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Spectres Are Us

Patrick James Dunagan

Abstract

A poetic sequence annunciating the schism between the poet and the city. The fragile observation of looking out while cruising along the avenues of reading writing/writing reading.

SPECTRES ARE US

There is no Orpheus to whom we can look; only the name of Orpheus.

- Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

Hardy's empyrean pinked gloom 3,000 feet up

Catalina Island some 3,000 yards back

approaching So Cal pools and freeways

petrol blooms gathering round Ukrainian blues

don't ever wanna go

walking the beat of waking

streets of lines run overheard

connections of the disconnected
who with spent slugs of ambition
rile the pharmacies of night
catch autumn glare from insides

to hold the vision of darkness
against perspiring heavy sight
propped up by manifold delivery
of every other'd nature known

bent on deep in the cuppes churning
out vineyards of absolution denied
held over social grievances come on
prickled up and gouged forms beautify

disfigured discards of previous eras
unrepentant

city

the gorgeous inviting romance
of the word alone itself emblematic of all

thrust upon it by youth hoping for much
aged by the hours wasted searching

looking to fill eternal ache

robed role

of pessimistic angel

caught up on

that Language Game

Wittgenstein , for one ,

claims

gives possible information

probable possibility

has a hold on

any other

drunk 19th century French whine
climbing suburban treetops
limbs dangling down stars overhead
breath raspy with delight

witness a car

rushing blur

of bustling traffic

visionary sort

to which committed

acts

what's then

it all come to?

Vatic from the getgo

whatsoever ongoing lasts even as seemingly it does not

first-steps into the act
learning to map-out the daily routine
of just doing your own thing
tracing letters down the page
from home to work and back
waging spirit against desire

it matters until it no longer does
"standing on a street-corner doing nothing
is P O W E R" Corso spells
easy secret of refusal

hand trembles push eye open takes in
swallows whole seconds one lengthy whoosh
returning body's facile touch mechanism
lever by lever streets cascade cross sight
blue forever 360 degrees round atop churning
combustible bellows forge sharp introspect
tagged back alley blurred to bits run cross
address eternal curses spit back for kicks
to dig it not easily
is hard

top turn burn

split bliss

crowns recognition

take Baudelaire to the corner
leave him there

don't ever let him know who asks

whatever's said builds honey fringed houses
round slender soul'd visionaries

adrift in fragile bear haunted hinterlands of thought
where the writing condenses to clear crystal offering

with a fist
stomping pavement against police baton

put away thy fury
lay aside your bodies

numbers no longer cut it
loud voices lent only to slumber

lend instead measure
strike down any facade placed before you

they done tear down the city to build the city
(old story

don't mean it ain't true
you
do what you do

to be you

all this

goes nowhere

less we

make somewhere

there

not there

anybody care

"Whatever I might be a 1000 dingbats be."

(at the Library

"mind is soul Milton said

or didn't he? somewhere

mean it that way

his wife

might live in light greater

than his eyes

would bear?"

"Live-her" Olson sd, according Duncan
so did

following histories
discovered

skating corridors dusted over
gaps cleared, ledges, curbs
grinding up against
the hours
what distances
amount to sky-scraping mountains
close-up

following signs
hardly recognized
into identities

walked back hours into dawn

Hollo not "hollow"

a constant ignorance

eclipses every

/

any

stubborn assertion

"ignorance is bliss" (Roy Fisher speaking of Bunting

"Thoreau ain't very thorough" (Olson to Gerrit Lansing

"the word is not the thing" (the notebook has it sd

Jack Spicer passes by with Rimbaud rounding the corner before Baudelaire
rides by on a cable car Gertrude Stein sits rounded in half-light of a fading
streetlamp the public address system blares William Carlos Williams reading
poems to Mina Loy who has collapsed before Niedecker and Zukofsky on a West
coast visit in the daydream of George Oppen drifting off right up there off Polk
from where now I write here some, what... forty years hence

patterns of telephone poles gone digital
speech-centered on language
scenarios evolve from out necessary use
fiber-by-fiber shuddering messages along

how good it ever was

how it is

past present

nothing future bout it

still doing

nothing to it

bear bare bear bare

listen

bear bare bear bare

that jingling

song thing

every engine resisting eternity

recorded chassis status

If you're a modern artist who's not some kind of cultural nationalist, you can understand that you can learn from anything and anybody, see that the whole of world culture is at your disposal, because no one person has created the monuments of art and culture in the world, it's been collective.

- Amiri Baraka

one city one song one body
walking it all along

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About the author

Patrick James Dunagan lives in San Francisco and works at Gleeson Library for the University of San Francisco. His books include *GUSTONBOOK* (Post Apollo, 2011), *Das Gedichtete* (Ugly Duckling, 2013), *from Book of Kings* (Bird and Beckett Books, 2015), and *Drops of Rain / Drops of Wine* (forthcoming Spuyten Duyvil 2016). He edited and wrote the introduction for poet Owen Hill's *A Walk Among the Bogus* (Lavender Ink, 2014).