



Versuche: 01

**The Burnt Flower
[1989-91]**

A Day at the Courts

The bonnet-queen enters. and parrots, three, trailing
and, in some underground dance, the possum-king.
“What, in this house, is that smell!”, she is railing.
Our king ,to wit: “Your chorus, they’ve yet to sing!”

The parrots shudder, twisted at this, and not laughing.
She parries: her look. a white venus, eyes of blue-lit,
breaks forth a frothing stream, nectral thirst, gaffing
our king, in a King-sized, spit-lined net. To wit.

The chorus sings, finally, the parrots chirp applause,
and fast, the queen takes her place, charmed, front-center,
what feelings concealed, escape in a cold, lone dimple.

The possum twists: shadows, the swinging of light claws,
makes his way, and with thirst, far to earth’s center,
again, shares tea with the dead. The queen grows a pimple.

Sestina

for Thomas Crofts

1.

Like a true American, I've reverted
to a dead form. To a dead fawn,
I've hacked up and sold her vitals
as boon to a wondrous market.
Now I await the spurious retort:
Thyestes never knew one slain!

2.

What to say of a French poet slain
but to the faith he'd not reverted,
this despite his sister's retort,
high-pitched, strained, like a fawn,
which, effeminate, grated his vitals.
She sold them, then, to market.

3.

Or of his mother, who never to market
was able to sell those promises slain
by books, and experience. On her vitals
she choked. She farted. She reverted
to the old joke, a degenerate retort:
she chained him to her side, fawn.

4.

Arthur Rimbaud was always a fawn
teasing the doe as he eyed the market
each desperate Sunday, till the retort
of the continent he believed slain
by sloth, and ennui, grossly reverted
to sex, massacred his vitals.

5.

He in his heart found hate for vitals
soon, and soon he was living fawn
dreamt of times he coolly reverted
 to the child he'd pawned at market.
He believed sights of his youth slain,
 absinthe gave violent retort.

6.

And Paris itself was a living retort,
breathing, circulating its vitals,
impatiently lost to be counted slain.
 No respite for the heart of a fawn,
seeing ancestors hung at the market,
 to inanimacy cruelly reverted.

7.

Rimbaud's retort would be I've slain
a fawn. What death for a market
sadly reverted, studied in its vitals!

Book and Instinct

1.

Goodnight creatures!

Off to insensitive sleep.

In my keep,
the dogs howl logarithms from intuition,
I bring hasty memories to peak fruition,
I *am* a creep.

2.

Tonight, the bestiary

is a gray-washed sea.

Vanity

leads me to betray the ubiquitous passion,
to departures all out of moral fashion,
for no pity.

3.

By night, perhaps,

the officer has forgiven me

my truancy.

Noticed they the lacking in conversation?

My silence, taken as demonstration

of prudency?

4.

Goodnight creatures!

The company in my keep:

A basenji

knowledgeable in all eastern mystic rights,

a doberman specializing in troglodytes

realize me.

Poem, "As"

1.

As
with Caddy in Faulkner's
novel, at least that
third, I the
mute
am stuffed with futile girls
like another poet more heavy (I pass
life with less Hegel,
have mastered *nichts*, and not the steel-smith's
turn)
 am twisted
not stagnant, a maggot not dutifully
fired.

2.

Leave that
last image in a blade of
grass, by which
the souls of the paper
christs,
timorous, passively (those souls first fettered most
painless-
ly to the kingdom's sinecure) rule
mourning the passing
of the heart, that only the possum
in the night
 rules
and that the shadows in the lantern halls
am stuffed with intoxicating girls, I've lost my
speech.

“Envision...”

Envision, in the
arena, lax Zeus
bleeding each wrist
for the lost music,
pale Zeus. The
yellow child,
knee-bent at his
side, smiles,
conjures dragons.
Fitful queens,
bosomless, their
black pools of
want
exceeding to rivers. Ever-
green spires
punching pinholes
in the blue milk
of sky.

The
procession is
tolling, boredom succeeding
that spent way. The
child has jacks in
each eye. He
will not confess
murder of Zeus.

Mystic Fragment

Babel creeps an arm
shaking Minos' rattle,
taking children green
turning them to cattle.

Zeus in ennui
bleeds a soporific
stench from open wrist
– deliberate music.

Griffins in the air
drop the daily Dis
punctually to spare
punks from great bliss.

Intellectual Hymn

I

None can know
the loosening lava of my reproach,
the curious victim of my approach
through space, stained and
 curtained
 like glass.

II

Physics lie
pigeoning the forum of my sky
– Freudians in my lullaby
will tire, tooling,
 sex lost,
 my fire.

II

Fade away
the terrified people or my day
when Helen's chased the day away.
I, then, laugh, a Pi-
 errot
 again.

IV

– still in love
shapeless in the shattered glove.
God may send a perfect dove
but think the poem still
 termed, “her-
 metic.”

V.

Moles, then, see
only, that which tortures me,

the curved dolphins in old seas,
no sound, the pre-
pubescent
cold round.

Returns

Fiction betraying
found outside the
 whole life
not entertaining
 not quite
 home to many
expected inhabitants
creeps to my cognizance.

Never betraying
past or present
 then found
fatally boring
 old ground
 evanescent
assurance of interest
past the first dinner guest.

Wondrously lying
my progression
 here or
trust not denying
 the door
 in digression
an eye on the prior cares
then to the victory stairs.

Foolishly paying
some attention
 the oaths
pledged by the weighing
 high hopes
 minus mention
the yawning inconsequence
counter experience.

Insinuating
egotism?
the sort
all to berating
mean sport
of the schism
between face and content
wielded like armament

not to regard spring
illustrative
to pains
cautiously inching
from rains
to the plaintive
remember the sacrifice
witness my paradise.

Gedanke

This futile thing
an Innocence
holy fabled
hermetic sense
of emptiness

incredits things
remembered us
duly violenced
at terminus
hypocritus.

The Burnt Flower

1.

You greeted me
and time stood still
ridiculous that I should think
such sentimental things
after discussions
of Spinoza

2.

Inseparably we
walked the shrill
enveloping of autumn's link
of winter to what sings
summers to visions
of Spinoza

3.

You cautioned me
that time could kill
near everything if one should blink
a second more than rings
true to persuasions
of Spinoza

4.

And wretchedly you
paid the bill
and left the park cafe to sink
into a thought that stings
hearts of the lost sons
of Spinoza

Ophelia

The essence of Ophelia who
thanked the skein of Hermes' fire
who found the trailing to be true
of this quick and solid fire
who reveled in consistency
of a blank illumined sea

The essence of Ophelia who
danced the pilgrim's dance of life
who found the falling to be true
of a wide and tended life
who celebrated ignorance
of determinating chance

The essence of Ophelia who
wept a state of common bliss
who found the flowing all untrue
of a pure and honest bliss
who honestly unreconciled
viciously denied the child

The essence of Ophelia who
spoke of an accepting place
who found the picture to be true
of a whole and other place
who ambitiously conspired
to provide what is desired

Jazz

The fingering of time in jazz
like weather in a tonic taken deep
awakes the stifled comic from his sleep
 the cornie who in dance
reorganizes space with female hands
is now the swaying branch and singing leaf.

The sky is now the pattern leaf
the wind is now the professor of jazz
the cold is touch of mitigative hands
 the well which is not deep
in pulses strong and weak will keep the dance
forever, now, until the crowded sleep.

Who wishes when in ready sleep
to fall to frozen ground like reddened leaf
participate in winds and in the dance
 in time which is not jazz
in space which falters congruously deep
in space which drops like old, rheumatic hands?

The criminal in cautious hands
returns, a painted knight, in sweated sleep
in quest to realize the springs of deep
 inside of branching leaf
which more than symbolize the fated dance
which grow in minds like swingers set to jazz.

Before one takes the hint to jazz
to reassure the mind of hidden hands
of silly feats and turns observed in dance
 in hollows of one's sleep
the step and shudder of remembered leaf
will prove a lesson well and print it deep.

And never in this witnessed deep
have ever two grown souls united jazz
so well as those who like submitted leaf
are limber in the hands
of midnight guided all too vicious sleep
who as the pitted beast resign to dance.

The suffered dance and deep
respite of sleep define the jazz
like interested hands the fallen leaf.

So
have
you up
there begot
more mysteries of
sounds and confusions
walks and your profusions a
new way to take up your interests
to conform with my inevitably demanding
self? I am lucky there is no compromise, for
here in this dock, with no one to talk to but the old
vague and possible selves which clutter these
drawers I am not too keen on selling so
I hold onto it, again in spite of
the fact of all the silence
issuing from the spot
I leave it Shrine
of Solace I
simply
call
it

I
nor
you nor
anybody who
sleeps in these
woods could ever keep
promises from these trees (as
the forest is a lonely place) to deny
it your favorite story or the
joke for which you're
famous would be
a thing too
cruel a
too
limited
function of
confession that
will bring about true
isolation That is many things
weighing down on the heart and on the
trees so all the forest be in
a dark which is false
as there is the
space where
lie you
and
I

Houseboat

Roger Rabbit kicks off a sneaker.
Lofting through the air,
the sneaker seems to land in a plate of
cookies,
oatmeal, Oreo, but
with a quick turn,
we see the nose sink in Yosemite Sam.
The shoelaces hang from his mouth like spaghetti.
Understand

the ways beneath the ways.
The houseboat sings when the Delphic waves
prick a lost strand in the consciousness
fixing the stare as a soulless, dark eminence.
But nothing in the houseboat seems to stay.

