

BUT I CAN'T and other poems...

By Martin Pedersen

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: It is unlikely I could tell the difference between a Spoken Word Artist, on paper, and an Oral Poet. I'm not sure which Pedersen is, but he is transfixing. His use of language is exquisite. "Even my silence / calculated to seduce / payback for poison" "I may miss a couple times but then I will squish you / against the glass and wipe your pulp with a paper towel" I would swoon to be a fly on his wall. "like a steamship of sweaty Sicilian immigrants / to a Sam Spade San Francisco" And spying a bride distractedly hanging out her own un-bloodied bed clothing? "she's so far away I'm forced to invent her madonna face" "Today I will tell my wife that I am leaving." Pedersen is an inversion incarnate of the old adage, 'Every story tells a picture.'

But I can't

It's stronger than
myself
I can't

I must pick at my cuticles
I must pop another brewsky
I must play one more round

Even my silence
calculated to seduce
payback for poison

First the bitter but honest lull
then thick strong honey
made years ago by
dead bees

I am sick
tens of thousands
of sparkling word bubbles
gas, I am hungover

I'd explode
in fireworks
but frankly
I can't.

Charity

from the rocking chair in the sunroom
I wave at you as
you go through the evasive maneuvers
I don't look at you, busy making notes
the room is big and you'll fly off
if you push too far, though, I'll get the swatter
look at you chase you and get you up against
a window as you run stupidly to the light
I may miss a couple times but then I will squish you
against the glass and wipe your pulp with a paper towel
if you bother me too much

I might not do any of this
I may just let you
my brother or sister
land on my arm
walk there as long as
you please
since I forgot why
I must kill a fly
I am a man
and I have free will

Farewell

Waiting for the red bus in the light rain for
she to leave on a long journey back
a cranky businessman's orange butt
on the shiny black lava cobble
just before sunrise
the blue swirl pointing west, anxious
like a steamship of sweaty Sicilian immigrants
to a Sam Spade San Francisco
cigarette silverly smoking.

Inspecting My Nails at the Crossroads

Essay correcting is boring me and I look out of the window across housetops
she's younger than I, medium build, long dark hair, a bride
she's hanging out the bedclothes, first the heavy tan blanket, she shakes it out
with distracted care she tosses it over the line and smooths out the wrinkles
it's a nice sunny day in March

she shakes the thinner blanket and the two humid sheets, how delicately she moves
a pink pullover that would look fine under a simple pearl necklace
with hubby's soft gray cardigan thrown on top
she's so far away I'm forced to invent her madonna face
she's so cozy, I should get back to my papers
if I could ask her she would tell me something I already know
that today
that it's today,
Today I will tell my wife that I am leaving.

light darken

thank you for the contrast
for taking my head in your hands
music biting and glad
like mountain water tastes
I tilt my head back and sway
the ticking doesn't bother me
one cuts and one bleeds
until the lanterns fade

when they come up again
on a child's merry-go-round
with other adults found
grasping into the unknown
at a flashing signal
I am home and will stay there
let go, won't you hearken
I need to see light darken

THE POET SPEAKS:

The Poet Speaks, that is, Pretends to Know What He's Doing:

If I must comment my own poetry I look and see that, as in my prose, I begin at the finish line then find a road leading there. I make the way clear but not too clear, so that the reader can participate.

Also, I often have a narrative hidden behind the poem. Some of these poems are quite old--like 20 years, I let them age slowly--so I don't remember what inspired them, but they've all been recently revised. It is interesting that, after living in Sicily for forty years, there is very little Sicily in my poetry. I suppose that in my poetry mind I am

elsewhere or referring to a time in my life when I lived elsewhere, or I am out of place, out of mind, lost in the clouds.

I'm equally unaware of my influences. I read lots of poets, many anthologies and collections, starting at the beginning, and then let them seep into my subconscious. So, I don't have a lot of answers or insightful analyses, I try to be spontaneous while not ignorant. And, whatever happens, I plow ahead telling my little made-up stories.

AUTHOR'S BIO: *E. Martin Pedersen, originally from San Francisco, has lived for over 35 years in eastern Sicily where he teaches English at the local university. His poetry has appeared most recently in Ginosko Literary Journal, Abstract Magazine, Neologism Poetry Journal, Poesis, Thirteen Myna Birds. Martin is an alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. His collection of haiku, Bitter Pills, has just come out. He blogs at: <https://emartinpedersenwriter.blogspot.com>*