

# I run

Poems for the age of intervention

*James Hamm*

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1

*Alight!*

Love needs, Love cries  
she whispered and I grew eyes  
my dream of sky blind.

*Letter from jail*

Dissolving milk in the sea of green  
the body drifted, naked, clean.  
Delicate hands motionless in the waves  
a faraway voice calling his names.  
Every step descended further  
from the vertical wall of water.  
Muted, the incantation of claims  
recessed to the World of flames.  
Calm, where once burned white  
the sweet-smelling stings I want.  
this is my goodbye dear readers  
fellow inmates, fellow cheaters.  
I only took what I left behind  
I only did as best as did my kind.

In the grey water, bottle-wound  
a letter of sixteen lines's found.

*Polaroid*

I see your world spinning right over my head  
I see your clouds weeping on my tired eyes  
I see the thousands of words dancing around you  
I see the flames of love licking my chapped lips.  
Haste come and bring warmth from you.  
I feel the gates of Death opening up my heart.  
Fate come and quickly taste what you want  
I feel my trembling hands reaching towards you.

*Rain*

Rain, rain, you must wonder  
from one into the other.

Oh how lovely!

Oh how lovely!

Can't you see whose hand it's in?

*Oh beautiful*

Oh beautiful!

I've heard of you  
what could you do  
to a Man of Science?

Oh, No!

What simple lines  
can you recite  
while bending so?

Is melancholy  
this new to me?

My hand will shake  
if I just let go.

*Inanna*

Surrounded,  
in this smoky bar  
by the scepters  
lost in apathy  
and ether and war  
arms flattened  
my whiskey far

when suddenly,  
Inanna appears

Immortal Inanna  
white marvel Inanna,  
Inanna with the signs  
laid on her hands,  
sandals on her feet,  
twigs on her forehead,  
a measuring tape  
held in one hand,  
a wide gold bell  
gripped by the other,  
Inanna with dark  
lapis lazuli eyes  
that dazzle every time  
she walks in hell.



2

West is here, but,  
as we learned at school  
not exactly real  
on a spinning ball

A place of mind then,  
to rest for a while  
after a good meal  
before the nightfall

## *Message*

I was born in 1996.  
I remember well  
when Daddy left to fight  
the evil man  
with a broken heart.  
Only six years old  
for the last time.

It was in 2036  
the World was burned  
for right or wrong.  
My beloved land  
torn apart from far.

It's late in the morning  
the sun is dim,  
ashes are falling,  
black and thin,  
as I send you my love  
for the last time.

## *On Might*

I heard a short poem,  
long ago,  
half dreaming,  
in class,  
it went something like:

"If you didn't prepare  
with sport, your arms as stone,  
Oh crystalline hands and limbs,  
for the stone brace thyself!"

It made an impression  
for the warning, I thought,  
was for me,  
drifting in my cloud  
lost in art, empathy and wine  
far away from the angry god.

Forty years have gone by,  
the strong still rule the land  
and now, with melancholy  
I hear wisdom's nod.

We, all of us,  
are not worthy.

Let the land belong  
to the ones who want it most.  
Let us say our goodbye  
dressed in our clothes of folklore.  
Let us pack our heavy bags  
and leave this beautiful World,  
bare once more.

*Pride,*

I took you for a sin,  
but you are a song  
of what we are,  
for that is the question  
at the tip of our tongue.

And you let us down.  
We thought we were  
the best that was  
Our home, our land

our father's fathers  
upon our shoulders  
they had not fallen  
so we could fall

Pride,  
I was wrong.

You're an engine of  
morphine to pack lies  
into the nothing  
that waits for all.

Just don't forget

that this Nothing can be  
as pretty as you want.

*The opposite of sleep*

When all you've gathered  
counts for nothing anymore  
and your sense of humor  
and your accelerated mind  
out of place on your face  
twinkles all alone,

remember that this land  
is also made of flesh,  
and the long voyage home  
to the first touch, the first smell  
the sweetest you've ever known  
can no longer be found.

Matters not if you never left  
or made it back a thousand fold.  
Matters not who built it high  
or what ruin was just born,  
for sacred is the place  
where you are touched the most.

Sacred, the beautiful word.

## *Masters of the Universe*

Above the highest highs  
zipping past mach nineteen  
I see you all hiding  
through my X-ray eyes.

You can't even begin  
to suspect my immense  
but small, my proud,  
my darkest round ball.

Cloaked in invisibility,  
this solo as my guide,  
I vary my geometry  
and pretend to fall.

Secure in the wisdom  
of the laboratory,  
in the precision of design,  
in my spirituality.

