

WIDOWER'S CAFE

IN DINGY RESTAURANT:

the grace of grease
nibbles politely
I finger my mug
slurpin to an open eye

her blonde hair tumbles
over corn starched skin
lips pucker at home fries
as eyes dance slowly at callboard menu

truckin man/ four seats down
sucks yolks with toast
cook chases flies
with swattin spatula

she coughs
the roadside queen
I look from ink pulp
and hope she won't die

my anger builds
rage man punchin shy nature
indecisively, I slide down stools to her
shy man on stage

"How do?" he says
"what--oh, fine."
"food good?"
"fine"
I swallow choked dreams

silently, we sit
the entire restaurant caught in our fumbling thoughts
truck man slaps a few bills, puts door to work
my mind drifts from fantasy to reality and back
she's as cool as melba toast

"Can I pay your bill?" I ask
"Why?" she asks back

WHY/why/Why??/am I forward/what am I doing/I don't know her/Do I want to?/
why not know her/ could she help me?/would she help me?/is it just because she's
a wommmmaaaaaannnnn--attractive, near, lovely?/do I want something for a tab picke /
am I that low/am I capitalist slime?/is this dollar diplomacy?/who am I/what am I/
why am I?

placing all I own,
on grease-streaked counter