

THE STREETS OF NEW YORK

The streets of New York
were always wet
in the autumn
 of dead leaves
cold
 and unheard of
like the love
 he ran after
and was always losing
 in a sea
 of blue and green
 butterflies and moss

The road
 that he chose
 to journey on
took him north
to the white cliffs
and he would end
in the rich songs
 of Bernadette
 oh how she lives on
ever in the flames !

His mother
 was down
to skin and bones
 like chicken soup
with floating pieces of marble
 and lights
 coming and going
 at excessive speed

She died
 fighting dragons
 with her arms
always holding
 to courage and strength

No one loved her
better than the moon

There
was a wistful
vision
of the great actor
posturing
before the gods of trees and rain
and the outlaw playing
his steel guitar
for the savage women
of the Mexican plain

The train
drove south again
across the Nile

There were flamingos
then
on 42nd St.
and an alligator
with a smile

His friend Richard was a magician
who showed him
card tricks on the avenue

He showed him
how they were done
but it was no good
he could not duplicate them
which was alright
he didn't want to really
anyway
he wanted only to be alone
at that hour of the night

Up 7th Avenue
the stars
were pinned
to the sky with names
and numbers

and the dates of their arrival
as though it mattered
he could not

count them all
He would walk along
the storm

driven night
his footsteps
squeaking on the dry
snow
of the pavement
and garbage pails
mist coming from
the steam of the basements

He would prowl
at the doorways
for something to pawn
but the thrill was gone

I will live
in another world
he thinks to himself
one without
hunger and thirst
or newspapers
with trials and errors

and savage drums
I will go there
only when I wish
and the cost

will be nothing
I will sing
to the west
where the colors

will be rainbows
of showers
and the days and nights
are all the same
and on and on
he would go
to take his mind off
the cold
and the snow

Someone
was singing
in Gregorian chant
on a high hill
above the sky
with bells
and falling ice

It must be coming
from a church
like the one Van Gogh painted at
Auvers - sur - oise
He imagined his thoughts
falling down
upon him
like flakes of snow
as in the final
scene in "The Lady with the Dog"
the falling snow
and the notes of the oboe
and so it went
on and on
like a dementia
with pain
that was eating at his brain

Is that Henderson
over there on the corner [?
as gaunt
as the snow

as in
Hemingway's story
 across the street
 and down the green alley
and the music changes
into something
 more plaintively sad

Everyone
 will be there
as soon as
the full moon
rises
 above the soft
 green hills
to say goodbye
 and throw flowers -
 red carnations
because of the
 white snow

They will
 all wear black
and dance
 a slow waltz
before bowing
 and leaving

Richard might be there
 at least in spirit
Of course Henderson
 hates funerals
or any kind of pomp
and will beg off
but the others
 will mostly come
his many friends
of passion
 and delight....

(An ambulance turns the corner
on two wheels
and disappears
in a haze
of pink gloom)

....He decides
that a few
of the women that
he has known
should be wearing white
again because
of the red flowers
and the snow
Then they can go

He wonders if the neon colors
could go on and on
until dawn
like smoke
He wonders about
a lot of things
if they are real
and if the Gods
forbid them to be known
Secrets
Why
Let all the sins and sorrows
empty out and pour
down the alleys with the neon
and the fog

Let them mutter
like absent-minded ghosts
Let them pierce my heart
with steel

I wouldn't care
like those pointed
spears
at the end of the fence
any one of them

would do

A dog is howling
as though
insane

It must be foaming
with disease
to care
on a night
as cold as this one

He must have known
for a long time
his end was
coming
because of the song
There was no name to it
just a memory
of strings
in harmony
of a child's
nursery rhyme
as
the ship sails
away with the clouds
and the waves
are moving
all exactly the same
exactly the same

Time out
for the pirate
with his black patch and wooden sword
Time for the maiden in distress
and a black cloud
to drift
over the endless horizon
and park beside
the falling snow

He was right

about the alley
But
whatever became
of Richard and Henderson
and all the others
who might have cared
to find him
in the blood-spattered snow
he probably
would never know

The End