

Out of Ur

ALSO BY ROCHELLE OWENS

Poetry

Not Be Essence That Cannot Be

Four Young Lady Poets

Salt & Core

I Am the Babe of Joseph Stalin's Daughter

The Joe 82 Creation Poems

The Joe Chronicles Part 2

Shemuel

Constructs

W.C. Fields in French Light

How Much Paint Does the Painting Need

Rubbed Stones and Other Poems

New and Selected Poems: 1961-1996

Luca: Discourse on Life and Death

Triptych

Solitary Workwoman

Plays

Futz and What Came After

The Karl Marx Play and Others

The Widow And The Colonel

Futz and Who Do You Want Peire Vidal?

Plays by Rochelle Owens

Fiction

Journey to Purity

Editor

Spontaneous Combustion: Eight New American Plays

Translation (French)

The Passersby, by Liliane Atlan

Film

Futz

Video

Oklahoma Too

How Much Paint Does the Painting Need

Black Chalk

Out of Ur

New & Selected Poems
1961–2012

Rochelle Owens

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2013 by
Shearsman Books
50 Westons Hill Drive
Emersons Green
BRISTOL
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
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www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-258-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of these poems have appeared in the following journals and anthologies: *Abacus*, *America a Prophecy*, *An Active Anthology*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *A Big Jewish Book*, *Boundary 2*, *Broadway Boogie: A Century in Two Decades*, *The Café Review*, *The Coldspring Journal*, *Confrontation*, *Connections*, *Contact II*, *A Controversy of Poets*, *Damascus Road*, *Deep Down*, *First Intensity*, *Four Young Lady Poets*, *Golden Handcuffs Review*, *Intrepid*, *The Iowa Review*, *Jacket 2*, *Moody Street Irregulars*, *The New Verse News*, *New Wilderness Letter*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Nimrod*, *No More Masks*, *Objects*, *Open Places*, *Open Poetry*, *The Partisan Review*, *Poems and Poetics*, *Poems for the Millennium* (vol. 2), *Poetry Now*, *Poets On*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Psyche*, *Rising Tides*, *Shell*, *Six Pack*, *Some/Thing*, *Stations*, *Stooge*, *Sulfur*, *Sun*, *Talisman*, *Temblor*, *Texture*, *13th Moon*, *Tree*, *Trobar*, *2 plus 2*, *Unmuzzled Ox*, *Upstairs at Duroc*, *Yugen*, and *Zone*.

The author wishes to express her gratitude to the following publishers: Trobar Books for *Not Be Essence That Cannot Be*, Black Sparrow Press for *Salt & Core* and *The Joe 82 Creation Poems*, Kulchur Foundation for *I Am The Babe of Joseph Stalin's Daughter*, and *How Much Paint Does the Painting Need*, New Rivers Press for *Shemuel*, Poetry Around for *Constructs*, and Contact II Publications for *W.C. Fields in French Light*. Parts of *The Joe 82 Creation Poems* were originally published in 1973 by Burning Deck as *Poems from Joe's Garage*; parts of *W.C. Fields in French Light* were originally published in 1984 as *French Light* by The Press with the Flexible Voice.

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for George, always

New Poems

(2006–2012)

Song from Out of Ur

Speak to a configuration of stains
even a silk shirt of the man from Marrakech
even a configuration of stains will be
made to speak sublime yellow-green
smears of avocado pulp the man from
Marrakech enemies at his feet the son
of a Macedonian his peach porcelain chin
its cleft pierced by a thorn pierced
is the man from Marrakech the son of a
Macedonian he crouches over a vanity sink
dappled with mother-of-pearl bearing
the weight of a nightmare a nightmare
about iron stairs about a long row
of embryos luminous organs fibrous pits
Narcissus purging
jabbing his two-inch pinky nail evil it feels
into the cleft of his chin
a levantine hook on a rampage
from out of Ur into the hotel his private
quarters red hot mosaic tiles hooks for
every hang-up made by master craftsmen
the man from Marrakech
eyes of pale gray-green pale gray-green eyes
son of a Macedonian
mummified is his code of honor

In ancient Phoenicia
a woman holds a sublime yellow-green
fabric smeared with avocado pulp
years later her unmarried hump-backed
son will unfold the cloth
Even a configuration of stains
will be made to speak

*

An urge for rhythms of Marrakech
gilded the row of upper teeth of the school master
listening to American jazz smiling at a man
from Sudan an engineer wearing a necklace
and a diamond stud in his ear
The man from Marrakech rises from the
Greek revival chair feeling the rays of the sun
resurrecting the dead

