

University of Central Oklahoma  
Edmond, Oklahoma  
Dr. Joe C. Jackson College of Graduate Studies

Confessions of Band Shirt Vigilante

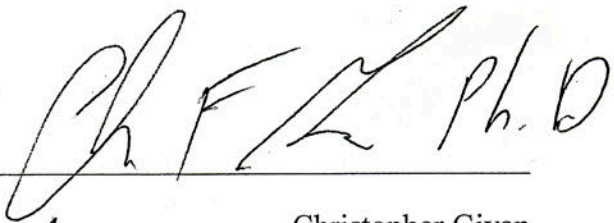
A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
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By  
Michael Torg Fadum  
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**Band Shirt Vigilante**

A THESIS  
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

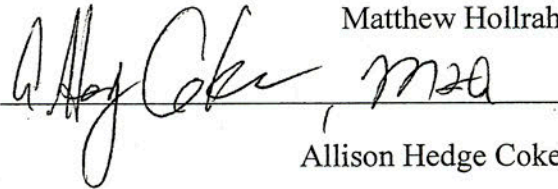
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Abstract:

The work is divided into six sections, which represent the emotion or motivation behind the speaker's obstacles in society. These obstacles may become reminders of the triumphs and failures of a young man's experience, trying to incorporate the wisdom that his older compatriots offer him. The writer's poetic influences lie heavily with the American Modernists. Some poets become characters or subjects within poems. The idea of creating a world within a poem stems from the rejection of tradition posed by the Modernists. Some of these created worlds hold Romantic ideals of grandeur, but most are simple alternatives to an alienating society.

A piece like "Don't Feed the Sea Lions," suggests that there are negative consequences to creating your own poetic world. It's easy to get lost or to bring abstract ideas to reality. For example, the lion tamer oversteps his bounds by feeding fish and puts others' safety at risk, though the character is based on a historical man, who operated in this manner in the Florida Keys. Some poems offer a safe vehicle to explore alternate realities and fantasies. Other poems seek to explore the damage society does to people, creatures or works of art. In "Dead Burmese," the reader confronts the speaker's realization that a dead snake on the side of the road holds insights into the American public's acceptance of raising exotic pets and then releasing them into a foreign ecosystem.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A previous version of, “Stomping on Coffee Grounds,” has been published in the October, 2012 issue of *Stepping Stones Literary Journal*.

“Midnight Stroll through Suburban Eden,” appeared in *The Absolute* in the 2011 volume.

## INTRODUCTION

The speaker of these poems often sees himself as a Band Shirt Vigilante in the alien town of Oklahoma City. Most of the people in the city offer friendship, but the cultural differences between the teenager and the Midwest former a barrier to acceptance. Relating at first to John Lennon's "Nowhere Man," the adolescent begins the slow acclimation to Oklahoma's customs.

He feels lost and longing for the beaches of Oahu, where he's spent the last four years of his life. He finds an alternative crowd of punk rockers and extreme athletes, which share his musical bond. Soccer, the sport he grew up on, finds a backseat to football. He's grateful for a break from the scrutiny of parents in the stands, but struggles to find hobbies to fill the void of being a beach bum, when he's not at school.

At school BSV finds out that the students like to play board games: Chinese Checkers, Spades, Monopoly, Life and his preferred game chess. The class has weekly tournaments after English and BSV builds a little bit of a reputation for winning.

Another young boy named Ellian Brown who's enjoyed the winner's circle challenges BSV. Both Ellian and his new challenger are unorthodox players. Ellian is noted as an attractive basket ball player with a bit of a temper. BSV plays the role of an outsider, an out of place surfer with sun-bleached blonde hair and tan skin.

The kids play a competitive game, where several pieces are exchanged. It comes down to the end game, and BSV wins. He shakes Ellian's hand, but the other kids start taunting Ellian. At lunch he comes up to BSV and tries to fight him. The latter is confused and asks why he wants to fight over a board game. Adults come around to break up the fight.

