

*Remembrances  
Of  
Things Passed*

*Dan garcia-Black*

## ***My Legacy***

*Try to remember these glorious moments  
of brilliance buried in all those years  
of mediocrity. ~ 2011*

All errors of any type including facts, logic,  
spelling and grammar are the sole  
responsibility of the author.

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*She nurtured me with tough love, held me in her arms and kicked me around a bit. She's what I need and everything I've ever wanted. She promises the world, but when the world isn't available, she gives me all of herself. I dedicate this mélange of words to my first love— Los Angeles.*

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## Table of Contents

Daffodils, 52 Ans Apr s...Pg. 1, If There Is A  
God...Pg. 3, Ambiguous Interfaces...Pg. 5, My  
Other Country...Pg. 6, I Guess, She Was  
Right...Pg. 7, Environmentally Friendless...Pg. 9,  
Generic Holiday Poem...Pg. 11, The Smartest One  
in the Room...Pg.13, It's About Time...Pg. 14,  
Hospital Tips...Pg. 15, Life Preserver...Pg. 16, Hard  
Drive...Pg. 17, Reasons Why...Pg. 17,  
Loaners...Pg. 18, One More LA Story...Pg. 19,  
Pawning God...Pg. 20, Confession...Pg. 21, Pokin'  
Word...Pg. 22, The Dark...Pg.25, tax-time...Pg. 26,  
Separation Anxiety...Pg. 27, Wrecks...Pg. 30,  
Aquarius...Pg. 31, Family Trad...Pg. 33, At  
Last...Pg. 35, Keith's Voice...Pg. 36, Maybe The  
Last Time...Pg. 37, Thank You for the idea.  
E.S.V.M...Pg. 38, Un-entitled Feelings...Pg. 38, The  
Big Bust...Pg. 39, Valentine's Day 2007...Pg. 40,  
And the Greatest of These...Pg. 42, Geppetto's  
Lies...Pg. 43, Delayed Reaction...Pg. 43, A Painful  
Case...Pg. 44, L.A. Rain Dance...Pg. 45, Time  
Machine...Pg. 46, Star Bright...Pg. 47, Roadside  
Diner...Pg.48, Sympathy for the Devil...Pg. 49,  
Memorial Day BBQ...Pg. 50, Lost Aged-ness...Pg.  
51, Coinology (L.A. Love Story)...Pg. 54, Missing  
Missive...Pg. 55, When I Die...Pg. 56, Dead  
Charlotte July 2001...Pg. 57, Yelling Fire In An  
Empty Theater...Pg. 58, A Last Wish For Us...Pg.  
58, Brilliant Star...Pg. 59, Healing Transfer...Pg. 60,  
My Last Woman...Pg. 62, Triangles...Pg. 63,  
Word's Worth...pg. 65, Breathe, Baby...Pg. 67,  
She's Home...Pg. 69, An Easier Road to  
Rapture...Pg. 70, My Plumber is a Poetry  
Critic...Pg. 71, Thanks...Pg. 72, Allah Bout  
Bombers...Pg. 73, Leaves and Vivaldi...Pg. 74,  
View From a 1983 Chevy Citation...Pg. 75, First  
This...Pg. 77, Phantom Limb...Pg.78, Waiting  
Room...Pg. 79, Wake up Call...Pg. 81, Happy  
Hour POV...Pg. 81, Flowers from a Stranger...Pg.  
83, Foolishness...Pg. 84, The Life...Pg. 86, I Tell You

We Must Die...Pg. 87, Litter Box...Pg. 89,  
 Lolita...Pg. 91, If There is A God III...Pg. 93, I'm  
 Sorry...Pg. 94, Medical Procedure-Monday  
 Morning...Pg. 95, Some of Us Are Not Quite  
 Broken...Pg. 96, Folds in Time...Pg. 98, Life-long  
 Commitment...Pg. 100, Over...Pg. 102, Sleep,  
 Baby, Sleep...Pg. 103, Making Book...Pg. 104,  
 Blood...Pg. 104, Neighborhood Bar...Pg. 105, I Will  
 Not Go to Your Funeral...Pg. 107, A Tug On Your  
 Coat...Pg. 109, Almost Right...Pg. 112, If I Die...Pg.  
 113, It'll Kill You...Pg. 113, Rainblows...Pg. 114, The  
 Crushed Rebellion Of 1996...Pg. 115, What It Is To  
 Be a Man...Pg. 118, What It Means...Pg. 120, The  
 Night Love Died...Pg.121, The Years...123, Muse-  
 ings...Pg. 124, It's Easy Not To Care...Pg. 126,  
 Good God...Pg.127, AM Drive...Pg. 128, Little  
 Mermaid...Pg.129, Mission Statement...Pg. 130, In  
 a Perfect World...Pg. 131, Anomaly...Pg. 132, Hi  
 Dad...Pg. 135, Olfactory Nonsense...Pg. 136,  
 Pasadena...Pg. 137, The King of a River in  
 Egypt...Pg. 139, The Last Poem...Pg. 140, You  
 Gotta Love It...Pg. 142, To The Broken Wing...Pg.  
 144, Godz Judgements...Pg. 145, I Know What's  
 Broke...Pg. 146, Total Recall...Pg. 148, World  
 Without Love...Pg. 149, The Twisted...Pg. 150,  
 Ugly...Pg. 152, Closer and Closed...Pg. 153,  
 FAB...Pg. 154, Just Do It...Pg. 155, Malibu  
 Stacy...Pg. 156, Now Go...Pg. 157, The Hands of  
 Time...Pg. 158, Lights...Pg. 159, Muse-Quick Start  
 Guide...Pg. 161, Past It...Pg. 162, Fouled and  
 Out...Pg. 163, Ain't Quite Blue...Pg. 164, LA  
 Autobus...Pg. 165, Oh, How I Love Her...Pg. 167,  
 Paper Cuts...Pg. 169, Tickle Me...Pg. 171, Beach  
 Action...Pg. 172, Key Fob-ulous...Pg. 173,  
 Equatorial Thoughts...Pg. 174, LA Gypsy  
 Woman...Pg. 175, Late Happy Hour... Later...Pg.  
 177, Learning to Be Better...Pg. 178, My  
 Equipment (A Live Poem)...Pg. 180, The Other  
 Side of The Universe...Pg. 181, DOA...Pg. 182,  
 Enough...Pg. 185, Lisa's Game...Pg. 187, LA...Pg.  
 189, Longevity...Pg. 192, The Sweetheart of USC  
 Greek Societies...Pg. 193, Awaiting to Circular

Breathe...Pg. 195, By The Silvery Moon...Pg. 196,  
Night Vision...Pg. 198, Nice Car...Pg.199,  
Nightning Flash...Pg. 201, Nova...Pg. 203, Old Boy  
(Not the Movie)...Pg. 204, Time #1...Pg. 205,  
Wards Ass Back Day...Pg.205, The Babes...Pg.  
206, This Special Night...Pg. 207,  
Inventory...Pg.208, Communion...Pg. 209, On  
Concerning Loving Oneself...Pg. 212, In Memory  
of ... Pg. 215, Photo...Pg. 217, Dying Poem...Pg.  
219

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(Dumbass Dilettante). Although I did take  
many suggestions, I must admit to ignoring  
some of the best ones. I am a "Double D"  
and if some errors make me seem like a  
boob to you, it's OK with me. Here I am sans  
make up and un-photoshop-ed.  
Enjoy it (or not).*

## ***First One—Daffodils***

*Daffodils oh, daffodils!  
I love the way you roll on hills.*

*I love your pretty flowers.  
I can watch you sway for hours.*

*Daffodils oh, daffodils!  
I love the way you roll on hills. ~ 1958*

## ***52 Ans Après***

Yes, I wrote Daffodils when I was ten.  
The teacher read it to the class  
laughing so hard she could hardly  
catch her breath to finish.  
Then she pinned it on the bulletin board  
for everyone in class to deride.

The class laughed with her  
and let me know that it was  
the dumbest (probably only) poem  
they'd ever read.

I agree. It sucked. I didn't even know  
what a daffodil looked like.  
It just sounded poetic.  
Everyone in class, stood at that board  
reading and laughing at  
the dumb poem.

I was probably the first poet



they ever took the time to read.  
Sure, they made fun of me  
all through the fifth grade .

But fifty years later,  
some are probably teachers, poets,  
publishers  
and, although they never knew it,  
I was their first read  
and they were my first fans.

I think that makes my life-long,  
unforgettable shame  
well worth it. ~ 2010

## **If There is a God**

My cat plays with a ball of yarn.  
He swats it around  
as if it were a toy mouse  
unraveling it as he runs and pounces  
the ball getting smaller  
leaving a trail from the bedroom  
through the hall,  
the living room  
and into the kitchen  
where it finally unravels completely  
and his ball suddenly disappears.  
Yarn everywhere,  
he tries to play with the tangled threads  
scratching at them  
memories of his game  
but they won't roll  
he looks up at me

helpless,  
wondering what happened  
to the ball and the fun  
and the rolling and the pouncing.  
He has such a stupid look on his face  
I can't help but pick up  
an end of the thread  
and start to wind it up  
patiently unraveling knots and  
rolling it into a ball once more.  
When I am finished  
I toss the ball to him and he begins  
to play the game over again.  
I must seem like a God to him.

I hope that when my ball of yarn  
unravels in some hospital bed  
in an ER or an old folks home  
somewhere, sometime,  
there is someone like me around to  
rewind my unraveled, knotted-up,  
lifeline back into a ball,  
ready to toss it back to me  
for another game,  
one more grand go round. ~ 2006

## **Ambiguous Interfaces**

Bought cool, antique, rotary telephone.  
Plug won't fit in my new wall jack.

Bought an USB LaserJet printer.  
My computer has parallel only ports.

Friend gave me a fire wire Sampler.  
My keyboards are old General midi.

Got new, spiral energy efficient bulbs,  
that won't fit in my old-style lamps.

Too much "new tech" gear here.  
So much "old stuff" still around.

Met hot, gorgeous, young babe  
at an East LA bar last night.

Same problem. ~ 2008

## **My Other Country**

I am a country  
I have invaded your country  
your people are now my people  
your needs, my needs  
I have added the burden of you  
onto those I already have

I look at you  
from across this pastel linen covered  
battlefield where we fight for glory  
and bear too much pain  
I follow the outlines of your borders  
through which I so recently slipped  
and planted my flag

I see you smile in your sleep  
Only then am I ready to  
accept the responsibility of you,

my new, beloved  
other  
country. ~ 2006

## **I Guess, She Was Right**

Saturday night while I  
was drinking with some friends  
at a bar in Alhambra,  
a drunk girl walked up  
and told me  
she'd been eavesdropping  
on our conversation  
she said that if I wanted  
to find a woman to love,  
I would have to change because  
all she heard me talking about  
all night was  
myself.  
I was humbled by her observations  
and promised myself  
to be less self-absorbed.  
It is Tuesday and until now  
I have not written a poem  
nor had an idea for a poem.  
I am trying to write from without myself.  
Today the blank screen  
started to talk to me.  
It said, "Write about the drunk girl."  
I replied, "She was drunk. Why should I?"  
But I decided the blank screen  
was the strongest argument  
to write something.  
And you know, I was so interested

in what she had to say to me  
about me  
I don't even remember  
what she looked like or  
who she said she was.  
I wrote this poem  
about what she said about me  
instead of about her...  
So, I guess we were both very drunk  
and she was also very right about me,  
after all. ~ 2005

## **Environmentally Friendless**

When the hell did we decide  
we had to be  
Environmentally friendly?

Ever since Adam and Eve  
got kicked out of the garden,  
the environment has tried to

Electrocute us with lightning,  
drown us with floods,  
bake us with droughts  
and freeze us with  
Ice ages and glaciers.

In the entire history of Humanity,  
the environment has never  
been our friend.  
What politically correct  
metro-sexual, anus-lubed,  
liberal socialist, dip-shit

came up with the term,  
"environmentally friendly"  
as a catch phrase?

It's like the couple  
that studied bears in the wild  
and got so confident  
that they never noticed  
when the bear's looks  
went from "You're my friend"  
to "You look like dinner"  
and were killed.

The environment doesn't give  
one good muther-fuck  
about you.  
The environment has only one goal-  
Keep the Earth  
from falling into the sun  
at the expense of anything  
and everyone on its surface.

The environment is in a fight  
to the death between  
it and us.

It must think that we're what's for dinner.

Conquer the environment.  
It may sound a bit harsh  
but the solution to Global Warming  
is just one button push away, Nuclear  
Winter, or a black hole caused by a  
particle super-collider.

I say to the environment,  
"If you wanna play,  
it's my way or the Milky Way." ~ 2007

## Generic Holiday Poem

Happy Holiday.  
May the spirit of the season  
fill your heart with the reason  
for the season and all its  
"holiday-ness-cicity."

O.K. that was pretty pathetic.  
Holidays make some people sad  
Those people are sick.  
They see everyone around them  
walking arm in arm, joking and  
laughing.  
Meanwhile they are alone and  
having dinner for one at  
a restaurant full of couples.  
They need medication like Prozac or  
Zoloft or something even better like a  
bottle of Patron and a Margarita  
enema— extra salt.

I always think of you on holidays  
so that I can be happy for you and all  
your drinking friends and family  
who also used to be my friends  
and drunken family but who  
don't talk to me or even answer

my emails anymore.

And, of course, let's not forget to be happy for your new fuck buddy, too. Some people would be bitter but I'm happy for You.

I hope you have great holiday sex all season.

I hope you have sex at the office.

I hope you have sex at the post office when you go at night to mail your holiday cards at the self-service mail drop off box after your new friend with privileges drives you there in his new Maserati.

I hope you have lots and lots of holiday sex especially during that special dinner that you two will share.

And I hope you do it on the table and knock over the expensive centerpiece just for fun.

I hope you have sex while you're taking that bubble bath so you'll smell good later when you both go to bed and have even more sex.

I hope you have so much sex that you are sore well into the next holiday, which, I think, is Arbor Day or Ramadan or Yom Kippur or Christmas or Canadian Boxing Day or Take Your Secretary Out To Lunch Day.

I'm not one of those depressed



Holiday people. I'm O.K.  
I'm happy for YOU on holidays.  
I'll have a special dinner, too.  
I'll eat my heart out. No, Just Kidding!  
I'll buy a special fancy lean cuisine.  
I'll light candles and have a salad  
with dressing made of live oil, extra  
virgin (Something you haven't known a  
Goddamn thing about since the fifth  
grade). I'll listen to romantic music and  
later, when I have sex,  
I'll use the rest of the olive oil  
to make it seem I'm doing it with  
someone who is hot and sweaty in their  
special private place.  
Then I'll be orgasmically happy.  
But I'll be especially happy  
because I know that you are happy for  
the holidays. And knowing that You're  
having a happy holiday always makes  
me very, very happy and not sad.

Sincerely, Dan garcia-Black ~ 2008

## **The Smartest One In the Room**

Whenever they decide to play,  
"Who's the smartest one in the room?"  
I always lose,  
on purpose.  
Because I know whom the smartest one  
in the room really is. ~ 2005

## It's About Time

By the time you're my age:

You should know what to say  
without floundering  
when a bartender asks,  
"What'll you have?"

You should have raised and nurtured  
at least one child.

You should have said, "I love you" to  
someone once and meant it.

You should have had your heart broken  
by more than just one person.

You should have learned how to say,  
"No" to a homeless person begging for  
money and then walk away feeling  
bad, that you did.

You should have spent a night in the  
hospital holding a sick loved-one's hand.

You should have felt the hand relax as  
you walked them from this side of life  
to the side where you could not yet  
follow.

You should have had lent money you  
knew you would never get back.

You should have had a night of sex so intense that as you lie in the ER being catheterized, cauterized, incubated and pricked with needles, its memory will make you smile.

You should have learned that happiness is a gift you give to yourself and not something you get from others.

You should have tried and failed, at least once, to create a work of art.

You should know that if you haven't done some, or any, of these things, you might still have time left before you die.  
You should know it's not too late.

And when you reach my age,  
or even past, It's about time you try. ~  
*2007*

## **Hospital Tips**

Be Brave.

Don't Behave.

Rage and Rave.

The quiet wheel gets no morphine. ~  
*2008*

## Life Preserver

She looks at it and asks,

"What's that?"

"That's the tip of my iceberg," I say.

"Not very impressive, is it?"

"Look more closely," I reply.

"Yeah," she says,

"From two inches away it looks huge!"

I retort, "Well, with you sitting so close,  
your big ass reminds me of the hull  
of the Titanic."

"Saying shit like that," she responds,

"will not get your iceberg close enough  
to collide with my fo'c'sle."

There was no collision.

This is not a love story.

This is a sailor's tale

of how I saved thousands of

seamen from a cold,

wet death behind her sarcastic,

icy smile. ~ 2007

## Hard Drive

Too often

she finds her way

into my thoughts.

She is a virus

in my

random access memories.

But rather than re-formatting,  
I let the program loop  
hopelessly waiting for my drive  
to crash or my power supply  
to burn out or  
for a pop-up that says,

'I was wrong, Baby.  
Please, come home.' ~ 2007

## **Reason Why We Never had Sex**

We were in bed when I discovered  
you were so full of yourself  
there was no room left inside for me. ~  
2004

## **Loaners**

They can't fix it today...  
so I get a loaner.  
It has more pickup than my car.  
It looks better.  
It's better on gas.

I go out drinking tonight  
and I drive from one bar to the next.  
I hit my limit, so,  
I get behind the wheel of the loaner  
and drive to the next bar and

then to the next  
hitting my limit at each

until I find myself  
at the state line. I stop.

I look through the rear-view.  
I know what is back there.  
It's where I've been living,  
broke down car,  
ex-wife, child support payments,  
shit job.

I look ahead towards  
where I've never been before.  
So, I step on the gas  
looking for the next bar  
in a new place with my new car  
just two loners out for a good time.  
~ 2005

## **One More LA Story**

The city is awake at night.  
Its breath, the sound of tires  
rolling along streets and freeways.  
Its sighs, the whine of eighteen-wheelers  
downshifting at curves.

