PASSAGES
TO
NOW

PARTS
II
&
III

POEMS BY

thomas perez jewell
to
Mom & Dad

Emma Sage & Tommi Joy

Vera

J. E. D.

R. D. B.

Tony, Ricky, Cindy

Robin, Kerry, Mike & Brian

P. R. N. Jr.

M.W.

A.M.

K. C. J.

C.T.

H, T, B.

Debbie

Helen

Holly

Karin

Kate

S. C. W.

M.I.

Roger

Leo

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2018
PASSAGES
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NOW

PART
II

poems
by

thomas perez jewell
EVEN IN THE DEPTHS

On those visits
to see my ancient Great
Grandma Charlotte
in the hospital, I felt
love's touch as a little boy, and
still carry this ineffable joy
inside my heart long after returning home
on the trolley, way beyond forgotten

and forget, within my own
children's lives, and even beyond
the depths
of this prisoner's regrets.

MEMORY FLASH

That corner market
like all of them
everywhere, a gathering place?

Right here, I am standing there
again in the afternoon, ancient
in my young skin,
awaiting entrance to relive
an infinity of childhoods?
WHAT IT MEANT

A salute to Dale L.,
a hair-lipped friend
from grade six,

who befriended this
stranded misfit,

and helped me feel felt
before I understood

what it meant
to belong to a world
that separates what's
different,

to belong to another
in the love of friendship.

BED WETTING DILEMMA

I slept in my clothes again
and wet my bed.
No clean laundry,
so I used dog shampoo
to mask my shame.

Then, I visited my friend as usual.
My odor trespassed on our play,
yet he and his family stayed unconditional

and just opened a window.
FEARS UNTANGLED

I remember hearing my Mom's second husband threaten to kill himself with a knife if she left him.

I hear the sobs, the clink of metal, the muffled and disturbing arguments after midnight.

She heard me whimper and came to offer comfort.

No words exchanged in the dark room as she unlocked the curls from my forehead,

stroked my waves of hair with her tense fingers until her fears relaxed and untangled.

SINGED LIKE PAPER

Singed like paper, scorched my eye lid when eight-years-old by Mommy's errant lit cigarette tip.

Even unintentional wounds, without malice, leave lifetime scars.
THE BLACK DIAPER BAG

I found a cache of childhood photographs in
a black vinyl diaper bag
when younger, a stash
of memories my father
never shared,
like the months and years that passed without him,
not even enough to complete an album.

LOOKING IN REVERSE

Looking in reverse is that the neighborhood where lived I was--
trashed & collapsed, graffitti ridden, weed infested,
and mis-identity striken?

How transcended did these families and familiarities manage?
Not without some lethal damage.
CHILDHOOD QUESTIONS

Anxious again
with shadows on the ceiling,
I wonder what went wrong
and why this keeps happening?

Why do I need to bend
to a grown-up's will or
wish or whim or command?

While alone in the dark, to make
monsters disappear,
I offer myself this answer:

"If not for pretend, I understand
my little heart would shatter."

GRUNION FUN

The moon's afire
after sunset.
The surf's silver fish full
running from our
clutches.
LOS ALISOS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, 1969

The list, typed and
memographed with
the sweet stink of alcohol,
of what one will need for
junior high P. E. read:

Gym shorts, check; gym jersey,
check; Athletic shoes, check again,
but a jock strap? Not yet. Deodorant,
what for?

My parents purchased the uniform and shoes,
and I bought the latter item before
I had any private hair.
So know one would know what still remained
hidden, I settled

on a bottle called "Secret."

ENTERING

Entering the world
of tender feelings for
another other
than my self.

Different from but
the same in
our mutual attraction and
cultural revulsion.
U.S. MARINE CORPS "DEVIL PUPS," 1970-71

Recruited fresh from the hoods and barrios.
With ripened minds, we arrived
for the U.S.M.C. run summer campaign for boys
starting at thirteen:
"For fun and adventure be like the 'Devil Dogs'
against Communism and report in the morning
to Camp Pendleton."

We ate and we slept and we awakened for two weeks
to the Drill Instructor's shrill:

"Make your racks for the food on your plates
and fill your bellies with America's spoils."

As proud "Devil Pups" we barked and marched
in platoons as Hitler's youth
into the maw of Uncle Sam.

YOUR REMEMBERED GIFT
(for Uncle Bud)

I remember the miracle
Uncle Bud delivered
at the rodeo in Ventura,
with his usual grin, to his
trio of nephews:
Two dollars each for treats
of our own choosing.

A lot of money to give
for nothing in return,
a rarity during our childhood.
WHAT HAPPENED?

It happened as happenings happen
while paying attention.
I knew then that this knower's knowing
went beyond this self alone, beyond
my own understanding.

Stricken with the flu in the summer
before high school,
I lie still listening to my illness whisper:

"leapin' and hoppin' on a moon shadow, moon shadow,
moon shadow..." and healed
the instant I remembered
what thoughts can't reveal and feelings
can't touch since this happening embraces you
as much as you embrace it
with nothing left to hold
or let go of
in the one of its embrace.

ONE OCTOBER WALK TO SCHOOL, 1974

Morning fog embraced--a moist,
cool comfort
the color of salt.

Myriads of worlds in motion
await this ignorant
student at sixteen.

I arrive on time to school
one fence to climb and
a single street to cross.
A TIMELESS SHARING

During the course of our teens,
   after wordless moments and gestures,
you and I took different turns
on our roads to growing old.
We used to travel as inseparable friends
   but fell away along with all pretensions.

Nothing would be further said because nothing
   would be done to understand
after the confessions of what we never shared.
What I kept secret was not a secret to you.
You knew the truth enough to stay silent and did.
You knew more than my self-denial allowed.
But, what of your feelings and those unexpressed
desires then?

I felt you feel them beyond what words tell.
I felt your heart open then close, close then open until
you closed for the final time with my heart still open.
Now I embody the truth about us,
   which is the truth about me--
that we still share a timeless sharing.

A BEACH DAY @ SIXTEEN

Overcast to start
   as morning clouds recede
   like the tide,
we arrive with the sun at noon
   in our "Hang-tens,"

shirtless and sanded and smooth
   summer worshippers of
bikinis, of curves, of skin, of waves,
and I, the one whose want stayed
   in the shade, wanting to swim
in his green-ocean eyes.
CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

Then I'll know its real
what we shared and share

the remainder of our lives.

Let's trust the trust
we felt in touch,

so the names we call each

other will be the same.

DREAM RESIDUALS

Awakening from

dream residuals
of coupled rituals:

Fragrant fluids congeal

and temporary solids

dissolve.

Is this this world's exist,

and through them emerge

what's permanent?
EVERY SINGLE Foe

A well-gripped,
   lime-green
tennis ball,
a worn baseball glove
   and pure fantasy
behind the grocery store,

I pitched, for hours,
   the ball against the wall,
   and struck-out every
   single foe.

"Tommy takes the mound--
   the crowd goes wild"
as I save another game
   and myself as well.

A CLARITY OF MIND EMERGED

A clarity arrived with the fog,
   wind songs and silences.

All time blended into one existence--
   ungraspable.

A vast presence emerged:

   Aware, Awake, Alive,
This absolutely formless form
   remains nameless since sixteen.
NOT YET READY, 1976

At the bottom of my alone
in Kremmling, Colorado,
this young man sits inside
his little boy stare,
fear frozen and so
uncertain of love's embrace
with freedom's sudden release.

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS CO, 1976

Already alone to the bones
when attacked by nature
upon my arrival in
Steamboat Springs, Colorado:

Lightning struck and thunder pelted
deep in the valley of my regret.

I could lift these Rocky Mountains
before healing my wounded self.
SOUTH OF BAGGS, WYOMING, 1976

North bound to nowhere certain—
in prairie purgatory?

Surrounded by
blisters, sheep shit and hunger.

No purpose but to wander,
standing solitary in Colorado
alone and never lonelier.

THE MIRACLE OF FRIENDSHIP
(SCW, 1976)

The second we met
we knew ourselves
in each other.

Your everlasting gesture
delievered me from embarassment,
freed a selfish self-sense
by the miracle of friendship.
A KENTUCKY MOMENT AWAKENED

Pre-dawn, post-storm
a snow-filled world
awakening to greet
sunlight's arrival
surrounded by deep, serene
silent listening...

INTERMINGLED AND RAPTUROUS

Unpossessed--

one with everything that day,
relived this now,
our park outing...

All of us in summer-shine taken
from the many into one
intermingled and rapturous--
every sense in communion.

We reached without effort
surrender's sweet surrender.
COGHILL AND BOND, 1977

One a misfit and one a bigot:
Coghill minus wit and Bond minus sense.
Two drunk off-duty military cops on leave
sit across from each other in between
a locked and loaded .45 caliber pistol
at McDonald's in Radcliff.

With Coghill's finger on the trigger,
Bond points and tugs the barrel toward
his chest then boom! Everything goes
slow motion. The blast knocks him
into the wall and both of them into sober.
Blood splatters all over as everybody freezes.

The verdict read: "Unintentional," yet
Coghill lives minus freedom, and
Bond minus several body pieces.

BLACK FOREST PATHS, 1978-79

On Black Forest paths
I run amidst
ancient trees
and recent saplings.

Easy to find myself lost, lost
in each delicious breath, found again, again
in every step I plant.
THE FERRY TO BREMEN, 1979

The wind
on the ferry to Bremen

stings every pore
not ensconced
in my military parka.

The crossing's not long
but costs a lifetime
of comfort.

Facing the brace on skin,
from obligation
not by choice, makes

everything colder
and nothing worthwhile.

I departed a young soldier
and now much older for the ride,

descend from the known world to
the unknown. How do I grow beyond

these tortures emerging from
the needless fears from
man's made measures?

MORE THAN SALVATION
(Bremerhaven, Germany, 1979)

During your conversation
challenging
the Word of God,

I listened and heard
a deeper voice within;

however, it took decades until
"I am" became

wordless, empty, and awake.
THE MONETTE CLAN

I never dreamed then
that I would have children
in my future,
while belonging to your family.

You inspired my being born anew
over and over and over,
outside in and inside out unto
birth, breath, life, death.

EVERY FACE I MEET

On the train from Frankfurt to Karlsruhe,
My fourth duty station as a volunteer soldier,
I began to learn what the Army doesn't teach:

How to live within my within,
How to be at home in an alien landscape.
How not to cling to familiar comforts, and

How to see myself in every face I meet.
AS HER FLOWERS
Ruth filled with her garden,
opening and closing
as her flowers.
"What gives receives, and
what expands contracts,"
she smiled while introducing her
retractulas as beautiful as
waiting's patience.

ENTERING
Entering its body--
Ripples and circles.
Both of us float,
not surreal,
all natural:
Submerged then enveloped
-- no brim --
Just filled with ecstasy
on either side
of the surface.
A SEMINARIAN AT STUDY

In the warm glow, I sit
with nimbus intact
by the window seat
in the upstairs library loft.

