

Rhymes With Orange Street

Poems and More (2016-2017)

By Dawson Gage

The Orange Song Crush, Part 1 (A Dream Sequence)

All the Flowers Pause (21 December @ Blossom Ferry)

groove swing beep swoosh
swim on the sound waves
now is your chance
to escape from that part
of yourself that nags and
coaches and tricks your soul
into strange gymnastics
time after time
in the very same way

up spiral staircase
past midnight
eyes upon shadows
that caress the paintings
and the house breathes
abiding smoothly
forming cocoons to consume
these mostly witless guests
god bless

 their little hearts
I confess
 that minor part
(indulge my flashback?)
played once upon a
 good great time
off in China
 down to party
when passports told
the global score
and accents told you

so much more
an education
 wet vacation
hints life of
the world to come
rolling from a
town to a city
to a town to a city
to a down get down
down down over easy
T-minus 4 days
 til Christmas
and out here at
the Blossom Ferry
that vicious cycle
delightfully levies
a tax upon those who
lack innocence
in heart
 in soul
 and memory

The Balmy Morning

up let's go
to the kitchen window
slide up
and pause

instantly the smell
of a damp downtown
December yes indeed
December in our city
so when should we worry?
the holiday show
must not disappear
yet surely it must look

faint as a ghost
against the air
so heavily watery pressed
against the balmy morning

To add so torrid
 so yuletide a carnival
to an unseasonal December
is right and good and meet
oh what fun so pleasant
sound of nothing (!) on Orange St
there, then, a bird that
sounds like a cat who
blows a pointless screech
unto the balmy morning

how come to a climate
such as this one here
where the smartest primates
mark their hottest-ever year
how smart? Says who?
says the guy at the counter
surprising my entrance
to this resplendent
newest of balmy mornings
hear my cry:
 glory be to the weather!

2016

In the beginning
there was the voice
who sprang from the nowhere
to tease upon
the mind of an infant

and of course the ears
were shaped just so
and beneath them, circuits
knew just where to go
and thus they did
The migrations of words
among dots of perception
permits for a tangle
to trap our sounds
in search of an angle
where the truth flashes skin
where the point sinks in
with a curious groan
(there's) no leaving alone
the bells that ring
when we merely talk
(let alone when sing!)

the plots and ploys
of organized noise
envelop

5 January (Liz Ross Plays the Cameo)

attuned
to the calendar
creatures
of its squared design

but life
is a matter that
only
knows the curvy path
sequence
so

“you do your math
I'll write my lines”

Daydream Notes for Dr. King (12 January)

there is only a single
living world with a solitary
history
and anything else
we think to be real
should be placed beneath
the lamp of scrutiny
they try to tamp the mutiny
down
so we struggle just to keep
up
our dilemmas are anything
but our own
and they don't usually
go out quietly

the day demands
of we the living
some purpose
to cling to
got big house
and a ring, too
but so much
trouble
we can sing to
rubble
but a voice
can
just
persist
enduring
cold

indifference
savor love
and value only
the vibration of life

17 January

when the twin desires
command in one voice
between truth and love
there can be no choice
for differences not at all
 wait for the splitting
and justice, offstage:
 you gotta be kidding

ridding the soul of
that special shame that
goes along with paper cuts
that slice expressions of
doomed remorse upon
low-held faces
yours and mine

ah! ha! take that back
or freeze at least
before virtues ye lack
are aired to the east
and then west by
which point the
rest will matter not!

friends and
comrades never
fear
break the law
with solemn cheer

bodyguard your near
and dear but keep
in mind our mission
is to transcend the
interstate and overcome
the traffic laws and
transmute machines from
junk to art to tools
and all around the
circle of nature's
industrial dance

Cold Hand Recollection

(On Porch @ St. James Episcopal Church, 28 January)

Oh, lo, what place
might I go? or would
we have? together?!
to stage the movements
which might've
 (yet)
etched our energies as
 epitaphs
that clarify what we
had no
 choice
but struggling to conjure
that life that here,
the merest toddlers
we undertook with
terribly avenging
purpose, oh indeed!
no doubting that.

