

City Sonnets

City Sonnets

A Collections of Early Poems

By Doug Tanoury



FUNKY DOG PUBLISHING



City Sonnets

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DETROIT, MICHIGAN USA



Printed on recycled paper

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City Sonnets

City Sonnet I

What shall I do with my memories of you?
All the yesterdays are 50-gallon drums
Of toxic waste: soft quilted down filled
Nights, barefoot on the carpet, running
For coffee and cigarettes at 2 a.m.
Head resting on my chest, bronze hair
Polished with moonlight shining through
The bedroom sheers, the jewelry box that
Holds old love poems, brittle yellowed
Sheets that line the drawers, under
Cameo rings and carved coral earrings.
Yes, all the yesterdays are leaky drums
Of unstable mix that eats through the
Amber of every new morning.

City Sonnets

Sketches I - A Study In Metaphor

The wind pounding ropes
Against sailboat's masts
Makes the music
Of an oriental dance,
As we walk hand-in-hand
Along the pier,
Past sleek hulls
Rocking in their wells.

She stops for a moment
Letting me watch a
Sail out on the lake
Inflate until bulging
And bloated, like a
Fat Italian woman
In a too-tight corset
Taking in
A deep breath.

City Sonnets

Sketches II - A Study In Metaphor

A soup bowl
Slipped off a serving tray
In the cafeteria today,
Vegetable and broth
Puddled between pieces
Of shattered white china
That glistened
Mother-of-pearl fashion
In the bright
Florescent light,
Turning today's special
Into a shellfish smashed
Against the rocks.

City Sonnets

City Sonnet II.

Lying in the backyard hammock
On summer nights still and quiet,
Cool and dark, stretching out under
The pear tree like the bones of
St. Peter resting under the altar
Of a big Roman basilica.
Neither holy man nor saint,
Just a secular hermit hiding from
The world, from love and life,
From time and change, hiding from
Death that knows no right time,
Wrong time, beg your pardon, 'scuse
The interruption, but always barges in
Like someone selling Britannica door to door.

City Sonnets

July

At night,
The sprinkler on the front lawn
Makes exotic sounds,
Oscillating several streams of water.
One insects,
One birds,
And another
Distant native drums.
All blending to create
Background noises
Of a jungle night.

The garden house
And high-tech sprinkler
Are a pipeline to dark
And wild places,
Listening to their Congo sounds
Floating through the living room,
And marveling at
The white-man's magic.

City Sonnets

Brush Strokes

Cut flowers on the
Table simple
Blossoms

Of daffodils and tulips
In a green glass
Vase

Womanly gestures soften
The hard edges
Of me

Like a rose pink or pale
Lavender twilight
Washes

The streets changing
Perspective
By

Shifting shades cut flowers
Brush soft against me
A vision

Simple and touching like
A woman wearing a
Straw hat

City Sonnets

Law Of The Jungle

There are certain facts
About me that startled her,
As she saw me for the first time
Hairy in my nakedness.
She saw the strictly feeling part of me
That hides behind the man
Was an emotional gorilla
With enormous needs and
Animal wants, a powerful great ape
Surprisingly sensitive
And deeply vulnerable

She saw confusion, uncertainty
And pain in me and was moved.
And I saw I needed her
As King-Kong needed Fay Ray,
To somehow shelter me from
What I don't understand,
To reduce all problems and complexities
To the simplest of emotional terms:
To love and be loved.

City Sonnets

Jacob

I must have missed his passing
He comes to no more
Sunday

Dinners there was a whirlwind
And then no him no
Gray

Bearded framing a ready smile
No comic no relief
No high

Pitched laughter in the
Aftermath of
Quicker

Than the eye illusions I feel
His absence the hand
On my

Shoulder is gone I did not see
It pull away but felt it
Go and

Am left wondering how long until
We eat like Arabs again
Dipping

Fingers into a communal dish set
Between us on the
Table

City Sonnets

Winter Night

Headlights spotlight for a
Moment snow lying
Thick on

The next to nothing branches of
A sapling like delicate
Hands of

Young girls at Sunday service
In white linen gloves with
Lacey cuffs

Fragile branchlets meant to
Support the weight of a
Single sparrow

Hold a bridal train in lighter
Than the night illusion
Carry

It high and graceful in
The darkness broken
Only

For an instant by the
High beams of a
Turning car

City Sonnets

Bodies

Bodies intermeshed
With fine precision
Technical artistry,
Like Swiss movements,
Touching her, feeling the
Soft smoothness of her
Body against mine,
Acting out all the laws
Of Newtonian motion.

