

Poetry Series

Frank Avon
- poems -

Publication Date:
2016

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Frank Avon(05.12.1936)

The person for whom Frank Avon is a pseudonym is 77 years old - and has been for some time. It sounds like a lucky number, so he feels he might as well stick with it for a while. He was an educator for 45 years, and is now retired, though not graciously, for he misses teaching every single day. He has written thousands of poems, but has never permitted any of them to be published (except for a few that one of his former students persuaded him to allow her to use in a professional journal, for which she was poetry editor) . Many of his students, however, are prize-winning poets, novelists, short story writers, essayists, and scholars. As a poet and teacher of poetry, this is the pride of his life.

Nowadays he spends his time working crosswords, playing solitaire, pruning and pulling weeds in his yard, and whining about old age. He has been married to an ideal wife for over fifty years: they have five children, literally scattered all over the globe, and five grand-children. They also have a raggie (rat terrier + beagle) named Peanut who runs their lives, and every so often demands that a poem be written about him. Frank Avon always complies.

(exit)

Never say to anyone
what you would not
have repeated
to everyone,

and by anyone
I mean anyone
under the sun,

and by everyone
I mean everyone
who can be undone.

'She cried her eyes out! '
'You hurt their feelings.'
'You must apologize.'

Candor can be
contaminating;
confidentiality
an invitation
to exasperation.
Confidence
is no more
anywhere.

All the world
is not a stage;
it's a bullhorn,
a megaphone,
a public shofar.

Keep your thoughts
to yourself, so
the world has to read
between the lines
of your wrinkled brow,
and never know
what you wonder -

and why.

Silence and
solitude are
the only pillars
to stand upon.
I've said too much
already
to too many,
so it's time for me to go.

(exit)

Frank Avon

10 Things I Do (Almost) Every Day: After Ted Berrigan (Almost)

wake up
check the mail
toss the junk
surf the Net
ache

look outside my window
reminisce
work a crossword puzzle
play solitaire
read a few pages from a book

read a poem or write a poem or wish I did
love life
especially my wife
who is my life
weed my rose bed or feed the birds or wish I could

watch Rachel (and the moon) (and the minute hand)
drink Gatorade
daydream
remember them
botch things up (to be perfectly frank) and wish I didn't and remember when...

Frank Avon

They are shadows are on the wall
shadows of the years:

Santa Claus
Ebenezer Scrooge
a china doll
butterflies
Desert Rose
a unicorn
a herald angel
and the Star

the others are lost in light

except one red ball
(pomegranate, if you will)
this year's
good cheer

all of them
hanging there
singing
in silence

rising
as shadows
on the wall
darkened
distorted
by distance

52 of them
a year of Christmases
illuminated
by memory

casting their spell
with stories they tell
tidings they bear

once a year
evermore

here and there
everywhere

shadows
on the wall
shadows

shadows -

hear them call
hear them
here

Frank Avon

A Dark Christmas Version #1

12.25.2001

This holly branch
in black and white -
may it enhance
this year's dark night.

Sometimes God's grace
in whispers sings
and we embrace
more common things

that hint at Light.

Frank Avon

A Dark Christmas Version #2

12.25.2001

How could we send
colors this year,
or comprehend
tidings we hear?

Not green or gold,
no touch of red
(tales shepherds told)
(words angels said) .

In wordlessness
must wonder find
or seek in silence
a peace of mind.

Frank Avon

A Forsyte House: Soames's Home

It owned a copper door knocker
of individual design,
windows which had been altered
to open outwards,
hanging flower boxes
filled with fuchsias,
and at the back (a great feature)
a little court tiled with jade-green tiles,
and surrounded by pink hydrangeas,
in peacock-blue tubs.
Here, under a parchment-coloured Japanese sunshade
covering the whole end,
inhabitants or visitors
could be screened
from the eyes of the curious
while they drank tea
and examined at their leisure
the latest of Soames's little silver boxes.

The inner decoration favoured
the First Empire and William Morris
[not red velvet chairs
or modern Italian marble].
For its size, the house was commodious;
there were countless nooks
resembling birds' nests,
and little things made of silver
were deposited like eggs.

Frank Avon

A Gift For Giving: A Found Poem

Forgiveness is a gift
we give ourselves; not
the person we forgive
but ourselves. When we harbor
resentment and vitriol
we only harm ourselves.

Everything is forgivable;
some things are inexcusable
but everything is forgivable.

Note: A found poem based on 'How Living with and Loving Bruce Jenner Changed My Life Forever, ' by Linda Thompson. (See Story for www citation.)

Frank Avon

A Goldfinch And Its Mate

I saw my first goldfinch
of the season today
gleaming amidst the sunflowers
that hide my porch,
its mate's camouflage
fading into the foliage

and I thank Ceres and Bacchus
or 'whatever gods may be'
that life abounds
no matter how near
(the roses are fading
with no fresh buds,

not even the climbers,
New Dawn and Joseph's Coat
and the Fourth of July,
and the sunflowers so heavy
their stems are breaking)
the threat of death.

Frank Avon

A Grain Of Sand

He dwelt for a decade
in the garden of Lambeth
with its vine and fig tree,
'the bright Marygold, '
his upstairs window
looking out to the river Thames,
the chapel built there,
and the mill of Albion.

Frank Avon

A New Heaven In A New Earth: Coming Of Age

For many lives I had been working on myself,
struggling, doing whatsoever could be done -
and nothing was happening.
The very effort was a barrier.

Not that one can reach without seeking.
Seeking is needed, but then comes a point
when seeking has to be dropped.

And that day the search stopped.
It started happening. A new energy arose.
It was coming from nowhere and everywhere.
It was in the trees and in the rocks
and the sky and the sun and the air -
and I was thinking it was very far away.
Though it was so near...'

Frank Avon

A Sense Of Sumptuousness: A Found Poem

A poem
is something of a list,
[a poet of the tribe of postmodernists says]
a list of phenomena
and reaction
that may or may not
lead to a conclusion.

It's not a story,
it's an arrangement.

[It hopes to]
resist narrative
and its numbing conventions
that depend upon domineering logic,
which is insufficient to
the full welter of life.

We don't live narratives.

We hop.

[Such a poem]
conveys a sense of amazements
in each landing and takeoff.

It comes to a sense of ending
that isn't necessarily completion
but more like how a song ends,
with a sense of

sumptuousness achieved.

[Adapted from Dean Young, in Best American Poetry 2014, Notes and
Comments, p192]

Frank Avon

A Thought That Often Crosses The Mind Of An Elderly Man

How I wish that I...,
but it cannot be;
all I have left
is the memory.

Frank Avon

Adages

Remember this
Remember this

It's always easier

to raze
than to raise

to wreck
than to erect.

Teach your children this
while they're playing with their Legos
instead of with nations.

It's easier
to invade
than to occupy,

to occupy
than to withdraw

to withdraw
than to facilitate
reconstruction.

Any of these can be a trauma.
Just ask Barak Hussein Obama.

Destruction
is easier
than construction.

Obstruction
is easier
than reconstruction.

Teach your children plainly.

It's too late to teach Saddam Hussein;
it's too late to teach Richard Cheney
and his ilk.

It's much easier

to desire

to conspire

(or simply to expire)

than to inspire

but, after all, it's inspiration
that's the foundation of civilization.

We must inspire
collaboration
and negotiation
education
and dedication
without reservation

to avoid

DEVASTATION

OBLITERATION

ANNIHILATION

Frank Avon

After Reading Charles Wright, I Go Outside Into The Treeless Park

'Tomorrow is dark.
Day-after-tomorrow
is darker still.'

For some of us,
at fifty-four,
life began again.

All things must end.

Can't begin
not again

Frank Avon

After The Last Supper

We call it communion.
I'm not sure why.

The Church Fathers
gave us flesh and blood,
live flesh, real blood.

'This is my body, '
they said.
'This is my blood.'

We call it Communion,
live and die.

'One knows
There is no end to the other world,
no matter where it is.'

Frank Avon

Afterward

And so, simplicity
descended,
and crept into our nature,
unknotting the future.

And so, intensity
ascended,
its flight among the stars,
and abandoned the impending.

Frank Avon

Agnostic / Prognostic

I am not anti-intellectual,
afraid to play with ideas.

Indeed, I find great pleasure
among the conceits of theologians:

the Jesus Seminar,
such as Marcus Borg,

historians,
such as Elaine Pagels,

aware evangelicals,
such as Philip Yancey,

ex-believers,
such as Bart Ehrmann and Reza Aslan.

I do not sink in confusion,
or rise to an Ultimate Decision.

For me,
to believe

is not to accept
(or refuse to reject)

but to rely upon,
to put my trust in,

to empty myself of the flesh,
and relinquish my destiny

to Jesu
the Christos

if to sink into oblivion
so be it,

if to rise in transcendence,
I rejoice,

if into Holy Communion,
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

Frank Avon

Ah, Me!

Hopelessness is not terminal,
nor does it slowly fade away;
it doesn't require surgery
nor does it respond to rest
and a couple of aspirin.
There is no vaccine,
no antidote, no vitamin B12.

It may be precipitated by
gray weather, day after day;
it doesn't rustle like the wind
or clap like thunder, or drizzle
on one's uncovered head.

Suddenly it's there.

One marks wars on the map
with multicolored pins.
Is there a pattern?
Is anywhere invulnerable?
The dead multiply,
each one generating another.

Things do not stay put;
they disappear in a rear-view.
One's eyesight, one's hearing,
one's hair, one's potency,
one's energy, one's memory,
and so on and so forth....

Don't rely on priests or deacons;
they're raising funds to
repair the sanctuary,
or finance their term
at the seminary;
one of them is counseling
the moderator's spouse;
another is having an affair
with the church treasurer.

Don't expect ones you elect
to maintain your respect:
they spend most of their time
(and cash) to get re-elected.
They flex their muscles,
their pecs and their abs,
to impress tv reporters
or their affluent supporters,
or the woman they're seeing
in South America.

Your local newspaper editors
have already got your obituary
set in type, for when it's needed
- if you are that important.
If you're not, your relatives
will pay by the line, when
the time arrives. Be sure
you have sufficient insurance.

At every major intersection
stands a man with a cardboard sign
and a hat extended, or a box
at his feet. 'I am broke.
I need your HELP. Or some cash.'

Ragweeds in your garden grow
faster than your marigolds
and never bloom a single bloom.
Neither does hopelessness.

Frank Avon

A-List For The Wrist: Rolex Daytona

People purchase prestige
in many forms
for multi-sums.

A Timex tells time
as well as a Rolex.
and when it is lost
or stolen
it's not catastrophic, for
it costs considerably less
than \$24,500.

Unless you're a motorcyclist
or a race car driver,
I'm not sure why you'd want to be known
to wear the aura
of DAYTONA.

Frank Avon

All I Have To Say

The world is a lump of clay.
So are we.

Night is another day.
Shouldn't be.

Frank Avon

And Yet

The only thing one's certain of
is that one can be certain of nothing;
certitude
is a cardinal sin,
Pride:

truths, values, understandings
after all are only
one's responses
to circumstances
to what others have
imprinted, imposed, impressed
upon one's psyche
circumstantial
social
uncertain,

I'm certain.

Frank Avon

Another Bible

It was an era of rewriting:

Bishop Percy's 'Song of Solomon, '
Isaiah as Lowth's prose poem,
the hymns of the Wesleys,
spiritual ballads for children,
Burke's 'the Sublime and the Beautiful, '
the oratorios of Handel,
Cowper's 'Olney Hymns, '
Smart's 'Jubilate Agno'

It was the era of his genesis:

Urizen, the height of his depth,
the beginning of the end,
Ahanian and Los, the end of the beginning,
occasion to lament

It was the era of visions

of his Vision
of Poetical Painting
of colour printing and prints:
'the Ancient of Days, '
'the Ghost of a Flea, '
'the House of Death, '
'Newton' and
'Nebuchnezzar'

It was the era of his identity,

and, of worldly hopes, the decline.

See, and behold!

Frank Avon

Apostolorum Apostola Part 1

Watch your step there, young woman. This is a treacherous spot in the roadway. I've traveled this passage many times before; many times have I seen someone slip, someone make a misstep. And slide among the stones, down into the flowing sewer there.

Ah, I see. This is your first time in these parts. I could tell by your tongue that you might be from elsewhere. I know the feeling. They used to call me 'the Magdalene, ' meaning I was too sophisticated, a city girl from the Town of the Tower. Once it had been a little fishing village, then a prosperous city that fell on hard times when those Romans erected the city of Tiberias. People who stayed in Magdala, then, they thought, were too snooty, 'has beens' from the old times - at least that's what Simon Peter was always saying to me, for he prided himself on being a lowly man, a hard-working fisherman, with those broad shoulders and brown legs and sinewy hands and arms, a true fisherman. Why his Teacher, who had chosen him, should also choose such a frilly city girl was more than he could understand. 'She even talks funny, ' he complained, 'all edoo-cated, 'n all.' But that was just Simon Peter, just the way he was. So don't let them get you down, or make fun of your tongue. We are who we are - all of us.

Where am I headed? you ask. Now that's interesting, isn't it? That's usually a question the men ask - not a young woman like you. Some of them offer to help me along the way, even to let me sleep in their tent - with them, of course. Well, I give them what-for! But others, more gentlemanly, are curious about me, about my clothes, the ones I wear to travel in along this roadway, and others like it. Women usually ask where I've been, where I came from. They really want to know, of course, whether I'm married - one of them - belonging to some man or another, with a troop of children somewhere. My answers, I have to tell you, always puzzle them - men and women - all of them. Where am I headed to? 'I'll know when I get there -' that's what I say. They wrinkle their brow at that. My bones will know, my soul will know, the Voice I hear in my inner ear - the Voice will say, 'Here.' They don't understand; some pretend to, but none of them do. Most of the women are wiser. Where did you come from? 'Over yonder, ' I say, pointing one way or another; 'a long time ago.' 'I can hardly remember, ' I say. 'By myself, '

I say; 'a while with Him, and since then by myself again - always'
Well, that's not really true - not in the strictest sense. I never
travel alone; I choose one group or another, never rowdies,
mostly women and their families, sometimes others who knew Him too.

Who is He? you say. Oh, I thought you knew, that you were one of us.
I was the Magdalene; He was the Nazarene. Outsiders, both of us,
sorta - strangers, or strange anyway - out of place - alienated -
talking a language they didn't know. I don't mean our tongues now;
I mean the language of the soul. We both, you see, had been dipped
in the waters of the Jordan - by Yohan the Essene, who was also called
Yohan the Immerser. 'We are a corrupt people, ' Yohan said, 'soiled
by the times we live in, the folks we live near, the impurities
we let happen, even when we aren't thinking.' 'Wash yourselves, '
he said; 'wash away your selves; come forth clean, come forth pure.'

No, no, no. I don't mean from harlotry. Heavens, no. Though I
must admit, some of the men liked to think of me that way - fallen.
You see, I grew up an orphan, passed from uncle to cousin to kin
even more distant. One of them, a wise old man, taught me to read,
told me to read and read and read. 'You don't need to be dependent:
find things out for yourself.' It wasn't easy in those days: scrolls
were hard to come by, unless you were affluent, unless you were
among the elite. 'Make yourself one of the true elite, ' he said.
'Read, read, read.' That's how I got too sophisticated for Simon Peter.
He was barely literate - really wasn't. Someone had to help him
decipher the scriptures, communicate thereafter with all the other
apostles. Often I helped him. He gave me grudging gratitude.

Then, when I was over thirty, I was married - a spinster in their eyes -
to the honorable Clopas - one of the elite, but not a thinker,
not given to meditation. One of us was sterile; we never knew which.
And then I was a widow - way, way too soon. That's when I heard
about this strange Immerser. I took to following him around,
just to hear his hardy voice, his words of insistence, his promises.
Stranger than I, he was. Living in the desert, eating only weeds,
seeds, wearing the skins of beasts he knifed from their carcasses,
barefoot, bare-legged, bare-headed, untrimmed, unshaven. What a man,
was he. But he spoke of the spiritual, he spoke to my soul,
and I let myself wear rough clothes, patched with rags, drab, plain.

Oh, no, now I've got you confused. Yohan was not He, not the one

I mean. Yohan was like a brother - but distant, weird, wild, wholly independent. We who followed him - well, we understood. It's like we were his descendants, but he was atop the mountain, and we were following at a distance, in the arid valleys.

So, how did I meet Him, my Teacher? That's what you want to know, isn't it? Strange as it may seem, I really don't remember. We were both around and about - simple folks, on our own. I think we may have seen each other from time to time at communal dinners - you know what I mean, weddings, holidays, anniversaries of births, marriages, funerals, events of some importance. A motley group - fishermen and gatherers, Zealots (those mouthy orators, rebels) , tax collectors (now they were true outsiders, alienated by the trade) , seamstresses, builders, diggers, nursemaids, beggars (those, too) . I had seen Him here and there; I guess he had seen me, too. Then he was immersed - as I had been - in the waters of the Jordan. Yohan the Essene seemed flustered - very unlike him. He mumbled. I barely heard him, but I have never forgotten the words I heard: 'You ought to be - washing me? I'm the one unclean. Why are you here? ' Then as He rose from the water, dripping, wiping his eyes, humble, it was as if it thundered, but the skies were clear and sunny. It couldn't have been Yohan the Immerser: he was much too quiet, his voice would never have rumbled. No, it was a clap of thunder. I'm sure it was. I never asked Him afterward; I should've. 'THIS IS MY SON WHOM I LOVE! WITH HIM I AM WELL PLEASED! '

END OF PART 1 - MORE TO COME

Frank Avon

Apostolorum Apostola Part 2

We'd better step out of the roadway for a few minutes. Do you see that cloud of dust beyond the horizon, heading toward us? It's a caravan. You never know what the drivers may do with their whips to clear the way. Besides, my feet are weary. Maybe yours are, too, young as you are. Weary, dirty, sweaty. The way feet get when you've walked as far as we have. What's your name, by the way?

Ah, Joanna. We had a Joanna amongst us, back in those days. Yo(sef) (H) anna(h) . Named you are, both of you, for two of our most beloved scriptural heroes. Yosef, who saved his brothers, the Yacobbeans, and Hannah, the mother (a miracle) of holy Samuel.

Here we are. Good, let's sit on this stone for a while, smoothed by years and years of use, as if it were a bench, just for the weary - as I am now. Oh, and there's a little spring, not much of an oasis, but wet and reasonably clean. Let me wash your feet for you. Maybe you'll do mine too. We women tend to do things like this for one another. Not men. They think, I guess, that doing so would debase themselves. That's why it was so surprising: when we were serving the Seder feast in that crowded upstairs room that had been acquired for us that Passover. He sat Himself down on the floor and washed OUR feet, all of us apostles - he washed and wiped them all. I'll never forget it. Our Teacher - Rabboni, I sometimes thought of Him - washing our feet!

Yes, yes, I remember. What you really want to know. What's my name? And his? And how did we ultimately come together. And why. Why.

Oh, I feel better. Thank you. More rested already. Tired feet, tired all over. Here, let me do yours now. My name? Mariam, like over half the women in Israel, it seems. Like at least half a dozen of the women in our entourage, companions of Rabboni. Called the Other Mariams, by Petros and his crew, who couldn't tell one from the other. Except His mother, of course. She was The Mariam. We were the others. They didn't call me the widow of Clopas, for that would have been confused with the wife of Cleopas. Sometimes, not altogether kindly, they referred to me as Mariam of Magdala. Implying, I think, that I was of the Old Line, those old timers still preserving the memory of Magdala back when it was prosperous. Or simply the Magdalene. His mother once suggested, 'You, the Magdalene. He, the Nazarene.

There's a pair of you, I guess.' The only time she ever suggested - but never mind. We think of ourselves as Miryams, you know. The beloved. For it is Miryam who abides gentlest in our memories. Moses was The Lawgiver, somewhat distant, somewhat impatient, dee-manding. And Aaron was just his mouthpiece. Not an articulate spokesman, but the one who repeated to the crowd, in his loud piercing voice, whatever Moses told him to repeat. Not The Faithful, either, like his brother. A trifle wishy-washy, who went along with the people. But, of course, you know all that. We love to be called Miryam, for it was she who was the Savior of our Savior. You know the story as well as I do, but we Miryams like to tell it over and over again. Miryam, it was, who hid the baby Moses; it was she who offered herself as mediator between the Nurse (her mother) and the Egyptian queen; it was she who sang the song of victory after the parting of the waters and the crossing to the Sea. It's a song we Miryams love to sing still: [singing softly] 'Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; Horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.'

We love, too, of course to prepare the cups for our Seder feasts: the Cup of Elijah (the wine) and the Cup of Miryam (the water) , for upon her death, God open a spring of abundant water for His people, called Meribah (the one misused, you remember. by Moses and Aaron, preventing them also from entering the Promised Land in person. We Miryams like to cite the prophet Micah, who taught that it was the three prophets - Moses and Aaron and Miryam - who led the people: 'And I brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, and I sent before you Moses, and Aaron, and Miryam.' Of course, our priest and Levites, to keep us women in our place, like to think God made it clear that Miryam was subservient to her brother (as women always should be) . When she protested, she was stricken by a kind of leprosy - her skin flaky like snow - until Moses (of course, Moses!) had to heal her. Even so, she was stricken for seven days, seven days impure, alienated. Oh, yes, you can tell, can't you, how pleased I am to be another Miryam.

And His name? you ask. Surely, by now, you must know it well. Our men are given many names to honor their ancestors: some, Yosef, of the coat of many colors, the Egyptian tetrarch (or some such) who saved all the Yacobbeans from famine; David, the godly king, godly in spite of his many indiscretions; Yacob, the father of us all, the father of the twelve tribes, who slept with his head upon the stone, who climbed the ladder with the angels; and, one of the most honored, Yeshua, who led our people through the parting of the waters, once again,

this time, the Jordan, alone among the survivors of the other Sea, before whom the walls of Jericho fell, and ultimately all of Canaan.

Our Teacher's name, as you must know, was Yeshua. Yeshua the Nazarene. Savior. The Savior of his people. As Miryam was the savior of our savior. But you know all of this. Surely you do. Oh, here comes that caravan. We'll have to endure their dust. Hear their whips, whistling through the air. Who knows where they're bound. And what is loaded on their carts. As soon as they're out of sight and the dust settles, we should be on our way.

Yeshua - our Yeshua - hardly the conqueror of Canaan- was the son of Mariam and Yosef.

Oh, yes, Yosef was his father, whether he sired him or not. When Yeshua was just a lad, he had to decide in his own mind what to call his God, whom he worshipped in the temple, studied in the scriptures, and spoke with in his visions. King, like David. O Infinite One. Lord of lords. Yahweh. Simply Spirit. He chose Father, for the father whom he knew, Yosef, embodied what he knew of godliness better than any other human figure in his experience. Our culture requires us to use a masculine noun for Divinity; otherwise, he might have called God Mother - after his mother Mariam. Though I have to think, in my own mind, that he deliberately chose Yosef, not his mother. More about that later, if we have time. It was Yosef and Mariam to whom he said, in the chambers of the temple, among Pharisees and Sadducees, 'Even now, I must be about my Father's business.' Yosef understood. His mother Mariam didn't. At least, in after years, it certainly seemed she didn't. She could never quite get beyond - making demands of him: 'Do something right away to help these wedding hosts. They are running short of wine.' 'You are going to get into trouble; come home with us and help take care of your family.' 'Be sure your brothers get high places in whatever kingdom you're setting up.' A long-time widow, hence head of her house, she was used to telling Yeshua and his half-brothers what to do. Like Shimon Petros, she never thought of me at all - or only as another of His Mariams. Only at the cross, only when we were grieving at the cross, did the mother of Yeshua humble herself to Him, to his apostles, even to us. It was we three grieving, using our veils to hid our weeping, there for him. Where was Shimon Petros? Where were the rest of the Twelve? Only young Yohan. In His agony, Yeshua saw her. 'My Lady, ' he whispered, croaked really, 'Behold your son.' Most folk think he meant - would have pointed to -

Yohan His apostle. I've never been so sure. I thought I heard,
in his undertones, 'Mother, here I am that I am. Look at me now.
Behold your son.' Then, even less audibly, 'I'm thirsty.' Then
(did I hear an echo of thunder, a distant echo of what was about to be?) ,
in a voice once again, authoritative, though broken, 'IT IS FINISHED.'

END OF PART TWO. THERE WILL BE MORE.

Frank Avon

Aristotles Analytics

The wheels
of the Mill,
the earth on its axis,
grind down
the Infinite
within
into matter
that which can be seen
by microscope or telescope.

Frank Avon

Artifacts

We are defined by artifacts,
the things we keep about us.

We will not be confined
to dictionary definitions:

He's a quarterback.
She's very pretty.
They're workaholics, all of them.
She's Asian.
He's as rich as Croesus.
Their dancing is divine.

We are defined by the things
we keep around us, won't let go:

Antiques, with the patina of life.
Paintings that color conception.
Postage stamps, traveling sedentary.
Rare books, pages to the touch.
Deciduous trees, harmonizing space.
Paperweights, animated gestures.

We are defined by artifacts,
hard facts, unrefined, tangible:

Automobiles, luxury or economical.
Clothes we wear, to shelve our selves.
Implements. to use and for display.
DVDs, stored away, rarely watched.
Coffee table books (no one looks) .
Rings on our fingers, silken things.

With artifacts we define ourselves,
are protagonists of our own fictions.

Everything we own is a metaphor
for what we have or haven't done.
Whatever we treasure is a melody

(jazz, pop, folk, rock, operatic) .
What we choose to keep, clarifies
who we are, who we choose to be.

We are defined by things prosaic,
things prophetic, things archaic.

If you would trace
our etymology,
it's not a documentary,
it's not a family tree;
it's what we keep,
until at last
what we've kept, is,
like us, set free.

Frank Avon

As One

They dance,
they twine,
his branch,
her vine,

in the flesh,
in a twirl,
in time,
in another world,

this moment...
this...
this..

this

aah, this

as one,

at once

once more

moreover

... no longer

no

long-
er....

Frank Avon

Autumnal Equinox

Fall of the year
has fallen

The air is chill,
the sky is dark,
leaves are turning,
Flowers wilt.

One wears socks
instead of sandals,
sweaters
instead of tees,
long breeches
instead of shorts.

The furnace
clicks on;
blankets
are welcome.

Summer
was too brief;
spring
too long ago.

Sing the old songs,
play the old games;
one must not be sluggish,
but brisk.

Hot cider,
bonfires,
of Jack Daniels
just a whisk.

Bring in the Boston ferns,
pull up the petunias,
mulch the rose bed,
watch the coleus fade.

Pray for
colors splendid.
Pretend winter
will be delayed.

Fry some green tomatoes,
pick a golden pumpkin,
put up a shock of corn stalks,
stack up some bales of hay,

mow the grass
one last time,
sharpen the teeth
of your rake.

Fall has fallen.
Frost is eminent.
Curtain your windows,
clean out the chimney.

Like you, this year
grows hoarier with age;
it won't ever be young
again.

Frank Avon

Bacchus

What is as it is
must be demolished
for what must be
to be:

his hammer
and his anvil
each must work
its way

with the fury
of fire,
lightning,
sparkling stars

for us to see
his tygers of wrath,
his stallions
of instruction.

Frank Avon

Believe

We all are children
at Christmastime,
or else we're never
children at all.

Substitute believers
if you choose;
it doesn't matter
which word you use.

One lesson taught
by Santa Claus
is that surely
there is no god,

or that God is
somebody else
dressed up like
Tom Nast's elf -

or maybe yourself.

So hang your stockings
on that night;
hang them high
and fill them tight.

What you must prove
to Santa's kids
is that God is love,
if God is.

Frank Avon

Below

I am not
the man you know;
an inner me
hides far below.

The soul
is not a bat;
it's a mole
burrowing below.

What one sees
only rarely
is the slice of dirt
where it goes.

Eyeless,
it burrows
under the surface,
(the conscious,

subconscious,
unconscious)
slipping sleek
faster, deeper,

silently,
lower, lower
and propagates
its kind.

Ugliness,
innocence,
willful
and blind.

Frank Avon

Best American Poetry 2013

Mitch Susskind writes about
Joe/Adamczyk
in five-line stanzas
for twelve and a half pages -
and (by the way) holds your interest

even when Joe is reading
Gottlob Fresge's 'Die Grund-
lagen der Arithmetik'
with a German-English dictionary.

So?

Aaron Smith writes about
Aaron Smith
himself, xxxxx his xxxxx,
his desires
and pubic hair
his own and just about everyone else's,
and underarm hair
whether or not
it's there,

and, by the way,
his piece (two dense pages)
is not poetry
but prose - a 'prose poem, '
one of those -
and prose is not poetry
and doesn't need to be
and shouldn't claim to be.

Poetry: define.
It's written in lines
(that's what verse means) .
Prose is what?
It's not.
It's as simple as that.
But never mind:

delete the last fourteen lines.

So
Joe/Adamczyk
is more interesting than
Aaron Smith
by a long shot,
which means that Mitch Susskind
is more interesting
than Aaron Smith, or
at least a better writer,
but Aaron Smith,
even when he persists
in talking about his own pubic hair
is a helluva lot more interesting
and a better writer

than all those others
who write about nothing at all,
or don't know what they're writing about,
or - to be more fair -
write only for one another
or only for themselves.

'By the way, ' Billy Collins writes
in one of his critical notes, 'is
anyone who is not a poet reading this? '

These 'poets' define poetry
as lines (or not)
that use words
to escape words,
to approach wordlessness,
to evade meaning
(what readers might
mistake as meaning) .
That's what they mean to do,
- er, aim to do, I should say
(a poem must not mean) -
what they do
even when they don't aim to.

Ergo,
most of 'The Best American Poetry'
isn't poetry,
though it means to be,
er, seems to be
(it's written in lines anyway) .

So
read Mitch Susskind writing about Joe
and Aaron writing about Aaron,
and a few others like that,

and keep hoping - as I do
(against hope - experience)
that one of these years,
there'll be

another Frost or Eliot,
Marianne Moore
or Langston Hughes
or Elizabeth Bishop
or Robert Lowell
(or even another Ginsberg)
a Nemerov or Dickey or Ferlinghetti,
Snodgrass, Sexton or Sylvia.

Maybe
it's gonna be
Jesse Miller -

just maybe -

who finds Eden
in his Florida
among the drainage ditches,
and a million mosquitoes,
'the scents and ghosts and shadows'
of 'this sputtering beautiful world.'

Frank Avon

Beware

In his eyes,
the danger lies,

averted,
shrewd, au courant,

this son of Simone,
this son of Reza,

not in his Apollonian visage,
not in his Bacchic body,

not in his iconographic posture,
nor his pose of nonchalance,

but in his eyes,
the danger lies.

Frank Avon

Beyond The Book

It's a book qua book,

never having been read,
I daresay,
never meant to be.

But I'm an addict,
a junkie,
calling myself a Collector
to pardon my transgressions,

unable to resist
the feel of its pages to my fingers,
the sharpness of its edges,
the precision of its binding,
the texture of its papers,
its dust jacket and endpapers,
the sweep of the eye across
its full-page and double-page photographs,
its heft,
the majestic musculature,
hard and carved,
unseen but to be inferred
from its weight,
its dimensions,
its volume,

its royal title
('genuine value')
in modest typography
all lower case
centered in pure white
enthroned on a black bar
against a broad expanse of ground
('The cover image
of two John Deere boot tracks
symbolizes
the company's 164-year tie
with the land') ,

the tip of its royal sceptre,
a small frontispiece,
a black-and-white photograph
of a bronze statue
of the master
and his autograph
in crude lettering
printed in gray,
'John Deere, '

its crown jewels,
as it were,
abstract nouns,
declarations of the values
of the Corporation:

Quality
Innovation
Integrity
Commitment

silhouetted in sepia
on the end pages,
in who-knows how many languages'
emphasized in statuesque typography
as headings to chapters,
gracing its robes of plush splendour,
a deep, dark green,
the power of its realm,

splashed on its expansive photographs,
dramatic black and white,
luxurious, opulent colors,
fluffy clouds and amber waves of grain
the muted greens of a misty morning
'a lone farmer walking behind
a mule-drawn, single-row John Deere planter'
its glassy, landscaped headquarters
on the outskirts of Moline
a French Renaissance chateau as the backdrop
for a monstrous modern tractor

a walking mower on the grounds of Lincoln Memorial
Spanish moss draped from live oak trees
a chisel plow and a four-wheel drive tract
running with lights at night
covering thirty to forty acres an hour
on a golf course mowed by a John Deere riding mower
'a row [apparently infinite]
of nearly identical 40,000-pound excavators'
an 8000-series tractor photographed from the air
plowing figure-eights, leaving gigantic tracks
'turn[ing] circles around competitive models'
a field of black-eyed susans
stretching all the way to the horizon:

and, oh yes, adages,
a multiplicity of adages,
each given its own page,
gilded,
centered,
demanding acquiescence,

Quality transcends beauty
Craftmanship is the humble pursuit of perfection
Dependability means delivering what you promise
Pride gives work meaning
Imagination takes wing in cultivated minds
Think beyond the box
Creativity brings life to a blank sheet of paper
OK is never good enough
We are judged by the seeds we sow
Walk the talk
Commitment never quits
Nothing runs like a deer.

The regal lance
running through it heart,
a timeline
reaching decade by decade
from a blacksmith's invention of the steel plow
in 1837
to a 'prototype driverless 8200 tractor'
in 20? ? ,

featuring, of course,
the original moldboard,
a steel double-shovel cultivator,
a Scotch harrow,
a sulky rake,
the disc harrow,
a double-cylinder hay loader,
a grain binder,
the first Model-D John Deere tractor,
the four-row cultivator,
the combine (of my generation:
never mind the little John Deere H
I learned on) ,
the corn picker (how I wish we'd had one) ,
and so on;

and featuring in 2000,
the millennial year,
the publication date,
a small portrait
underneath the bottom line,
the eighth company president,
from the outset with John
and his son Charles,
then a son-in-law,
a great-grandson,
the first five all
immediate family,

and, naturally, quotations
of the bottom line:
10 plows in 1839, 100 in 1842,
\$300,000 in 1842, \$3 million in 1907,
\$340 million in 1955, \$4.6 billion in 1982,
fewer employees and facilities in 1987
but earnings of \$7.2 billion,
then \$13.8 billion in 2000,
with profits of over \$1 billion,

'the world's premier manufacturer
of agricultural equipment'
all from a moldboard plow

a blacksmith made
from the blade of a broken saw.

The royal train
with its crescents and crests
royal ribbons
(or maybe royal petticoats) ,
trails along
in very, very small print,
requiring a microscope for most eyes,
going on for thirty-three pages,
the names of '63,676 worldwide employees
and living retirees
(as of January 1,2000) ...
listed in order of service start date'
beginning in 1922
[to be read, I imagine,
like names on the Vietnam Memorial].
'Business relationships
must always be win-win.'

The final page,
a royal coda,
is a full-page, full-color
photo of a deer
cast in bronze.

It's a book qua book,

designed for someone's coffee table,
or the shelves of an inveterate Collector.

I hold mine with pride.

Never mind its obsequious obeisance
to 'Corporate Values'
(for that should be its title,
not royal but oligarchic) ,

it is its design, not the text,
it is an artifact,
it is a work of art.

\$10 today
at Midway Antique Mall.

'Change is constant
but values are enduring.'

Frank Avon

Biography For The Ages

Query

If you were David McCullough
or Doris Kearns Goodwin
or Peter Ackroyd
or Jon Meacham
or maybe Douglas Brinkley
or another Robert Caro
or the spirit of James MacGregor Burns

whom would you choose
for your next work,
a biography for the ages
for all time to come?

Someone to rank up there
with many already written up:
Washington and Jefferson
Jackson and the Adams
Benjamin Franklin
Abraham Lincoln
the three Roosevelts
Martin Luther King
good ole Harry Truman
(yes, LBJ, the Kennedys)
and authors by the dozens
(e.g., Doctor Samuel Johnson,
Shakespeare, Keats, Byron,
Walt Whitman, Henry James,
xxxxx, Orson Welles
and all of those many others) ?

It's the way we canonize
the 'chosen' of our times,
the ones whose stories
lead on to other glories,
yet who lived their dramas
through crises and traumas,
mated, procreated,

sometimes hesitated
longer than they should've,
sometimes anticipated
eras long before them.

Whom would you choose?
Who would be your heroes?

I have a preference
for unfortunates - losers,
men who should have been
President, but weren't:
William Jennings Bryan,
Robert M. LaFollette,
maybe Estes Kefauver,
maybe Adlai Stevenson,
Hubert Humphrey, for sure
back in 1960,
maybe Nelson Rockefeller,
certainly Howard Baker,
Mario Cuomo, or Bill Bradley;
and those losers who became
winners of the Nobel Peace prize:
the honorable Jimmy Carter,
who has earned his place in history
at Camp David and as ex-president,
whose very versatility lifts him
into a whole new strata among his colleagues;
and the honorable Albert Gore, Jr.,
saturnine, has given us our future:
he named the Information Superhighway,
and wrote 'Earth in the Balance'
and 'An Inconvenient Truth.'

The shaping of an age
is the making of the future,
and the one who sees its shape
is the one who writes its history.
But the ultimate crux of history
lives in the lives of its people,
for it's its people, after all,
who give the age its shape.

So to reflect the era I've lived in -
the latter twentieth century,
if I were a star biographer,
I should choose these THREE:

1.

'You do not have to be a painter
to be an artist.
You may be a shoemaker':
words of Alfred Stieglitz.
Always his inspiration:
images of Georgia O'Keeffe.
Their love, their partnership,
their eyes, their tensions
were the sources - the deep wells -
of what we call the Modern,
of how we see American.

First came 291 - the gallery.
'291 is greater than the sum
of all its definitions....'
someone said (and meant it)
'an intellectual antidote
to the nineteenth century....'
Steiglitz discovered
Charles Demuth and John Marin,
taught us Picasso and Matisse,
Rodin, Rousseau, Cezanne,
and Marcel Duchamp
were not only for Europeans.
Then, of course, perhaps
of greater importance:
Edward Steichen, Paul Strand,
and finally Ansel Adams,
but first himself,
first he discovered himself.
He gave us his camera
as a paintbrush with light;
as a broad palette, all
the shades of black and white

and the grays that make them mean.

Then came the Intimate - his 'Room' -
and the intimacy

of Stieglitz and O'Keefe,
an intimacy that grew.

He drew her with his letters,
his voice, his flesh, the heart;
he drew her with his lens,
her nude, her hands, her face;
what he was drawing was her grace
(it was not only me, she said;
it was also someone else) .

They knew each other - themselves -
more they they each knew themselves.

Their intimacy grew:

in the beginning, adolescent
(he fifty-four, she twenty-eight) ,
growing more intimate - and less,
more independent, more distant,
more mutual, less immediate:
a collusion, it's been said.

Together they gave us the Modern;
they gave us intimacy and
independence and distance.

She gave him her grace - his.
He became the Eloquent Eye.

He gave us her art,
her womb of the world;
she gave us the world as art:
her black iris, her purple petunias,
her reds and reds and reds,
poppies, cannas, amaryllis,
hills, mesas, canyons, shells,
gray lines and blue lines,
ram skull, deer skull, steer skull,
a horse's skull with white rose.

She explored her world
and gave us worlds to explore.
(That's what art is for,

isn't it?) And her world -
velvet folds, soft and fresh,
was always flesh, earth's vagina -
enveloping us in the here and now,
and in the ever after everywhere.
And still there was her face,
not a woman's face later, a man's,
aged, expressive, epitome of grace.
O'Keeffe & Steiglitz,
Steiglitz & O'Keeffe,
what they gave us
can never be replaced.

2.

I wish that my century
had always been a century of art,
but first it was, and thereafter,
a century of wars.
Ours a century of thinkers
who were weary of thinkers:
Charles Darwin and Karl Marx,
Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein -
we were encapsulated by ideas.
We knew we needed to know,
but we needed to know what we knew.
Enter the Talking Head:
the phonograph, the radio, cinema
television, the Internet.
Talk, talk, talk;
war, war, war.
Fine Arts, we told ourselves,
after all were frivolous;
Communication Arts was the thing,
Let Communication Arts ring.
But in all the communicating,
opinionating and insinuating,
seldom was there the art.
Where, where the art?

'THIS is London, ' Edward R. Murrow said,

and we listened. For what he said,
we knew, was what we needed to hear,
what we heard him say, was what
we needed to know - at least, that day.
It was the era of Hitler's blitz.

Poet Archibald MacLeish said, Murrow
'burned the city of London in our houses
and we felt the flames that burned it.'
Murrow and 'his boys' remade the news,
remade us, gave us expectations:
Eric Serareid, Howard K. Smith,
William L. Shirer, Charles Collingwood,
Daniel Schoor, Robert Pierpoint....

