

St. Mary's Art Cloister

St. Mary's Art Cloister

A Collection of Poems

By Doug Tanoury



FUNKY DOG
PUBLISHING



St. Mary's Art Cloister

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DETROIT, MICHIGAN USA



Printed on recycled paper

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St. Mary's Art Cloister

A Walk Down Main Street

It's Sunday morning,
And I'm walking
Down Main Street
Between East Third
And East Fourth.

The sky is clear and
The sun is 30 degrees
On the eastern horizon
Between the two and
Three o'clock positions.

The light is bright
With shadows deep and
And streets quiet
And mostly empty
Like a Hopper painting.

I walk on the sunny side,
Which is the western,
Washed in light and
Cast a long shadow with
Lanky arms that sway.

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Blue Flame

The early evening sky
Just after sunset
Glow in deep blue
Jets of burning gas

Above brushstrokes
That paint a nimbus
Of peach that rises
Softly above silhouetted

Treetops on the Horizon
And the black enamel
That forms the smooth
Surface of a summer night

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Impatiens

The impatiens I planted
In June are withering
Their stems growing skinny
And gaunt like patients
In a cancer ward

But I am not ready
To let this season go
And cling to it like a
Yellowjacket traversing
A sunflower's radius

Through dandelion days
And topaz twilights
I've walked barefoot on
Lawns cut like jade
As cool gemstones

I refuse to yield the season
Lifting a drooping blossom
Of faded color
Upright once again
To its June position

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The Sleeping Gypsy

At night as I sleep
It sneaks with great stealth
Onto my bed,
Walks across my chest without weight
And seems to hover in mid-air near my head,
Putting its face to my face,
Its nose to my nose,
Its breath mingling with my own.
I often stir and awaken to see its eyes
Staring into mine
Like some nocturnal apparition,
Perhaps there,
Perhaps not.

I imagine myself the sleeping gypsy,
In a painting by Rousseau,
That peacefully dreams
In a purple night under the fullness of an ivory moon,
A jug of wine and mandolin by my side,
While a cat stands like a statue over me,
A dark spirit of the shadows.

Silent and still it crouches sphinx-like
On the windowsill
With only the motion,
A slow and snaking movement of its tail.
The body of a cat
With a human face
That watches the sky lighten
Just beyond the sycamores
In the predawn
And listens to the birds sing.

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Head Of An Angel

I hold my breath and smile
At a vision of pure whiteness,
At long and thick, fleece like hair
Forming a nimbus around
Gentle features, expressing
A peaceful softness
That makes me believe
She has seen God.

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Arrangement In Gray

Mist on Manhattan this morning
Was framed in my window like a
Poorly exposed black and white print

With graininess graduating to fog
Subduing the sharp geometry
Of the skyline with softened definitions

Blurred lines and intimation
Of forms a black and white tug
Pushes a barge up the Hudson

As sky and buildings and water
All blend into an abstract landscape
Colorless like Nebraska in January

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Back Of A Seated Nude

In Rivera's Nude there is no trace of softness
And no hint of the sensual but only a certain
Hardness that is withdrawal and a coldness
That is retreat in a pose completely closed

And one who looks at her feels this must be
The woman formed in clay before God's breath
Or it is Eve repentant in shame after tasting
Forbidden fruit and feeding it to man

The sharp line of her spine curves upward
Her head is bowed downward and
She is a flower closed and unopened with
Petals folded tightly and hidden in a bud

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Bathers

Together in a bath drinking
Monterey chardonnay with
Bubbles on my hand I lift
Faceted crystal to my lips
And smile at her and say the
Wine tastes of Autumn days

Leaning back against her
The water softly gurgles
As I sip breathing in the
Scent and smile at her
And say the wine has the
Fragrance of November air

My glass resting on the
Tub's ledge flashes in
Candlelight and I smile
And say my wine is wholly
Golden like dunes by the sea
On the road to Monterey

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Nude with Calla Lilies

In Rivera's painting there is
No face for it is a portrait
Of form a study of shape

