

THE LOVE BEGGARS

POEMS 1995-2004

Michael Attie

Walking Conversation

How fast, how slow,
what are the big steps
or little steps?
To leave yourself behind,
how far do you have to go?

On a wide, beautiful avenue
or in a little alley,
you can do it.

Eyes are getting too old,
they tire easily.
don't strain them to see
where you are going
or where you've been.

FROM HAIKU CORNERS

From Haiku corners,
teams scour the neighborhoods,
investigating trash cans, post-boxes,
traffic poles, gateways,
in all directions
just looking
for a peek
in the heart.

I settle on blossomed lawns
under acacia, jacaranda,
malaloica trees.
Meet a woman with upside-down tree,
she thinks it's from Southern Hemisphere,
" it's mixed-up, leaves and blossoms
at the wrong time of year
but I love it."

Settle under giant
yellow-blossomed tree,
the blocks treasure.
Ask eight passers-by
and no one knows
what kind it is.
At last, this afternoon
encountering 'don't know mind.'
Maybe I'll give up too.

Pass three houses in a row,
cape-cod with a picket fence,
modern with papyrus mounds,
adobe with cactus and gravel landscape.
On Sunday afternoon quiet walk,
one gardener with each house.

At Haiku corner,
countless haikus
call from every direction
but why go anywhere?

Couldn't find a poem,
I bring a bouquet,
7 red passion flowers,
one for each friend.
I must look silly
walking back
holding them to my heart
and Oh,
this is a poem.

On La Jolla Ave.
neighbors invite me in
for a Smirnoff cocktail.
"We're the happy block,
That's why we call it Happy acres."
"No, got to meet some friends."
Didn't say "For haiku sharing party
and this is one right here."
Anyway, they have big American flag
out-front and it would probably
just turn ugly.

Return triumphant,
waving haiku scribbled paper,
"With this I bring peace
in our time."
Just more poems
as meaningless as
old broken treaties.

A few blocks
from my usual neighborhood walk
the houses get odd
and funnier.

It seemed so precious
they might arrest us,
picking a magnolia blossom.

Not just me
after rainy day
not just people
everything seems
smiling.

Heart too full
only room for
a few words
haiku born.

Little trimmed Eugenia hedges
seemed pieces of music.
Walking slow,
eight notes, quarter notes.
Each had their moment
in my heart.
Suspicious lady
doesn't understand
no harm poetry
I sit to write
on her curb.
Still watches
as I round the corner.
Poetry,
making bad name
in the neighborhood.

On a bright, open, airy
Sunday afternoon walk,
knot in a Sycamore
looked like a puckered kiss,
Pampas grass
also waved hello.
People were just as friendly,
open-house realtor
shaved-off \$100,000 the
minute I walked in the door.
Felt like neighborhood burglars
would invite me along,,
At Fred Siegal parking lot sale,
packed with beautiful women,
even high-fashion
seduction maya goddesses
speak the true dharma,
one tells me,
"Beautiful day today,
what else can you ask for."

Snowing white pear blossoms
on little girl
playing with beagle.
I stop for any excuse,
“How old is that beagle?”
It’s really the little girl.

I Love Junk

I like all things that have seen better days,
where the color is barely rising in them
and they are just holding on to what they are.
Things left out, faded and
blended into each other.
Fences fallen down
and returning to their origins.

If it's abandoned, dilapidated,
half-gone back to the earth,
I call it mine.
Overloaded and worthless,
humbly given-up,
barely proclaiming its existence,
I know it's mine.

I love junk
so I ride the trains.
From up high it spreads out before you,
abandoned trailers and RVs in every yard.

Junk is satisfying in every way,
so I tour on my motorscooter.
Down low and close in,
the call of a distant junkyard
is too powerful.
I turn off the main highways
to browse the selections
on the byways and back roads.

God gave me too much love,
people think I'm staring
or coming on to them,
so I watch the world
reflected through mirrors
and windows,
seeing things transparent
and doubled,
fading in and out of being.
But this is a taste of the truth.
In this world
the only thing certain
is this being before anything,
too close to be close,
wide, bright and open
as the sky and sea.

The tabby lounging on the threshold,
row of ants climbing up the laurel trunk,
leaf-strewn sidewalk
dappled with this afternoon's light.

Yes, yes,
whatever is here
this very moment
right in front of you,
God made it
to say
hello.

And yes, yes,
surely
God also said 'love'
when designing
your form.

Out of Sorts

I can't help it,
I hate people who think
they've done something.
This rather puts me
out of sorts with the world.
The greater they think it is
the more they should know
they had nothing to do with it.

Paris first brisk autumn day,
golden, tan and yellow leaves
sweeping the streets
and just to be in tune with it
also blowing everywhere,
my first autumn cold.

