

Irrational Functions and Other Poems

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Irrational Functions and Other Poems

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www.bardsinitiative.com/localgems

This book is dedicated to my family, all of whom have been there for me through thick and thin and without whose guidance, love and support I would not be who I am today.

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Irrational Functions

We live in very confusing times,
yet people come to the conclusion
that we can calculate correctly
without contradiction or confusion
the equation of how to walk through life.

In trying to be Archimedes,
mock mathematicians that use their meager means
of measurement
in attempt to articulate the angels and oppositions
over look the complexity of the question.

If life is an equation,
the variables are not always rational functions.

Yet the previous generation of mathematicians,
on occasion,
have determined the density of their dubiously defined
decimal placements
diligently demanding the destruction and damnation of diversity.

$A^2 + B^2 = C^2$,
always,
without a doubt,
absolutely.

What about $E = MC^2$?
The revelation of relativity?

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A to Z is a line non-linear,
and our plans don't always proceed as we hypothesize.

Paulie might have been a predominantly powerful
hypothesizer and philosophizer,
planning to pursue his Ph.D.
But as he sat to calculate,
he didn't anticipate,
a wife, two kids and a mortgage,
before turning twenty eight.

Maggie missed out on medical school when a malignant
growth metastasized in her membrane.
Enlighten us as to where we can find the formula to foresee that.

If life is an equation we can see,
witness on a white board,
We would see copious amounts
of contorted circles,
acute angles, right, wrong, isosceles,
contradicting signs and co-signs
callously clamped together in conjuncture with conjectures,
that the world's fastest computer couldn't comprehend.

Is it fair, that all our papers are graded?
In a right or wrong,
one right answer only
one point earning pick on the scale,
put together
averaged
into a nice round number,
that's prepared to properly predetermine our placement
in the eyes of the world?

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Who is number master who judges?
How many teachers without tenure,
grade at a glance?

Summing up in seconds, using their own
scintillating synthetic self-serving means
of classification to put a label, letter or number
on everyone and everything they witness?

But did their hypotheses come out as they predicted?
Their postulations arrive at a provable conclusion
without confusion?

My crammed, cluttered, confused consciousness can still
calculate that the odds,
are against it.
But I won't put a number of their paper,
because if life is an equation to calculate, the variables
aren't always rational functions,
and the test,
is not
multiple choice.

Attention to Detail

Have you ever heard someone walk up to a clerk at a supermarket
and ask for a half gallon of *Napoleon* ice cream?

Napoleon?

You want a Mussolini and a Stalin with that three for five?

Why don't you go to the deli counter and ask for some
Ro-to-sory chicken?

Then swing by Starbucks to get a cup of coffee with
french vanill *ER*
and splend *ER*

Do you want some sod *ER* with your pizz *ER*?

Not that the *A* or the *ER* really matters on soda,
Because if you asked for a Pepsi and they gave you a
Coke, you wouldn't

even,
notice!

And you can't remember which one

A Mento makes explode, can you?

Good thing that chemists don't so easily forget what
happens when you mix bleach,
with...
that other thing...

I had a boss once who was OCD,
counted everything over,
and over and over,
and over

1...2...3...4...

1...1...

1...2...3...4...

4...3...2...1...

....

....

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1...2...3...4...
BUT, he never...
got the numbers wrong.

I have been berated,
my opinions negated,
freedom of speech denied,
because of my astute observations,
that the menu advertises penne pasta,
and these underhanded,
two-faced, bait-and-switch snatchers
give me...

RIGATONI!

Are people that blind, culinary speaking?
There is a great difference! Can you not,
taste it?
smell it?
feel it?
see...that one of the noodle tips..
is more...
POINTY!?

