



**THE
UNDERWATER
TYPEWRITER**

MARC ZEGANS

The Underwater Typewriter by Marc Zegans

ISBN-10: 1938349296

ISBN-13: 978-1-938349-29-4

eISBN: 978-1-938349-36-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015942439

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An earlier version of “First Watch” appeared in *Ibbetson Street 34*, November 2013

“ephemere” first appeared in Lyrical, *The Somerville News*, April 16, 2014

An earlier version of “Anacoluthon” appeared in *The Wick*, Summer/Fall 2010

“requiem for a spoken word” first appeared in Lyrical, *The Somerville News*, July 24, 2013

“A Hipster Retires” first appeared in *Boston Small Press and Poetry Scene*, January 9, 2012

“Somerville” first appeared in Lyrical, *The Somerville Times*, January 18, 2012

Layout and Book Design by Mark Givens

First Pelekinesis Printing 2015

For information:

Pelekinesis, 112 Harvard Ave #65, Claremont, CA 91711 USA

http://pelekinesis.com/catalog/marc_zegans-the_underwater_typewriter.html

P(un)k Poets: Too Fucked to Drink

At round end of no corner bar
Me and Ripper backs to stage
Grab filthy glasses in plastic
Polynesia, tilt bottom shelf

Exhale and converse.

Behind us, shirtless, gobbed
in maggot wriggle, Jello
admonishes black and stinking
pogo crowd to be Republican

Never thinking

that one year hence, kill the poor
will find happy embrace in red
states more scared of welfare
than war, and tuck sunny Ron

In Washington

where healthy school lunch
is six french fries
and ketchup, not rotting
is a vegetable.

I remember the cop cars
burning that Dan White
night, but more I remember
the sidewalk outside Twin

Peaks, corner of Market

Home to freaks, long before
San Francisco urban chic
and ENG, new to me
pushing and shoving

Starting a riot.

That's the story never told
about that San Francisco
But I saw the news crews
Spiking rage, as spilt Milk

Mayor of Castro

and de-centered Moscone
were shoved aside, TV slap
at gay pride, and twinkie
excuse, kernel of conservative
human rights, now running

thirty years in low-tax CA
waiting for the day
when limited Government
would metastasize.

II

Short eyes
has become
short lines
frictionless
the times
demand
Williams
not Whitman

a pressure
constant
hard clash
words short
text words
un-vowel
no space
for air

fk u

the times
demand
Williams
not Whitman

Shall we
give way

capitu-late
or do it early.

The times
demand
Williams
not Whitman

Spondee on
Spondee

consonant
diamonds
bent light
facet play

a flash

The times
demand
Williams
not Whitman

III

Is it our work now to surrender long lines, to Howl no more, clicking
faster, clicking faster, clicking faster, till letters
are too much, too much information to see; till we pixel click our
way in a vaster, faster space of small screens isolated
but accessible? Is it our work now to surrender long lines, to turn
the dirt on Allen's grave, to give less and less and send
more and more and more? Is it time to drop the analogue growl of
John Lee singing Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom, Howl, Howl,
Howl, Howl, a different kind of howl, a wolf moanin' at midnight?
Is it time to gate that mouth, to muzzle the grit, to join
the raft of bits? Is it time? Is it time? Is it time? Is this any more a
question? Can time demand? Can there be a moment
on a virtual raft? "A moment?" Not moments! Not any moment!
"A moment?" A moment to move, time justified?

"Noooooooo!" Howls the clown prince.
In a world without foundation, not even time
not even these times, not even this moment
can announce anything. The times don't
give us an historical curl. We cannot
surf anymore to shore on "the times."
This time, it is on us. The times demand
nothing, but what will we demand of ourselves?

In Turns

the savage detector raised a fragment of glass,
green and refractive at the fracture line,
to the side of his forearm, and drew it
down along the bone in calligraphic

sweep, circling the knob on his wrist as if
it were a traffic roundabout, spitting
sparkling cars from its pinwheel teeth
the evanescent light of abrasion

traveling happy into night's swallow
knowing that more hearts were meant to follow
the expulsive force of a turning wheel
powered by a small boy soon grown tired

thumb reddened by the effort, and magic
waning as sparks simply became more sparks
to a popcorn filled, cotton candy sick child
walking slowly across steaming asphalt

to his family's dirty vinyl seated car,
inside of which he would ride home too tired
for sleep, the plastic pinwheel neglected
but not abandoned by achy fingers

from which it dangled for the full ride.
the savage detector drew now the glass
along the depression west of his thumb
as the sleepy child sliding into bed

crooked his arm, spun the wheel a final time
sending sparks deep into the green glass night.

Sunken Contents

In the moment of fall
the slur, the cut, the jibe,
mast snapping, decapitating,
wind driven swing of the boom,
roll over—you dropping too fast,
too deep for them to touch, much
less bring you level. Proclaimed Mingus
you can't be brought low when you are beneath
the underdog, and falling fast from that subjugated
position, humiliation is an indulgent luxury, consumed
by those who imagine that loss of position carries meaning
to the death. It is a meme thing that, a transmitted misreading
of self, soul and scripture that causes endless harm, inviting as it does
all manner of violent substitute for discourse. And that is the virtue of the drop.
When you fall fast and hard, your guts having long exited your mouth, your pain
a curiosity to those who watch you writhe, *and critical comment on some embarrassing
position*, from which you long departed, arriving perhaps through no fault of your own—chuff—
at a new, soon passed, lower place, its station sign black on white streaking by, as you descend
further still, no longer wondering when you will get off the train, but only will it slow down long enough
for you to see something of the landscape in clear focus—you pine for unblurred edges, for the considered
moment, a longing satisfied fleetingly if you are lucky, and you rarely are, or so you think, at such moments
doesn't really affect you. And so the nasty introject is not so much silenced as muffled by a deepening pool
of water that scatters light at its surface, bends it at the point of penetration, and absorbs it on the descent.

