

10 poems = (5) poems + 5 = TEN poems....

By Strider Marcus Jones

**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Strider Marcus Jones plays on words like an inveterate, pathological lyre as he bows and strums us, plucking me, at least, from my melancholy melodies, monotonous monotones and doggerel doldrums with his mellifluous meter and tone. (I spitefully longed to eliminate at least one of his ten poems, but woe is me.) His imagery is imaginatively immersing; his phrasing and figures of speech overflowing; and, his symbolism, story, syntax and sound spill over the page with cascading cadence in a most spellbinding scintillating style. (Besides, he owes me money and cheats at cards.) Here is a sampling of the scoundrels verse: "to watch you / swan turned shrew- / hairbrush out all memory and meaning," "the heart of truth- / intact in youth," A "Savage" homage to Gauguin: "beauty and syphilis happily cohabit," "inseminating womb / selected by pheromones" (Presumably referring Paul's pursuits after he left the banking business.) Lots more gems here, but don't overlook 'IN THE COME AND GO, I MIND YOU' If I understand anything about in-you-end-oh, the double entendres are delightful... Nice tribute to Tolkien in there somewhere too for you LOTR devotees. Strider's light, slight-of-hand writing is as masterful as his pockets are shallow and his head is swelled... (Spacing is poet's own.)HS*

#### SALTED SLUG

your words stung,  
and hung  
me upside down, inside out,  
to watch you  
swan turned shrew-  
hairbrush out all memory and meaning,  
from those fresco pictures on the wet plaster ceiling-  
that my Michelangelo took years to paint,  
in glorious colours, now flaked and full of hate.

the lights of our pleiades went out,  
with no new songs to sing and talk about-  
suspended there  
inside sobs of solitude and infinite despair-  
like soluble syllables of barbiturates

in exhaust fumes of apology and regrets.

you left me prone-  
to hear deaths symphony alone,  
split and splattered, opened on the floor,  
repenting for nothing, evermore-  
like a salted slug,  
curdled and curled up on the rug-  
to melt away  
while you spoon and my colours fade to grey.

the heart of truth-  
intact in youth,  
fractures into fronds of lies and trust,  
destined to become a hollow husk-  
but i found myself again in hopes congealing pools  
and left the field of fools  
to someone else-  
and put her finished book back on its shelf.

## CHILDHOOD FIRES

late afternoon  
winter fingers  
nomads in snow  
numb knuckles and nails  
on two boys  
in scuffed shoes  
and ripped coats  
carrying four planks of wood  
from condemned houses  
down dark jitty's  
slipping on dog shit  
into back yard  
to make warm fires

early evening

dad cooking neck end stew  
thick with potato dumplings and herbs  
on top of bread soaked in gravy  
i saw the hole in the ceiling  
holding the foot that jumped off bunk beds  
but dad didnt mind  
he had just sawed the knob  
off the banister  
to get an old wardrobe upstairs  
and made us a longbow and cricket bat  
it was fun being poor  
like other families

after dark  
all sat down reading and talking  
in candle light  
with parents  
silent to each other  
our sudden laughter like sparks  
glowing and fading  
dancing in flames and wood smoke  
unlike the children who died in a fire next door  
then we played cards  
and i called my dad a cunt  
for trumping my king  
but he let me keep the word

## LOTHLORIEN

i'm come home again  
in your Lothlorien  
to marinate my mind  
in your words,  
and stand behind  
good tribes grown blind,  
trapped in old absurd  
regressive reasons

and selfish treasons.

in this cast of strife  
the Tree Of Life  
embraces innocent ghosts,  
slain by Sauron's hosts;  
and their falling cries  
make us wise  
enough to rise  
up in a fellowship of friends  
to oppose Mordor's ends  
and smote this evil stronger  
and longer  
for each one of us that dies.

i'm come home again  
in your Lothlorien,  
persuading  
yellow snapdragons  
to take wing  
and un-fang serpent krakkens,  
while i bring  
all the races  
to resume  
their bloom  
as equals in equal spaces  
by removing  
and muting

the chorus of crickets  
who cheat them from chambered thickets,  
hiding corruptions older than long grass  
that still fag for favours asked.

i'm come home again  
in your Lothlorien  
where corporate warfare  
and workfare  
on health  
and welfare  
infests our tribal bodies  
and separate self  
in political lobbies  
so conscience can't care  
or share  
worth and wealth:

to rally drones  
of walking bones,  
too tired  
and uninspired  
to think things through  
and the powerless who see it true.  
red unites, blue divides,  
which one are you  
and what will you do  
when reason decides.