Smile Crazy

--for Smileyface Duckdaughter

I know it's sickeningly sweet
but what can I do?
These days
I only want to write
smiling poems.

People are all going someplace.
Somehow I've ended up on the sidelines
sitting around
watching the dance in every curve and shadow.
I've parked myself in the slow lane
and can't just get up and go away.

I've got the smiling at strangers habit.
Sometimes I try to hide it so people won't think
there's some kind of drunken love-nut.
It is embarrassing
and gets me into trouble.
I might be called to account.
There are video cameras
in the trains, lobbies, parking lots.
I'll be reported to central monitoring.
I've crossed the line—
an affront to testosterone,
most men would gladly kill me.
Women think that I want to screw them
and walk away.

I'm afraid it scares people
so I'm resigned
going through life
a smiling sneak-peeker
taking my love notes on the sly.
Sometimes I pick on cheekbones,
noses or chins,
but mostly I like to sit
and watch the people who smile.

I wonder if they're the ones who know
this universe is designed
to know
that smiling blissnothing
behind all things.

Then
the only thing that just makes sense
is to let go of your marbles.
The only sane way—
you can't help but
just go smile crazy.

Wandering Amsterdam
come across street poetry festival.
Can't understand the language,
good. It doesn't matter.
I feel at home
in Holland and anywhere
united with smiling street poets.

Big Buddha Smile Poem

Someone says,
"You look happy." —
What the hell, why not.
Just park big Buddha smile anywhere
and spread enjoyment.
Let them think it's this thing or that place.
At Jocko's Steakhouse slop your chops.
Pet them all at the doggie store.
Toast any particular brew at the pub.
The real smile is not yours.
It is the trees', the flowers',
the busy or quiet streets'.
You are just its reflection
shining through all things.

BOSOM POEMS

I remember in college
my first real prayers,
thank you God
for bosoms.

At 58, a recognized Dharma Master
and still,
nothing has changed.

Somehow I never grew up
and still go through the world
sucking on a nipple.
I try to divert myself
with noses and buns
but let's face it,
life is still lived
from bosom to bosom.

Prescription for Universal Peace.
If they have a bosom
I love them
or at least
could love them.
And how can I leave out their brothers,
cousins, fathers, sons,
and their whole family, city,
and their country too.

Step out the door in Edinburgh,
Fringe Festival crowd like braless U.S. Sixties.
A beautiful wavy-haired red-head passes.
Start of another bosom day
in the bosom fields of bosoms.

Paris sidewalk café,
people coming and going.
I may forget a face,
but never a bosom.

Bosom vs. Being

Maharajis say, "Sex #1 impediment to spiritual path.'
The me that's holding on
just wants to hold on to a bosom.
In the immense scale of things
you'd think that it'd be left behind,
yet that bosom keeps coming back.
What's the big deal,
maybe the next life will end it,
I'll be born a woman
and finally get over it
or then will it be
penis vs. Being.

I tell myself
Russian Churches,
Bulgarian Tapestries,
the chamber concerts of Prague.
But lets face it,
I'm off on
another bosom survey of the world.

Yogi's Spanish lesson.
Best way to learn,
fall asleep to late night
sub-titled movies.
OK, soft-porn channel is
usually without much dialogue,
but, Ah, fall in love with Patagonia
in dreams
of full Latin Bosoms.

Finally slowing down enough
until there is nothing but love.
After two years
what so suddenly turned a corner
and disappeared
again as suddenly is here.
Everywhere
I just see disguises
for the world to love itself
and vow,
I can only live as a
wandering lonely love poet.
For me, there is no other life.

Right where you are
there's a hole in the universe.
Make yourself small enough
and you'll fall into it.
Smaller still,
and you become the hole.
Smaller still and there's no hole,
no you,
just the universe.

There's a hole in your belly.
Become hollow.
The universe is eating itself up,
right where you are.

Las Vegas en route to Death Valley

How strange to see
all these fish
that don't know
they're the ocean.

Las Vegas; all these people
that think
they're wearing clothes.

Be just a fish
swimming in the ocean,
sometimes the fish
and sometimes the ocean.

Masters Everywhere

Passed a forest ranger on the trail.
Perhaps I looked lost, she asked
“Any Questions?”
She was pretty
so I gave her my usual
smart ass response,
“Are time and space real?
Unity or diversity?”
She responded,
“What we love is real.”
Met my match
on Saddleback Lakes Trail.

Melting

To be honest,
once you've experienced melting
you won't be interested
in much else.

And you'll get better at it,
why settle for a toilet bowl?
You'll share the conspiracy
with a whole restaurant.
So what, grinning there silly,
let them think you're high on acid or something.
Your body wants to touch the walls
of wherever you are.
You're not going anywhere,
God's love is just coming here.
But you order an iced tea
and fake it.

