

Neruda Meets Basie

by Jeff Brain

If pitching is poetry,
batting is big band.
Big righthander winds
deals
Neruda metaphors
to a steady
Basie rhythm section tattoo

Southpaw sonnets
high and tight
low and away
constricted construct
catcher signals
conducts each pitch
Cat Anderson screams over
framed Ellington brass
back and forth,
Shakespeare and Duke.

Haiku curves dance
over
bucket-muted growling bones

Renga change-ups
confound
clarinets

Pantoums
prey on
outside Coltrane chords

Villanelle sliders
clash with
chorus after chorus of C jam blues

And when they connect
words flung, crack of bat, sweet sound.

Fielding is ballet.
Orchestrated movement
soliloquy and chorus pivot
turn two pas de deux

Leaps and dives
Arpeggio tosses
Grace every catch and throw

Ode to high heat
rears back and fires cheese
Woody's reeds sing mournfully
swing and swing and swing
amiss

Brittle innings tanka
Mingus bass bottoms bright
Baserunners scattered
Bird melodic stream
Stressed syllables
Lady Day syncopates
two base hits
Such swat thunder

Gilgamesh himself striding epic
Ninth inning
closer
facing Tony Williams, Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones
heart of the order
seeks hits
ride cymbals ride