



Versuche: 01

**Early Papers: Juvenilia
[1984-1990]**

Set One



The First Morning

Shadows trembling, silent cries,
Mystic goblin steals my clothes,
I escape into the corner,
Try to shield my tortured eyes,
Try to warm my freezing toes.

Pleasure echoes, silent call,
Bird of passion careless flies
I soon spy you in the center,
Curled into a naked ball,
Lonely, luring, sapphire eyes.

*

Darting glances, silent kiss,
Shred of light breaks through the floor,
We collide inside the armor,
Jointed fire, moment's bliss,
Escapes and burns the iron door.

Ancient highway, silent wing,
Griffin rises, waters glow,
I fall soft into your cushion,
Skin awakens, bodies sing,
Mouths can speak and fingers grow.

Stars maneuver, silent climb,
Rubber trees are by winds blown,
We soon melt into the moisture,
Breaths sustain and motions rhyme,

The sky and hell a monotone.

Ivory heaven, silent cry,
Ocean seeks a word in vain,
We retire into the vapor,
Speeding through the violent sky,
Pelted by the stagnant rain.

Stark confusion, silent fall,
Waxes freeze and candles die,
We try hard to run together,
Legs entangle, falter, fall,
Upon the ice and gravel lie.

*

Drowning thunder, silent fight,
Ill-bred creatures gasp and wheeze,
I try hard to break the metal,
Meet the walls in starless night,
Rivers bleed from hands and knees.

Passions slumber, silent night,
Drafts and roaches scurry, run,
I awake without your presence,
Grounded, now a skyless kite,
Longing for the winds of one.

Little Governments

little governments
are her attractive blue eyes –
sapphire confusion

These Crying Streets

"Petals on a wet, black bough" - Ezra Pound

I'm pretty sure that it was music I heard
while slowly wandering down
these naked midnight streets
and I 'm pretty sure that if this had happened earlier
when there was no need for streetlights
and no time for dreaming
that I would never have sensed it

– somewhere in this city
he lies down and eyes
the four walls of his room
the place he was so proud of
when he was so young
and he wonders why he hasn't yet moved

– somewhere in this city
she scolds the ancient
typewriter as if it
is the devil that's keeping her
from her prospective nimbus
and she wonders if she 's dead already

– somewhere in this city
he examines the razor
intently as if he
expects the blade to respond
to his questioning gaze
and he wonders what he will see next

– somewhere in this city
she waits within the
confines of her sheets
for his figure to appear

at the bedroom door
and she wonders if he really exists

and though I 'm not too sure what one would call it
whether or not it was jazz
or something more classical
I do know that something echoed beautifully that night
throughout the cluttered alleys
and over the tortured streets
and I'm pretty sure that it was music

– and somewhere in this city
he walks a crooked
line down a lonely
side street babbling about
some stupid song

but he never really wonders about tomorrow

these crying streets are his only concern

Four Years, "The Age Demanded"

I. Trenches

Blood, blood,
The fire's on the front line,
But they all fought in any case,

And !myriads of them fell to pass,
(They never wanted it that way).

To the trenches! A bitter draft,
Though all their eyes did search the land,
Few did know to where it was,
To whom it was their guns were aiming,
To where it was
 this road they're paving
Would leave them;
 if there was an end,
And if this end was still worth saving.

Blood, blood,
There was blood on the front line,
But the blood caked thick
 in the smoke-filled trenches
And the grass did make its way.

(Their eyes could never hope to catch
The crook that took their last.)

II. The Fat Man Speaks

The Fat Man adjusted his seat again
And spoke this time with fierce intent:

“Fear, fear is what splits the rocks
And time, time is the carver’s tool!
Create the seed, but make it aware
That it, the ‘moment’s monument’
Should be a growing being, intent
To strong take sprout, take to the air;
That it should yearn to rule the sky
As it does believe no other seed dare!

“Yes, fear, fear should be the hand
That lifts the branches to the sky;
The fear of an arid seed should be
The fuel that assures its potency;
Fear and you won’t sleep too well
But nothing you say will meet regret;
Fear, with fear, and all you said
Will become a ‘moment’s monument’.”

