



PENTAGÖET

An Extensive Atlantic: Pentagoet Poems

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Finalized in Gorham, Maine

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Purple Sunset

Castine, Maine

Sprawled upon the bed of my room,
thinking of loneliness and ex-girlfriends.
The huge volume of Philip Booth beckons.
Philip Booth of Castine, at times glorious,
and at times entirely too desperate.

Memories of faces, hair styles, skin
arrive funneling anger and disappointment.
The bed is not getting any softer.

To address an issue, step outside the issue.
Step outside of yourself for a moment.

Crack the book, read, then leave the room.
Walk down Main Street, empty street,
to where the strange structure sits
before the empty, silent, tanned beach.
It belongs to the Maine Maritime Museum.
It does not say "No Trespassing" anywhere.
Enter this structure perched along the seawall.

A purple sunset makes the clouds look
as though they're baking in an oven in the sky.
The bluish tint is escalated by these pink clouds.
Below, the deep purple of the ocean and
thoughts of lobsters roaming around alone,
forever lonely until the traps gleam.

Watch the ocean while sitting still,
catching the breeze as undulating like the tide.

It licks cold up your knuckles, fingertips,
up the wrist and toward the chest.
Too cold for June, cold enough for the past.
Watch the clouds roll away west, further.
They are carrying the memories with them.



Witherle Woods

Castine, Maine

Secrets and tourniquets within these scrolls of footpaths.
Unrelenting are the hairy boundaries of space:
small ferns erupting with greens of childhood.
The mud of wetlands leaving trekking shoes tricky.

Despite a 300 year echo of the tide of bloodshed,
birdsong is pleasant, cordial, inspiring,
and mosquitoes are smacked without hesitation,
and occasional coastal views bring forth memories.

As usual, it is deathly quiet in the labyrinth.
And yet I do not feel alone while passing along these trails.



Dennett's

Castine, Maine

This bar, Jack told me earlier, used to be a bowling alley.

"They used to build bowling alleys on piers."

"It's true," the bartender says, "30 years ago
the boss took this building apart and found lanes."

On the ceiling an infinite patchwork of dollar bills.

How does it work? How do you get them up there?

"Give me a dollar and I'll show ya" he says, toothless.

He's just young enough to be your best friend.

Is it difficult to get up there, is it a challenge?

"Give me a dollar and I'll show ya" he says again.

Five minutes later he has wrapped a 50 cent piece,
the dollar folded as though to hide a secret message.

The secret message is what's within, the tack,
which will hold the dollar to the surface.

The jars of pickled chicken eggs and pig hocks grimace
but he manages and is successful, as he always is.

Later, I will forget to tip this swash buckler,
and I will feel the guilt surge within me.

For now the youth of his actions are betterment.



The Bartender

Stonington, Maine

Stonington, small town on one southern tip
of many southern tips of a more northern Maine.

The properties separate like moldy puzzle pieces.
There is a gust in the air simulating my breathing.

In the restaurant, she serves me a beer in a jar.

There are two adults from Boston, a couple,
a man and a woman, both very happy, very present.
They eat local muscles and other things.

I eat a salad composed beats, goat cheese,
candied walnuts, lettuce, spinach, cranberry.

I talk with the couple about television,
about American cities, about Cambodia.
Inevitably they go back to their own chatter.

Outside there is no traffic, no surprise too big.

The bartender is from Port Townsend, Washington.
Her smile reminds me of the Pacific Ocean.
Her hair, like her face, reminds me of nothing.
We talk of life and our travelers' lives.
We talk in chirps, and we enjoy listening.
As I get up to leave, I hope for something more.
She tells me to say hello to the mountains for her.

Birdless in Holbrook

Brooksville, Maine

In the crossover I pass the bench.

"Last stop to nowhere."

Holbrook Bird Sanctuary.

There are no birds here.

They must all be waiting.

Succumbing to the protection of the trees.

The “back beach” explodes boundaries,
offers new glimpses to an extensive Atlantic.

I glimpse an older couple perched,
like birds, amidst the driftwood.



The Men at the Brewery

Blue Hill, Maine

From Indianapolis you drove to Maine,
arriving at the void of possibility.

Beard and eyes a synthesis of discovery and fear.

Words are welcoming behind twin pints.

You have come back to drink and clear your debts.

From Maryland but also from Vermont and New York City,
your Maine transformation has already started showing,
though too you remind me of northern Washington.

Notepad in hand, your journalist's smile emerges,
your flustered life immediately one I once knew.

