

a forty-eight year old burglar from San Diego

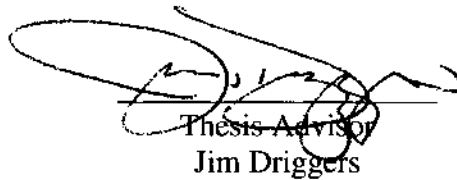
Senior Creative Writing Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For a Degree Bachelor of Arts with
A Major in Creative Writing at
The University of North Carolina at Asheville
Fall 2008

By *Jonathan Mickey*



Thesis Director
Lori Horvitz



Thesis Advisor
Jim Driggers

a forty-eight year old burglar from San Diego

Poems by Jonathan Mickey

18 Cantebri Asheville, NC 28806
704-458-9292
jpmickey@unca.edu

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table of burglaries

Rapture	2
My mother was nearly	3
My Fingernails	4
I did a line	5
Poems about me and other people	6
***Bad Posture	6
Maddy	7
Sadie	8
me or something	9
Found poem: Luis (taking a shit reading national geographic)	10
I have never been	11
Swimming Lessons	12
The last resort	13
Large Fries	14
Poem to young brother as children couldn't sleep	15
In a winter where whispers	16
Ass Bags	17
Seasonal dirty work	19
Once there was a very pretty	20
Kerouac attack	21
Tribute	22
Picture	23
1 and 2	24
Laundry mat poems (reading Cynthia Ozick and a woman...)	25
The bread mold downstairs	26
(For Brautigan)	27
Pockets	28
I used to get high before baseball games	29

Rapture

I was putting on dirty socks
looking out my window
and thinking I had
something to do this morning

My mother was nearly struck by lightning when she was pregnant with me. She said the bolt singed the grass. And also that it smelled like burning plastic. She said that the thunder nearly broke all the windows, but my mother sometimes exaggerates. I think that she may have even exaggerated me on a dark night in January with a bottle of Jack Daniels in one hand and my dad in the other. I couldn't say. I wasn't there.

My fingernails are getting long. I wish I could take my fingernails and use them to buy coffee on a rainy day as though fingernails were some forgotten currency. The fingernail on my right index finger has to be worth at least forty eight cents. But I've been wrong before. Once at a bar I tried to buy a scotch-water with a chipped tooth. The bartender said, "Keep that up and you'll leave with more than one chipped tooth. I'll knock your whole fucking mouth out."

The place was a shithole anyway; one of those bars that smell like my grandmother in her bathrobe.

"Fine." I said. "Suit yourself." I had already made up my mind to start going to nicer bars.

Like I said though; my fingernails are getting long. When I was a kid one of my most favorite books was a nineteen-eighty-five Guinness Book of World Records. My dad wanted to see if I could break any records with my birth and wanted to know just what all I was up against. So he read it while my mom was in labor with me. On page seven hundred and four there is a picture of the man with the world's largest fingernails.

I don't quite have that guy beat. His fingers were so long they had curled up and over themselves like ancient pythons. The man had the Great Wall of China growing from his pinky finger. In the caption under his picture it doesn't say that his life long ambition was to be a great and fantastic piano player. Nor does it say that he hand stitches his own line of jeans for the Gap.

He is the Mount Everest of fingernails. I am clipping mine right now. In thirty three minutes, because I am typing this too, I'll have my fingernails in a bucket under the sink where I shave. Fuck climbing mountains. I'll steal some coffee.

I did a line of coke off the kitchen table and decided that all I wanted to do was read *Pictures from Brughel*. I ran to the library. And plus I had to take a huge shit and needed something good to read. My bathroom library is full of very fine material but *Pictures from Brughel* is not included. In fact if you would like you could maybe send me a copy for Christmas. I would shelve it gently between *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Ariel*. I would make my bathroom reading sparkle. I'd even read it when I was taking a piss.

My adventure turned into complete disaster. The cocaine hit me at the most awkward moment. And well...well I fumbled. I dropped *Pictures from Brughel* right into the toilet, right before I was about to sit down.

It was just like this Holocaust class I was taking. And I was standing there with pants down, which didn't really help me feel better about anything. I learned recently in this class that Adolph Hitler stole so much art during the Holocaust that the paintings he stole were over a mile long if you were to line them up. And I don't really pay that much attention in that class.

It's an utter travesty no matter what way you look at it.

I felt like the biggest walking butthole in the world.