You're harmless enough.
It's really just a world
of bubblebrains
and airheads.
You don't need an excuse.

Nature's Play

Whatever is in front of you
is tearing at the edges of your being,
so occasionally,
try to place something
huge and magnificent there.

An insect
explaining the inner sanctuaries
of a puffball.

Gardens of wild grasses
shivering together
in a darkening meadow.

Grape-leaf arrays,
radars aimed at the sun
and happy to receive their messages.

Grass knows it's growing green,
stone's celebrating stoniness.
If you pass by reluctantly,
they'll let you in on the secret.

Nature's at play with itself,
you can join in.

The way little laps of wavelets race each other,
gull wings gracing the air with the way they move,
they'll take you along.

All the ways nature can take you out of yourself.
If you can't throw yourself away,
let madrone saplings do it for you.

If only my stomach could handle tea
or my anus didn't revolt at coffee.

Some struggle over their
addictions and inebriations
with smack, crack, acid or ecstasy.
With me it's come down to
an afternoon cup of tea
which seems to envelope me
in a sort of love embrace
with all things of this world
except this poor digestive tract
which sets up a rebellion
and doesn't want to allow me
even this poor pittance of caffeine
and cheaply won bliss.

Our Rounded Noses

Thank God
one day or another
our rounded noses
will make us all into saints.
Our curved and soft-edged
toes, heads, bellies, shoulders--
all round like space,
our big heart and true silent mind.

Only the stupid, chattering certainties
have sharp and hard edges.

Kids love to burst
glowing blown soap bubbles
and watch with wondrous eyes
that are still in the womb.
Then we all know the truth,
thank god our rounded noses lead the way
and really don't know where they are going.

Thank god our cute noses
will finally win the day.

Sitting on Melrose with a cup of tea.
Waiter collecting the condiments and
begins bringing in the tables.
Fading light glows on Louise's and Johnnie Rockets.
Again tonight
that other sunset
within this sunset.

Slow drizzle.
Ghost pines
rising from low mist
into gray moon glow.
An evening reading old Chinese poems
&
I'm in one.

Stepping out again
after year-end flu
and backache.
Coffeehouse interiors are so seductive.
Serious newspaper decoders,
angular walking women.
No matter what
everyone gets tied into
being themselves.

Anything you think you know
causes some deformation,
You become a horse person,
a bird person, a buffalo.
Here and there
something gets gobbled.
Where'd a chin go.
Mrs. _____,
a pleasant woman who
could talk with her nose.
Caught at mid-chomp—
sandwich-stuffed faces
when they're helpless.

Some people are radiating like the sun,
some are crying like the moon.
Some faces are a solid wall,
others are open and flowing with all things.

What a strange joke,
to have to remind myself
that I'm me.
I'm here on my usual love quest,
more out of touch than ever.

Suicide by Love

Oh God
lost again,
on the tiny streets
the beauty
could kill me.
I wander
to become
weak enough
and
stop fighting it.

Sunday afternoon smiling walk.

Someone watering their garden says,

“You look happy.”

“Me, Oh yes, a nice day, the sun is shining.”

One of these days, I’ll meet someone
for the real truth.

“Sun always shining in the heart.”

“This breath is not mine.”

“Each breath, the heart melts a little.”

“I’m part of your piece of art.”

“We share our breath with yards and fountains.”

Till then

I follow this person

then that person.

But I can’t keep up

with anyone going somewhere.

I want to meet that friend

to share this heart’s melting.

Till then,

I try not to appear

too weird.

The Love Beggars

--for Martha

The love beggars are coming to your neighborhood
with the love longing
that is never enough.
They are nowists and can't wait one moment.
They are on the love walk
and will move in anywhere.

This life of excuses
to get out there
and touch the human heart.
You play the game in infinite guises
but only love is given and taken.

You just want excuses to say hello
and carry your list along.
'Is this a maple or a sycamore?'
'What! No beagle along on today's walk.'
'You look just like this guy I saw on TV.'

When the heart becomes light and transparent
the loneliness may be too painful.
To survive, you have to throw yourself away.
You are just hanging out
waiting for the next chance
to fall in love.

The joy is a lie,
there is only pain.
The pain is a lie,
there is only joy.
Anything in between
seems to have vanished.

People appear and disappear.
You have just enough time
to fall in love.

The Love Bus Stops

How much love is enough?

You are singing because
it is all a part of you,
because you would not have it
any other way.

The little old lady on the bus stop bench,
the line-up of traffic signals,
the pigeons circulating among the street lights.

It doesn't matter where you are going
or when you get there.

If you miss your bus writing the poem,
that's OK.

Just as long as you can do this dance
with all things.

