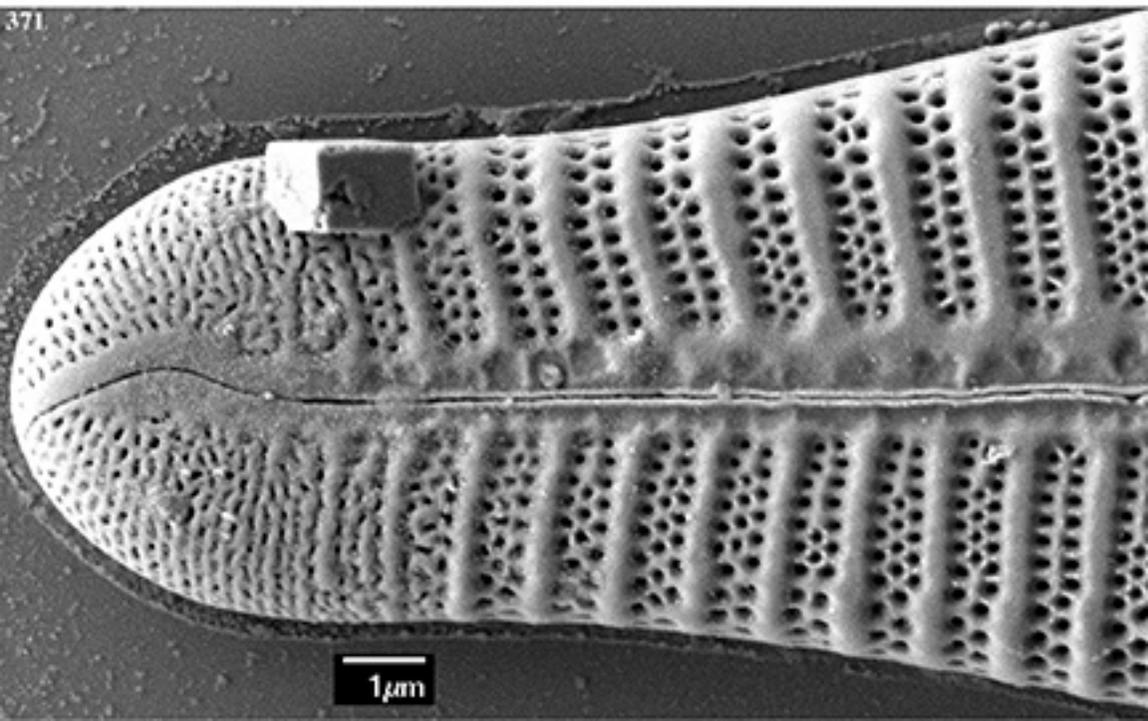


For a New Urbanism

Poems | Brian Kim Stefans

371



For a New Urbanism

Brian Kim Stefans



MAKE NOW
Los Angeles, 2015

Acknowledgements

“*Oi! Toy*“ and “Walkabout” previously appeared in *Vlak*, “Mediation in Steam” in *Lana Turner*, “Providence Sequence” in *Delivered By Drones*, and “The Men Who Sit” in *Drunken Boat*. Many thanks to these editors and publishers for their support.

For my sister Cindy with love

Contents

Weather	9
Zone (after Guillaume Apollinaire)	10
Two Lazy Poems	15
Reading in the Pacific Palisades	16
Sentence	17
Panther	18
For Amiri Baraka	19
<i>Oi! Toy</i>	20
Oh, When I Think of You Walt Whitman	21
Coffee	22
Providence Sequence	24
Mediation in Steam	33
The Watcher	40
Tossed Episteme	41
Status Update (after Sarah Palin)	46
Toto Merumeni (after Guido Gozzano)	47
The Men Who Sit (after Arthur Rimbaud)	50
Photographs	52
Poem	53
Walkabout	54
To A Korean American Poet	56
Static Thing	57
Advance	58

For a New Urbanism

Weather

It's mildly rain
every day
and no demonstrations
of greater power.

The State
is merely elevated
a half inch
to show we care.