Sp spake the corpulent being, content
Till he twisted his aching rump again.

III . Two Poems

Red, red, a verbal intensity
Flows from your mouth like juice, like wine,
Pounds the ground until the framework shakes,
Tortures the bricks until dust dribbles down.

Limp, limp, you abuse your crutches
Your complex words, for all that they're worth;
Polysyllabic, your rhetorical thunder
Is painted prattle, a starved man's verse.

Down, down, thus I can't admire
Your proud creation, your opaque front,
For your roots, as impressive as they are in numbers,
Are composed of wax, lost to the sun.

* * *

You always speak with fragments of knowledge,
Of genius! I see it fill your eyes, ·
But disordered, your train never fails to falter,
Crashes! Littering the mountainside.

But working quick, your fingers, your hands
Collected, could turn this rail-side death;
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed,
Your creation could breath as the sun itself.

So lose your breath, but spend it well,
Then time won't make such bitter bounds;
Your speed shouldn't mar your smooth progression,
Create! The balance is in the clouds .

IV. Rats

We are as rats, meant to stock
The bitter morsels left behind
By a day's worth of constant journey. We are meant

To escape to a corner, a soundless
Lightless nest, and then to fill our stomachs
Until rendered immobile. We are meant

To fear the tracks. The tracks ! The cool
Gray steel of the railroad tracks,
The given enemy, given to us

When we were pink and ignorant.

But I can see.

I can see my father, leaping out of the darkness.
He knew, "No answer

Is no answer," and it was he
That braved the tracks, kissed
The tracks, leapt

Until it felt like hell. Until it felt
"Real." He, the light of Prometheus' torch
Feared the corners as much as the steel.

We are as rats, meant to bite the darkness,
Meant to bite the bitter darkness –
Ash that cakes at our lips .

V. The Poet's Corner

Once again they enter my shop,
The old poets, to read from their “works”,
To mumble from behind the podium.

I see the actors,
 freezing outside the window,
Waiting for the bus, trying hard
To blow warmth into their hands.

The sight of the actors
 becomes most unbearable
As the poets take their seats.

*I strike the nail and am not idle;
My kin I lay to rest.*

The sunlight shifts on the flowerpot
And my attention is drawn
 once again to the window.
Square jaws, bright eyes – the actors' discussion;
Trying desperately to forget
 this part of the plan,
Waiting, as the poets each take turn
To mumble from behind the podium;
Mumble until the language
Is not English anymore.

*I strike the nail and am not idle;
My kin I lay to rest.*

A sea, a sea it is
That drowns me. My ears
Are lost among the voices of the poets,
And my eyes among the fingerprints
Slowly reproducing on the glass.

But the poets are always

invited to here
To read of their conceits.

*I strike the nail and am not idle;
My kin I lay to rest.*

I still feel arrogant
among these beaten poets
But only until
The old bus leaves.

*The sky retires to the fold,
This night I can't repress.
Rage! Rage! I strike the nail!
My kin I lay to rest.*

VI. Envoi

Sleep, sleep,
The sky is starting to smear,
Leave me with my pillow.

Leave me lying on the floor,
(I never wanted it this way).

Blue, blue,
The eyes you hold so dear,
She's waiting for you
 on the steps of the cornerhouse,
That great old house the sings when it rocks
Whenever a hard wind blows.

Sleep, sleep,
And she will soon come near.

Composed by the Waterfall

I felt the prostitute's cold dark hand
move down my chest. In fury, in a heated rush,
I struck her, the sight of her body
so becoming inhuman, inescapable,
I needed assurance. The rust on the bed,
the angry gray of the walls, the street
and streetlights, I
was not of the elements. I
was the conflict in case.
Motion was my escape.

* * *

By the waterfall it seems so far away,
that incident, and yet
correcting the time as it happens,
as common as these actions are,
creates no less than a scar, a blood vessel broken
and never mended. I think of an image of Yeats,
and how no sooner had I entered the room
reflection! And memory
bled into reality. Matter
bled into matter. and once again
the falcon couldn't hear the falconer.