This sense of alienation recurs throughout my poetry. I tried taking myself out of my poems to avoid narcissism, but others have shown me that sometimes you need to participate. Otherwise, pieces become images of landscapes. Regardless of their beauty, any reader tires of similar scenes. Toward the end of this book, a shift occurs as the speaker injects himself more into each piece.

It bothers me when I read about people, who are constantly the victim. You can only sympathize for so long. At some point you've got react, empathize and press on. The reality we live in can be combated by the world on the page and vice versa.

I've tried to create an abstract answer to the cruel, trendy, world of 21<sup>st</sup> century Americana. I hope others can take something away that helps them in their own struggle. Mental illness creeps into the history of art and has become a stereotype of the artist. One of the benefits of contemporary society is its understanding of psychological disorders. Writing can provide therapy if used properly.

Violence rears its self in different manifestations throughout history. For me it's a quality I'd like to purge. I rejected violence through faith and spirituality and poetry provides the perfect outlet to foster this mindset. Poets like Walt Whitman, Wilferd Owen and Mahmoud Darwish supplied strong answers to the question of violence and its place in society. Song writers such as Paul Simon, John Lennon and Bob Dylan played a part as well. Owens powerful experience on the front lines of a world war humbled me to the possibility of whether any violence is ever justified.

My poems contain an element of written revolution. Violent revolution has become a tool to propagate power for political leaders from the eighteenth century to the present day. On the page, they provide strength for the poet and hopefully for the reader.

Poetry provided a vehicle for me to deal with the harsh realities of war and loss, giving closure to lost thoughts. When you realize the freedom of expression granted in art, there's no greater lift to one's spirits. You can address characters, people and poets past and present. In several poems, I call upon authors such as Lewis Carol, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and others. In a poem like Ginsberg's "Supermarket," Ginsberg speaks to Whitman. I tried to take this a step further by allowing the authors to speak and interact, using poetic license.

**Ichobad Greene**



## **Year of the Rat**

Born in 1984,  
I never noticed big brother,  
Till Orwell told me to  
Look at a Chinese placemat  
And realized I fit.

The rat, honest and plain,  
Friends fall in and out of fashion.  
Old boots fit best.  
Fishing for fate,

Dodging scaly logs which spring.  
Alligators, close to the Dragon.  
Who was I supposed to avoid?  
Who cares?  
Let's finish this egg drop soup.

**Roosevelt Middle School**

I work in an old crocodile.  
Roof shingles shed like scales,  
a corpse cradling its young.

I thought the reptile alive,  
till I realized painted flesh fell  
from cinderblock bones,  
splitting sheet rock skin.

Even her skeleton shields children.  
In her mouth, behind brick-pillared teeth,  
a boiler room chamber still beats, but  
the bureaucrats will beat it out of her.

Superintendents,  
hover around the body like hagfish.  
They, the growing gods, shake tenured titans,  
waiting to bloom into big lizards.

We rot in the gut of an Egyptian god.

## The English Class Food Pyramid

We feed one another  
the greens of grammar.

Literature, that wonderful fruit,  
enters, and we forget the sagging ceiling,  
water filled electric outlets  
and the graffiti newspaper  
sprayed on the walls.

The box letter obituaries  
remind us of what waits outside.

In here  
we have a moment's peace  
before trashcan fires  
and metal detectors go off.

Let the battle for Mayridge begin.

## Confronting Racism in the Class Room

Get off the sundial, move in real time then feel the chalk board beat.

If anything I'll bar white-washed walls. We soak  
in the lavender and blue grey walls. People stuck in the belly of a baleen whale.

Get off the merry go round, and listen to the "Ballad of Birmingham."

Save *The Last of the Mohicans*, but don't deny the Anglo men,  
who marched with brothers in 63.

I spin around the room and kid's faces  
melt like a Milky Way bar in the sun.

