

The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright yellow-orange orb on the horizon, with its light reflecting on the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, red, and purple. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a person stands on the water's surface, looking out towards the horizon. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# Only Silence Is Shame

Revised Edition

by  
Bro. Ignatius Mary

*Only Silence is Shame*  
Revised Edition

Bro. Ignatius Mary, OLSM  
A Hermit of St. Michael

*Contemporary Poets Series #1*



Writers House Press  
2006



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*For Rebecca, Laura, and Sara*

*They ask what your poetry means. Why don't they ask the apple-tree what its fruit means - the apple? Probably if the apple-tree could speak it would reply: "Sink your teeth into the apple, and you'll see what it means!" ... They ask you how you have come to create poetry. Why don't they ask the rock how it has created the gem or the bird the fledgling or the woman the child? ... Without self-obliteration there is no concentration, without concentration there is no inspiration, without inspiration there is no revelation, without revelation there is and can be no poetry ... After you have composed poetry, where is your post? Certainly not within poetry: fancy finding in the apple the grains of the earth that nourished it! Maybe your post is behind poetry? No, not there either: your shadow would fall on poetry and confuse it. Under poetry, deep under it, that is your post: like every other fostering-ground.*

— Vasko Popa

# Contents

<i>Preface to the Revised Edition</i> .....	vii
<i>Preface to the Original Edition</i> .....	viii

## PART I

<i>You Say You Had A Father Once</i> .....	3
<i>A Poem for Sara</i> .....	3
<i>On Marriage</i> .....	4
<i>On the Birth of Daughters</i> .....	5
<i>The Story of a Marriage</i> .....	6
<i>The Women We Please</i> .....	9
<i>Predators</i> .....	9
<i>A Woman's Shoe</i> .....	10
<i>The Dancer</i> .....	10

## PART II

<i>A Child's Dream</i> .....	13
<i>The Thinker</i> .....	14
<i>Philosophy Seminar</i> .....	15
<i>Silent's Passion</i> .....	15
<i>Six A.M.</i> .....	16
<i>The Iowa River at 3 A.M.</i> .....	17
<i>The Gas Chamber</i> .....	18
<i>April Inventory</i> .....	19
<i>The Dark Cannot Be Seen</i> .....	20
<i>To A Residential Tree in Winter</i> .....	20
<i>Der Kopf Des Bösen</i> .....	21

### **PART III**

<i>The Girl with Black Eyes Speaks for All</i>	25
<i>Four Years After the End of Dreams</i>	26
<i>Cambodia</i>	27
<i>Country of Napalm</i>	28
<i>Many Wait for Death</i>	28
<i>Coup D'etat</i>	29
<i>Natasia</i>	30
<i>The Revelation to the Last Generation: The Apocalypse</i>	31
<i>Song of the Children – Nicaragua</i>	33
<i>There Are No Revolutions Anymore</i>	34
<i>Privacy Is Only For Dreams</i>	36

### **PART IV**

<i>At First Sight</i>	41
<i>The Barracks</i>	42
<i>Salt of Stars</i>	43
<i>Letters</i>	43
<i>Three Pleasures Upon Release from Prison</i>	44
<i>Return to Silence</i>	46

## *Preface to the Revised Edition*

This current volume remains mostly intact the way it was in 1986 when it was originally published; only a few minor edits were made for this edition.

The primary reason to publish a revision was to include a Part IV containing poems written while in prison – to break the silence about prison.

I spent one year in prison for making a stupid mistake, a legacy of my childhood that caught up to me. My time in prison became the lemon that God squeezed into lemonade on a number of levels. That is a story for my Memoirs.

This revised volume includes six poems written in prison. The first poem, *At First Sight*, laments about lost love, the hope of love, and the reality that it is unattainable.

The second poem, *The Barracks*, is about the hell-hole that we had to live in at the prison. Before the barracks was built we lived in dorm rooms (the prison was a converted college campus) that provided some small privacy and a little quiet and dignity. When the barracks was built we were moved into this overheated metal barn and stacked on three-tiered metal bunk beds lined up like grocery-store shelves. One of my bunkmates had a dream where he was laying in-between the cans of carrots and the corn. Due to my medical problems this place left me in constant pain. The Barracks gave us no privacy at all, even from the leering eyes of female guards, and the noise was constant.

The third poem, *Salt of Stars*, is about an experience of a cellmate. Randy had been on the “Hill,” as it is called, for eleven years. The “Hill” is an ancient castle-like high-medium security penitentiary where the prisoners rarely, if ever, see the night sky and the stars. The minimum-medium security prison where I was incarcerated was like a college campus. In fact it was an old teacher’s college. Since buildings were spread out on the campus we had to walk outside to get from our barracks to the chow hall. In the winter this meant walking in the early morning darkness when the stars were out and beautiful. When walking back from the chow hall one morning, Randy kept staring at the stars. It was the first time he had seen the stars in eleven years. He was like a little kid seeing the wonder of God’s creation for the first time.

The fourth poem, *Letters*, is about the one of the few things that can keep a man sane in prison, letters from family and friends. Often family and friends do not realize just how important letters are to a prisoner.

The fifth and sixth poems, *Three Pleasure upon Release from Prison* and *Return to Silence*, are self-explanatory.

Bro. Ignatius Mary  
2006

## *Preface to the Original Edition*

In August of 1927 Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Italian aliens, were executed for the alleged murders of a paymaster and a guard, and the theft of \$16,000, in the town of South Braintree, Massachusetts.

The trial attracted worldwide attention because of the political beliefs of Sacco and Vanzetti. These two political activists became America's most famous political prisoners as a result. The convictions were based on their beliefs in philosophical anarchism and not on the evidence of guilt or innocence. Justice, indeed, had one eye open to see the racial and political hatred of the times. The only crime was a love for the forsaken and hatred of the power manipulators.

The title of this book comes from a song by Joan Biaz, based upon the words of a letter written by Vanzetti while in prison. Vanzetti was writing to his father and trying to comfort him. The refrain of the song goes:

*Father, yes I am a prisoner*

*Fear not to relay my crime*

*The crime is loving the forsaken only silence is shame ....*

This book is dedicated to the speaking out on issues of life that we share in common in some fashion. (Even the war poems offer an insight to a common experience - the collective experience of Vietnam, the emotions of horror, pain and sorrow.) It seems that most people remain silent in the face of the truths of life, frightened I suppose, with what they find or see in themselves if they only dared to look.

Truly, only silence is shame if we as potentially empathetic and emotional beings will not or cannot speak out to life, to injustice, to love of the forsaken. Our responsibility to our partners on this small planet is to love each other, as corny as that sounds. Our duty is to explore the human condition, to discover what it means to be human, and to find ourselves in the process. Our obligation is to break the silence.

Part I breaks the silence about relationships with women. The poems range from optimistic (*On Marriage, On the Birth of Daughters*), to cynical (*Woman's Shoe, The Women We Please*), to sad (*You Say You Had a Father Once, Story of a Marriage*).

Part II breaks the silence on various subjects: the mystery of dreams, suicide, religious vows, religious bitterness, despair, fantasy, and intellectualism.

Part III breaks the silence about war - it's horror, pain, sorrow, morality, and culpability.

This volume includes both good and bad poems. That's as it should be. To break the silence we shouldn't always put "our best foot forward" - that wouldn't be honest. *April Inventory* is an example of a failed poem but is included here because of the controversy it caused when I was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service due to the poem's reference to assassination.

The style of most of my poetry was influenced from study of the Eastern European poets of the Post-war period. The Holocaust brought a knowledge about humanity that these poets captured well in their work. It is a powerful style. The American reader may be unfamiliar with such a style (e.g. no punctuation, direct expression of passions), but all should sense the power behind the words. Of course, that is not for me to say. As Vasko Popa informs us, the poets' place is underneath his poetry. It is up to the reader to determine any value.

A final note: The reader will notice that most of the poems contain a certain macabre flavor. That is because this period in my life, from 1981-1985, represented what could be called my *Black Period*.

John Wilder (*former pen name, now Bro. Ignatius Mary*)  
*Iowa City, 1986*

# Part I

*to my daughters:*

## *You Say You Had A Father Once*

You say you had a daddy once  
but now only Christmas cards  
and dolls that feel like  
real babies  
they come in a brown box  
with funny scribbles in the middle  
that mommy says spells your name

I sit at my desk  
at 3 A.M. writing you poems  
pausing to look around the room  
I see only your absence  
not even a rag doll in the middle of the floor  
to remind me to remind you  
to pick up after yourself

## *A Poem for Sara*

*to my daughter  
on her 4<sup>th</sup> birthday*

In the morning when I rise  
I stretch and yawn and rub my eyes  
And then my Sara comes to me  
I love her so as you can see  
Though still she is so far away  
She comes to me in dreams each day  
And in those dreams I hear her cry  
I love you daddy, don't say goodbye  
I say to her, I'm not away  
But in your heart I'll always stay

## *On Marriage*

*for Michael & Angelika*

The limits of space  
cannot contain the joy  
of the one moment of pronouncement  
when two souls are joined  
in a bond of love