Hands touching her
Tenderly, with respect
And awe, holding her
With delicate care,
Gentle caution,
Like my grandfather's
Pocket watch.

City Sonnets

Sleepwalking

Footsteps echoing
Down dim-lit halls,
As dreams walk with
Steel-cleated heels
Across terrazzo floors
On the mezzanine
Of consciousness.

City Sonnets

Mason-Dixon Masters-Johnson Glory-Glory

My face nestled against her neck,
Heart pounding like galloping hoof beats
Of a company of cavalry,
Breathing hard, taking in
The smell of her skin,
A trace of lilac, a hint of lavender.
Making love with her
Is like war between the sheets,
I'm the North and she the South
As we attempt with frantic urgency
To determine who can most devastate
The other. A house divided cannot
Stand but must lay in union,
Mouth on mouth, flesh on flesh,
As kisses explode against her
Breasts like an artillery barrage
Falling on a farmer's field,
A tactic used to soften
Strategic positions.

Tongue blazing a trail across
Her abdomen like Sherman's
March to the sea, an elusive target
Always moving, slowly undulating
From the pelvis, pressing hot
Against my lips, burning like
Atlanta in flames. Her body is a
Plantation where pleasure grows.
The valleys and inclines of her
An underground railroad where
Fantasies escape the bondage of
The brain and find freedom in
The mortar-blasts of nerve endings.
Sinking into her churning reaches
Like the Merrimack engulfed
In choppy seas, she unconditionally
Surrenders:

Come, Johnny come, the war is over.
Set the sex slave free.

City Sonnets

Turtle Hunting With Butch

There were days in August
When we hunted turtles,
Waiting for mid-afternoon
When the sun was hottest.
Some days I still see us there,
Two boys in a wooden boat
Rowing to the far side of the lake
Where the tall reeds grew
And turtles slept in the sun
On fallen trees half sunken in
The water.

Ores onboard, we sat quietly.
My brother peering into the water,
Fishing net in hand, as I sat
Silently in the stern
Watching dragonflies frozen
For a moment in flight,
Their bodies slender
Tubes of hand-blown glass
Filled with pale blue neon.

My attention slowly drifting
Toward the water lilies,
A jumping bass or the
Shape of clouds, for I could not
Sit quietly with concentrated intent
Or wait as patiently as him.
I never caught a turtle, but always
Held them tightly, both hands
Wrapped around their shells
As Butch rowed us home.

City Sonnets

I Wanna be . . .

I want to be a successful survivalist,
Sitting cozy in my basement bomb shelter
With lead-lined walls, counting cans of
Spam and sliced cling peaches, lounging
About in my bathrobe, barefoot late into
The afternoon, cleaning a shotgun that's
Never been fired, running the pickup of
The Geiger counter across the walls, and
Trying to calculate the half-life of
Plutonium on my mini-computer

I want to be a successful survivalist,
Snacking on crackers and pimento olives,
Watching "Star Wars" on the video recorder,
With the volume turned up to shut out
The faint tapping of someone on the
Outside, pounding on the blast-proof
Ceiling with a lead pipe or slab of
Concrete, a slight noise, barely audible,
Like a mouse scurrying across the attic
Floor, annoying only because you know
What it is.

I want to be a successful survivalist,
Safe in my hideout in the holocaust,
My air pocket in the apocalypse, lying
Naked on a green army cot under a sun lamp,
Listening to Beethoven's "Pastoral",
Bathing in quadraphonic sound, trying not
To think of her buried in the radio dust,
Or maybe still alive, crawling through the
Ruins, sick and hungry, balding, bleeding
At the gums, perhaps pounding on my shelter
With a hunk of rubble, lifting it with her
Last strength.

I want to be a successful survivalist,
Spending the nights calculating the
Half-life of love.

City Sonnets

Humphrey Bogart Confessional Poem I

I'm enthralled by the myth of me.
That cool, smooth: *"Hi, how are you?"*
With real emotion, my I-care expressions.
I'm growing happy with myself,
As I play Casablanca like scenes,
Confident that I know the lines,
Planning to trump the world,
Checkmate an unreasoning fate.

I want a simple pretty world
Without remorse, without wasted time
Or talent gone awry, a world where
Intellect serves desire and everyone
Serves themselves, I want the dark
And cozy life of Rick's American Cafe
Where all the world's problems fit
Into a shot glass.

