

RE:FORM

**Poems, Fiction  
Non-Fiction and Songs**

ART BY OFFENDERS, SECURE PATIENTS AND  
DETAINEES FROM THE 2015 KOESTLER AWARDS

1 October — 29 November 2015  
Southbank Centre, Spirit Level

# Ursa Major

On November 12<sup>th</sup> 2014 a great bear  
Escaped from the Gretzky Circus in Moscow  
And ventured northward  
Snatching fish from ice lidded lakes  
And leaving so many steaming piles of shit  
That half the broad had thawed by January  
On he galloped past Vyshny Volochyok,  
Petrozavodsk, Kostomuksha and would  
Occasionally, against his will, stop and  
Perform his silly circus dance  
Onward he went  
Up to the Kola peninsula and found a cave  
Where he sat and ate and partook of that  
Act that all fortunate beasts partake of –  
Hibernation

There he slept until early spring wolves  
Crept upon him and tore his gorgeous  
Muscled flesh – devoured a greater constellation

from

# Twinkle of Twilight

Verse 4:

We danced all night with happiness  
and the dog he chased his tail.  
I drank more whisky from my glass  
and I gave the dog some ale.  
I woke up early in my chair  
found my mind has been misled.  
Only me there and the dog,  
so I sat and nursed my head.

Chorus:

There were fairies dancing on the floor  
and an angel tapped his feet.  
Some violins rang out their tunes  
and a bass drum kept the beat.  
I looked into my whisky glass  
like a mirror to my eye.  
I saw a beauty standing there  
now my heart was high-and-dry.

Verse 5:

No moral compass; wasted years.  
I describe myself as crass.  
A life in chaos some would say  
looking down a whisky glass.  
It took me years to see some sense  
thank the Lord I'm sober now.  
No more shadows cross the moon  
'took a no more whiskey vow.

# At The Back Of Our Minds

It wasn't so much the weather  
which spoiled the holiday  
although it could have been kinder,  
keeping us off the beach,  
forcing us to waste our money  
in the endless arcades.

It wasn't even the hotel  
with its petty 'visitors park  
at your own risk' signs,  
or the pool table which refused  
to release its balls  
after we'd fed it with 50 pence pieces.

No, it was more the feeling  
at the back of our minds  
that something else was wrong.  
The way he refused to walk long distances.  
The way his balance seemed off-key.  
The way he leant over the railings  
on the central pier during his last day  
and was violently sick.  
And the way the doctors  
wouldn't look us in the eye  
after he'd had his scan.

# The Duality of Love

My heart aches so when She's not near.  
Oh how it aches when She comes close.

# The Peaceful Art of Fly Fishing

Peaceful, to me  
is a dancing whipped hand tied fly  
a *Gold ribbed hares ear nymph*,  
or a *Greenwells Glory*.

Peaceful, to me  
is a double Spey cast in a figure of eight,  
a *Stoat's Tail*  
or an *Ally's Shrimp*.

Peaceful, to me  
is a pitch black night time river,  
a *Teal Blue and Silver*  
or a *Silver Butcher*.

Peaceful, to me  
is the naked flame of a campfire,  
a smoked brown trout  
and a dram of whiskey.

from

# Comrades In Arms

There was a funny smell in the air and once or twice I got a faint whiff of rotten meat. It was known that the Hercules was used to carry troops and equipment and was a great workhorse for going into a battle. For that reason I knew it was also used to casvac the injured or at the worst returning the dead back to the UK for burial. I don't know if it was the smell of the dead but there was something not right with us going into a combat zone inside a large hearse.

# Land of the Silver Birch

School is a drag  
We are here for three  
reasons

To get judged  
To get strapped  
And to sing the Canadian National Anthem

And one day  
I got it wrong; and 'O Canada'  
Became a totally different song

And I stood there  
In all my patriotic innocence  
pride, welled up in my chest  
like the kind of love that is  
Insanity-for-no-reason  
And I sang:  
'Land-of-the-sil-ver-birch'

And I sang it for At-ush-mit who lives in  
the woods  
And I sang it for Ko-ishin-mit who flies  
everywhere  
And I sang it for Paw-quin-mit who lives  
in the sea

And I got five straps on each  
tiny hand  
And I couldn't feel my fingers  
for a good hour and a half

And although I cried some  
I never told Momma 'Jack'  
Because it wasn't  
her  
business



from

# **Animals of the First World War**

Finishing the letter took me more time than I thought it would.