It is not when love begins  
nor is it the first moment of commitment  
but this *one* moment does have a ring  
of joy and wonder and mystery  
that cannot be matched  
in any other way

It is the mystery of marriage  
that brings a love to the edge  
of eternity and universe and being  
It is the wholeness of the two lives  
intertwined by a bond  
that transcends human law  
but fulfills a spirit that the gods smile upon  
It is the love that nurtures  
the new birth  
that gives life  
a meaning and purpose

And for the Mr. & Mrs. only the rebirth  
of their love in prodigy  
shall overtake the beauty  
of this marriage day

## *On the Birth of Daughters*

*for Rachel Margaret*

All the glories and wonders of the world  
seem shallow compared to the singular  
and simple and beautiful sound  
of a baby's cry at the moment of birth

She is brought into the world in a daze  
of sounds and lights and feelings  
a wonder so awakening  
she can do nothing else  
but cry at the shock

Yet this little reddened creature  
no larger than two handfuls  
will change the world with her soul  
for she is much more  
than an expression of love between her parents  
she is God's gift to us all  
that we may see ourselves  
through her eyes and learn  
the innocence and purity  
that only she can know

Such is the mystery of life  
for among all the despair and suffering  
when it seems that all is lost  
a little one such as she is born  
of hope and joy and spirit  
and we learn again that life  
is worth it after all  
and that nothing can be more beautiful  
than this moment shared  
between a man and a woman  
a child and the world

# *The Story of a Marriage*

*to Laura Jean*

## **Chapter I** *The Wedding Night*

we kissed for fifteen minutes  
without breathing  
I slipped my hand  
under your bra strap  
and caressed my way  
to your breast  
we didn't see each other again

nine months later  
your boyfriend called  
and said you wanted to talk  
we talked  
and I remember your soft body  
smelling of perfume and sweat  
and the windows  
of my mother's Cadillac fogging  
so we didn't have to worry  
about someone seeing  
our naked bodies  
wrestling in the back seat  
it was our first time  
and you cried  
because you were no longer  
a virgin

tonight on our wedding night  
I remember that afternoon  
and between the lines  
of writing you poems  
I watch you sleep  
and notice the lamplight  
reflecting the rise and fall  
of your breast against the bed sheets  
and I see that you are beautiful

and I know  
that I do not mind  
missing all the women  
I would have had  
for tonight is the beginning  
and I love you  
but I cannot help to think  
how young and scared we are  
and I wonder how long  
the afterglow will last

## Chapter II *The Divorce*

I sit here and listen  
to a tape-recording  
of love-making  
and realize we have become  
only objects

or is it we were never more than that  
machines performing conjugal duties  
with boresome repetition  
rust was bound to corrupt even that  
leaving us with only shells to stare at  
over the breakfast table

but we saved ourselves  
you and me  
after tearing at each other  
we gave each other up     now

our sixth anniversary finds you  
down the aisle with a new android  
and me with poetry     an absurd mistress

### Chapter III *The Reflection*

more than ships in the night  
we sailed like the Titanic  
until an iceberg stopped us cold

what did we know about love anyway  
we were high school sweethearts  
losing virginity  
and in the afterglow  
saw each other  
through fogged eyes  
and romantic dreams  
of the *Twelfth of Never*

at best we sailed on stormy sea  
even from the beginning  
and weary from the storm  
lost sight of the approaching icebergs  
and each other  
and maybe ourselves

yet six years later  
on our twelfth anniversary  
we both cling to survival  
you and your android  
I and my poetry

## *The Women We Please*

*for D.*

sweating for hours losing breath  
she tries to scream  
her body has had enough  
we lie apart resting

in the early morning darkness  
I watch her sleep  
and when I touch her softly  
she awakens and says

*damn you bastard*  
she pulls her pants on

and goes

## *Predators*

*for Bob G.*

You have the gentleness  
of a rattlesnake  
yet they come to you  
like virgins  
giving their honor to a god

In fifteen years  
they will be the predators  
consuming all there is of you

leaving only panties on the bedpost  
and you limp on the floor  
wondering what happened to your youth  
and the virgins

## *A Woman's Shoe*

*for W.*

Goddamn that woman, she thinks  
the world is created in her shoe

these women of infinite shoe racks  
grope and stumble with high heels and wedgies

as if their feet could shrink  
to a size seven

## *The Dancer*

*for Kristel*

You were three years old  
I had moved away  
nearly a decade later  
your womanhood begins  
the little girl I watched  
prancing to the music on the radio  
now performs before hundreds

Your genius  
to create art out of motion  
framed by your delicate  
and slender and beautiful body  
moves one

While I was a thousand miles away  
you grew up  
I do not know you  
yet when you create beauty  
out of the motion of your body  
I come to see who you are

## **Part II**

## *A Child's Dream*

Lightning and thunder and black clouds  
close in like the angel of death  
on Passover night  
I suck in the smell of rain  
as the cool wind blows  
through my hair and gives me goosebumps  
and big thick raindrops hit my face  
with a force that makes me flinch  
thunder cracks and I feel as if I could do  
or be anything I want

Grandpa calls out to me ...