I press the orange button.  
I log the obscene number,  
here to give nothing  
and to take it all.

## *Hope*

It does seem without hope  
this, this violence  
that you can never defeat  
hiding with your children  
holding on to your feet.

Allow me, selfishly  
from distance, to point out  
the defining moment  
on the plains of Marathon  
of the Western World.

Time is a strange thing.  
A sparkle gets carried on  
by those you leave behind,  
a story, a gesture, even of love  
against the background of machines  
and money and oil and fear.

Like a drop on a hot dry rock  
or a seed, a fluffy nothing  
translucent against the sun.

*Lowland*

These days I can hardly keep  
my eyes open, barely a slit  
reading only one line  
before succumbing again  
to the wonderful warm sleep.

But I am paid to sit straight,  
an angular face under gelled hair  
tight clothes, polished shoes,  
looking through cathedrals  
made of numbers, not faith.

The busy-ness of every day  
is robbing me of my family,  
my thoughts lines from TV  
my arguments another man's  
twisted mental foreplay.

Yet in my dream, a remnant  
of a brash youth falling in love  
with lovely pale eyes, soft skin,  
a gentle man for the first time  
gauche trying to repent.

## *Heat*

The slender arc of the horizon  
fades between the two blues.  
The plane jerks up, then down  
invisible in the cloud's embrace.  
It is cold outside  
and I have been traveling  
ever since I remember.

Below lays a land  
that my father called home,  
that bound him with a love  
he rather not have known  
running to and fro  
in praise and in slander.

But just because  
he believe with conviction  
doesn't make it come true.  
We can't plan the next  
one hundred years,  
the next twelve wars,  
or the bounty to recover.

I see but a sliver  
between the dark clouds.

A lit candle perhaps  
for the children, not ours,  
lost in the desert  
that will cover the world.

## *War*

As I didn't watch  
the prolonged defiling  
on the March fourth,

I couldn't sleep  
from spring through summer  
imagining the missiles,  
The burn, the air,  
the skulls, the mess,  
the "they had it coming" affair.

War, I've read,  
is resourcelessness  
of the powerful,  
dressed up fear.

If so, last I heard,  
nailing to the cross  
didn't change a thing.  
I am ashamed of being  
alive, or human.  
I welcome now the change.

What matters is  
certainly not money,

which doesn't exist,  
but the memory of what was,  
brooms sweeping over  
ornate heaven.

In anticipation of another war movie  
which I probably won't see  
unless forced of course..

It struck me that the current elite  
all come from the "University",  
triangular and columnar,  
mathematically clean,  
the perfect child of Mr. Temple  
and Miss Always Right.

Where you are separated  
from your family, or society  
and thrown into the know-how  
without the wisdom of the past,  
for these are not your father's words  
(from his humbled personal heart)  
but a gathering of what works  
for any particular task.

That's where the plans come from,  
from lonely little offices  
filled with books to the top,  
away from the warmth of the sun.

That's where you meet

fellow-minded citizens  
bound to bring on the new  
one thousand years of fun.

And when it doesn't pan out,  
you can just shrug your shoulders  
and move on to the next subject,  
insect, or country, or loon.

This is what wars are always for,  
truth versus Lie. What is truth you ask?  
You won't find it in a book.

Not even that one.



3

I dreamed I was alone  
bathed in light  
in a straight hallway

Not led like a dog,  
or pulled by my hair,  
not having to stay

## *Do Wonder*

Imagine a bridge high over water,  
high enough that the depth below,  
lost among the thick fog,  
glows with the golden rays  
of the early morning sun.

You're there with your family,  
son, daughter, parents and wife  
cousins and uncles and aunts,  
and a bit farther your neighbors  
and farther still your town.

Although you can't see  
you know that it's longer than that,  
not only filled with the people of now,  
but of other times as well  
some of them almost not human.

Every now and then someone jumps.  
Not in a rhythm, but like rain.  
Some with a surprised look,  
some contorted and in pain,  
or resigned to their fall.

Your mind reaches out for sound,

or a break in the jeweled cloud.  
Could you go back, you wonder?  
You among all? And why?  
as you give in to the gentle tug.

*The earthquake*

drunkenly rolled into town.  
A town that, seen from above,  
was the greenest line  
holding onto the hill's shadow  
to guard the olive grove  
from continuous sunshine.

It was two in the afternoon  
when nap time in the heat  
flattens you out to extract  
the most comfortable dream.

The balconies were thus  
full of sleeping beauties,  
for what is more beautiful  
than a young man worn by work,  
with a newborn on his side?

