

Poetry Series

Barry Middleton
- poems -

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Barry Middleton()

I was born in 1946 in a small town at the edge of the Mississippi delta. The town and surrounding countryside would have been great subject matter for Norman Rockwell paintings. Much of that landscape and many of my experiences there are reflected in my poetry. As time progressed I realized I was blessed to have been born in interesting times and in an interesting place.

I was educated in the parochial school system in Mississippi and graduated High School in 1964. I attended Spring Hill College in Mobile Alabama and graduated from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale Illinois with a BS Degree in Psychology in 1969.

After graduation, I worked as a school teacher in the then segregated African American school system in my home town and later as a social worker in Orlando Florida where I worked with all kinds of troubled and abused children.

In 1987 I graduated from Rollins College in Orlando with an MA Degree in Counseling. For the remainder of my career I worked as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor at Venice Hospital, in private practice, and as a group specialist at Sarasota Florida's public hospital.

But the most important accomplishments of my life have been watching my son grow up and having the opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream to write and especially to write poetry.

2020

twenty twenty is calling me
beckoning serenity

I may not live to see the day
but I accept it come what may

one to five is all I get
a brief and cold and cruel vignette

still I am told it is decreed
regardless what I think I need

the Universe is deaf and blind
the stars already are aligned

twenty twenty beckons me
to come and join infinity

Barry Middleton

A Changing Light

I love the light of afternoon
the gold before the sun must set

the shadows reach out to the east
the end of day brings no regret

the greens are greener than the spring
and yet the fall is drawing near

the air is stirring with the clouds
embracing earth and atmosphere

from where I sit to quietly wait
I know that soon the day will end

content from how the show begins
I take my lessons from the wind

so I will wait and I will watch
for every scene upon this stage

as colors morph in changing light
till day has turned the final page

Barry Middleton

A Beautiful Day

a beautiful day
does not take away the ache I feel

I do not speak
of lost love or the agony of grief

I limp and totter
as a sunny breeze stirs the air

I think for a moment
of the miles I used to walk alone

today is different
a heavy burden is my companion

Barry Middleton

A Beautiful Woman

I heard the heart of poetry
I was inspired by the curve of space
and by the breath of summer

I found the beautiful woman
in the garden of desire we met
in the still air I awaited her kiss

she gave to me the thunder moon
the soul of the lightning
the esplanade of stardust

and so I write for her a poem
of beauty and passion's embrace
the rose in the setting sun

and so I give to her a token
that she might read my thoughts
and I would win her smile

I heard the heart of poetry
I dreamed of the flash of her eyes
and the breath of a summer night

Barry Middleton

A Beggar

She does not beg for peace,
her needs are much too dear.

A winter wind chills the street,
the leaves have left the trees.

Her clothes are hopeless rags,
her ancient eyes are empty.

She cannot see the sad beauty,
the ashen sky above the city.

She is blind to the bustling park
beside the ghostly cathedral.

She is blind to the artist's wares
that draw the market crowds.

She blesses each passing footstep,
whether for a gift or disregard.

Barry Middleton

A Bridge To Home

To swim the river was to risk death;
but I have returned to the river;
and now I see there is a bridge.

Before, it was hidden around a bend;
it was obscured by fog and mist;
it was mysterious like the farther bank.

Men die but once; so why am I afraid?
Across the bridge must wait eternity,
where once I lived in perfect harmony.

But death, I believe, is not like life.
Is a pristine river still flowing there?
Is there a hidden lost bridge to home?

Barry Middleton

A Bright Disguise

death wore a bright disguise
deceiving me with lies
and unaware I opened up the door

and yes I let him in
I thought he was a friend
he laid a golden box upon my floor

he quickly left the room
no hint of pain or doom
there was no clue to offer up a threat

so hear my story well
and save yourself from hell
perhaps you may avoid deception's net

don't open up that box
when something gently knocks
for you may wish to get a better view

or like me you'll regret
when death collects the debt
and you discover all the interest due

Barry Middleton

A Broken Promise

if love is a promise in spring
so love may as surely take wing
for springtime must end
though lovers pretend
what love's frail illusion can bring

no love is a union of souls
to hold us until we grow old
for love seems to fade
like spring's masquerade
when seasons return to the cold

so love will await the refrain
the seasons are ever to blame
for love will know fall
and winter's dark pall
until only memories remain

Barry Middleton

A Buddha Garden

the Buddha was the comfort of surrender
weathered so by rain and wind
that his very presence
spoke in silence

this Buddha had not suffered from desire
the moss grew on him like truth
arising from an awakening
of its source

in the absolute stillness of the garden
the cessation of all suffering
found the noble harmony
of the path

the stolid Buddha's serenity guided me
to know that quiet freedom
if only for the moment
in its peace

Barry Middleton

A Child

wanderer of blue eyes
and silver seeking hair
following a white moth
you will not wonder long
why white wings transform
to green leaves and orange fruit
in a twinkling as the wind shifts
you want neither intoxicant
nor philosophy
nor squirming guesses
but turning your head
to your smiling mother
you laugh
and scan the grass
for newness

Barry Middleton

A Child's Garden

I think I was just ten or twelve,
and more like ten I'd say.
The past is always hard to delve;
some memories drift away.

But when somebody throws a switch,
it all comes back to me.
Although there always is a hitch,
a lesson I might see.

My garden plot was very small,
but I had worked it well.
It fed the family one and all,
but gave no crop to sell.

My garden was like poetry,
that only reached a few;
and like a prayer not just for me,
but maybe also you.

Barry Middleton

A Common Wish

I do not need a grand reward
I only want a guide
I wish to join the winning team
if god is on their side

it's not a rare uncommon plea
to rise above the crowd
and when at last the day is done
to drift beyond a cloud

the world is a confusing place
we all desire the same
and most of us are satisfied
with very scant acclaim

and so I ask these questions still
when will we find release
since every soul is much the same
why can't we live in peace

Barry Middleton

A Confined Sonnet

I was denied the forest deep,
and all the secrets it might keep.
For I was vanquished to the town
as circumstances gathered round.

And it is true the roads we take
may lead to ways we can't forsake
until we find the rocking chair,
and take a room beneath the stair.

The present challenge seems to be
preparing for eternity,
and holding on to peace of mind
despite the fate of all mankind.

But I yet seek that woodland track
where I will rest and not come back.

Barry Middleton

A Constant Fire

the sun is fading from my view
obscuring everything I knew
I trust that it will rise again for me

it is the only constant fire
its faithful heat fulfills desire
it is more resolute than fading love

love is a comet's cold deceit
a blaze of light that brings no heat
and streaks away to tease the universe

the setting sun marks the years
recording all my hopes and fears
and melts away the frost of bitter grief

I only ask for time to share
a dream or two without despair
before the fire surrenders to the cold

Barry Middleton

A Crown

darkness filters into light
sunrise brings no vision
diamonds are charred and burnt
sallow memory weeps

yet for sorrow there is song
the dove croons its mourning
the mockingbird cheers dawn
but man is exiled from nature

the poet sees the contrast
he shines a light on fears
to bring a jeweled crown
and bury the sins of mankind

the sun rises over the sea
and its lyric is like a prayer
that men embrace the earth
that we embrace our kingdom

Barry Middleton

A Dark Greeting

The darkness of the night
is veiled in overcast;
and stars reveal no light.
I gaze across the sea;
no sail is visible,
no ship to comfort me.
The whisper of the surf
recalls a spirit quest
beyond my humble birth.
To die in paradise,
provides a just reward,
and I have paid the price.
I cannot ask for more;
this is my journey's end
upon an empty shore.
Alone amid the gloom,
with silence palpable,
I turn to greet the tomb.

Barry Middleton

A Daydream Victory

the images have never died
I live within a daydream still
I have resisted all advice

I searched to find a messenger
but often I would feel regret
then I relied on metaphor

for life is just a beating heart
a shifting star that moves along
to steal our legacy and pride

I knew a stone can never die
so I became a stolid rock
beneath the whisper of a brook

and I may find a place in time
or rest unnoticed by the breeze
if paradise ignores my pleas

a daydream yet is all too brief
few men outlast the final verse
to stay where waters gently flow

but I have left a fragile clue
along the paths of yesterday
where daydreams live eternally

Barry Middleton

A Dream Of Peace

I am asleep within a dream
of peace descending on the world,
and purest rain to cleanse the blood.
The guns are still, the flags are furled.

And here alone within a grove
of trees more ancient than desire,
I am returned to Eden's grace;
the breeze is a celestial choir.

The human race has found its home,
a garden and a silver lake
to feed and shelter every soul.
I was asleep, but now I wake.

If only dreams could find the day,
with sunrise on a gentle strand,
with humankind at last as one,
we might restore the promised land.

Barry Middleton

A Father

It's just a number on the calendar,
just another stone carved date,
easily tripped upon in the graveyard,
sometimes tripped over in memory.

I swore I'd be a better father than he,
but then how does one ever know
no matter what kindness children say?
I never meant to be so far away.

I told my father I loved him as if
it is possible to love absence like
waiting for cooling summer rain
breaking through the August heat.

No, absence is not love, it is hunger,
it was a hunger filled with laughter,
friends, soft kisses came and went.
Loss is like being a son or a father.

Does anyone get to keep their father,
to outdo him in devotion, sacrifice,
to be there even in death to reassure,
like a mossy boulder in a quiet forest?

Barry Middleton

A Field Of Flowers

a field of flowers speaks to me
a muted memory from the past
when summer was a child's bright toy
that seemed to fade and flee too fast

for all year long I counted time
with hash marks striking off the days
as I awaited patient June
to set the meadowlands ablaze

with school time obligations done
and spring and dogwood past their prime
I made my way into the hills
where nature yet composed its rhyme

it rested just below the path
that years before had been a road
a clearing faithful as the sun
displayed once more its motherload

the garden knew no gardener's care
beyond the majesty of grace
the seasons were its destiny
and no one knew its hiding place

but now those hills are gentrified
another man has claimed my spot
and built a home to call his own
and tamed my precious meadow lot

Barry Middleton

A Final Dance

I long to walk a barefoot path again,
in the soft summer sand of a childhood creek.
I long to move silently on wet autumn leaves,
to drift in the earth tones after rain,
and be showered by a shimmering limb,
where a frightened squirrel tries to hide.
Yet I still feel the sand, and in another season,
I can smell the air of the harvest morning.
Within my time machine,
I can stop and listen to the crackling sound
beneath my boots of a hard frost of sparkling
diamonds in the pasture of a cedar valley,
the trees decorated in crystal prisms.
I can see the white light of sacred snow
revealing every contour of lost secrets
on a hillside of gray trees.
I can feel the fire in the wood stove,
and hear it ticking and cooling like time,
in a cabin in deep woods. And moving on,
I return to spring in a glass of lemonade,
golden as a daffodil, sweet as a first kiss.
I cannot go there but I do,
I cannot touch a dream,
but I can feel it in my heartbeat,
like a movie I have seen before,
like the final dance that ends the year.

Barry Middleton

A Fisherman's Prayer

I feel I've been out fishing fifty years
and just as leave would call it quits for now
and throw the whole catch back for other men
to cast their lines upon and dream their dreams.

I searched across the waters far from home
and tried to calculate what waits for me
before the liquid future takes me in,
the stream of life that sweeps me to the tomb.

And I would pull my anchor for one wish
and free the living and the dead alike
if I could catch what hides behind a bend,
what might well be as fishermen pretend.

Barry Middleton

A Flash Of Lighting

a flash of lightning lit the sky
the solitary moment
and then the darkness fell again
to bring a brief contentment

and there I saw illuminated
all of time transformed
I saw the silent planets turn
the day that light was born

I saw the wars and I saw peace
as tranquil night returned
I saw a glowing ember too
where fires of passion burned

I heard a schoolyard melody
I watched the children play
and far away a church bell rang
to mark the end of day

I saw the mastery of tides
that blessed a hidden beach
and far off lands I dreamed about
that I might never reach

a still and peaceful lake appeared
I stood confused by grace
and heard an angel cry aloud
forsaken in this place

and in that flash a lily bloomed
just freshened by the rain
and so I knew the storm would yield
if lilies yet remain

the trees were bending in the wind
and men were bent with age
and yet the light proclaimed desire
was writ on every page

and still the thunder like a bomb
did shake my fragile heart
but light would come to show the way
and hope would play its part

four horsemen stood upon a hill
and watched the storm with me
the wonder of the lightning flash
revealed eternity

but then I saw the wind subside
and sunrise graced the morn
the prelude to salvation's light
when newer souls are born

I was consumed by night and yet
the light was so profound
I saw attendant grace and hope
where silent gods are found

Barry Middleton

A Ghostly Wind

if I could only stop time
freeze a raindrop in midair
a moment in the storm

I would move amid it all
exploring invisibility
and dance with your soul

still you are cloud trapped
in an illusion of stillness
when the lightning strikes

but you may wonder then
what was that ghostly wind
that blew away a memory

Barry Middleton

A Gift

you gave to me a gift
I wish to soon repay
you saved me from despair
to help me find my way

although you do not know
you think the debt is yours
your love was recompense
and evermore endures

therefore I grant you this
I must reward you still
perhaps beyond the dusk
when evening brings a chill

my golden star will blaze
a beacon shining through
to guide the midnight path
and light the way for you

Barry Middleton

A Gift And A Reminder

Some are born to celebrate,
rushing headlong into summer,
thrilling to morning awakenings.
Sleeping air conditioners drone,
and hibernating lawnmowers growl.

Ah but those are memories.
Here in Florida, grumpy old men
complain of heat, and curse humidity,
till I remind them once again
of ice, and snow, and slush, and mud.

Some are born to celebrate
every season like a wandering child.
We cannot wait to get outdoors.
Every sunrise is an adventure.
Every storm is a gift, and a reminder.

~~~~~

Another poem inspired by Ray Bradbury's delightful novel, *Dandelion Wine*.

Barry Middleton

# A Girl

I never will forget her kiss  
she was my universe

she was there when it began  
a hundred lifetimes ago

she was an old and mystic soul  
and I knew her tears

and she heard my plea  
she heard the stars and moon

she heard my love and grief  
and she heard death

she knew mysteries  
that could save me from fear

she was like a chain of clover  
connecting everything

Barry Middleton

# A Harvest

I read the saddest tale today,  
an image peaceful as could be,  
and yet a dream we all must dread,  
of apples dropping from their tree.

As one by one the apples fell,  
the dreamer wakened with a start,  
and reached to grasp his telephone,  
then held it to his trembling heart.

The old man knew he must pretend,  
that ripened moments long forgot,  
will never fall as apples do,  
to lie beneath the orchard lot.

He quietly dialed the telephone,  
a number that he often calls,  
if just to hear a friendly voice,  
before that final apple falls.

He listened as the silence spoke,  
of epochs death must now erase,  
for soon his heart could beat no more,  
as apples found their resting place.

Barry Middleton

# A Haunting Shadow

a shadow haunts me day and night  
and I hear what it said  
yet I will never understand  
the whispers that I dread

although I beg some fatal cause  
that might explain my fear  
despair is all this ghost reveals  
to make the misery clear

the greatest horror I was told  
that I deserve this pain  
is foolishness personified  
whose dogma is inane

if there were justice in this world  
then evil souls would burn  
and good would gain a just reward  
for all that it might earn

the innocent would never die  
if kindness wore the crown  
compassion then would reign supreme  
as evil was brought down

that's not the way of universe  
the shadow said to me  
that's but a wish which humans share  
for righteous destiny

Barry Middleton



# A Heal All

Guess I forgot to pray;  
that's not the cause  
of my dismay.

The lonely part is waiting,  
and all this midnight  
annotating.

I don't like to admit  
jumbled feelings  
I acquit.

The poems hide my fears,  
my sadness, doubts,  
and acrid tears.

I pen this quiet prayer;  
I know that it was  
always there.

I hope that heaven hears.  
I have not prayed  
for many years.

But when these feelings fall  
I think, perhaps  
prayer can heal all.

Barry Middleton

# A Hedged Bet

the scarlet fire of the setting sun  
may be heaven or may be hell

and every man must pause to look  
and wish that he could tell

and far beyond the horizon's gate  
where every answer hides

the mystery waits within the clouds  
beyond the restless tides

and foolish is the careless man  
who does not hedge his bet

to clear the way at the end of day  
and cover all his debt

Barry Middleton

# A Home For Rain

I know the rain will find a home  
for I do believe in destiny  
as lilies rise to drink their fill  
without debate of equity

the cloud conspires acquiring wealth  
and yet lets go of selfish greed  
for it must burst to grace the land  
to bring new life to every seed

yet man is blind to lessons there  
and hoards the blessings of the earth  
his stores may rot as others starve  
it seems the legacy of birth

but nature shares its vital trust  
that rain may find a worthy heir  
in bloom and brier and ripest fruit  
to save the world from bleak despair

Barry Middleton

# A Home On The Bayou

how many have I seen  
the waters slow and dark  
that haunted secret paths  
that time almost forgot

within the occult swamp  
the truth is quite apparent  
the home of dinosaurs  
reveals the end of time

I learned my lessons there  
and now I would return  
beneath the cypress dome  
where bayou waters flow

for everything must end  
everything that lives  
looks to the sky one day  
the fireball of its death

we like to choose the place  
to sleep eternally  
I choose the slow black waters  
how many have I seen

Barry Middleton

# A Home We May Embrace

A curse conceals the moon tonight.  
We cannot see the shore.  
The blackness settles over us.  
The gods we must implore.

Please carry us beyond our grief,  
and bring us to a land  
where peace and hope may yet survive,  
if that is your command.

The sky is black, the sea is dark,  
but fear lies in our wake.  
And you have been our trusted guide.  
Our faith we won't forsake.

We do not know the words to speak  
to earn your sacred grace.  
Please light our way unto a port,  
a home we may embrace.

~~~~~

A reaction to The Syrian refugee crisis of 2016.

Barry Middleton

A House Divided

we will never find salvation
we never learn from our mistakes
a dark shadow follows us

we wander the same blind alleys
we court the same dead-end dreams
the same self-deceptions

our soul is a house divided
utopian fire and the thirst for peace
are quenched by avarice

we conjure redemptive gods
to raise us from despair
their only answer is to look within

meanwhile a universal clock ticks
empty stars shine down
upon a house that cannot stand

Barry Middleton

A Kiss From Long Ago

The sweetness of your lips
and kisses I remember,
were lost to early snow
the last day of September.

The cold had come my way
as if it would remind;
the heart always betrays,
and love is always blind.

But then an omen came
of how I love you still,
as snowflakes kissed the earth
outside my windowsill.

A scarlet bird played there;
his feathers kissed the snow,
and I recalled your touch,
your kiss from long ago.

Barry Middleton

A Lasting Dream

if death is but a lasting dream
then I will gladly sleep

there I may roam into the past
of memories I can keep

cool green days of quiet groves
return again to me

and then I am a child again
my spirit is set free

when I crest the final hill
to see what can be found

I know a valley waits for me
my soul at last unbound

there I will find my family
and all that I hold dear

the peace of Eden's lasting grace
beyond all earthly fear

Barry Middleton

A Legacy Of Hope

like shadows at noon disappearing
the legacy of common men
must fade with passing time

so every man prays to leave a mark
for some it is the land itself
monuments in country graveyards

it may haunt the rambling rooms
of an old mansion
that lingers on the boulevard

others leave notebooks on a shelf
a message from the past
to pass into the future

still the only legacy of worth
dwells in our progeny
our sons and daughters and hopes

Barry Middleton

A Lifetime

an old man sits on a bench
and looks out at the green lake

he thinks in the past tense
of all that was and is no more

in spring he remembers winter
a cold wind occupies his mind

in summer he recalls the spring
the sweet aroma of wildflowers

in the silence he hears an echo
a small boy playing in the park

he carries a thousand memories
and hums a time worn melody

an old man sits beside the lake
and quietly looks back on his life

for a moment his withered hands
remind him of all they once held

Barry Middleton

A Little More

I need more light in my old blue eyes.
I need more memories and a few more sighs.

So what am I supposed to do?
Light a candle, find a pew?

That's not my style, I look within,
to find the light where dreams begin.

I guess the gods did put it there,
I get no credit, I took the dare.

And so I reach as well I can,
down to the core of one old man.

There's still some light within these eyes,
to search my memories for a few more sighs.

Barry Middleton

A Love Song

I think I'll end this story with a love song.
I hope that you will also sing along.

The love I'm thinking of is not a person.
It is about a love that's always certain.

It is about my life and how I loved it.
I would go on but I may have to quit.

I found where rivers run with gold and silver,
where icy mountain waters made me shiver.

In the deepest forest's darkened shade,
I knew the beauty of the glen and glade.

I loved my childhood and our simple home,
the smell and texture of the southern loam.

And I do love my far flung family,
though I don't often show that openly.

I love the friends I have and those who passed.
I never would accept a different cast.

No matter how, no matter where I went,
I recall it all as heaven sent.

I loved the sky, the forest and the sea,
the stars and Universe that sets me free.

Barry Middleton

A Lullaby For Mother

this lullaby is not sung by mother
it is sung for her

and every man has two mothers
the one who birthed and nurtured us

and the one who was the source
of all that we may know

I speak of the earth of course
and of something beyond the earth

every man is indebted to her
she is the force of life in the universe

now some refuse to grant her honor
for they forget their starting point

she is the place we leave to wander
and the destination that we seek

someday we know that she will die
the earth returns to stardust

before she sleeps we sing this lullaby
to ease her restlessness

and yes I'm sure that god is feminine
she is the mother of us all

Barry Middleton

A Maiden's Eyes

I see a silver mountain lake
I only see the waters

I see the river deep and wild
the muddy liquid delta

I see a bayou in the swamp
as black as ebony

and once again a hillside creek
is whispering to me

I see the waters of the world
I hear the ocean rise

as moonlit ripples flash and flirt
just like a maiden's eyes

Barry Middleton

A Moment Of Clarity

how foolish to think otherwise
of the sun
'I desire it to shine because it shines'
those words for once rang true
a confused poet had a moment of clarity

looking out on a gray day
I know my mood is gray
because the day is gray
the trees are black against an ashen sky
'I desire it to shine because it shines'

in winter I wish for spring
not this false bud of an early orchid
but the full bloom of it
the red blushing lips of the rose
'I desire it to shine because it shines'

~~~~~

The quotes are from Wallace Stevens'  
Uncollected Poems, Desire & the Object.

Barry Middleton

# A Moment's Awe

precious stars comfort the night  
rain falls on desert roses  
seasons welcome autumn leaves  
with secrets love discloses

all these things and so much more  
that bring a moment's awe  
remind me of the grace of life  
for they contain no flaw

and so I will attend to these  
the majesty of hope  
the silver moon amid the clouds  
that lends the strength to cope

it's true so much of life is pain  
but still I greet the day  
quite heedless of the fearful times  
for darkness cannot stay

Barry Middleton



# A Mountain Hymn

I climbed up on a mountain  
that is when you saw me cry  
I could see the past and future  
I could see the day I die

I searched the sandy sunset  
and I saw the desert roses  
and I knew I had the answers  
to what every man supposes

I saw the eagles praying  
for I had paid attention  
and I whispered to the sky  
of my pain and vain pretension

it was then I heard the mountain  
as it wept along with me  
and I knew within that moment  
that my life was just a key

and I knew a door would open  
you would take me by my hand  
if I stumbled you would lift me  
you'd be there till I could stand

you were with me on the mountain  
where the roses bloom at night  
and you told me you were watching  
and it all would turn out right

you were with me in the valley  
and I know you follow still  
and you will be besides me  
as I crest the final hill

when I ride that silent river  
far beyond the great divide  
I will know that you are with me  
where you promised to abide

I'll not forget that mountain  
that time you saw me cry  
I could see the past and future  
far beyond the day I die

Barry Middleton

## A Mundane View

beyond the blind grass of the lawn  
a man gathers pine cones in a bag  
a dry blue southern wind is blowing  
mute ripples ruffle the tattered flag

two old ladies prattle near the pool  
with nothing much to talk about  
but failing health and surgeries  
they celebrate their fear and doubt

spring arrived on a quiet corner  
because I saw a dogwood bloom  
this very morning near the car wash  
I ignored an old fool stuck in doom

wind blows and quickly the sun sets  
night falls and silence soon forgets

Barry Middleton

# A Mystery

I believe it is a orchid  
to be so pure and white  
so high up in that tree  
and nearly out of sight

it's not a sprite or nymph  
they are no more they say  
who could place it there  
not any child at play

too small to be a ghost  
too bright to be the news  
it may be watching us  
and hiding other clues

it's certainly not a bride  
lost in the lonely wood  
perhaps we'll never know  
perhaps we never should

maybe a vagrant dream  
that never had an end  
that landed in our tree  
blown there by the wind

the puzzle can't be known  
the secret safe it seems  
like riddles never solved  
of orchids ghosts and dreams

Barry Middleton

# A Naked Star

out there in some eternity  
exists a naked star  
it has no name it knows no god  
though it has traveled far

but in its anonymity  
it is a lot like us  
and it was born and it will die  
for it is written thus

and yet it does not feel a thing  
and it is not afraid  
as it exists in nothingness  
and dies where shadows fade

it dies like us and from its dust  
another star is born  
and when I leave the planet earth  
my son will greet the morn

the naked star must cease to be  
in supernova light  
but stardust lives eternally  
as newborn stars ignite

Barry Middleton

# A New Metaphor

death is not the setting sun  
the sun will rise again  
it is not the silence of midnight  
for dreams are never silent  
it is not a symphony ending  
for then comes the applause

we need a new metaphor  
death is not a crouching tiger  
death is much more cruel than that  
it is the blood ground into the dirt  
the red meat left behind  
the soul in elemental compost

death is not a burning house  
it is not a scream of agony  
death is the most utter aftermath  
it is not the smoldering ruin  
it is the future that never will be  
it is ashes cold and washed by rain

death is not a journey to the sun  
it is not the embrace of stardust  
not the tears of the universe  
death is cold  
depleted  
the darkness beyond all darkness

Barry Middleton

# A Peaceful Sunrise

the darkness of the east is fading  
a glow that claims that hope exists

the memories of night confound  
as dreams dissolve in morning mist

in blind confusion fires of dawn  
remind me of the blaze of war

the smoky haze of morning fog  
conceals with guile my guiding star

until my eyes are open wide  
and dreams fade in the flaming sky

I know that I am safe from harm  
I pray for souls who had to die

I pray for widows and lost fathers  
the children most who had to pay

extinguish war and bring them hope  
a dawn of peace to light their way

Barry Middleton

# A Poem Is Like A Mountain

a poem is like a mountain  
a vantage point

it is like an ocean  
a place for meditation

a poem is like an aged tree  
wise and resolute

it is sure of itself  
its meaning is in its being

it is ever new  
like a rose garden in spring

a poem is like a mountain  
an attempt at heaven

it is like a faithful lover  
it is the awe of totality

Barry Middleton



# A Poetry Of Light

There is a poetry of death  
and night.

There is a poetry of love  
and light.

My poetry can ramble far  
and wide,

or poetry can be right by  
my side.

For poetry is everywhere  
I go.

Within the universe,  
the stars bestow

a beacon for my poetry  
to find

a path to home,  
and what I left behind.

Barry Middleton

## A Poet's Grief (Clint's Grief)

Why must poets bleed  
for the empty ache  
of lost love, of lost youth,  
the wickedness of death,  
the dying pain of time,  
and the agony of memories.  
My tears are for the weight  
of all unending grief,  
for the silent inner war,  
and for all brutality  
of nations and of men.  
I weep for the shame,  
the endurance of hate,  
the frailty of caring.  
It is a ripping knife  
that tears a heart,  
and kills the soul  
with no savior to redeem.  
Planets whirl, moonbeams fall,  
and evil creeps like a maniac  
who stalks with hatred.  
There is no armor,  
the monster comes,  
hooded and red eyed  
in the terrible night.  
Speechless is my pain,  
no tongue to speak the loss,  
my love, my hope, my faith,  
my peace, my soul, my life.

Barry Middleton

# A Poet's Story

the poet never knew his story  
he wrote but would revise  
he made his plan and forged ahead  
but plans are but a guise

he went the way he had to go  
sometimes he had no choice  
he found himself in alleyways  
till time revealed his voice

he learned to look from left to right  
and found what some have missed  
a flower by the garden path  
the morning dew had kissed

he found the snake so beautiful  
yet with its deadly bite  
the good and evil of the earth  
revealed the poet's plight

and it may be he saw too much  
he searched the endless wind  
but never could he find the truth  
of how all stories end

Barry Middleton

# A Poet's Test

a castoff from a distant land  
conspired with night and poetry

composing darkness and the dawn  
the weaving of eternity

but in the dismal hush of night  
or in the blush of early morn

he heard no answer in reply  
no solace for his bitter scorn

he truly wished to sort it out  
divining blind infinity

to know the truth of stars at last  
in seeking out their mimicry

his work fell short of grand desire  
when he at last was laid to rest

returning to his primal home  
his litany had failed its test

Barry Middleton

# A Psalm Of Blessings

this small circle of my world  
is nearly perfect  
I have silence and peace  
the golden morning greets me  
spring is trembling in a lover's heart  
day waits for me like a budded rose

ah but just outside my hermit's wall  
the hungry monsters prowl  
I feel the knife of far off war  
I hear no whispering god  
I taste the air of hate and fear  
my circle is empty without hope

as I go out into the day  
I will not forget the pain and loss  
I will hold it close as I greet a friend  
I will listen to the sacred wind  
I will be grateful for my burden  
and I will pray and bless a stranger

Barry Middleton

# A Quiet Death

she only wanted grace  
searching for it in prayer  
she worked the land for it

and grace became a child  
and then her family  
but love was lost in death

she put to rest her dream  
before her husband died  
with all her children grown

as is the modern way  
she left her land one day  
too old to care for it

she dreamed of it again  
one final peaceful night  
her children came to her

her husband lived anew  
the family all around  
within the grace of home

Barry Middleton

# A Quiet Place

I know a place where I may go,  
where silence speaks to me.  
Beyond the pasture of the farm,  
there is a stalwart tree.  
There I will rest and pass the time,  
and dream and breathe a sigh.  
And there I see a cryptic date,  
carved on a beech nearby.  
I know my father etched it there,  
so many years ago,  
commemorating who knows what,  
for only he would know.  
And he has gone but in his place,  
alone I find my way.  
It's on the ridge above the glen,  
where I would often play.  
Now you could go along with me,  
and gaze upon our creek.  
Then you may hear the secret too,  
of how the woods can speak.  
The only sound is wind and time,  
and trees that gently sway,  
not much unlike the forest voice,  
that I heard yesterday.

Barry Middleton

# A Quiet Voice

the voice is quieter now  
but it is always near

it whispers from the trees  
defeating every fear

it beckons me to come  
and rest there in the wood

someday I know I will  
someday I know I should

and I will not resist  
the counsel of the shade

the voice is waiting there  
as pain and sorrows fade

it comforts me to know  
it speaks to me of fate

it whispers from the wood  
where ferns and lilies wait

Barry Middleton



# A Ride To Anywhere

does anyone leave childhood  
am I still that small smiling boy  
in the photograph  
after all the suffering

people like to compare  
whose pain was the best  
everyone feels grief and loss  
everyone feels betrayal

oh I envy those with easy death  
plane crashes and decapitating wrecks  
would ease the slow IV drip of death  
and sips of poison to kill the poison

I have prayed for a heart attack  
which likely guarantees  
I'll never have one  
as the gods seem out to torture me

the only consolation  
is wallowing in self pity  
and hiding from those who would  
heal me with cheerfulness

where is that boy now  
is he still behind these steely eyes  
is he still waiting at the bus stop  
for the last ride to anywhere

Barry Middleton

# A Rose

she placed the rose carefully  
into an onyx vase

a sprig of fern and greenery  
would add a final grace

all other testament was mute  
behind her brimming eye

only I could read her thought  
a silent last good-bye

still I may speak no more to say  
oh do not weep for me

I'll take the rose as if a kiss  
my soul at last is free

Barry Middleton

# A Sane Friend

suffering for sanity  
is the burden of humanity

sanity can be elusive  
and capricious and collusive

the world is crazy I am sure  
hold on tightly to endure

insanity is war and hate  
terror stalks to haunt our fate

and love should be serenity  
stretching to infinity

but love can end destructively  
often too impulsively

how is humanity to grow  
I pray but yet I do not know

but you and I can join our hands  
and hide a while from these demands

just one friend can be enough  
to fight for you when life gets rough

Barry Middleton

# A Shining On Dew

I skipped a rock  
half way across the pond.  
You said it sank into oblivion.

Atop the Indian mound  
we could see the forever  
of the smoke of yesterday.

I remember the cuffs  
of our jeans wet with dew  
and the sun on the grass.

We froze in awe  
when a golden deer  
paused by the dogwood.

Our dreams glimmered  
in the creek rocks  
like a secret treasure.

Somewhere in those hills  
an old beech still  
wraps us in its heart.

Only in the early dawn  
can we touch the quiet hand  
of all there ever was or will be.

Barry Middleton

# A Ship At Sea

a ship at sea in ghostly fog  
when all the world is gray

still plows its way to destiny  
beyond where shadows stay

the only sound upon the deck  
the footsteps of one man

who peers into the purblind gloom  
for sign of light or land

the ship it seems is in control  
there is no turning back

the mist is cool upon his face  
as gray fades into black

Barry Middleton

# A Shot Of Rum

pour me a shot of rum  
before I leave this place

so I may have the strength  
for destiny's embrace

I know I must depart  
still I would rather stay

but I am past the hope  
that I had yesterday

pour me a shot of rum  
before the bitter end

and please hand me the jug  
I just may find a friend

Barry Middleton

# A Shrouded Song

An incantation waits from me,  
not melodies of long ago,  
and not love songs in afterglow.

I remember these and more.  
I still recall the measures past  
the metronome could not outlast,

the rustic note of hill and grove,  
the tune of Sunday afternoon,  
the ballad of an amber moon.

I know I can't go home again.  
My river flows with harmony.  
Its final verse will set me free.

I gaze on stars as darkness falls.  
I know the silence holds for me  
a rhapsody of minor key.

Though all of life is interlude,  
the future hides at evening time,  
a shrouded song, a pantomime.

Barry Middleton

# A Sigh

there is a time not death  
the din and dealing past

the snake beneath a rock  
the old king is fast asleep

maidens still are weeping  
but do not weep for me

and so I rest one eye ajar  
beneath the mango tree

this comes of luck or grace  
how transient is this place

it may be just a moment  
the garden silently waits

and now I am a child again  
I hear the ticking clock

not a futile counting down  
I dream and watch the sun

Barry Middleton



# A Sigh In Spring

the earth breathes a sigh in the spring  
to see what the season will bring  
the air hints of blossoms today  
the perfume of April and May

and lovers may hear in the trees  
a pledge that arrives on the breeze  
new life and true love have arrived  
and all that the Spring has contrived

each year all mankind is reborn  
in Spring with the rise of each morn  
for Spring brings us hope that can last  
and a promise that winter has passed

Barry Middleton

# A Silent God

if ever he did speak in words  
for long he has been mute

and yet there is a whispered wind  
that I cannot dispute

for hints of sacred stars anoint  
the silence of the breeze

as if a lesson I must learn  
stirs here beneath the trees

the blue of sky reflects the sea  
in nurturing the view

the trees cast shadows on the lawn  
to bless the world anew

at sunset silent ghosts emerge  
a footstep on the stair

perhaps a quiet god may walk  
with darkness unaware

Barry Middleton

# A Silent Good Luck

My generation is passing on,  
but before we all depart,  
I have a silent wish for us,  
a 'good luck' from the heart.

A few died much too soon  
and left me long ago,  
but now I see a distant light,  
the place we all must go.

Beyond the light is mystery,  
and what is hiding there  
we only hope will be our peace,  
our wish and answered prayer.

Barry Middleton

# A Silver Lake

a silver lake in paradise  
waits for my return  
and calls to mind a childhood lake  
and lessons I would learn

my lake was once a quiet branch  
beside the river bed  
till providence would block its path  
so quiet waters spread

reflected there the fishermen  
had heard the mandate well  
to test the crystal waters store  
and till the gentle swell

just as the farmer tends the land  
of Eden's fertile field  
so also plows the fisherman  
to reap an ample yield

without the waters we would die  
they sanctify the earth  
to care and feed and teach us well  
the lesson of rebirth

and having been a fisherman  
I hope that I have earned  
that silver lake in paradise  
that waits for my return

Barry Middleton

# A Space Between

There is no need  
to feel the flame  
to know  
that there is heat.

There is no need  
to touch the sea  
or put it to my lips  
to know its briny nature.

I know great mysteries  
by the merest hint.

Life and death  
are close companions  
separated only by sensation.

I cannot see the roots  
of my beginning.

I cannot smell  
the smoke of autumn.

Yet I am acquainted  
with a space between  
as a man of middle years  
knows young children  
and old dogs.

Barry Middleton

# A Spell

there isn't much time  
for prayer or for rhyme  
the clock keeps ticking all day

the rain softly falls  
and a somber mood calls  
the sky is foreboding and gray

I cannot quite believe  
for the sharp winds deceive  
and hope only seems to betray

for the cold casts a spell  
like a dreaded death knell  
and grief that forever must stay

Barry Middleton

# A Sunset View

an aged couple in the park  
reminds me of a memory  
he gently holds her withered hand  
as twilight brings its mystery

then I recalled the tender smile  
and all the hope and dreams of dawn  
that sunset robs from broken hearts  
when every gleam of love has gone

are some immune to selfishness  
how else to pass the years with grace  
to share their lives without regret  
at last to find this peaceful place

for is that not the goal of love  
a bond in victory or defeat  
but some are cursed to greet the night  
alone as silent stars retreat

he stoops to pluck a homely bloom  
and gives it too his ancient bride  
she smiles and looks into his eyes  
they greet the sunset side by side

Barry Middleton

# A Tattered Hat

This ragged hat  
with tatters front and rear  
has eyes that cannot see  
and on its mouth  
no lips glisten.  
I found it in a cabin  
in the spring of '68.  
It cannot say  
so I surmise -  
a hobo left it there  
next to his gin bottle.  
He got it from  
a banker gentlemen  
for cleaning out his  
garbage cans.  
A tailor nearly  
took it home for his  
but settled on a derby.  
Once it fell into  
the lake and I saved  
it from a weedy death.  
I hope its next companion  
realizes how benign  
a world it is  
has not yet cast  
this hat aside.

Barry Middleton



# A Tethered Bird

A tethered bird  
that cannot fly  
is hope  
that cannot reach the sky.

The dream  
is once again deferred  
awaiting  
yet a whispered word.

The plan that in the end  
has failed,  
with truth and love  
forever veiled,

descends on darkest wing  
and doubt,  
and fears  
to let its sorrow out.

Barry Middleton

# A Thing Of Beauty

A thing of beauty is a moment's grief;  
the kiss of earth is but a fantasy.  
For beauty fades and dies without relief,  
a perished rose in frail mortality.  
Blossoming and hope must have an end,  
in time our passion and our rapture pale,  
regardless of the dreams that we pretend,  
and naught is left to even up the scale.  
The beauty of the world is quenched in death,  
the trees and gentle creatures are not saved,  
when every living thing is robbed of breath,  
and every soul within its horrid grave.  
A thing of beauty is a motive for despair;  
for beauty wanes like unrequited prayer.

Barry Middleton

# A Time To Grieve

the autumn is a time to grieve  
the year is well past middle age  
and I can see my resting place  
the final sunset waits for me

the colors of the leaves recall  
the childhood valley of my home  
the times and memories left behind  
that I will never see again

the fall was filled with earthen tones  
the creek with gems of polished stones  
in brown and burgundy and orange  
the maple reds and ghostly quartz

I often roamed into those hills  
my favorite time was after rain  
for then the world was carpeted  
to not betray my secret path

if I could go there even now  
I could escape but for a while  
as I did then to hide from pain  
in valley woodlands after rain

Barry Middleton

# A Toast To The Moon

I lift a toast to the moon  
you take my pain away  
but death is coming soon  
and then you come to stay

narcotic sleep brings dreams  
of love and destiny  
and night always redeems  
with midnight alchemy

moonlight transforms my fear  
for brief but precious hours  
as year adds on to year  
till fear has lost its powers

and when my soul departs  
then you may search for me  
you know our human hearts  
you come to set us free

you know that I must die  
and so you grieve my plight  
my glass is lifted high  
I toast the moon tonight

Barry Middleton

# A True Dream

I just want to be  
where the southern breeze  
shines down on a marmalade tree

with the sweet perfume  
of an orange grove's bloom  
where the fish are always free

in paradise  
I found the gold  
where the mangoes fall in June

now someone strums  
an old guitar  
beneath the autumn moon

I'll be content  
to pay the rent  
beneath a candy sky

and sing the sun  
into its sleep  
with a baby's lullaby

when I was young  
I had this dream  
and dreams sometimes come true

so here I'll stay  
where dolphins play  
with a girl that I once knew

I'll rest a while  
in a hammock's smile  
where the skies are always blue

and if you would  
then come with me  
these moments are too few

when the seabirds call  
and the shadows fall  
in the twilight of the day

I just want to be  
with the tropic breeze  
and the world so far away

Barry Middleton

# A True Friend

many years have come and gone  
I still recall that smile

I have wandered far from home  
as mile has led to mile

seasons come and seasons go  
until I see the end

then I come to know the loss  
of life without my friend

it may be death that steals a life  
or distance or neglect

so there should be a lesson there  
to nurture and protect

rarer than gold or precious gems  
the finest gift of earth

is kinship found with a loyal friend  
to grant life deeper worth

Barry Middleton

# A Trump Affair - A Parody

I went to a White House affair,  
and Trump and the clowns were there.  
The old buffoon, the tweeting tycoon,  
was combing his Clairol hair.

The V.P. he got drunk,  
and tripped on the elephant's junk.  
The elephant squeezed and cut the big cheese,  
and stunk the whole place with deplorable funk,  
the funk, the funk, the funk.

If the Congressmen take the dare,  
the Senate can end the affair,  
impeach the goon, the libs will swoon,  
for Pence doesn't bleach his hair.

The country is almost sunk,  
the elephant had to flunk,  
The elephant wheezed, excuse me please,  
it was not me it's was Trump that stunk,  
that stunk, that stunk, that stunk.

Barry Middleton



# A View From Space

the storm took away my memories  
I would return but there is nothing there  
the house is crushed like an eggshell  
the trees I knew salvaged for the fire

and time itself is like a tornado  
it scrambles the horizon with vine and bramble  
it is as if I walk in darkness once again  
the fields are filled with strange evolving crops

I look down from space on familiar landmarks  
I still can find the wreckage of the farm  
I see the horseshoe lake protected there  
a scope of hardwood and tupelo stand guard

from my vantage point the river is the same  
the creek still twists its way into the hills  
the secret lake reveals itself in a green valley  
the old iron bridge is now a slab of concrete

the city streets and places are the same  
but those I cherished are dead or dying  
now other souls crawl over those landscapes  
like ants seeking shelter from the blazing sun

Barry Middleton

# A View Of Possibility

when I have passed away  
the river will flow past the field  
green miracles sprout there like hope

the politicians will still lie  
their promises are autumn leaves  
money comes in through the back door

the world does not change  
because I objected to injustice  
because I was a man who wrote poetry

all that I could ever do  
was to point to the green river  
and pass along a view of possibility

the river flows onward in spring  
the crops are planted  
and autumn brings another harvest

Barry Middleton

# A Walk

Come walk with me this final mile,  
and grant to me a parting whim.  
We shan't go deep into the woods,  
or stroll the main street in the town.  
Let us pass by the fevered pace,  
and seek a secret, silent place.  
We pass a church that watches us,  
to judge the path we travel on.  
We hear the sound of childhood play,  
still unaware that suns go down.  
I tip my hat and pass the school,  
and all its bygone mystery.  
My destination is a place,  
where hides remote a simple tree.  
So few go there the grass is thick  
across a field that mutes the sounds.  
And why you ask do we go here,  
so far removed, the lawn unkempt?  
I stoop to find an acorn nut,  
and place it gently in your hand,  
and answer then. This is a tree  
I planted many years ago,  
from just an acorn's tiny seed.  
When I pass through that final door,  
it's up to you to plant the trees.

~~~~~

Dedicated to the many trees I planted wherever I went.
But the poem is about more than trees.

Barry Middleton

A Walk In Time

Beyond the gate the garden patch
gives up its sweet perfume.
The woods reveal a ghost of white,
for dogwoods are in bloom.
On new mown hay I make my way
beneath a lonely oak,
where copse and brier conceal desire,
that I cannot revoke.
Two lovers passed into these woods
so many years ago.
But now alone I find the path
where honeysuckles grow.
Then deep within the wooded vault,
where angels guard the glen,
I still recall the chill of fall,
and grieve what might have been.

Barry Middleton

A Weary Poet

he can't conceal the future with the past
no longer does he hear the patient breeze
he knows that men and mountains cannot last
for both return to vast and primal seas

and yet he must record his feeble verse
and find his bench beneath the tree of time
and scrawl his notes for better or for worse
to seek his rest in some forgotten rhyme

for he is only wedded to this page
that like a bride appears in purest white
though he is weary with the weight of age
he lifts his chin and then begins to write

and he may chronicle some petty thing
or reach beyond the mortal human cage
beyond the golden sunrise and the spring
to grasp the hidden wisdom of the sage

Barry Middleton

A Wish For Rain

I hear the rumble of thunder
and I wish it would rain

rain brings life and hope
the grass needs green relief

desiccated flowers wait
for a gift from above

the earth's tears are spent
the flesh is burned

grief is everywhere
in a cloud of toxic dust

humanity cries out
demanding redemption

summer lingered too long
and I wish it would rain

Barry Middleton

A Woman

a woman I knew for a moment
when we danced for a season or two
was the comfort of stars and midnight
and a waltz and an I love you

why oh why
can love never stay
seasons turn
then drift away

soon I stood alone in the silence
and a winter wind started to blow
but an echo still seems to linger
from a song that I used to know

so I know I will always remember
when we held each other so tight
as the music finally ended
she kissed me to wish me good night

why oh why
can love never stay
seasons turn
then drift away

a woman I knew for a moment
when we danced for a season or two
was the comfort of stars and midnight
and a waltz and an I love you

Barry Middleton

A Woodland Heart

the passages of daydreams carry me
to places long forgot in memory

the sleepy southern shade of summertime
the happy peace of childhood's paradigm

there I will roam again in steaming woods
relieved of all the world of musts and shoulds

to skip a stone across a silver pond
where I did swear a promise and a bond

the woodland nymph I will again beseech
as love must always dwell beneath her beech

for there is carved the essence of my pledge
still hidden just beyond the meadow's edge

a heart and just one name I yet recall
live on until the day when trees must fall

and there with time my heart always remains
till stars fall from the sky like winter rains

Barry Middleton

A Woodland Night

My childhood ramblings were so long ago,
and time obscures the traces of the past.
The sun no longer burns in afterglow,
but leaves a mark that always tends to last.

At sundown I behold the selfsame stars,
that congregate like fireflies in the dark.
I still may find the russet haze of Mars.
I hear the song of whippoorwill and lark.

And deep within the woods on any night,
I'd often stop to build a rustic fire.
I'd wandered far from home without a light.
The sparks that rose were offered to the briar.

That is the clearest image that I see.
It's like a statue someone carved in stone,
where night and stars and fire would comfort me,
where I might hide in peace and yet alone.

Barry Middleton

A Woodland Voice

What might be my Rosebud?
I have no token of my youth,
no snow globe to remind me.

I only have my notebooks.
I only have my poetry.
Will it be cast into the fire?

What holds the human soul
if not our dreams and hopes,
if not our victories and losses?

And what contains my spirit?
There is a box of photographs,
some trinkets here and there.

In the end, not much is left,
a frozen cinematic moment,
a longing for the past let go.

All the world will fall away
as I release it from my hand,
the voice I heard in the woods.

~~~~~

Inspired by Citizen Kane by Orson Welles.

Barry Middleton

# Above Despair

I wish to die in day old love  
like leaving work on a good Friday,  
in a good week, in a good year.

I want to never crest the hill,  
but dream the landscape there  
for disappointing heights I've topped.

I want to die painting hope  
on a rare old rainy day  
when light is all within.

I pray that gods, or law of odds  
will choose a time above despair,  
for no dread scythe must find me there.

Barry Middleton

# Above The Blue

above the clouds  
the stars are fast asleep  
the sea below is vast  
and dark and deep

and both hold secrets  
that I'll never know  
for I am trapped between  
where cold winds blow

and yet my spirit rides  
a restless wave  
to lift me to the stars  
beyond the grave

as every hope and dream  
perhaps comes true  
above the sea and clouds  
and endless blue

Barry Middleton

# Abstractions

colors of the sunset  
like glowing steel

green of spring  
the morning daffodil

purple velvet falling  
the curtain of night

a shimmering mirage  
heat rising on sand

a gold tinged sunrise  
a hopeful sky

earth tones of fall  
reflections on water

an argent moon  
silver fixed in ebony

pale shroud of winter  
silence drifting

Barry Middleton

# Accord

when a storm sweeps in from the gulf  
and pines and oaks toss their crowns  
there is a harmony on the breeze  
like a ballet in sky fire

the budded rose opens petal by petal  
revealing the only truth of life  
that passion is a blossoming  
in perfect resonance

young lovers find accord in the sunset  
doubt turns to the breath of hope  
two souls become as one  
within a gentle kiss

and there are those tranquil moments  
far from life's pain and betrayal  
when quiet falls upon the sea  
reflecting only peace

Barry Middleton

# Accumulated Defense

The fire has fallen on itself,  
the earth beneath my back is cold.  
I could get up to build some heat,  
a firm foundation still remains  
in coals that glow with ghostly flames.

Yet I have been alone too long  
to ever believe a midnight fire  
could compensate for what is lost,  
my only warmth against the frost  
that I have gathered to my bed  
like one in unfamiliar woods  
gone out to initiate the spring.

I've had a little bit of good  
I gathered to myself for wood  
and if a shoulder grows too chill  
I know life means me no great ill  
and no one is here to get alarmed  
if my cold I turn onto my warm  
and my warm I turn to heat the storm.

Barry Middleton

# Acquainted With Darkness

I met the darkness as a child  
it seemed to dwell among the trees  
when night had fallen on the woods  
to cast a chill upon the breeze

although I knew the gentle day  
and guardians of innocence  
the sunset brought an evil cloak  
and banishment of this pretense

but as a man I often sought  
a tangled wilderness of doubt  
as if to finally conquer fear  
to drive the dreadful demons out

so as the light at last is quenched  
again I'll wander in the wild  
at home again but free of dread  
where still my heart remains a child

Barry Middleton



# Adoration Ends

Much as a melting snow in spring,  
so love must fade away.

And love may never come again,  
for lovers can betray.

In spring, the lonely winter ends,  
and love begins anew.

Then lovers stray to warmer arms,  
for love is never true.

We wish to believe that love will last  
until the end of time.

Beware, for adoration's trap  
falls short of the sublime.

Barry Middleton

# Advice For Lovers

a broken vow is common grief  
I'm here to teach the young  
and so prepare the way for them  
that love may be undone

possession is the ruse of love  
that swears to never stray  
and yet we cannot own a soul  
and prisons must betray

for none of us would forfeit will  
it is our greatest right  
and none of us will give it up  
without a bitter fight

the challenge is to gently hold  
and never chain a soul  
so never dominate your love  
possession takes its toll

think long and hard before the vow  
for love's a daunting task  
and I can give you good advice  
you only have to ask

Barry Middleton

# After The Storm

after the storm there is a hush  
the world has fallen fast asleep  
and all that I can see is peace

and I could stay within this place  
I hear the muted sound of a guitar  
before me is a goblet of red wine

I could sleep with the resting trees  
silently waiting to be born again  
as stillness lingers after the storm

I could lie beneath star filled skies  
beneath the cool black waters  
beyond these storms and dreams

I could spend eternity in this place  
so do not weep for still I speak  
I will have everything I need

after the storm there is a hush  
the world as it was meant to be  
wakes to greet the next moment

Barry Middleton

# Again We Lower The Flag

again we lower the flag  
this time  
to honor the fallen  
in Nice  
yet each day that passes  
terrorism  
slaughters innocent souls  
world wide  
perhaps we should grieve  
each day  
the flag left at half staff  
to remind us  
to send a prayer to heaven  
with our tears

~~~~~

July 14,2016.

Thoughts on the victims in Nice, France,
and all the victims of global terrorism.

Barry Middleton

Age Of The Fern

in the age of the fern
the sea stretched to the horizon

beasts more primal than love
roamed rain swept bogs

man was not even a premonition
not yet were there birds

after the fall a reborn earth
nourished new life

eons passed and passed away
till a rose bloomed in Eden

the garden touched the horizon
fire mimicked the sun

fern and fauna were a dominion
again there was a test

and a man and a woman
stood in the rain and kissed

Barry Middleton

Aging Out

if you live long enough
you can age out of life
illness exacerbates this process
you can age out of romance
you can age out of adventure

you can find yourself in a prison
a prison of limitations
bland food and bland experiences
your voice cracks
your eyes and hearing fail

you can and will be robbed
robbed of every precious capacity
so carpe diem
do not put off living till tomorrow
you can never return to yesterday

Barry Middleton

Alien Dream

I never could find Miss Right
until one mysterious night
space aliens landed
and I was commanded
to take an incredible flight

now alien girls are alright
I neglected to put up a fight
she taught me a lesson
it was quite a session
I suffered the love bug's bite

but when I returned to earth
for that was the place of my birth
I awoke with a start
and the very worst part
is a dream lacks terrestrial worth

Barry Middleton

Alive In Fall

the wind is breath
it sings in the trees
sibilant rain whispers
it christens the grass

in the wet thicket
a silent deer hides
and the fox sleeps
and the owl waits

a final maple leaf
clings to its branch
the Virginia creeper
is a scarlet tatter

clouds mask the sky
and in the distance
there is soft laughter
and a scent of smoke

faraway muted sounds
claim there is more
like the rush of a river
like the beat of a heart

Barry Middleton

All In All

All in all, before the fall,
I laughed and had a ball.

And if I stall, well after all,
I'll take a curtain call.

Life can take a lot of gall.
We walk. At times we crawl.

We struggle so and often brawl
with backs pinned to the wall.

One thing I know is standing tall
before the shrouded pall.

Somewhere awaits a shining hall.
This life cannot be all!

Barry Middleton

All Lovers Betray

reading Charles Bukowski poetry
is like searching for dead anger
dead lovers, gone forever, lost

people cannot have relationships
anymore, they're too time intensive
too labor intensive when angry words
are not deleted but must be worked
sweated over like an August grave

I don't know if I am sad or angry
or something in between
not born to it but grown into it

the pathos of loneliness lingers
texted, tweeted to a million FB friends
i-phones buzzing in particular rhythms

is not enough to make connection
is not enough to form love or hate

and another day begins
like that song about Tom's Diner
I am waiting for a picnic
midnight or otherwise
I am waiting on my corner
building poems in the darkness
now another cup of coffee
now a train of thought to catch
and I dream of all the voices

Barry Middleton

All Must Die

spring is a precious gift
the blessing of a flower
but winter ends its blush
and robs it of its power

for life can never last
be it a man or beast
a king or wretched serf
the mighty or the least

the seasons come and go
the planets turn in space
the universe is dust
within a moment's grace

and love's a living thing
so love must also die
it fades away like dusk
into a darkened sky

so we may shed a tear
beside the humble grave
of everything we loved
that we can never save

but tears will be forgone
along with ecstasy
when every heartbeat ends
that is our destiny

Barry Middleton

Ambiguity Of Midnight

it is the cusp of midnight
and some will ask
should I go on
or stay here in the past
it's really not
a choice for me
for night conceals a mystery
that I yet strain my eyes to see
the stars are old as time
mute though they are
they hold the key
to plans of blind infinity
today and tomorrow
teeter on the brink
as today must pass away
with tomorrow not yet born
and which do I prefer
no ambiguity
I crave each passing hour
the clock may steal from me
the dawn is coming soon
the heat of clear blue noon
the somber afternoon
the sunset then the moon
yes I embrace the hours
each moment of my life
no ambiguity
one life was granted me

Barry Middleton

America Fulfilled

America

I fear we did abuse you
to make you so unkind

all who claim to love you
we cannot be resigned

we need to bridge the river
we need a path to peace

we need to pull together
to sign another lease

America

we fight for you again
or we will not be free

we must join hands as one
I know you will agree

we can solve every problem
and not destroy but build

just work together people
our dream can be fulfilled

Barry Middleton

Among The Roses

I dreamed of a sunlit meadow
a valley of lasting grace
I dreamed of a beautiful woman
and the moonlight on her face

I dreamed of eternal peace
and respect for all mankind
I dreamed of Aquarius
with the planets realigned

I dreamed that I found a garden
where every soul is free
and I strolled among the roses
as the world was supposed to be

and now I will sleep forever
beneath these primal trees
as shadows play on the meadow
in the whisper of Eden's breeze

Barry Middleton

Amulet

the silver and the gold
the amulet of the bear
protected his victory

fortune had abandoned
and fate had conspired
but for a humble prayer

for deep within his soul
was strength yet untapped
the gold of all endurance

he would keep the path
the forest was provider
he knew his spirit well

and for the ghostly bear
the silver stream in mist
pointed the way to home

Barry Middleton

An Evil Wind

August is a hot and glowing fever.
Dust devils rise on fallow fields.
No rain is in that furnace wind.
A scorching wave crosses the delta.

A change is in the restless air.
Demons ride above the fields.
A curse, a tragedy, and death
pursue the childhood guardians.

Evil lingers beyond the river,
hidden in the cypress domes.
A swamp witch stirs an evil brew.
Predators sharpen vicious claws.

The benign woods of the sacred hills,
are a citadel of Eden's hope,
a primal home for apple and snake.
Innocence seeks a shady glen.

Human evil and the wildcat
are confined to delta wilderness
beyond the dark river of death.
They cannot touch my sanctuary.

I am nine, and he is fourteen.
I hear the adults speak of murder.
Evil has risen on the August wind,
a little closer than the day before.

~~~~~

Recalling the death of Emmett Till, August 28th, 1955.

Barry Middleton



# An Exhausted Planet

the arrogance of the day is disturbing  
some blame it on modern politics  
some say it's all about racism or fear  
some blame anonymity and the internet  
but it's all of that and none of that and more

that men are products of their times  
can hardly be denied so it is all of that  
the split between the political parties  
has released some kind of nuclear energy  
something evil buried deep in our dna

all the baser instincts now have a highway  
and venomous politicians fuel the fires of hatred  
people have returned to the cave seeking safety  
finding some security in their own bigotry  
but there is nothing new in any of this

we gaze at our flat screen TVs and smart phones  
and text about the barbarians and drug gangs  
and in the suburbs some sign up for hopelessness  
while the rebels dream of solar-punk revolutions  
far beyond the avarice of an exhausted planet

Barry Middleton

# An Existential Fact

My parents brought me to the earth,  
but I will leave this world alone.  
I vanish into emptiness.  
Though there are some who stand by me,  
still none may walk beside me here,  
as I reach out to destiny.  
This is the existential fact:  
no spirit asks to live or die.  
We come to join a family.  
We leave to join infinity.  
This is the elemental tract:  
from dust we spring to grace the earth,  
to dust we fall, for we must die.  
And in between, we leave our mark  
like footprints on the timeless sand.  
They linger but a little while.  
The tide rolls in and footprints fade.  
tomorrows rest with yesterdays.  
There is no friend to guide our way,  
and no one knows the journey's end.  
This is the road we walk alone.  
Perhaps it leads not anywhere.  
Perhaps it is the path to home.

Barry Middleton

# An Immortality

'Sing we for love and idleness,  
Naught else is worth the having'.  
From: An Immortality by Ezra Pound

if there is such a thing as love  
no immortality accrues to it

the poet surely raised an eyebrow  
smiled and touched his chin

to know how clever he had been  
to write a testament to love

spinning some Victorian fashion  
for the confusion in the title

or were the far off eastern lands  
so easily had compared to love

and thus he wishes death on roses  
in trade for sweet wine kisses

like many men who seek that kiss  
in lieu of money, fame or conquest

and least of all the deeds of war  
whose only victory is in longing

it may be the immortality is there  
in war, where roses die, and men

Barry Middleton

# An Island

an island of peace and beauty  
was here to bless our days  
a respite from all bitterness

a tropic breeze was stirring  
and orchids were in bloom  
beneath a flawless sky

a turquoise sea encircled us  
date palm lined the beach  
and perfume filled the air

we did not wait for paradise  
the mango fruit was sweet  
fish could feed the multitude

this was the garden we received  
when earth was pure and new  
before we betrayed our destiny

Barry Middleton

# An Offering

alone in misty woods  
alone in the universe

and in a dreaming verse  
sound is cold and dark

and all around my view  
lonely stars are falling

the universe is calling  
as stormy night descends

the woods are a caress  
soft as a lover's kiss

still the wind howls  
across my cabin door

I light protective fire  
to stave away the night

and keep the storm at bay  
until the dawning light

above my humble dream  
a swirl of light confounds

as sparks and stars unite  
where piety abounds

Barry Middleton

# An Old Man

The dismal years may quietly creep  
as he sits in his rocking chair.  
His pride knows he can never weep  
so he hides from cold despair.

He searches beyond the sunset view  
that gilds the darkened pond.  
But the indigo of evening hue  
hides an empty promise of dawn.

He mourns and yet his will pretends  
that the grave has some defense.  
But the mockery of death descends,  
to strip him of all pretense.

Barry Middleton

# An Old Man's Ballad

Memory and fantasy  
are filled with sad regret.  
What was and all that might have been  
don't get a second bet.  
Forever lost with hopes and dreams,  
our youth can never stay.  
We learn to focus on what's left,  
tomorrow and today.  
To know all this, yet still be held  
a prisoner till the last,  
is fate for some who can't let go  
the demons of the past.  
They say that wisdom comes with age  
and treasures of the earth.  
But some would trade it all for love,  
the only prize of worth.

Barry Middleton

# An Old Man's Hands

a turn of cards  
an old man's hands  
to frame a prayer  
in memory's eyes  
the final ace  
some withered hope  
that life is not  
a sad remembrance  
of winning hands or lost  
this old man's hands  
with innocence  
reach out to place a bet  
a hope filled blessing  
to the mirror of youth  
I look upon these hands  
have loved and lost  
nurtured cherished  
chided pleaded past age  
these old man's hands  
still linger and hold a wish  
a flush in hearts ace high  
enduring luck  
a final royal desire  
a moment  
a chance

Barry Middleton



# An Unforgotten Kiss

the grief that can't be spoken  
must be whispered by the dove  
of the emptiness of heaven  
and the infamy of love

it's a murmur from the forest  
where the timid never go  
it's the lost despair of midnight  
and the tears beneath the snow

you may sense it near the ocean  
in the heartbeat of the tide  
and it's there above the mountain  
out where lonely stars abide

the grief that can't be spoken  
dwells in all the things I'll miss  
like the rising sun and roses  
and an unforgotten kiss

Barry Middleton

# An Unrepentant Violet

an unrepentant violet  
fell from the sun  
it meant me no malice  
it did not know  
my destiny

Barry Middleton

# Analemma Dilemma

time keeps painting lazy eights  
up and down the sky  
I never know the azimuth  
but somehow I get by

if I could only have a map  
or better yet a globe  
then I would know the way to go  
without a cosmic probe

a shadow moves upon the dial  
as time begins to fade  
I answer to a distant call  
I have my astrolabe

I'll find my way with Ptolemy  
and I will travel far  
for I can see the clearest course  
to reach my hidden star

Barry Middleton

# Angels Have Flown

When the angels have flown away,  
when the hope of spring has vanished,  
then which of your platitudes will sustain me?

When the sky has disappeared into the fog,  
and the cold dark night descends,  
it is a silent testimony of indifference.

When the most precious longing ceases,  
yet un-famished in its desperate need,  
the soul subsides to earthly hell.

When love transforms to demonic dreams,  
and life only waits for death,  
then what can you say to sanctify my path?

When each and every sunrise betrays,  
in a pointless prelude to the dying light,  
I never for a moment can forget my grief.

As the terminus of a season waits,  
the agony lives on to spite what once was,  
of angels, spring, light, and hope, and love.

Barry Middleton

# Annual Prayer To The Raintree

just before spring I gain the confidence  
with just a little luck  
I will see the azalea boom again  
I will hear the rush of a warmer breeze  
and taste the scent of the jasmine  
and touch the sun bleached gulf waters

so it is time once more  
my annual prayer to the raintree  
you see it blooms in fall  
to tell me I have marked another year  
golden bloom rains down on earth  
to set the seed for seasons and rebirth

Barry Middleton

# Another Chance

another year, another chance  
another dance with circumstance

perhaps a kiss, perhaps a glance  
will hold me in illusion's trance

Barry Middleton

# Another Storm

another storm is coming  
but this is only wind and rain  
I hear the thunder drumming  
not bombs outside my windowpane

the lightning fires the sky  
although with luck the storm will pass  
and yet I hear a cry  
where soldiers lie like broken glass

a widow grieves today  
but grief will bring no consolation  
as thunder in the gray  
salutes a dying generation

the rain begins to fall  
but can't absolve a violent world  
I pray for peace withal  
as tears fall from an orphaned girl

Barry Middleton

# Answer Forty Seven

I'm headed down river  
and wherever I'm going  
I'll know when I get there  
if a warm wind is blowing

memory is a demon  
that howls in an alley  
beyond a black mountain  
and down a lost valley

I know what it means  
to climb in a nightmare  
to an old oaken doorway  
at the top of a dark stair

till the sun gently rises  
and a rooster that crows  
says the more that I think  
the less my heart knows

and my only religion  
is just too absurd  
and flees the death cage  
like a pale panicked bird

I'm headed down river  
and wherever I'm going  
I'll know when I get there  
if a warm wind is blowing

Barry Middleton



# Anticipation Of Darkness

I feel it in a shift of the wind  
a threat falls on predacious wings

I sense it in a chill in the air  
the harbinger of a magnitude of ice

I know it in the twist of a gray cloud  
utter destruction lies ahead

it rushes toward me like lonely night  
in the wilderness

the anticipation of darkness  
appeared with the dying sun today

Barry Middleton

# Antique Monsters

so many there are, the armies, the wars  
gray haired charioteers of autumn

old men pray the Pax Romana will fail  
as the youth pray for peace

antique monsters are at home and abroad  
the lust for slaves, the boot on the neck

so the poets should be weeping  
but they are filled with the anger of tears

so warm hands should be joined  
but the cold eyes turn away in distrust

and so it is time for peace to wonder  
was hope only a metaphor for dreaming?

yet there is no victory in death, in war  
no victory at Actium for Augustus

Barry Middleton

# Aphrodite

who were your lords of birth  
did you rise from the sea  
wherever love is born  
is still a mystery

one man may never hold  
the Lady of Cythera  
the embrace is but a truce  
lovers await her glance

the favored Adonis was slain  
murdered by a beast  
and here he doth lie  
in a bed of pale anemones

men cannot shun the goddess  
though she brings war  
though her kiss is death  
her beauty entrances

on the full moon of equinox  
in spring we worship her  
with offerings of flowers  
and with an apple's kiss

Barry Middleton

# Apollo And Daphne

I called the god Apollo  
and only a dog came

I do not have a dog  
but that is still his name

every time he barks  
I hear a soft bow-wow

such a perfect rhyme  
I wish that I knew how

and so I got a cat  
so soft I call her Daphne

but if I try to pet her  
she will just attack me

so neither dog nor cat  
could lead me to the word

the muse that I was seeking  
now isn't that absurd

Barry Middleton

# Apophis 2036

The underworld serpent,  
cold blooded Uncreator,  
and mortal enemy of Ra,  
circles the earth valley  
awaiting a sleeping storm,  
awaiting a time to strike.

Mankind's flaw is pride  
in stargazing computers,  
claims of frail dominion,  
odds of havoc reduced.  
So man steals from Seth  
protection from despair.

Thus we sleep in peace,  
the keyhole locked tight,  
as dark Apophis slithers  
black as blackest night,  
till the Duat is revealed,  
the hissing of apocalypse.

Barry Middleton

# Appreciation And Regret

so much we take for granted  
friends and lovers  
youth and health

there comes a time in life  
strength fades  
hope fades

we do not get a second chance  
at grace  
and gratitude

the greatest tragedy of life  
is looking back  
on all we failed to cherish

Barry Middleton

# Armistice

Black sky, what secret  
do you mask  
beyond the farthest stars,

beyond our time,  
beyond our kind,  
beyond our darkest wars?

No man can know  
the Universe.  
The armistice may wait

where peace abides,  
and stardust hides  
a shining silver gate.

Barry Middleton

# As Death Is Near

as death is drawing near  
then what am I to say

the other side is hidden  
come back another day

yet I have intuition  
to claim to know the dark

above the blinding stars  
a place where we embark

I'll try to let you know  
I'll build a signal fire

you must look up to see  
beyond the funeral pyre

Barry Middleton



# Asking

life sometimes asks too much  
the strain is like a yoke  
heavy like water  
like sand

sometimes people ask too much  
pleading for more notice  
acknowledgement  
a kindly nod

I knew one who did not ask much  
he held his tarnished cup  
he touched the wall  
he blew his pipe

blind from birth this gentle man  
owned nothing of great value  
the little that he had  
he gladly shared

in time we learn what not to ask  
we grow to value devotion  
in our circumstances  
and in our gods

an austere dearth of neediness  
comforts the aged ones  
the lucky aged ones  
who find wisdom

others will die asking and demanding  
more money or love or fame  
another grasping day  
of stolen breath

Barry Middleton

# Assurance

those days the forest knew my mood  
protecting me in time of need

I offered fire to warm the night  
and prayed to forest gods and stars

the wind that stirred the canopy  
was like a midnight symphony

and sleep was like a lover's touch  
whose kiss could banish all my fears

Barry Middleton

# Astonishment

the poet held no malice  
he was what he was  
and he lifted his chalice

he stood at the precipice  
that was the frontispiece  
of all allusion to illusion

his imagined imagining  
the work of solitary mind  
was not admonishment

it was not condemnation  
of the old or of the new  
it was only what he felt

it was his astonishment  
the rose frosted in ice  
the relentless fire of war

a view that was his view  
that this alone is poetry  
was all of what he knew

Barry Middleton

# At Dusk

at dusk the whippoorwill has come to call  
and shadows of the nighttime start to fall  
that's when I wish the darkness to forestall

the shadows come and go  
but they do not bestow  
their secrets of the things I need to know

I spent my lifetime searching for a sign  
I sought the wistful shelters of my mind  
to love it may have been that I was blind

it seems so simple now  
I failed to see somehow  
the love that I would ever disavow

the twilight whispers on the somber breeze  
I will accept my lot on humble knees  
it may be true the gods still grant reprise

in heaven love may reign  
and life is not in vain  
the questions that I ask must yet remain

Barry Middleton

# August Heat

the air is oppressive as lead  
the Florida I used to love  
has betrayed my trust

even the wind is an inferno  
the purring of air conditioners  
never stops

the ibis forage in the grass  
they take their time  
there is no point to hurry

a hot damp cloud  
covers the landscape  
like a blanket of despair

people tend to stay indoors  
but I will not settle  
I'll find a shady spot

I have my sturdy chair  
so I will place it there  
and wait for distant October

Barry Middleton

# August In Florida

the thunderheads have moved in  
cotton candy mountains empty their canyons  
an inch of water falls in twenty minutes

the fire season is a memory  
not even the faintest curl of smoke rises  
the scorched palmetto prairie awakens

the scrub jay has returned  
the indigo snake is out of hiding  
the green frogs sing their appreciation

grassy fingers reach for the sky  
ponding water lingers on streets and lawns  
people gather their stacks of books

the choices are heat or thunder storms  
the choices are to read or to write  
the poets watch as words flow from raindrops

Barry Middleton

# Aurora

a Roman goddess  
we could use

not a Colorado town  
not Illinois either

nor northern lights  
not aurora borealis

just plain Aurora  
Goddess of Dawn

Goddess of Light  
plead eternal youth

this time stay young  
we need you

Barry Middleton

# Autumn Comes

the summer heat has gone  
rebuked by autumn's dawn

and copper colored leaves  
are forming on the trees

a fat squirrel grows ready  
the northern wind is steady

the wood smoke in the air  
is answering my prayer

the snake must hibernate  
the stars shall congregate

one season finally ends  
and another one begins

Barry Middleton



# Autumn Leaves

the autumn glow is here  
with winter coming soon  
a last display of color  
beneath the harvest moon

the leaves are like a fire  
in flames of orange and red  
recalling summer heat  
and not what lies ahead

but I am ready now  
to greet the winter snow  
and I will face the cold  
as winter winds must blow

and I will warm my hands  
on burning autumn leaves  
before the final gray  
where all of nature grieves

and too I shed a tear  
as smoke ascends the sky  
into a universe  
where even planets die

Barry Middleton

# Autumn Memory

I see right through the green  
of Florida's costume

the heat is a disguise  
for it is autumn now

and yet there is a sign  
the rain tree's russet pods

bring color to the breeze  
and hints of what's to come

autumn is postponed  
below the temperate zones

but deep within the swamp  
the cypress shed their tears

the maple and the oak  
await the season's change

and scarlet messengers  
return again to me

with windblown memories  
of bygone autumn leaves

Barry Middleton

# Autumn Prayer

my old raintree is late this year  
I prayed to gods I do not know  
to stave off all of earthly fear  
that I might live to see the show

now it is full in golden bloom  
again my yearly prayer is granted  
for autumn seems to lift my gloom  
in sacred ayres that are enchanted

I'm too far south for leaves to blush  
or glow in flame with fall's bright hues  
so raintrees signal of the hush  
when winter plays deception's ruse

what seems like death will settle in  
but past the season there is hope  
as raintree seeds lie deep within  
blessing me with strength to cope

Barry Middleton

# Autumn's Meaning

The change is felt within, the breath is cooler.  
A slightly drier breeze stirs the golden raintree.  
Beyond my tropic home, the maples are ablaze.  
Already northern frost brings the palm warbler.  
But here in Florida, autumn is a state of mind.  
The holidays are coming, the rituals of harvest.  
An end to one more year has just begun.  
The sunset on the gulf speaks softly and clearly.

Barry Middleton

# Awaiting A Kiss

when we were young you took my breath away  
but now I know our love can never be  
the heart yet follows where the passions stray  
as I recall a kiss that set me free

the memory leaves me waiting patiently  
for I cannot forget the rising heat  
that warmed the fires of cold infinity  
within a dance that earth and sky complete

for heaven dwells within the eyes of youth  
and in an upturned chin before a kiss  
and in the test of time and simple truth  
that now reveals the bygone love I miss

and though I failed I still await the chance  
to steal but one more kiss and one last dance

Barry Middleton

# Awaiting Love

Love's gift cannot be given,  
it waits to be accepted.  
Rabindranath Tagore

love can only be offered  
it is the greatest gift

if it is not accepted  
the loved one is poorer

why do I force suffering  
because of love refused

if I grieve the loss of love  
then was my offer true

or did I bargain for love  
like a miser making a bid

or could it be for some  
that love is not enough

Barry Middleton

# Bad Poetry

Day after day we read the poetry  
of the glitterati and the novice,  
who pen meaningless metaphors  
to incarcerate endless nonsense.

Like waves of a mindless tsunami,  
they crash one after another  
on distant and empty shores  
where blind men conjure visions.

We hang stars in imagined night  
to fight with the moon of dreams.  
We cry out with our fears and tears  
trying to touch a hopeless wind.

We search for wisdom in the seasons,  
and pray the gods may really care.  
While here within our quaint verse,  
the universe conceals its mystery.

Barry Middleton

# Balance Your Accounts

when all is said and done  
life is quite worthwhile  
regardless of the payment  
for debts that we compile

I look back with regret  
and shame no one avoids  
and grieve the victories  
that time at last destroys

but such is life they say  
that takes us up and down  
the smile of faithful friends  
and condemnation's frown

for those just starting out  
I offer this advice  
to balance your accounts  
for all must pay a price

Barry Middleton



# Balloon Ride

it takes the breath away  
the bright balloon we ride

it sails above our joy  
where nothing is denied

we capture every prize  
and cherish every gift

but then we must descend  
the fall is often swift

balloons return to earth  
to claim all that they gave

and men return there too  
beneath a breathless grave

Barry Middleton

# Bantam Roosters And Pleasure Boosters

I knew a man who had too many friends,  
small use they were but so he did pretend,  
and drink with them at night like men who sense  
that life should yield much more than its pretense.

He raised a flock of bantam hens and roosters  
that seemed to him a pride of humor boosters.  
The males were bright and beautiful and vain;  
the useless hens ranged free and were a bane.

His wife could never seem to understand  
the use of bantams nesting in the sand.  
They never used the nests that were prepared,  
though bated with a sacred egg and prayed.

She never understood the friends at all.  
or why he did not come to supper's call.  
She could not see the use of bantam roosters,  
and did not feel the need for pleasure boosters.

Barry Middleton

# Bare

the raintree and the oak  
completely bare of leaves

all day the drizzle falls  
like tears as nature grieves

the rain quenches a fire  
in the palmetto brush

the breeze stirs a palm  
noise is all a hush

this is familiar prelude  
I've seen it many a time

death is everywhere  
till earth composes rhyme

Barry Middleton

# Barren

some of us too old for love  
can only love the past

we thought delusionary youth  
and love would always last

then in age as wisdom comes  
with verities revealed

some will have a pensive wish  
for truth to stay concealed

it seems like such a simple thing  
to form a sacred pact

two as one against the odds  
to hold off all attack

therein lies the needle's eye  
elusive gate of peace

many seek but few will find  
someday the quest will cease

Barry Middleton

# Barry's Rules For Life

1. Stay busy! Find ways to enjoy your work. Identify activities that you love to do and that give your life a sense of purpose, and invest your energy there.
2. Play! Cultivate a sense of humor. Energize your leisure time. Sing, dance, be a clown. Don't lose touch with your inner child.
3. Invest yourself in friendships. Be a good listener. Share with those you love your hope and enthusiasm as well as your pain and regret.
4. Celebrate life every day. Keep a positive attitude. Be grateful for the simple pleasures like mealtime, social relationships and the beauty in the world.
5. Take care of your body. Eat right. Exercise. Get proper rest and sleep. Have a regular rhythm and schedule in your life.
6. Be tolerant and flexible with others when possible. Forgive little injuries quickly and see no indignity in bending a bit within limits.
7. Open your mind. Live to learn. Do not always be sure that you are right. Learn from mistakes. Try to see the other person's point of view.
8. Have faith. If it eludes you, look for something in the universe that is more important than self.
9. Do the right thing. Follow the Golden Rule. Treat all people and all creatures with kindness, respect, and compassion. Cultivate values.
10. Always have a dream. Focus on the present but plan for the future. Take small steps that will lead to your goal. Visualize success.
11. Nurture your self esteem. Give yourself credit for your good qualities and talents. Believe in yourself and define yourself as a winner and you will become one.
12. Think twice, slow down before you act or react. Impulsiveness usually leads to problems.

Barry Middleton

# Baseball And Love

I hate baseball and love  
I took a swing at both

I did not know a strike  
could make me such an oaf

I got some good advice  
but I ignored the odds

tranquility would flee  
as ordained by the gods

for baseball is like love  
the home run is just bait

and yet we take the dare  
we step up to the plate

three strikes and you are out  
I never got a hit

I gave up on these games  
so on the bench I sit

Barry Middleton

# Beached

they were like a well for me  
I fell deeply into the warm air

more than hatred of the cold  
the tropics were magnetized

too weak to flee this sorcery  
I languished in shady wisdom

I worshiped an August breeze  
until the heat had vanished

now a cooler night threatens  
and sleep surrenders to fear

but the sun will rise again  
warm sand beneath my feet

Barry Middleton

# Bear

he lumbered through the deepest forest  
and gazed upon the western shore  
and climbed a lost forbidden mountain  
but still he wanted so much more

he sought the source of every river  
compelled to wander far and wide  
he made his home beside a meadow  
and slept where silent stars abide

to dark remote and secret swamps  
and all along the southern bays  
he knew the grace of sacred valleys  
and all of nature's hidden ways

but now he seeks the journey home  
where every path comes to its end  
to rest beneath the slow black water  
where all the ills of life may mend

Barry Middleton



# Beating The Odds

I try to beat the odds  
I'm not sure what they are  
I've come a long long way  
I do not know how far

I need the aces now  
the hardest point to roll  
today I throw the dice  
upon the line my soul

I'd rather know my fate  
and win or lose the game  
there are no guarantees  
the odds reject the blame

a long unlikely shot  
is still at least a chance  
I'll toss the bones again  
this isn't high finance

Barry Middleton

# Beauty And Loneliness

many will say  
the most beautiful thing is love  
and this may be so

but also there is beauty  
in solitude  
in loneliness

there is beauty in a kiss  
but also in longing  
there is beauty in a tear

the joy and pain in life  
are close companions  
like lovers hand in hand

there is beauty in the spring  
there is beauty in a child  
there is beauty in grief

Barry Middleton

# Bedroom Eyes

those bedroom eyes  
the beginning of the dance  
before the passions seized us  
and put us in a trance  
you looked at me that way

those bedroom eyes  
still cause my pulse to rise  
you may recall it too  
the nights and tender sighs  
our love could never stray

yet love always deceives  
as do those bedroom eyes  
they flash and hypnotize  
but only tell us lies  
farewell to bedroom eyes

Barry Middleton

# Before All

last year's bloom  
refuses to die  
such are orchids

protected in glass  
green fingers  
seek mute mothers

they know not  
what they become  
but the path is set

the garden is a bell jar  
the gardener a god  
a hope becoming

without his love  
cold consuming winds  
crush their audacity

Barry Middleton

# Before Ideas

before there was a brain to name it  
blackness hovered in a silent void

before there was a soul to feel it  
love waited in the potentiality of dust

before any star grew to critical mass  
the light drifted in random photons

before imagined gods intruded  
one ruling law waited for notice

before there was a song to sing  
music floated on quantum waves

time's unabated vibration proceeded  
with no clock to measure its pulse

till every beat was set in the stone  
for a brief bequest of resonance

Barry Middleton

# Before The Fire

before earth was set afire  
spring gathered the birds  
without a tear in paradise  
without the pain of words

man possessed only hope  
summer was in the fields  
till evil in the human heart  
created swords and shields

peace within a garden home  
the gift of every tree  
was set ablaze by avarice  
with man no longer free

winter came consuming all  
infernos scarred the world  
birds and fields no longer safe  
as battle flags unfurled

time awaits a silent spring  
the dead make no reply  
when all is lost wars will end  
as smoke ascends the sky

Barry Middleton

# Before Thought

before thought came  
the word was spoken  
but no one heard  
so there was silence  
amid colliding stars

only in summer  
in its strain and heave  
do I hear the wind  
or glimpse sensations  
of golden imaginings

before thought came  
there was silence  
but in that cold hush  
I find a blessed note  
of poetry and harmony

and I will have it thus  
soft sounds at evening  
tranquil soothing words  
and gilded rhapsodies  
that welcome sleep

Barry Middleton

# Beginning

The ritual of hopefulness  
is always the same.

Velvet night is a soft vibration  
as my eyes meet hers  
with curiosity and fantasies  
of what might be.

Later, talking, feeling,  
the thread is spun  
that wraps us in each other  
like a thing hoping to happen.

Plastic gestures cease.

Again there is a breathing thing,  
alive like the evening air,  
a darting thing like flashing eyes,  
a tentative thing, a blessing,  
a possibility.

Barry Middleton



# Being Without Description

the verb to be cannot think  
it cannot wake at dawn

it hides within a restless sleep  
enduring and withdrawn

I have often sought this place  
elusive as a dream

the serenity of emptiness  
to finally rule supreme

is this too much to ask of life  
the silence of a sunset

to listen to the stillness there  
without a cruel regret

for only being sets us free  
seasons come and go

existence graces me but once  
that's all I need to know

Barry Middleton

# Bella Donna

behind me is a darkened path  
ahead a mystery  
the sun upon the garden walk  
is all that I can see

the past can never light my way  
to places far from view  
what is concealed around the bend  
I only wish I knew

I fear an emptiness may come  
more lonely than the dark  
where vacant riddles yet abide  
to quench a final spark

the only consolation is  
beyond that lifeless glow  
I sleep forever blind to fear  
where deadly nightshades grow

Barry Middleton

# Beneath The Bo Tree

I will not let the sun go down on you  
darling I will always love you true

here in the afterglow  
I'll rest beneath the Bo  
I will not let the sun go down on you

a love affair that just could never be  
still lingers as my memory sets me free

I'll never let you go  
I just want you to know  
my love for you is strong as Buddha's tree

so please someday remember me my love  
when I am gone and drifting with the dove

I'll love you till the end  
and sunlight I will send  
from Shambhala and heaven up above

I will not let the sun go down on you  
darling I will always love you true

here in the afterglow  
I'll rest beneath the Bo  
I will not let the sun go down on you

Barry Middleton

# Beneath The Goldfish Bridge

beneath the goldfish bridge  
beneath the dueling oaks  
there is a place for me  
to join the spirits there

for I can see creation's dawn  
the native camps and mastodon  
the saber tooth and goddesses  
inhabiting the ancient bayou

I see the slave in Congo Square  
our shame upon the auction block  
I see the bloody civil war  
I see a rogue fall in a duel

but mostly I hear children playing  
I see my mother quietly praying  
where generations walked before  
I rest beneath the bridge once more

Barry Middleton

# Bereft

now even the dog has gone by the door  
that I left ajar as I have before

I heard it slam the wind blew a gust  
reminding me newly and never to trust

for open doors are tempting to thieves  
who always find out an incoming breeze

I blame no one else for all I have lost  
I left the door open regardless of cost

treasure and friends have all blown away  
I doubt they'll return on some other day

but should they appear my pantry is stocked  
a pity for them my door is now locked

Barry Middleton

# Beside A River And A Tree

the desire to be a king  
weighs more than lead or gold  
weighs more than love

the wind within the willow  
may know a secret Universe  
or maybe two

the destiny of fools  
is written by the pen of wishes  
and stained by tears

regret consumes a dream  
all dreamers fight for hope and yet  
they often lose

the shaman finds a home  
beside a river and a tree  
his soul breaks free

Barry Middleton

# Between

Between the dove and the eagle,  
there is a challenge for humanity.  
Between the storm and the rainbow,  
there is a gentle spring shower.  
Between the hurricane and the hush,  
there is a harmony on the breeze.  
Between desire and fulfillment,  
there is the first tender kiss.  
Between birth and death,  
there is breath, a heartbeat, life.

Barry Middleton

# Between The Lines

I leave nothing  
between the lines

my heart on stage  
for all to see

I hear you speak  
I hear the secrets

a lowered voice  
regrets you hide

you could scream  
if you wished

I already hold  
a million secrets

they are not heavy  
they do not crush

I have been there  
choking tears

I held it in  
held it too long

now I reject  
every silent fear

Barry Middleton



# Beyond Our Universe

who knows beyond our universe  
there may be  
a million more

where the stars are never counted  
none of us  
can see that door

I do not mean the door to heaven  
beyond this door  
there is no name

there are fires we cannot feel  
out there burns  
a darker flame

no one really knows for sure  
like all I choose  
to choose my belief

I choose this one to bolster me  
because we have  
no grand motif

beyond our science or our faith  
so many things  
we cannot see

but even I may hatch a plot  
to tightly close  
infinity

out there I believe the dark of stars  
provides a sacred  
ponderous weight

that will bring the suns together  
to create  
a hopeful fate

some have asked me what I mean  
it's hard for me  
to clearly say

it's just the rambling of my mind  
to shield destruction  
and dismay

for then the universe can't die  
but lives on  
eternally

this is the blessing of the stars  
far beyond  
infinity

Barry Middleton

# Beyond Protest

What I know of bigotry  
deserves to be rebuffed.

We will repeat our history  
until the fear is crushed.

But all I see is poetry  
and all I hear is song.

Yet it is not my destiny  
to simply go along.

Join me in a song of hope  
and listen to the rhyme.

Help us find a way to cope.  
We're running out of time.

We possess a simple choice,  
but do we have the will,

with unity to end the hate  
that urges us to kill?

Barry Middleton

# Beyond The Moon's Embrace

the one I loved has gone before  
a diamond in the night  
she rests amid the silent stars  
and hidden from my sight

though she may sing a melody  
that I did once adore  
I cannot hear her muted voice  
from that most distant shore

I cannot touch her gentle hand  
nor feel her rhythmic breath  
nor sense the spice of her perfume  
for they are stilled by death

and yet I know she waits for me  
within some star lit place  
where I will find her kiss again  
beyond the moon's embrace

Barry Middleton

# Beyond The Typhoon

So much in life we can't control.  
We toil for silver and for gold.  
It wears us down and takes its toll,  
but we survive to reach the goal.

We seek for beauty, we seek for love.  
We search the sky. We push and shove.  
Answers murmur from a dove.  
They say he flies from up above.

At last there comes a better day,  
and if we try we'll find a way.  
It all turns crystal clear one day,  
if we can just keep fear at bay.

The folks I know have all been blessed.  
No evil comes. We did our best.  
If you are weary or distressed,  
just know that life's a simple test.

One day we all fly past the moon.  
We will escape the doom and gloom.  
And then with love we will commune,  
beyond the rage of this typhoon.

Barry Middleton

# Bigot

the ears of bigots are closed  
as are their eyes  
they cannot hear or see  
nor feel our pain

they fear the time may come  
to lose the game  
they are immune to touch  
and reason fails

their bitterness is lost  
in loneliness  
they cannot know the truth  
of their distress

for hate divides the race  
and leads to grief  
and only love may grant  
redemption's grace

Barry Middleton

# Bitter Winter Wind

the winter drought is like a spear  
no rain will fall till June  
my eyes conceal a final tear  
as clouds obscure the moon

the dry and bitter winter wind  
that slashes like a knife  
says hope nor passion can extend  
my inspiration's life

the desiccated lifeless verse  
of gray and barren rhyme  
is nothing but the ghostly curse  
of stars and finite time

for winter is a blood fed beast  
that drains the air of breath  
the mighty and the very least  
succumb at last to death

Barry Middleton

# Bitterness

bitterness comes and goes  
like an old friend  
I can always call it back

bitterness lingers  
and if I let my guard down  
its certain to attack

there is no bitter comfort  
no escape from  
responsibility

for I may blame another  
but my will  
was always free

Barry Middleton



# Bitterweed

I had to shun the bitterweed  
that held the poison in its seed

others had to try it  
it does not kill the body  
it only kills the spirit of the soul

my fears protected me  
that trip could not be free

others had to try it  
it won't let them forget it  
it cruelly kills the spirit of the soul

someone had to reap it  
the heart can only keep it

others had to buy it  
much to their regret  
it just killed the spirit of their soul

one taste can stay forever  
bitterweed is clever

but still they have to try it  
it does not kill the body  
it only kills the spirit of the soul

Barry Middleton

# Black Fox

Born to the ebon forest,  
soft denizen of shaded copse,

once I thought I spotted her  
vanishing in the forest green.

Again a tuft of raven fur,  
a frill caught in blackberry,

hinted she passed this way.  
Now the dusk is falling fast.

Tomorrow I will seek again.  
As the Stygian fog rolls in,

I turn to find my way home  
and hear her snappish bark.

The black fox is very near.  
Her home is a trusted wood.

Barry Middleton

# Black Ibis

a glossy ibis passed my way  
and turned to south as if to say  
that I must too some somber day

the darkest nomad came alone  
as if a tropic wind had blown  
to bring him to my peaceful home

I saw at once he bode no good  
and I would flee if I yet could  
but I was frozen where I stood

a message clear was in the air  
the bird was sent to simply bear  
reminders of my cold despair

for night must fall as it may seem  
upon a dark and ebon stream  
where ibis haunt my dismal dream

Barry Middleton

# Black Orchid

I heard black orchids don't exist,  
I only nod and smile,  
for I have seen this rarest bloom,  
this daughter of the Nile.

The odyssey of life fulfilled,  
I'll not disturb her place,  
for all of life I only sought  
to just behold her grace.

No such orchid experts say...  
A quest beyond our sight...  
but soft as velvet this I know,  
she surely blooms by night.

In my dreams the orchid wakes,  
remote and raven flower,  
the comfort of the journey's end  
perfumes the midnight hour.

Barry Middleton

# Black Swan Event

some called black swans a myth  
they said all swans are white

others would not end the quest  
without a gallant fight

a few are born to search for truth  
blind to common belief

enduring every hardship  
surrounded by their grief

heedless what the world may claim  
they climb the highest peak

they cross the stormy breadth of sea  
for secrets they must seek

the rare improbability  
the precious hidden prize

that some had sworn impossible  
or just some wild surmise

Barry Middleton

# Black Velvet

I close my eyes to black velvet  
there is no star in sight

but still my soul spins a dream  
for this is only night

this is not the endless void  
that beckons me in death

there are some things I cannot know  
as long as there is breath

and once I find that silent rest  
there'll be no poetry

or none that I may send your way  
from my infinity

so read these lines but trust I find  
one star to light my way

or listen to the wind at night  
where my cold ashes stray

Barry Middleton

# Black Widow

I watched a spider climb a wall,  
I watched her crawl down again  
and voices whispered for a call,  
that's all there is for men.  
I sit and watch the day go up  
and watch the clock go down,  
it seems my blood runs down a rut  
to oceans without sound.  
The spider climbed to find a fly,  
crawled down to stop and think  
and wonder that a day went by  
to end in sunset pink.  
You are a lucky one I said,  
small thoughts - no joy, no dread.  
But then I saw beneath a leg  
a simple trace of red,  
an hourglass that did not beg.  
I knew she did not care to know  
her sun was going down.  
She raised her back as if to show  
defenses that were sound.  
But I was cursed a larger brain  
that knows no sting of man  
can stay a day from its decline  
or grant him greater span.

Barry Middleton

# Blackbirds

The blackbirds came,  
there is only one way  
to look at blackbirds.  
Blackbirds swarmed,  
scavenged the grass.  
They moved en masse  
like schooling fish,  
then traveled south.  
The blackbirds know  
what God's rules are.  
They know cold oceans  
of air are flowing south.  
The blackbirds know  
what time is coming,  
what season of year.  
There is only one way  
to look at blackbirds.  
If I look to the sky  
I know the change  
that is on me soon.  
The blackbird's song  
is a soft summoning.  
There is only one way  
to look at blackbirds  
and that is to learn.  
They came in hungry,  
fed and flew away.  
One man watching;  
the blackbirds sang.

Barry Middleton



# Blossom In Sunlight

There is a pause to winter,  
a blossom in the sunlight.

A single red hibiscus shines  
from the still green leaves.

It is as if it wants to speak,  
to cry out against the cold.

Still it must relent at last,  
ending its defiant gesture.

But now the blossom nods  
like a wise old man resting.

The flower and man are one,  
eloquent in their silent vigil.

Barry Middleton

# Blue Memory

It fills my mind at evening time,  
for I cannot forget  
the foggy past where all is mute,  
the mist of old regret.

The faces of the ones I loved  
grow dim in memory.  
We're made this way to punish loss,  
or so it seems to me.

For every face there is a place,  
where I did love or dance,  
where meadows or forgotten woods  
beguiled me with their trance.

And there was then a sleepy town,  
with children quite secure.  
And friends were treasures to protect,  
beyond a dream's allure.

Now time has passed, the days are lost,  
there are no remedies,  
for dreams that haunt the midnight mind,  
and faded memories.

Barry Middleton

# Born Mystic

I've seen the soul where rivers hide,  
and heard the stolid mountainside.

The rocks and rivers spoke to me  
of mystic mind's infinity.

I'm sure you think a child can't know  
horizon, sea, and afterglow.

But I must tell you, you are wrong,  
though some refuse to hear the song.

I've seen it once or maybe twice,  
a child who took his own advice.

Yes I was born the mystic one,  
and I could see beyond the sun.

And later on, within my child,  
I saw it in his wistful smile.

We both saw souls where rivers hide,  
heard whispers on the mountainside,

and rocks and rivers spoke to us,  
of how to love, and who to trust.

Barry Middleton

# Born This Way

Forgetting so many facts,  
but remembering the feelings,  
is it a blessing or a curse?

A sadness that came in youth,  
washed over me like a wave.  
Some are born this way.

I read of this in a book.  
Before that I only felt it,  
but now I know it is the truth.

Some souls feel too much  
the pain that others feel,  
compounding their own despair.

Some souls judge themselves  
against impossible standards,  
always falling short.

We do this because the world  
forgets and never learns.  
It only remembers facts.

Some of us are born for feeling,  
born to remember the sadness,  
born beyond the irrelevant.

Barry Middleton

# Born To Be Blue

Some of us are born to know it,  
guitar men riding the blues train,  
southern gumbo, smoke and booze,  
the big muddy mojo voodoo beat.

Born to be blue is born to the blues,  
heart of Bourbon and Beale Street,  
up from the dust devil crossroad,  
work and sweat, a wailing sound.

From Lead Belly and Muddy Waters,  
the blues has told the painful tale,  
broken bottleneck slide and a 32-20,  
blues kings moaning and howling.

Some are born to feel the blues,  
born to a rhythm, tapping a shoe,  
conjure of the mournful hoodoo,  
bringing it home from Louisiana.

The signalman calls from the rail shack,  
I hear the ring of steel down the track.  
Pack my bag; I'm late for the show,  
the western clouds are hanging low.

I got me a faded old two dollar bill,  
and a broken down six string guitar.  
If I ever spend that deuce greenback,  
baby gonna have to scratch my back.  
I was born to the blues and I know it.

Barry Middleton

# Boundary Values

no longer rich was the man  
who told me yesterday  
that had I not known riches  
I would not understand  
the pain to reach the top  
and then to lose it all  
yet all he lost was cash  
but yet I pitied him  
and wondered had he known  
a sweeter vanished treasure  
the silent company  
of eyes and hearts  
so interlocked  
one could not tell  
where one began  
and where the other ceased  
I could not laugh  
nor tell him truly  
could not belittle  
petty gambling losses  
but thought him poorer still  
who valued money so  
that empty was his heart  
he had not lost a love  
but surely never had  
he loved  
and so had lost it all

Barry Middleton

# Box

I have a battered old shoebox  
where I keep my priceless stocks

black and whites and old regret  
all the things I can't forget

there you'll find a cockle shell  
a postcard claiming all is well

also ear and finger rings  
a feather dropped by angel wings

you wonder why I kept this stuff  
but memories are not enough

you'll see as old age comes around  
with days gone by no longer found

then you may have a shoebox too  
with bits and pieces of déjà vu

Barry Middleton

# Brain Damage

Love went out like satin night  
unnoticed in narcotic dreams.  
Love left me doped like a black star,  
like a pillow made of stone.

Satin, soft one,  
your eyes were wet as birth,  
and exactly brown.

My hangover is gone  
like silk opium into the worm.

It hurt me more to lose my mind  
than to lose you.

And yet, my granite sobriety,  
asylum gray,  
whispers nightly excuses  
of how I want to love you  
in old, hypnotic dreams,  
and laced with the softness  
of a tender, breathless embrace.

Barry Middleton



# Brave Blooms

Precocious blooms  
ignore the cold  
and boldly  
in the spring unfold  
while just this day  
I lit the fire  
to warm salvation  
and desire.

My northern days  
have taught me sure  
that scarlet blooms  
provide no cure  
for emptiness  
and excess pain  
and piercing days  
of bleak spring rain.  
They are a gesture  
for the sight,  
they know not when  
the time is right  
but bloom the same  
on the happenstance  
that spring will stay;  
they take a chance.

Barry Middleton

# Brave Perspective

I want to be brave  
like the bravery  
of the sun

eight planets  
166 moons  
and 7 billion people  
depend on the sun

I have to say  
that's chutzpah

we spend our lives  
battling fear

but the sun  
never worries

I want to be brave  
like the sun

I shine for a while  
but I will burn out  
someone will take over

Barry Middleton

# Bridge To Tomorrow

every bridge  
takes us to the other side  
but then we may come back

what waits beyond the final bridge  
no man can know  
for we cannot return

some believe the stars  
are cold and blind  
surrounded by emptiness

some believe another world  
is waiting there  
a universe of souls

death is a bridge to tomorrow  
what will it bring  
and will there be a sunrise

Barry Middleton

## Brief Visit

my visit to this planet  
was ever so brief

I wish that I could stay  
but time is still a thief

it's almost spring again  
I see a golden leaf

I know the poet said  
that Eden sank to grief

I joined the mortal tribe  
I never was a chief

I thank the universe  
for this is my belief

there is a tiny island  
surrounded by a reef

that waits for my return  
with comfort and relief

Barry Middleton

# Bring A Sharp Pencil

no one really knows me  
for I am here alone  
and pondering on midnight  
and all the things unknown

I hear the crickets singing  
but deep within my brain  
I know it's just a ringing  
that causes me no pain

the city is awake  
the buzz is like a bee  
my god is watching me  
to hear my midnight plea

the world is fast asleep  
the tide rolls to and fro  
the water is too deep  
to know where I might go

the hours before dawn  
conspire to block my rest  
I know the game god plays  
I know this is a test

Barry Middleton

# Broken Hallelujah

the story is as old as time  
for every mountain we can climb  
missteps await that just may kill  
regardless of our guile or skill

yes Adam did his very best  
but when God put him to the test  
his footing slipped and so he fell  
condemning every man to hell

and so it was with David's fall  
affliction and the wailing wall  
tumbled down from heaven's throne  
upon the seed that he had sown

we see it each and every day  
when power comes to its dismay  
the tyrant slain to quench the mob  
for all the souls that he did rob

as you look back I hope you find  
I never wished to be unkind  
a weakness fills the heart of man  
that we may never understand

I know I don't know many things  
we try to fly on broken wings  
we do our best when pride pretends  
and at the grave we make amends

so when you judge the human soul  
remember all may miss their goal  
for every man is fallible  
and that's the final parable

~~~~~

The title, theme, and some of the content and rhythms,
are obviously inspired by Leonard Cohen's song Hallelujah.

