

## CHARLES BERNSTEIN / Ruskin (earlier poems)

### What Is It

- 1: The cause, what's the cause?  
2: What do you mean?  
1: The cause.  
2: The what?  
1: The cause, that which is the cause, the cause  
2: The course?  
1: that which is the cause, the cause, that which is the cause  
2: what are you saying?  
1: the cause, the cause, what's the cause  
2: the cause?  
1: the cause  
2: the cause of what?  
1: that which is the cause, what is the cause  
2: don't you know?  
1: what's the cause, the cause  
2: you know, don't you know, oh you know  
1: the cause, that which is the cause, the cause  
2: can't you say it?  
1: the cause, what's the cause?  
2: is this a test?

*Bee/Bernstein: a chat*

If then he behaved and being bored tried quite simply to be abandoned then understood simply saying a few words in adjournment he could quite as easily have become engaged ashen or greyly amused such were his passions forever implying prevarikating disputes awakening summonses drag in drag out up down lost found unless hopelessly unfurl bewitch and unfrock loose mouthed or unrepentant not that it was ever leaked or hushed but small and such things not that anyone could have being impeccable so prim and every day pressed and yet sometimes a word or even half would hush and no real stopping tittle and gravy over soup people would be sad to understand to know but you let it well not get you it just had to be in grain with bestride so to say philosophical besmirchment.

Every morning at two prompt as a button down the sink and orange and stall and squeak hello couldn't wait at laugh the roast pearled in jack box sarcasm beck becking the rashful unblazoned sneak reminder of error onrush torrent twinge sloppy loose ship burnt no good bad manners pays no attention no excuse beck becking no moment at any time reference could then crawl.

As sequential as two in the morning as particular plaid a suit as botany had dribbled fire bugs and banged a bag of sass until laughing they got carried but not he clunk and regret resignation taxes death and great lightness of step huge dimension shape fields purchases uneven brokester button shop pink lily screaming finally tired but pink with until lost or fallen under until finally admitted to be at felony incurred and halted then like a the tears pouring like gin rummy with a flush red face having lost whatever picture of Gatsby like abandon and spleen mustered in nights over novel samovars musing of sundays end without the following fall driven by rackets of tennis playing hustled like dawn sweet dreams oh prince be good to me don't ever let me let them make you give me go I won't give you over or up on onto I won't try to caress your please let me let them let you.

It would not let go of my fantasies kept stirred awakened to my pit stomach up night  
grappling like lecher subway madmen green fungi lichens biologic urchins in green  
lentil ogres doggedly denied at every moment given and gotten over hump or hill valley  
or nightingale of loose feathers scuttled ship no moor no arab dancing squares just  
magicless bottles empty genre sandwiches staring blankly here and soaking bitter  
pillories curled over burnt cookies unrhymed without tune why should it persist in  
fighting or kicking in fussed belly flops not because it mattered meaning flat on red  
rimmed torn wasted patched and ripped sewn over and reused not because fingered  
and besmirched it lied and cheated and gobbled spitting fiery and stupid inanities not  
for all that caring and constipation but without that still and flaked and deceived and  
confused he spoke to tell his lollipop of a fine sunday swindle story not for all the tea  
in not for all the mush in Central Park he'd rather sleep than tell.

i am always misrepresenting giving a wrong sense of myself  
giving a sense of too much panic too much caring i'm afraid  
to seem to care too much feel guilty that maybe i'll depend  
on you too much or the situation is wrong for it that i'll  
lose my rightness my justification hurt afraid of the letter  
but waiting waiting will get it waiting will why what sometimes  
so dense so thick but why not with feelings as well as words  
letters do that feeling as well as letters do sometimes  
because i miss want need love have activities meet people  
talk go to the movies and yet all this i why not words as  
well as music why not music sometimes without words why all  
this musing and philosophizing and going over minutiae of the  
past why this planning the takeover of the videotape or tape  
field why this resting sometimes why this blowing cant it why  
this cant it why cant it why its why this all this

as if i valued you too much and you were taken from me  
for idolatry as if too much hug and pull and want and need  
too much for any one or any one thing too much as if idolatry  
putting out the light of god as if whats it whose it as if  
for idolatry shut out that new grace to shine on my native  
eye except that you than he shone closer by

up to  
and against barren and shipwrecked and forlorn gazing up against  
endless wear of words and held fast grasped out but why she why she  
and not she or she or he why she and not he or she why this or that  
and not that and not another why all these limits and all this regret  
this surge of resentment just for a joy on occasion just for that  
and for idolatry smote

## Nimrod the Pious: A Saga

Nimrod rode high, slinging & praying (no doubt a pious man) into the town. Bang bang he told the citizens with vaunted pride, bang bang move or else you'll die. Nimrod was strong in manness, big in color of choler (fast in anger): his hair a deep dark blue that others swore was dyed but Nimrod cried was true. Two guns he packed on each his sides, one black one white: painted by his new found bride. (SING: Nimrod rode high.)  
((No doubt a pious man.))

is that  
the way you see  
it

or  
is that  
the way it  
is

Would you believe it if Nietzsche told you. Would you believe it if Schopenhauer told Nietzsche. Would Nietzsche. Would Schopenhauer. And if you would believe it then why do you believe it, why do you believe the things you do. Would you believe it if Ed Muskie told you. Would Nietzsche. Do you. And if you cant believe Ed Muskie who can you believe, who can you really believe. Nietzsche. Did Nietzsche believe Schopenhauer. And even if Nietzsche did not believe Schopenhauer even if Nietzsche never could believe what Schopenhauer was saying, even if Nietzsche never believed anyone, would you. Could you. Do you. Ed Muskie says believe me. Ed Muskie says believe in me. Do you. Would Nietzsche. Would Schopenhauer. Can you. How can you believe it, how can you believe it the things you're supposed to. Did Nietzsche. Will you.

RED

PINK

ORANGE

BLUE

PIMENTO

MANGENTA

LEMON

ASH

BLACK

PURPLE



r--

i've gotton word  
that you just don't  
care anymore, that  
you're saying i'm a  
cold,  
impersonal creep, well i  
knew that we  
always knew that, what the fuck is  
with you, i was  
nice  
to you, i was kind,  
i was care-  
ful to do my share of the  
dishes, i listened  
to what you wanted to  
do, too  
and then this  
shit,  
this this,  
what's the cause,  
who've you been  
talking to,  
you know  
you can't believe  
them, you know,  
i mean,  
who the fuck—

yours  
and forever,  
roy roastbeef,  
king of slipshods

in that light games pale &  
when comes the time to & know how  
doubt—but what moves to  
a specious seriousness—of theatricalism  
questions of a quality or  
together & in itself enough  
that really what is wanted—sure  
then from a community—but is it  
new heights & what? Will that jar the  
circumstance that seems reasonably  
—well at least there's comfort in the  
sparklers & why it seems like what's

up chase  
(sway swell)  
milk  
charred  
lastless  
lake  
ly  
swan swell  
lake water  
lake swell  
atlassed  
brace  
lone  
crack  
o paque  
mouth wizened  
up the  
merry month  
I  
wasted willing  
in  
apt  
ly  
plause  
plaint  
by

To impose and be imposing.

Would it presume.

An worry.

To refuse and to disclaim to remit and to surmise.

Presumptuous.

And overtake.

Demure.

To refuse and refusing and denying and rejecting.

Would it overask.

Would it overstep.

Bound and sounded to bind and be personified.

May it.

Can you.