

色
死
蝉
诗

Songs
about
Sex,
Death
& Cicadas

Andrew Grimes Griffin

"and yet a god's not only won
by the slaughter of a hundred bulls:
a pinch of incense will do."
— Ovid, *Tristia: Book II*, tr. by Peter Green

Caveat Lector:

As my fiftieth birthday approached, I began to pour over notebooks and journals, some going back as far as 25 years, in an attempt to make some sense out of what has happened in the past decade. As you will see, should you chose to read what follows, I have failed.

If your idea of a good time is wandering through graveyards, indulging in fantasies of the flesh, and consulting entrails, please feel free to continue. If, however, you are drawn to more wholesome pursuits, perhaps this short collection of poetry is not for you.

A brief explanation about the dedications: since many of the poems are inspired by men I met on the Internet for sex, if a dedication is in italics then it is either his online nickname, or the name of a literary figure. If the dedication is non-italicized, it is that person's real name. All dedications are made without permission, whatever combination of cyber, literary, living and/or dead the person may be.

March 2011

Remaindered

for Bob Read, died Nov 1, 2000

乾称父，坤称母，予兹藐焉，乃混然中处

Heaven is father, Earth is mother, I this tiny being,
am mixed in the midst of it all.

《西铭》张载/ from "Western Inscription" by Zhang Zai

Now that you've been dead
These ten long years,
I think it's time we talked,
You cock-mad boy,
Wild for the touch of men,
Your lust for life
Burned you alive,
Leaving us to warm ourselves
Over your ashes,
On your half-remembered graces,
Leaving us to attempt alone
Our awkward waltzes.
I've made so many missteps
I could complain
It is hard to move gracefully
With one foot in the grave,
Yet you did it,
Made your dance to the graveyard
So uniquely your own,
Knowing
The sky is your father,
The earth is your mother,
And even at the very end,
As you so reluctantly left,
The universe enfolded you,
Somewhere in the small corners
Of the chaos called our hearts.

In My Garden

(for robhair & hairyluvr, nods to Zhuangzi)

flowers bloom shameless--
perfumed for promiscuous
honeybee threesomes -- endless

cross pollination
seeds breezes with the teasing
gossip of songbird voyeurs

cicadas chanting
electrify the treetops --
deep roots caressed by earthworms

the koi pond dries up
the fish gather together
in the muddiness and slime

Moisten each other
with precious spit -- splatter foam
to keep one and all alive

Random Sky

Blue witness to dreams
Beauty descends at random
A storm of petals
Surprises a passer-by
Like spring birdsong

The Seasons

The March snows will melt,
Leaving only what is gray and full of grief,
To be replaced by tree tops, green leaves
Whispering in the spring breeze
About long-lost friends
And the sorrow of things,
Hot summer sun quickly will
Burn off the morning dew,
Just as somewhere the sobbing cicada –
Who knows nothing of spring's thrill –
Or autumn's decline – sounds shrill,
Piercing as the mid-winter wind.

Anglo-Hiberno-Japonica

it's true, Jack Spicer,
I never knew you, which is
definitely for the best

you lie in your grave
and I know only music
from the coldness of your lips

Ó! go maire tú
is go gcaithe tú iad
long may you live to wear them

your short-sleeved shirts
I chose one from your wardrobe
you died, I'm wearing it now

decapitated
by low-hanging mist, the city
the mountain, its crowning cross

slowly dissolving
everything familiar
hidden, questioned or obscured

go mbeirimid beo
ar an am seo arís, Ó!
may we be alive next year

autumn leaves falling
tracing spirals to the ground
but they are already dead

no pleasure for them
In gyration, it's just us
entranced by their danse macabre

sláinte chuig na fir
go maire na mná go deo
for all the men — health
the women — eternal life

An Old Hag Talks to the Fairies
(Cailleach ag caint leis na Daoine Maithe)

Ar mhullach an tí tá sióga gealla
Fá chaoín ré an earraigh ag imirt a spóirt

On the rooftop the bright fairies
Play and sport in Spring's mild moonlight
Irate, the old hag of the house
Berates them for making such a row
The Good People retort:

"Seothín Seo Hó, nach mór é an taitneamh,"
Which is to say:

"Isn't it a great joy that
You are a blossom of bones,
Petals of flesh peel away
To reveal your skull –
a moon orchid of ivory –
bleached by the kiss
Of time's bright red lips."

