

Blanket

Selected Poems

Ry Southard

A man in a box

A man in a box with a box on his head
Not just another woodcut on the wall
 struggling to understand a poem
Rotors cycling above
 grinding impermanence
geometric reality sits
 upon a very small footstool

The sky so corkscrew
Soft corners sharp detours triangles guide
mish mash directions as always
 I pivot to face the mirror
my eyes remain on you

Where is the exit to quench the fire in my head
I need to remove the box

I never strived for perfection
only to understand the difference between smoke and flames
 and peace and fulfillment and you

Our box is a package of hope
silly people claim more
as if redemption can be bought

the Zion choir sings forgiveness
an anthem of prayers floats across our horizon
it's why we believe

2018 - 2021

A or B

Absolution anniversary of my soul
tragedy for the twenty
weeping for the forty
walking across the pond
Believing hope

it's the only thing that holds us
we witness in tears
succumbing to wanting but never

trusting not killing
oblivious to honor or charity
or acceptance of choice and color that soothes
skin to skin

caress absolution remembrance with oils and fragrance
tell the touching story so others may cherish
when time evaporated to our wonderment
your neighbor, your friend, your cohort

we are all immigrants to this consciousness
sharing differences
sitting on the porch swing dreaming, believing
softly singing hope

2016 - 2021

abandon ship

seems like many have abandoned reality
whatever that surreal prism
graffiti whose colors show more truth
than its graphic words
watching trains idle upon the trestle
 groaning in disbelief

the movie launched missiles, nuclear at that
i turned it off but not before oblivion
 i miss america

help me please
i don't know these waters
my oars are backward and askew
fumbling for a flashlight
 fleeing the future

floating fathomless
air became unimportant
we clutch hands jumping into dawn
a prayer or two as lovers do
forever cozy and secure
 bathing in our light

2017

About tragedy

How do you write about tragedy
With fear of exposing my own
I don't talk about it
Though I see it in the hall each day

A bombing there a shooting here
A quake to frighten all
I've lost track of hurricane names
but not Maria, Harvey and Irma

Oops there's Mathew that still pains
and Missoula's ash
yikes it's a list, a page I'd rather not turn
I miss compassion
The embrace, of sorrow the joyful hug of tomorrow
There is nothing except now

I accept disaster's windows smudged
With chalk messages of hope
Talk to me shout out redemption
Place honor on every mantle

Let's return to when we cared
A country of all of us
Even those we don't like

2017

American Refugee

I am an American refugee
On a tightrope between boundaries
without a bar

I need sanctuary from haughty narcissism
angry misanthropes, racism, and other ism's
militia here?
#scary home

Never thought I'd say this at my age
Never thought about fleeing
Canadian stadiums of refuge
reasons that brought us here in the first place

Sign says *Line Forms Here*
but we'll step out now
We don't qualify
 as immigrants four generations ago, maybe five
 ancestors in hardship
 they so revered freedom and hope
enduring danger and pain on vessels of dreams
sailing toward that statue
to participate in that ideal

Alighting on Ellis where equal
regardless of anything
Journeys to Ohio and Kentucky and Missouri
such a long road
a willing price to farm for hope
even with death

Oh to wish for those days when the sky was clear or not
and you did or didn't kill
your handshake and word were truth
Not what you made up and told the world
still expecting acceptance

How can I celebrate my nation and liberty?
Civility destroyed
Monuments dismantled
 tunneled for minerals as if sacred meant nothing
 defiling natives and everyone alike

discrimination celebrated

When my leader seeks to destroy this and undo that
Does it matter personal gain or executive hubris
should I jump or confront
or die in the collective rubbish

August 2017

asylum

My mind is a slum
A ghetto of haywired imagination
No futurist would engage its
scales of improbability

But i have shelter of sorts
word dreams that cloud my reality
I know every homeless person
at the library

A structure of society
should care for its own
and yet it doesn't quite happen that way
My neighborhood expands
one sidewalk sleeper at a time

Where is the border from this to that
the dinner bell can only be heard so far
the mules and ponies
haw and whinny for the feed bag
that will not be delivered
at least not from here
maybe there

the ghetto is me
i accept its grit
flavors a tad off
insisting on spice and nuance
islands
where I thought i got it

the day when i understand
is a day to celebrate
a day that will happen after I am dead
an autopsy will reveal a faulty imagination
thank god it wasn't my heart

