

## Shiftless

The people who were better than us were *comfortable*.  
They lived in painted houses with flush toilets.  
Drove cars whose year and make were recognizable.  
The ones worse off were *sorry* and didn't work.  
Their strange cars sat on blocks in dusty yards.  
The years go by and everything and everyone  
gets replaced. But this much is still true –  
I never liked work. My goal was always  
to be shiftless. I saw the merit in that.  
I liked the idea of sitting in a chair  
in front of your house for hours, doing nothing  
but wearing a hat and drinking cola.  
What's wrong with that?  
Drawing on a cigarette from time to time.  
Spitting. Making things out of wood with a knife.

Where's the harm there? Now and then calling  
the dogs to hunt rabbits. Try it sometime.  
Once in a while hailing a fat, blond kid like me  
and saying, "Don't I know you?"  
Not, "What are you going to be when you grow up?"

## Simple

A break in the clouds. The blue  
outline of the mountains.  
Dark yellow of the fields.  
Black river. What am I doing here,  
lonely and filled with remorse?

I go on casually eating from the bowl  
of raspberries. If I were dead,  
I remind myself, I wouldn't  
be eating them. It's not so simple.  
It is that simple.

## Money

In order to be able to live  
on the right side of the law.  
To always use his own name  
and phone number. To go bail  
for a friend and not give  
a damn if the friend skips town.  
Hope, in fact, she does.  
To give some money  
to his mother. And to his  
children and their mother.  
Not save it. He wants  
to use it up before it's gone.  
Buy clothes with it.  
Pay the rent and utilities.  
Buy food, and then some.

Go out for dinner when he feels like it.  
And it's okay  
to order anything off the menu!  
Buy drugs when he wants.  
Buy a car. If it breaks  
down, repair it. Or else  
buy another. See that  
boat? He might buy one  
just like it. And sail it  
around the Horn, looking  
for company. He knows a girl  
in Porto Alegre who'd love  
to see him in  
his own boat, sails full,  
turn into the harbor for her.  
A fellow who could afford  
to come all this way  
to see her. Just because  
he liked the sound  
of her laughter,  
and the way she swings her hair.