

A.D. Thompson's
My Life (as) Poetry

**CHAPPED
LIPS, LIES
AND LIVES**

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TEXAS

*There was love before
Hate, peace before war, why should*

We have to fight any

Dreaming I'm a philosopher, butterfly, I escape.
Already I'm announcing my own imminent return.
Never knowing how I came to be a babe in the woods,
The cry in the wild that nobody
Hears
Out of memory I forge
Manacles of hope
Perhaps I will persist or
Somewhere rest a moment
On dreams dreams
Nobody can ever guess.

I've written many acrostics through the years for my many names and others'. Most are quite bad. This one, which I wrote on a blackboard impromptu one day for a writing class I was teaching in China, may be my favorite. I started writing poetry very young, as you will judge from the next little ditty...

DANCIN'

Come on let's dance, dance, dance all night before the bright moonlight.
I'm falling in love with a young girl. Her face is exactly like a pearl.
Come on let's dance, dance, dance all night. Come on and see this lovely sight.
With eyes like pools and lips like roses, looks just like a gift from Moses.

This was written, obviously, before I knew love—years before. I like to consider it a Sufi text to the Beloved. Later I would know love, as in this next piece, written when I was smitten with e.e. cummings:

aNOTHER bEAUTY

another beauty could
distantly exist forgetting,
god, how I just kan love
me, none other,
pounding quickly!
r still tense u?
very wonderful
xtasy, you?

zzzzzzz

IMPORTANCE OF A COMMA

I stand in possession of the field, master of destiny, fate in my hands.
There are none higher than I, yet none are lower.
I am without enemies. Neither have I friends.

There is nothing, a void,
There is no black emptiness
but the lack thereof.
Am I part of that?
Am I all of that?
Am I, God?
Am I God?

COWBOY CAROL

Howdy y'all, yee- haw!
Christmas time is here!
We don't need warm eggnog,
Just give us Lone Star beer
And make it nice and icy...
It sure is hot down here!

Now that wintry white ol' Tannentide
Round here ain't never seen!
'Stead we gots zesty hot Navidad
of chiles red and green!

Huddlin' brrfore a yulelog fire
Just ain't quite the same
As campin round the piñon fire
Out on the starry plain.
Like keepin' warm ain't half as fun
If'n you can't share it with someone.

Now that wintry white Tannentide
Round here ain't never seen!
'Stead we gots zesty hot Navidad
of chiles red and green!

After my happy New Age early days, there succeeded...the teen years! When, as an angry young man rebelling with many a cause, I found deep literary expression and catharsis through heavy metal music:

DEATH DRONE

His sleep was troubled, but he knew not why.
Dreams of death- hear the reaper cry.
His bony finger, oh, it beckons and calls.
Chosen of Valkeries, now the warrior falls.
He wakes and stares upon a midnight sky.
Stars hold no future for him- it's his time to die!

Hear the death drone. Hear it ringing in the air.
Hear the death drone. Hear the singing everywhere...

Everybody sings their own. Time to join dust and bone.
There's no reason to be brave when you're entering your grave.
And when you've lived your whole life wrong.
There is no question- you know where you belong.
Oh yes you know it; you know it all too well-
You're gonna burn in hell!!!

Hear the death drone. Hear it ringing in the air.
Hear the death drone. Hear the singing everywhere...

Lucifer has called your name.
Now you'll sing it just the same!
Death drone- rotting flesh.
Death drone- carrion stench.
Death drone- lost remains.
Death drone- scavenged brains.
Death drone...
When you die, you will look in Satan's eye!

THE BALLAD OF THE GIFT

Below the land of ice there froths a lake
Beneath its waves gray impish fiends abound
There I met their Queen with eyes of granite
Under her skull-shirt whined a baby sound

She asks me do I think to leave alive?
I say, "I plumb forgot your gift outside!"
The waves rise up then to chastise my lie
I laugh them back and rub her belly hide

She spits on me a bilious flame of wrath
I coo, baby cries, she falls with a groan
Up in the sun spring warms the grand sun's house
The lake imps help to carry mother home.

My life was not saved by poetry, rather by fantasy.

FANTASY AS SONNET

Aryan illegitimately born
Prophesied great by oracle exiled

In ashes hid by birds raised in blue corn
To war-torn kingdom returned to stand trial

For murder most foul from whom he was born
Added rape to the charge of patricide
Maya the princess' hymen he'd torn
His very own sister it was he defiled

Oracle tell us how can it be born?
The oracle I the poet just smiled.
The city crowns them and will all soon be worms
The son is soon born and as soon exiled

Tis thus the heroic couplet met
Applaud not the couple but I the poet

I was obviously obsessed with form poems in my early years. This tendacious tendency soon disappeared completely and left me freer to write freer to write.

CRACKS

A child sees spots and cracks on the pavement an adult strides purposefully by- would that I had still a child's eye, such as I-am-sorry if I touch a touch too much. Living as I do on the razor's edge, too quick to cut, un-balanced on the tight-rope from the cave... not your fault I am burning in the fire of self and so I let words fall like poor hurt little birds I try later to heal to health to never-let-fly-again and I hide I behind others' words of the Other reflected in a tangle of my own mind- mingled un-deciphered; I will be led blindfolded through the labyrinth of my own mind and I shall know it not, as the prophet said. How do I love thee- with words welled up from before time, beyond me and the manifold limitations of fear and desire, fleeing and clinging, if in the blue abstract of cloud dancing where laughing buffalo thunder, more so in the details with the devil and all- where I can kiss your hump and smell the acrid breath of the tide of you, the moment toward and beyond death by this very act of wanting, wishing you were here now, and again in the orange purple abstract of remembrance- where you dance with a gentle bouncy and sultry sway, and so sass away all night, curling into me where you fit tight, so right I can feel your breathing deep and forget if this is not the rhythm of the world, but only the rhythm of my words now that if they ever hope to take flight beyond time, can do so only will so in your love so...

School also saved me from the harsher fate of some siblings torn asunder. I was most lucky to live with my wonderful working class mother who valued education and travel. I

wrote many a poem to her in many languages through the years, but she has them all and keeps a watchful eye. Though I shined, high school of course was difficult:

POPULARITY CONTEST

A man can be president in America or so I am told
If he be red or black or white if only he make so bold.
But he cannot win in thrift clothes even if he be so bent
As upon the post of high school student council president.
He, nay never she, though lacking little, candidate best
Loses dead- but don't fret- it's just a popularity contest!
Oh what relief, the man, he thought- okay, well, it was me.
Glad to hear I'm a loser in life, ugly, not just strategy!

I have left the rhyme and meter as awkward as I was a boy-man then, but the feeling remains and retains some dignity for it. The thrift and clean references allude to teasings I suffered throughout school as a "pink-slipper" (free lunch) with a Brit mum who thought bathing once a week quite adequate. She had seen rationing as a girl during the War.

HAIL TO TACONIC HILLS

I cared not for your so called good manners, nor understood your mean
which mattered not it seemed that you were cruel but called you "clean".
Still it is sad to think, though I moved on and did much good, not great,
Still prouder I of me than of this nation still so in high school-like state.
The principals have abdicated and there are no teachers left, too little pay
In spirit that is; for in dollars it is still they- the pretty old boys- that play
The role of kings and khans and gods and idols and the president
And we cannot even counsel them from the evil their ear is bent.
Not even on the side can we ride the bench of law and framers on our side
But we console ourselves with integrity; they have power, we have pride!
Still it seems a sticky sickly ride behind the madmen at the wheel, they peel
Out and leave burnt rubber behind as the only legacy- our children cannot appeal!
They are the losers, the geeks and nerds unavenged, the loners and the bullied.
They are our children. But we left them in the hands of brutes. We have no honor.

BUDDHA BELLY

Father, mother, thank you! Thank you for:
four limbs that carry me far and hug the trees,
thick chest, big shoulders to carry huge weight,
Leg muscles large enough to swim mountains,
Fine hair easily shaved off my round monkish pate,
tiny eyebrows, a graying goatee, and ear for music,
a nimble hand for ball, drawing, and stroking,
this skin that holds me in and touches the world,

a tongue that loves all tastes and a strong stomach,
a tongue that twirls front and back languages,
a quick smile and booming infectious laugh,
my mind crazy enough to brave myself.
my big nose royal, ancient, bird-like.
eyes that change color like my mood.
a firm jaw set to survival, ears alert,
a back and feet I can mostly forget,
firm seat relaxin' into earth anywhere,
& my Buddha belly people love to rub.

My brother is an artist like our mum and my best friend through life. Alas, as teenagers we fought for a time, hurting each other as only those who love can.

METACARPAL

Fifth metacarpal phalanges- as much as my mental capacities you distinguish me from all animals.

You are healed now but you remind me of a time that you were bro

ken by my rage!

When I was no more than an animal you held a fist; hold now this pen and a sweaty memory for conscience...

As an adult, I returned to Texas for a first (failed) stab at grad school and visited the Austin of my boyhood once again, astonished to find the pool where I had learned to swim so small. Austin certainly had changed from the hippy days when everyone lived in houseboats. I applied to live in Sandia House, a co-op named for watermelon and the landlord handed me a thirteen page manic lease and demanded too much deposit.

WHAT MEANING MADE

What meaning can be made by overheard conversations,
raindrops, the place of a fly on the page,
a blind man trying to make his way through an intersection,
technology, privacy, the reoccurring owl, the absent skunk,
the ring card, watermelon house's closed doors, the Law,
Quetta, the Quest, yellow Hondas, power corruption?
Meaning is made in context- ok- but when
you can stop the world,
shut out the insistent riffs, decide whether to attend to the
anthropological discussions d'à côté and eschew the
political article, then THEN suddenly
you SEE the rain- on table tops blue & black,
and orange chairs, see the way
they splash into puddles- see as we saw as children
(the intimate informants)-

In' revolution!

CITY OF STONE

City of Stone and I'm all alone. Paris, I come searching. An empty sky is not digne to rain down upon such beauty. Paris- a palace on every corner- quelle belle façade! I search in all the grand museums and I remember. How could I forget? Only erosion. Can this poem move you, Paris? There is no structure- only free flowing feeling... I search, Paris. So many statues. I talk to them. I cry to them. Statues in the streets- they have no pedestals. I would kiss their feet, wash them with my tears. I search, Paris, je cherche, Paris. So many beauties attract me, behind the shop windows. One cannot touch la beauté du musée. Je cherche, Paris. I stare into the fountain. There is a face in the water that I cannot see for the tears in my eyes, or are my eyes too of stone? Paris, I search.

Before and during college I had the honneur to study in Paris, City of Lights certainly and also of grayness. Here is one poem I scrawled on a napkin at the student restaurant Mabillon where I eventually met the group that befriended me. To them- grand merci!

THINKING PLACE

I've gone to think where thinkers go
beyond the rain
beyond the snow
not to the mountain
not to the plain
To the inner reaches of my brain.

I've gone to dream where dreamers stray
it isn't near
or far away
or at the end...
or at the start.
At the secret place within my heart.

I've gone to live where dead men dwell
no not in heaven
no not in hell
search not your body
search not your mind
Look in your Self your soul to find...

Somehow these two distinct language poems demanded to be together, after which one written actually in both languages, all the rest in French, then translated by me.

MONDE TRANSITOIRE

Dans ce monde transitoire, néfaste
Understand the mystery of your heart.
Qu'est-ce qui reste que moi?
Do not care for sharing what.
Et qui suis-je sans origine
you cannot comprehend
sans destination, sans chez moi?
Do not bother where you start
Peu importe si je cherche ou si je fuis
or where you end
j'y suis. Partout ou je cherche je me trouve...
or where you start. A circle has no heart.
différent. Peu importe si je change le monde
The world outside can smile or laugh or cry
ou si le monde me change moi.
Don't you stop to wonder why.
Tout change et n'est jamais le même.
Only wonder why you feel
Ainsi l'éternel dillème- qui change et
the same. Understand this mystery
se change juste pour changer,
of your heart, a circle with no end
le constant inconstant
and without start...
je ne puis m'échaper.

L'HOMME ET L'OMBRE

L'homme est son ombre.
Je m'écris, puis une question
se pose tout de suite: cette histoire,
n'est-ce que l'ombre de ma vie
ou est-ce que je ne suis que l'ombre
de mon oeuvre, plus que la somme de
mes actes? Ni l'un, ni l'autre
car il est midi point.
Le soleil est au zenith et il n'y a pas
d'ombres de tout. Est-ce moi qui écrit
mon autobiographie d'ailleurs ou bien
est-ce que mon oeuvre m'écrit moi et
qui lit? Allez! Il est tard- puis, au lit!

Partout où je fuis, j'y suis.
Partout où je cherche, je me trouve.
Partout, partout: Tout par, tu pars...

ME AM MY SHADOW

Man and shadow are one.
Writing my story I query
myself now is this history
of my life o'ercast or
am I only the shadow
of my works, the sum of
my acts? Neither for it's
full noon.
The sun's at its peak and
as shadow nears feet
I ask if my work does not
perhaps write me. Now
it's late, too late to read.

Partout où je flâne, there I am.
Partout où j'ère, I am there.
And parting is part sorrow.

Les amis s'en vont, et viennent.
Ils se cassent, comme mon coeur.
Qu'est-ce qui reste, que moi?
Je reste meme quand je m'en vais.
Le constant eternel,
je ne puis m'echapper.

Friends come and go
and depart of my heart.
What's left, any me?
I remain having gone.
The eternal change,
I cannot escape.

The English word 'core' (as in apple) sounds close to the French 'coeur' heart.

BIENVENUE

Parfois on se demande,
a soi-meme qui seul nous
écoute attentivement,
à travers les ages
si personne parfois peut nous
entendre au fond,
et sans parler de comprendre,
répondre au fond.
C'est ainsi qu'on se promene
sa vie sur papier,
c.v. sans visage,
pour chercher sa place
dans ce monde disperse
et qu'on entre anonyme
dans le café chercher son coin
ou semer son coeur
en mots sur papier,
paroles sans son, sans echo,
plume envolée ou racine arrachée
que personne écoute jamais.
Et pendant un jour
qu'on cherche à glisser inattendu,
on sera interpolé
dans une langue symbole
abordé difinitivement
sans doute au fond...
Peut-on ainsi jamais vraiment
comprendre, ni répondre
au fond soi-meme?

IMPERISSABLE IMPERIAL

Les ailes no sont pas
Brulées par le soleil incessant

HI THERE!

Ever wonder to yourself,
the only one listening
with attention anyway,
through the ages if any-
one could ever have
heard us to the core,
without speaking of under-
standing, answer at core?
So it is that I write
my life on paper, a
faceless resumé,
seeking its place in
this disparate world
and enter anonymously
my coffee house corner
to plant my heart seed
in furrowed lines,
silent words unheard,
soaring ripped from root
no one ever listening.
Then one day slinking,
we hope unseen, we are
called out in a symbol
tongue forever and
ever named at core
of course...
Can anyone, even us, ever
capture us or hope to know
our core selves?

VAIN VICISSITUDE

The wings are not
Burned by the ceaseless sun

Rompues par le vent bienfaisant
Dorées si lourdes qu'elles cassent

Broken by the battering wind
Gilded so heavily that they rend

Les ailes ne sont pas s'attachées
Les ailes ne sont pas arrachées
Les ailes ne sont qu'oubliées
Et c'est cela la plus tragique

Not bound to each other
Nor torn off one by one
They are only forgotten
That is the most tragic

Car les ailes servent encore
Pas à battre l'air nuagé encore
Pas à monter en dessus surtout
Pas même à flotter sur le vent si
Inattendu, inconnu là-haut

That they work still pulsing
Not beating the cloudy air
Not rising above it all at last
Not even to soar on wind so
unexpected, unknown on high

Mais à protéger seulement
Dans un nid à l'abri de rien
A cacher aux enfants affamés
Qui dans le ventre s'étouffent
Affamés par terre comme les
Vers dans leurs lits enplumés

But to protect only
In a ground burrow free
Hidden nestlings starving
Suffocating in breast plumage
Under wings starving grounded
Like earth worms dirty bedded

Ils n'apprendront jamais à voler.

They will never learn to fly.

After my year at the Sorbonne ended, in order to stay on in Paris, I took work as a guardian or security guard for EDF, the French energy corporation, socialized, then privatized. I was asked to retire after it was found my papers were not in order, and although French friends soon arranged work papers for me, I then left for diplomat work (with their kids in Summer camps) in den Haag, Holland and Genève, Switzerland. This silly little poem I wrote on night shift (12 hours) is certainly not worth translating:

CONTROLE DES BADGES

Oh, un beau jour à l'aube
me trouvai-je
la tête pleine de chimères
au poste de garde
à centrale 2 à Noissy-le-Grand
pour contrôler les badges.

Il vint le premier, s'ensuit un autre.
Ils attaquèrent
cette nouvelle journée
comme des machines,
des machines humaines, dirais-je,
Et je souris!

Je me flatte si je me crois poète
malgré moi,
mais ne suis-je qu'un agent
d'exploitation, exploité moi-même
par une vie qui me fatigue,
comme fatigue la vie,
je souris.

A chaque passante
non plus à celle de Beaudelaire
qu'à une autre je souhaite
la bienvenue, le bonjour.
Et alors?
Mais je souris...

Et voici le produit
de mon ennui
je vous prie-
un poème pourri!

TRAHISON

Le visage, façade, portail au monde
audela de l'âme dedans
enfermé un instant
et creusé, sévère, usé par la vie
écroulé par le temps et les accidents
qu'on appelle événements,
ne traduit pas la gentille beauté
que je sens ou veux sentir
en moi en vérité.
Cet aspect dur, qu'est-ce
et qui l'a fait, choisi?
Pourtant, je le porte
comme la maille origine,
garlande d'amour,
et je l'offre à vous tous
à contempler et à diviner:
qu'est-ce que c'est?
Ce portrait d'un homme
qui s'appelle Gaoussou?
Et qui est le vrai: ce devant
par derrière ni Janus ni masque caché
ou ce fonds amable voulu sympathique
d'un puits plein ou vide qui le vrai?
On se nomme pas soi-même

TRAITOR

This face, front, world gate
before the soul within
closes off at times
caved in as an old mine
eroded by time and tragedy
peel out like scars
doesn't let out the timorous
beauty that I feel or want to,
in my true soul house.
What's with this hard mug?
What bad potter made it?
I lug about this armour
as a rhino does its horn
but strung with flowers,
to offer it to anyone to
ponder. Try to guess
the hoary secret of
the portrait of man
in this case, named Dan.
Which is the real one the front
behind the myth or the masque-
rade man or the self well-mean-
ing empty full or fake?
We don't name ourselves

mais moi, j'ai un nom pour moi-même
secret que personne ne connaît
que moi
ni moi

but I have a name only I know
and you get no guesses
only I know
or do I?

The following poem was written snaking all over the page in a way I was unable to reproduce in this text, therefore I leave it longhand as many later poems would become:

QUAND

Quand tu ne sens plus la force de continuer sur la route que tu as suivi, poursuivi, pour
When you no longer have strength to follow your road that you held to, you had to, too

suivre trop longtemps sans savoir pourquoi, sans se demander, sans raison... Quand tu ne
long without knowing why or ever even asking, without reasons... When you only walk

fais que la tour de ta vie trop connue, que tourner, retourner dans un cycle prévu que la
traces of the tour of your guideless life, well known, turning, returning, in a prepared

tour de ta vie trop connue... un jour, leve-toi, te regarde bien dans la glace, et souviens-toi
cycle your auto-life... one day, get up, look yourself in the eye, and remember yourself;

de toi; et crées ton propre nouvel chemin dans l'espace infinie de possibilités vers un
and create your own new road in the infinite space of possibilities towards a future

avenir toujours ouvert...
which is always open...

The middle of this last poem turn round in an ever-repeating circle, the last lines at last breaking out, free, unlike the tomes in a U.S. 'French' café I once saw glued down!

PAS PERMIS

Il ne nous sera pas permis de lire.
Les livres seront collés aux murs, devenus
de simples décorations comme les fruits
plastiques derrière les vitres qu'on
vend aux êtres plastiques qui seront les
seuls qui restent à pouvoir les acheter.
On aura à écouter la musique vapidée de
cuivre qui pend sans cesse une atmosphère
à balayer les croutes! Que c'est bon-aigre,
doux de miel royal. Le feu aussi est vrai.
Ça brûle l'essence, gas qui jette dans
le bois de métal là-bas, qui consommé
jamais, n'ont pas d'odeur. Néanmoins

INTERDICTION

No reading will be allowed.
Books will be glued to the walls
like tinsel after xmas decorations
or plastic fruit in a display case re-
flecting plastic consumers with
hollow plastic credit to burn.
You'll have to listen to muzak
all the way down forever. You'll
sleep on tiny crumbs you'll feel.
Sour and sweet honey fire alive
burning gas chamber metal-eating
dinosaurs in oily woods that never
end odorless. In the museum mean-

au musée même, et dans le parc autour,
ces amants qui ont volé et à l'argent et
à l'éternité une miracle minute de
loisir s'embrasse, et l'herbe n'est
plus pelouse sous leurs dos mais feral
encore et les nuages refuseront
toute image et forme qu'on voudrait
leur donner- même les plus imagines.
Et la plume danse au main du poète
et va plus vite que l'esprit et plus
lent que le coeur.

while and in the park around it those
lovers who stole from silver and
eternity a minute, man, woman, of
leisure to screw sur l'herbe no longer
lawn, yard grass stuck to their feral
sweaty backs and clouds which take
no form no matter how hard you try
or how innocent you imagine them.
The pen in the hand of the poet
dances faster than spirit and goes
out slower than the heart.

For Christmas holidays I visited family in Warrington, UK after a brief misadventure in London. New Years in Scotland impressed me most of all the generosity and good will to fellow creatures I am accustomed to find on travels worldwide: "You must be cheery!"

FAKE FLOWER

How little you are to carry this story
of the stranded at Christmas
you might seem of little worth to some,
aluminum foil stem and crushed tissue
paper petals green and red,
shiny bright and festive,

Indeed you have your price:
sixty-six proper British pennies,
you were worth every one
not much but what a fortune then to me,
my wallet and passport lost myself somewhere
that I gave to the old woman
who approached me at the tube exit,
placing you in my button hole saying
"Please sir, for the orphans at Christmas."

I held you tight and you comforted me
through the cold night.
I clutched you like a charm and all luck changed.
Wallet and passport all were found.
Got the last ticket to my family up north
a Christmas miracle but true
for sixty-six pence
silly fake flower

A feeling- fleeting- the Nature

of Reality. Echo.

Thank you. Mantra. Chant. Paeon. Lord it just goes on and on
accumulationencyclopedicenumerationcataloguinglistsetcadinaus
Portraits to, the nose knows, non? Catharsis- description
narrative epic story, scene- don't make a scene. What is poetry,
You say? You won't find it that way- you'll have to read, write,
exhaust the language, the code then somewhere somehow
as the first waking awareness but still asleep in slumber all known
all encompassing peace where poem and poet are born one and indivisible
and suckle the warm nourishment, fulfillment even- praise be- of the Poem,
self-evident for that's all there ever really was, boy was.

Most of the poems here were written under duress. In college I took one elective in creative writing and it required us to spend half our time on poetry, not fiction as I had wanted. We should never get what we want. Our teacher was a wonderful author who wore a necklace of giant red chiles and wrote Travels of a Nuclear Whore, I believe.

ART HAIKUS

the sleek orange seal
glide easily, carelessly
through purple water

an odd green camel
his legs, head, and hump cut off
in the sand and sky

the lumpy blue frog
sits so still contemplating
the unseen blue fly

two headed tigers
snarl wildly at each other
blood drops everywhere

a huge mingled pile
of red seal bodies blending
together as one

The course was taught in the art building, which had a café in it, in which hung the above spackled haikus. We did not linger in image alone, but were asked also to engage. But first, one indulgence, an automatic writing I did one fine spring day in same said café.

AUTOPILOT

zebra chair empty yoghurt
flower there blue notebook
two gloves a Snapple juice
strawberry to tell the truth
square table but I'm unable
to write again
got my yoghurt spoon
ain't got no pen

GLOBAL PROBLEM POEM

A social political problem poem concerning
poverty, the environment, education, all violence,
the proper raising of children, and male/female and
inter-race/culture/religion relations:

Why do we struggle so?
When peace comes naturally
when trees and children inspire love
and all people love
when we all share the world
and everything in it
when happiness and harmony
are our universal destiny
and all is in us already...

R U 4 RU486?

Pop a pill, it's the right choice!
Une femme enceinte need not walk the gauntlet en route to
la clinique where she swallows two pilules, and her tumor goes.
Women who live in the land of the free can only look to Lady Liberty
through hazed eyes unable to imagine another's future, her own.
Her doctor is dead at the hands of right-to-lifers
The doctor lies dead for unlived non-lives.
Women without two pills must play mother martyr
besieged by the fervent who kill and threaten and say they save,
mobbing, chanting and cruelly menacing, raping, pillaging
their ads lies to deceive the desperate,
their lives lies to deceive themselves, their gods.
They do not do day care in fact the moms they now berate
were unwanted babies forced upon the world before their suicides
Desperate, dying womyn march through the deadly battle lines
into secret clinics where weary doctors work their magic against all odds
Women went to the streets for their rights in France.
In America, women, girls must slink into alleys.

Changing tone, we went to the Nature Preserve behind campus to write one day:

CALL OF NATURE

Who can resist?
Searching for solitude
I feel the pressure,
the need of escape,
to ease this pain,
the pressure-
on my bladder!
Searching for solitude-
a place to piss
for who can resist
when nature calls?

UNBEARABLE

In a spot such as this I sat as a boy
alone and afraid and in need of a friend.
I found no comfort in birds' distant cries
nor in the buzzing of the hidden crickets.
The still of the lake was un-bear-able
for I had no silly old bear like
Christopher Robin's to wish me
Happy Monday & Tuesday &..

DAYBREAK

Sunset dusk does day
Descend to dark down...

The fruit hangs heavy on the broken bough.
A donkey now stumbles beneath the plow.
I hear the cracking of the trees' thaw.
Along a bare black branch I saw
a single shining dew drop slowly slide,
hang agape, agaw.
To alight in its nest will gently glide
the sparrow; its seasons too subside.
As breath and love both moon and sun
in time
must fall
as to dust descend we drowning
living

Cease your incessant singing.
The sun does not shine on me.
I am in sorrow's shadow.
The birds do not sing for me
nor the flowers blossom.
If I could I would wish a
Winter eternal upon the World.
Let all be frozen, dark, and dead
since the Spring cannot
thaw a heart that once loved me
rekindle a fire that warmed me
brightened eyes that once shone for me
renew and rebirth
 a love lost
A love forever locked in an icy, dead
Winter of memory and longing, and despair
Yet Spring bubbles forth anew
frolicking and dancing with delight
and brings me no comfort.
And I cry as birds sing
and tear the flowers
for she love me not
and I die beneath the shining sun
and still Spring sings uncaring-
Spring, sing no more!

My tender heart ran to melodrama and why not? Clumsy style had to follow. All of us would erase many a word, whole scenes, if we could, but I would not erase one dewdrop.

WHY?

Why can't I write these tears I feel
for love of you?
this gentle, wrenching mingling of
pained euphoria, longing...
I cannot conjure your image-smile,
laugh, cry, scream, moan, slope back,
naked neck, mysterious eye hiding,
inside legs lifting, inside
The hands- I never look at them- to feel
so much- God, why can't I remember?
Look at the hands alive
To feel you
 I do not even reach out past my
 coffee cup

So much do I love you, desire loving you
more still
-a thing inside me
 my love for you
But I need around me
 You- so far away, reaching
as I remember
 holding, groping you
Together at least joined
 I inside you
 You around me
That is life!
 Who could I tell
 and must I forever more
 spill myself out on paper
flat and blank
 for want of your Ear
that once bent to my nibbling
 Love spill forth
whit I could never fill
You and if I am so Empty
whence then this for you?
Answer me! Anger me! Kill me
with your kindness without which
I do not know how to Live...

NAPE

I will stir the sauce on the stove by the sunny window,
warm inside on a wintry day.
You will chop the vegetables in a flowery sundress.
I'll be singing quietly to myself.
You'll be sipping your coffee in your calm, gentle way.
I'll turn and stare at you warmly.
You'll glance into my eyes a second, smile radiantly.
Then you'll bend to your vegetables and I'll slip my arms around you,
kiss the nape of your neck.
You'll giggle and scold "sweetie!"
And the whole world will be alright.

I am proud to say I moved on from my heavy metal phase to folk, then grunge hit. Appropriately enough, I worked in the dining hall dish room, also for our college radio station. My irascible and irrepressible German neighbor upstairs sat in his \$100 car outside my window with the neon laundry sign flashing, blaring what we then called music. Blame him for this poem and also insomnia brought on by loss of first love.

wind, broken promise, secret stone, soup of mother's love,
mind milk, a griffon gem, a siren's silent scream... and on
and on ad nauseum... Came out a knot!
Said: she will love you, or love you naught...
He gave it to me, told me- slip a drop in her tea.
Then I heard the cherubs chant:

splish splosh oh my gosh gimme gimme good god ...
splish splosh oh my gosh be careful what you wish wash!

I slipped a drop in her tea one day, then
tracked her down to say say say my peace-
she heard me out and nodded out whispering,
"I love you," slipped away- passed away...
Gone to come no other day! She loved me and left me.
Tricked, I thought, that old charlatan, but-
I'd gotten what I wanted, he said,
for in the great beyond, and only there
this then is how they love and only there
infinite love unrestrained without conditions
forever, just as I'd asked, and only there...
There, there, there... glorious There! DEAD.
But for now I'm alone again, left and lost and
then I heard the cherubs chant:

splish splosh oh my gosh gimme gimme good god ...
splish splosh oh my gosh be careful what you wish wash.

GHAZAL

Radif the caliph smoked a fig leaf in his hookah.
He saw a worm, smelled its germs, and asked Kaca the crow—
Where do the dandelions roam and trees fly?
Where can I catch a chocolate wildebeest?
Where are buildings inside out and do the rocks grow?
Where do buttermilk slippers wait?
I want to get young and sick the heels, so...
Tell me crow--singing pee pee to your lover—
Do you know?

*I won't gush here about the amazing people I met in the tiny village of 100 mud huts I had the honor to serve in that difficult place. I tell of their generosity, simplicity, and joy in my book *Notes from the Interior*. I have never yet done them justice nor ever can...*

SONG TO THE SUN

Sun, where is your due? Sun, here is your due!
Age upon age accumulates. The Sun still rises.
Men like ants clamor on. The Sun still rises.
Civilizations build to fall. The Sun still rises.
Great men live and die. The Sun still rises.
You and I laugh and cry. The Sun still rises.
In hope we toil all day. The Sun still rises.
To plant our little field. The Sun still rises.
Upon countless fields in time. The Sun still rises.
Season upon season succeeds. The Sun still rises.
Ours prayers still climb and fly. To the rain.
Fickle, blessed rain still rules us. The Sun still rises.
Constant, abundant, unthanked. The Sun still rises.
Forgotten, forgiving, unbidden. The Sun still rises.
In our sweat we curse the Sun. The Sun still rises.
Sun, where is your due? Sun, here is your due.
Overflowing, everlasting love unconditional.
To the source of all Life nothing need flow back...
The Sun still rises.

AFRICAN NIGHT

Sweet Africa night! Bright full moon, light breeze.
By full moonlight, all the village children out at the well,
the girls all clapping, jumping and singing, the echo on my house.
Out on a mat at Sanyi's, sleeping a little on the mat beside my best friend,
talking of loves, his hopeful fiancées, playing cards loudly, drinking rounds of tea.
All the people come by- young bandits with their radio and American caps,
elders in their grand bubus with dignified greetings and benedictions, loudly laughing
voluptuous young women in bright print pagnes, onw with an adorable, sweet-
tempered, tiny baby so doux, smiling, gurgling cheerily. Then light raindrops,
soothing the desert. Then the exhilarating wind blows breath-takingly in
with red clouds and rain, meaning more in Mali than we could ever dream.
The smell of wet earth. Never before...