2013

Chasing Kaleidoscopes

Watching passengers deplane
pieces of people I know
Jon to Jan then June
Did Joan wear glasses?
Jeffrey never aged
Last out was Raj
The light was bright
so I wasn't sure

Paying the toll into
the tunnel
headlights refracting
star beams at noon
whistling off curved walls
reverse the funnel
exit yesterday

Plumes of sparkles
ricochet
crinkles and wrinkles
jump and jive
beans alive
crush and grind
my wrinkles to your crinkles
bending cylinders around our lives
pushing today past mumbo jumbo
tumblers of winning tickets

Rolling down the hill in glee
turning memories upside down
glimpses over yonder
millstone to sand
tomorrow's beach

2013

circle

columns of darkness invaded the day
wilting bouquets of dreams

power that had no meaning, no fortitude, nor endurance
just nightmares of ignorance
breathing hateful words
fumes to complicate loss

we reach to remember
another time of togetherness
community
a barn rebuilt
sadness tossed in the brush

sunrise ready for floral stanzas
swaying exultant choirs
smiles whisked into our eggs
my solo song for you

so lucky to have joy
at least once in this walk
equal to winning musical chairs

2017

circles

my dreams circumnavigate
porous reality
 sponging up visions
wringing and flinging them to the universes
as if they are circuitously real
 Like a problem solved
when you were looking for another answer

it is quite premature for self congratulations
 best to praise the sphere
And existence
 We think so
 though
 maybe not so much as to wonder
non-existence

Is the essence of existence
 a covet for life
however you define hunger
 I reckon that's too melancholy
for this new maze
 valuing clouds and hope
somniaulant knots whispering for attention

The survey is
 another puzzle left to reverie and circles
Balls of string roll-ready
 to maintain that unraveling mystery

What would you say about me
The truth of not knowing
 when lusting for its elusive other

2017

Confusion

I was once a sullen head of state
another time a petulant beggar
The delta was near

The prism you see in us
bending in we
no shadow wonder of your perspective
joy shared on every plane

What shall we do to sustain our peace
to not pretend about anything
lusting conviction
amidst turmoil, avidity
and impatient disillusion

Soldiers and politicians approach
grim with duty and resolve
building chasms of detritus to separate us
Leaders seem to celebrate reasons to abandon truth
discarded paper crumples of smeared ink

Fumbling as if we know all
trying as lovers do
Kissing on the sidewalk
 on the steps and
 embracing a lake
 hugging across our garden
 touching a new spectrum

Our strength
smiling above frailties

Talk to me sweetheart
Please tell me again
Shun stupidity and concussions
purgatory and despair
wallowing in useless frustration when

we should be weaving strands of justice
and stitching seams of love
guide us through this oh so confused canyon
no longer vagabond

hope
I need you so

April 2017

Courage is the Light

Courage is the light that beckons us
Pulsing colors that haven't yet been invented
Undulating pathways surfaced in mystery

Kindness is the beacon that shines over us
A starry palette of acceptance of the known and unknown
Brushing our footprints for the next journey

Ever prescient is Sagittarius who guides us
Prancing across the universe
Erudite and free

Fire is the element that saves us
Quenching mistrust and gluttony and malice
Healing absolutions spread across the constellations

2021

A Don't You Get It? Poem

We're so lucky
To have running water
And bathrooms for cryin' out loud
And to have a safe backyard to
not get shot while having a cocktail

We take food for granted
and success because we (you and me) are not hungry
and so many are
Welcome to this mask

America is not about hunger
 Oh yes it is
Or inability to pay for sickness
 For certain
Or unsafe schools
 Ask the parents of those tragic places
Or getting shot without asking, of any race, religion or color
 Can we come to peace with
these most egregious crimes of our times?

And then there's deregulation of laws that protect
and improve our earth, sadly more today and these last 3 years

I lust this place and cherish
the possibility of a future with my wife
and for my daughter

Do I get it?