...

these are poems I wrote about me and other people

***bad posture

I grew bad posture
on brown pleather
bus seats

knees crammed
into the seat in front

back making a halfassed U
to be more like a dolphin

this all through second and third grade
wondering all the while
with my head turned up
why there were
little holes in the ceiling

and where my
bus driver
drove her bus
in the dark

...

Maddy

Madeline moves like
the goddess of milk

with hips
she bought
at a yard sale
used

the right light
the thigh light
makes them shine

Madeline moves in moons
her body
an orb of itself

hips ass breast thigh
patterns of ribbons
ribbons of Christmas lights
ribald in tardiness
vagrantly sensuous

Madeline's moons move milk
a straightening curve

...

Sadie

a well liked bowlegged
shy child with a
song voice

straddled the air
close to me
awkward and unsure
of a self-thing she

was beautiful enough to
hide a smile
behind her voice that
soaked the sound
a feldspar ring

almost as though her
souls was made of sound

all she said
“my shorts used to be my
brother’s who died”

...

me or something

when I was fifteen
spry and high on pills
I took a small craft hammer
and
smashed the video tapes
my parents made of my childhood

I took small
pleasure
in it ever graceless
hammer fall meticulous
and blood handed

it took me about two minutes
which amounts to about

forty-eight days a second

...

I finally got to where I would push around panhandlers. It was kind
of a long time coming

Found Poem: Luis (taking a shit reading national geographic)

hysterical his
children would die
from starvation

hysterical and depressed
of course it would never come to
starvation

manure serving as a crucial link

unavoidably little, the black turds
metaphysically commune with stomachs

hysterical and depressed
of course it would never come to
starvation

manure serving as a crucial link

obviously, they were all doomed

...

I have never been able to believe that things existed as they are all the time. I like to think that when I turn my back on a bird in flight, it turns into a freight train or a bathroom on an airplane or an apple orchard. People are the same way. You might be you right now but in thirty seconds you could be a street sign in Nebraska or a shotgun shell in Panama. Open yourself, let the world swallow you.

Swimming Lessons

One sad sweet summer shade day I spent drinking gin at nine and swimming laps while my father stood at the pool ledge and clapped eagerly and whole saint heartedly with his fat face glimmering in the shallow end as clouds made shadows and birds too hot for singing slept in their shade dreams angelic and fat. My father was a curt abrasive man, long given to the drink, whose vigorous excesses made him famous, who would tirade up and down Sleaford Street candidly, half clothed while my mother called him every vicious thing she could fathom from the porch steps and so there at the pool ledge he howled at me in a half growl chamber orchestra moan and belittled me as I came up for air, so as soon as he went to piss I stole his drink, slammed the warm gin, and filled it pool fluid and should have filled it with spit the son of a bitch.

the last resort

My father, my two brothers and myself were driving through Cairns looking for a good place to spend a couple of days and maybe play some golf. A place close to the beach perhaps, accessible to the reef obviously. It was a brilliant summer. My dad stopped at a Marriot that promised fantastic snorkeling in a luxurious forty foot deep lagoon stocked with an assortment of tropical fish native to the area. It also professed to have a great package deal with a pontoon on the reef. Lunch buffet included.

He said, stopping the car, "Kids I guess this is the last resort." Thank god we all thought, we got out of the car our shorts stuck to our asses with sweat. And we wondered off into only what would later be a dream and nothing more.

Large Fries

I got heart burn like a
bastard
it feels like someone
let loose fifty ninjas
and jet li
all up in my chest

why does fast food ice always sound like four thirty on a Tuesday afternoon? I wonder what fast food ice really aspires to be. Listen to it in the Styrofoam cup half melted. You always hear about ice clinking. Fast food ice never clinks. Fast food ice thuds. Fast food ice melts slow like a precocious metal. When people talk about the economy or elections I always think fast food ice. It's the mustache on the American Spirit.

Poem to young brother as children couldn't sleep

if you are quiet enough here
if you blend the crickets
into your breath
if you think about nothing
but the stars closing their eyes
too
softly and tender as the universe

then maybe we can get
some fucking sleep

and I won't have to
stomp your dumbass
face in

...

in a winter where whispers
were strung out like snakes
blood thick and
fat happy where
a smile could spread
heaven with a love damp
throw rug you

threw diapers
drug needles and ringworm
with every

hey-how-are-you
you mouth farted out
of your lovely fuck stick
face and I
followed you like
seagulls follow hurricanes

...

Ass Bags

I was in 11th grade when Bethany Bagley made me realize that god obviously spent the weekends getting hammered drunk and driving his car into trees. Bethany was a monster in every way. She had this translucent skin that stretched taut and thin over her lumpy greasy body and she wore makeup that highlighted her pastiness and collected around the acne on her face like flour flakes on burnt biscuits.

