



AUSTERITY PLEASURES

James Payne

Poems

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POEMS

JAMES PAYNE



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COLUMBUS

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All poems in this collection concede
their autonomy to the will of the author
who concedes to the will of the reader, et seq.

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[ALSO BY JAMES PAYNE]

PLAYS

Louis Riel, Do You Know How I Feel (with Ryan Starinsky)

The Prints and Drawings Room (with Sara Drake)

POETRY

Assuming Size (with Jordan Castro, Ryan Eilbeck and Richard Wehrenberg, Jr.)

ZINES

Arty Party (with Sara Drake)

How I Made Money

Punk Zine

This is a Comic Book (with Colleen Grennan)

Women's Comics Anthology (with Anne Elizabeth Moore)

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Us Out of North America

The 20th century is just, like, never going to end.

Like, we might run into LaGuardia or Stevenson tonight

because it's 4:35,
we have a roof
and it's just another hour
for a 40 oz. at Mike's.

*(Singsong): We can drink from sea to shining sea,
you, me and the American Century.*

Or reality: we've been at it since noon last night & you're still stuttering your Maginot lies,

'... war which led to that war which caused this war...' '...inexorably this world...'
'... we did this because they did that...' '...I was right and they were mad...'

*He's making nonsense, barely.
She's screaming, nearly.*

What are they arguing, really?

1. Land grabs,
handholds.
2. Ideology,
old tomes.

3. Revanchists,
apologists.

4. Monarchists,
lethargics.

Well, I'd rather pass out
than have your incising lines on my map.

I need the 'delete-all,' and it hasn't been invented yet;
because triggers trigger triggers, we all *know* things like that.

(Your amber's majesty – it's just Detroit
when you're mad at everything/me.)

There shall be no polity.

(At an impasse):

He thinks: *Us out of North America.*

She thinks: *Us out of North America.*

They say,

'Us out of North America

Poem for Sitting in Panera

I feel odd about my life.

Like, 'Off-putting.'

Like, 'Disconcerting.'

Like, 'Periodic burning.'

Like, 'What just happened?'

Like, 'What is happening?'

Like, 'What will happen?'

Like, 'What service industry job am I best suited to perform once I am inevitably weeded out of upward mobility? Which position can possibly soothe my ego while my manual labor is exploited to better expedite the alcoholism, caffeinism or consumerism of the landed gentry? And how will I ever make enough money within 10-15 years to be in a position to properly raise my children if I do decide to breed? And who am I kidding in thinking that my children will have the slightest chance to avoid thinking about the service industry, their best possible future position in it and how their own children will have to do the same while sitting in Panera in 2046?'

Some Answers to Certain Inexhaustible Anxieties

Only so many people get to do so many things.

And some things are only done by certain people.

And certain people only know certain other people.
And certain people decide who does certain things.

And certain things only happen in certain places.

And you have to be there to be there to be there.
And one thing, naturally, leads to another.

After all, we are:

Contingent beings
contingent on being,
being contingent beings
contingent on being.

Oh, and it's a recession.

Practical Mathematics

I am going to cost
far more
to fix,
than I am
to replace.

Am Appy R.I.P. 2003(?) - 2011(?) (Étienne 2/2)

We are the only people,
in the world,
ever,
who will know what it was
to wake up -
after champipple & weird sex -
and see a boy in pink, epicene,
vertically-integrated briefs,
chalk-outlined in
avocado & bonsai leaves,
holding onto something.*

*It was nice.

How I Smelled on I-90

I smelled like the last loaf of Wonder Bread,
the waft up and stay till stale.
Like that empty factory
and the shifting remainders
of our pre-service industry.
Like those painted billboards
that wither and weather away,
so 1960s/70s
and kept,
like a spectacle,
like a kid passed out
in the middle of the party.

I smelled like a human.
A person.
All people.

Everything that is real.
Really, really, real.

I mean,
I smelled like a summer festival,
on a big screen,
in a big park,
in some big city somewhere.

And like,
all the kids who were there.