Barry Middleton

Buddha And The Breeze

the Buddha and the breeze
can put my soul at ease
they both reveal the sacred path

to conquer all desire
to which I might aspire
and rise above the earthly storm

I pray a gentle wind
will greet me like a friend
for I am but an autumn leaf

and autumn leaves must stray
into their yesterday
without conceit or vain defeat

I go where wishes die
I go where planets sigh
to join infinities of grief

I go the Buddha's way
without regret's dismay
the breeze will bring my sweet relief

Barry Middleton

Building Walls

We built a fire, protection from the dark.
We built a home, to guard the family.
We built a tribe, to vanquish any foe.
We could not rest, for fear was still alive.
We built a town, that we may yet survive.
We found our god, protection from the beast.
We built a land, but others might intrude.
We built a wall, but this was not enough.
We armed our men, to stand beside the gates.
We built our hate, to kill the infidel.
We built disgrace, the murder of the soul.
We built our shame, the fire of endless war.
But hope lives on, and we must not give up.
When peace is found, we will not need a wall.

Barry Middleton

Burgundy Rose

beyond the reddest rose
lies passion

none deeper than
the burgundy of roses

fall colors grieve
for the spring

the burgundy rose waits
a tender touch

a gentle kiss
to stir her sleeping lips

I sought the rarest rose
of burgundy perfection

in seasons laced with grief
elusive as the goddess

I sought but love withheld
the ultimate in roses

Barry Middleton

Busy Dying

Petty souls,
like dogs, will bark
with greed and lust
within their heart,
and if they could,
would steal the spark,
the fire of dawn,
daylight made dark.

All hope is vanished!

The pride,
a generation's grace,
evaporated
into space,
for hate and war
still hold a place
that insane poets
can't erase.

All love is banished!

The lust filled miser
sold his soul,
but all his silver
and his gold
can't save him,
if truth be told,
for judgment falls
on meek and bold.

All treasure tarnished!

The wolf will come,
the owl with cry,
with wind and fire
as planets die,
and in a corner
of the sky

four horsemen ride
and demons fly.

Mammon and famine!

Then tears will fall,
for life's a joke,
and every prayer
is lost in smoke,
no one could hear
the words I spoke,
I had a dream,
but then I woke.

I guess I managed!

Barry Middleton

Butterfly Girl

love is like a butterfly
with little boys a running
nets in hand they flutter by
and think that they're just funning
alighting on a puggy nose
or tripping on some dainty toes
you'd think that little boys would know
that little girls are cunning

Barry Middleton

Buy Me A Miracle

please buy me a miracle
and put it on a shelf

so if I ever need it
then I can save myself

I often wish I had one
just one would be enough

a saving hand to guide me
if life becomes too rough

gold cannot procure it
so if I wish to own

I'll look within my heart
where miracles are grown

Barry Middleton

Buzzing

I think I hear her buzzing now
this is the way the bee must fly

no she can never tell a lie
don't even bother asking why

where she's going I don't know
it's really not my business

maybe she will touch the sky
as if she needs forgiveness

by and by the bee must fly
if she stings you she will die

I think I hear her buzzing now
this is the way the bee must fly

and now she's landing on my knee
what do you want honey bee

both of us can get by
I can walk you can fly

holy cow she winked at me
then took off so she is free

both of us can get by
I can walk she can fly

Barry Middleton

By His Hands

I suppose there is not much left
the last time I was there
a collapsed cistern
was trying to eat the house

but dreams restore the past
I dreamed of it in better days
the furnishings
marble top wash stands and basins

four poster canopies in bedrooms
the kitchen and the eastern wing
the musty smell was ancestry
a plume of smoke was on the hill

the Choctaw camp is empty now
but still the air must buzz
with stories of the olden days
the war that passed this way

my great grandfather's home
was built by his own hands
he raised his family there
now it no longer stands

yet all these generations since
a few have not forgotten him
the patriarch is yet upon that hill
asleep beneath beloved soil

Barry Middleton

Cabin

I never did find
the house in the wood

it was only a dream
not quite understood

the peace I desired
somewhere in a dell

was illusive as fog
like a final farewell

a shelter from worry
where there is no pain

a place with no fear
of the storm or the rain

the years are a teacher
and soon I will know

that sturdy wood cabin
I sought long ago

Barry Middleton

Cabin In The Wood

the world is all too real
I wish it were a dream
for then I could awake
beside a silver stream

far up a shady valley
where I might find relief
from all of earthly worry
and all of earthly grief

I would be young again
and heed my inner voice
then I would find a way
to make a better choice

but dreams are ever frail
and time will steal away
reality has crushed
the hope of yesterday

the forest is my cabin
so bring me to its door
and place my ashes there
to rest upon its floor

Barry Middleton

Cabin On A Hill

There is a cabin on a hill,
the image sharp in memory.
It's been a while since I was there,
but I still know it waits for me.
The walls are hewn of sturdy oak,
cut many generations past.
Great grandfather meant for them
to stand the test of time and last.
But still the years did slip away,
for as a youth I had to roam,
to find the treasure of the earth
beyond the valley of my home.
And now in age I can't return,
for I have waited much too long.
So my advice to you is search,
before life ends its precious song.
You'll find your cabin on a hill;
do not put off the dreamer's quest.
For all you have to do is try;
you cannot fail, just do your best.

Barry Middleton

Cage

will I break free of it
the cage has never seemed to fit

and yet where would I go
the cage is all of life I know

ah, but I can dream
maybe concoct a break out scheme

for it is not forbid
to live one's life full off the grid

and I am not too old
I'm almost there the truth be told

I know I'll touch the sky
if any man can reach that high

for every bird can soar
once it escapes the cage's door

Barry Middleton

Calla Lily

I'm filled with dark fatigue
but still I cannot sleep
the sun is now eclipsed
where palest lilies weep

the moon illuminates
my midnight reverie
a longing to be young
and innocent and free

and I know what it means
and I am not afraid
I've let go of the past
and all the plans I made

and I've let go of dreams
for only moments count
I've done the best I can
to balance my account

I reach to grasp a lily
to pluck it from its spot
but turn and let it live
as gods might well allot

I know that soon I'll see
the Calla lilies grace
and sense that sweet perfume
beside my resting place

Barry Middleton

Calling To Buddha

oh yes I suffer from desire
and I cannot be satisfied
though I have all that I may need

yet when I study forests deep
I find the lessons I should keep
in nature's meek frugality

although I battle with the wish
to rise above and conquer death
denying all futility

I still must struggle till the day
I master fear for peace of mind
to join the uncorrupted stars

for I did learn that I will die
and life holds everything I need
until my shadow finds its home

Barry Middleton

Can It Say Something

images fly like paper birds
like bubbles lifted
in a whirl of martini mixing
but poetry is more
can it say something

the morning newspaper
is a prelude to despair
best used as fire starter
burn the city down
a sacrifice to the sun god

can it say something
of regret on a foggy morning
because the fog
is a soft focus from a movie
I cannot remember

a bird lit by the window
not a paper bird
not a paper windowsill
paper hands read the news
the bird flew away

Barry Middleton

Can Only Blind Men See

His eyes, bright sightless pearls,
bestow a peace on him,
for blind men cannot go to war.
His vision lies within.

He asked me if the wars rage on,
and sad was my reply.
'Regretfully they never learn,
they'll fight till planets die.'

He said, 'It need not be this way
for nature does not war.
If this is all we have on earth,
is peace what heaven's for? '

'Peace and rest, ' I would suppose,
are waiting for us there,
no more battles crush our hope,
a respite from despair.'

'We could have peace on earth, ' he said,
'if men could let peace be.
If all were blind, we'd have no war.
Can only blind men see? '

Barry Middleton

Can You Hear It

Can you hear it in the air,
the music that is everywhere?

And did you never know
the lyric of a cloudless sky?

The resonance from every hill
awakes a sleeping daffodil.

The beat is like your heart,
for love is a musician too.

Tenderly a perfumed breeze,
a melody beneath the trees,

is wafting like desire,
the pulsing of a lover's breath.

And we may touch the rhapsody,
a sweet duet in harmony,

or we might lose the key,
the moment will not come again.

Then darkest ballads bid adieu,
the saddest sound I ever knew,

and on the final downbeat,
love dies to stark silence.

Barry Middleton

Cane Pole Fishing

you don't see it much anymore
cane pole fishing is fading away
it was never about the fish caught
it was about the water and the day

cane pole fishing put you in touch
with interesting people who knew
exactly how to pace a summer day
matching slow water of the slough

bait was organic and home grown
minnows or crickets or worms
wash your hands in black water
no need to worry about germs

I moved up to gear instead of a pole
the jon boat was traded for power
but I wouldn't mind if I could go back
back down to Short Creek for an hour

Barry Middleton

Cape Town Photograph

across the inlet Cape Town dots the shore
the homes and buildings are like children's blocks

a steamer pushes heavy near the harbor
and penguins frolic in the breaking waves

beneath the Cape Town light commerce proceeds
the stamp of vibrant life is everywhere

but where we stand to view the drumming scene
upon the rocks, a rotting fishing boat

and I can sense the boat in better times
where brawny men hauled in their load of fish

and in the evening sang and drank their ale
or headed to the port to find their woman

those men are dead, their once proud vessel broken
part taken by the waves and burning sun

and yet that sun will grace another crew
and consecrates the lives the sea reclaims

Barry Middleton

Cat Dreams

Are cat dreams a curse to those born of Leo,
or are they just a bitter gift of age,
caged symbols of center ring losses?
The betrayal of cat dreams is clear.

I crack my whip and shout denial,
but desire pays no heed.
A slinking feline, a chestnut panther
challenges my sleeping brain with sibilant
vibrato sighs and will not quit the ring.

I want no dream.
They have all abandoned me.
I want not, and yet I do want.
I want this purring dream to stay.
But no one knows like me that dreams
deceive and only death is true.

In time the sleep will come
when all the circus spectacle is done.
The cats will sleep in their boxes,
and I in mine as dreams unravel
along with all my tears,
like play worn balls of yarn,
and cat dream fears.

Barry Middleton

Cat Eyes

she had eyes like a cat
just imagine that
she looked mighty good
from where I sat

she moved like a feline
my brain went blind
what I was thinking
might have been a crime

she purred like a kitten
might say I was smitten
if love is a bug
I was love bug bitten

call it love at first sight
but the Buddha was right
and I learned in time
pain ends the delight

like smoke in a curl
love is only a whirl
a cat strutting at night
it's just a working girl

it is good while it lasts
love is always a blast
then it slinks on away
like my Tomcatting past

Barry Middleton

Catching Tigers

if ever dreams come true
where wistful dreamers go
then I would capture you
before the cold winds blow

the tiger roams the night
to bring the dream alive
the necromancer's might
would make a love survive

now in my haunted room
the ghost of loss retires
your magical perfume
rekindled midnight fires

so on my bed I slumber
on sheets as cold as snow
in fading vague penumbra
illusions come and go

so oft in drifting dreams
the tiger makes escape
exotic night redeems
the dark magician's cape

Barry Middleton

Cave Attitude

I'm looking for a quiet cave
every poet needs one

one way in and no way out
facing the setting sun

for all that I will ever need
is just a sheltered view

and I can see advantages
for there are quite a few

no one needs to watch my back
the cave takes care of that

and once I find that primal nest
I never will come back

Barry Middleton

Cedar Tree Christmas

We never purchased a Christmas tree,
where I was raised they were always free.
Down the valley in Cooper's cove,
grew the perfect tree in a cedar grove.

We always scouted far in advance,
and searched across a great expanse
to find the perfect shape and size,
a Christmas tree that we could prize.

We'd need a hatchet and a saw
to cut the tree without a flaw.
We'd need a crew, not just one boy,
to get it home for all to enjoy.

There was often a very long way to go
through frost or mist or even snow
as we dragged the trophy to the farm
then dressed it up in Christmas charm.

All the work was well worth while
and ransomed by a childlike smile,
on Christmas day with gifts and glee
beneath our priceless Christmas tree.

There was perhaps a lesson learned,
that joy is something to be earned,
that can't be had in commercial ways
and once you learn it, the lesson stays.

Barry Middleton

Chain Gang Mississippi 1965

I watched over Ceasollie
in convict stripes
as he worked the road
and sang his songs
soft and meek and beautiful.

I watched him by day
and I drank quietly at home
as careful white men do
and never stood on tables
nor sang in all night cafes.

I watched over Ceasollie
in jail for being poor
and boisterous
and black.

Barry Middleton

Change To Yesterday

at last I know my work is almost done
and still there is another hill to climb
but I will not defeat the setting sun
before I hear a distant church bell chime

the earth and heaven mark the close of day
the dimming light reveals my way to home
for I must now endure and find my way
forsaking all the hills I wish to roam

it matters not to rage against the night
as darkness falls upon this primal path
for every candle must consume its light
the fire is not rekindled by my wrath

and breath and passion always drift away
when hills and valleys fade to yesterday

Barry Middleton

Chango

Chango coco jambo
everywhere that I go
underneath the mango
blow wind blow

I hear a canto
coming from the Congo
almost like a tango
pain and woe

thunder and light show
tropical commando
banging on a bongo
this I know

red and white mojo
rooted deep in Togo
far away and long ago
storm clouds grow

the Alafin of Oyo
Caribbean afterglow
black as a river crow
let me go

Chango Chango Chango

~~~~~

Reminiscent of Vachel Lindsay (The Congo) but different in its reference to the African god of thunder and lightning as co-opted by people of the Caribbean.

Barry Middleton

# Chaos In Turquoise

Shattered in the hermit's nest,  
there is time to contemplate

a turquoise sea and silver bird,  
the essence of a sacred word.

Gazing on the blandest panoply,  
the solitary poet takes a stand

as drunken fishermen gather  
discussing sport, politics and god.

He has studied all the books,  
fiction of garden walk in robes,

Christ and Buddha and the sky,  
and restive turquoise monsters,

gods with heads of elephants  
and many arms to juggle truth,

and too the books of science,  
now closed with the others,

wherein he did learn the one,  
the link of fossils, voles and men,

and studied Icarus and angels,  
and all philosophy that soared

above the sordid brown clouds  
creating idols of gilded ideas.

Even a hermit seeks connection  
with clouds and cryptic voices,

but he returns to loamy Earth  
huddled like the old brown hen

in fear and disgust as soulless men  
like lusty seabirds cry and chatter.

Thus, safe and closed in a dusty hut,  
he would whisper out his lines.

Wishing for never ending things,  
fails to rise on boundless wings.

Out there in the restless Gulf,  
the old projected masque flies

beside the squawking seagull  
above the sighs of tossing boats.

The fishermen pull in their nets  
praying for blue weather to hold,

but far beyond the calm horizon  
a turquoise butterfly awakens.

Barry Middleton

# Children Should Not Die

They are gone, families grieve,  
the nation grieves the outrage.  
The night is hushed as we recall  
children laughing and dreaming.

The sound was a joyous noise,  
the hope and energy of youth,  
a sweet and ringing affirmation,  
a comforting song for tomorrow.

Now the night is dark and silent,  
their parents cannot hear them,  
only mute tears know the music.  
Children should not die like this!

Will America fail, or bless them,  
not in some memorial or prayer,  
but in a resolve beyond homage,  
with the duty to act and protect?

~~~~~

For the victims of Sandy Hook Elementary School 12-14-2012.

Barry Middleton

China Rising

there are so many souls
down there in China
I believe that the invasion
won't be minor

they work very hard
just to win
so when they come
we'll all learn Mandarin

we have the room
they are so very clever
let them come in
and maybe stay forever

I'll master the Guqin *
of old Cathay
and drink Baijiu **
with communists at play

I then will sip green tea
and eat Cantonese
and my dog will be
a golden Pekingese

~~~~~

\* A Guqin (goo'-chin) is an ancient musical instrument.

\*\* Baijiu (Buy-Jo) is an alcoholic beverage

Barry Middleton

# Church

I look to the river  
for life is a quest

the end of the line  
a quiet place of rest

past long lonely roads  
the clear water flows

and where it will lead  
no one really knows

there must be a stream  
still hidden by trees

and just beyond reach  
a soft tropic breeze

so scatter my bones  
where no one will search

remote in the wildwood  
for there is my church

Barry Middleton



# Civilization

One step beyond the wilderness,  
at the edge of a dark forest,  
dwells the human soul.

The forest calls to us of danger,  
of beasts that roam the night,  
of evil in the heart of man.

The fear is deep that hides within us,  
the archetype within our DNA  
is like a cold blooded reptile.

It keeps the wilderness at bay.  
It depends on every one of us  
to conquer fear and pride and greed.

Accepting life and death,  
with flowers laid upon the grave,  
is all that we may do with fear.

Today I take one step into the light.  
Tomorrow does not exist.  
Follow me into the moment.

Then we will vanquish every evil.  
There is no fear that we cannot defeat;  
the faithful sun reveals the way.

Barry Middleton

# Clarity In Flowers

I once did find a distant mead,  
quite hidden where the woods recede.

It was remote from pasture land.  
Was it forgot, or maybe planned

to leave a spot where flowers grew,  
with hidden lessons to pursue?

The grass was thick and rich in bloom,  
and verity, and rare perfume.

The garden that I stumbled on,  
knew secret truths of time foregone,

a single page of youth's sweet tale,  
where lasting beauty might prevail,

and need and grace could coexist,  
though hard to find and easily missed.

And I would leave the blooms in peace,  
for someone else to find release.

For who's to know, some other day,  
another soul might pass this way,

and rightly pause to mark the hour,  
the wisdom of a woodland flower.

Barry Middleton

# Clocks

it can't be time  
to say goodbye

I sang  
the baby's lullaby

then turned around  
to see him grown

now I am in  
the house alone

I once did know  
a brown eyed girl

but that was in  
another world

and that was from  
another time

before the ticking  
clock could chime

reminding me  
of all these things

that must unwind  
like clockwork springs

Barry Middleton

# Clockwise

we came from Africa  
clockwise from Eden  
spreading over the earth

from the caves of Lascaux  
to the steppes of Mongolia  
we wandered ever restless

we crossed the Alps  
and the Himalayas  
and the Bering Strait

we spread over the plains  
of North America  
we mapped the rivers

we delved the swampland  
we conquered the forest  
we built our cities

we traveled the globe  
we left our mark  
the open pits and scars

we fought the wars  
we murdered angels  
the sons of Cain endure

the bodies of our children  
lay strewn on battlefields  
and nothing changed

the blue green paradise  
has turned to desert  
the ocean is rising

in the sacred mountains  
we must gather  
for a final offering

in the sacred mountains  
we must gather  
for the final prayer

Barry Middleton

# Cloudland

to live within a misty cloud  
and never touch the earth  
was always inspiration's source  
unendingly since birth

to dwell amid a fantasy  
is frowned on by a few  
but I prefer to touch the sky  
and sail beyond the blue

please don't disturb my reverie  
I soar above the crowd  
I will not let you bring me down  
I won't give up my cloud

Barry Middleton

# Clouds And Stars

The clouds by day, the stars by night,  
may seem to call my name.  
But cold indifference in their voice,  
forever is the same.

There is no answer from above,  
no whisper and no grace.  
The silence and the emptiness  
is desolate as space.

I struggle through a painful day,  
to greet the lonely night,  
the universe confused by doubt,  
that I cannot set right.

The clouds and stars are brothers still,  
and that I can't deny.  
And so I know they weep for me,  
for they as well must die.

Barry Middleton

# Come Home

How I have often prayed for peace,  
and I have prayed for lasting love,  
but all I heard was hate and war,  
no answers from the stars above.

And I have longed to find my home,  
a cabin in a tranquil wood,  
and far removed from pain and grief,  
necessity and every should.

I know accord exists somewhere.  
I searched beyond the sacred sky,  
for trust and grace and distant gods,  
on which at last I might rely.

Then old and tired I found the truth,  
that came to set my spirit free.  
For peace of mind and love and hope,  
were always deep inside of me.

Barry Middleton



# Comfort Of Silence

I wander now in the comfort of silence  
I close my eyes and the clock runs backwards  
I am a child again  
a warm summer breeze rushes across a field  
my faithful dog follows my path to the creek  
the memories flow like green waters of time

I hear music and I see an auburn haired girl  
she turns her head and gives to me her smile  
we dance again  
the sweet hot smell of gardenias is in the air  
the music drifts into a quickened waltz  
to match our quickened hearts as we kiss

midnight is a silent dream of lost images  
a small boy who has grown into a strong man  
a child again  
dancing amid moonlight and flashing fireflies  
somewhere in a faded misted wooded valley  
and he may be my son or he may be myself

Barry Middleton

# Commitment

the high diver  
stands at great height  
and pauses  
to make sure he's right  
when he feels it is time  
and he's made up his mind  
he commits to the dive  
and he sails into flight

now he knows  
there is no going back  
there is no way  
to take up the slack  
he may score a ten  
and then he may win  
if he's properly  
gotten the knack

or he may soon discover  
we cannot recover  
once committed  
one can never  
adjust or retract

Barry Middleton

# Completing Seventy

seventy springs have passed away  
I see a new magnolia bloom  
the breeze that drifted into May  
bids me to leave my shuttered room

too much depression traps defeat  
as life goes on beyond my door  
the metaphor is blind conceit  
and yet it's one that I adore

I still get by without a cane  
and I can still compose a rhyme  
although the sickness in my brain  
demands its pay in overtime

but I will answer to the call  
and old obsessions of the past  
before the mystery of the fall  
conceals all things that cannot last

Barry Middleton

# Complicated Monkey

I'm a complicated monkey  
sometimes I think I'm funny  
just when you think you know me  
I go crazy

I have always been this way  
no matter what they say  
I haven't changed a bit  
I'm lazy

but if I make a promise  
then you will find me honest  
I deliver on my word  
though hazy

I'm a saint not a sinner  
at each Thanksgiving dinner  
I will show up once again  
with gravy

and if I really like you  
you will know that too  
I'm a complicated monkey  
you're my daisy

yes I'm a complicated monkey  
sometimes I think I'm funny  
just when you think you know me  
I go crazy

Barry Middleton

# Composite

I heard the dogs, my father taught me to listen  
a hint of sound would come and go on the wind  
at first not sure, I leaned into silence, the dogs

they were coming, Walkers, Blue Ticks, Redbone  
more moan than howl, baying, louder, fainter  
would they come my way along the oil line cut

if they followed the slough or the pipe line  
this is where they crossed the sluggish water  
the river lay to my left, the slough behind me

where else might the deer go, the pipe line  
burst from the woods a hundred yards away  
they were closer now, surer, the dogs sang

they were louder like my heart, or was it me  
making this noise, no, closer still, roaring  
fast on the trail, close now, coming this way

the gun, cold as December, rested in my hands  
I knew now the deer would come across the field  
the dogs made me tremble, I thought to breathe

from the trees the deer was coming to me  
grace, crossing the field in leaps and bounds  
I raised the gun and tried to stop shaking

frozen, no air around, the deer charged  
fifty yards, twenty, ten, swinging, leading  
no shot, no sound, leaping, he was gone

Barry Middleton

# Confluence

I may only roam so far  
along this gentle creek

then it flows into the void  
where muddy waters speak

seeking soon will fade away  
as deadly rivers crest

I hide in shade beside the brook  
to end the fearful quest

I wish to never beg escape  
for I might be brought down

lost in currents without hope  
where I could surely drown

Barry Middleton

# Confrontation

I wander far to seek and think,  
and rarely find the answer I  
was looking for, but often delve  
another just as needful of  
solution. I recall a day  
I thought that man endured above  
the whole of Earth in beast or plant.  
My walk that day did chance upon  
a hummingbird out sipping blooms  
of golden yellow honeysuckle.  
I thought: here are the frailest things  
that God has given roots or wings,  
and yet they have endured not knowing  
love or hate, and feeling no  
regret if we had never met.  
I was as frail as they I knew,  
and not the stronger for a brain,  
but likely weaker for the pain  
that I could feel that they could not.

Barry Middleton

# Conscience

having found forgiveness I banish guilt  
forgiveness being a state of mind  
where regret meets consolation  
in epiphany

I do not take pride in forgiveness  
or in a just life  
for I have made mistakes  
as humans do

I did not need a god to punish me  
I did that for myself  
there is no god whose sentence  
surpasses that of conscience

there is no god whose forgiveness  
absolves the mental anguish  
that good men struggle with  
over venial transgressions

Barry Middleton



# Contrast

poetry of darkness  
also contains the light

poetry of death  
must celebrate a life

the world exists in contrast  
the pulse of opposites

night and day contend  
hot and cold must struggle

drought can bring the flood  
calm precedes the storm

contrast is unity  
there is a single force

where life and death proceed  
the rise and fall of breath

Barry Middleton

# Coping With Trump

seasons come and go  
and victory and joy  
and disappointment too

we must remember this  
no one can steal your dream  
so do not quit the fight

today we mourn a loss  
tomorrow we find peace  
fortunes fall and rise

so turn away from hate  
and keep your values clear  
love is all that matters

Barry Middleton

# Copperwood Reflection

The morning air withholds  
its hint of what the day will be.

And so I wait and watch  
beneath the gumbo limbo tree.

By afternoon the clouds  
are alabaster bales of cotton.

They conjure up my youth,  
and memories I had forgotten.

Distant thunder looms.  
A breeze stirs a cabbage palm.

The rattle of a frond  
predicts an ending to the calm.

Lightning splits the sky  
amid a gray and restless wind.

So I retreat to home,  
to shelter and the storm within.

Barry Middleton

# Corruption

corruption only serves the self  
it disregards the needs of others

corrupt government is a great evil  
it exploits those it should protect

corruption is betrayal and deceit  
it is layered in lies and trickery

corruption is tyranny in disguise  
thievery shielded in darkness

corruption putrefies the soul  
it is forever an insatiable lust

to fight corruption be generous  
focus on the needs of the many

corruption dims in truth's light  
to save your soul rely on truth

truth is a beacon in the night  
it is silent and gentle and pure

Barry Middleton

# Counting Losses

the year will pass away  
a soldier lost in war  
a sailor sets to sea  
returning nevermore

the hard despair of life  
torments the soul of man  
so poets often ask  
what is deception's plan

nearby a silent star  
observes in hushed repose  
and what it all may mean  
nobody really knows

another child is born  
its tears will curse the light  
an old man grieves the sun  
that passes into night

Barry Middleton

# Cowardly Lion

he roars to show his might  
and never sleeps they say  
a predator by night  
a predator by day

as cowardly a lion  
as there could ever be  
he believes he is a scion  
of noble pedigree

he is no regal beast  
but petty as a mole  
he's lesser than the least  
at most he is a troll

he is a maniac  
a puppet on a string  
he's just a jumping jack  
who thinks he is a king

a narcissist and fop  
his necktie hangs too low  
his hair is like a mop  
he thinks this is a show

he's just a minor nuisance  
a blowhard wannabe  
a leonine apprentice  
is all he'll ever be

Barry Middleton

# Crazy Clown

I'm not sure how much I can take.  
Sometimes nothing gives me a break.

But I don't pay it very much heed.  
I have all that I really need.

I have my friends. I know the way,  
as I go out walking to greet the day!

Often I get down on the world.  
I spin the globe and give it a whirl.

It spins around this crazy clown.  
I just won't let it keep me down.

I have my friends. I know the way,  
as I go out walking to greet the day!

No more regret, no sorrow for me,  
I think that I will finally break free.

No no no more, I'm out the door,  
I'm going to take a walk, or I may soar.

I have my friends. I know the way,  
as I go out walking to greet the day!

Barry Middleton

# Crazy Gig

life is a crazy gig  
sometimes I think the game is rigged

in fact I'm rather sure  
we fight in vain but we endure

maybe the deck is stacked  
the chips accounted for and racked

played without a stake  
long before the bets we make

I thought I'd never fall  
I could do anything at all

but that is never true  
if no one puts their faith in you

I got a chance and luck  
someone to push when I was stuck

you'll need a partner too  
success is just a steady crew

so keep the wise ones near  
and forever be sincere

and then you will go far  
believe me you are a superstar

Barry Middleton



# Created Monsters

the monsters I created  
can never stop me now

the maiden and the knight  
have faded from my sight

I fill my glass with wine  
remembering the day

when monsters fled my glance  
they knew they could not stay

I beat them all but one  
but none shall block my path

and if it thinks it can  
then it will feel my wrath

Barry Middleton

# Creek

the creek ran over white sand and gravel  
and passing over secret ledges  
dug out the deeper holes

there could be found a place for swimmers  
or in another season a hiding place  
for hungry green trout

this place was a place for making memories  
secluded from a troubled world  
protected like childhood

and there I dreamed my dreams of triumph  
for in this place was all of time  
and every possibility

this place recorded the hopes of millennia  
where others had passed this way  
and paused for guidance

Barry Middleton

# Crime Scene

I see the yellow tape  
the crime scene is preserved  
white chalk dissolves in the rain  
soon the fallen are forgotten  
until the terror comes again

Barry Middleton

# Cruel Day Cruel Night

the morning star is shining in the east  
and still I grieve the rising sun  
for night is almost done

night conceals the cruelty of the earth  
war and dark oppression hide  
beyond a pleading dream

the sun reveals reality and pain  
no justice for humanity  
till night has come again

yet in corners of the darkened globe  
battles rage both night and day  
and dreams are no relief

Barry Middleton

# Cut Rose

beauty of the cut rose  
imprisoned in a vase  
quickly dies

the spared garden rose  
endures in silence  
communal

so with all possession  
there will be  
a dying

no bird would be caged  
no bloom clipped  
no heart bound

the purity of yearning  
free from tethers  
is grace

Barry Middleton

## D.E.

As near as I could tell  
with youthful wisdom,  
men fear two things.  
First there are other men,  
and probably could be first,  
unavoidable circumstance.  
D.E. was both in childhood days,  
a man and yet a colder thing,  
a symbol of evil in a blond world,  
a lesson that there are things unknown  
and better left un-investigated.  
My older brother found the knife  
back near the backside of our property.  
Not an old and rusty tool,  
no mind you,  
but only tinged by one day's dew,  
a hot trail.  
On its pearly side a diamond plaque  
was double traced and within that tracing  
an enigmatic inscription was engraved,  
the letters D.E.  
A man,  
an unknown intruder into our lives,  
defiled our tabernacle,  
came into our sacred woods  
where each hill and hammock  
had a holy name and almost every tree.  
He had come in darkness,  
alone and demon-like,  
carrying a rude weapon  
snatched from his hand  
by guardian angelic forces.  
His intent could not have been good.  
And so,  
when a voice came through the wood,  
we ran.  
The world was no longer safe  
with a man like this on the place  
consorting with the devil.

There was no defense  
against this profanation.  
We knew he held an evil power  
and though months would pass  
without a broken twig or footprint  
to speak of his presence,  
it was always there.  
We knew he might step forth  
at any moment  
from the bowels  
of some great, hollow beech  
and take us in our innocence.  
We would never forget  
the unseen terror  
of his circumstance  
and my father  
would always  
keep the knife.

Barry Middleton

# Dance Whistle And Kiss

put on your dancing shoes  
and dance away the blues

and you can never lose  
it's up to you to choose

now each and any day  
may come to some dismay

accept it anyway  
then make your getaway

for if you're in a fix  
just jump into the mix

and you can get your kicks  
from very ancient tricks

like whistling a tune  
of summer sun and June

a star a cloud the moon  
and Sunday afternoon

for happiness if free  
no need to pay a fee

just save a kiss for me  
for love is still the key

Barry Middleton



# Dancing Dream

I'm dancing in a dream  
light as feathered air  
spinning on the ceiling  
just like Fred Astaire

I'm young and strong again  
but I could never dance  
something in the moonlight  
has but me in a trance

dancing in the dewdrops  
outside my windowsill  
the stars above are swirling  
the night is cool and still

I think I know the meaning  
the message crystal clear  
so I will keep on dancing  
there is nothing I must fear

Barry Middleton

# Dark Ages

there is a story I was told  
of shadow lands and mystery  
of lead transmuted into gold  
a misty realm of alchemy

the legend says the world is flat  
and witches never sink but float  
and this is this and that is that  
and heaven's view is quite remote

but ancient belief is now disturbed  
by existential elements  
and crazed fanatics are perturbed  
by modern day developments

Barry Middleton

# Dark Flower

There is a place, a river run,  
dark flowers by the path.

And many lovers pass this way,  
escaping earthly wrath.

There I cut the richest bloom  
of royal and regal hue.

And this is all I have to give.  
I bring it here for you.

I found that forest in a dream.  
I walked the river run.

Alas, the vision had to fade,  
to match the setting sun.

So I must seek the dream again,  
and find the garden lane.

For it will guide me unto peace,  
and shelter me from pain.

Barry Middleton

# Dark Horizon

I seek the dark horizon  
and sail the night alone

as planets turn in space  
for stardust is my home

I search for silent peace  
when day at last is done

beyond the sight of land  
beneath the setting sun

I wander past the moon  
to break the grip of earth

the passage is hard won  
the destiny of birth

and when I close my eyes  
then I will sail no more

my ship at last will rest  
upon a distant shore

Barry Middleton

# Dark Sonnet

poetry cannot change the world  
despite the claim the poet made  
and yet we write with that intent  
to make a mark beyond the grave

to carve in stone a final wish  
for peace and tenderness withal  
is every poets fondest dream  
save those who curse the mortal soul

for poets of darkness cannot weep  
their tears are spent and dry as grief  
they must condemn both gods and men  
they know the truth of poetry

poetry cannot change the world  
cannot change the petulant soul

Barry Middleton

# Dark Stairway

there is a stairway only I can climb  
without a light in darkness and alone  
although I know that peace is waiting there  
beyond a gate that must remain unknown

I cannot see the bottom or the top  
behind me lies a cherished memory  
the future is a veiled imagining  
ahead this blindness hides a mystery

I grope with just despair to light my way  
although I pray to touch a guiding hand  
I climb bereft of grace and filled with fear  
perhaps to find my goal an empty land

I pause in wonder of this hopeless quest  
still I have reached a shelter where I wait  
and there is nowhere else for me to go  
so here I rest till light reveals my fate

Barry Middleton

# Dark Tide

a restless tide is pounding at our shore  
and tinged with blood adrift with fear  
the moonless sky is dark

our doors are bolted to the frightened night  
our shutters locked and curtains drawn  
and still we hear the waves

what comes of those who fear the water's edge  
who fear what waits beyond the sea  
the hiss of far off lands

what comes but war where innocence must die  
our sons and daughters bleed for dreams  
to make the tide recede

the fateful moon will pull their bodies home  
the waves are like the sound of death  
the tide runs to and fro

Barry Middleton

# Dark Woods

I have moved in blackest woods  
upon a moonless night

clouds were blocking out the stars  
I lost the gift of sight

I was not fearful of the way  
my feet assured me well

that I was on the proper path  
I heard the dinner bell

it seems I never learned to take  
a light along with me

perhaps I truly loved the dark  
it seemed that way to me

the family always wondered why  
I would stay out so late

and I could never find the words  
but I was pondering fate

I learned the lesson of the woods  
that darkness need not kill

and I could find my way to home  
and I still have the will

Barry Middleton



# Darkness Before

before the dawn  
a moonless night  
there is no star in sight

in darkest woods  
in fog and mist  
no hope can long exist

and yet I know  
before the word  
a distant fire was stirred

and so I seek  
as growing light  
retires the bitter night

Barry Middleton

## Dawn Leaves

love does not leave without the dawn  
it takes the early morning light away  
and leaves us only with the day  
the days are easy to endure  
the nights are filled with single sighs  
and fear the sun will never rise  
the sun is high when I awake  
love does not leave without the dawn  
for sleepless nights  
are blind to eastern light

Barry Middleton

# Dawn Reminder

beyond the misty lawn  
the mockingbird will sing  
a rain cloud waits for dawn  
to see what it might bring

beneath the shadowed sod  
a quiet dream is heard  
as death has found its god  
in song and cloud and bird

the mockingbird's embrace  
must end for rain's decree  
to fall to earth like grace  
revealing destiny

then visions of my fate  
arise in morning light  
perhaps to consecrate  
farewell to darkest night

Barry Middleton

# Day

rising in the east  
I see a peaceful day

has come to banish fog  
and melt away the gray

a long and troubled night  
is soon to pass away

though it may linger long  
the dark can never stay

I hear the call of dawn  
that says I can't delay

this moment that I own  
is all I ever may

Barry Middleton

# Dead Reckoning

How far a distance have I come  
since last I set my course?

The tide has run, the wind has blown,  
to steer me with their force.

And so I fear I'm nowhere near  
the safety of the port.

And which direction should I sail,  
if refuge lies athwart.

I look upon the starboard view,  
the sun is going down,

so I will take a westward tack,  
where harbor may be found.

For this is how the journey goes,  
a calculated plea,

with only hope to guide the ship,  
and save me from the sea.

Barry Middleton

# Death

In a dream came a stranger  
all in black and smiling.  
And foolish trust compelled me,  
and I said enter friend,  
and did not turn to see,  
but only heard  
the whistle of the scythe.

Barry Middleton

## Death 2

the dead are stirring in their graves  
their dreams were never realized  
spring gives up a violet bloom  
and yet our hopes are paralyzed

and on the hill the wildcat prowls  
its tender prey has wandered far  
somewhere another mother weeps  
her son consumed by endless war

the veil of death is like a fog  
the angels weep and demons roar  
where toxic clouds pollute the air  
before the funeral parlor door

Barry Middleton

## Death 3

I know that I am dying  
the doctors don't know when

I feel it in the season  
I sense it in the wind

and on the harder days  
I can grow quite afraid

I leave the world behind  
and all the plans I made

I know I bid farewell  
to passion and regret

and memories of love  
and those I can't forget

I fear the pain of death  
my home has burned to dust

I close my eyes to night  
I go because I must

but still the wind complains  
and clouds conceive their tears

as smoke ascends the sky  
along with hope and fears

Barry Middleton



# Death Is Not Merciful

death is not merciful  
although it comes to end our pain

death is a greedy thief  
along with pain it steals the soul

death is the seed of grief  
the source of all anxiety

illusions can't defend  
a mortal heart or fragile ghost

hope is springtime rain  
to make the flowers bloom again

hope is a failed religion  
for only earth contains our god

the planet looks away  
as men pretend eternal life

Barry Middleton

# Death Of A King

he knows the end must come to be  
and he admits he is afraid  
for he surrenders sovereignty  
with all his orders finally staid

the king must lay his crown aside  
though he was strong and wise and good  
as even where the gods abide  
come newer gods where old ones stood

and so it is with mother earth  
they say that she returns to dust  
and all that ever comes of birth  
must die for life is just a trust

and some say even Universe  
will dissipate and fade to gray  
and never gets a second verse  
but banishment and cold dismay

Barry Middleton

# Death Of Apples

when the best apple tree  
was split and fell in a storm  
there was grieving

because I remembered  
climbing it  
when it was in its prime

the best apple was at the top  
and my mother cried  
too high    come down

I went and got it anyway  
and it was the sweetest  
and it was mine

when that apple tree fell  
I learned a bitter truth  
that good things never last

Barry Middleton

# Death Train

slow death is like a distant train  
I see the tracks I know that it will come

and yet denial hears no sound  
there is no murmur in the silent steel

but premonition on the breeze  
tells me the train is not so far away

then soon I hear a plaintive moan  
that I dismiss as only ghostly fear

I know the mind plays tricks on me  
I can't be sure I truly heard a sound

I place my fingers on the track  
to feel the force that I cannot deny

and now the shock wave moves the air  
I hear the rumble of the angry wheels

and soon the sound becomes a roar  
I would retreat but there is no escape

Barry Middleton

# December Day

On a day in December,  
with days growing short,  
memory is an ember,  
firing life's last resort.

Some memories are crystal,  
some are dark with regret,  
some are only a riddle  
I can never forget.

Some I will cling to,  
some I gladly let go,  
soft kisses I once knew,  
pain I could not show.

In time's dim archive,  
all the up and the down,  
lets me know I'm alive,  
till the mystery is found.

I am old but I still plan  
a new memory or two,  
to take a last stand,  
give December its due.

Barry Middleton

# Decisions

decisions have to be made  
to go forward or backward  
or sit in the shade

to retreat is return to the dark  
to an age that was bleak  
and empty and stark

the shade only shelters your eyes  
if we surrender our vision  
we let tyrants arise

so never give in to the fear  
for peace cannot follow  
when tyrants appear

there is really but one simple choice  
to go ever forward  
and raise a loud voice

for the future requires we advance  
if we take the right path  
then the world has a chance

Barry Middleton

# Deep In A Lonely Woods

deep in a lonely woods  
I came upon a clearing

I had been face to face  
with all that I was fearing

I'd lost the way to home  
I had not packed a light

now it was growing dark  
and soon it would be night

there stood a silent fox  
just frozen in its stride

I'd come upon it there  
without a place to hide

so I was like a statue  
to her a quaint illusion

I'd not disturb her world  
regretting my intrusion

we both would learn a lesson  
for time had slowed its pace

in that eternity  
our fears would be erased

she bounded on her way  
and then I stood alone

within the garden forest  
that we have both called home

Barry Middleton

# Defense Mechanism

I will pretend fear can't exist  
for heroes hide in fog and mist

the bloody wars and genocide  
are far beyond on the other side

I can pretend and make it real  
success is only the way I feel

when rain falls in the afternoon  
I can accept life ends too soon

I can pretend that peace exists  
hate is dead and love persists

I still have dreams that I can fly  
it may be true we find the sky

I can pretend the world lives on  
till every breath of hope is gone

Barry Middleton



# Delights

delights like warm blackberries  
picked in June are best because

we know they will improve with age  
chilled atop tomorrow's ice cream

so like a love still hot and sweet  
the best includes the more to come

...

the first orange blossom of spring  
its perfume drifting down to the lake

is sweeter grown to old age wisdom  
that knows of ripening and death

so in spring we take a deeper breath  
and close our eyes on fragrant dreams

...

we listen to soft wind in the trees  
and the breath in a rush of rising surf

and in summer when thunder speaks  
and lightning fires beyond the sky

in the distance a church bell rings  
before the quiet hush of the evening

...

to look upon the world's beauty  
and yet to see its agony and shame

can make us reach into ourselves  
if only to console another's grief

and within that moment's peace  
to share a vision of hope and strength

...

the precious gift that equals sight  
is touch with all its pain and power

touch can turn the world around  
and light the darkest corner of night

when all we see is burgundy and black  
a lover's touch transforms to velvet

Barry Middleton

# Deliverance

I fear the well is dry  
and pirates are nearby

I'll hide behind a tree  
and you may hide with me

we will not make a sound  
for dangers all around

one day a knight will come  
for evil must succumb

the pirate ship will sail  
then justice can prevail

and we will pray for rain  
to come and sooth our pain

a storm to fill the well  
and break this wicked spell

Barry Middleton

## Delta Dinosaurs

When I saw the black water swamps,  
I could believe there were dinosaurs.  
Cypress as old as time and lightning  
were hidden from the woodsman's saw.  
Raptors still soared above, searching  
for a glint of silver in the waters.  
Surviving reptiles lurked in shadows  
in the patient kingdom of infinity.  
These were the places where no man  
had left his intrusive mark.  
From the hills above the town at night,  
I still could view the inland sea.  
Two hundred miles of darkened delta  
held the archeology of timelessness.

Barry Middleton

# Delusion In July

It is not a sunny day,  
and a sinister breeze  
stirs the clouds.

The insinuation comes  
before the hurricane,  
like dusk before darkness.

The heat and damp air  
are here to inform me,  
to warn of the inevitable.

There is no storm today,  
there is only an omen,  
a hint from hushed shadows.

The sound is a sigh of grief,  
far way and faintly heard,  
a whispered premonition.

Barry Middleton

# Denial

denial is a blessing  
mine never worked quite well  
I know there is no heaven  
I know there's only hell

reality oppresses  
I can't escape my guilt  
I see my every wrinkle  
my house can't be rebuilt

I'm too aware of me  
I know my every fault  
I am my henchman's axe  
I cannot call a halt

I envy every soul  
that can deceive their mind  
denial is a blessing  
I wish that I was blind

I guess that it's OK  
I think I'll be alright  
reality's a dog  
and often in may bite

but then it wags its tail  
and comes to lick my face  
to run from it is nuts  
and maybe a disgrace

Barry Middleton

# Depression Is Not A Cloud

depression is not a cloud  
it is more like a monster  
it can't be tamed or killed

it is the body filled with lead  
poisoned by toxic grief  
and paralyzed in a dream

it is the nightmare beast  
when all the lights go out  
and you cannot escape

it is not a cloud  
not the winter snow  
it is a blanket of black death

depression is the coffin's preview  
trapped in total darkness  
and feeling only despair

Barry Middleton

# Destiny And Conflict

if rain or river could transform  
the evil in the soul of man  
and wash away the ash of sin  
baptismal in its master plan

perhaps to purify the soul  
the savior rising in a cloud  
could gather all the congregant  
as our redemption speaks aloud

but avarice is woven deep  
into the fabric of the earth  
though some men try to rise above  
yet few escape the bonds of birth

the garden that we all desire  
is archetypal memory  
and all we reach to grasp recedes  
when fear and greed rule destiny

Barry Middleton



# Destiny's Angel

it's a long trip out of the tunnel I'm in  
but I see the light down near the end  
and destiny's angel is my only friend

perhaps by the glow of a harvest moon  
I can sing you a new October tune  
and raise some hope on a red balloon

I saw that old devil when he took my chair  
now all that he does is wait and stare  
I have some time but none to spare

so I tell that devil don't mess with me  
I got me a black belt tenth degree  
and I'll send you back to eternity

I know that my death is coming soon  
I'll dance with angels on my honeymoon  
I'm punching my way out of earth's cocoon

the devil took the hint and he went his way  
and he won't be back on another day  
for I'm gonna go where the angels stay

it's a long trip out of the tunnel I'm in  
but I see the light down near the end  
and destiny's angel is my best friend

Barry Middleton

# Did I Invent Despair

did I invent despair  
clouded memories are such  
that I cannot recall

did I invent my youth  
a boy playing in the woods  
who now is dead and gone

the old white farmhouse  
and the green creek  
no longer exist for me

I must wonder of reality  
of a thousand foggy visions  
love and loss and tears

did I invent yesterday  
and was it all a dream  
dissolving in nighttime mist

and is the death I fear  
an unreal and ghostly door  
to gardens beyond the sky

or will I close my eyes  
to only dream again  
of reinventing yesterday

Barry Middleton

# Ding Dong Daddy

it is time for some voodoo  
or hoodoo could do you  
a sestina for the ballerina

I'll try whatever may help  
a burnt offering of goat  
mix a spud in chicken blood

I've heard of potions  
powders and lotions  
chants and smoking roots

desperation lies in extremes  
measuring the circumference  
of a lifetime of flipping coins

so in the end I will befriend  
crazy notions to plug the dam  
a witch doctor or a jam scam

a necromancer or a pole dancer  
a ding dong daddy from Dumus\*  
maybe can bring me some luck

~~~~~

*From the old song sung by Arthur Godfrey,
Phil Harris and many others.

Barry Middleton

Dinoland

I dwell among the dinosaurs
and not in modern days
I don't fit in with many men
nor comprehend their ways

as conversation turns to sport
I am an odd misfit
they never speak of recipes
I like to cook a bit

they do not care for poetry
they rarely read a book
and if I mention politics
they shoot a hostile look

religion too is off the list
of topics to discuss
that's sure to start an argument
and I don't like to fuss

I dwell among the dinosaurs
but I don't really care
for old and weary dinosaurs
are not much of a scare

more freighting is the real world
that we live in today
that makes me want to run and hide
and sometimes even pray

Barry Middleton

Discovery

when I behold a field in bloom
I think of childhood days

among the brier as I did roam
my childhood spirit strays

...

I still can taste the secret spring
where crystal water flowed

then ran the valley to the creek
to pay the debt it owed

...

I think of brave attendant souls
who delved with me the lair

of huge and hidden perils near
but we would take the dare

...

now we cannot go home again
we know the poets say

still I recall and treasure all
the dreams of yesterday

Barry Middleton

Disenfranchised

the hopeless and the angry soul
will never be controlled
the slave crafts weapons of his bonds
for chains can never hold

the pain of hungry desperate men
must find survival's path
oppression hammered into blood
when tears are turned to wrath

the primal battle lingers still
for avarice divides
still we could feed the multitude
with all the world provides

but masters spawn a second force
the disenfranchised crowd
who always make their voices heard
when will remains unbowed

Barry Middleton

Distance

between us is the void
an infinity of space

space to be misunderstood
and to misunderstand

we hunger for connection
where hearts are broken

and yet we seek again
that once in a lifetime

eyes and minds meeting
filling the emptiness

Barry Middleton

Distraction

please bring me something to distract
from pain and ambiguity
from all the brutal things I see
and all the insincerity

the world is cruel with wanton greed
and all the baser traits
I see no savior in the clouds
as humankind awaits

you say that we must save ourselves
that is a noble thought
one thing that passing time reveals
salvation can't be bought

for all my life I've wondered what
a common man could do
to change the world and waken love
if only in a few

but old and tired I've given up
it gives my head a pain
please give me something to distract
and sooth my fevered brain

Barry Middleton

Doctor Lawyer Ice Cream Man

he's a doctor and a lawyer
and the ice cream man
he's litigious and delicious
and in very high demand

he can tell you what to do
if you ever catch the flu
and if you have a minor tort
then he will help you sue

if you only have a craving
for a little ice cream
he'll provide a double scoop
and a sugar cone dream

he'll sprinkle it with rainbows
to cure your every ill
and to strike a blow for justice
he'll forget to send a bill

he's litigious and delicious
and in very high demand
he's a doctor and a lawyer
and the ice cream man

Barry Middleton

Dog

'I am called a dog because
I fawn on those who give me anything,
I yelp at those who refuse,
and I set my teeth in rascals.'

Diogenes

there is much to admire in a dog
if they like something, they lick it
if they are scared, they growl
if they are threatened they bite
if pleased, they wag their tails

dogs are famous for their loyalty
they will fight enemies to the death
to defend their master from danger
and they ask very little in return
but appreciate any care or affection

dogs have only a few laws
eat when you are hungry
sleep when you are tired
don't worry about how you smell
don't bite the hand that feeds you

Barry Middleton

Downbeat

rhythm of the wave
is like the rhythm
of the heart
is like the rhythm
of love's passion
and out in space
quasars speak
and planets turn
in a familiar pulse
the pendulum swings
the dog wags its tail
the traffic rumbles
like a bongo beat
a pounding drum
in every street

the chaos, the distant past
city blocks or farm fields
fractal cells of plants or men
do not reveal the maestro

alone upon a hill
I hear a tune played
only for me
a symphony played
only for me
I hear
the music

Barry Middleton

Dragon Fire

The dragon's breath is fire.
The noble chevalier
may quench the dragon's ire,
to free the world from fear.

His sword is drawn to fight,
as knights must take a stand,
to act and set things right,
with justice close at hand.

Of old the dragon died.
The gallant killed the beast,
for truth was on his side.
Then enmity would cease.

But knights must not delay.
Today there is a dearth,
and innocence is prey
as dragons scorch the earth.

Barry Middleton

Dragon Slayer

before the closing act is done
and if a crowning wish is won

before the utmost prayer I pray
just one more dragon might I slay

and save a lady in distress
perhaps to win a brief caress

for what is all of life about
unless a man can have some clout

and yet in age the sword must fail
and knightly muscles must grow frail

desire forever knows no bounds
and so with memory's arms surrounds

her beauty for a dreamer's sleep
distinctly I forever keep

till dragons find eternal rest
and knights all end their final quest

Barry Middleton

Dragonfly

they can do
60 miles per hour.
they can eat
60 mosquitoes,
and then can devour
5 bees and 3 flies
and 12 ants
of small size.
they come
in all colors
and shapes.
they decorate
Amerindian plates.
some thought
them evil
like a cotton
boll weevil.
but to some
they bring luck
like a first
hard earned buck.
they're medicinal
in old Japan.
they gobble
them up in Saipan.
but here
in the States,
we observe
their brief fates,
in the summer
as wintertime
patiently waits.

Barry Middleton

Dream

I stole a little piece of day
the world was sleeping through
to watch a mist of fog transform
my neighbor's lawn to fantasy.

I heard the dawn's enchanted
birds, sweet incantations
to pass the spell along,
the dream we claim is real.

The blackened sky
turns nearly white
before the baby blue
and girlish pink
gives up to surer blue
and time to think.

How hard it is
for me to hold
to grief in the dawn,
for dawn is a mirage
of what might be.

And yet how easy
it can be
to forsake hope,
to nourish a sorrow
with the chimera
of yesterday.

Barry Middleton

Dream Beat

In dreams, the soft exhale
of affection, the friendship
in a greeting hug
melts in trembling alto tones
to a lover's sigh that whispers
for me to hold her.

In dreams, the punishment
of almost intimacy
in a cousin like embrace
fades to song as enticing eyes
and an upturned chin
invite passion,
a kiss silently submerged
from atmosphere.

The melody is a fantasy,
a gentle minor key,
then like an old song,
she leads me by the hand
to secret places bright
with the clash of cymbals.

The hot jazz of appetite
is for ecstasy in her arms.

The longing in the soul,
is for the afterglow,
the cooling back-beat,
the embrace of eyes,
the skin on skin,
and for the moment,
no pain in the universe.

Barry Middleton

Dream Lake

the secret lake is hidden
I search for it by day

I wander in the hills
but never find the way

many will proclaim
the lake is just a dream

I know that they are wrong
it feeds a mythic stream

I plan to find it someday
there I'll build my home

there I'll plant my flowers
no more the hills to roam

Barry Middleton

Dream Tear

the moon is sinking in the west
where it becomes a tear
that falls upon forsaken stars
beyond the atmosphere

and there appears a silhouette
within the grieving night
then I recall the one I loved
before the death of light

the dark reveals a broken dream
a moonlit rhapsody
another time another place
in breathless harmony

but soon the sun will rise again
to steal my dream away
yet I would rather hold the night
than emptiness of day

still dawn deprives my fantasy
and robs all hope of bliss
as light intrudes into my room
to seal a parting kiss

Barry Middleton

Dream Time

dream time was my haven
the voice in the wood

the beeches whispered
and I understood

the cane breaks were thick
there I might hide

there I was safe
from confusion outside

in the green under story
where animals scurried

wood nymphs awaited
and time was unhurried

on the soft hidden lake
waters dark as a raven

mirrored the sunset
dream time was my haven

Barry Middleton

Dream Voice Sonnet

As silent midnight brings a ghost,
a shadowed echo of the past
will speak enchanting foolish words
of how our love has never died.

And yet I reach into the dark
to find the heart of emptiness
that time has failed to rightly hide.

But I would sooner have this ghost
than face a night of mute despair.

The hush pretends that love survives
within the chasm of the shade
where fictive haunting dreams are made.

And though the spirit voice deceives,
I will await its whispered lie.

Barry Middleton

Dreams And Realities

the dream is surreal
within a foreign landscape
there is a girl I never knew
but seem to know so well

the rubble of main street
are bombed out images
memory strewn wreckage
and three lost souls

the children of the night
are a patchwork comforter
of pain and wishes
myself and my companions

one is a lost love
another a long dead friend
and there I fade away
into a fog of melted time

when dawn comes
the frightened dream of day
and its gnawing realities
are stitched into the years

Barry Middleton

Dreams And Schemes

desire was just a turquoise sea
where golden stars would set me free

I blindly chased the fickle wind
and thought on it I would ascend

so heedless of my final goal
I wandered lost and uncontrolled

but there's an end to every road
where oceans and the stars implode

and there I gaze and heed the tide
that whispers where my dreams abide

Barry Middleton

Dreamscape

ever since I was a child
at times my dreams seemed real

I dreamed of secret lakes and hope
and tears I would conceal

the tears and doubt have never left
still I have sweeter dreams

when lovers lost are by my side
as real as touch it seems

and sweetest yet is love's regret
the loves I never held

that smile at me a lover's smile
before the morning bell

Barry Middleton

Dusk Belies Darkness

Dusk belies darkness,
for dusk threatens
and menace dwells
in fearful expectations
of fading light.

But night is a comfort,
no hidden evil waits
in celestial shadows.

Night is rest.

No sin,
no omission
judges my eternity.

I am blameless.

Gentle silence beckons,
and peacefulness.

No pain,
no cold,
no loneliness,
no disdain,
only the caress
of blind stardust.

Barry Middleton

Dusty Cabin

the fire is lit and casts a glow
across the cabin floor
imagination takes me there
beyond the final door

OK to smoke my pipe again
for I am healthy now
a promise made in Eden's vale
affirms its solemn vow

does Universe live on in dust
or does the soul survive
I believe I know the truth of it
as well as I contrive

still everyone may certainly choose
what lies beyond that door
I choose a forest camp house stove
and dusty cabin floor

I hear a squeaky rocking chair
and then I light my pipe
a book is open in my lap
to heaven's archetype

here I will rest in forest deep
by waters dark and slow
I'll try to come back very soon
if there's another show

Barry Middleton

Dying Poetry

dying poetry is hard to write
a ghost leans over the keyboard
my words are empty as blank paper

I cannot put it off till death
for then it is too late
I know what only dying men can know

outside fate stirs the restless trees
the rain has ceased
no one else sees the drifting shadow

time drags on
as if childhood has returned
as if I wait for some coming season

there is no image or metaphor
a waking coma paralyses the mind
and the universe moves on

Barry Middleton

Dying Wind

a winter wind whispers
with discontent and rain

to streak a tint of sorrow
upon the windowpane

and if I listen blindly
I hear it once again

a ghost of passing seasons
tears and somber pain

reminders of the reasons
regrets are all in vain

the winter wind is waging
a final lost campaign

surrendering to spring
that murmurs its refrain

Barry Middleton

Dystopia

You must not drink the water,
or go out after dark.
And when the ocean rises,
you'll have to build an ark.

You'll need a respirator;
you cannot breathe the air.
Put on your mirrored helmet,
so you don't burn your hair.

Beware of storm and lightning;
black snow will fall in May.
Then we can tell the children,
how things were yesterday.

The hills were rich and wooded,
with bird and butterfly,
but when the acid rain falls,
then living things must die.

But we won't fear the future;
we'll all be dead as well.
We will not hear the cursing,
at those who made their hell.

Barry Middleton

Early Seeding

Before the spring,
before the bare twigs
of my season tree began to show
a damp green haze
within their brittle net,
I caught one day a neighbor
out with hoe and spade
to turn the earth
and seed an early garden.
I did not think it bold to ask,
since the old man was of an age
too near eternal mystery
to hide the little that he knew.
He saw the question coming
because I asked with the eyes
before I asked straight out.
'Early for a garden ain't it? '
He didn't stop to clean his spade.
He knew exactly what he'd say
and looked to see if I was set to hear.
An early spring would come was all he said.
I wanted something more profound
and kept him on the hook.
'What if spring is late
and your work's undone
by late frost? ' I asked.
'Suppose it is, ' he said
and sunk his spade again.

Barry Middleton

Earth Cycles

When the sun rises,
shinning on dew graced fields,
a mother answers to her baby's cry,
and there is hope.

Childhood is innocence,
but only for the lucky ones.
The world is cleaved to a blessing,
and the curse of evil.

The hawk rides a thermal
half way to heaven.
Below, its prey is crossed
by a shadow.

Earth is an abundant garden,
a bounty of flower and fruit,
and too it is a desert,
a barren, desiccated landscape
of thirst and starvation.

Weight gathers in dark clouds;
storms of war sweep the land.
The dove is blown by the wind.

Love comes and goes
on a spring breeze.
Love is inconstant;
love is a betrayer.

Age creeps like a predator.
Hidden until it leaps,
the tiger takes its prey.

Death is a welcome sleep,
the strange reward
for blood and tears.
Death is a saboteur.

Again the sun rises,
waves of grain
are stirred by the wind.
A child is born to tears,
and soothed
by the touch of its mother.

The earth turns,
the moon circles in its cycle.
The sun rises and sets
until we join the stardust.

Barry Middleton

Earth Is Weary

The earth is alive like breath;
the air flows on a temperate wind.
The sea pulses like a beating heart,
like blood its currents stream.
The mountains and rivers,
the lands and creatures are a gift.
The earth is our guardian,
protecting and nurturing creation.
Its only fervent plea,
that we use these treasures well.
The earth is our mother,
grown tired and taken for granted.
The earth is alive like grace;
but like love, the earth can die.
And yet she need not die.
The earth is an eternal spirit.
Though she may live forever,
her children must now take care.

Barry Middleton

Earth To Earth

once there was an Eden
in Africa or Asia
I could not know in life
beyond a wild fantasia

a riddle and a puzzle
I searched for it always
but it was ever hidden
within a distant haze

...
many come by faith
it's not found with logic
intuition takes me
above the philosophic

I believe that I'll get there
I'll fall down on my knees
to taste the primal waters
beneath the Eden trees

Barry Middleton

Easter Egg Hunt

The children play upon the lawn,
another generation's dawn.

We wish a better destiny
for springtime hope and progeny.

The melody that lovers plan,
in children since all time began,

darts here and there across the grass
till innocence can stand at last

and raise a fist in triumph there,
a pastel egg, an answered prayer.

Barry Middleton

Echoes Of Spring

There is a gift that comes with spring,
the rains fall and water rushes in the creek,
the budded rose reaches out for light,
a mockingbird trills a greeting to the sun.

The dew on the new grass brings a memory,
a foggy morning in April, a softening of things.
Then I can see again and shed the winter cloak,
and sing again the existential rhapsody.

I will trade the poetry of sunset for dawn,
for now the green parrots streak past despair
seeking their secret destination in tomorrow.
Soon the osprey calls to the renewing breeze.

These are the echoes of spring and youth.
The depression of winter lifts on rising air.
Noon reveals benign buttermilk cloud flakes.
Old men watch as lovers pass by laughing.

These things are left to the patient observer,
the planet turns, moon and sun race with time.
The swaying pines are like a metronome,
counting the tick and tock of earth's rhythms.

Barry Middleton

Echoes Of The Clock

I hear echoes of the clock
ticking on the wall
I see shadows of a giant
standing ten feet tall

memories of a lifetime
all come out to play
lovers and lost friends
wish to have their say

the family gathers round
our mother's favorite chair
she says to bow our heads
so we may say a prayer

the after midnight crowd
has gathered all around
whispering my secrets
though I am darkness bound

these memories are a comfort
the present day must lack
you sing a song for me
so thanks for coming back

Barry Middleton

Eclipse August 21,2017

Once feared as omen from an angry god,
the sun's eclipse gives cause to celebrate.
With passing time we see all things anew.
The sky is blue; the people congregate.

Why is this rare event so powerful?
Perhaps we celebrate an end to guile,
and darkest superstitions of the past,
although for some old fears remain in style.

This grace filled day reminds us of an age,
when all our world was deaf and mute and blind.
And so we cheer because at last we see,
the light returns and life and peace of mind.

Though times are dark the darkness cannot stay,
the universal fire will always burn.
Today I hope the world may see the clue,
to cherish light is what we all must learn.

Barry Middleton

Eclipse Trump

they say the Shadow knows
but I'm not really sure
it missed the President
I hoped it might obscure

no Shadow lingers there
in Washington D.C.
don't look into the skies
there's nothing there to see

and yet there is a Shadow
upon the President
the man is in the dark
he's earned our discontent

that guy has got to go
the nation's had enough
so he should just resign
it's going to get rough

a demon eats the sun
the natives were not wrong
for Trump has blocked the light
that makes the nation strong

you say it has not happened
since very long ago
in fact in 1918
the sun put on this show

but what goes on with Trump
no Shadow really knows
we have not seen this act
he strives for lower lows

but still I have great hopes
there comes a better day
when Trump is finally gone
the Shadow gone to stay

Barry Middleton

Eden's Rose

once a garden
now an enemy
her tears are exhausted

the heat
the storms
the wars

drought and starvation
angry seas rising
terror and blood

no food to eat
no water to drink
no love

the beauty of her rose
is forgotten
lost in the universe

Barry Middleton

Election Blues

one candidate may lack a brain
I think he thinks it's just a game
the other lies some people say
so flip a coin or maybe pray
but bigotry deserves no voice
the lesser evil is the choice
and so I vote for Hillary
to save her from the pillory
I cannot vote for Donald Trump
his mind's a sewer a fetid sump
and yes I have the election blues
the money wins the people lose

Barry Middleton

Elysium

Throughout our life we wonder,
What lies ahead in Elysium,
beyond the triumphant arch?

Could it be Paris in springtime,
where gods and poets
stroll the boulevard?

Is it a place where art survives
the ravages of time and war,
a peaceful garden park?

May we rest there by the river,
where the sun is a golden cup
filled with eternal grace?

Why then am I afraid,
afraid to embrace deliverance,
where peace and justice abide?

Barry Middleton

Emotions

the basic four emotions that we know
must go with us wherever we may go
I favor glad or sad
I'd rather not be mad
and scared I'd love to simply let that go

the sadness of the cloudiest of days
reminds me that the sun is still ablaze
yes just behind the cloud
obscure but yet still proud
and soon it will break through to brighter days

I know forever I'll always get by
whenever I can laugh or I can cry
I will not be afraid
I'll keep chin up and staid
until the heavens break this mortal tie

then I will be relieved of anger too
just one less block upon a lovely view
and if I could I would
I know I never should
not ever let my anger out on you

Barry Middleton

Enchanting Eyes

her eyes imprison fragile souls
though some forswear the trance

I swore when it was much too late
no more to take the chance

so now I turn and shun her view
lest she should capture me

for if she locks me in her gaze
I'll never more be free

Barry Middleton

End Of Day

horizontal rays of light
illuminate the stolid trees
swaying in a gentle breeze

a setting sun speaks of fate
and I can see the dark to come
for you and me and everyone

a breeze declares the hour late
prayer or hope cannot defeat
the end of day and self deceit

the harbinger of heavy night
impassive to my futile pleas
cannot bring me to my knees

but I will bow as if contrite
imagination to appease
and justify its cruel decrees

then I accept the final hour
as I accept my final plight
and softly step into the night

Barry Middleton

End Of Day 2

one day is like the next
the sun paints golden shadows

then soon the velvet night
will gather memories

like rhythms of the sea
or sails of forgotten dreams

fragments of my life
comfort and torture me

for some I would forget
still others are my soul

the golden shadows creep
into the dreaming night

the tide is going out
to take me from the day

and with it memory
will soon be washed away

the sea is quieter now
only ripples still remain

Barry Middleton

Endangered Species

near its creek in the everglades
the indigo snake lays wait

its den hides in palmetto brush
in realms that feel no hate

for in this land no humans dwell
to take more than the need

or hold a grudge till life is done
compelled by lust and greed

in that creek black water flows
ghost orchids bloom at dawn

a pond apple tree is heavy with fruit
and a doe watches her fawn

the snake and deer see life as just
in a garden paradise

they know no worry and no toil
it should make a man think twice

Barry Middleton

Ending

If when I die I stop
to tally the score,
I pray that tears will cease
and memory's smile
and laughter
will soften the death rattle.

Recollection is fleeting
like the green flash
of a Florida sunset.
I want to waken
sunny days
and how the rain
brought wild flowers.

The greatest gift
an old man has
is afterthought.
If life rushes
before my eyes
as the sun sets,
let it flash the pleasures
I have known
like a manic slide show
of hot green summers.

If memory captures
life and death,
I will recall it all
when I am old
and live my life again
passing over loving sunsets,
smiling children,
and gentle moments
to die in the arms
of my mother
and death
will never be a deceit.

Enough

the stars are enough for me
the sunrise is enough

the sea rocks me in its cradle
the rain cleanses the air

each season is a blessing
spring brings daffodils

summer brings lilies
to offer to my lover

and autumn is reflection
in unabashed earthen tones

winter is for sleep and rest
and future resolutions

the stars are enough for me
life is enough

my weakened heart still beats
today is a precious diamond

Barry Middleton

Ephemeral Things

ephemeral things
can be quite significant

spring brings grief
because it cannot last

a lingering kiss
knows that lips must part

seasons come and go
joy and sadness

tyrants rise and fall
no monument is eternal

life itself is fragile
a star consumes itself

a seeded dandelion
awaits a gentle breeze

Barry Middleton

Ephemeron

love came down from the hills
from the secret lake of dreams

she was dressed in white silk
like the dogwood of her valley

her laughter was celestial music
a jubilation never heard before

her dance enchanted the night
streaming with a hiss of steam

her touch was gentle percussion
the sibilant brush of a heartbeat

in her green eyes was the spring
her kiss was a warm sweet berry

to go to those hills again is death
beside a verdant lake she waits

Barry Middleton

Epiphany

A storm is building fast;
for time can never last.

But now epiphany
has come to set me free.

I think of precious dawn,
where poetry lives on,

and how the mystery
became so clear to me.

I still recall the faces,
that memory embraces.

And I will not forget,
my passion and regret.

As lightning fills the sky,
I know I will get by.

And I will never hide;
the storm is but a guide.

It comes to ease my pain,
with rest and gentle rain.

Barry Middleton

Epitaph

My final day is done,
all the seeds are sown.
Let rain resolve my ash
I want no pompous stone.

I need no fancy words
these few will suffice,
burn them with my bones
for I have paid the price.

I claim a shady spot
beneath a stalwart tree.
I want it near a stream,
for there I can be free.

I want a southern sun
to filter through the leaves
to guard my quiet repose
beneath a spectral breeze.

Barry Middleton

Epitaph 2

Frail is the flower of life,
and this I always knew,

when visiting the graveyard
where daffodils once grew.

They say the land endures,
so there we place the dead,

the patriarch at rest,
where feet no longer tread.

A marker cut in stone
reveals a hidden grave,

o'er grown in brush and brier
an epitaph engraved:

All are equal here
as Earth reclaims the land.

The pain and joy of living
are buried with the man.

Barry Middleton

Escape From Memory

Idle days bring fantasy
of love that used to be,
a vision of a bygone hope
that nevermore can be.

Yet we travel back in time
to find an open door
to memory we can't forget
and losses that we store.

In that place, a lover's sigh
rises from the dust,
enduring tears of yesterday,
and every broken trust.

We pray oblivion will end
the anguish that we feel,
for memory is agony
that only death can heal.

Barry Middleton

Escape Of Sisyphus

I am cursed like Sisyphus
my deceits were minor
and yet the gods conspired
to create my endless burden

I cried to the Universe
I called to great Olympus
for forgiveness and release
and yet my sorrows grew

I surrender to the gods
and push my abysmal stone
but with each journey
the hill is ground to dust

the stone itself is worn
the slope to home is easy
I thus release my charge
and I will see it through

millstones grind the grain
but grain grinds the stone
I will defeat the gods
the mountain is only dust

Barry Middleton

Escape To Dawn

a picture of the lonely moon
appears to fill my window view
so high above it surely knows
the secrets that I wish I knew

it sees the selfish world below
then hides its eyes behind a cloud
as if to look away from truth
that cruelty is disavowed

and some of us prefer to dream
and look away from sin and vice
preferring gazing at the stars
the ultimate escape device

still others draw the curtain tight
to block the weeping stars and moon
for they suspect the chance was missed
and no reprieve is coming soon

but something tells me I must fight
I know the darkness cannot stay
the moon and stars reveal the path
till morning sun returns the day

Barry Middleton

Eschew The Person

eschew the person
who disdains children

pull away from those
whose touch is uninvited

avoid people
who do not cook

do not trust the man
who puts a claim on truth

give silence
to pushers of religion

withdraw from those
who prattle endlessly

value the friend
who values silence

Barry Middleton

Evening Shadows

long shadows reach toward the east
fleeing the fire of the sunset

this is the time of day I now adore
the comfort of darkness falls

soon my world becomes a shadow
as it turns its back to the sun

and when the darkness blankets all
then I will sleep again

till I awake to an ember in the east
or to sparks arising from the pyre

Barry Middleton

Event Horizon

I feel the pull.
Not even light escapes they say,

where windless stars
conceal a hint of yesterday.

The blackest void,
the center of the galaxy,

still hides in space
and whispers of our history.

And at the edge,
a planet turns most unaware

of ancient laws
that linger in the shadows there.

And on that world,
as evil greed and war consume,

so few look up
to understand the hiss of doom.

As if the pull
will never reach the soul of man,

as light and time
return to dust where we began.

Barry Middleton

Every Woman

the girl is every woman
the expectation of dawn
revealing a dream of day
when fearful night has gone

she is the bloom of May
surpassing summer's heat
all the earth can yield
all passions we entreat

sunrise can bring a storm
a kiss turned to deceit
as tears of lightning fall
and force a blind retreat

the rose of spring is torn
the garden left in tatters
to cast a fatal shroud
on everything that matters

yes she is every woman
the breath of sacred belief
madonna of precious life
the arbiter of grief

but she may drift away
in winds beyond all reason
to leave us stripped again
to battle with the season

Barry Middleton

Everything Makes A Difference

everything makes a difference
every rising storm
every falling leaf
every word we speak

every child cries out for love
every soul needs nurture
loneliness seeks hope
humanity craves tenderness

the natural law is in the heart
no need to carve it into stone
everything we see is alive
everything makes a difference

Barry Middleton

Eve's Apple

the apple was sweet
but filled with regret

a kiss to remember
and pain to forget

moments of pleasure
incur a great debt

we all take a chance
we all place a bet

and sometimes we win
but then pirouette

the next time to lose
and take what we get

Barry Middleton

Eve's Relevant Secrets

the relevant secrets elude me
the tree of life and knowledge
alas banned for unknown motives

if gods had looked the other way
forgiving me my minor indiscretion
then I would never have to die

a rose sheds a tear
embers of the fire are spent
the garden in snow

my frightened heart cries for life
beyond the clouds an icy mystery
chills the blossom of all eternity

the breath of the goddess waits
again to share the apple's kiss
a taste immortality denied my lips

Barry Middleton

Evidence Of Darkness

Horror stirs at sundown
as hungry monsters wait.

Obscured by light of day,
the brute declares our fate.

Sunlight cloaks our fears
and helps us to forget.

But still the day is fragile,
a vague and brief vignette.

The darkness of the soul
is dark as darkest night.

It lurks in silent shadows
where terror blocks the light.

The sunset fire will fade,
the moon will show the way.

The predators of twilight
shall haunt the end of day.

The heart of man is dark,
though we deny the beast.

But when the light departs,
the savage is released.

Barry Middleton

Evil

Evil is done by oneself alone;
by oneself is one defiled.
Buddha

in a world filled with evil
men turn to hatred

we must avoid evil
but hatred makes us evil

avoid evil men
do not become like them

confront all evil
but not with hatred

to conquer evil
begin by conquering self

Barry Middleton

Exhaustion

I am exhausted
the party has gone on
too long
and still the guests
linger
like the last leaves
of autumn
defiant against the night
or merely fearing sleep
they gesture against the
chill of evening

Barry Middleton

Exit

love and life are fleeting
like melodies I used to know
harmonies retreating
to fade away in afterglow

the song of youth is brief
and soon becomes a memory
as age is filled with grief
and silence without remedy

the stage is vacant now
the theater emptied into night
I take my final bow
the exit is the only light

Barry Middleton

Exploring Dreams

I regret a few things
that I did on the way

as time moved along
to a final dark day

but more than mistakes
that I may have made

I regret the lost paths
where I never strayed

the road I discovered
when lost in the wood

that I would let pass
for I misunderstood

in the end we regret
what we do not explore

opportunity knocking
that we chose to ignore

Barry Middleton

Facets

wild expectation
exasperation

ecstasy and grief
life and death

the struggle
and the surrender

progressions
from white to black

fire and ash
sun and moon

the facets
of the rarest gem

Barry Middleton

Facing Winter

Forever I must face my fears,
and fight for every breath,
without the comfort of the years,
for life must end in death.

What lies beyond the ashen grave,
no one can claim to know.
There is no army of the brave
to halt the winter snow.

The strongest fall upon their knees
as winds and shadows speak,
as if the gods they might appease,
before the heart grows weak.

Still I defy the bitter cold,
and fight the wind and ice,
pretending that my fragile hold,
avoids the winter's price.

Barry Middleton

Faded Legacy

grandfathers and great grandfathers
walked these hills
and further back in time
a hand flourished on the Declaration

the ancestral land is the same as then
existence is different
houses sprout from the fields
pastures returned to woodland brush

but high above the homestead house
I find an ancient hearth
beside it lies an arrowhead
that speaks in whispers to the breeze

still deeper in the burial mound
the dead of the Paleolithic
sleep undisturbed in Eden
as millennia pass beyond all memory

Barry Middleton

Faded Photographs

faded photographs and paper memories
are somehow all that's left behind
a life's tokens are few

youth thinks the loss of love is greatest
they cannot know death's call
when even the soul is lost

that soul contains a lifetime's memories
not just the few words I leave
not images of youth

there is no flash of life before my eyes
the memories trail and drift
like autumn leaves

I've had too much of time remembered
too much of hope and spring
too much recalled

for this is surely the greatest of agonies
to look ahead and see death
and to hear its silence

Barry Middleton

Fading Footprints

footprints in the sand
fade with the tide

maple leaves in autumn
fade to final brown

...

roses return to earth
forgetting the summer

men fade and wither
bent by age or failure

...

and so the path taken
leads to fleeting victory

the tide rolls to and fro
without pity or regret

Barry Middleton

Failure To Site Scripture

To make you laugh
and cry at once
was never my plan,
was only a hunch
I played in the sand.
You see, I was walking
the beach alone
without an example
in paper or stone
of how life is ample
and amply provides
for laughter and tears
and feelings we hide.

Barry Middleton

Falconry

soaring on a sea of air
the falcon knows an ecstasy
that birth denied to you and me

it has no enemy but death
and it is unaware of fear
its kingdom is the atmosphere

it lives a moment at a time
and never looks beyond today
it conquers all that comes its way

but then it must return to earth
denied a final victory
for even kings must pay a fee

perhaps not so unlike a man
there comes a time for it to die
and leave the sanctity of sky

we too must fall eventually
to find the falcon's resting place
and greet the falconer with grace

Barry Middleton

Fall Memory

colors of the blushing sunset
remind me of a girl I knew
I remember her in fall

she wore the earth tones
of the season
colors of my woodland home

when leaves begin to turn
I see her even now
in orange and bronze and red

she brought the autumn breeze
she was a goddess
she filled the autumn night

Barry Middleton

Falling

fall, lover falling
you are a soft leaving
like the gentle, unnoticed slipping
of lover leaves from autumn branches

seeming strength in spring
brittle and breaking
with love deceiving

but a crystal kiss
white soft
and grieving
permeates the earth

Barry Middleton

False Path

I die with so much yet undone
I put off a home for a house

I dealt with the world of worry
and lost my peace of mind

the road was a blind dead end
no way to turn back now

I will not have the time I crave
I am too weak for tears

now I can only find regrets
I never knew the answers

what was I supposed to do
I took the false path long ago

Barry Middleton

Familiar Things

For all who wander far from home,
familiar things are memories,

the music and the rush of love,
the melodies and ecstasies.