The false door of lust opens
frustrates and disappoints
famous the false door of lust
slamming the head breaking the nose
cracking the jaw splitting the gums ejecting
the gilded row of upper teeth teeth
of Cavafy Donatello Passolini Versace
short dark solid men mavericks
with spleens of hot lava
orbiting the mediterranean sun

*

A djellaba is a djellaba is a robe a robe of roses
sings the man from Marrakech
letting fall around his ankles purple roses
the djellaba its distinct parts is like a fluid
a fluid of roses is a chemical analysis—proof
le bien et le mal
drop by drop its sound distinct
le bien et le mal
And he sings to pierced nipples nipples
on the sculptured torso—a man from Sudan
And when he sings the words
the words are pigment cells vegetal to vegetal
cooling the skin the words are hairs
pushing through layers pushing through
layers of skin scalp armpit bones in a sac
words of a song from out of Ur from out of Ur
from out of the throat of the man
from Marrakech

*

The children always crawl to golden coins
golden coins draw the children
whispers the man from Marrakech
And he grants wishes to a man from Sudan
and desire breaks its molten outer core
then drawing upon his economic advantage
whispers I am the Alpha and Omega
world without end

*

In the picturesque Medina
two old men are trading photos
cruise ships voyaging to America
Inside a galaxy a cloud of dust and gas
gas and dust inside a galaxy
Two old men are smoking water pipes
in the picturesque Medina
two old men are playing cards talking politics
sipping coffee
hearing the call to prayer
the man from Sudan an engineer
wearing a necklace
and a diamond stud in his ear
the man from Marrakech
eyes of pale gray-green pale gray-green eyes
son of a Macedonian
an athlete whose stamina was tested
with javelin hammer and discus
smiling and remembering a silk shirt
smeared with avocado pulp
hammer and discus are thrown
and the weight of the athlete
spirals in as dense as a star

*

Come see what has been called
the poignant picture—a father bearing
twin sons in his arms—poignant the chanting
aramaic words and they were born
from frozen embryos
Forced deeper the weight of a dream
about a gold ostrich egg and shining through
the shell the form that you should put
your money into—a two-headed child
two pairs of pale gray-green eyes
colors and patterns of the iris painted
with a fine sable brush
And dread is a light transparent veil
over the eyes of the man from Marrakech
smoking a water pipe eating sleeping reading
playing computer games
then feeling for his wallet for the accordion-fold
interior credit cards driver's license bills
receipts coins and photos
of the winged cherubim their halos
glittering circling red orange yellow
the young always crawl to golden coins
then chanting in aramaic a prayer
'And they are the winged cherubim
with the faces of children'

The Glacier

For a thousand years the glacier
expanding outward outward from the walls
of a dead artist's garden in Tuscany—
a hallucination of an obscure poet
living alone in Angola
writing in Portuguese

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

the word 'avore' tattooed on her forehead
snow forming ice
the glacier expanding outward outward
moving slowly slowly
lumps of ice tilting twisting
rows of words order of words

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

parts of words
the word 'abandon' stuck in her throat
lovely the letters like roots
spirals of roots multicellular
slender pliant twigs
lovely the letters like arteries

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

interlacing shapes colors wind rivers
blood of her mammalian brain
flowing outward outward
forming pictures of hieroglyphs
a honeycomb candles metal glass
an elephant gothic script
the mouth of a fish

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

leather bound books crop dusters
the mass of ice moving downward
the glacier flowing cresting
sound and meaning breaking break
ing rocks and ice
lovely the letters like the spine
of the aardvark bending

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

her mammalian brain
expanding outward outward
forming rows of letters
order of letters
parts of words rushing darting
stinging jellyfish
the debris of words from wind and fire

'Green the gardens of Tuscany'

solid liquid and gas
chunks of stone and iron
the letters cooling gleaming dimming
the word 'abandon' stuck in her throat
letters orbiting her head
fusing into words
giant storms of letters spiraling
the glacier expanding outward outward

Eye of the Botanist

In memory of Joy Walsh and Theodore Enslin

Amid the sameness he blinks going out
feeling in front
of his face

and landing on his right eyelid
sunlight blood vessels
a seed of the larkspur

under the eyelid
a seed of the larkspur
under the eyelid

the hind toe of a lark
scratching the cornea
stinging lacerating penetrating

a seed of the flower
blue color is the larkspur
the eye of the beholder

a fireball e x p l o d i n g
the eye of the botanist
a dwelling

the universe e x p a n d i n g
amorous the greedy seed
amorous
the greedy seed

a uterus its sweet nest
a triumph of genus desiring
desiring to fecundate

be fruitful and multiply
a seed of the larkspur flowering
s p r e a d i n g

the eye of the botanist e x p a n d i n g
the grandeur of the cornea
Jesus saying—

