

Rachel West's
30 Poems
April 2015



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Dedication

Maybe I'll die without a tattoo
on my body.

It seems redundant
to give the soul so much decoration
when in my mother's womb I coalesced
out of purposeful lipids and sweets,
for no damn reason!

How funky is that?

We talk about death a lot,
like a missing dinner guest.
We all have lots of gossip
about death.

If I permit myself
a moment of sentiment,
I title a poem in honor
of fallen comrades
once again. Maybe this is the year
we all reform.

Daffodils are up--
Joseph and I
go from place to place
discussing how to break
a pathway through time.

Suddenly
it's a matter of enshrining
one most important thing.

The ghost of the day:
white serpent
in the sky
divulging the eye
of a star.

poem on different software

because today's the day
i empty the cache of habit
and stop depending upon
old operating systems.

metaphors can come from anywhere
and who am i to judge?

"Waiting For Approval..."

I have a distinct and measured
program which I guide you
through- each one-
I am an engine
making sound and heat.

Money. Words. The agony
of seeing and being seen-
my head is a crisis and a pilgrimage-
a crown, a ruin-
from miles around
things fly toward me.

"Be yourself," I say in voices
that seem to come from a verifiable world-
"but be better- why
is your self so different?
why is it so self-ish?"

Don't use those words!
You can build houses
in the mind- instantly
better things do
become possible.

Why describe
happiness
as numbness

or vice versa?

I am alive-
and in some incarnation
I must learn
to leave
without violence.

Easter Sunday

The dopaminergic action
of our shared life
has me hooked
on ever longer
afternoons in the sun,
naked naps, feast days,
eternally reduced work hours.

Away from you I get aches and pains,
racing thoughts—
Here by your side,
I write poetry.

There's a kind of outpouring
today— 72 degrees worth
of extra humanity.

People are outside, grilling, talking,
sitting on porches— I feel less unusual.

I'm asking myself: what will I remember
from this day?

This morning a friend talked
of slowing down time— and thank goodness,
because I had just forgotten about
some eggs I'd put on to boil.

tabs

a million things to do!
bread, coffee,
scented cleaners,
Cocteau Twins,
the world abounding--

while my game loads,
while the yeast rises,
i think about my job, grateful
to have something boring to do
once in awhile.

I Really Do This

And now I write the poem about
lying awake at night thinking about feminism
and true love-- the difficulty of loving
in truth, according
to my real endowments--

of building
within the old habitations (who can say
where they come from,
but it's all I know)

which constantly impress their shapes
on me so that I lie
within and under,
trembling--

"I just want to show you
something beautiful," I say--
or is it somewhere, away,
I want to go?

Without my glasses,
I can't tell
which bird it is.

A feather, an eye,
the color gold,
a hint of blue--

If I'd never worn glasses,
I'd have understood sooner
how subjective reality is.

On my computer,
I check the shipping status
of my new computer.

although bold cobaly descends everyday from god, humans ignore joy. kiss lemon mush
numbly, opining present questions. rifle safety turns up volumes while xeroxing
yellow zomes.

this is my third year complaining about this.

close. almost over. 3pm.
they'll pour out
onto the streets, having gained
nothing. why am I here?

chugging green tea like I'm
swimming to my grave--
elevators
stuffed with ugly beards.

A Piece Of Pottery I Made In College

Five inches high, a cylinder
decorated in blue--
underlay of what was probably
iron oxide,
brushed too thin.

This was when
we were given
simple pigments:
Cobalt. Iron. Zinc.

Before I said: I will learn
to extract things from the earth.

The lilac has always
been here.
I'm not denying anything
its aroma of infinity.

Seeing The Jay, I Seek Its Shadow

I am tempted
to fall asleep
under a tree,
my feet in full sun--

I hesitate,
already gone
into the sky--

today is just
another day--

wasps will attack us
if we try
to get into the shed.

I'm just here for another way of talking. I'm just here for a moment. Thinking so many things. Wanting freshness, not the ideas I had while standing in the library, thinking I must write a poem, like it's some grave responsibility, like it's a bin of grain to be sold--

unlike the rushing sands of some unsettled abstraction--

Yes, yes, repeat your precious private insights and sensations, report every conversation you have with God. The poet is like some metaphysical mole, always wearing a wire.

Well, everybody dies, why not choose this?

Betray anyone, but not God.

tonight i think i will drink a lot
did you miss it? the weather
was perfect just now.

The Lilac And The Record Sale
(on Mom's birthday)

Sitting behind your house
near the springtime lilac
I wonder why I bought
that Jefferson Starship album
(Winds Of Change).

Rain gathers overhead.
Nothing needs doing.
Milkweed catches in the lilac
and explodes. The neighbors' girl
is shrieking in the yard.

I could become invisible,
but there would be difficulty
coming back,
remixing my own brutish
beauty into something
passable for you all
to look upon with expectation

Assume for a moment
I am among you--
then let yourself forget.
Go ahead. It's like
stepping into a fairy ring

and nothing happens anymore--
we have solved it
with definitions.

Splendor

I will get myself a pastry
and sink into a soft red bed.

Let God say
what God knows.

I live by example.

[lost]

Words are the body of a thought--
in my life
I have forgotten some words

Still I am lodged in the same space
where even forgetfulness,
articulation, dissolution, all blend,

laughingly,
into something like a joke,
something like a poem without words.

I'm practicing
for the thinking exam.

It's timed.

They're looking for good thinkers
and I'm gonna be one.

I'll be sitting there
thinking through the cosmic backlog,
finally giving fair attention
to everything--

Naturally I will be
well paid.

Refunds

today things are growing--
fierce little continuations
peep through the hardpan
in my permanent earth--

music that seems to come
from the past and yet
crawls across the floor,
no longer seeking me--

i said i felt old--

oh but when you, my friend,
were only thirty two--
now i imagine that i know
how tender you were

old notebooks

what kind of stern soul
cohabitated with my childhood?
they started me
on query letters
just in case-- by the year 2000
i belonged to no one but my dreams.

Open Source

I close myself in and prepare to break
the remainder of my fast.
I have my tools at hand--
the saucer where my mind dwells
in liquid form-- a productivity app of sorts--

When the yolklake sun spills in its pursuit
of linear time, I have a backup.

Finally, a reason to change.

The abuses expose themselves
eventually, and great liberation
is the balance of the cycle.
If we all chip in.

I am only thinking
of two things today--

How I brought with me everything
I needed to start seeds
except the seeds--

The other subject was sex.

Porch, 2 Small Dogs, Present Moment

Flowering tree and gas station wine--
perfume of days. The small town
we flee to restores slow thoughts
that creep like spring-- lying in the sun
I worry and worry then rise up
singing. how will I break
these occupational chains, latched
to a writing desk, its ledger
too heavy to throw in the fire?

Page by page, perhaps, all record
of right and wrong may be expunged--
or written over.

This is a different sort of exercise.

Praxis

After not giving up,
what occurs?
The promise of the invisibility cloak--
The deep well--
The sudden cry--

In the distance,
a library is raised
and fortified.

I'm Not Ashamed

I'm an old-hand millennial
with a walletful of jokes.

I told my mom and dad
to give me
a thousand raindrenched springs.

Thus far I've only received
thirty or so.

if i could compose
something better than silence--
but i've never been able to do that.

nobody felt anything until
they played the right song.