



Outlaw Poetry Selected Poems and Photos Vol. 1

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Author's Note: This compilation of selected poems contains many photos and poems written in the traditional three-line (5-7-5) form of Haiku and the five line (5-7-5-7-7) Tanka form of Haiku, as well as and other forms of verse. Unless otherwise noted, all photos and content are by K. Lee Lerner and licensed under a Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND, otherwise all photos and content are ©2023 K. Lee Lerner All rights reserved. For additional information, contact K. Lee Lerner at kleelerner@alumni.harvard.edu



Global Perspectives

Global perspectives
Blue sea to the horizon
An essential view

U.S. Gulf Islands National Seashore, Santa Rosa Island. Pensacola, Florida.



Eternity

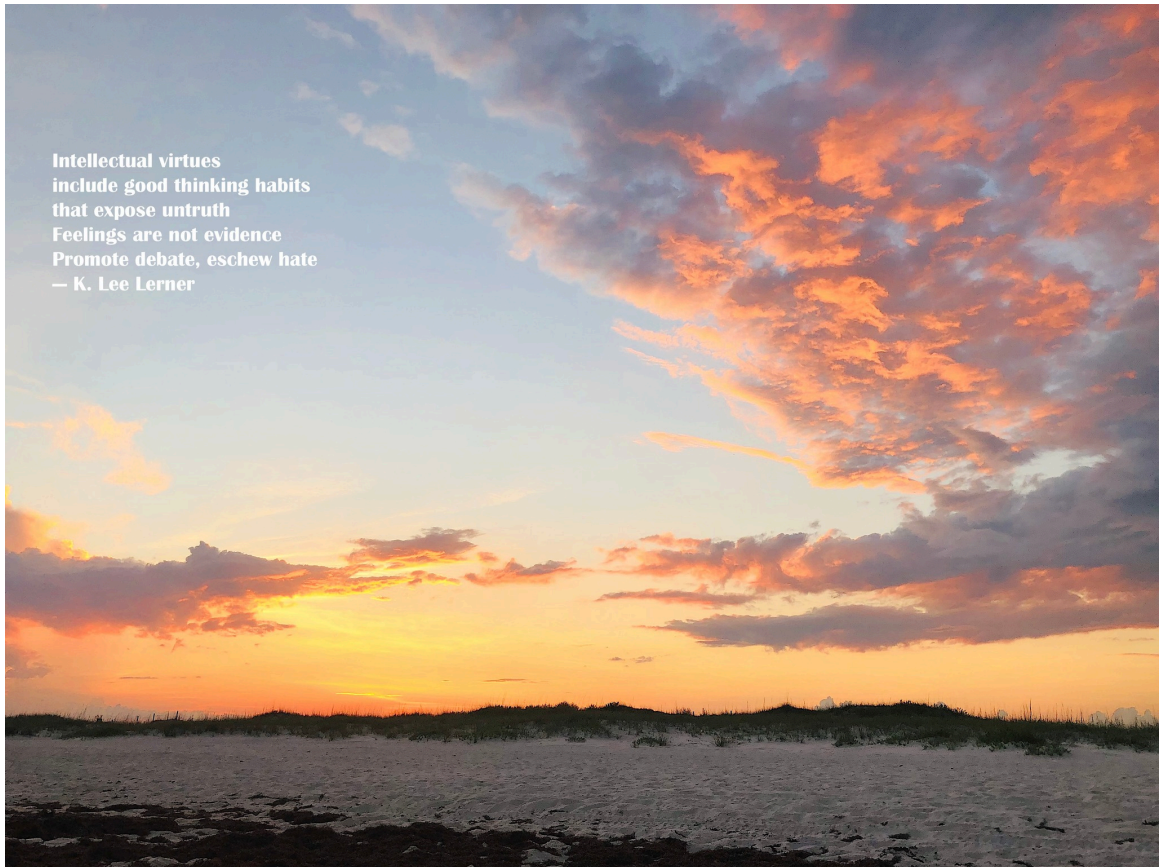
The night is never dark
for in the Cosmos distant suns flare,
each casting light into a void apparently stark
yet holding life capable of veneration and prayer.

The morning after the longest night,
sunlight breeches the horizon to illuminate
a sea from which fog takes flight
as seabirds swoop between waves they skate.

Our own lights flickering fast,
for mere adventure we leave comfort and set sail
and for conquest and love all odds surpass.
Skirting shallows and shadows, each of us seeks a grail

Eternity is all in a burst of light,
It is life lived, without darkness of night.

