

# The Lost American



**Michael Lee Johnson**  
cc&d 2007 chapbook

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## Dedication:

**I dedicate this book of poetry to my late mother, Edith Freet, who passed to be with Jesus Christ, Jan. 16, 2007.**

**She was 98 years old. See the poem “Speaking of Death.” She was a caring, loving woman, with faults like most, but loving people, and caring for others was her trademark. I would also like to thank Doris and Robert Light, Florida, (my sister, and her husband), for the many years and tears of devotion they showed in caring for my blind mother in her last years. They will find their place in heaven for the kindness they shared with her in her last days.**

# About The Author

Mr. Michael Lee Johnson lives in Chicago, IL after spending 10 years in Edmonton, Alberta Canada during the Viet Nam era. He is a freelance writer and poet. He is heavily influenced by Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Leonard Cohen, and Irving Layton. 200 plus poems are published or pending publication 2007 early 2008; over 100 journals, anthologies, online publications.

He is presently self-employed, with a previous background in social service areas. He has a B.A. degree in sociology, worked on a Masters Program in Correctional Administration, started a pre-Phd program and quit. He took a creative writing course in university on a pass/fail basis-he failed. He is published in USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Nigeria Africa, India, United Kingdom. He is a member of Poets and Writers, Inc; Directory of American Poets and Fictions Writers: [pw.org/directory](http://pw.org/directory).

Most of the publishing has been accomplished in the last 6-9 months.

But, the last 6-9 months are somewhat deceiving, considering he had a huge box of "unfinished" poems, dating back to 1965-67 to the present. Plus many new poems have evolved recently. In fact, poems are getting published faster than he can revise or revise them. Yellowed papers, wrinkled napkins and all, they wait for the hand of revival. He hasn't submitted poems till recently-since the early 70's,- remember, the "old fashioned" way, via snail mail.

6 Top Things Mr. Johnson likes in his life:

- 1) His interests in the study of spirituality, religions.
- 2) Nikki, his beloved kitten, and best friend.
- 3) His fire deep in his belly for universal health care in the United States so everyone has access to care, not just the rich or extreme poor.
- 4) His drive to find a way to survive old age in poverty.
- 5) His need to leave a legacy behind for others, no matter how humble or small the contribution.
- 6) The support of his true friends, Carol Marcus, John Balaskas, and Dawn Edder (who have had to read his poems and share his success over and over again, via email).

More of Mr. Michael Lee Johnson's poems can be viewed on his personal websites at:

[www.PoetryPoem.com/poetryman5](http://www.PoetryPoem.com/poetryman5)

<http://www.writesight.com/writers/advmktg/>

# Questions And Answers By The Author

## **Where were you born?**

I was born in Brazil, Indiana in a town so small it was hardly on the map.

## **Where were you born & raised?**

I was born and raised primarily in South Bend, Indiana and Niles, Michigan. I spent 20 years in this area before going to Canada for 10 years.

## **How has your upbringing influenced your writing?**

I was an only child and curious about everything in nature. I lived in a heavily wooded area in South Bend, Indiana where I saw a “Giant Easter Bunny” as tall as the telephone poles coming out of the woods. My pet, Connie beagle dog saved me from this youthful horror. The nature of being alone lead to study of each detail of an anthill and its occupants.

## **Are you married? What is your spouse’s name? When/How did you meet? Children, what are their names?**

I have been divorced for many years now, I made all my major mistakes early in life. I have one daughter, Dawn Edder, in Georgia. One very dear long-term friend: Carol Marcus.

## **When did you first start creatively writing & why? What prompted you to become a writer?**

Besides being an only child, I was caught up with the long events of the Viet Nam war. The turmoil, the daily announcements of how many died today, for the week, for the month. In the agony of this time period I started to release simple thoughts with images. They came out of the smoked image of my mind.

**What is your favorite book and why?**

The Bible. Life comes and life goes, spirituality will be with me now and after death. This I believe.

