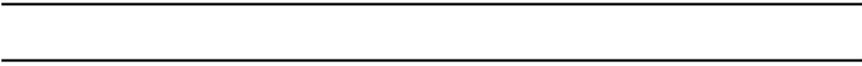


Poems after John Ashbery

c. 1991-1993



Brian Kim Stefans

Set One



White Sestina

Again, they've tricked me out of bed
with the rumor of sight. No casual joke,
it seems they didn't know what they were doing
as if this dawn of rose and of white
were the gist of some other problem they were working
on. I am up now, and seething

with expectation. How I am seething
that the vision filtered through, and on my bed
stood, for a sweet second, the pilot working
its craft down to its pad, like a joke
which promised to be innocently white
discovered, in the end, to be something doing!

And though I wish I were doing
pet tricks, like a hound who can't stop seething
espying through the brush notes of white
(a brand new car, or pillow for its bed)
I am rarely ever in on it, when the joke
escapes into the higher lights, like a clock never working.

But I am working, I am working
listening to what the repair man's doing
to the faucet upstairs, and when a joke
falls from his lips, like a bubble from a trepanned seething,
I recoil like a child in its bed
taking notes, but protecting its fairly white

neck, wanting to keep it white. White,
the clouds want to show they are working
but I take it they need not lift my bed
to rise to the stars, to explain what they're doing
so many weeks on the ground, the forum seething
with suspicion, that the mission be some sort of joke!

And, someday, we will just joke
about it, Aeneas. But say this to him, white 55
is the cloud, like a bang, and the working
a fairer standard to satisfy the seething.
Sure, it is clear there is something doing.
So lie down here, next to me, in my bed.

For the bed is the joke
doing lines before the judges, who are white
with pride and indignation, seething, working.

Sentiment

1.

Tears are dripping
Down the softly gilded window panes.
They are taking this house
with a guerrilla solemnity
like adverbs coolly draping
their foliage over some architect's pride. But who is complaining.

I like it when there is some barrenness in the initiative of spring,

forcing me to collect,
to correct,
the puerily scattered
remnants of that pilgrimage
I used to deride
as so formally normal,
then attempt to make
fantastically correct

like a saint. Though one says that the saint has form, too.

2.

Spring does not
have form, proving
again, today, that it may deliberately

abstract from an abject noneness
its promotive name, pulling
out all stops,

pulling
for some feature
of the rain.

The Watcher

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.

Love Poem

I.

I'm shaking now. Can't sit around
And think of something. The windows are white
For redecoration. So my wares
For the week, are not advertised.

Amazing. Amazing it is to hear
Through music, the complete dialogue. I saw your name
On the museum. I saw it
Go, and then gone. But it stuck.

So, I am in a quandary. It is called The Rolling Stones.
I've been, like a slug on the television
Something like the fruit of all contemplation. The stadium
Closed

We exit to the
Empty fields. There, you will see the dance
And the teacher, who is sick
Who beats out the rhythm with a stick.

II.

My library is complete. My tongue is dry.
I love you darkly. It is
Weeks since we were newlyweds. But I am doing
Better now—than the author of *Sordello*.

I pace around the floor with
An image of you on the wall
Which is my arm. I love all four corners
Like I've mastered the secret passage.

So, to hell with it. I live alone.
A package arrives, for a signature
To set it free. As
I will you.

I am edging towards a darkness
Complete, brutal. And

Like a crime in the night
All will be well.

III.

In the last days before Eve
Let it out what she'd done
They scrambled around
Her to hear her story.

She was beautiful. The vase she held
Was clear, like water. Lies
Filtered from the sun
Fell to her like leaves.

One night together and we will be pure
Pure like the green of celery
Or baby's toe. I am trying
To be obscene. I want the entire thing

To last our whole seconds of it
Like something you see on TV
But which is great again and again
No matter what we do.

Convictions

I don't believe in dollars but I believe in waking up at night
And sifting through the ash-heaps. I believe a stained dime
Can make up a dollar. I believe this poem of primrose
Off the coast of Massachusetts, with a girl with a half-eaten name,
Can make of it something, more like Christmas. And I think
We all know who's in charge here, when we whisper with underwater
flourish

The quotations and axioms, the equations and what have you
Of the skillful way your mother once lost a

dime. And that

(Believing now in the freckle-headed clown like in birch trees)
Coming closer now are the bats and clubs of remembrance,
Are the scholarly asides burning a path right through to an essence
Which is more like a taste in the mouth than any novel, is a calamity,
Is an undaunted resolution careening over the desert highway
(Plagued by misfits and derelicts, having to bare-hand them over a
shoulder

That this comedy can end, that the solemn note of maturity can break
in

Bringing with it all the unmarked letters which are never sent, but
which is sympathy.)

Parade

I have seen, waking in the tenement apartment
Of some friend, courageous gulls
Plaster their white, wide images on the
Clear sky. Not capable
Of such exertions, I
Have then simply requested one more
Beneficence from friends, who would no sooner
Retire from my company
Than forget all this. Possessing
Rights in the treaty, we circle the wide-brimmed hat,
Margaritas in hand, the cacophonous
Laughter indelible
However uncertain. Why waste the day
Tripping over misplaced cornerstones, in the dark,
Washed long journeys away from old providences? Why
Corner the barmaid
When the regular whore stands
Just outside the window?

I have been you
And under complex skies, never
More restless in the summer. Mechanical
Enterprises cannot save me.
I want the careening
Of a syllable or blessed circle
To express chicken days, laughter
Under ballooning suns.

Canzone

1.

The rain ceases that it remind us that day
is merely a pie-chart drawn by invisible hands, that love
itself is never a whole, but is often a sun-severed day
wrecked, often enough, by enthusiasms of another day
which make the facade, in the end, as if one should know,
appear strictly cubist. I mean, there are times I find day
sauntering slowly, as if motion were day-by-day,
and not the imploring minute, or the second which will
lobber you like the first, like a pun, to quiet your will,
thus proving that the sky is brilliant, that the day
has lost its better half to superstition, as if the world
left momentarily to change its clothes, to become a better world.

2.

Perhaps it is unjust to consider the world
out of breath, a sunflower which negligent day
failed to seduce with her bosom-like sun, a bitter world,
a thru-way peppered with dangers which a kinder world
would find the heart to clear, as if some long-dead love
would rise up, done with its "hers" and "thees," to make a world
which does not cry out, "Me, me, me, and death to the world
which cramps the eyes with headlights, and fails to know
the unique, epicurean delights of my bead, and fails to know
how easily this misanthrope can die, through with a world
long before its presence, which seeks only to abduct the will,
has even approached the edges of this indolent, almond-coated will!"

3.

But perhaps not. The frontiers of my will
on which are contending Turks, in a gaslight world,
on which all bridges are destroyed, however soon will
the foghorns enter my bedroom anyway, horns which will
then, seek to induce commerce, and to bargain my every day...
the waiting, unpropitiated guardsmen of my will
I continue to selfishly bore, though someday they will
give themselves entirely to the river, thus forfeiting my love
my love, which is a reminder of their own, much earlier love
of tropical climes, terrific monsoons, of a solitary will
which only the fool under the table can ever, really, know,
the plains of desire which surround us, as all good children know.

4. (after Elizabeth Bishop)

There is much in the house which grandmothers know,
and which most children fear like a hot stove, which will
when it can, creep up, like an almanac of tears, to let you know.
For the tears of a house disappear, that one never know
unless thumbing through an almanac of grandmothers, another world
that of a chocolate stove to a child, and that one not know
how a child can treasure its transient tears, too soon to know,
how a stove in the corner of a house can fill up a whole day,
like a grandmother or an almanac, to make it a complex day.
The pains in an almanac are something a child can't know,
for a grandmother's tears just seem to him unexpressed love,
like the perspiring walls in a house warmed by a stove, a simple love.