Where I can always say to favors asked:
"I don't get involved sweetheart."

City Sonnets

City Sonnet III

Tongues the wings of office news
Let fly the tale of me and you.
Something wild is loose that
Cannot be contained, like an ill
Tempered dog finally free of
Its chain and over the fence
In one easy leap. The typist's
Whispering in the lounge sounds
Like canine panting, clerks giggling
In the washroom documenting
With mocking pen on tiled walls
The shocking man bites dog details
Of me and you, as we mock argue in the hall,
Which of us the man and which the dog.

City Sonnets

Detroit Drunk

Stick this old drunk in the ground.
He slept many a Detroit night
Oblivious to the stars, after many
A drunken day stumbling along city
Sidewalks, and now he goes on
His longest binge with death
That great eternal hiccup
That cannot be suppressed.
Bury him with only a number
To mark the spot where his lips
Will forever lust for bottles of
Amber glass.

City Sonnets

Peter's Poem

I asked her for his last poem
Handing on the wall
And I thought: . . .
"Like Joseph of Aramethia
Petitioning Pilate for the
Body of Christ."
She snatched it down:
"Petition granted."

I was a stranger to him,
Yet it was special and
Moving to me, so when
I write my last poem
Give it freely to strangers,
Let no one ask
Just give it away.

My last work containing
All I am, all I was,
All I would ever be,
Retitle it: "Corpus Christi",
for me, and just give it away
For people who never
Knew me to read.

City Sonnets

Historical Inventory

I'm far from being a Pericles,
Diogenese, a Sophocles, Socrates,
Alcibiades, Aristophanes,
A Romulus, Augustus, Titus,
Cattulus, a Gracchus, Fabius,
A Marius, Solan or a Sulla,
A Cato, Plato, Cicero or
Caesar.

I'm more of a helot than a
Homeric hero; I lacked the traits
Revered in minstrel's songs
Or chanted by the ancient bards
In hundreds of exotic tongues
In the heyday of antiquity.

But late at night in that
Lullaby limbo, half awake and
Half asleep, I hear the marching
Of a host of men, the catcalls
Of the Gauls, the grumbling of
The Nubians and the trumpeting
Of elephants high in the Alps.

City Sonnets

Skylab Is Falling - A Heckler's Prayer

To commemorate the falling of Skylab in the summer of 1979

Come on you space age restroom
Come on home and roost
Plop yourself down in my garden
Cook my vegetables
Splatter my tomatoes and squash
Across three counties
Rocket my radishes straight
Through to China
Come on you cosmic kitchen
Come on and crash
Let me wake up one morning
And see you smoldering and
Sizzling where my car is
Suppose to be
Come on lets see you
Crush my Chrysler
You billion-dollar derelict
You starlight dancer
Hit me while I'm bored and
Sprawled out on my lawn
On a summer night
Hit me while I'm out there
Half-asleep listening to the
Couple next-door screaming
And cursing at each other
Come on swoop out of the sky
Like a bird of prey and
Snuff me out
Those two next door won't even
Notice your mass of molten metal
Burning up the lawn
Glowing red in the moonlight
Their angry shouts will drown out
The snap, crackle and pop
Of me beneath you

City Sonnets

Song Of The Cedars

Your church bells ring shrill in the mountain air,
Like a woman's cries lamenting the loss of her children,
Your sons scattered as widely as your holy wood,
Toward every point on a sailor's compass, your daughters
Carried off to the hinterlands like Europa speeding off
On the back of Zeus, yet the miles and years never dim
Their memory of you, a mountain village hidden in the
Shadows of the cedar groves, telling their children of
The land they left and the magic trees that sucked up
The spirit and strength of the mountains they grew on.

Cedars for boats manned by dark skinned sailors,
Laden with colored glass and polished brass,
Billowing crimson sails cutting across a purple sea
In the twilight dawn of history, speeding west bound for
Cyprus, Crete and Carthage, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica,
Out beyond the Pillars of Heracles, bouncing on the
Tall waves of the Dark Sea in tiny boats of mountain wood.
Cedars marked for Egypt and the tombs of pharaohs, the
Babylonian palaces of Nebuchadnezzar and Tiglath-pileser,
For Judea and Solomon's temple, the palaces of Byzantium,
Mosques of Islam, crusader's castles, basilicas in Rome,
Cathedrals in France, cedars tumbling down the slopes,
The mountains echoing their fall, their thundering crash.