Symmetry and balance that is
A woman in a Viridian pose
Her body in bloom

Crouched on a straw mat
The soles of her feet cross
Simply beneath her

Like leaves under a blossom
Lilies in a wicker basket
Before her

Stand in contrast to the
Strict order that frames
Them

And the straight and curved line
That rises from ass to spine
To part her hair

Her arms spread like stems
Supporting of weight of
Blossoms

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Portrait Of Madame Cézanne

Together we study a portrait
She giggles and I snort
At the stiff posture in a painting
Of Madame Cézanne

Her jaw set crossly
Framing lips unsmiling
Her eyes reduced to narrow slits
That serve to hold in all the rage

But she sits for him as he paints
Cursing him as he works and
Complaining of having no money
To buy food and clothes

Her anger remains sitting long
After she has left and he continues
To paint a portrait of poor relations
A still life of unripe fruit

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Where is Chagall

In a quiet gallery standing before
Fanch Ledan's painting:
Chagall in the South of France
I ask in a whisper "*Where is Chagall?*"

I search the work for some painter's trick
That's hid a portrait in this piece
I check to ensure my reading is right
An ask it again "*Where is Chagall?*"

Out of sight on the terrace viewing the night
Out in the garden just smelling the air or
Off to the store to buy wine and some bread
Leaving me with the question "*Where is Chagall?*"

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Cool Ashes

In mornings that are mostly gray
Clouds crowd the horizons
And cluster and congregate
In tight formations across the sky

Like poured cement they blanket
The blue brightness of summer
With concrete thickness that
Pancakes across the sunrise

Until cracks form where light
Grows and graduates to patches
As dullness buckles and heaves
And sinks slow below the horizon

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Dark Sky

In dark Van Gogh skies
Purple with pasty clouds
Crowds of crows fly above
Disturbed fields

Wheat marked with motion
Of wind made waves in
Golden grain the color of
Sunlit water

Blonde waves rise from
A landscape of violet
And gold punctuated by
Black waves

Flying into threatening skies
From fields stretching
Flattened by wind of an
Oncoming storm

Despair rises to the height
Of a crow's caw on a March
Morning after sunrise blocked
By clouds

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Flight

We all know
I want to super glue feathers
To my arms and make an Icarus-
Like escape, leave my old earth-
Bound problems and test my wings
On the warm air of a June morning,
To fly up and down my street
Just above treetops, until the
Neighbor women come to their doors
Looking out, looking up, shielding
Their eyes and squinting to see
Me set against the sun, white winged
And naked, spiraling upward,
Climbing until I am one small dot
Winking out of sight, swallowed
In a deep blue sky.

My ears filled with the wind,
My eyes half closed against the
Rush of air as I rise to
Discover what we all know,
Touch its face and wrap my arms
Around its neck, up where the
Velcro backs of clouds
Meet the fabric of sky.

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In A Spanish Garden

In a Spanish garden tall palms grow
Bordering arched walkways where
Hibiscus and Birds of Paradise bloom
In large terra cotta pots.
On sunlit mornings
I am drawn by the sound of fountains.
Their silver streams like
Pillars supporting a perfect sky.
As Bronze turtles swim in spray
Near terrace walls in mosaics
Of brightly colored tile
That recall Van Gogh's
Trees In The Asylum Garden.

Madness is a kind of remembering
As roof tiles in clear sunlight
Take me back to a churchyard
At noontime recess,
Were children's voices
Echo up the clerestory
To a sea of terra cotta roof tiles
Creating a pattern of light
And shadow to study
Through classroom windows
As nuns lecture on topics far away
From palms, exotic and surreal,
In a Spanish garden.

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Gray Nude

In the dim light of December Afternoons
She is a shadow moving from bath to bedroom
Wearing twilight

Like a loose robe that falls open to reveal
A silhouette of breasts a dark profile of legs
Curved thighs

The touch of her still wet hair against my cheek
That afterbath scent of jasmine surrounding
Her skin

As I capture a shadow odalisque stretching over me
By breathing in and holding her deep within
My chest

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*Poem in opposition
To Del Corey's elaboration
Of Doug Tanoury's reaction
To William Carols William's
Depiction of Bruegel's
Rendition of Applodorus'
Retelling of Ovid's variation
Of Virgil's description of
Hesiod's account of Icarus
In flight.*

Icarus running across a field,
Wings extended to the sea breeze
Whistling in his ears, feet
Sinking slightly with each stride
Into soil softened by spring,
As wind catches wings and
Slowly lifts. Footprints trailing
To the center of the field
Abruptly stop, magically vanish.

Green covers the eastern hills.
To the west the sea colors the
Horizon pale hues of blue and
Green beneath white clouds,
As a farmer plodding slowly
Across his field stops behind his
Plow to wipe sweat from his face
And neck, and begins trudging on
Again, turning up clods of soft
Black soil, breathing the smell
Of moist earth and grasses come alive.

In the distance a splash goes unseen,
A dolphin riding upright on its tail,
Dancing on the polished blue topaz
Surface of the sea, nose pointed skyward,
Eyes shut, offering a mouthful of
Feathers to the sun.

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Icarus Undaunted

I want to fly
With feathered and waxen
Wings, to escape from
My escape from
My escape gone awry,
To rise so high above
The common and mundane
That I lose sight of the earth
And see only a thick covering
Of clouds far below.
I want these home-made wings
To uplift me to ethereal reaches,
Until my terrestrial life
Left behind and earthbound
Fades into nothing
Like the thin mauve line
That is the horizon and
Separates the light blue sky
From the light blue sky.
I want to barrel roll,
Unseen, in the jetstream,
Speeding blindly into clouds,
The wind cheering in my ears,
Pushing my eyes shut
In the onrush,
Up, up, in graceful spirals up,
Up where the only smell
That hangs in the air
Is the breath of God.

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Icarus Upward

I want to stretch out my arms
Like Icarus wings and rise up
Into heaven's unstained blue

I want to glide gently in long
Slow spirals up and up and up
Until my world shrinks below

And all my troubles become
Little and hard to see from
Greater and greater height

Where the air is thinly cold and
I pass through clouds emerging
Again in bright sunlight above them

To spin, roll and tumble above
All eyes in lone and solitary
Sweeping rising lifting motion

Head bowed against the wind
In solar benediction and divine
Highest homage speeding upward

To brush the upper lip, tickle the
Nostrils and touch the cheek of
That which lifts me mercifully up

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Hesiod and the Muse

In Moreau's painting "Hesiod and the Muse"
There is a preponderance of blue
That softens the sky and subdues everything
Into a twilight background

Except the poet who stands naked with his lyre
Embraced by a winged Muse
A long sword hanging from her girdle
She seems to hover somehow above him

Hesiod wears a garland of laurel like a nimbus
His face androgynous his features feminine and fair
More light in frame and delicate in form
Than the Muse that supports him

Not a farmer not a sailor not a craftsman
But one who sits on soft pillows
And sips sweet nectar at the table of the gods
Hesiod is painted a poet

Suspended in the blueness of sky
There is a temple a single bright star
And winged creatures fly far above
The ground where blossoms touch bare feet

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Icarus In Winter

I want to take a running start
Stretching out my arms and like
A white winged Icarus be uplifted

My footprints in the snow stop
Midstride and vanish at the spot
Where my feet become airborne

Raising my legs arms outstretched
Rising into the chilling air of a
Sunday afternoon in February

Throwing back my head, opening
My mouth and closing my eyes
Against the force of speeding wind

As I race white wings swept back
Slightly in the wind as I streak
Into dark clouds purple with snow

And in the gloomy interior of winter
Clouds ice on my lashes seal my eyes
Shut to the darkened swirling mists

Where it not for the cloud cover and
My eyes frozen shut I could see God's
Face clear and unhidden this moment