She sat in front of me in Mrs. Mitchell's technical math class for dumbasses. Not that I was a dumbass but I failed algebra and had to take this shit.

She dropped her pencil while I was trying to staple some homework together. Her jeans slid halfway down her ass crack exposing butt pimples and stretch marks that wove up her jelly ass. And she was wearing some kind of g-string like someone had taken three fishing lines and tied them around a key ring. I screamed.

Not at the sight of it alone but because I was so disturbed I accidentally fired a staple into the bottom of my left eye. It's interesting too because my whole family has had something gone wrong with at least one of their eyeballs.

Anyway the shriek I let loose caught the class off guard; they all turned to look as Bethany struggled to squirm back into a better portion of her jeans and I had jumped up and was holding my left eye and pointing at her.

Naturally I was excused from class, and because Mrs. Mitchell was such an honorable and good natured woman she saw to it that I only get three days in school suspension for my latest "episode."

Yeah, but my whole family has had some deal with an eye. My dad hooked Cousin Trevor in the eye with a fishing hook. But it was cool because he got him while he was blinking although nobody realized that at the time, Trevor being freaked out and yelling and everybody screaming at the kid, "don't open your eye Trevor." So they get him to the emergency room and Trevor calm as a little cat looks up at my dad and says, "Uncle Glen can I open my eye?" And he does and the hook fell on the emergency room floor with a soft clink.

My brother stabbed himself in the cornea with one of those electric Christmas candles people put in their windows. Burnt his eyeball to all hell and now he wears glasses and looks good in them too.

I poked my mom in the eye on the way to preschool with the jagged end of a plastic laser gun. She had to go to the hospital.

And youngest brother too had a sebaceous cyst under his eye for like three years. It kept coming back.

Very much like Bethany Bagley's flabby ass. It wasn't just the physical side of her ugliness that disturbed me. It was a part of though. She would talk to the girl who sat next to her about how she got fucked by three guys at a party over the weekend and then turn around and cough on me and ask is she could copy my homework. Altogether a monster. So was the girl who sat next to her, Tina Ciardi, who laughed until she wheezed and choked on phlegm and then smiled.

There was another girl in another math class much later that again had the ability to make me shoot my eyes out with staples. But she was sweet natured and tender. You could tell by the way she picked at her pimples; with thumb and forefinger and then rolled the insides out in her palm and massaged it into her jeans.

Her name was Elizabeth something. Morgansomething I think, she had it written on masking tape on her lunch box. It was some kind of lunch box too, and you could smell it and how the box made everything inside it smell like plastic.

Elizabeth Morgansomething was the most carnally American girl I ever met. She carried a thermos of kool-aid and wore her grandmother's clothes. I know because she told me. And she had braces that were often full of ham and cheese sandwich and she laughed nervously, and sometimes when she laughed pieces of cheese would fly out of her mouth and land on your lower lip.

I am not averse to ugly people. But that utter train wreck that was Bethany Bagley. That's another story all together.

“this is seasonal dirty work”

the slogan
of the meanest, dirtiest, most shameless
organization ever

the black-jack-o-lantern-death squad

watch your asses

...

once there was a very pretty
girl who
laughed
like cherries
crashing on
concrete

she tied her
hair in
pony tail
rhythms and told
ghost stories in the
dark cold about
an old man
carrying a heavy
bag of cherries
through San Diego
streets at dawn

she tied her
socks in knots
at low tide
and screamed at
the jelly fish that
rolled onto
the beach at her feet

like white cherry pits
falling on sidewalks
from an old man's mouth

...

Kerouac attack

in sea neon
sea
Nebraska
serious now all alone
serious as all hell
in a gas station I
saw the virgin Mary
in shadows at a gas station
and climbed the
stations of the cross
from the back seat
of a Civic
all the way to heaven

...

Tribute

When I was young every picture of me had me smiling like Elvis. All because my dad collected stamps. Sounds crazy I know but among his most prized stamps were his Elvis stamps and I really only wanted to make my dad happy.

He used to get hammered on the weekends and show me his stamps. And it was so hard to please the bastard with anything I did that all I ever wanted to do was look like his stamps and mail other peoples letters with my face.

Picture

Madeline is standing with her elbows on a long brown fence in Kansas. The sun droops behind her head like a woman bending over to check on her roast in the oven. Grass waves at her ankles. Madeline watches the cars pass on the dirt road. Their tires, like they are mad at something, throw up rocks. Her face looks like a cherry even a fat kid would be afraid to touch. It looks like if she took a deep breath the sun would fall right into her mouth, along with every single dirt road in Kansas.

