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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Local Pontifications

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Larry A. Handy

March 2012

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Committee Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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(In order of those I've met...more or less)

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Local Pontifications

“Our ideas of poetry—including significantly, our idea of the poet—began to look back *consciously* to the early & late shamans of those other worlds: not as a title to be seized but as a model for the shaping of meanings & intensities through language. As the reflection of our yearning to create a meaningful ritual life—a life lived at the level of poetry—that looking-back related to the emergence of a new poetry & art rooted in performance & in the oldest, most universal of human traditions.”

—Jerome Rothenberg
(“Pre-Face” of *Technicians of the Sacred*)

“I got-a wings, you got-a wings
All o' God's chillun got-a wings
When I get to Heab'n I'm goin' to put on my wings
I'm goin' to fly all ovah God's Heab'n
Heab'n, Heab'n
Ev'rybody talkin' 'bout Heab'n ain't goin' dere
Heab'n, Heab'n
I'm goin' to fly all ovah God's Heab'n”

—Negro Spiritual

Local Pontifications:

Yangs

(War Poems)

Wind Sketches: Spittin' Game to Lois Lane

“Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman—a rope over an abyss.”
—Nietzsche

Mike Tyson:

Watch me knock the wind out of your man, Ms!

Lois Lane:

Watch you do what?! He can douse a house fire
While taking a plain-old-piss!

Mike Tyson:

I pawned my diamond rings for some kryptonite stones.
One punch from me and your man is gone.

Lois Lane:

My guy saved the world from nine nuclear bombs.
Strange love—you don't know how much that turns me on.

Mike Tyson:

When I look you over you know what I see?
Every woman like you has fantasized about a bad boy like me.

Lois Lane:

When you were locked up I know you read philosophy.
Ever read a little bit of Frederick Neechee?
To simply touch my man you climb a rope over an abyss—

Mike Tyson:

I'll still knock the wind out of your man, Ms.
I'll send him into that abyss;
I'll even bite the ear off of your man
Incase I hit him and I miss.

Stone Sketches: Telephone

“The way she talks when she’s spoken to
Down to me, the change has come,
She’s under my thumb.”

—The Rolling Stones
(“Under My Thumb”)

Time to go. Time to meet. Time to exist. The world needs a phone.
digital Ouija...portable tower of Babel...12 key oracle...

It’s the 21st century now. Everyone should have one.

God needs a cell phone. He should get with the times. He’s so third world these days.
So early 20th century. Can’t believe we still have to pray to talk to Him.

Time to go. Time to meet.
digital Ouija...

Buttons...numbers...codes...texts...wires...cords...ringing...singing...is that the radio?
Is that you? Is that me?

The language dance digital oracle 12 key Babel tower of Ouiji
God, yes You, God, get a phone!

Stone Sketches: Grasshopper

“Well then what can a poor boy do
Except to sing for a rock ‘n’ roll band
‘cause in sleepy London town
There’s just no place for a street fighting man.”
—The Rolling Stones
(“Street Fighting Man”)

I came to your school skinny and nervous and shy.
And I wanted to be like that T.V. Kung Fu guy.

You were just like me at one time. And the art taught you to be a Tiger.
Yin yang. It was never a silly game. You were just like me at one time.

My friend, let me tell you, that the world is not an open hand but a closed fist.
My friend, let me tell you, that the world drinks its bourbon; phucks its women;
and gets paid.

You were just like me, an enemy to the world, and still are.
I am no longer shy.
The art has saved me once again.

The Cruelty of Day Jobs, Women and the Sun

You know your middle-aged coworkers have no life
When they begin biting you with jealous teeth.

Fat fools letting their day jobs butcher
Them. Holding onto nothing but stale lives. Pigs
To a trough driving in traffic.
Human beings were created better than this.
The genie in the rubbing bottle never followed through
And so we rub I mean punch the rubbing clock.
9 to 5 times.

The Sun's song is so sly;
The Sun is like a castanet—
And Pinocchio has it easier than me.
The more lies I write the hotter the sun grows
I wish it were just my nose.

Are you single like me, lady?
And do you fall for the bad guy?
Well, that's okay, I won't wait for you.
I know your type.
You'll open your legs
And fuck the bad guy now.
And then you'll open your heart
And marry me later.
What? You find me sexy for being so blunt?
I still won't wait for you.
Go fuck your bad guy.

Sick philosophies follow when we dream big—
Shooting for the clouds missing and landing on our faces—
Blaming God for it all.

Do you love your day job, dear Sun?
Does your woman love you?
Your woman, the moon, does she?

There's that dark gown of stars she wears;
Dancing the black swan,
Piercing the heart with icy pitch;
In full moon mood or crescent mystery,

You have to kneel before her—
Before every time you hold her hand.
Every man needs a woman like that.

Mind if we trade places, you and I?
You're up there in the sky more closer to God than I—
He's just a tear drop away it appears;
Your roommate, huh?

There I go again writing lies.

The Total Animal Soup of Time/The Totem Animal Pole of Mine

For Totem Maples, Earth's Most Powerful Poetry Band

1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 to
Hell with the Mayan Calendar 2000 Eternity
God! These numbers remind me of taxes
I WANT to pay.
Swans mate for life.
Human beings stopped being swans in the 1950's.

Earth's Most Powerful Poetry Band!
Longer than most American-made marriages.

Earth's Most Powerful Poetry Band!
Are you out of words?
We're not.

Everyone in Los Angeles has a band stars in the sky stars on the walk of fame stars in the
LA Weekly watch a movie and see stars.

I met you Matt Coleman in 1995 with a hat and guitar all you talked about was when my
book would be published.
15 years later I'm in MFA and nothing is published.

You took to playing guitar behind poets.
Andrew Christopherson White boy with the Barry White voice read Tell Tale Heart to
your guitar.

At Azusa Pacific University you asked me to do the same.
Never thought of reading in front of crowds let alone a guitar.

We did our first song in Smith Dormitory Lounge with Mike Moulder as our only crowd.

Mikey liked it. And told me to put more feeling behind it. To read my poem in the same
way I felt when I first wrote it. Thanks, Mike. Took it to the coffeehouse stage on April
24 1997. Stole the crowd. Confused the crowd. "Is he rapping?" "Why isn't he
rhyming?" "Why is there an acoustic guitar?" "Where is the drum beat?"

Matt Coleman and Larry Handy. White boy on six strings, Negro on the mic. Typical
Ivory and Ebony buddy flick. Mel Gibson and Danny Glover. Iron Man and War
Machine. Nick Nolte and Eddie Murphy. Bruce Willis and Sam Jackson.

The drum beat came in September. Erik Elsey banging on bongos so I could sound like Jack Kerouac. Hated the idea but loved the groove made enough sense to me.

1998 made our first demo tape in Michael Barber's bedroom. Demo tape because cds were still kind of new. The sound was primitive but it still came through.

Took it to "Ace" Sean Hall. He took us to Hollywood for a studio session. \$300 was lot of pocket change. I was pissed because I had to pay for it all.

Had a radio show called Generic Soul. That's when Justin Punzalan scratched on "City Jazz and Fire". Still no bass player then, still no bass player now. Ain't rhyming now ain't rhyming then. Punk rock poetry, motherfuckers!

Acoustic guitar, congas, turntables, spoken word poetry. Odd band out. All the others had guitar bass drums. First gig in Hollywood on the Sunset Strip. Coconut Teaser's Crooked Bar. Saw our name on the Marquee. Developed the photo at Albertson's. No digitals back then.

Played show in front of poets. Jealous ass poets who hated that we had music and I could memorize everything. There was no SLAM in LA. No Poetry Lounge. It was us vs. them. And when Da Poetry Lounge came we still didn't fit in. We weren't hip hop. Too many Whites in my band. So what. Fuck the world.

Opening for rock bands because they understood the music more. Poets just want to be heard and start fraternities be it coffeehouses or universities—I was against it all.

Gave my middle finger to Def Poetry Jam when they wanted me and not the band.

Brian Sadler joined in 2001 and wanted us to sound Metal. First feud I ever had with a bandmate. Never kicked him out...Stuck it out...Like a musical swan...for life. Joanne Kim joined in October. Korean girl on keys was in the audience our first Hollywood gig. Made the circle complete.

Funny how no one quit.
Funny how everyone kept joining.
Hop on board. Funny how time brought a new puzzle piece.
Funny how our critics laughed at us. But all of their favorite bands broke up. Guess they weren't swans.

Year after year month after month.

Recorded two albums in Ben's studio. Def Poetry Jam could kiss our mixed race arses. Got nominated for independent music award.

And then, Matt Coleman, you joined a few other bands. Not quitting ours just diving up your time. You knew Poetry and Music was a tough sell. Work on that solo album of yours be a singer songwriter.

And Brian, you joined a real rock band. Party in L.A. Rock groupies give it better than poetry groupies. Still I wrote on like Maya Angelou Still I Rise it never was over never will be.

We recorded another album that topped all of your other band's albums. It was me showing you that WE were better than THEM.

The world can have its play
Earth can have its day.
The older we get fame seems so far away. But isn't it worth it? The growth?

