

fog-fruit foggage. apparently the word,  
perhaps the thing as well, came from denmark.

fog is ontological.  
it takes  
the world  
away from you.

#### CEREMONIAL

my bald bartender friend, paul hyde-nor-hair,  
had been living with this very attractive woman  
for about a year. i think he'd been supporting her  
financially as well as emotionally.  
one day she said she wanted him to marry her  
and he said, "give me time."  
so she gave him nine days  
and then she married a guy she'd only known  
for a week. she arranged to hold the ceremony  
on the sidewalk in front of the home  
where she knew paul always got together with friends  
on this one night of the week. then she invited  
all the friends she'd met through him  
to the reception, which was held  
in the luncheon joint right next door  
to paul's bar.  
she and her very new husband  
subsequently took up residence  
in a trailer across the street from the bar.

did i forget to mention that,  
before moving out of his apartment,  
she stood on the street in front of it  
and abused him at the top  
of her considerable lungs?

i suppose it's redundant to mention  
that paul seems to miss her.

EASY ENOUGH FOR YOU, JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, TO TURN DOWN  
THE GODDAMN NOBEL PRIZE

i never could plot worth a shit.  
i could write, but i couldn't  
think up plots.  
i wondered why.  
the other day it came to me.

i was reared intellectually on existentialism.  
for the existentialist there are no plots  
because there is no Plotter.  
a story happens into existence  
and creates its essence as it goes.  
in this state of chronic uncertainty,  
in which all choices are made,  
the characters, not to mention the writer,  
experience existential angst.

i'm now convinced my existentialism  
has prevented me from concocting  
commercially marketable manuscripts.

if i get much poorer, i intend  
to become a structuralist.

#### MY RETIRING COLLEAGUES

##### i.

they made an offer they couldn't refuse  
to my colleagues near retirement age.  
it's known in academic irony  
as the golden handshake.  
it gives incentive to retire early  
they say it will make way for new blood.  
i didn't see anything wrong with the old.

##### ii.

when i was still untenured  
this old military-man-turned-professor  
wrote the advisory committee that i should  
be let go because i dressed like a slob.  
he said my image was not conducive  
to taxpayer support for faculty salaries.  
the chair of the committee  
(of which i was a member)  
was about to entertain discussion  
when neither skarsten spoke up:

"we don't have a dress code.  
it's none of our damned business.  
i move to table."  
and so they did,  
and the threats to take the matter higher  
never materialized.