...

Yes I recall the breathless pause,
the meeting eyes, the tender kiss,

and I still hear the song that played,
when I take time to reminisce.

...

Those memories I will not let go,
until at last I close my eyes

upon a final earthly dream
of harmonies and wistful sighs.

Barry Middleton

Far

I am far from home,
far from belief in magic,
from belief in tomorrow.
Foolhardy wishes are vanished.
Maps drawn in the sand,
washed away by the tide,
the final leaves of autumn,
fuel no foolish notions
of spring's reprieve.
Sentiments of poetry, art,
paper and stone hopefulness
are betrayals of dreaming.
Tomorrow is a bland sunrise,
no noon day secrets
argue with curiosity,
and an empty
and absurd illusion
frames sundown.
No new season beckons,
only night is left,
cold mystery,
damp velvet darkness,
and until then,
the comfort of defiance.

Barry Middleton

Farewell To Poetry

I know the time will come to say goodbye
although I know I am not ready yet
once granted life we want to never die
but death will always stalk us like regret

there are so many things I want to say
surrender of the soul provides a rest
as time so quick and quietly slips away
compared to life I rate that second best

compelled each day to write another rhyme
a cruel companion trails my every stride
I know that I am running out of time
and mortal gods are still my only guide

perhaps this life is but a metaphor
where I continue on my weary way
until I find some secret open door
so I will not give in to death's dismay

but even now I hear its stealthy tread
it waits for me to look upon its face
and though I would outrun my haunting dread
I know I'll never win this futile race

Barry Middleton

Fatigue

a breaking wave descends
and still I cannot sleep
it's not a troubled mind
not thoughts too dark or deep

my body weighs me down
fatigue is crushing me
I sink into the tide
I'm trapped by gravity

this harbinger of death
would punish some great sin
I must have long forgot
I don't know where or when

exhaustion fills my lungs
it comes to torture me
I feel that I may drown
within a breathless sea

but I will fight this surge
that pulls me toward the flood
until I reach the shore
to rest my mortal blood

Barry Middleton

Fear

has it always been this way?
cowering behind a fire
at the mouth of the cave?
fear will rule if you let it,
or realize it's up to you.
earth provides whatever is due.
find your niche, enjoy the trip,
give all useless fears the slip!

Barry Middleton

Fear Of Darkness

before the sun departs
the air turns to gold

atavistic fear warns
darkness will descend

hungry monsters stir
joining the nightly hunt

evil hides in shadows
to trigger us to flight

for prudence knows
to shelter safe

to wait for silver dawn
protection of the sun

fear almost vanquished
as daylight demons wake

Barry Middleton

Fear Of The Dark

I will admit I fear the dark,
but not for what is hiding there.
I fear a nothingness in death,
an emptiness without despair.

For when at last I cease to be,
and all I ever was is gone,
with consciousness forever lost,
there is no darkness and no dawn.

So men must crave eternity,
and swear the soul will live anew,
because we fear the silent void,
the cold, indifferent, vacant blue.

It is indeed a pleasing tint,
and painted on the vaulted sky
ephemeral as hope and grace,
on which they say I should rely.

And yet I fear the dark beyond
not just the end of earthly breath.
Atomic souls return to dust
most unaware of endless death.

Barry Middleton

Fear Two

I might as well admit the fear
of all the things I cannot fight,
the evil hearts of evil men,
the sun descending into night.
It is quite foolish fearing death;
I cannot fight or run away,
for after all no one escapes
a fear which nothing can allay.
I'm not afraid of many things;
yet I do fear the end of pain.
For death will also end my joy,
an au revoir to stars and rain.

Barry Middleton

Feline

Go slowly like a cat
that flirts and rubs
and sits upon my lap
then purrs without delay
the first sign of day.
Curl up upon my bed
and touch me with a paw
and stretch a feline limb
without a flaw.
Go slowly like a cat,
and cunning
with my love.
That sound is but
a night bird's call
and all your stalking time
is free,
tonight the only prey
is me.

Barry Middleton

Fifth Letter From Zeno

Where are the gods of today?
Innocence was murdered in 1963.
God's death was headlined in 1966.
Justice and Equality fell in 1968.

Now the children recognize
gunfire in the school hall,
the bully prowls,
dope deals are concealed.

Never again will we know peace,
unlocked doors, freedom,
kids everywhere and safe.

Heads are bowed texting
like a prayer to technology
that connects and disengages.

A lifetime passes by with war
on war on war with nothing gained.
Still the soldiers die.

Each year that passes takes us
farther on a path from paradise,
the garden lost forever.

America seems possessed of greed
that never can be satisfied.
The economy of consumption
has gone viral in China and India.

The Eastern world is still exploding.
Doves lie slaughtered
in the killing fields.

Pirates roam the Arabian Sea
and tyranny reigns in Central Africa
and the Sahara.

What brave new world have we
created? The Alpha and Beta Parties
lord themselves over a ??? fraternity
of wage slaves.

Huxley's nightmare has come true.
Solitude no longer has a value
and Soma rules the social scene.

Hatred and bigotry, that we
hoped to banish, have risen
to a state of virtue, and racists
deem themselves patriots.

All this as we poison air and water,
crack and frack the landscape,
and ignore the melting ice
and rising sea.

The possibility of nuclear holocaust
that seemed to grow remote
now looms again in the Middle East.

Optimists assure us all is well
as governments build more walls
and more bombers and demand
less and less dissent.

Pessimists seek the edge of the grid,
the bunker or the insane mountains.

Barry Middleton

Fight Or Flight

the night is silent death
no angel stirs the trees
no whispers from the gods
to put my soul at ease

why must the night withhold
the peace of gentle sleep
with too much time to think
the shadows seem to creep

my fear leaks from the cracks
beneath a fractured dream
and flows across my room
like ghostly toxic steam

and yet I seem inspired
and shake my fist at death
resolved to fight the night
until my final breath

Barry Middleton

Final Act

all life is like a play
each act is for a term
each scene constructs a tale
the seasons will affirm

so life must move aside
to make the room for spring
the elders laid to rest
so youth may take to wing

each man will have a turn
so do not grieve the years
for there is grief in life
but death concedes its tears

and life is but a script
so treasure every page
for soon the curtain falls
and all must leave the stage

Barry Middleton

Final Betrayal

final betrayal is death
it waits to seal our doom

it brews itself in waters
beyond a silver moon

it hides on the horizon
I hear it on the wind

a storm without a heart
thunder without end

it leaves my soul behind
as lightening scars the air

the storm accepts a body
that nothing can repair

Barry Middleton

Final Dream

my heart still beats like a ticking clock
my lungs still move the air
and the tide runs in and out

and dreams of passion come and go
the synapses of forgotten memory
spark and fire a ghost

when the sun rises I face my chores
daydreams at the grocery store
and small conversations with idiots

still I will find the fantasy of night
and I will run to you as in my youth
my heart impassioned by desire

and you await my outstretched arms
and we are young again
as I embrace my final dream

Barry Middleton

Final Fight

nothing is heard above a cruel wind
it drifts in from the north

its whisper turns to a howl
it is the shadow of a prowling wolf

a pagan chant mingles with terror
despair intoxicates with fear

I vanquish this pale army of ghosts
with salvation's prayer

the enemy is at my gate
my knife is ready for the final fight

Barry Middleton

Final Home

all boys and trees grow old and die
but certain things remain the same
the woods I wandered as a child
where haunted places laid a claim

I hold them like a photograph
each path I charted in my youth
that seemed as precious as desire
with hidden and enduring truth

the creek flowed south until it turned
to ever seek the dying west
I told it though it could not hear
it patiently had done its best

for often I did find a prize
a tree now petrified to stone
that taught me how a dying thing
in time will find its final home

another child explores those woods
and on the breeze there is a ghost
he cannot see me watching him
or know my observation post

still I have never left that place
so he may sense a presence there
and just like me he might yet find
a treasure far beyond compare

Barry Middleton

Final Landscape

out there
the framed waters
of the Gulf of Mexico
wait for me

I can see
the misty colors
of the sunset
the somber clouds

everything green
has turned black
the beach people
are silhouettes

I can almost hear
the sails luffing
for purchase
in the breeze

a wise old pelican
gives up the hunt
and turns homeward

Barry Middleton

Final Pantomime

the rain tree sets its leaves
so I know that spring is here

and soon the summer heat
brings hope to end my fear

with yellow booms in fall
the tree declares a change

that nothing in the world
assumes to rearrange

too soon the winter comes
the rain tree marks the time

as seed falls to the earth
in the final pantomime

Barry Middleton

Final Path

the forest hides a mystery
a secret place I long to be
within the hills a valley lake
awaits a journey I must make

so far away I cannot say
how I will find the shaded cove
although the dusty road I see
may mark the final path for me

I hear a rain crow's mournful call
he knows that I am near the glen
where dark and silent waters rest
to greet me like a long lost friend

but none is here to share the hush
for all who found this place have died
I fear the search has been too long
and here I always must abide

Barry Middleton

Final Plea

words cannot hold you
you vanish into dreams

only memories remain
empty trees in winter

the wind whistles
recalling summer's ghost

I go on a journey now
I cross the river of stars

my tears are a final plea
that you remember me

Barry Middleton

Final Prayer

I pray for the blind
and also those who see
but cannot see the world

I pray for the deaf
and those with ears blocked
by fear and bigotry

I pray for the mute
and also those who speak
but only speak to lie

I pray for the numb
so paralyzed by doubt
they cannot feel our pain

I pray for the haters
who lack serenity
divinity and love

I pray for the grieving
and those who never grieve
who have no empathy

I pray for the hopeless
I pray for those who can
to share the wealth of hope

I pray for the lost
and those who will not search
for they will never find

Barry Middleton

Final Tear

The spirits of the just are dead;
the dragon rules the night.
A fog has settled on the earth;
the moon provides no light.
The heroes all have passed away,
and no one guards the wall.
A maiden mourns a gallant knight,
who lies beneath the pall.
We pray and wait for victory,
but war cannot redeem.
Mankind conceals a cruel heart,
and evil is his scheme.
A cloud of death defeats the stars;
the gods are filled with fear.
The king awaits the daggers thrust,
and sheds a final tear.

Barry Middleton

Find Your Wings

I know I was a lively child,
you do not need to hear,
for you can see it in my smile,
yet that could disappear.

For I am grown, a man knows how
to bear a heavy weight,
the challenge that some disavow,
we often call our fate.

And every child is full of grace,
yet life can wear us down.
The world turns at a hectic pace,
and peace is rarely found.

I whisper silent prayers for all,
as years go drifting by,
that everyone may heed the call,
to find their wings and fly.

Barry Middleton

Fire Of Ageless Stars

the fire of ageless stars
flicker from the dawn of time
to fade to candlelight

suns and planets are consumed
by time's unyielding gravity
the simple weight of existence

rivers run dry
deserts become oceans
mountains crumble to dust

so what of frail humanity
why would we ever think to be
above the earth and stars

why would we ever think to be
in fickle blind infinity
above the candlelight

Barry Middleton

Fire Of Life

it is a hot day in late spring
the magnolias are blooming
bees are gathering nectar

it is time for life to rally
it is the season of growth
nature is building strength

spring gives up her coy ways
for summer is coming
in scents of orange blossoms

I am ready for the heat wave
I welcome the burning sun
I celebrate the fire of life

Barry Middleton

Fireball Or Icecloud

the rain is pouring down
a sweet but mournful sound
but no one has to die amid the flood

we know the end will come
we'll hear the beating drum
as judgment falls to wash us in the blood

but we were promised then
when earth comes to its end
there's be no need to build another ark

it may be fire or ice
that will exact the price
infernos grow from just a single spark

and I've been cold too long
if fire must end my song
then I will pray that it is truly hot

reminding me of youth
and love and faith and truth
till icecloud cold is finally forgot

Barry Middleton

Firefly '66

moon, stars and fireflies
the moon is new
the stars are dim with mist
a firefly is blinking in the wet darkness
brighter than the moon and stars
an instant and gone
a star fading
lost in the universe

Barry Middleton

First Frost

something to look forward to
but something to dread

the change of seasons comes
the first frost

the cooler air is welcomed
by the children

I know that winter hides
in the smoke of burning leaves

the children do not worry
the frost is part of life

they know the winter comes
but they are unconcerned

whatever lies ahead
the snow and seasons

the children do not wonder
I try to learn from them

Barry Middleton

First Grief - For My Brother Bill

I thought that I would die before
this darkness fell with utter grief.
For when a loved one starts to fade,
it is as if the stars have dimmed,
and night grows deeper than the grave.
So many memories endure,
the bittersweet of days gone by.
I must be thankful for the strength
that you were always there to give.
Perhaps there's time for recompense;
to sit in silent vigil here,
and put within these pensive lines
a blessing for eternity.
You light the way for me once more.

Barry Middleton

First Love

first love is the smell of her hair
because she is not ready for a kiss

later the two of you write
that was what you did back then

even a letter is like eyes meeting
she touches the paper with perfume

mile adds to mile and year to year
she will go her way and you yours

but when you are alone and old
some winter nights you will recall

auburn curls brushing your cheek
dancing in spring with her mystery

Barry Middleton

Fish On Dry Land

I'm a fish on dry land (chorus)
please lend me a hand
I'm not gonna last very long
all I ask of my god
is to give me a prod
and let me write one more song

I am flopping around
down here on the ground
I gotta get back to my stream
if I can just get a hand
I have still got a plan
and I want to be living the dream

that is all that life is
it can give you the biz
but I won't let it get me down
I'm a fish on dry land
get me out of the sand
'cause you know that I ain't gonna drown

I am happy down there
and without any care
and if a lady fish comes along
then I'll buy her a drink
and I'll give her a wink
and maybe we will swim off and spawn

I'm a fish on dry land (chorus)
please lend me a hand
I'm not gonna last very long
all I ask of my god
is to give me a prod
and let me write one more song

Barry Middleton

Fish Out Of Water

fish out of water
the devil's daughter
came to take me by the hand
but I knew she had a plan
to steal my soul

she rose up from the earth
that must have given birth
to her evil scheme
I heard a wicked scream
I should have run

years and years went by
till every tear was dry
I could no longer see
was it her or was it me
she chained my soul

but then there came a ghost
who strapped me to a post
and made me hear his word
even though it seemed absurd
he set me free

I took his sound advice
and I thanked him once or twice
he left my shackled room
but he dropped a golden plume
and now I use it

my heart was nearly burned
as smoke and sulfur churned
so I jumped into the river
and the water made me shiver
but I was home

fish out of water
the devil's daughter
came and took me by the hand

but I knew she had a plan
to steal my soul

but she lost my soul for good
and she never understood
that I had to break the chain
I needed cooling rain
I needed water

Barry Middleton

Fistfight With The Devil

nineteen sixty nine was not
a time for the faint hearted
I still grieve the bitter loss
of soldier souls departed

a few who never went to war
have passed along the way
like another poet said
nothing gold can stay

they say there is a brilliant light
shining at the end
waiting there are all the souls
of all our kith and kin

now I don't know if that is so
I wish that I could believe
but what I saw down here below
was purposed to deceive

at any rate I'm tired of war
and hate and bigotry
it seems since nineteen sixty nine
that's been our history

I'm not afraid to leave this earth
I'll take my lucky charm
and tuck it underneath my shroud
to guard me from all harm

Barry Middleton

Five Acres And Independence

Five acres and independence
was a book my mother read;
the book became a dream,
then reality, now a memory.
You can still buy the book.
Anything I write will sound
too idyllic to be true
but it is truth itself.
The old frame farmhouse,
was painted white,
the floors squeaked,
it was built on the brick foundation
of someone's burned out hope.
Yellow/orange day lilies bloomed
along the gravel drive
perhaps before my birth.
I would bring improvements,
irises of every color,
purloined from this and that auntie
and a tiny holly tree grew
and grows, a giant, there still
having resisted even a tornado.
I planted nasturtiums when
I was six, my first experiment
in juvenile horticulture.
Redbud bloomed in the front corner.
Later I would plant the dogwood tree
beneath my father's lonely window
to give some comfort to his old age.
There were, I swear, a dozen plum trees
that mother made into endless jelly.
I could munch plums while mowing grass
and often new trees would sprout
from where I spit the seed.
There were six apple trees,
that's a lot of pie.
There were two pear for a full house -
four kids, one adult and a large man.
There were peaches for cobbler,

anything God thought of would grow.
Four good pecans were on the place,
enough for the squirrels
and more pie for all of us.
In the back, the blackberry patch,
I thought for sure inspired
the Uncle Remus tales,
provided a home for Brer Rabbit.
The woods were full of muscadines,
a black walnut tree, hickory, oak,
gum, sycamore, pine, beech
and red cedar Christmas trees.
There was lots of room for boys,
three of us to name the hills,
build the fort and tree house,
dam the creek, drag home
dinosaur age petrified wood,
hunt, fish, swim nearby Short Creek.
There was a vegetable garden,
huge beside the hand built
shed we called the barn.
Corn, tomatoes, greens, lettuce,
beets and radishes, pole beans,
limas, eggplant, cantaloupe,
carrots, summer squash,
green and hot peppers,
peas out the wazoo,
pumpkins, peanuts,
potatoes, turnips
and cucumbers galore.
Which brings up pickle.
OMG! Bread and butter pickles
swimming with onions,
fourteen day sweets,
five day spicy, to die for.
So many memories
crowd my brain.
Raccoons roamed,
bobcats and red foxes,
there but not often seen,
rabbits and squirrels
were in abundance,

quail, doves,
the occasional lost wood duck
or mallard landing on
Kimball's pond.

Memories! My parents,
my brothers, my sister,
all the home town friends
that roamed with us,
all scouts, cubs, boys,
brownies and girls.

Campfire burned
marshmallows,

Shady Valley,

Do-Land,

Eagle Pass.

Gone now, never to be
recaptured. Gone, lost,
blown away with time's wind...
someone should remember,
someone does remember.

Barry Middleton

Florida Panther

the panther scans the swamp
black tipped ears listen
to the hiss of distant traffic
now familiar as a sibilant wind
brushing the palmetto prairie
and rushing through pine flats
to warn of encroaching enemies

south of the Caloosahatchee
females and cubs know peace
to the north the big male
ranges a hundred miles
dodging his natural enemy
the alligator no match for him
unlike the machines of humans

the hunt was good today
he settles in the underbrush
east of town to rest and dream
and sleeping flicks his ears
and purrs as southern winds
carry the sweet perfume
of the Everglades northward

Barry Middleton

Florida Seasons

They say that Florida
has no change of seasons,
but mid September,
in a good year,
the noonday high
drops to the eighties
as the sun falls
low in the west,
the hint of relief
tints the thinner air
with cooler blue tones.
Already the bloom stalks
of the Queen palms
are dropping their gold
as a preface to fruiting.
By October the raintrees
are a saffron riot of flower,
November brings russet pods
that rattle in a cooler breeze
before their final show
of brightest yellow leaves.
Still a while before the frost
turns Florida Maple to burgundy,
Virginia Creeper and poison Ivy
will decorate the Lives Oaks
with crimson streaming garland.
In the swampland in December,
Bald Cypress drop their needles
and an ocher carpet
softens the stealth
of the hunter's footstep.
Christmas brings red berries
of the Florida hollies
and Brazilian Pepper trees.
The sky is bluer now,
the air is dryer.
Crape Myrtle and Sweetgum
will have their show
in red and bronze.

Fall is subtle in Florida,
winter is a few cold nights,
but Florida has its seasons
till the Live Oaks dust
the streets with green
in the bone dry
fire season of Spring.

Barry Middleton

Flowers And Roses

not so suitable for a vase
and that's a blessing
hibiscus are best left uncut

oh yes to adorn a lady's hair
they are lovely
but then so transitory

often true of fragile things
like untouched lilies
proclaiming summer heat

the iris in perennial grace
left in its place
a moment's silent breath

yet I will not resist the rose
but bring it to my love
she sheds a tear for it

Barry Middleton

Fluttering Things

I

in youth it is the leaves
trembling with delight
water over round rocks
and the agony of clocks

the times before desire
all the stars of heaven
placed there just for me
in the circle of my view

under the shadowy rock
there is no fear of death
for I will live forever
leaf and rock and treasure

II

then comes the greed
to seek and find and hold
scarce commodities of love
and symbols cast in gold

if I cannot possess a god
then I will hold a goddess
I build a fortress of fear
stone on stone on bone

until there comes a day
gazing at a quivering sun
I am blinded by oblivion
dark waters steal the light

III

then the walls crumble
and life is but despair
death is quietly waiting

as the devil takes a chair

a beating heart is doubt
love vanished like day
and no amount of gold
will take the fear away

the challenge to endure
is the ultimate test
surrender to the elements
the cosmos at its best

IV

now I tune my eyes
beyond the far horizon
where seabirds in frenzy
follow the fishermen

and then at last I know
what always I was seeking
to study the green waters
to wait the flash of silver

I'll not forget those stars
I know that leaf and rock
and gold and goddesses
are finally put to rest

Barry Middleton

Flying And Falling

Most every day I try my wings,
it is my dream to fly,
although some days I surely fall,
it's hard to touch the sky.

I often try to dodge the guilt,
but it turns out the same,
I am the one who clips my wings,
so I must take the blame.

But there will be another chance,
to find a greater height,
tomorrow brings another test,
to finally get it right.

Barry Middleton

Foe Or Friend

another wave comes in
it may be foe or friend

you cannot walk away
the wave is here to stay

all men confront the wave
it takes us to the grave

what happens in between
is but a single scene

great joy and greater pain
the heat and winter rain

the salt wash spray rolls in
it may be foe or friend

Barry Middleton

Fog

it comes to soften the glare
as it drifts in from the bay

it unites the sky and sea
it intends to teach a lesson

...

too much noise and light
confuse the fragile senses

so that the mind must reel
from imaginary conviction

...

the fog creates uncertainty
it disguises every belief

it paints with shadowy hue
the arrogant and pompous

...

armored in a healthy doubt
hides essential muted truth

the elusive gift of love
the obscurity of brotherhood

Barry Middleton

Fog And Maniacs

I laugh at the morning fog
because it must fail
it conceals for a moment
good and evil
beauty and ugliness

fog is a soft focus of shadows
I don't really know
what is out there
dinosaurs in the deep swamp
maniacs and vampires

but I shall wait it out
fog clings to the darkness
witches and warlocks roam
but hope is just postponed
the morning sun will rise

Barry Middleton

Foggy Dream

I climb the hill to find
a red fox left behind
waiting in fog and rain
her bark is a refrain

I return to a lost house
the scurry of a mouse
heeds creeping feet
silent ghosts retreat

I barely find my way
past all of yesterday
dreams that I recover
apple trees and clover

I won't go back again
there is too much pain
and mile has led to mile
I sigh and dream a while

the old fox sleeps
a secret hide she keeps
she knows I came in peace
to only seek release

Barry Middleton

Foggy Morning

the morning is fog and mist
I would not walk in the dark
but now the sun tries its will
night birds hold to the trees

I would not walk in the dark
for it is like the dark before
the sun has not been born
planets collide in the cloud

but now the sun tries its will
birds skitter over the grass
I walk with dew on my face
I almost believe light comes

the morning is fog and mist
I pray to a struggling sun
for all mankind to see again
the blessed green promise

I walk with dew on my face
confusion in the eerie light
like the first dawn created
a garden is waiting for love

Barry Middleton

Follow The Source

to follow the stream to its source
climbing higher and higher
is the journey of a life
that follows the true path

the journey is arduous
and rife with obstacles
the journey is filled with danger
but the mountain is finite

the source of waters is a treasure
the spring is cold and pure
in that place dwells the sun
where light banishes all doubt

returning again to the valley
the story becomes the message
it shines in an old man's eyes
it speaks in the silence of peace

Barry Middleton

Fools And Dreams

I can't afford to dream
I don't have time to lose
I much prefer what's real
and I have paid my dues

if wishing is for fools
and planning is for kings
I just may aim at flight
and test my fragile wings

for I will never cease
to dare mortality
to seize each fleeting hour
beyond reality

as he who lives on dreams
or plans of what may be
forgets to leave his mark
upon infinity

Barry Middleton

Fool's Gold

the sparkle is alluring
but glitter brings deceit

fever blinds the seeker
to surely guide defeat

fools divine false gold
until they learn the test

for real gold is heavy
its weight holds it at rest

a swirl of gentle water
and pyrite slips the pan

for treasure is elusive
and glitz beguiles a man

but real gold is solid
like love forever true

the color is quite subtle
and only finds the few

Barry Middleton

For A Lost Lover

your touch comforted me
like thunder and the rain
and took the world away
and with it all my pain

your kiss was an hypnotic
that put me in a trance
to guide me to a place
of stillness in the dance

your eyes were ever tender
like my desire for you
we found a loving oneness
when plainly we were two

you taught me to hold you
like a rose clings to a wall
till wall and rose are one
as nighttime shadows fall

you were rain and roses
a dream and yet too real
now you are empty night
and the silent loss I feel

Barry Middleton

For Just One Kiss

A galaxy looks past my heart.
It does not see;
a million billion stars are blind.
And I am looking out past souls
of other worlds.
They are too far away to touch.
Across the room I see your smile.
Impassioned stars
are burning in your fiery eyes.
And yet you are so far away,
a universe
I'd gladly cross for just one kiss.

Barry Middleton

For Robert Frost

every man who ever built a wall
still might take note of dignity and gall

when Frost lamented keeping apples in
I wonder if he thought of East Berlin

his neighbor sought to keep his pine cones out
from mixing with the apples all about

a mystic sees the mischief that we make
how many walls can this world really take

too many walls it seems are all around
I think Frost would agree they must come down

and I can understand his burden's load
after all those apples that he towed

the heavy weight as weariness befalls
a man who deals with apples fools and walls

Barry Middleton

Forest Bound

take me to the forest
if only for a day

so I may dream again
like I did yesterday

take me in the spring
dogwood blooms in May

we can take the time
let's go without delay

take me in the summer
trees above will sway

we can stop to dance
till sunlight fades away

take me in the fall
pause with me and pray

all the fiery colors
are such a brief display

take me in the winter
there my soul will stay

until you join me there
beneath the final gray

Barry Middleton

Forest Home

nature is the best home
moonbeams on black water

silver and ebony dancing
music of an autumn breeze

the woodlands are my home
a place where I am free

beside the darkened slough
I wait to know a sign

I hear the incantations
the sounds the forest makes

a bullfrog has its say
the night owl seeks its prey

the leaves are speaking too
the almost silent scurry

of so much life
that calls the forest home

Barry Middleton

Forest Worship

the grandest
Church of stone
will someday fall

but the forest
here a pillar
and there a pulpit
where birds sing
endures

Barry Middleton

Forgotten Snow

I almost forgot the snow
in the jumble of memory

there was cold whiteness
there were children playing

I remember the snow spoke
it called to sledding lovers

and there was laughter
on the hill by the school

black trees were blacker
the cold was a pale secret

as if the world was pure
the crazy war was far away

I almost forgot the snow
and gentle times so long ago

love was a soft snowflake
a closeness in frosty breath

Barry Middleton

Fortier Park

on a bright day in spring
two old men play chess

a musician practices
a songbird gives his best

the smell of a gardenia
freshens the green air

the azaleas are blessing
a hushed love affair

a pretty young madonna
forgets all her troubles

to fashion a clover chain
as her child blows bubbles

days like this are treasure
like pictures in the mind

like a memory of Sunday
and what we leave behind

Barry Middleton

Four Angels

before I died I met four angels
most men find only one or two
and even though they fly away
one moments grace is rare indeed

one I knew from wintry moods
as beautiful as lace and snow
and she was everything to me
and yet each season passes on

another came with spring and roses
but petal by petal a rose must fade
angels know their destiny
they must seek out infinity

one would seek the heat of summer
languid and lavishing in the sun
but autumn brings the falling leaves
till every tree is stripped and bare

the fourth ignored the season's call
more like a cloudless meteor
she was so filled with fire and dreams
she could not stop to land on earth

and so all angels come and go
no man can really own the wind
and in the end the things we know
are so much less than we pretend

Barry Middleton

Four Haiku

Sea Haiku

the bellicose sea
defeated by a mute beach
strength in grains of sand

Bird Haiku

the feathered soaring
arose like sullen mankind
from saurian swamps

Death Haiku

as the seasons pass
the wise forest never grieves
new trees grow from death

Woman Haiku

a strange enigma
the fearsome strength of woman
her frail tenderness

Barry Middleton

Four More Haiku

1

sun heat on my face
is a blessing of summer
a lover's warm kiss

2

the color of life
brightens with a gentle frost
like the fall maple

3

the end of one time
ashes spent beneath the trees
winter is coming

4

occidental man
speaks plainly but in the spring
he dreams in haiku

Barry Middleton

Fourth Letter From Zeno

one that I imagined
has gone before me

she lived a poet's life
and died too young

possessed by words
images and madness

she understood search
but not the journey

she tried to teach me
how to be a scholar

I knew she captured
the words I needed

what she took with her
cannot be found again

the book we wrote
is the silence of death

a forgotten language
I never speak her name

Barry Middleton

Fractal Death Sonnet

I weep for the hills laid waste by darkest night.
I weep for the rivers frozen in coldest ebony.
I weep for shadows of trees and the failing sun.
I weep for the tropics of paradise and the sea.
When the beauty of the earth vanishes from me,
then what was one life worth but what is lost?
My mark upon this day must fade at dusk.
Lost is the beauty of a maiden's plaintive dance.
The passion of love on an August night subsides,
gone, gone on the wind of a midnight storm
as sodden ashes fall upon the sand,
the residue of fires the storm had fanned.
The end brings naught but tears and silent doubt,
memories of vanishing time in a roundabout.

Barry Middleton

Fragile

our castle was fragile
it felt so solid and secure
yet it was ephemeral as spring

I had no fear
I thought nothing could defeat
our moment

some dreams will never stand
I was left a ruin
a rubble of memories

love and time are a fragile gift
spring comes
a rose blooms, a bird sings

then like the seasons
what was dust is dust again
washed away by tempest

I am left with the images
drifting in oceans of eternity
a castle, a kiss, a melody

Barry Middleton

Fragile Legacy

We leave our immortality behind,
and mine is written in a book
the world may cast aside.

Someone may find it on a hidden shelf,
and dust it off and take it home
to delve where shadows hide.

I know that every man is bound and lost,
but poetry can lift the soul,
and mark the dark riptide.

But on the fretful road to find the soul,
we lost the path that valued art,
and poets were denied.

I see my ashes on the silver waters
where I reflect a falling star,
my omen and my guide.

And all around I see a moonless sky,
the poetry of Universe,
where poet gods abide.

Barry Middleton

Fragmentary Blues

The music dies and smolders
in the embers of a lost fire.
The symphony of day
ends with cooler oboe sounds,
viola and kettle drum.
The eyes close calmed by fantasy.
Heat endures only as memory,
memory of winged desire,
a moment and lost
in evening's cold and careless breeze.
The dream was real,
seagulls soared on thermal
springs of air.
The dream was a dream,
the heat the crescendo,
brass and violin
chilled by the somber moan
of the reeds.
We seek and waves of harmony break.
We pray and only silence calls.
And in the end
a cawing sound punctuates
a foolish hollow plea,
seagulls in a blue white sky,
searching unhurried,
greedy but blameless,
searching mindlessly
for the noon day meal.

Barry Middleton

Friend

You are my friend.
In my home
you may come as you are
and stay as you like.

There is nothing that is mine
and mine alone
that you may not share.

You owe me nothing
for this fragile gift,
but put your joy
for my reward
in giving you
that opposite
of loneliness
we call
friendship.

Barry Middleton

Fruit Fly

A greenish fly with golden eyes
did chance to interrupt my sighs
then buzzed away to investigate
what next would prove to be its fate.

I let him bite and rub a wing
and thought how life's a fragile thing
involving little bits of good
that cannot last like wishes would.

And I continued to contemplate
this curious creature that came of late
to use a precious part of life
to see if I was food or strife
or something that could be of use
to a fly's short life of mild abuse.

And I do not think it all for naught
that he got but a single grain of salt.

Barry Middleton

Full House

The cards are laid, the bets are made,
and now my luck is called.
But I command the winning hand,
three aces won't be stalled.
The players thought, that's all I brought,
but seven stud's my game.
I show a king, what will they bring,
a single card remains.
They think I bluff, the game gets rough,
but all the players stay.
The final card, is no canard,
another king I play.
The gamblers moan, and start to groan,
to make excuse and grouse.
I did not cheat, no one can beat,
my beautiful full house.

Barry Middleton

Gaia

had I just one dream
a final wish would be
that I could dream again
that I could hope again

perhaps it is the times
claiming we are stalled
plainly evolution ceased
man is a hissing reptile

rapacity of raptors hunt
to slash and kill and take
by the venom of deceit
or mighty brutish force

I see the dividing blue
and know its indifference
beyond a black emptiness
the stars of hungry worlds

had I just one dream
a final wish would be
that I could dream again
that I could hope again

to walk upright anew
no slithering for greed
the world in brotherhood
justice defeating tyranny

the planet would find peace
equality in one human race
male and female as peers
their god of nurture Gaia

rational cooperation
and cerebral compassion
become a global strategy
connection to one family

had I just one dream
a final wish would be
that I could dream again
that I could hope again

all evil kings must die
no crown upon their head
feminine dominion rules
in birth and gifts of care

all evil gods must die
no tithe collected
to buy ruthless power
for perverted elders

and with their passing
humanity shall cultivate
a New Garden of Eden
cherishing Earth's gifts

Barry Middleton

Garden Home

The ancient gods bequeath to me
the woodlands of infinity.

A garden fills my last desire,
a shadowed glen, a peaceful fire.

And in that cove a cottage waits,
beyond decrees or evil fates.

And ever blooming roses grow,
where tranquil breezes gently blow.

Then in that heart of mystery,
my love at last returns to me.

Again our passion burns within,
restoring all that might have been,

And there we share a secret place,
to bask through time in its embrace.

Barry Middleton

Garden Universe

The grandest garden is the Universe.
The stars above are like flowers,
and here on earth the breath of life
counts bloom and stars and showers.

Every garden has its spring.
The re-creation of the Universe,
observed through narrow portals,
composes yet another verse.

A breeze exhales in spring,
the breath of all that we call fate.
And in the silver satin night,
the new born stars shall congregate.

For gardens far beyond our view,
are hiding in that stellar cloud.
And everything we thought we knew,
may yet step forth to speak aloud.

Barry Middleton

Gasoline Rainbows

oil and water mix
to form gasoline rainbows
they are a shimmering

we need not lose ourselves
in working together
we just may find ourselves

we can create a rainbow
like dull puddles
transformed to miracles

oil and water mix
to reflect the sun
and speak of hope and unity

let all people join hands
the rain is ceasing now
we must create a rainbow

Barry Middleton

Generations

Just five generations
most men will know.
I knew Great Grandfather
by a faded photograph
and family mythology.
He was pioneer stock,
Scots-Irish proud,
a strapping man,
mustached and sturdy.
My great Auntie
bequeathed to me
his Winchester,
legends of how
he killed a bear,
and that he was
a beloved father.
Would that we all
can be remembered
five generations hence.
His frame farm house
was crudely built
with cypress planks
a half yard wide.
The house wide porch
faced the pond and sunset.
His wicker chair was empty
in my childhood days.
His place at table
was a silent memorial.

This was my Grandmother's
'home place', she grew up there.
It was there she saddled
up her horse in morning fog
or snow white frost to ride
four miles to school each day.
I see her fetching potatoes
from the root cellar shed,

peeling onions in the kitchen,
or rolling dough for apple pie.
I see her even now,
idly watching a farm hand
prod the mule to turn
the mill in making sorghum,
waiting for her brothers' return
from the hunt, a brace of ducks
for dinner or better yet
fresh venison to butcher
and hang in the smokehouse.
Cistern water, hard living,
butter to churn,
scrub board wash,
garden work and sweat
from dawn till dark
was just a day's routine.
And still she lived to see
the telegraph, the telephone,
electricity, Saint Joseph's aspirin,
the auto and the airplane,
radio and radar,
TV, Johnny Carson,
and Neil Armstrong
landing on the moon.

Then came my Mom and Dad,
born in 1911, teenagers in 1929.
My mother danced the Charleston,
her flapper's eyes caught Dad's,
then came the Great Depression,
then World War II in 1939
curtailed their plans,
darkened their horizon.
There were ups and downs.
A dream deferred
is a dream lost they say.
I know that aphorism well,
lost youth, longing,
transgression and forgiveness.
I knew the sadness
of my parents lives.

And yet there were happy times,
hearts and initials carved in a tree
in 1947, a good year I would guess.
There were four children,
all grew up strong in our way.
I remember trying to convince
my father he succeeded.
As for me, gathering apples,
plums and muscadines,
home grown tomatoes,
swimming in our creek,
family meals, Christmas,
small town friends.
My parents did well I think!
But I was born to ask,
why cannot a man profit
from ancestors till they die?

But I do know my life the best.
Perhaps I did absorb some wisdom
beneath the beech, along the creek,
while sorting out dilemmas of my time.
Good God, the 1960s in Mississippi
were a fertile time for introspection.
I personally knew no one who was killed.
I roamed the hills and swamps,
camped, hunted, fished, and thought.
Steve and Charlie were my buddies.
Sam cut hair and preened the produce
in the grocery store where I cut meat.
I worked with Willie pumping gas,
washing cars, fixing flats
and greasing trucks.
I watched the prisoners work
and traded ready rolled cigarettes
for jail house tobacco
and even shared a beer
with convict stripped
black desperadoes.
I made it to Doctor King's rally,
totally missed the KKK
on Starvation Hill.

My father refused to give directions.
I remember James Meredith,
Freedom Summer,
the Freedom Riders,
Medgar Evers.
I remember Philadelphia,
(Mississippi that is) ,
I remember Jackson State,
Kent State, the War,
LBJ, Nixon, Watergate!
No redemption.
I remember the kids I taught!
Black kids - we now say
African Americans!
I remember their fear!
We survived it all.
Despite it all we flourished!

My son, my son -
and what will you discover?
The multi-tasking world
rushes toward you.
I cannot help you.
I was reared in slower times.
No I-Pod, no cell phone,
not even internet.
Face time has faded to Facebook,
responsibility for our words
hides in anonymity,
and what a world it is
we give to you.
Is it more a challenge
than great grandfather had,
to build a life after
bitter civil war?
Will it hold more wonder
than my grandmother saw?
Will there be more peace
than my father knew?
Will hope survive
as it has in me
despite the bitterness

and bigotry I fought,
and still I fight?
Try to ignore the manure son,
look for the pony always!
Take your time,
life is up to you.
Life is what you make it.

Barry Middleton

Getaway Shack

I want to go back to the getaway shack
hidden away far from the town
and if I could go where the blackwaters flow
I'd wait for the sun to go down

the darkness is cold but fire warms the soul
as the radio plays an old tune
I remember a girl and the stars in a whirl
and a kiss by the light of the moon

on a magical night in the dim candlelight
I return to a long lost trance
without any care in the crisp autumn air
I hold her again as we dance

it's only a dream that drifts like a stream
and all I am left is the song
that still brings a smile after many a mile
for the one I have missed for so long

Barry Middleton

Ghost

I saw a ghost
behind my brother's eyes
and I knew what it meant

a ghost can't plainly see the world
for it lives in between
the earth and sky

so when that ghostly fog appears
I know that vacant
empty stare

I know just what is going on with me
I know I can't deny
I am a ghost

Barry Middleton

Ghost Orchid

A few miles south of Eden,
I wandered the primordial garden
in the land of Confederate Trillium,
the now endangered bloom
that flourished in my youth
in the open understory of paradise.
The flora was pre-historic,
singular stands of bamboo
crowded the creek banks.
The riot of the May Apple in Spring
was an intoxicant.
Sovereign fern and mossy streams
were paths to prospects
of grander revelation.
Cocooned silken secrets
in alabaster wrap
waited for the light
while benign serpents mimicked
the ripples of the branch
before the fall of the seasons;
and more remote near Panther Creek
some said the wild cat still patrolled.

Now in age I seek a stranger species,
more elusive than dying memories.
Florida called me south like a Siren's song
and lately dreams command to travel farther,
the Everglades,
the Fakahatchee Strand,
for there the final secret lies.
Beyond all epiphytes,
bromeliads,
royal palms and cypress,
beyond the tannic waters,
the Ghost Orchid is in hiding
but to the less persistent than I.
It is said the wanderer will come upon it,
floating before his eyes ghostlike.
Nearby protectors watch,

necessity of Pond Apple and Pop Ash,
where fixed
by camouflaged roots
the orchid takes its nourishment.
And somewhere in the swamp,
in passion's dance,
the Giant Sphinx Moth searches
for a flash of candent light,
seeks the morning scent of apples.
A panther cries; the indigo snake waits.

Barry Middleton

Ghost Train

In dreams I ride the ghost train,
and I am rocked to sleep.

When the train passes into night,
I review my minor sins.

I ask forgiveness from unseen gods
who seem preoccupied.

I cross over imagination's river,
reliving past loves.

At midnight I come to the station;
the train fades to black.

Barry Middleton

Girl On The Sidewalk

what then is she
for she is not a part of me

is she the cloud
the essence of sacred rain

giving me life
madonna of all nurture

the mystery
a serenity men never know

is she a lover
with wet eyes and soft kiss

is she a witch
confusion in deceitful spells

is she the muse
a whispered vision fantasy

is she life
a partner of precious breath

or is she death
breast of clay in garden flesh

Barry Middleton

God Is The Garden

sometimes life will steal
all that we hold dear

most will then entreat
relief from every fear

and so we often plead
for gods to grant us care

to lend an easy answer
for every frantic prayer

but just a few will know
the legacy of earth

we only need the garden
the gift received at birth

Barry Middleton

God Participle

the universe withholds a kiss
and thus we search infinity
for gods we carelessly may miss
in distant frightening nebulae.

gods or angels hiding there,
in starlit nurseries deep in space,
are too remote to grant us care
or grace the brutal human race.

we search the sky hoping for more,
a single star to mark the king,
for every soul to then adore
in paradise as angels sing.

we wait in silent cosmos cursed
for blindest eyes to break the seal,
when devolution is reversed,
so god in man can be revealed.

mankind perverts divinity,
but starlight still instructs the way,
the light is up to you and me
for men are more than dust and clay.

Barry Middleton

Goddess Paradox

she is only a dream
she is an illusion
banishing mortality

she is archetypal fear
the death of the soul
if I cannot possess her

I seek till I find her
she dwells within me
deceptive like wishes

she is a temptress
a desire of dreaming
she is my fantasy

I try to turn away
but she comes to me
for she also seeks
a foolish apparition

Barry Middleton

Gold And Silver

I never found the silver cup
I never found the gold
and I never found salvation
in the stories I was told

and I never found the gods
hidden in a holy book
I studied silent questions
and wondered where to look

I climbed a sacred mountain
and I claimed the valley view
I sought the breath of living
in the firmament of blue

I roamed the emerald forest
I discovered crystal streams
and I knew the glow of passion
in the fever of my dreams

and when my death descends
I will hide within the fire
with no gods to be attendant
at my humble funeral pyre

but my ash will join the forest
or perhaps the deepest sea
to return to ancient stardust
for gold and silver dwell in me

Barry Middleton

Golden Fire

I welcome meditation hour
it comes today at 4 AM
the night inspires a secret power
much like a royal diadem

I will be king until the dawn
my kingdom is yet fast asleep
the moon casts shadows on the lawn
like dreams or cats that quietly creep

my dawns are mostly golden now
and when the eastern glow appears
I think about the why and how
for dawn must come to banish fears

I cherish night but with the sun
my subjects wake and rise from bed
I bless them when the night is done
as if they're rising from the dead

a humble bench provides my throne
I'll be there with the bright sunrise
the king who worships the unknown
and golden fire and morning skies

Barry Middleton

Gone

the ecstasies have evaporated
a youthful fog on a spring morning

even now it's hard to reckon
how so much optimism vanishes

nuance by definition happens slowly
as the sun climbs higher and higher

the bright colors of the peace rally
have faded and our hope is jaded

girls with hair parted in the middle
making love and hating only war

all gone along with Woodstock
and more tragically a lost dream

Barry Middleton

Gone Away

I am gone away to my island
gone away to my jungle home

there is no one here to vex me
to assault my spirit to insanity

food is the manna of invention
wine ferments the imagination

a cloudless sky is my religion
its only demand is appreciation

snakes and monkeys and parrots
do without dire commandments

the sound is a melody of night
the surf breathing and the owl

I am gone away to my island
and I will not be coming back

Barry Middleton

Good Morning Gypsy

good morning Gypsy
wont you stay with me a while
good morning Gypsy
wont you stay with me a while
'cause I miss my gypsy woman
and I miss that gypsy smile

good morning Gypsy
this is where your heart belongs
good morning Gypsy
this is where your heart belongs
all my nights are dark and lonely
stay here till the break of dawn

good morning Gypsy
all sad songs must end the same
good morning Gypsy
all sad songs must end the same
for the past was only dreaming
guess I'll have to take the blame

good morning Gypsy
yes I know that you must go
good morning Gypsy
yes I know that you must go
every road must follow fortune
every gypsy wind must blow

Barry Middleton

Grassy Key Deer

Down the beach was rocky coral,
split, bleached, and tossed
by a million sighs of the sea.

Once wet, living and brilliant
with color, now laced with debris,
dead remnants of used up existence,
rusted skeletons, salt white bone.

Heading back, a key deer I saw,
fantastic and dainty,
failed to notice the fatal metaphor
and ate the remaining grass.

Barry Middleton

Grateful Smile

for all my frivolity
no one knows my heart

people come and go in life
so many play a part

I'd like to thank you everyone
I am not in denial

no lemonade from lemons here
this is my roughest trial

still I am quite positive
I know it's hard to believe

I've still got a trick or two
and something up my sleeve

I'm not afraid of what's ahead
I am not mad or low

I guess I'll see how it turns out
I want you all to know

I am OK but do not stray
just walk with me this mile

knowing you are there for me
brings my grateful smile

Barry Middleton

Gratitude

the old folks often gave advice
that now is out of style
but now I'm old so please excuse
I'll say it with a smile

each day I must remind myself
to tally up the grace
and blessings from infinity
than pain cannot displace

throughout a life the gold is there
but you must use your eyes
to see the love surrounding you
perhaps the greatest prize

and if like me your needs are met
with all you might demand
then life should never weigh you down
for you are in command

the treasure lies in simple things
like love and friends and home
the only blessings that we need
this side of heaven's dome

Barry Middleton

Gravid Octopus

For a gravid octopus,
eighth arms just don't seem enough.
She has gone and had eight babies!

Her husband ran off right away,
left her in the month of May,
no ifs, no ands, or buts, or maybes.

Knock her up, then leave town,
Hectocotyli fooled around.
Now Mrs. Octopi is going crazy!

Eight to rock, four that fight,
one that stays up every night.
A mama octopus cannot be lazy!

Hectocotyli, he came back,
said true love he did not lack,
told her that he wished to own her.

She took her beak, bit off his ear,
Hectocotyli ran in fear,
as she flailed his ass on back to Arizona!

Barry Middleton

Gravity

long before that fateful apple
struck Newton on the head

every man who ever lived
knew some day he'd be dead

since the day that we were born
gravity drags us down

it took a year to learn to walk
to see what could be found

Newton said be glad it's here
or we would float away

but still it never lets us go
it always has its way

in age it drags us to the Earth
we ride it like a wave

Einstein claimed that's what it is
that pulls us toward the grave

Barry Middleton

Gray Moods

Another gray and lifeless day
is all it takes;
for winter always brings a mood
of dark defeat.

The haze is drifting off the bay;
so I pretend
the air is cold and fires are lit.
I know despair.

It is a guest that stayed too long.
As seasons change,
emotions rise and fall like waves,
and rise again.

And winter never fails, despite
the temperature,
whenever days are gray and bare,
my eyes will burn.

Barry Middleton

Gray Rain

the gray rain fell
the sun was neither east nor west

the ashen glow of sky
hid the intentions of light

the wet leaves of trees
drooped like tired old men

the warbler found shelter
in the darker green of the oak

the rain fell and whispered
yet I could not hear the words

the Spanish moss hung lower
black beneath somber limbs

so it is with rainy days
withholding secret impulses

beyond the ken of birds or trees
beyond the sense of men

Barry Middleton

Greed

I pity the greedy person
they are never happy
never satisfied

there is never enough for them
never enough money
never enough power
never enough adulation
never enough love

greed is the source
of all earthly evil
both global and personal

in grasping for more
when nothing is enough
the greedy person
sabotages their life

I dream of the stars and moon
I do not reach for them
I only reach to conquer desire
I only reach for contentment

Barry Middleton

Green Grieving

be with the laughter of green grieving
beneath the shadow, the summer hawk
that comes to take a life and give
the fledgling hope for another day

be with the laughter of tick and tock
pendulum swing of the grandfather clock
that measures time with a ringing gong
till the spring unwinds to end its song

be with the laughter of smiling lips
beneath the eyebrows invitation
treasure youth which comes but once
then turns away without sensation

be with the laughter of waters clear
that come to wash away our fear
pretend that we will live forever
and wait out all the evil weather

be with the laughter when seasons change
sun and moon and stars and rain *
be with the laughter of green grieving
as sleep descends, I am not leaving

be with the laughter of epic night
the final theme I must explore
I do not fear, beyond the hill
I seek the green and grieve no more

Barry Middleton

Green Parrot

the wild green parrot
came from afar
a slave in an iron cage

to be free was his dream
for chains and bars
could not contain his rage

one day he escaped
and found his kin
and swore a solemn vow

if death was the price
no slave would he be
never again would he bow

now birds and all men
remember the garden
and yearn to see the sky

no jailer can curb
the strength of a soul
it must break free and fly

Barry Middleton

Grocery Girl

The girl at the grocery store,
asks me most every day.
Find everything you need?
She knows what I will say.

I never found true love!
She smiles and fakes a laugh.
I ask what aisle it's on.
She calls upon the staff.

Please meet the man up front.
What aisle is true love on?
He wants it fresh and sweet.
Is all the true love gone?

Barry Middleton

Groovy

I know they retired
my favorite word,
why I never will know.
But I plan an attack
to bring 'groovy' back,
and I need everyone
to join in the pact.
I entreat every man
to my grandiose plan,
I need every woman too.
We must hear it swell
from each hill and dale
till it casts on the land
that old mystical spell.
We must say it
ten times each day,
till it circles the globe,
everyone will then say -
Groovy!
It means yes, it affirms,
it's good luck, like a charm,
it always solicits a smile.
I feel groovy, it's good,
it's about brotherhood,
sisterhood also in style.
The sun will shine bright,
put an end to the fight,
Earth's a garden, it's love,
there is hope up above,
it's all good, it's still
groovy tonight.

Barry Middleton

Grove

was this some fantasy of youth
the blind and futile search for truth

I thought it hid with all my shoulds
remote from view in somber woods

so many times I swore to know
the mystic place where secrets grow

too soon to find the truth betrayed
by fear and doubt and cruel charade

for truth is darker than the copse
where hope and seeking finally stops

Barry Middleton

Grove Street

I remember looking for mercy
not the street but the hospital
did someone really tell me Grove Street
that was in a day when memory was alive

it seemed a heartless place
where the hopeless sought out modern miracles
the hypodermics were still made of glass
finely machined by diamonds

but there was barbaric medicine
sleepless nightmares for a dying giant
and rites of passage for a boy
I turned and ran from the smell of despair

I never went back to Grove Street
a few years later the phone rang
my father died at home near his window
outside the dogwood bloomed again that spring

Barry Middleton

Gulf Fever

I walk along the beach,
I can't ignore the signs,
the sand has washed away.

We claim replenishment,
as if to steal some time,
depleting distant shoals.

The sea yet wins again,
the shore always retreats,
beyond the schemes of men.

Deception is a curse,
an illness of the mind,
eroding facts like waves.

I sense the rising heat,
as gods and devils meet,
where angry winds are born.

The sand beneath my feet,
warns me I must prepare,
for fever, flood, and storm.

Barry Middleton

Guns

they say that knives can kill
but that is not the purpose
of a knife

they say that cars can kill
but that is not the purpose
of a car

bricks can kill
and stones can kill
but that is not their purpose

they say that words
may inspire death
or they may inspire life

and they say that guns kill
and that is the only purpose
of a gun

Barry Middleton

Had I Never Stopped

had I never stopped
I never would have heard
never would have learned

she heeded more than words
she listened with her eyes
with her heart

now I can hear the silence
I taste her kiss on the wind
I know the music of her touch

take away my sight
and yet I shall see the night
the resonance of stars

take away the darkness
and in that wordless void
I join the beauty of her soul

Barry Middleton

Hallucination Four

the stars upon my ceiling
must know how I am feeling
I need a sign to show the way for me

outside the sky is dark
and soon I must embark
I only pray that darkness sets me free

I hear a night bird call
where shadows gently fall
and it will soon reveal all I implore

the harbinger of night
will set all things aright
and lead me to that peaceful silent shore

Barry Middleton

Hallucination One

silk and silver streamers
floating in the air

Caribbean maidens
run their fingers through my hair

I hate hallucinations
but what's a guy to do

at least I like the maidens
and I think they like me too

Barry Middleton

Hallucination Three

there's a bear outside my widow
there are shadows on the shade
there are fish upon the ceiling
that imagination made

I can hear the ocean roaring
so we must act with haste
the clock is ticking louder
and there is no time to waste

there's a guru and a shaman
looking out from inner space
and they claim to know the plan
that there's just one human race

there are patterns on the wall
in black and white and tan
there are lessons in the shadows
that could change the fate of man

Barry Middleton

Hallucination Two

The tide came in at midnight
maroon and sea foam green
but nothing in the universe
is quite what it may seem

one star above is orange
another sapphire blue
they take me to a place
I feel that once I knew

they tell me of a time
when I was with the sea
I can't go back to it
but it has come for me

it seems a peaceful place
to spend eternity
so lay me in its cradle
that is my destiny

Barry Middleton

Happiness

taking only what it needs
the flower is nourished

to want more than needed
creates misery

defeat brings anguish
victory brings arrogance

there is no happiness
in the poison of hatred

there is no happiness
in the prison of fear

peace is like a nesting bird
at harmony with grace

only the treasure of health
is worth possessing

peace in solitude
is like a star at midnight

happiness is a reflection
a flickering candle

Barry Middleton

Happiness 2

the Buddha said
the happy person
is like the moon set free from the cloud

to be set free from desire is a lofty goal
perhaps no man achieves
but only reaches out

difficult victories retreat from our grasp
like gods that vanish in the fog
like sand washed away by the riptide

to hold contentment
I celebrate the simple things
the rising sun and solitude

gratitude must greet the day
for here is something I can seize
moments drifting like leaves in the wind

Barry Middleton

Hard Goodbyes

it's very hard to say goodbye
to people and the things I loved
friendship is a precious gift
with treasured memories I keep

the valley forest floor at dawn
damp with dew or soaked by rain
was like a royal carpet ride
to where the silent gods abide

a cabin far from lights of town
a crackling fire and glass of wine
three aces and a pair of hearts
a winning hand that I was due

first love and second and the third
and tears and hope and try again
to find the soul that dwells within
goodbye to every long lost friend

I loved the moments of my days
and every road and woodland path
and I have found serenity
so do not shed your tears for me

I guess the more I loved my life
the less that anyone should grieve
when death coerces my reply
but it's still hard to say goodbye

Barry Middleton

Harmonium

A song without a second verse
cannot sum up the universe.

I cannot study every theory
that fails the fundamental query.

If universe ends in fire or ice,
it is a curious device

where once music of the spheres
was harmony to calm our fears.

Then nothingness and silence fall,
a final act, no curtain call?

I do not travel with the mystics
but I have faith in quantum physics

to start the universe again
without the help of gods or men.

Barry Middleton

Harvest

that gust of wind
reminds me that the world lives on

fall has come
the tropic fall is subtle change

and yet I know
another season passes on

grapes ripen
beyond the maple thicket path

a neighbor tests
the harbinger of ripened air

and I will dream
of mango gold and harvest moon

Barry Middleton

Hatred Rising (Vote Anyway)

they wear no war paint
they only hail with slogans
yet two sides are at war

it's not a bumper sticker year
in the battleground states
all swear they are independent

no one wants to talk about it
a fight might break out
blue and red like gang colors

sadly it has come to this
I see fire and bullets and blood
again I see hatred rising

Barry Middleton

Haunting Clock

the rhythmic beat
of the ticking clock
keeps me awake and seems to mock

time slips away
in the haunted night
with all the demons I must fight

the failures howl
like old regrets
and sleepless fear and long lost bets

the pendulum swings
to left and right
until I face that fateful night

then I will rest
through timeless years
without concern for scorn or tears

Barry Middleton

Have A Nice Day

everyone carries a burden
it may not show on their face
they may appear quite cheerful
but still it will leave its trace

we meet a friend in the street
and we say how do you do
they claim that they are fine
they hope all is well with you

the troubles we will not share
yet stay in the back of the mind
we carry the weight alone
it's the same for all humankind

now that I know this lesson
I suspect they are not so fine
I still wish them a splendid day
then I pray it is better than mine

Barry Middleton

Hear Me

can someone
just hear me
there's no need
to fear me
can anyone
listen today
I have
my opinion
my tiny
dominion
if I can just
have my say
I always
consider
I'm not
just a kidder
I don't have to
have it my way
if you will just
listen
and hold
your derision
I'll quickly
then go
on my way

Barry Middleton

Heartbreak

my heartbreak cannot be stitched
or darned like an old gray sock
it looks just like the picture
with a lightning bolt down the middle

this is not the first time at all
I left the farm and saw New York
and knew I could never be satisfied
regardless of weather or fortune

the heart can only take so much
like a horse that wants to run
like a boat jumping a wave
the heart rocks like a Ferris wheel

it tumbles like a mountain rockslide
tears fall and burn the landscape
then I clutch my chest and know
the bullet has passed clean through

Barry Middleton

Heaven Or Heavens

my poetry is done
I cannot say much more
have I been clear enough
I've said it all before

I do not know what waits
I cannot fear the void
and I have few regrets
for a life I have enjoyed

still I will die a skeptic
torn beyond my belief
my logic nor my mystic
can serve to grant relief

I lived my life on hunches
I heard the preachers preach
and yet the facts elude me
a man can only reach

the poet said of glory
that we may sense its door
but never grip the latch
till death concludes its chore

to solve the final doubt
some look to God and trust
still skeptics feel secure
that the Universe is just

Barry Middleton

Hellcat

the hellcat prowls the dark of night
to cast a spell

be warned she is a sorceress
you cannot quell

the mystery and allure of her
enchanted dance

may bind the soul forever in
a breathless trance

a metaphor of bondage holds
the will at bay

despite the loosened memory
of yesterday

nor may you heed the warning cry
of frail despair

the wail of one who almost broke
her evil snare

Barry Middleton

Hermit

Loneliness
is the cost
of frail protection.
A hermit's way
is safely to observe
and not participate.
Despair is a quiet retreat,
a reassuring lover,
an ease,
no strife, no striving.
Love is a foolish child
busy with knowing
nothing of night,
a candle that dies a bit
with every hour
of its expression.
Silence and raindrops
are a ticking clock.
A dark river
runs through it all
and down
to a boundless
universal.
Gods are content
in their isolation
for they do not know pain.

Barry Middleton

Hero

Diogenes still seeks an honest man,
a hero who is willing to take a stand.

Roaming in darkness, his bright lamp aglow,
he waits for a hero to vanquish the foe.

He wanders far, no champion in sight,
to aid those in need so wrongs are set right.

Not superman nor wonder woman,
he searches for heroes completely human.

And heroes are never all that far away,
everyone gets a turn at dragons to slay.

We all can imagine how a hero might act,
bravery is not letting fear hold us back.

So lift up your sword for the good of a friend,
you rule a small kingdom only you can defend.

Till fear is conquered and greed is undone,
you can show us the hero we all can become.

Barry Middleton

Hidden Despair

behind my eyes a demon laughs
and mocks my destiny
yet angels whisper to my soul
with hints of ecstasy

and death awaits in a ghostly glen
with shadowed ferns that know
the secrets of eternity
and where the nightshades grow

upon a street where all may meet
the devil and the priest
conceal the truth and murder youth
and quietly feed the beast

and fiends may laugh at my retreat
but rage within my heart
says I must hide my fears inside
from evil's darkest art

Barry Middleton

Hide

hide my grave in a cedar grove
or strew my ashes in a swamp
near to the oak the owls haunt
these are the places that I loved

hide me away from worldly worry
in the wild where creatures scurry
and if no one will tread that way
that is the place I want to stay

I am a man who had few friends
and I prefer it stay that way
if there is a grotto dark as hell
that is my shrine and my farewell

Barry Middleton

Hide In The Wildwood

I hid in the wildwood
I found sanctuary there
the world turned
the wind blew
falling leaves buried my fear
and the seasons passed

the trees were like lovers
growing slowly
and stolid as the rocks
changing little with time
they returned to the earth
at the end of the cycle

the woodland was the silence
before pain and grief intruded
a place where water flowed
where no voice cried out
a place without doubt
a place without betrayal

Barry Middleton

High In The Hills

High in the hills where the water is skinny,
there lived a pretty girl, and her name was Minnie.

Now one day down by the swimming hole,
the devil conspired to corrupt my soul.

Minnie came along; I thought she didn't see me.
I was down there hiding by a big ole tree.

Minnie wears boy clothes, but not too many.
When she goes swimming, she don't wear any!

She pulled off her shirt, and shed her tight pants,
and she damn near put me into a trance.

Don't get me wrong, because I'm a gentle man,
a polite one in fact, I hope you understand.

She got in the water to cool her skin,
and I came on out from where I'd been.

She did not squeal, much to my surprise,
and she had a bright sparkle to her eyes.

She knew I was lurking behind that tree.
The girl had a plan as soon I'd see.

She said, "Come on in, the water's just fine"
I said, "I got no suit", she said, "I ain't got mine";.

I jumped in the creek, and we got acquainted,
and before it was over I damn near fainted.

Memories will pass and they fade away,
but I'm sure glad I met Minnie that day.

She taught me to kiss, and she taught me to dance,
and she sure taught me all about romance.

Minnie knew how to tease and she knew how to love,
and she wasn't no devil, she was sent from above.

Barry Middleton

Hill Creek Memory

beyond the bridge a secret spot
provides a place for boys to fish
and silent paths that time forgot
where lovers go to stroll and kiss

and farther up a swimming hole
where summer laughter can be heard
never fails to soothe the soul
as bygone memories are stirred

I often go there even now
when mockingbirds awaken spring
for long ago I made a vow
to cherish all that seasons bring

although the years obscure the past
and strength and passion fade away
some things it seems will always last
like hopeful dreams of yesterday

I still can see that treasured creek
with crystal waters flowing free
where youth and love forever speak
like blessings from infinity

Barry Middleton

Hilltop Cemetery

the oak that counts the years is bare
the winter wind has stripped its leaves
and so it is for every soul
for time is but a band of thieves

the green will come again in spring
its golden glow may yet deceive
not all will wake from darkened sleep
and those who do may surely grieve

beneath these trees grow daffodils
in pageants filled with springtime grace
the ancestors and silent past
have found a final resting place

a generation passes on
their spirits scattered by the wind
the faded stones forget the names
where epitaphs no more pretend

Barry Middleton

His Father's Smile

A blossom falls to earth,
a death but do not weep.

Its seed is left behind,
to wake in spring from sleep.

And men someday must fall,
perhaps to leave a child.

The child grows to a man,
who has his father's smile.

Barry Middleton

His Secret

no one can ever make me cry
most every man is just like me
we hold it in
we tell a lie
it's only foolish words we say
it doesn't matter anyway

it's not as bad as sticks and stones
it only leaves a secret scar
I will survive another day
why can't I turn and walk away

I wear a smile so no one knows
or they might scoff and laugh at me
but I must face my job today
it doesn't matter anyway

no one can ever make me cry
most every man is just like me
we hold it in
we tell a lie
it's only foolish words we say
it doesn't matter anyway

but still my heart is broken now
I hide the suffering within
I cannot trust the silent crowd
I never speak of it aloud

you pass me on the street each day
I say I'm tired and overworked
you see me in the market place
a mask conceals my tearless face

no one can ever make me cry
most every man is just like me
we hold it in
we tell a lie
it's only foolish words we say

it doesn't matter anyway
it doesn't matter anyway
it doesn't matter anyway

~~~~~

This song was inspired by "Luka" by Suzanne Vega circa 1987. Her song is about a woman who is being physically abused. Mine is from the point of view of a man and verbal abuse.

Barry Middleton

# Holes

we try to avoid them  
but there are holes to fall into  
dark pits

I would not wish this  
on my worst enemy if I had one  
which I don't

three years I've been here  
three years sick tired desperate  
but fighting

if you fell in with me  
I'd be poor company  
I'm mute

we would stare blankly  
into the darkness  
in silence

I reach out to touch you  
so close to me  
so far away

Barry Middleton

# Home From The Hill

never will I climb that meadow path  
where I did wander in my youth  
the hunter is home from the hill

never will I glide across the lake  
the blackened mirror of the sky  
the fisherman grew old

always I will sleep beneath the stars  
at rest at last beside the oak  
within my woodland home

no more I roam the valleys that I loved  
my boots and gloves are finally stored  
the hunter is home from the hill

~~~~~

With a nod to Robert Lewis Stevenson.

Barry Middleton

Home Place Cemetery

stashed away in a tattered file
are mental photographs I keep
for consciousness to reconcile

the ancestry of yesterday
the house itself has fallen now
but memory lifts them from decay

I look out on the silent pond
the afterglow of setting suns
across the fields and far beyond

and finally near the cemetery
I bow to honor those at rest
in whispered prayers for sanctuary

Barry Middleton

Hope

hope comes to me at dawn
it rises with the sun
when day has just begun
when night is finally done

for dawn is made of gold
and soon it will appear
to banish doubt and fear
for hope is always near

I notice how the sun
in crossing east to west
provides my daily test
it always does its best

thus hope can fuel my life
and truth will light the way
to keep my grief at bay
I reach for hope each day

Barry Middleton

Hopeful Rain

the hypnotizing rain is falling
we are half way through the season

Florida is burning in wet heat
the rain is a blessing like ice and grace

I long for an October breeze
this August storm is only a preview

the heat will return tomorrow
and yet the rain brings faith

I fall into the trance of the rain
the heartbeat of hidden gods

life is renewing itself again
the world will be greener tomorrow

the world can hope again
the freshened air of autumn will come

Barry Middleton

Hopeless Peace

Peace cannot come to a world
where wild eyed generals feed
the commerce of endless war.

Peace cannot break through
on a harvest of grief, frozen tears,
and memorial remembrance.

A murderous beast resides within
the fear and icy blood of the reptile,
the archetypal DNA of ruthlessness.

Hatred and envy rise from embers
of hopelessness and broken dreams.
Peace hides in an unrequited prayer.

Something does not want armistice.
Some secret force moves in darkness,
its iron fist clenched for the kill.

Barry Middleton

Horizon Sonnet

no longer do I seek the far horizon
my world contracted, not by choice
I only view the old world in a book
to know the poet's silent voice

age can come upon a man at once
and tear from him the plans he made
and force on him a smaller universe
dreams vanish, hope can fade

my voyage of life is coming to an end
I do not fear the darkest sea
the vast regret, I never sailed so far
to claim a shore where men are free

but still my humble vessel holds its mast
that I must climb till every shoal is past

Barry Middleton

Horizons

I can't know where I go
until the journey's end
horizons hide in mist
that I cannot suspend

I search to find the lamp
the story I was told
but fog obscures the night
and I am tired and old

I see no shining view
for death to consecrate
horizons are like walls
beyond them lies my fate

the earth eclipses hope
my vision curved by space
I spin among the stars
to find my resting place

as I peer back through time
recalling every turn
I am forbid to know
the light for which I yearn

Barry Middleton

Hunter's Moon

the hunter's moon is coming soon
with coolness in the wind
summer's heat is tempered now
the rains are soon to end

across the valley sounds are heard
the father swings an axe
the cellar door is firmly pinned
its stores are safely packed

a shot rings out beyond the field
to fill the smokehouse walls
with venison and savory pork
before the winter calls

a stew is warming on the stove
and biscuits too await
the father welcomes suppertime
and bolts the garden gate

the family soon is gathered round
to bow their heads for grace
as father thanks the stars above
for blessings they embrace

the sun goes down and evening chores
are done by many hands
then laughing children head for sleep
to end the days demands

till dawn arises in the east
to mark a brand new day
when all will wake to face their tasks
whatever comes their way

~~~~~

This poem is inspired by fantasies of what life was like  
on my great grandfathers farm three generations ago.



# Hunting Memory

In my youth I was a hunter.  
As age advances, I hunt for memory.  
I remember planting flowers by the front steps,  
just old enough to dig with a spoon.  
I planted nasturtiums and was amazed at the riot of color as that grew.  
I knew then I wanted to grow things.  
I remember the garden gate I built at seven and how  
my mother bragged on its durability all her life.  
I knew then I wanted to build things.  
I remember painting the kitchen and the smell of the glossy oil paint.  
I remember the dogwood in bloom in an upper valley.  
I remember roaming, searching; I remember beech trees, and the stillness of the  
woods before my eye caught the movement of a squirrel.  
I remember the jeweled rocks in our rippling creek.  
I remember home, the garden patch, apple picking,  
the cool fall air, the first frost, cedar Christmas trees  
and priceless winters when southern snow blew in from the west.  
I remember the first daffodils of spring.  
All childhood is intact, all of my life stored in memory.  
I remember love and love lost,  
and found and lost again.  
I remember joy and pain, grief and new hope.  
For now the monster of forgetting is at bay.  
I can remember.  
I can hunt, I can find, all time not yet lost.

Barry Middleton



# Hurricane Alley

the sky was the color of wine  
and the sea was like pea green soup  
and the wind did howl  
like a wolf on the prowl  
and the clouds did a loopy loop

the hurricane came with a growl  
and the trees did the shimmy and shake  
and down came a few  
but what can we do  
when the gods of fair weather forsake

in the stillness soon after the blow  
I can see that the earth means no harm  
the wind must subside  
with the out flowing tide  
till the tropics spin up the next storm

Barry Middleton

# Hurricane Impressions

it's very clear she's coming  
that's what the whisper says  
that hisses in the pines

so many years ago  
I learned the signs to watch  
a change is in the air

the palm trees start to pray  
their folded fronds  
turn from the wind

a sleeping giant oak  
stretches her limbs and sways  
like a goddess waking

now it's about to start  
the breeze picks up  
and birds make their escape

the tropic deity I worship  
is angry now  
someone disturbed her rest

and she becomes the hurricane  
and yet I see no malice  
nature takes its course

the trees are in a frenzy  
wildly tossing their heads  
an empty protest

Barry Middleton

# Hurricanes And Firestorms

hurricanes and firestorms  
easy for the superstitious  
to believe the gods are angry

but man tends the earth  
taking the gift for granted  
bowing to money and politics

some say it is too late  
the yellow daffodil of spring  
has burned into a ghost

gray ash smolders on the hill  
another home collapses  
into its grave

the sea erodes the shore  
the winds bring down the trees  
and on a lonely street

poets and sages weep  
and search the far horizon  
and scream a message to the sun

Barry Middleton

# Hymn From A Mango Oblivion

sleeping beyond sunrise  
misses the moment  
when the colors of citrus  
fill the eastern sky

and the only defense  
from knowing that we die  
dwells in that dream only  
the one we claim is real

the garden seems alive  
the animals are stirring  
stirring like white desire  
softly calling Eve's touch

in darkness a rooster crows  
so that the dew will fall  
so men and trees and birds  
can call hosanna to morning

Barry Middleton

# I Call Him Universe

God and Earth and Universe,  
to me seem all in all.

If a Creator made it so,  
then He can sure stand tall.

We really do not know His name.  
Maybe you disagree.

We have no clue just what He's like.  
I doubt He looks like me.

Our faith should never isolate us  
from our fellow man,

but heal and bring us hope always.  
That has to be His plan.

I see His mark upon the stars,  
and on the blessed Earth.

You call him God, OK by me.  
I call Him Universe.

Barry Middleton

# I Cannot Get You Off Of My Mind

I cannot get you off of my mind.  
I guess that's just the way I'm inclined.  
You were the one.  
You're still the one,  
the only one, under my, southern sun.

When I lost you, I just had to cry.  
I could not find the way to goodbye.  
I cried and cried.  
I nearly died.  
I'd give it all, just to be, back by your side.

Chorus:

We never know, if love will grow,  
or just blow away on the wind.  
We hit the high, we hit the low.  
We may not know, until it's the end.

I cannot get you off of my mind.  
I guess that's just the way I'm inclined.  
You were the one.  
You're still the one,  
the only one, under my, southern sun.

When I lost you I just had to cry.  
I could not find the way to goodbye.  
I cried and cried.  
I nearly died.  
I'd give it all, just to be, back by your side.

Barry Middleton

# I Cannot Stay

the sky tonight is peach  
the air is still as death  
the noise of day is done  
and I am past my grief

the trees are black like lace  
that shields the fading light  
as moments of my life  
I gather to my dreams

and I will take the dare  
of peach tinged autumn days  
and wait for day and noise  
and long lost lace and grief

the sadness comes at dusk  
the stars are firing up  
as pain comes pouring down  
then I must go my way

though life is everything  
the seasons pass away  
though life is beautiful  
I know I cannot stay

Barry Middleton

# I Canot Forget You

I still recall the night we met  
right then and there I placed a bet  
I fell in love with no regret  
you are the one I can't forget

I can't forget that funny smile  
that certain flair that certain style  
my every memory is worthwhile  
my dreams of you can still beguile

but then you found somebody new  
the morning sun must steal the dew  
although we had to bid adieu  
I know I can't stop loving you

I'm blessed or cursed until the day  
when I must leave and go my way  
my ghostly passions yet will stay  
my love for you can't go away

I still recall the night we met  
right then and there I placed a bet  
I fell in love with no regret  
you are the one I can't forget

Barry Middleton



# I Can't Forget

there is a certain love  
my heart will not let go

for time cannot erase  
a memory's afterglow

and passions of my youth  
still tease a fretful mind

as seasons pass away  
I try to be resigned

the hardest part of age  
are losses I regret

I will forever grieve  
the one I can't forget

Barry Middleton

# I Carried You

I carried you in every night  
dreaming of coldest snow

you and I were young again  
but that was long ago

I carried you through the day  
haunting the deep shade

I tried to run from cruel time  
where memories are weighed

I carried you throughout a life  
and down a forgotten beach

in every spring in every breath  
to realms beyond my reach

I carried you into the sun  
raising a prayer to the sea

there at last your soul may sleep  
and there I am set free

Barry Middleton

# I Choose Shadows

I choose shadows and the cave  
for there is too much grief

far from time's lost utopia  
beyond Peak Tenerife

I choose shadows and the cave  
and shun reality

safe from all brutality  
illusions cannot hurt me

I choose shadows and the cave  
far up the mountain side

beside a fire I guard my soul  
in woods where hermits hide

I choose shadows and the cave  
Atlantis is no more

the hope I had for all mankind  
rests on the ocean floor

Barry Middleton

# I Died Three Years Ago

I died three years ago  
no one noticed  
probably because I kept on moving

generally speaking  
dead things lie very still and quiet  
but I kept on moving and talking

it seemed the thing to do  
everyone said stay positive  
everyone said I looked well

no one noticed that I had died  
no one noticed  
as they passed my ghost in the street

Barry Middleton

# I Dine Alone

I did not pay attention  
I simply wasn't looking  
perhaps it was the dog  
but I was busy cooking

I felt a screen door slam  
something left the house  
it might just be the cat  
or nothing but a mouse

I turned to stir potatoes  
it could have been a ghost  
the table must be set  
I dare not burn the roast

dishes now need washing  
and errands must be run  
I wish I had more time  
to join in childhood fun

something left the house  
the children are all grown  
now the chores are done  
and now I dine alone

Barry Middleton

# I Don't Have A Dog

I've been fighting the blues all my life;  
I don't have a dog and I don't have a wife.  
And my future ain't looking too bright.

I don't have a dollar or dime;  
all I've got is a song and it don't even rhyme.  
And the clock keeps on stealing my time.

Every morning the sun starts to rise;  
but all it can tell me are puzzles and lies.  
'Cause I ain't got a chance at the prize.

I think I'll just lay down and die.  
No one will miss me and no one will cry;  
and I guess I will never know why.

I been fighting the blues all my life;  
I don't have a dog and I don't have a wife.  
The loneliness cuts like a knife.

But if I had a dog it would bite;  
and if I had a wife, she'd just want to fight.  
I suppose everything is alright.  
I suppose all in all everything is alright.

Barry Middleton

# I Dream In Poetry

I dream in poetry  
and all the colors of autumn.  
My days are haunted with nuance,  
the insinuation of a mockingbird,  
hot luscious sun on my face,  
the flash of wet, feminine eyes.

A day in thirds is music.  
Morning tunes the day,  
then statutory noon  
utters its canto  
till a liquid violin sunset  
weeps with passion's colors.

I dreamed in spring  
and green gold promise  
was a betrayal of hope.

Summer has gone,  
lost lilies drop their seed  
before the cold wind turns.  
I dream in poetry  
and all the colors of autumn.  
Forgotten songs echo hot nights  
and memory's kiss.  
The music has died.  
Blind day gives way  
to dreams of falling leaves,  
and softest night  
to carry them away.

Barry Middleton

# I Fell Asleep

I fell asleep and I was dreaming  
of those places left behind,

country roads and water gleaming,  
summertime and bright sunshine.

I often wished I could return,  
but time just runs in one direction.

And though I will forever yearn,  
a lost desire has no correction.

But I will try, for try I must,  
at fitting circumstance to dreams,

for that is all that I can trust,  
and not my long forgotten schemes.

And will I someday be rewarded?  
One more thing I can't foresee.

Beyond a time yet unrecorded  
awaits an ultimate decree.

Barry Middleton



# I Found The Diamonds

I found the diamonds in the sky  
the gold of the sacred sunrise  
the tenderness of a lover's touch  
the wonder of the mountain peak

yes there were the darker nights  
tears and doubt and fears  
yet looking back upon the years  
regret is but a waste of time

I found the scarlet gem of sunset  
the turquoise tropic waters  
the breeze in silver palms  
the treasure of a peaceful dream

Barry Middleton

# I Grieve For All

I grieve for myself  
but in that grief  
I grieve for the world

I grieve for those  
who struggle with bonds  
who struggle with pain

I weep for those  
who have no home  
for those who wander

I see the hopelessness  
and the oppression  
of the invisible cage

my eyes burn  
in the toxic smoke  
that poisons children

I grieve tyranny  
insatiable avarice  
and abuse of power

I await freedom  
like a bird in winter  
seeking the way home

Barry Middleton

# I Have The Sun

I have the sun to love  
the blessed kiss of rain

forgiveness of the forest  
to understand my pain

I have the cool dark lake  
to comfort all my grief

the soft embrace of sand  
to grant me its relief

a sweet and gentle wind  
rushes through my hair

then I am young again  
and held within its care

and when the day is done  
the moon is shining bright

my silver boat is waiting  
to sail the darkest night

Barry Middleton

# I Hear A Call

I hear a whispered call.  
The winter rain must fall  
to chill the naked soul.

Regret is in the wind,  
for grief cannot suspend  
or heal the pain of life.

The words I could not say,  
the secrets locked away,  
return in foggy dreams.

I feel my pulse retreat.  
A prayer fails to entreat  
aloof infinity.

So silently I wait,  
beside a bitter gate,  
till sorrow finally rests.

Barry Middleton

# I Heard The Voice

I heard the voice in the wood  
as a child I heard it clearly  
it rang in the waters of my creek  
it whispered in the leaves of the trees  
it leaped into the silence of dreaming

the voice constantly sang to me  
it carried me from the cruel street  
where innocent blood was spilled  
in homage to the shame of the past  
it carried me into the endless universe

and as the child sees  
hermits are incubated  
innocence retreats

the rational reaction to insanity  
is a different type of insanity  
a flight of the imagination into the stars  
where god lives beyond the silence  
where love grows a garden in wilderness

there the voice spoke  
and there the voice was heard  
it told me I must find my rhythm  
it told me I must find my way  
my path from hell into salvation

the dreamer seeks peace  
the child may sense a true path  
yet may lose his way

the desire came before poetry  
something inside screamed for expression  
the dreams were hard to hold  
they came like the tears of the wood  
like the silent grief of the garden

where psalms began I was there

alone in the infinity of universe  
I found my voice  
the constant melody of stardust  
was made manifest in humanity

the voice was a song  
the words of gods of mercy  
the cycle of moons

poetry filled the silence of the wood  
it flowed in the waters  
it was present in the darkest pond  
it was in the memory of a tree's rings  
it was within a child's desire

poetry was the boy becoming a man  
it was the tears of grief  
it was the memory of love  
it was in the wish for peace  
it was the final return to the stars

rest comes in rhythms  
peace is the rhyme scheme of time  
a child's dream is law

Barry Middleton

# I Know My Destiny

the waning disk of moon  
has hurried on so soon

I stifle back a yawn  
to greet the break of dawn

I wonder why it's so  
for no one seems to know

why light of day or night  
must ever fade from sight

no one will answer me  
to God I've made my plea

I know that life must end  
and then we can ascend

but I just see the signs  
and pen a few more lines

the light will come again  
and doom will not descend

it does not trouble me  
I know my destiny

but I still must ask why  
must love and life yet die

before we are set free  
beyond infinity

I guess I'll never know  
until the final show

then God may answer me  
till then I'll let it be





# I Laughed

so when I laughed at death  
she was angry

I guess she thought a grim  
exterior would help

she said it was not funny  
death cries

still I will laugh at my pain  
and grief

they are here to tell me  
I am alive

so when I laugh at death  
it is a choice

I laugh in a roar of agony  
and tears

I steal from tears a throne  
and crown

when my laughter ceases  
then death will smile

Barry Middleton

# I Listen To The Rain

I listen to the rain  
it has a tale to tell  
when I think all is lost  
it whispers all is well

it cares not where it falls  
and some may get a flood  
and some a sacrament  
to wash away the blood

to some it may bring grief  
but others dance and shout  
and celebrate its gift  
where it relieves a drought

and poets know the truth  
the blessing of the rain  
and cherish every drop  
for all it may sustain

Barry Middleton

# I Look For Her

I look for her at sundown  
but she fled to the north  
never to escape herself

I reach out left handed  
but the cold bed sheets  
have long been empty

I look for her in dreams  
but only find the terror  
of dark maniacs stalking

I look for her in poetry  
and she appears at dawn  
warming coldest memory

she inhabits all my verse  
there in a white solitude  
she beckons from the page

Barry Middleton

# I Looked Outside

I sat and looked at the world outside  
from the window my father sat beside.

I saw what he saw then turned away  
and heard the words he could not say.

The world is a cruel confusing place,  
may as well call us the inhuman race.

Hostile and greedy and vicious as hell,  
I hear the toll of humanity's knell.

Hypocrites bray and preachers scream.  
Even awake it is still a bad dream.

As war rages on and politicians lie,  
I often wish I could cash out and die.

The savagery of the heart of man  
is a quandary I never will understand.

Yes life is sad and brimming with sin,  
but if I had my wish I'd try it again.

Barry Middleton

# I Lost My Way

I lost my way at dark  
in lonely woods one night

I turned to left and right  
I could not hear the lark

I lost my love one day  
the fire had lost its spark

I felt the blunt remark  
that love can never stay

why gods chose me to mark  
I simply cannot say

but much to my dismay  
alone I must embark

I lost my way at dark  
in lonely woods one night

I turned to left and right  
I could not hear the lark

Barry Middleton

# I Lost The Thread

I lost the thread of the moment  
in the long shadow of dusk

it seemed nothing would answer  
as if there was no one to trust

did I lose the strength to endure  
conspiring with fear of my goal

far beyond the peak lies wisdom  
to begin once again I am told

if I do not turn from the future  
and waste no time on the past

the moment is mine at evening  
in quiet dreams that may last

Barry Middleton

# I Love You

it is so easily said  
and yet so hard to hold  
not like the fairy tale  
that we were often told

for love is like a song  
that drifts into the night  
and vanishes at dawn  
as dark gives way to light

and love is like the tide  
that steals the lover's plea  
engraved in fragile sand  
then washed into the sea

perhaps love is a bird  
that flees a bitter wind  
as seasons come and go  
and love comes to an end

and yet my love is true  
and lingers until death  
for I will not let go  
before my final breath

Barry Middleton

# I Ride The Prow

I ride the prow in bucking through the inlet  
the turquoise wake is dressed in white lace

smaller boats fight through rough water  
rise and fall like life, decks collapsing in foam

we yell like savages ready for the kill  
till quieter waters come to calm the blood

where blue turns to black the dolphins  
race and play beside us in a game

as if to say one life is given, land or sea  
they seem to wish we'd join the revelry

at end of day and heading into port I recall  
a primal memory, ancient sea dreams linger

I rest upon the stern to summon better times  
a peaceful home deep in the sea's rhythm

Barry Middleton



# I Run Across Them

I run across them each and every day:  
a man who knows his sun is fading soon,  
a guileless child who lingers long at play,  
a vagabond beneath the rising moon.

In dark and shadowed valleys of the past,  
I follow them in mist and darkest night.  
And yet I know this image cannot last;  
horizons wait to dampen every light.

Before the dim and distant glow has fled,  
the old and weary man returns to home;  
a mother puts the restless child to bed;  
the lonely vagabond no more will roam.

Barry Middleton

# I Saw The Past

from the high point of the hill  
in the shadow of a ruined house  
I saw with the eyes of the Cherokee  
I saw only the past

I saw the land of my fathers  
I saw the misted horizon's wisdom  
and I heard the sounds of the past  
cannon fire and winds of despair

I wondered at the white man's war  
I knew the black man was in chains  
the blue soldiers would free him  
but death was in the air

I must retreat deeper into the hills  
I leave the river of blood  
I will wait for peace to come again  
I seek the clear water spring

I am only dreaming of the past  
below me is the dark river  
I see the misted horizon's wisdom  
I must return to home once more

Barry Middleton

# I See The Stars

I only see the stars and memory  
I am confined by space  
and night

imagination lies beyond the stars  
and takes me anywhere  
I dream

memory fires the coldest winter night  
recalling victories  
and loss

I have traveled with the lonely stars  
before their fire was sparked  
and time

once again I break the bonds of earth  
I break the bonds of space  
and age

a poet's ragged book of tattered dreams  
records the final page  
of death

I travel to the stars and memories  
beyond contingencies  
of breath

Barry Middleton

# I See You Everywhere

I see you everywhere  
a memory drifting in the air

a phantom left behind  
that haunts if only to remind

the images are strange  
privations sure to tease the brain

in fall the maple leaves  
weep with me as nature grieves

the green that used to be  
is shrouded now in burgundy

birds flee the cold  
knowing summer cannot hold

the river rushes on  
youth and strength soon are gone

the promise of the sun  
is vanished now that day is done

I see you everywhere  
in losses that are hard to bear

Barry Middleton

# I Should Be Criticizing

I should be criticizing  
for telling me those lies  
but that's not so surprising  
you think that I'm not wise

you ain't ever fooled me  
I know you can be found  
down there in that sleazy bar  
on the other side of town

swinging at the honky-tonk  
with a cowboy not a man  
you told me you'd be back  
just shoot me where I stand

I should be criticizing  
but I must thank you too  
you opened up my eyes  
I know what you're up to

Chorus:  
you evil cheating woman  
you been stepping out on me  
now I'm through with you  
at last you set me free

Barry Middleton

# I Smell The Rain

I smell the rain again  
for everything in nature  
gives a warning

when change comes  
the weathervane spins  
before the torrent

when love ends  
the air grows cold and gray  
before the tears

for everything in nature  
gives a warning  
I smell the rain again

Barry Middleton

# I Tried To Deny It

I tried to deny it  
I cannot abide it  
but I admit I am afraid  
death is a mystery  
I know the history  
the end of every plan I made

my life is ending  
the night descending  
where I have never been before  
I thought that I  
would never die  
but now I must deny no more

but I still wish  
a parting kiss  
I do not want to leave this world  
though I know rest  
is probably best  
among the stars where planets whirl

I loved my life  
success or strife  
and I accepted all that came  
so I will sleep  
in stardust deep  
and face the end of joy and pain

Barry Middleton

# I Tried To Forgive You

honey I tried to forgive you  
you did everything heaven forbids  
you lied and you cheated  
I felt so mistreated  
you're the reason that I hit the skids

you said you always would love me  
but that didn't mean a thing  
I should have known  
that an ill wind had blown  
you even hocked your wedding ring

honey I tried to forgive you  
you did everything heaven forbids  
you lied and you cheated  
I felt so mistreated  
you're the reason that I hit the skids

soon there were promises broken  
so I hit the bars like a drunk  
you were fooling around  
all over town  
our love boat had rapidly sunk

honey I tried to forgive you  
you did everything heaven forbids  
you lied and you cheated  
I felt so mistreated  
you're the reason that I hit the skids

Barry Middleton



# I Want To Go

I want to go  
where raintrees grow,  
back to the forest  
of my birth.

I want to know  
what the raintrees know,  
and learn all the secrets  
of Earth.

Does it lie to the south  
as I always believed,  
and still farther south  
I must go?

Or is it within,  
or the smile of a friend,  
or some place  
I never will know?

Barry Middleton

# I Want To Travel South

I want to travel South  
I hail from warmer lands

the South is in my blood  
I do not feel the shame

I hear forbidden words  
I know that hate abides

it is alive on main street  
in remnants of bigotry

the lynching has stopped  
but not the rage of evil

I roamed the bitter cold  
for consolation

I want to travel South  
I may not have the time

I want to see if change  
has come to bless the river

Barry Middleton

# I Was Preoccupied

I was preoccupied, I lived within myself  
that cannot be denied

yes I was hard to reach, I think you really tried  
you truly did beseech

I had no spirit guide, I only had myself  
and never satisfied

I cannot blame a soul, I guess I make excuse  
I'm sorry on the whole

I see it as my fault, I needed a retreat  
but it was all for naught

I lived within myself, and even now I do  
a book upon a shelf

that's all I know to do, I hid within my shame  
and love was never true

maybe you understand, I tried to love you too  
it was not as I planned

I was preoccupied, I lived within myself  
that cannot be denied

so bottled up inside, much too tightly wrapped  
without a place to hide

yes I was hard to reach, I think you really tried  
you truly did beseech

you were not to blame, you never had a chance  
I always stayed the same

I had no spirit guide, I only had myself  
and never satisfied

maybe you understand, I tried to love you too  
it was not as I planned

I was preoccupied, I lived within myself  
that cannot be denied

Barry Middleton

# I Will Love You Always

I will love you  
until my shadow fades

I will love you for  
a hundred thousand days

it's been said before  
but no one meant it more

you are the only one  
that I adore

I will love you  
until the end of time

I will love you  
beyond the scale of rhyme

when dark shall fall  
I'll love you through it all

till angels come  
to tear down every wall

I will love you  
beyond the final years

I will love you  
till springtime disappears

and should a single star  
keep shining from afar

then I will never  
bid you au revoir

the stars and planets  
have a second verse

my love for you is larger  
than the universe

my song will let you know  
look up and see the show

I'll be there  
in the sundown's afterglow

I will love you  
until my shadow fades

I will love you  
for a hundred thousand days

Barry Middleton

# If I Could Choose

if I could choose a time to die  
then it would be in summer

the heat of noon is tempered by  
a rumbling distant drummer

the blazing sun is muted then  
as darkness roils the sky

spring's bloom and orchids fade  
and wilt but never sigh

they nor men can know the hour  
they shed a final tear

in summer flowers must submit  
their spirit freed from fear

Barry Middleton

## If I Could Pray

If I could pray, then I would pray for strength,  
the strength of courage in the face of fear,  
for in a dream I saw a dreadful sight,  
as it was I laid there upon the bier.

A night of fog had settled on the view,  
obscuring all I ever thought I knew,  
and there was only silence in that place,  
the spirit fled with not a single trace.

And no attendant ghosts had come to grieve,  
within a barren forest stripped and bleak,  
and not a breath of wind disturbed the trees,  
but all was cloaked within a strange mystique.

The dream subsided as the darkness fell,  
beyond the mist of dim and dreadful night,  
and only then did I perceive a sound,  
where tolling bells proclaimed the final rite.

Barry Middleton



# If Love Were True

If love could only once be true,  
I pray to make it last.

The intermission waits for me,  
to end the shadowed past.

The passion and the fever die,  
and spring can never stay.

And love is lovely for a term,  
then fades like yesterday.

But just a modicum of grace,  
would set my world aright.

And one more chance is all I ask,  
one kiss before the night.

Barry Middleton

# If Only Dreams

If only dreams could meet the day,  
and love could settle on the earth,  
then I would surely know the way,  
to hold the only prize of worth.

For deep within my pensive dreams,  
you walk the path that we once knew.  
But that is history it seems,  
a vanished road that proved untrue.

Yet still I look for you at dawn,  
and in the setting of the sun,  
and in the spring when hope is born,  
and when the year is finally done.

I often wonder if my dreams,  
are sent to punish me somehow,  
desire and Eden's sacred themes,  
renewed as in a long lost vow.

When morning comes I still await  
a kiss to free my prison cell,  
but love is banished like the fate  
of souls within a dreamer's spell.

Then as the dark of night descends,  
I reach for grace and often pray,  
that angels come to make amends,  
so dreams at last can meet the day.

Barry Middleton

# If Silence Could Speak

if silence could speak  
then you would know

a mute and clumsy pause  
speaks more than words

in those dumb times  
I don't know what to say

if I could utter words  
I'd say I know your grief

I'd say I've felt that pain  
I've felt that loneliness

I too lost everything  
all that was my anything

and when you look at me  
with brown and pensive eyes

and if you too could speak  
you'd ask if that were true

Barry Middleton

# If To Be

to only be  
if I had an everywhere to choose

and I do  
for imagination takes me there

I'd pick  
the low and rolling hills of home

somewhere  
in a meadow filled with flowers

a cabin  
near the clear stream of my youth

wicker chairs  
upon the porch and one a rocker

the view  
walled in oak and beech and hickory

and there  
with my memories and quiet peace

at last empty  
I would write a poetry that only is

Barry Middleton

# Illusion

I gaze at you across my room  
confused to know my eyes deceive

I wonder are you truly real  
or just a dream the stars conceive

you still inhabit misty views  
my eyes eclipsed by smoke and tears

the mind plays tricks and memory  
is now confounded by the years

I know I dwell in yesterday  
but still I welcome visions past

where love's illusion comforts me  
though apparitions never last

Barry Middleton

# I'm Almost Over You

I'm almost over you  
the years play out like cards

my hair is streaked with gray  
I give you my regards

it was so long ago  
I still remember the night

the tide was coming in  
the moon faded from sight

we packed our things and ran  
the blanket and champagne

and late into the darkness  
we listened to the rain

we passed the night together  
and yet we were alone

in tides and stormy weather  
adrift in the unknown

Barry Middleton

# I'm Just An Old Hippie

I'm just an old hippie,  
born in Mississippi.  
Lord, please don't  
string me along.

I ain't felt so great  
since 1968.  
But I just wanna write  
one more song.

Chorus:

Lord - I never asked you,  
well not - for too much.  
Just - give me this one,  
'cause I'm down - on - my - luck.

I still got a question.  
Give me one more session.  
And I will try  
and get it down right.

Why is the sky blue?  
I wish that I knew!  
Lord, I ain't trying  
to put up a fight.

Chorus:

Lord - I never asked you,  
well not - for too much.  
Just - give me this one,  
'cause I'm down - on - my - luck.

I'd still like a chance  
and a swing at romance  
before I gotta  
lie down and die.

It's love that we lack,  
gotta bring it on back.

At times I may laugh  
not to cry.

Chorus:

Lord - I never asked you,  
well not - for too much.  
Just - give me this one,  
'cause I'm down - on - my - luck.

So when will the war end?  
It's peace that we must win.  
So why can't we all  
get along?

We got one planet earth.  
It's the place of our birth.  
Ain't it obvious  
that we all belong?

Chorus:

Lord - I never asked you,  
well not - for too much.  
Just - give me this one,  
'cause I'm down - on - my - luck.

Yeah I'm just an old hippie,  
born in Mississippi.  
Lord, please don't  
string me along.

I ain't felt so great  
since 1968.  
But I just wanna write  
one more song.

Barry Middleton



# I'm Not Sure

Who knows what they wanted,  
they were not very clear.  
But if they wanted courage,  
I only offered fear.

I could not hear their voices,  
and they could not hear mine.  
So much misunderstanding,  
so much a waste of time.

I did not want to rule them,  
but I would not be ruled.  
I might have made more effort,  
but I could not be fooled.

Perhaps they found the answer,  
I could not figure out.  
If so they kept it hidden.  
What is life all about?

Barry Middleton

# Image And Metaphor

the meadow in spring  
is an image and a metaphor

the yellow dandelion  
the newness of life itself  
breeds the seeds of newer life

the man who sees the meadow  
is not a man but is all men

he reflects on the image  
so the man is consciousness  
the metaphor of the gods

the meadow in spring  
is an image without the man

the man without the meadow  
is not conscious of the image  
the divine metaphor is lost

Barry Middleton

# Image In Moonlight

in the image of moonlight  
I heard the grieving dove  
and I buried my memories

this is for an absent lover  
whose face has dimmed  
in the shadows of evening

moonlight on the waters  
in silver and gold strains  
rang forth from her kiss

and there in blue light  
was passion and soaring  
adoration rising on wings

in the image of moonlight  
the lost dove calls to me  
and crosses into darkness

Barry Middleton

# Images At Sundown

sunset pours into the window  
of the hermits hut

he thinks the sun in the pine  
is his silver treasure

the sun paints his images  
the widow frames his world

the sharp blue of noon  
is faded to a softer shade

nuances of green abound  
the silence itself is verdant

red seed pods kiss the earth  
beneath a golden rain tree

and a final yellow dandelion  
defies the change in the wind

the hermit greets the afterglow  
a palm tree nods its grief

Barry Middleton

# Images Of Evil

I hear the beating wings,  
leather clad with scales of fire,  
the dragon circling the earth.  
Within a steel gray cloud,  
lightning flashes death  
as burning rain descends.  
The flame of evil spreads,  
consuming cabalistic lust  
informs the soul.  
Al-Qaum, Apep and Erebus,  
set loose from chains,  
lurk in a putrid fog.  
The heart of the beast  
beats an atavistic drum  
from the well of time.  
A rank and feted swamp  
rumbles reptilian desire  
from a dawn on black water.  
Still frail ministers of love  
raise their offerings of peace  
to a silent Lord of Light.