Zone

from Guillaume Apollinaire

You tire in the end of this ancient world

Shepherdess O Eiffel Tower your flocks your bridges bleat on this morning

You have had it with the antique living of the Greek and Roman

Even the cars here have an air of the ancient
Religion alone has remained new religion
Has remained simple like the hangers at Port Aviation

You alone Christianity in Europe have avoided becoming ancient
Most modern European it is you Pope Pius the Tenth
And you who the windows watch who shame makes reticent
You do not enter the church this morning you will not be confessing
You read the posters the catalogues and the pamphlets that loudly sing
 Here there is poetry this morning
For prose the journals and magazines
You read the nickel installments of the *Adventures of the Crime Police*
The portraits of famous men in a thousand diverse titles

This morning I see a pretty street whose name I forget
Fresh and proper the sun is its dawn trumpet
The workers the directors the beautiful stenographers
From Monday morning to Friday four times a day they must pass here
In morning the sirens cry three times
A raging clock barks around noontime
The murals the lettering of the signs
The plaques the notices like a parrot squawking
This industrial street how I love its returns
Situated as it is in Paris between the Rue Thieville and the Avenue des
 Ternes

There is the young street you are nothing but a child
Your mother dresses you in her blue and white style
You are very pious and with your best friend René Dalize
You love nothing more than the ecclesiastic pomposities
It is nine o'clock the gas burns low
And blue you leave the dormitory by a way that you only know
You pray all night in the chapel of the school

For there lies the amethyst adorable and eternal
Turning forever the flaming glory of Jesus Christ It is
The lily we all cultivate
It is the torch of light red hair that is never laid out by a wind
It is the son pale and flush of the sad mother
It is the tree always blooming in all your prayers
It is the twin dooms of integrity and eternity
It is the star of six branchings
It is the God who dies on Friday God resuscitated on Saturday
It is Christ who climbs the sky higher than all the aviators
He holds the world altitude record

Pupil Christ of the eye
Twentieth pupil of the centuries it knows why
Becoming a bird this century like Jesus climbing the air
The devils down in the pit are raising their heads to see what is there
They say he imitates Simon Magus of Judea
They say that he is a flier but he is hardly a frequent flier
The angels hover around this pretty hoverer
Icarus Enoch Elie Appolonius of Tyana
Float around this primitive plane
They swerve to let pass sometimes the transports of the Eucharist of Saints
The priests who climb eternally are raising the host
Without even folding its wings the plane comes down
The atmosphere is buzzing with the flight of a million swallows
Streaming in from the side are the falcons ravens owls
From Africa the flaming marabous and flamingos
The Roc bird celebrated by storyteller and poet
Soars by and holding in its talons the skull of Adam *le premiere tête*
The eagle sinks with a shriek from the horizon
The small hummingbird from America is sent
From China come the pihis long and supple
Who have but one wing each who fly in couples
Then there comes the dove immaculate soul
They escort the bird-lyre they lead the ocellate peacock
The phoenix the funeral pyre which it bore from a self-same wedlock
In an instant spreads its burning ash
The sirens leave behind their infamous canals
All three arrive and all three singing beautifully
And all the eagles phoenixes and the pihis of the Chinese
Convene around the flying machine

Now you are in Paris in the crowds all alone
The herd of buses low at you around they roll
Anguish and love press at your throat
As though never again could you be loved
Were you to be living in ancient times you would probably enter a cloister
You frighten yourself quickly you find you're whispering a *pater noster*
You scold yourself your laughter rings like a fire from hell
The flickers of your laugh illumine the base of your life's well
It is a painting hung in a somber museum
Sometimes you look at it closely that you may see clearer

Today you walk in Paris the women have all been bloodied
It was and could I forget I would it was the decline of beauty

Surrounded by high flames Our Lady ogled me at Chartre
The blood of your Sacred Heart devoured me at Montmartre
I am sick of having to hear the blessed words
The malady I suffer is a syphilis of flayed nerves
The image that possesses you that you survive insomnia and anguish
It is always near you that imagery that passes

You are on board ship now on the Mediterranean Sea
There are flowers the entire year in every lemon tree
With your friends you make a journey in a barque
One is from Nice one from Menton and two are Turbiasque
You examine with fear the octopi in deep waters
Through the algae swim the fish the emblems of our Savior

You're in the garden of an inn on the outskirts of Prague
You sense a great happiness a rose is on the table
So you observe instead of writing your prosy fables
The rose chafer asleep in the heart of that rose

Horrified you see yourself depicted in the Saint Vitus agates
You were sad enough the day you saw them to maybe take your own life
You resembled Lazarus maddened by the light of day
The hands of the clocks in the Jewish Quarter are going the other way
Slowly you retreat back into your life
To climb up the steps of the Hradcany to hear the night
In the taverns they sing Czech songs