Earth Day 2020

evolution of a trauma

I would not be here if

It starts this way

Nope

Ok denial so what

I've been here before

wearing a different get-up

before you knew me

rain washes the track to ruts

fissures gratefully harbor pity

walking down mucky roads

slog after puddles after nothing

shedding clothes shedding hope

seeing the light of self-despair

ready to jump

A wander with my love

transcends a bad moment or two

but I can't hide from myself

weary without expectations

So what now palpitations

gulping sunshine from a sieve

holding out hands grasping for us

it is this way every day

waiting to get lucky

though I knew I already am

so tomorrow I will learn to infuse

sense into trauma

without confusing my soul or my sweetheart

2017

How sparkles attract

I am subterfuge
Exacerbation lying wet and lonely

There's always me
in dark vacant lots prowled only by fear
and coyotes and vermin

A plague of nothing has me confused
barren and unfulfilled

Where is the temple of salvation oh savior?
Send me a map and I will
sojourn for training and a new definition

I'm so tired of uncertainty
Get me out of this maze of hype
sewn with calamity festering without stitches

I see you in the distance beckoning
shimmering
Promises so beguiling

A country I have never known
glowing with golden prosperity
with glittering gates spackled by slaves

Let me in great leader
to descend into your dream
to transform our tolerant destiny
back to its rightful tyranny

2017

if I were tomorrow

Would I judge innocence
and ignorance as
would I devoutly castrate politics

I would challenge destiny
and nuzzle luck
Nurturing all that
good to be born swathed in

Pastures laden with hope
and hops and dreams

Hearing the birds chatter each morning
saves me

from wondering
Will there be clouds of mushrooms
Will we rise to save ourselves
above yesterday's forgiveness
cradle ever love

caressing your face is heaven
lucky to nuzzle your neck

It is tiring I know to speculate
tasting morning dew
squirmy things move through the grass
laughing we seek tomorrow

December 2017

know

i know your pain
but cannot imagine your injury
when you were there
i was on the beach
i had not paid the fare

you were hurt
i felt it with you
without sorrow
with hope

walking seeing hopeless
they were homeless
again
i share weariness
i wear weakness
thankfully no longer cold
blessed to have a home
the shelter of Hatteras

yes i heard wonder
we shared that too
am I umber
or black or olive or white

we smelled every aroma of life
only me and you
and then ventured yonder
above

we wear hats
to be closer to god
capping off our humanness
laughing in the mirror

i touch love
your brim
floating pads of lily joy
godlike isles emerge from the sea
alight with me
to Hatteras

2016-17

Moon

Why detour the howling moon
pushing waves to the shore
We lap them up
as never before

The reason we're here
to treasure our place
A gift from the gods
who made this space

Obscured by people who otherwise claim
as if having wisdom to not know
Big Ears is our savior's
conservation show

Slicing off mountain tops
or coring their roots
Drilling to nowhere
I'm hanging up my boots

Wandering in the copse
barefoot cold and wanting you
A sliver in the sky
surrounds true

Songs on the horizon
stanzas skyward
Craters shouting
summons from the lord

2017

The way picnics become legacy

Words are my environment
our forests and streams, oceans abundant

Socrates and Pandora banter recumbent
a wildflower picnic of thoughtful conversation
pieces of crusty bread, some cheese
and figs, a goblet of wine
Glimpses of eyes closed, sanity without illusion

Push me to the forum's perimeter
fling me to the god-filled clouds
smother me with reason and resonance and lilting lullabies
ballads of expression, a cappella dreams
Forgiveness in every chorus

Please slather some peace on my bread
and I will be your honey muse
trinkets of syllables adorn our table
Awaiting and beckoning to join as friends

Passing poems to our children
legacies that might endure when hope is prescribed
pray for that today

2017 - 2020

Poetry String

I started in life on a poetry string
Stretched across a canyon
Maybe as deep as the Gunnison

A road slipped around the crevasse
Meandering as if a creek
Frustrated with fallen trees and dislocated rock
Please be with me now

Feather remembrance into truth
Only you can do this

There is nothing to remember but now
The arboretum of our home
Spackled with leaves of love

2020

standard

with perpetual irregularity
i seek you
slumber amiss
truncated dreams
transfer to canvass or
stacks of mottled paper
brushed and penned
spackled
with alarming regularity

a harried legionnaire lugging a
shouldered bag of stones for Pandora
the true goddess, legend shattered
my purposeful calves
stanchions of patience
unraveling gender
i know now pixos and pythos

we touch

no one can see our breathing

circling around the vase

long before dawn's Rosetta stone
i kiss your closed eyes

2012

Sunday why

Why does war happen
Perfect cobblestones be damned
Seas that need conquering
Gold and spices for glory
The power of conquest