I wish the world could see more of us.
Six totem animals thrown together on a poetry pole. Ready for the world once again.
Ready for 13 more years. Ready for 13 albums.

Middle finger to all you that don't like it. Middle finger to all you non-swans.

Poem for a White Racist Mind

[Youtube video: **“Fight the Power”** by Public Enemy

Youtube Dialog Comments:

[@botticelligal](#):

“John Wayne said in a Playboy interview he had no problem with black people as long as he didn't live near them.”

[@dal4018](#):

“John Wayne had a right to his opinion. The fact is black /minorities bring crime and a decline in property values. Why do you suppose that is? It's a fact. And please use an intelligent argument, not the race card.”]

You couldn't leave the world alone.
Your pale world a sheet of paper...with no writing.
Colonize it. Harness its color. Create a picture. Fantasize.
Drink its tea. Stick your pale dick in its Asian girls.
Cheer and bet on its niggers. Big daddy of the western world.

As long as you live
Your teeth will always be browner than my skin.

Smile with your mouth, the lies still in your eyes.

On my death bed I may ask to see your medicine;
On yours, you will cry to hear my songs.

I will not sing to you.

Go to hell.

Love.

War loves
But it is also loud
And love is heard best
In a whisper.

Yet love has strong legs—
The many hills
It has raced up—
No reward in return—
The painful cries—
Louder than whispers.
You've heard them, haven't you?

A chosen calligraphy
Flowing in strange directions.
Legitimate in the end.
Risky puzzle to solve.

Fuck poets who no longer use the word love.

The Specific Reason Why Poets Should Not Wear Sunglasses...

is because you can not see
the colors of the day
As they were meant to be seen.

The blues
The greens
The hot oranges
The reds.

The sun is supposed to hurt.

In another world the sun
Is as powerful as television.
In another science the sun
Is God's thumb.

After you have danced till 2am
Driven through neon-infested nights
Whispered...
And slept under the moon—
Awakened by a bitter clock,
The sun is supposed to hurt.
More than coffee.

Did you know that when your hand meets your brow
To shade your eyes
You are really saluting the day?

The blues
The greens
The hot oranges
The reds.

One Million and One

One million poems written
About the moon
Here is one million and one.

Expensive hats
Lose their shape;

Ancient as earth,
Still round and mystifying!

Sharp as an illegal switchblade when crescent
Clever street cred
Slitting the sky over dark alleys.

The women of the world wish upon stars
Ignoring your order
No star grants wishes
Without your nod.

The men of the world build
Giant eye glasses to stare at you;
Walking on your powdered head,
Phucking you with a phlag, but still
“One small step...” never granted
Without your nod.

Fake Celtic witches
From the new world
Learn your spells from magazines
And computer fonts.
Their fat flesh dancing
Naked around trees.
You glow for them in mockery.
Wink your eye
So the sun gives them cancer.

Your kindest ally is the coyote.
The wolf, the owl.
The fisherman on a wooden boat. Alone.
Those who know you with a soft song.

The Poet Speaks to the Mountain and the Mountain Speaks Back...

(written while climbing Mt. San Gorgonio -- 11,499 feet -- 10/25/08)

Poet says to Mountain

(5) i am the faster..
(7) my friends tire; i leave them
(5) and snake around you
above timberline.
Climbing you is like climbing God.
When I am lost, I study the sand prints.
I sip water when I'm tired,
And stop for verse.
Back home I have no woman to think of me
I write for one that isn't mine
Teach me the mind you teach
I build my verses daily
That they become like breath to me...
Fluid, invisible.
Those that do not create art
Will never understand...
Deeper prayers...
Calmer religion...

Mountain says to Poet

To be Poet is to bleed as man and speak as angel.
Surrender to me,
Surrender life as we walk.
Your written words are on paper,
Mine are the foot tracks in the sand—
Add to them.
The whistling of wind is my spoken word;
My diary circles you.
Come to me alone,
Do not shy when others misunderstand you.
Never think of me as tedious, but stretching.
Snake around my false summit...
There is another world that waits behind a rock.
You haven't what you desire because you haven't reached my true summit.

Saturday.

It was Saturday. It was December.

Training for a marathon. Alone.

I ran 10 miles in the rain.

Fat people ate chips and farted on their couches.

Fat people masturbated and argued with their spouses.

People like me run in the rain to train. Somehow

People like me are not in power. Somehow

People like me are ruled by them.

Nigger

As divine as the moon is
As radiant a shadow it casts
I hate being Black at night. In the city.
When White men with gold badges... and billy clubs... and blue suits

Make

A

Circle

Around

Me.

And I sit on the curb answering silly questions.

I hate being Black at work
At lunchtime
While office folk whisper and chuckle chubby and pink.