You are now in Marseilles amongst a milieu of melons

You are now in Coblenz at the Hotel du Geant

You are now in Rome in a medlar tree from Japan

You are in Amsterdam with a young girl you find pretty she is ugly
She wants to marry her lover now a student in Leyden
One can rent rooms in Latin *cubicula locanda* I remember
I was there for three days already and spent just as many in Gouda

You are in Paris with the examining judge
Like a criminal he hands you an arresting sentence

You have made the sad and joyous voyages
Before you were familiar with falsehood and the age
You suffered love in your twentieth and thirtieth years
I have lived like a fool and squandered my days
You dare not look at your hands and I always feel like crying
For you for her that I love for all you find terrifying

You look your eyes full of tears at the poor emigrants
They believe in a God they pray the women nurse their infants
They fill the halls of the Gare Saint-Lazare with a horrible stench
They have faith in their star the Sage Kings
They hope to earn *l'argent* in Argentina
To return to their home country to live there like kings
A family drags a red eiderdown quilt like you carry your heart
The eiderdown and our dreams seem like unreal arts
Some of these immigrants remain here and abide
In the Rue de Rosiers or the Rue des Ecoiffe in a pig sty
I often see them stealing night air from the streets
They move themselves but only rarely like chess pieces
Most of all there are the Jews their women wigged
They rest in chairs deep in the bowels of their boutiques

You are standing at the counter in a skeevy bar
Drinking cheap coffee surrounded by the down-and-out

The night you spend in a spacious restaurant

These women are not wretched they have their cares
Even and the ugliest one makes her lover suffer

That one is the daughter of a constable from the town of Jersey

Her hands which I don't see are chapped and gritty

I cannot evade the sadness of her scarred womb

I humble my mouth at the laughter of another girl entombed

You are alone the morning has come
Milkmen clink their bottles on the road

Night departs like a beautiful *Métive*
It is Ferdine the false or Lea "the attentive"

And you drink the alcohol boiling like a life
You drink the *eau-de-vie* that is your life

You are walking to Auteuil you want to go on foot
To sleep among your fetishes from Guinea and the Ocean
Another form of Christ they are an entire other credence
It is the Christ inferior Christ of obscure expectations

Bye Goodbye

Sun neck sliced

1991/2014

Two Lazy Poems

written on an iPad after seeing a John Baldessari retrospective

We can stand it
one minute
at a time

ha ha and by seconds
stand it

but by hours
begin to question
the stamina

and talk
endlessly about it.

I watch art
idly
as that appears
in the instructions

and watch sports
actively
when the
screen is large

as
passively
I succumb
to this poem.

Reading in the Pacific Palisades

There are mysterious persons, friend,
who greet you warmly, but then stare back
at you, after the most brief, impartial

hello, with visions, it appears
of skin splitting beneath razor, or rape
of their small, unguarded daughter.

Hollowed-out eyes suddenly grace
their faces when you thought a comic's
dob! was all that was called for, or

at least the neutral mask of a bearded
physics scholar. Neutrality, however, seems
a rare quantity in this parking lot,

and the hour or two that lie ahead
with this accuser – insufferable. Bring out
the drinks, oil this creaking boat

caught between the twin coasts of
boredom and hate, with no hope of
offshore gambling to infraternize the time!

A half hour later, the reading's done, and
no one's lost, violated, or beheaded
by rusty machete, or tattooed with streams

of burning oil, nor has the host
announced your recent return from Sing Sing
after pasting your face on a broadsheet titled

Meghan's Law. But the jury's still out
for the one with the paranoaic leer,
apostrophes around the exit, and with

no passion for adventure among the illegible
natives, my friend, the game seems fixed,
two steps forward being the sole way

out, and no hope of the cudgel's blow.

Sentence

Somehow
we'll have
to say
on a
precipice
look
at how she
ripped
you
open, clear
as a liturgy
blank
as slate
that no single
word
confirmed it
instead
a sentence
thought you
through
one
ripping down
a tear
accurate
for some years.

Panther

Silver grip,
unadorned, like
Shaker furniture,

death grip
they'd say, for the
phones, but I

just grip
its sides, in bed
collegially, or

simply take a look
at my typing, famously.
This little sketch

provided to you
from self-attention –
the pregnant click

of the keys
all that's remarked –
and time going

wah wah wah
like elephant traffic –
ample and clear-

headed, these words
adding myth to it.
A modest grip

on a nine-and-a-half
inch screen
gums these words

to the maws of poems.
Here they are.
Here they have been.

