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A Portrait of the Artist as a Modern-Day Cowboy

In 1977, I sauntered up to a Sunoco station in a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri astride a horse bigger than most cars manufactured at the time to be welcomed by assorted facial contortions manifesting various states of appall, consternation and what, in German, is known as *schadenfreude* - all results of my rather ragged attire - an unbuttoned tartan shirt, partially untucked from my pants of tarlatan, belted by tightly tied twine and clasps of brass, hung with teeth from every person that I'd ever made love to, slippers of animal hide, undocumented and slipped through customs, soled with fins sliced from sharks (a commodity in Cozumel), all torn and topped by three thick black braids in the style of the Indians of the secret desert that Texas can't touch and Oklahoma's too stupid to think of, and a smearing of grease, grime and gore - the road's gift to its travelers, and justified they were in receiving me thusly because after I roped my horse, Ethel Rosenberg, to uninhabited Pump One, I cracked my neck spat on the concrete, scraped half a cigarette out of the grooves where it met asphalt and put it in my mouth without wiping off the crumbled leaves, glanced sidelong at the big man (appall) gassing his Mustang at Pump Three behind Ethel, looked longingly all the way up and down the legs of the lesbian (consternation) sticking Pump Four into her Pinto, winked at the young gentleman in a business costume (*schadenfreude*) who couldn't tell a tailpipe from a tailpipe, but knew he'd go through a lot of them in his career because that is what happens to Colts these days, resumed my saunter towards the register, crossed the threshold into fluorescent hell that burned white and bright off of the tiles I stared at before the register-girl got up from her lunch of food she stole from her not-present employer, her eyes were blue and body from somewhere else said - three more dollars in the Pinto, she's cute - replied - sure, she is - with a trace of an exotic language only heard in Trieste under the river of her discourse, walked over wondering what her name might have been then remembered that she was nametagged Rich, slamming my shark-slippers I escaped with purloined package of Peachy-O's for a friend towards curved back of the Pinto-pumper, splayed my hands across her broad bottom, summoning Balthasar the magi through spasmic fingers, howling unprovoked Old Father Old Artificer Stand Me Now and Ever on a Good Steed as he entered her body she smiled knowingly because she was in on the

prank phone call to heaven, so I extended my claws through her backside spurting blood and screams while I tossed her longways away from the platform and neglected to explain myself to the inquiring big man or young gentlesir, and when I saw a coffee-stained envelope postmarked eight months ago next to the yellow foam where the passenger's pleather upholstery was pulled up it said Joyce first and then Burroughs-McCarthy above the place where she had her porno mags sent, I repeated my incantation Old Father Old Artificer Stand Me Now and Ever on a Good Steed seven times in a river of discourse, kicking the Pinto into reverse gear, intending to continue my escapade of evasion of my former and absent employers in the nascent space tourism industry, I waved goodbye to forlorn old Ethel Rosenberg expecting never to kiss her soft lips again, standing quietly she never budged, even when big man prevented more sauntering by backing his Mustang behind the shoddily constructed Pinto when I was waving, causing a crunching collision, forcing the Pinto's fuel tank into its rear differential, puncturing it with bolts and accomplishing an explosion of metal and fire consuming all present, so obviously it was the manufacturer's fault you see that my whole being is burned and pussing and I am without ears, nose or any place most people grow hair and I am being constantly approached out of man-holes and grates with explicit and sexual passes by a man with green skin who calls himself Cryptkeeper and invites me to his shit-smattered, sewer-lair, and when I told my story to a judge in 1981 he agreed with the abomination of subhuman pleading before his feet, ordering the manufacturer to issue warnings and to kiss me as punishment, as well as to me and the surviving families of Joyce and big man and young gentlesir money has been expressed to the places we used to have our porno mags sent, but Ethel Rosenberg's family live in Germany or are Jewish communist Steeds, so they deserve and receive nothing but consternation and *schadenfreude*.

[*Ben Brezner*]