

It's About Time



J.R. Solonche

Books by J.R. Solonche

The Lost Notebook of Zhao Li

Life-Size

Coming To

The Five Notebooks of Zhao Li

Selected Poems 2002-2021

Years Later

The Dust

A Guide of the Perplexed

For All I Know

The Moon Is the Capital of the World

Piano Music

Enjoy Yourself

The Time of Your Life

The Porch Poems

To Say the Least

A Public Place

True Enough

If You Should See Me Walking on the Road

I, Emily Dickinson and Other Found Poems

The Jewish Dancing Master

Tomorrow, Today and Yesterday

In Short Order

Invisible

Heart's Content

Won't Be Long

Beautiful Day

Peach Girl: Poems for a Chinese Daughter (with Joan I. Siegel)

It's About Time

POETRY

J.R. Solonche

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Time

Walking on the road on a warm morning in late December, I came upon a dead opossum that had been struck and killed. There was no blood, there was no crushed skull bone, there was no trail of intestines. I passed it by without much thought, for I was thinking about what I had heard on the radio, what a physicist was saying on the subject of time, that time doesn't exist, that time exists only as our thoughts, the future being only our thoughts about it, which we call anticipation or plans, the past being only our thoughts about it, which we call memories, that both the future and the past exist only in the here and now, for these are merely our thoughts, which exist only in the here and now. So walking back the other way, I picked up a strong stick, and I nudged the opossum's carcass off the road and onto the soft leaves at the apron of the wood against the rotting trunk of an old oak tree in case he was right. Or wrong.

Somewhere

Somewhere someone is thinking
of somewhere else, which, if
anywhere else, could very well be
here, which, when I think of somewhere
other than here, I am careful to think of
no one I know thinking of nowhere I know.

Hour

I want to name
this hour, this hour
I live in now neither
witching nor *happy*,
neither *children's*
nor *lunch*, neither
darkest nor *zero*.
I want to name this
hour, this hour that
I die in now, the *wasted*.

Shadows

There are many shadows
on the ground, but only
one shadow moves. It is
the shadow of the hawk,
which is as silent as the hawk
that makes it while waiting
for the ground to move.

Yosemite

Was it a crow or a raven
that flew down from the pine
to the ground beside me?
It doesn't matter to me, but
to the one who finds the feather,
it is everything.

Weathering

I marvel at how
they weather the rain,
these petunias, these
marigolds, beating
their beating. “Beat
you to the sun,” they
say, not missing a beat.

Failure Story

Many upon a time
is how they begin.

And they lived as best
as they were able,

for what else could
they do? is how they end.

Shelf

If there is such a thing
as an emptiness beyond

empty, surely it is this shelf,
which, while I fill all

the other shelves with books,
I will keep always bookless.

The Tree Of Knowledge

The only knowledge stored
in the apple core was

the knowledge of good and evil,
of nakedness and sex.

Whether it knew the origin
of the universe is not recorded.

Immensity

I looked up into
the immensity
of the sky just at
the right moment
to see the hawk
traverse the immense
city of the clouds.

Thumb

Just the right unopposably
opposable, bendable angle
to enable us primates to grasp
and to hold, but also to beg
for a ride on a Texas highway
or turn less skilled gardeners
green with envy or find
the enemy's metaphorical eye
to stick you in, the only one
to pull out the plumb
and rhyme with it, the hand's
handiest of all, you thumb.

Short Conversation

“So I guess it’s over,” he said
as she was walking out the door.
“You hit the nail on the head,”
she said, closing the door behind
her. “Well, that’s the best way
to hammer the last one into
the coffin,” he said to himself.

Hydrangeas

I forgot about them.
It has been a year, after all.
What do you remember after
a year? But here they are again
in their corner of the garden,
bigger than ever, which I take
to mean, in the language
of hydrangeas, *Better*.

The Thing's The Play

To act in a play
is not the same
as to play at acting.
Leave the king out
of it. The queen, too,
along with the friend,
the girlfriend, and
her father and brother.
What's left to do
but read the soliloquies,
one after the other, one
into the other, all night
long, and back again.

