

**Redacted Poems**

**by**

**Jack Saunders**

Trollope wrote that his imaginary Barseshire was as real to him as any place in England, and that he was loath to leave it, but that that story was now done.

Patrick O'Brian, rest in peace

David Mamet, "The Humble Genre Novel, Sometimes Full of Genius," "Writers On Writing," *New York Times*, January 17, 2000.

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## Introduction

Bill Roberts  
Bottle of Smoke Press

Recently I got a job, after being out of work for 18 months.

I had ten weeks separation pay from being laid off, went on reduced benefit social security, and had 26 weeks of unemployment, plus one 13-week extension, so I made it a year, just fine, but the last six months were kind of nervous, and I ran a bank credit card balance up, while looking for a job.

I wrote up a storm, needless to say. With the threat of having to go back to work hanging over me.

I wrote 32 books in 18 months, and posted the books online, as I wrote them, at my web page, *roman-feuilleton.com*. Some of the *feuilletons* were poems.

When I went back to work, I took down *roman-feuilleton.com* and started a new web page, *The Daily Bulletin* ([www.thedailybulletin.com](http://www.thedailybulletin.com)). I started redacting the book I put up on the web, and part of what I took out was poems.

I found myself writing a book in three parts. DIRECTOR'S CUT: AMERICAN LETTERS' SMOKING GUN. The version on the Internet is bowdlerized, in the interest of me keeping my day job. DIRECTOR'S CUT is the unexpurgated version, the book, with the redacted cuts restored. The book runs 100,000 words.

It strikes me that the poems from DIRECTOR'S CUT might make a chapbook.

I would call it *Redacted Poems*, by analogy with *Collected Poems*, or *Selected Poems*.

I called a book REJECTED POEMS, once.

I looked up *Ann Menebroker* in Google and got a hit on Bottle of Smoke Press.

Are you interested in publishing *Redacted Poems*?

Jack Saunders  
Garage Band Books

# From OUT OF THE BLUE

## Fringe Benefits

I remember when the people from HR  
would come before us, twice a year,  
as regular as clockwork—this was when  
Bush *père* was president—and say, “You can have  
half of what you used to have, for the same amount,  
or what you have now, for twice as much money.  
We call this Flexible Benefits, or Maximum Choice.”  
Only now it’s the Congress. It’s Medicare. It’s  
a bill of rights, a bill of wrongs, a bill of goods,  
as Wright Morris says. Who’s Wright Morris?

## Saturday Night in America

I am listening to the radio.  
Saturday Night in America.  
Big Band music. The very songs  
the band at Fort DeRussey played  
in Honolulu 40 years ago, when  
President Kennedy was assassinated.  
A San Miguel beer was 20¢ in the NCO Club.  
You could buy a porterhouse steak the size of  
a motorcycle seat for \$2.50. I hadn’t started writing yet,  
but knew I was going to be a writer when I grew up.  
It was important to remember everything that happened to me.  
And now I am one, as sure as Ernest Hemingway. Kurt Vonnegut says  
a writer cleans the birdshit out of the cuckoo clocks. I am not  
a secular humanist I am a logical positivist.

## Déjà Vu

I used to, I worked right here. In the same office, in fact.  
I drove over Hathaway Bridge in my old Datsun B210.  
I was writing a winch manual on AMCM countermeasures  
equipment, and now I am working on an O-level maintenance manual  
with IPB for the rewinder, or reeling machine. It was like Thanksgiving  
the day I got the job. I came up in November, on a reconnaissance sortie,

and found a job in February. A good job for this area. It took me longer when I moved back, from Atlanta, but here I am, as John Hartford says about the earthquakes in California. "I'm still here." Us hippies ain't going nowhere. Bush is the Military-Industrial Complex President Eisenhower warned us about. The forces of darkness and the forces of light. Shades of Richard Nixon. Did you see the *jowls* on that son of a bitch.

### **Multi-Tasking**

I remember when IBM announced a program called TopView. It didn't work. Or it worked, but it wouldn't work with the network, or the expanded memory capability of DOS. And it was slow, and a resource hog, and the GUI was counterintuitive. Microsoft was lean and mean, and beat them to the punch, with Windows. We'll get the bugs out in the next release. The first product to get a foothold in the market wins. There is a narrow window. Whenever cost or schedule conflict with quality, quality prevails. Would you like to buy some property in the Everglades, or the Brooklyn Bridge?