suffer the larkspur children
beautiful children
luring the hummingbirds and bees

joyous the seed of the larkspur
in the heat of summer
joyous the song of the lark

glorious the eye of a botanist
lit with flaming torches

Horishi

Desiring e u p h o r i a
envying Van Gogh the tattoo artist
begins carving sunflowers

a layer of s k i n the s k i n
the c a n v a s
absorbing sunlight

s p a c i n g the petals
each puncture the molten eyeballs
thumbs and fingers of Van Gogh

marking the s k i n
inserting the pigment
the s k i n the c a n v a s

absorbing sunlight
each leaf touches of yellow
dabs of white and green

a single rapid stroke

ravenous the flesh the c a n v a s
near the armpits
among the petals of flowers

a bright blue halo
leaves of beaten gold from the sun's core
the mystical signature of Van Gogh

hidden inside of the thighs
of the samurai warrior
occult words energy of the Logos

from ink to blood
the thorns piercing the s k i n
the c a n v a s absorbing sunlight

the sound needles make the waves
the waves and wind

Ode to a Gila Monster

There goes a Gila monster
in the beginning
of the triumphant twenty-first century
there goes a Gila reptile
following soundlessly
soundlessly following
is a Gila monster a mute animal
a monster of brilliant color
there goes a Gila reptile
studded with yellow and black
beadlike tubercles
there goes a beautiful reptile
with lidless eyes
devoid of dread and shame
in harmony with the microscopic algae
in harmony with a zygote in a moist habitat
in harmony with a basil plant
in harmony with fern and poison mushroom
there goes a cold-blooded Gila monster
a cold-blooded messenger
an ingenious reptile
seeking and smelling insects fruit rodents
the aromatic plants
in harmony with hibiscus and sand dunes
in harmony with chemical molecules
with amphibians and their larvae
with layers of water
in harmony with jellyfish corals and seaworms
with giant redwood trees
in harmony with mammals scorpions fish
crustaceans and turtles
in harmony with layers of water
in harmony with symmetry with layers of water
in harmony with Alpha and Omega
in harmony with the rays of the sun

*

In front of a
carved wood sculpture
in the violet light
Mary Magdalene Mary Magdalene
In the violet light
there goes a Gila monster
a Gila monster
majestically formed
a monster of gorgeous color
her body an astrological plan
studded with yellow and black
beadlike tubercles
like atoms locked into a pattern
vibrating particles
dabs of orange blue and green
forming an image in
the violet light
light rays entering the eyes
of a Gila monster
her body sovereign of
stems branches roots plants
of bones flesh blood vessels
sovereign of the wood sculpture
of the long slender limbs
delicately modeled hands
and feet carved with a chisel
Mary Magdalene cut from cut
from a single length of poplar
her hair highlighted with gold leaf
strands of her hair blowing
blowing across the lidless eyes
eyes of a Gila monster

*

Naming a wish wishing a name
Gila monster descended
into this world
triumphant

in the twenty-first century
hatched from the egg of the sky
emerging from a fiction
her body an astrological plan
in harmony with the rays
of the sun
slowly slowly slowly slowly
towards the four directions
a monster
of brilliant color
sleeping underground
dreaming of monkey cup
and cobra lily
vulnerable flesh eater
spiritual carnivore
Gila monster
the warmest of mothers
like the warmest of mothers
righteous and paradoxical
vulnerable flesh eater
spiritual carnivore
there goes a beautiful reptile
slowly slowly slowly slowly
towards the four directions
a cold blooded messenger
a monster
of brilliant color
her fatty tail
studded with yellow and black
beadlike tubercles
her gift of spit
her healing reptile spit
spit of power spit of cure
spit of metamorphosis
in harmony with layers of water
in harmony with Alpha and Omega
in harmony
with the rays of the sun

*

When as an incarnation
mother of the milky way
in the triumphant twenty-first century
O monster of harmonies
flying descending
into this world
descending
O Gila monster O virgin queen
imperial reptile
hatched from the egg of the sky
flying Gila
descending into this world
around her a spreading hibiscus
O philosopher with lidless eyes
all-seeing
eternal wunderkind
devoid of dread and shame
O head and fatty tail
majestically formed with yellow
and black beadlike tubercles
pure as alabaster shining gold
mother of the milky way
of metamorphosis
her gift of spit
her healing reptile spit
spit of power spit of cure
vulnerable flesh eater
spiritual carnivore
wafting incense sanctifying
the four directions
slowly slowly slowly slowly
scuttling over the sand
a cold blooded messenger
a monster of rapture
in harmony
with the rays of the sun