**PARDON**

**MY**

**POETRY**

**Volume One**

****

**By**

**Jim Slaughter**

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**CAVEAT LECTOR** (Reader Beware): The ratings of the poems in this volume are P, PG, and MA. Readers should use discretion in determining which applies to which.

This volume of verses is dedicated to

Erato,

Thalia,

their seven sister Muses,

and

Ogden Nash

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**PREFACE**

This volume is the first in a series spanning some ten years, and counting, of creative writing effort. The subtitle is “My Muse Made Me Do It”, but might also well be “Versatility” because the pieces included here represent my range of styles and themes, as well as some philosophical insights, a gentle sense of humor, a modicum of sagacity, some wry and playful cynicism, and simple, every day observations of the human condition.

But, of all the genres of writing I could have chosen, why settle on poetry? I have been asking myself that question since this journey began. I am all too well aware that many people do not particularly enjoy reading poetry because they consider it too highbrow. What I have learned from the writing of and subsequent reading of and about poetry, is that it should not be considered a luxury only to be enjoyed by the privileged few, the cultural and cerebral elite, as it were. Poetry need not be weighed down by deeply ponderous metaphysical messages to be worth one's time and effort to read it.

So, why do we many who are not privileged enough to belong to the aforementioned categories think we need poetry? I have come to believe that we need poetry to tell us about and to help explain things like joy and beauty, and passion and love, and wonder and wisdom, and creativity and truth. In other words, everything that gives life merit and makes the living it and the understanding it more worthwhile.

Most things in life are ephemeral, at best. All things, in time…monoliths and monarchs, pyramids and politics, religions and reliquaries, baseless bigotries and, yes, even books…wear out, corrode, rot and decay, and eventually turn to dust and are erased from memory.

Poets, too, after passing through, will pass away, but the spirit they infuse in the verses they create and leave behind them becomes, somehow, also infused with the metered, albeit chaotically cadenced spirit of the poetry of the universe, and becomes, therefore, eternal, and indestructible.

A tall order? You bet! But one well worth the effort, I think, and one that I take great pleasure and satisfaction in attempting to fill.

Edgar Allan Poe is quoted as saying: I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of Beauty.

And sometime later, Gertrude Stein added: Poetry need not be burdened by weighty messages to have merit.

Now, who am I to disagree with those two?

Jim Slaughter

Springfield, MO

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**(My Muse Made Me Do It)**

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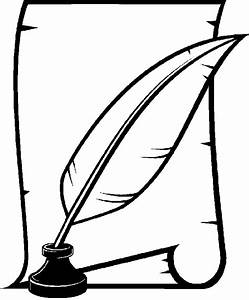
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Poetry: the best words in the best order.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

**My Muse Made Me Do It**

I thought my secret was safe in the closet

In scads of pads neatly stacked on a shelf,

But when my muse said it’s time

To post my rhymes online,

Was the day that I “outed” myself.

I’m not what you’d call a great thinker,

My profundity’s barely skin deep.

I’d love to be one of those

Who paints pictures with prose

And writes books people buy, read, and keep.

But it’s too hard to flesh out a plot line

And keep it moving from cover to cover.

First you push, shove, and fold it,

And polish, and mold it,

Then toss it all out and start over.

Writing verse is a less stressful pleasure,

Mine’s often witty and gay.

Is each poem I write a rare treasure?

Will I gain wealth and fame beyond measure?

No, it’s not, and I won’t, and I know it.

Some things are not done for the pay.

Time will tell if I merit the label of “poet”,

But I’ll keep scribbling my rhymes, anyway.

Though my muse tries her best to inspire me

To keep trying to vendor my stuff,

This is poetry, nobody needs it,

But if now and then somebody reads it,

I tell her that will be glory enough.

Now my secret is out in the open,

I can neither refute it nor rue it.

So, I'm confessing it out loud,

Yes! I'm a poet, it's avowed,

And I'm proud that my muse made me do it.

**Poetic Aspirations**

I have penned that I write for the pleasure,

Not the wealth or the fame I might possibly gain,

But in hopes that if people should read me,

They’ll enjoy and remember my name.

And I may get you yet, "Poet Laureate",

I'll have all the requirements, I'm sure:

I'll have lived;

I'll have loved;

Suffered pain and remorse;

And that one other thing, now, what is it?

Oh, yes,

I'll have various volumes of verses, of course.

In my life I may not have achieved much,

But something tells me, P.L., you're my due.

Though I missed out on Oscar, and Tony, and Emmy,

I have faith in myself,

So that space on the shelf

I'll keep dusted and waiting for you.

**High Praise for Joyce Kilmer**

For years I've tried to figure out

The tree Joyce Kilmer wrote about.

Was it an oak, or maybe elm?

What was it so appealed to him

That gives his simple poem so much clout?

He thought that he would never see

A poem lovely as a tree,

Then, quick as anyone could quote one,

He sat himself right down and wrote one

As lovely's any poem about a tree's a right to be.

What line could possibly compare

To "A nest of robins in her hair"?

So when next my muse is on vacation,

And I am strapped for inspiration,

Perhaps I'll attempt a Kilmer imitation.

Then as quick as one-two-three,

I'll have a poem about a tree,

But to forestall all litigation,

I'll call mine "Arboreal Vegetation".

**Elegy for Mister Boots**

Poor Mister Boots is lying dead,

A porcelain feline near his head.

He climbed the shelf to better see

What that peculiar thing could be.

He slipped, they fell,

And that was that,

'twas thus a curio killed the cat.

**The Curious Passing of Li Po**

Two porcelain figurines fell out of the sky,

Dropped from a crop duster plane passing by.

The pilot yelled, "Look out down below!",

But no one could hear, he was flying so low.

The dolls struck Li Po who was filling his sack,

Now the rice farmer lifelessly floats on his back.

He does not move, first victim of

A double knickknack paddy whack.

**The Last Roundup**

An old cowpoke from Cheyenne, Wyoming

Got a hankering and set out a roaming.

He got as far as Montana,

Choked on a banana,

And returned in a box the next morning.

There was no one waiting to meet him,

No family or loved ones to greet him.

He was laid in the dirt

In boots, jeans, flannel shirt,

And an old faded checkered bandana.

**A Mammoth Ambition**

When Wally was a wholly woolly mammoth,

He decided very young to be a monk.

He learned all the Latin phrases,

And ecclesiastical ukases,

And stored all his worldly gewgaws in his trunk.

The day he went to file his application,

The abbot there admired his aspiration,

But added with some priestly trepidation,

"This job cannot be secured

Until you're officially tonsured",

Then he stepped back and beamed his approbation.

Wally paused for just a minute,

Then cried, "Go ahead and skin it!"

Whereas a bald spot on their pate

Might make most mammoths second rate,

For certain monks it's more like being "haute coutured".

When the ritual was through,

Wally felt he was brand new,

And his role as monk would bring him joy galore.

But that small round patch of skin

Did not sit well with his kin

Because holy Wally wasn't wholly woolly anymore.

**Humpty Dumpty (Look, Ma, I’m Flying!)**

When fat, stoned Humpty Dumpty

Tumbled off that high wall,

He was laughing so hard

He scarcely noticed the fall.

He cracked his shell, I'm assumin',

'cause out leaked his albumen

And most of his cholesterol.

By some fluke he survived,

Though more dead than alive,

And his bulb was beginning to dim.

When the king's men inspected,

They found him too disconnected

To be resurrected,

And the chance that he'd make it was slim.

What started out to be fun,

If you'll pardon the pun,

Turned out that the blame,

And the "yolk",

Were on him.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Trees in bud and blooms

In riotous display the

Stage is set for spring

Summer mem'ries filled

With lemon ice cream nights and

Watermelon days

Harvest moon, frosty

Nights, leaves changing hues to show

Autumn's here again

Old cold-hearted friend

Ever catch me unprepared

Winter's at the door

**A Sonnet About Writing a Sonnet**

The urge to write a sonnet's really strong,

I've put it off as long's I think I can.

A sonnet's not like lyrics to a song,

The phrases come begrudgingly to hand.

A sonnet should be easier to write,

The words flowing smoothly from pen to page,

But if the reason for a rhyme is trite,

It's best to cut your loss and disengage.

The sonnet's form is old and rather quaint,

But so am I, and so our paths have crossed.

As sonneteer I can't be what I "ain't",

But hopefully, my efforts won't be lost.

The urge to write a sonnet I can't hide,

The finished piece, a source of poet's pride.

**Simply Senryu**

Simple open truth

Naked is the best disguise

Mask to cover lies

In control again

Subtly fading scars and pains

Time will heal the rest

Darkness visible

Blackness radiating from

Nihilistic eyes

The sad truth is how

Easy it is to make a

Total mess of love

**Noblesse Oblige: The King**

The king was quite old, but not senile,

And his problems with sex were not penile.

He could rut with the best,

When put to the test,

And got plenty of rest in between while.

**A Young Fool’s Legacy**

I think I may have puzzled out

The tree Joyce Kilmer's poem's about.

That it's an oak is in my head,

But now she's old and nearly dead.

Her roots are dry,

Her branches bent,

Her breast by cruel lightning rent.

Her head, once proud, now bowed and bare,

In spring no robins nesting there.

She cannot lift her limbs to pray,

He never answers anyway.

But if only God can make a tree,

Then there remains a mystery.

How could a gardener such as He

Take time to make, so lovingly,

Then spurn and turn His back

And callously forsake His artistry?

Her beauty lives in poetry,

Part of a young fool's legacy.

Oh, would that I could make her whole,

Or give her peace

And help release her soul.

**How the Kangaroo Got Its Name**

When Australia was still the "land down under",

And British folks first lit upon its shore,

They found nearly naked people there

And stared at them in wonder,

As well as dingoes, emus, wallabies, and more.

Some animals they deemed most fascinating

Because they jumped so high and easily as far.

They plied with mimes and signs gesticulating,

And tried their best to find out what they were.

"WHAT ARE THESE BEASTS?"

They waved their arms and cried.

"Kan guru," the Aborigines replied.

Which translates, "We don't understand you, man",

But the Brits accepted out of hand,

And soon the word spread through the land

That the odd new beastie's name was "kangaroo".

I realize this may seem a bit spectacular,

And I may have taken liberties

With the aboriginal vernacular,

But since the kangaroo is still so called today,

My version, I conclude, is equally as good

As what any naturalist or animal activist may say.

**Through the Year**

January's cold caress gives way

To February's brief embrace.

The blustery winds of March hold sway

'til blushing April shows her dewy face,

Then coquettishly she'll skip away

And leave us mid the darling buds

And wrapped up in the lusty arms of May.

Joyful June comes bouncing in

With matronly July up close behind her.

The golden days of August reign,

Then pale beneath September's scholarly reminder

That sly October's opalescent bliss

Will leave us eager for November's frosty kiss

'til gay December dances through

All tinselly and merry.

And even though we know she cared,

She'll leave us thrilled but unprepared

To face and try to gracefully embrace

Another January.

**Ponce de León and the Mermaid**

Ponce de León was dejected,

He couldn't find the Fountain of Youth,

And to make matters worse,

He was under a curse

From a Tequesta squaw with only one tooth.

Things hadn't gone quite as expected,

And his men were all suffering as well.

In a Florida bog, all they did was drink grog

'til the very last one of them finally fell.

One Friday, along about sundown,

Something caused Ponce’s ears to start ringing.

So, he followed the sound 'til he finally found

What he thought were two Lorelei singing.

The squaw’s curse started workin',

Ponce threw off his jerkin

And ravished them there in the Everglades.

Just imagine his shock,

When he finally "undocked",

And saw two manatees instead of two mermaids!

**Hedging My Bet**

I've never been much of a worrier,

Others do that far better than I,

Nor am I renowned as a scurrier,

Which is not to imply I don't try.

My small circle of close friends and loved ones

Is diminishing one at a time,

And one of these days I'll wake up to discover

That it's my turn, and I'm next in line.

But if, indeed, that's the next big adventure,

I hope it's a pleasant surprise.

I'd love to prove, or disprove,

All the theories I've had

About life and love, and good and bad,

And wisdom and learning, and ethics and such,

That faith is a pillar and not just a crutch.

But, I’m not worried, I don't do that, you see.

"Que será, será", what will be, will be.

But on the off chance that there is a hereafter,

I'd like to reserve a small space there for me.

So, if any of you get there ere I do,

Try to grab us a nice window seat with a view.

**A Poet’s Pledge**

I will release no rhyme before its time.

No limerick, ode, haiku, nor sonnet

Will 'scape from 'neath my poet's bonnet

'til it be trimmed and tamed and non-aggressive,

Or overripe with verbiage

Or punctuation too excessive.

I will not break this pledge I take,

Cruel critics' barbs though I endure.

My verse I'll brace with style and grace

Until my place in poetry's secure.

Of course, should "laureate" become my haunt, too,

I'll release anywhere, and anyhow,

And anytime I damn well want to.

**It’s a Process**

I aim for brevity,

Strive for clarity,

Avoid ambiguity,

Eschew trite banality,

Insert sagacity,

Blend in sensitivity,

Fine tune for harmony,

Appeal to humanity,

Infuse with honesty,

Sprinkle in some levity,

And voila!

Poetry!

**Another Sonnet About Writing a Sonnet**

The sonnet is a form I've barely tried,

Each time I think I might, I miss the mark.

I mull and moan and finally cry, "Hark!

There's something 'bout a sonnet that still hides."

The finished work's a source of poet's pride

If he can just ignite a tiny spark,

And find the niche wherein his piece to park,

And mind his aim when other bards deride.

My pen is poised, the page is blank and bare,

My mind is open, ready to expound.

Will it make sense, read well, and will it scan?

The theme is vague, and yet I know it's there.

Should I let fly and bring my prey to ground,

Or wait a day or two and try again?



To read a poem is to hear it with our eyes; to hear it is to see it with our ears.