~~~~~

Al-Qaum is the Arabian god of darkness and night. Apep is the ancient Egyptian serpent god of evil. Erebus is the Greek god of darkness born of Chaos. The poem was inspired by the unspeakably evil villain in Randy Wayne White's newest novel, "Mangrove Lightning".

Barry Middleton

Imagination

imagination helps us wonder
imagination yields to fear

mystery in sounding thunder
doubt in yet another year

imagination always planning
imagination never sound

impossibilities enchanting
dreams so often let us down

yet another plot arises
another notion to explore

with intuition mind devises
all of wanting we implore

the curse is almost owning wisdom
as dreamer's wishes take the stand

we live within a brutal dictum
that destiny defies demand

Barry Middleton

Immigrant

can I be an American
I was born in Mexico
can I be an American
I hail from Vietnam
can I be an American
I was born in Cuba
can I be an American
my grandfather was Italy
my mother was France
my uncle was Portugal
my cousin was Russia
my aunt was Tunisian
can I be an American
I am English
and Scottish
and Irish
and Puerto Rican
and African
can I be an American
I was born here
my eyes are slanted
my skin is brown
my hair is black
I only want a chance
a chance for freedom

Barry Middleton

In A Better Place

The shadow can be larger
than the man.

Why this is so
is hard to understand.

The man, once laid
into the darkened grave,

retains the qualities
we wish to save.

All his weakness
and his every fault

is locked away
within the coffin's vault.

So seldom may we hear
the eulogy,

reflective of the rogue
he used to be.

Barry Middleton

In A Dream

the satin dress you wore
I never saw before

something was going on
beneath the trees of home

a wedding party there
the moonlight in your hair

the breeze had lifted me
down near the old oak tree

the leaves were falling down
with music all around

memories of long ago
put on a midnight show

and then we kissed again
upon that dying wind

but dreams are only dreams
or so it often seems

the somber afterglow
of love I used to know

Barry Middleton

In A Lost Crowd

isolation's hiding place
is in the mind
for there we see
hermits of every kind

the schizophrenic beggar
on the street
is a rhapsody in rags
without conceit

the shut-in widow
now is seldom seen
an overgrowth of hedges
are her screen

the old bachelor
feels his life has ended
and dwells in books
with fantasy pretended

and some are born
to seek the hermit's roll
the mystic madding poets
of the soul

Barry Middleton

In A Lost Land

In a lost land,
far down the river valley,
there were trees of pink Mimosa,
apple, plum, and yellow clover.

And in that land,
most every tree and brier
bore sweetest fruit.
The woods were alive with magic.

And there were streams,
that rushed with fish,
flowing like ribbons
from the hills.

Children laughed
where a tree house stood,
a frail defense of last resort
from tyranny and chores.

We did not know
of death or war
and all the other mortal scars
or why our father worried so.

I can't go back
for it is much too far away.
I can't go back and so I weep
for treasure time can never keep.

Barry Middleton

In A Silent Forest

in a silent forest far away
an autumn breeze stirs the trees

I see no human mark
as if no man has passed this way

the world is cloaked
in grays and browns

the sun is going down
and now someone has lit the fire

I smell the smoke
it calls me back to camp

but I will look just one last time
into the shadowed night

then turn to greet the darkness
to find the camp house light

Barry Middleton

In Growing Old

fire consumes the mightiest of trees
the brittle wood cut down at last
to block the winter cold

old men pursue the light in dying flames
till glowing coals are memories
of passion and desire

deep within the dark a whispered prayer
will know the wisdom of the fire
when I am born again

but I return to earth in suffering
to build my fragile house anew
the infant's hungry cry

the seed has fallen on the forest floor
where grows a tiny miracle
that takes but what it needs

Barry Middleton

In Lavender

she was in lavender
that royal color

in lavender perfume
like poetry

the silk of her dress
a flowering field

the horizon blessed
mad with wine

a lavender of desire
a blushing lilac

the color of dreams
a velvet night

violet lips adorned
in that passion

essence of stars
a perfect amethyst

she was in lavender
like poetry

Barry Middleton

In My Cave

in my cave I am safe
safe for a day or a night
or that is my delusion

everything is relative
space is bent that way
safety is a locked door

yet there is no safety
death crashes in at will
safety is a feeling

safety is contentment
feeling and knowing
that I am alive for now

I do not wait for death
I wait for sunrise
to illuminate my path

light creeps into my haven
dark stone softens its hue
earth tones come to life

Barry Middleton

In Seeking Answers

In seeking answers,
the science of intuition
explores the house of mystery.

Rattling in the attic,
the secret bones of gods
enumerate stars and fireflies.

Imagination paints
the shadowed side of things,
far off lands hiding in darkness.

And culture spins,
in fairy tales and legends,
pacifying dreams of innocence.

But mystics speak
to reveal the arcane truth,
to open the locked door of time.

Barry Middleton

In Solitude

in solitude there is consolation
to be alone for just a moment
to find a rare and silent retreat

in a windy forest without sound
I see the pulse of a living breeze
I touch the heartbeat of the air

so isolation sharpens the senses
I sit beside the ocean at sunset
that is one sensation of beauty

as I close my eyes in blindness
I can taste the salt in the mist
I can hear the seagulls searching

to transcend all glare and noise
I turn from every earthly bond
as only then may I know my soul

Barry Middleton

In The Forest

I wake with the first glow of dawn
in my cabin in the forest

the windows open wide in good weather
to let in the sounds and scents

I built this place on a childhood stream
on the ridge above the glen

and there I hear the babble of the creek
and the chatter of a nervous squirrel

I have a lamp so I can read at evening
the owl will lull me off to sleep

in fall and late at night I wait to hear
the ticking of the cooling stove

I know now I have nothing more to fear
for I have surely found my peace

Barry Middleton

In The Quiet

the day's listening is done
only my thoughts are heard

the random musings of poetry
are fragments of yesterday

there is no tomorrow yet
but only moments of reflection

I remember the sounds
wind in the forest of my youth

storms and sibilance of rain
water rushing with the torrent

I remember the crackle of fire
to warm a winter night

sleep rises like a whispered fog
where softest dreams awake

Barry Middleton

In The Woods

I am lost in the woods where the path is a maze,
and still I will stay till the sun starts to fade,
where no one can find me in shadow and haze,
with safety of darkness to come to my aid.

I am seeking a heart that I carved in a tree,
but the comforting darkness denies me the way
that time and the bramble have taken from me,
and taught me to treasure wherever I stray.

I'm content, though alone as the night settles in,
when I hear an owl call from a great hollow beech.
I claim it's a greeting from a welcome old friend,
who reminds me that fate is quite beyond reach.

For hope is elusive when lost in the woods,
where darkness confirms much I misunderstood.

Barry Middleton

In Thirds

a third of life is spent in youth
children explore a newborn world
later they will search for truth

the child in learning how to love
will find a broken heart for certain
and there's no answer from above

a third of life is spent in wonder
a man will grow into his future
and take possession of the thunder

and yet for all his proud ascension
no matter his successful ride
he'll not get by without dissension

a third of life is spent in brilliance
wisdom comes to some degree
and if we're lucky some resilience

but illness that we can't remove
descends till death to steal the sun
then we have nothing left to prove

within each span and mortal space
the pain and sorrow catechize
to lead us to salvation's grace

Barry Middleton

Indian Summer

something
from the spring
that keeps us going
that clears the winter sky
and coaxes deceived buds
and doomed butterflies
to taste the bogus season
sends men out for reckoning
tired of contemplating walls
a yearning instinct
pent up
frozen desire
and mixed
with a toast to memory
the touch of a gentle hand
the hope for bluer skies
a lover's sigh
before the pretense dies

Barry Middleton

Inevitable

one house crushed by tornado
another fallen in a cistern grave

still in others ghosts linger
can nothing of the past be saved

one town alien as youth
another foreign as the moon

still another lost in time
a beggar mumbling out a tune

a nation grown mute to grief
its spirit lost in coldest space

flag hung like a shameful head
forgotten pride is its disgrace

a flood is rising storms will blow
fire and death will fill the sky

no king absolves us with salvation
sword in hand as planets die

Barry Middleton

Ink Prayer

in hours before the dawn
with too much time to think
I can depend on you
the night is raven ink

they say that black is void
and has no inner light
that is not true for me
it serves to fire the night

black ink on purest white
has never let me down
but lights the way for me
to don the poet's crown

but now I am struck blind
and paralyzed by fear
oh do not take from me
the work that I hold dear

please do not take my voice
I do not need to hear
I can forgo love's touch
but give me one more year

no do not steal from me
the ink upon this page
that guards me till the dawn
from tears and grief and rage

Barry Middleton

Insanity

we grew up with it
fear of the cold war
mutually assured destruction
MAD, that was the acronym
then the wall came down

the wall is up again
not nationalism now
this time religion
is the seed of hatred
brother against brother

the bombs are smaller
the death more personal
the blood is just as red
redder than red ideas

the Middle East is ticking
the cold war is thawing
they believe the answer
lies in a genocidal bomb
it may come all at once

Barry Middleton

Insentient Fire

Caught between the antique gods,
and the devil in the heart of man,
I can only turn to the silken stars,
for there dwells a tapestry of mind.

Now we walk the garden alone,
the man and woman but alone,
without the comfort of wisdom,
defenseless against the universe.

Then we must weep in realization
on the banks of this pristine river,
weep with the passion of an orchid
containing the lost tears of spring.

Weep as new creation is being born,
a new legend of star blessed causes
where the breath of universe stirs
passion's fire within insentient dust.

To embrace at last this misty place,
which is the cradle of every child,
is to finally find the truth of truth,
and know its wisdom and its grace.

Barry Middleton

Inspiration

air to breathe
and fuel the soul

a fire within
a rhythm
a drum pounding

divinity
a god who cares

and if there be
a heartbeat
close at hand
a person

someone to believe in
someone to believe in you

arms
lips
soft eyes
breathless wanting

Barry Middleton

Internal Rhyme

I wondered what you wondered
when I lacked imagination

and I wondered how you took it
when I did not have the time

youth is such a frail duration
many mountains we must climb

still I offer this ovation
on my way to the sublime

I always did my best
to help you find internal rhyme

Barry Middleton

Into The Woods

as time draws near
I welcome the shade
imagined like fog
melted by the sun
I welcome the shade

images of wormwood
archaic moss and fern
do not frighten one
warmed in shadows
tuned to the brake

I welcome the shade
like love's memory
a place once known
lost now, a fading
but golden green

an intoxicant calls
the journey seeks
some secret glen
where the first spring
flows in single purity

I welcome the shade
the loving copse
where old wood rots
and new seeds claw
for sun washed leaf

Barry Middleton

Intoxicant

Age and illness devour all;
they take away the passion;
they take away the music,
the songs of yesterday.

Is there no kind intoxicant
to dull this bitter pain?
The seasons come and go,
yet unredeemed by death.

The feast is now exhausted.
I have no earthly appetite,
and all but hope is lost,
to medicate my infirmities.

Barry Middleton

Invisible Demons

some things never change
morning brings the sun
hope is rising in the east

again the angel of death
has given up the night
as if I could not die by day

things that roam darkness
are less fearful in the dawn
the sun banishes the demons

Barry Middleton

Iron Bridge

As a curious youth I roamed far and wide in the wooded hills.
Each passing year my circle widened to new discovery,
from backyard and cow barn, to apple orchard, past local mysteries.
Past moss and windfall in the prehistoric landscape of fern, trillium and cane.
Past the rivulet at the backside of the family farm.
Our little brook ran into Short Creek just before it merged with the muddy river.
I knew by intuition there was discovery upstream a ways, around another bend,
just hidden from reach.
Late at night, when the world was dead quiet, I could hear a clue, the oak plank
rattle of the old iron bridge.
The rumbling sound was a waking dream, unfulfilled, beckoning, a destination,
and a conquest.
Childhood overflows with seductive riddles and circuitous journey, too much to
unravel in a day or a year or years of searching.
I took on the challenges one by one till my father gave directions.
Cross the old dirt road and head to the sunrise along the pipeline cut.
Cross the next branch, turn south on the trail at the lightning scarred oak,
another mile on the ridge and you will come to a graded gravel road.
The bridge was to my right.
Scant traffic there, it took effort in the hills, just to find the place, most would
not bother.
There was a green hardwood valley, trees powdered with road dust in summer
drought, a common scene in those parts, rusty truss work,
gray weathered plank for the deck above the pristine waters of the rippling
creek.
Up the hill - Short Creek Church, white clapboard and picnic tables, slumbered on
a lawn beneath giant oaks.
There was quiet beauty there, uncommon silence, attentive wilderness, a
snapshot of serenity.
Sometimes you have to search, sometimes you have to wait. Sometimes all that
remains is a memory and a lesson in patience.

Barry Middleton

Irreverent

Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow...
From Sunday Morning
by Wallace Stevens

on Sunday mornings I listened
to the painful dreariness of reverence
dreaming of evil Saturday midnight

thus I was pulled, wish boned
to the point of psychotic break
in what to give and what to take

my father is to blame
he claimed the forest
was his church, and it was clear
whiskey was his holy alter wine

I thank the divinity of mother's genes
the whiskey was too strong
but still the forest beckons

I sorted it out despite
the double bind
that those consumed by lust
do not go blind

I sorted it out and found
divinity within my mind
no agnostic ghost at all
it is in me, the waters
birds and rain and snow
it is within my joy and grief

Barry Middleton

Isolation

listening to the Universe
there isn't much for me to say
there are no answers from above
the stars are mute in disarray

the many seasons of the truth
have left me with an emptiness
forever lost I claw my way
through dark and arid wilderness

the tune I hear you cannot know
it seems to play for only me
upon a mournful violin
the melody of time's debris

I feel the pain of humankind
that vacant interstellar space
that keeps us oh so far apart
the sin that we cannot erase

it wrapped itself within the soul
and bound in orbits of our fears
when Universe abandoned us
and left us with forsaken tears

Barry Middleton

It Wasn't Too Surprising

it wasn't too surprising
her eyes were so enticing
it looked like rain
so we stopped beneath our tree

her chin up and excited
the fire was soon ignited
and when we kissed
the lightning just missed me

she really held me tight
to scare away the fright
the rain came down
it was electrifying

I'm sticking to this story
so believe it or be sorry
I'm tingling still
and that there's no denying

no it wasn't too surprising
her eyes were so enticing
it looked like rain
so we stopped beneath our tree

her chin up and excited
the fire was soon ignited
and when we kissed
the lightning just missed me

Barry Middleton

It's Just Another Day

it's just another day
I think that I can make it
and I will not delay
I will not try to fake it

I have to earn my pay
no use to belly ache it
and I may even pray
for I will not forsake it

I didn't sleep last night
I kept the blues at bay
I put up quite a fight
till darkness went away

I gave it all my might
and now I'll join the fray
dawn is a lovely sight
on such a gorgeous day

the sun is shining bright
just like the poets say
now everything seems right
but come whatever may

I'll not concede dismay
I see a brilliant light
as new and soaring day
has come to banish night

Barry Middleton

I've Had Enough

I shiver but I am not cold
it's not about my fears
a shudder runs throughout the land
of burning echoed tears

troubles weigh upon our world
the stars are blocked tonight
a dark and frightening demon roams
the mob disputes his right

the tear gas drifts in every street
the cops have done their best
and yet the hate must overwhelm
and many fail the test

how long before we mobilize
and who will call the bluff
when will Americans arise
to say they've had enough

Barry Middleton

Jacob's Ladder

legend knows the way
twelve angels attended
the ladder was a dream
a metaphor and promise

the poets know the gift
a single race to spread
to populate the world
never to be abandoned

there on Mount Moriah
would be their temple
and a trust from above
guarding the stairway

now the straight path
often lost and empty
waits rays of sunlight
shining on Jacob's rest

in a sleeping meadow
lies a dreaming child
as the earth awakes
a lavender reminder

so may that child arise
prosper in gifts and grow
perhaps showing the way
earth still is a paradise

Barry Middleton

Jones' Situation

halfway to a mutation
with rotund posterior
spring said nothing to Simon Jones
only instinct repeated and repeated
the scarcity of birds
the thin guise of civilization
shrubs trimmed neatly
in a vain attempt to hide
the pagan voodoo symbols
selected for wholeness
Simon knew only hungry people
and some that eat
Simon prayed often
and washed his hands
and showed his poems
to close friends
and in the end
sold all he had
and moved to the tropics

Barry Middleton

Jook Joint

You still hear the blues at the jook*.
By the way, that word rhymes with book.
Down home people say, we went jookin',
listen up, and then you can go lookin'.
Po Monkey's would be the right place,
and perhaps they'll reserve you a space.
Drive past Merigold just a ways,
and the music is sure to amaze.
Cold beer is a part of the deal,
and dancing still has its appeal.
And I give you my word, you'll never forget it,
but don't wait, or you may live to regret it.

~~~~~

\*Pronounced 'jook' joint but usually spelled juke.  
Po Monkey's Lounge is located in Merigold, Ms.

Barry Middleton



# Judgment Day

the clouds are coming  
the storm is drumming  
soon it will be too late

the wind is blowing  
with no one knowing  
what is to be their fate

the clock is running  
no guile or cunning  
can stop the final toll

no use for shelter  
the waves and welter  
will come for every soul

where should one go  
when fierce winds blow  
to carry us all away

best to be ready  
on a path that's steady  
and it won't hurt to pray

Barry Middleton

# June

June is fully here  
and cotton clouds stir.

The damp heat comes  
to gift parched earth.

The first raindrops sizzle  
on black pavement.

Thunder in the distance  
disturbs a quiet rest.

Another green season  
flows beneath the sky.

The young children laugh,  
and the old men cry.

Barry Middleton

# June Heat

the heat has arrived  
the first tropical storm  
eastern waters are restless  
the hot blue sky is seamless  
creatures seek the shade

at dusk the breeze calms  
darkness brings a tempering  
cooler air settles like fog  
the air is wet and thick  
sunset is the only fire

night and sleep are death  
uncertain rest cannot last  
heat is temporarily at bay  
the sun will wake it at dawn  
the sun will wake the world

Barry Middleton

# Just Another Storm

Having chosen a plebeian life,  
I missed the muttering alleyways.  
I heard it all from insane poets  
tucked away in the cannibal asylum,  
stumbling upon a god like a drunken priest.  
And further back in time,  
among the dinosaurs of forgotten swamps,  
I found our jelly like ancestor  
nesting on a rotted hollow log.  
I warmed my hands on campfires,  
and I was not afraid.  
I learned of desire in auburn curls  
on summer nights beneath the universe,  
reflected below in a million fireflies  
disappearing in the burgundy velvet  
of a first kiss.  
Common men have their dreams,  
have their hearts broken by love and war,  
know the agony of abandonment,  
know the pain and fear of growing old,  
the world dissolving itself into a room.  
At a certain age,  
I suppose it varies,  
men feel they have seen it all,  
all but the final rattle of the serpent,  
the river of blood freezing like a snapshot.  
Then breath will be stillness,  
the hush that follows a season of storms.

Barry Middleton

# Katrina

when you're living on the river  
and the waters start to rise  
then you surely know the reason  
that old weeping willow cries

Katrina used to be a lady  
but she turned into a storm  
waters rising to the rafters  
I curse the day that she was born

put me on that paddle wheeler  
'cause I have to leave this town  
levees all are overflowing  
muddy waters all around

though the river is still raging  
it's the only path I see  
wind is howling like a demon  
the hurricane won't let me be

when you're living on the river  
you know the meaning of the blues  
when the water starts to rising  
you may win or you may lose

Barry Middleton

# Keep On Keeping On

one step forward and two steps back  
that's just the way that it is  
I pop the top on my favorite brew  
just to find that it's lost its fizz

at the top of the hill I took a hard spill  
and slid all the way to the bottom  
I searched and searched for my inner child  
and then I almost forgot him

damned if I do and damned if I don't  
I don't have the Midas touch  
the gold that I found was elusive as love  
and did not amount to much

still I slip and I slide and I roll with the tide  
I'll swim until I reach the shore  
perhaps round the bend I'll try once again  
just to see what life has in store

Barry Middleton

# Key West Glow

The wind blew with a Key West glow,  
and I could hear the steel drums ring.  
Jimmy Buffett tunes were playing.  
I still remember everything.

I had borrowed a Chevy Van,  
went all the way on down the keys.  
I found my camps on A-1-A  
enjoying flowing with the breeze.

The memory is still alive,  
nineteen hundred seventy five,  
me, my six string, and a bag of weed,  
and I was hip and full of jive.

The wind blew with a Key West glow,  
and I could hear the steel drums ring.  
Jimmy Buffett tunes were playing.  
I still remember everything.

I chased the Conch train on my bike,  
I listened to the docent's speech,  
saw six toed cats at Hemingway,  
and met a girl on Smathers beach.

I can return there any time.  
It was a place where I felt free,  
relaxing with the Key West sun,  
that now still shines on memory.

Barry Middleton

# Key West Madonna

The girl in blue upon the sand  
intrigues me like this southern land.  
She always smiles as if to say  
that I could speak but words betray.

She watches casually her child  
and notices my sometimes smile,  
then turns to check and be assured  
to find her view is not obscured  
but playing idly on the sand,  
a tiny shell held tight in hand.

I watched her from the farther side  
struck dumb before the southern tide  
and might have spoke only to say  
that she was beautiful today.

But to the sea, beneath the foam,  
I nourished other thoughts of home,  
a longing to be small and free;  
the tide lets go and leaves me be.

Barry Middleton



# King Of The Mountains

in the mountains the sun is rising  
and though I am not there  
I see it clearly just the same

the air is thick with morning mist  
the valley wet with dew  
the coffee pot is on the fire

a breeze wakes the rhododendrons  
as they stir and shed the night  
in crystal droplets like tears of joy

and I know how they feel  
as in the east the mountain profile  
becomes a silhouette

gold transforms to rose and pink  
and orange and tangerine  
the alchemy of dawn has come

I pour my steaming morning cup  
and start some bacon in my pan  
the sun has breached the sky

yet there is silence in the air  
the world may take its quiet repose  
I am the king of the mountains

Barry Middleton

# Kiss Of Rain

the kiss of rain recalls a time  
the world was green and new  
and magic lived in every breeze  
where time and seasons flew

a yellow raincoat with a hood  
and then my rubber boots  
and I was set to go outdoors  
and play in water chutes

my dad would stay inside and read  
my mom might bake a cake  
as I explored the pasture lot  
where rain had made a lake

and I would stand beside the creek  
and watch the roaring flood  
or stomp and splash if I could find  
a puddle filled with mud

back home I hung the rain gear up  
upon the porch to dry  
but now I wonder where time goes  
as childhood seasons fly

and too I wonder when it rains  
of all the things I miss  
a yellow raincoat and my boots  
and rain's enduring kiss

Barry Middleton

# Kiss Of Rain Haiku

rain on a tin roof  
the forest dark and silent  
a kiss at midnight

Barry Middleton

# Kyrie Eleison

there is no mercy in this world  
no lord inspires the rabble  
fear is the greatest enemy  
but it has been given a throne

we fashion weapons and wait  
but the enemy is invisible  
so we build our totems  
and offer sacrifice in blood

the demon is not beyond us  
mystics know its hiding place  
they hear it in the heart of man  
beating with a primal rhythm

mankind searches for a symbol  
for an emblem of deliverance  
but the beast cannot be killed  
our fears nominate it as king

in the final desperate act  
innocence and reason are blind  
humanity teeters on a precipice  
above a vast and ruthless sea

~~~~~

Inspired by *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding.

Barry Middleton

La Femme

first of all the perfume
blind men know its power
every man lifts his head
though we know the plot

then there is the cloth
the way the garments
fall caressing her secrets
and the abashing colors

poets too should note
the cut and curl of hair
the beguiling coiffure
tresses of golden sirens

all this before the sound
sweet labial incantation
promise more than song
another warrior undone

Barry Middleton

Lady

she is perfection dancing
the planet's waltz

she is the lady of the lake
a dream of summer

her grace beguiles
an illusion of eternal spring

the sorcerer
raises worlds in her honor

the knight pleads
for the kiss of a goddess

the poet sings
of her grace and beauty

she rebukes desire
she moves with the stars

she smiles from a mountain
where the king dwells

Barry Middleton

Laissez Les Bons Temps Rouler

Down in New Orleans,
you find those Cajun queens.
Hold her and scold her
till she's a little bolder.
Hold on tight,
for love is just a dream!

The Mardi Gras they say,
is time to dance and play,
beads and bad deeds,
sow some wild seeds,
party down,
till Lent comes our way!

Tomorrow we will repent,
but the party can never relent.
we'll be hung-over
when it's all over,
we'll be broke
from the Storyville rent!

Laissez les bons temps rouler,
head for the Vieux Carré.
But take my advice,
best to think twice,
at that house
with that girl from Tremé!

Barry Middleton

Lamentation

how many ways poets lament
the knowledge of death
the death of love

we face the gray winter sky
the sun occluded
the dark angels

fruit fallen from the trees
yellow leaves
muted landscape

the greatest lamentation is
that we live and die
like the yellow leaves

knowing also the world lives on
with careless disregard
for who we were

Barry Middleton

Last Blossom

the last magnolia blossom waits to drop
it is a relic of the spring
but it is unaware
it cannot feel its petals gently fall
the other blooms have set their seed
as nature has its way
I smugly believe that I am wise and strong
and yet as seasons pass away
I grieve the coming heat
I envy falling petals in the night
the peace of death without despair
until spring comes again

Barry Middleton

Last Embrace

I cannot say goodbye to you
our time together was too brief
I can't restore our yesterday
for death is but a heartless thief

but I am still the man you loved
a memory I hope you keep
I step into eternity
no last goodbye to make you weep

I never could outrun my grief
I never shed my foolish pride
I often fell and often failed
but do not think I never tried

I came to earth in bitter times
I leave this world about the same
to put my pride and tears aside
I do not know who is to blame

I turn away without farewell
I wish for you your share of grace
and peace until we meet again
for this must be our last embrace

Barry Middleton

Last Fantasy

there was a land of innocence
that I left long ago
where fantasy fulfilled desire
a place I used to know

and it might be a jungle swamp
where dinosaurs could roam
or deserts in Arabia
that nomads call their home

on other days I found myself
on prairies of the west
defeating outlaws on the run
where six guns were the test

and once I built a rocket ship
that flew around the moon
until I heard the dinner bell
that called me home too soon

the sacred waters gently flow
into the world of care
the rites of passage must be met
and I would take the dare

so boyish dreams are faded now
I've wandered far and wide
the final challenge waits for me
beyond where stars abide

Barry Middleton

Last Love

First love is enchanting,
to tempt us with allure

and passion in a kiss,
yet never is secure.

Seasons come and go,
but we can never block

relentless destiny,
the ticking of the clock.

Love grants a parting kiss.
But love which is forgone,

brings the chill of winter
that we must face alone.

For final love is memory
of one we can't forget,

a last dance at midnight,
and ghostly pale regret.

Barry Middleton

Last Sundown

The sun is going down,
but I still have a wish or two,
and there is something left to say.

Now I must leave this place.
Forgive my fallibility,
and if you loved me shed a tear.

But do not grieve for long.
I loved you too and do not want
you to forget that life goes on.

Disregard but this,
for it contains my final wish;
do not give up on peace and love.

Do not give up on hope.
The fight for justice must live on.
That is my only legacy.

Oh yes I made mistakes.
And every man encounters shame.
Admitting that is virtue's door.

And passing through that door,
we seek to balance our accounts.
We do the best we can with that.

I truly believe to try
is all a man can really do.
And I can simply say I tried.

I hate to leave this world,
but there is something beautiful
that finally comes at end of day.

There are the memories,
the hills and valley streams of home,
the friends and lovers lost in time.

And there was poetry,
like prayer it always soothed my soul,
I have recorded every dream.

The darkness lies ahead,
but now I see a primal glow
that must be like the birth of light.

The colors all abound,
the scarlet and the tangerine,
the turquoise and the royal purple.

And there is rest that comes.
I go to join the atmosphere.
I am at peace with gods and men.

Barry Middleton

Last Sunrise

I cannot know which sunrise is the last;
the sunny days still call me out of doors.
The rainy days are for the books amassed,
for times when pure baptismal water pours.

And dark gray skies bring out my memories
of love affairs and long forgotten days,
and hopes for better times, and desperate pleas
for light to lift the sullen fog and haze.

The seasons turn like pages in a book,
and once the page is turned we can't go back,
for no one ever gets a second look.
The story ends and then we fade to black.

Still age and illness come to mock my fears,
so I must pray for this despair to pass.
The end of day awaits my final tears,
and there I pause as sand falls through the glass.

Barry Middleton

Lazarus

love and mystery
are silent questions

like children ask
with curious eyes

then someone says
I know what it means

no one is deceived
that's not it at all

stars play in darkness
mute and distant

and lovers pretend
moments are answers

children shrug and say
that's not it at all

love and mystery
are like a restless sea

far beyond the horizon
the wind speaks

Barry Middleton

Leaves

staring out at the rain
is a thing that I love

the birds taking shelter
gray sky up above

I see a small lizard
beneath a flat leaf

awaiting the sun
to grant warm relief

safe under my roof
I'm without a doubt

grateful for refuge
to keep weather out

Barry Middleton

Left Behind

I leave behind the perennials
the daffodils of youth

the memory and the faces
and the traces of the truth

I leave behind the month of May
the sun on a sparkling creek

the dove and the promise of love
and the whispers that we seek

I leave behind the black and white
in humble words upon a page

the hope of recurrent spring
and the final wisdom of old age

Barry Middleton

Legacy

the rivers were a legacy
they ran with adventure

to ride the river was a step
on the journey to eternity

the hills were a legacy
huge and stronger than time

they met my every need
they fired my imagination

the ancestors were a legacy
known only in stories

they were strong as the hills
they were wild as the rivers

the family was a legacy
raising another generation

growing hope like a prayer
to mark the path to home

Barry Middleton

Let Them In

there is a rumbling in our land
and horror in the world
and fear

the war has pillaged every prayer
its legacy is death
and grief

the victims of terror reach for us
and we must help them find
a home

we must not turn away from them
for every child deserves
a smile

Barry Middleton

Lethean Interval

I have seen the underworld,
the velvet dark before the light,
a silent void of peace and rest,
and so I do not fear the night.

I have visited the Lethe,
the ebony cascade of ages.
In caverns far beneath the earth,
demonic fear and pathos rages.

The darkness is beyond salvation
and silent and bereft of grief.
The only blessing is cessation
of tyranny without relief.

I have seen the underworld
where we return to garner time,
to roil in dust in eons hence
that must suffice for the sublime.

Barry Middleton

Letter To Myself

I wish that I had written you
when I was young and strong and wise
I knew that I would never die
I'd face the world without disguise

but as I pen this note to you
I have grown old and tired and weak
but I recall that hopeful youth
it is to you that I must speak

I can but say what I was told
to quietly sit and watch the crowd
and see the good and evil there
and think before I speak aloud

and though I wrote it long ago
I would not take my own advice
and that has put me on this path
with wishing that I had thought twice

I've come to believe I was untrue
to one I should have loved the most
this shadow of my former self
this youth transformed into a ghost

Barry Middleton

Lewis's Trilemma

lunatic, liar, or lord
mad, bad, or god
fallacious argument

we are the sons of god
the sons of universe
all of us divine

yet we reveal duality
good, and evil
god, and devil

freedom is a choice
a life of selfishness
or goodly, godliness

our voice defines us
we are the sons of god
we are responsible

Barry Middleton

Life

if the earth says cherish life
then it must be alive
how else would it know
the value of the breeze

what use are the seasons
of a dead and doomed planet
its voice is silenced by the cold
by the still expanse of ice

the earth says celebrate the sun
today the world yet breathes
the passionate sun still burns
and man survived the night

in a tiny bubble of life
beneath a dark and empty sky
the earth whispers of sunrise
when we begin the world anew

Barry Middleton

Life And Love

I might have died for love
but lived to only die

I'd like to live for love
but love has passed me by

it isn't all that bad
I rule my universe

and love can be quite sad
for better or for worse

the world is cold and cruel
the heartbeat is too faint

to waste it on a fool
while looking for a saint

and living is enough
when I think of the past

for life and love are rough
and both can never last

Barry Middleton

Life Images

a shaggy black water dog
scaring the fish in the creek

hot coffee on a cold morning
windowpane ice on the slough

first love running to my arms
down the dark train platform

wind moving the bright leaves
in a gold and burgundy fall

yellow green of spring blessing
the meadow flowers with a sigh

polished mahogany paneling
musty smell of the courthouse

an old lover's face in a dream
the door to the room wrong

antiseptic smell of the hospital
the smile of the undertaker

Barry Middleton

Life Moments

what will life bring
soon it will bring night
and I will rest
and sleep a while
I must be up for dawn

life
the up and down of it
tears of failed adoration
bliss and inspiration
the grief and expectation

night moments count
the pendulum swings
fear fades away
as hope composes poetry
the past is all behind me

Barry Middleton

Life River

the river will carry you
bend you to its will
fight the river

it will strand you
on an island
with no easy escape

it can pull you under
but swim for your life
fight the river

yes the jungle is perilous
the desert is wide
the mountain is daunting

these too can be fatal
but there is discovery
the gold lies beyond

break free of the river
find your path
choose wisely

Barry Middleton

Lifeguard

he studied the sea so often
he sensed its presence

his intuition knew danger
in the riptide

he could not save them all
some would die

he heard the rhythm of surf
in his dreams

the hands that reached
might pull him under

when he awoke
the sun was a fever

then there came the time
for him to leave

he looked one last time
at the horizon

he could not save himself
a wave was building

the tide no one can escape
would take him in

Barry Middleton

Light And Darkness

transcendent light fell to earth
with grace

an accidental offering
from space

there was no guide or heavenly
embrace

stars shined on stone and left
their trace

planets turned as careless comets
stray

volcanic ash and mountains swept
away

till green and dawn descended on
the day

that man beheld his kingdom and
his prey

Barry Middleton

Light In The East

the light in the east is a message
the world has survived the night
shadows reach out from their sleep
as I pause to reflect on the sight

love comes and goes like the dawn
breath and the tide are untrue
daylight gives up to the darkness
and midnight surrenders to blue

in spring I remember my childhood
and summer recalls passion's heat
but autumn must bring melancholy
then winter concedes my defeat

still light in the east is a message
a pastel and golden glow
that tells me the world is an infant
which is all that I need to know

Barry Middleton

Light Of Justice

I wandered in the dark and dismal night,
and wondered at the beauty of the stars.
I pondered cruelty on the planet Earth,
and desolation on the planet Mars.
Perhaps the bleak infinity of space,
reveals the soul of justice and of peace.
Far from the prison of our mortal flesh,
we yet may find the freedom of release.
But do not wait for gods to show the way;
for it is taught in every faith and school.
The prophets and the mystics lit the lamp,
that glows within a simple golden rule.
And when humanity applies that rule,
the light of justice, peace and righteousness,
still has a chance to burn within our hearts,
and deep within our human consciousness.

Barry Middleton

Light Wednesday

I dreamed the title words
it took all day to understand them
light Wednesday is how I grew up
half the businesses in town would close
on Wednesday afternoons

hasn't the world grown a bit too busy
I can remember my father
coming home at noon for a sit down lunch
the whole family gathered round
who can do that now

Wednesday afternoon
you could not find a dentist or a doctor
unless you too were at the golf course
long lunches were even tolerated
on my college road crew summer jobs

on light Wednesday afternoons
I remember breaking early for the fishing hole
I often walked when I could have gone by car
my dog liked it better that way
as we sniffed out signs of life along the creek

Barry Middleton

Lightning

explosions shower velvet night
like fireworks of the gods
and I must tally up my card
to calculate the odds

they say to look beyond the sky
if I would leave the earth
but I am trapped by gravity
it's tied me down since birth

and I am trapped by hidden walls
while longing to be free
and I am trapped by fear and doubt
and unknown destiny

I may not see the promised flash
when truth at last shall fall
but lightning's beacon in the night
portends the closing call

Barry Middleton

Lightning In A Bottle

a bell jar
an ant farm
lightning in a bottle

a blue sky heaven
highways to nowhere
pain and joy

death is not easy
release me
quench my thirst

beneath a frail dome
inhumanity grins
with bloody fang

bring final damnation
extermination
no more electric evil

Barry Middleton

Lignum Vitae Haiku

lignum vitae tree
delicate is your flower
heart wood hard as steel

Barry Middleton

Like A Clock

it cannot be explained
no two of us walk the same path
for each of us our pain is paramount
because we own it

we hear people say
oh I know there are so many
who are much worse off than me
and so I must explain to them

how would anyone suppose
that I could somehow find relief
that I might take solace
in another soul's misery

in a cruel and violent world
I am grateful for my peace
for my safety and serenity
gratitude does not salvage despair

yes I am safe from war and terror
I am alive to see another day
yet silence screams into my brain
like a patient ticking clock

Barry Middleton

Like A Distant City

when the sun finally faded
I lit a candle

I had been a watcher
in the last light of day

the cloudless blue sky
turned white in an instant

like the turning of youth
into silver wisdom

there were no clouds
only a pastel afterglow

like a distant city
coming into view at dusk

and I lit a candle
to claim a piece of a star

and then I poured the wine
a toast to pale eternity

Barry Middleton

Like A Flounder

she gigged me like a flounder
when I put my arms around her
it was not long before regret sank in

I'm not so glad I found her
her demons seem to hound her
I knew that she would drive me crazy then

she thought I was a rounder
my ship about to founder
I set my sails and finally got away

but I'm a slow rebounder
and though it may astound her
the grief I feel endures until this day

resentments are profounder
and yet hey they do confound her
for she is unaware or so it seems

but I'm no fair expounder
that long and pained encounter
has left me with some bitter broken dreams

Barry Middleton

Like A Goddess

she was a goddess to me
foreign yet familiar
exotic and costumed
still she reminded me of home

she was a leopard in disguise
with leopard claws
and leopard eyes
eyes that hypnotize

I thought I heard a distant drum
it was just my heartbeat
trapped within a dream
the sound of ancient lands

she was a goddess to me
as beautiful as ebony
exotic and costumed
still she reminded me of home

Barry Middleton

Like An Army

night creeps through the trees
like an army stalking darkness

creatures of daylight vanish
the world is flushed with fear

evil forces bring a shudder
to the just and strongest of men

like a tide it rises on the land
till its march is halted by dawn

the world wakes to the light
the dark tyrant is vanquished

~~~~~

This poem chronicles the primal process of darkness and dawn  
but is also offered as a comment of the banishment of tyranny.

Barry Middleton

# Like Pebbles

like pebbles on the beach  
no two alike

like the ever changing tide  
the ticking clock

each passing minute  
fades to oblivion

to never be retrieved  
forever lost

like a river rushing on  
carrying pain and joy

time will never cease  
the moments fall away

Barry Middleton

# Like Rain

when I consider every storm  
and long gray days of hopelessness  
then I recall how fears transform  
with sunlight healing my distress

if mercy fell like rain from clouds  
then faith renewed would greet the day  
like flowers bursting from the earth  
as love and grace baptize dismay

yet we all know the drought must come  
to test the strength of love's resolve  
for hopelessness is blind to grace  
a sin that man cannot absolve

redemption must endure the pain  
beyond the heat and fevered drought  
to search the sky for hope and rain  
and move ahead though filled with doubt

Barry Middleton

# Like The Ocean

for love to be like the ocean  
like silent midnight on the beach  
is only a dream escaping

you are the moon over the water  
silver ripples on the gulf  
the phosphorescent foaming tide

on the horizon a storm is brewing  
you are in the flashing lighting  
like a siren's beacon beckoning

you are in the distant rolling sky  
beyond the reach of earthly love  
the tide reflects your golden star

Barry Middleton

# Like The Wind

love is passing like the wind  
that soon must go its way  
the heat and rush of passion fade  
like songs of yesterday

it is a province of the night  
beneath an august moon  
that yields to chilly autumn air  
to sound a sadder tune

why love must end as seasons turn  
and why the cold winds blow  
are rhapsodies beyond my ken  
that I may never know

Barry Middleton

# Limerick Rules

the limerick is never that easy  
it's tone must be light and quite breezy  
and it must be exact  
so if you've got the knack  
try to make it a little bit sleazy

Barry Middleton

# Lingering Duet

let our timeless spirits wander  
do not hurry from my side  
stars are sinking to the ocean  
darkness calls the restless tide

stand beside me like a shadow  
we are running out of time  
echoes stretch out from the sunset  
as the moon begins to climb

take my hand and know the moment  
kiss my lips and touch my soul  
stay with me a trifle longer  
till our heartbeats seize control

life is passing like our passion  
we grow old to not forget  
close together dreams and wonder  
lingering in love's duet

Barry Middleton

# Lions Birds And Fireflies

I heard a melody in the rose  
I was a dreaming child  
asleep beneath the apple tree  
wandering amid wonders

then I was called foolish  
carrying the book as I did  
watching the waters  
humming an unknown tune

I dreamed about the lions  
and the colors of the seasons  
I saw the colors of the birds  
red and blue and gray

the full moon rose silently  
on summer nights  
with fireflies and destiny  
sailing a purple velvet sea

all my dreams came true  
the song of the rose  
breathes within the poetry  
of lion and bird and firefly

Barry Middleton



# Lions On The Beach

In mid July the breeze will turn,  
and freshen gently from the east.  
Across the sea from Africa,  
the trade wind stirs a mighty beast.  
The old man gazes `cross the sea,  
for he has sensed a subtle change.  
Then he recalls a youthful voyage,  
that now is far beyond his range.  
As memory comforts grief and loss,  
a daydream brings a moment's peace,  
till death will come to set him free,  
then he at last may find release.  
The hurricanes are coming soon,  
with lessons they shall surly teach.  
The old man wonders even now;  
are there still lions on the beach?

~~~~~

Inspired by Santiago's dreams in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway.

Barry Middleton

Little Red Truck

I thought that I was right out of luck
till I took a short ride in the little red truck

the nurses were pretty on the 7 to 11
I thought I had died and gone straight to heaven

but then they brought in the breakfast food
and with it descended a sad broken mood

it was something like an omelet made of something like eggs

and a cold cup of coffee that was nothing but dregs

I speedily concluded this just might be hell
my salvational trip wasn't going very well

I was sure that must be it but I didn't smell smoke
so then it crossed my mind it was another bad joke

two nights was all I needed for the asthma attack
but I pray to God in heaven I don't have to go back

Barry Middleton

Little Sparrow (A Song)

oh yes
love has the rose's blush
as love is just a rose
but colors fade like trust
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

for when
you took me in your arms
I knew the sweet perfume
of love and all its charms
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

you gave
your kiss to me in spring
I held the reddest rose
but petals soon take wing
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

and now
as winter brings the frost
and only thorns remain
I search for what was lost
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

I know
that love always deceives
yet pray upon my knees
to hold that rose again
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

oh yes
love has the rose's blush
as love is just a rose
but colors fade like trust
I see life as roses

je vois la vie en rose

~~~~~

Not a translation but my own song based on La Vie en Rose.

Barry Middleton

# Live Oak

As woods surrender to the frost,  
there is a tree that won't let go.

The live oak tightly holds its crown;  
it knows a wish, men wish to know.

And yet this false and lasting green  
is costume and a bold deceit.

Eternal life is quaint disguise,  
audacious in its vain conceit.

Although the live oak clings to it,  
I know its life comes to an end.

And one by one its acorns fall;  
its leaves are scattered by the wind.

Thus men are so like evergreens,  
defiant till a final spring.

But seasons or the woodsman's axe,  
at last must garner everything.

Barry Middleton

# Lonely Evening Star

they ask me how I'm doing  
they know I'm very sick  
they poke at me  
like probing a half dead snake

they know there is no danger  
cancer is not contagious  
they want to know how I cope  
they know death stalks everyone

like sticking a toe in a cold lake  
they are testing the waters  
getting a little closer to mystery  
to the grief and isolation

you look quite well they say  
knowing all the while I'm dying  
your attitude is amazing  
you are an inspiration

I curl into my bed  
feeble and weak as an infant  
lonely as the evening star  
fearing the pain and darkness

Barry Middleton

# Long Lesson

Some man's future lover,  
in ribboned pigtail curls,  
and out to walk her brother  
in the world of little girls,  
came down the walk and singing,  
not what the world was bringing,  
but carefree childish songs  
that did not say how long  
the lesson for today  
would take to have its say.  
A boy and girl together,  
to test the springtime weather  
in innocence and play,  
will come another day,  
and others without end,  
to try and understand  
whatever love demands.  
The little boy, whose heart  
will break before he calls  
himself a man, the girl,  
who trades her youth for love,  
her life in growing closer  
to that which birth denied her,  
the other one beside her.

Barry Middleton

# Longer Days

the days seem longer  
the way they seemed  
when I was just a child

I don't have much to do  
but I stay busy  
I smile and laugh and feel

perhaps I stayed too long  
the night is miles away  
soon I'll be moving on

I'll greet the longest day  
time is nothing now  
nothing but my servant

Barry Middleton



# Longing

I long for a lost and ghostly past,  
for love and a murmuring forest  
where beeches, phantom white,  
were landmarks on the way home.

I long for a familiar place of rest,  
a soft faithful hand and comfort,  
a warm white woodland cottage  
with heirloom lilies still in bloom.

The dream that passed my way  
is interrupted now like a movie,  
the old and brittle film broken  
and faded to a dark emptiness.

And this is a most familiar story,  
all the bold, naive plans of youth  
vanished in time's sullen grove,  
still longing, hoping without hope.

Barry Middleton

# Longing For Peace

I long for that beyond my reach  
yet out of view along the beach

and it may be just out of sight  
there in the haze a distant light

I seek a shore where men are free  
where I might find serenity

a secret glade awaits me there  
a haven safe from all despair

so there beneath the palms I pause  
remote from man's contentious laws

and there my soul attains release  
a tropic wind and captured peace

Barry Middleton

# Look Up

it's hard to find the light  
from the bottom of a well  
but if you look straight up  
it lifts you from your hell

don't look to left or right  
you'll only see a wall  
don't look upon your feet  
that's where the shadows fall

it's hard to find much hope  
within a darkened pit  
you may seem paralyzed  
you feel that you should quit

but drifting overhead  
still shines the awesome blue  
so just look up to see  
it's waiting there for you

Barry Middleton

# Lost

some get lost in a place  
some get lost in the race  
and some will get lost  
while out there in space

you can get lost with bugs  
you can get lost with drugs  
on the wrong side of town  
hanging out with the thugs

some can get lost in time  
some can get lost in crime  
and poets I know  
can get lost in rhyme

they get lost in the wood  
they get lost in the hood  
they get lost by thinking  
that they never could

don't get lost at the zoo  
don't get lost and be blue  
just stick to your dream  
you can make it come true

Barry Middleton

# Lost And Found

If there was just a lost and found  
where we could go when feeling down,

there we might regain our youth,  
or find again that missing tooth.

Then when a wandering soul we cross,  
we'd take them there at any cost,

for there they just may be recovered,  
by one who lost them, rediscovered.

Barry Middleton

# Lost Dream

I look for you in dreams  
but even there it seems  
you have abandoned me  
so day and night agree

to give up hope of care  
like trees in winter bare  
may be the saddest thing  
that life by day can bring

I pray as dark descends  
that visions make amends  
yet find just cold despair  
for naught awaits me there

in evenings passed alone  
a nuanced pain is known  
that never yields by night  
love's image or its light

Barry Middleton

# Lost In The Hurricane

I'm lost within the hurricane  
the wind is howling all around  
the waters are no longer still  
but roar to mock the wolfen sound

I'm lost at sea in nightmare fear  
the ship is pitching to and fro  
at any moment it may crash  
beyond salvation's ebb and flow

on rocky crags we run aground  
although the raging storm must blow  
the clef rock trail reveals a vale  
and shelter that the gods bestow

and entering those restless woods  
I know this is the master plan  
the blessing of eternity  
at least for one old rambling man

finally the wind subsides  
the rougarou of howling fears  
is banished from the garden path  
now guarded by an angel's tears

she reaches out her hand to me  
and then I recognize her face  
my guardian was always there  
my rescue from this wretched place

I turn a see the ship go down  
and others stumble to the shore  
I bid them on to Eden's glen  
we're lost in hurricanes no more

and it may be this vision quest  
is mute and blind with fantasy  
but I will find my garden spot  
so if you would just come with me

and we may walk into that glen  
or lie beneath its verdant sod  
but either way it still is true  
that we will find our only god

Barry Middleton



## Lost Muse

you take with you the dance  
the rhythm of waltz  
my soul

the heat of passion vanished  
the secret sharing  
my song

the breeze becomes a vacuum  
depriving air  
my breath

the tincture of the rose  
is turned to dust  
my love

you take with you the muse  
the beating heart  
my life

Barry Middleton

# Lost Music

I never heard a song till you  
came down to lay with me  
and all of life I thought was mute,  
the flowers in the park  
began to tremble in the dark  
and tune themselves for me.

I never thought that words had breath  
but those you spoke to me  
still linger in my memory  
and nightly breathe a sigh  
which says that love should never die.

I never knew what silence was  
till silent in my room  
I reached for you and found you gone  
and lost your haunting tune.

Barry Middleton

# Lost Road

They say a writer, a poet,  
must write what he knows.

For that we must exhume  
painful loss and torment.

I saw the rack and torture.  
No boasting, it is a curse.

Love seems not to love  
the few to punish defeat.

I know I'll always wonder  
why love cast me aside.

Should I write what I know?  
Then you must go with me.

Down an empty dark road,  
I would travel not alone.

Turn away from me again;  
I do not blame your fear.

My way is fraught with pain.  
Best to run before the snare.

Some destiny is set in stone:  
to live, to yield, to die alone.

Barry Middleton

# Lost Soul

I found my dreaming soul  
I left it in a childhood place  
as cold as memory  
and dark and lost bereft of grace

I must have placed it there  
quite hidden in a grove of trees  
a grieving sacrifice  
to drift upon an evening breeze

I did return in rhyme  
to mend capricious carelessness  
and I have searched the path  
to ease my soulful restlessness

but I yet learned my heart  
was filled with anger and regret  
I hide beneath a wall  
and write of all that's hidden yet

Barry Middleton

# Lost Summer Love

in August I think of you  
you and I together on the sleeping porch  
we didn't do much sleeping  
your kiss was as hot as the night

we could hear the breeze in the oaks  
and the moon must have blushed  
peeking through the screens  
the steaming night would last forever

how I long to hold you again  
our bodies clinging together in passion  
for your movement was poetry  
taking me ever sweetly in a final rhythm

Barry Middleton

# Lost To Time

the past will often coax a smile  
and yet I also cry  
for long lost friends and destiny  
and all the times gone by

the sleepy Mississippi town  
the innocence of youth  
adventure in the summertime  
and brotherhood and truth

I can recall these even now  
and claim they are not lost  
I close my eyes and they return  
and yet there is a cost

precious memories linger still  
but it occurs to me  
for every one I might recall  
another one must flee

and so I laugh and cry at once  
for fragile memory  
and all the moments lost to time  
beyond my reverie

Barry Middleton

# Love And Lightning

lightning strikes only once  
in any given spot

we are led to believe love  
can tie a lasting knot

science has no evidence  
that either is the truth

both claims defy analysis  
just fantasies of youth

the physicist will testify  
lightning can strike twice

foolish lovers learn in time  
love extracts a price

love ends in bitterness  
if not in cold deceit

lightning surely finds a fool  
refusing to retreat

Barry Middleton

# Love Changes

I claim true love can never last  
but changes to regret

or even worse to bitterness  
that we cannot forget

for I am certain love can fade  
like sunset veils the light

but still it lingers like the stars  
that yet control the night

and like the stars love beckons us  
we always take the dare

I bow to the inevitable  
I recommend great care

but when I claim that love can't last  
please try to prove me wrong

and keep the fire of love alive  
and burning bright and strong

Barry Middleton



# Love Does Not Die

love does not die  
it hides behind a memory

love does not die  
it is twisted into pain

love defeats death  
death is a framed picture

to love one far away  
is love exquisitely forlorn

if love will never return  
we search the night

if it leaves unannounced  
we search the crowd

love is always a rose  
the perfume and the thorn

Barry Middleton

# Love Does Not Love

like the tears of the sunset  
like the death of a rose

the end of love is a verdict  
from a cruel god

the sun falls to the sea  
drowning time in wishes

beauty and youth and breath  
wilt in summer heat

love does not love  
it steals all faith and hope

Barry Middleton

# Love Drug

I finally found my drug of choice,  
it speaks to me in my own voice.  
I'm floating on a sea of mist,  
so far above the dark abyss,  
that I can almost reach the sun,  
where there is love for everyone.

Perhaps that is the lesson here,  
embrace the loved ones you hold dear.  
And if you need a wake up boost,  
then turning inward is of use.  
It sure as hell woke up my head,  
to show what hid behind my dread.

Regret came knocking at the door,  
I tried to even up the score.  
I finally saw the things that matter,  
of doubt and love it is the latter.  
Confusion, fear, and death's dark scheme,  
no longer block my waking dream.

And will death even matter then,  
as fog and mist drift on the wind?  
I do not know, I don't pretend.  
Love may live on where stars begin.  
So live for love is my advice,  
you never know, love may live twice.

Barry Middleton

# Love Is A Pattern

love is a pattern  
of light and shadow  
of lace and dreams  
that drift away

love is elusive  
the sun that flees  
into the final west  
to drape despair

love teases memory  
in veiled tenderness  
of all that used to be  
love is a mystery

but love escapes  
the youthful fantasy  
of lace and memory's dreams  
and fades without embrace

Barry Middleton

# Love Is A Predator

love is a predator  
that stalks my lost desire  
a ghostly god of night  
a murderer and liar

it crushes like a vice  
a ponderous heavy stone  
that I must cast aside  
to face the dark alone

and in the end it kills  
a bloody claw concealed  
that I cannot defeat  
and yet I fail to yield

love is a predator  
it stalks my hiding place  
a tiger's kiss of death  
a shroud of silk and lace

Barry Middleton

# Love Is A Thief

love  
is like a thief  
beguiling with disguise

deceiving  
with a promise  
and leaving you with lies

love  
will take your soul  
and purloin every heart

it steals  
your very breath  
and then it must depart

but you  
will love again  
no matter what you swear

you'll let  
the robber in  
you always take the dare

Barry Middleton

# Love Is All

love is like the mountaintop  
a world stretches to the horizon  
but matters not at all

everything is contained in love  
lovers see the sunset  
simply because it is shared

they hear the mockingbird  
and hold tightly to each other  
only to portion its joy

the clouds stream above them  
but solely to reflect the heaven  
within each others' eyes

the wind stirs in the tall pines  
and its breath is like love  
like a whispered secret

Barry Middleton

# Love Never Stays

Love never saved a single soul,  
love never stays.

It might drift onward  
in fitful narcotic dreams.

Move on to become weariness,  
and another barren sunset.

Love is a jester and a trickster.  
Love is an ever retreating mirage.

This sandbar for the shipwrecked,  
is a place to catch our breath.

But then the tide returns  
to drown us in the audacity of hope.

Love is fire stolen from the mountain,  
another delusion of immortality.

Barry Middleton



# Love Passes

I like to claim  
I do not weep

that love  
abandoned me

but pride aside  
I do confess

and cannot  
disagree

as lovers pass  
as lovers must

so then  
my tears do fall

and all of pride  
is swept aside

behind  
a hermit's wall

Barry Middleton

# Love Poem

Dawn's music,  
secrets,  
and the damp air  
of early morning,  
are things progressively  
more melancholy.  
Until like the music,  
like the heavy air,  
like the secrets  
and warm feelings,  
we are part of the air,  
part of the music,  
making secrets  
in the closeness  
of sunrise.

Barry Middleton

# Love Seasons

my first love was the spring  
and yet each season brings me joy  
I love the summer heat  
the colors autumn will employ

then too I love the rose  
but I must love the orchid more  
the rare and delicate  
that lies behind a hidden door

I love the mockingbird  
that lifts me from despair and grief  
and where the osprey soars  
I find my faith and my relief

I love a tender kiss  
the closeness of a winter fire  
and adoration's eyes  
still spark and kindle my desire

I love the stormy night  
I love the forest after rain  
the silence of the stars  
though they can never feel my pain

I love my dearest dream  
that somewhere in the soul of man  
the season yet may come  
when love becomes the master plan

Barry Middleton

# Love Story

The end of love is like a knife  
that pierces every soul.

And yet I know that some in life  
assume to circumvent the strife.

But also true, when love grows old,  
the embers of our passions fade.

The frail defense against the cold,  
is just a fiction I was told.

The end of love is frigid steel,  
a painful blade that all may feel.

Barry Middleton

# Love Trumps Hate

we must turn from hatred  
for like the sun it blinds

to look away from evil  
is not to deny that it exists

these things haunt the soul  
we can never forget

yet they can consume us  
fire warms but also burns

hatred creates hatred  
violence creates vengeance

hatred is a prowling beast  
it wants to make you hate

only love trumps hate  
only peace can find peace

Barry Middleton

# Loveless

there comes a time in life  
you know that love has died  
with emptiness like ice  
out where the stars collide

then even doubters pray  
with nothing left but hope  
for only fantasy  
can bring the strength to cope

but those assured by death  
may turn to welcome night  
so sure a home awaits  
where stars provide the light

still all whom love denied  
will face their doom forlorn  
accursed by destiny  
to rue that they were born

Barry Middleton

## Lovers Haiku

lovers by the lake  
a silver moon is rising  
the white egret soars

Barry Middleton

# Lover's Lane

There must still be a lover's lane,  
safely shaded in the hills,  
where lovers go to hide the pain  
the careless universe instills.

I can recall like yesterday.  
the one who held my heart so dear  
with all our plans as fresh as May,  
and not a single Earthly fear.

A tree lined road, a dizzy height,  
that ended in a view below,  
revealed the shining city lights,  
with all our cares in afterglow.

Now newer lovers come this way  
to pause and pledge their love will last,  
and ghosts of love, they often say,  
sing mournful songs of lovers past.

Barry Middleton



# Love's Changes

Love is everlasting.  
When you truly are in love,  
it never goes away.  
But it may surely change,  
yet not to apathy.  
When love betrays,  
it turns to pain,  
and anger,  
even hate.  
When love is unrequited,  
it simmers like regret,  
not quite the burning flame  
it might have been.  
But still we feel its warmth  
in moments we remember.  
And that we call a longing,  
an ache like hunger left unfed.  
And should this linger,  
unfulfilled for many years,  
it may become despair.

Barry Middleton

# Love's Moment

let me die today  
to remember you in eternity

never aging but as you are  
in timeless youth and beauty

you are the heart of the rose  
the tears of mortality

the trembling fear of infinity  
let me hold you always

in a precious moment of life  
a love for all of time

for truest love lives on  
love and beauty do not die

Barry Middleton

# Love's Precedence

What love proclaims,  
spring cannot outdo in eloquence.  
Love is the poetry of man's greatest gift.  
We feel the sadness in a sunset.  
We weep like no animal can.  
Standing upright,  
we embrace to the very soul.  
No words can frame  
substantiation of love's claim.  
Spring's gusty boasts of bloom  
cannot surpass the blush of love,  
for love is beyond the essence of a sunset,  
and more remote a jewel than starlight.  
Love is iridescent, elusive, gleaming.  
Love is indulgent, dreaming.  
We are compelled to it  
like some addiction.  
It is a mad rush of euphoria lovers feel.  
It is a state that words cannot describe,  
all feelings throbbing to a teenage beat.  
It is a rush denying speech,  
denying spring of any claim  
to consecrate the world,  
denying and yet affirming,  
a pulse, a gesture signifying  
love's precedence.

Barry Middleton

# Love's Season

love has a season  
a season of youth  
hot summer wind

we lay in the sun  
till darkness came  
we lay together  
in passion's heat  
in the peace after

fall is a warning  
cool air needs fire

I look in your eyes  
the fuel of love  
has burned away  
the cold has come

winter wind is ice  
death is all around  
I will not surrender

when spring comes  
I dream of the flower

your kiss is a rose  
your touch is a soft  
and tender blossom

Barry Middleton

# Love's Sensations

her eyes  
beyond the beauty of the rose  
were yet soft petals  
of devotion

her hands  
much like a sparrow's wing  
were a feather's whisper  
on my cheek

her voice  
like the warm breath of summer  
fanned the flame  
of desire

her kiss  
as essential as a heartbeat  
was of life itself  
an intoxicant

Barry Middleton

# Make America Great Again

no more norms  
White House storms.  
down the road a lynch mob forms.

the racist right  
is out tonight.  
no more robes but in plain sight.

great again?  
hate and sin?  
this is where the tears begin.

cries of grief  
no relief.  
reactionaries beyond my belief.

war is coming  
thunder drumming.  
in the streets the blood is running.

what's in store?  
civil war?  
is this what we bargained for?

~~~~~

Charlottesville Va.8-12- 2017

Barry Middleton

Malady

it builds in the gut
like a heavy metal
till the poison kills

it is the cause of war
the cause of poverty
the fodder of envy

it drains the rivers
it burns the forests
it slaughters beauty

it is gloating avarice
that seizes the soul
that strangles kinship

it is the destroyer
the fire cloud demon
the darkness within

it is all of human evil
it robs the earth
it hoards the very air

Barry Middleton

Mango Dream

another spring has come
the mango tree in bloom
it promises its fruit
before the end of June

then storms will blow again
the steam and heat will rise
as orchids gently weep
and old men watch the skies

this is the way of earth
its cycle grants a gift
then dying leaves must fall
where lonely wishes drift

yet we survive it all
the season's bleak retreat
and wait for mango dreams
where hope and passion meet

Barry Middleton

Mango Margarita Girl

the mango margarita girl
beneath the tiki thatch
with red hibiscus in her hair
the others try to match

one dances an alluring step
and lights desires disguise
another's laugh is sensuous
but fails to hypnotize

every man in the tiki hut
has a single thought
but mango margarita girl
can simply not be bought

green eyed ladies envy her
but do not know her woe
for can a lover e'er be true
and how is she to know

Barry Middleton

Mannish Reprise

I'm a man
no need for you to be alone
I'm a man
just want to rent, don't want to own
I'm a man
guess you could say a rolling stone
I'm a man
please step into my comfort zone

you are a woman
I know you need the same as me
you are a woman
you've got the lock, I've got the key
you are a woman
you're sweet as honey from the bee
you are a woman
you got the peaches, I got the tree

I'm a man
I hope that you can understand
you are a woman
come here and lead me by the hand
I'm a man
no need for you to be alone
I'm a man
please step into my comfort zone

Barry Middleton

March Wind

the march wind is stirring
and a spring tide awakes the sea
hope and blossoming are on the breeze

the air is growing warmer
as the sun at zenith rises higher
and the sky is a seamless shield of blue

I know this change so well
having counted three score and ten
I see that the span of winter is breaking

the icy prison is melting
to move aside for newborn souls
a pageant as old as this timeless zephyr

the march wind transforms
for now the winter fades and passes
and tears of death ascend to the clouds

Barry Middleton

Mare Sirenum

darkest lunar isle
so beautiful the song
remote alluring
fantastic
an hypnotic call
ever seducing men
to chemistry of loneliness

expanse of silver
tarnished
with elusive dreams
desire
a noble illusion
a plutonian glow
remote
unreal
a fragmentary rock

a siren's tune
emboldens youth
with oceanic vision
but all of time
bestows on age
an earthbound
tender wisdom
for tethered dreams
and lower orbits
an earnest kiss to silence
archetypal memory

Barry Middleton

Mary

I don't think you like it
me knowing you this well
you cannot tell me now
but I don't really mind
that you saw my dreams

still if you were here
you'd see through me
a little bit crazed
obsessed a trifle
I don't know
maybe possessed

the leaves are turning
in my cold world now
a bell rings in my ear
and a clock is ticking

I told you it was OK
you knew I lied
now I am old
green eyed girl songs
conceal lost rhythms

ah but I do remember
it makes me choke tears
and tremble with fear
till I find you again
and come to rest again
in your dreaming arms

Barry Middleton

Mating Season

it's spring and every male
is chasing a female

a blackbird break-dances
for his tawny girlfriend

green parakeets in pairs
race toward paradise

a mourning dove coos love
secluded in the palms

the osprey builds its nest
displaying primeval flair

the archaic saurian brain
ignites innate desire

Barry Middleton

Mausoleum

it rises like a wall
to block me from the world

I am too weak to reach
into another day

and yet I know I must
and yet I know I will

with illness and with age
and sadness and regret

brick by brick the wall
darkens the mausoleum

Barry Middleton

Meadow

a greening meadow waits
and breathless yearns
for us to come to her
and rest in her touch

with furtive looks
to left and right
we seek her comfort

and she, being
a lover herself
will shyly laugh
as birds curiously
tip their heads
and a warm rush
of summer wind
takes us in its mystery

Barry Middleton

Mean Street

the gangster calculates his odds
upon the street bereft of gods
to target whom and when to rob

the addict has no more to lose
and only sees one road to choose
a hit of crack or a shot of booze

the young girl out to sell her soul
seduced herself by Satan's hold
a broken youth the devil stole

while every night a baby born
a mother now will curse the morn
the infant from her arms is torn

filled with rage and tuned to rape
a predator lurks like a vicious ape
his victims will not find escape

the politicians give no answer
but lie and cheat and spin and pander
while hell consumes us like a cancer

the preacher rants on evil deeds
and tries to sow his righteous seeds
that seem to fall among the weeds

so still we pray that there is grace
to lift us to a better place
till then the street is our disgrace

Barry Middleton

Melodies And Rain

A melody's familiar grace,
transforms the southern breeze,
that rises from the eastern Gulf,
abandoning the Keys.

A somber note the wind reveals,
comes just before the storm,
a rhapsody of youth and hope,
where thunder clouds perform.

A mournful oboe and a flute,
in sweet and sad duet,
frame vibrant overtures that fade
to omens of regret.

For such it is on somber days,
when summer storms arise,
and rain's forgotten harmonies
come drifting from the skies.

Then elegy will have its way,
with memories left behind,
as tropic winds begin to blow,
and stir the pensive mind.

Barry Middleton

Memorabilia

I save the bits and pieces of the past
the trinkets and the faded photographs

disheveled like the windblown autumn leaves
beyond the pulse of everything that breathes

I cannot step into those memories
before the gods I stoop to beggary

and plead my case to an indifferent sky
and wait to hear abandonment's reply

the wind conspires to stir the leaves like grief
but tears are shed to very scant relief

I take an object from a shelf of dreams
as I recall my youth and foolish schemes

but even memory withholds from me
the sights and sounds of all that used to be

and nothing seems to fit my failed design
a voice to fill this silent pantomime

Barry Middleton

Memorial Day

to place a flower on a grave
was then a heartfelt memorial
so it was in May of 1865
in Charleston, South Carolina
when 10,000 freed slaves
came to honor the fallen
the Martyrs of the Race Course
where 257 Union POWs died
some say our Memorial Day
started right then and there

620,000 died in the Civil War
in 1868 there was a proclamation
but there is still some dispute
as to when and where it began
but there is no dispute on this
that over a million have died
each day another soldier falls
so this is the day to feel the loss
freedom is a joyful celebration
but let us not omit the invocation

Barry Middleton

Memories Of The Seasons

On a Florida summer afternoon,
I try to bring inside the heat
of soupy air I work through tired lungs.
My air is a studied breath,
is inspiration to unravel
the tired knots of memory.
Breath,
the lifetime poem,
comes to this,
the hot and the cold,
the bright and the dark,
the wet and the dry.
It is easy to think of extremes
in Florida.
I work to breathe
as beads of sweat condense
on forehead and neck
and beads of memory drip
like water drops
from my exhausted air conditioner.
The waters grow memories
of hot and cold,
of birth and death,
of love and loss.
The heat reminds me
of the heat of long ago
and strangely of the cold to come.
The heat reminds me
I am alive on borrowed time.
I remember the childish heat
of August at home in Mississippi,
and the weary heat
of sixty beloved summers.
In a nearby oak
a cousin of a remembered squirrel
lies flat on a limb
and pants to cool its small brain
and dreams of fall and fat acorns
while I fight for air to fuel a few more

memories of the seasons.

Barry Middleton

Memory Of Dust

to all places of aspirant return
you to the small affluent farm
where the fat brown cows graze

or you to the pink glow of azaleas
beneath live oaks and gray moss
shimmering like a pastel spring fog

and to all strangers out of place
the white iris in a field of purple
staring amazed and lonely as grief

you of the wild white river raging
the silence of footfalls in cedars
in time's snow capped mountains

you of sorrow and cocaine winter
desperately tuned to a blue dance
ascending lost ecstasy in a dream

cherish the moment and memory
soon we become the gray past
soon we return full circle to earth

our last vow of perpetual journey
ends with the stone city of death
where memories reside in the dust

Barry Middleton

Memory Of Home

I had to give up what I loved
I had no other choice
the place I loved was beautiful
I still can hear its voice

it sang to me a simple tune
of hills and valley creeks
it sang of seasons and of time
and how the forest speaks

it sang of passion and of love
forgone with cold despair
it sang of friendship and of faith
without an answered prayer

I don't regret the going forth
but I cannot return
a falling tear just adds to grief
my eyes forever burn

the road of life is long and hard
and filled with loss and pain
the greatest sorrow lies behind
I can't go home again

so I will dream of destiny
as I recall the past
for I remember all I loved
as long as memory lasts

Barry Middleton

Men Are Not Like Moons

When the moon speaks to silence stars,
I hear its advice.
Dead and cold and unconcerned,
it lives on until eternity ends.

But men are not like moons.
When the man speaks to silence men,
too often the wisdom is foolishness.
It dies with the sunset.

Sunrise watches the retreating moon.
Each know the rules.
"Good bye for I can never reach you.
The tide is waiting, I have a job to do."

Barry Middleton

Men Are Not Like Seasons

summer is the life of man
but men are not like seasons

the metaphor recalls passion
the warm kiss of a lover

summer is the feeling of home
of safety and solace

it is a time of birth and growth
crops are rich in the field

as summer ends death comes
but with the hope of spring

but men are not like seasons
the tomb is cold and silent

Barry Middleton

Mephistopheles

take the day
and my tears away

and bring me
sweet mother night

her darkest light
is hiding from sight

soon she shows off
her might

the devil they say
has her own dark way

she gropes till death
has its sway

no more of tears
without any fears

no pain
to measure my day

Barry Middleton

Mergers

love is a rose
but also the thorn

love is the calm
before the storm

blossoms weep
for the kiss of rain

love is a season
of heat and pain

love is a leaf
in scarlet hues

if love endures
love is the muse

seasons pass
and wisdom knows

love is a child
and love is a rose

Barry Middleton

Middle Of Somewhere

at times life can seem
like the middle of nowhere
and nowhere's no place to be

I'd like to be
in the middle of somewhere
maybe somewhere where everyone's free

if someday I find
the end of the line
almost anywhere might do

I just want to be
in the middle of somewhere
in the middle of somewhere with you

Barry Middleton

Midnight Cubism

she hides in shadows of midnight
and often steps into my dreams
she is always there
she has so many names
so many disguises
she is written on these faded pages
she may be a lover lost in time
sometimes I do not know her
she is like broken stained glass
shards of memory
reassembled by Picasso
and yet she always seems familiar
she seems to remember me
and I recall the feeling of springtime
as I hold her in my arms

Barry Middleton

Midnight Landscape

the sodium yellow moon
pours silver and topaz
on the velvet whisper
of a blackwater bayou

the bright thunder moon
mutes celestial diamonds
with a dark umber fog
that paints a sable sky

my old boat is pulled
back through the eons
sculling past invisible
giant silent sauropods

and here in the essence
of time's secret argument
shadowed gods concede
as a frog sings to midnight

Barry Middleton

Midnight Train

I did not hear what was always there
the midnight train from Memphis
I did not feel the earth tremble in fear
that's the way it is
when you live so near the tracks

the train ran right through town
it pealed in the night and at dawn
it rattled every coffee cup and spoon
and yet it was invisible
no one felt or heard it

the train rolled south to New Orleans
but only in the day was seen
only in the day was heard the whistle
crossing Highway Forty Nine
rumbling toward the next delta town

I never heard it tiptoe cross the river
cross the trestle where I had jumped
to prove myself a man
and when it took me north toward home*
its rhythm rocked me into dreams

Barry Middleton

Milkweed

Hiding in the tall grass,
was a thing the children never saw.

We were too young
to know the secret of the milkweed.

Perhaps a god of healing,
or evil deadly serpents waited there.

I ventured into the field,
but never so far to solve the mystery.

A mortal son hid there,
where the snake gave up its secrets.

Entwined along his staff,
resurrected fear and doubt endures.

A lesson learned,
to dare not open up the underworld.

Barry Middleton

Mind Of Buddha

the greatest friend
and the greatest enemy is mind

for in this troubled world
mind is like a storm tossed ship

mind seeks a safe harbor
as the tempest is long and great

war is at war with mind
for the mind wants only peace

avarice dwells in desire
and consumes like a black hole

when every thirst is conquered
dying is the end of need

mind seeks cosmic order
so mind is unafraid of death

but mind is dulled by pain
a fish on dry land

the struggle is to endure pain
serenity is waiting

mind is at peace with stars
one light among many

Barry Middleton

Mirrors And Stars

when I look into the nighttime sky
I wonder if some other soul
is gazing back at me

the multitude of stars and worlds
are habitat for dreamers
perhaps just like me

the night is like a mirror of being
in each light a heart beats
that I can never touch

yet I clearly know their lives exist
faith is like a mirror too
why else a universe

Barry Middleton

Mississippi

I know it may sound strange
but I still miss Mississippi
all the people and the places
that I loved that never change

a lot of things were wrong
but it did not take too long
I was indoctrinated right
I never sank into the night

so thanks to Mom and Dad
and all the friends I had
when I look back to the past
I know nothing good can last

days when I went fishing
skipping school and skinny dipping
my long gone vanished days
almost lost there in the haze

I wish to go back on the wind
to see every childhood friend
but the road leads ever onward
round that Mississippi bend

I know I can't go home again
but Mississippi is in my veins
and if the Lord of Lords ordains
Mississippi will ease my pains

Barry Middleton

Mississippi Essay 1964

It was a special year, graduation from high school, senior skip day was still in vogue, off to college next fall. Barry Goldwater was running for president. Lyndon Johnson was waging war on poverty.

The other war, Vietnam, and the protests were just heating up. Meet the Beatles was released.

Poll tax was abolished. Mississippi, in shame, was bombing and burning.

Muhammad Ali beat Liston.

The first Mustang appeared at the Ford place on the low end of Main Street, it was a red convertible.

Jack Ruby was found guilty. The Good Friday Earthquake brought Alaska to its knees. The Rolling Stones debuted. I saw the New York World's Fair.

Malcolm X was taking a stand. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. Three civil rights workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, were murdered by Klansmen in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

Draft cards were burned for the first time by 12 guys in New York. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, abolishing persistent segregation, was signed by the president.

Goldwater asserted that extremism could be a virtue.

Race riots occurred nightly on the 6 o'clock news.

The Gulf of Tonkin, civil war in the Congo, the last execution in the United Kingdom. Bob Dylan turned the Beatles on to pot. The Warren Commission reported. Pete Townshend busted his first guitar.

Tunnels were dug under the Berlin wall. It was an Olympic year. Martin Luther King won the Nobel Peace Prize. The Cardinals beat the Yankees in the World Series. A 5.3 kiloton nuclear device was exploded in Tatum salt dome near Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

There was more, lots more, these things stuck.

Barry Middleton

Mississippi Mercy - Vicksburg

You can't convince me living in the town
with all its air pollution, dirt and crime,
is harder on the health than country style.
Sickness is a country way of life;
that's the way it always was and is.
A visit home is a visit to 'The Home';
that's what I think of country hospitals,
the major illness there being just old age.
Along the way the countryside is green.
If grace is green I might conclude that God
so pitied Mississippi that he spilled
his richest portion on the sickly land
to compensate the farmer's plight of toil.
I pass by palmist Sister Kane's estate,
a shack behind a sign and sunken gate,
the sign of Christ in Christian day glow red
and dripping paint for blood into a palm.
Inside the T.V. set is tuned to Him
who gave his life to pay the rent for them.
I ask directions at the local Shell.
I want to ask the rednecks, Where is Mercy?
But know they wouldn't get my city play.
They tell me how to find the hospital
returning to their beer and talk of fish.
Strange apostles lead me now-a-days,
Just take a left on Grove and go-a-ways.

Barry Middleton

Mississippi Teacher

I remember the forgotten ones
alone beneath the stars
on a frosty Mississippi morning

the unprotected multitude
were abandoned by hope and care
no paternal spirit guarded them

they waved at their white teacher
as I passed on the way to school
as if I bore a sacred covenant

the sharecropper shacks were gray
cotton fields in the back yard
and peas and collards for supper

not one in a hundred was lifted up
but held within a legacy of death
monstrous poverty and bigotry

oh yes I ran away as far as I could
but I have not forgotten them
and they say it's different now

they say there is hope for America
but all I can see is fear
and my hands are old and helpless

Barry Middleton

Moaning Blues

the moan of the blues
is like the moan of lovers
is like the moan of lost love

it is a Memphis sound
it is the sound of Chicago
it is a Mississippi delta beat

the moan of the blues
is hopelessness in a dying city
the drug street with no way out

it cries for redemption
it grieves the wasted lives
it calls for mercy and salvation

the moan of the blues
holds the blood of the slave
it is the breath and soul of despair

the moan of the blues
is contrition and resolution
it is the tears shed for better days

it is of birth and death
it is the sound of a baby's cry
it is the prayer that awaits eternity

Barry Middleton

Mobile Bay 1964

It was not necessary
for the two of us to shout
above the roar of the boat's motor,
white foam behind us,
and black liquid night all around.

We were thankful for the
red and green lights on the buoys,
and far away
a line of yellow dots
encircled us
and put an edge to eternity.

When we jumped the wake
of an inbound freighter
our hearts dropped a beat.

Then we heard the dredges drumming
where men worked through the night
to let us know the world was alive.

Barry Middleton

Mocking Dream

falling in love a time or two
and living near the lake
in the end was not enough
for these things did not last
just parts of another lost time

and when the rains came
I longed for the white cottage
the silver shining waters
to be in love once more
for someone to share the lightning

does every life fall short of dreams
filled with betrayal
so that the dream
becomes like a death's head
a wretched mocking from the clouds

Barry Middleton

Mockingbird

the season steals
your beautiful melody
winter robs me
purloins your song
carried south
to warmer reaches
new world nightingale
sing your fill in spring
shout out your metaphor

linger in the summer
heat and passion
at its peak
but in the fall
a cooler breeze
transforms your refrain

no hand of man
can silence the chorale
but the seasons pass

like death I sleep
I dream
of southern heat
strains
of the mockingbird

till green appears again
flashing on the breeze
hint of white blossoms
a downy splash of gray
a song alive and joyous

Barry Middleton

Modernity

The flowers of evil have seeded a time or two,
mutated and multiplied by many dark nights.
It often seems today, destruction's eve has come
when another failure to cure the twisted mind
erupts, slaughtering pale vestiges of innocence.

Preachers and pundits mouth clichéd platitudes,
funereal poets have not evolved past promises
to always remember those so soon forgotten,
and politicians will not rise to defend society,
but hide behind pretentious claims of indignation.

That leaves the poets to scream in profane words:
damn the guilty failures of self serving hypocrisy,
damn religions that endlessly war with brothers,
damn useless governments fattening their power
while making a mockery of service to the people.

Damn the mutant beings we call corporations,
like monsters in a horror movie sucking blood,
mining their gold from the lives of wage slaves
in every quarter of industries darkest idolatry.
Yes, damn them all to the deepest pit in hell!

The flowers of evil have mutated and multiplied,
no more is there beauty in the city of the world.
The quietly insane and peaceful hermit awaited
some resolution beyond bestial human powers,
but giving up on that, I tithe and pay my taxes.

Barry Middleton

Moments Of Infinity

the stormy nights that follow me
and crystal skies on sunlit days
are moments of infinity
that come to baffle and amaze

deep in the woods the shadows fall
and nighttime creatures start to stir
I hear the lonely night bird's call
I savor midnight's sweet liqueur

but pain appears along with grace
and too with joy yet comes regret
to find me in my hiding place
as there are times I would forget

but casting memories aside
refusing night denies the day
I'll take my roller coaster ride
accepting bliss and bleak dismay

outside the stars are shining bright
tomorrow calls for clear blue sky
a storm is brewing in the east
I cannot pause to wonder why

I'll taste the wormwood of deceit
and honey mixed with bitterroot
till time and end of time shall meet
where pleas and arguments are moot

Barry Middleton

Monarch

the glow of sunrise
ends the darkness

a monarch butterfly
tests a new breeze

his fragile conquest
controls the dawn

he brings morning
in pastel shades

his own gaudy colors
crown him as king

yet his rule will fade
before the sun sets

proud royalty rises
on ephemeral wings

Barry Middleton

Monition

one should speak up to hate
it filters through the air
like toxic gas or fear

and who will take a stand
protection for the frail
against abuse and rage

it closes like a fog
a poison yellow cloud
has settled on the earth

I know it can't be killed
it can't be caged or jailed
it can't be bound by law

one must speak up to it
one must condemn the beast
and raise the human soul

Barry Middleton

Monochrome View

the river is high and muddy
the winter rains are falling
the delta fog is like the sea

the air this time of year
is wet and cold and dreary
the gray woods are silent

I pause at the top of the hill
I hear the scream of the mill
and the rumble of a train

the whistle of a wood duck
streaks past my hiding place
and memory lights a fire

I do not miss this dismal view
I miss its empty solitude
its comfort for somber moods

Barry Middleton

Monody For Eden

I cannot sing for one
so many children lost
the cruelty of politics
the pomposity of faith

I mourn beyond those
I held dear and true
I weep, I sing, I scream
for all jaded humanity

for in the innocent time
of children and nations
unlimited divinity waits
till hatred and war loom

the dead do not return
and those who live on
stripped of innocence
welcome the henchman

comes death and suicide
the despair of nations
the grief of the family
un-consoled by heaven

and this while grinning
preachers and politicians
put on seraphic faces
and tally their profit

so soon we all will know
our Eden has lost itself
and will not come again
till guileless hearts arise

Barry Middleton

Moon And Shadow

the sun and moon have passed
to leave the dark before the dawn
the silence of the night
obscures my shadow now withdrawn

the starless sky may know
what hides within the tapestry
where east to west descends
but all I see is memory

the green of spring is lost
the passion of the rising sun
the heat of summer spent
that seemed to end as it begun

the passing of the seasons
relentless as the falling leaves
will find the soul of winter
and places where a shadow grieves

the setting moon bequeaths
a blind and endless void of black
a shadow lost in space
that passing time cannot bring back

Barry Middleton

Moonblind

it comes from wandering the dark
the lonely wood at evening time

like exiting a matinee
to step into the white sunshine

the cloister of the somber moon
can tarnish so the heart of man

that he is blinded by the light
to struggle lost without a plan

some must heed the shadowed glen
a primal garden of the soul

and mystic notions of the void
the outer darkness and the cold

Barry Middleton

Moons Of Moons

Some women do
walk as goddesses.