The old hag merely shakes her fist,
"Ní bhfaighfidh sibh mo mhealladh,
Le brí bhur gcleas ná le binneas bhur gceoil,"
And thus she did scold:

"Foolish Fairies, May the Devil take you!
For you won't entice me
With the cleverness of your tricks,
Or the sweetness of your music,
Or the wild gyrations of your hips."

The fairies laughing flee, saying as they go,
"Seothín Seo Hó, go n-éirí do chodladh leat,"
By which they mean:

"Off to bed with you now, dear,
And may the dark worms
Gnaw not your dreams
Of beauty and youth,
That we will have always
But to you will never return."

Dinosaurs

Let's say, for the sake of argument,
All good dogs do go to Heaven.
If dogs, why not dinosaurs?
This would mean
Heaven is full of T-Rexes,
Just like Jurassic Park,
Oooh! Scary!
And don't give me any of that
The lamb shall lie down with the lion
Bullshit, been there already,
Got up missing a few chunks.
So, considering the dinosaurs have had
A couple of hundred million years
Of heavenly hunting,
Or six thousand years at the very least,
Then they've already eaten everything,
And everyone in sight.
They are going to be hungry - very hungry.
Unless, of course, vegetarian morals
Have carried the day,
Then the meat eaters are in hell,
If it's a choice between rapacious raptors,
Or holier-than-thou vegans.
I don't know about you,
But I know where I'm going.

Curtain Call

Just because the stones are silent,
Do not think
They are unmoved
By the show —
So tragic, such a scream!
As with all performances,
Both actor and audience
Always quit the scene,
Leaving the
 — Empty —
 Stage behind.
We humans, little infants, thinking
The room disappears each time
We turn around, close the door.
And even though the earth is solid
We tip-toe so gently upon it
Like mice in a deserted home.

Mythical Creature

(for Route042, nods to Zhuangzi)

How can such a creature exist,
One minute resting corpse-still,
The next all dragon-golden coiling mist,
How to speak to such a being,
One minute loud as thunderclaps,
The next silent as the abyss.

You insisted on dressing me,
While you remained beautifully naked:
"With these clothes on
You look nothing like you are
in bed, but it is not a lie,
not a disguise, it is a second skin. "

Travel Guide

*(for quieroculo, with nods to Federico Garcia Lorca
and Francisco De Quevedo)*

"They were prodigious interpreters
of the soul of the people,
and they destroyed their own hearts
in storms of feeling ...
bursting like enormous cicadas
after lacing our atmosphere with ideal rhythms."

I am my own Hell,
(And a martyr to myself)
So consider this a travel guide
To a place you do not want to go,
A place I am seeing
So that you do not have to.

A frog in a well
Knows nothing of rivers and seas,
His sky is small, circular, perfect,
His world is manageable and known,
Every morning swimming,
I think how nice it would be
If this rectangular pool of water,
Lit by skylights and maintained just-so,
Were the extent of my world,
And I had never left my well
To travel to the far side of the globe,
To a place completely alien in its familiarity.
Even in my hometown I play the tourist
Pretend it is my first time here,
Ask passers-by for directions
To places I've always known,
Request love, real estate tips, sex, guided tours:
On your right your childhood home,
Note how tall the maple trees have grown,
On your left the place where you first kissed a girl,
Remember when you used to kiss girls?

Yes, of course, there was that reason to leave,
To crawl up the slime covered stones,
To find sex and love by singing in swamps of night,
Only to discover they are but fleetingly connected.

The cicada cannot sing a winter song,
He knows nothing of autumn leaves,
Ice storms and the first flush of green,
He knows only heat and lust and song,
And heat and heat and heat,
We had to sit, having spent the day
Wandering the Dragongate Grottoes
With their 100, 000 Buddhas,
Some the size of a thumbnail,
Some four storeys high,
Carved 1,000 years ago
By order of victorious warlords,
All the while the cicadas sobbed,
But then as we rested they began
To fall lifeless around our feet,
Spent, silent in their final descent.