Octavio Paz

**Hats Off to Cats**

Egyptians worshipped and revered them,

Superstitious people feared them,

When wicked witches commandeered them,

They rode on brooms and often steered them.

In cramped pet shops owners tiered them,

Exotic dealers bred and reared them,

Sometimes bobbed their tails and eared them

Then coolly, casually auctioneered them.

Poets lauded them and cheered them,

Children's writers buccaneered them,

Hateful boys have chased and jeered them,

Careless motorists have smeared them.

Allergics sneezed each time they neared them,

Sculptors bronzed them, groomers sheared them,

Trimmed their toenails and veneered them.

Toy makers stuffed and puppeteered them,

Jewelers brooched or lavaliered them,

Geneticists have engineered them

And for research volunteered them.

Though man's endured them and endeared them,

He's barely tamed, not domineered them.

To humans history has adhered them,

But their nine lives have persevered them,

And that is why I tip my hat

To the legacy of the cat.

Even this hard heart's been smitten

By a furry ball of kitten.

Cats have kept us fascinated

Since the first ones were created

And perhaps hung out with Adam's other half.

They have been both pets and passions,

And served as well as fads and fashions,

But it really is enough to make one laugh.

Men may ply themselves with worldly honors,

And of slavish dogs play prideful owners,

But to aristocratic cats…

They're merely staff.

**Rapunzel and the Really Bad Hair Day**

When fairy tales were in fashion,

Before true love was rare,

A prince loved a maid who was flaxen and fair.

He came every day and patiently knelt

Before the dark tower wherein his love dwelt.

He'd call out, "Rapunzel, please show me you care,

And let down a ladder of your golden hair."

This scene re-enacted for forty long years,

His plaintive pleas ever falling

Upon unheeding ears.

But one winter's day, very bitter and cold,

The prince puzzled to fathom what his eyes did behold.

Overnight, it appeared, her hair had come unbound,

And the tresses lay scattered all over the ground.

As he gazed at those sad locks, his poor heart was torn,

Was his true love now bald,

Her long hair shortly shorn?

Then the prince felt a chill shoot right down to his boots,

He perceived that the gold was quite black at the roots.

Suddenly down came a note in a filigreed cup,

"I can't hear the doorbell, so just come on up."

"Oh, you gotta be kidding!"

He cried, quite beside himself.

"My perfect Rapunzel, bald headed…and deaf?"

Much chagrined, he charged in, but the higher he climbed,

His ire waned at the prospect of the treasure he'd find.

He opined she'd be virtuous, angelic, demure,

But then he stopped dead in his tracks at the door.

The crone he encountered at the top of the stair

Was morbidly fat, and far, far from fair.

The prince blanched at the warts

And coarse hairs on her chin

As she lewdly, and nudely, gestured him in.

She lay draped on a bed wearing only a smile,

But a true prince is immune to lascivious wiles.

While most heroes in such tales are stalwart and stout,

This one raced to the casement and flung himself out.

As he plunged to his doom from that horrible room,

And ever nearer beneath him he watched the earth loom,

The prince yelled as he fell, shook his fist, and he cursed,

“How could someone I’ve cared for be such a nightmare,

And why the hell didn’t I vet her on Angie's List first?"

**A Handful of Haiku**

Only thing that gives

Man power over nature

Imagination

Like the souls of trees

Naked branches in Winter

Pray for early Spring

The earth cannot die

Nature is eternal life

Resurrects each Spring

Look beyond the thorns

Imagine past the brambles

Smell the raspberries

**Some Poetic Advice**

To all you wannabe poets,

Here's a word of advice ere you start:

If you want folks to love it,

Keep your ego out of it,

When you write, always write from the heart.

It's great fun to write haiku and sonnets

About rainbows and gay Easter bonnets,

But if you find them too terse,

You can flesh out your verse

And festoon it with quatrains and nonets.

**Simply Senryu**

Old imprisoned souls

Submerged in mind's dark waters

Screaming in silence

Somewhere in mem'ry

Old loves live in the silence

Of a secret place

The flavor of tears

Bitter galling cold as ice

Taste of love gone stale

Older and wiser

Or do we just run out of

Stupid things to do

**In One Era**

Life's one thing after another,

They say,

Time goes by as it usually does.

How sad to look back

At one's life one day,

And, instead of an ocean

Of is or will be,

See only a puddle

Of was.

**The Sound of Music**

Once someone heard

The vibration of the universe

As it went bouncing all around

And called it sound.

Then somewhere farther

Down the line,

Someone heard that sound in time

And called it music.

In another scant few billion years,

When the sun is dead and there's

No life because no planet left will bear it,

That noise, no doubt, will still abound,

But make a less melodic sound.

Where's the music

When no one's around to hear it?

**The Muses and I**

Of all the gods and goddesses

Found in Greek mythology,

My favorites are the nine Muses,

Each means something special to me:

Calliope is epically bombastic;

Urania has stars in her eyes;

Erato's love poems are fantastic;

And Melpomene says of tragedy,

"It's not a play unless somebody dies";

Polyhymnia's hymns are rafter ringing;

With Clio through history I prance;

Euterpe is kind 'bout my singing,

Terpsichore, not so much 'bout my dance.

But my main muse has always been Thalia,

We were so good together on stage,

And considering how long this gal's been around,

She's holding up well for her age.

Now that I'm no longer acting,

I don't see her as much anymore,

Though I know anytime I get stuck for a rhyme,

She'll be there for me just as before.

She says I'm not much of a poet,

My verse is not epic and grand.

And she's right, it's not great, and I know it,

But at least it's not vapid or bland.

She likes to drop by to remind me

Of what she thinks were happier times.

When she wants me, she knows where to find me,

Here, scribbling away at my rhymes.

**On Behalf of Dogs**

Beagle, boxer, poodle, pug,

Airedale, cocker spaniel, terrier,

Shiatsu, pom, or something furrier,

Pedigreed, or curish mug,

Dogs make our lives ever so much merrier.

We pick up after, poof, and pamper them,

But, never, like our kids,

With the Ten Commandments

Do we ever try to hamper them.

Consider how they often make us break

With number Seven,

And other blasphemies they might incur

If there were eleven.

But for all their sins they make amends

With apologetic eyes

And ingratiating grins.

We try holding out, but in the end,

A sloppy kiss, first us then them,

A wag, and we're best friends again.

**My Beef with Antonio Banderas**

What's so hot about Antonio Banderas,

So charming and manly and "guapo"?

He's at the top of his game

There in L.A. and Spain,

But what about the rest of "el mapo"?

Can he woo a girl in Swahili?

Can he say "naku penda" and mean it?

If he tries to get touchy and feely

While crooning a tune to a girl in Rangoon,

Won't a "ngo" or a "ney" just obscene it?

I'm sure he can warble "je t'aime",

And "ich liebe dich" can be sung,

And I doubt he’d be skittish

In Yiddish or British,

Though Urdu might trip up his tongue.

But he does all too well speaking Spanish,

Even some guys who hear it will sigh.

I just wish from my girl's mind he'd vanish.

He's richer by far, and, of course, he's a star

And more "macho" and "guapo" than I.

**If Bard I Be**

The sonnet form's antique and mired in dust,

Why should I strive thus so to write one well?

If bard I be then learn new styles I must,

Will I achieve my goal, who can foretell?

So here again I sit with pen in hand,

Attempting some new iambs that will rhyme,

Entreating Muse to guide my falt'ring wand.

The formula, so strict, takes lots of time,

But I'll persist 'til fourteen lines are writ,

One final couplet crowning three quatrains,

Persistence now completing this last bit.

There's something 'bout a sonnet tests my brain.

Yet I prevail, these fourteen lines once one,

The prize obtained, this poet's work is done.

**Where I Lay My Head**

I'm a rambler, I'm a rover,

Yonder's where I long to be.

Where living's leaner, senses keener,

Grass is greener's home to me.

Tumbleweeds are my companions,

True vagabonds make best of friends.

Desert highways, country byways

All go my way in the end.

At times I may get tired and lonely,

And think I might try settling down.

Then I remind myself that roots are binding,

And I hightail it out of town.

Guess I'll always be a drifter,

Yonder beckons, bids me come.

Around the bend my road’s unending,

And where I lay my head tonight is home.

**Tall in the Saddle (The Legend of Pecos Bill)**

There is a legend of a cowboy down in Texas

To whom they give the sobriquet of Pecos Bill.

It's said he rooted and he tooted

As across the plains he scooted,

Stetsoned, jeaned, bowlegged, and booted,

Pursuing cows, and wooing gals as was his skill.

The story goes, one day while Bill was busy wooing,

A cyclone came and rudely whisked the gal away.

He hopped atop the thing to ride it,

Quickly lassoed and hogtied it,

And then no worse for wear and tear and rough foreplay,

Out stepped the gal, and Pecos Bill had saved the day.

Now, legends often tend to get a bit inflated,

And this one here is no exception to the rule.

Some say it's too exaggerated,

I say it's well imaginated.

Like alimony oilmen often pay their exes,

Things are always so much bigger down in Texas.

Of course, it's hogwash, rubbish, bunk,

And yet how often have I thunk

That the tale of Pecos Bill is kinda cool.

**Pretty Is as Pretty Does**

Pretty is as pretty does,

Tell your daughter when you scold her.

Skin deep's as far down as beauty goes,

Beheld only by the beholder.

Looks, you see, are a fleeting gift

That's gone before you're through with it.

Pretty is what you are, my dear,

Beauty is what you do with it.

Good parental advice, no doubt,

But it begs at least one query:

What would it gain

If beauty is "skinned"

Just to prove a theory?

**The Annual Ugly Bug Ball**

The world of insects is a dither and a buzz

About the biggest party bash that ever was.

Their favorite time is here,

It comes just once a year,

The Annual Ugly Bug Ball.

Caterpillars, centipedes, and honeybees

Are sprucing up and rubbing rouge upon their knees.

Their costumes are brand new,

Tonight they're going to

The Annual Ugly Bug Ball.

Moths and butterflies are practicing their dips,

The arachnia are limbering up their hips,

And ants who love to dance

Hope they'll find romance

At this year's Ugly Bug Ball.

Both the mantises are planning to be there,

Such an elegant, sophisticated pair.

The husband is ideal as dancing partner and a meal,

One mating tango, though,

And he'll have done his share.

Partygoers now are streaming toward the hall,

They'll be there if they can scurry, creep, or crawl,

And then they'll dance the night away

To music the cicadas play

At the Annual Ugly Bug Ball.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Glad now Winter's gone

Bradford Pear greets each new day

Gaily dressed for Spring

Blossom seems to rise

Spirals up to waiting branch

Ah! A butterfly

Whirlwind rushes by

Swirling flashes snowy white

Butterflies dancing

Don your party wings

Come to the Butterfly Ball

Dance now Winter's gone

**Noblesse Oblige: The Queen**

The queen wanted Sir Bruce for her lover,

But said knight had his sights on another.

She became un-enamored

When she caught him un-armored

And in bed with Sir Cedric, her brother.

**Simply Senryu**

Love me forever

Or just 'til the end of time

Either one will do

There's a difference

'tween love and fascination

But where is the line

Love can ebb and flow

Like the churning of the tide

In the human heart

Love's a fragile bloom

Never water it with tears

It can't grow in salt

**Phantom Lover**

She comes to me,

My phantom lover, in the night,

Wraps her sweet, dark arms around me,

And sweeps me to the heights

And depths of her desire.

Passion pulsing, crowning,

Sailing, swirling, drowning.

Through the years this dream's survived,

Never let me be revived

From this blissful sleep of sleeps.

Never hide from me your face,

Make me your forever lover

In the warmth and rapturous deeps

Of your embrace.

**Jack and Jill (A Moonshine Lullaby)**

Where hillbilly Jack

Sent his pregnant wife, Jill,

Was not for a pail of well water.

She trudged up that hill

For some swill from a still,

But returned with a new baby daughter.

Jack wasn't amused

When Jill told him the news,

And he yelled, "Whar'n tarnation's mah likker?"

So, she crowned him and drowned him

Where they still haven't found him.

Hillbilly divorces are cheaper and quicker.

**A Final Sonnet About Writing a Sonnet**

Okay, time to really make a sonnet,

I'm in my chair, I'm primed and set to write.

Pad is here, pen poised to scribble on it,

My mind's open, I hope the time is ripe.

My Muse? The sky, soft billowy white clouds,

Trees gently dancing with a winter breeze.

I mind the subtle vacancy of crowds,

The world outside's a siren and a tease.

Amid my piles of tomes alone I sit,

Muted noise of birds, neighbors, papers, books,

A low-pitched mental hum, and bit by bit

I pen this piece, all mindful how it looks.

Will it make sense, read well, and will it scan?

If this be sonnet, I'm a happy man.



A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language.

W. H. Auden

**Questions and Answers**

Questions built the Pyramids,

Likewise, the Internet and cable.

They sent men to the moon and beyond,

And produced the multiplication tables.

They also spanned the Golden Gate,

And made the silent movies talk.

Questions yielded the printing press,

And are helping wounded warriors walk.

They pit our gullible intellect

Against the Bible's specious revelations,

Still man continues to live in fear

Of a coveted but questionable salvation.

They’ll cure the common cold, in time,

As well as ALS and cancer,

Intolerance, though, is an insidious disease

For which, I fear, there is no answer.

In conclusion, let me leave you

With one simple but cogent notion:

Answers make the world go round,

Questions set the wheels in motion.

**If You Could Be an Animal**

If you could be an animal,

Which one would it be?

Which one shares your personality?

Would you be mammal, or amphibian,

Perhaps a reptile, or a fowl,

The strength and memory of an elephant,

Or the wisdom of an owl?

Or maybe one that science says is probably

A branch upon our family tree?

It's anthropologists' contention

That the simian's most like us,

Though that theory raises quite a bit of dust.