I hate being Black when your face turns red
And I date your daughter.

And yet I love being Black
While I'm fucking your wife—
Yes, your wife, the mother of the daughter you forbid me to date.
That new thing she did in the bedroom
She learned from me.

I love being Black when I write poems;
When my music makes Jesus weep.
I give God goose bumps.
He loves you, too, but yawns.

The secret chord that David played that pleased the Lord...
He learned from me.

Growing Apart

He looks one way
She looks another way.
Why did I get married?
The pussy was good.
The years were hard.
And we were never best friends.
Compatibility for sixty months.
But we were never best friends.

The Ditch Diggers in Orange

Cool! The little son said,
 He gets to see inside the ground!
I wanna do that! The little son said.
 Mamma said *But it's a lot of work.*

Stay in school the fat teacher said,
 Or else you'll dig ditches when you grow up—
 Wouldn't you rather be typing buttons instead?

Cool! the little son said.
 Though, in the end it's the same;
Breaking your back for whatever—
 Breaking your back for whatever
 Is cool.

Pugilist

Ignoring the night I will walk alone.
Ignoring managers with money-colored teeth.
Ignoring the woman clinching cardboard rounds

My chin sways left to right; a willow.
Touching gloves,
Red leather
Against tooth and nose.
Struggle we struggle on.
Dance we two men dance
Around each other's walls
Breaking down each other's walls.
Breaking until one or the other of us falls

The crowd doesn't care.
Blood.
Blood, they go wild.
Cut after cut we cut each other for money;
For the sea of applause.

A boxer's silent scold
Snake-like like a crooner.
Sweating under lights,
A cage of 16 ropes.

Some snakes are too slow for me
The way I move.

Some nights I am sad
Has the speed bag prepared me?

Some city nights I walk alone
Alone after a fight I am alone.

The scorn of a ring bell sharp soothes my tension.
I rise from my tired seat
Wooden for another round.

Alone after a fight I am still alone.

Flesh Prayer (back-of-the-book)

(Sorry, Feminists.)

Thank God for the whore.
The massage girl in the back of the LA Weekly.

These days real women only want to be your friend.

These days
Their maternal instincts so strong
They care more of motherhood than wifhood.

Thank You, Christ, for the whore, the false wife.
Thank You for my Mary Magdalene.
Good girls still want the bad guy,
And the back-of-the-book-girl is where the good guy goes.

My day is long and perhaps
I will burn in flames perhaps.

But at least I will burn having been touched.

And though Your Spirit touches me,

I am a morsel more than spirit.

And some nights that, too, needs touching.

May Pantoum (Yang)

Sunday morning sting
The day after the end of the world
Some poets say the dumbest things
Grandmother's mind is in a swirl

The day after the end of the world
I'm left to do another task
Grandmother's mind is in a swirl
I comb my hair in the looking glass

I'm left to do another task
Alzheimer's and mood swings
I comb my hair in the looking glass
Family is such a difficult thing.

Alzheimer's and mood swings
Some preacher said the world would end
Family is such a difficult thing
God said, "No" and Time moves again.

Some preacher said the world would end
Some poets say the dumbest things
God said, "No" and Time moves again
Sunday morning sting.

Twenty Eleven

the mountains in Li Po's song
were not in Beijing
abandoned in Beijing was a serene sound
switched for engines
and the misguided harmony of honking horns

America, what have you done to Li Po?
on foreign soil the signs are in English.
They want to be you.
But why?

Overcast

(Trastevere, Rome, Italy. June 2011)

What sane woman hates moonlight?

The city lights in Rome pale to LA.
But the moon?

The moon is unquenchable.

(5) A distance runner
(7) Blowing a wind instrument.
(5) Super human lungs.
 This is moonlight.

(5) The light the binds like
(7) Tape. Taunting anger and fear.
(5) Never to be sold.
 This is moonlight!

Today I was touched.
I was robbed on a Roman train.
A gypsy pick pocketed my camera.

Moonlight can never be touched.
Moonlight can never be pick pocketed—

I want to be this way.
I don't want to be ordinary.

Places

(Trastevere, Rome, Italy. June 2011)

There are places where lovers go
To no longer be lovers
But man and wife

Places that overlook the sunshades of Roman roofs
Places where the evening
Says goodbye to the sun
And versa vice

There are places by the Mediterranean
Where a poet does cartwheels
Barefooted

Places where statues are older than America
And city graffiti is older than Rap music.

These places
All of these places are on my camera

That some bitchass-pickpocketing-gypsy-motherfucker stole.

