

## The Tenderloin

By Paul Pera

In walking these streets  
I see old bums shedding their  
clothes as a snake sheds  
his cellophane back, changing  
into angels, whose name  
no one remembers

and Jackie the Queen, whose eyes  
summon you to the basement  
of his heart and the upper room  
of his ass, where everyone says  
hello for a price

and Margo who came looking for  
experience almost fell  
in love with my naivete, I  
almost kissed her with tenderness  
she cried once and then forgot

since she's been filled with fucks  
by anyone who had enough life  
to own a name.  
she still remembers to laugh  
beautifully, though, when we meet

still, I can't touch the shadows  
of her eyes or walk near the tree  
where she weeps.

# Visiting My Grave After Death

By Paul Pera

## I

Sunday, as I stepped from a train and  
found the town in church listening  
to bells an incantations  
a little girl greeted me ans showed  
the flowers on her panties  
she left tattling to the streets  
not even that dog of bones  
lifted his head dripping with eyes  
glass shivered in the wind  
a tiny bell talked to itself  
as I entered the cemetary,  
an arena of marble sticks  
seared with a history of arithmetics

## II

I took stones from the intimacy  
of my pockets to place  
like fruit that resist  
growth and death  
I came to spit  
words in the wind  
and let them flake  
issue to issue  
I, who never wished  
to be touched by life  
am dead, the privacy  
of my blood opened  
for death to spawn  
a stranger in my body

## III

Black scarved women with their heads  
on the graves of daughters  
and unstitch tear by tear  
trying to talk the dead's lanuage

and lisp into their dreams  
I remember the nights in bars  
watching the fire consume itself  
drinking impatiently till  
my eyes became one and flames  
spread a fabric on my skin  
As I came into the ballet of tongues  
sashay into the salty burn  
and in the restless morning  
the sun would eat my window  
like a cat bringing the dismembered  
remains from the evening's hunt

#### IV

A dog barked at my genitals of stone  
as I left the gate, he wanted my return  
but I boarded a train like entering  
the intestine of a giant and filed  
into a seat, waiting for the whistle  
to brush me off into  
a tunnel's collapsing mouth  
with rhythmic rushing, popping flashes  
a requiem of photos with serrated edging  
sibilant litany: requiescant in pace et eterna  
requiescant in pace et eterna  
requiescant in pace. Amencollapsing mouth