

Collected and Annotated

by the author

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Volume III

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'...something
rescued from what we sense
of time

so beautiful
so vain'

INTRODUCTION

This collection of poetry presents definitive versions of most of the poems I have completed. Since I have included all the poems, including many early works and works of questionable quality, this is not the planned

SELECTED POEMS ASSORTED LIFETIMES

Rather, I am treating this as a kind of internal autobiographical documentation of my poetry. In some cases I have annotated the works, and I have included many alternate or derivative versions.

Many of the dates, especially those of the earlier volumes, are vague; most of them are guesses. The order of the poems, however, is generally accurate, both within the volumes and from volume to volume.

This volume covers the late 1970's and a lot of the 1980's, comprising the first decade or so of my life with Dorothy Nestor, and the transition of my working life from the academic to the 'professional.' It was also a period which began with intense psychological difficulties and therapy, and continued with much introspection and adjustment. It begins with my purchase of a small printing press, and ends during my initial exploration of computers as a mode of expression and as a career.

[This multi-volume set is a revised edition. It is based on an original completed in 1993, which in turn was edited from an earlier XyWrite III source. This version has been re-formatted using XyWrite IV for Windows. Type family for Volume II is Apollo MT from Adobe.]

SALEM (1974-77)

picking type
talking to the voices

wisdom crouched
between the lines
i wrote
in absence
of the ear

my english teacher
said a poet
never stands alone

but
who will listen

completed 1974

This was originally typed in 24 point Old English on an army surplus diploma typewriter. 'Picking type,' however, refers I believe to typesetting, either with the aforementioned rubber stamp kits or with my (then) new printing press.

all this never stands in the way
of my discovery or joins/such
lofts as time from age come/
stumbling/with the sheets rolled
up and sometimes poised/for
nothing but the cold-edged
snapshot of my room/which always
features sunshine/momentarily

completed 1975

This one was also typed on the Old English machine. It was typed straight out, including the slashes as line dividers to save space, since it was a horizontal 3 X 5 poem. Probably the last of the little sheets!

so I have
arrived
another
time
this
place
face to
walls and
back to
space

completed 1977

fear
 the darkness
fear
 the night

fear
 the shadows
fear,
 the light

completed 1977

This was published as Poem card #1 by the Fine Arts Bluesband & Poetry Press, which I was just getting together in Salem, having used my severance pay windfall from The Western College as seed money.

THE MUSEUM & BROCKTON (1977-80)

the burning of an orange light
in someone's grey window
 gleaming
lines in curtains
 through the snow
i walk

falling gently through the trees
the winter lays her hands upon my ears
and all the sounds of living
muffle til they cease to be but
orange lights
 glowing
lines in curtains through the hush
of christmas

completed pre-1977

See the final version, next.

the burning of an orange light
in someone's grey window
 gleaming
lines in curtains
 through the snow
i walk

falling gently through the trees
the winter lays
 hands upon my ears
and all the sounds are muffled
distant
 orange lights
 glowing
lines in curtains through the hush
of christmas

completed 1977

This final version was printed in a setting by Dorothy Nestor on the FAB&PP's Poem card #4. It was our 1977 Christmas Card.

im
perfect
relation
ships
pre
spoken
unword
s
impl
ying an
ddeman
ding
per
fec
tions
not
requi
red
o
r requi
ted

completed 1977

poems lost
in the
night recovered
from tense
dreams worked out
with care

first
lines whole
epics recited
r.e.m.'s

unwritten
consolations no
doubt filed
in the mind

completed 1978

Piano tuner
singing at the grand,
the strobe is nestled in the works,
singing back
with lights that freeze
in answer to a perfect pitch,
(or wander... He reaches
for his wrench and bends the wires
to an airy match:
a cat's paw of perfection
on the strobe box face.)

