

# TO THOSE WHO KNOW IT NOT

LARRY KERSCHNER



# TO THOSE WHO KNOW IT NOT



LARRY KERSCHNER

D PRESS

ELLENSBURG

2019

Peacepoet Larry Kerschner was a featured reader during the Inland Poetry Prowl, in Ellensburg, Washington. These poems were read at the Clymer Museum & Gallery in Ellensburg, on Saturday, April 6, 2019.

Engraving by A. De Neuville, "Tel El Kebir"



ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
BY THE AUTHOR

## **answering a question**

The first man I killed was small and  
hidden in the tall grass.

Being a killer forever changes you.  
Even if you learn to be kind and considerate and civilized  
that part of you is always  
hiding down inside  
awaiting a chance.

A normal person does not want to kill and  
will avoid it at all costs.  
The military won't allow you to remain normal.  
It doesn't matter if you think  
you are smart enough  
not to get caught up in their lies.  
They will change you.

Don't be sucked into the biggest myth and lie  
that dying for your country is somehow heroic.

Really be all that you can be.

## **ants**

Bukowski noticed that  
*the ants are everywhere*

*picking up the dead,*  
*their dead and the other dead*  
working it like it was a job  
cleaning the low-domed hill of the nest  
keeping it free from the acrid odor of oleic acid  
tiny crosses placed in remembrance in the grass  
the patter of even tinier feet moving in unison  
intently pushing moldering bodies away

close listening may reveal ant laughter  
at morbid jokes and grave humor  
with ants dying to get their attention

### **the bee dancer**

The roof line is set  
the new bee hut is square and level  
open faced to the southeast  
when the bees arrive  
in a few weeks  
I shall dance a bee dance  
of welcome  
by April my bare feet  
may be able to raise some dust  
where now there is mud  
intoning a poem about bees  
my fat belly jiggling  
over skinny legs  
I will attempt to waggle appropriately  
to show them the way

## **both ducks**

both ducks stick their bills  
into the brown stones and mud  
seeking food in the garden space  
one bird waddling behind the other  
winter's paralysis finally easing  
small green buds poke from the dirt  
some worms lie on the surface  
with all the recent heavy rain

wild geese fly north overhead  
ignored by our two who are sure  
that all they need is here

## **force and violence**

while waiting at a light  
I saw a couple walking along the road  
he pushing a bicycle  
she backhanded him on the right arm  
not hard  
with her left hand  
they were both smiling  
I'd guess he just said something amusing  
possibly a mild jibe at her  
or something self deprecating  
she responded with a playful swat  
but a swat from any person  
against another person requires  
some degree of force  
leaving the question of when force  
between persons  
especially if the one  
is larger than the other  
is considered a form of violence  
where is that line between play and aggression  
what do we name that type of force between persons  
when we don't want to see it as violence

bones young and old can be brittle but  
sometimes black words can be more hurtful  
than a ballistic strike to the body  
how do we measure the force of words  
that teach about violence in a way never  
to be forgotten

### **I will teach you how to perform a war**

a clean operation  
to remove that dangerous tissue  
which can no longer be controlled  
we first name it cancer  
we curse it for an inhuman bastard  
nothing legitimate to be found  
the pathologic question  
must be asked and answered  
weighing whether a pound of flesh will be enough  
shared definitions in hand  
we sharpen our knives  
sanitary  
chrome and steel  
bright lights  
remove any shadow  
of doubts  
patriotic anesthesia dulls the senses  
common and other  
to the loud cutting  
ripping and  
bleeding to come  
once hidden viscera bloody red  
broken bone white  
and hypoxic blue tissue  
stare out at us  
unexpected collateral damage  
can be dressed  
with sterile white gauze  
although the bloated smell  
sometimes remains

afterwards  
we will remove our gloves and  
wash our hands

### **I thought the clerk at the hardware store**

Was just trying to get information  
About the heater we wanted to replace  
When he asked me  
If the thermostat had three wires  
Or four

I was truly surprised  
When you responded  
To him  
In an aggressive  
Assertive  
Plainly pissed off tone

Later in the car  
You explained  
Patiently  
Through clenched teeth  
That I would understand  
If I could spend  
Twenty-four hours  
As a female

