

Chapbook One:

**Soul Songs
and
Infections**

Infection

I.

**Soul Song 1 (Love and Happiness)
Soul Song 2 (Take Me to the River)
Soul Song 3 (If You Don't Know Me By Now)
Soul Song 4 (The Most Beautiful Girl in the World)
Soul Song 5 (Nowhere to Run)
Soul Song 6 (Put Your Hand in the Hand)
Soul Song 7 (Spirit in the Dark)
Soul Song 8 (Reasons)**

II.

**Donkey Soup
Sqrowl
Sharkles
Duet
After Penguin Dust**

III.

**Flashback
Prisoner of War
Downtown Suite 2009
Prayer Wheel**

Infection

i.

They came quietly,
handed each of
 us
a single
 infected
cell.

We buried them
in wooden chests,
waiting for them to
 grow

ii.

They entered the room,
 passed out
bits of chain,
 two or three links,
no more.

 Our task:
to shape the shackles to
 our necks

Soul Song 1 (*Love and Happiness*)

Three a.m.
and the sweat
you didn't sleep in
cakes your lids
and the bed sheets twine
one lonely

leg

You're lying to someone

John Donne's on the corner
trading tastes
with Blind Joe Death
while your first mind
stares
at the memory,
fresh,
of her bonded,
banded,

eyes

When you open your mouth, kudzu dies

Your second mind's MIA
down behind the levee
at Friar's Point
where no one
ever
goes

Damn sure, baby,
not you.

Soul Song 2 (*Take Me to the Water*)

The candle in your bedroom
gutters
goes out
Char in the vessel
where clarified butter
burned

A crust of carbon
16 atoms deep
caging the light
in her eyes

Don't let me do this to you baby

At sunrise, I thought of the *Song of Songs*
and walked down to the water
where the sky cried blood
carmine
crimson
and cruel

reflections

dragged down
into mud
under water
far
too deep
to see

Soul Song 3 (*If You Don't Know Me By Now*)

The problem's morale.
As always.
How to get from
point q to point t
by way of the sound
a lemur
makes
when she comes
for the kiss of the scalpel
at 4:38 a.m.

And there's nothing
you can do

save
gather the broken yarrow
and seal
your pierced ears

against song

Those wings you see
ain't hers
except
maybe
when she dance
in the naked moonlight
all up
inside
your head

and her name
it subject
to change

So go ahead and kiss your baby,
the one in the mirror cross the table
sippin bella donna
like 16 year-old Scotch

Soul Song 4 (*The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*)

The sound of my fingernail
tracing your spine
bone by
cracked
bone

echoes
the day

we read Dante
together

skipping the parts about hell.

Soul Song 5 (*Nowhere to Run*)

You stop at the threshold
of the unlocked door

Inside

you lie

on your stomach
open
to her laughter, her light

She enters you
slow
as broken glass
or a quill from a porcupine's corpse

You gasp for air
drowning
in ink
she drains
from your dreams

So wrap yourself in sweeter chains
and break the seal
of the dark
you pretend to protect

pure
past anything
even you
might believe

**Soul Song 6 (*Put Your Hand in the Hand*)
for William**

Stocking cap spelling death
on concrete cloaked
in November leaves,
Body bread broken
by the whisper of morning's sour wine
and the undying
wail
of the little one
hungry
for the jar of Gerber's strained plums,
--her favorite—
forgotten at Mel's when Back Ho
plugged the jukebox with
the song that wouldn't drown.

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

Unforgiven,

he fell
in the door to the Fellowship Hall,
reached for your hand,
found mine.

And now,
as the hard rush
of the metal angel's wings—
lifts me above stormy water,
I sip sauvignon,
listen to the wafer
knitting questions
in my unforgiven bone
and open myself to the lover
who whispers the grace notes
of our names,
waiting for us to come.

Soul Song 7 (Spirit in the Dark)

Midnight graced
with the first ghosts of grey,
your beloved hair
brushed my wrinkled hands,

gentle
as fingerprints
dancing a prayer
on the rim
of a candlelit
glass.

Soul Song 8 (Reasons)

Leaning on the space
you used
to be

I fell

empty
as the dream
of God's

amputee
the morning after
gone

Donkey Soup

Slimly Sarlo slupped his farse
(A snisly slarp o' grunge!)
whilst Criggly Wordered hafenglush
end Grinnly gagged nunge.

Slimly Sarlo, far away,
didn't like his snack.
Grinnly took away his dongey,
never to give back.

Krutchta bruk t'bibblefuld!
Buttles warnd end raeged.
Killkenkraken! Krackenflak!
Chilkies bunkled skage.

Farshnartz! Grickspartz!
Klicksogram.
Cragum ender back!
Grisplit! Grisplat!
Klicksofrat.
Enkum furer snack.

Grinnly was a mean old witch,
didn't like her pet.
Fighted Slimly Sarlo's dongey.
Dongey won, you bet!

Hehaho,
we lufenluf
Fo de fud we fid.
Hohahe,
hoo are we
fo doodin wad we did?

Burly bulders bunst aburt,
bug abuv daburg.
Grundin Grinnly int'ugglets
whilst we grunt at hurg.

Hahehoe,
her weed grow
fur from stupid sound.
Herhehoe,
girdergrows
inder under ground.

Grumny ate some dongey soup,
silly child was she.
Little dongey in her soup,
just like you and me.

Sqrowl

Without a freeze i sing:
Fur the winner snooz skary me nut
ins hide a sleeping tree.
Eyes holely watch
far the springings leave
or the sum of falzing be's.

Sharkles

Oilishly, framed owlshly,
evil olmans inner merror
mistor

Zales of Gleamingness!

