met this guy, somewhere, hell his eyes looked like a madman’s
or maybe it was only my reflection of. . .
well, forget it, anyway, he said to me, uh uh you read Camus?
well we’re both in a very womanless bar looking
for a piece of ass or some way out of the top of the sky. . .
it wasn’t working— there was just the bartender wondering why he’d
ever gotten into the business
and myself, very discouraged with the fact that I had been translated
into 6 or 7 languages
and I was known more by more skidrow bums than college profs,
and this guy kept going on—

The Stranger, you know, that depicts our modern society—
the deadened man—
couldn’t cry at his mother’s funeral,
killed an Arab or two without even knowing why—

he kept on and on
on and on
telling me what a son of a bitch The Stranger
was, and I kept thinking, maybe he’s right—
you know, those speeches before the Acadamies—
you couldn’t tell whether Camus was talking and laughing out of the
side of his mouth or
whether he was
insane. he talked the same as the guy next to me at the bar and we
were only looking for
pussy.

it was very sad—
all along The Stranger had been my hero
because I thought he’d seen beyond trying
or caring
because it was such a bore
so senseless—
that big hole in the ground looking up—
and I was wrong again:
hell, I was THE STRANGER, and the book hadn’t been written the way
it had been meant to
be.
The Old Woman

she lived in the last old-fashioned house
on the block—
you know the kind: vine-covered, dark, quiet.
her neighbors were gone—
nothing but high-rise apartments about.
you’d see her two or three times a week
pushing her little shopping cart on its two wheels;
then she’d come back with stuff in bags,
go into the house, and that was
it. she never spoke to anybody.

it was last week about 3:30 p.m.
that her house began sliding off of its foundations.
it was a very slow slide
and you simply got the idea that the house was just stepping
forward to take a walk down the street—
except some of the boards began to snap—
they sounded like rifle shots, and the house moaned just a
little—a dark green moan.

somebody called the fire dept.
and the boys were running around shutting off the gas
and shouting at each other
and telling the crowd to keep back
when along came one of these television trucks
and they sighted in on the house sagging toward the street.

when the front door opened and the little old lady walked out and she was *bombed*, as they say, completely out of it, they put the camera on her and the guy ran up with a mike. she was on the screen.

“how long ya been livin’ in that house, lady?”

“35 years.”

“ya got insurance?”

“nope.”

“whatcha gona do now?”

“go to Ireland and get drunk for two weeks.”

then she walked away and left them all there, alone.