**What is your favorite poem and why?**

William Carlos Williams, The Red Wheelbarrow  
so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

It makes life painted what it should be in a concise image of reality.

**Who is your favorite writer and why?**

Carl Sandburg. He has the imagination of a flower, the sensitivity of a word to sharp to swallow.

**What is your favorite song, music, why?**

“A Thousand Stars In The Sky”, Kathy Young. An oldie when harmony meant something, when times were simpler, and when “I love you” stuck for a while.

**What are your writing goals?**

I want to have my first chapbook done by the end of 2007 or mid year 2008. It will be titled: “*The Lost American.*” This has been a goal for over 40 years and all I need is a publisher, I have the poems.

**What are your dreams and goals?**

To stay healthy in a country that offers no real health care. To love Jesus the best I can with my limited abilities. To get my poetry to the world before I go to sleep.

**What are your hobbies?**

Listening to the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Band, out of Des Plaines, Illinois.  
Loving my cat Nikki, Staring at the 36 year old willow tree outside my balcony window.

**What is the writing process like for you? Do you sweat blood or do the words come easily? How many edits do you normally do before you feel your work is completed?**

Often a poem will start with a picture on the wall, a catch phrase that sticks in my mind, a cat and a moth having fun. I have some poems that came out naturally with few changes; or poems that suffer from child birth and never fully mature. Being alone, being my own editor is my biggest problem so I always live the door open for changes, or revision. I've actually had one poem evolve over the years into 3 separate poems. Real journal editors are my best friend, and sometime my worst friends. Their suggestions are sometimes harsh but invaluable.

**Do you have any advice you can share with other aspiring writers?**

Very much so. Since poetry pays little, requires much, I see my personal story writing poems since 16 years of age, now 59 years old as an example of determination. As I said in my bio most of my publishing has come in within the last year-I had/have poems dating back as far as 1967. As noted, now, 40 years later, by poems are getting published all over the world, and most of them came from yellowed papers, wrinkled napkins and such, they wait for the hand of revival. Never give up hope and always remember a power greater than you is driving the vehicle home.

# War Poems In Exile

## Skinny Indiana Boy

With a heart once as big as Texas  
or Alberta where he came from,  
the draft resister tries to erase  
the memory of his sordid past;  
coming out of the Rockies,  
down over the slate, out of self-imposed exile,  
he leaves the northland shaking his bandaged  
fists at prairie sky.

He was robbed of his own conviction  
by a war that ended, others forgot,  
there was nothing left to die for, to wait for,  
no more signs to carry in the dark-  
only the chill of the northern winter left  
to remind him of what he once felt,  
once talked about.

The night looked long in his deep green eyes  
robbing his faint life away.

The scream of loneliness has turned  
his innards inside out to pity.

Non-religious accept for those  
weakened moments, empty nights,  
vacant lots, he leaves behind lightless  
10 years of those silent wars  
without refuge.

He no longer speaks with bullets bleeding  
from his mouth, he no longer searches  
the quiet whispers that echo in the pines.

Now he is at home near the land of Indiana lakes  
where in his childhood he created the vision for  
his now dead dream, content to say nothing radical anymore-  
just glad to be alive.

## Wing Tipped & Resisting

It made sense to watch him grow;  
the foolish things he did to girls,  
the endless hours he filled their  
bedrooms with delight-I swear  
he was an Indiana boy.

He was a whisper of dreams & words.

The pines of Alberta fanned his brain, the  
intensity increased the blaze of conviction.

The voices of many personalities  
formed in his larynx over the early Indiana years.

Names, ideas, beliefs, & images gathered in a garden  
of imagination & sand merged, bred & spread Northward  
outward like eagle wings.

It was a cancer without a cure or antibiotic.

The wind had stopped prayer when he was born  
& he had felt his own creation with his own breath.

More than new desires or old desires, or old war memories of the past,  
this boy was a proclamation of potential rejected by his peers.

