Bona Vada
Selected Publications by Jeremy Reed

Poetry
Isthmus of Samuel Greenberg (1976)
Bleecker Street (1980)
By The Fisheries (1984)
Nero (1985)
Selected Poems (1987)
Engaging Form (1988)
Nineties (1990)
Red Haired Android (1992)
Kicks (1994)
Pop Stars, with Mick Rock (1995)
Sweet Sister Lyric (1996)
Saint Billie (2000)
Patron Saint of Eyeliner (2000)
Heartbreak Hotel (2002)
Duck and Sally Inside (2006)
Orange Sunshine (2006)
This Is How You Disappear (2007)
West End Survival Kit (2009)
Bona Drag (2009)
Piccadilly Bongo (with Marc Almond) (2010)

Novels
The Lipstick Boys (1984)
Blue Rock (1987)
Red Eclipse (1989)
Inhabiting Shadows (1990)
Isidore (1991)
When The Whip Comes Down (1992)
Chasing Black Rainbows (1994)
The Pleasure Chateau (1994)
Diamond Nebula (1995)
Red Hot Lipstick (1996)
Sister Midnight (1997)
Dorian (1998)
Boy Caesar (2004)
The Grid (2008)
BONA VADA

Jeremy Reed

Shearsman Books
Published in the United Kingdom in 2011 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD
www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-164-1
First Edition

Copyright © Jeremy Reed, 2011.
The right of Jeremy Reed to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the
All rights reserved.

Cover illustration copyright © Luka Young, 2011.
Author photo copyright © Gregory Hesse, 2009.
CONTENTS

BABY'S GOT A GUN
   Book Thieves 11
   Tipping Points 12
   What's On 13
   Blacks and Grays 14
   Dusty Springfield’s (blues) at 5am 15
   My Lives 16
   It Takes Two Baby 17
   Going Down Slow 18
   We All Adore Johnny 20
   Thinking of JC (Good Times, Bad Times) 22
   Baby’s Got a Gun 23
   Aliens 24
   Prospecting Poet 25

CURRENT AFFAIRS
   Alan’s Time 29
   Opium for Men 31
   Back to Bill Franks 32
   To a Friend in Despair 33
   What the Dead Do 37
   Dylanologist 39
   e-mailing Edmund White 40
   Book Catalogue 41
   Somewhere a Change 42
   Current Affairs 43
   Rewriting Shakespeare’s Sonnets 44
   You Wear It So Well 45

CHINA YUM YUM
   Jaffa Cakes 49
   Kitchen Poem 50
   The Difference between Harrods’ and Fortnum’s Smoky Teas 51
   China Yum Yum 53
   First Out 54
   Thundery Blues 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sooner or Later Frank</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to Johnnie Ray in Bed, Baby</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorian Gray: the Physicals</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey Eyes</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pop</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lolita</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese French</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving On</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing You</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Jamie</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London/Tokyo</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot and Cold</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Fury</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something the Matter</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London My Time</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer in the City</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moon Gangs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Coli</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost Dark</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon Gangs</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antivenom</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People Who Don’t Die</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgotten Poems</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Goliard</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful Losers</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Tourism</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syd’s Dead</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Experience</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Derek of Dungeness</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungeness Blues</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Associations</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baudelaire and the 21st Century</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moondust</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cooked me a spoonful of diamonds
cooked me a spoonful of gold
just one spoon of your precious love
will satisfy my soul

Willie Dixon
BABY’S GOT A GUN
Book Thieves

I never guessed at first, this man
so quizzically attentive to Burroughs—
he’d been in twice, casual knitwear,
sober jeans, academic air,
Boeing aluminium-coloured hair;
I never thought his slow reconnaissance
of signed Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac,
more than a collector’s internal debate
over the price, dust-wrapper, state,
his knowledge worn the way a silver ring
gets eaten by the skin. The third time he
left space where a Burroughs Naked Lunch first
in its olive green Olympia imprint
had faced outwards, as though he’d cut a tree
from a familiar stand.
The fourth time, he lacked nerve, or I was quick,
his adrenalin never fired the shot;
the fifth time a signed Kerouac
went missing like a pane of glass
lifted clean from a window frame.
We preferred to live with the enigma
and never questioned him, but I was curious
about his method, as I might
be of a disappearing act,
or something incisive like a surgeon’s cut,
or how a chess player conceives
a configurative strategy,
and waited for him to return and show
me how the signed John Fante Ask The Dust
left with him, like he’d put on extra weight
he never showed, slipping out casually.
Tipping Points

Magnolias collapse like a pink trifle, a mashed dessert, get flattened underfoot in cold abrasive thunder showers. I feel the planet air-pocket in spin like a plane thrown about by wind somewhere above the China sea, the passengers starting to crawl with sweat. It’s a race between tipping points, a switch to sustainable technology or collapse: a network blackout, all power crashed.

