

NECROMANCY



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Locofo Chaps

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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Necromancy Acknowledgements

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Anger

I am the nettles choking your stomach.
You are a door, swollen with July,
that keeps me, mad dog which you beat,
in your basement. The wind salts the eyelids
of every wound. With every step,
your bare feet shatter hypodermics.
The air bloats with grasshopper chatter
and the drip of faucets. You greet strangers
with a bayonet in your hand. Roses
reek of greenhouses. The pruning shears
are in your hand. Salads have too much vinegar,
coffee too much sugar. It's better
to go hungry. The world fandangos
behind a sheet of glass. Your body
slumps like a brick waiting to be thrown.

Suicide Bomber

I wear a vest
of widows and orphans.
For a second, I hold
our world in my hand.
My fingers curl
and crush to a fist.
I am prayer,
pregnant with fire.
Your body is the gate
to paradise, locked.
I am the key.
With a trigger, I turn.

Revenge

Wine from the orchards
where you sow your sin,
my song is the silence
after you slap
the mosquito in your ear.
I am the murder that continues
to kill. Two mirrors,
like two generals, stare
each other down. The corpses
between them stretch on forever.

Drone

I am a steel pomegranate
ripe with seeds of fire.
I sizzle your sky, a wasp
eager to sting the geography.
Let the air grow heavy with the taste
of charred bone and scorched blood.
Mosque. School. Orphanage.
They are all just points of light,
coordinates on a stranger's monitor,
witnesses to implode with flame.

The Bridegroom of Rad'a

On Wednesday, we met with the qadi,
who bound our hands and recited the fatiha.
Now God peers into the world
through the wound in my chest.

My father scattered raisins
across the carpet for good luck.
How many rials can buy atonement,
can resurrect the dead?

On Friday, the butchers came
with their sheep and calves.
How many Kalashnikovs will it take
to father the orphans?

We chewed qat and smoked our narghile.
Now what's left of our bodies is bathed
and cleansed with camphor and agarwood
before the shroud overwhelms us.

All morning, drones hovered overhead.
Now we are a caravan
of flags and tears
bleeding into the earth.

Rifle

I cradle this apiary
and finger it like a flute
to whistle the song of corpses.
My pepper grinder spices
your salad with blood. I stand,
ready as your best man.
This priest blesses the ring
that weds you to your coffin.
I am a locksmith with a hundred picks.
Which one will open your body
and what secrets will it discover?

Ahkam

--after Aharon Shabtai

These creatures in fatigues and ski masks,
I tell myself, aren't Muslims,

in the truest sense of the word. A Muslim
is prohibited from adorning his body with jewelry

be it gold chains or military-grade munitions.
A Muslim is prohibited from consuming flowing blood.

A Muslim does not believe in the sword that hacks the neck
but in the ghazal incarcerated by fear in the prisoner's throat,

in the body that leaves a dimple in the mattress,
not in the shell that incinerates it.

He prostrates himself not before the Emir, or the Caliph,
but unrolls his sajjāda towards Mecca—to Allah,

and he cries five times a day out for peace.
Therefore, he will not rob another man of his land

and will not execute him on his knees.
The ragged sermons of al-Baghdadi

preach a Surah of pain and poison—
a sure sign that a Muslim has made Hajj to an ungodly city.

Headstone

Constant as a hemlock trunk
in a winter orchard, I
am the headboard for the bed
where no one wants to sleep, menu
for the mouth that eats but one
meal, your biography,
abridged. The reader remains
alone to fill in the details.
I maintain my vigil, a candle
lit by snow, a stain
no soap or weeping can scrub away.

A Poet In Prison

*On October 29,
a man will be arrested
for writing poetry*

In prison, pictures
of babies are illegal.
The sun, rainbows, brown rabbits
with fuchsia noses, angels,
none of these are allowed.

My daughter Josephine learns
about birds in school and draws
a picture of a whooping crane
mid-dance, its long, yellow beak
up turned, its wings flared wide
like a cemetery gate.

Birds remind prisoners of flight,
of swimming through the sky.
So birds are not allowed.
Nous ne pouvons pas avoir ceci the guard
laughs, and tears the drawing
down. Only a corner of blue
sky remains, taped lonely as a word
to the cinder blocks of my cell.

A week later, my son draws
me a dead body.
Dead bodies don't remind prisoners
of anything they shouldn't
be thinking about. Dead bodies
are allowed in prison.

My son shows me his picture.
The sky is black. Bright scribbles
of maroon and crimson
soak the ground.
Il seras travailler
pour nous un jour
the guard chuckles, and walks away.

