









*Futurism*  
selected poems 2007-2010  
by Erik Stinson

**the death of the ball turret gunner**

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from the dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died I respawned over Los Angeles circa 1987.

**when our kids are famous**

when our kids are famous  
we'll get black cars  
and drive them around our  
new Beverly Hill Neighborhoods.  
We'll leave our meds piled on the dashboard,  
and we'll roll joints on the back seats.  
We'll make out at the drive in movies  
stoned, and eat gummy bears  
under the California stars

**LED Lifesystem**

SEX FOOD SHELTER  
CONVERSATION LCD  
NEWS FEED SEX  
CASH FOOD SHUFFLE  
CINEMA DRUGS HUSTLE  
SEX NOVEL SHELTER  
TRAVEL DISCO SLEEP  
GOD WHISPERS TO  
THE SMOKERS OUTSIDE  
FUCKING IN THE STREET



**northern lights**

in the fall,  
on cold days  
after the sun  
sets behind the ocean,  
when people are drinking  
down by the waterfront,  
you can see strange  
explosions of light  
coming from the north  
where the glittering  
power plants convert  
bacteria into fuel  
in giant black  
domes

**is this real life**

the bar is empty

at 11pm on a saturday.

it is spring and

people are driving

to the big city

for thrills.

i'm too tired

to go.

i finish my beer

and vanish

carefully

**fear powder**

at a baseball game

boys in black shirts

sniff drugs in bathroom

stalls. they step

back out into the

light and scream

funny things at the

opposing pitcher.

later, someone plays

tetris on a gameboy

while another person

splits drugs

into small plastic bags

**over-ocean match**

when the shuttle landed

i saw her smile

from under the polyvinyl

pink hood and i knew

that the software

had made

the right choice

**the politics of dancing**

at the heart of things, the cold white center of our lives,  
is that fear of the past and of the future - to the point  
where talking about it becomes a guarded secret thing.  
talking becomes the kind of intimacy for late evenings  
and plane rides. we try to follow each other into  
these dark clouds, into these drug dens,  
these ambitious personal issues, but the blindness  
at the center of our lives leads us only into our sensual selves,  
the outsides of our selves, our skin and blood  
and the things we want our bones to feel.  
the tactile sustains us in times of fear.

**my father is a crash investigator, near retirement**

You wake up from Christmas booze and a week of fever, chilling everyone in the melting streets.

After a week of snow and a few plane rides  
all the people you care about seem to be sick  
of themselves, ready for a new year.

So you clean your apartment, put on your new shoes,  
and go out for a drink.

The nightworld takes a break for family vacation,  
but drug addicts and hustlers sit jittery. Students  
get out of school, and read ridiculous books.

My father takes a few days off work, and planes  
still crash all over the world. For my Birthday,  
he offered me a glass of scotch

and we sat and looked at the Christmas tree,  
and I remember all the nights he spends  
on his boat in the islands.

Our glasses have beautiful old sailboats etched into them.

**seasoned lovers of popular shapes and feelings**

in the cradle of my eyes you rest  
weary from constant tropical mirrors.  
the time makes us both thin shapes  
like the clouds at sunrise,  
barely a sinew connecting  
each corner of the ocean.  
it will be easier when the sea contracts  
and hours can flow again  
like serpents or rivers  
or tap water from your bathroom, copper.  
i can't remember where all this time came from,  
and there's no ending here in the north,  
for seasoned lovers of popular shapes and feelings

**precious little scenes that disappear like students in community college**

how does it feel to be in the moment  
when a community collapses, disappears, becomes  
an underwater ghost town?  
to sit on the edge of a bar stool at closing time,  
and feel the night pulling your friends out into the dark.  
the cool breathing of the ocean, across the street from the bar  
knows something about the end of community,  
the continuation of tides.  
still, i can surprise the ocean. she gasps,  
when i go out for a cigarette alone  
and she tries to keep me company with the sound of her waves.  
my friends don't follow me out into the sand dunes.  
the scene breaks apart and i think of  
the people i know who are far away.  
when you love the ocean, it's easier to escape your drinking buddies.  
the ocean at night is vast and my old friends are afraid to look her in the  
eyes.