An octave now, from habit.
His ear demands it.
Then, in the hollow of empty seats
he straightens on the bench
to try some Chopin,

(the dial still winking
through the song at each harmonic,
pricking the arpeggios.)

completed 1978

piano tuner
singing at the
grand
the strobe
box
nestled in
the works
singing back
with
lights that
freeze in
answer to
a perfect
pitch
 (or
wander

he reaches
for his
wrench
and bends the

wires
to an
airy match
a cat's
paw of
perfection
on the strobe
box face)

an octave
now from habit
his ear
demands it
and then

in the special
hollow
ness of empty
chairs
and far-off
lighted
windows
he'll

straighten
on the
bench
to try
some Chopin
a favorite
etude
 (the
dial
still
winking
through the
song at
each
harmonic

pricking
the arpeggios

completed 1978

This is probably a later version of the piano tuner poem, re-written in the earlier, skinny style.

i want no ads
time-wise
this end of the
year

 i
need no feelings
other than mi-
ne to own

(insensible to
these cravings,
my yen for
futures not with-
standing, i
am un-
prepared for give
and take)

my
house is built
on dreams already
green
 no seed
can grow but
weeds

(so can
i clip tomorrow's
coupon in
the bud?)

release me from
tonight's
unproven pro-
mises and let
me sleep the
sleep of un-plum-
ed
 in-
fancy

completed Christmas,
1978

two and a half
piping down
the sides of a song
sweeping the floors
minding the windows lest
they open in the
wind

the dreadful wind

keeping the doors
to myself
lest i sing

the half bells ring

completed c. 1978

it was an
afternoon without
particular
triumph or travail
time
was simmering
the light
shifting under
sommnambulating
cumulus humilis

a good day to
smoke fat cigars
and look up words
and wait for
calls to be returned

completed 1979

particles of comfort
where once has been
despair
perhaps it is
the influence of friends
visiting
praise
weddings
or the absent
moonlight

nights have not
been all they could be
the wash of
emptiness
stripped of fear
which made it
potent

now just simple being
is the comfort
little nuggets
felt but not
caressed

perhaps it is the
influence of friends
gifts and
giving love
and hardships
of the memory
of shining
skys and afternoons
which lingered
into evenings
without the pressures
of tomorrows

suicidal
consciousness
that life is
over but for the
ending
pleasant bland
and sad

the violence
melted
into little pools
of painlessness

perhaps it is the influence
of friends

completed 1979

Thinking about the infinite
again last night, wondering about
the ultimate pause comparatively calmly,
gasping only once or twice
for window light;
a bit aback at that -
I had to think.

It was despair not born of some
depressive error of metabolism but direct
from Death itself;
no excuses now.

I would never
(in some better state of mind)
see something else in afterward but
ending -
final, not sweet or bitter,
unrewarding certainly—and that was that.

I went to sleep not comforted exactly
but knowing
this was indeed what all the fuss had been about.

completed c.1979

i met her
foraging
for poetry
at
PTA
bookstalls

she was
(like me) a
lone star
gesturing in
her imagination

we swept
away each
other
indifferent
to our
dreams
and now we
speak in
sequences of
silence

still
occupied
and searching
lost in
tenderness
embracing
in emptiness

our
real lives
lie
in motion-
less images
(we see
them only
through each
other's
glance) of
contentment

pain
less calm

we seldom
read to each
other

completed 1979

i am not given to this state
easily or with dignity
everything is quarrelsome
in this moment and the
madness fails to overcome

with some revolutionary spirit
as a coach i could yet face
this down
my delirium could shift and
dogma save the hour

if i had music to support me
i could make it hard
 or soften time
but as it is
i cannot reach what i cannot
touch and nothing's left
but some reflection

all one
no wonder
sitting on
my stool
my poems

study
broken
windows
and
imagine
time

a tool

completed 1980

maybe i'll start
to eat
cucumbers again
I don't
know it
just seems the
thing to do

completed September 17, 1980

Written while at an Art Museum Conference at Wentworth-By-The Sea.