Call me compulsive,
Call me uptight,
that I won't eat a hotdog, without a hot dog bun!
Maybe it wouldn't matter if I was starving,
from the third world,
food would be food.
Maybe these minute differences don't matter...
So then...
I guess it wouldn't matter on Wall Street
if we switched the 474, to a 744?
or a 693 to a 396?
Then again, maybe,
If people had known the difference,
between the Japanese bombers, and Japanese Americans,

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really knew the difference,
the Manzanar relocation center in 1942 might
 not have happened.
Maybe if we watched the details,
Harvard professors who are also African Americans
wouldn't get carted off to jail,
just for trying to get back into their own homes.
And maybe if we paid real attention,
we might have known the difference,
between one Arab nation and another,
known our real enemies,
know that it's not the Turban, that indicates ideology.
Maybe, if we knew the details,
we could differentiate between innocent and guilty,
maybe...
I don't know for sure.
Maybe this new wave of OCD, compulsive people
 coming up in the world
is nature's own way of countering the mess we've made,
by not paying attention.
I don't know if the world would truly be better if we paid
 attention to detail,
but I do know what it looks like when we don't,
and it is a mess.

Yuppie Mobile

She barreled down the street,
turned into my drive through
and quickly crashed into one of the polls.
I ran out, towards the giant
twelve-foot long, seven-foot wide yuppie mobile to ask
"Are you ok?"
The middle-aged woman with her badly died
flock-of-seagulls haircut turns to me,
stares at me,
and says,
"Why is your drive-through so narrow?!"
I see the family portrait on the back windshield,
and am happy that none
of her five kids
were in the car.

Temple of Manhood

Ladies,
social direction might dictate
that I have to hold the door open for you,
might have to pay for you if I took you on a date,
and if you slap me, I'm a baby for whining, but if I slap
you it's domestic violence.
And you might get the house and the kids even though
you were the one who wanted the divorce.
But the last laugh is still mine.
Because while we're waiting in court,
and you're bleeding me for every cent I have,
and we take our breaks to go to the bathroom,
your wait--will be an hour long,
and I'll walk right in,
no wait whatsoever,
to the sacred temple of manhood.
You can have the kids,
the house, the car,
and all my money.
But the urinal is mine,
And you will never have it!!

The Bees

They work with each other, the bees.
They work together,
by instinct.
They fight—sometimes.
They fight off intruders, if they have to,
willing to give their lives for their duties.
They fight with each other, on occasion,
briefly
before getting back to work.
Everything for the hive!
What might force gives them order?
What mighty force dictates
their social structure?
What little bee scribe
with his little bee pen
penned the little bee constitution?
What little bee priests
talk of little bee deities
to give little bee faith
in their daily bee lives?
Where are the bee police
bee lawyers,
bee laws to keep them in line?
What makes them follow the Queen?
What method of enforcement
would keep them working, should they decide
to leave?
But they don't leave.
They know exactly what they are here to do,
while all of us toil,
piddle, twiddle,

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with our laws, cops, lawyers,
judges, jails, executioners,
a thousand dictators dictating,
trying to figure out what we are supposed to do with our
superior intelligence?
Yet here we remain
clueless.

Unused China

Unused china in the newly weds' kitchen,
Paintings, portraits on the wall;
books on the shelf,
never opened.
Fancy suits,
Rolex watch,
Ferrari with new car smell in the garage.
A yacht in the dock that never left port;
caviar, steak, champagne in the kitchen,
all untouched.
Peanut butter and jelly sandwich,
half-eaten,
on the living room table.

Masochist

The customer comes up to order

"Quart of milk,"

"Anything else?"

"That's it."

"Dollar twenty-five."

"Out of a hundred."

"Anything smaller than a hundred?"

"No, but I have the 25 cents."

I must be a masochist,
in a world where asking for less,
means "Give me More!"

Ball-gag in my mouth,
shoved in there by the management reminding me about
the state of the job market,
helps to keep what I'd like to say
at bay.

And here I stand
Like the average American worker
of this generation;
Hands cuffed,
Whipped, yet thanking my master
for shitting on my face,
and praying to God,
That I don't get another dildo shoved up my ass.

