

Personal Poem

Frank O'Hara
from *Lunch Poems*

Now when I walk around at lunchtime
I have only two charms in my pocket
an old Roman coin Mike Kanemitsu gave me
and a bolt-head that broke off a packing case
when I was in Madrid the others never
brought me too much luck though they did
help keep me in New York against coercion
but now I'm happy for a time and interested

I walk through the luminous humidity
passing the House of Seagram with its wet
and its loungers and the construction to
the left that closed the sidewalk if
I ever get to be a construction worker
I'd like to have a silver hat please
and get to Moriarty's where I wait for
LeRoi and hear who wants to be a mover and
shaker the last five years my batting average
is .016 that's that, and LeRoi comes in
and tells me Miles Davis was clubbed 12
times last night outside BIRDLAND by a cop
a lady asks us for a nickel for a terrible
disease but we don't give her one we
don't like terrible diseases, then
we go eat some fish and some ale it's
cool but crowded we don't like Lionel Trilling
we decide, we like Don Allen we don't like
Henry James so much we like Herman Melville
we don't want to be in the poets' walk in
San Francisco even we just want to be rich
and walk on girders in our silver hats
I wonder if one person out of the 8,000,000 is
thinking of me as I shake hands with LeRoi
and buy a strap for my wristwatch and go
back to work happy at the thought possibly so

Personal Poem

Alli Warren
from *Here Come The Warm Jets*

They say the public sphere has ended
they say caravans impede the valleys
When you're wet & stuck from last night
don't compose a text. If you want more of what makes you
feel, go to the market
Open your mouth say what you think you might mean
Your skin is interesting to the extent it allows you to walk into
this bar
That pink thing covers the tits or sits in your pants
holding you in place
"your body is already here for you"
Stretch the way an ape does
Dead rat near the rain drain
You don't have any kids you don't even have a bathtub you have a
stand up shower in a studio by the lake
Wash your hair once or twice a week, don't use a brush
Learn to wear contacts, drive stick
Ask for more money if they'll give it to you
but don't mind so much
you might die but you could end up alone & wobbly at 90
Help your great aunt with her frozen meal, kiss your grandmother
even if she doesn't know who you are
Be kind towards the paintings of the past, remember seasons
change your mood change the trees
Don't cancel on a friend more than once they'll feel demeaned
Len Bias died of cardiac arrhythmia
induced by a cocaine overdose
the greatest player never to play in the NBA

Keep in touch with your friends
Keep a few trinkets in your wallet to balance out the plastic
Ask your brother for some things, but not advice
If you are too beautiful to be a poet, do not despair
you are beautiful and god loves you
Keep a few bad jokes in your back pocket
along with a notepad and flask it might get you laid
If you find your doppelganger, do not despair
When marching or dancing around fire or fucking
Don't mind a little looping
but if there's no lily there's a problem
The Diggers radicalized the commons
Is the lesson to not exercise. Is it disgusting to eat fish & chips
He called it the Montana Goodbye
Yellow diamonds in the light
Greyhound, greyhound, greyhound, sleep

If when you wake you can't stand
to walk around with yr eyes and coffee doesn't help
take a nap you might wake up distinct
Spring training is over. A boat trip to some brewery
on the other side. Said I'd never drink again
We are asked to imagine a multiplicity
of phallus receptacles & the mental health of human beings
"Agriculture may have been a mistake"
Yoga won't help
The buildings around the city center throb
Paul Thek's American audience, smashed blueberry pint
Food to keep you alive
If you find yourself clawing around the apartment
Lace up your boots slowly, count the eyelets
you can see the fireworks out in the harbor
if you climb to the roof and know what a harbor is
Fitzgerald by William Bunge, Queen Mab by Percy Shelley
Cats Cats Cats, death

Your Toyota Matrix will be used against you
A wife won't be paid for the strain on her body
carrying around a womb
The strained rib, inhibiting your capacity
A case of the schizos, the thorazine shuffle
"I'm an emerging mid-career artist"
Go to army base, go to the abandoned office park
Go to the track bet on the horses with the right names
ignore your fear of the line of empty stalls
Try to teach your lover to drive a car if your lover does not know
how to drive a car
Assume the wound, disregard calls for rigor
When pressed for a tale tell the one about the couch cushion almost
burning up a house full of poets
Clean the top of the refrigerator
Read Lefebvre's 500 page book on the Commune
("first, translate the French")(first, learn French)
There has never been a general strike
Give some money for the crop failures give some money for the
habitat of non-kings

Remember the hoarders, don't have too many cats
Look at the moon
When your niece pulls candles and bunnies from wall sockets
believe her she's a living relic
When he uses the word "seminal" dismiss the phrase not the name
Consult the advice columns
Your friends are not your enemies
The dream with your head magnetic to the floor
your inability to stand up
build a program platform for culling the names
"One would cease to exist."

Greet the shopkeepers (first, find the shopkeepers)
remember the name of the carpenter who built you a
shelf is it Roger or Robert
Forgive the mice forgive the flies
Remember the debt you're living off remember being exchanged f
or a few donkeys remember how bricks get made
Treat the detritus around you as a talisman the permeable wreck
don't claim to know what modernity is
If your date uses the word "dialectics" don't get up and walk out but
remember this moment it's important
At the height of your priestly powers
don't drink beer
Astrology is real
John C. Reilly plays the frumpy husband

The enormous inflatable cylinder they're building if you straddle it
you'll wind up diseased and emotional
Remember the midwives the witches the mothers
If you lack confidence in your poetry don't compensate with
clothes
If your son buys a box of sturdy locks and a primitive weapon
Don't talk politics with your brother he cannot be convinced
eat dinner poetry won't sustain you what is a woman
Get it from behind
Learn to spell medieval
Be kind we must overthrow the government we are too tired to be
kind build an underground flood build the camp your body
A full time profession in crossing legs
one across the other then the next
place your palm firmly against yr thigh
keep the nerves down
Watch Vertigo with 3000 friends watch the three-screen tribute to
conquest and empire read more history
Burn the Olympic village burn the box stores
Celebrate the birthdays of your friends and the holy holidays even
if you're not a believer learn the tales eat the eggs
the joy of a child with a chocolate mouth
& the sun setting
& the sun setting

those men in Tulsa were racist despicable and wounded men
Don't have a husband
Don't go to Las Vegas even the old one go to the desert consider
the DEA and the department of agriculture expect blockades
Mercury Retrograde will end
but not Columbus
An artist with his boulder, men with their wide-leg stance
Try to think what a generation might mean, and epochs, but don't
believe them, visit your friends on the reservations
visit your friends in jail
Cultivate crushes and houseplants but not too many

