from *The Black Notebook*

I love the strange machinery of the night, its levers and veils, its winches and invisible mirrors reflecting the awful splendor of solitude. Sometimes I hear the sound of pulleys like the beds of restless sleepers. Sometimes I hear the vibration of ancient wires like a knife pressed on the strings of a guitar, weird shimmering notes, haunted by the pain of love.
These riffs
the stars are playing tonight
seem to be saying
bring your own tears.
I could swear it
is the graceful sound
of Lester Young
playing something pretty
for eternity,
a few notes. That's all
it takes to
make me heartsick
and happy,
sitting here on the porch
at 3 a.m.
trying to imagine
what it's like to be gone.
Who knows anything
about it? Maybe
the angels. After all,
aren't they nodding
behind each note
in gladness and despair?

The rain, the grave
insistence of it,
like the leaden ring of a bell
canceling the visits
of angels.
Everything has the mute look
of disuse,
like an abandoned factory
or a motel
where the vacancy sign
is an understatement.

Tonight it's a different kind
of music. The shadows
of trees shuffling around
the yard, while the stars
shimmy and jook, the moon
like a battered saxophone
moaning and crooning.
The dark windows of houses
like the pinched and
gloomy looks of old maids
or ministers watching
all this commotion, all this
jive-ass wailing and
wriggling, their feet secretly
wanting to dance
inside their homely shoes.
Even the dead leaves
on the ground seem to be
saying, give me a little
wind to make me
remember being alive.