They watch in horror as "Four Little Girls"  
pay for humanity's red dwarfs,  
as they burst in a House of God.

## **My Golden Rules are Out of Order**

It would be great to leave behind  
a book to help others live,  
knowing there's a reason  
to drive to California  
with no place in mind.

My life expectancy is probably eighty.  
You just have to dodge drunk drivers  
and unseen coronaries.

They've mapped the human genome,  
but I'd rather not know  
if cancer's coming.

You can speak to God if you believe.  
I'm content in a church  
but humble on an airplane.

Gripping cup holders,  
staring out the window,  
praying this steel bird  
doesn't fall to earth like an egg.

I'll recycle cans, glass  
and plastic bags.

I'll live in a clay hut,  
but I can't eat locusts and honey.  
Well maybe in a drought.

## **My Thanks to the Man Who Invented Nylon**

I sit on an artificial sponge  
in nylon shorts, a miracle of the industrial age.  
I could just as easily wear  
a loin cloth or a leaf,  
but I'll spare any onlookers.

## **The Oil Pump Graveyard**

A beaten old man ran out of emotion.

He stood and looked at the skeletons of  
old iron soldiers that once pumped.

The pretty pools and rainbow reflections  
fanned words and wars for two centuries.

All I want to do is light a match.



## **Classroom Condemned**

Sitting on a particle board barricade,  
I watch pieces of plaster fall from  
ceiling tiles like guano from stalactites.

Mull over the irony of an electric chalkboard.  
Laptops at every desk dodge raindrops.  
Contemporary education stuck in the corpse  
of the new deal.

Asbestos in the bomb shelter, broken glass,  
leaky roofs, sinks, toilets, yet we tell kids take pride in your school.

The fire alarms fill with water.  
Plastic bonfires with note book paper kindling roar in bathrooms.  
Firemen call Roosevelt the Roach Motel.

No stadium, bleachers, not even a marked field,  
we made soccer goals from spare tires  
and volleyball poles.

How can we save Uganda,  
when SW 44<sup>th</sup> street's sunk?  
We spend money on cell phones not schools.

## Obituary for a Confederate Quickie Mart

Dream brown  
instead of sleeping  
in black and white.

Demons dance  
to a Rebel bell  
by Mohawk road,  
a one stop hell.

I heard hate  
scream in my ear.  
You're a nigger lover  
so hide in fear.

Now your cobwebbed pumps  
rust in the red dirt sun.

Your grey glass cracks  
from prairie wind.  
They'll doze you soon enough.

**Where's Walden?  
I Found Him Buried in the Elegies.**

## Dead Burmese on Highway 1

The car ahead swerves to hit  
a golden brown spotted  
fire hose  
laid across both lanes  
of route 1.

The Indonesian belly  
splayed open,  
full of lizard-like chickens  
and Spanish game cocks.

I pull over to  
examine the corpse,  
ripe like sludge in mangrove roots,

I glove up  
and pull the python  
to his sandy grave  
in the swamp.

Here lies  
the unwanted Genghis Khan  
of South Florida.

## The Southwest

I always miss the desert,  
an unknown artist's mineral painting  
of cacti in an empty fish bowl.  
It clear I missed the aesthetics at first.

Two skinny dogs lap water  
from a green hose rest stop.  
Upon closer inspection,  
I mixed up my canines.  
Foxes fool hounds by camouflage.

All your friends are strangers  
in the Southwest.  
Just ask Danny,  
who hangs by the parking lot.

Looking up,  
the gold-capped mountains rise like  
fossilized teeth cut from rose rock.  
These hills once oceanic plates  
serve frozen fish baked in nature's concrete.

Sandstone and sediment mix  
with sagebrush and dead grass.  
I admire the wonder of withered rocks,

which stand to plateau like stone pedestals,  
cracked and cleaned by the bright light bulb.

The late summer showers  
last long enough to flood  
creek beds that run once a year.

Danny showed me the value of  
a pickup truck in a monsoon,  
warned drainage ditches  
become death traps  
in the downpour.

