



# LOVE'S ARROWS

*L-poems & Stories*



PHYLLIS B. PARUN



All Rights Reserved © 2011 *PHYLLIS B. PARUN*

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing. For permissions contact the publisher or author.

Cover art and all illustrations are solely owned by the author and require permissions.

Permission to make copies of any part of this work can be submitted in email to

Cover Design and Illustrations by author

ISBN: 978-1-7323560-8-5

Publisher  
**BERNARD PRESS**

Inaugural Edition





*DEDICATION*

To everyone who has ever loved.



## CONTENTS

### I

#### Poems

Poet's Life

That's a Nice Tomb

I sit in my studio

Each time we made love

Sunday Morning

Childhood Sweetheart

Collateral Damage

Mephisto

Artists and her Muse

Pilgrimage to Paris

You turned me into a poet

Your sweet smile

Sapphoisms

### II

#### Three Stories

The letter

Encore

Bailey's Storms

### III

#### Epilogue Poetry





I

Poems



## A POET'S LIFE

I keep poets hours

writing 'til dawn

sleeping 'til noon

following my muse

everywhere she goes

with the tip of my pen.

Turning the ringer off my phone

I bask in the solitude of my home

curl up in bed

on cold winter nights.

Pulling the covers over my head

and with my night light ballpoint

and poetry journal in hand,

I scribble down sweet phrases of

love and longing

pleasuring myself with beautiful verse

stroking the flesh of erotic words

and stoking the fires of poesy--

These are the true joys of the poet's life.



## *THAT'S A NICE TOMB*

That's a nice tomb!

New Orleans is full of tombs  
whole cities for the dead  
above ground tombs big as houses  
embellished with finely carved  
figurative sculpture.

Here the Dead are dead  
the living are dead -  
walking dead  
Everyone here is dead.

Bodies haunting the streets  
taking up space  
roaming around  
looking for meaning  
looking for love  
looking for sex and drugs  
Finding only the walking dead.

Tombs

City of tombs

City of living dead

walking dead

buried dead

reincarnated dead

and I, foolishly looking for a solution

to my heartbreaking sorrow

among these ruins.

\*

I sit in my studio  
and contemplate the nights of passion  
you and I had .  
memories of those kisses still linger here  
where I write sweet phrases of our pleasure -  
visions of our joyful embraces  
still fill me,  
I have no need for  
the company of others.

I remember how you came to me  
in the heat of summer passion - and now  
I am filled up with longing  
waiting for your return  
writing love verses to you.

\*





Each time we make love  
we were not alone.  
Our naked bodies caressed,  
of course,  
but also  
our naked hearts,  
our naked souls  
and our naked spirits  
caressed each other.

\*



Sunday morning  
I found myself  
hung over  
and in a poetic daze,  
scribbling down phrases,  
composing thoughts  
possessed by my muse --  
For it was last night  
that I got drunk on salt, sushi and tea -  
though I would rather have been drunk  
on your sweet lips.  
But alas!  
They were not available to me!

\*



*FOR A CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART*

I cross time and space once again  
just because -  
when my mind drifts back  
the you I knew is there  
that graceful, talented, witty you  
singing Verdi, Rossini, Donizetti.  
What ecstasy! What beauty!  
inspiration and friendship  
traces still held in my heart.

\*



COLLATERAL DAMAGE:

*Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell*

Growing up in  
the dark ages of the 1950s when  
you were my first love and I was yours  
your life came crashing down around me  
when your parents and mine  
wanted you married to a man  
and modern psychiatry used  
death drugs, shock therapy, lobotomies, and  
homophobic propaganda to  
change us into heterosexuals  
because loving our own sex  
was a disease  
back then.

Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell

In spite of assaults  
we loved right through the darkness  
the marriages  
the birth of children  
the homophobia  
the liberation wars  
fighting for freedom  
our freedom  
to love each other  
through all the years of oppression and  
patronization  
the story of our love told  
in "The Children's Story"  
and "Therese and Isabelle"  
right up to "The Kids are Alright".  
Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell



We can never forget  
the days when we could not  
kiss or hold hands in public  
take our lover home for family holidays  
being in the closet at work and overly cautious  
when looking for apartments to live in -  
together;

We can never forget the anguish of denial  
the looking the other way when anti-gay jokes  
were told in front of us.

Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell

After so many years of alienation  
are we now free to write our own futures  
free to live our own truths  
free from our fears  
even with our wounds not yet healed  
and we still carry around these scars  
as badges honoring the choices  
we made long ago in the darkness  
when we were young and it was our fate  
to drive deep into the patriarchy  
without each other  
Are we free yet  
Have we now finally driven through the darkness  
and out on the other side?  
Goodbye Don't Ask Don't Tell

\*

*MEPHISTO*

Love of you  
Has reduced me to  
nothing.  
Every part of me  
Save the Divine  
Has been taken from me.

Upon your leaving  
I have been stripped of myself,  
my sword, my shield, my armor.  
all vanishing  
before me  
Here I stand now  
naked  
for all the world to see,  
vulnerable to  
every danger

unprotected from  
life's harm  
unnourished by  
your sweet intimacies

Only a small part  
of my soul  
remaining  
And how easily I would  
give up that part of me  
to the love of you  
for your return.

\*

## *THE ARTIST AND HER MUSE*

She looked at me.

I was drawing  
focusing somewhere passed her,  
passed the form that she was -  
focused into another world,  
a mere shadow of this one.

She looked at me

dead at me.

She didn't look passed me,  
she looked directly into my eyes.  
She looked into the form  
that I was,  
breaking my poetic trance  
severing it into pieces -  
My trance shattered  
fell down around me.

She was my model  
I was her  
muse.

\*

*PILGRIMAGE TO PARIS*

*and The Père Lachaise Cemetery*

Paths and paths and paths  
of graves  
housing artists and writers  
Now dead.

Paths and paths  
leading to more paths  
to eternal houses of  
once vibrant artists.  
It's the year 2000  
and all these artists now icy cold  
lay in this damp, stony place.

Paris now a City of Phantoms  
and still the tourists come  
like so many hungry refugees  
from contemporary civilization  
seeking guidance from these graves  
and inspiration from the streets of Paris  
where these artists once walked  
And from the stones they once walked upon.

\*



*YOU HAVE TURNED ME INTO A POET*

Because of you

I have many memories of

life's sweetest pleasures

And now since your divorce of me

my sorrow casts its shadow and

my tears fertilize this poet's soil.

I am pregnant with pungent verse

poetry flowing through my veins day and night

When my body and soul call out for you  
words come streaming in  
I am wet with passionate phrases  
Without you I keep the company of love verse  
Hear the tantric passion in the words of poets  
warming my heart made cold by your departure  
putting fire back into the caldron of my life  
While my cat keeps my hours  
sleeping at my feet like a sphinx  
guarding some ancestral spirit  
within this temple and comforting me.

\*

Your sweet smile  
leaves me yearning  
to touch your lips  
with mine

\*



## SAPPHOISMS

1

Before I met you  
I was starving  
And you came to feed me

2

A day without  
your touch is like  
being thirsty  
And not having water

3

When I think of you  
I think of laughter

4

I miss you  
In the quiet corners of my day

5

Sweet memories of us  
Are the reason  
my heart still beats

6

There is no breeze  
no blade of grass  
that has not whispered  
your name

7

You are the joyful dream  
Which has been with me  
My entire life

8

I awoke from dreams  
Of kissing you

9

Everything you said to me  
Was music

10

What I couldn't do  
To get a glimpse of you.

11

The wind  
And the sun  
On my skin  
And you  
in my heart.

\*





II

THREE SHORT STORIES



*THE LETTER*

A letter arrived. When she touched it she felt something strangely familiar. She brought the letter in and placed it on her desk where she could see it. There was a return address she did not recognize, but when she saw the city stamp it took her back to her youth.

Her husband had died five years previously and now at seventy-eight she was alone and even though she had two adult children, a son, Alan, and a daughter, Cassie, she did not feel less alone. The prospect of being alone into old age with children and grandchildren did not comfort her. She still felt lonely.

