

# The Killer

by Gordon Osing

Fame is heaven to a low down Calvinist,  
Jerry Lee, and you knew plenty of it in  
your morning after mirror. Famous as Beethoven  
in Berlin you are, where good and evil  
haunt everything. Way past easy pleasure  
you are on stage not every night nowadays,  
but it was pleasure that drove the fingers  
in your mind to get it when you needed it,  
because that's what lords and princes did  
in the 16th Century, when *droit du seigneur*  
was good as a law, and you still the best  
whorehouse piano player in the world  
and pleasure is all a poor man is going to get  
and *jus primae noctis* is any night you can  
and every gal is heaven somewhere. You  
ended a show looking straight up into heaven  
pleading with closed eyes for whatever salvation  
a scoundrel sees. You were and are without  
a doubt the Johnny Apple of all seedy pianos.

To be ass-holier-than-thou you pretend  
to this day butting the keys, kicking over  
the piano bench, but not like it used to be.  
Pretty girls in the front rows used to be  
wild for your whiskey ways, if nowadays  
it's boys who need Uncle Jerry's permission  
to be ruthless. Never mind your famously  
shouting "Too much love drives a man insane."  
You never got too much. And still your fingers  
spider in the keys, and the thumb goes backward,  
Jacob's ladder running up and down between  
the chords descanting the melodies. Yours  
was always a mean love that won't be loved,  
doesn't know how, not you, the patron saint  
of no deposit no return desire, Hamlet with  
a vengeance, highwayman of hearts. If  
Calvinists had saints, you'd be one.

I'm sorry to see you now stranded  
in performances of persistent defiance.  
*Barbe-bleue* is still your progenitor,  
but wanting old careers, voicing sad anger,  
the Blues riddled with blind insolence.  
You had to be paid something. You can't believe  
what you can't love, and that means women.  
Sensuous heaven reigns every night you go on,  
and it's the loving you get that is still the thing  
that cancels doctrines, if it never satisfies finally.

I see you can't quit. Ok, even if it ends  
in imitations of yourself and the gals you  
knew have turned their mirrors around  
to see the blank side of what was there.