

I don't think so  
it's just a phrase  
like Warren Harding's  
"return to normalcy"  
the right emotion for the-right era  
aimed straight at your heart  
& about as meaningful  
as any other commercial message

#### FOR A FUNCTIONING BRAIN

I pick up a bookmark  
they're all over the place  
this one  
has some writing on the back in red ink  
there is no liberty without leisure  
no quotes around it  
damn  
did I say that?  
doesn't sound like me  
but shit  
the statement has merit  
wouldn't you say?

#### A FATHER & SON MOMENT

we came together on the subject of music  
he loved Duke Ellington  
Duke's son Mercer was mentioned  
my father quickly dismissed him as a nonentity  
I mentioned a fine standard  
that had been written by him  
Things Ain't What They Used To Be  
my father was unfamiliar with the tune  
& didn't want to know how it went

#### 4 AMERICAN CARS

being 18 & impulsive  
I gave the guy 90 bucks  
& drove the black '52 Buick off the lot  
later I remembered  
that the car didn't HAVE a display price  
just 2 zeroes on the windshield  
make your own offer  
the guy must've been happy with me  
that white '57 Fairlane was the best  
a real classic

only cost me \$400  
& worth so much more  
my mother sold it when I enlisted  
upon discharge  
my father gave me his white '66 Ambassador  
not exactly a happening car  
for a young man  
it immediately broke down  
enroute from NY to Boston  
I managed to limp the rest of the way  
at 15 mph  
I sold it for a very low price  
& never told my father  
the exact figure  
the last one was beaten up & blue  
a '68 Coronet wagon  
it came in handy  
when I worked at a halfway house  
it functioned for a few months  
I realized eventually  
that cars were something I could do without

"WHO WANTS TO BE A GARDENER OR A TAXI DRIVER?"  
— Charles Bukowski from the novel Hollywood

sometimes these things can't be helped  
for a variety of reasons  
money must come in from somewhere  
I sublease from a friend  
fleet driving ended with Reagan  
we've both been doing this much longer  
than originally planned  
this week he took a guy to Worcester  
a \$95 job  
the passenger was apparently a fireman  
involved in union work  
when they got to Worcester  
he told my friend to see so & so back in Brookline  
so & so was a union official  
who would pay him  
the whole process took five hours  
the union official knew nothing about it  
it was all a scam  
we're told to ask for the money up front  
but that usually leaves a bad taste  
passengers take it personally sometimes  
so who wants to be a cabdriver?  
I don't know  
who needs money would be more to the point