If I were his biographer,
I would want to ask three questions:
how did he become this voice for the people?
how did he shape our sense of what is worthy?
how has his influence - his vision -
waged and waned in the aftermath?

Born in Polecat Creek, North Carolina,
in a log cabin, on a farm that brought in
a few hundred dollars a year in corn and hay,
homesteading in western Washington
just south of the Canadian border,
early on asserting leadership, speaking,
at first redefining, then presiding over
a federated students' movement,
his first employment, working on behalf of
displaced Germans in early Nazi domination.

Then brand new feats of broadcast journalism:
covering the 1938 Anschluss, Nazis over Austria,
the Munich Agreement, fall of Czechoslovakia,
the war years in London and flying on US bombers,
the liberation (the disaster) of Buchenwald;
and afterward, a hero in Washington:
'The Case for the Flying Saucers, '
I Can Hear It Now, See It Now,
Alliance for Peace, People to People,
Small World, CBS Reports,

'Watch on the Ruhr, ' 'Harvest of Shame.'

Then he was shoved off commercial television
by 'The \$64,000 Question.'

What we have left in television, he said,
'insulates us from the realities
of the world in which we live.'

He was determined to tell the truth
no matter how much it might hurt -
us, or himself. He was the first
to report about the connection
between smoking and cancer. He said,
'I doubt I could spend a half hour
without a cigarette with any comfort.'
Always it was his image: his Camel
dangling from his lips, casually:
65 a day, about three packs.
He developed lung cancer
and lived for two years after
an operation to remove his left lung.

Journalism is dead.
Today instead
we have 'talking heads.'

Talking heads? The best of them -
he was their predecessor, he was
their mentor: Walter Cronkite,
Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw,
Keith Olbermann, Leslie Stahl, Diann Sawyer,
Rachel Maddow, Anderson Cooper.... -
have they enhanced the reputation
of the Newscaster, of Edward R. Murrow?

3.

I wish I could see which public servant
will have shaped the United States
leading this world into peace and liberty.
I cannot.

Mine has been a century of wars,
yes, crisp modern images, informative words.
It has not been an era of peace
of world-wide freedom or of equality.
No, is hasn't.

So whom shall I choose for my third biography?
Whom would I lift up for our posterity?

I must still rely on words and images;
The person I've selected - not a loser -
has been neglected. He's capable
of stimulation and most worthy of emulation;
He writes stories and essays, and of ecology;
he works the soil and speaks for the earth;
the seeds he plants will help feed his world;
he's an unacknowledged legislator of his age;
his greatest gift, the life of his life
is simplicity - the images and words of poetry.

But first Wendell Berry was an activist,
his only weapons words.

02.10.1968

'We seek to preserve peace by fighting a war,
or to advance freedom by subsidizing dictatorships,
or to 'win the hearts and minds of the people'
by poisoning their crops and burning their villages
and confining them in concentration camps;
we seek to uphold the 'truth' of our cause with lies,
or to answer conscientious dissent with
threats and slurs and intimidations....

I have come to the realization
that I can no longer imagine
a war that I would believe
to be either useful or necessary.
I would be against
any war.'

02.09.2003

'The new National Security Strategy

published by the White House in September 2002,
if carried out, would amount to
a radical revision
of the political character
of our nation.'

03.09.2011

'We need a 50-year farm bill that addresses
forthrightly the problems of soil loss
and degradation, toxic pollution,
fossil-fuel dependency
and the destruction of rural communities.'

on the death penalty

'As I am made deeply uncomfortable
by the taking of a human life before birth,
I am also made deeply uncomfortable
by the taking of a human life' afterward.

But mainly he is a Kentuckian,
a farmer on the banks of the Kentucky River,
in a community he calls Port William in his fiction.
He farms with horse-drawn implements;
his only technology is four solar panels,
a push-button telephone and a CD player;
he owns no television and avoids all screens.
His vocation is husbandry:
he is the husband to Tanya, devoted and faithful,
and responsible for his land, its crops and livestock.
'Eating is an act of agriculture, ' he says.
Among the values he espouses
vigorously and continually
(and espouses is quite the right word) :
sustainable agriculture, appropriate technologies,
small-time farming in healthy rural communities,
the pleasures of good food, (yes) husbandry, hard work,
the miracle of life, fidelity, frugality, reverence,
and the interconnectedness of life. What threatens
his simple way of life (what threatens us all) are
industrial farming and the industrialization of life,
agribusiness run by giant, absentee corporations,

chemical pesticides and fertilizers, eroding topsoil, depletion of ancient aquifers, ignorance, hubris, greed, violence against others and against nature, global economics, and environmental destruction. 'Today, ' he says, 'local economies are being destroyed by the 'pluralistic, ' displaced, global economy, which has no respect for what works in a locality. The global economy is built on the principle that one place can be exploited, even destroyed, for the sake of another place.' So there you have it.

But first and foremost Wendell Berry is a poet. He has returned American poetry to Wordsworthian clarity of purpose. Even his titles suggest his simplicities: 'Broken Ground, ' 'Openings, ' 'A Part, ' 'The Wheel, ' 'Farming: A Handbook, ' 'A Timbered Choir: Sabbaths, ' 'The Country of Marriage.' Most are pastoral, many are elegiac, but all are celebratory of the wheel of life. His fiction, short stories and novels, are poetry in prose, likewise elegiac of a lost way of life. One critic encapsulates the emphasis he places 'upon the rightness of relationships — relationships...elemental, inherent, inviolable....cadences of the hymn.... the voice of the elegist, praising and mourning a way of life and the people who have traced that way in their private and very significant histories.'

What Berry gives us is ourselves, the way we used to be, the way we must live, if we are to survive the catastrophic century, its cultural complacency, and renew ourselves in perspicacity. He calls himself 'a person who takes the Gospel seriously' 'Blessed Are the Peacemakers, 'i s the title he gives one book: 'Christ's Teachings About Love, Compassion and Forgiveness' and that, I believe, is his key

to our future, to all eternity.

Coda

These three biographies:
are they the best that's yet to be?

Stieglitz and O'Keeffe gave us
modernity: the beauty of our world
intimacy and distance - clarity.
Edward R. Murrow gave us
information and empathy, challenges
to audacity and arrogance - clarity.
Wendell Berry has tried to give us
the world we've lost, the world we must
restore: husbandry, fidelity - clarity.

What can we ask more?
Who can speak for us - to us -
with more authentic charity?
Theirs is an iconography
to bear us up, to give us hopes,
to urge us to explore
how to respect our earth
how to rid ourselves of war,
how to love ourselves once more.
After all,
that is what
biographies
are for.

Frank Avon

Birds Of A Feather

There are front lawn birds
and back deck birds:
scattering more seeds
than they eat,
to feed the squirrels
or spring up as sunflowers
or weeds among my zinnias.

A flock of sparrows,
dull-colored (gray and brown)
colonizing our shrubs,
traveling in fours or fives,
cleaning their beaks
on the limbs where they perch;

a pair of cardinals,
he a brilliant red,
the spark of bright
on the dullest day,
she as noble as he
though grayish,
not as noticeable;

one little house wren,
perky and quick,
determined to build her nest
inside our garage;

and chickadees,
and nuthatches,
and the tufted titmouse,
silver and regal
as his cardinal cousin;

an occasional
red-headed woodpecker,
and feisty blue jays;

and at the peak of summer

a pair of finches,
golden and gray,

for the lawn -
like life -
is that way.

Frank Avon

Bittersweet

Pomegranate husks
are hard as stone
dry to our lusts
as Elijah's bones

Pomegranate seed
in their lusciousness
invite us
into her dark suite

Pomegranate juice
is sharp and tart
startling us
lest our lips fly loose

What you see
doesn't always dance
the way all flesh
fancies Zeus's mead

Frank Avon

Blackberries / Briars

There are no blackberries
in the wind;
no juice
slips from my lips.

Last year's briars
are brittle and brown;
next year's
green and grasping.

What calls
is the winter;
we will wither,
our vines slacken.

There are no blackberries;
last year's briars
in the winter
bristle and unwind.

Frank Avon

Blank Verse

The poems I compose in my head
are refusing to be plastered on paper,
or relegated to cyberspace;
they stop mid-verse and stare.

'I refuse to be committed, '
the poem says instead,
'to words. Word-wise
I'm all in your head.' That's all.

She is not whole.
She has no soul.
'My word, ' she said,
'I'm all in your head.'

In my head,
this is what I said,
and kept adding lines
all in a slow decline:

I am attached
to artifacts....

Today at Friends of the Library,
four books I bought....

Sixty-five of my years
I lived in 'the American century'....

You can't seduce poetry
from out of sheer prose.
Her eyes just roll.
'Ya gotta have soul.'

Frank Avon

Body And Soul: After Charles Wright

'The neighbor's back porch light
bulbs glow like anemones, '

all night long,
from twilight to the next morning,

perhaps all day,
unseen in daylight, unneeded

night and day.
It's what beckons in the cityscape,

the waste, the treeless lawn,
what outstars the stars

in the middle of the night,
in the middle of desolation.

Frank Avon

Book Collector's Musings

All I did was read a lot -
or maybe not

but look at my books
and bid my looks

not betray
my miserly ways.

They'll live, I trust,
after I am dust;

their words will last,
a living link to the past,

and to the one
who would have been undone

if he could not have them
and carefully shelve them

in his library, and enter them
in his catalog for the interim.

Then one of these days
when Time has its way,

may they survive,
for while they're alive

I too shall live,
and through their pages give

my message
and my blessings

to those I love even more than these
I could not leave.

Both Daniels (For The Brick, Not The Tin Man)

'It's good to have that other self available.'

* * * * *

Daniel in the fiery furnace,
Daniel in the lions' den:
they both are one Daniel,
one and the same.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar,
Daniel and Belshazzar,
Daniel and Darius,
they all are one Daniel.

Daniel of the tales,
poetic and mythic;
Daniel of the visions,
prophetic and apocalyptic -

ah, yes, they are all one
Daniel, one and the same.
I love all those Daniels,
every one of them speaks for me.

* * * * *

Look into your mirror:
the Daniel that you see
is merely a shadow
of the one you want to be.

Look into your soul,
the shadow lurking there
and the persona you seem
to be: daimon and seraph

(just like Milton's Satan
and Michael his archangel,
both speak with Milton's voice,

in the same iambic pentameter)

are selves of many selves
you are or may become -
upstart and ole boy,
ruler and roustabout,

patriot and traitor,
revolutionary and king -
selves of many selves
you are or may become.

The finite mind's a fragment,
and it's fragmented again;
the Infinite, whole
but lost in its finite frame:

the occasional traveler,
the poet after his death,
Daniel and that Other Daniel,
all fragments of the whole.

Hold onto all these fragments,
finite though they be,
clasp them to your chest,
for all of you is Me.

Frank Avon

Bridegroom To His Bride

12.27.1962 - present

I never expected less
I never knew what to expect
I guess

the wedding kiss,
wedded bliss,
and this - and this - and this

Eternity's a long, long time,
every moment
every time

eternal love,
a gift of grace,
around, about, above

a gift of grace
your touch - your smile - your tenderness
in every place

more, much more
than I could ever
ever have hoped for

a worthy woman
nobly planned
to warm, to comfort,

hand in hand,
ever two, ever one
every daughter, every son

a wedding cake
a wedding kiss
each moment an eternal bliss

and this - and this - and this

Frank Avon

Broad Street

Let's assume
they were ordinary folk,
a hosier and his wife,
their shop on the ground floor,
its looms and till,
living quarters upstairs,
sleeping rooms near the top,
dissenters among Georgians,
maybe Moravians,
maybe Muggleonians,
voting for Charles James Fox,
the older brother
in the image of his father,
penny-wise, unpretending,
a younger brother derelict
(favored by his folks) ,
recklessly off to war,
a sister matronly,
and he among them
a dreamer of dreams
- he saw his God -
threatened for his visions,
too sensitive to be subjected
to the schoolmaster's rod,
largely self-taught,
perhaps with chapbooks,
cheap books with awkward woodcuts
of 'forests dark and drear, '
crippled beggars and wayfarers,
deathbed scenes,
twisted city streets,
but also Horace and Aesop,
Joseph and his brothers:
'Born like a Garden
ready planted and sown.'

Frank Avon

Bukowski

He wrote of a bluebird
in his heart
and of Carson McCullers
dying.

He was a poet
who didn't sing,
and between the lines
all you could hear was

singing
singing
singing.

Frank Avon

Buried With Him

In mid-September
I sit on my deck
warmed by the sun,
immersed in sounds:

the clicks of katydids, in waves
a chipper songbird to my left
the bass of a lawnmower in the distance
a breeze among the leaves, whispering

I am reading
about the American theocracy
but the voices that surround me
baptize me in sounds.

Frank Avon

Caiaphas

He was a king uncrowned
and he knew it -
we all knew it -
back in those early days.
He strutted down the hall
expecting ovations
on all sides,
flinging his banner,
letting his eminence swing.

His was the torso
of the David of Michelangelo,
the hands, the limbs,
the visage, the locks,
his complacency,
his insouciance,
his hauteur.

Oh, he had his Jonathan,
loyal but limited,
unsophisticated, never to be urbane,
whose sister Michal,
fresh but frivolous,
(it seemed natural as a man)
he assumed as his own:
no one was surprised,
it was to be expected:
marriage was de rigueur
in those days.

He would insist
he was a living myth:
the strength of a Hercules,
the speed of a Mercury,
the endurance of an Atlas,
the appearance of an Apollo,
the appeal of an Eros,
with the subtlety of Ulysses.

But all this was incidental.
It was his voice
on which he prided himself most:
the Hebrew tongue
of the Davidic psalmistry,
the soaring visions
of the prophetic Isaiah,
the rough diatribes of Amos,
the erotic song of Solomon,
his witty adages,
the weary wisdom of Ecclesiastes,
the dazzling visions of Daniel.

It was the Pauline Greek
addressing a throng in Athens,
penning confidential epistles
to the concupiscent Corinthians,
out-arguing Romans,
consolidating Thessalonica,
subjugating ecclesia
in Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae,
self-assuredly mentoring
the young Titus, the young Timothy.
It was those down-to-earth
pilgrimages of the Greek physician
following along with
a self-proclaimed Apostolate,
savaged by the seas.
It was Johannine terseness,
its plainness yet elegance,
the chronicles of Galilee,
the simple pastoral parables,
the rabbinic discourses,
remembrances of the last days;
it was the simple missives,
the soaring Apocalypse
and the ultimate peace
of a New Jerusalem.
It was all of these
in their original dialects,
carefully parsing the syntax,
carefully assembling the sources,

carefully calculating the rhetoric.

These were his tongues;
he cherished their intricacies.

So, as king, he was uncrowned.
Though he expected adulation,
he was ultimately unwilling to court it.
With disdain for the commoners,
he commanded no foot soldiers,
initiated no legionnaires,
celebrated no invasions,
repelled no occupations,
presided over no ceremonials,
only imagined these glories,
dancing nude at the head of the parade,
flinging his banner,
his eminence swinging,
with crowds at his feet,
with women clinging to him,
trailing clouds of exultation.

All this only imagined.

Instead of such adulation
he settled for veneration,
silent and solemn,
among those astute enough
to recognize his versatility.
With his facility in language,
the eloquence of his tongue,
he became a chief among
the scribes and Pharisees.
He abandoned his synagogue,
in disdain for its rigidity,
migrated from Old Zion
to a temple of the Philistines,
demanded respect for the abstruse,
for the elegant minutiae
of the Ancients and the Moderns,

found among the minor multitudes

with which he surrounded himself,
devotees and subordinates,
a voluptuous Bathsheba,
her body and mind
near a match for his own.
So he sent Michal packing
back to her homeland,
the refuge of the homeless.

He had reached the pinnacle.
Did he dare cast himself down?
Or could he build a cathedral
more luxurious, more resplendent?
But no, it was not to be.
The king uncrowned,
the high priest with no rituals,
never elevated to a full professorate,
at last he was ageing, relentless
in defending his tenets,
in interpreting his intricacies,
more and more abstruse, less
and less comprehensible.
Never mind the masses;
never mind syntactic ambiguity,
never mind rhetorical splendors.
Quite simply an emeritus.

He was no Adonijah;
he was no Absalom, Absalom,
he was no Solomon,
his not the harems,
his not the judiciary,
his not the opulence,
his not the palace,
his not the Temple.
His but the name,
the king uncrowned,
the priest unmitred,
the progenitor unheralded.

His but the coterie
of a few of the enlightened

and the ageing Bathsheba,
and the remembrance (as they say)
of things past, of things imagined:
the eminence, the adulation,
the assurance, the veneration.

If he had to live his life again,
he would cast himself down
in a public display of his prowess,
sprout wings, dance in the air,
rule the then-known world
with the sword of his word.
If he had his life to live again

he would live up to the rock
of his name, a Grecian Cephas;
he would have himself anointed:
an Anointed One, he would be

but it is not be be.

He will live on -
his tedious manuscripts,
his cautious translations,
his bold inscriptions unwritten -
in the dust, the holy dust,
of his archives.

Not marble,
his torso, his eminence.
Not a king among kings.
Dust to dust.
Just dust.

When he spoke aloud
the Tetragrammaton,
a Watchtower Society
ennobled his voice
as their Supreme Agon.
He was incensed.
Not his name.
Not The Name.
No longer inerrant.
His rebuttal

unread,
unheralded.

One among the many.
Once among the kingly.

Frank Avon

Canopy

a dome of satin

a grove of trees

a flock of clouds

a night of stars

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names Pt.1

It all started with Dimples,

a 1960 blue Bel-Air,
with a sharp, white top,
a pseudo-convertible,
my first brand-new car,
purchased at Carter Chevrolet
just two blocks off the Square.

Both virginal and matronly,
she was, a sleek beauty
with a touch of class, but
plenty of oomph to share.
Then the hailstorm hit.
She was only a few months
off the lot, still asparkle,
and suddenly, in three minutes
she was dimpled, front to rear.
A young professor, already in debt,
I used the insurance dollars
for other purposes and
affectionately labeled her Dimples.
Naming an auto humanizes it;
a machine becomes a companion.

And jolly companions we were:
Dimples and I, nomads,
we explored Texas, only a bit
inebriated; we summered back
in Tennessee, gallant, free;
we courted together (did we
ever!) , and decided immediately
to settle down (virgin become
matron, and damn good at it) :
we found our windshield etched
with hydrochloric acid
from an irascible student;

packed to the gills we set out
for Ioway, expecting a PhD
and two sons simultaneously.
For you see, matronly Dimples
was really meant to be
mentor, counsel, godmother
to my lovely bride from Tennessee
and, early on, a lively family.

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.2

And then there was Batmobile:
a dark blue Camaro,
the first of its breed,
with Batman, Batwoman,
and two sturdy Robins,
abetting from the back seat.
B'mobile was a last hurrah,
hail and farewell to youth,
in the era of Adam West and
dah duh-dah duh-dah BATmaannn,
capes a-flying in the breeze
(seen up close, a towel
or one of Mommy's pillowcases) .
So we Bat-four were on our way,
off to affluence (we were sure)
in the hallowed halls of
Old Mizzou - Tiger Country.
Then the sudden snowstorm hit.
He was only a year or so
off the lot, still asparkle,
and suddenly, in three minutes
or less, he was crumpled
in a ditch, his lights still on,
the radio playing, gung-ho
still, the Bat-parents safe
but just barely, at The Hill,
more than halfway home, near midnight,
on I-70 with the anniversary present
they had just purchased
in St. Louis, on the backseat,
a huge table lamp, unbroken,
believe it or not. But B'mobile
totaled, still as sleek as new,
music still playing in the night,
lights still beaming, head-on
in a great big ditch. Zilch!

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.3

Enter Dirty Red. Station wagon.
Maroon. With more offspring
on the way (eventually three more) ,
and annual trips back to Tennessee -
more space, to sleep and play
and not to quarrel over windows.
She wasn't speedy, she wasn't sleek,
she wasn't graceful either,
but she was spacious, gracious.
And she was used a lot:
cub scout dens, groceries,
mulch for the yard, fertilizer,
Pfandy the beagle and her pups,
birthday parties, trips to KC,
shopping bags, luggage even on top,
lots and lots of mud and slush;
oh yes, five o'clock traffic
with four inquisitive kids
in the back seats, their parents
counting minutes between birth pangs,
the anxious dad, stepping outside,
waving, 'Let us through! Let us through! '
Dirty Red stayed the course, patient,
steady, never a great beauty,
but serviceable, safe, and capacious.
Until she just about
wore herself out.

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names Pt.4

Then there was Munchkin. 'Nuff said.
A used brown two-tone Pontiac compact
station-wagon, with the back seat
facing backward (inviting
carsickness and discipline issues,
with two growing boys,
feeling their oats) .
By 'used, ' I mean 'useless.'
On a vacation trip we could afford,
to KC for the circus or a fair,
Munchkin just quit. Gave up.
Despair.

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.5

It was time for a van.
A Dodge, blue and white,
just like Dimples, but a whale.
Moby Dimple was her name.
Moby Dimple she became.
All through teenage years:
Christmas trees, lawnmowers,
ski trips for college students,
computers and TVs, antiques,
a poogle named Tennessee,
a Pomeranian named Buttons,
several of Pfandy's litters,
Siamese cats and manx kittens,
Cupcake and Jellybean and Gunpowder
and several of Cupcake's litters,
backhoes, twin beds and mattresses,
desks, sleeping quarters
for three or four or five
youngsters (no seat belts, yet)
to see families in Tennessee
to see DC and Williamsburg
('oh no, Mommy's got her map out,
it's time for the Smoky Mt. unit') ,
Virginia Beach and Crescent Beach,
South Padre and Matamoros,
and finally the Big Move to Florida
(with illegal house plants aboard,
and Buttons sleeping on the floor) ,
to become Gators for life
just two of us once again
(in an era of serial killings)
and our faithful, crotchety,
long-serving, fatigued, scrappy
Moby Dimple. Living among
Preludes and Sonatas,
Mustangs and Thunderbirds - and Jaguars
at the shiny, pink apartments

on the outskirts of rainy Gainesville,
among well-tanned, wealthy undergrads,
Moby Dimple dared Ahab to intervene.
She made herself right at home.
She often coughed and strained,
and limped along and fainted,
but she plugged on, and she plugged on.

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.6

In the meantime, she had had
two little siblings, sharing her pad:
Teddy Bear, the brown Toyoto,
and the Silver Pimpernell,
a Chrysler LeBaron, with leather roof.

Teddy was a second car
for the family's second educator,
whose students kept them busy
and aware; and he double-dared
anyone to scare the teenagers
with learning permits he shepherded:
lots of scrapes and dents
and traffic tickets, appearances
in traffic court (two generations
on the same day) , schedules,
soccer meets, music lessons,
band practice, PTA, track and field,
tennis, orchestra, part-time jobs,
driver's tests and new licenses,
high insurance rates,
low maintenance, tricky business;

and the Silver Pimpernell,
shiny silver (teenage daughter:
'It looks like it belongs to
a PIMP') . But he was dignity,
say what you will. A compact sedan,
if that term's kosher, elegance
and usefulness, not quite virginal,
not quite matronly, let's say
haute cuisine for the middle-aged,
busy parents of a family down-sizing,
beginning to have cars of their own
(we won't go there: it's a many-pronged
destiny - er. destination, Minnesota
to Texas to Kansas to who-knows-where) .
Silver moved with us to Florida,

and felt quite at home, retiring
to Blues Creek, with ailing Moby Dimple;
eventually going only backward,
working only in reverse,
she regretfully gave her place
among our race of cars to...

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names Pt.7

Petunia, the Purple Pick-Up Truck.
Now Petunia was a doozy, pert and perky,
but oh-so useful. A Ford Ranger,
with an extended cab, hence
a scrunched up back seat (whew!) .
She made a vivid impression
on high-school students in Starke, FL,
along with her owner, herself also
pert and perky, an Original,
doomed to dismay in Starke, Reality.

Petunia was a trooper, and a hauler,
an errand-runner, a backroad bumper,
an explorer of the Old Florida,
ancient oaks with Spanish moss,
both coasts, state parks, St. Pete.
and a tripper - back to Tennessee
for, after all, she required
considerably fewer calories
for those long treks up to Chattanooga
(in other words, more miles to the gallon)
than a silver LeBaron with a leather roof -
and on shopping trips to High Springs
and Alachua and Micanopy, for antiques
and book cases and large works of art,
which fit nicely in the bed
of a down-to-earth pick-up truck.

In the meantime, the Pimpernell -
he did well, lounging in the driveway,
going to church and weddings and
formal receptions, operas and symphonies.
As he aged - and he, too, did age,
but oh so gracefully, in his silver sheen -
he was driven to private clinics
where he experienced numerous
organ transplants and retired old tires.

Regrettably, his ID badge no longer
read LeBaron, but Le ron,
though he pranced along, jauntily, ...

for a while,
till he was quite out of style,
square rather than pleasantly curved,
dapper more than dignified;
then circumstances intervened
and the Old Man became a dean,
and the sheen was dimmer,
and it was time that he not be
re-tired, but quietly retired,
so to the country he was driven...

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.8

and replaced with a Grand Marquis -
a Mercury, mind you, Olympian.
You see, the Old Man and the Old Lady
were no longer Batman and Batwoman.
They had ascended the pinnacle
from Mommy and Daddy, to Mom & Dad;
then he was named Lord of the Manor
(academicians in their academese
called him Dean of the College,
but you see what I mean, don't you?)
and she, his First Lady.
Though they had no Executive Mansion,
or Guard of honor, or Major Domo,
at least they deserved a chariot d'or.
So gold it was: a new Marquis
painted lavishly with royal gold.
Chariot d'Or, he would be.

He squired the Lord and Lady
to Miami and Orlando and Tampa Bay,
Jacksonville and Tallahassee,
many times, to royal (i.e., deanly)
affairs: feasts, rituals, high teas,
visitations to the constabulary,
and, of course, to Ben Hill Griffin Stadium
where up in the President's box
they would see the Gators play -
(at least the dean would,
while glad-handing dignitaries)
to defeat Tennessee and 'Bama and FSU,
and win the National Title behind
DANNY WUERFEL - for which, of course,
the First Lady required a new gown
each time, though she watched the game
in the upholstered luxury of
a reception room, chatting with other
ladies of similar repute, cheering

the Gators on, only after each TD
(which they could see on a big TV) .
To Chariot d'Or it was all a charade,
and he, a carriage in the grand parade.

The rest of that story
is inscribed in glory
in the memories of all three:
the Dean, his Lady, and the Marquis.

You must realize (this will be no surprise)
that Chariot d'Or had his troubles, too.
On a bold adventure way up to Wisconsin,
then a nostalgic return to Ole Mizzou,
they were heading, late one night,
through the most desolate part of Ioway,
when the Grand Marquis - ran smack dab
into tragedy (well, nearly so) .
He was only a couple of years
off the lot, still asparkle,
and suddenly, in three minutes,
he hit a deer. ('NO, THE DEER HIT ME!)
Oh, I beg your pardon, the deer hit him.
His radiator was mutilated; his upper body
crunched, scrunched, punched, almost sqwunched.
It was the dead of night,
there were no lights - what a sight! -
until somebody called a sheriff nearby
(meaning, in Ioway, miles and miles) .
The wrecker came, and pulled him with chains
('IRON CHAINS! ') , yes, iron chains
to the closest clinic for automobiles
(meaning, in Ioway, miles and miles)
where he was turned over to a repair
squadron ('SQUADRON, HMPH! A ONE-MAN CREW')
for surgery that lasted longer than a week.
In the meantime, the sheriff conducted
the Lord and Lady to the only motel
(a ramshackle affair, ordinarily open
only in deer season, which this wasn't) :
the next day, the insurance company
had no car to supply as a loaner

so they were sent off in a Dodge Ram
('SAY IT AGAIN, SAM? A DODGE RAM?
SCREW YOU! ') So they spent the week
RAM-bling around in Ole Mizzou,

when, what d'ya know, they found
the perfect home they'd been looking
to retire into, bought on the spot,
so they had exactly two months to move.

Hence, Petunia the Purple Pick-Up Truck
(NOT a Dodge Ram) and a humbled Marquis
changed their place of residence:
she became the carry-all, the faithful
servant in Missouri summers and -
oh, yes, in Missouri winters, too,
huddled outside in the driveway
while Chariot d'Or cuddled inside
his own two-car garage - his very own.

Now, Paul Harvey, listen: here's
the rest of the story:
on their last day there, in Blues Creek,
the now ex-dean was bit on the haunch
by a neighbor's dog (indignity
of indignities) , and on their last night,
he and the Grand Marquis drove
to his office for some last-minute biz.
During the Lord's few minutes there
upstairs in the attic (his new quarters,
as ex-Dean) , out on the vacant (?)
parking lot, somebody bumped into
the fender of the Grand Marquis
(he was only a couple of months
out of the shop, still asparkle,
and suddenly, in three minutes...)
he was left scraped and dented,
driveable tho like a kid with a skinned knee.
The villain drove away, a hit-and-run chump,
leaving no note, no apology, no ID.
('INDIGNITY OF INDIGNITIES OF INDIGNITIES!) .

WAIT, THERE'S MORE.
DON't GO AWAY!

Frank Avon

Cars Through The Years: They All Had Their Names

Pt.9

And so it was to be. They were
settled quietly, the Marquis
and Petunia the Purple Pick-Up Truck.
Their charges, no longer as sprightly
as they once were, hobbled in and out.
The Lord and his Lady had graduated
to new titles, the most honorable of all:
Poppa and MomB (to all of you
mere mortals, who are uninitiated,
these mean Grandpapa and Grandmama,
but Poppa and MomB fit them better,
and, as the Marquis and Petunia knew,
names are important, even for people) .
So they settled in, and the years
flew by. Trips to Kansas, with first one,
then the other, to see three granddaughters,
and flights across the Pacific to see
the two grandsons, Aussies to the core.
Back to Tennessee, for surviving family,
those class reunions that creep upon us,
and autumn leaves at Fall Creek Falls.
Once to the Adirondacks. Sometimes
to Texas or Wisconsin or Ioway.
You get the picture. That's the way it was.

Any questions? No. Then we'll move on.

This time, headlines made the difference.
Petunia and the Marquis were in the best
of health: maybe a bit tired, otherwise
like new. No hailstorms, snowstorms,
no deer at midnight or hit-and-run durivers.

Headline #1:

THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY ANNOUNCES
IT IS TO DISCONTINUE MAKING MERCURY'S

Then one day, at the local dealership,
there he sat: the Marquis's first cousin,
a newer model, silver, Chariot d'Argent.
The trade was made: Marquis I retired,
Marquis II was hired. All was well
on shady Talent Drive. Drive on.

Headline #2:

PRESIDENT OBAMA ANNOUNCES
THE CASH FOR CLUNKERS PROGRAM
to lift auto manufacturers
out of severe Depression.

Now, Petunia was no clunker;
she was really in her prime,
but she was fifteen years old
(in human years that's more like
one-hundred-and-seventy-five!) .
Maybe it was time to let
the Ranger range in golden pastures.
The trade was made: Petunia's distant
cousin, a little Ford Escape
(was she black or metallic green
or a deep, deep blue? - it depended
on your angle and the sun's rays)
came to Talent Drive, to take
Petunia's place - in the driveway,
while Marquis II reigned in the garage.
Essie (they thought she should be
designated as an Escapade, instead
of an Escape, so they settled on
Essie) was busy, busy, busy.
A little SUV, she transported
her people wherever they needed to go,
and in the spacious place
behind her back seat, she hauled
all sorts of plants for the flower
bed (annuals, perennials, bulbs,
seeds, trees, shrubs) with topsoil,
cow manure, peat moss and mulch
to provide proper bedding for them;
probably tons of groceries,

luggage packed tight, a dog house,
more antiques, rare books
(and not so rare) , lots of junkie,
hardware, software, more computers
than you could count (they all
wore out) , wheelbarrows,
vacuum cleaners, red wagons,
brief cases, sewing machines,
empty boxes, etc. etc. etc.
She adopted their rat terrier,
named Peanut, who nestled comfy
in her back seat for trips,
across town, to dog parks,
walking trails, shopping malls,
restaurants, across country
to Ft. Lauderdale, Nashville,
Dallas/Ft. Worth, all over.
She was not fastidious.
Though she was cleaned periodically,
mud and dust and trash accumulated
on her floor; acorns and lichens
and insect-infested leaves,
and twigs chopped off by saw-worms,
all from the shingle oak she sat under,
(oh, and bird-do!) kept her iridescence
in disguise (black or green or blue) .

Like Petunia and Marquis I,
Essie and Marquis II, were beloved;
more important, they were respected.
What you name, you are less likely
to defame; what you name you are
more likely to claim as your kin.
What you name you feel affection for.
What you name will always be the same
for you. Bel-Airs have disappeared
from the landscape, but Dimples
lives on in our memories, her hail
marks, her etched scars.
Station wagons and vans for people
are a thing of the past, but not
Dirty Red or Moby Dimple, or even

the hapless Munchkin. Toyotas
have risen in the world, are now
snobs around their lesser brothers,
but Teddy has his place in our
family history (with all his scrapes) .
LeBarons, those old squares, have
made way for sleeker wares, but
the Silver Pimpernell - who could
forget him? Rangers - well, they
are virtual strangers now, but not
Petunia. She's still our charmer,
the Purple Pick-Up Truck. Ford
may no longer make the Mercury,
but the dealers' loss is Olympus' gain -
or should that be Valhalla. If
there be a Valhalla for automobiles,
we shall not grieve, we'll be relieved,
for we know the names we bestowed
will be inscribed in that Book Hallowed.

AND THERE MAY BE MORE OF THE STORY
YET TO COME. HANG ON!

Frank Avon

Choosing A Christmas Card For 2011

Cute won't do,
not this year -
not Santas and sleighs
or chubby squirrels in holly trees
or bulldogs with red noses and reindeer antlers,

nor quaint,
Fido lounging before the fireplace,
the mantle decked with greenery,
stockings hung with care,
and under the tree, a teddy bear -

no, no, not this year,
nor 'old-fashioned, '
the covered bridge, red
against the snow,
or some other Currier and Ives -

Grandmother's white house
seen from a distance,
the wreath on the door,
a cardinal at the window,

no, nor mountain majesties
looming on the horizon,
reflected in a clear lake beneath,
'Peace on earth'
inscribed in gold leaf.

No, no, no.
It must be simple:
Picasso's dove
or cicadees in brown.
No message.

Or dark,
seen from far above.
Two beams of light
where once (ages ago)

Twin Towers stood.

Choosing a card
this year
won't be easy.
It must be desolate,

but lined with silver.

Frank Avon

Christmas Is...

For an older generation,
holidays also age;

what we let ourselves remember
(or, actually, imagine)

elevates the ordinary
with a temporary glow

and casts a wistful mist
over what was really splendid:

Central Park in shades of gray
with a touch of red from yesterday

metropolitan geometries
made softer by some leafless trees

an arch of stone built to bridge
water that mirrors its own image -

beauty is there for you to see
Christmas, what you let it be

Draft 2

Christmas Is...

Central Park in shades of gray
with a touch of red from yesterday

metropolitan geometries
made softer by some leafless trees

an arch of stone, built to bridge
water that mirrors its own image -

for an older generation,
holidays also age;

what we let ourselves remember
(or, maybe merely imagine)

apparels the ordinary
with a supernal glow

or casts a wistful mist
over what once really shone:

beauty is there for you to see
Christmas, what you let it be

Frank Avon

Christmas Tree Ornaments

They've been relegated
to the bottom rung
of the wrought-iron tree

this year
out of the glare
of the floodlights

near the floor.
Never mind.
Once again they've made the scene:

Santa's helper
the Christmas elf
the sewing machine

the drummer boy
Crayola mouse
bloated gator

cornshuck granny
the Wild Thing
the pink slipper

Holly Hobby
the sunshine girl
Santa Beagle

teddy bear
teapot
'Home Sweet Home'

the snowdrop
beribboned globe
Japanese lantern -

out of the glare
they still are there

and will be still

same time next year.

Frank Avon

Clean Plates

We Depression babies
were clean platers,

appetizing or not,
hungry or not,

with respect to starving children in China,
we ate it all.

At age 82
still do.

Clean plates,
no waste.

nothing left,
all waist.

Frank Avon

Coach

Why he spoke
those words to me,
I could not know,
why he said
what he did
is still a mystery.

We were walking
down the hall
toward the gym
where, as team manager,
I would build fires
in the cast-iron heaters
to warm the place
for practice
that afternoon.

He was our hero:
captain of all his teams
at DuPont High School,
married to his
high-school sweetheart,
a Navy man
in World War II,
a GI in college
lettering all four years
in three different sports,
the coach
who led our Bulldogs
to their only championship,
father to a house
of rowdy boys;
his name was Douglas Donal,
his family called him Sonny,
to us he was simply
Coach.
He was built
like a Mack truck,
yet behind his teacher's desk

on the second floor
of our brick building
put up by the WPA,
he would speak softly
and laugh
soundlessly.

Why he spoke
those words to me
that morning,
I could not know:

'Classical music
is important, too,
ya know.'

He could not have known
(I had told no one)
that I spent Saturdays
switching back & forth
between SEC football
and the Texaco Opera Theater;

that Siegfried
came alive to me
and those Volsungs
in Wagner's music,
that crafty Carmen
stole my heart
as she did everyone's,
that those Bohemians
Roberto and Mimi
and the frowsy Musetta
lived life to the fullest
on the margins,
that Madame Butterfly
in her arias
spoke eloquently
of her love and loss,
that the hunchback Rigoletto,
his lovely daughter,
the arrogant Duke,

the killer and his mistress,
filled the theater
of my mind
with Verdi's great quintet.

He could not have guessed.

Yet with those few words
out of nowhere,
just between
him and me,
he gave me permission

to be who I was,
to like what I liked,
to live in another world.

Not all stars
had to run and pass,
dribble and pivot,
and make the winning basket,
or touchdown,
or homerun.

It would be
all right for me
to look forward
to Monday Night of Music
on NBC.

Frank Avon

Comments

13 likes

12 dislikes

Keep them comments comin'.

Somebody reads me,
well, not the gazillions
who follow
those bloggers

the ones who share
their every care
and daily disclose

their nakedness
their grocery lists,
what haunts them
and taunts them,
profundities about

movies we've missed
(or shouldn't see)
income tax
adolescent zits,
elderberry tea,
NFL pro's
the latest in back packs,
Angelina's clothes
brad's beard and hair,
how much skin they should bare,
a pet chihuahua,
the refreshing smell of ocean spray
how to pick your nose,
wunders and wzdumb,
global warmin'
desert stormin'
what straits some singer riz from,
what hites some stars soared to,
and everything in between.

You know who I mean.

A handful of folk
I've tried to provoke:
I've panned 'Invictus, '
touted Bukowski
and Ferlinghetti,
on one James Merchant
thrown confetti,
given verbal thumbs up
to Collins and Oliver,
found Poe too bouncy,
compared his Helen
to Marlowe's
and rated it lower,
defended Gibran,
the neglected one....

Enough of this;
you get the gist.

I don't hesitate
to make a mistake,
and how!

Sometimes I'm serious,
sometimes imperious,
or nearly delirious,
like now!

but usually just simple.
Here's an example:

It's about a poem by Roald Dahl
to someone who said he forged it all.

PLEASE, put away the DVDs and read;
books are the only thing you need.
You'll find them on the library shelf
where you can quickly help yourself.

And if you persist long enough
(it won't be hard, it won't be tough) ,
somewhere near the library wall
you'll find a book by Roald Dahl:
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.
Yes, that's right. That's it exactly.
The book is neat! very groovy!
and it came long before the movie.
So put away those DVDs
and READ the original -
please, PLEASE, PLEEEASE!

Frank Avon

Conversation

for J.M.M., 1936-1998

We should have talked again - he and I -
would have, if we had met somewhere, begun
as if we had never left off, in mid-sentence
almost, as we did once before (young
we were then, and would have been once more
in what we said or were to one another) .

We didn't. Comatose, he lingered. Speechless
now, alien, I called but could not call out: Begin
again! Even so. He spoke no word, but what
I heard, I heard, though I was not there in that
hospice room, so neat, toneless; I did not see,
with my own eyes, the bed clothes rise,
when he lifted his finger to beat time
with untimely carolers, or when he raised
his arms as if to conduct one more time
a chorus from 'The Messiah.' Alas, he could
no longer sing, nor could I, but what he spoke
in those faint strains, he spoke. And I - I heard.

Frank Avon

Corner

All of us should have a corner,
our very own, ours alone,
an offshore island
in the Sea of Dizziness.