But then a war, the Vietnam curse,  
a conflict that ripped the internals of a nation/guts wide opened  
by opinion & past dreams then men died.

Blue north wind now blows icicles through his hair,  
& he works against the wings of the red/white-& blue-eagle-  
while blood torn stars blend in his blue eyes  
the border of two dissonant countries divide  
& another night passes to sleep in exile.

## If I Were Young Again

Piecemeal summer dies.  
The spread of long winter blanket again.

For ten years I have lived in exile,  
Locked in this rickety cabin, shoulder  
Pushed up against the open Alberta sky.

If I were young again I'd sing of the coolness of high  
Mountain snow flowers, the sprinkle of night glow-blue  
Meadows;  
I would dream & stretch slim fingers into the distant nowhere,  
Yawn slowly over the endless prairie miles.

Prairie & grassland where in summer silence grows  
& spreads eagle wings out like warm honey.

If I were young again I'd eat pine cones, food of birds,  
Share meals with wild animals; I'd have as much dessert as wanted,  
Reach out into blue sky & lick the clouds off my fingers.

But I'm not young anymore & my thoughts torment,  
Are raw & overworked, sharpened misery from torture  
Of war & childhood.

For ten years now I have lived locked in this unstable cabin,  
Inside the rush of summer winds,  
Outside the air beaten dim with snow.

# Edmonton, Alberta Poems

## Edmonton Streets

Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>,  
alone,  
40 below zero,  
he died a cold  
winter death  
on 105<sup>th</sup> St.  
near North  
Saskatchewan River.

In his steel casket  
buried beneath  
rooted, frozen earth,  
squirms the  
lifeless breathing  
of winter.

## Coffee Time, Fuller's Restaurant

(Edmonton Alberta Canada)

June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1980

3 a.m.

& I'm getting older by the minute.

Thinking about it makes me tired.

Outside traffic crawls slowly over  
slippery pavement like inebriated turtles.

Inside, at the coffee counter, I flirt with a waitress-  
fresh young fruit from Montreal. She insists  
on calling me Vincent Price & speaking  
French in Alberta.

I'm trying to read *Periods Of The Moon*,  
By Irving Layton, selecting the human  
Condition, repetition, & insomnia as  
My main themes.

Next to me, a street gypsy drooping  
over the counter beside me, pulling  
scraps of dog-eared aged newsprint  
From a doggie bag. She stares  
squint eyed at a picture of John F Kennedy  
for 2 hours, manages to laugh an incredible  
29 times,

Sorry, 30 times, 31.

Counting makes me tired,  
makes me take notice of the gypsy  
& disapprove.

## Unknown Poet From Rue Montpelier

I warned you darts with advice  
strong words tripping over emotions  
like an imbecile -  
so you think you're Leonard Cohen  
loving some naked Nancy in a cluttered  
matchbox apartment overlooking  
European culture simulated,  
above some obscure, narrow  
Montreal street?

For your information,  
straight poetics from insanities Almanac,  
Leonard Cohen died years ago  
in a twisted pickle poem he  
entitled "Narcissism."

Do you & your welfare lover  
desire to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation,  
deceased , unnoticed, unheard of,  
unwarranted for failure artists  
inside this thin, onion skinned wall  
dingy with your dreams?  
I warned you darts with advice,  
tapering off with your impotence.

## From Toronto To Ottawa

She comes,  
and she goes,  
unnoticed.  
She walks,  
and she talks,  
to no one.  
Her night is  
the long city street  
sheltered & protected by neon.  
She amuses  
& she entertains,  
swaying her slender body,  
...but no one offers,  
& she shouts out  
for no reward.

## Mount Pleasant Cemetery

(the temple of the body-Toronto, Ont.)

Gravediggers uprooting caskets  
with sharp, steel shovels-  
with each slicing step downward  
through nerve-rooted earth  
cooper pennies jingle in change  
purses dangling by their sides.

