

Poetry Series

**Adam Fitzgerald**  
**- poems -**

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## Adam Fitzgerald(12/30/1983)

Adam Fitzgerald (born December 30, 1983) is an American poet. He is the author of *The Late Parade*, and his poetry has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Fortnight Journal*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Post Road*, *Rain Taxi*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and many others. Fitzgerald is the founding editor of the poetry journal *Maggy*. He teaches at Rutgers University and The New School.

Adam Fitzgerald received his BA from Boston College and his MA from Boston University before earning his M.F.A. from the Columbia University. His first book of poetry, *The Late Parade*, was published by W.W. Norton/Liveright in 2013; the book has received positive reviews from John Ashbery and Harold Bloom, among other notable figures in the literary world.

# Bulb Field

The poor man with anonymous face  
Stalks the cut rows of flower fields  
Where sleeping turf blurs into bland  
Patches of sea-blue, chalk, blushing rose  
Softer than the oleander anguish of blood.  
He holds his rake like a lash of iron

Curling along as his whole body's ironed  
Into the staid winds of the horizon's face.  
What chases his skin, so devoid of blood  
These years? Whom does he avoid in fields  
Where no sun has ever set or ever rose?  
The dark-musked dusk is nothing if not bland.

So the worn-rum thatched-roof homes blend  
In dusk. Desolate homes blending like iron  
In the forge's slate grooves where fire rises  
On fire. But the homes are cold, unlit faces  
Corrupted not how sagging shadow feels  
But like the washed-out iodine stains of blood.

Quiet, the small walls show no sign of blood  
Or fire. Quiet in a quiet light bound by the land's  
Autumn-rich patina; the regal, rusty fields  
Warped with flowers as upright as lead iron,  
The gonsel or farmer wanders, firm, effaced  
Among rainbow bulbs: peach, beige and rose.

Perhaps his tilting pace stirs for the lip of a rose  
So flushed from shivering cold it glows as blood.  
The flowers are as much the eyes of his face  
As they are simply flowers, brilliant and bland.  
Or are the flowers more alive, the irony  
Of a scarecrow tilting flower-like in a field?

And now the warm faded flowers in the field  
Quiver like a panting flag. Now the rows  
Resemble city-blocks, the buildings not iron  
But a vast complex of petaled rooftops blooded

By sums of invisible suns, their paints all bland  
And monochrome, brittle dry pastels, no faces

Of iron-age citizens but a single giant who fields  
And faces all the charming vacancies, who rues  
His bloodless flower-city but prefers it bland.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Dirge

Out of seaweed mermaid wood  
The wit of snowbird shadows  
Crowds your lip where no word  
Has known ferns or urn-songs.

Out of seaweed mermaid wood  
A fringe of wild poppies drops  
Where grassy bones have stood.  
Your lip is singed & poppy red.

The wit of snowbird shadows  
Sings to cable-cars like ether.  
A scalded alder sits in blue aloe.  
Your lip sits and thinks of there.

Crowd your lip where no word  
Will sob like untouched violins  
Nor crawl as the spider Christ.  
This air, which we have heard,

Has known fern or urn-songs;  
As you have culled a shroud  
Of should that holds no wrong.  
You did no evil in your death.

Out of seaweed mermaid wood  
The wit of snowbird shadows  
Crowds your lip where no word  
Has known ferns or urn-songs.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Lady's Cummerbund

Who is here  
and who will bother?

It doesn't matter dear,  
remember the run-in with your father?

Yes, I know, but each  
sequestered in his unlikely yard

convinced as it were that things are peachy  
for the others, only we have it hard.

But only we do. Just think of here.  
The makeshift rains, the field-school

closed in un-repair. And down at the pier  
a flower-soft beetle drowns in a pool.

Doesn't that all mean something to you honey?  
After all the migraine months of fear?

I don't acclimate well to towns squashed by money.  
I've forgotten where I placed a certain year.

Next time, with brooms and prisms, can we mount the roof,  
skip into the fenced-off idleness of something proud?

Forget the beige recliner. Indian summer's all our proof.  
Love's comfort lies in bed, gazing out at lazy clouds.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Locust

His stone shoes tipped askew on the curb's hush,  
The plump of poor men's cheeks he saw bestow  
A blushing crown. Their rasped voices he heard  
Litter the streets with disreputable words.