*I don't want to go in* I say

*I wanna see the lightning*

I cry and hide behind the piano in the dining room  
Grandpa tries to coax me out with promises of candy  
but I won't be bribed this time

\*\*\*\*\*

It's November 1963 and I dreamed two weeks ago  
Kennedy was shot in the head I overheard the news  
on the radio coming out of the school cafeteria  
I spent the rest of the day frightened  
of dreams

The storm could have saved him I thought  
the rain and thunder and lightning you see  
kept my dreams from calling things true  
if it weren't for Grandpa

\*\*\*\*\*

Years later I spend all my time in thunderstorms  
and wait for the lightning to discharge  
all the truth of my nightmares  
it hasn't struck yet  
so I stay up all night  
until I am too tired to dream anything

## *The Thinker*

*for Walter Collett*

He stands alone at parties  
subdued by a thought he cannot try  
he argues only with himself  
unashamed of his difference

*Madness comes from this*

When the party is over  
he walks home alone  
to a room full of dusty books  
yesterday's underwear on the floor  
a dirty plate from breakfast lying on the typewriter  
he tosses his shirt and pants onto the handle of an upright vacuum cleaner  
sits on his bed and briefly stares  
wondering when he changed the bed sheets last  
he buries his head in the pillow and thinks ....

*So ... dis aliter visum\**

He falls asleep alone  
he dreams in the morning  
he will awaken alone  
the day will only remind him

*Madness comes from this*

*Everyone is and wants the same  
those who want otherwise  
go voluntarily to the madhouse  
Nietzsche said that he spent  
his last ten years insane*

*\*dis aliter visum* = loosely means "costly contrary/alternative vision"

*fragments of Rigor Mortis*

*Philosophy Seminar*

*for t.h.*

We the philosophers  
sit and stare  
in a room with ten chairs  
and a table, faded white walls  
a gray blackboard  
and dim lights

The wisdom of centuries  
have echoed in this room  
and in the hallowed halls  
of ivy-covered vestigial martelloes

*confined to our museums  
we rummage in phrase  
rather than experience  
the creative blazes\**

\* paraphrase of lines 384, 385, 414, 417, & 529 of Goethe's *Faust*, trans. by Walter Kaufman

*Silent's Passion*

I stand in line to wait  
for silence and hear  
the monks chant their vows  
and speak no more  
within the walls  
the drum beats the beat  
that quiets the silence  
I open my mouth to speak  
the words I hear no more  
and lose my thought  
my mouth is on its own

## *Six A.M.*

The smell of bacon and eggs  
Thomas O'Malley at the door  
scratching to get in  
a bowl of milk laps it up  
purrs washes his face rubs against my leg  
slowly lops onto his favorite couch My  
favorite couch I don't want cat hairs on  
he kneads the upholstery with sharp claws  
didn't I tell him five times already to stop that  
curls and sleeps He's had a hard night

*With eyes that reflect devilish red  
he streaks through the night  
on cat's paw unnoticed  
nothing escapes his cunning*

*Fidei Defensor\**

defending the family honor you see  
from trespassers mice  
sundry nocturnal inhabitants  
ghostly creatures

As if from a far universe  
the wizard's companion and spy  
he returns at morning's rays

Oh how it would be  
to change places

\* *Fidei Defensor* = Defender of the Faith

## *The Iowa River at 3 A.M.*

The river moves  
like a ballroom couple at waltz  
and the whole world slows to 3/4 time  
only an occasional bluegill  
jumping out of the water in playful dance  
breaks the flow of the river

A mother duck stops  
to stare at me for a moment  
and then returns to her brood  
another bluegill breaches  
the surface of the water

The only other sound in the night  
is the sound of my own heartbeat  
pounding a rhythm I have not noticed  
in a long time

It is 3:01 a.m.

In the distance the 2:45 freight blows  
its whistle a bluegill leaps  
at a bug just above the water  
the mother duck quacks for her brood  
to follow her a dog barks  
at its shadow I no longer hear  
the beat of my heart

It's 3:02 a.m.