They chat casually of Jesus,  
His painless resurrection  
from the sealed tomb,  
moneychangers being chased  
away from God's holy temple.

## 40 Below

(Edmonton, Alberta)

Face it.  
If you don't think you're cold  
you're not cold.  
Lilly's pea green  
eyes start to glaze  
over.  
She boldly  
leans forward  
pushing against  
knife sharp wind,  
peeling back layers  
of young pink skin.  
Little straight patches  
of icy snow  
form a welcome  
carpet  
in front  
of her.

## Caricature Of An Early Planter

(Edmonton, Alberta Canada)

He is a gardener  
with a spyglass.  
With an ice pick  
cavities are chopped  
out of the earth's torpid  
mouth, dry seeds are packed  
in with frostbitten fingertips.  
He rakes his yard clear  
of all snow in winter  
so green blades of grass  
will pop through frozen earth.  
He will weed, thin his garden early.  
He is a realist; he writes poetry also.

# A Tender Touch & A Shade Of Blue

## Speaking Of Death

Speaking of death-  
mother, Edith, at 98  
in a nursing home  
blinded with  
macular degeneration,  
crippled in pain,  
drowning in pills,  
I come to you,  
blurred eyes, crystal mind,  
countenance of grace,  
as yesterday's winds  
I have consumed you  
& taken you away.  
Death hides, but doesn't divide.  
"Where did God disappear to"-  
she murmured  
over & over again  
like running water  
or low voices  
in prayer:  
"Oh, there He is.  
Angel of the coming."  
Death hides, but doesn't divide.

## Dad Died

At the bottom  
of the spiral  
staircase  
there is a letter.

My dad died.

He never wrote letters  
on time anyway.

My step-mother  
had to write this one  
for him.

## Bread Crumbs for Starving Birds

Smiling across the ravine,  
snow cloaked footbridge.  
Prickly ropes slick with ice,  
snow clad boards pepper sprinkled  
with raccoon tracks, virgin markers,  
a fresh first trail.

Across and safe,  
I toss yellow bread crumbs  
onto white snow, for starving birds.

## Now That I Desire

Now that I desire to be close to you  
like two occupants sharing a twin bed  
sensing the warmth of sweating shoulders,  
hungering for your flesh like wild wolf  
leaning over empty carcass,  
you're off searching unexplored cliffs  
& climbing dangerous mountain tops,  
capturing bumblebees in broken  
beer bottles for biology class,  
pleasing plants & parachuting from clouds  
for fun.

In clouds you're closer to life & nonsense,  
a princess of absurdity, collector of dreams  
& silent sounds.

In clouds you build your own fantasy, share it with  
select celebrities.

But till this captive discovers a cure for caring,  
a way of rescuing insatiable insanity,  
or lives long enough to be patient in longing for you-  
you must be vigilant,  
for with time snow will surely  
blanket over this warm desire.

## Catch On The Fly

Full barrel up 53 north,  
heading to Lake Zurich, IL,  
Christian talk radio 1660  
on the radio dial,  
crisp winter day  
sunbeams dancing down  
on the pavement like midgets.  
85 mph in a 65 mph zone,  
just to aggravate the police,  
black Chevy S10 pick up,  
shows what a deviant I am  
in dark colors.

Running late for a client appointment,  
creating poems on a small hand held recorder  
knowing there is not payment for this madness  
in this little captured taped area of words.  
Headlights down the highway for a legacy  
into the future, day dreaming like a fool obsessed.  
Working out the layout of this poem or getting my ego in place,  
I will catch up with the imagery when I get back home.  
This is my life, a poem in the middle of the highway.  
Scampering, no one catches me when I'm speeding  
like this.

## Silent Moonlight

Love lost  
in silent moonlight  
tortures heart  
with rising sun.  
Silence snores.  
Sunlight scatters  
shadows in  
spotty rain.