As she was still grieving five years later, her two children worried about her being isolated and melancholy. She felt the loss of her very best friend and the loss of her way of life. She longed for the soul connection she once had and for that deep listening of an intimate companion.

Mom, Alan and I are worried about you. We think you should start dating.

At my age! What would be the point? Besides how would I even meet someone?

Well, you would have a companion. We were wondering if there was someone in your past that you had a thing for, someone you lost track of?

From my past?

Yes, you know a sweetheart, a former date? Surely there must have been someone?

We really don't want to go back there.

Mom, we just want you to be happy and not feel so alone.

I think I'm doing fine just as I am.

Mom, sure you have wonderful memories and we would like to see you make even more of them.

I have a good life. I have you and Alan and the grandchildren.

Mom, you know that is not enough.

Well, maybe not but –

So tell me: wasn't there anyone, some sweetheart in your past?

Well –

Well? Who?

Maybe.

Maybe, who?

Ok, yes, there was.

Who?

It's not what you would think?

Mom, I am not thinking anything. So just tell me.

Well, it was a girl –

A girl? This sweetheart was a girl!

Yes.

There was a long silence. She did not know what her daughter would think of this. And she was not really "coming out" but she knew that between her early college days and today many social changes had taken place. There was a new liberalism so she chanced it hoping that her daughter, whom whom she never even talked with about this, would understand.

You mean you had a thing for a girl?

We were young and it was just a flirtation and didn't go anywhere. It was long before the gay and feminist liberation movements, you see.

How did you meet?

In college. We met in college. We were friends for several years then I met your father and we married and had you two.

But, Mom, you did feel something for her?

Yes. Yes, I did.

Mom, that is so cool.

You think so! I found it very frustrating.

No, it's cool. Really it is. So you were best friends?

More. I think it's called a "passionate friendship" isn't it?

So it was only a flirtation and never sexual?

Good heavens, no! The times were too repressive. Back then it was considered to be a disease. Our parents could have put us in a mental hospital. Besides we were supposed to get married and have kids.

Mom - how awful! Was it really like that?

Yes, it was. So we were just very close friends.

Do you think she felt the same toward you?

I am sure she did. And I suppose that if there had been more freedom then like there is now, we would have become lovers. But there wasn't and we didn't.

Aren't you glad things have changed for the better?

Yes, I suppose but that's past now.

Maybe so Mom, but then again maybe not.

Cassie did not forget this conversation and over the next several months she continued to pry information out of her mother about this young woman until she got the girl's name, where she lived and some other pertinent information. After an Internet search, Cassie found a phone number and address and then she called. From the conversation Cassie learned that the other woman had come out, that her lover of forty years had died and now she was alone also, like her Mom was. After telling her her own mother's story, Cassie suggested that the woman write and then give her mother a call.

She never did open the letter that had arrived that day, but just stared at it there on her desk for months. It blended in with all the other memories and antiques that furnished her house.

One day the phone rang

Hello!

Who is this?

You don't know?

No.

It's a voice from your past.

Who is this?

Virginia.

Virginia? Virginia!

Yes.

Virginia? Virginia! Ah -



There was a silence. Cassie thought the phone went dead.

I'm calling because your daughter called me.

She did?

Yes and then I wrote to you. Did you get my letter?

Yes. But I didn't open it.

You didn't?

No, I felt uncomfortable. You know I always felt that *you can't go home again*?

Oh, yes, I remember now. I fear you have read too much Thomas Wolfe.

Both of them just burst out laughing.

I haven't seen you in so many years. And I would like to so how about we get together?

It has been many years. And so much has changed.

But why now?

It is a long story. How about we talk about it over lunch. We'll catch up.

But I don't know. This is rather sudden.

Sudden? What's sudden about getting in touch after forty years? It's just lunch. We'll get together and have a good talk. I'd really like to hear about how your life turned out. You can fill me in.

Well, I suppose that would be ok.

Where shall we meet?

Why don't you come over here on Thursday? My daughter will be here too and you can meet her.

Ok, then. I am so looking forward to seeing you.

