



Image from Hemmings.

R. T. Castleberry

### Events Leading to an Aftermath

I set myself a task—  
burrowing into the light-fingered protocol  
between burglar, b-girl, border cop.  
Informers laugh for dollars,  
sell every question as secret, as motive.  
Beneath a sunset of graying clouds, bare trees  
whipping wind makes a razor from a dried leaf.  
I sit in a bench-seat Buick,  
watching the sheriff's mistress  
bring payoff money across the headlight clearing.

“Gimme back, gimme back my bullets,” the song screams.  
With only the car crash flames to answer.

Tall blondes like my eyes.  
They see ocean depths—  
some days green, other days blue.  
There is a story line where  
I read ahead of the room, lower the newspaper  
to watch my wife and ex-wife  
switch Fendi purses and pistols.  
“The Bride Died In White” is the book  
on the bed between them.

“Gimme back, gimme back my bullets,” the song screams.  
With only the car crash flames to answer.

I admire an intimate image in Juarez art;

a kiss—that artificial trade,  
shared between three lovers snared  
by stiletto, gold coin, carnality.  
The bordello painter places a lily beneath the frame,  
a syringe beside the party champagne.  
What I remember of that night  
is a gunman bleeding beside the taxi,  
a dancer's dress floating below the San Mateo Bridge.

“Gimme back, gimme back my bullets,” the song screams.  
With only the car crash flames to answer.

Peru-jaded, I resist sleeping.  
My voice cuts low, the phrasing changes.  
I hold a different stance, order a different whiskey.  
Midnight money layers complicity and control,  
like film noir fascination,  
A drinker's cough answers the North wind.  
This Fisher Creek life has ended.  
I won't go back into the hills.

“Gimme back, gimme back my bullets,” the song screams.  
With only the car crash flames to answer.

---

R. T. Castleberry's work has appeared in *Santa Fe Review*, *Pinyon Poetry Review*, *Comstock Review*, *The Alembic* and other publications. His chapbook *Arriving at the Riverside* (from Finishing Line Press) appeared in 2010 and his e-book *Dialogue and Appetite* (from Right Hand Pointing) in 2012.