### **Multi-Tasking**

Brew wrote a screenplay once called *Contest Writing - Championship Style*. In it, a man used the Shift-F3 keys on his computer to go from the document he was being paid to write to a book he was writing on the sly. On company time, using company equipment. His cube-mate could tell which one he was working on by how fast he typed. When he got to blazing away, she would say, "I know what you're *do-ing*." But she didn't rat him out. It was them against the front office. When he heard footsteps he would switch. The bossman was like a motorcycle cop behind a billboard. They knew what he was up to but they couldn't catch him. Why can't Hulk think? Because Hulk is a hero in a comic book. I changed the name of *The Daily Bugle* to *The Daily Bulletin* so no one would think I was copying Spider-Man.

### **30 Years of Living Dangerously**

The jackrabbit or the papa-san  
waits until the last possible instant  
to dart across the road in front of

the semi or the weapons carrier.  
You don't want to leave the wrong poem  
in the xerox machine, or send something to  
the printer, only to have it malfunction,  
then burp the incriminating evidence up,  
later, to a bossman, or the lackey of  
a bossman, the informer, or sharp tool  
for the company, the sycophant, the me and you  
are pals—huh, Spike?, the brown-nose kiss-ass  
careerist, or strainer, as Manfred's Granny called them.  
Odor, o-no. Comes out like a ribbon lies flat on the brush.

### **The Writer Regrets**

I'm sorry but  
the volume of rejection slips I receive  
does not permit an individual reply to your  
snotty, disdainful missive. You are not right  
for me. I lack enthusiasm for your hidebound mindset  
in this difficult publishing environment. Perhaps another writer  
will feel differently. There's the honor rolls and the beauty pageants.  
Sorority girls going down for a fraternity pin. Fraternity boys  
getting married for a piece of ass. Careerists. Nelson Algren said  
no one should be a literary agent just because she wants to be one.  
Many are called but few are chosen. Keep trying.  
Even a blind pig finds an acorn  
once in a while.  
Just follow  
the pack.

### **Third Mate**

One time Potter wrote a short story  
for Tyrone's *Hogtown Hooter* regional magazine  
(Pretty Michelle was the brains behind that outfit),  
the punch line of which was, "Ha ha, there *is* no  
third mate on a head boat I'm a deckhand."  
We killed the grouper and red snapper that day.



He's on the left, I'm on the right.  
A garbo asked Potter for a life jacket, and he said,  
"What for—all they do is make your titties sore."

### **Sportsman**

A garbo is a native of L. A.  
(Lower Alabama) who comes down  
to the Redneck Riviera, rents a room,  
and fishes for a week. He buys a plastic  
GI can at K Mart and fills it full of mingo snapper  
and motel ice. From *vermilion*. Called *beeliners*,  
in Panama City. On the way home, he throws  
the lot in a side ditch, pink water, rotten fish,  
and all. The opposite of a conservationist.

### **Homeland Security**

Should holiday travelers be concerned with terrorist attacks  
this Thanksgiving weekend? Yes. And gas prices, Disneyworld,  
especially the commercials. Strontium-90 in the atmosphere  
from the Americans and the Russians blowing off atomic bombs.  
Bush had decided to withdraw from Iraq a month before he was assassinated.  
Don't want to put those two words together on the Internet, the software will come  
looking for you like an earwig crawling in your ear or a *carneira* swimming up  
your urethra when you piss in the Amazon River. Who knows what evil lurks

in the hearts of men? Sad days are these in Passaic. The Shadow don't.  
*The Shadow* is Victor Jory, for Christ's sake.



Percy Dovetonsils, where are you now that we need you?  
Fuck this “Springtime for Hitler” shit. The situation is serious.  
Do you feel safer, now that Monkey Boy is in? *Space Balls*, the movie.  
Permanent waves, a boutonniere, cuff links, a string of pearls.  
The host, adjusting the knob for his guests. Mixing the martinis.  
Did I miss something? The Military-Industrial Complex  
is alive and well in academia. Look like one of those  
Dip Wars parties, where faculty wives made dueling guacamoles  
while faculty men talked business, were chatted up by flirting coeds,  
that's how the patronage was handed out, Nuala O'Faolain says.  
Jesus H. Statistical Christ, Kathleen.

# From DISTANCE LEARNING

## Anger Management Issues

Patient denies having rage  
about his lack of literary recognition,  
claims his outlook is "always merry  
and bright." Says he has nothing against  
Haitians, even though he calls their religious  
practices "ululating," and "jabbering in  
their heathen tongue." Ought to send them back  
to Africa. No, that's the indigenous blacks.  
Is he xenophobic towards the Century Village  
New York Jews, who view a Florida cracker as  
an ignorant hick? Of course not. Your deli man  
in Brooklyn was also mine. My prune is yours.  
Philip Larkin was a racist, maybe, but he didn't get laid  
until he was 41 years old, in the *annus mirabilis* between  
the lifting of the Chatterly ban and the Beatles' first lp.  
Madonna on Oprah talking about authorship.

