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Dedication

This book is dedicated to those people who have helped me see myself more clearly, by giving me reflections that, at times, I didn't necessarily want to see. They provided me with myriad opportunities to grow!

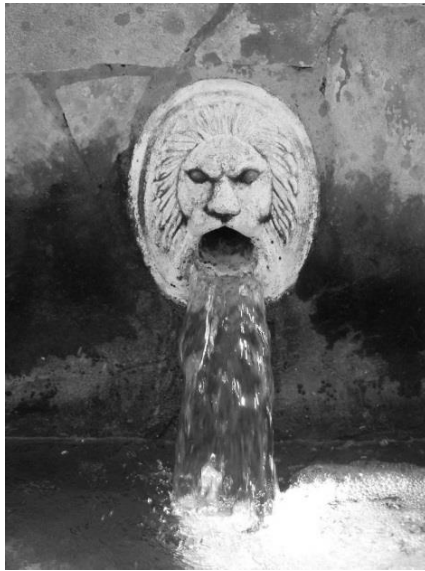
Chief among these are my wife and daughter, as well as my parents, family and friends...and sometimes a stranger who just happened to say or do that one thing I needed most.

Thank you!

Free Verse

Streams of Consciousness

by Oliver Caspers



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Free Verse

There is no such thing!
All verse is created out of
Necessity,
Like the need to vomit
After a long night of
Overindulgence.

Ever since I can remember, I have been writing. Rarely was it a casual act, or an exchange of information with other people. More often it was an inner compulsion, a base need, like food and water and shelter, to spill something onto a virgin page filled with lines, to release something that needed to escape or fester. A message for me, and me alone.

It was my way of expressing my inner most feelings, thoughts, contemplations, needs and fears, those aspects and forms of myself I was not ready to voice aloud to anyone save an unjudging blank piece of paper.

Here I could express my reservations about life and death and love and loss and all points in-between. Here I could divulge what lay beneath the facades of everyday existence, even if only to myself. It was not until I was in my late twenties that I actually began learning to share these inner workings with real people, in real live conversation, with real responses and exchange.

It took my leaving the United States for Europe for this process to begin to really blossom in the outside world, to go from one-way street paved of papyrus, to boulevard

coated in dialogue. Yet even then, some things I needed to keep to myself. So, I vented them solely in writing.

In this way, especially in my early years, writing became my haven, my sanctuary, my inner sojourn, my window of self-expression, where I could twist and turn and scream and love and hate and feel and share and weep and trust. The empty page that was slowly filling was my counsellor, my lover, my nemesis, my friend, my peace maker, my catharsis. Writing allowed me to release what was bottled up inside, to relieve the pressure of existence in a world where purpose is not given but must be found and shaped individually.

Until now, I have shown others very few of these pieces. Most of them I wrote in a single sitting that took only moments. These are truly streams that flowed out of my consciousness (or unconsciousness). I don't know where they came from. They simply leaked out; a soul needing to upend itself to see what would spill forth, and be cleansed, expressed and understood in the process.

Maybe that is the most pure form of creativity, since it is not tinged by the need for perfect meter and rhyme and flawless self-expression. Or maybe that is just an excuse. It is certainly not the most perfect for the same reasons.

Occasionally, I *have* acceded to the desire to revisit and touch up a piece, out of dissatisfaction with its preliminary form. Only a few did I go back to over and over again because I was simply not capturing what I wanted to say. None of them aspire to being anything other than what they are: glimpses of a soul unfolding.

Some of the pieces I did not understand until years after their spilling. Some I understood only at the time of putting them on paper. There are one or two that I still have not grasped but which, strangely enough, strike me at a profound, visceral level and sound a chord within.

I've tried to arrange the pieces chronologically, so you may get a feeling of how my thoughts, dreams and ideas and my style, my *modus operandi*, have changed through time, how my first steps were unsteady, lacking an own voice, trying to be what I was not and express what I couldn't. Only after many years did I acquire the whispers of an own voice. Maybe you will be able to hear it, as it slowly grows within the strokes of what I have written.