And bottles break without sound of glass,  
The stench of memory's lips mouthing back  
A tattered kiss, a perennial bruise;  
Old ghosts compelling yet love's stupor.

Then in the resigned yawn of a moment,  
Its cordial pain unharmed by sentiment,  
Solemn litanies rose from the sewer's throng  
And hallowed ears indulged a pulsing song.

The sparse table and dusty crib reminisce  
No softer lullaby... His dreams grown numb,  
Melody orphans him again to sleep:  
Familiar bed he punctures like a drum.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Man Out Of Sea

I built a man out of the sea today.  
Clay waves, hurricane flotsam and jellies  
Sopping into these palms' quiet caverns—  
I held seaweed and basalted sponges,  
Pellucid crustaceans, their brisk bones  
Bound by my tiring hands, then sculpted him.  
I borrowed undulating crepes that arch  
The plunging sea's wide diminished breast  
And fettled light the sternum, moldering  
Oysters off the ocean's bottomless muck  
Until the chest developed through to limbs.  
Concatenating a spine from dozens  
Of drying seawreck planks, the whole took shape  
And so I hollowed sockets, bestowed gold  
Searing from the sun's enameled margins,  
Horizons of no shore—this, for his eyes!  
From lichen clouds I whittled complexion,  
Soon my sea-creation refined, complete.  
Slicing the salty dune-crust reeds, edging them  
Forearm through finger, pungent coral caked,  
I combed a gaze meanwhile from crystal sands;  
Gathered lightning echoes, crabs' wires.  
I stored diggers' feet and other string bits  
Of the sea then tied these straws: a shawl of hair...  
The day breaks off. A beak's shadow scours  
The surf. Mammoth gulls crookedly careen.  
My sea-man stands stoic as the rich-silk sea,  
Moonglow, ink of veins; no gaps remain.  
What scuffed vox winds I'd caught are lost,  
With uncompromising choice I refused  
To give my man of sea a voice. He cannot  
Move—yet think of all the chaos up from where  
I sledged him! Now: mine, ordered,  
Scavenged-together, kelp-enjointed,  
Tangled with pier-net skins, barnacled rust.  
And so I built a man out of the sea today.  
How useless he is. Inhuman. Yes, beautiful.

Adam Fitzgerald

## Occurences

Fondly, have we apprehended tomorrow?  
O let us not say anything rushed too soon,  
For too soon it was quick unexpectedness  
Who snapped and left us brushed to go  
Here with little room and cursed blessings.  
The railing leads along an allegory  
Of sinuous stair and carpet,  
That others have travailed and imitated—  
This is precisely the purpose  
Of its upright comeliness,  
Parcel of the wedged day  
And betoken of the emerald chandelier.

The peach wallpaper paused,  
The rosy cherries brimmed in a bowl.  
The topaz day is coming late.  
Pale, soft, wonderful odors hang the room.

Adam Fitzgerald

# On The Face Of Christopher Marlowe, 1585

Dank and of phosphorous hue  
from your strict Cambridge frame,  
each harsh cheek a white plum  
cinched in a pink's slight pinch,  
your complexion, blotched powder—  
what deft obsequy will you hear?

Your convoluted guise: impassioned,  
numb; a stature refusing flinch  
where ruddied oils milked your features  
to a fine rose-silk, a tapestry  
of Orient spice, the precious reds  
and precious whites, whitest scents—

immediate, dismissible, alluring.  
Your bushed brown hair strands  
slouched flamboyantly, a dust,  
a tanner's stain-stitched satchel.  
Your strident eyebrows arched  
as if a nebulous star's froth

tossed into a striding pony arc  
coiled taut, tensile whiplashed bark.  
Your sandfaded mustache halved  
like a willow drenched half-under  
the bright red bay of your lips  
banked by an effeminate beard—

but these, not the colors I claim.  
Rather, the eyelid-silting brown  
seething its fixed brown stare,  
a hard verb's glare, incensing grip,  
a woodsmoke weaved tight to circle,  
impenetrably hurt, diaphanous and bare.

In crawlspaces jut from the nose's  
slope and the eye's wide slanting V,  
the scratched flesh stanchions a tangle,  
incredulous white shadows angling

underneath a diminutive, possessing blue  
that edges, wrestles the left eye open.