## WOODED WINDOWS

as this long life slowly goes  
i find myself returning  
to look through wooded windows.  
forward or back, empires and regimes remain  
in pyramids of power  
butchering the blameless for glorious gain.  
feudal soldiers firing guns  
and wingless birds dropping smart bombs  
on mothers, fathers, daughters, sons,  
follow higher orders  
to modernise older civilisations

repeating what history has taught us.  
in turn, their towers of class and cash  
will crumble and crash  
on top of ozymandias.  
hey now, woods of winter leafless grip  
and fractures split  
drawing us into it.  
love slide in days  
through summer heat waves  
and old woodland ways  
with us licking  
then dripping  
and sticking  
chanting wiccan songs  
embraced in pagan bonds  
living light, loving long,  
fingers painting runes on skin  
back to the beginning  
when freedom wasn't sin.

OVIRI ( The Savage – Paul Gauguin in Tahiti )

woman,  
wearing the conscience of the world-  
you make me want  
less civilisation  
and more meaning.  
drinking absinthe together,  
hand rolling and smoking cigars-  
being is, what it really is-  
fucking on palm leaves  
under tropical rain.

beauty and syphilis happily cohabit,  
painting your colours  
on a parallel canvas  
to exhibit in Paris  
the paradox of you.  
somewhere in your arms-  
i forget my savage self,  
inseminating womb  
selected by pheromones  
at the pace of evolution.  
later. I vomited arsenic on the mountain and returned  
to sup morphine. spread ointments on the sores, and ask:  
where do we come from.  
what are we.  
where are we going.

## IT'S SO QUIET

it's so quiet  
our eloquent words dying on a diet  
of midnight toast  
with Orwell's ghost-  
looking so tubercular in a tweed jacket  
pencilling notes on a lung black cigarette packet-  
our Winston, wronged for a woman and sin  
re-wrote history on scrolls thought down tubes  
that came to him  
in the Ministry Of Truth Of Fools  
where conscience learns to lie within.



not like today  
the smug-sly haves say and look away  
so sure  
theres nothing wrong with wanting more,  
or drown their sorrows  
downing bootleg gin  
knowing tomorrows  
truth is paper thin  
. .  
at home  
in sensory  
perception  
with tapped and tracked phone  
the Thought Police arrest me  
in the corridors of affection-  
where dictators wear, red then blue, reversible coats  
in collapsing houses, all self-made  
and self-paid  
smarmy scrotes-  
now the Round Table  
of real red politics  
is only fable  
on the pyre of ghostly heretics.  
they are rubbing out  
all the contusions  
and solitary doubt,  
with confusions  
and illusions  
through wired media  
defined in their secret encyclopedia-  
where summit and boardroom and conclave  
engineer us from birth to grave.  
like the birds,  
i will have to eat

the firethorn  
berries that ripen but sleep  
to keep  
the words  
of revolution  
alive and warm  
this winter, with resolution  
gathering us, to its lantern in the bleak,  
to be reborn and speak.

MIRROR, MIRROR

mirror, mirror,  
in the hall  
age comes to us all,  
and looks wither  
through the play  
of years slipped away,  
away

in the lapsed lingo of street  
and road,  
where tangents meet  
and move with innocence  
up summits of experience  
told,  
whose fruits we eat  
then weep  
when they implode.  
these reflections  
in this autumn of adventurous directions,  
mean more  
standing in the door  
of ebb and flow  
watching people come and go  
wearing introspections  
of what they know  
after listening to a stranger's small confessions  
on midnight radio.

