Harmonia

outfakes and B-sides

Don Share

Argotist Ebooks

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Argotist Ebooks

Dedicated to the Old Man and the Puss.

Harmonia

Fantasia on the Rapture
- for the esteemed poet, B.K.

The rich people in my town live on a street
that smells like ass.

They give over their opinion as if it were
a terrible stone doll.

As for their houses—at least paint
doesn't make noise.

You know that part of a movie where
it's almost over, but

not quite? And you're glad? Well, that
is where I am with life.

The horror of just being a line, or being
contracted into a line, a line

That shatters into a thousand aberrations—
I could not even retreat dead

into emotion, so... Measure my life
in Wikileaks and recycling instead.

I had learned to dissemble, *mon frere*!
And if I had any real

gumption, I'd machine-gun that great
big collected poems of so-and-so.

"We have come," Yeats was told by
the unknown writer,

"to give you metaphors for poetry."
Like him, my wife tells me,

I have been engaged in bouts
of snoring, of "sleaps,"

of dreams with sounds, hallucinations,
scents, flashes of light,

And movements of external objects, namely
mosquitos and cats.

On whose esoteric authority are we
to accept all this rapture?

Isn't it all just a hearty bit of *temps*
perdu? I eat. Pray. Leave.

I asked for some TLC, but all I got was
The Learning Channel.

Well, life is nothing if not edu-
cational. Cultural

crapital... Absolutitis... I don't believe
that an individual is

the result of a crowd of a million
divided by a million,

and I don't believe in pinning you
down like a butterfly.

As you know: *Affliction most doe*
give us eyes to see.

Praise the Lowered
-seen on tattoo

It was ever thus, spake Zarathustra.
Drinking beer with the neighborhood

Obama-haters, when putsch comes to shove.
We're all embedded in history.

I said: You have to veil the evil,
to some extent.

But I was caviling the clover,
staring into my wobbly glass.

God invented the meniscus
to save idiots like me.

Here comes the litany. Its gurning face
poking through the curtain has launched

a thousand angry ships bound to land
wherever the sowers of discord moan.

The Kind-Hart's Dreame

The cruel know to whom to be cruel.
A thunderbolt strikes before the victim

ever sees the lightning. Even if the cruel
were angels, they would have to be turned

into devils. And their victims?
If I were to give them dungeons,

they would, to a man, write their last
testaments right on the dingy walls

in their own heart's blood.

LA BOTA (Loteria card)

The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you. – Sylvia Plath

I.
Das Boot must dive deep to survive,
its crew keeping silent to minimize
noise and avoid detection; they're bored
on board, our jackbooted cast, but attacked

and reattacked, avoiding dejection, they're more
or less alive. *Das Boot* returns under cover
of darkness to New Rochelle in the next reel.
Make that La Rochelle. But then, well,

everyone dies in the hell of a U-Boat
bunker, strafed cinematically by the Allies.
All is lies. All is horror. All is over.
All's well that ends über alles.

Every film buff adores a fascist, a heel.

II.
Many employees have gotten the boot.

III.
Do not attempt to remove this locking device
from your vehicle.

IV.
It follows me wherever I go.
In particular, it loves the snow.
It has soul. I get a kick out of it.
It's made of I know now what.
It tries to stay in step with me, but –
I yell at it when I'm running late.
It hugs the hollow of my foot.
It looks lonesome, it has no mate.

V.
Nancy Sinatra was made for walking.
Her black boot was made for her stocking.
One good boot stalks another.

VI.
When you fell

one boot,
please yell:

TIMBERLAND!

VII.
Every poet adores a boot,
the black boot
in which we have lived out
our dark days
like a fist.

The Arrow

The arrow leaves Cupid's quiver, pierces the heart –
But not really; tells us which way to go;

Reminds us to be straight, though
Where it lands I know not; no.

Departs on-time-every-time from its blow;
With skill (not its own) finds the target –

Bloodred, bullethole round, shaped like an O;
Has tailfeathers, a slim sexy shaft, is never slow.

The arrow joins arrow – in a row – all *eros*.

Lost Roads

Don’t think of her, think of Frank Stanford.

The Rapture, Again

I'll be there with ringing in my ears.

Librido

Our ancient cat grew
itself a tumor

between its eyes
that furrows its eyes

even further,
for whatever

of its life is left.
A cat is not an it,

you tell me.
It is now,

I tell you.

For a Dying Cat

If the continent
of black islanded

on your white fur
expands and shrinks

like ocean's tides
then I know you

are still breathing
my dilatory old friend.

Harmonia

Inside every *mensch*
is a piano-playing feygella
who wants to play Carnegie Hall

With his pants down,
and a gold Cross pen
to help commemorate the occasion.

I'm So Glad We Had This Time Together

The fat rabbis who fathered
my father's forefathers hungered
for truth, justice, and a real schmeer.
They were well-fed, ill-informed, imperious,
and full of fear.
Their ungainly bodies defeated introspection.
Only the vagaries of their shabby wardrobes
admitted abstraction.
Wooly-minded, genial except when provoked,
their disputations, never-ending, were yoked
by violence together: interrupted by children and wives
who sharply reflected their faces at them - like knives.
The war interrupted all that; their way of life ended
without even a prayer or good-bye,
and they left behind only whatever there was to find
in the violent rolling blue, before he died, of my father's
one good eye.

Toiling in the Mills of the Kavanaghs

What couldn't I do with a pen
of iron with the tip of a diamond?

Mirror

She looks good
in the mirror. So
do I fall in love
with the one
in the mirror
or ... ?

I Can't Believe You're Standing on Your Hind Legs for a Tuber

In my mind,
it's almost pumpkin pie time.

The lattes are on the froth,
and Mr. Blue Sky has banged

his purple fists on a table
ably set for two.

What is the purpose of a scolding?

1,000 Places to See Before You Die

No bad idea goes to waste here.
Nor is daydreaming necessarily encouraged.

The Ages of Man

Who knew that eyedrops and buttcream
mark the many ages of man?

As the boy who quit saying Kaddish
for his old man, I had glimmers of the rage—

Well, who wants to go on living these days?
A sage? If I will, I can. It's my turn.

On the first and last page of my will:
A scream.

The Lost Language of Umbrella Makers

Pitty-Pat on the way to the pity party,
singing: "The Grass Won't Pay No Mind"
in the rain.

Pray she won't get wet, smarty-
pants, or you will find
that nothing

Comes from pity but pain. I quote that
last bit of piety because I'm in a bind.
I have to ask:

Is it quiet now? I can't tell. I can hear
what goes on, but only
partly.

I am not nothing but love.

Over, Under, Sideways Down

According to the crystal monarch of the air,
the revolution will not be theorized.

I have a sadness that is almost Jewish
and a veil of ideas I can't think

through, or around. Mostly, nobody
can tell if a stone was put where it is

by design or not. My word I poured:
so there! The past is too tight?

So are these plaints.

Sow and Grow

Sibley's Guide to Birds? Or *Trees*?
Crazy people are the first not to know

that they're crazy. A disturbance
of just under an hour's time can seem

like an eternity, if you're a crazy person.
The police will come; you'll wish you

were the one who called them: banging
on doors, garden plants overturned

in rage, above all the yelling, from both
sides of a closed door. It's late October,

and some birds – I wish I could say
more about them – still linger, singing.

Fewer of them, I gather, thanks to climate
change; but the survivors mate and sing

just the same, thank you very much,
and there's so much less raking of leaves.

Genealogy

The sons of the fathers count
for so much less than the deaths

of fathers. I cannot chuse but
love them, the fathers. Counting

my blessings backwards,
teeth on the blackened edge

of the soul, I study his unsteady eye.
Therefore language. Therefore eyes.

The juiciness of the language,
it's not perfectly done. I can't preserve

our organs from our will, or from want.
So go stir the pot. Flay the chicken

and strip out all the nerves. Eat.

Perfection

If you're going to be a perfectionist,
then make sure you are perfect, please.

Badfinger

I have never "made" another person happy.
But doesn't everybody get to start over

with a green slate each spring?
Gone are the cold days when I sulked

in my peasoups. Gone are the icy
daemons who nudge us when our stinky

muse tempts us. If you go down
the wrong road, there will be a warmish

clearing, and then a fork –
either way, you are going to freeze.

It could be the hour of the wolf,
during which children are made

to sit in quiet quasi-darkness
till the first lamp of light is lit.

A cold man who wants to be warm,
even now I don't know a water to write on.

Amen

Amen is always an afterthought.
Amplitude is, after all, part of the prayer.

And look, I'm happy to receive your pain, however
voluminous. But isn't the same at least the same?

One is apt to overfall, the work is so unimportant.
But the ranting has got to stop, and it has to stop.

When? And where? Come down from that mountain
right this instant, or I'll put an end to it all, and to my name.

The Hotel Apollo

One size does not fit my all.
I have pet peeves, but not a pet. Yet.

Otium works for me, if it works for you.
My work, after all, is my *manus*,

And with luck, it'll go nicely into
my *libellus*. Might we share

some innuendo? A bit of cut
and thrust in the public forum?

Because you and I love and hate
and fuck and chisel out verses.

Yours are very good.
I'm all for 'em.

So let us go, you and I,
then to the Hotel Apollo.

Daemons

Speaking of daemons, I'm very sorry
that he had to die
without his glasses on.

What do you do with the persons of your dreams?
It is not an ego-inflating experience,
being in the homeland of your last thoughts.

The climes of the angels, it seems,
are not marked by a tombstone, not for a year.
There is therefore no such thing as a near-

death experience, do you hear me?
But there really is a chasm, and I really
am looking straight into it, despite

the expanse of the expanse.
He never did descend, or condescend,
to ask me what it was all about.

He got, instead, this burial clout.

Cleopatra's Nose

Had she been plainer, Caesar
would not have invaded Egypt.

Am I writing about my father?
Yes, and no. And I don't

feel the least bit of mortification
I'm so doing, because uncertain

wants are more excruciating
than certain wants. But

mostly no. Mostly just me
and my ordinaries are here.

Lumps

Take them.
And if your heart isn't
in it, why then
it's just one big lump.

Wisteria

This is not a wistful little French movie.

Seminal Versicle

Small
is not all
that's beautiful.

A dwarfish whole,
said Cole-
ridge on a roll.

Great House

Cheese was meat in my family.
You wouldn't want to meet my family.

*

Walking on tippytoes through my own house—
but still slow dancing with you in my sleep.

*

Everything I bought today
is square and vacuum-packed.

*

But I didn't come home with all this
stuff just to fool you.

*

Every marriage I've ever had,
somebody came along and said

*

This is a such great house!

Swoon

My beautiful cat
had a nose like

Akhmatova.
She had

historia, and
harmonia.

Poem on the Demise of Doctor Death

There are
no indelible
marks on a soul,
not a one.

And yet
no conscience
is immaculate,
after all.

So what words
were inscribed
in your black
diaries? –

The world's
own secrets
that you took
with you

and spread around
like grass seed,
watering and waiting?
And waiting?

This I Believe

I do believe
my cat is

behaving
posthumously.

Why I Am Not Bertrand Russell

They say Russell's BBQ in Oak Park
is not what is used to be. Oh,

the sauce still has cinnamon and cloves
in it, sure, but, hark –

the angels sing not of this unguent.
Their heralds are mute as newspapers.

Russell's is closed for X-mas, they say.
I hope they have had a lovely holiday. Or he.

Today's storm has stranded weary
travelers in windswept droves.

The snow has fallen, as have we,
in great drifts. An unbeliever, I find

that I'm praying nowadays, are you?
It's quiet. It's wine-o'clock.

I've no more thoughts on the matter.
I'm just saying.

Zero Degrees of Separation

He had nine lives, but he did not have ten.
Pentameter meant not a thing to him.

We buried him in the heel of a storm.
What was the weather when he was born?

That's precisely what has died with him.

On All Fours

The way you treat me –
must be
a post-axial development.

It's not at all susceptible
of explanation
in terms of instinct.

Who invented this taxonomy?
Who put the con
in contempt?

He who put
claws on the tiger
for all to see?

And the harsh
black pepper
in my dyspeptic eggs?

A termagant.

The Right to Bear Arms

The grace of the childhood bed.
Someone usually ends up dead,

or “clinging” to life. That’s the night,
throwing us what we can bear.

Cleopatra's Needle

After
a period
of illness
I lost
my father
(sorry
about the bad
grammar
there!)
in Central
Park.
I want
him back,
the little
prick!
Come back
before dark
or I'll be stuck
with this
most odd
nostalgia.

I Expostulate; You Reply

Collateral damage and opportunity costs aside,
if you won't say good-night, then *I'll* say it.

Like As Not

You told me my simile was not “the same.”

Tempers fugit

Never tell a dying man to go to hell.
Never say you're going to put an animal
"to sleep," oh no. And well,
promise nothing "till death do you part,"
because death is the part you don't understand.
Do not say you're "tired" when (dead to rights)
you mean something else, or "I love you"
when you mean something else.
Don't blather about the Northern Lights
or Perseids if you feel isolated,
or talk about maybe buying a piano.
You should never go to sleep angry—
no, stay up all night, feel furious
rather than waste any dreams you might have
or find yourself merely elated.
Just because I'm an atheist doesn't mean
you don't have to pray for me, you dope.
When you reach, as they say, the end
of your rope—hang yourself.
Otherwise, just hang in there and love
somebody else even harder. And if you fail
at what you set out to achieve,
find a rhyme for "fail" like, say, "tail,"
"pail," "ail." But never tell a dying man
he can go to hell. We murder to dissect,
as you always say. As you always said.

On Bellowing

If words fail me, oh –
you will supply them, loudly;
nor are they luxury items wasted
on flunkeys, horses, cats and so forth.
Nor can I hide among the thickets, no,
for these words render me, lowing
like a cow, inexcusable: callow.
Please stop yelling, though.
I already know that if you fail
yourself you fail everywhere—or so
said a bellicose man who called
himself **Bellow**.