This stark blue that tears the watcher's  
from the background's dim, the collar's  
flower-flap, the loose collar which wraps  
around the narrowing, half-buoyant neck  
but—in these hidden blue latitudes,  
eschewed from tame concentric pupils,

a swift, chilled flame recedes where  
a reservoir and lake's imagined, percussive  
air warring while your gaze easily gazes,  
spilling across a vast brow-cornered inch  
to the eyes—a fabric of onyx rocks  
that cast a stinging jag-tooth glint

from the water-crust surface. Concealing  
nothing. Revealing nothing. Heaving  
in thin heavy veils a petalled light  
that weighs these waves to pyramids:  
where no person lies, only a presence  
split, a wretched semblance of water

rocks rendered with the rest of you,  
come from some unknown artist's brush,  
a dry, persistent routine gleaming  
little of your indifferent sex... You, drowning  
proud in fate's shrug, doom encusping  
your rich aristocratic oxygenless pose—

yourself your Muse—an incandescent stare—  
a solitary, dead, time-orphaned stare.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Resignations

Inchoate lily fronds, and tawny gloss  
Splaying across a dim pond  
While dilatorily he surveys himself,  
Azurely lost  
In thought upon the water's rim.

Torpor-limbed, his face is half  
A mask of shadoweeds that stem  
And drape the cornered air. Still tendrils  
Of light bask  
Through foliated emerald fins.  
Echoes arouse a slim rush  
Opaque of sound.

Yet what may we ask of him, this Narcissus?  
Whose potted alabaster eyes  
Confabulate shade through amber —  
Whose frail heft of self sifts  
In fissures of supple tented waves,  
Their dark ventriloquy adrift...

I am eyes and stare alone, his  
Yawning image seems to say.  
And waterwed, he, as with the surface,  
Preens and stays.

Yet admit no matte of ebbing moonlight.  
No lush garland of earth fragrant from stars.  
His vision, two ribbons of froth, floats  
Splendid in sloth, ever unwinding  
Over clay moraines and tin fjords that crumble  
Like a lazy knee around him.

In this hour, slick of mud, where suns  
Are swallowed  
Like a mustard seed, willows flay, where winds  
Copulate spore and dander, he sees  
Only communions of colors sexed  
With wafting waterscents that are nothing else

But himself.

No pure possession may be dredged.

No blur or sulphur iris but his own.

This ground is sparse, engorged

On crags and parched, blank

As if the hollowed rondure of

An eye.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Saint Christopher

Striated in folds, his red gown flows  
Like a firemuscle dipped to a flamelip,  
While featherlegged, lame and limp his toes  
Writhe wearily wave-enrhythmed steps, chipped

Foot he crosses with, among gold minnows  
Mocking him in nimble dance, jubilant.  
Anguished, his brown eyes close in lead repose.  
And all is gold, barren and opulent.

O, cursed Saint, your finger-threshing staff  
Gnashes your gnarled knuckles the heat will taint  
As skylinen soiled sags, the infant laughs  
And winds sift pitchless. But travel on, Saint,

Such eyes narrow like a craving chorus  
Of rocks, wound-worn and darkly susurrus.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Shams

A leaf is scrolling in the dumb verb  
of your scalp, the matted junk  
of your hair, where the flat strands  
that glue together fold aside  
some dull gell slick in stale water.

A leaf, one of my poems for you  
to roll and smoke with pouty lips  
up your slender ass, is coming  
down from across your crushed opiate  
brow, a devouring mouth caressing

your cheek, which dry now, was  
watering once, hungry sobbing tears  
that would slurp and slake themselves  
as quick as angels at the foot of holy  
graves or sleeping infant breasts.

Does your cheek remember more  
than you, —how its clear honey,  
bright and lusty as stuffed-pollen stems,  
ran its gorgeous muck and hauled  
some pity for a boy crying like the night?

Your cheek a pregnant flower.  
Your cheek a hand, pride-cold  
and alone. Where's the memory then  
of that fierce milk your eye strummed  
across soft cinammon apple bones?

And lowering around the plate of your  
upperlip, stale and stinking with fear  
and nervous red streaks that balked off  
and unchalked your broke-statue gaze,  
where is there one bit to pit against thirst?

The pure dropp which like a buddha shits  
peacefully in the huddled-forest dusk,  
as orange suns massacre mountainpeaks

and drench everything in a cold light  
until lakes murmur blue envious dreams.