I feel sunlight pour
over my text and self-sense, hear
Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle offer
some ancient wisdom
I can't yet grasp because I am
already ensconced in my own
faith's resistance.

ANCIENT SEAN AT TWENTY-ONE

(Seminary Retreat, 1980)

Along the shore in Santa Cruz
Sean and I share with each other
our desires to serve:
He wants to be a monk in Spain,
and I want to stay a seminarian.

He wants never to speak again unless
in prayer and toil for God's glory
in a cloistered garden and
till his own heart's soil.

By comparison, I am not ready for this level
of commitment. I am yet to be in love
with another human being. I am not
where he already is, not yet aware
of what's already been.
FOR BRIEF MOMENTS

In the care of Salvador
for broken bones

and shattered heart unknown
to him between
our awkwardness
and private silences.

He wanted to give the gifts of him

at the moments when

I wasn't aware enough

to embrace them.

AS IF UNLIT

A Saint Francis example

in a fellow seminarian:

Wickedly thin Brother Paul,
a lantern's flickering flame

brighter than the sun, shining on
every single shadow,

lived among us as if unlit himself

a purer image from our very Source:

Shame free, blameless, and
eager to forgive.
PARADOXES OF DESIRE

I climbed the mountain to the seminary and found
a single cell with nothing on the walls:
    A simple bed, one window, sink and wardrobe.
My desire to live God's will flourished until
    I argued with Him or Her, or It about Leviticus.
I didn't know it then, but I projected God's view
    on the other side of this argument.

Absent wisdom, I didn't see the consequence
    of my hubris or its embedded seed called ignorance.
Trapped I was by my own conceit I made
    God my scapegoat for every decision
I didn't want to make, for every feeling
    that didn't feel safe.

Until I met myself in another, with the world
    at my disposal, I suffered over and over
life's paradoxes called desire:
    those painful pleasures we co-create
to replace our original natures.

FOREVER'S SEASONS

(Dr. Hopkins, d. 1982)

In honor of this philosopher well met
    as your student,
during the dusks of your autumn
    and my springs of dawn,
you helped dispel

    my youthful reliance on magical thoughts
    as you died in the cycle
    of a well lived life:

a lover of wisdom in forever's seasons...
UNREACHABLE "SOON"

Hours and days of aches
for the sake of what's not so.

Moon on the lake
lake on the moon,
holding out for that
unreachable "soon."

MARVELOUS MEET

Marvelous skin
our textures meet.

That magnificent smell
found on your face while
touching this face,
discovering those present gifts
this moment gives
even after years...
BREATHING LESSONS

I held my breath

to reach our

other's each,

not knowing when

to hold or to release.

In that pleasure's pain,

I learned

more than how

another's touch can teach,

skin to skin, when to breathe

and what to kiss.

THIN'S INVITATION

Thin's invitation

to which I didn't listen

Too awkward and frightened

to initiate a yes.

Our frequent and infrequent

face to face encounters

turned out and into only moments

of wish and pretend

instead of celebrated

lips and skin.
NOT YET PARTNERS

We danced the dance
not yet partners:

Minds and eyes only, only
eyes and minds felt

the forward and reverse,
the swerves and turns, the angles

and curves.

Then the music began its begin
around and around until everything's skin

Inside out turned outside in.

Everywhere at once a single spin

over and over and over and over...
again and again and again and again...

EACH OPPOSITE EACH

Each opposite each;
their open wings meet

the other's sky.

The play leads to flight.

These lovers fly and soar to reach
mutual heights,
highs that make the fall

evermore worthwhile.
OUR WALKS AS ONLY US

Remember our walks through neighborhoods that were not ours?
How we built future castles to fit our shared dreams at large surrounded by gardens where myths and labyrinths unravel.

It didn't escape us, walking side by side, those intimate moments, that these dream domiciles we fancied and planned, after our college years, would never come to pass, yet we lived in them; we loved in them; we let ourselves become them dizzy with delirium, then let go of all our holds, returning to our senses.

We, two young students, destined for success, felt each other's oneness enough to transcend living's "what if" into everywhere's "only us."

WORLDS IN LOVE

At my first touch in what in me is whole.
I smile with trust when Joe tosses the ball.

In his first vulnerable throw,
I catch a glimpse of worlds in love inside the inside of my own glove.
BUT CONTINUE. . .

"Teach me to love,"
you whispered
into this lover's
ear.

Our lightning & thunder had come
as we basked in the calm
of our storm.

Warmed by our touches,
we surrendered.

How fragile we felt
against its power.

Where do we plummet
from here?

No way to know
but continue. . .

EVER AFTER US

The kiss
that was a bridge
bonding
our lives and
lips which
continue
to touch
every
ever
after
us
LITTLE TO DO WITH US

Not surprised by the shallow depth
at which we celebrated your twenty-first birthday
in San Francisco at North Beach.

This lover, after dinner, made himself a fool
by singing solo to demonstrate complete surrender
to his love, yet I remember your disgust
and loss of face in public.
Not the first in our relationship but
the last time my heart's intent would insult
your brilliant mind.

You the user so used and
I the martyr so misunderstood.
In this play of opposites, we found, after all
that had been done and said,
although we wanted to be in love, love
had little to do with us.

FINAL ACTS

Balancing on wires
once hidden

finding the heights
becoming & being
you and I, trapeze
artists for a time...

Bodies with minds with hearts
one catcher
one flyer
once enfolded
hands and arms with
every else
attached--

A circus of desires yet
seldom sated
beyond the present
climax.
PETER'S FLIGHT

Not your first suicide attempt--
still alive at my arrival.
You couldn't guarantee your own safety
after being abused as a child, now an adult,
by the institution who asserts an infallible
Truth for over two centuries since the Nazarene
was made their God.

What about your truth Peter?
The truth of being used as an altar
for sexual favors.
Doesn't your Gospel matter to the fathers,
who sent you to the hospital to protect
the Archbishop who guards the Holy See:
the Vicar of Christ Himself?

You're not the only suicide attempt,
without guarantees, that still stains
the hands of these "holy sacraments."

YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE

One telephone and call
from San Jose to Tchibanga

when long-distance was distant,
and separation separate.

Both of us behaved as if
this were so.

Now no calls from wherever
you roam
to this prison I am now in.

No distance, no separation,

behaving more
as one.
IN HONOR OF JOSEPH MERRICK
("The Elephant Man")

Mr. Joseph Merrick, I met
your image in the art of film
on a foggy London street
among misfits and freaks.

Transported I was deep
beneath your thick skin,
feeling beauty of all things grotesque
in the world of your story.

Recoiled in horror, you and I,
by how humans abuse humans
by refusing what is ugly
about ourselves.

BERNIE AND TIM

Inseparable as friends--
a couple of clowns,

who discovered how to see deeply
into each other's other, and
played on the surface of earth

as timeless instruments
for the whole world's circus...,

unfurling every part of themselves
in the spirit of their spontaneous
music, ever learning in the moment's

moment, the value of being humorous.
THE CLOSEST I'VE EVER COME TO MICHELANGELO

The closet I've ever come
to Michelangelo's work
was handling the dead like him, learning
about human anatomy first hand:

How death informs life
as much as life informs death,
and that mysteries reveal themselves best
in the moment's notice
not by what's sketched.

WHAT'S NOT TO MOURN
(1984)

I lived in the room
upstairs above
the celebrated dead.

My home for working in the mortuary
where my bed rested against
the wall to better navigate
this closet with a shower.

Dirges and hymns sung by day,
Solitude and silences by night.
Hot plate feasts
with simple cuisine, then
doing the dishes in
the bathroom sink.

This is how I lived:
Alone yet not alone
celebrating all
what's not to mourn,

Content to be alive
among the dead and

the sweet flowers sent
by everyone's relatives.
INITIATED BY YOU

Feel you still
& the smile
wrapped sideways.

Your touch
penetrating

all inhibition
to express such

a natural response

that so opened

these lips for

our first

kiss.

ONCE AGAIN

Once again

the raptures we share insist
on the skirmishes we invite

between our bodies and desires.

Limited our powers
to resist the resistances

which neither one of us

resisted.
NOT YET READY
(1983)

Once upon a smile
I asked you for a date,
I do recall your "yes,"
but can't recall your name.
I'm sorry for the lapse.
I still taste you just the same.
I remember that I gave
what you wanted to receive.
I remember I didn't take
what you wanted to give me.

HOMELESS PAUL
(SJSU Campus, 1984-85)

On campus I befriended
the "King of Refuse."

From table to table, he'd tramp
and eat every morsel unconsumed
and afterwards raid the ashtrays.

We talked and shared
until no longer strangers.

Face to face or from a distance,
we stay well met
into all futures.
AN ENLIGHTENED ARRIVAL
(Gabon, 1985)

A quarter lifetime spent
preparing for Africa's mission,
finding everything so
already arrived
prior to my arrival.

A CLASSROOM IN TOHIBANGA
(1985)

Enter at your own risk
no doors, only window slats, and
desks arranged for thirty or more
les élèves reluctant to learn
their third language while only seeking
the moyen to please
their parents and the President.

After a year of mutual torture,
we got along enough to embrace
our foreign purposes and celebrate
our differences as one expression,
igniting our pilot lights to flame,

whether we liked it or not, allowing
what was already alive to find
its way to our surfaces.
SOFITEL DE TCHIBANGA

An afternoon at the pool
sun worshipping
under the Tchibanga sky.
Franoise emerges
from the cool liquid blue
as I, with delight,
celebrate the view.

AN UN-AFFAIR IN AFRICA

Each year
when the summer stirs the tropical winds,
I am assailed again by an affair
that never occured between us.

Everytime that vision on the beach arises
of never touching beyond holding hands and
that cryptic comment my heart still can't understand.

I feel from the inside out the same taste as then
during that violent reunion of my want and
your rejection, mixed with my aging regret
and youthful arrogant ignorance.
IN AFRICA LIVING LIFE

A vision, a dream, a wish,
or déjà-vu, many years prior,
came together on the Ogooue River
in Lambarené, Gabon.

Pirogue bound west, we motor
through the muddy waters.

On either shore unfolds
what I've seen before:
thatch huts, cooking fires and smoke
with Africans of all ages in Africa
living life.

Then approaches a hippopotamus
eyes, ears, and snout exposes
this great river's dangers
and how dreams, in their wake,
go deeper than any supposes.

THE REAPERS OF GABON

Manioc harvest
funneled into heavy loads
hoisted then carried
by women holding infants
all the way home.
STORM SWOLLEN
(Gabon, 1985)

My heart is storm swollen
a million miles from home
farther than my arms can gather.

So I let my pain swim
with the Nyanga
to the shore,
spilling all I am
into every ocean.

ONE WITH THE NYANGA

Always alone
with the Nyanga I stood

fixed like a bridge
across a world of chasms,

reaching for reaches
I couldn't yet grasp.

