

ghosts



poems by ron androla

ghosts

i'm hugging my syrian grandmother,
sitto, i feel her as we
embrace; her peppery cumin smell,
her hands smelling of butter,
her hair, mushrooms. she's
sitting in a low chair
& i bend.

two days ago my dad
in a hospital bed,
tubes & machines
everywhere, opens his
eyes
looking at
me -- that's how i
wake

these days
my dead relatives
spin
into
my
daylight
dreams
& stay
thru gray october
hours

then
it rains
cold rain
spattering
hundreds of
thousands
of fallen
leaves in
grasses &
on concrete

might
snow
i see
grandpa
androla
& uncle
tony too
they don't
seem very
different
dead

the tooth is gone

very novocain'd
top half of the molar
snaps right off
i hear it crack
& the dentist says
i was afraid that
wld happen
then flash of a
scalpel crosses
my wide eyes
& he's digging
into raw jawbone
i hear it
& he's got
half the tooth
clamped & is
wiggling
it
i count to five
in my head
& his nurse
is stuffing
gauze thru
my lips
saying bite
down please
while biting
while very
novocain'd
with a soft
bloody mouth
full of cotton
gauze i ask
is it out?

it's out
the dentist
affirms
cupping my

right shoulder
in his plastic-
gloved hand
squeezing a
little

carver

i cld look it up
how old ray
carver was when
he died
54?
seems that's right
or younger
his short stories
are IT
you realize IT
IT is human hell
lovelessness
& alcohol
in 20th-century amerika
ray carver is a
master
but he died
too young
like eleven years
sober
he wrote painful
scenes
of divorce's reality
& readers run around
a merry-go-round
of marriages
trust
ray
trust
nobody else
trust me
don't

sky today is a pale blue shell, tissue-thin

human mind collectively
flies, ebbs, catches in whirlpools
of time's minds, multitudes
of human minds in particular

segments of time
crash down with the crush
of now

carver was a jellicle
cat

birthday poem for dave

twenty-three years ago
my dad was alive
& he drove to erie
after news flowed
my sister, his daughter,
had you

we went to the hospital
up an elevator
deciding to look
at the new-borns
before checking on
kathi

& out of the dozen or so
infants we saw
you
we sd
there
he is

tapping on the glass
waving little fingers
smiling
my dad was
beaming
we noted how yr

face resembled
our side of
the family
blew you
kisses
then walked down

the hall
to see how kathi
was

we saw
david
we told her

you did? she
asked
when a nurse
brought you
into the room
turned out that

whole time
we thought
we were looking
at you
it was
another baby

we laughed
kathi laughed
everyone laughed
we cld be
so
wrong

a bad poem

i remember emailing
michael mcneilley
saying how refreshing
& inspiring it is
he has composed
a bad poem,

finally. towards
the end of his life
he was writing
volumes of perfect
poems, perfectly
worded -- amazing

everyone.
then mcneilley
wrote a bad
poem. i forget
what it
was about, but

i felt such
exhilaration
i wasn't
the only
poet
fucking up.

xmas 2003

dog's tongue licks my hangover face
6:30 a.m., that's how i wake. take
the black beast outside in our garage
leading to the side-yard
still darkness blurs my hangover
consciousness. i groan as i take
the steps, move slow, i'm one of
those giant, sleepy sloths, an
oxygen-high alien sloth,
each stair is a faraway mountain.
each inhale hallucination.
after an hour i bring our black
dog inside, first wiping the mud
& dog-shit & snow he has on his
paws with a green towel in the
doorway. it's light by now.
the snowstorm never did hit us
as predicted.
instead of lake-effect snowfall
over the edges of lake erie
here in the city of erie
an inch or two
nothing major.
i am in preparation-h land.
the catastrophic weather
slips inside me somewhere
& erupts from inside-out
i spew snowflakes in the wind.

three forty six left in the third quarter

twenty eight nothing.
buffalo looks like a
puppet with only a few
strings remaining.
new england is a dog-
pack, ball-sacks brim
with lava-like sperm.
pink hardon football
wiggles thru the chilly air.
broken puppet jumps
with one bent knee
& no arms.
wolf of a man
on the patriots
leaps & catches
the throws in his
teeth.