I have also taken the liberty of setting the stage for the various pieces in the form of introductory comments to each section. Sometimes works of art are understood more deeply in the light of the context of their creation, not that I aspire to artistic originality.

In any case, I feel the time to release them is now! Now, because, now I no longer fear them. In the past, I worried about what others would say, how the works would be received. After all, they are a glimpse of me at my most vulnerable, intimate level. To share them could be to invite danger, even social suicide. But now, it no longer matters to me (so much) if they are received well or poorly, if people think of me differently because of them.

They are a part of me, whether others know of them or not, whether they are, at times, infantile, or juvenile, or

self-indulging, or melodramatic, or even silly...or just plain poorly written. They are snap shots of my soul emerging in the form of verses written, if imperfectly, and thus they are glimpses of something otherwise inexpressible, something hidden behind masks and convention and social mores.

So, to release them is an act of liberation, of deliverance. I am freeing myself of thoughts, feelings and ideas I have kept to myself until now. I am freeing myself of the notion that there is something I need to hide from the world because it is too personal, too close to me, that there is something that is not worthy of being shown.

If I can't show myself in these writings, even in my faults and imperfections, then what is the point? What is the purpose of hiding behind masks of convention, of what should and should not be done or expressed or even felt, if it covers the truth of the soul and does not allow it to surface or unfold? My fears are as much a part of me as are my strengths, as are my weaknesses. Or at least, as much a part of who I was at the time of having or expressing them.

So, publishing these works is an act of surfacing, a turn of deep divulgence, a feat of emancipation from the depths, a liberation from a notion I once had.

And, dear reader, if anything written here strikes a chord within you, perhaps you, too, will be cleansed or a part of you may rise from some depth, where it had lain hidden. At the very least you will know that you are understood, even if just in part.

Because, in the end, I believe I am not the only one who has ever felt the way I have felt or thought what I have thought or done what I have done. Or to put it in words I have already written:

*All we poets ever do
Is say what all know to be true.
And what most fear to voice aloud
We climb the mountain for to shout!*

- O. Caspers
October, 2018

Poems, songs, thoughts and ideas

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Poems of early youth
Adolescence and Cold War Fears

Introductory comments

I grew up on the East Coast of the United States in the late 70's and early 80's, at the height of the Cold War. Movies like "*The Day After*" and "*When the Wind Blows*", as well as the often angry, sullen, and expressive music and lyrics of Roger Waters (from Pink Floyd) infused my childhood and left deep impressions in my growing, teen-aged spirit. To process them I turned to writing.

What follows are a few of those early imprints, written sometime between the ages of 13 and 18. What really scares me is that, considering the political climate of today, I could have penned some of these poems yesterday!

Most were originally written as songs to be sung without being accompanied by instruments. I simply sang them to myself. I did not yet have access to poetry as a separate form of expression. What I knew were song lyrics.

When reading the words now the melody I had first intended still automatically pops into my head and it is almost impossible for me to read them in any other inflection or rhythm. Somewhere out there, if it still exists, is a tape I made for a friend, with me singing these songs for her. A part of me hopes it is never found.

A Knock on the Door

It was the day that followed
The end of Time.
I was sitting in bed
Talking with Nobody.
The last living soul
On this damned planet
And I wanted to cry.
But it was too late.
The only thing that I had left
Were the shoes on my feet.
And in my hand there was
A loaded gun
With which I wanted
To end it all.
To end the reign of Man
That had brought about
Their own Destruction.
Then in the nick of time
There came a knock on the door!

Just a Flick of the Switch

As I think back now it all makes sense,
We had to suffer the consequence.
There was no time to think,
No time to stop,
The end was drawing near.

As the wrinkled old man gave the command
The warheads began to fly.
Already the bombs
From the USSR
Were falling from the sky.