**shiver**

i was riding  
my bike back  
from a party in west oakland.  
the sky looked like the future -  
gray green and shivering with secured wi-fi signals

i swear I saw a guy with two dogs  
and the dogs were pulling  
a shopping cart full of empty cans  
and which would become crack

there was a kind of lazy sexuality  
to the whole bike ride.  
i felt like everyone would find love  
after the next trip to the liquor store.  
but if they failed to  
another night alone would be easier,  
than trying to get home from some new lover's house  
in el cerito or albany or fruitvale

**the northern air cooler**

she spent two weeks with her sunglasses on, in late september,  
coming home from graduate school. her parents seemed smaller  
than she remembered, the northern air cooler.

in the islands, the sun was much lower than in california.  
the three of them drank moderately: father, mother, daughter,  
sailing through cold blue straits and wicked fjords.

the bars of los angeles waited for her return  
like earnest high school boyfriends. she didn't think of them much.

instead she slept alone, against an AM radio's gentle waves,  
coming up the west coast, piped into the boat  
by an antennae connected to the mast.

her dreams were too full of cocaine taquerias and scary weekend discos.  
everyone aged at alarming rates. she tried to stop time with her eyelids.

late at night, she smoked on the bow of the boat at anchor. spacing out,  
not even looking at the stars.

**he knows a ton of chicks**

there's this dude who's lived around here for a while.  
He has a harem, as we say. Dark bangs, lit cigarettes.

women hold his hands wherever he goes and  
the light from the Oakland sky seems to shine

on him, naked, in his bed with several  
beautiful white birds who go to art school.

it's not that we want to be him.  
we just want to know how he finds the time

to be desirable.  
i can barely finish my beer,

these women know what kind  
of graying, obscure, tediously hip

sex I could give them.  
we would disappear together.

**i can tell that someone in your area code is reading my blog**

DON'T PRETEND.

I CAN TELL THAT SOMEONE IN YOUR AREA CODE IS READING MY BLOG.

I HAVE GOOGLE ANALYTICS.

YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW IN YOUR AREA CODE.

THEREFORE, I KNOW YOU THINK I'M INTERESTING.

THREE DAYS AGO, YOU STAYED ON MY WEBSITE FOR ELEVEN MINUTES.

I THINK YOU ARE IN LOVE.

DON'T FIGHT IT.

**realistic sex**

THAT PIZZA WAS REALLY GOOD.

I KNOW. DO YOU WANT SOME TEA?

YES. I'M COLD.

I CAN TELL.

IF WE HAVE SEX MY TOES WILL BE COLDER BUT I WILL BE WARMER.

I CAN'T TELL IF I AM STILL DRUNK.

I AM.

WE JUST HAD SEX.

I KNOW.

DID YOU CALL IT PIZZA?

I DON'T REMEMBER.

IS THIS THE SEX THAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY HAVE?

WHAT?

YES.

**golf**

im 16 years old  
on a golf course  
in the foot hills  
of the cascades.  
the air is gray  
and calm, but  
mostly hopeless.

i carry my bag  
of clubs. I have  
headphones on.  
the other guys  
are calling  
each other faggot  
or nigger, i  
can't remember  
which.

i'm listening  
to interpol.  
i'm way passed  
depression. i  
don't want to  
kill myself:  
at that age it  
already seemed  
pointless to  
die.

i was  
80% sure  
i would be  
unhappy forever,  
so golf didn't  
seem so bad.

**future beach**

graylight in  
the clouds  
above the beach

across the bay  
there moves  
a disturbance  
in a low hills  
like a razor  
blade from  
deep caves

i'm drinking  
a beer and  
watching SF  
swell to the size  
of a warzone

my friends are  
in the dull sand  
next to me.  
their tattoos  
seem funny,  
for once

**get it get it**

GO FOR THE GOLD,  
DOUBLE UP AND  
MAKE A STACK.  
6 Gs IN MY SHIRT  
10 Gs ON MY BACK.  
NEVER BEEN A  
QUITTER MAN,  
ALWAYS BEEN A  
SNAKE. SELL IT  
THROUGH THE  
AGENCY, SELL IT  
THROUGH THE  
BREAK.



**hot tub situation**

we biked for a long time, you and i  
up san pablo away from downtown  
it was 2 in the morning  
bro, can i put my whiskey in your back pack  
uh yes  
i think we are here  
there was a high green hedge and a modern gate  
it smelled like ozone, the sound of voices through the hedge  
you jumped over the gate and let me inside  
a bunch of people were in a hot tub  
you could see their tattoos and all the folds of their fat  
we took off our clothes  
the water was too hot, there was not enough beer  
the feeling of getting out of the hot tub,  
my vision blurred, listening to stories float into the cold California sky,  
lifting out of the heat and the exhaustion,  
the sensation of your body being warm, even in the cold air,  
radiating something like joy

it was too much to bare

and then to ride home with wet underwear,

through a rough part of town

and later, a text message that said you just had sex five times

**poweruser**

ripe young people

standing

under tracklights

what are we

doing tonight

when this

is over

i'll be out

alone in

the cold.

today they invented a

new kind of computer

i'm going to use it

on the train

under the bay

/

when i get out of the station

there will be blinding signage

and homeless people

and ten thousand

smart phones

sucking the tits of this great city

**what i woud do if i wanted to 'worship satan,' hypothetically**

engage in casual sex

drink five nights a week

appear exhausted in work settings, often

read bukowski on the train to work

get ironic tattoos

listen to black metal 'with care'

blog only as often as i thought people would read

give up trying to find a fulfilling relationship, for now

go to the beach

avoid people i find uninteresting

**i would rather have a terrible sandwich than an expert handjob**

the neon sign at

the back of the bar is

kind of shaky tonight

/

it's like, trying to

not 'over-do it'

or something

/

my friends are

drinking themselves blind

and by midnight

i feel my options are narrow

like the space

between your legs

/

it hurts to give

up something like hope,

when it feels wide and profound.

but it hurts more  
to go some place  
loud and humiliating,  
like the super bowl  
halftime show is  
just doing drugs in  
the bathroom under  
those terrible lights  
/  
can i just go home  
and eat a sandwich

**executive microsystem**

three small, harsh

cubes in

concert with

your massive

pulsing

ego circa

1998



**backyard**

tonight we'll drive  
out of town together.  
my husband and i  
will get drinks  
at that place  
way up on the  
hillside.

/

right now i'm  
in the backyard  
at 45, drinking.  
he put the starcraft  
game on the stereo.  
our robot is mowing  
the lawn.

**washington spring 2008**

we're stoned listening  
to the same EP on repeat.  
i can feel the hot highway  
under the car.  
all the way from bellingham  
to seattle i feel  
warm, pointless,  
that summer is  
worth everything  
i will ever own.

we had played an  
empty coffee shop  
downtown,  
drank in the parking  
lot, we hated each  
other from  
different parts of

the car.

but we loved the

round smell

of the countryside

sliding open.

the windows fill

thickets of black sound,

at midnight. being so

desperate

now seems distasteful.

**god**

i have coffee in a

giant mason jar.

CS4 is open.

i am trying to

make an interactive

experience for

a mainstream audience.

somewhere on

the internet

somebody is

charming

the entire chat room

**down south**

i heard late last night  
that two of my  
friends playing shows  
down south  
got arrested  
trying to buy  
pot in tijuana.

the guy who  
told me  
pulled over on his  
bike and cracked  
a beer.  
the words echoed  
from his wide  
smile, "they should have been buying pills."

he passed me the

beer as a cop  
rolled by us,  
the long street dark,  
the blocks of warehouses  
and crack houses,  
cold.  
“they’ll be out soon.”

he took back the beer.  
i looked at his face  
and remembered  
a time when  
he told me about  
his uncle  
in juarez  
who was  
split limb  
from limb  
and left to

die in

front of a police station.

**i want to be a part of this**

we drank for  
hours under  
the half light  
of the outer city.  
you said you  
needed more  
to drink but  
i had nothing  
so you got drugs  
from another friend.  
the color of the  
sky seemed to take  
everything from  
us. i saw dozens  
of beautiful  
faces falling into  
the ocean.



**listening to 90s RnB in a bar in oakland**

it's like 12:30 am.

in front of me is a round

table with beer

and whiskey on it.

the air is like a

hot fog coming up

from the port of Oakland

in summertime.

but it's the dead of

winter. 49 degrees.

my friends are drunk

again and i don't mind

too much. it will be

OK for a few more years,

just like this.

with Mirah Carey

you remember

the last drink  
as playful, yet  
empowering.

for some reason we  
can still smoke in doors  
at this bar. a beer costs  
a dollar, somehow.  
there's no reason  
to hope for  
anything better than  
this.

**chat room bar**

condensation on

the lip of

your glass beads

to the hum of

midnight traffic

and you wonder

what time it is

in other parts of

the bar

**zen garden**

fingers against

quartz grains and

along the trunk

of a small

tree. LED

lights edge

the clay pot,

in the

pixel-rich

yellow night

**national park**

we drove

for hours through

the wasted city.

at the edge of some hills

a green blanket

unfolded.

/

a massive fence

with dark greenness

inside, for miles.

the visitor's center

had metal detectors.

the wi-fi was

pretty fast

**sonic shower**

deep drone

of the black

metal opera,

digital plumbing,

cleaning every

surface of

your finite

prosthesis

**sips**

recording studio in

a hard part of

the east bay.

the room is dark and

a 32oz of nady

ice is holding

up the ceiling,

reflected in the

sound booth

window

**cyber family**

granite ipod cover.

did u remember

to back-up

ur lifebook



**sunday twenty years from now**

a digital projector.

a 3D window on

a thin white granite

slab in a gray

walled room

with the lights

dimmed.

the broadband

video feed

hisses as a

thunderstorm

climbs the foothills.

/

the microwave

pizza tastes like

seaweed. i'm watching

a boring comedy

about recent

trends in online

dating.

**depressing job market**

in the future:

all jobs require exactly

3 years of experience.

no more, no less.

at 28, after one year on the job,

you are fired.

your body is made into

eco-friendly

SAT test

paper.

/

in the bathroom

at private school

PTA meetings,

27 year old

wall street bankers

roll you up

and snort cocaine

through your flesh.

**rare anger**

feeling something

very strong about

another person

sometimes happens

when you are answering

their boring emails

/

'oh yeah, i'm too busy today

to work on that project'

but you know they are just

in a cafe somewhere

spending their parent's money

and staring at facebook

/

i don't know how to

make money doing what i love.

i don't know how to make

money at all. everyone

wants me to work for

free so i can gain

valuable experience.

all i want to do

is sleep and eat and fuck

and drink and listen to music

so loud it drives away the hordes

of people who have

no idea what

they want

/

i try to make something

beautiful out of the

meaningless garbage

we feed to all small

children. meanwhile,

i just wait for imaginary

future people to appreciate

some unknown part

of me

with their money.

if i felt worthless,

at least that would be

decided and i could

get a shit job,

and wait to die,

like so many proud friends

/

but the promise of

working a job that

fits my abilities

glitters faintly

like a .gif

**rapture**

the mid 20s,

like every other

time of life, contain

an element of people

being simply

left behind by

shifting tides

of fashion



**no romance**

at night the train takes me  
back home though miles of  
warehouses filled only with  
the dead dreams of  
gen-X performance  
artists.

/

i'll go home and read  
a book about the early  
years of the internet. my  
subconscious will  
briefly hover near the  
surface of my skin,  
before i fall into  
a deathly urban  
sleep.

**my parents live in a smart phone**

i talk to

them on weekends

when they sound far away.

the crackle of lips against

margarita glasses echoes

across thousands of

miles of American fiber.

**tom waits on the internet**

tom waits pulls into

a gas station on

the internet

and says

'what kind of

bourbon will make

blogs relevant

again'

**foreign wilderness**

when my parents logged into  
tumblr a huge vortex of  
RGB pixels passed across their  
vision, leaving a silent void

/

blank screen  
dull white fading into forms

/

now they sit in a clearing  
of deep greens.

a faded yellow 1970s  
sky hovers a meter  
above their heads

/

now my parents see  
in all directions:  
small windows of sacred  
light tunneling off infinitely -  
north south east west  
past present future

**pacsun trippin hard**

in the green backyard of

a house where

7 beautiful women

live together in white,

Victorian rooms,

there are tables crowded

with empty cans of beer

/

the sun sets and i watch

the sky turn to a dark blue,

that way it does after that

interesting day-drunk euphoria.

the women here seem

bored or sexless and the men

slide between each other telling

sports stories or war stories

/

i see two men crouched

together on a patio,  
wearing flip-flops and muscle tees,  
looking blunt and agreeable,  
and i decide to drink until  
the things i say without thinking  
separate me  
from them  
completely

**fame**

at my school a man  
in a white suit talked  
for ten minutes about  
the power of google analytics  
in determining who are the  
best creative people.  
when he asked for  
questions i didn't raise  
my hand.

/

the internet is creating  
and new kind of  
secret fame  
that gives voice  
to a perfect subconscious,  
seething below massive  
quantities of social  
media data, unseen by science.

a few months from now,  
certain lucky people will  
shape the wings of  
a giant bird, now  
lifting itself from the  
shadows of new posthuman reality.

/

this bird will  
redefine  
human  
behavior  
forever.



**cyber friends need dates irl**

i was walking to my  
apartment in darkness  
and i saw  
three cars parked  
in front of the public  
library. there were  
people inside the car  
windows looking  
at computers

**unexpected sun**

i walked out of the train

station at 3 pm

and the sun took

my face

and cleaned it

**i will let you hate me for a while if you promise to remember my name**

maybe you saw something i did online

maybe you saw me on a street in oakland

or brooklyn or seattle

/

you probably thought i was, like hot,

or you thought i was an asshole

because i dress like an asshole

/

sorry i look like that

but it helps me in situations

that i find myself in, often

/

the point is,

i'm going to try to help us get through all this.

if you just remember

my name

i promise to

do everything in my power  
to be the best artistic  
politician i can be.  
vote with your wallet,  
come at me with hateful eyes  
and i will look at you  
with the soles of my shoes  
and the cracked lenses of my video cameras  
and we can make things that help  
us understand what we are supposed  
to do next, and who we should forget  
and who we should remember.  
and who we should put  
into our facebook profiles forever  
/  
it's ok to hate me in  
a soft way

**car accident**

my mom and dad and me  
were driving to a friend's  
house way up in the hills.

we were slowing at an  
intersection when we  
got hit from behind.

my mom yelled 'ouch'  
for no reason and then  
i said 'are you ok mom.'

/

i went to see how the other driver  
was. 'i have insurance' she said.

i was like 'are you ok.'  
she said 'fuck,' in a low,  
insane tone.

/

in the parking lot  
of a bank we exchanged

information.

she said to us,

'nobody in california

stops on yellow lights.'

i was like 'good to know

bitch,' under my breath.

and then we went to

have some wine

with our friends.

**2069**

from the back alley

window of a small apartment

in tokyo

/

i can see

the sun reflecting

against the bottom

of wide green leaves,

like ancient

submarines

from america

/

last weekend,

i went way out of town

and stood in a wide,

dusty clearing

to watch the moonset

**i was once brutally attacked by a christian woman**

who tried to

dry hump me

for like 30 min.

afterward she

said she was 'i'm so sorry'

and i was like 'whatever'

and she said 'it could

never happen, us.'

'because you live in oakland'



**goths drink canada dry only**

my boss asked about

SEO

and i was like,

'i donno, maybe read

the wikipedia article

on adwords.'

and he said,

'ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

wikipedia, yes,'

in a crazy voice.

**video chat room 12:44 am pacific time**

ppl in order left to right, top to bottom

girl with thin, frayed bangs looking intensely, slightly right

girl with face half-covered in pink bed sheet

boy with long hair and center part drinking strange bottled drink

boy with 'high-volume' bowl cut and optimistic mustache in kitchen

empty room

boy with very pale skin and thin round glasses

boy with red polyester bowling shirt

boy in very very badly-lit bed, face appears to be 'coming out' of something

**video chat room 1:35 am west coast time**

people in order from left to right, top to bottom:

guy without shirt, possibly masturbating

guy with long hair, listening to rap

girl with long hair and an optimistic, friendly expression

guy with white shirt and desolate stare

guy sleeping in a bed, face partially exposed

girl eating ramen, without shirt, with bra

two asian girls in bed, looking smug

white guy using camera effect of 'angel halo'

cute girl with hair up in a well decorated bedroom

girl with hard hair, wild eyes, seems deeply sad

**brick of quartz**

i can see

the reflected people

you confuse

your self with,

late at night

in the chatrooms,

when videos are playing

and the lights are low

and chemicals move

like text messages













MARY HARRON  
KATHRYN BIGELOW  
WONG KAR WAI  
SOPHIA COPPOLA  
RIDLEY SCOTT  
DAVID LYNCH  
SEAN PECKNOLD

WILLIAM GIBSON  
JORGE LUIS BORGES  
RICHARD BRAUTIGAN  
DOUGLAS COUPLAND  
BRANDON SCOTT GORRELL  
MEGAN BOYLE  
ZACHARY GERMAN  
TAO LIN  
JIMMY CHEN  
MIRANDA JULY  
CHELSEA MARTIN  
FREDERICK BARTHELME  
CHARLES BUKOWSKI

TALBOT TAGORA  
LAST SLICE OF BUTTER  
NAOMI PUNK  
GENERIFUS  
MASTERS AND JOHNSON  
HERR JAZZ  
THE MICROPHONES  
GREEN RIVER  
KARL BLAU  
LAKE  
NO AGE  
FLEET FOXES  
HALF YOGURT  
BOTCH  
THE YOUNG FRESH FELLOWS  
NATALIE PORTMAN'S SHAVED HEAD  
TOM WAITS  
MY BLOODY VALENTINE  
TOO SHORT