With the refracted
light through the crystalline
proprioception
of the vamp donning her Maybeline,
the schooler with legs like Bruce Jenner,
the priest with his
CDs in his corvette,
the housewife who, apotheosized,
is a demon who should not bleed your eyes
– all, now a
trick of the light.

Know the curtain
closing on our first days
when we were taught
reality really does not matter.

In the silent

forum of our earliest thoughts
one could hear
a hairpin drop
under the shattering tea-tray's disaster,
under our first saint's lisp.
Were it a lesson:
veil the creature with a neon fiction.

The Library

1.

Having most recently escaped
That cubed cloud of books,
the Mississippi revealed
by Mark Twain's simple crooks
of invention,
the charm of boy
America
– who over heard a table-turned tale
of creeping ghost barrel.
I know the novel
is more in America.

2

That strawberry-headed girl
meets death with generous cigarette
obscuring a nose
for more refined comfort,
unknown beyond the painless throes
and aches of a liquid dream,
she,
a ghost
stalking these halls,
ignores the glance and call,
she balks.

3

Meting the rage of centuries
these walls' institution
finds fruition in a room
dedicated for all
peculiarly to talk, peculiarly to smoke.

4

The lamps flicker:
We are all Tiresias:
Wordless, we hear sounds.

5

An upright posture
enters with an air of old money,
tied around his waist
an old straw dummy,
invaluable until scrupulous
attention reveals— 1'd say
nothing his chalked, undramatic
voice has not just revealed
to involuntary audience.
Nothing, only nothing.
(I wish he were a poodle.)

6.

No Huck Finn could ignore
the leer of harelip from the corner,
document it with a strength
not betrayed ignoble, grace
of gesture and silence— insures
there is heart in that flesh.
Don't let careers get you yet!
Exist in that careless state,
it is nothing less than death we await.

Open Letter

The obscene leaf
bearing your desire
was paltry, more so
stacked contrary the

page after page
of poetry sent you
– pregnant
with resoundings of my

quest, a lumbering, gagged
achievement.
Not to harp on
incongruities

the complementary
hermitage of your
word
to my *poseur*

did provoke laughter
and a spit back
even from cautioned
devils, a phallic

critique,
chorically agreed,
deserved.
– Or to talk

of “form to content.”
Humor, lady,
hysteria
disassembled with flames the

political umbra
separating sage
from a hell-bent other
– the sadist, who

together, then
deduced
the portion proper
to your emotional cramp,

a generous third
of the postage stamp.

“Your Beauty...”

Your beauty, or the figure
of it, shaded by word
processor, now supine
on a grandpa bed of iron
frame and inhibition,
the metal clock and calen-
dar set teetotaler-
ish on the safe dresser,
smart head to the magnet-
ed interest in that
central mission, is simple
like the macrocosm symbol
in my book, the dream.

Twisted in earnest drama
ill-spent on the crowd
of kids in Sunday tow
by aunts, lisp and muscle
spasm, rewards of fickle
day may seem unsettling
like fish as compromising
meal at Lent, or dance
tainted with circumstance.

“What, With Whitman...”

What, with Whitman my great
predecessor and a music
Plato would be ashamed of
the Loreleis are mad? The
pleasant earth now reeling
arteries now coursing with
the question of cognizance
and of anatomy?

No high
curse of the Dionysian can
eradicate for me the waned
significance. Nor history
of suffragette and consti-
tutions avert the attention
cerebrally. Having thus
sent the violent fruits of
those efforts, I advocate
the political and accused
damaged couplet:

a pleasant
dress is all what meant.

“The students are all gone asleep...”

The students are all gone asleep
at twelve o'clock; presently
stirs a beetle underneath
my brightened desk; honestly
no cause could ever make me creep
below my desk, courageously,
to certify my naked feet.

It drives itself with crippled wings
against the floor, hallowing
territories taking in
a greater ground, visioning
no charms begot by fancied round
of destiny; and countering,
I do not stir and let it win.

“The time is killing me...”

The time is killing me; I cringe
at smug hero, the syringe.
Shapes which falter for my eyes
coursing arteries disguise;
irony which sure persuades
me to fury, dizziness fades.