I smelled like tap water,
I smelled like Klaus Kinski,
I smelled like Theodore Kaczynski,
I smelled like things directly underneath and to the sides of me.

I smelled like homemade speed,
things you buy that you don't need,
things you need that you can't buy,
like trying to find your roommate
to find something,
or someone,
and do something,
or other,
to get high.

I smelled
like the exculpations
of the weight of the world,
the palimpsest
of justification and whateverness,
the layers
of innit and forgetfulness,
at turns me
and me and me and neverness.

But,
mainly,
I smelled like a dead person
underneath a Richard Serra sculpture
and the conversation
the preparators mumble through
after.

Books of Love

We should spend the week together
so I can read all of your books.

Because we have the same taste
and you have your father's money.

Classified Déclassée

Q: Do you love me?

A: 'I consider myself a revolutionary Communist.'

(Burned on the return, ash met dirt with marked éclat.)

(Things hurt.)(Things never worked.)(Things jerk.)

(The truth is it didn't matter - ever. Did it?)

(Not to you.)(Not really.)(Not to me.)

Q: But, do you love me?

A: 'That's violence.'

(I see.)

Andy Gardner's Milk

I go to 7-Eleven because my roommate wants milk. I say that if he buys me a cigar, I'll use my EBT card to buy him milk. The cigar is \$1.27, the milk is \$2.99. I smoke my cigar on our porch at night and drink coffee and watch Annie Cohen-Solal on Charlie Rose. I drink three cups of coffee.

When my last cup is too cold I pour it in the pot and pour out another cup.

I need to edit an interview with an avant-garde feminist filmmaker about performance art.

Instead, I go to amazon.com, artforum.com, badatsports.com, banalization.blogspot.com, boingboing.net, charlirose.com, donewaiting.com, facebook.com, gawker.com, gmail.com, goodreads.com, nehrujackets.tumblr.com, newyorker.com, onion.com, pitchfork.com, statcounter.com, twitter.com, ubu.com, weedsteeler.wordpress.com and wikipedia.org.

I pick up my cat. I read an essay by Wendell Berry. I read nine pages of Benjamin Franklin's autobiography. I read about the Delaware Republican Senate Primary.

It's 7:28 a.m.

I've been up for nine hours.

I've done absolutely nothing.

*I woke up.

*I bought milk.

*I drank coffee, smoked a cigar.

*I looked at the Internet

*I picked up my cat.

*I read nine pages of my book.

I've done absolutely nothing.

It's 7:40 a.m.

Oh, O'Hare

Oh late thirties, early forties, smartly adorned couple,
encumbered with shopping bags,
with child, with luggage, with waiting,
with your conversation that fills the moment,
slipping a bon mot or two to pass the time,
at the airport, seemingly *always* at the airport -
in one line or another.

You met during undergrad, coastal.
Honeymoon to follow, with holidays, heli-drops, full partners, in-laws, contented sighs -
fertility drugs for the little one, though really, you tried.

She with the American Girl Place shopping bag,
he with the scarf, the coat, the watch, the shirt, the shoes, Oh!
How the wait can get to you!
The line being simply unending,
ten minutes in all, and the worker telling the six check-ins,
three carry-ons, tennis racquet backpack, 'Please move along': what gall!
No, that is too much, far too much, no, that won't stand.
And with a quick retort, a remark of genius was at hand,

'Ma'am, you know what would really get this line moving
is if you had a few more workers to help the check-in man.'

Ah. *Voilà*.

The clarity. The mental acuity,
the trenchant analysis that had eluded the ma'am in her duty.

After all, it had only been three and a half months since her role precipitously soared,

'You'll need to do more – our profits are dropping through the floor.
Got to stay competitive, a marketplace - you know. So you'll cover the let go.
I don't see why you're upset, it could have just as well been you, so...'