the world today

ann is maybe crossing
the virginia state line
about now. she's stopping
in berkeley springs to
thrift-shop,
then going down
to her mom's
place by a river
where addison,
ann's daughter,
is waiting. they are
coming back north
monday -- addison
is staying for a week,
& she hasn't yet seen
this house we now reside
in, rather than that little
apartment. addison
has her choice:
sofa-bed in the relaxing-
room, sofa-bed in
the other room,
or the twin bed
in the extra bedroom.
i predict she'll take the
relaxing-room where
a tv is,
with cable,
with mtv.
she's 14.
i completely
forget what
being 14 is --
i can hardly imagine
my daughter's sense
of things at 24.
i know it's
all tumultuous
i'll bet the word

tumultuous
is an old word
in human language.
remember the conditions
hundreds, thousands
of years ago,
& tumultuous
is an appropriate,
true word.
time shrinks
us as we
deafen
& go mute:
we're molecules
inside a banana
a chimpanzee is
eating in a tree.
the buffalo game
is tumultuous
for buffalo.
bledsoe must be
very sore.
ann is in her glory
thrift-shop shopping.
she'll look for a vintage
fedora for me.
addison might be
tattoo'd,
with various piercings,
smokes,
gets stoned.
it'll be a different
kind of week ahead.
the world today
is tumultuous
& i doubt
drew bledsoe,
quarterback of
the bills,
cares one fuck
what the world
is today
except the end
of this year's
season.

over the mountains

over worn jean-faded
cotton blue ridge valleys
in a mist like a black &
white tv movie mist
but wet that wets the windshield
& stupid us
drive a new pt cruiser
we groan simultaneously
when the girl from enterprise
rental brings it around
from back
i almost say no
take it back
ann almost says no
take it back
over 600 wet miles
later
we won't ever buy
a pt cruiser
& the shenandoah
valley is dreamy
in foggy january
fog
milk-spray
so fine even
gravity can't
grab it all the way
down

shitting

shitting in the dark on a dank, broken toilet i can see the sky thru missing cardboard over the doorway with a heavy cardboard flap, & soon it isn't black starry smoggy city sky; there flies various wizard-of-oz characters: wicked witches, dorothy, toto decapitated but animate, half a farmhouse, chickens swirl in the dark eye of a hurricane, cows, dogs, crows, hubble space telescope vistas of galaxies & starbursts, pieces of a far-off life.

joe is snoring great beer snoring on a small newspaper bed in the corner of cardboard walls. it's the middle of night, chill is swarming in as i sniffle, wipe, shut the busted lid of the toilet. i'm not as used to this new environment, this life of nothing, this box of a home i share with my old friend joe in an alley on the lower east-side of erie.

i renounce everything in my past. i leave all my possessions. 3 pairs of jeans, that's what i now own. 3 pairs of jeans is, in fact, indulgent, but i consider it a minor fault in relation to all i happen to negate: explicitly, society. my mind is mostly television, & i denounce everything i've lived -- lies, distortions, abstractions, glassy scenes of media advertising -- i was born on a conveyor-belt in 1954.

i had money. i had things.

joe never did have money, he's lived this way most his entire life.

"joe?" i remember suddenly recognizing him, as he stood there outside a stop-&-go bumming for spare change a few weeks ago. sure, he was drunk, he was on something, but he knew me, he recalled.

"ralph! you sick son of a fuck!"

"wrong name, but it's good you remember me, joe," & i laid a twenty in his old red hand.

"you sick fuck," he laughed.

"c'mon joe, i'll buy you a meal, & drinks. i was just on my way to get some grub & toss back a few. what do you say? it's been like twenty years i've last seen you."

