

*The Hearses All Line Up in Rows of Nine*

I haven't known  
many women,  
but I've known  
some

all of them  
different  
from one another  
while still  
being  
the same

all of them  
have been artists  
at some point  
in their lives

which means  
they were all a little  
crazy  
and a little bit  
damaged

I don't know what  
it is about a woman  
with wounds

perhaps its  
not having to  
lick my own  
in the dark

like we were both misfits  
both survivors of some  
great war

we were both  
a bit salty  
and a bit mad

not that

everyone isn't  
wounded in one way  
or another  
but an artist  
knew it better

and I suppose  
it was because  
they had a better  
shot at  
understanding me,  
as well

creators should be with creators  
and destroyers with destroyers  
because if it's the other way around  
the destroyer will always  
triumph over the creator

how something as mighty as fire  
always loses out to water

alone they are impervious,  
exact opposites  
but together  
one is a superman  
and the other a feeble  
element

and all my girls had fire  
just some where hotter and bluer than others

one would drink  
a fifth of whiskey  
like it was  
a pina colada

and whenever  
we'd be somewhere  
and we'd send someone  
out to buy beer and booze  
a few people would  
call out,

*"Pabst Blue Ribbon!"*

or

*"Heineken!"*

and then there would be my baby,  
tough as nails,

*"Wild Turkey 101!"*

and she'd curse

like a sailor

when reading my rejection

letters,

*"What the fuck do they mean,*

*'you're too profane'?!"*

*Fuck them, baby,*

*you're a champion,*

*you're a god!"*

and then there

was one that only

called me by pet names,

and never drank a drop

of liquor,

and called her farts *toots*

she always wore

a perfume that

spiraled around her

in a glossy, pink haze

smelling like a cosmetics counter girl,

bubbling all the time

calling me *handsome*

and the rest of the

girls fell in between them

somewhere

some harder

some softer

all of them

leaving for different reasons

while all of them

being the same

but because of their  
varying degrees  
of hardness  
I've found that  
hard women can become  
wonderfully soft  
when you need them to be

they can love  
you with a mother's love  
and shrink down into  
a little dwarf of  
compassion and understanding

while soft women  
have a hell of a time  
getting hard when  
you need them to be

they shrivel  
and usually stay their  
normal depth,  
shallow as a puddle  
in an uneven groove  
on the road

I would prefer a woman  
who tries to be hard,  
and then falls to pieces,  
letting their image shatter completely

because they are the ones  
with something to hide  
and there is no better feeling  
than when they finally decide  
to unveil whatever it is  
to you

for no matter what happens,  
no matter how brutally your love ends,  
you will always share that moment  
of vulnerability-

nine women  
have come and went  
over the years,  
and it's strange  
to type *years*  
because I still  
have such a long  
way to go

but now  
I am alone  
and searching for number ten,  
although not searching too hard

and I know to  
look for my women  
the same way I look for  
my mattresses  
firm yet giving,  
supportive yet comfortable,  
hard yet soft