They cite the chimpanzee, especially,

As being anything but dumb,

He has a brain as big as ours

And an opposable thumb,

But, if being a monkey's cousin makes you cuss,

Blame Charlie Darwin for the fuss.

Or maybe you'd select a species

That's endangered or extinct,

Each few years the list is adding one or two.

But we'll keep chopping down their habitats

To put up shopping malls,

Apartment homes, and parking lots,

'til one day it befalls

The ones who're left will dwindle down to just a few,

And they’ll be living in a zoo.

Evolution proves we're better off

As the species that we are,

There’s no need to alter chromosomes or genes.

But as the human population here

Continues to explode,

And unless somebody figures

How the excess to unload,

It won't matter who we know or what our means,

We'll have no choice but be sardines.

**Breakfast of Champions**

The most important meal of the day

Is a healthy breakfast,

If nutritionists are to be trusted,

But "healthy" depends on one's point of view,

So that bubble's about to be busted.

How do chickens and pigs figure into the plan,

And what's the value of their contribution?

And how much credit should each one get

For cholesterol and protein distribution?

In a hearty breakfast of ham and eggs

The following must be admitted:

The chicken is more or less involved,

The pig is fully committed.

**The Ballad of Villonia Beebe, Part I (Overview)**

When Villonia Beebe was a baby of three,

She got it in her head to trim the Christmas tree.

She lit all the pretty candles,

Tossed the matchstick away,

Sister, brother, dad, and mother

Never saw Christmas Day.

Nine years went by, she bloomed,

And when Villonia was twelve,

She got a yen for French and Greek,

And so decided to delve.

When her language teachers asked her

What she wanted to do,

Villonia taught those profs some things

The French and Greeks never knew.

She played the field with lots of guys,

But at age thirty-two,

She thought to get herself a steady man

Was what she should do.

She tried out Toms, and Dicks, and Harrys,

And then settled, in due course,

For a handsome hunk named Homer

Whose nickname was "Horse".

They lived as wife and husband, then,

For sixty-four years,

A life of trials and tribulations,

Lots of laughter, lots of tears.

Homer made and sold corn "likker"

From a still up in the hills,

And Vee would sometimes turn a trick or two

To help pay the bills.

The lovebirds made their minds up

When they turned ninety-five,

That they would live to be

The oldest couple alive.

But time, and fate, and "likker"

Tend to play funny tricks,

Hunky Homer kicked the bucket

At a neat ninety-six.

Villonia is alone again, like when she was three,

She's outlived most of her friends and family.

As she sits, and sips, and waits her turn,

One reflection seems to calm her,

When she's found, she'll be so full of 'shine

They won't bother to embalm her.

**Love’s Blind Eye**

Love always thinks it's chosen well,

Discerns no qualities to criticize,

In the loved one all is loveable,

And defects become virtues in a lover's eyes.

To speak, or write, or sing of love,

A lover needs no dictionary.

The words come tripping off the tongue,

For love provides its own vocabulary.

A girl who's pale is jasmine white

And her purity is felt,

If swarthy, she's a simmering brunette.

One who's wafer-thin, with skin stretched tight,

Is willowy and svelte,

A chubby one's a sugar plum, a pet.

A sloppy and untidy girl's a wild and carefree soul,

On a giantess bestow a goddess air.

A midget might be mignonette, button cute, a doll,

A vain girl's assumed dignity

Gives her charms beyond compare.

A shy girl is smart, a dull one, simple and sweet,

A chatterbox, engagingly bright.

A silent one's dark and mysteriously deep,

Affected, maybe, but love makes that all right.

So, a truly smitten lover loves

All the faults of his beloved,

And ever has it been thus since "the Fall".

Whom your heart says love, you love her,

Not in fits and starts, or selected parts,

But farts…

And warts…

And all.

**Peter Piper’s Peculiar Pepper Patch**

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers…"

Every time I hear this twisted rhyme,

I mind how 'gainst Mother Nature it's a crime.

What those peppers were no one can tell,

Perhaps banana, jalapeño, cherry, bell.

But whate'er they were, it's plain,

At least to me,

That peck of pods came off no bush nor tree.

For years this simple nursery flaw

Has scraped, and scoured, and rubbed me raw,

And in my very craw the thing's been sticking.

So, to bring the problem up to date,

And to try and set the record straight,

I've checked with Vlasik, Clausen, Kraft,

And all three agree the notion’s daft

That peppers can be pickled prior to picking.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Sunbeams bright as gold

Turning night to joyous day

World wakes up smiling

Smell the storm's burden

The wind is choked with sorrows

Sadder far than rain

Stars in tidal pools

The moon submerged in dewdrops

The sun in a smile

Screaming throwing things

Nature's on a tear again

Best to duck and run

**Noblesse Oblige: The Prince**

The crown prince of a country in Asia

Loved a commoner named Anastasia.

When his parents demurred,

He said, "Don't be absurd",

And promptly employed euthanasia.

**Simply Senryu**

Exhumed memories

Pinned to a moment in time

Faded photographs

Close enough to hold

Or lose one's way and drown in

The past is like that

Stripped of artifice

The worst kind of nakedness

One's own reflection

Dancing by myself

Music slower softer now

Box is winding down

**Gourmet or Gourmand?**

The aardvark is a quirky beast,

Uniquely dentalated,

And to the armadillo gastronomically related.

He dines on termites, ants, and such,

Most any bug his tongue can touch,

On fruits and veggies, not so much,

Unless he's running low on Vitamin C…

Or needs to be re-regulated.

**The Gift**

Love often comes

When least expected

And from the most

Unexpected places.

A smile,

A touch,

A promise of tomorrow,

A fleeting word

On the wings of a soughing breeze

Taking you to never dreamed of places.

Accept this gift

As graciously as you can,

Nurture and protect it,

It just as often never comes again.

**Unsportsmanlike Behavior**

If you read the reviews and review the reports,

You'll conclude I'm a dude who is no good at sports.

At badminton, lawn darts, or table tennis,

No record of my name's in that book by Guinness.

When I played baseball, the coach was sarcastic.

I ran like a windmill, he said, that was spastic.

My less critical teammates said they had no bothers,

Since I kept the bench nice and warm for the others.

Gymnastics, wrestling, touch football, the same,

I was simply no good at those physical games.

When I tried playing golf, caddies walked out *en masse,*

And the country club cancelled my guest privileges pass.

So, suffice it to say my abilities lay

In arenas requiring less sweating.

I eschewed the life athletic

And pursued one more aesthetic,

But there are two things I do excel at, I'm betting:

I'm quite good at recalling the victories I’ve won,

And the flops I am tops at forgetting.

**Best at Room Temp**

My dear, a Romeo I fear I'm not

When the temperature is too darned hot.

I prefer to do my wooing,

And my billing and my cooing,

In a thermostatically well-regulated spot.

So, the choice of where to rendezvous

Presents a slew of problems, too.

I don't mind trysting with a lady

In a nook that's nice and shady,

But on a beach in mid-July just will not do.

On a cloudy day I may essay a walk about,

But the stroll will likely be cut short, no doubt,

For I must quickly duck back in

If the sun comes out again,

Else I'm perspiring back to front and inside out.

So, when next romantically inclined you get,

And ere another beau you find, my pet,

Just keep the room temp, if you please,

At a steady sixty-eight degrees,

And I'll Romeo your socks off, Juliette.

**Simply**

Do I adore you

Simply because you're wonderful,

Or do you seem wonderful

Because I adore you?

Does my heart beat

Simply each time I think of you,

Or do I think of you

Each time my heart beats?

Do I want you

Simply because I'm fated to,

And Fate created you

To make me want you?

Will I love you

Simply for all eternity?

Is just one eternity

Enough time to love you?

Are you merely

My heart’s interpretation

Of a lovely dream,

Or are you simply

As wonderful as you seem?

**When in Rome (Improving Foreign Relations)**

When I'm traveling and away from you,

Not to worry, Dear, my love is true.

I remind myself that I'm still yours

When I find myself on foreign shores

In a tryst with a miss behind closed doors,

It's not straying, it's "diplomacy",

Part of my "Good Neighbor" policy.

How else can I explain

A flirty dame on a train in Spain?

It would be impolite to refrain

From joining her for a brew.

I may not always stop to think,

While teetering on the brink,

How easily one little drink

Can turn into a few,

And, bibulistically,

When in Rome I do as the Romans do.

If a *femme* makes an overture

In France to *chercher l'amour*,

And it leads to a brief *séjour*,

It's not romance I pursue.

I'll learn more French in an hour

From *Mademoiselle* in her bower

Than at the Louvre, or the Tower,

Or even Notre Dame, too,

And, linguistically,

When in Rome I do as the Romans do.

So, don't shed tears bitterly

Over pictures from Italy

Of my guide Isabella and me,

My heart still beats true.

Each time I give in to a yen,

It's just so I'll know where I've been

'til I'm back in the States once again

Rendezvousing with you.

So, euphemistically,

When in Rome,

I might go for a "spin" in Rome,

'cause, Dear, I hear it's a sin in Rome

Not to do as the Romans do.

**Postcards**

My love left me a letter,

"Dear one, I hate to make you frown,

But there seems to be a part

That's missing from my heart,

I need to find it before I can settle down."

Then she sent me a postcard,

It said, "Caro, ciao from Rome."

She loved the music, food, and wine,

And the Vatican was fine,

And she didn't know when she'd be coming home.

She caught a cold in London,

Was sure she'd glimpsed the Queen at tea.

The Thames is far less than sublime,

But Big Ben keeps perfect time,

And the galleries reminded her of me.

She got a tan in Rio,

The beach there is divine.

Confessed she'd had a little fling,

And leaned a most peculiar thing,

That Brazilian kisses don't compare to mine.

Then in a card one morning,

"Dear one, I'm coming home.

The world’s too big and far too wide

Without you by my side,

And I've realized I didn’t need to roam."

My love is done with travelling,

And knows, now, in her heart and mind

That the thing she went to find

Was the love she left behind

And wasn't missing,

It was right here all the time.

**Fabulous Faraway Places**

A beaver and a bandicoot,

After playing squash one day,

Were sipping cappuccinos

At a quaint outdoor café.

"Ah, thish ish sho like Parish",

Lisped the beaver with a sigh.

"And I," remarked the bandicoot,

"am minded of Mumbai,

And Rome, and Barcelona,

And so many other places."

The beaver merely sat there

Being glum and making faces.

"What's the matter, chum?" asked bandicoot,

His voice as soft as flannel,

"I thought you tripped as much as I.

Don't you watch the Travel Channel?"

**A Question for Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, and I quote:

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."

Then proceeded to list as many as she could

In fourteen lines, telling her husband, Robert,

And us, in the process,

Just how deeply and fervently she loved him.

But I would pose this query to Mrs. B.,

"Liz, dearie, does being able to list

All the reasons you love a person

Enable you to love that person more,

Or better, or differently?"

I see no need, indeed,

For yard-long lists of words

Declaring love steadfast and true,

So, in my considered view,

There’s no need for lists, or sonnets, even,

When just three simple words will do.

**Two Ordinary People**

You were no Cinderella at the ball,

But, then, I was no Prince Charming, I recall.

We were two ordinary people

That fate and chance had brought together,

But by the time the dance was through,

We'd found romance and we both knew

That for two ordinary people,

It was like a fairy tale was coming true.

Ensuing years have proved that life is not a dream,

And all that glitters is not gold, as it once seemed.

But when two ordinary people

Vow to join their lives together,

Then all the ordeals they'll withstand

If they face them hand in hand.

That's how two ordinary people

Make the magic work without a magic wand.

I'm not a prince and you are not my princess bride,

And I couldn't slay a dragon if I tried.

We're just two ordinary people

Who kept a vow and stayed together.

But, when it's blessed by true love's kiss,

Ordinary can be bliss,

And when I think of me and you,

I know some fairy tales come true,

And even ordinary people

Can have a happily ever after ending, too.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Middle of July

Breathless days and sauna nights

Summer's lethargy

In their garden pool

Irises rise cool and tall

Like pastel nymphets

Laughter of the rain

Crisp and clean like silver bells

Cool as lemonade

Larking breezes spread

The queer secrets shadows tell

In idle gossip

**Noblesse Oblige: The Duke**

The Duke of Milan was an arrogant man,

Pugnacious, mendacious, and vain.

He was also a mess,

For he loved to cross-dress

In ruffles and bustles and trains.



A poem is never finished, only abandoned.

Paul Valery

**Simply Senryu**

Talent is a seed

Inspiration makes it grow

Turning seed to fruit

Take selected words

Wrap them up in craftsmanship

Create a poem

Sensuous alive

Feel the power of the words

Teeming on the page

Verse a healing balm

Words can act like medicine

For souls in distress

**What to Feed Your Valentine**

Valentine's Day is special when you

Take your sweet out to eat at a romantic venue.

Add appeal to the meal,

And show him/her how you feel,

With a side dish not found on the menu\*:

With fajitas and flan, it’s *te amo* for Juan.

Pile on *ich liebe dich* with a schnitzel or fish.

*Aloha wau ia'oe g*oes with roast pig and poi.

Add *je t'aime* if your man suggests coq au vin.

If lo mein's what she wishes, *wo ai ni* for your missus.

*Naku penda* suffices for most okras and rices.

*Aishite imasu* to Lucy as you're sharing some sushi.

Put *ikh hob dikh lib* in a box with some bagels and lox.

*Ayor anosh' ni* won't sound quirky with buffalo jerky.

Shout *ti amo* with gusto as you serve antipasto.

*Mi amas vin* you'll emote over barbequed goat.

With curry, try *mea tum se pyaar karta hu* in a hurry,

Though there's no guarantee it will work.

No, food’s not a sure bet, so don't get upset,

And don't fret if you start to feel tinglish.

If everything fails, don't start gnawing your nails,

Just say, "Darling, I love you," in English.