Statues

(Florence, Italy. July 2011)

Immortal Saints in Roman stone
Mounted atop cathedrals
Birds shit on them

The Mother of God
Mary Madonna in stone
Birds crap on her

Forget Hell
Forget Blasphemy

Birds shitting on man
Is the true curse of Eden

Gulls—
Pigeons—
Blue jays—
Flinging forbidden fruit

There are no true words for life.
Why do we waste it on poems?

Moths corrupt, gypsies pickpocket and steal
Birds shit upon the rest

Windstorm

1.

The wind renews
Knocking out power lines
Like a boxer
Like a land lord
Circulating song until the sky wails
Whistles
Are there angels in the clouds?
Pseudocane Hurricane
It makes no sense to fear
I a grown man in my 30s
I a grown man burying my head like a child
Beneath my nightly covers
Cursing confidence

The wind renews
Because all is old
All around us is stale

Blow it away
Wind Psalm
Blow us all away
Until God thinks twice about rapture.

But keep the covers over my head
I a frightened man
I tell you my dog that is outside
My dog who will not bark
She is braver than I.

2.

It seems to want to surf.
The sound. The sound of crashing air.
The soprano gust.
The guist.
“guist” more feminine than “gust”.
“guist” not even a word.

Elemental shower.

~ *Find the battery for the light.*

~ *Power outage.*

In darkness my ink twists. I write.

—Shall I board the doors? /

—The windows? /

—We're in California /

—This isn't supposed to be /

This haunting—

Witching sound—

God must love the witches, too.

3.

Table tennis in the air
Table tennis that is not there
Balls and nets hurling with flare
What is with your invisible scare?
While in the corner I write I stare
Upon lined page is it here—
Or is it there?

3.5 (Themanwhoknowshimself)

The man who knows himself
Touches himself
Every night at 2am
Horny lullaby
Lonely lullaby
Without a porn or picture
Only with a cry

(sigh!)

4. (As Afterwind)

Sirens bark to the teeth of air—
Clean up crews everywhere.

After all of the death
It still gives life, the wind.

After trees plummeted
 Uprooted
After shingles lifted from roofs

<why even my dog's dogshit was blown away—
 Turds tossed levitated ascended astray>

After it all
The sun drinks from a wooden bowl.

—

Surviving palms
Dance
Or wave
Like a woman waving
Goodbye

To the silent evening.
Or the silence
Of evening.
(either way)

Local Pontifications:

Yins

(Love Poems)

Wind Sketches: The wind outside made a loud sound again...

The wind outside made a loud sound again—
Outside the window where my grandpa lay—
Every morning before work at 6 AM—
I would change an old man's diapers.

Being a grandson means I listen to the wind—
Why can't a nurse do what I do?—
Because they get paid.
There is freedom in the wind—
My grandpa lays and listens.
And again it would blow—
My grandpa's eyes on me and then on a picture of me—
When I was seven—how much I've grown now—
How weaker he has grown and he knows.

The Telephone rings a different type of wind—
A different type of chime more annoying—
Grandpa says "Thank you, buddy. I wish I could help myself"—

I wash my hands and leave the room—
Leave him with the wind and my picture—
I will always be seven in the picture to him—
Never too busy too listen to wind.

Wind Sketches: Everlast Boxing Glove

Sweet science. Like the wind.
Everlast. And unmovable; I make the world move for me.
Round 1. Fight!
Red rubber or whatever the heck they make me of.
I'm stained with the working class cliché of three:
Tears, sweat and blood.

A jab to the jaw, or to the upper lip—
Call it a brutal kiss.
Round 2. Fight!
Samson had a similar song.
Slaying his Feelest Steins with the jaw bone of an ass.
I've struck many a man in the jaw.
Landing many a man on his ass.

I'm just a child's mitten made for a man.
Blame me? Name me as violent?
I muffle the blows.
I am the red cushion The
Buffer between knuckle and tooth!
Blame me? Name me as violent?!
Round 3. Fight!
Is not the wind more brutal?
What of currents?
Loosing men at sea separating sailors from their wives—
What of hurricanes?
Twisters, monsoons? Is not the wind more violent?
What villages have I destroyed?
What thatched roofs have I torn and sent flying away?

Wind Sketches: Dementia

Wind came and took my grandma's mind away.

I grow older. I grow harder. My life changes.

Wind comes cruel. Blows my laughter away.

Stone Sketches: Transit

"I was born in a cross-fire hurricane
And I howled at my ma in the driving rain,
But it's all right now, in fact, it's a gas"
—The Rolling Stones
("Jumping Jack Flash")

One way is a long way.
Sun shines, we save the environment.
Bus ride.

Black men who can't play ball anymore drive buses...
Or become security guards—
Mexicans do the rest.
Mosquitoes breed over puddles of water—all the same in this world.