*Cholera kills, but it doesn't have to. One dies of dehydration. I offered this simple
technical solution of course but it was not enough. A baby died. Isn't this the story you
wanted from Africa- black despair? This is true as are full moon laughs at the well.*

ALI

On the death of our griot's firstborn
baby, Ali, of cholera- Allah ka hine na! Amiina!
Ali, son of the prophet Mohammed, African avatar,

archetype, hero and victim, martyr... Tonight,
by the moon, among the starry clouds' movement,
on market day no less,
gentle Samba the griot's only son Ali died.
After many days suffering, the life ran out of him
into the sands of ages. Ali has gone now to the ancestors.
There is the comfort of this village.
Here for generations it has seen another early passing on.
This village has seen many souls.
The living are the least in number or power,
clinging to their daily daba toil. Ali will not till
the earth, but fill the earth. And he has left the living,
but not the village. Many have lived here and many
more will live here yet, God willing, and Ali has his place
among us all. Though so small. Ancestor!
They are hungry for more good company
Ancestors a blessing as are children.
Aalbaraka, Ali, blessed, thanks, I Bissimila...

CRADLE TIME

Newborn Christmas
As white as new fallen
snow the white sands of the Sahara,
enveloping eternity in her changing season
ever same- now burning red hot glare, now whipping
wind blinding sting, now blue-black chill beneath the
stars, now a serene sea of tranquility, still as Time
memorial, stretching out to All, to you, Peace...

It makes no difference to me whether I celebrate Christmas or Tabaski. I celebrate.

TREE DANCE

bathed in rain
branch out little lots leaves
branch out flower fruit and in it
seed born away by wind in it a
new tree tomb womb earth,
earth from roots form roots born
single sapling grown baptized in
rain water womb grown earth enveloping
bark brown flexible growing
strong firm branch out bathed in
rain branch out little lots leaves
branch out flower fruit and in it seed...

There's nothing like a storm in the desert, not even these poems:

I AM THE SUN

in the desert searing my soul sea of sand and solitude
nothing- but the maddening imagined mocking buzzing of flies
no comfort from oppressive heat, this dust filled orange obscuring
wind rolling down in pressured clouds smothering all, heavy my head,
my heart alone against all myself...

The rain comes, the unforgettable smell of earth alive
fertile divine the drops the love myself standing
exultant in sweet nectar suckling succulent under
starry skies pity, acceptance, approval even...

But soon comes the storm, for rain never comes here
without lightning crash, roaring thunder, stinging whip
angry gods, drinking overflow flood myself crying over!
For the rain knows not how to last here, never lasts,
this storm, my love, myself, in the desert- of my self,
can you never sustain, oh pity!

ODE TO MALI

Thus I mark thee Mali in mine own eye
home to bull and shit and baa and bleat and
Ameriki never knew so much sand
but thus I do love thee; here now is why:

Here they never bother me to think or
wash or work or much of anything all
but lay oh lay all day we all small small
in our own filth which we call home for...

Mali is a sty for you and I who
are the mulling herd mass, zen child nature,
noble savage civilize, slate pure,
wind blown buttocks street and house of doodoo.

Lo! Here am I big fish, eagle to men-
Malimogow sheep to my wolf, ou bien?

I was medivacked to the Ivory Coast for a host of maladies. I saw Cyrillic.

ASIGNI

La plage, the beach, crash of waves, still of sea.

La meduse, jelly fish- why me? Why not burn instead
the fat red carcass of the over-privileged, protected
Club Med decedents? What sign is this? the touch
on me the volunteer? As I condemn this expat here
in his Africa hat- how dare he?! Me in my flip flops.
And who knows, perhaps he is a volunteer just like me.
Condemning me? Who is to judge? La meduse.
And in the ivory tower, is there not also misery?
And greater loneliness? Where is my sugar mama?
Little Simon the small boy with his smile and chatter
also came up to touch me. Slept on the sand with the
sand dollars- of infinite value...Ate the langoustes, fruits
of the sea- spicy salsa, dance, passion fruit- fantasy...
Fried fish and plantains, so plain, beans and rice delight!
Samsara- the cycle of life. The moths fly out-
Simon tries to stop them, tarry a while and play,
says he, dancing winged one, out to sea...
Falling finally as far as they can go in the all
encompassing mother of waters deep to die-
washed back in on waves crashing, still of sea,
invigorating and rejuvenating me, after, to
relax light on the beach...

*Peace Corps no longer supports motorcycles for volunteers. They are dangerous, but
they are what allowed us to go off the roads. Sticking to roads is dangerous.*

TRIUMPH

I left as master- of the field of dreams
a field of victory in eager young eyes reflected conqueror
I left them to the stream of fate's unfolding flow
Grow seed of Hope in that field I planted...
I know now, weary go- home fly I on my moto
racing the wind and a formation, divinest nature's sense,
of white birds against a golden cliff, that hour,
over sand and rock and thorn and ravine I rolled...
Overcoming all, exultant, one, and All
to my home and well I'd earned that honor
to my home to tell that triumph to
sing my song to myself to
no one there.

AFRIKIDIKI

In ignorance they laugh.
In ignorance they cry.

In ignorance they live and love.
In ignorance they die.
Poor, poor people,
dirt poor people, dust poor people,
soil poor people, earth poor people...
Who will help them?
Who can help them?
In illusion struggle, desire,
and despair at last!
Who will help them?
Who can help them?
Nobody.
Thank God.
Allahumdidlidli...

If I stayed away from my hut for a week, when I returned my first task would be to sweep away new termite growth for an hour or so, but there were formations I couldn't reach.

YOGA MUDRA

in the mud dome of my mind
acrawl yes with ants should life be born
from a red, swollen sore on my left leg
then or flash in the sky calm before
a dust storm stinging sand its windy force
but bringing no much-needed rain to soak
the hard cracked earth hard cracked
fissured baked pounded painful earth
that gives us birth- a womb like
the mud dome of my mind
yoga mudra oom

WHAT IS AFRICA TO ME?

All a place can ever be, a place of belonging, of ancestors I had never known, of welcoming strangers of shining smiles and eyes of curiosity where the dead do not pass-away. They are glad to see you come back- it is good. Family. Elders. Clapping children's songs. An age group even though I am not initiated. Common bowl. Bissimila. Calm. Wrapped in hills. Hidden fruit tree delights. Sand in toes. Sleep under stars... What is Africa to me- friends, a taken village, and family. Baptism whisper, kola nut blessings, a name that knows no limits, that has been patiently whispered, blessed, greeted and remembered for generations and to which I add my white face and which passes through me to two babies- one an orphan, another a friend's tree nursery, chief's counselor- where none will ever be left forgotten.

INBETWEEN

I am sick at soul, Mali, missing you...
Not a claim-staker like a lover, Mali,
inviting open spaces, vast welcome
Desert unobscure and open, Mali,
like sand time through the hours pass
And rock surprise leaping high, Mali
sunrise to sunset shining rock...
And this hard place, now, stuck,
back and beyond, home- unless...
Speeding by- crowds unknown
Nothing beckons
And I am
 still
 staying
 stuck
 in-between.

Sitting sipping café city
the dream I dragged with me,
through you, Mali.
I am torn, still, thoughts fly,
to your wide open twisting arms,
Mali, I still believe
You live in and around me
-even here..

CITY LIGHTS

Bright big city lights-
towering grid patterned skyscrapers,
neon all night rotisseries, neat rows of
suburban streetlights- Vanity!
What pretenders you dare to frown
drown out the very stars with your noisy glare.
Who, trapped within the hazy hue will ever
know the true brilliance of the real sparkling
luminaries of Infinity and Eternity- the stars?
For all your glitter and glare, bright big city,
I would not trade my quiet desert sands
sleeping beneath those steady stars innumerable.
And the village children clap, sing, and dance
by the well under the full moon...

Because in reality We are moving...
the earth revolving, not the Sun setting,
it is more true to say: I saw the mountain

Each day a little later for work they
Stopped going and went out into
The streets and said hello to one
Another and told stories under the
Remaining stars and someone said
What does it mean? The story?
Whatever you want.

My return journey from Africa across the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and halfway across America stalled like Bugs Bunny's in Albuquerque where my mother was drawn to the artistic light and I drawn to her sadness. I beat the streets, oddly paved, in search of work and met a Navajo woman in human resources who laughed at the goat sinew repairs in my holy shoes and later moved in with me.

THE HIGHWAY

stretched on long, doubly, up to the horizon-drop
brown, white dash lines, and yellow
He waited for the bus, and waited, and waited...
He tried to fill out the job applications
 but couldn't, couldn't write all lies
 answer all those questions again.
They didn't want to know who he was, or where-
Didn't they know what he could do?!
They didn't know what needed to be done.
 No, help, so-
When the bus finally came, he got on
 said hello to the driver
 "How's it going?"
No answer-
 so he killed the driver.

Later, the social worker asked him, "why
 you did it?" / No answer.
again:
"Oh, I know- you don't care!" said social worker
 to silence
"But you do- so why you so pissed off"
 No answer.
"Let me guess," provoked social worker,
 "God made you do it."
(pause)
"There is no god," he told the social worker,

"God is dead.
Read Nietzsche."

They executed him.
No help for it.

“why?”

Add your stone to the Cairn, passer-by.

SPIRIT UNSPEAKABLE

When we met all was worlds away
and fleeting our flirtations with a masquerade world.
You tried to run. I brought wild flowers to your door to die.
I cannot tell you the meaning of this love, dear turtle.
I tried to retain a place to be a man- and one to reflect you in,
visions of you beyond- and me-mingled, but you moved in to share
All, too much, too quick. We wandered midnight streets with junk
carts, beneath stars that had seen both of us dirt proud, wind-blown.
How can I make sense of this for you? If I write you rose petal rhymes
will they fade fast too as blue horses rush in, can we hide among the
grass seeds- small in the skies I want to soar on wings sore from trying,
endless trying- I bare your wait. Hand in hand we move whirling recklessly-
but where, where? Let us not speak of debt what you have given and I profaned,
now that I have seen you resplendent, sneaky looking, snug on Mexican buses,
laughing, teasing in N’awlins. I have seen you stand strong against the storm of me.
I have seen inside you a spirit unspeakably beautiful and strong and i will not be free
again until you see it reflected in my eyes into your heart forever...

ULTERIOR REALITY

He was looking deep into Reality
trying to figure it all out.
He stared deeper and deeper
emerging from the tunnel
into a protean pool of deep green.
Life fluid and there it was
in the bottom- the Worm.
He was searching for meaning
and he ate the marrowless
Worm- the Tequila Worm
and he stared at Reality
through the thick green glass
of the bottom of an empty bottle.

MEDITATION IN BLUE

I’m on a blue streak. Blues up and down my arm
Like quarter notes in an archipelago crescendo

Down the blue, blue Danube. But- in trouble
With the blue line, doin' blue time, bidding
Visions in a midnight blue sky I can see blue
Sky at midnight blotting out the stars, moon, sun...
I just can't wake up. What's a blue boy to do, little?
What horn to blow, Ezekiel? It ain't easy bein' Blew!

Did you ever feel you were living in a different world than someone else, or everyone else? Get help! Like poetry. I did ask the mc of this event if he would mind if I tried out some story telling as I was then compiling my trunk of fables, etc. into my book Diner Dharma. He said, in not so many words "Stick to poetry."

WORLDS-A-PART

Best Price Books poetry on the patio-
vagrant bearded broad-beating beats
(his buddy swaying beside, conceptually,
lighting styrofoam coffee cup on fire)
to counter magic wiccan women amazonian
man-hating, vaguely circling chicana indian
smoke sex sing song, the gay guy about
bashing maleodramatically, carelessly,
a coupla guys droning out letters to mom
from dying soldiers back when? WWI,
dry skeptical theorums annunciated matter
o' factly- the usual cast of suspects, plus the
Outsider watching wistful, wishing, plus MC
screaming wildly sophmorically enraged at the
street kid on bike who interrupted
(never mind the yuppie cigar cell phonies)
says- to all the big women in black at their table,
about the seven pointed star, riding off with the
BEST by far poetry of the night:
"Fuck you and the World you live in!"

A SERPENT, RAINBOW-TONGUED, ME

Beauty to the left. Beauty to the right.
Beauty behind me forever. Oh please
Let there be beauty ahead, four times blessed.
May the Buddhas continue to turn the wheel of
Prayer for us aqui abajo, for God is big and, well,
It is good that you have come. I will wait for you then
Even in the rain- on the Pollen Path... I'll wait
Where blue horses rush in and Angels fear not to tread.
I await you on the Beauty Way, fore-praised...

Hojho Hojho Hojho Hojho

Those of us who cannot readjust upon return from Peace Corps become Peace Corps fellows and earn free degrees in weird places. One lovely such fellow, my book end, had his first child in the Chusca Mountains near Nakaieitoh, Mexican Springs, on the Navajo Nation. Dine believe there is a special connection when a baby first laughs. I don't remember what I did to make that baby laugh, perhaps it was just my ugly mug.

FOR HANNAH SAGE

It is Good that you have come!
How small fragile strong magnificent and miraculous you are!
Breathe, sweet angel- and open your eyes to a new world- you have made more beautiful, worthwhile...Lovers talk of becoming One- but only in babies is it done- but much, much more! First laugh- let me hear it- I am not so hard as to not still be touched by the miracle of Life- we All have it Already! We forget and you remind...
I am sorry I haven't breath for your song,
yet remembrance- no doubt you sense it
somewhere
in your huge
world Awakening-
Open Sesame!

DIG IT

I knew a dude who knew a dude who
Found this huge old diamond, man!
He was a made man after that but
You know what happened to him?
He died soon after is what and well...
Here's how it went down, see his dad
Dad was a diamond digger and went out
Went to the fields every day of his life.
He was looking for the big one but
He only found diamond dust, barely
Enough to keep him going but never
Never the big one on his screen as
He sifted out the dirt, the mud, the
Gravel and stones and he bent, man,
He bent but he never found the big one!
So you can imagine his son was bitter
Bitter he was about that when his dad
Died, died penniless and left his son
Nothing but the dried mud stuck in his
Screen, and the boy promised that he
He would never, ever go looking for

Diamonds, and he never did, until...
One day this old woman who loved
That boy as she had loved his dad,
She said go get you a diamond today,
Son, today's the day! How did she
Know? No telling but he went and got
It- the biggest old diamond, I tell ya!
It was a fortune his father had always
Always dreamed of, and the son had it.
He hid it at first, as if ashamed, no, not
Scared, but- there was something,
He could not understand. Why him?
What got him?
In the end?
He killed himself.

*Every year for ages, perhaps, and for a few more seconds if we're lucky, the great birds
on their way south rest down with the mule deer and jackrabbits in Bosque del Apache.*

BRINK

I look to the crane to save me.
We have hunted them to the brink...
Yet they cling gently on- in the DMZ
Not only on scorched earth of cold wars
In Afghanistan for instance and in the way
Of the three gorges dam, bird of fortune good

On the Bosque del Apache I knew them
The sand hills of whom Aldo sung
From far away, and they had hatched
Whoopers among them but these of
Old they nested not, knew how nor...
Though others had followed an
Ultra light to Florida and made it out!

So in the Land of Enchantment we
Waded not nor hiked but drove in
Nice as you please in a yellow line
Past SUV sucking mule deer, we got
Coffee at the Black Lab café on the way
Happy but I got mad at the maddening crowd
Overdeveloped America, God help us!

Through car windows we watched, no
Different, consuming, like on a TV

And birds were everywhere, not at all
Watching us, strange big metal beasts
But I wonder what they would have
Thought had they such thoughts as me

What to do with my life? Where does it
All lead?... after all even good roads were
Paved under! We got out at last as light
Faded I lay down exhausted and then, then
They took glorious flight, en masse, and it
Was spiritual, lost we all were and they in
The majesty of a moment of grace together
Each small thing beating it's perfect wings
A hum of harmony and a movement sure
As the Sun rises each day and all things
Know their path, even we if we would
Only forget ourselves a moment forever.

Also endangered is all hope for children, abandoned by mother, father, church, and government to the care of tyrants, imagination squelched, curiosity crushed. Help.

I STAND IN SYMPHONY

I sit in sympathy
with my students.
No one would want their job.
I am teacher. The day is long.

My students begin it on that orange monstrosity.
The insults on the bus go round and round.
Arriving they have no office. Their only space is a tiny desk.
But don't dare decorate it.
Everything they must carry in backpacks.
See them hunched under texts, binders,
compass world, standards, memos home,
write ups. They cannot possibly ever carry it all for us.

Every half hour bells ring and they must run the gauntlet, like rats,
Punches, yelling, spills, vomit...BUT
No time for the bathroom.
Wait for lunch—if you can make it.
Don't dare ask a teacher.
Imagine Trump begging for a hall pass.

Your time and tasks are not your own. Need a break? Hurry finish!
Need more time? Homework. Got a great idea? Confused?

You cannot talk to your colleagues. Whisperrrr Teacher yells.
Lecture, lecture, lecture...
You definitely can't talk to them.
World's worst boss.

God knows in which tome I read of this form, but the locale I know well. After two years teaching public school on the Navajo Nation, I rewarded myself with a year to write and spent it in the only coffee house in Santa Fe open past 5pm- Borders. It was a sad year.

CLERISIES

Dr. Albert Schweitzer
On Kant, Pax, and God couldn't be righter
Went to prison camp for matin and morgen
& still fixed broke arms wings & his organ

The honorable Dan Thompson
Of fame and fortune had aucun
Nix, nada, none, but a shwa
Ending with esq.

MLK
Took the hard way
Took on the sheets
Now they're walkin' HIS streets!

George Dubya Bush
To the white house was rushed
Dumb he was without a mandate
With greed, power, history, and hate.

Georgia O'Keefe
Painted a queef
If Stieglitz had known
He'd have left her a bone.

The Brothers Grimm
Wrote fat and slim
Gingerbread-fed birds
Echo "Have you heard?"

Gustave Flaubert
Of talent so rare
And such simple heart
You can smell Emma fart

Emily Dickinson
Now what a fix you're in!
Hope is the thing with feathers
But despair is wearing leather!!

Agatha Christie
Ha ha you missed me!
Now the pear's in a pickle
And the monkeys are fickle.

Don Quixote de la Mancha
and trusty Sancho Panca
caught in flagrante dilitante
With Dulcinea and Rosinante!

Friedrich Nietzsche
Couldn't beat ya
Cross the wire o'er the trench
From fiend to übermensch

Karl Jung
By a Viener bee was stung
Right on the mandala
Made him want to holler!

I owe this to the many kind-hearted souls who have written for the struggling writer books of ideas, exercises and affirmations, this one in particular to the Artist's Way.

MAXIMUS TRANSFORMATIONS

VIRGEN

Lupe wrote me a xmas card. Didn't say much- just like her.
Just- I'm pregnant. They (she meant the family) asked me:
Who by? I said- hey, immaculate conception, a Christmas
Miracle! They don't believe me- Help! I need an angel to
Bring the glad tidings and share the good news. So I sprung
The joint at that one- even if mine was a university, not a jail,
Tightly strung! I didn't think I was an angel- always thought
She was, but Hell! I can play one on TV! Me they call Lobo,
Lobo loco, the lone ranger- and I usually do ride alone- Lupe
Was the exception that proved the rule and the only card I get!

I showed up not in shining sunset though, but in dead of night,
Lost! Got there and greeted the fam but before I could bless
A hair on their heads, they start in- he's the one, the one who
Did this to you, isn't he?! Good thing I got wings- well, wheels
At least! Lupe hops on the back of my bike and we speed off
Into desert stars while her past is still looking for the shotgun!

I know what you're wondering- did I do it? Did I really do that
To her- like it couldn't really be a miracle, and I an angel, 'cause
Miracles don't happen anymore, right? Well, you're right. I did
It to her but you know what, baby- I gotta tell ya- it was a miracle!
Immaculate!

I keep her image graven, gilded in the cathedral of my mind.
In the image's eye are reflected a man that was me, reflected
To eternity and in his eyes are the stars, fixed forever on that
One moment.
Immaculate!

Mountainous joy and sorrow. To describe to a king this country, crumpled paper.

UNSENT LETTER

Fascinating. Timing. Life lives on it.
You write your letter and at that very instant
all is playing out and you are played out,
there scratched out, your pen ends, lines
on your palm- love, life- already on paper,
the words true or false gone; do you feel them yet,
the ink still dry when you see your love walk by, gone?
Send your letter now, fool- to yourself, to remember, to learn-
nothing- it joins many such letters in your box of momentos-

but many more come, coming, timing- I'm writing one even now...

LA CAJA DE MI MAMA

Dama Fortuna no era amiga de mi querida madre quien perdió poco a poco todo, si había algo más que nada; sin casa ni cama, nada más una caja tenía, trenándola de lugar en... Perdió padres y casa, unos hombres y un maridos, hasta su último amigo, hasta que le quedía solamente dos niños- pero de memoria no le faltaba nada nunca aun si no había de comer- había historias Si, de boca abierta, y cosas sentimentales también que se llaman recuerdos para no olvidarse- de viajes, de juventud, de viejos- fotografías, zapatos pequeños pa' bebés, y rosas fanadas- de todas estas cosas habían "en mi caja alguna parte" decía- y pensamos mi hermano y yo que debía haber pues muchas cajas llenas pesadas de estas cositas, de memorias... Si se trataba de algo, honores o tristezas, mi mama tenía autentica prueba siempre en su caja, y cuando murió mi madre no podía dejarnos nada más que su caja como herencia- y era bastante- pero era vacía. La caja contenía solamente una carta cubierta de todo el polvo de las edades que dijo que tenía que dejar a las cosas poco a poco... como se andaba mucho y su vida era llena de alegría y también de tristesa y la caja nunca contenía lo que contaba, lo más importante, que era más grande, más enorme aun que el corazón.

EL PASO

The music in this neon lit
McDs fits perfectly my mood-
somber but no passion, a bad
ballad. Floods blocked the
bridge into USA, poverty
blocked our rpads out.
Adventurer took us in-
was backpacker- now cooks

MA'S MEMORY CHEST

Fate was no lady friend to dear mom who lost it all little by little if any- less-thing: no house, no bed, only a box she lugged from place to... She lost parents, house, some men, one husband, even her last friend, until only two children remained but no memory left her ever even if no bite had she to eat; history she had, wide gaping sentimental things called souvenirs so as not to forget their family trips, her youth, and old photographs, tiny shoes as well for babies, and faded rose, all that she had "somewhere in my box" she told brother and me, we thought the boxes must be bursting heavy of with so many precious keep-sakes... Whether it was honors or sorrows my mother had sure proof in her box, and when she died she could not leave us much, only the box as our inheritance, enough, though empty. The empty box contained only a card covered with the dust of ages that said she'd had to leave the things one by one... as she went around and had a full life- full of joy and also sorrow of sorrow so it never contained what counted most which is bigger than the heart, box, bigger than the box.

launders for 3 kids, lives thru
old photos. Another set of
uniforms stood btwn us and
goal of return- no reason or
explanation. Even nature
should work against us- or for-
the luck of finding rescuer.
Feels I'm forever walking dark
unknown streets laden under rain
dependant on strangers for
food, direction, permission...

I cut all the poems that should be here because I felt I owed client confidentiality to the residents of the immigrant shelter where I worked, Casa Marianella. Instead I include a couple of pieces from the perspective of those who think themselves uncrossed:

QUE

"He's vomiting now!"

Bro/ken Spanish

"Esta vomitando ahora!"

and they seemed to get me:

poison center operator, duty nurse at the hospital, whoever

"No...bottle...please."

calm, controlled, quiet and slow-

Caribbean Spanish speaker.

"It's triptomene, an antidepressant."

Spanish

"He ate them all!"

My three year old...got the cap off...asleep...tummy ache...empty bottle...screaming:

"How many were left?! How many were left?!"

In Mexico on business- I'd picked up some

Spanish

though all the Mexicans who worked for us spoke

English.

This trip, stupidly, family vacation.

"...water..."

"Que?"

"...temperature..."

"Does he have a fever, honey?"

Honey, does he feel hot?"

Calm/not calm...stopped vomiting...nodding off:

God,

do they say don't let them sleep?!

I couldn't catch any more. A bath?

"Que?!"

“....!” operator yelling.
Later, no ambulance only
doctor,
translated the operator for me:
“He’s FINE! No need to worry. No danger at all!”
Years later: same son in
secondary school
foreign languages.
He chose Spanish, got a
D in it.
“Who needs Spanish anyway?” he asked me.
“Everyone today talks English.”

I’ve been to Mexico many times but never on business and only once as a student (of Mayan folklore), but always for pleasure. I lay on beaches, sipped cocktails, danced many a night away and ate like a king. My counterparts from Mexico in America, be they welder or engineer, hauled cement for hourly wages higher than the daily wages they had heretofore known, shared rooms and funds with dozens of others at home and abroad and saved for their return the many presents they would owe and to build their family home:

VISA ACCEPTED

The first American rocket that landed on
The newly ‘discovered’ planet tried to first
Off plant its star-crossed flag right away.
Immediately a security team swept down and
Immobilized the ‘contaminant’. Interrogation
Ensued with the result that the custodial team
Realized these would-be ‘invaders’ did not
Even speak *lingua inter-galactica!* Imagine!

“I tell you what, Zog,” spoke the Captain,
handling one of the creatures gingerly, its
silvery skin smooth and cold between his
pincers, “their habitat is mighty puny!”
“Yes,” Zog affirmed, handling the great
space shuttle roughly, upturning it over,
“seems they’ll let anybody into the inter-
galactic club these days, eh? What right
have they, cluttering up our own pristine
planet with their junk,” he crushed the
shuttle the Argonaut, “and then they sit
here idly, not knowing even how to tele-
path or any of the most basic skills, and
they depend on our services and welfare!”

“What shall we do?” asked Zog.
Said the Captain: “To the zoo!”

I visited a friend who did Peace Corps in St. Lucia in the Caribbean where cruise ships dock taller than their palace. I always try to help out and as they had an AIDS campaign going, I offered up this modest ditty in praise of the mighty condom. Lucians fear the rain

KINGFISH CALYPSO

Rain is coming, drip drip drip
Put on your rubbers, get a good grip

They are fish in the sea that you don't want to eat
So when you go fishing make sure you do like me
They are fish I tell you that you don't want to catch
Bottom dwelling fish that bite and scratch...

When you go fishing wear your rubbers
When you go swimming wear your rubbers
When you go diving wear your rubbers
Oh when you fish men wear your rubbers
Or you might catch IT!

They say man he don't step in the same river twice
But I always come back to that same hole so nice
The road is getting so slippery
Don't get bounced, men, do like me

When you go fishing wear your rubbers
When you go swimming wear your rubbers
When you go diving wear your rubbers
Oh when you fish men wear your rubbers
Or you might catch IT!

Some men they tell me I get fish one time!
I say that's nice man if you like slime

Me when I dive I go down long way
I bring a lunch man there to stay

I take my time until the pump is primed
I go one time two time three time four
With rubbers on I can always fish for more
Stopping driver!

When you go fishing wear your rubbers

When you go swimming wear your rubbers
When you go diving wear your rubbers
Oh when you fish men wear your rubbers
Or you might catch IT!

The next friend I visited was doing Peace Corps in Paraguay, South America. Okay, they were a bit more than friends, but from this one I got a call on the eve of departure saying "I don't want my cake and eat it too." I knew I was in trouble but made it through the high holidays and managed not to throw myself in the Fos d'Iguaçu waterfalls:

RECIPE FOR DISASTER

Ingredients:

1 man
1 woman
A dash of suspicion
A pinch of innuendo
A jot of jealousy
30 second phone call (hang up)
Lots of love

Directions:

1. Beat the love until it is raw.
2. Separate the man and the woman.
3. Sprinkle suspicion on one; add innuendo for spice.
4. Ring phone. Hang up.
5. Mix well. Serve cold.

I cannot do justice to the wonders of South America and the people there I saw and met, as all was colored by my green ego. Go see for yourself. I got tattooed and other robbed

INTO GREEN

We slept as children all winter long-
cuddled, burrowed deep, hid and napped,
lul, lul, lulled to sleep by sweet Orion's song,
or else by spring our strength be sapped!

Then thaw and wonder and stirrings anew-
we rolled and thundered and cloud burst!
Snow to sleet to rain sheet gentle drip dew-
As much praised we the robin as once Jack Frost we cursed.

Spring comes gently first, in sir the merest trace,
but wind whips then and lightning crack!
Earth scents the air, sand stings the face

to heights of frenzy my love and I turn back-

But then on a day as another she turned cold
though my fire burned yet bright, now steamed-
over reason to give me, she made not so bold
And I, what could I, disbelieved as if I'd dreamed.

Now or then? No answer- only round shoulder
mocking and melting me, he who once was her lover
Rage! beg, despair, rack brain- grow bolder-
Imagined I suddenly- perhaps she'd set another

Before me never, after I forever, first and last
that is how I resolved that it must be
Future now and every season eternal, never past,
she with me and I with her and she with me...

One day into the wood I watched her go
and sullen I slunk out animal-like to spy
to see if not if whither whether I don't know
I crawled and growled and snarled not to cry.

She walked brisk- some purpose surely drove
I sniffed each step graceful print and scent
until she came of a sudden unto a shadowy grove
And so went I cowardly behind a thorny bush bent.

I saw her and yes! another creature she embraced
Blind red blood eyes I turned cursed sky to see
blinked, pinched, looked again and faced
the man she held unmistakably was ME!

I reeled, I spun, or was it world around
ran, stumbled, grabbed, fell, to grassy moss I clung
Then saw she was with me rocking, rolling, writhing on the ground,
Then knew it was another creature round me tightly hung.

In a forest alone, except air, electric mist
I was with a demon dancing, devil in green
so laughed he, she, I and softly kissed.
Peace resolved no more could ever come between-

my love and I back home in sweet bed light yellow
sweaty slid, made love eternal- such a silly fellow!

JAMMIN JAVA

BROAD AND SALUDA

From my spot on Turtle Island
Where the Broad and Saluda meet to
Form Congaree River and Swamp, de
spite man-made mallandia Lake Murray
Where only Mexicans use the beach BQ
With native foods like acorns choked by
Kudzu and at farmer's market: peaches,
Pecans, okra, greens, yams, watermelon,
Ya cotton on- in the cypress temperate-
With opossum, wild pigs, pan fish, gator,
An occasional gull up from the strand- and
Cherokee of names with C and G and...
Tikkun Olam Heals the World

I wish I could tell you about Freak Street, the cul-de-sac of mill houses, of or pertaining to whales where we were married on the median and had bonfires, piñatas, badminton, showed movies on the sides of houses, past the train tracks, down by the river, with the born agains and Baha'is and black, gay, Jewish Latinos and Buddhist notary, tall bike kids with dreads but straight-edge, the mad gardener and his bees and yes, even our one republican and the dying old man and the dog walker and especially the house where the Chinese lived within walking distance to their restaurant and with their Guatemalan dish washer who was run down by an SUV when they put the condos in. I would like to tell you more about it but I can't. It's my secret and I'm afraid they will pave it over if...

A VIEW

We are ALL the dispossessed.
I took that thought from village to city.
Damn this place is provincial...
Then a new thought:
Don't you know you caress mountains with your hand?
All your eye beheld was yours to explore!
Corn rows to kiss in, lakes to drown eyes in...
Sure you had no exclusive fencing off thereof
That meant all the world was yours to mete out:
Dusty hermits on briared roads, half disclosed bathing maidens
You set your picnic blanket on any glen your heart chose!
And invited any who happened by...
I think I'll reclaim lightly, as I look out
My bathroom window on a morn
See a bird flit over clothes line on which
Drying mop hangs, an oh so simple scene in
Green, overgrown, soft light on the sloping mill house roof

Now this place, I think- anyplace really- is place
I can stay.
No one can dispossess us but ourselves.
And I don't care it's special, saccharine sweet to say-
But bless this place oh so provincial.
Bless you all, and everywhere.

FRIDGE MAGNET LOVE

Come kiss me / Speak less / Soul friend / Deliciously / Luscious dazzler / Morning
symphony / Like moon do / Easyful / As never night / Breath like / Beneath desire /
As kiss can / A moment / My Queen / Gentle sweet / Fruit caramel / On your lovely belly
In passionate embrace / If you want spring joy / & celebrate the rhythming / at home
angel / here honey / asleep / and I will show you my

*My now wife stalked me, seriously. She showed up at my work, where I volunteer, and
asked to move in on our third date, after asking me three questions. It worked out.*

BEST PAL

You know, sometimes, with friends I feel like a fraud.
I know it's cause you see the best in me.
I want to be that best me.
But, sometimes I feel I must confess.
Friends, sometimes I pick my nose, and wipe it places.
Seriously I have many faults.
I'm angry-not just at injustice, greed and war.
Friends, sometimes I'm angry at computers, can openers, a wall.
Sometimes I lash out at family, those I care about.
I'm vain and insecure.
I pee in sinks.
I never cheated on a woman, but I cheat on taxes and once at Scrabble.
I'm gluttonous, slothful. I know you know I'm fat. I fart!!
Sometimes I want to quit. I want to give up. Yeah brother.
I held a grudge once. I forget what.
Friends, I get bored. I instigate. I'm an incorrigible gossip.
I spread rumors and I know now it's evil.
Like this one time... Okay!
Friends, I'm not perfect. And I'm not sure how to change.
Truth is—I do know better.
BUT...
 But, there's an angel.
She came down, human, so she could
love me just as I am.
Friends, I'm not sure anymore about anything.
I admit it!

But I'm sure of her.
So, friends, I asked her.
She said yes.
Friends, I want to announce to you:
Chrissie and I are getting married!

*You have five minutes. Pack! You're leaving your country. Now what did you forget?
Shoes? Photos? Toys for the kids? Rolled up medical gloves serve as a ball.*

BANTU BOY

Bissimila.

I was granted a new beginning.
A little boy laughs like an old man I know.
Old souls. Smell the village on them still, in
yellow UN refugees scarves at the airport. Tears.
Careful, don't fall on the escalator...
Don't forget your new sponsor's jacket.
Welcome and beware. They still wear colors,
smile, at ringworm even. Turn the saucepot handle.
They put knife twixt toes and pull meat across it.
This makes sense where they had no tables.
What are you cooking? Meat. Mr. T wants to marry M.
Again. In a woman's blazer!
Stop! Don't run off the steps.

Fayne muru.

She's a single mother, Black, on food stamps, welfare.
Does your image capture the colors of her head wrap?
Does It matter she is refugee?
Bantu ten years in camps.
Ran out of campfire ghost stories.
She is mother. What identifies her?
Her oldest is Eden. Struggles with soccer,
Likes math, writing: "Wait for me teacher,
One daytime I will be do right."
There is more in him than he can say.
He can say all the suras of the Koran.
Father dead, he watches over sister Y'mbaya,
Brother Humidin, a shade lighter, why? don't ask
Oh, and feisty Yaba of course. This is his story.
Where is Yaba's refuge in this world neither cruel nor caring?
Seizures rack his little body, bladder flows, stomach empties,
Eyes roll, kids come running for me, years since CPR class,
I carry Yaba kicking, put my shirt under his head, waiting
Desperately for modern medicine while Eden and grandma
Put keys to his nose and spit salutatory prayers to Allah on him!

When he stops at last there is a second of silence, another. Total
Silence, my burning ear on his bony chest. Then a snore!!!
Sweetest sound I ever heard! I'm scared as if an uncomprehending
Child myself, in between empty echoes an eternity until the
Heart races back babum babum babum- *Albaraka*.
EMTs come then, too late, terrify them with tubes,
Eden groans, another sound I'll never forget.
He does not trust us. Should he?
Spit sense and keys trump EMTs.
Someone explain it to me, please.

*After World Refugee Day and thanks to fellow Voyagers, we were able to have the
Unitarian Universalist sponsor a Bantu family. My proudest moment with UUs,
however, was when they embraced the unlaced bodiced pagans around a Maypole:*

MAYDAY

Beltane
We're going down.
The Green man rises. Again.
Pagans today wear mainly black.
The color is in their cheeks.
Blood cannot be bleak.
Ribbons- blue, yellow, pink
Wrap around the pole-
Corpulent twirling parts
Surprisingly lithe, agile even,
Joyously jiggling
Cannot be laced in,
No, not even by lace
I am around around now
Tied in the middle.
Truly now the world
Spins around me.
Newton, eat your
Fig heart out!
On the grass we lay
Listening to string pluck
Birds from air to listen
You can see the notes
Arpeggio in midair!
Chrissie has a fly on her head
A huge soak on child's tattoo
I'd shown her a flower, then
Slight of hand put the fly on
And the children shriek

When I remove the cool cloth!
I have my head on her belly
Up, down softly staring agape
At sky all wonder, silent for once
Just being... in Bliss!
This now with her with everyone
All the world around the color-
Wrapped world-pole wonderful.
Truly, the world was already
Spinning around me always.
Newton, eat your blessed fig heart out!!

We were also lucky to be among the birthed from the ashes of the South when Phoenix Tongue's poetry exploded under the guidance of our guru Starino and later the alliterative JB. Strong poets passed through, slam winners, Just Cause, blues riffs...

ARISE FENIX

From ashes of the old South / Sacred cadence burnt / Into memory / Invoke the greats
By all means / BUT / Let us not take our / Selves / Too seriously / Be ourselves
Beautifully / Zits and all / This is a hate free zone! / We can don gloves / Even wear
berets / If we back it up / With our life blood / In words / Or, at least, / A laugh!
Whisper now / To be heard over / The noise of it all: / Beer glasses, chatter, / And God.

WAKE UP GENTLY!

Ya write a different kinda poem for a
reading than a reader, one a
persons, another an idea (no l)-
you cannot misspell things for one
thing or leave weird spaces, punk-
tuations... and trite ellipses-
cadence, rhythm, rhyme forbidden
These things you must singsong spin in
images spiders webs sinew tough thin
You- hey, you, yeah- you weren't
listenin'! The other with attention
rapt- looks at me, thru me, for a
savior, at least one night, say stand
up- take a bow- thinking of the poem
he/she, s/he would writ!
No deep ideas don't work- is smoke
black or white depends what's
burned- can't burn an improv poem-
au chaud, on the spot like:
"Where was god b4 he made the earth?"

as St. Augustine (pretend self) confessed
to wonder-this won't WORK!?!@
Gotta paint the image, bloody hands
READ< RED< READ- say, spray it,
masturbate it, slam it, jam it. Gimme a beer, damn it!

*I conceived of many series of poems in that sacred place and I will magnanimously now
spare you, but share just one, as it is a series- of joke poems- that never got passed one:*

JPO K EM 1

The orphaned creature's cry is the saddest thing.
It does not even know what noise to make.
Its mouth stretches tremendously wide.
It is hungry, green. It hops along.
Presently it bums up against a smooth hoof.
Towering above is the strange, stretched, arched
Spackled giraffe powerful of limb though
It looks unsteady on skinny spindly legs.
Its neck is thicker! And longer!
Nubs on its head, big eyes, it chews with
Long tongue and strong teeth
Tiny leaves—acacia thorns are nothing to it!
Its baby nuzzles against its sloped flank.
Intertwining its neck and little head between
Mama's legs.
“Mama giraffe,” the orphan asks
It's mouth really enormous, hungry,
Loud—“What do you feed your baby?”
Bending backwards knee, stooping giant
Neck down, mama giraffe sees the tiny
Frog, answers—“the leaves way up
There in the tree branches, honey.”
Baby wide mouth frog hops high as
He can flicking out his tongue—to be
Fair it is proportionately long like
Giraffes. But no way can he reach
The leaves. “Thanks,” he leaves
Mama giraffe and baby sad and sorry.
He hops on, wind in his mouth.

VILLANELLE

She carried cardboard to the trash.
This I did not want to see.
She kept the cans for cash.

What does she want from me?

Why lord won't she let me be?
She carried cardboard to the trash.
Her clothes were damp and dirty.
There were still those to call her perty.

The cans she kept she kept for cash.
She fell, caught the box upon her knee.
Silent her eyes registering no plea.
She carried cardboard to the trash.

She crept behind the naked tree.
She limped and lifted herself to pee.
The cans, the cans she kept for cash.
Will she ever be happy?

Is she ever, already happy? And me?
I carried cardboard to the trash.
I saw the cans she kept for cash.

I was surprised when LA or SC did not riot when Michael Jackson was exonerated:

EPIC OF M.J.

The gloved fist is raised. It is no longer for black power.
A new era dawns...
The glove is white covering A tight fist...
It means Victory for us all- Michael Jackson is free.
I saw it on TV. So it must be.
Read it on page one. Live at nine!
Jurors interviewed. Book deals. Action figures...
Michael Jackson is free!

Meanwhile in Amazonia the green sap flows and pesos reales are devalued.
But never mind, Michael Jackson is free!
In Africa severed limbs drip AIDS on shiny diamonds.
But no matter, Michael Jackson is free!
In Asia a starving child opens a tin can landmine and loses face.
Never mind, Michael Jackson is free!
In America drug companies find new ways to spike drinks and rape women.
But it's all good, Michael Jackson is free!
In Oceania brown bodies pile up unnoticed bloated by yearly Antarctic tsunamis.
Never mind, Michael Jackson is free!
Arabs and Jews are killed, disfigured, enslaved all across... Europe!
But no matter, Michael Jackson is free!

A genuine American tap-dance thriller- fit to acquit- a BIG HIT!!!
Michael Jackson is free; yawn
(Already yesterday's news)

Social work, as I learned in SC, does not work and is not very social:

FULL OF IT

It took me a while to see it.
I mean, I knew the death eaters in Africa.
They called themselves developers.
Why would I think social work in the States
Should be any different?
Of you warm-hearted, worm-eating, fallen
Heart-breaking parasitic idealistic leeches!
Tell me your pain, client. I'll write a grant.

Bob's wife lay dying for five years sucking
Oxygen, silencing him, lonely Bob his
Son Vietnam Vet 100% disabled did not
Leave the house for over a year upon return
Medicated now. But Bob is still lonely.
Eat it up, pain-sucker! Eat his stories!
Regurgitate a theory, a platitude, a poem...
Feel self-satisfied, smug, less self-absorbed,
Self-doubting, self hating, less self-assured,
Full.

Full of blood.
Full of pain.
Full of life.
Full of shit.

Case in point, prisoners who are not allowed to receive books. Prisoners who often work, for example, at food banks where I visited when working with shelters are among the most well-read people I have ever known. The majority in this country languish for victimless crimes usually associated with addiction. Anti-glue is not a fair treatment.

NO ADHESIVES ALLOWED

I got mail today!
Weird- a bit of taped paper
My own address
In my own hand
I open it to find the cards
I sent my sister Kim.

She did the murder
And is doing time
At Penn States... Penitentiary
"If you look into the abyss long enough
it looks back at you,"
she quotes Nietzsche.
Too bad they hadn't caught her sooner.
Ten years she punished herself
With heroin, slow death for his death
And many times she called prison
No Home
I sent her recycled cards:
One my mom painted,
Another a nice quote
A picture saying "hang on"
They ripped my index cards off them.
Glue ripped paper they sent back
With a red stamp on the envelope:
"No Adhesives"
Man rules in prison-
Guards' rules, prisoners' rules...

