



## Mugged Into Writing a Poem About Your Own Death (After CA Conrad)

CA Conrad is one of the most inventive poets alive. That they're gender-ambiguous adds to the importance of hearing their story in our queer-phobic time. (They once said their pronoun was "Power Sissy." Never mind that's technically not a pronoun.) Conrad's duende and courage in the face of the AIDS epidemic and the torture and murder of their lover Earth are examples for all humans. To write about death is hard and one's own death is even more difficult. My mentor Sam Hamill taught poetry in Alaskan prisons with Gary Snyder. He told participants to write as if tomorrow they were going to die and they understood the gravity Sam was after. So does Conrad. In his chapbook *Mugged Into Poetry*, he writes:

If you haven't been stabbed or shot, if they took your money under threat and left, consider a poem. After I was mugged recently in Philadelphia this exercise came to mind on the subway ride home, the post-mugging subway ride where poetry took its rightful place at the center of my world where even muggers play a part in it, it being bigger than the knife, more concentrated and firmer than his cock which will have many admirers in prison. He's going to die. So am I. So are you. He could have EASILY killed me, he and his three friends BUT I AM ALIVE AND QUITE WELL writing for poetry as I willingly came to this cesspool of humanity to do. All the globe becomes a poem. It is enough to manage this small part, here, a body, in a body, stinking, beautiful, a bit of tormented, angry, tender, delicious flesh. It is enough. Each of us. If we can read this we are all alive and creative. Anyone who tells you that you are not creative is a coward afraid of his own potential, trust me. Ignore all cowards, they were born to be ignored. Find your strength, find your poems. Every morning for two weeks as soon as you waken PREDICT your death. And write it down. For instance, "by choking in 11 years, 4 months, 2 weeks, 6 days, 12:18 pm.: THEN STARTING at the tips of your toes touch your cells of skin and nails, feel bones, your pulse, hair, feel your moving body in the morning ALWAYS moving as long as you live you are moving blood through veins moving thoughts through dreams EVERY morning for two weeks touch every inch of your body's surface and your holes moist and dry. As soon as you finish this reaffirming ritual write a poem from your moving blood in the thoughts of the dream, and combine that LIVING poem with the prediction of your death.

Here is the chapbook's first poem:

## GUESSING MY DEATH

Thursday, July 29th, 2010

by choking in  
11 years  
4 months  
2 weeks  
6 days  
12:18 pm

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when i win the lottery  
i want my legs amputated  
and two beautiful peg legs  
wooden of course

Frank Sherlock says it's  
a very bad idea  
he says I should  
reconsider  
seriously  
reconsider

i want peg legs but  
he says i'll regret it  
he might be right

but what i really  
want is to have my  
real legs (the ones  
I don't want)

cremated because  
what i really want  
is to scatter  
my own  
ashes

i thought about getting  
liposuction and having  
the fat cremated  
but it's not  
the same  
because i can  
eat more  
delicious  
donuts and  
grow it back

it doesn't count

it HAS to be  
something  
missing for  
good you  
know

but to  
spread my  
own ashes is something  
i love thinking about  
and the cheerful  
sound of my  
peg legs on  
Philadelphia  
sidewalks

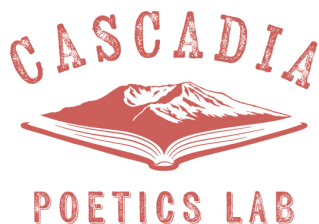
Perhaps it is gallow's humor that Conrad is dipping into here and you need not try to compete with him in the humor department, but can you predict your own death, as he does and be specific about the cause? Maybe your death will be heroic, as in this Conrad poem:

**Tuesday, July 20th, 2010**

by lung cancer in  
12 years  
8 months  
2 weeks  
6 days  
4:17 pm

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**GATHER HIS SPERM!** someone must dress as a nurse (I'LL DO IT!) cheerfully walk into Dick Cheney's hospital room (I'LL DO IT!) jerk him off into a dixie cup (I'LL DO IT!) seed gathering magic spell for the future demon caste (I'LL DO IT!) "This is your happy ending Demon Cheney, hope you enjoy!"



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3 Oct 2021  
TUX woo' kwib  
Casa del Colibrí