I see her in mist,
exotic and mystical,

a heavenly grace,
a Utopian ideal.

Adrift in fantasy
she dwells,

as if a slow waltz
plays just for her.

Yet her foot falls
print the dew,

albeit diamond like
in sunlight.

Her laughter
is a velvet melody.

Her dark eyes,
are moons of moons.

Her radiant lips
await a lover's kiss.

Barry Middleton

More Than Flowers

earth is more than flowers
the children are playing
chasing the darkness

lovers are sighing
swearing their allegiance

but the rumble of thunder
shutters an illusion

in spring there was hope
brotherhood laughed at war
invisible for a generation

then an insane mist fell
it was a shroud
soldiers returning
silent beneath their flag

the children are praying
wars erupt like fire
the children are dying
spring blooms hide a bomb

when the earth falls silent
a cold river will flow
underneath the ice
our meek heir will awaken

Barry Middleton

Morning Forest

it is morning and the leaves drip
from last night's rain
the fog still hangs low in the glen
trees shiver and shimmer
a wakened bird hails the new day
with liquid harmony
peace hides within this isolation
sound is a soft feather
misty bowers do not speak of fear
no danger lurks
still I am but a stark intruder here
the forest watches me

Barry Middleton

Morning Grief

the woods are dark and magical
the meadows damp with dew
but still the hills cry emptiness
beneath the awesome blue

for nothing in the wondrous world
is worth a single dime
without a love to share its grace
and mark the passing time

the sun arises in the east
a glow transforms the trees
a tear falls from a trembling leaf
awakened by the breeze

Barry Middleton

Morning Rain

it is a baptism to awaken the new born day
a morning rain is falling
teardrops are gently calling
a blushing infant cries out proclaiming life

morning is like a child's moment of confusion
I think of promise
I think of promises made
infinity rises with obligations in a misty light

morning rain nourishes day dreams with hope
possibility awaits
impossibility is banished
in the garden a tender new rose is sanctified

Barry Middleton

Motorcycle

if you've ever been there
you don't forget the feeling
your girl's arms around your waist
and the motor vibrating through you both

and it's not so important
where you are or where you may go
because the hot sky has spoken today
and above the wind you feel her breathing

the two of you are one
speeding to secret destinations
you cannot turn to see her hidden smile
she squeezes tighter to let you know it's there

Barry Middleton

Mountain Climbing

so near the mountain peak
that I can see the top
I must continue on
I know I cannot stop

yes I am tired and old
it's tempting to turn back
the prize is often found
far off the beaten track

and so I ease my pace
as old men have to do
I want to breathe the air
reserved for just a few

I only pause for night
to rest my weary head
I'll make it to the top
and not give in to dread

as earth and sky are wise
and point the surest way
to lead me to the clouds
forever there to stay

Barry Middleton

Mountain Image

upon a mountaintop in Spain
I pondered on a mystery
for I had never sailed the sea
how could this mountain come to be

it must have been a book I read
some vision that had come to me
a spider web where dreams are spun
a drunken elf upon a spree

imagination is a gift
a blessing from infinity
the crazed confusion of a giant
a mystic cloud's divinity

so how I came to be in Spain
is hidden on this mountaintop
beyond the clouds and stars and moon
where dreams and dreamers finally stop

Barry Middleton

Mountains

I welcomed mountain peaks,
and one was in my youth.
The challenges and blessings,
were both a part of truth.

The second was a conquest,
the pinnacle of life,
but too the longest fall,
when victory turns to strife.

The third has furnished peace,
to briefly catch my breath.
And now I face the fourth,
the precipice of death.

I cannot see the peak,
or what is hidden there,
perhaps the promised land,
perhaps complete despair.

But still I climb as clouds,
obscure what lies ahead.
The summit waits for me,
with nothing more to dread.

Barry Middleton

Mountains Of Infinity

no longer can I shed the pain
it is a constant mockery

surrounded by the failing soul
are ragged shadow-lands of grief

the sunset brings cruel avatars
forsaken gods and goddesses

the somnolence is like a pall
the darkest velvet of the night

then even dreams are agony
reminders of lost ecstasy

for youth can never come again
or song or breath or lover's touch

and in the final prayer I plead
a dreamless sleep to comfort me

where dismal timeless waters flow
from mountains of infinity

Barry Middleton

Movement

I think I see movement
through the dark trees
a mystery in the forest
waiting to be revealed

I dreamed as a child
of lost cabins there
in wood or meadow lot
I still have these visions

the shelter is small, dusty
tired, rustic, welcoming
overstuffed plaid chairs
everything one needs

warm rough wood paneling
sunshine on mesh curtains
foggy mullioned windows
it is safe here, a retreat

I am alone but the place
is haunted by ancestors
ashes are my protection
the forest gods whisper

I see movement in the trees
the mysteries are revealed
I would give up everything
to step into this quiet dream

Barry Middleton

Moving On

we do forget the awkwardness
the letting go of childhood

we do forget the years it takes
to call ourselves adult

life is filled with many turns
responsibilities

change is never smooth or easy
we struggle on

we find a way to find our way
until the last journey

till we are old and see the end
and turn the final page

weak and worn we turn away
and quietly leave the stage

Barry Middleton

Mr. Black

Mr. Black was always watching.
He watched us from his mossy home,
hidden within a hollow beech.
He lurked in mists beyond our reach.

He followed when the sun went down,
and stepped into our restless dreams,
where often in a haunted park,
his footsteps echoed in the dark.

We knew that he was always there,
when sudden noises in the night,
staggered from their hiding place,
and caused the heart to blindly race.

But as the clock records the years,
our childish demons fade away.
We banish lairs where ghosts abide,
and mortal fears are swept aside.

We all forget the truth we knew,
in superstitions of our youth,
till fate is finally at hand,
the plot that shadows always planned.

Though we may live three score and ten,
still Mr. Black comes back again.
He'll find you on some moonless night.
He follows you just out of sight.

Barry Middleton

Musician

never was the mood more pure
in fictive offerings secure
than music

the movement is a maiden's dance
a sequined dress cannot enhance
her grace

the soft lament of saxophones
in lonely melody intones
the wind

behind the band the conga beat
calls for lovers to entreat
a sigh

the audacity of violin
banishes my deep chagrin
like stars

forgotten lyrics that I spurned
smolder in the fire that burned
my scars

Barry Middleton

My Delusions

all men deserve to dream
and these are some of mine
a peace on earth that lasts
where harmony can shine

I do not mean to preach
but what we learn we owe
so stop and listen well
to things you need to know

the only race on earth
is called the human race
that we are family
no bigot can erase

the gender wars must end
respect is still the key
and blessing everyone
to be what they will be

the garden then restored
that we lost long ago
will end all hunger here
this gift the gods bestow

and do I really think
all this could come to be
or is it just a hunch
from blind infinity

I do not really know
I think that faith's a test
I hope the teacher knows
that I have done my best

delusions these may be
but I don't think that's so
I may not see the peak
but from the afterglow

I tried to spread the news
that peace and love are all
the only things of worth
before the stars must fall

the task is passed along
so fight for what is right
remember that old song
and keep the prize in sight

Barry Middleton

My Despair

the images of grief abound
the hush of midnight snow

forgotten kisses lost in time
and dreams I used to know

a single flower by a grave
a widow's pain to ease

the final maple leaf of fall
surrenders to the breeze

a shuttered house upon a hill
a trellis dry and bare

the vacant sky and silent day
the tears of my despair

Barry Middleton

My Dreams Will Never Forget

my dreams will never forget you
you are always there
like the river is there for the ocean
like spring remembers the flower

you are there like a silent bird
carrying bits and pieces of memory
to create tomorrow's wings
you soar in a paradise of stars

I hear you in the sails of tall ships
crossing the seas to yesterday
you carry the hope of redemption
leaving a silver wake on black water

I see you in a memory of childhood
reflected in time's deepest pond
lit by the moon's uncertainty
more beautiful than the palest rose

you are my passion and tenderness
and my dreams will never forget you
you are the song I must remember
you are the kiss to comfort my doubt

Barry Middleton

My Father's Son

my father sat beside me
as we headed down the river
he was not strong
but he was still a man

oh he could fell the timber
and he could plow a furrow
but many things
he could not understand

he could not say I love you
but he knew the darkest forest
and he knew the lonely place
I had to go

and he could not travel with me
far beyond the river valley
nor teach me all the things
I had to know

yes he was like the mountain
that I had to face alone
like many things
I'll never understand

but I told him that I loved him
and his eyes filled with tears
as he looked up
at a strong but lonely man

Barry Middleton

My Neurosis

I'm not afraid
of death
but I am afraid
of dying
I'm not afraid
of sadness
but I am afraid
of crying
I'm not afraid
of freedom
but being free
is scary
I'm not afraid
of happiness
but it's wisest
to be wary
I'm not afraid
of memories
but forgetting
terrifies
I'm not afraid
to speak the truth
but I am afraid
of lies

Barry Middleton

My Poetry

say I would describe the setting sun
comparing it once again to death
the afterglow is but the end of heat
to the east the coolness of the moon

or that I speak of love and betrayal
it may be a rose with poison thorns
a Judas kiss, calm before the storm
the fickle heart of the Miller's tale

perhaps I shall curse the angry gods
like a nomad damning their retreat
creating a universe without apples
and thus withholding heaven's seed

now in the proper study of mankind
the subject may be beauty or brutality
nurturing Madonna caressing her child
or stalking maniacs who rape and kill

and last the unknown poet in his age
pens one more verse to bless the past
with only one regret to carve in stone
that man and love and stars don't last

Barry Middleton

My Pool Cue Ain't Straight

my pool cue ain't straight anymore
my pool cue ain't straight anymore
my pool cue, ain't straight
I'm a dollar short and another day late
my pool cue ain't straight anymore

my rooster don't crow anymore
my rooster don't crow anymore
my rooster, don't crow
no cock-a-doodle-doo at the rodeo
my rooster don't crow anymore

my froggie don't croak anymore
my froggie don't croak anymore
my froggie, don't croak
he hopped on away and it ain't no joke
my froggie don't croak anymore

my hens don't lay anymore
my hens don't lay anymore
my hens, don't lay
they took my eggs and they ran away
my hens don't lay anymore

my guitar ain't strung anymore
my guitar ain't strung anymore
my guitar, ain't strung
my song is over and I come undone
my guitar ain't strung anymore

my pigeon don't fly anymore
my pigeon don't fly anymore
my pigeon, don't fly
she lost her feathers with another guy
my pigeon don't fly anymore

ain't goin nowhere anymore
ain't goin nowhere anymore
ain't goin, nowhere

gotta stay here 'cause I took the dare
ain't goin nowhere anymore

Barry Middleton

My Quaint Poetry

I spent some time today
to read my poetry

I say that some is good
and some is bad I see

I think Picasso stared
for hours at his wall

and often smiled a bit
and often was appalled

but here's a simple truth
all art is worth the time

my words may earn no fame
still I can call them mine

Barry Middleton

My Sanity

I know it's not the same for all,
but cancer wants to make me crawl.

It took from me most every joy,
such petty things seem to annoy.

I can't enjoy my favorite foods,
or bottoming bi-polar moods.

I cannot sing, I cannot dance,
there is no chance of new romance.

But what am I supposed to do?
I count my gifts, I have a few.

I take a walk, the air is cold,
the sky is blue, the clouds are gold.

And I have friends who help me out,
they banish fear, and banish doubt.

And I still have my poetry,
my work, my life, and sanity.

So I will focus every breath,
on love, and grace, and life not death.

Barry Middleton

My Solace

My only solace is poetry,
for death stalks my dreams.
But I may turn to memory,
to know my life was blessed.

Poetry and solace live
in shady valleys of the past.
There I may travel still,
in youth again, in love again.

New adventure waited,
with desire on every corner.
I pray do not take this away,
do not take memory.

Barry Middleton

My World

my world is not the same
my house destroyed by time
my body weak and tired
at least I have my rhyme

although I sense a breeze
my inspiration's verse
has shifted to the west
for better or for worse

the cold has settled in
no fire can warm my night
my vision too must fade
then I will lose the light

above the windy sea
a bird turns to the shore
I watch him while I can
till I can watch no more

I struggled with the storms
I paid a heavy cost
and I will struggle still
till finally all is lost

Barry Middleton

Mystery

I sense there is a coming storm
that almost shows the mystery
of universals that transform
what has been to what must be

the still pink morning bloom
rose not so many hours ago
too beautiful to mark the doom
afternoon would start to show

from the south the gray descends
streaks of fire and rain and wind
and I would wish to make amends
for I like each of us have sinned

at last the sun ignites the west
and puts all storm regret to rest

Barry Middleton

Mystic Haiku

mystics know wisdom
the cycle is now complete
ash to feed flowers

Barry Middleton

Naked As Rain

my sole meek wish was
to be naked as the rain
to be eloquent as the rose

as it is with living things
to join with the dust
to speak like the storm

this was so little to ask
the quiet peace of time
the sweet tang of autumn

I conspired with denial
and the oak's wisdom
to find my fragile self

I have abandoned wishes
I touch the humble soul
and walk the first forest

I will live forever hidden
with seasons and waters
in earth's lush monument

Barry Middleton

Nearly Midnight

Nearly midnight, and the thunder calls,
and echoes from the sky on sturdy walls.

Soon sleep will come, and with it gentle rain,
the end of day and all of daytime pain.

The town is quiet; the town folk are at rest.
The work is done; and I have done my best.

My eyes are heavy with a welcome dream.
Above the rain and clouds, the stars yet gleam.

It comforts me to know as midnight nears,
that darkness will abate my doubts and tears.

Barry Middleton

Necessary Roses

the blush of the rose brought passion to life
it was no bite of apple wakened Eve

she gazed into that secret well of petals
and knew the sweet aromas of the night

then Adam too was taken by the spell
and learned of desire and ecstasy and roses

beneath the tree of life they did embrace
to bring to earth our passion and disgrace

to bring such beauty to the world
yet mixed with greed and jealousy

for good and evil cannot separate
they co-exist to tempt and test out fate

though there are men would ravage every rose
I guard the innocence of roses white

as I seclude a place within my heart
to grow that fragile rose of youth and light

Barry Middleton

Never Ending

the greatest sadness is not death
but things that never end
like war and inhumanity
that we can never mend

injustice and abiding hate
still linger like a plague
and efforts to correct these ills
are yet confused and vague

and rape and slavery live on
they never seem to die
and tyrants rise to kill the soul
on that you can rely

also are those who plunder earth
to fowl the purest sea
and burn the forest of our home
regardless of our plea

the poisoned air and waters flow
as fire has scarred the land
is this the end for man and beast
is this what gods have planned

Barry Middleton

Never Enough Time

there is never enough time
for anything or anyone you love

as we grow old regret sets in
for all we wish we'd done or said

the workday is a ticking clock
that steals the years from us

the children grow into tomorrow
we blink an eye and they are gone

we can't recapture yesterday
love comes and goes with sunrise

and in a final act of cruelty
old age will take whatever is left

no one escapes the dilemma
so do not watch the clock

look around and find the time
the moments within today

Barry Middleton

Never Grow Old

Growing old is a choice
we need to get right.
That's why I intend
to put up a fight.

Growing old is for those
who mistakenly chose.

So celebrate life,
no one can live twice,
and take my advice,
to always add spice.

Find someone to kiss you
and then close your eyes
and never give up
on love or surprise.

Barry Middleton

New And Old

Young lover's days
are an indulgence.
Perfumed moods,
heat and passion,
are a passing dance.

Time's gift
is a tender kiss
against
the moon's
long stay.

Times gift,
the comfort of giving,
is fair recompense
for lasting love.

Newest love is shaped
in sunlit air,
but love is long
when time
increases care.

Barry Middleton

New Moon

the sliver of new moon
is rising from the trees

the moon of lost love
rests within its arms

this dim glow brings hope
if only in its promise

the gift of light will grow
with time and destiny

then moonlit night returns
as lovers test the spell

life and love are waiting
as stars ascend the sky

the hush is palpable
I pause to breathe a sigh

Barry Middleton

News Lady

I can tell by the look in her eyes
that she's only talking to me
she gives me the news every day
I don't care if you disagree

I know what is deep in her heart
though she is quite far away
she wants to keep me informed
of the world of unrest and dismay

she always shows that she cares
with a glance that is never disguised
she is only thinking of me
I can tell by the look in her eyes

~~~~~

OK it's Pamela Brown on CNN.

Barry Middleton

# Newspeak

the fog has settled in obscuring truth  
deceit is blunt and loud and brash  
and facts are perjury

the air is cold and threatens with despair  
there is no anchor in the storm  
to keep us safe from harm

within the mist the beast is roaming free  
it whispers paradise will come  
if we consume the lie

but something hides beside the wayside path  
the seed of revolution waits  
for truth cannot be killed

Barry Middleton

## Next Ex

stay too long in the sun,  
you get burned.

stand too near the flame,  
you catch fire.

wander too far from home,  
you get lost.

stay too close to home,  
you get trapped.

fall in love again,  
the result is the same.

you get burned,  
you get lost,

you seek a sunny day,  
the next fire,

the home you left behind,  
the next ex.

Barry Middleton

# Night And Cloud

nighttime clouds painted black  
the colors that I knew  
just yesterday

the chaos of the stars tonight  
I know cannot break through  
my bleak dismay

a silence palpable has come  
to pour its emptiness  
into the dark

until I hear the dawn's first bird  
who brings some tenderness  
with his remark

he knows the night will always pass  
to bring a grand new day  
I know he's right

the sun will come with every hue  
of vision on display  
in shining light

oh I have seen some grief before  
my window like a wall  
that had no view

that's when I learned if I just wait  
and also give my all  
I make it through

Barry Middleton

# Night Beach

I walk the dusky beach  
and raise my voice alone  
the darkness to beseech

as somber moods belong  
in flute and violin  
meek and soft and strong

the song is isolation  
the firmament of night  
the saddest intonation

still comes the epiphany  
of silence in the waves  
as stars fall down on me

the wind is a final prayer  
there on the black horizon  
the anthem of all despair

Barry Middleton

# Night Storm

the storm blows in from the gulf  
blessing the parched landscape

some other god sends drought  
as it always does in winter  
punishing earth's drunkenness

anger rumbles on a tin roof  
and the rage is dynamite  
brimstone and then thunder

two rival air forces dog fighting  
like good and evil in the garden

I rest behind thin walls of hope  
I know well my frail protection

a puff of wind takes me down  
I am an old worn sodden tree  
and tired of storms and hiding

Barry Middleton

# No Driver

I treated my life like a self driving car  
it went where it wanted to go  
it took all the turns at a very high speed  
it truly did go with the flow

its computer was broken from what I could tell  
it careened on a lunatic flight  
but the journey will eventually come to an end  
'cause that car's gonna wreck some night

or I may take the wheel and yet try to steer  
I fear there's a cliff up ahead  
I'll slam on the breaks and then spin the wheel  
even then I may yet end up dead

Barry Middleton

# No Escape

There are shadows in my mind,  
vanished lovers and lost friends.  
There are hard and heartless demons,  
aimless dreams and blind dead ends.

In crumbling memory's recall,  
are faded faces, and the traces  
that time and age at last erases,  
till the loneliness becomes a pall.

There is silence in the darkness  
regret and prayer cannot relieve,  
as I look back without salvation,  
on shadows I forever grieve.

Barry Middleton



# No Eyes

The eyes are closed in death.  
Hollow men are blind.  
So there are never tears,  
there is never care,  
no reason for despair.

I cease to see the sunset.  
Must I also then forget  
all sensation and regret?  
And will I know you there,  
or is it like we never met?

Is there no poetry,  
never more to comfort me,  
a metronome's infinity?  
Does silence recompense  
serenity without pretense?

Is there finally peace,  
will war and hatred cease,  
will blindness find release?  
Beyond my final breath,  
my eyes are closed in death.

Barry Middleton

# No Florida Farewell

it may be soon  
or when the moon is lost

years ago  
I left the winter frost

I cannot know  
as sand falls in the glass

the many or the few  
as seasons pass

so now I view the moon  
in swaying palms

nor bid farewell  
to Florida's sweet alms

she has been  
the only faithful love

always like a goddess  
from above

I am yet consumed  
in her desire

I still cherish heat  
and her sweet fire

Barry Middleton

# No Love Sonnet

love is a cruel and foolish vain deceit  
like Eve, betrayal is the end of need  
so best to ever keep a safe retreat  
of defeat or domination taking heed

love kills, the venomous snake of time  
still beckons peace, a seductive lure  
but crawls into the garden to remind  
that lowest hanging fruit is not the cure

loneliness is cruel, the other curse  
and those who live it claim it is a crime  
and leaves us to consider which is worst  
to live our life or quibble over time

and some we know are left to wonder not  
in vagrant grief are those whom love forgot

Barry Middleton

# No More

no more is he there  
to correct my memories  
to tell me where the commas go  
or try to educate me further  
on objective and subjective pronouns

all these were valuable  
but these were the trivial things  
more important was a paternal spirit  
paternal yet understated  
nurturing is a better word

with father and mother  
there were six of us  
and now that six is three  
a huge hole opened in the universe  
and my brother vanished

Barry Middleton

# No One Escapes

a soldier dies on foreign soil  
regardless how the just might toil  
the eons pass but man cannot break free

upon a barren mountaintop  
the incantations never stop  
as mystic mantras pray for remedy

a tyrant gains the upper hand  
to face the anger he has fanned  
when mobs arise to tally up the score

the prince and pauper are the same  
at last they find the end of pain  
as death descends to close the final door

still tears fall from the poet's ghost  
he did his best and more than most  
to lift the hopes of those he may have met

but life is like a game of chess  
we make a move we take a guess  
and no one ever gets a second bet

the garden of Gethsemane  
where Jesus wept and made his plea  
is silent as the lonely April moon

now terror wanders every street  
the hand of mercy out of reach  
like memories of a long forgotten tune

the orbits where the planets spin  
forget the tales that might have been  
and legacy recedes like restless tide

so every man must die alone  
no one to bear his body home  
our destiny awaits where stars abide

the lessons of philosophy  
have tried to set our spirits free  
but lose their way in ignorance and greed

and yet the righteous don't give up  
but raise again a sacred cup  
for better soil to sow a hopeful seed

Barry Middleton

# No Regret

There are no tears for lovers past,  
for even pain must fade to gray,  
and fears and old regrets can't last,  
when sunrise shifts to yesterday.

And ecstasy is in the air,  
as flowers bloom then fade away,  
with yet no cause for my despair,  
for April comes to lift dismay.

Life is a bridge to parts unknown,  
and like a lily of the field,  
we grow and live and die alone,  
then autumn takes its somber yield.

All nature blooms and sets its seed,  
and never does it weep or grieve.  
It takes from earth but for its need,  
a last embrace, the soul's reprieve.

Barry Middleton

# No Two Sunsets Are Alike

no two sunsets are alike  
this one is steel and pink  
until it fades into darkness

no two sunrises are alike  
I love the golden ones  
reminding me of treasure

but not the treasure of gold  
the treasure of the sun itself  
the guardian of our world

the sun at noon in a blue sky  
the sun hiding in a gray mist  
I love each day the sun grants

I love anticipation's nights  
awaiting tomorrow's destiny  
the sunrise and the sunset

patience finds a just reward  
I see a hopeful eastern glow  
as color fills the muted sky

no two tomorrows are alike  
this one is peach and tangerine  
with subtle hints of distant blue

Barry Middleton



# No Victory

I found the mountaintop  
and saw eternity

I swam from the riptide  
with fear as my companion

I dared the demon's lair  
to call the dragon's bluff

I defeated every foe  
and left them far behind

I turned the hurricane  
and fled the fire of war

But victory was lost  
when love abandoned me

Barry Middleton

# No Wings

tonight there is a blue haze  
a mist rolled in I can't abate  
and it may be the voice of fate

lately light has turned to speech  
that whispers all that I may know  
is prelude to the afterglow

but still I fear the gods deceive  
beyond the haze the sky is gray  
a somber suit for my dismay

a waste of time to dwell on that  
for sadness is for living things  
the dead may truly have no wings

the war is won the peace ensues  
blue smoke marks the battlefield  
a wingless knight discards his shield

Barry Middleton

# Noble Ideas

peace is a noble idea  
an idea perhaps beyond our ability  
so contrary to human nature

love and brotherhood and justice  
are noble ideas  
that all too often fail us

peace of mind is elusive  
a fragile mental space  
protected only by strength of will

yet an idea is a thought  
a possibility  
to live life without thought is sin

still many condemn deliberation  
living life by knee jerk reflex  
they create the wars

without ideas there is no poetry  
there is no music  
without thought we are animals

the idea of prayer is to raise us  
to raise us above the beast  
to live and die for noble ideas

Barry Middleton

# Not My Time To Die

maybe by this time next year  
I'll know where I must go  
but now I would not mind a bit  
an expedited show

for I am tired of sleepless night  
though not so tired of life  
in fact I have two points of view  
split by a parsing knife

one part cries out to live again  
one part would welcome death  
the ambiguity is plain  
as stillness or as breath

but I learned many years ago  
for me there is no door  
I certainly want the pain to end  
but know I must endure

soon I will take my morning walk  
to see what day might hold  
and I will study every clue  
for silver and for gold

for treasure fills the summer lawn  
in sparkling diamond dew  
I hear the laughter of a child  
beneath the awesome blue

a red hibiscus drops its bloom  
another takes its place  
the sun is rising in the east  
in its unhurried pace

and so I choose this time each day  
to live and breathe a sigh  
my ambiguity will fade  
it's not my time to die

Barry Middleton

# Not Prufrock

how young he was  
to claim these lines  
it took me a lifetime  
to nearly understand

many words frame  
an old man's fears  
always there is much  
for backward looking  
yet he looked forward

scholars still wonder  
who is he addressing  
I know the girl's name  
but will not tell you  
that's how poets are  
leave something misty  
for silver haired debate

one thing is obvious  
he does not care  
for growing old  
looking forward  
to small visions  
life's chattering  
he beckons her and I  
to follow the ramble

I have rambled  
through the fog  
left and right  
academic prattle  
fooled them all  
with foolish faces

there are no prophets  
but if there were  
who would choose  
the rack of constant

inquisition, who would  
so do I dare, do I

better to be the claws  
poetry burned with me  
none left for dissection  
comfort in a meeker fate  
no brouhaha for me

but something I plead  
something he pleaded  
with gods and devils  
whose arms we embrace

the sea awaits  
the maiden lingers  
consumed in lace  
by the garden gate  
she turns away  
like the turning tide  
like a vision that  
arrives too late  
mermaids or Sirens  
call me to darkness  
call from where  
I do not know  
riding seaward  
into waters  
I have never  
seen before

Barry Middleton

# Not Seen Before

why can't life be just butterflies  
why must we suffer snakes  
why can't I always get things right  
why must I make mistakes

the things that I will never know  
would fill a ponderous book  
the only lesson I have found  
to take a second look

it's said the wisest carpenter  
will always measure twice  
then he will need to cut but once  
so best take his advice

when I am so convinced I'm right  
I stop to think some more  
to then discover what I missed  
the thing not seen before

Barry Middleton



# Not Silent

the forest is never silent  
a whisper, a chuck, a wail  
dusky shadows speaking  
a hidden, secluded tale

wind trees acknowledge  
sound of breath and love  
rain washes the branches  
hearts follow the dove

far off an axe echoes  
someone gathers wood  
deep, the greening cover  
discloses a lover's mood

owl and wildcat calls  
brief reminders of grief  
darkest waters display  
the gold of a fallen leaf

the forest is never silent  
woodland nymphs nearby  
buzz with faded memory  
recalling an ageless sigh

my lover beckons me  
to hold her in this place  
the forest then falls silent  
passion's hushed embrace

Barry Middleton

# Nothing

I'd like to write a hundred more  
love songs for the coming year  
to look beyond tomorrow's door  
claiming I have conquered fear

I'd like to believe a lover waits  
just past the boundary of time  
there I would escape the fates  
with Eve again and the sublime

I know nothing calls to me  
but what in rhyme I can create  
so this is left when I am free  
for poetry is heaven's gate

still I'd prefer an earthly portal  
and beauty of the flesh immortal

Barry Middleton

# Nothing More To Say

we have left the wonderland  
gone away for good I say

and what we deem as poetry  
are mansions only of dismay

in lieu of grander themes we get  
bland descriptions of vacations

of sunset in the Pyrenees  
sabbaticals of inspiration

no more of pondering the stars  
nothing calls from Palestine

we lift a glass with haughty airs  
to comment on a vintage wine

and cast aside the crumpled news  
to muse upon a worthy quote

the one that we almost forgot  
that line the famous poet wrote

Barry Middleton

# Nothing New

there is nothing new  
so we look to the old

the sky

sunset is my cue  
the blue indifference

turning to pink

it is a gentle dying  
there is nothing new in it

what can I say

purple cloud and tangerine  
I've seen it all before

a color like the sea

it is as old as time and yet  
still it stirs a sigh

it stirs a sigh from me

Barry Middleton

# Nothing To Write

I have nothing to write but the gray sky.  
The trees are black with slick rain.  
The last blossoms are defeated.  
Winter has come.

The sun is taking some needed time off.  
It shines somewhere on snowfields.  
No one skis on the beach.  
The sand is empty.

Christmas lights are strung in palm trees.  
People are shopping at the mall.  
But I have nothing to write.  
My mood is blank.

Barry Middleton

# November

an autumn chill that tints the air  
the fireplace lit  
the evening chair  
so many things remind me of November

maple leaves that yet hold tight  
the shorter day  
the longer night  
a wish that I forever must remember

tender lips and vows we made  
the time of day  
when shadows fade  
when love was not a token or pretender

then winter nights and deepest snow  
foretell the fate  
that all must know  
still I recall the passion love can render

often dreams may take me there  
where two of us  
without a care  
cherished each and every dying ember

Barry Middleton

## November 2

November says the year is ending,  
the harvest in, and it is time for thanks.

Autumn is a prelude and reminder  
that years and seasons cannot last.

We get but one final November;  
all the others are past.

The cooler air is like the feast  
that we prepare Thanksgiving Day.

It is a time to think  
and count our blessings.

I look into November fog;  
I know that this may be my last.

I must take from it what I can,  
gratitude and memories,

and all the panoply of life,  
for this is my only November.

Barry Middleton

# Novus Ordo Seclorum

the snake has abandoned temptation  
passing it along to the allure of gold  
to the luster of a maidens hair

sleek sinews coil and wait in the swamp  
smug and satisfied with the fall  
as god is a prisoner of the emperor

across the fields the soldiers march  
sword and cannon at the ready  
and conquest or defeat is like smoke

the eyes of destruction look to the sun  
a dark ocean ripples with terror  
principio ad finem

Barry Middleton



# Nuclear

there is a ribbon from the sunset  
the wind shifts  
and the trees turn away

this is the time of day I love  
and fear  
before despair and fade to black

angry palms throw their frailness  
in a stream of air  
a silver eye pierces a gray cloud

sunset is exactly like love  
like gold melted  
to copper is a reverse alchemy

there is a ribbon of blushing pink  
then the violet  
the velvet crushing agony of night

and yet the fool in me bows down  
blinded in the glare  
conjuring day and atomic kisses

Barry Middleton

# Obama

there once was a guy named Obama  
who was definitely not into drama  
conservatives hate him  
and also berate him  
but he's cool as the great Dalai Lama

Barry Middleton

# Obsession

When obsession takes hold,  
nothing else enters consciousness.  
Lovers do not think of death.  
The dying do not remember love.  
The world is seen through a tunnel,  
the field of view is narrow.  
There may be an ordinary scene,  
a flower, a woman, a dream.  
There may be a harbinger of death,  
tombstones of obscure ghosts.  
Beyond this stage, the clouds drift,  
unobserved and silent.

Barry Middleton

# Obstacles To Ecstasy

schemes that try to capture me  
are obstacles to ecstasy

as ecstasy without disguise  
does not reside in breathless sighs

and this is true of love's deceit  
whichever costume we entreat

he of rippling muscled shoulder  
or she in dance a trifle bolder

endless passions we beseech  
should be a lesson that we teach

to all who would possess a soul  
life is the only shining goal

life is the essence of ecstasy  
the breath of every mystery

a season and the touch of a hand  
only a moment in vanishing sand

Barry Middleton

# October Thoughts

I feel the first of autumn now  
that I have waited for too long  
the cooler air is like a song

the spring is distant memory  
a breeze alive as youth and hope  
has vanished with the strength to cope

I can't recall the daffodil  
the rose of May is here no more  
the summer bloom has no encore

a certain sadness comes with fall  
the year and I can see the end  
a cycle I cannot amend

though I embrace the temperate air  
I still must grieve for I can see  
that winter comes and destiny

and so I have a brand new goal  
to savor every taste of fall  
before the winter comes to call

the candy corn and Halloween  
Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Eve  
till years and poets take their leave

the out of doors are calling me  
the clear blue sky and afternoon  
the stars at night and harvest moon

Barry Middleton

# Ode For A Dryad

like a tree swaying in the wind  
like grace  
and the drift of air and leaves  
she amazes

her hand is a thin soft branch  
reaching  
where a bird sings and weaves  
dreams

her eyes reflect silent waters  
and moonlight  
as midnight kisses the forest  
with sleep

her touch is the narcotic mist  
of devotion  
the precious gold of a sunrise  
in Arcadia

Barry Middleton

# Off The Path

flowers grow off the path

newness waits there  
the garden tends itself

it is not far away

turn left at your door  
instead of right

stroll to the lake

sit on the bench  
listen to the air

take time to see

dawn's long shadow  
reaches to the west

study the text of seasons

bloom and leaf and twig  
birds racing south

cultivate stillness

it whispers to you  
wisdom's secrets

Barry Middleton

# Old Dust

The smell of old folks houses  
makes me believe  
that men are made of dust.  
When I was young we used to go  
by fifteen miles of lonely road  
to see the old ones on the home place.  
I did not know the meaning then  
of musty odors there  
and thought them just too old to clean  
or too far gone to care.  
But I chanced upon my home  
one winter day and noticed there  
reminders of the fate we all must bear.  
It is a mix of dust and home,  
a hint of the eternal tomb.

Barry Middleton



# Old Gray Witch

I see the old gray witch  
her heart is black as pitch  
she's hatching out a scheme  
to hex my every dream

she lurks in moonlit night  
she loves the devil's light  
when she is on patrol  
she's out to steal my soul

but when a shadow falls  
and by my window stalls  
upon a lonely night  
I don't give in to fright

I keep some water near  
that is their only fear  
I'll splash her with regret  
for witches can't get wet

it gets them every time  
so don't forget this rhyme  
she'll melt like yesterday  
a puddle of dismay

and don't you pity her  
when witches you deter  
it doesn't hurt a bit  
it's just what witches get

Barry Middleton

# Old Man

when the old man got sick  
he sat on his couch a lot  
and looked out the window

there he saw what used to be  
the dogwood bloomed  
a few more years for him

he knew the end was coming  
had already come  
his truck rusted in the shed

across the muddy bean field  
that once was cotton  
the green creek still flowed

his weaknesses were gone  
along with his strength  
he had no smile or anger

if the fall was not too cold  
at Thanksgiving  
he might open the window

and far beyond the river  
he would hear on the wind  
the hunter's hounds baying

Barry Middleton

# Old Man Waiting

Death is patient waiting  
for this old man  
who wanders in the park.

He makes a vain attempt  
to spark awareness  
of the motive  
that brought him here.

He cannot move his mind,  
but vaguely knows  
it has to do with spring  
and laughter.

He has confused  
the flowers by the path  
with girls in rowboats  
smiling at their lovers.

He shakes his head,  
and only for a moment  
his eyes return to youth.

He passes by a couple  
on a bench,  
and tips his hat  
to say the day is good.

Barry Middleton

# Old Man Walking

I am old and know the truth  
I know I am pretending  
now I use a walking stick  
my companion is gone

I know the mistakes I made  
but now it is too late  
too late to start again  
I lost my way so long ago

and if I have a vacant stare  
it is because I have forgotten  
where was I going today  
what was I looking for

and so I turn and move along  
until a young child passes by  
and jogs a memory  
of when I was a fearless boy

Barry Middleton

# Old Soul

The old soul cannot escape  
the pain that no one sees,

the pang of war and brutal fear  
that nothing can appease.

The first to gaze with human eyes  
so many eons hence,

still must struggle asking why  
of grief without pretense.

Why must love and life desist?  
And what is living for?

Can greed and killing ever cease,  
and bring an end to war?

The old soul must hide the pain  
for they have known the years,

and time can never stem the tide  
of anguish, loss and tears.

Barry Middleton

# Old Stars

beyond the peak of any mountain  
strange as shifting clouds on high

a wizard stands beside a fountain  
counting time as it runs by

he has a job that's never ending  
as he tallies every soul

and the message he is sending  
says we never need grow old

oh yes we know that we must die  
do you think that is the end

think of all the times we cry  
forgiveness drifts upon the wind

the wizard makes his count for good  
as the moments pass him by

and in the end where he had stood  
a gate is opened in the sky

beyond that gate the blazing sun  
and some stars we surely know

will declare the battle won  
showing us where old stars go

Barry Middleton

# Old Trees

the trees I watch  
have now grown old with me  
along the road  
that knows my destiny

and still I watch  
they seem to point the way  
I must have faith  
concealing my dismay

the trees live on  
and wisdom does not hide  
they do not grieve  
the death they must abide

they catch the wind  
they welcome winter rain  
they feel no joy  
they cannot know my pain

the road leads on  
companions by my side  
the way is clear  
the trees are still my guide

Barry Middleton

# Old Trees And Desire

beneath the old hickory  
at the top of the hill  
you swore to love me  
till the stars stood still

we lay on our blanket  
looking down on the lake  
to think of it now  
still brings a heartache

we thought the future  
was sunshine in May  
we could never believe  
in any dark day

the old hickory tree  
has succumbed to the fire  
that's the way it can go  
with old trees and desire

Barry Middleton



# Omen

Weather commands to stay inside today.  
A black cloud threatens demons and fire.  
Dark silhouettes move in an eerie glow.

Uncertain messages drift on a somber wind.  
Trees toss their crowns like angry kings.  
And in it all the poet ciphers out the riddle.

The thunder is from the cannons of war.  
The cloud is the smoke of Armageddon.  
Trees shed tears from many broken lives.

The poet wonders; was there ever love?  
When the garden was lost, did a curse fall  
like hailstones in the gloom of the tempest?

When the air grows still again, the calm  
is the prelude to the coming destruction.  
Storm sirens peal a warning and an omen.

Barry Middleton

# On A Night In Autumn

on a night in autumn  
with summer not quite gone  
the cusp of the seasons lingers

I am impatient for cooler air  
yesterday the raintree bloomed  
the first saffron petals fell

I know the fall will come  
hurricanes have had their way  
the eastern sea is calmer now

the night is hot and damp  
summer is dying in the stillness  
autumn can wait no more

Barry Middleton

# On A River Torn

Torn between hedonist and priest,  
half begging you to take my hand,  
half believing in love and giving,  
the other half disgusted, screams  
less pain, less journey, less love.

I come to seek this wide water,  
a comfort of silence and peace.  
A bride of serenity and despair  
beckons me to a dark cabin  
where I steel myself and heal.

The rage of the world washes by  
in the bloodless river hidden.  
Safe, silent, walled from love,  
I am insular; no hatred invades  
the safety of my island totem.

Where once I dreamed of water,  
a desiccated wasteland spirit calls.  
The waters pass by at their pace.  
I burn docks and pray in shadow:  
conceal me from blood, from flesh.

Barry Middleton

## On Leaning Left

I watch the children  
walk the garden wall.  
They step too slow,  
and then must step too fast  
to keep from falling  
on the walk or grass.  
They lean to left  
to keep from falling right.  
They lean the other way  
to compensate for sway.  
I wonder if they know  
the game they play  
with eyes so fixed  
upon their nearest step.  
More than one I saw that day  
so studied his last move  
he missed the corner turn  
and so he fell and bruised a knee.  
I wondered why the tears  
for I was old enough to see  
one faulty step was cause enough  
to set the others free.

Barry Middleton

# On The Island

the sea came ashore  
and the streets are rivers

the trees are stripped bare  
the tropical green is gone

roofless homes  
homes without walls

no food no drinking water  
no helpno hope

the children reach for us  
the mothers weep

the casual government  
yawns its platitudes

A reaction to the deplorable response  
to help Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria 2017.

Barry Middleton

# On The Road

the rocky road I traveled  
I always took the dare  
I climbed up on a mountain  
and turned the devil's stare

I swam the muddy river  
and fought the cruel riptide  
through every single journey  
someone was by my side

the war that tried to take me  
would lose that battle too  
for I was not forsaken  
of all that I held true

I did a few good deeds  
mistakes I made were few  
a strong hand always helping  
his name I never knew

but still the third man factor  
is watching over me  
and he will pull me through  
till heaven sets me free

~~~~~

The Third Man factor refers to reported situations where an unseen presence such as a spirit provides comfort or support during traumatic experiences.

Barry Middleton

On The Wind

the sun is bravely fading now
the air is cold and clear
and I will hide myself indoors
though I have naught to fear

no fear today to hold at bay
for I have seen the end
unlike the sun there is no show
when mortal men descend

and death is a familiar road
I see the final bend
beyond a bridge I roam no more
as every path must end

and so I watch the setting sun
with very few regrets
for every man must pass this way
though every man forgets

but if you grieve my going forth
then know I can be found
upon the wind on winter days
out where the sun goes down

Barry Middleton

One Candle

one candle still can light a room
one candle burns and it may know
outside the world is indigo
beneath a cloak of somber gloom

the sun is hiding in the east
no hint as yet that she will rise
her golden hair and flashing eyes
will soon illuminate the skies

I'll be outdoors to see her then
the goddess is my morning friend
and I must worship her at dawn
Aurora walks upon my lawn

a single candle stays the dark
to quietly wait Aurora's light
a song sung by the meadowlark
and hope and faith to end the night

Barry Middleton

One Law

If I could peel away the sky,
what might I see?

An angel resting in the clouds,
a golden throne?

The spirit and the stars decree
a dome of blue.

Upon the earth one law lives on,
humanity.

And that is obvious and clear,
one race, one law.

It matters not to name a god
we do not know.

The Universe is mystery enough
for me.

Barry Middleton

One Or Two

My loves live on in clearest memory,
for I have not forgot what used to be.
And though my hair is gray, my spirit weak,
I still will cherish all of whom I speak.
Yes, I remember every night of bliss,
and passion in their touch and in their kiss.
In age a man is left with only dreams
that quietly flow like wistful midnight streams.
I must confess that there were one or two,
that now add up to dreams of quite a few.

Barry Middleton

One Star

the mist reveals
one star
yet I see
beyond the cloud

a billion galaxies
shine
but this one star
is mine

so I depend on it
its light
proclaims my path
toward home

its fire
blesses the earth
with care and hope
for every prayer

I need that
lasting pledge
to listen
and to touch

I need one star
not cryptic skies
a universe
without disguise

Barry Middleton

Only The Dying Smile At Death

only the dying smile at death
it hurts too much to cry

I do not claim to be in pain
I know this lullaby

I know I drift into the night
not many seasons hence

so please don't take away from me
my smiling self defense

there is no need for frowns or tears
so ditch the cancer face

though I'm not happy I'm resigned
my smile you can't erase

Barry Middleton

Only Words

the kisses fly away like birds
into a darkened firmament

documenting the flirtation
for day was but an ornament

and tenderness is memory
a feather blowing in the wind

tossed and tortured in a storm
where exhausted love must end

all that soars someday escapes
song and passion find crescendo

fading love and cold migrations
will go the way the seasons go

so love must always end in grief
the kisses fly away like birds

as wings ascend a dying breeze
and lips are left with only words

Barry Middleton

Order

we seek refuge from chaos
but chaos is our mother
in the gray cloud wind stirs
seabirds spin and cry

we may wish it otherwise
still there is no song here
no song but the push of air
dumb and blind as reflex

the flag streams in a rush
then sags into exhaustion
the tree is a sturdy cross
where we hang our honor

there is no silence on earth
but wind and tree and bird
do not yield a single word
the whistle of wind no tune

arrogance might weep at this
and claim we are abandoned
yet we are part of a universe
and it will never leave us

humility requires we shelter
shelter in the word of chaos
and make our song ring forth
in symphonies of life and dust

Barry Middleton

Osprey

Morning sky,
bright sun,
fish eagle
of the marsh
flying low.
Its catch,
silver prey,
hangs from
talon strength.
Sepia and bay,
white bellied,
bandit masked,
dappled mosaic
beneath wings.
An intimation
that worship
needs only
the sky.

Barry Middleton

Out Of My Element

I am not lost for I remember all
but age and grim fatigue
remove me from my world

I close my eyes to see
the slow black waters of my home
the egret searches the shallows

overhead the osprey soars
the multitude of fish
have always fed these creatures

there are no managers
no delivery trucks
bringing what the swamp may need

the mighty alligator is satisfied
deer and turkey roam the banks
the squirrel stores its winter acorns

there is abundance here
that tells me Eden is not dead to us
in a palmetto thicket a panther sleeps

although I know I cannot go
when I gaze into the darkened night
I remember all the lessons learned

Barry Middleton

Over Jordan

a river of death runs
with blood
descending to Galilee

its grace is ravaged
no pristine cascade
flows from the mountain

for again this chalice
of sacred waters
is polluted by terror

god's garden withers
in the drought
war stained by hatred

there is no baptism
no salvation to come
for the unrepentant

no promised land waits
where a flood of tears
poisons the acrid sea

Barry Middleton

Overcast

the shadows disappeared all day
the world flattened like a photograph
and people seemed to move more slowly
as if the cloud's depression followed them

the air was warm but seemed unfriendly
an old man was lost in foggy thought
and did not tip his battered gray hat
the cat sat on his mat where he always sat

even the flowers turned to gray despair
the weight of hopelessness bore down
some gave way to thoughts of old betrayal
regret is easily found on dreary days

there was something in that ashen overcast
a mystery to hide the sun and solemn truth
until a muted sound like distant playful wind
whispered with the din of children laughing

Barry Middleton

Overwhelmed

the stars shine down in silent scorn
an echo in the wild
no homage to creation's grace
and gratitude exiled

mankind destroys the soul of life
the waters turned to death
the air is filled with toxic blight
polluting every breath

beyond the sea the wars endure
and blood runs in the street
distrust betraying brotherhood
where fear and hatred meet

at home a madman prowls the land
to shatter peaceful day
the bullets fly and children die
when terror comes our way

but surely stars must have a plan
to save the unprepared
so let us pray the stars have hope
and pardon is declared

Barry Middleton

Owl

Big psychotic eyes and vicious beak,
you convey terror to the lesser species.

Feathers askance like a professor's hair,
affected garb in drab shades of tweed.

A countenance resonating superiority
brings fear and obedience to the forest.

The peonage of mice and mute frogs
hear Armageddon in your question.

Who, is all you say. Who will it be?
Shadowy creatures find their burrows.

I alone stand tall in the frightened night.
Unafraid I face your pompous glare.

Barry Middleton

Palm Warbler

they are like feathered
over active children

the way they dart about
bobbing their dun tails

they never sit for a second
their song is high and faint

a cheeping that sounds
yellow like their breast

they dart away from me
in a naughty guilty panic

caught stealing pine nuts
ashamed and a bit scared

Barry Middleton

Palmyra

laid waste by terror and war
an ancient city
built on Neolithic memory
astride the Silk Road
lies in utter destruction

these ancient ruins
were not human beings
yet their desecration
is almost as great an evil as death
they cannot be renewed

the Great Colonnade
the Temple of Bel
lie in rubble
only the archway stands
and so there must be grieving

Barry Middleton

Pangaea Fantasy

Continents of experience separate us
and no Pangaea embraces mankind.
Can we reach for the horizon
and behold a brother there?
Can we look with hopeful eyes,
and find transcendence,
a longing for pacific dreams,
archetypal visions,
a time when oceans were rivers,
an inconvenient blue divide
between tribes of one lineage?

Some men still dream a bigger dream,
and now and then will nominate salvation
to be voted on in beer halls, bedrooms
and breakfast meetings.
Now and then the dreamer steps up
against the naysayers and money mongers,
against hatred, favoring love,
the long house and the harvest table.

Another hand reaches out for redemption,
a millennial tide of doubt and fear pulls it down
and threatens half of what we are
or could become.
Can touch heal, can muscle work in unison,
can our common enemies be pain,
hunger, loneliness, greed and cruelty?
Pangaea waits, the continents are moving.

Barry Middleton

Panic 2 A.M.

when I think of all the stories
I have heard the travelers tell
I know all there is of heaven
I know all I need of hell

but I believe I see the ending
you know a storm is coming soon
that old willow tree is bending
I hear a wildcat's angry howl

elusive sleep is just an eyeball
glowing red into the gloom
hopeless shadows spin a nightmare
softly creeping to my room

after midnight lurks a power
beyond the pale of grace or sin
it's a brooding evil hour
I call it panic 2 A.M.

I am caught up in a cyclone
too much pain and emptiness
my brain is whirling caught in exile
a dark vortex of loneliness

did that hand I held a moment
traveling on the road to glory
ever know I heard their tale
ever hear my own sad story

it is late at night and calling
is the wildcat's lonely growl
night time shadows surely falling
the cat is answered by the owl

after midnight lurks a power
beyond the pale of grace or sin
it's a brooding evil hour
I call it panic 2 A.M.

every man is just an island
whirlpool eddies guard the reef
hungry dragons by the wayside
forked tongues and no relief

I know the hurricane is coming
lizard fire to burn the earth
storm cloud thunder distant drumming
fire and ice and no rebirth

the gyre will churn the muddy water
eye wall screams and anvil sounds
the wild cat cowers in an alley
a rumbling wave throughout the town

after midnight lurks a power
beyond the pale of grace or sin
it's a brooding evil hour
I call it panic 2 A.M.

memories' colors all are fading
wind whipped rags upon a line
hail and lightning now retreating
like the windstorm in my mind

the wildcat's track has all but vanished
the owl is nowhere to be seen
the lizards lick their tongues and wonder
was mankind a futile dream

the stories idiots must tell us
of life's glory and it's pain
recycle with galactic nova
the wanton cities of the plain

after midnight lurks a power
beyond the pale of grace or sin
it's a brooding evil hour
I call it panic 2 A.M.

Pantomime And Song

did you ever hear a pantomime
yes that may seem impossible
but music plays within my mind

saints and sinners gather there
and it may seem improbable
the devil sneers and sits upon a chair

on His throne the God of Love
declares the soul unstoppable
and reassures from up above

it's just a dream but maybe so
a riddle quite unsolvable
we wait to see until we finally know

I am not troubled by the rest
the maze contains no obstacles
I know I always did my very best

in between we carry on
for life can be most tolerable
just learning pantomime and song

Barry Middleton

Papa's Chair

no one sits
in Papa's chair
yet there is
a lesson there

tradition carries
on it seems
seasons pass
death redeems

a generation
has to mourn
before another
man is born

still everyone
must pass away
children wonder
till this day

will I grow old
and will I die
may I sit there
and if not why

Barry Middleton

Paradise

The passion of
a flushed embrace

is paradise,
a secret place,

where reticence
within your eyes

has vanished with
our primal sighs.

Paradise
is wilderness,

and tangled arms,
and passion's kiss.

Paradise
is fragmentary,

a hidden place,
and momentary.

Barry Middleton

Party At The Lunatic Light

the teapot toker
with the chromium smoker
keeps serving lavender cake
we paid him our money
for some tupelo honey
and a bag of wake and bake

I took a few tokes
of Mr Teapot's smoke
and I was floating on a cloud
while wearing a cloak
a comedian joked
and the party got loose and loud

a brother named Woody
in a Hurricane hoodie
was rapping out a gangster beat
his girl kept the rhythm
she was right there with him
when Woody turned up the heat

a tranny named Annie
with a silicone fanny
was rocking like an old freight train
a stoned Pakistani
went looking for his granny
when the butterflies stormed his brain

we all shot the breeze
and ate some fried cheese
the munchies were long overdue
then I went haywire
the fire was getting higher
seems this crazy girl wanted to screw

now Willie G
has a PhD
and he plays Ragtime piano
he has a pickup truck

and seven hundred bucks
and drugs from Texarkana

well he played all night
till the sun was bright
and then he played some more
so I gave it a whirl
with the crazy girl
and yes I upped my score

the action's alright
at the Lunatic Light
it's the craziest bar in town
the manager is Betsy
she is Mary Lou's bestie
and everyone knows she's a clown

Mr. Teapot is strong
on that medicinal bong
and the crazy people all get along
they play funky fusion
to spread the illusion
till the sun comes up with the dawn

so come on tonight
to the Lunatic Light
it's the wildest bar around
it's a wonderful sight
Main and First on the right
it's way the hell down town

you'll have a great night
at the Lunatic Light
but don't talk to Dragline Dwight
he ain't quite right
with that stick of dynamite
and he plays with fire at the Lunatic Light

Barry Middleton

Passage

as a child I dreamed of a passage
secret and hidden from view
so I sought for it on the hillsides
and I scouted the cool morning dew

it was dark and musty and scary
but I knew that I had to go on
to a door half way to the peak
that I might depend upon

the door was rusted and creaky
and resisted my childish weight
beyond it I knew there was waiting
a reward that was surely my fate

I never did locate the passage
I will search till the day that I die
perhaps it's beyond the horizon
beneath the aloof careless sky

Barry Middleton

Passion

she came from a dream
out from the fog
white like an apparition
of desire

there was never music
till her deep breathing
stirred percussion
from the sky

there was sweetness
in her swelling kiss
like honey and the sea
in waves

scent of hair and musk
in lavender disguise
like no imagined
orchid's bloom

her touch was heat itself
adoration awakened
as my heart brimmed
with fire

Barry Middleton

Past Midnight

I stand here in the moonlight
and it is well past midnight
no one around and not a sound
to share this mystic sight

I face the night alone
I guess I should have known
quite unprepared but yet I dared
to wander far from home

the moon falls toward the west
and I have done my best
though I'll be gone before the dawn
I still have passed the test

so I will not give in
nor grieve what might have been
for there is grace within this place
where peace will soon begin

Barry Middleton

Past Tense Love

she was the first daffodil of spring
warming the melting snow

she was the hope and the promise
the golden green audacity of new leaf

she was the heat and passion of summer
the lazy breeze of an August mirage

she was the last night of passion
before falling leaves hinted of change

she was all the colors of the season
the burgundy and scarlet of maple

she was the closeness of the campfire
the body heat of lovers entwined

she was the pattern of the snowflake
ice crystals on the windowpane

she was the grace of the frozen lake
the comfort of the long winter night

Barry Middleton

Patiently Waiting

beside the lamp there sits a chair
and nothing else is waiting there

and nothing in the night's surmise
can move or entertain surprise

winter comes with stacks of books
my hat and coat are on the hooks

and nothing in the crisp fall air
can save me from the cold despair

for those who live within the mind
the shadowed night is never kind

I close the book and take my meal
and pray that I might make a deal

for if death stalks me in the night
then I will gladly quit the fight

but should I wake to more dismay
I'll try to tolerate the day

with patience for the quiet release
of painless night and endless peace

Barry Middleton

Peace In The Stars

there is peace in the stars
there is peace in the forest
there is peace in the sunset

and yet our peace is lost
the world of endless war
shall never find serenity

there is peace in the waters
there is peace in the breeze
there is peace in the sunrise

and yet the blood still flows
the sirens scream and wail
and vengeance is reborn

there is no peace in tears
there is no peace in smoke
there is no peace in terror

there is peace in the infant
there is peace in a hope
there is peace in a prayer

Barry Middleton

Peaceful Woods

The green of peaceful woods is haunting me.
The glowing gold of spring confounds the air.
For in these lonely hills, I am set free,
so high above the field of daily care.
I feel the breath of air that stirs the leaves;
and in this place in spring, my soul may mend.
I smell the dampened earth where no man grieves;
for it is here I know the gods attend.
And spring declares that life may come again;
and warns to not surrender to despair.
So here I wait and welcome light within,
a moment's whispered hope and silent prayer.

Barry Middleton

Penance

The hope I always sought
was that peace might last,
a futile pursuit of a dream.
And so as the mystics do,
I turned to peace within.

There in a studied silence,
alone with secret thoughts,
I felt the fear of death,
but saw a welcome peace.
And this was my only plea.

My tears were exhausted
from wars that never end.
For war will wait forever,
wait till the end of time,
for a final bitter penance.

Barry Middleton

Perfect As Dusk

dusk brings a memory
the smell of burning sawdust
the whistle of the lumber mill
at five o'clock

sensation and a golden sunset
mix with pain and loss
and I hear the doppler fade
of a train screaming past

grieving a long lost love
a brown skinned girl
pins a cotton blossom
into her raven hair

farm hands are heading home
and a church bell rings
something is lost there
something never found again

Barry Middleton

Perfection Image

the only perfection is
in death or in a loss

for that which has gone
always remains the same

so unrequited passions
are flames yet burning

frozen fires of the past
still unheard melodies

age marches relentless
yet in my ancient dream

a maiden's face blushes
a child is forever young

Barry Middleton

Pet

There's no one around
and the cat won't complain
if I open the window
and let in the rain.

The cat doesn't care
if I sit here and stare.
No, me and the cat,
we like it like that.

I can sleep in the day
and think in the night
and the cat doesn't worry
what's wrong or what's right.

There's no one to say
that my tuna fish salad
isn't spicy enough
or limpid or pallid,
to add mayonnaise
or improve on my ways.

And me and the cat,
we like it like that.

Barry Middleton

Phantasm

the apparition of the town
stopped to let the stars fall down

the aged poet sat bemused
by dreams and questions he perused

regardless how the cold wind blows
the songs of poets are composed

the night stands still in fantasy
of bygone tears and ecstasy

the tincture of the harvest moon
comes to end the saddest tune

but ghosts and phantoms yet abound
and wait to watch the sun go down

Barry Middleton

Phoenix

I would live again
a dusting of ash
and you with me
in a new today

how many times does the Phoenix rise
like a burnished sunrise from the sea
red eyed lavender and purple plumage

the salt white sands of home are skeletal
the Phoenix glares down from the palms
as if it could resist one more time at life

I would live again
a dusting of ash
and you with me
in a new tomorrow

at evening when the sun breaks through
the gray clouds we thought were death
lay claim to ancient resurrection myths

south in the shadowed primordial lands
a whispered chant still lingers in a mist
like a stirring of wings from a dusty nest

I would live again
a dusting of ash
and you with me
in a new forever

Barry Middleton

Pierced By A Death

lives must end in sharpened phrases
so I will write them for the funeral
another borrowed life, a death
I see the poison tearful waters

so it seems that all of life
is a funerary collection of loss
lost souls departed now
broken promises, faded hope

so bitterness is unrelieved
the final hemlock builds
like heavy metal in the gut
to be the only cause of death

yet imagination does remain
like blackest water, deep, slow
reflecting all of human pain
flowing quietly like passing time

I was a child when I pulled aside
the cistern cover to reveal
deep in the wellspring, dark
gazing back at me, myself

and that prepared me for the job
I threw a fist of dirt into the grave
and took my shovel to the task
to hide the loss and earn my way

Barry Middleton

Pigments

snow swirls in the desert
and a green eyed eagle hunts

creatures of the blue sea
claim three fourths of the planet

I touch the petal of a rose
my heart turns to a red passion

the sunrise is yellow gold
and hope is the first daffodil

death is a moonless silence
a black and empty sky

Barry Middleton

Pine

a solitary pine
stands in the palmetto

the far away sun
is warming me

I see a red-tailed hawk
low in search of prey

and finding none
it lights upon my tree

and lighting there
as I have happened by

the scene is absolute
a pine a man a bird

it does occur to me
that I might be the pine

that I might be the bird
who's looking back at me

the sun is watching too
but does not speak

Barry Middleton

Pistachio Kitty

I once held a dream
called green ice cream
the queen.

she was soft and a brat,
my little calico cat,
it seemed all my life
she redeemed.

now if I had the knack
to bring pussy cat back,
I'd give up my heart
and my soul.

for vanilla is fine
when you need to unwind,
and chocolate always is king.

but they don't make the scene,
pistachio is supreme,
and forever the dish I esteem.

Barry Middleton

Plant A New Tree

plant a new tree
someday the old one
will fall in a storm

wherever you go
plant a new tree
for tomorrow's child

I look at my new tree
I may never sit
beneath its reassurance

over there the old tree
does not tell me
who planted it

the old tree and I
will be leaving soon
the new tree will grow

in fifty years
someone will sit here
in its cooling shade

he is yesterday's child
he has become the man
who plants the trees

Barry Middleton

Planting Violets

planting violets in the night
and nothing in the world seems right
I feel I must give up the fight
I fear that I may die

the musketeers and robin hood
have left the hero neighborhood
without them I can do no good
although I often try

sometimes I feel that I'm a clown
and still the stars keep spinning 'round
and down is up and up is down
and bound I cannot fly

I can't escape I can't let go
of all the things I wished to know
so tossed within the flux and flow
I say this with a sigh

a melody from outer space
and memories I would not erase
yet come to me in this dark place
though time may pass me by

but I'm still calm and realistic
conversing with my inner mystic
while ciphering my lost logistic
to search the darkened sky

Barry Middleton

Pleas And Fate

the days the wind blew
and the rain fell
we were so young
and love was new

the arbiters of time
a life of storms
and shadows of death
mock the sublime

passion fades on a breeze
strength vanishes
then all is lost
save dreams and pleas

when hope is gone we wait
the air is still
the lovers pass
to seek their fate

Barry Middleton

Please God

Please God, can you just put me through?
I'd like to talk to Mom.

I know she's up there somewhere near.
She helps to keep me calm.

And I don't know what she might say,
but if I can connect,

then I will go along my way,
but make this call collect.

I know she would not mind a bit,
she always took my calls.

She listened to my tales of woe
each time I took my falls.

I'm in a lot of trouble now,
don't want to bother You.

But if you just hand her the phone,
she'll tell me what to do.

Please God, can you just put me through?
I'd like to talk to Mom.

I know she's up there somewhere near,
she helps to keep me calm.

Barry Middleton

Poetic Art

how must we paint astonishment
we speak about the rose
the breathlessness of love

there lies the topic of all poetry
pain encased in ice or burned by desire
the butterfly and the battlefield

astonishment is of grace and agony
poetry is the fever of obsession
an ultimatum and confession

it is tenderness or violent cruelty
the wonder of dawn and time
the serenity of twilight on the ocean

it is a vessel for jagged tears of grief
poetry is never reality or fiction
poetry is a stunned reaction to universe

Barry Middleton

Poetry

poetry is a time lapse rose
an un-budding

it is a soft focused close up
of star shine

poetry reaches for something
untouchable

it is a well of deep emotion
reflecting

it tells its story in metaphor
and image

poetry is always many sided
like crystal

it is a part of every sensation
tears and laughter

poetry records the whole of life
rage and fear

it is anguish and obsession
a desperate prayer

poetry rises above humanity
poetry has wings

Barry Middleton

Poetry #28

Poetry does not sing songs.
It sadly lacks harmonic words
to merely mock the vibrant birds.
Music is a longing removed from living,
a secret place of metered giving.
Music and song are man's long longing
for transcendent wings.

In birds the music glides
in quarter notes
and full harmonic.
So there abides
only in feathered things
songs that rise
on rhythmic wings.

Barry Middleton

Poetry Everywhere

poetry is everywhere
with a lost love
a lost childhood
it sees the future
to death and beyond

time is perfectly patient
it waits never restless
but poetry
does not know its span
the words are like a river

the river runs past time
and all that time creates
here grows the wild rose
there in the thicket
the flash of a tawny fox

none hurry save man
where all thought resides
where poetry records
the tilting universe
the river the rose the fox

Barry Middleton

Poetry Is Prayer

poetry is prayer
it is a call to universe
a call to a hidden muse
a call for meaning

poetry seeks metaphor
for what life is
from whence it came
and of its destination

the simplest poem
is solemn
like a child's question
like a profound riddle

poetry is an offering
it is like the rose
given to a lover
to proclaim desire

when hope has died
the flame of poetry
rekindles the fire
that banishes the night

like sacred books
poetry is not divine
but only seeks divinity
only reaches upward

poetry is not religion
it is not philosophy
poetry is like a painting
it is a representation

the images of a poem
are reflections of dreams
the dreams are reflections
of what might be

the poem does not explain
it imagines
it records a fantasy
and shares a unique vision

poetry is a finality
it expresses final hope
final despair
final metaphors of existence

the poem knows
the contradictions
before they are spoken
before the dream is born

poetry is written
as an ultimate epitaph
enduring beyond the grave
an attempt at immortality

Barry Middleton

Point Of View

the morning was so long ago
it has grown old before its time
it creeps along like old men do

the new born sun reached out for day
so restless for its hopeful climb
to claim a victory at noon

but then its tears began to fall
for it could see its resting place
the far horizon of the sea

and as I watch it disappear
a world away someone awakes
to greet another infant day

perhaps the coming night reveals
the secret of infinity
as morning breaks across the sea

Barry Middleton

Politico

there is a storm on the horizon
corruption undermining polemics

Caesar's ghost is set loose
wandering the Senate chambers

revenge and proxy wars
stir global fires and terrorism

our most revered institutions
are occupied by tyrants and rogues

hungry lions wait to devour us
as the house divides itself for spite

no savior inhabits the grey cloud
the thunder is a cannon's echo

vows of service and protection
are hollow and lost in the wind

this arrogance of the powerful
cannot be allowed to endure

Barry Middleton

Polyglot Of Dreams

friends and lovers lost to time
join the fretted pantomime
in this silent dream of mine

to all but me the song is mute
no one hears the somber lute
the saddest strain yet resolute

still the words are ever strange
that past and syntax rearrange
grief a dream can never change

and sadder too that time erases
memories of forgotten faces
and traces of far distant places

dreamers wake to feel the pain
and seek to memorize the strain
where facts and verities remain

Barry Middleton

Pond

At the top of the hill,
where few ever go,
time never changed the pond.
The clear waters swell
from a spring in the dell,
that runs to the valley beyond.

A rope still hangs
at the old swimming hole,
daring anyone with the nerve.
A water snake glides,
by the bank where it hides,
where a casual eye won't observe.

Ages ago,
the small rivulet
was dammed up to block the flow.
The work of a mule,
and a dream as a tool,
foretold what we all should know.

Think big and build strong,
and make a wise choice,
to hold back the waters of time.
Wherever you go,
there is treasure below,
beyond every hill that you climb.

Barry Middleton

Poor Yorick

I look at him
he looks at me
he's not the man
he used to be
poor Yorick

the jester's skull
is not unkind
he lost his soul
he lost his mind
poor Yorick

he lost his lips
he lost his skin
he's not the man
he might have been
poor Yorick

I look at him
he looks at me
I'm not the man
I used to be
poor Yorick

a silent chat
by him and me
two mindless skulls
that came to be
poor Yorick

Barry Middleton

Possibility

I might, I can, I will, I must
that's all I know that I can trust

I could, I shall, I guess, I may
and that's my answer for dismay

I dream, I try, I do, I hope
and there I find the strength to cope

Barry Middleton

Pray The Truth

in the twelfth hour
sleep captures me
and there I pray
to all indifference

there I force myself
to take a deeper breath
to find hidden strength
to tap the universe

I cannot lie in prayer
I may curse with rage
for an elusive answer
or a fool's empty plan

peace and sleep come
illusion's procession
of the dead and dying
haunt dark shadows

I wait to join them
in time's unknown
free of all deception
in that dreaming place

Barry Middleton

Prayer

I do not pray for answers
they are already here
I listen to find them

I do not pray for favors
life is the greatest gift
and life will find a way

I do not pray for peace
peace is too elusive
I search for peace of mind

I do not pray for love
love has a secret path
I strive to be more loving

I only pray for strength
I know that I am weak
I need a helping hand

Barry Middleton

Prayer Circles

like fractal images of hope
I send my plea above
to rise beyond our destiny
and grant the gift of love

the longing is a primal wish
to leave despair behind
so I implore infinity
for all of human kind

petitions spin eternally
prayer wheels beg for grace
and incense spirals to the sky
to save the mortal race

but still destruction visits us
as if no one has heard
and war arises in the east
as lords of death concurred

is this too much to ask of life
to gather `round the fire
in brotherhood as sparks ascend
and whirl within the gyre

Barry Middleton

Prayer To Love

I searched for you in every crowd
and in the silent darkened places

in cities of the empty soul
on moonless nights in nameless faces

now passion has abandoned me
and I am weary of the quest

yet I still hunger for your touch
and beg one kiss before I rest

for love is fleeting like our breath
a flirting brush with life's affair

its hiding place is never far
but easily missed by cold despair

Barry Middleton

Predators

stalking hoards are everywhere
they aim to capture prey
and carefully they lay a snare
in a game of foulest play

to steal your money or your soul
is all they think about
even if you hide or dodge
they still may find you out

beware the predatory type
and shun their evil leers
or you'll be tangled in their net
and left with only tears

it's difficult to spot these rogues
they roam both night and day
so be on guard for promises
that may lead you astray

I tell you they are everywhere
so I have gone to ground
they won't find out my hiding place
I shall not make a sound

Barry Middleton

Predestination Sonnet

the punishment is in the stars
as if I sinned before my birth
as if pain was my destiny
I came to earth already cursed

when love abandoned me it seems
for what deceit I do not know
my hope absconded with the dusk
without relief or afterglow

now night conspires to steal my breath
to rob me of life's simple joy
I find no pleasure in the breeze
where loneliness and death destroy

the stars yet twist a sharpened knife
to punish death and torture life

Barry Middleton

Prelude To A Tear

life could be quite simple
yet it is capricious

a promise is like a clay pot
waiting to be broken

regrets are motions of stars
gone awry

every rose drops its petals
into oblivion

love is a fleeting serenade
lost in a storm

a kiss is the silent prelude
to a tear

Barry Middleton

Premonition

the monster is loose, the beast
its eyes are ablaze with hatred
its heart is fire, its blood is ice

men are fools to think it sleeps
it lives in the soul of the tyrant
it feeds on lechery and power

it uses fear to build its armies
it is nourished by primal greed
it is driven by an insatiable lust

it worships deceit and duplicity
and grins from its gilded tower
to then attack on reptile wings

it laughs at those it has consumed
who cower in servile obedience
and bow before their evil master

Barry Middleton

Prepare For Death

with one last chance to be alive
how do I ready myself for death

I quietly watch the pulse of wind
and feel the rush of air like breath

my window rattle is a drum
the sound is like a beating heart

the visions that surround me here
will soon appear to play their part

the tossing trees in ecstasy
are greeted by a moonless night

they cannot see they cannot feel
they do not curse the dying light

to touch each moment passing by
can only help the soul break free

I touch and taste and know the wind
that's all that I may clearly see

Barry Middleton

Prepared For Winter

autumn has come
soon winter follows
but I am well prepared
I saw the first leaf fall

I am warm enough
my house is snug and tight
the winter wind
will lose the fight

still I do know
a longer winter comes
but I am well prepared
I had my say
I must go on my way

Barry Middleton

Presidential Advice

Please Mr President,
you lie with every breath.
The end is coming soon,
your lies will be your death.

You're no Republican,
you Nativist Whig.
You bigot, you're a fop,
in fact you are a pig.

The White House is in chaos,
and all because of you.
You owe America,
but we do not owe you.

Are you some kind of moron?
What is this all about?
They're going to impeach you,
they've going to kick you out!

Please Mr President,
give up this vain conceit.
You're pathological,
shut up and kill the tweet.

I did not vote for you,
I'd sooner have been shot,
but I give good advice,
and here's the best I've got.

Please Mr President,
just take this tip from me,
though Jesus said it best,
the truth shall set you free.

Barry Middleton

Pretense

the sun is coming up
I drop my last pretense
each day could be the last
and that's my recompense

so I must use this day
and study every mood
to find the treasure there
that hope might be renewed

it's in each breath I take
confirming simple things
a kiss before the dawn
the touch of angel wings

the sky is glowing now
the planet is alive
I welcome this new day
and all it may contrive

for I am just a man
the clouds keep drifting by
and earth grants all I need
till darkness fills the sky

Barry Middleton

Prison Of Despair

Despair has built for me a wall,
foundations laid upon the past,
till block on block it was complete,
and high and strong and built to last.

It walls me in, it walls you out,
and yes, I know I built it so,
protection from a greedy world,
the avarice of every foe.

At times it's cold behind my wall,
and lonely as the sullen grave,
but life is no less cold than death,
for grieving souls we cannot save.

And some of us are made for walls,
the prisoners of a grim despair,
constructed from a lifetime's pain.
We keep our walls in good repair.

Barry Middleton

Problem

Callousness and complacency
is a strange partnership.
One cares only for itself.
The other does not care at all.

Barry Middleton

Projections

much less than heaven I adore
but I do crave eternal life
escaping every pain and strife

and so I wander in the past
beneath a primal constellation
as stars conceal a mute salvation

there I project parental lords
begging grace and just rewards
to save me from mortality

and since I am a father too
so they must love as fathers do
and thus desire to grant my wish

my fantasy's eternal bliss
fulfilled by love and hope withal
the garden I almost recall

and yet I know this is a dream
for no projection can redeem
the grief the serpent and the fall

Barry Middleton

Prophecy

in the hot air of twilight
the news of calamity is great

silent attendants of death
come to reap their harvest

birds gather over the field
as harbingers of night

their restless undulations
flee the relentless wars

the sun shall kiss the earth
with the sacred fire of god

a baptism of sorts endures
a cleansing gift of universe

then spring descends again
on the scorched barren fields

a single seed blessed with grace
welcomes the flood of time

Barry Middleton

Protection

protect me from the wind
that lately threatens death
protect me from despair

the trees are blasted bare
the coldest rain has come
to paint the shadows black

and I cannot turn back
nor find the winter sun
nor shelter from the storm

a dark and ghostly form
as freighting as the night
is looming on the breeze

it brings me to my knees
to chant a final plea
protect me from despair

the trees are blasted bare
I seek the winter sun
my work is not yet done

Barry Middleton

Psalm Of Solitude

I live in the wilderness alone
no need or fear troubles me

safe is the forest of my home
without grief or betrayal

I have the blanket of the night
to comfort me till dawn

I face the dangers of the light
beside my fragile path

far from the ease of Eden's door
I wander free as the air

the denizens of forest I adore
are my companions

I am protected from all harm
from the evil strife of men

I yet have hope within the storm
and the peace of solitude

Barry Middleton

Purple Unicorn

I heard you were looking
for a purple unicorn
he's been here all along
since the day he was born

at times the one we seek
may be right in front of us
another one distracts
we turn and miss the bus

Chorus:

just look around
he's in the lost and found
but don't wait too long
or he'll be outward bound

sometimes your unicorn
can be so very shy
but if you stop and pet him
he'll keep coming by

you don't need to search
no not a moment more
a wiggled little finger
he'll come right to your door

Barry Middleton

Puzzle Box

I found an antique box
in a forgotten shop
no one could open it
I had to try the lock

I took it home with me
it did not cost a lot
for no one saw the use
of puzzles time forgot

I studied it a while
then put it on a shelf
I could not open it
or not all by myself

but now I know the trick
a man can't gain alone
it takes two souls to find
the path to the unknown

it does require some luck
a prayer and effort too
but two may find the key
and that's the secret clue

Barry Middleton

Quartet

1

summer revelry
a soft glass of cabernet
the taste of a kiss

2

scarlet colors weep
the tone of autumn despair
blood stain on the leaf

3

winter threatens death
faded wishes pass away
white hush and cold wind

4

a fresh bloom in spring
the gold of the green meadow
pleads and whispers hope

Barry Middleton

Questions

children ask questions
but when we grow old
we have all the answers
or so I was told
but now I am old
and what I discover
mysteries still waiting
to reveal and uncover

I still do not know
why the sky is so blue
I still do not know
why love is untrue
I still do not know
why regrets endure
why all human illness
cannot find a cure

why is there hatred
and why must we kill
and what has become
of men of good will
why cannot humanity
silently bless
one race and one planet
no one to oppress

Barry Middleton

Quiet

can wise men teach fools
can fools teach wise men

the silence of the mouse
prepares for hungry winter

wisdom isn't had by chatter
but by the hush of listening

the crane moves in grace
a solemn whisper of peace

so it is that mice and cranes
attend to the quiet spirit

wisdom is lost in clamor
the world is raucous noise

Barry Middleton

Quiet Old Man

quiet, I love that thought
day before the hurricane
a much better line than
waiting for the other shoe

I write this poem in winter
cool, quiet, Florida winter
in a few more dry months
the fire season will come

I cannot warn the children
there is nothing to warn
I smell the smoke even now
age senses ultimate defeat

noise is a child's addiction
youth is a hectic neurosis
need filled with hungry pain
searching for serene spring

the spring, the seasons pass
generations in a soft breeze
mindless of sky fire, storm
the Earth trembling in fear

there is nothing to warn
bawdy, fearless youth
gain wisdom through loss
grow to quieter places

why is silence such a fear
it is not the peace we fear
it is the mute destruction
after the storm has passed

spring comes and old men
gaze out their windows
where the flowers bloom
and children run and laugh

I will only sit and watch
young lovers passing by
the park is alive with color
no thought yet of a storm

there is nothing to warn
youth cannot learn from age
laughing, optimistic, hopeful
out to conquer our failure

life will always move along
whatever rubble remains
tomorrow dreamers will use
as a foundation for beginning

no one sees my hiding place
waiting here for quiet serenity
coming like a cosmic firestorm
of utter destruction and rest

if I am spotted in my window
a quiet old man they'll say
no one sees within my mind
the wind, the earth opening

Barry Middleton

Quiet Vengeance

the day I think the flood is done
the water gets much deeper

and all the rivers run with blood
from a cold and deadly reaper

I hear the winds no longer howl
I think the storm abates

but I was only in the eye
a second half awaits

and when I feel my pain will end
I hide from cruel deceit

with certainty the blow will come
to knock me from my feet

I seek a retribution day
when fire consumes the sky

and flood and war and evil winds
at last will finally die

Barry Middleton

Race With Shadows

I know I can't hide
from shadows inside
they follow wherever I go

and I cannot outrun
the race with the sun
time passes with little to show

I paid quite a price
perhaps once or twice
pretending like shadows pretend

but lies and deceit
I cannot defeat
till shadows have come to an end

the sun starts to fade
and shadows and shade
will drift in the pale afterglow

with daylight's retreat
the darkness is sweet
as I rest where the dark shadows go

Barry Middleton

Rage

As I now leave the stage
and step into the dark,
my passion ends with rage.

For I must turn the page,
a new path to embark,
as I now leave the stage.

Wisdom comes with age
to voice a terse remark.
My passion ends with rage.

The vision of the sage
sits lonely in the park,
as I now leave the stage.

Death will not assuage
nor make a final mark.
My passion ends with rage.

I slip the golden cage.
My new home is stark.
As I now leave the stage,
my passion ends with rage.

Barry Middleton

Rain And War

As thought is silenced by the rain,
all that's left are feelings.
The mind is empty of its pain,
the stars are gently reeling.

And peace may find the world tonight,
until the break of dawn,
then men will rise from death to fight,
as endless wars rage on.

But as I hear the peaceful rain,
I dream of times to come,
the war to wipe out every stain,
when wars at last are done.

It ends in fire and ice they say,
so I am safe from flood,
when Armageddon comes our way,
consuming flesh and blood.

Barry Middleton

Rain Crow

the rain crow feels the secret wind
that gathers in a distant land

beyond its southern woodland home
as gods and demons make a stand

from Africa across the sea
there stirs a mystic tropic breeze

with force of searing desert heat
and steam beneath the cotton trees

the rain crow knows the time has come
for soon the hail and lightening fall

its mournful cry throughout the wood
is warning of the coming squall

now in the east the storm will rise
to churn the waters near the shore

and I must thank the rain crow's call
as I take heed and bolt the door

Barry Middleton

Rain Gods

I think that it will storm tonight
a change of season comes
I hear a rumble to the north
where rain gods beat their drums

a drought has parched a grieving earth
and fire has scorched the land
as smoke and ash ignored my prayer
awaiting this command

the moods of weather come and go
like luck and life and death
just when we think the end has come
the storm will gather breath

the rain has come too late for me
but that is quite alright
at least tomorrow gets relief
the rain will fall tonight

Barry Middleton

Rain Kisses In The Eyes Of Fire

there are certain things that inspire
and rain is one of them
and your soft kiss was like the muse
infused with images
then the sun painted the bland clouds
with a firestorm

and your eyes flashed with secrets
known only by you
there was heat in passion and desire
and breathlessness
so when wind blew over the water
there was a question

and when you vanished in the snow
in dark silhouette
then the song was a violin weeping
with grief's melody
and the last burgundy of the maple
gave up its leaf

Barry Middleton

Rain On The Bayou

the far side of the bayou
beneath the cypress tree
where destiny is watching
something waits for me

it could be love or death
a land of feathered green
in shadows left behind
or just a ghostly dream

deep in the cypress dome
are secrets never known
and buried in the garden
where mysteries are grown

dark rain is gently falling
dark water everywhere
no matter what awaits
I yet will raise my prayer

the far side of the bayou
something waits for me
it could be love or death
that comes to set me free

Barry Middleton

Rain Tree

Besides the fact my father always wished to
grow one far above its temperate range,
I always wondered why the rain tree
held my fascination so.

A modest tree in size, not particularly beautiful,
it is drab for most of a year.

Yet in fall the yellow blooms consume last year's
memory, and imbue the sky and earth
with flowers live and dying.

Like a fragrant snow, a saffron tenderness kisses
the earth beneath the homely branches.

The tree grows large in beauty only,
unlike the movie giant where metaphor of size
misstates majesty.

And as the weeks go by, the falling blooms
transform to russet parchment pods
that rustle and whisper in the breeze
and house the seeds for future generations.

Perhaps my father knew that in the fall the rain
tree claims two final shows, a fevered golden
symphony that fades to bittersweet and blushing
hopefulness.

Barry Middleton

Rain Whispers

Rain whispers on the roof,
and if I listen carefully,
I know it only speaks the truth.

It is a sound beyond the ages,
primal as the gentle wind,
wise as all our earthly sages.

It comes to tell us of the gift,
the greening land, the blue of sea,
the firmament and clouds adrift.

It hints of all the fragile things,
the treasure of the path of time,
the silent joy a whisper brings.

Barry Middleton

Rainbow

where a rainbow starts or ends
nobody really knows
it's born in mist and emptiness
out where a cold wind blows

like trust and hope and mystery
this bridge of fragile light
must fade into infinity
and vanish from our sight

though cryptic and ephemeral
it always leaves its mark
to draw our eyes into the skies
where miracles embark

Barry Middleton

Rainbow Cats And Paisley Frogs

children are painting rainbow cats
chasing psychedelic frightened mice
trimmed in lace and Caribbean spice

and waiting in the sequined palms
is a glitter bomb in a tropical storm
the possibility of a purple unicorn

decorated in atomic emeralds
fantasy lives in a bright paisley frog
scarlet stockings on a sassafras log

if all of this wonder still isn't enough
look to the sky for magical streamers
seabirds in air are periwinkle dreamers

Barry Middleton

Rainbow Swim

With the gold of the morning sunrise,
and a mist blowing off of the bay,
I am swimming beneath a rainbow,
all the wealth of the world
is coming my way.

A drizzle of rain gently falls,
and time has slackened its pace,
and I would not exchange with any man,
the moment, the treasure and grace.

Barry Middleton

Raintree Bloom

the budding of the raintree
marks another year

and I hear children playing
without conceit or fear

raintrees only bloom in fall
then the cold winds blow

innocence and blossoms fade
like love from long ago

seasons pass as children grow
soon there comes a change

that nothing in the will of man
can alter or arrange

raintree blooms can never last
but move aside for spring

to never know the afterglow
that spring and children bring

Barry Middleton

Rainy Day Books

the rain can't wash the tears away
they hide behind a wall
where sorrow lurks on stormy days
as wicked torrents fall

I fool myself to think I'm safe
for rainy days bring grief
in memories from the raging sky
no shelter grants relief

the past seeps in from misty clouds
and there is no defense
it creeps in shadows down the hall
although I make pretense

perhaps a book might comfort me
and lift me from myself
I light the lamp and quietly stray
to see what's on the shelf

and then a clash of lightning strikes
and then the thunder roars
I find a book and take my chair
so glad to be in doors

then sorrow and the hours fade
until the storm has passed
but since rain comes another day
my store of books is vast

Barry Middleton

Rainy Mood

my hope is yet
in keeping

a prayer
without an end

as now the sky
is weeping

and rainy moods
descend

but spring
is gently creeping

the willows
blow and bend

and seeds
are quietly sleeping

till spirit blooms
ascend

Barry Middleton

Rare Prize

I found a few diamonds,
very rare and remote.
I heard cherished gems
that I often do quote.

I met priceless people,
and I loved quite a few,
some brilliant with luster,
the gold shining through.

Hard days were a weight,
like the stone from a mill.
Still there is a soft space
where the soul has its fill.

I found a rare bounty,
nearly hidden from light.
I searched remote places,
till the prize was in sight.

Now I tally my treasures,
the memories enchanted,
the joy and the wealth,
the blessings life granted.

Barry Middleton

Raven Riddle

Sable child of fantasy,
you never rode a natal wave,
you never suckled human flesh,
you slept within and black without
and wondered at the world about you.
And yet you wondered not at all
resting in a bottle by the wall.
Darkness born upon a page,
a saving breath upon my age.
All of flashing sloe eyed beauty,
feminine, naked,
no regret,
ebony body,
hair of jet.
When knowing too much
won't let me rest
but I would sooner
lie awake than die,
come raven dreams
to set me free,
dark paragon of ecstasy.

Barry Middleton

Reality

when all reality stood still
then my reality was yours

and our reality was all
the tide surrendered to a kiss

a foggy glow beyond deceit
revealed to me a masquerade

I knew a moment in mirage
I saw a stranger in your eyes

deception wedded to desire
as wind enticed the dying leaves

and one familiar silhouette
dissolved into a distant cloud

Barry Middleton

Reality And Fantasy

reality and fantasy
mixing with infinity
gently pour into a quiet dream

a simple stream the dawning hour
welcomes now the sunlight's power
as if there is a final secret scheme

a child is standing where I stood
surveying everything he should
perhaps to see through time my hiding place

I wish to help him to be strong
but I know he will get along
but now he cannot know the fate I face

is this a wall or heaven's gate
I guess that I may have to wait
but I see clearly now where I must go

there is just one more bridge to cross
until I am no longer lost
then I discover all I wish to know

Barry Middleton

Reborn

they say we get one chance at life
but I am not so sure
we know the body truly dies
but might the soul endure

the body's dust returns to dust
we choose what is believed
the spirit just may be reborn
as new life to conceived

I do not know what heaven holds
I believe it is on earth
and that would be enough for me
my soul transformed in birth

somewhere the eyes are closed in death
somewhere a child is born
the spirit's journey never ends
but wakes to greet the morn

Barry Middleton

Receding Dream

Poets are given the gift of vision
and the curse of melancholy.
We see the possibility of peace,
but war is an eternal monument.
We see the possibility of love,
but lovers pass away like seasons.
We approach the clouded mountain,
yet are denied the summit.
We know that suffering could cease,
yet we watch the world bleeding.
And so we mourn the waste of life,
the tears of selfish pride.
We mourn the greed of humankind,
for earth is an abundant garden.
And too we long for youth again,
yet we know that cannot be.
So in the end, vision is a curse,
we reach for a receding dream.

Barry Middleton

Receding Wave

The wave recedes into the sea,
along with love that used to be.
The sun recedes behind the cloud,
and life recedes beneath the shroud.

A cruel and godless penalty
conspired to steal my love from me,
as if she were a falling leaf,
a passing season without grief.

The sea is salted by my tears,
with loss of love and fading years.
And heaven hides beyond the gray,
to shed no light on my dismay.

And deep within the mist and foam,
I wander searching for my home,
a shack beside the bleached debris,
of pain and loss and destiny.

Barry Middleton

Recompense

the lessons of life
are mastered by few
it is hard to let injuries go

yet all of the slights
do not matter a bit
as a final wind starts to blow

I try but fall short
at forgiveness and grace
but I never succeed at that

if you feel the same
when I pass you by
just smile as I tip my hat

in the end how we fail
drifts away on the wind
so I hope no one took offense

now I will step aside
as the gray clouds arise
allowing the storm's recompense

Barry Middleton

Recycle

Lonely rivers do not grieve
but flow to mother sea.
The lonely life that I must leave
conspires to set me free.

The river passes by a brook
and takes its living there
and does not lend a backward look
and has no sense to care.

A river and a man are one
and go the way they must.
When eulogy is said and done
the waters are a trust.

A borrowed soul will bless the sand
collected at the sea;
the skeletal remains of man
are setting fishes free.

Barry Middleton

Refugee

I leave behind the rubble of my home,
the broken dust was once four sturdy walls.

Ahead may lie my freedom or my death,
behind me is a land where darkness falls.

Behind me are the dying and the dead,
starvation and the hopelessness of thirst.

Ahead two thousand miles of dangers lurk,
still I will never ask why we were cursed.

I must be strong though we have nothing now,
but just the love within a family.

And that will see us through the foreign lands,
to safety and our final destiny.

I take with me my wife and daughter too,
my infant son, and hope to light the way.

Together we'll endure this brutal path,
we have been blessed with yet another day.