All persons, who my company
may regret, soon bore with me,
thus inhibited I'm safe:
damning hands and temple quake.
Time is killing me. The rook
of my conscience, remedy took.

The Voyeur

The light switched on, thus
my guessing the ten minutes
passed and fooled solitude:

but my deductions falter
heavenless, and sight
inhibited by four walls and

more: the light switched on,
I saw no ghost depart, not
later, the penitent divorce.

The Scholar

Sit and think the night's not over,
She's not yet dressed, in all her colors
For the cool taste of bed. I can't see her body
Resplendent in a cool shore's gasps .
She is not yet naked in my mind.

And climbing up apple trees he used to wonder,
And watch her skin, soft beneath her touch
Time would not be his, then , but did
He know? Her skin, forever behind windows,
Her hands, forever by her side.

I wrote until the lightbulb flickered
And tried to imagine the weight of her breasts
In my hands. Her eyes did greet me, I know,
Her smile burned. But I have been there
Too many times. She walks away.

He didn't know why, in summertime,
Sweat would crawl between his legs as he watched
Each garment fall, not too quickly.
Ten years of his life spent not knowing,
Ignorant, and ten years more.

A Dream for Winter

after Rimbaud

Winter, in a railroad carriage
to Niagara (pink, with blue cushions, and
sleepily in the corners,

kisses, with goblin smiles, howling “Stretti!”)
We will leave together, and we
will be comfortable.

You’ll close your eyes, you don’t want to see
“the evening shadows with mocking faces! those snarling
monstrosities! black elves

and black wolves!” (I ask
if you don’t want a cigarette. Then you feel
your cheek scratched. A kiss

like a mad spider, runs round your neck.
You scream, “get it!,” you bend your neck.
Your neck, quick! I see, and I soon realize

that it will take a long time
before we really grab that creature
who laughs, and travels a great deal.

Complaint of Pierrot

from Jules Laforgue

Oh, that model soul
bade me her adieu
because my eyes... too?
 lacked principle.

She, such tender bread
(now a Wonder loaf)
...typical! gives birth
 to one more brat.

For, married, she is
always with a guy
who is a “nice guy,”
 hence his genius.

II. Pierrot (One Has Principles)

from Jules Laforgue

The girl decided (oh in her vain way!)
“I love you, simply, for yourself.”
O la la! what conventional cribs!
 just like art,
but let’s have calm
and indulge in our capitalist ideals!

Then, she whispered to me, “I wait...
Here I am, but I just don’t know,”
her gaze affected by milling moons.
 O la la! was
it just for prunes
we attended, in our town, the school?

Then, one beautiful evening, perfectly
ll-starred... the moment just right!
the girl dies. O la la! now that's
 original song!
You will be reborn
as we know, some time on the third day.

if not in person, then in the streams
and smells of spring months, taking
up more fools in quest of the Zäimph
 veils of the Gia-
conda, and the Skirt.
I may possibly be one of those fools.

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.

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?

The Ship of Gold

from Emile Nelligan

There was a mighty ship carved of massive gold:
Its masts touched the azure, on the unknown seas;
The Cyprus of love, hair loose, with nude torso
Stretched herself on its prows, in excessive suns.

One night, however, there came the great danger
In those clever oceans where the Sirens sing;
This horrible shipwreck inclined the ship's bottom
Toward the depths of the abyss, unchanging grave.

There was a ship of gold, and its diaphanous flanks
Displayed its rich hold to those profane sailors,
Disgust, Hate, and Nerves... they split it between them.

What is left of the ship from that so brief Tempest?
What has my heart become, but a deserted ship?
Alas! it has foundered on the vacuum of the dream.

Love's Labor

If this Christmas you feel
nothing but unique gall
at ceremonies which seem
the indecipherable sum
to a human mathematic:
the human mind is stuck
in Thought's thorns and pricks
– might as well get him socks!

If through winter's mist
shouts the routine Must
and pleasures for the kids
don't taunt experienced heads
like color for a sister's
nightgown, or dear brother's
difficult taste in hats
or brand-names for the aunts

If for the special racket
you finger the vacant pocket
swear one time you had it
now some bureaucrat's got it
to finance a mutual war
– if in department store
your spiteful credit card
whispers what you most feared

If you have marked dissent
of a conscience sorely bent
by measures you have taken
to service each guest wine
– though not wine for a king
the mind now fully swung
to conclude the season's ill
with a long, long-distance call

– Then, presuppose a pass
a lucky, explored course
between the gift of chance
and awkward social science
– a poem is what you mean:
the riddle of deliberate man
whether object or good dead
is solved by the schemer's word.