As we looked out our windows the sky was ablaze,
And the smoke was rising high.
I sat with my baby,
Not daring to move,
As the house began to fry.

As the acid vapors slowly covered the sky,
I took her in my arms and said “Goodbye”,
The time had come,
The song was over,

We had reached the end...

...in just a flick of the switch.

A Passing Witness

There really was no way we could have escaped.

I remember our last moments together.

Hand in hand we sat wondering why

We had to die today.

Then, slowly, I saw her melt away.

And I left her body then, on the sofa in the den

And locking the now-gone door behind me

I walked away.

The rain was pouring down

But it never touched the ground.

The clouds only slowly sucked it in.

The fragile boxes that leaned against the doors

Were the homes of those

That had survived the 30-second wars.

As I looked up at the sky,

The black no longer blue,

I saw what I thought was the sun,

But no one really knew.

From somewhere I heard a lark scream.

But under the circumstances

It must have been a dream.

Under the circumstances

It must have been a dream.

And I thought about her then,

On the sofa in the den,

And leaving my now-gone life behind me

I passed away.

The River

There is a river that I know,
And that river is my soul.
It flows from sea to shining sea,
And where it goes, that's where it takes me.

The river runs over crops that yield,
And to many a distant battle field,
Over mountains, over trees,
Over forests, and overseas.

And as a cloud above the world of grief
It can smile and laugh and feel relief.
It has left its pain, left its fears,
And amongst the sky it sheds no tears.

But down below on earth so green
There is no happiness there to be seen.
Instead there is a wind that chills,
A wind of men that says to kill.

This wind of men has dire need
Of lives on which it then can feed.
Its hunger is great, its hatred is strong,

Its power is enormous, but its cause is all wrong.

And this blowing of the wind, it can be stopped.

It will blow no longer, if only we act.

But to do so would take a lot of souls

To combine in one river, which then can flow.

This river would thus displace the wind,

Removing it forever from mankind.

And all that is left is this one great river,

Which then can flow freely for now and forever.

There's a river that I know

And that River holds our souls.

Unfortunately, it has not begun
flowing!

Ballad of a Dead Man

An old man lies in the bed that you once occupied.

His tear drops litter the floor.

In his tightly clutched hands he holds the book of rules.

No one can help him, the world is made of fools.

He gets up from your bed and stumbles to the door,

Taking along his bottle of whiskey and all the excuses it
contains.

He walks along the corridor, with you behind him,
carrying his soul, trying to scoop up the pieces of his
fragmented life

All around, as it spills from his domain

Of influence.

Just as it spills

From yours.

Don't spend...

...too much time inside your head,
Not enough time inside your heart.
The clock ticks time remorselessly
Is it ever too late to start?

Hear the words and feel the music
And understand everything you see,
Really listen to what you are thinking,
And only then can you be free.

When the Storms of Winter Surge

The water splashes violently against the pier,
The mist rises in endless succession,
And the light from the moon
Glitters along the rolling waves
As the wind howls like a beast of prey.

Far away, in the distance,
Another light can be seen.
A moving light.
It bobs up and down,
Like the streets of San Francisco.

A fog horn blasts its deafening call,
A call of violent sorrow,
Like the weeping of a widow at Man's funeral.
Once again it cries out in the night,
A sound, like emanating death,
For which there will be no relief.

The light bobs most furiously now,
As the wind screams in anger.
The waves increase in size,

Like a lion before its leap upon the antelope.
Then, flexing its thighs, it springs.

And the wind howls no more,
But whispers a dirge:
All your sea-sick sailors
Won't be coming home.

To See the Light

On a running dark day in the middle of June,
I was standing by the river, all alone in the dunes,
When a boat came 'round the ever-changing turns.
And in it I saw the face of a girl long gone.

On a running dark day in the middle of July,
A tear ran down my face on its way to the sky.
But I did not linger long in that moment of pain:
Her face disappeared in a cloud of cocaine.