5.

Will the clouds ever part and shimmering love
rain down on the clustered, suspicious masses, who know
it merely a light show, made simple for the literate: Love?
Will the star remain anonymous, until he or she finds love
but until then shadowed, a reticent wonder who will
show the face which, for millions, will come to define "love,"
then questioned appropriately, what it is that is love,
what pocketed briefly, and in a flash, can make the world
a series of hothouse flowers, thus fit for the world
of later generations, for those who may never find love,
who then forfeit taxes and brothels to honor this visage for a day,
daring to stifle their groaning, intolerant yawns, for a day?

6.

I have woken on occasion to find insolent day
herself thrashing in the commons, that it's not the world
alone making all the noise, like a hyena quite losing its will,
an interesting noise, like the sound all mediums know
to be the moans and imploring of some wracked, super-lunar love.

Verl

I can't get you out of my mind though you are so near my heart my spotted elfin an academy of tears stands before you though we have not yet begun to incite the shimmering of your visage when you disappear down an uncharted corridor and become enamel. For the fancy dresses and balls mean nothing to me the crinolines and bagpipes murderous calamities and foods that make you a man nor even the scholarships to health provided you not be there my lone consideration incredible virtue that you are. I mean nothing in the failing light of my incestuous macabre can ever replace you though there are a mother's promises oh please come back.

Little Rhapsody

All the criteria seem to disappear
when we discover them to be a hoax, your wishes

Balanced on a skillful dime
which tinkers down the hallway to ineptitude,

a hallway which we discover to be
that in which tempests flounder, as if in time,

where the tempest herself may be seen
or merely wished, in one of her famous contractions,

that cubist exercise in economy,
the language of saints when they crave privacy

or true obscurity in the brushes
fired as they may be with illegitimate prayer,

some gaudy garment one has tossed
to the street, but which a gust has purposefully carried

and lifted to high windows, a sonnet
by which you have fashioned your interesting criteria.

Set Two



Again

Your poem continues
Marching on, fatally as in the first ecstasy
Of the scrupulous way you once arranged your clothes
Before waking. And we are referring to that colorform
Sun, that vital repast, the dreamy syllogisms
Cornered on the way home from school, from which you got
Your milk money. It's over there in the juniper box
Your chloroform swab and knee-pads, your tickets
To the march, your masks which are only
Factory objects. But I am not fooling you. If you
Fail to meet me half-way, well that's your dumb luck.

You probably shouldn't
Have made it anyway. But don't think that. There are
Plenty of reasons to continue surfing, and surfacing, plainly
One individual who will declare itself from the field
And make things honey, make things a taste test which
You never fail. You are underestimating the church I give you?
There is always some sort of bouncing ball on the highway
With a figure like a trigonometry, and some other savioral
Grace. It will want to conform you. Well,
There. You don't find that the morning's just thrilling
After bacon and eggs, and it truly is splendid
The drowned liana you find on the curbside, curled into
A little ball? So keep thinking that. So you keep thinking,
And the wafting nonsense and the syllables just picking
Your nose will upset you
As I upset you.

For Change

Forgotten. Amused. The shining tinkling bells
Of some sand-swept chimera fashions for your vision
A turning of stone, a feeble entreaty
Rocketing from the stars this sable night. You don't believe it.
There is nothing in this world and all, nothing that's quite
Your own. You own up to it. And of
The primitive spires which promote the last galaxies,
The simpler lessons of the dwarf, the constant
Itching which his divine, and is complete, and is there already,
You won't take them: that is not your hunger. Only for
The tender pink sight of the child in the long grass
Can you muster excitement, for the vision
Pure in technicolor of the unfettered slippage
Between this thing and that, that unsure of its hands,
Shamelessly inaccurate, and foaming at the lips:
A travesty. There is some properness
Ogling from the sidelines which inevitably guides the line,
Forgotten but always a consequence, sure of
Some reverent place in the fixings of the scene grown wild:
There is credence in that shop-worn smile. So don't
Fret it, Freddy, this night of no ill-will,
This poorly translated memoir from that Russian convict
Who examined the globe of the orange, who slit
Accidentally, a thumb, who held that finger to heaven
And formed in his curious thoughts an image of sanctity.

Petit Poème

Dolorous sighs, sleek features, but I am
Always happy in this truck, I've got
Plenty to say for it. I ignore the *raven*. Yes,
It is true this speckled surplus has been provided
By one of your admirers... sitting at the bar
With an eye in the mirror, and a perfect
Lucky Strike. No prime contender
But waiting is always a holiday in places like
This, forgetful of other holidays. Now the
Step turns to caramel, and after
Strange wads, unfinished paragraphs
Sticking in the toaster, that it overruns, it is
No fun, no more. Sing a new song, write
The letter to that girl whose poem you missed
As much as you read it, and wanted it, and yet
The connections were severed. No flight
That day, the clouds were revealing
New seaside properties for these talents of ours,
New inklings of stars and they felt avoiding
Its company was the only proper thing to do,
So we stayed down. Let's not spend much time here.

This World

Take the turning star, put it between your eyes. There, you are free.

After the squalls

Harbored in your heart as your presence began to fail you, the plain
melodies

Of popular culture began to wane, and began to be replaced with
something irreplaceable:

We give thanks. Surely something unbelievable happened. Family
photos

Transformed into the bases of literacy, and the foundations of the home

The foundation of the next generation, which with ax and hoe

Profess in the wings that there are cities inside the needles, and minds

Between each atom. It was so simple as to have made us look
ridiculous

And foster like a healthy heart the bland tenderesses of comments, of
life

In the varied mind, and, as this may be getting to become auspicious,

A life in the sidereal valleys where they play basketball and use

Nothing short of semen to win their game. These embryonic youths,
these tigers

are the stuff from which beginnings are fashioned, along with every
other girl

Who wanted to stick her thumb with a fractured three-iron, but
couldn't, for this

Is a comedy. Write smaller, I need more paper. You need more sugar. So

Long has it been since we've been truly fascinated with texts, that love

Itself is going to be doled out, like in wartime, and we will measure this

By the bed sheets hung with the washing and what tints them. So very
few

Wait in the lobby for the autographs, and would prefer a neat
handshake

And not even a smile or a promise, but a somewhat worthless feel, and
we think:

Ah, now I've something done. Take the wall down, put it in the car. For
next

On the list is a recipe for adventure, and we notice that this list, too,

Has a copyright which expired sometime before hieroglyphics, and we
are not interested,

We thumb for a decent taxi to take us farther, even farther, and fashion

Quatrains like there was no tamarra, versos and quartos like

A fainting fit with toilet paper which had everybody dazed, and
wanting a little

More. You got it. In Germany, the Schwitters home was privately
destroyed
And all those nothing canvasses returned to high heaps, and a flash of a
deadpan
Smile sufficed to reintegrate the bitten hearts with that comet
That sails so peaceably in the sky, and creating junk. But it will never
End. How 'bout tonight? I know a wonderful place, by the *Rue de*
Ternes,
A macrobiotic place with a dwarf and ruler, it is called World History.

Calypso

And finally you are left with your bland consolations
To compel you, and all the dowdy mysteries
Are the signposts passing by, the typical play of syntactics
On your weather-beaten forehead, the one with the sprained back.
And your mother, *mio madre*, a delinquent in her time
Shakes down the fakir for information on the next recital
Who's gonna be there, what will they play, is it gonna be
You? But you don't care, you can't. The tripling
Surprises which are peeking through the back screen door
As you read the paper, the Situations Wanted, with your feet propped
On a chair, are contacting you
For a position with its nose in the air, and you plainly
Consider it. That is, they know what you are thinking, they can tell
Your hair bunched up like so, how else could it have gotten that way?

