

she makes me 19 & other poems...

By Jack Henry

In order to keep the poet's dedicated spacing Hezekiah's note follows the poems. All appeared previously in an echap called The Righthand Angle of a Continuous Curve from Blunt Trauma Press, now defunct. Font size is poet's own. Eds.

she makes me 19

she makes me 19 when i stare into her eyes
when i try to form a sentence
when i attempt to speak without stutter -

my mind spins a vast wasteland of mythology,
hope and happenstance;
ignoring the now, the real,
so-called day-to-day mundane activities
we often find ourselves trapped within -

her confessions share no perfections,
each atom, each cell, each breath hangs sweet on my skin,
tells a story i struggle to share -

my days blaze with fire when she connects
by phone or phrase -

there are always lines to read between,
nuance, however subtle,
in my mind she looks at me the same as i look at her,
but my mind is no longer agile, no longer
complete, no longer rational -

a mirror reflects an image only i can see -

when truth creeps in i find myself deep inside craters clawed from
clay and dirt with my own bloodied hands -

i am mistaken, i know this, but from the well of life,
no matter how dry, hope always springs -

especially in the mind of a madman -

fields afire

there is no silence at the center of a garden filled
with dead flowers and falling leaves.
a garden surrounded by armor and brick
and bones of soldiers gone so long from us now -

we stare up through trees bent in relentless wind,
watch for crows & heroes & golden dreams
ripped from pages of porn star memoirs -

sometimes she whispers on my shoulder,
just before tears fall,
just before truth spills across a fresh scrubbed floor,
just before a phone rings,
& a man's voice fills the receiver,
sudden realization grips the throat of a barrister in decline -

once i wept for a woman like that,
a woman whose magic lived between her legs,
whose magic lingered on her lips before fleeing into memory -

neglect and shadows fall across her face -
i open a door -
i take her hand -
i lay her down -
words filter through fly traps,
through black screens & under doorways -

only the moans of her last saving grace fill the room
& we laugh aloud despite a moon overflowing
with blood red rage
& fields afire burning free & close to the soul -

driftwood

TV buzzes some old movie.
undercover angels chase demon dope.
a ceiling fan spins lazy.
winter begins a slow drift in.

i check memories left hidden in the bottom
of an old tee-shirt drawer.
wipe away spider webs and driftwood,
cut free pictures of dead lovers with
a rusty switchblade knife.

she had a name, changed now to something i cannot remember.
once married, settled into default divorce.
two teenaged kids off to college.

an image dissolves in my brain: a woman alone,
settled on a fat, brown couch situated to perfection
in the middle of an upscale Scottsdale house,
a small dog coiled into the crook of her leg.

her smile wavers, just before teardrops fall,
just before a memory shatters and i close the drawer.

atop the bones of dead saints

one by one we place stones atop the bones of saints
felled by the voices of disbelief and disintegration –

and no more to dance in fields laid flat by footsteps
of hooligans and martyrs, carrying their flames and fears
within the clench of trembling hands -

i wait in my gray walled cell, surrounded by barbed wire and prison dogs –

my debt still due to a society no longer holding faith in anything more than the thickening cock held
before their anguished lips -

east of where i stand

my brain fills with scattershot landscapes,
tumble weeds blow dead
across long flat rivers of black asphalt,
trees and shrubs bend from a ceaseless wind,
dust carves veins atop dry clay river bottoms –

i cannot begin again down this road,
travel across the Mojave,
through ports of insanity,
past memories etched on bar tops
and dirty truck stop bathroom floors –

stains litter broken concrete,
remembrances of escapade and malady –

at a four-corner stop on Highway 72,
where cars seldom pass,
trucks never venture,
where traffickers land and unload Columbian wares,
where the restless find peace,
i pull to the shoulder –

swirls of dust peel toward an expectant smile -

i scream out her name,
if only to hear it breathe to life,
if only to let the word tumble from my drying lips,
if only to know a moment of solace –

before the road calls
and I travel East –

i always travel East,
she will always be East of where I stand -

a suddenness that cannot be explained

...and this young couple kisses
at the center of a coffee shop,
no one seems to notice me
and i cannot avert my eyes
just as i cannot remember when the simple lust of youth
conveyed so much light and explosion,
a fire from a hidden corner
behind the soul but near the heart -

...and i look away toward a sun
winking atop fat white clouds,
a sun knowing more than should be known
by such a distant friend;
and when i collapse into a pool of words
and monograms and little shiny tidbits,
random flashes of bluster and a wind rip across an asphalt
parking lot in a low part of Phoenix,
a part of town where memories
are best left alone
and leaving becomes the best part of the day -