Coincidentally

There is a railroad track in northern Minnesota that dodges lakes like a running back; a good running back, with surgical agility and not a bit of ferociousness. In America, in the deepest pits of our hearts, we like our running backs to be ferocious, like lions not housecats. Think Earl Campbell, Walter Payton, there is an embodiment, a sentiment expressed that is affecting in their running watching them almost makes you feel like you their pads. This railroad track is different; it's more like Marshall Faulk than I would care to admit, like Dickerson, Sanders, after they got slow, Sanders never got slow, Sanders is the exception, that was a bad example.

If this railroad track was like Barry Sanders it would bear the weight of cold towns. The burden would be milestones. I probably wouldn't pissing on it.

1 and 2

1

I had just finished my first novel about a cemetery gardener with cerebral palsy and it was accepted in the academic community with a flourish, a solid debut. I was working on a stipend at the university and living in the basement of a certain professor Thrash. Thrash had once been a mediocre poet. In the late seventies he published under the name Hugo Pounce and his work was somewhat acclaimed.

Thrash was a devout drunk.

He had about him a peculiar genius but he hadn't written a poem in years; in fact the last thing he published was an essay on Yeats that had been described within the community as plodding. He confided to me, late one evening between bottles of Jameson, that he had been working for the past eight years on a novel and was close to completion.

"It's a pleasant feeling," he said.

"I imagine it is."

He then produced a derringer from his coat pocket and blew his peculiar genius all over the kitchen wall.

Following the investigation the university decided that a leave of absence would do me well. The entire incident left me scathed. I had never been a murder suspect. It was grueling. An inhabitable mindset, I could write a sentence. I wouldn't do living there anymore. I moved into a small apartment and began work at a grocery store stocking produce.

2

A student by the name of Goolsby, I think it is, Goolsby or O'Meara, something distinctly Irish, expressed an interest in renting my basement. He is a fair poet it seems, juvenile, at times but decent. If I recall he had a collection published as an undergraduate.

I believe he said he went to Kansas. Or maybe it was Kentucky.

How he got way out to San Diego I have no idea, the fellow is charming enough however. He has a thick chin and his Midwestern sentiments sometime flounder around there. Harmless bastard from the looks of him.

I am close to finishing my seventh novel, The Bone Giver, about a cemetery gardener with cerebral palsy. The kid moves in a week from Saturday.

Laundry Mat Poems

(gangsta)

(reading Cynthia Ozick and a woman blends herself into my book and becomes an arm of the narrative. A beautiful middle aged arm of the story covered in rings)

Into the toil goes the toiled. And the soiled. So thinks Stella at the wash.
And for a moment the world
looks up and all is underwear
all is lint and simple

seafoam stocking socks
and for a moment the
world looks up
and aunts are locked out in Miami

left to burn
or left
to flick matches

the last asylum so thinks Stella at the wash
the final resting place for
the diseased of mind

into the wash so thinks Stella
soiled pants press at the glass
and are pulled back again

everything spins in cycles

...

the bread mold downstairs
has taken artistic license of
my notebook and is giving a reading
tomorrow at five forty five

I hear there will be a
Musical accompaniment

...

(for Brautigan)
At the age of forty-nine
I am sick and tired
Of socks

It's a short walk to heaven
I could take it barefooted

...

Pockets

it is unlawful to remove this tag
new material monthly
 subscriptions available
your cashier today was Daniel
Daniel survived the lions den
the loins den
the garden of lions eden the edict of the garden of loins and the backbone of Daniel is suffused
with marble
suffice to say

new material
 fold
keep folding eyes down
ears it is unlawful to remove material
your cashier today was Caesar Augustus
hair matted yarn
bad breath broken
teeth
chipped bones
send by hair mail
 hold your breath
keep folding
creases and grease
toss the receipts

...

I used to get high before baseball games
and there was this pitcher
(this after I was kicked
out of high school
and played rec league)

who threw nothing
but lazy eyed
limp dick curveballs
that hit the dirt at
home plate and threw
up jack shit

Davis Sterns
was his name and
he had this
semi-retarded sister
that used to
scream
on the
tin bleachers
all game long

(Julie Grace Sterns, called her by two names)

I think I even sold him weed

anyway
he threw a high
3-0 curve
letter high
and I hit that thing
like two miles

I still don't think it has landed yet
not the point
the point is

I should have taken that pitch
walked to first

and stole home
off that fat bastard

...
