



Poetry
2004

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Passing for White in America

From the dusty corners of shelves
In my mind, I watched
Hidden deep within the shadows
Allowing the thoughtless flow of momentum
To carry me to places I would never desire to go.
I watched minds of hope and promise,
Around me, break themselves along
The rocky shores of despair,
Carried heedless by the torrents of disillusionment
Until their bodies were bent and hammered
Into new shapes on the anvil of conformity
By its sheer will and oppression
Until they no longer resembled who they once were.

I watched
And I did nothing.

When they offered up their pleading arms,
Bloodied by the walls of silence
Against which their bodies and spirits had broke,
I turned and walked away into a haze of smoke...

...Into the abyss of a bottle
To never come up for air,
Decades vacant: Presumed Missing.

I turned, walked away with pretences
Arm in arm, that none of them had ever happened
Except for the instants becoming convenient
For the crucifixion of my addiction,
Knowing full well when I lifted
The chalice of self-pity to my lips
I would never qualify
Even as the thief on the left.

In the end
It was me
Who had never existed.

Descents through the Rings of Hell,
Shaped by cavernous hands releasing
Hounds of suffering to nip bloodlust
At my heels, I ran full in terror
Until my face mirrored in my grave
Haunted even that horror. I ran
Until exhausted, numb from the exertion of escape.
I became the chameleon, the wallflower
Pasted back into the corner from which I had emerged,
Making little noise, causing no dust to stir,
Fitting in, assuming the role until the mask became me
Although in my heart I always knew
Even this would carry me only so far.

I drank the angst of status, possessions,
Money, and career, bearing guilt and denial
In the silent martyrdom of the public square,
Trotting out my muse to parade my individuality,
gagging its voice should it stir
that iota of conscience.

Yet, desperation remained, leaked
From my days, and oozed what little solace it could
Of salvation sought from sanctuaries between the legs of women
Until even then, in the end that stain of hollow pursuit,
Colored the shadow of one so blended in,
He had bled dry all his identity from his bones.

If I had ever lived
Now I was dead.

Dead each morning, awakened
To another mere link

In the unbroken chain of years
Still stretching outward from me, grim and sullen.
Dead each afternoon, alarmed
How the hours run a swift bitter river
Eroding time into memories and regret.
Dead each evening, the ebb of a day
That is the lamentation of a two-sided mirror
Reflecting yesterday and tomorrow.

Dead, succumbed by the dots joined
On pages where I have never really existed
And where now I never will.

Dead, passing for white in America.

[miss lonely hearts is now online]

miss lonely hearts stands on the shelf
and wonders if maybe this is the day
when they crash down all dreams
because someone's at the gate checking credit ratings
and someone's at the door saying something
about the car being towed and someone's
on the phone about an overdue bill over a war
in iraq or egypt or nigeria or some place like that
miss lonely hearts doesn't know because she gets
all her news from the cable channel and hasn't walked
across the block into another part of the world for oh so long

miss lonely hearts gets tired of hearing the people say
what is wrong when she is being told what is right because
who wants to take the time to think and besides it all comes down
in the end to something she doesn't want to think about and that's why
she quit going to the mall years ago because there were too many choices
and it hurt her head and the lights were too bright and the noise scraped
her ears like sandpaper across the cat's scrotum and when she got back home
the lights were off and who knows who might be waiting in the dark
and she would miss her favorite show and once she found a delivery
she could trust was never going to cross the threshold again and spend
all her time enraptured in the bliss of 312 channels because once in there
the people looked better, were smarter, easier to predict & never let you down
so why even bother any more because you know once you give it a shot
you will probably just fall flat and have to listen to the rest of the world
say "I told you so" with their smug and proper ways and besides what did they know
what it took to be an american these days what with the rest of the world all wrong
and jealous of miss lonely hearts because she dared to be big and brave and free
and was always right because she told god to tell her it was so and what did
those frogs and kites and wops and sandniggers know about the real world because
you know they don't get to see the world like miss lonely hearts does

miss lonely hearts would give you a call and let you know how she was doing
but that would mean putting down the remote and walking out into another room

and you never know who might be looking in the window and there are always those
drive-by

shootings but that is the price you pay when you live in a country free enough
to arm the insane and the children first so she might send you an email later
at least when the cable man comes and hooks the computer up to her tv so just you
wait and she

will tell what the world is really like and how you should be because she sees it
every night on the news and it doesn't take a rocket scientist long even to figure out
if you listen long enough to someone telling you what to say by god you will believe
that you said it yourself and we all know in the end that is what makes america great
because we trust our government enough to think for us and aren't afraid to let them
tell us what we said so but you couldn't expect no euro-trash or third world darkie
to understand that true freedom means they can take the rights of some because you
know

that yours are safe for the moment and so you can have anything you want as long as
you are willing to go far enough in debt to get it because in the end once you die
the universe ends and all that is left is wasted so you might as well fill as many holes
in you as you can while it lasts as long as they come wrapped in plastic three-fold
because the more you consume the more you help make jobs so more people can
consume more

and even those euro-trash might benefit but would they ever gives us credit no
they still resent we bailed their butts out and who cares if history doesn't agree
with what she just said because it's true because we are americans and we say it's so

