AUTOHAGIOGRAPHY

JON DAVIS

CHUCK CALABREZE is not getting his lands in order
He’s not saying please and thank you
He’s not excusing himself from the table
CHUCK CALABREZE is not thanking you for your patronage
He’s not having a nice day
CHUCK CALABREZE is not working on himself
Not taking it one step at a time
CHUCK CALABREZE doesn’t give a fuck really
He’s not going slowly
He’s not regarding other’s feelings
He’s promised to fuck you up
You and you and you
He’s refusing to mind his own business
He won’t rise early and he’s banging his head to Rancid
(in total disregard of the lease he signed) till late at night
CHUCK CALABREZE will be late with the rent this month and next month and the month after that.
He doesn’t feel much like answering the phone so he’s letting it ring
CHUCK CALABREZE’s answering machine is saying
I’m not here and if I was I wouldn’t answer anyway
So leave a message and I might call back if I feel like it
But don’t hold your breath cause I haven’t felt like it
In a long long time
CHUCK CALABREZE is bouncing checks
Checking eighteen items in the fifteen or fewer line
He’s refusing to save and he’s spending beyond his means
He’s neither frugal nor thrifty nor wise
He’s not praying for peace
He’s not chanting in the arboretum
He’s not recycling
His cholesterol is way out of line
And he’s not giving anything up
CHUCK CALABREZE does not mean well
He’s not trying his best
He won’t be patient
He won’t act his age
He’s drooling on the pillow
Pissing on the seat
He drives in the passing lane
Passes in the breakdown lane
He doesn’t care whether bridges freeze before road
CHUCK CALABREZE has refused to find the lowest cost long distance carrier
When he wants something
He shouts and shouts until he gets it
When he gets it he whines
That it’s not exactly what he wanted
DEAD SQUIRREL

after Fred Frith

Possibly amidst the smashing glass.
There amongst the tambourine marchers.
Possibly before the door slams.
Before the drummer stumbles. Before the scatteration of cymbal and tom,
the crash and rattle of toppling snare.
Possibly before the pharmacist staples the bag to the bag to the label
to the receipt. Possibly there, among the ordinary gleamings in the silverware
drawer, the wine glass coaxed into song.
Possibly before the ambulances arrive, before the lumberyard truck starts backing
and the geese lay their necks along the grass and emit the hissing blat we learned
to call honking. Possibly before someone climbs tableside and attempts a ragged
Mr. Bojangles imitation. Possibly before the dinner music. Before epistemology. Before the arrival of the latest
tropical depression. Before Romanticism. Primitivism. Possibly before the fight song, the drinking song,
the mystical ravings. Back there, in the dawn of time immemorial
or something rather like it. Before the baying hounds. Before the cartographers
mapped even the darkest caverns of our collective psyche.
Before blenders. Crock pots.
Before the lap dancer tossed the man's drink in his face. Before lap dancers. Before drinks. Even before faces.
Somewhere during the cacophonous ceremony we were beginning to commence to initiate, quite possibly the hysterical combatants were shouting
over and over for no reason: Dead squirrel! Dead squirrel! Dead squirrel!
Whether celebration or lament we cannot know, but the chant was,
reports indicate, accompanied by much
high-stepping and forceful vomiting, 
by smashing glass, door slams, 
stumbling drummers: Dead Squirrel!
PUBLIC APOLOGY

It’s true I’m even more unreliable than I was when my unreliability was publicly acknowledged. Are these heights or depths I’m reaching? Yes, the sample was inadequate, but forty percent responded heights, fifty percent depths, while ten percent reported an unshakable lassitude. Therefore, I apologize for the six consecutive banquets I failed to attend. Especially the one at which I was honored and my plateful of Coquilles St. Jacques simmered unattended. Sorry, too, for not reading the latest guest of honor’s most recent trilogy. You’re all probably correct when you suggest that if I knew anything, anything at all, about the Crimean War all of this could have been avoided. I must reiterate, however, that had you all been less judgmental you could have better appreciated the entertainment value of my plight. The various betrayals, the shenanigans, the pratfalls, and the less benign miseries—the bottle of barbecue sauce hurled at the adobe, the vengeful gnomes prancing with their glasses of wine, the ardent hound howling as the principles tussled in the den. I apologize, too, for the unfortunates who witnessed the unforeseen copulation on the gravel driveway of one of our finer restaurants. Such intemperate clasplings, though they have become a trademark of sorts, must not be tolerated. The shouted admonition to “keep it in your pants,” while colorful, proved an ineffective deterrent. Likewise, Get over yourself. Likewise, Think of someone besides yourselves. Frankly, there was little anyone could have done. Not even gravel. Not even public humiliation. Not even bruises. Tar and feathers. Still, my apologies are genuine. Please report them in full at the next cocktail party. I understand they will not be as entertaining as the moans that allegedly rose from the driveway, the hot tub,
the back of the van, the scenic overlook, from behind the yews of the unoccupied house, but perhaps they will make you feel that you are not -like the unnamed protagonists who would risk everything to cavort among the chollas and prickly pears.
Unbuckled now. Seatback and tray table in a less-than-upright position. Who will say I am not the happy genius etc., riding thermals between Des Moines and Dubuque like an afternoon vulture. The woman with the infant at her breast, the man with his Wall Street Journal—I contain multitudes, my breasts enormous and swollen with milk, my bank accounts unaccountably huge. I have kicked my habits. I have vetted my long-term investments. Look at me, moving freely about the cabin. Look at me, athwart the gunnels, my massive missive tucked beneath my arm. My flight attendant proffers a beverage; my captain, O captain, hopes I am enjoying my flight. While the miserable shudder at bus stops or risk gangland executions, while the complacent wade into honest back-wrenching jobs or cross out bank, movie store, grocery, I am engaged to recite to the assembled hobbyists and hopefults, to the tenured and tracked, to the wan coeds matriculating by the fire exit. Then I’m island-bound to a conference on The Caribbean Sea as Metaphor during which I will declaim my fatuous “St. Kitts Ode,” committed to secure the invitation, but which also demonstrates my unequalled grasp of the semi colon—“not since Wordsworth” the critics intone—and my keen eye for particulars: cabanas blooming pale in paler light, bikinis like hammocks for the sleepy breasts. Six miles up, I perambulate among the REM-sleepers and cellophane-crinklers, among the lap-topped and newly-pensioned. Tomorrow, I shall be their spokesman, their voice, celebrating myself, assuming what they assume, barbarically yawping in this language that mostly makes them nod and drowse.
Poet, humorist, and literary raconteur Chuck Calabreze died suddenly on December 26, 2000, in the bathtub of his estate in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He was 38. Although his rapid movement up the ATP rankings (in both singles and doubles) has been largely curtailed by his demise, the indefatigable Mr. Calabreze continues to produce texts. His manuscript of poetry, How Is This Fun, is nearly complete, and he has begun work on a collection of essays entitled Try to Stop Me! about his post-mortem writing career. In the introduction to Try to Stop Me! the irrepressible Mr. Calabreze addresses his unprecedented career move: “I never truly existed, I was always and already that point at which nonexistent cultural attitudes upthrust; I simply made manifest--reified, if you will--the complicities and projections, the lassitudes and desires of my nonexistent-but-potentially-virtual readers. This is a service which I gladly continue as a dead man. My existence as a tennis player was somewhat more corporeal; regrettably, my death has forced me to retire my racket and my trademark smiley-face wristbands.”