She got directions to their house, and on the appointed day she buys a bouquet of long stemmed red roses. Around noon she arrives at the address, parks the car, walks up to the front door and rings the bell.

She waits and then rings again. Hearing noises inside she holds the roses firmly, nervously anticipating the door opening and seeing those beautiful hazel eyes of her sweetheart from long ago. Finally, the latch turns and the door opens.

Standing there before her was a young woman with long flowing dark brown hair, much too young to be her former friend. For a moment neither said anything. They were both stunned into silence by recognition of each other. They had met at the college where she was a professor and this young woman was a student. This was a summer student who had come onto her and who she had reluctantly rebuffed in order not to endanger her tenure status at the college. That was fifteen years ago. But she always remembered her because she found her very attractive but could never act on it because of her position at the college.

As they both stood there looking at each other, memories of their past flirtations flashed before them, when she heard a woman's voice from inside the house say,

"Cassie is that her? Do invite her in."

Just then she lost her firm grip and the red roses slipped from her hand, falling to the porch floor in front of her.

\*





*ENCORE*

So many years  
and yet it seems as if they weren't there at all  
except  
we are meeting now  
not then.

It started as a letter  
one singular letter  
then two, then three,  
with each I remembered more  
I saw scenes  
heard sounds  
smelled aromas  
all the way back  
to the first day we met

Now once again  
I am in Paris  
crisscrossing that city's ancient geometry  
through cosmic time and space

Time stands still in my memory  
there she is the same  
here I am the same  
nothing changed  
in the absence  
in the silence  
in the distance between  
since the day we first fell in love  
those many years ago.

Will she remember  
so many years ago  
when we were young and so beautiful?  
Will she  
I wonder.



The taxi arrives at Opéra Palais Garnier

The driver lets me out.

I step through those grand doors  
into the gilded Baroque opulence of  
the Second Empire  
climbing its magnificent staircase  
to my box *pour l'amour*  
one glance  
at the opera program  
I knew.

The lights dimmed  
the strings played that proud majestic,  
funereal overture  
chorus voices part the curtain  
and I am transported to 1775 the Paris  
of Gluck and Orfeo's first performance  
of love lost once, love lost twice  
and twice regained.

Then a single unforgettable voice soars above the  
rest.

It is hers

as I remember her

my heart is brought to a stand still.

And when she sang

*"Che faro senza Euridice? Dove andro  
senza il mio ben?"*

"What can I do without Euridice? How can I live  
without my love?"

I fell hopelessly under her spell a second time

as if her eyes met mine for the very first time

*"Euridice! Euridice!"* as if singing

a passionate plea for me, her lover, to return

the bel canto cry

*"O Dio! Rispondi! Rispondi."*

the memory of those times

when we were younger

and I followed her from stage to stage

from audience to audience

here I was in Paris falling in love all over again.

The three acts passed like a dream  
and I sat transfixed for an eternity until the  
curtain  
then finally, arising from my seat I left the box  
making my way down the staircase backstage  
flowers and a card preceding me  
to her dressing room door

I knocked once  
twice, three times.

It opened.

There she was  
standing before me  
emerging from my dream stretching back thirty  
years.

Without any hesitation I took her in my arms  
kissing her passionately on the lips

"I've been wanting to do that ever since  
our eyes first met those many years ago."

"All that matters now is we are here  
together now."

She took my arm,  
as we left 19<sup>th</sup> century opulence behind  
for a stroll down the Place de l'Opéra  
passing the Café de la Paix and  
Belle Époque Paris  
hailing a taxi headed for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,  
the feel of the cobble Parisian streets  
beneath the wheels,  
we arrived at the Saint-Germain des Paris  
and the Les Deux Margot where  
the driver lets us out.

Her hand in mine we chose a table  
in full view of the Paris streets  
and sat down to tea  
in the company  
of the ghosts of all those  
avant-garde artists and writers  
who graced these tables decades ago.  
And so it began again  
just as it had so many years ago.

\*









## BAILEY'S STORMS

It was the beginning of the hurricane season when last we met one afternoon over a stormy meal at Bailey's. For me it was wet, very wet weather, but not the kind of wet a woman can truly enjoy on such an afternoon.

