

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 building on the corner—  
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.  
The city's sleepers roll over, restless before rising  
relentless to track across her 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 and 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.  
Maybe it'll fly in spring. Come back.