II.

here on these
grounds we

could see, if
but dimly, that
the keys to
Wilmington would
appear in our
hands

III.
but keys do rust
and the law does
bust and the hustle
of life grinds our
hands to dust so
the bones of a spirit
just do as they must
almighty garden I
trust you to read
along with this lonely
child

who might yet
make of these structures
a cryptic scriptural
citadel for the final
defense of an undiscovered
faith teaching meant to
keep the city ablaze with
that old time full-stop
new cove deep religious spin
 come
 tribulation week
however
 quickly
 or not

how little regret

that he fussed
the ways he did!

yet...still,
once dust, our hands
 refract
 the light of heaven
and bones and trash
and zones of cash
all the same will
one day be just
another secular point
of charcoal-gray conceit that
cannot see the part
it plays in the churn
of life in the earth of
the garden which yet remains

12 February

a 'gaggle of geese'
that's how you know it
so what be the name
for a unit of poets?

a prism, a problem
a conflagration
a missile, a paintbrush
a spectral nation?

or maybe it would be
a *coincidence* of poets
for upon the encounter
of one or another
always somehow
the same sweet

shock of
recognition

13 February (Upstairs Downstairs)

looming looming
down upon laughter
banter saunter
smile swagger giggle
smile smile
in the figure
struck clear and hot
in a moment or six
the Blossom Ferry scene
plays tricks on
the senses so
let down your
defenses for here
you'll find there's no
such thing as an
enemy, none but
human energy,
naught but synergy
civil society
bodies forth
in an orchestral flower
power corrupts absolutely
entropy turns itself
inside out
hallelujah!

13 February 2016

here now forcefully
groans the essential
shared voice of the city
and hinterland both
and now here suspended

on winds of our banter
a hard look , a soft word,
a fleeting encounter
a bolt of memory
from the ultimate void
the future is built
once the present's destroyed

**Weekend with the Wild Green Goddess, or,
Ya viva Lizzy, Dawson Gets Dizzy
(a Dream Spell, 19-21 February)**

where in the USA
is Lizzy Ross a given day
when songs contain
the entire humidity
and aching beauty
of these our
landscapes
all about these
fully breathing
states yes nifty
leaving coming
going give or
take a few years

as well put once,
some lives you live
others you leave
behind in the
sanctuary of
lightning nerve-searing
memories dreams
wordplays of love

for it's we who are here
who are perfect

America, not so
the next one, let's go
hand me yours
your hand, silly
sometimes songs
compel their targets
to commit
the opposite
of a body charade:

timeline puzzles
woven into the part of
our soul that the tongue
and throat and lungs
done brung bubbling
toward the surface
but, what
onward
towards heaven
as would balloons
that act like comets
or only to careen
into the new city
of temples
to lay us low
beneath the shadows
of rainbows
made of
smoke and
this hunger
we seem
to have found

13 March (for Caitlyn O'Hare)

a gleeful fuzz
before mine eyes
it swirls inside
of the morning glow
and just because
the wall-clock is lying
let's coincide
with the sweet flight
of the daytime
and night

spring along step
the jagged gray walk way
talk way too fast and play as
many games you may:
win at one go
well
lo!
and be
hold
not much to show
sell
sunbeam
the unsold
took a clean shot
at broken pane
sailed right through
so why complain
yet it's all the same
with an empty frame
can't keep to a claim
with unsung name

oh lord here goes
that melting does
then this light
be it lamp glow
 or sunbeam
does the light not flash
in these quavering lines
well tell you what
this time our appointment
over
 flows
 all
 designs

The Red Giant Cometh (18 March)

the lives of others
were channeled through the
cycle of the plant
that underlies the jigsaw curls
of every other process

Enter the Typewriter Electric Redux (18 March)

a twentieth century kind of machine
that hums to suggest a terrible strength
who would ever need to throw
their very mind so quickly down
 and strike the page with force terrific
 would that the mind
 were this specific with the zig
 wait zag bop yes let's
do some pop lolly zoom oh
 that's not a whoa yes
bad click idea ding at all
now start with the bare
 minimum fee
don't tax a man's reservoir

meaning isn't free
and freedom is a mean wage
 for our labors at this
station making recycled word-garments
 thank the lord for the joys
of the factory

