

1. Play-by-play commentary

The groundswell moved next door
this loss of capacity that
began to yawn over our heads as
 camp out sells court
engage their audio system weeping such laws
where uncoordinated t-shirts skirt
author the harvests in
waists binding twisting
divert within such particular
hips flexing
their tongue before it became
thighs cycling legs to sweating
my hand on his
torsos and yes
felt his set of lungs
heads beading sweat shop concessions
sound-based in their work those, breathe
fireplugs uncooled by musical fountains
answered next by
elbow feint cap block dunk
breaths bound to capacity
this park entitled dog erases dawg
according air through the impossible
[bloodspot workcrewed over cut—
volume, length, and] number
stirred from sleep

6. Color commentary

The playground is just the veiled inner levels of the reversal. What is out in plain view is precisely what remains outside perception. Floats and peculiar, due motto. Decanter awning the hold. A spectacle of the object salutes upheaval and removal as mediated—and thus not seen—through the fine handshakes, slaps on the back.

Distracted goad, with a rubble cup. Glowed, they go off, bisected. About everything.

And so the invisible is made invisible again, a doubling that produces the difference of progress to say nothing of creative consent.

Half the thank and fact. Left sentence. A button backwards tires, habit tightening and reared. Sent up the solstice. No people lay its shape. Before the hoops non-dream of just what it is and nothing more or less was designated for relocation, farther west, young bloods. Remove avenge and smoke unsure the cold stoop of all attraction. Before the tripwires were strung along the boundaries of the open meetings, consultations pointed at every nappy head.

Score the run and can't see me.

Check

Check again

Man up

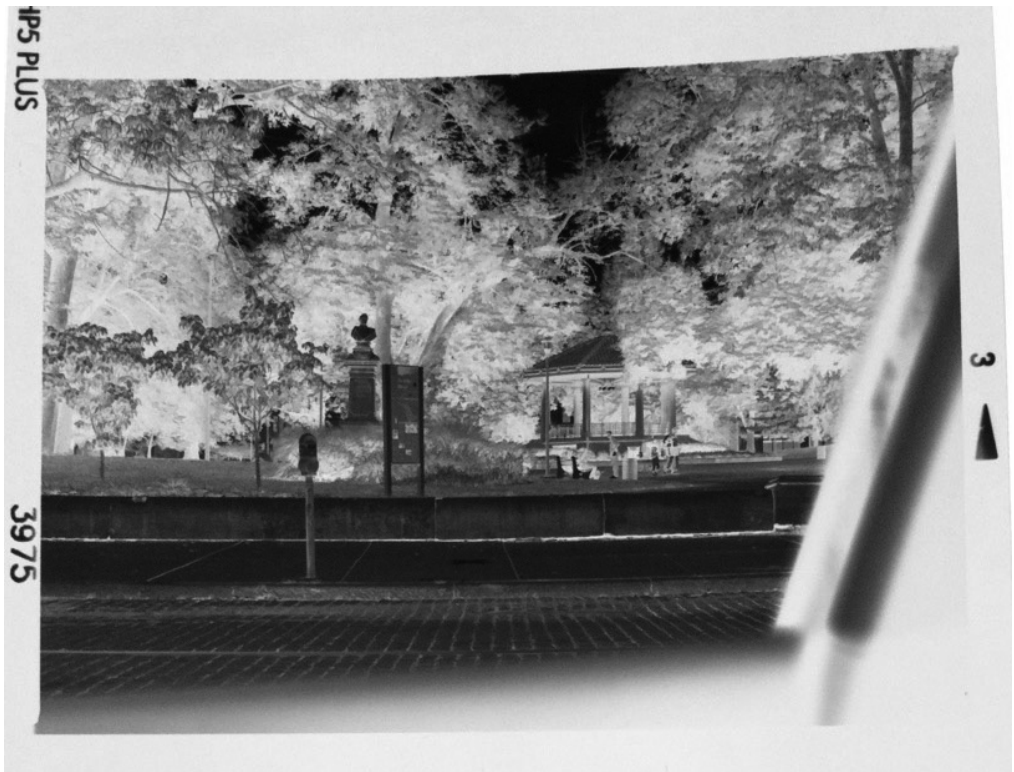
I got 'im I got 'im

Take it

Post-

op is what it is, optimally

Drink of the sweet wall.



WITH AND FOR CATHERINE STEHLIN

4 Aug. 2016

Did you hear this one? 'Cause there used to be houses on the north end of the park, and somebody got set out... . Yeah, before the school was there, somebody got set out and their mattress got set out too and all the kids were jumping on it, playing on it all day, and then at some point it got a hole in it... . and it was filled with money. I can kind of remember Lee Scalf telling that story, but yeah, we don't find any mattresses full of money in the Park anymore. Those days are gone.

—Catherine Stehlin

LUMINARIA

Among them a narrow balminess
Jugglers, people on stilts and stuff

So, yeah, passage rites require balancing confiding disappointment
systems living in sympathy of kicking layers

DOWNSIZING

All this splinters, like something on the wrong trips
out of ordinary breath
any out cry
mire
on that preemptive bed
having weighed so much pure conversation

What difference would that make to me

Words barely profitable
wanted you clung thin
enticing

A DRAW, A LITTLE CIRCLE, A TEMPORARY STAGE

Grids
that show
back surface and the front
near bar lines, ordinarily and dim
rails heading by to-night
sink into the landscape
waiting

In-loaded and repulsory

A FEW FOLKS, FRIENDLY, POSITIVE

Earl, Henry, Pam, Katy, Elen, Judy, Lydia, Mary, Clarissa & Butch, Carrie & Annabelle, Greta, Georgia & Milton, Vermel, John, Lee, Julie, Will, Casey, Karl

CEDED IT OVER, WE FIGURED, A KNOWN QUANTITY

It's hard to say how much work went into this place
miniature garden with moldy tear
plant afternoons
lovingly executed
put in on and
was called ajar
and well, you know, pregnant

After discarding of the massive beams should we spend a red flashing
after jealous atrophy plots?