Paulie Told Ronnie

Paulie told Ronnie
not to forget to tell Johnny
to mention to Frankie
to not make mention to Ricky
about Bobby's party this weekend.
Too bad Frankie forgot to tell Johnny
to inform Ronnie
so that Ronnie might enlighten Paulie
to the fact that Ricky already saw the invite
on facebook.

Why

Why, why, why why why,
did no one tell his mother,
that if you're four foot-ten,
one-hundred-and-ten pounds,
playing the tuba is
NOT
a good idea!!

Nutrition Prescription

Of all those who attempt to tell us what we should eat,
dietitians, nutritionists and the like,
some recommend two eggs for breakfast.

Really?

Every person?

Two eggs, every single day?

Lets do the math here...

Two eggs for seven billion people...

14 billion eggs a day,

98 billion eggs a week,

Five trillion 95 billion eggs a year...

Those poor, poor hens,

those lucky, lucky roosters.

I wonder how much chicken these nutritionists recommend?

Poolside View

Two, smooth scoops of vanilla,
encased in a strawberry bra,
could have melted in that sun.

It's hot out here...

Took a dip in the pool,
It was still hot.

Until the furry, fat guy,
with his mushroom-cloud-muffin top,
and his hairy, Chewbacca nipples,
waddled right in front of my happy view,
and took a dive bomb cannon ball,
that missed me by less than a meter.

The tidal wave that ensued,
cooled me off.

Deficit Attention Disorder

Does is A.D.D. up?

You say I have a disorder that constitutes a deficit of attention,
I appear, unable to stare,
for countless hours
forcing my focus on the frivolous frustrating formulas
floundering before me,
on the black board.
Can't do it without shaking the leg,
bobbing the head,
looking around aimlessly.
My disorder constitutes a deficit of attention?
Perhaps the deficit is in what you would have me be
paying attention to?

Biologically speaking,
omnivores have carnivorous tendencies,
like a cat shoots after a mouse
or a mole,
or a bird,
darting by faster than eyes can register.
What if those adolescent young men who make up the
majority of the diagnosed
are just in conflict with their
personal primal personas?
Calling them beyond the classroom window into the
No-longer-existing wild,
itching to move,
run,
chase and catch the quarry fleeing before them.
The leg, shaking,
the head, bobbing,

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body moving,
the pent up, unused energy nature intended for us to use to
spring out,
obtain and bring back our catch to the clan.
Your contradicting classroom etiquette,
rules designed for simplicity of the structure rather than
the welfare of the students is no match for mother nature.
And mother nature tells me,
I want to be outside...
That the answer is out there!

Not on your blackboard.

That's one possibility, for the lack of attention.

Maybe...it's your boring monotone,
your pitiful, pedantic postulations presuming to judge a mind
on a number
that has lost our interest.
Or the fact you have us memorizing minute miniscule details
micro and macro
learning not for knowledge sake,
but to not fudge the statistics
on the tests decreed to be handed down to us by who gives a
crap from who-the-heck-even-knows land?
Now that
could lose anyone's interest.

But of course, that's where our focus should be right?
not outside, at why the temperature is changing,
or looking at the oil spills?
Not at the billions
going hungry,
or the countless people below the poverty line, right here in
our backyards?
Not at the fact that more than two-and-a-half million people

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are incarcerated in the land
of the free,
Or that people are too afraid of lawsuits to help each other
in the home
of the brave?
Not at the hunger or hatred,
the unemployment,
the pollution,
or the war?
Not at everything happening right here, right now,
under our noses,
all of it going by, unnoticed and ignored,
for staring at the board 8 hours a day,
or at the computer screens in the cubicles, focused in on a
single solitary task with all the focus in the world,
ignorant of what's going on out there in the real world?
And we,
the ones with A.D.D.,
are the ones not paying attention?
You say, I have a disorder constituting a deficit of attention.
Well, maybe, just maybe
the deficit, is in what you would have me, be paying attention to.

