

RAGMUFFIN

Michael Coakley

i have walked against the one-way sign
on sidewalks dirty and reeking
from a hobo scrounging for his meal
in an overflowing garbage can, seeking
for his meal of security, peeking
in overflowing garbage cans of existence
ignorant of me as i passed by him
and into a sailors' bar where no sailors are
just an unemployed prostitute sitting in her beer
and two sordid men probably queer
talking to the bartender with his elbow near
some spilt peanuts discussing the transient government
and yesterdays ballgame arguing quietly
so as not to disturb the syphilitic asleep
in his tomb on a round table with feet
dangling in search of the womb
i have strained to see what the prostitute has
lost in her glass staring at the beer bubbles
listening to her mutter bad things about mothers
as the other three share each others
grief someone spits into a stained handkerchief
while my head revolves to watch my hand
open the door and leave seeing the same hobo
trying to bother me into thinking i have become
too involved already and must succumb
but now i rub the one-way sign the right way
and find night has been killed by day
i join the day dreamers who stay at home at night