On this bus the drivers aren't nice.
We don't ride into traffic. We ride fast.

"Slow down, driver, you're going to miss the stop! Damn!"
"Driver, open the back door!"

Skinhead sits with a Black girl.
Skinhead because his tattoos say so.
He puts his arm around her and they kiss.
Today is not a strange day and I promise I will not scratch my head at the matter.

Bus ride to nowhere.
Fish in a rolling sardine can.
Public transportation.
Saving the environment in L.A.
One more time.

People aren't early for work and people aren't wearing cologne and people aren't
always free.

Stone Sketches: Devil Fork

“I shouted out, ‘Who killed the Kennedys?’
When after all it was you and me.”
—The Rolling Stones
(“Sympathy for the Devil”)

Shout	Fire	Shout
Fire	Shout	Fire
A	Suffering	god
Allows	suffering	in the world
	Lick	
	My	
	Lies.	
	I’ve	
	Turned	
	Them	
	Into	
	Ice-	
	cream.	

Stone Sketches: Courtney Love's Lips

"I'll never be your beast of burden
I've walked for miles my feet are hurtin'
All I want is for you to make love to me."
—The Rolling Stones
("Beast of Burden")

red
bloody
profane

model
slutty
crimson.

cushion
voice
kiss

microphone
maybe (May I?)
please

Love.

I Went Looking for Redheads in Ireland But I Guess They're All in Scotland

Dublin, Dundalk, Dingle, Da Causeway
The car rides through dream.
The sheep.
The camaraderie.
The prayers.
The gray clouds.
The green hills.
The Guinness I never drank.
The tea I did.
Da Causeway, Dingle, Dundalk, Dublin
The accents that never annoyed me.
The drunk bastards that did.
The time in America I never missed.
The pork blood pudding cakes, the stews.
Not having to tip.
Euro coins I'd better not loose.

I miss you, Ireland.
I've read of you in books
Now I've touched your face sweet
With my feet and tears.

Signs in Gaelic—oops, sorry I mean Irish.
National anthem played at midnight in the wooden pub.
"Whoa! Peep out that big-tittied-blue-eyed bar maid!"
"I bet she got Guinness in them titties, too!"
"Sorry, miss lassie, I don't drink. Wish I did, though."

Something about America doesn't smell right.
Must be all the coffee we drink here.
Our breaths are stained with morning traffic and cruel suns.

“This Lunar Beauty”

“So I stole the title from Auden, what’s it to you?”

Life is not dark, you pessimistic assholes!

Life is:
A lingering tea kettle forever whistling Dixie

Life is:
The little Black drummer boy beat boxing for Jesus

Life is:
The Terminator saying he won’t be back

The earth leaps; dizzy
Is the carousel we ride
Soprano the wind.

Or maybe

As shines sun so shines
Moon. Day and night clichés croon
Critics hate clichés.

The First Time I Saw the Atlantic Ocean

Maybe a boat
Maybe a boat
Or two in the far distance.

Maybe but for now all that
I see is the sea
Shades of violet and aqua green
Rubbing together.

Liquid thunder.
Violent splash.
Liquid laugh.

Men change the sea does not.
Tools turn to tech.
Tech turns to vanity.

The ocean is ancient.
Back and forth.
The ocean is ancient.
Wave after wave.
The ocean is ancient.

A holiday away to the sea is a
Holiday for fools.
Your problems back home
Will never go away
Unless you become as or think as the sea.

Before the Skellig

I wish and wait years,
Days
Weeks
For a woman like you.

A spine of golden hair.
French braided.
Eyes like waves.

I wish forever for a woman
Like you.
But the beach I
Can have now.

The dwarf beach.
Small and hidden 'twixed two
Cliffs.

Interweaving waters.
Patterns of lines.
Blue life break dancing against rocks.

When the tide touches me,
I will try not to move.
I will stand still,
Think of you, and
Wish for shorter days.

Lake by Ross Castle. Killarney, Ireland

Where do ripples go?
I want to go there.

They go into the foam
They go into the rocks
They ripple into memory

Moved by earth and wind
Moved like pioneering horses
With glistening carriages that
Dizzify you should you stare too long

Trampling past sad willows
And story-tale bridges
Where swans with necks like broken hearts shepherd them.

They ripple until they bathe away
Like developing film
Colliding into the last edge of earth

Where ducks and water birds
Swoop down to drink;
Then carry their souls to heaven.

Where do ripples go?

Where they go I want to go there.

'Tis of Thee

(“And what is ‘American’? We’re simply a nation of mutts. We have no pure culture.”)

