



# Rules for Poetry

Poems 2010/2011

Rick Lupert

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## **Ain't Got No Press**

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Probably the closest things to perfection are the huge absolutely empty holes that astronomers have recently discovered in space. If there's nothing there, how can anything go wrong?

*Richard Brautigan*

***A Thing I Never Thought I'd  
Hear Myself Say Outloud***

Tigger,

I don't want your anus

on my toes.

## ***Who Lives Inside Me***

and how did they get there?  
Surely there is a technology  
at work here.  
Who lives inside me?

I know they're there,  
I've felt a breakfast meeting  
near my spleen,  
a rave, just last week

outside one of my  
ventricles.  
Who lives inside me?  
My god, they couldn't possibly

be very tall.  
I'm barely allowed on roller coasters  
as it is.  
Who lives inside me?

Are they even Jewish?  
And for heavens sake  
how do they get their mail?

## ***Mayonnaise***

Ever since seventh grade  
when I thought you were butter  
I raised a holy hell in the cafeteria  
the injustice of unlabeled spreads  
the principal had no sympathy

## ***At The Japanese American Museum***

At the start of the introductory film  
George Takei tells us to turn off our personal devices  
then shows us a series of black and white images  
that end with an explosion

Addie wonders why they didn't iron the  
kimonos before putting them in the display cases  
I tell her those are the original wrinkles  
and she seems satisfied

There are haiku on the walls  
one of them mentions the ocean

Life magazine December 1941 had an article  
titled "How to tell Japs from the Chinese"  
No similar article titled "How to tell Krauts from  
The Americans" could be found.  
I guess that would be in Death magazine

One could replace the word *issei* "Japanese"  
with Jew and this would be the museum of tolerance  
The story is universal

She stops to fold paper  
It is Free Activity Saturday  
A house is built  
There is always the option  
to draw people in the windows.

## ***Japanese Day***

Today at the Japanese American  
National Museum, we were served

expensive tea and complained  
that the other table had chocolate

dessert instead of the banana walnut  
we were brought.

Today in Japan a wave washed a house away  
ten thousand times.

## ***A Dream I Had***

I am a substitute teacher in a High School Spanish class.  
The desks are stacked on top of each other. I begin to arrange them

and notice I've placed them all on one side of the room with a large,  
awkward space on the other. I spread them out. The students come in.

One of them is a fifty-nine year-old Los Angeles poet who carries all his  
worldly possessions with him in plastic grocery bags. I ask the students

to tell me about their day. "It's not that I care", I think to myself in the dream.  
It's just that I don't speak Spanish and I want to fill the time.

There is a knock on the classroom door. It is an older dark-haired  
Spanish woman. She says "My hair is broken." I think she means her

air conditioning.  
I wake up.

## ***For Robert Wynne***

I have never  
written a poem for you  
before.

This is,  
simply,  
no longer true.

## ***Adventures In Language***

Lately Jude has been referring to  
a glass of water as,

are you ready?

an *ass of wawa*.

I don't think you were ready.

## ***Drinking Coffee, Waiting for My Wife***

It is a Sherman oaks morning and the plans of eggs  
Are belayed by keys in a purse in a trunk of a car

This unexpected siesta at the crossroads of Los Angeles  
Has more coffee in me than usual. They keep refilling and

I am ready to walk up the side of the building and survey  
The Valley. Gravity is not my concern. Normally I'm so straight edge

At least in terms of chemicals I allow inside me  
I've crossed other kinds of lines.

There should be twelve-step programs for people like me  
Hello my name is...and I am nothing in particular worth mentioning

The phone rings. The keys will soon be where they belong.  
A short drive will be followed by an omelette

It is no longer morning. "Can I warm that up for you?"  
"No" I say. They do it anyway. I am obligated to put it in my mouth

It is no longer morning. My eyes will not close until the war is over.

## ***Seven AM Hurrah***

A victory parade was held in my neighborhood this morning. It consisted of a man honking his car horn in a joyous manner. Nearby a chainsaw did its thing against celebratory branches. Congratulations I say! After a while they moved on...time is so vague this early in the morning. Where they went, I don't know. The parade route was not made available to me.

## ***In Brugge***

After watching the movie *In Bruges* I compared my experience to actually *being* in Brugge.

There were less guns, of course. Or was it *more* guns? It's so hard to tell when you're in a foreign country.

I'll never forget the fat man from South Africa who put his viddles in our mouths.

Colin Farrell was nowhere to be found. Or perhaps he's just *that good*. The belfry to climb up.

The revolution of swans.