Those who have not taken the fall, imagine that when you hit “rock bottom,” you will be shattered utterly.
You like Humpty will be blown to bits, and them sorry-assed, domesticated minions who can't or won't
think for themselves will be powerless to help you, as if it were them you'd be turning to in the first place.
Yes the bottom is solid, but you reach it slow, your relative buoyancy rises as you plumb the depths, and
you bounce along the bottom as an astronaut walks the moon, light on your feet, but clumsy. Unlike the rising
astronaut's vacuum ballet, you are dancing in heavy liquid, you feel the compression at every turn.
If you remain, you will fold in, diminish, curl and deflate until you have become a hard point, a grain of sand,
visible, but unremarkable in every aspect, and there, washed by tide you will slowly and eternally recede.

We who arrive at this place are not broken, but we can barely move, and we can barely see. We cannot
speak, for to open our mouths would be to drown. In our wiser and more hopeful moments we simply
direct our eyes to where the light seems brightest and move as best we can in that direction,
rising slowly, stripping away the weights that have dragged us down, eschewing
the deadly density of the lower regions, pulling toward the surface slowly.

It is on the ascent that we have time to consider the landscape,
and consider it we must, or we will rise too fast, finding
ourselves crippled at the surface by our own blood
gasses. It is in the ascent that we learn
what lay beneath us, and how far
we had yet to come, before
we could speak truth,
our truth, in clear
and ringing
voice.

The Underwater Typewriter

She found me gathering urchins in the cove
at the feet of towering yellow kelp
rising quick to the surface with a stone
to crack the captured quarry on my chest
as I rode the pulsing swell off Point Lobos.

“Your whiskers are grey. You must have stories,”
she laughed, trailing me like a hungry gull.
“Tell me your tales, and the ways of Big Sur
while the sun still sparkles on these waters.”
I opened with legends of the Ohlone

told her of great grizzlies fishing the streams
of stocky, square-rigged galleons carrying
explorers and settlers up the coast
of families who tended the Point Sur Light
of writers, of hermits of medicine men

of musicians and poets and ranchers
and thieves, high in the Santa Lucias.
“You seem to know a lot about humans,”
she whistled, splashing with her hind flippers.
“Perhaps you will write it all down for me.”

I turned, diving deep into the kelp bed.
When I reached the ocean floor, she was there
laughing gently, opening her seal coat
placing a round-keyed Royal typewriter
in a rock cradle, incanting, “please begin.”

What is Hers

Grey lace, her thong hangs on the thin steel, black knob-
ended peg from my wood valet. She's left it as scent
marker, as trace memory, so I will not forget peeling
them from her cool white thighs, so I will not forget
her opening to me, so I will not forget her taste,
her tongue, her caress, her watered eyes,
her parted lips—full, reddened, younger
than her years—so I will not forget.

Hoop earrings: open-clasped, thin, bare, simple.
I thought they were silver, but laying so long
untarnished, I wonder now whether they might
be white gold—they cannot be platinum, too
warm for that—or perhaps something cheaper,
and the thought of that only deepens their elegance,
reminding me of her simplicity, her fragility, her taste.

Tiny cut glass, black beads on a crumpled brass
necklace, set deliberately under the earrings
on my French vanilla bathroom radiator.
She dropped the hoops days before
and added the chain later, gently
drawing my eye down, placed
quietly, answer perhaps,
after I saw and spoke
her delicate adorn.

Black heels in my hall, high, canted, strapped,
unfilled, waiting her foot, ready to move,
those shoes. I see her walk now, all lilt,
and breathe deeply. She looks back
cross her shoulder, hair bouncing,
lips half-parted, catches my eye,
swings her hips, cat-walking,
and dissolves.

A lone
borrowed book rests
on my shelf
waiting.

Will she come
to claim

what is
hers?

MARC ZEGANS is the author of the poetry collection *Pillow Talk* and two spoken word albums, *Marker and Parker* and *Night Work*. He comes to *The Underwater Typewriter* through the bayous and backwaters of American poetry, having been the Narragansett Beer Poet Laureate, and a Poetry Whore with the New York Poetry Brothel—which *Time Out New York* described as “New York’s Sexiest Literary Event.” Marc has performed everywhere from the Bowery Poetry Club to the American Poetry Museum. As an immersive theater producer, he created the Boston Center for the Arts’ *CycSpecific “Speak-Easy”* and *Salon Poetique: A Gathering of the “Tossed Generation.”* He also has been MC and co-producer of *The No Hipsters Rock ‘n Roll Revue* and co-producer, with Karen Lee, of *Burlesque for Books*. Marc lives near the coast in Northern California.



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Pelekinesis titles are available through Small Press Distribution, Baker & Taylor, Ingram, Bertrams, and directly from the publisher’s website.