It being just three and a half months, possibly four,
your incisive commentary must have opened new doors,
new avenues for ma'am's thoughts
on the theory and origin of long lines;
though your blithe conflation - blithest of all time -
of the working and the owning classes and their difference in kind,
failed to belie your none too opaque fixations on faraway fly-fishing,
credit default swaps and choking trollops in Red Roof Inns
while on business trips to Annapolis, Maryland.

This faulty conflation – that begged a response, a clip to the midsection, perhaps -
was filed away, moved along, through the queue that fills her day,
drinks her night and keeps her rent a further month out of sight.
After all, where does the ma'am place in the long line of life?

You are the consumer, *You* are our best customer,
and my Sir and my dear lovely Lady, how you are always right.

One of Everything

I just feel like
it would be nice,
for once,
and only once,
to go to J.Crew,
and get
one of everything.

Cloudberry Jam

In the number 2 on High, I see:
people I know on the street.
My 401(k) being Anna Karina dancing,
Kate Bush: *The Dreaming*, my IRA,
my total gross income twixt
the back and front stickered covers,
markers over ~~OSU~~ libraries.

'So, anyway, I threw away my shoes
when I bought new shoes.'

Is that what you do?

And I'll throw away these shoes
when I buy new shoes.

Into the refuse pile, into some other continuum.

In the number 2 on High, we
drink, fight and fuck. (G.G.)
Beg, cry and kneel. (Me. Me.)
Live, love and suck. (???????)
Sleep, somnolent and feel. (Me. Me.)

En some other continuum.

Total net intake, FY 2010: *Marmalade*.

I'm on a cloudberry jam.

Enter man on bike on sidewalk. (Cheerily) 'Homos.'

Parce que, nous sommes dans l'autre continuum.

We can live in the past, in a portfolio of photographs,
somewhere, not here/here, but always some other continuum.

In the number 2 on High there swirl affinities, colors, Television Personalities,
kultur idolatries, propre peoples of some other continuum.

And you?

'What is it about you?'

Because I do like something about you.
Even when riding the bus is all we can do.

Eton Trifles

I want to be in a band
that sounds like The Jam,
covering The Jam
covering The Jam
covering my band
covering The Jam.

I don't know. Who knows. Who cares.
Just maxed out my credit cards applying to grad schools.
It's like, 'Either make this The Jam thing work, now, or
trudge 45+ years horizontally/downwardly/innerly/boringly/whoringly.'

Ugh. I just feel like I'm
Down in the Tube Station at Midnight
in a dark, desperate, grasping metaphor
for my heart/soul/mind/fabric of reality kind of way.

Though, considering how this poem is going,
I feel like I could write a 33 1/3rd
for *All Mod Cons*, 1,000 X at least as good
as Colin Meloy's *Let It Be*. Please, sir, advance me.

But, still,
I'd rather be in a band
that sounds like The Jam,
covering The Jam
covering The Jam
covering my band
covering The Jam.

Our Rattails

Make my hair
back to when you were punk.
We had rattails, sure
things were fun.
Half of it was shaved, and
we never really bathed,
our nails were half-black,
'I swear I graduated college,'
I just have this tendency to look back.

666etwood Mac

I stopped liking music.

But I didn't stop thinking about it.

But I did stop caring about it -
probably in the backseat with a book,
probably in someone's bed, asleep,
probably in-between comments/looks.

Probably I stopped liking it
as I was playing it, or
maybe I just sublimated those thoughts
of how being in a band with you was
into a more general feeling
toward a range of notes
and the conventions for arranging them.

Look, life is hard -
probably I/it am/is difficult,
probably - I have heard - 'We are too alike,'
probably feedback ≠ brilliance in 2009.

Probably overburdening everything
as I seem to do to it, or
whatever, and anyway,
we are out of that place.

I don't blame you necessarily,

(I don't really care (though it does seem
a plausible explanation when I sit to mull it over
(but who's to say I'm not projecting (or displacing
(and what would it change? (can anything change?
(can this? (can you? (can I? (I?))))))))))

I just stopped liking music.

A Bedtime Prayer

I want to click
on a link
that will take me
to a place
I don't
hate.

