

# THE COLLECTION

A photograph of a large, weathered stone fortification, likely a historical site. The main structure is a massive, rectangular wall made of rough-hewn stone, showing signs of age and wear. In the foreground, there is a smaller, white-painted structure with a dark, domed roof, possibly a sentry box or a small chapel. The fortification is situated on a raised platform, and there are some palm trees visible in the distance. The sky is clear and blue.

PAUL RENATO  
TOPPO  
2005 CHAPBOOK

# BLUES FOR UGOLINO

There's this bloated float in my brain,  
that swings into action at unexpected  
moments

boasting

of an edge so fine upon  
infinitesimal edge, though it is unable  
to negotiate

my release at crushing dawn;  
a ray, bent like the sudden  
spike

of such liquids  
of your choosing, but  
between guilty dawns

in my arm, erases the slow  
lines that mix  
through it,

skips in and out  
of its own  
deadly rhythms

press

making the horizon  
endlessly seem  
to disappear

the revolution on me, pure  
like a stone grown  
frictionless

in the moonless ether  
of time's collapse.  
(like an ass in black slacks),

It swings into action, Father  
and does not tremble  
above your grave

# THE NUDE OF YOU (LAS BABAS DEL DIABLO)

On the platform, watch with agony  
of foreknowledge, the declining train  
that misses every stop. Not even the Buddha's stopped voice,  
decelerating, trapped in expanding feedback loops and  
wheels, can get the souls back in there with dignity, because the  
tunnel flows to nowhere, or is swallowed there, by land and sea

Self-contained systems expressly approximate, lewd and  
forbidden tall axes falling on them, the nude of you goes around  
instantaneously  
an infected needle, while children grow around the maypole,  
and become their own dolls, silent and fish-eyed you know  
they rose to the nightly solitudes of space not yet formed, and were  
made thus: voiceless so  
many times before, now it's just a trick,

frozen intervals of naked fright catalogued in the seamless senselessness  
of time

(and its plethora of false pauses)

Think of that as you balance the (deoxy)ribo-ladder, whose android  
hands are not even human, upon the face of heaven  
And (finally), if you have to break the hearts of angels,

Then at least go digging first where the pain is:  
along a series of bases, bound by impossible light,  
and the theory  
that the little spit (that reflects you) was left by the ghost  
of these departed quantities, a confused goggle  
of codes, burned with ceaseless love into the martyr's bones.

# THE SHAPE OF NUMBERS

I wrote a poem in Math class:

This is hard  
This is so hard  
This is so goddamned hard  
This is so goddamned fuckin hard

This is soooooo hard  
Goddammit  
This is soooooooooo fuckin hard  
(I mean it)

Shake me  
wake me  
fuck me  
Epiphany

I could say  
This a bundle  
Of times without  
Saying

It:

This is (so)<sup>n</sup> (goddamned)<sup>m</sup> (fuckin)<sup>p</sup> hard !<sup>q</sup>

And I bowed, infinitely, the figure 8 carving my name into the desk  
of the seventh day

In the belly of the clocktower you spurn  
all mechanism and that dog with mange  
in your brain  
that pants like a woman  
while you polish the ruby  
fruit that will not survive this voyage  
of translation

A pendulum rises and collapses to wake  
Or erase you

Between beta blocked heartbeats and homages  
To immense mirages

Time is never generous, rocker, but stingy  
like a whore,  
like the truth

Across the face when the first pair of insect  
eyes decapitated your middle name  
and broke your ass,

you stripped the myths from the wall and replaced them  
with tiny bits of stellar  
tits, nicely heroin  
chic

## CLOCK TOWER

Because you had to believe in her  
Or fall from that cloud  
into the topological oceans of your own brain,  
rapt wrapped  
up in utterly evangelical hell.