The beauty I didn't see  
in rose rock cliffs and railroad cars  
haunts me as the water rises.

### **After Cremation: The Gardener's Funeral**

Before he plotted plants and peach trees,  
he sketched steel birds with swirling wings.  
Now the ashes of this armchair sage lie beneath  
a sapling sprouting pink pedals that dragonflies find.  
While they sit in dark coffee clay,  
the soul of the Gardner walks through once more in  
the memory and minds of those left behind.

Above the Magnolia, sliver zinc blobs drift  
apart from a white mass like  
the molted feathers of an African Grey Parrot.

Dingy reflections shimmer in a stagnant farm pond.  
They've come to pay respect to the gardener in rural unity.  
Pleased by the sweet smell of barbeque shacks and cedar,  
He found his resting place in the backwoods with the bullfrogs.

## Attack of the Prions

I see my best friend etched  
in the night sky, a man made Orion.

When you told me your possible death sentence,  
we saw a star fall.

Whether meteor  
or space trash, a  
brilliant green  
burned up over Kansas.

Genetics, the new plague,  
tells your fortune like a cruel gypsy queen.

Yet, we gaze at corrupted constellations,  
hidden beneath city lights.  
They can't take Sirius.

Boys grow, willing to eat  
a sulfur flavored drum  
for the sake of a catch,

a man willing to stake  
a tent with his body  
in a super cell,



you work while muscles melt.

Enjoy life, because it's leaving in trickles

like snow melt in spring.

"The Devils in our DNA,"

forecast death but can't take

the heaven you found

in a pretty nurse.

Prions eat tissue but not the page.

To see you, I look out to the constellation.

## I. Coral Reef Prairie

Grazing on sea grass  
and coral polyps,  
oceanic livestock  
with rose red scales  
and aqua green fins  
may not have much to eat  
in the coming century  
as reefs brown like  
the once fertile plains  
of the Mesozoic.

Instead of natural selection,  
man-made intervention creeps.  
Tigers and bulls wait on the fringe.

Torpedoes  
chase frightened herds  
of bright colored fatty fish  
into coral walls.  
Impaled on sharp lime stone spikes,  
these cattle make for an easy meal.

## II. Don't Feed The Sea Lions

A grizzled old lion tamer  
feeds the sea beasts  
without regard to his  
or others' safety.

Waving bloody ballyhoo  
on the ocean floor,  
barracuda bite his scarred hands  
and nibble his nose to a stub.

Two weeks later,  
a Bohemian diver dies while watching  
from the false safety of a feeding ring.

He flails his arm,  
and the bull bears down  
on his thigh.

Half an hour later, he's bled to death  
on a boat in the Caribbean.

## Funeral Service For a Boar in Levy County

Walking down a country road,  
I saw a black leg with red tone.  
A magnificent black bird,  
I thought to be an eagle  
perched on a cedar tree.

My nostrils begged for scent of pine.  
I wondered where the leg came from,  
and the stench brought me to brine  
creek, drainage ditch.

A black bag of hair lay bare,  
step to close and rancid meat  
knocked me to my knees,  
while the vulture waited on bough above.

Seconds later, the skinned hide  
of a noble pig sank in a stagnant tide.

Which pickup truck dumped this bloated beast?  
Ahead the Rebel flag loomed over Old Glory.  
Out of my element, I'm one angry Yankee  
in a Southern swamp.

**Don't Eat Yellow Cake in the Gulf of Tonkin**

## Ode to the Pilsner

The pleasant tang  
of bitter hops  
in the bottom of a beer glass  
will be the only sensation  
left to enjoy, and it's enough.

He found comfort  
in the body of a blonde lover.

The smell of fresh flesh  
charred black on a sandy freeway.

Nerves never settle like debris  
carried by currents  
until they reach  
the bottom  
of nightmares.

