



Interior of The Ghost Ship of Oakland before the fire

Christopher Bernard

Ghost Ship

To wake, on a sun-bright Saturday morning,
the cat asleep in the light-washed porch,
a sky nearly cloudless,

the air fresh and cool as a sheet,
in the garden, one, two, three sparrows,
hopping and chirping, chirping, hopping,
to news of a fire in the city across the water
(a city you cannot see from the garden,
though the sun is rising slowly above it)
that ate through the beautiful rooms
heaped with magnificent bric-à-brac
like a Victorian attic run mad,
in a schizomania of bibelots, tchatchkes, antique beds,
art deco statuettes, preening ottomans, Ganeshas, dream catchers, disarticulated
mannequins,
Edwardian divans in beaded love niches, chairs stuffed with peacock feathers, glass eyes
and tortoise shells,
a palace of sacred junk, curtain rods crossed like épées, surgeon's busts, the broken heads
of fortune tellers,
rags of superannuated tapestry, portieres draped over shipwrecked pianos,
ragged testaments of shawls beaded with tangled brocade,
the enlaced patchwork labyrinth
piled to the rafters where the flames
raged without pity, fire feels no pity,
the shouting children trying to escape.

In memory of the victims of the Ghost Ship fire in Oakland on November 2, 2016

Christopher Bernard is the co-editor of *Caveat Lector*. His novel *Voyage to a Phantom City* appeared last year. His newest book—the poetry collection *Chien Lunatique*—will appear in May of 2017.