First, choose your place:
a corner of your room,
in your study, if you're so lucky,
in an attic or basement,
isolated,
no where near a television set,
a telephone with a silencer
(or none at all) ,
cozy warm,
out of the public eye
so you can be as harum-scarum
as you choose.

Next, light:
a window and/or a lamp.
I'm doubly fortunate:
my bay window
looks out on my rosebed,
on the trees down our street,
three hand-hewn crosses
in the broad, respectful
lawn of a church a block away,
its steeple
against the sky,
the belling tolling its hour
solemnly,
melodiously;

and two (two!) lamps,
a reading lamp to my left,
with an adjustable swing arm,
and a table lamp to my right,
with a three-way bulb,
dusky, dim, and bright.

Then, your chair:
a Lincoln rocker, maybe,
a Laz-y-boy recliner,
a swivel office chair,
preferably worn and comfy,
an easy chair upholstered
in black leather
or a wingback
in plush corduroy
with an ottoman,
a chaise lounge,
if you have room
and the inclination to recline.
I've been fortunate enough
at one time or another
to have all of the above -
except the chaise lounge,
which is not my style.

One other major decision:
you can be as neatly organized
as you choose -
a pocket for this, a file for that,
crannies for everything else,
color-coded,
daily dusted and swept,
books on a shelf
for browsing, reference,
a magazine rack,
a reading / writing desk
with carefully selected bookends,
a colorful lap blanket,
some comfortable scuffs
to slip you feet into.

Or, if you like,
you can be as messy
as your teenage son,
as cluttered and klutzy,
with stacks of books,
magazines, manuscripts,

files, memorabilia,
artifacts that attract you,
pens, pencils, scissors,
stapler, jelly bellies
(oh, yes, plenty of those) ,
paper clips, potato chips,
volumes you promised to review
and haven't got to yet,
laptops, back scratchers,
coasters for sodas
or coffee from Starbucks
(or something stronger -
I recommend against
Jack Daniels or Jim Beam) ,
wastebaskets, recyclables,
floormats, a variety of shoes
(sandals, flip-flops,
foot warmers, loafers, boots) ,
a dictionary, crosswords,
cards for solitaire,
and a collection of paper-weights
(mine are animals: I have
a zooful of them, but I choose
a half dozsen or so
to keep me company)
and a sleeping pad
for your rat terrier
(or, if you insist,
your Siamese cat) .

I think you might guess
from the copious details
which style I choose.
Neat, to me, is picayune,
a bowing to authority,
and I choose never to stoop.

Everybody needs a corner,
a place to call your own.
a place that you choose,
a space you can use,
furnished to your delight,

accessible day and night,
a place to get lost in
and NOT to be bossed in,
a desert island
or a Scottish highland
in your imagination,
a niche for meditation,
not demanding or taxing
but simply relaxing,
a peak to aspire to
or a cave to retire to,
just the place you need
to read and write and read,
a place to let off steam
or just to sit an dream,
to escape to every day,
to cogitate or pray,
a lair for thinking deep
or just to sit and sleep.

A very private center
no one else can enter.

But let me remind you,
the way I've defined it,
if you happen not to own one,
your corner can be

a poem.

Frank Avon

Count Your Blessings

Every single day
just before midnight
make yourself a list,
at least five each day.

a strand of music that haunts you
an email you weren't expecting
soup and salad at the Bistro
your terrier waiting at the door
a warm body, a warm blanket

Count your blessings,
name them one by one.

Some weeds turn out to be wildflowers,
some scrubby bushes blossom profusely,
some simple, green foliage of summer
bursts into berries by the autumnal equinox,
elegant and enduring.

Take a day, a simple day.
Let it be hallowed
by its simplicity.
Just make yourself a list.

Frank Avon

Creation Of Our Selves

We are made up of
others we have known;
their impressions
are etched upon us.

Some have sapped us
of ourselves, slapped us
with a plague of self-doubts,
insecurities, hostilities.

But there have been others
- archangels in disguise, gods
and goddesses from some Olympus,
spirits of holiness and grace -

shaping us as golden bowls,
clothing us with flowing robes,
carving us as marble torsos.
They have made us who we are.

Engrave their names upon
whatever monument you erect
for yourself, laud them,
let your fame enhance

their names, whatever you
have achieved, festoon
a sturdy pedestal before which
you bow and scatter blooms.

We are not blood streams,
not genes; we are living wholes,
and the Creator molded the clay
from which we are made

with many, many hands,
some known and celebrated,
some distant, some hardly known
at all, or appreciated.

O, Infinite One, Adonai,
accept our pure thanksgiving,
and bless them, those with whom
you shared Creation of our souls.

Frank Avon

Cromek

Friends

by him meant well
but what he truly meant
was hard for them to tell,
harder still to sell.

'Poor Blake, ' they said;
'Madness';
and so public acclaim
from his designs sprang,
though etched by Schiavonetti.

Yet in 'this night of Time, '
Christ the Eternal Man reappeared:
'Christ in the Sepulchre, Guarded by Angels, '
the Christ of 'The Resurrection, '
the Divine within us;

and also 'Auguries of Innocence'
('a Grain of Sand, ' 'a Wild Flower) ,
the last three Nights
of 'The Four Zoas'
('intellectual War, ' 'sweet Science') .

Frank Avon

Daedalus Redux

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages

What he builds
(she says,
her eyes arias
of investiture)
is mind eternal
(atemporal, she says,
her name dissyllabic
and penumbral, sleek
as her black satin) .

He scans synapses
stellar storehouses
of memories, axioms,
inferences, instances,
ideas, thought processes,
even dreams, intuitions,
replicating everything
(her restless thighs
resisting arrest
in the dawn's early light) .

His wings are an aftermath
(she says, her fingers
symphonies of sibilance,
semblance, synthesis,
her lips swift clicks) ,
for what already soars
hardly needs propelling
except for decoration,
deceleration, Debussy.

Too near, too near
(she breathes heavily,
without abrasiveness,

in arcs of color,
abs of incandescence)
Infinity - to be.
He says (she says)
I AM (I am she)
pour vin (pour moi) .

Destinies (diatribes)
withheld (with helm)
from his hammer and nails
(she says, secretly,
sensuously, slenderly)
his screws, what secretes
in after-images of glow
(she repeats, repeats
her body scanning his
nuclear mass a capella)
his Cybernetic Cymbeline,
alas, his Innocents,
Posthumus (Imogene,
she says, self-consciously) ,
his bodiless Incorruptible
(don't cry for me Arr -
agon)

Frank Avon

Dastardly

isn't a word we use much any more,
but we should.

Beheading newsmen is dastardly.
Bombing innocent women and children is dastardly.
Shooting first graders in their classroom is dastardly.
Refusing Medicaid to a dying mother is dastardly.
Shooting an unarmed teenager in the middle of the street,
even in you're the police,
especially if you're the police,
is dastardly, dastardly, dastardly.
Scamming the elderly and stealing their jewels is dastardly.
Abandoning your children to a mother alone is dastardly.
Getting pregnant with children you don't want is dastardly.
Growing rich on the sick is dastardly.
Much of Wall Street is dastardly.
Living on welfare, if you're well, and refusing to work is dastardly.
Making 100 times more than your diligent employees is dastardly.
Robbing the poor to give to the rich is dastardly.
Beating your wife to a pulp on an elevator is dastardly.
Raping a woman and being called an All-American is dastardly.
Shooting a couple's corgi in front of their eyes is dastardly.
Paying for votes and voting for who pays you is dastardly.
Mowing down rain forests for profit is dastardly.
Befouling our water and air is dastardly.
Making the mentally ill beg on the streets is dastardly.
Filling our prisons for minor infractions is dastardly.
Driving drunk is dastardly.

Boring your readers with lists that are too long could be dastardly.
You get what I mean!

Bespoiling the earth
Making others suffer
Causing the loss of life
Besmirching anyone's name
including your own -
all of these are dastardly.

But singing off-key ISN'T.
Chewing gum in the movies ISN'T.
Wearing dreadlocks ISN'T.
Missing the bus ISN'T.

DASTARDLY is a word
you may never have heard.
USE IT
often and sagely,
calmly and courageously.

To lie and deceive
can be dastardly.
To say what you believe
usually isn't.

Be friendly,
be gentlemanly,
be brotherly,
be lovely,
be timely,
be kindly,
be motherly or fatherly,
be neighborly, be godly.

but be thou not DASTARDLY.

a dictionary definition: dastardly = characterized by underhandedness or treachery, hatefulness or villainy.

Frank Avon

Dayspring

Let there be light

and the light of the sun
dispels the gray,
radiates our way,
and crowns the day.

Let there be sun,
let there be sun.

'Please don't take
my sunshine away.'

Frank Avon

Desperation

Desperation
does not divert us,
it should not distract us.
Recall your John Deere tractors,
they would not desert us,
before we reached our destination.

Frank Avon

Devastation: April 25,2015

The Earth quakes
and thousands of Nepalese....
shocks - and after shocks.

Frank Avon

Dispair

For hours and hours
I still stare
out my window,
my eyes sightless
my mind void
nothing there

I sit and sit
and wait and wait
my coffee cold
my arms folded
my fingers spread
on my chest

nothing else
to
say

Frank Avon

Doctor's Visit

The examining room
is sterile
is cheerless
without a speck of dust
(without a ray of hope) .
You wait
incarcerated.

They take your name, your date of birth.
They take x-rays (digitized, they say) .
They take your blood pressure, your pulse.
They take your statement
(keep it terse, keep it curt) .
They take your pants
(here, wear these paper shorts
that keep slipping off) .
They take your personhood away.

You wait.

And wait.

(Another thirty minutes,
Dr. Valium has to go to surgery.)

You wait.

And wait.

Over an hour you wait.
I need to call my wife
(We have no public phone;
no, no phone you can use.)
Can I put on my pants
and run downstairs
and tell my wife what's going on.
(No. You might lose your appointment
if the doctor comes while you are gone.)

You wait.

You try to read a book,
a Sports Illustrated.
You nod off
in this straight, straight chair.
The bright light that bathes you
(in your paper shorts)
blinks off. You have not moved.
The spotless room is shadowed.
The only light, the only window,
in a large computer screen
on the wall at your elbow,
its myriad icons don't flash;
they never change or blink;
they are as impersonal as
the steel sink, the steel implements,
the white walls, the examining table,
the plasticized pine floors.

Two and a half hours, you wait.
And wait.
You are pointed to the rest room.
The pot won't flush.
Its all-seeing eye,
its little red light,
doesn't see you.
You've vanished from its sight.
Or, worse, been banished.

The surgeon hurries in.
(The surgery was perfect.
You have no problem with your surgery.)
But, doctor, if you hurt the way I....
(It must be your lower back, a disc,
or your circulatory system.
I'll order another X-ray,
another set of tests.
I'll be back in a few moments.)

And he's gone.
Doesn't come back.

Never does, though he always says
(I'll be back in a few moments.)

I'm dismissed from the spotless room.
From my paper shorts.
From the bright, bright light
that knows when to click itself off.
(Go to the front desk.
They will make your appointments for the tests.)

They take your height.
They take your weight.
They ask you about pace-makers
or anything metallic you wear within.
They take your telephone number.
Your address.
(Your venue.)
They take your name,
who you are.

That's all.
You can go now.
No, we have no public telephone.

And all the while, outside,
it's been raining and raining,
thundering, windy.
You never knew.
It didn't matter.
It doesn't matter.
(You are not you.)

Me.

Frank Avon

Dog Songs

are silent.

But then
some of the world's
greatest oratorios
have profound silences
within them.

Look at a full moon
at midnight.
Watch the little flickers
cast off by
the summer storm
that isn't going to happen.

The tree outside my window
is as green today
as it was yesterday.
Is the rose as red,
or Joseph's coat
as colorful,
orange and yellow?

The summer beaming
on my bare back
until it's anointed
with sweat,
and the swallowtail
floats overhead
noiselessly.

A city street at 4: 00 a.m.
after a rain shower.
The next few pages
of the book I'm reading
when I fall asleep.

You bark ferociously
when something strange
or unexpected
invades your space,
or the doorbell rings
during a television program -
or on a television program.

You grunt when you yawn,
you almost coo
when you turn your belly up
for your daily scratching -
but only when you want to.

In your sleep, you murmur
and whine - or growl
in your dream.
Then your claws
scratch my leather chair
when you wake me
from my nap.

But when we're walking
our daily walk
and the weather is fine,
I'm likely to whistle cheerily;
you trot like a Shetland pony,
you swish your tail vigorously,
your ears perked up,
you eyes bright and sparkling,
your nose sniffing the air.

That's when you sing -
sing, sing, sing -

and there is not a sound.

Frank Avon

Doggone It!

He sits at my feet
to be noticed
(I don't)

He stretches head to tail
to be seen
(I don't)

He puts his paws on my knee
so I can't ignore him
(I do)

He puts his paws on my knee
again and insists
(I desist)

He won't quit
I give in
He wins again.

Doggone it!
Being the lead dog
requires persistence

I let him out to pee
I give him his midnight treat
he sleeps at my feet

It's better this way;
I let him play
like he's the lead dog

'cause he is.
When he wakes
he'll lick my nose.

It's a lead dog's kiss
I submit
I am his.

Frank Avon

Don

He was my friend,
the very first one,
one of the best.

'We'll be buddies, '
he said, and from then on
we were.

He was always a-grinning,
always had fun,
competing and winning.

I was bullied
and teased
but not by Don,

an outsider, a loner,
alienated,
but not with Don.

When things got too bad
he was the one
to set them right.

He held me
together
when I was falling apart;

he warned me
when I needed to be
warned;

he admired me
when there was not much
to admire.

We were always desk mates,
he liked it that way
when I couldn't see why.

He was the captain,
everyone liked him;
I was his sidekick.

He put me forth
when I would have
stayed way behind.

But he saw something in me
that no one else did,
least of all me.

I knew, even then, he was genuine,
he was courteous,
he was kind.

He loved his family,
and they loved him;
to me, they were ideal.

He loved our school,
which I thought was the pits;
but he saw what was good.

He loved life,
and was always eager
to try - to win.

As grown men,
we seldom saw each other -
drifted apart,

but when, at last,
we got together again,
it was as it had always been.

'When you're around,
let's have lunch,
spend time with our friends.'

We planned,

we would
whenever there was time.

And then
one day
Don was gone.

Too soon,
too much unsaid,
too long....

If there's a heaven,
I shan't hold
for streets of gold;

just a tree of life
by the river of life -
and friends of old.

All would be well,
Don would see to it.
So be it. Shalom.

He always said, You're our leader,
and he saw to it that it should be,
but now I know (as I always sensed)

it was he,
it was he,
it was he.

Frank Avon

Don: A Eulogy

He was my friend
when I needed a friend
the most.

From first grade
through twelfth
he was my friend.

I was teased and bullied,
harassed,
but he stood by me.

I was an outsider,
alienated, a loner
and he took me in.

On the playground
he always made sure
I was on his team.

Furthermore,
he always made sure
that we would win.

He was congenial,
he was athletic,
he was handsome.

He was our leader,
even when we didn't realize
he was leading us.

He always gave the limelight
to others, while
he served behind the scene.

He was a gentleman
at an age when gentlemanliness
wasn't cool.

He was honest,
even when honesty
wasn't shrewd.

All too often,
he warned me of
what I shouldn't get into.

but when I was awkward,
timid, insecure, it was he
who thrust me forward.

The youth I knew,
who befriended me,
became a man who

led his people,
served his community,
and grew wise.

He liked to win,
and the way he played the game,
always led to victory.

On that last day
he just had to play,
determined to do well.

It wasn't a hole in one,
but it was a magnificent shot;
he collapsed,

and he was gone,
Always winning.
He was the one.

He was my friend:
I can only hope he knew
how much his friendship
meant to me.

Don'T

be too rosy-minded.

It could cause tensions
in the stratosphere.

Keep your thumb
on the throttle.

Display dismay
once or twice
a day.

It's safer that way.

Frank Avon

Dove Sta?

She taught Nanny
and I taught Edie,
Nanny was a sweetie,
and Edie wore a mini.

I had never heard
of Vonnegut,
and had no time
to read his books.

But this I knew:
he was a man
who was loyal
to his kin.

I heard Ferlinghetti read
Dove Sta Amore;
I wish Kurt
had heard him too.

Cat's Cradle,
God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater
Slaughter-house Five
Breakfast of Champions

The only book
I wish he'd written
I would have read
but, of course, he didn't:

he asked this question,
he was the answer,
his were the words,
his books his vision:

dove sta amore
dove sta amore
where lies love

oh, there love lies

Frank Avon

E2 C [read = E Squared C]

found (more or less)
in POEMS 1923-1954
(first edition)

War (to hymn) Was
The Enormous Room:
BA - BOOM

merely a mistake
a French de camp
t'Adore [read ta-dor-ray]

but first came Harvard
and Harvard once more:
then an ambulance corps

LA DOOR TA - DOOR
lit(erary) forms
more(and) more

'Him' performed
at Provincetown Playhouse,
then 'Santa Claus' in '46

a ballet (- tutu) [read minus tutu]
Uncle 'Tom'
(BA - BOOM BA - BOOM)

CIOPW: pictures
in charcoal, ink, oil,
pencil, water water COLOR

a trip to Russia
'Anthropos -
the future of art'

then - kcab to Harvard -

Charles Eliot Norton
'i six nonlectures'

but all ways and
above ways
word plays:

'Tulips and Chimneys'
'&'
'XLI Poems'

'is 5'
'W ViVa'
'no thanks'

'1 x 1'
'XAIPE'
New and Collected.

(a permanent place among the great
nothing less than spectacular
one of the inventors of our time)

hymn
(A-hem)
Him

{the photograph
on the front of this jacket
was taken by Marion More House}

Frank Avon

Each Day

Each day is each day,
a blessing in its own way:
every flower that blooms,
every seedling,
every tree that grows,
each morning, each evening.

One day at a time,
mostly rest and sleep.

The color of that iris
is incredible,
delicate, elegant,
almost ecru.

The honeysuckle vine
is profuse,
full of fine buds
promising honey blooms.

The Japanese maple,
its leaves crimson/wine,
its spread shapely,
its loveliness divine.

The spikes of gladioli
piercing the sod,
green and brownish
and sharp as spearpoints.

Nature
from my window
nourishes my vision
vivifies my heart:

it's elegant,
it's profuse,
it's shapely,
it's sharp.

Yes, this old heart,
weird and obstinate,
refusing to heal
beats on, loves well.

Each day is each day,
a blessing in its way,
every morning, every evening,
vision, and sleep.

Frank Avon

Ebenezer

is a place -
was a place
when I was
that other self,
exuberant.

It was atop
a hill -
not so high
given the hills
of Middle Tennessee.

A narrow road
twisting and rising,
canopied by trees,
led precariously,
to its height,

but on the other side,
where we lived,
one approached the top
up a gentle, sunny
slope.

A church sat
at the top,
under which I
slept
with my dog Snowball.

Across
the narrow
gravel road,
stood
the one-room school.

That self I was
so long ago
expected

all churches and all schools
to be like those.

Would that they were,
would that they were.

Frank Avon

Eight States Of Man

Bacchus would rather be
Apollo, golden and sculpted,
the Olympian for all eyes,
and Apollo may realize
he'd rather be Bacchus,
at least some of the time.

Mercury is satisfied
to be himself or
whoever he pretends to be,
and Zeus has no choice.
Hades loves the dark,
and Vulcan his labor.

Mars doesn't know his wars
spring from what he has repressed,
and has but contempt for others
who live them out in the flesh.
Poseidon is the master of the seas,
the Third World,

and all the other Olympians
say welcome to it:
though the depths he may prize,
they, even when they plow the Earth
and her fairest daughters,
their yearning is toward the skies.

Frank Avon

Elephants Don'T Forget

Elephants
in my backyard
do not bloom
or boom aloud;

they grow tall and green,
tilting in the wind;
they must be disinterred
after first frost in the fall.

Elephants haunt
dreams I cannot recall,
stick their ears in
conversations I regret.

Elephants don't forget.

Frank Avon

Engraving

It was the line
that captivated him,
without shadow or shading,
purity of outline,
the line of beauty,
scientific tools and specimens,
the boldness of antiquities:
Rafael & not Rubens,
the Apollo Belvedere,
Venus de Medici,
fine muscularity,
graceful folds of drapery,
Durer's rhinoceros,
'Melancholia, '
the Savior walking in a tulip.

So, at age fourteen,
he was apprenticed to practicality,
for seven years,
around the corner from Covent Garden,
across the street from a Freemason's Hall,
to learn the Language of Art:

'Oh, that my words...
were graven with an iron pen
and lead in the rock forever.'

Frank Avon

Epiphany

Reading my mystery,
I had reached
the end of a chapter
and was flipping backward
to remind myself
of the chapter title,

when I saw it
alight,

a small butterfly,
half-inch wings,
dark brown
with bright orange stripes
till seconds later
it flew away.

That pages of print,
gray on gray,
should always be punctuated
with such moments of grace.

Frank Avon

Equal To: Not True

A moth, a scrap, a snake.

First, I have to say:

I had just finished reading ten postmodern poems today,
poems that mean to be
poems that do not mean to mean,
or that disguise what they mean to mean
as unmeaning
so as to appear to the postmodern elite
not to mean but be.

I closed the book,
and looked for the two large rubber bands
I bind around the paperback book
with my right hand
to keep its corners from crumpling.
You get what I mean?

* * * * *

Dark has fallen.
I snap on a light
on our redwood deck,
which is not really redwood
but wood stained red.
Such are the fictions we live amid.

A moth, its wings outspread,
its thorax up, obviously dead.

A piece of paper wadded up
a breeze could sweep away with one puff.

Two large rubber bands scrambled together
like two little snakes in a nest without a mother.

On the redwood bench,
in the pale electric light,

they're all three one and the same,
as I approach them / it
clarifying what I see with my dimmed eyesight.
Meaning is never a cinch
to lose, to seek, to claim.

Meaninglessness one can forgive.
Dismembering meaning is no way to live.
A dead moth is not
a scrap of paper or
rubber bands lost.

To clarify:
wings that can fly
only on a breeze passing by
or wiggly worms having sex
are, for poetry, merely PRE-text.

Poetry, at first, is seeing,
meaning comes next:
the meaning is the text.

Frank Avon

Eternity's Sun Rise

Do not sing what you have not seen,
nor dance amid daylilies
while twilight welcomes evening stars:
Venus the voluptuous,
the hard armor of Mars,
sweltering with red.

Dusk brushes her skirts among the trees,
and one hears neighing fillies
across the meadow, seeking nuptials
beyond the iron bars
that raise like spears their forked heads.

Our estate
is not the multi-pronged candelabrum
of hammered silver.
It is an oaken bucket
and a drinking cup of cedar,
and water drawn from an icy spring.

Providence serves only those who wait,
lordliness is not disdain, but a crumb
tossed upon the river.
Do not raise your eyes upon Nantucket
unless you've been there with thimble and needle
and heard the voices of angels sing.

Pray without breathing
the joys you are seizing;
you must catch it as it flies
for what you seek defies
both rhyme and the logic of seasons,
only flickers in candlelight.

Handle it easily,
rejoice that it pleases you,
it's important to recognize
a diamond among the files.
Watch for wasps and honeybees

and monarch butterflies.

Frank Avon

Eve

You are the rose
in my garden,

you are the plum
in my tree,

you are a rainbow
around me,

your are all Eden
to me.

Frank Avon

Ever

The heart stops.
Nothing else.

The sycamores still
shade your deck.

The wisteria reaches
and keeps on reaching.

Football games.
Election days.

Winter solstice.
April's rains.

The New York Times.
Broadway plays.

What people say.
How they think.

(...all those years
all those names

all those visions
all those incidents

simply
disappear.)

Thistles.
Queen Anne's lace.

Shakespeare.
Mahler.

Rivers run.
Mountains stand.

Orion and Sirius
will still be there.

The heart stops.
Intermission.

Frank Avon

Every Body

Our bodies are all the same
and no two at all alike.

I sit by the window
in the coffee shop
at a med center,
and all the bodies I see,
walking by outside,
waiting for the valet,
in the lobby,
entering this shop,
standing in line,
finding a table,
sitting, talking, sobbing,
sipping beverages,
lingering,
talking on cell phones,
munching salads and sandwiches,
just sitting,
just waiting,
as am I:

HUGE BOTTOMS STRETCHING THE SEATS OF JEANS,
HUGE BELLIES TWICE THE SIZE THEIR WAIST SHOULD BE
TALL, THIN, OYSTER PALE, WITH HUGE, HUGE FEET
HUGE BOOBS PROTRUDING OVER OBESE BODIES, BOUNCING
SHORT, HISPANIC, SQUARE WITH A BELLY BULGING
HAIR, BLEACHED BLOND, PILED UP ON SMALL HEADS, UNMADE FACES
TALL ANGULAR, BREASTLESS FRAME DETERMINED HER HIPS WILL SWAY
A SHORT ASIAN, SQUARE SHOULDERS, SLENDER WAIST, BARE CALVES
A YOUNG BLOCK, BROAD CHEST, STRONG, BARELY 5'4', PLODDING
TINY, TINY GRANDMOTHERLY BLACK WOMAN SLIGHTLY BENT, FRAIL
CARROT RED HAIR ABOVE A STARCHY WHITE SHIRT AND BLUE NECKTIE
BLACK TIGHTS, SILKEN BLOUSE, ASHEN SKIN AND BRIGHT RED NAILS
SHAPELESS WIDE, WIDE HIPS AND SAGGING BREASTS, ROLLING ALONG
AGING, IN A DOCTOR'S UNIFORM, ROMAN NOSE, THIN WHITE HAIR
LONG LEGS, LONG WAIST, THIN TEEN TORSO IN WALKING SHORTS & T-SHIRT
JULIUS CAESAR IN A WHEELCHAIR, CHIN OUT, DOMINATING HIS TABLE

MOSTLY BIG HANDS, PRIDEFUL, IN AN EXECUTIVE'S SUIT OF BROWN SHEEN
A LITTLE GIRL IN PIGTAILS, ALL LEGS AND ARMS AND EYES

and many, many more
more obese than skinny,
more skinny than square,
a few square but none
built by the builders' blueprint
no Miss America figure-eights
no vee-shaped male torsos
none worthy of Michelangelo
no David
no Botticellian Venus a-borning
no Faun and Bacchante
no Cupid and Psyche
not the Adam and Eve of Peter Paul Rubens
or of Antonio Molinari or Hendrick Goltzius
no, many more like Fernando Botero's on Pinterest,
nude and very broad, milky white, seen from the rear
or profiled with all their weight, seated,
or frontal with just a hint of pubic hair
(never mind the long phallic serpent,
red, dangling handily from the Tree)

and here I sit
staring,
just staring,
in this body,
the only one I have,
wearing out,
more than a bit breathless:

skinny legs and arms
little, round belly
flat chest
knobby knees
scar tissue here and there
slumped over
balding gray head
femoral artery blocked
ulnar artery numbed
aortic arteries rebellious

all aches and pains elsewhere
and ailments unseen
diabetic
hypertensive
anemic
hearing impaired
vision blurry
light-headed, weary, weak
coughing and congested
feet swollen
yes, breathless still
once 5'8', no longer
no longer...

no two alike
all the same.

We are our bodies
and we will never be
any body we once were
or wanted to be.
They wear out.
We wear them out.
They tear.
They're threadbare.
They shrink where they shouldn't shrink.
They spread where they shouldn't spread.
They fade.
Come unmade.

Bodies
are all we see
of our souls,
all they've been
and are about to be.

We walk them without a leash.
They heel and sit upon command.
They reign
at our right hand,
and then,
they rein us in.

Across the table from me
in shiny sequins on black satin
and in faded jeans, skin tight,
with perfectly coiffed hair
of platinum silver
false, flagrant eye lashes,
a tan of 10
probably painted on
nails of turquoise
matching rings and beads
and rings in her ears,
she sits and stares
at bodies walking by
and stares at her hands
and into the air
as she speaks into her cell
and in her body
once petite
wiry now,
stale, leathery,
no longer fresh,
she sits

and she weeps.

Even bodies
so well made
so well preserved
are Benedict Arnolds
in the flesh.

For flesh is not
marble
or bronze
or even brass
or limestone.

Bodies are cells
(not phones)
in which we're imprisoned
and on our own.

Her childhood sweetheart
(they re-found each other
and finally married,
after all those years,
the end of a golden episode,
one flesh, at last,
just four months ago)
is the victim of organ failure,
terminal.

So are we all
So are we all.
Breathless yet.
Bodies all.
Every body.

Frank Avon

Exstasis

Ecstasy
is mercurial;
it lasts only seconds
and forever.

Body
and body
releases soul;

mountains rise up,
rivers roll,
and two become one

once more.

Frank Avon

Failure

Deserted or distanced
by friend and patron,
irritable and outspoken,
raging against his rivals,
the public and the System
(Sir Joshua Reynolds & Urizen) ,
a failure in his time:

his Exhibition
(works which now hang
in the most prestigious museums
in his English-speaking world,
while the works of his rivals
lie forgotten and unknown) :

what he foresaw, what he saw
evolving in his London
was the Age of the Machine,
of mass marketing and
a conforming public taste
of contempt for the Spiritual

what he also saw was the sun
not as a golden guinea
but a host of heavenly angels
crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy
is the Lord God Almighty.'

Frank Avon

Fall

One more week of October,
its 'bright blue weather';

one more week of apple cider,
one last plunge into 'Indian summer';

one more stalk of corn,
one more bloom of heather.

Soon it's dark; we're all alone,
so while we're still together

let's celebrate each season,
October's afloat like a feather,

celebrate, hold hands. cherish
this while we have together.

Frank Avon

Fallen Man

His body is not
his body,
their bodies
are his:

Albion rising
Los ascendant
even the aged Urizen, and of course,
Newton

heroic,
ideal,
in the order of Michelangelo
but erroneous,
'petrifying all the Human Imagination
into Rock & Sand, '

his body isosceles triangles
as is his compass
and his design,
Reason personified,
at the bottom
of the Sea Time and Space,

his only hope
in his robe
becoming a scroll:

the embodiment of Error
is a work of the Eternal

Frank Avon

Felpham

He left London
and for three years
dwelt in Sussex
near the sea.
He was to be free.

He was made an assistant,
my 'secretary, '
by one William Hayley,
the Poet of the Day
(now unknown):

his work was routine,
demeaning,
unappreciated
by the elite
of Chichester,

but in his cottage
with his Catherine,
the myth grew, his Zoas,
his life he lived
among the Eternals.

Frank Avon

Finding Hope In Hopelessness

There must be a way
Just not today....

Frank Avon

Finkbine Park

Corrugated metal
on a concrete slab -
our first home

(except a few months
in the Pink Palace,
a duplex in Texas) -

corrugated metal
left over from World War II
on a concrete slab.

No matter how much
you swept
and mopped and scrubbed

it still looked dingy
unswept, unscrubbed,
unkempt.

When I came home from work,
my wife was never weeping,
just scrubbing the shower

again - and again and again.
It was a metal stall
eroded at the edges.

* * *

The only furniture we owned:
a Lincoln rocker, a hi-fi,
and a hand-made cedar chest,

but the first thing I did
was to tile that concrete floor
and put down a remnant of carpet.

The oil heater - shoulder high -

sat in the middle
of our 'living room';

the water heat
sat in the corner; we
wrapped it with a plywood screen.

* * *

The overall dimensions
were about 18' by 32';
the windows, head-high.

The walls were paper thin:
not much went on around us
that we didn't hear.

The couple in the attached apartment
were newly-weds also,
obviously ill-suited.

They argued often and loud,
calling each other names
inappropriate for - well, anyone.

When a quarrel had gone on
long enough, we turned
our hi-fi up full blast

and put on an LP
of the Wedding March
from Wagner's 'Lohengrin';

that quieted them down
immediately;
we declared victory.

* * *

I was a graduate student,
living on half salary
and a measly teaching assistantship.

Finkbine Park with its
gravel streets and Dempster dumpsters
was called 'Married Student Housing.'

Technically, we were living
in poverty - would have been
eligible for food stamps,

but were too proud
even to consider
cashing in.

Our monthly budget for
groceries was \$50,
which usually meant

potato soup
for the whole fourth week:
I loved my wife's potato soup. Still do.

* * *

But Finkbine Park
was home - oh, yes,
it was home,

where we brought
our first two sons,
where they learned to walk.

When one of them was born
ladies from our church
insisted that I let them

come and clean house
before mother and son
returned from the hospital.

Things were so scattered,
dishes and laundry undone,
so what they didn't know

is that I stayed up quite late
the night before they came
cleaning before they 'cleaned.'

* * *

When #1 son was born -
sooner than expected -
we were up all night,

but he didn't make his appearance
until noon the next day.
Never again, I told myself.

Never again do I put her
through such stress and pain.
And I didn't

for another fourteen months.
Right after the first was born,
I had my first major exam

scheduled at 1: 00.
I had studied for it
until midnight,

so I raced away
to take the test.
Out of over a hundred students,

I made the highest score -
the 99th percentile.
it was a very good omen:

that son completed his Ph.D.
never once in his school career,
making a single B - all A's.

* * *

When the second was born -

he was due on February 12 -
I told my wife

any day in February is OK,
except the 8th.
I would be conducting

a workshop in Keokuk that day,
and my consulting fee
would pay his birth expenses.

Well, of course, you guessed it:
he arrived on February 8th,
but not quickly.

At some point, he decided,
just to wait awhile, he
wasn't ready yet

(another accurate omen) ,
so finally I had to leave
to conduct my workshop - nervously.

I had known all along - but hadn't
told my wife that he was likely
to be born with a cleft palate

(something about medicine she took
for airsickness before she knew
she was pregnant) .

So at intermission of my workshop,
I called the obstetrics ward
at the University Hospital.

'You have a son, ' they said;
'he and his mother are doing well.'
'Are you sure? ' I asked,

and asked again, and yet again,
insistently. 'Everything is fine, '
they attempted to reassure me, but

I couldn't believe them.
After the workshop, I raced home
- well above the speed limit.

I bounded up to the nursery
and, after greeting my wife,
demanded that they take me

to the nursery so I could see
my son. He had a perfect
little baby mouth.

* * *

My wife nursed both boys
rocking in the Lincoln rocker
and reading Russian novels.

I pulled them around the park
in their red coaster wagon,
and carried them on my shoulders

to the abandoned golf course
next door (also 'Finkbine') ,
to the Iowa City park

where they watched the swans, and
the prairie dogs in their mounds,
and perched on a fire engine.

* * *

Ah, yes. Finkbine Park was home.
We didn't feel poor,
for, after all, all

the other residents
were also graduate students
with the same limited incomes.

We laughed with each other;

we cooked together and partied;
we babysat each others' kids.

I'll never forget our baked Alaskan:
the ice cream inside frozen
so hard that it required a hatchet.

Our boys and their friends
found a patch of woods
at the edge of the old golf course:

it became the Secret Woods.
Batman and Robin dwelt there
running through the park

wearing a mask and cape
(the cape, a turf towel
or maybe a pillow case) .

* * *

Our unit was near
an entrance to the park,
close to the gravel street.

It did have a nice shade tree,
so I decided to make a little lawn
with a picket fence around it

(the picket fence, of course,
I found at the Dempster dumpster -
it was our place for sharing) .

Our sons played on their 'lawn, '
with their trikes and trucks,
wearing only diapers

(and sometimes, not even those) .
We adults sat reading
under the old shade tree.

But not all park residents

were good at parallel parking,
so every so often (too often

my wife insisted) one of them
crushed our fence with
the bumper of his car.

My furious wife
threatened to sue,
and bawled them out publicly

whenever she heard
the crash. That evening
I just rebuilt the fence.

* * *

Eventually, piece by piece,
we added furniture of our own:
a sofa bed, a decent refrigerator,

a mattress with a metal frame
(which we promptly broke
when we jumped up one night

to see the window peeper
who had been caught by police,
their red lights flashing) .

We bought an air-conditioner!
Even a television set so our sons
didn't go elsewhere to watch

Batman & Robin
and the Cisco Kid
and Saturday morning cartoons.

I built a room divider between
our tiny kitchen and
our little 'living room':

it was simply a bookcase

with stained slats on it
reaching to the ceiling,

slightly slanted
with space in between,
and behind these slats,

the envy of our neighbors:
a huge orange light fixture
suspended from the ceiling,

by a bright brass chain -
a special from Sears-Roebuck,
as I remember.

* * *

We had a floor-to-ceiling
book shelf next to our front door,
One was the 'boon book, '

The Red Ballon, our first son's
first book, hardly appropriate
for a one-year-old, but what

did I, a graduate student in English,
know about books for children?
He loved his 'boon book'; we read

it every night. Another book,
displayed on the shelf, visible
to anyone passing on the street,

was by William Shirer:
'The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich'
from the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Prominent on the spine
of its book jacket (you may remember)
was a large, graphic swastika.

Our neighbors just across the street

were from Scandinavia
(maybe Norway or Sweden) .

Iowa's winter weather
wasn't cold to them;
it was a home away from home.

We were shocked (and curious)
when they parked their infant
outdoors in a baby carriage

in Iowa's icy weather.
But they were even more shocked
(horrified, indeed)

when they saw that we
publicly displayed
a swastika!

* * *

But Finkbine was home
to all of us;
we were more than neighbors,

we were family. Just
around the corner from
our unit, a Japanese family;

just back of our unit
a family from Utah - Mormon -
with eight children (they

rented two adjoining units) :
one of their daughters
was a tour guide

to the neighborhood,
leading all her playmates
around our picket fence,

pointing out that little boy

who (can you believe it/)
had removed all his clothes.

* * *

As neighbors, we were close:
up the street a unit or two,
an engineering student lived, who

always found the best sales,
the neatest give-aways,
treasures at the dumpster.

'Come along, ' he said one day,
'I've found apples for the picking.'
Of course, I went.

We climbed the tress (at some risk)
and picked (with great labor)
a bushel apiece, only

to find out we were stealing!
Our hard-won baskets, of course,
we tendered to the irate owner.

* * *

When, at last, I finished my degree
and secured my first position,
we were on the edge of affluence,

we imagined.
So I bought my wife a fine white coat
with a collar of silver fox fur.

I have a snapshot I took
of her standing by - get this! -
our shiny new Camaro,

the first of its kind,
dark navy with a fine white line,
our very own Batmobile.

It's December; the car is parked
under the old tree,
outside our picket fence.

* * *

Finkbine was a fine time.
We think of ourselves as Iowans
yet. We never, ever wept -

er, that is, we rarely wept.
There was the case of the carrot cake.
My wife was trying a new recipe;

something went wrong:
the cake just tanked,
it refused to bake.

She wept - and took herself to bed.
I babysat the cake in our old oven,
until it finally revived, hours later,

and began to rise. It was fine.
The only other time
that I remember weeping

was when we left.
We swept and mopped
and scrubbed,

and in spite of our efforts,
824 Finkbine still
looked dingy.

I had rented a truck
(we had furniture now) :
I left with our older son.

My wife was still cleaning,
scrubbing and scrubbing again.
Then she followed

in the Camaro with the second son.
Both of us driving our vehicles
with an excited boy beside us,

laughing and chirping,
and we in our separate vehicles -
both of us weeping.

Corrugated metal
on a concrete slab -
it had been our home.
Finkbine was just fine.

Frank Avon

First Meeting

She was walking across
the tree-shaded Quad,
no, not walking,
she was tripping across
ever so lightly.

She waved and shouted
to her friends - my friends.
'May I join you? ' she asked.
In an instant,
I knew we two...

at least in that hour
I knew, I knew,
that she and I
were meant to be,
if only she
could think so too.

Frank Avon

For The Poet August Kleinzahler

Poetry as an art is...

'complexity
and formal achievement';

otherwise, it's no different than
'rubbing pig feces
or listening to Fox talk radio
or taking serotonin reuptake inhibitors —

if that makes someone
less suicidal or homicidal
or miserable,
great....
But it has nothing to do with art
per se."

.....

Ah, yes,
Brooks and Warren 101:
what makes an urn well-wrought
is complexity
and formal achievement,
subtlety
and obliqueness,
paradox
and ambiguity,
understatement
and irony.
Got it.

Nothing to do with the reader, of course,
That would be a terminal cancer
called 'the affective fallacy.'
Put in a call to the Mayo Clinic.

Simplicity and accessibility,
and - god forbid! -
what's informal:

the work of witch doctors!
Cast them into the outer darkness.
Put in a call to Salem.

Take you choice:
pig feces
or rigor mortis.

Frank Avon

Fountain Court

His last move
was one of many
last things.

Adored by 'the Ancients, '
young men, his apostles;
maintained by Lindell
with gifts and commissions;
studied by Crabb Robinson,
his every word preserved -

he gazed out his window
at the Thames like a gold bar
at children playing
in the courtyard.