Now he registered the world in mute,  
except for caterwauls of mortar rounds.  
Screams from soldiers burning  
in armored ovens forged from  
improvised explosives.

Growing up oblivious to war  
till he turned six.

Humanity began to beat him.

Fickle from fistfights

on the playground,

after his first bloody nose,

he imbibed adrenaline,

filling a bottle

with blood soaked hormones.

During gestation an umbilical cord

wrapped around his fetal neck like

shrapnel entwined around an elm.

It formed an empty glass.

## I. Babylon by the Book

Atomic clocks  
watch defense stocks  
rise with each pink moon.

We wash the maroon  
clumped sand  
only to clog  
the hourglass again.

Limbs without bodies  
like lambs without tongues,  
never speak.

Buried in the desert,  
one-ton supernovas  
wait, while  
bunker busters radiate  
barren tracts  
like bleach in tar pits.

The commander in chief  
thinks we scrub the desert clean.  
She needs the dirt and rainbow grease,  
her heritage.



## II. Bang!

The Black Hole

swallowed men.

It spit out dark sooty statues on

tar-soaked sandy streets.

Paved by mechanical Warthogs,

they spray copper balls

at a thousand rounds a minute.

Men smolder in mass graves.

They can't speak but whistle

out of eye socket mouths.

They once held

long limp pistols,

waiting in a glass pebble gale

with no concept of time.

### III. Stay out of the Sand Box

Pay no attention to a phallic  
axis of unconnected evil  
as it drives civilized men to  
euthanize the Fertile Crescent.

Incinerating bodies before the blood  
clots in sand, forming little dry crimson bricks.

Somewhere in D.C. a bottle of red zinfandel  
sinks into cream-colored carpet.

### **I Buried the Victim out Back**

A college kid tried to pick up two teens with a pistol.

He took a skateboard truck upside the head.

A man fueled by raw oysters and *Green Jelly*.

Some sad over-aged girl offered to suck my dick

in a broom closet when she passed my seat.

Tiresias came back as R Kelly.

Not every white man's JFK,

the life preserver or the migraine headaches.

A man fueled by raw oysters and *Green Jelly*.

The old band witch hit on me.

She called my kid a lazy Mexican.

Tiresias came back as R Kelly.

My first sergeant harassed the supply woman.

She came to me. We drank it off and had our say.

A man fueled by raw oysters and *Green Jelly*.

So when they draw on you,

pay forty dollars for a new deck.

Tiresias came back as R Kelly.

A man fueled by raw oysters and *Green Jelly*.

### **Ectoplasm in the Swimming Pool**

## I. True Love Falls on Moving Day

I love you enough  
to move a baby grand,  
but the ivory keys  
curse at me.

They whine like  
wind blowing through  
Yorick's cracked teeth.

The hardwood ruined  
as wheels crunch stained oak.  
Numerous players have tarnished  
this stamped suit  
of oaken armor.

When I watch  
it sitting, smirking at me  
from the back of the truck,  
I'd just as soon push it off.

Just a phone call.

"Honey, we hit a bump."

"There was nothing I could do."

## II. Recovery From True Love

One more hernia avoided.

I love you enough

to move the tone deaf

siren as it sings

Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Sympathy.

**Poor Penny**

She's worth more  
in copper than coinage.

## Cretan Collage

I finally saw the primordial aloe ooze  
that festers with life thriving on  
an ectoplasmic orgy of kinetic energy.

At first sight, you may avert your eyes,  
yet behemoth beasts bear an  
understated eloquence in pose  
and the posture of prickly pine pillars.

My mortality ends with words.  
The mutants I adore remain pixilated,  
painted with their own eyes averted.  
For who disgusts who is a question  
I'll ask till an answer appears in the ooze.



## **I Prefer the Jester to the Baboon**

I'll slam my head into a book,  
count the page numbers and  
cringe at actions taken like a  
baboon beating his chest.