Rodent watched my every movement like a sharp-eyed teacher looking for something amiss. He sits back on his hind legs, stumpy half-tail swishing back and forth. His little dish-like ears twitch at every sound.

I look over the finished letter, my cramped writing filling pages. It seems impossible now that I've crammed all my life for the last few months onto those small sheets of paper.

Carefully, I fold the paper and slip it into the envelope: all under the watchful gaze of Rodent.

His little ratty head bobs as though he understands what I've done and approves. He scampers away into the night. I can see the glint of lamplight off his small eyes as he looks back at me.

# Junktown

Welcome to junk town. Plug in and change your mind. Wash your hands. Hygiene is a...coffee pot. Just add fuel. Smoking seriously harms you. Probably that or that bad cheese you ate. A craving only lasts three minutes. What's for dinner? Food poisoning...Changing nappies #unhappy

It's that type of fudge you need to have. Every little helps. Aw that stuff like stuck you know like stuck in yae. Say it with...Rice Krispies. Mouthwash, jukeboxes and gasoline. Irreverence is my disease. Money is nature. That's why Judas wept.

Silly pointless, self-obsessed. The rise of the v-loggers. Can you take it all away? Up to 60% off. Do you think you could minimise? Piracy will never die. From air-bed to world domination. On the trail of forgotten typewriters. It's so special and unique. I can give you five good reasons to punch a dolphin. There are dying ogres and pixies too. This is not like the future but I sense it's right up there. Moon pic...what a time to be alive. But you can't water a camel with a spoon. Swallow but nothing's forgiven. Balderdash: noun. 100metre race for the follicly challenged. The grey chapter. You can plug it into your phone. Switch that sound that we didn't know was there and turn it into a distant hum. There's no leaving now. Look up!

# Hero

February 9<sup>th</sup>. I forgot to buy the chicken  
for your dinner party.  
I told you a chicken joke  
and you forgave me.

April 7<sup>th</sup>. I broke your favourite vase  
during a bout of resented dusting.  
I found another one online.  
You cried when it arrived.

June 19<sup>th</sup>. I came home drunk  
while your mother was visiting.  
I bought your mother flowers and  
you kissed the top of my head.

April 20<sup>th</sup>. The dog ran away  
after I'd forgotten to lock the gate.  
I found him at 3am in the rain.  
You called me your hero.

November 11<sup>th</sup>. You died.  
I don't know what to do.

# **Jist tay let yi know**

**(inspired by William Carlos Williams  
and Tom Leonard)**

**Jist tay let yi no  
the bujys deid**

**ye left thi caje opn  
thi cat goat it**

**so doant feed thi cat  
its hid enuff thi day**

from

# The Life and Times of Four Eyes

These are the muttering streets.

Keep your insidious intent  
for the cliquey classes  
of intellectualized kiss-asses  
lovers of art not drawn on walls  
shining out invidious intensity  
to the boy who ends up  
living it up with the glitterati on  
*Have I Got News For You.*

from

# The Life and Times of Four Eyes

And it doesn't matter  
that he smiled sweetly at the old ladies  
and the rent man  
and didn't swear with the other kids  
or nick c\*\*k mags from Maggie Johnston's  
or blow up condoms  
or chuck bangers through letterboxes.  
He's still the strange one.  
He's still the evil one.

So, when does the badness start?

# Exchange Deal

We had no choice  
but to exchange him last year,  
for a younger, balder, slower model.

On his good days he manages to trundle  
around the house, stopping only to stare  
strangely at photographs of his predecessor.

Sometimes he will ask awkward questions,  
such as, ‘when will I grow hair, like him?’  
We then give each other knowing looks  
behind his back. And in a strained voice

one of us will eventually reply,  
whilst studying the pile of stones out in the yard  
where his hamster, double-wrapped in baco-foil  
lies buried.

# Wallpaper

Yellow flowers  
for Winter's eyes  
in a dying room.



# Possessiveness & Covetousness

*Possessiveness*  
is a growling dog  
holding onto his bone  
with every ounce of strength,  
carrying his delicious prize  
to the burial ground  
in the back garden.

Not far away,  
just out of sight,  
*Covetousness*, the neighbour's dog  
looks on  
licking  
his grinning lips

# Chemical Cash Cow

The pink one keeps me happy and stops me feeling sad  
The red one keeps the pink one from making me go mad  
The white one helps me sleep and the dark blue one helps me think  
Though I sometimes think of suicide if I take it with the pink  
Two green ones keep me calm and help me not to panic  
But I do not take the green ones if I think that I am manic  
My orange one, it has side effects they make me feel quite ill  
So I told this to my doctor who gave me a yellow pill  
Now I've got a rainbow which I swallow when I'm told  
And the makers of this rainbow? They earn a pot of gold.

