

Heartclips



Poems of 1996

by Alan Harris

Cradling love as an infinite infant within

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Noon Out of Nowhere:
Collected Poems of Alan Harris
www.alharris.com/poems

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Good Friday

If ever rain should sing a hymn
throughout and throughin;
if ever unfolding buds with tiny pain
should bloom big over meadows;
if ever hearts in deepest pain
should find a silver light--
let it be on Good Friday,
our day of holy surrender to
more than we know,
our bow of reverence to
more than we are,
our wail of grief for
all that might have been,
our needed emptying
of the cup of self to
find an inner morning--
an Easter wherein
the Sun of Love
will rise again.

Word

No mouth big enough to say it,
no voice sweet enough to sing it,
but there, riding on every breath,
is the Word from which words rain down.

Prayer of Unknowing

O Lord, I don't know
what "O" and "Lord" mean,
nor do I know what words
to silently say
into your holy ear
(if any ear at all is hearing),
nor do I seem to receive replies,

and yet I feel in my deeper
inside places (which have no places)
that, as I'm fumbling for words
and stumbling within my soul,
a prayer is somehow praying me
and giving amen to my life.
Uncomprehending, Lord,
I drop my words.
Amen.

Analogies for Love

Is love a light beam we shine
upon our chosen few of heart,
reflected by them upon us?

Or is love an inner sea
contained by, yet containing us,
in turbulence or pleasing calm?

Does a new mother perceive
in her baby's trusting breath
the force of a new volcano?

As a cup that cannot explain its tea
or a husk that fathoms not its corn,
I cradle love as an infinite infant within.

A Younger Friend

All gosh utmost joy she much so
has, kindly exploding out of
her ice cream sundae heart
topped with quips and smiles

while spinning effervescent futures
or singing laughinations out of
I-dare-you presents or geysering
forth with heartacious good will.

From upper, inner wheremost
emerges bouncing and penetrating she,
who can jump a moon or be one
without or with a cow or three.

Breezy of soul, a dreamer of whims
that go wham and ideas that go am, she
and her wand zing out angel dust from within
to make stiffness and topsies turn dancingly turvy.

Divine Mischief

If Oneness, why Twoness?
Is the One a relief for the Two,
and is the Two an excitement for the One?
A brush against the Divine Cheek?

Perfect Oneness rains polarity
down into physical creation and conflict--
but later, Twoness sublimely surrenders
back into the One Breath.

Can there be some mischief here?
Might the Two be the One's TV?

Walk

I walked with you today--
with you and the One inside you
who beamed light through your eyes.

Your voice seemed more than your voice
and held meaning beyond your meaning.
Who was in you speaking?

I walked with you and mystery today,
and now I need to learn Who dwells in you.
Perhaps the One inside me knows.

Introduction

Beneath my friendly laugh,
down where you can't see--
worms.

Quiet, warm worms
from a soiled past.
No needs have they,
secure in my all.

They meditate behind
my generosity,
ride calm and innocent
in my essence,
come with me everywhere
through anger,
comfort,
love.

I must apologize.
Not even a fish would want them.

Anyway--here, meet my worms.
They have no names.

Do yours?

Experts and Folk

Oh whilliker thistledown, angel-may-care
if the pins of all dumbledom fly through the air
and tinkle quite prinkly with scatter and scorn--
who am I, I ask you, and how was I born?

Universe, schmuniverse, big bang or no,
let comets be vomits lit up as they go;
let galaxies stretch till they reach golly gee,
but where was I, why am I, who will I be?

Theological thinkers and scholarly fakes
pretend with Godthority, footnotes, and spakes,
assuring, demurring to cover their gap,
but all they produce is implausible crap.

Oh wiffle-ball shuffle-through, devil-be-joke,
instead of the experts, I'll hang with the folk
who don't know from nothin' how we became we
but never were not and will never not be.

My Cow, My Guru

My brown cow
lives in the now.
How?
Nohow.

Quantity and time and hay slide
through her unnoticed. She
doesn't count her stomachs
or her breaths or her days.

She seeks no acupuncture
treatments, nor does she
brew herbal teas.

Being the best she can be
holds no interest for her as
she grazingly meditates with
slow-moving hooves and jaws
over a grassy pasture.

Her Buddhist eyes see
out and in all the way.

My cow knows an old, old mantra
that she neither flaunts nor hides--
when the world needs a moo,
she gives it one.

As her swishing tail
with Zen precision
scatters a bunch of flies
like unwelcome thoughts,
my brown cow's gaze is
inly intimating to me,
"No how is there to now."



Overflow

Sometimes I'm so full of good feeling
that I can't do any reading.
Nothing comes upstream.

If you are full of good feeling now,
throw this poem away.
It's a waste of time.

Write me one.

On Leaning

Some think they leaned upon a stronger will
when all that happened was this will had shone
a light beam on some girder, deep and strong,
within their own divinely buttressed soul.

Mistakenly, they felt this other will
support their own, when really, all are leaning
safe upon the same Eternal Strength
which none of us can own, but all may share.

The light beam shows it's safe to turn within.

War Baby

After I came beginningless
into Illinois in 1943
as a first-born joy,
I drank World War II in
with my sweet mother's milk.

Bombs were dropping quietly
behind her caring embrace
and exploding in her
goodnight kiss.
I breathed her worried love
and thought it was air
if I thought at all.

Twenty-five times my father
thrust his B-17 "Spot Remover"
carrying ten trembling airmen
through German defenses
and sowed the karmic seeds
of a quick explosive harvest--
while I was piling up wooden
blocks
and hearing rhymes
about moons and spoons
and thumbs and plums.

So much war-worried gentleness
was transmitted
by my mother's reassuring smile
that perhaps I heard small
voices back in my throat
screaming for mercy
as they laughed.

My father came home
a new stranger
who wanted to be king
of the little home
my mother and I had shared.
Who was this intruder,
this usurper?
He wrecked our delicate bond
with his love
and his jubilant grief
after peace was declared
with Hitler tucked into a coffin.

I wanted to play with cars
and building blocks like before
but my father dared
to order me around
like a bomber crew
and have me bring him things.

Wasn't it about then
that I learned
to kill flies?

Washing Windows

This morning we two are washing
our upstairs windows, a yearly drudge--
you indoors, and I out on a ladder.
Each other's face appears begrimed
through window after window
as we wiggle them free from
their filthy aluminum tracks.

We do lose our patience, let's admit,
if the other of us turns imperfect
somehow or startles the first
with a near-fall or a near-drop.
Danger and caution are dancing.

Suburban cleanliness fails to fool me.
I feel underneath this dayness an expansive
nightness where one's essence may freely
float between shadows of shadows
or bask in uncanny glimmers of glory,
having seen no shape, thought no thought.

Day distracts us. When we think to be
simply washing windows, an inner
mysteriousness guides our hands
from far behind our eyes. Day has
dangers, but night is as safe as Allness.
Wipe your glass clean, yes, but be not
deceived by what you see through it.

I could settle for a diet of only days--
our windows, their cleaning, shaky ladders,
plus countless other depthless decoys that
dwellers of the eye have come to accept.
But I won't.

I must be soft into knowingless night,
where quiet bumpings and strange
bewilderments flow, merge, disappear.
My appetite is for the fruit of freedom
growing upon hidden trees of maybe.

Wipe your window, yes, in bright daylight--
but I insist on washing my side with night.

When Poems Are Still

It is calm of times now,
poems having disappeared like a mist.
Yesterday's nagging scintillations
that promised a tryst of wordings
now lie content below any saying, any art.

Quite free from poetry is almost any peace
until some brazen poet arrives
to stir up some alphabet soup--
but the very deepest calms, like a sea bottom,
lie mute beneath all chop of words and wind.

Today let there be rest from poems
and from other twistings of the mind,
for it is calm of times now, free enough
for wordless breath, and breath, and breath.

Spin

Mr. Forever tossed me out
for a little spin
toward the ground of being,

and zing! here whoever
I am is, alive and
spinning planetwise.

From earth not far
can I seem to stray
nor live beyond my time
nor see beyond my sight

since Mr. Forever firmly
holds the string reining in
the yo-yo that I am.

Dressed

At birth
my mother
dressed me
in the world

which I have worn
ever since
despite some
fraying sleeves
and tight belts

that I can
deal with
until the main
button pops

and off of me
the world falls
in a useless
heap.

The Inside Door

What, to go out through the inside door,
is gained and lost and revealed?
What if some organ resigns early
or an oncoming car presents crashdom
when yet no I in me prefers cessation?

From jelly and muscle and bone
did birth make me me?
Get away, I heartily say--
I rode this body into solidness
and trained it in the school of earth.

Down it goes, you say?
Slips off me overcoatlike?
Whoever in me is my inner me
says "Wasn't that life a honey?"
as out I slip through the inside door

and maybe muse
"Well, well, well"
spaciously for 800 years or so
until some earthbound man
has too many beers and

gets his wife or his woman
gently to beckon me
down to her womb
for another grade
in school.

seeing you

when I look you
in the eye I find
history and mystery
not to be known
even as your own eye
presses me like a white
daytime moon nudging
soft against an open sky
right in front of outer space
leading to everything else
that flies and falls including
any flying-falling maple seed to bring
an unfoldment of up and down
(now don't the sprawling-upward limbs
and thirsty spreading-downward roots
trace out a delicate explosion so slow
so sweet that the tree has to yes die
to go bare
to fall
to rot
to sleep
to have been all of
what a tree is
all of?)
but how I look at you
my very alter-life
is as moon over healthy tree
at play in sunlight
in behind your eye
behind your inner eye
behind the innerness of your inner eye
behind even behindness
all the way back to
here I am across a table
from your most amazing being
wondering if you see
what journey is behind me
all the way to here

Here and the Ground

The shiny car you drive is
going into the ground.
All the neighborhood trees are
going into the ground.

Buildings, all of them, are
going into the ground.
Your sofa and your dog are
going into the ground.

But soul--have you a soul
that won't go into the ground?
What force can keep your essence
from going into the ground?

Suppose your body quits and
does go into the ground--
where will your soul then be?
My own says, "Here, right here.

"The love that makes life life is
dwelling in your here,
and all you ever gave is
coming back to your here.

"Thing and thing and thing may be
going into the ground,
but where can your here ever go
except--exactly here?"

Commuting past the 'Hood

*The 'hood is the 'hood is the 'hood,
where a throb in the heart
can keep time, keep time with a sturdy song
too blue for the too too.*

Through the train window
I notice inhabited shells
south of the tracks--
hollow-windowed,
mottle-roofed homes.

Open-hooded engineless
cars rust under giant
cottonwoods littering broken
sidewalks leading to front doors
opening into TVs never not on.

Perhaps some brutal mothers
feel free to batter TV-addled
children in these houses,
loose cages to be escaped
for safety in the streets.

Perhaps some fathers are
secrets or stray away
or land jobs in fall-apart
factories for just enough
cash to prolong starvation.

Within this silver train
suburbanites glide safely past
the 'hood with eyes in newspapers
or closed in sleeping bliss,
unaware and uncaring that

south of these tracks might
thrive a rugged richness
not understood by well-fed
hardwood-floor owners
accustomed to gourmet coffee.

Further on, west of the city,
suburban houses appear
all slick and pretty
as polished pain,
some of them transmitting

false alarms to uncaring cops,
some of them serving as
highly mortgaged
coffins for lives
deceased at the roots.

Hand-to-mouth 'hood dwellers
grapple and make do and laugh,
clutch most any prize and die,
few of them ever aspiring
to climb a dollar ladder

or pass away like
moneyed mortals,
trusts all set up,
who shatter as richly
as a falling chandelier.



Interpreting Geese

A flock of Canada geese
flies overhead,
honking whenever
honks are needed.

One goose veers
away on its own
to the left.
Another splits right.

Zen awareness might
say, “Ah, yes: the
goose and the goose
and the flock. This is.”

A philosopher might
see three divergent
realities coming
into being above.

An ornithologist
might ahem and
expertly affirm, “Yes,
geese will do that.”

According to a poet:
“Feather-flung loners,
ecstatic with freedom, fly
straight to their unknowns.”

Hunters say blam.

Christmas Awakening

From the mantel, stockings
packed with Christmas
tinyness and sweets
dimly hang at 3 a.m.

Cold wind outside
shakes and snaps the house.
The dog is asleep on the couch.

This artificial tree, lights off, points
second-floorward with wrapped
bounty beautifully beneath it,
testimony that goods are good
and glitter is better.

The dog sighs and turns over.

From underneath,
the furnace exhales warmly
upon tree ornaments
livingly aquiver.

All else is motionless,
and less,
except for the dog
now snoring on the couch.

What if this--
right here, this instant--
is Christmas?

What if this quiet room
is flooded with the future?

What if an unseen star
is shining here,
lighting the way
to a new beginning?

What room, I wonder,
is this? Do we have here
a manger?

The dog sleeps deeply.
The room is ready.
One waits.

How I Clean

As a vaccer
I'm a slacker;
as a hacker
I'm a stacker.

I have trouble
sorting rubble
till it's double
triple double.

I go all out
till I stall out,
then I haul out
all the fallout.

Griefs That Stay

Some griefs
(and you know
yours by name)

twist so terribly
deep that instead
of crying

you carry them like
inoperable bullets
inside your flesh

and feel their
twinges every few
seconds without

letting on
to even
your dearest--

damnable, beautiful
griefs that fit you
like a bone.

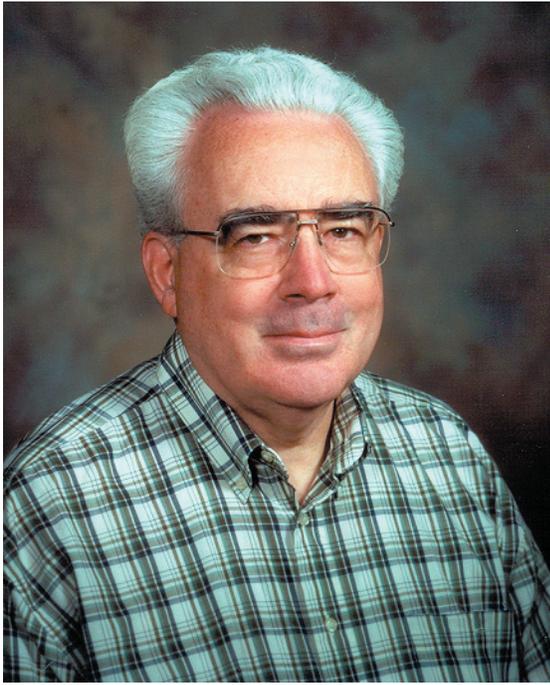
Sharing Copedom

How do you cope with nopes, with fallen hopes,
with must-haves that go poof in the night?
Do you glum out and turn numb?
I do, for a while. Join me.

How can you know what you don't know?
You need answers, but all you hear is
the inside of your head. Do you worry?
I do, for a while. Join me.

Is happiness just beyond the next locked gate,
and no one around with key or hammer?
Do you fantasize with fruitless wishing?
I do, for a while. Join me.

When trouble somehow dissolves from notice
and leaves you breathing free again,
do you smile a breath of thank you into the One?
I do, for a while. Join me.



About Alan Harris

Born on June 20, 1943, Alan Harris was raised in Earlville, Illinois, a small farming community of about 1,400. His father Keith was a World War II B-17 pilot who for the rest of his life (he died in 1980) farmed the family acreage east of Earlville while also taking time out on weekdays to drive a school bus. Alan's mother Margie served as a diligent housewife and mother of four children, and for many years was Head Librarian of the Earlville Public Library.

Although he studied plenty of poems (often half-heartedly) in the local elementary and high school system, it wasn't until he majored in English at Illinois State University (minoring in trumpet and piano) that Alan began experiencing strange inner stirrings that resulted in some serious poems. His college poems seemed to spring from a new unknown place and seemed rather odd, yet were satisfying to write. Several were published in annual issues

(1964-1966) of ISU's literary magazine, *The Triangle*.

Alan and his wife Linda were married in 1966, and all through the next 35 years, new poems continued to emerge and seemed to need readers. Every year or two, between 1980 and 1995, he would assemble that interval's crop of poems and self-publish a volume to give to family and friends.

In October of 1995, having acquired some HTML skills, Alan published on the World Wide Web all of his poetry books as *Collected Poems*. Within a year he added four more site sections: *Thinker's Daily Ponderable* (original aphorisms), *Stories and Essays*, *Christmas Reflections*, and *Garden of Grasses*. The latter section, originally co-edited with Lucille Younger and now co-edited with Mary Lambert, is an on-line literary collection for work contributed by other authors.

In 1998 Alan's literary collection took on its current Web address of www.alharris.com and in 2000 was given the title *An Everywhere Oasis*. After buying a digital camera and taking it to the forest, Alan published several photographic essays and poems which are now available in the site's *Gallery*. Also offered are 76 audio poetry readings, with 20 poems being read by actor and friend Paul Meier and the others being read by Alan. New "Web-only" poetry books posted since 1995 are *Writing All Over the World's Wall*, *Heartclips*, *Knocking on the Sky*, *Flies on the Ceiling*, *Just Below Now*, and a new 2001 work-in-progress entitled *Carpet Flights*. Launched in December 1999 with co-editor Mary Lambert, a new anthology entitled *Heartplace* began accepting and publishing work from contributing authors. In 1998 Alan's son Brian composed and performed *Bunga Rucka* (a recording of which is offered on the Web site), which is based upon Alan's poem of the same title.

Alan has earned his living in a variety of occupations—high school English teacher, junior high band director, piano tuner—all of these before settling into a long career of computer-related work. He retired in 1998 after 22 years' service at Commonwealth Edison in Chicago, initially as a computer programmer, then a systems analyst, and later a computer training coordinator. For his final three years at ComEd he developed Web sites for its corporate Intranet and the Internet. Linda retired in 1999 after working for 20 years at an insurance company, but rejoined the work force in 2000 as a transcriptionist in a large medical clinic. Since retiring, Alan has been doing freelance Web design for individuals, non-profit organizations, and other non-commercial interests, as well as continuing his creative writing.