now if walmart delivered miss lonely hearts could pray to god from her doorstep
and never come out of her bedroom again and that would be just duckie because
who would want to leave the splendor of the true america except maybe some
tree hugging dope smoking leftist who should be shipped off to russia or
north korea or berkeley or some other such place where some traitor should go
to be with their own kind and leave miss lonely hearts alone so she can get on
with being a god-loving patriot which i am sure you know what that means
because if you don't then that is just too sad and miss lonely hearts won't waste her
breath

or time of day on you because she just has too much important to do what with her full
calendar

of events which she would show you but she can't remember how to program the pda
and

what does it matter anyway because it is time for the next show and if you have to ask what the show is then you're even more pathetic than she thought you were when you interrupted the important things she was doing whatever that was except she knows it had to be important because she was told it was and there you go if you can't understand that maybe you should go back to where you came from because you are just not worth her time

[miss lonely hearts is now offline]

Let Us Begin

Let us begin
By stripping bare the bones of emotion
That lie within the desert of our lives,
By drinking deep the dregs from the cup of reality
That we smash then at our feet.

Let us begin to open our passion like the wound it is,
Driven deep into the heart of the moment,
As we abandon our wings
To the heedless flight toward the sun
Where with muscles spent
And sides heaving against the pain
We shall plummet together
Locked desperate in each other's embrace
Back toward the sea from which we came.

But even in the moment of that defeat
We will know we have been there.

Let us begin to finally live.

From Beneath This Scar

From beneath this scar I stare out
At the skulls, with their skins
Pulled taut, lips held tight, covered
With translucent skin, paper thin; through which
I watch the blood pulse
As nerves shoot falling stars,
To move their jaws in endless talk
Through nights and days, telling me
What I should think, what I should do,
Skulls that bury me drowning in flame.

I shield my eyes from the reflections piercing bright
Of the words they place upon the plate
For me to eat in hope that if I consume their food
I will become them, I will be them;
Dancing a puppet on a tangled broken string
For those who stand in wait
For me to trip upon the twisted twine
Of what they perceive to be my fate.

I am no longer wearing the bones of the marionette
Who dances such morality upon the head of a pin,
Nor am I the Fool, laid horizontal
Beneath the grinning leer
Of Death turned upside down
To divine from the depths
Some perfect paradise where I will wait
Long into that good night
For just any soul who walks haunted
By the footsteps of a vision
Come to pass, slipping
Grimly down the slopes of loss.

Within me now stands a different vision,
A vision strong that does not whisper
False statements into my ear
But rather echoes the surety of conviction
As I watch the children of the morning
Float on rafts of desperation
Upon the waters flowing long and deep
From the savage rivers of my heart
Having at last burst forth
Through the dikes of hesitation

To finally cover these once disparate lands
With the cool waters filtered through the silt of truth.

I bite my taut translucent lip to stay awake
So not return to the dream from which I came,
Tasting the pain the blood pulses into my mouth
While the falling stars of my nerves
Fight gravitas and natural inclination
To allow those tangled threads
To hinder my vision
Entrapping me once more within a life
I would heedlessly create
While I stand blind to the iron clamps
Existence uses to shackle my skeleton
To the paper thin bulimic words
Vomiting from a soul who drowns in flame.

Montage

Move speed gray blur color fade
Face warm touch cool glass
Thought run form blend fuse turn
Thread pull emotion collect merge
Wind sound music rhythm one

Fly skim turn twist glide
Pull feel finger hue collage
Bend arch ache dance soul
Smile cry laugh rant rave

Sunglass glint arm hot face calm
Transcend escape land surrender stay
Fly wing under wind over
Sun lemon sky blue white tears
Cease hush turn you there me

On through day night next week year
Horizon mute forever disappear
Mind blank fuzz web fog
Drum heart breath blink shift

Highway motion find soar
Curve force turn lean slip slide
Fade color blur gray speed move
Going went gone montage

Red Monkey

The secret that white people
don't want to hear
is that they are really pink.

Reveal to them that truth
and they are powerless.

The day in that Banarsi alley
when I heard
the chant "Lal Bunder*"
a part of my soul
never walked again.

*Hindi for Red Monkey

Bastille Day

Within the straightjacket of this life
My thoughts sing a symphony of chaos
That plays its ironic tune outside the window
Where the ghosts of this palace
Dance upon the dreams of my grave
While beyond these handcrafted walls
Riots teem and unchecked fires lick slowly
Toward the ramparts I so carefully erected.

These guillotine of days storm
The Bastille of my mind,
The angry peasants of repressed impulse
Calling forth for a revolution
Where the justification
Of the tyranny of the majority
Becomes still another name
For the mob rule within my thoughts.

I am not Marat,
Nor I am Robespierre
Or a latter day Bonapartist
Searching for a republic of delusion.

I am merely a small sad tale cut quick
As the fires of Paris burn, rage
Through the decaying streets of consciousness
While I lay upon the satin sheets of remorse
Waiting for Antoinette to feed me cake
From a lone silver spoon.

