

**THE  
LUNACY  
POEMS**

**Don Eulert**

# The Lunacy Poems

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Don Eulert

*"It has always been the fashion to talk about the moon."*

-W.C. Williams, KORA IN HELL

**TABLE OF CONTENTS****THE LUNACY POEMS***PROLOGUE**The Cycle*

CYCLOSIS

WHITE PERTHIAN MOON

REPORT TO HIS MAJESTY FROM THE SANCTUARY SHE

MOON OF THE MONTH OF FALLING CHESTNUTS

THE PURIFICATION, THE TENTH MOON

MOON OF THE WINTER UNION

MOON OF THE MONTH OF LONG NIGHTS

MOON OF THE MONTH OF SORROWS

FOR THE COLD MOON

THE WATER-BEARING MOON

MOON OF THE HONEY LOCUSTS

REGINA'S KINGDOM

*EPILOGUE*

## **PROLOGUE**

### **THIRTEENTH MOON: ECLIPSE**

After I wash in the last light  
refill the tub for tomorrow's sun  
two star-flowers floating

where tonight the full moon will  
reflect! How many times a year  
to wait speak extravaganzas

Now as it comes on a shadow  
takes an underside bite  
then covers the whole moon  
before it's a quarter up the sky

Eh--what are you anyway, moon?  
"seducer of under-age girls"  
In her darkness true stars return  
then the undressed moon  
*How many months be in the year?*  
*There are thirteen, I say:*  
*The mid-summer moon the best of all*  
*or the merry merry month of May.*

## ***The Cycle***

## CYCLOSIS

Throw the head back  
and let it float to the moon/coming  
over Olympus

Shout motherwater  
into the hot Mediterranean  
come  
legs tumbling  
backward in a menstruum sac  
voluptuous water  
voluptuous mountain  
voluptuous moon

We float in a luminous  
vanishing  
towards the daytime sky

who devours  
all children of the night

*VI.12.73*  
*New Corinth*

## WHITE PERTHIAN MOON

an old couple walks up the street  
 stride to stride slowly  
 they speak softly in Greek  
                                 their feelings  
 do they move to the shape of their language?

                                music and  
 the moon whirls down the water  
 a gashed way to the rocks here

what moves inside you there  
 your golden fields unfolding  
                                 flowers

“the moon the moon” the old man said:

the moon rides behind the edge  
 still full on you tonight  
                                 down latitudes

retsina, 10 cents a glass  
 I sleep with you not with you

the frightened wombs of the fig tree  
 they shrivel and sweeten  
 outside this window

*VII.20.71*

*New Moudani*

## REPORT TO HIS MAJESTY FROM THE SANCTUARY SHE

The wind has been blowing for three days.  
It's all I can do to hold the sides in. The  
windows rattle, and the tin on top the chimney  
rattles--ah, Mihai, what am I doing out here  
trying to chop wood by moonlight? It's impossible  
and besides I'll tear these satin pantaloons

think of what your tufted doublet will be like  
should I find an armload to carry lunging  
and stumbling like a villager hugging a wine cask!

It's the full of the moon these nights.  
Days her highness' body opens unconcealed in sun.  
It is her fertile time but the land is dry  
for this time of year. I look down the streambed  
whose water-rounded rocks gleam from where I sit  
imagining water and frogs singing. Ah, Mihai,  
you should have seen me yesterday  
picking up acorns one at a time, at most two,  
out of leaves dried nettles poisonous weeds,  
sweating and raising my own dust to swallow  
for a kilo of the pointed kind hard to clean.

In the firelight she lies a leg has thrown back  
the coverlets, but I keep in the lamp's circle  
to tell you this: the Summa Triangle now makes  
its exit for the year, low in western skies  
Deneb, Vega, and the star on the other corner  
I can never remember, even for this your report.  
In a few days the sorcerers say pieces of light  
a distant disintegration will fall through the sky.  
She has been talking to a bird, canyon wren or  
bush thrush--one of those with a thin curved beak  
who lately has been coming in mornings  
while we're still abed watching from the smokehole  
or perching just above us in the cedar rafters.  
Have you any knowledge of these doings? What  
will you think if I report only things amazing  
to the senses? Will you get any balanced idea  
of the general laws here, and their persuasion?