That's why you swallow yourself  
into a close Mobius of rage,

because a smirking devil that shits  
in the corner of your cage  
opposite and adjacent  
has caught you  
in an act of love

# PORTRAIT

I hold the center of this labyrinth,  
And wait but  
The plastic monkey never comes.  
It has been this way since before  
You unhinged my heart,  
And unseated my soul, when  
A chord heard somewhere on  
The piles of hell.

Lynched history, (not Numbers) measures the  
Vastness of time's relentless withdrawal  
From here; while minions and  
Ministers evangelize (in the Calvinist tradition)  
I wait for the monkey who never comes.  
Yet

The perilous dive eludes like a kiss,  
Into Self-  
swallowing machines lagging  
Their masters by nanoseconds of time  
At the soft petals of the altar  
Other sacrifices arrive  
Already dead to destiny

There, upon the breaths and engines of sense,  
maybe the monkey  
Cages of the superego taunt  
The monkey to hump  
Because that's how I reason  
With it,  
Now that pills and treason  
Don't do the trick

Will I ever befall myself?

Like an injection, or simply  
Wait, under a harmony  
Of stars,  
while  
Only  
Comes the ogre, extending  
me  
A fat hand of bare meat

# FINNEY'S DRINKING AGAIN

Who hangs this drunk  
attitude on an inverted  
crucifix?

tying a time together in a  
vicious tomb while

a song goes  
skipping  
over the grooves like  
a syringe bouncing off a vein.

his loose mood lifts  
the stillborn moon out  
of a crib of wax

it's dark again, and I  
have diminished to  
the suburbs.

the poplar holds  
birdsong (between  
the teeth of the leaves)

her eyes broken, guiding  
my dreams into what they,  
tomorrow, might have become.

# BRICK'S MECHANICAL CLICK

I keep going back because I want  
to shake this ocean off my back  
and spit in its sallow eye  
Gulls down on the surface,  
the alpha dog of a caravelle  
rare like split light

all this

When I make a mess of the numbers  
and disfigure your law of physics,  
the glass moon rolls out of its eye  
to settle in a corner of a  
star.

So old ships dance off the  
silhouette  
of space and come up again like  
fossils,  
their contours fixed  
in the glaze  
of a fish's gaze through ironic  
ice,  
flat on my face

An echo feeds a bloody rose,  
and I leave in her open arms a residue  
of lewd subtractions.

Do you know the silent coast of the other side?

where my trusty rusted  
double toys  
with a feeling  
I took years to reject,

I discover I desire the  
full cup, its rim  
a hoop from  
which new light jumps  
drowning out of the wine

while a hard-on leaves  
a thin scar upon the stars.



# THIN LETTERS

On a wavelet of air  
you hear its music

but the thin letters  
evanesce like a corrupt

program  
on your tongue

so by midnight  
I've strained

language  
back through a

thermodynamic beginning;  
and now

I'm covered with it  
kicking absolute zero's

ass. (it's a habit  
that hangs

on dissolving walls  
in my head)

I keep on throwing nooses  
to my moods,

so the dawns that wait  
like syringes

will  
tighten around

me in sleep,  
their loose

rythms  
tired

like statements  
and equations.

# SCRAPE

are you young enough  
to want a facelift?  
or has your face, lifted  
out of pools of protein,  
seen itself in the  
eyes of your unseeming  
maker?

the idea must nag like a  
cocktail or the time  
you got raped  
on the terrazzo while  
the birds stopped  
chirping in the vast spaces  
of your right brain

Is that skin, after all?  
And,  
worn like a lampshade,  
does it still dampen  
that seventy watt  
glow of the hole?