She used up her free envelopes
Fighting the adoption and
Ten more envelopes cost \$4.50
But she only makes 33 cents an hour
And sick calls cost \$4 each and lock-
Down for power storm blackout equals
Lost pay too, she even used up
The yarn for her daughter's gift...
No money for more, she writes me
I send cards; they come back...

"Be careful when fighting monsters,"
she admonishes, Nietzsche again,
"Not to become a monoester yourself."
When the caged are saner
What use freedom?
We are monsters!
Our freedom's no fucking good!
Look what we do with it...
Electric battery installers!
Nothing sticks anymore!!!
But we are all ...

So...

Damn...

OR

I can stay up all night and go to Paris
or Prague or Peoria or to the café or dingy diner
to eat hot cakes or burritos or birdseed
or go to sleep and dream of dogs or dreads or
diamonds or shiny stars or seas or seasons subsiding
or steady rising or not dream and die
or I could make an act of contrition, a random act of kindness-
put money in a meter or on a table or bench or in a wishing well
or make a paper airplane and sail on it to the moon and build a
hut there, and give it to a hermit, in exchange for a nut and watch it
grow, and climb it to the giant cloud and dance there and sing a song
and sing the song and sing and sing and sing-
the song which heals the world and exalts the fallen
on up into the and and and rejoice!...

After Africa plans fell through, we set off for the Appalachian Trail to get fit, hikin' from Georgia to Maine. However car died in Junction, Texas and by the time we'd made it to the trail head, better heads prevailed and my trail name, Switchback, was proved prophetic while my wife's trail name, Splashback, led us to Korea but we did not linger.

LAMENT FOR TRANSFORMY, OUR CAR

I looked up at the roof of my car, my albatross. It was gray faux felt (as kept alive the pilot crash). But I thought this is not my gray life. I was heavy laden, destined for greater stuff, rare these moments of honesty with myself. So in I went to coffee shop, that my preferred anti-depressant, with blues/grass music. Might soothe me into key/essence/tense, but the dying of the light was magic indeed, made me believe, even me, in Underado. Who is he? One of the 16? 32? 42? And where or where may my true love be? Fish float mockingly still, not looking. The chicory is bitter, less than the lyrics, less than my heart, less than me, myself.

I had the good fortune, after a few misadventures, to wind up an English professor at Suzhou University where I taught writing by use of negative space, warm ups, weirdness:

TWO SWORDS

The mighty red starred epaulettes of the PRC
are selling socks on the Shanghai Nanjing rail line.
Round faces, sallow with no/sleep register neither
surprise nor annoyance at the loudspeaker (no whistle)
interruption of their own particular somnambulant daydreams (or lack thereof).
The socks of course as demonstrated with harsh wire brush,
are indestructible. As dreams alas aren't.

THE LECTURE

What constitutes identity?

Three points.

Random gesture.

Cheap plastic clock loud. On syllabus?

Elbow patches- ethereal over aesthetic.

Turtleneck existential black.

Lecture hall cell. Hell!

Doodling.

Tick. Tock.

Firstly...

Individuality? Frat boys in third row?!

My god! And I'm atheist.

Monotone.

Clicking pen.

Confining desk torture device.

Gaze into middle distance. Ultimate distance. Nothingness.

Tick.

Tock.

Second, culture.

Sensitivity training kicking in.

Political determinism.

Nature versus nurture.

Eyelids heavy.

Drone. Shift in seat.

Assignment? What font?!

Coed barely clothed.

Tick.

Did I leave the milk out?

Another ten minutes! WHY???

Laughter out in the hall.

Why not just give handouts and nap?

Questions?

Blank faces like the unadorned grey white walls.

Used napkin on floor. Nice.

Inspiration. Poisonous fluorescence.

Tock.

I know how I will kill myself!

COUNTRY UNDER CONSTUCTION

The cranes have come to China.
They bring the rain.
Therefore they are welcome,
happily heralded.
I've seen them,
breasts muscles pumping,
thousands taking flight
from marshy Bosque del
Apache in the land of
enchantment. They followed me,
it seems. In the desert they were
sacred Blue Herons.
In swamps long legged egret.
Else somewhere may be flamingos red,
giant albatross...all the same.
One of their favorite stopping places is the
DMZ in snow cold and so they come
the world over, glad tidings.
Alas to China in smog black
cities now it is construction cranes
that come, metal beaks rending gray skies,
they leave no place untouched.
No space to fly. Acid
Someday may be no rain
Skies emptied by modernity
For now let us sit, warm,
as if on eggs.

TANKA

The dauphin hid it,
Buzzing in his royal hat,
Smiling ripped its wings,
Pinned it down in a corner,
Burned it beneath his glass.

SOMETIMES STILL

Sometimes still
When I see a cake plate
Covered in leftover frosting
I am a boy again
Remembering my great, grettestest
Joy, surreptitiously licking
Crumbs so precious

Sometimes still
I burst into a run for no reason
Just to jump tree roots
Growl like cougar boy
As big warm raindrops fill gutters
To swim in...

Sometimes still
A sunbeam catches dust floating like tiny magic pirate ships in air
If you stop and see

Sometimes still frosting is precious
Rainsdrops are magic, leafdoms are
Kingdoms, man, everything is just so
Warm wet precious evermore!!!

KOAN

What is the sound of one hand clapping?
The ringing of the bell of life, the cosmic
clapper inside It, the universal sound of
existence. What is the cause of the ringing
of the empty clapper less bell? My little
pantheon: Tara the liberator flitting about
me with her flowers joyously playful, fragrant,
dispelling all fetters, attachments, bindings
holding me life a little fairy, or many, feminine,
flowery little lights all around me fending off
problems; Avalokiteshvara sitting before me
large, magnificent, magnanimous, fatherly,
looking upon me smiling kindly in complete
acceptance and approval of me and everything
about me in this great wisdom love;
VajraSattva shining behind me around me
large infinite light dispelling all dark storms
of delusion and all negativities even past; and
finally the Buddha supreme in whose hand
folded in lotus lap I sit completely at home,
at peace, welcomed, arrived with absolute
power of peace, belonging, understanding,
compassion, joy, harmony, enlightenment,
and I in turn holding in my hands in lotus
lap a little Buddha me...

AS SOON AS

As soon as I can behave without impatience—
there will never be a moment without dew drop reflection.
No more wrong turns.
As soon as I feel no more anger—
I can respond purposefully to the
Gatekeepers.
I will tell my heart to the critics insistently.
I will speak my truth without expectations.
As soon as I achieve equanimity—
Accidental Accolades will reign down upon me.
Unneeded allies will appear everywhere.
I will remember all the world's hurts smiling.
I will play in the fountain.
As soon as I let my guard down—
Impish ambitions will attach to me.
You'll be sticky sweet.
This poem will make sense.
As soon as I am perfect—
I'll fetch water and hew wood.
I won't need to be perfect.
Being perfect,
I won't want to be.
As soon as I stop talking about I.
In the meantime,
The in-between times,
I'll act "as if..."

Time in Thailand also seems under this pen to have taken a dark hue, but in the Land of Smiles, may not be the I is darkened while the ass sits zazen? Could it be a world at war, responsible for... This one from an expat newspaper about a sad suicide seen as routine:

FANNY PACK

People think suicide is a sudden thing,
like flipping a light switch.
The guy in the Cabana next to mine
likes certain aspects of 60s counterculture-
the more hedonistic ones. Idealism was still
born in him. He self medicated the phantom
pain of that abortion of hope.
Abbie Hoffman came to speak at his school.
Since he was on some student committee, the Prof who
invited Abbie said he should come to the
welcome dinner. Apparently conversation was
lively with Abbie and the Prof. My neighbor
bailed to bang some chick. Figured he'd see

Abbie next day at the lecture.

No dice. Abbie went to the hotel after dinner and killed himself. Just like that. No speech.

We hear about Western tourists on over-extended visas jumping from hotel balconies on Pattaya beach, unable to return “home.”

Expats plunge to their deaths in the stairwells of their condos. In their bum bags are soggy swimsuit, talc, and a length of electric wire. No one knows their remains.

To hear – or read – the news of this rain of fed up farang in Thailand, one would believe indeed suicide was quick and final, an epidemic as deadly as meningitis among village children.

But I believe suicide is all around us, slow as palm breezes and tooth aches.

See the suicides drinking their weight each day, all bodily fluids turned poison, blue starred vein noses inhaling death, trying to buy youth by the fistful, prepubescent brown bodies on each arm, dead weight – Impotent attempts to flee in deep sand.

See the suicides playing roulette on motorcycles weaving like a drunken stumbler in crawl traffic carcass.

Suicide is slow – I should know, trying to commit it but it’s no switch you flip.

I’m frenzied to light the fire but the wood is damp. Wouldn’t you know it?

Social work studies were cut short by a mobilization, this one for a wetter war zone than the Middle East. I watched over the night shift as River Center arena absorbed the displaced of the Superdome that peeled like an onion and then absorbed another hurricane, all of which I sat and spewed in my book Shoot the Wind. This too darkens:

BIZ AS USUAL

Admittedly I’ve not been to Iraq, BUT

I know profiteers. I saw Katrina.

FEMA contractors could go up to 200% hotel allowance on government credit cards in times of

emergency. Is that not all FEMA does?
Meanwhile behind the Green Line they BarBQ
by No Bid Contract built bowling alleys.
Per Diem in New Orleans, Hazard Pay in the
other crescent.
It's the same Black water flows thicker than
blood, security or mercenary, the buck
never stops...
In an old WWI poem a soldier cleans his
rifle and gaping down the muzzle sees
an abyss. Stare long enough it stares back.
Gotta feed the guns. No food at the dome though!

*Never would I wish to end on such a sour note, however, nor does it reflect my current
teaching at Thammasat University, or my view of our potential poetry, I mean, future...*

MY TEMPLE, MY TEMPLE

If I were to somehow have a temple,
If by some aberration one day there were a temple to me,
Let the old men sit drinking tea in it, talking, not talking,
Let the children slide down the altar, laughing, fighting, crying, then laughing again the
way they do,
Let pretty girls dance there, but most of all let the ugly girls dance, in the place of honor,
Let the fat man sing there, and the thin man too, side by side, in drum rhythm,
Let the lame and the lepers sleep there in the shade, and the rich man sad at heart,
Let all the offerings left to rot in all the corners of the world be brought, orange slices and
hominy stew,
Let us eat it all together.

Burn in the ceremonial fire all the:
constitutions and money
certificates and invoices
paper tigers and card castles
-Wash in the smoke and smell how sweet it is!

Though this temple were never built,
Yet it exists somewhere in the heart of us.
Treat it with reverence and remembrance, with care, not awe,
Then it is real.
You'll feel it: solid as pillars, buttresses flying,
In mind's eye go there to worship and repose,
Sip tea with elders, laugh with children, dance, sing, sleep, dream, and live, live, live...

*And I suppose how I knew this project was ready was when a new chapter opened in my
life. The gris gris blessing charm given to me by my village Kiro in Male had gone*