Montréal

I'm reading *Reality Sandwiches*,
sitting on a terrace in Montréal,
and all Ginsberg keeps doing
is listing names of cities,
like that's enough.

When Frank does it,
it's charming.
When Allen does it,
it's damn demanding.

And is it enough?
Why do people who do things
feel the need - go some place
and then say they went there?

I don't even want to read Ginsberg,
but it's him or Veblen
and I just want to enjoy
Montréal.

Nature Morte

I'll look
at your old profile pictures
because it will make me
feel shitty
about
my life.

Arthur Danto

There was this thing
where we would have deep,
philosophical conversations
on the nature of art,
because we were
Americans in Paris,
and that is what we read
we should do there.

And I would clumsily refer
to an essay I had never read
to augment my fumbling,
out-of-depth argument,
only to have you look at
your bestie from preparatory,
start laughing, and say,

‘Oh, *Arthur*.’

I looked forward
for two weeks to
hear him speak,
as a student, it
was even made mandatory:

‘Important lecturer visiting the Wex guys,
make sure that you’re there.
It’s not all that often we

get someone like him to come here.’

But, everyday, you dreaded the inevitable
‘How are your parents? And your studies?’
from him, his wife and his little dachshund,
in the lobby of your apartment building,
on the East Coast,
in New York,
in Manhattan,
by Columbia,
where your father worked,
where everyone you know went,
and where Arthur is Professor Emeritus
of making people from Ohio
look wildly out of their element
while floundering in debate
with someone they adore.

Problems Worth Having

I don't want to have to read everything

& see everything
& watch everything
& listen to everything
& do everything
& be everything

just to talk to you.

Equality

A copy from the store,
a copy from the library:
both tell the same story.

Is that what you mean by equality?

Ice Cream Étiquette

1. One should *always* read Sartre while on one's 30-minute break from one's retail job; sitting in Dunkin' Donuts, drinking water out of a free cup, with – crucially – the Gin Blossoms overhead.
2. However, one should *never* be seen doing so. It appears ripe with disjunctive meaning, an impropriety few wear well.
3. If one is, unavoidably, approached by a service industry 'peer' and questioned as to, 'What are you reading?' the mannered individual will reply, 'Oh, this book or whatever.'

4. It is proper to not purchase D' & D's wares, with a possible exception for a small, black coffee. Sartre is most palatable when one deprives one's self of material pleasures (e.g. croissants, munchkins).
5. If the aforementioned course of action is not, for any reason, possible, stay in bed until 2:43 p.m., stare at one's floorboards, and eat pistachio ice cream.

It is preferable to do so out of one's sugar-coated cone.

We Remains

The stomach is a commodity:
pork barrel to be traded on open markets
for not spending money.
Trade to have something to keep,
for you - not just for food.

Yes,
not full is fulfilling,
it connects you to a heritage;
the mass underclasses of mass
who have felt full
of human feelings of humanity:

of a body, of having a body,
of being somebody with a body,
of being a body with a body's feelings,
of being bodily hungry.
And to etch out a gaunter form
is to see interest gained,
dividends paid, money made.

(Though not enough for debt,
or enough to be spent,
but really,
if you ate what you could afford
you would be, clogged arteries -
and still hungry.)

But those with enough
manage to look neither
too little nor too much.
They look fresh out of the package
like choice hasn't touched them yet,
like something cast in bronze or built by slaves,
they never fluctuate
according to the time of the month,
or whether they worked late,
or if their roommate brought something home,
or if they both left the dumpster all alone.

They never need entertain:
'a pound lost is a Pound earned,
is "just one pound of flesh."

But we remains,

we only eat *lest*...

Bushwick, NYC (Étienne 1/2)

On Food Stamp Yoga,
(1st of each month)

we eat like Marquises
and Comtes and Kings.
Kings and Queens of Kale,
at the Court of Never Buy,
Never Sell.

3rd floor roommate Étienne says,

‘Acid tabs,
bring reusable bags.
The inside of an avocado makes me feel glad.
It’s like everything I’ve always wanted but never had.’