Even in the dead of winter
I feel nothing but summer heat
I cannot tell the difference
Between a blizzard and a thunderstorm,

I always end up sitting alone
Somewhere on a hot summer day,
Listening to the keening of the cicadas,
Those devotees of the Muses
Who starved themselves to death,
So overcome with love for beauty,
They simply forgot to eat,
The Muses, flattered,
(Shouldn't they have been horrified,
Repulsed, gotten a restraining order?)
Transformed their fatal fans into insects
Who would sing their praises eternally,

Feasting on nothing but the morning dew.
So I too sustain myself on ephemera:
News stories, YouTube videos,
Facebook chat and Internet cruising,
Sex with near-perfect strangers,
And somehow, I've never been happier,
This rarefied electronic diet,
Information-rich, commitment-free,
Seems to make everything clearer,
The whole fifty-year journey spread out,
A MapQuest of my heart,
Tracing lines, raised veins
On the arms of the last man who held me,
Remembering the path that led to him,
I start to rock back and forth,
My voice trembling,
My chest shredded with feeling,
Swelling
About to explode...

Song of Sodom

(for brooklyn)

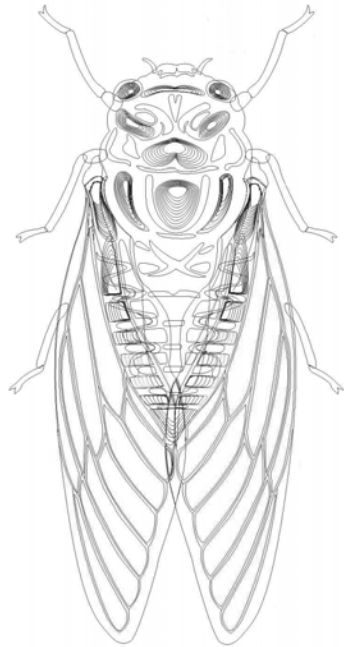
Cinnamon and shit,
Spit, sweat and cum,
Robust and fragrant,
The streets of Sodom.

And do not believe
What you may have read
In antiquated texts,
For Sodom is not dead.

Its streets Google-mapped,
GPS Grindr sexted,
Cyber porn palaced,
Vid cam infested.

The web electric,
An enjoyment of boys,
A madness of men,
Weaving muscles and bones.

Shit and cinnamon,
The streets of Sodom,
No angels or demons,
Just hard cocks and cum.



If You Are A Man

If you are a man
Who thinks that there is
Nothing special in
The red autumn light
"The moon is the moon
The same old phases."
Then you'd better have nothing
To do with me

If you are a man
Who does not believe
In poems, music,
Bright garments at night,
Who feels things do not
Look best by moonlight
Then you'd better have nothing
To do with me

If you are a man
Whose heart is only
An empty mirror
Colourless, closed tight,
Reflecting whatever,
Stands there in plain sight,
Then you'd better have nothing
To do with me

If you are a man,
However, who stands
Beneath a clouded moon
With lilacs in bloom,
Who brushes his lips
With morning's first dew
Then I'd like nothing better
Than a man like you,

Nothing better than
A bedewed, moonlit,
Shadow man like you.

Lucifugous

Strange how being naked dissolves
The illusion of our bodies,
Clothes like border guards
Deserting their posts.

Feeling him I think of you.

A memory as red as meat,
As vibrant as crickets,
Desire as simple, as keen
As the thing under childhood's bed,
 Waiting
To give kisses to the dream
That is our flesh,
 As translucent as jellyfish,
 As transient as tadpoles,
Evolving in the night.

My Jasmine Revolution

(for hot_time33, truevalues, doitno, letstart)

Jaffer

 Marwan

 Fadi

 Hamid

These are some of the beautiful men
Who gave me their kind words

 Hairy bodies

 Hard cocks

But not their hearts.

Their hearts are already taken, filled
With dreams of a freedom
They could not find in
Algeria

 Morocco

 Syria

 Egypt

Lands of heat and hidden
Pain left behind for

 Nordic days

 Long nights

 The warmth of

Foreign embraces.

Connections

(for BigJohn1)

The woman in the building across the way
Watched all day as he paced
Back and forth, now stopping, now starting,
Finally climbing
Onto the ledge of the balcony,
One tiny step and a few seconds of free fall
Took him out the world,
Fatally breaking
Your 20-odd year connection,
Thus began the Dark Times.

And when I found you,
You were 65 years old,
Grief had nearly killed you,
But in the end it had failed at the task,
Something else would have to do the job,
Because after you fucked me,
As I prepared to leave,
You kissed me and said:

"Being inside you makes me feel
Connected to the world again."

Bruised

(for montrealtop)

His body
Metal hard
Flower fragrant
Enfolds me

Petals all
Nicotine and purple
Bloom
Through my skin

Indelicate
Blood blossoms
Born more of
Teeth than lips

Slow fading
Ruptures
He forced
From within

Danced Shadow

Have you never gone
Alone into the dark woods,
Let crepuscular limbs muscular
Remove unnecessary clothing,
Danced shadow with men
Beneath dangerous trees?

