

A Brief History on Poetry In My Life

I mourn what could have been the inspiring lullaby of poetry caroling at the church of my childhood memories. Instead what echoes today is a choir of Catholic nuns chanting a desecration of the English language. They sing with a foreign accent so chipped and hacked that it leaves scars on the skin of my love for poetry and the English language. All of it stemming from a turbulent economic environment at my long dead Saint Aedan school.

I don't know if the school couldn't pay its teachers, or if it chose to fire every one at the same time. The latter sounds stupid, but NOT to be minimized as a possibility. After all, they allowed a group of children to remain unsupervised for the entire day during a massive walk-out protest. If this massive Usually, protests temporary, and easily until some mutual accord is made, but not this one. This became the protest of no-return. The teachers left everything behind, gradebooks, exams, sweaters, desk accessories. Perhaps some took a dash of guilt on the way out. I remember my teacher crying just moments before she left us

As I saw this massive riot unfolding, The question was, Am I happy or am I sad sitting here alone with my classmates as my teacher rushes off crying? It was simple: Yes. I was happy seeing my oppressive teacher run off crying. How many tears has she wrought with the simple letter F. How many brutal beatings did she inspire from violent inept parents looking for ways to displace their aggressions based on one mistake? This was a victory in the battle for childhood independence without guns or knives. It was an impossible battle where only God is on your side.

After the tyranny dissolved, teachers left a new tyranny formed, it was

The school's resolve was slow. Substitutes took control as babysitters, rather than educators, until, at last, all of the missing teachers were replaced with nuns imported from the Philippines. Since priests and nuns are bound to a life of poverty, it made them perfect candidates for a teaching position at my school. All seemed to run as it did before the great economic collapse.

Somewhere in 7th grade, reading and writing became a major extracurricular activity in my life. The English pedagogy at school was simply staring at us while we stared at a vocabulary book, and silencing us if we dared move our heads. Sneezing was unacceptable behavior too.

It was a miserable experience because literature could be more than a strict staredown with a vocabulary book for thirty minutes. I still remember some of the most exciting moments reading the R.L. Stine Goosebump series. Reading also gave me some independence at home. My parents assumed I needed solitude to read my books and so they did less to hassle me on trifles. My parents knew little English and did their best to invest in expanding my interest in literature by buying me packages like Hooked on Phonics.

Eighth grade at last, and with it came a shift in the English curriculum. Perhaps it was due to orders trickling down from Bill Clinton's education policies, demanding new, better, perhaps even untenable standards. The nuns, once rigid in their instruction, now sought to pronounce and teach us to read poetry with modern finesse. Poets like Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Alexander Pope were introduced crudely. When the material became too complex, they called upon the vice principal to command the class. And when that proved insufficient, they fused religion with English together, assigning us passages from the King James Bible to read and write about. It likely explains why my writing carries a 17th-century flavor. Anyone who read Robinson Crusoe or David Copperfield will understand my ancient form of writing. Sometimes, when I speak to myself, a British accent unexpectedly emerges, like the voice of some long-dead British gentleman.

This entire backdrop is important to set the stage for today. As I said in the beginning, all from my past echoes the voices today.

Mellifluous

A single mispronunciation is no one's fault. Hideous words like “phlegmatic,” exist, which causes the opposite sentiment of its own meaning to native speakers, or the word “colloquialism” which should only be used sparingly and never colloquially. But, in the case of nuns, every single word fumbling out of their mouths was a poor attempt at pronunciation.

These nuns of my childhood shamelessly misled us into believing that theirs was the correct pronunciation. Students were expected to learn a word to the point of perfection and anything less led to the unsheathing of the bloody red-inked pen of failure. To think, a child felt compelled to teach an English teacher English, but fell silent by an unmerited respect. I see now, the plight was not just to teach, but to summon an earlier centuries' Catholic pedagogy of whooping tail. There was more than one correction to be done, one of the tongue and one of conscience.

In retrospect, this is my first encounter with trauma. Clusters of dark chatter amidst meaninglessness, foreign fragments of Tagalog and broken English. incoherence over years is torture. Sadly, it inspired me to enjoy math as a child. It became my favorite subject because it was more visual than auditory.

There are blackouts in the cradle of my childhood. More than half of my classmates were Filipino, so they were likely indifferent to the babble, but not to me. All of this violence led me to something I call post-traumatic speech disorder manifesting itself at the sight of every new word. I dare not look at the number of words in the dictionary. My soul won't bear the sound of the number.

But perhaps I'm being harsh. Everyone had a teacher with some accent, how dare I exhibit hatred or xenophobia in my lamentations. I am the problem.