GOODBYES

she rode away
silently
on a screaming
motorcycle
repeating her
 goodbyes
with a shrug
each time i
closed my eyes

completed 1980

MOVIE

her eyes
like gunshots,
a tear, like
glycerine,
hanging
from her cheek

completed 1980

The whole poem was a grouping of three fragments, as follows:

*my poems
 study
windows and imagine
 time
 a tool*

*'...i am a shadow
you stand in darkness*

we do not trust

the sun...'

*her eyes like gunshots
a tear like glycerine
hanging, on her cheek*

The middle citation is from the works of the one with a tear in her eye.

THE UNIVERSE

the universe
ended
five days ago this
Friday
I saw it
I was standing on
a balcony in the
city
idle
at a party where
they were discussing
books and ideas
and each other
with great
passion and no
little wisdom
I

had wandered away
from the
excitement to look
over at a building
being built
for the second
time this time
bigger and
prettier and with
more places for
people to live
and where
I was
standing on the
balcony
feeling moderate
and pleased

and deciding to
go back inside and
get another drink
and try to be
a little less
moderate when

I saw it
the universe just
crumbled
not even all that
slowly (the
way we're all
used to seeing
buildings get blown
down, in slow
motion, so you
can see it,
but with the sound
at normal speed

so you think that
everything
is normal and
it's all very
breathtaking)
this sight certainly
out-did anything
I had ever seen
on the evening
news and
I understood
at once what was
going on and
rushed back
into the
party to tell
everyone all
about it when
that became
impossible

completed 9/80

This was published as a small (very small) booklet by the Fine-Arts Bluesband & Poetry Press.

like when
you're standing
at an air show
and suddenly
become aware
of the risk

you don't
quite know what
to do whether
to write about
it or run
away
or just stay
and watch as
long as it
lasts and enjoy the
feelings knowing
only what you
know

completed 9/20/80

poetry surrounds us

crazy Joe with
his painted moustache
curl above the
blacked-out tooth
seen smiling for
once but waiting,
sitting outside his
barbershop for
some kid to chase
and scream at
or some other
day, sweeping
the streets conversing
with passing cars
and haranguing buses
crazy Joe

or the old pug
outside the
Blinker Cafe, posing
for the poem as if
he didn't know
how sad and beat
he was, fists in
the air all smiles

or streetcorners,
porches, lost
uncluttered
playgrounds, snapped
shuttered boarding
houses

the first line is
supposed to be
ironic
the last is
poetry

completed 9/20/80

Some of the images in this poem are from the exhibition of photographs by Jerry Parker which I organized. When published in Poetry By The Page it was titled 'For Jerry Parker.'

poetry has never
been so distant as
tonight
conversations lost
in traffic, moaning
November
 clouds
obscuring purpose
the winter still
three weeks away

passages from
yesterdays
lives are cleared
out cleaned up and
put away
another trough to
be endured while real
life rattles against
my eyes and my
stricken sensibility
shrivels

i am told we can
be thankful for awareness
but as i sit in here
knowing that lines
that could be
spoken are
there beneath me
in the midst of what
i know to be
my life

awareness only pricks
at conscience and
quickness my
readiness
to despair

and hold my
breath until
by counting long
enough i am
time traveled
into spring, still
more delusions and

another fling at fantasy

completed 10/30/80

thinking of ducks
and pajama parties
for no apparent
reason connected
at the end of a
long chain of logical
leaps

our duck White Cloud
is alive
we thought she might have
gone to the wild dogs
around the pond