For Amiri Baraka

Sing at a
bird, sing
at tires.

Take of the
street street
signs.

Of the
sounds
make an opera

tropical,
industrial,
such as

cities are.

Oi! Toy

So this is the song the sense blows, sailor,
huh? So sick of making fun of you,
and finding in my sex earrings,
it's plain as torts: they're watching you
telling the retelling, decades on
on the Cosby show (such high living)
it takes me to know you care
about – decades after the ploy was on.
But stand apart like a Band
Apart: that's Anna K.'s skirts you're inhaling
on sofa 'twixt Bibulous and Clyde
Pate (she's hot like a minaret), the Grinning
Man accepting this greedily as history
channel, even filming us, collapsing
with oleaginous laughter in these odd odds.

Oh, When I Think of You Walt Whitman

I remember that you are dead and that you'll never be able to retweet me.

Coffee

There's so little left for me
in this bottle, and it's morning
anyway, much too early
for even a modest bottle
of wine – what to drink
if I don't want to drink coffee?

My home-brewed coffee
generally sucks – don't blame me,
– it's the machine, its drinks
stink. Yet, each morning
(when I'm off the bottle)
I make some very, very early

hoping, if I catch it early
(this machine), it would make coffee
worth drinking – like from a bottle
of Starbuck's coffee. Oh me,
I have such desperate mornings
thinking of new things to drink

that don't stink. I drink
milk, OJ, things for early
risers – the “elixirs of morning” –
like everybody else... and bad coffee.
This is just *like* me,
sometimes thinking a bottle

of pond scum, or a bottle
of flat out disease, or a drink
of pathological *me's*
viscous musings about the early
routine of making bad coffee
would somehow *make my morning*.

It does – it makes my morning
a fly trapped in the bottle
of day, like making coffee
from yesterday's grinds, a drink
of terrible, unseemly early
presentiment of what will happen to me

this very day. *Li'l ol' me?* Each morning,
early, I don't sweat it, I bottle
my thoughts – sink. Drinking my coffee.

Providence Sequence

1. FOR W. S. GRAHAM

There's been so little
because there's been no people.
A jam between phrases
makes them unintelligible.
Arguing in the streets
is hardly people,
and noise is a parable
of hardly getting people.

I'll up the bounty on communication.
Set the heads on the table
and let me swear, swear at
them – they will hardly notice.
After my death, will they notice
the silence, my hardly
getting people, as they work
their way into my memory?

A quick success, *getting*
people, is often called
“small talk.” I can't do it,
she says, opening profoundly.
We get to talking. She
swears, she only likes to talk
deeply – and rather quickly
our conversation turns to talking.

It's ordinary, not communicating.
I forget, and master it
daily, and with accuracy.

2. ALBA

I drank a piece of gum
and smiled while she chewed.

3. IL NONCONFORMISTA

He couldn't say "good night" without
trying to bring your attention
to the language. He was
that much of a fraud.

•

We fed him popsicle sticks for breakfast
and made him wear grown up clothes
telling him he was grown up.
This got hilarious when he forgot he was driving

a helicopter, forgot he was driving at
all, in fact.

He forgot how to blow his nose
out the window, like his people do.

•

We were feeling circumscribed,
he was learning quick
how to write, how to get out
of a jam when it didn't feel very natural

to be barnstorming a Burger King
in lieu of content.

•

All the rubber customs
began to fit him like a suit
and when the country began to go out
and the days' night lads were switching to winter treads

he was forgiven his sins,
but had to give back the suit.

4. REASONS TO KEEP CALLING

Since someone might
die,
for example,
soon.

5. POEM

You could come
to change my mind about the world.
Maybe I needed that,
sounds of ice breaking

in the driveway as the car pulls in,
evocative, tragic,
young parents at their first go
and having no idea what was happening

now, at this time
as I talk to you, thinking
no original phrases
except these challenges from the Sixties.

7. FOR ROBERT CREELEY

1.

All that we know, and
then some

is over there
in us.

2.

Someone who managed to love and be loved
– amazing!

8. OUR WELFARE

I make it kind of easy on those around me
by being obtuse – by silence, mostly,
reading through cancelled checks, or the newspaper
in the caffeine-free light coming from outside
(I didn't invent that, the *other* stud did)
so it doesn't matter what I think, things tumble down
like it has for centuries
– before kitsch was born, that is.