The water feels cool to my skin  
the mother duck does not notice  
a bluegill jumps at another bug

I relax and the water flows around me leading me  
slowly down river  
like a maiden set in her ways

I cannot hear the mother duck  
scolding her brood now  
only the sound of the river  
lapping at my back

It is 3:05 a.m.

## *The Gas Chamber*

I place him in a sterile chamber  
with a glass observation window  
six nozzles inside pointing down  
he licks my face  
I tell him to stay

I shut the door  
he is restless and excited waiting  
for the game to begin  
I turn the knob  
he sniffs the acrid aroma

he looks at me for a moment  
as if waiting for me  
to thank him  
and then his eyes close

I empty the chamber of its poison  
remove the body  
drop it into a plastic bag marked for disposal  
and go home

## *April Inventory*

*dedicated to the U.S. Secret Service  
in tribute to Natalya Gorbanevskaya*

rain cold snow  
more rain  
1334 stress points  
300 will kill  
speeches on nuclear war  
someone ought to kill the President  
maybe I will  
so I'm watched by the SS

defending art  
against morality  
my poetry is  
and is not  
nothing more  
or less

I argue anyway

poems to be finished  
articles promised  
no money  
sleep in the street  
I'm dead by the 15th

## *The Dark Cannot Be Seen*

the proverb says, *All is vain*, No  
that's a clever lie  
rather, all  
is nothing  
that's the secret  
to know one's living  
floats on an abyss  
no valleys  
no mountains  
only dark empty  
space  
no up  
no down  
no reason  
no love  
One's life is a shadow  
exposed to the sun and  
forced to see its lack  
and in the dark cannot be seen

## *To A Residential Tree in Winter*

branches cold and naked  
stretch out in the night and mist  
like arms of the living dead  
poking out of barren graves  
for want of life

daylight erases the shadows  
and the branches become  
a forgotten fixture  
among the imprint of glass portholes  
and the screened-in porches  
of insensitive intruders

## *Der Kopf Des Bösen*

*for G.E. Goeken*

Brecht wrote  
*A man lives by his head*  
on the wall is a head  
shrunk to the size of a flattened orange  
in some dark ritual in the jungles of Brazil  
its skin is wrinkled and black  
like a prune dried in the summer sun  
and its puffed-up lips are tied  
shut with twine to hold back the acid vomit  
they say its touch has the power  
to evaporate the holy spirits  
and thus it hangs upon the frame of a gospel license  
left over from days wasted  
as a Baptist evangel  
it is an omen  
that seems to make the wall a part of itself  
so that the eye cannot focus on any other part  
it is as an altar of a sacred dominion devoted  
to the constant nailing of gods  
who hang on trees  
and to the warding off of the disease of spirits  
that comfort the lost to believe in a hope  
of human transcendence it hangs  
off the frame causing it to be crooked  
as if to remind all of the distorted lineage  
that ordained the man named within its certified border  
to practice the deceit of ignoring lust  
but it is better to fuck thy neighbor's wife  
than to go on with the dead  
did not He say  
*Let the dead bury the dead*  
and this Brazilian demon on the wall  
is the hope that ensures the humanity  
which means the lust  
that this defrocked soul  
now bears passing homage  
But as Brecht wrote  
*His head will not suffice*

## **Part III**

## *The Girl with Black Eyes Speaks for All*

*for Cambodia*

two black spheres look at me  
with a hardness and hatred  
that no sixteen year old girl should know  
her hair is black and tied back  
sway from her eyes  
she must see clearly to shoot  
she holds a rifle to her shoulder  
pointed at me  
I have startled her  
we look at each other  
for a brief moment wondering  
what move to make  
I see that she is beautiful  
like my sister I wonder  
why am I here her finger  
moves on the trigger her eyes  
do not close but look  
straight into mine  
I come to know her in that moment  
and then I shoot  
the bullet enters her forehead  
blood spurts onto my pant-leg  
my buddy comes running and says  
*God, you got another gook*  
I say  
*Yes, they're all over*  
*hiding in the hooches Kill them*  
*Kill all those goddamn gooks*

at home my sister waits  
patiently for her brother  
to come home and hug her

## *Four Years After the End of Dreams*

Someday the war will end  
and I will go home to kiss  
my sister who watches  
the blood on the six o'clock news  
she asks me in her letters  
if I have killed  
babies and women  
like in the stories she hears in school  
I do not answer her  
but tell her I will be home soon

What am I to say  
it is impossible to describe  
what is necessary  
to those who do not know  
what horror means  
How can they know  
that horror is a friend  
for there are only two ways home  
death or victory