(when it freezes there's
no escape for a
white domestic duck
that can't fly
that can only
quack and waddle
and humbug us all
out of our sandwiches)

but she is alive and living
in the other pond
across the road
she must have travelled
through the
culvert
to the open water

with the wild ducks
and the gulls
and this got me to
thinking about pets I
had once but
lost, long ago

my first cat
the second I can
remember in the
family but
my first that
used to sit with
me on the porch and
let me hug it
and talk to it when
no one else would

good old Tige, she
or he was a
terrific cat and
I missed him
her when whatever
happened that
took it away

and after a while
I even forgot that I
had a cat ever
and longed for one
the way I longed for
things I thought I had
never had
like other kids
like

pajama parties
and friends

completed 1/81

you
know how it
is

sometimes

you wish
there were an
appropriate
poem

completed c. May 1981

board feet
 pig scratch hide and seat
rubber members
 chronicled endeavors

due rates of care
appreciate or beware

layers alone
 leather bound gilt tome
fear betrays
 ambitions outrage

RADIO COUPLETS

cratered pond
 swimmers pass beyond
exhausted sentience
 demented repentance

cigarless skies
lampless lies

wednesday's parole
 walking crepe heel and sole
gradual gowns
 smileless and renowned

completed 2/13/81

indignant purusha
observant flourish
embarrassed avoidance
luminescent allowance

TV QUATRAINS

fatuous paraclete
incredulous shampoo
belligerent omnibus
appreciative parvenu

completed 9/81

NEW WAVE

lyric

having trouble tracking
those inner grooves this morning
a gram too little weight
or just the anti-skate device

i sit staring
transfixed by the fade-out
annoyed by the drop-out

one more gram
would be too much for sure though
these new records
on an old machine
can only mean

refrain

too much fuzz in the left channel
 (left channel)
any kind of break-up
is too much
 (too much fuzz
 too much fuzz

too much fuzz in the left one
 (one one)
one more gram for the fade-out
 (fade-out)
one more gram for the fade-out

completed 8/81

senate hearings on the radio
in the car
thinking about lonely shoes
on the highway

a lone exersole
out on the center strip
not too new

another day the Rolling Stones
pleading on the tape deck
on the highway
on the off-ramp
trucking home from high-life errands

a boot
sits in the breakdown lane

a brown engineer's boot
flapped open
speaking poetry to us
straight from the shoulder

urgent to get home
urgent to understand them all
urgent, like the Stones,
to take a guitar lick and go

i am convinced
that these are not
just ghosts of some
past pedestrians

there is something else
in these visions

completed 9/81

BOSTON (1981-88)

off
like a
voice-over

“i am
leading a quiet
life in
Mike’s place...”^a

musing on
this little
poem while
i wash
the Sunday
Times’
print off
my hands

being forty
five and
more en
cumbered with
the sweet
little
meaningless
things of
life i like

living still
on dreams
but less
on ex
pectations

“quiet”
and
“com
fortable”
because
it happens
over time

(you know,
the cats
are older
but still
alive, sleeping
even more
but still
purring
next to us
in bed)

“what
a way
to go”

completed c.1981

.....
^a Ferlighetti, thank you very much..

my text
awaits my search
delayed

the lists supply
their own
but I reject

them all
without a line's
result

the poem's insistence
tries
the job is stalled

like ice
and salt the stubborn
flux defies

the air and time
remains
the same as night

collapses
into dawn
and light

begins to reach
the silent
places trapping

memories
and keeping
separate

secrets deep
and still
and whispering

"the night is now
complete"

completed 9/5/81

Perhaps in response to the attitude expressed in the previous poems, this begins a period of more intense formal (and somewhat self-conscious) experimentation.

A POEM ENTITLED I HAVE TO LEARN TO TRUST
THE LUCIDITY OF THESE MOMENTS

spark sparrow
a light
dawn's gone
and here
sitting while
this bird is
closing on
the wing
spark
sparrow landed

spark sparrow
non-participating
remnant
of warm
blooded
archosaur
wanderer

lightning struck
Mesozoan
mystery
timid cousin
of literary
giants
Hawthorne and
Poe are
standing on
my shoulders
as I write

spark sparrow
in flight

completed 1982

SKETCH

Another holiday in Boston, where
they celebrate the past with
dead men and flowers
and Italian sausages on
the streets;

It's Patriot's Day; it's patriot's day.

