

COW SKINNER'S SON

SEBASTIEN WEN

It was Vancouver, March 29th, 1966 and
he was just some cow skinner's son from Toronto

He was the toughest guy I ever fought, said the butterfly.

When the bell rang:
it rang for his father's question-mark spine slumped on the front porch
it rang for his stale-lipped momma who plucked chickens for five cents a
wing

and still he stood.

it rang for his children, killed with a hungry needle
beneath the roar of the machine named poverty

and still he stood.

and after his children overdosed, it rang for his wife, who hung like the moon
from the chapel of their closet

and still he stood.

He was the toughest guy I ever fought, said the butterfly.

he tells the story perfectly. Over and over, like it will set the sun on its heels

*Yeah, by the end of the twelfth round of the fight, I knew
Muhammad Ali had won on points. Unanimous decision, but
he went to the hospital with internal bleeding and me?
I went dancing with my wife.
123, 123, 123.*

George Chuvalo,

All these cities sag with age. I picture your face, kissed with the fists of a dancer
if I listen close, I can hear your exhausted laugh dragging its way
across the dry winter of this vast
and infant country.