## Bricoleur

Once Brenda becomes adept at transcribing medical records  
she can telecommute. Work from home. Every day will be  
Casual Friday, dress-code-wise. No race or battle-of-the-sexes  
jokes at the water cooler, no office politics, no jockeying for position,  
wondering if you hockied in your own nest with that one, Jack, having to  
network and form alliances, exchange theory in the work of Marcel Mauss,  
an earlier edition of French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss, is she  
a Freudian, a Marxist, a cultural evolutionist *à la* Leslie A. White  
at Michigan, a bureaucratic hydraulic despotic elitist (rice paddies  
in the Orient, *cf.* Wittfogel). I distance-teach, sailing my philippics,  
jeremiads, and pasquinades out into the howling void of cyberspace.  
Joe Mac called the HRAF at Yale (Human Relations Area Files)  
the Human Relationships Area Code, and he got a masters degree  
in anthropology from FSU. Few are called but many are chosen.  
If you truly have a call, you're screwed, Camerado.  
The ones who don't are sharpening the knives for you.  
Teachers, learners, incense-burners.  
I'm still here, John Hartford says,

about the California earthquakes.  
Dancing on a platform of my own construction.  
¾" marine plywood, salvaged from the county dump.  
A knacker in an abattoir, put together out of scrap.

### Navel Lint

I wasn't really ABD  
(all-but-dissertation),  
although I had completed  
my course work and passed  
the comps in every area except  
my specialty, North American Archeology  
(not just the Southeastern United States).  
Once you get the union card you specialize.  
Dale McCall knew a man who was an expert on  
uterine scars in shrews. Do you know how big  
a shrew's uterus is? Picture Pee Wee Herman  
holding his fingers close together and saying, "Tiny."  
The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.

### Redacted

Why do you write *redacted* on certain headings  
in your online journal (OLJ)? First of all,  
it is the great long continuous book  
of my life, *40-Year Run*, a novel.  
Journal entries are just a part of it.  
Ezra Pound made Laughlin put  
the black lines of the censor in  
his *Cantos*. Hemingway wrote *unprintable*,  
in places where he could not use the word  
he wanted to. He drew attention to  
the absurdity of such restrictions.  
*Expletive deleted* sums it up.  
One can guess the exact term  
from the context, so who is fooled,  
whom protected, from what? Dirty words?  
Thoughts? A feeble attempt at mind control?  
A sense of modesty, decorum, punctilio?  
Manners? Advice to the lovelorn?  
Brew wrote a column once called "Ask Doktor Dork,"  
for the newsletter *KorporateKulture.Kom (KKK)*.

From what the old NCOs called an early Quality Control program, Zero Defects. Zelda Dork. We put the K in kwality. Around the time that Lucent stock went from \$84 a share down to so low they were almost delisted from the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). Good morning, may we Marfak your car? This is my brother-in-law's car, Marfak you. Have you had it in an olive, the oral polio vaccine? The good news is you don't have polio. The bad news is you have SIV. Simian immunovirus. You pays your money and you makes your choice. Syphilis or yaws.

### **Team Jack-and-Brenda**

All this hoopla about a possible pandemic made Brew remember Gerald Ford's swine flu immunization program, the old people dropping like flies after coming to the position of attention to salute. You don't have polio, you have SIV. A social disease. You get it from a mosquito bite, like West Nile Virus. Thoughts have wings, say the Rosicrucians. A hickey on his neck with perfect bite marks in the center from the vampire, B-movie actress, striptease-dancer (ecdysiast), and titty-picture model Glori-Anne Gilbert, whose fan club Brew was a member of. Brenda took their picture behind closed curtains at Glamourcon 1999, his cameraperson, paparazzo, and breastplate of righteousness.



A girlfriend of Balder's (who didn't make the cut) saw the snapshot, which Brew had made into school-picture-sized prints to distribute to his readership, and said, "Who's *that*?" "My dad," Balder said. Pause. "My mom took the picture."

## Garage Band Books

The censor was the Roman magistrate  
who took the census. There is thus  
a normative component to what is banned,  
and what celebrated. The Greek word for *ostracize*  
is from *potsherd*. Used in the balloting. Banishment  
tantamount to death, in primitive societies.  
And no bed of roses in our own.  
You have to be strong in your mind,  
Monk said. Anything you have to do,  
you have to go on and do yourself,  
Rahsaan Roland Kirk said. Mingus said,  
"Bird's not dead, he's hiding out.  
And he'll be back with some new shit  
that will scare everyone to death."  
Bob Weinstock, who recorded Bird  
(and Monk, and Mingus, although not Kirk,  
I don't believe, Lucky Thompson, homeless  
on the streets of Seattle) for Prestige  
inscribed a book to me, "To Jack `Bird' Saunders."  
I helped him to self-publish it. Disintermediate now.  
Publish it yourself. They can't cut me off because  
they don't know where I'm getting it.

