

I Forgot Light Burns



Eileen R. Tabios

I FORGOT LIGHT BURNS

PREVIOUSLY BY EILEEN R. TABIOS

POETRY

After The Egyptians Determined The Shape of the World is a Circle, 1996
Beyond Life Sentences, 1998
The Empty Flagpole (CD with guest artist Mei-mei Berssenbrugge), 2000
Ecstatic Mutations, 2001 (with short stories and essays)
Reproductions of The Empty Flagpole, 2002
Enheduanna in the 21st Century, 2002
There, Where the Pages Would End, 2003
Menage a Trois With the 21st Century, 2004
Crucial Bliss Epilogues, 2004
The Estrus Gaze(s), 2005
SONGS OF THE COLON, 2005
POST BLING BLING, 2005
I Take Thee, English, For My Beloved, 2005
The Secret Lives of Punctuations, Vol. I, 2006
Dredging for Atlantis, 2006
It's Curtains, 2006
SILENCES: *The Autobiography of Loss*, 2007
The Singer and Others: Flamenco Hay(na)ku, 2007
The Light Sang As It Left Your Eyes: Our Autobiography, 2007
NOTA BENE EISWEIN, 2009
Footnotes to Algebra: Uncollected Poems 1995-2009, 2009
Roman Holiday, 2010
THE THORN ROSARY: *Selected Prose Poems and New 1998-2010*, 2010
the relational elations of ORPHANED ALGEBRA (with jjj hastain), 2012
5 Shades of Gray, 2012
THE AWAKENING: *A Long Poem Triptych & A Poetics Fragment*, 2013
147 MILLION ORPHANS (MMXI-MML), 2014
44 RESURRECTIONS, 2014
SUN STIGMATA (*Sculpture Poems*), 2014

FICTION & PROSE COLLECTIONS

Black Lightning, 1998 (poetry essays/interviews)
My Romance, 2002 (art essays with poems)
Behind The Blue Canvas, 2004 (short stories)
SILK EGG: *Collected Novels 2009-2009*, 2011
The Blind Chatelaine's Keys, 2008 (biography with haybun)
AGAINST MISANTHROPY: *A Life in Poetry (2015-1995)*, 2015
(experimental autobiography)

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Eileen R. Tabios

Moria Books

2015

Chicago

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ISBN 978-0-9912121-3-2

Cover Image: photograph of bathroom at Marquis de
Riscal, Spain by Eileen R. Tabios

An excerpt from "I FORGOT LIGHT BURNS" was
previously published in *TRUCK*, Editor Halvard Johnson

Moria Books
c/o William Allegranza
9748 Redbud Rd.
Munster, IN 46321
<http://www.moriapoetry.com>

*For Tom: My Life
in Poetry would not have been
possible in its form
without you*

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I FORGOT THE FLAMENCO RED

*(—during pre-ablutions in bathroom at Marquis
de Riscal, Spain, June 2014)*

I forgot Red for the slithering snake freezing to
S in Espana

I forgot Red of demon blood rising from
flamenco

I forgot Red of grapes gathered to be crushed

I forgot Red of black heels stamping concrete

I forgot Red of old boar slowly turning to look at
you with yellow eyes

I forgot Red of lace flaring beneath violet velvet
skirt

I forgot Red of Garcia Lorca's fingers trembling
as he wrote "nightingales"

I forgot Red of cantaor's voice becoming rusty
nail pulling out of an old board

I forgot Red of Guernica

I forgot Red of palms clapping as fast as a
machine gun blast

I forgot Red of Picasso painting humans as
aliens in "Guernica"

I forgot Red of knuckles bruising to beat the
palo on wood tabletops

I forgot Red of duende thinning a poet to a
sack of bones

I forgot Red of a guitar turning night into smoke

I forgot Red of the Arab boy starving as he
wove a rug for the Spanish Queen

I forgot Red of a dancer sacrificing mother-of-
pearl combs to the dance

I forgot Red of knuckles exploding to
mountains from moving boulders for castle
walls

I forgot Red of ribbons fluttering the joyous
version through a fiesta

I forgot Red as the roses sacrificed to the
spiders by the winemaker

I forgot Red of bleak eyes and packed guitars
by yet another train station

I forgot Red of refusing water to roots you want
to penetrate deeper into earth until drought
dust becomes a mythological relict*

I forgot Flamenco Red when I saw its color applied to toilet paper whose pages will address urine, feces and snot



(inspired by a conversation with winemaker Jesus de Madrazo Mateo of Contino, Spain, June 2014)*