Two histories for one second,
and a whirlpool won't let me forget.

Set Two



Salutation

Nymphs, centaurs, fauns
and other strange forms, danced on his forehead
and tickled the yarns, and tickled the yarns
until whiteness bled into the midnight
and crawled alone until dawn.

And the horses galloped among the spires
of black forest, on a dark promontory
and the maiden sang, only whispers – sweet conspiracy!
– this charming flesh, but beyond his grasp
thus down to Kimmerian seas.

And what was this that had caught him there?
but lunar intimations, piercing the evening air
like red whips, that scarred in starless sleep?
– the wail of raging oceans through the walls
that had set his blood fire deep?

Or was it but whispers from the other room
– that soul shuffling candles in his shadowless head
needlessly thanking for compliments,
tut then settling down to an exile's sleep
but pleased, or should be, having ramped with the dead?

Then pondered further in his quivering bed
– *or was it the sinner who weighed his breast?*
but this fell short, unrealized
for never before had ever met his eyes
the vision to support such a lofty head!

Or was it the sinner who weighed his breast?
– but missed, thought quite the opposite
having never experienced what kind Phidias wrought
in measurement, thus betrayed his thought
of the finest song, but in its simplest caught:

*The winter scans its imperious skies
it its thirst for blood and its bandit eyes
– winter scolds, and the vulture cries!*
Thus, thus inflicted by a cultured wound
he pays faulty heed to the draw of the muse!

Wallflowers

1. Dancers in Costume

We saw the purple, red and gold
flesh, that was
profundity, through colored goggles.

2. Poem

for Bob Myers

Three pieces of crisp brown paper
rest on your forehead. Fly, say to them,
that they take to the sky, blind men.

This is autumn too. Once writ,
the leaves may shuffle cross ground like ashes.

Though the moisture of our woman's breast
may someday take them back again.

3. "Le Mot Juste"

1.
The gay tomcat poled
ferry music, its hind
legs the attraction.

2.
These furry limbs, once
of mistresses, now
of distant children.

3.

The boat escaped, around
one corner, patiently
the town realigned.

Jessica

Jessica wheels around, not
through air, through memory.
This decaying surface rests on my mind
troublesome, as if growing.
This growth is in recognition
until all is decayed, then its gone.

What have you, that a lonely dancer
slowly cuts plains, until light
free in space, and time, instant
and then drawn out, is subtracted.
Crawling along, the desert is
hard, quiet, but not tacking.

Tease, and then weave, into memory.
The cloud is a white sheet – silhouette
of body, dance at will! softly.
In a second, fear hinders, don't
worry! in the absence, ignorance.
In decline, beauty snaps her reigns.

A Resurrection

I

Crows feet set with the nail through it.

II

The bramble so thick,
one could almost see eyes.

One Man

Yellow bags of green light
appreciated

The dog is dead, only
uninviting

Poem

The ego
makes-insects
of humans,
 the
tiny legs, play at my forehead

like lover's tips, rattling

two frozen stars, in a burnt out walnut shell.

Otter

for Andrea Steinbusch

I

If there vere asps, I
wouldn't see
white dresses,
 cannons, not
cloud
their naive pursuit.

II

In an eye's pace, could
be caught
an otter.

Among stones, slick
among,
 this form

would be there, and all ways
dumb.

Elegy

Emaciated dog, circling

raging, what

 bowel seeks
to spoil the earth?

Caught through morning's veil.

And there,

 desperate for sun.
picking flowers, and then
 holding them,
 what
god knows it?

What

god in the hayfields, hunting
viands?

Defense of a Mystic

“Trees? no
government was built on
these,” so
said,
 whv
snakes inhibit passing?

...it
circled the chandelier, played
nostalgia on the piano,
 coaxed
mediums,
 was
perhaps green?

