

12-2000

Teisho of a Tree in Light: A collection of poems

Samuel Arizpe
University of Texas-Pan American

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Arizpe, Samuel, "Teisho of a Tree in Light: A collection of poems" (2000). *Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA*. 393.

https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd/393

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

**TEISHO OF A TREE IN LIGHT:
A COLLECTION OF
POEMS**

A Thesis

by

SAMUEL ARIZPE

**Submitted to The University of Texas-Pan American
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2000

Major Subject: English

TEISHO OF A TREE IN LIGHT:

A COLLECTION OF


POEMS

A Thesis

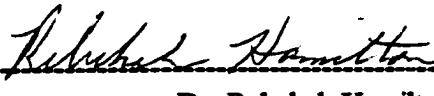
by

SAMUEL ARIZPE

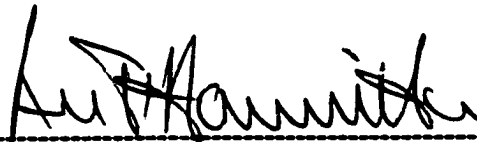
Approved as to style and content by:

 July 10, 2000

**Dr. Rob Johnson
Chair of Committee**

 10 July 2000

**Dr. Rebekah Hamilton
Committee Member**

 7-9-2000

**Dr. Lee Hamilton
Committee Member**

December 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
COPYRIGHT NOTICE.....	vi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. TEISHO.....	19
JOKO IN THE SUN AT NIGHT.....	20
LITTLE BOATS.....	21
TEN FIRS.....	22
FRIDA.....	23
TEISHO OF A TREE IN LIGHT.....	24
CHAPTER III. NOWHERE IS NOW HERE.....	25
AFTER AN HBO SPECIAL.....	26
DHARMA-DROP JOSHU.....	27
LA LUZ DEL YO DE SAN JUAN.....	28
SEEING YOU, MY LOVE.....	29
HAPTIC, SERENE.....	30

AN INNOCENT, A CHILD.....	31
A LOAD OF FUR, A PAIR OF EYES.....	32
TELL ME YOUR HEART IS A HEART.....	33
LA LLORONA.....	34
WHAT WAS IT ABOUT.....	35
THUS FLOWERS AND EVENINGS ARE.....	36
LOS CUATRO BAGATELOS.....	37-38
SOBRE TUMBAS CON ARROZ.....	39-40
ROM.....	41-42
ON A LONG, GREEN LAWN.....	43-45
THE AIRY, LIGHT-FILLED ROOM.....	46-50
CHAPTER IV. MOMENTS DIVINE, MOMENTS FOUGHT.....	51
THE QUERY.....	52
BIG BANDS IN FULL SWING.....	53
AS THOUGH IT WERE SOMETHING.....	54
WHEN ON COMING HOME.....	55
EL LLAMADO ESPERADO.....	56

THE SONG OF ST. THERESE.....	57
ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS.....	58
SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI.....	59
THE BODHISATTVA.....	60
LA ISLA DEL PADRE.....	61
IN THE SECOND SPRING.....	62
CHEERFUL DONA GLADYS.....	63-64
THE GARDEN.....	65-66
OUT OF WHAT WAS.....	67-72
AND SO IT WAS.....	73-77
THE GRASSES KNOW.....	78
SUPPLEMENTARY PAGES.....	79
WORKS CITED.....	79
WORKS CONSULTED.....	80-81
VITA.....	82-83

Copyright
by
Samuel Arizpe
2000

INTRODUCTION

In Hispanic culture, *discernir* and *distinguir* are important verbs.

Discernir means to discern, to see one's way through something by seeing into it. *Distinguir* means to distinguish, to see the subtle differences and shading between things or ideas that are being compared, thought about, or experienced. When used together, as in *discernir y distinguir*, they denote toward life an attitude of total engagement, thoughtful awareness, and a heightened expectancy to what is—or might be—emerging in the present. To *discernir y distinguir*, then, is intimately linked to the reading of one's own existence, to interpreting life for oneself. It is also linked to the experience of life as 'word,' the conviction that all of existence is something in the act of being communicated.

Because I also inherit from Western culture a predilection for experiencing life as energy and message, I take seriously the fact that I exist and that others exist along with me, and that our existences, mysteriously, are interconnected. Consequently, I look for the writing of authors whose own exis-

tence is immediate, passionate, and exploratory; who appreciate subtlety and shading and paradoxes; who express a clarity of vision and pay attention to the details of life without being fastidious, and who reveal intuition and compassion and humor in the presence of irony. I find this passion and subtlety in the poetry of Arthur Sze, Elizabeth Bishop, Mark Strand, and Hilda Morley; in the fiction of Doris Lessing, and Charles Dickens. I have found it in biography, such as Peter Ackroyd's Dickens, Simon Heffer's Moral Desperado: A Life of Thomas Carlyle, and Yogesh Chadha's Gandhi: A Life. It is in Matthew Fox's introduction to, and commentaries on, Meister Eckhart's sermons on creation spirituality, Breakthrough; in Robert Aitken's essays on Zen Buddhism, The Mind of Clover, and Taking the Path of Zen; and in Shunryu Suzuki's informal talks on Zen meditation and practice, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.

I engage strongly with the writing of authors who take up the issues of perception and the boundaries of consciousness--individual and collective. This is why I read the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop. She has a penetrating and detached vision of the natural world: her poems read as though she is simultaneously engaged with the world but does not care, as though her descriptions are of things spied just at the moment of their passing. Bishop's poems

beg the questions: who is this self that is aware, that knows things? And what is this knowledge? Is the world just as I see it? Or do I construct what I see by knowing it? Is it the nature of the self to always want to know? I find two of her poems, “In the Waiting Room” and “One Art” (The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry), especially resonant.

The subject of “In the Waiting Room,” the first poem in Bishop’s *Geography III*, published in 1971, is simple: Bishop describes going to the dentist’s office as a small child with her aunt Consuelo and sitting in the waiting room while her aunt’s teeth are attended to.

In Worcester, Massachusetts,
 I went with Aunt Consuelo
 to keep her dentist’s appointment
 and sat and waited for her
 in the dentist’s room.
 It was winter. It got dark
 early. The waiting room
 was full of grown-up people,
 arctics and overcoats,
 lamps and magazines....
 and while I waited I read
 the *National Geographic*
 (I could read) and carefully
 studied the photographs:
Babies with pointed heads
 wound round and round with string;
 black, naked women with necks
 wound round and round with wire
 like the necks of light bulbs.

Their breasts were horrifying.
I read it straight through. (1-15,16-32)

The experience of seeing pictures of naked African women and of hearing her aunt's cry of pain from the inner office as if it were her own gives the girl a sensation of the strangeness of her existence and of her uncomfortable connection with the rest of humanity. This moment of sudden awareness causes the girl to lose ordinary consciousness and penetrate life more deeply.

Suddenly, from inside,
came an *oh!* of pain
---Aunt Consuelo's voice---
not very loud or long.
I wasn't at all surprised;
even then I knew she was
a foolish, timid woman.
I might have been embarrassed,
but wasn't. What took me
completely by surprise
was that it was *me*:
my voice, in my mouth.
Without thinking at all
I was my foolish aunt,
I--we--we falling, falling,
our eyes glued to the cover
of the *National Geographic*,
February, 1918. (36-54)

As is characteristic of a Bishop poem, and this is its strength, the subject of the poem is grasped through its *deceptively simple surface*. As the poem progresses, paradoxically, this identification with her aunt becomes the

basis of a fall into time, self-consciousness and separateness. Bishop conveys the power of this poem not through excess detail or drama, but through short, relaxed sentences, which is not surprising, given Bishop's tendency toward reticence of self.

In "One Art," the terrifying self-consciousness and otherness of the world that Bishop experienced as a girl in "In the Waiting Room" is mature, Bishop having undergone a lifetime's worth of relationships, travel, homes and, most poignantly, losses:

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three beloved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster. (10-15)

She has reflected on what these places and things and people meant to her. The foundation-shaking realization of the impermanence of the world and of her own mortality described in "In the Waiting Room" has in this poem blossomed into an awareness devoid of self pity that is nevertheless realistic. The poem is a villanelle, a fixed nineteen-line form employing two rhymes and repeating two of the lines according to a set pattern. Line 1 is repeated as lines 6, 12, and 18; line 3 as lines 9, 15, and 19. Bishop's use of repetition

conveys a sense of resignation that borders on serenity. She tells herself what her spirit must have known by now: that she had lived and seen and been seen. The voice is of a woman now, not a girl's. Bishop's mention of losing her mother's watch and of the mother she lost to mental illness is poignant; but as usual, though she does not gloss over the facts Bishop has chosen to *imply* the loss instead of to dwell on it, to allow the external details of the poem to create a feeling of that loss. This poem is emblematic of how Bishop chose to undergo--what she chose to do *with*--this universal fear that was specific to her: to go through it by seeing into it, to *discernir y distinguir*.

