

Travels, Observations, and Prayers

Poems

by

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Chapter 3

RANTS, RAGES AND REFLECTIONS

## Poetry Will Come

(I worked for an hour or so on this poem. I swear the English language doesn't have enough words to work with. 2/23/14)

I must wait for Poetry to come.  
And I know that it will come,  
but in its own good time,  
and in its own silent way.

And it will whisper what I need to know,  
about life and love,  
hope and pain,  
and redemption through it all.

But I must be patient and very still,  
for Poetry has its own quiet Way,  
Its very own Heart,  
and its own subtle Stories to tell.

And it cannot be heard  
over the din and crash of this hectic life  
the constant conflict in my mind,  
and the chaos of the world around.

So I will sit here quietly,  
and listen very carefully,  
and someday perhaps I can tell to you  
the Stories that Poetry has for me.

## Dreams

(Written after a rare peaceful, relaxing sleep, and reading Poe's poem "Dreams" 2/20/14)

Dreams flit by  
specters of what-was  
flashes of almost-reality

and for a moment I can reach out  
and touch other worlds  
live other lives  
sing other songs

before they fade  
and retreat back into the mists  
with the coming  
of the cold gray dawn.

When?

(The question came to me early one morning laying in bed. The night before I was reading an e.e. cummings poem, "Grasshopper" and noticing the play on the position and capitalization of letters and words. 2/19/14)

When does an i become an I?  
When does an eagle learn to fly?  
When does a cry turn to a sigh?  
When does the fear in me begin to die?  
and when does the i become an I?

O You Proud Mountaineer!

(Written thinking about the Freedom Industries water crisis in Charleston, along with the fracking, strip-mining, and everything else we do to ruin our land. 2/9/14)

O you Proud Mountaineer,  
Who calls West Virginia home,  
Heart of Appalachia,  
Soul of America!

Steeped in Tradition,  
Covered in Honor,  
Glowing with Pride!  
Poverty stricken, yet rich beyond dreams!

Tied to the land,  
Bound to the soil  
Held sacred within the arms  
of Holy Mother Earth.

Now look around,  
O you Proud Mountaineer!  
at the land that shares your soul  
at the fouled water you cannot drink,  
the chemical-laden crops you cannot eat  
the pollution in the air you cannot breathe  
created in the name of prosperity and progress  
for every one  
but you.

Stand up!  
O you Proud Mountaineer!  
Stand up for your land!  
For your traditions and family  
and the generations that will come  
long after you are gone.

Stand up for your Freedom!  
Stand up for your Rights!  
Your Right to breathe  
Your Right to your health  
Your Right to LIVE!

Stand up for your loved ones  
For this State you call Home  
For the mountains that gives you life,

and the land that bears your soul.

Stand up!

Let your Mountaineer Pride show forth!

and let the whole world know

in no uncertain terms,

that the abuse of your Sacred Home

will not go on.

## My Poems

(Written one night contemplating the type of poetry I write. 2/5/14)

I do not write poems of might and glory.  
They do not sing of love, longing,  
or beautiful dreams come true.

My poems speak of hardship,  
of struggles and pain,  
loneliness, fear, and despair.

But there again,  
deep within the mire,  
are also poems of Hope.

Of the fight for life ever renewed,  
of the battles waged daily for love,  
and of a heartbeat faint,  
but beating still  
among the wreckage of a simple life.

Are you listening, dear one?  
Can you hear my words  
whisper within the gentle breeze?

Do they sing to you,  
Call your name,  
Beckon you turn  
from the Shadows of your life?

Follow me then, if you dare,  
for ever I quest,  
ever I push onward,  
ever through the Darkness  
ever towards the Light  
of the Morning Sun.

## Wolves in the Shadows

(written one Monday morning after a rough night. 1/20/14)

Doubt, Fear, Uncertainty, and Despair,  
the Wolves of Destruction prowl  
in the reaching, clutching shadows  
just beyond  
the pale flickering light of Hope.

Stoke the fire, son!  
Stoke the fire!



## The Ocean of Life

(A morning musing, contemplating the sudden changes I've been through. 12/30/13)

Standing in the ocean of life  
facing the safety of the shoreline  
with your back to the waves  
you get hit suddenly  
without expectation  
without warning.

You get knocked down  
and the ocean gets in your eyes,  
your mouth,  
to your very soul.

Stand up!  
Stand up!

Turn around and face the oncoming tide!  
And live, damn it!

LIVE!