The anxiety I excrete  
will squish under my feet.  
As I skank to *London Calling*,  
though the wall  
has physically fallen.  
I run into the electric  
fence of national pride.  
It bides and bides  
till my hate combusts,  
electrified.

When I stop myself,  
I don't count page numbers  
or check chapters.  
Things click quickly, merge  
in a metaphoric safe.  
The combination-lock  
resides in the poet's mind.

### **What I learned from Jolly Old**

**London's Lone American Anglican**

Mr. Eliot,  
a modern man in loose-leaf,  
sings of London's soiled streets.  
He whistles gulping  
smog from smokestacks.

He walks barefoot through soot,  
which cakes the bottom  
of his small soles.

Nothing can haunt the  
palm of his mind.

He ignores  
trendy tribes that drink  
and jive in cramped cafés,  
those who fill hollow theaters  
with cacophonies of cackles.

I choke down the same smog  
in stuttered gasps.  
The fumes funnel into  
my fragile phrenology.

A resounding *Thanatopsis*.

He toasts the falling orange  
and the coming winter.

## **Multicolored Mirrors of Winter Life**

Lights of artificiality  
hang from gutters  
in a modern tribal village.  
Divided by those that wait  
for nonexistence  
and an aberrant abode  
of worshipers.

Here lies the modern battlement.  
The white steeple's  
sects fall like dead branches.  
They break beneath the weight  
of icy sheaths,  
smashing bones  
empty edifices  
sagging but still steady  
like the walk of an old man.

## **The Human Hive**

Offspring

cling to the walls

of a steel acropolis.

They'll thrive

in the coming spring.

While old bodies

ripen just to rot in the street.

## I. Ode to Ryan Wood

I saw them take your body away.

What was left from a partial cremation.

I missed the funeral

in the desert.

We said goodbye in the garage.

When you bitched me out for joining up.

In Basic, I read the irony in a letter

from my future wife.

A sketch artist denied formal training,

Surrounded by M-4's, bunker busters

and nuclear Armageddon.

## II. Agony in Adhamiya

I hear the screams of your gunner in flames.  
No poem pays you for your service.  
To bring you back, I'd ride a bike for life.  
Let my Honda Civic gather dust in the garage.

You showed me *A New Kind of Army*,  
and that flag draped mask  
hides the Mohawk.

When the bulletproof Bradley  
burned up as Persian parting gifts  
found their way across the border.

I sat oblivious on the couch.  
Then Seth called.

We celebrated you at a Uhaul center.  
The hackysack rainedance  
worked for days in June.

When your security blanket burns up,  
and the King's men make you march  
for their money. You sing  
Adhamiya Blues to buck them.



I listen to the beat  
like a dry Sponge  
soaking up blood.

## I. Twentieth Century Bronze Horseman

Patton, we are paradoxical seeds  
you spit from your mouth,  
cracked open by the teeth  
of history.

Now we wait,  
in the beak  
of a blackbird  
for a chance to grow  
in some fertile soil.

## II. From Bronze to Berlin

You once whipped a man  
with your nickel-plated pistol,  
and from that moment, the blood  
never left cerebral lips.

Like packed snow beneath your boots,  
we watched the boughs and twigs  
wail for an end to the concussion  
that rattled continents.

You freed my grandfather  
from a wheel barrel of coal a year,  
raisins and stale bread,  
and a death sentence  
set one day short.

The ivory grips gave you away.

### III. Cavalcade For World War

Your enemies are trapped  
in the shadows,  
emblazed on Hiroshima's walls,  
outlines of bodies in atomic exile.

They were earned by baton twirls  
and bayonet banquets.  
Others lost as napalm-baked  
flesh chars and flakes  
like the damned at Dresden.

You sank in the maroon salty sea  
that saw allied souls  
taken by the tide at Normandy.  
The body regained its blue hue.

## Stomping on Coffee Grounds

In our master bedroom,  
acrylic featherpints float.  
Our landlord brushed  
them into existence.  
Coffee grounds  
color the withered wall.