For his last works
he was guided
to illustrate
works of the Spirit:
 the Book of Job
 the Laocoon
 Dante
 Pilgrim's Progress.

A tradesman still,
his last commercial engraving
was 'Moses in the Ark of the Bullrushes.'

'Nature has no Outline:
but Imagination has.
Nature has no Tune:
But Imagination has!
Nature has no Supernatural
& dissolves:
Imagination is Eternity.'

Frank Avon

Front Yard

I look out our window.
I step out our front door

into green
into blossoms
into growth

alive
surviving
thriving

I breathe deep,
my feet tingle
in the grass.

Will it last?
Is it ever-
lasting?

I walk out into the growth,
my flesh tingles
in the green.

Frank Avon

Getting To Know You; Getting To Know All About You

Bios

help us know
people
as people:

so they should consist
of more than just lists
of degrees received,
college teaching positions,
works published,
awards won,
public recognitions,
and all that boredom.

To know is more
than merely connaitre,
when it's people,
it's mostly savoir.

And poets are people
(most of them)
(I suppose) .
Their bios
like their clothes
are more than masks;
they disclose
who they are,
unless they're nudes,
simply posing,
disguising their personalities
in mere dimensions,
lines and curves,
and physical extensions.

So here they are -
all 75 of them
from this year's
Best American Poetry,
in the words they wear

and the lines they share,

that is,
until I run out of
breath,
ink,
patience,
and the impulse.

I'm using
the book's bio-notes -
what we know
of the poets from them -
excluding lists
of degrees received,
college teaching positions,
works published,
awards won,
public recognitions,
and all that boredom -
though for some
there's not much left.

(NB: included are
their names - pure poetry themselves -,
where and when they were born,
their lives,
where they are now,
with the title of their poems
to lead you on) :

Sarah Arvio
(New York, 1954)
thirty years in the Village
translation of Federico Garcia Lorca
translator for UN in NY and Switzerland
(Maryland by the Chesapeake Bay)
"Bodhisattava"

Derrick Austin
(Homestead, Florida, 1989)
"Cedars of Lebanon"

Desiree Bailey
(Trinidad and Tobago,1989)
"Retrograde"

Melissa Barrett
(Cleveland, Ohio,1983)
national teaching award from Building Excellent Schools
teaches writing in an urban middle school
lives in a century-old home
(Columbus, Ohio)
"WFM: Allergic to Pine-sol, Am I the Only One"

Mark Bibbins
(Albany, New York,1958)
cofounded LIT magazine
(NYC)
"Swallowed"

Jessamyn Birrer
(Falls Church, Virginia,1975)
an autism advocate
stay-at-home parent
technical writing instructor
(Klamath Falls, Oregon)
"A Scatology"

Chana Bloch
(NYC,1940)
, journal of arts by women over sixty
"The Joins"

Emma Bolden
(Birmingham, Alabama,1980)
nonfiction chapbook, Geography V
"House Is an Enigma"

Dexter L. Booth
(Richmond, Virginia,1986)
(University of Southern California)
"Prayer at 3 a.m."

Catherine Bowman
(El Paso, Texas, November 26,1957)
lives on a farm
(Bloomington, Indiana)
"Makeshift"

Rachel Briggs
(Syracuse, New York,1984)
associate professor philosophy
(University of Queensland, Australia)
"in the hall of the ruby-throated warbler"

Jericho Brown
(Emory University, Atlanta)
"Homeland"

Rafael Campo
(Dover, New Jersey,1964)
teaches/practices internal medicine
outstanding humanism in medicine
subject of stories on PBS Newshour and CBC Sunday Edition
(Harvard Medical School, Boston)
"DOCTORS LIE / MAY HIDE MISTAKES"

Julie Carr
(Cambridge, Massachusetts,1966)
contranslator of Apollinaire
collaborates with dance artist K.J. Holmes
Counterpath Press and Counterpath Gallery
(Denver)
"A fourteen-line poem on sex"

Chen Chen
(b. Xiamen, China,1989)
"for I will do/undo what was done/undone to me"

Susanna Childress
(La Mirada, California,1978)
grew up in the near Appalachia of southern Indiana
short fiction and creative nonfiction
music group Ordinary Neighbors
(Hope College, Holland, Michigan)

"Careful, I Just Won a Prize at the Fair"

Yi-Fen Chou

aka Michael Derrick Hudson

(Wabash, Indiana, 1963)

nom de plume has been helpful in placing poems

works in genealogy center of a public library

(Fort Wayne, Indiana)

"The Bees, the Flowers, Jesus, Angry Tigers, Poseidon, Adam and Eve"

OK, OK,

seventeen's enough,

all the A - B - C 's.

You get the point, don't you?

More poetry in the titles than

in the poems,

in the poets' names than

in the titles:

alliteration, assonance, consonance,

more trochaic than iambic,

even a couple of amphibrachs

(Melissa, Susanna) ,

not much life in the bios

(one autism advocate,

one in internal medicine,

some music and dance,

farming and philosophy,

eighth-grade English) .

The poet's life is not a poem,

but it ought to be

revealing prose,

at least as interesting

as a t-shirt,

sneakers,

a purple scarf,

a navy blazer,

a baseball cap,

or woolen cape.

The poem is what the poet says,
not who the poet is;
what the poem says
springs from who the poet is.

Choose:

anonymity
a mask
a birthday suit
or clothes
of bio-prose.

Frank Avon

Gideon's War: A Book Review

There's blood on every page.

They.

Someone is beheaded.

Someone's eye is screwed out.

Someone is shot in the belly.

Someone is short in the head
and pushed off the deck.

They

are riddled with AK-47's.

They are pierced with primitive spears.

They are crushed in a landslide,
a deliberate landslide.

They are bombed.

Their bodies are bloated,
blanketed with flies,
not maggots, not yet.

They. They. They.

It's all Abu Nasir
who is really Tillman Davis
who really isn't,

and his brother Gideon,
the prophet of peace,
the mediator, pacifier
who kills, and kills,
and kills.

He has to, doesn't he?

Or is it Uncle Earl,
or the CIA,
or the National Security Council,
or a blast-off senator,
or President Digges,
or the novelist himself?

Or us, his readers?

There's blood on every page.

They.

Frank Avon

Gift

His greatest gift
isn't his to give
but he did

in his own tongue
in his own time
almost in ours

was it Hamlet?
Oedipus?
Ghosts?
A Streetcar Named Desire?

His room is a-clutter
his floor
his desk
his mind

for giftedness
doesn't grow
where there's no
cluttering

and giftedness
even his
adheres
in the giving

what is
or isn't
his
and now is theirs/ours/yours

Frank Avon

Goldfinch

He is an archangel
outside my window,
golden as the sun,
of light a bright ray
on the darkest day.

Gabriel
Michael
Raphael
or maybe
Uriel,

when he alights
on the branch of a sunflower
his balance
is as certain
as his colors are contrary:

shining yellow
and shining black,
and when he soars away
in his body
I see my soul.

In this day's hopelessness,
he is my hope,
in what I see
he lets me envision
eternity.

I see him now,
perched atop
the tallest stem,
and then he's gone,
and I with him.

Frank Avon

Golgonooza

Napoleonic blockades,
Luddite protests,
Corn Laws & Gagging Acts:

it was an era of poverty
and desolation, loss
and loneliness,

only Catherine was there
to clothe him with her care
and bathe in his inspiration.

Out of the abyss,
as from Milton's 'L'Allegro'
a Lark arose

mounting on wings of light
'into the Great Expanse, '
vibrating with 'effluence Divine'

and Milton himself descended
into the tarsus of his left foot,
not unlike the Great Comet of 1811,

And with the labor of Los
a new Jerusalem he built.

* * * * *

The Zoas of his visions
were states of Humankind,
Humanity Divine,

their lovely Emanations
unloosed at last,
their Spectres forgiven,

and Golgonooza

the city of Art and Manufacture
lies at the heart of London,

Albion will arise,
his fourfold vision restored.
Paradise.

'And all that has existed
in the space of six thousand years /
Permanent & not Lost...

'& every little act, /
Word, work, & wish...
all remaining still.'

all
still

Frank Avon

Good Night

The half-moon,
bright and pregnant,

and the single twig
silhouetted against it:

how rare and ordinary,
poised with significance.

Frank Avon

Grande Chorale

Let them sing!
Listen to them sing!

the cells
of which your body is composed
all of their voices, each one
sings in harmony with one another

their anthems rising
beyond the walls that shelter them,
beyond the domes, the spires
beyond our moon and sun,
beyond what most men hear
beyond our stratosphere -

to join the angelic choir
of the One we dare call God,
whether the names we use be
Apollo or Bacchus,
Athena or Aphrodite,
be Woden or Thor,
Frigga or Freyja,
Isis or Osiris,

Adonai or El Shaddai,

let them sing
listen to them
as they serenade
the Infinite One,
the Uni-verse.

unless a cluster
of them sing off-key
or flat
in a-rhythmic prose;

they sing in parts
lyric soprano

mezzo soprano
contralto
tenor
baritone
or bass

and many more
unnamed in the here and now

in a Grande Chorale

until the cells
close down
and their voices
rise silent
in a Grand Finale

to join
the celestial host
in the Everlasting

whose 'Holy, holy, holy'
we hear in cells
of memory
or imagine

rising soundless
through multiple dimensions
boundless
in a symphony of silence
our forebears
once spoke of
as the Harmony of the Spheres.

Let them sing!
Listen for them!
Listen!

Frank Avon

Green Street

1.

He required of her
 pity
and shared with her
 love
and, if lifelong protectiveness
 be mercy
and patience, peace,
their marriage
was divine:
'in lovely copulation
bliss on bliss'

2.

Engravings on their walls,
drawings and watercolors,
Catherine,
his younger brother Robert,
singing his songs
over green tea and lemonade
with the Bluestocking Mrs. Mathews,
a nondescript volume
called POETICAL SKETCHES,
conversation and confrontation
('no time for seeming
and little bits of compliment') ,
the platonism of Thos. Taylor,
'happy Islanders' of the moon
in a satiric burlesque:

infinite London,
seen only within the mundane
London town.

Frank Avon

Happiness Is...

... if you're comfortably ageing
(on Social Security or a pension,
or, even better, both)
is not all that complex, to be

relative free of aches
not altogether, but relatively,
with acetaminophen,
having finally got over
the feeling of guilt
not to be working every day,
and just a few little extras:

a rocking chair or lounger,
a good firm mattress,
coffee every morning
and some good Earl Grey tea,
once or twice a week
a good hamburger, fried catfish,
pasta or spaghetti,
hot potato soup, pimento cheese,
one or two Oreo cookies
only once a day,
some good books to read
from the public library,
maybe a newspaper, maybe not,
a dog to pet and nurture,
a few flower pots to tend,
a window on the world,
some bird feeders nearby,
to porch or deck or patio
to enjoy sun and shade,
warmth in the winter,
cool in mid-July
(what we've gotten used to,
but in the old days,
folks learn to adjust) ,

if you're a boomer

some kind of shiny red car
and a few old LPs (Elvis,
the Beatles, the Police)
and occasional a CD,
maybe even Beethoven or Verdi,
if you're one from the Silent
who came of age in the Placid '50s
a movie every few days,
maybe a DVD or on tv,
mostly ones with suspense,
a happy ending, a good soundtrack,
and Hollywood-attractive leads.

A Big Bonus: children to make you proud,
scattered here and there,
a letter or an email every few days,
a Skype of the grandchildren,

and the Grand Prize - one we don't
deserve, could never earn:
a spouse who's really a better half.

Oh, yes, I believe in heaven,
God's giving it to me now.

Frank Avon

Heat Index Of 107

Another bottle of Gatorade,
watering our petunias,

another wish the bills were paid,
a chat with other seniors,

idling indolently in the shade,
snipping what's-it-to-ya's:

hoping
the heat of an August day
gives way
to the airs
of a September evening.

Frank Avon

Heavenward Bending

I shall miss you
when I've gone beyond
the Great Whiteness

as Eternity misses
the arch of the rainbow
of Time,

as what is bodiless
misses the Body,
shapeless, its Design,

for you are my body,
the shape of my life,
the arch of my vision.
only thee.

* * *

I had a dream,
a life or two ago,
that I had passed Beyond.

I was given,
as my Guide,
as bodiless as I,

one of my first mentors,
having (in time)
been long gone.

I was wild and wide,
unspecified, enamored
of what was/is no more.

At first you'll pretend,
he said, or somehow led
me to imagine,

you still have shoes
and a shirt, shoulders
and eyes that work,

Pretend, he said,
except he was wordless
and untoward: Envision.

Don't you miss, I asked;
don't you miss -
but words I was without.

Envision, he said:
any spot of time
you yet remember

whether you remember it
or not; times you wish
had happened but didn't,

possibilities,
jubilation,
currents of occurrence.

It's all the same,
you see; whatever
could have been, could be.

Say what was unsaid,
whisper, listen,
Envision!

For a while
- in all this whileless
new sense of being -

you'll exhilarate,
reorder and repeat,
and delve even deeper;

that's all I should say,
he left unsaid, but

as you rise and rise

1-2-3-4-5-6-Seven,
you'll suddenly see
Thee joins the Jubilee,

in your voicelessness,
you sing the Jubilate,
and all is all

and nothing's lost
and forever is for
Ever. And what was

(on the downward slopes
of Time) is still and will
be, is now, and I AM

Infinity.

Frank Avon

Himself

Adam and Eve
sit in the summer-house
in their little garden
reciting Paradise Lost,
naked before the fall

* * * * *

The one we know arrives
and survives
though what we recognize
now as triumph
resides in denial.

Naked Swedenborgians
('Now it is Allowable')
- indeed, all organised religion
gives way to Priestcraft
seemly the avoidance of Sin.

The ancestors he chooses
- Paracelsus & Behmen -
outsiders of other centuries:
God within oneself,
wheels of fire and the Abyss.

Wollstonecraft and Paine
- political radicalism,
classic rationalism -
even they cannot decipher
the likes of Isaiah.

So this is just a beginning
just as this is an end:
what he has lost
he has yet to lose.
'Our End is come'

Frank Avon

Holy Matrimony

Lycius and Lamia
in their palace,
beyond reason,
above the public,

she not a serpent,
he not a stone,
anima and animus,
never alone.

Marriage is a temple,
a sacred totality,
feast of the flesh,
start of the finish,

to die together,
to rise as one,
the life everlasting,
death undone,

a cleansing of flesh,
a sealing of soul,
marriage in the temple,
a Platonic whole,

lost in an amazement
of intimacy and love,
once androgynous,
restored from above.

O holy Hephaestus,
in your cave at the pole,
meld us forever,
an epigenetic soul.

Frank Avon

Homage To Will

It's hard to keep track of time
all the time

[cliches display
common sense recurring;
adages adapt
immutability to chance.]

for timelessness
keeps intervening,
Eternity is overarching
and undermining,
spontaneity
breeds simultaneity,
and abundance
is revived
minute by minute

[let these words flow;
let words flow on,
flow on, deep and dark,
for synonyms are sonorous,
infinitives finite,
antecedents sideways,
contraries juxtaposed,
mirror images refracted
by significance,
contraries
balanced and reconciled.
Roll on, roll on!]

* * * *

A goldfinch
once again
this day
and every day
for a season
feeds on

sunflower seeds
by our porch
but startled
by an opening door,
the approach
of that Mortal Boor,
darts
to the bare spire
atop the Norwegian spruce -

his brilliance,
his stamina,
his confidence -

for only a moment
and away

- and his mate
less flashy,
more golden,
the patina
of patience,
flits closer
to the soil
but glides
away away
at his side -

always
this day,
his way
flies.

Eternity is in love
with moments that shine.
And love that's eternal
will any moment arise.

Frank Avon

Hopefulness

I will build it
of strings and rubber bands
and kindling,
adding a few leftover Legos
for lace and Justice
and tinker toys
and lincoln logs
for good measure.

They will call me Candid
misspelled in ALL capitols
and mispronounce my name

Aaron
Erring
Earing

You would look slinky in black,
they'll shout from the sidelines
as I twist the final discus
and kneel in the dust
'Brute! ' they'll scream,
'Sinner! '

I will call its attic
a plunder room
and hide there
all his letters
in a chocolate-covered cherry box,
but he will have already died
in the War
and she will have already left

His will be her first death
of many deaths the first

'I will wear floodlights, '
I sing, 'at midnight, '
and 'Summer' and 'Colours'

and 'To All Appearances'

from the Hart,
from the Hart

Frank Avon

Hospice, They Say

I try; still I try,
but this life has been so good
for so long
that leaving it
no matter how gradually,
no matter how comfortably,
is never easy.

Is it?

Frank Avon

Hostas

for Ocia, b.08.07.1895

My mother called them
August lilies,
for they were supposed to bloom
each August,
but hers never did.
She nurtured them
as she did us children,
moving them from one sunny spot
to another,
then to partial shade,
under one of the maples,
or somewhere else,
but they never bloomed.
The spirea did,
the mock orange, crepe myrtle,
the bridal wreath
by our front door,
but not her August lilies.

Her birthday was August 7.
We didn't celebrate birthdays back then,
but every year she would begin
watching for her lilies to bloom.
The climbing roses bloomed:
Dr. Van Fleet near the smokehouse,
bourbon pinks all over the cellar door.
The Southern magnolia bloomed -
profusely.
Its blossoms, large and creamy white,
had a sweet, sweet fragrance.
that overpowered one's nostrils.
She was a grand Southern lady,
that magnolia
(still is, over sixty years later) ,
sturdy, quiet, elegant, though
overshadowed always
by the giant oak nearby

(which long since has been gone,
struck by a fierce storm) .
The oak dropped its acorns noisily
every September
and lost its dull brown leaves
soon afterward,

but Lady Magnolia's waxen leaves
were green and crisp
all year long.
We used them to decorate our mantelpiece
every Christmas.
Sometimes we silvered them, or
sprinkled them with foil icicles
or bright, shining silver balls,
candlesticks of burgundy red
footed in their crispness.

Oh, yes, the magnolia was sturdy,
but her blossoms, creamy
and fragrant, large and silken,
were ever so fragile.
One slight touch of a fingertip,
and they would immediately
turn brown.
Just a breath, too close,
too intimate,
would soil their purity.

I always thought of my mother
as the magnolia;
my father was the masterful oak,
dropping its hard, noisy acorns,
all over its corner of the yard.
When we started to school,
the day after Labor Day,
we could hear them crunching
under our feet,
as they did until the snows
of December.
You couldn't miss them.
They made their will known,

they demanded obeisance.

But all summer long
the magnolia blossoms,
soft and shy,
were hidden among
those waxen, green leaves.
One had to climb carefully
among the limbs of the tree
to find them, to retrieve them.
One had to hold each blossom
ever so gently
and bear them, as if they
were the queen's tiara,
on a velvet cushion.
Not many people were patient
enough, or so fastidious.
We cut Dr. Van Fleet roses
for our mother;
we brought her baskets
of crepe myrtle.
We gathered honeysuckle vines
from the lane to our house.
She loved them all.

I was the only one
careful (or foolish) enough
to bring her
the heavily scented,
delicately sensitive,
magnolia blossom.
I think my mother was grateful.

But, still,
and to no avail,
she waited for her
birth flowers,
her August lilies.

* * * * *

This morning our hostas bloomed

as they do every August
just in time for my wife's birthday,
August 28.
The blooms are small and white,
held aloft
on stiff stalks,
much higher than their lush green leaves,
like a shaft of bells
suspended in space
outside my study window.
They are noticeable,
you can't miss them,
though not ostentatious,
plain and simple,
but many and classic.
You would never think of cutting them.
They know their rights.
They invite you to look their way
and pass on by.

We have no giant, stately oak
nor groves of maples,
no box elder or tall, skinny locusts.
I've started three sycamores,
two tulip trees, a willow,
one struggling maple,
some birches, half a dozen red buds.
One little cherry survived
out of five.

We have a rose bed,
several climbers
(a New Dawn, descendant
of Dr. Van Fleet,
Joseph's Coat, the Fourth of July) .
We have a wildflower bed
and elephant ears,
ivy and Virginia creeper,
coneflowers and butterfly bushes,
hydrangeas and coleus,
impatiens, marigolds, and petunias,
sunflowers and morning glories,

four o'clocks and lilies of the season.
Clematis vines have spread
all along our patio wall
and the heat spout
of the clothes dryer inside.

But August belongs
to the August lilies.
Whenever they bloom
- as they always do -
swaying slightly in the breeze,
presiding over the beds
and shrubs around them,
a spear of silent bells,
whenever they bloom,
I know my mother lives
and every year
rejoices.

Frank Avon

How An Elderly Man Compensates For His Losses

What cannot be,
cannot be.
He has his garden to tend,
his beds to weed.

his roses
his wildflowers
his elephant ears
his clematis vine

his daisies
his black-eyed Susans
his cosmos
the columbine

his wife's wisteria
his giant hibiscus
his honeysuckle
his burning bush

his coleus
his Boston ferns
all those spider plants
all those lilies

and then it's winter.

Frank Avon

I Am What I Must Be

I am what I must be.
I am a gravel road that leads to a large log house.
I am the walnut trees that shade the gravel.
I am the stock gap at the end of the lane.
I am the mailbox at ten o'clock every morning, hopefully open.
I am those hedgeapple trees that bear false fruit in the fencerow.
I am those blackberry vine, the old thorny ones, the new green ones.
I am ironweed.
I am a prickly pear.
I am limestone that clefts the plum thicket.
I am the jagged oak, hit by lightning, that still stands.
I am one of the seven springs for which this farm is named.
I am the silver, trickling creek that bare feet wade in.
I am the old beech and the spring it springs from and hovers over.
I am the dragonflies, the snake doctors, the skeeters on its surface.
I am the field of wheat and the combine that reaps it.
I am the team - the sorrel mare and the black jenny mule.
I am the John Deere H.
I am also the nest of hornets - ask no more.
I am the corn rows and the ragweeds daring someone to pull me.
I am a shady hillside made for dreaming.
I am the watering trough and the livestock that come there.
I am the muddy pond and the dam that seals it.
I am the nanny goat and the kids she bears.
I am the Rhode Island Red rooster with the harem of hens he crows of.
I am the foxhounds, hungry and loud.
I am Reynard who eludes them.
I am the hill to the south with its winding road
I am the moonshiner behind it and his ilk, whom he succors.
I am the sunset behind the woodlands.
I am the rock wall that's tumbling unkempt
I am the barbed wire on the new fence beyond it.
I am the crows that walk and talk there.
I am still the child with his little red wagon.
I am the garage painted silver and the basketball goal above it.
I am the scrawny box elder.
I am the grape arbor and the winesap apples.
I am the Sears 'n Roebuck catalog.
I am the corn shed and the corn sheller.

I am the lespedeza hay, scratchy and itchy.
I am the upstairs window.
I am the limestone chimney.
I am the Warm Morning heater.
I am the stovewood hat feeds it.
I am the long, long front porch
I am the swing that swings on it.
I am the locusts.
I am Dr. Van Fleet.
I am the mock orange shrubs.
I am the wide blue skies.
I am the thunderstorm in August.
I am the jonquils that bloomed in February and the blizzard that froze them.
I am the Black Angus bull, bellowing monstrously.
I am a slimy little lizard.
I am the tobacco hornworm. (Am I the imperial moth it will become?)
I am the lost boy who didn't know he was lost.
I am the outsider who couldn't find himself in the names others called him.
I am the rat terrier he cherished.
I am the one who worked the fields and walked the woods.
I am Ursa Major. I am Orion. I am Sirius.
I am the one who left and never returned.
I am the one who escaped and never will.

I am who I am.
I am Columbus who discovered a New World.
I am the world that was never new.
I am the one who discovered himself when he left.

Frank Avon

I Did Not Post A Poem Today

for Miss Mandolyn

i did not post a poem today
exactly why i cannot say
but this i know
as sure as snow
i did not post a poem today

maybe it's not too late

maybe i can post a poem right now
i'll try and try and try - and how!

where's miss emily anyhow?

she flew away on a purple cow
and she won't be back till a week from now

not muchuva poem, but that's ok
i posted some rhymes anyway
i posted some lines today
it doesn't matter what they say
i posted a modernist poem today

so miss emily can come back now
whether she's ever seen a purple cow

Frank Avon

I Have Loved

I have loved
many and often
but only one
was the first one.

ah, but that was
just a childish fancy;
she was a child
and I was a child,

we never spoke,
we never touched,
and then we grew up
for we never had been.

I have loved
many and often
but only one
was the first one.

Ah, but that was
only a daydream;
I was not myself
and she never knew.

What one cannot say
cannot be
and that was yesterday
a long time ago.

I have loved
many and often
but only one
was the first one.

Ah, but that was
mere infatuation;
we were only friends
with not much in common;

she was a vision
and I was myopic;
my mind knew better
but my heart was retarded.

I have loved
many and often
but only one
was the first one.

and she was the last one
and she was the best one
and she was the only one,
and of all men I
am most fortunate.

I have loved
many and often,
but only one
and one only.

Frank Avon

I Have Loved And Been Loved

Windy, so windy
it has been

flying kites
over Hampstead Heath,

twisting trees,
lifting leaves.

I have loved
and been loved -

everything else
- tho magnificent -

beside these
is quite

insignificant,

a simple breeze.

Frank Avon

I Never Leave Just Once

I always turn back.
I never leave just once -
my office, my house
the attic or the kitchen.

Always I remember
what I almost forgot
or wonder if
what I left I'll want.

Once I was leaving
for good
where I had worked
for years.

It was midnight.
I was tired.
It was time to go.
Tomorrow I would drive

several hundred miles.
And yet I knew
there was one more thing
I had to do:

I had to write someone,
had to say good-bye,
yet there was no one
who would want to hear

what I had to say.
So I want back
to leave my key
and a memo

to the department secretary,
saying this and that,
nothing worth repeating -
and all the time I'm weeping.

I always turn back.
I never leave just once.
Freud could explain it,
and I won't deny it.

I always turn back.
I never leave just once.
because there's a chance
I should not be leaving.

What I retrieve
(and probably should leave)
is one last glance
at what I might still need:

to leave a book behind,
to keep a note unfiled,
to clasp a tattered flag,
to pocket a dusty weight,

is to hold an open mind,
to refuse to say 'Au revoir, '
to caress an ancient rag,
to insist it's not too late.

I always turn back.
I never leave just once,
what I retrieve
is the self I've left
and can never leave.

Frank Avon

Icon

I cannot know him, can I?
He will not speak to me.
Yet I am possessed by him;
he's one of my other selves,
someone, I think, I'd like to be:

not my Albion,
a Glad New Day,

not golden Apollo
or a thundering Zeus,

not Gabriel
nor Lucifer before his fall,

not Elijah in his chariot
nor Ezekiel with his wheels,

Orion and his dog,
Pegasus with Bellerophon,

Taurus the onyx bull,
or the rat who wed a dragon,

King Arthur
or Galahad,

no Childe Roland
to the dark tower come,

not Prince Hal or Hotspur
or Hamlet, Prince of Danes,

no Coeur de Lion
or Ethan Allan,

il Trovatore
die Meistersinger

not Paul Bunyan
or Pecos Bill

not Dan'l Boone
or Davy Crockett

not Superman
or Captain Marvel,

not even Elvis
or a Pat Boone,

Bob Cousy
or Pistol Pete,

not even those guys
I idolized,

looking on from the sidelines,
an adolescent, an Outsider

not my persona
nor a Jungian shadow,

a Great Unknown,
the intimate one,

before whom
I prostrate myself

in whom I see myself
when I shall rise,

the actual idealized,
my ideals energized,

maybe Amerika,
a Son of Liberty -

his visage, the Adirondacks,
his shoulders, Appalachia,
his right arm, the Great Lakes,

his left arm, the Florida peninsula,
his ribs, railways,
his abs, the Great Plains,
his heart, the Gateway Arch,
his veins, the Mississippi,
his lower limbs, the Chisholm Trail,
and the voyage of Lewis and Clark,
his knees, Yosemite and Pikes Peak,
his feet, the San Francisco Bay

out of the earth he should arise
riding his mount into the skies
fleeing Armageddon,
facing the seventh heaven,

the climax
to which he aspires

a more perfect union
a New Frontier

He must cast off bonds that bind him,
must recline on a couch of the ether,
must triumph with only his eyes,
must repose in poetry, transform
Rodin's bronze into human flesh.

Still he calls me
from the depths of darkness,
from cycles of silence,
from a distance indeterminate,
Indefinite, nor quite Finite.

Still he calls,
though prideful, even arrogant,
distant and withdrawn,
yes admit it, sultry, sullen,
ultimately Unknowable:

the Unnamed,
the unchained,

prince of darkness,
duke of dawn,

uncrowned, unthroned,
of so many, only one,

after all these years,
one moment golden.

Frank Avon

Iconography

He had to have his icons,
Olympians, if you will,
from the very beginning,
from the time those bullies
taught him his inadequacies,
that he was an outsider,
an alien among his kind.

They were distant, aloof,
living on another plane,
but walking among us,
though not of us, statuesque.
He wanted to be like them,
and knew he never would,
though not like them either,
but of them, evergreen.

Until there came a time
he discovered himself, even
celebrated his Self. Even
then they were implanted in
his mind, shadows inside him,
from time to time emerging
to remind him that he has
always come in second
in whatever race he's run -
never number one. Except

that she has loved him
accepted him, alien that
he is; moreover she is his
Other Self, one who makes
him complete, lifts him up
beyond the everyday, every day,
not statuesque, not above us,
but, at last, ever, evergreen.

Frank Avon

Iconography II

We all
(it is our nature)

must select an icon,
and subject ourselves to it

(the golden Phoebus,
a shaggy Dionysus) ,

for Images
to the Imagination

unveil our secret selves
reveal the hidden real,

our vision
of what we should be,

and know
we never will.

Read the portrait,
compose yourselves.

Read and write
to know it well

(St. John's apocalypse,
the Gospel of Mary Magdalene,

the David,
the Pieta,

Paracelsus, tria prima,
Jacob Boehme, his Aurora,

someone, the Sun,
some darkling Star) ,

too close, too close,
too far.

Frank Avon

Id Est

A prison
without bars
incarcerates
your self
for life.

It is
who you are.

Frank Avon

Idolatry

There were always those
he wanted to be,
wanted to be like,
but couldn't.

They live enshrined,
even those who've died,
flesh and iron,
in his mind.

Frank Avon

If I Should Die Some Tuesday...

What I hate for the world to lose
is all the things I have learned,
all the things that I've been through,
what my mind has stored away in urns,

in little suitcases, in file cabinets,
in the pockets of pool tables,
among tree limbs, inside fishing nets,
in its silo, its garage, its horse stables.

What I hate for the world to lose
are all those things that I remember,
songs, psalms, adages, jokes, clues,
what happened every year, each December,

but (alas) , the final loss is not the first,
for already, every day, I lose something else:
words I can't recall, folks' names (that's the worst) ,
how a movie ended, scores, when to take my pills,

how long a line should be,
when a poem should rhyme,
whether it's trite to say, 'I see, '
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME

How I hate for the world to lose,
what I've already lost,
all the things... now I was saying what?

Uh, I forgot.

Frank Avon

Illness Takes This Day

Time is running out -
so much to say -
so much unsaid -
and yet I am without -

without words
without images
without lines
without a single verse -

these two
are all that I receive:
'Forgive me, Lord,
for I am a sinner'
'I believe,
help thou mine unbelief' -

that's all I receive,
maybe that's all I need -
and gratefulness for a life
filled with richest blessings -

one scripture
I've seen most often fulfilled,
and some folks insist
it isn't even a scripture,
but I believe it is:

'There's a divinity
that shapes our ends,
rough-hew them
how we will.'

Frank Avon

Immanuel

If we live and move
and have our very being,
infinity dwells within us,
about us and beyond us,

and upon Mt. Zion
our banners are raised
and atop Mt. Sinai
words are engraved

(God is One)
on copper plates
with which one butchers
the Golden Calf.

Frank Avon

'Invictus' Invalid

No, I shall recite 'Invictus'
no more, no more, for

I am the vassal of my fate,
I am the bos'n of my soul.

Frank Avon

It's All In The Brand

It's all in the BrandName:
BrandClaims
lead to BrandFame.

The brand (name)
you choose
is your grand fuse.

An English teacher
is a WordWizard.

Poetry is
WordPower.

Literature is
ClassWords;
one studies it
in a WordClass.

English majors
are the WordHerd;
their A-students
are WordNerds.

A publication
is a WordBlast.

Communication is
the WordNet.

Journalists are
the WordSet;
international journalists
are the JetWordSet.

What do I think
of all this?

It's the epitome of WordMerd,

just another WorthList,
or to be more blunt
TurdWords.

It's all a GrandGame
for a GrandAim
(she's no longer a Grand Dame) .

A failure is a WordBomb,
but success - ah, success -

is a Zing with a Fling!
WordZest for a WordFest,
It's always WordCome,

a WordSpasm
like a GrandiorGasm.

A brandname is a
GrandShame!

The brand (name)
you choose
in your grand refuse.

A grand name is a
just what it is -

any old bland name,
just the way it came,

hers, its, or his,
always the same,

Jane or Bill,
Jack or Jill,

the news, the blues,
lines, signs,

whatever
and ever.

Frank Avon

It's Lust Advertising!

You head your page
with cenogenics:
anything
to pay the bills.

He has gray hair
of the elderly
but the torso
of Schwarzenegger.

Never mind:
buyers are blind;
what they promise
isn't some body,

it's the lilt of
youth, a tilt toward
omni-potency, just
a jiggly swagger.

If she loves you
anyway,
you don't have
a role to play,

and if she doesn't,
you mustn't,
for you won't
forestall her 'Don't! '

Frank Avon

Joseph Of Arithmatea

Only sixteen,
a beginner,
on a copper plate
he engraved
the evangel of England
on England's rocky shores,
some twenty years later
he engraved it again
and was still making proofs
near unto death,
'of whom the world
was not worthy.'

Frank Avon

Judgment

They rise and they fall,
on the left and on the right,
from the cave to the flames,
from the dark to the light,

many, many, many
multitudes,
all One Man,
the Divine Humanity,

painted at least seven times
by one man,
all of them Eternals,
states of his Mind.

Frank Avon

July 3

For a whole month
I'd been wordless

the pain and numbness
of chest and shoulders

invading my nerve
occupying it

denigrating
the urge

to ejaculate
words

until a goldfinch
amidst sunflowers

loosened
the tie that bound me

and let fly
the surge.

Frank Avon

Just A Dog

A dog, after all,
is just a dog
until the elderly man
needs to be needed,
to nourish and nurture,
to bestow affection;
then that mongrel
from Animal Rescue,
part rat terrier maybe,
maybe part beagle,
walking the woods with him,
chasing squirrels and rabbits,
curling up at his elbow,
wagging its tail
at the sound of its name,
is the man's best friend.

Frank Avon

Just Before Midnight

I walk out into the night,
my hands clasped upon my belly,
thumbs pointed upward,
like a monk meditating.

I slip my feet along the walk
smoothly, smoothly, quiet
I stare straight ahead, but
my eyes ennoble the light.

The coleus have grown three feet,
the Boston fern fans out
as an abundance of ostrich feathers
in the shadows and the light.

The sweet potato vines spread
under the butterfly weed,
completely obscuring the dusty miller
hiding itself, surviving, beneath.

The marigolds still bloom profusely,
the petunias have mostly expired,
the impatiens grow tall and lank,
graceless at the shank of summer.

I pause, then shuffle on,
out of the porch light, into shadows.
Let your mind glow blank; relax
your fibers; distillate: I whisper.

The year 2000 wasn't the end of
anything - except the century,
and technically that wasn't until
2001. Except certain species.

Who knows how many. I was younger
then, almost elderly, but not quite.
I was younger, and welcomed synchronicity.
The next two years would be sung

in perfect harmony: soprano, alto,
bass, tenor. The strings would sing.
The reeds and brass climb upward.
With or without the vulnerable percussion.

But now, I walk out into the night, quiet.
I recite what I remember: '... for he
shall be like a tree, planted by rivers
of water.' Hands clasped, I shuffle on

into the dark.

Frank Avon

Just Off Interstate 40

There it stands
on an interstate access route,
with traffic whizzing by
all day and all night.

Between a Waffle House
and a Pizza Hut,
near Taco Bell and Shoney's,
there it stands:

a large, old locust,
its trunk bifurcated
when it was a sprout
in someones's pasture,

stands, reaching
toward the sky, its leaves
dancing in the breeze (its
blossoms in the spring

summoning locust winter) ,
and swinging from its limbs,
from uppermost to lowest,
their tips sweeping the ground,

their leaves green and profuse
against the dainty locust leaflets,
are long, long sprays of
Virginia creeper.

Virginia creeper,
far, far from the Old Dominion,
Virginie, swept up in modern
urbanization and mechanization,

lends its sweep and grace,
as if this were still 1620,
to the land, to the air,
climbing high, swinging low.

It is hardy and resolute,
its old craggy stems
clinging to the bark
of the vulnerable locust.

Virginia creeper, persistent,
creeping, creeping higher
up that large, old locust,
swaying gracefully

and graciously reminding us,
weary travelers that we are,
among fast food franchises,
that in the terstices

of what we have demanded,
alongside pavement and neon,
and noise and oblivion,
simplicity can be elegant.

Frank Avon

Just The Right Madness: A Found Poem

Ecstatic poems
announce their arrival
when the act of writing
is utterly inconvenient:

in the shower
walking the dog
[late for an appointment
just before surgery

changing a diaper
or a flat tire
mowing the lawn
or moving to Florida].

One has to surrender
and just plain take dictation
[use whatever pen or pencil
is handy & Holiday Inn station-

ary]. The lines and images
may be overtly relevant to one
another or not (the less relevant
the better) . Sometimes

[the] connective tissue
was nothing more than filaments
[or Freudian inhibitions
or merely personal habiliments].

So much the better: [the poet]
is left with a poem illuminated
[or intimately creneled,
or instantly incriminated]

with just the right madness

[just the right madness].

NB: This is a poem I found and could not resist. So far the best poem I have discovered in this year's Best American Poetry is 'Elegy for My Mother' by Frannie Lindsay. It's splendid. Her note in the biographical appendix is also 'poetic, 'and quite insightful about the writing of poetry. This is a fractured quotation from that note; the words in brackets [] are my own, inserted to illustrate 'madness' and to alliterate, assonate, and halfway rhyme. Get the book and read the original poem and note; it's worth it. Terrance Hayes, ed., *The Best American Poetry 2014* (sorry, the computer won't let me italicize titles) . The poem is on p.83f and the note on p.174f.

Frank Avon

Just To See

Just to move.

Just to sit.

Just to see

the world outside my window.

It is enough.

It is enough

Frank Avon

Ladies

Pink ladies
are apples - tasty

Naked ladies
are lilies - lovely

Ladies
both pink and naked

restore us
to our Eden

Frank Avon

Late And Soon

I shall sleep tomorrow;
don't wake me before noon,
for I have stilled a storm tonight
and shouldered an enchanted stone.

Let the little house wrens whisper,
nor wake me up at seven,
for the dreams on which I drift tonight
may be the seventh heaven.

Frank Avon

Life In Lowercase

Life is a sitting room -
a sofa and a couple of chairs,
a coffee table and coffee table books,
two lamp tables, a Lincoln rocker,
a library table with a Tiffany lamp,
a writing desk, an antique cabinet
concealing a television set,
hand-tooled ceramics, hand-woven baskets,
an easel with a portrait of
one's great-great-grandparents,
frowning as they always did
from the landing in the staircase
while children slid down the banister,
large paintings - abstract, impressionistic,
oh, and one traditional, roses in a still life,
lifting one's eyes to the skylight,
or the bay window looking out on one's world
and other, more mundane worlds,
impinging on what should be
one's own inner space.

Life is a sitting room.
To guests it is a parlor
with a leather divan and antique oak;
to family it is a great room
with generations of artifacts;
to oneself it is a living room
where one never lives
but maintains order and a face
to meet the faces that one meets.

Life is a sitting room,
but living is not sitting:
it's pacing, jogging, standing
around, occasionally lounging,
working at a desk, in the dirt,
it's pumpin' and humpin' and
just holding on tight, all day
and all night, it's waiting

in the wings and dancing without
strings, and hills you can't climb.
It's 'root hog or die, ' reminiscing,
staring at the stars, improvising,
imagining, projecting, giggling.
Never sitting. Never, never just sitting.

Life is a sitting room,
but not living.
Life is an abstract noun,
nothing you can grab on to;
living is an active verb,
a gerund, a participle.

Don't write about my life.
It never is nor wasn't.
Write about me living.
Write about my living.
Write about living.
Live as I have lived.
That is living abundantly,
and that is living eternal.

Living is a kitchen.

Frank Avon

Lines

Another 100

Verses are lines:
that's what the word means.

Writing in lines
requires that one sees

in a new way,
for each new day.

I am not a Keats,
never will be,

nor Ole Walt
nor Miss Emily,

but what I know
is that writing these lines

is a way of knowing
myself, our times,

this earth, our place,
our griefs, God's grace.

Frank Avon

Lines Within The Lines

'What do I love
more than life itself? '
This is the question,
time and again,
that I ask myself.
I guess I'm obsessed.
It crosses my mind
whether I want it to
or not, interrupting
whatever my thought.
Resist, I cannot.
Reject it, I cannot.
What does it mean?
How can I answer?
I am possessed.

What would I die for?
Many are the answers
to that, more than I can list:

Beth, our five children,
their children, their health,
that they could lead
the life I've led, could have
the same happiness. Yes,
I would die for that.

But what do I love more
than life. They are my life -
what I love, past, present,
and to come: God is love,
I've always heard, but I
would say, Life is love,
and God, the Giver of life.
Providence. What I love
is this life itself:

these cherished ones,
the hills and green of Tennessee,

the college where I became
who I am, where Beth
and I met, my peers there
and mentors, surrogate
parents, all my life;
poets I've taught, books
I've treasured, music
that lifts me up, heroes,
second selves, what I
experience vicariously,
daydreams, work I've done,
words I write and
texts I edit, basketball,
April, politics, the solstices,
wonder and wisdom,
tenderness and ecstasy,
quiet meditation, days
of rest, good food and wine,
lying in the sunshine
at Crescent Beach or on our deck.
Love is life, the life I love.

Oh, there have been deaths,
and life afterwards:
the alien years of childhood
when I was an outsider,
teased, bullied, called names
I dare not repeat, try not
to recall, but I survived;
illnesses and pain,
weaknesses and strain,
but I survived;
disappointment and disillusion
that I survived.
Little failures are little deaths
that one survives.
lives we didn't lead;
regrets, neglect
that cannot be forgiven,
but one closes one's eyes
to survive.
Departing is dying, going away,

and there is no third day:
if you return, it's not the same.
Ask Lazarus; ask those who've died.

Of consciousness,
sleep is a death;
and bad dreams are
the flames of hell,
suffered in the flesh,
in subconsciousness,
but each night I survive.
Each day I wake
to life anew:

I sip my tea,
I smell my roses,
I yell for my team,
I hear rhapsodies,
I walk the woods,
I wade a creek,
I drive my Grand Marquis,
I play solitaire till I win,
I work crosswords
at least once a day,
I eat hot buttered biscuits
and blackberry jam.
I pray.
I fondle the pages
of a brand new book,
or of an old book,
long unopened.
I warm myself by her body.
When she's far away,
I talk to her anyway.
Oh, yes, I am alive;
I survive.

The question I can't help
asking myself, answers
itself. To love is to live.
To live - to be yourself -
is to love. Like the stream

I go wading in, I'm always
changing, always the same.

Life abundant,
life eternal,
life to be lived
every moment.

Five smooth stones
enliven my fingers;
leaves I press
in a dictionary
remain wordless
but refresh my spirit;
her voice, her eyes, her hair
are with me everywhere.

Poetry is 'little lines
of sportive word run wild.'
I exercise my mind
to read within the lines.

What do I love
more than life itself?
Why, life itself, of course,
life after death.
day after day,
Every day is heaven;
every moment lived,
forever.

I am alive.

I am alive!

I am

alive....

Frank Avon

Linnell

His friend,
a young artist,
of means,
a hard-shelled Baptist,
caretaker
of his final years.

Will
I could never have been,
but perhaps
a Linnell,
his visions if not to share
at least to cherish
and admire.

* * * * *

'At a quarter past midnight
on 14 October 1819
Richard Coeur de Lion appeared'

* * * * *

Ghost of a Flea:
'[reach me my things]
There he comes!
his eager tongue
whisking out of his mouth,
a cup in his hands
to hold blood
covered with scaly skin
of gold and green'

* * * * *

The Everlasting Gospel
'Thou art a Man God is no more
Thy own humanity learn to adore.'

Lisbon

Lisbon is
one land away

and as far as I know its
streets paved with gold.

Its orange roses
rise up a step-ladder

one vine at a time
and on the horizon

one's eyes discern
Iago climb and climb

(or is he called Diego?) ,
his angels singing

one swig of whiskey
so you can visit this

one land away
this Lisbon.

Frank Avon

Lists #1

Words

don't come easy any more
as they used to
- they just don't -
in lines
in paragraphs
in verse
in essays
(formal or familiar)
in splattered patterns.

Now

they prefer
to line up
in lists

like children
at the water fountain -
lists with lots... of dots,
lists of seventeen,
lists that explore
what is no more,
lists of what isn't and was
never meant to be,
lower-case lists,
abbr. lists,
lists that illustrate,
lists that finalize,
lists that domesticate,
lists w/ twists.

See what I mean.

Lists

list.

Frank Avon

Lists #2

Sentences

are penalties
imposed
by oligarchic authorities;
you escape
only by crawling through
those narrow windows
of the sleek modernistic jail
in Ft. Lauderdale,
its clean, bristling white walls,
the rolls of barbed wire
over the twenty-foot fence
at the entrance -
one of the early skyscrapers
in the downtown area
near city hall
and the school board
and Florida Atlantic University,
with an ocean view

the roiling Atlantic,
with yachts and
sailboats and
fishermen who pay by the day
and cruise ships
at certain hours
headed out there,
way out there,
out
there.

On the other hand

lists

are free
like Medicare
like fresh air

like thinking (you think)
like love (that isn't)
like enterprise (that pays and pays)
like trade (that costs and costs)
like writing (according to a guy
named Elbow) ,

free, free, free,

fancy
for all,
for the asking
like daisies & dandelions
and honeysuckle vines.

Lists lean
(list you might say) .

Never mind.

Words
once over easy,
easier than ever,
so easy -

whole troops of fellows
line up

to enlist.

Frank Avon

Locust Winter

Leaves on the trees
are still spring green,
only a few fading darker.

The lime green thumbs
at the tip ends
of spruce branches

are gone - forest green now.
but on the tall top spire
baby branches have sprung forth.

We would have to walk a ways
- my dog and I - to find
the season of the week:

the locusts are blooming,
in creamy white clusters
dangling like grapes.

In my youth
we would have called
these cool rainy days

locust winter. Today
I call it
yesterday's tomorrow,

and celebrate
the little elderberry bushes'
ebullience,

the tiny green leaves
determined not to succumb,
to live on.

Frank Avon

London

The streets of the city
where he walked
(for walking was his workshop
and sights, his reward)
were dingy and stinky,
crepuscular and crowded,
interrupted occasionally
by green squares and
monumental edifices,
angels in trees
or the prophet Ezekiel

but his eyes saw
what his eyes saw
(eidetic imagery) :
houses of gold,
pavements of silver,
gates ornamented
with precious gems.

Frank Avon

Look! It's Another Commercial

A handsome man descends
in a pillar of light,
a tube of clarity, of crystal

through world wars and water
through sheer atmosphere
down tiers of stories

into a well-lit
dungeon
with a tiled floor

into inner space,
the depths within,
incarceration,

and reaches into air
into space out there
into gravity that isn't anywhere

and finds floating
all about him
above, below, around him

artifacts,
nuts and bolts, he says,
what's engineered,

what's sleek and clean,
what's steel and plasticized,
what's nimble to the fingers,

and he is ostracized
by perfection
and oscillation

and banality
and sharp, crisp arms,
sleight of hand

but what he says is trite,
for triteness is like a blanket
of artificial light;

and POWER
is his pastime
his villainy entire

what he sells
is hell
on wheels

and cosmic deals
and liturgies
of idiosyncrasy.

He smirks,
he shirks,
he pushes the button

THE DEVIL,
he insists,
IS IN THE DETAILS

YES
THERE'S METHOD
TO MY MADNESS

Oh, yes,
there's madness
in his methods,
isn't there?

Frank Avon

May Day

Once a year
for one day
the sweeps of London -

enslaved since they were four,
sold for twenty or thirty shillings,
prodded down sooty flues,
narrow and twisted,
maybe seven inches square,

for one day they
were set free
on the streets:
their sooty faces whitened,
their spiky hair powdered,
dressed in white paper lace,
lords of misrule
for the amusement of the masses.

'Unorganized Innocence'

Frank Avon

Me Again

This morning
for a moment
I saw the sunrise
reflected on the western horizon
its warm light
gilding the tops of trees
with their fresh green leaves

and I was free again
to be again
as I have not been
for a season.

Frank Avon

Memoirs

You ought to write
your memoirs,
not for anyone else,
only for yourself.

In the words of
a memoir
you live again
what you half-

lived before
unheard.
and now cherish
so much more.

Memoirs don't have
to rhyme;
they're not confined
to dactyls or iambs;

your seven score and ten
won't happen in stanzas,
there's no sharp line
between an octave

and a sestet;
the only couplets
are birthday cakes
with candles

or champagne
for an anniversary,
or egg nog
around the Yule.

Memoirs
are all middle;
the beginning and the end
are beyond one's ken.

Of course, memoirs
are a form of fiction,
reality as one
remembers it,

but there comes a time
when what one remembers
is quite as real
as what can be documented.

At least make a list:
graph the peaks
of your experience
and the people

of whom your life
is mostly composed,
the places
you hold sacred,

the works of art
(poems, paintings,
music, sculpture)
which are a part

of who you are,
books you read,
movies and the stars
whom you admired,

icons and idols,
artifacts
you treasure,
the weathers

you enjoyed
or endured,
escapes you made,
what all occurred

in your travels,

treks, pilgrimages,
your climbs, falls,
your entourage,

your destinations,
and stops along
the way - to see,
to rest, to play,

whether in awe
or idleness,
the surprises
and the crises:

let the memories roll,
relive your life,
your decades, your eras,
the eternities

you've risen toward,
you've sprung from:
these are the chapters,
these are the tomes,

these are the scrolls,
these are the stones
you gather in an ark,
hold up to the light,

cling to in the dark,
from time to time unroll
to sanctify the hour
and satisfy your Soul.

Write your memoirs:
consecrate what's yours.

Frank Avon

Missive For Some Patriots: Don'T Believe What's Before Your Eyes

This is your peace,
your proud independence;
but a truce is not peace,
nor indifference, independence.

Whatever wavers
quivers in the wind,
whatever quavers,
shivers at the dawn,

whatever you see
that does not show,
whatever you guess
but cannot know -

wave your nation's banners,
lift your arms in salute,
listen to those feet
marching along the street:

you and they are alive,
patriots at your best,
you see who's survived,
dismiss the ones at rest.

She fulfills your desire,
her flesh meets your need;
the children that you sire
are of a noble breed.

Other people's sons
are the ones who tote the guns;
you shout the State's alarms
and boast our strength of arms.

Lift your eyes to the horizon,
raise your arms a sign of triumph,

victory is not surprising,
prolongation, just a bump.

So shoulder you beloved son,
lovingly clasp you bride,
never mind displaced ones;
they were on the other side,

the explosions in their streets,
the destruction of their homes,
their sallies and retreats,
the snipers and all those drones,
our bombs
and their
defeats.

We're free,
we are at peace!

Frank Avon

Monarch

What I see
are the leaves
of a butterfly weed

growing near the street,
sprouting regal
blossoms,

crimson and yellow,
and sprightly sprigs
with red buds

in its upper reaches.
And nestled among
those sprigs,

completely at ease,
like a fetus
in its mother's womb

or a puppy
curled up
in its bed,

or any one of us
asleep, resting our backs
by flexing our knees,

it lies,
the larva,
black and gold and white striped.

One has to wonder,
doesn't one?
if he may not be dreaming

of the epic flight
on which he will embark
in his season,

in his rugged beauty,
seeking another Eden,
the most notable

of Lepidoptera.
the triumphant

Monarch.

Frank Avon

Moving

The gull soars before the boat.
It seems to float.

The eye believes all it sees.
But why should I?

What the heart knows it must seize:
gull boat sky seas.

The sea of gulls, sky of eyes -
for me, they rise.

Frank Avon

Mr. Teacher

What I spoke as truth
was what I had imagined,
made up, pretended -
convinced that my pretense
was utter Reality, outer

reality. And they listened.
My God, they listened
(or else transferred out) :
Sondra, Lindy, Ann,
John, Errol, Sam....
I had never been listened to
before. They listened
to what I made up, or
evoked from what I skimmed,
scanned, perused, browsed:

what Douglas Bush meant
or John Locke or Cardinal Newman,
heaven's bourne in 'La Belle Dame, '
Whitman's astronomer and
Geo. Meredith's galaxies,
how Eben Flood was already
ebbing, what Christmas meant
to Nemerov or Laurence Ferlinghetti,
'Christ climbed down...this year, '
Old (St.) Nick gone by Easter....

I told them what it all meant,
and, by God, they listened -

and found their selves therein,
I think, as I was finding mine.
That's what education is, isn't it?
Listening to what someone made up,
and learning, by the way,
how to make things up oneself.

Literacy is illiteracy disguised,

a tale told by idiots -
signifying what is signified,
and we become who we become
by deciding which pretense is real,
and which merely pretentious.
That's what teachers are meant to be
- until they go away for their Ph.D.

and disappear.

Frank Avon

Mt. Eden

First, there was the grape arbor
and two winesap apple trees,
after that the vegetable garden
(Daddy plowed and planted,
I hoed and weeded
and dusted insecticide,
Mamma simply reaped,
and all was well) :
next the orchard,
apple trees and peaches
of several varieties,
then the tall wire fence
to keep the goats outside,
behind that the thicket
of wild plums and
daisies and prickly pears,
and finally, hackberries
and hedgeapples
(aka Osage oranges) .

I'm sure
you'll find the treasure
well before the
hackberry patch.

Frank Avon

Muddy

the water was
where I stepped in,
I, wearing an old swimsuit
woolen, made with a top,
as swimsuits were in those days,
dark maroon and scratchy.

Now why
would I remember this
in my eightieth year?
and flapping my arms
and bouncing my feet
in water too shallow
for one to swim,
or drown
unless one lay face down
for a good long while.

It was a new-made pond
in someone's backwoods,
not ours,
and I was all alone
(I supposed)

and peeled off the wool
and stretched naked
on the packed clay dirt
shoveled there by a bulldozer
(I supposed) ,

and slept
in the hot sun
(was it July?)

and never did again.

Frank Avon

Muffin / Cupcake

In the news
(Huffington Post) :
9 euphemisms for vagina.

Oh, please,
how about 9 euphemisms
for knees:

bony cushions
undercover Russians
aches and pains

heaven's gate
too soon too late
sybil's chains

God's supplicants
proposer's duplicates
the American twain.

Grooving on up -
moving on up - arise - surprise:
lover's lane.

Frank Avon

My Love

She is the star in my sky.
She is the moonlight
that canopies my world.
She is the Queen of my night.

She is sunshine.
She is my sunrise.
With her is always high noon.
She is the light of my life.

Frank Avon

Names

They have earned their names -
the names they were given:
she, Home,
and his Blessed One;
he, Candor,
and her Prince, of the Right Hand the Son.
They are dwelling near the elms.

They have earned their names -
the ones they might give themselves:
she, Grace,
and the amazing Miranda,
he, Salem,
and the blazing Benedict.
They are pilgrims within Eden,
all ways and for ever.

Frank Avon

Naomi

She will be ninety-five next month,
tiny, frail, fragile,
but healthy
and alert.

For sixty years, she's suffered
tragedies most of us avert,
a bitter divorce,
despair and attempted suicide,

single parenthood,
financial responsibility,
isolation from family,
years of trauma, years of concern.

With all her five children,
she's suffered disasters;
eventually she's lost three, and
one of her three grandchildren,

yet still
she is cheerful,
seeing the lighter side of life,
serene.

She was always my model.
Early on, she pointed the path,
she held high the standard,
always loyal and gracious.

To be happy, she says,
you must do something,
love something,
and look forward to something.

* * * * *

The moon is bright tonight,
not quite full,

ovate,
enwrapped in an aura.

If I should hear it speak,
out of its grace and patience,
its loveliness and light,
the moon serene,

or if I should hear it sing
a winsome air,
brightening the night,
I'm sure what it would say:

To be happy,
you must do something,
love something,
and look forward to something.

So hear my praise and prayer:
for things I still can do,
so many I have, to love,
and more to look toward.

Amen.

Frank Avon

Neighbors

In mid-afternoon in August
I sit in the shade

of the sycamores and black oak,
the shelter I dwell within,

near marigolds and calladiums;
I watch the red bird feeder with windows,

and see the titmouse
and chickadees,

neighbors,
I welcome and feed,

the titmouse with his silver crest,
the chickadee with his white cheeks

and black cap,
They come and they go,

back and forth,
and what I see is the way it should be:

in the ordinary
an epiphany.

Frank Avon

New Hope

New Hope Church

- it was my grandmother's church;
she was a good Southern Methodist -
long ago moved away
from New Hope Cemetery.

Today

the church building has been abandoned
- a family uses it as their dwelling;
the lawn is weedy and unkempt -
but the cemetery flourishes.

Frank Avon

News Papers: Q & A

Q. In the Age of the Internet
what's the use of newspapers?

A. Good question.

Obituaries are still there -
the only time most of us
get our names in print.

Q. Fair enough. What else?

A. Hmm. Comicstrips

Your life in only five panels:

Baby Blues

Zits

Edge City

Freshly Squeezed

Pickles

Q. Yep, that's me. Every day in Pickles.
There must be something more.

A. Yes, of course. There's always sports:

every game, play by play

- high school, college, pro's, even junior league -
football, basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, polo,
track, tennis, golf, swimming, wrestling, boxing,
auto racing, horse racing, cycling, the Iditarod,
marathons, triathlons, biathlons, yachting, the Olympics,
World Series, Super Bowl, NCAA Final Four, the Grand Slam,
all the news of all the stars, a hole in one, a no-hitter,
trades, injuries, all-stars, MVP's, Coach of the Year,
(oh, yeah) then there are the scandals - rapes, abuse,
drugs, steroids, corruption, bribes, criminal offenses

and ON and On and on....

Q. Zzzzz. Oh, more?

A. Women's pages.

Q. Women's pages?

A. Never mind. Science and technology. Foods. Finance. Business.

Q. Finance AND Business?

A. Sure. 'A focus on making money
and making a difference.'

Q. Buying votes, in other words?

A. Editorials, which no one reads any more.
Letters to the Editor, which no one writes any more.
And TribTalk: Readers Call In -
whining, complaining, sneering,
all in substandard English.

Columns, columns, columns -
political, critical, comical, euphoric,
Dear Abby and Ann Landers.

Q. So, after all, what are newspapers for?

A. Lining bird cages,
dogs to pee on,
washing windows,
packaging breakables,

All in all,

nodding
napping
sleeping

But Most Important - which will keep them in business:

CROSSWORD PUZZLES

Q. There you go. Now I see why
newspapers are for keeping.

Frank Avon

Ninety Times

Ninety times
the bell has tolled
and what is this?
It's still the heart of May.

Ninety torches
light the hall
and what is this?
The jewel is still asparkle.

Ninety stanzas
of the song we sing
and still we are but
even steven.

What is heaven?
the samurai asked,
and what is hell?
Hakuin only sneered.

So the samurai drew his sword,
but the Buddhist said,
What is this?
Why, this is hell.

The samurai sheathed his sword
and bowed before his zen.
What is this?
Why, this is heaven.

On earth,
Hakuin said,
this is heaven.
It's May, a gem, it's Eden.

Ninety questions we've asked,
or the same question
ninety times,
our answer still the same.

When it's always May,
and our Jewel still gleams,
all is Eden, Stevie, and
on earth, this is heaven.

Ninety beginnings
we've celebrated,
and what is this?
Ninety is but
a beginning.

Frank Avon

No Body

I always wanted
to be
someone else
than me

to wear a different body
play a better role

not
this bit part
an extra
a noBody
but

Tyrone
Cornell
Tab
Clark Stone

It was not
to be
I fled
into ulcers
and elsewhere

seethed
creeping out
seeking
someOne

she
gave me my body
and took hers away
leaving me

bereft,
I fell back
into myself
crashed

crushed

left
to ulcers
again

until an internist
also a seer
taught me
how to breathe

and then
alone

on my own
bitterly
beckoning
anyOne:

all this
was Prologue
prolonged
about Body
bitter

until
one summer
someOne -

Act One

when I breathed
the breath of life
to become
a living whole

Frank Avon

No Snow At All

Let there be no snow
save in paintings
as by a window framed
in the palace of their love.

Let there be no snow
save for the crisp whites
in wafts of linen piled
over their warm afterglow.

Let there be no snow
on the lily of her breast
silken to his touch
or the stilling of his breath.

Let there be no snow
lest crocus again arise
between their warm thighs
and blossoms grow.

Let there be no snow
no, let there be no snow,
for love in warmth comes
and only warmth must know.

Frank Avon

No, Never Again

Do not call to me from beneath your mound of covers and coverlets,
do not let your whispers seek me out, seduce me, nor your warmth,
for I am wasted, and what was once mine and mine alone is now no more.
Let me hear the singing of the willows in some far distant land,
let me dissolve myself in what remains, what sustains me, reflection.

There will be no new tomorrow when we arouse, no refreshing morning,
there will be not once again, never again, those first faint stirrings
of lives to be, to come, to tantalize us into rising and falling,
and rising and falling, until we soar into the deepest dissolution
of all. No. There will be no blistering noon, nude, in the sunlight,

no sinking into the waters of, the warm depths, the velvet folds
of that highest of all outbursts, those groans of resolution. No. No.

Frank Avon

Nobody Ever Finds The One

nobody ever finds
the one,

Bukowski wrote,
and he didn't,

I suppose.

nobody ever finds
the one

unless he lets
himself be found

by One.

Frank Avon

None Of The Above

You
must choose
a topic
for your poem

OK,
poet:
I'm writing about a poet.

'The topic you entered is not recognized.
Please enter an acceptable topic.'
Try

poetess
poetry,
poets.

None of the above
Guess,
you guess.

'The topic you entered is not recognized.
Please enter an acceptable topic.'
Oh, hell - er -

I mean, oh yes.
One sorta floats by:
creativity?

Qui, qui
creativity
let it be, let it be!

So the non-topic
so uncreative will be
CREATIVITY

(None of the above)

Frank Avon

Not

I can't write poems
any more.
Words won't succumb

to my wishes
(succumb
isn't the right word, is it?)

They demand commands.
I can't give them;
trumpets, I can't sound.

I hear their wings
beyond my mind -
Almost hear....

Poetry surpasses me
(except surpasses
isn't exactly
what I want to say, is it?)

Frank Avon

Not Found (Error To Origin)

Just another way
to frustrate me

Just another way
to irritate me.

Just another way
to make me

realize
how limited I am

how little control
I have over

what I do not know
what I cannot do:

computers
technology

futurity
obscurity

apps?
perhaps.

I'm from another age -
the Age of the Page.

Let me turn the page
and visualize

what cannot be
that has to be

who I am
who I ain't

what I hear (sound in the print)
and don't (silence in the margin)

and the difference between
what's seen and never will be

the Found and
Not Found (Error to Origin)

Frank Avon

Oatmeal

The muffins you make
are oatmeal;
the cookies you bake
are oatmeal.

Understand though,
for cereal
what I'll take
is a bowl

of Cheerios.

Frank Avon

Obsolescence

Bodies break down.
That's all there is to it.
Like autos,
they're engineered
to last only so long,
and not much longer,
no matter what.

The more repairmen
work their miracles,
the more miraculous
repairs are needed.
Eventually repairs
require further repairs;
then what's irreparable
occurs, the irreparable
recurs, and the whole body

reverts to actuarial
prognostication: you're
breathless, your feet swell,
you're weak, you're fatigued,
the eyes don't see so well,
the ears don't hear so well,
the nose doesn't quite smell,
nerve endings begin to twinkle,
the duodenum's inflamed,
sleeplessness gets blamed
on arthritic joint pains,
knees buckle, you're light-headed
without a swig of Jim Beam,
some foods you cannot digest,
some muscles start to protest,
you discover your gall bladder
(you didn't know you had one) ,
pleurisy, phlebitis,
diverticulitis,
certain nerves are pinched,
your jaws are clinched,

some things happen too often
(say, at three o'clock in the morning)
some things not at all
(drink prune juice, eat more fiber)
and as for sex? Okay, what's next?

You determine not to whine,
- and then you whine.
You determine to be cheerful,
- then immediately you're tearful.
You enjoy the gloss of memory:
that's a privilege of aging, until
the loss of memory sets you raging.
Some things can't be replaced,
some things can't be repaired,
some things you just won't embrace,
but some things can't be deterred.

You take more medicines
than you can name or count,
and the side effects of each medicine
lead you to need another round.

The repairmen have prepared themselves
to challenge the Engineer,
but the body's the innocent bystander
who can't just disappear.
Seventy - eighty - ninety....
the repairman's on a roll,
but the body begins to bounce
and groan and pitch a revolt,
and the Engineer calls on
the Highway Patrol -
sirens - whistles - flashing lights

and the body amid the noise
with the conflict at full blast

softly, silently, at last
sings of the soul's best joys:

Shall we gather at the river?

The beautiful, the beautiful river?

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand
and cast a wishful eye,
to Canaan's fair and happy land,
where my possessions lie.

There's a land that is fairer than day,
and by faith I can see it afar,
and the Father waits over the way,
to prepare us a dwelling place there.

I have found a place of constant rest,
near to the heart of God,
a place where pain cannot molest,
near to the heart of God.

Bodies break down;
they're made that way,
but the old body keeps on singing,
or at least humming its happy tunes,
for the body loves its music
and enjoys it late and soon.

The body's made that way.

Frank Avon

Ode To The Cereal Bowl: After Bukowski's 'As The Poems Go'

As the poems go
so goes the notion

- and overhead
in vivid color

and constant motion
the living ad:

Kellog
Post

cornflakes
raisin bran

wheat chex
cheerios,

the poems displayed
in black and white below:

be a better breakfast eater,
the ads seem to say,

to sing
to shout aloud,

'Read me, read me, '
the poems plead.

In this day
- sad to say -

cornflakes
have more clout,

cheerios

win out,

and the poems go
in slo-mo.

Frank Avon

Old Age

Each day
is just another day.

We relive the past -
in long lists,
in lines we write,
in artifacts we handle
with our eyes,
in old pages turned again.

We live each day -
just another day.
Then we relive
ourselves living the day.

That's just the way it is.
Tomorrow will be
just another day.

Frank Avon

Older

some sensible nonsense

I just cannot help it:
I'm feeling quite decrepit.

I wish I were wiser
I wish I were stronger

I wish I were warmer
I wish I felt hunger

the way I used to do
from my hat down to my shoe,

I wish I were less dizzy
but I'm glad I'm not drunker.

If I were somewhat bolder
I could face getting older

with a little bit more humor
just a little bit less gloomier

so just a few more rhymes
just a few more times

just a few more lines
till I get to climb higher,

so for another day
I have a lot of hope

and you won't see me play
with a noose in my rope

I think I'm gonna stay
for I think I can cope.

Maybe I should be skinnier
maybe I should be slyer,

maybe I could fly skyward,
anyway I can be a winner,

so sit closer, my dear,
and be of good cheer

and give me your hand,
strike up the band

let 'em play Sousa,
the Beatles, or Caruso,

we may not live forever
but no way could we live better

Frank Avon

On Acknowledging One's Illnesses As The Natural Effect On One's Body Wearing Out

All I can hope for is
amelioration.

The time is coming,
the time will come,

when all one's hopes
are ameliorated.

Frank Avon

On Lehman's Largesse: Little Postmodern Decipiences

I don't get it
I haven't a guess
and I wrote it

The words that call,
I let them fall into
oblivion,

obeisance,
obscurity,
maybe even

meaninglessness.
Oblique?
Complex?

Inaccessible
to the Common Reader?
Oh, yes!

Words are sounds
mainly, images,
vaguely connotative.

They must speak
to the Undersoul -
correct;

not the intellect,
to the elite,
to the elect,

not the crowd,
not too loud,
on a roll.

They must be,
in a word,
free - wholly free.

And just a bit,
almost explicitly,
phallic.

The jugular tulips
glow in the manger;
the hungry bananas

bathe in starlight
with the radio on
and sing I COME

ICOME icome income I Inca mai DIEeeeeee....

Frank Avon

Once Again

the autumnal equinox.

Oh, there's always Destiny
with a capital D -
but in the meantime
there's daylight
and decimals
and deciduousness
(and indecisiveness) :

one more chance
once more (once more)
to elicit wisdom, wonder,
wisdom & wonder

and black-eyed susans
and basil and oregano.

Ruth is now 94, in Texas,
the Southern Book Festival
is in October every year,
we leave for Florida on
Martin Luther King Day
and stay at least six weeks,

and if we're fortunate
see the Florida Grand Opera
or hear the Soweto Grand Choir,

and put out pansies,
and put out pansies.

So read a few pages every day,
write a few lines late at night,
sing 'My Happiness, '
water the plants
piddle

and make one more list:

the seven seraphim,
avatars of character,
churches dear to the heart,
moments in American Literature,
'heroes, advise us, '
cities to visit one more time,
20th century celebrities,
publications that won't perish,

like the Sears & Roebuck catalog
'Amazing Grace, '
the Harvard Classics,
the Farmer's Almanac,
and Beethoven's nine symphonies

[there you go again]

There are always blessings
with a lower-case b
(at least five each day)

and in the spring
(oh, it will come again)

buttercups will bloom
down the hill,
and violets all over
everywhere,

and there will always be
another spring,
another equinox,
days lengthening,
de-light
(and Determination) .

Let's move the butterfly bushes
up against the patio fence.
Let's take up
the elephant ear bulbs
and put away the amaryllis.

Let's mulch the birches
and the sycamores
and the tulip trees
and the Japanese maple,
the cherry, the dogwood,
all those redbuds
that sprang up this year.
Let's clean the garage
(one of these days) ,
and sing 'On Jordan's Stormy Banks,

and sing

once again

once again.

Frank Avon

'One Call Tames Them All'

'daunting dandelions
marauding moles

bothersome bugs
spotty sprinklers

crank crabgrass
tenacious termites'

I read it in the Atkins ad
'one call cures them all'

(after all, poetry is where you find it,
and I found the ad on PoemHunter)

so I looked up Atkins
and found out it's a lo-carb diet:

don't feed dandelions
bread and potatoes,

moles should be steered clear
of legumes and sweet beets

keep bugs away from
chocolate and fruit juice

spotty sprinklers might get clogged
with milk shakes and potato soup

don't let crabgrass grab onto
spaghetti and yogurt

avoid feeding termites
corn and white rice.

Keep guard
on your yard:

count the carbs!
Try rhubarb.

Frank Avon

One Moment

Two goldfinches today
 two males, together,
 bright with life;
then they flew away

Frank Avon

One More April

Sometimes what winter kills
in the spring cannot live.

This year forsythia -
the tallest stems,
the longest branches
are bare and stiff
leafless unblossoming.

The rugged little pansies
clung to life
through ice and snow -
would not let go.

All the trees
now have their leaves,
the willow first, insistent,
the cherries abloom,
the Japanese maple
proclaims its identity
in its dark crimson,
the tulip poplars,
the lone maple, the birch,
the broad-leafed sycamore.

Most of the shrubs
are holding on:
the wisteria flings
out its tendrils,
the burning bushes,
pygmies, stunted
in their growth,
persist in pink,
oh, and of the three
little elderberries,
one survived
transplanting
and struggles bravely
(I'm sure it's so)
to maintain its beauty,

fragile though its branches
still may be,
to reach the sun,
the butterfly bushes
defy pruning -
they demand to be higher
than fence or wall.

In spite of my languor,
the crocus, the jonquil
demanded my attention,
tulips put forth
their cups of color,
and the new iris bed
is outdoing the old.

So much to do,
so much to be done.
And I - I must stand aside.

So much to be done,
and I - I can only
stand alone, apart.

Poems must be my eyes.
I stroll through
Emily's garden,
the stubborn foliage,
the dapper blooms,
luxuriant
in their
simplicity.

I can read,
with these eyes,
I still can read.
With this breath
(erratic though it be)
I can breathe in
their odors,
their freshness.
Still I can scatter

seed, plant bulbs,
and hope they
will spring forth.

Rugged little pansies
cling to life,
the muscles of my mind
(weakened, forgetful,
but persistent)
pinch back weeds,
stir the soil,
clip overgrowth
and trim stalks
after their blooms
have faded
and dropped away.

Poems must be my eyes.
I can read.
So much to do,
so much to be done.
And I must stand aside.
But as long as
these muscles of the mind
flex themselves -
rugged little pansies -
cling to life,

I shall stand unbowed,
I shall spring alive.
In these lines
these lines,
I shall stand erect.
I shall breathe
the air of spring,

I shall.
Sometimes what winter kills
in the spring still will live.

Today

Outside My (Hospital) Window

Outside my hospital window

one moon
a sliver of moon
only a silver/white sliver

and walls and walls and walls
walls of darkness
walls of night

and the inward
walls of pain and pain and pain
and out there

only

one moon

one sliver

silver

only one

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xv

Then there was color.

Day has broken.

It's September summer.

What under the full moon
had been black silhouettes
awash with faint white light,

are now a last splash
of summer,
its abundance:

orange of the cosmos,
blue of asters,
the reds mottled with
pink and yellow of Joseph's Coat,
the crimson rose
called Mr. Lincoln,
hard by the sharp red and white
of the Fourth of July,
the fleshy white of
the New Dawn climbers,
the abounding
yellows and oranges,
pinks and russets
of marigolds and zinnias,
the delicate white
Star of David
and a few stragglers
among the daisies,
the fading pink of
the potted polka dots,
and the scarlet
of the leggy impatiens,
the tawny dark
of the black elephant's ear
across the driveway
with the neighbors'

tall, tall pink roses
towering above everything
(in spite of being
uncared for, untended) ,
and then in early bloom
the autumnal lavender
of purple chrysanthemums,

and all around, everywhere,
green, green, green,
from the yellowish green
of the fading flags,
to the forest green
of the Norway spruce,
the profuse green
of the wisteria
flinging itself into the air,
refusing to bloom
till its own good time,
the leaning sugar maple,
thrusting itself upward
toward sunlight,
foliage and grass fresh
from watering,
a yellow butterfly
fluttering by....

a living rainbow
around me,
carpeting the ground,
still brown below,
opening up to the
graying sky above -

September summer
its abundance.

Frank Avon

Outside My Windiw Xvii

The light
even the light
is autumnal,

sober as a Miltonic nun,
wrapping the grounds
in saffron, tinged with solemnity.

The shadows, under her tutelage,
grow longer, larger,
darker, more persistent.

The light,
even in midmorning,
at midday,

throughout the long afternoon,
even the light,
is mourning something undefined.

(Let me not give way to regrets, to disillustionment.
Let me not weep.
Let me not slip headlong into despondency.)

The light,
even the light,
is cast aslant,

veiling her face,
pulling her cape about her breast,
her train stretching along the ground, all the way to Distress.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window I

Just
outside my window
five branches
of a young redbud
in bloom
- luscious, elaborate, mauve blooms -,
little heart-shaped leaves
of faint green
at the tips of twigs

in Just-

Spring

yes, yes

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Ii

Still

outside my window
five branches
of a young redbud
its little heart-shaped leaves
of faint green
growing bigger each day
at the tips of twigs
as the blossoms fade

in Still-

justSpring

oh, yes, still

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Iii

What I see outside my window
on this gloomy day

are raindrops falling
bouncing on the driveway,
trickling from tree limbs,
silhouetted against the dark spruce
and the red Ford Escape,
weighting down the pink phlox
and the gold and russet pansies.

The soil is black,
the green grass shimmers,
the tulips stand erect.

And then there is a respite,
and all is still
and silent
outside my window.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Iv

The wisteria limbs
are swaying in the wind,
flinging vines randomly,
reaching out, reaching....

as if the whole clump
were a dancer with
a cape of green silk
tossing and turning about,

and standing in her shadow
still and stiff,
stalks of the hibiscus,
springing forth, fragile.

Some day before too long
giant red blossoms
will break forth each day
from mature hibiscus limbs

and the wisteria...
will the wisteria at last
after five years of waiting
burst forth with lavender?

One never knows.
One forever hopes.
Loveliness grows, though
when, we cannot choose.

A swaying green cape,
stalks still and stiff,
the promise of crimson blossoms,
and a vision of lavender.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window IX

I sit on our front porch
outside our bay window

perusing books I've purchased
at a rare book store this afternoon

a coffee table book about John Deere
a collection of poems by Garrett Hongo
a mystery story with Charles Dickens as the hero
a softcover of Thomas Puncheon's 'Vineland'
'St. Louis Silhouettes'
with water color paintings
and writings of a daughter
of the Lacledes and Chouteaus

I relish the feel of them,
the pleasures that they promise,

when suddenly
without my realizing it
I see that I have been joined
by the pair of them,
the goldfinch and his mate.

They are feasting on sunflower seeds
I have provided them in a white tin feeder
(the sunflowers themselves are drooping
their blooms having been stripped of fruit):
they are perky but at ease
sure of themselves
though a cardinal cock,
its feathers dulled by late summer,
makes a claim on his territory,
sparrows circle all around them,
a chickadee slips in and out nervously
retreating to the overgrown wisteria.

She hurries through her meal,
then makes her way to her nest;

he lingers for a while,
insouciant,
then mounts the air
to the tip-top of our young maple,
perching high up there,
burnished by the setting sun
and then is gone.

Finally I've learned
what I was taught long ago:
to moments live
who lived but years before.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window V

May is fleeting:

it spreads its colors -
red, pink, orange,
yellow, purple, blue -
and darkens its greens.

My computer screen before me
is only words, words, words,
but the bay window,
to my back, to my side,
in front of my eyes

offers me May:

the delicate pink of spirea,
the crimson of Mister Lincoln,
the flesh pink of New Dawn,
the fresh blend of Joseph's Coat,

and all the greens
that claim the landscape,
no longer the fresh, fragile
of spring, not April any more,
becoming the fecundity of June,

the tiny redbud leaves
now grown broad as fans,
the wisteria vines grasping,
clasping, making their demands,
the hibiscus adolescent

flirting with his future,
to emerge giant blossoms,
the young spruce, hirsute,
growing taller, tawnier
by the day, spreading,

lily fronds, young sunflowers,
dusty miller, polka dots,
grass and weeds invading

the flower beds, the rosebed -
determined to succeed.

Maia is a virgin
waiting not to be,
seeking, reaching,
seducing Zeus,
producing her sly Hermes.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Vi

Today it is raining.
Not just drizzling,
but not a downpour,
dribbling steadily
on the concrete walk,
bouncing the leaves
of the redbud tree,
weighing down the roses,
soaking the wisteria
which stands an umbrella
over its patch of ground.

The day lilies are trying
to blossom for their one day.
The flowers just transplanted
are standing resolute,
showing their colors.

A gray day,
a gray day.

We need the sun,
the blooms and I,
as much or more
than we needed rain.

I need, I need
to be young again,
in sun or in rain.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Vii

The sunflowers,
uninvited,
grew tall,
rooftop tall,
crowned with blossoms
like the sun,

then they faded
drooped, grew limp,
and one by one,
fell into oblivion,
their spines broken,
cut off at the roots.

Sunflowers die;
the marigolds and zinnias
they, shaded, hang on,
the single cosmos
lays claim to its territory;
St. Joseph's Coat re-arises;

the giant hibiscus
defies Japanese beetles,
who have riddled its leaves,
and burst forth each day
with huge new blooms
of rich, royal crimson.

But it's the daisies
that carry the day,
the queen of wildflowers,
overtopping Queen Anne's Lace,
holding their white heads high,
reflecting the day's eye.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Viii

It's no longer there,
the redbud outside my window

its heart-shaped leaves,
its rapid growth
from a spindly sapling,
its color in the spring,
its dangling seeds,
its filling my sight
with lush green foliage,
obstructing my view
of the street,
the church in the distance.

It's no longer there,
uprooted by my own hand,
a hired hand,
clumsy, incompetent,
too damaged to be transplanted,
its roots torn,
trashed,
no more.

Once again
my view is unobstructed,
I see the sunflowers
and the goldfinch among them,
the little orange lilies
along our front ramp,
the flower bed around the stump
of the old black oak,
the young maple, seeking the sun,
our neighbor's hardy roses,
trees standing tall,
standing still,
filtering the blue sky.
I see them all.

But the redbud is no longer there

- and it was I
in my pride
in my folly
who let it be uprooted

and lost it
and am the poorer for it.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xi

It's lunchtime at the bird feeders.
Quite a crowd today.
The feeding spots are contested.
They'e having to learn to share.
The flock of sparrows, of course,
who make their resting place nearby
(sometimes their nesting place, too)
in the twirling vines of the wisteria
that are so dense you can't see through them
until - usually as a flock of four or five -
they flit and flitter away, soon to return.