-- -- --

Sunset Blvd., one of L.A.'s few streets
with real late-night pedestrians--

folks going shopping at Ralph's
while the lines are shorter,
lots of cabs, panhandlers and winos,
a few hookers and pimps
at the Pioneer chicken take-out.

A quarter moon and neon signs
misty in a light haze.

Palm trees seem a little out of
their element in this February chill.

Under the wide sky

I sit waiting for the 217

and it all seems
my warm garden.

The night is a smiley blanket
for this heart
that I can't walk out of
and that won't let go of me.

The Love Egg

After midnight, I wander
aimless circles around the Borscht Belt,*
always coming back
to where I came from
until finally
I can't seem to go anywhere.

We are a tiny embryo
on the membrane of an immense
love egg.
The egg is a bursting
bubble of delight.
This world is just the blood flowing
through God's heart.

This breath is not mine.
It's an angel's breath,
a cloud's, a clown's or a whole meadow's breath.
Any breath but mine.
If it's my breath I'm suffocating.
If it's God's breath
I have enough.

*L.A. neighborhood mostly populated by little old Jewish ladies and young counter-culture types.

The Love Garden

In a wind garden,
a love garden,
a garden for stopping,
suddenly one day
there is no need to go on.

Bunch grass--
all wild hair
blowing in the wind and sun and sand.
Rocks wrapped around themselves
like a tight puckered kiss.
Clown saguaro friends.
A day in Death Valley,
creosote bushes, sand and mud,
everything is speaking,
but not in any human language.
How to translate it?

The cartoon world,
where everything thinks it's happy,
it seems to be right here.
Poems: the futile attempts
to tell people that nothing matters
but this drunkenness.
Take another step
and fall in love.
It's all melting
and the melter
is melting.

The Love Meltdown

The love meltdown
is the natural state of the brain.
If you sit enough
it will start to happen
here and there and almost anywhere.
Eventually it will be difficult
and painful
not to be in the
meltdown.

Wherever you go,
you'll be 'the love poet'
or you'll play 'the professional smiler.'
At a bus stop or cafe terrace,
just a smile can unite everyone.
Why? Its simple.
If someone asks, reply:
"Because matter is consciousness."
That should settle it once and for all.

or

"Everything is alive and we disappear into it."

or

"This brain is not ours,
but is the pure space that contains everything."

or

"The immensely sweet heart
is giving us birth--
right now."

The Love Money

Late afternoon tea at Perry's on the boardwalk,
roller blade rental and snack bar.
The truth, people are just learning,
vulnerable, at least for a moment,
trying to keep their balance,
falling over themselves
and having fun.

At Perrys I don't mind being single,
I fall in love every five or ten seconds.
In line, I buy pizza and coke
for a few kids.
Money doesn't really exist
except
if you give it away
someone might believe you.

The last swarm of seagulls
turns west along the Palisades.
It seems like everyone is an old friend;
the kid learning how to bike ride
with his tongue is already a deja-vue,
the little girl dancing in the sand
just for the fun of it.
We're all part of a mystical family,
keeping time to a rhythm
we may not know we are hearing.

It seems like New Years,
we're all joining our hearts.
Wherever I go,
everyone is part of my poem.
I'd like to meet them all again,
but I'm like a thief in the night
and sneak away
without saying good-by.

The Love Mothers

Afternoon tea at Fred Segal's
Malibu cafe and playground.
Oh God, keep me from trying to say it.
A day when things seem to be floating,
dogs running around free,
strangers bussing each other dishes,
seagulls kettling high and
pigeons flocking through the swaying eucalyptus.
Kids on swings and slides,
babies in strollers and love-mothers everywhere.
African, Latin and All-American mothers,
Jewish mothers and little old grandmothers too.

Babies are for more
than just perpetuating the species.
We forget
but they remind us.
Every baby is a whole universe,
and we too
outside the edges of our beings,
are love,
 are love,
 are love.

The Love Zoo

Valentine's Day,
morning tea at the
Farmers Market.
Some skywriter spreading
big hearts above L.A.
I'm scribbling poems on Darjeeling
tea bag packet.

The connection is always here,
just a question of finding people to celebrate it with.
Maybe I'm the fool,
and everyone is celebrating.
Why do I have to make things so explicit?

Groups of French or German tourists
wandering through the market,
cameras at ready,
eyeing the morning's regulars.
We're all in each other's zoo,
casing and sizing each other up;
"How can I fall in love?"

Word games--
How many words will get you
into someone's heart?
Find the shortest route.

The Love Parade

From Farmers Market
To Canters and Eat-a-Pita,
Fairfax Ave., the trail of tears.
Seafood gumbo, go seagulls,
Afternoon tea.
Now that I'm retired to the poet's life,
Lazy
With a nose in everyone's business.

