

THE COMPETITIVE SPIRIT

A friend and I were talking
about our jobs.
About better jobs we could get.
We sat on the porch and watched
the lawn sprinkler.
"I'll study prehistoric literature,"
he said.
And I said, "That's a good idea,
but it might be hard stuff to find."
And he said, "Sure, but don't you see.
That's the beauty of it.
It's a field without competition."

-- Rafael Zepeda

Long Beach CA

GREEN STEW

for a drifting second i understand the
day, as i walk toward the jeep parked
in front of the bookstore, under an evening
magenta sky flowering over desert mountains.
next to the bookstore a dingy mexican
resturant is faint-yellow and doleful.
i cannot resist. the place is empty so
i have the pick of any table. the one in
front of the window is perfect, and as i
make myself comfortable i remember that out
in the jeep is the day's newspaper so in a
flash i am back outside to get it and in
another flash i am back in the shabby light,
at the same perfect table. a young girl brings
me a menu. i order a dish of green stew.
on the spread newspaper two flies land and
when i shoo them away they swirl around me in
a playful circle and then land right back where
they were. the narrow cheerless red street is
getting dark, lights coming on here and there.
on the newspaper i open up my miniature diary,
the diary that is so tiny that i store it in
my shirt-pocket, and before the bowl of stew
arrives i am able to scribble down a few words,
but nothing more since the space for the day,
as with every other day, is very limited, to
the extent that i am not able to get beyond
pinpointing my location and the kind of weather.

the stew smells wonderful; the shabby yellow light rides expertly every spoonful raised slowly over the sports section. i will never be able to satisfy myself with one bowl. in the street a mangy mutt stares in at me. my appetite is voracious, after all it was only a couple of hours ago that i was smack in the middle of nowhere, changing a tire in the late afternoon desert, sun pouring down my back like sand. i order another bowl of stew. i never want to leave this shabby light. the waitress has a solemn dark understanding brow. i ask her if the next bowl could be a wee bit hotter. she asks me if i want more water.

THE STUFF MY DREAMS ARE MADE OF

the sofa put out on the curb for the junk truck is soaking up rain as fast as the rain is falling. yesterday when it was sunny a few children came by and they sat in it for awhile, playing by wildly jumping up and down, and then sitting calmly with their arms around one another. i thought the junk truck would have been here by now; the sofa has been sitting out there for some four days now. i hope the rain does not make it too heavy to pick up. the same sofa was in one of my dreams last night. i was dragging it, in this gray drizzly dream, through a narrow street, taking it to a friend's apartment who said that he could use it since i was finished being its owner. as i dragged it it seemed to get caught on every little bump and indentation in the narrow street. some people stood about watching me, giggling and asking one another questions, and even in this dream, this drizzly lengthy odd dream, there were children who wanted to play on it, and as i dragged puffing they came seemingly out of nowhere and jumped high on the old springs, yelling and teasing, laughing and calling me silly names. when i stopped, in this dumb dream, to rest, i sat on the sofa, amongst these children which were multiplying like flies in a boiling july kitchen. they paid no attention to me once i was sitting, instead they went about in their games, treating me as though i were just additional rusty springs. when i could finally stand no more i broke out in a maniacal scream sending them scurrying in every direction possible. once i reached my friend's place he met me at the door and together we both dragged