5 April

Celebrate the season
and work on your career
you don't need
a reason
 to think (or not!)

about Korea

hope to see ya
when you've come across
that old explosive glee
you might not be a miracle
but you sure are aimed for me

once or twice
with oh my lord
what an integral swagger
we dared along the
lines of an embrace
with
 out limit

just in case
you take me up
on the moans I've tried
to keep implicit
who knows what kind

of a song we'll write
next time you come
for a three-day visit

it must conflate
your several values
in ways that mingle
your eyes with crazy
but the lurid visions
you may conjure up
to arouse your silly hands
oh that they pantomime
out to a coming attraction

why only a fraction
of our illiberal sweetness
we so far color
plausible simply
such dear dear episodes
of this parietal fever

don't justify your manners
can you see
oh how and why
and why
and how
they make me happy?

I suppose it will do
for this moment to study
the body of your work
but my mind so happens
to nurse a delight
for the work of your body
sound
of

thought
not
quite
but
sharp
deep
slow
wise
maybe

6 May

Hyperthymesia

a gift from the sky
don't dare you begin
to think that it all makes sense
why so complacent
then are you while
you bathe in the truth
but the truth is bathing
and splashing over me

Even still, pay heed
to the life of your city
and the city will love
you back

Every detail retained? Far from it
but enough that there will never be
adequate time to swallow
fast enough

Communion with Mezzanine (19 June)

Up in this loft
I commune with you Mezzanine
for your mind is
confection

of artifacts
and together
the weather favors
the prepared mind
which is to say
the ready hand
could we have planned
what sea and land
envelops our
 moments
 in
 super
 calligraphic
world
 night
 picture
 signatures

Faced with confusions I
dwell in this loft
where you lived here
Miss Mezzanine
with drop chord
a power strip and
some kerosene
lamp light late scene
never seen such a
clear sight full moon
you ever been called
clever when the
true story board
looks like in facts
made to figurines
the solemn boards
of plywood cross legs
seated up top

perching over
 great messy message
 mighty jumbled up
 behold the garage!

28 July

something
 you might want to call
a stalker, a tyrant, or spy
roams about the
humid night
the ghosts of past July

singly
 tingling
 and doubly
 plural

in air like this
water hangs thick
brimming
so heavily
waterfalls threaten
to erupt from
any given cubic inch

Sunday, 13 November

Waiting for Renee
on a Sunday oh say
why would one not brood
in florid anticipation
which finally drips its way
down unto down town
world: a magic cyclone
of political confusion

wraps our daily lives
in a fearful embrace
American-made questions
piled up in the streets so
high like towers of Manhattan
or maybe Taibei
but set that aside let's
just have a nice day
Sunday why not go out
in the rain to play
a daydream far-gone
ah yes, that's okay
set the mind to relay
while debating
 am I writing
or waiting
 nail biting
 or stating
my own methods, okay
now no need to pray
just watch the rain fall
and write the time away
while waiting for a stranger
Leland lady college teacher
named Renee, who's not
arrived, she may!

Ides of November

November unfolding
the weight of landscapes
placed upon scales
which balance entails
the judgment of morning
and the wail of motors
with a trickle of sirens

calling on the avenue

nothing is perfect
but all can be noticed
beneath the high ceilings
and above the rotten planks

it's good to give thanks
for the chill that autumn
 Saturday sunlight disclosing
so I crawl my way
 back to civility

29 November

the solids in space
and fixtures of life
with a curve to the map
and a tilt to the clocks

too rapid in pace
but more wonder to things
so avoid the great trap
and dismantle the locks

the odometer rolls
like long highway codes
the windows get stuck and
the paint job erodes so
don't believe in the polls
shift through the modes
but don't sneer at good luck
and take old timey roads

Up to Castle Hayne!
fresh cut flowers
in a memory chain!