*Halas*¹ dear reader, I am not composed of hate. I am merely a reflection of truth whenever it is clearest, and it is clearer now than in my childhood. This image of truth would be invisible if it weren't so foolishly the case that a non-English speaker was teaching an English speaker to speak English. To be an authority of language words should flow from the tongue with mellifluous harmony. Knowing the word mellifluous and pronouncing it might only be the only standard for teaching English. No one should be entrusted with teaching English if they fail to pronounce the word mellifluous. Surely, there are harder words to pronounce but this word's meaning has a purpose too. Mellifluous means sweet, musical, and pleasant to hear. Reflecting on the word in relation to one's skill in English should leave an impression on the conscience without much introspection—especially on nuns who should avoid any transgressions against the innocent minds of the sacred child. These nuns could never have pronounced mellifluous. Never. Ever.

Not even in the perfect afterlife. Exhibiting certain brilliant types of poetry to children should not be left to any fool. It's the equivalent of letting a butcher do surgery on your heart. If not in person, you can see then television or the internet. One of my favorite poems, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, written by Robert Dwyer Joyce is a perfect example of what a poem can be when voiced by the qualified soul. I am providing a link below to Lisa Gerrard's recitation. The poem is about war between the people of Ireland and Britain with the common but ever-inspiring concepts of the tragedy of war. Barley was the food the hungry and independence-starved Irishmen carried with them on the fields. The food has metaphorical value in the violence. I prefer not to ruin it by saying too much. To me, the poem is a slight spiritual influence or a reinforcing coincidence that sways me to the front line of the underdog in almost all cases of conflict. In the Gaza genocide, for example, I will never be able to empathize with Israel. It's impossible. The people of Ireland also walk hand in hand with the Gazans. The sound of a beloved poem is louder than any bomb being dropped.

Here is a link to the poem read by Lisa Gerrard:

¹ The word No in Arabic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5-LevCAjRQ>

In a critique of my character, one might ask why I enjoy poetry that sounds like it's meant for ailing, beaten, and broken-hearted women. The reason is that it somehow acts as an antigen to the virulent spit attached to every word echoing from the nun's mouth. How aura-shattering would it be if Lisa Gerrard read a poem in grade school. Oh how my passion for reading and writing might have multiplied. I'd have poetry bursting out of every nook of my bookshelves and notebooks. My parents would go bankrupt from all the paper being used for inspiration. To the nuns, hopefully, a graceful abdication of poor services rendered, if not they would implode from their bad conscience.

Maybe I beg too much for a voice like Lisa Gerrard in my poetic atmosphere, maybe I can forgive and embrace mediocrity in quality and passion, but to hire someone so antipodal to the art at a spiritual level is a fatal failure. The moment a nun "Marries the Lord," she becomes impregnable by any spirit of a poet in the summoning realm. Poetry is fundamentally heretical in the eyes of fundamentalist Christians because the body must be inhabited by spirits other than just one or three. It depends on who you ask. Masters of poetry must be capable of summoning the spirit of the poet no matter their spectral residence, be it heaven, hell or purgatory. A true poet's voice must serve as a conduit between the living and the dead, invoking not just the poet's soul but the poem's heresy also known many as the truth. One must temporarily dispossess his or her soul until the last period of the last stanza of the poem is complete.

On the Poetic Neurosis

A fundamental quality of a poet is the ability to dispel scientific knowledge while expression calls, or a natural ignorance of science might also . I'm not using ignorance as a pejorative. As a teenager I knew little of psychology or medicine, the madness you see in Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Raven' or 'The Black Cat' was simply a sick broken mind—an icky illness wrapping at the chamber door, only this, and nothing more. Mental Illness was a deplorable and ignorantly a leprosy-like contagion, but Poe gave an elegance to madness. Before knowing medical terms like schizophrenia, bipolar, and mental illness the character of a person no matter his madness had its value in art and inspiration.

Imagine if we took madness as something like cancer. Being young and ignorant of scientific truth, gave Poe's work more room to work in the parts of the brain that were slightly less mature, more naive, and fertile with impressionability. Today I believe horror is a little more beautiful to me because it has an origin in poetry. This goes for terrible horror movies. Anything with an origin in poetry gives in extra depth that it lacks. If someone else had a disposition to enjoy the works of Poe, maybe they too see the elegance I see.

I will say my ignorance was key to being with Poe's work. I'm sure he was too. Is it possible now with everything I know? No. Unfortunately no. Can I become a poetic spirit like those I require of the poetry elite? No. But maybe others can. I truly am not worthy.