I FORGOT LIGHT BURNS

“What is to give light must endure burning.”
—Victor E. Frankl

I forgot I was a connoisseur of alleys—

I forgot the glint from the fang of a wild boar as
he lurked behind shadows in a land where it
only takes one domino to fall—

I forgot how quickly civilization can disappear,
as swiftly as the shoreline from an oil spill
birthed from a twist of the wrist by a drunk
vomiting over the helm—

I forgot grabbing at my fading dreams only to
recall a vision of skyscrapers crumbling from
the slaps of iron balls—

I forgot how gemstones can gasp—

I forgot the mud like the skin of my
grandmother, her gum-teethed cronies and
other wiry residents of a patient village beaten
by the sun—

I forgot mangos, eaten before they ripened—
they were savored with much salt and first
soaked in vinegar—

I forgot a brother—

I forgot the brother who gave me a rainbow
trapped within enamel—

I forgot the light burned and we never shaded
our eyes—

I forgot discovering the limited utility of calm
seas—

I forgot appreciating a *delicadeza* moonlight as
much as any long-haired maiden—

I forgot the stance of cliffs meeting water—

I forgot tipping Bing cherries into a blue bowl
until I lost the sky to a crimson moon's
overflow—

I forgot love is always haggled—

I forgot one can use color to prevent
encounters from degenerating into lies—

I forgot dancing furious flamenco with vultures
under a menopausal sun—

I forgot I was not an immigrant; I was simply myself who lacked control at how the world formed outside the “Other” of me—

I forgot learning to appreciate rust, and how it taught me bats operate through radar—

I forgot the bald girl whose neck increasingly
thinned until I could count the ropes stretched
along her throat—

~~I forgot greeting mornings as an exposed
nerve—~~

~~I forgot wishing to be pale—~~

~~I forgot the sky so lurid it was
nonreverberative—~~

I forgot the empty chair that awaited us, its
expanse the totality of a planet still
unexplored—

I forgot a fabric named *Solace* and its
availability in celery, parchment, black pearl,
crème brulee, persimmon and sage—

I forgot waking from a dream of white heat to
see sun-washed walls forming a room where
silk and lace sculpted a milk puddle on terra
cotta floors—

I forgot the rest of Greece, its national heat
waiting...

I forgot you falling asleep in my skin to
dream—

I forgot memory contains an underbrush—

I forgot the inevitability of ashes—

I forgot sentences like veins—

~~I forgot the Introduction as a permanent state—~~

I forgot gardenias were crushed for perfume
entrusted with cancelling midnights—

I forgot how the mountains of bones shared the
pallor of thick, white candles burning in
helplessly tin candelabras—

I forgot no metaphors exist for genocide—

I forgot how to italicize the word *God*—

I forgot how to long for rose petals yawning like
little girls, like the daughters I never bore—

I forgot possessing money for perfect hems
consoles like martyrdom—

I forgot my sympathy for tender hours—

I forgot that, sometimes, the world should be
veiled—

I forgot the starving Arab boy who wove a rug
now hanging above the Spanish Queen's
bed—

I forgot the damp eyes were mine—

I forgot that if you call an island “Isla Mujeres,”
half of the population will be anguished—

I forgot the glimpse of eternity in black
obsidian—

I forgot the sodden tissue balled up into a
small, dead bird—

I forgot the unreasonable ghosts of unicorns—

I forgot a complexion forged from miles and
miles of bad and bad roads—

I forgot how to heal face blindness by
introducing context—

I forgot the violet bruise from a rifle's
intimacy—

I forgot your fingers reaching to caress the
hollows formed when my knees bent—

I forgot a girl shrieking as her swing soared
towards a boiling sky—

I forgot belting my jeans with a used halo—

I forgot a pedestal bloodied by what who leapt
from it—

I forgot envying the thorns—

I forgot the marrow and murmurs melting into
soup—

I forgot the revolt of the minor key—

I forgot exodus—

I forgot the mother snapped the umbilical cord
with her teeth, strapped the newborn to her
back, then picked up the scythe—

I forgot deathbeds where eyes take on an
ascetic's gleam of ecstasy—

I forgot the Carrara defiled until a nude woman
emerged—her magnificent breasts paled
against the blank gaze of her stone eyes—

I forgot baby priests turning away to cast
profiles forsworn to Donatello—

I forgot to nurture salvation's seedlings—

I forgot minarets growing within muddy
whirlpools—

I forgot how the abbess gambled to house
refugees while the Adriatic sighed and sighed

...