Barry Middleton

Regret

as fire ignites the stars
with fantasy
I sense a final dream
at apogee

I find that I can fly
above my fears
and looking down I see
the vanished years

men may claim they feel
not one regret
but if we could go back
and not forget

would even one of us
not change our road
and so avoid life's pain
and heavy load

we all have our regrets
do not deny
and everyone of us
one day will die

and then we lose the chance
to set things right
the strongest man alive
must quit the fight

make your amends
before that final day
and it is best to act
without delay

Barry Middleton

Relativity

Creation does not roll the dice
with universe and time.

We need no Einstein quantum test
to ferret the sublime.

Just use God's gift a tiny bit,
and it may come to you.

It is as plain as day to me,
as clear as skies of blue.

For He most surely plays a game,
the rules are 'do not peek'.

And anyway He can't be seen,
His game is hide and seek.

Barry Middleton

Relativity 2

Poetry is tangential.
It does not follow life
like a faithful dog.
Poetry is thought at
escape velocity.
The appearance is
rising above.
The reality is
breaking away.

Barry Middleton

Reprieve

the sun defeats the storm
as clouds transform to white
and now the gentle breeze
proclaims an ancient rite

despair came with the gale
but only found defeat
the demons fade from view
with death in blind retreat

though fear shall come again
still I embrace this day
to breathe the peaceful air
forestalling final gray

Barry Middleton

Resignation

On the edge of a cliff,
on the edge of a night,
a dark little cabin
is edged by my light.

So close to the edge
of destruction it stood
that I feared that my light
might do it no good
but tumble it headlong
with splintering wood
down rocks to the river
and end it for good.

And I wondered a man
should pick such a site
to lay his head down
for even a night.

But the storm at my back
convinced me to stay,
to die in the night
if death came my way.

Barry Middleton

Resisting The Siren

I

I would refuse the siren's call,
the beckoning of an earthen wall.
Come, she sings, come with me,
enchanted fog will set you free.

II

Instead I listen to the wind
for it is not deception's kin.
Its messenger is true and wise.
Death awaits in mist and lies.

III

Life ascends on a spring breeze
without a call for bended knees.
Without demand, its quiet smile
is a gift of love bereft of guile.

IV

A goddess and an evil scheme,
a golden apple and a dream,
still linger deep in Eden's shade
until the time the debt is paid.

V

The alluring hiss of a pale serpent
is resting there without dissent,
torn between the earth and cloud,
where hints of wisdom are avowed.

VI

Men, like snakes, are hypnotized
by secrets in a maiden's eyes,
the universe and mystery
revealed as if she heard their plea.

VII

Still I never found the sage
who could unravel in his age

timeless knots of questioning
fading love and seasons bring.

VIII

Planets turn and sirens call,
men stand weeping at the wall,
and voices whisper in the fall
that is all of all, and that is all.

IX

Beneath an ancient hollow oak,
I smile and mull an inner joke
that knows what I cannot relate
in setting suns that cannot wait.

□

X

The student has become the teacher,
but deep within this muted preacher,
now grown wizened, lame and weak,
are secrets that I know to keep.

Barry Middleton

Restless Tide

the tide is restless turning in its sleep
the rippled moon sits on the horizon
and in the eerie light
the dawn is not awake

from where I stand atop a grassy dune
the sound of gentle lapping waves
is faintly heard above the hush
where liquid silver whispers

no man may know its secret message
it hides in moonlit waters
on an empty and foreign beach
translated by the darkened tide

Barry Middleton

Retreat

Somewhere a cottage painted white,
that sits nearby an ebon stream,
is waiting in a misty light,
that all the pain of life redeems.

I've only seen it in a dream,
a dream relieving every plight.
But is it real, or does it seem
a frail illusion in the night?

Somewhere a cottage painted white,
a sun that makes the waters gleam,
awaits to make the darkness bright,
to save me from an evil scheme.

I've only seen it in a dream,
but it may be within my sight,
or such the fantasy must deem,
that I entreat with all my might.

Barry Middleton

Retreating

every time love smiled at me
my heart would soon be broken

for every whispered promise made
a pale deceit was spoken

so I retreat into myself
beyond that vagrant notion

to cherish lonely peaceful night
barring a lover's token

the breast of dusk is falling fast
on a wide and silent ocean

as I embrace a dreamer's death
and a necromancer's potion

Barry Middleton

Return

I'd rather not return
my neighbors went to see
the chimney toppled over
the fallen pecan tree

the room where we had supper
collapsed beneath the weight
the storm had smashed it all
my mother's garden gate

the landscape turned asunder
by cruel tornadic wrath
that I could never find
my childhood woodland path

in my enchanted forest
the trees are bleached like chalk
the brush reclaims the ruins
where barefoot I would walk

but still the creek is flowing
adventure all around
another boy is wandering
to see what can be found

Barry Middleton

Return Postcard

ghost upon the hill departed
yes the bones do lie
disheartened and discarded

autumn has no sharper smell
to consecrate the frost
wherein our souls must dwell

to bleached bones left behind
and time's beguiling wind
progeny is blind

grief salvation prayer and tears
can never consecrate
the finality of years

so the house where we endured
where fallen spirits failed
is evermore obscured

Barry Middleton

Reunion

I lost you on a chilly night
in autumn

now only in my dreams may you
appear

but I will always search for you
at evening

a spirit love to banish earthy
fear

I'll see you on the other side
of midnight

I'll be there in the silent clouds
of time

I'll find you in the mist of early
morning

I'll hold you in my wistful dreams
and rhyme

Barry Middleton

Revolution

revolution has not yet come
war lingers in a faraway land

just down the selfish street
hungry families await mercy

evolution has not yet filled
our hearts with compassion

poets search for a voice
screaming empty phrases

resolution floats in a breeze
turning its back to the wind

grief spills from tender blood
hopeful lives put on the line

absolution forgets its power
far beyond an insular hatred

Barry Middleton

Revolution 2

it may start with a shout
it may start with a fire

it may start with a whisper
it may start with a ripple

it is driven by moral anger
till rage becomes a flood

it cannot be stopped
it is a wave of humanity

the power is like water
like the power of the sea

gods do not aid justice
that is up to us

it is not found in wishes
it begins with our defiance

Barry Middleton

Rising

A wave is rising.
Crescendos of voices cry out
for peace and love and brotherhood.

A day is coming,
all humanity as equals,
the rubble of walls will be a bridge.

A realization is rising.
Our hearts are all the same.
People are joining hands and singing.

The human race is rising.
We rise from the ashes of hatred.
Beyond the smoke of the past lies hope.

Barry Middleton

Rituals

in the smoky evening
you find them
gathering like seagulls
at the shore

they are
the young and old
some sheltered
in the shade
of a tiki hut

they are all waiting
they wait
for the green flash
they wait
for the fruit drink
spiked with rum

the young women
look across a shoulder
at their lovers
waiting

the old men study it all
then turn again
to the setting sun

Barry Middleton

River

I rose in the swamp
where few ever go
far up a lost valley
where dark ferns grow

I spoke to the rocks
I called to the birds
and I silently sang
without any words

I carved the oxbow
poured over the ledge
till I was a bayou
surrounded by sedge

the end of my psalm
is a bright melody
I return to my mother
a warm turquoise sea

Barry Middleton

River Blues

I got the blues, I got the blues
no one to travel on with me

I got the blues, I got the blues
no one to travel on with me

I know the blues will take me down
they might as well just set me free

I drifted past the delta towns
on down that Mississippi run

I drifted past the delta towns
on down that Mississippi run

I hit a deadhead in the water
it sunk my boat, my trip was done

the blues had put me on the island
the muddy water all around

the blues had put me on the island
the muddy water all around

I should have never left my home
for now a friend just can't be found

now in the spring the river rises
and it will bring my body home

now in the spring the river rises
and it will bring my body home

the blues are sure to take me down
and then no longer will I roam

the blues are like the river's tears
they never give, they only take

the blues are like the river's tears
they never give, they only take

they pull me down to New Orleans
they take my soul into their wake

I got the blues, I got the blues
no one to travel on with me

I got the blues, I got the blues
no one to travel on with me

I know the blues won't let me go
they might as well just set me free

Barry Middleton

Rivulet

I claimed a rivulet
it was too small
too meek for fish

it held minnows
a sleepy salamander
and skittish frogs

it meandered
like a child
valley trapped

it flowed timidly
over bright gravel
till rain came

then it roared
like muddy death
swirling

it carried wishes
of infant poetry
and hope

it flowed to a creek
the grown up
waters

it rushed to the river
with a dream
and a prayer

Barry Middleton

Road Crew

Mississippi in August was dusty hot
we took our lunch beneath an oak
the prisoners and I

they managed good cheer, laughing
joking about what they would do
when they got out

if ever a man needed a beer, they did
black skin in black and white stripes
working in the swelter

so on that final summer day of work
I bought the beer, one apiece
like it was just a movie

Barry Middleton

Roaming

I was a child who loved to roam
a little more each year

expanding circles here and there
I never had much fear

but it can happen to the strong
the world comes crashing in

I did get bruised and so confused
no answers hid within

and so I went a different way
got lost and took my knocks

I took so many alleyways
I landed on the rocks

but then one day I found myself
I looked down from a hill

my childhood valley waited there
the dream I would fulfill

sometimes I close my eyes to see
for it was always there

sometimes I only have to reach
to find my answered prayer

Barry Middleton

Robbery

you took my song away
and left without a care

you took away the rose
and left me with despair

for hope is banished now
a diamond turned to coal

the strength I had is gone
my courage and my soul

within the vicious crowd
and menaced by my fear

you robbed me of my life
and purloined every tear

you shattered all my joy
and drifted from my sight

the image of your smile
has vanished in the night

my grief almost complete
yet hunts me down by day

in memories of love
that will not steal away

Barry Middleton

Rock And Roll

the song I want to play
aches for harmony
but I will keep on singing
till life abandons me

freedom is an angel
coming to my dream
serenity's protection
against an evil scheme

they say we get too old
for rock and roll
and music has an end

but if truth be told
I still have soul
or so I can pretend

evening is a dream
there I play my song
I must keep on singing
till death will take me home

midnight brings an angel
to sing along with me
and I am young again
and I again am free

they say we get too old
for rock and roll
and music has an end

but if truth be told
I still have soul
or so I can pretend

when the sun is fading
the melody is mine
I close my eyes and pray

for music is divine

the band is tuning up now
soon we start to play
and rock on till the sunrise
to welcome one more day

they say we get too old
for rock and roll
and music has an end

but if truth be told
I still have soul
or so I can pretend

Barry Middleton

Rosebud In The Snow

I cannot see the snow
but if I could I'd go

inside a a crystal globe
I'd watch the magic show

for there the whiteness falls
so safe beneath the glass

I would not feel the cold
but I'd relive the past

I need the fantasy
the snow globe speaks to me

of winters long ago
this rosebud in the snow

Barry Middleton

Roses

the autumn is not a season of roses
the spring is far way

the colors of the fall are beautiful
but they are not like roses

though I could have a hot house rose
I prefer the wild and rambling

there is something about the rose
the red of passion the white of innocence

a rose is the sweet perfume of love
and the thorn concealed by leaf

despite its intoxicating audacity
I reach out to the rose

despite the toxic painful thorn
I yet await the spring and roses

I will endure this season of burgundy
and earth tones of the coming cold

I will endure the blanketed winter night
till roses come again to flaunt their light

Barry Middleton

Roses For Poetry

No more her poems capture me,
within a spellbound dream,
no more to send me soaring high,
to lands I've never seen.

No more to hold me in a trance,
her song alive with fire,
her melody has vanished now,
like cold and lost desire.

No more she comes to comfort me,
to banish every fear.

No more will whispers of her verse,
cause me to shed a tear.

Her poetry is lost in death;
and here upon the tomb,
dark roses wither with the cold,
yet never more to bloom.

Barry Middleton

Roses, Words, And Shadows

A whisper from the hush of vanished day,
becomes the language of reality.
A plaintive shadow must remember me.

The rose has come to mock mortality,
to shed its bloom before the end of May
as heat consumes and summer winds betray.

Then silence falls and shadows go their way,
and love becomes a prayer and desperate plea
beyond the lonely sea's divinity.

Still I await the final cruel decree.
But gods withhold the answer to dismay,
as roses, words, and shadows fade away.

Barry Middleton

Royalty Of Night

When darkness falls and shadows flee,
and colors take a somber tone,
I know the force that sets men free,
I see it in the violet of dusk.

The sky of noon was newborn blue,
but now it takes a bishops hue,
and struggles imperially
with the red sunset till purple falls.

The sky is coronate with rays of light,
and though it soon casts off its robe,
and sets aside the crown of day,
yet never does it forsake its majesty.

Content, the king of evening reigns
but for a moment in glowing flame
till night impeaches rule of day
and the dark nocturnal dominion
is free to cast its diamonds in the sky.

Barry Middleton

Ruins

the past is a ruin
we cannot return
the land is bramble
a sunken farm house

a house can be rebuilt
but not the same house
not childhood's house
the past is a lost ruin

mistakes and regret
fashion the rubble
like random bricks
from fallen chimneys

odd dreams tease
rooms near forgotten
even in my sleep
I cannot find home

Barry Middleton

Rules

Rules are made by fools,
but with the best intention,
to save some other fool
from crisis intervention.
For if the fool was free
to make his own free choice,
you know he'd mess it up
without some foolish voice
to tell him of the rule
that keeps him safe from harm
concocted by the idiots
who run the funny farm.

Barry Middleton

Running Out Of Inspiration

running out of inspiration means something
must be coming to an end

I hate that feeling of déjà vu but here we go
again

I never know the end is coming before it gets
here

it's a feeling like a waterfall is up ahead and
I'm canoeing

or I'm stuck on the train track and the car
wont start

that's how I know I must be in a really good
movie

I never can figure out who did it or how the
good guy is going to get away

love affairs end that way with a business as
usual sunrise

then you get that odd look or someone says we
need to talk

she says we need to talk but I would rather be
run over by a truck

once that's been said there's nothing left to
talk about

you can hear the inspiration leaving like air
escaping a flat tire

there's nothing left but suitcases and sad
paperwork

isn't life just a constant series of surprises
and disasters

so that is the way it ends like the poet said
with a blind side whimper

and I am running out of inspiration but what
does that mean

where does the next poem come from or the
final love affair

it's intermission time and the reels are being
changed

or maybe the movie is over and the next feature
is about to start

and then I realize I never see the end coming
but I never see the beginning

maybe there is just enough time to get a coke
and some Whoppers

Barry Middleton

Sabotage

It must be sabotage
that came

in stealthy camouflage
to maim.

It hides behind a lie,
a kiss,

just like a foreign spy,
or bliss.

A traitor flees as dreams
betray,

like hopes and schemes
of yesterday.

The poison soon will seize
the brain

beyond all urgent pleas
and pain.

The saboteur then fades
like smoke

into the masquerade's
cruel joke.

Barry Middleton

Sacred Woods

in sacred woods there is a whispered voice
where I might closely listen to the wind

and with it comes a message to rejoice
for deep in its embrace the soul may mend

and filtered by the trees a hallowed light
casts golden spears and shadows to the earth

and every gleaming leaf reveals its might
where dryads trace the legacy of birth

it's long ago that I would lose myself
within that grove to ponder lessons there

recorded for my notebook on a shelf
beside the burdens that a man must bear

but when the seasons turn and darkness falls
my notebook yet accepts another rhyme

and I return for still the woodland calls
from cherished places not yet left to time

Barry Middleton

Sages Contend

every spring must unwind
without reason or rhyme
for tension must find its release

every life has an end
as the sages contend
our torment will finally cease

one thing is quite sure
for those who endure
the grave will provide lasting peace

so don't get attached
we will all be dispatched
for a lifetime is only a lease

Barry Middleton

Salamander

I looked into the spring
and looking back at me
a bright green salamander
beneath his tiny sea

I thought your world is small
as I looked up to see
a multitude of stars
beyond infinity

I learned my lesson well
one grain of sand am I
I drink the cool spring water
my lips no more are dry

Barry Middleton

Salvation Army Love

when Johnny fell off the wagon
it wasn't a pretty sight
he boozed and smoked marijuana
for many and many a night

he fell down and bashed his head
and landed in a ditch
when he woke upon the morning
he was lying beside a witch

so he ran as best as he could
but he smacked right into a cop
who did not like his excuses
the jail was the very next stop

when finally he was set loose
he did it again and again
everyone thought that Johnny
would die from swilling that gin

but Johnny was only a frog
till a princess would give him a kiss
and that frog turned into a prince
when he saw everything he might miss

yes Johnny gave up the whiskey
and he'd finally found him a keeper
he didn't need booze or weed
for love was both higher and deeper

Barry Middleton

Sameness

Having written of love and war,
the budding rose of spring and hope,
and all the betrayal of these things,
what should I say to the vacant page?
I prayed for rain and got a flood.
I prayed for the sun and got a drought.
I prayed for wars to end,
but peace never came.
So that in the end this is what matters,
things that continue like sunsets,
like soldiers marching off to death,
like roses and love and spring rain.
To think that it can be made new
is the ultimate betrayal.
It stays the same,
the planet circles the sun,
the poet stares at an empty white page.

Barry Middleton

Sanctuary

There still must be a secret place,
a land where no one comes to call,
I saw it clearly in my youth,
a forest near a waterfall.

The valley was obscured in mist,
and I had stumbled on that spot,
but then moved on to grander things.
In time the sanctum was forgot.

But far from home and tired and old,
I often fall into a dream
of safety and a hidden glen,
and sacred meadows by a stream.

Some night the dream will come again,
and I will build a cabin there,
to welcome then my peace and rest,
relieved of burdens and of care.

Barry Middleton

Sandhill Crane

sandhill crane
strutting your stuff
in the parking lot

red hat
tipped forward
powdered cheeks
gray/ochre
mottled dress

ancient bird
your huge wings
soared over us
before Adam
named the beasts
before man
imagined gods

endangered
in Florida
looking for lizards
in the median

the swamp
is to the south
my friend
hard to find
what we need
to survive today
the swamp
is to the south

Barry Middleton

Satartia - Clear Lake Camp - 1967

A gray wooden skiff is moored
in ink black water, water as dark
as the midnight sky miles from town.
Floating autumn leaves,
and green gold duckweed
move along the surface
like a liquid forest in a quiet breeze.
Moving in stillness, the water inches
its way past a rustic cabin.
Odors of leaves, fish,
and stove smoke breathe life
to the cool clean air.
Game taste, evening,
and a toast to friendship,
bring a sleep like peacefulness
as forest animals find their beds.
Oak, tupelo and cypress pillars
sweep skyward from land and swamp,
and diffuse into a pediment
of green and bronze and indigo.
The setting sun glows red hot steel
across the waters of the slough
and mirrors all. I see myself there still,
sitting solemn and silent, a part of it.

Barry Middleton

Sawgrass Kingdom

I

The fortress was without walls,
the savanna and cypress domes
and the wide river of sawgrass
was remote and impenetrable.

The Big Water Lake was free then,
none of its power was contained,
and when the storm season came
the sawgrass swords flashed.

The abundance of the waters
was limitless in fish and turtles.
The land teemed with wildlife,
there was serenity in the people.

Keen diamond edged sawgrass
rose from the muck and ash
of lost generations of ancestry
resisting the futility of conquest.

The Calusa knew the ancient land,
knew the whispering water swords.
They knew their own ancestry,
the kingdom called Escampaba.

The only gold to be had then
was the golden skin of the people
and sun dance on fertile waters.
There was stillness in the land.

II

Then came Juan Ponce de León.
He sought no fountain of youth
as the mistaken myth proclaims.
He hunted slaves, gold and power.

Greed ran deep in Spain's blood
and Ponce would spill the blood
of the coastal Indios of Florida
and the blood of his own men.

Wind stirred in the Everglades
and word of a genocide came
from the Carib refugees fleeing
vicious invaders of the islands.

The wind in the sawgrass blew
and was a sibilant warning
the Spaniards did not heed
for greed consumed their heart.

That first conquistador they say
was felled by a single arrow,
but more evil would soon come.
War hissed in the sawgrass!

Ponce's mission was conquest,
the search for imagined gold.
Ponce brought terror and death.
The Indios answered in kind.

III

Voracious intruders still came
and died on the pure white sand
now red with the comingled blood
of Spanish and Indios warriors.

Juan Ortiz was a noble youth,
high of birth but lacking wealth.
Like the others he sought gold
and he hungered for adventure.

Adventure found him shipwrecked,
beached and seized by Chief Ucita
near the great west central bay
called the Baya de Spirito Santo.

He would be burned at the stake
but for the Chief's daughter,
who pled for his life and her love
crying for her father's mercy.

And even then Ortiz also cried,
praying to his Heavenly Father
as already the fire was alight
and Juan Ortiz writhed in pain.

The prayer, or the girl's plea,
was heard as Ucita gestured
and Ortiz's life was spared,
for only love salvages death.

IV

Three years passed in peace
and Juan Ortiz learned
the Indian ways and speech,
content with his life and bride.

But war among the tribes
caused Ucita to retreat
and contemplate the evil
he had brought to the people.

The Spaniard must be killed!
Again the princess wept
but showed her husband
the path to the enemy camp.

Mococo was the warring chief
who took Ortiz in to know
Ucita's strength and plans
and to learn of the Spaniards.

We do not know the fate
of that sad Indian bride
but it was a time of pain
for all the Indios of Florida.

Perhaps the princess was forgiven.
Ortiz was finally granted freedom
and released to Hernando De Soto
and died by water in the north.

V

De Soto also died seeking glory
on that same rambling exploration
but the Spanish ships still sailed
up and down Florida coasts.

Rarely did they dare to land
and there was no real need,
the loot of Mexico and Peru
streamed north on the current.

The Gulf Stream ran north
till the ships turned east to Spain,
but if the soil of Florida did fall
beneath their boots, they died.

Hernando Escalante de Fontaneda
was a child of only thirteen years
on the voyage home to Spain
but for fate and the shipwreck.

The sailing tide paid no heed
to the season of the storms
and the hurricanes delivered
gold and hostages to the Indios.

Escalante was spared death by fire
to sing and dance in the court
of the great chief they called Calus,
the mighty Lord of the Everglades.

VI

Like Juan Ortiz before him,
who was held by central tribes
in his three years of captivity,

Escalante would learn the way.

Seventeen years he spent
with the fierce Calusa people
before he was delivered
to freedom by the French.

It chanced that he was the first
of the invaders to then behold
the wise King Calus of Escampaba,
to know, and live to tell the tale.

It was the tale of an empire,
perhaps 200,000 savage souls,
great fearless armies of thousands,
and keen hatred for the invaders.

The empire was allied in trade
with the Mayaimi Lake tribe
and the east coast Tequesta,
and the empire was allied in war.

Escalante chronicled his story
and warned those to come;
these tribes would never submit
to slavery, the sword, or the cross.

VII

The Spanish did not give up.
One of the last adelantados
was Pedro Menéndez de Avilés,
a general as great as Calus.

He came in peace not war
and wed in shame and sham
the sister of Calus who was
forever more Doña Antonia.

With more lies than promises,
Menéndez left her in Havana
where she learned Christianity,

but her love was for Menéndez.

The Everglades were given him
but for this abandonment.
All Florida was in his hands
but for his deceitfulness.

In years to come aged King Calus
was killed by the Spanish traitors
and Florida was ceded to England.
Nothing had really been gained.

As with all futile wars forever,
only death itself was victorious.
The Calusa died on the beaches
and at last in fetid exile in Cuba.

VIII

So the winds continue to blow
and till this day the breeze
crosses the wild wet prairie
and the Everglades endures.

Other hardy men would come
to seek alligator and fur pelts
and the snowy egret plumes,
but the Calusa were no more.

Seminole came from the north
and inhabited the sawgrass
and the few remaining Calusa
were absorbed into that tribe.

Despite man's destructiveness,
the Everglades today is much
as it was five hundred years ago,
or twenty thousand years ago.

Still today a few brave souls
fight as the Calusa fought
to protect and keep the glades

and restore them to their glory.

And some may say King Calus
still presides over the horizon,
the half land emptiness and sky
of his eternal sawgrass kingdom.

Barry Middleton

Scary Times

traffic jams and gun control
robocalls and website trolls

some proclaim the end of time
war is rampant so is crime

politicians slinging mud
crazed fanatics scream for blood

markets rise but spirits fall
Peter robbed to pay off Paul

all those asleep must now arise
before our planet fades and dies

Barry Middleton

Search

I always thought beyond the hill
lay a mystery I might reveal

just around a bend in the creek
a sandy beach just out of reach

far to the west in a hidden valley
a golden claim and a grand finale

or deeper in the misty swamp
a hermit's hut or witch's haunt

in the heavens truth concealed
only waited to be revealed

as I approach the journey's end
I found the ground I can defend

and you may find as I did too
it does not hide beyond our view

we seek for it like a prize to win
until we discover it lies within

Barry Middleton

Searching For Adonis

Silly Cytherea
has gone to went
and silken seek out
heaven's sent
but not from
no intelligence
she missed him
in her negligence.

Silly Cytherea
is far from home
and wanders in
the streets of Rome
to find a soldier
on a throne
with laurels all
in bloom o're grown.

Silly Cytherea
came to town
to find her quest
was never sound,
she cried so hard
that she had found
that love's brief gift
the gods confound.

Barry Middleton

Season Of Storm

the season of storm lingers
the tropics are restless

birds spin in a gyre
above the Sargasso sea

a fisherman tests the wind
and turns to port

the horizon is left behind
gray recedes to night

where earth and ocean meet
lightening scars the sky

I know the storm will come
I know I will get by

my shelter is quite clear
I see the light of grace

the light of home and peace
will be my resting place

Barry Middleton

Season River

seasons come and go
I've seen quite a few

liquid moods and change
are all I ever knew

I am left to grieve
beneficent intention

just as rivers pass
fading to oblivion

what does it matter now
broken heart or promise

I finally have become
a jaded doubting Thomas

I have seen the wound
I know the bitter pain

I was washed anew
in blood and lust and rain

so it is with waters
baptism and rebirth

as I begin again
to tally up the worth

Barry Middleton

Secret Door

remember when we believed
there was a secret door

that showed itself in dreams
but in the day no more

throughout our lives we seek
but never find the way

a covert key to comfort
to keep our fears at bay

but some in age they claim
have found that priceless gate

surrender to what comes
with grace accepting fate

the secret door is living
a door without a lock

so savor every breath
before the final knock

Barry Middleton

Secret Lake

I cast my dreams into a secret lake,
far up the valley path and hid from view.
And there must rest what time cannot forsake,
beneath a veil of vague deceptive blue.

Although unknown by strangers passing by,
this hiding place was all I might contrive.
Beneath the crystal waters yet they lie,
but no one knows, my dreams are still alive.

For memory frees a long lost love affair,
in haunted places like a mountain glen.
I smile and lift myself above all care,
as I recall the times together then.

But no one sees the sorrows buried there,
nor pain and loss my mask forever seals.
For there are secrets much too hard to share,
like places in the heart that time conceals.

Barry Middleton

Seeker

hope abides in the hunt
with will and doubt

when the panther springs
it gives its all

still the prey slips the trap
glancing back to mock

discouragement passes
hunger fires aspiration

treasure is within reach
though defeat stalks

the victory is simplicity
passion and need fulfilled

the patient wildcat prowls
guided by his dreams

far from all arrogance
the hidden prize awaits

success is beyond the hill
beyond the final test

Barry Middleton

Seekers

all the seekers show up here
scanning for inspiration
and finding only dawn and dusk
they sink in self-indulgent ego

they paint rainbows of hope
on life's battering ram
breaking through the prison door
with fairy tales and wistfulness

just before the inquisition
they speak of love in spring
they claim there is nothing else
not even high deeds or poetry

at the tunnel's end they see light
stars swirl on a starry night
a black cloud crosses the moon
but then the darkness comes

all the seekers show up here
and finding only dreams
they write them down in verse
casting coins into a darkened well

Barry Middleton

Self Defense - A Song

No, honestly officer
I didn't say fuzz;
I'm just headed for home
to cop a good buzz
and I don't see the harm,
if harm me it do,
it only hurts me
it doesn't hurt you.
If I did a crime
it's one that can save me
from doing much worse
it helps to behave me
and keep me off streets
in the dead of the night
and out of big trouble
and out of big fights.
Now I fight with myself
and what's on my mind
and it gives me a tool
and it gives me some time.
So, honestly officer
I didn't say fuzz;
I'm just headed for home
to cop a good buzz
and I don't see the harm,
if harm me it do,
it only hurts me
it doesn't hurt you.
It doesn't hurt you!

Barry Middleton

September Wine

If I were forced to make a brief summation
of what was worth the time and what was not,
I would not go the way of some I've seen
and trace the river to its source and stop
my finger on each town where I found joy.
That takes too long and I don't have the time.
I'll give the best example I can find
and offer you a cup of Autumn wine.
The latest thing I loved was just a girl,
no grand statement there, no distant pearl
of wisdom there to keep you sane or add
a lot to the common store of philosophy.
Love is like youth, like gold it cannot stay,
yet now I'd give it all for just a day.
But if you ask advice for those in love,
I'd tell them, 'Love, but always keep in mind,
the time may come to drink September wine.'

Barry Middleton

Seraph

a seraph spoke to me
in riddles to confuse
I was already lost
so she did not amuse

I asked her what she meant
she blessed me with a smile
I cursed her trickery
and unrepentant guile

you call yourself a guide
the guardian of man
you speak in platitudes
and offer me no plan

tell me the way to go
and what awaits me there
for you can point the way
to free me from despair

the hush was deafening
she only shook her head
I cursed her once again
the silence was like lead

I said just answer me
is that so much to ask
she smiled again and said
but sir that is your task

Barry Middleton

Serenity Tryst

when fear fades away
and acceptance begins
life becomes a little easier

but it takes the stinger
from the bee
life becomes vulnerable

with that
I realize how precious
is each breath I take

do not be concerned
I am not dying yet
this is where I want to be

Barry Middleton

Sestina To The Ballerina

her seductive dance enchanted
but with the season she departed
a swan bursting into flight
took the passion from the night
to seek a foreign tropic home
of ecstasy and lands unknown

in all the dark of that unknown
nothing in the world enchanted
winter's cold became my home
as in the mist the swan departed
no song could rise into the night
no phoenix struggled into flight

the ash of love cannot take flight
as seasons turn to the unknown
and lovers disappear one night
the heart no longer is enchanted
its fragile pulse is now departed
and leaves me in my icy home

and yet I crave the fire of home
but passion too is only flight
to cruelly pass with love departed
without a balm for pain unknown
in lonely dreams that are enchanted
by her graceful dance each night

and so it seems an endless night
of darkest earth and silent home
for mine is but a grave enchanted
as swans at midnight take to flight
and one can hear the vast unknown
of poets and of love departed

november's eve and souls departed
return but once upon that night
with howling cries from the unknown
arising from their graveyard home

to join the lonely grief of flight
as winter's breath wafts enchanted

departed ghosts are thus enchanted
the swan and night in endless flight
in their unknown and wintry home

Barry Middleton

Shadow

when I was very young
walking in the morning
the sun was to my back
a quiet day was dawning

my shadow greeted me
though I was on my own
I saw my shadow watch
so I was not alone

but men will turn in age
to face the setting sun
my shadow lags behind
my journey almost done

I could look back to see
I know that he is there
he will not let me down
my shadow does his share

the golden sun ignites
the silent place I go
I am ready for the sun
I'll find the afterglow

I'll find the distant sea
beyond horizon's tide
my shadow guiding me
forever at my side

Barry Middleton

Shadow And Song

the dying sunset fire has dimmed
but darkness is a song
the shadowed night is harmony
when light of day has gone

the moon's pretense is melody
that whispers of the way
and guides me like a siren's call
that death will soon betray

but still that silver glow recalls
a time of passion's light
though now a faded memory
that vanished into night

still I will roam the shadowed path
and listen to the moon
where blindness lost and desolate
finds comfort in its tune

Barry Middleton

Shadow Beach

the shadow of life in the sunset
is washed in blood red light
and snake like tentacles of darkness
are growing over the land

the palms are blazing silhouettes
reaching out from the fire
to welcome the cooler evening
as they await the eastern light

even twilight must die un-mourned
and as the darkness grows
the silent silver moon is rising
to bring the soft shadows of lovers

the breeze over the restless waters
stirs phosphorescent memories
of shadows walking hand in hand
where daylight and darkness meet

Barry Middleton

Shadow Of The Red Rock

come with me into the evening
come with me to the shadowy places
to the deepest reaches of the cave

we have left the garden behind us
we go on a different journey now
to behold in the thirteenth vision
the foggy sun rising on a foggy day

we see the men who come and go
businessman, politico, and priest
the corporate farmer, and the thief
the butcher robots, doctors, fools
the consumers of mythology and war

what hath god wrought
the golden rule sold out for gold
reptilian predators roam at will
divine avatars from planet mars
revile a profitless truce

is this our shameful destiny
the dust of fear under the red rock
no new religion beckons in the dawn
while we ignore the obvious lessons

there is a mark upon the soul of man
can it be overcome
we have had four millions years
four million years to change our ways
but man conducts his ruthless business
like a frightened ape

and in the end the women weep
and feed the infants at their breast
and children dream of better things
before the loss of innocence

it has happened once before

it may come again as the hand of god
or the soul of the universe
or the beast mankind that consumes
the insatiable apex beast of the earth
the fire may come again
as frightened eyes look up to see oblivion

this is my grief beyond prayer
the garden is defiled
the fire storm is coming
the plans are laid upon the table
I see myself in a shard of looking glass
I see the planet earth
not only must I die
but all of humankind and too our world
fear death by fire and water
risen seas cannot quench the flames

~~~~~

Eliot's fear in a handful of dust may be us.

Barry Middleton

# Shadows

shadows haunt my waking mind  
I did create you and now in sleep  
you come to stir my silent dreams  
with wistful hope  
that you might come to stand beside me

you come at dusk so seek me not  
let you be a dream that I forgot  
shadows run away upon the night  
to leave the lonely dreamer  
with his plight

do shadows tease just one  
or every man  
and since it's mine can I repeal its span  
fantasies torture and never can they heal  
but I am yet sole judge  
to grant appeal

Barry Middleton

# Shadows Follow Morning

shadows follow morning  
for night is sweet relief  
concealing pain in dreams  
till day returns my grief

shadows follow morning  
they will not turn away  
they search for the horizon  
and lurk in shades of gray

shadows follow morning  
but I will sleep once more  
the shadows gone at last  
beyond a darkened door

Barry Middleton

# Shadows Of The Past

oh yes I will return some day  
not even death can block my way

if you have never seen this place  
and memories time could not erase

then you may fail to understand  
the forest where it all began

born beneath the Eden trees  
a child grew stronger with the breeze

a silver stream and apple trees  
the moments that a boy might seize

but mostly peace within that place  
that took me from the hectic pace

of school and chores and what would be  
intentions of divinity

and all the storied panoply  
that lay within my destiny

I will go back I promise you  
to seek the path that I once knew

I'll rest in shadows of the past  
where life and love and trust still last

Barry Middleton

# Shady September

the sky is neither blue nor gray  
but something autumn in between  
I close my eyes and smell the hay  
September fields so far away  
some men may love a springtime mood  
but I do love the air of fall  
my favorite season attitude  
or thus the autumn leaves conclude  
familiar thatch of briar patch  
black berries ripe and shinning rich  
have lured me from my purposed track  
I only pause then double back  
honeysuckle is the gate  
that I must push aside to pass  
into the glen where dreams await  
and whispers of my secret fate  
today I seek a simpler vine  
I need a bucket full and more  
of fallen pungent muscadines  
for winter jelly so sublime  
but there is yet more fun to come  
aromas sweet as candy cooking  
and when the winter has begun  
the jelly holds the summer sun  
now if you have not found this grace  
I'll tell you where to look and find  
let's call it Shady Valley place  
a tear within a soft embrace

Barry Middleton

# She Walks In Dreams

Indeed as beautiful as night,  
her images are indistinct,  
a blazing sun beyond my sight,  
an orchid that is now extinct.

I cannot paint for you her walk,  
or delve the mystery of her eyes.  
By day the wildcats never stalk,  
but always under starlit skies.

A sighted man may well go blind,  
and yet the blind might clearly see,  
for all of darkness is inclined  
to set her mystic vision free.

The stars are eloquent they say,  
yet do not speak a single word.  
The moon is mute by light of day,  
its furtive song cannot be heard.

Indeed as beautiful as night,  
she wanders in a dream sublime,  
but dreams dissolve in morning light,  
eluding metaphor and rhyme.

Barry Middleton

# Shellshock

not only soldiers  
laboring home  
not just  
the widow lost

not just the child  
whose father died  
but all must pay  
the cost

for war extracts  
a nation's soul  
and tunes the heart  
to hate

and kills the light  
of every hope  
denying Eden's  
gate

exhaustion or  
a screaming rage  
fill the hollow  
street

where shellshock  
takes its awful toll  
in victory  
or defeat

Barry Middleton



# Shelter

a west wind stirs  
palms fold their fronds  
like praying hands

the earth offers up  
a sacrifice of sorts  
the palms bow

awed birds flee  
in a woodland cove  
refuge awaits

shelter of the forest  
entreats the animals  
to silent grace

the storm finally done  
the prayer is granted  
the palms endure

Barry Middleton

# Shield

Some are made of arrogance,  
and some are made from steel.  
Protection is imperative,  
so all must raise their shield.

Some will hide behind a wall,  
some hide behind the news.  
And some turn quite invisible,  
to block inquiring views.

Some are hid by vulgar wealth,  
but they are simple fools.  
Others hide in poverty,  
to live by simple rules.

As for those with wounded souls,  
if gods grant my appeal,  
a world may come without the need  
to craft a stronger shield.

Barry Middleton

# Shifting Weather

the wind blew all day  
in the pines  
and the wind  
would blow all night

the clouds streamed  
like birds  
fleeing the movement  
of the trees

sun came and went  
like truth  
the cloud was truth  
and the sun lied

the wind in the pines  
made a sound  
like a river or air  
falling like rapids

the hermit knew  
change was coming  
a change he thought  
long overdue

Barry Middleton

# Shocking As Birth

death is as shocking as birth  
death is like fire and roses  
death is as amazing as the universe  
death is the final astonishment

that stars are born and die  
that planets collide into destruction  
regardless of their promise  
is the final proof of indifference

an asteroid fell in the rainforest  
and the crater was filled by the sea  
insentient reptiles did not weep  
meaningless death fell from the sky

thus is the fate of wildflowers  
and the grace of all creation  
so I must curse human audacity  
this vanity that claims a privilege

I bow to the inevitable  
for death is not uncommon  
still every man must tremble  
as he stands before the dark abyss

Barry Middleton

# Short Creek Baptist

I climbed all the way  
to the iron bridge that day

and then up the old  
gravel road

at the top of the hill  
the chapel stood still

not a soul was in sight  
but my own

burdened with sorrow  
I carried my load

so I asked for the gods  
to explain

there in the silence  
I heard a reply

to all of my questions  
and wondering why

they sent me a breeze  
as I fell to my knees

that whispered  
a lullaby

I felt the glimmer  
of angels

they said I was safe  
from the storm

just stay in the lee  
of the chapel

forever protected  
from harm

then a quiet voice  
gave me the key

it said you are safe  
with me

Barry Middleton

# Short Creek Valley

I've often said that I grew up  
in a boyhood's perfect paradise  
and here's a little bit of evidence.  
If paradise has a water source,  
Short Creek is a worthy one  
with water clear as a summer breeze  
after rain, potable, in the upper valley.  
I often thought when I was young  
that Short Creek was an ironic name,  
my expeditions ran deep into the hills  
but never reached the source.  
Short Creek was long in life's lessons  
and longer yet in memories.  
In age we all say things shrink.  
The childhood farm is no longer huge,  
the creek was truly not so long,  
though still I would not call it short  
for it was formidable.  
Perhaps that was the first lesson,  
living in a confusing world  
so soon to be a shrinking village -  
the world is full of contradiction.

I fished Short Creek  
from its mouth at the muddy Yazoo  
and well into the hills.  
Catfish lurked there and alligator gar,  
sunfish, bass, soft-shell and green turtles  
and wayward wood duck strays  
that overflowed the nearby Horseshoe Lake.  
It was easy to imagine then  
the native ancestry of the land -  
the Cherokee and Choctaw,  
the ancient Yazoo tribesman  
standing in a dugout made of cypress  
as he polled his way  
across the flat land delta strip  
before the hills turned bayou to rapids.  
Then, abundant deer, bear and turkey

roamed the land.  
In hills above the valley,  
the Indians made their camps  
and shards and arrow heads  
were turned behind our plows  
and taught that treasure,  
that life itself,  
comes from the earth  
and that man returns to it.  
That was the second lesson.

The third lesson was about wonder  
and joy and faith in intuition.  
The creek was a playground  
in my childhood time:  
a place for skipping rocks,  
a place to camp, to swim,  
to split a first beer with a buddy,  
a place of muddy banks  
to form a water slide,  
a diving platform for the fool hardy,  
sand beaches that rival Cancun,  
a place to spy on skinny dippers  
and find what girls were all about,  
a holy balm to consecrate a friendship.  
Yes, Short Creek was a playground  
but also a place of higher learning:  
a place to explore the crux of living,  
to wonder and to find  
what was,  
what is,  
and what was yet to be.

Barry Middleton



# Shower Of Rain

after the rain  
silence falls  
the last drops  
are ticking  
in the pipe

before the storm  
wind rivers  
in the pines  
warned of life  
and death

the new world  
is christened  
full and moving  
as the clock  
ticks and tocks

the ash and dust  
are absolved  
by desire  
as grass reaches  
to a reborn sun

Barry Middleton

# Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

quickly life is done  
death comes to all  
what crown was won  
will then be set aside  
the page is turned  
the plaques are hung  
the laurel wreath  
laid upon the grave

the glory of life is brief  
a man need have his say  
not least of all the poet  
whose meager dusty verse  
will soon be forgotten

or discovered hence  
in an attic storehouse  
where reading these  
'tis known what I know  
that he was just a man

but if you wish for more  
delusions of immortality  
then seek the mountain  
at midnight and gaze  
at Ozymandias in stars  
know each one is leased  
not one doth own itself  
and all the debt is called  
the stars to dust again  
and crowns and plaques  
and intimations of poetry

Barry Middleton

# Silence Sleeps

When silence sleeps,  
exhausted  
in the dead of night,  
then watchers  
turn their heads,  
and night sounds  
come to life.  
Not heard before  
while silence watched,  
the murmur of the city,  
the whisper of a garden,  
a lover's breath,  
is heard the louder  
that she sleeps,  
till droning  
in the morning light,  
she raises sleepy arms,  
and sweeps away the noise  
before the children wake.

Barry Middleton

# Silent Dawn

there is no music in my room  
the fog outside my windowpane  
mutes the song of the mockingbird

the stolid palms await the breeze  
to wake the breath of life and time  
the silence is the comfort of grief

the meditative pause of morn  
brings sadness and a calming mood  
only the poet feels the hush

the intermission cannot last  
a knock upon the door will come  
the fog will melt and birds will sing

then poets face the pain of day  
the hectic fevered pulse of life  
till silent dawn pretends once more

Barry Middleton

# Silent Muse

the muse is nearly silent  
she whispers in the dark of night  
I cannot hear her voice  
the silence beckons of my plight

now I must heed its call  
for as the seasons pass away  
so poetry is lost  
in coldest winds of yesterday

it has been said before  
that gold must vanish from the earth  
the old must move aside  
for spring and seasons of rebirth

then poetry is new  
in stranger words without a rhyme  
as I now shed a tear  
beyond the limits of my time

Barry Middleton

# Silent Music

Have I so changed as I grow old?  
Where once the music played  
within the walls of sunlit space,  
I now prefer the shade.

Beneath my silent tears of grief,  
among the darkened trees,  
I heed a midnight symphony  
that whispers on the breeze.

The sound is quietly heard within,  
I hearken to the muse,  
the rhapsody of poetry,  
a lyric interlude.

Beyond the dawning pastel glow,  
the orchestra of time,  
with harmony and memory,  
plays images and rhyme.

And yet I know the music ends,  
the silence was foretold,  
I sense it still, though you may not,  
where shadows are consoled.

Barry Middleton

# Silent New Year

I know that knock upon my door.  
Her ghost appears each New Year's Eve.  
We never find just what to say,  
for time and destiny are mute.  
Her flashing eyes yet speak for her,  
and seem to make the message clear,  
reflections of regret and pain.  
Perhaps she sees the same in mine.  
But still no sound is in her voice;  
her words are but an anxious cloud.  
Oh yes I know this is a dream;  
for many years she has been gone.  
I will awake to greet the years,  
and shake off sleep's paralysis.  
That cloud becomes strange poetry,  
with words that fall like silent rain.  
But I still welcome midnight ghosts,  
within the hush of reverie,  
when apparitions come in dreams,  
to mark the ending of the year.

Barry Middleton

# Silent Waiting

red and glowing in the night  
my clock is slowly keeping time

tonight it seems the dark is endless  
as I search for every rhyme

and I have so many questions  
the hush of night yet reigns supreme

I know that is the way of silence  
it takes nothing to extreme

perhaps it listens in the darkness  
cursed to never answer dreams

or it knows the only answers  
lie within or so it seems

we all must find the way we find  
the reassurance is the story

and it is told by every man  
of all the world and love and glory

in the darkness there's a plan  
and it may be that something hears

and though it never makes reply  
it can relieve us of our fears

until the body finally dies  
then the silence speaks out true

only then will we find out  
what is waiting in the blue

Barry Middleton



# Silhouettes

in the fog bound forest  
every memory hides  
where silhouettes await  
and all regret abides

I would wander there  
if god would let me go  
a shadow in the shadows  
lost from long ago

but memory is cruel  
I cannot see the faces  
of all those I have loved  
or all the long lost places

and god seems careless of  
the petty things I wish  
and of my whispered prayer  
so I am left in mist

and there the silhouettes  
will tease my memory  
until that final hour  
when shadows comfort me

Barry Middleton

# Simple Things

a touch of adoration  
common or remote

sun dancing in ripples  
a silent sailboat at rest

things I take for granted  
but there is more to love

the murmur of wind  
that I might easily miss

and if I listen blinded  
I taste a warming kiss

and only then recall  
your fiery umber eyes

Barry Middleton

# Simplicity

the Buddha said  
do not grieve what doesn't exist

men grieve the thought of losing  
things we do not have

imagined wealth and hungers filled  
by future fortune

the Buddha's message  
do not try to hoard a dream

lift each moment like a chalice  
taste the fresh baked bread

grieve only for the moments lost  
to desire and fear

Barry Middleton

# Sitters, Quitters And Go-Getters

for sure there are sitters  
who never get started  
maybe fearful of life  
or simply fainthearted

there also are quitters  
they start off just fine  
but then they give up  
frankly lacking in spine

go-getters work hard  
life always is rough  
go-getters decide  
they can't get enough

so what will it be  
sit, quit or go-get  
it's all up to you  
it's not over yet

Barry Middleton

# Six Humble Landscapes

I

the place was filled  
with shadow  
wet with ferns, musty  
green of carpet moss  
bamboo rattled  
in a hot breeze  
I heard laughter  
as children played  
nearby, clear water

II

adventure ran  
deep in swamps  
where once  
a saurian kingdom  
breathed fog  
into the fog  
and lesser creatures  
dreamed of becoming men  
where later I explored  
and dreamed  
of becoming a man

III

laughing at a muffed shot  
brotherhood and billiards  
cold beer  
the glow of a hanging lamp  
the summer night  
was heavy in the air  
the teenage girls  
stopped by to see  
what boys pretended

IV

in the city the roar  
of the beltway hid  
behind giant oaks

that lined the path  
to somber knowledge  
Spanish moss murmured  
hiding quiet columns  
that faced the green  
where in the spring  
touch football  
claimed dominion

V

a cramped apartment  
a kitchen and a bed  
brick streets rumbled  
beneath our bicycles  
past the lake to meet  
a rendezvous with fate  
pretending to be grown  
before reality exploded  
the weight descending

IV

pine trees whisper  
when the wind comes  
fire and thunder  
remind me once again  
how small the world is  
the birds come and go  
old folks nod a greeting  
I nod and ready myself  
embracing the landscape

Barry Middleton

# Sixth Letter From Zeno

The universe, some say,  
is empty without a god.

I think they do not know  
the immensity of sod

on which, in prairie waves  
of galaxies that turn,

countless rainbow suns,  
that must forever burn,

nurture strange horizons  
where alien beings gaze

at royal purple skies  
where fiery seas amaze.

I know some cannot see  
the silver plains of Zeno,

and too, they may dispute  
the universe that I know.

Barry Middleton

# Slate And Silver

slate and silver  
and cold ice blue  
with the eye of god  
blazing through

as a child I was taught  
never to look  
the answers hid  
in a great dark book

if you look in his eye  
you may go blind  
that wasn't the answer  
I set out to find

I never believe  
what I cannot see  
so I gazed on death  
gazing back at me

the hot white sun  
yet spared my sight  
I knew it could lead  
me into the light

slate and silver  
and cold ice blue  
the earth below  
the sun shining through

Barry Middleton



# Slay Ride

I've given up my try to figure out  
humanity and riddles of the times  
where gods and demons hide in toxic fog  
with truth concealed in foolish nursery rhymes

the shadow of a giant looms tonight  
its beard and goat like horns in silhouette  
reminds me of a song I can't forget  
of wolfen nights that howl with cruel regret

the tempo of the clock has set the beat  
the loping lupine sound of padded feet  
the wolves are gathered all around me now  
so do I dare the charge of just retreat

I'm tired of weeping    tired of being tired  
I'm tired of running from the beast's attack  
this old and fevered knight must end his quest  
I draw my sword to face the snarling pack

I do not wish to fight but fight for life  
it is the only thing worth fighting for  
the scene is bloody yet I won't give up  
till breath is gone and I can fight no more

Barry Middleton

# Sleep

Sleep is a pale stranger  
when the mind lingers  
in a forgotten waltz.

Memory brings a chill  
in the darkest night,  
for I cannot forget  
your tender kiss.

And late night talk  
ended all my fears  
until our love was lost.

But imperfect endings  
leave haunting shadows.  
The faint hint of music  
is a summons for you.

Sleep is a pale stranger  
as our dance continues  
in a nearly faded dream.

Midnight knows the beat.  
I bow to a dim ghost,  
swaying in a final waltz,  
within my silent room.

Barry Middleton

# Slow Down

slow my brain down  
slow the world down

the storm outside  
the storm within

turn the dark clouds  
quench the lightning

we make a journey  
round the sun

another battle  
lost or won

sand is falling fast  
within the hourglass

Barry Middleton

# Smoke

smoke ascending from the camp  
fire's protection from the damp

the delta land serenity  
the essence of what used to be

a band of brothers from the past  
recalls a day that could not last

the strength and energy of youth  
a world secure in sturdy truth

and I would go if given time  
to find lost memories of mine

but smoke evades a ticking clock  
like memory that comes to mock

both drift into impassive skies  
as hopes and dreams refuse to rise

Barry Middleton

# Snapshots

stand alone by a great waterfall  
hear the sound of fear and awe

take note of the symmetry  
in the wings of an eagle

when the breeze stirs  
see that the trees are like dancers

in the gold of the palm blossom  
treasure springs from quite heat

climb the western mountain  
and find the home of the lion

travel across the sea and dream  
but never forget your home

to see the majesty of the universe  
abandon all foolish notions

learn of the folly of conquest  
but do not surrender to tyranny

whisper your prayers to the wind  
and answer only to yourself

Barry Middleton

# Snow

a saxophone is grieving  
an instrumental season  
is coming to an end

sharp brass is yielding  
to muted oboe moods  
sadder weather

the violins weep  
like willows in the wind  
a gray cello rumbles

I feel the kettle drum  
like my own heart  
percussion of thunder

the voice is like rain  
tears of the contralto  
she knows my sorrow

she is the vanished girl  
a gentle guitar rift  
a lost breeze of melody

Barry Middleton

## Soft Claws

love always moves like a cat  
so graceful and feline  
somewhat of a brat

but when love is turned away  
it's better to hope  
and it's best to pray

for that's when the claws appear  
colder than steel  
and sharper than fear

so treat your love kindly and well  
for cats can be heaven  
or they can be hell

Barry Middleton

# Solitaire

Another night of solitaire,  
a silent room, an empty chair,  
a withered rose within my room.

Still random poems I compose,  
as darkness beckons to the rose,  
in memories of sweet perfume.

A card is laid, the stars confound.  
A shadowed echo without sound  
recalls my frail mortality.

The cards are dots I must connect,  
in cryptic poems to protect,  
my hope and rose totality.

Barry Middleton



# Solitary Concert

Beyond the imprisoned symphony,  
violins right and woodwinds left,  
past the books and French doors,  
the painted landscape waits  
for you to make it sing.

The night, with all its  
dark and hidden noise,  
I shut outside  
for sadder sounds  
of emptiness,  
of voiceless walls  
that echo with the sound  
of only music.

Barry Middleton

# Solitude

With solitude, my oldest friend,  
I roamed alone in silent woods,  
and studied every trembling leaf.

I challenged undisputed belief,  
to delve the irony of gods  
beyond the cryptic universe.

In solitude I could rehearse  
realities which time resolves,  
the ebb and flow of ecstasy.

And echoed songs of destiny,  
beneath decaying fallen trees,  
would teach the brevity of life.

But death is no assassin's knife;  
and silent woods I'll not exclude.  
My oldest friend is solitude.

Barry Middleton

# Solitude And Song

I know the meaning of the poet's words,  
in solitude to hear the song of birds  
within a misted glen and feel the wind  
arising in the place where streams begin.  
Beneath the sacred trees of silent time,  
yet I could hear the heart of nature's rhyme  
that kept the rhythm of a somber grove,  
the creak and sway within a hidden cove.  
For solitude and song were given me  
as gifts from musings of eternity,  
and they have not withheld a faithful peace  
where every worry of the world must cease.  
So deep within the woods I will remain,  
relieved of strident crowds and rasping pain.

~~~~~

The image is a replica of Henry David Thoreau's cabin.

Barry Middleton

Someone Else's Book

everything that falls to earth
must land upon this page
all the pain and joy of life
the wisdom of the sage

laughter of a child at play
will drift upon the wind
the many times I still recall
of moments with a friend

every broken heart I've know
will walk this path with me
and every soul who's gone before
into eternity

for human hearts are all the same
no matter where you look
like someone sitting next to you
from someone else's book

Barry Middleton

Something About A Mountain

there is something about a mountain
resolute and unreachable
the ultimate peak

these are the cathedrals of Wyoming
the Montana wilderness
the Cabinet range

to climb all day above the timberline
and find the grizzly's lair
to glimpse the lion

and finally to view the awe of paradise
and be alone in that place
with its silent god

Barry Middleton

Something About The Moon

something about the moon
can tint my mood to blue
for the color of the night
is a strange familiar hue

from childhood I recall
a sadness in the sounds
that stirred on moonlit nights
when shadows made their rounds

I was too much aware
that sorrow prowled the night
that prayer or strength of will
could never set aright

yet sometimes when alone
and woods were dark and bleak
the moonlight brought a peace
that even now I seek

the moon is life and death
and love and destiny
and all a man might know
and all he'll ever be

Barry Middleton

Something Missed

do you ever speak my name
and dream of days gone by

if this is so please tell me true
and do you breathe a sigh

did you turn and walk away
to never need my kiss

do you confess admitting love
is treasure you still miss

for if you do I welcome you
I have not lost my place

if you return a fire still burns
a passionate embrace

Barry Middleton

Somewhere A Home

somewhere there must be a defense
there must be that quiet place
a defense against a ruthless world

there is a valley between the hills
a stream flows along the woods
and divides them from the meadow

the fruit trees are heavy with apples
the setting sun throws its shadows
and the only sound is the cool breeze

the old frame house is painted white
someone watches as night descends
the children will soon be fast asleep

Barry Middleton

Song

the song of the mill
sawing through timber

the owl at midnight
that I still remember

the boom of a shotgun
across a field

the death of the meek
who carry no shield

the terror of riders
deep in the night

the snake in the garden
that fills us with fright

the blood and carnage
the produce of battle

so many cut down
and treated like chattel

I wish to go back
to the song of the mill

the owl in the woodland
and peace on the hill

Barry Middleton

Song Of Lost Love

So far away, you are my love,
yet I can never hear your voice.
Beyond my walls and lost in time,
I still cannot revoke your choice.

And I would never have it thus,
for truest love is not a toy.
And still I wish there was a way,
a hidden bridge I might employ.

Though I cannot caress your soul,
yet I would hold you for a time.
But in the bond of poetry,
there is a hint of the sublime.

And so these lines contain a plea,
an echo on the wind that calls.
It prays that you remember me,
beyond the time when silence falls.

Barry Middleton

Sonnet 37 Polliwogs

Love grows as love goes
like polliwogs to frogs,
whose wiggleness no longer shows
in leaping out from logs.

Love's occult when love's adult,
and somber in her days,
and makes no effort to rebut
her oriental ways.

Love's at rest when love is best,
when passion's bit is done,
then love settles on her nest,
and contemplates the sun.

Love's a gaudy lily in the first days of May,
a wildflower memory on a cold December day.

Barry Middleton

Sonnet 39

The only picture on the wall
reminds me of a love I had,
two dancers frozen to recall
a love the painter once had known.
He holds her in his arms as if
to say that love is always new.
Now time has passed, its only gift,
a brief, translucent shade of blue.

So love and friends too quickly pass
as sun beats down and pictures fade.
So life assumes a somber shade,
as suns go down and yesterdays
begin to subtly change their hue
to brief, translucent shades of blue.

Barry Middleton

Sonnet 46

My window in the night that lets in stars
is there for me to open and recall
that though I live within a frightened wall,
fear, like windows, can be set ajar.

Walls are built by men who understand
the complex laws of fear and bravery,
the intermix of will and slavery,
nature's strength in alms or in demand.

This ancient wall is built of solid stone;
it closes in the soul and blocks the view.
A window takes me places never gone,
the freedom of the stars in evening hue.

A window open to the night and hope
gathers stars granting strength to cope.

Barry Middleton

Sonnet 47

I wish to find the farthest bloom
that by the seed of rivers rests.
And there in delicate embrace
a rare perfume will be my grace.

Into the mystic glen unguided,
up from the dark and sullen swamp,
I find a garden walled and sided,
the secret keep of mystery's warden.

A light, an ecstasy of breath
beguiles the dream with sweetest scent.
The passion is a christening,
a foil against life's ample torment.

Imagined bloom and far from view,
I seek, but those who find are few.

Barry Middleton

Sonnet Of Spring

Not to spring only is the sun confined
but in the dreadful winter, dread removes.
It leaves a lacy pattern so refined
upon the snow and thus approves.

As when it passes into night,
its aspect dies,
but darkness lies
when plainly moon and stars reflect its might.

Nor only at zenith is felt the light,
or early the morning,
or late the evening,
but through our days and unto night.

Not to spring only is the sun confined,
it leaves a lacy pattern so refined.

Barry Middleton

Sorcerer

witchcraft and love story
mandrake and morning-glory
cast an occult magic spell

warlocks with potions
and conjures with notions
hold secrets no one can tell

the tears that won't fall
are a clarion call
presaging the toll of a bell

love is absent of reason
it is just for a season
until an enchanted farewell

when promises broken
are the only love token
in realms where witches dwell

Barry Middleton

Sorrow Rises Like Fog

sorrow rises like fog
a daffodil bitten by frost

spring is a sweet kiss
and winter a broken hope

her eyes enticed
her glance burned my soul

a simple song trilled
in the heart of a mockingbird

then hushed like death
it was never heard again

when the wind stirs
I feel a cold regret

dew drops are like tears
on a barren landscape

Barry Middleton

Southern Summer

a heat that freezes
still as a photograph
like a sleeping dog
in the dog days

down south it is dry
dust devils swirl
in desiccated fields
flies bang the screen

life pushes itself
deep into the shade
beneath the oaks
a snake hole hides

a heat that freezes
calls for lemonade
an old man squints
and wags a paper fan

Barry Middleton

Space Rock

since time began and the fall of man
I cannot find my home

when I look back I just see black
so onward I must roam

I flew past stars and got to Mars
and looked down at the Earth

too many souls to suit my goals
and nothing there of worth

I'm outward bound so I turn around
someday I hope to land

on a tear to who knows where
it's not the way I planned

an asteroid in a coal black void
careening out in space

to find a light that shone one night
my cratered resting place

Barry Middleton

Spanish Moss

the Spaniards had seen nothing like it
it draped the cypress like a beard
it clothed the women of Timucua
before the rape and genocide

the voodoo priests of Louisiana
fashioned it to hex dolls
perhaps to even up a score
or lend some hope to oppression

under the shadowed dueling oaks
he met his final distraction
the moss waved like his lover's hair
and the challenger's shot rang out

it was a good fiber for bousillage
retted it made a fine mattress
it stuffed the seats of cars
now it is relegated to arts and crafts

still beneath the oak and bald cypress
it crowns the canopy providing shade
it is un-offended by its arcane history
with no regard for the whims of man

Barry Middleton

Sparkle's Toast

we surely miss a certain friend
who had that special glow
who now has moved so far away
we had to let her go

and time can dim a memory
but some stay clear and new
we cherish those and won't let go
but hold to just a few

there is a girl with shining eyes
whom we will not forget
she cheered our dismal day at work
to her we owe a debt

and so a toast to our sweet friend
don't ever change your style
we're ever grateful for the gift
the sparkle of your smile

Barry Middleton

Spent Souls

reaching to help these lost souls
I know best their forsaken hope
no gain in trading with the devil
crossroads deals gone badly wrong

staring blankly with addicted eyes
barely able to move haggard bodies
half listening, dozing through my prayer
unable or unwilling to gather their mind

Faustian pride did not defeat them
though surely once they did aspire
it is sullen shame, pride's opposite
wherein they seal self destruction

no zeal of Icarus temped flight
few ever pursued mastery at all
sought no dream beyond magical ease
the fall, a crazed back street thirst

few can understand the wasted need
the sick belief that life must offer more
must always offer endless higher highs
till a secret phantasm is cheaply had

ah but is not hubris wanting too grandly
Faustus or Robert Johnson, demanding
just a trifle more than life supplies
Icarus wasted, no wings, no escape

Barry Middleton

Spirit Guide

the eagle of the swamp
always follows me

to tell me of the day
my soul will be set free

he is my spirit guide
whispering with his cry

one life is all he needs
he's not afraid to die

he finds a mate in spring
the nestlings fly by fall

a feather falls to ground
and so it is for all

but with the winter past
the fledglings in refrain

will give his spirit wings
and then he soars again

Barry Middleton

Spring

in spring the boy
would bring the first daffodil
to his mother

the garden would be plowed
and planted
with hope and confidence

when the chores were done
the creek would call to him
with cooling waters

the swimming hole awaited
the green trout fanned its bed
below the railroad bridge

spring is the beginning
spring is a memory of Eden
of a green and dappled valley

spring is the abundance
reminding us again
earth loves and cares for us

Barry Middleton

Spring And Love

spring and love
life and death
time comes to little more

cloud and rain
tears and pain
the moments come and go

falling stars
grant a wish
that I cannot disclose

autumn comes
and winter's cold
till spring revives the rose

Barry Middleton

Spring Is Near

the air is changing now
and winter soon will fade
the cloudless sky is blue
no more am I afraid

for soon azaleas bloom
and brittle trees transform
the mockingbird will sing
and honeybees will swarm

each year it is the same
although I never tire
as spring brings hope again
forever to inspire

as life begins anew
I'll take another chance
and spin the wheel again
to change my circumstance

I will not miss the gray
I will not grieve the cold
I welcome sun and heat
the spring is precious gold

Barry Middleton

Spring Kisses

the orange tree will bloom
the bee will seek its rare perfume
the winds of march will blow
as signs of spring begin to grow

I hear the mockingbird
the song is like a sacred word
that testifies to hope
unleashing passion's allotrope

and that is just the heart
when lovers come to play their part
with love's sweet pheromones
set loose to warm the temperate zones

and bloom and bird and man
return to where it all began
before the spring dismisses
to greet it with impassioned kisses

Barry Middleton

Spring Rose Haiku

the testament lives
the breath of spring surviving
a rose for your heart

Barry Middleton

Spring Signs

The first orchid is open now,
an angel with silver wings.

A bird nest fern is still asleep,
and dreams of magical things.

Spring comes but once a year
to freshen the garden again.

Azaleas know the mandate well,
to brighten the heart of men.

A tropic wind is building a cloud,
awakening Eden once more,

reminding me to never forget
all these fragile things I adore.

Barry Middleton

Spring's Lease

the April rain will fall today
it is a sacred trust
the mockingbird will sing its song
it sings because it must

and I will write a song of spring
yet verily I grieve
for I can see that life must end
and seasons can deceive

my faith is now a single breath
for it could be my last
then if tomorrow I awake
I'll not regret the past

still I will watch as showers fall
and greet the budding rose
and whistle to the mockingbird
before my eyes must close

although I sense an evening breeze
the April rains will cease
when birds no longer sing for me
and spring grants my release

Barry Middleton

Stage Four Tomorrow

Stage four tells me my time is limited.
It brings regret
that I did not inhale more deeply,
did not relish every moment of stage three.

Along with age, stage four asks a question;
whatever happened to stage two?
It passed me by like a bottle rocket,
fast but short, and in the end a minor poof.

I have completely forgotten stage one;
but there was fire and laughter.
I'm not sure what the joke was;
it is now a word cloud of lost voices.

Stage four makes me aware of mistakes;
tears fall for missed opportunity.
Even sleep can hold no dream;
there are so few tomorrows.

Barry Middleton

Star Prayer

What is the gesture of the stars
that guides philosophers to find
theophany for all mankind?

They do deserve the pyramids
to cast long shadows on the Nile,
and mark the journey mile by mile.

We came of stars, protonic dust
encircling the Milky Way,
and we return again one day.

So it is fitting that we ask,
what is the service stars entreat,
that even time may not defeat?

Till we are stardust once again,
upon the earth our soul must dwell.
The stars implore we tend it well.

Barry Middleton

Starprint

somewhere is space
a lost star wanders

god moved his garden
to seek a worthy world

man squanders grace
and even to this day

without redemption
he plunders the earth

to find the lost star
look within yourself

cast away your greed
bring love into focus

you can help remake
a blessed garden earth

when enough do this
the star returns to us

Barry Middleton

Stars And Poets

a poet leaves not much behind
just memories and verse
and memories fade into the past
for better or for worse

for all we have is humble rhyme
the poems that we write
perhaps to shine some future day
or die some future night

and so it is that poets write
of stars that light our way
and in the hope their words live on
surpassing mortal stay

but when the words return to dust
and light comes to an end
then even dying stars must ask
what waits beyond the bend

Barry Middleton

Stars And Souls

the stars are shining bright tonight
and stardust never dies
for cosmic death gives birth to light
to bless the evening skies

the universal cycles turn
I know they never end
as newborn stars begin to burn
and faithful souls pretend

essential elements and fire
may never cease to be
but earth cannot sustain desire
for heathen ghosts like me

I know I am insentient dust
my body and my soul
and leave them both I surely must
when my dark star grows cold

the cycles of the earth dispose
to nevermore be proud
when consciousness must find repose
to lie beneath the shroud

Barry Middleton

Stars In The Riptide

Within the riptide, hope creates a heaven;
for in that moment, death is near.
The sand, that slips beneath my feet,
is telling me I cannot run away.
Beyond the stars, the sea is dark and cold;
I fight the tide with all my will.
And though I may cheat death tonight,
I know that fate will call for me once more.
My strength is gone; I am resigned to death;
I rest my soul upon an empty shore.

Barry Middleton

Stars Wishes And Dreams

the wish I have is made of stars
and dreams within the midnight blue
in darkness I yet find your hand
and walk a velvet path with you

the tears of time recede like tides
that can't resist the rising moon
and I can hear the sea's request
as breezes stir a shifting dune

return to me the wind implores
a kiss will seal the pledge we make
a wish for passion to endure
that dreamers swear to not forsake

but sands and time cannot desist
the planet turns and waits for none
the moon completes another quest
we make our trip around the sun

although my dreams can never stay
when wishes fade in morning light
by day I watch the ticking clock
till I embrace the stars tonight

Barry Middleton

Statue In The Park

the statue in the park must come down
it recalls a darker time of war
it is a bitter memory
it blocks forgiveness

this monument to shame was a reality
representing a different reality
a tribal memory of blood
and wasted lives

a thousand statues cannot bring us peace
a child may see a noble figure
may see glory in war
may look up to it

but we know the truth of war and statues
we know the futility of war
the statue must fall
it must come down

Barry Middleton

Still Life

not much is moving in his art
that's what a still life does

a curious museum piece
a bee without a buzz

that isn't all that troubles me
about this bowl of fruit

there is no rumble in the sky
and poetry is mute

was it a picnic he had planned
perhaps in hopeful youth

to speak of stillness I suppose
like destiny and truth

Barry Middleton

Still Waters

I knew those still, dark waters running deep,
the ones that stir the memories that I keep,

a secret place where sweetest waters flow
and feed the river at the old oxbow.

So many places calmed my storm within.
My heavy heart was filled with deep chagrin.

I often sought some solitary tree,
and said a prayer for Father and for me.

I had some choices in the woods and brakes,
bayous, rivers, streams, and darkest lakes.

They were all baptismally clear and pure,
to somehow bless the pain I would endure.

At last my quiet childhood prayer was heard,
the old man finally knew redemption's word.

I saw my father find serenity
before he drifted to eternity.

And time has also cinched the prayer for me,
a peace of mind that I could not foresee.

Barry Middleton

Stillness

here there are no quiet places
even the desert speaks to me

the forest whispers its prayer
the stillness is only in the mind

stillness is the secluded peace
beyond the din of a restless city

stillness is beyond dimension
where impossibility is fashioned

stillness is the silence that falls
on the sanctuary of lovers

as in their fevered embrace
a hushed kiss banishes the noise

Barry Middleton

Stone

in the end life is swept clean
like the polished stones
of a spring water creek

elements of happiness and pain
drift downstream
leaving behind the stolid soul

like a stone it does not feel
like a child it waits
like an old man it observes

my hands embrace the waters
I wash my fevered brow
a stone gazes upon a stone

Barry Middleton

Stoned

I am stoned
a child again
just beginning to realize
a momentary life

I worked my life away
I filed my income tax
I never went astray
but I will not come back

though just before my death
I feel I have been blessed
with vague serenity
no sweat no strain no test

I'm stoned but maybe you
might hear it too
the essence of every note
the hum of the Universe

Barry Middleton

Storm In The Night

Something has awakened me.
Was it the thunder,
or the lightning?
Was it the sound of war,
or the torch of truth?

Or was it love dying
in an explosion of faith
as lost trust lies bleeding,
and the fires of passion
burn with consuming hatred.

A disturbance in the air
will not let me sleep.
I fear the worst.
Beyond the horizon,
death brandishes its sword.

At dawn the silence comes.
Then my clouded eyes
will reconcile despair.
The storm has gone now.
The demons are in hiding.

Barry Middleton

Storm On The Bay

it matters not what I might say
when looming shadows end the day
and darkness falls upon the bay

the seabirds know a storm is near
and there is something yet to fear
that stirs the restless atmosphere

it hides in intermittent light
a beacon flashing in the night
is warning that I should take flight

and yet I know I cannot flee
surrender comes to set me free
I trust the storm may comfort me

so I gaze out as clouds now weep
their sodden teardrops on the deep
and winds postpone a welcome sleep

Barry Middleton

Storm Season

heat hangs heavy
in wet silent air
clouds are brewing
telling me to beware

weather is changing
and not for the good
it seems like a threat
to frail brotherhood

the season of storm
the season of flood
the rumble of thunder
is chilling my blood

the sound is a gun
the winds are a fire
the tempest erupts
with will and desire

Barry Middleton

Storm Seasons

the storm season is here
it is only a matter of time
thunderheads bloom and drift
in the overheated air

the tourists ask
does it rain here every day
I tell them every other
but only for three months

I give the advice I was given
many years ago
go to the beach anyway
and if it rains take shelter

this is the storm season
pop up showers are nothing
heed the gulf monsters
watch what lurks off Africa

Barry Middleton

Storms Of Hate

at noon the sky is seamless blue
but close at hand a storm conspires

and this is not a tropic storm
it rages in the heart of man

the clouds will soon converge
and hot and cold shall meet

and hate and love will then contest
their meeting in the street

the sky grows dark and blood will flow
no peace on earth today

when gods and frightened men concede
and look the other way

Barry Middleton

Stranded In The Universe

I am stranded in the universe
my dreams became a wretched curse
I heard that space and time can never end
I have to say I tried
until I finally cried
but solitude is still my only friend

some are born to be alone they say
I doesn't matter anyway
the road to circumstance has never changed
and the Milky Way ignores
all the things a man implores
the plan it seems is very very strange

I sleep alone each lonely night
it can't be wrong so it must be right
it seems to me there is no other way
a ball rolls down a hill
quite regardless of my will
I guess I must accept it come what may

I stare into the silent sky
until my time has come to die
and sing my songs of things I cannot know
beyond the stars and moon
the time is coming soon
to dance in space where lonely spirits go

Barry Middleton

Strange Feelings

when there is nothing left to fight
the battle lost or won
the strangest feelings fog the soul

no struggle means serenity
the peace of mind I always sought
preparing for eternity

I know the dragons are not dead
but what's a knight supposed to do
I have no strength to carry on

and in the end the scoring card
ignores the victories and defeats
it was the fight that counted most

it was my life not my estate
and surely not the dragon's fate
that represents a legacy

the younger knights must now rise up
to them I lift a hope filled cup
and now bequeath my sword and shield

Barry Middleton

Strangeness

Strangeness? Try the great swamp
at midnight looking for panic.

Run around the moon six times
before sleeping with a witch.

Split your multiple personalities,
and plant wildflowers in the cracks.

Chase a raven from the pine tree,
and search for turtles laying eggs.

Find the similarities in things,
stone, feathers, and insect wings.

In sleep the poetry is like a rock
tossed into water, then the ripples.

Try for the innuendo, the thing
in the mind after blackbirds.

And yes, I found the rain tree,
I planted it beside a bench long ago.

Barry Middleton

Stranger

Am I cursed, a stranger here,
to struggle down a different road,
failing the trial, running from fear,
never breaking the secret code?

I live bewildered far apart,
even in a boisterous crowd,
my grief is held within my heart.
I seldom speak my pain aloud.

Yes I find the world too cold
and so I choose to just observe;
bruised in youth, if truth be told,
I hide within a strange reserve.

Some are strangers on the Earth,
and travel far to seek the light.
We live our lives of little worth,
and die exiled no friend in sight.

Barry Middleton

Strangers

I often wonder how many
how many are isolated by fate
or by their own mistakes
how many are alone in this world

with all its romance and grief
with all its sorcery and deceit
the world flows by my door
like a river to who knows where

on the other side of that river
I see the faces of strangers
I see a sad fog of solitude
souls disconnected from touch

I hide behind a clever disguise
I hide behind a vacant stare
I look and pretend to know you
but I do not fool myself

I am nothing but an illusion
a flickering and dying reflection
alone in the immensity of universe
I am a stranger here

I am the invisible man
colorless and muted by shadows
no one sees me or hears my cry
my desolate tears fall in darkness

Barry Middleton

Strangest Lover

She slips into a quiet dream,
but she is like a stranger.

I reach for her, she turns away,
I know I cannot claim her.

Still there is an emptiness
that haunts my very soul,

barren as the hush of night
where memories grow cold.

She is gone and dead to me,
as darkness fills the sky.

But I will love her till the day
that suns and planets die.

Barry Middleton

Street Death

I heard a mother weep again;
her son lay dying in the street.
And does it matter how he died,
or who it was that held the gun?
Injustice wears too many cloaks,
in colors of the brutal street.
In black, or white, or blue, or red,
a bullet is invisible.
The mother weeps for justice sake,
beyond her pain and utter grief.
And humankind must own the blame,
for her son is the same as mine.
For her son is the same as yours.
He never had much of a chance.
The fault of inequality,
to thus deny a man his dream,
diminishes all of us with shame.
To fail to feel this mother's pain,
denies our only chance to heal.
To fail to act to end the death,
condemns us to a hopeless world.

Barry Middleton

Street Sounds

they chant 'black lives matter'
tear gas drifts protesters scatter

the cops said he had a gun
another mother lost a son

we wage a bogus war on drugs
the racist code a war on 'thugs'

there's a rumble in the street
stumbling home on weary feet

on the other side of town
we sip a drink at sundown

we stop the children at the border
the court already out of order

too many kids who cannot read
just too many mouths to feed

should we care or fade away
pretending that was yesterday

there's a rumble in the street
stumbling home on weary feet

on the other side of town
the sun already sinking down

gang bangers driving by
don't care where the bullets fly

in the suburb dinners late
kids on molly meet their fate

a generation doomed at birth
is this the legacy of earth

there's a rumble in the street
stumbling home on weary feet

on the other side of town
drink the shame and wash it down

young men cannot find a job
angry voices in a mob

will we ever heed the cry
how many souls may have to die

and when will all at last embrace
one heart one voice one human race

hear the rumble in the street
stumbling home on weary feet

on the hopeless side of town
lock the door or burn it down

Barry Middleton

Strength Within

as love may come and go like spring
like luck or fortune's furtive grace
so every heart must guard itself
and thus reserve a secret place

and in that secret place the soul
behind a wall where no one goes
must hide itself from pain and fear
and all delusions we suppose

our strength must ever dwell within
and can't depend on someone's hand
to raise us from the world's despair
life rarely goes like we had planned

for we are born and die alone
and in between love comes and goes
and grace is just accepting fate
to welcome both the highs and lows

Barry Middleton

Strong

I am stronger than the tornado
that destroyed my childhood home.
I am stronger than the seasons
that passed me on the road to nowhere.
I am stronger than the heartbreak
that often crept into my life.
I am as strong as steel,
I am as stolid as stone.
I have seen it all, and done it all,
and soon death may take my soul.
But it will never defeat me.
I will be a part of the sun and the rain,
within the heartbeat of the forest,
in the pulse of the wildest river.
I will soar with the eagle and the hawk.
Where the deer roams, I yet will be.
I glow in the coals of the winter hearth.
I flash in the lightning of summer winds.
I am stronger than the mystery of stars.

Barry Middleton

Sugarberry Dream

Beneath the sugarberry tree,
I dreamed on summer days

of all the possibilities
that startle and amaze.

And all was quite conceivable
when I was very young,

peace and love and brotherhood
and songs as yet unsung.

The sugarberry tree came down
one evening in a blow

like men who fall before their time
before their dreams can grow.

And that's the way it often goes
with men and hope and time.

They fade away yet unfulfilled
before they reach their prime.

Barry Middleton

Suicide By Dragon

when dragons raise their heads
inside a fearful dream
breathing fire into my brain
I plan a safe escape

I will not run or hide
or beg forgiveness from a demon
no sword or shield protects me
I raise my pen in vain conceit

but this is all I have
to curse the angry men and gods
who seem to rule our destiny
who show no mercy to humanity

to banish evil from this world
I'd gladly give my life
but dragons laugh at bargaining
and burn another village

so I stand fast before the beast
it seeks from me humility
demanding my surrender
but it can never kill my soul

Barry Middleton

Summer Is Coming

summer is coming
it is my favorite
time of year

spring was a promise
but life taught
promises are broken

fall is a harbinger
green is stripped
from the forest

winter is melancholy
heat is gone
and silence rules

summer is life
summer is rain
and wind and joy

summer is coming
orchids know
and reach sunward

Barry Middleton

Summer Kiss

No blossom compares
with a kiss in summer.

Springtime is hope,
but infant, wistful days
grow pale in the heat
of a blue August sky.

The touch of your skin,
golden leaves dripping
in the sacred hot rain,
are a plea and a prelude
to the birth of memory.

No blossom compares
with a kiss in summer,
when the season turns
to fever, and white wind
aches for the comfort
of sky fire and thunder,
before the storm passes.

Barry Middleton

Summer Love

I knew the summer wind
and moonlight on the bay
and a girl with auburn hair
who took my cares away

they say first love is lost
on foolish whims of youth
I know in growing old
that certainly is the truth

I have not met the man
who'd not return to times
of stars and secret vows
to stroll beneath the pines

when silver ribbons fall
on waters black as night
a kiss can banish pain
as passion's fires ignite

but dawn returns our grief
for every night must end
with lovers lost in time
and never found again

Barry Middleton

Sun Angel

'Sad men made angels of the sun...'

From: Evening Without Angels

By Wallace Stevens

so this angel of the street
can be bawdy and hungry

she is made of something
far more like earth and sea

and so she sparks desire
beyond wings and halos

she is the true sun angel
flesh and blood and heart

she descended like all of us
from the cloud of forever

and looking back to mystery
she still bears its question

and looking back to mystery
she is haunted by its yearning

Barry Middleton

Sun Course

The sun props up an elbow in the dawn
and casts a sleepy yawn,
inquisitive birds to test the air.
They travel with the leaves, a wave
of dreams transported by a primal breath.

The sun stands upright, the heat of noon
emanates a grating order
that makes the humble beasts
stampede among the scrub, nightmare-like,
fleeing prima facie rule.

The sun then sets in the ancient west,
soft shadow sounds remain
of rustling sheets as wise animals
glide among the palms that edge the sea,
like death seeking out its source.

Barry Middleton

Sun Fire

I steel myself in the tropics
to hide from a patch of snow
that lingers in my memory
no matter where I go

I feel the cold white shroud
I never can forget
it haunts my waking dream
it stalks me like regret

I died in the coldest north
now life is filled with dread
though I may seem alive
for long I have been dead

I died in the coldest north
when love abandoned me
no kiss can spark my pulse
death is a count of three

the spring came three times
and melted the ice away
but then the season passed
it seemed like just a day

I steel myself in the tropics
deceived and safe from harms
but a patch of white awaits
in a shadowy lover's arms

Barry Middleton

Sundown

the sun falls through silver
and hangs for a odd moment
in the black net of the palm

then the silver turns to gold
evening's alchemy conspires
to bring a moment of color

a watercolor masterpiece
blues that morph to turquoise
pink and peach above the gray

copper streaks the ruby clouds
a pirate ship spills its jewels
the bounty falling on the beach

this is the gift and grace I know
I sit and watch the sun's magic
as I await the flash and finale

passionate red in glowing steel
ignites the sky's eternal image
an incandescence of sacred fire

Barry Middleton

Sundown And Dark Lands

down a green valley where spring waters flow
across the broad swamp where few ever go

I wandered till sundown in search of the truth
that hides in dark places and forever aloof

I searched in the hills and deep in the marsh
in fugitive lands where the lost path is harsh

and I found the secret the black water knew
concealed in the shade of a faraway slough

this is the journey that every man takes
from brightest sunshine to still water brakes

there in that lonely and desolate place
I whispered a prayer for the whole human race

deliver us all from the frightful regret
of sundown and dark lands we cannot forget

Barry Middleton

Sunrise And Sunset

sunrise and sunset
remember me
and don't forget
I walked with you each day

I left my mark
a rutted path
a fragile spark
before the light must fade to gray

I did my best
but often failed the test
but still I did prevail
that's all a man can do

my legacy
is only this
a parting kiss
an old man reaching for the grail

Barry Middleton

Sunrise At The Camp

The sun ignited the bayou mist,
and the forest called my name,
as I sat beside the crackling fire,
warming my hands on the flame.

A sapsucker drilled on a maple tree,
and a squirrel complained to the fog.
A bullfrog croaked a rumbling note
from his perch on a hollow log.

The mallard's call was my alarm
that said it was time to wake,
to brew the morning coffee pot,
and hurry my way to the lake.

Sunrise at camp was my gratitude,
and forever the time of day
to thank the earth for one more dawn,
and whatever might come my way.

Barry Middleton

Sunrise, Sunset

I have always preferred sunsets
but lately long for the sunrise.
Now I am left with faded memories
of the dawn, the building light,
the promise of almost and wishes.
Strange that the same colors abide
at birth or death.
Crimson desire, purple solitude,
russet and rose regret,
girlish pink and baby boy blue,
and the dull gray of aged ships.
Age does not eliminate desire,
it fans bittersweet embers with a breeze
that wakes remembrance of wanting.
Majestic colors haunt memory
for even kings must die alone.
Death's jester is a parody
of purple audacity.
The reds are the worst,
sodden tears, the cowering,
the crowded ruse of wasted,
wanting, dreaming, mistaken starts.
Sunrise is like a young lover
concealed in a secret blush.
Her soft arms are a shelter,
a port for the war weary
and the battle worn.

Barry Middleton

Sunset Dare

at the end of the day I pause
and I notice a church bell rings
a bird drifts across the sun
as if every memory has wings

the sights and the sounds of youth
rise up with the toll of the bell
the sunset and birds to the roost
may still have a story to tell

the day always comes to an end
and youth must surrender they say
the bird seeks its rest for the night
and men seek a rest from dismay

still deception will tease my mind
to pretend in the evening air
that I am yet young and still strong
and ready to take any dare

Barry Middleton

Sunset Lessons

beyond the sunset out of reach
the dusk holds secrets it might teach

for everyday must have an end
to leave its lesson 'round the bend

the colors mark the close of day
and greet the stars that guide our way

the night reveals where we must go
the velvet sky in afterglow

beyond that glow no man can see
for darkness hides its mystery

Barry Middleton

Sunset On The Bay

a silver sheen on the water
black silhouettes of the palms
and cool air rising from the bay
how could I wish more serenity

racing shells glide in the afterglow
of pink and tangerine and navy
where their anonymous occupants
keep pace with reflected rowers

the sun's radiance is almost gone
a moment in an image of perfection
a memory like a quaint photograph
an awareness of what is left behind

Barry Middleton

Sunset Secrets

hidden in the red sunset
I see a color of my own

it is subtle and muted
a unique view of endings

...

all endings are not red
some are fed on purple

excruciating and royal
like velvet night itself

...

in some is a blackness
like the pitch of midnight

or a beckoning of souls
into an angry cold ocean

...

but in my secret sunset
there is a whisper of blue

a hue that only I can see
a song that only I can hear

Barry Middleton

Sunshine And Shadow

I saw the sunshine
the flower of youth

passion and frenzy
the warm glow of truth

a kiss in the spring
the ghost of the wood

for only a moment
then vanished for good

I saw the shadow
a quiet place of sleep

the comfort of midnight
where silence is deep

the pain and the glory
are not understood

still in my lifetime
I wish that I could

sunshine and shadow
I saw it all

whatever comes next
I'll answer the call

Barry Middleton

Supernova

To know that death will come to all
should be a consolation to the seasons,
that nature too must deign to fall
at random and bereft of reasons.

For like a man, the sun will dim,
and should our progeny
control that day,
observe the protestation,
I think that he alone might see
the mote of man's divinity.

When all the suns explode,
and god doth laugh
uproarious in her cave,
the slave will turn to welcome death,
the king will have no grave.

Barry Middleton

Surreal Landscape

enough of wandering
following dawn's color
or the lagging sun

fools chase illusion
deluded by waves
beyond rhyme

you sang of stars
in harmony and light
I cried for more

in a perfect wind
deep in a green forest
we found the lake

fringed in velvet roses
lutes of poetry
rang their tunes

but on the turning path
darkness stalked
like a sunset melody

Barry Middleton

Surrender

I gave up my delusions
I cling to no illusions

now I must face the facts
and grave realities

perhaps you might remember
the meaning of surrender

with every burden lifted
into the peaceful night

now I must bid farewell
and break this mortal spell

yet I'll be close at hand
so please do not forget

I'll see you in the twilight
I'll look for you at midnight

reach out or call my name
and always I'll be there

Barry Middleton

Surrounded

we drift into a cloud of ghosts
I wish that I could see
a shadow of the past within
our lost humanity

the phantoms soon will pass away
as younger souls are born
to give the planet one more chance
a new and hopeful morn

the child may find serenity
and take a deeper breath
as peace absolves the smoke and fog
to save the world from death

or they may resurrect the beast
and fail to turn the page
in resonance of war and hate
and pale and spectral rage

but every man must trust and pray
new souls will seek the truth
where hopeful spirits hide within
the faith and heart of youth

Barry Middleton

Survival

the words on the page
the black and the white

remind me of teardrops
and cold mountaintops

in the wide wilderness
the journey of survival

knows bruises and agony
and apathy and apogee

past the mountain peak
the way to home awaits

down below is the valley
the finale and the tally

and all that we are left
in crossing over the river

is a crumbling headstone
where words stand alone

Barry Middleton

Survive The Pain

desire cannot be overcome
regardless of enlightenment
it can only be survived

I want one more painless year
to defeat one more storm
to die in a just world

and yet I will survive the pain
to cast a feeble vote for peace
and feel the sun on my face

desire cannot be overcome
need cannot bring lasting love
a wish cannot stave off death

Barry Middleton

Survivor

survivors for a while
we kid ourselves

easier to pretend
a life will never end

I was a survivor
I answered to the call

I fought the dragons
stared down the devil

the armor is tarnished
the arms are weak

the final demon waits
I will not fight today

I put my sword away
I turn to face the truth

Barry Middleton

Swallow Tail Kite Haiku

a swallow tail kite
swoops lower over the pines
its prey hides in fear

Barry Middleton

Swamp Wizard

far removed in the Everglades
and well off the beaten track
at a bend in a blackwater creek
stands a swamp wizard's lonely shack

no one knows just why he retreated
to a place where few ever go
to his island beyond the Big Cypress
where the tall black mangroves grow

I have heard he is wise as the ages
and maybe a hundred years old
and he chooses to live in the swampland
but just why is a story untold

some claim his true love died young
others say that he hates all mankind
and some only laugh and nod
and declare he just lost his mind

but few ever call to inquire
as he glares with a foreboding frown
at his bend on that desolate creek
where he waits for the sun to go down

Barry Middleton

Swan Song

just one swan song is not enough
so I must wander through my mind
along the roads I left behind

I cannot let those places go
a peaceful vale and shadowed creek
are here with me and seem to speak

I see a shy and lonely boy
that sought the loneliness within
in deepest woods where dreams begin

today an old man pays his debt
and I can hear what he might say
to that young boy of yesterday

I come to thank the ghostly past
I owe you everything I own
you knew each path that I would roam

I listen for the child's reply
we did the best we could old man
we built foundations in the sand

some men are born to be alone
come walk into these woods with me
among what is and used to be

I see them both as they retreat
they disappear into the trees
their laughter fades upon the breeze

Barry Middleton

Sweet Brown Sparrow

sweet brown sparrow
flirting round my barn

nesting in the hayloft
stirring up a storm

hens are gone to roosting
night is still and dead

sweet brown sparrow
come to my feather bed

I'm not afraid of morning
nor frightened by the night

I am afraid of dying
and life's too short to fight

sweet brown sparrow
it's safe here in the shade

fly down and stay a while
for soon the night will fade

by morn the sun is rising
our time will come no more

sweet brown sparrow
fly in and close the door

Barry Middleton

Symbology

The osprey, fox and timid deer,
the drifting of the atmosphere,
stardust and the velvet void,
hold certitude we can't avoid.

