

Deborah Williams

I Used to Watch Westerns

I used to watch westerns
But I just don't anymore...
Actually, it's gettin' hard to watch anything

Like trying to watch luchas on Saturday night
Papa's hollerin' 'cause he's out of beer.
Mama yells go get a job.
My ruca called three times to tell me she's had no period for
three months. And I'm leavin' out the door to find someplace
quiet
just when Mad Dog Cortinas hammerlocks that white guy Pretty
Boy George.

My pants slide onto the sheepskin
pointed patent leather toe spurs
my short into a canter
through the barrio.

I pick up my carnal, standing on the corner.

He's packin' — A holster.

He says, "hang left on Soto/park back/Danny's Doghut/
E Street clicka rounding up chevys."

Mad chevys with their eyes on glaring us down

My carnal says he could use a little music, turns up KRLA

He says, "Jimmy turned Jesus/brother killed/couldn't take it."

Little Richard wants his baby back

I can't find a cigarette

the vatos are getting out of their cars

Little Richard lays on the soul "oooooooooooooooooh Babeee..."

Orale mama, they done it again. A 38 right into my chest.

Lucky, I keep a spare to bite on

when County Hospital is cutting a hole for a plastic hose
saves my collapsing lung.

A week later

my carnal and I turn south on Brooklyn

to the tattoo parlor

past cringing houses, smoking like teepees

to hang safe with the homeboys

drinking, talking war

My carnal says, "we're tough"

and I say,

"Ya, real tough."

But I don't think I say it right.