An enervating light, like the bad light
of a train terminal during the off peak hours
– the bagel shops shuttered, the dusty thrones
of the shoe shine stalls the most impressive things gleaned
in the *clack* of the flashbulbs. I can take you here
without concern for making a typical impression
in impoverished shadows,
in the gloaming of keeping things out –
but back to not talking.

U2 has just stolen,
I'm pleased to report, another melody from Stevie Wonder
to keep it alive, but through the filter of novelty,
thus oxygenating it for another decade
of airplay (the *other* stud balks at such exchanges)
which is why there has been nothing truly *fashionable* since
the Fifties, when songs were dances, the leads still gay
though they didn't know it (tattooed to another
vocabulary). So we

round them up, these words, and shuttle them
through time, pointing to a friend, insisting that friend's
not *mine* – like Picasso when Apollinaire stole
the Mona Lisa (as if he did, as if you were timid, or cared)
– but meaning it, before the meaning hike broke in,
and got us wedded to our welfare – where you read, and I just sit.

9. CODA

W.S. Graham.

I've never read him.

2007/2014

Mediation in Steam

SOMETIMES

thoughtful people are confined
to wheelchairs
in memory
for the seven reasons punk died
sometimes bras make sense
hippie pennies contract
dungareed dudes with didgeridoos
values every other muscle
pure
snowflake
– and that’s where the pastoral begins
the satire
offends, in case this ambiance is protective
it ain’t – such sominex
clues us in on the big arrears

•

MY BOD ON a zine

haircut beneath the cloying smile
rambling endlessly in this pissing christian vision
– tron
for the babies and bacchanals
gracelessly, the pedestrian surrenders
difficult brilliances
the instinctual sham-o-meter, that
any given night
gives reason to pay the rent, that
reason, lost
pump fist over the castrates
from behind the gleam of armor
defecated by choice
republic – these thoughts fancy across the water
of talk
the vandal in career

•

THIS
arrogance of having deficiencies
of an mgm fantasy, video
raspy and white
the career hype don't love it
rhyme after rhyme after rhyme, no
poetry
as the fans are flakes
and the texts, half-baked
of the pattern
what decides in waste fields
the currency of joes

•

AND THAT WOULD make it remarkable
to listen to, socializing with the extremes
for daily
manna, proud, ridiculous
so that ordinary blasphemy
reveals its vicinity
hamstring begotten favors
one more scares the bejeezus
from tiredness
supine at the foot of the
"lamb" what
abstractions
for bizney
has been muddy these days

•

THIS, FINALLY, MY book
of philosophy
recollections, discouragements, *lex*
often reading circus

for humid terms
suspended in the wild percentage, moving
like cloud spots, frictions
of leg against leg
the music
this frantically the look
of seemingly improper moments, for the book
protects, and then there's abundance
to elevate
the mundane, to its
synaesthetic upper station
where white funk makes its play, for
emotion, pleasure, pain, simple
it seems – to the roving challenger
bored, quite frankly, of this

•

THAT THE BULL sways
breezily sideways
tell it to the arboretum
balance it with cheek
the grayed
galaxies, sophomoric at first, breeding
sustenance
a marked reduction in hormones
virtually unfulfilled
cozening the hottest button
the latest spiritual chill
from comcast
and, brother, its monthly
purchasing power projects
without doubt, sans future
budgetary
as a high loan from the outer spaz
protects without whim
and nothing of that german grammar

•

TRUTH ACHE, COMEDY

of replicants deferring
the love lost between selves
in crackling plastic
what one observed
through the rain
is a runner chasing countdowns
sadly forgotten
but for the gorgeous
challenge of it all
this celebration of po-moing
verbal synergy

•

I DON'T GO to shows

operation, tag-to-tag
survival
in the mesh of vicinities, bar code
of
beer bombs, a
ball room, such
across that heat is
africa, crust
of issues, she
asks
and performs the marxist plug
of the werk on the werk in the indelible cellars
of culture
that would be a chapter
one would want to review
further, this
gridwork, pile-on, path through the
forest – paved out by yellow
flares,
clutching, from the drama of organic life
the sense of civility, civic pride

•

IN THE FUZZ box, of
autumn
slants of light curtains
who
complains (this is worth forgetting) is
the circle – stones are projected
thrown in
venomously at the jolly
roger