I forgot the hollow man in a basement
collecting water as it dropped from a corroded
hole—

I forgot the dank air around a man, belt
wrapped around one arm, heating a spoon with
“liquid”—

I forgot the row of prone people on the remains
of mattresses—

I forgot the world going up in smoke and
coming down like rain—

I forgot injected air bubbles—

I forgot I knew better than to display flinch—

I forgot instructing saliva to wait—

I forgot boats burning where fire bloomed roses
in the middle of an ocean—

I forgot a dungeon's red velvet chair crashing
to its side so that our pens would mate—

I forgot the Spanish guitar never wanted dawn
to arrive without glass goblets shattering—

I forgot my father is not Hermann Wilhelm
Goering of Germany—

I forgot a child will crayon to form a heart—

I forgot my father is not Heinrich Himmler of
Germany—

I forgot flamenco will stomp the floor to form a
heart—

I forgot my father is not Adolf Hitler of
Germany—

I forgot Vincent Romero, sweat, marijuana,
oranges, cloves and the fall of blue-black
hair—

I forgot the killer nicknamed “Bullet” for his bald
head and thick neck, all smooth except where
puckered a scar documenting the flight of a
gunshot—

I forgot El Gitano ripped his shirt—

I forgot she clawed her cheeks—

I forgot draping black velvet over the sun—

I forgot a woman shrouded herself in white
linen—a poem invisible but stubbornly
transparent until flesh became stone.

I forgot that the moving prop of clouds can fail
to soften the edges of dark architecture—

I forgot the sun revealed it sips wine as it
sets—

I forgot paint can transform canvas to skin. I forgot that when the paint can is empty, only then will innocence reveal itself—

I forgot we agreed to toss away the blindfold so that our ears can become more than holes for burning stones tossed our way by a cruel race—

I forgot the blossoming of desk lamps—

I forgot I wanted to make memories, not simply
press petals between pages of expendable
books—

I forgot a plea to be buried under a canopy of
red roses—

I forgot how, sweetly, you offered eggplant—its skin made palatable through much prior bruising. I remember *you*, Philip Lamantia—

I forgot my birth language Ilokano: *maysa, duwa, tallo, upat, lima, inem, pito, walo, siam, sangapulo...*

I forgot the crushing tune that worked
Baudelaire to the bone—

I forgot waiting by grimy hotel glass, peeking
through hair, fingering lace sleeves, envying
the lobby's silk flowers for their inability to
feel—

I forgot how the ellipsis hides, elides, gives up
...

I forgot looking at glass and not seeing its
transparency—

I forgot wondering if sweat can ever be
dishonest—

I forgot the relief of witnessing a smile—

I forgot I never knew the words to a poem
etched beneath the exact center of the
Vatican—

I forgot nothing about Albius Tibullus whose
poems lurched their way into non-existence,
though Quintilian considered him the best poet
of the Roman empire—

I forgot the excavation of Anonymous whose
bones outlined a fetal position—

I forgot I saw a city bleeding beyond the
window and felt Manila's infamously red sunset
staining street children whose hopes
concerned absolutely no one—

I forgot I was happy with your hand on my
waist as you sought the scent hollowing my
throat—

I forgot a bolt of cream linen turning crimson
along the edges touching the floor—

I forgot true love is never chaste—

I forgot silk: how the departing slide away from
his skin was the only consolation even as it
created what would need to be consoled—

I forgot that sometimes I caught your eyes
before your mask would surface and your
eyes, sometimes, were sad—

I forgot anthologies of glass—

I forgot that equanimity is the opposite of all
that you taught—

I forgot Rodin drawing women taking their
“melancholy pleasure” in front of him—

I forgot shaking the wrist of the man with no hands—

I forgot a strand of hair hearkening a welt—

I forgot the advantage of an ignored
chandelier—

AN AFTERWORD

My recent work, "Murder, Death and Resurrection" (MDR), includes an MDR Poetry Generator that brings together much of my poetics and poet ics. The MDR Poetry Generator contains a data base of 1,146 lines which can be combined randomly to make a large number of poems; the shortest would be a couplet and the longest would be a poem of 1,146 lines. *I FORGOT LIGHT BURNS* is the second poetry collection to emanate from the MDR Poetry Generator; the first, *44 RESURRECTIONS*, was e-published in 2014 by PostModernPoetry E-Ratio Editions and is available at <http://www.eratiopostmodernpoetry.com/pdfs/44Resurrections.pdf>.