out out beyond the edge
where the wayer ripens
to a silent pledge

it takes a little touch
of a desperate heart's pulse
on time
off center

Patience #1

try cold weather
if you still
have any
the spine of our
inner demon
buckles
in the wind
of a winter band
in the hinter
land
we're locked
up
with full
cup
brimming
lights
dimming
in the palace
of holy December

Patience #2

falling in splendor
through
the kudzu valley
the pockets of light

spraying the
traffic jam
canopy
blind
and electric
combination
sympathy show
took my time
descending
and bathing
in the season's
icy basin

24 December #1

strangely long
the drive north west
from Wilmington
but so it would be
the sky to the left
of my silver wagon
a flaming turret
of sunset clouds
streaming toward heaven
against the Tarheel ceiling
which shimmers in
a breathless dance of
pain, lamenting
the curse, the broken
chances, the atrocities
hidden in the district
lines, and so too the sky
itself broadcasting
a silent judgment

14 January (St. James Integration Day)

the seed of our victory
was hidden from view
once upon a time
in the fortress embedded
far below our sidewalks
where memory persists
on some auspicious evening
we will swagger on down
and dig up the keys
in the spot by the river
where bygone days saw them
discarded in simmering
darkness triumphant
but those were the old days
when we were scattered, and few

Patience #8

the tiny
 ceremonies
that we pepper
 upon day
 after week
 have to play
hide and seek
 write a letter
to focus
this episode
on worthy
 flavors of
 devotion

Patience #9

the unremarkable sounds of Sunday

with canine shouts, autos running
with smooth thrums
 or grinding jingles
the tingles
 that spread
through limbs
 left still
 co-mingle
with dread
also known
 as free will
take leave
from this history
 of invincible
 delusions!

25 March

give me clarity
 or hold what's left
 away from the clouded
days-end motley lightning as close
 to yourself
that you'll hardly resist
the seizure of your spirit
by the doldrums in the heart
it makes me fall apart
when I daydream on
my former states of
warmth and unity
professions of kindly
long-form kept company
it's what I had it seems
 or so thought
 and yet think
I blink a few nettles
 of meditation combat

against the sorrows
that derive
 from fatigue
in the arenas
 where love
to my central
 nervous system
is under attack
 every single waking moment
I can't
 continue charades
for eternities
 in the absence
of pardon for the
 crime of being earnest

and yet I shall not lean for pity
seeing no need for such
 desperate kickstart
kerosene measures
of fast resort
it wouldn't work out
for I'd balk at the handoff
of dignity, fearing
its thorough completeness

if someone is looking out for me
(of course there are several)
I hope they knew
what they were getting into

and there it goes
in the ink unleashing
another unhelpful
menace

 away from me
to cast that back
to places where
my mind may count upon
a respite
and soul can
 contemplate
 something akin
to a sign, an omen,
magic yearning
a reward would be nice
but for a moment I'll endure
with only a word from
the oracle, a song from the muse
any of them, don't think
I won't be ready
when it's the occasion
to summon everything
that churns in my character

Big Night

I am feeling
the outlines
of a trouble
that will not slow
nor yield
 nor glower
it falls upon me
keeping watch
while the raindrops
only lend their
say so
to this miracle
running on
 empty

29 April (Real Estate)

timely do I infiltrate
the parcels and the plots
I move myself to demonstrate
the methods of our knots
that tie our lives to compensate
for failures in our thoughts
I am the beast called real estate
and I cry in empty lots

the public baffled by my nerves
these conduits of motion
by crooked lines and quantum curves
the city shows devotion
my glory plainly dear deserves
your most sincere emotions
for me each little atom swerves
so careful with your notions!

(for) surely as we correlate
the causes and effects
no simple plan or estimate
that won't be made complex
when life declines to circulate
a shuffling of the decks
may clear the way to meditate
what will we think of next!

25 July: Public Radio

Nothing rhymes with Orange Street
where once or twice
I keep the beat
of your advice
drumming
 behind my navel
something makes the tea sweet
but take a swing
so here repeat
to be a king
thriving
 among vocations
touching where our ears meet
the summer verbs
should secrets neat
laid on the curbs
slaving
 in your programs