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Indian Ink

After sunset the pastel colors
Of summer dresses seems to
Hang above the west horizon

In an evening that undresses slow
Twirling buttons and rubbing seams
Fingering each soft fold of fabric

The sky glows indigo with the faded
Blue of old tattoos that stretch
Across this bare shoulder of night

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Ionic Green

I have been napping in the shade
Where ash and maple leaves mingle
Together to form a high arbor
That is ornate and finely sculpted

Like a cathedral's vaulted ceiling
Adorned in classical patterns
Of intertwining foliage
I lay in the house of the Lord

As the sun lights leaves and branches
Like large panels of stained glass
In panes of brightness and shadow
I lay like the remains of a dead saint

Arms folded solemnly across my chest
I rest like a relic under a marble altar
In half-light and silence I dream
Beneath a domed sanctuary

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Lyrical Pink

The geraniums and begonias
In baskets hanging from the
Front-Porch awning bloom
In half-hues of violet

And wash-tints of lavender
That Punctuate green leaves
In many places with petals as
Delicate as insect wings

In evening their flowers
Are sunrise in the trees
In a still life of morning light
That is poetry in pigment

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El Paseo De Los Melancólicos

If I walked in Rivera's landscape
Along a path bordered in darkness
There is light in the distance

Where the sun through the trees
Paints a bright pattern on the ground
And I know it is a long walk

From darkness that gives way only
Grudgingly in small spots that
Grow in intensity toward brilliance

The stark verticals of pines are balanced
By the long horizontal of hedge in a vision
Where opposites meet quietly

In the coolness of shade in the silence
Of foliage and if I walked down this
Twilight toward a distant daylight

I would remember the smell of pines
And earth and the sunlight in broken
Windowpane patterns on the path

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Picture Of Natasha Gellman

In Rivera's portrait a woman in white
Reclines on a sofa the slit in her dress
Opens like a lily and her legs
Extend like the pistils from a blossom

Calla lilies in the background seem to
Follow her form in flower and mirror
The soft horizontal angle of legs
The slight vertical attitude of torso

And one who looks on her is left wondering
If she is a mere reflection of the lilies
Or if the stems and blossoms are just
A sort of shadow that she alone can cast

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Obsidian Glass

The lake at night reflects moonlight
In each faceted wave and ripple
Carved upon its surface

The water gives darkness substance
The wind and waves the sounds
Of breathing metered by sleep

In an evening that stretches out
Peacefully and silent like a vagrant
Passed out in the park

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Paper Wings

She is a white-winged maiden
That Chagall might paint
Floating across a sky of lapis lazuli
Carrying a single feather
In her hand

Tilted slightly in attitude
And speeding azimuth
She flies on paper wings
Not her own
But that I alone give her

To a schoolboy she is
The first day of summer vacation
And exhales the warm air
Of June mornings
Holding hope
Promise and all things
Not yet here

She sings glad tidings
With a child's voice and
Tickles me with
The white feather of newness

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Las Sandias

In Rivera's painting melons are
Sliced and resting ripe crimson
Bordered in bone-white rind open
And inviting on a green wooden table

That is the matching color of the melon
Skins themselves and veins of black seeds
Dot through the meat and accent its
Redness and deepen its lushness

The one piece bitten waits for the unseen
Hand that set it down to pick it up again
And lift it to lips and tongue that are the
Matching color of the melon's ripeness

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Spirits

In Paul Gauguin's *Spirit of the Dead Watching*
Like a coconut on the sand a nude lays on a bed
A series of gentle curves and hemispheres posed
As a stilllife of bowl and fruit on a table

Her body full to fleshy thresholds of softness
In quiet loveliness she waits her hair smells of
Green jungle her skin holds a residue of sea salt
And her movements are slow and beautiful

As palm branches move slightly in a trace
Of breeze she lifts a leg raises an arm turns her head
Dreaming of the touch that will call her limbs
To life again and again and again and again

Her breast buried in the bedding their aureoles
Pale pink almost a mauve against the darkness
Of her skin they are a trace of iridescence that is the
Ocean sky just before sunrise and just after sunset

The yellow-eyed spirit of death sits in the background
In cold vertical contrast stiff erect and shrouded
Silently watching the horizontal form stretched
On a bed hiding a smile with her hand.

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Sunday Morning

In bed on Sunday morning,
She runs her big toe lazily
Up and down my naked calf
Leaving thin white lines
Where her toenail meets my skin.
She says she loves me, and I say
My heart is a trailer park
Crowded with feelings for her.
She asks innocently,
"Lots of feelings?"

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The Flower Carrier

In Rivera's painting of a flower carrier
A man struggles with a burden of a
Basket of blossoms and he seems small
And unable to stand under its weight

A woman helping is large like the burden
Tied to his back and accentuates his weakness
As he crawls with knees and walks with hands
In a pose that is Christ beneath His cross

In the stark angles of a prone figure trying to rise
Verticals of arms balance the horizontals of legs
And a tilted torso compliments the diagonal
Of the blanket that binds the basket to his back

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The Woods Edge

In Sargent's rendering of Monet
Painting at the woods edge the
Grass is golden and a stand of birches
Whitens the wooded shadows

The brightness of grass and trees
Smell of linseed and oil paints
And Monsieur Monet's blue smock
Is the color of the unseen sky

Beneath a tree a woman in a white
Dress sits waiting and wearing
A small dab of golden grass as
Her hat on a summer afternoon

Her head turned arms folded distant
And bored as the master holds palette
And brush her dress spread on the grass
Whitens the wooded shadows

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Thunder Gray

Storm clouds pile up on the horizon
And I see classical shapes rising
Statue like in sculpted marble
Vaporous human forms float weightless

The bearded face of Zeus
A bare breast of Aphrodite
The torso of Apollo
A thigh of Artemis

As substance of stone changes
And Olympians melt into
Raw and uncut lapis against a
Deepening sapphire sky

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Venetian Light

Prisms form in beveled edges
Of Large glass windows
On Sunday afternoons

I study banded spectrums
And colored stratums
That grow from red to blue

Like notes on a musical scale
That touch and move me back
To a childhood wonder

As I position my hand to catch
In an open and upturned palm
All the wavelengths of light

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White Light

In a white-rope hammock
Strung between two trees
In my yard on afternoons

I lay nodding motionless
On webbing like a spider
Awaiting its prey

Stillness is my blanket
And quiet is my pillow as
I dream in cooling shade

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Wings Of Icarus

Was it as William's said
And Bruegel painted,
Icarus with

Wings that worked too well
Flying high over
A farmer

In the field, sweating
Behind his
Plough,

Never looking up to see
The flight of wax
And

Feather wings, never
Getting a chance
To laugh,

But a man, head bent
In practical pursuit.
Icarus

Looking down on him
Behind his plough
Far below

Smiling at slow progress
Across the field,
A trail

Of turned up earth, a
Thin line seen from
Great height

A single scene that let
Icarus fall happily to
The sea.

St. Mary's Art Cloister

About Doug Tanoury



Doug Tanoury is primarily a poet of the Internet with the majority of his work never leaving electronic form. His verse can be read at electronic magazines and journals across the world. Collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be found at Funky Dog Publishing <http://www.funkydogpublishing.com> and Athens Avenue <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/dtanoury1/Athens/index.htm>

This and other ebook collections of poetry by Doug Tanoury can be read and downloaded at: <http://home.comcast.net/~dtanoury1/Tanoury.html>

Doug grew up in Detroit, Michigan and still lives in the area.

Doug Tanoury credits his 7th grade poetry anthology from Sister Debra's English class, *Reflections On A Gift Of Watermelon Pickle And Other Modern Verse*, (Stephen Dunning, Edward Lueders and Hugh Smith, (c) 1966 by Scott Foresman & Company) as exerting the greatest influence on his work. He still keeps a copy of it at his writing desk.