The MDR Poetry Generator's conceit is that any combination of its 1,146 lines succeed in creating a poem. Thus, I can create—generate—new poems unthinkingly from its database. For example, I created several of the poems in *44 RESURRECTIONS* by blindly pointing at lines on a print-out to combine. While the poems cohere partly by the scaffolding of beginning each line with the phrase "I forgot..." (a tactic inspired by reading Tom Beckett's fabulous poem "I Forgot" in his book *DIPSTICK (DIPTYCH)*), these poems reflect long-held interests in abstract and cubist language. Through my perceptions of abstraction and cubism, I've written poems whose lines are not fixed in order and, indeed, can be reordered (as a newbie poet, I was very interested in the prose poem form and in writing paragraphs that can be reordered within the poem).

Yet while the MDR Poetry Generator presents poems not generated through conscious personal

preferences, the results are not distanced from the author: I created the 1,146 lines from reading through 27 previously-published poetry collections—the title's references to murder, death and resurrection reflect the idea of putting to death the prior work, only to resurrect them into something new: sometimes, creation first requires destruction. But if randomness is the operating system for new poems (i.e. the lines can be combined at random to make new poems), these new poems nonetheless contain all the personal involvement—and love!—that went into the writing of its lines. The results dislocate without eliminating authorship.

The math is over my head for calculating the number of poems (in math, permutations) possible from these 1,146 lines. I asked my son's high school math tutor, Carl Ericson, to calculate it for me. Carl used an approximation formula to answer my question and approximated that the total poems possible to be generated by the MDR Poetry Generator is a number that has 3,011 digits. To date, with the two poems in *I FORGOT LIGHT BURNS*, I've written—rather, the MDR Poetry Generator has generated—130 poems. We're just beginning: may they provide enjoyable reading.

—Eileen R. Tabios
January 26, 2015

Books/E-Books Available from Moria Books

- Jordan Stempleman's *Their Fields* (2005)
Donna Kuhn's *Not Having an Idea* (2005)
Eileen R. Tabios's *Post Bling Bling* (2005)
Anny Ballardini's *Opening and Closing Numbers* (2005)
Garin Cycholl's *Nightbirds* (2006)
Lars Palm's *Mindfulness* (2006)
Mark Young's *from Series Magritte* (2006)
Francis Raven's *Cooking with Organizational Structures* (2006)
Raymond Bianchi's *American Master* (2006)
Clayton Couch's *Letters of Resignation* (2006)
Thomas Fink's *No Appointment Necessary* (2006)
Catherine Daly's *Paper Craft* (2006)
Amy Trussell's *Meteorite Dealers* (2007)
Charles A. Perrone's *Six Seven* (2008)
Charles Freeland's *Furiant, Not Polka* (2008)
Mark Young's *More from Series Magritte* (2009)
Ed Baker's *Goodnight* (2009)
Rob McLennan's *Kate Street* (2010)
David Huntsperger's *Postindustrial Folktales* (2010)
Gautam Verma's *The Opacity Of Frosted Glass* (2011)
rob mclennan's *Kate Street* (2011)
Garin Cycholl's *The Bonegatherer* (2011)
j/j hastain's *autobiography of my gender* (2011)
Kristina Marie Darling's *narrative (dis)continuities: prose experiments by younger american writers* (2013)
Jay Besemer's *A New Territory Sought* (2013)
Joel Chace's *One Wed* (2014)
Garin Cycholl's *Horse Country* (2014)
Eileen Tabios' *I Forgot Light Burns* (2015)

The e-books/books can be found at
<http://www.moriapoetry.com>.

POETRY

Eileen R. Tabios loves books, and has released more than 20 print, five electronic and one CD poetry collections; an art essay collection; a “collected novels” book; a poetry essay/interview anthology; a short story collection; and an experimental biography. *I Forogt Light Burns* is her 28th poetry collection. She has also exhibited visual art and visual poetry in the United States and Asia. Recipient of the Philippines’ National Book Award for Poetry for her first poetry collection, she has crafted an award-winning body of work that is unique for melding ekphrasis with transcolonialism. Her poems have been translated into Spanish, Italian, Tagalog, Japanese, Portuguese, Polish, Greek, computer-generated hybrid languages, Paintings, Video, Drawings, Visual Poetry, Mixed Media Collages, Kali Martial Arts, Music, Modern Dance and Sculpture. She also has edited, co-edited or conceptualized ten anthologies of poetry, fiction and essays in addition to serving as editor or guest editor for various literary journals. She maintains a bibliophilic blog, “Eileen Verbs Books”; edits Galatea Resurrects, a popular poetry review; steers the literary and arts publisher Meritage Press; and frequently curates thematic online poetry projects including LinkedIn Poetry Recommendations (a recommended list of contemporary poetry books). More information is available at <http://eileenrtabios.com>



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ISBN 9780991212132



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