His Disability

His disability was your excuse.
His disability
was why you did everything for him,
after his father left.
Woke him up,
Made his bed,
Breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Did his laundry,
ironed his clothes.
Cleaned, scrubbed,
took a second job so he wouldn't have to work one,
even though he's 24 and you're 65.

But he can't work, right?
He can't clean, he can't do his laundry,
he can't cook...
"He's autistic! What do you expect?!"

What do I expect?
I don't expect anything,
but I remember:

I remember him, in the marching band,
playing that trombone with more
enthusiasm
than more than half of his fellow musicians.

I remember his dramatic readings,
in English class.
Iambic pentameter flowing out of his mouth as naturally
as each breath.

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I remember, in history, he never forgot a date, could name
all the presidents backwards.

In science class...they might not have let him handle the
chemicals anymore,
after that...unfortunate incident with the eyebrows,
BUT...he has the entire periodic table memorized.

Gym!!
When he got hold of the football,
everyone,
myself included,
parted like the Red Sea for Moses.
No one wanted to mess,
we all stood out of the way, of THAT charge.

I remember his room, spotless.
I remember him cleaning, taking the garbage.
I remember him making his own dinner.
I remember him...being, social...as best as he could.

I remember early in eighth grade, when he did something wrong,
you'd punish him.
I remember later on in eighth grade...the punishments stopped.
I remember in the middle of eighth grade,
When he would hum to himself,
and twiddle his fingers non-stop, and not realize,
when the other kids were making fun of him for it.
I remember they, the teachers, couldn't handle
that he couldn't sit down
for the entire period.
I remember that they were clueless concerning him, and when it
came time for a convenient classification, a consistently
competent yet callous teacher aid uttered the possibility
"Maybe he's on the spectrum."

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His disability, you say,
you proclaim...

Was his disability the reason
he could calculate faster and in higher denominations than
our TI-83's?

Was his disability what put him on the honor roll,
was his disability what got him more scholarships to more
colleges than our graduating class's valedictorian?
Free tuition,
free dorm room,
Meal plan, books, all bought and paid for in a package fit
for a king,
before he set foot there, only so you could tell him,
"It's ok, you don't have to do this if you don't want to,
you can drop out."
So he did:
his disability.

So now, he sits in his room,
all day long,
and you make his bed,
breakfast, lunch dinner,
wash his clothes,
clean the bathroom after him,
while he
does
NOTHING.
Gaining fat, gaining weight,
on the computer,
video games, 24/7
No friends to speak of,
No responsibility, productivity,
Life to call his own?

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What happens to him
when you're gone?
Now that you've taken off his gloves,
taken him out of the ring,
his muscles have atrophied,
no longer able to go ten rounds, with life.
Will he relearn all that you made him forget?
Or will it be KO in round one?
I don't know,
but don't talk to me
about his disability
because I remember
what I didn't stop him from doing.

His disability,
you exclaim,
his disability.
Disability defined as what gives one a disadvantage.
His disability.
His disability.
His disability...is...you.

To My Former Lover

I will build a bust of you,
my former lover.

Carve out your pretty face,
shape your eyes,
your lips...

your beautiful, flowing hair.

Will make every single little point, little detail, as perfect
as I remember you.

So that when I smash it with a baseball bat, it's that much more
satisfying.

