

a day uptown/a night on the bowery

by Walter Bjorkman

a day uptown

carmen singin' the blues at the old met, sande and me makin' out
up above

she dies at the end, i think i told teach when quizzed, i took a
guess -

or was that the dactyl at the nat? teach was there when both met
their fate,

or so she would have us believe. the whitney has a ramp that goes

round and round up

and round and and

down

past all the artist's works

or is that the guggy? i forget - teach knows *all* the spiral's angles,
she sez

the plaza is more an almost full-circle, or is that the wollman rink?

the carriages pass by both, horses don't care where they shit.

we stay back without teach, play skee-ball in times square

and say hi to the pros and transvests. melanie rides her roller blades

down columbus as the frozen statues go home to sleep above park,

wearing mad ave stuff we can't afford need or desire, our jealousy

spoke

teach says an artist can live anywhere, for there is folly in holy
places

and frivolity in serious domains, as well as beauty in squalor

why walk up five flights above the east village or bowery's bowels
to write/paint/sing of despair? above 23rd or so, city's grid takes
grip

streets walk east-west north-south in 5th avenue custom suits,
except for the rebel b'way and times square where the cultures
meet

downtown the streets run in all directions, canal 'bout the only
that obeys

west 4th street crosses west 12th street, no avenues in sight
and the water pressure non-existent, the alleys closing in tight

whatever happened to patronage? t'was a noblesse oblige at one
time

now they grunt at the egalitaria of the pest, i was born in the
wrong line

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a night on the bowery

teacher's down on the corner, marking papers with her cherry lip
gloss

i can't get a handle on her, never could, she never did sumthin' for
me

keats lives upstairs, too frail to emerge, coughing up sputum
there's barb-wire wrapped around the top of his six by six room
we share the same sink, shower, toilet and towels down the hall

teach warned me, I wouldn't hear it, johnny & i drank from the
same bottle

luisa may came by and wanted to share it, she died first of thirst
we put her on a pallet, rush her downstairs, keats died of
exhaustion

the morgue bus never came, i stuff them both in a dumpster out
back

while richie havens sells his motherless child's freedom on the
streets

in her monestary mission, with her rosary and candles, time holds
me here

feets got the travelin' blues but my hands tie old women's bones
to my hair

we play gutter ball with crumpled village voices, ginz and tuli
are the best,

knocking down teach's spindly legs, foaming lips and cast-iron
gazes

while ginz mantras me at my worldly nighttime excess

cowboy bob stopped pulling strings years ago, now he sits on the
curb

talkin' to ludwig 'bout unfinished biz, "teach me ding dong school"
he begs

rodney k opens a hydrant, cools the bloody night streets, bowery
flooding

ghandi floats by on a raft of popsicle sticks, waving to the crowd
and asks

sister theresa as she hustles tricks, "is it john or paul who is really
alive?"

i make my way to bed, but dear lanlord bobby d wants his rent
can't afford the eight-bits a day so i play dead, but he's adamant
"get outta here ya one-kneed loser, or i'll see you in chains, you
bet"

so i stumble out back to the escape of teach's fiery red 'vette
hop in with her, rev out of town, she dumps me near santa cruz

she got a job teaching frogs how to live without their legs
i tried never looking back, but visit every now and then

the whole cast play out their scenes as if i never existed
sartre asks when he sees me why i return, i nod my head
and say as I jingle my change,

“just keep goin', driver, to the next no exit”

