

**Pitch perfect  
& out of bounds**

Submitted to **Sixfold**  
October 2014

## **Tumbler**

My heart's no worse for  
wear than  
a pair of  
sneakers left in  
the dryer too long

A little gooey maybe  
but it'll have to do.

## Beyond recognition

In  
certain tempers under  
certain lights I open my eyes  
& see through  
yours

We balance on  
silky threads of  
birthright  
& luck hoping to be assaulted by  
nothing greater than will  
& hope

But what is woven by  
design can be shorn by  
accident  
& burned beyond  
recognition

W/heat of  
inspection distilled memories vaporize into  
skewed color signatures of  
drugstore processing

Pepto-Bismol wallpaper  
& mossy green kitchen tile

Urine-hued tablecloth  
& a cotton candy sky

Then there comes a day that begins like all others before  
but which falls in on  
itself like plowed sand

The familiar glow that lights our way is washed out by  
other brighter lights

A wishless breath  
& we scatter... *e r r a n t b l o m s e e d...*

## Empty next

All my birthdays are in  
the past

The future measured in  
ellipses...

## **Drifty eyed infant sees everything**

Everything  
& nothing @  
all

Scalp of  
lemon verbena  
& rising bread

No fool you  
w/ those sausage fingers  
& that duck-downy hair  
& dried apricot ears  
& blue iris eyes  
& rosebud lips  
& Michelin thighs

I am a red-eyed galoot of  
a man committed to  
the trial  
& error involved  
w/cleaning out  
the crusties @  
the corners of  
your eyes

I wipe your ass  
& clean your brand new vulva  
w/its unripe mysteries  
& catch your vomit  
& blow your nose

Kitty-cat mews  
& gerbil clucks  
& your face all red  
& scrunched up like that

Your bright light steals my sight

It's the fourth time you're up crying like you lost your mom @  
the lion house  
so we've landed here together again on  
this couch your body the size of

a super burrito bursting w/  
cilantro  
& garlic  
& beans  
& consternation

*Cry cry cry cry cry...*

The only ones awake in  
the world

*Cry cry cry cry...*

Wingless hummingbird sucking the bottle like your life depends on  
it which of  
course it does

*Cry cry cry...*

I put Joe Henderson on  
the turntable to cool you down

*Cry cry...*

–Hush child that’s just yeasty clouds  
& paper rain

*Cry...*

–Nothing to fear ‘cept tears themselves

One small breath then another  
& one more like the one before then peace  
the search complete for  
now.

**Pitch-perfect  
& out of  
bounds**

Odus carves out a dark  
& crooked course along  
the northern sidewalk of  
South 777th Street going west to meet the bay perchance to  
the sea when he senses something strong  
& new night jasmine  
& tar  
& something else that makes him a little bit moony  
& a lot bewildered

Wooly headed nightlogic  
but there you have it

The next second he is second-guessing himself about the smell  
& decides its the sound of  
a ship down @  
the Port sliding into  
her slip  
or a train pulling away from  
the yards  
an 18-wheeler cutting taking the shortcut to  
the Bay Bridge

The sound of  
outgoing fire competing  
w/the music of  
the Đàn bầu player plucking out  
a tune  
as his long dead daddy turns a corner  
whistling his mailrounds  
but Odus he goes on  
& on  
& on  
& on tuning to  
the serenade of  
fog that scrapes out sounds from  
the blood-splattered walls of  
French colonials whose balconies bristle  
w/elephant palms  
& whose bowing balustrades are festooned in

glory vines

*Whyever whenever what-what-whatever do you mean?*

On

& on

& on past

the pool hall where he use to go

w/his cousin Limelight who used to shark fools after  
school @

the bombed-out bordello where his platoon would go on

R

& R

On

& on to

the corner of

Ho Chi Minh Blvd across from

where the Anglican Primitive Baptist Church

is kitty corner to

the Salvadorian taco truck where he

& Penny would take little Cassa for

something quick

& greasy

*What-the-hell-ever*

It's all so much like just another Bataan Death Stroll past

hootches made of

straw

& a GI lean-to where me the men would wait out

the worst of

the heat

Just like

but not really\*

[similes be damned]

By whatever means necessary in

the light of

a fuse burning bright across

the screen left to

right bright

& impossible



*If you don't like this war Son go out  
& make one of  
your own*

That nearly made Odus laugh his fool head off which served to separate mind from  
body  
w/a hand here  
& a leg there  
& his face across  
town  
& an arm over  
yonder  
& his pride useless as stones on  
a steer

But so he goes on  
& on  
& on to  
the beat of  
a tune by  
Bird–*Stella* by  
*Starlight*—each note  
& half-note played pitch-perfect  
& out of  
bounds

This time is forever

It's just so nice to have that tune hanging in  
the air again after  
so many years

So sweet  
& so sad  
& so right on  
this night

But the dead are just as lonely as the rest of  
us

They will whistle  
& they will drum

& they will do anything to get you to break your stride  
& walk @  
their side.