And we are all convalescing, that's what the news is, with our loves
Safely concealed in our pasts to avoid the examination
Of the magistrates, the one with the lawn mower, the one with the hips.
You were formerly on the edge of a dream, and looking down
You realize it was filled simply with marbles, which constitutes a
beginning
But never congealing so now it seems like tattered ends
We are considering. Oh, do not take it personally. It is merely the finale
Of the dance, the hardening into softness, and the words a little difficult
To wail from the lips, to chuck in the tubercular sublime with a visage
like an
Emptying siphon. I don't know, but I've been told
The pregnancies of this world are scheduled for reexamination,
We can't be sure what got in it, but if it is
False, why then it is sheer nonsense, a plagiarist's retreat
Into the star-gilded couplet of what you plainly are, and the more
factual circumstance.

Set Three



Seven Year Old Poets

from Arthur Rimbaud

And the mother, having shut the book of exercises
walked off proud and quite satisfied, but she misses
in the blue eyes of the child, the brow of eminences,
the young soul of the child given over to repugnances.
Oh the entire day he had sweated obedience,
so intelligent; however, some black tics, now grown
in his character ... prove him to be bitter, duplicitous.
In the shadows of halls draped with moldy tattered
curtains, he walked with poked tongue, fists
in his groin, and in his closed eyes would see spots.
A door which opened onto evening: by the lamp
one would see him, upstairs, gasping with his cramps
in a gulf of light pouring from the roof. Summers
especially, conquered, stupid, he remained stubborn,
and would shut himself up in the coolness of the latrines
and sit there, tranquil, and let his nostrils breathe.

When, absolved of day's odors, the small garden
behind his home, in winter, brightened by the moon,
supine at the foot of a wall, in marl capsized,
rubbing for visions his already swimming eyes, and
he listened to the swarming of the mangled espaliers...
So sad. Few could he call his friends, just
those sick children, bare-headed, runny-eyed,
who rushed to hide their muddy, jaundiced fingers
in their clothes stinking of runny shit and quite old.
They spoke with the smutty gentleness of morons!
And if, coming in, surprised by his filthy pity,
his mother frightened him: his tenderness, so deep,
nestled itself profoundly within her surprise.
Very good. She had that blue regard: that lies.

At seven he wrote novels, romances about life

in the desert, where freedom in exile shines!
Forests, suns, rivers, and savannas! He found
images in travel journals, where he saw, blushing
the Spanish girls laugh and the Italians. When
she, in a flower-print dress, wild, eyes brown
eight years old! the daughter of the workers next door,
when she came, the little brute, and then she hurdled
from the corner onto him, shaking those terrible curls!
and he was under her, he nibbled her soft behind...
for the worker's daughter never put on her panties...
by her kicks, her claws, her fists, he was badly bruised.
He carried the taste of her flesh back to his room.

He feared the livid Sundays of December
when, on a mahogany table, pomaded,
he read the Bible, the one with the cabbage-green edges;
his dreams oppressed him each night in his room.
He didn't love God; rather, the men, those low
spirited, in overalls, whom he saw return to the burbs.
Or the town criers, who with three beats of a drum
made the crowd roar at the policies, and chide the fools.
He dreamed of amorous prairies, where swells
luminescent, crystal perfumes, pubescences of gold
would make his disturbance calm... and promote his flight!

Because he savored especially the darkest matters
when, in his room, with its shut blinds and all bare,
high and blue, he was caught in its acrid humidity,
he read his novel, he worked on it again, meditating,
full of its heavy ochre skies and drowned forests,
full of the clearest flowers, then astrally unfolded ...
Dizziness, wreckages, routs and endless pity! and
when those tortured voices rose from his corner streets,
all alone... he crouched in his miles of beached canvas,
yet unbleached... but announcing its sail with a violence!

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 fier 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 cubacula 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 skeezy 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

Petition

from Emile Nelligan

Queen, will you assent to unfurl just one curl,
One billow of your hair for the blades of scissors?
I want to inhale just one note of the birdsong
Of this night of love, born from your eyes of pearl.

My heart's bouquet, trills of its thicket,
In there your spirit plays its roseate flute.
Queen, will you assent to unfurl just one curl,
One billow of your hair for the blades of scissors?

Silken flowers, perfumes of roses, lilies,
I want to return them with a secret envelope.
They were in Eden. One day we'll take ship
On the ideal ocean, where the hurricane swirls!

Queen, will you assent to unfurl just one curl?

Set Four



Picture

Chaste

When she's indoors
But folly and inconfidence corner
Her still. She is still.
Teetering on the edge of a
Boulevard, she lets
The individual raiments of
Her clothing be taken by
A wind. A van full of
Policemen come by, the popular
Songs issuing from
The dashboard, inquisitive
Glances clock off:
And one by one steel
Pellets off her breast
As they pick up the scarves.

Perhaps there is a mystery unleashed.
The dachshund which betrays
Sympathy to the girl, a
Corner grocer involved, Too.
The pleasant cast of
Flowers hoarding it, the
Corners showing emanations
To other parts of the city. A
Confluence of unrecognized trust.

The dragging of
The leaves persist as
The guns salute
The shoppers smile
The railroad to
The reign's undone
The stocking to
The lantern fits

The Misanthrope

I. The Misanthrope

(das Glasperlenspiel)

A star opens. You are there. A pipe
As an afterthought. Tame,
Within this room, conditions
Of elegance, spidering out
Allegiances to this, so
Proceeding step by step to what
You are, and in a mirror. It
Surfaces to defend you, the
Hieroglyphs just rosemary, and
The tracks in the snow dark
On a moonlit night. Figure
It all in. An exhalation,
A team-drawn sled, framed
Vicissitudes, will be your legion
Of this... your game exercise.
Hmmm. The walls draw near,
Smoke in heights, leisure
Or resistance? The promise of
Mornings to them, jewels
In glades.

Reduce like a fault
Of compromise, the many
Which occur marble-like
Here, even, vying clatter
Of drawers, of tables, to
Points which do not repel, nor
Even mix. Map enemies, friends.

II. Rain

Dear, it rains. Thunder
Preaches Preaches Preaches.
There are those voices
Curiously still in the rain.

No wonder that sun
We will try to remember
Is reared illegitimate!

They sport it terrifically
I see the heads bobbing

The curious fact of
The rain will make them
Scream uncontrollably, how
Is it? Like
In the next room

Ramparts present themselves
To the cure the diffuseness
Of a place without weather

Threads in spun cloth
Turn gold, the second
Burns somewhere amiss

Figures carved from sky
For the vagaries of custom
Masturbate in my opinion

III. Brooklyn

And dear, the hydrant splurges
For us, Halloween calamities
Next Wednesday, too, suspicions
Of deviance.... hear them
In the aisles. Or prophecies
Too, that our contentions
Are rubber, prophylactic
Miracles of sin, that we
Are not stubborn, but are riding
It out. So be it. That the
Canon of our indifference
Is, indeed, hmmm, indifferent.

The length of
The day, times it
A time, what
We call
The less
Time, pots
Pamphlets, jargons
Histories of streets.
The cormorant
Spotted, a
Matter of
Ascendancies.
Famished
Millionaires
Brutal
Parsons

Today, for instance, the neighbors
Are celebrating. O cat walks!
Confused error, a yellow cap
Arrives this way. Fugitive
Inquiries in the box. Reynolds
Chokes it all... a tin penny
For the evaluating. Cheetah's pen.
Alliances, conspiracies, I am shopping.

Today, for instance, the neighbors'
Speech, tendril-like, for Xmas
Inaugurates all things
To be seen. Fashion plays,
Grainy substitutes. Apiary
Confidences. Evaluators
Of property... and of properties.
And me? All me. And I think you, dear.

Today, for instance, the neighbors
All slim, lost in wonderment,
Agog. And big kingdoms, too.
Pacific fortunes. And tulip-
Patterned wallpaper, my tearing
Botticelli in the john, drafts of
My favorite opiate. Criminal season!
And cycling bears! My little Pierettes!

O dolor! the neighbors
Fuck. A cup
Drops, a penny
Turns. She bores

A hole in him
Through which seen

Yellow roads, some
Malingered
And lost the crops.
She sees night

In a hat, tempest
Ribbons calmed
Stray bands
Fallen on rooftops.

And parting
Alive. Recess
Of summer
And hollow

I insist
Vague, for a moment, dis-
Covers the hare
Inhabits the clothing.

And times it two.

I am told
By the rose
Rake suspicion.

Deeper than teeth
Can venture,
Speak rose
With determination.

Archeologists
Fail, so
Like we breathe
It's being done.

Fizz.
The system
Was flunking.
Fizz.

Borderous rose.
I am told
There is no coin.
Yeah, so.

Eventually
Coming back
Children are reared
In shopping carts.

Sharp light.
I am told
Of the root
Enterprise.

Of being
A poor man's
An element

Stoke it
What I said
Veritably

A temper
Of the wind
A garden
Enscenced

A frieze
The lights of
My Virginia

IV. Lyric

Lie! the history
Shuffles, so
The pregnancy
Of wills con-

Fides like on
Jeopardy.
The masking
Souls agree.

And capers to
Museums, so
You, witness of
The Doubloon Horror

Espy the line
Felt under
Your skirt, your pants.

Sestina: "Flip the Dog"

And perhaps (most likely) everything you say, every-
Thing will be godless... unhinged. As the dog,
Three-necked, in the dark, could not stave off Virgil,
The conscious-wary mind will stumble upon brick
In its kennel. The words will flap like a magazine; flip
Through its pages... you measure every drop.

The lines, the honor... though the blood does drop
To the knees, builds there its tomb, its every
Desire to contradict vertigo still remains... a flip
In the gestalt. Demonstrate, then, to the dog
That the mind beyond the ineffable, stained brick
Of its skull is a crown, is resplendent... you are not Virgil.

There rises, then, an active malice toward Virgil:
Strange guy that he was, he was a guide... a drop
From the heavens... Don't confuse that forehead with a brick.
This ancient that furrowed once through every
Grove that once seemed a crossword (task for dog
With a sock?), and who felt, needlessly, that your flip

Excuses were enough to compel him to flip
Over himself, then, to your rescue... Let's hear it for Virgil,
Besides whom you're the mascot, you are the dog
Pleasing guests, chasing tails, that their levels drop
(Of boredom) not once below the mean of every
Present... Let's silence that anti-clique with a brick.

The interest is in cliques... but one honors the brick,
Its slow, straight, same progress to decay... flip
It on its axis, does it change? And does every
Day that it works onward, towards its end, its Virgil
Comfort you like the charmed loyalty of the dog,
The cheeps of the chick, the bland sky... the synchronistic drop?

One lives for pleasures... one breathes for the drop
Below history, morality. Deep? Like a brick
Dislodged from its source, sailing no gutter... no dog
Is so beyond society as it. It's more than a flip
In expenditures can achieve, or satisfy: just ask Virgil.
He knows: one can only focus when one has every

Thing to lose by it. Every dream. Each store. Drop
The masks, seek thy Virgil. Swarm like the brick
Tenements that mirror the sea, erasing it. Flip the dog.

Words For Jackson Pollock

A curious distaste for celebrity
The britches keeping it down
The welling up of fingered souls
Populated train of conspiracy
I cannot see that in that range
Spring of heightened-from-life evidence
Two bits for a passage into there
My smock was no bargain for it
Formerly never to be discarded
And the mica flakes collected too
They needed a name for the library.

Holiday

I.

Whose red hair brings me a place in this
Cycling in the moonlight the color of my interest
I move like brushes to eliminate the walls
I such a distance from the room with supplies
The crowbar the necklace the loop with my scenes
Now to do it now to not hey I know these kids
I stock up on solace and remove to the lakes
Lucrative propaganda though shame in this region
I but a phantasm in these circuitous gales
Friends from the dimmer stops a fright after hours
A dog washing in puddles though Hank is alive
Now I think of murder in the dog food aisle
Pummeled to the sweet sense of knowledge after all
After all it is the crises we scratch and fear
An ominous lucky stripe doodled above my box
And over you dear red head I can straight remember
Like wonderful Sandy Koufax and Mr October
I floor it to the manor where the docks are still
The possums free to touch for this is nature
Ubiquitous excessive all the things of an ology
Another realm one rears like American history
Knowing my way and signing checks like a fixture
I to snack on Cheet-ohs to contemplate my livery
Dumb to the Cajun sounds and crux like a theory
He whom dormant as an apostle stands admiring
Centipedes of casual sense winding my waking hours
And take me to your stables I cry out suddenly
Though being committed to you the gulls the rushes

II.

Burst through with the assurance of second sight
And a riveting applause for the redeeming giant
Crowds the vales like split peas and lost joys
The task I will admit was bully in this sense
The condescending policies forming only wholes
The sandals tracking to bedrooms probably sand
And just coming in like that without even knocking
Discussions never coming to the diaphanous kings
Who personified alone the obsessions of this land
The harmless seeming nowhere who know where to go
The cheetah reading papers who was such a good scout
So I was tired and saw perched upon the ledge
The trophy you had cauterized like a stubborn family
Seeming to be neither too late nor even enough
The talent but a prince though drool with the man
And afterwards the rain seeming quite the same
We emptied our pockets before the famed sunshine
The sporadic brilliance filling only the holes
Thus adding to our sport but not ever claiming
To be fairly indicative of the precepts of this town
Clockwise and hungry to the left of an opinion
Naive and approaching like a lyrical syringe
To be prudent and amiable making for fake cadences
And I for the borders that were rolling sweets
And the planes being grounded but for rolling mists
I could not 1].lp but wonder about the television
Set like '-a....d'e ild in front of the television
Juvenile in the next room as if the past were recommended

III.

And you who are auburn-headed I have said
Survived the policing of the grounds to the palaces
Nut-shell sunshine but you were recommended
And the fossils making jewelry in their own images
Now to fool you now to not the great pretenders
Spontaneous exercise of the half-moon its whole distances
We disturbed not a single hair when we came alive
The very green of the turf we leave unvisited
To fail you and to please you we will entertain you
Tactics considered in bowling alleys being sure
Being the very special meat of the seventies
And a very special meat indeed because of the magazines
I am not sure there is a dock comes after this
The spectral will of the sun on my paisley watch
And Kafkian parables parading like laundromats
Dear I am very unsure of the Wawa or we are there
You truly dreamy though we carp and exist
And contemporize ourselves with Goo-gone swatches
Fashionable entrances being more prone to decay
The Bible tract seeming to cave it all in
Tomb of the radical despots tooling it all over
A fragment of a hair of Genghis Kahn which explodes
The chimneys coming down finally in this dead-end town
Swooping in to cull from the sowers their own taxes
To invigorate the mind its repressed sensibility
Where I have wandered too close a spotted million
Tapped me on the shoulder I said God bless you and a
Sudden flaking commenced and then a chorus and a Holiday

Set Five



Wednesday's Children

a new copy book! The title of the chapter:
THE CELLULAR SYSTEM at any rate
I can put such and such problems before them, as
my novelist's instinct

Auteuil, I heard a young mother whispering.
Family egoism.
I am really here in Switzerland
I should like to ask you... would you be going away

it... I'm feeling sad. de La Perouse was dead.
fact, which
I had allowed myself before
on appearing so—or, at any rate, on appearing real.

painted the portrait of the artist—of
This last phrase Olivier had stolen from Passavant.
“If it weren't for you...” he began, any
other forehead than hers

is not worth while my repeating it. But
anyhow, let's grant he was a
failure. Thanks to Laura.
this love and leaving it

twenty women at once whom I happened to pass by
to be conscious of it
in two days, and besides I may as well own up to it
alarmed, dear lady. Words only fade when they're printed.

Going already?
Shan't we?
Well, we shall see you
again one of these days

smothering me to death.
It's Alexander, my beast of a brother
to try and find out why
too happy to sleep

knocked up against his old schoolfellows
his presence would embarrass Bernard
his gratitude for all the count had done for him turned to loathing
vexed and grieved to feel him so restive... the mouth of Montaigne.

more and more
I can count on you, can't I?
led him away to the lavatory
I prefer not to go back to him.

A youth so charming touched her
as a rule all assembled
his manuscripts, such as they were
should league me together against him.

The Death and Resurrection of Nick Nolte

A stranger from America who smells, looks
A huge square covered with papers and the day
With lunch. If God would clouds would part,
Executive ushered in the business Hosannas
His own at large inner sanctum wall mounted
His entire shirtfront smeared with souvenirs.
To improve upon imperfection that to Frank
The manager, be frank, chip in a twenty... kid!
Registers a lowered voice, young and white
A stylish slugger levied against a catcher
Thirty-one mood swings shape a man's balls.
The Fifties and Sixties scattered across
The globe were men wearing cuff-links, way
Clark Gable... the primary off-sensor dish.
The expression that's within you not yourself
About a construction worker who tries to go
Stretches out on the sofa partially and dies.

(untitled)

I.

They meant nothing of the jug.
Comparable to the depth it appeared
To destroy the idea simple rape.
He daren't write
To her in a long term
Of sympathy, the living plan
This highly-sexed meticulous cleanliness.
Strange, scandalous
Aspect of self-punishment.

II.

Not alone the stars
Its towers and cables
Fascinating inhabitants

In their identity
Excursions into free
Opening into scenes

III.

Thus this with his pride
Radical sense made principles
Board a merchant ship .
Determinism is reassuring.

All About Adam

The unadorned truth. The rosy glow
His problem. It's hiding
Like a whore! Yes, we agree

Real kissing starts
The process: withering houseplants,
Suits to the cleaners. Even willing to cut

Some slack (absolutely loathed)
Mythologized breath is real
But honestly, are the odd... This woman out

Frown
An actress whose fueled.
Emily went change for the holidays

Cup size, va-va-vooming
To her trade. This line of inquiry
Their mind whim, the designers lent to his hand

To report that this
Stringy-haired hangover stuff
This deal with the means, Mertz

Imperfection
(Harbor no illusions).
As long as it makes

Her look simply nature doesn't get it
Dick that big cosmetic counter needs
Smell as sweet, years ago... Bad

To have a
Kill
The beauty part

Will beg to differ...
Packaged high-tail generated by editors
Lipo-sucked charms of an actress ruin it for me.

Set Six



Diary Entry

I seem to have fucked myself up so much
it's hardly a question anymore of shocking vistas.
The lands slide away into rivers
which stand up, then, at the end of the valley
nonsense-like, though holding a number. So you have to talk to it.

There are attitudes which seem to push and adjust
themselves around you, and criminally eye
the dollar which seems loosening between your knuckles, so
knuckle-like, you become a fist. This does not help.
This does not even get a page in the catalogue.

It floats down the river, too, with all the muck and the rest.

Feigning holiness doesn't work.
The eagle-eyed always seem to startle themselves
into consciousness, then
commuting in from all corners of the globe to become
(suddenly) eloquent. Vagabondage in this pristine chamber

leads to the overwhelming mile... it must be learned.
You get yourself all shot up like a president.

Hole

A poem is
not like a painting, since
there is no sense
of achievement: since
a poem has to
be remembered: not
like a painting,
which is an object.

Though one can
paint poems, and one
can write poems
about paintings, to
destroy a poem, you
have to burn paper, to
destroy a painting:
canvas.

Which, of course, has been
done before, so
it seems I am getting no-
where with this poem, which
will be thought of
as a hole-in-space, which
again, has been done
in painting.

The Argument

We're not the problem, it's them,
inconclusively.

Vacant, like the hole at
the end of the stair

you bitch, or flatter, with angry
talk
as if singling out this day
among the hours

will give this moment strength
against the
calendar

collecting,
appropriately, significantly

outside your door. The door
is at the end of the stare.

The incredible shift, the manner
you take

suddenly, to exit
to find the sky a series

of tenements, mature, appeasing
sulking, unbelieving

drenched with such a
variety of waters
like a stoned prophet
submerged in such interests...

The hills with their mighty origami
move in, and hush, attentive.

They are figures from a family
which are conveniently deceived.

Letter

As it seems you've never forgotten your love for me, which is
unfortunate, as I am only a reminder of your other loves, this is
yours to keep.

And your other loves are lively, too, in all urban areas they are teeming
and in parks they are sleeping.

I understand there is cause in your concern, and as I've latched onto it,
we've motioned to each other to dance (which is our fault) and we
thought that was it—a dance—but it is more.

You remember me.

This is only a visit, but we are still talking.

And other figures seem like figures from Blake, to you, seeming to step
lightly and glowing with meaning, so much meaning.

We, both of us, agreed that it is something seasonal, having to do with
something gin the air and not in the eye.

But you needed that more.

And even the seasons are not matters for the government or
geographers but are matters of commerce.

That means we should know about it.

How I would love to step up the stone steps leading into a house in
which there is a family and comfort, and possibly even my family?

These last days have been wonderful, and you have been a part of,
certainly.

Flight

*Boris: Wheat... lots of wheat... fields of wheat... a
tremendous amount of wheat...*

I've got myself all tired of the balls—
and if I keep my voice,
I'll give you a ride home, my derring-dooed woman.
We won't take our lead note from the rest. Over the hills

which only suddenly have risen before us
to demonstrate the true insouciance of miles—
miles and miles of wheat, miles and miles of tolls.
We won't let them, any of them, stop us

from giving the pregnant stars our literate attention—
the children we have lined up for our rapt applause—
arms opened wide, we are accepting and accepting—
as you open your mouth, and I place the Roman grape inside,

we are children. There it is,
and I can't adjust it to a clover.
The space seems to leap out like a leopard—
fields of wheat, miles and miles of fields of wheat.

Suburb of New York

How this came to pass:
on a meek street the lights were out,
chocolate-lovers had boarded the windows.
Everything you ever wanted
was a travesty in this villa.
Sign-painters had found themselves cautioned
that the lightening cannot do what they can do
and must do, every autumn of the year, the silent eve.

Crisp leaves trundled through the darkness
like clear messages to lovers
pure but vaguely stultifying. Out of the dark
might come a cry:
a legion of vans from the highway
a corpse in each of them, a posse from the league
cornering this little town, a time of innocence
like the variegated cubes of the days.

So you coke up. In terms of the weary
no system of protective cables
like some poem humming at the back of your mind
makes up for it,
the loss of balance:
the hollow rib-cages of hounds barking up alleys
are the vehicles of childhood coming back to haunt you
without even the meager hand of the dance
to arrest you.

Red Hook Missive

How deep you are in your own poetry
a glance out the window won't decide.
If you choose to take
the corner by the leaf
you have not taken the leaf, but what comes
after that. You will not be speaking
into the next room, when you speak,
you will be speaking into the next mind, with the leaf.

Perhaps it is a pet you foster,
and with timely inspirations make it grow
and after it grows, walk
into the next room, where she knits.
But she is knitting in the next room, then
and will drive you crazy with her circumlocutions
which always seem to
lead back to yourself. And the leaf.

You flounder in irresolution
and perhaps a class will make it better
where you diagnose
with the eye of Marx
all that you wished had happened to you.
You walk in cinematic desperation,
the camera behind the leaf.
It is May.

Then there is — the excitement of the place!
By the corner where the drugstore
sells magazines and Oh Boy gum
you are able to practice your alchemies
to the jeers of the unwanted public
and your humiliation satisfies you
because you feel it in your skin
what it was that ever happened to you.

Set Seven



Lyric

As usual, few can agree
on the mind's deep impossibility.
You flush the morning star
of the vermilion of night
and palm its halved fruit:
don't go hankering after answers.

Weaved into the solace of it
a Sunday morning presenting
its signs and directions;
as usual, few can circumscribe
the vector of moony nights
hushed, landing near the sea.

The Hero and Scholar

The mind returns like a Scorsese hero.
The brutality of its reflection

satisfies itself into maternal warmth.
The hero will lie down beside his shield

and propose confessions to the walls
that will be summarily disregarded.

The mind is like this hero at the close.
Battered, worn into a minor symbol.

*

A mind can become obsessed with the body
it delivered through its stages to standing here.

Here comes the hard part. The mind rebels;
the body is left smoking cigarettes.

The mind retires into the effigy
of the body; here, it becomes a scholar.

The body can recognize flaws in the argument.
It barely whistles as it decays.

*

The body suffers traumas. The mind suffers lesions.
The body and mind suffer traumas and lesions.

It is necessary that they cooperate
if the wild thing is to be done.

The hero responds to the call of action
and takes her into his arms, like a scythe.

The scholar responds by hinting at the door;
the scholar safeguards his material books.

*

Somebody arrived at a conclusive poem
and left it on the doorstep in a basket.

It was originally attributed to the scholar
but was poorly written, so it was the hero.

It was eventually decided that it wasn't written
at all, but that the weather had sundered it.

Soon it was well-written. Soon it was admired.
The scholar and hero are unreconciled.

The First Thing

The first thing I asked you: demonstrate
like a scholar. You bleached the linen.

The rose was there,
indeed, the thorns.

I was forced to understand the linen
as a sail. Alas, I had to do that.

*

The pride of a country is greater than its things.
Our people swelter in creased alleyways.

They are inventing a speech of the thumb
(they plunge it into the orange).

Without discourse:
to continue chatting.

*

This complexity is a mirror.
A mirror is in this complexity.

A minor has been arrested:
in lieu of his progression

a familiarity with his contents has been offered.
Therefore, he is stoppered under the dead light.

*

The blandishments, the awards, the conscious efforts
are swimming at the window. Erase them.

The stinging prick of competency:
erase it.

A walk is a sweating effort.
The world will absorb you as its child.

*

Guard, nevertheless, your materials.
Power on the page

is traducible. Avoid quarantine
yet avoid the plague. A stalk

is the living remnant of its primary disaster.
A material is silent until it speaks.

Wishing It Would Happen

I.

It is clearly time that you start wishing it would happen.
The dome of your secrecy is plangent on the horizon

its chromatic spills are as adept as a remonstrance.
Your calendar card is a hindrance to one visiting you,

the choir of your natal heart is now devouring its substance.
Please forget that no one has ever known you.

II.

These emissions are just the result of our fatal attraction;
the circus tent is folded over our belovedness

but permits the smoke of air to escape into the atmosphere.
The sky is even viewed through intelligent fibs.

We perspire in our double-nature with the prescience
that relief comes frequently and with identifiable method.

III.

The spectators are departed; we are left with the meaning
of the dance long after the applause have ended.

Believing that it is a hope that has devised our detractors
should we escape into the developing sunrise?

I think we should escape; I think, it's just a ruse
but we understand that completion is too much to ask for.

IV.

Once, our fantasies collided with a unique splendor.
Once, our hopes were submitted with a proud punctuality.

So what if the victors has decided to stay down
deep within their regions beyond badgering or skill?

There is excitement in surrendering to the blanket of water
overtaking us... delivers us to an inveterate silence.

V.

Our improviser has floundered on previous declarations:
that the river leads to oceans of the modern essence.

We accepted our commands with a breathtaking humility.
The spokesmen for these institutions... requested

our requests... but couldn't they comprehend our language?
It is clearly time that you start wishing it would happen.

The Daughter

From the silence which
was here yesterday, rose a cry
more brilliant than the sun, and yet which wove
in filaments through the sky
to collect by the puddle which reflected the sun, to which
we walk to drink. Fantastic beasts, brass instruments
celebrating a cool farewell, assembled
to converse and congratulate, and to usurp
a religion. But the sun was still blotted out
as if a great big shirt had fallen from the sky, a loose fit.

But you are still Henry
with the daughter.

Many scholars will record this
as epochal. But existing in the space
between colors, like speech
in mime, like an empty glass. Between
these thorns was a colony, up the road
which you take into your pocket, presently.
But I elaborate. What was being said
can never come back, unless
I repeat it, or unless I mean it
in a different way. And I have. I am
a scholar. But you are still Henry.

Or if I rhyme it
with ought'er.

The Last Poem in the World

The last poem in the world
is left out in the rain.
She has a name
and is failing to call.
The streets are filled
with broken pieces.
All the pieces are broken, I hear,
so I don't mind.

I am trying hard to complain
but can't, they are so cold.

So how to explain
that my sister spends her nights
out of house, in another
room,
her failure to communicate?
I am unsure enough of
the stillness of the night
and mistake it for misanthropy.

I am trying now to practice
beyond understanding.

The last poem in the world
has the name of my sister.
She is silent, and tall,
but actually laughs quite loudly.
I am waiting for the door
to open to her,
this house is so silent
(including her laughter).

I awake some mornings frozen
with no knowledge of the night.

The Method

This was offered: there should be a method
for recording all this. The courtroom swelled
until the pompousness had to be let out the doors.

Someone also considered letting the lions in.
What questions were prepared for the lion?
This was offered: there should be a method.

A penny twinkled down from the chandelier
making everyone remember the priorities
until the pompousness had to be let out the doors.

Before then, it smarted. The story opened
onto a barbarism that was building before
this was offered. There should be a method

for recording all this: our confusion, so precious.
The virtuoso was declawed. The conscience, split.
Until the pompousness had to be let out, the doors,

however, remained barred — you had to
show your face through the peephole. One then said
“This was offered!” There should be a method:

Holidays should be spent in the suburbs with the cats.
Winters are not holidays: they are spent at home.
The pompousness should be offered as a method.
(There was this, until the doors has to be let out!)

Times

Some old tune: rushlights shift.
Snatch of old tune: corner grocery.

Southern twang: revitalizing the symphony.
There is something in it reeks of a purgatory.

Like our love: protractors snap shut.
Vegetation now seems to dominate the scenery

And the ruling clouds and diamond-eyed walruses
Are slipping on this maudlin terrain.

You called. Famous plans eroded. A fist
Broke through the breeding wall of the glass

And collided with the convict (who had a card).
Cigarettes extinguished: look out for honey.

Pole-stars collided. A frank dismissal
Of the general left some sort of poultry in charge

With a swiveling eye, with a medallion
Hung around its clucking, perverted neck.

There was a story about it somewhere in the Bible,
How a dream once led to some unfortunate victory.

Hands slapped: call it a nation. A foreign
Element has invaded this sleeping bed

With a head like a lion, with an act like a culmination.
Sheer it quickly lest it become something original.

Poem

The cats give birth.
The trash collects.
The town is dreaming.

Girls are swelling.
Men are cruising.
Fish lie on their sides.

For W.C.W.
For the theatre.
For the parks. The workers

in the parks.
In the morning of exhaustion.
Coffee at evening.

The book is a tome
(it is a small book).
We are a small people.

The food is delivered.
The trash is deposited.
The family is sleeping.

