

[Home](#)

[Winter 2010](#)

[Autumn 2009](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Contact](#)

Three Poems

by John Grey

Her First Trip Overseas

She's in France and her plants wither.
their stamens, petals, curling up brown and lifeless,
for want of her loving.
Her ancient empire is nothing more
than tendrils desiccated with old blood,
a corner of Providence, Rhode Island:
burning to the ground for all she knows,
its residents carved up by pestilence.
She's always despised the testimony of the past,
preferred having nothing to leave, to ever go home to.
She longed to disappear in tourist sites, statues,
historical artifacts, archaeological diggings.
People needed to be foreign. To speak foreign.
She would gladly cut herself on the shards
of their broken English if that helped.
She wanted to be far-fetched in our minds,
like postcards of the Eiffel Tower,
the crouching gargoyles of Notre Dame.
Or snapping herself posed by Jim Morrison's tomb.
Or before Camus' last offering, Sartre's bones, even
the fossilized whiskers of Victor Hugo.
She would love no more living people.
She would never return. Not for family, me or anyone,
Not after three days in Louvre, two in the D'Orsay,
being awe-struck by a thousand beatific Madonnas,
transfixed by the gold-pink flesh of Renoir bathers.
The truth is indestructible. History buries and we dig it up.
No one frolics like her, matching her moods for speed
through the Champs Elysees espresso gauntlet.
Even without the shadowed hotel room, the accordion
with a tremor in its keys, playing to the unlit window,
in a stranger's transitory arms
I have heard nothing of her for months.
Except for the brief violence of her telephone tongue.
The French don't like Americans
so she called me.

Coupling

They were right out in the open,
at least, as open as a dark moonless night
and the edge of a thick wood allows.
His pants were down, her dress was up.
What if children were as inquisitive as her?
What if they were the ones who went out
to investigate every small noise,

each rustle, every moan?
Lucky for juvenile sensibilities,
she was he one who ventured
from the house in dressing gown,
brandishing a flashlight
like the sword of a knight with a pure heart.
The cold wind didn't deter her.
The uncertain ground wouldn't stop her from her task.
She shone a light on their naked bodies,
screamed out on behalf of Jesus and the disciples
that she was here to rid the world of Satan.
The girl hid her face.
The boy yelled, "Go away you old hag."

They were well hidden.
No moon in the sky, trees, brush, huddled close.
His pants were down, her dress was up.
What if the woman in the brown cottage
was as nosy as children?
What if she came out of the house
disturbed by the noise they were making?
Unfortunate for senior sensitivities,
that woman was the one who ventured
from her house in dressing gown,
brandishing a flashlight
like a guardian of the old moral order.
Cold wind wouldn't hold her back.
Unsteady footsteps didn't deter.
She shone a light on their naked bodies,
screamed out on behalf of all that she had missed out on
in the years beyond her husband's death.
The girl hid her face.
The boy yelled something like
"Don't you realize that we're doing this on your behalf?"
Anyway, the sex was hot.
They could live with her lack of appreciation.

A History of Kisses

Since when did a kiss become a memory —
perfunctory touch of lips —
a quick peek on behalf of more passionate kisses
from fifteen years before —
you pulled back then
because your breath demanded it
but that didn't stop your eyes
from begging for another -
and now it's the years that need them —
they're reassurance packaged in a mouth —
the ardor was crushed some time back -
I should feel blessed that, at least,
that the tenderness remains.

So when you leave for work,
you purse your lips —
you want me on them

if only for a moment —
it's an acknowledgment of our shared history —
fifteen years
and not a tongue in sight

Copyright 2010, John Grey. © This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.

Australian born poet, **John Grey** has been a US resident since late seventies. He works as financial systems analyst. He recently published in *Connecticut Review*, *Kestrel* and *Writer's Bloc* with work upcoming in *Pennsylvania English*, *Alimentum*, *Caveat Lector* and the *Great American Poetry Show*.