

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

June 1, 2007

Friday Poem

Filed under: [poetry](#) — alecsothblog @ 2:42 am

When I watch in-flight movies, I only choose comedies. There is something about the mix of confinement, cheap wine and comedy that just works. On yesterday's flight to London I watched *Music and Lyrics*. The movie stars Hugh Grant as a washed up 80's singer (like Andrew Ridgeley – other guy from WHAM!) who reinvigorates his career with the help of Drew Barrymore.

The best part of the movie is the music. The film perfectly captures the happy emptiness of pop songwriting. I remember listening to an interview with the writer/director Marc Lawrence on [Fresh Air](#). While most of the songs were written by Adam Shlessinger from the band [Fountains of Wayne](#), one of the tunes was written by the director's 13 year-old son. Clyde Lawrence also wrote the theme song to Miss Congeniality when he was 8.

After the movie, I started reading J.M. Coetzee's book [Disgrace](#). Instead of a washed-up pop star, this book is about a washed-up professor. But the following passage had me thinking about pop music:

This year he is offering a course on the Romantic poets. For the rest he teaches Communications 101, 'Communications Skills,' and Communications 201, 'Advanced Communication Skills.' Although he devotes hours of each day to his new discipline, he finds the premise, as enunciated in the Communications 101 handbook, preposterous: 'Human Society has created language in order that we may communicate our thoughts, feelings and intentions to each other.' His own opinion, which he does not air, is that the origins of speech lie in song, and the origins of song in the need to fill out with sound the overlarge and rather empty human soul.

Is it any better if this song comes from Wordsworth than George Michael? Would I be a happier person if I put down the Coetzee book, ordered another wine, and watched Meet the Fockers?

All of this brings me to the Friday Poem. I was saddened to hear about the [recent suicide](#) of the poet Sarah Hannah. It seems that Hannah was always drawn to darkness. She wrote her Ph.D. thesis on Sylvia Plath. But just like my airplane movies, she clearly longed for something sweet and light:

The Colors Are Off This Season

By [Sarah Hannah](#)

I don't want any more of this mumble—
Orange fireside hues,
Fading sun, autumnal tumble,
Stricken, inimitable—Rose.

I want Pink, unthinking, true.
Foam pink, cream and coddle,
Miniskirt, Lolita, pompom, tutu,
Milkshake. Pink without the mottle

Or the dying fall. Pink adored, a thrall
So pale it's practically white.
A tinted room beneath a gable—
Ice pink, powder, feather-light—

Untried corner of the treble.
I want the lift, not the lower.
Bloodless pink stalled at girl,
No weight, no care, no hour.

2 Comments

1. Sad to hear about Hannah I knew her great poet-person actually she didn't write her PhD thesis on Plath planned to but it didn't work out she did write a scholarly published article she sent to me awhile ago about the poetics of Plath. May she rest in peace.

Comment by [Doug Holder](#) — June 1, 2007 @ [9:24 am](#)

2. When sad can be so beautiful, the joy from reading such a poem is painful. I did not know of her before. Thanks for the post.

Comment by [Jeremiah Jones](#) — June 1, 2007 @ [9:36 am](#)