My sunshine snapped  
a photograph but  
focused on grey  
shades that lick our  
black and white bodies.

She stared at the photo  
framed in beach bark,  
traced down the wall,  
and glared at a naked  
pinewood cross,  
standing on its own.

## Death by Mercury Poisoning

Dressed in an ebony suit,  
the critic, Mr. Pound, admires  
his slick seal skin.

The writer stands erect.  
Mr. Carroll shows off  
a Victorian straight jacket  
with bright parrot leaf lapels.

“What did your subconscious  
Supply you with today?” asks Pound.

“The art you need to fill your  
black and white diatribes  
from Toltec to Tehran.”

Donne enters  
in blue pinstripes  
with the circus dripping down his chest.

“Who’s that beast in the clown get up?”  
Pound cries affronted by the fashion crime.

They buck up like Buffalo.

“Pay no attention to him.”

“He’s a hybrid and a Yid  
from Tottenham court road,” Pound says.

“Oh my, I thought they got rid of those in 45.”

“Just wait, Ezra.

You’ll thank Ginsberg someday.”

“And why should I listen  
to a crooked nose?” he replies.

“Death stocks you between books  
like a red spotted tick in tall grass,  
waits to latch on before red dirt winter.  
You’ll seize up with scarlet fever.”

Carroll shivers as the silver slides  
across the brim of his top hat.

## **Thanatopsis**



### **The Demi-God Chess Champion**

I sat and played chess with Minerva.

Imbued in marble, I lost as always.

She didn't know what to do

because she had no one to answer

to, and I saw obsession

in checkered coal and quartz.

### **A Native in the Conquistador's Cemetery**

I should be dead and the rust  
must be scraped from my head.

Someone unscrew the metal spikes  
from my Mohawk of rod iron.

Spanish moss covers my tombstone,  
a wig that comforts the cold rock.

I can't be opened any more.  
Thanatos locked the gates.

## The Pitch

We envy the green  
of Emerald Isles or sunny Spain.  
But we roll on straw brown Bermuda grass,  
crack ribs on red clay concrete.

In secret, we wince with the twinge  
when muscle tears from bone.

Everyone just wants to play the game.

We lose sight when drug lords shoot  
outside backs<sup>1</sup> over own goals.

Real men known as sons out of respect  
bend knees to give thanks for hat tricks,  
handshakes and your idol's jersey.

Egypt's captain sets the ultimate example.  
He held a ten-year-old while men riot.  
Flares swallow Cairo. This leaves  
a philosophy student to comfort the dead.

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<sup>1</sup> Outside back is a position on a soccer team, also known as outside defender or left and right back.

## The Yank

Where's Walden?

He moved from a log cabin to dwell in adobe brick  
nestled in the tall grass of the open plain hiding from,

Yankee Doodle who took New England  
through disease and mass starvation.

He ate cursed apples and prayed to fate.

He stuck campaign pins in  
the white eyes of revolution.

He filled the void of identity with red clay bricks,  
and disguised insecurity with white-hot whigs.

He built a foundation on swamp land.

Now our steel imbued skyscraper empire rises.

He replaced Christ with Calvin,  
a black hole devoid of a muse.

Living in the carrion of the cannon,

I still found free will.

## **A Midnight Stroll Through Suburban Eden**

I set out on my pseudo-epic quest  
With my fabled mutt beast and think  
Should I lock the door?  
If someone should actually break in  
They need whatever it is more than I

My neighbors' pet monsters began to bark  
In cadence with one another,

A gaggle of security guards  
Who aren't really needed

I'm so far removed from fair Odysseus  
My beast is blacker than the suburban night  
In any shadow may lurk a stray cat or skunk  
And still I'll jump every once in a while

Nothing but familiar concrete curves  
And hedgerows with high and tight haircuts  
They salute the street in homage to order  
Just little clean lots with Bermuda grass borders