## Reeds and Deeds

Lucky Thompson was disgruntled  
about the way white record company  
owners treated black jazz artists,  
and was outspoken about it.  
Ended up on the streets of Seattle,  
homeless. Douglas Fairbairn (*Street 8*)  
had Alzheimer's Disease, and died  
not knowing he had been an author.  
Dodo Marmarosa considered himself  
a musician, to the end, and practiced.  
Kept his chops up. For whom did he play,  
in his lonely room? That's the \$64 question.  
I have a lady in the balcony, doctor.  
Give her a good swiving, you sexist pig.  
Germaine Greer tore Norman Mailer  
a new asshole. Jesus, I loved to write.

Bukowski, upstairs with his typer, listening  
to Mahler on the Alps of Night.

### Not Invented Here

Bukowski listening to Mahler on the Alps of Night,  
upstairs with his typer, the good German wine,  
no more rotgut, no more flophouses, disreputable whores,  
a woman in a gingham dress, a BMW, a house in the suburbs  
with a swimming pool, camera crews from Germany, Belgium,  
an interviewer from Italy, when he was on Bernard Pivot's  
*Bouillon de Culture*, on French TV, shitfaced to the scuppers,  
he walked off, didn't even get to answer what his favorite cuss word was.  
Came into the states from overseas, had two books on the top-ten list  
at the same time in Brazil, big in Europe, Spain, bus stations in Portugal,  
the prophet is not without honor, save in his native land.  
New York is so provincial it can't stand itself.  
Someone might be gaining on them.  
And they call me a hick.  
Just because I am self-taught  
doesn't mean I cannot do it.

### POV

When the psychologist gave Roddy McDowall  
a Rorschach Test in *Lord Love a Duck*,  
he was supposed to see something sexual,  
but instead claimed to see "butterflies."  
"You're hostile, you little creep," the woman said.  
But what if that is what he actually saw?  
Why would he lie about it? *Art brut* translates  
*outsider art*, but you could also call it *mental patient art*.  
Who's to say what anybody else can see from his angle of vision,  
just because we can't see it from ours? Enema vérité is what you see  
on the end of the fork when you *really look*. Sometimes to actually see  
what's on the fork we have to eat with chopsticks. *POV* stands for  
*privately-owned vehicle*. Prevent FOD (foreign-object damage).  
The errant bolt sucked up the air intake.  
Or thrown there as an act of *sabotage*.  
*To destroy an employer's property*  
*or hinder the manufacturing process.*  
*To subvert.* You bureaucratic hydraulic despotic elitist, you.

## Huh?

Madonna on Oprah  
talking about authorship  
(of children's books),  
agency, empowerment,  
did you sleep your way  
to the top, dear, trade on your  
good looks, were you audacious,  
could you suck the chrome off a trailer hitch,  
like Eva Peron, have you no sense of irony?  
No *pudeur*, or shame? No modesty?  
Is it me who's crazy? We're looking for people  
who want to write. There's a future for you  
in cartooning. Have you thought about show business  
for a career? There's no business like it,  
to coin a phrase. Is that Irving Berlin  
or George Gershwin? Syphilis or yaws?  
Ahead, the cliff, at one's heel, the wolf.  
Go ahead and make the leap, like Buster Keaton,  
or Frederico Fellini, who could fly. Maybe you'll land  
in the top of a tree. Maybe they'll give you an *homage*  
at the Cannes Film Festival for your body of work,  
or the National Book Awards vote you a Lifetime Achievement Award  
for your Contribution to American Letters. This year's taken  
(Stephen King). But there's always next year.

## Race Matters

I think Madonna should get  
a National Book Award for her body of work,  
or either a contract with Hallmark Greeting Cards,  
like Maya Angelou, Lifetime Professor of This or That  
at Wake Forest University, blackness, Negritude, conspicuous display,  
colored person in the window, good thing Brew was able to expurgate himself,  
and not go online for everyone and John Ashcroft to see at his web site  
with the N word, the race card, to paraphrase William S. Burroughs,  
if he had one, he'd play it, wouldn't you? A Florida cracker will make do.  
Just because she's a pop diva is no reason to exclude her.

## Brew's Dream

I'd like to charter the Lady Anderson  
for a Twilight Cruise and Fried Shrimp Dinner.  
Play What You Brung. I would invite the Buzzard Cult  
and the Clampettes (not Dreadheads), a First Annual  
Jack Saunders Memorial Pick-In. When I win  
a genius grant, or sign a multi-book contract.

