

Neil Richardson

Episodic flash sight

Poems

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For me . . . but I am only me
because of great friends, family
and the many loves of my life.

That said, this is dedicated to Kai.

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Preface

I am not much for celebrating birthdays, but upon turning 50, I decided to bring together some of the poems I have written over the past 30 years. I wrote some early poems in high school that now read like song lyrics (and not particularly good ones). Even those in this collection do not have much literary merit, but they do have sentimental value. These poems captured some moments and thoughts of who I was and how I was thinking at particular moments of my life. I added the bolded context to provide a bit more insight about the poem or my life at the time I was writing. Poems are hard to understand...and I may be taking liberties even calling these poems.

The style, particularly in the early poems, owes a lot to the Romantic poets and to William Blake. I would say that the only similarity my poems have to the great Walt Whitman is that they do not have much rhyme or meter to them. I was neither a phenom like Rimbaud or inspired to write the new Bible like old Walt. Simply, these doodles capture some sliver of my life.

I have written a thousand books in my mind and still write more. One day perhaps one will make it on paper. I sense that in my remaining time spent on this planet for this go around, I will be writing in a different way, and I wanted to put these relics to rest. They are a like a group of friends from my life—some better than others, some downright bad, others angelic, but all part of the truth of my life.

The only single theme that I can discern is that I love to love, observe odd moments, and reflect on a momentary feeling, past but impressionable. Spirituality, drinking, art,

sex, and egotism pervade. This is a complete vanity project.

I have included two email letters, one describing my views on who I am and the other on death. Of course, they go hand in hand and are inseparable. I walk with the knowledge of my mortality each step I take, and truth be told, this insight has been the fuel that has taken me around the world and deep into my internal Kosmos.

The title of the book represents how I see things... flickers of light that flash as bright as a strobe or as weak as a candle in the great dark night of existence and mystery.

Love always.

∞ The 1980s ∞

Wealth through a looking glass

I wrote this poem very much inspired by the love I have for my friends, especially the “Aztecs.” For better or worse, the Aztecs were my family, my religion, and my love for many years and long past our playing days. Telman, Terry, Franco, David, Patrick, Jimmy, Arturo, Paul, Gene, Houston, Sergio, Wilson, Sully, and many others* were the terrestrial gods of my life. For several years, I would recite this poem in revelry at each great event or excuse for one. Often there would be drunken cheers for me to recite and then an equal number to stop once I started.

*I am rich as any man
not with gold but with friends.
Friends can never be spent
and their affection is heaven sent.*

*I see from one day to the next
that I can escape into a text.
But escape it is, as only the strength
of a friend can fortify and be bent.*

*When my days grow short in life
my legacy will be that I cared for all.
In death I shall not forget the call
I lived and loved with the best of all.*

*Aztecs in spirit include countless others but certainly Marcos, Erik, Kari, Wally, Bill, Avner and Drew walk each day with the wildness, loyalty and sense of connection necessary to be in this elite group.

Time was

Many of my early poems show an influence of the great Romantic poets. I began reading Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats especially in the 11th grade after my English teacher told me I was dreamy and “the world was too much with me.” This poem was for an early love in Tampa, but my heart and hormones were constantly yearning for the “perfect” person, which either made it hard for me to find or put impossible pressure on my new “love interest.”

*Time was we were watching a movie
Then walking to love in a hurry
On that night I held you tight
And I knew without a doubt you were right.*

*Our first day the water was like ice
But in your body love was nice
In the woods I saw life and I knew then where I stood
In you everything would be good.*

*Time was we were running from trouble
You went through hell with only a laugh a giggle
I slept on every floor and you were there
Right beside me with your love stare.*

*In you, I felt perfection
Your body was warm and craved affection
In the light of day or dark of night
You never left me and stayed without hesitation.*

*Time was we were dreaming of the future
Looking ahead trying to forget the past
Well the future is here let's make our dream
You and me together, what a team.*

*We are now on the threshold of happiness
Let's remember who we are, what is right
Challenge thought it may be let virtue be for what we strive
The future is up to us let's take the vow
to never give up as long as we're alive.*

Conscious love

From my earliest experiments in love and relationships, I was totally convinced that physical connection was proof of something beyond our solitary existence. As a young man, I found it hard to love realistically and for better and for worse put too many people on impossible pedestals. I loved to be in love at every level.

*I love you daily in my mind
It is you that keeps the day kind
I see your beauty everywhere I gaze
It shines as surely as the sun off the bay
In the night you conquer my thought
Even before sweet slumber is sought
As I sleep dreaming of your tight embrace
Our souls unite in heaven's space
When I awake hardened from our love
It is you that did fit me like a glove
As I lay awake in bed and close my eyes
In my sight the darkness is overcome by light.*

Outside the breeze

When I was not actually in love, I was often stricken with grief that I was without my “eternal mate,” often wondering to myself: How could a great guy like me not have the most awesome person in the world in my life? I would have to say that I must have felt a fair amount of insecurity. I did not realize at the time that this was a pendulum swing that will remain forever and that the same swing exists in even the most committed relationship. On my death bed, we will see if I learned my lesson complete.

*Outside the breeze is lazily blowing in the darkened
night and the trees sing choruses
my thoughts drift easily from memory to dream
and back again to enshroud me in my mistaken loneliness
I ache for the stolen happiness I cry in my emptiness
am I not unlike a tapestry
with a million unlike pieces stitched barely together whole?*

*Somewhere in the night my illusive quest
is waiting heart beating
destiny is dancing in the fathomless outreaches
while I wait weeping
come to my love dearest
transfigure my love precept
to the reality of the land of the living
and suture my soul.*

Beside the light

From my first girlfriend, Angela, to the sunny fantasy of the Beach Boys songs that were the soundtrack of much of my youth, in my mind's eye, I always pictured blonds as my ideal mate. In reality, I dated people with every color of hair and over the years discovered it was not hair color that most attracted me but the sense of confidence, awe, and danger that blonds (with any color of hair) could represent. I wrote many of these early poems in Tampa or St. Petersburg.

*Beside the light, your hair was golden and your smile bright
With you no matter how dark I see the light
Let's shoot for the stars and make the world right.*

*On our ride to happiness let's pull all people to paradise
Beside the light I feel your love on a ride to heaven like a dove
It's funny how people look from a bird in flight
 looking down from above.
I thank the good lord for showing me to you
I found love you made it feel different and new
Beside the light I thought of all things
 *and all things I thought are you.**

Christmas at home

This is probably my most conventional poem; it is about as Norman Rockwell as I get. When I moved away to Florida, I looked forward to coming home for the winter break and experiencing the sights, people, and sounds I was used to. Holidays did not seem the same in Florida. I missed my family, and I missed the Aztecs and other friends. I wrote this after a dinner at Scotti's house with his family. My Mom and Dad always created a magical Christmas for Drew and me. As kids we would often drown in wrapping paper, and Dad would make a breakfast of fried eggs and bacon mashed up into a bowl.

*Christmas at home, there is nothing else that
compares, how nice it is to share.*

*Not only gifts and good tidings and blessings
to boot but the greatest gift.*

*Of what I speak is obvious (or should be...)
memories of course, Christmas is the time
of remembering times gone past and creating
resolutions for the future not yet come.*

*Christmas brings me back to my parents and brother
and loved ones for warm times and cheer.*

*Nothing else compares to the exchanging of gifts
my soul cries out in joy.*

Splendor in the park

Near the USF campus, there was a fantastic park that was part swamp with elevated wooden trails and surrounding grassy picnic areas. I would often rent a canoe and glide lazily through the streams reading poetry out loud. This poem was inspired by those days and includes my love of nudity and someone to share the Kosmic embrace with. I would usually only go to the first day of class, midterms, and finals while at USF. I would depend on notes from friends to prepare for tests. I had a lot of time to explore the world and myself.

*It is exquisite and true nothing is more wonderful
Than two lying together in the splendor of the park
The green grass so downy and lush and so magically
Perfect as to put off the walk.*

*The old wise oaks seem to whisper with a soft inviting shiver
Rest beside my trunk and I'll begin the sweet damp summer
slumber
Leave the lustful fire to be spread by the caressing enticing breeze
And upon awakening I will fulfill your desire with ease.*

*Beside the tree, close to the river my kiss
I did quietly lean over and give her
From kiss to caress it seemed to be happening too fast
I dreamed for this moment to last and last.*

*Though our union of body...and spirit was over
And our bodies left naked and breathless
We were at once soothed and relaxed enough to nap
and also to dream for more splendor in the park.*

I hear the wind call your name

This is another poem in which I was in shock that I was alone and my “soul mate” had not revealed herself to me. Looking back, I can see that no matter how amazing and happy my days were, I wanted to share the greatness of my life with someone. I ended up driving around the country for 9 months after I left Tampa to be by myself and examine my attachment to love, women, and sex.

*I hear the wind call your name
Its sweet resonance caresses my body like a feather
When I close my eyes
Your warmth secures me
And an angry world is brought to its knees.*

*Neptune's roar drowns the air
yet still I hear
I wonder where or who or when (should I even dare?)
enlightened in love I cry in solitude bearing my cross
waiting for whom I would care and who would love me.*

*Somewhere you are rather than dream
I see your hair colored in summer
your face residing in the clouds
accompanied by love blown with passion.*

*As the sun withdraws in the West
the tide retreats to the depths
I feel the collective reservoir of humanity
wash over my soul (with all their desires, hunger and need)
and
I hear the wind call your name.*

Days of old

I wrote this poem while living in an old trailer in the backyard of a house in old Tampa. There was a lot of moss dripping from the trees, and there were orange and grapefruit trees that more than once provided my breakfast if not the mixer for a drink at night. The woman who owned the house would often walk in her house naked at night with the lights on, and her male visitors seemed to like her large breasts. I had no TV so sometimes the widow would be my entertainment. I was anxious to see what my life would be like then in my last year at college but also did not want college to end.

*Days of old, gone...sometimes cold sometimes blue
at times there were times that time did not accept.
Seemed it moved faster or slower, foggy or clear
whatever it did not matter, what was it if not perfect?*

*Days of old, gone...sometimes cold sometimes blue
what worth the present if the past is forgot?
The memory is what makes now bold and new
the jubilation of victory, would not be if not for some defeat some
time ago.*

*Days of old, gone...sometimes cold sometimes blue
thank the mind for rendering the ability to find
the hope in the sorrow and the possibilities in tomorrow
The shallowness of the past brings forth the depth of the future.*

Night to next

I wrote this during a summer back in Arlington. Nearly all our night activities involved loading up into someone's car and going to Georgetown or 14th Street where all the strip clubs were. This poem, though, was inspired by going to the 930 Club (when it was downtown on F Street) and seeing a punk band, if I recall. Besides the Aztecs, I had a separate group of friends who were punks or too punk to be actually punk.

*Night to next I wallow on the edge
falling up to the down side of pity
I stroke with a soul clothed in leather
searching for emotion and reality hidden
among the debris of Lafayette's city.*

*Bottled future sold as broken glass
my stature is tinted by material misgivings
I seek to live in the wreckage of my lives
and run from the conformity that threatens me with apathy.*

*I have visited the seething streets of man's desire
and have come back rejected, empty and unfulfilled
with wonderment though little surprise I have seen my face
in the brothels and shooting galleries of the loveless.*

*I am beginning to see the light as the neon fucks the night
the waves of despair are beginning to disappear
I watch in the mirror I see myself climb the stairs to the abyss.
I wince as my mind is severed from my body
I look upon the open door of eternity.*

I sit and ponder

I began writing this while drinking whiskey in my trailer in Tampa. This was my first poem that hinted at my awareness of the Kosmos and my sensitivities toward global awareness and action. There is some Springsteen and Bono in this poem as well as Dylan Thomas, Moby Dick, and me.

*I sit and ponder my soul through an empty glass
and fill it yet again with spirit
dangerously awakened I flirt with comprehension
though my thirst soon drives it away.*

*Civilizations' insatiable desire to dominate
harpoons my reality like Ahab on a peg
I bleed into the world I do not know
half empty I sit half full
raging against my preconceptions.*

*I am torn from my faith
the concrete materialism of a decaying planet
sobriety threatens with the coming of the light
easily I won't go down without a fight.*

*Martin Luther built the road
I am but one traveler
journeying toward epistemological satisfaction
amid the tolls burgeoning tariff.*

*It has been said that we have tamed nature's tumultuous mood
changes with ingenuity*

look to the land, sea and the sky

you will see we have only overcome ourselves.

Regarding myself...I have been touched by the magnificent

*looking out into the great expanse I know I will not be saved
from the storms*

*only that I will weather well the vagaries of the
Kosmos.*

In my threatening poverty I advance to the crossroads

my glass increasingly harder to fill

I look to the West and hear questions in answers

I ask how much and who to compensate?

I sit and stare endlessly into the light

This is another poem I recall writing while sipping a drink and pondering my future. At this point I was working with Franco as a laborer installing tile—\$50 cash a day for 8 to 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, no more, no less. On Saturdays, if we got a lot of work done, Franco and I would quit at 3 pm and make the 4 pm Crystal City match. It was hard work and I was paid the same as the illegals working for the company. I enjoyed the physical part and spent a lot of the day dreaming up ideas about places to go and how my soul related to my spirit. I also usually had a poetry book with me and would read to Franco while he sat on his knees placing the tile and stone.

*I sit and stare endlessly into the light
I burn long into the night
my drink has turned into an unlimited fountain
of golden flowing crippler
I wonder what living death will be brought tonight.*

*I have worked all day and sweated my pride
I deserve to drink and even to... drive
if death awaits around the next turn
then let me buried in the shadow and shade.*

*Autumn's cool hormones
blow into my waiting consciousness
I remember the morning star
and the comrades and lovers who have died to live again
in memory eternity exists but you have to believe.*

*The beginning begins as end passes
spring blooms in desolation of winter
I remember those joyful adventures
in the quiet and the dark and the call
my habit cruelly demands
I burn with fury in the lizard tinged flame.*

*There is no joy where joy can be bought
an idea embraced creates answers to the perfect universe (that does
not exist)
travelling down the accidental path.*

*Kosmic flawlessness only exists in the swirling blackness of
conditioned thought
it is the great ones who conquer their villains
and move beyond mere convictions
and swallow their mortality to the very last drop.*

Open the book

I wrote this after an all-night party in which I had awakened in an inflatable life boat I inflated in the living room of Bob's house off campus. I was living very fast and trying to absorb everything around me.... I was a super sponge. Each day was filled with soccer, reading for at least 2 hours of non-school related philosophy, classes/homework, and visits to the park or USF pools to keep my tan strong and dark. Each night, there were parties and most likely sex or the pursuit of sex. There was a strong sense that at one level things were incongruent and that there were forces and a reality that I could neither control nor fully understand. Fortunately, I have never been a control freak.

Open the book of life and look inward

observe state of mind

control is impossible even as wishes rule.

What is the happiness that eludes? (is it just fantasy?)

is the love we think we need out there somewhere

or are we fulfilling a lonely destiny but forcing something not there?

Horizontally things look crooked to me...indeed

rapture impending is no longer a question having been transformed into a smile.

I live for and by the moment

as my mobile home can testify.

Have I acceptance or constraint?

I do still reach for what cannot be imagined...

*through a door beyond mind and matter.
I wait for a promise to deliver the dimensional answer
in the sublime wreckage of my mind's eye.*

*Chapter by chapter I conquer worlds known and not
still I lay humbled
the more I learn the more ignorance
I become aware of (not least in myself).*

*Living 28 hours a day is speeding me
towards nothing but expiration
does it matter, will I or anyone remember when I am gone
the glory, parties, embraces, places and faces
no matter how pretty or dressed in lace?*

*What is the demon that plagues me and urges insatiable appetites?
Perhaps I am an idiot in search for a fool?
In the dark and the next goal just that
there is no end nor last breath or thought
only a point where my dreams are realized or not.*

Hope

This came out of a vision I had after I had split up with Erica. There is also some reflection or sense of residual grief on my previous girlfriend whom I moved to Tampa with—Chris. I was feeling a great sense of pain in breaking up with Erica, but I also knew that it would pass and I would experience the excitement and despair of the search for the “perfect one.” It took me a long time to fundamentally change the way I thought about women and relationships. I was immature and expected too much, and I was sometimes quite controlling in relationships and unable to communicate my feelings well. I have never blamed anyone for breaking up with me. I was not easy.

*He climbed upwards descending into the black hole
anticipating the petroleum colored phantom
From the unseen edge a carboniferous odor trickled
unmercifully forward until it was soaked with the unknown
Bete Noir indeed yet still the hell inspired question
cycloned inside metamorphosed into a creditor creature
Climbing nowhere he remembered the mistress of hope
whose laborious efforts had once transformed.
She was gone now long ago replaced by a questioning phantom
who weakened the man in murky confusion.
As the promise soaked phantasm moved closer for its two
dimensional embrace he felt a feeling thought extinct
At once there was a leak and light began pouring into
the unending crater and he was bathed in faith and belief
Like a feather in a tornado's path the princess of unending
confusion pulled away soaked from her metaphysical clasp
leaving the door of life cracked open to the milky way*

*And conviction carried the reborn man from memory slavery
to his soul experiencing comrade called...hope.*

The end of the rainbow

I'm not exactly sure of the incident that spurred the creation of this poem. A kind of clarity happened to me after seeing Bruce Springsteen in Tallahassee with a group of about a dozen friends who insisted I go. I wrote this poem a month or two after that show. I was reluctant to see Bruce because he had become a hugely popular rock star and "Born in the USA" was dominating the airwaves with eight songs in near constant rotation. The punk ethos in me rejected by instinct anything the masses enjoyed. Springsteen connected a lot of dots for me regarding leading a purposeful and meaningful life. His talk about the possibilities of an American invasion of Nicaragua and the work that a local food bank was doing lit me up and combined with my deepening interest in Buddhist philosophy and the late 19th century Progressive movement. After that concert, I felt like I needed to apply my life to making the world a better place tangibly.

The end of the rainbow is it near?

Foundations based on truth and liberty

Reaching upwards without fear.

Colors bright and passionate diverse and dear

Symbol of beauty that brings democracy near.

180 degrees ghostlike from afar, yearned

By young and old, will lead to happiness

Or at least so they are told.

Why is it that no one believes or lends a hand

Or is willing to make a stand.

Everyone wants the gift of gold at the end of the rainbow

*but what bittersweet pleasure it may bring without a friend to share
lead and lean.*

*Fables of long ago declare the meaning
of working towards the end.
Though never promised to exist with ease
I have not forgotten the burden
of which I at least must bear.*

I am going home

Toward the end of my years at USF and in Tampa, I began to see home with several contradictions and mixed feelings. I loved my friends and family but I was also really noticing the inequality between the rich and poor. Whether it was north Arlington or Georgetown on one end of the spectrum or Anacostia, where my Dad worked, East Tampa, or even South Arlington, I caught glimpses of poverty. I had a hard time reconciling the promise and reality of America and began to see the system as not as fair as it should be. I began to feel deep emotions about political leaders and others who were not egalitarian.

*I am going home to the people I love
to the streets that were at once my playground
and my keeper and without a doubt
my most effective teacher.*

*I am going home to the houses and the hills
to the menacing alleyways that provided
that first thrill and showed me more than once that
I could hate.*

*I am going home, to the manicured lawns
that house the lonely and the afraid
the people who package the "American dream."*

I am going home with a message and a tear.

Cold and lonely night

Reading Whitman especially and Buddhist texts helped me to think about death—and its relationship with life. I wrote this shortly after moving back to Arlington from Tampa. Overall, as a young healthy man, I felt somewhat invincible and unafraid of dying while at the same time ambivalent.... It was simply a different state of being (or not being). My life would play itself out in some kind of way, and I felt that if I stayed true to my code of authenticity I would have few regrets.

Cold and lonely night, why are you here?

Where is your purpose and from whence did you appear?

Do you bring death and despair

or just the light of the moon and stars as seen from afar?

Images murky and clear, changing with the wind

bringing me closer to realizing my fear

what have I to say or do, If I be human

then human I be and all mortals do surely all die.

Where have I gone where I have been

do I go with nary a chance or I one to be suspect?

If not go...then perhaps come

It seems I have never finished until I at least was done.

What more could I expect but to outlast the cold?

Cold and lonely night maybe just that.

But I

There is not much to say about this poem except that it relates to the pathos of love lost. I was a loyal partner and felt very betrayed when a relationship didn't work out or go as I wanted. I was always quite surprised that people could actually live their lives without me after being part of my life. My ego at some level was huge and masked another level of insecurity that I was not much aware of.

But I...I knew her so well

I knew when she had lied or cried and where and why

always I was there for her anger or sorrow

yet still she could not tell.

I wanted to help to be her friend and lover

Like id to ego or stem to flower

My pact for eternity was bound in heaven

Could not be cracked broken, cracked or given.

My vision of happiness was destroyed by faithlessness

My love apparently was too heavy to be held steady

I pushed too hard for a quest to enhance intelligence

I was the mystic dagger that made my love vision stagger.

I knew her so well, I was the granite hand ready to lift

When she fell, naïve and bold I forged ahead

Into the fiery scolding pits of a black hell

Trust was my beacon and my only strength.

*What finally inspired that long ago storm I can only speculate
I alone am to blame and should have forecast
my descent into the abyss yet I could not tell
But I...I thought I knew her so well.*

Do you remember?

This poem was written with Erica in mind. We had a great time together. She enjoyed the frenetic pace of our lives with all the parties and hedonism as well as the deeper, more reflective parts of me. Erica had moved around a lot in her youth, and she really enjoyed being part of the great circles of friends I was part of. Many weekends would feature Erica in bikini contests, and we lived at least a semester just off her winnings. One weekend we went down to Key West with Bob, Joel, David, Bill, and some other guys, including one obnoxious Bostonian, whose family was allowing use of their vacation house. None of us had any money; so on the way back after eating little for 4 days, we entered Erica in two bikini contests. She won one and came in second in the other. We split the \$1,000 in winnings and gave our friends money for food.

Do you remember those sunny restful days in the park

Wearing only sunlight and sweat...

after the labors of love?

Do you remember the mirrored water and colored sky

and the lights of the city

as we crossed the slithering two lane causeway

and the meteoric pace of our Datsun 210 through space?

Do you remember the Atlantic chill of Daytona

Double victory in Lauderdale and the tranquil breeze of Key West?

Our pace in our created labyrinth was fast

as we dreamed of the River Seine

Do you remember the image of our credible destiny

and our desire to assimilate all of life into our one?

How did we destroy in the mania of a moment

all the accumulated love and life that was given above?

Is it not a wonder?

This is one of my favorite poems. It captures a really special memory I have of Florida in general and the USF campus in particular. Spanish moss grows on a lot of the trees, and for some reason I always tripped into an ethereal state of being whenever I stared at the trees...being strangled by the live moss.

Is it not a wonder?

Tangled vines and drooping gripping moss

You treat your tree as if it were a suckling defenseless babe

And what of your suffocating embrace

Is it not just a cannibalistic kiss dressed in lace?

From gnarled rooted base to green enshrined peak

You cover your giver of life as intimately as a wife.

Year by year you grow stronger and your vine becomes longer

In your finest brilliance you will have killed yourself and your mother

Is it not a wonder?

Dreamers it seems

I was active in the anti-apartheid movement at USF as well as supporting the creation of a national holiday for Martin Luther King. This poem reflects my continuing and deepening interest in human and global affairs. I had no friends who were consciously racist, but racism was all around wherever you went. There was tension between whites and blacks growing up in Arlington, and it was strong in Florida. The sickness of racism prevented whites from seeing their own hate and blacks from allowing the sickness to heal and go away. Our media loved a good story, and somebody of another color doing something that appeared race related was good fodder. We still suffer from the disease. This poem is for Dr. King.

*The mayhem of evil continues as surely as
night follows the day.*

*There was a man who was heard once to say
"I have a dream"
And was just as surely shot away.*

Dreamers, it seems, never cease but leave us too soon.

*Humanity calls sometimes with a murmur and sometimes with a shout
Those who answer, answer with a scream!
Destiny divine as Gabriel, deadly as Lucifer
Some will heed
while others stamped forward like a steed.*

*Armed with the truth, strengthened by faith
Dreamers surge forward awaiting fate.*

*Never lie down to the forces of defeat
From the ashes of despair rise, man, rise!*

*If the standard bearer should fall
question not, life is nothing but to lose
I go but with the grace of the god
If I am gone, let someone else bear the call and carry the fight
to the very gates of hell.
Dreamers, it seems, never cease but to leave us too soon.*

Upon return of sun

I wrote this poem while volunteering with the Sandinistas in Managua. I was much in thought regarding colonialism and its lasting terrible influence. In 1987, Erin and I took a fantastic journey from DC to the border of Panama. Along the way we visited Tampa/St. Petersburg, went to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and crossed the Rio Grande to bus, train, and walk to Costa Rica. We abandoned the Datsun 210 in Ozona, Texas, and hitchhiked to the Mexican border. We were on the road for nearly 6 months. Wars raged in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and each bordering country was militarized. It was a fantastic adventure and we rarely spent more than \$5 a night for a hotel or more than \$1 for a beer or meal. In San Jose our money was stolen from our hotel room and we were left penniless. We had met a Costa Rican congressman who raised some money for our return home, and many complete strangers and backpackers gave us what little they had. After 2 weeks bussing back to Ozona, we were put in jail for loitering and had to wait it out until Wally and one of Erin's friends wired money for the repair of the 210. It was perhaps my greatest adventure.

What will the rising star find upon return?

Mayhem, horror, despair

Order, happiness, hope

Universal energy...for or against?

...You?

Dance with shadow

Embrace light and night

Yesterday's gods as good today?

God: Apathetic or ambivalent

...You?

*Aztec Man God blood on hands, it is yours
Generalissimo what gave you liberty to murder and kill
Did Trinity God match the flame
And the kiss of Montezuma... Senor Cortez, tongue or not
With whom you dance the historical intimate?
... You?*

*America?
We?*

*Fuel wonder sprawl
Heaven on earth.*

ℳ The 1990s ℹ

The humid breath of a continent

After graduating from Georgetown and earning my master's degree, I worked with the League of Women Voters in Chicago on a statewide election monitoring project. Anna and I were living in the windy city while she attended the Art Institute. Shortly after we married in 1996, I was offered a 1-year contract with the National Democratic Institute to organize a nationwide election monitoring effort in Ghana. Due to the threat of violence with the election, I was unable to bring Anna until after the election. I stayed in a beautiful hotel in Accra right on the ocean for a couple of weeks while my house was being readied for me. Many evenings, I would come home from work at 9 pm or later and just sit on the beach looking at the crashing waves and bright moon. I was satisfied.

*The humid breath of a continent
caught
in my nostrils
washed my skin
with salt
I swam in the noisy undulation.*

*It must be true
That humanity emerged from the ocean
I with white skin
visited upon the mother continent
descending from the air
yet felt
I at ease
Wash over me distant mother
Come home...I at last.*

*Removed from the hearth
never long for the sand
colored moon
going away is mental travel
stars
like memory
are as close as far*

I am wet.

Chaos

A big learning curve was involved in the National Democratic Institute project in Ghana. I was not a confident public speaker; I did not have any project management training; I could barely understand the process that our PVT (parallel vote tabulation) used with a computer; I had never managed adults before; I did not know the country well; and I was working with a pack of experienced female colleagues who knew I did not know these things and seemed to dislike me for being inexperienced, humble/vulnerable, hopeful...and for being a man with opportunities they likely did not have. I ended up training nearly 20,000 election observers, giving talks across the country, and meeting and forming relationships with tribal and governmental leaders across Ghana—and the election is still the best in African history. This poem reflects my early insecurity.

Chaos drives

minds wild

confusion

insecurity

risk of failure

I am blind in the storm...can I reach the eye?

The mind's eye does it see clearly (can it?)

is it the emotional eye

the intellectual eye

or is it just

I

who is blind?

The dense thick blackness

*draws me ever...ever deeper in
I am afraid.*

*I fear my own limitations
do not want to admit
that I have
much less recognize
my weakness.*

Am I different?

*The dark depths of fear
blind me from the light of my abilities (if they exist?!?!)
I wonder what I have to offer?*

*Is perception the clear bell ringing
from the church
surrounded palms
behind
I who question?
ring...ring...ring!!!
how do I know what I see
if not what I feel?*

Episodic flash sight

A lot of my memory images flicker in my mind's eye. I call this episodic flash sight. This is a poem depicting the Abadi Beach Hotel bar scene in Accra. It was always hot (even with the aircon on); the fans were always on but did little other than circulate the smoke and the drinks poorly made but strong. Anyone doing business, legal or otherwise, in Accra, Ghana, or West Africa went through its doors. Everything was for sale—from people, to rare minerals, to governments. It was all about a price and all about the power of the middleman. Mary Beth had more control over rare resources than most of the men she was servicing.

*Episodic flash sight
snapshot thought
timeless thieves
selling diversions between sips
“Play it again, Sam” I think to myself
as Akwasa pounds the ivory in an ebony blur.*

*How strange it is to hear Chicago in Accra (or perhaps not!)
old men laugh with cancerous sincerity
their whispers and
dead man cackles
push the lung smoke ever higher
the swirling fans
continue to move their light
faster in the
damp air
the waves crash and roar
with the precision of a socialist machine*

*predictable
slow
and unburied.*

*Mary Beth works the bar with the endurance of a crab
digging its hole
she twinkles and lights up her cigarette
like the faces of the
dead men
when she saunters
near
hard nipples
with an invitation
to be what they were.*

*They...like Mary Beth are only
in love with numbers
they quantify
until their hole is dug.*

Cartesian snow drifts

This is an odd minimalist little poem. I wrote this in my house in Accra after a long day at work. My house came with a cook, maid, landscape crew, and two guards. It was beautiful...when I was home. The neighborhood was very upscale and I would organize soccer games in the street with all the kids. One afternoon, I was even able to train with the youth team of the Heart of Oaks professional soccer club, the best in the country. My fitness was bad and the ground was bumpy, dusty, and rocky, but I enjoyed myself. I sat under a tree afterwards looking at the sunset with a couple of the players and coaches drinking coconut juice. The title of the poem is a play on the definition of Cartesian and the fact that I could exist as neither this or that or black or white and that maybe we are usually in a gray zone. In that moment (and now), I am responsible for the plight I am in, and it scared me.

I AM

Or perhaps

Rather

I am...maybe

Sky frost

Soot black

Washington boulevard with yesterday's miracle

Now ugly

It is funny

I think of snow

sitting with burn on my nose and prickly heat on my ass!

Perhaps the fire grows too hot

too bright

*the cold
more comfortable?*

*Fear has caused me to be less than what I could become
blind to my surroundings
fear revisits
the cemetery
vision no deeper than my hole
I dig myself.*

I miss your breath

I wrote this while I was in Ghana. I missed Anna a great deal, particularly as the learning curve was steep and the work intense. I was isolated from most of my colleagues, as they were career NDI workers and working with heavy responsibilities themselves. My movement was somewhat restricted in Accra, as I had to have a driver wherever I wanted to go and there wasn't that much to do besides the two hotels and the mostly dirt and broken asphalt of the restaurant district that comprised a couple of Chinese and Indian food restaurants and an imitation McDonalds. The poem speaks for the intense longing one can have for their partner.

*I miss your breath
you breathe life into my lungs*

*I am blind without your eyes
to see
what kind of man
I am.*

*I yearn for your body
scent
intimacy is impossible without your sex.*

My heart is still without your pulse.

*I am abstract and thoughtless without your brain
what ideas
I would have
were I to be in conversation with you right now!*

*I live yet
because our souls
swim as one
as in the beginning
and beyond the end.*

Woodstock99

Just prior to the new millennium, a new Woodstock happened in upstate New York. It was an awful event with fights and chaos. It made me think about myself as part of another generation, and for the first time I did not feel like a “youth”: the kids who went to this Woodstock were into Bush, Grunge, and other hardcore sounds. I don’t think most of the “kids” really understood anything about the original Woodstock. I felt more connected in most ways with the 60s generation than this emerging generation in the late 90s/00s. I began to worry about the near future.

*In the glowing embers of idealism lost
a person went forth
into stillness
beat*

*Whole cities, institutions, philosophies, ideas, science, religion,
creatures organic
dead
a paradise not lost
but forsaken*

*future fucked
civilization precursor
abandoned, untended empty glory
a generation
sparked with save
dramatic malaise
single person*

*stepping gently over the crushed and around the ashes
moving forward alone*

staring into the burnt future

tomorrow

soured and sold out

*soul sacrificed, spirit jettisoned, emaciated, whipped, tortured,
stomped, beaten, sodomized, raped, pissed on, lied to
democracy abandoned*

*a single white strip of paper dances limply in the breeze on new
dead tree*

vast pasture large with promise latitude mind change

now

ash covered, shit stained and trash strewn

landscape of nowhere

a distant whisper

*beyond the stomping, screaming, yelling, hatemongering, thoughtlessness
melody of despair*

there is

the sound of silence

will a person be left to hear it?

will you hear it?

Volcano

Well, this one is mostly about sex. I wrote it thinking about a series of past experiences. Not much more to say except that in my mind's eye, a great kaleidoscope of images and memories emerge, decorated and blessed by some amazing people.

Heat of fire

lying dormant, centuries, eons or just maybe seemingly

tremblers sometimes...maybe

the risk, sudden rush, danger

pull back...later?

no lava will flow now...lava to come?

when is better question

how do you feel

ready for quake ride

Lying at base

looking at awesome tit

feeling heat

jungle stream

earth sweat descent

tumultuousness

humidity

fools only no feel

Volcano!

to come, come, come

*From deep
what is there must release...sooner maybe later...what difference?
surface
brace for heat
the blast
oh the light...soul shine
feel warmth and quake
jungle swayback
devastation or divination?
the birth of new
fuck me!*

*Swimming into flow
lava left lava right
floating in boundless searing sea*

*Sometimes islands be formed
no struggle
penetration soft just ooze up
like parade of sweet emotion
into or on
flow go.*

Plasmatic motion shooting

This is another poem about sex and spirituality. In my mind, sex is directly related to spirituality. Literally, when it is at its best, there is a merging of body and spirit, mind and soul. This poem is a playful one using some exaggerated imagery from Whitman and perhaps a dash of Allen Ginsberg. There is also comment about the horror that organized religion has unloaded on sex as being dirty, bad, etc. It makes me cry to think about the centuries of guilt and suffering that people endured doing what is natural and following their divine inner nature to merge and love.

Plasmatic motion shooting

stuff of creation

cosmic energy propelling birdlike beyond time

like spirit

speckling the womb with the code of forever

coating existence with delight and eternal eros

the milk of humanity nations

ideas, projection

always yearning...more

Go! Go! Go!

I see now

Adam and Eve

were birthparents of

insecurity, self-loathing, mania, psychosis, neurosis—the unnatural

hate of the true god

we climb mountains

part seas

*cross deserts
travel the full length of rivers
spend a fortune
looking...always looking.*

*It is harder to see God than our own heart (what difference?)
when we embark on the path to find and seek
we to return
we cry out, give me happiness eternal life let me know my father
ha! You would likely not know your salvation if he swallowed you
in Gaia's womb
seeking him...in the other...a fool's charade!*

*I am God
you a God
we a Goddess
societies, spaceships, spoons
all
made from the orgasm
juice of creation's mixture
I the Alpha...and the Omega
we
lovers first and last...together always
swimming in the warm rapid streams of possibilities
salt and sweet
everyone all
all everyone.*

*From my hips
Wand of holy creation
Good god's urge
Lay my magic in future's treasure box
allow the spark to light eternity
adhesiveness
moisture of two or many
revolve, evolve, entropy, empathy
our orgasm
new world shining brightly
volcanic necessity
I have become one with all you who read this and accept!*

*Sing the body individual
suck the communal group
join always...more, more, more!
chorus stronger, louder, higher, deeper
come together
Unite! Unite!
democracy is an orgy (and as messy!)
tongue, swallow, accept, absorb
soak venus
wash penis
bridge your distance to destiny
forever linking...becoming
village, town, city, state, nation...world
arrive in heaven that you presently exist.*

Sometimes in silence

Meditation can be a frightening experience. I wrote this in Chicago, and for someone without a regular job or family I was impossibly scheduled. Free lectures, soccer, meditation workshops, voluminous reading, bar hopping, city exploration, and myriad other entertainment and enlightenment activities with Anna filled my day and life. When I bring my swirling and diverse thoughts to a standstill, I am exposed on many levels. For a moment all the conditioning and interpretation leaves me literally naked and vulnerable. I often protect myself by what I “know” and use books and experiences as shields and sometimes even as spears when I am afraid or on the defensive. To live truly free requires the peeling away of many layers of thought, memory, and experience.

Sometimes in silence

there is absolute terror

of being still

infinite.

Bringing motion

thinking, planning, doing, scheming, worrying, hoping

to a...

stop.

I identify with doing

with action...with my accomplishment

what am I when I

stop?

*What is there?
who am I?
who is even there
knock, knock, knock...is there anyone fucking there at all?*

*What about the world that is me
that too often equates motion with excellence
though a mountain be moving it is fantastic in its stillness
a tree, rooted moving yet
slowly
how fast the sky?*

*Flying corridors of memory
I skim a trillion diverse experiences
at once singing in the Amazon, feeling hunger in Managua
blisters in Kasbah, flash feelings of adulation powerful success—then gone
teasing, pain...
and failure returns on old streets equal to an ocean in me
the motion it all goes, goes, goes, goes, goes...*

*Sometimes in silence
Being still in terror
Evaporates like it never existed
Nothing, everything, nothing, everything, nothing...*

*I am
I breathe and terror
returns.*

It is the age of ghosts

I wonder sometimes if projections from the past, including our conditioning, limit us to what is actually possible. Maybe our memory is full of ghosts that actually do create terror and chaos in our lives; maybe they also live in fantasy and provide perfect love and understanding. Wherever I wander, whether here in DC and Arlington or somewhere across the globe, I sometimes see what appears to be ghosts or alternate realities just beyond the fringe of my direct sight. In the corner of my eye I see images that appear to be of the past disappearing. People, livestock, buildings, and trees drop out of sight like rows of dominos as I turn my eye.

It is the age for ghosts

hosts that lurk, dance, skip, hop, love

just at the edges

beyond direct scope

I see them increasingly but most of all they see me.

Forever in repose

singing in operatic beauty

clear

I hear love, remorse, horror, confusion, and melancholy

and....love again.

I hear and am with you ghost...ever more do I see hindsight's

perfect reality through

your lens.

It is the past

flashing beyond time and space

more close than far...I see

I too can not...forget

nor can you

our ghosts control what we think is possible.

I surrender

I wrote this in Chicago while sitting at the Robey house in Hyde Park. I was working in the Seminary Coop Bookstore at the University of Chicago. After spending hours in the stacks restocking and encountering innumerable books and ideas, I would often sit and simply stare with no premeditated thoughts. It was as if after seeing the thousands or millions of sentences and words, hopes and aspirations, practices and deeds, I was stupefied. I wondered what all the sound and fury, effort, despair that is writing, creating...and living had wrought. In this moment only the silence made any sense.

I surrender

*I surrender to the white light
hidden inside
my tar intestines.*

*Greed swims in the canal
of my bowels
mixing with desire.*

*The moon, sun and stars
have been less accused of duplicity
than the motive of humanity
or me.*

*I surrender to the impulse to be free
I will leave my expectations with the trash at the stoop
I will curb my needs
and scoop my accomplishments.*

*Just be
Just allow
Let.*

*The most honeyed horizon can fit in my pocket
If keep my sack of trick and treats
in cortex pants
I will wear underwear of wood
and stain myself with thoughts
and dreams....of letting.*

*To let or not to let is the better question
I withdraw from the race
to be at the finish line.*

Kinesis

Kinesis is an interesting concept. It is the response of an organism to engaging with something beyond itself. I wrote this and recited it before meditating for many years, and I had it taped to my wall in my apartment on Harvard Street NW and then in Ingleside. It is a powerful affirmation, but I suspect that part of the inspiration from this was the intense professional growth and struggle I was having at The Harwood Institute. Rich took me under his wing, and he told me it would be rough and push me beyond all my limits. He was right...and I did become the professional I aspired to be through the suffering. Not working at a professional job until I was 33 left me with numerous gaps in my job experience. I left THI a better professional, but I also saw too many contradictions between the mission and the reality of the Harwood philosophy.

Be Love

Be courageous

Be Love

Be a leader

Inquire from others

Be Love

Hold others accountable

Be Love

Be mindful

Be Love

Actively listen

Be Love.

Martin and Lawrence

Shortly before Anna and I left Chicago, there was a terrible beating in our neighborhood of Bridgeport on the Southside. A large group of white men beat two black teenagers at a public park near the White Sox stadium across from our house. When I moved to Chicago, I loved how there were “communities” and a deep connection between neighbors. It took me some time to realize the dark side of neighborhoods like Bridgeport: you needed to be “like” the people who lived there. The city was a terrible mess of balkanized areas separated as cleanly as they were in South Africa during apartheid. Whites, Blacks, rich, poor, north or Southside, Whitesox or Cubs, Mexican, Eastern European... Pole, Ukrainian, Russian, union, non-union, blue collar, white collar—the message was always clear: don’t be different. Being different got you beaten and sometimes killed.

Did you ever think about death?

Now you are immortal

You shadow dance in the mansion of memories

Did the girls cry for you before?

Will they again?

You each were born to arrive at the threshold

Of adulthood

You crossed into the ultimate.

I wonder if you ever shaved?

Did your masturbation and fantasy live up to expectations?

Did you ever pick up trash from the street?

Did you tell your mother that you loved her?

Did Frank Thomas ever hit a home run that you scrambled to reach?

*Now there is a green and...chipped
Electrical pole
Covered with flowers and notes from the ones who did not realize how they
Loved you!*

*As your bodies impacted in the wall
(perhaps the green and chipped electrical pole dismembered or impaled)
did you remember to love?*

*The sign said
WE WILL MISS YOU TWOS
I do not think they will
The bane of humanity is to forget.
Faithless we live in fear
Acknowledgement of you
Brings us face to face
To death.*

*All grown up to die!
We bury the dead so that we cannot see you.
Death disturbs us
In death is life
But we do not believe.
Immortality
Lasts as long as memory
Mansions like all constructions fall down
I will remember you
Until I forget.*

I come from WOMAN

This poem pretty well says what I was feeling. I believe I read this at a poetry reading on the Northside in Chicago. Anna and I were hanging out with a lot of aspiring artists, critics, and students at the Art Institute. I could not paint, so my artistic identity (if I had one at all) was as a poet. I think I was also experimenting with form with this one.

I come from Woman.

It has been said

“a woman waits for me”

I have been told

“there is a God who waits in heaven”

I am born to a Woman and will wed to Woman

Should I not least expect when I perish

I go to God—who is Woman

Yet distinctly not a Goddess

Simply

God

In Everything Is All Things And In This Is Perfection.

This great city of the lakes

With the thunderous EL and its jagged skyline

Contains a portion of God

And I live through Her eyes and

See

Through

Her

SOUL.

She is me

and I am I

a part of She

*In Imagination I find the better parts of myself
like
Her and She
I can Create
I have birthed world's whores, ideas, movements, death, destruction, flowers
Oceans, spaceships, liberation, culture, excuses
finally
myself.*

*I am without Vulva, Breast or Womb
but I am close
because
I feel LOVE*

*The better part of strength is Courage
and
the
better part of Her is LOVE
her existence
my gift*

*A Woman waits for me in Heaven
and
her
shadow
is Here!...AND I CAN SEE FEEL BECOME
because
I
exist.*

℘ The 2000s ℘

Sixth day

I wrote this poem in the waning days of my marriage to Anna. I am not sure exactly how to translate this, as it was a process more like automatic writing than anything else. The pain and suffering of a failing relationship seems muted in this poem. There is a sense of resignation that yet another relationship has run its course. Perhaps, I was unable to feel the fire as I did in the dying relationships of my past. Just maybe, this poem projects an unconscious idea that I was coming to the end of my personal creation and development...and soon a kind of acceptance that, like all creatures, I have flaws. Existence is murky.

*How long...day?
measure?
can we?
mirror
broken
hundred splintered shards...glass
sparkling, reflective unto space, into time beyond
solemn
hold...look into fragment, what see?*

*Face?
world?
possibility?
despair?
hope?
suffering?
love?
You...do you not see all these things?*

What create...I?

How measure...me?

When?

Shall I count hours or tears, maybe moons or dreams?

They say...took god six days.

Was good?

When know?

Does it matter?

Dead September

I wrote this shortly after the Twin Towers collapsed. No one could watch that and not be moved to tears. The live TV feeds showing people jumping from the burning floors are a horror that have not left me. A friend of mine, Neil Leavy, was a firefighter killed that day in the first tower. Neil and I became friends at USF, and I did what I could to steer him out of a drug addiction. He went home after college and got a seat on the New York Stock Exchange. The drug scene was so rampant that he was pulled back into it. After hitting rock bottom, he quit the exchange. He became a firefighter following in a long line of public safety jobs in his family, which was from Staten Island. I remember how happy he was at Bob's wedding talking about his decision to join NYFD. I told him he would be a hero every day. I was right.

Shinesun like fallrain

*single wall of light on most beautiful day ever was
then...*

deadlive moment...crash, fire, death.

*Like pouring rain 3,000 souls soaked heaven in near instant
Kosmos*

*open mouthed and exhaling eternity
sucked in image and action
in the drop of buildings.*

We who live in memory and imagination continue journey

The dead be...beyond

horror, suffering, pain.

Dead be. Dead be atoms. Dead be energy. Dead be sunshine.

Dead be warmth.

Dead be with us

Feel dead from warmth of sun

Lick dead from your humid pores

Feel deadless in cold of winter moon

Warm dead inside one you love.

Feel!

Beautiful flaming leaves drop from trees like...

do in autumn.

We

come forth

Inhale...exhale, Inhale...exhale

Until be dead.

To struggle in face of Kosmos

Is same as reattaching a fallen leaf

will never grow

Dead be, be dead

September Dead

Directions to 24-hour fire sale: Everything must go!

The madness of invading Iraq after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack was immediately clear to me. For me, it was obvious how our energy dependence was instigating this war. President Bush's mistake cost thousands of people their lives and cost billions of dollars. The president said the best thing we could do to support the war effort was shop, and his conservative Christian beliefs always alarmed me. The distinction between religious fanatics is a small one, and they all believe in simplicity.

*Potomac to Euphrates take Tigres to the Anacostia
get Smallpox shot from Hussein
get jet from Bush on the loose
guns for the loon sure to boom
let's do massacre there
ghetto rap deathdrug here*

*Gabriel's 4X4 chariot thundering
zoom, zoom, zoom
blue cloud
here come four hummers of the apocalypse...so what if it is
late...eat more!
Coke is life
take exit 69
toward oblivion*

*The line in the sand...?
where you?*

*Quick, your car is thirsty
and you?*

Rainbow

This poem I wrote for my mother soon after her death. Rainbows are incredibly fantastic creations of the earth and really represent the cycling of water, matter, and life. A rainbow proves the fact that every single thing is always being recycled into something else—both a great part and a limitless whole. Our spirit is beyond time, thought, or words. Only the silence provides a peek at the limitless. I discovered a new way to love my Mom after her passing, and in the profound aftermath of her death I see things more clearly as they really are—her most important if not final teaching. I sense her in Kai at random and welcome moments.

Drop of water fall from cloud

Turns into vapor

Becomes invisible

*Yet transcends ephemeral substance to become a billowing cloud
building block of rainbow*

Sunlight penetrates the rain droplet with a crooked eye

And ecstatically responds morphing white light into something new

Eternal return in seven hues!

Raindrop is journeywork of a million reincarnations

Is there a point at which the raindrop ceases to exist?

Cascading downward falling back to earth

Forming river torrents

Finding the sea

Eventually to ride...part wave part spray

Until the great mother sun beckons

*Sucking the liquid from the droplet body
To begin epic cycle again and again and again...*

*Rainbows appear as an arc to the mortal eye
Even as they exist whole
What does your eye not see?
 less real if not revealed?
Any drop of water in you may have been part of the salty brine
 yesterday or five hundred or five million years ago
 or in me
Is there a forward and backward in the cycle
 toward what end?*

*As the color fades from this world
Its spirit expresses
What is unseen white light is equal in measure
 to all shades of the spectrum
Rainbow
 as beautiful and as imperceptible
 As me as you.*

I will see out of both eyes

One day with Karen, Franco, and Maria, we took a long drive into the Shenandoah. It was a partly cloudy day and everything really did look blue and gray. It was on a weekend, so it was mostly quiet and the landscape seemed a bit bleak and foreboding to me. Along the way we saw a shocking sign on a church that said “tolerance is an idea for those who believe in nothing.” I felt perhaps the strongest disconnect from America that I ever had. In the time since the wars in the Middle East began and President Obama was elected so much of the country seemed to turn narrow-minded, bigoted, and afraid. I recommitted myself to championing an America that did not embrace dark and hopeless ideas but instead saw the good and bad in equal measure and with as few filters as possible.

*On a recent afternoon I saw not white clouds coloring a wet spent field
electric wire protecting broken stalks crushed cobs and jagged
bottle neck*

further I saw

blue mountains worn by age.

*Sadness hung in the air like a kite undecided whether to fly
or fall.*

I thought of America or was it I?

Where is our center further right or left—from where to measure?

How can we see beyond our own eyes and know what to believe.

I remember thinking I was right once and was not

...and one time in the desert I was sure I was going to die—

I did not.

*As a child at the beach I remember wondering if a wave ran out of
ways to be a wave*

*how can you tell waves apart—where do they end or start?
Is my mind with uncountable thoughts like a wave—are there right
and left or wrong waves?
One thing I have learned in the city on a mountain or in the ocean
what looks right now will be different tomorrow.
All of this stuff is a trick to make me believe it is real when it is
more a ghost.
Is revolution just change of a different sort that makes me nervous?
I would like to revolutionize the way I think about people of a
kind seemingly not mine
can I trust myself to trust?
Been wrong and alive am now immortal till my time I am not
I better learn to forgive so that I may forgive myself.
I will see out of both eyes the one that is right and the one not.*

The journey of a lifetime

This is poem that I wrote with Karen in mind. It took me far longer to find her than I expected, but I finally did find a bright star in the vast universe who would be mine and I hers. We traveled many roads prior to crossing paths. I am happy that for this part of the journey I have a great companion who has proved herself on different continents, along the ocean, atop great mountains, and in my heart and soul. Our travels will exist always as they always have.

*The Journey of a lifetime began moments
after our first righteous breath.*

*We return from incomprehensible distance to resume
the dance of life till death.*

*Our hearts pound and our blood beats
searching the earth with hopeful feet.*

*A thousand million billion trillion years ago when we were already
earthly old*

a two winged soul emerged out of the Kosmic fold.

Mountains topped with snow

Rivers raging from rain

Oceans undulating from moon pull

Deserts hot in day cold at night

and forests, reefs, caves and the grassy plain new as never before.

*Being young and strong and knowing no border the winged spirit
flew everywhere at once not understanding any limit.*

*All the varieties of experience—physical, intellectual, communal
and spiritual*

created a storm of confusion the winged spirit thought was literal.

*Losing sight of the partner wing the soul in despair plunged
into a void lonely—fractured from its better half.*

*Searching the corners and the in between
the internet highway, River Platte, Kilimanjaro, Serengeti
plains and Rock Creek too.*

*Existential blindness impedes the soul body from sight and sense
our wing flaps with more faith than our eyes can see.*

*We find ourselves by discovering our wings are still there
recognizing each as our own—two wings in flight forever
flapping in air.*

The eternal return

This poem is for Kai. Kai is the greatest thing to ever happen to me on this earth. Beyond the 50 countries traveled to, the fantastic spirit of great friendships, and the power and beauty of a million hours playing soccer, loving, reading, and experiencing, Kai has been the greatest miracle. Kai represents the entirety of the Kosmos in all its manifest glory and now-ness. I can see and sense everything in his eyes and the feel of his heartbeat. This is perhaps my most complex poem and the hardest to decipher; not a word or phrase is there without a great deal of thought and meaning. Finally, though the best of all possible possibilities may emerge from Kai's existence, no pressure on the lad ☺.

*The Venus flower swung open providing a glimpse of new light
to a sky field not yet bright enough
needing a returning star that will support the Kosmos
in an arc of emerging memory.*

*Behold! A twinkling witness has come up the down staircase of the
heavens to
remind us who we are and may become
Kai...a spiraling seashell in one sense
an Eidolon for all existence and being in another.*

*A sun among suns has swaggered its way across familiar domain
discovering
its place among eight named children in a timeless occurring
vacation destination that is earth...*

*trees, daisies, bees and babes of myriad variety—bloom,
thrive
die by same cycle.*

*In this month, it is said a Christ was raised and it is true!
Countless saviors are born and die providing
truest glimpse of an eternal return
recycling of life
spread the word you and we and I are risen!*

*We also die for a moment whether from assassin's lilac flavored bullet
or self-inflicted
born an atom in destiny's seed.
Time is infinite in one sphere
and irrelevant in another that is boundless.*

*The math of the universe predicts a repeat
like all formulations change is the teller of truth.
Amor fati—we are what we are
we are not the future or the past, the hope or regret.*

*We are only love right now if we can actually...be.
In the marginalized future—I am already dead.
Now I see again through a newborn's eyes
I am infinitely alive!*

*I see through you and our deepest self connects together
on a bridge of mindfulness and energy eternally returning.*

Welcome back Son...I am whole!

Transformation can only be new

I wrote this after speaking with great futurist thinker Rick Smyre and after reading a new collection of Rumi poems. I like this poem because it says in a few words what I might have written with a lot. Rick has always maintained, like all the great mystics, that we cannot “partially” transform. We either are...or are not. Once changed, it is forever; the path is long but the fuel is never-ending.

There is neither map nor path

toward solving complex puzzles and riddles

*these are not children's games either...they can mean death,
suffering, decay*

if we pretend to transform when we really reform.

I, you and we need a new mind

that feels the emergent moment and follows multiple possibilities

*like a breezed flag floating in space tethered to a star
unborn.*

A wave does not need to swim it only needs to be

In my 50th year this poem represents my understanding better than any other thing I have written. Within it there are Whitman, Krishnamurti, Blake, Wilber, Statom, and Miller, but I wrote it from a deep understanding of what actually is.

*With an eye always observing limitless spheres
Shifting like liquid kaleidoscope swirls
 my mind's eye reflects innumerable colors...green, red, purple,
 yellow—more
Recalling adventures of body, spirit and brain
I see ecstasy, ennui and pain
 near the ceaseless thundering din of craggy shore.*

*I see in shadow's despair—the best mentor
I do not wonder regarding suffering
I wonder regarding resilience and courage to bear transient agony
 I ask...what of grace? By god or by divine sight?
Do you suppose it a gift to be given or realized?*

*In brightening light, I see cobbled path heading toward sea
Sun with billions of sister stars twinkle orgiastic on undulating waves
Percussive thud after percussive thud
 Plunge into beach, within the mist...
 I hear the surf whisper come closer in salty breath
Beckoning me to dive deep, become wet
...to become the sea.*

*What is the muscle that flexes kissing lips soaking in timeless brine?
Come near, so that we may fuse our souls without permission
 enfold me in churning, pounding Eros and crashing Agape
Can you feel the communion of soul with Thou?*

*My heart releases, forever—fragmentation into strong current
I am neither swimmer, wave, nor even sunray from warmest star
I am all.*

*I declare the sum far greater than part
No longer given to wait for grace
A wave does not need to swim it only needs to be.*

Cuba: Contextualized

This is my only slam-style poem. I snuck into Cuba through Cancun. Cuba didn't care much as long as you paid the border agents their required bribe, but it could be a serious offense if US Customs had discovered my visit. The flight was the worst I had ever been on in an old 1960 Soviet passenger plane. The plane did a nose dive, and the refreshment tray fell on the flight attendant, breaking her leg. I had just been given my complimentary shot of rum as the plane went down and the guy next to me nestled, crying into my chest. I lifted my glass (without spilling a drop) and yelled "Salud"; shortly after, the plane began to even out. I read this poem at a club in Havana between sets in a music club on my final night in the country. My month-long trip was coming to an end, and I loved the country but found a lot of contradictions. It was the most capitalistic country I ever visited; every single thing was for sale. As has been said a zillion times before, Cubans live in the past by circumstance...but you get a sense they are comfortable in the twilight zone.

Distill Disparity, Cuba Ron Smooth

Cheap made from cheap Earth orgasm.

Norte Americano! How dare I say:

!Yo! !Yo puedo decidir su historia!

?No? You say? Take my Bacardi and Rum!

Fortaleza ancient, protect your historical

Mouth from no cock, not Uncle Sam's

Whose balls are in your boca

And whose ass in your naranjo (nose)

The Malecon! The Malecon! The Malecon!

Samba snipers sip Bucanero while history collapses

*In heaps of hot air, hot revolution...cold reality.
Capitalism rules, people are tools, social consciousness
Is a stool, runny, red and fragmented.*

*!Viva Fidel! Lights, camera, action!
Revolutionary star, bearded bandit
Belching smoke of boisterous borrowed ideas
That sits like the Spanish fleet still and in sand and in water.*

*!Norte Americano! We are not buying what you are selling...
second hand shit shined in selfishness, sickness and sinister ambitions
We will take our history and Ron (rum)
Even if Ruskies renege on our marriage
Made in the bowels of the Kremlin mired in a masturbatory Fist Fuck
Farted into history from the spit polish shine of the London Library
Her majesty the Queen's royal douched pussy.*

*!Viva La Revolution! !Viva La Revolution! !Viva La Revolution!
Make it in London, Close it out of Berlin, ejaculate into Russia
Spit it into Fidel's mouth (Marx)
Who drips splendidly from the Sierra Maestra
"Campesinos, we will make a new world
when your ass is bigger, bigger, bigger
big enough to fit whole Love Boats of Turistas packaged like suppositories.*

*Where did Batista hide the money?
Where did the Doctors and technicals hide the loot?
Why they of course hid their stealth wealth in Cessna's bound
For the shining lights of:*

Miami, Miami, Miami

*Where men are men and women...well, women in the Latin
American sense...*

And liberty is to choose Coke or Pepsi

Dope or drink

Not Man think!

Borrow ideas, forget ideals.

!Cuba! You could have been the Puerto Rico that never was.

Why did you not want our kiss

As if you knew enough to choose

Between death, decay, diffidence

Rapid or slow destruction

Who are you to decide the fate of your nation?

Jose Marti: What do you think?

*You, man of the world, politics, art, literature, warrior, poesia de
passion*

*We will forgive you that you are Cuban (you knew enough to exile
USA yes?)*

Aha! We will package you...

Exile in the USA, Exile in the USA, Exile in the USA

Why not a misunderstood song for you son of freedom on a white horse?

People don't care what it means as long as they can chant to it!

Did your dream of liberty and fraternity

Really mean the deification of one man as father, leader, Presidente?

Did it mean that you could not talk your own truth?

Did it mean that the opposition party organize and languish in jails

*Of rehabilitation, rehabilitation?
Great son of Cuba...will your Cuba of the world ever be?*

*Empty rooms behind empty windows
Propped up by blistering sun
Unremorseful wind, wave, image
Profiteering jineteros, glorious Chevys and Fords rumble proudly past
As you fall into yourself
As goes General Motors so goes Cuba — is that what was really said?*

*The Malecon! The Malecon! The Malecon!
Collapses.*

*My beautiful boy Che! What can I say?
Dr. Che you operated on a global system comfortable in its
Sickness, sadness, anxiety, self-centeredness
Was it necessary that your scalpel be death and your bedside talk whisper
...more pain, horror, misery...
Dr. Che did you save the disease and kill the patient?
Did we cut out your heart like we cut off your fingers?
Did you really need your head
If you were dead Dr. Che?*

*Capitalism is alive and well as the revolution withers
In hearts and minds—except for hunger (revolution means hunger
after all)
The revolution exists only in Miami
Where time and thoughtlessness stand still (at least El Morro was
supposed to be still!)*

*Dr. Che if only you were a little more...how shall I say...bourgeois
(Max Shnellig...can you hear me?)*

*We could have sold Coke together and your machine gun song was
much better than*

*White hick, Memphis thief Elvis Aaron (however you want to
spell the fuckin name)*

*Your gift was to grab, not yours, you got what you wanted, fame,
fatness, fear, guns*

Nixon, peanut butter and television

Dr. Che you could have had all this and more!

If only you were a little less...how shall I say Earnesto...

The world did not need three more Vietnams...one was enough

To shrink the fallen idol...what the world needed was a Coke!

*Che, my lovely, Marilyn did not want a baseball player, she wanted
a world player*

Breast to beard in a Hollywood bungalow

*Tanned, rested and relaxed you could have been a hero! Didn't you
know?*

Talking about being Earnest...what love you had for Cuba!

*The daiquiri, pina colada, mojito, la marina, the stars, the islands
in the stream—*

But what of the gente?

*Did your days in Spain satiate your appetite for Spanish speaking
communists*

*Singing Marxist hymns to a theory that lives only as long as its
believer*

*Earnest: You had the sun, romance, war of ideology. Whose side
were you on?*

*Where were you without your ron, shotgun and rod...oh! That's
right dead in Idaho! Actually, that is a great title for a made for
TV drama...we can serialize it and sell it to the Cubans they'll
watch anything on either of their two channels—call it a novella
Recycle some more toilet paper and viola...! Salude!*

*Teddy, you rough riding hero
In withering ire you crumbled an empire
Dead decades before
You the Kosmic straw (if only we had TV back then—you could
have been really famous!)
Breaking the back of a syphilitic Spanish piss ant
Powered by sloth, greed and siesta!
Go Teddy Go! Go Teddy Go! Go Teddy Go!
Mr. Hearst, did you sleep less alone? Was your cock a bit more
engorged from extra cash?
You were a player, a slayer, the agitator (Okay...so I like to
rhyme sometimes...shoot me!)
Did your Mother finally stick her tongue in your mouth?*

*Habana, whose name do you call for?
The sun neither sets nor rises for you
Will you teach that we may live for the sun and die with the stars
Will you, will you, will you
Will us, will us, will us
Be?*

Spring 20??

This could be about any spring. One of the best things about spring is that it is a kind of transition season between the cold of winter and heat of summer. By my nature, I am most comfortable in all kinds of transitions, whether seasonal and in this world or psychological, emotional, spiritual. The process of becoming and travel to a new place or reality is invigorating.

*Earth—cold, barren, hard and frozen
sun hides above
clouds shivering against
little blue planet iced in angst.*

*Undulation, tribulation, revelation
what are we to become?
do we hear the gunned goose song falling from the sky?
what of the grounded whale?
felled tree...did you hear the cry of the earth?
did you star indifferently or even worse...
forget
whisper to a scream
when do you bear?
when do you listen?*

*Listen bloom!
renew galactic island
tulips come forth beckoning
erect, vital, open your floral wings to warm caresses
kiss the bumble bee...buzz, buzz, buzz.*

*Come awake awhile
pause...before certain death
more certain re-birth
the long moment between horror and suffering and ecstasy and acceptance
two sides of the fold
how might you absorb your pain into orgasm of light?
where people end gods begin.*

*The goddess birth's a new song
in despair out of darkness
hope springs forth from moist...apprehension
sun returns blazing rays against angst
no hiding from cold
riding thru cold is faith's reward
spawn visualization of kosmic glory
orange, green, yellow, red, lavender, white...push up and out from earth
listen bloom!*

Into sky

I wrote this after a meditative walk in the Bahamas. Wally recruited Avner, Roey, and me as sailors to go across to the Bahamas from Fort Lauderdale. It was a fantastic trip of impossibly beautiful weather and great fun. When I am most clear and centered, the fragments of reality fall away and I really see things as they are. There is only unity, emptiness or fullness. I stop judging or trying to understand and my thoughts and memory disappear. Silence reigns.

Into Sky

I see

clouds

transforming sun

into beams.

Kosmos (I look upon you in sublime wonder)

I see

totality

experience in light shreds

myriad hues,

shades...

I ask myself...

what color is my filter?

Do I see Kosmos

or light of countless stars?

One great sunlight day

yet billions...more

light day too.

*Truth as one
or many into one?
could it be
that there be stars
and be only star?*

Flag

Our flag's image has become a symbol for people holding both great and horrible beliefs. In the month and years just after September 11, 2001, too many Americans did terrible things to people they thought were Islamic or foreign. Not only would the founders have been horrified, there was no understanding that in actual reality we are one and the same.

What mean?

Why?

What do in your name?

Not?

Fabric...

Or spirit?

Many or one?

One...many—when?

You?

Looking out into expanse

This is another poem that describes how I understand actual reality in my half century of living. Along with the “Like a Wave” poem, this poem captures a tiny bit of the insight from epiphanies I repeatedly experienced from age 8 to about 19. The epiphanies at first gave me a great sense of being (self-consciousness) and context and later on revealed the interconnectedness of all things and reality. I wrote this while in India at Rajghat in Varanasi. I had a beautiful experience staying in this ancient city. Seeing the most remarkable sunrise of the thousands I have experienced one morning left me unable to articulate a single sentence that described the sublime understanding of what I was feeling...and knowing. Dipping my finger in the river that morning, I felt the silky smoothness of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Only the silence of meditation can compare.

Looking out into expanse

Floating hot palm fronds to invisible amoeba

Into literature sacred or not and civilization brutal and spectacular

Library of Kosmos...can you see?

Listening to hum and vibe

Undulating rhythms cascading and crashing, surge and retreat

*Pound and fury of fiery solar emission to Mingus or Springsteen
composition*

Song of Kosmos...can you hear?

Touching the infinite

Grip of strong muscle root or relationship fragmented

*Moist tunnel of Shiva, the tears of the forgotten, memories
bittersweet*

Embrace of Kosmos...can you feel?

Truth, Good, Beauty, necessary shadow as strong

I vision sound of sense

All created, all float past

Imagine, respond, excite, surge overflow and merge

Return, revolve, rotate

God eye, can you see the universal?

God ear, can you hear eternity?

God tongue, can you taste today's creation?

Yes.

The world

As I get older and dare I say a little bit wiser to the ways of the world, my lenses of seeing reality become clearer. I am no longer resisting the dying of the light or wanting something far off in the future or perfection. I sometimes have profound acceptance, and the layers of conditioning and judgment fade away.

*The earth will be hard sometimes cold or hot
make it your own right now*

*People will return your love sometimes they will not
do not let them go unloved ever*

*You will strive for success yet do no wrong
do not give up always sleep honestly*

*Your spirit will take flight toward light
darkness is temporary starlight forever*

*Welcome to the world
where time is not
the earth will be hard sometimes cold or hot.*

Schoolyard tree

One of my greatest and earliest loves is a tree that still stands at Page Elementary School. I spent many days playing next to it with my friends, building stick forts, and in its exposed roots. I loved nearly every minute of my childhood, and it was this tree that I looked at first after my epiphany in 3rd grade that provided me the understanding of self-consciousness. As the years passed and I became a teenager, I would occasionally visit this tree with a girl and a beer. As this tree goes, so go I.

Titanic Tree almost limbless

glory past

arms

branches

shoots...few

downward cycle

I felt two lifetimes

hugging grizzled friend

kissing great oak.

My mind pushes to the past

six years of loving

standing guard its breath caressing

10,000 pre-nubal children

running, dancing, singing, playing

childhood lives away

always its awesome girth

protecting stalwart against the wind (and age).

*Titanic tree almost limbless
roots massive, craggy digging into earth
my architectural creations
no less than the pyramids to me
hundreds, thousands...in my mind millions
Of steel girders, metal framework, concrete, glass (or were they
really just stick and bark creations?)
balanced in the old recesses of trunk and root
my foundation
creations protected
always inviting
providing.*

*I see looking backward
often me returned to its strength and roots
early love consummated against its bark
beneath massive frame
looking down upon my passion
hands, fingers, fumbling, zippers, books, snaps
entrance
far less swift or
noble
than my gargantuan friend
standing out in the forest
for all to see
my seed a wasted
immature acorn, spilled on womb and denim
ground not ready to accept sprout
vision into the future...*

someday yet?

The ground has grown hard

winter long

the winds now havoc wrinkled appendages

tree skin, thick, scabby

shed lie slate from the great shaft

tree has outlived crumbling wall

and the stumps of death surround

eaten by ants, termites, worms.

Our futures hold the same

sooner or later

bulking friend, father, mother, brother

we will live long together, memorialized in spirit

our tongues sweet with stamen will dance forever

infinitely

we grow, shrink...grow again.

lasting impulse

old tree

death becomes you!

Epiphany

This is my attempt to describe the most sublime experience in my life. One morning when I was 13 or 14, I was delivering the *Washington Post* in the early morning. This was a great job and I usually looked forward to jumping out of bed and running to my route. I liked the feel of the morning and the slow coming light. One particular morning, I experienced a wave or a glimpse of complete understanding of all of reality. I think this was related to a moment of self-consciousness that dawned on me powerfully in 3rd grade. I have had a series of similar and powerful epiphanies throughout my life; however, they occur less frequently as I have gotten older. Oddly, perhaps, I have never had a powerful epiphany during my sitting meditation, although I see and experience a merging of all things and a great sense of emptiness/fullness/nothingness sometimes; my meditation does produce consistent and powerful experiences. Reading William Blake helped me make sense of what I experienced and gave the word for it.

Cool dawn

darkness

letting go into light

A flash...ultimate whiteness

blindness—open my eyes

first time...see

seeing actuality a new world before me

me distinct

me merging liquefying

partwhole

wholepart

*Questions ceased
yet
I
full of wonder
passion universal
everything familiar
mysterious yes!
and familiar now and forever familiar*

*New colors
a black blue a white blue
deep red turn brown
rainbow turning real
tasting like melted memory*

*against a still car dizzyness divine
falling back, stumbling forward
leaning gasping for air that became solid, could not breathe
staring into hands, into skin into bones
through pavement, sewer, soil, strata—the molten core
I could see*

*Swirling, swirling, swirling
opposites merged became un-merged
randomness chaos harmonized*

*The distillation of everything known—and to become known
became fluid
no longer borders between experience*

*division was dead—rather
was, was not, is, is not*

*Mystery revealed eternal spiral
ascend to bliss, descend from spirit
universal Kosmic truth
revolution*

*To be, to be not
yes
only Yes—Is
I am
Eternally.*

Random notes regarding my life

Insight on how I came to be who I am: Words I live by and why

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. —Walt Whitman

I was skipping school one day, and as I would often do, I went to the public library nearby. I was mostly ambivalent about school; however, I loved to learn new things and was curious, which is why a lot of the time when I skipped school I'd end up at the library—school not always being the best place to learn, ironically enough.

Anyhow, I would randomly sit at different stacks in the library and just start reading. On one spring day in 1981, I picked up *Leaves of Grass* and opened it up to a random page, and this sentence shot into me: *For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

I had an immediate epiphany about the interconnectedness of all things; the flow of my life and passions shot in front of my mind's eye. From that point on, almost every major thing that's occurred to me in my life has felt *familiar (or unknown thought...known).*

In that moment, I began to believe very deeply that we are one great part of an even greater whole. Cycles of life and death and everything in between were just that: a passing season that would transform and return, the same but different.

I believe this experience of profound understanding came at the right time because in a lot of respects, I was a somewhat typical 1970s latchkey kid. My family was

together but somewhat dysfunctional. Mom and Dad did their best under tough circumstances raising Drew and me, but their relationship was not a good one. Even so, I felt a lot of love and security from them. I would often roam the streets aimlessly with various friends, breaking windows of abandoned houses, exploring the woods, and fantasizing about girls or maybe scoring a great goal in the World Cup. At this point, I wasn't a strong student or interested in a spiritual dimension or even a very good athlete. I kept my friends at a distance. People overall were unremarkable to me. However, from this afternoon forward, I felt a connection and engagement that helped propel me to reaching a high level of American soccer, traveling around the world, and receiving a graduate degree from Georgetown University. All of these things focused specifically on being directly and deeply involved in the human experience—connected to me, connected to others. Even so, I am learning to love more and better each day.

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you...and to you, and to you, and you and you....

All good things were in the merging. Soon after, I learned how to meditate and sustain the epiphany—and thus, it has been and is.

**Death (and therefore life):
Letter to a friend upon the death of her father**

I just wanted to say I received your thoughtful note regarding the book I sent to you. It is a profound loss to lose a parent, and I can only imagine the grief you must feel having had both your parents pass so quickly one after the other.

It is amazing that each of us will one day disappear from this earth and all our activities, the stuff we own, and even our names will be mostly forgotten.

I have to believe that surely there is a purpose for our existence, and while I do not follow any organized religion I believe that most or all have important things to learn from and follow. They all believe that until we wake up/become enlightened/saved we are in a fallen or suffering state, and they all believe there is a way to mostly end the suffering—and they all believe that by living a purposeful life we can reach a point of transcendence that allows us to suffer easier until we ourselves pass into the next phase of our existence. This is the promise of the perennial philosophy.

I believe all this is part of a larger and more beautiful eternal existence that leads us through multiple incarnations until we finally exist as only love. We become integrally connected and embodied to the point that we are literally not separated from any single thing in the universe.

This all gets confused with religion, as humans have added a lot of odd rules and regulations on how to get into heaven/nirvana, etc. The important thing is to begin or sustain your own journey toward enlightenment in whatever form you are comfortable with and in whatever way makes the most sense to you. When I visit a church or a temple or some other kind of holy place and I hear something from someone who tries to divide us from one another by saying there is only one religion and one set of rules to reach God, I know they are wrong. God only knows connection and love, and God is in each of us and we are God.

Forgive me for writing all of this, and I don't mean to sound like I have all the answers, but I say all of this in the context of what a beautiful journey we are all on; our parents, friends, loved ones will all be with us because we all are making our way toward enlightenment, and we will continue the transitions until we realize we are all and everything only ONE.

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