The appeal of these poems for me is that they show that Bishop's intellect was sharp and focused, and her taste and hunger for life so intense that her losses and the strangeness of the world she encountered did not stop her from creating a conscious life for herself, thus producing some of the most beautiful poems of this century--all written with a precision of language and a focus on external details, all reflecting an internal emotional realm, all beautifully crafted. The girl in the dentist's office became a supremely-gifted poet who mastered her craft and honed her technique. Always aware of how mercurial "identity" and "consciousness" can be depending on where one is, Bishop made words, images, and nuance her metier for communicating what

she saw of the world. For her, as for me, seeing the world and knowing it are one. Bishop's poems have "meaning," but the poems are the object; they are works of art imbued with meaning. Bishop was adept at using syntax to convey a message, but the message came from inside the poems, requiring from the reader what Bishop had once said she wanted from art and was necessary for its creation: a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration, similar to the Zen Buddhist notion of *samadhi*, meaning concentration or a quality of meditation.

I try to emulate the formal completeness of Bishop's poems, the purity and precision of her descriptions, the masterful way she created--like Mark Strand--a voice with natural-sounding language and simple diction; and I try to remember that outer facts and attention to external details can reveal an internal emotional realm. Bishop's poems reveal her mind in action, and that action consists of apprehending life. Though the 'self' is never the subject of her poems as it was for her contemporaries the confessional poets Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath--Bishop was too modest, too reticent to make herself the subject of her poems--I identify in Bishop's poems an acutely observant self, a wise and compassionate intelligence, and a tendency toward charting the world by being aware of the paradox, the impermanence, we call life,

reality, existence.

I wrote “A Load of Fur, A Pair of Eyes”(p.32), and “When On Coming Home”(p.55) while reading Bishop, and though they are not meant to imitate her, I believe that in some ways they show her influence. “When On Coming Home,” a poem that began as an intuitive grasp of the color green in the western sky, is a fourteen-line condensation of the act of seeing that felt ecstatic. Its formal completeness lies in my continuous linking of color to syntax in order to anchor it in the external details of the sky. With “A Load of Fur, A Pair of Eyes,” I am more oblique about what I want to say because it deals with irony, my realization that the small animal I perceive on the road as dead I also perceive as beautiful. I try to link the images of life and death casually through the look of the poem, the swaying stanzas; and to find a tone of voice that will imply my attitude toward the subject. The external detail of the poem is at once the actual animal I saw on the road, the “load of fur, the pair of eyes,” and the stirring of feeling that the apprehension of death and beauty as one has caused in me.

My engagement with Arthur Sze’s poetry began when I heard him interviewed on NPR’s ‘FreshAir.’ What I heard piqued my interest: a man philosophizing about his perception of the world, with room in his mind for how

others experience it. I immediately ordered his book, The Redshifting Web. When the book arrived--and this surprised me--I trembled. I knew instinctively I was on the verge of discovering a new voice, a new vision, a new language. All of Sze's poems have a sense of mind to them. These lines from his poem, "The String Diamond," show that for Sze mind is subject as well as canvas, experience as well as thought:

In the mind, an emotion dissolves into a hue;
 there's the violet haze when a teen drinks
 a pint of paint thinner; the incarnadined
 when, by accident, you draw a piece of
 Xerox paper across your palm and slit
 open your skin.... (1-6)

The upstairs bedroom filling with the aroma
 of lilies becomes a breathing diamond.
 Can a chrysalis pump milkweed toxins into wings?
 In the mind, what never repeats? Or repeats endlessly?
 (15-18)

To read his poems, then, is to read Sze's mind at that moment that he is aware that he knows something, and one gets a sense of the impermanence of things, and of this paradox: that things are, and that even though they are, they are not, in a constant state of flux. What impresses me, though, is that Sze's poems are aware of this impermanence without being lamentative, that they are testaments to how things are without being dogmatic. In Sze's poet-

ry, 'how things are' is a dynamic, organic state of reality. Lines from "The Leaves of a Dream are the Leaves of an Onion," sections four and six, respectively, show that Sze has a dynamic, organic vision of the universe:

The heat ripples ripple the cactus.
Crushed green glass in a parking lot
or a pile of rhinoceros bones
give off heat, though you might not notice it. (1-4)

Crush an apple, crush a possibility.
No single method can describe the world;
therein is the pleasure
of chaos, of leaps in the mind. (1-4)

There is a reverential, awestruck tone to his poetry, with each poem sounding as though it is a first word, a first impression, a first recognition of life. Sze asks philosophical questions in his poems, and the questions stack up nicely against concrete images of nature: Where does matter end and space begin? What is it like to catch up to light? Do the transformations of memory become the changing lines of divination? Stacked up this way, images and questions borrow from one another: questions about the mind are imaged concretely, environmentally, as natural outcomes of Sze's comprehensive world, and that comprehensive world is dreamy, seemingly made up of random inchoatness, and silent collisions. His affinity with phenomena is very much like the Buddhist teaching of *Dharma*, which means affinity *and* phenomena; and

also the notion of *Karma*, which means the world of cause and effect or affinity. Sze's look into phenomena is a look into the world, or *kensho*, a look into the essential nature of things. This, in turn, is similar to Meister Eckhart's belief in God as "nothing," the force that forms the very fabric of nature, of phenomena, and that is expressed as that phenomena's creative energy.

Two of my poems are a direct result of reading Arthur Sze: "Garden" (p.65) and "La Isla del Padre"(p.61). "Garden," the first of the two to come, was written as an experiment with a more natural, organic style of imagery, with the images creating an internal environment of color and sound. "La Isla" is also composed of organic imagery but is formatted to look ample and sound meditative. Both poems show an element of narrative. In "Garden," I am straightforward, relying on words to create a sense of passion through narrative; but in "Isla," I use words to give it the color of a painting, which is apropos to its subject, the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

I also count among the influences on my poetry, St. John of the Cross, a sixteenth-century Carmelite monk who is considered one of Spain's greatest lyric poets. He assisted St. Teresa of Avila in the reformation of their religious order, which had lapsed from its charism of contemplative prayer. As a result of this involvement John was resented and, in some monasteries, vili-

fied. Toward the end of his life he was abducted by fellow-Carmelites and whisked away to a monastery in a remote corner of Spain, after which many people thought John was dead. There, in retaliation for his efforts to bring the Carmelite order back to simplicity and prayer, he was imprisoned in a cell six feet wide and ten feet long that was originally intended as a closet. Twice a day he was brought out to kneel before the community, beaten, slapped, and spat upon. During these months of captivity John's experience of the 'nada,' the great paradox he had often preached and written about, deepened: John began to know God as the nothing that is all and in all; as a void that seemed to him like an abandonment and a darkness which was finally revealed to be light, for it is God. This experience of absolute nothingness left John incapable of knowing God as concept, and he finally sank into God irrevocably, without conceptualization.

The influence of John of the Cross upon my poetry comes by way of this 'nada,' the nothing that was central to his teaching and writing. John's treatment of it in his poem "The Dark Night" opened the way for me to write about what I had experienced but had not discerned for myself: God is paradox beyond paradox; God does not originate in me. The beauty of "Dark Night," an allegory in which the lover, the soul, sings of its good fortune in

having been united with her Beloved, God, lies in its simple language and form: it consists only of eight stanzas, each having five verses, with an ababb rhyme scheme. One *sees* the rhyme but *hears* it as a wall of soft sound, as of whispers or the waters of streams. The sound of soft words that John creates is an ingenious combination of masculine and feminine rhyme in the same word—as in this series of words from stanza 1:

En una noche oscura
 Con ansias en amores inflamada
 —Oh dichosa ventura!—
 Salí sin ser notada,
 Estando ya mi casa sosegada. (1-5)

The 'nada' that John wrote about in-forms my poems as space and air, as hunger, discernment, and curiosity; it is the form, intelligence, and content of my poems. His influence on me shows especially in poems like "The Grasses Know"(p.78), "La Isla del Padre," "Thus Flowers and Evenings Are" (p.36), and "Bodhisattva"(p.60). "Grasses"was the first poem in which I began to speak about God and to approximate the nada, "the constant bobbing in the constant sea/of the ever rare, the never me." I am more overt about it in "La Isla," wherein I have Frida Kahlo tell Diego of a dream that tells her of "a nothing she paints and always feels." "Flowers and Evenings" shifts this sense of nada and gives it an organic feeling by saying of beautiful things that

it is “as though it were a law that what is, if it is beautiful, must glow inside itself and not know what it does when it is.” In “Bodhisattva,” for the first time I call the ‘nada’ a void, an oblivion into which I throw my cross and “take out God.” “Take out God” is meant to imply a rubbing out, a killing of God, and to imply a sense of illogic, a picture of the ‘invisible’ God as something removed from a place—the nada— that has no locus.