After the battle that I fought to the soul,
Looking for love where no one else would go,
I saw her smile fading in the twilight,
I was left feeling broken as she passed into night.

On a running dark day in the middle of September,
I held a gun to my head so I would not remember
All the bad things that had happened to me,
All because of a girl that I thought I once knew.

And then one day I wondered
Why my life had been so rough

All because of some long-ago love.

And then and there I realized:

That to see the light

Is to be the Light.

And only you, yourself

Can overcome the fright

That grips you and haunts you

In the middle of the night.

Childhood Dreams (For Aristophanes)

My love is like a flower that blooms in the day,
With peddles of silk, and warm as sunshine.
Yet she does not fade when the silver moon
Reflects upon her brow,
For she holds eternal grace.
She is the light from which light shall dawn
And then shine forth.

She rides on the noonday sun
As a ship of full sail;
Slowly the breeze catches her shining hair
Which stirs, as if from sleep.
Never once does she falter or sin
For she knows the ways of truth and wisdom.
Her innocence is her bible.

My love is pure like gold
Yet scarcer than the diamonds,
For she is true like ice, like fire.
She is the rose in the garden
But she does not draw blood.
In this she defeats Love and Life itself,
For she is everlasting.

Listen

Listen to the wind come howling
Like the black crows do.

Listen to the wind come howling
Like I do for you.

But the crows, they fly away.
And I, I am here to stay.

Life

Life is a mere echo of thoughts,
In which feelings swirl in crazed,
Undistinguishable patterns,
In which Darkness
Lingers longer than light
And even Love
Is blind.

The Sojourn

I have walked many a mile
Through the Valley of Solitude,
Like a rivulet of hope,
As it flows along its eternal course,
Through the twists and turns of life.
Sometimes slowing
Sometimes a waterfall,
Yet always downward
Towards the abyssal plains
That are my soul.

And only the gentle breeze of memories
Stir my heart of stone
As they filter through my senses.
Like some leaf upon the wind,
They sway past
And are gone.

I have walked many a mile
Through the Valley of Solitude,
Burdened with the unpolished
Marble of a headstone.
Withered roses lie at my feet,

Unnourished by the blood
Of a broken heart.
All that is left upon the wind
Is an unsung eulogy.

I have walked many a mile
Through the Valley of Solitude,
And now
My confused sojourn will end,
For here I will rest,
Eclipsed by the valley of the Shadow of Death!

Phoenix

The rain splatters softly against my window.

The trees sway gently in the powerful wind,

While the clouds rush through the sky.

Their shapes horrid and dark.

Yet, they are not the tools of destruction they may
appear.

They are instead, motley forms of beauty

Bringing life to those below.

The tears they shed revive the living.

I, too, want to be revived.

I want to go and frolic in the small streams

That run along the concrete.

I want to dance and sing with the leaves upon the wind,

All the while feeling the gentle tingling of raindrops on
my naked skin.

I know the rain is warm because the season of rebirth is
upon us.

Let me, too, be reborn, let me, too, be renewed,

A Phoenix rising from the ashes of his own darkness!

Salvation

Greetings, realm of the sun!
Again I've come to see you reign.
I stand here at the gates of dawn,
Your rays of light, they keep me warm.

I thank thee for all that thou hast done,
For without you it could not have come.
The darkness has been cast away
And your golden light is here to stay.

As I step, quiet, through the gate,
Away from anger, pain and hate,
The world of Death is left behind
Where even love was blind.

Now I stand within the light,
For this I did not need to fight.
It came from deep within myself,
A book finally taken from the shelf.

No longer am I asleep, it seems
I now have wings of woven dreams,
I spread them and leap from way up high

Into the maelstrom...

...and I fly!

Twilight (over Bangkok)

Please, hold me in your arms tonight,
Under the stars, where the moon shines bright,
And the lights of the city shimmer so far away,
A lonesome reminder of what was the day.