We were the prematurely dead
Children in paradise,
Babes in the forest of night,
Waiting for instruction,
Or, at the very least, an intelligible sign,
Metatron, Metatron, where are you?
But none came, so we simply marvelled
At the vultures roosting in the branches,
So patient with our endless games.

Exegesis

If I never stopped talking,
Wrote all day, every day,
Still I would never be able
To express the torrent of words
This flesh-bound volume
Absorbs each time
I press against you -
The hard length of you - even
A simple kiss
 Rewrites the Qur'an,
Each striptease
 Reveals a Holy Scripture,
Every coupling
 Becomes a Sutra.

Other People's Fairytales

I am trapped in the fairytales other people tell,
"Grandma, what big teeth you have!"
"All the better to eat you with, my dear."
Really nasty ones with buckets of blood,
Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad,
Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One,
Full of imaginary monsters made real,
Ár n-athair, atá ar neamh: go naofar d'ainm,
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
Intended to frighten us like naughty children,
Allah-hu-akbar, Allah-hu-akbar
God is the greatest, God is the greatest.

""Little piggy, little piggy, let me come in."
"Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin."

Buddha, Life is a Cabaret

“吾未見好德，如好色者也。 / I have yet to see anyone
who loves virtue more than sex” — *Analects*, Confucius.

Buddha, you say

life is only a handful
of loose sand tightly held
in a closed fist
slowly let go

so what

Buddha, you say

the world passes away
we as in a dream are
connected but fleetingly
and not in fact

so what

Buddha, Life is a Cabaret

a few naked hours
embraced tightly
in each other's arms
is time and world

enough

Worms of Love

How could we not have known
My body pressing down on yours
Would smothering be
The grave's cold clay,
My hot kisses the caresses
Of a thousand lovelorn worms,
Each "I love you" and "baby",
One more tiny bite?

Bedtime Surgery

for C.S.

The zipper cleaves the cloth,
The scalpel cuts the skin,
Unlike surgeons, we could not
close the wounds we opened.

If I were to have dug
my fingers deep
into your chest ,
I would have felt your heart --
Straining -- against the intrusion.

For Want of Anything

Cigarettes like angels on fire
Dance endless across his lips, words
Fall like flower petals or autumn leaves:
Red.

Yellow.

Brown.

Then gray.

Until only bare branches remain,
Thin and painful reminders that love,
Like everything else, dies, mostly
For want of anything better to do.

Where and When Forever Began

(China, July 7, 2008)

The world wires my feelings

A cosmic project spanning

Thirteen billion years

Just so

I can feel always

The tears

Falling

Away

As you walk down

That summer lane

Leaving forever

Or the closest thing to it

Erasure

"今天天，斯昭昭之多

The Heaven now before us is only this bright shining spot"

I want to end in the middle

Of a wind-swept field

In a snowstorm cold and bright

Erased

Like a single dot

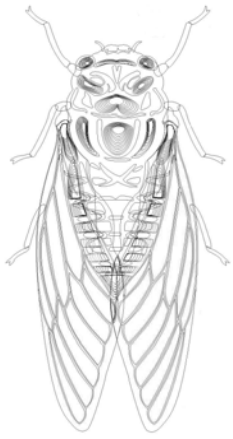
From

That which otherwise is

A Perfect

Pure

World



Exiles

For MKL Nanjing, PRC

"Exiles, what great suffering love forces on you!
How long will this madness last!"
The Romance of Tristan, Béroul

Our hearts a thousand screaming
Cicadas in the wutong trees
Of a hot Chinese summer

The weather channel says rain
Our love is hidden
On the far side of the world

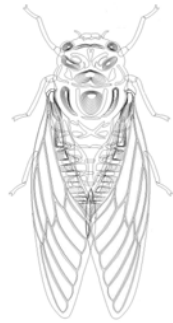
Our hearts a thunderstorm
Sweat on warm and wet
Love-stained lips

The weather channel says clear
Our love remains hidden
On the far side of the world

Our hearts not even death can
Now join twin static poles
Of an ever-changing globe

The weather channel says snow
Our loves lie hidden
On the far sides of the world

My heart a river of ice
Frozen with winds of absence
Everything cold white waiting



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(© is for cocksucker)

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