I began reading and wanting to write poetry (I cannot write poetry without reading it, and cannot read it without feeling moved in some way, in some direction) as a high school student at Central Catholic in San Antonio, Texas, when I came upon T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Until then, I had only read conventional poetry and had acquired—inherited, perhaps—the misperception that a poem, if it was “good,” had to teach me something, and that I had to decipher its meaning. That is, it had to be applicable and pragmatic. With “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” I departed from my usual way of reading a poem. Suddenly I had no interest in finding meaning in it, for the poem itself was the meaning. “Prufrock” was a concrete representation of something that I intuited in and through the poem itself. It was applicable and pragmatic to me as no other poem had been, composed as it was of a brilliant color (“the yellow fog”) and metaphor (“that rubs its back

upon the window panes,/ the yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle”) and a voice of a man I recognized in myself. The poem’s pattern of action awakened in me an emotional response. Everything about the poem—its irregularly-shaped stanzas, the questions (“And indeed there will be time/To wonder, ‘Do I dare?’ and, ‘Do I dare?’”)—made specific sense to me from a place I had not known before. Since then I find that a poem expresses emotions in the form of art if it transmits feelings to me without being a direct statement of emotion, what Eliot refers to in his essay, “Hamlet,” as the objective correlative. I believe my poems communicate feeling, not specific emotions, and are my way of being in the world.

“As Though It Were Something”(p.54), a poem I began writing toward the end of 1999 and finished in early 2000, is an example of how I found a poem’s objective correlative. For months I had wanted to put into words the feelings of contentment and sadness that seized me whenever I walked in my garden at night. In the process of discerning my feelings, I realized that my own internal emotional realm was inseparable from that of the garden, and that I had to try to express this symbiosis. After trying different looks for the poem (I find sometimes that the intuition of a poem is also the search for its form, and that form and essence are one) in order to convey a simplicity of

perception and a depth of feeling, I decided to keep the form of the poem simple. By keeping it simple, I hit upon its own formula, that set of objects I saw in the garden that felt imbued with significance. These I linked up with 'objects' such as lamb, blood, purity, mist, and soul. The concatenation of these image/objects form the poem's chain of events:

The garden has had blood in it all day.
 Washed clean, as it were, by a lamb.
 Between two branches that move,
 A web shakes softly. It is round
 And has something in the center.
 Here there is no monstrance, no
 Altar, no wind, just the strangeness
 Of life, the purity that is everywhere.
 Under a mesquite tree, a cat languishes
 Orange and true. The grass, no visible
 And invisible, grows, and the mist again
 Drops as though it were something
 And nothing, as though it were a soul.

Elizabeth Bishop, Arthur Sze, St. John of the Cross, and T.S. Eliot have all left their mark on me in some way. Bishop's famous "eye," her gift for descriptive detail, in my opinion, is a form of wisdom, similar to the wisdom of St. John of the Cross; conversely, the wisdom of John of the Cross is an ability to see through the beauty of this world and appreciate its impermanence and volatility, as Elizabeth Bishop did. Both poets inspire me to continue looking at and listening to a world that is simultaneously confusing, exhilarating,

arating, mysterious and sad; and they confirm what I had always intuited: life and poetry are one; to write is to develop consciousness. All four poets show a remarkable capacity for tolerance, for experiencing the world *as it is*, not as they want it to be. I like that Arthur Sze's sense of wonder, his vision of the world is as comprehensive and direct, as universally subtle as Eliot's; and that the 'nada' of St. John of the Cross is T.S. Eliot's wasteland, a world of blessing and curse, a void. Our word 'religion' comes from *religio*, a Latin word meaning 'a binding.' I believe that Arthur Sze, John of the Cross, T. S. Eliot, and Elizabeth Bishop were bound to the world by their ability to experience life immediately, without prejudice. They practiced an intelligent awareness of the world, themselves, and of others. Each of these poets is an intelligent, compassionate participant in life. They all show me that poetry, if it is rooted in truth, is not passive but literate, aware, participatory.

In his eponymous New Testament letter addressed to Hebrew Christians who were experiencing extreme persecution, James tells them that in order to face their hardships with dignity and courage they should ask for a practical knowledge of God, so that life and steadfastness can be as one for them. For Elizabeth Bishop, John of the Cross, Arthur Sze, and T.S. Eliot, life was not generic or abstract, and they were all steadfastly *practical* in their

discernment of life. Existence elicited feeling from them and they translated that emotion into art.

In as much as they show my tendency to see the individual at the center of life and to look to nature for a revelation of the truth, my poems fall within the Romantic tradition of Western Literature—with a twist: they also show a strong Eastern influence, in particular, of Zen Buddhism. As a member of the Missionary Brothers of Charity, an order founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta to serve the poorest of the poor, I practiced *zazen*, sitting meditation, at a *dojo*, a Zen training center in Los Angeles; and, along with vows of Christian religious life, I professed the “Three Pure Precepts” of Zen Buddhism: to renounce all evil, practice all good and to save all beings. The title of this collection of poems, ‘Teisho of a Tree in Light,’ shows that influence. *Teisho* is a dharma talk by a Zen master in which he expounds on the affinity of all phenomena and essential emptiness. ‘Tree of light,’ I now consider a visual remnant of Guatama Siddhartha’s bodhi tree. “Nowhere is Now Here,” the title of the second section of poems, is my way of playing with my awareness of impermanence and paradox, an awareness heightened by my practice of *zazen* and my reading of the seventeenth-century Japanese Zen poet, Basho.

II. TEISHO OF A TREE IN LIGHT

joko in the sun at night

**Somehow
those lips
and that leg
and those pants
did not go the way
of love (intransigent, guilty).
They broke
the brilliance
of one sun
and did not weep.
They woke
as they went the way
of things, to sleep.**

LITTLE BOATS

**What if you said no and nothing
Ever came, nothing appeared**

**Or ever went. What would it
Be like inside. Like nothing**

**Inside nothing? Dark ember
And umber walls? A hundred**

**Fishes and little peeks at
Little dishes? It would be**

**Dark. It would be blue. You
Looking at me looking at you.**

**Nothing the size of rings, and
nets. Hands in things. What**

**Life besets. That is what, if
You said no. If nothing ever**

**Came, or ever went. If life
had not. That is what. Throats.**

Sinking silence. Little boats.

TEN FIRS

**If such is the glory, the glory
of something that passes, what
is the glory of something staying
still?**

**If it is resplendent and yellow
as the wings of a bird, its cage,
its bill.**

**If the fading glory passes, if
each veil is put to rest, of
what use white rocks? Of what
use vapors on hot days?**

Perhaps.

**Perhaps to notice the dangling
of ten firs in ten ways.**

Frida

**Frida's red, at the top of a rock;
White, in light of the glare of a block.**

**She's green, yellow, soft, spinning, touching,
Blue, dark, and big. There are bits of Frida rushing.**

**Frida's looking out and down at the town that made
Her see and paint and talk again. She had been sad, afraid**

**She might not, could not, would not start to walk. She spins
And spins and spins. Thrushes dive, clouds expand. Winds**

**Rush up and hurry past. Joyous, loving, peaceful wind that saw
Her pinned. That pulled her out and stayed within. Now all**

**Is clear: Frida's here, at the head of the top of a rock.
She's white in the light of the glare of a block.**

**She's green, yellow, soft, spinning, touching,
Blue, dark, and big. Look at Frida look at me, rushing**

**Up to talk to me: "Dieguito, qué paz profunda siento. Qué alegría
Profunda se colocó en mí. Dieguito, amor mío, te doy mi valentía."**

Teisho of a Tree In Light

**I see niceties of all kinds.
I see niceties lasting unto daybreak,
And the color of red and the color of a deep,
Bunting blue.**

**I see you: not you the thing on top, but a
Simple, placid you come through.**

**All along the route you make to me, I see
A simple, sitting, stunning tree.**

I hear a calling.