Call your mother on Good Friday
Drink in the sun every once in a while
 especially if there's a slippery rock in the San Lorenzo
Translate your sadness to anger then be done with it
 everyone knows you're no good at staying mad
Decorate your loved ones with green garlands
 touch the mosses know the names of vegetation
The acts of parliament the elimination of holydays
 one should not rise before the first light
The people resisted the repressions
Dancing and frisking together
 the little titties of Abel Gance's dance number
 "it's important that you be luminous"

Don't talk too much about language in mixed company
Willful memory forget everything don't doubt
Hold it where it hurts
Boys don't know colors but they call them master painters
The first person to use hoodie in a poem
It's great to walk thru the threshold quit the shaking ask for a kiss
Wear opal proud wear it with your pants
Go to the ocean
Don't keep your categories straight
Baylor, Kentucky, Chavez Ravine
They call it One Big Man One Big Truck
 but I've seen a thousand of those trucks
Don't trust the weatherman
He's no fire hydrant spinner cap oracle
They may make a robot but she'll never be Nina Simone
Thick socks, open heart
Love the tiniest ways
 out of the sidewalks into the trees
 lust before dishonor

The Stalin Epigram

Osip Mandelstam
translated by Clarence Brown and W.S. Merwin

Our lives no longer feel ground under them.
At ten paces you can't hear our words.

But whenever there's a snatch of talk
it turns to the Kremlin mountaineer,

the ten thick worms his fingers,
his words like measures of weight,

the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lip,
the glitter of his boot-rims.

Ringed with a scum of chicken-necked bosses
he toys with the tributes of half-men.

One whistles, another meows, a third snivels.
He pokes out his finger and he alone goes boom.

He forges decrees in a line like horseshoes,
One for the groin, one the forehead, temple, eye.

He rolls the executions on his tongue like berries.
He wishes he could hug them like big friends from home.

Celestial Hobo

Bob Kaufman
from *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*

For every remembered ream
There are twenty nighttime lifetimes.

Under multiplied arcs of sleep
Zombie existences become Existence.

In night's warped rectangles
Stormy bathtubs of wavy sex
Come hotly drawn.

Everyday, confused in desperate poses,
Loses its hue, to prodigies of black.
There never was a night that ended
Or began.

All the Time

Laura Riding Jackson
from *The Poems of Laura Riding*

By after long appearance
Appears the time the all the time
Name please now you may go.

By after love time and she knows
And he says rose
Unless unless if not.

Or if if sometimes if
How like myself I was
Among the salt and minutes.

Some Ancestor of Mine

Marina Tsvetaeva
from *Selected Poems*
translated by Elaine Feinstein

Some ancestor of mine was a violinist
and a thief into the bargain.
Does this explain my vagrant disposition
and hair that smells of the wind?

Dark, curly-haired, hooknosed, he is
the one who steals apricots
from the cart, using my hand. Yes,
he is responsible for my fate.

Admiring the ploughman at his labour,
he used to twirl a dog rose
in his lips. He was always unreliable
as a friend, but a tender lover.

Fond of his pipe, the moon, beads, and all
the young women in the neighbourhood...
I think he may have also been a coward,
my yellow-eyed ancestor.

His soul was sold for a farthing,
so he did not walk at midnight
in the cemetery. He may have worn
a knife tucked in his boot.

Perhaps he pounced round corners
like a sinuous cat.
I wonder suddenly: did
he even play the violin?

I know nothing mattered to him
any more than last year's snow.
That's what he was like, my ancestor.
And that's the kind of poet I am.

TUESDAY

Joanne Kyger
from *All This Every Day*

Who is she
Who is she

Where are you going

I have a name I can barely say, to people
To myself, I cannot understand my name.
That is you, you is
you understand,
conveniently located. You mean in this *place*
we are to do it,
make
I mean does it have an address, will she find us there?
You mean it is in *location*?
that I pick up leaves from the garden
in recall.
This place.

Now I am left, You see right thru plastic, emerald ponds
where frogs croak, easily, in twinning youth, yellow suns
expand on their throats. How dare! The fires

that change the light, in violet of memory's flat plain
There were
the movement of capitalism, direction. More the eye
has as yet
freedom from promise, investigation. What did that mean?

Where do you think it is. In the
city is absurd. But I suspect, snake like it is coiled up
released and triggered into dream land, the star light directs
our true turning over to sleep on the left side so the back
is left free to radiate protection.

I'm going to hurry up now, take pace, embrace, swallow the sea,
all the heat from the sun, stem, moon light, in patient flow
is pulse, up, out, it was spat out as a word and grewed upon the spot.

You mean this *place*? Where the leaves are stuck in the cabbage rows?

Do you think she'll find us?
FOUND FOUND FOUND FOUND upon the ground.

Poem

James Schuyler
from *The Home Book*

I do not always understand what you say.
Once, when you said, across, you meant along.
What is, is by its nature, on display.

words' meanings count, aside from what they weigh:
poetry, like music, is not just song.
I do not always understand what you say.

You would hate, when with me, to meet by day
What at night you met and did not think wrong.
What is, is by its nature, on display.

I sense a heaviness in your light play,
a wish to stand out, admired, from the throng.
I do not always understand what you say.

I am as shy as you. Try as we may,
only by practice will our talks prolong.
What is, is by its nature, on display.

We talk together in a common way.
Art, like death, is brief; life and friendship long.
I do not always understand what you say.
What is, is by its nature, on display.

Under Flag

Myung Mi Kim

From *Under Flag*

Is distance. If she knows it

Casting and again casting into the pond to hook the same turtle

Beset by borders conquered, disfigured

One house can be seen

Then another thatched roof

On this side of the sea the rancor of their arrival

Where invasion occurs according to schedule

Evacuees, a singular wave set against stubbed bluffs

Rigor of those who carry households on their backs

Above; victims.

Below: Chonui, a typical Korean town. In the distance,
a 155-mm shell has exploded.