American is going to Ireland
And listening to Bob Dylan on the radio.

American is going to Ireland
And seeing the words “Tex-Mex” on a menu
Or “American-style hot dogs” written on a jar of weenies
For sale.

American is them asking me where I’m from.
Them asking me about the Lakers.
About Catalina Island.
About Low Riders and smog.

American is me listening to Miles Davis
At 3AM in the morning
Developing a taste for Malt Vinegar in my ketchup
American is me wondering why this place is so strange.

And then remembering
That in my own land there are smaller places just like it.

Tiny Irelands in Montana
On Indian reservations
Tiny Irelands in the ghettos
And streets.

Tiny mirrors come together
Like glass puzzle pieces forming one giant America.
And American is a verb not an adjective.
A verb meaning “to-look”.

Parrots

Nine green parrots in a papagayo tree
Cracking open paraíso seeds and showering
Green shells on me.

Nine is fine.
One more in a song?
Too many.

Funny how men race to hell.

Autumn in L.A. is really summer.
I want to hear my own human breath
Before I go to work.

Pregnant cubicles filled like prison cells—
Free the nine green fly oblivious—
Strange how men rush to hell.

Concierto de Azul

I've wasted the color blue on sorrow.
I should use it to think of your letters,
And the waters mine will fly across to reach you.

The musical blue
That dances in the white dress
By the eastern statues
To Romany tunes.

When my voice grows raspy,
I have a lonely trumpet
That hurls a brassy whisper.

In my russet summer,
In your ever blue,
I call down stars that you may see
How powerful Poetry can be.

I tug them away from heaven
To worship your footsteps,
The sashay of your lips, and the humor in your eyes.

Take a glass with me to the sea
And we will drink in blue.

Sorrow never more.
Whenever my heart wants
Whenever my heart waits (longingly for you)
Purple maybe
But never my blue.

Across the Room Jessie

When we were 6 and 7
My best friend Jason Buckaloo
Colored Martin Luther King's face
With black crayon.

Use brown I said
But he's black he said

When we were 6 and 7
My best friend Jason Buckaloo
Colored Martin Luther King's suit
With green crayon

Black and green look funny I said.
Oh shut up he said.

Across the room Jessie
Colored him pink.
And gave him a blue suit.

Jason! Teacher yelled.
But he's black! Jason held.

Well...you're coloring blind
And outside the lines.

POEM

I dream of holding you
As it rains. I dream
Of kissing you
As life itself hurts
And the frosts of winter bind.

The breath from your lips
Upon my face
Blinds me from the city's sour song.

These are verses few can say and know.
Few understand that call weeps for response.
Few understand the story of the heart.

Long the length of your hair,
 your ten toes
 your courage—it follows me
 And like Orpheus
 I look back.

Long the length my kisses hold.

Lone Leaf (in four)

Yellow leaves moved by wind.
One lone leaf zigzags and circles.
Of course, it would be a butterfly
One lone leaf, of course.

Lone Leaf (in two quatrains)

Moved by wind one hundred yellow leaves circle.
Moved by will one lone leaf flutters.
Of course, it would be a butterfly,
One lone leaf, or course.

It is you I write to
And you my letters miss.
Through distant days and clear memories
One hundred yellow thoughts written on one road.

Dobre Noche

I love your face at 2:20am
Your sleeping face—I imagine
You sleeping right now.

And this I write
In the middle of night,
In the minute of morning,
A poetic insomniac knows
Language is a miracle
And never can he put an end to words.

It takes more than time to get over you.
Perhaps if you broke my nose instead of breaking my heart
I would feel better.

Are your toes still pretty?
How is the weather?
I ask dumb questions just to hear your voice...
Your accent...
Don't frown.

Dream

Sun holds morning
in a clenched fist.

Moon whispers into its ear
the words:
Release now.

I open my eyes to you.

Making Sense of it All.

I love you because
I am an idiot
And I look at stars
And one whisper from you
Reminds me of a feather from a bird's wing.

I love your fingers long and strong for a woman.
I love you because I love the sea and because I am stubborn and I think
The sea is also stubborn.

I ride the bus alone at night,
I see stars that remind me of you.
Looking through a window,
Sitting on a used seat,
You are the only memory
Freeing me from normal days which should never be normal.

Two-Parts Villanelle One Part Surprise

Every time I sit in front of the red tree
Every car in the world passes by
I think of a song of you and me

Isn't it funny how the blonde in pink catches my eye?
Every time I sit in front of the red tree

You walk down busy streets at the end of the day you sigh
I think of a song of you and me

I wonder tomorrow will I live, will I die?
Every time I sit in front of the red tree.

