

Old Sea Dog at Casey Key

This much ought to be said: today the sea
 Moved against me like an eager woman,
 And in the white house among the cabbage palms

An old man nodded, slept, dreamed perhaps
 Of randy weather and the ultimate lee shore.
 Now in late afternoon west-riding thunder

Questions our motives and the land's repose,
 Drubs the last raucous jaybird to the thicket
 And lays its heavy truth upon the air.

Ballasted with its earth-ward the restive spirit
 Tugs at its moorings, straining under a thin
 Parchment of breast and dydlids, ready to break

This blind truckling to circumstance. The wind
 Conceives, in answer to its single question,
 Merely an echo of the mocking bird's

Chaotic medley sung to no higher purpose
 Than simple heed of the morning's silken presence.
 Muscle to sinew, bone to brittle bone

Body rocks down the hallway in the dark,
 Listens again to this sudden distress of leaves:
 The ghost of meaning fumbles at the door.

And coursed down eighty years to its fierce perfection,
 Love hangs in the humid air like a spent wave
 Casting its shadow on a troubled shore.

H. C. Dillow