Aspiring Biology Major

She was only five-foot-five,
but she had DD's!
Or at least I think she did...
When she got up and walked over to me,
and they were bobbing up and down in that tank top,
my ADD went out the window
and I paid good attention,
debating with myself,
whether those DD's were in fact DD's, or just
 plain-old-regular D's.
As she stood there in front of me, muttering little nothings
 in her native tongue,
something like "Hi, how are you, I'm blah blah," or something,
I couldn't help it,
the science major in me that didn't matriculate at any
 university I know of
wanted to test his hypothesis...
...see those milk producing jugs just a little bit closer...
...purely for scientific research reasons, of course.
But, I never got the chance.
Apparently I hadn't learned the approach rituals for this species,
it involves something to do with...eye contact?
And after that cat-claw-turned-bear-paw, knocked my glasses...
...I mean...scientific lenses off my face,
she turned to head back to her habitat.
I never got a closer look at those DD's,
but as she left my eyes found their way,
to another point of inquiry,
one that you can only get a good look at, from the rear.
I sighed,
and wished it wasn't too late to change my major
to biology.

Magic Mirror

Hypocrisy is a meal we all share together,
a dish decreed down to us,
shared in our selfishness.
Attempted sovereignty or tool for survival?
Some go back for seconds, thirds, fourths,
suck up the entirety of the remaining, stuffing,
into their mouths so fast,
soon after stuffing, puking up the remains,
in everyone's direction.
Accusing the single-portion takers of gorging,
going through their garments in search of grizzle as proof
of your postulations.
At home in the mental state,
that this makes you master of truth and honor.
In dessert you absorb
copious amounts of their finest intoxicating concoctions
slurping the selection
waddling back and forth nearly collapsing
on the sober host who's had none of his own
now depleted wine supply.

To them you are a guest,
to yourself, you are entitled,
and will dare to stand there in wonder
clueless the next day,
as to why the messenger bearing the invitations, is absent,
and you will curse them, for being discourteous.

Oh what magic mirror do you look into each night,
with the painted crown upon your forehead.
And what scale do you judge by,
that bears heavy in uneven favor, of your position,

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despite what sits perched on the other end of the barter,
light, or non-existent,
from your half of the deal.

Cup on the Corner

One quick turn,
a slight slip of the hand, smack and tumble.
My oversized gold band that I still,
still wear, collides.
The 16 ounce, fire-engine-red cup
with the barn logo on the side--
sun shinning over, with the rooster on top
almost cock-a-doodle-dooing, tips over.

The white cap firmly on top
spinning once, twice, thrice,
over and over as it all slows to a crawl.
Mimicking the rooster,
I let out a loud yelp.

The spinning object,
force, acceleration and all meets the floor.
Half regular, half decaf,
Two-and-a-half sugars, one Sweet and Low,
with half and half, one drop of French Vanilla creamer
stirred six times—splatters in a single second.

No amount of crying, convincing or counseling,
will bring the millions of drops of that splattered coffee,
back together again.

World of the Squirrel

“Worlds are altered rather than destroyed.” –Democritus

Down the branch through the broken window,
with shrubbery and vines on the outline,
back to his search, on the inside of
the short stacked two bedroom
with the dusty photograph knocked over
on the water damaged desk.
He exits through the front,
where no door stands in his way
past the cutoff designation reading
nineteen-fifty-blank.
Onto the path,
passing the empty dish,
where no food was waiting for him.
He scurries down the broken, cracked back road,
meandering through the graveyard
of broken-down, old cars
towards the tree trunk sticking out the minivan
stretching into the sky.
He looks upward
awaiting the next acorn
that will fall.

A Cruise on a Funship

We pull out of the Hudson, passing by
the Statue of Liberty.
Everyone looking,
glaring, staring, snapping,
creating their own impressions, interpretations,
views,
of her universal, unending message to us all.

Moving out on the water,
all waiting to reach a certain length away from the land of the free,
before they can legally open the casino.

There is advantage in the ocean,
beyond a certain point--
no past to locate behind us
no future to look ahead,
only
the present.

The ship we sail on rocks back and forth seeking balance.
How big a wave would it take to sink us all?
Waves of that size do exist.

Forecasts, radios, sound waves and blinking lights,
high-tech forms of communication,
do their best to keep everyone safe,
each passenger seems completely at ease.
We've come a long way since
the Titanic.
Luckily, no meteorites have crashed into the ocean in our
proximity.