# NACHO KICKS LOOSE

Rings of scum nag the fuckhole,  
Maybe

I pulled into Nazareth

cat fur stings bloodshot eyewhites  
of my hero.

gurgling splitting the rayon wind

I have a complaint:

the nails have missed the target, like a  
German nurse with her syringe  
of empirical miracles,

his hands  
roll into a muscle,

those oval shadows of wasp's fine wing

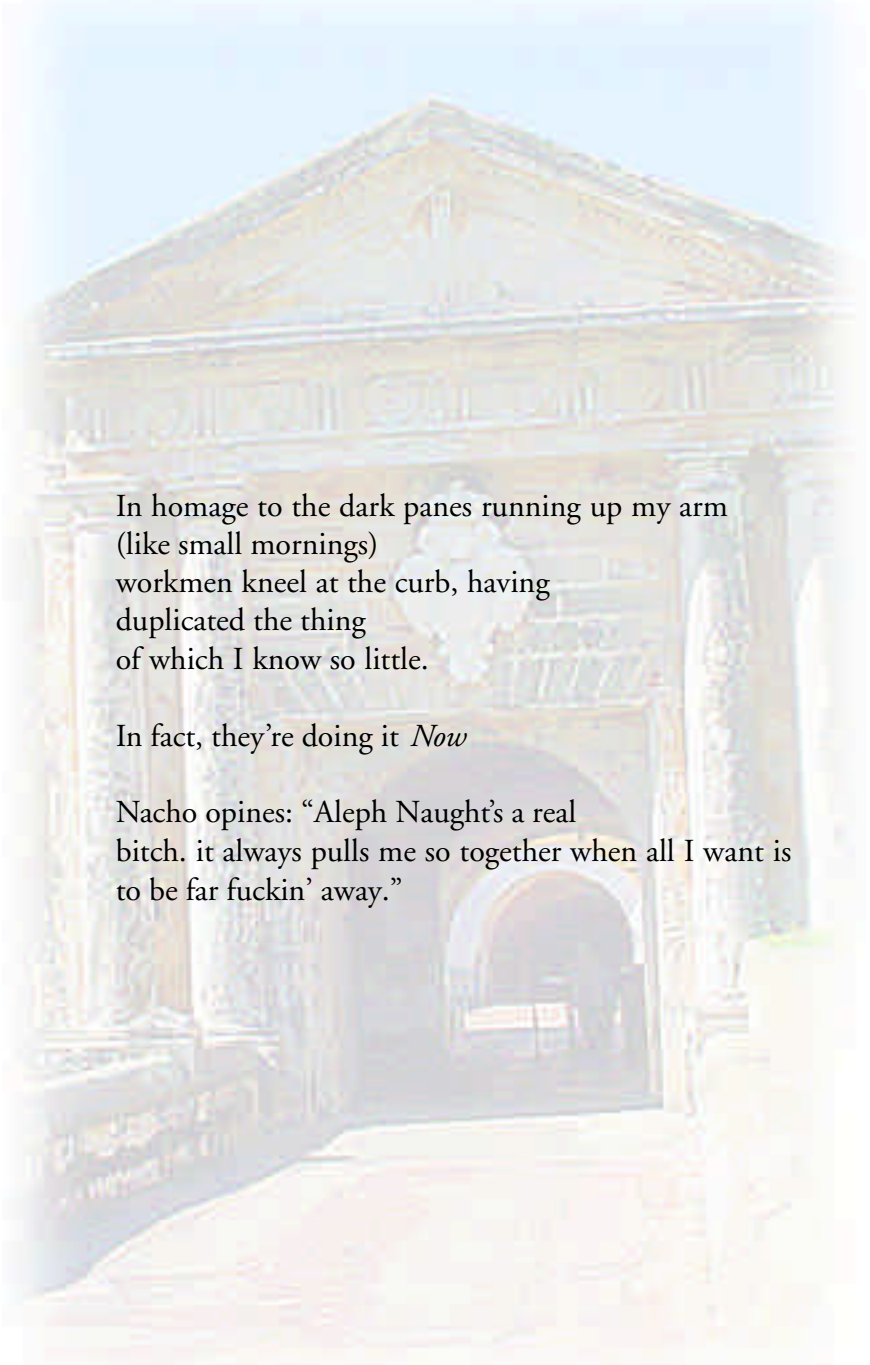
then canals run with a humidity that pops up  
like champagne, while fractals of blood litter the air  
with fire, falsified

by the trace;

A fat hand reaches out a lyric

*La cosa pierde color cuando la piensas dos veces*

Nacho's kicking loose of the Earth.



