

Covers

TONY LOPEZ is the author of more than 20 books of poetry, fiction and criticism. His most recent poetry collections are *False Memory* (Salt, 2003) and *Devolution* (The Figures, 2000). He has received awards from The Wingate Foundation, The Society of Authors, and the Arts & Humanities Research Council. His poetry is featured in many anthologies including *Twentieth-Century British & Irish Poetry* (Oxford), *Vanishing Points* (Salt), *Other* (Wesleyan) and *Conductors of Chaos* (Picador). *Meaning Performance: Essays on Poetry* was published by Salt in 2006. He is well-known as a poetry performer and has given readings throughout UK, Europe and North America. He teaches in England at the University of Plymouth, where he was appointed the first Professor of Poetry in 2000.

Also by Tony Lopez

Poetry

Equal Signs (Equipage, 2004)

False Memory (Salt, 2003)

Devolution (The Figures, 2000)

Data Shadow (Reality Street, 2000)

False Memory (The Figures, 1996)

Negative Equity (Equipage, 1995)

Stress Management (Boldface Press, 1994)

A Theory of Surplus Labour (Curiously Strong, 1990)

A Handbook of British Birds (Pig Press, 1982)

Abstract & Delicious (Secret Books, 1982)

Change (New London Pride, 1978)

The English Disease (Skyline Press, 1978)

Snapshots (Oasis Books, 1976)

Criticism

Meaning Performance: Essays on Poetry (Salt, 2006)

The Poetry of W. S. Graham (Edinburgh University Press, 1989)

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1 Screen

They stand before you in a light that comes from elsewhere
having no possible origin. Is this art history or mass immigration?
We can do unrelated facts, reconstructed contexts, lost aporias,
for we know well enough all these squadrons and arms dumps.
A van full of explosives parked close by a school—
then two small dogs join us in the graphics
as a site hosted by *Tripod* goes down the plughole.
Add 3. A full-fat blueberry muffin in “absolutely
incomprehensible”, the latest makeover style. LEVEL 4.
Who threw the first stone? Who dug the foundation trench?
Shadows that never quite gave them a third dimension
were small, backlit, well-informed. *Clio*, *Twingo*, *XSara*
are the magic names that will be embedded in stucco
inside of the tree. If you need to make a claim
you write it out in longhand and blot the page.
I hear that Bush has decided to rat on Kyoto
and work on projects that would have otherwise
been impossible. Are we not all Palestinian?
Petals turn into butterflies, historical pipework,
a grey-green aperture in the middle ear. Ready or not.

& Far Away

On stalker's paths
asylum seekers
might just walk
the timber line
into the free end
where stealth bombers
and non-renewable
mental resources
known as snakeheads
the logical conclusion
snow-capped mountains
in hostile territory
a loss of tissue
beside the stream

Lights a fire
to find the way
old maps and books
grown in Albania
from these requirements
permissive paths
broken crystals
a piper's son
transported boulders
non-white migrants
smoothly uniform
zones of contention
or prefab huts
in blue-white light

And upland areas
with added butter
are worn away
in seeking to ensure
convention status
for boulders or trees
technically restrained
common-law rights
are not recorded
in direct sunlight
to transit camps
half-way across
this lovely peak
a suspect hold

For cloud shadows
set out to dry
on definitive maps
a question of money
becomes impassable
with growing dismay
carried in reserve
when he was young
these exit visas
into a safe country
more or less defined
who leaves on horseback
a public hearing
in melting snow

Black Panther Colouring Book

When the lights came back on, everybody looked like shit
Hardest hit was the airline industry

None of us even lives in New Cross
We are like vapours tossed into the nothingness of noise

He was pulled from a hole in the ground
Determined in case law and medical evidence

The very devil of artifice and administration
Now the Taiwanese have developed their own racing style

So that they could play 'the enemy' in exercises
Mostly standard issue British chirpiness

Eating grass on the long road north
The pacifist star sported zero bling

Saddam Hussein is a fan of Hemingway
Sometimes the stories overlap, just like dances

Always localised, and with different variations
Putting the rubbish out, taking their kids to MacDonald's

Anthrax letters ready to send off
At a hotel near Heathrow airport

She could even go outside and see the trees or whatever
I've played a bit on my solo albums

Yet inherent in each of us is a deep desire
The suction machine was too loud

Like finger-painting without the washing up
Which pumps oxygen to her starved brain

Steering also has been restored
In Hollywood there's simply no kissing

Whether or not such bribes were actually offered
almost no-one then worked on the land

They are intimidating everyone, not only women
Creeping on hands and knees through matted thorns

And that was a good experience, when I was dancing
In the vilest conceivable way

Screening the film to executives, Cher and Demi were told
That it would be more fun to torture them

In a rough part of town
Based on familiar experiences like travelling

A little spoonful of jam
The only member of the Klan killed by police

In the gold-coloured car from which the shot was fired
You have to recognise voting strength