Some C Y O bugler in a pink plastic
uniform hat, blowing taps;

Some pols lounging at the graveside,
as flags and Gold Star Mothers
flutter in the crowd;

It's Patriot's Day; it's patriot's day.

They start the ballgame early so
the crowd can make the marathon;

They close the banks
and open the stores;

It's Patriot's Day; it's patriot's day.

completed Patriot's Day, 1982

In the morning, on my way to work, visions off the El: a naked man
at his window for a moment as we passed, my glance
capturing the scene before he moved and I was taken
off along the line;

Sitting next to me this little old Chinese lady with her two grandsons
sitting opposite her: she is chattering away in Chinese
and they seem embarrassed but too respectful of her
age not to answer.

And I wonder what the naked man was doing; probably just getting
ready to put on his pants, not much of a story there,

And I wonder how the old lady's chatter sounds to another Chinese,
compared say to the English of an old lady from
Dorchester; I mean the Chinese need their inflections
for their meanings, but to me they sounded funny
and quaint; and how good was her grammar, and
were the kids embarrassed that she was talking or
because she was talking too much or too loud, or
maybe they were embarrassed by her slang and poor
diction; I don't know. It sounded like Chinese to me.

There's a painter who paints pictures of buildings with little stories in
the windows and the naked man reminded me of
these paintings but there probably wasn't much of a
story, probably, he was just getting ready to put on
his pants.

completed April, 1981

NOTES

Looking at less than average Poussins
the other day at the Fogg
reminded me of two portraits I had seen
three years before: an Ingres
and a Delacroix confronting each other
in a corner, striking me in
poetic irony.

Today it was all
more direct. Ribera's "Saint Jerome" in
ecstatic self-denial in the corner
by a Gentileschi (whose famous sister lost
her virginity to art) and a
Ghirlandiao (who only lost his fame
to history and whim) his "Mainardi Madonna"
tenderly concerned, a handsome
Christ Child on her lap, a little tense
perhaps about the clamshell
arch too tightly fitted above her head;

and in another room Jacob
Ruisdael's stormy landscapes;
Arcadian melancholy not stiff and disguised
like the Poussin but raw and right
there, honest Dutch Romanticism, Delacroix
would approve, I suspect,
and so would Ingres. They were both
romantics in search of that ideal
elsewhere. So am I
wandering through
galleries from time to
time, sharing jokes with Franz Hals
or returning the calm gaze of an
Antonazza Romano, making notes
and passing by

completed 1982

spring
street hockey
across the
way

played with
plastic
sticks, a red
foam ball
and a
first baseman's
mitt
for the goalie

completed 1982

Andy's Etching

the fallen diva
in the
arms of her
admirers collapsing
undone

moved and
silent
they hold her
gazing at
her rapture
wondering and
anxious

(her hair
streaming
like his music
behind her

this moment a
prelude
and a coda)

Based on a real etching in my collection by Andy Stevovich, a local artist whose works I had exhibited while at the Brockton Art Museum.

poetry comes in moments only

sitting in the
public plaza
surrounded by
people
watching the birds

listening to them cry and
claim their spaces
oblivious to the people

watching the
flight of a small sparrow
and some pigeons

thinking about dinosaurs
and spelling

poetry comes in only moments

riding the subway
going to work
losing the thought
knowing it's gone before
it can be written
down

never writing
it down but
composing it somewhere
in his brain where he
might get at it again

someday

cross-referenced
to a dream or some
other immanence

poetry comes only in moments

feeling lost without
time and within it
living

all in an instant

caught in the
interrupt between
the endless transaction
of passing seconds
and Brownian oscillations
and gluon exchanges

the static stepping
inertial flow

sitting at the
predictive point
with no particularity
or certainty or
uncertainty

