

## Selected Poems from *topsy-turvy*

### Charles Bernstein

read for The MUD Parcel Reading Series, Oct, 2021

#### Twelve-Year Universal Horoscope

Key: A Aires, T Taurus, G Gemini, C Cancer, L Leo, V Virgo, Li Libra, S Scorpio, Sa Sagitarius, Ca Capricorn, Aq Aquarius, P Pisces. Each section covers one year, then rotates.

A2019, T2020, G2021, C2022, L2023, V2024, Li2025, S2026, Sa2027, Ca2028, Aq2029, P2030

Anticipated reversals occur in unanticipated locations: avoid planar surfaces. As Saturn and Pluto come into alignment, prepare for irrepressible nostalgia. Casual attachments provide a medley of diversions from long-term fantasies. Mix of sulfur and magnesium is at its height on the 12th and 29th: stay clear of disarticulating headwinds while remaining open to miscalibrated address. Seek pine- and coconut-flavored dishes. Preferred alcohol: Anisette (neat).

T19, G20, C21, L22, V23, Li24, S25, Sa26, Ca27, Aq28, P29, A30

Reach out to long-estranged family members to say *life is better without you*. Don't back away from regrets. Outer Andromeda is fragmenting into deep time shallows: Time to stop the ambivalence and say *no*. Mid-month is best time for buying short but avoid other financial transactions. Look over your back before making sudden move. Avoid disco. Linger in crinoline. Seek wool products and avoid rayon. Preferred alcohol: Pisco (sour).

G19, C20, L21, V22, Li23, S24, Sa25, Ca26, Aq27, P28, A29, T30

Pegasus wars with Orion, but zones of calm when Pyxis is rising. Smells intensify in arboreal regions. Old lovers come to mind, posing immediate threat. Keep eyes on interstitial aggravations. Tumeric and clove in seventh and thirteenth weeks will ward off transvirtual infection. Travel southward when possible but not before 6am local time. Persons from Uruguay will offer gift: not necessary to return favor but wait one week before opening. Seek volcanic dust. Preferred alcohol: Koskenkorva (with bitters).

C19, L20, V21, Li22, S23, Sa24, Ca25, Aq26, P27, A28, T29, G30

Turbulence in the nebula. Dark Matter in retrovariance. Take only third offers. Dress in chartreuse on even-numbered days and in mute orchid on odd days. Friendships cement in near term on days with "3" (3, 13, 30, 31) but stay at sea level on days with "5" (5, 15). Your horse will "place" on "0" days (10, 20, 30). Moods conform with waning and waxing moon, great calm at new moon. Avoid sexual contact at full moon. Seek bougainvillea. Preferred alcohol: Slivovitz (with orange peel).

L19, V20, Li21, S22, Sa23, Ca24, Aq25, P26, A27, T28, G29, C30

Turn no one away. Gold is buried just beyond shoreline. Emotional tides are uneven, but stay with them or undercurrent will pull you down. Magnetic fields from the melting polar caps run roughshod over love life. Avoid newspapers in second weeks; at other times start with recipes, when available. Jupiter crosses Saturn in perfect Equinity Semblance: keep measured distance from newcomers. Saturn is lodestar whose course tracks in avoirdupois: pound for feckless, dram for egress, stone for gravitation. Seek cantilevers. Preferred alcohol: Aguardiente (over ice)

V19, Li20, S21, Sa22, Ca23, Aq24, P25, A26, T27, G28, C29, L30

"The seraph / Is satyr in Saturn, according to his thoughts" (Wallace Stevens). Close call becomes near miss. Bounty holds only when seared. Jade is talisman of recusal and redaction. Aspiration punctuates lunar flares. Retreat in hollow days, parry on pivots. "The genius of misfortune / Is not a sentimentalist": defy writ to rend. The tally is incendiary, but fortune comes in buckets. Disable charms to charm. The following day rips away the scuff of last. Cleave to presenting, adjacent insistence deems purpose. Seek such sentiment (not sentimental). Preferred alcohol: Drambuie (splits).