The simple life, older than  
the written account of the town,  
was snuffed in less time that  
you might take to read these few lines.  
before the prayers, or the burning fires,  
before horses came to graze.

Most never woke up,  
the lucky ones that didn't have  
to search for their daughters,  
or wait in line, to be sent finally  
to the city they despised.

And when the rain came again,  
the mud bricks returned to mud.  
But through the silence, it was said,  
echoed often a shrill and angry wail,  
in this latest ancient maze.

## *Astrology*

Be weary this fall  
for darkness is eying  
you growing up  
as a deer to a wolf.

Avoid colorful conduct,  
all flowery words, or dress  
that could be taken  
in the opposite direction.

Even though you may  
think of yourself as tall,  
Foolishness is seldom  
seen married to Luck.

Lay low. If not afraid,  
at least practice  
unrebelliousness.  
Real is the force of doom.

Only Time is your friend.  
Avoid the seven sins  
for the sake of judgment,  
and weather the certain  
coming storm.

*In tomorrow*

It wouldn't be too far fetched  
to say that you'll need  
everything you got to face  
your blue tomorrow.

I've looked into this for years,  
through thick dusty books  
filled with alchemy  
and theatre of absurd,

through the encouragement  
of the psychoanalysts  
that to the south repeat  
what Tibetans know best,

through the lost tribes  
living in fear, or anger,  
differently colored altogether,  
and restless at the border.

You'll need to remember  
the steam of strong tea  
or whatever else that lets  
you hold on to the rest.

Or, simply think of a number,  
but it has to be large,  
and it has to be yours,  
while you wonder  
all the toys you can buy  
and in what order.

I have seen your future in my dream,  
it is the deep blue of rare sky.

## *Astrology II*

Step out of everyday  
and into the starry sky  
for without science  
you have no aim.

Eyes now covered with hair,  
from this gentle warm breeze,  
focusing hours on end  
on a blink from far away.

Perhaps blink is wrong,  
something more akin to abandoned awe  
for an object of light you could call  
an angel.

Perhaps not that far either  
since it came for you  
through your retina, absorbed in  
and part of you from now on.

The vault above your head  
slowly turns towards pink.  
Your shivers are gone.

## *The lone song*

It was hot in the desert  
a heat as sharp as the steel  
of my financial defeat.

In the deep end of the bar  
with sweats of alcohol  
sticking my shirt to the seat,

I was done. I knew well  
the way back home through  
the familiar humiliation.

"Are you ready to submit?  
to accept, on your knees,  
the way to salvation?"

Why was I shaking then?  
What was this invisible force  
taking me back from my death?

"Do you want your doom?  
or with a click of faith,  
the same as the greatest greats?"

Today, notorious but not great,

in this vast colonial room,  
I reflect back on that fork.

The weight of the future  
is crushing my aging back  
as I cry in the hallways at night.

The solace of the drink is gone,  
and my friends are hissing  
in the dark.

*Head or Tail*

Have no fear,  
even though the center  
of your psyche is far  
from cupid's loving stare,

even though the finger  
of the news points at you,  
for nothing in particular,  
personally, every day.

As you reluctantly carry  
the weight of your birth  
like a serpent on your neck  
while it should be a joyous affair.

I welcome you now  
to the select club of  
Germans, communists,  
Jews, religious or not.

You are beautiful in despair.

*The Capital, again*

is sucking on money.  
Hanging about town,  
among the riff raffs,  
and the worried pants,  
I noticed all of their faces  
reflected in the glass  
of this of all places.

Strange lines danced  
around their eyes, little arrows  
pointing to surprise.

The old TV, placed high  
and menacing my beloved,  
took a notice of me,  
then coyly asked for another dime.

*My Liberty,*

Have you noticed how short  
my poems have become?  
How desperately I hold on  
to your transparent matter,  
before you run off to the next  
indignant or ranting word?

In your jewel studded dress now  
you strike your favorite pose  
amidst ruined houses of clay.

I lament death for sure,  
but also the transformation  
of your beacon of Hope  
to this burning sword.

*The human league*

There you are, sideways  
as you've never been before,  
in front of the window, white  
and bare in this lush decor.

You're half smiling, half surprised  
at the irony of your fate,  
not sure anymore of waiting  
for a sign full of wonder.

I suppose I ought to have  
followed you in. I wanted to,  
but honey, you know me  
I'm not of your golden world.

Soldiers returning from Irak  
might know what I vaguely mean.  
A curtain lifts, and there you see  
all the wretched, young and old.

And they call on you. Anything,  
a healthy eye, a pint of blood,  
a prayer half heartfelt, and half  
submerged in absolute thunder.

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