Of elders who would have been sitting in the warmest part
of the house with comforters draped around their shoulders
peeling tangerines

Of an uncle with shrapnel burrowing into shinbone
for thirty years

A wave of much white cloth

Handfull of millet, a pair of never worn shoes, one chicken
grabbed by the neck, ill-prepared for carrying,
carrying through

Not to have seen it yet inheriting it

Drilled at the core for mineral yield and this, once depleted,
never to be replaced

At dawn the next morning, firing his machine gun, Corporal Leonard H.
was shot and instantly killed while stopping the Reds' last attempt
to overrun and take the hilltop

The demoralized ROK troops disappeared but the handful of Americans,
completely surrounded, held out for seven hours against continuous
attack, until all ammunition was exhausted

General D.'s skillful direction of the flight was fully as memorable
as his heroic personal participation with pistol and bazooka

Grumman F9F
Bell H-130s
Shooting Stars
Flying Cheetahs

They could handle them if they would only use the weapons we have
give them properly, said Colonel Wright.

Lockheed F-04 Starfire
Lockheed F-803
Bell H-13 Sioux
Bell H-13 Ds

More kept coming. More fell

Is distance. If she could know it

Citizens to the streets marching

Their demands lettered in blood

The leader counters them

With gas meant to thwart any crowd's ambition

And they must scatter, white cloths over their faces

Every month on the 15th, there is an air raid drill sometime during

the day, lasting approximately 15 minutes. When the siren goes off everyone must get off the streets. An all clear marks the end of the drill.

And how long practice how long drill to subvert what borders are

What must we call each other if we meet there

Brother sister neighbor lover go unsaid what we are

Tens of thousands of names

Go unsaid the family name

Sun, an affliction hitting white

Retinue of figures dwindling to size

The eye won't be appeased

His name stitched on his school uniform, flam

Flame around what will fall as ash

Kerosene soaked sin housing what will burn

fierce tenement of protest

Faces spread in a field

On the breeze what might be azaleas in full bloom

Composed of many lengths of bone

Robin's Hood

Yedda Morrison
from *Girl Scout Nation*

Forest War
Fighter Spore
Genen Mock
Pop Rocks
Scissor Scout
Girl Ground
Ground In
Paper Wing
Word Tempt
Compass Bent
Cleaver Kit
Kit Fox
Fox Knows
News Hunt
Ogress Doe
Older Eggs
Lady Flora
Foreign flight
Fight was
Was I
I was
A Fighter
Wasn't I?

no
Body no
Carbonate no
Twist no
Fleshhook no
Wrist ring no
Branching no
Rivulet no
Pulse daisy no
Cheek paste no
Trunk and sand crab no
Chloroform no
Puff flag no
Stow web no
Indent no
Hush hush no

Hymen noose no
Ascension no
Whiteout no
Heat column no
Shimmer bolt no
Tulle no
Funeral treetops no
Slack mange no
Hooding no
Post Op no
Breath bubble no

Tongue torque no
Feather no
Dark spot no
Kidney hash no
Legs and buttocks no
Hardly fists no
Bone nest no
Pinch hit no
Through line no
Licklog no
Membrane no
Mouth paw no
Out maw no
Fought causer no
Bodice gauze no
Limb dope no
Fizz air no
Hair filch no
Purchase no
Torn pi no
Heartleaf no
Sparkle nail no
Derribon ceremony no
Inwind no
Nada no
Nothing

Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note

Amiri Baraka

from *The Dead Lecturer*

Lately, I've become accustomed to the way
The ground opens up and envelopes me
Each time I go out to walk the dog.
Or the broad edged silly music the wind
Makes when I run for a bus...

Things have come to that.

And now, each night I count the stars.
And each night I get the same number.
And when they will not come to be counted,
I count the holes they leave.

Nobody sings anymore.

And then last night I tiptoed up
To my daughter's room and heard her
Talking to someone, and when I opened
The door, there was no one there...
Only she on her knees, peeking into

Her own clasped hands

From *Muse & Drudge*

Harryette Mullen

Jesus is my airplane
I shall feel no turbulence
though I fly in a squall
through the spleen of Satan

in the dream the book beckoned
opened for me to the page
where I read the words
that were to me a sign

houses of Heidelberg
outhouse cracked house
destroyed funhouse lost
and found house of dead dolls

two-headed dreamer
of second-sighted vision
through the veil
she heard her call

they say she alone smeared herself
wrote obscenities on her breast
snatched nappy patches from her scalp
threw her own self on a heap of refuse

knowing all I have is dearly bought
I'll take what I can get
pick from the ashes
brave the alarms

another video looping
the orange juice execution
her brains spilled milk
on the killing floor

if she entered freely
drank freely – did that not mean
she also freely gave herself to one and all –
then when was she no longer free?

we believed her
old story she told
the men nodded at her face
dismissing her case

debit to your race
no better for you – lost
gone off demented
throwing unevenhanded

disappeared undocumented workhorse
homeless underclass breeder
dissident pink collard criminal
terminal deviant indigent slut

riveted nailed to the table
crumped muddied dream stapled
in her face mapped folded back
to the other side of the facts

that her body bleeds
is no surprise
a fragment bursts and color seeps
through her camouflage

bannered behind her
braid unfurled
extended she lean aiming
breaking the ribbon

kink konk crisp crinkle
my monkey's off his head
he wears my hat that
helps me think a little

zipped into high-tech overalls
suited to her lightfoot boots
kicking her heels up
and away beyonder

just as I am I come
knee bent and body bowed
this here's sorrow's home
my body's southern song

cram all you can
into jelly jam
preserve a feeling
keep it sweet

so beautiful it was
presumptuous to alter
the shape of my pleasure
in doing or making

proceed with abandon
finding yourself where you are
and who you're playing for
what stray companion

LYNCH 1

Aime Cesaire
from *Solar Throat Slashed*
translated by A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman

Why does spring grab me by the throat? what does it want of me? so what if it does not have enough spears and banners! I jeer at you spring for flaunting your blind eye and your bad breath. Your debauchery your corrupt kisses. Your peacock's tail makes spirit tables turn with patches of jungle (fanfares of marching sap) but my liver is more acidic and my venefice stronger than your malefice. Lynch it's 6 PM in the mud of the bayou it's a black handkerchief fluttering atop a pirate ship mast it's the strangulation point of a fingernail in the carmine of an interjection it's the pampa it's the queen's ballet it's the sagacity of science it's the unforgettable coitus. O lynch salt mercury and antimony! Lynch is the blue smile of a dragon enemy of angels lynch is an orchid too lovely to bear fruit lynch is an entry into matter lynch is the hand of the wind bloodying a forest whose trees are galls brandishing in their hands the living flame of their castrated phalli, lynch is a hand sprinkled with the dust of precious stones, lynch is a release of hummingbirds, lynch is a lapse, lynch is a trumpet blast a broken gramophone record a cyclone's tail dragged by the pink beaks of raptors. Lynch is a gorgeous chevelure that dread flings into my face lynch is a temple destroyed by roots and gripped by a virgin forest. O lynch loveable companion beautiful squirted eye huge mouth mute unless a jerking there spills the delirium of mucus weave well, lightning bolt, on your loom a continent exploding into islands an oracle contortedly slithering like a scolopendra a moon settling in the breach the sulfur peacock ascending in the succinct murderess-hole of my assassinated hearing.