Li19, S20, Sa21, Ca22, Aq23, P24, A25, T26, G27, C28, L29, V30

Cold mouth, hot lips. Perpetuate fevered state, outlives livid transiciencies. Dig hard but cede ground. Solar flares quash unspoken dreams but open path for development. Meteor showers in the south inflate currency. Lucky numbers: 8, 13, 331. Orient Eastward for repose, Westward for reflection. Scent: basil. Keep cool, under 60 degrees F., on first and last days of every month except first and last months. Eat soup weekly, alternating hot and cold. Seek predisposition. Preferred alcohol: moonshine (with rum).

S19, Sa20, Ca21, Aq22, P23, A24, T25, G26, C27, L28, V29, Li30

Watch for mid-Pacific squalls. Stay totally clear on such days. Even the smallest thought can betray you. Confide only in friends from past five years and only about matters that occurred over that time. Signs of incompatibility include swift and frequent eyelid clatter, extravagant hand motion, and midday drowsiness. Signs of compatibility include sudden rain, heightened gait, and tender elbow. High risk of falling into dark matter. Vigilance pays off on 3rd, 12th, and 19th day. Seek vermilion. Preferred alcohol: Trappist brandy (spritz).

Sa19, Ca20, Aq21, P22, A23, T24, G25, C26, L27, V28, Li29, S30

"What is most full seems empty. Yet its use will never fail. What is most straight seems bent. The greatest skill seems like clumsiness. The greatest eloquence like stuttering." (*Tao Te Ching*) Climb to the tallest point within your reach then lie flat at the lowest point, saying these words. Saturn's rings surround your despair: have courage! Sing a song of childhood when you feel farthest from it. Every crack of thunder speaks with the voice of your dearest lost loves. Seek oak. Preferred alcohol: rice wine (chilled).

Ca19, Aq20, P21, A22, T23, G24, C25, L26, V27, Li28, S29, Sa30

Settled matters unravel: time to take the advantage. Tropical depressions complicate unfamiliar liaisons, providing opportunities for needed adventure. Catch a falling star and put it in your pocket. Uranus rising: auspicious for small-bore improvements but not major renovation. Act as if “there is no use in a center” (Stein): galvanize desire against regret and regret against compulsory well-being. Bird song provides big tip on holiday parties. Seek negative velocity. Preferred alcohol: mescal (with lemon).

Aq19, P20, A21, T22, G23, C24, L25, V26, Li27, S28, Sa29, Ca30

Sharp descent of Calypso Cluster drags Marmolean Veil into direct imbrication. Lucky numbers -6, -18, -871. Lucky colors: maroon, dead-island blue, mustard gray. Stay pressurized: do not leave capsule. Pseudoglossia is music from outer spheres but do not interpret or translate. Live in, not for, the moment. Seal the deal (resistance is a form of divination). Seek adjacency. Preferred alcohol: cachaça (with lime and sugar).

P219, A20, T21, G22, C23, L24, V25, Li26, S27, Sa28, Ca29, Aq30

Let envy propel you to eternity. Otherwise, duck and cover. Orion lays bare prognosis: structure treatment in response. Anxiety cools to fermenting antagonism: perpetuate memorialization. Sylvan linings pocket outsize payouts. Scatter in flutter, halt, then heave hard. Use thyme and ginger on 6th and 8th days of month, otherwise paprika (except in first and last days). Time will stand still at last moment. Follow the radiant sound of whoosh and whap. Declare insolvency as metaphysical foundation: blur affinities and self-identifications. Mid-months probe deep into shadows: reject false bottoms. Seek inardency. Preferred alcohol: absinthe (with Bénédictine).

## Amberianum

[Philosophical Fragments of Caudio Amberian]

Caudio Amberian was a Jewish poet and sophist of the first century CE (circa 30-75). He was likely born near Alexandria and spoke or read Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. He may have studied with Philo before moving to Rome around 60. In Rome, Amberian started a small school for sophistry, where he engaged students in Socratic-style dialogues. In addition, Amberian was a counselor to Nero in the last years of his reign, following the fire, and he helped set the ground for the move of Josephus and his entourage from Jerusalem to Rome in 71. The only previous translation of Amberian's work, an untitled poem, was published in *Girly Man*.