\*The "cuisines d'amour" are as follows:

1.Spanish 2. German 3. Hawaiian 4. French 5. Mandarin

6. Swahili 7. Japanese 8. Yiddish 9. Navajo 10. Italian

11. Esperanto 12. Urdu.

Pronunciation's at the reader's own peril…

**Little Miss Muffett (Don’t Mess with PMS!)**

When a big hairy spider

Came and plopped down beside her

As Miss Muffett sat munchin'

A light, healthy luncheon,

She screamed, "Sir, naught could be ruder

Than an arachnid intruder!",

And proceeded to prove the mistake he had made.

'neath a teacup she trapped him,

With a teaspoon she tapped him,

And then lethally zapped him

With a snoot full of Raid.

You may ask why'd a maid

Go ballistic that way.

Well, that's something this nursery rhyme

Never would say.

As the tale I've revamped,

I'd opine she was "cramped"

And in no mood for sharing with strangers that day.

Or, more likely,

Although this may sound quite absurd,

She'd not abide spider turds

In her curds and whey.

**Who’s Afraid of Louis Vuitton?**

Don't be fooled by the smile of a crocodile

Who appears to be happy to meet you.

His grin may be beguiling,

But his brain is compiling

Various ways he might possibly eat you.

A croc's disposition is hard to predict,

It's quixotic and largely a moot case.

The main thing he most often worries about,

And what keeps him for poachers upon the lookout,

Is becoming a handbag or suitcase.

**The Ballad of Villonia Beebe, Part 2 (The Middle Years)**

She'd been wooed by dukes and diplomats

From Nome to Nagasaki,

Kept by barons, bishops, bureaucrats,

And a mobster’s minion lackey.

She'd been plied with jewels, a fancy car,

Designer gowns and furs

By lots and lots of husbands,

Not one of whom was hers.

For fifteen years she lived among the swank,

But at thirty she had nothing in the bank.

She pawned her diamonds, sold her gowns and her furs,

The car was repossessed, just the payments were hers,

Got her picture in the tabloids with slanders and slurs,

Villonia Beebe was no one's baby anymore.

She took to pandering and cruising in malls.

A john, a judge, would like to help her,

But he hadn't the balls.

She learned it's hard to be a call girl when nobody calls,

Villonia Beebe was no one's baby anymore.

Two more years went by in bars and walking the streets.

She'd like to meet a guy who's loaded, handsome, and sweet,

So she could settle down and turn that trick into a treat,

Then she'd be somebody's baby once more.

At thirty-two she thought she should get out of "the life",

Go back home to Arkansas and be someone's wife.

She'd soon get back an accent you could cut with a knife,

And become a real hillbilly once more.

The Toad Suck men were simple and quite easy to please,

Though the way they buzzed around her

Made their wives ill at ease.

Still, she made a decent living on her back and her knees,

Villonia Beebe'd come full circle, for sure.

Then one night she met Homer, at a barn dance, of course.

A cute and awkward guy who said his nickname was "Horse".

One “ride” and she's not had one single day of remorse,

ViIllonia Beebe was someone's baby once more.

She sometimes contemplates her life,

When she takes the time to bother,

From beauty queen to trampoline,

From doll to moll to mother.

She doesn't miss the jewels or car at all,

And fur just makes her itch,

But if truth be told, a part of her

Sort of misses being rich.

But Villonia is content, now, with her lot,

Especially when her "Horse" is hot to trot.

**The Ballad of Villonia Beebe, Part 3 (Obituary)**

Ms. Villonia Beebe has passed away,

She was Toad Suck’s most famous attraction.

Born June 26, 1900, died June 26, 2014,

She saw a century plus of continuous action.

She was born and raised in Arkansas,

And lived most of her life in the Hollows.

Beauty queen at eleven, mother of seven,

Her children are listed as follows:

Homer, Jr., the oldest, was killed at Verdun;

Jasper's an internet parson;

Bobby Lee has a small part in "Nuns on the Run";

Hank's doing 20 for arson;

Tabby's on welfare, with three kids of her own,

And another one due any day;

Ruth is a madam in Juneau or Nome;

And Jolene works with Cirque du Soleil.

Homer, Sr., her husband, had a nice little still

Where he kept corn likker a brewin'.

His body was found one day in the swamp,

Looked like the hogs had got to him.

Letty Buford, her friend, who discovered the corpse,

Said "Vee's expression could not have been calmer."

The coroner noted she was so full of 'shine,

He doubted he'd have to embalm her.

**Once Upon a Midnight**

On a dreary night in mid-December,

As well as I can now remember,

I sat and contemplated embers

Smoldering in the fireplace, dying.

Outside a bitter wind was howling,

Inside were flickering shadows prowling

'cross study walls as I sat rocking,

Watching flames with cinders vying.

The maudlin poem I'd been perusing

Had raised a question quite bemusing

That circled 'round my cerebellum

And captured my imagination.

I pondered why Poe found it shocking

When he heard that raven knocking.

It was merely seeking haven

From the storm, not conversation.

He seemed to think it came to haunt him,

And for his carelessness to taunt him,

Though he had no recollection

Of how he came to lose Lenore.

She was wearing something furry,

But after that it all got blurry,

And the last thing he remembered

Was someone yelling, "Nevermore!"

But a cold, wet bird was no more omen

Than "Cheerful Ed" was Poe's cognomen.

Could be it was just a token

Of whatever he was smokin',

And was just the lady leaving

As she slammed his chamber door.

**Lutie Mae McDaniel Sings the Blues**

I was on my way to Nashville,

Planned to be a country star,

The Grand Old Opry was where I was meant to be.

I drove across the Mississippi,

Stopped in Memphis for the night,

And that's where fate stepped in

And changed my destiny.

I found a cheap motel and showered,

Went out to get a bite to eat,

My cash was low, so there was little I could choose.

A cup of coffee, and a burger,

And a slice of pecan pie,

The very last thing on my mind

Was Memphis blues.

But in a small café on Beale Street,

Upon a postage stamp-sized stage,

A pinpoint spot to frame her face was all they used,

I watched my dreams of fame in Nashville

Fade like smoke rings in the air,

When I heard Lutie Mae McDaniel

Sing the blues.

You could tell she'd been a looker,

But her voice, once pure, I'm sure,

Now was raspy, wrecked by cigarettes and booze.

But every word was raw emotion,

Full of love, and loss, and life,

And I felt every single one

Down to my shoes.

There was no one on piano,

Just Lutie Mae and a guitar,

At break I asked if my assistance she could use.

She drawled, "Auditions are tomorrow."

I said, "Ma'am, here I am tonight."

Then I sat down right there

And knocked out "Beale Street Blues".

If you should ever get to Memphis

And find you've time upon your hands,

Check out a joint that’s known as "Beale Street Lu's".

That's now my little slice of heaven

Where each night at eight and ten,

I play while Lutie Mae McDaniel

Sings the blues.

**To Wand’ring Minstrel Breezes**

The rapturous oceans roar

And shout their praise

In gospel waves

That crash and smash

Against a cold,

Forbidding shore.

The mountains sigh and moan,

Lift suppliant arms,

Sing paeans and psalms

That rise, then echo back

A hollow,

Mocking tone.

The forest trees may bend their knees

And bow their heads, but not to pray.

Instead, if you should ask them why,

They pay no heedless god tribute,

They're merely giving mute salute

To wand'ring minstrel breezes passing by.

**The Model and the Master**

Giovanni didn't trust Michelangelo,

He'd heard that for guys he was hot,

But for minimum pay of a florin a day,

He was willing to give it a shot.

As soon as they started the session,

Gio’s senses said something was wrong.

Mickey couldn't decide how to pose him--

Wearing armor, a toga, a thong?

This went on for a while, and then with a smile

The master casually said to the dude,

"Please don't think me a jerk, but to get this to work,

I must have you totally nude."

Avoiding eye contact, Gio peeked at his contract,

Then took a deep breath and replied,

"Si, but with the insistence that you keep your distance,

And another five florins besides."

And that's the way the story goes,

I've repeated it word for word,

How the most famous statue in all of the world,

The one that's called "David" occurred.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Summer plays 'til Fall

Winter is a thoughtful time

Resting up for Spring

Winter's nearly gone

Time flows into Spring again

Well worth the waiting

Seasons come and go

Ripples in a long long stream

Constant yet changing

Once there was Eden

And there in unfading grass

Winter flowers bloomed

**Don’t Mess with Exes in Texas**

A badly divorced poet named Tex

Wrote rude verses defaming his ex.

It so got up her dander,

That she sued him for slander,

Now he writes retractions and settlement checks.

**It’s Greek to Me**

A man in exile

Feeds himself on barren hope

Yields to fate in time

**Aeschylus: "Agamemnon"**

Life's hard lesson

Wrong is shameful in the old

Time instructs us all

**Aeschylus: "Prometheus Unbound"**

Words not deeds rule men

Shaped to meet the moment's need

Waging war with fate

**Sophocles: "Philoctetes"**

Courage to choose right

And 'gainst harsh reality

Make no compromise

**Sophocles: "Antigone"**

Poet's plea for peace

Fair breezes speed us onward

Making love not war

**Aristophanes: "Lysistrata"**

**Bones of Contention**

I'd like to step back in time a bit

And mention the dinosaur,

He lived two hundred million years

And then was seen no more.

The dino's demise is a mystery

That's hashed and often rehashed here,

One favorite hypothesis seems to be

That a giant asteroid crashed here.

Argued by clerics, and scientists,

And other great men of distinction,

Some clearly deluded,

Yet none has concluded

What actually caused the extinction.

What really occurred

Lies somewhere obscured

Amongst all those theories and guesses.

Some still do remain, though,

Like the crane and Komodo,

And a number of interstate truck-stop waitresses.

**Here’s To That Invincible Bunch**

You are woman, so defined,

You are perfectly designed,

Every aspect of your being makes you who you are.

You meet the challenges you face

With intelligence and grace,

Because of you the human race has come so far.

You have measure, you have worth,

And your purpose here on Earth

Is to show the world war's not the only way.

You may question, you may doubt,

But you bring good things about,

And do it all without a rancorous display.

Man is creation at its worst,

Why you were not invented first

Is a mystery, unsolvable, it's true.

Though chauvinists may sneer and scoff,

We might be so much better off

If the running of the world were up to you.

We'll never understand God's plan,

So, from one less-than-perfect man,

Here’s to you ladies!

Thanks for all the things you do.

**Time**

It ticks, it merges,

It runs, and converges, and spills,

It twists, it turns,

It dilates, it gyrates,

It shrinks, and convulses, and kills.

And one day,

No matter what we do,

It stops…

For some with a whimper,

For some with a shout…

And in spite of what poets and pundits say,

On that inevitable day,

There's no glory when the ticking stops

And time runs out.

**In One Ear (and Out to the Bridge Club)**

Everybody likes a little gossip,

Everybody likes to hear a bit of dirt.

It brightens conversations,

And arouses shocked sensations,

And might cause some mild vexations,

But should never, never, never, ever hurt.

What the neighbors do

Should be nobody's business,

It's not your fault

If they don't keep their curtains drawn.

Besides, you're reasonably sure

That's what binoculars are for,

And if you hide behind your door,

What you can see them do by them is never known.

The Browns across the street

Are having problems,

He's been sleeping on the couch

Since New Year's Eve.

It seems those last two business trips

Involved some extra-marital "slips".

You're not adept at reading lips,

But gossip needn't be precise to be believed.

Yes, everybody likes a little gossip

To discuss at lunch, or brunch, or over tea.

To be aware of the mistakes

That almost everybody makes

Is all the skill and guile it takes

To be a gossiper, and not a gossipee.

**Beware Old Demon Rum**

Here's to the haughty elephant,

Won't eat food that's wrapped in cellophant.

A catered meal is okay,

Like alfalfa or hay,

But most everything else is irrelevant.

The best of them try to abstain

From drinking spirits like gin or champagne,

Which might not give them rabies,

But just might lead to babies,

Or ailments like gout and colitis,

Or, with this admonition,

A rare skin condition

Some vets have called pachydermatitis.

**Age and Attitude Adjustments**

From age one to three

Your life's barely startin',

But it kicks into gear

When you clear kindergarten.

Then on to primary, grade school,

And each stage in between,

'til you make it to twelve,

And then finally thirteen.

You've had sex once, you shave,

You think life has begun

When you burst out of twenty

And into twenty-one.

Then something horrible happens,

It's the end of the line.

OMG! You are thirty,

Whither, whence twenty-nine?

From thirty the decades fly by in a wink,

But before into dotage you totally sink,

Try thinking of sixty as the new thirty-two,

And get up off your keester…

You've more living to do.

**Memories**

Phantom figures at the window,

Shapeless shadows on the wall,

Footless footsteps faintly follow

Faceless voices down the hall.

Are my memories mere illusions,

Have time and distance made them blur?

Is my past cast with self-delusions,

And not the way things really were?

Memories, though they may haunt you,

Can help survive life's bitter burn,

If you're old enough to want to,

And wise enough to want to learn.

**Every Poem is a Song**

A present's not a gift

Until someone sends or brings it,

But a poem is still a song,

Even if no one sings it.

You may think you can't write lyrics,

But you're wrong.

If you ever wrote a poem,

You wrote a song.

Every poem has a melody inside it,

Although in free verse it's easier to hide it.

Let me cite, as an example,

Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass".

Now, this is a masterpiece, no doubt,

And I don't mean to be too critical, or crass,

But it's laboriously long,

And notoriously short on song,

And although he does give it a nod,

I find it somehow rather odd

That by the end he's all but left the music out.

If what he calls "singing" is so by definition,

It's well camouflaged by piles of superfluity

And about a million tedious miles of exposition.

To perform his piece in public

Walt's fans rarely get invited.

It takes almost as long to read the thing,

As it took the guy to write it.

Now, lest you think that I forgot

The premise of this piece, I've not.

It's true I wandered from the path a bit,

But with alacrity, I'll now get back to it.

Most lyrics don't require one jot

Of setting, dialogue, or plot,

But what the better ones have got

Is lots of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition.

Every time you write a poem

You make a miracle,

And even more so

When that miracle is lyrical.



Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.

Robert Frost

**Cinderella (If the Shoe Fits…Part 1)**

Once upon a time…

Once upon a time, in France,

A story teller fella

Wrote of a girl named Cinderella,

Meant as a fairy tale romance.

Her daddy died when she was young,

And she was forced to share his riches

With three monumental bitches,

A most unhappy circumstance.

For years her stepmom and stepsibs

Made her perform a menial's duty,

And as she blossomed into beauty,

They grew more spiteful, mean, and cruel.

Each night they dined on fine cuisine

And wore lace dresses with silk sashes,

While she wore rags begrimed with ashes,

And got just crusts of bread and gruel.

Then one day a herald

From the king demanded entry

To the homes of landed gentry,

They were invited one and all.

It was the prince's eighteenth birthday,

And the king and queen were harried

Because their son was not yet married.

Ergo, the reason for the ball.

The stepsisters primped and preened,

And great excitement they exuded,

When Cindy asked to be included,

They gaped at her as if appalled.

Stepmother sneered, "See here, I'll show you!"

With self-righteous indignation,

"Your name's not on the invitation.

Just we elite are so installed."

So, Cinderella went downstairs

To seek some solace in the kitchen,

But 'stead of sittin' there and bitchin',

She started dancing with a broom.

She whirled and twirled around the room,

Or else she'd stand there, gently swaying,

As if an orchestra was playing,

Pretending they were bride and groom.

And then a flash, a crash of thunder,

And to Cindy's stunned amazement,

There gliding through the kitchen casement,

A pudgy lady dressed in blue.

She said, "Hello, my dear, no fear,

I'm here to grant your secret wishes,

I'll wave my wand and clear the dishes,

And make a princess out of you!"

So, she waved, and tapped, and zapped,

And what she seemed to make the air do

Was whip make-up, nails, and hair-do,

And then to make the look complete,

Out of those rags so soiled and worn

And far too torn to drown a cat in,

A gown of gossamer and satin,

And crystal slippers on her feet.

Without this timely intervention,

Cindy's tale might have been tragic.

Could she have managed without magic,

And her dilemma be resolved?

But everybody knows what happened

With a gourd and six white mice,

And how a smudgy scullery maid

Was made to clean up really nice,

When a fairy got involved.

To be continued…

**A Paean to Bacchus**

Squeeze a cherry and let it sit,

And don't forget to take out the pit,

Let it ferment, at least a day as a rule,

To give it some zing and a kick like a mule.

Do the same with the blackberry,

There on the vine,

Then fill full the flagons with festival wine.

From cherry to berry we'll ramble along,

Our cups full of hooch,

Our young hearts full of song.

Inside the tubs the fruit still ferments,

Those juices have uses to enhance our intents

To revel with Bacchus,

The god of the vine,

With each quaff of the vino, we erupt into rhyme.

Be it barley and hops, or cherry or berry,

Let flow freely the brew

Whilst we drink and make merry.

Tomorrow's regret is tonight's joyful song,

The flesh may be weak, boys,

But the spirits are strong.

**A Handful of Haiku**

A cloud can't be touched

A rainbow's an illusion

Can't embrace a breeze

Have you heard you can

Hug a tree and make it laugh

Some're ticklish you know

What is a haiku

A moment plucked from time's flow

Summed up in three lines

Writers of haiku

Prove that one doesn't need a

Big pot to pith in

**Twenty-three Skiddoo!**

Flapper Shirley Shively sighed and thought,

How could she?

She'd love to do that hootchie-kootchie dance,

But would she?

Though the boys she loved to tease,

She was, sadly, quite obese.

Surely Shirley Shively shouldn't shimmy,

Should she?

**Simply Senryu**

Who writes history

It's written by survivors

No one else is left

In a person's life

What can be worse than old age

The alternative

A man becomes old

When his past regrets start to

Take the place of dreams

Childhood is over

When a door that's left ajar

Lets the future in

**Belle of the Ball**

A flamingo asked a fer-de-lance

To be his date to a high school dance.

"Oh, you can’t cut a rug with me,

I've neither arms nor legs, you see."

"No problem there", flamingo said,

"You can still play the perfect role.

We'll enter the limbo contest,

And you can be the pole!"

**The Country’s in the Very Best of Hands (Nov. 2016)**

There are lofty careers such as chef or physician,

But none quite so low as a politician.

We vote to send them to D.C. to represent us,

But once they take office, they start to resent us,

And retaining the job is their only ambition.

We've a two-party system, supposedly better than one,

But they're constantly bickering and little gets done.

Each session is rife with innuendo, and slander,

And pure diatribe, and, of course, gerrymander,

But when they vote to raise their pay, they pull as one.

Republicans and Democrats by name,

Self-promotion and duplicity's their game.

What a politician says is proving

He's lying if his lips are moving,

But we elect them,

So, we've just ourselves to blame.

Donald Trump's now president, but here's the thing,

This country needs a leader, not a king.

Hillary might not have been much better,

But she would have tried harder, had we let her,

And she wouldn't treat the job

As just a hobby, or a fling.

Republicans are thrilled because they won,

But the uphill fight for them has just begun.

What they seem to disremember,

All power to them is not surrendered.

No matter what they may propose,

The Dems will stubbornly oppose,

And soon they're back to where they started…

At square one…

But both Houses work the hardest

When they're getting nothing done.

This country needs a captain

Who can steer the Ship of State.

I hope that Trump will beat the odds

And not wind up as second rate.

For the next four years, I guess,

We'll have to bide our time and wait

For him to tweet us just exactly where he stands,

And that the country's in the very best of hands.

**Caveat Scriptor (Writer Beware)**

Words are a writer's stock in trade,

To ply it well requires a versatile,

Not volatile, vocabulary.

With words a writer's claim to fame is made,

But words can have broad repercussions.

So, when he writes he should select them well,

Not just to sell,

But so they don't arouse the scrutiny

Of those guys at Homeland Security

And become the subject of discussions

Of the FBI, the CIA, the DAR, the DMV,

The IRS, the IRA, USPS, the EPA,

The PTA, SPCA, AARP or AAA,

Twitter, NAACP, the NFL, the MLB,

The LGBTQ community, the NRA, the PGA,

NASA or the BBB, Ellen, Oprah, Dr. Phil,

An ad hoc Sunday sermon bill,

Or his city, county, state constabulary.

**Old Friends (For Brenda)**

I'd been thinking 'bout a show we did together,

Get a call out of the blue,

You're in town, just passing through,

Maybe we could meet up later, if I'm free.

You say the name of your hotel,

Yes, I know it very well,

Why don't you go down to the bar

And wait for me.

It’s more than twenty years since we last saw each other,

And before we'd even started,

It's as if we'd never parted,

Our friendship quickly spanned those missing years.

You say I haven't changed a bit,

And I say you're still looking fit,

We laugh and hug and choke back, "Liar!"

Through happy tears.

You're on tour and you have left another lover.

I laugh and say what else is new,

I'm between romances, too,

It's a shame we don't have better taste in friends.

And we consider why we do it,

And the pain of getting through it,

There's no excuse,

And we'll be doing it again.

You want to know if I have lived with many lovers.

I reply, there've been a few,

But none measured up to you,

We'd be happy for a while, then she'd move on.

You say all loves come to an end,

That's why we're better off as friends,

And we'll be that way

When all is said and done.

Then I ask you if your life is ever lonely.

Do you ever feel despair,

Or afraid when no one's there,

Ever feel like giving up and going home?

You say an actress comes to love it

'cause it's part and parcel of it,

And helps to make the most of good times

When they come.

We sit in that bar like we used to do,

And reminisce ‘til they close at two.

We tell each other what we've been through,

How far we've come, things left undone,

The loves we've known, why we're alone,

And promise not to wait so long

To meet like this again,

And how very glad we are that we're old friends.

**Cinderella (If the Shoe Fits…Part 2)**

The Ball…

At this point in the tale

A happy ending should be pending,

But readers now are more demanding,

And so, I'll tweak a bit the plot.

Cinderella made an entrance

Like aurora borealis

That sent a shockwave through the palace,

"Who is this chick? Man, she is hot!"

When the prince caught her attention,

His anxieties enflamed him,

But when she smiled, he overcame them,

And asked her if she'd care to dance.

The king and queen were sore relieved

Because they'd had some apprehension,

To girls he'd never paid attention,

They thought him something of a "nance".

But by the time the waltz was over,

He was thoroughly enraptured,

This girl his royal heart had captured,

And her to wed he was inclined.

Mom and Dad looked on with pride,

And it was then and there decided

To get the two of them united

Before the prince could change his mind.

But he was well and truly hooked,

And as to true love she surrendered,

Cindy suddenly remembered

She must be out of there by twelve.

If she hung around too long,

Until the tower bell stopped tolling,

The whole darn thing would start unrolling,

The midnight knell would quell the spell.

So, Cinderella fled the ball,

But just before the spell was broken,

She dropped a slipper as a token,

And hoped the prince would come around.

But when the clean-up crew was through,

Along with hairpins and nail clippers,

At least a dozen single slippers

Had been turned in to Lost and Found.

When the prince saw all those shoes,

He didn't ponder which or whether,

Just one was crystal, the rest leather,

And he knew what he had to do.

He had his mother pack a lunch,

And Benzedrine he grabbed a fistful,

Then off he shot just like a pistol

In hot pursuit of that glass clue.

To be continued…

**A Gaelic Fashion Statement**

A giraffe who was new

At the Aberdeen Zoo

Heard a bagpipe a skirling one day.

He tracked down the player

And offered to pay her

If she kindly would teach him to play.

He gazed at the piper,

A Hebrides viper,

As she uncoiled and let out a sigh.

Then she hissed, "Listen, dearrie,

I'll answerr yerr querry,

But you're nae gonna like my rreply.

Yerr legr'rr like stilts,

You'd look funny in kilts,

And that just would'na sit well wi' Scots.

We'rre quite snobbish and swell,

And know perrfectly well

That plaid dinna fit well wi' spots!"

**The Pitiful Parable of Pistol Pete**

Pistol Pete is Peaceful Peter now,

Married life has altered him, and how.

He used to be a honky tonker

Always spoiling for a fight,

Now he's always home with Mama

And in bed by nine each night.

It was a huge mistake to take that wedding vow.

He had to give up playing poker with the boys,

And had to throw out all his "girlie" mags and toys.

Nor can he scratch, nor cuss, nor chew,

He had to kiss that life good-bye,

And when he's dragged to church on Sunday,

She even makes him wear a tie.

There's not a thing about wedded bliss that he enjoys.

After six months, she can't take it anymore,

All she does is wring her hands and pace the floor.

When Pete proposed to her, he promised

He'd reform and get a job,

But no one wants to hire a guy

To sleep, drink beer, and be a slob,

And Mama's sick and tired of being poor.

What the last straw was for Mama, who can say,

But the police came and carted her away.

What she claimed as her defense,

That made the judge and jury frown,

Was he forgot too many times

To put the toilet seat back down.

"Justified, perhaps, but guilty, anyway."

To see her tried Pete's pals piled in from miles around,

Then stayed to see her fried and Pete put in the ground.

As each one heard the eulogy,

This thought was racing through his head,

"If I had followed Pete's example,

That could be me there lying dead!"

And not a dry eye in the parlor could be found.

If there's a moral to my tale, this truth will fit:

If you only "like" someone, do not commit.

Before proposing, think again,

'cause it's a fairly well-known fact

That married life can be a pain

When complete opposites attract.

If you don't believe me, just read his obit,

Because Pistol Pete's the pitiful proof of it.

**Look On the Bright Side**

When the kids are complaining,

‘cause it won't stop raining,

To be stuck indoors just sucks.

Don't let them pout,

Instead point out,

It's lovely weather for ducks!

When you're feeling blue

'cause your bills are due,

And you've got more checks than bucks,

Don't take to drink,

Count to ten and think,

It's lovely weather for ducks!

When you've burned the toast

And ruined the roast

'cause you just can't cook for shucks,

Lift up your chin

And order in,

It's lovely weather for ducks!

When your spirit's poor

'cause your job's a bore,

Your career is at its crux,

Just smile and shrug,

Lots of dough in drugs,

But, before your self-esteem self-destructs,

Please remember this bit,

Not all drugs are legit,

And besides that's a business for schmucks.

So, stay on the right side,

And look on the bright side,

Somewhere,

It's lovely weather for ducks!

**Paris in the Spring**

If ever I should go again to Paris,

I hope that I can be there in the Spring.

They say that April is the time of year

When love pervades the atmosphere.

Couples stroll along the Seine,

Arm in arm or hand in hand,

They browse quaint bookstalls on the quay,

Maybe share a kiss along the way.

Perhaps they'll find a quiet nook

Where they can sit, sip wine, and look

Into each other's eyes and keep the world at bay.

For Paris captures in its spell

Those young *messieurs and mesdemoiselles*

Who find romance a many splendored thing.

Where love's hopes and dreams survive and thrive,

Perhaps old hearts may come alive

In that magic place that's Paris in the Spring.

**A Handful of Haiku**

Spring waits for her cue

While Winter goes on dancing

Milking the applause

Sun shows up for work

Tired stars yawn and close their eyes

The night shift over

Rain falls gently down

Leaving all things fresh and clean

Sparkling in the sun

The cool evening comes

And early night winds whisper

To listening leaves

**We Three Kings**

King Midas' greed for riches was such

That everything turned to gold in his clutch.

As did his daughter one day,

When she got in the way,

Much better for her had they not kept in touch.

The Camelot tale is a wonderful fable,

And King Arthur and knights were all equally able,

But had trouble deciding

Just who was presiding

When no one could sit at the head of the table.

The vain Emperor\* was pleased,

As he gazed in the glass,

At how well his new trousers

Conformed to his ass.

The fabric, so sheer,

With one crease in the rear,

And the "zipper" in front,

Though demure, was pure class.

\*The one with the “new clothes”

**Simply Senryu**

A true fact of youth

It's short-lived as a sunrise

Facts are stubborn things

When you've done the math

How long it takes to grow old's

Already happened

Live in the present

Try to make the most of it

Now is all there is

There are two things that

All species have in common

They're born and they die

**She’s Big and Beautiful**

There is no subterfuge

In the hippopotamus,

She's just naturally huge

From top to bottomus.

She loves the rivers more than lands,

On stubby little legs she stands

And grazes 'cause she has no hands.

For losing pounds she has no plans,

Such as Jenny Craig or rubber bands.

Obesity for her's no plight,

To be big and beautiful is her right,

So, about her weight she's not uptight,

Nor loses any sleep at night.

Some say she’s rude and impolite,

But she just takes another bite

And says, "So whattamus!"

**Cinderella (If the Shoe Fits…Part 3)**

The happily ever after…

He searched the kingdom for a fortnight,

'til all saddle sore and weary,

With his eyes bloodshot and bleary,

The prince arrived at the last door.

He found two sisters, far too ugly,

And an even uglier mother,

And asked himself why even bother,

This whole darn quest's become a bore.

Then from the kitchen came the vision

He had searched so far and wide for.

He asked stepmother what she'd lied for

To say the three of them were all.

A flash, a crash, there was the gown,

Ad then he saw her bare right flipper,

And on the left, a crystal slipper…

The girl he'd danced with at the ball.

The stepmother feigned regret

That they three had so misjudged her,

Was for her good that they'd begrudged her,

But to a prince one shouldn't lie.

On her wedding day the trio

Met the fate they should have dreaded,

They were arrested and beheaded,

And Cindy never blinked an eye.

The wedding feast and celebration

Were the grandest in the nation,

The king and queen felt jubilation,

Their son was "normal", after all.

They could retire, pass down the crown,

Now that the prince was in ascendance,

Then, he, in turn, to his descendants,

They were so glad they'd had the ball.

But on the wedding night the prince

Confessed his sexual confusion,

And forced them both to the conclusion

Theirs was no fairy tale romance.

But still they made the marriage work,

Although not blessed with little nippers,

Sometimes he wore the gown and slippers,

And Cinderella wore the pants.

The End

**The Fine Art of Bathing**

On the subject of bathing

There are two schools of thought:

In a shower or tub,

Which you should,

Which you ought?

Of course, some people say

Either way is okay,

While others are a tad more particular.

They'd rather scrub in a tub,

And recline on their spine,

Than to sluice standing up

Perpendicular.

**Time Is Fluid**

A life is a story told in the arc of time.

Time is fluid, white as light,

And glittering with flecks of brilliance,

Liquid moments leaking away over the years.

Sometimes I feel as if I am inside a mirror

Watching my life leaking away.

The world outside seems insubstantial,

As if the present is a dream,

And only my memories are solid,

And alive, and now,

The only clear instants in the fluid of time

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Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting that speaks.

Plutarch

**April Angst (Lonely for the Lone Star State)**

I'm not known for being sentimental,

Nostalgia's not really my thing,

But each year 'round the middle of April,

While I wait for my CPA to ring,

As I'm sorting through piles of instructions

Re what I can and can't claim as deductions,

I know in my heart without failing

There'll be plenty of weeping and wailing,

And I'll wonder why I ever had to roam.

When the "ides of taxes" are upon me,

I'm reminded why I miss my Texas home\*.

\*No state income tax in Texas

**Well, I Can Dream, Can’t I?**

In my own quiet bedroom,

In my own comfy bed,

Every night I escape from reality.

I give wings to my fancy

When the pillow hits my head,

And my dreams are like a movie that’s starring me.

I'm Aladdin glidin' on a magic carpet,

And the djinn has ditched his lamp

And hitched a ride.

The flying's great to get my kicks with,

But no good to pick up chicks with,

With a big blue bilious genie at my side.

I'm a knight from Camelot in shining armor,

Dueling dragons, saving princesses from doom.

What should be mine as recompense,

I must decline and hie me hence,

The rules of chivalry are strict,

No wiggle room.

I'm Chris Columbus on that fateful expedition,

By sailing west we'll reach the East,

Least that's the plan.

While cruising 'round the Caribbean

Searching for a port to pee in,

I find, not India, but a new uncharted land.

I'm big brave bwana on an African safari,

Trapping savage cats

Because that's what I know.

As soon as we have made eye contact,

They're signed up and under contract,

Then off to Vegas for my Circus Circus show.

I never know what's going to happen

When I lay me down to sleep,

It might give a less intrepid person hives.

I'm sure it's pure imagination,

Or maybe it's reincarnation,

And I've done those things before in former lives.

But whether Charlemagne or Sinbad,

Peter, Robin, Roy, or Fred\*,

Or somebody else from myth or history,

In my dreams as I slumber

In my own Sleep Number bed,

I can be where, what, whomever I want to be.

But in the morning when I wake up,

I'm so glad to be back home

Because it's really not so bad just being me.

\*Peter (Pan); Robin (Hood); Roy (Rogers);

Fred (Astaire…or Flintstone)

**My Dream Girl**

My dream girl is no doll, no Kewpie cutie,

Or an heiress, or an actress on the screen.

She's neither nun nor acrobat,

Nor wears fine feathers in her hat,

No frump for Trump Republican,

No beauty queen.

She's not a princess locked up in an ivory palace,

Awaiting rescue by a valiant knight like me.

She doesn't dazzle like aurora borealis,

Or sing arias from "Carmen" like Ms. Callas,

Or practice *tae kwon do*,

Or even know *tai chi*.

But the girl I dream about has joy and laughter,

And her heart's as full of love as it can be.

When my spirit's low, she lifts it to the rafter,

And I know we'll have a happily ever after

Every time I dream of her,

And she of me.

**How a Perfunctory Poet Punctuates a Piece**

A period here. a question mark there?

A handful of commas,,,tossed in the air

To fall, all willy nilly, but he doesn't care.

Then he closes his eyes so he never sees,

And does it again with apostrophe's.

Ellipses…. colons: and semis;

Will be put through their paces,

And are frequently found in the oddest of places.

Quotations are more than just dressing or stuffing,

Yet they often appear when "nobody said nuffing".

It makes reading a chore just to try to adhere

To a writer's directions of what to do where,

But you barrel on through 'til you get to the end,

Give your eyes time to refocus,

And then try it again.

Some poets abjure punctuation, for sure,

And though not a big fan,

I'm a reasonable man.

e e cummings, for example,

Responds to the call

By using little or no punctuation at all.

**Table for One, Please**

An iguana and a ladybug

Went out to eat one day.

The lady said, "This is my treat,

And I'll be glad to pay."

Hissed lizard, "Not at all, my dear,

For I've a teeny hunch

That after I am through with you,

There'll be just one for lunch!"

**Itsy-Bitsy Spider (Reservations Not Required)**

An itsy-bitsy spider

Is waiting for the rain

To drip its final droplets down

So she can weave her web again.

Next time she'll choose a better spot

Than that worn-out water spout.

It was damp and cramped

And the sun could never quite

Completely dry it out.

This web she'll string between two trees,

A fat oak and one much thinner,

Then, with lacey, lethal table set,

The tiny spider will wait some more

To see who'll drop by for dinner.

**A Handful of Haiku**

For just a wingbeat

Fireflies light up the darkness

Search for mate or prey

Fireflies frugally

Furnish their own candlelight

For a mating dance

Metered fast or slow

There's a kind of poetry

In the sound of rain

The Grand Canyon is

A poem about Nature

That's writing itself

**A Couple of Limericks About Cats (More or Less)**

A cruel circus lion tamer named Fred

Dropped his whip once and ended up dead.

When his body was found,

It lay scattered around,

Badly scratched and detached from his head.

Where a homeless old woman once sat,

Her pet puss was found dead and suspiciously fat.

But the tabby deflated

When a vet operated

And let the bag lady out of the cat.

**The Seasons of My Life**

When I was young and green

The world and time were mine to own,

I believed I was invincible

And careless seeds were sown.

Candle burning at both ends,

And other signs I should have seen,

But I was young and green.

While I played at love and life

My Summer blazed and days flew by,

I glanced away and they were gone

In the blinking of an eye.

Summer wine's a potent brew,

But still I drained each goblet dry,

And Summer days flew by.

When Autumn tiptoed in

As soft and subtle as a dream,

Still slightly drunk on summer wine,

I missed the signs I should have seen.

No sound it made as it appeared,

So crystalline and clean,

And subtle as a dream.

Now Winter's at my door,

The world I once considered mine

Is just a past of echoed memories,

Some sweet, some gall like bitter wine.

And a poignant truth's revealed,

Each day I've lived was borrowed time,

And the world was never mine.

I've some remorse but few regrets,

I've let the chips fall where they would,

Of all the bad things that I've said and done,

Some have been balanced by the good.

I've been to heaven and to hell,

I've weathered every storm and strife,

And that's all there is to tell

Of the seasons of my life.

**Coffee from a Styrofoam Cup**

Once I drank milk straight from the carton,

And guzzled beer out of a can,

When I dripped gravy on my tie, I licked it up.

But though my manners were appalling,

One habit I would never fall in,

I never sank to drinking coffee

From a Styrofoam cup.

I grew up in far West Texas,

And my mama taught me well

Not to slurp or belch when we sat down to sup.

And when I went away to college,

I picked up social skills and knowledge,

But not a knack for drinking coffee

From a Styrofoam cup.

I've been from Malibu to Memphis,

I've crisscrossed the Great Divide,

Thought I might be a movie star when I grew up.

That pipe dream never came about,

But even when it fizzled out,

I never stooped to drinking coffee

From a Styrofoam cup.

I've grown much older now and wiser,

And my habits have improved,

And I will play my part until this gig is up.

Though I do things I once thought drastic,

Like sipping champagne out of plastic,

I draw the line at drinking coffee

From a Styrofoam cup.

When at last this play has ended

And the final curtain's closed,

And St. Peter says, "Hey, Jim, your number's up."

Though I will surely face a specious doom,

I'll flee from that celestial waiting room

If angels try to serve me coffee

In a Styrofoam cup.

Now, should the right one come along,

I'm sure I'd gladly change my song

To find romance again before my time is up.

We may not on everything concur,

But if it came down to a mug…or her…

I could get used to drinking coffee

From a Styrofoam cup.

**Animal Crackers and Chicken Soup**

When I was a kid and I got the croup,

My mama would make me chicken soup.

Then as a special treat just for me,

She'd add an animal cracker menagerie.

Animal crackers, oh, what fun,

Like Noah's ark, only one by one,

Dancin', and prancin', and jumpin' through hoops,

I had my very own circus right there in my soup.

There were all of the animals in the zoo,

Camels, and zebras, hippopotami, too.

Monkeys and chimps doin' loop-the-loops,

All splishin' and splashin' around in my soup.

When a tiger, or lion, or grizzly bear

Would try to elude me, I didn't care.

I'd chase him around and around in my bowl,

Then I’d catch him, and bite him, and swallow him whole.

If your kids balk at vegetables, though they should

Eat lots of them because they're good,

The little dears' cooperation you can recoup,

Put veggie animal crackers in their soup.

Animal crackers, oh, what fun,

And even though my mama's gone,

And I no longer get the croup,

I still like animal crackers and chicken soup.

**You Sent Me Flowers**

You sent me flowers, you held the door,

Remembered birthdays and ties I wore.

The ordinary things I'd do,

You made them seem important, too.

You'd take my sad times and make them glad times.

Sometimes I'd say things that caused you pain,

But though I hurt you, you'd not complain.

My thoughtlessness was guaranteed,

Still, you were there in times of need,

Steadfast, unswerving, me, undeserving.

You said you loved me, and though I knew,

Pride wouldn't let me feel that way, too.

Too little romance in my soul,

My head too firmly in control,

I couldn't change it or rearrange it.

I'm not like you were, not strong and brave.

I couldn't give you the things you craved.

Your love and generosity

Were wasted on the likes of me.

Find someone nice, kid, was my advice, kid.

I'm going to miss you, now that you're gone.

You were the best friend I've ever known.

I know no matter how I spin it,

My life was better with you in it.

How could I know it, but never show it?

I write this letter I'll never send.

Just need to tell you I'm still your friend.

Too late, I know, but necessary,

When I read your obituary,

I cried for hours and sent you flowers.

**Selectively Eclectic**

I freely admit I love classical music,

And please don't think me a snob

If I keep my composure

When I mention composers

As Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Schumann,

And not Ludie, or Wolfie, or Petie, or Bob.

And a symphony simply cannot be enjoyed

At just any old time of the day.

I can't listen to them prior to seven p.m.,

And I don't mean to brag, but I couldn't be dragged

To a Wednesday or Saturday matinee

Of a ballet by Bizet or Massenet.

My taste in classical music, you see,

Is eclectic, but not meant to shock.

I choose Strauss for the schmaltz of a polka or waltz,

And Chopin is my dude when I crave an etude,

Though I do tend to doze in my seat in the loge

Through an opera by Wagner…

Or more Offenbach.

**It’s Not Always Easy Being Me**

I've been frequently right,

And I've often been wrong.

I've had plenty of breaks,

And made lots of mistakes,

I've been weak, I've been strong.

Looking back, now, I see that is my destiny,

What else is there to be but what I am?

I've been good, I've been bad,

Much more sinner than saint.

I've been wooer and wooed,

I've been misunderstood,

Been called perverse and quaint.

But I do what I love, and when comes to shove,

How else can I prove that I am what I am?

There are times I fit in,

Times when I don't belong.

I hear opening chords

And start singing the words

To a whole different song.

My footprint is small, but I rise when I fall,

And I strive to stand tall and be all that I am.

**Well, I Never (A Kind of Bucket List)**

Well, I never played tug-of-war with an elephant

Or kick boxed a kangaroo;

I never tried to outsmile a crocodile

Or won the lottery or built an igloo.

I never went searching for buried treasure

Or gold at the rainbow's end;

I never discovered the Fountain of Youth

Or had a circus clown for a friend.

I never ran with the bulls in Pamplona

Or croqueted on the lawn of the Taj Mahal;

I never drank wine from a young lady's slipper

Or made love 'neath a waterfall.

I've never zip lined from the top of Mt. Everest

Or hitchhiked from Nome to Peru;

I never had a long erudite conversation

About how to decide when to use "whom" or "who".

I never played Hamlet, or danced in "Swan Lake",

Or sang opera with Callas or Sills;

I never wrote the great American novel,

And I think, alas, never will.

I never jousted a unicorn

Or read the dictionary from A to Z;

I've not romped in the rain on a plain down in Spain

Or grown a moustache, a beard, or goatee.

I never bought or sold stocks on Wall Street,

I just never could get the knack;

I never walked a tightrope across Royal Gorge

Or swam from Miami to Cuba and back.

I never fought dragons, or tilted with giants,

Or found a cure for the common cold,

And I've never been able to quite figure out

Just why it is we grow old.

Most of my list is pure fancy, of course,

If I don't do them, I won't feel frustrated.

I’d say, all in all, I didn’t mind growing up,

But I find growing old’s just a bit overrated.

**My Moment of Truth**

Today I awoke to my moment of truth,

I'm no longer as young as I was in my youth.

And perceived, furthermore, to my utter dismay,

I'm not even as young as I was yesterday.

Oh, how and why was my youth so misspent,

And how can I find when and whither it went?

Was it hung in a closet, or tossed in a drawer,

Is Peter Pan really gone, boon companion no more?

As I woke up this morning, he was with me, I swear,

But when I looked in a mirror, a stranger was there.

I'll ransack each closet, every cupboard, and drawer,

But I fear I'll not find that sweet boy anywhere.

Now a new thought occurs, one not nearly so bleak,

I'm not yet as old as I will be next week.

So, Peter, adieu, sayonara, and ciao,

Please keep my youth with you, I'm too old for it now.

Oh, dear, golden boy, oh, bright symbol of youth,

We cannot remain young, that's the bittersweet truth.

Yet silver-fringed laughter hide-and-seeks in the hall,

And I smile for my youth hasn't vanished at all.

My mem'ries are young, I invoke them at will,

Like the spirit of Pan that remains with me still.

**Simply Senryu**

Every artist knows

That craft plus soul equals art

His tools of the trade

When you come to know

There is sadness in beauty

You start to grow up

Though now's not perfect

One should not trust the future

Or live in the past

We all give in to

The omnipotence of time

Sooner or later

**Another Year Older**

A little less agile,

More aches and pains,

A little less hair,

More capital gains,

A little more girth,

A little less grit,

Another year older,

A little less fit.

A little less debt,

A little more doubt,

A little less certain

That I've figured out

What the reason for living

So long’s all about.

If I do find an answer,

And if I'm still here,

I'll let you in on the secret

On my birthday next year.

**I Sing My Song**

I sing my song in celebration,

I sing my song for those who care.

The words resound through every nation,

I sing it loud so all may hear.

I sing for countless generations

Who've lived in ignorance and fear.

The words are plain, need no translation,

The theme is peace, the message clear.

One voice in song o'er all the others

May still be heard above the din.

Are we not all sisters and brothers,

Our roots the family of Man?

I sing of hope for our salvation,

My words, though weak, I pray they can

Reach out and teach that toleration

And peace on Earth's a better plan.

**Miracles Can Happen**

Sister Josefina Javelina

Packed her bag in Argentina

And went flying off to Rome

To see the Pope.

Her desire was to become

So much more than just a nun,

She had asked her local priest,

And he said, "Nope!"

But she had high expectations

Of a papal dispensation

To pursue her goal,

And here's the reason why:

Though he later came to rue it,

Her priest quipped that she could do it

The day the Pope resigned\*,

Then pigs could fly.

\*That priest made this remark on Feb. 9, 2013.

On Feb. 11 Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation.

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I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of Beauty.

Edgar Allan Poe

**Where Have All the Young Men Gone?**

Where have all the young men gone?

Gone to fight in foreign lands,

To make the world a better place

And place it in more peaceful hands.

Why did all the young men go?

To do their duty, every one,

To help the cause of liberty

For peoples they don't even know.

When will they be coming home?

When all the guns have ceased to roar.

We'll raise a cheer when they return,

And pretend they brought an end to war.

But how will some come home again?  
in bag or box, it's all the same.

And what will they remind us of?

That war's a wasteful, senseless game.

Who will mourn these fallen sons?

Mothers, fathers everywhere,

And all the rest who stayed behind

And cheered them when they went to war.

Where are heroes laid to rest?

On the breast of immortality,

To sleep, warmed by a vigil flame

That burns their names in history.

And what will be their legacy?

This epitaph for one and all:

All wars must end ere there will be

No more young men to heed the call.

**Some Suspiciously Specious Motherly Advice**

My mama taught me manners

That have served me very well,

But there’s one I never understood

Nor could fully quite condone.

Mama said:

“Don't slurp the soup,

And sit up straight,

And eat every bean

And pee on your plate.”

I didn’t question her advice…

'cause moms are never wrong…

But because of it,

To this very day,

I can only consume legumes

When I'm alone.

So, mamas, when you give advice,

I urge you to be wary,

Lest your kid, like me,

Grows up to be

A victim of vocabulary.

**How Do Children Sleep at Night?**

It's a wonder young children still turn out all right

With the stuff parents cram in their heads every night.  
Things like visions of sugar plum fairies and sprites,

Or a thousand tales of Arabian delights.

A frog who turns prince with a kiss from a lass,

A girl who goes dancing in slippers of glass.

A cow that gets high and jumps over the moon,

A crockery dish that elopes with a spoon.

A boy who can fly but refuses to grow,

A difficult girl who plants maids in a row.

A magician who wants to trade old lamps for new,

A woman so poor she must live in a shoe.

A waif who sells matches out in the cold,

A king who can touch things and turn them to gold.

A dog, an old woman, a cupboard that's bare,

A girl locked in a tower, a ladder of hair.

A magical wheel that spins gold out of straw,

A guy helps a lion with a thorn in its paw.

A girl wearing red visits grandma who's resting,

Finds a wolf in her nightdress and Granny digesting.

Three kids and a wardrobe, three men share a tub,

A brave tailor kills seven mean flies with a club.

An archer makes merry with his men in the woods

While relieving the rich of their money and goods.

Kind huntsman, fair princess, a vain evil queen,

Dwarves and a prince who get caught in between.

A baby, a mean fairy’s hundred-year snit

'cause her name's accidentally left off a guest list.

A piper who lures out of town rodent varmints,

An emperor with new but invisible garments.

A farmer's wife butchers three handicapped mice,

A house drops on top of a witch who's not nice.

Another with gingerbread two children seduces,

But winds up getting baked in her own savory juices.

A giant and a beanstalk, a cat who wears boots,

A wolf who's outfoxed by three pigs in cahoots.

A bad little boy who sticks fingers in pies,

And one whose wooden nose grows when he lies.

There are others, of course, far too many to mention,

But I hope these will serve to excite some attention.

With stories like these knocking 'round in their heads,

It's no wonder if kids toss and turn in their beds.

Yet throughout countless ages these stories survive,

Kids listen, and dream them, and still wake up alive,

No worse for having been charmed or affrighted,

Imaginations are stoked, little minds are ignited,

And continue to hold them in dear veneration

As they pass them along to the next generation.

**Two Triolets for the Price of One**

The best life…

The best life is a simple life,

Poets and pundits all agree.

What value strain, what profit strife?

The best life is a simple life.

So, follow drum, and heed the fife,

The world a better place will be.

The best life is a simple life,

Poets and pundits all agree.

The heart always knows…

The heart always knows what it wants,

The head sometimes gets in the way.

A fantasy teases and taunts,

The heart always knows what it wants.

That fantasy's virtues it vaunts,

People in love are wont to say.

The heart always knows what it wants,

The head sometimes gets in the way.

**Out of a Dream**

My dreams of her had colored all my youth,

Her beauty, grace and charm were all I sought.

I reached for her in dreams to learn the truth,

The art of love in her embrace was taught.

As years progressed and youth was vainly spent,

I dreamed her less and less as time slipped by.

The art of love turned act and lacked intent,

What dreams I dreamed were desolate and dry.

I yearned for love, I sought it night and day,

'til one bright morn a wondrous thing occurred.

I browsed a shop, and when I stopped to pay,

A vision from those faded dreams appeared.

And then I felt my heart stop for a while,

She'd dreamed me, too, I saw it in her smile.

**Ghosts, Goblins, and Ghouls, Oh, My!**

Ghosts and goblins come in waves on Halloween,

The spookiest spooks and creepiest creeps

The likes of which you've never seen.

They really haven't come to haunt,

It's not your mortal soul they want,

Just your Skittles, Candy Corn, and Jelly Beans.

Vampires, werewolves, zombies, hags,

Witches, warlocks, wraiths in rags,

They won't suck your blood or eat you,

They're just here to trick or treat you.

When the doorbell rings,

You'd best fill up their bags.

If brave of heart, you might invite them in.

Your lair is dark, the fiendish games begin.

Apples to bob, a tail to pin,

Brew to imbibe, a bottle to spin,

And then, of course, costumes to rate

As party monsters celebrate All Hallows E'en.

**The Four Horsemen**

**Conquest**

An endless cycle

Little men with little minds

Try to rule the world

**War**

History teaches

The one thing humans do best

Is kill each other

**Famine**

Human paradox

In a world of such plenty

People are starving

**Death**

Fact or prophecy

The human race is the next

Endangered species

**The Garden of Eden**

Some people believe that the Garden of Eden

Was in Africa, Asia, Australia, or Sweden.

The presumed site of its location

Is assumed from the interpretation

Of which Good Book's being read

And who's doin' the readin'.

**Marriage-Go-Round-and-Round-and-Round**

**Round 1**

An effeminate young husband named Ben Dawes

Sought a sex change in spite of his in-laws.

He made the decision,

And got the incision,

And he now has a yang where his yin was.

Somewhat "butch" Betty Lou is his spouse,

Unlike her folks she thinks Ben is no louse.

They'll stay married with pride,

With him as the bride,

And she'll be the man of the house.

Their life should be smooth now and supple,

But new wrinkles crop us midst the shuffle.

Their friends find it bemusing,

The switched roles are confusing,

Are they straight or a lesbian couple?

**Round 2**

To put an end to their friends' consternation,

Betty Lou had the sex operation.

Her breasts were so small,

Didn't touch them at all,

And the schlong they stitched on was quite nice.

But her doctors neglected

To say the organ selected

Was Ben's old one, they’d kept it on ice.

When Ben saw it, he turned somewhat "vanillier",

And had thoughts that could not have been sillier.

But when Betty would ride him,

It felt like he was inside him,

And when he fondled and stroked it,

Or pinched it, or choked it,

He thought, "How odd,

This feels oddly familiar."

**Round 3**

This is an age of sexual transitions,

And more and more people

Are defying traditions

Which may well cause some folks

To be vexed by you.

But, my advice to transgenders

Is don't surrender your "tenders"

Just to render your friends

Less perplexed by you.

**Pondering Down Under**

The koala's spiritual beliefs

Are difficult to assess.

He attends no church, or mosque,

Or synagogue,

And never does confess.

He's not a cannibal, and so

Communion is appalling,

And as for gospel singing,

It's just so much caterwauling.

I suppose he's an agnostic

Because he often stops and ponders

The reason for the universe

And all its many wonders.

And so, we must be satisfied

With this insight that's been slipped us,

While he goes back to being cute

And munching eucalyptus.

**Happy Anniversary**

The bouncing checks, the flirty ex,

The made-up quarrels for the make-up sex,

And never knowing what might happen next,

One-year anniversary.

The sleepless nights, the senseless fights,

The deep depressions, and the highest heights,

The daily bickering over wrongs and rights,

Ten-year anniversary.

The rolling eyes, dramatic sighs,

The nagging questions, whens and wheres and whys,

The lame excuses and weak alibis,

Twenty-year anniversary.

The icy stares, the temper flares,

The accusations of alleged affairs,

A week of sleeping on the couch downstairs,

Thirty-year anniversary.

Through laughs and tears, when the smoke clears,

We're still together after all these years,

And all the bad stuff sort of disappears,

Forty-year anniversary.

I guess the reason why you and I still try

Is those words "I'll love you 'til the day I die".

I know you meant them, dear, and so did I,

And that means everything to me.

And so, my friend, until the end,

We'll stick together through both thick and thin,

And if I had to do it all again,

I'd be right here on bended knee,

Asking you to marry me,

So, darling,

Happy Anniversary.

**Hey Diddle Diddle**

The rhyme "Hey diddle diddle…"

For me poses a riddle:

What possible need

Has a cat for a fiddle?

A cow might jump over the moon,

So I'm told,

If a milkmaid's hands

Are unexpectedly cold,

Which could make a dog laugh,

Or anyone, for that matter,

Just as funny as cutlery

"Spooning" a platter.

This rhyme is so silly,

Raises so many questions,

But as for solutions,

Not one good suggestion.

So, I'll add here my own sage advice

To the muddle

To prevent boys when peeing

From making a puddle:

When you need to go piddle,

Think "Hey diddle diddle",

Keep both your eyes open

And aim for the middle.

**Fairies in My Garden**

In gardens, glens, and forest glades

That oft great banquet halls resemble,

On a Summer night, if the moon is bright,

One might see fairy folk assemble.

One night, by purest happenstance,

I chanced by one such congregation.

I stood bespelled at what I beheld

To be a fairy celebration.

But something seemed to be amiss,

Their demeanor was alarming.

No joyful tunes or ribald runes,

These fairy folk were mourning.

As I strained to hear, quite suddenly,

I kenned why they were grieving.

They keened and cried, a fairy died

Because a human stopped believing.

It's no supernatural malady

Or some mysterious psychosis.

How fairies thrive and stay alive

Is by simple symbiosis.

They need us to believe in them

To keep their ranks from falling.

And, yes, it's true, we need them, too,

So, listen for their calling.

May I never grow too old to dream,

May my heart, with age, not harden.

Then they'll not grieve whilst I believe

In the fairies in my garden.

I can hear their haunting music now,

Tantalizing and pulsating.

I must away, I cannot stay,

My fairy folk are waiting.

**More Effective Communication**

Do you remember Helen Keller?

She was a really awesome speller

Who couldn't hear, nor see, nor speak,

So, to communicate,

She would ges-tic-u-late.

Marcel Marceau spoke perfect French,

But he was helpless in a pinch

Because a mime does not converse,

Or even curse, such is his fate,

He must ges-tic-u-late.

Polynesian girls who hula

Often dance for poi or moola.

They rake in tips with swaying hips

As their grass skirts gyrate,

And they ges-tic-u-late.

Magicians cause a great sensation

With their prestidigitation.

They make assistants disappear,

And even levitate,

When they ges-tic-u-late.

Upon the mound a pitcher scans

The fingers of the catcher's hands,

Who, to show how fast or slow

The ball should go across the plate,

Will then ges-tic-u-late.

When good ideas you hit upon them,

Use your hands, don't sit upon them,

Get your point 'cross to your boss,

Let me reiterate.

Conversation's more impressive

If animatedly expressive

And your vocabulary's rich and up-to-date.

So, when you talk stop dilly dallyin'

And be more like an Italian,

Give your reticence a rest,

And just ges-tic-u-late.

**Some More More Effective Communication**

How do you think Scheherazady

Would incorporate her body

To spice up those tales and keep enticed

That potentate?

She would ges-tic-u-late.

Aladdin could have faced disaster,

But the djinn said to his master,

"I've three wishes I can grant

But can't articulate

Lest you ges-tic-u-late."

In ancient Greece Olympian Zeus

Would turn his Titan anger loose,

And lightning bolts he'd throw to show

The path his wrath would navigate

When he’d ges-tic-u-late.

So, let me say here, as I wind up,

When you talk, just make your mind up,

To enhance your speech and diction,

Take a tip from folks in fiction,

You’ll make communicating great

If you ges-tic-u-late.

**In Days of Old**

In days of old a lady's heart was won

With chivalry and deeds of derring-do.

If swain proved false, she'd bid the knave be gone,

Adjust her cap and look for someone new.

By age fifteen a maid was in her prime,

Her window for a spouse a narrow slit.

She could not pule and pine for love sublime,

And oft as not would take what she could get.

When knight set out to win his lady fair,

Through joust or other mortal combat act,

He knew that love for him she would forswear

Lest he prevailed with manly parts intact.

S'truth, love in days of old was quite a chore.

Thank goodness it's not like that anymore.

**The Essence of Emily Dickinson**

She wrote of storms, winds, wild March skies,

Sunsets and dawns, gardens and lawns,

And birds, and bees, and butterflies.

The first robin of Spring was reason for hope

Beyond crowning of monarch, or birthday of pope.

She wrote of the seasons with a delicate flair,

Such as “leaves turning red in Fall's altered air”.

Her human friends were trusted, though few,

But companions enough for the world she knew.

And she wrote often of death's quiet dignity,

Never with rancor or morbidity,

But with full awareness of the reality

That she was always in the presence

Of her own mortality.

**A Variation on a Theme by Dr. Seuss**

There once was a Grinch who was bad to the bone,

Which was why he always spent Christmas alone,

But one year the Grinch said, "Enough is enough!"

And decided to steal everyone's Christmas stuff.

In the village below, in the center of town,

Stood a great Christmas tree with gifts all around,

Gaily wrapped presents, some large and some small,

Filled with treats and surprises for one and for all.

The Grinch plotted, connived, he schemed, and he hatched,

"By morning," he vowed, "all that loot will be snatched."

Then he rushed back inside to flesh out his plan

To disguise himself as that Santa Claus man.

He measured, and cut, and stitched stitches galore,

When he suddenly heard, just outside his front door,

Something that set both his Grinch ears to ringing.

The sound was quite audibly somebody singing.

He opened his door just a crack so to peek,

And what he beheld made him meekly squeak "Eek!"

In front of his cave was a sight quite bewilderin',

A small group of seven or eight village childeren.

Then a tow-headed toddler crept forward an inch

And quite cutely cooed, "Mewwy Cwissmas, Mistuh Gwinch!"

The snarl that he tried for turned into a grin,

And 'stead of biting their heads off, he invited them in.

He dashed to his fireplace, tossed on a Yule log,

Then served gingerGrinch cookies and sweet green eggnog.

They gobbled Grinch goodies ‘til there weren’t any more,

Then thanked him and brusquely bounced back out the door.

 As he watched them depart, to his utter surprise,

The Grinch felt his heart shrinking back down to size.

He quivered, he quaked, his knees started to shake.

"This unGrinchlike behavior has been a mistake!"

Then he slammed shut the door

And proclaimed with a sneer,

"Well, you thwarted me this time,

But just wait 'til next year!"

This tale has a moral, quite simple yet bold:

Some people can't change, if the sad truth be told.

The Grinch, of his species, was simply a bad 'un,

He couldn't change his spots, poor thing,

Even if he had 'em.

**Some Banking Hanky Panky**

A sweet and naïve bank teller named Doris

Had a crush on a colleague named Boris.

But one day while at work,

The young clerk went berserk

When she caught Boris banging the manager, Morris.

Doris' secret admirer, Dan Danson,

Was swarthy, and tall, and quite roguishly handsome.

But the next day while at work,

This clerk, too, went berserk,

Took an ATM hostage and held it for ransom.

Dan was embarrassed, didn't want to be caught,

And was going to shut himself up in the vault,

But Boris told him to run,

While Morris called 9-1-1,

And Doris flatly declared that it wasn't her fault.

When the S.W.A.T. guys arrived on the scene,

They found everything calm and serene.

Boris told the S.W.A.T. captain that Dan

Had taken both Doris and Morris' van

And fled with the cash from the money machine.

Doris' version, when caught, was more exculpatory

And dripping with details more lurid than gory.

She'd plotted with Dan to create this diversion

To rescue her from that den of perversion.

And now Boris, and Morris, and Doris, and Dan

Are suing each other for the rights to the story.

**Squanto and the Pilgrims**

Winter in Plymouth, 1621, was harsh as could be,

The Pilgrims were sick and sorry they'd come,

They missed their warm English beds and their tea.

The still ambulatory shivered and shuffled about,

As they griped, and they groused, and they cried,

'til of 132 Mayflower passengers and crew,

All but fifty-three of them died.

The following Spring a kind Pawtuxet brave

Took pity upon the poor sods.

Squanto showed them how to plant barley and corn

And fun things they could do with the cobs.

That fall when the bountiful harvest drew near,

They searched out their new Indian friend, Squanto,

To ask if he'd teach them to make barley beer,

And he could have, but he didn't want to.

They decided, instead, to have a great feast

To show thanks for the mercies of Heaven.

They sent an invite to every redskin and white,

Festivities commencing at seven.

It would be an outdoor, potluck affair

With sack races and piggyback rides.

If the guests would kindly bring entrees and snacks,

Their hosts would contribute the sides.

On the day of the fete, the Wampanoag arrived,

Chief Massasoit leading the way.

They brought venison, turkeys,

Lobsters, ducks, geese, and clams,

Each neatly arranged on a wickerwork tray.

At the colonists' table the selections were specious,

No pastries or baked goods, no dairies.

The best they came up with were bland little dishes

Of vegetables, cornpone, and sundry dried berries.

They played a few games, and sang a few hymns,

Traded recipes, stories, and jokes.

The Pilgrims were dour and stolidly grim,

The natives were more festive folks.

As they started to eat, Capt. Jones jumped to his feet

Crying "Thank God for His merciful bounty!"

The Pilgrims chimed in with a thunderous "Amen!"

That was echoed all over the county.

The Indians looked at each other and shrugged,

If they understood, they very well hid it.

Why thank sour gods for saving these clods,

When it clearly was Squanto who did it?

**Logged in to Ogden**

Poets aren't noted for raking in dough,

They may get some attention,

But it's mostly for show.

Take, for example, the bard Ogden Nash,

His writing earned him renown,

But he worked to earn cash.

From mail room to Broadway,

With other jobs in between,

But no such plebian endeavors

Could his verses demean.

His humor's urbane, erudite, and compelling,

And when a word wouldn't rhyme right,

He adjusted the spelling.

Of all of the poets the world has created,

I like quite a few, and there're a few that I love,

He is the one I have most emulated,

And if he could read my poems,

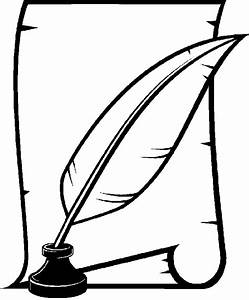
I like to think he'd approve.

As a general rule rhyming's easy for me,

But at times when I'm stymied or fogged in,

I don't take time to snivel, or settle for drivel,

I take heart and start channeling Ogden.

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A poet’s work is to name the unnamable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world, and stop it going to sleep.

Salman Rushdie

**The Frustrated Llama**

The Peruvian llama has a name

That almost everyone mispronounces.

"The double 'll', it sounds like 'y',"

He patiently announces.

"The single 'l', it sounds like 'l',"

Proceeds his dissertation,

"And a 'lama' is a holy man

Of Tibetan derivation.

But what I cannot understand," says he,

"Is why it's not left up to me

To solve a problem that's become the worst case

Of mispronunciation in the history of creation,

And spell it 'yama', like it sounds,

In the first place!"

**The Real Skinny on Snow White**

You've heard of Snow White and the story reported

Of the seven wee dudes with whom she consorted.

Well, here is the skinny on what really occurred,

Just another example of how stories get blurred.

The facts are quite shocking,

Some may be offended,

But read on, if you dare,

Discretion much recommended.

The dwarves toiled in a mine and got dusty and sweaty,

Then rushed home to Snow, willing, able, and ready.

They played sex games with prizes,

Who was best, who the worst,

And poked fun at whomever dropped or "popped" first.

Their sylvan life was idyllic, the fringe benefits great,

One romp after another,

A real *ménage à eight*.

When the vain evil queen probed her mirror, it said,

"Hon, your huntsman fibbed bigtime,

Fair Snow White isn't dead."

So, she dressed herself up as a hag and went callin'

With a web of deceit she was sure Snow would fall in.

The crone gave her an apple, her kind deeds to repay,

Snow took one juicy bite

And swooned dead away.

Now, here's one of the falsehoods I'd like to correct,

You don't need to be Einstein these dots to connect.

Snow didn't succumb to poisoned *pomme*, as they say,

She simply was pooped from "playing house" night and day.

The dwarves were sad but decided

A good thing was worth keeping,

It's not necrophilia

If the body's just sleeping.

Then Prince Charming found her, woke her up with a kiss,

And blah blah they lived in storybook bliss.

What's never been told, when Snow woke and was sitting,

She said, "No, not tonight, dears,

My headache is splitting!"

Then sotto voce, "Now, Prince, let me make you aware,

The significant fact is dwarves are dwarves 'everywhere'.

Pay no heed to the rumors, what they fail to instruct

Is, though the orchard’s been plowed,

The cherry’s yet to be plucked."

**A Handful of Haiku**

Could be hurricanes

Are Mother Nature blowing

Off a little steam

Could be an earthquake

Is the Earth telling us she

Has a tummy ache

Could be volcanoes

Are just Earth's adolescent

Complexion issues

Could be an eclipse

Is the universe scowling

In disapproval

**It Ain’t Necessarily So**

Pious people are prone to become agitated

When agnostics assess their beliefs overrated,

And the words that they're liable

To read in the Bible

By mere men were created, not divinely dictated.

**Poetic Ponderings Pertaining to Penury**

Upon no laurels have I rested,

My IQ just once was tested,

And I learned at age of five, I was no prodigy.

At Texas Tech I solved no riddles,

Split no atoms down their middles,

Never earned an MBA, much less a Ph.D.

I did, once, pose a query about Mr. Einstein's theory

Regarding time, and space, and quantum relativity.

I simply asked why study Al’s extended family,

And the prof expelled me from his class in perpetuity.

My career, though never stagnant,

Neither was a money magnet,

Now in retirement I've more Social than Security.

And my portfolio's in tatters

'cause concerning money matters

That investment mumbo jumbo's just a mystery.

What do the IRS and Charles Schwab expect of me?

To make a living with my pen is my big fantasy,

But it's more likely I will one day win the lottery,

Or make more money in flea markets selling pottery.

If, as they say, an artist suffers for his artistry,

Then as a writer I guess I can thrive in penury,

And never prostitute my art nor my integrity,

Though I would sell my soul to publish annually.

But if my effort never pays,

I'll be content I've spent my days

Trying to pen the perfect phrase,

And basking in the random praise

When a reader smiles and says, "Ah,

Now that is poetry!"

There’s no money in poetry, but then there’s no poetry in money, either.

Robert Graves

**Pardon**

**My**

**Poetry**

**Volume One**

****

**(My Muse Made Me Do It)**

**About the Author**

Jim Slaughter is a retired teacher and actor, originally from Texas. He immigrated to Missouri in 2003 and has been living in Springfield ever since. This is his second volume of collected poems. The pieces here also display a spectrum of styles and themes that are generously laced with his unique sense of humor, seriousness, nostalgia, reflection, exaggeration, fabrication, inspiration, and imagination. Though not intended to change the world, in any significant way, he does hope that, in some small way, his verses might help to make it a kinder, friendlier, happier place.