It might also be an introduction to their own personalities. I believe there is a tragedy in my life, and I am not alone, but not common either. To find someone else with a similar taste is a rare connection.

In the

Melancholy My Love

Intentional Desecration of Poetry

In my previous essay, I admonished the destruction of poetry by the failure of the teacher, performer, and spirit. Knowing well the enemy I am intentionally destroying this creation by revealing the essence of this work before the great exposé. I am in some equivalence teaching psychology of the works below. How ruinous! How masochistic! How evil! And yet, that is precisely how I've chosen to begin my poem.

For the sake of desecration, I maim this creation. I am filing the teeth of the monster.

I warn you now. The poem below must not feel foreign to you. It must not stick to you like a virus from some poorly skinned Pangolin hanging on a meat hook in an exotic food market. You should have been vaccinated against *Tragoedia Viruliferous* long before today. A sickness of the spirit composed of decay, false hope, and the sound of suffering. You must be strong enough to say, "I remember this, I have felt this, and I have overcome." If not, a rot will manifest where the only cure is pure love. It must triumph and devour like a superhuman white blood cell. All mercy to the reader.

But I worry little if you are spirited like my Sens, because I have felt true love radiating from each of them. They carry a sacrosanct form of love from the joy of fatherhood and the love in marriage. I designate it "Sen love," I feel it to be a new compound, something of a martyr's love, and a vague 21st century essence of reincarnation. To die and to be born again, but younger with a new body, face, and soul. Not so much one's own face. As deep in the word "I" there is no longer an image

of the self. In the mirror, instead, is the reflection of those you love. Something others can't see.

Moreover, for a poem to move people of love, it must be a matter of love. One must fall upon it like a flower. Not just any flower. It should be a flower blooming out of an icy slab of concrete.

My Use of Latin and Other Languages

My use of Latin in writing is an ode to Schopenhauer's essay on the study of Latin. He wrote, "It is only by learning to write Latin that a man comes to treat diction as an art. The material in this art is language, which must therefore be handled with the greatest care and delicacy." Indeed, it feels like some words in Latin were orchestrated from the beginning to chain a future of knowledge in musical strings. Anyone slightly more ignorant than me would reckon Latin was created by a god, in the same way he created the impossibly intricate eyeball on earth.

Also there is some Spanish mixed into the poem. I'm using some words my aunt said to me as she was dying that will stick forever. "Yo Quiero Morir."

I added translations in the footnotes

The Sound of Her Tears

Trap the liquescentia of the soul's broken heart.

Listen to her closely and a song she will impart.

At first, a gagging breath, pain's lullaby.

But wait for the tune of the opening cry

Many recoil each following tempo,

Escaping the tune of this holy memento.

But, O what a song if you are willing to kiss.

Kiss *belle dolor* on her salty wet lips.

From one moan alone, among these you will hear–

*Luctus*² Sonata, *Miseriae*³ Toccata, or *Valse Di Yo Quiero Morir*⁴

The grand symphony everyone fears

Is the sound of pure suffering

The sound of her tears

By Hamdy El-Shamy

² Mourning in Latin

³ Misery in Latin

⁴ Waltz of I want to die in Spanish

February

“Ha-hoo-hooly-jeez it’s cold out here,” Joseph grumbles while shuffling around the front door of his old brownstone apartment.

He takes a deep breath and cringes as the aroma of his apartment reminds him of an old Irish bar after a ceremonious night on St. Patrick’s Day.

Joseph quickly slams the door embarrassed by his unkempt apartment.

“It’s not like I gotta girl or nothin.” Joseph sighs. He quickly e slaps his coat pockets waiting to hear his jingling keys. Find it deeply stuck his large furry peacoat pocket and lifts his key to lock the door, but his cold trembling hand shivers as he turns to lock.

“February is the worst,” Joseph says to himself, shaking off more of the cold.

A gray fog creeps into the block, Joseph blows a puff of air from his chest and a small cloudy vapor forms. He walks through the small round mist towards his car.

“That lil breath could be a billion times bigger, lookin’ down on me like a giant fluffy cotton ball with the warm sunlight floating by its side. I could be lyin’ down on white sands on the clear water of Florida’s beaches. These cold ass feet. instead, I’d be coolin’ small crystal sands. And they’d be ticklin ma feet too.”

Joseph carefully tippy-hops over slippery ice patches towards his parking from one iceless cobblestone to the next, through the parking space at the side of his building. He pulls out the remote key for his Honda Civic to unlock the door, but the remote fails to beep. He presses it over three more times, but the car refuses to unlock.

“Maybe the key needs a new battery or somethin” Joseph mutters to himself before stepping toward the car.