I ask you of your thoughts on the Upper Peninsula
and the answer you give is both honest and malignant.
You flip glasses and deliver messy plates.

This is a chance for you to raise your children in peace.
This place a chance for you to escape Grand Rapids.

We're not all here to stay put and contemplate.
Some of us will only know this bar, this landscape, one time,
before bouncing backwards through the surrounding forests,
the nearby coastline as jubilant as a jinx,
the nearby coastline as corrosive a battery in a palm.

The Tilted Floor

Castine, Maine

A floral carpet from another age.
The sunlight reveals an inventory.
Furniture to hold clothes,
furniture to reflect images: mirrors
upon mirrors upon these antique walls.
The doors and frames in white paint.
The wallpaper blue and pink and green.
Four lamps in this haunted room.
A hutch. A fan. A smoke detector.
The metal heater looks like a rib cage.
When I drink the blueberry beers,
they go down smooth, like soda.
When I drink mugs of fresh coffee,
they go down smooth, like water.
When I eat, it is close eating.
Nibbles, savory bites, nothing huge.
Whether hunched behind book or laptop,
whether in the morning or at night,
my mind never falters, never falls flat.
This room's tilted floor, however,
keeps me and everything else rolling.

Jack

Castine, Maine

International and internationally thinking.

Nigeria. Vietnam. Cuba. Venezuela.

Jack, his wild beard wildly gray and admissive,
admits to being entranced by every place he's been.

Cambodia. Thailand. Congo. Jamaica.

His room, the room of the bar, the bartender's room,
is a dark place with walls of pictures,
photographs and paintings and drawings collected,
emerging as bulbs of light in a humble sanctuary.

We talk with urgency as though we might never cross again,
his mind reflecting on countless experiences,
my mind an imagination creating potential experiences.

Malaysia. Singapore. England. France.

This moment the world exists according to our values.



Sorrento, Maine

It was not about expecting much.

It was about fulfilling a request

to see the proposed image:

he told me to go to the library.

I never did find the library in that small nook,

in that pulsing geographic outlier.

In Sorrento, its strange cloak quivering,

keeping the obvious out, the mysterious in.

Sorrento, where I found the haunted house

and turned around just to take a picture of it.

Sorrento, where on its outskirts I get lost

hoping I can get there by "Treasure Island Road."

It was not about expecting much.

It was about keeping the obvious out

and keeping the mystery within.

Inscribed on the face of a lion sculpture: "ARIES."



Mount Desert Island

I: Bar Harbor

The cemetery held names
of those dead people I knew not,
yet the names felt familiar.

The cafe held bodies of tourists
and those locals whose behavior
I remembered as once my own.

The park in all its correctness
felt incorrect, felt like a disaster,
and the signs called it a “museum.”

I walked through Bar Harbor maniacal,
looking for something I knew was not there,
looking for a celebration to my return.



II: Somesville

The library was one story in its height.
It was closed despite the listed hours.
On its roof was a huge sign: "LIBRARY"--

The falls of Somesville are careful,
carefully arranged for photographers.
The perfect blend of grass and concrete.

The gardens are invisible to the road.
They sit beyond the quaintness of the museum,
and beyond the large white foot bridge.

I left my vehicle parked in the mud puddle,
walked around until my shoes were soaked.
The woman crossing the road with me was elated.



III: Southwest Harbor

The roads were straight, narrow, and clear.
They were obvious but only in their damaged.
Ruined by potholes, cracks, all of us.

The overlook was surprisingly brief
and filled with droning clicks of tourist cameras.
Below the parking, private beaches moaned.

Parking lots with no spaces invited me in.
The businesses boring from the surface.
I left as soon as I entered.

Before heading back to the edge of the island,
to return to the main land and in search of rest,
I gave strange, dead looks to other drivers.

Coastal Patchwork

Roads slithering through forests,
long bodies undulating over hills.

In every sense of this beyond there is speed.
In every sense of the speed there are secrets.

Vomited at the end of the line
into some strange seaport town,

tiny watercraft hovering near the docks,
while older men and older women scramble.

The ocean is perfectly still, silent, blue.
The ripples of the tide the language of the wind.

End



Greg Bem is a poet who is currently based in Seattle. He grew up in rural Maine, to which he returned for a vacation after living in Cambodia for ten months, and then graduating from the University of Washington with an MLIS.

This electronic book was inspired by Adrienne Rich and Philip Booth, and was composed over two days while staying at the Pentagoet Inn, located in Castine, Maine.