## *Cambodia*

two little boys  
not older than eight years old  
stand on a dirt road  
of a village somewhere in Cambodia  
one is barefoot  
the other wears worn sandals  
and carries a weapon

they stare at me  
or through me I should say  
with a haunting not of children  
but of old men with cold and hard  
eyes of knowing

but these two are not old men  
they are children lost in war

yet some will say they are symbols of resolve  
and others will say they are soldiers of revolution

I say they are children  
and turn to smile at them  
they turn toward me  
and the one looks  
straight into my eyes  
without flinching  
raising the weapon  
held tightly in his small hands  
and fires a round just above my head

the bullet strikes the wall behind me  
and I eat the dirt in the road  
they nod at each other with stone faces  
like that of fraternity brothers  
giving the secret handshake  
in recognition of their membership  
but not so anyone will discover

They continue on their way

## *Country of Napalm*

The U.S. is the only country  
of napalm  
Napalm that glues to the heart  
and burns it out  
that fires the soul  
from beneath hell  
that makes scorched babies  
cry for death for momma  
melted into a heap  
for G.I. to shoot her  
for pleasure sake  
And yet she cries  
for life and walks  
with stick and pain  
and bandages looking  
for brother among the stench  
of gasoline and slowly burning flesh  
that cannot be extinguished  
And the U.S. is the only country  
of napalm

## *Many Wait for Death*

There are many who wait for death  
and others who cannot wait  
but go blindly into the fires  
consumed by the shadows  
of ideas born of despair  
and fathered by the philosopher-kings  
entombed in their houses of white stone  
and Roman columns bearing the mark  
*fidei defensor*  
and to all who pass know  
that it is this champion who shall decide  
who shall live or die  
and the soldiers go on to march to hell  
and some of us to the fire  
and any who may be left  
are only orphans  
lost in the dark

## *Coup D'état*

bodies beaten with gun-butts  
are brought into the courtyard

inside tortured screams  
and blood on the walls  
from the floor to ceiling dismembered bodies  
like so many jigsaw puzzles  
scattered throughout the room

a guard slits the stomach  
of what was a man  
places a hungry rat in the guts  
a pot over the rat so he won't get away  
the guard torches the pot

the rat  
in hunger and to escape the heart  
eats through the body to the other side  
the guard  
brings in the next prisoner  
who carries the dead comrade  
to the courtyard before  
taking his place

## *Natasia*

when I was eighteen  
I met a woman named Natasia  
who was determined to love  
every man in the world  
even the dead ones

I read her letters  
between decapitated heads  
and burning grass huts  
and think of times canoeing  
with her on the Iowa River

I was so gallant in those days  
even asked her permission  
before I kissed her  
I think I shocked her  
but what did I know  
she was Natasia after all  
and I was only a boy

I put away her letters  
and my youth  
and continue to war  
now I know better  
I take what I want

## *The Revelation to the Last Generation: The Apocalypse*

### I.

Yesterday death gave birth  
to a conqueror *Eagle*  
who lived in the *Valley of War*  
and in the *Plain of Common*  
the people looked up and wondered  
at the bald-headed bird of prey  
as it soared above them  
choosing its victims  
like so many fat women  
meticulously picking  
the next chocolate tart  
to devour and eat

*Oh how it would be* said the people  
*to be like the Eagle*

### II.

Today the *Eagle* gives birth  
to an infernal peace in the *Valley*  
and the people cheer and admire  
the peacemaker  
and the people watch  
as the *Eagle* feeds its child  
with mushrooms  
and the child becomes mighty  
and soars high like its mother  
before the eyes of the people  
and the people marvel  
and the people move into the *Valley*  
to be with the *Eagle*  
and the people say

*Oh how it would be to be  
like the Eagle*

### III.

And when tomorrow comes  
no births will be given  
and death will overcome death  
in the *Valley of War*  
and the *Last Generation* will return again  
to the *Plain of Common*  
to eat the mushrooms  
growing on the graves  
of the aborted children  
and the people will not remember  
the *Eagle*

## *Song of the Children – Nicaragua*

We fight against the Yankee  
the enemy of humanity

together we fight him  
as one people one mind  
and we will be free

We are the children of our fathers  
who fight in the streets  
and in the mountains  
and do not come home

the eyes of our sisters  
are full of tears  
and our brothers are  
shot down in the streets

We have no tears left  
for our mothers who are taken  
who lie on roads  
without breath  
no longer to suck their babes