I was in green and she in white on this rainy day as we sat in a secluded corner of her choosing getting comfortable for what I thought was going to be an entirely pleasant rendezvous. How wrong I was for that was not what was to transpire on that day.

It has been several months, which seemed like an eternity since we had not conversed at all even by voice mail. It seemed to me that she had gotten busy with work, which overshadowed even the previous passion she had displayed for our friendship.

She had always been difficult. She never was really obvious with her feelings even though she was extraordinarily passionate and romantic. But she was never capable of anything really ordinary and this is why I found her so utterly fascinating and why it was so impossible for me to consider being without her.

Now as we sat there together for the first time in months, she looking into my eyes and I into hers, I felt at peace, the kind of peace one has from being held in her arms and caressed gently by her voice.

She began by telling me that she did not think we should continue telephone tag and I was feeling that even telephone tag was better than nothing, painful though it was not to have more.

She always left me wanting more, longing for her companionship night and day. I craved the sound of her voice and now she was saying that we should let things lay "fallow" for a while. What a blow that struck in my heart. How tender, how sensitive I was at her every mood change, at her every word. This struck like a funeral; suddenly, I felt someone had died.

It's not true that I have never experienced grief because I have. I am no stranger to grief. Grief has been my constant companion since my mother's death when I was a teen. But this, this was such a shock. How easily my tears flowed, how silly I felt, how embarrassed I was to have a show of emotion in a public restaurant.

Still there was this loss, and I grieved for all the loves I'd had had and lost, and for all the joys and depths of feeling this one woman had engendered in me over the last three years. She had been my mother to hold onto and my sister to play with. She had been my colleague, my teacher, my best friend. I had learned so much from her about being intimate with a woman. She had calmed me. She had guided me. She had been my nurturer, my counselor, my teacher, and friend. We had been as close as two women could possibly have been without any sexual expression. Life did not seem as vibrant with the prospect of her missing from it.

I sat frozen, tears streaming down my face as I remembered the many wonderful dinners with her for birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas. One visit in particular returned to me just then. It was on Yom Kippur. When I arrived home on that afternoon I found a neighbor's note telling me that flowers had been left for me. My heart leapt. Chills consumed me. My knees became weak and I had to sit down.

I picked the flowers up from the neighbor. They were beautiful. I took them home and cut them into three bouquets. At seven-thirty with a gentle knock at the door, she arrived dressed in white, with a smile, a hug and a kiss. My heart was thumping. We sat down to a candlelight dinner and gazing into each other's eyes, talked of many things,

After dinner we danced, held hands, and kissed for what I remember as the second time. Of course, it was Yom Kippur and she had come to ask forgiveness. What a romantic way to do it!

So many meetings in restaurants. Once, I remembered, she had invited me for Chinese, leaving this message.

"I don't need to eat anything when I'm with you. I am nourished by the mere presence of being with you."

She had always been very romantic and even though she acknowledged the depth of her feelings for me in so many ways, she didn't feel this warranted changing her whole life. She was married and a mother of three. So she would go no further than flirtatious phone calls and dinners at restaurants.

Once when she had grown tired of making her daily early morning calls, and I, still attached to this intimate practice of hers, told her that I missed her daily calls. She responded that she liked "to call early in the morning when I imagine you to be asleep and whisper into your ear." Her words rushed me so, that I almost fainted like a tightly clad Victorian lady being courted.

I had talked with her many times about her flirting, her affectionate poetry, and her need for romance with a woman, but she never gave it a second thought. Yet I could not go on thinking this was a completely straight woman. She had invited, nourished and cultivated our passionate friendship. I had simply returned it.

But even though I had tried pushing and probing nothing seemed to move her at all toward recognition. Even though she had once told me that when she was a child, she had seen a picture of two women kissing and thinking that the picture was beautiful showed it to her mother. After that the book disappeared and was never mentioned again.

Now, three years after our first meeting. Her suggestions that we end our encounters tormented me.

“I want you to understand that my position has not changed,” she told me, “I still can’t be with you the way you want me to.”