## ***First Funeral***

I went to my first funeral today  
people say I'm lucky when they hear that  
to have been shielded from the shock of  
our impermanence for so long

I walked in with a woman who said  
My husband's entire family is buried here  
"Apparently Not" I thought  
This is how I deal with the tragedy

Songs are sung  
The Rabbi speaks  
Children tell the stories  
of the life gone by

We caravan from chapel to grave  
It is so Los Angeles to take  
so many cars  
so short a distance

The casket  
a simple pine box  
a Jewish star on it  
is put into the ground

The holy words are said  
shovels are lifted  
The widow, fifty seven years with him  
is inconsolable

The cemetery employee  
announces the conclusion  
collects the prayers in  
prearranged black paper bags

Some go to the meal  
some back to work  
we miss the man  
are grateful for our breath

## ***Iced Tea Glass Prophecy***

Just as the prophecy foretold  
there would be a time shortly  
after I put the iced tea glass  
in the dishwasher that I would  
make new iced tea and reach  
for the glass in the cabinet, but  
it would not be there because it  
was still dirty in the dishwasher  
and I would have to pull it out  
and manually wash it, just as  
the prophecy foretold  
it happened  
it happened

## ***More Summaries of Dreams I've Had***

I  
There is a creek of unexpected  
alligators

II  
Our luggage is missing  
When it arrives, it turns out to be  
several ketchup packets

The airline employee tells us of the time  
she flew to Australia with her mother  
naked

III  
I find myself in the desert  
I realize I'm not supposed to be there  
so I twirl around like Wonder Woman in  
nineteen seventy six

I trip and wake up

## ***Caterpillar Poem***

Addie discovers another caterpillar  
walking up her arm.

We're not sure if they're coming from  
the farmer's market produce

or if they've set up a civilization  
in our house.

Three caterpillars  
this week alone

each one found walking up  
some part of Addie.

I can't blame them really.  
If I were a caterpillar

or any living creature  
That's exactly what I'd be doing

## ***Rules for Poetry***

Never use adjectives  
unless you're trying to describe something  
and you don't want to do it the hard way

Never use the word 'forever'  
It reminds people they're going to die  
and the last thing you need is people distracted  
by their mortality during your poem

Write what you know  
Unless you're a fool, in which case  
look to the internet, and write about something there.

Avoid vowels  
and their angry sister  
the letter Y

Avoid cliché  
On the other hand...

Learn the difference between  
epigraphs  
epigrams and  
epiotomies

Use as few words as possible  
In fact, hand out blank sheets of paper  
and tell them it's your finest work

If you ever use the phrase "darkness in my soul"  
be prepared for me to come to your house  
and kill you

If you're going to write in form, do it right.  
For example, as I understand it, a haiku  
is eight hundred words written while  
sitting on a cheesecake

Line breaks are important  
but use them carefully, once you've broken a line  
its parents will never forgive you  
or maybe I'm thinking of faberge eggs

Finally, go to poetry workshops  
sometimes they serve food and  
you can't write poetry if you're dead  
because you forgot to eat.

# about the author

Rick Lupert has been involved in the Los Angeles poetry community since 1990. He served for two years as a co-director of the Valley Contemporary Poets, a twenty-five year old non-profit organization which produces readings and publications out of the San Fernando Valley. His poetry has appeared in numerous magazines and literary journals, including *The Los Angeles Times*, *Chiron Review*, *Rattle*, *Stirring*, *PoeticDiversity.org*, *Zuzu's Petals*, *Caffeine Magazine*, *Blue Satellite* and others. He edited *A Poet's Haggadah: Passover through the Eyes of Poets* anthology and is the author of 13 books: *Paris: It's The Cheese*, *I Am My Own Orange County*, *Mowing Fargo*, *I'm a Jew. Are You?*, *Stolen Mummies*, *I'd Like to Bake Your Goods*, *A Man With No Teeth Serves Us Breakfast*, *We Put Things In Our Mouths*, *Sinzibuckwud*, (Ain't Got No Press), *Lizard King of the Laundromat*, *Brendan Constantine is My Kind of Town* (Inevitable Press), *Feeding Holy Cats* and *Up Liberty's Skirt* (Cassowary Press). He has hosted the long running Cobalt Café reading series in Canoga Park since 1994 and is regularly featured at venues throughout Southern California.



The author's other e-books are *To Hell With Rick Lupert* (Ain't Got No Press, May, 2006), *The Rick Lupert Fun Club* (Ain't Got No Press, May, 2007), *On My Eventual Death* (Ain't Got No Press, May 2009), and *Today We Bombed The Moon* (Ain't Got No Press, May 2010) All four are available for free download at [PoetrySuperHighway.com](http://PoetrySuperHighway.com)

Rick created and maintains the Poetry Super Highway, a major internet resource for poets. (<http://PoetrySuperHighway.com/>)

Currently Rick works as music teacher at Southern California synagogues and as a freelance graphic and web designer for anyone who would like to help pay his mortgage.

He lives in Van Nuys, California with his wife Addie and son Jude.



## Rick's Other Books:

### **Sinzibuckwud!**

Ain't Got No Press, Jan., 2011

### **We Put Things In Our Mouths**

Ain't Got No Press, Jan., 2010

### **A Man With No Teeth Serves Us Breakfast**

Ain't Got No Press, May, 2007

### **I'd Like to Bake Your Goods**

Ain't Got No Press, Jan., 2006

### **Stolen Mummies**

Ain't Got No Press, Feb., 2003

### **Brendan Constantine is My Kind of Town**

Inevitable Press, Sept., 2001

### **Up Liberty's Skirt**

Cassowary Press, March, 2001

### **Feeding Holy Cats**

Cassowary Press, May, 2000

### **I'm a Jew, Are You?**

Cassowary Press, May, 2000

### **Mowing Fargo**

Sacred Beverage Press, Dec., 1998

### **Lizard King of the Laundromat**

The Inevitable Press, Feb., 1998

### **I Am My Own Orange County**

Ain't Got No Press, May, 1997

### **Paris: It's The Cheese**

Ain't Got No Press, May, 1996

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