

Hobos: Paris vs. San Francisco

by Steven Gowin

Under the Grand Pont, I see these cats drinking Algerian red in light green bottles with tin foil caps they tear away but can't replace.

Parisian hobos smell of pee, like California bums, but French pee runs stronger, less minty. In France the world's a pissoir.

Staggering near the water, the Parisian band mumble a tongue more indistinguishable from French than do their California brothers mumbling Tenderloin English.

The pissy Seine numbers fewer "talkers" than those among the Market Street hoboid, but the Parisians are as, if not more aggressive.

Paris and California walk proud. We put our clochard up against anyone's, Boudu's mighty sons and heirs.

World class tramps all, they float beneath and above us, gliding on alcoholic fog to our disgust and admiration.