Busload of Japanese tourists
Swarming the Farmers Market.
All lost, don't know where they're going.
God, I love uncertain, hopeless people,
Just for a hint of the truth.

Families waddle by,
The kids following along
Haven't been clamped down too hard
Yet around who they think
They are.

Farmers Market
Sit by the baby carriage mothers.
Little old painted skeleton going away life
Lady stops, loving coming into life life.
Everyone stops to oogle new life.

I like the transition times,
A little after two
The lunch rush is ebbing
In the first hints of the afternoon lull.
Tourists thin out and
Pot-bellied kibitzers take over.
I don't think I'll mind soon
When I'm old and decrepit too.
'Come and sit at our table,
everyone is welcome.'

A smiling party on the house.
A bar with party favors
For everyone.
The brass sections blow their horns out
For that moment of silence.

Be the heart
And it's all flowing through.
Be the staging grounds
And it's all a love parade

Those Buckeye Flats mosquitoes
pecker thru
thick canvas pants.
Companions head up
the road.
I stay,
blood splatter
a few more.

Beautiful evening light
sunset at Buckeye Flats.
No limit
of bliss
or mosquitoes.

Tired Old Theme

All the love games
I could play with a woman
I end up playing
with seashores, forests
and endless city streets.

The love meter,
tell me you are me and I am you.

The bosom of a woman
or of the universe
is the only end
for this pain.

Travels of the Lingerie Monk

I can't help it.
Even in stained glass
all-awed light-bathed
gothic cathedral.
Beautiful woman walks by
quickly changes my worship
to God's most glorious creation.

Oxford Street,
the beauty of a lifetime,
in five seconds
I'll never see her again.
Fortunately,
ten seconds later,
the next one.

The man who loved women was OK.
But God,
the man who loves
all women
is too much.

Began my vigil
at teashop table on Oxford Street
watching passing people parade.
Vowed not to get involved in thinking.
Not dragged into conversations.
Just watch and feel
the little pulse of joy
giving out the breath to everyone.
Then
the first attractive woman
sits at adjoining table
and pulls out a magazine.
It was Italian.

Same Theme, New Settings.

After twenty years anticipation
finally another trip through English countryside
on Edinburgh/London Express.
The long remembered little tiled-roof towns,
sheep-folded hillsides
and then my old malady prevails
and the landscapes' beauty can't compare
to even the eyelashes of Scottish girl
who takes her seat across the aisle.

Swami's travels through Europe
alone and a little lonely.
Don't want sex,
just a touch or look is enough.
A beer with two Scottish girls,
have to get real close to understand her thick accent,
it's like we've kissed.
Directions from Italian woman,
touching forearms, I'm happy for a day.
Keep this stupid continence, but
somehow, made love across Europe.
Good enough.

Wherever you are, just look up.
Some branches or fronds
are gently blowing in a light breeze,
little kids are running among the tables
or stool-crawling the counters.
At least, all over the plazas and cafes
young people are courting and falling in love.
Really,
you might as well too.

Penis Poems

Everything busy asserting its existence,
how can silent emptiness be heard?
What chance does interbeing have
with that penis busy proclaiming,
'I exist, do something with me.'

The far reaches
of this amazing little penis.
On a crowded tour bus
whether five or ten rows
ahead or behind,
it keeps accounts
of the prettiest girls.

For Homer and Rufus
my two darling terri-poo brothers.

A goof-poof
 & a snug-rug.
Kisses on the run,
 passionate, fast and furious
& slow, sensual ones
 that leave you begging for more.

Oh! Let me count the ways.
They're the love team,
the friendship boys,
the neighborhood do-gooders.

Morning meditation's perfect lapfull,
 one on each knee.
Evening hug's perfect fit,
 heads on both shoulders,
 soft bodies snuggled into armpits.

Tails-erect terriers
 on parade.
Poodles on your team,
 at your service.
The fun brigade-
 always ready for more.
Chinese acrobatics, Sumo wrestlers,
Swahili dancers, Voodoo—
 they're in every kind of troop.

The old couples,
 braiding and dressing their
 Pomeranians and Yorkies.
Yes these two have done it to me,
premature dotage,
 two or three decades
 before my time.
I thought I still had other callings in this life,
but now I've settled into Mike's maid service.

Post-shower lick-down time.
Dog food boycott mutiny.
Boredom guilt-tripping primas.
 "I promise I'll play with you more tomorrow."
Sitdowncomestayheel--

Sometimes they do the five commands
to make him feel good.
Teeth licking kiss preparation,
"Come here you."
No more need for meditation timer,
when they stir from lap--
time to get up.
Now I understand why dog is god spelled backwards.
Just saying the word brings unlimited wonder and happiness.

The pitti-pitti boom boom boys.
Arunachala shaivite sadhupoopies.
Tyranis-toothed tu-tu wadis.
Wocky-socky tom-toms.

All-day the non-stop nonsense
naming patter keeps on coming.

Wam-wammy boom-boomys.
Ruf-hoofis poofis and the hom-pomer loner.
Little hanuman nummies.
Chewy hug-chuggers.
Nickety-nook wag-happies.

I'd like to stop it,
but the names just skirt the edges of
this happiness that won't go away.

Doleful-eyeing beg-weggies.
Nose-posing hanky-wanks.
Chin-scratchable chitter-chats.

I'll go on like this growing old
happily they'll lead me away muttering
twoforone hug-luggies.
Chest climbing rug-buggies.

Terri-poo poems

Cold, clear
winter solstice night.
Teardrop trailer on sidestreet
by city park.
Warm womb under cover
count the boys,
one, two
and I am terry-poo mommy.

Spacious nose
in a variety of life forms
glad
mine and terri-poo's
also in this congregation.

A changed man,
transformed by terri-poos.
A month wandering South America,
Rufus and Homer left at home.
Everywhere driven to contact with people
just so I can get at their dogs.

MEDITATE WITH ME

At Andres 'the peoples restaurant,'
I want to go from table to table,
invite all the lonely sitting by themselves
old men to come and
MEDITATE WITH ME.

The tough cowboys with mustaches,
I know there must be some way
to work around their edges,
invite them with a beer and cigar
and then spring it on one of
those wild, lonely prairie nights,
LETS MEDITATE.

Maintenance men, stock girls, bus boys.
I'll tell them the real way
to keep it fresh, clean and ordered,
MEDITATE WITH ME.

At Norms,
filled with Ukrainians, Ugandans,
Filipinos and every Latino,
I'll put up a banner,
'Tonight come to big
welcome to America
MEDITATION PARTY.'

Everywhere, I collect the sad looking people
and think their time has come,
'LET ME TEACH YOU TO MEDITATE.'

I always prime everyone with the inquiry,
'What do you do.'
Then I wait for my chance,
hoping for my opportunity to respond,
'I TEACH MEDITATION.'

PILGRIMAGES 2003=2004

Oregon Coast Roadtrip, August '03

In teardrop trailer
snuggled with two little terri-poo puppies
keep me warm.
I don't wish to exaggerate,
but this may be
the greatest thing that has ever happened
to a human being.

* * *

Making the evening campground rounds.
Lots of kids stop their games to pet and carry
cute terri-poo pups around.
They don't know they're dealing with
professional trained and hired
huggers and kissers.
Back in the teardrop alone
we practice for tomorrow's rounds.

* * *

Oregon coastline.
Another day, another beach.
Here they go,
Jet-ski and Rocket-boy,
chasing waves, flocks of shorebirds,
mists and clouds, each other
and anything that moves.
You'd think they'd tire of it already.
They will,
in about six hours
drop exhausted and collapsed
at teardrop trailer door.
Good, now finally worn out enough
settle in my lap for evening meditation
and again
vast sea, blue sky
and miles of bright sandy beaches
invade flimsy teardrop walls.

We share this tiny space,
fifty cubic feet
monk's cell on wheels,
distills and concentrates
the heart's happiness.

* * *

My religion is practicing kindness
--H.H. Dalai Lama

It doesn't matter how you do it.
Anything is just your excuse for
being nice to people,
but it does pay
to think up something
that they can't resist.
I've developed a triple threat
that now I can practice kindness all day.
In each campground
giving tours of the teardrop trailer,
when I open it the terri-poos
are inside waiting for them.
When there's no action
I play the accordion to draw them in.

A week on the Oregon coast,
hundreds say they're going
to take up the accordion,
go tear-dropping
and get their terri-poos.
When I return next year
they'll be a deluge
and I'll have to find
new kindness schemes

* * *

The team.
All day
Homer's
passionate and extravagant
kissing shows
and
all night
Rufus quietly
rests his head
in my lap.

* * *

I know
I don't know
where they've been,
but
they're round, black,
shiny, so cute
and I can't help myself,
I've got to kiss
their little noses.

PATAGONIA Jan./Feb. 2004

Somewhere along the way
I became a 'type junkie.'
I can't settle for someone being just themselves,
they have to drag their whole family,
city and country along with them.

It started one year when,
from a train window,
I saw all of India
in a perfect turban,
standing in the station.
In Argentina,
with a big friendly smile,
the city of Cordoba sat down
at the table next to me.

Maybe it's because I'm from Hollywood,
I always want to make things bigger
and more than they are,
everyone cast in their perfect role.