Crumpled tobacco leaves of your mouth  
which swim off in smoke like rusty stripes  
of a brilliant brown trout, long after the rotting  
half-carcass capsizes like a kiss, a smudge  
of rose on the handle of a bathroom sink.

May my poem excrete and caress you still,  
as much white ink as you have given bitter  
to my gums, massaging your drowsy fists  
and clinging within your polluted heart-lips,  
as long as your indifference enamels it

until one day, smuggled away, it crutches  
like a drunken monk to lilac and underbrush  
who, thinking of his thousand ancient rivers  
while lying in the nestling gossip of vegetation,  
will grab himself and seize a bit of God.

Adam Fitzgerald

# The Coming Train

It was a time of grandeur then,  
When marble strangers huddled in lobbies  
And cell phones stopped working  
Their tired itemizing and lonely inventories  
That is night.

Bodies assembled gradually. Checks hunted  
In the glass cylinders of the window,  
A small statuary of a village lady  
Paused to gather garlands of a blue lily.

We were pent with bread and breath then,  
Souvenirs sanctioning nature, or maybe  
Something fiercer, like its sure causations.  
All this clacking from slim ribbons of whim.  
Who were we then, when the piano lurched  
Sad appointments meaning time without tedium?

'Heed the bank deposits, ' the sign read,  
'Wonder and wander often as you praise.  
Choose for the cotton jar  
A band of lucky tantrums and slivered gums.'

Yet for all that, it was a blessing of service  
To cancel as often as we calmly came,  
Remembering not me or it but what became of it:  
A bespotted shaft, spackled and combed with laurelled sun.

In those days we stayed on  
While everywhere papers hurried us away.

Adam Fitzgerald

# The Love Song Of Saint Sebastian

There would be nothing more to say.  
You would love me because I should have strangled you  
And because of my infamy;  
And I should love you the more because I had mangled you  
And because you were no longer beautiful  
To anyone but me.

I prated you with platitudes  
Insouciant and dry as the sunlight overhead,  
You, who stood like a word from my mouth.  
After, enamored in the hayfield, we bled  
Like a blaze of carrion and taloned shadows,  
Cavalries of the South.

Soon, you will gaze as I have gazed.  
At a man, something charred we created  
Pacing between cypress and pillar.  
At a flank from my torso happily fated  
And at your own likeness insinuating its arrow—  
My own or similar.

There would be nothing more to say.  
You would love me because I should have strangled you  
And because of my infamy;  
And I should love you the more because I had mangled you  
And because you were no longer beautiful  
To anyone but me.

Adam Fitzgerald

# The Relay Station

We sleep in private homes now, forgetting  
the laundry or whomever's name. Snow  
comes and blankets,  
nothing about the outdoors  
being lonely except it's the outdoors.

The same doors are opened. Piles  
of ghosted marginalia end up on the end,  
where they belong.

A cord or two's tangled. Songs  
drift. Soon, or even sooner than that,  
what's tucked inside isn't dark

in the sense of darkness, but resting  
like the-uncle-we-loved's hat.  
Peter and Abby sweep the bin in.  
Time goes like a stone at that.

Wide tracks of things we've thought about  
cool off into a frieze, waiting for us  
to track them down again one day  
until a loaned key is minted.  
I or someone else hums.  
Tissues are collected. Dust settles.

Our trust is renewed and renovated,  
like faucets, because fate is set that way  
and today — never happening —  
one day is an imposter  
that will not be looked on as anything  
but what fell between a casualty of sorts.  
Woods or wares, as it were.

News comes. Furniture  
plays furniture. If what we exchange  
rumbles slightly in too much quiet  
then it means this for you. Afternoon  
grievances or friends to be arranged.  
Tea steam purring from the kettle almost.

Adam Fitzgerald

# Time Being

Let him walk home  
With a swallow and a Sunday river  
Pinned to his vest; sleeve  
Dragging in the thirsty dirt.

Let him walk home  
With a thresh of woodshed vine  
Dangling over his dead hands.  
Dead hands? Why not dear hands?

There's burbled cotton and turgid oranges.  
There's a surplus of velvet and a loose strip of rain.  
The door opens inward.  
The mistakes are come from a little resin we don't bother with.

Polish the box, and take the tablet cold.  
The wind has his applause to get to.  
Don't delay or trouble the migrations  
And the migraines and the immigrant farmers  
Who fetch barrels-full.