Isle of the Numb

Upon this ancient isle of the mind, where in the end
When the die is cast we all come to reside,
Around the campfires of the heart and soul
Where voices drone on with the old stories
That have been told and will always be told
Beneath the cold pale lie of the moon:
What moves us at these tortured moments
When breath and momentum are all that remain
Before the waves of eternity wash
The footprints of our existence from the shores of life?

Moments are all that are trapped between the edge
Of rationalization and acceptance,
Moments that attempt to deny the turning hands of the clock
Or to admit, in those least guarded of instants,
When all is stripped bare
And there is no way or place to hide
From the leveling of expectations,
Behind thought where no thought exists,
That at the very core, the innermost of cores,
We are all so utterly afraid.

For all we have are words,
Those most ancient of symbols
Which attempt inadequately to explain
What it is that separates us
From the world in which we live
And from whom what we truly are:
Nasty small beasts that cannot admit
To the packs in which they run
Or the sounds of their own voices
As they bay for blood beneath the wandering night stars.

Words, the harbinger of all we are,
Or who we are suppose to be, as we dress them

In the swaddling clothes of deceit
And lay them orphaned upon the doorstep
Of any with sympathy or who are fool enough
To heed their siren call.

Words, which the poets and authors dress as peacocks
To strut in the shining flash of their glory
When they lay them upon the page
And say perhaps this is a snippet, a mere snippet,
Of what a moment could be, a moment should be,
If only honesty could let one release
And to admit in end we are ever so limited
By our inadequate understanding
Of what we do perceive and how we may utter it
In some way that appears to be almost real.

Words, which the historians use to connect the dots
And to brace us quietly for the understanding
That in the rush of all that enters us
At any given second, any given time, we are so unable
To comprehend such said events
In partiality, let alone approach totality,
How possibly could we have the conceit
To say we know what has happened in the past?

Words, which the scientists of the mind
Shake as a rattle for their voodoo
To give the correct names to the daemons
That haunt what we are
With their justifications to blame
Our chemistry, our society, our mother,
Especially our mother, so that in the end
When blame is painted above our doors
We can proudly proclaim our innocence
And say that we are the children who should be spared.

Words, which the politicians bandy about as a mural
That they paint in black and white before they wash
The canvas of existence with the blood, the lost red blood,
Of the young and the innocent so that they may pocket
The thirty pieces of silver that tell them
That their actions are whole and fair and just
While they divide the world along invisible lines
That add to the comfort of the distraction
From the inevitable conclusion that the old must all die some day
No matter how large their accumulated armory of power and wealth.

Words, which the pious kneel and pray before
With the burnt offerings of their lives
While they present themselves with succor for their holiness
When they grovel as the Whores of Babylon before those in power
And in return for the justification they bring to the table
They are offered a seat at the left hand of the Golden Calf
But are left in the end with sleep that is so troubled
By the fiery hand of doom written upon the walls of their consciousness.

We are left to listen to the mermaid, she who is alone
Among the hollow notes of her flute,
Her face turned toward the sea,
The lost mystery of the bones and the waves,
From which she came
And to which she may nevermore return.

We are left with mere dreams or perhaps uneasy visions,
Buried so deep within the well of our souls,
Filled with the tears of anguish and denial,
Stripped naked, a carcass consumed and covered
With the flies and maggots of disillusionment,
Distracted only by the convenience of the moment
Where perhaps we can hide behind
These sounds, these symbols,
Where perhaps we can lie in wait
For the other victims who dare

To threaten the boundaries
We create around the wound we do call life.

For what can threaten such a wound,
What can wind so deep, strike so quickly
That occasionally we are forced
To awaken from the slumber of our delusion
To realize a world, a life, spins madly outside,
Outside our touch and our control,
And we are merely shadows
Walking through the twilight of the garden
Of our own existence?

For what can prick such the balloon of ego,
Drive us in panic to become aware
From that instant, that one solitary instant,
Beneath the illusion, beyond the fear,
Outside the gasping of perspired air,
Outside the grasping of the sweat dampened palms,
That we are not genteel, that all in the end returns in the end
Down to blood in a world that is built upon blood,
Torn from the veins and hearts of countless generations,
Within the past and continued to this day,
Behind the walls of the lives
Where finally perhaps the only difference
Between any of us is the accident of where we were born?

At birth we are led gently by the hand to the top of the cliff of life
Where our breath bates before the beauty of a world
That fades off into the horizon in front of our eyes,
An instant before the gravity of the awareness
Of time and isolation begins to drag us down
Step by step for the rest of our lives,
Where perhaps for the only time within our existence
We do know peace, save for the solace created
By the lifelong process of yearning for death,
An instant that is serene and hushed and golden,

Until those who do nurture us, place the boot
To our backside and echo the magic words passed
From one generation to the next:

Fly, you are on your own...

And within that instant we become aware
Of how truly alone we are
As we watch the earth below slowly, ever so slowly
Until inevitability and gravity assume full control
Within the headlong rush of familiarity,
Grow in more detail before our vision,
And in the panic finally we realize
The time offered for us to grow used to such isolation,
To grow accustomed to the blinding freefall,
Is terribly long and cruel and sad

And in the end far, far too short.