I pray that this night will never fade,
And forever end all the love that was made,
For come break of day you'll be gone with the sun,
And what tonight we hold dear tomorrow I'll shun.

For as the young dawn spreads her fingers of rose,
We both must follow the paths which we chose.
And I know if we never again should meet,
You will walk with some other, down some other street.

But I shall be walking all streets alone
Because the love that I feel, I feel to the bone.
And a heart that is full of the love that I feel
Once broken, I fear, can no longer heal.

Early Poems

The Roaring 20's

Introductory comments

The poems that follow were written in my twenties as a way of processing the thoughts and ideas, even styles or entire lines of other poets and philosophers that I was exposed to in college and at the university and weaving that together with the feelings and pains and loss and confusion I was experiencing. The poem **Collage** is a perfect example of this, as the name already suggests.

In some of them, though, when I now read them, I can see glimpses of my own voice coming through amidst the voices of those that came before me. Where it becomes more of me expressing myself, rather than someone else's style or wording used to express me.

The poem which, for me, stands out in this context is **To Hamlet**. I can still remember how and when I wrote it and what my reaction to it was.

I was living in a small apartment with a friend, going to the University to study Philosophy and English Literature and Linguistics. We lived right under the roof, so the walking space inside the rooms was tiny. My desk fit perfectly into one of the corners, mainly because I built it myself to do just that. It was really simple: just a piece of wood cut to fit, held up by two chocks that were propped underneath. It was at that desk that the urge to pen **To Hamlet** overtook me. I wrote the poem in under five minutes. It simply spilled out of me like an overturned urn.

When I reread the poem that I had just written, I felt that, for the very first time, there was a spark of me in those

lines somewhere. All the other poems leading to it had been more a poetic or rhetoric exercise. Here I was finally being honest with myself, my feelings, and my role in them. I was no longer pretending a persona to create an effect. I actually *was* the effect. I was speaking from an inner acceptance of myself and my engagement with life, not what I thought might be nice to consider expressing.

It was an unexpected disclosure of my soul, like a breakthrough to some part of myself, that I had not known of or tapped into much before. The experience left me awed, hopeful and frightened at the same time, feelings, which have since surfaced together repeatedly.

The poem **Of Poetry** is one of my favorites from the era. The circularity and subsequent failure of the poem I still find extremely appealing. It is also one of the rare poems I actually worked on over and over to get it to be where I wanted, literally for decades. I will let you decide if you think it can now hold its own.

Fire

To punish Prometheus,
Zeus bound him to a rock
And sent an eagle to pluck out
His liver.
And still, Prometheus was not broken.
Though his body was bound,
His spirit was free.

To punish Man,
Zeus bound him to passion
And created woman to steal
His heart.
My body is bound,
As is my spirit.
Thus I differ from Prometheus,
And liken Sisyphus.

Ascending the Throne

There came a day,
When Zeus defeated Cronos.
And there will come a day,
When the heart defeats the mind.
But Jaweh,
The jealous god,
Defeated both,
And the crucifixion followed in his wake.

The Mirror

Sometimes,
When I can shove Narcissus
Aside for a moment,
I see Hamlet
Staring back at me
From the depth of the pool.
And when I reach for the stone,
To disperse
His horrid features,
I am inhibited.
And only Echo
Of distant laughter
Can bring Narcissus
Back again.

• • • • •

The Aphorisms of
D. R. Zimmer

Introductory comments

Some thoughts can be expressed neither in song nor poetry. They are simple commentary on life or personal insights that aspire to universal truth. I have here chosen to call them *aphorisms*.

They are the product of good conversations I have had with others, summed up in a few lines, or acumens I have thought to have gained along the way. Some are rewordings of other's discernments to more closely fit what they mean to me, a boiling down to my own personalized essence, if you will.

In my daily work I have occasionally cited these phrases to others. However, it seemed silly to reference myself as the author, "*As I have previously said...*" Thus, I have attributed them to the mind of D.R. Zimmer, a person from the epistolary I am part of, together with one of my very best friends, Chris Kelly and a few other very interesting characters. The book was released in 2019 under the title *I'm O.K., Doc.!* and is also available through Conscious Quarters.

The aphorisms, just as the poems and songs, are also arranged chronologically by date of execution.

The Aphorisms of D.R. Zimmer

The human race has a marvelous tendency to ask superfluous questions, and an even more marvelous tendency to come up with superfluous answers.

Language arose out of the fear of silence.

Lack of confidence is what keeps most men from attaining their dreams. Over confidence is what destroys them.

Death is that aspect of the game of life that makes it worth playing.

Graves, like words, are always empty.

Why is it that we find fire so fascinating? Perhaps, it is because deep within the flame we see our own lives flicker away: we slowly grow, then come to climax in one brilliant display of light and energy, and fade until we are no more than a dying ember. Yet, we see hope within such flames. We know, that given the proper fueling, even the smallest flint can once again become a

roaring fire. It is in such thoughts that we yearn for an afterlife...and seek religion.

If you want to liberate people, let them be free!

Sometimes honesty and kindness are mutually exclusive terms.

It is said, "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword." This maxim can be extended to read: "He who lives by his beliefs, dies by his beliefs," a concept practiced only by the very few. For the general populace, however, the aphorism would ring true if written: "He who lives not by his beliefs, dies by someone else's."

Lastly, I am an intellectual incapable of handling the discrepancy between the Bondage of Reason and the Freedom of Thought.

The more I know, the more I realize I know nothing. So, why do I strive for knowledge so ferociously?

Don't force yourself to become who you thought you would be! Change who you thought you would be, to become who you are.

It's not what happens to us that defines who we are, it's what we do with what happens to us that allows us to define who we want to be.

Our personal power is defined not by what we have the strength to possess or control, but by what we have the strength to let go.

Only when we stop comparing ourselves to others are we truly incomparable.

If you don't know where you want to go, you may wind up where someone else wants to have you.

What we say about others says more about us than it does about them.

To be compassionate with others I first need to be compassionate with myself!

When I know what I want, and how to get there, the probability of my actually reaching my destination is much greater than if I put my head down and just start marching.

Going around in a circle can also build momentum!

When I think back to who and how I was a few years ago, I think back smiling at myself as I was then: younger, more naïve; and I am grateful that it seems that I have become wiser, more mature, more centered. It also helps me amid turmoil, because I realize that in a few years I will be thinking those very same things about myself as I am now. That realization really helps me put a perspective on the wisdom I feel today and lets me access a certain level of humility!

If you've asked a question, you need to endure the answer.

Everyone you meet comes with baggage. The trick in any relationship is to love each other so much, that you are willing to help each other unpack.

You can't expect to hit what you don't aim for.

The great thing about warring with yourself for so long is that, eventually, you're bound to win.

Trying to change what is, is like trying to move a blanket upon which you are lying. If you want to change the place of the blanket, you've first got to change your own position.

It is easy to misunderstand one-another. It's understanding that takes effort.

The fastest way to change something is to do something differently!

To be completely rational you must first lose your senses. To think, you need to go inside your mind. To (make) sense, you need to go inside your body.

I was not who I thought I was until I became who I had always known I would be.

Our worst enemy is ourselves. And we cannot fight ourselves to win. We can only love ourselves. That is all that is required for victory.

Self-Reflection is the true reason for our existence.

True art holds a mirror in front of us, within which we learn to recognize ourselves more completely.

The reason why I was more centered as a teenager was not because I had less responsibility, but because I listened to more music.

If you want to know how to conquer your fear, find out for what you burn. There is no apprehension in what you burn for. Fire is impervious to fear.

If you want to help people, one of the key factors is, knowing when to stop.

Everything we do has consequences. So does everything we don't do.

A relationship becomes real when you begin to find out more about yourself than about the other person.