Oil and control
vast deserts and more of both
Hubris believed more than water
Incongruent with what we breathe

We simmer broth that bubbleth with love
and sanctuary
we walk incessantly to that sunset

Going to market where life is centered
Bringing it home for family
We have memorized the table

A supper we always imagined
or some may have already been blessed
Heads are bowed humble in simple supplication
Prayers for all and what lies beyond
the street the border the ocean and ice

Fumbling searching for litanies and affirmations
to countermand the next war
It is enough for a poem
Is it enough for more

February 2017

Untitled 1976

lean way,
way back
over the edge
and
groove on a
different
scene
then take
off -----
run hard,
hard as you can
through
the wood
then suddenly
stop
no place
in particular
and live

1976

walk

every day to the horizon
just after coffee
my legs just know the way
can't remember when it wasn't
toward the sun

out and about then out again
leaf scrabble and dust
staying just ahead of the day's fray

don't look back my friend
except to see your lost soul
sucked into the past
leaving an empty cereal bowl

i walk through my village
your home their history
what is main street now
i am lost collecting tumbleweed
one tangled town's story
fringed in joy and

i cry through Nagasaki
cradling grief just as Berlin
or Atlanta smoldering
does it matter who shot who
that year-long winter

i smell each song of spring
and step kindly in celebration
weaving through bouquets and throngs
a new bridge opens across the bay
the ferry man wonders

turning what used to be a simple corner
the borders and wire
so cruel and divisive
avoid that porch to view another ghetto

forgive me
forget me now
i don't have time to question you soldier

only the general directing chaos
potholes to crater our road

go marry your battlefield lover
that is the synthesis of peace
share the foxhole's soil to plant seeds
will your babies make better presidents
to change our wars and slums and doctrines

i slow my pace to grip your hand
to hug your dreams and kiss your pain
just like the 200 years before that when we forgot
and turned sideways to believe
some man who told us a better way
some god who never appeared

the path was juicy green humid
sultry torrid drops tickling each leaf and every frond
dancing in tongue yummy dew
the meadow we dreamed together

brush strokes we imagined
on that grass covered dune
waves that only remembered our entwined fingers

my motion ceased when you left me for only that moment
just rocks and dirt and nothing
bland dry bone barren brown
i became subject to the clouds growling

the whim of winter swirling snow
left me wondering where to place my feet
where to bury suffering
and mark the grave with my boots

rejoined and barefoot we smile into twilight

2015

wanton for freedom

I am wanton for freedom
just as I cherish clouds
and the colors of our differences

No premium for acceptance
with Saturn's nod
another revolution

Prescient savior heal me
with wonderment and sacrifice
A forest of such abundance as to heal the moon

Stymied and unraveled hearing
dissonant rumblings of discord
flushed with disapproval
embedded with matter of nothing

with you our endgame is a sunrise spring
horizon sipping love
Straws of lust
We are only now this freedom

2017

What really matters

I've lost my understanding of crimes I never committed
I'm tired of being judged for what I have not done
I stand before this poem naked
in meditation to the east
Where Atlantis cleanses Hatteras' breath
and the beach smiles profusely on our dawn walk

The journey to understanding anything
is bereft with circumstance and opinion and syntax
Oh my, such a pompous ménage de catastrophe
The café's patrons debate with passion
Knowing, accepting the possible reasons of opposition
and for the most part acquiesce to some middle ground
to go home in peace if not friends

Another petite verre monsieur
to continue this conversation
and may I invite my friends to partake

A journey around the world
Like the five-language chatter at the
Vorbasse Hestemarked in 1976
There was traditional and dramatic spitting and hand slapping
In lost dialects with many shots of schnapps
Horses were traded, none were lost
Posturing, but never anger
and often a sideways glimmer and glint of mischief

Beautiful, gnarled men and women that lived through the Occupation
and passed that remembrance to their children, my friends and me
An embrace, a conversation that we need now and always

2020

window

i'd love to keep the window
open tonight

mystery
shadow sounds of Orion

rain but not radioactive
slough of truth
smear with mango fiber

does glass have an inert
orange cone alert?

a parade of animals
skip and traipse the
foreground
knowing the camera
is on

2012