

that
and prefer to remain,
happily,
an unstable individual
nearing the verge of
dementia.

BEAUTI-FUL

this one poet used to carry
this stringy-haired blonde around
with him at poetry readings
and
she'd sit out in the audience
and now and then
just as he concluded a
poem
the blonde would
breathlessly say:
"beauti-ful"

it made him look good
and I was a little jealous
of it
myself:
nobody had ever said that
about
one of my poems

and each time
after she said,
"beauti-ful ..."
it made them
applaud.

he had her planted at all
his readings
this poet who was so good
with the ladies
he had this
gentle smile and
these
artistic
dangling
hands
and he dangled
very well
elsewhere
it was
told.

I attended these readings
because I was living with a
sex-pot who insisted upon
going to them
and since our affair was
still fresh and
new
I made certain horrible
sacrifices

and he was reading
everywhere
in every little pitiful
hand-out
poetry hole in L.A.
and nearby
parts ...

and this one night
he had a new plant
in the audience
a tinted redhead
wearing fisherman's boots
and a cowboy hat
with a two and one half foot
red feather
but she was as good as the
other:
at certain times
after certain poems
she too would utter the
word:
"beauti-ful ..."

and the applause would
follow

an hour later he was still
tirelessly going
on, and then he finished
one
and his new plant said it
again:
"beauti-ful ..."

and then it came
from the rear
from one of the back
seats:
"NO, IT WASN'T, IT WAS A
PIECE OF SHIT JUST LIKE
EVERYTHING ELSE YOU'VE
WRITTEN!"

it was the stringy-blonde
standing up on
one of the seats
holding her paper cup
full of
Thunderbird

and then the applause came
it came and it
rose and it
rumbled
it was perfect and endearing
and unashamed

he had never heard applause
like
that ...

and after that night
maybe a week later
I was alone
sitting up against the
headboard of the bed
the sex-pot was out
to a reading or
somewhere
and I was into another
beer
going through one of
those
throwaway tabloids
when I came across this
short notice
that a certain poet
had left for
New York city
to seek his fame and
fortune
there ...

a beauti-ful city for a
beauti-ful guy, I thought,
bundling the tabloid
and dumping a 3 pointer into
the far off
basket

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA