



# PURE POP TIM POP LANE

REVELATORPRESS  
chapbook no.006



**PURE  
POP**  
TIM  
LANE



## REVELATORPRESS

*Pure Pop* © 2007 Tim Lane

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## Poem Begun in August

*for my friends*

Afternoon descends through the window  
Naked in the middle of overcast November while  
You withdraw twenty bucks from an  
ATM or retrieve a pair of slacks from the  
Cleaners or crack a Russian code  
& I am dead serious about this lying in  
Bed with a book of poems & a can  
Of Coke business. "Whose  
Poems  
Anyway?" Now you're talkin'. I am  
As fond of them as cagey autumn leaves  
& nobody falls back into bed near  
Noon to read poetry better whether in summer  
Or winter or now that July's light has  
Begun to fade. I am going out  
On a limb,  
But we all have our talents. And it is  
A parade, really, what we do, what we don't,  
Meeting friends for drinks, trading reviews  
& remarks, a few kind words, our best  
Years behind us or ahead;  
The films tell us  
That.  
A break in clouds allows the room to brighten,  
Gerard in Virginia, Matt in Bowie, Mike in D.C. (have  
I finally lost track of Mary & Blake?) & while the

World transacts what the world transacts  
I work on the administration of the heart,  
& what the world gains in data or  
Wealth or new medicine I gain in intensity  
Of emotion, which I try to capture in poems motes  
Of dust twirling in columns of light or hand  
What was once & still is yours to those I  
Meet transparent my love for you  
A large window brimming  
Over.



## We Have Yet to Ride on a Roller Coaster Together

*for Sheila*

I like to watch you fix your hair  
 I like to think of you when I'm supposed to be working because work is death  
     unless you enjoy it  
 But then it isn't called work anymore, is it?  
 I like to think of you when I'm not working, too, because thinking of you is enjoyable  
 I like to pick you up from work, just thinking about picking you up!  
 I like to lean into you while you're watching TV & I'm thinking about pizza, sex  
     the Hirshhorn  
 I like to hold your hand while we walk & I'm struggling to explain an idea  
 For a new esthetic an esthetic of love that shortens the workweek  
     & creates a new clarity  
 Which allows for sleeping in on Mondays & Wednesdays  
 Saturdays, Tuesdays, Sundays, Thursdays  
 & Fridays

Behind each poem you're talking on the phone to your mother  
     & when I see or hear something  
 Then I feel it & when I feel something then I have to tell you about it  
 Like those last three swigs of Coke they're always yours, I'll share, you can count on it  
     though you usually hand the can back  
 If it's light  
 I like to lie in bed & think of the past now that you're part of it  
 I like to watch you stepping into a sandal, the agreeable way the insole & *it* meet  
 Sometimes I like to fool myself with foolish preoccupations because the preoccupation  
     of one thing or another  
 Becomes the accidental gesso of a life, & it's okay, no, we can't cut the paint too thin

Alas, I like the Coca-Cola magnet the bookmark the pen the markers the cup  
Thank you, dear, sometimes I enjoy a Heineken

I like the new quarters so shiny & light  
Coca-Cola, the Art Institute of Chicago, bottled water, bowling shoes  
Your bohemian disregard for Time's brutal schedule that is as much a part of you  
As an eyelash, an ankle, your love of  
Indian food

I like how *like* the Pacific Ocean  
You search comb find stack collect, your love of  
Rubber stamps, & yes, by the way, I did like that bikini, the pink one  
with the black polka dots,

I like Ron Padgett's poem "Wonderful Things"  
& yes, I like to make love, oh, Sheila,  
Just thinking about making love!

**Poem***for Sheila*

I am lying in bed at 6:00 A.M. watching the light coalesce  
on what leaves remain in the trees above our garage overhead a pearl  
screen turning blue like a film that opens on neutral sky  
then down to the lake a deliberate foreshadowing my hand  
behind my head the radio alarm goes off I do not know this piece  
I am thinking I must not move & watch this transformation,  
that we must be as slow, methodical, gentle as this light

I go out for a walk past the shriveled lilacs at the end  
of our block this brilliant maple which wasn't red last week has  
become a Rothko a billboard for Coke a colorized prop  
in a black-&-white film more real than  
everything else the drabness of October which surrounds  
it the houses the blue garbage bins the exhaust of idling cars  
blurring like numbers on a roulette wheel suddenly spun

I am twenty-one again I am working my way around  
Baltimore I am coming home from work I am stuck in traffic  
on the Belt I am making love to you on the futon before  
Chinese & a movie & everything is effortless the triumphs &  
the fuck ups & neither of us possesses a vague American  
sadness which is the inextricable disappointment  
of not being born affluent or in films

## Some Truths

I do not know anything about the ocean so I will not write poems about the ocean  
I do not know anything about the appendix so I will not write poems about the appendix  
I do not know anything about the duck-billed platypus so I will not write poems about  
the duck-billed platypus  
I do not know anything about pig farming so I will not write “Ode to the Industrious  
Pig”  
I do not know anything about the Blackfoot so I will not write poems about them  
I do not know anything about George Gershwin so I will not write poems about him  
I do not know anything about our good neighbors in Canada so I will not write  
Canadian poems  
I do not know anything about the Hindenburg so I will not write tragedies  
I do not know anything about Thomas Edison so I will not write poems about  
the light bulb, the phonograph or the electric pen

I will *not* under any circumstances drink Busch beer. I will not write poems about  
horse racing. I will not distract you with French Impressionism. You can't make me  
drink the Busch. The desert & ocean are twins, I suspect, within the pancreas of the  
appendix. George Gershwin played the banjo. The appendix, I'm afraid, is as  
homeless as the truth. I confess to have never read Norman Mailer.

Norman Mailer drank Busch beer. I do not know anything about  
glazomania so I will not write poems containing lists. I hate chess, although  
this isn't really fair. Fear = death, for me, anyway. “Only the devil  
hates,” my mother used to say. A duck-billed platypus might  
drink Busch beer. I saw Canada once from a plane,  
but it was dark. I do not like  
pickled beets.

**Poem Begun before a Storm**

I'm glad to be alive if only to witness this storm  
For a storm is neat to see like that one home run by Mark McGwire  
Or Mount Rushmore or the opening credits of Bay Watch  
Admittedly there are many other things  
I put one foot in front of the other I am walking

Noticing between disheveled curtains  
Everyone in the neighborhood's watching the same  
Show generally we are fair people  
Work hard & value TV

Quite often a storm is like a curve ball  
Impossible to hit, O, my love, have you seen  
How dark it is to the north, never mind  
Come upstairs while the children  
Are still asleep

## Now, Dark Theater

*for Sheila*

Now what did he  
mean? But all that's required  
of understanding  
is to demand more & more  
of the artist. And so it is the window  
became my friend & beyond it  
a sky of cigarettes & beer against which I  
directed several films—

yours & mine.  
Madonna's wedding  
gown glistened, dark vault of some-  
one's advantage. I feel for. Feel bad  
for. I am envious. Sounds better. Relieved.  
That *man*. And what of Picasso's  
women? What of his men? And that  
French restaurant on Connecticut Avenue,  
where we sat outside, watching

tourists pass?  
Eventually spring secures an  
audience—the sight of several oranges  
weighing elsewhere in memory, an accident,  
as if all thought were an unwelcome  
concussion or

*Flag*

by Jasper Johns.  
I watch *it* pass.  
Something flickers more  
than a nickel just beyond this  
cinema. Crazy desire,  
maybe, these stars our eyes  
absorb & project.

## **Fabulous**

*for Sheila*

I love you & these empty branches & those wet  
roofs over there coming close to our window while I  
lie in bed sipping Coca-Cola are nothing. They  
are nothing. And I very much enjoy being busy  
in a very unbusy kind of way but this again is nothing.  
It is nothing. Here is a map of our country hanging  
above my dresser & there where I gaze the state  
of Maryland where we lived shaded pink & nestled  
within it a diamond D.C. This was something.  
Where we lived & Blake & Mike & Diane & some  
others & we loved them & they loved what they loved  
& we loved loved & the cherry blossoms bloomed  
for us & for them & for everyone else & the  
Beltway strangled traffic for miles & Dupont Circle  
spun with dark excitement while spattered statues  
of statesmen saluted the stars & stripes & the  
Potomac eased along with its reflection of sky &  
Kennedy Center & the Lincoln Memorial &  
Hirshhorn housed dumbstruck moments on free  
display for you & us & everyone else.  
This was something.

Morning traffic tinselled by streaming sunlight  
long overdue shuttles along & December wind continues  
to buffet the vinyl siding on the west side of our  
house & my collages continue to hang



on the wall at Todd Mack's gallery after a fabulous  
reception but all of this is nothing. It is nothing.  
The paper thudding against the door is  
nothing. A cat's paw on the stair is nothing.  
A dripping faucet is nothing.  
It is nothing. And here on the nightstand  
beneath the clock radio a postcard from San Diego. This  
was something. Where we lounged like seals  
on Mission Beach while Steve & Sheri worked &  
the immensity of the Pacific made it impossible to write  
poetry for weeks & the cable cars swayed above  
Balboa Park for us & for them & for  
everyone else & the scrubby hills multiplying  
upwards into morning haze became valleys hording  
galaxies of stars at night for us & them  
& everyone else & the desert  
tattooed us with the colors of heat & the waves on  
the shore at Coronado took absolutely no notice  
determined as two bodies quietly lapping together  
between pastel sheets in a Mission style  
home in Del Mar while our children  
napped on the floor. This was  
something.

And now the empty branches & wet roofs dissolve  
into a theater of sunlight & the window's a film from which I tear  
my eyes to read "Having A Coke With You" even though  
*you* aren't here because it's you it's not O'Hara's "you"  
when I read his poem & it's D.C. or San Diego or Chicago  
instead of San Sebastian or Barcelona

when I open this poem  
& it's your love of ice cream instead of yoghurt  
& it's the warm East Side of Lansing 4 o'clock light & neither  
one of us has been to the Frick yet  
& it's you the Impressionists never got to stand near the tree  
when the sun sank no I don't think Frank O'Hara would mind  
if this morning it's you when I read "Having A Coke"  
instead of him with somebody else some place  
I've never been.

But places, like days,  
are nothing if not imbued with your love.  
And a day spent working for money is wasted  
while a day spent writing poetry is wasted but more  
honest. And all of my collages are only so many  
scraps of paper if not imbued with your love. And all of my cans of Coke  
are not full if not imbued with your love.

**Pure Pop***for Diane*

I saw you I was drinking a Coke I was driving through downtown I was riding in a coffin I was drinking a Coke You were wrapped like a mummy I could barely see your eyes You were standing on the corner You were watching a procession I was riding in a coffin I could barely see your eyes But I saw you You were standing on the corner The traffic stood still You were in a magazine The buildings closed in You were making a video The sky turned to ice You were dancing at a concert I was drinking a Coke You were wrapped like a mummy I could barely see your eyes You were watching a procession I was riding in a coffin Your eyes were like quarters O, Massachusetts! O, Pennsylvania! The winter light shattered above us Your eyes blazed

like suns Your hair, tousled & sassy Your hair, like Marilyn Monroe I was spinning on a record The record was death I was riding in a coffin Your hands were on your hips Your hips defied death You were wrapped like a mummy I could barely see your eyes You were grabbing your crotch Your crotch defied death I was searching for May But I found you instead You were crossing the street You were grinding against a man You were red & yellow tulips A murder of crows flapped overhead The winter light shattered like a mirror Beyond the mirror was death I could barely see your eyes I was listening to Miles I was drinking a Coke Did Miles bring you back? Your eyes

blazed like suns The dull winter light like a pyramid of refrigerators & stoves The light the dull ring in a tub, the dull exhaust of a truck, a muddy shoe, a dusty record, the turntable fucked, the arm refusing to budge Newspaper ink on my fingers Oh, how the tiniest irritating details get magnified in December! I was listening to Miles I was drinking a can of Coke I was trying to hang on I was searching for June But I found you instead Did Miles bring you back? You were crossing the street  
The buildings closed in Your eyes blazed

like suns O, Madonna, of the thigh, of the fishnet stockings & the grace! O, Madonna,  
of the sexual liberation of the 80s! O, Madonna, of the combat boots & the pointed  
breasts, the white corset & the pin-striped suit! O, Madonna, born into this dreary  
January light! I saw you You were in Lansing I was drinking a Coke I was driving  
through downtown I was looking for May But I found you instead The buildings closed  
in The sky turned to mud You were wrapped like a mummy I could barely see your

face You were incognito You were home, ha, ha  
O, Grace Kelly, come back from the screen! O, Diane Wakoski, write us a poem!  
O, mysterious woman arriving on this corner at the same time  
I drive by in a coffin drinking a can of Coke, listening to Miles,  
sing a song for us that will drive this black sludge away!

## **Short Message**

*for Blake*

Thought of you today  
When halfway through a can of  
Caffeine free diet Coke  
I realized there was an unfinished  
Can on the counter.

And what's more,  
I'd been drinking from  
Both cans without realizing  
I'd been drinking from  
More than one.

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Don't know if I'm sad because English League  
Soccer's been canceled or because my poems lack the sophistication  
of an Ivy League education or because the trees have  
switched to tweeds with the corduroy patches  
on the 'bows,  
however I do know Michael Owen  
has fifty-four in his first one hundred—seven in the last four—  
& Marat Safin's become the third youngest  
champion in New York,

(if he didn't  
have a girlfriend then he'll have one  
now) It's tough to watch Pete go out like  
the bull, the sky steps back from the clouds, autumn cool & unaffected, Andrew Speight-  
ish.

(Please excuse the absence of my exclamation  
point.) Sometimes I get lost running cold  
water in the sink because sports & tragedies  
inform Americans where & when  
& how to feel

(a Life Savers  
diet  
cuts calories) & it's hard  
to believe Bob Knight's unemployed to remember  
my acquaintances star in their own private  
soaps which exclude me when the petty misfortunes  
of the rich & famous seem to encompass us all.

**Winter Poem, 1999**

So, I am starting this poem off the way Mary H. begins a story:  
so, anyway, unable to pace the duration of another dismal morning  
here in the Midwest, I turn to thoughts of poetry & art, I have  
no idea what other people think about all the time,  
money, I suppose. It is high time, I think, to purchase Frank  
O'Hara's collected poems, having devoured his selected poems  
cover to cover the last few years, the way I eat a candy bar,  
the wrapper barely surviving, it finally occurring to me that the  
editors might not have selected the selections I would select.  
Such matters cannot be left to trust.

S. is working, J.R.'s at school & the baby is sleeping,  
& I am not gay & living in New York & spring is a long way  
off, or so it seems, so, anyway, I write to Blake,  
another futile attempt to encourage him to move to Lansing;  
I will have to trick him, I guess, but with what!? There  
are a few museums, galleries, too, but the winters  
are treacherous, & who really wants to live in or around  
Detroit, & who, besides the people who think of money  
all the time when they think of anything at all, can  
afford to live in Ann Arbor?

## **What Is Meant**

Sunlight filters through an armoire in the backyard although  
filters is not exactly what I mean.

What I really meant is the collage at the cafe  
has shattered a spring evening into a thousand starlings.

No, pieces isn't right. Confessions, maybe.  
The bus driver's ears are plugged by the tedious shit

of the lonely. Please understand I didn't  
intend to sound callous.



## The Hour of Trains

In the hour of trains the barking dog apprehension of night  
the automotive idle of morning disrupting the paths of the stars  
the sweet preoccupation of our varied selves the air in this  
room expanding like a pond stocked with blind carp see  
those clouds over there see those clouds white cotton resemble  
carp feeding at the edge of a pond one stops to admire as  
often as one admires the sympathetic nervous system  
surprised during morning's agenda to be stopped by the slow  
creaking passage of an ocean liner revealing just how much  
can happen or go wrong before noon thinking I am that small  
boy by the tracks skipping school my wondrous somersault  
before first bell the source of a nervous teacher's tirade beneath  
the dim candelabra of Wednesday parting yesteryear's suits  
two kids pushing out of a closet at the sound of a bell the bell  
which you were that you remember so well during the hour  
of trains so shrill so alarming upsetting the adulthood of evening  
its ebb & flow the drinks & accusations you have become

## Poem Resisting Several Obvious Titles

*for Leslye*

There's something to sitting on the edge  
of the bed, naked & in front of the window, as morning  
sunlight reveals the bricks of the building across  
the street, as if I'd never noticed, the slanting roofs  
of the houses sparkling, leaves suddenly dry  
but green, & it's not about nakedness but forgetting  
as you watch the blue sky swinging like a  
brilliant chandelier above your  
head.

Most likely, the traffic light changes, the cars  
begin to pass, & in that muffled silence chasing after them  
I cock an ear, & if I hear a jingle for condoms,  
or baseball statistics, or a DJ's reverberating belch  
after a smart-ass remark, I frown, but if there is  
nothing but sunlight, I forget, that  
chandelier crashing to

Earth

& in the wake of shattered glass I experience  
Joy that is not a Big Mac a Mercedes Benz or a fancy  
cappuccino but my daughter my son my wife my  
family & friends the communication of art & poetry  
warming the east west north & southern  
chambers of my heart.

## The Announcement

*for Sheila*

The elusive sensation of trying to recall a dream  
while eating a bland breakfast, as if the Furies hesitate,  
eagerly poised to grind arsenic on your omelette—  
aw, the boys are sick with it, as if they ever had a chance.  
Keep the wailing down, you creeps! Eurydice loved  
only me. Beneath the blue sky of a billboard  
of the Marlboro Man, I listen to a requiem  
of motorists. A train roars by,  
or was that Zeus? Maybe I should go  
to a ball game. Great solace in the cathedral  
of crowds. Sooner or later, I've got to get back  
to the poetry, pay the bills. But wait, look!  
A gondola bumps the porch. Oh, Orpheus, she  
cries, I'm pregnant with your child!

## **Size Is Directly Proportional to Splash**

*for Mike*

Supposing I beat the odds on Who Wants to Be  
a Millionaire I could meet you at the east wing of the National Gallery  
every Thursday & after that we could catch  
a film at the Janus

we would avoid Mr. Henry's because you work there  
& Mr. Eagan's because I've been drunk there

on Sundays we would go over to the studio to work  
on huge canvases which we would eventually hang from  
blimps above Arlington Cemetery & in prime  
retail space along the tracks

& I'd sit down at a refinished antique desk  
with one hundred small compartments to compose dedications for Diana  
Krall while the model breaks for a smoke

& then we'd meet Sheila & the kids &  
PJ & Blake & Vilma at The Brickskeller for steak  
& I'd have an Old Peculiar & you'd have  
a pilsner & the kids would have pop

## **Homage to the Sun with Bill Clinton & Frank O' Hara in Mind**

Failed  
Illicit campaigns  
For love  
The way poetry  
Pales beside  
The sun  
Which woke  
O' Hara on Fire  
Island to tell him  
How much  
It liked  
His poems  
We all long  
For this kind of  
Affirmation  
I think  
One golden  
Obituary from  
An indifferent  
Historian  
The integrity  
To keep our  
Appointments  
Without  
An oath

## You & I

*for Sheila*

I want to have lunch with my wife,  
with Blake, or Gerard, or Steve, or Bill—  
or Matt Cullen, who can eat two orders of  
fish-n-chips & a large Caesar salad—  
I want to open this poem with an image,  
but I'm not thinking of any images  
at the moment, my mind only full of this  
language which often fails us.

Some things make me think  
men have come a long ways, others  
that we haven't come far at all.  
Steady me, O,  
red, metallic can of Coke—  
one crackpot professor  
pissed with my grasp of current events,  
my therapist bashing John Wayne.

I drive to Tower  
for Miles Davis, to Schuler's  
for Fante, I would like to meet Bonnie  
at Emil's for a drink, I would like  
to meet Gerard at Stober's for shuffleboard  
on a dismal afternoon when  
we, you & I, are unable to take the kids  
to the park I am thinking of you

as if you are here,  
                                    & if Brian & I are suddenly  
gripped by the juke box & beer &  
peanuts & a desire to flip our  
table over & turn the  
Peanut Barrel upside down,  
but don't, then it's a victory of  
character over temperament,  
& we, you & I, are fortunate to come thru  
winter & still like each other  
when others only love.





**Tim Lane** lives, writes and paints in Lansing, Michigan.







## Poetry

“Pure Pop is just that—a little bit of Coke, a little bit of homage to the Pops of the New York School, and a lot of heart. Tim Lane’s gracefully fluent lyrics are celebratory, immediate, full of feeling, and full of life. Without falling into sloppy sentimentality or clunky derivation, Lane conjures his own world while stealing fire from the masters.”

**Lisa Jarnot** / author of Black Dog Songs and Ring of Fire

Pure Pop delivers all of the delicious, unmitigated pleasure implied in its title. Tim Lane’s poems, jubilant and experientially engaged, prove that joy too is serious stuff.