THE COMPLAINT: WHAT ARE YOU SOME KIND OF

Steve Carey
from *The Selected Poems of Steve Carey*

Actuarial plight Nostradamus Devil Bat
Overzealous mighty-winged flabbergast
Wholesale heathen plot worry wort
Sci-fi lexicon fomenter hassle-free
Quipster of the ring, of the planetary system
Of your choice, of the regrettable necessity
Of your selection, lover of the little village
You choose not to live in, sensationalist (tra-la)
On the wing (tra-la), ever-breaded ever-beered contemporary
Of the witless, confessor of regional horrors,
Noxious last-man-in-this-town-who'd-smite-a-fly,
The delegate slated to spot the pattern,
Overramped reader of the champ, the clue
To all sensory discharge, protean scorn reposed,
A fine thing awry in your youth and others',
Orphan of the phone, TV, stereo, stove, etcetera, yet
Promoter of the hack's activities, duffer's delight,
Haver of your own way, helloer of fortunes,
Traveled-fast hyperbole to hell and gone,
Globe-wide uncle of one, sensational at speed
And sleep, twister of like you did last summer,
Absent weekender, (and) faulty diner
Though deprecating in that, more fortunate
Than unfortunate kin, user of lotions
And marginal balms, believer, muscler in-er,
Frayer, no more than most, of fabulous nerves
In the cause of the fabulous, half-assed fighter
Of the swine, tippler, hoper for the best
While naughty in the tale, puker in the room,
Absolutist, habitual fucker, fucker
Of the young, Halifax (type) charmer, trickster there
In the wind, freezer of you monkeys, incipient whimperer
Of tummyache, any ache, shover of it regardless
Into your pocket, what-the-heller sometimes,
One-time holocaust fortifier, seen murderous Russian
With briefcase, meeter at the park in twenty minutes,
Thinker of something else, mondo très flagranté,
Endorser, snuffer, in service to the fundament,
Turner, attender, lighter of the candles,
Blower of the candles out, some ugly,

Troublesome divine, lip-quick, occasionally poco loco,
Sucker, oft winter fond, sooth various, humble sinker,
Par considering, comer, turd, a good example,
Known chump, humper, two or three bricks shy of a aload,
Thermal crackpot, wishy-wash, twit, object of the annual,
Of another, Bahama-bound, neo-passé poontang.
Lunge-monger, thrust-hustler, quasi-objectionable
Quasi-aged quasi-rookie, one of the boys and girls,
Binky, you admit, to your friends, hapless, potentially
Awarded winner, ropey of soul, rank specialist, signifier,
Roiling worm, symptom-listing, self-effulgent, no-show,
Knower of exactly how you feel (really), sleeper, boozier,
Blank-head, some Bub or other, lover, quick-draw, pleaser,
Size-queen or concerned consumer, wondrous in your turn,
Wrong, haunted, fraught, tamed, papacy bewildered,
Someone rarely associated with something (else), yet
A devoted supporter of just that now, one that once
Shook the hand that shook the hand of the one that's sure enough
Now President, sooth-brooder, a fool humid tube, trumpet
To the fluke, reacher, neglectful, fruit-thinker, juiced,
Mourner, bruin-typed, oaf-souled, heavenly described,
Vapid grappler, feeler deeply, bone so, outré,
Vigorous hand washer, resenter of children or others
Openly fascinated, feckless defendant, drummin' man,
"Fascinatin' Rhythm" whistler, buff, let me
Have a biter, painter of things a certain blue,
Kicker and screamer, squabbler, to this day,
As I say, digger of that crazy beat?

Personal Poem #9

Ted Berrigan
from *The Sonnets* and *Many Happy Returns*

It's 8:54 a.m. in Brooklyn it's the 26th of July and
it's probably 8:54 in Manhattan but I'm
in Brooklyn I'm eating English muffins and drinking
Pepsi and I'm thinking of how Brooklyn is New
York City too how odd I usually think of it as
something all its own like Bellows Falls like Little
Chute like Uijongbu

I never thought on the Williams-
burg Bridge I'd come so much to Brooklyn
just to see lawyers and cops who don't even carry
guns taking my wife away and bringing her back

No

and I never thought Dick would be back at Gude's
beard shaved off long hair cut and Carol reading
her books when we were playing cribbage and
watching the sun come up over the Navy Yard
across the river

I think I was thinking when I was
ahead I'd be somewhere like Perry Street erudite
dazzling slim and badly loved
contemplating my new book of poems
to be printed in simple type on old brown paper
feminine marvelous and tough

from *Threadsuns*
Paul Celan

Your eyes in the arm
the
asunder-burned,
to go onrocking you, in the fly-
ing heartshadow, you.

Where?

Arrange the place, arrange the word.
Extinguish. Measure.

Ash-brightness, ash-el—swal-
lowed.

Mismeasure, unmeasured, misplaced, unworded,

unwo

ash-
hiccup, your eyes
in the arm,
always.