An aristocratic gait, I see Chile approaching.
Cravats—here's Belgium,
Italians holding their cigarette butts,
Germans with maps.

People complain about the crowds
at the Grand Canyon and Yosemite
but I wander the world
to wonder the wanderers.

Early morning bus over Andes
suddenly filled up with Italian tour group.
I don't know if they are
really this animated,
overdosed on espresso,
or putting on some ritualistic
early morning Fellini show.
One way or another
at Argentine/Chile border,
a sudden and unexpected
bonus trip to Italy
included in the fare.

Bus breaks down in Chilean foothills en route to Argentina.
We wait on side of road six hours for replacement bus
and finally arrive at closed Argentine border station at 2 A.M.
After bus driver's many knocks and calls, a bleary-eyed immigration official
comes down, turns on lights and opens station.
Our luck, some pretty girls aboard
--Swiss, French, Swede--among the
vacationing Chilean families and viajos.
With each hippy girl, the official's mood improves,
soon beaming smiles of welcome,
granting extra long visas to enjoy Argentina.
Finally he realizes something is going on
and scowls at us, 'I cannot work
when you are all watching me.'
At the final visa stamp we all applaud him,
pose for photos, re-enter the bus
and from that moment I knew
I would love Argentina.

Dogs as excuse

Yes, I love people too much.
It's embarrassing.
I try to tone it down
but I can't
so I tell them it's the dog.
Then I can get in close.
"Yo tango el mismo
en Los Estados Unidos."
Snap close-ups with the little boys
and beautiful girls.
I tell them it's the dog,
of whatever kind--
I have the same.

Hanuman always seems to have waiting
in the adjoining seat,
the next beautiful girl
for this old grandpa
to fall in love with.

I share a few dharmic homilies
of universal love
with these artists, models
and yoga teachers
but they see the horny old guy below
and move on.

In this pain
sometimes
a little poem
appears.

* * *

I love getting lost in Buenos Aires.
Beautiful Argentine women
can't read the maps,
takes ten minutes to figure out
what's around the corner.
Really
I know exactly where I am.
Just kindly old grandpa
wandering Buenos Aires
doing my daily tango dance.

Little Travel Poems

Island-hopping meditation.
On a ferry
all the cars are moving together
and it seems we're standing still.
Try the reverse,
still mind
unites everything.

In still mind
know the love always here,
being/space/awareness
made of it.
In life
just looking
for something to attach it to
and snatch a poem.

On many stops
back-roads bus,
people on and off,
appearing, disappearing,
seems heart smooches
the same way.

Waiting for the No-Show.
A short nap, little doze,
nod-off specialist.
One of these times
Mike won't start-up.

Digital camera replays
all pretty Buenos Aires girls,
on wet and dreary Chilean bus ride,
wanderer happy.

Pre-verbal squeals from two-year olds,
'Hello world,
happy here
with you and me,'
wandering grandpa translates
from before all languages
and tries it himself.

It was a veiled secret
then I had to get out my camera
and snap a picture,
the little girls at the next table.

The orange soda
and mustard on the table,
the gray/green bay outside the window.
With quiet mind,
everything in the world
is saying hello.

Strange world,
everything a celebration
of the underlying
nothing.

Bus and ferry fees,
hostels and hotels add up too.
Wandering this island or that
up and down the regions
of Argentina and Chile,
all just the pretense
for my attempts to explore
the limits of the human heart.

One Word

Sometimes, wandering foreign countries,
people ask me the purpose of my travels.
At first it's a little embarrassing
to say 'love pilgrimage,'
but I stopped making excuses,
vowed to learn 'love' in every language
and travel the world
practicing my mono vocabulary.
I soon abandoned my
simple determination
for more elaborate phrases.
With five words and a smile,
in my confused Spanish,
hodge-podge of half-forgotten
Italian, French, German,
I transpose gibberish
love poems of the heart,
'Amore per tutti,'
'Alles ist die Liebe Dios,'
'En tutto del mondo l'amore est uni.'
If someone says,
you seem happy today,
no more 'It's a nice festival,'
or 'The clouds are pretty.'
Today at an empanada stand
I whispered in a little old Chilean ladies ear,
'Todos es en el amore Dios.'

They dragged me out to some lake,
when I just wanted to hang-out with Chileans
in the Mercado.

They made me walk dusty roads
and drive when I hated to.

They played rock for me,
who only loves Peruvian accordions.

And yet,
I enjoyed my grumpiness so much
that I forgot all about it.

Wandering the world,
I never know if I'm among saints
or scoundrels and scam artists.
Really I can't understand the adults
so I hang out by the slides,
jungle gyms and sand boxes.
For an honest exchange,
you can count on the kids.