My three-mile trek ends with  
A painstaking march up composite stone steps,  
Grunting, I reach the top of a small staircase  
And I thank the bright bulging nightlight

That guided me home

## **Marine Land: The Whales Unwanted Retirement Home**

Till extinction by execution,  
I sit staring at the blue bubbles belched  
From a whale in the dead Pacific

The emperor's men moved from stabbing Chinamen  
To baleen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

I want to surf on the back of a leviathan  
Such a stupid suicidal tendency

I watch the red dot rise on the white backdrop  
And the burning ball behind it on the horizon mocks the speared flesh

I'd give anything to swim in brine for longer than a few hours  
The alien world with purple trees and pink grass

They kill God's behemoth  
For yen on the black market and I'm sick from the sonar screams

They'll join US submarines in joint exercises as hundreds beach  
I watch a child pull on the caudal engine that can't reverse in air

They exhale and organs crush





## **Ode to Lt. Col. Torg Fadum**

I wonder what he felt

Sliding into a crawl space

Like slipping under a car hood at 20,000 feet

He lived through a 53% mortality rate raked by flack

The grunts lived a slightly safer life

When the aluminum shell peeled back

He fell through the sky

Floated to the ground finding

The black luck of landing in a Nazi camp

He ate raisins and stale bread

Aryans wheeled in a barrow full of coal

POW's learned they burned their annual supply

He faced interrogations

In dark rooms lit up by the strike of a match on his dry skin

From one officer to another the Germans play good cop bad cop

He spent time in solitary for smart answers to dumb questions

Tried to comfort the men who found Dear John letters

And wrote to his family, for the first and last time of his sentence

He faced death from the Furher  
Saved by a man with ivory coated hands  
Because of this I exist

**Paco Villa**

The full metal jacket melts into bone.

In your ankle, it found a home.

I watch you say it was a drive by.

But we wonder if it's a thug life lie.

The streets slap men for cartel kicks.

In the end, you choose your licks.

Late every morning for one semester,

I wonder why you lie and fester.

Now you've come to every class.

You've got the chance to maybe pass.

The street wise professor in tattoo ink,

Dreams of where he'll land not sink.

If I see you on that stage,

I'll cheer, for you broke the Top Town cage.

## What Did We Bring Back Home

When did Bud die?

Why did Woody have to burn alive?

They said it's a war then changed the story.

There's no holocaust just black pools and poppy fields.

Molly's "Punch Drunk Grinning Soul"

Stares into the infinity of police action.

My mind's scarred like a pumpkin left to long

After autumn softened it, I felt it freeze in February.

Jeff left college kids money after he was KIA.

Some things should stay frozen.

I wish Woody never left that record shop.

The irony in *A New Kind of Army*

Blares from speakers in a faded black F150.

Battle buddies testify for one of the fallen.

As melting clay walls creep to the sand,

Soldiers take shade in tank treads.

Oh, to survive ambushes in desert streets

Then succumb to PTSD and a Georgian tree.

**Rizzo**

I watch her run through thick grass up to her ribs.

She never stays in one place for fear of the birds.

Big bulging crows weigh down the electric black rope.

They eye her for a meal but the brindle black pit bull keeps them at bay.

So the scavengers sit on fence posts, power lines and sorghum trees.

My wife made me love her. She runs like a rabbit, short hops through Bermuda.

A dog daft by evolutionary standards survives through red clay tunnels left by allied prairie dogs.

I worry I'll squish her when she runs round my feet or when I turn over in bed.

Somehow, she's seven and proven me wrong. With static wavy hair, she mimics Einstein.

At rest her tongue hangs out like raw skin in straw blonde hair.

## **Flying through Aerosol**

The pole vaulter falls to freedom on a dirty mattress.

Weak bent barbwire guards watch him leap.

The drainage ditch eyes check for victims.

He leaves imprints in the gravel for others to follow.

I want to spot for the man.

Concrete, you're such a cruel prison.

I love watching your grey hips give way.