When I go about introducing

myself

to myself,

What I hear is the hollow 'thud'

of boots on boardwalk

the clink of spurs

and Ennio Morricone.

(Ready boots? Let's walk.)

I walk through dusty

swinging doors.

The piano music halts. It's me at the piano,

with a vest and a cigarette and a tumbler

of whiskey and a hazy expression.

Of course,

simultaneously,

I, the gunfighter

just stepped through the doors

I exchanged glances with myself.

A Spaghetti Western pause.

An eye twitch.

I, the piano plaer,

pivot on the bench.

I play *Gymnopedie* by Satie.

I am also the saloon girl in red

and gawdy curls and false eyelashes

standing beside the piano.

I wink at myself as I proceed to the bar.

There is a mirror behind

a long row of bottles.

Above the mirror is a reproduction of

Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalous,*1844.

I considered the rampant carnage

of the image and felt the music

was inappropriate.

I looked back at the piano plaer.

I, the saloon girl, understood and

tapped myself on the shoulder.

I switched to Chopin's *Etude in E Major.*

Contemporaries. Artists.

The bartender asked that I pick my poison.

I was the bartender,

in pinstripes and

sleeve garters.

I considered the angst of the visual

and auditory Romance-era artists around me.

I asked for a Black and Tan.

The Harp and Red Triangle.

Foam,

blackness,

semi-translucent Gold...

The color of every

chord Chopin ever composed.

"A toast?"

I surprise myself. I am a derby-wearing salesman with my collar loosened, slumped against the bar. A wobbly arm raised a shot of tequila, which slants dangerously to the rim.

"To what shall we toast?" The gunfighter asks.

"To the stars," I reply, words sliding against one another. "I'm a telescope salesman."

"'The stars are wide

and alive,

they seem each like a smile of great sweetness,

and they seem very near.'"

We drank to Samuel Barber and James Agee.

An Indian Chief, who is also me, sips a frothy mug of beer in the corner. Sets it down, and with glassy eyes, speaks:

"I feel a sudden urge to sing

the kind of ditty that invokes the spring."

And we drank to Cole Porter.

I looked at my Black and Tan,

and thought the drink must be me, too.

There I was, on the glass, staring back

at myself.

Four of me sat at a round table playing poker,

smelling of cattle, horses, campfire and

cigarette smoke.

Four cowboy hats so dirty their original

color wasn't identifiable.

The piano player changed songs again. I was

chords away from declaring that just a jacknife

has MacHeath, when two of the cowboys were

on their feet, pistols drawn.

"Fancy gloves!" Shouted the first, snatching

the wrist of the other and shaking extra cards

loose from his glove.

The cheater glanced warily around the

saloon. The sheriff stood up slowly. The badge

looked good on me.

"This isn't what it looks like," said the Cheater.

"Glaubst du denn, daB nur der Mund spricht?"

Demanded the first cowboy. "Augen sind wie fensterglas."

And the rest of the saloon had to agree that the

eyes speak as much as the mouth.

We drank to Kurt Weill.

The sheriff unbuttoned the holster of his Colt 45.

"Just settle yourselves a spell, boys," I said.

"One of these mornings, you're going to rise up

singing. And you'll spread your wings and you'll

take the sky."

The poker players loosened. It was summertime.

"Come on, fellas," said the sheriff. "Got a

little rhythm."

"Each morning I get up with the sun,"

said the gunfighter.

"To find all day no work has been done."

"How I long to be the gal I used to be,"

said the salesman, and downed

another shot.

"Something must be done," said the sheriff.

"Let's call the whole thing off," offered the

cheater.

"I say sarsparilla," said the bartender.

"We'll make a twosome that just can't go

wrong," said the cheated, and twirled

his gun back into his holster.

The two of us shook hands. We drank

to Gershwin.

The salesman looked into the mirror.

"I was a stranger in the city," I mumbled.

"The outlook was decidedly blue."

I drank to Ella Fitzgerald. And

Rosemary Clooney.

The Indian turned to me:

"Birds in the trees sing, their days full of song.

Why shouldn't we sing along?"

"Starlight and sweet dreams?" I queried.

"Look at what I got," said the Indian.

The sheriff sat at the bar.

"Without a song, a man ain't got

a friend."

"Even the palms seem to be swaying

when they begin the Beguine."

said the bartender.

"I'll never know what makes

the grass so tall," I said. "I'll never

know what makes the rain to fall."

"I only know there ain't no love at all,

without a song," said the gunfighter.

"Mere alcohol doesn't thrill me at all,"

I said, gazing into my

empty shot glass.

"I am dejected. I am depressed," I paused, "Yet

resurrected, and sailing the crest."

"Why this elation mixed with

deflation?" asked

the bartender.

I looked at the Indian.

"Days can be sunny with never a sigh

don't need what money can buy."

"I got rhythm," said the piano player.

"I got starlight," said the salesman.

"I got sweet dreams," said the Indian.

"I got daisies in green pastures," said the

saloon girl.

"I got Gershwin, Weill, Chopin, Barber

and Satie," said the

salesman.

"Who could ask for anything more?"