...and i know i have to return
to realm of normalcy and leave this
fascination alone, return it to its sleeve,
stored away with the LPs
gathering dust in a box buried under clothes
in the corner of a garage
i no longer own -

contemplating discretion

there is a taste in my mouth, bitter sweet,
a reminder, perhaps, of a gun-metal past,
a formless gray future –

an indication, if you will,
of a precarious perch
between reality & the skin of angels
i have long sought –

there is a dream in my skull, a nightmare it seems,
left to fester its damnation upon the last fleeting strands
of casual exuberance & moments of self-realization
left hidden in an old shirt pocket –

demons in Mercedes' drive too fast on Interstates,
talk into cell phones, attempt to rule the world,
contemplate indiscretion, plot the next conquest
from their nesting
between the legs of a whore -

thickets along a dust trail
hiding bombs & marauders,
insurgents filled with black tar intent
& sleight of hand fascination,
skilled craftsmen in warrior cry tradition –

there are miles of road
restless beneath my feet,
rising through green hills,
and pastures filled with indifferent cows
and bellicose farmers -

a road eager to take me east but always reminding me
home is where i stand -

a sound as light as a feather drifting away

she lives beyond a long dead sea -
past flat valleys and jagged peaks -
rivers that long to taste water,
again -

out beyond simple reach -
beyond grasping hands and fingertips -
beyond mysteries yet to unfold
but eager to stretch -

no future except for another breath, another sigh -
when morning sun bites into the eastern sky,
i damn its presence,
for the sun has touched her before i ever had a chance
and each day shall forever begin the same -

no trust held within veins of coursing blood -
her eyes alight with passion, fire and strange magic -
a storm begins to ride across the desert -

and if i ever spilled the truth; broke down past barriers
and concrete walls; past warriors and demons alike;
past the very edge of a fading world;
thunder may crash down pronouncing
a sudden end to all that i am or, perhaps, a mouse may squeak
a sound so light a feather would pass it by as
it simply drifted away -

there's no telling a future
when the past is not yet done -

Poetry editor Hezekiah writes... *Here is some poetry from Jack Henry aka jck hnry who sometimes eschews vowels and one of whose routine duties is fishbowl cleaning. What could possibly go wrong with this? The greatest compliment one can extend a writer is to read. 'she makes me 19' "her confessions share no perfections," "my days blaze with fire when she connects / by phone or phrase -" "a mirror reflects an image only i can see -" This guy is hep: "swirls of dust peel toward an expectant smile -" "...i collapse into a pool of words" You have to have the burn. What if Jack actually lived this life? ...I would like to come back as him.*

THE POET SPEAKS:

Ah ja. das ist fantastisch. ich danke dir sehr.

How Did I Start: i have read and studied poetry, and writing in general, for most of my adult life. during my extended internment at University i studied literature, history, cultural anthropology, and quantum theory before discovering writing as a reasonable outlet for my warped sensibilities. eventually, i received an mfa in poetry some years ago.

in my mind poetry is the basis of all writing, all communication, all interpretation of the world us; without poetry we are nothing.

i started writing to understand myself and my own reality. over the years i cycled through different realms of interpretation before returning to a very simplistic world view based on words and sound.

Stylistic Influences: like a great many poets i found my start through Bukowski but stayed in that grasp for a short while. my influences are fairly obvious in the Beats, early Russian Formalism specifically Mayakovski, late post modernists such as Charles Simic.

more important influences are really in the world of film and music. i found influence in the LA Punk scene in the mid-70s and early 80s. and within film i have taken a great deal from David Lynch, Martin Scorsese, and a myriad of others. i believe the visual arts have a great effect upon the written arts. of course, it is a two-way street.

Why Is Poetry Important? poetry is the basis of all human communication. that is why it is important. it is the simplest, and most complex, form of writing to express human emotion and circumstance.

writing poetry is like breathing for me. i think in poetic form. my mind is always writing, subconsciously. writing it down is the only way to relieve the madness.

in the end i truly believe that poetry should be brutally real and deeply honest. life is not always a colorful metaphor or clever twist of phrase and word. it is much deeper, much darker. simple words often convey the strongest message.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Jack Henry (jck hnry) is a writer/editor located in the high desert of California. Jack is editor/publisher/fish bowl cleaner at Heroin Love Songs and 1870 Press. Recent work has appeared in Red Fez, Horror Sleaze Trash, Bold Monkey, Rusty Truck, Fearless, Cajun Mutt, Dissident Voice, Ariel Chart and others. In the Fall of 2020 Jck's latest collection "Cosmonauts Sing Old David Bowie Songs: A memoir of crazy," will be released by **Punk Hostage Press.** jackhenry.wordpress.com