Yesterday I was on swollen knees for five hours  
filling spaces in the floor against miasma rising!

Mihai, I have ashes on my hands and face and forehead  
from dragging them out of the oven with a wood paddle

early this morning. But that time of day especially  
the light comes holy and mysterious through the trees.  
You would cover your eyes! Perhaps it would be better  
if you didn't know how the fire in the bushes  
gives a purple sign to this chosen kingdom.  
You might release your legions and legions,  
snails with banners, Adeodatus at their head,  
and ask more fealty than even this loyal report.

But listen, Mihai--with this report I finish service  
as anyone's emissary. If not for this intention,  
why else would the oak-tree split itself tonight  
just as the moon rose, throwing down in thunder  
its largest branch? And you can't come unseen,  
growling after my white kernel of silence.  
Three hawks with pointing fingers on their wings  
circle and watch by day. Each night I attend  
the signaling coyotes, and she becomes an elf owl  
sorting entrails of victims. She divides bones  
cackling omens and portents in her lunar tower.

*VIII.9.76*  
*Santa Ysabel*

## MOON OF THE MONTH OF FALLING CHESTNUTS

Polished fruit of the night tree,  
 this athanor moon comes bearing light  
 out of suffering, a caldron of roundness  
 rising into a canopy of her own brightness  
 and signals these things to be done:

*When water has fitted the bowl  
 our hands motion each other  
 to supplication and preparing:  
 "The thing of beauty  
 is the thing of pain."  
 We wash our hands together  
 and on the same cloth dry*

We begin to repeat ourselves.  
 discover things that were lost:

This is the only open gate  
 out of the circle of streets  
 around the torture chamber  
 These are the names of wounds  
 that caused unseen scars  
 This is the name unspoken  
 when "Who is this?" was urgent  
 These are the eyes not seen  
 in the dark This is the mask  
 of passion in wine, is incest  
 with the lost father, is the  
 frightening noise at the long  
 stairs, the unknown steps, the  
 lock barring any return  
 This is the blood of the unkept  
 promise that darkens the lake, and

*Out of the lake struck by the flame  
 tongue of the snake a mountain swells:  
 its forest lifts bright crowns  
 to a west cloud moving down. Then  
 the cone of night vaulted to part them  
 is driven and bolted to darkness  
 where his power coils in a cave  
 spirals through the oil of your spine,  
 comes blue flower of light in our eyes*

This is the gemstone  
of earth glittering in the mind  
unable to think it This is  
the unspeakable gift, this is the iris  
of night burned green on the lens  
of the full moon This is incense  
This is communion bread served  
in the bowl of unplayed music  
This is the name of the unborn child  
This is the fire in the water

We drink from the lost chalice  
offered to us by unknown hands

*IX.IS.78*

*Olomouc, Czechoslovakia*

## THE PURIFICATION, THE TENTH MOON

Delivered again by your daemon  
 you follow an old spotted hawk  
 out of the light out of the moon

moon that reflects fire, and  
 out of thought we arrive surrounded  
 by a circle of fire, desirous

For fall of rocks and dark water,  
 for the place in me struck hollow  
 I sing your fullness, sing ripe  
 fruit and berries, sing spices,  
 your eyes and mouth to flower,  
 sing branches of your fingers

Abundant bowl of your body I drink  
 I sing the moon to lift its wings  
 in your womb, sing the opening  
 flower in myself where nothing was  
 In the region of fire you burn  
 naked. In your eyes trees open  
 leaves against a blue distance.  
 From your heated body rises up  
 cinnamon and all sweet sages

As incense we rise in the light  
 Your arrowed waist arcs us  
 to a field where the sun has slowed  
 and we hold it slower still  
 bridged between us. We can see

a silhouette of wings burnishing  
 a wheel turning out another moon  
 another sun in whose daytime you  
 give me bread and cheese in whose  
 nighttime I offer apples and wine  
 for your laughter and your weeping

*X.14.78*  
*Zurich*

## MOON OF THE WINTER UNION

1.

A white beard I have  
 she has a white dress  
 we ride a white horse  
 we go up

a landscape of all air

white  
 We ride into whiteness

2.

The amphitheater in grey  
 night moon  
 we circle it slowly  
 three times

severe rock tiers  
 crumbling  
 she wears black

3.