Your church bells ring shrill in the morning air,
As sheep graze in the valley, and men ride donkeys
Down winding trails, but your cedars are gone,
Felled and spent years ago and have followed the
Old Phoenician glory into the twilight dusk of antiquity,
Olive groves now grace the slopes, and the only
Thunder that echoes in the mountains are the sonic booms
Of Syrian MIGs jetting over the snowcapped peaks.

City Sonnets

Matthew

He sits close to me
On the living room floor
When we watch television
In the evening,
Leaning his back against me
As if I were a recliner
As we sit quietly in closeness.

When we walk far back in the yard,
Out by the apple tree,
He asks me hard questions
Like: "Where do apples come from?"
Or: "*Who makes the grass?*"
And to his questions
I mostly answer, "*God,
God does it boy.*"

He nods satisfied,
Agrees and adds that God has
Very long arms and
Giant like legs to reach everything
All at once, and I nod my head
And we agree again.

City Sonnets

Commuter Poem I – St. Joe's

Silhouetted in sunrise,
The gothic spires of
Old St. Joseph's towers
Through the fog, drifting
Up in weightless harmony
Of power and grace, each
Stone cut with a Latin hymn,
Hammered into place by
A booming "Hosanna!".

City Sonnets

Humphrey Bogart Confessional Poem II

I want to take off
My Bogart mask,
My red cumberbun
And white dinner jacket,
Undo my bowtie,
And for once,
Just this once,
I want to hold you
In the same way
That I need you.

You'd never know,
Would you,
That transforming
Feelings into words
Was my craft,
A long practiced passion.
(People are full
Of contradictions.)
So let me say
That there is much
I haven't said to you.
The most important feelings
Have gone unexpressed.

It's too late now,
No matter what I say
Or how tightly I hold you,
I've got a feeling
Something's going to happen
That you have never
Seen before.
I think Bogart's
Going to cry.

City Sonnets

Commuter Poem II - USDA

Standing in a crowded bus,
Gripping the overhead rail,
Swaying like a whole side
Of beef dangling from a
Freezer hook, feeling bodies
Press against me as the
Coach rolls.

City Sonnets

Reflections On Huron

The lake is calm tonight,
The waves whisper soft against the shore,
Exhaling quiet sighs like
Satisfied lovers floating off to sleep.
The moon lies fair
Upon your hair, come sit on the sand,
Smell the night breeze, the
Lakes breath sprinkled with the homesick
Dreams of sleeping sailors;
Listen, hear the chamber music of the
Water coyly probing the land,
Like the trembling hands of a virgin bride
On a midnight voyage of
Discovery; Sappho heard it long ago on
The island shores of Lesbos,
And it brought to mind a lover's touch,
A brushing, barely touching
Like tremulous fingers trailing lightly
Along her skin; we also feel
It sitting here on the shores of this
Great inland sea, the lake
Stretching out before us, sleeping in
Stillness like a dreaming lover,
Even more beautiful in sleep; ringlets
Of moonlight bubble on the
Wavelets softly patting the sand in
A slow steady beat, like a mother gently
Patting her baby's back,
Rocking, slowly rocking; feel the water's
Lulling touch washing tones of
Tenderness, and not a note of sadness in;
Lets be true to love,
You and me, never forgetting that even
In the darkest night,
There's light, joy, love, peace and
Help from pain, for you
Know the world is only partially insane;
Let's put aside our childish
Fright, forget the things that clash
In the night.

City Sonnets

City Sonnet IV

I collect pieces of time like the seashells
That line the shadowbox echoing forever
The sound of the surf. The what was and
Them that were are so many Rockwell
Prints hung along the low walls of consciousness,
Butterflies in a glass mounting far
From the wildflowers , beyond the fields,
Gathering moments like a housewife
Collecting Hummels, turning them delicately
Fingers gently brushing the fine details,
Emotions frozen on porcelain faces.
The painted eyes holding the knowledge
That the sea resounds in tiny shells and
Memory is the hearts highest function.

City Sonnets

Lake Huron

Something draws me
To this stony beach in autumn
To fill my pockets with
Fossil mollusks, sponges,
Coral and all Precambrian
Squiggly crawllys
Frozen in limestone.

Fossils always make me
Thoughtful, that a bit of life
Lies frozen in the clay,
An invertebrate version of
Lot's wife, Godless little
Creatures good only for gravel,
Or to end in the pockets of a
Thirteen-year-old boy.