We will fight our enemies  
and watch them fall  
before the eyes of orphans  
blood is our only weapon

leave us yank  
to bury our mothers

## *There Are No Revolutions Anymore*

*in memory of Jack Reed*

*You can always go back  
to private responsibility  
but you can never come back  
to this moment in history*

someone said that  
I no longer remember who  
maybe that's the problem  
no one remembers  
and thus we go our way  
stuffing our pocketbooks  
and mending the white picket fences  
while the moments in history pass by  
unnoticed and lost  
and then we wonder  
when it was we gave up  
our virginity  
and buried ourselves  
under neat manicured green lawns

and then we shake our heads  
at the long-haired hippie freaks  
marching down the street  
holding picket signs preaching  
truth and justice and the end  
of war and the beginning  
of love

we know the hippie only marches  
because he's too lazy to work  
and we go to work that day  
drinking a glass of milk  
to soothe the ulcer  
only to come home that night  
to swallow the six o'clock news  
with a glass of water  
and an aspirin

and still I find an anti-war movement  
crawling down my back  
but find I can't scratch it away  
with hands that are glued  
to the remote control  
of *Hill Street Blues*  
yet as I howl about the state of the world  
I know the itch on my back  
will go away for a time  
as I drink my milk in the morning  
and then punch the clock and bank  
the check and mend my picket fence

there are no revolutions anymore

## *Privacy Is Only For Dreams*

A bastard comes in  
sits on the bed where I am chained  
takes two fingers  
puts them in my mouth  
slides them in and out  
what he wants I do

Privacy is only for dreams  
we are used to it by now  
naked men and women  
stand in lines  
being asked name address religion  
while Nazis take motion pictures

Pushing others out of the way  
they come to me  
the light and camera focus  
on my face then my breast  
and slowly down  
I try to cover myself  
but they order me to keep my hands away  
I know they could kill me  
or worse  
put me in a medical barrack  
I do as they ask

We are barracked in one large room  
without mattresses or blankets  
the stench of human waste in the corner  
we all watch  
a couple screw  
two beds down from me  
many hang over the bed posts and watch  
I wait for the privacy of my dreams  
but I find myself raped  
by nightmares  
chains men with smiles  
doctors instruments pain examining tables  
I no longer know if I am human  
I am led to the slaughter  
of my body my inner parts  
my mind my dreams  
I am only an animal  
privacy is for people

## **Part IV**

## *At First Sight*

At first sight  
I saw her under the pomegranate tree  
reading Shakespeare  
long black hair wisping in the warm breeze  
legs crossed, deep in thought  
over some verse  
in a world of her own

I watch her for hours  
tears run down her cheek I see  
    as she must have read something sad  
lips and mouth then flicker into smile  
    something must have made her glad

At first sight  
she captivates me  
I cannot move  
I long to smell her scent  
to look into her eyes  
to know her  
to know anything of her  
I am lost

The reverie is broken  
when I realize who I am  
and how dangerous it would be  
to know anything more of her  
even the color of her eyes  
those eyes that would enslave me  
and hold me forever  
or so I imagine

The song warns never fall in love  
with a dreamer  
or with a poet I would add  
who dreams in verse  
and never sees the ground

It is said that I am a poet  
a painter of pictures with words  
a verse daydreamer  
supposedly, maybe, twenty years ago  
when I was lost  
in the heart of darkness  
of my soul

I am lost again seeing her  
a loser savant I suppose  
only the savant part was left behind  
with those long ago verses of my youth  
which for her makes me dangerous  
and far less interesting.

## *The Barracks*

*for the guys*

We are lead into the barracks  
slammed with the smell  
of sweat and bodies not unlike  
a Siamese whore house in the heat  
of a summer night  
This is where we live  
or rather this is where the dragoons  
have stored us  
like so many groceries on shelves  
My bunkmate had a dream last night  
that he was laying amongst the cans  
of peas and corn on a grocery store shelf  
only to wake up in this place  
this warehouse amongst 150 other bodies  
on prison shelves smelling housing  
we dogs of society  
privacy stripped to bone

## *Salt of Stars*

*for Randy*

We walk back from breakfast in the dark  
the black sky is speckled with the salt of stars  
my friend walks beside me with his head upward  
his eyes drinking in the wonder  
his body absorbing every grain of salt  
he has not seen the stars in eleven years

## *Letters*

*for Tracy*

Letters are life-blood  
when trapped behind razor wire  
and sliding metal doors and dragoons  
I am nearly bloodless  
a forgotten dog feral  
or perhaps not forgotten  
just ignored for fear  
of the reflection back  
in their face  
or perhaps not ignored  
just abandoned  
amongst their lives too busy  
to notice or to care thus  
I lay pale in the darkness  
counting diamond shapes in the grate  
of a cold metal door  
waiting  
for a transfusion