Photo: Sunset aboard Bella off Great Point Clear. Mobile Bay, Alabama.



Intellectual virtues

Intellectual virtues
include good thinking habits
that expose untruth
Feelings are not evidence
Promote debate, eschew hate

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore, Johnson Beach. Pensacola.

Only Child



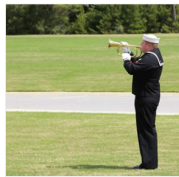
Military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). Barrancas National Cemetery, Naval Air Station Pensacola. ©KLM@klob. Photo by K. Lee Lerner. All rights reserved.



Rev. Joshua Thompson presides over military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). Barrancas National Cemetery, Naval Air Station Pensacola. ©KLM@klob. Photo by K. Lee Lerner.



Military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). His wife of 61 years, Shirley LaWade Lerner receives the flag and words familiar across the generations.



Military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). Barrancas National Cemetery, Naval Air Station Pensacola. ©KLM@klob. Photo by K. Lee Lerner.



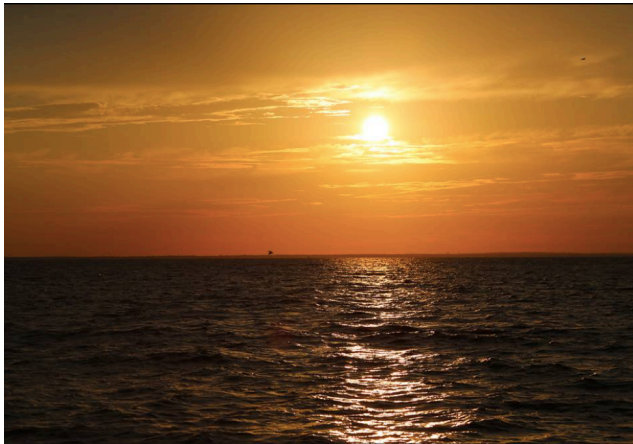
Military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). Barrancas National Cemetery, Naval Air Station Pensacola. ©KLM@klob. Photo by K. Lee Lerner.



Military honors for James Richard Lerner (1931-2015). Barrancas National Cemetery, Naval Air Station Pensacola. ©KLM@klob. Photo by K. Lee Lerner.



On the anniversary
Of my father's death
I'll take my mother
To visit his grave
When her time comes
It will be her grave too
Alas, If Blue Angels are flying
She'll say it's too loud
But I'll feel good
They will both rest
In a place of honor
I'll take her to lunch
Though everywhere is terrible
I waste my money
Liver is always undercooked
She is lonely
Grandchildren don't call enough
She sacrificed everything
Yet no one makes time for her
It bothers her
My hair grows gray
She says it makes her look older
Though it is only March
She will ask
Who is coming this Christmas
Which again could be her last
Perhaps had I been a surgeon
Everyone would have been happier
She did not travel enough
while I have been everywhere
There are others to blame of course
So I will hang on the cross a bit
Suffering the sins of the world
I'll silently offer forgiveness
For she does not remember
Things like the napkin holder
I made her in woodshop long ago
The one that she discarded
The very day I brought it home
Because It did not match
her kitchen
Parents' greatest gifts
Own their own happiness
Give freedom without guilt
Soon enough I will place
Flowers on her grave
In a place
Honoring freedom



Sangria and Sancerre rosé with Perrier all day

Seafood, shrimp, and scallops sashimi
Sweetcorn, slaw, and Southern succotash
Spicy salsa, suplemento de verduras
Snoball or Stracciatella?

Soulful sounds
Songwriters' sweet soft ballads
Sentimental classic rock of youth
Seductive songs sung in French by Sirens.

Sociable, staunch, stalwart friends
Solid, swank, and swell
Supportive, square, and stand up
Spunky, spirited, and spontaneous
Swashbuckling skillful skippering



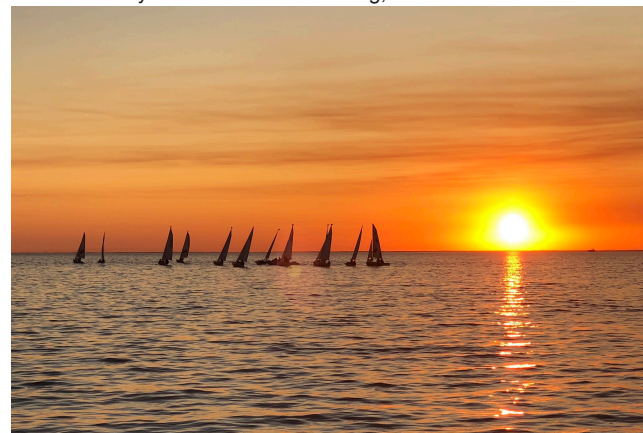
Summer

Sizzling and sybaritic
Set on sugar sands
Spacious sparkling seas
Sailing and surfside strolls

