Three Poems: ‘Albuquerque Summer’s Day’, ‘#3’, ‘#5’

Jason Yurcic, poet, activist, human being

Albuquerque Summer’s Day

For an angry man like myself
The miracle is not to walk on water
It is to be here
In spite of the pain they have administered with their ploys
I love being poor
Love that everything I own I have made with my own hands
Love that there are holes in my socks
Because my children have ten pairs of socks
And they will never know my pain
Never be laughed at for being uneducated
Never know what it feels like to live without their father
They will never know my pain
And I love that
Love that after I tore the ass out of my work pants
That my 9-year-old daughter can teach me to use her sewing machine
Her slender hands working the hem line
And I can use the pants for another 5 years
Here I sit in the heat
The heat of an Albuquerque summer day
Heroin spoon over candle flame heat
The heat of an Albuquerque summer day
And the clouds know my name
The Harvester ants know my name
And the clerks at Hollister or the Gap
Have never seen my face
And I am proud to have nothing in the eyes of others
Proud that I love dirt under my nails
Here I sit in the heat of an Albuquerque summer day
Glass pipe, lip and finger blister heat
And I give myself to the clouds
The leaves
The blue sky
Brown mountain
Give myself away for nothing at all
In a world where we are taught
Nothing is free
I sit here in the heat of an Albuquerque summer day and
I am free
#3
I give my mind away sometimes when I’m at work
Give it away to an opaque corridor
Inside me
Cussing
Spitting
Damning my fate
Stuck here
In the land of the uneducated
Bent back, muscle torn, lip jockey
Talkin’ shit about the uppities that pass by the front gate
In their gas guzzling SUVs and Mini-Coopers while my old truck
with a quarter million miles sits rusted by the fence

I stare at the front gate
Every second’s break I get
From the nightmarish horror show of hard labor I’m in
Like it was a blanket under a tree in a clearing by Rio Grande River
When ‘Shorty’ pulls in
Driving his son’s red convertible Mustang
New boots, belt, jeans
Smiling
He has the most beautiful knowledge in his words
The kind of knowledge you can’t get from a book
you can’t pay for with a college tuition
Can only get from a lifetime of hard labor
It’s payment is blood, sweat, torn ligaments, and pain
His bulging forearms
Calloused hands
Sun-beaten skin
Show me how I’ll look 10, 15 years from now
If I don’t get out of this work
But I also see
These brilliant brown eyes
Sparkling with contentment and acceptance
He knows his life is to work like this
He has worked like I do for nearly 30 years
Without a complaint
Worked hard to have a good life
A small piece of land on the outskirts of town
200 chickens
Two horses
And a dog
‘I haven’t worked in three days,’ he says while looking into his palms.
‘My hands are getting too pretty.’

My mind moves over from the gloom
While I speak with him
His voice is low, humble
Like a spring river of mountain snow that has worked its way down
bone-breaking cliffs
To gather in front of one last cluster of fallen trees
Spill over the lips to finally reach the ocean
Where it doesn’t boast, but mixes with its environment and
becomes fleeced
With the movement of nature
And I learn from him
As I always have
Learn to accept myself
If only for awhile
Learn that the life I live is not so bad, because I get to speak to men
with strong spirits like him

When he leaves, I feel like I am losing a part of myself that I don’t
even know yet
And the nightmare closes in around me again
When I reach down for my pick and shovel
Dust filling my lungs
Scratching my eyes
Cussing
Spitting
Damning my fate.

#5

Now that I work
In one place every day
My former co-workers come around to visit

The ones I shared my pot with in hopes of drowning myself
In THC to forget my failures
The broken bottle path I followed
While driving to and from
Several worksites in a day
Live borrachera (a drunken lifestyle)
Fighting in musty saloons and rundown one-stool cowboy bars
after work

Today it was Blanco
He pulled up in his 1974 Chevy Dually pick-up
Radio blaring Northern New Mexico Ranchera Music
Stops just inside the gate and blows into a chrome-plated police
whistle
That he uses to call in his horses from pasture

I talk with him for awhile in the shifting shadow
Of a wind-blown tree
Talk about how his life has been going
While he speaks
Through a giant smile
A black push broom mustache
I try my best to listen to him
Since I am him and know
The rest of society has pushed us so far out
That no one truly listens anymore

And I thank the Creator for helping me listen

Seeing his leather-like face
his battered hands
I give praise to his heart
When he lays right on the ground and kicks back
toying with pebbles and sticks
While telling horror stories of jobs gone wrong
Under the guidance of college grads with clean hands
People who were afraid to get dirty
But didn’t mind telling him to

Seeing how every concrete finisher
Black finger-nailed construction worker is as angry as I am
Angry at the world
And the fact it has turned them/me away
Made us feel dirty and uneducated
Until we believed it
And lost the right to be who we are
But I know for sure Blanco doesn’t care for MBAs or PhDs
He loves his horses
His ranch

Most of us are
In the general sense
Uneducated
Most don’t read books
Most read sale signs on liquor store marquees and cooler fronts
But we know how to read a man’s eyes
Can tell by the direction a horse turns in the wind if the rain is coming

This poem is written for them
My hard working, hard-hearted brothers
We built the streets
These buildings
These towns
Because of us children have a place to learn
Playgrounds at parks
Because of us dirty, uneducated men
Fools and losers
Unshaven faced
Scowling men
With soiled clothing
Or however the mainstream wishes to categorize and judge us
Most, including myself
Will never see our true beauty
Because of the way we are looked at in supermarkets and retail stores

Before Blanco leaves
He blows into the breathalyzer ignition of his truck
Spins his tires in the street
And yells like on a warpath atop one of his horses
I give praise to his reckless abandon
his bullheaded defiance of society.

Author Bio

Jason L. Yurcic, a pain based poet, has published 4 books of his work. His first release Voice of My Heart (Sherman Asher Publishing), was awarded runner-up in the 2007 NM Book Awards. Poems by Jason L. Yurcic (Verna Press), Word Son (EMAYA Publishing), and Odes to Anger (West End Press) also runner-up NM Book Awards 2009. His first play, Little Ghost, won a national competition and was produced by Nicholas Sabato and the Santa Fe Performing Arts in ’09.

Jason L. Yurcic was functionally illiterate until the age of 25 years old when he sat down to try and compose a suicide letter to his family. As he tried to express his feelings, he found he did not contain the skills needed so that his mother would understand his decision. It was then, he picked up a book, fought his way through dyslexia and learned a few words to tell of his pain. He never finished the letter, the words he read started to change his image of himself, his feeling of worthlessness. Five years later he published his first book.

Jason Yurcic’s poems are usually not written – instead they often float in the air around his children or glisten in the sunlight. A transitional poet, Yurcic’s work fuels poems in adverse conditions. Those which make it to paper are a shaving compared to that which passes through his mind.