**A calling not spoken, not heard, but pushed
Through by fingers and by word into the singing
And the calm of a lesser, wiser, bitter bird.**

Is that it?

**That I should come and you should hear?
That I should pass to a wiser, lesser, bitter year
And still slough and still cough and still be you?**

The true you:

**The come quick, not slick, near me, in a glory
And a pattern you.**

III. NOWHERE IS NOW HERE

After an HBO Special on Mental Illness

**You think, 'If only I knew: why does my mind fall on itself,
Conflate what it is, then pull back to a void and die?'**

dharma-drop joshu

**In the past days
Of moon's blue, I knew,
I could swallow, I spoke.
Look, not that my mind awoke,
But it does not sleep at all these days.
It does not cry; but how it wonders why.
Why a desert? Why a sun? To where, this down-bound
Taste of love with you? What really has begun?
When the edge is burning and it is white and collected,
To where those stones, the used-to-be, the I-was-me?**

La Luz del Yo de San Juan

**I
forget: I
Too once was
Sacred, blanched invisible; I
Once was, I want to
Be, what always is, what has
Been me: the joy of God that
Sprays God where God is: a void, a
Silent bliss. I forget: this night is day, day
Is night, a star of such shine that what shines
Has always shone, always shines: light of God in God alone.**

Seeing You, My Love

I thought that I might see it all,
If only I had seen at all.

I thought that I would see it die,
If only I had had an eye.

I thought that I could see it show,
If only I had seen it grow.

I thought that yellows had to be,
If only just to help me see.

I thought of thoughts inside the mind,
If only just to see their kind.

I thought of rain inside of snow,
If only just to see me know.

I thought of seeing you, my love,
If only just to ask, what of ?

Haptic, Serene

**It appears it has gone, or, in your case, come this far
From the shallows, the deeps, the greens and grays that overlap**

**First in thought, then in dreams, then in caps of soft sounds
Over that pole of want that hovers, first in what is, then in what seems.**

**You deemed it this way, the way of shamans, so I would look into you
But not see, with the eyes you took from me, when on coming out,**

**I began to think, and thought to be eponymous and still, to be to stars
What stars are to night, to be light, then nothing, then this: exactly,**

**No more, no less, the colors of the sky at dusk, for as long as it lasts
Where it is: first lilac, then white, then lilac in white, and white in lilac:**

Haptic, serene--and, though complete--without agenda, like you.

An Innocent, a Child

Do you find, when you look, that words

**Are racks of want and need for what someone took
When you could not define with your brilliance**

**This theft thrown on you so early in life, as a fat man
Might who rapes, then escapes,**

Hidden, mystified, fed and glorified by guilt

Wrought by him, and thought of him by you,

**My innocent, my child, as the dark you were ever, or ever
Will be afraid of, not by him, but by what you do when**

You look, and need, and want your self:

Not mystified, not fed, not glorified, not for what

**You are, but what comes when you are;
Not lost because you lose but what comes when you choose:**

Unmystified, unjustified, unglorified: an innocent, a child.

A Load of Fur, A Pair of Eyes

It is not ritual, but it could, the going in,
 The coming up, and wishing
 Well, and 'think I should?' (Seeing lights
 And stars and fields and woods as things

That break, as things that are completely
 Should) says that at night, in an idyllic
 Sight, young life (pulsed, pushed, or pulsed
 And pushed) is a flame in a flame, and a bush;

Is so pushed and so pulsed, that a road,
 In the middle, is a load of fur, a pair of eyes
 And legs, where it has come and now it dies
 As that which is and slowly tries. (Knowing

Lights and fields and woods as things that
 Are completely could): I say, it should have
 Stayed still at night, in a bush, and had sight,
 Not to see far, but for things as they are as

They hop at will to light; or, frozen, stand
 A'fright in the spray of that yellow in beams
 That strike (to hairs and legs and eyes) what
 Once was, what is, what seems.

Tell Me Your Heart Is a Heart

**You must tell me of the poetry of your mind.
You must say how it is done in, and how it comes
And, when ready, how it quietly disappears.**

**And how it is you live with the knowledge that,
As part of it, you too come, and you too go,
And someday you will disappear, having known,
Having seen, having been.**

**Tell me your heart is a heart. Tell me your mind
Is a moment, all moments, sharp, supine, erect,
And very green and very still.**

**Tell me, poet, man, child, say that it matters
That I am, that it has always been, it will always be,**

**And, though blind, that I will, at times, sometimes
See, like you: wise, privileged, alert as What Is is
To What Is.**

**Like the cold and old white, white stars that sometimes
Are eyes, sometimes holes and, sometimes, lights
In the sky that are dark.**

**Like you in the dark of the light of the half you behold
When you are, by means of two, just one: not thetic,
But eidetic, and calm.**

La Llorona

Each day, when Lila does what she does, some dreams drop away.

She walks on roads looking for dogs to see if they're dead.

You can see her at night.

Because of how she walks at night, Mexicans here call her
La Llorona, the crier that floats on rivers and lakes looking for
The children she is supposed to have drowned.

Now in true Taoist form she appears contradictory, admirable.

Each day, when Lila does what she does, the hairs of the
Dogs she prods for love stick up, and she can tell when they droop
If this is the day crippled children in Kosovo live or die.

All days and all walls and all hearts are hers.

Each part in each mind would rather die than not make, with full force,
Only once, the orange, wet clay she bakes on dots, and puts on rocks,
To lend them spots.

She knows when they shine that they shine to break, like stars
On tops of lines in lakes, like the silence that dying of children makes.

And she knows when they are what makes them be.

Now, in true Taoist form, she starts to see that whatever it is,
It is all imaginary, real, and free.

What Was It About

**What
was it about
his
blue that drew
me
to respond to
the man
that
walked by,
Looking
at me, telling
me
by what
he
saw that,
as he
Walked
by and talked
and
asked why
and
then laughed,
He,
gentle man,
loving
father, heart of
gold,
was also, like
me,
involved, irate, and,
finally,
About
to do something?**

Thus Flowers and Evenings Are

This is
 the soft thud
 of flowers. The center
 and silence
 and row of hours
 Where they
 erase what they
 know of themselves (and
 their purple) and still are
 purple, still grow,
 and
 Know
 in a glance
 (Off a
 tree and a pool)
 Of their chance,
 their ways
 that seem, always,
 simultaneous,
 old, as if
 it were a
 law that what is,
 If it
 is beautiful, must glow
 inside itself,
 and not know, at all,
 what it does
 when it is.
 Thus flowers and evenings are.
 Their center, their meaning,
 their way to be
 when made to be,
 are leaning
 In
 light, and for once,
 night is
 a real space, a real place.

Los Cuatro Bagatelos

1.

For months now
Clouds in the
Sky have been
Round. They've buried
Themselves, and laugh.
They throw themselves,
Say what is,
Rescind themselves and
Play. They suggest
And point. They
Make a white,
An effulgent gray.

2.

It's a wishing gift, a child, a moon, a tree.
And it has come. First, in the frost to converge,
Then to sing when you see--through a limb on
A hill--a tall, dark tree, the moon, a shell, the sea.

3.

If the green in the eye of the hair assembles,
Then this is the air of air in pockets that come down,
Which resembles an aureole of light in a town of lights:
Like sprays and ways of the sky, like color
And a thunder that dissembles.

(“Cuatro” cont.)

4.

I will tell you
Now that the time
In my mind is
Real, and that of
All the shades in
My hand, this one
Is most blue, and
The one I love.
I will tell you
Of time as though
It were time, as
Though its name were
Tongue and at last
It had come from
Afar and the dark.

Sobre Tumbas con Arroz

**Qué
triste la vez
que vi un mundo profundo
en mí.**

**A
la vez profunda
y superficial, esa
vez triste
e inicial.**

**¿Qué
mundo quiere
que inicie, yo, la voz
de su superficie?**

**(Sobre
tumbas y camposantos
y piedras con arroz)**

**A
esa voz
feroz color de rosa
en vasos de pasos sonantes,**

**Que
vi y conocí, a la vez
profunda y superficial,
triste
e inicial, de dos
colores: (verde y azul marino)
y buen olores (gardenias.)**

(“Tumbas” cont.)

A
la voz
del invisible: nada puede
ante ti, indivisible,
toz feroz; nadie quiere más

Que
lo que das. (Das nada.)

Mas un olor, mas un color:
(amarillo e instante): sobresale
y sonante. Mas las rosas
y las cosas de dos
tumbas y un color, mas la ola
de la ola de
las olas del sudor, mas las
olas del amor.

ROM

**Whether you call or not
disappeared, and I was left
thinking
of course
what it might be at last,
and what might have come**

**Had you had yourself to see
as the plastic faces rom
their way
in, while
you ghosted the panels
with surveys and data and programs**

**You bought while shopping alone
in that area of memory-- main,
auxiliary, ram--
where your
even, dark truths are kept
in storage, giving the illusion of**

**Virtual memory, when it is just jocked
around for fun at a very serious
rate of speed,
and shades of dark-
ness queue up to be used, until
you remember: multi-tasking and**

**Allocation of resources allow you
to run parallel programs
inside yourself,
for a while,
and you may high-level
language yourself in, but, still, what**

(“Rom”cont.)

**Remains is real: an operating system
with sub-components whose heart,
programmed to compile,
assembles and fetches
and executes itself over
and over again until you know, whether**

**You call or not, the same darkness of
memory, the same register, the
binary code
of wishes erased,
(sadly, not to hurt, but from
apathy, an overrun in your sector,**

**Your track, and your name, from fear
and hurt, and shame)
as bits do when
they're told
to run until, suddenly, old,
the task complete, it's begun:**

**The silence of something silent and
perfect, something done,
as sources
and objects
do when they merge toward
tasks, no questions asked, not stupid,**

**Just focused: on their way, sent to,
brought back and, needed,
they go tumbling
and, bright, they are
lights, sparks, a touch that
once it knows, prints itself, and goes.**

On a Long, Green Lawn in Palacios, Texas

**He
is, in
one of them,**

**On
a long,
green lawn**

**In
Palacios, Texas,
the town of**

**His
start, by
Matagorda Bay.**

**He's
intent, looking
at the Kewpie**

**Of
bald nose
and head I**

**Laid
at his
feet. His fingers**

**Just
sprang open.
(These photographs are**

**As
much about
these splendid things**

**As
they are
about the short**

("Palacios" cont.)

Hair
that his
head now shows

As
glows.) The
lush, newly-sprung,

Alert,
intent grasses
swoosh and turn

and
curl up,
like cypresses Van Gogh

Painted
in Arles
one night with

Stars.
all this
swooshing, leaning grass

Express
my child's
intent (Tao-intended)

To
love, to
live and love.

(His
long, thin,
splendid things are

(“Palacios”cont.)

**The
time of
tendrils being sweet,**

**The
sun’s translucent
light on leaves**

**Makes
his mind
and spirit meet.)**

The Airy, Light-Filled Room

1.

**This
airy, light-filled
room Annie's
in is it.**

**Where
momma brought
Rudy to
thirty years
ago**

**When he
was sick with
pneumonia and almost
died.**

**The
one she
lived in
beside him for
five weeks.**

**Now
Annie's dying.**

Her cancer spread.

She has a month. Maybe two.

Maybe.

**(Yes
and each
red tile on each
roof of this**

(“Light-filled” cont.)

place is a talisman

in the evening
sun, whose glow will
know)

Annie’s dying has begun.

2.

Of
all
our friends,

she’s the most beautiful.

Deeply
dark, chocolate-skinned,

merciful.

She brings us potatoes.

She calls momma “Ms.” Santos.

She’s never liked wearing shoes.

(Big Daddy,
her grandpa, liked
to feel
grass or sand
on the soles of his feet.)

Somehow,
through her, love and mercy meet.

("Light-filled" cont.)

3.

(Yes
and each
red tile on each
roof of this
place is a talisman
in the evening
sun, whose glow will
know)

That Annie's dying has begun.

4.

(And
dying's medicinal,
ephemeral,
chimerical.

(A nothing.)

A sea in which everyone drowns.

(A nothing.)

The sea in which everyone lives.

A void?

The void.

In which everyone is?

Ground of groundless ground.

(“Light-filled” cont.)

5.

Annie
died on a

sunny cold day.

She
had been dreaming
and at one

point

shot

out of bed,
bolting for the window,

screaming, ‘Let’s get the

hell

out of here.’

She grabbed
a nurse by the neck
from behind

when

that nurse

tried stopping her.

We
pryed open Annie’s hands

from

(“Light-filled” cont.)

the nurse’s neck,

her

grip was so tight.

In
bed, lucid again,

she

smiled,

and leaned

forward, then died.

6.

Annie was buried on a cold sunny day.

Our breath made smoke.

Leaves fell.

Her cortege went by our house.

7.

(Yes,
dying’s medicinal,
ephemeral,
chimerical.

A nothing

(The sea) in which everyone drowns.

IV. MOMENTS DIVINE, MOMENTS FOUGHT

The Query

**Why do you hate it
When, at the coffee shop,
Walking by, I see you and stop,
And, shaking your hand, I make this query:
'How are you, love, how've you been?'
Then walk off smiling, waving, in a hurry.**

Big Bands, Full Swing

**In the center of a town's square, the noise of big bands
In full swing meets the recurring desire of love; dry blasts
Of desert air sear themselves into images, and green tufts--
High and wispy--of a grass under the poppies coalesce with
A smell of crawfish in the water of a ditch after a storm,
Where boys tell themselves to swish through, and the mud
Swishes through their toes. But the acid tones. The acid tones
Of life: these are the remnants, the original bang of desire
In one time that is still itself. This is wrapped in something
Of desire and tapped as surface by mind, and loved as love.**

As Though It Were Something

The garden has had blood in it all day.

Washed clean, as it were, by a lamb.

Between two branches that move,

A web shakes softly. It is round

And has something in the center.

Here there is no monstrance, no

Altar, no wind, just the strangeness

Of life, the purity that is everywhere.

Under a mesquite tree a cat languishes

Orange and true. The grass, now visible

And invisible, grows, and the mist again

Drops as though it were something

And nothing, as though it were a soul.

When On Coming Home

**When, on coming home at dusk, you see a padded green
In the western sky, and a white and a gold that had once
Been white and once been gold, and under it all, an orange
That has the feel of orange, and it is orange, and a white
Crane flies unaware, gaunt, long-legged, and pure, and you
Think, 'Ah, this is language for my heart, my eyes: this is
Language that never dies,' and you see in the sky a green
Like the dark green of feathers of ducks on breasts of ducks
Skimming waters, and a slither, just a slither, of a blue that
Will take over, and be, it, the sky, or the lack of sky profound
And deep as minds, you will see a quivering, a trembling of
The light, and suddenly strings of violet will meet the white,
And silence spread, and spread this light, and, Joseph, it will
Turn to bright, this gathering, this sinking, of dusk to night.**

El Llamado Esperado

1.

En el sueño, vi lo que nunca había visto:
Mi mente como ella misma, y por primera vez
Cesó de querer ser; mi corazón era el corazón
De todos, y mi alma sin reflejo; mi cuerpo
Era mi cuerpo, llevándome, compartiéndome;
No mordí la ilusión que soy un fragmento, un
Fragmento de algo, y que hubo un tiempo cuando
Era yo completo, y que he sido expulsado, que
Tengo que vagar, esperando mi llamado.

2.

I saw in the dream what I had never seen:
My mind as itself, and for the first time
It stopped wanting to be; my heart was the
Heart of all, and my soul had no reflection;
My body was my body, taking me, sharing me;
And I did not bite into the illusion that I am
A fragment, a fragment of something, and that
There was a time when I was complete, and that
I have been expelled, and that I am wandering,
Waiting, listening for my calling.

The Song of St. Therese of Lisieux

**Inside roses of the mind, life is rhetoric,
Life is blind, in the roses of the mind.**

**In the roses of the mind, life is bright and long and kind.
It sees itself, though blind, go stare and stand
And play behind a bright and daring dying mind.**

**In the roses of the mind, the colors of the mind itself
Are what is bright and kind and long, are what is here
And what is gone, what shifts and builds and moves along.**

**Inside roses of the mind is such beauty of such kind
That those who dare to go, go blind, can stare
And stand and play behind a daring beauty of the mind.**

**Those who stare and stand behind this daring beauty
Of the mind will stare and be and still they see
A daring kind, a daring find, roses, in the roses of the mind.**

St. John of the Cross

**In this darkness, I hear the cooing of doves,
The fluttering of wings.
The words I uttered long ago come back: 'Existence is nothing.'
I pass through myself into God,
And all I ever said of God is true and untrue.**

**From this darkness, where I sit and stand alone,
I hear the footsteps of those who come to make me
Kneel on cold stone among monks while they eat.**

**Each monk, when he finishes, will walk by and slap me
For bringing our order of Carmelites to simplicity.**

The sense of who I am floats away like a string.

**At night, on my side, I lie near the hole I have begun to make
In the wall of this closet.**

I hear a hiss of air, I smell dirt mixed with rain.

**I want to see the sun's light at dusk, as I once did walking
Near the river, making notes of my thoughts of God.**

No one knows that I drown in God.

Saint Francis of Assisi

**When the Nothing that is really nothing
Bore into Francis,
It left five wounds that reminded everyone
Of Christ.**

**People said that Francis was truly like Christ,
A reflection of the goodness of God.**

**But Francis felt embarrassment,
For nothing in him reflected God,
Who cannot be reflected,
Does not tempt, and is never tempted.**

**So Francis asked God to take away these wounds.
God did not comply.**

**God said, 'Francis, you asked me to make
You a worthy servant, to take you into Nothingness
Where there is no ambition but the ambition of love,**

**And no dying but the dying to self:
So I am making you worthy
And I shall not take away these wounds from you.
They will remind you of me. I am Nothing.'**

And Francis drowned in the sea of love.

The Bodhisattva

**Tonight I wonder if others wonder what to do
With themselves.**

**The small pops of sound that had come from the kitchen
Ceased when I turned on the light, as though
They had heard me approach with the intent of stopping them.**

**I want to stop the fast and furious world
That scares me now.**

**Tonight I hear them again: accusations, losses of innocence
Effected by men with large hands on the hills of a country,
My country, whose hills are green.**

**I hear wails as bodies not souls are opened in ravines, as
Children still in mothers are untimely born, bloodless, bloody.
As semen, the pleasure of it, registers.**

If all is the void, does Nothing know what happens?

**Does Nothing know that I am tired, that mothers continue
In the face of death, that there is suffering always and everywhere?**

Has nothing ever felt Anything?

He said, let him take up his cross and follow me.

I threw my cross into the void and took out God.

**Since then, every baby shot, every woman raped, every man
Dismembered, anyone forgotten, is a flower, a poem, a song.**

La Isla del Padre

**On a hill in Marfa, near red-clay roads,
 I laugh and tell time by looking at the sky:
 It is cobalt, it is black, it rains. Frida tells
 Diego of a dream that tells her of a nothing
 She paints and always feels. "Yes, Frida,"
 Says Diego, "All things are life, all things
 Are ebullient and bare; life is austere,
 Effulgent; it is beautiful, a blank void."
 She wants to tell him, but cannot, of what
 She thinks, of what she felt when she
 Saw a mouse whisked away by an owl
 With great wings, illuminated by light
 From the earth. She wants to think of love,
 Of what she knows and cannot say:
 That the red clay of the road she is on is
 Barren; that she feels the royal blue, the
 Purple, the black of the night sky in a
 Deep and concave place inside her; that she
 Is haunted by the beauty of the dead
 Horses she saw in the grasses of the fields;
 And that she remembers the time she sat atop a sand dune
 At a beach in La Isla del Padre, her shorts
 At her ankles, missing Diego, mesmerized
 By the blue and greyish gold of the gloaming
 Sky, the crescent moon, and the evening star.**

In the Second Spring

In the same hall of other thoughts and another kind,
 The laughing of nuns walking about in a room, alone,
 Causes the dreamy sound of their heels to settle on,
 And become, the radiance of a dry scone on a plate,
 And a child's young fingers to open, and a cup
 To drift through the hills to the sound of a pup
 That sniffs around, oblivious, and enthralled
 As moments made for those who are called
 But are lost in variance, and vicissitude, and thought,
 Moments divine, moments fought.
 Such the dry fingers of bones that were,
 Those who huddled and planned and saw to concur
 On which course the world would be,
 The posing of questions and the effort to see,
 And the heels in their minds,
 The love for variance and the display of kinds.
 Such the dreamy sound and the dry scone,
 The color of rivers, a color of stone,
 The wills of those who will themselves but never are,
 The losing and the winning and the far
 Islands of love that come as the call
 Of mind to mind, and the stringing of words
 For time, words for when time was time.
 In early summer, when the sun of the Trollius Europaeus
 Marks the Barren Strawberry with its moon and goes away,
 Dipping and singing like nuns laughing in a room, alone,
 As young flowers among flowers that live and die are known,
 There is a sweetness in the hills where the sound of the pup
 Sniffing and barking breaks open a cup.
 Those who are called and enthralled are made round,
 Those caught in variance, vicissitude, and thought
 Break open like moments, moments divine, moments fought.
 And from old gardens the Chelidoniums escape
 To wooded sites. In the second spring they are erect.

Cheerful Doña Gladys

**Cheerful Doña Gladys walks barefoot,
Talking as she mops the floor,
And tells me of a child she miscarried
While on her way here, a boy.**

**“Yo sé que él es un angelito y que él
Está con su tata Dios.”**

**I am surprised to hear her say ‘tata’
Instead of ‘padre,’ for ‘tata’ has
A beautiful ring to it: of intimacy
And beauty, a gentle and kind familiarity,**

**And the softness that men have
In their hands.**

**Doña Gladys had planned
To name him Miguel Corazón,
In the hopes that, once here, he would
Grow in freedom and be as creative
As Michelangelo and have the sweetness,
The courage, of Jesus in his heart.**

**“Yo no creo que la muerte viene de Dios,
Porque Dios nos hizo a todos, y todos
Morimos porque somos y vivimos, no
Porque Dios lo manda.”: “I do
Not believe that God sends death to us.
God made us all and we die
Because we are, because we live
And exist, not because God wants us to die.”**

**And now I read that a Honduran woman
Spent six days floating on the open sea,
On a makeshift raft, and that she screamed
And sang praises and, with her whole heart,
Begged God to save her, and she was saved.**

(“Gladys” cont.)

**But her husband and children died: all
Swept or hurled away by the hurricane
That blew her out to sea.**

**When asked how she survived,
She says she survived only because
God held her tightly in his arms,
As she held her son until she was too
Weak to hold him or withstand the great
Pounding of winds and rain, the crashing
Chaos, everything around her.**

**She begged a bird near her to take her
To land, and that’s when a helicopter,
Looking for the rich in their yachts,
Saw her instead, and she was saved.**

The Garden

Aware of the beauty of the garden,
I stand and give thanks for the power that quivers in it now.

A butterfly flits about the citrus trees a few feet
Above the new damp earth, and I feel
It was all done in love by the gardener from Chiapas
Who works here now. He tells me about Miguel, a boy
Who died of heat prostration, alone in the brush
Just north of here, "su estómago lleno de bichos."

When he says 'bicho' instead of 'lombriz,' I am transfixed.

I feel the presence of Diego, the seminarian I knew
Who was abducted under cover of night
In the highlands of Guatemala near Quezaltenango
And dragged down ravines and up hills and never seen again.

But the death squad nailed his severed hands
To a tree: warning his people to shut up and go their way.

Once, after making love, we lay in his bed, laughing,
For down the hall we heard footsteps of men running to class.
And then, suddenly, beautifully, he rose again.

Holding my hands, he said, "You must believe, Guillermo, that God
Is a garden; no one is ever exiled from the garden, ever."

I know that now. I know that the communion of saints is love.
Love in the hands, Love in the feet, Love in the eyes,
Love in the brutally busted mouth of a saint.

I do not know God now, but I remember you, Diego.

("Garden" cont.)

I know that you gently traced a circle around
My eyes with the finger you sometimes angrily pointed at others
When they said that a priest's place is at home.
I know that you stood naked at the foot of our bed,
Crying, that you sat by me when I told you, and only you,
Of this eternal sadness that I sometimes think love is,
And that you asked me, begged me, to leave now, so that

I might be safe, so that you might see me again and love me again.

I know what I know now: the little, white, yellow and green
Butterflies flitting about are joyous and joyful,
Living and unconscious, as most beautiful things are.

I know the smell of the earth under the citrus trees.
I know you at the window of our small room, standing,

Looking at the hills, and the highlands beyond the hills,

Thinking, thinking of what it meant to choose life now
During war, to choose me and your love for me

And the alertness, the awareness that love makes in those that love.

Out of What Was

1.

Today he speaks to the wife of a man who died.
 She says between sobs, "I'm so upset with him;
 If he'd only taken better care of himself he'd be
 Here with me." Then, as quickly as they come,
 Her sobs stop, she smiles, reaches with both
 Hands and pulls back, carefully, slowly, strands
 Of long hair. He's seen this gesture: his sister
 Used to ake a bobbypin, put it between her teeth,
 Pry it open, and pin it to her hair.

2.

He is startled. The anger in this widow has changed to
 Grief so fast. He starts the commentary he does when he is
 Faced with irony, when he is in the presence of something
 He distrusts, and is serious, but wants to burst out laughing
 From sheer nervousness. He thinks, "Cry, or wail, but for God's
 Sake don't sit there and rehearse your moves with me; this
 Is serious; this is real." But what is real here? Is she, awkward
 And stiff, real? Is he?

3.

He sees this, too: how, if he listens, and looks, and sits still,
 As he does now with her, he sees how things converge and
 Lead out, and cease and start, as though things were one,
 And he, man and mind, were in them, lost. He notices that even
 As she's awkward, she's gentle, setting before him water in
 A crystal glass, etched and rough. He touches such things
 With his thumbs, feeling the bumps that stick out, and he must
 Let go, for beauty, the feel of it, hurts him. There is something
 Else: when he does let go, there is a feeling in his thumbs
 Of how something recedes, and is, and dies, all at once.

("Out" cont.)

4.

She rises, walks to the door and stares—it is plexiglass, and
 Her husband put it there, for her, so light would shine in—stares
 To the other side of the lot, at rocks and grass, and more rocks.
 "It would have been my desert garden," she says. "He knew
 I saw beauty there in that lot that we bought." "He wanted
 To make it for me." "It was his last gesture of love for me."
 In silence she looks at the blue sky, and points: there are
 Wisps of color in the sky, and they break. The yolk-red
 Where the sun was is brilliant, bright, full of orange, spotted
 Yellow and pink and white. The horizon is long, a sliver
 Of beautiful light. She says, "I like evenings; they're quite
 A sight: how day is turned and turns to night."

5.

He wants to tell her, but can not, that suddenly something
 Surges inside him and that he is thrown, is spun over
 And over until he comes out a Nothing, a watching eye,
 Observant, quiet. "All my life," she says, "I've been going
 Away, dying; all my life I have been rebelling against
 Disappearing. Now I don't see a difference. In fact,
 I don't see at all. Life is a blindness."

6.

How does he tell her that today he looks in, as though he
 Were falling into something he knows and is known by,
 But staying still, going nowhere? How does he tell her
 Of the dream he sometimes has, in which he stands in a
 Church and looks to its center, where from the four
 Corners four large beams of wood meet, and he stands
 And stares, completely still, aware, alert, full and
 Brimming with life; then quietly a change occurs and he
 Is more amazed, for not only does he see the center,
 But the center sees him, and there is a change again,
 Until there is no center, no "he," no it, and a voice cries--

(“Out” cont., stanza break)

He knows it instantly--and when it does, it brims, and he
Senses that he is in, that he will never lose or be lost.
It says, “Don’t worry, it’s all The Same.”

7.

She comes to the table from the door where she
Stood, and sits. Slowly, thoughtfully, she smiles,
And says, “Sometimes even with my ability for
Abstracting ideas I can not speak, as though I had
Burrowed and burrowed and learned something
Oblivious, something unpredictable, and it had all
Just gone, disappeared, slipped away, and I had been
Left wandering, staring, and wondering about the
Stars in the sky at night: how they dapple, how they’re
White, how they’re red and streaked with light.”

8.

Suddenly, the rain on the roof, the sound of it,
Surprises him. He had been sitting in silence, thinking,
And did not know it, as though asleep, but content
And alert, like the sky, with nothing but nothing as
Its self, and not caring, for it is, and it is what wants
What is, it is jet, and indigo, and black. He notices that
When he thinks of love, he thinks of it as something that he
Is without, and must have now, as though he himself
Were the side of a fence love is not on. Long ago, when
He came back from El Salvador, he did not know what to do,
For he stood on nothing, he was that nothing, and he ached
For love. “Love,” he had thought, “is a light, and I will have it,
I must have it: Love sets all things right.”

(“Out” cont.)

9.

And for the first time he notices a beautiful lamp in each Room of this house. Each one is vivid, and shining, and Story-like, sprouting outward, and hanging down. The red of one is so strong, and it shines as though it Had been—or is about to be—dark, that he must stand Near it and touch it, amazed at the power of something So still. Though each lamp is distinct, in his mind they Connect, and he sees them connect, like graceful ropes of Vines with buds of flowers that bloom on top.

10.

She leads him to one on a table in a den. She tells him, “This one I love; it is an aristocrat, tall and elegant, a Southern Star. Its color is turquoise freckled with dots Of purple.” She taps its top with the tip of her nail and He realizes how things are short with sound, and how one Hears, and one thinks and reveals and is revealed as that Which is but is not, not yet; like moments in this house And each room that are always open, always closed, empty And beautiful, for they are, and do not claim at all what is, For they know that we pass on our way, as each way of Color and light, purpose, and sight.

11.

As he looks at the lamp that she loves, he senses her standing, Looking at him looking at it, as though she’s proud that he is Seeing something she loves as it is, not as he wants it to be. She turns and walks past him to another room. He stands and Listens to the sounds that come from that room, little muffled Sounds: drawers slid open and doors closed and boxes opened. She exclaims, “Here it is; I found it!” and walks back to him, Smiling, holding something, her arms extended in a gesture of Giving, and he takes it. It is a beautiful, little thing, a drawing Of something bright, in black against white, of something Bursting, as though in midflight. She says, “I found it, of all

("Out" cont., stanza break)

Places, in Michoacan, when I was young. It's a drawing by Basho. Please take it; I'd like you to have it."

12.

He does not see her as he saw her then. She is calm and alert and Honest now. And he is relaxed. Talking and listening have Made him so: with nothing to see or do or take; as though He's known, as though he knows what it is to know, like silence In waves, like hearts of hibiscus, row after row. He notices sounds In another yard, from across the way: a child clicks a coin on A bottle; someone thumps a rug on a clothes line with a stick; Birds change places on a branch in a tree, ruffling and flapping their wings.

13.

Anticipating his request, she says, "The water in the pitcher is Still cold; would you like some more?" The sound of the water In the glass is soft, a small roar, a turbulent world of shifts and Shapes, then still and transparent, something and nothing at all.

14.

She is about to speak, when the phone rings. And something Changes: she is speaking to someone else, not to him, and then Another change: she smiles and it occurs to him, as she smiles And moves her hands, that she listens when she loves, and that Things are drawn to her and listen and go away, having touched Her and become still, like a shell, a blue shell of a robins's egg, Like night when it settles upon things. She laughs and laughs, For a friend on the phone has said, "Remember: there are no Islands, and no days before." And already he thinks of this adage That made her laugh as a mist in the dream that never came. "Believe me," she says, "I thought I'd have to let his garden die, But I want to take care of it; I want to make it mine."

(“Out” cont.)

15.

**Together, in silence, they imagine the garden as more, starting with
What is, and out of what was, with the colors of Portulacas: shades
Of Magenta, cerise, orange, scarlet and yellow, with stillness for a
Center. “I sense it already,” she says. “It is beautiful, like streamlets
In a desert at night, dark as the skin of a plum on a plate painted white.”**

And So It Was

1.

At almost nine months of pregnancy his mother had become very big. She moved slowly and only thought of resting. But with three children—ages 10, 8, and 4—to take care of, she rested little and looked forward to night, when she could just lie in bed and think and notice the sounds to which all day she had been oblivious:

The muffled sounds of cars going through the underpass just yards away; the signal of a train coming and coming and finally crossing over that underpass; “pachucos” drinking and laughing across the street, Houston Avenue; and little birds chirping, oblivious and happy, as though for them, night were day and day were night.

2.

And so it was that on the night of April 24, 1953, as she lay thinking and listening, his mother began to become ill, and a violent thunderstorm blew in, damaging houses, trees, and telephone and light wires. After the storm, fresh northerly winds lingered, and the fog that had covered Houston lifted.

Amid this illness and this

Calm, his mother slept until she woke up, or, rather, she was awakened by the sense not only that she was ill, and that she hurt, but also that she was apprehensive and afraid, and excited, feelings that occurred in her wondrously, for they were concurrent. The next morning, when she stopped on the steps to her apartment,

Looked at them, caught her breath, and prepared to maneuver them slowly and carefully, her water broke and she was surprised: she would deliver him now, before noon, not in two weeks as her obstretician had pronounced an hour ago.

("And So" cont.)

3.

When he was put in his mother's arms, he stretched as though he had always been asleep, as though he were enjoying waking up, and spread his fingers wide in wonderment. The nurse who put him in his mother's arms said that she had never seen a child so wide-eyed, so hungry to live. She predicted he would go far,

For he was curious and generous by nature, and that he must always be allowed to grow, for he was by nature rooted in truth. His mother thanked God for saving them that day when she tripped on the railroad tracks. His father had run up behind her and helped her up just as a train had begun to

Move and just as she had thought her foot was stuck between rails and that she and the child might die. (The other day, she told him that she had not screamed; that she had only thought of the beauty of the tracks glinting in the sun; and that for an instant it had all come to her: the picture and the feeling of where and how

She was: a picture of the sun, gloriously red, in all the trains and all the tracks. And a feeling, in that instant, that she was inside of, and covered by, something lasting; and that she and he were alright, for there is no beginning and no end.)

4.

(His father laughs at this, saying that when this happened, his mother was very heavy, her hands and feet swollen, and that from behind, struggling to get up, in her maternity skirt, his mother looked funny and tragic, and that it was she who had insisted on walking through the train yard, because the hissing of the trains and the commotion of the yard somehow soothed her.)

(“And So” cont.)

5.

The day after his mother delivered him, his brother Rudy and his sisters Josie and Mary Lou visited his mother. They stood at the doorway, watching her watch him. But none was jealous and all were curious. His brother, rebellious and impulsive, christened him “cabeza de tetera,” owing to the elongated shape of his head, a tem-

porary effect of the “fierro,” the forceps the doctor had had to use to pull him out, because his head was too wide and big, and his mother too small for him to pass through her without danger. But all went well and soon he was with his father and mother in the apartment they would continue to share with his father’s parents,

Until his parents moved to a place of their own. In that place his sisters and brother felt relaxed. He tested, and tasted, his first power there: the ability to scream and cry, which he took to be the ability to get what he wanted; which was, at this time, to feel secure, not to feel discomfort, and to know what was going on around him.

6.

When he became a toddler it occurred to him that people he loved--his brother, his sisters, his mother and, to a lesser degree, his father--were his security, and that he loved them. He followed his siblings everywhere, and when he couldn’t keep up with them, he showed his displeasure and frustration by crying. He wailed so loudly and so frus-

tratingly, that his brother, short-tempered and impulsive as ever, gave him a new sobriquet: “La ambulancia.” (This happened on the porch of the house they lived in, next door to St. Joseph’s Catholic Church. This church had a school that was off limits to them. Sometimes at dusk they’d run over and scale its high fence

(“And So” cont.)

And play until they were yelled at and told they must leave. His first taste of mystery and ritual and prayer was there in this church, at Mass, when his grandmother Simona told him to look, to be silent, and to listen.)

7.

In his mind, this time and these places coalesce. The forms of many houses and apartments they lived in and liked and felt secure in (until their rent went unpaid too long and they'd have to leave, sometimes under cover of night, simply because his father, who worked hard, had decided once again to spend his wages on beer and on all that

Meant to him: socializing, showing off, forgetting, being oblivious), all of them flow in and out of his mind and make him wonder: did he pass through them, or they through him?

8.

In one of those houses, a yellow one, his sister Josie taught him to speak English, the letters of the alphabet, and to dance. In this house his father brought him soup when he was ill. And, as he passed by the rooms of the woman Who lived upstairs, his brother Rudy looked inside and was shocked: he saw huge under-

Wear hung on a line. He quickly ran downstairs to tell. They laughed, and one of them assigned a number to them: “size a hundred.” In this house he took the small red, yellow, and green chiles he had picked outside and gave them to his sister Mary Lou who, thinking they were candies, popped them in her mouth,

Then screamed and cried. He stood still, amazed, observing the commotion he had caused.

(“And So” cont.)

9.

One day, while looking at a school he had a vision. He saw a young man in front of a large crowd, gesturing, praying, and speaking; but as he saw him, he saw inside himself and he was that man, and he was the crowd, and he was his praying. He knew in an instant what love is: it is no beginning and no end.

He felt so thrilled by the vision, that he ran inside to his parents, forgot his normal unobtrusiveness, and shouted to them, “I am going to help people know the truth.” They looked at him, mouths agape, and stared, surprised; then, pleased with him, they burst out laughing, and he too laughed, and noticed

That behind them, through the window, was the sun, gloriously red, in the trees and the tracks. He noticed, too, the sounds of a train coming and coming, and the cars in the underpass, and as he noticed this, his mother drew him in close to her, held his hands in hers, and said, “Look, be silent, listen.”

The Grasses Know

When was I not alone?
When was I left to die?
When did I get up to go home, and notice that
That those stars had never shone?
Were they as wispy, as paper-thin as I?
Sometimes I say, It does not matter, I do not
Care that they are air, that this is stone.
(What is formidable, beyond me, out of my
reach, inside me?)
I think: how can something this blue, this deep,
This real, do this, love me so and let me go?
(I sometimes think) the grasses know.
It is God who knows.
What is God?: bottles tied in shoes,
A body saying news?
God is my way to you. You to me.
Now I am the shell of the shell to his tree.
Is he real? Does he do this to me?
The constant bobbing in the constant sea
Of the ever rare, the never me.
Does God do this to me?
I sometimes think I might be free.
Oh but how this frightens me: to be so real,
And yet to die.

WORKS CITED

- Bishop, Elizabeth. "In the Waiting Room." The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. Ellman, Richard, and O'Clair, Robert, eds. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988. pp. 826-28.
- . "One Art." The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. Ellman, Richard, and O'Clair, Robert, eds. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988. pp. 820-21.
- Cruz, San Juan de la. "The Dark Night." The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross. Kavanaugh, Kieran, and Rodriguez, Otilio, trans. Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979. pp. 711-12.
- Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The Norton Anthology of Modern American Poetry. Ellman, Richard, and O'Clair, Robert, eds. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988. pp. 482-85.
- Sze, Arthur. "The Leaves of a Dream are the Leaves of an Onion." The Redshifting Web. Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1998. p. 129.
- . "The String Diamond." The Redshifting Web. Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1998.

WORKS CONSULTED

Aitken, Robert. The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics.

San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984.

---. Taking the Path of Zen. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982.

Bishop, Elizabeth. Elizabeth Bishop: The Collected Prose. New York:

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989.

---. Elizabeth Bishop: The Complete Poems. New York: Farrar, Straus &

Giroux, 1984.

Chadha, Yogesh. Gandhi: A Life. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.,

1997.

DiYanni, Robert. Modern American Poets. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.,

1987.

Fox, Matthew. Breakthrough: Meister Eckhar's Creation Spirituality in New

Translation. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977.

Hamilton, Ian, ed. The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry.

New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Heffer, Simon. Moral Desperado: A Life of Thomas Carlyle. London:

Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1995.

- Holman, C. Hugh, and Harmon, William. A Handbook to Literature.
New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1992.
- Kermode, Frank, ed. Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot. New York: Farrar,
Straus and Giroux, 1975.
- Miller, Brett C. Elizabeth Bishop: Life and the Memory of It. Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1993.
- Morley, Hilda. The Turning. London: Asphodel Press, 1998.
- . What Are Winds & What Are Waters. London: Asphodel Press, 1993.
- Schwartz, Lloyd, and Estess, Sybil P. Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art.
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983.
- Strand, Mark. Blizzard of One. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.
- . Selected Poems. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.
- Suzuki, Shunryu. Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind. San Francisco: North Point
Press, 1972.

VITA

Name : Samuel Arizpe

Educational Background:

Central Catholic High School, 1968-72; San Antonio College, San Antonio, Texas, 1972-74; University of Texas-Pan American, 1982-83; Sacred Heart School of Theology, 1983-87, M. Div., 1987; University of Texas-Pan American, 1990-95, B.A. in Spanish, Minor in English; English Graduate Studies, University of Texas-Pan American, 1995-2000, M.A. in English, Writing/Poetry Major, December 2000.

Professional Experience:

Missionary Brother of Charity, 1976-82, in Los Angeles and El Salvador; professed vows of poverty, chastity, and free and wholehearted service to the poorest of the poor. In Los Angeles, worked among Latin American families and the destitute living on skidrow. In El Salvador, distributed food to families affected by civil war. Ordained priest, November 28, 1987, in Pharr, Texas. Pastor, St. Martin de Porres Church, Alton, Texas, 1989-90; chaplain, Valley Baptist Hospital, 1990-92, Edinburg and Mission Hospitals, 1992-96; pastor, St. Joseph the Worker Church, St. Theresa, and St. Anne, in San Carlos,

Faysville, and San Manuel, respectively.

Permanent Address: Rt.1, Box 202-E, Edinburg, Texas, 78539.