 “Clay nails, the light
bends through this ocean;
and escaped the light, discovers
no current
sensation,
 thus
forward.”
Tease in the

wind,
banished the night to relics, brought
room to mean, then
no room.

Huddled under tight.

Fragments

What pretty sand. Stay by me,
I've crossed my hands across my chest,

in April. Kyongchon
told me I was pretty. In Korea,

I am not in Korea.
Walking on the beach with you Heather.

Chowder house, e passed it up.
Frail bird. Sneeze. That was Ezra
Pound. Where are we?

Drew Gardner, wearing ratty white
sneakers suddenly
appears from around the chowder

house. That Asian boy
told me I was pretty. Korean boy told me.
I was petty.

green mist. Lisa

Steal. That's how he poem
ends! That was Ezra Pound. Bird.
Drew is carving an orange

for Heather.

Jungle, the low
green mist. Toucans' colors

in my cereal
ball! End

fact. Try religion?
Drew appears from behind the chowder

house. He hums.
Imagine Drew humming.

Gods float.

from The Aeneid

Aurora rose in the meantime;
surging, she left Ocean.

Through the gates

the forms of the select youths, bathed
in light, went

with thick nets, and tipped spears, and
then

the Massylian horsemen! the sharp-nosed strength

of hounds! All forth
in a straight rush.

The queen

dallies

in her chamber.

The foremost of chieftains of Carthage, those first

men, await

her

at her doorstep, and

arrogant in gold and scarlet, foaming at
the chain bit, kicking dust, her steed

also stands.

Finally, before the
hot crowd, the queen makes her entrance.

Enclosed in Sidonian cloak, with colored
fringe, her hair

is bound in gold;

she wears a golden quiver,

and a golden brooch holds fast

a purple cape.

With like pride,
beside her Asanius goes, bouncing with big glee,

beside him the towering
Phrygian cohorts, and
in that group, he most splendid,

before other most graceful
Aeneas, who comes

with his line of troops, which he joins to hers
an ally.

Just as

Apollo, when he deserts Lycia, in winter
Xanthus'

floods

frost over-ridden. Just as

that god, who visits the land of his mother
Delos;
just as he churns the chorus, just as he sparks

the dance! Cretans and Dryopes
take part in this dance!

the Agythyrsi

with painted flesh! round
the alters. Just as

Apollo, who walks

in silence

the high ridges of Cynthus, and bands
his hair, with twisting

fingers, in green fronds
 (though his spears
make chatter on his shoulder):
 just so goes

Aeneas:
nimble as that god, with like glory on his face.

And when they have gained
 their mount
on the height of the peaks, in pathless thicket:

Behold! the
 she-goat jumps down
with the ease of falling stone,
 behold!

the stag, who bears a great weight,
kicking a trail
 of dust! across

the field,
 crossing the troops, rolling
together in concord, forsaking the

mountains.
 Ascanius,
high on a fierce steed, cuts down the middle

passes these, the she-goat! then
 the stag;
with prayers, he then begs

that in this slothful herd, a beast with spirit
be found, a wild
 foaming boar! or

perhaps
a great blond lion from the mountain.

Set Three



Blast

“Quant aux bas, ils sont inutiles.”
— Rimbaud in a letter to his family

The general's horses — HIS horses even
Are tired. Three weeks on the cavalry
And these too DIE BY THE ROADSIDE. Is there such
Exhaustion in London? The men here eat
From tin cans, FLIES
BITING AT THE NEW EARTH. Women now have
DEATH ONLY with which to argue, and sight
SLOWLY DIMINISHES, as shells burst,
Seeming ONLY in the FOREGROUND. Do you feel
Such confinement in your own home?

The air remains thick and yet
For all these trenchant things, NOTHING
HAS CHANGED. LIFE REMAINS
The SAME STRENGTH that propels EACH
SMALL INDIVIDUAL to assert.
This morning I nipped
From an enemy a MAUSER — and image
Of PERFECT BRUTALITY.
I found I did not like it.
I broke the butt off and fashioned
A gentler feeling. Both images TAUNTED
MY SENSES. I emphasize,
Both images, of GUN AND SCULPTURE
GOT THEIR EFFECTS from a SIMPLE COMPOSITION
Of LINES AND PLANES.

