



Double Review Of Amy King's *Antidotes For An Alibi* and *I'm The Man Who Loves You*

Matthew Rotando

"We oblique points of tenderness."¹

Here is a sense of poets themselves → or those who speak to make sense of the world → or those who must use words to world the intersection with these million senses → these are the voyages → the dodgy intersections between what the heart will have and the consequences →

poems, the nodes that detect

We the moves between material bodies → a move that understands: "The world is all that is the case."² → In an Amy King poem, we also move at angles, fire the formal sense and mode of things, arrive at slanted meaning, and (w)hole truths, go to poetry to tell or be told, have a private interaction facilitated by our own sensors (a King poem's lines are febrile antennae) (eyes, hands, tongue, et cetera) that would perpetually sting if we didn't throw ourselves away or into people and their instruments → to use poems for having a good (read: new) life, King uses words to say:

¹ From "Cloud to Shroud" in *Antidotes for an Alibi* (11).

² Proposition One from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

“Love, we are never without defense –
once removed, I can see down into you.”³

In *Antidotes to An Alibi*, the lover moves shadowy through the pages. Sometimes the poem is the lover, sometimes the lover is the sound the lover makes through the poem →but the lover never loves to leave, and always sees with

“eyes/ like cake, only softer and heated.”⁴

Days and dates are things, like time is a thing, in “Love in the Afternoon,”⁵ when “the windows of Thanksgiving/ teach us how to see.” First the word is on the page, then the thing it means, and maybe not the second, if you are lost and like it, you see.

Like a noun on hinging feet, “There goes my dramatic exit,” says the speaker, noticing mobility in the metropole, and even nature, too, “nam[ing] every bee/ on her yellow jacket tree...”

So we have to ask, is it the poet the speaker means when we see, “Over there, an elbow girl spends her time with lotions and days/ asleep inside an iridescent character lining, considering revisions”?⁶ See how days are things? See, or ask. And where do we find them? In slow transformations hanging in the calliope of words, we suspect. And “we” is always the most intimate place in *Antidotes for an Alibi*. So much so that it can hardly ever be more than one. But it is ever more, somehow. Do you sense the close intimacy with the work of thinking the wor(l)d? It’s there, and ever more.

The voices within these poems switch from guffaw-inducing pun to intimate confessional. This undermines the confession and “sinceritizes” the pun:

“The day I hoped to understand was the day

³ From “Cloud to Shroud,” again.

⁴ From “A Domestic Film” in *Antidotes for an Alibi* (2).

⁵ In *Antidotes for an Alibi* (15).

⁶ From “The Late Show Effect,” in *Antidotes for an Alibi* (26).

I backed out on the big bang.
I simply couldn't take the stress."⁷

This poet's "alibi names names."⁸

Cars, skin from the body, and traffic, and the lung handshake that hampers math. Aspic, other suspensions, sweet watery high school hides rivet forward. A voice is a way to write the page → a woman and a cork to float with ← a coffee named "telescopic blue out—" ⁹ and body, as body is always a terrace, a button that means hyperspace, or a look back at the city, with which to grind the little organ. A kind of intimate private light moves through and instructs: "How To Detonate A Bomb," "How To Get A Theory Of Relativity," "How To Get Here."¹⁰ In one, an urgency and the audience conjured together:

"I want to cable
those of you not listening, in your passive remission
provides a frequency facet, a repetition
that blusters all things anew: the history of a body
can teach heightened sense by the avoidance of rot."¹¹

Elsehow, a tiny perfect tractatus on the thing we always use to break ourselves and break through:

A person can invent love just by loving.
Though not exactly, it's the closest arc anyone spins on.
And then the lack of love finally ends
in a dead end of fucking to cover up the hole
where love should play on a regular spontaneous basis.
Some assume the hole is an absence

⁷ From "My Mother Was My Age Then," *Antidotes for an Alibi* (32).

⁸ From "Patient Consent," *Antidotes for an Alibi* (34).

⁹ From "The Art Of War With Myself," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (65).

¹⁰ Titles from *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (28-30).

¹¹ From "How To Get A Theory Of Relativity," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (29).

that longs to be filled. But it's not a metaphor
of another sort or a pause enacting the turning of pages."¹²

And in clustering of word phrases, or "story tales," a sense of affection for the reader
combined with a short, shimmying, ars poetica:

"This is not another war song, my pea. This is a caramelized
treatment of syntax that maps the wetness spatially spread
between the mucus that harbors our bodies."¹³

The poem and the poet clearly make each other aware of the words around war and war
in the way it says things. Every function of meaning a shrapnel event.

In *I'm The Man Who Loves You*, the voices of the poems sound like the voice of the artist
who both loves and feels the constraint of having to use words to explain wrinkly shifts in
identity and bearing:

"I put myself into this box of unerased sentences,
I live in a box that lives in a drawer with arrows pointing
out the professor then female then southern parts of me
on initial examination of a body accompanying biography,
a series of transparent confessions turns most of my lovers off,
so does this type of artificial language, though I adhere
in something of a more masculine vein that can be coaxed open
but is more often dilated then narrowed into a permanent voice
style..."¹⁴

¹² From "How To Here," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (30).

¹³ From "I Want Your War," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (33).

¹⁴ From "I'm The Man Who Loves You," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (34-35).

You'll see, you readers, you'll see a book range, like an open idea cloud bank, from awareness of the miniscule spaces between identity-thoughts (thefts?), to the whole power-arc of "the planet, Manhattan."

Any poem in *I'm The Man Who Loves You* could have some lines pulled out and tattooed on your arm to guarantee old luck and good city fortune:

"Believers come in small packages;
the ones who hold tight to frayed ends laugh smaller.
Be small, o person.
Be mismatched with others."¹⁵

Note the intimate address and the slippery sagacity. You get comfortable as the advice changes.

If sadness tends to exist, within the poems of *I'm The Man Who Loves You*, it looks inward, to examine the sadness-effect (on language, on the body, on you). A grand effect of happy sadness lopes through the poems, calculates veracity of the anti-totalizing hand of Poetry. Phrases as limbs gather the city lot's weeds with a windowed southern past, producing a loneliness in your very proximity, close enough that you don't feel so only anymore:

"I wish those lovelorn the bad stories with furnished rooms,
a chronic reverie to be carried by the shadow of the opal sea."¹⁶

It's word iridescence, not plain or simple.

¹⁵ From "The Lucky Lessons Of Happenstance," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (75).

¹⁶ From "The Mysterious Wisteria Grows Beside A Seated Stone," *I'm The Man Who Loves You* (78).