I lie on the couch listening to  
the city tell me a bedtime story  
It begins with the slow thump, thump,  
thump  
of a helicopter hovering close,  
hunting human prey.  
It speaks through cop car klaxons

shouting out a deadly square dance  
call,  
"Get out of the car,  
lie down on the ground,  
hands open, arms out to the side."  
Then pop, pop, pop, pop, pop  
and silence.

I strain to hear the end of the story but  
the last part of the tale is an ambulance  
siren, the high-pitched wail of my city  
crying for one more of its children killed  
by those little gods in black uniforms  
who proclaim they are here only  
"to serve and protect." ~ 2006

## **Pawning God**

The old pawnbroker had spoken after  
weighing her small pile of treasures  
Thin chains, bracelets, charms and rings  
all weighing very close to nothing.

The young mother replies stressing every  
syllable, "But I Need Fif-Ty For The Light  
Bill!"

"Forty is all you have. Look at the scale!"  
A ten-dollar Mexican standoff-  
the Pawnbroker and the Mama.  
Then a little girl about six standing  
hidden, almost invisible, behind mother's  
ample skirt speaks, "Maybe Jesus can

help us!"

She hands her mother a thin chain  
from around her neck with a crucifix  
(Jesus nailed to the cross).

The mother puts it on the scale  
With a look that reminds the  
pawnbroker

of brown uniformed soldiers,  
that same hatred in their eyes, so many  
miles and years ago it seems like an  
entire  
lifetime away and still, not far away  
enough.

"That makes it Fifty," Says the  
pawnbroker

his eyes tearing from the memory.

"What do you have to cry about?"  
the mother asks.

He replies as he points at the man  
nailed on the cross, "It is just that it  
makes me sad to see  
a nice Jewish boy go through so much  
pain  
for a mere ten dollars."

"Right thumbprint,

Sign on the 'X,'

Here's your fifty.

NEXT!" ~ 2004



## Confession

I have discovered that  
I am a man  
In a woman's body,

At least, I am,  
often as I can find  
one who is willing. ~ 2006

## Pokin' Word

This ain't no rhymin' hip-hop.  
I just want to be given my props.  
I'm talking about my indigenous visions  
Not your colonial, police-state,  
historical revisions.  
I am the great, great, great, great  
grandson of the leaders of Atzlan.  
A royal serpent of the Sonora desert  
I uncoil my lengthy form from  
Mexico North to your Southwest—  
Arizona, Nevada, California and the  
rest.  
Burning sand rises in my throat  
Causing a sirocco of words  
Every time it's heard  
Some mojados crossed into eternity  
when all they wanted to do was to cross  
from what is ours to what WAS ours and  
what will be ours again.

The Minutemen & National Guard  
will have to send a twenty-first century  
Paul Revere shouting, "The indigenous  
peoples are coming!"  
From San Ysidro through Weho and on  
to Sacramento, "They're coming!  
They're coming!"  
And no one will care.  
They'll look around and see  
We're already here, everywhere  
In the restaurants, in the fields,  
The auto body shops, Home Depot  
making deals— Wallmarts, school  
boards,  
On freeway on ramps, and  
Local governments.  
Some of us are even cops.  
We're waiters, writers, teachers and  
businessmen.  
The list never stops.  
It's not an earthquake you feel  
rockin' this state.  
It's moving vans carrying their heavy  
loads of white flight fueled by  
white fright and hate.  
Folks believing colonial revisionist  
historical lies are bound to repeat the  
mistakes made by the duped and the  
unwise.  
But with every baby born of mixed  
indigenous, immigrant and colonial  
heritage I believe there is hope.  
that we'll see each other eye to eye  
and at some future point in time,

we'll all have a touch of each other's  
DNA.

So when I call you whitey—you'll see  
how un-surprised I'll be to hear you yell,  
whitey, back at me.

The will be no difference—

Brown, white, yellow, Black.

I'll order a Dr. Pepper with my sashimi  
taco covered in Greens, fried up with  
fatback.

We'll have to find other things  
upon which to base our hate.

Like which end of the egg did you crack  
this morning when you ate? Cracker!

I need a better reason to hate you than  
The color of your skin or your  
point of origin.

I'll want to know do you drink beer or  
Tonic and gin?

And while we're at it,

Do you believe in HIM?

Or are you an atheist like

So many of your kind?

I don't mind.

What really matters to thee is...

Do you have a Master's degree?

Cause what that says to me

Is that your need to feel superior

Is what drives your desire,

While folks like me are only good  
enough

to hire as your gardener or limo driver.

Now, I'm no racist—

I love everybody.

But when you're snobbish about  
your level of erudition  
I feel absolutely no contrition.  
I'm ready to pull out my Machete and...  
But why make war, good lookin' ?  
If it sounds good let's give this devil his  
due, Let's hook up instead and maybe  
our kids, too, can be snobbish bores  
just like you.  
Alright, I'm outta here—PEACE! ~ 2004

## **The Dark**

Close your eyes.  
What do you see?  
I see faces, ghosts  
from the past.  
Some in pain.  
Some laughing at me.  
Some are people I've loved  
changing into angry,  
disfigured monsters.  
Compared to that,  
what fear can  
the dark alone hold?

Go ahead, Father.  
I'm ready.  
Turn out the light. ~ 2006

## Tax-time

a storage space five feet deep  
eight high and five wide  
holds almost sixty years of my life

585 is the jewelers mark for  
14 karat gold coincidentally  
the number of this unit.

I open boxes within boxes  
finding no gold but only an  
old wallet and my father's gun to pawn

it's been tax time before  
all that was valuable seems  
to have been previously pillaged

gun to temple I take a deep, hopeless  
breath,  
cock the hammer, look in the wallet  
and pull the trigger

all of it—  
the space  
the wallet  
the gun  
and me  
—empty ~ 2007

## Separation Anxiety

First day of school  
after mother dresses you  
and tells you to do  
what teacher says.

It's time to  
walk through the door  
and leave your  
past life behind.

Playing in the room are  
children you don't know  
looking like they've  
been there forever.

Fear and loneliness  
make you cling to  
mother's skirt  
and hide your eyes.

The teacher comes  
and tells you to join  
the other children.  
They want to meet you.

You don't know her,  
don't trust her  
but she pulls you gently  
into the classroom.

You look back at the door.  
Mother is gone.

You are alone in a room  
full of unknowns.

There are building blocks  
on the floor. Ah, familiar!  
You place one carefully  
upon another into a tower.

A clumsy kid walks into it  
and runs away. Another says  
his name is Robbie and  
he'll help you rebuild it.

Soon you get to know  
your classmates and this is  
just another place to play.  
The fear is gone.

Later on, they dress you up  
in a gown in a bed.  
Noisy, machines beep  
and tubes are everywhere.

You are afraid of what  
is going to happen  
as you leave your  
past life behind.

You remember  
the first day of school  
and have a slight idea  
of what to expect.

You see a room up ahead

as your vision fades from dull  
to bright. Someone pulls you  
gently into eternity.

Oh, yes,  
the familiar blocks on the floor  
and Robbie waiting there to help. ~  
*2008*

## **Wrecks**

My truck  
Faded paint  
Worn upholstery  
Dented doors  
Spongy brakes  
Bad compression  
Noisy muffler  
Leaking fluids  
Bent frame  
Creaking groaning  
Every stop  
Every start  
US made  
Nine-teen  
Forty-eight  
Feelin' old  
We both  
Keep truckin'  
Through life.

Swear t'God ~ *2001*



## Aquarius

She's prepared for the cold, sterile  
efficiency of hospital room bed,  
beeping monitors and the tubing.  
Every imaginable size tube in  
every available orifice  
just like a TV medical show.

It's a long dolly shot, slightly out of focus,  
with her mother's dry, emaciated body  
lying still on the white sheeted mattress  
in the center of the room.

She has brought her mother a rose  
from the sad garden at her vacant  
home.

So dry from neglect  
For days the older, dehydrated woman  
had been too weak  
to get a drink of water for the roses or  
herself before being rushed to  
emergency.

Her daughter asks if she can give her  
some water and is told that the tubes  
are taking care of air, food and all  
liquids.

She grasps the hand of the woman who  
bore her for nine months and then  
nurtured her  
over thirty years but gets no response.  
Struck with a sudden thirst,  
she rises and walks down the hall  
to get a drink from a water fountain.  
The cool, sweet taste of water  
forms a decision within her.

She will not let her mother die  
without insisting they let her have  
a few drops of this miraculous fluid.

There are nurses and doctors  
removing the tubes from the body on  
the bed  
when she returns to the room.  
An older RN pats her on the arm and  
says,  
"I'm sorry. She's gone."

That night she dreams of rivers, brooks  
and streams.  
She wakes up at 4 AM so thirsty she  
drinks two full glasses of water before  
going back to sleep.  
The next day she drinks glass after glass  
until she feels about to burst.  
Week after week she obsesses about  
water and death. Each drink may be  
the last.  
Death, water, water, death,  
So afraid of dying she can't live past  
the moment.

Months later, while looking through  
her mother's photo albums,  
She finds a picture of her young mother  
in a hospital bed looking tired  
but happy and holding a newborn.  
Until that moment she had felt nothing  
but fear of death and thirst.  
She begins to cry.

At first tiny sobs,  
then hard, breathless animal sounds  
and she feels a miraculous wetness  
on her face.

Tears flow from her eyes in streams  
down her cheeks, like brooks, like rivers  
and she starts to feel alive again, finally,  
having given water to the dead. ~ 2008

## Family Trad

What's in it for me?

Being family, I mean.  
Never gotten along with 'em.  
They always talk about 'cha  
when you're not around.  
They borrow money and ask to stay  
at your place while theirs  
is being remodeled.

What's in it for me?

They tell everyone's secrets to each  
other until there are no secrets left to tell  
So they make some up. They tell you  
you're adopted.  
And when you're convinced you are no  
longer family, they come and ask  
for a loan or a donation  
to bury Aunt Jenny or Uncle Ben  
whose own kids act like they aren't  
family, either.  
Let's have the wake at your house

or yours or, better yet, mine  
Because, if I'm not family,  
I can charge for the booze and the  
food and then serve cheap stuff, while  
keeping most of the cash in my pocket.

What's in it for me?

Oh yeah, I remember, the family  
tradition of insanity and incest. Yeah,  
plenty of crazy incest.  
And now that I have removed myself  
from all of those crazy people.  
Now that I am a family of ONE.  
There is only one thing left to do.  
I think I'll just go and fuck myself.  
That will make my own small family  
very happy. ~ 2009

## **At Last!**

Hubris makes some folks  
Write their own tombstone  
Epitaphs.

I'm no different. So,  
I search for the phrase  
that will make both friend  
and frienemy alike,  
sigh with appreciation .

This mission started when I read that  
Frost's epitaph, "I had a lover's quarrel  
with the world."

And that W.C. Field penned,  
"All things being equal, I'd rather be  
in Philadelphia" for his memorial.

After all these years,  
I've failed to find the perfect phrase  
or sentence, until tonight.

I ask you to etch upon my tombstone  
one word, three times, once for my  
friends,  
once for my foes and once for me.  
"finally,  
Finally,  
FINALLY!" ~ 2009

## **Keith's Voice**

I don't care  
how well you fucked her  
or how poorly  
she fucked you.

Brother, all of us have been fucked  
sometime or another.

Some get fucked in court.  
Some get fucked by public defenders.  
Some get fucked in prison  
by lifetime rear-enders.

Some of us get fucked by doctors  
working in a free clinic.  
Some of us deserve to be fucked but,

perhaps, I'm just a cynic.

Being fucked is the worst thing  
and the best thing anyone can be.  
Next time you feel you're getting  
fucked,  
let it be by me.

Fuckingly yours,  
KN and DgB ~ 2009

## Maybe The Last Time

Someone plays an old song  
on the digital jukebox  
just as the bartender sets down an icy  
tumbler of Vodka Rocks in front of me.  
I wonder who would play a tune from  
my teens in this young hipster's  
watering hole?  
Maybe they think it's funny to play  
a funny old song for the funny old man  
sitting at the bar.  
Maybe I played it a half hour ago,  
forgot, and it's taken this long to come  
around in the rotation.  
Maybe an old woman played this song  
and is reliving her younger days.

I never much liked this song  
when it first came out.  
But one gets used to things over the  
years.

One gets used to the reluctant  
erections, the un-smooth skin  
under now wrinkled fingers  
and the taste of bar Vodka  
instead of the top shelf brands.

Still, at the end of the song  
when that dead guy screams,  
“Come on, Baby. Light my F-I-I-I-R-E!”  
I look around, hoping there’s an old  
woman staring at me who might want  
to try to light it at least one last time  
before we both turn into the result  
of these dying, cooling, “red-embered”  
copulations—  
the inevitable gray of our ashes  
dumped into a churning urn of burned-  
out funk.

Oh, Sure, It maybe a pale shadow  
of its former self, but any way you figure,  
it’s still sex (and at my age), it may be  
the last time and if that’s satisfaction or  
resignation. I don’t care. ~ 2009

### **Thank You for the Idea, E.S.V.M.**

I burn my candle daily  
just a moment at a time.  
In hopes it will last forever  
if never let to shine. ~2007

## **Un-entitled Feelings**

The young own their dreams.

The old... seem to own  
everything else. ~2008

## The Big Bust

I'm waiting  
No rush  
It'll take as long as it takes  
tomorrow  
next week  
next year  
I'm patient  
Red, Black or  
the damned, double zero green  
It's like a roulette wheel  
What will come first?  
Love, Death or  
Insanity.  
Love is red hot  
Death is cold and black  
But insanity is full of hope  
green, waiting,  
believing there's a solution  
within the wheel as the  
round Earth spins, about to drop  
into a Red, Black or Green slot.

I'm not worried.  
I'm just crazy enough to think  
I've got time left for  
a couple more turns  
at the table before  
I go bust. ~2008



## Valentine's Day 2007

Writing a poem is like meeting someone new for a cup of coffee, some conversation and a promise to get together again soon.

Next time, maybe, it's for a movie, dinner or drinks.

You drive home reflecting on topics touched upon without coming to conclusions.

One day the poem kisses you and you kiss back, passionately.

Then you're all over that thing sticking parts of you everywhere

as you change perspectives, wrestle with conundrums and

grab concepts from the front and the rear turning them over and over again

until you are so comfortable with each other that when it is mentioned that

your belly makes you look like a naked Buddha.

You reply that gravity has not been kind to her breasts.

"Then why do you keep playing with them?" is the poetic retort.

"Because I like them that way."

Then you laugh and type more.

Pretty soon you marry and start going to all the poetry readings to meet your friends.

They tell you that you're robbing the cradle or that she looks too old for you.

Some of your friends don't like her.  
Some of them try to steal her away from  
you.  
She's yours, however,  
proof is the copyright  
at the foot of the page.  
The next day it happens again.  
You meet a new idea.  
The process starts over.  
And why not?  
There are no laws against  
Poetic Polygamy, yet.  
And, anyway, you can always  
move to Salt Lake City, Utah...  
Have a Word-filled, Poetic Valentine's  
Day! ~2007

## **And the Greatest of These...**

I often wonder if love  
is truly the opposite of hate.  
I cannot tell the difference.

My love for you  
is so strong  
I fear it will kill me.

Death and hatred are lovers.

They walk hand in hand  
along a path bordered by thorny briars  
from which sprout red flowers called  
roses.

I love you.  
I send you a rose.  
But like love, it will die soon.

Perhaps that is the difference  
between love and hate.  
One of the two lasts forever.  
Peace! Salaam! Shalom!

There are no answers here.  
Go back to your corners of the world  
and tell your people that to win  
they must have a lasting commitment  
to hate.  
We all know love loses wars.  
And besides, who loves to be known as  
a loser? I know I hate it.  
~2007

## **Geppetto's Lies**

She goes down on me.  
Cute, blue fairy wings flutter  
nervously

She begs me to say,  
"I love you."  
I tell her, "I don't. I don't."  
She pleads. So, I say it  
and every time it's a lie.

But she doesn't mind  
because when I do  
it's not my nose that grows. ~2008

## Delayed Reaction

Some people wake up at two in the  
morning finally getting the joke  
they heard at noon.

Some people finally feel the sprained  
ankle they suffered  
at the sound of the starter's pistol  
only after they've won the race.

Some people finally notice that their  
friendship has changed and other  
feelings have grown,  
only after turning over in their sleep  
to find they're no longer sleeping alone.

It's 2 AM, Luv.  
Time to wake up and laugh. ~2001

## A Painful Case

(apologies to J. Joyce)

It is a sorry waste.  
So many words used, spent  
like greyhounds after a race  
panting, dull-eyed with tongues  
hanging from the sides of their mouths  
both the winner and the losers  
never having caught the faux rabbit  
After running around the track  
showing excellent breeding and  
stamina in chasing the un-catchable  
subject of my dilemma

which is lost on the dismissing crowd  
who thinks that they understand  
immediately upon my first abrupt  
ejaculation,  
A starter pistol for sentences,  
From which this entire effort is expended  
only to say over and over,  
again and again  
three words,  
two subjects,  
one pathetic thought.  
Nothing more than  
"I miss her, I miss her, I..." ~2002

## **L.A. Rain Dance**

Rain is so rare in L.A...

When it comes,  
cars spin and slide  
all over the road  
in joyful, chaotic dance  
bumping and grinding  
against one another  
to the beat of slow thunder  
while admiring each other's  
lightning strobe-lit form  
on the dance floor called  
Sunset Boulevard.  
They come together in  
steamy embrace and listen to  
the siren's song,  
emergency vehicles  
rushing parentally to

take them in tow and  
to give them a good,  
long time-out for  
their infraction of  
dancing  
with strangers  
in the rain. ~2005

## Time Machine

Vodka fuels the time travel machine.  
The secret to time travel is liquor.  
A small amount of liquor  
and you travel back in time  
using a technique called memory.  
A large amount of liquor  
and you travel forward in time  
using a technique called black out.  
Time travel is paradoxical.  
When you use the "small amount of  
liquor memory technique"  
You go forward in time  
because you miss what happens now  
by thinking about "back when."  
When you use the "large amount of  
liquor black-out technique,"  
you lose the ability to travel back in  
memory because  
there's nothing to remember.  
If you black out in front of people,  
They will remember what you did  
for you.  
That's time travel second-hand.  
And while were talking about time,

why is that thin, third clock hand called  
the second hand?

Anyway, I suggest that the reader  
experiment with the two techniques  
and find the one that works best  
for his or her particular time travel  
needs.

Do not use tequila to fuel  
the time travel machine.  
Many times it just makes you  
stay in the moment  
and later you still remember  
all the stupid things you did  
as the room spins and puke your guts  
out all night long. ~2005

## **Star Bright**

The night sky here in the foothills  
of the San Gabriel Mountains  
is never Black.

It is salted gray with diffused light from a  
cluster of cluttered stars  
on the ground called "The greater Los  
Angeles Metropolitan Area."

The number of light bulbs there roughly  
equal to the human population  
of the world, blinking on and off in  
similar fashion to the rate of births and  
deaths everywhere, at any given  
moment.

I sit in my car watching the sky,  
peering down at the valley.

Then I turn off my headlights  
and wonder...  
Who just died? ~2004

## Roadside Diner

I hear you're worried about me...  
What gives you the right?

I've been molested by the best of  
pedophiles.  
I've been butchered by the worst of  
heart surgeons.  
I've been paralyzed by a Cerebral  
Hemorrhage.  
I've been ripped a new one by the IRS.  
I'm still alive.  
I'm still breathing, working, singing and  
writing.  
After all that,  
What makes you think that your dismissal  
of me  
So important that you should worry?  
Do you think yourself as more than  
One very, deep pothole in this  
extremely bumpy road I travel from one  
bad choice to another?

So, please, excuse me but  
I see a cute waitress at the counter  
Who, I believe, needs my very special  
attention  
Right Now.



"Hi, Baby. I'll take a coffee, black, and something hot & sweet..." ~2004

## Sympathy for the Devil

"Whoo-Hoo!"

At the job, a co-worker  
walks into the lunchroom

just as I shout, "Go to Hell!"  
into the cell phone  
and slap it closed.

"Your Ex?" he asks knowingly.

"If she's ever found murdered,  
I'd be the likeliest suspect," I say.

"Maybe something bad  
will happen to her, before that,"  
he suggests sympathetically.

"Something terrible already did," I reply,

"She married me." ~2008

## Memorial Day BBQ

This world is a dust bowl  
of dead bodies.  
Dust of the dead is  
in the air you breathe,

the food you eat and  
the clothes you wear.  
You cover your nakedness  
with the dust of the dead  
that came before you.  
Someday you will hear the voice  
thunder out of the sky,  
"Why are you naked and not  
ashamed?"  
You will answer,  
"I am wrapped in layers of your dead.  
I am not the god that kills.  
I have no reason to be ashamed.  
I am the bare-assed bastard  
who stands before you,  
looks you in the eye and  
thanks you for the free-will  
to kill in your name.  
I am the progeny of Cain because  
You let him kill Abel.  
I will do the same.  
I will kill when I am able.  
I will cloak myself in the robes  
white with that dust and proclaim,  
"I am doing my father's work!"  
We will then have a Memorial day  
And I will drink lots of beer and  
eat the sacrificial lamb-  
Barbequed... Amen. ~2005

## Lost Aged-ness

This big city can make you feel  
young, old, both or worse.

So much stays the same...  
like street names, parks,  
landmarks, eateries and hotels.  
On Alameda,  
the Terminal Annex Post Office,  
Union Station, Olvera Street Plaza  
and Felipe's.  
On Broadway there's Ptomaine  
Tommy's. Oh, yeah, it's gone.  
The Ambassador hotel on Vermont  
is gone, too.  
Tommy's Burger on Rampart, however,  
is still there. And so is the USC medical  
center where I was born,  
still on Mission Dr.  
How about the bus station  
at 5<sup>th</sup> and Main?  
Gone—now on Alemida.  
The La Brea Tar Pits  
and Angel's Flight have survived  
but with only skeletal remains  
to give testimony of past residents  
(angels, antecedents and antiquities).  
The Hollywood sign, the Brown Derby  
along with Wallich's music city  
and the record-shaped Capitol/Sony  
building are fifty-fifty,  
somewhat there; somewhat not.  
But I can still see the spirit of

my youth spent on the corner  
of Valley and Mission Drive  
where Lincoln Park's duck pond now  
holds court to Plaza de la Raza  
only a few blocks from the  
Juvenile Hall Detention Center.  
I feel old when I come to the end  
of the 710 freeway that started in Long  
Beach  
toward Pasadena but was never  
finished.  
An entire lifetime ago...  
still waiting.  
My old city.  
My young memories.  
My old body  
My place in the world.  
LA, you make me feel so young,  
so old, so living and so dying...  
lost in your size but found  
etched into the pathways  
of my graying matter.  
A maze of directions saying,  
"Go straight here. Turn back around  
there,  
make a right at the light,  
get left off on a dark corner  
of that cemetery on Whittier Blvd  
under a a concrete slab a mile  
from that unfinished freeway.  
The perfect spot of final rest  
for the search of my demons  
and the angels in this old city  
of youthful expectations

and aged poet's grief-filled  
confrontations  
of what might have been left...  
unsaid...  
Always too much,  
rarely too little  
but, perhaps this time around,  
just enough, to cut this poem  
in half and count the rings  
revealing that we are both old, new,  
young and used in Los Angeles  
Lost-aged-ness. ~2009

## **Coinology—(L.A. Love Story)**

So many questions can be decided  
by the toss of a coin.  
It's heads or tails,  
yes or no and Oh...  
occasionally, the coin lands  
on its edge.  
Verifying that if there is a Supreme  
Being,  
he owns all the comedy stores and  
whoopee cushion factories in the  
universe.

First date.  
I look into your unfocused eyes,  
past the paid bar tab on the table,  
over the tall, empty bottles of beer  
and I wonder, "Heads or tails?"

We stand up to leave and

I take your hand to steady you.  
Leaning against me,  
you put your free hand on my ass  
to keep from falling over.  
The answer is tail for you,  
Head for me and  
Breakfast tomorrow consisting of  
Bloody Mary's, "Did we's?" with a  
side order of uncomfortable,  
hung-over glances.

Now who will wash the  
puke off my car?  
Heads I do it,  
Tails you do it,  
Edge—  
we shower, go back to bed and  
see if we like each other enough later  
to wash it together. ~2005

## Missing Missive

We used to email one another.

First sign of trouble was a text  
from her sister,  
"The end is near...she is so calm  
and so beautiful."

Then there is another,  
"She has passed.... my soul too full of  
sorrow to breathe."

I wait for the next email.

When I receive it,  
possibly in a dream, it reads,  
"So peaceful here.  
See you soon."

I take comfort in that word  
and believe she knows I'll reply...  
Soon. ~2008

## When I Die

When dad would drink  
He would sing a silly song  
and change the words

It was:  
"When I die bury me  
Hang my balls on a cherry tree.  
Bye-Bye, Blackbird."

Of course,  
after he died,  
We didn't do it.

He's buried at a cemetery in LA ,  
balls firmly attached, safe from display  
upon any tree branches on these  
sacred grounds.

I don't have a song I sing when I drink  
Maybe because the only song that  
mentions  
The La Brea Tar Pits is called "Pico &  
Sepulveda."

It's doo-wop  
It requires more than just one voice and  
has no specific burial instructions

But when I die, leave my balls alone.  
Just slip my body down into the Tar Pits  
a fitting, comfortable, black repose for  
ancient anachronisms  
and old fossils like me. ~2007

## **Dead Charlotte July 2001**

I find out she's dead  
weeks after the funeral.  
I'm glad I wasn't told at the time  
nor invited to go.  
This way she is still alive to me.  
I could think, "She's just out of town right  
now,"  
Or "She's moved away or not talking to  
me"  
Any number of deceptions  
that keep her away,  
but keep her alive to me.  
Until last night when  
she came to me  
as I slept.  
"I missed you at my funeral,"  
she whispers.  
"So, what's it like to be dead?"  
I ask feeling numb, empty and  
attempting "nonchalance."  
Her voice sounds like dry,  
wind-driven leaves scratching around



the hopeless alleyways and  
lifeless back streets in my head  
as she coyly replies,

"Why ask what you  
obviously already know?" ~2001

## **Yelling, "Fire!" in an Empty Theater**

My clothes are on fire  
should I remove them?  
What else would being naked  
reveal about me to the world?

Too late for more revelations.  
There are no secrets  
left to be uncovered.  
No names of girls  
I might have turned into mothers.  
I've written it all, twice.

All that's left is this terse,  
annoying verse  
among so very many others. ~2007

## **A Last Wish For Us**

I want to remember you  
the way you were  
when we first met and  
before we ruined each other.

There are beautiful memories  
of a time before I did things  
that hurt you so much  
you went away crying.

It's a selfish wish because  
it transports me to a time  
before you discovered how  
to hurt me back. ~2006

## **Brilliant Star**

Honey, there was a time, long ago,  
when I thought I was pretty bright.

Then I heard that drinking alcohol  
destroyed brain cells.  
So I started drinking  
hoping to stop at the point  
where the "average person"  
might understand what I write.

I slipped past it.  
I should have stopped drinking  
after that first cocktail.

Now, I seem to be writing poetry  
for morons.  
How do you all like it so far?  
Don't get pissed off, just wait!  
And allow me say,  
"I think it's great!" ~2008

## Healing Transfer

I cross the street in the rain  
transferring from bus 260 to number 76  
back to my empty house  
my cold thoughts  
alone...

He is standing at the bus stop  
dressed in layers to keep warm.  
Probably going home  
from a hard day of dirty work  
smoking a cigarette  
headphones covering his ears  
listening....

We wait knowing the bus will come  
eventually.

Then, softly, he starts to sing  
rough voice straining,  
"Love for now and forever..."

Louder

"I can't live another day without you..."

Then screaming out to the street,

"Darling, I just called to wish you  
Happy, Happy Birthday , Baby.

Can't you hear me

Crying...?"

I'm embarrassed because I understand  
every note he tries to sing  
every word he shouts.  
It's how I've felt since  
she left me.  
my silent anguish now

given voice by a Stranger...  
the raindrops become glittering gems  
in the headlights of number 76.  
The squeal of brakes shatters the  
moment  
as it stops to pick us up.  
I get on the bus and pay the fare,  
expecting him to board behind me.

But as the bus starts forward  
I look back and see him  
Standing...  
rocking slowly on the sidewalk  
to the music of his sorrow.  
Waiting to teach the next traveler,  
by example,  
what happens to souls too fragile  
to get onboard the bus  
and move on. ~2005

## **My Last Woman**

I tell my last woman, ever,  
while we are in bed,

"When I die  
I want to be cremated  
with my poetry and  
have my ashes sprinkled  
on the heads of all the women  
I loved who broke my heart."

"Do you think there will be  
enough ashes to do

a job that big?"  
She says laughing in reply.

I realize here is someone  
who knows me.  
How could I ever  
leave her?

"Be sure to save a handful  
for your own head," I say.  
That line should be followed  
by a fight and angry exit.  
But, instead, she stays.

That's how I know  
she is my last woman ever. ~2007

## Triangles

My friend, Jay, has a Master's degree  
in Mathematics from UCLA  
He's relatively young and has a great  
job.  
He's been married for seven years.  
He's played classical piano  
for over twenty years.  
He also has a Bachelor's in music.  
I always ask him for answers on any  
question  
about music or math and he asks me  
about marriage.  
He knows a lot about triangles:  
Equilateral, isosceles, right-angle,  
obtuse, human.

The human triangle is the most obtuse of all.

The obtuse, human triangle is the only one

where the sum of the angles is not 180 degrees.

It's usually hotter than that

It is the feverish product of more than 98.6 times three.

Jay's dad followed Jay's mom to a motel room in Monrovia where she met a family friend in Room #3.

His dad broke down the door then shot his wife, his friend and himself when Jay was 16.

I've admired Jay for living and succeeding in his life after this tragedy of triangles.

I guess the equation for his parent's triangle is the sum of all the angles is equal to  $rt$ ,

where  $rt$  = room temperature.

Love is finite.

Death is cold.

Intelligence is passionate.

Passions can be obtuse.

I saw Jay yesterday

He was troubled

He said he had fallen in love with another man's wife.

So, I asked him,

"What is the sum of the angles of a triangle?"

He looked at me as if I were nuts  
or was making a bad joke.  
I did a 180 praying as I walked away  
that the next time I see him,  
he'll remember the human triangle  
is not 180 degrees. ~2006

## Word's Worth

Rationalization is a two-bit word.  
Save yourself twenty cents  
and just use the word "excuse."  
Words can explain anything away.  
I just had a beer with dinner, Officer.  
I swear to God, she told me she was  
twenty.  
Words fill documents with ideas.  
Documents like constitutions,  
Penal codes, Vagina Monologues,  
the Iliad and the Odyssey.

How can you tell a politician is lying?  
He's in government. Wake up!  
"A verbal contract isn't worth  
the litmus paper it's written on."  
We've heard it all before.  
But when you see  
what words can accomplish,  
The Talmud,  
The Koran,  
The New Testament,  
The Hitchhiker's Guide to The Galaxy,  
you can't help but think  
that if you can find

the right combination of words  
there is nothing you can't achieve  
with them.

I've tried them all,  
love poems,  
philosophical treatises  
by Hume,  
Socrates,  
Kierkegaard,  
Marx  
and even threats.

I've discovered one true fact.

A few words at the wrong time  
can make someone hate you.  
But a lifetime of words  
will never make anyone  
love you.

And as far as I'm concerned,  
that makes the result of actions  
priceless and words—worthless. ~2008

## **Breathe, Baby**

Hopes and dreams are not one size fits  
all.  
They are individual as every breath we  
take.  
Breathe and a moment has passed.  
Breathe and another day is gone.  
Breathe and there's a brand new sun



looking down at her with me,  
Breathe again and she is with a different  
he.

Breathe; I'm back on another day.  
Don't let it take your breath away.  
Breathe and there is time to live  
Breathe and there is time to try  
Time to find another love,  
another place to be  
inside your mind or  
outside yourself  
Suicide seems nice but,  
breathe and suddenly it's all wrong  
Breathe and your death wish is gone.

Suck in air  
Without air there is no living  
Life requires breathing.  
So, breathe. Suck it in.  
Suck in your pain,  
suck in your joys,  
suck in your memories.  
your new ones,  
your old ones,  
suck them all in. Life sucks,  
life breathes. Stick around  
If you don't like  
what's going on now  
Suck it in  
and breathe  
You will live.  
Things will change from  
one breath to the next  
until you stop.  
And then it's time to go for the light,

to get slapped on the ass  
to cry, to suck, to breathe  
and start life over by the inspiration  
of respiration once more.  
Breathe. ~2008

## **She's Home**

We always knew she would make it  
home.  
When she was born,  
the doctor tried to make her cry  
but after suction and spanking  
she remained silent. He gave up and  
was about to tell us she was gone  
but when he put her down  
and was about to speak,  
she cried because she had no one  
holding her  
she felt apart , homeless. When he  
placed her  
in her mother's arms she reached  
for the breast and grew strong  
she was home in mother's arms.

She grew up strong  
and she grew up proud  
she was a leader.  
She did three tours on foreign soil.  
But even there she did her best  
and called it home.

She's home now,  
back in her home town

with mom and dad, sisters and brothers  
and cousins and friends.  
She was always the strongest of us  
and we knew she'd make it back.  
We were all glad to have her home.  
Happy she made it.  
We just wish she'd make it back  
without the coffin and the flag.  
We hope someone was holding her  
in those last moments when she cried.  
We all hoped she'd have made it  
back alive but we're sure  
she's glad  
She's home. ~2010

### **An Easier Road to Rapture**

If men's genitals were made of  
chocolate and women's tasted like  
beer and church services felt like an  
orgasm, men would never have to ask  
for sex, women would never go  
unsatisfied and the entire world would  
be Bound for Glory,  
Hallelujah! ~2006

### **My Plumber is a Poetry Critic**

Night after night,  
I listen to the sound  
of a water leak somewhere  
in the bathroom.

After a week,  
I call a plumber.  
He takes a month  
to show up.

I'm at the computer when he  
finally knocks on the door.  
I tell him the problem and  
leave him alone to fix it.

After a while,  
I turn from my keyboard  
startled to see him standing  
behind me peering at the screen.

"Have you figured out where the leak  
is?"

"I can't find one," he replies.

"Then what am I hearing in the  
bathroom?"

He cocks his head toward my monitor  
and says,

"Just the sound of you pissing your life  
away, I guess." ~2007

## **Thanks**

Damn you and thanks, Bitch!

Yeah, I know I still owe you money.  
So, just stand in line.  
You'll get it when I do.

Wait, I'm sorry. This is a thank you note.  
Before I met you,  
I'd known some  
"Higher power" whores.  
But until you came along,  
I'd never met a woman who  
would say, "I want you to be happy"  
and finish the sentence with,  
"Bye. It's over!" Spiritually.

Wait, I'm sorry, this is a thank you note.  
You did teach me  
to take nothing for granted.  
I no longer count on the sun rising,  
night being dark or that tomorrow  
or I will ever come again.

I've lost faith in breathing,  
waking up, Vodka, Tequila, Beer and  
that four letter word that starts with  
"L" and ends with "fuck off!"

Thanks for the education on things  
I had yet to learn at fifty.  
Thank you, teacher  
for lessons I never wanted to learn.

Thanks to you, school's out forever.

I am glad of that and for your "F"-ing  
report card. I suppose you're still the  
"head of the class" but for someone  
else, now.

As for me, I'll choose masturbation over matriculation with you any time. ~2006

## **Allah Bout Bombers**

(#2 in a series of "If There is a God" poems)

The moment he detonated  
the explosives,  
He felt pain beyond any  
he had imagined  
or would have believed.  
He knew it should only hurt  
a second or two,  
but it continued  
until  
it seemed  
to last  
Forever...

I hope. ~2006

## **Leaves and Vivaldi**

It is the dead of winter in LA  
The leaves in burnt sienna, autumn  
colors  
Have finally fallen onto the pavement  
Still moist and pliable from  
This morning's warm, heavy dew  
They make no crunching sound as my  
feet  
Crush their backs against concrete.  
I pick one up and notice that, despite

the color,  
It does not feel desiccated, dry, dead.  
I hurry to get back to the office  
Where I can escape the afternoon  
eighty degree January heat into  
Cool air-conditioning.  
There hasn't been enough wind lately  
To explain the abundance of leaves on  
the ground and I wonder...  
Realizing seconds later that  
Here in L.A.'s eternal spring and summer  
The old leaves fall to the ground not  
because they are dead but only  
because the fresh, new, green ones  
sprout beneath them  
Pushing them off the trees.  
At work I look at all my young, eager,  
green, wet behind the ears co-workers  
I smile good-naturedly, as someone  
quips,  
"Look busy the 'old man' is back"  
And I wonder...  
Which one of these new sprouts is going  
to be the one, the one to knock me off  
my own particular place on this  
branch? ~2004

## **View from A 1983 Chevy Citation**

For many reasons,  
overheating not the least of these,  
My citation will not go faster than

50 miles per hour  
To make matters worse,  
the horn is broken.  
So when I am driving  
down the slow lane  
of the freeway  
And people are honking their horns  
as they speed past me  
I cannot reply in kind  
And by the time  
I raise my hand for the one finger salute  
They're gone and too far away to see it.  
Frustrating!  
But at 50 miles per hour  
When I see a sign that says  
My off ramp is a mile away  
I have well over a minute (72 seconds)  
to prepare to slow and turn off safely.  
It gives me time to see and to avoid  
what the guys in their twenties  
driving new cars at speeds in their  
eighties would hit, never get to see  
and will wonder about (For all of a  
couple of seconds as they drive past).  
And on a drive from the start of the 605  
freeway to you at the end  
I have time to think of what I will say  
when I get there  
So that on the drive back  
I can think of what I might have said  
in anger at the start, later to regret,  
Things I need never regret 'cause,  
in the end, it was left unsaid  
It has given me time to compose



this little poem as I drive home.  
There's a lesson my Chevy  
is trying to teach me  
that I should learn  
Maybe not today.  
Perhaps not even tomorrow,  
But someday.  
Because, now,  
as I view the road ahead,  
to the sides and behind  
I believe there is still plenty of time  
To gain wisdom—even at Fifty. ~2006

### **First This...**

(Then you can tell me you hate me)

(Song) The first time ever I saw...

Yeah first times  
Can you remember the first time ever?  
No not that.  
I mean, first time surprises  
Those unexpected firsts.  
The moment you first met your greatest  
love,  
The moment you first tried pot—or not  
The moment you first learned  
Something everyone else said  
they had known forever  
Like the taste of cafe latte with biscotti  
Like the pleasant wash of your lover's  
tongue  
Where you had never imagined it  
before

Like that rose with a hidden bee  
that stung your nose  
As you breathed deep that red, red  
fragrance  
Oh, you won't forget that first time

How about the first time you met me?  
Of, course you've forgotten  
It was on your birthday.  
I'll never forget it.  
Your little fingers gripping my pinkie  
Your desolate, inconsolable cries  
as they pulled you away  
As they cleaned you up  
For grandparents and aunts and uncles  
to see  
Of all my first times, in all my many years  
and In all my possible past or future  
lifetimes I'll never forget—never want to  
forget  
The first time...  
Ever I saw...  
Your...  
Face.... ~2002

## Phantom Limb

Countdown...  
"Three"  
Old park-benched war vet  
Complains that his left foot itches again  
Left leg amputated at hip  
Field Hospital Mei Lai Province, Vietnam  
1969

"Two"

Bulimic dancer backstage babbles  
"Butterflies in my stomach—again"  
Stomach gone, removed years ago  
Norris Cancer Center, L.A. 1995

"One"

I wake up 11:59 PM, with painful  
erection Dreaming about your legs  
wrapped around me pushing, rocking  
Heart ripped out of my chest still  
beating Starbucks Cafe, Pasadena  
December 1997 "Zero"

New Year's Eve 2002. We, the maimed,  
anticipating another year after year of  
ghostly innervations—Phantom Limb  
Sensations. ~2002

## Waiting Room

Hospital Emergency waiting room,  
my stomach pain unbearable.  
I look at the people around me,  
a little boy cradling a bruised arm,  
an old woman holding a young girl's  
hand  
telling her something I cannot hear but,  
I am sure, is reassuring.

A man, tattoos covering  
every bit of exposed flesh.

And on his temple is a tattoo of a woman, perhaps, a religious icon or a girlfriend.

The tat is bleeding and I joke my pain by thinking, "It must be that time of month, again." Slight comfort.

Another man, years older than I, walks into the room.

Unsteady, eyes slowly crossing, unfocused

he spots an empty chair, totters towards it, falls heavily upon it, trusting that it is strong, will support him and sustain his weight during his wait.

I start to laugh.

I can't help myself.

There is no stopping the chortles mixed between the pain, the tears, the snickers and the guffaws.

I once fell heavily in love with someone I thought was strong, supportive and whose love would sustain me as I waited my turn to succeed. She left me for someone else years ago.

When I look at the old man in the chair, I can't help but hope years from now, somewhere, as I struggle and teeter from emergency to emergency, I may also learn to trust again, even if it is only a chair. ~2009

## Wake up Call

There comes a time late in the day  
when the sun has not yet begun to set  
and you are a bit confused.

Maybe you took a nap in the afternoon  
because you started drinking in the  
morning and you wake up at about five  
or six thinking it's morning and you have  
the whole day ahead of you.

You feel there's time to get up and find  
a job, start a business, learn to speak  
French, take a trip to Ireland or sign  
yourself into rehab.  
Then, you realize, it isn't morning.

Night is falling and there's very little time.  
It feels like some greedy bastard  
has stolen hope from you  
while you slept and  
despair deflates your plans like a  
rottweiler biting into a beach ball and  
with a tiny pop, all the air gone in a puff.

Yeah, it's easy to give up  
and see nothing ahead,  
except deeper sleep, and, perhaps,  
another dream.  
Or, you can lie to yourself and pretend  
you still have enough time to go out  
get a drink and meet someone.

Time enough to fall in love,  
to break a heart or, more likely,  
life enough to have  
your heart broken  
one last time before nightfall. ~2009

## Happy Hour POV

I wonder how it's come to this?  
I'm cold.  
My head is white and  
my body is smooth as  
glass.  
My flat, round bottom is  
sitting on a bar.

I'm about to be sucked dry  
by a bored man who  
thinks he's a poet  
drinking and then writing  
these words on a napkin.

Why do they call this Happy Hour?  
~2005

## Flowers from a Stranger

The gardenias arrive at work  
Saturday just before lunch.  
I read the flower shop card.  
It's a missive from a stranger  
saying she wants to meet  
the man who got  
her bio-mother pregnant

over 36 years ago.  
"Leave a voice mail  
with a time and a place  
to meet"  
is the last line.

I call the number,  
"The man who received these flowers  
is not your father.  
He is a branch of your family tree  
that was torn off and thrown away  
before you were born.  
The time to meet was  
36 years ago and  
the place was in the hearts  
your mother discarded  
when she abandoned us both." ~2005

## **Foolishness**

I was a vegetarian  
in the late 60's.  
It was rough.  
No Amy's or Eastman's frozen entrees  
at the Ralph's.  
My friends were carnivores and, mostly,  
they'd want to hang out at Pink's  
hotdogs  
in Hollywood.  
I'd order a kraut dog, extra mustard  
and no wiener.  
Usually, they'd hand me the order  
with a wiener on the side.  
One of the stray dogs around

would get to eat the meat.  
Then I'd commune with my friends.  
One night, however,  
an older, black woman taking my order  
probably the same age as I am now,  
stopped me, put her hand on her  
ample hip and said,  
"I'm working here  
an' ain't got no time for foolishness.  
Next!"  
Her old voice was strong and husky  
in her righteousness.  
I've remembered that voice  
all these years.  
I hear it when I ask for something  
different than what life has decided to  
hand me.  
Every time I ask for Sympathy, Respect,  
Love or Faithfulness,  
I hear that old woman  
repeat those words and  
I know that it isn't just  
she talking.  
It is the voice of God.  
She's telling all of us  
standing in line with our own  
special orders that She's working  
an' just ain't got the time...  
Now, almost forty years later,  
I understand what The Voice meant—

Telling the world,  
God don't have time for all your  
Foolishness.



You want a Kraut dog, extra mustard  
and no wiener?  
Keep it simple, Stupid, and pull out  
the wiener yourself.  
You want the good life?  
You get life  
the rest is up to you.  
You want peace in the Middle East?  
You want to be president of the USA?  
Must you bother God  
with every little detail?  
Damn you and your  
special orders of Foolishness!  
If you pray for stupid things  
like Lotto numbers,  
a new car or a date  
with the new hottie at Hooters,  
you just might hear her  
stop your life with one word,  
"Next!"  
And then, you're finished, Fool. ~2003

## The Life

Cold Monday morning,  
under an overpass, up on one elbow,  
body covered in layers of  
blankets and plastic sheets,

he sips coffee, hot and black  
from a Styrofoam cup and watches  
my bus pass by as it takes me  
to my little job.

I imagine tasting that powerful, dark,  
pungent brew as our eyes meet, two  
men, both going nowhere,  
sharing one thought,  
"Ah, Coffee!"

"Life just doesn't get any better."

It's only a moment,  
then life walks up, moves us apart  
and back onto our different paths.  
~2007

## **I Tell You We Must Die**

Maybe it was a dream.  
It could have happened.  
I remember shooting hoops  
from the free throw line  
listening to Doors music  
my boom box to the side,  
off-court.

I'm just shooting,  
running,  
dribbling,  
and shooting again.  
Casual, not paying attention.  
Shoot,  
basket,  
retrieve,  
repeat.

My friend, Larry,

walks up courtside  
just as the music  
gets to the line,  
"Oh show me the way  
to the next whiskey bar."

"You've hit  
nine baskets  
in a row, Man!  
One more and  
it's an even ten."  
He turns off the music,  
tells me to concentrate  
and make this shot.

Of course, I miss.

Years later,  
I look for ways to  
achieve happiness.  
I read self-help books,  
go to counseling,  
try drugs,  
alcohol,  
sex and  
religion.

I think happiness  
is like that  
tenth basket.  
The less you  
concentrate  
on getting it,  
the more likely you are

to have it.

Larry, wherever you may be,  
press "play" on that  
ancient boom box  
and Show me  
the way to the next  
whiskey bar.

Please don't ask why, old friend.  
Please don't ask why... ~2008

## **Litter Box**

It's a hot summer afternoon  
on my first day off since I moved  
to East Los Angeles from Culver City,

I turn on the ceiling fan  
and open the front door to  
the courtyard.

My screen door is  
closed, locked and secure.  
Cooler air filters into the hot room.

I sit at my computer  
checking emails and  
writing down poem ideas.

I hear a cat at the front door.  
I remember my ex-roommate's cat  
left behind when I moved out and smile.

When I look towards the door  
I see a large black cat's rear end,  
up against the screen pissing into my  
room.

I yell, "Stop!" and the cat  
runs away while I get a mop  
and clean up the mess.

I realize I've moved into this cat's  
litter box and I plot ways to stop it,  
pepper spray, no, electrifying the  
screen, no, and then...

The natural solution presents itself.  
The cat is just marking his territory.  
But this is my territory now.

Every morning since that afternoon,  
before my usual trip to the bathroom,  
I open the front door and piss through  
the screen

I mark this room as mine.  
If the cat approaches my door,  
I open it and urinate on him, too.

He has now learned to  
stay away from my door and  
I learn a good lesson, too.

"Don't eat asparagus the night before  
you plan on pissing through the screen."  
It smells like wet pussy. ~2007

## Lolita

When I was a kid  
I had a doll.  
No, not an action figure  
but a raggedy, cloth girl-doll.  
Her name was, Lolita.

I would  
drag her about,  
lose her,  
find her again,  
sit her down,  
watch TV with her.

She was my best friend,  
my companion,  
I told her my secrets,  
I tied back her black, yarn hair  
and let my parents worry  
that I might not be  
a manly three year-old.

I was seven the last time  
I remember finding her  
in a forgotten cardboard box  
in the back of my closet.

I said out loud,  
"Boys shouldn't play with dolls  
and especially, girl dolls."  
And I threw her into the trash bin  
outside.  
I think I saw my dad smile.

A lifetime later,  
on cold nights,  
I miss my yarn-haired friend.  
I regret having callously  
tossed her away  
but understand clearly  
why so many dolls since,  
have done the same to me. ~2008

### **If There is A God III**

Why do people have sex with men?  
Men smell, they don't cover their  
mouths  
when they cough, they have penises  
and  
piss all over the place like cats  
marking their territory  
but with less accuracy.

I don't get it.  
I have friends who have sex with men.  
Most of them are women  
but a few aren't.

Damn! It makes me believe  
there is a Supreme Being.  
Because if there is a God,  
He made some people  
want to have sex with men.  
And, being a man,  
that is something for which  
I am very, truly grateful. Amen. ~2009

## I'm Sorry

The end is near...  
And you're all going to live!

You'll wake up after  
being hit over the head,  
run over by a truck or  
shot through the heart  
by someone you trusted.

Oh—you'll want to die.  
You might even try and  
fail at suicide.

But sometime afterwards,  
you will wake up and  
start to live again.  
Even in the state of Alaska or  
in Northern Siberia where  
the nights are six months long,  
morning arrives someday.

I'm sorry but you're going to live  
and all those things you let go  
when you thought you were dying,  
will come back to be taken care of  
by the new, living you.

I'm really sorry for the inconvenience.  
But that's the way it works.  
That's just the way it works. ~2008



## Medical Procedure- Monday Morning

To die without having seen  
Fellini's '8 1/2,'

or reading T.S Eliot,  
James Joyce,  
Jacqueline Susann,  
Homer,

or to feel the wind against your face,  
the warmth of a fireplace,  
your lover's touch,  
a paper cut.

To never taste  
your mother's milk or  
to feel her nipple, love  
against your lips.

The best laid plans  
of mankind's lust  
continue to reproduce  
only to end  
in dust. ~2008

## Some of Us Are Not Quite Broken

Damaged people walk around LA.  
Their defects are as obvious as a broken  
nose

mashed to one side like a painting by  
Picasso,  
a missing eye, the socket, a black hole  
in outer face, cleft palate twisting  
mouth  
into fleshy Fleurs de Lys,  
truncated arm scratching a misshapen  
cheek with a stump, empty trouser leg  
waving in the breeze a warning flag,  
"Watch out, beggar up ahead!"

Most are shaking paper cups.  
Coins jangle the familiar, rhythmic song  
of those in need.  
The beautiful people drop in a quarter,  
a handful of change or a buck  
Sometimes they are rewarded  
with a nasal grunt,  
an unfocused stare or  
a drooling, "Bless you."  
These are the homeless upper class.  
It pays to advertise.  
They are the walking poster people  
of their predicament.

It's the others,  
the damaged whose burdens are  
buried inside.  
The ones who are talking to themselves  
in quick mumbled phrases,  
*"That bastard ain't gonna give us shit.  
Don't ask him, oh, go ahead, no maybe  
not.  
Look see? He walked right by*

*and now there's that babe with her  
titties  
all showing through her tight shirt  
and those long, lean legs she too afraid  
I want to touch her to give me nothing.  
And here's that preacher man  
with his quarter and a Jesus loves you  
on his lips.  
Why don't Jesus love me five bucks  
or a bottle of wine worth?  
Hey! You just a con man for Christ."*

These are the poorest of the homeless  
caste,  
damaged beyond repair,  
completely broken.  
You don't notice until they talk  
or you get within nose reach.  
And do I give them money?  
I would but while they are  
the lowest and the broken,  
I am part of the American middle—  
class.  
I pay rent, bills and taxes.  
Yeah, I'm not completely broken, yet.  
I'm just broke. ~2006

## **Folds in Time**

Four in the morning  
One eye opens  
to see a fold in my  
threadbare comforter.  
The cold keeps me awake.

Oh, if I had a wish,  
it would require I fold paper,  
the origami myth of the  
10 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> power cranes.  
Then my wish would be granted.  
But thoughts slip to  
the folds round my eyes  
in my once smooth-skinned  
face, a poker face, in the  
5 card game where  
to fold means  
"I give up. It's over."  
There is a dog-eared fold  
in my family bible at the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm.  
"...He preparast a table before me  
in the presence of mine enemies..."  
I look around this table,  
my own last supper complete with  
the Judas called "Time."  
I could draw to an inside straight  
but instead, I decide to look up  
toward the heavens and say,  
"Lord forgive me.  
I know not what I do."  
Then with a loud sigh,  
"I hope my debts  
will be forgiven  
as I forgive my detractors."  
I whisper so lightly  
that God, the dealer,  
barely hears me say,  
"I fold."  
Those at the table  
or I disappear as time

folds back onto itself  
to the beginning.  
He deals a new hand,  
looks me in the eye  
and dares me to open. ~2008

## **Life-long Commitment**

I've always driven the cars I own  
into the ground.  
I stay with one car  
through sickness and in health  
until it just won't run anymore,  
'til the teeth in the transmission  
wear down to the gums  
and the clutch loses its grip  
and the stick on the manual tranny  
won't stand up anymore  
and the windshield is so pitted  
that I can't see out of it  
and the radio is so weak  
I can't hear it  
and the tires are so bald  
that every wet patch on the road  
provides an amusement park ride  
until the engine is running on  
two cylinders out of four  
and the oil is leaking  
into the cooling system  
and the coolant is  
shooting out of the tailpipe  
and the differential is indifferent  
and the battery gets no charge  
out of going fast

and the body is  
dented and misshapen.

You, know,  
I guess, I treat myself  
the same way.  
Wonder if  
when I die,  
I won't get taken to the morgue  
in the coroner's ambulance,  
but rather,  
be toe-tagged and sent  
to a junkyard  
by tow truck.

I think that's called Carma. ~2007

## Over

Over  
Overall,  
It's over  
It's all over  
It's all over my overalls  
When I think it's really all over  
I imagine your body being all over mine  
And it's all over my overalls again and  
again  
Until it's all over the sheets, the pillow,  
the floor and ceiling

My thoughts turn toward you like a key  
inserted and twisted in the ignition of a  
car

and the engine turns over and over  
then catches, this meditation becomes  
the start of another up and down,  
bumpy, hand shaking, teeth-rattling,  
jarring, jerking trip though my memory's  
two-lane  
going faster and faster, harder and  
harder until, overall, it's all over my  
overalls once more  
But as I listen to the fat lady sing this final  
aria  
I can tell it's really over—  
All over for now  
until tomorrow morning  
all over again. ~2009

## **Sleep, Baby, Sleep**

A car alarm is crying in the distance.  
Cop car siren speeds close  
then fades away wailing.  
the slow sound of dribbling water  
refills the toilet tank.  
The neighbors in apartment 2  
start arguing again.  
A truck rumbles heavily  
down a nearby alley.  
I listen to my heart beat in my ears  
replaced by the sound of  
helicopter blades hovering over my  
bed.  
Somewhere blocks away  
a confused cock crows.  
Somebody buy him a clock.

It's four AM for Christ's sake!  
Now, it's 6 and the shower starts in the  
room next door.  
These are the musical tones  
Brahms could not have imagined,  
sung to me by the city ,  
that keeps me awake all night once  
again.  
Just then the oldies station  
radio alarm blasts on, Beatles singing,  
"Good Day Sunshine, Good Day  
Sunshine!"  
I close my eyes to rest just a minute  
before getting up to dress for work  
attentively listening to the daylong  
cadenza warning me of tomorrow  
night's coming L.A. Bedlam Lullaby.  
~2008

## **Making Book**

I want to write a book.  
I want to call it, "Suicide for Dummies."

I'd say, "When you cut your wrists,  
don't use an electric razor."

I'd include, "When you hold that gun  
to your head, be sure the safety is off."

I'd tell you, "If you start your car  
and fall asleep having carbon  
monoxide dreams,



don't park in the street—you'll get a ticket."

I'm talking from experience.  
Actually, I think I'm pretty smart.  
But none of my attempts at suicide  
have ever worked out.

That either makes me the world's  
biggest dummy or, perhaps,  
a fucking genius. ~2009

## **Blood**

Let the blood flow onto the page  
It's not hurting anything  
And besides the paramedics will wear  
rubber gloves  
When they pick up the body  
To reveal the poem beneath...  
under... lying... it... all.  
~2002

## **Neighborhood Bar**

Two old guys are talking basketball  
at the far end of the bar  
while the big TV monotones  
statistics about numbers of  
GI's killed in some foreign country.  
The young bartender  
his back to me is  
talking up a nice looking babe  
old enough to be his mother.

She toys with him by sucking  
the pimento out of the  
toothpick-pierced martini olive.  
She licks her lips  
then her tongue  
explores the green oval-shape  
before slipping it  
into her mouth and smiling.

I need another tequila shot  
but my chances of making  
eye contact with  
the bartender  
are roughly equal to  
the weather-guy on TV  
getting his Doppler prediction  
of "No rain until Friday!" correct.  
I could go home but  
my TV gets rotten reception  
and all I have is half a bottle  
of Vodka in the freezer.  
So I stay put,  
flick my glass onto the floor,  
apologize for the mess  
and, while I have his attention,  
I order a double Tequila  
just in time for NBA highlights.  
I already know the score.  
I won this one. ~2008

## I Will Not Go to Your Funeral

Your daughter,  
your family,  
your friends,  
your students,  
ex-husband,  
ex-lovers in  
little groups  
chatting,  
crying,  
laughing,  
reminiscing about  
how you touched them.  
I would stand  
aside, alone,  
at a distance from the  
mound of freshly dug  
earth  
This place,  
your final home,  
beneath a garden of  
dying flowers  
watered by tears of  
those who will miss you.

I am a ghost who  
can not miss you anymore.  
I have no need  
to mourn at your funeral.  
So many years,  
I felt your passing  
from my life to your own.  
Perhaps, now,

someone in another place  
will know how  
to live with your  
gentle, sensitive spirit.  
God knows, I never did.

But most nights,  
when sirens wail  
and dogs howl,  
I still ache  
for the will  
to have learned how  
in that short time  
we had together  
while we were both alive. ~2006

## **A Tug On Your Coat**

There are a few things  
I've heard and learned  
on my road not to complete college  
that I would like to share.

First, to have a friend  
you must have the  
predisposition to be a friend.

Living in the past  
reduces the time available  
for living in the present or the future.

When objects collide  
something called Entropy happens  
and they can never be the same again.

Divorce is an attempt  
to reverse the process  
but it only proves the point that  
you can never be the same,  
especially your bank account  
and credit score.

Later, when you meet someone new  
the name of Entropy is changed to  
Baggage and it all starts over again.

Wear a condom at all times  
but specifically when playing sports like  
Baseball, Football and Golf.  
You never know  
when you will get to  
first base and beyond,  
plant it between the uprights  
or get a hole in one.

To those who use Schrödinger's cat  
to explain the observation  
of sub-atomic particles  
and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle,  
I say the cat is always DEAD unless  
observed to be otherwise.  
However, you should keep clipping  
coupons  
for kitty litter and food  
because those critters have  
nine lives and you just never know.

The Bible is a good reference book

but the dictionary has  
an easier alphabetical plot  
and contradicts itself less.

If someone asks  
if you have a small penis,  
tell them that dick size is relative  
and that you use  
the formula  $E=MC^2$   
to measure yours.  
Its size can only be stated  
in light-years.  
So, .00006 is HUGE!

I'll let go of your coat, for now,  
but I suggest you take it to a tailor  
and have him let it out a bit.  
Because the longer we live  
on this road,  
the more room  
we all need to grow. ~2007

## **Almost Right**

She had a brilliant mind.  
She used to say  
there was no "one" person,  
no "one love" for anyone.

She believed there were  
thousands of perfect loves  
to make each of us happy.

We argued.

I told her she was wrong  
and would not listen.

But, she was right, in a way.  
I was right, in another.

Perhaps there are thousands  
of people in the world  
that can bring us joy.

But I know it took only one  
to destroy  
mine. ~2010

### **If I Die**

If I die while we're fucking,  
It will prove I had absolutely  
no idea what was coming. ~ 1998

### **It'll Kill You**

If I smelled like beer,  
I would want to drink myself down  
from head to bottom until there was  
nothing left but gas. One by one each  
bubble would burst, leaving behind a  
momentary aroma, some familiar  
olfactory memory of the brew or  
perhaps just an onomatopoeic,  
one word poem about my dad's death  
from too much drink,  
"Pop!" ~2006

## Rainblows

A children's bible story tells us the rainbow is a reminder of God's promise never again to bring about the end of the world by flood.

Now, I am told that the rainbow is a prismatic effect of the sun's rays on water droplets in the air.  
We see rainbows in waterfall mist,  
lawn sprinklers on sunny days and  
distant rains.

There must be moisture  
for a rainbow to appear.  
I used to believe that a rainbow  
was a promise of good weather  
and smooth sailing,  
especially, if I was in love at the time.

Now, of course,  
I understand that  
when someone is looking up  
and enjoying their rainbow.  
Somewhere else,  
someone else,  
maybe you, perhaps me but someone,  
must be standing in the rain. ~2010



## The Crushed Rebellion Of 1996

Drunk, driving home  
from another topless bar  
one night through  
El Monte, California,  
I drive side streets to avoid  
watchful cops and pass through  
neighborhoods where poor folks  
keep pens of  
chickens, rabbits and geese.

Comestibles growing up to be  
butchered and eaten by families  
of minimum wage-earning parents  
here from other countries  
trying to find their part of  
the American Dream.

Suddenly, as I near a driveway,  
I see movement, too close to the  
ground  
to be a person, but more like a carpet  
unrolling onto the road.

In headlight flash, I see rabbits.  
Dozens of rabbits crossing the road  
and I can't stop or veer away.  
I hear the thump, thump, thump  
as I hit and kill bunny after bunny  
and then continue down the road  
hoping no police siren,  
hue and cry will chase me.  
But the rabbit die quietly.

I escape. I get away  
to drink and drive another day.  
The image of those rabbits  
and the carnage I caused  
haunts my dreams that night.  
I see the pen door closed  
but left unhinged in a careless moment.

I hear the rabbits talking, plotting  
and planning their escape.

It is time and the largest of them  
slams his body against the door  
once, twice crying out to his fellows,  
"Follow me to freedom and life!"  
The others push against the door  
until at last it swings open  
and they tumble out  
furry balls of hope  
running in circles until the big guy  
shows them the way out.  
"Follow me to into the world!"  
Out through the back yard,  
to the driveway,  
around the parked pickup  
and into the street to be met  
by me,  
Dan garcia-Black-Toyota-Death.

I wake up feeling nauseated,  
the bunnies, the death vehicle  
but mostly last night's tequila shots.  
A song plays in the back of my mind.

It takes me moments to identify  
a Bob Dylan tune called,  
"Subterranean Homesick Blues"  
Last lines,  
"Don't follow leaders.  
Watch the parkin' meters."

Sound Advice for humans  
and rabbits alike. ~2007

## **What It Is To Be a Man**

Don't cry, even if your new designer  
jeans are torn by a protruding nail on a  
display  
at J. Crew and you know that this type  
of tear will be visible even after  
a French weave.  
Wait until you're alone to shed a tear.

Don't ever tell your woman that you  
love her, even if losing her would  
feel worse than going blind, losing a  
limb or ripping your favorite shirt on a  
badly built shelf at Urban Outfitters  
or Banana Republic.

Don't ever say, "I don't know," even if  
they're talking about the half-life  
of "enhanced" uranium or how it feels  
to be gang-raped in prison or what a  
bummer it is to get your period just  
before Prom Night and how the water

weight and swelling make your new dress so tight you can't zip it up.

Don't ever admit you're lost, even when the gas gauge is in the red and the needle is pinning the "E" in empty. And if some female tells you to ask for directions, just repeat this phrase, "I know, it's around here someplace," over and over.

Don't ever feel sorry for strippers, even when they tell you their man beats them up, takes all their money for drugs and has sex with their daughters and their sons! They just want you to tip them big. Why should you? Their man is just going to take their money away from them for drugs anyway. Tip 10% unless they discuss the half-life of enriched uranium while they fondle your cyclotron and stroke you to a reactor meltdown during a VIP lap dance. Then 20% is not unreasonable.

Finally, love your children. Love them so much you will work seven days a week, 12 months a year and take vacation pay only to buy them presents on their Birthdays, Christmas and on Valentine's Day (if they're girls). Do

everything you can for them even when the Credit Card companies are taking you to court and putting liens against your property. Do it because that's what being a man is all about. It's about accepting responsibility for your progeny and, in the end, giving unconditional love to them because of all the people you have ever loved or known, they deserve it most because they are your kids.

And if you think that last sentence is "begging the question," you are not a Man. ~2007

## What It Means

To be young again!  
People wish that too often  
for it to mean anything  
anymore.

It's like saying, "I'm fine,"  
"Have a good day."  
Or "I love you."

If there were a labor union for clichés,  
all these overworked words  
would be on strike  
for higher meaning.

Besides, if everyone had the opportunity  
to be young once more,

they'd probably just make  
the same mistakes all over again.

I know I always do. ~2010

## **The Night Love Died**

On the night love died,  
the face on the moon  
stopped smiling and  
the streetlights cast  
a lonely shadow  
walking home to  
an empty bed sleep had  
immediately abandoned.

On the morning  
after love died,  
the sun rose at  
the appointed time  
but shone less brightly  
than the day before.

The usual breakfast grew cold,  
uneaten and was later joined  
with inspiration and ambition  
in the trash.

Obligation, however,  
continued its day  
working and paying bills.

Rain fell sporadically  
well beyond forty days

and forty nights while  
an ark floated away  
upon tears from  
love's burial site.

There was never a dry place  
upon which to land again.  
Just as well, because  
the couple in the cargo hold,  
Hope and Faith,  
had been pushed overboard  
by Depression and were lost. ~2010

## **The Years...**

If it had been my choice,  
I would have lingered  
with you well passed aged-ness.  
I would have told you,  
"You look beautiful in that dress."  
Your face eroded with crevasses  
would be to my eyes  
as young and beautiful  
as the day we met.  
If it had been my choice.

If I'd had a voice in the matter,  
I would have seen in you  
the same young beauty  
you were at the moment  
I became aware of you  
My thoughts turning us  
into one complete being—  
forever new. If it had been my choice.

But it was yours and now  
in the years since you left,  
during this chance meeting,  
I must admit I find,  
upon gazing at your countenance  
and my mirror, the years...  
have not been kind. ~2007

## Muse-ings

I see a bright, white light and  
As I move closer my head bows toward  
The blank page on the computer  
monitor  
I'm falling asleep.  
But just as I am about  
To slip into a dream I hear  
"So dis is wat you drug me away from  
the party for?"  
I immediately jerk awake  
with the eyes of my eyes wide open to  
see  
It is my Muse and she's drunk  
Again.  
"My pearls before slime.  
Dat's it. Slime, swine, swine, slime.  
Mix the coconut with the lime,  
Give me a rhyme alla da time.  
Slime,  
Rhyme,  
Alla da Time..."  
She sing-song, slurrily recited.  
"You're repeating yourself," I interrupted.



"So what? You slime bucket, un-original,  
Idea-less, pen pushing  
Homo Sapi, Sapi- you sap..."  
"Stop it!" I interrupt again,  
"It's true. You do inspire me but it is  
I who gives poignancy  
and understanding to that  
minor inspiration with my own  
experience  
and human perspective."  
"Human! Bah!  
I wuz having fun and  
Terpsichore was about to show us  
a new line dance move  
When I get the call—  
'Go help Dan out of his writer's block.'  
Hell. I show up and you're asleep at the  
wheel,  
And think itz no big deal, cause you  
don't hear no tires squeal.  
Don't you know how important it is when  
I choose  
To reveal the inner rhymes in your  
Slime swine alla time literary nursey  
crimes..."  
"Shut up!" I scream,  
"Your rhyming is getting worse.  
Just give me a starting point and go  
back to your party."  
"Gimme, gimme, Give. Me." she  
mimicked.  
"No mister Smartass Slime head Goo-  
Goo-Guru.

Rhyme this: The slimebag never wrote a  
thing of his own, 'cept for the times  
when she  
threw him a bone.  
Oh, damn, that's not it.  
Oh yeah, now I remember, Rhyme this:  
"Up yours, Dumbass!"  
Then she disappeared.  
I sat there for a quite a while trying to  
discern  
the difference between observation  
and inspiration.  
And then I wrote this poem about both  
which I say proves her to be  
so, so wrong.  
I think. ~2004

## **It's Easy Not To Care**

Your friends are all broke  
and so are you  
but you don't care.

There are sick people everywhere  
and then you sneeze on the guy  
sitting in front of you on the bus  
but you don't care.

You feel like you want to die  
after that bitch breaks your heart  
but nobody cares  
and you wonder why.

Simple, it's easy not to care.

I think we established that  
fourteen lines ago. ~2010

## Good God!

Billions, BILLIONS,  
Not thousands,  
Not millions,  
B-i-l-l-i-o-n-s  
On a glass slide  
Called the Universe.  
Under a microscope  
Being watched by  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Insert Name of Deity here).  
Oh (See above)!  
Help us or, at least,  
Help me to  
Get the apartment,  
Find the lost puppy,  
Win the Lotto.  
Hear my plea.  
Can you see me?  
I'm the one waving at you  
Up here in the  
Left hand corner  
of the glass.  
My name is Dan.  
Can we be friends?  
Amen. ~2007

## AM Drive

I notice on my drive to work  
that my car has a hangover.

It can barely see through the smeared windshield because of the bright, reflecting chrome bumpers of damn cars cutting into its lane.

My vehicle is irritated and it honks—repeatedly.  
It wants to park by the side of the freeway and idle but it knows a cop car would harass it and it couldn't possibly pass a field sobriety test right now.

Earlier might have been better but it stopped at a service station and filled up on a mix of gasoline and ethanol.  
One should never mix fuels when one has a hangover.

It needs some "hair of the dog" but the canines in this town are too quick  
to be caught by my slow, cranky, aching ride.  
The car with the hangover is driving me to drink.  
I see a liquor store sign near the next off ramp,  
"Guinness in Bottles and Cans!"  
Maybe the car will feel better after a brew.

I truly believe,  
at this moment,  
we are both at least  
a pint low. ~2006

## Little Mermaid

The DVD, "Little Mermaid" is playing on  
the small TV in my teen-age daughter's  
bedroom.  
She is asleep.

Before turning off the set, I look at the  
chair next to her dresser.  
Padded, push-up bra, tiny, thong  
underwear and a T-shirt that has the  
word "Slut" in gold glitter across the  
chest.

I want to wake her up and reminder of  
the price and pain that little mermaid  
paid for leaving mom and dad to go off  
with that handsome prince in the story.

But "Let her sleep" whispers in my mind.  
She, like the rest of us, must learn  
her own lessons and, besides,  
who listens to their dad at that age,  
anyway?

I turn off the TV and close the door  
quietly behind me. I leave her to her  
dreams; hoping they all have a happy  
ending. ~ 2008

## Mission Statement

I believe I am average.  
I like average.  
I understand average.  
I cannot comprehend  
Genius.  
That's because I'm average.  
I understand stupid.  
Some of my best friends are stupid.  
They go to college their entire lives  
in an attempt to become average.  
I don't study.  
I get along with my stupid friends.  
They seem happy.  
They love beer and barbeque.  
The few geniuses I've met don't seem  
happy. They want to be recognized for  
their genius.  
But other geniuses rarely give praise.  
The average don't say much to genius,  
except, "I don't get it."  
Stupid is easy to impress.  
A card trick,  
a new computer game that's just like  
the old computer game but with more  
blood or a big set of boobs.  
Boobs are impressed by boobs.  
Geniuses are not impressed by genius.  
Average likes average.  
I like being average.  
I know that if you like me,  
you must be average, too, or stupid  
but you're no Genius. ~2008

## In a Perfect World

No one but a one-legged, diabetic blind man whose left arm has fallen asleep and whose right hand has slipped off his dog's harness as the white cane falls out of his hand and lands on the concrete apron with a loud snap at the intersection of "Hispanic Name" Avenue and "Some Dutch Guy" Blvd. startling his canine helper into yelping loudly as it runs into the path of a semi-truck driving on the wrong side of the street (so it doesn't stop to help), would ever consider my life "perfect." ~2006

## Anomaly

To poets with day jobs  
Yeah... It's finally over!  
The walking prison called work is over.  
Quick! Get to the local coffee house,  
pull off that tie, shed the uniform apron,  
unbutton the top buttons  
of that goddamn shirt,  
spit out the shit from the  
shit eating business grin  
that you're required to wear on the job  
at all times and see if you can  
remember how it feels  
to have a real smile on your face.

Now with your cafe latte, your pad  
and your pen,  
sit down to ink out the pattern of your  
multi-dimensional soul onto the blank  
impatient  
two-dimensional page  
She waits, hot and ready,  
for your rush of words,  
multi orgasms of metaphors and images  
shooting wild streams onto and all over  
that aching lover (the wanton whore),  
the blank page.  
That white faced virgin is staring at you  
demanding your pen's pumping  
onslaught.  
Wanting you to cover her. Begging you  
to fill her up—both sides...  
And you can't think of a fucking thing.  
You can't remember the myriad ideas  
that plagued you all day, which made  
you hate the work, the boss, the  
computer, the customers and the  
meetings.  
Made you hate all those annoyances  
that kept from wrapping yourself around  
the Muse.  
And now you are impotent, a limpdick,  
a droopy hanging wang—but this time  
it's the Big head instead of the usual  
other. In mental stammer you say the  
familiar incantation, "This has never  
happened to Me before. Maybe a  
drink, smoking some meth, the chronic  
or getting laid, can shake me out of this



blah, blah bland lack of mental hard-on."

You try one. You try them all—twice and still no brain stiffy. You hate this feeling, you want to cum loads of metaphorical verbiage but it won't happen.

"Laddie, You're working with a soggy noodle."

You can't "beam it up, Scotty."

It's just Ernest's nada, nada, nada and, oh yeah, even more nada.

Goddamn work. Fucking people at work. They're the ones to blame. If only... Then the answer arrives with a celestial choir chord. An epiphany! I think you've got it, Pygmalion!

Make yourself button up all the buttons on that shirt.

Tie the goddamn tie back on. Pull on that stinking uniform apron on and put the shit back into your shit eating business grin. Now tell yourself that you absolutely, must get back to work in five minutes.

And stand back, Baby! Cause now the big head is hard and hot and the cum of words is fast, black, inky and full of sticky ideas. Shooting jets of word images all over the page.

The minutes tick away—You convince yourself that it's O.K. to be a little late to work today, or, for that matter, real late for work cause the pay off is that you

know that as long as there's flow they're just ain't no way you're going to go to that fucking little job...

Whose true purpose has suddenly been revealed to you and, Oh Jesus god, now you get it! Now, the reason has finally become real to you. As real as the monthly, reoccurring and unavoidable sound of your landlord banging on the front door demanding last month's late rent check. ~2000

## Hi Dad

Hi, Dad.  
You're looking older  
and more tired every day.

I remember when  
you were the strongest  
of them all.  
My heroes,  
I mean.

But now with your dyed hair,  
mullet cut,  
yellow teeth  
and sagging butt,  
you're a joke,  
an embarrassing  
caricature that I wished  
would disappear.

Until this morning

when I discovered you  
under the shaving cream,  
Staring back at me  
through the bathroom mirror. ~2007

## Olfactory Nonsense

Words are meaningful.  
Sounds are evocative.  
The word 'olfactory' is  
both meaningful and evocative.  
It reminds me by sense of smell  
of the gardenias  
my parents took so much time  
to nurture and grow  
into fragrant white blossoms,  
my dad having turned to gardening  
when he lost his job,  
and we fell on hard times  
after the ol' factory closed down. ~2008

## **Pasadena** Dedicated to the BarCelona Restaurant

Pasadena, you are an old lady  
in a sun hat smelling your roses.  
You are a young black woman  
walking down Colorado Blvd.  
to the sound of a sensual Samba.  
Pasadena, you are an old man singing  
the blues  
on the street with his dog  
guarding a Starbucks cup

doubling as a tip jar.

You are traditional, staid,  
wearing a white collar  
worn so long and so frayed  
it has turned blue.

Pasadena, you are the Green Hotel  
envy of the Hiltons.  
You are rich with the  
art of the poor on your streets.

I walk past restaurants I cannot afford,  
and smiling women I cannot afford,  
and clothing stores I cannot afford,  
but I appreciate the street music  
and I drop a few coins  
into an open saxophone case.

Pasadena, you could have been  
another Los Angeles metropolitan  
sprawl.  
But as I step left, right, left  
through your present, into your future—  
the monument to your history.  
I'm glad you have remained true to  
yourself  
and not become another small town  
LA footnote at the bottom  
of the San Gabriel foothills.

Pasadena, you are an old lady but,  
Baby, you are young at heart.  
You are both very cool and very hot

You're my old lady  
and I love you. ~2005

## **The King of a River in Egypt** (Open Letter to What's her face)

Bad things happen to bad people.  
Sometimes good people do it to them.  
Sometimes bad people then beat the  
shit out of the good people that hurt  
them.

Sometimes bad people just  
beat themselves up for years,  
thinking that the good people  
must have been right to cause them  
pain.

The good people are, after all,  
good people.

Bad people are just like everybody else.  
If you cut us, do we not  
stick a shotgun up your ass  
and pull the trigger?

If you love us, do we not  
cheat on you like the good people  
and everybody else do or does?

But, I digress.

Point is,

I've been beating myself up for so long,  
now, that nothing a good person can  
do will ever hurt me in any way again.

Maybe You don't think it's true.

Maybe You think you are a good  
person.

Maybe You think I'm acting like a child.

But I am "The King of Denial"  
and the memory of you  
my only subject. ~ 2007

## The Last Poem

When the last poem is written  
It will be translated poorly  
Into every language and  
Will be understood by everyone.  
And everyone who hears it,  
Who reads it alone or  
Listens to it being read in a stadium  
Surrounded by thousands of people  
Crying,  
Laughing or just  
Smiling, will know  
That they have experienced  
"The last poem that will ever be  
needed."  
They will understand, finally,  
That it is more important  
To experience 'being here' than to  
know why they 'are' here.  
They will understand that heaven and  
hell are two names for three things that  
are one—  
The here,  
The now and the  
We.

Be my heaven,

Be my hell but,  
Damn it,  
Be it now.  
I cannot write the last poem alone.  
I did not write it yesterday.  
We may not have a tomorrow.  
Live while you have life to do it.  
The last poem will end  
with the word into which you were born.  
It will be shouted by a Greek chorus  
as your mother pushed again and again  
And until you were free to hear it.  
Listen.  
It's there inside.  
Telling you that the time  
to push past and free  
of these bonds is  
"Now!" ~ 2003

## **You Gotta Love It**

Love is a red heart cut from heavy card stock and pasted onto a white, filigreed paper doily.  
It is the words like "Dear, Honey and Darling" written with permanent marker upon the empty, crimson face of this handiwork.

Well, no, that's not it, exactly.

Love is how you feel at the smell, touch, taste, sight and sound of a human being that you trust with your trust.

It is faith larger than a mustard seed  
that merges your loneliness with  
another's to create fulfillment of a need  
you never before realized  
required resolution.

No, that's not it, either.

Love is all the suicide threats,  
the nights without rest,  
the touch of hand to hand  
or of lips to a breast.  
It's all the words spent, obsessed  
with Sestinas and Shakespearian  
Sonnets.  
Saying some things and, yet,  
still not quite getting it.

It may be impossible to express love in  
words  
but if you take love and simmer it  
over the cold fire of misunderstanding  
until it is a semi-solid mass  
of writhing, seething, undulating  
concentrated emotion,  
you will have the recipe for Hate.

That is a very easy thing to feel and  
to understand and about which to  
write.

Hate is simple while love is complex.  
Perhaps, that is why, Oh my Brother.  
There is so much of one in the world  
and so little of the other. ~ 2009



## To The Broken Wing

Why does your matter  
matter?  
Are you not mostly  
spirit?

So why should  
matter  
matter  
to your spirit?

It is because  
matter and spirit work together  
In direct proportion  
to courage.

Be brave in spirit and  
your body will overcome  
whatever  
the matter.

Take heart,  
my broken-wing,  
For then the spirit within  
can heal all that really matters! ~ 2007

## Godz Judgments

My younger daughter's name is Lisa.  
In Spanish that means smooth.  
I love her and her older sister.

Her sister's name is Melissa.  
In Greek that means  
Honey.

My kids are smooth  
and sweet as honey.

They are the best I've ever created.  
They are the opposite of me.

My name is Daniel.  
It means God is my judge.

If God judges me for whom I am,  
then I will be damned.

If he judges me for my daughters,  
eternity will be  
sweet and smooth for me.

Amen. ~ 2009

## **I Know What's Broke**

My friend and poet, Wanda,  
reads a poem about  
broken hearts.

She says she's never seen one  
and doesn't understand why  
the experience of losing love  
is attributed to breaking  
an internal organ.  
Why not a liver or a kidney?

When a relationship ends  
and I am cast into life's recycle bin  
like unsolicited, spam email,  
it's my stomach that twists up  
and my lungs that can't  
catch their breath.

Stupid heart's not broken.  
It keeps pumping away  
like nothing happened  
while my guts feel like  
I am Prometheus  
chained to a rock  
and waking up every morning  
to an eagle eating out my insides.

Losing a lover is nothing about  
a broken heart.  
But I've noticed it does affect  
a much larger part of my physiology.

When I am tossed aside  
for the next one in line,  
I must admit  
I know what's broken.  
Because being dumped always kicks  
my Ass. ~ 2009

## **Total Recall?**

It happens every once in a while.  
Part A won't stiffen enough  
to go into part B.

Then all the lies and  
kind words begin.  
"I must have had too much to drink,  
It's the first time THIS  
has ever happened,  
Must be my blood pressure meds."  
And "Don't worry about it.  
It happens to everybody.  
I prefer the cuddling anyway."

Just in case it happens again,  
I'm going to be prepared.  
I saw an ad online  
where I can get the perfect  
cure to this rare problem  
at a place down the street  
from where I work.

It's a tattoo parlor.  
I talked to the artist there  
and she assures me she can fix it.  
Along the shaft of part A  
In 14 pt Arial bold type  
She will print, "Made by Mattel in China"

If it ever happens again,  
I'll point to it and just say,  
"I must not have gotten the recall  
notice."  
~ 2007

## World Without Love

In a world without love  
People start relationships  
with people they perceive  
to be smarter,  
richer or  
sexier  
than themselves.

Then they say, "Goodbye"  
and walk away  
when they find  
someone perceived  
as even more  
intelligent,  
financially stable or  
hot-looking.

That's what people do  
in a world without love.

In a loving world,  
people respect and admire  
less selfish qualities.

Can you tell me,  
what kind of world  
this is?

I think I've gotten confused  
about it in my life once—  
a couple of times. ~ 2007

## The Twisted

The band is straight, geriatric standards  
The audience a mixed bag of  
newlyweds  
and nearly-deads  
at the Hollywood Italian restaurant  
just off the strip.

We are led  
to an empty table  
Next to a group full of giggles and  
squirms  
who sound like drunk adults  
turning into children  
just before they pick a fight  
or pass out.

A few minutes later I notice  
one of the giggle gang  
next to us,  
a lovely, dark-haired girl,  
gets up and walks around  
to another chair.  
She hobbles.  
Disfigured limbs.  
The others at the table, too,  
are distorted, misshapen.  
One so short she is the same height  
standing up as sitting down.  
The table is a sideshow  
to an oldster's  
"Nine Inch Nails" band.

My date folds  
an origami rabbit  
out of the desert menu.  
But the attempt goes horribly wrong.  
The rabbit's insides fall out,  
one ear is lopsided and  
the other is torn off completely.

I say, "That rabbit belongs  
at the other table."  
And I begin to laugh  
so hard,  
So loudly,  
So incessantly,  
that one twisted girl gets up  
and tells me I am cruel  
I am rude  
and I should leave.

But with tears in my eyes,  
I cannot explain to her why  
I cannot stop laughing.  
I cannot stop to explain  
I am not laughing at them.  
I am laughing at fate.

I cannot stop to explain  
how I envy them  
their failed folds,  
all their defects blatantly displayed  
for all the world to see and to accept  
or not.

Unlike mine

years hidden deep inside,  
only now showing through my laughter  
as my own twisted demons cry. ~ 2002

## Ugly

This city is full of ugly people.  
They are visible everywhere.  
Most of them seem to like to hang  
around  
wherever I am.

I stop at Starbucks  
for a frappuccino light  
and the line is full of them.  
Ugly people in singles, couples  
or large groups are always around.  
And why not?  
God must love ugly people,  
He made so many.  
These ugly people seem to care  
for each other.  
They hug and kiss as they  
push strollers while cooing  
at the contents.  
These ugly people  
all act like they are normal.  
It's like they don't know  
they are ugly.  
They don't get it.  
They think they deserve the love  
of other ugly people  
and have a right to happiness.



I don't get it.

All these ugly people together, living,  
loving like nothing is wrong with them.  
Don't they have mirrors?  
Besides, the worst part is  
that all these ugly ones are everywhere  
and think I'm one of them.  
But they're wrong!

If I were one of them,  
I would have an ugly someone to love  
me.  
I would be happy like they are.  
But instead I am alone  
and that proves, I'm not one of them.  
No matter what the fun house mirror  
I use to shave each morning reflects.  
~ 2010

## **Closer and Closed**

Open Up! Close Down!  
Open up. Close down.  
Open? Close?  
Open clothes.  
Clothes down.  
Open and close, close, closer.

Up, down! Up, down! Up! Up! Up!  
Down... and close.  
Down... and closer.  
Closed down in clothes-less,

closest, closeness... ~ 2001

## **FAB**

We were talking about  
the Beatles when I told her  
I couldn't like anyone  
or anything  
so many people thought  
was wonderful.

"Oh yeah? Well,  
what about air?  
Everyone seems to be  
breathing it these days."

"Let me tell you about air,"  
I sneered, "It has oxygen  
in it. And oxygen oxidizes.  
When your cells become  
too oxidized  
you grow old and die."

"If you could stop breathing,  
you could live forever."

"Is that how the Fab Four  
plan on achieving immortality,"  
She joked?

I sighed and said,  
"So far, only John  
and George get it." ~ 2007

## Just Do It

At a poetry venue in LA,  
the host asks a question,  
"Who has something to read,  
we absolutely MUST hear?"

Everyone has something  
they want to read.  
But to stand up and say  
you have a poem everyone Must hear  
is to have swallowed a large order  
of super-sized hubris (extra ham).

It puts one's writing into perspective,  
though.

So, did you have to hear this poem?  
Was it an absolute MUST?  
Maybe not.  
But that's okay.  
There was enough hubris in me that  
I got up and read it anyway. ~ 2008

## Malibu Stacy

She's tall, blonde and beautiful.  
I've always held it against her.

But tonight at the 35'er in Pasadena,  
she's the only bartender around and  
I'm the only customer in town—drinking.

I ask for a beer and tomato juice.  
She says, "Try it with our Bloody Mary mix.  
If you don't like it, I'll buy."

I take a drink and it takes me back  
on a time trip when I would steal a sip  
from my mother's beer when she wasn't  
watching.

I haven't talked to mom for years.  
She doesn't know how to be a mother  
to a grown man with a shattered heart.

I look at Stacy, and even though  
mom was dark, average height  
and pretty, I see similarities.

The beer tastes good but  
the reminiscence about  
my mother doesn't.

I close my tab and go to another bar  
where, hopefully, the bartenders won't  
make me feel so much like family. ~  
2007

## **Now Go!**

If you're reading this  
things are not so bad.  
No matter how painful it may seem,  
you are still alive.

If you're reading this

there is nothing you can't overcome.  
No matter how great the loss  
you are working to move past it.

If you're reading this  
you are searching for hope.  
You are looking for it in the words as  
the words look back  
and tell you it already exists within you.

If you are reading this you have strength  
you have hope you have a future  
before you.

Now go live it. ~ 2007

## **The Hands of Time**

I'm sitting at my favorite bar  
when I notice the clock over  
the cash register.  
One hand is bent perpetually  
at 8 o'clock.  
The other is lying  
against the glass face  
between the numbers 7 & 5.

I ask the bartender,  
"Hey, D! What time is it?"  
She looks up at the timepiece  
and says, "It's fucked-up o'clock."  
"Yeah," I reply,  
"That's one fucked-up clock."  
D says, "Dude, it's old. Give it a break."

I recognize the truth  
and the logic instantly.  
When I was young,  
I remember my clockworks  
pointed straight up at the twelve  
every morning  
and many nights, too.  
Nowadays,  
it likes to hang  
somewhere around 5 or 8 o'clock.  
Just proving that  
nothing lasts forever,  
especially a body part  
that rhymes with CLOCK. ~ 2006

## Lights

When the gods turn down the brightness  
control on the sun and the colors run  
away from the sky one by one  
Yellow to orange to red and finally  
deep violet until darkness covers the  
beach.  
No moon; just the stars and our little fire  
of scrounged scraps and driftwood built  
in the concrete ring on the beach put  
there  
to keep us from burning down  
all the sandcastles left waiting for  
the high tide.  
Faces of my wife and two daughters  
animated by the leaping light of the  
flames

Laughing and smiling at their private  
little girl jokes  
Roasting marshmallows; wishing they  
hadn't forgotten the grahams and  
chocolate  
Watching the green phosphor light  
generated by the waves as they crash  
thunder onto the shore and the few  
lovers hand in hand walking along the  
crooked line of water's teasing dance  
with the sand  
Safe with mommy, daddy and the lights  
from the guard shack only about a mile  
away  
At peace with the elements  
Air, Earth, Water and Fire.  
My youngest notices first and speaks  
out,  
"Daddy, look! The lights from the little  
house are gone."  
I look. She's right. It's probably 9 o'clock  
and the guards have left for the night  
Suddenly the air seems a little bit colder  
The night a little darker  
The strangers walking on the beach  
A bit dangerous and more strangerous  
I realize that the sound of the surf is so  
loud that a human cry for help would  
be lost in it  
We all seem to shiver and huddle closer  
to each other at about the same time  
Not because of the cold but perhaps for  
reasons more encoded in our DNA

Perhaps we seek the same comfort in  
closeness as our ancestors did  
Huddled about their own fires when  
they heard the distant roar of the lion  
Or the sound of the wind giving voice to  
the angry, nocturnal spirits that inhabit  
the surrounding darkness.

In that instant we all know the time has  
come to rise up bravely, parents on  
either side and warily walk toward the  
magic-wheeled, metal horseless sleigh  
that will take us to the safety of the  
cave—home. ~ 2001

## Muse—Quick Start Guide

All week no words  
Blank page  
No catharsis  
Just rage

My Muse  
is constipated.  
Last night  
Great idea  
Snort Metamucil  
This morning  
I write Poems, poems  
Pages, pages  
Print them  
Read them

All shit! ~ 2008



## Past It

When I think about the past,  
it is memory of  
something lost like  
a friend,  
a favorite car  
or a limb.

It is looking behind  
and thinking so hard  
on what cannot be  
touched, tasted  
or seen again that  
I forget to look forward.

There is so much to see in the past  
I have been unable to turn  
my attention back to the future  
until lately when I am older.

Now, I can finally focus on  
all that waits ahead and I see

it is only the beginning  
of more past,  
the end of this long road to  
a time when I'll be dead,  
past it and have left something,  
possibly, for a young someone else  
to remember when  
they look back... ~ 2009

## Fouled and Out

I don't want to hear,  
"I love you."  
I don't want to say,  
"Good morning, Love."  
I don't want to live  
for "Someone special's touch."  
I don't want to be branded  
"Her man" by anyone.

I want you to be happy.  
I want you to feel good.  
I want you to know I am not dangerous.  
I want to die alone in an ER anywhere  
and listen to the referee call out  
over the loudspeakers,  
"No Harm! No Foul! Flat Line!"  
then fade to black for commercial...

I'm ready. It's been a good season,  
Coach. ~ 2006

## Ain't Quite Blue—Lyric

Ain't no sunshine—Ain't no rain  
Don't feel too good but I feel no pain  
Everything just rolls along about the  
same  
But, Still I ain't quite Blue

When I'm nice—You treat me mean  
You make me feel like Mr. In-between

And though our love is nothing but a  
shattered dream  
Still I ain't quite Blue

Back in the day It felt so good  
to wake up and sing  
that early morning song (just for you)  
But now it seems  
You change your each and every  
mood  
I only want to make you feel all right but  
You only try to make feel so blue

When I'm good—You treat me bad  
You're only happy when I feel so damn  
sad  
And though I've lost the only love I've  
ever had

Still I ain't quite Blue  
Maybe you can explain it but...  
Still I ain't quite Blue. ~ 1973

## **LA Autobus**

There's something insidiously  
mind-numbing about  
riding the Metro through LA.

It's not that the girls  
aren't cute, miniature versions  
of Beyonc or Christina Aguilera.

It's not that the side-show of

broke, broke-down people  
isn't a fractal-ed and beautifully  
pixelated portrait of mindless grumblers  
being harangued by drivers  
not to ask for alms.

No, it's the cacophonous mix  
of teen girls' squeaks  
rapping under their breath,  
ear buds firmly attached  
to the sides of their stereophony

And the non-sequitur drooling  
out the sides of slack-faced,  
shuffling psycho-mumblers  
in a mix of rhyme and trochaotic  
street bump dissonance

punctuated by a blaring pre-recorded  
voice,  
"Approaching Venice and Hope,  
followed by Venice and  
Over-the-Hill Street."

This confluence of strangers  
and the strange  
is so much a part of LA  
that I, too, have a place in this colored  
tapestry of bus life or, at least,  
I'm one of the few black knots  
underneath trying their best

to hold it all together. ~ 2007

## Oh, How I Love Her

She walked into the music shop  
I looked into her eyes and knew  
before her words came out,  
"You must be Dan, the guitar man."

My own eyes must have shown  
a kinship or congenial spirit  
because she asked in a low, gentle  
tone,  
"You restrung my old guitar.  
What do you think of it?"

I told her, a smile coming to my face,  
How I tried not to believe it was  
a fifty plus year-old Gibson classical.  
I told her that I dismissed the label  
as a fake and the archaic bridge design  
a fraud.  
Even the serial number  
so perfectly etched  
on the back of the headstock  
was not enough to make me believe.

But then I strung it  
like Ulysses stringing his bow  
before the suitors of his wife  
taking note of the craftsmanship,  
the wood, easy feel.  
and like the son of Laertes,  
I plucked a note, it sung and I knew.

The lovely young girl asked me to play

and I played a scale or two  
and a chord just for effect  
And we stood there,  
guitar between us, in love.

The spell of this magic moment  
was more enchanting when she  
queried,  
"Would you teach me to play?"  
I looked at her eager face  
and although I was as old as her guitar,  
I thought, "Why not? I should give it a  
whirl."  
But instead, I handed her a card with  
two other younger teachers' names.  
And as she turned and walked away  
I knew I had fallen in love,  
not with the young girl,  
but with the other, older beauty—  
the Gibson, a truly vintage piece. ~ 2007

## Paper Cuts

Finally  
Clearing off the old desk top  
Where I used to write letters  
Before there was e-mail.  
Years of paperclips,  
Broken pencils,  
Old rulers  
And piles of old papers  
Too many to sort.  
Just shuffle them into stacks  
Stuff them into drawers.  
Oh Damn!

A paper cut  
Deep  
It bleeds.  
I go to wash it off.  
No bandage needed.  
Let it heal naturally.  
I mow the lawn.  
It burns from my sweat.  
I wash the car.  
It stings from the soap.  
I take a shower.  
It hurts as it catches on my hair.  
I get dressed.  
It cracks open each time I  
Tie a shoelace,  
Button a button,  
Tug at my shirt,  
My slacks,  
Daylong reminders of  
Papers in desk drawers.  
So I have to look  
And when I find  
The page with blood on it,  
Of course, it had to be  
The last letter you wrote to me.  
Now, at least, I think to myself,  
"It's just the pain of a paper cut."  
But before stuffing it back  
In a drawer,  
I decide to read it  
And the paper cuts one more time. ~  
1998

## Tickle Me

Sometimes I feel that I'm not human.  
I heard a report on NPR yesterday.  
They said that human beings are  
incapable of tickling themselves.  
Scientifically proved .  
When one tries to tickle oneself  
the tickle response is removed.  
Weird God that sets us up  
able to orgasm or climax  
by masturbation  
but draws the line at laughter.  
Sometimes I feel that I'm not human  
because  
I can tickle myself every time I think of  
how I believed every false lover's  
promise to love me forever,  
Just to hear "I've found someone new"  
a short time later.  
Yeah, I have to tell myself,  
"Stop! Stop! No more.  
I'm killing me!"  
Because since you left me, Baby,  
I can keep myself in stitches  
laughing at my naiveté  
all night long and  
throughout the day,  
But, I swear to god, I can no longer be  
the way other humans are  
and make love to myself  
as I should know  
according to the show  
on National Public Radio. ~ 2007



## Beach Action

(or she loves sea men)

In, out; in, out  
Up, down; up, down  
the waves at the beach  
work the shore.  
The tide keeps It up.  
All day long, all night long

Baby, I good but...  
ya know, I just can't compete  
with that kind of action. ~ 2002

## Key Fob-ulous

My keys are in the ignition.  
I'm standing in the parking lot  
next to the car.  
I try the door, then,  
I try the passenger side.  
Yeah, I remembered to  
lock them both.  
It's happened before.  
So, I carry a spare in my wallet.

I sit behind the wheel after  
unlocking the door.  
I stare at the spare key  
on the key chain that your mother  
gave me before you and I broke up.  
The fob has an inscription,  
"If you love something, set it free.  
If it comes back, it's yours.  
If it doesn't, it never was."

Every time I lock myself out of the car,  
I look at that key chain and  
no matter what is going wrong  
at that moment,  
it becomes unimportant when  
I think about the many years  
I've been waiting for your return.  
And then, until I forget again,  
I understand that the key chain  
is the only thing I have left of us  
that was ever,  
truly mine. ~ 2004

## Equatorial Thoughts

I've never been South of the Equator  
but I understand it's different there  
from California.  
Here water flows clockwise  
down the drain .  
There it drains counter-clockwise.  
It's the opposite.  
A reversal of the natural order.

I can imagine a place,  
South of the Equator, where  
people walk and talk backwards  
like a scene from  
Alice in Wonderland.

It's a place where old men get younger,  
and, eventually, as newborns,  
crawl back into their mother's womb.

Then mom has nine months  
to find my dad to have sex with him  
so his penis will suck  
the sperm out of her.

Perhaps, I should move  
South of the Equator  
and hope my life will  
unscrew-up itself .  
But I know, it will probably  
go down the drain there, too,  
just counter-clockwise. ~ 2007

## **LA Gypsy Woman**

(Dedicated to Madame Maria)

I got gypsy cursed  
by an old woman  
and a deck of cards  
in the back room  
of a sex shop  
in downtown  
years ago.

She said, "Man,  
you come in here smilin',  
joking and makin'  
Mama laugh.  
I see how you get the ladies  
to be with you but  
it never lasts,  
does it?"

"You see, Man-boy,  
you got a

wondering soul  
behind that smile  
and women  
they stay with you  
for a while, But soon  
they know you're not  
the man you seem.  
You has to wonder about  
the sadness and the hell  
in your life's dream.  
Yeah, you row, row, row  
down the mournful stream.

Woman wants a man  
who don't think  
about nothing but her  
and makin' her glad  
she's the one who  
choose to be with him. "

"You a con artist  
and a singer of sorrow.  
You smile and  
the women's with you  
but you scowl and  
they's gone by tomorrow. "

"There ain't no use.  
You can't even choose  
between the women, the blues  
or the booze. All three  
can kill you true  
and mama ain't got  
no cure for you."

I left thinking, "Well,  
what the Fuck does that  
old woman know?"

But year after year,  
woman after woman,  
bottle after bottle  
and stanza  
after chorus  
after verse,  
I guess she saw through me  
and she knew well,

how to conjure up  
that gypsy curse,

Damn her to hell! ~ 2007

### **Late Happy Hour... Later**

After the open mic,  
a pod of poets sits at a bar  
drinking.  
Every time  
a clever observation  
is made,  
the oldest poet says,  
"That's a poem for you right there."  
It's annoying as hell and  
I leave thinking he's  
just an old pain in the ass.  
But short as this (poem) is,  
he was right. ~ 2007

## Learning to Be Better

It's a trick of memory  
I see her talking at me  
speeding through a harsh critique  
of my failures as her lover.  
I feel like she wants to get this process  
finished quickly because she's  
already made a date for later tonight.  
She hesitates only once.

It is when she says  
that she never told me she loved me.  
It must be a lie because she hesitates,  
I hope.

But when she runs through her list  
a second time, I give up and ask myself,  
"What could I possibly learn from this  
experience?"

Oh, yes! How to break up devastatingly  
with someone I never want to see again  
and I listen carefully.

So, at this moment  
While I am breaking up  
with one of the forgettable women  
since that first one so long ago,  
I am remembering these things.  
But when I get to the part  
where I should hesitate  
before I tell her I never said I loved her,  
I rush through with conviction,  
so that she will have no hope.  
Proving to myself,  
I am not so cruel as she was

in the memory of that first time  
and that I've learned that, now,  
I'm a better bitch than  
she will ever be. ~ 2010

## **My Equipment (A Live Poem)**

I want to talk about  
the equipment.  
It can only last so long  
before it begins to fail.  
The sure look of curves  
and hard angles begins to fade.  
And each attempt to use it  
creates a greater chance of  
slip ups and mistakes  
than the last.  
It gives me performance anxiety  
every time I place my hands on it.  
It's a small thing but  
most people who learned  
to use it correctly don't have  
my provlrm or "problem."

I'm a hunt and pecker.  
I envy touch typists to whom  
it doesn't matter much  
that the letters on their  
keyboards have faded  
or disappeared all together.  
But every time I type  
an 's' instead of an 'a'  
or an 'i' in place of an 'o,'  
my equipment causes

a failure to communicate  
by r-mail, excuse me, e-mail  
between the three of us  
the computer, you and me.

So, if it seems I no longer write,  
"I love you's" and all you get  
is a bunch of "I live you's,"  
please understand,  
It's not me. It's only my fading,  
aging equipment. ~ 2008

## **The Other Side of The Universe**

The Hubble tells us the size of the visible  
universe is about 15 billion light years  
across.

That's about ninety trillion miles.  
In your new Ferrari, at 100 miles per hour,  
the drive would take about 90 million  
years— with no traffic

Last night you stood with me next to my  
Geo.  
We said good-bye and we kissed  
for the very last time.  
No sweet words left.  
And although I felt your body next to  
mine,  
you weren't really there.  
You and my heart were already gone  
living on opposite sides of the universe. ~  
2004



## DOA

Quite a few of the dead  
are jealous of the living.  
They are like jilted lovers  
who don't remember  
the misunderstandings,  
fights or boredom.  
They only remember  
the good times of life.

They hover and watch as  
the living  
fuck,  
play poker,  
roulette,  
blackjack  
or the Stock Market.  
Jealous of anyone  
who wins and even  
of those who lose.

The dead can fly  
up through the atmosphere  
into space and visit planets,  
stars, galaxies, new universes.  
But able to go anywhere, know and  
see anything, they prefer  
to stay on Earth  
where they can touch  
nothing.

Oh sure, there are souls  
who get so lost in

the music of the spheres,  
string vibrations,  
the microcosm  
that they spend  
eternity exploring  
the infinite and  
never feel the need  
to return.

That may be  
a heaven of sorts.

It is the others  
who remain on  
the same plane,  
wishing they could  
make love,  
eat sushi,  
hoist a pitchers of brew  
and watch their favorite  
sports team  
blow the big playoff game  
year after year.

This may be  
a hell of sorts.

Which kind of dead  
are you?  
If you never  
get over disappointment,  
broken hearts  
or loss of friends,  
I'm going to guess

that you are  
the "stay on Earth"  
type of dead.

If I'm right about you,  
be assured,  
I'll not be seeing you around  
in the not too distant soon. ~ 2007

## Enough!

It's strange word.  
I've had enough.  
I've had what I need.  
The bartender tells me,  
"You've had enough."  
I've had more than I need,  
except I don't think so.  
I told that bitch I married,  
"I've had enough."  
Meaning more than enough,  
too much of her bullshit.  
I tell my girlfriend, "Enough!  
Too much sucking,  
humping,  
pushing,  
against my dick  
my lips and tongue.  
Enough! Stop!"  
Then after a few minutes  
of tumescence,  
I need more.  
More than enough  
which is just enough.

I realize that  
until you die there is never  
enough of enough.  
But for now  
this has gone on  
long enough.  
This is enough poem  
for now and maybe  
too much poem.  
Just ask the bartender  
He always seems to know  
when you've had enough. ~ 2008

## **Lisa's Game**

I woke up this morning aware of  
her breath on my face.  
That little game we used to play.  
I would pretend to be asleep,  
her face hovering inches from mine,  
I'd open my eyes suddenly and say,  
"Boo! Gotcha!"  
I'd lift her to the bed,  
tickle her and  
hold her in my arms  
until she would say, "Hungry, Daddy."  
I would get up and  
make breakfast for her.  
Sometimes her older sister  
would join us.  
A few months later,  
before her fourth birthday,  
I left my family.

Sixteen years have past.  
This morning my eyes are  
glued shut with sleep.  
I want to open them but can't.  
Too many tequilas and  
too many beers last night.  
I'm in no rush to be assaulted  
by this morning's light.

I know she's not here.  
She's going to college  
and is old enough to call me  
if she needs something.  
I miss that little girl.  
But in a way not as much  
as I miss the man  
who knew how to show  
his daughter he loved her,  
those mornings  
when they would play  
the "Hungry" game. ~ 2007

## **L.A.**

Los Angeles,  
I can't write you.  
If I tried  
the words would sprawl  
across the page  
miles apart between  
coherent thoughts  
and in between are  
spaces where no sane white man  
would stop to ask for directions

and places where black folks  
just driving through to the next  
concept would get stopped  
by cops because a burned out  
brake light is a sure sign of  
drug deals, home invasions  
or, worse,  
property values going  
down.

Drive fast and you can get from  
Rodeo Drive to a real rodeo in Norco  
in less than an hour and then  
go to Belmont Shores or  
Mount Wilson.  
All this because  
the words are  
so  
    spaced  
        out  
you can't just walk from idea to idea  
you need a car for this poem

I can't write you, LA.  
Oh yeah,  
shouldn't forget to mention  
The Lakers,  
The Dodgers,  
The Clippers,  
the Kings and  
Movie Stars.  
But there is so much traveling  
between each idea,

Little Tokyo,  
Little Armenia,  
Chinatown,  
Koreatown,  
Olvera Street and  
the Coliseum.  
How can I expect you,  
Dear Reader, to focus on  
this poem about LA  
If I, the writer, must stop now  
because I cannot stay on subject?  
And to get back to the beginning  
of this poem  
I would have to take the 57 North  
to the 210 West and the 134  
to the 5 South  
exit on Los Feliz  
take surface streets  
to Echo Park,  
Hollywood or  
just sit and watch  
the merry-go-round  
travel in circles  
miles and miles everyday  
going nowhere,  
rooted to one spot,  
in the park.  
But I've run out of gas  
and everyone knows  
you can't get anywhere in LA  
on foot except into trouble... ~ 2007

## Longevity

Some of us were never young.  
We were born old.  
Some will never be old.  
We'll die young.

Oh, we may be 60, 80 or 30  
when our bodies give up.  
But, those who believe we should  
"Go not gently into the night,"  
must get ready to fight or delight.

Yes, my brothers & sisters, lovers  
and friends with privileges  
I just want you to know...

Death Is Coming!  
But with a little time and  
a bit more foreplay,  
It can always come again.

Don't rape the reaper,  
wrap you body around him.  
Then, slip away while he sleeps.  
Go out and play.  
Give yourself another year,  
a month, a week  
or just a day.

Death, like your birth, has never  
needed anyone's permission to come  
and neither do you. ~ 2007



## The Sweetheart of USC Greek Societies

If Helen of Troy was the face  
that launched a thousand ships then  
she of USC was the body  
that launched a thousand poems.  
There were no great heroes in my  
poems  
like there were on those ships.  
I just printed them out in 11 point font,  
put them in a box and launched them  
at her via UPS.

Three days later,  
the box was on my doorstep  
when I got home from work  
'Shipment Refused" stamped in  
BIG RED LETTERS.  
We both knew that old tale written by  
Virgil.  
Did she think I had hidden in the box  
a tiny army that would come out at  
night  
and whisper my poems to her  
defenseless, receptive brain while she  
slept?

She was right, of course.  
Every poem had its tiny voice  
whispering,  
"Dan is a really great guy.  
He's the best you've ever had.  
He still loves you.

You're gonna miss him more and more each night."  
I picked up the box and disappointedly tossed it into my bedroom closet.

Later that night, tiny ideas snuck out and crawled all over my pillow like ants on yesterday's blueberry Danish left and forgotten under my bed. They whispered into my ear, "Loser, loser, loser."  
I woke up and wondered. "What was in that box, anyway?"  
I went to the closet and found it full of Her essays about me. She of USC had stuffed the box full of her own thoughts and then tricked me into dragging them inside the safe fortress of my walled house.

Those damn, clever Trojans don't make the same mistake twice. ~  
2007

## **Awaiting to Circular Breathe**

Being good at sex is something one learns. All the right moves, the timing and the climax are easily taught and learned by rote.

Success at love  
is something one invents.  
Every step taken  
by two together  
is an exploration of  
the road never  
before taken.  
Love is as new and different  
as one snowflake is to another.  
Realizing this  
is to lose  
all the baggage  
all prior pains  
and joys.  
We re-invent the wheel  
with each kiss,  
each playful bite  
until what we have together  
is round but unlike  
anyone else's wheel.  
It is our own invention  
and no one else, My Love,  
will ever break  
into our special,  
perfect circle. ~ 2007

### **By The Silvery Moon**

*"They say drowning is an easy death..."*  
*Wilton's Holiday, P.G. Wodehouse*

In the afternoon sky,  
a pale, half-ish moon appears.  
It occurs to me  
that such an icon of the night

seems inappropriate floating above  
the hotels and insurance buildings  
in the LA skyline  
while I sit in my car on the 110 Harbor  
freeway as I attempt to reach the  
beach  
to watch the sun drown in the sea.

The sun and the moon are as different  
as man and woman.  
The sun shines, the moon reflects.  
Between man and woman it is the same  
except who does what to whom is rarely  
what one expects.  
But the moon is in the sun's sky this  
afternoon in LA.

There is something poetic  
in the interplay of these opposites.  
It could be a sadness or a trespass.  
But there is a metaphor, an analogy, an  
allegory, a conceit, a poem, or, at the  
very least, a Tonka or Haiku.

I cannot write it.  
The reflection of that shining may inspire  
pride or regret.  
It leads us to dwell on our myriad of  
differences.  
We say, "Share." but it is always  
an uneasy truce.  
Solutions seem as far away as the Sun is  
to the intruding Moon.  
As different as this man is

to that absent woman.  
Instead, I will stare at the sky  
until someone behind me honks,  
I will press my foot upon the gas pedal  
and move on to another place,  
closer to the red brake lights ahead,  
another stop along the way  
to the final moonlit seascape  
where I will rest. ~ 2009

## Night Vision

Light is.  
It seems to have no weight to it.  
Sometimes you feel it  
against your skin on a sunny day  
but if you want to stand up  
it can't hold you down.

Dark is heavy.

While daylight comes at sunrise,  
darkness rushes in at night-fall.  
It hits the earth with  
the impact of a battering ram  
and scatters the light  
into tiny specks in the sky.

Dark thoughts are so heavy  
they will hold you down  
on your bed and never  
let you stand up again except  
to get a razor blade or a hand gun.

Funny thing, though, night ends  
when the light (which has no weight)  
lifts up the dark and throws it  
past the horizon,  
beyond the blue canopy of sky  
and then also picks you up  
to start a new day.

No matter the strength,  
the weight or impenetrability  
of the night,  
follow the light and you will find  
day is not so far off  
that you cannot discover  
your way out  
of darkness. ~ 2007

## Nice Car

The light turns green  
the new Maserati in front of me  
doesn't move.  
I honk my horn.  
Cell-phone glued to his ear,  
the driver sunglasses glares at me  
through his rearview.  
He takes his time,  
to start across the intersection—slowly.  
I have to hurry my little Jeep  
as the light turns yellow  
and then red.

At the next stop  
He swerves into the lane next to me.

So we sit waiting  
Cars side by side  
His window slides down.  
"You in a hurry, Old Man?"  
He's dressed in a business suit,  
Wearing cool, expensive shades.  
I say nothing.  
"Not jealous of my ride are you, Loser?"

And I wonder.

I think about my life at 35.  
Brand new cars, club memberships,  
personal trainers, big deals pending,  
business trips, the booze, the drugs, the  
women... more drugs,  
The 12 hour workdays, The 8 hour play  
nights, the three hours sleep, then back  
to work, no time For my wife, kids.

I think about the divorce, liquidation of  
assets, lousy lawyers, lost love.

I know that downhill road where making  
money and buying status symbols  
means more than home, family and  
friends.

The road that leads from a Maserati to  
huge family support payments and  
finally an out of date Jeep in desperate  
need of a new clutch.

I look over at Maserati guy and I want to  
tell him what's up ahead. I want to tell

him to slow down. I want to...

But the light turns green and he's gone.  
Zero to sixty in less than seven seconds.  
And I can't help but think,

"Nice Car..." ~ 2004

## Nightning Flash

When does night begin or end  
and what is the "middle of the night?"  
Day is always Sunrise, Noon  
and Sunset.

But night changes with age.  
A child knows Midnight is 12 AM  
but doesn't experience it for years.  
And then once being there  
falls asleep and it becomes  
the end of night.

Adults travel into darkness  
well past Midnight  
Bright lights, dancing,  
drinking and sex  
change what is  
"the middle."

Some adults think of it  
as the cold, false dawn,  
a short time before sunrise



when the dew is heavy  
on the street a shivering walk  
to the car.

A quick drive home, a shower  
and the day begins so soon  
this cannot have been  
night's middle.

Maybe it was at the point  
when the drinks  
started to have their effect  
and one asks the other,  
"Do you live nearby?"

I can't tell where  
the middle of anything is  
anymore.  
It used to be 30,  
then became forty,  
now closer to 60  
I can't tell  
if I am walking to my rest  
in the middle of night,  
the hour before dawn  
or if I'm on borrowed time  
having already passed  
into another day.

I just know that once you get past  
the middle of anything  
you are walking toward the end.  
As I look back at the road  
I've traveled in the dark,

I'm glad to have met  
so many fine folks  
with whom to share my thoughts  
and who call to keep me awake,  
sometimes, when I need them  
in the middle of the night. ~ 2007

## NOVA

*"A nova is an old star that explodes and  
then appears as a new star in the night  
sky..."*

There was a hole in my universe.  
I looked up and saw nothing,  
dreamt of nothing.  
I looked forward in time and saw  
nothing,  
dreamt of nothing.  
Then a Nova appeared.  
Oh yes, it was far away.  
Yes, it only appeared at night.  
But it was something bright and right  
in the emptiness of black void.

She was a Nova  
who led me from a vacancy  
to a manger where my life  
was reborn.

I am an old man  
Resurrected as a child  
My spirit rekindled  
by the light  
from the Nova,

familiar as the night air I breathe  
and exciting as the light that reflects  
in our eyes when we are together. ~  
2008

## **Old Boy (Not the Movie)**

There's an old guy sitting alone  
in the corner at a bar  
nursing a pitcher.

He laughs to himself,  
shakes his head,  
says something  
he thinks is witty  
and laughs again.  
Sometimes he scribbles  
in a notebook lying next  
to the beer and laughs once more.

Some girl says out loud,  
"Poor old, lonely bastard."  
"Yeah," agree the people  
standing near the girl  
who uttered the words.

I look up from my  
notebook and realize,  
they're talking about me.  
I giggle like a schoolgirl  
and write it down.

Being old is one thing,  
being drunk is another

and being a poet is altogether  
something else.  
It's the combination of these three,  
the "ménage á trois,"  
that makes this old boy happy. ~ 2006

### **Time #1**

Time is funny.  
Ironicadoxical, I guess.  
It's different  
From moment to minute.

When do you live?  
Are you here now  
Or are you just  
Waiting for tomorrow  
To be better?

I feel I'm living in the present, tense.  
But often my thoughts are  
So completely obsessed  
With dead friends and lost loves,  
That I wonder  
If I am actually just living  
In anticipation of yesterday. ~ 1999

### **Wards Ass Back Day**

Half awake I stumble to the  
bathroom.

I piss in the washbasin.

I wash my hands in the toilet bowl.

I comb my hair before I take a shower.

I brush my teeth with Preparation H.

I stick toothpaste up my ass.

I pet my girlfriend.

I make love to the dog

(They seem to appreciate the attention).

I email my Doctor a list of possible behavioral side effects from the new anti-depressant he prescribed.

Then I write a poem and hit "Print."  
"At least," I think to myself,  
"I got those last two right." ~ 2008

## **The Babes**

In high school  
It was the cafeteria.

In college  
It was the library.

During the "career years"  
It was the local dance clubs.

Later on

It was the grocery store or the laundry-  
mat

These days  
It's the doctor's waiting room or the  
pharmacy.

Nothing much has changed.  
It's always been, and still is,  
all about the Babes. ~ 2004

## **This Special Night**

On this special night,  
I buy a baguette and,  
as always, I remember  
that French girl

in whose father's business  
I toiled away a large portion  
of this life which now lies  
behind me.

I recall, she and I would leave work  
to stop at the bakery in town  
and buy a baguette much like  
the one I purchased tonight.

When we would reach my apartment,  
one end of the bread would be gone,  
broken off by the girl with tiny crumbs  
stuck to her ample, ruby mouth.

"No baguette will ever make it home

in one piece," she would laugh.  
Then she would kiss me passionately,  
lips parted to prove the taste of her  
wisdom.

Tonight, this special night, I arrive home.  
Something within me is gone,  
stolen like a piece of missing crust.  
I am broken but, miraculously,

on this special night, the bread is whole  
but I wish to God it were not so. ~ 2009

## **Inventory**

*On my 50th birthday, I decide  
to take inventory of my life.*

New Tires,  
Old truck,  
Tuned up,  
Six cylinders,  
Two kids,  
In debt,  
Marriage vows,  
Broke down,  
Well-lubricated,  
Gassed up,  
Few friends,  
Over-worked,  
Under-rated,  
Ignition on,  
Brake off,  
Full throttle,  
Pedal floored,  
Engine revved,

In gear,  
Doing fifty,  
Staring at,  
Rear-view,  
Re-fuse,  
To slow,  
Keep accelerating,  
'Til I,  
Crash through,  
Big sign,  
Up ahead,  
Two words... "Road Ends." ~ 1998

## Communion

She walks past the neighborhood bar window, not quite aware of the ocean swells rising on her young chest. "T-shirt's getting too tight," says Bill behind the bar. "Yeah", I think, "It must be getting uncomfortable to play volleyball at school during recess." Her jeans that were once rolled up to keep from stepping on them are now let down and showing her little ankle socks. But what's happening to them at the hips is one of those miracles that can only happen at a certain age in a young girl's life. Her face is losing that tiny bit of baby fat Except for around her big, pouty unpainted lips.



She is still a child and pure as an angel's prayer.

She is a living reminder of what life once was.

She is a bittersweet memory to the ninety-nine cent store, make-up covered women pandering to the desires of jaded old men who try to cop a feel of sagging old breast for the price of a shot and a beer.

Men who have forgotten a time when they thought girls were weird and playing a hard game of tackle foot ball was the most fun a guy could ever have.

The women look at her and sigh, the men clench their fists and then have another drink and forget why.

The girl decides to cross the street. She's just a kid so she runs, jumps out between two parked cars right in front of speeding convertible, driver on a cell phone sees her, swerves, near miss she never stops.

Already across the street and out of sight before any of us can let go of the lung full of air we've been holding all these seconds when we thought she would never see her next birthday.

Maxine two stools down coughs and pulls a cigarette out of her purse puts it in her mouth and Bill lights it.

No one complains.  
We understand.  
I take a smoke-filled breath  
and ask Bill for a double Vodka, beer  
back.  
I raise my glass to toast to Innocence  
but all that comes out is,  
"Here's to being Lucky, Young and  
Dumb."

"It beats the hell out Horny, Old  
and out of Viagra every time, " quips Bill.

Maxine chokes on a laugh and coughs  
her approval.  
I realize while I suck the suds that  
watching that little girl walk by was  
wholly traumatic.  
I want to go home and shower the smell  
of smoke, brew and sweat-tainted  
cheap perfume off me.  
But I know there isn't a soap strong  
enough to wash away all these years  
and all those beers. So, I tap my glass. It  
sounds like a altar boy's bell.  
Bill smiles and brings me another.

"There you go," he recites the liturgy.  
"Blood of Christ," I intone. ~ 2006

## On Concerning Loving Oneself

I am certain all sentient beings  
tell one another this aphorism,  
"You cannot love someone else if  
you cannot, first, love yourself."  
I believe it.  
Therefore, I love myself so  
I can love other people... better.

When I love myself,  
my favorite position is  
me on top.  
Oh, on occasion I'll spoon with me  
but spooning inevitably leads to  
me on top... again.

I've heard all that talk about  
being with the same me  
an entire lifetime is like  
having the same thing for dinner  
every night.  
But I'm never unfaithful to me  
I don't fantasize about a different me  
when I'm making love to me.  
And I know when I call me for some  
loving  
I'm never out with another me.  
I know I'm always available  
when I get the urge...  
for me.  
There is comfort in that sort of sameness.

Also, if I ever catch something from me,

I always know where I am  
so I can let myself know not to  
give it to myself again.  
That's having a social conscience.

One of the best parts of loving me is  
No matter how kinky I get with myself,  
I never get too rough  
or use too much "teeth."  
So, I still respect me  
for the next time  
I want to "do" me.

Ok. There is just one problem...  
After loving myself,  
I sometimes nudge myself, while I sleep,  
onto the wet spot and I wake up  
stuck to the sheets.  
Having a towel handy would be  
prudent,  
but sometimes I'm so overwhelmed  
with the desire to love me that  
I can't wait and, of course,  
a condom would just be silly.  
I'm sure it will all work out  
once I get to know me better.

So when I tell you that I love you,  
Remember, I've been loving myself  
a lifetime just to be ready  
to say these words.  
I'm going to assume  
you've been loving yourself, too,  
because, at this moment,

I expect you to be as ready  
to love my me as I am yours.  
Oh, look how nice! There are mirrors  
on the ceiling in this motel. ~ 2005

## In Memory of Me

I have a young friend  
who goes to rock concerts  
not only to listen to the music but,  
mainly to rush onto the stage.  
He twirls and dances until  
Security beats the crap out of him and  
kicks him out.  
Then he tries to sneak back in  
and does it all over again.  
Crazy?  
No.  
I believe I understand.  
I think back to dad, mom,  
teachers, aunts, uncles  
and I remember best  
the times I was in trouble.  
Day to day interactions are recalled  
as painted pastels or bland watercolors.  
But the rages and disciplines are  
fresh still wet masterpieces  
in vivid oils running down  
the canvas of my memory.  
Some people look back  
and see pretty pictures  
They view their lives  
as kindergarten finger paintings.  
My friend, living with an older sister and  
their bedridden, drugged out mother,  
who most days, can't remember

her name (much less his),  
has to paint his own history with  
vivid images he will always remember.  
He showers,  
looks at himself in the mirror  
dozens of piercing on this face and  
chest  
He slaps on some aftershave,  
Pulls on his clothes  
Now he is the artist  
Ready for another concert  
in which he will paint his life  
in colors mainly red, black and blue  
a non-pastel history  
that says to himself and everyone,  
"I was here!  
I will always remember,  
even if no one else does.  
Once upon a time, I was here.  
I Was Here! And...  
I danced." ~ 2003

## Photo

I sip my first morning cup  
window seat, street side,  
inside my favorite cafe .  
He opens the car door  
and she steps out  
her soft, light-brown hair  
now brushed lightly  
on the sides with gray.  
He takes her hand.  
Proud almost arrogant,

he stands beside this ageless beauty,  
the living work of art, she is.  
Her eyes are love-filled.  
She sees no one but him.  
I'd seen that look before.  
I was once the proud one,  
once so arrogant.  
He? He is not the man  
for whom she left me.  
But I know him,  
like I knew and understood  
the many before me and  
the many who will come after.  
Soon, the look of new love  
will begin to fade and another love  
will take the old one's place.  
Works of art know nothing about  
loyalty, hard work and fidelity.  
They only know admiration  
and the endless search for more.

My wife elbows me gently in the ribs  
and says sarcastically,  
"Take a picture. It'll last longer."  
I turn to look at the woman  
to whom I have promised  
the rest of my life.  
I know she is right because  
deep in my wallet, in a hidden  
inner pocket, guarded by snapshots of  
our kids and holiday trips and over-the-  
limit credit cards, the remarkably  
unfading photo of her does. ~2002

## Dying Poem

When two people talk and walk  
down a dirty LA street  
One passes a bottle and says,  
"Vodka fuels the time machine."

Maybe, he hears the whisper  
of my words in the back alleys  
of his memories.  
I may be gone,  
but I'll walk along.

On some rainy night  
when you wait for a bus,  
it comes, you board  
but someone stays behind.

You may remember a line about  
souls too crushed to move along.  
I may be gone,  
but within you, I live on.

Or perhaps, you remember a story  
about a ball of yarn and a cat.  
How God can make life whole again  
and bring it all back.

If just one person remembers  
something I might have written or said,  
If it lives inside their head after I'm dead,  
it doesn't get any better than that.

Dying, I mean. ~ 2009