The sun is mawkish, the blades of a rumbling helicopter  
Chop by; its grim lines have no center.

But you see, that man over there with the metal skull  
And pigeon-plated heart, let him walk home.  
He's tired and is nowhere born. He'll never get there.  
The air split, a menacing tether disparages his decency.

But let him there already. He'll never get there.  
Let him walk home in the blue echo of his lips.  
On the marble of his face: two wet, falling wings.

Adam Fitzgerald

# To A Boy Leading A Horse

Under a shudder of sun  
A murmur of wood.

The opal sky impure as lead,  
The air is gaunt and azure-sedged;  
Combed with glass and mercury.  
A marble tomb suspended.

§

Under the flesh of this sun  
I fear for your tenderness, boy.  
Though the wind is not more bronze  
Than the crumpled ochre of your skin,  
With the petal of your phallus  
Outlined as the rest of your body  
In chrome and creosote, your eyes imprinted  
Wild with tarnished ash and flaking rock-flint —  
What of you is permanent?

A gash of  
Shadow leaks above your chin,  
Shadows streak dark foliage cringing  
Along your shins.

Dispatched in light but not of noon,  
I know the world is claimed by litanies  
Crude as your lips and soldered as your limbs.  
Vacant and chartreuse, nude and loose  
As a cratered stump  
I know the body of a boy exceeds  
—What red oaks rise from the blonde titan earth  
And come to crumbled timber, broke shanks  
And crippled paper.

Our breath is tenured  
In wild shoots, pools and blanks of weather.  
It permits of leisure  
Its limits will not remember.

You, boy, who lead a horse hinged in silver,  
Know, this is not elegy.

§

And yet, what else records  
The accusation of an upright neck?  
Plaintive, ordinate, an open form  
Spanning the locked space between  
Despair and what we know of prayer.

Infringed perpetually,  
Hollow, cavernous, deprived  
And permeated with presence  
Wholly created and uncreated,  
The singer is a mouth  
Heaving heaven; severed, lavish  
Dissolving increments caving  
Towards light or light's brethren  
But by light never sated.

To which we have heard it sung and said  
As the mouth is clay and song  
As you say, clasping hip  
With more than shadow spilling from your lips:

I have my dead and do not mourn their going.  
I have my dead, their peace is half my going  
And half a peace I hold remote, and dread.  
Flowing over the stricken calyx of my palm  
My grasp extends and grasps for what visible  
Region reigns within a terror our eyes tread,  
Towards elsewhere, askew, groping the invisible  
Until the dark has blossomed, concrete and calmed.  
We have breathed as leaders with corrupted knowing,  
The imagination is a steed, cryptic, fleet, unknowing.

Adam Fitzgerald

# When

I have not come too late, too late to the house  
upon this seldom street. When one is tired  
and one searches why one is tired and cannot  
sleep, perhaps one fears they have forgot,  
forgotten how much to fear one's self, or  
when the night aborts without even a moon's  
retreat, when the flesh that hangs upon the prongs  
of one's dull ribs, heaves and heaves a little less  
with each sequent breath, when the lungs traipse  
like feet about, abhorring that they must go  
where forced to go—then one walks, or  
maybe, one never leaves one's self. Still, I have  
come upon a house on an unfamiliar street.  
The shudders are blue and blue is not appeasing  
when it is worn and worn enough  
so that it looks faded, faded even if a light  
easily seems to breathe an appearance new.  
But it is a worn and faded blue, and I  
am walking when the night drags on  
And forgets itself. Once, I thought I knew this self.  
Rather, I have forgotten how to fear myself—yet  
I have not come too late. The house is hedged—  
I mean to say, the shrubs around the house are hedged,  
the house itself is no more than a stuck mixing of stone.  
When I came to this street (and I do not know  
its name) , when I came to this house  
and my chest lessened as if knowing, now,  
I might rest; resting I feared I had come too late.  
There is another house to the left, and surely one beyond  
and beyond the one beyond; here, I'll sit.  
I'll sit on the silent stoop. Here I'll wait a face to greet  
(and though I know not whose house this is)  
if someone asks why I'm here or why I seem  
to always eye with fear—if someone should  
passing across the lawn ask anything at all,  
easily passing because there is no gate,  
I'll say, or seem to say, I hope I haven't come  
too late.