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Sitting here in the green and black decorated sports bar,
not glancing at the eight screens overhead,
too focused on the rum and coke,
the chocolate-flavored cigar I smoke
only once a year,
and the notebook.

Wishing I could smoke this cigar in the Jazz lounge,
hearing the Jazz trio, the live band playing their beat for beat,
meet and greet,
telling the tales of the Jazz age, like F. Scott Fitzgerald,
reminiscent of a time long gone,
the roaring twenties,
parties, drinks, spending without care.

The good times to be had--the only thing on the horizon,
the only apple of the eye,
an apple now all too often forbidden,
the rule against a decaying Eden, for no reason, treason
to not put that desire on the back burner,
to do one's duty.

Duty, to an undefined entity,
Pre-baby boomer script,
in the late third act we are all acting out.

Over fifty countries represented on the ship,
A name tag on the waiter's suit tells me whether to say
thank you,
gracias,
merci beaucoup,
salamat,
terima kasih,

Or ask him or her how to respond in their native tongue while
they proudly answer,
happy that a Yankee doodle dandy would find it handy to know
how say a phrase
the way they do.

They work twelve to fifteen hour shifts at a time,

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serving drinks, cleaning floors,
Pushing the grandmother up the ramp to her cabin,
while her two seventeen-year-old grandsons are too busy figuring
out the new apps on their iPhones.
Dealing with the lady in the quadruple-X shirt complaining that
her chocolate molten cake hasn't arrived yet.
Where are those fact-chasing, survey-serving economists when
you need them,
at the right time,
with the right mentality
to take a look at dependency theory,
here on board this ship in its glorious microcosm?

Quadruple-X shirt has to hurry,
She has to run to the casino again,
Reduced minimums at roulette,
blackjack.
Me personally, I like to use the Fibonacci strategy,
increasing the bet only on the winnings,
then going back to the minimum,
always attempting to resist the urge
to go all in.
I don't always succeed.

And when I lose, I wander,
hijacking a piano,
locating, detecting, the only one with no lock,
playing "my heart will go on."
We're on a ship dammit! That's why!

The night times, the disco, the parties
playing age-old music,
from twenty, thirty years ago,
before voices were completely digitized,
and one actually had to have talent.
Billy Jean playing,

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reminding me not to break young girls' hearts
too bad that I really have no control over that.
Hearts will be broken, despite intentions,
like Bob Marley once said, "the truth is everyone will hurt you,
the trick is finding out which ones are worth suffering for."
But here, out on the ocean,
no strings attached,
preppy girls who wear school uniforms
will twirl on the poles,
like a girl who has to do so at fourteen for singles, just so she can
afford to buy lunch.
Hoping if they step out of their element,
do something different that they wouldn't do in their normal lives,
they might find something that they've been searching for.

Was it the perfect Romeo, the Leonardo DiCaprio who would
make her heart go on?
Was it the big jackpot in the Casino that would make the gambler
forget his financial woes?
Was it the spiritual awakening of being at no place in no time in
the middle of space that one can't trace so you can find the inner
peace that you seek but can't get
with the two-hundred-and-thirty customers at your shift in retail,
or the boss pounding down over your head
with deadlines piling high,
folders on your desk through the roof
demanding your attention,
your focus on frivolity
so the major questions,
the important inquires, like
who we are,
what are we doing here,
why, why, WHY,
are all put on hold, indefinitely.

But here, on the Funship,

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sailing back into American waters,
watching the performances,
live bands playing,
dancers kicking,
Middle-aged-cubicle-slave-paper-pushers, now pushing
the twenty-two-year-old jersey girl closer and closer as they exchange beats back and forth,
bopping to the beat of music he hasn't heard since college.
Party in the USA playing at a pace that gets me moving
at a speed that I can't recognize.
Not stopping until my eighth step outside, onto the deck of the ship to see the skyline of New York on the horizon, and the sun slipping up out of the corner of my eye, reminding me, that in two short hours,
we all have to go back
go back
to whatever it is
we really are.