Pictures

There are pictures of
Stafford and Kunitz
on my wall. I wonder
if they ever met. I doubt
that they ever met.
But they're meeting now,
Kunitz and Stafford, Stafford
and Kunitz, on my wall.

The Soul's Sea

I don't believe you
have to believe in it
to sail on the sea of
yourself. Look at me,
Ammons. I'm doing
it, and I can't swim.

In The Bar

A couple sits at a table.
They are young. She
is stunning. He is plain.
I am old. I sit at a table
with Jeff. Jeff is old.
We are two old men
sitting at a table. We
drink beer and look at
the stunning young
woman at the next table.
She has long black hair.
She has pale white hands.
She has dark eyes.
Jeff and I look at her.
Her plain boyfriend
knows we are looking
at her. We don't care.
We care only about her
long black hair and her
pale white hands and
her dark eyes. "I'd like
to fuck her," Jeff says.
"Not me," I say. "What?
You don't want to fuck
her?" Jeff says. "No.
My fucking days are over,"
I say. "All I want to do is
hold her pale white hand
and look into her dark eyes
for as long as she'll let me.
And then longer." "That's
too bad," Jeff says. "Just
drink your beer, Jeff," I say.
And then say longer.

I Made A Mistake

I made a mistake,
which, when I tried
to correct it, because
mistakes get hungry,
became a bigger mistake,
which once again,
because mistakes get
hungry, became a still
bigger mistake, which now
is totally unrecognizable
from the original mistake,
so I suppose the lesson here
is do not feed your mistakes.

Walking

When I walk on the road,
I rarely meet anyone. There
is rarely anyone to meet.
I miss living in the city
where I would meet lots
of people when I walked.
They would all be different
each time. There would be
lots of different stories to
write about, lots of different
faces for my dreams to choose
from. Then I would sit at an
outdoor café and write a poem
about how it would be to walk
on a lonely country road and
meet no one, no one at all,
and have only my own story
to write about, and only
myself to dream about. Yes,
the grass is always greener.
Yes, the cement is always grayer.

Incidence

A crow came flying
from a tree in front of me,
arc-turned right up higher
back into the same tree
while a second crow
came flying down,
tracing the same arc
left, which, because both
occurred in one eye-blink,
I call one incidence.

To One Who Complained That I Behaved Inappropriately

So what part, what part
was inappropriate exactly?

Was it the way I touched
your back, ever so lightly,

between your shoulder blades,
while saying, "Excuse me?"

Was it the way I looked into
your blue eyes, all there was to see

in the world? Was it the way
I got lost in your strawberry

blonde hair and wanted never
to be found again? Tell me,

tell me, was it the way
I whispered, "Listen to me,

I'm falling in love with you,"
and you laughed at me?

So, yes, I did all this.
I'm guilty, but oh, so kisslessly.

Cosmos

Outnumbered ten
to one by the marigolds,

the cosmos, nevertheless,
do not care whose pot

it is as they are ten
inches closer to the sun.

Found In Translation

Whenever I write a bad poem,
I send it to my friend, Francisco,
in Portugal, who sends it right
back, and which, although
I cannot read it, I know is so
much better in Portuguese.
I must make more foreign friends.

Pantomime

A small private plane
flew overhead.

I thought it was
the Angel of Death,

so I waved,
and it dipped its wings.

August Ale

Did you see the light blonde light
at the end of the tunnel?
So did you enter the tunnel and tunnel
through all the way until
the tunnel turned into a funnel
through which the light turned into a female
with golden cheeks and golden cheeks?

There Used To Be A Prayer

There used to be a prayer.

There used to be a prayer that prayed it all.

There used to be an answer.

There used to be an answer that answered it all.

There used to be a question.

There used to be a question that questioned it all.

There used to be a silence.

There used to be a silence that silenced it all.

The Governor Of Poetry

Of course, she was a woman.

Of course, she was a Democrat.

Of course, you donated to her campaign.

Of course, you made telephone calls on her behalf.

Of course, you went door-to-door on her behalf.

Of course, she lost, Alfred.