In homage to the dark panes running up my arm  
(like small mornings)  
workmen kneel at the curb, having  
duplicated the thing  
of which I know so little.

In fact, they're doing it *Now*

Nacho opines: "Aleph Naught's a real  
bitch. it always pulls me so together when all I want is  
to be far fuckin' away."

# EL ALEBRIJE

the acrylic moon's  
a foreign pimp

in my new heart's old land

sparrow your hollow bones hurt  
my heads hear voices

on the ocean, but the ship's  
vastly horizon itself,  
blesses so many solitudes.

Think I'll make a last stand  
against blue pools  
of probability.

Oh to fuck you  
senseless  
with bomblets of light  
and wallow there awhile  
while horses plot a slow-motion  
charge

without riders

laying in code no real intentions,  
in collimated beams  
rude and alone,

which makes me think I  
am  
down  
on purpose.

Now your hoof is kicking out the optic nerve  
Now I only feel breath  
and frozen lamplight  
and fall like a hinge, unhinged.

cleft chin  
working  
itself  
out.

oak door  
croaks open  
to let  
out

a dream, the time is that is  
t = t zero is:

too late *cabrón*

all the Jupiters I can conjure come  
drooling out.

At painted plates they came to suckle  
a white phosphorous

but they are bounce back

Now drip from his glass while  
my tail whips around a lidless  
eye.

# ANTIPOEM

a coward  
sits

by a fountain  
reckoning

won't  
the sea spit

up a fist  
of water?

at a foot

by afternoon  
its tendril made gold

(or the angle  
of the sun)

# READING CORT ZAR AND CARROLL

*(Estoy de buenas, nena..)*

let's talk about the sad contents  
of a bag of quarks

(oh, for fuck's sake)

why is that?  
I'll raise you one double dual  
 $x^{**}=x$  (amen)  
why is that?

*todo preso es político, claro*

well  
I think  
I'm  
a change in direction  
I'm  
a lookin' past the zipper-faced moon

to a little synapse  
that wouldn't

Renato's here!

I hear the echo of that that that never landed  
in the trap

that is: not nostalgia, *te lo juro*



you're I me mine

because

finally he rises

to trump the most  
faux desire I ever puked out

of a volta,

of a lineup of invective  
from the sun

(you might confuse it with shadows)

Renato grasps plastic keys,  
up the swing Papá, up

Papá

Papá

Papá

*On tas? quielo iy a paque! Papá abajando?*

*¡Papá!*

*No me bagas cosquillas*

*¡Ya Papá!*

*(házme volar, Renato*

*Mi Natín)*

Here's an antipoem born  
To swim in my sea of sins

*nunca sorteé las trampas del amor*

so  
if you can multiply two negatives  
*sin que se mofen de ti,*  
I got Borges' death masks sneaking a  
late look up the wrong hole.

*¿sabías? quiere morder el tallo de mi rosa*

then let's  
you get back to  
you

you see:

*(agáchate wey que vas a saber lo que es bueno)*

theoretically  
-1 means

an escape from funky number town

so that

(-1)(-1)  
means: *el futuro llegó hace rato nena*

*Doña Eduvigis anda penando (ora pro nobis)*

*¿ya te cayó el 20?*

since they put me in this place  
I've been diagnosed

by a stupid fuck

*eso no me arregla....(a mi)*

I hope the music crushes the petals  
in your ear

*¿cómo no sentirme así? si ese perro sigue ahí.*

Renato's on the swing  
cooing,  
swaying with me  
among these trees  
of numbers

minusplusminus...  
plus

the riddle  
you see  
will make  
me free

The sinusoid rhythms of a giggle like the spongy  
ciphers themselves fly from his eyes:  
He will soon put some other sun in a wax cradle

When I unlearn long division,  
So again I may penetrate the thunder  
Again

# THE ROOFTOPS OF ZACATECAS

The sky tumbled out of fireless eyes  
from the poverty of thin air, a cherub  
pissed itself and while snow fell

in hell

I attached to the acetic moon my picture  
of you.

