

"I lost it," I say.

"I'm sorry," she says.

"As for Hemingway," I say,
"one of his wives once left
a batch of his stories on a train
& he was never able to reconstruct them"

M. ROUSSEAU

"the guilt-ridden nerd," I said,
"who wrote down his confessions."

"Ah, that Rousseau," she said, leaning her painting
against the wall & folding the easel.

"Yes," I said, "& as one with a Catholic upbringing,
I think the world would have been better off
if he had gone to church & made his confessions
in secret to a priest.

"But that Rousseau was not brought up a Catholic,"
she said, putting my bottle of vodka
back in the cabinet.

"I know, I know," I said, "but he fucked up the French
with his goddamned writings."

"Oh, the French," she said, going out to the kitchen
to check the dinner.

"Yes, the French." I said, getting up
& taking my bottle of vodka out of the cabinet
to pour another unartistic,
but forgiving drink.

THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL

We sailed in
about dusk,
tied up the boat
& walked into town
to do some drinking:

the Florita was crowded
so we crossed
the plaza

& went into Pepi's,
bought a bottle of gin
& sat down at a table;

I lit a cigar
& we drank for a while
& talked about
words,
about the magical being
of words;

then Hemingway
took out his pad
& began writing
a story

& I diddled a poem,

but when I saw this magical being
dressed all in yellow

I thought: Fuck the words,
stuffed the poem in my pants
& took my drink to the bar
where she was sitting.

THE IMMORTALITY GAME

As I watch from the window
the light is just right
& there's a glow on her cheek
that's as rare as gold dust:
a young woman passing in the afternoon,
still too young to imagine
she will ever reach the garden of Allah;

later I open a book
of French impressionist painters
& see Manet's The Fifer,
dated 1866:
a young boy in a brass-buttoned tunic
& baggy red pants with a blue stripe
that curves into eternity;

by midnight the wine has run out
& I'm banging the typewriter
trying to get that young woman right;

neighbors across the street
can hear the clatter: