

GARY

DAVID'S



DEPT. DES
FLAMBEAUX
ET DU
GUMBO

VISCERALLY 7

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DEPT. DES FLAMBEAUX ET DU GUMBO:

POEMS OF NEW ORLEANS

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"Why, a white boy writin' pomes 'bout Nawlins? That's
kinda like a Fat City dude tryin' t' sang d' blues."
Man in Canal Street

"Nobody gits t' jus' look around here, man."
Clerk at the Crackerjack Voodoo Drugstore

"Yall gotta suck d' heads."
Willy Fontenout, crawfish farmer

"...though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana solitary in
a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend or lover near,
I know very well I could not."
Walt Whitman

HEAVY NITE ON THE HOT TOWN

The steel-beaked hawk breathes hard down
on the hot town from the north by
west as tourists as well
as wealthy portrait painters on the square all
shudder, huddle distraught.

Tonite, bad bourbon burns
thin black blood. Blues
turn from bars to ice &
Summertime, when the livin's easy aint
no place in sight. But sweet tonite, so easy o so nice!..
"fo' muthafucka steel"
to find the good but fat
heart of some grey flannel insurance cowboy just
in from Texas. For a few bucks, deep in the heart. His
last cold bloody breath was of Royal St. His sole
fate, dovetailed. But

y'all listen up: round these here
parts, if things be gettin' shaky, we
shake too. Both ways.

TOUR THRU CONGO SQUARE

"It was a frightful triumph of body over mind, even in those early days when the slave was still a genuine pagan; but as his moral education gave him some hint of its enormity, and it became a forbidden fruit monopolized by those of reprobate will, it grew everywhere more and more gross. No wonder the police stopped it in Congo Square."*

Today a young love pink couple whirls a frisbee on the close clipped lawn. A leashed toy poodle with blue ribbons & red painted claws wags its dainty little rear dribbling dollops of poop. On the sidewalk pigeon dew half pints & high heels have been

dropped. Now you find yourself standing before a stone eagle forever trying to fly. Desperate wings raised in surrender. Its mock beak has been broken off. Its once white breast has been pelted with yellow paint. Behind

under the pediment of Municipal Auditorium, the words:

MUSIC POETRY ART DRAMA ATHLETICS

have been chiseled in the granite facade. Turn to the river & you can hardly see the clock on the cathedral spire. All that has been

here & still live oak & magnolia roots barely remember what leaves forgot altogether, the dances:

Bamboula Calinda Counjaille

*George W. Cable

CENTRAL LOCKUP

The stately celebrated Orleans Parish
dignitaries & other local notables whoozily cut/caught/framed
by picayunish critics of the time's
histrionic items of crime or culture/up
blue ribbons smash bottles on bows buss babes & whores shake
fat hands & circle in fixed circles while around

the corner, down 6 blocks, off Camp St, bivouacked
by a pale sea of port, a cold man o' war tanked
like a rotgut trunk barely erect against
the buffeting northerly: the

Old Gimped Grip "Nobody
aint never give me
no key t' no
city"--muttered & spits in the gutter.

The obtuse angle between

cold concrete plus
blood interface
equals degrees

of the fall/broke/bum a quarter for a cup
of vomit/got a dollar for a cot
of busted glass/bled a tear
of sham/mugshot forgot/a slammed man
of the cooler slab...

Flatly stated, the gruesome incredulity of
the details: patient hair overgrows clot claw-like
nails grit teeth rot dust wrinkles formaldehyde blue
eyes nicotine bitten lower lip or maybe at best the limp dry
heaves in the nearest passed-out asshole
in the drunk tank.

(The case was later found
empty
but for a rusty key.

Which suited no body.

STREETCAR DESIRE

New to all this, I mount the trolley, take
a position straight
across from her, I find. I can't keep
my eyes off her. Hands off!
she spits in my face
with her dark eyes just
looking away. I'm a real sucker
for dark eyed girls. My eyes are
blue. I am alone. She's trying to
talk to her friends about something in
Spanish. Wish I'd taken that in
high school. Dummkopf! Yet now
the car jerks. Her tits
jiggle. What tits!
that tingle straight down to
the brown bottom of
my balls. I finally get up
guts enough to query her
little brother just begining to
giggle away 'cause he's already caught
my hardon: "How do you say 'You are
pretty' in Spanish?" "Usted es bonita."
"Oo-what-ass-bone-need-tah?"
"Usted es bonita!" I come back to my fancy, try
to impress her with my verbal acuity. Half
flattered but flatly: "Thanks--eh, gracias." Ha! I bet
I'm her idea of a rapist. Or maybe some mad
Anglo lover. Nah! She probably thinks I'm just
another lonely creep in the nite. Well, I get up
to go but miss my stop. "Hasta la vista,
señorita." "Adios." Going home
to jerk off. As a kid, I wasn't
really kidding yet. Guess I'm making
up for it now. Poco
a poco, tomorrow
y mañana...

THE 1 & ONLY CRESENT CITY HOODOO HAIKU BET

Doc Moon! 2 gris-gris
say yall aint never heard o'
Lafcadio Hearn

A RENTED ROOM IN HELL THINKING IT'S FELICITY ST

Hoarse sucking of bellows
between the bloated cheeks of
wind drifts up
to the balcony: those same ol' tunes
erode their ears wave after wave so
weak they fall
back on themselves.
As she goes down
on his piqued cock, he thinks
of the distance
between Lethe & the steamboat
calliope wheezing its ditties
down the air of the Mississippi.

In hell there's no
time nor
is there eternity
either. Their good times seemed
so good, til some charge
would shock their hearts into beating
each other. The walls of
the room seemed smeared
with desire. The bed at times would blow up
in their faces. Its white bleeding
blinded windows of the room. Exit finally
with the bitter taste
of blood alone
on her lips.

(Sometimes in desire
for love, we fall--
thinking it's heaven
rushing upward by us

BOZART

Where but in the city care
forgot could care less
whether POETS is
a mafioso-owned lounge in Fat City or
an uptown chic cheese & verse soiree put on
by a gamy crew of cutesy bacchantes.

We've yet to read
the proof
in the makings.
Taste
reigns Queen over all
parades dragging to Mars or
wordy stardom. Your only come-back

"But these bazarres
we have are all
sellouts!"

N.O. NOCTERNE

This city is the town
you come down with after you're sick
of uptown city madly & dream.

You sit nondescript, write
poems or not, drink Falstaff or Wild
Crow in a white suit & panama hat on an old wrought

iron balcony. You make believe. You smell Church's
fried chicken across Felic^{ity}. A nightlife of
asphalt bayous swamps your heart.

Your wavering heat just wants
to get laid by a quadroom. Along Magazine St tonite
the antique shops all grow white

breasts submerged in brass spittoons.
Your bed is made of steel painted grass-green.
You sleep alone or with somebody

you don't know. You lose time thinking
you never had it
so good. Your memory's as bad

as a scratched record sticking
its swan song to the hard rain. Dead end dove dreams
before drowning in drunken backstreets of sleep

fly up & burn away the night.

LOCAL COLORS

When jive talkin' jukebox tunes turn
Dixie beer jazz to voodoo queens over
Burgundy Street Buster's red beans &
yall so wasted on camp Flambeaux you don't smell
the muggy burn of crawfish shells in rubbish bins under
Bourbon Street's striptease fatback city sleaze & bones
of hoodoo busted open air tombs break out
loud zydecco beat & bloodbucket
boils doctor quicker than lowdown Laveau or levee dead
water over royal Quarter slave houses lean like mean
Kingfish P. Long by gold gone green tinsel Jewels ever fills
up broke roughnecks dock crewmen maroon dry & floats
spew fake pray beads geek gods play dubloons then blue
booked ebony professors pig knuckle down ghost ivories
of Creole White's cotton mouth gin Basin Mahogany raw
hot Hall jellyroll earl sauce oyster hole story now Desire
Project casts chicory man shadows on rosie magnolia
scent of old hardup kill code black ball mask
as the Mississippi bubbles its wayward way toward the Gulf...

When these colors are to be got
in fire by those already been
in that barren dark leeched there &
back--well then, they just
know you know & must
let out one helluva laugh to
keep from lettin' on.

NEXT STOP ON THE TRANSIENT'S CIRCUIT: ROMANCE

"The city is a cage.
No other places, always this..."*

Maybe
New Or-leans
is really
something
in

between a 3-ring circus in the Dome & a 2nd line parade down Melpomene
between a Cajun big fun feast & a Creole festive funeral
between a bold flash brass band & a lone black's steel axe blues
between a bar's ever swinging doors & a cathedral's tourist hours
between a Fat Tuesday & a burnt-out fast day
between an all nite bourbon blitz & a clear morning's cafe au lait
between a chic bistro & a wino's Tokay
between a crawfish bisque & a beignet
between an orgy & a soiree
between--damn it!--all

in between. But it's the 'in
between' what really
gets you.

Movin'
to the jazz
When the Saints
Go Marching In
O when you groove
right on the beat

-en path of vapid vagabonds
long haired pretenders
tuneless troubadours &
dreamland vendors

"N.O. is only a place where
chumps who aint got no place
else to go
go." Or stay. (A way.)

"I met him in a cell in New Orleans/I was
down & out" yonder in

cont.

"Sin City" hawks the hackneyed haggard-eyed Bourbon St vaudvillian
between Sandra Sexton & The Pearl
of the Orient. But just the other day from California came

2 postcards:

The Golden Gate Bridge as seen from Alcatraz.

"As cities go, a wonderous one..."

A Collage of the city's famous scenes, including...

"...it's very hilly with beautiful green parks
all over & lovely friendly ladies who are
intelligent (a rare species in..."

A young sun goes west everyday over the Delta, pointing
with near-sighted rays its downfall.

The City sparkles in the distance.

*C.P. Cavafy

LAST CALL

Last nite I heard my last
poetry reading (of course drunk) in
New Orleans but wouldn't y' know forgot
to bring my own poems. Anyway
there was this young cat running out
that old yellow line on middle age blues &
something about love
never sticking
around long enough to find it
a job
or even fix it
a drink. But like I say, I was
really gone & had nothing to read or lose but this
coal eyed ruby town ice cube with the moony appellation &
nice ass wouldn't even let me buy her
a cocktail afterwards & hours no dice & no poems &
I was on deck & already
dead tired sweating hot & thirsty but
y' know my ol' lady (who's blood sucked me for 2
months & fucked my best friend to boot) the other
nite threw in/at my head a bottle of red
wine (Chateau Bouscant 1963) & up & left
me empty for New York city & I was plumb alone
dumbstruck down & drank so in the poetry
reading room without a word in the middle of
that cute little bitch's poem about the sexiness
of old dogs or somethin' I headed straight for the
Half Moon & downed my last
round with 6 nickels beer breath & the good
ol' boys who don't give a fuck
for poetry & shouldn't 'cause the sun rises
here from the west bank & sets over the
east while ol' man river flows brown
downstream north & there aint no blue
laws where even The Great Atlantic
& Pacific Tea Company pushes booze & the streetcar
line curves uptown from the Canal & O hell!
I wanna go home but can't 'cause I'm drunk too much
poetry & not eaten nearly enough
love & the last call will never be
recalled 'cause those damn dim places never ever really close
in a heart that just keeps staggering on down the road.

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