This was the woman, after all, who had run panting to get my phone calls, who had given our first kiss in a park, who's romantic early morning and late night calls I had built my day around, to whom I had written so many letters.

What a shocking ending to such a romantic affair this was indeed.

I left the restaurant that day with a heavy heart and tears in my eyes, knowing that as so many times before the weather would change and the sun would shine again.

*(Before the levies broke and flooded of New Orleans in 2005, Bailey's was a popular local restaurant in the famous New Orleans Fairmont Hotel.)*







*III*  
*Epilogue Poetry*



## The Singer

She was born with that voice  
Absolute pitch, musical skill extraordinaire,  
Never a faulty delivery did pass her lips  
Too many words made her sick  
Music was her forte:  
When she sang scales  
Only a nightingale could compete  
With the beauty of her sound.  
She was My Fair Lady,  
Lilly Pons and Maria Callas  
And when she left  
She took the music with her.





I could never love you  
the way you wanted to be loved  
and you knew it  
you could not love me  
the way I wanted to be loved  
but I didn't know it  
it took all this time to  
realize it



I should have said

Please stay

Won't you come back

Just for a moment at least



Sometimes we only need one word

I love you

Sometimes three



I want you beside me  
familiar and  
real





thoughts of you linger still

why?

maybe its the memory of you

or the thought of you

or the decade we were in

that I long for

but then maybe

its you



break my heart once  
break it again  
then again  
still breaking it  
even now  
when it is all said and done  
you still grow on me

what an artist your are  
creating this long lasting  
appreciation



## Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the many named and unnamed persons who shared their lives which became fodder for these stories.

And a special thanks to the Dancing-Shark Studio of Karen E. Doby for indispensable technical support and cover formatting. And to my readers Bobbie Geary and Gloria Daniel always generous with their insightful comments.



## *PHYLLIS PARUN*

New Orleans born, artist-philosopher poet, was raised and educated by Louisiana teacher parents from whom she learned the art of living well through art, dance, music and sports, pursued the study of philosophy at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, the University of Pennsylvania and LSU Baton Rouge. While teaching at Dillard University, Ms. Parun received a grant to attend Harvard in the social sciences. Ms. Parun spent a large part of her adult life in the visual arts as arts-activist, initiating the city's first 1% for Arts Ordinance, operating a Fine and Decorative Arts Studio, restoring antiques and reviving the lost gilded arts. As an arts, health and political activist, Ms. Parun has been a catalyst, shaping the unwritten culture of the New Orleans landscape.

Ms. Parun's published genres include interviews, articles, essays, poems, e-zines, art, and photography in a wide variety of local and national publications: *The Beachcomber* (LSUNO), *Alternatives*, *Contemporary Arts Southeast*, *Macrobiotics Today*, *NonCredo*, *The Rogue*, *Pulse* (AOBTA), *American Assn. of Oriental Medicine*, *MacroNetjournal*, *Healthways*, *Bywater Current*, *Gulf Coast Arts Review*, *ArtLit*, *Iris*, *Qi: Journal of Traditional Eastern Health and Fitness*, *The New Laurel Review* (2001, 2015), *The Maple Leaf Rag III* (2006), *Mending for Memory* (2017) and creator of *The New Orleans Living Treasurers Award* and *The New Orleans Avant-Garde* e-zine.

Ms. Parun's writing is filled with a wealth of fulfilling life experiences. Ms. Parun is undoubtedly one of New Orleans' native living treasures.



END NOTES

*Thank you for reading.*

And if you enjoyed this please leave a review at  
Amazon USA

[https://www.amazon.com/-  
/e/B006HX9348](https://www.amazon.com/-/e/B006HX9348)

*If you like this one you might also enjoy*

*“New Orleans Born” and “New Orleans  
Between Poetry and the Blues”*

And visit artist-author webpage

[www.phyllisparun.com](http://www.phyllisparun.com)



For future notifications on new releases,  
join author email list:  
[pbpstudio@yahoo.com](mailto:pbpstudio@yahoo.com)



*FiN*



## Notes





## Notes