I spoke in English
she answered with silence.
In my sudden movements
she remained still.

In my surprise stillness
with her I moved.
MASS @ SECTOR CINQ

Do all effects have causes?
"What am I doing here," I ask,

hoping my fear doesn't show,
while sitting shoulder to shoulder

with a community of "lepers."

"Clean and unclean equals human," I think
while pressed against these brothers and

sisters offering gestures of peace,
touching me one by one.

I pray as we receive communion and drink
from one cup that this body

and blood ritual infects us all
with what's unconditional.

'NGEMA'S REQUEST

Ngema, the mask-maker,
without legs asked
me to find
   a strong rope
   long enough
   to hang himself.

I searched the village for days
without purchase,
then returned
from my failed mission
on purpose.
TCHIBANGA AWAKENED

Thinking, thinking that life
other than here makes life
over there extraordinary.

Not so present until you face
being overwhelmed.

There's ordinary living without escape
and more or less wherever
you go thereafter, you find the need
to eat, drink, sleep and shit.

Then afterwards work, play, dream, share
and touch every human aspect which is Spirit
in the flesh as well as in
everything else that exists in our beings:
The marketplace of things invisible and seen.

The rooster crows our awakening
so the dust settles us
into its ever-presentness.

UPON THESE REFLECTIONS
(for Eric, 1985-86)

I saw in his eyes
the efforts to learn
about growing old
once his teacher
in Africa long ago.

I see his face at fifteen
as mine in the mirror.

The keen pupil upon
these fresh reflections
is now my timeless teacher
about living forever.
TEA AS ONE IN AFRICA
(1985-86)

Tea time in Libreville
the sweet release of chamomile
from the prison of my own fears
while living these conditions in Africa.

I sip then swallow
the moment's warmth, breathe
in its fragrant taste, feel
the peace within me reach
Being joy's sweet surcease.

UNINHIBITED DANCING

Dance from midnight
until the morning light
a la boite near the marche.

"Don't make eye-contact unless
you want to bed your dance partner,"
this custom echoed in my head.

Just Mvuki-Mvuki to the movement
of the music, which means
shed your clothes and dance uninhibited.
LOVE AT FIRST LISTEN

Love at first listen
hearing about "Life in a Northern Town"

from the savanna of Tchibanga,
south of the equator.

"The morning lasted all day,
all day," . . . as "Evening turned to rain . . ."

and as I followed myself down to my station,
I wrote "so long" with my eyes
"as the train rolled out of sight. Bye, bye . . ."

Life in this African town where
my mourning lasts all night, all night.

SPACE & TIME SUSPICIOUS

I departed my voluntary year
in Africa as I arrived:

Suspicious about space and time
about why every here is never better
than any over there.
"LEVER SOAP"

Lever soap's scent
does not cleanse
me from these
Libreville events:

Bed bug bumps, the itch
for home, trade winds
all day long, cold
showers during stage, and

watching Anorexic Annie run
from her calories.

Compasion for the African
became my need for self-
compassion.

Learning to teach them English
taught me how to learn about myself.

Moussavou with damaged heart became
my teacher and I his student.

In every word and every lesson
every student taught the teacher.
Every teacher his own pupil, and
every pupil one shared vision.

MICHELLE'S LEGACY

"Breathe," you'd say when
I complained
of being cold.

In other words, be responsible
for your self. Be one
with the elements. Don't suppose.

You'd smile that smile until
neither of us
would appear in the
everywhere we found.
AWKWARD YET GRACEFUL
(for M. W.)

The visit to your huge house
and warm arms
after climbing
the mountains
to reach the top.

My surprise when yours
climbed mine.

We laughed and danced, danced
and laughed
through our first time at rapturous...

Awkward yet graceful, clumsy
before the flow.

CAUGHT IN MID-SMILE

Willowy thin

and flexible,
blowing toward
this wind.

Asking to be
not called
"beautiful," while
caught in mid-smile in
the want of wanting
what's not wanted while
getting what
you want.
FRIENDSHIP MIRRORS

There you stood
as if...
around the bend
when I returned
as if already I
arrived in you
as if you left as me
and returned as you.

Our faces told
the story with one
singular beauty.

BENNIE AND MIKE

Bennie and Mike fresh
from the Old Country,
wearing the boot on
your sun-kissed olive skin.

Everybody loved your sharp accents
and smooth charms but

I knew the quietude and
soft affections shared
between you.

I witnessed one evening what
your fearlessness doesn't wear
being unbashful in your skin and open
to the unaware.
A THOUSAND KISSES

Helen launched a thousand kisses my way
in just three years time
and as many invitations to share her bed.

We met when she was ninety-two
and I was twenty-four at her convalescent hospital.

Every week a visit and every other moment
her propositions.

Along our way before her final smile,
I asked her in my naïveté, aroused by curiosity:
"How often do you think of sex?"

She replied with posture and tone
most dignified:
"Every time I see you honey!"

FOR NETTIE STILL ALIVE

No preparation necessary
the sages say, all is practice
at different depths of consciousness.

I met Nettie in deep waters
while learning to navigate
convalescent hospitals.

Lonely at ninety-one,
she offered this seminarian
a wary welcome to his offer to listen.

This promise kept, we grew
as I listened until she died
alive and smiling
at ninety-seven.
JIM FROM MINNESOTA
(1986-88)

AID's was the plague of the eighties
when I stepped in the middle
of Jim's illness.

Twenty-six blonde and blue,
humorous and handsome un-hidden
behind his dying and lesions.

I held his hand and wiped his brow
through many medical missions.

So true then as is now,
no medicine need cure him.

BIRTHDAY AWAKENED, 1987

At my peak in paradise,
I cupped the Pacific Ocean

in one hand
and discovered, beyond belief,

my own magnificent clarity.
BLONDE & BLUE

I am
with you Jim,
so blonde & blue,
holding hands,
as you,
fear-filled, ponder
what will kill
you first:
the treatment's poison
or the plague
of AIDS?

"Don't be afraid,"
my touch suggested.
Life and death,
both no and yes,
transcend every opposite.

HOWEVER THE CONFIGURATIONS

However
the configurations,
we managed to make that happen
and happen and happen, and
on each occasion,
we equaled or
superceded our previous
penetrations.
EMPTY FICTION

I knew before you knew yourself
your imminent departure.
Constantly rebuffed I was on what
might be the matter.
Was there something in my weakness
that made your reasons stronger?
Why fabricate a pregnancy and
its permanent solution?

Already what we'd given amounted
to convenience equaling
a zero minus your division.
Nothing we discussed. Nothing left to challenge.
No need to defend your empty argument,
nor your empty womb as empty as our apartment.

In my efforts to pursue a deeper understanding,
you responded with a haughty laugh:  
"You ought to be a novelist," and
never said a word again
about your empty fiction.

MT. MICHELLE

Out in the cold until
we breathed our breaths
in unison on the cliffs.
Enveloped am I
by your whispered sighs
as high a climb as
my fall down.
AFTER WAVES
(10-18-1989, Felton, CA)

The parking lot--
sloped, graded, and altered
by the earthquake stayed
empty all day
after the waves of the Loma Prieta
closed what's commonplace.

One skateboarder braved
the waves over and over, daring
the ordinary spaces
extraordinarily.

ONCE UPON AN EARTHQUAKE
(St. Joseph Seminary, 1989)

This particular house of God
no longer exists,
such is the Law of Impermanence.

So suffer the memories and future?

Never in the present tense.
"THE GRAND OPENING"

That time, at the library opening, 
still exists in this timeless mind. 
Your eyes yield the truth from me 
I can't deny. 
The crowd surrounds your 
celebrated self. 

Our first public encounter 
after many private nights. 
I misread the intent in your heart 
for us to leave together as one, 
so I left ignorant and all alone. 

A BRIEF AND TIMELESS FRIENDSHIP

Intense and never indifferent lived 
translucent Vince--

A pure heart wrapped around 
his sacred mind.

Deliberate risks taken for the sake 
of what's permanent.

Life for him meant a million deaths 
and as many resurrections.

As old as he was young, yet 
no stranger to all things ancient.

His presence ever now 
keeps so beautiful 
my very own existence.
ERIC'S ARRIVAL

Instant friends we became
working as tutors, while
tending to our flocks
of students with
periods, commas, and elipses.

We discovered
more questions than answers
at the end of our essays.

ERIC'S DEPARTURE

On your way, before your
departure, we
drank till after
dark, celebrating

a promised return from
your year in Heidelberg.

I prayed you'd stay the night--
that night has yet arrived.

ERIC'S RETURN

Nothing remains
to everything's change
along its way to where
it returns--

even relationships--

never the same
yet always so.
I AM SO SORRY

There we were
    in the midst
    of our Is.

We sought to please
    as one, but
    found each other
    hurt instead.

Who knew then
    this path to love?

Where are you
    in the midst
    of what's now?

Have you reached
    your depths to heal?
Have you felt
    the freedoms of forgive?
I am so sorry
    for the harm I did.

WITHOUT REGRETS

K, it wasn't love between us that so enamored
our own created images; we acted-out the art of our lives
and wrote about it.

Lost but also found, we shared the real within
our own ideals.

We experimented, if you will, with each other's
    metaphors and similes, keeping each other only
    in the margins of our poetry.

Nevertheless sincere and careful to what we felt,
    we stumbled along our path together yet
    as undeniably separate.

Death seemed to be the life of most my poems,
    including our relationship, yet you and I
    survived our coupling:

I left to practice being more like Walt Whitman,
    and you, without regrets, embraced your Gertrude Stein.
THE HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER

At six feet seven,
a full grown man,
all of eight-years-old in his mind,
Buster, as skinny
as a pillar, effortless,
reaches
for his hummingbird
feeder.

With blood-red fluid,
He fills the chambers
to the brim,
without a single spill,
feeding his toothless grin.

MOMENTS IN YOUR WORLD

A brief encounter in Mariposa
has lasted into thirty years.

In my heart resides
those moments in your world:

Where your beauty breathes
in mine.
OUR EXCHANGES
(for Vera)

The day reflected the color of our essences
when we walked hand in hand into the garden.
Gold or silver or platinum none of these
matched our exchanges.
Grace and beauty and gratitude:
   all of these included the May,
with everything in the world that mattered,
   we married.

OPENED DOORS
(for Hsa)

Our trust young and tender
   after years of already being with others.
You offered us a tea to share--
   Lapsang Souchang--
   the beginning of many things new and different.

"Liquid rope the aroma and
   a pungent and smokey taste," I teased.
We laughed at each other’s reactions.

You opened many doors to my senses
   for ancient spices, bountiful gardens,
   and edible flowers:

   Life changing yet permanent adornments
   with ineffable flavors.

Gifts you introduced I still savor,
   continuing to fill with you
   the cups I keep empty.
A SONG OF GRATITUDE FOR VERA

Our season arrives
   to consciously conceive our dreams.
We embody infinite space as one
   to co-create in love
the celebration of our children's choices.

Your beautiful fullness encompasses
   the universe making room
for two more wonderful beings to be.

THIS LOVE'S STILL PRESENT

Our honeymoon under the sun
   among the stars in a German June.
Everywhere love and
   everything is our being together
already with child.

The windows open in
   at this Bavarian Inn as
all walls and doorways dissolve
   the moments we enter
our own beautiful haven.

Mirroring the surrounding mountains,
we climb their heights and reaching
   for the depths inside our shared hearts,
we touch forever's bliss
   which always is
where love exists.
IN EVERY STEP AFTER AND BEFORE
(for Eha)

In every step after, my dear,
you remain in my presence.
I have not forgotten
how you've shared
my marathons.
How you've helped me realize
my greatest dreams in the births
of our beautiful daughters.

In every step we met, my love,
you were present already.

Remember our shared Rumi verse?

Lovers don't finally meet on the surface
They're forever in each other's depths.

A WORPSWEDER VISIT

Rilke's Worpswede still exists
in the witnesses to his works.

He's on the streets, in the taverns,
on the docks and in the seekers
prior to, during, and after their walks.
AUNT JUANITA'S LOVE
(Funeral, 1993)

When small in a world
that used to be large, I
made you false
when you were true.

Stern and strict
you seemed so hateful
though your family came first
even for this ignorant nephew.

I stand here in your honor,
in sacred embrace,
as you stay still
now every place.

HIS FOREVER IS
(Mike's Funeral, 1997)

Stillness moves us
as I sang "Bookends":

"What a time it was/
it was..."

Singing his forever is.
A STEP-FATHER MOMENT
(for Ethan and Sascha)

It was "evening
    all afternoon,"
before we entered
    the park down
the street for
    frisbee football, and
effortless laughter:
    two transitory sons
and one step-father, together
    share in permanent proof
what happens when
    love outlasts
one's happenstance.

OUR WALK OF DREAMS

My two legs with two more
    dangling down
from a pack on my back while
    pushing her sister in a
three-wheeled stroller toward
the lake and back
    one by one by one, three propellers
past, present, and future at once
    awakening what's unlimited.
MY "GLEN GETTY" FRIEND

Two cups of tea served
in porcelain.
We gathered together
after your wife's betrayal:
Shattered to pieces and
wounded by the shards.

"Humpty Dumpty and all
that rot" echoed in our heads,
but nothing could be said
to match what we shared:
A pot of your special blend
my "Glen Getty" friend.

BESIDES MY SELVES

I've been looking
for somebody else
besides my selves
from bookstore shelves
to everywhere there's joy,

for an identical enthusiasm

for a poet's wisdom.
SWIMMERS
Swimming in
the motions
until our heads
spin,
meeting each other's
ecstasy
in the movements--
swimmers in the ocean
of living's
separate oneness.

ECLIPSED
Sunny at night...
full moons
in bloom...
Horizons on fire
our equal
delight.
EVER SO BEING MORE

Sleek &
slender-
ly you

stand--

an island
in a promised

ocean,

swimming toward

reaching shore

All of me rescued from,
then stranded on

ever so

being

more.

EGGPLANTS & HURRICANES

The mixtures
that came with

our banquets... eggplants,
hurricanes, anticipations... the

softening of fears and hearts, eating
generous servings, and
after the feasts, as

hippos and elephants we rested.

Not self-indulgent but beautiful gifts
are those spontaneous moments
never planned for, nor
identified with.
NINO & GINO

Nino and Gino—
students from different decades,

Teachers from various centuries,

beautiful beings of love and wisdom

as are we all, who in our own time, climb

life’s mountain with its ever leveling
challenges and sorrows and

its delicious waterfalls into the oceans

of nameless joys, while learning to swim

and navigate, without effort against

what happens to us, toward the unreachable

reaches beyond what’s hidden behind our bodies

and minds and to celebrate what it is that pulses,

immense and emergent, beyond our beyond.

WHO IS REMEMBERING?

Who keeps visiting our dance—
our slow motion in the dark—

feeling that feeling when

everything rejoined rejoices.

I was and am not I.
You were and are not you.

Who is the entity
that’s remembering

this continued

movement continue?
THE DEATH OF WILL
(to my two students)

The death of Will killed
all Middletown. Still
alive after the collision,
during the early hours, they hit
an ancient oak head-on.

The fragile youth, at the driver,
laughed until he collapsed.
Dead before the hospital.

The driver survived without
a scratch, yet scars run
deep we can’t detect. The
curve he wanted wouldn’t
give. The speed he drove
too fast to manage.

The driver lost his friend in life
but gained a life from his friend’s death?

Who do we make responsible for this crash?
Who will we forgive
to free our grief?

BRANDON’S SUICIDE

When is it not a shock
when a friend takes
his own life by gun shot?

Haunted still by the only if. . . ?

How far back must I track
my maybes and perhapses?

We met when I was your forty-year-old
student and you my sixteen-year-old
teacher.

How many times had you died already?
SORRY AUNT MARTY

Sorry Aunt Marty
that I didn't see my way to you
for this life's departure.
I missed the chance to say good-bye.
May I say it now?

Thank you for loving me just as I am
through you I know a love without opposites.

Thank you for still being an active presence
in my life even while in prison.

Your spirit visits often in my silences,
and I'm inspired to love all beings
I encounter as you continue to continue.

May I be as selfless as you
in loving my self through all others.

ONE WITH HIM IN EVERYTHING

(for Tony, 2005)

This moment's reach
as I touch

his murdered flesh.
Together we sink
into his death,
One with him
in everything.
LUNCH IN SAN FRANCISCO WITH TONY, 2004

Don't we all carry on with our delicious wounds and burdens according to our capacity until we've had enough?

Tony asked for McDonald's: One double cheeseburger and a chocolate shake, and said, "I'll pay you back brother when I get some money."

I told him, "No worries, It's my treat," and ordered "the Meal Deal" by mistake. Tony didn't want the fries they delivered, so he went table to table to persuade complete strangers to "take them all for free!"

I won't forget the horror on their faces and their stares at Tony's toothless grin, affected speech, tangled hair, stained skin, awkward gait, and mix-matched clothes wrinkled and soiled.

Tony's sincerity stole my heart showing his child-like innocence and genuine love for people. Either he ignored their repulsion or stayed unaware because he was not troubled by their refusals, so pleased he seemed with his efforts to share.

As we walked away, I accepted the unwanted fries and ate them, one by one, in joy and pain, as I tasted, over and over, the too familiar flavor of my brother's pervasive madness.

A BROTHER'S BURDEN?

Forever my childhood companion The closest soul to our departures, a lasting witness to endless arrivals.
WHEN DID HIS MADNESS EMERGE?

My brother lived in the garage
   in our father's backyard with the dog.
I understand now my puzzlement then, and
   why that chow was so protective.

What looked like his "high" masked
   severe mental illness.
I didn't understand his madness then
   nor my own at the time.

What looked like his freedom
   was actually his prison--
   tormented from within
   by those multiple voices.

I didn't listen to my brother then
   nor his pain:

"The voices," he'd say
   "won't go away."

ALL OF HIM LIVED IN HIS BLUE EYES

An hour spent
   with my brother's corpse,
   forty-nine years re-lived
   in sixty minutes.

Never closer than when
   we were younger.

Now side by side
   in our shared silence.

We knew more wonder than
   fear as boys.
   Our poverty brought riches
   beyond all wishes,
   discovering depths
   only love provides.
AS I RECEIVE THEIR UNIVERSE

My girls of the fields
run and jump and
plant themselves
as flowers to be picked.

After cartwheel lifted and whirled
into dizzy circles,

the search begins for Daddy's
fresh bouquet.

I feign unawares
until they present four hands filled
with miniatature daisies
wrapped within little fingers.

My world all at once dissolves
receiving their universes.

ADVENTURE RICH IN SEATTLE

We three swim
Seattle's Aquarium:

adventure rich,

we dress in aquatic
gear and

wrestle the seals
through glass.

All afternoon,

we speak the language
of fish,

roam the waves

with silent treasures
one in their wakes

and graceful trances.
ALWAYS THIS DESPERATE?

(2005)

On the boulevard southbound,
in downtown Lima, at night,
eyes meet eyes as acrobats
of every age toss themselves about;
All the colors of the spectrum emerge;
Vendors sale their handmade wares
while little children dodge between
their customers in cars, eliciting
Sol, Centavos, or Dollars, and
stare into your windows
like mirrors as you enter their worlds
through troubled eyes looking into yours
looking back and asking if all of life
is always this desperate?

DEAD SILENCE IN LIMA

Open mouths
from the sky above them,
I see roofless houses
by the thousands,
Hungry Peruvians
by the millions.

"Feed us, feed us
as you promised."

"Listen, listen,"
cry the children.

"Need what lesson?"
screams dead silence.
MACHU PICCHU, DECEMBER 2005

Standing fresh
among the ancient ruins:
Peaks upon peaks
Stone on stone
resisting forget with
always remember.

13,000 FEET HIGH

Dining
with my guide--
handsome eyes--

"Anything you want
from the menu,
anything?"

Was I surprised!!!
COUPS DE FoudRES

Thunderbolts of blue,
under the colors of sun,
the entire spectrums involved
somewhere--I am; you are--between
the extremes of feeling
the opposite of same's.

This is how it strikes
right in the center
of hearts and lives:

Love at first sight;
first the skin
and then the wrists

a wisp of waist and then
the eyes penetrate,

staring into always yes, reflecting
what's always true.

BEING WITH BEING

Measure-
less
that stare and
smile
over your shoulder
upon our departure.

That marvelous familiar feel

that touches this being
seen and embraced

as is
Being with being always
never quite
the same.
ON THE INSIDE & OUT

Beautifully
alive and awakened
in your gaze and presence.
The pout and push
of your mouth:
the clarity of skin--
face and voice
--like mirrors reflecting what
goes unexplained but is
and remains.
The heart of all existence
feels our dare and desire
to live on the inside and out
of each other's lives.

YOU SEE

What's become of
our becoming?

Being this moment
brings the want
to let things be
as we left them.

Change can't resist,

yet, how can a feeling
forget its origins, even

when that's feeling's suppressed,
present and
never not expressed?
DEAD AT SEVENTEEN

(for Jim)

Just like Lincoln and Kennedy
before the doom unfolded,
You wore a smile before the fatal shot
penetrated your head.

It's the moments we shared
before the tragedy
that I remember and re-live,
but I can't forget all the blood splatters,
the shock to the senses shattered
from the blast, from the bullet's trauma,
from the hurt and the after matter. . . .

The why goes beyond what reason explains.

We never saw it coming
(neither did Abraham or John) as we
ate our lunch together your last
afternoon, before your murder happened
that night and after what happens
each time a gun becomes
the solution for an angry
young man.

"PIRATE'S" PLIGHT

One-eye blind as you cried in private,
Admitting to fear, defeat, and hopelessness.
Adrift in an ocean of difficult choices
Trapped by your own gangster conscience.

Another victim of gang inflicted violence.
Sixteen when you felt the consequence:
One bullet to the head ended your voyage.
Shot by the man you attempted to silence.

Just like the "Pirate" in Hanh's Zen poem,
All of us the pirate who fires the gun.
All of us the victim who dies from its wounds.
Fear makes us separate but love keeps us one.
"CARTOON'S" DOOM

"Blood-in, blood-out,"
What he said in tears,
wanting out of his
gangland labyrinth.

I refused this logic
but understood his fears.
Both of us feeling
frightened and trapped.

"Birth-in, death-out," I said
a reality we all share, but
death came too soon
to "Cartoon" at seventeen.

"Guts-in, guts-out."
How its done by "Los Treces."
That's how he was found
gutted in two by a machete.

ALREADY HARDENED AT 15

Reaching for the regions
beyond reason to comprehend
one boy's struggle to belong.

Only the heart can reveal
the answer to "Who am I?"
(Who we are beyond the mind.)

Still I posed the question
to stir an early awakening
before he "jumped-in" to his
street gang identity.

I heard he died in Oakland
from a shotgun blast to the abdomen
before he could answer his question.
THE KILLING OF BIRD

I knew a boy named "Bird."
Shot dead for defending
what wasn't him--an image
he adopted in the hood.
shots in the chest and abdomen:
No life left at sixteen
after words exchanged led
to a fistfight he'd won,
which led to more threats made,
which led to a loaded gun,
which led to "Bird" lying dead
in his own blood:
A self beyond the seen
as yet understood.

AN ANGEL ISLAND LESSON

My lesson escaped me
that day I explored
those prisons for our
Japanese "citizens":
during the Second World War.

What were their conditions then
with these structures now in ruins?

My allegiance died on that island
finding no answers.

The ghosts I heard are real.
Can you hear them holler?
OUR EMERGENCY

Feel the story his story tells:

A gunshot through his neck and chest.

His wounds wept as I felt the scars infected after surgery.

Now minus his sternum and dignity his truth is our emergency.

That bullet was "not justified" as many witnesses testified.

The undercover cop, under oath, had lied to corroborate the falsified.

MY EYES ENLARGED

You took them off,

I didn't...

The room got small

My eyes enlarged

All of a sudden

an E L E P H A N T.
ALL DAY AT THE DeYOUNG MUSEUM
(San Francisco, CA)

Masks of every kind from North and South America
too many to name the nameless faces
everyone worn on walls and on visitors:
  Reflections, mirrors inviting different identities
  and rituals: Some of them unkind, many separate,
  All of them divided. Lift and see

What's behind the masks we've worn through wars,
treacheries and betrayals--killers killing ourselves
instead of those others.

Our original faces need no embellishments. We are the same
just different. One face equals no face at all.

One heart is one mind. Unmask
to see through the shades our ego-selves portray;
there is no human act we can perpetrate
that remains unforgivable.

REVISITING

Revisiting that diver
  who didn't slap
the face of the water,
  nary a drop, did
  he spill,
  illiciting thrill,
as he entered,
  with ease,
its body.
ST. UNCLE DANNY

An ordinary man and
daily saint
to any soul in need.

Surrendering everything
without return:

Behavior unconditional,
living generosity
transcending every reason.
I honor
you with deep respect,
in the name
of all that's worthy.

Please accept this shirt
off my back.

WHEN AUGUST BECAME OCTOBER

When an August became
October, the last
time I heard your voice,
although hoarse, from your hospital
bed after the "procedure."

Stage four lung cancer made
its way into all our lives.
Before the fall's first frost arrived

Your exit came to no escape, no
waiting as time stood still with

no between, beginning, or end.
KERRY'S EXECUTED DEATH

The family executed her death
at nine a.m. in mercy.

She didn't breathe her last breath
until nine forty on the dot.

I know because I inhaled
her last gasp,

staring at the clock
when time stood still.

9 A.M. PACIFIC TIME
(for Kerry)

A strange comfort
embraces
the moment knowing
when she'll die:

both human and alien.

Releasing her life--
a blessing or curse?

Around her bed in unison,
we gather and release
our final prayers and goodbyes
before whatever comes
after death arrives.
ALLYSSA THE TRIUMPHANT

A post-modern goddess—
One obstacle after another falls
at your feet.

Once the lesson's learned all else dissolves
releasing your ancestral wisdom.

You said many times how the Great Spirit
of all creation blesses your every endeavor.
Now with tiny child in your care, you seem
to meet the needs of all the world's children.

Strong in your resolve no matter what happens.
You love as love loves without the need of opposites.

RIDING HIGH IN THE SADDLE

Tommy already knew
what to do
on the first pony
he rode.

He circled the world
with each revolution,

already accomplished this
diaper-wearing,

trailblazing toddler,
owning the moment

as everything's future.
THREE TRAINS TO EVERYWHERE ALONE

I

(From Karlsruhe to Kaiserslautern, 1979)

I must return. I must return to
somebody not yet there, despite
the unshared sojourn
among these many strangers, this

stranger felt less strange
and less alone from the one

who sits no longer staring out from
the inside of what's not him.

II

(From San Jose to San Francisco, 1984)

Alone with 81 poems
hand held before consumed.

Each a revolution around
a circumference that equals
zero.
I found myself arrived already
before I left the station.

III

(Cuzco to Machu Piccu, 2005)

All eyes trained on the peaks unseen
yet closer & closer & closer the wheels churn
toward already's future. . . .

Feeling the pull of having been
ascending heights for my home's return,

Feeling the pull into fresh, new worlds
traveling alone as everyone's self.

Now, here, beyond, beyond, beyond.
MY SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION IN BRIEF

INFANCY

Baptized Catholic
without consent
in Los Angeles

CHILDHOOD

Stained-glass windows near
Lacquered benches then
catechism afterwards
with three given choices:
Heaven, Hell or Purgatory?

ADOLESCENCE

The sermon according to
The Weekly Bulletin—
my evidence of attendance
before Confirmation.

LATE TEENS

A renewal of faith—
a victim of my own ignorance
during Lent to Easter
through Kentucky snows.

EARLY TWENTIES

I
Fasted forty days and forty nights—
literally, without food during lent,
in Germany's winter desert.

II
Re-entered the womb
at twenty-three
in a Catholic seminary—
a world within a world's world.

III
After three years, I departed
and baptized myself more
catholic than Catholic.

IV
Met Lao-Tzu while ingesting
his 81 poems on a train
from nowhere to San Francisco.
MID-Twenties

I
I introduced myself to African Rituals
in the midst of a Christian
identity crisis in Gabon, Africa

II
Tasted fruits of a woman
for the first time as
an everlasting happiness happened.

Thirties

I
Found Jesus before Christianity
on my honeymoon
after some darkness came
a liberation.

II
Participated in the births
and development of two
beautiful human beings.
Alleluia!

III
Dabbled in the esoteric arts
of divination and grew
from magic to mythic to reason.

IV
Learned how to love this abandon
son while being
my daughter's father.

Forties

Touched by the countless
miracles in other's lives
as their therapist and counselor.

Fifties

I
I met Buddha in the mirror
in my cell at the county jail.

II
Continuing to listen in silence
on how to unlearn
while in prison.
PASSAGES
TO
NOW
PART
III
poems
by
thomas perez jewell
SELF-PORTRAIT, 2011

For years
  pain rained
into every pore
  until I became
a river of regrets.

Now imprisoned,
  I am swimming in
an ocean of forgiveness.

A NATURAL MASTERPIECE

Spider webs capture
  a fallen leaf
against the freedom side
  of this cell's window.

A natural masterpiece
  to marvel--

A wind maneuvered miracle
  even in this grim abode
  for prisoners.
MY FIRST THIRTY DAYS

Every thing surreal
   in my first thirty days
   in jail.

I slept with the lights
   on afraid
my demons would glow and
   grow in the dark,
   but instead they revealed themselves
   in the light.

Afraid that I might find, I was,
   this solitary confinement
well deserved for my crime and
   a welcome reprieve for the shame,
guilt and pain
   I continue to feel.

ON PURPOSE?

Shaded grays
   on cemented walls
Manufactured sadness
   on the other side
   of natural.

Sun, moon, stars, invisible
   makes me crave
   all things created.
EVERY PRISONER KNOWS

What's life like living
among the "Untouchables?"

Every prisoner knows,
just look at their faces
when nobody shows to visit.

IN THE GREAT RELEASE

In the great release of dreams
Nothing's gained
only let go.
Nothing's obtained
only purged.

Nothing's forgotten
but everything's
forgiven.

Nothing separated
everything one.

Nothing's nothing as
everything's everything.
TOLERANCE

Mind like water.
We begin our epoch
as compact puddles of urine,
fluids and tears--
a helpless present
with insidious futures?

We motor together
the river of ourselves
without guarantees
during uncharted courses
through jungles, mountains
or deserts on either shore.

The waters widen or constrict
according to our fears, and

we realize, the instant
we begin to sink, the tension
of our tolerances, the breadth
of our hearts, the depths
of our oceans.

Whether pebble or boulder, what’s
the level of our absorption?

SIMPLE AND COMPLEX

In this simple
little box
The world's this tree
full of complex
people.
HOW GOES YOUR ROUTE TO PARADISE?

How goes your route to paradise?
Following footprints of aborigines?
Wearing shoes another's worn?
Living on clastic rocks in a Pacific atoll?
Being as active as oxygen or inert as argon?
Let go all strategies for being now.
Be this moment nirvana found.

IN A MOMENT'S MOVEMENT

Fog feet amble north and south.
Sun rays wobble east and west.

Moon beams sleep in light and gambol all night
as earth spins colorful whirls in timeless delight.
WHAT'S NEVER BORN

What's to understand about life
but to live.
Play the pipes and ride the tubes.

Water's soft, yet from great heights
becomes concrete, not to mention ice.

Random waves from ocean depths,
oolites formed as our creation.

Timeless tides on blatant forces
from single cells to invertebrates
to human beings and all our forms
Always one—what's never born.

IN A FEEBLE PUDDLE?

Why muddle in a puddle,
old one or young,
when the currents offered
by the ocean are
much more fun?
AGAINST THE WORLD

Stranded on a landscape
with hearts that hate:
scarlet and sulfurous
from fumaroles of toxic waste.

Once longleaf pines burnt
to ash after the eruption
between volcanic selves.

Empty of farads spent on vengeance.

Nothing remains but
photonic teeth, just enough
to torque a pulse
to keep their muzzles pent
against the world.

A CERTAIN PEEK

The winter sun
offers me a certain peek,
enters my slender window
into where and how

I'm living now.
HOW FLOWS YOUR SPIRIT?

The soul is our Mohs
to test our hearts:

Soft or hardened?
open or closed?
Content or miserable?
Fluid or solid?
Tortured or healed?
Clung to or let go,
all things impermanent,
preserve or release,
How flows your Spirit?

IN EVERYTHING'S BEGIN

Inspired
by
the leaves
hanging on
in Winter's
dancing winds

as am I
always already
embraced
in

Everything's
begin
MY PATH TO COMPASSION

Sculpting my hatred into kindness
hard as granite, as proud as delusion.
Plutonic depths of fear and ignorance
layers and layers.

Water on stone
my path to compassion.

In silence, I elicit
Michelangelo's ghost
for hints on how he sculpted:

Allowing what emerges from
the imagined to authentic.

NO VICTIMS IN NATURE

Day forgives
the night its nature.

Night envelopes day
with a natural embrace.

Both provide
such beautiful arrivals.

Both allow
departure's grace.
LISTEN! LISTEN!

Listen children.
    Listen Elders.
Listen men and women.
    Listen as you listen!
Think and think again
    until your thoughts
outthink themselves into oblivion.

Don't think you can outthink
    the truth that lives within.
What you resist is your teacher now,
    and what's discovered
becomes your wisdom.

Listen children listen!
    Listen Elders listen!
Listen, listen men and women!
    Listen for catastrophe's disasters.
    No one's special; no one's spared;
Every one's the only One.
    Every moment brings this lesson.

Welcome, welcome your unlearning, and
    Allow your Truth's always been.

PARKING LOT LIGHT

A seagull lit
    on a light standard.
No pause in
    nature's flow.
Even in still-
    ness
Every activity continues.
A NATURAL CONTRAST

Shadows play on the lawn
at dawn and last the
whole day long.

Still but not still, they move
at one with what makes them so
by doing nothing everything's done,
by doing everything,
nothing's undone.
A natural contrast
of sorts to what's
always been
simply reflecting, without effort,
what always is.

WATER ON STONE?

I spoke and tried to reach toward
an inmate who hates
himself as much as everybody else.

Not one week since his return from
the hospital emergency room after
trying to kill himself as much as
the lives of everybody else.
WHEN I CALL YOU

When I call you Mother,
who are you when
you can’t remember
who I am?

Who am I if you forget
who you are but we
still alive while dying
at seventy-five?

HOW MANY DEATHS DID WE SURVIVE?

How many deaths did we survive together,
Mother, before you died?

Your father, your mother, your sons, and daughter,
your brothers and sisters, and everyone else
we’ve held in the flesh.

Now comes your release, your reunion?

Now emerges what never began and
what does not end...
FREEDOM'S EVOLUTION

Uncreate creates creation
Emptiness and Form so Form and Emptiness
This and That Fire and Ice
Vapor and Solids
The play of opposites
Nested holarchies
matter to mind to spirit

Conscious unfolding and Unfolding consciousness
Becoming's being and Being's becoming

Ascending and Descending again and again
Many to the One and One to the Many

Birth to life to death to return
moment to moment to moment to moment

Interdependence and impermanence
We embody agency and communion
--never separate--

"Wholes that are parts of other wholes"

Already always and Always already

Aware of these Truths
one's freedom emerges.

BEING SILENT AND STILL

When I am silent
and still,
I am the world
as it is.

When I talk about it,
the world is
my inherited mess.
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Conditioned from conception and birth.
Conditioned to drink cow's milk.
Conditioned to eat beef.
Conditioned to pledge allegiance
to the flag.
Conditioned by a conditioned curriculum
which doesn't insure against
one's ignorance.
Conditioned by the illusion of success,
security and salvation
until disaster occurs with injuries
and their response is utter silence.
Society's conditioned responses to unconditioned
events do not equal one's happiness.

Now suicides are rampant in reaction
to our institutions conditioned responses
to life's unanswerable questions.

Soldiers, loners, parishis, heroes,
sons and daughters awaken
from the "American Dream" unable
to adjust to the actual shock
of our unconditioned reality.

THE RIGHT TO FIGHT BECAUSE

A flawless how
and a faultful why

fought for their right
to wrong because...

When reason fails
to appreciate what,
the first to blame
is you know who?
A PARTNER'S LAMENT

Your nightly sad undress
of your unseen happiness

leaves completely you un-naked
to your own nakedness.

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Late in the relationship
we became estranged
as the dark of our departure came.

Early on and until, we stayed
light in each other's arms:

Alive we felt
what does not change.
22 MAY 22nd's AGO
(for Vera)

Twenty-two May 22nd's ago,
we married in a garden.

So brief was our coupling,
how did we grow so bountiful?

Wrong was I to break the vow
to give my life until I died.
Why did I surrender this paradise?

Both of us fell into a separate grief. Your wounds, I understand go deep, yet why do I still celebrate our anniversary you ask?

I live our days we lived with gratitude and with reverence since our love stays evident in how we love our children.

EXTREME FRIENDSHIP

If a friend asks you to give your life for his and you refuse you are not his friend.

True friendship requires every inconvenience there is.
A SEAGULL LESSON

Curious creatures that flock
of seagulls now
circling our garbage
and human refuse,
stirring the air and
steering themselves
with the wind.

Is there wisdom to be gleaned
from their spin and whirl, or
some unique nourishment to savor
from the shit we create?

TEEN SUICIDE IN PALO ALTO, CA

Out-side-in seems the way to be rich,
but in-side-out is one’s path to wisdom:
No need to seek what already exists.
Stop the self-blame: Your hearts already
know too much pain.

You parents whose children let the train
take them to their heaven—
No explanation but death remains
therein rests the lesson:

We all live lives of illusion
unless we die before we die.

Parents and children listen:
Let your lives be the death
of our ignorance not our
innocence or guilt.

Our answers reside in the questions
only our love as one can answer.
WALKING THE DAWN WITH ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Walking the dawn with Ernest Hemingway in Madrid. We'd never met before this nor had I ever been to Spain, yet, we both caught wind of the illegal practice of matadors slaying bulls for sport at the slaughterhouse after being gored or shamed.

We stood as eyewitnesses to the fear, stink and reek of human vengeance in the name of justice.

As the moment turned the sunrise pink, Papa and I shared a chill along with the old women queued to drink the rich, red reward of the morning's fresh spill.

KARMIC CUISINE

What's on your plate—
more or less?

Are you less wanting more
when you're hungry to the roots?
Isn't more less when you're filled
to the gullet?

If your more means another's less,
why not make your less another's more?
Share the quotient for your less to be more
on every level we exist.

Make what's enough your karmic measure.
Why force more into what's never less?
DERRY ISLAND, 1972

I want to share this lesson in forgiveness offered by Richard Moore to Charles Inniss.

Strangers in opposition before the weapon Charles fired blinded Richard at ten:


In Derry that dark day, no bitterness persisted after Richard lost his vision. He'd discovered in the darkness a sight as yet defined. He forgave the British soldier the instant a deep compassion awakened in his heart.

MY RE-VISIT TO FRAUEN INSEL

You and I walk the island in early June newlyweds again as I relive with you your girlhood unfolded:

A tragic tale of discovering who you were in the wake of where you'd been. The place a refuge from your mother's unremitting cruelty,

and your temporary deliverance from the unspeakable trauma at the hands of Al. I felt and feel your pain near and far away, at once inescapable and yet unhealed.
BITTER GIVE OR SWEET RECEIVE?

I watched a bitter man
   in the prison yard, crippled
in his bodymind, share bits of bread
   to sparrows and blackbirds
   without resentment?

Whistling sweetly for them to gather,
he then threw the crumbs with abandon
   like the sower in the gospel.

Who knew his intentions, or where
his gifts might land
   when given the wings of release:

a bitter give or sweet receive?

SMILE MICHAEL

When your smile releases
   your face from doubt,
despondence and despair,
your heart, you put to sleep,
awakens.

The wonders of all worlds appear
   inside this one expression,
and I glimpse
   the beauty and truth
of your endless universe
   kept well hidden.

Smile and live Michael,
   from the inside out,
to express and allow
   what is pure perfection.
ONE WITH THE SOURCE

Not a van Gogh of yellows and golds,
but the sun.
The biggest star from where we live,
which has become
our diode of doom
instead of the pallet
for creating our world.

Some experts agree and disagree
its warmth and beauty
is corrupted by us.

We can't unlatch, or make a wish, or
roll the dice in self-disgust;

We must be one with the Source of Light,

and transform ourselves
from the inside out.

One with each and every creature

as earth and ocean
as tree and flower.

RIDING THE TIDES OF LIFE

Riding the tide's movements
wave deep and water weighted
a full nine months young, horizon born,
exposed and red-tinged, I am
already delivered from
the personal ocean of waiting for
the always embrace of this moment's
emergence.
FOR PROPRIETY'S SAKE
(for Yaakov Chaim ben Avraham)

What actually goes according to plan?
Not even time can penetrate its own demands. Conform
    to your gold-plated dictates
or embrace those toxic emotions
    from the powers of impulse?

Even in rebellion
    one must keep
the proper decorum.

Human dilemmas
    resist moral Velcro.
What fits one won't
    always stick to the other.
Proceed with caution
    on the road to wisdom.

How will you maintain
    your nuclear reactions:
with deuterium or Deuteronomy?

LOVE EMERGES THUS

Self-hate does not serve the self.
Misery comes only in its wake.

Who is the one who holds that wisdom?
Listen. Listen. Listening awakens!

Let go. Let go. Let go, so
love emerges thus.
THE DEATH OF TERESA

Once again from a distance I hear
the news delivered in a wave of voices.
You died a few days ago, eight years
from the point of your motorcycle collision,
which caused your coma and afterwards
brought your conscious recovery no farther than
your bed could travel.

In my heart you were never distant.
Our essences continued to meet
as daily visitors in whispers.
We never used the designations as "step-siblings."
Over and over we'd dance with time and spaces
every place, remember?

Never separated, always welcome.
So in life as in death,
I felt you feel what both we felt:
Essential truths that keep us always.

MY BROTHER'S CONSTANT PRESENCE

In my quiet, your voice speaks
so loud.
I hear your silent wisdom
in all I feel with
every touch that touches true.

You breathe this truth
into every moment's being:

That love are we through you so me.
OCEAN BEING

In meditation & beyond
buffeted by thoughts
and images,
distant and near,
easy and difficult, as if solid,
I am none other than
water, water in
the forms of rain, snow, waves,
waterfalls, tsunamis
& hurricanes:
Ocean returning to
Ocean. . . wet wet wet always.

BEING TIMELESS
(for John B.)

Today may be the day
your reply is received?

Not that I am waiting as I breath.

Sitting content inside my breathing
until my counting reaches infinity.

Thirty years have been already
counted since we last met,

so thirty years may pass or
more before another pass
that open door. . .

What advantage being timeless is.
SPIRIT ALREADY

How do I celebrate my brother
ten years after his murder?

I still hear in my inner ear
the conversations between my second cousins
after they beat him to death:

"Get the syringe and some heroin;
Let's make it look like an overdose;
Nobody will care about this crazy addict..."

I still cringe at the bloody images I imagine
of his final fight for life with
blood splatters on the walls as evidence
until washed clean by our aunts and first cousins.

How do I celebrate my brother's life
but with unconditional devotion,
as I swim the same currents he swam
through addictions, through madness,
through murder, through loss and gain
always forever, forever at once.

DEATH DOES NOT SEPARATE

Forty-eight years both living with
and remembering him,
even the two-years before my birth.

Tony would be sixty today if
he'd survived his murder
by our first and second cousins.

Eleven years since the Emptiness revealed
our lives as timeless. Now
I live his death as easily as I breathe,
or as miserable as when I live
as if we were separate beings.
AFTER ALL THAT WAS BEFORE

We drink tea
in the center of my dream,
after all that was before. . . .
After your suicide by hanging,
I bewildered, pour.

You speak your story in images
until our cups go empty.
I still don't understand
what you understood
to leave this world as you did.

Shrouded in further silence, thrust
deeper into deeper stillness,
I move to the music inside
the inside of your blue eyes
and listen:

"Let go of your fears, my friend,
for many deaths await you."

ON YOUR DEATH DAY
(for Joanne)

Silenced by the news I am.
The letter from your daughter said:
You "transcended" a month ago today
beyond what any words could say. . . .

The dying part I understand and accept
but what exactly did you transcend?

We talked and danced and laughed in love.
We did all these as best of friends,
by being them we already embraced
all living's receive and dying's release. . . .
UNTITLED

You said you wanted to understand.
Have you ever read the novel Of Mice and Men?

There are many Georges and Lennys
in the prison system:
Misfits and criminals who are innocents
and innocents who are misfits and criminals.
All of them somehow rejected one hundred percent
as opposites rather than ones
in desperate need of oneness.

If you should ask me which one I am,
I'd reply that I'm just another human
one hundred percent responsible
for what I did and didn't do to deserve
that which has kept and still keeps
My "I" and your "You" separate
from our "We."

LOOKING BACK INTO NOW

Looking back
on the choices I chose,
Being still with my pursuits
and wrong-doings, I realize
how fruitless it all was to seek
and search
as if these would deliver me.

I realize, now riding the waves
of my consequences,
how important every act is.
INSPIRED STILL, 1968

Forty-eight years ago tonight, longer than he lived his life, RFK lay on the kitchen floor in his own spilled blood at the Ambassador Hotel.

I recall too well the human illness that kills.

I missed school the following day living in the suburbs of L.A. One of the millions in vigil, hoping for a miracle.

Forty-eight years ago tonight, I lived with violence until I turned ten.

Many still die at both ends of the gun, forgetting it seems about that human illness that still pulls the trigger.

MY GRIEF DID NOT RELEASE ME

My grief did not release me, so I released my grief. My guilt did not release me, so I released my guilt. My shame did not release me, nor did anyone else, so I released my self as one with everybody’s Self.
TO SHARE IN MY FREEDOM

Michael from Wales
are you still logging the miles,
still living that dream
with your wife and your children
in that house on the glen?

I'm still here on this earth
learning and breathing. . . . Did
you hear that I am living
my life in a prison?

Remember our run
in the forest at night
covered in rain clouds, the wet
and the mud. . . . O the mountains
we climbed and the heights we became.

Now I live in a cabin
on a ship in the ocean,
years from all shores, from
my family and friendships.

Please give me a moment
to share in my freedom:
Each breath is as precious
as someone who'll listen.

I row & I row & I row & I row
bringing me only to this moment's now.
This is the lesson my misgivings have given:
Whether on land or the ocean or in prison
every shore sought awaits us within.

EXPLAINING ONE'S STINT IN PRISON

Searching for the impossible
by chasing the opposite. . .

Jumping from the cliff of reason
without any purpose to discover
a truth that's always existed.

Now a fugitive from a former identity
until one surrenders everything witnessed.
DYING AS I LIVE

Just thought I'd let you know
I am constantly rewriting
  your already delivered eulogy.

Your life and death
  still ever present, now
absorbed in love, but
  how do I tell the rest about
our permanent essence
  nobody else seems to feel?

How do I show them what
  it is to accept forever's gift
    even though I am in prison?

How do I except
  in how I live now?

How do I except
  in how I now die?

BEFORE THE LAST

A fine undoing
  your unmasked shadow
That call after the arrest.
  How long will the will persist?
Friendship is everything's basis
Our first goodbye with many to follow
  before the last comes beginnings all.
NO OFFENSE IN HIS SMILE

In 1965 duty to Vietnam called
and Roger responded.

As courageous as he was calm,
he admitted the truth
by landing the "Yes" bomb
on the following question:

"Do you have any homosexual tendencies?"

"When was your debut?" the doctor queried
during the interview with incredulity,
as Roger dropped even more incendiary answers:
on the questions about his combat fitness.

Paradoxically, the inquisitor appeared tortured
as he scrawled in larger than life letters
upon the official draft documentation:

"Your service will not be required
as a 4F Deviant."

A FULL UNDERSTANDING

Prison is not only lock and key
it's hatred and vengeance.

I sit everyday with everybody
I've somehow harmed and all
those who have harmed me.

This world lives and dies
on compassion--too often

it's the last lesson we live.

In breath and breathe we meet
in silence,

I feel the pain and in that pain
understand your suffering as mine.

We are not separate.
LOCKDOWN @ MARIANNA

Anywhere's train station
when voices and energies converge
with engines and cabooses.

"Lock-down!" signals everyone's
resistance to departure.

In the shuffles and huffs toward
reluctant journeys as
inmates exit their pleasures to enter
their pains.

"Lock-down!" "Lock-down!"

Each door a track to destinations
their belief systems take them:

Into the past for their futures and into
the future from their pasts while either

illusion will release them from

or keep them in their prisons.

SHOCKED INTO A RECOGNITION

I see your eyes in the mirror
looking into what
I thought couldn't be seen.

Shocked into a recognition
and the need to stay hidden.

Naked and unafraid that moment,
yet twice as excited to give in
to what only now can happen.
A PRAYER BEFORE I NIGHTLY DIE

Now I lay me down to die
to self-dissolve this separate-self
as dead as everyone alive
as alive as everyone who's died.

Now I lay me down to rise
from wake to dream to dreamless sleep
as one with the Many, and Many as One
then return as such in seamless descend
from dreamless dream to full awake
again as One with All that's been.

A PRISON TRANSFER BY BUS

Even prison can't
force stillness
sitting as shackled lotus
on a bus.

The rapid world whirs,
through the barred windows,
floating time and space--
that's Emptiness.

What is the lesson when
everything that's
not you
stops moving?
TALKING TO PICTURES AND IMAGES

Every morning I greet
my dauthters and sons from prison.
Do you think they listen?

My Mother and Father, the former died,
the latter is dying; my once wife,
now remarried, and every single lover
my memory touches. . . .
Do you think they'll listen to my listen?

My friends, former colleagues, enemies, victims,
brothers and sisters. . . .
Do you think they'll hear my contrition?

To myself at different ages and poses
with all of the above in what's only now.
Am I not all of them? Are we not already one?

NOT GETTING A WANT

I agree now
to your argument for affection,

and would do now
what I didn't agree to then.

Yes, I do apologize
for what I didn't understand

since I am not now
that person who turned you down.
IN MEMORY OF THE PULSE MASSACRE

Check your own pulse this moment.
None of us is a victim of life, but
only self-made victims of a common delusion.
We are not separate from any of us--
human beings one and all whether
pulling the trigger of hatred or
receiving a tender kiss on the lips.

We are not separate in this disaster, and
nothing can separate us, nothing
not even ourselves from ourselves. . . .

Nothing violates us worse
than our own intolerances.

WHY NOT?

Listening to a tired
Gang-banger confess
who's now beyond
signs and symbols
and tribal warfare.

Tatted to the max,
like a clown
in the circus, he admits:

"My life's been one big act.
I've outlived my former image
living through so many deaths."

For him, now what? has become
Why not?
NOBODY BUT OURSELVES

Nobody died in prison today:
"Only forty-two," they say,
but what was his name?

Is Nobody worthy to mourn?

Nobody collapsed on the yard
until he became a D.O.A.,

but nobody knows the cause
why Nobody suddenly died,
so nobody's responsible I suppose,
behind these iron gates
built on purpose
by a nobody we'll ever know?

TO FEDERICO GARCIA LOBRA

Folded poems unfolded
that reveal you, still the

creases of your deep verse need
further exploration and patience.

I only know that the frog in the pond
you introduced to this poet

holds much more wisdom
than my current lotus will allow.
I ASK US TO ASK

Thirty-nine years ago this August day
Los Angeles slept as I reported
for active duty--
myself as yet awake.
I stood, right hand raised,
and pledged my death
for my country to live as
Vietnam's sins remained uncleaned.

I didn't know then what a real soldier seeks:
Who's seen the red of an enemy's blood.
Who's felt the fear and fight to survive.
Who's one of the millions crippled or maimed.
Who wants from the struggle peace without end.

As a soldier who's known the pride for a cause,
the swell of the heart when your side as won,
but the dirt that is done to be one on that side
covers the graves of the ones who have died.
As if this sacrifice isn't enough, it covers the motives
of the leaders who've lied.

Why do our soldiers from Iraq and Afghan
struggle as heroes upon their return?
Why do they suffer from their victorious mission?
What is the reason they're killing themselves?
Why do we kill for the sake of illusions?
Who is responsible for the graves that we dig?

As a soldier who knows the fear of a soldier,
As a human who knows the wages of sin,
As an inmate who knows the darkness of prison,
As one who is one with everyone's being,

I ask us to ask America these questions.

MY FINAL RESUMÉ

A sacred human being
as well as profane.
For further information
inquire within. . . .
MY DEATH CHANT

No longer
am i
on my way
to
anywhere
but
now.

A REFLECTION FROM YOUR DAD
(for E & T)

Don't be afraid to be
your beautiful.

All happiness requires of you
is complete surrender
to what is true.
SCULPTING BY FEEL

Sculpting by feel
whatever the medium,
temporary or permanent--
hands and wrists take
the risks,
daring the dare
for what comes next--
The immanent's emerge,
the cataclysmic surprise,
the unobjectified bliss and
all things connected
without its subject.

UNEQUAL ON THE SURFACE

Unequal on the
surface,
Our efforts to love
reveal that, but in our
depths, yes, we
complete the end of
all stories.
BREATHING IN THE BREATHLESS

The earth's continued dance around the sun--
one with us its movement.

Entranced while
in the stillness,
dancing in dispersing light:

Soft, slow undulating hip kisses
provoking response.

Now eye to eye filled full with sky.

Lip to lip together wrapped
in nature's endless spiralness,
closer & closer, as close as
this moment is,

breathing in a breathless breathe.