poetry only comes in moments

realizing he is too
impatient
even to write

impatient

to get on with the next
word, the next thought,
the next ending

the next pause between moments

impatient for
the next moment

only poetry comes in moments

knowing that life is as
much like a good cigar
as a baseball game

that things are events

that all words are
other words

that being used to
be nothingness but
now is just is

and that staying alive
is just
like staying
dead

completed 1983

RADIO POEM #3

obsolete
paper tray
tissue elite

compact
moderne
real issue

complete

completed 1983

MICROSCOPE RESISTOR
MANIPULATES REGENERATION
MADCAP REFLEX
MENAGERIES RELINQUISHED

MILKSHAKE RADIATION
MENDACIOUS REMONSTRANCE
MORPHOLOGY'S ROSARIE
MISTAKEN RECOVERY

completed 1984

bagged professionals
impatient photographers
surround the moment on
the field they fret
and push the tardy
players in this
implacable spectacular

while in the stands
the empty flashes specs
beneath the arc lamps
match the amateurs who
need to stamp their memories
with self-furnished
authenticity

completed c. 1984

This one might be about the 1984 Olympics. It exists only in original handwriting, and I can't readily decipher it all, especially the word after 'self-' in the second-last line.

poets utter epics and
i hear fragments
two lines out of
a stanza one word
out of a phrase decked
with allusion and
dismay

i miss the point the
critics deliver
to their readers and
each other
i am too shallow
to be a writer a
witless reader of words
and textures

who can no more
hear what books may mean
that i can see beyond
the edges of a photograph

completed c. 1984

my poem won't write itself

i want to sing of ancient archosaurs'
transmuted reptilian nature
reflected through their flight
through time

i'm afraid of heights, though,
and envy birds and fear them

so longing all the while for
dinosaurs to praise and cuddle
with
to watch them nest and waddle
through the swamps and glisten

i've spent my effort on the past
and traced the threads of evolution
right through the thin tissue
of my poetry

and cannot come to winged
splendor

neither this nor the last old
egg will hatch

completed 1985

I just read
that Richard Brautigan
died a few days ago,
apparently of "American Lonliness"

according to the obituary he
hadn't written much lately

now I stopped writing
two years ago to play my time away
on honest jobs

but I am happy

so he
muses, wondering
about how good a
writer can be
if he doesn't
die
without
it

and I liked
his books, too

completed 1985

the poem goes

Vinnie Criss
has no teeth

it's not a poem
so much
as grafitti written all
over the walls
in one part of town

a message or

a monument like

Boston cops
suck dick

but more specific and
believable somehow

it's on the
boarded-up store
with the kitty-corner
door-way which is also

property secured by
the rent and tax payers
of Boston

and on the side of
the high brick front
steps of Puritan Ice Cream
(they don't use that
door, either)

and it's all over
an abandoned gas station
and a print shop with
plywood windows
and a black iron
grate door where men
still work printing
something

so i want
to know

who is this Vinnie Criss
and why do i care
about these empty buildings
and neglected walls and
so what about
his missing teeth?

completed 1986-7

Spring separation

from one's life
drawn to new life
and new love

Spring love

the old isolation
grows with the lawns
and the days
and the nights without love

old love lost in time
with

Spring love

even bitterness
fades into Summer

completed 1986-7

silent
like semaphores
are
 full of
meaning

retreating
into the space
between
 night
and delight

angels
weeping

ears ringing

completed 1987

today i saw
a contrail in
the sky
through my
picture window

lined
 up
exactly in
the air with
my neighbor's
tv antenna

 wires in
 vee's all

pointing the
way for the
plane for me
through the
triple pane

to heaven

this is life

completed January, 1988

I loved a sentence once,
but lost it
it was
in an Updike story

I wrote a note to remember it by
and put it in the page but
my note is gone (the page
is lost)

I search the story's sentences
for the combination
that spoke to me
two years ago and, by grace,
I cannot separate the lines

It's all more mellow now

and I miss the feelings I know I had
for 'Augustine's sentence'

nearly perfect

worked on c.1982-88, not complete

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MAJOR GROUPS

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