This war is a great remedy.
It kills ARROGANCE
SELF ESTEEM and PRIDE. It kills NUMBERS
Of those USELESS UNITS that have proven
SO NOXIOUS to our economy. It KILLS FEAR,
Refers it back to MORE BASE RELATIONS
As ONLY LIFE remains. But with all this
Know that my views
Remain ABSOLUTELY THE SAME.

A man with NOT YET
EIJEN A SCAR of his lost arm
Sings into a harmonica, his torso
ALL BUT CHARRED. His music cries, but Ah
The notes sound sweet.
Is this the falcon
Losing sight of the falconer?
Is this the sensation
Of DEATH'S PALE BREEZE
That TIGHTENS MY SKIN in this fervor?
I only hope
I return to my country soon.

(after Gaudier-Brzeska)

Pierrot

Three pages of *Cantata for a Clown*, three
more I think

possible:

 given the mode of presentation,
 limp rhythm,
myopic like a paperback supermarket novel.

The creatures dance celebrating a passion,
 well enough
intended, I think:

 but the vogue went out
 with Pound
for dribbling until terribly over-extended.

Fettered with the burden of truth, alone,
 the hero falls

 broken:
 but you are not Edgar Allen Poe,
 the poet's
praise was reserved for a praise unspoken.

And finally, the interest in old Chinese
 thought, not
profound, I think:

 as ridiculous as fish
 ate raw,
potent for a crutch of impressive sound.

But who, in this sense, is as honored as I
 think myself,
diseased with ability:

 the historical man
 of letters,
or Merlin, the local street-corner priest?

Ursula

My black coat is musty with heavy German rains
– chasing Ursula up and down the streets of
the Eiffel. My soul remains,
however, completely unscarred by that love.

Face bleeding with mismanaged adolescence
– that is, I washed my face, still thinking
I'd somehow obtain the essence
of poster-boy glamor – still shirking

the tides of reason I associated with age
framing the millions. – I followed her down
each road, a perfect sage,
apotheosizing rain and weather to her frown.

How this all seems delightful “in a frame”
– and I, repented, now foolishly free
to laugh again? The same
dark hooded criminal tantalizes me

behind each corner, with a Latin tongue,
cherishing the blade he holds as prosperity
in Jersey City – the young
naif whistling, announcing his place. It's me

ecstatic, loud down these trashy urban
streets. – Oh, Ursula, that your white touch
might someday reach me again,
me, floundering now, there, my stupid crutch

dissolving in this American rain,
my coat which survived the German rain!

Pierrot: an entertainment

A creative writing class. Pierrot is among the students, as is Maria, and Rob Fuller. There are six other students, three girls, three boys.

Teacher (intimidated): Pierrot,
the lines you submit...
let me be more subtle with it.
I am not able to understand
the relation of a Thanksgiving turkey
to Genghis Khan's conquering of China, true
the footnote here clears
"I am the phosphorescent appleseed of North New Jersey",
from its obscurity, eh...
What I mean is, eh...to start
from something simpler yet, eh...Are you
in love? Let's start with that.

Maria: Yes,
he's in love.

Pierrot: Love!
What do you know of love! And you,
what do you know of poetry!
(pause)
I should not be required to explain myself.
(pause)
What was dealt from my unconscious is what you sensed.
(pause)
A poet isn't required to "clarify" it!
(finally)
I am insulted, to say the least, by this academic
insolence.

Teacher: I am sorry.
I was just wondering, innocently,
whether you could explain the text to me,

that I enjoy it more! My wife and I
have taken to enjoying your texts,
the recurring motif of the phosphorescence,
it has us berating our ears
that we cannot hear you better,
in our years. Don't provide us
with the clues
if you don't think you must.
If the pleasure is in this purest state
unadulterated, unfootnoted, pure, and
as you say
straight from the unconscious, well, then ...
I do like your unconscious, Pierrot!
(I don't say that often about men, you know.)