Salubrous sun in salutiferous doses
Swimming and spiritual surfing
Sublime shade
Succulent salty sweaty sex

Soigne seersucker and stylish sundresses,
Snazzy sandals and snappy shirt collars popped
Simply sunscreen for the shapely or sporting
Svelte to sonsy, seemly and statuesque

Sapid and saporific
Smooth champagne at night,
Sunny mimosas in the morning,



Struggling to stay strong and self-sufficient

Savvy serendipitous scribblings
Scholarly, scientific, and sensuous

Sapiosexual spellbinding muse
Studios, substantial, and suasive
Sapient yet sultry and saucy
Sophisticated and sensual

Sailing swift and slow
Sunset with just the jib out
Soaring sails and stars draw us
Sacrosanct sacred season



senses.
Far removed from sensual
Effluvioms of Inhumanity also haunt my memory.

There remains rapture in the memory
of a woman's fragrance.
From the perfume of Paris to the naturally sensual,
in enchantment or embrace, a woman's smell enlivens
senses
in intimacy abandon is distilled into a maddening scent.

Lips caressing and tracing the nape of a woman's neck
scents.
that linger restlessly in memory.
Now my soul seeks the help of other senses.
to trigger enigmatic and fleeting hints of fragrance
And if only in my mind exists such an ephemeral sense
It's enough lose myself in the sensual

It is the loss of abandon to the sensual
I fear most about missing scents
Though taste is diminished by loss of smell
it is not as easily lost to memory.
Nectars devoid of fragrance



A Sestina to Smell

I was nearly sixty when I lost my sense of smell.
Of all the senses,
the olfactory is tied closest to distant memory.
It is both primal and sensual,
linking our lives to both strong and subtle scents,
with love recalled by fragrance.

I remember people and places by fragrance,
I knew late spring in Italy and summer in Provence by their smell,
when ginestra and lavande created rich roadside scents.
A merest whiff of approaching snow or of stormy sea excited my



other

offer

of smell

Still delight the tongue and other senses

In any want any of the senses
dangers lurk beyond loss of the sensual.
When fear is a lost fragrance,
when flight is not quickened by scents,
awareness, though sharpened by memory,
often hinges on what we smell.

Yet it the smell of love that must not be lost from memory
The essential scents of passion that play in a symphony of the senses
For what we cherish as sensual is often found in fragrance.



Nature writes stories

Nature writes stories
We watch and listen closely
Science becomes art

Photo:, Gulf Islands National Seashore, Perdido Key, Florida



First Light

The estuary,
a brackish ecosystem,
shelters and nurtures
fish, shellfish, and crustaceans
First light on Christmas morning

Photo: Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve



Millikan's oil drop

Millikan's oil drop
measured the electron's charge
hovering mid-air
suspended between charged plates
like our Sun 'twixt day and night

Photo: Orange St. Pier. Fairhope, Alabama.



Duality

Light interference
revealed light's duality
Particle or wave
depends on how you measure
showed Thomas Young's double slits

Light is what it is
Duality is our crutch
in quantum theory

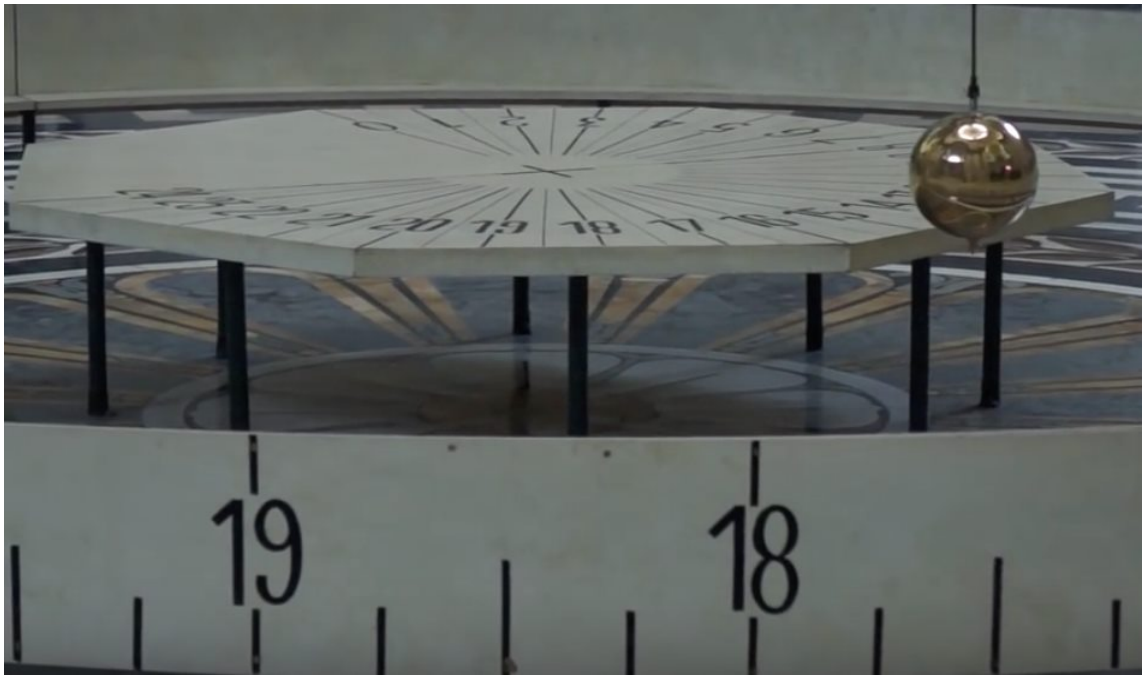
Photo: Bellissima under sail along the U.S. Gulf Coast



Aristotle's white light

Sir Isaac Newton
showed Aristotle's white light
passed through a prism
revealed a rainbow spectrum
Proving it complex, not pure

Photo: Bellissima under sail along the U.S. Gulf Coast



Revolution and Rotation

Foucault's pendulum
demonstrates Earth's rotation
in the Pantheon
Earth revolves about its sun,
rotates about its axis

Photo Foucault's pendulum in the Pantheon, Paris, France



Inverted rainbow

Inverted rainbow
over Santa Rosa Beach
while biking today
We all see different rainbows
Ephemerally unique

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore - Santa Rosa Island. Pensacola, Florida



After the rains come the bees

Blown about by storms
After the rains come the bees
looking for their hives
Singing in the Key of A
looking under sail covers

Photo: Far from shore, bees find refuge aboard Bellissima in Mobile Bay following a storm.



Rayleigh and Mie

The setting sun's light
scattered by Rayleigh and Mie
Twilight's afterglow

Photo: Offshore Great Point Clear



Sweet nectar of Spring

Sweet nectar of Spring
In earnest, I search for thee
All for my honey

Photo: A bee with pollen grains on the back of his thorax shows one way that pollen is transported between flowers as bees hunt for and feed on nectar in Montrose, Alabama



Nature's seasonal journey

The most ancient clock
Nature's seasonal journey
Monarch butterflies

Photo: A late season Monarch Butterfly takes on nectar from late-blooming verbena in Auburn, Alabama. The nourishment needed to sustain a journey south of thousands of miles.



Surfside at sunset

Surfside at sunset
Thunderstorms in the distance
Sand crabs scattering
Outstretched wings leverage the breeze
Wrack's salty scent fills the air

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore, Perdido Key, Florida



Love's best benefits

Love's best benefits
are self-explanatory
No need to explain
No need for an exposé
You can count them in the dark

The wonders of love
Numerous as grains of sand
washed smooth by the surf
Into which we etch passion
that endures beyond life's tides



Meteor shower

Meteor shower
New moon and dark skies above
Bella out at sea

Photos: With a new moon and dark skies overhead, I took had Bella out on the last day of May 2022 to see whether the anticipated Tau Herculis shower lived up to its potential. From my vantage point along the North Central Gulf, the shower did not manifest the dazzling "thousand points of light" display many astronomers had hoped for, but I spotted at least two dozen long-tail meteors between midnight and 02:00 hours CDST. Most radiated from near Arcturus. They were not brilliant, but it was still worth the trip. According to NASA, this meteor shower is the result of the Earth passing through the fragment field produced from the breakup of Comet 73P/Schwassmann-Wachmann 3 (SW3) in 1995. along with some dust previously ejected from the comet in 1890. Knowing that I would be at the helm, I left my high iso camera ashore. A terrible oversight. I was pleasantly surprised, however, at what I could capture with my iPhone 12. A steady hand anticipating -- and countering — the waves was required for the 10 second exposures needed to produce the images below. I recorded one flare (in red) with my night vision goggles.



Patriotism

I have a deep love
For my deeply flawed country
Like a rose with thorns,
Bluebonnets mixed with cactus,
Her beauty comes with perils

Photo: U. S. Navy Blue Angels fly in formation over Barrancas National Cemetery
National Cemetery aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola, March 2015.



Racing a squall line

Racing a squall line
Seeking shelter from a storm
When the line caught me,
Bella heeled 60 degrees,
as the straight-line winds raked her



Girls become women

Girls become women
Many are vulnerable
They simply suffer
Shouldering greater burdens
Carrying more than their share

Photo: Pétionville, Haiti — Daily Life Remains A Test of Survival and Endurance in the Pétionville Displacement Camp. More than three years after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, displaced and homeless Haitians still live in the Pétionville displacement camp, located just below the U.S. Ambassador's residence atop the Massif de la Selle on grounds once used by the Club de Pétionville, Men are without work, women struggle to feed infants, and children retain a tenuous grasp on life and childhood.



An ancient land

'Tis an ancient land unscarred by ice
where white sugar sand now frame paradise
What we see as home is often softly obscured
and toward criticism we become inured
Past sins are easily forgotten

Fog shrouds Ecor Rouge along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay.



Evening weds Day

A band of coral
The Sun a fiery gemstone
As evening weds day



Black-tie soiree

A black-tie soiree
Luminous clubhouse and moon
Sun's last lambent light

Fairhope Yacht Club. Fairhope, Alabama.



Autumn breezes

Cool autumn breezes
Blow across a sun-splashed beach
Invigorating



Cool March sunset

A cool March sunset
Shades of blue across the sky
Winds blow pastel clouds



A plagiarist's theft

A plagiarist's theft
Steals more than just words and thoughts
It robs us of trust
For the sin of plagiarism
Painful death by poisoned quill



A plane on the ground

A plane on the ground
Like a sailboat in a slip
Awaits a new day



Natural serenity

A serenity
No Valium or Xanax
Light breeze and calm seas



Deucalion's Ark

Like Deucalion,
building an ark to survive
the floods sent by Zeus,
we prepare for storm season
in Promethian twilight

A tempest brews in the Gulf. Let the season begin. Fly Creek Marina, Fairhope, Alabama.
June 2021



Wisdom's light

If fallen, seek grace
When in despair, salvage hope
In silence, listen
In darkness, rest your eyes
Wisdom's light comes in whispers

Photo: A faint double rainbow briefly forms over Gulf Islands National Seashore. June 2022



Stars disappear

The cosmos expands
much of it we'll never see
Stars disappear,
twenty thousand a second,
never to be seen again

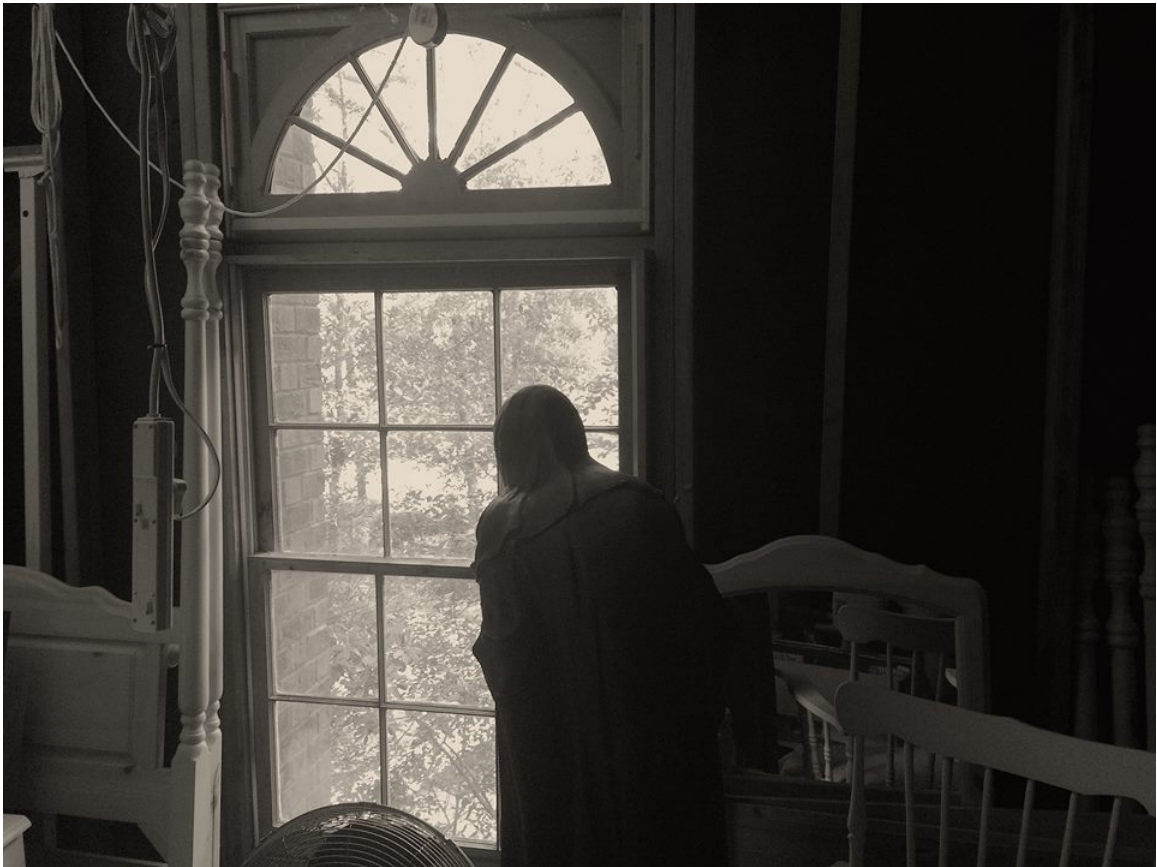
The physical realities imposed by the speed of light and cosmic expansion. Much of the cosmos will forever remain unseen and inaccessible, we can never directly observe it nor have any contact with it. What we do observe is how things were rather than how they are. Moreover, if Earth lasted far beyond its allotted time, the much of the cosmos we can observe beyond a collection of local galaxies would disappear forever from our view. In fact, an estimated 20,000 stars a second currently disappear from our view into an untouchable and observable cosmic abyss.



Lamont Library

Waiting at the door
Early to the library
Social life zero

Photo: Lamont Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass.



Halloween Treasures

In attic treasures,
dementors last forever
Not so, childhood days

Halloween was our favorite religious holiday. The kids would decorate the house inside and out. I would spend hours carving pumpkins that carried the children's names. Some years hundreds of trick-or-treaters visited. Raging backyard bonfires. Hot dogs, Hay bales, Sticks, Toasted marshmallows. Caramel apples. Pumpkin chicken. Pumpkin Pie. Punch with floating eyeballs. Graveyard dirt. Scary story contests. B was also decked out as a gypsy, I donned my officer's sword and played pirate.

Boys like to do dumb stuff. The girls had a broader sense of whimsy and a spectrum of fantasy fashion to express. Growing up watching WWII dramas, in my youth, I played "behind enemy lines." I dressed in black and played commando — not collecting treats but simply trying to avoid being seen by roving hoards the entire night.



Helios' Flight

Helios' Flight
His radiant chariot
Yielding golden light
Circling Oceanus
To bring dawn with his return



The breath of Notus

White clouds as wave caps
On blue Gulf waters below
The breath of Notus
Greek god of South Southern winds
That build into summer storms



Ephemeris

Heliocentric
My mind's perihelion
Ephemeris time

Photo: Sunset off Great Point Clear. Mobile Bay.



Custodians

People and places
We are but custodians
Ephemeral life

Near San Saba, Texas. Spring, 1978.



Winter Dunes

Low sun, shaded sands
Illusions of snow-capped dunes
Winter passages

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



Starlight

Ancient fires glow,
illuminating the night
Here, a friend till dawn



Space Exploration

in America,
lingering after sunset,
awaiting a new dawn.



Return to the sea

Walk into the sea
Earthly tracks erased by wind
In the beginning

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Perdido Pass, Alabama.



An Early Spring

Fragile azaleas,
blooming well before the Spring
Risking everything



Santa Rosa Island

Small freshwater lakes,
guarded from the sea by dunes
Essential wetlands

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



Pale Moonlight

Into a pale sky,
seabirds soar to hunt again
Bright moonlight cometh

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Perdido Pass, Alabama.



Sunset Linging

Sunset lingering
A sliver of soft moonlight
Twilight hovering

Photo: Sunset off Great Point Clear. Mobile Bay.



Autumn Sands

Greeting the season
Bronze against sugar white sands,
rustling sea oats wave

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Perdido Pass, Alabama.



Rare treasures

E.B. White was right
A true friend and good writer
is a rare treasure



Balanced Life

The perfect union
does not consume itself in
all-consuming love.



Maturity

Spring's poulet rôti.
Yields to more complex flavors
Autumn's coq au vin

Photo: Les Jardins De Tuilleries, Paris.



Ancient Rites

More ancient than sport
Nature's seasonal journey
Monarch butterflies



Nature's Clocks

Human clocks may change
Tardy Monarch finds late blooms
Nature's clocks adapt



Listening for gods

Listening for gods
enlightens and inspires,
but speak not for them

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore, Johnson Beach. Florida



Southern Snow

The pale sky whispers,
cotton fields as Southern snow
Our anamnesis

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast. Baldwin Country, Alabama.



Supermoon

An orbital dance
with perigee-syzygy.
Brilliant supermoon

Photo: Aboard Bella, Offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.



Cosmic companions

Over a dark sea
Cosmic companions align
Illuminating

Photo: Aboard Bella, Offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.



Seabirds scurrying

Seabirds scurrying
On a morning walkabout
Birds in a bustle

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore, Johnson Beach. Florida



A Path to Wisdom

The path to wisdom
Open, brave, critical thought
Avoiding hubris

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Alabama Point and Perdido Pass, Alabama.



Transient Sun

Transient Sun and sea
Ephemerally golden
Time limits luster

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



Sand sculptures

Wind eroding sand
Sculpting on scales vast and small
Nature's monuments

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Alabama Point and Perdido Pass, Alabama.



Mars-like landscape

Cosmic forces craft
temples only in man's eye
on Mars-like landscapes.

Photo: U.S. Gulf Coast near Alabama Point and Perdido Pass, Alabama.



Growing Old

With my grandfather
More than fifty years ago
I planted small trees



Yaupon Holly Leaves

Yaupon holly leaves
Ilex vomitoria
Native caffeine source

Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) leaves, the only indigenous North American source of caffeine, served a substitute for coffee in the South during the Civil War. Native Americans in the Southeastern part of what is now the United States brewed a tea used in bonding rituals, hence its inclusion in family holiday rituals.

The active ingredients in *Ilex vomitoria* derivatives are caffeine and theobromine. The plant's scientific name is misleading. Plant derivatives do not have emetic properties.



Winter Dunes

White sand cast as snow
The sun paints a cool backdrop
Winter takes the stage

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



Avian ennui

Birds of a feather
Sitting on piers together
Avian ennui

Photo: Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.



Night Yields to Dawn

The night yields with dawn
Her dark dress slips off with ease
to embrace warm light

Photo: Aboard Bella, Offshore Great Point Clear in Mobile Bay.



Yielding to Action

Spreading wings for flight
Moments of indecision
yielding to action

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



Avian Envy

Fishing in the surf
Watching others soar offshore
Avian envy

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.



January skies

January skies
pale, cool, and distant from Spring
The Sun gathers strength

Photo: Aboard Bella, Offshore Great Point Clear in Mobile Bay



Intercommunion

Impersonating
Flowers dream of butterflies
Intercommunion



The Pen Reveals All

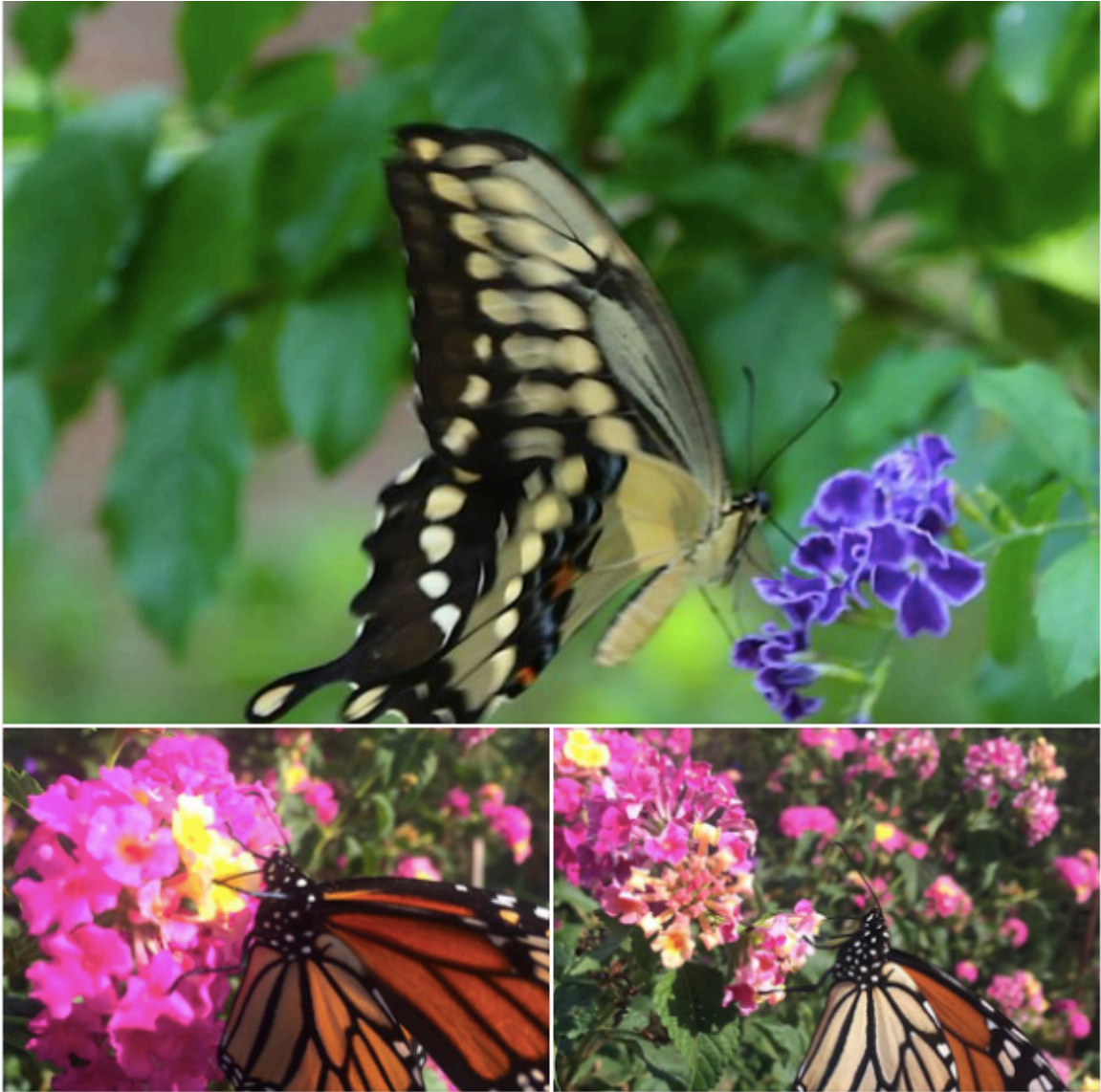
Everything we write
whether prose or poetry
offers an insight
into our diplomacy.

Our mental statecraft
smooths over indiscretions.
Life choreographed
in a dance of reflection

Negotiation
intrinsic compromises
and sanitation
allow us our disguises

The pen reveals all
In both the grand and banal

Photo: Gulf Islands National Seashore, Johnson Beach. Florida



Endangered Butterflies

Searching for nectar,
butterflies in my garden
fluttering about
Monarchs are now endangered
Victims of our indifference



People flee peril

People flee peril
Immigrant or émigré,
Danger may one day find thee.

Daily life remains a struggle and test of survival for those displaced by disasters,
both natural and man-made.

Pétionville Displacement Camp, Haiti. April 2013.



Memories Endure

Body, mind, and heart,
life unites and separates
Memories endure

The Musée du Louvre from the left bank of the Seine along the Quai des Saints-Pères. Paris



In My Cold Dead Hands

From a cold dead hand,
a pistol they might need pry
From my other hand
My metal pica ruler
they will surely need to pry



October Sky

An October sky
First fears of Russian's Sputnik
Now cyberwarfare

Aboard Bella, offshore Great Point Clear



Where Coal Forged Hard Steel

Where coal forged hard steel
Ancestors worked lived and died
Snow covers old scars

On the road to my maternal grandmother's grave in Tidal, Pennsylvania.



Inaugural Exercises

I turned east from the Bay
riding into horse country landward of Point Clear,
Absent the smell of hay,
without the scent of cactus near,
the polo grounds and surrounding meadow
proved too manicured to stir strong memories
of Texas as I rode in tempo adagio.
And so my mind played over horses and melodies
From Wildfire on "cold and drafty nights"
to John Sutter's "hands froze to the reins" in Colorado
From Willie's "old worn out saddles" and cowboy insights
to A Horse With No Name and the Eagle's Desperado.
American history sings Rhymes of the Renegades,
of the road ahead, be unafraid.



Draining Swamps

When you drain a swamp,
cold-blooded creatures await.
True nature obscured.

Bayou in Jefferson Parish Louisiana