But demanding his place
at the diner -
in fact, ruling the roost,
is my friend the goldfinch,
a dandy little cockerel,
perhaps now a proud papa,

and with him, today,
for the first time in a week or so,
his mate - with a difference.
She's positively glowing.
Her wings, usually dull and drab,
among the sparrows sparkle.
And her breast - it's golden,
almost as resplendent as
her 'peacock' of a consort.

Could there now be nestlings?
When they take flight,
as she does quickly
and he soon thereafter,
they head southward
several trees down the street
as they always do.

If only they could know
how much they are treasured,

if only they'd let us
help protect their young ones
from all the dangers
young ones face.

But that's not the way
goldfinch are made,
and dangers are inherent
in being such fragile birdlings,

as, in one way or another,
they are for all creatures.
So I shall sit in silence,
just grateful, in this moment,
for the blessing of their presence
and all the presents I've been given,
all the blessings.
Let it be. Let it be.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xii

Once again
I look upon
what's left
as summer moves along:

the grass is browning
from those dry, hot days
of late July,
some spots are bare

today is cloudy
but now in late August
little thundershowers
are not sufficient

to retrieve verdure
that flourished earlier
nor to engender
late summer splendor.

Impatiens are leggy,
cosmos going to seed
roses sullen
holding back their blooms

are letting them shatter
too soon, retaining
their shape and color
only a day or two,

bachelor's buttons
have a few blue blossoms
but mostly seed pods
on dusty brown stems,

the foliage
of the giant hibiscus
has been shredded
by Asian beetles -

that's about all,
though the hardy zinnias
and marigolds
are spreading wide

and wider,
their yellows, orange,
bronze, fuchsia, whites
and pinks assertive,

and from one to another
abuzz with life,
busy gathering nectar
flits one hummingbird.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xiii

Summer is a-flourishing
just as summer is a-finishing.

It's September outside
and chilly.

The goldfinch have departed,
the golden cosmos has bloomed itself out.

Still there's a rash of color
a-blowing in the wind:

zinnias, marigolds, impatiens,
one giant hibiscus, still insistent

the blue of asters reminiscent
of bachelor's buttons earlier

and green, green, green,
the wisteria tendrils a-stretching,

the black elephant's ear (really bronze)
leaning weightily toward the black petunias -

a-flourishing
a-finishing,

persistent
in its energy.

Just beyond the pane
reaching skyward

a branch of our climbing rose,
Joseph's Coat of Many Colors,

has shot out at its apex
twelve tiny buds,

at its finish, something summery
about to spring.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xiv

All is dark
except the lingering
of the automatic light
and the reflection in the window
of my computer screen:

all the greens
of limbs and leaves
and all the blossoms' colors
are merely silhouettes
in my line of vision.

It's what I do not see
that means so much to me,
what's flourished spring and summer,
will sustain me all through autumn,
and remain in my memory the long winter.

I can't begin to name them all
or enumerate the colors.
I simply represent them all
with ones I see now (the closest)
marigolds, Joseph's Coat, the cosmos

and the full moon
past its blood-red eclipse
shrouded by the clouds
white all the night
reigning over what's not seen.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xix

It's rainy.
It's Tyruesday.
And all I see

are bare trees
a gray sky
brown leaves
blown into heaps

one last rose
incongruous

and up close
at my back
the burning bush

and all I hear
is when it speaks

TO BE

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xv

I try not to look.
It's October,
talk of frost.
The sunshine is garish.
Instead, i stare
at the keyboard before me,
black plastic: a s d f j k l;

What's almost over
is no longer summer:
the only thing that goes on forever
is the end: always it's over.

What will come again
will never be the same,
already isn't. The tendrils
of Joseph's Coat are
unblooming; the giant hibiscus
has majestic foliage, but
not a single bud of crimson;
the zinnias have faded, their
stems and leaves powdered with
what must be fungus, or age,
faded, jaded, awaiting euthanasia;
mounds and mounds of marigolds
festooning the concrete ramp,
flaring, flamboyant orange over-
spreading inanimate grayness, with
late bloomers tall and rangy,
overtopping all the others,
attracting bumblebees and little
yellow butterflies flickering
among them. Shade from the neigh-
bor's oaks is shadows. What ages
well - well, nothing much.

Next spring some things will
spring forth again, but not
the same. Next summer someone -

I hope it will be me - will
put out other plants, here or
elsewhere. But for now -

well, I refuse to choose a word,
not farewell or adios or adieu,
nope, not seeya! The poetry of

these last (almost) warm days
has to reside only in their
names, the ones that insist on
surviving: cosmos, bachelor's
buttons, Mr. Lincoln, Mirandy,
mums (bronze & purple) , New Dawn.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xvi

Gray days

- as today is gray -

defy our eyes,
deny sight

insight / foresight / oversight:

at the edges of our consciousness,
fragile and frayed,
our sensitivities and sensibilities,

we have not the strength and energy we need
to avoid the plunge into the abyss

downward / backward / inward,

so we subsist: Gray.

Oh, but, no.
No.

The maple tree up the street
- its leaves that remain -
has turned a color I cannot name.
It's not pink, not orange, not yellow, not red;
its color is unnameable,
but it's the opposite of gray.

Look, look, look, it says. Look.
And suddenly I see.
And there is still the mass of yellow and orange
we call marigolds;
there are the pinks and scarlets and burgundies and yellows
we call chrysanthemums;
there are the huge, droopy leaves of bronze, nearly ebony,
we call elephant ears;
there is one crimson blossom

we call Mr. Lincoln
and one other nearby
we call a giant hibiscus;
there are here & there, up and down the street, outbursts of mauve
we call burning bushes;
there is white tinged with pink, springing up late, but persistent,
we call dahlias;
there is one single remnant of white and yellow
we call the Day's-Eye;
there is a climber near our window, the essence of color unnameable,
we call Joseph's Coat;
and there is the golden splendor on a few fragile stems
we call cosmos.

Look, the maple shouts
and for a few brief seconds
we see
rays of the setting sun
crowning the day,
banishing gray,
ushering us into the Presence
we once called Parousia
(some of us still do) ,

and our eyes rise

upward / outward / forward

beyond the browns
near the ground

beyond the gray
we've called today,

beyond what's still green
and what's everygreen,

beyond our sills,
beyond ourselves,

and we are uplifted
into Vision

immanent
transcendent

a present image
of Shekinah

- until it fade
from our sight

until it raise
us to its height.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xviii

And then there were only two
tiny rose buds

Joseph's Coat
of many colors:

there will not be
another

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xx

A few last leaves
rain-sprinkled
on the tulip tree

immersed in gray,

and I am reading Blake again,
his tribute to the Angel of Amerika,
her virgin prairies far distant
from the Prince of Albion,
the escape of the hairy Orc
from his chains of constraint,
his uprising against the ancient Urizen,
who is himself enchained by law and order,
the tyranny of arid rationalism,

and I am reading on this dark day
and remembering when I was Orc,
baking in the sun, nude to its rays,
trusting that Amerika would rise again,

and I am sitting here in these shadows
with the light of a pale lamp
over my right shoulder,
clicking on this keyboard,
my vision captured by those pale yellow leaves
the last on the tree
and the blackened foliage, wilted on the bare stems
of this past summer's giant hibiscus,

crimson but tentative,

and I am distressed
by last night's dreams
and today's news
and the vision of Amerika
rejecting refugees,
its oligarchs more despotic even
than that Prince of Albion,

and no Orc in sight

and autumn adumbrated

and where I sit they have
'shut the five gates
of their law-built heaven /
Filled with blasting fancies
and with mildews of despair /
With fierce disease and lust
unable to stem the fires of Orc'
in Beirut and Paris and Mali,
on Russian aircraft over Egypt,
suicide bombs strapped to their chests
in attics and seedy apartments and closets
springing forth naked and bearded
to fulfil the prophecies of ancient Amos
and Jeremiah and the Blake of Amerika.

and, as I sit here, darkness gathers
as night falls
in the middle of the afternoon,
and what was green and red blackens
and all I see in my window panes
are shadows of what lights shine within,
of my desk and chair and bedside
and the screen of this silent computer
and my copy of Blake's Poetry and Designs

and what I read

pale leaves -
the pages of
this tome

which once would have been
His scroll

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxi

December sunlight
is all I see,
and the residue of summer gone -

December sunlight
and the long shadows
aslant from the west.

And here I sit in splendor
inside my bay window,
warm and cozy,

words flourishing at my elbow
as if they were hardy cosmos
or roses climbing:

the poetry of John Keats,
Innocence and Experience,
religious poems of America,
The Tree of Life.

I hear singing;
with my eyes closed
I see them float by:

lumina gloria
exuding from god or goddess
for the moment, of this world,

nimbus
blown
by

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxii

What I see
outside my window
on this

the darkest night:
a Norway spruce
spangled with lights

reflected in the glass
windows and sheen
of an auto in the driveway

and overhead
in the darkest sky
a full moon,

for the winter solstice
has always required
festivity of light.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxiii

Only snow,
and ten below,
blossoms of snow
on the spruce
dark in the yard
standing in snow.

Indoor
on the twelfth night of Christmas
the Christmas cactus bloomed:
as red -
not as scarlet or magenta,
but somewhere thereabouts.

And what I read
by someone named Revell
was of the lovely Oothoon
and Henry David Thoreau
and phrases from Ashbery,
and in my mind
red melted

and the white uprose
as in the robes
of a heavenly choir
or the jewel
a Guarini might see
in a crystal of ice

Now it is night
time to draw the blind
a night without light
time to draw the blind

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxiv

I could not cope
with hopelessness.

The little maple,
scrawny and bare,
rooted in frozen soil
across our drive -

that slants too far
toward the east
making an angle
with the surface of the earth,
not an erect ninety degrees
but maybe seventy five

as if it were beseeching the sun
once again to warm
something at the core
of its torso,
or set the sap to flow

once more.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxv

One tuft of snow
one fragile patch
all that's left
of January's rout -

all that remains
outside my window,
while inside
I am engulfed with pain

impassive embankments of pain
that will not melt

tidal waves of pain
that will not ebb

cloud after rolling cloud
that can't be swept away,

Morpheus
thy name is all
I can say
all I pray

blanket me
with sleep
ethereal,
release

from January's pain
the bile and bane
the sharp crests
of icy embankments,

these storms of pain
that reign
o'er all my inscape,
hold me constrained

while outside
one tuft of snow
all that remains
 at last
of the blasts of January.

Frank Avon

Outside My Window Xxvi

Here at my feet
green tips
of this spring's jonquils

and across the way
at the edge of my vision
a row of crocus

white

Frank Avon

Outside My Window: An Apologia (Of Sorts)

They say -
or so I heard -
that Mary Oliver belongs to an
'I-looked-out-my-window-and-had-a-revelation'
School of Poetry.
Maybe.

Not me.
I belong to no School of Poetry,
not even a kindergarten,
certainly not an
'I-looked-out-my-window-and-had-a-revelation'
school (room) .

But what
I often do is
look outside my window when I first arise in the morning
and write what's there
for me.

I do,
and what I see when I look outside my window
speaks to my soul
for I do belong to a School you might call
'I-have-a-soul-and-it's-the-only-real-part-
of-me, '

which means
I swim upstream
in whatever creek I find myself, with all the other minnows,
refreshing myself as through a glass brightly,
gazing through the panes of my bay
window

and write
what I (I would have said envision,
except somebody might think I was classing myself
with William Blake who,
by the time he was four, was seeing angels outside his window)

see there.

Frank Avon

Passages

i

I shall not hold
what once was

yesterday
gold

a poem
doesn't grow

lovely as a tree
in Tennessee

ii

He ran away
before he was three

through underbrush and weeds
to Ebenezer

and kept on running
a way from Them

from convention
from submission

by indirection
(insurrection

only more subtle)
to find

direction out
and him Self.

iii

'Tis better
(mark my words)

when you are old and gray
you shall say

to have loved
mindlessly

and hopelessly
and lost

(despair)
then to wait

till at last
you should find

love that was
your first

iv

Under the spreading
(it was an oak really,

a shingle oak)
chestnut tree:

gone, now
gone
lichens and bolls
festered

its leaves fell
all year
detritus;

what is left

is the spreading sky
and claritatis

v

songs are words
only words

and the air
they're sung to

wind
that blows

unless
you can keep your head

and thread
your way past the pompous

and silver your senses
when all about you

and in your mind
are losing theirs

Frank Avon

Pausing - That Was All

'I could not stop for death.'
Striding, striding
where he strode,
undeterred by his grim robe
I have kept the higher road.

Higher, I might have thought,
bearing, I would have said,
a heavier load,
keeping on, going forth,
pausing - that was all.

And all was hardly enough.
'I will lift up mine eyes, '
I read - and again and again
those words I said,

'unto these hills.'
But hill and valley -
they all are one
the sky, the clouds, the moon, the sun,

they all are one
and then are gone,
all the same,
all work done.

I only paused,
and then kept on.
I spoke their names
always the same,

and there were names,
and there were names
more and more,
harder than the one before.

I only paused -
though now I halt

and raise their praise
to heaven's vault.

If they could hear
my whispering,
I'd say to them
one more thing.

'You should know,
you all should know,
you will live on
wherever I go,

for you made me
who I've become
who I shall be
till all we are one.'

Frank Avon

Peanut

'He's just a dog, '
I say to myself.
'That name! '
I say to myself,
the name he came with
when we adopted him;
'That wagging tail, '
I say to myself,
'he knows how
to get what he wants.'
'He's just a dog, '
I say to myself,
and he is.

Nevertheless,
I hold him in my arms
as if he were a child,
I clasp him to my chest,
I caress his rib cage,
scratch his tummy,
rub my fingers
behind his ears,
actually let him
lick my nose (? !) ,
press his cheeks
tight against mine.

When we walk,
he chooses the way we go,
but, patiently, his pace,
to mine he slows.

He's still our puppy,
yet he's seven years old,
middle-aged in dog years,
and I am seventy-seven,
well-advanced in mine,
already seven beyond
my allotted three-score-and-ten.

One of us
will survive the other:
that's just the way it is.
The one I grieve for now
is the one who will survive.

'He's just a dog, '
I say to myself,
and indeed he is,
just like the ones
who preceded him
in my lifetime:
Shoestring, Pfandy,
Tennessee, Buttons,
good ole Max,
our grand-dog,
company for our son
when he was alone.
All gone.

When I caress Peanut,
I'm caressing all of them.
'That's just the way it is.'

All of life, Somerset said,
is a Persian carpet:
'the weaver elaborated
his pattern...so
might a man live his life
...look at his life,
that it made a pattern.'

That one little straggle
of brown and black,
just so many short threads
in one large carpet,
among the thousands of carpets
woven and cherished,
woven and forgotten,
all of them together
just one infinitesimal

fragment - many but finite,
in the Finite Universe,
itself one straggle of thread
in the Eye of Infinity,

but that little straggle
is a part of the pattern,
that I might name Beauty,
that I might call Love.

Frank Avon

Picasso

Picasso knew war,
it's what he deplored,
its horror,
its complexities,
disruption,
fragmentation

Guernica

Picasso
knew simplicity,
a few lines of hope,
a few lines - and white,
just one spring of green,
what we pray for.

Shalom

Frank Avon

Picasso: Pentads

Good will among us,
very distant seems:
calm, tranquility,
impossible dreams

All I can pray for
this holy season
is simplicity,

just one sprig of green.

Frank Avon

Pleased

When they are introduced to a stranger,
only bozos say (the eastern author explains)
'I'm glad to meet you.'

I had to be eighty years old before I heard that,
by which time I'm proud to be a bozo, or hick
from Tennessee, who really says 'Pleasta meecha! '

But the difference is we don't say it
unless we mean it, so if I ever meet that eastern author
in person, I'll say politely, as she has made me aware I should,

'How do you do? '
And not care.

Frank Avon

Poetic Genius

And there he stood

words emerging
in Robert's old notebook,
its pages now reversed,
on a copper plate
in a journeyman's workshop,
the reverse of 'Ancient Order, '
out in Lambeth Marsh,
in the shadow of Boehme,
from myriad mindstreams,
in a world fearful
of another Bastille,
the flames of Revolution,
a darksome hymn for the Ages

his 'fearful symmetry'

Frank Avon

Poetry Is A Way Of Knowing

A poem
is a little paper boat
streaming and floating
on a gush of rainwater.

All it takes
to make the boat
is a piece of paper
(and maybe a pencil) ,

but it takes
a gush of rainwater
to keep the paper
afloat.

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Iv

Looking for Alaska
A Long Way Gone

Designated Daughters
Ready for Romance

Hyperbole and a Half
The Hypnotist's Love Story

Lena Finkel's Magic Barrel
Think Like a Freak

Even in Autumn
The Five Love Languages

Big Little Lies
The Liar's Wife

The Millionaire Master Plan
The Billionaire's Vinegar

The Seven Sins of Wall Street
Utopia or Bust

Before, During, After
In the Kingdom of Ice

Behind the Beautiful Forevers
Panic in a Suitcase

Brando's Smile
The Wayfaring Stranger

The Goldfinch
Fifty Shades of Gray

How I Tell Toledo from the Night Sky
Orange Is the New Black

Mr. Mercedes
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

The Glass Castle
Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

Grain Brain
Wheat Belly

The Paleo Kitchen
Season to Taste

The Mockingbird Next Door
I Am Malala

MaddAddam
The Maze Runner

The Life of the Automobile
All That Is Solid Melts into Air

A Spy Among Friends
The One and Only Ivan

Long Walk to Water
We Are Liars

Escape for Mr. Lemoncello's Library
Heaven Is for Real

Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site
Rosie Revere, the Engineer

The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion
Moon in a Dead Eye

A Dance with Dragons
What to Expect When You're Expecting

Everything I Never Told You
Act of War

When the Light Gets In
Bombshell

A Clash of Kings
A Storm of Swords

The Boys in the Boat
The Perfect Hope

Silkworm
Silver Star

The Book of Life
The Untethered Soul

We Are Water
The Ocean at the End of the Lane

One Nation
Invisible

The Perfect Life
Wild

The Gifts of Imperfection
Proof of Heaven

Wonder
Quiet

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It IX

Wendell Berry's publishers

North Point

North Point

North Point

Pantheon

Golgonooza

Larkspur

Island

Aperture

Sierra Club

Sand Dollar

Safe Harbor

Shoemaker & Hoard

Brazos

Braziller

Red Butte

Riverhead

Avon

Wind

Orion

Damiani

Gnomon

Counterpoint

Counterpoint

Counterpoint

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It X

forty books to read before you're forty

The Omnivore's Dilemma
Mastering the Art of French Cooking

Crazy Salad: Some Things About Women
Mom & Me & Mom
Bossypants
Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book
The Portrait of a Lady
The Feminine Mystique
Making Marriage Simple
Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead
The Complete Poems (Emily Dickinson)
The Complete Poems... (Elizabeth Bishop)

Just Kids
The Museum of Innocence
The Inheritance of Loss
Personal History
Lit
The Middlesteins

Say You're One of Them
Swimming Studies
Daring Greatly
Great Expectations

A New Earth
Bird by Bird by Bird
Oak: One Tree, Three Years...
Beautiful Ruins
Tiny Beautiful Things
NW
Blue Nights
The Fault in Our Stars

House of Mirth

Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety

Salvage the Bones

Saint Maybe

Song of Solomon

Dear Life

A Long Way Gone

State of Wonder

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter

Quiet: The Power of Introverts
in a World That Can't Stop Talking

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It I

in advertisements

Hard day Soft landing

Time for a joy ride

Driving the dirt roads of Montana

Driving diesel vs. driving Lexus

Focused on finding

something better

Learning something new

deserves all your attention

Ready for anything

Decisive battles

of world warfare

Dynamic discussion

on urgent energy

The city by the bay

a million miles away

White Cay

rock iguana

a group of sea turtles

called a bale

Take a smart step

Defy gravity

Tell time like a man

Tackle the biggest questions

Wild life

Keep it wild

Take the T-mobile
test drive

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It II

on the parking lot

Frontier
Eclipse
Expedition
Escape

Park Avenue
Highlander
Odyssey
Cruze

Dart
Stratus
Arcadia
Vue

Accent
Optima
DeVille
Rendezvous

Fiesta
Five Hundred
Sable
Soul

X Terra
Forte
Avenger
Rogue

Regal
Alero
Pacifica
Murano

Maxima
Charger

Cobalt
Durango

Tempo
Elantra
Dakota
Edge

Silhouette
Sonata
Prelude
Quest

Forester
Fusion
Camaro
Gran Prix

Terrain
Trailblazer
Tribute
Intrigue

Cavalier
Altima
Ranger
Grand Marquis

Yaris
Suburban
Pilot
Protege

Outlook
Yukon
Malibu
PT Sport

Sundance
Avalon
Pathfinder
Explorer

Oh yes, Scion
Saturn
Volvo
Sebring

VW
GMC
BMW
Infiniti

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Iii

billboard ABC's

Asia Breakfasts

Call Dr. Pepper

Emergency Future

Give Hollywood

Indoor Junior

Kohl's Lake

McDonald's Now

Open Pizza

Quality Ranch

Swiss Trailer

Unborn Visit

Winery eXit

Your plaZa

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It V

subdivision of a Southern city

Avalon
Sable Chase
Thousand Oaks
Sterling Place

Haile Plantation
Hibiscus Park
Magnolia Heights
Willow Creek

Sherwood Forest
Somerset
Shenandoah
Pepper Mill

Royal Gardens
Raintree
Cobblefield
Coventry

Boardwalk
Broadmoor
Benwood
Biltmore

Misty Hollow
Tanglewood
Blues Creek
Deer Run

Sunrise
Twin Pines
Tower Oaks
Hunters Glen

Westwood

Wyndwood
Millhopper Forest
Pebble Creek

Capri Cluster
Brywood
Loraine Court
Azalea Terrace

Strawberry Fields
Cherry Tree
Mile Run
Hidden Creek

Suburban Heights
Tennis Woods
Town of Tioga
South Pointe

Apache Creek
Apple Tree
Arrowhead
Turkey Creek

Greenbriar
Granada
Forest Lake
Eloise Gardens

Summit Oaks
Pelham Place
Granite Parke
Summer Creek

Buckingham Forest
Lenox Place
Sutters Landing
Lincoln Place

The Hammocks
The Quarries
Chantilly Acres

The Sanctuary

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Vii

in an art gallery

Spectrum
Mandala
Trojan Zebra

Sierra
Kalalau
Cascadia

Explosions
Pilgrim
We All Are Made of Flowers

Garfitti
Snarf
Fantastic Mr. Fox

Canto Terra
Crow Feet
Flicker

Technicolor Trail
Rainbow Road
Superstitious Snake

Oracle
Mercado
Adobe

Pandora
Medusa
Past Present Future

Night Symbols
Ocean Blast
Things That Dangle

Nantucket Sound
Peggy's Cove
Lotus Leaf & Damselfly

Watching Film Noir
Gazing at Ourselves
Adrift

Mercer Street
Balconies
Spiraling

Candyland
Assault
EEEEEE! ! ! ! !

Compost
Knobby Starfish
Honeycreepers

Polar Change
Goldenrod Soil
Asparagus Ridge

A Mildewed Past
Born in a Tin Can
Interference

Hidden Marbles
Blue Dance
Translucence

Cypresses
Pasturage
Zigzag

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Viii

#8 - verbs that end in -ate

germinate
generate
terminate

bifurcate
duplicate
replicate

resonate
enunciate
articulate

punctuate
hyphenate
communicate

conjugate
predicate
iterate

meditate
cogitate
contemplate

impersonate
emulate
venerate

fabricate
formulate
prevaricate

regulate
legislate
pontificate

complicate
exaggerate
investigate

mediate
moderate
modulate

participate
cooperate
collaborate

evaluate
speculate
appreciate

elucidate
illuminate
advocate

indicate
designate
stipulate

illustrate
decorate
lamine

aggravate
capitulate
negotiate

dedicate
commemorate
celebrate

scintillate
fascinate
captivate

marinate
titillate

salivate

(but we just ate)

asseverate

assimilate

coagulate

estimate

tabulate

calculate

situate

approximate

delineate

contaminate

commiserate

vaccinate

abbreviate

alleviate

eradicate

insinuate

implicate

incriminate

insulate

isolate

incarcerate

vindicate

exonerate

liberate

evaporate

dissipate

eliminate

vegetate

pollinate

propagate

regurgitate

urinate

defecate

copulate

populate

proliferate

inebriate

intoxicate

desolate

masturbate

fornicate

procreate

detonate

incinerate

decimate

devastate

obliterate

annihilate

subjugate

tolerate

elevate

hesitate

vacillate

abdicate

separate

segregate

congregate

agitate

agitate

agitate

demonstrate
(in the straits)
orate
radiate

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Vi

in a brochure a cure-all

Belly fat starts to melt away
almost by surprise.

Joints wracked with pain
are suddenly pain free.

Out-of-whack blood sugar
levels normalize.

Muscle aches vanish.
Digestive problems vanish.
Liver spots, wrinkles,
even gray hair.

Your mind becomes sharper.

Your memory bounces back -
you never forget your keys again.

Your skin is rejuvenated.

Your body is flooded
with healthy antioxidants.

Canes, walkers
and even wheelchairs
are dumped.

Cholesterol levels -
just where your doctor wants them.

Blood pressure healthy and low.

Your immune system springs back to life.

Your vision stays nice and sharp.

Complete relief from years of constipation.
Gas, bloating gone!

Turbocharge your energy!

Go to bed feeling old and tired,
wake up feeling like a teenager.

'I can garden all day
and dance all night! '

Nobel Prize winning research.

Zero risk,
it works for you or it's FREE.

[Wow! That's for me!]

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Xi

books stacked about and scattered around our room

[on the floor]

Thomas and Beulah

Byrne (by Anthony Burgess)

In the Company of Strangers

De Mayor Of Harlem

Belloq's Ophelia

A Chance Meeting

Young Romantics

The Classmates

Wait Till Next Year

Heroes of History

the five people you meet in heaven

But They'll Miss Us When We're Gone

Toponymity: An Atlas of Words

Traveling at Home

Walkin' the Dog

Detroit City Is the Place to Be

I Know Where I'm Going

Rand McNally Road Atlas

Bhagavad Gita: As It Is

The Romance of the Rose

Don Quixote

Boy, Dog, Snow

A Clown at Midnight

Is He Dead? A Comedy in Three Acts

A Year with Hafiz

A Year with C.S. Lewis

Through the Year with Jimmy Carter

Collected Poems of

- Hart Crane

- Wallace Stevens

- Lorine Niedecker

- Dorothy Parker

[listed in ascending order]

A New Literary History of America

From Puritanism to Postmodernism

The Anatomy of Influence

Park Songs

Story Hour

Transformations

Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Excavating Jesus

Rebirth of Wonder

Reviving the Ancient Faith

The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement

Toms River: A story of Science and Salvation

The Bully Pulpit

Team of Rivals

'To the Best of My Ability': The American Presidents

The Supreme Courtship

War in a Time of Peace

The Course of Irish History

[mysteries of Jo Nesbø]

The Bat Cockroaches The Redbreast

Nemesis The Devil's Star The Redeemer

The Snowman The Leopard Phantom Police

[within reach of my Laz-Y-Boy recliner]

my mother's Bible (KJV)
my Goodpasture Bible (ARV)
One-Year Bible (NIV) & (NRSV)
The World Book 2014
Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Tenth Edition)

[and in a niche above, hand-sized]

Daily Strength for Daily Needs [1892]
The Prince of the House of David [even older]
Roberts Rules of Order [1899]
Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice [1909]
My Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis [1954]

[special volumes between golden bookends]

The Poetical Works of John Keats [red-leather binding]
The Finer Tone
Selected Poems and Prose of William Blake
Songs of Innocence and Experience [boxed, w/ designs in color]

American Religious Poetry
Men Who Walked with God
The Tree of Life

[and]

an empty journal

Frank Avon

Poetry Is Where You Find It Xii

first lines in a collection by Garrett Hongo, 'The River of Heaven'

In California, north of the Golden Gate
clumps of spinach gritty with sand in the seaside lot
orders from uncles and telephones full of questions
I'm back near the plantation lands of cane and mule trails

Driving off the Kam Highway along the North Shore,
I must have always wanted to go it alone
We woke near midnight / flicking on the coat closet's bulb
from under the harpstring shade of tree ferns

... - a Thirties blue Fedora / slouching through thick China fog
There's a swale of new fieldgrass / rainsprung
At the No.1 Cafe, waiting for his lunch
Across the vacant lot and its small garden

When I lived in Seattle, I loved to watch / the Sonics
In high school I was in a special group
Sheathed in a lucent, sky-blue Spandex suit, she reclines
In a back alley, on the cracked pavement, with the strewn waste

I fling back the white-washed, garagelike door /
of the ghetto church
Under the cone of flurred light / blued with cigarette smoke
In Chicago, it is snowing softly....

There are things tonight I've never known
In winter, those first mornings after my father died
I have no memories or photograph of my father
He must have come wanting little, / except to belong to the land

Frank Avon

Pomegranate [dr2]

The apple Eve plucked
from the Forbidden Tree,

the seeds Persephone
sipped down in Hades,

a seasonal sacrifice
to Demeter and Dionysus,

blood of an Adonis,
salutiferous,

in Mary's garden,
flowered crimson,

fruit ripened
in its season;

in the hands
of the Infant

flesh hallowed,
seed redeemed,

paradise
restored.

Frank Avon

Pond In Winter

Trees are rooted firmly on its banks;
snow flakes drift softly into the water:

there has always been a pond
wherever we celebrated Christmas:

on Seven Springs Farm
when I was a child;
down the hill from 2000 N. Allen
when our children were children;
near Blues Creek,
when we were once again on our own;
and at Twin Lakes Park,
where, in retirement, we walk our dog.

Always a pond:

the water is still,
trees reflected on its surface,
snow flakes don't raise a ripple,
it's a pantomime of peace

a pond in winter

the reason
for the season

Frank Avon

Preamble: A Found Poem

The world of woods and water and fields -
and the sidewalks children use
to walk home from school -

are among our greatest teachers.

Perhaps it will not be my generation
that wrenches creation back from the brink;
perhaps it will be the next one.

But only if they know it,
love it,
were once loose and free
to wander in it.

Quoted, with slight adaptattions, from 'Preamble, ' by H. Emerson Blake, p1.
Orion magazine, May/June 2105.

Frank Avon

Prophecy

These are the works,
these are the words;
these, his designs,
these, his lines.
His, not thine.

1.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:
a miscellany
of poems and proverbs,
satires and diatribes,
the Bible in its infernal sense.

2.

The French Revolution,
epic,
a book, never a book,
doffing his bonnet rouge
at the end of a long, hot summer.

3.

London,
a Song of Experience,
wandering solitary
the dirty streets, the dirty Thames,
the soldier's tears, the harlot's cry.

4.

America,
a prophecy:
Orc, energy and rebellion,
Urizen, tyranny and the Law,
whence the myth arises.

Frank Avon

Raggle

What do you do with a raggle?

Do you wear it or wave it?
Trash it or save it?

Run it or close it?
Prune it or hose it?

Do you sing it or win it?
Sweep it or spin it?

Or none-of-the-above it?
Mainly you just love it!

Twice each day of the week,
you lead it on a leash.

For it's a crossbreed that's legal
between a rat terrier and a beagle.

It has a rat terrier's ears and nose
and the need to dig for moles;

it has a beagle's gentle habits,
and the need to chase after rabbits.

The main thing that's gotta be known tho:
you don't own him; he's gonna own you.

He sleeps in your bed at night,
and barks at even a slight

invasion of his space.
'UPS man, this is MY place.'

He jumps up in your face
and kisses you on your nose
time and time again.
Yep, he's one of those!

He's quiet watching a DVD till he
hears the doorbell ring,
then he takes a fling
at the door, even if it rang on tv.

What do you do with a raggie?
You watch his tail joyfully waggle,
you stand by while he chases a gaggle
of geese, and you refuse to haggle

when he insists
that your hamburger is his.
If you let him have his way
you're sure to regret the day.

When he's been digging in the mud,
he'll track in all this crud,
so you put him in the tub,
and give him a rub and a scrub.

He chooses a chair as his throne,
and goes there to gnaw on a bone;
if you protest, he'll go and hide it
and dare you to try and find it.

He's a blessing and you know it,
and he likes for you to show it:
rub his belly,
share your jelly.

If you leave him at a pound
he'll whimper without a sound.
You'll see it in his eyes
but when you return for him,
he'll react with a show of surprise,
for he knows you really yearn for him.

With a raggie, just what do you do?
Well, you love him and let him love you.

That's all.

Have a ball!
Or throw it down the hall,
and he'll chase it with his all,

his tail all a-waggle.
He never will straggle,
for he's just proud to be a raggle.

Frank Avon

Rah! Rrah! Siss-Boom-Bah!

WOW! I'm now a veteran poet,
and I didn't even know it!

Somebody had to tell me;
somebody had to yell at me.

Does that mean I can slide
on the high slide now?

Does that mean I can swing
on the high swing now?

Does that mean I can ride
the bumper car ride?

Does that mean I can sing, sing, sing,
until I hear bells ring, ring, ringing?

Can I wear a beret,
no matter what the other kids say?

If I like to read and write a bit,
do I no longer have to hide it?

After all I'm only seventy-seven
(plus a year or two) .
How d'ya like that sibilance?
I planned it just for you.

I don't talk about my adolescent acne.
I finally found it's jest too hackneyed?

I wrote my first poem in second grade.
This, I discovered, would not be my trade.

I did the assignment over three times,
which is quite a lot for just two lines.

Here's what I came up with -

as a seven-year-old wordsmith:

I HAD A VERY HARD TIME
TRYING TO MAKE THIS RHYME.

So, I'm a GATOR!
I'm a TIGER!

I'm a BULLDOG!
I'm a BISON!

I guess I'm better'n you know it,
for I'm a VETERAN POET.

(Yeah, I had a hard time
trying to make that rhyme.)

((My score is still sixty-one to fifty-one.
I guess I just ain't a nifty one.))

((((I guess that means I please the id'juts,
and aggravate the critics;

no, no, I mean I please the critics
and jeopardize the id'juts.)))

(((((If you've got this far, then while
you're reading, watch me smile.))))

:)

Frank Avon

Realms Of Gold

'... which bards
in fealty
to Apollo hold'

December
is the sunset
of the year,

a bit of golden
frippery
hung about its neck,

glittering
glistening
asparkle

in the dark
that seems to
get darker and darker

(Ukraine
Syria
Iraq
Israel)

'Peace on the earth'
is only an island
in the Sea of Time

an Eden
yet to be
restored,

in some cloudy future
a strand of clear air,
but for now

only a prayer.

Frank Avon

Recess

The playground was my prison.
I attempted to shelter myself at its edges.
If I could only make it through fifteen more minutes
without hearing once again
those voices

- shrill, mocking, jabbing, wily, taunting -

and those names

all those names

names, names, names.

Sonsabitches,
I should have yelled
back at them,
and shook my fist,
and kicked up dust,
and spit,
but I couldn't.

And if I could've -
well, I would have had to be a different person,
not myself,
and this playground not my prison.

Frank Avon

Regret I

Regret is the street I live on
(Parisians call it Rue) :

regret is the house I dwell in,
its floor, its walls, its roof;

regret is the robe I wear,
regret is my belt and boot;

regret is the bread I eat,
my meat and wine and fruit;

regret is the air I breathe,
all I dream and the work I do;

regret is the moon above me,
I am shadowed in its light;

regret is the soil at my feet,
its sturdiness I can't defy;

regret is the water I bathe in,
I sink beneath its tide;

regret is the fire that warms me,
its flames flash high and higher;

Regret is a goddess who knows me,
she emboldens me with her eyes.

I could not be myself without regret;
it won't abandon me even when I die.

Forgive my sins, I pray, and grieve;
I believe, I say, help my unbelief.

No, I shall not forget,
nor apologize as yet,
that I regret,

for all that I

regret.

Frank Avon

Regret II

I suppose we can't regret
what we haven't heard of yet;
yet everyday something new
enters my still provincial view,

and I'm sure there's so much more
that I would stand in awe before,
so I'm unable to forget
what's still unseen that I regret.

Frank Avon

Reincarnation

God has come down,
I believe,
more than once,

and more than once,
I believe,
has been lifted up.

The City of God,
I believe,
is paved with the gold

of the human torso,
I believe,
sculpted as a human scroll.

Frank Avon

Remarkable Photograph

The church on a rock
looks like
a lighthouse
an ark:

the setting sun
the starry sky
a pillar of cloud
stony ground like ocean waves.

One stands in awe.
One worships from afar.
What we see
is what we are.

Frank Avon

Right Now

Last night
I read a story
I drafted years ago.
I didn't know the author
and I didn't understand
what his story meant.

Last night
I read a poem
I drafted years ago.
I didn't know the poet
but I wished that I could write now
like him.

Frank Avon

Robert

He slept for three days
and three nights
after tending his brother
on his deathbed
for a fortnight,
then watching his spiritual body
rise through the ceiling,
joyfully clapping his hands.

Only a shopkeeper
behind his counter
on Poland St.
in the 1780's,
he became himself,
his own humanity
learned to adore.

The chapel
at Great East Cheap
he and Catherine attended,
Swedenborgian,
seeing eternity
in the sands of time.

Henry Fuseli,
given to him for a season,
Lavater
whose aphorisms
he annotated:
'all life is holy.'

The landscape of Tiriël,
his own lines
illustrated by his own hand.

Robert's notebook
he kept beside him

all of his life:
'With his spirit
I converse daily....
I hear his voice & even now
write from his Dictate.'

It was a vision of Robert
who revealed to him the secret of
'relief etching'
by which he achieved
his luminosity:
copper plates,
hammer and chisel,
white or red chalk,
a camel-hair brush,
saddle-oil and candle-grease,
the aqua fortis,
its 'biting in, '
then burnt walnut oil
or burnt linseed oil,
printed on Whatman paper,
awash with glue and water,
finally hand-colouring:

illuminated books.

All Religions Are One,
his 'original stereotype';
The Book of Thel,
Songs of Innocence:

'the Poetic Genius
is the true Man.'

Frank Avon

Rood

Let us now behold
what was once foretold:

to die for others
is to give them life
and in their lives
to find life eternal;

what is crucified
is spectrous Selfhood
and what arises
from the swaddling rood

is a Body Spiritual:
the body we let ourselves know
is the dimension of the soul
our senses codify,

but the Body of the Spirit
is what we envision
when we let ourselves sense
with vision Infinite.

As an acorn to the oak,
this body is to that.

Frank Avon

Royal Academy

It was not the Academy
that was his academy:
its spacious new building,
its Greek and Roman casts,
its live nude models,
the more sensuous medium of oil;
certainly not the ten-minute lectures
of Sir Joshua Reynolds, its president,
on 'general beauty'
and 'general truth'
(*'To Generalize is to be
an Idiot. To Particularize
is the Alone Distinction of Merit'*) :

not even the patient tutelage
of the ill-fated James Barry,
devoted to the arts
as historical and national,
who ultimately had to live
on bread and apples;

probably not even
riots in the streets
nor the burning of Newgate;
finally not any of these.

His academy
was his colleagues,
those sons of London
a little club of shared interests:
a love of the Gothick,
interest in Ossian & Chatterton,
an earnest spirituality and
sensitivity toward the sacred,
and a streak of political radicalism
(Stothard and Flaxman,
Cumberland and Sharp,
maybe Gillray or Rowlandson)

and his work -
his academy was his work
as engraver, journeyman,
with metal plates
and his 'iron pen, '
hatching and cross-hatching,
hard work,
dirty, demanding, ill-paid:
'I have taught pale artifice
to spread his nets upon the morning /
My heavens are brass
my earth is iron....'

His academy was his iron.

Frank Avon

Screensavers

Screensavers may save us

from irrelevance
from inattention
from reducibility
from abstraction
from distraction

Screensavers may save us,
or not.

I just exited the Internet
and there was one of my
screensavers. Where
it came from I don't know.
How it got on my computer,
I don't know that either.

But it blesses me
whenever I see it:

roses somewhere
climbing a wall,
bright, whitish red
against a wan green.

Forgive me, I want to say,
that I did not see you yesterday.
Hear me, I want to say,
and let me share some news with you.
Lead me, I want to say,
to the Eden that entralls you.
Remember me, I should not say,
though I shall remember you.
Believe me, I want to say,
for I love you,
and I have left so many things unsaid
with those who've loved me
that I can only hope

for a few moments
of eternal life
so that I will have the chance
to say, Forgive me

that I did not say this
yesterday.

Frank Avon

Sedition

It was a trivial incident:
it epitomized his alienation.

He collared a soldier
he thought was loitering
in his garden.

