

Poetry Series

John Allen
- poems -

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John Allen(2/26/83)

My name is John Thomas Allen. I am 23 years old, from Albany, New York. I have lived here my entire life, apart from some travelling, and am currently a philosophy major in college. I work as one of three editors for 'Breath and Shadow', a publication geared toward disability culture. I work as a freelance tutor in poetry/literature for mentally ill/disabled students at the college I currently attend. These occupations are inspired not only because of financial concerns; if I had too much idle time (if that's possible?) , I'd probably drive myself bonzo reading experimental poetry 24/7. I have been writing poetry and short stories since the age of 14. My inspirations are poets like Cesar Vallejo, Franz Wright, and Jim Carroll.

Cans

melted snow crawls at a snails
pace down his threadless, stinking

brown work boots
unwittingly imitating his

brain waves. zigzagging through
the senseless rubber maze

of a sleeping heel and reaching
his own dead end on loose floorboards,

it adds a new continent
to the puddle made from tears and

other things that have formed like a
moist waste land over three years.

occasionally he is sure that the
shrill voiced neighbor downstairs

who complains loudly about the
noise is his daughter. who else,

after all, could care enough to
wake him up. never having the energy

to go and find out, he will forget.
this will not matter, since she is 85

and was put in a nursing home
last night, no relation.

none of this may ever matter,
since downtown his dreams

are on sale for 50 cents a can.

John Allen

Dust

smoking patio
breathing pine bush
leaves of green razor.

the march leaf hanging like a crippled
butterfly-

Your dark glasses and oily skin.
I speak, you look like
you just lost your best friend.
You belch carcinogens, the spilling
smile of smoke, grinning contours
Thick. my sympathy is rotten honey
burnt faintly when you move to ash.

A starless morning,
the cuffed breeze,
sky's crisp condescension with
the blueness of your monster: to
speak in taxidermy, words
empty sound bytes
your mouth reeling celluloid
stuffed with black feathers. I
will not see you long again, it
should grow dark tonight.

You will talk your way back into it

John Allen

Eve

leaning into the summer evening like
a slick coat of glowing oil,
sliding on skates in greased joy
coating shadows aged so
finely by the stubbled sidewalk
the man fading in sync with
the tired sun, growing dim in
the unmade blanket of deep noon
pallid overtures of escaped words
lost in blistered interruption,
the telephone wires and radio
stations. awkward conversations,
the childlike hunger of
lost hound eyes

John Allen

Objects In The Mirror

exiting one snowstorm
another hits outside the
mud caked van as
tires curve onward with
a scolding insistence
that seems almost appropriate.
noses run with powdered
leakage, viscous
debris leaving
unblessed shrouds on tissues;
the lost house
a tired lover's
furious expression
before leaving for the final time
a child's last stare,
led away in hues
of blue and red that night the
neighbors finally called.
he fingers
his seamless shirt,
not bothering
to wonder where the threads went
not this time.
a man with scarlet skin
and green eyes like a
snapping lizard
tries to engage him
in conversation
about yesterday's news,
the leaking print he uses to
smudge his own seat.
in the bony rearview
mirror the people look
like sick zebras or failed
contortionists.
a series of old
cottages rush into view,
snowcapped and called rehab.
next to him, a woman

with scaly legs and eyes
like tense alarm bells
chatters with a few teeth
that were fortunate;
'god', 'god',
she mutters again and again
as though the trees stripped
bare with whistling wind
should burst into a crown
of thorns and bleed
just for her

John Allen

Smokebreak

smokebreak

Jose C.

sagging coats
picked limply from
the graffitied cubby.
slipped on like bruised
banana peels

or

commercial straight-
jackets threaded
with stitched wrists

the zippers open onto
dauchau's rib
indelible slashes
carved masterfully
in animal randomness

A Spanish girl
flaked skin falling
covers her mouth
with a napkin
she's drawn on,

muttering about germs.
filing along like
miscalculated index numbers

wait. 'you, with
the bruises that have
a good memory and a bandaged
wrist. go

sit by the telephone
where 'FEAR TOMORROW'
was carved into the wall
by some earnest unfortunate.

tonight is still CO:
constant observation for
short i will

watch you when my coffee
is strong
when i am weak think
of how you got here,

and avoid anything sharp.'

John Allen

Vague

unformed and anonymous
urgently pinched in waves of finned dispersion

a distant face streaming slowly apart
in the slumping waves of a forgotten pond

a thin river
dry Ophelia, unsure where to fade

carrying bouquets neither real nor artificial
symbiotic petals

christening a sleeping sea with
clear blushes even you don't understand

dry as the brush you were painted with
still not knowing as your sharp cheeks strike the

canvas
my dry Ophelia

John Allen

Wish

i wish so intensely

that after an hour or two

my hopes are as vapid

as the murmurs of a child

pretending, closing his eyes

above smoldering birthday candles

John Allen