## My Lady, Maria

Like a good Rembrandt,  
or a unique bar of soap  
carefully handcrafted,  
shaped into a delicious  
figure with hot butter knife,  
you are natural, beautiful, proficient,  
honest as opposed to fake.

## Dove Poem

I hear  
scratch of  
little dove feet  
I hear peck  
of little dove bill  
in bird seed basket  
on my balcony-  
in near silence  
on rain filled  
afternoon-  
thunderstorm,  
lightening  
overhead dark,  
cramped up with rage,  
holds off a minute  
so I may  
hear these sounds.

## Gotham, Oil On Canvas

Chatty women at the dining table  
in 19<sup>th</sup> century garb-  
red hats & hair pins  
caked with rubies,  
ghostly faces acutely obscured,  
hue blue matted hair stretching  
down like dripping wax.  
Menus open out white  
as bleached sheets  
with no black typeface.  
Wine glasses filled with white  
Clouds, no red juice-  
begging in silence to be  
lifted up, to be touched  
by the missing lips of strangers..  
3 mirrors hanging from  
frozen air behind the bar  
away from the dining area-  
circular globs of white reflecting  
nothing but moon shapes.  
At the dining table ladies  
pointing fingers at each other,  
ears filled with gobs of paint.  
Dull lights in the corners  
depicting form, faint  
in near darkness.  
Their pictured world,  
frozen in time, is slapped on canvas.  
As the evening wears toward midnight  
the painting disappears, emerging  
silent characters into madness.

# Bipolar

Awake  
night  
light  
jungle  
twisted branches of thought.  
One character linked to the  
insane personality of the other.  
Bipolar in a universe of singles.  
The fear of aloneness hearing  
cracks in your walls; the joy  
jumbling into the municipal pool  
in Hillside, Illinois at 3 am.  
Bipolar, bewitched, and alone.  
Late to work staring at your  
employer dart split eyes.  
Tattered with memories dancing  
on the tablecloth with glee  
slapped on the face with a teaspoon  
just to feel the sadness leave.  
Bipolar, bewitched, and alone.  
Seldom ever hear happiness  
that doesn't sound like a fire  
siren camping in your eardrums.  
Meds crank up & crank down;  
moods follow the meds  
or do meds follow the moods?  
Personal wars echo words in my ears.  
Even during silent times the night  
roars like street jungles.  
Bipolar, bewitched, and alone.

# Revolutionary Snow

Poem dancer,  
Russian yellow in revolutionary white snow.  
Am I really Yuri Zhivago  
Hidden in this funeral procession  
Held high by pallbearers, looking at my dead father?  
Lifting him up stairs into the Russian Orthodox church?  
Only for the sake of snowflakes & the pouring  
of aged Vodka on the casket?  
Only for the growth of rebellious youth,  
the sweet aging of wrath?  
Does a somber poet lose his flavor  
Of word and dance & turn to medicine-  
like children finding meaning  
in racing around rooms and mazes  
holding hands and losing direction  
before their breath stops, the punctuation dies?  
Poem dancer Russian yellow in white snow-  
50/50 the poet dies alone.

## Playful

Nothing  
more playful  
than a gray  
moth dancing  
-skeleton wings-  
and a green-eyed  
cat prancing  
-paws swatting-  
around a  
lit kerosene  
lamp  
-shadow boxing-  
& we all  
had fun  
in the  
moonlight

## Battered Behind Dark Glasses

An otherwise beautiful lady  
with eyes matted & closed  
is not exactly sleeping.

The trouble goes deeper,  
the doctor has a laser  
light drill penetrating her eyes  
That have turned thunderstorm  
Black with smudges of red & pink.

She tells herself this will never  
happen again, there will be no  
rebirth with him.

In idle hours she self-nurses  
a cave of hurts. The lights are off;  
her eyes are bruised & burning.

In the morning, still in bed she looks in a mirror,  
Her face thickened with puff & irony-  
she weeps splinters sounds.