One school holiday, lost in blue mirage hazing the beach, right down on the green tide a friend grabbed a rubbery octopus out of its niche in a rock corridor, tentacles grabbing, and its black ink cap projected over his white shirt, the stain opening out like a continent, a sort of blackest Africa. It’s the shock I remember, the black squirt gunned like a missile launcher, and my friend’s momentary shattering against a rock. It’s my three-button black Jaeger blazer brings it all back, so too the planet’s flip one side light and the other dark, but angry light-polluted and burnt-out, things getting rocky, as I track across a pink magnolia petal littered park.
What’s On

Disturbance in the city’s hypothalamus—a new J G Ballard novel, a riff from a Rolling Stones rehearsal, a variant chord from the human riff’s indestructible neurology; and somewhere in a lab, donor oocytes compounded into human clones, we’ll never know the difference one day, except the eyes turned blank as cellulose on a Jaguar XK coupe—two of them standing by the underground car park entrance, warrened beneath Bloomsbury Square? And then the underground UFO factory, donor organ traffickers, dealers cocktailing psychoactive additives, new drugs for a new body redesigned for the visionary present, the abdication of reality? A Delta 11 rocket blasts off from Cape Canaveral, delivering NASA Mars probes, its green casing logoed with blue and red NASA roundels bound for the red planet.

The universe weighs in at 10 kilograms per cubic metre, and me I’m 50 kilograms, that light in volume, I’m just nerve and personality, no body mass, stripped-down for easy death and poetry? The gateway’s there if we could see it—50 years from now, 100, 200, no different from imagining its contents—a post-human colony, backs to the sun, waiting in a convoy to move on into clearer air after pollution warnings, dust-cloud hangovers, jeep-crawling into the 23rd century.
Blacks and Grays

The high-end 21st century look:
William S Burroughs as its prototype,
the mapping YSL, Richard James, Hugo Boss,
like structural architecture
got into clothes
exec/casual black: exec/casual gray:
the a note in gray deepening colour
the black matte black stylistic gravity
suggesting ship’s black paint
sans serif lettering done in spray bomb black,
black runny hair dye, Mafia conference tables,
the blackout in a gun barrel.
Gray’s neutral and attracts colours
like purple, cerise, orange, red,
but finds a complementary line with black:
a locked in mood, a foggy quotient,
an emphasis more than a style
in composing attitude like menu
to fit with grainy emotion.
Take a black three-button blazer,
a gray cashmere jumper and charcoal slacks,
you have the 21st century future
like airport skies smudged at vanishing point
towards a global marker:
a texture that’s backgrounded as a base
to building on like a Burroughs novel
as a lab-experiment, black and gray
by the canal today, the serious two,
cutting a deal and studiously dodgy
on the café patio in full view.
Dusty Springfield’s (blues) at 5am

The voice is mink. The scent Trésor.
Dykes in the clandestine
1960s at Aubrey Walk—
she left her panda makeup on all night
so Sandra wouldn’t see her stripped,
run-proof mascara like black dahlias
leaving no traces on the black pillow.
The ashtray’s like a mortuary:
the bottle-green Booth’s gin bottle bottomed-out
to a finger’s width,
the uncapped Schweppes tonic bottle gone flat.
The room, (Anna Kavan’s a street away),
smokes bluely—whitely, light tweaking
slatted Venetian blinds in mid-July,
light that mixes with the sleeping tablet’s fog
into an opalescent 5am blur.
She sashays in a black silk negligée
into the bathroom’s clinical sanctuary
to do full makeup before Sandra wakes,
the diva pop star lining eyeliner
like immaculate Chinese calligraphy.
She fires-up on the last clear lick of gin,
eyes squeezed on its hot corridor
into the gut, and then slinks back to bed.
Sandra’s curled in a caterpillar shape,
black hair rayed out, the love bite on her neck
the colour of a blueberry.
Dusty feels flat, gravelly and wiped out.
She sits cushion-propped waiting for the day,
her mind configurating how she’ll sing
a certain phrase—she scans it word by word—
lights up a fag for huskiness,
repairs her toe polish, while Sandra shifts
from dream to dream, face up, and stays that way.
My Lives

Thin. Looks like a pop star (high cheek bones at low cloud level).
Owes all his poems to a pink jumper (cerise, more raspberry),
seen on a bony shouldered man
at La Colette: popped juniper berries
mixing a tangy frisson with the sea,
one excerpted, truant, white-hazy afternoon,
a Thursday, circa 1973?

Clothes. Mostly a Mod aficionado:
the poems taking colour from a shirt
seen at the time, high collar button-down
blue gingham, (the tone unrepeatably
an offbeat deep blue subtext to navy):
the wearer stepping into myth-making
as lyric building blocks to poetry.

Education. Hanging round, filling in
empty spaces with imagination.
Outsider, from those two teeny sightings,
a shirt and jumper obsessive
linking the singularity of each
to inspiration. Mods are detail-cute.