Pierrot: Thank you, sir.

Maria (aside): What a lot of bullshit!

Teacher (sensing her chagrin): Yes, and...
Mr. Fuller has something
to offer, a monologue in formal iambs, concerning
the library in Alexandria, I believe,
and its burning?

Rob (nervous): There is a little Greek in it.
"Toyos ubumbos" it means "burning hair"

The building housed upon the Nile
not books, but papyrus
intended to run the centuries' mile
and bring the classics to us
upon which teacher and student smile
knowing the wisdom carried thus.

But storms are oft in Egypt now
as then, and once a gust

betrayed the spine of a palm, and down
the tree fell, as it must
leveling man and many a cow,
kicking up a whole mess of dust.

And there for days did lay the tree.
One day it did combust,
left out, so far from liquid sea,
so dead and dry it was,
burned down the whole damn library:
Apollo, Athena, Mercury, Zeus.

The elders, when they saw it burn
created quite a fuss:
“Why,” they struggled then to learn,
are the gods so mad at us?”
Till one should raise his voice, discern
the truth of it: toyos ubumbos.

Teacher (nervously, looking to the class):
Refreshing, er, in its ...humor?

Student 1: The juxtaposition
of Nile imagery to Greek mythology,
the dialects of two national regions
wedded in such a text as this,
the ending, which recalls
Mauberley, the Wasteland, what else?
The rhythm, which swoops down and takes
the reader, as in an ecstatic, living monsoon!
Not very
modern though,
is it?

Student 2: Three Chinese
laundrymen giving
paper tea cups

to children.

Student 3: Recalls
Auden in a fashion most commendable.

Student 4 (obviously in love with Rob): I liked it, too.

Student 3: The coupling
of ancient motifs with modern concerns is a lot like
Auden!

Student 4: Yeah.

Student 3: The meter...the meter... Have you ever read
“The Unknown Citizen”, a poem I believe
written by W.H.
Auden?

Rob: No.

Student 4: No?

Students 5 and 6 (suddenly, in unison):
Ooooooh. I don't know.
It's nice. Hee hee hee hee.

Teacher (baffled): Well,
thank you Mr. Fuller.
Eh, Pierrot, you
look as you have
something to say.

Pierrot: There being no fine line here
between idiots and dingbats
I would like to offer my suggestions
as to the improvement of this poem.
Seeing as you have... not a tender subject,
not something one should be too wishy-washy about,

not something one should even have to be too subtle about,
why not, hmmm...
in the interest of a better aesthetic product,
a poem one could, in a sense, read,
why not, hmmm.... Why not make it
shorter! You see,
I understand poetry
to be something someone says quick, as if
in a scream! Something
curt,
digestible...quickly,
expansive
in the moment, an object, even,
in space. Eh... Why not
the last two
verses. Lop 'em off!
The poem would be the better for it.
(suddenly)
You'd have two for the price of one, too!
(then, as if defeated)
I'd do it.

Rob (slowly convinced): Hmmm...yes,
an idea.
(growing excited)
I can see this poem turned
into something even more sincere!

Pierrot: You are quite a good poet.

There is a long pause here, the other students quite stunned. Then, en masse, they begin to complement Rob and Pierrot, timidly at first, then excessively. Alone, Maria observes. As the noise dies down, she delivers her final, disgusted, aside...

Sad shit.

...at which all action freezes, and the chorus begins.

“Three, it’s a magic number...”

Seaside Heights, New Jersey – 1957

This presents, after a particular growth:

Charging, sea-wise, the fragrance of life,
She, content, a new understanding,
The sky, caught, above the lighthouse green,
The sands, a service on this cold estate,

Her slippers, worn from seagull watching...

She could now sees families slumbering on the beach
Twelve weeks ago when winter was away...

Her eyes, hollow and dry, and gray,
And the wind through the reeds only whistling.

Set Four



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.

Set Five



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

Set Six



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— I'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.

Set Seven



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.

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.