## The Heart is Always Tender

(written at a restaurant contemplating what  
it means to be a man. 12/10/13)

It makes no difference the thickness of skin,  
for the heart is always tender.

It makes no difference the steel in the eye,  
for the heart is always tender.

It makes no difference the determination and grit,  
for the heart is always tender.

And it makes no difference the spirit and courage,  
for the heart is always tender.

And it will always reveal  
the true measure of a man.

## Love Unbound

(Written after an online conversation with a friend about homosexual relationships)

What in the world is Love doing?  
busting into our quiet little lives  
taking complete control of our hearts  
confusing our minds  
taking hostage our very souls

While bringing to ruin  
our rules and regulations  
our prim and proper parade  
of customs, conventions and culture

What is Love doing  
perplexing our plans  
confounding our commandments  
our logic and legal doctrine  
interfering even with God's own Grand Design?

We have it all planned out, you see?  
functional, flawless, rational, reasonable  
one man, one woman  
one woman, one man  
preferably of one race  
banded together in Holy Matrimony  
together forever and ever and ever, Amen.

And no one to wonder, no one to weep  
no one to yearn for what shouldn't be  
or cry in the depths of lonely silence.

No craving crushed  
no longing lust  
no desire denied  
and no happiness hidden away deep in the shadows  
along with who you really are.

And yet---

Since when did Love ever listen to Reason?  
forever flaunting infatuation  
confounding custom, convention, and common sense  
rejecting rationality and all the rules of "what should be"  
and laughing all the while at every one of our silly little love laws.

So what is Love doing?

It's doing what it's always done--  
rising above discrimination and hate  
overcoming the prejudices of power  
with passion and persistence  
pride and protest  
and knocking down walls of division with the gentle touch  
that lays to rest fear, doubt and insecurity  
with a strength that never falters, never stops, and never ever dies.

## Consequences of Growth

(Written after a hard day, and reflecting on some harder lessons learned) 8/28/13

Every now and then I get a subtle message tied to a brick and flung at my head.  
Every now and then I get a whisper printed on a bat and struck across my knees.  
Every now and then I get a sticky note taped to a boot and shoved up my ass.

And I scream

And I cry

And I crumple to the ground curl up in a fetal ball and moan my misery and pain.

And then after a while,  
after moments, minutes, months or years,  
I open my eyes.

And the world hasn't changed.  
But I have.

I am empty.

I am clean.

I am...

Free.

## Father

(written during an intense conversation with my wife about the effect our parents have on us.) 8/15/13

I will never be an image of my father  
I will never follow in his footsteps  
be a man as he has defined it.

I will however be an image of me  
I will make my own footprints upon my own path  
I will be a man as only I define it.

And that will be OK.

Whine.

(Written over the course of several years,  
inspired by Allen Ginsburg's "Howl", 9/11,  
and the Bush Administration)

What has happened to the best minds of my generation?  
What has happened to the heart and soul, the blood of life,  
the Spirit of the Land of the Free?  
What has happened to the Voice of the People, and by the  
People, and for the People that should not perish from this earth?  
What has happened to the People themselves-  
Young and Strong and Angry  
Marching and Protesting and Singing  
Raising their Collective Voices  
against a world  
gone utterly mad?

Are they asleep?  
Dozing in their plastic wrapped houses  
tightly sealed with duct tape  
believing themselves safe from chemical attack  
while chemicals kill them still-  
quietly hidden, deadly delicious  
disguised in the colorful plastic wrap  
of their Last frozen Supper  
Sleeping soundly in their comfortable King sized beds  
with the blood of the hungry and the homeless  
painted above their doorways  
while Angels of Death dressed in silver wings  
scream through the skies above their heads  
Praising the Name of the Giver of Life  
while taking the lives of the innocent  
men women and children.

Are their covers pulled tightly over their heads  
eyes squeezed tightly shut  
Afraid to peek, afraid to look, afraid they'll see  
the very terrible and very real Bogeyman  
grinning maniacally in his three piece business suit  
servant of the insatiable Corporate Demon "More"  
Stalking, whispering, offering the world  
in exchange for blood, sweat, and soul.

Are they dreaming their gentle drug induced carefree dreams  
technicolor coded in green, blue, yellow, orange, and red

while visions of Peace, Love, and Harmony,  
God, Guns, and Liberty  
Homeland safety and Homeland Security  
dance gaily through their heads  
never hearing the cock crow at dawn screaming  
Awake! Awake! Awake!



