Old Sea Dog at Casey Key

This much ought to be said: today the sea
Moved against me like an eager woman,
And in the white house among the cabbage palms

An old man nodded, slept, dreamed perhaps
Of randy weather and the ultimate lee shore.
Now in late afternoon west-riding thunder
Questions our motives and the land’s repose,
Drubs the last raucous jaybird to the thicket
And lays its heavy truth upon the air.

Ballasted with its earth-hoard the restive spirit
Tugs at its moorings, straining under a thin
Parchment of breast and dydlids, ready to break
This blind truckling to circumstance. The wind
Conceives, in answer to its single question,
Merely an echo of the mocking bird’s

Chaotic medley sung to no higher purpose
Than simple heed of the morning’s silken presence.
 Muscle to sinew, bone to brittle bone
Body rocks down the hallway in the dark,
Listens again to this sudden distress of leaves:
The ghost of meaning fumbles at the door.

And coursed down eighty years to its fierce perfection,
Love hangs in the humid air like a spent wave
Casting its shadow on a troubled shore.

H. C. Dillow