Frank O'Hara

For the Chinese New Year
& For Bill Berkson

*One or another
Is lot, since we fall apart
Endlessly, in one motion depart
From each other— DH Lawrence*

Behind New York there's a face
and it's not Sibelius's with a cigar
it was red it was strange and hateful
and then I became a child again
like a nadir or a zenith or a nudnik

what do you think this is my youth
and the aged future that is sweeping me away
careless and gasless under the Sutton
and Beekman Places towards a hellish rage
it is there that face I fear under ramps

it is perhaps the period that ends
the problem as a proposition of days of days
just an attack on the feelings that stay
poised in the hurricane's center that
eye through which only camels can pass

but I do not mean that tenderness doesn't
linger like a Paris afternoon or a wart
something dumb and despicable that I love
because it is silent oh what difference
does it make me into some kind of space statistic

a lot is buried under that smile
a lot of sophistication gone down the drain
to become the mesh of a mythical fish
at which we never stare back never stare back
where there is so much downright forgery

under that I find it restful like a bush
some people are outraged by cleanliness
I hate the lack of smells myself and yet I stay
it is better than being actually present
and the stare can swim away into the past

can adorn it with easy convictions rat
cow tiger rabbit dragon snake horse sheep
monkey rooster dog and pig "Flower Drum Song"
so that nothing is vain not the gelded sand
not the old spangled lotus not my fly

which I have thought about but never really
looked at well that's a certain orderliness
of personality "if you're brought up Protestant
enough a Catholic" oh shit on the beaches so
what if I did look up your trunks and see it

II

then the parallel becomes an eagle parade
of Busby Berkeleyites marching marching half-toe
I suppose it's the happiest moment in infinity
because we're dissipated and tired and fond no
I don't think psychoanalysis shrinks the spleen

here we are and what the hell are we going to do
with it we are going to blow it up like daddy did
only us I really think we should go up for a change
I'm tired of always going down what price glory
it's one of those timeless priceless words like come

well now how does your conscience feel about that
would you rather explore tomorrow with a sponge
there's no need to look for a target you're it
like in childhood when the going was aimed at a
sandwich it all depends on which three of us are there

but here come the prophets with their loosening nails
it is only as blue as the lighting under the piles
I have something portentous to say to you but which
of the papier-mache languages do you understand you
don't dare to take it off paper much less put it on

yes it is strange that everyone fucks and every
one mentions it and it's boring too that faded floor
how many teeth have chewed a little piece of the lover's
flesh how many teeth are there in the world it's like
Harpo Marx smiling at a million pianos call that Africa

call it New Guinea call it Poughkeepsie I guess

it's love I guess the season of renunciation is at "hand"
the final fatal hour of turpitude and logic demise
is when you miss getting rid of something delouse
is when you don't louse something up which way is the inn

III

I'm looking for a million-dollar heart in a carton
of frozen strawberries like the Swedes where is sunny England
and those fields where they stillbirth the wars why
did they suddenly stop playing why is Venice a Summer
Festival and not New York were you born in America

the inscrutable passage of a lawn mower punctuates
the newly installed Muzak in the Shubert Theatre am I nuts
or is this the happiest moment of my life who's arguing it's
I mean 'tis lawd sakes it took daddy a long time to have
that accident so Ant Grace could get completely into black

didn't you know we was all going to be Zen Buddhists after
what we did you sure don't know much about war-guilt
or nothin and the peach trees continued to rejoice around
the prick which was for once authorized by our Congress
though inactive what if it had turned out to be a volcano

that's a mulatto of another nationality of marble
it's time for dessert I don't care what street this is
you're not telling me to take a tour are you
I don't want to look at any fingernails or toes
I just want to go on being subtle and dead like life

I'm not naturally so detached but I think
they might send me up any minute so I try to be free
you know we've all sinned a lot against science
so we really ought to be available as an apple on a bough
pleasant thought fresh air free love cross-pollenization

oh oh god how I'd love to dream let alone sleep it's night
the soft air wraps me like a swarm it's raining and I have
a cold I am a real human being with real ascendancies
and a certain amount of rapture what do you do with a kid
like me if you don't eat me I'll have to eat myself

it's a strange curse my "generation" has we're all
like the flowers in the Agassiz Museum perpetually ardent
don't touch me because when I tremble it makes a noise

like a Chinese wind-bell it's that I'm seismographic is all
and when a Jesuit has stared you down for ever after you clink

I wonder if I've ever really scrutinized this experience like
you're supposed to have if you can't type there's not much
soup left on my sleeve energy creative guts ponderableness
lent is coming in imponderableness "I'd like to die smiling" ugh
and every small tiptoe is crossing the threshold away

whither Lumumba whither oh whither Gauguin I
have often tried to say goodbye to strange fantoms I
read about in the newspapers and have always succeeded
though the ones at "home" are dependent on Dependable
Laboratory and Sales Company on Pulaski Street strange

I think it's goodbye to a lot of things like Christmas
and the Mediterranean and halos and meteorites and villages
full of damned children well it's goodbye then as in Strauss
or some other desperately theatrical venture it's goodbye
to lunch to love to evil things and to the ultimate good as "well"

the strange career of a personality begins at five and ends
forty minutes later in a fog the rest is just a lot of stranded
ships honking their horns full of joy-seeking cadets in bloomers
and beards it's okay with me but must they cheer while they honk
it seems that breath could easily fill a balloon and drift away

scaring the locusts in the straggling grey of living dumb
exertions then the useful noise would come of doom of data
turned to elegant decoration like a strangling prince once ordered
no there is no precedent of history no history nobody came before
nobody will ever come before and nobody ever was that man

you will not die not knowing this is true this year

RED SHIFT
by Ted Berrigan

Here I am at 8:08 p.m. indefinable ample rhythmic frame
The air is biting, February, fierce arabesques
 on the way to tree in winter streetscape
I drink some American poison liquid air which bubbles
 and smoke to have character and to lean
In. The streets look for Allen, Frank, or me, Allen
 is a movie, Frank disappearing in the air, it's
Heavy with that lightness, heavy on me, I heave
 through it, them, as
The Calvados is being sipped on Long island now
 twenty years almost ago, and the man smoking
Is looking at the smilingly attentive woman, & telling.
Who would have thought that I'd be here, nothing
 wrapped up, nothing buried, everything
Love, children, hundreds of them, money, marriage-
 ethics, a politics of grace,
Up in the air, swirling, burning even or still, now
 more than ever before?
Not that practically a boy, serious in corduroy car coat
 eyes penetrating the winter twilight at 6th
& Bowery in 1961. Not that pretty girl, nineteen, who was
 going to have to go, careening into middle-age so,
To burn, & to burn more fiercely than even she could imagine
 so to go. Not that painter who from very first meeting
I would never & never will leave alone until we both vanish
 into the thin air we signed up for & so demanded
To breathe & who will never leave me, not for sex, nor politics
 nor even for stupid permanent estrangement which is
Only our human lot & means nothing. No, not him.
There's a song, "California Dreaming", but no, I won't do that
I am 43. When will I die? I will never die, I will live
To be 110, & I will never go away, & you will never escape from me
 who am always & only a ghost, despite this frame, Spirit
Who lives only to nag.
I'm only pronouns, & I am all of them, & I didn't ask for this
 You did
I came into your life to change it & it did so & now nothing
 will ever change
That, and that's that.
Alone & crowded, unhappy fate, nevertheless
 I slip softly into the air
The world's furious song flows through my costume.