•

ONE OF THE great english voices
cut
up, three stories
robert wyatt
hum, incredibly danceable
now, to the new knowledge
accrued with friendship
such self-referential grease
provokes the dim readership
in a vial of kittens, ribboning
what one considers meters rather
didactically
uncovers a gem

•

BLINKING SPASMODICALLY, UNCONTROLLABLY, the girl
proves herself worthy
to the master's eye, bored of cushions
that guarantee
worthless renown
like a seismograph in economics
replacing god
in the black boxes of futurists
this, a rather depressing acknowledgment that progress

turgid joke
understood by practically no one
beyond the
claustrophobic perimeters
the unprofessional, the densely arithmetic, the sieves
that play
mundane instruments in their pathology

•

NOW IT'S GETTING heavy handed – the
toaster
for katy forgets her books
and has the best play day in her life, running
back from school, finally refreshed
that her screen saver
recognizes xmas

•

MEDITATION ON STEAM

can't be suspicious, though
as an aphrodisiac
nothing much matters
hence, hostilities retract
into forests
these gels
correcting all the colors
of intent
the cop glider stilly overhead, photographing
grapes they steal from the Nile
no thought, no
a blunt buttinsky
decides it's all untrue (uterus)
dissolves the anti-depressant
book
the moment they diversify

into windings

in text and a battle of rhetorics

such that the corsair archeologist

makes intelligent play

squirted

eighty percent of the style

statistically unkempt

rolando

pastoral

as tits

a crush of stable forms

The Watcher

for Michael Gizzi

Cackles from the plumbing. So give me a scene
from the deck. The watcher
follows a hand leading through the sky
his sight guide. Constellations
titter at the smallness of it, this enterprise
surviving on tape and glue. And
like an alertness that is its own identity, an
eye will flash only negative
to the watcher who sits down to inspect
his shoes. No camaraderie
with exiled slaves from nothingness
brings him peace, no choke
hold, obvious, will serve
to be pointed at. His eyes which are diamonds
will make his prose, his hands which are callous
will thumb his nose, weariness
will inspect the progress.

The

curtain will ridicule his
own choices, seeming
they surpass even mother's
and father's forthrightness, or still
cages erected sometime
in his youth

to gather hope. Watchers
do not come together
to give out hope.

1991/ dedication 2014

Tossed Episteme

SOMEDAY, WE MAY come
to regret this,
albatross,
but only the pronouns

(nothing much more
can scrape the inner curve
of the skull) –
we'll regret it all.

•

THE BIRTHDAY GIRL
is skinny. U2 plays on the
speakers.

•

AS IN LIFE
a breakfast of chopped steak,
runny and failed eggs

sprinkled with low sodium spices
a new story
branches out from every moment

of new media theory

as La Brea Avenue
hums with professional fitness
preternaturally, to the gyms

as the homeless
with conventional charm, lie ensconced
in starlight

that doesn't burn
given the lack of snow

I go –
fueled, as Bukowski says, with no goals

but to avoid despair

which is the pleasure, its gauge,
what one understands

benighted to causes

•

TEN ASSISTS
in the telling of this story –
aspirant's dilemma.

•

I LIKE THE cars.
In moments of heightened emotion,
they are my bling.

I lost my voice screaming in my car tonight.

Good actors who need career rehab
are my bling.

•

ANDRE THE GIANT with a cold, autistic stare
is unconcerned, for once, with birdshit on his billboard
serving, like the jar in Tennessee,
to command his own pure piece of chaos.

A flicker of radio
could bring all this peace to life.

Some days we just sit and commit, my friend,
fixed in commercial glut, waxing and waning in attention.

•

YOU,
draped over the couch like some discarded kimono
of David Bowie's!

•
SHITTING IN TURBULENCE
while Alice in Wonderland

(Johnny Depp version)
burns on the cabin YouBoob

lusterless monstrosities are we
wish mine were illusion

•
CURL UP
like a nap
and take a cat.

•
NOW LET'S TRY murder:

usually, two beings, possibly
both armed, maybe neither,

but often within proximity
of each other

able to hear, touch, smell
the offering

the drone is not that
it is our reading

•
I RISE TO piss
again, into the terrain
and see that it is living.

I am the pulse.
•

MOSTLY AS AN object
yet declamatory

though love contends
and argues threshold

to be revealed
in social, mammalian glory

dangerous to analysis
and to the State

•

TRYING TO
hold

the hand of a body in the shower

he discovered water.

