

# GUESTBOOK



**RICK SNYDER**

Some of these poems have appeared in *jubilat*, *Milk*, and *The Poker*.

Photo by Michael Ashkin.



2007

## After 80 Flowers

About what, face, fiction,  
a mode of address, rhetoric  
as constant as the current  
flowing from satellite  
to screen, the night sans  
serif and lightly blue,  
washed up again, repetitious  
feelings in the throat,  
thorax, sounds wriggling  
through, pelting plastic,

sad how the spokespeople  
age, turning away from  
the light and toward  
unfiltered sun, yet this  
sense of deixis pricks  
them, objects too abject  
to say, words recycled,  
days thrown away, little  
species dwindle as snows  
climb to higher ground

### **Confessional Poem 3**

Wouldn't you cry on 60 Minutes  
if you were a famous porn actress?  
I feel guilty, even now, about  
being so jealous of the sincerity  
of her feeling. We all know  
they can't act anyway, provided  
that acting and faking are considered  
two separate skills, like writing  
and lying, or sleeping and dying.  
Anyway, it scabs over quickly  
and there I am, reading in my room  
while mom makes instant potatoes.

## Red Eye

When you're circling space even  
the captain's voice seems sinister  
sneezing to the left and the right  
rituals of making stuff up to tear  
it down under a different name

I am the very tip of Allah's sword  
forever hurtling across the screen  
to Brad Pitt's forehead which is  
good as new with slight dimpling  
along the edges with erasure marks

So much spandex so little time  
they grow up with the express  
purpose of hating you learning  
from the masters who refuse to  
take credit until their excuses are

Turned to indolence flashing out  
like shook gold upon a vinyl couch  
stuck with meringue they dissolve  
into sleep having won the ultimate  
struggle to show up another day

PROFOUND GHETTO  
integrity of subway ads

1500 new books of  
award-winning poetry

a heat wave in April  
followed by earthquakes  
and hail

the fear of anthrax  
has faded away

## Poem on My Head

I carry it everywhere  
like a talisman  
bringing no luck  
but maybe a sense  
of what I'm missing

\*

Particulate city  
swirls around itself  
to tease new life  
from a few tired  
phrases

\*

Such meager gods  
epidemics of junk  
and food fuse  
into angry boys  
pixel by pixel

\*

The point of my  
nachlass is to be  
without one unless  
it's utterly oblique  
and endless

## Poem Beginning With My Beard

It hurts me more than it hurts you.  
I feel it grow as the face shrinks.  
I'm sorry, Mikhail Bakhtin,  
this is not a novel way  
to apologize for naming the cat  
after you. She's sick too.  
Our funks mix like some  
industrial warning for housewives  
everywhere. How bad is it  
to think about Bhopal  
while writing a poem?  
What about Medvedev, Hermes,  
and militant Jews?  
Logic stalks. The falcon  
can hear the falconer  
and never fails to lock on.  
How long do I have to wait  
for the world to contaminate  
its selfish thoughts  
with my own? I want  
to be relational so badly  
it can't happen. I know that.  
No more analysis needed  
to loosen up the words  
that never really . . .  
Here city, city, city.  
Come on, boy, don't be  
afraid to coalesce into  
an ethereal smear pocked  
with monuments that burn  
all night, crazier than thou.



Both of us just sit there,  
waiting for the catastrophe  
that matches our mise-en-scène:  
dirty sun to smoky screen  
filters a false logic caught  
again, obsessively stable.

## **Deep in Snow**

About suffering they were  
never wrong, the old bastards  
tagged and scanned, ready  
for dada from the sands  
of Cyrene to the shores  
of Guantanamo, Geronimo,  
e-i-o

## **De rerum natura**

I hate it when  
the world rushes in  
all rude and unvarnished,  
its decomp sloshing  
all over your lexicon,  
its hubris tickling  
the back of your throat  
like a leaf on the verge  
of sneezing, while all  
the animals return  
to their rightful  
Rousseau paintings  
or sulk in tire treads  
and bitumen, waiting

## USA Today

Smog stretched like gauze  
around the melting crags,  
as if to show the aliens  
how fucked we are:

Will Smith unable  
to awaken from the 90s  
neoliberal nostalgia that  
afflicts me too, fancying

blow jobs over snuff films  
narrated from ground control  
to grainy cockpit's third  
person omniscient victory

for biblical mastodons  
who build fences for miles  
before they sleep, dreaming  
citizenship as amnesty.

## Documentary

Today is good day  
for a 15-year-old movie.  
That must be why  
they keep making them.  
Gene Hackman in downtown  
Chicago, the rhythmic  
clatter of an elevated train  
making his voice go  
up an octave. I can  
already see the late  
afternoon light in my  
living room mingling  
with Gene's despair,  
the silver sides of  
the train brilliant  
above the rusted latticework,  
the shadows mottled  
by a dusty pothos  
dangling in my window,  
the cat napping on  
the couch, undisturbed  
by the distant squeep-  
squeep of a car lock.  
In the movie itself  
the doleful cadences  
of alarms might  
arm my youthful  
failures to see that  
anything can be  
anachronistic.

DRUGS LISTEN—

I like that

\*

Pictures of my body

Copies of my poems

\*

While the Power Rangers

fight outside an abandoned refinery

\*

The Marine takes his first steps

with lightbulbs flashing

## **Dissolution**

a common comma alongside the asphalt  
asthmatic ascent of Chinese delivery bike  
Odysseus lashed down in the ambulance  
the past itself an inverted pyramid in colloquial style

it's not abnormal for the mind to palpitate  
the same truck to clatter over a giant steel plate  
stop intending to perceive the world and nothing will follow  
on Tuesday we depart from gate 17

an occasional mania keeps me sane  
homemade canals only flow up and down  
plagued by a stubborn desire to anthropomorphize myself  
another solution to all your duplication problems

## Los Angeles

A citizen, I squandered my youth among  
the cool angles of ergonomic offices,  
drinking coffee, playing Doom, meeting  
or exceeding the basic expectations,  
but conceptual art in the age of corporations  
withers on the vine (becomes a cliché)  
ceaselessly becoming documentation  
incapable of nostalgia, violence, regret.  
Oh Deleuze, if only you were here to see  
the subdivisions ceaselessly recombining  
with day laborers and casual dining  
(au bon pain), cops on Segways and flags  
on trucks, on-ramps funneling grainy faces  
with deep discounts, real-time inventory.



## Poem for Isabelle

Early morning migraine,  
the birds skronk among themselves—  
I know their names as well  
as they know mine though

they, at least, seem to sing songs  
that are not wholly agonistic,  
the assumption of positions,  
the drive for survival in the bleak

and weedy fields of concrete  
between three tenements, elegant  
30s living in the heart of Los Angeles,  
strewn and tagged like some Orphic

cyborg from here to the insertion  
of your favorite celebrity's name,  
if we insist on playing that game  
and refuse to admit, in fact,

that we like everything we see,  
from tacos to smog to Reuters to qwerty,  
even the convention of the first  
person plural pronoun, borne

of equal parts spite and solitude  
until some mother, I guess, yells  
your name repeatedly among  
the weeds, screens, and fields.