

Six poems

By

Paul Ilechko

WHY I LIKE THEM: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH SCRETCH writes...* There are so many great lines that lurk within Paul Ilechko to linger among us. I won't begin to cite them all, site for yourself, he's in our sights, here's some: "sounds everywhere had faded to a new / quietness a soulful ambience now becalmed." This is lengthy but I can't resist it, "Your flimsy shirt / of charmless linen / with fraying cuffs / and fading collar / you wear with such / a sense of incongruity" "broken glass and splintered / boards that carve a boundary" "another clock strips time from / summer days the flimsiest excuse / for nothing left to say" "music clustered in / the corners of the rooms / insinuating itself into the quiet" "clothed in stripes of pastel symmetry." When are too many not enough? A wizard of awe, incantations as enchanting as entrancing . . . (Spacing is poet's own.)

Sixteen Years

Sixteen years of bridges and emotion
before the last thing was dissolved before
the horizon was bisected stainless as fire
in a world slick with a blushing materialism

the simplicity of a winter sun innocent
against the azure brilliance of a cloud-free
sky stripped to the basics the airwaves
blanketed with Tennessee advertising

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*where the wreckage washed up its shotgun
planks and rusted branding the parsimony
of the ill-mannered transitioning through*

dusk to the exotic rush of presence

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left behind the road the myth the filling
station the place where asphalt faded
into water the silent times before the aperture
closed and radio came to its predicted end

when morning resolved empty-headed
and joyful yellow as sand in its pure lucidity
sounds everywhere had faded to a new
quietness a soulful ambience now becalmed.

Made a Book

I insist that my books must be stitched
she said the eventuality of glue
is always failure and so we advertised

and hired and gathered up a squadron
of needlework slaving acid free into
the depths of winter and every black

word on every soft white sheet of linen
was perfect in alignment cut
and feathered into the softness of literature

but by the time all this was finished
the man was gone black shirted
and canvas shod his cheeks unshaven

a veteran's dream of fire and acid
and roasted pig leaving behind a bitter
scrawling of goodbye without forgiveness

hidden within the implication of hatred
that spanned continents now written
into her history second edition.

Charmless

Your flimsy shirt
of charmless linen

with fraying cuffs
and fading collar
you wear with such
a sense of incongruity

you as barbarian
you as a wretched
blackguard miscreant

raw as morning within
your sluggish devolution

broken glass and splintered
boards that carve a boundary

a city state that panders
to the wealth of others

leaving you to dwell within
the refuse of its days

and sleep in dreamless misery
beneath the cloudless sky

absorbing the toxins
that emanate from
so many dying rivers.

A Broken Summer

Summer long a rinse of light
across the pale fire of sky
dream that you imagined it
dream the crows and jays flocking
for the ages dream the emptiness
the broken whole of it

a car is a killing thing when you
drive across watching
a performance the cold sad death
of television dream of mystery
that leads you by your broken nose
into another possibility

another clock strips time from
summer days the flimsiest excuse
for nothing left to say
dream the drugs dream the bathroom
the open vein dream
the heat of broken needle.

Circle of Life

We sat cross-legged
in a circle on the floor
engulfed in atmosphere

music clustered in
the corners of the rooms
insinuating itself into the quiet

conversations that almost
failed to start before
fading into emptiness

everything reeked of smoke
echoing the fires that still
lingered in the downtown areas

soon someone would rise
and leave the room but till then
we stayed inside the pliable

machinery of our oblivion
each linked to another each
chained to the unavoidable future.

The Price is Right

For the price of a dollar when everything is extra it's Cameroon it's Venezuela it's all that you know it's the morning light filtered by thin curtains ...

if I had that dollar in the early morning I'd buy you a breakfast I'd buy you a drink whichever one came first my hunger or your thirst

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for the price of a lost wilderness measured in shards of illusion packed as if it were salvation it's just an extra dollar every day ...

sliding from your pocket into someone else's fingertips clutched and then gone vanished into the faint light of early morning reflective and reflexive

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for the price of a song a simple theme with cut-and-pasted lyricism dripping like fat that even a dollar can buy ...

dripping with the dream of equity that so many of us know can never be real while we waste our slow running trickle of dollars on drink and scarcity and abandon.

Slumber

We aimed at slumber as the reachable state
floating atop the oily slick of moonlight

trapped within reflection exhausted by
the infiltrating memory of burning grasslands

light had broken though the boundary
of an abject minimalism a century's sickness

clothed in stripes of pastel symmetry the meeting
point of Agnes M and the fading desert sunlight.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I rarely start a poem with a concept in mind, I'm more language driven than idea driven. I often used found materials to trigger the writing process, and sometimes create other "rules" that I have to follow, for example, basing the first line of my poem on the first line of the source material, the second line of my poem on the second line of the next piece, etc. I start with these raw materials, these words or phrases, and I build the poem up organically, each idea triggering another one until I have something worthwhile. I work best when I let go, let the subconscious have its head. Then it's revision time, working on the flow, the musicality, perhaps merging another fragment that seems to fit with this one. The key thing for me, though, is to write something every day, even if it's rubbish.*

As far as influences go, there are many – I read constantly. However, if forced, I would single out Wallace Stevens as one of the earliest and most critical, someone who made me sure that I too wanted to write poetry.

AUTHOR BIO: Poet and songwriter Paul Ilechko is the author of three chapbooks, most recently "Pain Sections" (Alien Buddha Press). His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including The Night Heron Barks, Rogue Agent, Ethel, Lullwater Review, and Book of Matches. His first album, "Meeting Points", was released in 2021.