The unity the osprey brings
to earth and sky on spirit wings,
reminds me that we all can soar
who look beyond the bolted door.

The fox is every prayer and dream,
a key to hope we may redeem.
We seek to find and hold it fast,
in frail devotion unsurpassed.

The deer is vulnerability,
the fragile gift of roaming free,
the torment of the risk we take,
in all the choices that we make.

And stardust is our final home,
the tranquil arc of heaven's dome,
the kingdom of serenity,
the spirit's wings and destiny.

Barry Middleton

Tables Or Walls

there is no beauty in a wall
they have a wicked use
to isolate our fear and greed
and evil and abuse

a wall is false security
not one cannot be scaled
and history can testify
that every wall has failed

and even worse they separate
how can we understand
by banishment and deep mistrust
the people we have banned

let's spend our money on a feast
for freedom is a test
then we may find no need for walls
but welcome every guest

Barry Middleton

Take My Attitude (A Song)

Life can be confusing,
head goes spinning `round,
sure could use some friendship,
good times can't be found.

Take my attitude, (Chorus)
Take my attitude,
Take my attitude.

We could all be brothers,
all stand up as one,
Christian, Jew and Muslim,
all lay down the gun.

(Chorus)

We could all be brothers,
black and white and brown,
join the celebration,
no one puts you down.

(Chorus)

Why can't we be lovers,
men and women need,
the strength each of the other,
respect, a mighty seed.

(Chorus)

When you love a woman,
or when you love a man,
love is always blessed,
but fear can't understand.

(Chorus)

All the world's a garden,
Spring, then Summer falls,

play and pray in Sunlight,
soon the night will fall.

(Chorus)

We are all just children,
and what is living for?
End the competition,
no one keeping score.

(Chorus)

Barry Middleton

Taking A Fall

Batman and Robin could not stop sobbin'
as Gotham became a dark slum
our heroes are dead and it gets to my head
for the goons have us under their thumb

Superman crashed 'cause he didn't have cash
to escape from the green kryptonite
he fell where he stood in a bad neighborhood
and that was the end of his flight

Wonder Woman too saw her ticket was due
when her bracelets were stolen and hocked
she took up a job and married a slob
and I must admit I was shocked

That's the way that it goes as everyone knows
and the mighty might well wear a crown
but the end of the day can bring their dismay
for tomorrow they may be brought down

Barry Middleton

Tears Of Waiting

when the tears are exhausted
when the fire of anger is extinguished
I am left with the dull ache of waiting

my hope died with the tears
peace died with my prayers
the gods do not hear or do not care

my eyes are empty beyond despair
what is the word for utter hopelessness
what is the metaphor

I wait for the final passion
I welcome the terminal pain of death
bereft of mercy there is only sleep

Barry Middleton

Tenderness

there is a need for tenderness
as primal as lust
essential as trust
but fear and mortality deny us

we set a fire before the cave
to banish night
to block the beast
deceived to know it dwells within

but tender sleep is well deserved
your body warm
the cave a womb
the comfort of the only heaven

essential man was given this
a test of will
against the chill
the soul of nurture or despair

the fire is dim consumed in ash
the moon is full
and dawn will come
the judgment is the human heart

Barry Middleton

Terror Continues

the terror continues
bodies lie dead in the street

an evening of music
becomes an evening of death

politicians will express their
condolences

preachers will
offer up their prayers

death of children
death of young adults

blood spills from the pyramid
a sacrifice to indifference

Barry Middleton

Terror In Belgium

More innocent families are grieving.
Poetry cannot capture the horror:
children, old women, young lovers,
all dead on a bloody altar of hatred.

No God smiles down at the carnage.
No injustice justifies random murder.
The terrorists do not seem to know,
nothing is gained but Satan's ritual.

The demon is the evil heart of men
who lust for power's cruel dominion.
And death will curse their vile blood
to satisfy the God that they betrayed.

The poet does not see the light above.
Blood leads to blood and hate to hate.
The ghost of endless godless terrorism
curls in sulfurous smoke and darkness.

Barry Middleton

Terror Refugee

The terror of war,
the fear of all terror,

drives humanity
like the fear of death.

...

Love and peace,
and life and liberty,

are shining ideals
that crown a dream.

...

The terror of despair
gazes to the west,

trusting its embrace,
and the solace of hope.

Barry Middleton

Terror, War And Lust

There is too much sorrow in this world,
too much for lamenting poets to describe,
too much to chronicle with weak words.

What is the metaphor for our brutality,
a beast that hides a ghastly hoard of sin,
that lurks within the heart of every man?

The cold reptilian brain bears the mark,
yet concealed by human flesh and blood;
it shows itself in smoke and fire and lust.

Though it stands upright in the garden,
its soul slithers like a venomous rapist.
It feeds on the virginal innocence of youth.

The serpent is the beating heart of war.
Its terror seizes the soul of a generation.
It scorches the earth in hell's brimstone.

~~~~~

Inspired by the brutal bombing of innocents in Lahore, Pakistan on Easter  
Sunday, March 27,2016.

Barry Middleton

# Terrorism Of Hopelessness

serenity has become the death of hope  
a plaster saint shattered by a drunken tyrant  
no possibility of redemption  
no path ahead for evolution but despair

evil had nothing to do with apples  
a confused metaphor hid the sin of the first born  
brotherhood was forever lost  
trust was banished by blood spilled in the sand

antiquity is still plundered for gold and slavery  
men are washed in blood to please idolatry  
bombs rip flesh and gods asunder  
the invisible mark is borne by an evil soul

Barry Middleton

# Terror's Cloud

the cloud has covered up the blue  
the gray has banished all our hope  
and everything we thought we knew  
to rob from us the will to cope

the breeze is whispering beware  
so toxic is this mist and smoke  
that every breath must bring despair  
from horrors that our fears evoke

within that cloud a demon hides  
and spreads across the fragile earth  
to block the sun where light abides  
with our frail legacy of birth

so we must meet the haze of death  
and make this pledge beyond despair  
to banish terror from the earth  
and grant the innocent their prayer

~~~~~

After the terrorist bombing in Manchester, England, on May 22,2017.

Barry Middleton

Thanksgiving Over The Bay

Thanksgiving will always be,
being run out of the kitchen
for too much pesky sampling,
moms, grandmas and aunts
bumping each other there,
the smell of roasting turkey,
orders to the older kids
on setting up the table
as sweet potatoes capped
in marshmallow browned.
No such thing then as
carbohydrate paranoia,
electric mixers whirred
butter mashed potatoes,
yeast roll aroma mixed
with cranberries bubbling
on the crowded stove
with fat boy gibley gravy.
The baking had proceeded
in premeditated stages.
Now there would be
pecan and pumpkin pie,
lemon filled coconut cake
and golden apple pie.
Outdoors, touch football
ruled the cool fall day.
Still there was time
for BB gun practice
with empty beer cans.
At sunset, everyone
headed to the pier
to watch Mobile Bay
take the sun away.
Tomorrow would bring
Black Friday shopping
and the Trivial Pursuit
annual challenge match.
Saturday was reserved
for the holy sacrament

of Alabama/Auburn football.
The quiet evening dictated
a glowing fire in the hearth,
drinks and maybe a song
and endless conversation
as cousins and cousin dogs
got better acquainted,
amid popping flashbulbs
that tried hard to freeze
the momentum of time.

Barry Middleton

The Absence Of Order

The song she sings is a charade,
a brief funereal parade.
A mortal song she sings to me,
not weavings of eternity.

And so I sit and find the shade,
canceling all the plans I made.
I muse on time that used to be,
a prisoner of my memory.

I cannot halt the cruel brigade.
A dirge assails the palisade.
Her song seeks no divinity.
It is of earth and turquoise sea.

And in the song, the masquerade,
a rumbling giant seems to fade
and roil amid imagined scree
of spirits and infinity.

The ghostly sea at last assayed,
withholds its genius and its aid,
where outer voices pay their fee
awash with ghastly pale debris.

The lyric in refrain displayed
the sea and song to be betrayed.
And tilting stars may yet agree,
as they embrace the fragile sea.

Barry Middleton

The Addict

the addict sleeps
his life away,
narcotic fog
keeps pain at bay.

dodging pain,
he knows no joy,
another soul
without employ.

such are those
who run from life.
the irony,
without the strife

there is no force
to make them strive,
no cause to even
be alive.

Barry Middleton

The Angel Oak

I can't be proud
of pain I did provoke

I did some good
some bad I would revoke

sometimes I didn't think
before I spoke

other times
I thought life was a joke

I stand before
the dismal devil's cloak

and look him in the eye
and do not choke

I may have been
asleep but then I woke

I'll make my plea
beneath the Angel Oak

~~~~~

The 'Angel Oak Tree' is a Southern live oak on Johns Island near Charleston, South Carolina. It is estimated to be at least 400 and possibly up to 1400 years old.

Barry Middleton

# The Angry People

these are the angry people  
they claim they were cheated  
the tax man was a thief  
their life was brought to grief  
and yet their wealth is great

they are afraid of shadows  
their soul is a tree of death  
it's only fruit is hatred  
that brings death back to them  
they claim a bitter god

in spring they dream of war  
at dawn they watch the news  
and as the day subsides  
they appreciate the view  
and take a lavish meal

they lock the door at night  
a gun is by their side  
they jump at every sound  
and what the night may hide  
they believe deception's plan

Barry Middleton

# The Arrow

she shot an arrow to my heart  
and I was underneath her spell

my courage gone along with will  
and strength that I could not compel

I cannot blame her cruel attack  
I wore no armor for my soul

for I was hungry for her love  
with appetites beyond control

but I did learn the lesson well  
and now I guard my tears and grief

no one can pierce my heart again  
though loneliness is strange relief

Barry Middleton

# The Art Of Shadows

I grew up in the shadows  
the sun hidden behind a cloud  
darkness spread over the south  
like a river flood

the view was a cotton field  
sharecroppers worked in peonage  
with no way out for them  
not so for me

I existed in the shadows  
and hid my secret thoughts  
passing along occasional kindness  
as all I had to give

but I knew what the shadows were  
the shadows of slavery lingered  
cruel words of ownership  
and better treatment for dogs

I filtered in and out of shadows  
till I was old enough to leave  
I hid from the evil of darkness  
until I found the light

Barry Middleton

# The Artist

the soul of the artist is a burden  
we take responsibility for tomorrow  
the audacity of the task  
boggles the mind

with chisel or brush or pen  
we reduce mountains to monuments  
we conjure the fire of a starry night  
we freeze the scream of terror

and we must chronicle love and death  
the beauty of the universe  
the grief of letting go  
so this is a heavy weight we bear

art aims to change the world  
this is its sacred mission  
and some will be remembered  
and some will die unknown

and yet when we unite  
it eases our burden  
to know so many others rise to the call  
to fracture the walls that separate us

Barry Middleton

# The Bar

The bar could be the church,  
the workplace, the club.

We come here to be connected  
and to remind ourselves

how separate men are,  
how apart from one another.

We might talk of women, sport,  
politics or even of gods

for these are all as one thing,  
a point of focus

that separates and connects.  
Just to see them,

or more importantly to know  
that we were seen,

we come to view the others,  
and invent their story.

Barry Middleton

# The Barbarians

Those people are the enemy.  
Those are the barbarians.  
They will always be at the gates.  
Eternal avarice awaits.

Instinct must name the enemy,  
otherwise he is within us.  
He is the man in the mirror  
who broke a sacred trust.

I see the dark, I see the light,  
I see the stars, I see the night.  
I see the grace, I see the sin,  
a dual soul possesses men.

Greed and pride cannot be killed.  
Barbarians are at the gate.  
The war continues endlessly  
till universe declares our fate.

I do not claim to know the path.  
I struggle with my mortal wrath.  
I cry and pray to kill the beast  
that dwells within my human soul.

Barry Middleton



# The Bear

the clumsy lumbering  
frightening I suppose

the old silverback  
grown soft and fat now

you were a golden  
champion of the mountain

a breath of frost  
on the Yellowstone River

seeking Cutthroat trout  
and ripe sarvisberry

now the winter comes  
and you are ready

before the first snow  
you wonder

you turn into the cave  
with no prayer

the leaves wait for ice  
soon you will rest

Barry Middleton

# The Beast

Humanity is lost,  
it became a beast.

It lost its way  
in the cruel jungle.

It lost a vital bond,  
the strength of unity.

It grew divided,  
splitting into mobs.

It forgot compassion  
and brotherhood.

It burns with a fever  
that will destroy us.

It is a selfish dragon  
feeding on our souls.

Barry Middleton

# The Beeches

The days I studied every tree  
I knew them more by reputation  
than by their name or occupation,  
the job their wood is used to fill.  
Now time has taught that beech are best  
as homes for squirrels or signs to mark  
a boy's way home as woods grow dark.  
The old trees die from inside out  
and form a hollow hulk to warm  
the lives they house. The wood that's lost  
the beetles take, and birds in turn.  
And so their use for boards and beams  
is limited, except the few  
the loggers take for pulp and crates.  
The giants are scarred by woodpecker work  
and where I carved essential facts  
in jackknife script so long ago.  
For beeches were best for dates and hearts  
that carry me back on woodland walks  
and prove the marks the beeches made on me  
were deeper yet than those I went to see.

Barry Middleton

# The Bees Know

the bees know something  
they hide in the swamp  
where the tupelo grows

the deer see dying waters  
the bees are gone  
they cannot find their tree

the air is still and mute  
the river of grass weeps  
and the bees know

the cane fields bring death  
the tupelo tree is quiet  
the bees have flown away

Barry Middleton

# The Beggar

surely he sought success  
hard to believe he didn't

he gave up young or old  
he forgot his own story

maybe all possibility  
is cruelly set in stars

so for lack of talents  
failure was his curse

do we attain glory  
or is there one station

where loveless roses wilt  
regardless of effort

since fate put me here  
I hand him my change

it will not change him  
it will not change grief

coins and roses vanish  
the game to stay alive

makes beggars of us all  
hungry alone and wanting

Barry Middleton

# The Black Book

the black book made more sense  
than modern poetry

it sayeth and it said unto  
giving sound advice and gibberish

it paints an ugly picture of a god  
made in man's image

or maybe it was modern poetry  
back then

inspired by oral tales and hijinks  
and miracles

the begetting went on and on  
until it came to me

I had to turn to the white book  
I had to write it

Barry Middleton

# The Black Velvet

I walk in the sunlight  
but I am weak and sad

I write sad poetry  
as an evening prayer

but giving up denial  
does not mean giving up

the black velvet waits  
it is royal and wise

it saw the birth of light  
the death of empire

there is no sadness  
but only moons and stars

darkness hides creation  
as it recreates itself

Barry Middleton

# The Blue Room Essay

The blues in Mississippi  
were there in slavery days.  
By 1937, the blues ruled  
the juke joints and cafes  
on the dark side of town.  
I checked the local spots  
in the wide open sixties  
but never once dreamed,  
I was a scant forty miles  
from a sacred blues shrine,  
the storied Blue Room.  
I must forgive myself,  
too young for the heyday,  
I missed the best of it.  
Half and half Tom Wince  
owned the famous place,  
opened as a beer stand  
when he was twenty seven.  
It grew, became his house,  
ballroom and restaurant,  
bar and rowdy dance hall.  
The Jitterbug Den room  
was lined in split bamboo.  
Top acts played upstairs  
in the Skyline Ballroom.  
Tom's riding jodhpurs  
ballooned to hide a pistol,  
everyone knew that,  
so there was no trouble.  
It was a high class joint,  
whites always welcome  
along with wealthy blacks  
or the poorest sharecropper.  
Whites crowded the place  
when Louis Armstrong played.  
The talent was impressive,  
I can't name them all here,  
Ray Charles, Fats Domino,  
B.B. King, Dinah Washington,



Little Milton, Muddy Waters.  
Tom Wince's wide influence  
extended to other businesses,  
he was a blues promoter,  
the biggest in Mississippi,  
booking for Ruby's Nite Spot  
and the New Club Desire  
in nearby Leland and Canton.  
Progress ended it all in 1972.  
A new club was opened in 1974  
but it wasn't the Blue Room.  
Wince died in 1978,  
a young 68 years old.  
It all says to me don't wait,  
look around you, go do it,  
or it may be long gone  
when you decide it's time.  
The symbol of the Blue Room  
was a star above its door.  
Now the star emblazons  
Tom Wince's quiet grave  
in Vicksburg's cemetery.

Barry Middleton

# The Brave

everyone says I'm brave  
but I'm not  
I'm just too weak to scream

I can no longer fight  
no one beats this disease  
no one beats death

but I did make a promise  
I promised to ride it out  
I promised the next sunrise

Barry Middleton

# The Bridge

I see it waiting patiently  
I know it will not pass away

somehow it does not frighten me  
I chose the path of yesterday

the trees are green on either side  
the breeze is just as fresh and fair

on one side is the world of breath  
the farther side relieves my care

one side is filled with noise and life  
and loneliness and fevered grief

the other side is blind and mute  
perhaps the silence brings relief

I cannot know what waits for me  
I keep my expectations low

perhaps I'll be surprised to find  
a place here Eden's trees yet grow

all that I know is I must cross  
and I will keep my head held high

the final bridge to mystery  
is welcomed with a fatal sigh

Barry Middleton

# The Call (A Tribute To Joseph Campbell)

I heard it early in my life  
it was oh so vague at first  
it commanded to explore  
it grew clearer with time  
so I sought and dreamed  
scanning a small universe

I have written on it often  
it found me in a green forest  
propped against an oak tree  
reading and imagining more  
and when I closed my eyes  
I could almost see the way

the star-swirl caressed me  
and I slept to find silence  
fear was as great as the call  
the push and the pull tore  
tore at my heart and soul  
till final confusion roared

I woke and was lost again  
I slept and found in fantasy  
the chimera in a nightmare  
the demon that had to die  
red eyed and vicious claw  
a reflection in black water

the teachers came and went  
pointing to odd cryptic visions  
beckoning from the black hole  
at the center of time's wheel  
then student became teacher  
the sound was a cymbal crash

so the journey was begun  
foes and obstacles defeated  
until a final challenge called  
to step away from needing

to know that life is enough  
is the mastery of the divine

still I trembled hesitant  
there were stories to write  
and wrongs to be set right  
the loose ends of existence  
needed tying to a neat bow  
exhausted gods were let go

I learned that life is motion  
life is like a horror movie  
when you think it ending  
the beast thought dead  
will resurrect its awful head  
to die upon your final sword

I stole the beast's treasure  
I stripped away its vanity  
and made escape at last  
it was escape from future  
it was escape from past  
no evil can stop me now

so for me it comes to this  
to be the voice in the wood  
giving it a song and verse  
knowing the how and why  
what peace has come to me  
the redemption in my word

Barry Middleton

# The Captain Of The Universe

The Captain of the Universe  
is out there building stars.  
And looking down he may not like  
Senatorial cigars.

Up in Washington DC,  
all they do is fight.  
The world is cracked just like an egg.  
Seems they should set things right.

I wonder what the Captain thinks,  
and I can take a guess.  
He's building stars to start anew,  
one way to fix this mess.

They say He's gone this way before.  
He had to roll the dice,  
wipe the slate, begin again,  
commencing with the mice!

Barry Middleton

# The Catcher

most anyone can play the game  
as catcher in the rye  
it's not at all impossible  
for every bird can fly  
with little fame and no acclaim  
you'll only catch a few  
to ride again the carousel  
with someone dressed in blue

~~~~~

Obviously inspired by J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Barry Middleton

The Chance Of Redemption

the chance of redemption seems mighty slim
they blame it on us, we blame it on them

God and the devil had a big fight
Satan sentenced to hell for only a night

he settled on earth, oh you know his name
in the heart of all men, the hatred and shame

so where does salvation begin to begin
the spire of a church, or the souls of all men

I have but one prayer, that's all that I need
that I can grow stronger and stick to my creed

I believe that redemption begins in the heart
I am part of the plan and I must play my part

and you may join me if you believe that too
so get with the program, be a part of the crew

Barry Middleton

The Children Play

the children play
in the aftermath of summer

heat and dust are memories
the opulence of water has vanished

green leaves and iced tea
steaming air
has given up
to warm meals
falling leaves
and stove smoke

autumn is not sad
autumn is an infant season
that looks toward joyful snow
good books
warm fires
and peaceful sleep

the children play
in the aftermath of summer

Barry Middleton

The City

Great slabs
are laid into her maw
like ribbons of death
tied neatly with a concrete bow.
She ruminates on robot wheels,
humanity reduced to steel.
Within her entrails the slow
mutation of a nation breeds.
Is this the unktion of man's pity?
The obesity of a city.

Barry Middleton

The City Of Ideas

in cities of ideas
'twas said the poet dwells
he climbs the highest peak
he delves the deepest well

he never knows the hush
for silence whispers there
the voice is never mute
it drifts upon the air

it vexes him in sleep
it will not let him rest
recording one more rhyme
he gives to us his best

he weeps for every pain
that humans must endure
the illness of his race
and yet he knows no cure

~~~~~

Title taken from C.P. Cavafy, *The First Step*.

Barry Middleton

# The Comfort Of Silence

The comfort of silence is a blessing.  
The world is filled with noise.  
Voices hiss and prattle  
like wind in the pines,  
like the rattle of a brittle forest.  
There is no meaning in it.  
These echoes contain nothingness.  
They do not fill the eye.  
They cannot touch or be touched.  
I hear no music,  
only a cacophony of the mindless,  
the squawk of a blind crow.  
But the silence is a sacred grove  
in the dawn of first light.  
It is a comfort and a blessing.  
Only then can I feel a god's touch,  
or know the cresting wave of breath  
where dwells my pensiveness.  
The comfort of silence is a blessing.  
It is like a kiss,  
all sensation tuned to serenity.  
Silence is the touch of creation,  
the song of the angels,  
the soul of all that ever will be.

Barry Middleton

# The Country Of Long Dead Men

'where does one find  
the country of long dead men'  
From the movie The River 1951

they do not reach for love  
they are alone in crowds  
they do not need a god  
they are the long dead men

I see them all about  
defeated by the game  
they can no longer feel  
they know the final truth

the Universe is God  
of everything we see  
and God is Universe  
and all that we may be

is one life not enough  
that each man must decide  
we make it what it is  
we all create our fate

the land of long dead men  
is well beyond the earth  
among the silver stars  
the soul's eternity

Barry Middleton

# The County Fair

When I was just a hometown kid  
the county fair came round each fall  
and I would ride the easy rides  
and wonder what went on inside  
the tent down near the end where men  
would gather like chickens after corn.  
I'd ride the easy rides and stay  
within my brother's call as I  
was told to do. It took me years  
to deem myself a man and dare  
to lift the musty skirt of that  
remotest tent and swagger to  
the ticket booth of deadly fun.  
But how the thing did climb and dive,  
it made me appreciate being alive.  
And the girls in the corner tent?  
Why they were that much better,  
my eyes were that much older,  
my eyes were that much wetter.

Barry Middleton

# The Cruellest Element

the cruelest element is love  
the heat is radiant  
consuming all

no one escapes its soft allure  
the fire within the eyes  
the naive smile

then secret vows are often made  
that love will never fade  
at end of day

but promises are soon betrayed  
I watch the sun go down  
I stand alone

and yes I know I can't go back  
I try to pass this on  
we stand alone

Barry Middleton

# The Crunch

the silent universe  
where comets streak

still beckons me  
as if the stars could speak

proclaiming all we know  
of destiny

as slaves of tightly  
shackled enmity

we would deceive ourselves  
with murky pride

from every truth  
that we have set aside

but some still hear  
the cratered death of stars

that comes to reconcile  
our earthy scars

Barry Middleton



# The Cusp Of Uncertainty

we live our lives  
on the cusp of uncertainty

teetering on the brink  
a breath away from death

we grasp as if we can hold  
gold or love or glory

the land can fall away  
the air can vanish

and all the worlds gold  
will not buy a single day

nor stop love's deceit  
quixotic and mercurial

the brash sun rises  
mindlessly confident

Barry Middleton

# The Cynic

Life is filled with honest men breeding disaster  
from simple solutions and good intentions.

Love is a hasty decision based on limited  
evidence and extremely poor advice.

Children are the means by which mistakes  
are passed from one generation to the next.

Barry Middleton

# The Dark

on the dark side of the hill  
there is a darker forest

beyond the final ridge  
there is an even darker sea

as I look down there is no light  
but only vacant void infinity

I understand denial's brush  
that paints a flickering mirage

I understand that faith  
can lift some human grief

but I can see no distant light  
I am blind in a wilderness

Barry Middleton

# The Dark Garden

the drought has put it into disarray  
the garden is brittle, brown and dead

angels gaze down from above and weep  
is there nothing left to praise or protect?

out where the black holes hide  
a plot is being hatched by rival gods

the dark gods want to send an asteroid  
and begin the world anew, a clean slate

the gods of light seek redemption  
to reinvent their miraculous intention

in the vast void something is moving  
and nibbles at a tender green leaf

Barry Middleton

# The Dark Side

on the dark side of the planet  
a hungry child is crying  
a soldier falls in war  
a young girl is enslaved

on the dark side of the planet  
mindless bombs rain down  
blood runs in the street  
old women wail

on the dark side of the planet  
a murder is avenged  
a man takes what he wants  
a poet stands alone

on the dark side of the planet  
the gods have turned away  
the poisoned waters flow  
the forest is aflame

on the dark side of the planet  
endless grief survives  
avarice consumes  
hollow tears are shed

Barry Middleton

# The Darkness

As darkness cannot speak,  
it hides the mysteries.  
What does the night conceal?

My eyes cannot break through  
the wall of blind deceit  
beyond the Universe.

I see the moon and stars.  
I hear the patient wind.  
I feel the emptiness.

At either end of time,  
there lies an ink black stone,  
containing all that is,

where all that ever was,  
and all that there can be,  
awaits the catalyst.

Barry Middleton

# The Death Of Paris

Because he coveted beauty  
above wisdom or power,  
death would be his destiny.  
Wisdom may have saved him.  
Yet he deceived himself  
to believe a mortal man,  
could possess such loveliness,  
even though he was a prince.  
The fairest maiden of all,  
the daughter of the Swan,  
was wed to a Greek King,  
but she did not love him.  
Still in alliances of death,  
armies swore protection  
of their honored Queen,  
and the honor of the King.  
Yet goddesses conspired,  
and Eros fired love's arrow  
ensuring Helen's passion.  
Thus the Prince was doomed.  
Paris would die for love,  
for abduction of the Queen  
brought war and retribution,  
and Troy was razed to dust.

Barry Middleton

# The Debt

what is the debt we owe  
to thank the universe  
for granting such a blessing  
the beauty of this earth

not just an awesome view  
but all earth does provide  
to meet our every need  
a garden and a guide

and when we fall from grace  
know every man will sin  
but if we can atone  
then in the end we win

the debt is paid in full  
when we are filled with love  
and if we seek that path  
they do take note above

when gratitude comes due  
it's sure to show the way  
with friends forever true  
who will not back away

to what is up above  
that gave us such a boon  
that granted life on earth  
we thank the stars and moon

Barry Middleton



# The Delta Sea

My father told the story;  
before man roamed the hills  
edging the Mississippi delta,  
the land was a dinosaur home.

The loam from the forest soil  
washed into a shallow sea  
covering cockle and coquina  
with a fertile layer of earth.

The well digger brought up proof,  
bleached white by millennia,  
minerals sacrificed for farmland,  
ancient shells and fossil crabs.

My great uncle sat on a vertebra  
from a mineralized sauropod  
and later school confirmed,  
oh yes, there once was a sea.

And if I needed further proof,  
late at night from the ridge road,  
the stars reflected in dappled light  
upon the fluid city streets below.

Imagining, I could squint my eyes  
and travel back through time  
to gaze on a cretaceous swamp  
where now the man fish sleep.

Barry Middleton

# The Deluxe Motel

if I'm not back in thirty minutes  
send up a helicopter  
my girl ran off with another guy  
I guess I might have stopped her

I never did try I let her go  
I hope it's not too late  
I'll cry and plead my honey come back  
yes I'll ingratiate

and if she does return to me  
I'll do the best I can  
but I won't fuss and I won't fight  
not with that other man

and I won't put up with this crap  
not even one more time  
she tried to take me for a sap  
and she knows I'm past my prime

but I have won the lottery  
it's worth a million bucks  
now that ought to bring a little kiss  
at the Motel Deluxe

if I'm not back in thirty minutes  
send up a helicopter  
my girl ran off with another guy  
but the lottery might just stop her

Barry Middleton

# The Divide

the emptiness of hollow politics  
cannot cross these divisions  
business exploits the common man  
and men betray both brother and sister

a wave is building  
resistance is the answer  
the firm commitment

institutions cloaked in righteousness  
religions of love and truth  
are mired in hatred and deceit  
and steered by greed and power

resist hatefulness  
we must reclaim the pulpit  
restore the garden

nations are like tribes of warring apes  
our baser instincts are on parade  
on the killing fields of the apex predator  
suspicion and competition are like gods

cleanse the sin of Cane  
let earth care for everyone  
sharing like family

it turns to man vs woman, white vs black  
vs brown and yellow  
and the bigotry of gender wars  
is the spiritual murder of so many

we are but one race  
we are one humanity  
born for unity

in the centers of leadership obstructionism  
rules the day  
our leaders are at war with their colleagues

and no solutions rise from the fog

cooperation  
rebuilding a paradise  
only requires will

this has to change, this cannot stand  
the planet is decaying, crumbling  
the sea consumes the land  
this has to change, this cannot stand

we must protect earth  
we will have the world we earn  
oasis or death

the answers are so obvious  
a politics of unity and compromise  
moderate coalitions of willingness  
and tolerance

problem solving leadership for humanity  
let us all join hands  
we can reclaim Eden's hope  
dream big and reach out

Barry Middleton

# The Divinity Of Cheese

Somewhere in milk  
a divine secret lies,  
a caveman discovered  
to his great surprise.

Left much too long  
in the back of the cave,  
the ferment was brewing,  
the cheese we now crave.

To pay proper homage,  
this happened in France.  
They invented fromage,  
thus cuisine was advanced.

A transcendent food  
was discovered that day,  
a food of the gods,  
or so the French say.

Barry Middleton

# The Dream Of Day

the dream of day is calling me  
the smell of morning coffee brews  
a hint of light is in the east  
that says the time has come to choose

my open window to the night  
does yet reveal where shadows play  
a long lost love and summer tunes  
and all the dreams of yesterday

but as that glow looms through the trees  
I know that I must finally rise  
I hear the rumble of the street  
that greets the dawn's discrete disguise

and what is real and what is not  
this brief encounter with the sun  
or endless night where soon I go  
beyond the dreams I had begun

still day intrudes itself at last  
and really offers up no choice  
the sun creeps in to banish sleep  
but some will grieve as some rejoice

for there are those who crave the night  
who dwell in shadows of the past  
who know that day is just a dream  
and night's the only thing will last

Barry Middleton

# The Dueling Oaks

Hundred of seasons have passed  
beneath these majestic live oaks.  
Men fought their insignificant duels here.  
Men died here.  
But before the muskets were fired,  
the Natives made their peaceful camps,  
and fished the bayou.  
And smoke curled through the limbs  
like the curl of the limb itself,  
mimicking the curve of the bayou  
as it crawled slowly to the big water lake.  
The men who fought the duels are gone,  
the Native Americans are gone,  
the seasons have passed away.  
But the breeze of memory stirs the leaves,  
and the limbs creak and moan.  
The trees pour out their grief.  
The children are shadows,  
the men are ghosts.  
Yet you still may hear a child's laughter,  
may sense the campfire's smoke,  
or the acrid smell of black powder.

Barry Middleton

# The Empty Journal

an abandoned smokehouse on the home place  
whose smoky fires had long grown cold  
was a storehouse for broken dreams  
forgotten memories  
and blond fantasies of times past

we used the place to play our children's games  
when old ones rocked the porch and paced the day  
like molasses from the mule turned cane mill  
down by the pond  
we invented mysteries there when none presented

I recall I went there all alone on a romantic day  
and found discarded in a tray of family treasure  
my favorite book  
I opened it and took a look

it was an empty diary  
a journal that the lady of the house  
intended always to begin and end  
but never found the time to write an idle line

there were too many meals to cook  
too many clothes to wash  
too many times the rains were slight  
or just as bad a flood  
times when her only plans  
were to bolster her husband's  
against both their doubts

and yet he died  
then she  
the book was set aside untouched  
my favorite  
leaving me to put upon its empty face  
what I would  
love  
death  
an embrace



Barry Middleton

# The End

spring's first daffodil has come  
but this is someone else's year  
tonight the earth is bitter cold  
this is the story I was told

it has to end this way  
with no delusion or dismay  
I join the ash of time  
and pen a lasting final rhyme

yesterday a child was born  
and he must search the world  
to find his way through night  
and golden morning

and as my soul is laid to rest  
my final breath is prayer  
and blessings for that child  
accounts are finally reconciled

Barry Middleton

# The End Of Time

as time concludes its mission  
directed as it were by gods  
or physics  
or gods of physics

the earth grows colder  
the sun has dimmed  
the planets fling outward  
in lost orbits

the last poet sits  
beneath an existential tree  
and pens a final song  
a hymn to the universe

he reflects on humanity  
on good and evil  
all life's pain and joy  
and on the silence of death

he writes of tears and peace  
of deserts and of sunset  
he prays for cosmic spring  
his hope is not yet done

Barry Middleton

# The Essence

the essence is not love  
love does not redeem

poets find the core  
revolving in a dream

the grand plans of man  
golden universal gods

philosophers and kings  
the conquerors of odds

imagination's marrow  
is all that we invoke

the evil and the good  
of the existential joke

art and gracefulness  
appreciation of beauty

the nurturing mother  
the naiveté of duty

we think and it becomes  
whether love or hate

a paradise in misty fog  
or hell's sulfurous gate

Barry Middleton

# The Eternal Boy

a boy who would never grow old  
decided the world of adults  
was lonely and bitterly cold  
and he could get better results

he learned that the world of men  
was deceitful and cruel as can be  
and the odds were but one in ten  
to either succeed or break free

so he hid far apart in a wood  
away from the world and its pain  
and there he would stay if he could  
where fancy and memories remain

and forever in secret he dwells  
in a world of his own you can share  
within the green hills and the dells  
in a place without worry or care

some say that he lives in his head  
that he must face facts and the truth  
but he says he would rather be dead  
than to give up perpetual youth

Barry Middleton

# The Evening Star

The evening star is peace,  
where every fear can gain release.

So I must follow it,  
as time and passion may permit.

And from that precipice,  
I gaze upon the wilderness.

I reach to touch the wind,  
for on its wings I shall ascend.

Beyond the firmament,  
then I will finally rest content.

Where stars fall to the sea,  
the dusky shadows comfort me.

Barry Middleton

# The Experiment

experiments in sunlight  
brought the rose

and mountains brought  
the rivers I suppose

in all the randomness  
of universe

one planet waited for  
the second verse

and waited for the man  
to name the day

to wait no more when  
woman came his way

and ever since the rose  
has been revered

and sun and rivers still  
have persevered

and stardust still awaits  
to see it through

as dawn illuminates  
the morning dew

Barry Middleton

# The Fifth House

At sunset in the fifth house,  
the old lion is dreaming.

Fire is spent so he accepts  
the solace of the evening.

Desire and the heat of day,  
the essence of his breath,

are chilled by the afterglow  
of passion and by death.

Days of glory and devotion  
recall a grander age.

The fervor of his soul is lost  
as he turns a final page.

Purple night follows him,  
descending on his will.

He gazes at the golden stars  
and crests a distant hill.

Barry Middleton



# The Fighter

old fighters know  
leaving home  
with huge ambition

trading lonely doubt  
for hope and dreams  
too often battered

deceit and schemes  
the feints and fades  
we might have made

till the final bell  
defeat whispers  
from the corners

we long for home  
with no way back  
to carry our pride

in the final round  
we find no comfort  
in our battle scars

bruised and bloody  
beneath the stars  
of a humble birth

Barry Middleton

# The Final Lock

it is morning I'm not sleeping  
I am talking to the clock

on the farm the farmer wakens  
to the crowing of the cock

will I ever find salvation  
before I hear the dreaded knock

all night long I pen my verses  
many secrets I unblock

and I am not a bit concerned  
for the poems are my rock

to guide my way to paradise  
until I turn the final lock

the farmer's day is just beginning  
he takes care to tend his flock

and so I say hello to morning  
I say good morning to the clock

Barry Middleton

# The Final Quarter

the final quarter of the year  
the pale October moon  
descends the west

a little to the north of me  
the leaves are fired  
for fall's burning display

but here in Florida the change  
is subtle like a first kiss  
surely you remember

and yet a chill is in the air  
not in the air so much  
as in the mood

the night is coming to an end  
the year is ending soon  
and life must end

it happens in the final quarter  
sunrise and sunset  
are all the season yields

Barry Middleton

# The Final Scripture

the final scripture is silence  
where poets delve for jewels of peace

a clay crown that might in eons hence  
come to dazzle the ages

oh it is not yet written  
it rests in a yellow field in autumn

it waits for stars to claim it  
it comes of loam and wind and time

scripture is a voice from the forest  
where waters move on rock

it is a tensile filament of aspiration  
as touch gives way to sight and word

it knows the tenderness of a kiss  
it praises spring and laughter

it is an animal but something more  
the spirit seeking something to adore

Barry Middleton

# The Fire Season

the season of fire is coming  
from April to well into June  
the sun stares down from the blue  
darkness stares down from the moon

the sky is a cloudless sea  
the meadows and forests are dry  
the omen is palpable  
the wind only breathes a sigh

a careless spark in the swampland  
from gods or the hand of man  
and the Florida prairies are burning  
as if this were part of the plan

when the rains of the summer return  
the green will burst forth again  
as the heavens deliver a flood  
and the smoke disappears on the wind

the cycle of time never ends  
though the planets collide out in space  
the essence of life is a blessing  
as its ashes conceal hope and grace

Barry Middleton

# The Florida Medicinal Shuffle

(You must be over 21 to read this poem.' Enter Here:

please pass me the bong  
we can all get along  
we can all take another hit

it won't take too long  
this ganja is strong  
so soon we won't give a shit

we voted weed in  
it's joke my friend  
the Republicans want to fight it

they no longer bash  
they are fighting for cash  
for misery will always remit

I know it's not great  
that they play with our fate  
but one day they will commit

it's not a stalemate  
we'll just have to wait  
till they divvy their share of the split

sit back and think right  
there are cops out tonight  
and they'd love to write your obit

take a hit for the fight  
and jump on the flight  
and see Loaf Dog for really good shit

~~~~~

This is a work of 'supreme fiction' as Wallace Stevens put it. I don't break the laws, even the stupid ones - not much anyway. That said, it is pathetic how Republicans who control Florida are delaying getting medical marijuana to

people who desperately need it just because they are in a greed fight over the money. We passed the amendment by a 70% majority. "Loaf Dog" is a fictional character from the movie Don't be a Menace to South Central While Drinking your Juice in the Hood. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

Barry Middleton

The Florida Springs

water, cold, crystal, emerald
no words, no photograph
can capture what these are

here it is so easy to imagine
the first wiggly embryo thing
arguing with algae for status

these waters flowed beneath
pterodactyl before birds sang
before nature rethought itself

these waters were haunts
of mastodons and saber-tooth
no human footprint marred

then came the Paleo-Indian
the thinker and tool maker
the hunter and the builder

a somewhat belated start
brings me a mere forty years
wandering in a Florida dream

this is where I chose to seek
my baptism and my forgiveness
an eternal youth, magical waters

and I did find it here, reposed
giant oaks watched and waved
gray moss, green water, a drink
to quench my soul's last thirst

Barry Middleton

The Fort

It was our multi-purpose shack,
the playhouse of my early youth.
The fort was a place
to carry out childish experiments
and a place to hide
from the secret torments
of growing up.
There was chemistry there,
old fashioned bottles
that once held pills and potions.
Green ones, blue, brown and clear,
some were oddly shaped,
the trademark of a mighty tonic.
There was protection there,
a door to close
against the tyranny of schoolwork
and chores and worry.
The fort smelled of the earth
that was its foundation.
I learned there
about the solubility
of talcum powder,
about brotherhood
and what it feels like
to pause a while
and wonder
and pretend.

Barry Middleton

The Game

I searched for the silver
I searched for the gold
I searched for a victory
beyond my control

I searched for true love
elusive as hope
I searched for the courage
to walk the tightrope

I didn't find treasure
I found no true love
now my life slips away
like a pale frightened dove

the blessings I found
I won't bother to name
you know who you are
you know life is a game

so when the time comes
just do me one favor
don't give it much thought
there's no need to waiver

just bury my ash
in an old wooden box
set adrift in the tide
on the spring equinox

Barry Middleton

The Ghost Star

Where the coldest star turns,
the secret garden is concealed.
Arrogant men claim knowledge
that is knowledge of the abyss.

But the void knows the mystery.
Crystal forests beyond dimension
and hidden elements of intuition
fuse with unwritten laws of time.

There a paradox spins its puzzle,
an impossible riddle is woven,
an indifferent tapestry of chaos.
Yet fools offer up their judgment.

Only mystics cherish the unseen.
They embrace the bewilderment
of a grain of sand lost in infinity.
Only the mystics know humility.

A ghost star turns in utter silence.
Its secret mission is impenetrable.
Its cycle is like the cycle of earth,
life and death without an epitaph.

Barry Middleton

The Ghosts Are Gone

the ghosts are finally gone
and they no longer torture me
remorse and old regrets
at last have let my spirit be

to let go of the past
is not the ease of sweet release
although I bid farewell
to welcome now some inner peace

what is my mission now
no god to light the path for me
the blindness of the soul
conceals my distant destiny

the night is rich but dark
the shadows that the daylight feared
are blank as memory
when all the ghosts have disappeared

I lift my walking cane
to probe the emptiness of death
it seems there's nothing there
a precipice beyond life's breath

the ghosts are finally gone
and I am here alone it seems
forgiveness is a weight
that death lets go along with dreams

Barry Middleton

The Gifts

the garden was filled with gifts
fruit hung in rank, damp shade
birds in ravenous harmony sang
the forest sounds caressed sleep

man was in dominion of beast
the greening of leaf and root
food and shelter by the waters
silver shadows awaited capture

the beauty of woman was a grace
to her honored service orchids grew
and all flowers led to her compare
as adoration of the paschal seed

the pride of man was his strength
to aid and never court contempt
reaching for a comrades hand
to share the bounty of the hunt

of blessed gifts, holiest was fire
gathering at dusk the families
to praise the tribe and the earth
and the sacred laws of kinship

Barry Middleton

The Gravedigger

I was no philosopher
and not the master digger.
I took no pride and did not
understand the job I did.
Old Craig, the lazy digger,
gave advice and laid it out.
And Hubert, the artist of the crew,
would take a sharpened spade
to even up the sides and make
them true. Howard and I,
or brawn and useless intellect,
would throw the slack from
out the hole and cut a little deeper
down till we were told to stop.
I did not understand the fuss
and careful contemplation
of the pit, not as long as the
coffin fit. But I was just
eighteen, too young to realize
that this was art, the final
mark a man would cause
upon the earth, the ditch
unlike the others that would
be re-dug and altered
by the years and whims
of other workers. No, this
was permanent work for
pay, the likes of which
is hard to find today.

Barry Middleton

The Grave's Embrace

as I look back on poetry
much like time lapse photography
I find the metamorphosis
of themes and lessons I had missed

the windy words of youth betray
the mysteries hid by yesterday
when I did ponder time and death
with lovely passion in my breath

but as a lifetime nears the peak
'tis darker lines that I must speak
a butterfly with broken wing
reveals that life's a fragile thing

for leaf by leaf each one must fall
the trees are stripped for winter's pall
and dying roses in a vase
foretell the waiting grave's embrace

Barry Middleton

The Gray

the gray sky over the Gulf
is the color of a battleship
and it says two things to me

it says there is a storm there
beyond the blank horizon
sea and sky like an entity

I can believe the butterfly
that claims a hand rippled
the waters off Sierra Leone

and the ripples became waves
now churned into a hurricane
by time and heat and neglect

but gray also is the battleship
plying the waters headed east
for perhaps still another war

and battleships spawn storms
and the winds of death blow
far away they circle the world

Barry Middleton

The Greenhouse At Leu Gardens

When winter gloom is all my view,
and days, like harvest fruit,
weigh heavy on a weathered frame
too weak for such a load,
then I know a place to go,
where domiciled as warm as June,
secret orchids fuel a passion fire,
and fragrant walls in tropic bloom
reflect the damp
of loving August nights.
The colors there
are set among the green
like Genesis in rhyme.
Saurian fern and cycads grow
below an ancient roof
now glazed with primal moss.
Yet I feel these panes of grizzly glass
are facets in a rare gem,
the ransom for broken winter moods
till the season yields.

Barry Middleton

The Gyre

history certainly repeats itself
its cycle is vague and mercurial

the stony beast no longer hides
shadows of evil cover the world

failures of the past lie scattered in the desert
the desiccated corpse of the king
rules a dominion of dust

crumbling effigies outlast the empire
again the Sphinx will suffocate beneath the sand

moss covered totems now rot in the jungles
the centuries have washed away the blood

the sacrificial steps of the pyramids have been cleansed by time
tourists whisper of these things and take a photograph

today the tyrants compete for glory
their treasure is easily maintained
extracted from the blood and sweat and tears of slaves
the chains are fabricated from the iron grip of the system

in the east a yellow fog descends
as dogs and old men die along with women and children

politicians puff their chests and pontificate
and nothing changes in this world

each morning a hopeless star rises in the east
and yet no wise men appear on the morning news

the evil moon sinks into the deceit of a dying sea
innocence and salvation's infancy still await
and we give thanks that we survived the night

there is no second coming
our poets shed their tears

and pen a desperate song
recited for the coffeehouse
where no one really hears

~~~~~

On the cycle of evil in the world and the slaughter of civilians in Syria by nerve gas from the Bashar Assad regime. Allusions to William Butler Yeats' The Second Coming are intentional.

Barry Middleton

# The Happiness Machine

You cannot trap it in a box;  
it's not a thing you tightly grip.  
It's in the breeze of summertime,  
as rain is falling drop by drip.

Though happiness machines are made  
to capture all our plans and schemes,  
a tethered wish can never fly,  
but often crashes with our dreams.

And happiness cannot be bought,  
for treasure builds anxiety,  
as fortunes made and fortunes lost  
are patterns carved by history.

You cannot keep it on a shelf;  
it can't be pickled, canned, or stored.  
It comes and goes but never hides,  
within a dark magician's hoard.

And no machine can make it stay;  
it's in the budding of a rose.  
It's in the laughter of a child;  
it's in a kiss I would suppose.

It's here, where seasons come and go,  
when youth and passion are the rage,  
and too, when youth and passion fade,  
it's in the wisdom of the sage.

You know quite well what I will say.  
Oh yes, it's not so hard to find.  
It's in your heart and attitude;  
just look around, and use your mind.

It's in your family living room,  
it's scattered all across your lawn,  
it's in the setting of the sun.  
and in the wakening of dawn.

Happiness resides within,  
yet it is almost everywhere,  
it's in the preciousness of life,  
it's in our every hope and prayer.

Barry Middleton

# The Hermit Of The Condo

he planned a more productive life  
he thinks about the government  
and how the years so quickly fly  
and why the world lacks common sense

he rarely ventures out these days  
he listens to the ticking clock  
and only rises from his chair  
when morbid neighbors come to knock

they come to do a wellness check  
they come to see if has died  
but long ago he passed away  
for years he has been zombiefied

there was no need to bury him  
he kept on moving through the years  
concocting poems from the kitchen  
well seasoned by despair and tears

that's not to say he never smiled  
he knew that things would turn out fine  
if life's a joke he came to believe  
the laugh comes with the final line

Barry Middleton

# The Hero

he was the hero of the forest  
friend of the trees and brook

he was the hermit of the city  
a buried name in a book

he wished for a faithful companion  
he hoped to find her one day

till every hope had vanished  
and silently slipped away

he loved not well enough  
and most of his friends had died

before he closed his door  
to the angry world outside

only then could he see the forest  
only then could he sense the loam

as he plodded a midnight journey  
to the green crisp valleys of home

Barry Middleton

# The Hide

at the point of the hill the old deer slept  
from there he could view the dying west

the cool of the evening was a blessing  
that brought the safety of quiet rest

the woods fell silent except the call  
he knew so well of the owl and the fox

and so he sighed and closed his eyes  
before the crowing of the cocks

too soon the hunters would awaken  
the clarion of hounds and horns

would split the peace of his quiet hill  
as he crept away to the thicket thorns

there to browse the final berry  
and wait again in the fretful shade

for night to come and return to home  
the hill where all his dreams are made

Barry Middleton



# The Highwaymen

the water is liquid glass  
like the surreal surface  
of a remote lonely moon

silver light dances  
in the blue ripples

I am weightless at peace  
released free in inner space

the sun is hot on my face  
I close my eyes for silence  
lime lemon tangerine  
dancing citrus shadows  
fill my simple universe  
breathing fire colors  
till I make my turn  
swimming darker now  
into royal purple night

these are their colors  
the Florida Highwaymen  
their roadside paintings  
the colors of my world

poinciana and vivid palms  
gesture to a grassy lawn  
beneath pink lace clouds  
in a perfect periwinkle sky

on a distant dark lagoon  
a scarlet orange sunset  
stains with nuclear flame  
the slow ink black water

cotton candy pink cumulus  
warn the ibis of evening rain

along a lost ebony river

the olive hued cypress  
lends its somber color  
to the hiding place  
of a radiant egret

florida is a gallery  
of outrageous color

I wish that my poetry  
sold along her roads  
as easily as paintings

then I might aspire  
to be a Highwaymen  
selling humble verse  
the splash of sunrise  
the silence of sunset  
and all my dreaming

hopeful songs of love  
hushed grieving odes  
a prayer to the spring  
all of life's landscapes  
flowers birds heat  
young women strolling  
on an alabaster beach  
the breathless turquoise  
of the Gulf of Mexico  
waiting to kiss the sun

Barry Middleton

# The Hill

obviously it was named  
from the ant's viewpoint

to me it's just a teacup  
full of sand  
no hill at all

it straddles their grand canyon  
a crack in the pavement

I block the sun  
the ants fall on six knees  
to worship me

the primitive sacrifice  
of a virgin worker is offered

I deign to let them live  
another day  
I step around their city

I return the sun to them  
no apocalypse today

their pyramid is intact  
I accept their praise  
and bless an empty sky

Barry Middleton

# The Hunt

the owl is watching me  
he knows I cannot sleep  
he calls into the hush  
where silent shadows creep

I will not answer him  
at least not on this night  
for just before the dawn  
he slips away from sight

with that the midnight owl  
will find his hiding place  
I'm granted one more day  
the moon will set the pace

but owls always return  
and I take no affront  
this is not personal  
the owl was born to hunt

Barry Middleton

# The Hurricane

the storm has come to threaten once again  
with random death and violence without end

and yet the wind of hurricanes is weak  
compared to evil men and all they wreak

the storm will kill and bring us cruel despair  
that we must join together to repair

but when will kindness unity redeems  
rebuild the heart of all our hopes and dreams

Barry Middleton

# The Hurricane Of Death

many emotions crowd my mind  
I know that death is coming  
yet death is but a shadow

it is the pain of dying I fear  
the physical torment  
and the grief of losses

I dread the death of sunrise  
the season of darkness  
the preemptive blindness of tears

memory is my only comfort  
and soon that too will fade  
every element of life banished

awareness brings sadness  
depression hangs in the air  
joy is muted by a stagnant fog

then there is the rage  
the rage at self for my mistakes  
and rage for all that I postponed

and there is hopelessness  
terminal illness makes no deals  
regardless of prayer or merit

like a wolf death stalks its prey  
no weapon provides defense  
there is no hiding place

death is a storm at sea  
beyond the shores of hope  
the lightning flashes a warning

abandoned in the riptide  
life's breath drifts away  
till strength and will are gone

death is loneliness  
death is personal  
no one can truly understand

emotions are a rising flood  
and the worse of all is regret  
all the what-if roads not taken

I am overwhelmed by the unknown  
everyone prays for miracles  
the well meaning lean on denial

the prayers are appreciated  
but they do not change destiny  
the wind relentlessly howls

I walk this path alone  
I see the coming destruction  
the hurricane of death

resignation is the final act  
I feel it rising like the tide  
then all my pain will find release

Barry Middleton

# The Hush

When brittle death and winter come,  
I will forget the red rose of passion.

Spring's return is small consolation  
for final silence,  
limit of beauty and love,  
the fallen petal, the cold stars,  
the end of music.

Can you hear me pleading for touch?  
Can you hear my song?

I want no memorial where time whispers  
beneath falling leaves.  
What of the pledge and promise of life  
to not forget?

My voice is asleep like a winter bird,  
my flower striped of its petals,  
only your memory keeps my soul.

Barry Middleton



# The Ice Comes

You will find your way  
when the ice comes.

When the wind howls,  
stabbed through by fear,

denizens of spring  
sing the stars to sleep.

The seasons turn  
to migrations of hope,

and bitterness  
fades into tomorrow.

A nascent songbird  
shivers its frozen tune.

The ice melts,  
the miracle survives.

Barry Middleton

# The Introvert

The walks I used to take at home  
in Mississippi told me more  
I think of men and such than all  
the chatter of the lecture hall.  
My eyes would move from tree to tree  
and see a soul in every trunk.  
I met the extroverted oak  
and thought he did not care for what  
I said. He had the brawn to stand  
a storm; his roots meandered far  
and wide. I said he touched the Earth  
too light that way. His pride in such  
an insubstantial stay was sure  
to be his downfall if indeed  
he would not set a deeper tap.  
But then my eyes engaged near by  
a shattered introverted pine.

Barry Middleton

# The Invaders

invaders have arrived  
they do not hail from outer space

they are invisible  
they walk beside us on the street

they are the multitude  
they are not from a foreign land

the enemy is here  
it lives within our human fear

the terror hides itself  
behind the neighbor's silent wall

it cannot be contained  
it waits for tyrants to arise

~~~~~

'We have met the enemy and he is us.' Pogo

Barry Middleton

The Invisible

I am invisible
wandering an invisible street

I am inquisitive
but life is now almost complete

to find a faithful love
is all I wanted life to be

wind drifts above
as dusk kisses the eternal sea

to buffer from the night
I did not ask for very much

but now I shun the light
the comfort of devoted touch

I am invisible
I cherish night and quiet shade

to be at last set free
where broken poetry is made

Barry Middleton

The Invisible Door

behind the invisible door
all possibility is waiting

some never find the way
searching empty places

some seek across the land
and never come to rest

no one can see the door
that opens on a dream

it may be just in front of us
close within the heart

and it may seem impossible
until we blindly reach

Barry Middleton

The Island

where is the island I seek
too small for predation
but for hungry sea birds
that circle and dive for fish

grass huts and shanties
open to the quiet breeze
never locked nor need be
for the tribe is a family

coconut and mango grow
greens and herbs plentiful
as are fish and breadfruit
the earth feeds the people

where is the island garden
once here beneath my feet
shall it never come again
as a dreamer awaits mercy

Barry Middleton

The Jungle

a tiger roams beneath the trees
as stealthy as the night
the serpent lies beneath a rock
where death awaits its bite

the only sound is bleak despair
descending on the breeze
and darkness closes in like fear
that prayer cannot appease

the echoes of the drums of war
are filtered by the shade
mysterious and cryptic gods
must surely be dismayed

their idols all are overgrown
consumed by brush and briar
all light subdued in fog and mist
where hidden beasts conspire

Barry Middleton

The Law

there is a law within the universe
that says the stars can never die
for they will be reborn

is it the same for mortal human souls
no man can ever know the truth
as death forgets the past

but watching every motion of the sky
has been preoccupation's trance
and spirits wonder still

I cannot know the limits of my wish
nor what awaits beyond the grave
but stars will never die

my only hope is yet to dream again
beside a verdant valley stream
and wake to see the dawn

Barry Middleton

The Light

the sun draws from the sea
a golden alchemy

amethysts and rubies
are scattered in the sky

slate and silver canyons
can hear the lullaby

and soon the moon will rise
in silk of indigo

the mood is blue as love
and tears from long ago

but light returns at dawn
with sunrise memory

a golden alchemy
the sun draws from the sea

Barry Middleton

The Literal

lovers of the literal
miss the nuances
that their daily bread is manna
that the budding rose is truth

that love is a cameo
the kiss of moon glow
the breath of spring
the tears of the sunset

and it may be
that the pain in life
is more than a thorn
it is a blighted impediment

the things
that wall imagination
are prisons of the soul
are jailers of the miraculous

these walls know not
of manna or love
they are blind to truth and pain
blind to the godliness of sunset

Barry Middleton

The Lonely Time

I cherish early morning,
the lonely time.

To wait and watch the glow,
almost sublime,

rising into the night
until the hour

of sleepy tousled sunrise
and its power.

Morning nurtures hope
lifting the pall

of raveled darker times
that I recall.

Morning is comfort's muse,
the world anew,

and I alone in it
till dawn breaks through.

Barry Middleton

The Long Way Home From Indian River

There is a distance to my home,
not half the road behind me.
Yet I sit and watch
the sun go down on Indian River.
My food and beer are done,
and still I stare at quiet water,
green ripples of sea grass,
and tailing redfish.
I could retreat the sooner,
my cooling motorcycle
waits to take me
back to my beginnings.
I might then gain familiar rest
before the darkness settles in.
Yet with sunset fading,
I hold to this encounter:
a piece of the horizon,
a portion of the sunset,
a beaker of the night.
Would I return the shorter way,
omit circuitous wandering,
an easy road I'd find,
but I must choose
the stranger route,
and unfamiliar pleasure,
solitude in afterglow,
discreet,
sequestered treasure.

Barry Middleton

The Middle Of Somewhere

I'd like to be
in the middle of somewhere
away from this crazy world

and if you agree
come along go with me
we'll break out and give it a whirl

it's not a place
it's a state of the mind
that comes from the stars up above

this treasure is rare
so best to take care
it's the feeling of being in love

Barry Middleton

The Mute Sky

yes I would send a warning to the sky
to bring a rain to quench desire
the clouds are cruel and mute

in summer half a life has passed away
a desiccated lily droops
a lizard seeks the shade

so I must write the stuff of mortal grief
the setting sun and destiny
the tears that will not fall

a poet feels the seasons of the heart
the hot the cold the wet the dry
the short supply of air

and yet he often fails to heed the call
till old and weak it is too late
to make a final plea

and so it is the scream becomes a moan
and light becomes a silent moon
that sinks into the west

Barry Middleton

The New Mystic

The new mystic may speak of spring,
but in an unfamiliar way.

For spring is nothing more
than a coalescence of fevered stardust.

Without the bygone mystic,
spring is a warm and inarticulate breeze.

With no one to define it,
spring is just the sudden urge of a beast.

Spring is truly a sultry whisper
that only the mystic is roused to hear.

Barry Middleton

The Next Valley

the fact of mortality
makes me wonder

I see the trees fall
I see death's descent

every season passes
dust blows to oblivion

gardens lost forever
fade from memory

dark clouds obscure
a marvelous illusion

I am amazed
by desire's deceit

summer lilies wilt
seeds touch the earth

the next valley waits
a silent breeze stirs

Barry Middleton

The Old Road

Behind the farm in an ancient wood,
an ancient road followed the ridge
like I followed the tread of my father,
trying to make my steps as big as his.
The road had more success I'd say,
for it was carved from wilderness
in days when no machine
could flatten hill nor fill a hollow
so boys could find no spot along the way
to race a scooter in a trial of honor.
The road was walled where mules
had cut a trace, though not so deep
there was not still a hill to quicken
our walk or slow it to a turtle pace.
The way was vaulted there with trees.
It was a sacred place to pause,
to pray,
to play,
to wonder
if by chance some Confederate miser
had buried gold
as the story we were told.
The road had been there long
before the land divided North
and South in war.
And farther up the way there stood
in a meadow in the wood
an old piano church of African race.
There was no song upon its face,
its eyes had long been boarded shut,
the churchyard path was now a rut.
But nothing along the old road
could hold its vines embrace for long
save a simple house too abandoned
for even the poorest sharecropper
to wish it his. When first I came
to its door it had contents,
broken furniture and other remnants
of the former tenants.

The only thing that stayed there then
was truly not alive,
a fantasy of broken dreams,
evil mysteries and ghosts.
They made me run through thickets
propelled by common sense
and back to the church
for self defense.
But I was just a child
playing in the wood
and now not one sight along
the way is left unchanged
but the road itself.
Whatever stayed upon that hill
has left to haunt another childhood.
Now the only fears that haunt
are phantom deeds of living men
that make me want to dream
a childhood dream again.

Barry Middleton

The One That Got Away

oh yes, I am a fisherman
but that's not what I mean
the one that got away you see
became a lonely dream

for dreams are filled with images
that never slip away
and restless seas may rise again
on shores of yesterday

I gaze upon the wistful tide
where mermaids sway and dance
reminding me of one I love
who holds me in a trance

oh yes, I am a fisherman
as hopeful breezes blow
the memories yet pull me in
where peaceful dreamers go

Barry Middleton

The Pageant

the pageant of the season turns
and hope may come and go

the bloom of spring is insincere
a brief pretense and show

the promises of youth are guile
then bitter age is due

a lover's smile forswears deceit
yet proves to be untrue

at last our very breath defrauds
the pageant put to rest

as kindly words attend the grave
to dignify the quest

Barry Middleton

The Paris Accord

A drought is almost like despair,
but then there comes a flood.
The cycles of the patient earth,
run deep within our blood.

The seasons of the sun revolve,
like seabirds in a gyre.
We pray for sacred rain to come,
and quench damnation's fire.

The universe, forever mute,
yet offers up a clue.
For only blessings we protect,
are those that we are due.

So we must tend the garden well,
and shun the serpent's lair,
and double down our firm resolve,
to fight perdition's snare.

~~~~~

Written as a response to the withdrawal from The Paris Climate Accord.

Barry Middleton

# The Peak

In a mountain meadow,  
water flows from a rock.

Moss is green and thick  
beside the Rhododendron.

As I reach the rocky peak  
I gaze across the valley.

Fog rolls down the slope  
to mark the time to go.

My camp is far below.  
It welcomes me at sunset.

The rushing of the spring  
soothes my fretful night.

The crackle of the fire  
warms my secret dream.

Barry Middleton

# The Pen Of Poets

The universe is wide and deep;  
and artists look beyond the reach  
of science and philosophy,  
to find the lessons that we teach.

And every artist knows his tools;  
the chisel is the sculptor's choice.  
The painter wields a fluent brush;  
the pen inspires the poets voice.

It is a fragile instrument,  
to carve the essence from a star,  
and delve dark regions of the soul,  
to paint brutality and war.

Well suited to gentility,  
the pen must beckon to the spring  
in songs of faith and love and grace,  
and all salvation hopes to bring.

And lastly ink upon the page,  
records the poet's epitaph,  
the summary of a human life,  
within a cryptic epigraph.

Barry Middleton

# The Planet Game

There are many ways to play the game.  
Some say the score is finite.  
I gain a point; you lose one.  
They claim the world is a zero sum game.  
They say the scarcity principle rules the planet.  
There are not enough resources.  
Competition, conflict, and war are unavoidable.  
Others say, we can prosper as a family,  
as it was in the beginning.  
Cooperation is the key.  
There is enough for everyone.  
There is sustainability for the planet, for humanity.  
But we must work together as one human race.

Barry Middleton



# The Play

I had a dream  
and you were there  
the stage we stood  
upon was bare

the dream was but  
a brief encore  
a call that we  
could not ignore

and so we played  
our separate parts  
like patrons  
of the finer arts

before the graceful  
final bow  
returning us  
to here and now

and as the velvet  
curtain fell  
the dreamland  
faded to farewell

Barry Middleton

# The Poetry

the poetry in me rushes  
like a wild waterfall  
seeking misty oblivion

it is a breakneck race  
over the precipice  
beyond all trepidation

I want to get it all out  
out in the careless wind  
where eagles glide

I cannot know the time  
only that the clock ticks  
all rivers keep a schedule

I leap into the stream  
heedless of dangers  
forever free in its force

Barry Middleton

# The Poetry Of Hope

the poetry of hope  
is a warm memory

in the coldest winter  
it is the dream of a rose

it is a whispered prayer  
in the darkest night

the poetry of hope  
is the love within the family

it is the necessary angel  
atop a Christmas tree

hope is as eternal as the stars  
it is the light of a single candle

Barry Middleton

# The Port Beyond The Bend

far down the river run  
a bird escapes its cage  
a wildcat stalks its prey  
a young man turns a page

the waters flow with fate  
to join a larger stream  
perhaps to bring us pain  
perhaps to grant a dream

the planet never stops  
its journey round the sun  
and love conspires with time  
until its day is done

and one man falls asleep  
before the dawn will break  
as tears of grief must come  
another heart will ache

the river's course is long  
and no one sees the end  
that holds our destiny  
the port beyond the bend

Barry Middleton

# The Prehistoric Forest

we called it the Prehistoric Forest  
every nook and cranny of home had a name

it was a dank and mossy glen beside the creek  
it brought to mind the distant ancestors

not our human kin but back to the beginning  
back to slithery things like centipedes

back to slippery things like frogs and snakes  
back to invisible amoebas only imagined

woodland spiders hung their capture nets  
and black dead fall limbs littered the path

there were ferns and cane brakes and mysteries  
and if there was a rustle in the trees

perhaps it was a squirrel or perhaps tyrannosaur  
on cool mornings a fog settled over the creek

I could stay until the cloud lifted but I would go  
better to remember it that way shrouded in mist

Barry Middleton

# The Price

must I grow mad for poetry  
madness past its prime

can older men go crazy  
and buy asylum time

late I come to scholarship  
to find my poets jailed

lazy students never rise  
to bring the heroes bail

starry night delirium  
insanity or ruse

are then a crazed prelude  
to devotion of the muse

for mad poets consecrate  
beyond the touch of reason

the query of the universe  
the frenzy of a season

Barry Middleton

# The Priest

Now even priests have many doubts,  
so one came back to earth to see,  
he feared he failed to make his mark,  
on how the world turned out to be.

Although a priest is just a man,  
and fallible like other men,  
his hopes had soared when he was young,  
he dreamed a world that might have been.

But he would glimpse a different view,  
confusion took him on a ride,  
where everything he thought he knew,  
lay strewn upon a mountainside.

The rubble of humanity,  
that fell so short of precious dreams,  
lay bent and broken on the rocks,  
and yet still clutching long dead schemes.

The priest could see the cruelty there,  
betraying innocence and youth,  
the pride and greed of human flesh,  
where lies concealed a higher truth.

He felt that he had failed mankind,  
for it had been his job to teach,  
to show which path to take in life,  
he thought that all he did was preach.

“I should have pointed out the way,  
and led them to the promised land.”  
He wept and begged forgiving grace,  
for this is not what he had planned.

Then came a voice beyond the clouds,  
that said, “I know you did your best,  
you led, they did not follow you.  
You passed my each and every test.

Men have a choice a priest can't change,  
you showed the way for them to go,  
the fork in every path's a test,  
one road is high, one road is low.&quot;

Now many of you know this man,  
and some will believe he was a god,  
he's gone by many names it seems,  
since first he touched this earthly sod.

And I am just a bit like him,  
I dream a world that might have been,  
I grieve for mine and all our faults,  
within the scope of fear and sin.

But like the priest I did my best,  
I often fell or missed my turn,  
all men are lost upon this earth,  
it seems that we must die to learn.

Barry Middleton



# The Question

the question  
since the dawn of time  
concerns the essence of our fate  
the question for today  
is the battle of love and hate  
and which will now prevail

for man is torn  
by contradictory natures  
we never could survive  
without cooperation  
and affiliation  
for this is family

but competition lives within us  
the bitter taste  
of a spring apple  
the desire to be a god  
and to live forever  
and to have it all

and so we build our treasure  
we hoard and hide our loot  
and we will kill for gold  
and kill for power  
we are never satisfied  
for greed requires protection

gods and boundaries  
and borders divide us  
still hand in hand  
love comes to walk beside us  
this is the lesson for today  
reach out and love can stay

but hate will never die  
we cannot kill the evil half  
and still keep love alive  
and all that we can do

lies deep within the soul  
it's up to me and you

Barry Middleton

# The Rain Will Come

a storm is drifting in  
I will not venture out today  
it is as if the shadow of death  
has cast it's pall across the sun  
at noon the sky grows darker

and I know what it means  
the gods have sent a harbinger  
to torture me with reality  
I know they hold the cards  
they hold the lightning bolts

the storm says death is coming  
although my walls are strong  
they cannot keep the darkness out  
the rains are coming soon  
to wash away the ash of yesterday

Barry Middleton

# The Raintree's Lesson

It is that time of year again,  
the raintree buds are green as spring.  
And yet it is September now,  
and soon I'll see what fall will bring.  
Now nature always tries to teach,  
I see the greening buds as youth.  
Though I'm a half step out of phase,  
I do still search for love and truth.  
October sets the golden blooms,  
much like that season of a life  
when jobs become a new career,  
and each young man will seek a wife.  
But seasons turn to autumn red,  
the wife and children soon are gone,  
and so the raintree speaks to me,  
the universe must move along.  
I reach to take November's test,  
the russet seed pods seem to know,  
I open one if just to see,  
the umber seeds, the final show.  
And I have been this way before,  
and learned to see the raintree's way,  
that life's a cycle till the end,  
before it fades to yesterday.  
And yet it does not end at all,  
as seeds fall to the earth and sprout,  
and new life takes its place in line,  
to search the season's roundabout.

Barry Middleton

# The Rarest Gift

just once I stole a kiss from you  
yet how I love the memory  
like alabaster's luscious glow

that was the way you wanted us  
I'll say I hate the term just friends  
for friendship can't be quantified

as friendship is the rarest gift  
with which to grace another soul  
and friendship is the truest love

all lovers come and go like May  
no one can really own the rose  
possession only leads to pain

though fire consumes the autumn leaves  
in dreams we are forever young  
when I recall our late night talks

and I yet hear your alto voice  
examining the whys of life  
and bets we both had won or lost

Barry Middleton

# The Reckoning

The days of youth are long in leisure.  
It then was easy to neglect  
the duties that in retrospect  
become the measure of a man.  
I'd leave my job half done at noon  
to check the meadows, creeks and hills  
and often I would stay too late,  
nor think of food upon my plate  
while I was figuring the will  
that caused an indigent daffodil  
to bloom among the ferns and vines  
so far in time from human kind.  
Whose ancestor had passed this way  
and planted flowers as if to stay  
and was that all he left behind?  
Oh, I knew of a fire that scorched the brick  
and melted glass that lay beneath  
the old frame house where supper waited.  
I knew we had built on his foundation  
to try and work out our salvation  
without much thought to when or where  
he laid his flowers out with care.  
But a man's youth is only a page  
and a man's dream in a different age  
is harder to reckon that why a boy  
stays late in the wood to merely enjoy  
the yellow blooms he picked for his mother  
or a few yellow questions saved for another.

Barry Middleton

# The Relevant Secrets

the relevant secrets elude me  
the tree of life and knowledge  
alas banned for unknown motives

if gods had looked the other way  
forgiving me my minor indiscretion  
then I would never have to die

a rose sheds a tear  
embers of the fire are spent  
the garden in snow

my frightened heart cries for life  
beyond the clouds an icy mystery  
chills the blossom of all eternity

the breath of the goddess waits  
again to share the apple's kiss  
a taste mortality denied my lips

Barry Middleton

# The Rhyme

old men walk slowly  
so I have time to see

to study the silver sun  
as it burns the golden sea

old men walk slowly  
so I have time to think

another spring is coming  
a heron stops to drink

old men walk slowly  
the raintree sets its leaves

and I have time to wonder  
for stars are on the breeze

old men walk slowly  
the rhythm of my time

and stopping at my bench  
I try to find the rhyme

Barry Middleton



# The Ritual

the ritual of fire is life  
the greatest gift of all

it warmed the neolithic cave  
preventing every harm

it lit the dark and frightened night  
it nourished every meal

it cared for us in winter time  
and waited for the spring

the ritual of fire is life  
elusive like a god

essential as transcendent waters  
for every breath of earth

and yet the fire is not alive  
it only gives us life

and waters are an empty sea  
when there's no star in sight

Barry Middleton

# The River And The Sea

the river is like a lover  
I see it coming to me  
but I cannot go with it  
for it will pull me under

it moves to touch me  
it dances washing me  
it moves on like a lover  
it leaves like the dying

the river is like a death  
an unseen flowing secret  
it vanishes around a bend  
and a new river is born

the sea is everlasting  
the sea receives rivers  
the sea caresses lovers  
the living sea breathes

it rocks me in its arms  
it recedes but it returns  
the sea is ever faithful  
the sea outlives desire

Barry Middleton

# The Road

I see the avenue  
the road leads to the sea

and what may lie beyond  
the sea withholds from me

the far horizon waits  
receding like the breeze

no stalwart bark is here  
no answers to my pleas

the road ends by a ruin  
a vague uncertain clue

where once a city stood  
a ghostly empty view

I whisper to myself  
this comes as no surprise

I always knew this place  
where hope and memory dies

I go where stars lie down  
I go where moonbeams sleep

beyond this futile road  
lie waters dark and deep

Barry Middleton

# The Sacred Blue

questions drift like clouds  
across a velvet sky  
a what and then a where  
and three is asking why

what I know of man  
and what I know of earth  
tells me the what and where  
the why adds up the worth

the sky turns from velvet  
into a pastel day  
the sun ignites its fire  
to melt the fog away

the blue whispers to me  
still you may ask me why  
I breathe the air to hear  
a sacred lullaby

and as the murmur fades  
I close my eyes to see  
the beauty of the earth  
the glory of the sea

the why is joy and life  
and I will seize them too  
the wonder of the gift  
of awesome sacred blue

Barry Middleton

# The Saddest Day

The day you realize,  
that you must take the fall,  
and give up on your dreams,  
is the saddest day of all.

The time will finally come,  
you cannot live on lies,  
you see the setting sun,  
it comes as no surprise.

And yet there is relief,  
your struggle disappears,  
for just outside your door,  
a breeze removes your fears.

Then silence of the night,  
will conquer every care.  
Surrender of the soul,  
will find the final stair.

Barry Middleton

# The Sand Children

the children of the sand  
the worshipers of the surf  
dazed with a latent craze  
to mummify the sun  
form a line upon the beach  
a dotted line  
like a puzzle  
dots not yet connected

Barry Middleton

# The Sea

the sea is our mother  
life comes from the sea

the sea breathes  
it is restless and vital

the tide rises and falls  
it whispers to the shore

the sea is the oblivion  
where men find humility

to gaze at the sea  
is like meeting the gods

to bathe in the sea  
is the ultimate baptism

the loneliness and tears  
of all men fill the sea

Barry Middleton

# The Sea And The River

I'm not far from the river of life  
I'm not far from the sea

I'll ride as far as the river may go  
and wherever the sea leads me

where turquoise turns to navy blue  
I'll soar where seagulls fly

as dolphin leap in the foam and breach  
in a comforting lullaby

a foot on the soil and one in the waters  
that's the way I always have been

I am never alone and not far from home  
the world is my next of kin

one day I'll find where waters must go  
one day I know I will see

a place love abides to hold me secure  
with a sea and a river for me

Barry Middleton



# The Sea Frightens Me

the sea frightens me  
the immensity of it  
the power of it  
so I treat it like a god

the sea is like a beast  
the rise and fall of breath  
and tide and blood  
consume my fantasy

we came from the sea  
and it returns for us  
a predator of storms  
ship wrecked memories

the sea contains it all  
and bleaches every bone  
concealing destiny  
and all that used to be

I hear the roar of lions  
no restive tide for me  
I much prefer dark water  
beside a stalwart tree

Barry Middleton

# The Seed

the hand that tilled  
the fertile fields of Eden

considered everything  
that man might need

he tried to give us  
something to believe in

and brought it all together  
in a seed

the garden grew  
and covered all the earth

but weeds of plunder laid  
an evil dew

not God but man  
would bring the devil's birth

the sacred mystics came  
to warn the few

that man destroys it seems  
to me so strange

the gift of life fulfilled  
our every need

we've left a job for God  
to rearrange

but there is still his love  
within the seed

I'll sow his seed and I will  
share his love

if you sow too the world  
may then renew

when we return what came  
from up above

we might reclaim the Eden  
we once knew

Barry Middleton

# The Selling Of Culture

useless exuberance is dead  
it died in the winter of America  
the age of Aquarius is lost  
it sold out on bargain day at Macy's  
culture has been auctioned

education yielded to profit  
buy a degree with debt  
you get a scroll but no job  
a consumer economy rules  
production is outsourced

elections are bought  
corporate personhood is law  
pay as you go for congress  
attack ads and lying campaigns  
pout and shut the government down  
forget what the people need  
screw it all and cash your check

no one resists television  
the epitome of mindlessness  
no news on cable news  
biased viewpoints of lunacy  
hours of talking heads  
the country and the world rots  
our infrastructure crumbles

commercials push drugs  
antacids for an acrid mentality  
commercials prey on fear  
cure your induced addictions  
lose your belly fat  
we cling to a cancerous life

new apps and video games  
literature is unreality  
reality TV is literature  
poetry is prose

books are obsolete  
newspapers are pamphlets

music is processed like cheese  
organic music is the local bar  
a dance beat and video visuals rule  
lyricism is dead

racism is dumbed down to code  
hatred sells like cheap wine  
elections reveal transparent xenophobia  
bitterness has replaced solutions

communication is babble  
heads bowed to the eye phone religion  
reading text messages  
avoiding conversation  
facebook has replaced face time  
the timeline is for dogs and babies  
the news infiltrated with ads  
malware sprouts like weeds  
the revolution will not be televised\*  
culture was sold to the highest bidder

Barry Middleton

# The Sense Of Things

the sense of things is not a tale  
not fictive poetry  
with no one there to sense the thing  
an atom reaches out for grace

and so abiding in that place  
in quantum emptiness  
the silent motion of the stars  
fine tunes its mythic instrument

realities of secret worlds  
minuscule and huge  
endure past man's exhausted reach  
into the dark and velvet void

unfathomed wells of time conceal  
those final elements  
beyond sensation and desire  
ablaze with heat and sultry fire

Barry Middleton

# The Serpent

the snake is in the garden patch  
as beautiful as trust  
but pain has entered to the world  
along with hate and lust

and man is tempted by the taste  
of greed and jealousy  
the fruit of the forbidden tree  
has sealed our destiny

so good and evil coexist  
within the heart of man  
and will throughout eternity  
though that was not the plan

it does no good to crush the snake  
then beauty also dies  
but we must all speak up for truth  
and shun the serpent's lies

Barry Middleton

# The Signs

I look for the words  
I look for the signs

I look for the blush  
that speaks of spring

the bay tree in bloom  
pink silk of mimosa

the heat of summer  
announces a harvest

I look for the orange  
I look for the mango

I look for coolness  
the soft air of fall

I look for red berries  
of the southern holly

I look to winter frost  
trees brittle and bare

the cold is a prelude  
the gray dominates

I look for the signs  
the words of seasons

Barry Middleton



# The Snake

the snake is loose in the garden  
it hides in the fog  
from its first hiss of temptation  
it beckons us

the slithering war is out of hiding  
the venom and fang unleashed  
men cheer for victory  
and scorn a prayer for peace

the paragon of animals is not man  
man plunders and hoards  
man kills its own kind  
man devours the earth

the ultimate predator roams  
the dignity of woman is ravished  
innocence is stolen  
there are no more heroes

the snake has waited patiently  
made to represent a demon  
denigrated  
it awaits a return to wings

distant swamps know evolution  
the beast is as old as time  
it leaps on new born legs  
it gazes at the sky

Barry Middleton

# The Soul

the soul is the light behind the eyes  
the invisibility that makes a human  
it is consciousness  
unfettered by imaginary fears

in life it journeys to the utmost star  
deciphering the universe and gods  
returning to humility and dust  
to raise its song

the soul breathes the air of the ages  
it is the legacy of wisdom  
it is the pain of birth and death  
it is the silence of midnight

still invisible in death  
unconscious fettered bound and narrow  
it is a path into infinity  
the stardust of the cradle

Barry Middleton

# The South Gets Out

now once in a while  
the south gets out  
I call somebody honey  
what was I thinking about

don't want to be  
politically correct  
but still I don't want grief  
oh what the hell, oh what the heck

I went to the market  
a pretty girl was there  
I said hey babe what's up  
big mistake, what an icy stare

now I don't mean  
no disrespect  
but the south gets out in front  
oh what the hell, oh what the heck

a man's a brother  
a chick's a chick  
or maybe sweetie pie  
and I won't change, you know I'm sick

it's not so bad  
I pay the check  
I hold the door for you  
oh what the hell, oh what the heck

Barry Middleton

# The Spirit

what is the spirit  
each man must divine it

we try to analyze it  
but we cannot define it

some say it must live on  
past death

others believe it dies  
with breath

still others doubt  
what's never seen

but most agree  
it cannot be a dream

something in each of us  
lives and reasons

and it is not unlike  
the passing seasons

just where it goes  
no one really knows

Barry Middleton

# The Spirit Of Autumn

the spirit of autumn is the wind  
for it must stir the falling leaves

the leaves are an omen of death  
bleeding out their final colors

the spirit of autumn is not sad  
it is a time of harvest

it is a time of feast and gathering  
it is the sound of children playing

for we would stay outdoors in fall  
to linger till the light must fade

another season passes on  
and speaks its lesson for today

the winter comes  
the trees are stripped

the cycle of the earth and life  
must sleep until the spring

the spirit of autumn is not sad  
it is a time of feast and gathering

Barry Middleton

# The Spoiling Of The Devil's Garden

The hint of life in spring,  
the newest buds  
that died all winter long,  
must have thought  
all nature grieving,  
lost from hope  
in fear and cold  
and loneliness.  
The hint of life,  
the thawing brittle sleep  
curls out an arm,  
a golden finger sprout  
foretells a wrinkled hand  
to consecrate a greening life  
and promises of things to come.  
Five months of death a year  
would seem enough.  
Periodic bloom,  
perennial doom,  
suffice for them,  
a momentary tomb.  
The hint of life in spring  
proclaims that we endure;  
and still men's eyes  
must register surprise.

Barry Middleton

# The Spring

I traveled farther in than out  
to find the spring I speak about;  
and still I wonder if it flows  
as first I watched it when it rose.

But why I dug for a day, then two,  
with all the world quite out of view  
was just to delve a mystery;  
the spring I knew was just a key.

I was a city boy at play  
held out from all the yesterday  
of knowledge that might help my toil  
to capture sustenance from soil.

The strangest ferns and aspen trees  
yet whispered with an ancient breeze  
and dampened earth would add a clue  
and prints of animals who knew  
the answer to my hope was near,  
that there was water hidden here.

And so without machine or witch  
I marked my spot and laid a ditch  
like some new Moses of the sod  
with faith in where I struck my rod.

And there I dug, nor did I doubt,  
that I would find the water out.

And when the spring began to flow  
with clearest water cold as snow,  
I cried aloud that all might see  
my labor's new found destiny  
in water brimming up to show  
to anyone who did not know -  
just listen to the Earth's reply  
when thirst is great and lips are dry.





# The Stars

the stars are putting on a show  
to entertain one another

they do not think of the magic  
they have worked

they do not know the meaning  
of their light

here a leaf and there a beast  
populate the silence

fields of clover tint the planet  
green and yellow

water runs from the mountain  
roaring over rock

and here alone a man wanders  
and gazes at the sky

Barry Middleton

# The Storm

Wind destroyed the apple trees  
and taught me nothing can stay,  
taught me hearts must break.

The landscape was altered forever.  
I can no longer find my way.  
Those I knew are dead.

We can't go home again.  
Tornadoes and wars come and go.  
Riots tear the heartland.

My creek still flows from the hill,  
and makes its proper turn.  
But at the river waits a new soul.

Lightning fires the western sky.  
The trees are all different.  
Everything is different.

Barry Middleton

# The Story

something is rising  
and something is falling  
and this is the story  
of the universe

the sun comes up  
and across the void  
another star explodes  
another rocks a cradle

tonight the moon climbs  
like a tired old man  
who has done this work  
so many times before

shortly winter will pass  
and old daffodils  
rise again from the dead  
and we call this hope

on this winter solstice  
a child is born  
and an old man dies  
this is but a single story

Barry Middleton

# The Strongest Wall

Whatever walls me in, must wall you out.  
That's the way with things that separate.  
Where I was raised, I knew there was a rule:  
it was the way of life to segregate.

I knew how wrong this was when I was six.  
The railroad track somehow was the divide,  
and I would learn the lesson soon enough  
to keep my playmates from the proper side.

I learned to qualify to be a wall,  
there was no need that it be wide or tall.

Moving on through life I soon would know  
the strongest walls of all are in the mind.  
When tribes or nations choose to stake a claim,  
the wall is just a line we hide behind.

A wall can be the god we give a name,  
a color we associate with grace,  
a nation or a belief we must accept.  
All walls divide the fearful human race.

Yes, walls can be invisible as air,  
deceitful, cruel and wholly unaware.

Barry Middleton

# The Sun Has Died

the sun has died without regret  
it would not wait for me  
the black beyond the glow of dusk  
demands its bitter fee

I hedged my bet as best I could  
but loans must all come due  
the sea reclaims the darkened beach  
as colors bid adieu

the silhouettes of restive palms  
have blended with the night  
to leave me in this dismal place  
without the faintest light

within the sightless gloom of grief  
the waves yet whisper lies  
to lure me to the evening sea  
where empty stars now rise

I nod to hidden mermaids there  
then turn and walk away  
still they must know I will return  
when bets are called some day

Barry Middleton

# The Swan

'I remember the maiden slave, wasted, soul sick,  
trudging through muddy streets, forever seeking  
the lost coconut palms of splendid, tender Africa  
beneath tears of immense and misted memory.'

A liberal interpretation:  
from The Swan, 'The Flowers of Evil',  
by Charles Baudelaire

the city changes just as quickly  
the landscape and purity of youth  
city blocks or small town streets  
of the wistful wondering past

there, in the sunrise, was a pulse  
there in the dawn was the swan  
bereft of blue dream and cloud  
captured, held in ageless grace

but time always curses memory  
and whoever has lost their place  
must sink like a damning weight  
to the river's dark soft summons

longing does not die like cities do  
though I stand before the grave  
my lovers lost and youth and hope  
I still dream of my tropic home

Barry Middleton

# The Thunder Spoke

when the thunder spoke  
it was like the sound of war  
but I do not fear the thunder  
I fear the lightning

I do not fear death  
yet I fear the pain of dying  
I fear preemptively  
the time when fear is gone

to live on the mountain  
or in the deepest valley  
are times of earthly fear  
the transition is a challenge

between a fearless dawn  
and the rest of sunset  
the path leads on  
to an anxious anticipation

Barry Middleton

# The Times

the horizon knows troubled times  
rumbling dark thunder  
the clash of hatred

the nation is torn by a fire storm  
neighbor against neighbor  
the family broken

leaders swear allegiance to greed  
corruption fortified  
flood and burden

the people rise to demand change  
rejecting the betrayal  
of bitter winds

Barry Middleton



# The Tower

it is the tower  
where all things are seen

it is the pinnacle  
of life and aspiration

once reached  
one cannot embrace deceit

it is bewilderment  
the desperation of truth

it is the tower of finality  
where futility is known

it is the last desire  
a last wish for breath

Barry Middleton

# The Train

it carried me into my dreams  
where dreams forever roam

the rumble and the whistle's peal  
were just a part of home

it carried me beyond a dream  
into my northern days

to snow bound paths of poetry  
that hid in winter's haze

it found me in the tropic sun  
across the oyster bay

it carried my first love affair  
it taught me how to pray

the train is coming soon for me  
I heard it call again

I know I can depend on it  
it's still my oldest friend

Barry Middleton

# The Tree House

The ceremonial main beam  
went up in spring,  
an oak two by six  
so heavy it took  
us all together with our mother  
to hold it up while I bent nails  
against its obstinate solidity.  
The pyramids  
must have been easier to build.  
Boards were brought  
from every scrap pile  
on the place and we would  
make a production with  
the addition of each one  
and raise them with a block  
and tackle as if we were  
dedicating some monument  
to time.  
The construction of the tree house  
took till summer,  
the landscaping went on till fall  
in Shady Valley  
and there was a permanent position  
for someone willing to work,  
maintenance of the kitty cat cemetery,  
also the resting place of rabbits, dogs  
and a two headed turtle.  
And there was a bridge to be built;  
there is always a bridge to be built.

Barry Middleton

# The Trouble

Pity I wasn't asked to speak  
before God spent His famous week.  
I'd not have held the apple back  
or dealt the snake a mighty whack.  
If those reforms were not enough,  
I'd sure have called the devil's bluff,  
perhaps forgave Eve's indiscretion  
with absolution and confession.

Barry Middleton

# The Unnamed Stars

the unnamed stars  
utter the silence no man hears  
they light the darkest void of space

yet they are unnamed  
for there is no man to name them  
their fires roar like a million furnaces

why this burning  
man would wonder why  
why and for what need do these exist

the unnamed stars  
do not think or feel or watch  
they die in cataclysm without despair

Barry Middleton

# The Valley

there is a valley  
where I hid my dream  
even now it waits  
beside a stream

the woods are dark  
the sky is turning black  
it looks as though  
I really should turn back

but am I dreaming now  
or is this real  
I may confuse the facts  
with what I feel

perhaps a memory  
waits and is concealed  
and burns within my brain  
with its appeal

but I am never lost  
if I can believe  
the hush of whispered  
answers I receive

and though I may be  
dreaming as I roam  
I still can see the valley  
of my home

Barry Middleton

# The Voice In The Wood

In summer I could hear  
the voice in the wood  
when the wood was alive  
with slithering confusion  
and life was a hot green blur  
as the creek ran rushes.  
In winter the murmurs  
of forgotten echoes call me  
to a childhood bridge,  
a bridge to dreaming.  
A final silent day  
before the spring  
when the voice commands  
an ultimate act of faith,  
I flirt with denial.  
But quite accidentally,  
the elocution of returning birds,  
the flat statement of green tongues.

I have grown familiar with broken things,  
the despondent and the desperate  
and I have wandered in tangled mazes  
rich with mocking disappointment  
for the bogus gold of spring.  
And I have picked the rusted heap  
searching for a bit of color,  
listening for a rustling,  
an affirmation of life.  
I have felt the sharpened edge  
of unrequited aspiration  
and I have been amazed  
to see the throng mirrored  
in a shattered shard of looking glass.

Here I sit, retired of hearing  
old truths reiterated  
from un-inquisitive oracles.  
Here I receive,  
unabashed and without bias,

the tenable with the probable,  
the unuttered undeniable,  
the randomness  
of inspiration.  
Here I affirm the voice  
regardless of school,  
regardless of intention  
and beyond misconception.  
Here I assert un-banished survival.

The voice babbled  
like a young creek  
in a hurry to grow with rivers.  
It spoke confused truths  
and non-confusing lies.  
It laid down hot and cold  
explaining creation in fairy tales.  
It was a kind voice,  
substantial in tone,  
reassured and reassuring.  
It was the voice of functional rule.  
It spoke only to point onward.

Gray air of dawn  
pierced by a natal moon  
broken by the whispering wisdom  
of a child's question.

Deep was the wood and deep  
its rhapsodies without danger.  
Beasts as large as houses roamed,  
silver mansions reigned  
and clear water flowed.  
Among the hills with holy names,  
beneath the eagle's beech,  
a secret lake, and filled with love,  
eluded me by day for only dreams  
could show the way.  
Those were the free times  
before the voice began  
to warn of the end of dreams,  
of the time the dreams are real.



I fell to my knees  
and spoke with sacred forces  
making timid pleas  
for undisputed phrases  
or in their stead a peaceful place  
to lay my head.  
I was answered  
by a non-committal breeze.

There with wonder did I walk  
and there with laughter did I seek  
and there with ignorance did hear  
all vindicated dreams and fear.

The voice never ceased,  
it trickled and roared like the tide,  
it drew me farther in,  
it pushed me out  
to test the gold of spring.  
It demanded answers  
from speculation.  
It demanded choices  
from induction.  
It wet me down,  
it dried me out,  
it made me think,  
it made me doubt.

Then rippled in the waters  
a human halo, a blessing  
essential as dew  
dawning a quiet pond.  
The voice proclaimed  
the consecration of a man.

I believed the voice.  
I loved, I gave and got,  
I lost and was resigned.

And the trial  
was a trial of existence,

of hot and cold,  
of wet spring nights  
and dry winter days,  
was a trial of strength,  
of mind and muscle  
against life's tendency  
for torment.

I played with dreams  
and the voice played  
with memory.

And I played with thoughts  
like notions from rare books  
and I sailed my toy boat,  
pieced together chanciness  
in the storm.

Then did the voice crack  
with age and a vision  
of the damned.

Then did I see the  
cracked wisdom of  
the world and death.

Then did the voice  
roar like a winter river  
beneath a lost bridge  
to nothingness.

It washed me  
in the wisdom  
of despair.

Death is worth life  
the voice rattled -  
it comes.

Strive not for death,  
it comes and the voice  
of what was will cease  
to the gasping cries  
of a new age.

Search not for death  
and the wood  
is a constant symphony.



# The Wall

Not much room behind the wall,  
a secret garden meek and small.

There a hermit takes his chair,  
his frail protection from all care.

A stranger on the planet Earth,  
bewildered since his day of birth,

retreated there to try and heal  
the wounds of all of time's ordeal.

For living life was filled with pain,  
the only choice was to abstain

and build the wall and only share  
with those who took the other chair.

And few were those he ever graced  
with refuge in his cryptic place.

Barry Middleton

# The Watchman

the watchman's lamp is dim  
he sees no distant fire  
no signal on a distant hill  
that he must pass along

the night is cold and damp  
in blanketed despair  
throughout the camps and valley towns  
beyond all hopelessness

the watchman knows his job  
he does not hope or pray  
he scans the bleak imprisoned night  
till dawn returns the day

Barry Middleton

# The Watchman's Night

the dismal night is not my guide  
without the grace of sleep  
without out the comfort of a love  
and dreams that I might keep

the clock is creeping like the moon  
as it descends the sky  
and time is warped by destiny  
when all has gone awry

the world is silent as the tomb  
to stir a bleak despair  
and I can only count my fears  
for I am too aware

although the world is fast asleep  
for sentinels of night  
still someone guards the mysteries  
and hope for dawn and light

Barry Middleton

# The Weight Of Tears

I cannot find the anger  
I am crushed by the sadness  
another senseless shooting in America  
another bombing in a far off land

I grew up with terror in Mississippi  
another murder  
another bombing  
another church burning

not at my doorstep  
not as I picked up my newspaper  
no death at my church  
but neither retribution from my god

I grew up with racial wars  
with the war in Vietnam  
the martyrdom of saviors\*  
the hatred of the ghostly mob\*\*

now I am numb to death  
in my grief is hopelessness  
I cannot find the anger  
I am crushed by a weight of tears  
~~~~~

*Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. ** The KKK.