## *Three Pleasures Upon Release from Prison*

### I.

When I was young  
I walked up and down our country road  
every night each summer and much of the Spring and Fall  
and sometimes even Winter  
at 2 am or whenever  
then the sky was clear mostly  
marveling at the universe of stars  
against the black canvas perched on God's easel  
and the grandeur of a full moon  
the lesser governor ruling the mystery of the night  
and the freshness of the night air  
filling my nostrils with the exhilaration of a first love  
and the stillness that washes over me  
like the cool water in a lake  
baptizing me in the secrets of the dark

I talk to myself of private thoughts  
or I just walk still  
allowing the night to sink into me  
to absorb into my skin  
like water to a dry sponge  
lying alone in a abandoned kitchen sink

### II.

On a whim I traveled 2000 miles  
to upstate New York  
it took 36 hours non-stop  
driving through sleep and the cliffs  
of the upper Appalachians

As a little boy, my brother and I would play  
a game with M&M's in the backseat of the car  
we imagined the colors  
of the M&M's to be different things  
cold and hot  
yellow was the sun, red was fire

green was the cool grass  
brown was the cold earth  
We ate each color in a temperature turn  
first yellow, then green, red followed by brown  
if we ate out of turn we burned up

•

At 32-flavors my brother took forever to decide  
I chose chocolate every time, regular chocolate, not  
one of those exotic chocolates, or I'd choose strawberry  
My brother made fun of me for my  
lack of adventure  
but it was my private tasty adventure each time  
that was all mine

•

I use to buy \$300 of groceries in fifteen minutes  
I plan now to spend hours just in the fresh fruit department

### III.

Twenty minutes to put her face on  
to eat a bite at the corner deli  
make-up bottles, brushes, things, and who knows  
all over the sink and panty hose hanging  
from the shower curtain-rod  
the scent of her skin, her hair lingers  
through the memories of my mind  
the soft touch of her fingers on my face  
the softness of her breast against mine  
the cute way her bottom wiggles  
when she is scrubbing the countertop  
the smell of Thanksgiving dinner  
that fills the room with the aroma of generations  
the sparkle in her eyes on Christmas morning  
as bright as any child  
the look she gives me  
that only a woman in love can give  
these are the touch of a woman

## *Return to Silence*

There is a silence in the streets  
traffic, horns, jack hammers  
that one longs for after a while  
it is the noise of silence  
worthy of escape from this place  
of constant decibels of humming  
of air exchange systems designed  
for cattle re-circulating  
the stench of sweat  
the never-ending drone of the television  
enough to cause the heart to lose  
its beat  
and the mind to lose itself  
the continual banter and blather of man-boys  
pretending to be grown but never making it  
hiding behind masks of toughness  
fearing themselves lost

To return to silence  
is a daydream like freedom  
that illusive delusion  
the brass-ring never found  
but cruelly offered by the Man  
like the four year prison sentence  
that he secretly knows is life  
that even death cannot release

It is a freedom lost in noise  
of hysterical drones  
and politico cons  
trying to drum out the sound  
of fear imprisoned, heard inside their souls  
never allowing us to return  
to any sort of freedom or silence

## About the Author

In addition to writing poetry, the author writes fiction and non-fiction works, in addition to religious, catechetical, apologetic, and theological essays and books.

The author attended poetry, fiction, and expository workshops sponsored by the University of Iowa Writers' Program and sat under the tutelage of poets such as Paul Engle, Marvin Bell, Donald Justice, and W.S. Merwin; fiction writers such as Reynolds Price; and essayists such as William Irwin. The author was also a student of Daniel Weissbort, the publisher, along with Ted Hughes, of *Modern Poetry in Translation*, published in London. Professor Weissbort introduced the author to the Eastern European poets whose style influenced his own poetry.

While a student at the University of Iowa, the author was appointed to the Editorial Board of the University of Iowa Press and the Governing Board of Windhover Press.

In the 1980's the author was inducted into the *Who's Who in U.S. Writers, Poets, and Editors* and the London-based *International Writers and Authors Who's Who*. He was also the recipient of the prestigious *Kaltenborn Grant for the Arts*.

In addition to his creative and other writing endeavors, the author is currently the webmaster of the St. Michael's Call Supersite ([www.saint-mike.org](http://www.saint-mike.org)), one of the largest resources for Catholics on the Internet, a facilitator of the Catholic Support Group for Sexual Addiction Recovery, Director of the St. Padre Pio Center for Deliverance Counseling, Director of the St. Thomas More Center for Truth and Justice, and produces Internet Radio broadcasts on Catholic issues. The author is Catholic hermit, a consecrated brother in private vows, with the Order of the Legion of St. Michael. He lives in hermitage in the State of Iowa in the United States.