We enter her mother's  
 house strange house  
 she makes her bed for us  
 we move  
 in the bed of her mother  
 a beautiful young woman

4.

In the church people  
 weeping this violation  
 she comes alone to the wedding  
 her dress  
 sculptured of stiff flowers  
 and curious winter  
 flowers around her neck

they are protesting  
 "he is in another land"  
 she smiles she  
 can marry alone takes

her left hand in her right  
                          says the words  
she goes out gives  
a flower to each one  
a picture of the wedding  
they gape at her  
dreadful beauty her calm  
a dead woman behaving so

*XI.12.72*

*Monastery Varatec*

## MOON OF THE MONTH OF LONG NIGHTS

Here is the full moon again This burns  
a path across the far dark sea  
to Cap d'Ail at midnight in December

From the south a warm and constant breath  
drives explosions of water into foam  
carves stone drifts over trumpet-flowers

over oranges and banks of green smells  
Spring to a traveler from the north  
where flowers are precious stones buried  
under the sky's froth on mountainsides

On the shock and modulation of waves all  
night his thought floats, a jeweled bird.  
This body falls away a keeled boat down  
the horizon bound to the Nile to Luxor

Two days the moon must circle this bark  
with a painted eye between its horns,  
before we arrive to the Solstice scepter

On the dark spread of water Sagittarius  
and the sea's freed breasts almost savage  
her naked hipbones rocking in the moon

*XII.19.78*  
*Cap d'Ail, France*

## MOON OF THE MONTH OF SORROWS

Even the lake shivers and deepens.

An ovum swelling in the darkness,  
 this moon is hidden face turned  
 from the necessary abortion;  
 Her tears or the lost Northeast child's tears  
 cluster white in the air.  
 Faithful winter ruptures like a blasphemous  
 snicker at queen Belly's rude gesture.

He breathes in these soft sorrows with the night. They live in him  
 Parables carved by the Knife Solitude.

### ***The First Parable***

*Done on each anniversary of the founding of the country Patientia  
 (where in great silence the citizens have no ideas about things,  
 but have only what happens to them, and thus fail at nothing).  
 First he invokes the memory of the first-parents Kiss and Belly  
 represented in the image of the Moon of Falling Chestnuts. Next  
 takes a dry petal from the White Rose. On his tongue it resists,  
 then it turns from bitterness into the softness he remembers. He  
 takes red wine. He hears a woman's voice, after each gesture  
 repeating "Go on . . ." so calm it must be a promise, though  
 the voice betrays neither advice, nor permission, nor urgency.*

### ***The Second Parable***

The flesh of the dream  
 sloughs off in the light.  
 Only the cold bone of it  
 sticks in the throat of day.

Then out of his throat  
 a humming. "Why not speak?"  
 she says, though he believes  
 he shouts all he knows

Of dark and lost moons.  
 Of tiny skeletons traced  
 in all the falling snow.  
 Of a silver-dragon clasp  
 hanging on a burst door



### ***The Third Parable***

*At a certain location in a tropical desert, a man and a woman were having an intellectual discussion, even though a deep chasm lay between them. As near as they could come to each other from a ledge on either side of it, they still had to shout to be heard.*

*The man insisted that if snowflakes were grown large enough, one could find in them the universe's basic structure. In their extension (being themselves stars) actual constellations now unseen could be postulated. Conversely, the key lay in their pre-being, in discovering the invisible force that triggered their symmetry.*

*The woman, waiting until he was almost finished, pointed out that in the case of snowflakes, they were all bone, and counted for nothing until some flesh attached to them. She cautioned about the confusing nature of skeletons, how they form in a fetus at an unknown point. Then she described how once, when she walked by the sea, she had picked up a spray of bones but had thrown it away as remnant of a fish's fin. Only later did she know these flanges had supported fingernails in the race of giants that lived before the waters turned to salt.*

*I.17.79  
Prague*

**FOR THE COLD MOON  
WHEN HORSES GET SKINNY  
I FLEE TO AFRICA**

Here where the moon gives birth  
to a perpetual sun Here where  
the moon at night feeds on wine  
of the scarlet bougainvillea

buffalo cropping noisy swaths  
through our camp their darkness  
and their black crescent horns  
turned silver by the moon