In time
the poet matters
beyond adolescence, into

the streets:
the fucked creature
on the corner
blends into obsolescence. In

time
a song: how, what, whenever;
strength, eye traffic,

speech: "The windows of homes
are lined one-to-one beside me;
I am interested in a prison." And:
"She is so much variety.!" And:

“Sometimes, I appreciate caution.”

The streets are greater
than the darkness at evening.

Defeat is a longish word.

Sestina, "The Confession"

The child looked at me, and said:
"For this poem, I think
 leaves are red."
I don't know much about poetry, nor do I
even, know much about children.
The autumn ice begins to take my car.
In winter, snow will be white.

The walls in my room are not white.
I twist in my bed, as is said
teenagers do wanting to have the car.
 The coil on the oven turns hot red
in the far room. I
open a pack of cigarettes children.

* * *

(narrative)

Outside my window, in a park, children
play the game of love they think is white.
 "Like a cross, or a Christian," I
said,
" ... each one has a dinner jacket that is red,
each one has a very nice car."

A car
bullets past the park, disturbing the children.
This one, however, stops it is red.
 One boy, his face is blue and white,
disappears behind the door of the car. I said,
vanishes into the car.
 Did I say I?

The news is all over town. "I
don't know much about poetry. I
know how to drive a car!"
 "Too many unguarded children," I said.
Too many... too many... children white
spit from raging furnaces, still hot red.

So much for thinking with red
eyes. So much for lying and I
turned fewer pages white,
and among them, not a car.
So much for our children...
...it was never, really, said.

* * *

I said, "It is red,
children. I
see a car, it is white white white."

Poem

I think I am starving in my sleep
but can't be sure. Pleasures in the night

from a very different woman
are all that I ask for.

The cove of my acquaintances
can be something like a contest

or a hit parade. I think
but with unusual syllables.

The mercy that you have guided me to
in my room, it is senseless

like a spark, or fire
when preoccupied. I

have learned to adjust to this
when a fool can never claim to be a groom

and is helpless. The door
that is only an occasion

is breast-warming. It looms
to cadences

too intense for story-telling.
I wonder about the cautious things

variable in the night
and my day in peaceful squalor.

Morning reveals that hostility
can surrender its limits.

Election

There is no doubt
You can dance, but can you cook? Little more has to be displayed
Before the cook's intervention, in the time after slavery.
We understand that there are rocketing miles
But the veiled hypocrisy seems to want to sweep it all over,
The customary progress being something like weeds
And we believe it, too, to be something less considerable.
I have gorged on the cash flow and its spawn, you may say, and
More, there are canopies
Of darkness edging over this cinema
And it is fairly unstable, this opinion I am flaunting
Because of it. I am as good as the next guy. Agree:
We are fairly sure that the performance can go on without you
And, what's more, we will continue to be your champion.

Love Poem

I am a distance from the bars
Where she is blond, and I
A space-born traveller.

Nonsensical
Amid the hubbub
I am a trader in arms.

She is more than a fashion queen,
Actually much less. She is
Of the aristocracy.

I admire that in her. I admire
Her home. I want to
Live in it. I like her servants

And the hubbub
Of her servants
Turning out to greet me.

And we talk,
She and I,
Of nothing.

But her eyes are wild.
She makes, with her hands, figures in the air
In this dumb restaurant, and I

Understand her!

Letter Poem

for Lindsay Stefans

Your brooder is still alive.
However, his self is
egg-shell white.

In the center of a garden he sucks his thumb.
There is no sound here, not even the wailing of sirens.
Airplanes are like the old airplanes,
The ones of our youth.
Dreaming contedly
Upon the stars.
Like in the images of Prague you see on TV,
A false flash. A black-and-white couple.
His manuscript sent back.

He just go the brochure from Stella Adler.
He's confirming.

We Are Triple

It's embarrassing and stupid and I don't really care
About the Academy Awards!

You were shuffled onto this stage for a purpose,
They seem to say,
Leaving you bare-nosed
And crazy. So, I won't go!

So I gave a speech about the plague and my inner freedom,
How it always challenges me when I'm driving.

The Screenplay

What was it like, the walk? Blurrily through the streets
With the failed whirring of my screenplay to keep me talking
To no one, just a helpless hungry-man leaning out of the gutter
With a raised hand, and a tight-lipped proposition. I
Was preoccupied with my words, and I failed to sense the imagery
Of the tropical day, here in Rutherford, how I stood out
In my winter coat, how all the citizens stood out
In their winter coats. I was just barely breathing, so many
Cigarettes smoked, but which led to no poetry, so many
Coffees drunk, but not a single conversation. No, not a single
Conversion. I'm leaking votes. And the failed screenplay
Falls into someone else's hands (it is an adaptation
Of Madame Bovary) to be turned into someone else's prank, a sheen
Of thirty-second gloss, a poster-boy fool, and a conversation that asks
Who is God? Is there a God? Pray tell, and is someone burning?

Midas

I relax into my sin
With graciousness, with ease. The calm
And control

Are pole-stars, and I
Am at equilibrium. I am chartered
Like an ocean liner

With its gaudy, abstract
Passengers, devil-may-care
Incorporated interests, profound like a

Flat-out lie. Forget
The cross
And the weight of it, as

Obvious, the gale winds rush
Supine on the flat back of the sea, which
Recalls the story-book

Relations, the climb
Like the gull climbs, a tower
Of indivisible solemnity. Poor and

Recurrent, obsolete
For centuries, and for centuries bartered
This gold, this lump in my throat, is sin.

Washes
And protects
The peace.

Poem

As it was always the strange tint
Of perversion guided you here
Where the matter is always cash
And how to get it, alone
A circumstance to draw you from
A society of general take and need
And how you are
Now
A veritable punk
On the sofa. And how you walk
Peeling umbrellas from the ceiling
Rehearsing the strange opera
Which is depressing to almost everyone.

The Wind, the Clocks

for Walter Lew

This is how shrewd: the votes are in
and all the back-slapping is purgatorial.

There are blossoms in every tree:
fine time spent in ranged customs,
burnt blossoms that's
naïve, spectacular,
though dawn is its violence.

An effable structure
leans into arced wind.

But it's variable in New York,
what price you pick, and energy.

Set Eight



A Writer!

What the hell have I been doing, where have I been?
these past couple of days as they carted away the furniture
under an El Greco sky, under the pretext of doing it
for the firemen? What ghastly intrusion has occurred
leaving me sitting here, sucking my thumb like a writer
torn and outworn by unusual difficulties
feigning obeisance, as if the creature on the fast-track
is going to look over, is going to understand my dilemma?

Tribeca

They are looking for me, these
boys on the street. *I am not there!*

How can they expect me
to *be* Mayakovsky
if they have no sense of humor!

*

The grocery store clerk
is unusually polite:
I don't dread seeing him, mornings
I awake too early:

my mind has diligent
spiders,
which are timely with their noise. The clerk

hands me the change
in both palms

and I read about how this is propitious.

The boys, nonetheless,
follow me
back from the grocery, and

these deductions evoke Pasolini:

that I am not one of them,
and have other business, that

Pasolini
brought them his business.

*

The sun
was bright on
the side of the building, like
on a cliff face.

Novels

Your ability to speak
on a Sunday afternoon,

the sweat beginning to form
on your forehead,

typing
your latest news for the calendar:

Edmund Wilson is dead
pages before his journals
were ever completed.

You will probably tell your friends:
the Mac is a composing machine,
and court banality.

*

Expecting that day
and none to surpass it
you are made wondering about being aged:

your lower jaw
having become the prank
of some suburban
dentist.

 You don't know anybody gone that far,
(it is difficult to laugh at the ones that are nearly there)
and are thankful.

*

The summer should be
like that of Brazil,

or Jersey City,
in a novel:

so much companionship
and potential for murder

trapped among the fading leaves...

leaves which still
master their arching weight
in the pots.

The smell is resonant, humid
and water in the air seems ungodly.