My son sits down next to me
on my bunk, holding his drawing.
A thick canary streak points
from the dead man's body.
"What's this?" I ask "An enemy's
spear? A bit of rancid bone?"

My son's eyes grow wide. He looks
for the guard, then draws my ear
close to his lips. "Shhh!"
he whispers "I have brought you
Josephine's whooping crane!"

Dust

The last taste on your tongue before
it turns toward me. Mountains fold,
seas surrender, cities cease
and I, alone, remain. When the stars
at last flare out, I cling to the dark.
I am the fabric you first were folded from.
Remember, you return to me.

Death

People whisper my name from the shadows
of their mouths. Your life is a party.
I am the guest who is hours early
and keeps you from setting your table.
I am the guest who arrives after everyone
leaves, the wine bottles emptied, and the plates
already cleaned. You don't remember
inviting me. You only know
that I am sure to come. You send me
your children to harvest, then blame me
when they are gone, but I am innocent.
I did not plant these seeds in the sand.
I only gather what you throw away.

Mrs. Owen's Cook Book Chili

The original version of this recipe was first published in 1880. According to John Thorne, "This may be the earliest printed recipe for chili con carne and it is urprisingly authentic."

Take lean beef and cut in small dice, put to cook with the Drake drilling process. When well braised,

and some onions, a clove of garlic chopped fine, governors, investors, and one tablespoon of flour. Mix

and cover with water or stock, wildcatters with land contracts, one teaspoon each of ground oregano, camino, and coriander.

The latter can be purchased at any drugstore. Take dried prices due to the Depression, off coast smugglers, and peppers.

Remove the seeds, cover with water and put to boil. Add Gulf, Shell, Marathon, Texaco, Exxon

and when thoroughly cooked, pass through a fine strainer. Add sufficient puree and lobbyists to the stew to make it good

and hot, and salt to taste. To be served with a border of Mexican migrants, well cooked in the Rio Grande, beans, and volunteers

with rifles, walkie talkies, and promotional t-shirts. Serve with grated cheese and sour cream. Enjoy.

Oil

I am fire waiting to arise, the ink
you burn to scrawl prophecies across the sky.
The grain you harvest after planting dead bodies,
I stick like black dew to the rocks.
I creep, a grapevine beneath sand and soil,
while you get drunk on my wine. Pluck the coins
from your eyes. You ferry yourself across
this river until it runs dry and you walk.
You babies fiercely suck at nipples
for me, milk from an infanticidal breast.

Microphone

I am the ear that bellows
whispers, yodels mumbles.
I am the boat that smuggles
falsehood. My captain is emperor
naked, yet you invite him
into your waters. My cargo
creeps in, and soon it was always
true. Just ask anyone.

Medal

The remains of your leg, blasted
by a roadside bomb, dangle
at your chest. I remember
what you have done. Hang me
at your heart. Frame me. I will shine
your deeds to the world. Do nothing
but fill a bag and a hole in the earth.
I am a stone someone hands your mother
to replace her child.

Privilege

--for JC

I am the storm to scour the blood
of hungry seamstresses from your bras,
the nectar to sweeten deported workers
from your mangos. You only take

your convertible out for Sunday jaunts.
I am the wind to lift the corpses
from the desert of your gas tank,
the snarl of engine to cover the bullets

that ought to echo in your ears.
All your donations are tax deductible.

Grass

I am the carpet you sweep
your errors beneath. You corner me
with fences and sidewalks, lies
that you are in control.
of nature. I rebel, force
through concrete, grow
despite your blades. You will die.
and people will forget
your borders. They will only see
me, poured over body and stone.

Tarek al-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi
--after Adam Hughes

Tunisia,
let your mizwad be muted
for you are dressed in stone.
This is not about my dates,
the two-hundred dollars I borrowed.

Tunisia,
a pyric wind shakes you from the foam.
A gasoline sun sears its dawn across my skin.
My body undoes itself into so many dermal blossoms
awakening to light. I always thought dying
was a walled garden with cool water;
now I find it's scorch marks on the pavement,
the blackness of my skin as it turns to sand
amongst the cigarette butts and food wrappers of the gutter.

Tunisia,
tomorrow morning, I will be so much wasted fuel.
Vultures will jab at the bones of your children as you turn
into a land of shadows. I offer my embers,
reassemble my ashes into a thousand angry voices.
The wounds will cauterize as your children dance
the shadows towards the east, and my smoke
refuses to descend from the clouds.

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