## THE COMET OF HER WORDS

he sheds his matelessness

and shapeless

statelessness

undormed

to lie with her undressed

in woods earth warmed.

after drinking

and thinking  
in the hollow trunk of an ancient tree  
she reads  
his tea  
leaves-  
and he hears  
her nature in the pattern  
of her years,  
saying now we happen  
and the comet of her words  
weaves its sentences  
in his,  
let's go of bleakness  
walking through wilderness  
light footsteps in senses.

#### IN THE COME AND GO, I MIND YOU

in the middle, where i find you,  
i wriggle in behind you  
all the way.

in the come and go, i mind you,  
what we were is reconciled, you  
let it stay.

this template, for being tender,  
is our state to remember  
into grey;

beyond the time of soil and ember,  
into nothingness's timbre-

be it, play.

## LOOKING IN LOVE'S GLASS

looking in love's glass

at what we have drank

and haven't drank

to quench our thirst

slow and fast

not the first

not the last-

beauty is flesh  
is your womanliness  
and i find  
your mind  
grows branches into mine  
we climb-  
so compatible  
and indelible,  
to others forgettable  
crashed dream  
on screen-  
we know  
we go  
out of scene.

### **THE POET SPEAKS:**

*I like the company of people but prefer solitude. I like to listen to people talk, the way they see it and say it. For me, poetry spans our past, present and future. These poems, and those in my books, are about the themes of love, relationships, peace, war, racial, economic and sexual equality, cultural integration, poverty, mythical romance, the magic of childhood and experience of growing old as a Bohemian maverick. The strings of chance and consequences meld with music and art in Spinoza's orderly chaos of the universe.*

*Life is hard and uncertain for most of us now, but also rare in our corner of the universe, so I strive to express my own understanding of it. Thinking time is my creative cove. My English teacher, Anne Ryan inspired me to write poetry when I was thirteen. The poems have grown with me and reflect much of who I am now. Some poems sleep for years. Mere jumbles of words, themes and rhythms in subconscious gaseous clouds. Their form and meaning evolve in Spinoza's orderly chaos. Other poems just happen, triggered by a single word or phrase, a sound, smell, or shape that relates to something from our past, present, or future. Writing a good poem makes me feel like the artist who can paint, or the musician who can play - joy in creating something that others enjoy and feel inspired to try doing themselves.*

*My first poetical influences were the Tin Pan Alley lyricists and composers like Sammy Cahn, Cole Porter and Rogers and Hart. I love the fun, rhythm and interplay between lyrics and music. Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen influence my poetry in the same way, allowing me to experiment with metaphor, form and rhythms.*

*Relationships and love are one of the main themes in my poetry. Two books which have travelled with me through life are Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy and Tess Of The D'urbervilles by Thomas Hardy. Tolkien's Lord Of The Rings trilogy is a big influence on some of my work.*

*My favourite poets who have influenced my work include: Shelley, Keats, Yeats, Auden, Dylan Thomas, Bishop, Szymborska, Langston Hughes, Plath, Art Crane, Larkin, Forough Farrokhzad, Neruda, Rumi and Heaney.*

*What inspires you?*

*Salford – my home town. My working class Irish and Welsh roots. My Muse and Children. The natural and industrial landscape. Archaeology. Astronomy. Social history. The struggle to overcome adversity and oppression. Contemporary poet, musician and artist friends. Trying to play more than three notes on my saxophone and clarinet. Working on my next poem.*

*Who are some writers you admire?*

*Adding to those previously mentioned – e e cummings, Bukowski, Brian Aldiss, Chaucer, Marlowe.*

*What is your writing process?*

*I write most days with pen on A4 paper folded into quarters. Strings of ideas and phrases. Any time of day, but I prefer the evening and through the night. Some poems survive the first draft. Others go through minor edits to language, theme and structure. Some get butchered and others are sent to hibernate until I return to them.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Strider Marcus Jones – is a poet, law graduate and ex civil servant from Salford, England with proud Celtic roots in Ireland and Wales. A member of The Poetry Society, his five published books of poetry <https://stridermarcusjonespoetry.wordpress.com/> reveal a maverick, moving between forests, mountains, cities and coasts playing his saxophone and clarinet in warm solitude.



