

« [voodoo day-by-day lineup announced](#)
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oh no

[Jim Carroll](#) died.



[Here](#) is the NY Times obit. [Here](#) is the mostly useless nola.com article (both pop).

Below is a quote from Patti Smith in the NYT piece:

“I met him in 1970, and already he was pretty much universally recognized as the best poet of his generation,” the singer Patti Smith said in a telephone interview on Sunday. “The work was sophisticated and elegant. He had beauty.”

From [catholicboy.com](#):

I am very sad to let you know that Jim Carroll died on September 11, 2009.

He was at his desk working when he passed away.

Plans for memorial services, etc., are still in progress.

As more details become available I will post updates on the Jim Carroll Discussion List and CatholicBoyNews email lists.

I am so sorry to share this news. We will all miss Jim terribly.

Sincerely,

Cassie Carter

My Jim story:

I met Jim Carroll in 2002 when he gave a reading at the Shim Sham – what is now One Eyed Jack's - in the French Quarter. His reading was – and I really hate using this word because it *always* sounds cheesy but it's the only one that fits – profound. It gave me chills, like when you hear Aretha Franklin on a really great stereo system. Afterward, some street kids gathered 'round him while he gave a little talk and answered questions about life, poetry, whatever came up. He gave the air of being an extremely genuine, sensitive and also sad person. He considered all questions seriously, even the too-personal ones that were clearly meant to piss him off, and thought a minute before answering. He thanked them repeatedly for coming out to see his reading... he was disarmingly modest for a rock star poet, and quite the professional.

I waited for him to finish his Q&A session at the bar. I was determined to wait all night if necessary; this was Serious Business™, a once-in-a-lifetime chance to meet my favorite living poet. When he approached the bar an hour or so later, I offered to buy him a beer but he declined. I (embarrassed, more than a little drunk at that point since I'd been slamming beers for two hours to calm my nerves) gave him a poem I'd written for/to him that ended up in my thesis and has since been published, "Letter to Jim." If I can find/retrieve a copy, I will post it.

He shyly took the poem, glanced at his name on the envelope and stuffed it in his leather jacket pocket. I wonder if he ever read it. I remember thinking maybe he'd read it on the plane back up if he got bored. Then he started complaining about the weather in New York (it was winter, and especially cold that year) and talked about how shaken up the city still was, how weird it felt (*weayd*, he pronounced it). This was not long after 9/11. I asked him if he was in the city when it happened. He looked deeply disturbed; I can only compare the look on his face to the look people had right after Katrina, when asked about their experience.

I felt strongly, irrationally compelled to protect him somehow, or to just hug him. Like when you see someone on the street or at a party, and they have this look you recognize – fear, loneliness, or just sort of lost – and you feel an impulse to hug them, shield them, because you recognize your own humanity in them – that sort of feeling. I got it, strongly, while talking with him. In a way, it broke my heart. Because I felt like I couldn't do anything about it. I thought maybe it was because we're both poets, that we share that extra piece that makes us a little different – hypersensitive, quickly fatigued, extremely receptive and easily influenced – maybe that was what I was recognizing in him, but I can't be sure. Who knows. He just looked so fragile and shaken. And yes, a little like David Bowie.

I asked him about Cassie, his agent, and how he was liking New Orleans this visit. He said he liked New Orleans and grinned, but that he missed New York. I can't remember who left the bar first, me or him. I do remember that my boyfriend at the time was petrified that I was going to run away to New York with Jim Carroll, and it was indeed a legitimate fear, at least on my end... I was sort of obsessed with him for five years. heh.

But never mind the man and his own delicate grace; that same beauty is evident throughout his poetry. He's written some excruciatingly gorgeous lines. I recommend [Void of Course](#). It's awesome. It should be required reading for all poets.

What impressed me most about Jim... well, he impressed me in many ways, but one of the most incredible things about him was that he was completely self-taught. He was one of those rare souls who is born knowing how to write great poetry. That's a once in a generation deal. Jim had a rare gift and, as much

acclaim as he's received, he deserves more. I am so glad we were alive at the same time, that I got to meet him, even if I did make an ass of myself and go total Fangirl on him. I am so glad he got off hard drugs and lived to be 60.

He was such a badass, too, a punk rocker in the 70s. He had the air of an old rock star.

He was fucking sexy. He made *poetry* sexy.

What's strange is that I was just thinking about him this morning. I found this old, unlabeled burned CD and was listening to it when a spoken word piece of his called "The Sun" came on. I was happily surprised, and wondered how he was doing while I was blow drying my hair. The last line of the poem goes: [when faced with a choice between two beautiful things], *I have always chosen the lesser majesty*. "Me too, Jim," I thought, and ran a comb through my hair. *I prefer the moon over the sun, too. Or maybe the moon prefers me*. I thought about that line – *I have always chosen the lesser majesty* – and its implications all the way to the office.

Choosing the tattered over the shiny. Choosing the dented old luxury car with horrible gas mileage over the new hybrid Honda, because it has more character. Choosing the guy who's kinda dorky but has a sweet nature and great sense of humor over the guy who could pass as a fashion model but is a totally shallow prick. That sort of thing. *I also choose the lesser majesty*. Pretty much every time.

Then I get to work and see this.

He died on 9/11. At his desk. Writing.

Remembering his reaction in 2002 to that date is a little... disorienting. The synchronicity makes my head spin. Who would have known, as I was sitting at that bar with him in 2002, talking about 9/11 and the tenor of New York, that that would be the day of his own death seven years later?

Rest in peace, man. The world was a better place while you were here.

*There will always be a poem
I will climb on top of it and come
In and out of time,
Cocking my head to the side slightly,
As I finish shaking, melting then
Into its body, its soft skin-*

-Jim Carroll, "Poem"
from Void of Course (1998)

Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [Eight Fragments for Kurt Cobain by Jim Carroll](#)
- [Jim Carroll's Last work – New York Times](#)
- [Jim Carroll Has Died](#)
- [NYT: Jim Carroll, poet and punk rocker, dead at 60](#)

This entry was posted on September 14, 2009 at 12:33 pm and is filed under [Jim Carroll](#), [September 11](#), [Void of Course](#), [catholicboy.com](#), [people who died](#), [poetry](#), [poets](#) . You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

2 Responses to “oh no”

1. [subway philosophy](#) Says:
[September 15, 2009 at 10:17 am](#)

I love that poem.

2. [antiplath](#) Says:
[September 15, 2009 at 10:25 am](#)

yah me too. I love the idea of personifying a poem as a lover. Told you he was sexy 😊 Brilliant use of the word “cocking,” too, I think.

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