## Body of Work

The top three hits  
for *madonna*, at Amazon.com,  
are *The English Roses*, *Mr. Peabody's Apples*,  
and *Madonna Nude 1979*. Her body of work  
thus includes pictures of herself naked.  
I am the man, I suffered, I was there,  
Walt Whitman said. I kept asking Brenda,  
"What happened to her phony British accent?"  
Hankering, gross, mystical, empowered.  
A figure model who made good.  
The Pearl Bailey Chair of shitty music.  
Apologies to Dr. Maya Angelou.

## Lie Down with Dogs, Get Up with Fleas.

Sad days are these in Passaic,  
Ernie Kovacs says, as Percy Dovetonsils,  
lispng poet. An ascot and a cold martini,  
a smoking jacket, blow-out patches  
on the elbows, a pipe, like Max von Sydow  
in some Bergman movie, ha ha, think he could  
make a living writing verse, it is to laugh.



Might as well expect to be Akira Kurosawa directing Toshiro Mifune in *Sanjuro*.  
The Maya Angelou collection, *Life Mosaic*.  
Any bonds, today? Pardon me, but ain't you Michael Jordan? Bugs Bunny, at your service.

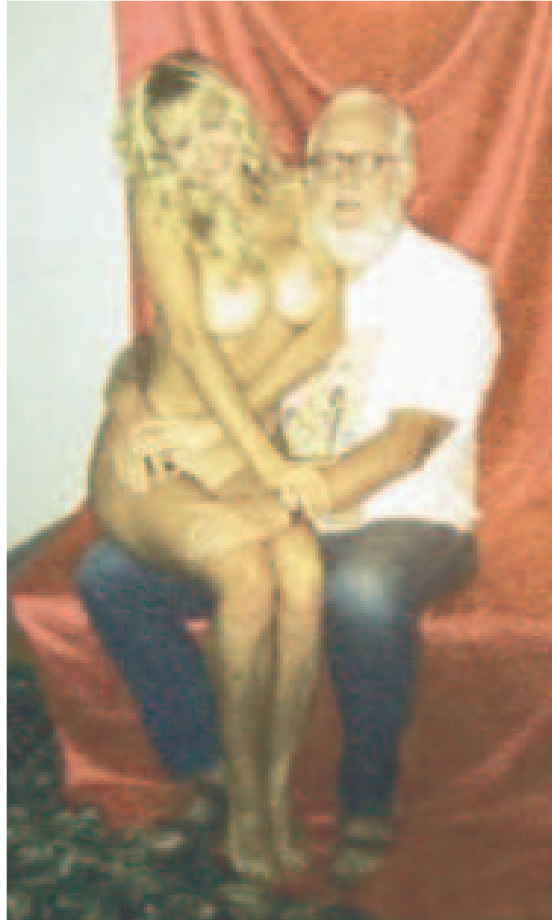
### **Guilty As Charged**

Stop the presses, Chief.  
I have a story here  
that's going to break this town  
wide open. Who do you think  
owns this newspaper, son?  
Was Brew crazy? If he had a race card  
he would play it. Wouldn't you?  
I wouldn't. At least, I haven't.  
So I am accused, by someone who did,  
does, of white privilege. Against which  
there is no defense. Methinks the lady  
doth protest too much.  
Start at the pointing finger  
and trace it back.  
The bigot in our midst  
is you.

## Art Brew, P. O. O. T. S.

The *Florida Artists Directory*,  
from which educationists select people to be  
Poets-in-the-School (P. I. T. S.) weighed Art Brew's work  
in the balance and found it unacceptable, or inappropriate.  
He got the two confused. So he started practicing what  
he called distance-teaching, at his web site on the Internet.  
A poet out of the schools (P. O. O. T. S.).  
Beans, beans, the musical fruit.  
The more you eat, the more you toot.  
Holy frijole, a Mexican jumping bean.  
Any racists in the audience?  
Male chauvinists? Pigs?  
How could he disguise  
his whiteness?

## Shapeshifter III



They got Brew to be the Santa at the company  
Employee Children Christmas party. He kept thinking of  
the barmaid in *Bad Santa* taking Billy Bob Thornton out in the parking lot  
and screwing his brains out in a car, saying, "Fuck me, Santa, Fuck me, Santa,"  
it made Brew feel like some kind of a *sex* object.