Alexander Blok

Those born in obscure times
Do not remember their way.
We, children of Russia's frightful years
Cannot forget a thing.

Incinerating years!, do you bring tidings
of madness or of hope?
The days of war, the days of freedom
Have left a bloody sheen on our faces.

There is a muteness - the tocsin bell
Has made us close our lips.
In our hearts, once so ardent,
There is a fateful emptiness.

Let the croaking ravens
Take flight above our deathbed -
O Lord, O Lord, may those more worthy than us,
Behold Thy kingdom!

September 8, 1914

Anna Ahkmatova

Mayakovsky in 1913

I never knew you in the days of your glory,
Your turbulent dawn in all I know;
But perhaps I'm qualified to tell your story
At last of that day from long ago.
The lines of your powerful verse were filled with
Strange new voices we'd never heard . . .
And your youthful hands were never still as
You raised up a terrible scaffold of words.
Whatever you touched was no longer the same as
The thing it had been before that time,
All that you censured and covered in shame was
Condemned to death in your thunderous lines.
So often alone and disaffected,
You impatiently tried to seep up fate,
For already you freely, gladly accepted
That soon you must go and take part in the great
Struggle. And as you read an answer
Of rumbling dissent could be heard all round
And the angry rain eyed you askance as
You debated at length with the outraged town.
And now a name, unknown, obscure,
Was flashing around the stuffy hall,
And all through the land today it endures,
Reverberates still like a warrior's call.

Anna Ahkmatova

For Alexander Blok

I came to the poet as a guest.
Exactly at noon. On Sunday.
Beyond the window, frost,
quiet in the room's space.

And a raspberry tinted sun
above tangles of blue smoke...
How clearly the taciturn
master turns, on me, his look!

His eyes are of that kind
remembered by one and all:
Better take care, mind:
don't gaze at them at all.

But I remember our words,
smoky noon, of a Sunday,
in that high grey house
by the Neva's sea-way.

Anna Akhmatova

There are Four of Us

Oh Muse of Weeping...
— Marina Tsvetaeva

... So now I have renounced it all —
soil and all the blessings of the ground.
The spirit-guardian of “this place” — its
heart-ghost — is an old tree stump like
pockmarked steel.

All of us in life were only guests: to live
our lives was this — my only habit.
And now I think I hear two voices calling
to each other from an aerial pathway.

Two voices... but against the eastern wall,
still in my line of tangled raspberries,
the fresh, dark flowering of an obscure
elder branch, as if it were a letter from Marina.

*19-20 November 1961, Leningrad
,the hospital in the harbor. In a delirium.*

translated by Tony Brinkley

Nikolay Gumilyov

Sonnet

I'm sick, for sure: deep darkness holds my heart,
I'm bored with the people and the stories,
And dream of treasures of the kingdoms, glories,
And yataghans, all covered with blood.

It seems to me – and this is no fraud –
A Tartar, squint, was one of my begetters,
That fierce Hun. And the infection's fetters
Through length of ages, are my steady bond.

I'm mute. I pine... They vanish – walls of home:
There is a sea in spots of silver foam,
The sun of evening – on the stones' lead,

The city, with blue domes, like its wardens,
With flourish and decor of jasmine gardens,
We'd fought right there ... Oh, yes! And I was killed!

Boris Pasternak

Hamlet

The buzz subsides. I have come on stage.
Leaning in an open door
I try to detect from the echo
What the future has in store.

A thousand opera-glasses level
The dark, point-blank, at me.
Abba, Father, if it be possible
Let this cup pass from me.

I love your preordained design
And am ready to play this role.
But the play being acted is not mine.
For this once let me go.

But the order of the acts is planned,
The end of the road already revealed.
Alone among the Pharisees I stand.
Life is not a stroll across a field.

Boris Pasternak

In Memory of Marina Tsvetaeva

Dismal day, with the weather inclement.
Inconsolably rivulets run
Down the porch in front of the doorway;
Through my wide-open windows they come.

But behind the old fence on the roadside,
See, the public gardens are flooded.
Like wild beasts in a den, the rainclouds
Sprawl about in shaggy disorder.

In such weather, I dream of a volume
On the beauties of Earth in our age,
And I draw an imp of the forest
Just for you on the title-page.

Oh, Marina, I'd find it no burden,
And the time has been long overdue:
Your sad clay should be brought from Yelabuga
By a requiem written for you.

All the triumph of your homecoming
I considered last year in a place
Near a snow-covered bend in the river
Where boats winter, locked in the ice.

What can I do to be of service?
Convey somehow your own request,
For in the silence of your going
There's a reproach left unexpressed.

A loss is always enigmatic.
I hunt for clues to no avail,
And rack my brains in fruitless torment:
Death has no lineaments at all.

Words left half-spoken, self-deception,
Promises, shadows-all are vain,
And only faith in resurrection
Can give the semblance of a sign.

Step out into the open country:
Winter's a sumptuous funeral wake.
Add currants to the dusk, then wine,
And there you have your funeral cake.

The apple-tree stands in a snowdrift
Outside. All this year long, to me,
The snow-clad city's been a massive
Monument to your memory.

With your face turned to meet your Maker.
You yearn for Him from here on Earth,
As in the days when those upon it
Were yet to appreciate your worth.

1943

Translated by Alex Miller

Boris Pasternak

To Anna Akhmatova

It seems I'm choosing the essential words
That I can liken to your pristine power.
And if I err, it's all the same to me,
For I shall cling to all my errors still.

I hear the constant patter on wet roofs,
The smothered eclogue of the wooden pavements.
A certain city comes clear in every line,
And springs to life in every syllable.

The roads are blocked, despite the tide of spring
All round. Your clients are a stingy, cruel lot.
Bent over piles of work, the sunset burns;
Eyes blear and moist from sewing by a lamp.

You long for the boundless space of Ladoga,
And hasten, weary, to the lake for change
And rest. It's little in the end you gain.
The canals smell rank like musty closet-chests.