Here where the lions wake us up  
Here where your tropical body  
lies fallow as a deep lake  
under the mosquito nets

though the moon swells full  
and red-faced tangled in the  
wefts of the acacia tree

Here where lions' nocturnal  
eyes and knowledge grow round  
with the moon resonate the night  
with equatorial cries

*11.8.72*

*Ishasa Camp, Uganda*

## THE WATER-BEARING MOON

After a full moon came  
 after I predicted clear sun tomorrow,  
 a torch-dance of lightning over Mesa Grande  
 a flood coming down-mountain

two ranges still lit by the struggling moon  
 dragging the language of water behind her  
 the smell of wet rocks and white sage  
 the sound of water pouring off the cedar roof

Inside fire  
 from the crotch of oak limbs  
 almost unbreakable bearing years  
 that slowly split away my serious love

You remind me of how we love our teacher  
 and forget how we learn and forget  
 The fire is down rats are fucking  
 under the floorboards twittering and shrieking  
 like birds. Next will come a pounding at the door

Owl whoop and coyote scramble, where are you  
 in the rain tonight? My prostate pulses  
 when you cry--under a full moon and an owl  
 seducing in two tones, where are you? And

who rides beside me, slowly the saddle rises  
 and falls. We lope on a trail through the chaparral  
 and come here, seduced by a myth, and  
 in the seventh month of fearing. But

back with the full moon and the rain--  
 I rise from rocking on my knees  
 to the thunder. Its get runs from the flat roof  
 floods over the streaming patio stones  
 to the roots of whatever wants to grow

*III.12.76*

*Santa Ysabel, San Diego County*

## MOON OF THE HONEY LOCUSTS

The acacia in a line  
 rise towards the moon  
     because of the hill

In the foreground water  
 runs from the sundown wind  
     though it grows dark

A willow in its branches  
 holds such fragile green  
     because it is spring  
 and the frogs bark

What if we talk of politics? it is a  
 persistence growing  
     a matter of words  
 a matter of words

The oldest frog I can hear  
     groack groack grok until  
 above the ragged clouds  
 the three-quarters moon

below, the water falls calm,  
 I tremble I fear I desert

and the moon moves out  
 from a shield too small to keep it  
 makes its way and stands alone  
 an empty sky

except the opening moon. O christ  
 all that talk about the moon!  
 The water has grown calm!  
 We must find another place this  
 has gone picture-perfect

the night lies close beside us  
 and beside the open water weeds

"Weeds, weeds, weeds,  
     we shall all eat weeds"

the madman mumbled

spoke it over and over  
said it to the man who rode all night  
sleeping on top of his beehives  
on his way to acacia woods

*IV.18.73*  
*Judetal lasi*

## REGINA'S KINGDOM

where she holds court  
 talks to golden snails  
 and touching their wet antennae  
 calls them shy where she  
 waves a hundred fronds  
 of ripening wild strawberries  
 for a fan where she becomes  
 a black butterfly  
 chooses your arm for a throne

she spreads her mantle  
 beside hawthorne  
 and berry-brambles

every mask of creature  
 gnome or troupe  
 of magik beasts court her  
 sacred bees circle futile  
 to follow her motion

birds cry  
*O dance around her clockwise*  
*Who comes young as She pleases*  
*Sing hi Sing low*  
*A May song never ceases*

*The other side of darkness*  
*Her rising face releases*  
*Sing ho Sing high*

dark space white eye  
 comes the thirsty moon

Queen of prolific eyelash  
 her scepter a whippet tongue,  
 we wet as seals turn feats  
 in the moon's liquid  
 O lady of the wild and the tamed  
 gone rare gazelle gone  
 smiling gone into the moon's  
 open face closed eyes  
 blue-rimmed the night's moon

only mushroom-gatherers were invited

a pilgrim and a panther shape-shift  
at her royal pageant on the mountain

*V.14.74*

*Dobrovat Forest, Romania*

***EPILOGUE***

I found the moon  
hidden in a snail costume  
her mother a fish her father a tree  
Her eyes a flow of sky with a silver bow  
drawn back at me

the arrow a  
harvest of light

A white owl returned

In silence I start to snow  
I put out the votive candle  
with fingers wetted from the wetness  
where I touch her