Above her head on the lamp desk the alarm clock keep ticking,  
across the room, around the corner, the refrigerator keeps humming.

The man who had his way is dark in her, like distant echoes  
embedded in a memory or shadow.

## Indiana Poem

Breaking loose from the state line  
of Illinois, bursting down the Indiana  
toll road , near Lake Station  
heading south,  
smelling smoke of old  
gray steel mills  
seeping out  
of Gary,  
left behind me,  
steel men, strong men,  
ribs of fire, courage of  
union dreamers,  
long gone & most laid off,  
pension plans stolen,  
now gas station employees,  
travelers of the  
past, snuff chewers,  
& labor wages,  
small lakes & fishing ponds  
with half sunken boats  
with tips pointed sky high,  
& memories dripping  
off the lips of clouds.  
I'm banging out 75 mph,  
in my raspberry  
Geo Tracker;  
but as Jesus said: "I tell you  
the truth":  
nothing ever changes in  
Indiana but the seasons  
& the size of the corn ears.

## Face On A Bus

face on a bus,  
passing by,  
nameless,  
stares out the framed window,  
frozen like skeleton bone-  
boredom nibbling away at his time.

## A Poem Of The Night

A poem  
is a thought  
of flowers  
near frost,  
dangling stiff  
bitten by  
the vampire of  
late fall,  
hanging desolate  
near dusk  
from a pot  
on a patio porch-  
with a yellow bulb  
light beaming  
conspicuously outward  
over chilled  
yellow green  
glazed grass.  
While my cat Nikki  
hunches over a coffee,  
table, toasty & warm,  
nose pressed  
super glue  
to the window  
on guard for  
passing birds,  
cars-  
utility vans  
with large bubble eyes.

## Illinois Trains

Trains, love them, hate them  
the way they play sound; songs they sing.  
Transformers switch, vibrate the power  
into poetry, shake notes out of the sky.  
Short stretch, street to street, long stretches,  
Chicago, Elgin, Rockford, though prairie towns of Illinois-  
running the same rails over, attached to many places.  
Shrill sound of horns dig deep in bowel of urban earth  
like backhoes; developers changing passing landscapes  
with faint, greed filled faces.  
As the trains pass to history, train sounds  
fall silent, a minor key.

# Rainbow in April

April again,  
the wind  
falls in love with itself  
skipping across asphalt  
and concrete bare  
with the breaking weather.

A rainbow  
Is half arched,  
broken off deep  
into the aorta  
of the sky.  
It hangs  
from elastic  
rubber bands  
of mixed colors  
dipped in God's  
inkwell,  
airbrushed  
by the fingertips  
of Michelangelo.  
April again,  
the wind steps high.

# If You Find No Poem

If you find  
no poem on  
your doorstep  
in the morning,  
no paper, no knock on your door,  
& your life is poorly edited  
but no broken dashes  
or injured meter  
& you don't wear white  
dresses late in life  
embroidered with violet  
flowers on the collar;  
nor do you have  
burials daily  
across main street,  
& no one whispers  
in your ear, Emily Dickinson-  
you feel alone-  
but not reclusive-  
the sand lady  
still sleeping in your eyes-  
wiping your tears away-  
if you find  
no poem on  
your doorstep-  
you know your not  
from New England.

## Hazy Arizona Sky

Fireball  
hurls into  
Arizona sky.  
Summer sun is blasting away  
at desert sand like a dragon-  
baking down on cracked  
and crusted earth-  
makes a desert cactus  
split its rubber  
skull in half -  
flood dry open valley  
with one cup  
cool, clear  
refreshing  
water.

## Lost In A Distant Harbor

Love,  
once beside me  
  
now  
  
lost in a  
distant harbor  
  
calls out into the night  
crawls back into the fog.

## Quiet Hours Passing

You rest  
in this empty hospital room.

Your repetitious words, spoken to yourself, stumble over one another.  
Everything is in holes and pieces.

The strange ear-ringing sounds of silence  
broken by occasional voices in the hall-

the shadows pushing the lights  
around like street bullies-

the sparse furniture all changed, each strange piece  
placed differently than you would have it at home.

But you're not at home, you're  
in this empty hospital room, resting.  
Everything is in holes and pieces.

# Graying In My Life

Graying in  
my life  
growing old  
like stagnant  
bucket of  
rain water with moss  
floating on the top-  
oh, it's now such  
a bad deal,  
except when  
loneliness  
catches you  
chilled in the  
middle of a sentence  
by yourself.  
ticking away  
like an old grandfather clock,  
hands stretched straight in the air  
striking midnight  
like a final  
prayer.

## A Gift Of Desert Sand

I wish to offer you  
a possession, but all  
precious things have  
been given to you-  
diamond rings from weary strangers,  
fine linen weaved by foreign hands;  
but a nomad owns little,  
scavenges much.  
For this reason, I write  
warm words in dry wilderness,  
hijack a private plane,  
parachute down to you  
this short poem, a gift  
of desert sand, a gift  
from desert sky.

## Children In The Sky

There is a full moon,  
distant in the sky, tonight,

Grey planets are planted  
on an aging white face.

Children, living & dead,  
love the moon with small hearts.

Those in heaven already take gold thread,  
drop the moon down for us all to see;

Those alive with us, look out their  
bedroom windows, tonight, & smile-

Then prayers, then sleep.

## Flight Of The Eagle

From the dawn, dusty skies  
comes the time when  
the eagle flies-  
without thought,  
without aid of wind,  
like a kite detached without string,  
the eagle in flight leaves no traces,  
no trails, no roadways-  
never a feather drops  
out of the sky.

## I Work My Mind Like Planet Earth

I work my mind  
inward into a corner of knots.  
Depressed beneath brain bone  
I work my words, they overwork me.  
Fear is the spirit alone, away from God.  
Hospital warriors shake pink  
pills, rattle bottles of empty dreams.  
I walk my ward down the daily highway;  
I work the roadmap of spirit, weed out false religions.  
One God for so many Twelve Step programs.  
I wrap myself around support groups,  
look for dependency within their problems.  
I publish my poems, life works, concerns on floor 5.  
I edit my redemption, escape from the laundry room;  
run around in circles like planet earth,  
looking for my therapist to seal my comfort.

# Michelangelo: Painter & Poet

Michelangelo  
with steel balls  
& a wire brush  
wishing he was  
wearing motorcycle leathers,  
going wild & crazy,  
stares cross eyed at the  
Sistine Chapel ceiling-  
nose touching moist paint  
body stretch out on a plank  
bones held by ropes from falling-  
painting the face of Jesus  
& the Prophets  
with a camel hair brush;  
in such a position, transition  
a genie emerges as a poet-  
words not paint  
start writing his sonnets,  
a second career is born-  
nails & thorns  
digging at his words:  
it is finished.

## In December

In December Miami sun  
stands out on the southern  
tip of Florida like a full-  
blossomed orange,  
wind torn sunshine eats away  
at those Florida skies.

Spanish accents echo through  
Caribbean Boulevard loud  
like an old town crier  
misplaced in a metro suburb.

Off the east coast 90 miles,  
westward winds carry inward  
the foreign sounds lifting off  
Castro's larynx,  
and the faint smell of an  
old musty Cuban cigar  
touches the sand and the shoreline.