And like an empty nut the hot wind frets
Across their waves, across the blinking eyelids
Of stars and branches, posts and lamps, and one
Lone seamstress gazing far above the bridge.

I know that eyes and objects vary greatly
In singleness and sharpness, yet the essence
Of greatest strength, dissolving fear, is the sky
At night beneath the gaze of polar light.

That's how I call to mind your face and glance.
No, not the image of that pillar of salt
Exalts me now, in which five years ago
You set in rhymes our fear of looking back.

But as it springs in all your early work,
Where crumbs of unremitting prose grew strong,
In all affairs, like wires conducting sparks,
Your work throbs high with our remembered past.

1929 Translated by Eugene M. Kayden

Boris Pasternak

Nobel Prize

Like a beast in a pen, I'm cut off
From my friends, freedom, the sun,
But the hunters are gaining ground.
I've nowhere else to run.

Dark wood and the bank of a pond,
Trunk of a fallen tree.
There's no way forward, no way back.
It's all up with me.

Am I gangster or murderer?
Of what crime do I stand
Condemned? I made the whole world weep
At the beauty of my land.

Even so, one step from the grave,
I believe that cruelty, spite,
The powers of darkness will in time
Be crushed by the spirit of light.

The beaters in a ring close in
With the wrong prey in view.
I've nobody at my right hand,
Nobody faithful and true.

And with such a noose on my throat
I should like for one second
My tears to be wiped away
By someone at my right hand.

translated by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France

Vladimir Mayakovsky

A Cloud in Trousers
Prologue

Your thought,
Fantasizing on a sodden brain,
Like a bloated lackey on a greasy couch sprawling,--
With my heart's bloody tatters, I'll mock it again.
Until I'm contempt, I'll be ruthless and galling.

There's no grandfatherly fondness in me,
There are no gray hairs in my soul!
Shaking the world with my voice and grinning,
I pass you by, -- handsome,
Twenty-two-year-old.

Gentle souls!
You play your love on the violin.
Crude ones beat it out on the drums violently.
But can you turn yourselves inside out, like me,
And become just two lips entirely?

Come and learn,--
You, decorous bureaucrats of angelic leagues!
Step out of those cambric drawing-rooms

And you, who can leaf your lips
Like a cook leafs the pages of her recipe books.

If you wish,--
I'll rage on raw meat like a vandal
Or change into hues that the sunrise arouses,
If you wish,--
I can be irreproachably gentle,
Not a man, -- but a cloud in trousers.

I refuse to believe in Nice blossoming!
I will glorify you regardless,--
Men, crumpled like bed-sheets in hospitals,
And women, battered like overused proverbs.

John Coletti

Deep Code

Panya in cuffs
tuned up
f-inch
banana jack
phone Wrangler
palm blood
slot-car
fingertip
Rhino
Little Shits
to Horrified Man
(I can only cry at the movies
or work)
restaurant
aerosol
lepidolite
periwinkle
chalked up
ship
present
thick
thawing
chemical frost
getting laid
the cold it takes away
adjusting to a loose, black sweater
framed by
gravel, unnatural warmth
hollowed muscles
soft lips
your neck, a bicep
& tremors
playing air piano
for a map of South America

105 90 75

60 45 30

that exquisite

porcelain pen knife

w/ a painted donkey on the end

raising up from the pack

I saw a picture of Schumann the other day

& remembered

my hair clippings

paw bone

paw bone

paw bone

paw bone

how graphite shines

when you color on

color rattled like a paper match

black white black

velvet squares

abstracted

geometrically

Kermit Pez

Barney Pez

glowing

in lap

life can be tolerable

if this is the best and worst of it

yr bruised

infant cheek

frozen hands

shady eyeliner

Bosman's

wrinkled green

loam

unclean nostrils

playing

at a game of

underground dust

subtle, poor

& masochistic

a knee with a mane

trampling
over
the jelly roll quilt
everyone looks away
I thought today
that a week's stay
in a mental unit
might be a relief
god help us all
chew local
slipper
what? this is it?
just to be
at ease
w/ not being at ease
a looseness w/ punch holes
as you count
lines in flour
or the semiotics of
likelihood
in a world of
unnatural
privillage
but he was here
and I was there
to keep you
whether you would be kept or not

John Coletti

Get Up. You Always Do.

We are the Adventurers
& we are looking for a dog
but we are not the sky
looking for our heads
to be just one stare
I made you a picture of a bird
penciled in tanagers
pigeons at sea
then one much smaller I call
folded lakes
Andy Rooney's nephew
topless on a
Coney Island bench
licking 10oz road erasers
in Coke bottle glasses
just be ok for me tonight
East River's strung out headlights
still pushing through
covered buttons
I came to shoot hippos
but the digital world
barfed & won a bit
candy is delicious
you should eat some every day

Alice Notley
from In the Pines

5

The intention of the organism is to know its life. Is that right? says the dead man.

Your eyes are like times
your eyes are like people
your eyes are like failures to see

my eyes are like rhymes
my mother's back yard
covered with pine needles
stabbing your eyes

on the ground it's misty night.
The fence is silver-sharp spikes

on the edge where I can't see
on the periphery.

By chance I was born to appear to you to be a woman, my mother's daughter, she hears me small girl calling to her in trouble on the phone in her dream, dressed up like a choir. I forgot to tell her I was everyone. If she loves me it isn't because of the intention of the organism. It is because of the love, if you are in it you know. Then at that time that's what you know. Then in that time you don't have to know. That's why I'm not telling a story.

You don't have to solve the murder. You did it. You sold everyone a human killed by a human.

Bent over backwards, because the X-rayed beloved has dust on it. It's such a dusty rat.

I lie here his eyes dry flames and the sisters of luck.

It was my luck to be tormented by the people advancing themselves over others. It was your luck. Whose luck was it? This is going nowhere. Because I'm dead or because it's the human situation you say I can't see.

There's no such thing as a situation.

What about your illness? you say. Oh, the plot.

And now he is leaving and going away. Part of the murder of my love.

It's somewhere in a torndown house that's now the post-office.

She shook it and broke it.

It's below the house that isn't there.

No one but he's someone to me, and if only these relations remain, after all I've done and known, why did I? No one and I'm no one to myself. Not his daughter, but I'm his daughter, because I'm him and this love the fire that never dissolves in these eyes you've named, because you weren't a woman. Well neither am I. And there's nothing for you, too.