I remember this beach
When the fossils were younger
And I used to walk down to
Watch the October sun rise
Over the waves before I'd
Walk to the highway and wait
For the school bus, my pockets
Bulging with quartz filled sponges
And crystallized coral.

Something draws me to this beach
In autumn, leads me through
Sedimentary outcroppings formed
By running time, illustrating all
The strata of me and fossil
Fragments exposed to the waves.

City Sonnets

Urban Ceramic

All my images
Have been kiln dried,
Fractured like potter's clay
Let bake too long,
A poor imitation,
A caricature distortion
Of a Grecian urn,
Not polychromed,
Depicting no heroic Heracles,
No Ledo and the swan,
No Echo, No Narcissus,
No myth.
No pictures,
No story,
But sitting dull gray,
Fracture lines thin
As Gossamer.
These days I am a clay vase
Forgotten at the well.

City Sonnets

Bless My Feet

Lord, bless my feet,
Shed your divine grace,
On these dusty old dogs,
That I might sidestep sadness,
Pivot around pain,
And tango wildly just
Out of tragedy's reach.

Lord, bless my feet,
Buttress these fallen arches,
Grant them swiftness
Like the winged ankles of Hermes,
Let me fly from misfortune
And book from badness
In its many forms.

Lord, bless my feet,
So I may can-can in a chorus
Of catastrophes and be untouched,
Let me always stay in step
With those I love, so I may
Dance happily through life
Amen.

City Sonnets

Basement Study

It's easier for a pickup
To pass through the eye
Of a needle than for me
To write a poem, go
Stick my heart in the
Microwave and press the
Timed-cook button
For there's no poetry,
Nothing sacred left in me.

The dampness in the basement
Makes the ditto copies fade.
All my words are running,
Accelerated by wet and mildew,
Until everything is just
So many blue smudges
Stuffed in basement boxes
With dolls with no heads
And kiddy's pallets of dried,
Cracked watercolors and
Brushes short of bristles.

City Sonnets

Pentecost Sunday

I find myself singing out loud
With the children at Sunday
Morning Mass, Where before
Only my lips moved in half -
Whispers. I notice my knee
Now touches the tile floor
Of the nave when I genuflect.
And I feel quietly changed.
As the priest an his prayers
Suddenly hold meaning
And move me in ways that
Approach fine poetry.

City Sonnets

City Sonnet V

You must be more than a classic sculpture, a fine
Portrait, an object of art. No illusion, no semblance
Of life. Your breasts must rise and fall, you must live,
If only in these lines.

Long after all who we know have passed into
Chiseled letters on weathered gray granite,
School children will see you leaning
On the kitchen counter, wearing a faded flower
Print housedress and squinting your eyes against
The sunlight shining through the big window.
No goddess, no divine feminine figure, no Venus
Rising, but flesh and bone you'll live
Because whenever pen touches paper the bottom line's
Been you.

City Sonnets

Woman In The Shower

The shower curtain inhales deep
And swells as she steps in.
Leaning, hands softly pressing the
White ceramic tile in delicate balance,
Standing, back arched, head tossed back
Glistening in the water beads
Like a fine marble figure in a
Renaissance fountain, alone in the
First dim light of sunrise
On the palazzo.

City Sonnets

Please

Lord,
How will you go about converting me,
Will you poke my brains with burning
Dreams, will you jab around in my chest
Like one trying to kindle an old fire,
Will you set me thrashing, sweating in
My bed, crying out in my sleep like
Scrooge on Christmas Eve, will you
Shatter me like a mirror by holding
Up an image of the man I might have been,
Or will you strike me from my horse,
Send me groping blindly in the dust of
Some Damascus road?

I'm much too stubborn for lightning bolts
And thunder, you've got to take a subtle
Approach with me, come on soft and sweet,
Move me tenderly, hit me full force with
A fistful of feathers in a velvet glove,
Touch me gently like flakes of snow that
Melt on the lips, pound me with a summer
Rain, humble me with a
plague of tulips,
Chastise me God,
Blast me with a warm breeze on a
Spring morning.

City Sonnets

Construction

I want strong action verbs,
That show the skilled workmanship
Of a master craftsman and hold up
A line of verse like Doric pillars
Carved from white marble,
Massive and powerful enough
To stand forever.

I want stanzas built to the
Beautifully classic proportions
Of a Greek temple,
A poem of careful construction,
Built like a Roman road
To take the reader
I don't know where.

City Sonnets

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 Doug Tanoury's poetry 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.