...omnipegtd lies.

Sha! Sha! clacked the clock.
Her lightle sister creed, sha sha.
Her lightle sister creed, She Deed!
He, incomplated, smoils.

Whole werfen bats,
whole caves of blind,
whole quiet choirs sing, sha sha,
Whole quiet choirs sing.

Duet

1.
Someday mourning sinlight honer,

breasting steely, fist apeek,
beers me bluely from my blanknet,
drips me bondly to my steep.

Peepcious lovling,
peepcious lovling,
whizzardingly seept away.
Who?
Forgotten dryad breeztis,
coolme where she lay.

2.

Windy wandrys inabout ye,
Whistering adyou.

Adyou

anyou.

she whists adyou,
solowly,
whower you?

After Penguin Dust

Fly to me on passionwings...

she left him slowly echoing

his music losing sway.

Tunes unkeyed, mememoried

in offbeat times un

songed un

rhymed un

timely unvoiced melodies,

fingerings for fleshy keys

for the stops

of a

mantic a

musing

man

Who,

after her coda

after cacophony

Blowing blues blindly,

Remains.

Flashback

Fractured eyelight strikes.
Your spine unwinds
your sight
from time's unshaping spikes
of winding
white
entwining sheets.

Waiting, I watch you,
frozen,
sweat.

Within you, demons dance.
Your brothers, damned,
revive
their fated fall
in violet pounding dreams.

My arms vanish
for your aching face.
Refracting,
flash
into the blows
within
your bloodstream's strobe.

While voices crash
and rage
you on,
Watching, I wait your pain.

Prisoner of War

They cuffed him
on the sidewalk
after the Jefferson seminar
let out.
Two MPs and a guy in a suit
the color of Nixon's soul.
Someone yelled something about the pigs
but before we could think,
he was gone.

Someone said drugs,
which didn't make sense.
True enough, he never turned down
a joint or a hit on the Thunderbird
passing from hand to hand
while Jim and Jimi and Janis
glowed on the black light
walls.

But, shit, that's what made him one of us,
not like the doggies on West Colorado Avenue,
watching the dancers in off-limit clubs
with eyes that said
they could blow
at any time.

He was different.
He told us stories about mama sans and Saigon cowboys, made us laugh.
The chicks didn't even mind his plastic leg.

The paper said
he'd escaped from the Arizona pen,
stolen his dead twin brother's license
and volunteered
for Vietnam.
Traded his leg for a silver star
at Dak To.
Came back home
a lie.

Only one thing we know for sure:
he wasn't who he was.

Downtown Suite 2009

1.

Silent as synapses
refusing sacred flame,
our unsaid words cut capillaries,
fillagree phantoms of purely personal pain.

At the corner of 5th and 11th,
I breathe out the tendrils of last night's sleepless dream

and consider my options:
north to the farmer's market—
spring orchids, fresh honey with coriander,
the tee shirt of Geronimo I've been coveting,
Homeland security since 1492;
or south—
the caged dry fountain
at the heart of the unrenovated park.

Suddenly, beside me,
a bottle tree blossoms in Presbyterian shadow,
flash of plastic spirit
roped to a bamboo crutch.
Chilled by May mist and candlit ghosts,
I read the legend through church yard rails:
All welcome
You did not choose me

Personal pain.
Precious as a paper cut on a drunken thumb
smearing blood on blurless words:
Pneuma, Kenosis, Anneal.
Pointless in this place
where pain paints each glance
the color of cancerous lymph.

Human eyes
touch and withdraw,
drawn to the promise
of purely personal
pleasure.
A green dress in the boutique window,
imagined perfumes,
the season's new melody series style or
poem.

2.

Maybe you're wrong.
Maybe the streets are brimming
with allies:
comrades poets lovers and
Ginsberg's crazy angels (AWOL since '72).

The black woman pushing the twins in the stroller
--call her Emily—

midwife whose hands have guided
breath through forests of guns,
carrying the Congo not as lament
but love
for the lost boys
her sons.

Corporal Michael Montero
outside the café
where the reporter waits,
rehearsing his witness,
counting each grain of sand
on the tarmac at Al Asad.

Tech writer in a pressed white shirt
and Three Stooges tie,
abstracting electricity as he waits for his cappuccino
--capacitors, voltage, resistance--
Wage-Labor and Capital tucked in his pocket,
food for the subway ride home.

Carmela
poet and rapper,
refusing her diagnosis,
singing the linger of Gail's diamond tongue
erasing the letters of *lymphoma*,
mixing new beats,
thinking
another world.

3.

A bike messenger in a Bob Marley tee-shirt
swerves and curses a cab.

Unbidden,
Them Belly Full ghosts vision's void,
with the metallic memory of acrid October air.
Halloween 2001,
prophecy and promise
of Babylon's fall.

Outside the theater where I first saw Godard—
Vent d'est and *La Chinoise*--
I pause and shuffle
the shopworn

questions:
Who owns these streets?
Who do you love?
Who must you hurt?
How do you read the prints of power
burned on your
branded
brain?

4.

Entering the Union Square station,
the Holy Ghost,
incarnate, heretical,
grey wisps escaping her babushka,
blasted eyes fixed
on Baldwin's restless ghost,
spits, turns,
and steps into air.
Clutching at the rail,
fingers closing on next to nothing,
brittle, embarking,
she falls.

Prayer Wheel

Sowing the sorrow
between dream and dawn,
the prayer wheel spins

the suffering of all beings

Hands cupping quiet,
tongues tasting
the blood of His bitten
blistered

lip,
together alone
we pray.

Supplication Contrition Gratitude Adoration
Have mercy I'm
sorry Thank you Wow