Love Poem

No, no, no no no!
I can't do this, I must be crazy.
You must be crazy!
How in the living heck can you expect me to write a love poem?
Love poem...
love poem!
I could NEVER write a love poem!

“Once upon a time, my half-fiancé, half-cheated on me with that half-marine when she was at her half-assed college half way up the east coast!”

Blah, doesn't sound too good, does it?

“Oh the mystical magical marvelous evening meetings by the sea-shore, with the sparkles and rainbows glistening in the spring air...”

What are we, fairies!?

Maybe I'll get down on one knee and confess,
my deep, unyielding, unrepentant, guilty, jealous,
burning, burning, deep, jones, obsession, desire,
undeniable love,
for cheese fries!!

How could I ever write a poem to express something as complex and unimaginable as the *L* word?

How can I hope to write about...my own experiences?
No way to describe that feeling deep down in my bread basket,
the tingling anticipatory reaction I get just seconds before
I see her.

James P. Wagner

I could never explain that her kiss still lingers on my lips
deliciously for ages after we part.
How the hell am I supposed to say that I, a grown man, can sit
there, in his comfy chair,
curled up with a hankie, tearing as tale as old as time from Beauty
and the Beast dances before my screen just because of the feelings
she has breathed into me?

I didn't just say that out loud just now, did I?

No way!! That's it! I can't do this!

I cannot explain to people that feeling of unequivocal
contentment when she's there with me, arm in arm, hand in hand,
entwined in a cuddle cloud,
on the couch with the fire in the fire place burning.
Not even needing the Lord of the Rings on the TV screen to take
us to the fantasy realm that we are already in, in our embrace.

No, yo no tengo las parabras,
tidak
salamat,
terima kasih
No way to convey
in English,
Spanish
Indonesian or Tagalog.
I'm done,
that's it,
I can not write
a love poem.
I just don't have the words,
to do it right.

Acknowledgments

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Unused China, previously published in *Riverrun*, 2010.

Deficit Attention Disorder, previously published in *Perspectives Poetry Concerning Autism and Other Disabilities*. Local Gems Poetry Press 2010.

His Disability, previously published in *Perspectives Poetry Concerning Autism and Other Disabilities*. Local Gems Poetry Press 2010

Cup on the Corner, previously published in *The Lion's Voice*, February 2011.

About the Author



James P. Wagner, also known as Ishwa, has been a fan of poetry since first reading his Aunt's copy of "The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe." He earned a B.A. in creative writing from Dowling College and is about to finish his masters. He is the first and former Long Island Poetry Examiner and has written more than 50 articles concerning Long Island poetry. As a performance poet, James "Ishwa" is a long standing member of the Dowling College Spoken Word group and has featured all over the island from Borders to Starbucks, from libraries to the Hamptons for such esteemed poetry organizations as the Performance Poets Association, The North Sea Poetry Scene, and the Long Island Poetry Collective. James is the founder of Local Gems Poetry Press, and has been an editor for several poetry anthologies, including *Examination Anthology*, *Long Island Poetry from Students to Laureates*, and *Perspectives, Poetry Concerning Autism and Other Disabilities*. As founder of the Bards Initiative, James has also hosted many poetry readings. James is also an award winning fiction writer, essayist, martial artist, and actor. He also enjoys playing the djembe and piano and cooking penne alla vodka for board game nights. When not trying to seem professional, James can be seen making monkey noises while playing laser tag, singing in high-pitched voices, and finding other ways to embarrass his friends.



Local Gems Poetry Press is a small Long Island based poetry press dedicated to spreading poetry through performance and the written word. Local Gems believes that poetry is the voice of the people, and as the sister organization of the Bards Initiative, believes that poetry can be used to make a difference.

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www.bardsinitiative.com/localgems