Adding,

‘Oh Prosecco, just let go! À la Cour de Bushwick we never say no.’

And,

‘These things people think mean things are mean things, do-you-know-what-I mean?’

On Food Stamp Yoga,
(1st of each month)

we love one another.

It is not tough.

Selected Contents of the Dumpster

1. You
2. Me

It Doesn't Make any Sense Because you are Smiling

You 'flick-off'
the camera
in multiple
profile photos
in such a way that
the knuckles
of your index and ring fingers
are at different heights
and the index
is notably higher.
Ineffable feelings of
confusion & concern.
I really think
I need to be there
for you.

Transitive Proprieties (for Carte Goodwin)

A politician dies,
leaving a bald sized moth-hole in otherwise steel wool.
All the Sorels lie in wait; they know this,
and fumble over one another to stand for Congress.

It's like sharks, sure, it's like vultures, yeah,
it's like a lot of thing we think of animals as doing.
It's like fictional characters fatally flawed by ambition,
it's like movies of situations that seem too fictive to come to fruition.
But - I swear - you can hear,
on windy summer nights,
gasps in the aether of the newscast, like
a child chanting its Christmas wishlist in fright:

NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD
NEW TIMES, NEW BLOOD

The sharks, sure, the vultures, yeah,
they eulogize for the moment,

panegyrically assess
why they best represent
the passed-on's past
on measures and repeals,
to carry forth that gorgeous WV State Seal
into the 21st century of continued ruling class
ruling/teaching provincials class rules class.
But you don't have your sinecure yet,
M. Carte Blanche,
you still need to feel
that you show that you feel.
Make them feel you feel you feel!
That you feel you really feel!

Even so,
sweat shows on your lapel,
your figure cuts nothing to believe,
and the air of your tribute
is not fit to breathe.

It just musses one's gel.

It just salves one's hell.

As with Earlier Periods*

It's bigger than Hip-Hop,
yet smaller than can't stop/won't stop.
It's about the size
of the whites and their eyes.

It's the size of a lot of people who died,
of a lot of people kept alive,
of us in-between
who aren't seen,
you know,
they can't even make us out for the trees,
that we're herded through each eve, just to commute right back,
forcibly set upon that track, so all we can do is think and dream and wish and want back.

(But when beginning plays end, memories \neq friends.
Your childhood room: burrows, dens, a wire-fence, a pen.)

Yet it all seems so clear:

There are people who can think and speak but they just can't seem to hear.

And we're still here.
And we're still here.
And we're still here.
And we're still here.
And we're still here.

*“The lower classes, as with earlier periods, were segregated from the aristocratic and mercantile “society,” and led lives far removed from the relative luxury enjoyed by the other classes.’

Occupy Everything

In all capitals, in all the capitals, all of the time:

OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING
OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING
OCCUPY EVERYTHING OCCUPY EVERYTHING

But I don't even feel like being in my own body.

Trop Moderne Lovers (for Gabriel Simony)

Gabriel.

He said it best,

'C'est trop moderne.'

'C'est trop, trop moderne.'

If there is something French, it's:

'Everything as it should be.'

'As it would be.'

(As none of us would even recognize it if it were something we could see.)

They cursed and fucked, you know, Grandpap & Grandmommy,

printing press pissed the rote memory;

I'm glad the Internet had me.

Can't all stay, V-E Day;

my Mackintosh looks a bit a different way.

'Mais, mo'dernity, mo'problems.'

Well, one young punk Modern Lover am I.

Et tu?

'I'm a little dinosaur.'

It's nothing altogether new.

Some day I'll be dignified and old,

And I'll try not to sell the world I was sold.

Notes

For the official reader's guide to allusions, references, and word usage, please visit :

[<http://banalization.blogspot.com/2011/03/readers-guide-to-allusions-references.html>]

For the audio version of this chapbook, please visit :

[<http://banalization.blogspot.com/2011/03/austerity-pleasures-audio-chapbook.html>]

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