

Ricky Ricardo Drinks Alone ·
Jim Simmerman

I-yi-yi-yi! look at that moon
floating up there like a teaspoon
of sweet cane sugar or the head
of a conga drum. Someone said
the man-in-the-moon is an old
Cuban fisherman who sold
his boat for enough bay rum
to sail out of his body one
soft Havana night and half
the time I think it's true. Laugh
if you like, but I have watched
his eyes fix upon the thatched
hat of a woman who waits
each night by the dock for her late
sailor to return, only to
see the morning paint a blue
and emptier harbor, only to turn
once more from the sea and yearn
slowly homeward, across fallow
tideland. Her long yellow
dress made her look, from
a distance, like a canary come
to sing the forests back.

What
has become of the rains that cut
through the night like maracas? And
of the flowermonger whose hand
was a warm garden on my neck? And of
the sails that hovered like doves
on the horizon? And of the clop-
clop-clop of Lucinda? I want to stop
the moon with a bray sometimes. I
want to bray so sweetly it will fly
backward, like an empty bottle
over my shoulder. Bray until
I am back on the beach with my
father, learning to tie
a bowline, mend a net. There

was a song he sang—I remember
how the surf beat out time, though
the words, the words. . . . Low
tide left me shells shaped like
pink fans. Luck was the bright
bit of glass I found one day. Keep it
close, he told me. Memory is a ship
in a bottle. The bottle breaks.