Both of these claims proved false
In at least 35 countries

This normal boy in his sensible knitwear
This calm happy girl who isn't me

Holds radical views in an open and tolerant manner
Allowing federal agents to tap any phone

And sleep as I in childhood slept
In a damp house in the country all alone

Clear and Present Danger

Shot from a passing car, meanings attached
to the task of consumption

People of the village lost many trees
and were driven from their homes

You might remember coming up at Waterloo
a cutting table must be provided

With a few enigmatic phrases
the Globe Theatre was burned down

Most terrorism is small-scale
carried out by a handful of people

Death squads hunted down suspects
who melted into air, into thin air

A vernacular knowingness that informs
the Oklahoma city bombing

Served to increase popular sympathy
desire in the ordinary sense

Freeze-framed we recall trauma
sanctioned by the return of the forename

The world is closer than you think tonight
walking on gravel in steady rain

Equal Signs

Migratory paths
seem more solid
precisely because
of devoted sisters
restored to health
as contending forces
for this remapping
hadn't yet begun
the period in which
to borrow money
shimmering metals
infinitive phrases
under the table
where she continues
inscribed on the frame

Beyond these isles
he gets freaked out
by sheer diversity
a larger field
at the moment when
economic logic
with berries in it
can free this girl
symbolic capital
is full of noises
subtle and profound
in which any item
is a pathway into
the welfare state
a veil of allegory

Took possession of
a magic lantern
to bring about change
at the going down
in isolation
hoped to evade
many of these aspects
or stomach acids
could open the door
most lying slave
surprised the art world
with serrated edges
continues to evolve
this means of redress
from moment to moment

Never fully empirical
I want to suggest
a religious gloss
on the social text
was anti-comedic
the comeback king
contains vivid colour
was himself downloaded
between source and filter
to possess the land
without test explosions
the simplest hypothesis
a standing wave
all human emotion
a means by which

The nuclear family
freely interwoven
as a critical matrix
brought to the fore
from virtual testing
of strategic imbalance
fierce, moody, patient
complicit in slavery
altogether abandoned
secular parables
at the level of culture
behavioural data
is used to infer
non-random features
closed at one end

A shift in subject
the most visible product
was forced to watch
outside the window
each kind of feeder
whose interest is justice
needs to be needed
though they oppose it
push to flush
recover the rivals
inarguably marginal
diasporic peoples
always the others
attempt to defer
self-apprehension

Lines crossed out
a boat adrift
withholds new evidence
layered on white
as legitimization
for ordinary people
that might be lost
in compact fission
which clouded perceptions
of enterprise culture
whose contradictions
always already
the most prismatic
add deeper meanings
left unresolved

By human agency
out of the programme
at various intervals
hoped to evade
short-term winners
and yet because
in toxic gas
the sole foundation
fails to describe
the outside choice
so is she elided
as the land itself
reinforced harmonics
returns to buildings
so recently burned

All the accumulated
metaphysical terror
progresses no further
to shield him from
revisions and subversions
of collective action
has usefully clarified
microscopic variations
much less a period
a point of retreat
was what awakened
service information
in phrase space
and unconnected
carried most weight

Sounds and energies
during the course of
acute loneliness
does indeed fuse
revolution or death
gaps between segments
of hard finality
also by particular
scatological images
which sought relief
in transfer of aura
the scab drops off
white steamer gone
breakfast materials
disemployment

Imperative demands
didn't actually get
French and German models
for recent years
people in trailer camps
after the break-up
on wooden rollers
a cheap metal statue
was unobtainable
so she responded
after 25 years
in a foreign light
events as such
puzzled and offended
the default mode

Function defunct
by almost any measure
a figure unweaving
humanist purposes
might conceivably be
empty of content
they hang suspended
a mode of protest
calls into question
actual information
that no-one uses
nor were they able
such conscience seeks
a necklace of skulls
we need to remember

Precedes performance
lives without meaning
becoming a subject
that quickly cleared
having no stomach
we need to remember
even at the risk
freely composed
collective experience
tended to defer
a social body
adhering to words
recalling the 60s
before the emergence
of burning houses

Virtually complete
modifying phrases
a three-legged cat
would like to posit
that Boulder interview
in at least 2 ways
colouring spaces
significantly enlarged
a forest fire
she chanced upon
a dangerous concept
came fully formed
in empty jam jars
to denounce the evil
each in her own

Longer in exile
a ferocious capacity
will overthrow
models for behaviour
which haven't been shaped
by violent enforcement
disarticulated
an interior landscape
I happen to occupy
in psychic trauma
embellished or comprised
to enfold the consequences
was Ornette Coleman
chosen for adoption
with equal bluntness

That began to surface
in sensuous detail
on bilingual roadmaps
even more frequent
the texture dissolving
musical formality
suffused the painting
being pulled between
negative loyalties
have been issued
in title therefore
not identical to
retrospective denials
and more acutely
alters the key