

Coney Island Lineup

I'm at the point now
where people are telling me
what I should write

a few years ago
I wasn't considered
a *serious* artist
because everyone
and their mother
is a writer

but now that I've
had some work published
people love to tell me
what they think
I should write
my poems about

"...I bet this would make for
one of your *weird* poems!"

and all of it means bunk
because I can't write
when someone tells me to
it has to come naturally

sometimes it comes out
of me right then and there
but sometimes it works its way
slowly and I don't write something
for two or three days

this is why I never did well in school

if I was assigned to write a report
on Napoleon Bonaparte

I wrote about a film I had seen
that had something to do
with Napoleon Bonaparte
and turned it in a week and a half late

I wasn't good with time constraints
either-
But last night
was one of those special nights
that only come along
every once in a while
and there is nothing you
rather do than be
stuck in time
there

it was a beautiful evening
spent with the only
important woman
in my life

enjoying ourselves
at the expense of others

mulling around
stores
laughing
at the
doom
of cardboard
customers
buying loofas

these people must be dead,
I thought

they are all too sane
or maybe we were the sane ones
and in their normality
they were driven mad-

I took her to the place
where I used to take girls
when I was in junior high
to touch their panties
and kiss them on the mouth

we did neither of those
but we talked
and in the darkness
if felt good
to be together-

We met up with some of her girlfriends
at a bar downtown
and as I entered
the room
I felt the trepidation
come over me
like a wet blanket

everyone there
frozen in breathless
tasteless
joyless
conversation

her friends
an abused divorcee at the age of 20
a wild woman with a dangerous lover
a dullard

and her brother
a champion
a beautiful man
who doesn't bullshit anything
just is
rather than pretending to be

he had been off drugs
for nearly a year
and he wrote a mean poem
effortlessly

I liked his writing because it was...
true

him and I
joked quietly to one another
discussing Tom Waits-

We then decided to go
swimming

none of us
knew anyone with a pool
so we broke into a hotel jacuzzi

I boiled there
in a t-shirt and underpants
too ashamed to get fully
undressed

one of the girls
called her boyfriend
who came to join us
and
he looked like the
reincarnation
of Marlon Brando
in *The Wild Thing*
but with none of the class

“You know what you should write about?”
she said to me while
hanging cross-armed
over her biker boyfriend

“What’s that?” I said

“You should write a poem about me.” she said

“I can’t predict what I’m going to write about.
I’m an artist! A truly great artist!”

we all sat there
awkwardly

the woman
that served as my only reason for being there
sat on a chair
calling me over to sit next to her

her brother and I
sharing the same thoughts-

we were among a group of
misfits

but not the
eccentric
inspiring kind

they were
the formulated
sub-culture

and we
the mad
sat and watched them

as if we were in line
at a freak show

visiting Coney Island
where madness and obscurity
reign supreme

and that lovely woman
put it to me perfectly
as she lay next to me

“Strange things happen to us
because of the people in our lives
but you can’t write about it
because they’ll know it’s them
in the poem.”

that would be true...
if I cared
one way or the other