### **low tide**

at Saltwater State Park

searchers  
armed with steel fork and mythic clam gun  
thick as sandpipers  
dance on the edge  
seeking their limits  
between the grey wet beach rocks  
and the milky blue water  
the wind whips little white caps into the fog  
fat rain is ignored  
in the frenzy of the hunt

gulls and crows circle  
flying low  
seeking the broken and  
discarded

## **men in black**

where are the MIB when you need them

the blonde clown wants to build a wall  
supposedly to keep the alien horde out  
but some suspect this is deflection on his part  
so we won't look behind his fleshy mask  
agent K and agent J won't be allowed  
to look into his actual background  
even when the fate of the planet is at risk  
he was born in another reality like many  
extraterrestrial lifeforms living on earth  
these aliens masquerading as humans  
may appear as god botherers however  
look behind the vacant eyes and you might  
recognize an arquillian disguised as a republican

remember don't watch major media  
don't look into the flash of the neuralyzer

## **on stage in Alaska with Allen Ginsberg**

om  
om mani padme hum

poet  
I heard you sing each word  
full of that sound  
that droning  
early in the throat sound

om-ing and chanting  
buttocks dancing  
air vibrating  
incensed  
by the very words

when you sang of cement rivers  
and tobacco machines

when you sang of  
divine signs in abo dreams

when you sang of sad paradise  
and dancing devas and amorous Bodhisattvas  
when you sang of the grey smoke's secret smile  
and of tomorrow's love and sorrow's many names

when you sang the sound  
a universe makes

you sang the song  
the universe truly sings

**Rock Dog**

lives in the dark places  
of the Earth  
Rock Dog is seldom seen except in the shadows  
he is hard in the way that the night is hard  
the way a dream is hard  
crystal in the moonlight

Winter comes from the north and proceeds south  
everywhere there are bones  
rib bones, back bones, a stray ulna  
washed white in the downpour  
It is not clear which of the People lived here  
or who died here  
these unknown (to us) men and women  
may have hidden from each other  
waiting for their wounds to heal  
singing in a low drone while the world decayed

The People stamp their feet  
their children breathe ice and lie still  
Rock Dog's unpadded nails clatter over the stones

Rock Dog lifts his hind leg  
to the quartz in comment  
his words can be sharp

when it rains Rock Dog wears  
slick gray like a new skin

In the past there was a boy with no name. He awoke and found himself in the forest. He saw a cave and climbed in for shelter. He could remember being in the hole in the ground when a large rock was pushed over the entrance. He did not know who his enemies were. He was afraid of the dark but he began digging. Soon he found some roots that he could eat. He became stronger and continued digging. The smell of the Earth became the smell of his Mother. He began to eat small rocks. His teeth became diamonds so he could eat larger rocks. He continued to eat into his Mother and finally came to another cave. It had an opening to the outside. It was night but since he had been in the dark so long the light from the stars hurt his eyes. He went back into the cave. As he continued to eat into and through his Mother first his bones and then his muscles became stone. Now he rarely comes above ground and only comes out in the dark. This is how the unnamed boy became Rock Dog.

## **the war was black and white**

at first but then  
in living color red and yellow and khaki green  
brought into the living room but what was always missing  
was the smell of war  
my war smelled  
of dying vegetation eau de agent orange  
burnt gunpowder and burnt people  
dark blood sweet and warm  
piss shit sweat  
testosterone  
the same smell is found in what is left of a pizza shop  
in Jerusalem  
now the smell of war is in Jenin and Ramallah  
piss and shit and blood  
mixes with the frustrated cries  
of the people  
Helen Caldicott holds up  
a picture of a baby with his head blown off  
the smell of his head seeps up through the  
concrete rubble after the tanks roll on  
the same smell of piss and shit and blood  
rose in the hot desert  
some days after Iraqi soldiers were buried  
alive  
the same smell at Waco when the embers died and  
the smoke cleared  
the same smell of  
more piss and shit and blood  
was found by firefighters  
and police digging below the twin towers space  
the same smell more piss more shit  
more blood  
was found near Kabul raised with the dust  
by bombs from 40,000 feet  
next we'll find that same smell in some new axis of evil where  
the smell of oil added to the smell of dead children  
added to the putrescent odor of piss and shit and blood

of war and death  
should gag us all

however as Erasmus said five hundred years ago  
war is sweet  
to those who know it not