# Homeless Donkeys

One thing for sure about donkeys, they can stand and stare.

'Look' at one place for hours and they shout 'Hey Ho Hey Ho', farting at the same time.

My neighbour used to have this donkey whenever he took it to fetch some water

Donkey didn't like to cross the bridge so it used to cross the river without the bridge.

Hard work, it was to pull him out of the mud.

In this picture the owner of the house doesn't look impressed with the donkeys feeding on her plants.

Are these donkeys homeless?

Maybe one of the donkeys got wounds all over very disappointing.

Nice house.

# Pond Life

A little fish swims

A bigger fish soon appears

The big fish remains

# At Her Majesty's Pleasure

Here I am  
at 'Her Majesty's Pleasure',  
vegetables  
like snooker balls,  
mashed potato  
that can hold bricks together  
to build a house  
they can put  
more prisoners  
into

from

# The Plague House

Night-time then, lying on a bed of moss and gazing at the stars, thinking that civilisation had never existed, that here on this planet of moor he was alone, the whole globe to himself, and when he died, as surely he would (because Richard was no survivor), he would die in a world unpolluted by the presence of other people, a sublime of solitude, the only possible, only truly, peaceful dying a man could have, without clamour of concerned voices, or snigger of un-well-wishers. But what was this strange and annoying intrusion, this klaxon call, this shrill War Ministry warning that the bombs were falling? He resisted, disabled his hearing, and tried to stay connected to the heather and the wind and the sky... but it went out in a moment of blind flash.

Richard wasn't free – happy – at all.  
Hospital. Bright electric light. Panicking nurses.  
'Fire drill!' they barked. 'Get out of bed!'

from

# Feeding Habits of the Jackdaw

... you will see them jumping, pecking, clod-turning, probing, and scattering. Throw them scraps – bread for instance, and they will drop from the sky and feed upon it with their heads on a horizontal plane. Insects around cowpats and human refuse are captured by the jackdaw's jumping from the ground or, sometimes, by a vertical drop from one or two metres above towards the source of the flies' interest. Earthworms are rarely extracted directly from the ground as you will find with other birds, but if the opportunity arises might be snatched from freshly-ploughed soil. (It has been observed of jackdaws to eat only that head of the worm. In times of plenty this kind of selective behaviour makes good evolutionary sense: the discarded body of the earthworm is mostly intestine and waste, while the head contains the ova, sperm, brains and gizzards.)

# The Visit

One hour,  
60 minutes.

One hour,  
3,600 seconds.

One hour,  
2pm to 3pm each Thursday,  
to spend with you each week.

One hour,  
1/12 of the clock.

One hour,  
0.6 percent of one week.

One hour,  
0.042 of one day – to three decimal places,  
to hold you, laugh with you, listen to you,  
smell your hair, play chess with you, say good-bye to you.

One hundred and sixty seven hours,  
99.4 percent of one week.

One hundred and sixty seven hours,  
10,020 minutes.

One hundred and sixty seven hours,  
601,200 seconds,  
until I'll see you again.



from

# Two Years A Tramp

If the prison property department haven't lost my equipment, I will leave prison with a rucksack, a tent, several sleeping bags, a tablet (containing hundreds of books), a mobile phone, an expired passport, a few changes of clothes, and a pair of worn out walking boots. Several pieces of key equipment got lost in disastrous circumstances on Valentine's Day in Sofia, Bulgaria. This included my beard trimmer, camping stove, a spare pair of shoes, and a pair of second hand British Airways first class flight pyjamas (an incredibly bitter loss).

from

# **Scribo Ergo Sum**

In his introduction to ‘The Illustrated Man’, Ray Bradbury says that he writes “so as not to be dead.” And that is it. When you have been in prison for as long as I have, and you have no concrete release date, you begin to wonder if you even exist at all. Surely the whole point of existence is to have an effect. To leave something behind perhaps. Even if that is just a thought or an emotion within someone else.

Jail is like purgatory. You are still around, but you have no impact. No effect. The point of your existence is void. You slowly begin to die. But there are two ways out of purgatory. One is a torturously meandering and slow death. The other is to fight back with an all-consuming desire for life.