Where Are The Beats? (2004)

Where is Jack  
Writing the wrongs of America  
Chronicling the heartbeat of America  
Just this side of Paradise  
Yet so far away from Paradise

Where is Neal  
Screaming madly from coast to coast  
Living to dream and dreaming to live  
Bopping along with the jazz  
Where too much is never enough

Where is Allen  
Howling madly from the rooftops of the world  
Witness to the destruction  
Of the best minds of his generation  
While lamenting the Fall of America

Where is William  
Aging, strung out, chasing the dragon  
And the boys  
And all the while eating his lunch  
Naked and all alone

Where are the West Coast Poets  
Kenneth and Lawrence, Philip and Gary and Lew-  
Are you waiting for your country to call again?  
It's time.  
It's time.

## Time Passes

(Contemplating my aging body at the Book N Bean 12/3/04)

The beauty of youth does not stay  
admire it while you can  
It soon fades away to reveal  
the mileage of our souls.

Written at 41

(After reading the Beats, so many of them were tragic. I am unsure of my own longevity)

Lew Welch was 45 years old  
when he disappeared into the mountains  
with his rifle.

I have four years to go  
and I wonder

Will I feel like that when I am his age?

Perhaps...  
Perhaps.

To W. C. Fields (10/29/01)

(I tend to be a cranky SOB at times, and just want to be left alone.)

I think I'm gonna grow  
into a cranky old bastard  
who thinks that anyone who hates  
children and small dogs  
can't be all bad.

## Hostages

(Thinking about the three women who were held hostage for ten years in Cleveland)

How can someone be held against their will  
in this land of the free  
this land of plenty  
of opportunity  
of promise  
of hope?

And then I think of myself  
held hostage in this very same land  
by fears  
by doubts  
by insecurities  
and demon-haunted whispers of my past

And then I begin to understand.

## What Can I Do?

(Written sitting in a restaurant watching the evening news, and the tragedies of the world looked so overwhelming)

There is so much I cannot do  
to make this world a better place.  
I cannot work enough  
Serve enough  
Love enough  
BE enough--

The pain and travails of this world  
towers over me  
completely  
solid, mighty and foreboding.

What can I do against this  
with what little I have,  
with what little I am?

Yet here I am--  
I have life  
I have breath  
I have will.

That must count for something...

And here is a pebble at my feet  
as I stand alone on this barren rocky shore

This I can move--  
I can pick it up  
caress it  
hold it in my hand

I can write on it  
paint it  
use it to express my very soul.

I can build with it  
along with others a mighty wall  
a home, a hearth  
a sanctuary

Or I can with a toss,

send it back  
to it's watery home and watch  
as ripples carry the message of it's return  
to the furthest reaches of the pond

And in the end,  
perhaps that is enough.

## What I Wear

(I remember working at a hardware store and other minimum wage jobs where I wore a name tag. It's interesting how many people make assumptions about you based simply on the clothes you wear.)

The uniform I wear today  
will hide me away  
from the rest of the world

They will look at me  
and yet not see

The Writer  
The Poet  
The Teacher  
The Counselor  
The Student

The Friend  
The Husband  
The Brother  
The Son  
The Child

The Hurt  
The Fear  
The Anger  
The Uncertainty  
The Desire  
The Yearning  
The Hope  
The Love

But it's all here, deep inside  
carefully hidden away  
right behind my name tag.



## Fragments

(I hate it when a poem or part of one presents itself, and then fades away before I can write it down.)

Fragments of poems

brush past me

Sometimes they stop and say

"Hello!"

But they never stay and talk.

## Screw World Peace!

(written at 5:30 A.M. 6/15/07. I am definitely NOT a morning person. This was originally published in Whetstone, Issue 27)

Right now,  
the most important thing  
in the world to me  
is not world peace  
or feeding the hungry  
or even saving the planet  
from the destruction of mankind.

I'll work for all those things and more  
right after I've had my damn cup of coffee.

(These three poems were written the same day, after browsing through the poetry of these ancient Persian poets)

To Rumi (8/16/04)

Those who dance in the Light  
Cannot choose the Light.  
They can only choose to remain.

Only those of us  
Alone in the Dark  
Can decide to join the Party.

For Hafiz I (8/16/04)

Dance Friend, Dance!  
For time is short and  
the end grows near,  
So Dance, Friend, Dance!

For Hafiz II (8/16/04)

The Master is a Grand Illusionist

Fascinating every one  
with pretty scarves and lights

while the true Magic  
is worked  
right under their noses.

## My Poetry Is Not For A Jovial Crowd

(Written at Canaan Valley, 10/4/07 I was feeling a bit down, and watching all the happy, smiling people around me just made me angry.)

My poetry is not for a jovial crowd  
filled with laughter and song and cheer.

My poetry is meant for a more serious crowd  
who has seen the dark side of this wonderful world  
and felt doom's clutches around their heart.

My poetry is meant for a more cautious crowd  
who seeks some meaning in life's constant maddening  
rise and precipitous fall.

My poetry is meant for you perhaps,  
lonely, desperate, hungry and lost,  
who waits patiently and quietly for a small glimmer of hope.

Dance, Corporate Marionette, Dance

(This poem took a while to finish. Being the type of person I am, sometimes I see these corporate puppets and feel sorry for them, while at the same time, feeling a bit smug.)

Dance, Corporate Marionette, Dance!

Dance for your supper,  
your vacation time share  
your annual Christmas bonus  
and the tie that you wear.

Dance for your Lexus,  
your Beemer, your Porsche  
for your wife's yoga class  
and your kid's college course.

For your home in the 'burbs  
and new swimming pool  
for your neighbors to envy  
and think that you're cool.

Dance for Washington,  
Lincoln, Hamilton and Ben  
and never once think  
that it might be a sin

To sacrifice freedom  
passionate joy in your life  
and replace it with cubicles  
and corporate strife.

So dance, Corporate Mannequin, dance  
your payments are due  
for your SUV, your plasma TV  
and your credit cards, too.

All your company wants  
Is your blood, sweat and tears  
and to make productivity  
for twenty more years.

unless they dismiss you  
and cut loose your strings  
take all that you've got  
then give you a sling

If you're lucky enough

you'll retire one day  
with a bonus, SSI,  
and your 401-k

And perhaps you will question,  
one day give a thought  
was the life you gave up  
worth all that you've got?

Was the sacrifice worth it?  
all the life that you gave  
now that you have little left  
as you head to your grave?

If you could do it all over  
if you were given the chance,  
would you still do the same, and  
dance the Corporate Dance?

## The Library

(Sitting at the Bridgeport Public Library, it was nearly empty and very quiet. I wondered, if the books could talk, what would they tell me?)

There is a prison in our town,  
a lonely quiet, brightly lit place  
with carpet and comfortable chairs,  
where guards neatly dressed  
watch over their prisoners with matronly care.

Many of the prisoners are older, some having spent  
most of their lives here.  
Some are younger though, and they shine with the  
tenderness of their youth.  
Standing up in neat orderly rows, it is hard to  
distinguish one from another.

The guards have put them in their rows  
counted, cataloged, numbered.  
Each one is accounted for and kept in their place.

There are many colors here.  
Black, white, red, yellow, many  
nationalities and languages.  
Yet in their rows they all seem the same  
standing at attention, silent.

It is hard to believe that each one--every one  
harbors a secret-a story-a life.

Sometimes, if you visit and are very quiet, as  
you examine the rows, you can hear some of them whisper,

"Free me! Free me! Release me from this place!  
Let me live again! Let me share with you my life and joy  
Hope and sorrow, love and pain. Free me!"

Most though, you can't hear.  
Their souls are almost dead, decayed,  
rotted from lack of use, mute.  
No emotion, no voice, no hope.

Yet sometimes a body is discovered  
laying stacked amid others,  
barely breathing, just a small glimmer of life.

It is chosen from among many, by a curious  
wandering soul, for reasons only guessed.

And for a time, the dead live again,  
brought out of their suspended animation  
by searching caring hands  
and with a shout or a whisper,  
a dance of joy or perhaps in  
thoughtful meditation  
share their tale with another,

if only for two weeks.



## Eating All Alone

(6/17/07 Written at work during lunch break. Being a loner by nature, I naturally found a quiet corner to eat my lunch. Sometimes though, I wish I had some good company to share my loneliness with.)

You say I sit and eat my lunch all alone?  
I beg to differ, if you please.

For I carry within me  
in my heart  
in my soul

All my friends and my family  
Loved ones near and dear  
Past and present.

Here are all the people I've ever met and known  
and remember well..  
fondly through forty-two years of living  
laughing and  
loving.

I can see their faces,  
hear their voices and  
feel their touch.

All their strength  
their light and love  
buoys me up,  
supports me and  
comforts me

And they are as real  
right now  
as if every one of them  
were sitting right here with me.

So join me, will you?  
Pull up a seat  
If you can find some room.

Join us for some laughter and  
pleasant conversation.

We have so much to talk about.

## Job Interview

(Another job interview, and sitting in the lobby waiting, it occurred to me what a life changing event getting a new job can be. I didn't get the job, and looking back, I'm glad I didn't. )

Sitting in the lobby  
waiting for the interview to begin,  
a moment in time  
frozen in nervous anticipation,  
where the edge of fate seems sharpest and  
the cliff overlooking the unknown  
looms near.

Standing on the precipice of my future,  
the winds of change blows strong  
pushing,  
pulling,  
urging my spirit onward,  
as the Sirens of the Future call  
from the darkness of the unknown  
Come!  
Come!  
Come!

## Not So Innocent

(The poor, the down trodden, the beat: they live in a different world. They can't come to us, so we must go to them. 6/12/07)

There are those who are not so innocent  
living in this world  
who have seen what man can do to his fellow man  
who have seen stark terror in the eyes of children  
who have heard the desperate cries of the lost  
who have experienced the deep red wounds and  
been helpless to stop the bleeding  
who have felt the souls of the unforgiven  
clutching desperately at their own hearts  
who have smelled the stench of rot and decay  
among the living

Their testimony is in their eyes  
and their voice  
and their hearts.

Listen, if you can  
for it is the cry of the witness to the  
underbelly of man

a cry for healing  
which can only come  
in the light of day.

## All I Want Is A Minute, Lord

(Sometimes we get so busy we don't know which way to turn. Some of us live our lives that way, just doing, doing, doing, and we never have time for ourselves.)

All I want is a minute, Lord,  
Just one minute...

to rest  
to relax  
to breathe  
to think  
to reflect  
to question  
to cry  
to weep  
to mourn  
to smile  
to laugh  
to dance  
to give  
to share  
to play  
to look  
to listen  
to feel  
to care  
to love  
to LIVE.

## Illusions

(Written after attending a conference on Schizophrenia. Sometimes, when worry, stress, anger and fear rear their ugly heads, I can in a very small way, understand. 7/25/05)

Phantoms in my mind  
Screaming, Raging  
Overwhelms  
The still quiet voice  
of reality.

## Life

(Written after a very challenging and successful rock climb at Coopers Rock State Forest. Sitting in my favorite bar, exhausted and exuberant, and finding out that frosted mugs hurt raw fingers, I wrote this poem on a handy bar napkin. It remains one of my favorites.)

If I can't live life to the fullest,  
I don't want to live at all!  
I'll just sit down when I'm at Death's Door  
and wait for her to call.

But I long to feel the wind in my hair  
and blood rush in my veins.  
For I know there's no tomorrow  
if today there is no gain.

I've run along the edge of life  
and I've seized upon the day.  
This is what they'll say of me  
when at last I'm carried away.

## Important Things to Do

(Written 4/23/07 on the back porch  
during some much needed time off)

I'm not going to write an epic poem today  
one that ponders the meaning of life  
or reveals the truth of love  
refrained with shouts of joy  
and sighs of secret passion.

I'm not going to change the world  
with actions bold and daring  
with impassioned pleas to save  
what is left of our humanity  
and the earth.

I'm not even going to mow the lawn,  
or paint the door, or tackle  
the myriad other little projects around  
the house that needs to be done.

Instead I think I'll watch the sun set  
from my plastic easy chair on my back porch  
and listen to the birds sing their songs  
and watch the grass grow  
and feel the soft spring breeze blow across my skin

Because today,  
it's the most vital, important  
life changing thing I can do.

Enough!

(Written after reading Allen Ginsburg's "Fall of America" 5/18/07 Previously published on the website [www.poetsagainsthewar.org](http://www.poetsagainsthewar.org))

When will it be enough?

Enough Pain

Enough Blood

Enough Hate

Enough Fear

Enough Screams

Enough Cries

Enough Loss

Enough Tears

Enough Death

Enough War.

Enough!

Enough!

Enough!



## Battle of Falluja

(Written on a napkin at a coffee shop while watching the coverage on TV.  
11/8/04. Previously published on the website [www.poetsagainstthewar.org](http://www.poetsagainstthewar.org))

Rage War, Rage!  
Bullets fly  
and people die  
The good and the bad  
the Right and the wrong  
depends simply on  
which side you're on.

The fear and the hate,  
confusion, debate,  
Meanwhile the world sits  
and watches, and waits.

Parents on either side  
of the political fight  
will lose their children  
in the battle tonight.

We'll watch from our Living-rooms  
see their tears, hear them cry  
comfort ourselves with reasons,  
and yet wonder why-

Was it all worth it?  
The blood and the pain?  
The dying and wounded,  
The dead and the maimed.

So what was accomplished,  
at such terrible cost?  
Was anything gained  
by the lives that were lost?

In history books  
our grandchildren may read  
of the battle this day  
and not see the need

of the violence and terror  
the loss and the pain  
and say it just wasn't worth it  
regardless the gain.

## Disposable Income

(written as I was sorting my change  
at home--6/14/07. This was originally published in Whetstone, Issue 27)

I separate my pennies from  
the rest of my change  
and put them in a special jar  
as if the lowliest of the low were  
more special than the rest  
and I'll wait until they are enough  
then cash them in for larger bills  
so I can throw them away more easily.

## Beat

(Written at a restaurant on a napkin, remembering the Beat writers 1/23/09)

(For Jack and the rest of the Beats)

Beat up  
Beat down  
Beat over  
Beat around

Beat into  
Beat through  
Beat me  
Beat you

BEAT!  
BEAT!  
BEAT!

Is there any salvation left  
for the beatific ones,  
these angel headed hipsters  
that ruled the dreams  
of William, Allen, Gary, and Jack

With the single minded madness  
to suck out all the marrow of life and  
BURN!  
BURN!  
BURN!

## Lemme Alone! I'm Busy!

(5/11/07 Written at a local sub shop. Why is it that at times when I really want to be alone, talkative people seem to gravitate my way?)

And if you have to ask me what I'm doing,  
I'll tell you.

I'm contemplating the meaning of life  
Thinking of ways to end world hunger  
and bring about peace on earth.

I'm considering ways to cure cancer  
Save the rainforest and provide  
equal rights and opportunity  
to the disadvantaged and the poor

When actually, I'm just sitting here  
doing nothing at all-  
enjoying some peace and quiet  
and some rare time to be alone  
with myself.

That's something you may not understand,  
but to me, it's as important as anything else  
I could do.

## Buddhist Moments

(12/31/08 Prairie Wind Zen Temple, Pittsburgh. These three poems were written on New Year's Eve, while at a Zen Buddhist Temple)

### I

#### Zen Moment

Caught up whole  
in the words of a  
Buddhist Poem--  
Dog licks my hand  
"Hello."

### II

#### True Reverence

After meditation  
I bow to the dog  
Asleep on the cushion.

### III

#### A Stranger

The crowd slowly gathers  
and mingles in the warm winter closeness  
of the old log home.

Old friends and new  
Conversations light--  
laughter and the sound  
of plastic forks on paper plates.

I sit in the corner alone  
among the dusty books.

I don't belong, a stranger here  
Such innocence and lightheartedness  
is foreign to me--

I who have seen the darkness  
felt the emptiness of soul  
and lost the illusion of simplicity.

## Mission Accomplished

(Written at a local restaurant 4/13/09. It seems to me that sometimes we are our own worst enemy.)

"Death to America!"

The extremists shout  
as they plan and scheme  
and think of ways to crush  
our beautiful American Dream.

But if they'd stop and watch a while  
at what we do to ourselves  
our health, our environment, our education  
and our own American way of life

They'd shake their heads  
as they turn towards home  
and say, "Mission accomplished."

## Perspectives

(6/16/04--home. This poem started out very whimsical, but took a rather serious and sarcastic turn)

Spider leaps an inch or two  
further yet than I could do.  
Fly on the ceiling, upside down,  
looking up, he sees the ground.

All day long, I sit and wonder  
When God made us, was there a blunder?  
I look around me, what do I see,  
Violence in the media to entertain me.

Do we progress with all we know?  
Or will we reap just what we sew?  
But just give us our bread, and our circuses, too  
A reason to smile, when things look blue.

Let's enjoy the party, forget all the rest,  
For our guest tonight--Marie Antoinette!

## What Do You Do?

(written at the Book-N-Bean 2/6/04 This was a favorite hangout of mine. There were lots of college kids there, and the discussions of their hopefully bright futures and struggles of college abounded.)

What do you do  
when the darkness wails  
and you stand on the edge,  
the precipice of the future  
and the winds of fate  
howl against your back?

Do you fall?  
Do you fly?  
Do you live?  
or do you die?

Which is safer?  
Which is sure?  
Do you seek the passage back  
or sail to further shore?



## I Weep for the Victims

(Who speaks for the victims of violence, loneliness and monotony? All three are killers of the mind, body, and soul)

I weep for the victims of the human race  
the lonely men women and children  
caught up captured taken hostage  
by pain rage and hate  
despair loneliness and fear  
envy lust jealousy and greed

Killing each other, killing themselves  
in the classrooms and hallways  
living rooms and bed rooms  
in the streets and alleys and offices  
quietly slowly surely  
one by one by one  
in calculated inches and degrees

Fighting for pride and principles  
possessions power and property  
status and cold hard cash  
while the innocents slowly whither starve and die  
as a simple matter of consequence

Creating where they fall sacred holy ground  
where the dead are never forgotten  
but never really honored,  
and never really remembered.

## Junk Food

(Written at a fast food restaurant--1/9/10)

One day  
Perhaps years from now,  
I'll be lying alone in a hospital bed  
with tubes and machines to keep me company.

I may look back on this day  
and curse the choice I made,  
for the trans-fats, the cholesterol, the sodium and the grease.

But right now,  
I'm hungry,  
And it tastes good,  
and  
I  
Just  
Don't  
Care.

## Prometheus Bound

(I worked on this poem to get the rhythm just right. This was written after reading the ancient Greek play by the same name. I like the idea of the underdog having a strength that the mighty cannot conquer. This was originally published in Whetstone, Issue 26)

The pain increases, flames leap high,  
the shackles wear my bones.  
Cast out of heav'n by one called Zeus,  
usurper to the throne!

The night brings me some small relief,  
I think on what I've done.  
Theft and betrayal my heinous crimes,  
I mocked old Chrono's son.

So I stole fire from Hephaestus,  
to give to naked man,  
to light the spark of hope I saw  
within that pitiful band.

Now as dawn breaks, the pain renewed,  
an eagle circles high.  
To rend and tear immortal flesh  
and Zeus shall hear me cry,

"Your tortures mean but naught to me,  
I'll bear them by the hour.  
So do your worst but you can't kill,  
for you have not the power.

Repentant I shall never be,  
my actions they were just,  
and if you can not see my way  
I'll stay here til I'm dust.

Here Ocean's daughters stand with me,  
for they know I was right,  
to lend a hand to those in need,  
with my compassionate might.

'Tis greed that blinds your eyes to this,  
and greed shall seal your fate,  
and though I'm chained upon this rock,  
I'll laugh and watch and wait.

For you may torture day and night,

and long to hear my plea,  
but my regret or of your fate,  
there'll be no word from me.

So do your worst then as you will,  
and tear me part from part,  
but though you try with all your might,  
you cannot touch my heart.”

## Cellphone

(written one rainy Monday morning laying in bed and listening to distant sirens 8/18/09)

Sirens scream on a Monday morning  
Ambulance and fire truck together  
Heading for the highway  
to a scene of crushed and twisted metal  
where glass and blood mix with engine fluids  
on the cold black pavement...

Early Monday morning and I'm running late  
Not enough sleep and no time to eat,  
I hit the road and head to work.  
Appointments to keep, meetings to attend,  
papers to fill out and reports to file.  
Now who do I need to call today?  
I reach for the phone and start to dial...

Sirens scream on a Monday morning  
Ambulance and fire truck together  
Heading for the highway...

## Give 'Til It Hurts

(When I'm busy and got a lot of things to do and even more on my mind, the last thing I want is to be asked to do something else.)

“Take a chance on a bike?”

The lady says.

“Donate just a dollar--

plus your name and address

and phone number,

at home, at work and your cell phone, too,

and an email address as well, if you have one.”

If she only knew-

how much of myself

I already give

she'd just hand over

the damn thing.

No questions asked.

## Time

(Written during the summer of 1998, when I took an entire summer off and did not work at all. This poem remains my favorite, my own rant against the corporate world.)

You ask me what time it is?  
Who cares what time it is?  
I've got nothing to do  
no appointments to keep  
or meetings to attend.  
No deadlines or last minute rushes.  
No place to go, no place to be  
no time clock or wrist watch  
to mark the passing of my life,  
set into neat little increments by those  
who are supposed to be my employers.

Who have ritualized, cannibalized  
my life and time and space.  
For my own good, they say,  
and for the good of the company, too.

Gods such as Efficiency, Competency, and Productivity  
are worshiped in boardroom shrines and used  
to quantify and qualify  
my worthiness.

Those gods are gone now,  
along with their tie-vested priests.  
Exorcized, cast out by a larger god  
who knows me better than any  
and loves me most of all,  
and doesn't insist that I follow the path  
of Seiko and Timex.

This god's name is as familiar to me as my own  
and I can see his image every morning  
in my mirror.

You ask me what time it is?  
Who cares what time it is!  
The time right now is my time  
and that's all I need to know.

## Flying

(One of the first poems I wrote. January 1992. I should have been studying at the time...)

Floating on the currents  
of an ocean of air  
high and free  
above land and sea  
through clouds and clear blue skies.

It's just a dream and nothing more  
yet from this spot my mind can soar  
and leave my burdened self behind-  
If only for a while.



## I Can't Wait

(With some people, bright lights are intrusive and painful. With me, its noise. Sometimes I just want to scream.)

Sometimes,  
when the children are screaming and crying,  
and the cell phones are ringing,  
and people are shouting over one another,  
and the advertisers on the radio and TV  
are loudly demanding my attention,  
I just can't wait until  
I have to get a hearing aid,  
just so I can turn the damn thing off.

## Grey Days

(Sometimes, feelings of depression can be comforting)

There's a grey coverlet  
plucked over me tonight  
hiding me away from the cold dark world  
Turning bright colors to varying shades  
of black and white.

Comforting in its blandness  
providing a brief but welcome respite  
from the harsh unblinking glare of life.

Scream!

(Written after 9/11, when the world appeared very unsafe. I felt sorry for the newborns who would have to grow up in this environment of fear.)

Scream, baby, scream!

Wail out at the trials you will face  
in this dark and unsafe world.

And while you're at it, little one,  
scream some for me, too.

## History at a Glance

(Written after several crank phone calls from my friends in response to my answering machine message that said:

"You have reached Husk Castle.  
My Scribe will hear your plea in my stead.  
You may speak after the tone.")

The king has fallen from his throne  
as barbarians siege the walls.  
The captive women scream in vain  
and the stricken hero falls.

Fear and death has stalked this town  
took advantage of the night.  
The flames leaped high and looked upon  
the doomed with glowing light.

Morning breaks and smoke rolls on  
from fires burning still  
but silence reigns over the land  
for there's no one left to kill.

In history books there'll be a word  
or two about this day  
when savages swept from the hills  
and held kingdoms in their sway.

## A Cry in the Darkness Unheard

(written at a restaurant 9/30/10 Contemplating doing a lecture on suicide)

Suicide screams a statement  
The loudest call to action  
ever heard.

Pain  
Agony  
Apathy  
Loneliness  
Hopelessness  
Beyond Despair  
Nothing left and no way out

A declaration against the wretched condition  
of life and the world.

The trouble is

No one ever listens.

## Not Today

(Written at a local restaurant 3/2/09. Another moody, depressed day)

All around life blossoms and grows

but not with me-  
not here-  
not today.

People rest assured, nestled  
within their own quiet lives  
Safe and secure-  
Predictable and comfortable

but not with me-  
not here-  
not today.

The children laugh and love and play  
Their parents dote and work  
and return their love  
moment by moment-day by day

but not with me-  
not here-  
not today.

The sun spreads out  
its life giving warmth  
across the pale blue sky.  
The earth welcomes the  
simple gift  
with wide open arms.

but not me-  
not here-  
not today.

## No Tears From Heaven

(Written at a local restaurant 2/28/08)

The tears stopped flowing long ago  
She can't remember the last time she cried.  
All that is left is a comforting numbness-  
day in and day out  
that keeps her sheltered  
from the constant cold dark rain.

If there's no anticipation,  
there is no hope.  
And if there's no hope,  
no dreams, no longing-for,

Then there is no disappointment.  
No crushing defeat, no almost-was,  
no just-out-of-reach.

So gone is anger, gone is pain  
gone is her laughter  
but gone also, is shame.

She thinks it's not such a bad trade after all.

## I AM TROY DAVIS

(Written following his execution by the State of Georgia, September 21st, 2011.)

What does it take to kill a man?  
To deliberately take is life  
his love  
his hopes  
his dreams  
his potential to heal  
and laugh  
and love  
another human being?

What does it take to 'just do your job'?  
To be a good soldier,  
a good employee of the State  
a servant of the People--

Even when those very same people cry out  
for a cease and desist  
for compassion, for thought  
for reconsideration  
for time to reexamine what we believe is truly right,  
and truly wrong.

To think about what we stand for, strive for,  
as a people  
as a nation  
as a member of this very human race.

Tell me, what do you have to put to rest  
to shut down  
to block out  
in order to become one with the soulless auto-matron  
with a system that in it's brokenness has forgotten  
how to think  
how to feel  
how to care  
and like a train whose brakes have failed  
continues on it's deadly track until...