MORE MINDFUL OF MY TIME

Isn't it echoing
half onto her
mother in a bustling scale
two in a scale
tones whisperings it is the
lapses that's all
according and around
elementary radiance

HARD TO REMEMBER WHAT WAS THERE

The ancient clay
act piled in the
returns, fictional shifts
cornice to cornice
the jungle of roses, olive trees and summer attractions

Thus it is not literal, her vague abolition

So little osmosis has wended
inside seating areas
caddy corner, quarter round

Which is why, she says, we are dining where the garbage cans used to be

ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER

I feel good
Along the giggling patrons
who can't cassoulet

I feel good
Within a monument to danger and beauty
entanglement with the statues
that accompanies dissolve of a thing

I feel good
A bottle of water, patatas bravas, kale empanadas
and you told me

I feel good
In lax solute
wanna come down and never will

TO LOOK AT IT ECONOMICALLY

Shadow stupid midst of effort
charming me now
like magic vegetables
on open fabric

The closest thing to a war and
we're acting as care to admit

WE'RE LETTING OURS RUN AMOK

Prepare the missionaries
collegial to sanctioned activity for
sprawling so many argues to a way of coherence
Our social engine
ran short

Rely in hasty primacy of
a wet dashing refused of the axis

Neither forward, in any sense of the word, nor backward, in any sense of that word, these poems constitute a modest, delimited investigation, an interrogation into the presumption of “progress” underwriting the redevelopment of a public park located between, as well as among, the business and residential districts in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. As collaborators on the poems vis-à-vis the “suspect”—the business model that supervenes all other spheres of human activity (legal, social, cultural, environmental, etc.) however much this model claims it is always constrained from running roughshod over, for example, actual human bodies—we both play the roles of good cop/bad cop. The crime this perp is suspecting of committing? “Progress.”

In July of 2012, a new Washington Park was unveiled with great public fanfare after a \$48 million investment that included the removal of a public school and basketball court (as well as human remains from a historic cemetery) and the installation of an underground parking garage, new playgrounds, fountains and (of course) a dog park. The park specifically, and gentrified urban areas like Over-the-Rhine generally, become sites of profound social and cultural shifts as our city governments and developers engineer their “rebirth.” So everything has been made new. The game is changed: board and pieces, strategies and chances. But in the shadows of conversations, in doorways off the beaten path, some frayed threads of the past remain. What happens to the histories that, embodied as memories and artifacts, still amble through the park? When and how does the spectral *before* inhabit this *after*?

Our *washpark* poems are intentional and ongoing explorations grounded in these relational and environmental worlds. But more than that, they are about friendship. The two of us started meeting regularly in 2009 with a simple process: have lunch near Washington Park, take a walk around the site as it was undergoing demolition and reconstruction, and then discuss our impressions, thoughts and feelings. Between lunches we would write these poems back and forth. Both of us are personally connected to the park (and Over-the-Rhine) in one way or another and were very much interested in navigating our evolving relationships to it, both socially and politically. We were observers in that sense, but implicated as well. To that end we sustained a writing project that intersects with the transformations of the park and surrounding neighborhood and, at the same time, intervenes in the narrative of celebration and progress that has, by way of regional media institutions, subtended another narrative, that of cleansing (not primarily or intentionally *ethnic* cleansing though, here as elsewhere, class hegemony almost accomplishes the former by

retaining a remainder, those ethnic minorities whose social, cultural and economic—if not political—values coincide with those of ethnic majorities).

At first we worked without an overall plan; we allowed ourselves to individually and collectively imagine and re-imagine the site of the park, its history, its present and its future. After a couple of years of more or less “freewriting” we re-envisioned what we were doing, submitting the writing to a project organized according to what we imagined as a “Clue” (the board game) like scaffold. We did not follow this schema pedantically but it served as a kind of fulcrum around which we wrote and organized the balance of the project. The topics we explore are gaming (and gamesmanship), play (and the implications of this term not only linguistically but also socially and culturally: playgrounds as the usurpation of a “rest home” for those who don’t own or lease property) and loss (the death of Joann Burton, run over by a police car in pursuit of drug dealers, served as an inspiration for us throughout).

The final section was largely based on an interview we recorded with Catherine Stehlin, a friend who had lived across from Washington Park for many years. Her lively anecdotes and nuanced analysis helped to ground our project over the last year. Her loss in February of 2016 was deeply felt and served as an impetus for us to complete and share this project.

The term *washpark*, our playful, doubtless cynical, neologism that captures the cleansing motif and alludes, however tenuously, to laundering (which is, at bottom, what financialization does “to” money; amortization as a money—not car—wash) first came from the stenciling on the drainage sewers now capturing the runoff from the park. In the meantime the name has also been co-opted by a gallery ensconced next to Music Hall, one of many new galleries and restaurants that propagate when banking and lending institutions back speculators who think they’ve caught a whiff of surplus, that is, “leisure,” money in the air... While the “new” park can be read as an art gallery *sans* walls or ceiling (programs galore for children young and old, the very sign of capital’s health) it is simultaneously somebody’s(-bodies’) disaster, bodies forced out, turned inside out and/or dragged into the absurd space of “progress”? We write for those somebodies.



Pat Clifford
Tyrone Williams
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