His fingers, raw from the cold, fumbles the key around as he jammed it into the frozen lock. Ice resisted, packed tight inside the keyhole. He grits his teeth, wiggling and jiggling, forcing the key deeper into the keyhole.

“Come on, you piece a shit...”

With a sharp twist and a shove, the ice cracks, the lock finally gives way with a reluctant click.

“Finally.” He shakes his icy wet hands. As he unlocks the door.

“Door’s stuck too God damn it, Was it that bad yesterday?”

Joseph heaves the door open from the handle finally forcing the door open, he plops onto the car seat. Rubbing his cold hands together. Joseph gives out a sigh of relief He sticks the key of wet trembling hands into the ignition and turns it to start the car engine. It makes a whizzing, clacking, sound unlike a typical failing engine. The second time it just screeches out as though car was in pain..

“No God please!” Says Joseph as he takes another turn at the ignition while slamming his feet against the accelerator pedal. The car makes no sound.

“I can’t believe this.” he lets out a laugh of frustration.

Joseph starts slamming the palm of his hands on his steering wheel.

“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!.” He slams the wheel until the red of bruising covers his hands in pain.

After slamming his head he starts gazing at the sky.

What’s stoppin’ me? Why the fuck, would anyone live in the cold anymore? “It doesn’t make sense. there are air conditioners if it gets too hot. ”

Joseph pulls out his phone, calls out for Siri.

“Hey Siri.” Joseph trembles chattering his teeth

“Why would anyone in the hell wanna live in this hellhole refrigerator known as New Jersey..”

“Good Question Joseph. New Jersey, also known as the garden state, is known for its beautiful beaches, delicious pizza and vast canvss of flowers.”

Joseph laughs.

“Hah, Yea we got beaches, but only for three months out the year, then it’s cold as ice. The garden state?

Hah! Flowers! Joseph turns to the vast gray and crooked cracked cemented streets, old rusty unused industrial buildings decorate the skyline giving it an abandoned look.

What else Siri?

They are also known for their Pizza.

Hah! Yea. When you’re a kid, a nice oily soggy pizza is great.

Joseph grabs his gut.

Not when you got cholesterol floatin in your blood stream. ready to

“But not me. Am I right or am I right Siri.”

“Yes. You are Right Joseph.” Siri responds with her soothing digital voice.

Joseph glances at his smartwatch.

“Great, late for work.”

Joseph pulls out his smartphone, swiping through the images of bus and train schedules he keeps in cases like these.

Joesph steps out of his car, kicks the door open preparing to steps toward the Hoboken train station.

“He looks at his watch.”

So if I take the 9 am, I’ll be two hours late.

“Damn it.”

No wait a minute.

Joseph gets an idea.

Theres that scooter app thing I never used. ”

“Hold on, wait a minute.”

“There’s the taxi app where they pick you up and drop you off. What was it Scooter. Rooter.

“Siri, what’s that app people used to rode around cheap.”

“Uber is known as a popular ride service...

Joseph snaps his fingers.

“Uber, that’s right.”

Joseph quickly scrolls through the app store to download the app on his phone.

“Why’s the internet so damn slow?”

Joseph squints at the top of the screen.

“No bars, great. Joseph looks around.

“I guess I’ll just go back home.”

Joseph jumps out of the car, slams the door and rushes towards his apartment while staring at his phone.

When hears a loud smack.

A black hazy starry darkness knocks him unconscious.

Joseph slipped on a puddle of ice in his

He felt small bits of snow tickle his cold red nose.

As he painfully rose from the ground Joseph woke up dazed the stream of blood forming a from his head streaming on the the fluffy white snow.

“Ishit.”

the blood is covering for a head cut covers the light snow that

“fucking shit.”

Joseph creeps towards his phone hoping minimal.

Joseph looks up at the sky.

“Oh God if you’re up there. Please save my phone.”

Joseph picks up the phone slowly, turns and smiles.

“please.”

“as he turns his phone over a small glass pice of the screen cracks off.

The phone is mangled was sliced and cracked into pieces as though it was shattered by a hammer.

Joseph’s eyes swell, a hint of tear forms out of frustration. He wipes it dry then looks up at the sky.

“Fuck You” he flips his middle finger at the sky.

Right before trudging back towards his apartment.

“While I’m at it, Fuck you for February too.

Joseph carefully treads back to his apartment.

“I’m going to Florida.”

Moral of the story: Sometimes it takes a. knock in the noggin to do what’s best for you.

“It can’t be.” He pulls his thumb sticks it up into the air.

A flower?”

“A flower reaching out concrete” slab