An old yogi says,
'Forget all those mantras
and visualizations,
today, fall in love with the world.'
Whatever the country doesn't matter,
the grand ashram is right before you
at the sand boxes and slides
sages and enlightened masters
are dispensing grace.

At age two or three any words will do,
kids still seem fueled by some delight
beyond this speech or that.
The whole universe is coming in little packages,
the wrappings are too alluring
not to wish to know the source.

EUROPE, April/May, 2004

Amsterdam stole my credit cards
and wouldn't let me leave
until I finally arrived.

After a week
I've seen all the sights
and can get down
to the serious business
of aimless wandering.

The first day I thought
I could sit around Amsterdam forever.
Then I lost my credit cards
and actually thought I might have to do it.
Too soon I wore out my favorite coffee shops,
cafes and canal benches.
Even the red light district is soon boring.
That same guy making the rounds of the canals again.

A 747 would be a snap.
The Queen Mary like nothing.
But this Mike that wants
to go somewhere
just won't slow down.

When you've finally nothing left
but to disassemble the mind
it seems the work of a lifetime.

Couple at next table
softly whispering
like they're gently stroking
each others cheeks.
Seems I've forgotten,
can people really feel that way
or have they just seen too many romantic movies.
But soon I'm feeling as quiet as them
and remember,
Ah,
Hanuman touches me
the same way.

I always revisit
the site of the last poem,
the outside table at the corner coffee shop,
late night bench by the canal,
cup of chai from the same Indian restaurant.
Maybe I'd found the golden key to the flow.
But poems have a way of surprising you unexpected.
They find you out when you have forgotten about them,
sneak up when you are looking the other way.
You are always amazed and so grateful.

The Berkeley of my heart.
Whether traveling in Shanghai,
Katmandu or Amsterdam,
If strangers appear
my kind of people
who I'd like to meet,
I always assume
they must be from Berkeley.

Little Travel Poems

Now past sixty,
I should be over it
but I still like looking
in the mirror
to see that clean-faced
smiling little boy
looking back at me.

Monks lament;
finally a sunny day in Budapest,
just when I've grown fond
of that sun shining
in my little room.

It's like precision clockwork;
a cup of coffee,
a poem,
diarrhea.
Oh, the price
a poet pays.

Kundalini rises,
the world sinks
in oneness,
you cash-in
the jackpot
for a poem.

Real Dining Car

For twelve years waited
to again experience
a real European dining car.
Alas, through France, Holland, Germany,
all been replaced by snack bars.
Finally, on Czech R.R.,
my tea and breakfast toast served
while slowly passing
through Moravian and Bohemian
fields and villages,
with strains of Smetana and Dvorak
going through my head
along with thoughts,
for this hour
I'd wait another twelve years.

The Organ Grinder on the Charles Bridge

In Prague, spend my afternoons
by the organ grinder on the Charles Bridge.
The music might seem simple-minded
though it is actually often complex
and always ebullient and joyous
in a carnival sort of way.
Pipes, drums.
tambourines, wooden blocks,
bells, cymbals all combine to shake loose
whatever's holding you down.
The high-pitched chimes
seem directly connected
to the seventh chakra's
bliss-buttons.

Of the streams of passer-bys
many slow down,
some stop to give a coin,
take a photo or pose for one,
swing their hands in time
or conduct the music,
give a turn of the crank
or just smile along with the crowd.
Sometimes trios and quartets
break off from the flow
in little circle dances,
maybe a few dozen sing along
and one little old lady
doing a frug-like gyrating dance,
joins me as the afternoon's regular.

To me there seemed
a little halo of happiness
that everyone entered
as they passed.
The babies were cuter,
little girls more beautiful,
boys handsome and nobler.

Off in the distance,
on the river banks
and next bridges,

the crowds and trams
are moving to it,
as overhead
also in time with the beat
a dirigible floats slowly and steadily by.

The Pretty Girls

From a safe distance,
passing boats
and streetcars,
the pretty girls
all smile at me.

When enticed in
by the pretty girl
at the door,
I can be sure
the tea will be served
by the little old lady
in the back.

In cathedrals and basilicas
I forget images of Jesus and Mary
and sneak looks,
while they're praying
the girls are all so pretty.

Sometimes when
I meet the pretty girls,
they always want to fix me up
with their mothers.

All the pretty girls
are friendly and
want to meet me,
just when I'm on my way
out of town.

Bulgarian pretty girls
all become waitresses,
I've given up trying
to eat my meal
without falling in love.

Left Bulgaria
with indigestion--
too many meals.

Bulgarian waitress
just refused
to bring me any change.
She knew the value
of pretty girls' smile.

One pretty girl smile
worth more than dinner.
In Bulgaria,
you get your money's worth--
sort of.

Last Bulgarian pretty girl,
suspicious,
she doesn't know
I'm just looking for a poem.