He was accused of
damning the king,
threatening his troops.

He was indicted
and stood trial,
never again to be unburdened.

Frank Avon

Selfie Expression

My prose
isn't elegant,
my poetry
not so fab,
my essays
unintelligent,
my speeches
rather drab.

My singing
is for the shower;
at protests
I am shy.
When I pun
people glower,
my jokes
usually go awry.

Nothing ever happens
when I shout SHAZAM!
To tell the truth
I often fib,
but whatever else
I am
you'll have to admit
I'm glib.

Frank Avon

Seven-Year Cicadas

Every seven years or so
they zoom in again;
they leave their hulls
scattered around,
like plastic confetti
littering the ground.
Most of us never know
when they'll soar again
or what form they'll take.
'These cyclical eruptions, '
one honest journalist said.
who's called a comedian
among a Blitzkrieg of talkers.
'Depressing in their similarity,
predictability and intractability.'

It's time for the cicadas again.
Once they were labeled a Tea Party,
dressed and painted as Mohawks,
not a lawless mob,
but Sons of Liberty,
a principled protest
against an unjust Law,
according to Samuel Adams,
hoodlums and thugs, rioting,
boarding ships of Big Business,
looting, sinking 342 chests of tea,
an uncivil act of disobedience,
that led before too long
to an armed Revolution.
Sons of Liberty
became the Minute Men,
aiming their firearms
(not just bricks, not just bottles)
at officers of the law,
clad in their officers' red uniforms,
lined up and on the march
to put down this sedition.
The seven-year cicadas

had to be obliterated.

Those Mohawks became
our first American Heroes,
those thugs and hooligans.

Oppression often goes by
the name of Law,
'taxation without representation';
the minute protesters
pick up a bottle or a brick,
they become thugs and hooligans.
Only when they win
an outright Revolution
and start a new Nation
do they earn respect
as the Minute Men.

News media and mayors
call her the Mother of the Year:
she slaps her teenager
and sends him home
from the scene of protests.
Because he's a thug? a hooligan?
Or because he might be
the next Freddie Gray,
his spinal cord severed,
no credible witnesses?
A question not to be asked
by the news Blitz-krieg.

Peaceful protests
don't get headlines:
that requires a fire.

Two questions reporters
almost never ask:

Why are the runners running?
Why are the gunners gunning?

Peaceful protesters

are always asked,
How can you condone
this violence,
these thugs and hooligans
(even when they don't) .
Heroic officers of the Law
(and there are many of them)
are very rarely asked,
How can you condone
this violence,
when the perpetrator
is 'one of their own.'
'These officers
could have done no wrong.'

Which 'threat of violence'
is most publicized?
The 'rough ride'
in a police van?
Or the stone thrown
through a window?
Which most likely
to be investigated?
Which dismissed
as a mere incident?

Armed forces of the Law
break spines;
most protestors today
break windows,
loot liquor stores.

Which one must fear most
the loss of life and limb?
the hooligans, or the officers?
Which one is more likely
to be arrested & prosecuted?
Which one is more likely
to be protected & excused?
Which one is more likely
to have an unpayable bail?
What's the official story

likely to be if
there's no bystander's video?
Well, of course, it's simple:
the hooligan's insane;
he killed himself, didn't he?

Guess what?
The Tea Party
has become a political party,
one that stands
for Law and Order,
these Sons of Liberty,
they claim,
are Sons of Licentious.
a Beer Party
with their own Sam Adams.

Every seven years or so
- these cicadas of violence -
they erupt again
and get headlines
and 24-hour coverage
and the media Blitz-krieg
breaking the curfew
(Freedom of the Press!) ,
themselves provoking riots,
whether consciously
or unconsciously,
showing thugs and hooligans
in action, in close-ups
(such trauma is drama) .

Let the cameras pan
all the streets of the city.
Hundreds, even thousands,
of armed officers in
riot helmets and shields,
warriors' armed vehicles
(no redcoats now,
not one lone Paul Revere):
hundreds and hundreds
of media with microphones,

armed with hand-held
cameras, where the fires
are blossoming
(the brighter the blossoms
the costlier the commercials) :
and dozens of protesters,
mostly women screaming,
a few teenagers
daredevils
strolling jauntily
in front of Officers of the Law
(but more important)
strolling jauntily
as teenagers do,
in front of the Blitz-kreig
of cameras.

Oh, yes, before too long
the cicadas will fly again
for a few days, weeks maybe,
then what will be left
will be their hulls,
tattered scattered shattered.

Then where are the Police Forces?
Strolling the peaceful streets
of working neighborhoods?
Asking 'How may we be of help? '
Where will the Blitz-kreig be?
Asking neighborhood leaders,
'What can we do? '
'Why do you think these things happen? '
'Who are the oppressed?
and who the Oppressor? '

Rest assured
(if impassivity can really be rest) :
sooner or later,
the cicadas will rise again.
Send in the armed vehicles.
Send in a blitz of cameras.
Blazes will blossom,

hulks will litter
the streets.
Windows will be broken.
Tea chests
hurled overboard.
Wait and see.

Hooligans or heroes?
Thugs or Sons of Liberty?
Who are the Minute Men
protesting injustice?
Who are the redcoats
upholding the Law?

Watch CNN.

Frank Avon

Shorty

Men have to be well under 5'8'
to be considered short.
I know. I'm 5'8' and I look down
on everyone else.

All the other men in my family
were tall, 6' or taller:
I grew up assuming that I
was just as tall as they were.

It worked. I've been tall
ever since. Some Hollywood stars,
an article proclaimed,
are shorter than you think.

Why, Tom Cruise and Sylvester Stallone
are only 5'7'. And Robert Downey, Jr.
only 5'9'. So? Who declared they're
short? Let him stand against them.

Tall is in you mind.
Ask any pygmy chief why.
Tall is what you are
when you hold your head up high.

Dark and handsome?
Maybe not. Doesn't matter.
But tall? Oh yeah,
on your own two feet, you're tall!

Frank Avon

Simple Sonnet

Every day
there comes a moment,

a sign

that still I live
and my life is blessed
as it has ever been:

today
a silver titmouse
found
our big red bird feeder

and on the hillside
naked ladies
spring tall and pink
arisen.

Frank Avon

Sing, Sing, Sing

I cannot keep from singing,
songs surge in my esophagus,
burst forth
like bananas of music,
cascades of verses:

Gonna lay down my burdens
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside,
gonna lay down my burdens
down by the riverside -
ain't gonna study war no more....

We can't know how roses resonate,
how lyrics and melodies are wedded,
what inspires the choir within us
(light within landfalls) ,
what elicits self-won symphonies.

We can't know
what's gonna flow
forth next,
what tunes, what texts,
will shine forth in solitude.

We could make believe
I love you,
make believe that you love me,
we could find peace of mind
in pretending.
Couldn't you? Couldn't I?
Couldn't we?

hymns, lullabies, anthems,
ballads, Beatles, show tunes,
Perry Como Bing Crosby
'The Tennessee Waltz'
ditties, arias, folk songs, love songs

Puff the magic dragon
lives by the sea
and frolics in the evening mist
in a land called Honah Lee

Watch out for the wagoneers,
volume is an escapade
singing in the shower
like a brand new RCA
(His Master's Voice)

How much is that doggy in the window,
the one with the waggledy tail?
How much is that doggy in the window?
I do hope that doggy's for sale.

Whatever there is down there
however it springs forth up here
its magical it's mystical it's musical
or not
but it's showers of serendipity

La donna è mobile
Qual piuma al vento,
Muta d'accento ? e di pensiero.
Sempre un amabile,
Leggiadro viso,
In pianto o in riso, ? è menzognero....

I am lifted up
I am reified
something inside me
tells me I'm deified
that I should be canonized.

I soar,
Je t'adore,
on the wing
to the ceiling

sing

sing
sing
sing

Frank Avon

So Careful Of The Type

A flock of sparrows
amid the sunflowers
next to the bird feeder;

so many faces to be seen
in the windows
of a yellow school bus.

Lilac blossoms in the spring,
holly berries at winter solstice.
If winter comes....

Frank Avon

So Much Depends Upon

A dipper of cold spring water
on a hot July day;
Queen of Hearts and Jack of Spades

Frank Avon

Solstice Past

I saw a robin
today, and one chickadee:
the rose stems still green.

Frank Avon

Song For Our Children

some fifty years ago, or so

Flip-flop was a poodle
A long, long time ago

Dancers whirled
in another world
A long, long time ago

Bonzo was a big, bad bear
who chased a girl with golden hair
and vanished into sky-blue air
A long, long time ago

Pandora's box
Aladdin's ring
of hearts the queen
of kings the king

once in fine rhetoric tones
we swapped for custom-made millstones

Frank Avon

Sounds From Way Down And A Single Rose

for the Postmoderns

Listen:

Gladly I glisten,
I'm greedy to whisper:

Some how Some where
there's another nest

as I hear woodpeckers
conjugate my eaves

Some how Some where
I hear the woodpeckers
Gladly conjugate

in another nest.
My eaves glisten,
I whisper ever so gladly.

At one age broken-hearted,
now I wager
it's where I started,

where, broken-hearted,
at my age now, I wager,
too unwieldly to conjugate.

My verb is thrust
your noun is tundra.
Everything else is floribunda.

Frank Avon

Still Life

It hung over our dining room table.
I wonder, does it hang there still?

A basket of fruit, as I remember,
appetizing no longer, moribund.

Still. Run your fingers over its
flatness, its texture glass.

Whose life? Living still? Edible?
Still living? Was once? Incredible.

Make the fruit feathers;
make the basket a bowl.

Leave off inquiry. Let it go.
Stave off iniquity. Always so.

Or a boa. Or a python. Its eyes.
Still. Alive. Its text-

ure: elegant, relevant, sibilant,
softly sinning among the cypresses,

shining, after all these years.
I wonder, does it swing there still?

'If you want great' sensibility, 'it's
hard work and a long walk' back there.

Frank Avon

Stories

The stories we read
in our English classes
are not the heart
of the story.

When stories are read
by thirty kids,
they rewrite the stories
in thirty ways;

and the stories they share,
like pebbles tossed in a lake,
combine and intersect
with stories they make

from what they've seen,
and what they've lived,
and what they've missed,
and what they've guessed.

The story they tell
will be their own story -
the one they live in -
the walls of their world.

The stories that grow
among the kids we teach -
these stories - they are
the heart of the story.

Frank Avon

Suburbia

Canopies are cleverer
than carpets,

daybreak, more open
than doors,

clouds are cozier
than cabins,

daisies daintier
than mowers.

The canopies
I walk beneath

that sunbeams
flicker through,

cloudbursts
shower me

daisies assure me
love is true.

So lie with me
upon the carpet,

leave ajar
the doors

let sun shine
in the cabin

and silence
those damned lawnmowers!

Frank Avon

Summer Gone

It's raining.
The day is gray.
Chilly.

Summer
is washing away
in channels of mud.

One daisy
is still waving
among wildflowers.

Asters
insist on
their purpleness.

Roses
persistent
cling to their petals.

Nevertheless,
never the less,
summer is gone.

Only its shadows
some green,
some still ablossom,

remain.
to be cherished,
to be held

inviolable
until all is lost,
until the chilling,

killing,

frost.

Frank Avon

Summer: A Dog's Eye View

The rabbit bolts from
under our deck;
squirrels up a tree.
Lizards simply sun themselves.
So will he.

Frank Avon

Summer's On

What one listens for
through the air swimming
with promise and prospects
is the twittering of birds,
mating, nesting, feeding
young beaks screeching
at the end of naked necks,
the buzzing of bees
in blossoms bursting
from cherry trees, redbuds,
honeysuckle vines, roses,
the laughter of children
in the neighborhood, yelling,
bouncing balls, riding bikes,
rolling hoops, wrestling
in the grass, maybe someone
whistling - even a song,
just the whisper of a breeze
leafing through new-green trees.

But, no,

summer's on:

what one hears is the drone

nextdoor, down the street,
a block or two away,
across the green ravine
all around, first here
then there, eventually everywhere

of someone mowing a lawn:

power mowers, power noise
drronnnnnning onnn and onnnnnn

it only stops
when it hits a rock
and then

onnnnnnnnn n onnnn n onnnnnn

summer's drone

on n on

Frank Avon

Sunset On Columbus Day

10.12.2014

Promenade of winesap apples
quilted with falling leaves

dawn of frost
sweatered after breakfast,
sweltering by high noon:

In fourteen-hundred-and-ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue
and never knew, never knew, never knew
where his ships were sailing to.

Forty groggy fourth graders chanted
in Miss Sybil's sluggish classroom
(she never left her desk, she always sat;
we each recited, all forty of us...
October's bright blue weather, etc.) ,

earmuffs and mittens lining the shelves
of the classroom's cloakroom,
prime punishment before a threatened paddling,
'Go, sit in the cloakroom; don't let me see you.'

We never knew, we never knew
just how many Arawaks they slew.

We grew, we grew, each year we grew
tracing the same pseudo-graph
of Pilgrims and Wampanoags
roasting turkeys and deer,
costumed in good cheer,
feasting the season.

Even Dvorák sounding empty,
cellos shallow, violins shrill,
colors too bright, too tempting;
it's too late anyway for an overture,

bullets have blasted, blood has spilled,
and all those Columbia's -
those townships and counties,
those rivers and lakes and hills -
have sprung up all over:

Mule Day in Tennessee
Avenue of the Columns in Missouri,
the People Tree in Maryland,
Wright's Ferry on the Susquehanna,
state capitol on the way to the Santee,
blueberries and cranberries in Maine,
last wooden jail on the Chattahoochee,
Strassenfest south of St. Louis,
shrine of St. Katharine Drexel in Virginia,
the gold rush in California,
hydroelectric dams in the Pacific Northwest,
and on and on and on.

Now it's 2: 21 in the afternoon:
strings swing into a Virginia reel
brasses crash a fanfare for the polka
the applefell overture.

Cristoforo
the great Columbo

before the Redskins
were as Amerri-kin
as God! , motherhood
and apple cobbler.

Italian-Americans arise, arise!
strike up the band with your Irish-American neighbors,
with Teutons, Slavs, and Scandinavians
(never mind, they were not the first ones, either) ,
with Africans, czarists, Bohemians,
Iroquois, Osage, Pawnee, Sioux.

Rise up, rise up, Lewis and Clark,
the sabbath we desecrate is the Old One,

the monument we dedicate is a nation anew,
the arches that bind us,
the superways we traverse,
space needles we reverse
the men on the mountain remind us,

(October's bright blue weather...)
(hardly a man is now alive
who remembers that famous day and
shot heard round the world...)

'twas nineteen-hundred-and-forty-five...
many of us are no longer alive -
Don and Nancy and Bobby and Julia and
Nelson and and so many others are gone -

and the frost on the pumpkin
and the fodder in the shock

dem old days
dem old ways
dem bums of Brooklyn
dem old folks at home:

sainthood survives
the saints' demise.

St. Christopher,
Cristoforo's forebear,
crossed the river
with the leaden child
on his strong shoulders,
and in his distress
shouldered us all
on the way to glory.

Rise, people, rise!
Declare this day
a holy day,
our new world
is old
and old worlds

are renewed...

The way is the way,

call it a high way

call it the Nina the Pinta the Santa Maria

call the bronze princess you find

(if you're to be satisfied with a name)

an indiana, if you will,

build her a shrine

in your heart and mind

feather her with gold

ennoble her with a tiara

love her and cherish her

sanctify your embrace

magnify her presence

call this a holy place

dignify her children

with all your blessings,

for their day

is their day,

and the only day that's left.

The sun is setting,

the sun is

yet

Frank Avon

Thank You For This Day

Wrap this day in silver,
tie a big red ribbon on it.

You can't give it away,
you can't keep it,

so do what your mamma taught you to:
write a note thanking the giver.

Be specific, Mamma said.
Tell Her what you liked about Her gift.

Not just one thing, Mamma said,
mention at least two or three.

Don't forget, Mamma said. Do it now.
You will never get this gift again.

Frank Avon

Thanksgiving: It's A Miracle

I know a miracle when I see it:
the tiny paws of our rat terrier,
the Golden Gate bridge,
the Adirondack mountains,
photographs by Ansel Adams,

a jigger of Jack Daniels,
daisies growing in a clump,
these keys with which I write,
Richland Creek at flood stage,
one-humped and two-humped camels,

sourdough bread,
Black Angus cattle,
postage stamps,
morning glories,
John Deere tractors,

the hand of man,
the hand of God,
everything handmade
or begotten
of the body.

I know miracles
when I see them,
here and there,
everywhere.
And I am thankful.

Frank Avon

That One Is Gone

There once was
a walker
a jogger
a runner -
that one is gone.

There once was
a singer,
a tenor,
in the choir or solo -
that one is gone.

There once was
a teacher,
with a trusted memory,
a knack with a class -
that one is gone.

There once was
a speaker,
not a fulsome orator,
but one who would be heard -
that one is gone.

There once was
a gardener
digging and delving,
planting and pruning -
that one is gone.

There once was
a lover
lusty and eager,
midnight or morning -
that one is also gone,
long gone.

There once was
a believer

sometimes a doubter
but one who prayed, 'Help mine unbelief.'
That one clings on.
Though all the rest are gone,
that one alone clings on.

Frank Avon

That's The Way It Is

Roses are red,
violets are blue,
dandelions are expecting,
that's the way it is with dandelions.

Frank Avon

The Beginning

He walked to Hampstead Heath
wearing his Broad Hat;
the Linnell children waited at the gate,
with them, he became a child again.

Months and months passed,
of ailments and debilitations.
He had to go by cabriolet.
Fuseli died,
Flaxman died
before him.
Death is
'but a removing
from one room to another.'

* * * * *

[I had to wait a while
before I could bring myself
to the reading of the last lines.]

* * * * *

He worked on:
Dante and the Bible,
'The Last Judgement, '
Jerusalem,
'the Ancient of Days, '
and, yes
(journeyman still) ,
a visiting card for George Cumberland.

In the ultimate hour,
he drew a portrait
of his Kate,
'you have ever been an angel to me, '
sang joyous songs,
'no - they are not mine, '
told her he would be with her always.

And so it was.
And ever shall be.

Frank Avon

'The Best American Poetry Of 2015'

In the first place, the title is not a title; it's an advertisement - false advertising, actually.

More accurately, it should be 'Some Modernist American Lines Selected by One Person Who Was Selected by One Person Who Does the Selecting of the Selector Every Year'

But that might be considered too long for a title, so it could also be called 'Some Modernist Lines Selected by Someone in America in 2015'

Or maybe 'Some Lines'

But Modernist is somewhat important. for the person selected to do the selecting must be a Modernist Poet or not be selected by the Modernist Poet who does the selecting. The Poet must be a Modernist or he couldn't be a Poet, not one of the 'Best, ' and the poetry he selects must be Modernist or it would be considered Poetry.

This year one of the 'Best' was rejected by forty-nine editors before it was published by the fiftieth, and the Selector agreed with the fiftieth, so that's one out of sixty-one, so that's clearly a consensus that it's one of the 'Best.'

Not a one of them makes sense, for if they made sense, they wouldn't be Modernist, and if they weren't Modernist they wouldn't be Poetry, and if they weren't Poetry, they couldn't be one of the 'Best.'

Sometimes the Notes tell you what the Poem means; otherwise, you wouldn't know what it means or whether it means anything at all. Sometimes the notes don't and you don't. It's a matter of faith.

The Modernist Poems are selected from Modernist Reviews which are edited by Modernist Poets who also serve as judges for Poetry Awards which go to Modernist Poets who will serve as judges for some such Award in the next year or so. So with the publications and the editorships and the Awards and the critical essays explaining what the meaningless Poems mean, the Modernist Poets get tenure and promotions and salary increments in colleges and universities, each of which must have a Writing Workshop (patterned after Iowa's) staffed by Modernist Poets who select as their junior colleagues the students of other Modernist Poets in other colleges and universities, all of whom

write external letters of reference for each other's Promotion & Tenure (P&T) Committees and referee submissions to the Reviews published by colleges and universities, each of which must have a Review.

It doesn't matter that Modernist Poems are meaningless, for their only readers are other Modernist Poets, who are also writing meaningless poems to submit to editors who are themselves Modernist Poets submitting poems to them. And the volumes they publish, every year or so, are edited by Modernist Poets and published by their presses and bought for the libraries of colleges and universities where all of them, having earned tenure and promotion, request that they be purchased.

So now you know how the 'Best' become the 'Best.'

That leaves the rest.

There are the rest of them (not the 'Best' of them) for the rest of us (not the Best of us) .

Maybe we should get together and publish a volume called 'Some of the Rest of the American Poems of 2015.'

Nah. Wouldn't sell. A title has to be an advertisement. 'The Best American Poetry of 2015.' Which will be bought for all the libraries of all the colleges and universities where all the 'Best Modernist American Poets' will request that they be purchased, hoping that next year one of their own 'Best Poems' will be selected by one Modernist Poet who selects them and who was selected by one Modernist Poet, whose forewords count as publications for the P&R committee who will recommend his continued tenure, promotion, and salary increments.

That's how the system works.

The Best and the rest.

May the rest R.I.P.

Frank Avon

The Book

For him, it was not the Law,
it was the Prophets:
the covering cherub and stones of fire,
the wolf and the lamb,
pestilence and famine,
the streets of Jerusalem,
'a little child shall lead them, '
'I am a child... I am a child.'

Frank Avon

The Forsytes - At A Glance

'The gloomy little study,
with windows of stained glass
to exclude the view,
was full of dark green velvet
and heavily carved mahogany -
a suite of which Old Jolyon
was wont to say: 'Shouldn't wonder
if it made a big price some day.'

Frank Avon

The Horned Lark

I saw him for only a moment,
dark against the beclouded sky.

It's larger than a sparrow,
but striped sorta like one,
with a blue crescent on its breast,

the only true lark
native to the New World.
It nests on the ground
as early as February.

It sways in flight,
a soft simple tingle.

Of course, he was a myth
or a miracle,

like those tongues of fire,
like those arrows of desire.

Watch out, watch out.
I'm at the very top of the ladder -
the very last rung.

No sinew, or adrenalin,
only air
is all there is

there.

Frank Avon

The House Of Experience

'there's a divinity
that shapes our ends
rough-hew them
how we will'
Shakespeare, Hamlet,

What we saw
let us know
it was beautiful.

What we didn't see
what we couldn't know:
it was rotting beneath.

We always need to see
what we don't see
what we can't know.

So we must know
that what we see
what we believe
may not be so.

It's humbling
but not humiliating;
it's disappointing
but not devastating.

To be humble,
but not sink too low;
to have high expectations,
but not be too sure

may be the key to maturity,
the way of Prudence,
may be a basis for security,
the hallowed ray of Providence.

Frank Avon

The Land

The land I sprang from
lies fallow now.

Rolling fields where once crops grew -
wheat, oats, and corn, rye and barley,
red clover, alfalfa, lespedeza -
now grow weeds taller than your head,
underbrush, young hackberries and hedgeapples.
Paths have eroded or been invaded by vines.
Fence rows and ditches are blanketed
with alien kudzu or Asian honeysuckle.

Roads that were once gravel
are paved now.
Where do they go?
To other paved roads.

Farmhouses are abandoned,
the doors open to strangers,
windows broken, steps dangerous,
walls and floors bare,
weathered, beginning to decay.

But the hills are still green and glossy,
the creeks clear and sparkling,
the pastures spread with wildflowers,
blackberry vines rampant,
shade trees here and there.

The wealthy hoard the land
as if it were mitred gold.
One farm I lived on and its neighbor,
where the Lyles lived
with their umpteen kids,
recently sold for a cool \$2 million.

On the winding road down the hill
to Shepherd's Branch,
now paved and scenic,

stand here and there
elegant, secluded vacation homes
for the affluent from distant cities,
overseen and tended by the offspring
of the illiterate backwoodsmen
who once lived there in penury.

Where country churches
and one-room schools once stood
rocky clearings have no signs
of their former edifices.
The country store is ramshackle,
a heap of rusty iron and rotting wood.
The mill across the road,
where our wheat and corn
were ground into flour and meal,
is there no more.

And the land -
the land all around,
the land I sprang from -
desecrated, not hallowed,
lies fallow now.

Frank Avon

The Last Of Last Year

December isn't
the end of the year;
we only pretend it is
because it's dark outside,
and we need to see the light.

December isn't
the end of the year;
that's March 25,
Lady Day.

For then the sun
has outrun itself
and shines
its exultation:

Feast of Annunciation,
and the crocus
blooms
even in the snow.

New Year's Day
is sometime in April -
we never know
exactly when

until it's past
and then, we know
it's another year
again: Resurrection!
And, at last, we see the light.

Frank Avon

The Last Word: An Odd Ode To The Id (Est)

Forgive me:

It's been a month

of suffering,
and suddenly words flow

and flood,
jettison,

won't stop
with the clock

can't be controlled
can't be bruited

or muted
or mooted.

In line
after line

by accident
by design

it ain't poetry
and it ain't prose

it's gibberish,
of fish

a pretty kettle
(cf. Keats)

stop it
stop it

cap it
top it

this pome
of foam

suds
duds

PS:
SOS

ceaSe
deSiSt

ssssssss

sssss

sss

s- - -
QUIT

QT

U I (me)

Q

T -

hee

Frank Avon

The Mailbox At The End Of The Lane

for Shoestring (ca.1949-1964)

The red flag
on the mailbox
- ours had faded
in sun and rain
summers and winters -
always seemed
to grow brighter
each December

in the season of
woolen sweaters
braided holly
shiny red ribbons
packages and
envelopes.

Every morning
at about eleven,
Mr. Warner blew his horn
going around every curve
up Gnat Grove Hill,

and, no matter the weather,
Shoestring at my heels
(if you did not keep her tied,
this little rat terrier
was always under your feet)
I raced down the lane
faster than wheels.

Old Santa Claus
had retreated years ago
(become another myth) .
I filled my own stocking,
trimmed our tree
with icicles and tinsel,
put a wreath on the door

and Mamma's candlesticks
on the mantelpiece,
amid fresh magnolia leaves,
 green and shiny,
 sometimes silvered,
and loops of red rope.

And Shoestring and I
 it was,
who brought back
 packages
 and envelopes
from the mailbox
at the end of the lane,
to the long front porch,
through the front door
into our big front room
heated by its Warm Morning heater,

from Ruth in Ft. Worth,
from Merle at Roberson Fork,
Sarah Margaret in town,

from MaMa Clift
 Aunt Vivian
 Uncle Horace's eight
 Cousin Brownie
 an uncle in Nashville
 an uncle in Akron
maybe from
 someone
 unexpected.

What Shoestring and I brought
in those packages
and envelopes:
 what was sealed inside
 and beribboned, was

 Joy and Love,
 Peace and Hope,

gifts that never break
or fade
gifts of Providence
gifts of Grace.

Frank Avon

The March: November 1864 - April 1865

Sherman's March to the Sea
is no longer just a phrase.

It's a multitude
of faces and names,
faults and aims,
pine trees and pontoons,
surgeries and psyches and sex;
it's suffering
on all fronts,
mud and blood and mules,
sensitive hands
and stogies and brandy;
mansions and courthouses
and barns and pup tents;
it's a bayonet in the belly
and bullets and vomit.

It's not David and Bathsheba,
nor Lancelot and Guinevere
nor Romeo and Juliet,
but it could be, it could have been.

Its daylight and darkness,
moonlight and deep shade,
skirmishes and battles
and sieges and numbers
and numbers and numbers.

It's family and phrasing
and foraging and the tromp-tromp-tromp
of a century being born.

Sherman's march to the sea
will never be the same
and never was.
It's 'the devastating manufacture
of the bones of our sons,
a war after a war,

a war before a war.'

Be aware:

what was once just a phrase

said with a sneer

has emerged

as the swath of a year.

Frank Avon

The Path: A Photograph

Along the path
of a ten-day pilgrimage,
the way is strewn
with sunken stones;

on either side
the fences are
twisted, crumbling,
overgrown with sedge;

overhead
straggly trees
form a canopy,
intermittently;

far ahead
and all around
into the distance,
mists beckon.

* * * * *

And I am transported,
I'm ten again,
walking the ridge
to the west of our farm,

on an abandoned road,
untraveled
for years and years,
but still there.

I imagine myself
ageless in the mist,
and once again,
in this mist,
I am ageless still.

The Redbud, The Rosebud, The Pumpkin Seed

The redbud, the rosebud, the pumpkin seed -
the year rushes by with consequential speed,
but if I sit and sulk at what has come and gone,
I may discover
I can never
tell the wildflower from the weed.

Frank Avon

The Rest

It's Saturday once again, almost midnight,
another sabbatical come and gone:
another week of no achievements,
a week of fever, weakness, fatigue.

so much undone, so much I'd like to do,
all these poems to share, I'd like to teach,
all I'd grasp that's well beyond my reach,
what I can no longer fix my inner eye upon,

and in the folds of the rose I'll never grow,
among the petals that have shattered now,
what I sought, what I seek that's scattered,
an unfocused mind cannot find, can never know.

Frank Avon

The Rest Of The Story

In those days
there were the Lewisburg Tribune
and the Marshall County Gazette,
rivals I suppose, though they
carried the same obituaries,

the same election results,
the same community news -
Catalpa, Delina, Ostella,
Verona, Grab All, Gnat Grove -
the same ads for auctions,

the same weddings (when and where,
what the bride wore, who the brides-
maids were, the groomsmen and ushers,
the reception and wedding cake,
where they honeymooned, and where

they'd live when they returned)
and brief announcements of those
who ran away to Rome, Georgia,
one weekend, and the birth announcement
seven or eight months later.

The news in the Gazette and Tribune
had to be read between the lines,
or heard repeated at the Courthouse Square,
or around the cast iron heater at the back
of one of the country stores that dotted

the landscape. Or whispered at a meeting
of the Home Demonstration Club, or confided
on the party line, with Miss SaraBelle listening
in at the switchboard, and immediately telling
several of her friends. Which her son Neilson

would tell us at school on Monday, and we
would spread from the front seat to the back
of the big yellow school bus, as we passed

Cherry Corner and the New Hope Cemetery,
or turned right on the Delina Road.

What was printed in the Tribune and the Gazette
was what was meant for history (what was fit
for history) . You had to be there to hear
(and it was important for everyone to hear,
but not for History) the rest of the story.

Frank Avon

The Same, Always And Never

Some things are always the same
and never the same twice.

Take National Geographic.

In its bright yellow cloak
for years and years
since I was a kid
stuck in study hall,
restless and limited,
it has bade me escape
the here and now,
the this and me,
and explore what
otherwise
I can never have explored.

Now it's May 2015,
and at age seventy-seven,
once again
I am that wide-eyed teen
I was once before:

breaking the communication barrier
between dolphins and humans,
seeing with sound,
an alien intelligence sharing our planet;

taking back Detroit,
with the nation's largest urban bankruptcy
in the rear view mirror,
with plenty of empty space to fuel the imagination;

on a quest for a superbee,
saving the world's most important pollinators,
bumbling and buzzing with these industrious insects,
searching flowers for tiny drops of nectar;

harnessing the Mekong,

from China through Laos, Myanmar, Thailand,
Cambodia, and Vietnam to the South China Sea,
its dams devastating;

walking the way,
more than a thousand miles on the Camino de Santiago,
a centuries-old Christian pilgrimage,
to the cathedral where are enshrined the remains of St. James;

until the very last page,
on July 8, 1927, in Vulcan, Alberta,
watching a tornado
from an open auto in the loupe.

Ah, yes,
always the same
and never the same twice,
always dangerous, in the safety of its pages.

Frank Avon

The Season Of His Birth

has been a season of grief.

Always, it is so,
I suppose.

Death takes no holidays,
does not fold his broad wings
nor spare
what they enclose.

Death could not stop for these
Twelve Days,
for still he must make his call
on those we know.

And so
(though we believe) ,
in this His Season
still we grieve.

Frank Avon

The Simple And Elegant Way To Eat Spaghetti And Meat Sauce

At the dinner table tonight
we were speaking of simplicity and elegance
(we adults) ,

of an antiquated hotel
recently restored;

so Joshua, age 8, and Jackson, just 11,
slurped their spaghetti and meat sauce

simply and
elegantly.

Spaghetti and meat sauce
are better if you slurp them.

Merci, Josh and Jack!
Delicious isn't silent.

Frank Avon

The Sixteenth Day Of Christmas, & Picasso

Piled up randomly on a round tea table
with coasters, 2015 magazines, remotes,
candy tins are the Christmas ornaments
of fifty-two years, sparkles of color,
textures of cloth, wood, paper, glass,
so fragile - if the ceiling fan were to fall,
or a single stone come crashing through
the window, or one blast of wintry storm....

The tree is down, gone, not only bare,
but no longer there - wrought iron, not fir
this year. We'll package these in tissue,
in plastic bubbles, store them away for still
another day. Tonight's DVD was Simon Schama
on the Power of Art: the passion of Guernica.

Frank Avon

The Solstice Is A-Comin'

What I want to tell you,
what I want to shout out loud
(will you hear me? will you listen?)

is

the days are gettin' shorter,
they always do, don't they?

Nobody really celebrates the solstice;
what we celebrate is

the day and the way we met
the rock of Gibraltar
what we remember about Ebenezer
(well, what I remember about Ebenezer,
where I lived until I was five)
blue jeans and bed rest
spring's first crocus
the last butterfly
cracks in the sidewalk
with grass growing in them
and a little maple tree trying
sidewalks with no cracks at all
Barbados in the morning
drinking another Mountain Dew
an ice cold Mountain Dew
singing a capella
dancing on the roof
dancing in the cellar
dancing in the dark
dancing every Sunday
dancing with no shoes on
dancing with no clothes on
dancing in the stark
dancing without stripping
dancing without stooping
dancing without stopping
dancing with your Poppa

dancing like Baryshnikov
dancing like Gene Kelly
dancing on the walls
dancing in the hall
dancing in the rain
dancing at your prom
no matter where you're from
dancing every day
dancing every way
dancing every May
dancing in the hay
dancing yesterday
dancing on the go
dancing in the snow
dancing in the velvet
dancing in the moss
dancing in the warmth
of last midsummer's eve
dancing in involvement
dancing with each thrust
dancing in the softness
of the petal of the rose
dancing to the heights
dancing till there's Henry
waiting in the wings
waiting till he crests
dancing all the night
dancing till you swoon
in the widening moon
dancing on a spree
dancing till the two are one
dancing till it's three
dancing in frivolity
dancing in the forbidden tree
dancing till you're free, free, free
dancing, dancing, dancing

dancing....

Forget the winter solstice:
respect the mistletoe.
'Christmas in a-comin' /

the goose is gettin' fat...'

Just remember that,
just remember that.

Frank Avon

The Sparrow And The Clay

What I want to write about today
is not that strong heart that's outdoing itself
leaving me breathless -
not all those tests,
that stress,
not that.

What I want to write about today
is not the cloudy day
- this cloudy April day -
with its brisk cool breeze.

The little sparrow on a limb
of the redbud outside my window,
the jonquils still abloom,
a new burgundy tulip,
the wisteria suddenly greening all over,
clumps of violets here and there,
grass unmown,
something pink I can't name -

all these
call me.

Once I would have....

But what I want to write about today
is tomorrow -
the sunflowers I will plant
and the red poppies,
the gladioli bulbs,
coleus and impatiens
around the roots of the trees,
and a mound of wildflowers,
the fescue with which I will resod the lawn,
the flagstones
with which I'll pave
the path around the house,
along the patio.

No, what I want to write about today
is not tomorrow
but

forever,

'forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
forever panting, and forever young'

The best is yet to be,
some poet said,
and said and said.
The rest I can't recall.
The best is not the all.

The Potter and his clay
must wait another day;
the potter's wheel's areel,
and still the potter's feel

of a clump, a bump,
to be reshaped,
remade,
still unmolded this clay,

not yet an urn,
net yet a bowl,
not yet a vase.

Today,
the sparrow:
that's what I want to write about today,
the sparrow and the clay.

It's dusky now -
twilight.
The sparrow's back
cleaning his beak
on a limb of the redbud
outside my window,
flipping to the top of the wisteria,

the very tip-top,
swaying,
then away,
away.

That's all I need
to write about today.

Frank Avon

The Square

Saturday was the Square.
That's the way it always was.
The Square was the center
of the County Seat.
In the middle, of course,
was the county courthouse,
with its manicured lawn,
checker players under the trees,
and at the busiest corner,
the statue of the Veteran,
representing all the wars.
At the top of the four-story,
stone structure was the clock,
a face on each of the four sides,
tolling the hour like a sentinel.

Streets on all four sides
were lined with parking spaces,
wide, welcoming sidewalks,
awnings projecting from
the fronts of businesses,
the heart of the little city,
its shopping district, but
also a favorite site for visiting.
Two banks, two pharmacies,
department stores, jewelers,
furniture galleries, ten-cent
stores, dry goods, hardware,
and a Western Auto Parts.
Dominating the northwest corner
were the First Methodist Church
and the Minnich Hotel;
at the northeast, the county jail
and (yes) the Women's Rest Room,
a parlor-like sitting room, where
ladies, weary from shopping,
could sit and rest and visit.
In the middle of the northside,
for all us children stood

the Saturday mecca,
the Dixie Theater.

For, yes, Saturday was matinee day
(a double feature: a western -
Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers,
the Lone Ranger, Tom Mix, Cisco Kid,
Gene Autrey, the Durango Kid:
and a farce, maybe the Marx Bros.
or Abbott and Costello, or
The Bowery Boys w/ Leo Gorcey
and Huntz Hall, occasionally
Jimmy Durante, or sometimes
a mystery or melodrama of some sort) :
a newsreel; a serial - Superman
or Flash Gordon, if we were lucky;
and always those previews, scenes
from the ADULT movies that would be
shown weeknights next week.

Next door to the theater sat
the Dixie Barbershop, where Mr. Jones
cut my hair - after I had watched him
shave and shear one or two businessmen.
All us boys got scissored the same way
(no crew cuts or flattops or duck tails
for Mr. Jones's country boys)
and shellacked with Wildroot Creme Oil,
or Vitalis or Brylcreme or Lucky Tiger,
which sent us on our way, smelling
like coconut or exotica of the jungle.
His shop also housed public showers
(I never knew who had to come to town
to take a bath) and a watch repair shop.

Then there was a late lunch
(Saturday was hamburgers and milk shakes)
at the Blue Bird Cafe or a soda fountain
in one of the drugstores nearby.
There I also bought a Captain Marvel
comic book, and browsed through
all the others - and adult magazines,

much more innocent than than Playboy,
but not to a prepubescent imagination.

Just a few steps off the Square
on the southeast corner stood
Moss & Barham, men's clothing,
where once a year I was fitted
for a Sunday suit - and necktie!
(Sundays were suits and neckties,
and the Golden rule in Sunday school.)

Next was the office of the Tribune
and upstairs over it, all the way
to the back, up some rickety stairs,
in a corner room, bigger than an office,
but small for a library, with
shelves all the way to the ceiling.
I could check out two books for two weeks.
Mrs. Katharine B. Cox knew I liked history,
so she always had a couple waiting
for me (usually Alfred Leland Crabb) ,
but she always let me read the shelves
and choose for myself. She didn't
even arch her brows when I began
to seek out Erle Stanley Gardner
or Ellery Queen, even an occasional
Mickey Spillane. Somehow I doubt
Mrs. Cox had read the latter herself or
she would probably have called in
my father. She never would know:
he read those, too. Never commented.

The rest of Saturday afternoon
was spent walking around the Square,
looking in show windows, staring
at women shoppers - and their daughters,
wondering if the Dixie Theater cashier
had sex with the usher (they sat together
in the grass at the Methodist Church,
even holding hands: turns out they
were married, but I didn't know that!):
wishing for a bike at Western Auto,

browsing in the ten-cent store; listening
to politicians harangue the crowds,
or street preachers, handing out tracts,
while they ranted about the Judgment Day.
(They knew the thoughts I'd been having
- I just knew they did - and were
threatening me with the fires of Hell) .

Or maybe I just sat in our car
to read my new Captain Marvel
or one of the library books -
they never lasted the two full weeks.

At the end of the day, Daddy sent me
- always me, not himself - to fetch
Mamma from the Women's Rest Room.
Man! was that ever embarrassing!
All those ladies chattering away.

On our way out of town, a block from
the Square, we stopped for a minute
at the feed and seed store
to replenish our supply, for
our pigs and cows and calves
and Daddy's fox hounds, then
on the outskirts of town,
we'd pull our truck or Model A
into the Gulf Service Station
for \$3 worth of gas.

Saturday was the Square.

Alternative Saturdays
were college football
and Texaco Opera Theater
- first one, then the other -
on the radio, and sometimes
Archie Andrews or little
Thom McAnn or the Quiz Kids.
Opera stories were the best;
I always tried to get
the synopses and miss the arias.