### **Bad Santa**

Rep. John Dingell, D. Mich., described  
the Medicare Reform Bill, or either  
the machinations leading to its passage,  
as "a Special Interest Saturnalia." One thinks  
of Anaïs Nin and Hugo, visiting the whorehouse,  
in *Henry and June*, to watch two prostitutes  
having sex, and later, on the street, souls grown  
shallow, tepid, displaced Africans in Picasso masks.  
*Les Mademoiselles d'Avignon*, clowns in Santa suits,  
*I, Pagliacci*, verismo opera, snail operculum earrings  
in the Court of Louis Seize, the barmaid in *Bad Santa*,  
I was afraid I'd get an affliction, and tried to think  
of aversion therapy, where they show a child molester  
a picture of a nymphet, or a nymph, and if he is aroused,  
inappropriately, as one says, he receives an electric shock  
through the penile cuff, like Steve Martin in the movie  
*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Take that, you filthy pervert.

### **Ho Ho Ho**

The disc jockey at the company party,  
hamburger cook at the picnic, a tub of beer,  
a fish fry, Team Player awards, a gift certificate  
to a restaurant one wouldn't eat at if it were free.  
No beer now, soft drinks, bottled water, no tea,  
no coffee, possibly herb tea, everyone in a 12 Step Program,  
on a diet, recovering from this or that, a few relapsers,  
hard cases, the 10% that didn't get the word, or got the word  
and wouldn't heed it, wild hairy asses, recalcitrants, sawtooth-wave  
recidivists, backsliders, demolition experts, both UDT and EOD,  
bomb squad members, a task force, a SWAT team, jackboots, the knout,  
poor Hedda Nussbaum, whips and chains, Merry Christmas, kiddies,  
have some punch and cookies. Santa doesn't feel good.  
Santa is dyspeptic. He calls Christmas

The Feast of Bad Conscience.  
Bah, humbug.

### **Additional Duty**

Brew got the duty,  
Brew was issued the suit,  
he had to sign a hand receipt,  
and have it dry cleaned, afterwards,  
including the signature cap, for cooties--  
the red elastic pants for pubic lice?--  
the fake boot-tops wouldn't fit over  
his massive calves, like Jouko Ahola  
in Werner Herzog's *Invincible*, so he cut  
a slit in the back, under the fake fur,  
and safety-pinned the gap in his red tunic  
over his big rumbling belly where it puckered.  
Jakeleg and jury-rigged. Santa reports as ordered, sir.  
Jesus, I hate Christmas.

### **Bah Humbug**

Dickens wrote a Christmas story  
every year and dreaded it like the plague,  
or gout, a Stilton with a bottle of Madeira  
in the top, a cigar from Nicaragua, a hat,  
"Genuine Panama," virgin vinyl, *faux* fur,  
we need a volunteer to play Santa Claus  
at the Employee Children Christmas Party.  
W. C. Fields said any man who hates  
dogs and children can't be all bad.  
You. The fickle finger of fate  
has landed on Art Brew.  
Silent Night. Silent Night.  
Silent but deadly courtroom creeper.  
Low tide at the oasis. Your camel had diabetes.  
(A chemical analysis of Egyptian beer.)

### **Low-Bottom Drunks**

Brew went to an AA meeting  
of motorcycle crazies, Sobriety in the Wind,

no booze, no dope, no weapons,  
a man who looked like Hagar the Horrible  
got up and said, "I hate fucking Christmas,"  
and everyone agreed. Earth People are such hypocrites.

### **Setting an Example**

I once went to a Christmas dinner  
at the halfway house, for men,  
Palm Trail Lodge, with Brenda  
and the boys, on our bicycles,  
as a conspicuous example of recovery.  
Many of the men had passed the white-knuckle stage,  
in detox, and were in the Pink Cloud phase.  
But that was always dangerous, especially around  
the holidays. One could get overconfident. Complacent.  
Or be overwhelmed by bonhomie and not give a shit  
about the consequences of a slip. I was hanging in there.  
And they could too. If they didn't drink and went to meetings.

### **The Poorhouse Fair**

I remember alcathons, this time of year,  
at the American Legion, on Federal Highway--  
the vets rented out their hall to Alcoholics Anonymous--  
where all the sad cases, newly sober, shaky, during the holidays,  
fraught with bad memories of family break-ups, one's life as a dog,  
would 13th Step each other, drinking non-alcoholic punch  
and dancing the dirty boogie, then a slow-dance. A lot of  
cigarettes and coffee, a lot of refined sugar.  
Commercials and old movies. Romance.  
Any bonds, today? Support our boys overseas.  
Ration stamps and bootleg gin.  
No, that was Prohibition.