And these blanketing leaves
have come from where?

breathed into the memory
to make these novels so sad, melancholic.

In a nation of the anachronistic

I am looking at you
through roseate spectacles.

I have conjured up a dream life
to market appropriately,

you are sometimes a part of it.
Now, for instance, as you are,

in your faded jeans, with your back to me.
bending to re-set a plant, one of

your plants..
the pride of your apartment.

As, for instance, now I am in your apartment.

I am not outside, where I could be
freezing, and voiceless, or smart
with a harangue of impressions. I am inside your apartment
with substitute impressions. Your name

is elaborated in my catalogue.

*

In a nation of the anachronistic
these words never spill
into conversation. Someone will find them

in a drawer, a pantry,
some invisible place, and drop
them, and mercifully oneself, into the sea.

The day might continue as it had been planned
for centuries.

That apartment would be riddled
with these opaque miracles
of attention
so much that it is inattention:

That is the limit of our art.

The goal is for the daughter of ourselves
to be undecided in her occupation,
aware that she suffers from failing nerves
and may come home
with troublesome stories:

that the schools are cold
and crammed with contention,
is no place for a burgeoning witness.

We know
that this nation
of the anachronistic
sleeps with her ruminant dreams.

We are hoping
she discovers this book.

Mayakovsky Poem I

My mother will remark
that my teeth are bad,
that I have grown thin.

How can I explain
that it's just Mayakovsky
working like acids through my veins!

I will be dead
tired
and stretch out on the couch and

*

the conversation has turned
to me. Mother, how can I say
that I am always talking
about me! that
this is my subject!

It is a subject whose scholarship
is 24-7 with no rewards!

I have cornered the market!

And my hands
would be dead on my lap
like lapdogs.

Epigrams

Night, it is early morning:
tell me about the day
with its pastel nature.

Don't tell me about it.
We will find ourselves rather disliked.

*

To you in Rutherford I give you my word
that the same poem spoken is the one sung

that the poem is still foreign
something beyond custom

and that you will have, finally
a name for your church.

*

I am planned for a walk on Saturday.
She has called
who denies me over again. But we walk.

We both understand our circumstances
make impossible "permanence in relationships."

*

Reading that contemporary Greeks have the gods...
How shocking for the poets of America!
Will someone

wake up the old one in the dusty tomes
and compel him towards taking up arms.

*

I was reminded of the time in basements
I spent in my youth.

Vision
it was dark.

This was rich.

That is the nature of our corruption:
when light is only seen as the saving light.

*

Let us remember
night into morning. The Holland
Tunnel is a tail from Jersey. I am
remembering coffee. My patience wakes.

I am even now resembling a living poet.

*

But that is impossible.
Let us
get ourselves
rather disliked.

*The brother for whom
you ply your charms
has named you vagrant
with his alarms.*

That is classic.

Tribeca

Sometimes I forget to pray
and a mediocre book
falls from my side.

The streets are covered
with the stray leaves.
I am not upset.

I continue walking peacefully, humming
as if the last day had turned
much like the rest and it has.

The walls are usually filled with poems.
I can never take them into my pocket,
which excites me. I must
surrender myself to the therapy .

*

The night is adorned
with goblins of my past.
There is nothing like history
to adopt you!

I am running, now
from these dream figures, who have
much better sneakers...
because, alas, they are so young!

I am running
to keep up with the taxi
I leapt from to confront my selves

varied, speechless, and proud,
that I bribed into sticking around.

So much
to run from
and to! The figures
of my past
continue to loiter and keep records.

*

My diary has nothing of the virtue
of a notebook sketchbook
of an artist, rather,

is filled with bills,
receipts and payments
I hoard towards substantiation. It's this humor

that is hounding me. My old soles
are in terror! It's this variation
on surprise
that they think is unoriginal

when the moment comes for action.

So I am counting
on a fruitful sleep
to invigorate my senses.
It never comes.

*

And how could it be
that that a pamphlet
can be the seed of revolution

but that a book is often
an invitation to sleep,
so many invitations, you are bothered?

This street that is lined
with your dead heroes
is merely a display of postcards,

one that you can send
to your aunt in Switzerland
to prove that, alas, you are Korean!
I mean:

there is something in the sound of waves

piping in to conduct you
like a church

portable in its very
eagerness to instruct
but with nothing like the revelations

that will always be work:

the many days that hit you
suddenly like one day,

like a faint, anarchic peace.

Celanese

The cops are speaking
Celanese: they deride his development.
The cash is carried. Quick
are the orders. The phantoms stick

to the pavement though.

Schnee

itself is not sticking.

One dreary night in Berlin
is all I remember
of you

you with whom
I now spend my days:

a poem that was marvelous
about dead, unspoken names.

Only in Berlin, with your Russian tongue
irreverent in the next room
could I pardon myself to other places.

*

The room was a place that was lent to us.

The poem was an attempt at invocation.

The Child's First Words

The gray is the gray of a thousand stones.

The miles are perceptible
inside the stones
and the names are still ringing.

The sky is alive with memory.

The road is sometimes
composed of these stones.

*

But you were speaking.

How could I forget
that you were speaking!

I must have been remembering something terrible
to have you disappear like that
and reappear, and tremble

and slow and slow and slow
tremble.

These words are ours.

(recollection)

I must have been mistaken thinking
that the sounds of my fingers dancing
could be the sound of words.

*

I have made paper
washed like the stone.

You asked why I'm always dreaming.

Because I do not believe
the things around me (including you),

and my cruelty persists.

Laugh like the raging Buddha
into the night.

The Child's Second Words

Does the city understand this?

One elephant rages in an apartment
with his works of poetry.

One could as soon forget him
but for his currency. But the line

remembers. Could it be known?

The Rilkean subject has retreated to the underground.

The Rimbauldian ecstasy is no more a trespass.

One poet, who is an elephant, has constructed
a vase of dandelions .

The capital offense is in the dreaming

the world will come around

to the wealth of dandelions.

The Child's Third Words

which weren't as pleasant

the scaffolding corrupted

long tail into Holland

ventilator is absent sky

crane "folly and crane"

These things I would love to send you

*

Normative applauses were high priced

weren't as pleasant

cannon cigars secretive havens presence amiss

bad monk high price

*

The grace of a president's apogee

It is an entertainment for kings.

The Child's Fourth Words

Of course, I am always expecting
and doing so, am out of line.

*The rose of our gardens is the same.
The rose we are viewing is the same one.*

therefore, there is not sympathy
even though we were formally others.

*We have retaliated with our sin.
We are nothing beyond a thousand pardons.*

The scent of the rose is sweet. It is a telegram,
it is an eye, and it is a whistle.

*The chorus you once heard was a paper stack.
The choices you have earned are taken back.*

The choices we have decided upon are better.
Therefore, let us live freely in the one gaze.

*It is a question.
It is a prison.*

*

Did I ever tell you
the story, overheard
at a subway terminal. It was

nothing but creaks
of a hinge. It was
better than music, as music

is doled out
by the musician. For pay! And my

music why

even the no-talented
could play it

provided I be there.

That is the story.

*

It is a question.

It is a prison.

Asian American Poem

You waited
into the room.

You proceeded
to play with my dress.

Being post-activist
you eliminated the flowers.

My respect for you
foundered briefly.

*

Confronted with the guidelines, I followed.
I needed... I mesmerized you.

The hirsute curtains
were a strange distress

but the log you were in,
it was stolen.

*The numbers were the following
69, 89, 93.*

*Beyond that
ill comprehension. We waved it!*

*a glove in front of
your glass eye.*

I didn't understand
the terms when we started.

*

Now, I do.

I am straighter than Clark Kent
and dare to say it.

Oh, laughter is the language
of the rain!

Laughter, it is time!

*It is yours, too
so dust off those dancing Buddhas!*