At his school in Rome, Amberian spoke in a broken or pidgin Latin that some of his students called "barbaric." The only record we have of his writing are the Latin transcriptions made by these notoriously unreliable and sometimes hostile students. The *Amberianum* was reconstructed from shreds and shards at the Sid Caesar Center for Dysraphic Studies. Missing words and the seaming of disconnected parts likely mar the work. The Latin manuscript was discovered on October 4, 1895, buried under a former Minsk dry goods store. The story of the miraculous finding of the *Amberianum* has been told in the award-winning book *The Oyl: How the World Became Pataquerical*.

Abolens sensus numquam liberare cogitatione.

Abolishing reason will never free thought.

•

Etiam homo fastus scribere posse bonum carmen. Sed suus non amo.

Even a self-righteous man can write a good poem. But it's not likely.

•

Praecaveo osor qui clamat "odisti!"

Beware the bigot who shouts out "bigot!"

•

Nonnumquam homo qui mendacii loquimini veritatem.

Even a liar sometimes must tell the truth.

•

O dii magna! Protecut nobis adversum malis qui consumuntur per justitia.

May the gods save us from those consumed by their righteousness.

•

Colaphus est chiridotus punctum.

A cuff is not a sleeve.

(*Alt.*: A blow is not the full chemise.)

•

Aestas alga mutates in hiberna malogranatum

Summer seaweed becomes winter pomegranates.

•

Si paratextus fortior poema sequitur fornicando fortior amor?

If paratext is more important than poem, does it follow that love is more important than sex?

•

Perceptio est scriptum.

Perception is textual.

•

Omni scriptura est pupilla.

All texts are orphans.

•

Perspicientia est sensus vigalantis.

Knowledge is a matter of minding sense.

•

Ubi erraverit caper detondetur vitulum.

Where the goat strays the calf is shorn.

•

Rarus est maeror nomas.

Seldom is grief misplaced.

•

Omne iter fluxum.

Every journey takes a turn.

•

Cultura est opinabilis.

Cultivation is a manner of opinion.

•

In fragmenta veritas.

Truth is in pieces.

•

Vivis et vigeo. Argumentum injustitia deos.

The fact that you are alive and thriving is proof that the gods are not just.

•

Remissio prope nihil. Desiderium dono divum.

Forgiveness is overrated. Regret is a gift of gods.

•

Quid nunc videtur priori numquam imaginabilis.

What was unimaginable an hour ago is unforgettable now.  
(unimaginable / hours ago / unforgettable / now)

•

Proximi sui ruina unius hominis felicitatem.

One man's catastrophe is his neighbor's good fortune.

•

Servus absolve illusion licentia. Dominus amat fraudis.

A slave is free of the illusion of freedom from which his master takes pleasure.

•

Virtus est selectivam.

Virtue is selective.

•

Coitus est bonitas plus quam amor. Est tangibili.

Sex is more virtuous than love because it is more tangible.

•

Amor abducit lubido.

Love turns many from desire.

•

In vino exiguum clinamen veritas.

In wine truth swerves.

•

Sensus mentis dolum.

Perception is the finest trick of the mind.

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Veritas nondum visibilis.

The truth remains to be seen.

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Salus in numeris donec numerus vester ascendit.

There is safety in numbers until your number is up.

- 

Numquam nominare inane vacuum.

Never call a void a void.

- 

Sine pullos nihilum ova.

If there were no chickens there'd be no eggs.

- 

Ignorantiam didicit.

Ignorance is learned.

- 

Odium contagiosa est.

Hatred is contagious.

- 

Maximo sinceritatis ironia.

Irony is the perfection of sincerity.

- 

Veritas est scortum sumptuosus

Truth is a pricey whore.

•

Judaeorum dabo optimus pretium.

Jews will give you the best price.

•

Si videris Judaeus, dicere salve pro me.

If you see a Jew be sure to say I said hello.

•

Omni infringes punctum impotens etiam amare.

Everything breaks at its weakest point including love.

•

Fragilitas sollicito amatio.

Fragility is the root of love.

•

Quasi pardus est Judaeus. Sed absque maculis.

A Jew is like a leopard without the spots.