Rigoletto gonna kill the Duke,
Valkyries flying through the air,
Carmen leading all those men on,
Roberto & Mimi and them Bohemians!

But radio was just radio;
you could take it or leave it
and walk out in the woods a while,

for Saturday was the Square,
and afterwards the Grand Ole Opry.

But mainly it was the Square.
Y'know, you just had to be there.

Frank Avon

The Third Day, And Beyond

Do I expect
resurrection?
Good question.

As palpably
as St. Paul?
Probably not.

Merely metaphorical?
Well, yes,
but not merely.

And not oblivion
either, nor
one Last Judgment.

Do I expect
resurrection?
I cannot imagine -

can't manage
the details,
all the ifs and ands -

it's unimaginable.
After all,
that's the point,

isn't it? The miracle
lies beyond
the finite mind,

beyond the here
and now,
beyond examination.

Do I expect
the Unexpected?
Oh, yes.

Can I imagine
the unimaginable.
Well, no.

Can I believe
the unbelievable?
I cannot but.

He arose,
He arose,
hallelujah,
Christ arose.

Frank Avon

The Walrus Said

The time has come,
the Walrus said,
except this time I'm
the walrus.

So it's time I head-
ed on:

on to Xanadu
where Kubla Khan
did not get
his river dammed,

on to Utopia,
which is NO Place
you'd ever
get scammed,

to the Elysian fields
where a dragon's tooth
a fighting, dying
warrior yields,

to the Garden of Eden,
where Adam and Eve
shoulda been weedin',
instead of eatin',

to Kalamazoo and Timbucktu,
whose rhythmic names
refer not to reindeer games
but to a place that's home
to Jim Buck Kazoo,

to old Tibet
where even yet
they venerate
the Lama,
not the llama, mind you,

but the Great Lama,

to Beulah Land
where I'll take my stand
but nowhere near
Alabama,

to the Land o' Goshen
where milk and honey flow
and, otherwise, there's
not much drama,
nor much commotion,

to Ararat,
where Noah set
his old ark down and
set free all them insects,

to Mt. Olympus
where gods and goddesses
went to relax
after all that sex
with merely mortal humans,

to Atlantis,
now submerged
for harboring
the praying mantis,
who killed her mate,
after she persuaded
him to impregnate her,

to Norse Asgard,
where Valkyries
fly their heroes
to the grand Valhalla,
where they reign
with great king Odin,
aka Woden, the old one,
to whom each week, they say,
we dedicate W(od) ensday,

to Shangri-La
where peaches grow
row on row
and the dynasty of Han
came to know
their farther reaches,

to El Dorado,
the land of gold,
where adventurers pause
and Ancients go,

to Wonderland
where Alice ran
after the rabbit,
and the Cheshire cat
can smile and grin,
till it becomes a habit,

ah, yes, to the Land of Oz
which never was
and evermore will be
home of the knave
and land where we flee.

The time has come,
the Walrus said,
so I'll head home
to one of these,
or Tennessee,
which always will be
home to me.

Frank Avon

There Was A Time

There was a time -
but that was times and time ago
times and time ago...

there was a time
when poetry lived on my lips
and in my pen
and then

there was a time
when life sprang from my loins
and lived on
and then

there was a time
when children played about my feet
and in my yard
and in the woods
down the hill to the pond
and then

there was a time when
words came smoothly
and laughter readily
and tears rarely
and timelessness often
and then -

but that was times ago
time and times ago.

Frank Avon

These Days

Days, these days,
are all the same,
like fish swimming
in a goldfish bowl,
no one in the lead,
no one tagging along.

Monday was once
a fresh new start
of a week ahead,
a day-long dawn.

Tuesday wasn't
just any day, it was
a day of promise
already being fulfilled.

Wednesday was a peak
at the crest of the week,
choir practice
and prayer meeting.

Thursday let you
look ahead to what
the weekend would bring
and back at what's been done.

Friday (T G I F)
was one long coffee break,
then a long lunch,
and a looonng afternoon.

SaturDDay was freedom,
on the golf course
or mowing the lawn
or a stop by the hardware store
to shop for tools needed
or just hoped for
and seeds and fertilizer,

mulch and topsoil
and cow manure,

and then
a night on the town
that was still SaturDDay
until midnight, or maybe
an hour of so beyond,
and a designated driver
to see everyone home.

Sunday, a Day of Rest,
shop-lifted from
the Hebrew Sabbath.

And there were seasonal
days of days:
for the Queen of May,
for Mothers and Fathers,
for Memorials and
the American Flag,
firecrackers on
the Fourth of July,
a laborless day
to honor Labor,
and the anniversary
of weddings and births,
a candle for each year,
with cookies and punch
or hot dogs and beer,
the unhallowed eve
of All Hallows Day,
a Day of Thanks
for mythical pilgrims
and their dishonored hosts,
and blessing the turkey,
a Day of Gifts
of Santa's toys
and the Father's son,
Immanuel,
a Day of Light
at the depth of dark, then

a day of roses and chocolates
and Bee My Valentine,
Fat Tuesday and Ash Wednesday
and Holy Thursday,
and at last
'He arose, He arose,
with a mighty triumph
o'er his foes,
He arose a victor
from the dark domain
and He lives forever....'

That was a Day of Days.
But every day
was a day among all days,
with its own new dawn,
its own domain,

until our week
was warped,
our days fading
into one another,

until, all the same.
they swim around
their goldfish bowl
no one the first,
not one will last,

they come, they go
comme çï, comme çã

each day of days,
so near, so far....

Frank Avon

These Days...

sleeping eating keep-
in up with my medicines:
then it's dark again

Frank Avon

These Hands

I spread my two hands;
I press my two forefingers
and my two thumbs together,
making a heart between them,
as it should be.

Why in the mythology
of our physiques
is the plateau of our feelings
identified with that dumb pump
in our torso, and not,

as might be more apt
metaphorically, and more
visibly persuasive
and more clearly sensitive,
in our hands?

* * * * *

There they are:
now they are gnarled.
What I see so spread apart
are mostly veins and wrinkles
and swollen, knobby knuckles.

There is that ring finger:
the tip is missing, has been
since my pony bit it off
before I was three,
and gave me my first notoriety.

An old story for old hands.
I turn them over, pressing
only the little fingers together.
The heart has become a tent
or a temple, just as it should.

There are those palms.

pinkish and just a bit puffy,
with life lines angular and
horizontal, only one in each palm,
carved deep and long.

These hands, once strong
and pliable, have always been
smaller than I would have
preferred, not as square
and manly as my father's

or those chosen by photographers
as works of art and emblems
of the sensitive brute (Man) .
but neither long fingers for the piano
nor tough, wily ones to grasp cash.

* * * * *

Even so, these are the hands
that have held hers
for all these years
and touched the softness
of her soft skin, her

luxurious curves.
These are the fingers
her babies have held
or pointed toward
like Michelangelo's Adam.

And that plain gold band
at the base of that finger
is never removed, is a second
skin, as the press of her flesh
against mine has always been.

* * * * *

These hands have dug in the soil,
planting bulbs of tulips and
elephant ears, have pruned limbs

from Japanese maples and her wisteria,
have clipped roses for her vases.

These hands have slid over keyboards,
have steered automobiles, have
pulled little red wagons and
pushed wheelbarrows, and thrown
stones to ripple the waters.

These hands that hammered and sawed
have washed and rinsed dishes,
have dug post holes and strung
fences, have raked autumn leaves,
have soaped my sweaty body.

As clumsy as I may be, as awkward
and uncoordinated, these hands -
these unimpressive hands - have been
even themselves capable of agility,
the epitome of versatility.

* * * * *

So I spread these hands wide again,
making the heart between them,
and remind myself (as if I could forget)
that these hands, these very hands
give and receive Love and the Lovely.

These hands raised are my body's peaks,
they should be seen as the seat
of the shire that is myself,
they are the plateau of my feelings,
the arch way through which pass

all the roads our souls has traveled,
all the knolls we have caressed,
all the borders we have trespassed,
all the depths we have descended,
all the heights we have transcended.

These hands, these two hands....

Frank Avon

These Two

The giant hibiscus,
its two blossoms
crimson and dramatic,
is hidden somewhere
behind the burgeoning wisteria.

The tiny white blooms
on the clematis
climbing our patio wall
- there must be thousands -
whisper in the breezes.

Two among many -
this is their week,
this is their season
They clarify
one's vision.

Listen, listen!

Frank Avon

They Made Me Who I Am: J.M.M., C.L.T., D.W.C.

I have lost them all,
they live only beyond me:
amaryllis red

Frank Avon

This Body

gets to play
its part
a major supporting role

Adam's clay
beast of burden
a china bowl
erotic zone
work of art
philosopher's stone

then folds in
upon itself
rebels
gradually recedes
depletes
just wears out
no more

and then, no,
there's no encore
not one last bow

KAPOW!

Frank Avon

This Day

There they are again,
at the top of the sunflower,
feeding on its seed,
above their drab sparrow cousins,
and the bumblebees,

a pair of goldfinch,
small, flickering,
a dash of color,
she tawny but tinged with gold,
he a flash of light.

Eternal life
is simply flitting
day by day
from one blossom to another
catching glimpses of color.

Frank Avon

This Day, This Age

Beyond a certain age
one lives each day -

a tiny goldfinch
is one's Gabriel,
a climbing rose,
Joseph's Coat -

and in one's winter
the beauty of all this,
all that's been,
a past that never existed.

To write up one's memories
is to believe
in the unbelievable,
what never was but is,

as children
Father Christmas
his crimson sleigh
a darksome forest

as elders
Xanadu. Jerusalem,
shadowlands, all Prelude,
'silent upon a peak in Darien, '
sunny domes, caves of ice,

Paradise.

Frank Avon

This Jesus

Whoever Jesus was,
whoever He is to me

(and these two
are necessarily divergent)

- whether of virgin birth,
whether physically resurrected,
whether a miracle worker
a magnetic leader of his cult,
whether an illiterate peasant
or a nerdy adolescent
arguing points of Law
with his elders in the Temple,
whether married to the Magdalene,
or celibate among all those women,
whether a political Zealot
on a companion of tax collectors,
sometimes a defender of whores,
apologetic to the Syro-Phoenician woman,
elevating a Samaritan,
celebrating a prodigal,
hungry on the Sabbath,
so reaping despite the Law,
folk hero in the streets,
cleanser of the temple,
nay-sayer to the irascible Peter,
threat to the Establishment,
alike to a corrupt priesthood,
and arrogant invaders,
the Elite of his day -

whoever Jesus was,
whoever He is to me,

just a lowly laborer,
a handyman, a tekton,
a teacher,
respected Rabboni.

In his era, and ours,
(academicians affirm)
thrive many messiahs,
many baptisms,
many miracle workers,
many magnetic leaders,
many zealous radicals
promising a new life,
proclaiming a New Kingdom,
and he a person of the street,
a wanderer on the hillside,
a mere tekton,
from a town forgotten,
called the Nazarean.

How can they explain
(these haughty academicians)
that he became the One
to remake his world,
to remake our world
some twenty centuries later
the Son of Man
the Son of God
one with the Spirit,
the Holy One?

Simplicity itself:
'The time is fulfilled.
The Kingdom of God is near.
Repent and believe
in the good news.'

This Jesus of Galilee,
the lowest of the working class,
had gone to the wilderness
(according to the academicians
in their arrogant interpretations)
not to be tempted by Satan
but to learn from the Baptist,
that son of the priestly class,
recognized by the infallible Josephus

as fearsome to the current Herod -
he went merely to become
one of his ragged followers.
John's baptism, Josephus says,
was not for remission of sins,
but for purification of the body,
for initiation into his sect,
water the cleansing agent.

Like other gospel stories,
the academicians assert,
John's lineage and miraculous birth,
was 'a fantastical account' that
'most scholars dismiss out of hand.'

They have no faith,
these sons of the Academy,
but depend upon historicity,
though like all positivists,
they too are people of faith.
What they believe in
is the power of their own minds,
to ascertain facts through
their own sensory experience,
to interpret factual information
with logic or human reason;
hence, certitude (or Truth)
is their derived knowledge.

Whoever Jesus was,
whoever He is to me,
through Him Spirit speaks
to scribes and Saducees:
John baptized with water,
Jesus with the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit and Fire.

Of God and Man,
the Son of sons.

Who Jesus was,
who Jesus is to me.

So I believe,
help thou mine unbelief.

Frank Avon

This Morning: A Haiku

A bird feeder that's empty,
a wee chickadee,
amid morning glory vines

Frank Avon

This Prayer I Pray

When in the everlasting
I dwell

may it be upon these hills
I've walked among

among these trees
I've ambled under

beneath the stars
that guide my nights

within the grace
wherein I've lived

in a time of peace
since infinite

beside the one
I've lain beside

all my life
that has been my life

those pages nearby
we've read or would

some hot baked bread
and blackberry jam

and Earl Grey tea
and pepper jack cheese

a garden to hoe
and roses to grow

laughter of children
and then their children

psalms of David
and the Voice of his Child.

Wait. Stop me now.
How childish am I

my sight so dim
so selfish my hymn

that I should expect
to live the life

I've already lived,
am living now.

O Holy Essence
of wisdom and insight

Who will read aright
these visions I raise -

not as petitions
but as thanks and praise.

Frank Avon

Three Score And Ten

That's life span.
At least, that's what I learned
years ago,
on Sunday mornings
at Castella Country church

I gazed out the window
at the grazing cattle
while dear Brother Hoffman
read his text
and delivered his sermon.

He waved his Testament
over the pulpit
to make a point,
quietly eloquent,
an elderly man of God,

I thought.
Probably in his fifties.
Five days a week
he taught school
in a county nearby.

I wanted to be
like Brother Hoffman,
quietly eloquent.
It wasn't to be.
I wasn't.

I have lived
my three score and ten,
(and seven more -
and more) .
I have been blessed.

The warm breezes
across the pasture,
some clucking hens,

a quiet pastor,
the Ancient of Days.

Amen. Amen.

Frank Avon

Three Words More

The moles in my yard
didn't come back this year;
neither did the deer.

Tho my roses were less hardy,
a redbud invaded Joseph's Coat,
applause for only the marigolds.

I'm getting old -
weak, weary, dizzy.
I walk with a crook

So sing me one more song,
read me one more psalm.

I'm sleeping in the sun,
I'm reading in the shade:

Derelict
Everyone
Escapade

I'm breathing in the sky,
I'm swimming in the breeze.

I raise up my arms,
I kneel on my knees.

With wary eyes I see

the willow tree
Virginia creeper
Joe Pye weed

the glade
the crick
the sun

Escapade

Derelict
Everywhere

One

Frank Avon

Thursday

Nothing to say
today -
not one single word.

Silence is
unutterable -
what lasts is unheard.

Frank Avon

To Celebrate

A spray
of bright red berries
on your mantel
or wound
into a wreath
or gathered in a vase:
that's all it takes

to celebrate

Frank Avon

To Eat, Or Not To Eat

They called it yogurt-go;
they said it was strawberry,
but it was just a whiff.

They called it lemonade;
they said it was amazing,
but it was just a sip.

Next time I'll buy an apple,
and crunch it to the core,
and punch the seeds into the soil,
for that's what an apple's for.

Frank Avon

To Joan Kane: Nee Naviyuk

I hear you
loud and clear;
it's just that I don't know what you're saying.

I see your
images, bright and striking,
a collage, a montage, specimens of reality amid lines and colors:

'an irridescent green beetle, '
'trail paved... with coins, '
'three skulls... in a box of Olympia beer, '
'pale grass: vitiligo, '
'a sforzando of light';
it's just that I don't know what I'm seeing.

So I must go
to the notes -
like old arithmetic books
with answers in the back.

Eskimaux, I suppose:
Inupiaq:
'stories about Nome, '
'dating from Nome's gold rush, '
'hauntings and layers of history, '
'images and stories of disturbance, '
'husband and children [asleep].'

I want to hear what you're saying;
I want to see what you've seen.
I don't:
'along with you'
I 'fever through'
poetry.

Whatever that may mean.

Frank Avon

Tonight

Let me warm myself
with your warmth tonight;
cover me with your quilt,

for your quilt is hand-sewn
(it's called the Wedding Ring) ,
and your body is like silk.

Frank Avon

Topic? Topic? Topic?

You ask me for the TOPIC, me the poet.
The problem is I often do not know it.

I have to guess
and guess
and guess again:

rue
regret regrets
despondency
melancholy
pessimism
solitude
sadness

none of them will do

I finally make something up
(nature, I think I said) ,
splash water in your cup
so you will let me be
and then I punch the key

SUBMIT

What topic did you choose for me?
I can not find the answer.
It's out there in the ether;
it must have fallen loose somewhere.
Let me take a breather.
Maybe I should be a dancer,
rather than a poet without a topic.

The topic of the poem - if you really need it,
then why don't you take a minute, call it up,

and READ it!

Treasure Island: Overall Statistics

The scores are evening up:
I'm now behind
57 to 49
not a bad alignment
for a lowly freshman.

I stand by my convictions;
I still don't like 'Invictus, '
at least every day
somebody reads what I say,
tho I'm a lowly freshman.

I still don't understand
how I accrued eighteen
unsuitable messages. I mean
I'm not that underhanded.
I'm just a lowly freshman.

You see
that's
what stats
say to me;
you're just a lowly freshman.

Frank Avon

Twelve Birds Of Christmas

Robins
bring spring.

Bluebirds
have red breasts too.

Cardinals
reign supreme.

House wrens
nest within if they can.

Goldfinch
feed on sunflower seed.

Titmice
flit silver.

Chickadees
in twos or threes.

Nuthatch
mix and match.

Chimney sweeps
keep house.

Meadowlarks
reap fields.

Pilated woodpeckers
knock on wood.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds
zip and zummmmmmm.

About the manger
this time of year

birds of a feather
all flock together

and, like the angels,
gleefully sing:

'Peace on earth,
joy on the wing.'

Frank Avon

Twice Blessed

Every once in a while
a gentle rain
falls for a few minutes
from the gray, gray skies,

and I feel blessed.

The the skies clear
and the sun bursts through
the cover of clouds
just for a few minutes,

and I feel blessed.

Frank Avon

Twice In My Life...

I'll have to admit,
I was told,
I wasn't in it.

Once, I was young,
Just commencing,
As we said back then.

All of them said,
And, of course, I knew
I had to be true.

I ran away,
Into the deep dark woods.
Nobody had to know

if I wept.

Older now,
In my eighties,

I've been denied
My own country.
I don't fit.

Sixty million
Silent voices
Scream at me:

'You're out of it.'
'Stop your whining.'
'You're the misfit.'

They've slapped away
The only where
I've wanted to be.

I'm in mourning
For all we've lost.

I cannot breathe.

There's no deep woods

I can run to now

where I can weep.

Frank Avon

Two Green Points: Art Print By Wassily Kandinsky (A Found Poem)

High-quality printing
gives this fine art print
its vivid and sharp appearance
... coated with a silken finish
that protects the inks
and creates an elegant look

* * * * *

Wassily Kandinsky (1886 - 1944) ,
the originator of abstract art,
believed that art could visually
express musical compositions.
An accomplished musician, he saw
color when he heard music,
and associated a color's tone
with musical timbre, hue with pitch,
and saturation with the volume
of sound. Kandinsky named his works
after musical terms. Originally
a lawyer in his native Russia,
he was inspired to study art...,
after seeing Monet's 'Haystacks.'
Kandinsky was gripped by a compulsion
to relentlessly create, and believed
that if this drive were pure,
it would evoke a powerful response
in viewers of his work.

* * * * *

... strikes a balance
between quality and affordability.

PRICE
\$32.99

Frank Avon

Two Haikus

dwindling moon tonight
shrouded in mist; maple sprigs
alive and alight

each eternal life
we live: damselflies in flight,
water streaming still

Frank Avon

Unanswerable 2

The grass that has been trampled
will grow green once more.

The shrubs we've had to cut back
will put forth new branches
and grow round again.

The things I've forgotten,
the dear ones I've lost,
will another springtime come
when they will live again?

The evidence of what I hope for,
the substance of what I can't see -
where, where, where are they
if only in me?

Frank Avon

Unanswerable 3

I am sterile,
I cannot conceive;

how can I imagine
what I only believe?

Frank Avon

Unanswerable 1

What do I love
more than life itself?

I cannot answer,
for she
is my life.

What do I love
more than all the world?

I cannot answer,
for they
are all the world to me?

What do I love
more than love itself?

I cannot answer,
for only He
is love.

Frank Avon

Unbelievers

in this Era of Unbelief,
especially academics

(our current scribes & phraisees)
with their degrees in theology

no longer supported by belief, but
in line for tenure and promotions

must explain...
er, 'devise an explanation for'

a humble Jewish tekton
who would become

in one generation
the Holy Son of God,

of a virgin born,
from his tomb arisen.

Rumors, they say,
'fabulous concoctions, '

hallucinations
'of the evangelists' own devising.

Josephus, you must believe:
all his facts are real,

not mere truths,
mere tales of gods and heroes,

except the passage
where he speaks of Jesus,

'appears to repeat
the entire gospel formula, '

but, of course,
academics must argue

this is not really Josephus,
their gospel truth,

but 'corrupted, '
'later interpolation, '

'its authenticity dubious, '
'futile attempts'

to cull 'some sliver of historicity, '
still it's significant

for it happens to mention
Jesus' crucifixion.

So unbelievers believe
what's 'true' is not 'real'

nor the 'real, ' really 'true, '
unless they declare it's

- oh, yes -
believable.

Frank Avon

Untitled (For Obvious Reasons)

Words

that have been one's intimates
have cohabited for years
retreat
retire
or (to mix metaphors and senses)
simply disappear.

You need one,
you call it up.
It's gone - AWOL.

You've known it for a long time,
well, since your youth,
back when mild, shy Uncle Ed
in his hospital bed,
dying,
went wild, threshing, ranting,
swearing, yelling obscenities
you're sure he never knew.

Now what's the word for that?
It's hidden. It resists,
refuses to reenlist.
Not Alzheimer's, no, not that,
nor senility -
more vigorous, more rigorous,
I want to say delirium tremens
but, no, no, off altogether,
no, not amnesia either,
but more muscular
than mere forgetfulness,
more crepuscular,
or do I mean corpuscular. Hmm,
I'm not sure. Scratch that.

The word's dug itself in
a ditch, a delve, a crater,
and won't come out.

I thresh and turn about,
duh and uh and er,
taste it in my mouth,
but, no,
it just isn't there,

Leave it blank, they tell you.
It'll come to you later.

That was yesterday,
how long must I wait?

to tell you about the early stages
(when words you need are in absentia) ,
the first phases

of _____.

Frank Avon

Urizen

Why
would he have returned
again and again,
even at the end,
to this figure,
who stood for
what he most abhorred?

abstract rationalism,
moral legalism,
tyranny,
power and domination,
the System?
God, Priest & King?
Why?

this Ancient of Days,
heroic, fallen,
wielding his compass?
Why, why?

Could it -
could it have been
an inner self who shadowed
his Poetic Genius?

Could it have been
his own pride & ambition,
the vainglory & the fear,
his selfishness & irritability,
his resentment of his friends,
his rage,
his need to be admired,
his calculated schemes,
his need to systematize,
to create his own world?

In the new Jerusalem
'on England's mountains green'

could even he be redeemed?
shaking off his 'aged mantles, '
rising once again
'in naked majesty /
In radiant Youth, '

a Glad New Day?

Frank Avon

Variations On A Dream: After Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams fail
life is a beached ship
that cannot sail.

Hold fast to dreams
for if dreams fly
life is a wisp of cloud
drifting against the sky.

Frank Avon

Vitamins

Two a day
is what I try for:
Vitamin B12
and poems I draft
or scan the sky for.

Frank Avon

Vocabulary

When I taught eighth graders,
I used newspapers to locate
words for vocabulary lessons:
local papers, the New York Times:
front-page news, editorials, OpEd,
including Letters to the Editor,

whatever else caught our attention.

Would the same be possible today,
I wondered. Here is what I found:

Ebola! Ebola! Ebola!

'US revises ebola rules:
monitoring not enough, States say'

'Ebola fight meets Reality'

'Nurse released from Quarantine returns to Maine'

'With ebola, Mayor stands tall
as two governors stumble'

'Virus is fought with scrub brushes and cleanser'

Editorial:

'The Dangers of Quarantine'

Letters to the Editor:

'Are ebola quarantines necessary? '

What else? Not that much.

'Audit of Postal surveillance raises concerns'

'... New York City bilks Medicaid'

'Picasso returns to Paris pedestal'

'GOP senate hopeful outsources jobs'

'Cash pours into climate fight'

'Israel expedites Jerusalem housing plan'

What else commands one's attention?

An elegant ad (on Page One!) :
HARRY WINSTON: rare jewels

Turn to Page Two:

CHANEL
Zeitmeister
Cartier
VERDURA
Rosa Lladró
Tiffany & Co.
Dior
CALVIN KLEIN underwear

One more page - a full-page ad in full color:

Charles SCHWAB
Own your own tomorrow

'Are you asking enough questions
about the way your wealth is managed? '

To read newspapers these days,
you need the vocabulary of the affluent:

NOT Walmart, Target, Home Depot,
'planning portfolio management /
income strategies / banking

And of high technology:

What the world needs now is

SIMPLE

'... a different kind of solution,
built on the idea that
sophisticated technology
doesn't have to be
complicated technology.'

'In a world besieged by complexity,
'Simple' wins. It brings
clarity instead of confusion,
action over paralysis... allows
companies to redefine the way they run
by cutting across silos and
fragmented, outdated processes -
... to open up innovation...
so they can keep pace with
the massive amounts of data
being generated today
and deliver insights in real time,
helping them invent what's next
without disrupting what's now.'

Vocabulary Quiz:

1. surveillance
2. portfolio
3. outsources
4. silos
5. innovation
6. data
7. generated
8. disrupting
9. sophisticated
icated

What we need is SIMPLE

SAP

NEW! NEXT! NOW!

Frank Avon

W W

Wonder and wisdom

Wisdom and wonder

The shadow of opacity

The promise of perspicacity

Frank Avon

W=o=r=d=s

There is,
I hear myself saying,
and this is enough.

I wonder,
I hear myself asking,
whether or which.

Words insist,
I hear myself saying,
wisdom that isn't.

Listen, listen,
I hear myself whisper,
sufficiency is....

and pull another weed
from the marigold bed.

Frank Avon

Walking Is A Way Of Life

From childhood on
I walked the woods
and hills of Tennessee:

just a-thinkin' -
daydreaming
my parents complained.

I wrote plays,
and won national elections
and fell in love several times.

I've always walked
and thought
and composed myself.

I've also composed
lectures, essays, letters,
editorials, poems, orations,

and kept them in mind,
word for word, until
I could find a pen and paper.

I never thought of it
as exercise; I never realized
how important it was for mental health.

I was simply walking,
and talking to myself,
losing myself, finding myself,

on streets around my college,
around Sherwood Forest,
to a park near my apartment,

on an abandoned golf course
pulling my boys in a wagon,
along the route the bus took,

down a steep hill and up again,
way out on a country road,
all around our neighborhood,

through a protected forest,
under some power lines,
on a trail that used to be a railroad,

on and on and on,
in all kinds of weather,
in every stage of my life

until

no more the exercise
no more the composure
no more mental health

instead

heart disease and breathlessness,
bad knees and unsuccessful surgery,
weakness and fatigue and dizziness,

still

I walk a block or two
up to the neighborhood church
and back home again

or to the end of our cul-de-sac
and very slowly back
with our dog on his leash.

It's time enough for a poem
(well, a haiku, at least)
or a letter to the editor,

and time enough
for memories
of the way it used to be,

and time enough
to wish
for more time.

I walked the woods,
I've always walked,
I was simply walking,

Walking is who I am.

Frank Avon

Walking The Dog

When I go walking, I daydream.
I talk to myself.
I never thought walking was for exercise.
Not till my cardiologist said so.
For me, it was a simple pleasure.
A way to relax.
Necessary for mental health.

I walk to compose myself
(quite literally) -

and speeches and lectures,
articles for publication,
editorials for my professional journal,
letters to the editor,
letters to the ones I love
(which I never get around to mailing) ,
letters to the History Book Club
refusing to pay a bill for books I never ordered,
essays,
book reviews,
sermons for a little country church at Chestnut Ridge,
sermons I no longer deliver,
committee reports for the Faculty Senate,
eulogies,
another set of memoirs,
all sorts of lists

- and poems like this.

But when I walk my dog
(which he insists I do every afternoon)
he doesn't do any of this:
he just enjoys himself
sniffing and pissing

and jerking his leash to chase a rabbit
or squirrel
or the neighbors' cats,

or at night
under each street light
a July fly,
or cricket,
or a toad.

Walking is his business,
and if you interrupt him,
he just lifts his nose in the air,
swishes his tail,
and prances down the street
(yes, he really prances)
as if to say,
'Get a move on, Bud!
What I do
is none of your business.'

Frank Avon

Wassily Kandinsky, Color Study Of Squares

The circles
are blobs
of color
in squares,
twelve of them,
overall 36 x 48.

'Wassily Kandinsky,
the father of abstract art,
also a skilled musician,
strongly associated music with art.
Kandinsky saw color
when he listened to music,
and believed color could
visually express music's
timber, pitch and volume.
Kandinsky believed
that the purity of his desire
would communicate itself.'

'This premium giclée print,
an upgrade from the standard,
is produced on watercolor paper
with the same vivid colors,
accuracy, and resolution
giclée prints are known for
the world over.
Standard for museums and galleries,
millions of ink droplets
are "sprayed" onto quality paper.
The smooth color gradients
make giclée prints appear
much more realistic.'

Frank Avon

Westminster Abbey

Living in the past,
among the dead, if you will,
monarchs and prophets,
their temples, his own,
their arches and thrones,
thongs marching down the aisle,
their chorales and plainsong,
alive in his eyes,
the historical an aperture
into the spiritual within.

Ossian and Rowley
were not imposters:
what they saw,
he could draw;
and then his Sketches
(Poetical) worked variations
on the cadences
of Spenser, Shakespeare & Milton:
'Ages are All Equal,
But Genius is Always
Above the Age.'

Frank Avon

What Do You Wanna Save?

What do ya wanna save on today?
25% off pizza and other things,
20% off car rentals or wedding rings:
save on little things and big things.

It's written on the wind,
on waves and waves of water,
it's etched in your mind,
whether you want it there or not, or

daisies fly in the wind,
bluebonnets in West Texas,
the scar tissues look like eel
wiggling around in your flesh.

You must live with the scar;
the force of the wind you can't deny;
brace your teeth, don't bite your tongue,
your mind - your mind can overcome.

Let your ears hear these lines,
or maybe some others like them;
let them swim in your mind,
let them flow with the wind.

What Wordsworth said, you
aren't likely to forget:
'little lines of furtive wood
run wild, ' run wild, run wild.

Frank Avon

What We Need

Send us a prophet,
call him Orion,
give him a scroll,

like Amos the earthman,
Jeremiah the warner,
Isaiah the seer.

Let him stroll
the land, proclaim
the end

of war on earth,
hostility toward man,
the endless shame,

or else
THE END.

Frank Avon

What's In A (Poet's) Name?

It was once important
for poets to have three names:
either trochees
or, preferably,
dactylic.

It must have started with
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
and his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

or maybe Percy Bysshe Shelley,
but Americans caught the wave:

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
William Cullen Bryant
John Greenleaf Whittier
Oliver Wendell Holmes
James Russell Lowell

(ye olde Fireside Poets)

James Whitcomb Riley
Paul Laurence Dunbar

(Walt broke the cadence
as he did with everything else)

Edwin Arlington Robinson
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Edgar Lee Masters
James Weldon Johnson
Thomas Stearns Eliot
(old T. S.)
William Carlos Williams

but the modernists
clipped their wings:

Ezra Pound

H. D.
e e cummings
W. H. Auden
Ogden Nash
Bob Dylan
Pete Seeger

Robert Bly
Gary Snyder
Ted Hughes
Thom Gunn
(he's the one
who wore
black leather jackets
and tore
into the sun)

Mark Strand
Louise Gluck
Frank O'Hara
Robert Haas
Robert Pinsky
Rita Dove
Billy Collins
Ted Kooser
Kay Ryan
John Blair

So there.

And then there's
Virginia Hamilton Adair.
Thank your stars for her.

Amphibrach
Dactyl
Iamb

Frank Avon

Whispering

Listen
to the whispers
in the attic
in the closets
in the pantry
in the silence
of solitude.

Listen
to the whispers;
let them soothe you
and inspire you
and reconcile you
to the silence
of solitude.

Frank Avon

Winged Prince

The wisteria,
unblooming,
grown dense,
choking itself
with its own tendrils,
sways in the breeze,
basks in the heat.

Its density,
its resilience,
its resistance
to blossoming -
its very presence,
a huge umbrella of leaves,
is the image of our age.

But for a moment,
once or twice or
three times a day,
he reappears -
one of my other selves,
their prince,
the gladsome goldfinch.

At first it was
the sunflower seeds
that brought him
and his staidly mate,
but at last he has found
the sock I've put out for him
of nyjer seed.

If I step outside,
he skitters away,
all the way to the top
of the black oak tree;
he cannot know (or can he?)
how much I need him,
how much he means to me.

He shall return,
chipper, quick,
feasting himself
on a sunflower, the sock,
the trough of the bird feeder,
confident but cautious,
then away.

For the wisteria,
I weep,
so luxurious, so lost,
but for the finch
I raise my eyes
in praise: epiphany,
my glad new day.

Frank Avon

Winter Again

Winter again.
Gray days.
The same gray
every day,

until
the canon said,
'Let there be red.'

'The grayest days, '
I heard him say,
'most need
 scarlet
 crimson
 maroon
 vermilion.'

'For one day at least, '
the canon said,
'let there be red,
let there be red, '

and it was so.

Frank Avon

Winter In Tennessee

Blackberry jam on
hot buttered biscuits;
cast-iron stove in the kitchen

Frank Avon

Wiz

Wisdom is only a word,
not easily defined,
often in one's mind
with wizardry aligned.

Neither wisdom nor wizardry
can ever be proved to be,
before our very eyes they flee,
each a ship long asea,
a ghost ship on the sea.

Frank Avon

Wonderful Words Of Life

It was the same every Sunday:
two or three hymns (I can't remember
for sure) , scripture reading
and a prayer, another hymn,
communion, a closing hymn and prayer.

It was the same every Sunday:
I was nine or ten, the only kid
my age. I was thirteen or fourteen,
one of the four (Jimmy, Thurman,
Bobby and me) on the back row.

It was the same every Sunday:
swimming nekkid in Richland Creek,
walking all those hills and woods,
playing touch football, taking in
a movie at the Dixie Theater.

It was the same every Sunday:
'The Old Rugged Cross, ' 'I come
to the garden alone..., '
'Softly and Tenderly, ' 'Standing
on the Promises, ' 'Abide with Me.'

It was the same every Sunday:
dinner with Miss Johnnie, Jimmy's
mamma, or Miss Velma, Thurman's
or Miss Ocia, mine - fried chicken,
or country ham, or casseroles.

It was the same every Sunday:
'Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of li-i-ife,
Let me more of their beauty see,
Wonderful words of Life.'

It was the same every Sunday:
changing clothes in an upstairs room;
talking about Vanderbilt football;

telling dirty stories: talking about
girls, girls, girls; talking big talk.

Jimmy, a senior in high school, would
get married, give up his football scholarship.
Bobby would elope and have his marriage annulled.
Thurman would marry the class valedictorian.
And I - I - would go on to a wonderful life.

But it has never been the same since:
the country store now stands in shambles,
the one-room school is long since gone,
the New Hope church is somebody's domicile,
though the Wonderful Words of Life live on.

'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they
do. This day thou wilt be with me in paradise.
Behold thy son: behold thy mother. My God, my God,
why has Thou forsaken me? I thirst. It is finished.
Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'

It was the same every Sunday:
It will never be the same again.
This Sunday evening, the band will play:
an electric guitar, the drums, the piano;
the singers will lead us. We will share

our needs for prayer - all of us. Kathy
will lead us; her message will be uplifting.
And, then, once again, it will be the same
as always: 'This is My Body, this is My Blood.
This do in remembrance of Me.' All the same.

It was the same every Sunday:
we wore our Sunday suits and shined our shoes;
we put a dime (me) or a dollar (Jimmy)
in the collection plate. Deacons passed
the bread and wine. It will never be the same.

It will forever be the same.
One in the Spirit; one in the Word,
the Wonderful, Wonderful

Word, our

Life.

Frank Avon

Words

are willows.

They only seem
to weep,
swaying in the breeze.

They drape
gracefully
from lithe limbs,
bare all winter,
hidden now
in the verbiage
that sways
gracefully
through the air
to the ground,
a mist of willow green
just green,
foliage
asweep,
that only seems
to weep

Frank Avon

Words, Words, Words

Inquisitor! incognizable Word
Of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre,
Into the steep savannahs, burning blue,
Utter the loneliness the sail is true.

Hart Crane, 'Ave Maria, ' The Bridge

So, I get it. I get it. I get it.

Metaphorical progression. Logical discontinuity.
Ideational subtlety. Muscular tenacity.
Passionate intensity. Intentional obscurity.
Enigmatic simplicity. Verbal obliqueness.
The juxtaposition of opposites.
The opposite of clarity.
Imagistic precision. Rapture.
Omnivision.

Poetry.

Poetry of the people
is a misnomer.
Poetry for the people
should require
the people to submit
to inner struggle;
should force
submission
of the intellect.

Let words wash over you;
strip your consciousness nude
so the super-id
can be bathed in
the ocean tide,

a tide that overwhelms
each personal will,

chills the sensibility,
cleanses the spirit within,

and renders meaninglessness
meaningful,

the awful, awesome,

content, bottomless,
thought, oceanic

time, timeless
each moment, forever,

limits, boundless,
beyond Ultima Thule,

the words independent,
the word, immanent,

the Word, wordless,

a fathomless cloud of fatherless
words, words, words.

Frank Avon

Working, Working

He was an engraver,
'full of work, '
earning a living,
courting a public,
taking commissions,
whatever came to hand,
putting himself to it
to be 'sure of winning a wage, '
lending his efforts
to handbooks of science,
stocking and selling
the outright erotic

(if sometime dilatory,
hardly punctual,
often delaying,
sometimes dabbling
in the mystical,
speaking with Spectres)

and all the while
in a side room
at all hours
in his brother's old notebook
sketching, drafting,
Gates of Paradise,
always exploring

'two contrary states
of the human soul'

Frank Avon

'Wrong Verification Code.'

'Enter it again'

So I do.

'Wrong verification code.

Enter it again'

Again and again

It's always the same.

'Please enter a topic for your poem.'

I just did,

you erased it.

So I enter it again.

'Wrong verification code.

Enter it again.'

So I copy the poem.

Punch 'Submit a new poem.'

Paste the old poem.

Enter the same topic.

And once again

punch 'Submit.'

Oh, Sh-h-h-h-h....

(Don't say it.)

Frank Avon

You And Your Self

Just admit it:
you're in love with yourself.
it's an off and on affair,
come and go,

up and down
in and out
to and fro
high and low

You're the light of your life
you're the blight of your life
you're the height of your life
and its lowest depths;

you're the might of your life
and its most fragile frailty;
you're the fight of your life
and its cease fire;

you're the flight of your life
you're the plight of your life;
you're the sleight of your life
and its heaviest weight

It's magic
it's miraculous
it's tragic
it's ridiculous

Only you
know who
you are or would choose
to be

So give yourself a hug,
a pat on the back,
a kick in the ass,
a day in the sack

You extend
you pretend
you suspend
you upend

For only you
can amend
can atone
can revise / revitalize

Only you can forgive
(you can't forget)
Only you can live
with regret (or without)

So close your eyes
take a deep breath
relax your muscles
your chest, your abs,

your hips, your thighs,
your calves, your delts,
your heart, your mind
all of you

You are many,
you are one
what God has joined together
let no one cast asun-

der
Amen
Amen
and again Amen

Frank Avon

You Are

the avocado of
my youth
the rose petal of
maturity,
the corduroy
of middle age,
of old age
my modicum

You are

silken
southerly
swan-like
serendipity

You are
the wildflower;
I am the weed.

You are
Queen Anne's lace
and chicory

I am
a dandelion
and ironweed.

Without you
I would be

flat
lost
loose
NOT

You are the

BE

of
Me

Frank Avon

You Can't Live With

what you've lost
or forgotten
or let slip by

what cost too much
or took up too much attic space
or your mother put in the incinerator when your father died

or without it.

Frank Avon

Zinnias: April / August

You see wee green leaves;
roots unseen in dark moist soil:
burst orange crimson

Frank Avon