

**The Interrogation and Crucifixion of the Vagrant
or simply
The Defendant**

--Carl Watson

(Day One)

When asked how long I'd been in town
Off the top of my head I said four months
But I didn't really know: seemed longer.
They asked what I do for a living
That was just another mistake, following many another
I have a job, I said. It's not my living,
And from whence do you hail? they asked
Not without a soupcon of sarcasm
At which point I remembered absolutely nothing
No place, no game, no exchange of value or shame
As I was neither coming nor going,
But walking/waking, I do remember
How at the time they seemed the same
I recalled a highway whose shoulders
Were sharp borders where imprudent claws
Bent in longing gave themselves over
And the weedy drive for increase,
That craving of the living for their own images.
I remember the longing of the long and recent dead
A nursing home, it could be said, set in stone
Where waylaid ambitions go gray, yes
Gone souls and lemurs hung like swamp lamps,
The eyes of accumulated desire guiding me. I paused.
And how did you manage to pay your ticket?
They asked, as if they knew where I'd been.
Selling blood on the boweries
Of the old coast cities
I returned, flippantly, and continued
Yes now I remember, it was back in '73
Or '77, that decade of despondency