Somebody Soul-Murdered Mike

Somebody soul-murdered Mike!
That little bone in his heart got broke.
He never reached his full height.
He still has training wheels on his mental bike.

The person Mike of whom I spoke?
His bird-like movements when he told a joke,
the way he told me to go take a hike?
God preserve my soul-murdered Mike!

Receipt

It was the added shake
of salt, the sharp

comments
that did me in, that
peppered our talk.

But tears spiced the stew.

Parable of Arable Land

The man always dies first, as my dad always said.
He built a brick house for his family, a new church
in his town, and a slim wooden coffin for himself.

His trowel fingers flew like birds, the nails he hammered
bit faster than cat's teeth; he never got drunk
and wouldn't speak about his work.

The ingratitude of his children was sharp like sawteeth,
and when he died, God built a for him a storm
that washed away every stone he ever laid. Sad.

But the coffin survived, and it sang this tale like a harp.

Essay on *Mañana*

That opens up a can of worms, but I am just a worm.

*

He must increase, but I must decrease.

*

Your family will always find you wanting
the family you never had.

*

Sweet nothings once in a blue moon
is all I ask.

*

We never died of tomorrows yet.

On Rhetoric

Mincing words
is not what
I do.

I hack
their bloody
arms off,

and mouth
their expiring
stumps, even though

a full meal
is a crime
against God

and man.

The Pilot

Who tells *me* what to do?
Somebody always tells me what to do.
What to do?

I have a list: a what-to-do
list, and, you guessed it: it's much to do
about nothing. "Nothing to do,"

Says my daughter. "Nothing to do?"
I reply? "What's it got to do
with me?" *To do or not to do*,

That is the question; it's die or do.

The Pearl of Idolatry

Value, price, and profit?
Come off it!

Shades of Hades?
Miss Moffett, your tuffet.

What is it
about a man and his mower?

His wife, may she glower
in Hell with other ladies
as the Lord sees fit—

That pearl I gave her.
Why didn't I ever waver

from the throne where I sat,
and still, forever, sit?

Word Problem

"In my life the furniture eats me." – W.C. Williams

Home is a place
to think about something else.

The yelling
is scarring.

Eventually, the battery
will die, and it will stop.

Home is a place
where they serve you slop

and you must take it in
like a kitten from the midden

who has hidden a herring.

Take Me to the Pilates

My dog is downward-facing.
The Cow. The Plow. The Pegasus.

What's left of my heart is racing
With the Devil. *Ow*! "Don't cuss!"

I Wandered Lonely as a Clod

The cracks in the ceiling
are edifying as anything.

The Most Certain Thing

Shakespeare's sonnets
were his most exact copies.

Hello Is Other People

The denial of co-evalness, for instance.

*

Grief is like coming home from the doctor.

*

Please have your identikit ready.

*

Posthumous advice books for mothers.

*

Hell hath no fury.

*

Hello, My Name Is.

*

The cat continues to be angelic

Home on Derange

Hypnogogic nonsense:
speaking with dead Father,

stroking long-gone kitty,
cuddling with You.

Our roses are heirlooms
that come and go.

I gather them as I may,
and wither.

“Why Am I the Keeper of Every Goddam Thing?”

Fatherhood is like listening to other people talk
about some wonderful dream they had:

It is not a pleasant feeling,
and it doesn’t change the world.

Intimidations of Mortality

The rose of Sharon
in the Hebrew Bible
wasn't even a rose.

People with Thin Skins

Gravitate towards
other people
with thin skins.

Like pharaohs,
they build great dark
chambers, and take

everyone with them
when they die
in a golden blaze,

their skins
crisping into
thin black leaves.

All Stories are Likely

I keep thinking
that the rocking

chair creaking
is someone come

to see me here;
wrong again, but

no violence has been
done to plausibility.

The Sorrows of Young Worthless

Were so
outlandish.

If you can read
this, *save yourself*!

The Origin of Speciousness

Years passed.
Everybody in the whole-
sale block

was dancing
to the Jailhouse
Rock.

Then one day
I walked freely into
a plate glass door

after which I saw
things very differently.
Like stars, or

your precious aging face.
Those accusations?
Look, we all of us

end up on the wrong foot.
That is to say,
on our backs. And fast.

The Encountrist

What the cat doesn't grab
the crow takes away. How
can anything be saved?

Sometimes I'm just so
subtotaled. Jerks run
the world, with their bad

cologne and playlists;
spouses freely espouse
little, or nothing at all.

Maybe I shouldn't talk to you
about poetry anymore.

Black Mark on My Permanent Record

Every OCD should begin
with his own penis. That's why

I am a B student for life,
washing my hands of love,

a notwithstanding kind of guy
who continues to think

in percentiles.

Use Your Words

Your dad is in my handbag.

Fireflies on the 4th of July

I've been so unwise.
Don't let this be

my last book,
or despise.