Who among us is immune to surprise?
I think of a song of you and me

Seal said, "In a sky full of people only some want to fly"
Every time I sit in front of the red tree
I think of a song of you and me.

Cinquan

Love.

Young. New.

Soothing. Blooming. Confusing.

A needed element abused.

Romance.

Infant Terrible

When I was a baby
My grandmother would lay me down
And change my diapers.

When I was a baby
I would laugh
And piss in her face.

The sunlight, too, was young.

It would cut through the window
Like a morning thief,

Strike my stream,

And I'd piss rainbows!

Sveta's Toes.

Fetish?

Well.

I sing for them.

Long. Straight.

10.

Perfect.

Much to celebrate for another day—

Much to ignore in the world;

Though, today, I celebrate.

Walk across my day, my night, I won't grow angry;

Dance over my world;

Track mud into my life, maybe I'll think twice.

Nice.

Long, straight, perfect.

The radio will call us to the floor;

The wooden one.

The shiny wooden one.

Un-robe your shoes and

Dance the ten naked for me;

10 toes.

Painted like little ladies.

Painted like stars on a night that isn't Christmas.

Painted like stars that live forever

May Pantoum (Yin)

Young couples laugh on the bus
Take a trip to the east part of town
Bring food on and driver will fuss
Ride so crowded we can't sit down

Take a trip to the east part of town
Dirty windows and dirty seats
Ride so crowded we can't sit down
Working class women with tired feet

Dirty windows and dirty seats
The sharper men smell of musk
Working class women with tired feet
I watch a girl's thigh I watch myself lust

The sharper men smell of musk
Watch a world through rose-colored clouds
I watch a girl's thigh I watch myself lust
Write a verse make your muse proud

Watch a world through rose-colored clouds
Bring food on and driver will fuss
Write a verse make your muse proud.
Young couples laugh on the bus.

Poem About the Sun

Thinking of you
 Makes me think of her.
The woman with Russian accent
 The woman with dark hair.

You scold with gold—
 A musical heat.
 Burning angry in the evening.
 Burning without smoke,
 Without greeting.

Bobbing low beneath
 The buildings of L.A.—
The Nimrod buildings
 The ones that claim to scrape the sky.

Bobbing beautiful—
 Until the sky blushes—
Burning luscious—
 Uncompromising.

Jill Mows Lawns

(For Jill Alexander Essbaum, poet)

Jill mows lawns
Cutting grass on Sunday
She won't write poems that make you yawn
A Texas sweat in the month of May.

Cutting grass on Sunday
Although she should be in church
A Texas sweat in the month of May
Collapsing at the end with a bottle of birch.

Although she should be in church
There's a rougher glory she gives the dawn
Collapsing at the end with a bottle of birch
Pay days these days make you feel like a pawn.

There's a rougher glory she gives the dawn
Cliché one says a penny saved is a penny earned
Pay days these days make you feel like a pawn
Cliché two says a lesson lived is a lesson learned.

Cliché one says a penny saved is a penny earned
She won't write poems that make you yawn
Cliché two says a lesson lived is a lesson learned.
Jill mows lawns.

Redundancy...and all I want to be

Clouds think for themselves.

Clouds are never late.

For no day
is a silly day

Clouds are never insulted.

Clouds never stray—
They trick the world and conceal the sun
pretending to rain
graying before 40
descending to the ground
until we need
lights to see—

Clouds remember home.

Jonah clouds take shape
of both belly and whale.

Silver clouds won't tarnish;
darkening hills the color
of my skin.

They trick the world and conceal the sun
For who said the sun was so optimistic
That it should be seen?

Clouds sing me a letter. Clouds for you and I. Clouds for she and me. Because "she"
rhymes with the word "me". Clouds with no bank account. Richer than the sky. Richer
than businessman who race wild beneath the sky. Puffy or straight. Soft or angry clouds
that glissando and crescendo. Clouds that sanctify and speak in tongues. Clouds that
drum like a lover's rabid sex. Erotic clouds. Lost clouds that escape—convict clouds
that once were but are not anymore because they are free. Clouds that can never be...

scared.

...or lonely.

Clouds that don't have to search for love like I do because they burn.

Digging deep until they strike intimacy

In a rhythmic life language.

“No, Cerulean”

-for Erin-

Set me in moods

I tell her.

Your eyes are blue like the ocean's or

The scales of a sacred fish.

She laughs.

No, cerulean. She says.

And your skin? Like cotton or a peach when I kiss you.

She laughs.

I will wrestle the angels of loneliness to get to you

I will numb their toes and force their wings in other directions

Spring to my winter and winter to my enduring heat.

She laughs.

Silly lovesick poet. She says.

She laughs.