

You nod at parallels to 19th century Paris. You
were the brilliant rebel, doomed genius, the damned.
Does the city make the artist or defile him?
Maybe both. You were like that corner building--
meticulous brick and polished balustrades-- fronting
a brothel. Your poems seethed behind formal facades.
Your lines wept under carriage wheels, chimney soot.
Mine are free-- wrinkled with racket and smear.

Chuffing semis gather now to disgorge at sun-up.
Nothing is blossoming wicked and wild in rusty cans
on cracked stoops, only forgotten cold-burnt geraniums.
Sleepers roll over, restless before rising relentless
to track across Chicago's not-yet made-up face.

Look there-- a night-blooming cereus opens ghostly rare
in a florist's window. To the west, the top floor
of that steel/glass lance is open to new arrivals,
all hours. Steaming or frozen, the city is a womb.
The city incubates death. It has character
but outgrows its soul. The city coughs, spits, curses.
This city is a phoenix.

Like your poetry, Mr. B.
Maybe it'll fly in spring. Come back.

--Glenna Holloway