## In This Place, Poverty Falls

In this place  
night falls  
with Linda.  
Wrinkled life, wrinkled wishes  
race across her face.  
Torment bristles with each morning.  
Nailed to a cross within her house,  
Linda lives.  
Everything is a cycle,  
a charity or gift.  
Poverty is an odor,  
it is a smell her  
nose itches with.  
In the yard, poverty grass,  
near the old car, poverty grass.  
Poverty tastes like metal on her tongue.  
On this journey with no applause,  
no gas, Nicor shut that off.  
No money, laziness shut that off.  
House full of bills & debris.  
With no relief dollars shrink  
in her hand harmlessly.  
Rest & wait in welfare lines,  
manipulate the coins.  
Electric heaters keep the old house warm  
and the multiple pets alive.  
The microwave heats the plastic salad bowl  
filled with water for sponge baths.  
The left over water mixes with  
hydrogen peroxide brushes her teeth.  
Her body pale & spirits bail  
out with pills.  
Groceries are checks  
nourished by food stamps.  
Walls come closer in at night.  
The wind outside roars  
with stolen property inside.  
Dreary days, step  
into depression;  
a slice of her mourning  
pronounces her dead.

## Willow Tree Poem

Wind dancers  
dancing to the  
willow wind,  
leaves swaying  
right to left  
all day long.  
Birds hanging on-  
bleaching feathers  
out into  
the sun.

## Nikki

Watching doves  
peck away,  
all day long at  
a full bowl  
of mixed seeds,  
out on the balcony-  
the cat curls  
up on the sofa,  
after a meager  
meal of house flies-  
and dreams of  
sparrows with  
wide soaring  
wings.

## Eclipse of Thought

Wing tipped  
by the sun-  
I see a different  
version of the moon.  
A movie not yet seen  
in darkness.  
A story not yet told by prophets.  
No movie mongrel  
has siphoned the  
joy from the wing,  
the eclipse.  
Clever this fore night  
how the transition  
of sun and moon  
cloud my thinking-  
create this poem.  
Somewhere in between.

## April, I've Been Fooled Before

I blink, the electricity is off.  
The day has brought  
night to an end on top of me.  
Lamp oil and flashlights save me  
from myself.  
I walk in darkness.  
In this darkness I don't  
see my shadow.  
When the wind goes still  
cold chills down my spine  
don't feel anymore.  
I walk in darkness like this  
but I've been fooled myself before  
at Halloween, fears of April thunderstorms.  
April thunderstorms have knocked the lighting out of me.  
Pulled the electricity out of my sockets, pulled plugs from my condo.  
Lying in bed with only this conversation to keep me company.  
I feel like an ice tope insulated around in my words,  
Looking for images in shadows, quiet corners.  
I creep myself alone.  
Here I lie on my back in bed, think, try sleep-  
with ghosts, witches, spiders, devils,  
and all kinds of nasty things.  
Nothing brings Christ out of closed wilderness  
faster than darkness being alone.  
I blink, and electricity is back on.  
April, I've been fooled like this before.

## Captured Shell Cranium

I capture my moss thoughts  
inside this tight shell cranium.  
Do poets expose their brains?  
Do poets keep their thoughts  
inside pressure steamed cooker?  
Do I have to express myself  
in a form someone understands?  
Maybe I'm square lakes  
inside a cave and pour out  
like sugar streams from a jar.  
I can't seem to push out  
the space between thoughts  
and feelings.  
Am I ruptured, solitary timber?  
Release me cave river  
emerge me from this dark-  
let me fall.

## Moon Sleep

I stick  
my hand  
out toward  
the sea  
roll out my palm  
I offer a plank,  
a trail for you.  
Follow out into the water  
& the salty stars.  
When you stretch out  
& give your heart  
to the final moment  
to the glass night sky,  
draw me in  
sketch my face  
on the edge  
of the moon-  
sad & lonely  
over ages of moon  
sleep.

## Loss

In a field of fresh  
cut clover  
summer sun,  
noon high,  
beats down  
on open farm spaces,  
3 dependent children,  
and somewhere  
she has lost  
her shadow-  
and now  
she stand still-  
with nowhere  
to go.

## Indian Faces

Leaves painted Indian  
Faces, war dancers  
Swirl above  
The Goddess of fire.

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# The Lost American

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