EVERYONE ELSE SURVIVED

Teresa Perez died today,
our celebrated Aunt. Her

goal served us
throughout our lives.

On that same day, another
eternal moment occurred, her son,

our cousin Michael died

in a fatal car-collision

everyone else survived.
A DREAM I NOW LIVE

In dreams I now live
reliving many undecisions.

The all I've known
before this known.

I am lying in your arms
confessing the love I feel
and with your permission
we "only kiss,"
and as we do
the feeling's more real
this ever-present now
which is enough.

I AM GRATEFUL

I am sorry it took
a lifetime's worth
of catastrophes and hurt
to realize this moment:
those delicious mysteries
for which I am forever
grateful.
NOT ONLY
(for E & T)

Not only
born
but always
so.

Be the beauty
your living
self unfolds.

Learn to trust
Love's embodiment.

IN EARLY SPRING

In early spring I
didn't know

how beautiful,
beautiful could be

that flower surfaced
in this desert's

Ever blossoming...
OVER MUCH

Over much
we lose
our touch.
The
wind brings and
takes at once.
What is disaster &
calamities postures
but freedom's chance
to dance its dance
with every radiant
randomness.

THE INFINITE IMBRACE

The embrace that keeps
embracing leaves traces of us
through time, and
miles and whiles through
no spaces, no chases, no
lapses in between every other
infinite embrace;
NOTHING LEFT TO HOLD

Every age--
a letting go.

All our feelings only seasons
for the moment.

Nothing left to hold
when we let go, let go

of growing old and all the reasons
that keep ourselves imprisoned.

SKIRTING THE RULES

Skirting the rules
of affection, two men, in prison,
sit, side by side,

with a bag of sweets between them,
talking about their separate
selves as if they weren't
already one.
SHINRIN-YOKU
("Forest Bathing")

Silent giants rising
  filter the sunlight,
we're awash in forest dust,
purified by the musk
  and pungent rot offerings
from ancient freshmesses.
Granules of stillness breathed-in
  each breath expresses
our purification... 

THE FACES OF AGE

It happens
  beyond all control:
The smooth becomes rough,
  the supple
sags,
sun spots and
  lunar ravages,
crevices and lines
  more prominent after a smile,
after all disasters past,
  after joys come and go,
after ever after
  never happened.
A BEND IN THE UNIVERSE

Rounding the corner
from a bend in the universe,
caught and lifted
by the wind indivisible,
struck from the inside out,
an implosion beyond a known,
captured by a wordless wonder,
shifted into a return from
an already being
that's always so.

A SONG CALLED YOUR NAME

A song called
your name
touching the memory
of us, music
that animates our dance
bringing close what
now seems far....
that look in your eyes
before our hearts
dissolved.
COMPETITIVE ENERGY

Competitive energies gather
as the body of bodies--
a race with grace--sleek,
sensuous, and delicious
forms and emptiness
expressed as never separateness,
as an ever-present realized
existence--
our caused effects, ready or not,
no matter what.

ONLY FOR THE MOMENT

Vulnerable
under
a zillion stars,

Our hearts
visible
as we surrender

all resistances.

Being one (only for the
moment) in

this ever-changing
stillness.
WHAT'S EVER LOST?
"What's ever lost?"

my "found" self asks
with a laugh.

Not finding my friend
anywhere visible

whose birthday it is.

Not knowing how
but knowing where

you live (invisibly) in the heart of what

can't be lost.

CAREFUL

Careful

no need
to be

anything

other than now's

any

how's

very stillness.
WITHERED AND EMBITTERED

Withered and em-bittered

how grows your tree?

What do you contend
   in the sorrow of your mind?

Storm after storm
   who else the cause?

   Who else the blame?

Suffering in your limbs
   with bitter attitudes

No leaves arrive.

THUNDER UNDER THE EAVES

Down
   pounds
   the rain.

Thunder under
   the eaves.

   I am lightning's
light while
   very wet

a human conduit for what
   happens next.
ZEN FRIENDS
(for JR 7 Rosebud)

Weeping over the great display
yourself in me,
myself in you.

The great distinction?
that we live this truth

on different mats
beyond what's simultaneous.

Within what's always so,
we dare to feel
what we only know,

and now we simply grow
to be the moment's moment
already now.

LESSONS LEARNED

I'd take a picture
of that... but

my camera's
now defunct.

"No Photography Allowed"
in the production

of want.
A QUESTION?

How would the Buddha respond
to these embracable boughs
now "Out of Bounds"?

Who is sitting under
this Suchness but us?

What more to discuss?

When distance is imagination's
figment,
up and down, in and out,
do not exist.

UNTITLED

When lovers in your
memory converge
form is form
when empty appears full.

Isn't it all about learning
how to die to life's live?

Learning to breathe into what seems
like the beginning is the end.

Learning to live
with life's emptily filled
fullness?
WHILE LIVING IT

Everything is as it's
always been,
like it or not....

I thought I
thought I missed
what life is
while living it.

After all I didn't understand
what I couldn't avoid, waking
in the midst
of its unfolded folds.....

I am it. You are it,
and all of it is empty.

Time is timelessness,
why: resist?, yet still
not wanting to be completely it.

Not far from when we were kids and picked,
right? But now we're all
grown-up?

SEEN THROUGH

All things being one--
The one I witnessed in you

was the one
now realized--

one self awakening
to itself

seen through another one.
PRISON RUMORS

Rumors upon rumors
of more transgenders.
"An invasion of identity snatchers," say
the "Haters" from deep inside.

Why fear being who you are?
Why stay a prisoner of what's defined?

Let each be each and any be any--
Be more comfortable with your own being's mystery.

Do not decide another's natural voice,
nor allow yourself to live fear's force.

Who are you but what you deny?
Come out, come out and be who you are.

All of us is already transgender.
All of us always beyond definition.
All of us one in our many expressions.

BRAVE

Six-feet-one
and transgender
in a men's prison,
painted and adorned,
she faces
her Nation.

Brave to embrace
life's unchangables.

Brave to face
what can be changed.
A SKETCH OF HANS FROM MEMORY

I met his features on
   two separate occasions:

   One on a honeymoon with his daughter
   and the other after
   our separation.

   Faces meeting faces
      in person and in memory.
   A well manicured beard I remember,

   an homage to the jazz musicians
   he reprised with his voice
      and measured gestures.

Cultural differences and preferences aside,

   we bonded until she and I
   dissolved our marriage,
   and he took her side,

   revealing the character
   I want as a father.

Not spontaneous but willing to risk
   for his principles,
   all of him,
      with quiet depth and dignity,
   I hold with respect

   beyond what memories possess.

EVERYTHING

Everything changes
   so nothing remains.

Everything changes
   until nothing's the same.

Everything's change
   so nothing stays.
LETTING GO OF LETTING GO

I'm forever learning impermanence
what can and cannot be possessed.

My heaviest lesson rests upon
my very busy desk within

my favorite photograph, vintage
nineteen ninety-seven, when

my daughters lived as four and three.

While looking into their rising-shine,
I see the light reflect their ancient eyes,

allowing this father, in that and this instant,
to realize how much change continues to continue,

and that moment will stay only, over and over,

for as long as I continue
to let go of letting go.

FROM FAR TO NEAR

I could paint you into

an Asian, or Indian, or
Spaniard, or African.

I could serve you coffee, tea,
or any other beverage that fits

my dream... . .

All of them temporary, beautiful

and delicious... . .
Although that would not allow

love to follow its permanent path.
NO LONGER?

I hear their footsteps through the narrow halls
of this current prison.
Buried on the surface,
every former inmate encased
in the bricks and mortar: The
Japanese interned during
America's war against itself,
without shame, when everybody
not "us" stayed a "them."

I hear my own footsteps echo all of these
as well as those imprisoned others,
like I am, as one of the "them," ashamed
after being condemned an enemy of humanity.
No longer a citizen of "us."

IN THE YEAR OF THIS ROOSTER, 2017

Still alive in this Year
of the Rooster:
Two for my eldest
while five for her father.

May we more than hear
its boastful crow
to daily awaken
what's already awake.

Beyond what's belief,
transcending what's reason,
May we more than listen
to the Rooster itself:

Awakening the awaken
awake in ourselves.
EITHER ONE THE OTHER

Mountains upon mountains
oceans over oceans
to circumnavigate your person
to transcend your life-long purpose.

Mountains inside mountains
oceans within oceans
inside my outside search
I find what can't be found
The source of all I am.

Mountains and oceans
oceans and mountains
either one the other
neither one is separate
Being all there is beyond
beyond beyond's within.

BREATHELESS THINGS

The joy of slender waists
and wrists and
tapered necklines of all kinds:

Humans, egrets, avocets,
giraffes, and wild horses... choice examples.
Embracable all by themselves

These breathless entrances
of doorways, windows, and frames.
WHAT'S THE OPPOSITE OF EXISTENCE?

Contexts within contexts within contexts until we remember what's timeless.

Reality's not pre-given. Our hummity lives between the opposites. Like it or not. Regardless?

How precious do we treat one another's Self to balance what's impossible?

What's the opposite of this existence: Being who we are as: worlds within worlds within worlds ad infinitum?

COMMUNION

Face to face with a purple fluted flower wrinkled and delicate like tenderest human skin around the entrance, touched by the expansion and ecstatic balance from its involuntary contractions.
UNTIL

Afraid at first
the second you said "yes!"

I knew this ascent would not last
and the descent into my self's
self-destruction had already begun.

Already the superficial layers fell away,
moving closer to the core.

How else does a self dissolve?

How else does two become one
until all is gone?

ONCE STUCK

Once stuck
by the glue of time
and its own yuk!-

Laughing now
at how ridiculous
self-clinging is when
letting go of
"I-me-mine" simply offers
each and every one of us
the gift of timelessness.
OUR EMPTY OCEAN

Why bother?
  Why care?

Why surrender to the
  annihilation,
  our return to dust?
Not the dust of the nihilist,
  but the stuff
  which values
  always now,
  awakening us
  to the traceless,
  ever-present flowing,
  where everything matters,
  everything within this empty ocean.

MOMENTS UNFIXED

Fleeting
  but not in meaning
  these memories,
  those moments unfrozen,
  moments unfixed
  that keep rising out of
  everywhere's here
  & everything's now.
FIVE LIFE DEPARTURES THAT WERE ARRIVALS

1

(From LA to Denver to...)

Exchanging the earth
for the universe.
Hitchhiking through
new world galaxies.

2

(Seminary Ventures)

From secular to
religious by bridging
centuries of separations.

3

(Tchibanga, Gabon, Africa)

Volunteering
to save the world with
a single unconditioned
gesture.

4

(Del Rio, TX)

Quitting one career
for another, my primary intention:
being present
for my daughters.

5

(To Federal Prison)

Exiting one prison
for another to learn
what keeps us
from freedom.