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POETRY OF JOHN GREY

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The Flight I Lost

Felt like a black and white movie
colorized by blood.
A collage, the ditch, the broken nose.
A documentary on the sickening purple
of the fisted eye,
the swelling interviewed,
the torn shirt seen up close.
Counterinsurgency...
one hand reaching briefly
for the heart
to feel if it still beat.
The other flopped in slime.
The face, a comic strip character,
plastered across real life,
thought balloons on crack.
Not forgetting the skull
in its puddle of bile
while the victor stood above me,
hyped the tattoos
on his upper arm,
the junk mail knuckles
he could still be sending me
if I defied pain
and stood up.
Not me. I just lay there,
sympathy on my radar,
not another uppercut.
The victor stumbled back
into the bar,
to cheers I expect.
Meanwhile, I pleaded
with the passersby, please
don't step on my opinions.

Spoil Tips

We were in Yorkshire,
not the Leeds of churches
and the River Aire,
but back-country,
more like back century,
two hundred years ago
and the lead mines closing.

Sheep grazed where they could.
A dog chased rats through
the ruins of a smelt mill.

Lone chimneys stood
like sentinels
whose guard has not been changed
since Victoria was queen.
"Pillars of the past,"
you called them.

Scattered throughout
the man-made hills,
were iron relics
barely begun
their long devolution
back to earth.

Down industrial mole holes,
rusty tubs squired rusty shadow,
rails skewed off into the darkness.

"Cheap imports killed it,"
said the man back at the pub.
And here we were,
more cheap imports,
hiking the spoil tips,
under sky of unwitting clarity,
of brightness unaware.

How to Get through Life on Ten Cliches a Day

Read and memorize
passages from "Ulysses."
Recite them sometime
between your third and fourth scotch.

Insert licorice in your ears.
Bust open piggy banks,
abscond with the life savings

of the children of close friends.

Pray to God only in those months
with an 'x' in them.
The rest of the year
pray to former game show hosts.

Put yourself in the hands
of amputees.
Be willing to kick stray soccer balls
where no kid can ever fetch them.

Rely on negative thoughts
to get you through
the happiest of occasions.
When bored,
create mental images
of naked virgins on sacrificial altars.

Whenever you are
faced with obstacles,
be advised that obstacles have feelings too.

Keep repeating to yourself,
words like "humungous"
and "scarifying."
And remember,
the bulldozer is your friend.

Draw on a higher power.
Jack Daniels is always a good choice.

For at least a half hour a day,
go to the quietest place you know
and scream until your throat hurts.

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Australian born poet, playwright, and musician, **John Grey** has been a U.S. resident since late 70's. His latest book is *What Else Is There* from Main Street Rag. His works have appeared recently in the *English Journal*, *The Pedestal*, *Pearl*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Work will appear in *Pennsylvania English* and the *Connecticut Review*.