### **My Readership**

I had several readers  
who lived in the bushes  
behind Eagle Army-Navy  
Discount Department Store,  
and one who lived in the back seat

of a car parked at City Park and bathed  
in the public rest room. I'd see them on my way  
to the post office, or the beach, on my walk,  
or out riding my ten-speed bike, Straight Ahead,  
on my errands. I carried a canvas tote-bag  
for groceries. Condemned meat and reduced-price produce  
from Publix and Neal's Farm Market. Owen brought home  
fish he caught in the surf. Barracuda, mostly.  
A small one will not give you *ciguatera* poisoning.  
Oh yea, I had several readers at Delray Seafoods.  
One girl wore a T-shirt that said, "Helmet Laws Suck."  
My coterie of steadfast readers, the Buzzard Cult.  
Drying-out farms, mental hospitals, barracks,  
oil platforms, a man who lived in a cardboard box  
beneath a highway overpass, with a dog, and a checking account,  
he wrote me a check and it was good, just because he was homeless  
didn't make him a deadbeat, Eric Hoffer checked out library books  
when he was hopping freights, and working as a migrant laborer,  
and he returned them, back then the honor system meant something.

### **I Hate Christmas Less**

I hate Christmas less  
with every year. First,  
there were children, and now,  
I am a grandpa. My father's dead.  
I think of him at Thanksgiving, Christmas,  
and New Year's Day. The bowl games  
on the television. College rivalries. The SEC.  
Food, the exchange of gifts. He didn't drink.  
There are continuities, down through the generations.  
A longitudinal dimension, like Trollope's chronicles.  
People do what they do. And then they're gone,  
and it's just you. As Duke says, "Someone's always leaving,  
someone's always being left behind." Some things go unsaid.  
Better say them when you can. You might not  
get the chance again.

### **A Rolling Stone**

Once, Owen wanted to cook duck, for Christmas.  
You know, in addition to a venison roast and a Boston butt.  
I bought a couple, fresh, at Harry's Farmers' Market, in Atlanta.

He and Jean were living in Athens. He must have cooked a leg of lamb, too, because I remember a mint sauce made from a plant his mother gave him, tupelo honey, bacon fat, from a coffee can on the back of a gas range in their small apartment. They were newlyweds. A washer-drier combination would fit in a utility closet. A married couple, starting out. We had more shit than would fit in a seabag, even though I culled things out every PCS (*permanent change of station*). A rolling stone gathers no moss, and neither does a professional musician.

### Happy Holidays

Is this Prohibition,  
is it the Great Depression,  
World War II, Korea, Vietnam,  
Gulf War Syndrome, Operation Dalkon Shield,  
Bush I, Bush II, the Old Rollback,  
the elimination of the capital gains tax,  
the estate tax, a tax cut for the rich, tax shelters  
for corporations, Star Wars for defense contractors,  
no more environmental laws or irksome workplace safety  
regulations, no oversight, fiduciary responsibility, honest audits,  
good-faith bargaining, no checks and balances, pack the judiciary  
with right-wing ideologues, pack Congress so the legislative branch  
will go along, wreaths and holly, tinkling bells, jolly merchants, Jesus sells.  
They have no bread, let them eat cake. The poor are as free to sleep under bridges  
as the rich.

### In Character

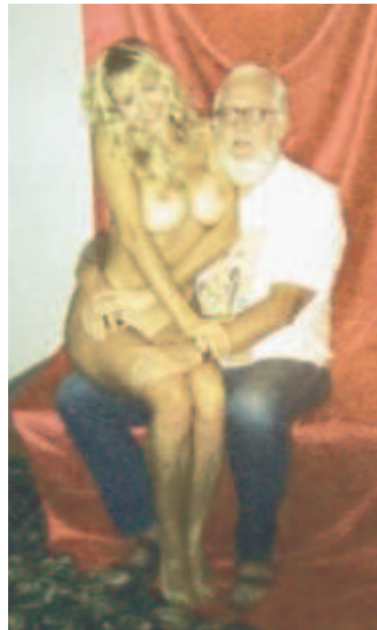
My Santa gig went okay.  
The kids were neat. Very serious.  
I asked one boy what he wanted, and he said,  
“World peace, and for my parents to be happy.”  
I was *in character*. I said, “You wouldn’t blow smoke  
up Santa’s ass—would you, son?” He tried to kick me  
in the nuts, like a midget.

# From A LEGEND OF THE UNDERGROND

## Dynamo

Charlie Parker said he was tired of playing in cellars. I guess he wanted a string section behind him, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, composition lessons from Edgar Varèse, but he did his best work in places that smelled of cigarette smoke and stale beer, with a rhythm section behind him and another horn, who pushed him, and whom he fed off of, like Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, or Red Rodney, improvising, on the fly. Swapping fours. I'd like to win a genius grant and write the Great American Novel, properly, with time for research, revision, polishing. Instead, I effloresce, I radiate *feuilletons*, which I concatenate, in order of composition, into a congeries of disparate elements looking for some principle of organization. Let the reader put them together in his head, like the eye does with color, shapes, and the ear does with interval, and sound.

