

makes me care, or maybe makés me
give even less of a shit than before;

who knows, being
suddenly on the line here, sitting on the back bumper
of the Sube
of all places, only 33,000 miles on it, parked
at a rest stop in California
asphalted and concreted over, landscaped over
with eucalyptus and lawn; a piss stop
tiled over with porcelain walls to throw poems onto.
It is August 31st, 1989. It is 4:15 P.M. and I am still
alive.

I am snacking on corn chips and watermelon and beer.
Not thirty feet away, on a bench, waiting for a lift,
three young people are playing blues, guitar and
harmonica,
the girl with them has tired eyes and is dressed
in black.

She may sing when she finishes her cigarette
if the spirit moves her. She may not. Not everyone

steps over the line, opens all the windows, bets
everything they got on such chancey geography,
such iffy geology.

DO THE TREES FALL IN THE FOREST WITHOUT US?

I have an urge to prune the woods,
thin the deadwood,
starting with the oaks around the house,
get out there with saws and shears —
make 'em look nice, encourage new growth.

'Course, I'd be destroying the habitat of bugs
and parasites that live in places like that,
and maybe a few birds and lizards'll have to go
hungry for a while, but
it's something to do, something more useful, maybe,

than writing
useless poems about subjects like this,
trying to publish them, beautify the world
so full of deadwood, parasites, etc.

I know there are others who feel, from time to time,
like pruning the trees in the forest,
and calling it to the world's attention.

If this poem is ever published, such people can write me in care of the publisher. I probably won't feel this way for long, however, so I'm not promising any replies.

THE SCHENKERS

Our little house
in the clearing in the woods
on the side of the hill amongst the oaks
and the pines and the junipers
under the wide sky

is so beautiful.
No telephone, no electricity, only
space and quiet and birds and animals
and peace.

So beautiful,
I'd like to put up a neon sign
on the railing around the deck,
or maybe in the window facing south

for nobody to see,
just me, and Alice,
maybe our immediate neighbors ...
make for some laughs,
some conversation in town,
maybe make the local papers,
raise some hackles.

I can imagine
all the night raptors in the vicinity
and all their prey
sitting out front of the house
in the middle of the night
in hypnotic truce.

Take it down in a couple of months
when the novelty's worn off,
spend a few years
sitting on the deck
thinking up something new.

— Donald Schenker
Berkeley CA