Occupation. Monitoring the crowd
for image, mostly in London’s West End,
and working from it. Writing a poem’s
like compressing the shattered galaxy
into a lively rectangle, 30 lines,
8 x 5? Biography: still unmixed
the unsettling secrets stored in the studio.
Agenda: getting the two colours right
a pink and blue that won’t ever be matched,
but keep pointing up possibilities
of resolution on hazy Thursdays,
staring at futures, and eating ice cream
that’s sharply, alertly dark raspberry.
It Takes Two Baby

Your ash-stained black fedora’s rake
tilted back, slept-in, re-characterized,
a Johnson’s of St James’ punched
into a UFO shape, then the black shades
concealing 52 hours without sleep,
eye slants the colour of canned tomatoes
when the shades slip—
you hanging on the stairs
beneath a Vivienne Westwood poster
so large it hallucinates off the wall,
Sex in its snarlish punk World’s End heyday
in 1976, SW3.
Two Marlboro Lites are sighting from your lips
with variant deposits of drooped ash
like flaky bullet heads,
an incendiary’s burnt out bronchia—
40 a day, supplemented by cocaine.
You offer me the bottle of Pinot rosé
you’re dragging on at 9.30 am:
wine the colour of a pink carnation.
I work the bookshop for you in a weird space-time,
me with my head speedy with poetry—
that’s always my peculiar drug—
the dopamine acceleration of words
into such extravagant imagery.
We’re broke. I tell you words are hot sapphires
if we could get an exchange rate—
a conversion into gratuitous Euros?
I’ve nothing in my coat but purple pens
and valium and space substituting for money.
A baguette’s all I’ll eat today
to fill the hunger. We embrace and stay
a minute folded in each other’s loss
so that the contact hurts—it’s come to this
a momentous event in which we bond
outside of the brutally sunlit indifferent day.
Going Down Slow

At first, I thought depression was like fog, dispersible over an office tower, a flaky vapour burnt off by pink sun the colour of a red grapefruit, but found its core was black and hard and sometimes irreducible

the way an avocado stone maintains obdurate guard inside an egg plant’s slippery leather skin. I didn’t know that it’s interior was subterranean like a corridor—a mazy underpass with the lights blown

and menace graffiti-tagged on the walls. I curled up there and notched myself into a caterpillar’s ball. I had incentive, but I couldn’t act, and got so drunk glasses seemed redundant. I drank relief clean out of the bottle,
corks littering the floor like dead bullets a gutted war-zone in Baghdad. I occupied a shrinking radius, the TV on, and me reading it blank, afraid if it grew silent I’d go mad or end up drug-zonked in a hospital
orbiting pharmaceuticals like friends I’ve visited who shook all day. Letters accumulated in the hall—unopened snow-drifts littering the floor. I stayed inside and thought a black river was waiting outside to break down the door.
Months of it, going down there, terminally?
No change of clothes, bunkered like the Führer,
the loaded pistol aching on his desk.
Half a stone dropped, not even poetry
worrying me into hyper-alert.
The blackness killed it in my chemistry.

No comfort, when the way up’s the way down.
I wore black mirrored glasses everywhere
contactless as an alien
with an indifferent wraparound stare.
I scored some methadone by Centre Point
and tried to unplug pain. Nothing seemed real.

The nights were worst, the days like a dead train
derailed on a Siberian plateau.
I sat ten hours and didn’t move at all,
convinced that losers win, got up at last
and took a pencil and wrote on plaster
like naming a new country on the wall.
We All Adore Johnny

Elusive, out of town again,
the blond-haired head-turner who stops our hearts
networks our conversation underground
in the 6pm Phoenix bar:
comparisons with a taller James Dean
or quiffed Billy Fury as prototype

brim on the tongue like strawberries
soaked in his favourite brand: Stolichnaya vodka
80 proof Russian bullet shot
stripping the lining from the throat.
I read us a Frank O’Hara poem
about the way a first vodka

triggers acceptance of almost anything,
like feeding emotions through a juicer.
Johnny’s a vodka tearaway,
a dealer with a film-star’s looks,
and by some freaky synchronicity
calls mid-conversation, so he’s right there with us

as a connection in the bar
sustained by my Nokia signal.
He’s heading north for three shape-shifting days,
no destination ever named,
he’s somebody who perfects a dissolve
like fog worked to a blue consistency

on smoky blue: a seacoast texturing.
We order drinks and recreate his pull,
the hypnotic charm he asserts, the style—
his Valentino shades ledged in his hair,
the smile that’s coloured banana-yellow,
his eyes the clear blue of a swimming pool.
We’re like a fan club grouped into this bar
talking up Johnny and Frank O’Hara,
and how vodka is clear like poetry,
only its side effects are slightly skewed
and heady and hopefully off the wall
and burn like Johnny as a ruined star.