## Suspension of Disbelief



Brew was Santa at his company Christmas party.  
One co-worker got shitfaced, and confided  
she had a thing about Santa's outfit. Red with white trim.  
She took all her clothes off, like a figure model, or Madonna,  
the famous author of children's books, on *Oprah Winfrey*,  
pulling at her bodice so her bare midriff was not exposed  
to television viewers. "Hey," Brew's co-worker asked,  
reverting to the sixties. "Whatever happened to 'Let it all hang out?'"  
Brew agreed. He tore his Santa suit off, down to his blue jeans  
and white T-shirt, but that destroyed the illusion, the mood,  
his co-worker couldn't get it up, with a civilian. Santa was screwed,  
rued, and tattooed, and so was Brew. Ho ho ho. There he sat,  
with three inches of cold-rolled steel, yodeling Kyle Ogle's  
"Vasocongestion Blues."

### **The Holiday Season**

A lot of Seasonal Affective Disorder  
this time of year, attempted suicides,  
drunks falling off the wagon, spousal abuse,  
downsized workers fragging bossmen,  
going postal in a fast-food restaurant,  
to mix a metaphor, that's not a guarantee,  
it is a delivery goal, a lot of materialism,  
a lot of hypocrisy, a lot of greed, year-end bonuses  
for the people who stabbed their buddy in the back,  
fucked over their subordinates, and screwed the customer.  
Took the heat. Stood up to the plate. Stood, and in the evil day,  
withstood. Cried all the way to the bank. Lee Iacocca, Bob Hope,  
and Gerald Ford, cornholing each other in a portalet suspended by a crane  
at a golf course condominium complex in Vail, Colorado:  
The Mile High Club.

### **Wh', Wh', What's Up, Doc?**

*Rattle's* "Tribute to Writers of the Underground Press" issue  
left me out. Blaster Al says it's better not to have been considered  
than to have been considered and excluded, but how is one to know  
the difference? What is the reason for the omission? Did I fail to measure up?  
How much, along which axis? Did I slip through the crack, just in the nature of  
the beast? Should I take it personal? Should I shrug it off as accidental,

fortuitous, aleatory, stochastic? I took Statistics from a man who stammered. and the word that tripped him up the worst was *random variable*.

### A Moveable Fête

When Hemingway was living up over the sawmill, in Paris, he would go down to the Louvre, and look at the paintings, to take his mind off how hungry he was. But when he finished a story he liked he would treat himself to a tray of Portugaises. Here Brew is at the Acme Oyster House, on Iberville, in New Orleans, or either at Felix's, across the street. Or maybe he's at the one at Baytowne Wharf, in Sandestin, where he went to hear Dread Clampitt play, out of doors, under the tent, the pennants snapping in the breeze, the smell of lamb, roasting on a spit,



grinning like the cat that swallowed the canary. Enough is as good as a feast. He has just finished writing *Redacted Poems*. He is employed. Life is good. It is good to be the King of Daily Typewriting.

## King of Daily Typewriting

It is good to be the King of Daily Typewriting.  
The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.  
Henry Miller was the King of Smut, Kerouac  
was King of the Beatniks. By analogy with Sputnik.  
*My Life as a Dog*. Ingemar Johansson beating Floyd Patterson.  
A lovely bunch of coconuts. Nicolas Freeling's first  
Inspector Van der Valk novel was *King of the Rainy Country*.  
I read it in New Orleans, starting out, when I thought I'd be  
a paperback mystery writer. Now, like Melville, quarreling  
with fiction, I lapse into postmodern rants about how *PI*  
stands for *post-inaccrochable*. What a person writes  
when he cannot sell a word he writes to New York or Hollywood.  
Dear John, Christopher M didn't do *Root Doctor* as a Four Sep  
chapbook, so he might not have any copies. I paid him to make  
250, went back for 250 more. The band sold 100, at \$5 a shot,  
so I broke even. My cut was merchandise. Their debut CD,  
*Dread Clampitt*, featuring the self-titled single, "Dread Clampitt."  
Send some to a radio station in Jamaica. A hickey on my neck  
with two perfect bite marks in the center, where B movie actress  
Glori-Anne Gilbert bit me. As the wino said to the fashion model,  
"I suppose a fuck would be out of the question."



Do you still get a little on the side?  
You mean they moved it?  
An old bitch, gone in the teeth.  
A botched civilization.