•

THE CELL PHONE
ripped into shreds his pleasant avoidance
some mawkish, falsettoed
ode of eighties vintage

emerged like tin from the speakers, thus
his friend, no longer in abeyance
in some winter time-
zone

placed a bet on the frailty of his advertised,
hen-pecked mood.
Better get it.
It's been got, and somehow

the camera
clicked:
he was deciphered. If only for fun.

Observe the ease
of folding out of indifference:
the price of *admission*.

•

THE ACRIMONY OF the streets:
street walker, *hi*
we're here
to favor your tenants.

•

IN THE OTOLARYNGOLOGIST Christian Head's waiting room
an old guy leans over into his
breath.

•

IT'S SICK
to end this.
We're going to need pleasant iambs.

Status Update (after Sarah Palin)

Energy

~~Budget~~ cuts

Lift American Spirits

Toto Merumeni

from Guido Gozzano

I.

With its rambling gardens, vast rooms, and its seventeenth century balconies overrun with verdure, this villa seems like something from my verses, yes, the typical villa from a *Book of Letters*.

The villa thinks, sadly, of better times. It thinks of gay parties beneath century old trees, of illustrious banquets in immense dining rooms, of the festive salons raped for their antiques.

But where, in olden times, came the House of Onsaldo, House of Ratazzi, House of Azeglio, House of Odone, now stops a sputtering automobile, trembling, twitching, and some hairy stranger walks to knock the Gorgon.

A barking is heard, a passing... cautiously the door opens... in this cloistral and barrackish silence Toto Merumeni lives with his "convalescent" mother, his schizophrenic uncle, his gray-haired great aunt.

II.

Toto is twenty-five years old, melancholic, quite cultured, with a taste in the inkwell works; slight in brains, slight in morals, and scary in his hunches... he is a true child of our times.

Not rich, one day he decided to "peddle my wordlings" (there's his Petrarch!), an embezzler, a gazetteer... He chose exile. Liberated, he reflects presently on his follies. We're safer not to print them here.

Oh, he's not bad. To the poor, he sends money to keep them going... to his friends, a basket of fruit. He's not bad. Students come to him for a topic; for connections... he's a service to most emigrants.

Cold, conscious of his self, his faults,
oh, he's not bad. He's the Good Man sketched by Nietzsche:
"...in truth, I must deride that fawning creature
called *good*... simply because he lacks claws..."

After draining studies, he runs to his garden, plays
with his sweet friends, the earth inviting...
His sweet friends are: a caterwauling blue jay,
a pussy cat... and Makakita his little monkey.

III.

Life had taken from him all his early promise.
For years he dreamed of loves that would not call.
Despairing, he conjured a princess, an actress;
today he loves the cook... she is eighteen years old.

When the house sleeps, this girl, barefoot,
a fresh chill plum in the day's first light,
comes to his room, with lips to his bounces
onto him... he possesses her blessed and supine.

IV.

Toto cannot feel. Some latent, untamed illness
dried up the prime founts of his sentiments;
analysis and sophistry have made of this man
what flames make of a house in healthy winds.

As that ruin, however, that has seen fire
produces gladiolas with colorform flowers,
his parched soul loosens, oh little by little,
a scattered efflorescence of consolatory verses.

V.

So Toto Merumeni, after sad events,
is near grace. He alternates research and rhyme.
He is locked in, meditates, expands, explores, understands
the Life of the Spirit which he never understood.

For the voice is small, and his treasured art
immense... and because Time (even as I write!) flies...
Toto writes apart, he smiles, sees a future.
He lives. One day he was born. One day he dies.

1992/2014

The Men Who Sit (Les Assis)

after Arthur Rimbaud

Gashed with pocks, scabby – their eyes encircled with green
bags, chubby fingers gripping their
thighs, their skulls plated with a haughtiness, vague
as the leprous flowerings of old walls –

They are knotted in epileptic loves,
their fantastic ossatures fixed to the black skeletons
of the chairs, their feet to rachitic
stalks – they are entwined there, mornings and nights!

Old men sinking, one with their seats: the
vitamin sun makes burlap of their skin
– and, with eyes turned toward winter's falling snow,
they tremble there, like pinched toads.

But the seats are good to them: shit
brown, old straw yields to their neglected hinds.
Dying suns, swaddled in stalks
of the corn they once fermented, shine for them.

Question marks, knees in teeth, green
pianists, ten fingers rapping a tambourine under
their seats... they sway to soft barcaroles,
their scissored scalps float on these motions of love.