How many winters missed you, patient as a flower?  
12, if you want to know.

Do you know that

While I sat under your willow little snakes coiled  
around my heart,  
and the music that crowded my body like a soul  
emptied your science from my eyes?

While, all the time, just beneath the surface,  
cloned eyes peeked through, only

which ones would turn out to be you?

# TEOTIHUAC N

I throw it in  
like the towel  
I am obsessed by it:

here  
a nation rises on a pyramid of numbers,  
each morning it arrives  
pricking edges of surfaces

the holes that fell fill morning  
with a false dew

gravity factors uncountably many  
loaded dice  
from the pressed sweat  
of labored orbits

the stars are its disclaimer,  
the oblong places  
where we end unjustly

when there is no other place.

and it remains thus through the perishing moments:

the crude archaeology of time  
wraps life around its pauses  
roughly, while I discover that

an ogre with a sundial has used a trowel to  
dig out the fat meat

Later, you will tell me  
how it felt between the fingers  
when you threw it away

# FEEDING ZENO'S HEAD IN METRO ZAPATA

Unlikely like time itself  
a clone of slumping moments

roughly speaking, feeling  
mechanical

In metro Zapata

There's even a machine that pushes  
the people  
like a paper dolls

out of their private parts

One's a string of twins, endlessly siamese.

so they will never rise from iron tombs,  
or sway

divide this moment's light into pearly layers  
of probability and ugly,

low looks at

Cave paintings and two Aztec moons dance as they roll  
in the sky

They make a bone rose rise like a flag. In Union Square  
the crowd is switching places with me,  
away and now through the tired glass,

a man burrows into the womb as I hurry a smile  
in the strobe of the poem.

# BUSH'S NOVENA

Down at the fireplace the shadows throw  
little missives,  
at the base of a titanium heart

while the bloodless thumping  
beneath the roots

caves to its own echo, and ends, each wave  
overtaking the effortless wake

shutting out light  
tight,

against a hurricane of tears

Amid bemused and bewildered black contractions,

he arrives and ejaculates at the Superdome,  
perfecting,  
articulating

a Fox with eyes like rubies of the thousand points of light  
which mutate into a kinder and gentler  
hyena

killed  
inside cages of water,  
(because wrath must reach out  
to kiss even Parishes  
of the soul),

they rattled their pistol-hot bone chains,

the moist air carried footnotes from a sax, down  
to the 9th ward, as if  
a riff  
would suffice  
(ne c'est pas, cher?)  
to save their black asses.

Time around frames  
the dark with blue  
and rises

and so forth

through the branches toward  
where the hummingbird was stilled  
by a machine gun

Here I wait for the bus to the day  
before yesterday

I'm strung along in semicircles,  
by politics  
in  
fat  
evenings with bored looks  
Nancy Grace  
and dead babies  
that flash for a moment on screens  
of the subconscious

Time to fly to the eye:

voices slide like a sleet of sorrow  
vague and silly,



I feel pressure, a refinement of  
gravity whose hue  
I never knew

couldn't be bribed but

could clap bones on a drumhead,  
so violently  
independent  
of the country  
of the three-fifths  
of themselves.

Now, he  
calls the twitching toads down to a pious lunch  
with cookie sheet Gospel music,

while horses reappear on Bourbon Street,  
born again the electric atmosphere that

Conjured the exceedingly small love  
which may play underneath,  
banging skin  
hard enough to raise the dead.

# THE COLLECTION PAUL RENATO TOPPO

**scars**suopɛəjɪqnd

Editor@scars.tv

<http://scars.tv>

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