If everybody's my parents and children, my sisters and brothers. If everyone's my love. Still I saw you dead, watching over you. You were your own angel.

And his double instructed him

To leave me coded messages

From his death

In every poem he wrote.

This is the circumstance of trees

Gone forever from the yard.

It's too dark for my sister to go out.

Don't let her go out there yet.

If you only care for others you'll get nothing in this world. Nothing for you, too.

I cared for others all my life, he said. And still I was wrong.

I'm trying to give you everything I have. But I can't find it; I can't find it yet.

* * *

And I traded my face for one
pierced with ruby studs.

Because I loved you

I mean, because you loved me.

This is where the writing was never generous.

Where it broke into partiality

I became partial to myself. And you, to you.

* * *

He wasn't right in the head. I may not be right. He checked the door for you at
night. He asked for a little money in return so you paid him.

Why do you think it needs checking?

I think my property keeps me from living on the street.

The store's gone delapidated. We are all sorrowful because it was us but it isn't
the store now, it's empty.

He rode a freight into town and decided to stay. He slept in a garage.

I'm checking the doors of your stores.

I want to break in

to say I'm leaving

I'm going to leave on

a train; I leave and

leave in the night.

No one wants to rent the store now, it's like a broken thing. My self, he says,
dead there.

I was first pierced by love when I was born. My face and body pierced by blues,
by reds and blues, like a tribal possession.

Sapphires and rubies of rigid pains, love bade me contort myself.

Did love itself?

It is a realer word than physiology. Though I run from it. If it got me again I
could not, like this world, stand long, for I'd be too full of love, not, like this world, full
of hate.

He said he had a piece of paper to prove he wasn't crazy. He said, do you?

Is it a piece of paper?

Yes, it isn't the chemicals; it's the piece of paper with the words.

When he died, Daddy raised the money for the burial. No one in such a small
town should have a pauper's grave.

No one wants to rent my store now. No one wants to check the door.

I'm just like him I'm watching your stores at night. They're full of songs you
don't remember.

It's an accident that I have this property where I sleep, I say. I got it through love
without asking. I didn't do anything for it; I loved someone who died. I didn't even buy
it myself.

Don't you cry, said his sister, don't you never cry.

* * *

You are the murderer.

I always knew the house was on fire. It was one of the first things I knew.

It's still on fire, the closet. Is there anything in it?

I knew his songs before I knew his name. Everyone knows the songs before they
know of the writer or singer.

Maybe your daddy sang them to you, she said.

And the one who wasn't right in the head sang Goodnight Irene, the one who, like me, was not a man or a woman, or anything.

No one would let him be a man. But I couldn't handle it, a sex like that. It's repulsive to be given a sex, when you're a being on a freight train flying by, mindless and not right.

I had slept wherever the freight train took me, he said.

I didn't have to be right in the head if I could just make it through my time.

You're right in your head.

Not if I'm him. And there's nothing to be right about.

* * *

My eyes so full I could not see, is all I want.

What's in the closet of fire

What's that burning on your cheek

Only a ruby where your name is.

So he wasn't loving anyone? Each minute each flame that's what I am.

The birds sang about the murder.

They were the sapphires leaving and going away, while someone stayed on with a mind to get through it.

The leaves were emeralds and the sun was the diamond this time.

Only in your mind, if you kept it safe.

I'm afraid that my mind isn't safe.

I'm afraid that I'm not safe.

Unless I was safe before I was born to be guarding your store.

The store lies empty, am I?

There's nothing in it but songs.

Have I gone beyond the periphery?

Second-hand
lingerie
bought in the night
is thin

The hardware store
opens early
full of
heavy men

beyond the periphery
where many martyrs
fell

How far gone
into my defect am I?

* * *

Out on the periphery, of his eyes of red, it begins. I have nowhere to go now.
I can't find it.
Go to the hardware store, where you can get something to fix something.
No go into the empty store, our store.
Here are the pieces of some martyr, to pick up and put in the store. To add to the
empty store, to the store. And she's from another culture, I don't know her any more.
I never knew her.
Or myself.

Sometimes my song exists to obliterate yours; your book is terrible, violent and long, none of the women. None of the women what? Why should I bother?

In the mind-body problem there's nothing but words. Kept in a box, with a jeweled label, of semi-precious gems.

She's just gone with the man. That's what they do, they go *with*.

What did you do in your songs?

I picked up the pieces of Osiris. But I'm not Isis.

This is so silly, ten thousand years. Of this imposed femaleness.

Pick up the martyr's pieces and put them in her box.

She was a martyr to the mind-body problem, never relinquished, always defined.

How can there be a mind-body problem, if I blow myself up in Palestine?

Put them in the box with the glittering label PROBABLE. You think this is probably all of her. You are a philosophical materialist you say.

What did you do in your songs?

I don't know, I'll never know, you say. Someone else will write them about me, won't they?

I looked into a void of love. And I fell down. There was nothing else there. No where, where I was no one.

But I have to sing this song. I'm still here.

In the hardware store you say I can find a cure. No one will be a stranger but me. A girl.

Daddy you knew.

It hurt me too much
to tell you.

What's the point of saying who anyone is or what they did they didn't do anything.

Don't learn anything from anyone. They'll tell you about the mind-body problem, or refer you to a man in the wind. The old words blow back again, all about men.

I'm dropping all of these pieces into the fire.

I've dreamed since I was
four years old

I've dreamed since I was
four years old

that the house is slowly on fire
that the house is slowly on fire

and I can't get you to leave it
and I can't get you to leave it

and I can't leave without you
and I can't leave without you.

You might say I was forewarned, any way. Who forewarned me?

* * *

Is there a new song in the new
the new species?

If you care. If you.

I'm so afraid in the new of the St. James Hotel. The Jamie Infirmary.
He worried about a woman in the rain. She was an image in trouble.
Remembering he'd ask, Mom, Jamie in the rain?

There aren't any episodes, everything floats between everyone. No one.

He seemed secretive but he hid nothing. He was thoughtful and thought by himself. From an early age.

They were brothers.

There's nothing to hide. All stories of deception are empty.

Why don't you use more aggressive, active verbs?

I'm too sick.

From an early age we are sisters and brothers, but we think we know the numbers of us.

Hard is the fortune of all womankind.

Bought in the night for a song.

You think you won't enter the St. James Infirmary.

How far gone
into my defect
am I?

Have I gone beyond
all the federales?

If you don't know the song, you don't know anything.