

Leah Maines: Leah owns the rights to all poems**After Three Years, Again You**

I kept your comforter
Pungent with you
Until the scent became distorted
Then disappeared with washing

After two years
I bought a duvet to cover my bit of you
In flowers
 To bury you in a bed of roses?
 To stuff you away without totally losing you?

And then
A thousand miles from my home
In an antique shop in the French Quarter
After three years again you

Standing by the cut glass
I heard your voice
You were laughing and holding the hand
Of your new wife
 Perhaps on you honeymoon

I saw your promises glisten
As you paid for a peach-colored candy dish
 She had short hair
 You always said short hair was sexy on a woman

I watched as you kissed
In the doorway
You never knew
Time could not heal me

After a Day of Sailing

faltering we fall
to find ourselves in
this dark room
my legs locked
around your waist
as you ask me
to do so
I do but
we both know
neither of us is ready
for this awkward moment
of first union
as we awkwardly fumble
to please the other
 tongue to tongue
 tell me your secrets
 draw me near
 come with me here and
 let my long blonde hair
 flow like a river
 over your shoulders
 down the small of your back
 round the curve to your belly
 and beyond
then evening will come and
will dissolve our fumbling
into a fine mist of memory
and I will find myself
romanticizing the memory
 the smell of fresh air in your hair
 still there from a day of sailing
 the music of the mast softly whispering
 in our ears as you give yourself to me
then
as I go to rise
your fingers will gently glide
down my arm to ever so
slightly grasp my wrist and
you will say
 you don't need to go

Back to Black

All in black with silver chains and pierced or pinched barbelled or pinned
 Brows ears nipples navels tongues
 Bolts in the forehead or back of the neck
 Reminiscent of Frankenstein's monster with a shaven head
 Trying to make a statement

The silver balled tongues are for oral pleasure

Did I tell you that?

Or at least that's what I've heard but

I don't know for sure because

This is not my generation

Coming of age in the back of a van

Not down by the river but in front of my mother's house

High on mesc

Or was it purple micro dot?

It was groovy man groovy and cool man too

Or at least that's what I thought

While I was smoking a doobie

Or was it a big water bong?

Trying to hide the fear of growing up

Not all in black but black inside

Hiding behind a golden tooth with a heart in the middle

And Farrah Fawcett hair wings flipped on both sides but no halo

And a tattoo of two cherries on my inner thigh

Way up high near the crotch

Girlfriend's got a butterfly in the same spot creeping toward her knees by now

Another's got L-O-V-E across her knuckles

And H-A-T-E on the other hand

Still regretting that Indian ink mistake twenty years later

But if I could go back

Would I ditch that golden tooth? Ditch that cherry tattoo?

Would I ditch the water bong and groovy, man, groovy?

Would I ditch the doobie?

No way because this was my generation

Well maybe the golden tooth wasn't such a good idea

Counting My Losses

I count the months of my
Husband's absence by my periods
Each month a reminder of the
Children we will never have together
The little ones I will not hold
Close to my breast and feed
Sweet milk from my own body
Baby's breath I will never inhale
The toothless smiles of red-headed wonders
With brown globe eyes I will never see
Memories never made only hoped for
As each month I count my losses

Mourning Sickness

This morning
Two gray mourning doves
Sat in the branches
Of the large sugar maple
That rests in our front yard
As I sipped my morning tea
They sang a dirge
And grieved with me as I
Read the papers that
Gave me the details of
Who gets what and when
I need to appear where to
See the end of us

In the branches above me
Two plump birds cooed out
A broken love song to one another
Cooing
 then pausing
Cooing
 then pausing
Cooing
Until one flew away

My Husband's Hands

his hands have traveled
every inch every part
of my body
for twelve years
the inches have likely
grown into miles our
passion ever rolling
the odometer of touch
and now only nine
months after his
departure down a
different road I see
his hands and
I no longer know them
 How can fingers once
 clothed in so much
 promise now shine so
 naked and strange?
it's a mystery
you know
how the mind forces
us to forget such once
intimate things
 like a husband's hands
in order to heal us
in order to help us
travel elsewhere

Searching for Center

after you left my life shifted
left then right
wrong
anyplace but center
this sounds so cliché but true
my arm stretched out to touch
cold sheets in the morning
searching for you in overstuffed pillows
placed in the shape of a body
pressed closely to my back
at night
so I might find straight sleep
if only a few hours
trying to fool myself into
thinking you
not pillows at all
resting near me
 but no sounds of soft breathing
before your breath always coaxing me
to slumber
now absent
so is sleep
and I cannot find center
still

Leah Maines has served as the senior editor for Finishing Line Press since she took over the press in 2002. She has edited over 600 poetry collections, including several award-winning titles. She is former Poet-in-Residence of Northern Kentucky University (funded in part by the Kentucky Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities). Maines is the author of two poetry books. Her first book was nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the Williams Carlos Williams Book Award (Poetry Society of America). *Looking to the East with Western Eyes*, New Women's Voices Series, No. 1 (Finishing Line Press, 1998) reached #10 in the "Cincinnati/Tri-State Best Sellers List" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*), and is now in its fourth printing. Her most recent collection, *Beyond the River*, (KWC Press, 2002, 1st edition) won the Kentucky Writers' Coalition Poetry Chapbook Competition in 2002. Her poems have appeared in numerous national and international publications including *Nebo*, *Owen Wister Review*, *Licking River Review*, *Flyway* and other literary magazines and anthologies. Maines lived in Gifu, Japan where she studied and researched classical Japanese poetry at Gifu University. She also studied at Kings College London, England and The Marino Institute in Dublin, Ireland. Leah lives with her husband and children in Central Kentucky. She is an avid golfer, and collects golf balls (and poetry chapbooks) from around the globe.