Oh, but what is it that makes them get up? What a shipwreck
of scolded cats! Whining, stretching
– arise more slowly, Olympic champs!
Their trousers puff around their bloated thighs.

And you can hear them: their bald heads
knock the dark walls... they stamp torqued feet,
thump after *thump*. Their buttons? The eyes of crouched beasts
leering from down salty corridors.

Then, they own that invisible hand
that murders: their gaze filters black poisons, cursing
the cadaverous eye of the pitiful dog,
so you choke. You are stuffed in obnoxious funnels.

Relaxed, fists plunged
in coarse cuffs – they've forgotten what made them get up!
From morning's aurora to evening, tonsils bunched
in miniature chins – nearly burst with agitations!

When a sleep lowers their eyelids...
they dream of their seats made fecund, of keen
lovers waiting in droves. They frisk among chairs to be born
amidst these proud bureaus.

Flowers of ink spit their pollen in commas
and comfort them... the length of crouched calyxes,
the flight of dragonflies by a file of gladiolas
– and the barbed ears of corn arouse their penises.

1992/2014

Photographs

with Cindy Stefans

To focus on the exact in-
stant – or site –
fidelity

(an eight-letter word), moon-rise

– Sold my
gelatin silver print (soul) to
 buy it
back again: “(untitled).”

 Light
bulb, zone
system, a phrase (“let’s
see”) – The photograph

is as direct in its appeal as a sun-
rise. The camer-

a is the
simplest of
tools: comparable to a pencil.

c. 1998

Poem

Sleep is so difficult.
Take a fresh hand

from the ashtray. He claims hedonism
kept him from writing reviews. As we see it

he's reading excellent poems.
Style is a temporal stigma floss.

Tom Raworth laughed
at my joke about Nelligan's hair. I'm a serious

observer of Québécois poetry. At least
to you, straying this way

with Jewish money.
That was the force killed Obi-Wan.

Apologies are OK
for failing memory. They're never out of place

actually, just loving
to run among the bric-a-brac of a

life soundly spent. It's personal. Others see a wall.
I sit here and massage this colt history.

Come to my room
to talk. It's a simple place: the chains, the wrists

linked to these Frenchy tomes. Why are you there
acquiring dimes

in the negative? I'm not.
But they put my kitsch through college.

Walkabout

Cited cows.

I think I need to leave the city and see some of those artificial paradises that Baudrillard, who vacations in a log cabin, would have us believe do not exist.

My idea is a heart in the basement

UNTER DEM LINOLEUM

– *p-thuck! p-thuck! p-thuck!* –

“My little idea is in pieces until I finish this work.”

“I would like to assure myself that we’re doing everything possible that can be done to save what is genuinely one of the biggest colonies of Jackass penguins to be found anywhere in the world,” he told reporters.

What do you do?

My idea is in parts, the book leaning slightly to the left,
hovering over the sleeper, like an image from Fuseli.

Perforations in the fabric suggest the pogroms of history.

Dissimulation. Efficacious. Hope. *Feeling it in his bones.*

Stranger than at first imagined

– a whinier “Waste Land,”

– an egg come back from Gillot.

A sort of syndrome. The typo that is exact to you.

Pick up the pace?

Poetry to order, these are poems made to order.

The checklist was presented by Benji Sands:

“More names for the fictions, more jailbait for the *roped*.” – they said.

Yes, American Congress.

To A Korean American Poet

after Lucas de Lima

Because you don't act Korean
it is my opinion
that, in fact,

you are white.

When you write that you are Korean
you are being *self-serving*
since (in fact) like a Korean in Sweden,

you are white.

I know everything about Korean
because I'm Brazilian.
I *insist!* All that you've ever wanted is

to be Mexican.

Static Thing

No curious weather
and the air thick,
not the beginning of a story,
not Buenos Aires,

mere auto-capitalization
in place of the voice,
no waves of sense
from speech
of dogs or children,

just silence,
awareness
in the occasional click
of the thermostat,

no drama, no
comedy, no
dramedy,
but more correction
from the pills
and the computer,

not even radiation
from the slab
on which this poem
fails to be written,

no entropy
because there's no form,
no catastrophe
because there's no weather
in Los Angeles,

no sin, no virtue,
as has been suggested.

Advance Notice

Never try, then
try harder.

The doxa of economy
versus the plug

on excess.

Never plug a guest,
never harden

the art. Steer,
my little cybernaut,

into harm.