"mister money-fuck, huh? ok, let's go, i'm fucking famished!"

since that moment he rolled into my lexus, his flatulence & burping disgusted me. but i remained polite; after all, joe

was a good friend of mine a few decades ago & he had had a heart of gold. i owed him, so his discrepancies i cld overlook. i offered him cigarettes, which he chain-smoked, & a fatty that he smoked mostly for himself, even when i asked him to share it.

at the restaurant he was a typical disaster, knocking into tables, being loud & obnoxious to everyone, but i slipped our waiter a fifty, big puppy-eyes asking for a break. "very well, sir, but i can only maintain so much," he bent down to whisper to me.

"I WANT A GODDAMN DRINK, BOY!" joe boomed.

he ate well, & drank more than i thought possible without falling face-first onto the table. in a flurry we got out of there & i asked him where he lived.

"nowhere roger," he winked, drooled in his seat, fumbling with cigarettes & lighter.

"man you can sack on my couch if you want," i sd.

"well fuck a fucking duck," joe slurred.

"is that a yes?"

"is the pope a faggot?"

"is that a yes?"

"that's a yep, fucker," & joe's head began bobbing, & he was out.

i got him up to my apartment with a little struggle, & let him fall over onto the couch. i was drunk, more than loaded, but i wasn't ready for sleep just yet. i stayed up, checked my email, made chai -- in the background, joe's loud snoring in the livingroom.

i woke first. shock froze me when i opened the bathroom door. the stench of shit smeared everywhere was overwhelming, vomit peaked in my throat, tho i swallowed it back down closing the door, falling to my knees.

joe was gone.

we were

we were in a savage, war-like
dream running away with others
jogging thru dark woods

in a wet cave we
kiss, embrace,
tremble with fear we

might
be
discovered

by
our
merciless enemy

maybe
they're
aliens

maybe
they're
animals

maybe
they're
huns

movie
life
rolls me

fuzzy
feeling
down a leg

recognition
it's
our cat

then clawed
paws of our
hoggish dog

we were dreaming
ann
it's sunday morning

the pipe
is
full

there
is nothing
but peacefulness here

thick cable
of time thru
my head

thru
yr
head

first things

first things first,
chain dog outside
as dawn breaks
open, make
coffee. fill a
bowl. sip,
inhale.
an hour passes
& the dog
is inside again,
ann's awake.
cat screams for
bacon.
i talk to my
mother on the
cellphone.
ann's upstairs
on the desktop
now, writing,
& i'm down here
enclosed in our
tool-room
with the apple laptop
configuring
the language of
one's self
into a sort of
poem.
what are we
doing today
except what
we're doing
presently?
hell if
i know.
dog is barking.
someone has
the audacity to
walk down our

alley in
the middle of
morning.

stop time,

that's what a poem
does.

truth

silver flash absolutely
full -- xmas gift,
this silver flask,
from my daughter.
our jim beam black
flask is also totally
at brim of the cap.
& there's still near
half a fifth of the fifth
of jim beam bourbon
on our upstairs dorm fridge
along with that black flask
i filled for ann on a friday
evening. it's goddamn
antarctica outside.
i'm wearing a large
corduroy shirt
& my old gray wool
cardigan.
winter shoes too.
my dark brown felt fedora
as tufts of gray hair
sweep over my hound-dog
ears. electric space-heater
tries & tries to warm this
tool-room, but just barely.
ann will be home in about
half an hour.
i'm dizzy from sleeplessness
& novocain &
life. this is about
the time in 1988
my dad died. i never
remember the exact date.
i just feel him, remember
him, think & dream about him.
it was winter.
it was about this time.
death is dreary & morbid.
fateful.

karma is cruel.
eternity is shit.
we are gold.
we are diamond.
we are beauty
& ugliness
& innocent.
we weigh
tons.
flabby minds
as porous as
jellyfish
ascend
descend
slither thru
sandy mud.
the lake is not human.
sky isn't a piece of a
man. mars
doesn't matter.
moon bases are
strategic military
units.
amerika has
washed over us.
we drowned a few
decades ago.
we're ghosts.
we're living
like serfs in the 21st century,
translucent serfs
with our cyberspace existences.
my neck muscle is still quite
sore. i haven't even mentioned
my ass.
my runny sinuses.
my cough.
i'm being a cry-baby
ghost.