Barry Middleton

The Whiskey Defense

anyone who's spent some time
in honky-tonks and bars
each one of us has met this man
we know him by his scars

you heard his sad old story told
of all of life's abuses
he tells it in a slurring voice
and the whiskey makes excuses

oh yes I know he may admit
he made a few mistakes
he never got a second chance
he never caught the breaks

I guess some men are doomed to fail
they show you all their bruises
tears fall on the barroom floor
and the whiskey makes excuses

when I was young I swore to never
be that sad old man
and it may be the life we get
is not the one we plan

still as I take my place tonight
a man gets what he chooses
and I can see that clearly now
no whiskey no excuses

Barry Middleton

The Wildland

the forest voice is silent now
the nymphs have gone away

no more does Artemis protect
a world in disarray

her slackened bow is heedless of
the demons roaming free

is this the punishment of gods
and sealed by their decree

the garden forest that we knew
has fallen on the path

where once a child did sing and play
before this mutant wrath

no song arises from the oak
for song is mortal too

and dies with innocence and hope
the way that Dryads do

Barry Middleton

The Wind Blew

outside the wind still blew
and safe inside
I surely knew

the wind still blew for me
and soon the wind
would set me free

the things that cloud my mind
weight down upon
a frail mankind

and so we make appeal
to win a final
desperate deal

but you and I still know
for whom the careless
wind must blow

Barry Middleton

The Wind Is Stirring

the wind is gently stirring
it is the restless breath of August

the earth is yet alive
but wilting in the relentless heat

the oaks and pines quietly sway
like lovers waiting

they do not know the hurricane
they have no memories

one has a partly broken crown
and does not know

they cannot hear a woodpecker
that searches for a grub

and both are dumb to pain
and blind to cruelty

the storm may bring them down
but not their progeny

the rain spurs a new generation
to reach into the sky

Barry Middleton

The Women's March

Today the women march on Washington,
so many voices joined in one great cry,
that all might find respect and dignity.
They take a stand not only for themselves,
but for the disenfranchised and abused
of every creed, identity, and race.
They march in strength and solidarity,
for everyone must have an even chance.
They march for opportunity for all.
The ideals of forgotten dreams still call,
and like an army all must raise alarm
until it roars a million voices strong.
They will not let the flame of freedom die.
They light the torch to shelter future souls,
with liberty, equality and hope.

~~~~~

Inspired by the women's March on Washington,  
January 21st, 2017.

Barry Middleton

# The Woodland Cathedral

the woodland cathedral  
is the grandest one of all

the slender living columns  
support a sanctuary

where anyone can see  
the handiwork of mystery

the forest is alive  
with goddesses and dryads

the air is thick  
the understory is carpeted

in green moss  
in molding leaves and loam

beside a creek  
a small boy watches

for a moment  
he lowers his book

and wonders at the sight  
and is it just a dream

Barry Middleton

# The World Is Dark

the world looks darker  
death looks brighter  
yet so many look away

there is no escape  
but escapism is everywhere  
so many avenues to oblivion

these roads lead nowhere  
diversion and distraction  
are obsessions

an old man looks ahead  
imagining the light  
but filled with doubt

the light of paradise  
he thinks may be  
the sharpened edge of night

Barry Middleton

# Theater

I never felt the bullet strike,  
my death was quite serene,  
but it was just an interlude,  
a brief dramatic scene.  
And yet the blood was thick and red,  
it may have pierced my heart,  
the bitter stage is never kind,  
but all must play their part.  
And just before the final bow,  
before the shot was fired,  
it was too late to be a star,  
too late to be inspired.  
The curtain fell to scant applause,  
though I hit every cue,  
but still I know 'twas just a play,  
I'll wait for the review.

Barry Middleton

# There Is A Clock Ticking

beneath the setting sun  
a boy is quietly wishing

the dove is on its nest  
a youthful bride is hoping

a call for peace awaits  
as children laugh and play

beneath the setting sun  
the wars have just begun

an old woman weeps  
a man looks to the sky

beneath the setting sun  
I hear the clock ticking

Barry Middleton



# They Drugged Me

I know they drugged me  
I woke up and I was old  
I don't know who did it

I snuck into the drive in  
back in nineteen sixty five  
beneath a navy blanket

I went to sleep under there  
when I opened my eyes  
the first divorce was final

time did not slip away  
it died in a train wreck  
on the way to Illinois

the palm trees in heaven  
look just like Florida  
but I never found an angel

I know they drugged me  
life flashed before my eyes  
so I must have been alive

Barry Middleton

# Things I Did Not Say

there are so many things I did not say  
I may have hinted once or twice  
but that is not enough

the seasons pass and time must take its toll  
the sun is fading in the west  
a breeze confounds the air

there are those things yet better left unsaid  
that may bring pain or wistfulness  
but there is still regret

now it is late and I must go my way  
you must have seen my doubt filled eyes  
I could not find the words

Barry Middleton

# Things I Like

I like my bachelor pad  
my favorite colors  
tan and blue  
political incorrectness  
inappropriate clothing  
an open collar  
and an open schedule  
I like dogs, hounds especially  
small rivers and small boats  
I like cooking in a skillet  
Dutch oven stew for company  
I like not worrying  
about cholesterol  
the economy, the wars  
or anything else  
I like hot weather  
orchids, all flowers  
pretty women, birds  
the beach with no one there  
red wine is good  
sunsets  
wind in the pine trees  
memories  
silence  
a moment to think  
a moment to not think

Barry Middleton

# Things That Matter

there are but just a few  
the things that truly matter

a meeting in the moonlight  
a tender kiss at dawn

the passions of the night  
and love that is foregone

the empty view outside  
my window to the day

holds no allure for me  
I turn to yesterday

and finally looking back  
to one I used to know

I only see a girl  
that I lost long ago

but I'm prepared to die  
to walk just one more mile

in smoky fog and haze  
with memories of her smile

Barry Middleton

## Third Letter From Zeno

Her laughter was a starburst,  
a 4th of July explosion  
in his heart.

When he walked with rivers,  
as a child walks, there was no time  
for a harvest of tears.

To claim to know the universe  
is an arrogant attempt  
at divinity.

God asks for love,  
men lay death at his feet.

He sang to her a love song  
that was like  
a bird is a silent forest.

The late rising moon  
lights the darkest night,  
surpassing the stars.

God fights his death,  
but, in his love  
and his passing, sets us free.

The cherished virgin  
vile mankind  
has made a target.

When he feels the wind blow,  
he knows the planet turns.

The sun fires  
priceless diamonds  
on a frosty morning.

If she loves his song,

he knows the raintree blooms,  
the seed of another year.

His neighbor's roof blew away.  
Of its destruction,  
he will build his home.

The orchid waits for men  
to depart  
for it does not fear the snake.

What price must he pay  
for his personal tyranny,  
for forgiveness?

Power becomes a club  
but it should be a question.

Ah yes Rabi, the hill is but  
a failed attempt at heaven.  
We climb to never reach.

If one song of his  
wafted to a single ear,  
that was all he sought.

The fear that he is nothing  
is a prison where he,  
safe from scorn,  
hides from your eyes.

The sky holds its breath  
and waits for an embrace.

The green parrots came  
taking the sunflower's bounty  
and never asked nor thanked.

A melody he hears in the wind  
tells him the work  
is not yet done.  
There is a solemn hymn

drifting in its rushing.

Where the dove waits,  
beside a silver gate,  
the jeweled peace beyond  
is a psalm.

To take more than the need  
is to devour one's own soul  
as the earth grieves.

A vanished love leaves  
an airless vacuum,  
years without breath,  
then the lungs fill.

He swore to remember her kiss  
and still he does. But some forget  
there was a pledge.

If he could be content  
with his philosophy  
as the sun sets,  
he would embrace the night.

We can grow wisdom  
out of pain; a world  
of professors nod and bow.

He curses the clouds  
that he creates because  
they block the sun.

The paradox is silence  
for we all hunger  
for the words.

If he was the servant  
of a god he did not know,  
then what a great surprise  
in paradise.

He waits for her  
to share with him  
the evening meal  
and all eternity.

The stream of thought,  
that comes from  
the eternal man,  
awaits a weeping sky,  
reunited in stardust.

Deep in the pond of memory  
lie all his loves and all his love  
beyond all words.

Barry Middleton



# Thirteen Ways Of Looking

I

a green parakeet sails  
and darts in the Florida  
confusion of passion

II

silence is midnight  
and remembering  
a drifting feather  
a beating wing

III

when waves break  
on the shore  
the soaring  
the seabirds wake

IV

deep in the swamp  
alligators bellow  
ibis strut  
a cretaceous fusion

V

archetypal visions  
invoke  
a time I once knew  
a nervous egret  
an ancestor

VI

the essence of hope  
is like entering a room  
a parrot cocks its head

VII

when evening comes  
the rain reminds me  
of the rose

of the wings

VIII

a never silent crow  
complains to the pines

IX

the heat of summer  
is a soliloquy  
is a mockingbird  
is music

X

the next issue  
falls like a falcon

XI

at times all I know  
is the slow rhythm  
of the heron

XII

the green meteor  
is just a rock  
with wings

XIII

the finale  
is ice cream  
a feather  
a strawberry  
dream

Barry Middleton

# Thought Shaper

Did you ever meet a thought shaper?  
They plant a seed and make you think.  
They subtly debate till a light comes on  
and some new thought you call your own  
was really shaped and put there by  
an expert in the shaping drive by.

Barry Middleton

## Three Verses On Rhythm

Did witches meet a summer night  
for rhythmic chants and easy rest  
and were they at their very best  
envisioning the sight?  
A wanderer in a foreign land,  
weakly natal, blinding sand  
and salty kicks while in the spell  
and dreamy drifts between the swells.  
Then mingling love and lust with dew,  
a prayer, a chant, a fork of yew,  
begat a creature wholly new.  
On summer nights the coven meets,  
a cauldron for a sea,  
to make a potion somnolescent  
and rock you in the moon's new crescent.

I looked into the sky a summer  
Sunday afternoon and breathed the air  
and thought I saw the rhythm of a wave.

The gray solitude of spring overtakes me  
as a storm washes out slowly,  
intensities of hue.  
I do not know the truth, the lie,  
immensities forsake me.  
Youth is wise to ponder,  
not too long,  
the meaning of a rhythm,  
the nuance of a song.

Barry Middleton

# Thunder Moon

From what I have learned  
it's not from Seminole

as often is the claim,  
but it is aptly named.

The wet Florida heat  
rides on an east wind.

Love is a summer storm,  
lovers safe from harm.

There is peace in thunder,  
the natives knew it well.

The full moon of July  
is an earth god's reply.

Whiteness in lightning,  
a spirit gesture to heat,

hails the thunder moon  
embracing the afternoon.

Barry Middleton

# Tiger Dream

I looked into the garden  
and saw a tiger there

the softest feline eyes  
provided no disguise

but she could not harm me  
for she was never real

and yet I see her clearly  
I see her everywhere

until the dream dissolves  
to end that brief affair

Barry Middleton

# Tiger Eye

I looked into the tiger's eye  
and shared the air  
that only fools  
would dare to breathe.

I heard my heart above the beast  
but with the beast  
and in the beast.

I looked into the tiger's eye  
and saw my empty stare.

Barry Middleton

# Tiger Lily

now when it comes to lilies  
I do prefer the Tiger  
each year it will return  
for it is a survivor

my mother put it there  
perhaps recalling youth  
to me it spoke of life  
it always told the truth

with summer spent and past  
exhausted lilies fall  
and Mom and Dad now lay  
beneath the garden wall

but still those lilies bloom  
so many seasons hence  
the storm could not take them  
for they had their defense

their roots are old and deep  
and they have set their seed  
I'll find them once again  
when fettered souls are freed

Barry Middleton



# Tiki Hut

whenever life seems in a rut  
I sneak away to the tiki hut  
it's just a little south of town  
where friendliness is always found  
I'll have a glass of beer or two  
and if you'd like then you come too  
we'll let our troubles drift away  
into the sunset on the bay  
until the darkness in the west  
directs us home to welcome rest

Barry Middleton

# Till Night Has Passed

when I am fast asleep  
I dream again of you  
the night is filled with stars  
and love is young and new

I take you in my arms  
we dance beneath the moon  
the band has played again  
our old familiar tune

I reach into the night  
but cannot find you there  
I know you are a dream  
a shadow cold and bare

yet I would not awake  
but stay where dreamers go  
as stars fulfill a wish  
to find you in their glow

I know you are a dream  
and dreams can never last  
still I will linger here  
until the night has passed

Barry Middleton

# Till Sunrise

There's a long long road till sunrise,  
with a man so deep in the muck.  
I can't sleep at night,  
all I do is fight,  
with the pillows, 'cause I'm out of luck.

Now I can't blame it on a woman.  
She left me so very long ago.  
I guess it must be me,  
so I will wait and see,  
as I tell you my sad tale of woe.

When the sun comes up tomorrow,  
I'll be brave, and face another day,  
figure out what's wrong,  
and write another song,  
on the object of my dismay.

Now the sun is finally rising.  
Where'd I put my old worn out shoes?  
Yes it's time to get on up,  
put a beer in my coffee cup,  
cop a buzz, walk the dog, fight the blues.

There's a long long road till sunrise,  
with a man so deep in the muck.  
I can't sleep at night,  
all I do is fight,  
with the pillows, 'cause I'm out of luck.

Barry Middleton

# Time

Time is the cruelest element,  
passing slowest in misery  
and swiftest in joy.

Time,  
god's silent toy,  
takes a little  
of what is valued most  
and  
takes a little more,  
un-noticed  
as we presume to outwit death.

Time gets even with men  
who pay it little heed.

Taken for granted  
and hating life  
it knifes out  
its piece of flesh.

Swift knife in pain,  
slow in healing  
and yet  
so greedily appealing.

Barry Middleton

# Time Lapse

time is unimportant  
as the days grow short

once the year is done  
I cannot get it back

rain falls on the garden  
seasons come and go

beneath the silent blue  
mystery is unexplained

when the sun rises  
and the winds freshen

a sailor takes to the sea  
intent upon the horizon

in a far off land  
a child's day has ended

and so a dream begins  
and so tomorrow comes

Barry Middleton

# Time Machine

every clock is spinning fast  
the time machine moves on  
seasons race from spring to fall  
another year has gone

and I was born in bygone times  
to die some future day  
an instant's breath is all I own  
but moments never stay

in youth the days and seasons lag  
with every day the same  
until my life is almost done  
for credit or for blame

all I can do is fight for life  
the time machine must stop  
to find me buried with regret  
or on the mountaintop

Barry Middleton

# Time Never Stops

between the inspiration  
and the final act  
a metronome keeps ticking

between eyes meeting  
and the kiss  
heartbeats count the stars

each night  
the earth turns its back  
to the sun

between I will and I did  
dark days come  
as a challenge

beneath a silent clock  
the years fade away  
into lost orbits

possibility becomes memory  
there is always doubt  
time never stops

Barry Middleton

# Time Trivia

It won't be stopped!  
It is like a terrorist.

It destroys and takes.  
It is filled, yet empty.

I look up distracted,  
and the sun is setting.

Night brings mourning,  
and grief and regret.

I marked my calendar  
that I might remember

a most essential task.  
Did I forget the goal?

Was it about building  
something to defend,

something important,  
till fire melts the sky?

Barry Middleton



# Timeless

time cannot be bought or bartered  
time is free  
a priceless gift  
yet so many squander it

regret sets in  
that I did not use this gift with care  
that I worried about tomorrow  
instead of embracing today

time is like a walk in a beautiful park  
a master gardener tended it  
the trees and grass and flowers  
the perfect blue sky

time's current is like a quiet river  
it runs past us  
whether or not we notice  
it flows until it finds the precipice

Barry Middleton

# Time's Well

the wishing well of time is deep  
lean far to find the soul of tears  
the silver blackness hiding there

toss in a coin and say a prayer  
the sound will echo on the walls  
to seal the treasure of an age

beneath the depths are memories  
a mint of lost and broken hope  
entombed by ripples of desire

the dreaded well of life deceives  
where expectations thrash and drown  
as there is no escape from death

so save a coin for rushing streams  
and cast it far into the flow  
then softly breathe your final plea

Barry Middleton

# To Banish Fear

To banish fear is still my wish,  
to care not for tomorrow's dream.  
And yet that too is but desire,  
a whim to fly above the crowd.  
But I must roam the night alone,  
and deep within a darkened grove.  
And I do fear eternity,  
for blackest midnight is my home.  
So take me from the world of light,  
without companion for my voyage.  
And I will bravely face this fear,  
as hand in hand it is my guide.  
For night has lessons it may teach,  
that far exceed a dreamer's reach.

Barry Middleton

# To Fight Alone

the cold will make me pray  
the cold will make me  
lonely in a crowd

the cold is desolate  
a friend can only suffer  
with me here

the fight is solitary  
I wrap my arms  
around myself unseen

I whisper to the dark  
to light a fire  
to bring the sun again

still the wind must blow  
and so I shake  
and hold to visions now

I close my eyes to see  
a palm  
a tropic breeze and paradise

Barry Middleton

# Together

it is ominous to feel  
I've put the pieces together

isn't that always  
when the other shoe drops

I scream free at last  
then the bullet strikes

I escape the war  
and then fall off a cliff

it's like being pre-medicated  
for the electrocution

or waiting for revolution  
till everyone is a capitalist

I've put the pieces together  
I see what is coming

my only regret is  
I must miss Armageddon

Barry Middleton

# Tomorrow

I went searching for the sunshine;  
I could not take the winter cold.  
The silver moon deceived my vision;  
the sun became my only gold.

Nothing changes in the tropics;  
every season is the same.  
I went quite crazy in the moonlight;  
and the heat can take the blame.

I still recall a shaded valley,  
where seasons come and seasons go.  
And I still miss the gold of autumn,  
the silver spring and summer's glow.

I roamed so far to find the treasure,  
it seems it's everywhere I go.  
It was here in tropic sunshine;  
it was there in winter's snow.

Every vision fades with sunset;  
still we endure the trial of years.  
The sun will rise again tomorrow,  
then I'll forget defeat and tears.

Barry Middleton

# Tomorrow's Regret

it was youth that said  
we can't regret tomorrow

but there will come a time  
for truth to out

the life road leads  
in circles back to death

we journey  
from nothing to nothing

this is the only road  
to what tomorrow brings

it bears remorse and pain  
inevitable as night

we wait again for sunrise  
tomorrow's agony

we wait for nothingness  
for all regret to end

Barry Middleton

# Too Long Ago

Stealing away to a distant field,  
hidden far from the lights of town,  
we lay in the grass on a secret night,  
watching the Perseids shower down.  
There we witnessed the universe  
show off amazing fire and grace,  
to strike a spark within our hearts,  
for we were hidden in that place.  
And when I turned to see your eyes,  
reflect the stars so far above,  
I knew your lips called for a kiss,  
to seal our covenant of love.  
And late in August every year,  
the falling stars still rain their fire.  
Though you are far away as they,  
I still recall that night's desire.  
But fires that blaze on summer nights,  
must go the way all fires must go,  
returned again to ash and dust,  
to fade away in afterglow.

Barry Middleton



# Torn

the curtain of the sky is torn  
as secrets are revealed

the malice of the human heart  
can never more be healed

if gods above still keep accounts  
where stars descend in space

a mighty storm will soon befall  
the vicious human race

if vengeance is the way of gods  
then so with man below

the end will come in fire and ice  
with every land laid low

but if the voice above is mute  
and heedless of a plan

the same destruction comes to us  
begot by deeds of man

Barry Middleton

# Tornado Life

of all brute destruction I have seen  
the cruel tornado is the most obscene

a thief that robs the innocent of life  
to rip asunder all, a vicious knife

we feel a vague and simple recognition  
that living never proffers precondition

a theory as we drift to sleep at night  
to hope for other days to stand and fight

we know the storm may come, all lost  
never believing we will pay the cost

when darkest angels pound upon the door  
and level all our dreams as demons roar

till life can never be the same again  
abandoned, drifting in deception's wind

Barry Middleton

# Touch

I am so in touch with touch,  
deceit cannot touch me.

All I see is photoshopped.  
You won't slip much by me.

I don't believe the things I hear.  
The truth is much maligned.

I do not trust a single word,  
though thoughtfully refined.

I have a taste for bitterness,  
for sweetness turns to grief.

Just a hint of saccharine,  
kindles my disbelief.

I know that I can smell a lie.  
Perfume cannot fool me.

And if it stinks, it stinks I think.  
I think you must agree.

I do not hold with second sight.  
I won't stand for pretense.

Only things that I can touch,  
to me, make any sense.

Barry Middleton

# Toxins

toxins in the air  
toxins in the food  
toxins in the water  
toxins in the mood  
toxic people  
toxic pills  
toxic chemicals  
toxic spills  
toxic religions  
toxic smoke  
toxic ideas  
toxic jokes  
toxic boundaries  
toxic borders  
toxic divisions  
toxic orders  
toxic decisions  
toxic habitation  
toxic beliefs  
toxic radiation  
toxic prejudice  
toxic waste  
toxic relations  
toxic haste  
toxic radio  
toxic glow  
toxins even  
in the snow  
too many toxins  
nowhere to hide  
heaven is toxic  
entry denied

Barry Middleton

# Toy Soldiers

these are not toy soldiers  
this is not a video game  
this is a sacred war  
the enemy must be killed  
lay waste to their lands

their sons and daughters  
play in the dust and ash  
someone must die for this  
children know the game  
these are only toy soldiers

another generation comes  
our fathers have been slain  
this is a sacred war  
the enemy must be killed  
these are not toy soldiers

Barry Middleton

# Transitions

I heard it too,  
I heard the thunder,  
and the whispered wind,  
and the raindrops like a clock,  
ticking.

It woke me from my dream  
like an answered prayer,  
surprising, startling.

It was about transitions,  
about the seasons,  
a fire quenched,  
the greening of the summer.

It spoke to me  
from the muted sun,  
from the gray clouds.

It was not in the mind,  
it drummed within my chest,  
and I was a part of it.

Barry Middleton

# Treasure Yesterday

too soon there's only yesterday  
without an answer to dismay

those yesterdays of memory  
and what my life turned out to be

that's all I'll ever really know  
and in the end they steal the show

I treasure yesterday always  
I'll not recall the clouds and haze

when I remember yesterday  
the sunlight falls upon my way

across the Universe I go  
with all my yesterdays aglow

too soon there's only yesterday  
without an answer to dismay

those yesterdays of memory  
and what my life turned out to be

good yesterdays of memory  
and what my life turned out to be

Barry Middleton

# Tree Moments

outside my window  
I see my old rain tree  
each fall it blooms for only me

trees are moments  
they take me back in time  
a snapshot of the faded past

I planted them  
the pines the holly the dogwood  
I saw them grow like children do

how many trees  
how many have I planted  
I wager they're a thousand strong

a tree may hold  
the secret of the ages  
within its vague encrypted rings

army of trees  
army of moments past  
the only things that ever last

Barry Middleton



# Tree Of Knowledge

born without knowledge  
man only knows need  
and driven by hunger  
he cries out to his mother

peace is primal in Eden  
in the infancy of humanity  
there is no need to choose  
there is no hunger or thirst

hidden desire outwits us  
the allure of eternal life  
the kiss of infinite wisdom  
our oceanic dreams awaken

men reach beyond hope  
to join their imagined god  
to be satiated and to know  
to grasp the mystery of ages

so the apple is consumed  
and with it innocence dies  
and there is peace no more  
but only the hiss of a serpent

Barry Middleton

# Tribute To A Dead Poet

Wars and war rumors  
consume a peaceful wish,  
neighbor fears neighbor,  
the godless sky bleeds.

Another mortal wound,  
another mother's grief,  
hungry children await  
their father's return.

Addiction stalks longing  
with a corporate prayer  
to consumptive greed.

Politicos turn their gaze  
from serving the people  
to claw for pride money.

The gambler lays a bet,  
the robber pulls a gun,  
honest wages looted.

One vague poet writes  
odd notes and memories  
of a lost green planet.

The dark aged wisdom  
of the evil backstreet  
is in the hustler's eyes.

Crass guiltless merchants  
rub their fat paunches  
glutted by slave profit.

On a dry burnt sandhill  
a gray preacher rants  
against crazed sinning,  
his eyes to a dead sun.

Our priests and mentors  
betray youthful dreams  
with lustful perversion.

No brave and shining  
world we have created,  
no shelter from evil.

Moping youth lodge claims,  
foolish aperies of wisdom,  
arrogant with stupidity.

Putrid ashen air surrounds  
a doubtful future with  
pale deceptions of hope.

Still the dead whisper  
in rancid cathedrals  
that god's awful angel  
waits in a nightmare  
to redeem faint terror.

In secret coven meetings,  
alphabetical ledgers due,  
bony demon fingernails  
tally our debt and profit.

Barry Middleton

# Tropic Autumn Comes

autumn comes in late rushes  
in the warm moist wind

if you've been here long enough  
you sense a change

intuition says the air is more sensible  
this time of year

cooler temperaments will prevail  
hurricanes are exhausted

in a few weeks the birds will come  
blackbird and warbler

like refugees of the bleak cold north  
they speak of fate

they speak of time's falling leaves  
in a mimicry of death

Barry Middleton

# Tropic Dream

I sought the mountaintop  
but I was valley trapped

I was mired in a province  
of infectious bigotry

I escaped to the city  
to find the same contagion

I sought the purest lake  
yet roamed a dismal swamp

I sensed a truthful breeze  
but was becalmed by lies

I craved the gentle rain  
but was washed by a flood

I gazed at the horizon  
and saw my freedom there

and then I found my home  
within a tropic dream

Barry Middleton

# Tropic Farewell

the diamond of the tropics  
is the sand of a crystal beach

and silver hides in the forest  
in springs just out of reach

the gold is the blaze of dawn  
and grief is the setting sun

yet hope abides at evening  
when the heat of day is done

for then is the time to recall  
the riches that came my way

the wealth of silent darkness  
the grace of a tropic day

Barry Middleton

# Tropic Religion

I am weary of the tropics  
yet I will never leave her

I am weary of the endless heat  
the blood-red sunset

palms are like a maidens  
hair blown by the breeze

the egret stalks its prey  
like a pale ghost of death

cypress rise from dark water  
I was born for this place

live oaks are a colonnade  
to hold the blue dome of sky

I am weary of the tropics  
yet I will never leave her

I have no other church  
where I may rest my soul

Barry Middleton

# Tropic Wilderness

tropic wilderness surrounds me  
drooping leaves of understory  
reach for light

the forest is quiet and peaceful  
and I am quite at ease  
I have no fear

a giant cypress cools a shady spot  
palmetto fans are mine  
I have no pain

a mossy path leads to my home  
concealed within a hollow oak  
the world is far beyond

I see the tropic wilderness  
I know where I belong  
I see the cool dark waters

Barry Middleton



# Tropic Winter Storm

the winter rain will fall tonight  
in wishing me to sleep

the cold but tropic rain lets go  
as shadows gently weep

a vision of a love gone by  
has come to tease my brain

but all the wishes of a life  
can never ease the pain

and yet I welcome rain and sleep  
that brings a brief release

the heart of darker winter storms  
will bring a final peace

Barry Middleton

# Tropical Gift

the riches you gave to me  
beyond the price of time

will never more be known  
this side of the sublime

your gifts are not forgotten  
the jewel of a turquoise sea

the shellfish pink of sunrise  
the gold from a mango tree

a whisper in the woodlands  
an osprey's prayer to the sky

the silver moon at midnight  
the hush of a lover's sigh

when I gaze on tropic stars  
as they descend to the sea

I will cherish every diamond  
the treasure you granted me

Barry Middleton

# Tropical Storm

All of my life the storms passed me by  
but the one that is building I cannot deny.

So now is the time for me to prepare,  
as a hurricane waits to bring me despair.

I searched all my life for my Florida home,  
far from my birth many paths I did roam.

I traveled the south on a southern road  
till the road ran out in a tropic abode.

There a turquoise sea and a banyan tree  
provided a breeze and some shade for me.

And there I camped and a home I made,  
through many a storm I was never afraid.

I survived and I lived all the pain and the joy  
and now must prepare for life's final ploy.

Far out in the Gulf where god makes his plans  
the weather that's brewing is out of my hands.

Something sinister stirs a darkening cloud,  
hiding the heavens with a foreboding shroud.

There is nothing to do that will keep it at bay,  
the storm of a lifetime is coming my way.

Barry Middleton

# Tropical Testament

In the tropics where we were born,  
death seems as impossible as eternity.  
Eden endures like a painted memory  
graced with green waters and hyacinth,  
the egret and wildcat together in peace,  
a roadside depiction of unreality.  
An intoxicating deception tosses the palms.  
We do not wish to bury our dead.  
The sea returns them to their mother.  
In the garden, love curls about desire  
in oceanic promises, but its bite is death.  
The hand of the artist is hidden.

She told me of the season of roses,  
and the season of the barren and the lost.  
There is a bud that opens to blighted truth,  
that does not yield to false perfumes.  
She fled to the north, to coldest snow,  
leaving me only the book of the dead.

In spring, April marks the fire season.  
Lightning prepares the prairie for rebirth.  
There is foolish laughter on the breeze,  
and the waters of the gulf are warming.  
Those who came to escape the cold winter  
turn their eyes to the north and home.  
They dread the burning time of year  
when heat rises and hurricanes blow,  
when natives know the coming of the flood.

death waits in damp heat  
the setting sun welcomes night  
darkness hides the storm

Like the waves that crash one on another,  
like a beacon flashing the news,  
There is terror in the heartland.  
Even now the unreality relieves.  
We seek the banality of lunch with wine.

A pleasing view helps us to forget.  
The world lives on in its dull routines,  
politics is punctuated by seasonal sport.  
She says, 'Never mind, I'll have  
what he is having and some tea.'  
Still there is that rumble of thunder.

cruelty of man  
avarice its only god  
the viper's deceit

We may grieve the death of the swan,  
the uprooted tentacles of hopelessness.  
We tread broken glass with bloody feet,  
no music rises from a soulless woodland  
as we await the unexpected guest.  
Tiresias is transformed to predict the future,  
and bring to earth a feminine desire for song.  
Yet he could not see the arrow of poetry.  
And so the silent earth must grieve,  
no swan, no lark, Eden wasted.

In this land there was only war and death.  
The invaders came with genocide  
where every native died in terror  
or privation and exile.  
Oh no, the Seminoles are not of Florida.  
We may blame it on the Spaniards except  
this was not the end of death.  
It migrated like a plague far beyond  
the fountains of youthful blood.  
Death is our legacy.

unrepentant souls  
no poetry of Eden  
dry and lifeless leaf

There is nothing in the land that lasts,  
do not be deceived by a warm breeze,  
by a song wafting over the waters.  
Death walks with us like a shadow  
on a shadowed road.

The heat is rising and a wind is building.  
The waters yet retreat.  
The obituaries have been written.

On the horizon, a sailor searches destiny.  
To the east the storm is raging.  
He gazes to the west, his homeland.  
He knows she cannot save herself,  
and he cannot save her.  
He prays for future generations.  
That is all that is left to do.

fallen man destroys  
the heart is a dark kingdom  
evil shared by all

Barry Middleton

# Trust

despite the greed and lust of war  
in spring hope is renewed

the rose decides to take a chance  
to set a peaceful mood

despite the predators who stalk  
the fog of darkest night

our prayer is answered by the dawn  
restoring faith and light

despite all evils of this world  
our dreams are not remiss

they whisper in the garden fog  
and in a tender kiss

Barry Middleton

# Trust The Evening Star

these are the simple things  
that I may trust

the morning star  
becomes the evening star

the rising moon  
must fall and set at dawn

the blazing sun of noon  
subsides at dusk

and breath and love  
are but a moments grace

the planet winds its way  
around the sun

and life must finally end  
for everyone

Barry Middleton



# Truth Whispers

there is a sound in the wind  
truth is whispering there  
a breath

there is a song in the sunlight  
quiet as a mother's lullaby  
a softness

there is joy in falling leaves  
making way for spring  
a cycle

there is sweetness in tears  
saying someone was loved  
a loss

Barry Middleton

# Turn The Corner

I want to turn the corner  
I can't go back in time  
I've pondered every memory  
and put them down in rhyme

I need a new horizon  
but don't know where to look  
I may give up on song  
and study one last book

such it is with age  
with strength and passion spent  
the oldest melodies  
must finally relent

only old men know  
the dark and lonely road  
no one to hear their jokes  
or share the heavy load

I want to turn the corner  
and see a different view  
mirages in the desert  
or anything that's new

although my dreams are locked  
within a prison cell  
I'd like a glimpse of heaven  
I've done my time in hell

Barry Middleton

# Turning

another blaze of sunset grace  
another year, another page  
winter's chill is gently fading  
another spring has come of age

each and every year I pray  
to see the dogwood bloom again  
azaleas testify to hope  
blooms speak like a lost friend

I know that life and seasons turn  
the sun goes down, planets spin  
without much heed to my desire  
or any other want of men

the day is ending, seasons pass  
another sunset's grace for me  
as time proceeds around the sun  
descending, where I cannot see

Barry Middleton

# Twilight Blue Prayer

In every hue of sunset,  
the only one I know

is tinged with twilight blue  
of time in afterglow.

All memories are blue,  
all dawns are tinted pink.

But as the day is ending,  
I need no doublethink.

The victories have faded  
to mark the close of day.

And time reveals a shade  
of bittersweet dismay.

And so I must resign  
the struggle and the strain,

and send a gentle prayer,  
to free me from this pain.

Barry Middleton

# Twilight's Tow

It's been a while  
since I have watched  
the evening settle in and fill  
the silence up with darkness.  
It comes the same however;  
too long I've stayed outdoors.  
I turn and watch my shadow  
reaching out toward night  
that silently pours through trees  
a mile away. My homeward  
walk will find me in the dark  
before the backyard gate swings to  
and startled dogs begin to bark.  
A thousand limbs  
that scraped my face  
and just as many spider webs  
I failed to see, you'd think  
should make me watch the time.  
But twilight's steady tow,  
however rare it may have been,  
will find a mind with too much on it  
and holds me in the growing dark  
to tally up the worth today  
of what was done  
and what was yet to do.

Barry Middleton

## Two Deceptions

both are like the falling leaves  
a tale that no one ever believes  
a passing season and a lover

coming and going of perfume  
revolves in an enchanted room  
till love consumes a fevered heart

death is the breast of darkest night  
a western moon fades from sight  
surrendered to its mausoleum

yet we cling to seasons past  
affections that can never last  
antique lies we choose to cherish

like gardens where maidens stray  
and angel spirits croon and sway  
and wait to satisfy our hunger

Barry Middleton

## Two Haiku

Dogwood

dogwood blooms in spring  
hope is yet a white desire  
green leaves hold their gold  
~~~~~

Buttermilk Sky

flaky clouds floating
the sun is a daffodil
darkness calls me home

Barry Middleton

Two Roads

I have come to a fork in the road
each path is a mystery
on the right is a green woodland
a reminder of my childhood home
the hills are alive with adventure
everything is moving in this place

on my left is barren wasteland
the road stretches off to the sea
where the seagulls cry their tears
the wind rattles the palm fronds
and the sun sinks into the horizon
in a lifeless scarlet blaze of sunset

Barry Middleton

Two Rocks

The creek in the wood
behind my childhood home
was rich with the entertainment
of questioning.

What were just two rocks
to some, to me seemed to hide
eternal mysteries.

Most rocks that I dragged home
had found a final resting place
upon that creek bed
where water washed them
each and every day
and kept them shining
like jewels is a rare display.

But now and then
the anthropologist of spring,
behind a plow, would dredge up
from the soil a clay caked shard
of ancient stone.

And that was cause enough
to pause a while and wonder
who had cast it there,
or had some great upheaval
of the strata rolled it to this spot
never till now to be touched
by curiosity or washed by rain.

Barry Middleton

Two Voices

the night speaks with two voices
one says darkness is despair
the other welcomes dreams and rest

the darkness is resignation
the bowing to the inevitable
the end of pain must end my joy

the light is in the east
the horizon hides the dream of day
as sleepy eyes perceive the glow

the night dream was a memory
a child alone in secret woods
asleep beneath his favorite tree

the child and man will soon awake
and watch the sun come up
and dream again of the day voices

for darkness always yields
at least it always has
the planet turns to greet the sun

Barry Middleton

Tyranny

The terrorist and tyrant dwell,
not very far apart,
and thrive on fear and death and greed,
and evil's darkest art.

When ignorance and apathy,
and hateful acts conspire,
the arsonist arrives by night,
to light perdition's fire.

And once alight infernos grow,
consuming hope and prayer.
Then only knowledge, care and grace,
can quench the soul's despair.

Barry Middleton

Tyranny And Anarchy

at the curious intersection
of tyranny and anarchy
two strangers meet
they are two but also one

kingdoms rise and fall
power crumbles into dust
the sea inters the pirate's gold
and lust encounters mortality

the bandit and the dictator
have much in common
they put no value on humanity
they prey upon the weak

I wish that I could believe
that there will be a reckoning
a finality of fire and ice
to crush the head of the snake

Barry Middleton

Underneath The Willow

underneath the willow tree
besides the river's edge

the lovers sang an ancient tune
and swore an ancient pledge

until this tree is dead and gone
and river beds are dry

then I will love you till the end
he tells her with a sigh

the years pass on to memory
and love must fade away

like promises and broken vows
and songs of yesterday

and now the willow is cut down
and thrown into the fire

the river washed away the oath
and quenched forsworn desire

Barry Middleton

Unlearned

tomorrow's child already born
to bitter earth filled with scorn
hears mournful cries

the lesson no one ever learns
blood will flow as hatred burns
and flags unfurl

a holy mission filled with rage
a jihad or a last crusade
is death's disguise

millions now have died in vain
their only legacy is pain
an orphaned girl

the fallen soldier never saved
a widow weeps beside his grave
with desperate eyes

war has washed us in the blood
and evil prowls the neighborhood
of the world

Barry Middleton

Unlimited

dark and cold winds roar
out beyond the prison door
hidden mystery to explore
no matter how we spin it
for the sky is not the limit

we may find in deepest space
wisdom rests within its grace
and power we cannot efface
soaring minute to minute
for the sky is not the limit

yet we meet in human kind
a faulty creature nearly blind
carnal flesh at war with mind
still we must transcend it
for the sky is not the limit

Barry Middleton

Unrequited Roses

The rose is overdone in verse
for every lover claims its worth.
The red one in my neighbor's yard
now stirs forgotten memories.

The rose is often overworked.
I do recall a boy who daily
offered roses to bring a smile
to a winsome girl he did desire.

Nor seldom I conferred a rose,
a small investment in wistful hope.
The rose was adoration's pledge
affirming tenderness in passion.

One more poem on the rose,
perhaps a waste of precious time.
The red rose at the neighbor's gate
recalls a time I believed in love.

That rose is pain, its petals blood.
It speaks to me of lovers lost,
no smiling eyes, no hopeful sigh
from unrequited roses of memory.

Barry Middleton

Unseen

like a storm beyond the horizon
the threat is unobserved
and yet is slowly wends its way

the first hint is a whisper
a cooling breeze against the skin
a welcome illusion

a promised change brings hope
but deception hides itself
like a serpent beneath a rock

at last the threat draws near
and then it is too late
there is no time to flee

the serpent possesses the garden
the dragon owns the wind
the hurricane has come

Barry Middleton

Unspoken

there is a place where I must go
that's like a book that has no name

you will not find it on the shelf
for everyone it is the same

so anyone can make it theirs
and fill the page with what they wish

perhaps it's like the home we lost
and long to see just one last time

for me there is a fertile glen
I see it clearly even now

but I cannot describe its grace
although you know I've often tried

the grass is green and gardens grow
from loam as rich as time bestows

and fruiting trees abound in bloom
to lend the air their sweet perfume

here too the crystal waters flow
un-endingly from hills and springs

with clover thick and pasture green
a secret flowered meadow sings

this Eden may be blessed by sounds
unheard beyond the bygone years

the animals of farm and field
that once a carefree child had known

and too I hear familiar tunes
the ones I listened to in youth

an old piano freshens night
and calls us home at dinner time

our mom and dad will take their seats
the kids will find their favored place

and all will briefly bow their heads
as one recites our thanks for grace

when chores and homework all are done
the silent hush will settle in

beneath the moon the children sleep
and dream about the coming day

but one yet lies full wide awake
and tries so hard to shape his dreams

he plans to travel far and wide
to wander from his valley home

and as he grows to write his book
of every path that he once took

Barry Middleton

Unteachable Lessons

gods are like waves
a silence that only whispers
a ripple in the breath of universe

seek your god like the hawk seeks
alone in the hush of the sky
the prize is not hidden

it has been said
talk to your god in solitude
your voice is as evident as thunder

the tyrants do not know the gods
gods are stolid and restrained
the deity is humble

it has been said
we only need to seek
the universe is aware of our tears

quietly shepherd all that nurtures
love as the universe loves
and you will find peace

Barry Middleton

Until Your Kiss

I swear to this
I could not see
until your kiss
awakened me

I could not see
until your touch
awakened me
for love is such

until your touch
I was so blind
for love is such
I was resigned

I was so blind
I swear to this
I was resigned
until your kiss

Barry Middleton

Untitled

'No spring can follow past meridian.
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss
To make believe a starry connaissance'.
From: Le Monocle de Mon Oncle: by Wallace Stevens

I grow quite weary of it, but they do persist,
believers and infidels squabbling over nothing.
If fools could see, a better world would be,
to treasure what is, and not a fool's illusion.

And so there is a taste of apples in a kiss,
to foster poetry of bliss and, with the passing,
a desire for everlasting life, as old men
pray and concoct verses to another spring.

Love and life are a sunrise and a red hot noon
beneath the fusion of a violent star, fire seeming
infinite, grand but just the meaningless gesture
of a single careless law beginning in destruction.

The noon day blue fades at evening to a black
reunion of the stars and water, but not before
a nuclear sunset reminds me of the end to come,
and makes me believe the world dies in fire.

When men are well past forty, some will know,
the angels came and left upon the lost wind,
and all the song, so lovely then, is crying now,
cacophony and prelude to a silent intermission.

It may add up to only this, the knowing, a breeze,
the springtime lily wet with dew, another morning,
and not to mourn but emulate the creatures sigh,
as sleep comes again, awaiting one more dawn.

Barry Middleton

Upon The Pyre

This life is but a gift that must betray;
a Trojan horse conceals the enemy.
And all the ecstasy will soon decay;
then we are left without a remedy.

This life is like a play, the curtain falls.
The dagger plunges in the final act
as Brutus gestures to the senate halls,
for even kings succumb to the attack.

This life is nothing but a fading rose.
The crimson blood and petals one by one
recede to burgundy and black repose,
when seasons of the sun are finally done.

This life shall mock our everyman's desire,
the gift, the play, the rose upon the pyre.

Barry Middleton

Utopia

on a clear stream in the mountains
there was peace

in the garden before evil entered
there was grace

now the silent dawn calls us back
to beginnings

to the pure waters and sweet air
of paradise

if we will only reach out for truth
hope is waiting

like the winter waits for the spring
another chance

like love waits with the anticipation
of longing

like time waits for the astonishment
of utopia

Barry Middleton

Valley Chapel Grave

I sought the meadow for its grace
a chapel in a wooded glen
the quiet spirit of the place
protected me from grief within

but grief is never far away
for life is frail and breath is weak
I would return another day
to garner all that I might seek

still here today I did behold
a single rose upon a grave
a story that has grown too old
for one who died so young and brave

the rose was freshly laid today
the soldier's grave was far from new
the widow's hair had turned to gray
her tears comingled with the dew

and yet I sensed she was at peace
as time was drifting on the wind
and soon her grief would find release
when she would hold him once again

Barry Middleton

Values

the silent perfection
of the wilderness
makes no boasts
the song of the dead poet
has no pretense
and there is a value too
in the gray of the winter sky
when the color of the sky
and sea are one

love leaves in autumn
for we would not have her go
amid lilies and unaware of the cold

when they kissed
the world was out of balance
denied its centrality
it wobbled drunkenly
through the night
and though she cried
god puts none aside
to puzzle out the plan

when all the prayers were done
the silent shadow of a nun
beckoned him to gently come
and view a second of the past
that must forever last
a glimpse of chicken bones and ash
that vanish in a flash
that vanish

in the gray light of tomorrow
a soldier dies
for distant daylight
mother's cries
and though the dress
is neatly tied
no blush will fall

upon the bride

Adrian Hammer didn't know
the use of any winter snow
or why the world must move so slowly
with large investments in the town
his stocks were up and never down
he believed that all he'd lost was found
in his respect the county round
he did not die a flashy death
but old and tired just went to rest
his friends all thought it for the best

the mud upon my shoes
becomes the life
upon my age
if I look closely
and remember
I will behold
no plan I have begun
and no regret
that did not hold me
in the passion of life

Barry Middleton

Vanished Lover

a fateful shadow haunts the night
within my restless sleep
your vanished spirit still remains
in memories that I keep

for I would not forget your kiss
or passions of the spring
when we were young invincibles
and love was everything

in afterglow we are the same
beyond the curse of age
much like a book I set aside
before the final page

for you are beautiful as dawn
and secrets of the night
in visions where I hold you close
as souls again unite

a vanished love may never end
or so it often seems
for you are here beside me now
if only in my dreams

Barry Middleton

Verbs Simile And Metaphor

I got used to being a verb
usually transitive of course
holding lovers, moving mountains
rushing about banging into things
I was never the subject or object
I was the action
the falling not the tears
the speaking not the speech
I was a simile
in motion like a river
charging like a bull
weeping like a child
but then it happened as it must
the intransitive came upon me
I sat, I stopped, I lay
I became a metaphor
the thing itself
the call of the bird
the rose in the vase
the chill in the autumn air
the frozen ice on the pond
I am intransitive
I sleep
I am a metaphor of age
a relic
I am death
I am intransitive
I die

Barry Middleton

Vicksburg Battlefield

The cannons in the shadowed trees are mute;
the autumn leaves yet shed a silent tear.
The war that ended many years ago,
has faded from the freshened atmosphere.

Now gentle flags that flutter on the graves,
recall the pain and blood where armies fell.
And multitudes of tombstones line the hill,
as somber spirits cast a ghostly spell.

Although I wonder what we failed to learn,
from endless wars where soldiers go to die,
mankind seems heedless of my fervent prayer,
yet hushed again by one more battle cry.

Still falling leaves caress the somber field,
and grieve where fragile soldiers lie concealed.

Barry Middleton

Virtue

Virtue cannot defeat hatred,
but hatred cannot exist
in the heart of a virtuous man.
To walk the path of righteousness,
is much more difficult
than to climb the highest mountain.
We must not hide from evil,
but we must not meet evil with evil.
The reward for virtue is contentment.
When we see evil, we must confront it.
When we see virtue, we must praise it.
There are gods of wooded valleys,
there are gods of sea and land.
But truest virtue and salvation
dwells within the heart of man.

Barry Middleton

Vision Quest To Titan

On Saturn's moon there is a place,
the region of Xanadu,
where light shines from the ocean floor,
beneath a dome of blue.
The sky above is frozen ice,
yet every soul is warm,
as gentle currents ebb and flow,
protected from the storm.
There is no hunger in that realm,
the planet is alive,
and life is filtered from the sea,
where peaceful beings thrive.
Immortal forests never yield,
for they are left to stand,
there is no need to harvest them,
perhaps as gods had planned.
The creatures there will never die,
transparent as the breeze,
they sleep forever in this womb,
the cradle of the seas.
This planet/moon grants every need
to spirits of this place,
who are but parts of one great soul,
one land, one Titan race.
Perhaps the earth was once like this,
in Eden's fertile glen,
and Xanadu and vision quests,
reveal what might have been.

Barry Middleton

Voice In The Pines

there's a voice in the pines
that keeps spinning out rhymes
and the melodies lost long ago

and I hear it so well
and yet no one can tell
as I smile in the dim afterglow

now the echoes grow faint
still I have no complaint
so I heed to the rhythm and rhyme

then I write a new song
won't you please sing along
till the metronome stops keeping time

there's a voice in the trees
on a lyrical breeze
but the night closes in like a spell

and as I fall asleep
where the rhythm runs deep
then the muse is the toll of a bell

Barry Middleton

Waiting For Rain

a gray day without rain
it seems a waste
a failed campaign

the dark mood of muted light
can cast no
reassuring light

a bright hope when prayer is done
yet hears a distant
kettle drum

that pledges rain by afternoon
its sweet relief
is coming soon

to wake the desiccated earth
a midwife
for the lilies birth

and what do gray days hold for me
I guess I must
just wait to see

I may be spirit and the power
or just the dust
beneath the bower

and either way is right by me
for either way
at last I'm free

Barry Middleton

Waiting For Spring

The wind is wild that stirs today.
The cold tells me to rest and stay

indoors until the storm subsides.
And yet the sun no longer hides,

but shines to bless the blustery morn,
and so condemns my bitter scorn.

As when I wish to quit the fight,
and quietly step into the night,

there seems to come a subtle clue,
that I should wait for spring is due.

I'll test the day, but I'll be brief,
till spring can bring its warm relief.

Barry Middleton

Waiting For The Falling Shoe

Life and death will be what they will be;
there is no card to leave the jail for free.

And in the end we rant and rail and pray,
but fail to steal another single day.

The bar always announces closing time;
why can't the gods reveal their paradigm.

Life is filled with joy and pain and doubt,
too hard for anyone to figure out.

I wish I had a clue to be my guide,
a beacon from a sacred mountainside.

But here I wait; one day becomes the next,
confused, abused, and totally perplexed.

Someone once said to play it from the heart,
the deck is stacked and that's the hardest part.

Barry Middleton

Waiting For The Storm

I await the storm that comes
to spread its sweet perfume
it will enclose my world in mist
that makes the orchid bloom

I know I can depend on gales
to fell the ancient trees
reminding me of all the harms
that bring me to my knees

with the storm new life is born
I see it in a flower
then I remember every man
can stay but for an hour

so rain and wind and life will be
whatever they will be
so summer storms will move aside
to let the sun break free

Barry Middleton

Walk With Me

come walk with me a while
I've not too far to go
before the final mile

perhaps you may recall
we passed this way before
beside the waterfall

you must remember it
far up a mountain rill
we stopped to talk a bit

we lost the path ahead
we'll not go back again
I don't know what was said

the waterfall yet flows
and guards the mystery
of all the mountain knows

now time has passed away
we'll not go back again
for what we missed that day

Barry Middleton

Walls

some hide behind a vacant stare
some hide behind a smile

some hide by stating only facts
others hide by guile

some hide and never do disclose
the pain we often feel

that judgment of judgmental folk
can force us to conceal

we seek for one to raise our hope
and there reveal our soul

someone to trust our secrets to
when walls no longer hold

Barry Middleton

War And Love

One war ends, another rages.
We study history, we turn the pages.
There must be a better world somewhere,
a place of peace and hope.

A sidewalk café, young lovers
hear no guns, no political jazz,
they only hear with eyes and lips
a breathless kiss.

Some of us war all life through
till death whispers a final yearning
for silent peace.

The history book lingers pleading,
the wine is poured, blue candle light
is all around me as cannon sounds
murmur soft hymns, another requiem
for dead lovers.

Barry Middleton

War Comes Again

another soldier dies
a sweetheart gently cries

a wife falls to her knees
to pray and weep and grieve

a father too is lost
and is it worth the cost

a faithful friend is gone
the war still rages on

the leaders make excuse
to not secure a truce

and evil is condoned
as tyrants seize the throne

Barry Middleton

War Storm

the clouds are building in the east
and fire has scarred the sky
the terror of the night has come
when evil demons fly

the war has spread across the globe
and no one seems to know
just what to do to save mankind
or how to quell the foe

I hear the thundering of boots
a million soldiers strong
as if that path could save our hearts
or stem the evil throng

the bombs may rain upon us all
for we are all one race
but death can never end the storm
or bring salvation's grace

the hearts of men will never change
by war or armies might
the road to peace is walked alone
each man must find the light

~~~~~

A reaction to the terrorist bombing of the Istanbul, Turkey airport on June,28th  
2016.

Barry Middleton

# Was She In Love

was she in love, I do not know  
she lost her way so long ago  
the night was cold in late September

she traveled far, where spirits stray  
consumed by ghosts she could not slay  
her soul was just a dying ember

still I recall a better day  
when she would weep and she would pray  
she is the one I will remember

was she in love, I'll never know  
I call to her where wishes grow  
in dreams that bring a sweet surrender

Barry Middleton

# Wasted Despair

## I

It seems right and logical to begin in spring.  
April seems kind this year, the trees waking,  
the light, perhaps the new grass and leaf,  
with little doubt, claim the earth lives on.

Foolish despair, proclaimed again by jaded  
poets, is of no regard to the young lovers  
whose plans assume another year comes  
as the golden spring sun blesses their dream.

Thinking doth make nothing so in the finale.  
So the opinions of fools or wizened scholars  
share an absurd stage, staging for infinity  
where brains are dust and poetry recants.

## II

How can I now in age recall the rivers;  
rivers that washed the memory of youth?  
The river in spring was baptismal,  
the preacher, progeny of slaves and mud.

The river washed away the sins of man;  
the river's stain hid the sins of hatred.  
Yet the truth of the river was between  
hate and love and only prayed for life.

The river took in life, moved on heedless,  
calmed and cooled the heat of summer,  
the heat and greedy lust of spiteful men,  
a blessing, a curse, a pride and a shame.

## III

It is said we must make life our own,  
spring, love affairs, waters or deserts.  
Choices come and go, laughter, tears,

somewhere in the middle comes a sigh.

Humanity is large, multitudes cry out  
for love and hate, serenity or conflict.  
Spring comes again and summer rains,  
promises of daffodil, hyacinth and lily.

Tended gardens or untouched wild,  
seasons rise and fall, night, day,  
and dreams and memories linger,  
melody and chaos curves into space.

#### IV

Beneath the shadowed care of time  
a universal clock records millennia.  
Mystery seems all that is or ever was  
except what desperate fools proclaim.

High on a hill an imagined poet issues  
a protest to a god he does not claim.  
The prayer, to let the world live on,  
to let the spring come in once again.

Nature's first green gold flashes  
in sunset fires. There is an ending,  
a sounding ending that begins again  
as thunder comforts the earth dream.

Barry Middleton

# We

yes you are just like me  
wherever we may stray  
we know that we are free

though we can never see  
the error of our way  
yes you are just like me

on this we may agree  
for what life does convey  
we know that we are free

we found the hidden key  
to celebrate the day  
yes you are just like me

the gods did hear our plea  
on golden hills or clay  
we know that we are free

until that last decree  
our fears are held at bay  
yes you are just like me  
we know that we are free

Barry Middleton

# We Can Kill The Tyrant

We can kill the tyrant,  
but we cannot kill tyranny.  
For tyranny dwells within  
the selfish human heart.  
Yet we fight another war  
to change the inevitable.  
Death will not bring peace,  
will not bring virtue.  
The poets have no answer.  
The gods remain silent.  
A child is born;  
its primal cry is indignation.  
An old man dies,  
and curses men and gods.  
A final blasphemy  
has settled in our souls.

Barry Middleton

# We Can't Save Poetry

we can't save poetry  
time consumes it all

time consumes the earth  
consumes the timekeeper

books and poets crumble  
until there is no spring

and there is no one left  
to gather daffodils

and there is no one left  
to write or read the books

so while the earth is ours  
we must write poetry

so the last man may know  
a vision of the world

and what has come before  
and how we felt in spring

and what a love was like  
before there were no lovers

Barry Middleton



# Weakness

beautiful  
and girlish women  
always were  
a weakness for me  
liquid  
and tender  
dark eyes  
seeking out a life  
needing help  
with no betrayal  
not so different  
from me

Barry Middleton

# Weariness

It falls on us as seasons often do  
when we are unprepared,  
a weariness that hope cannot subdue;  
and not one soul is spared.

Despite tenacity of my complaint,  
it is much more than this.  
Though weary of mortality's constraint,  
I crave a parting kiss.

I covet peaceful Sunday morning light,  
and all the hours of love,  
the treasure in the passion of the night,  
as stars fall from above.

With lusty seasons of my youth forgone,  
so weary of despair  
am I, I welcome now the curtain drawn,  
on losses that I bear.

In age our triumphs fall and drift like leaves,  
but never to return;  
and smoke arises on an autumn breeze,  
where seasons never learn.

Barry Middleton

# Weathered Stone

His epitaph is now  
a broken gravestone,  
a hidden fault line  
running through a name  
that's nearly worn away,  
obscured by wildflowers.

The pity is, the cruelty,  
not only life must end,  
but even the grave,  
the earth itself  
is impermanent.

Fools like me  
compose our verse  
to buy a bit more time.

When it comes to graves,  
I hope that they select  
a sounder block,  
or better yet,  
cast my dates in bronze.

Futility is that nothing  
endures, not stone,  
not bronze, not even poetry,  
and not the earth or sun.

New worlds will come to be,  
from destruction, creation,  
souls rising from the stardust.

Barry Middleton

# Wet Afternoon

it's not exactly raining  
the sky is just complaining

that's what we get in June  
the east wind blows a tune

that I know all too well  
the sea in the conch shell

claims the storm is coming  
the faint distant drumming

the Florida tropical storm  
struggles to transform

the hush of intermission  
like a divine musician

it's just another season  
I do not know the reason

but seasons here are few  
like ones that I once knew

the hot the cool the wet  
the storms I won't forget

Barry Middleton

# What Beauty

beauty in the orchid bloom  
the scent of lavender perfume

colors of a rose's blush  
captive stars in midnight hush

or when we look upon the sea  
in all its restless majesty

we know the soul of beauty there  
can lift us from a cold despair

mountain peaks where eagles soar  
and every luscious tropic shore

the darkness and the inner light  
are each a part of human sight

so much of beauty everywhere  
an everlasting love affair

surrounds each life if we can see  
where beauty waits to set us free

Barry Middleton

# What Might Have Been

the poison is irresistible  
everyone must taste it  
regret is too insatiable  
to enforce abstinence

cursing the compulsion  
condemning weakness  
we grieve imagination  
what might have been

we rage at lost dreams  
foolish empty hungry  
the finer sentiments  
can never compensate

we caress the bitterness  
seizing a lethal chalice  
hemlock dark distilled  
black and deadly malice

Barry Middleton

# What Ought To Be

When thought turns  
to what ought to be,  
I do not think of war,  
I do not think of peace,  
or of love, or tedium.

When thought finally  
gets down to things  
that really matter,  
I think of the day  
in quiet meditation.

The morning sun  
casts a golden light;  
there is a blue sky.  
A light winter breeze  
postpones the night.

Barry Middleton

# What Seems To Be

How do we really know the world?  
The sun and seasons come and go,  
and love and hate may ebb and flow.  
But gazing from his window ledge,  
a man just sees what seems to be.

So if the crown of midnight comes  
bestowing wisdom on the king,  
or in the dawn the growing light  
illuminates what's wrong or right,  
the man and king at last are one.

The seasons pass and leave behind  
a flower placed beside a grave,  
and on the stone this austere verse.  
Here ends his wisdom and his quest,  
where all he owned is laid to rest.

Barry Middleton



# What Will Suffice

so without a heaven  
we look around and back  
we must look back  
and forward in tomorrow

not to a voice of yesterday  
but to the images  
the primal  
those can never be ignored

so without a guide  
we find the dew of spring  
slithering juicy things  
the nest of all of life

this we must protect  
this we must project  
not a faded tragic scrim  
but the anxious quavering

in swampy insouciance  
we must contemplate  
reviving the essences  
an Eden of insurrection

Barry Middleton

# When Death Is Past Its Prime

if there is grief when someone dies too young  
then we should celebrate a death  
when death is past its prime

old age takes everything that is of worth  
and in the end we do not live  
although we yet may breathe

with age and illness men will long for death  
they pray to greet it like a friend  
but prayers remain unheard

so spread my ashes in a worthy spot  
and pour the wine and serve the meal  
and whisper what you feel

and if you would then read my poetry  
and sing a song or two  
all else is lost to time

Barry Middleton

# When Hope Was Green

with hope the spring anticipates  
the world was a road to everywhere

I basked in the glow of a sunny day  
composing songs to change the world

I stayed until the darkness fell  
the western sky in streaks of gray

the muted shadows lost their hue  
and melody became a dirge

and still the road leads on to roads  
as seasons pass like setting suns

and poets pen their winsome lines  
within the rhythms of their breath

Barry Middleton

# When I Return

when I return to the hills of home  
the voice in the wood falls silent  
the music of midnight is no more  
even the wind ceases its whisper

in a cold sunset  
I do not know the seasons  
time is colorless

the green of the woodland valley  
and the shade of the dimmest brake  
have vanished in a dream of waters  
dark and wide they reflect stillness

all passion has flown  
flight without the sound of wings  
the bird is hidden

for now I am a part of the swamp  
like the moss beneath the oak  
I do not hear the song of the creek  
I do not feel the rush of the seasons

time is still water  
memory without despair  
I descend at last

when I return to the hills of home  
I gaze at dusk from the hilltop view  
then I will walk just one last time  
into the deep embrace of the valley

Barry Middleton

# When Love Takes

when love steals the sun  
and every beam of light  
has vanished in the cloud  
the moon avows the night

the melancholic fog  
then lifts its dreary head  
and those who sleep by day  
arise as from the dead

stars are frail pretenders  
in blue and purple gloom  
their light beyond the reach  
of every shuttered room

when love has taken all  
and leaves us in the dark  
the day is emptiness  
the night without a spark

and in this dismal world  
many lose their way  
while darkness lingers on  
though it be night or day

Barry Middleton

# When Rivers Sing

I wonder if you think of me  
for like a ghost I hear your voice  
a song that will not let me be  
still whispers like a fatal choice

I cannot touch you from afar  
for time conceals your destiny  
but I can see you in a star  
when night reveals its mystery

the clock moves on and rivers flow  
and I am worn and weak with age  
but still a dreamer claims to know  
what lies upon the final page

for then I go where dreamers go  
and there again I take your hand  
as rivers sing with stars aglow  
and memory makes its final stand

Barry Middleton

# When Sun Breaks Through

the sun has broken through the gray  
to grant the earth another day

if only sunny days could last  
along with future and the past

we surely know the past will fade  
into a final masquerade

and future days will come and go  
and pass away in afterglow

for nothing lasts nor will the cloud  
the sun has finally disavowed

nor will this fickle sunny day  
that comes to keep my tears at bay

Barry Middleton

# Where Can I Run To

where can I run to  
where can I hide  
where do I go  
not a soul on my side  
there is no religion  
that will bring me grace  
the gods can't be seen  
who will show me the place  
I have been all alone  
since the day of my birth  
I've looked in the corners  
and crannies of Earth  
we come to this world  
alone and afraid  
we all do our best  
in the brief  
masquerade  
in the end  
there is no one  
to open the gate  
life is just living  
death patiently waits  
a man dies  
a child born  
the sun rises and sets  
a child is new hope  
old men are regrets

Barry Middleton



# Where Life Astounds

I know you see the fear I feel,  
that if I could, I would conceal.  
I do not hide it out of shame,  
it's just that I cannot explain,  
for it is not the fear of death  
that dogs my path, my every breath.  
It's not the fear of the unknown.  
It's more like fear of certainty.  
Some say, the truth is reassuring.  
I say, their truth is fantasy.  
I wish that I might cling to it,  
but I remember destiny.  
Yes, I was in that place before,  
where lions roam and planets soar,  
where eagles seek the noonday meal,  
and I was quite invisible.  
A hundred billion years passed by,  
when I was dust and unaware.  
Now death conspires to take from me  
my sight, the light, the sound and heat,  
no more of touch, or love, or hate.  
Above the waters of my sleep,  
I cannot see you gazing down,  
from where all living things astound,  
but I'm at peace, my soul unbound,  
I'm here to bless this hallowed ground.

Barry Middleton

# Where The Stars Shine

god is not the old man in the painting  
I'm not sure what god is  
but surely not that

some believe god walked in the garden  
stole a rib and banned the apple  
creating judgment and guilt

they believe god once took an interest  
punishing evil on an evil earth  
and keeping accounts

now rampant iniquity goes unpunished  
and god no longer cares to act  
the ledger is closed

but perhaps god is the final singularity  
the black hole at the center of time  
beyond the last horizon

so god may dwell beyond the star shine  
in silent and indifferent rest  
on the seventh day

Barry Middleton

# Which Is Greater

which is greater  
power or glory, wealth or truth  
wisdom or love

think before you answer  
for power leads to jealous war  
power would add to power

and glory is fleeting  
only the masters feign immortality  
poetry is lost, monuments crumble

wealth is ridiculous  
it buys the world but only for a time  
useless treasure for a king's grave

love is two sided  
the human heart is selfish  
love is a path to deceit and betrayal

truth is an argument  
a demand that assaults belief  
truth shifts like an endless wind

wisdom is untouchable  
no man can define it  
it is instinct and intuition in disguise

Barry Middleton

# White Wolf

a ghost is moving through the trees  
it only stalks at night  
before the dawn it finds its prey  
and none escapes its might

we build our walls to block its path  
but it will find us out  
and make its entry to our door  
of that there is no doubt

the wolf must roam the wooded glen  
beneath a frightful moon  
there is no use to guard your soul  
no one shall be immune

Barry Middleton

# Who Can Love

'So, we'll go no more a roving  
So late into the night,  
Though the heart be still as loving,  
And the moon be still as bright.'  
From: So We'll Go No More a Roving  
By Lord Byron (George Gordon)

who can love  
are there rules somehow  
that love is beyond fate

yes there are one or two  
more basic wants  
a roof and a warm plate

then a lock on the door  
a picture on the wall  
reminding me of home

hermits never stand alone  
they love the past  
dreams and phantoms

love is the rarest ransom  
deeper than gold or diamond  
the center of the soul

so fragile, vulnerable  
a hunger, our great desire  
and yet it can grow cold

hold my hand, my left  
and I will use my right  
to vanquish every enemy

that's what love is  
I stand in front of thee  
protect thee from all enmity

yes I will give my life  
gladly trade my death  
for your salvation

so what should you think  
and how can I explain  
this strange equation

love another more than life  
sacrifice all  
a tender and brave conceit

yet look about you  
the hunger of deceit  
the gift of love devoured

not even blood ensures  
that bond  
that love doth flower

we make a choice, unshaken  
and in the end  
love is received like breath

the rarest prize is ours  
the hand is taken  
we have no fear  
of living or of death

Barry Middleton

# Who Was It

Who was it that passed me on the street today?  
I was preoccupied and did not notice.  
They were a blur and a shadow disappearing.  
I turned but could not recognize a familiar walk.  
And yesterday I heard a song I had forgotten.  
It drifted like a leaf on the winds of time.  
For just a moment I was young again, and you.  
It seemed like spring as we walked hand in hand.  
I see the distant steeple of a country church.  
I think I know that place but can't be sure.  
My eyes are dim, my hearing too has failed.  
Who was it that passed me on the street today?

Barry Middleton

# Wide Smile

something in that girl  
with the big wide smile  
takes my breath away

I'm not sure what it is  
I just call it chemistry  
but it's really a mystery

I don't exactly know her  
she couldn't be a witch  
not with that great grin

something about her  
just gets to me bad  
that everywhere smile

Barry Middleton



# Wildflowers

we'll meet where summer lilies grow  
beneath the trees that line the path  
among the shadows in the park

we'll walk together by the lake  
in autumn with the falling leaves  
when chilling winds announce the frost

and with the waters skimmed in ice  
we'll stop beside our favorite spot  
and watch the meadow fill with snow

we'll gather roses in the spring  
and place them in a crystal vase  
within our simple cottage home

we'll meet beyond the setting sun  
where memories burn like faded verse  
like seasons tossed into the fire

and as each season comes and goes  
we'll be together in the dawn  
when wildflowers find the morning sky

Barry Middleton

# Will

free will is a great pretense  
a grand deceit  
as if our petty choices  
turning left instead of right  
choosing chicken instead of beef  
marrying for money or for love  
add up to some golden award  
some trophy of wisdom  
and grace

in fact we fall through life  
like a boulder from a mountain  
barging and banging our way  
veering this way and that  
by gravity and chance  
our every plan may find defeat  
and every dream retreats  
like desert sand  
blown by the wind

Barry Middleton

# Willow Bend

A storm is building rain,  
outside my windowpane.  
But it's a blessing  
that is sent from above.

The wind fills with hope,  
and strength for me to cope,  
and brings back memories  
of old Willow Bend.

Come along, walk with me,  
beneath the willow tree,  
we'll return to that day  
along the river.

I am safe from all harm,  
in the heart of any storm,  
when I can hold you  
in my memory.

So come along, walk with me,  
beneath the willow tree,  
among the memories  
of old Willow Bend.

There is still a lesson there,  
when we did not have a care,  
making memories  
along old Willow Bend.

Barry Middleton

# Wind

Like being, like breath,  
the breeze brings life,  
tempering Florida's heat.

Across the oceans,  
the Gulf of Mexico,  
skimming blue water,  
land and reef,  
precious mist,  
ten thousand miles  
to reach me here.

A baby cries in China,  
laughter on a distant isle,  
flying fish swimming in air,  
the sweat of a peasant,  
the people on the beach,  
all touched, all touching,  
one world, one life,  
one breeze breathing  
life to silent thoughts.

Barry Middleton

## Wind 2

when the wind rises  
it is the breath of earth

it comes as a reminder  
of the legacy of birth

the land is still alive  
the wind is just a clue

to tell me everything  
that I already knew

the river is the pulse  
the beating heart the sea

the morning and the evening sun  
are reaching out for me

the wind observes the scene  
and passes on its way

like men and moments do  
and every yesterday

Barry Middleton

# Window Moon

the window moon is bright  
the muted world is still  
and there is peace within  
but night has brought a chill

beyond the glow the stars  
are trembling in their place  
to cause a doleful dream  
that I cannot erase

for past the stars is night  
the void in velvet black  
the dream will take me there  
beyond the lighted track

and there I choose to stay  
where peace and grace abide  
in dark infinity  
where wisdom cannot hide

Barry Middleton

# Winter

this time of year  
old trees sense fear

their leaves are fallen  
their power stripped

they cannot know  
if spring will come

all existence  
wants to go on living

the planets cry out  
against the cold

now the old men  
think about death

as the old trees  
fall without notice

and in the end  
embrace the earth

Barry Middleton

# Winter Bird

the winter bird has come  
she knows the time of year

she started on her way  
without a single fear

she set her course to south  
at least a month ago

before the snow could fall  
where arctic winds will blow

the frigid air attends  
her steady corridor

as if it were a race  
to get to Florida

each year the bird will win  
for there she found her name

the warbler of the palm  
come all the way from Maine

Barry Middleton



# Winter Monsters

the sun was hidden in the gray  
but now the light is here  
the monsters of the winter night  
must fade and disappear

but winter has not gone for good  
the seasons slowly turn  
and so the gray will come again  
ignoring my concern

the night did bring a winter rain  
it was a mild attack  
the earth is grateful for its gift  
the monster left no track

still I have had enough of gray  
enough of winter rain  
enough of monsters in the night  
enough of doubt and pain

Barry Middleton

# Winter Moods

high on a hill the dead men sleep  
and spring is far from view  
the trees are dry and nearly bare  
the chill contains a clue

winter's breath is coming soon  
as seasons have their way  
the colors all are fading now  
the sky is bleached and gray

a blanket soon will cover death  
with snow of purest white  
the moon reflected on the graves  
as comfort to the night

and those of us below that hill  
will quietly light a fire  
and bolt and latch the widow tight  
to trap our last desire

Barry Middleton

# Winter Stand

Have I known winter but a day?  
I shudder if I have a way  
to go before the warm lets down  
her sunbeams on a frozen town.

Like men on winter walks who ask,  
"How long before the hill is past?"  
I long for easy slope to home  
but climb the seeker's way, alone.

I should have known to listen to reason  
and bundle for a harder season.  
I should have gone out with a friend  
that we could joke about the wind.

Oh when does man suffer defeat  
when well prepared and on his feet?  
It makes me want to lay a plan  
and take a grander winter stand.

Barry Middleton

# Winter View

the cold wind begins to stir  
and so we light the fire

the warbler dances on the lawn  
the blackbird calls alarm

some may pray to hold it back  
but still the winter comes

maple leaves hold tight to life  
consoling a grieving tree

a man sits by his window ledge  
to frame his winter view

Barry Middleton

# Winter's Ghost

a breeze that stirs the pine  
will bring its seed to earth

the passion of the spring  
shall celebrate rebirth

the raintree's russet leaves  
are colors of the dawn

the mockingbird will sing  
to claim the world lives on

more orchids set their buds  
as winter counts its loss

and men may then reflect  
but all must bear a cross

the ghost of winter fades  
yet cannot bring release

what is the worth of spring  
without the hope of peace

Barry Middleton

# Wired Shadow Sonnet

insinuations beyond my reasoning  
to love so the tall shadows of evening  
to long for sunsets dark, troubled thunder  
fiery red night torn asunder

the winter here in Florida's parade  
is dry, lifeless, a crowded masquerade  
pale tourists lost in blind submission  
faces stupid with hungry inquisition

what they seek lingers beyond their view  
they search for life but only death is due  
shadows stretch into the dark east  
frightening night is like a purring beast

it curls about my safe and quiet retreat  
as storm and nighttime shadows I entreat

Barry Middleton

# Wisdom

to seek within the self  
to rectify iniquity  
is the path to wisdom

the wise man listens  
to his complaints  
and learns from pain

he is undisturbed  
by criticism  
or by foolish prattle

the wise man  
does not judge the fool  
but pities him

he treats wisdom  
as a garden  
which must be tended

he gives up darkness  
to search for light  
and he is unafraid

Barry Middleton

# Wishing

I wish I could play the piano,  
I wish that I lived in Montana,  
I wish I could dance,  
and owned a big ranch,  
I wish life would give me  
just one more small chance.

I wish that I had better luck,  
I wish I had a big pickup truck,  
I wish I had a gal  
who called herself Sal  
and a pert pinto horse  
in my OK corral.

To wish is alright if you're young,  
the time when dreams are begun,  
but better take action  
to make it all happen,  
a wish and hard work,  
even big plans get done.

But when wishes grow old  
there's no final bet,  
so don't let your wishes  
become your regret.

Barry Middleton



# Wishing In Colors

I had a wish to find the reddest rose  
the dream of love  
a blossom without thorns

I wished for green spring and rain  
a field of yellow daffodils  
like friends laughing in the breeze

I had a wish in lavender and royal  
to stand upon a hill  
and claim a valley kingdom

the blue sky of summer's worship  
was an answered prayer  
the touch of cooling water

I wished for the orange tree bloom  
a white perfume of desire  
and the ghost of yesterday

I yearned for brown and burgundy  
the crumpled maple leaf  
the oak in sorrel mourning

Barry Middleton

# Wishing Miracles

now I wish that I could catch  
a miracle

some things deny a solid proof  
empirical

I once prayed for a blessing  
that disappeared

many times I needed courage  
yet I feared

everyone has felt this way  
many times before

like times I found no refuge  
and no open door

can miracles still appear  
if I do not believe

I could not envision god  
rejecting a reprieve

and so I ask a favor now  
asking is the key

I hope he knows my need is great  
and watches over me

Barry Middleton

# Withdrawal

my brain is in a shamble  
I guess it's got to ramble

and where it goes  
I'm pleased to some degree

my heart tells me I miss  
if I pass up a kiss

I get advice  
and it's good advice from me

I just think twice and know  
the way I need to go

if it goes wrong  
I've none to blame you see

so if I'm in shamble  
I guess I'll take the gamble

it all comes from  
so deep inside of me

the music plays inside  
with nothing left to hide

it all comes from  
so deep inside of me

Barry Middleton

# Without A Star

another bleak and lonely night  
without a guiding star in sight

though many walked this road before  
the darkness grips me to the core

but I must walk this path alone  
so many miles beyond my home

I stumble and I almost fall  
far down the way I hear a call

the owl is sister to the night  
she speaks to say that I must fight

a star that's rises in the east  
tells me that night is soon released

now I can see the journey's end  
that night and owls and stars portend

Barry Middleton

# Without A Tear

moving past resentment  
and bitterness is not easy  
but in the end of things  
those things slip away  
after all these years  
I must wonder  
why was all that  
so seemingly important  
death is a sobering event  
it seizes total focus  
I shift from busy living  
to busy dying willingly  
given the gift  
I can see it coming  
given the curse  
there is nothing I can do  
acceptance is a bully  
it gives no choice  
it twists my arm  
I am a child again  
and I submit to it  
this time without a tear

Barry Middleton

# Wolf

had I the choice  
death would be sudden  
to free me from lingering

whether of illness or of age  
death that stalks  
steals hope like a predator

little by little the wolf  
creeps toward my destiny  
I wait for it to leap

Barry Middleton

# Wondering How And Why

before the universe existed  
possibility waited  
and quietly held its breath

before dew graced the garden  
visions of mist  
hid in unobserved emptiness

the steam of passion arose  
only to waken light  
so truth could be revealed

then fire and water united  
to paint the wind  
and fan desire into dreams

and within the dawn of time  
a breeze stirred  
and stars and moons exhaled

so it was till mountains rose  
and human souls  
and wondering how and why

Barry Middleton

# Woodland Heraldry

the forest words whispered  
telling me to stop and listen

I spoke to the forest gods  
I heard the song of the nymphs

each tree held a sacred hymn  
the hollow beech was mystery

the ancient oak was wisdom  
the maple was burgundy grief

the lady of the lake beckoned  
and I surrendered my dreams

I gave up my secret wizardry  
until I was trapped in poetry

the forest words whispered  
they uttered a bleak demand

it was the quest for harmony  
a final song of the woodland

Barry Middleton



# Woodland Muse

I heard a cryptic melody,  
and knew it held a clue.  
To some it was a muted hush,  
but others surely knew.  
Yes I could hear the poetry  
that hid within the beech.  
The subtle music of the woods,  
was well within my reach.  
A breeze careened among the trees  
conducting symphonies,  
to empty coves of brush and brier,  
with only me to please.  
And I could hear the water play  
within our babbling creek,  
and listen to its gentle voice  
as if the stream could speak.  
And as the trees swayed to and fro,  
there was a pleasing sound  
like rocking chairs to lull to sleep,  
a spotted fawn I found.  
And last, but certainly not the least,  
where bees had made a hive,  
within a shattered dying giant,  
the sweetness would survive.  
And by that ragged oak I rest,  
in silent reverie.  
And I still hear that woodland song,  
beneath the honey tree.

Barry Middleton

# Woodland Night

in woods upon a moonless night  
I lose myself

and just before the dark sets in  
there is a hush

then memory holds me listening  
to nothingness

the day has put itself to sleep  
beneath a dream

the darkness traps me once again  
walled in and mute

now I must slow my pace and feel  
my way to home

I reach to use my hands for eyes  
and stumble on

but when I find the garden gate  
I see a light

and wonder was this just a dream  
beyond my sight

I see the clouds go streaming by  
I see the stars

I see the earth beneath my feet  
a darkened sky

this is a place where I once dreamed  
before the dawn

it is the place I go again  
with dreams forgone

Barry Middleton

## Woodland White

White in a woods devoid of snow,  
may be a mystery I cannot know.  
It may have been the tail of a deer,  
a flash that quickly would disappear.  
I knew no bloom had fled its bower;  
it was no pale and ghostly flower.  
Like a bird it vanished from my sight;  
no tree I knew had the gift of flight.  
Perhaps it could be the poet's ghost,  
or a fluttering rag on an old fence post.  
For woodland white is strange and rare,  
when autumn days turn cold and bare.  
But perhaps it's best to leave some doubt,  
than to know what a mystery is all about.

Barry Middleton

# Work Your Dream

A dream descends into my zone,  
an angel tips its golden wing,  
and in the wind an undertone,  
proclaims I can have everything.

Some say that is preposterous,  
but if you'll go to any length,  
then just like me, the rest of us,  
and even you, can find the strength.

Perhaps you may be lacking gold,  
you only have to work for it,  
a dream should not be cheaply sold,  
the treasure map is all you get.

The path is there in front of you,  
if you are stuck in some dire place,  
just don your boots and bid adieu,  
and find your share of precious grace.

The dream disclaimed an easy lot,  
it only said it's there for you,  
we must embrace what we forgot,  
for life and love are treasure too.

I know that all of this is so,  
the angel promised all these things,  
and I was paid what I was due,  
and all I did was spread my wings.

Barry Middleton

# Worth The Wait

I look out on the morning  
it is January in Florida  
I know it took a billion years  
to make this day

a gemstone sky in blue  
feathered by the egret's plume  
crowns the chilly sunlight  
on the emerald landscape

an el Niño breeze  
stirs the Spanish beards  
of the live oak trees  
and whispers with the pines

and now by chance  
the children play  
in innocence from time  
so the day is like a prayer

I know it took a billion years  
to make this day  
and I can see them all  
and all were worth the wait

Barry Middleton

# Write What You Know

they say write what you know  
but growing older I no longer know

and things I knew I have forgotten  
like rusty unused tools my father left

the inconsequential things I knew  
are memories strewn about my floor

age is an awful prison that weds us  
to a spot in space to dream of freedom

in daydreams youth can come again  
and humble travels can be undertaken

where would I go you ask  
and easily I'd write the things I lost

I'd write the things I wrote  
childhood days and woodland haunts

enchanted forests with nearly visible  
dinosaurs and mysteries concealed

I'd write as I wrote of the waters  
black, green with moss and sustenance

I'd tell of trustworthy comrades  
and commitments sealed with blood

I'd write of an expanding Universe  
and finding love in an upturned chin

I'd write of all the pain that's know  
for all the souls who wake alone

there is a dearth of inspiration  
growing into unknown years

I cannot write the known  
where I have never been before

but I still feel it deep within  
that once I inhabited the void

so I am left to chronicle a feeling  
nurtured where the stars are reeling

there comes an end to pain  
an end to loneliness

I have not been so I can't say much  
I go there soon to never write again

Barry Middleton



# Writer's Block

what does one do with writer's block  
we must write what we know  
but I have only morbid thoughts  
I cannot tend to those desiring flowers

this is the dry and lifeless summer  
living things seek shade and wait for rain  
the poet feels the breath of death lurking  
and nothing seems to lift his fatal mood

his notebook then must take a darker tone  
the ominous foreboding of the final flourish  
the fleuron below his signature  
is his terminal gesture to the spring

poetry is only written for tomorrow  
although for you death is a shimmering mirage  
when it finally calls to you  
then you may understand

Barry Middleton

# Yazidi Refugee

when their grief has no more tears  
an empty stare contains their fears

yesterday their home was burned  
every prayer and pleading spurned

the cruel beasts of war destroy  
and murder innocence and joy

faith and hope and love deserted  
where every value is perverted

as death and rape and pillage rise  
in fire and smoke their village dies

they struggle toward a foreign land  
across the sterile barren sand

they pause beneath an olive tree  
to thank their God that they are free

Barry Middleton

# Yazoo Witch

A grave in the old graveyard,  
it was said belonged to a witch.  
A sinister chain was the safeguard,  
from the curse if it ever unhitched.  
The chain was sturdy and strong,  
to hold any witch at bay,  
with links at least one foot long,  
and an edict we all must obey.  
'If you dare to break my chain,  
despair will come to the town,  
when death fills the night with pain  
and destruction will rain down.'  
The witch's curse met a test  
back in 1878  
when the quiet of the witch's rest  
was disturbed by a ponderous weight.  
The man who fell the timber  
was soon to become a believer,  
for that was a year to remember,  
the year of the yellow fever.  
Half of the town's people died,  
the chain was quickly made whole,  
the legend would soon be a guide,  
the story we children were told.  
It was a rite of passage  
to spend a night at the grave,  
a feat that few boys could manage  
to prove that they were brave.  
But one impish boy they claim,  
stayed the night in that place  
and cut clean through the chain  
so the witch's grave was defaced.  
They knew it had happened before,  
another year of the witch's ire,  
that was nineteen hundred and four  
when the town was destroyed by fire.  
Now boys never seem to learn,  
and in 1927,  
the lessons behind were spurned,

more souls ascended to heaven.  
Again the chain was broken,  
the witch's words were true,  
as in my youth they were spoken  
for the curse again was made new.  
That was the year of the flood  
that covered the southern land;  
the witch took her payment in blood,  
so pay heed to her command.  
Throughout my youth the chain  
has held and holds tight now;  
so we all can learn from our pain  
if the Yazoo witch will allow.

Barry Middleton

# Yesterday's Rose

I pledged roses  
but you vanished

roses declare love  
in fragile petals

I have learned  
so I swear an oath

if you return  
so will the rose

each day I lay  
roses at your door

I have no treasure  
no gold or silver

I recall the time  
I failed to bring

a promised rose  
and lost you

it seems long ago  
but I know

the missing rose  
was only yesterday

Barry Middleton

# You Are There

it's always good to know  
you are there if life goes wrong

we never do outgrow  
the ones who make us strong

though you are far away  
you are also very near

the world can all turn gray  
but I have no fear

you make my world feel warm  
and that will always be

you shelter me from harm  
sustaining peace for me

and that's what old friends do  
you ease my every pain

I pray and you pray too  
we turn the hurricane

it's always good to know  
you're there when life goes wrong

we never do outgrow  
the ones who make us strong

Barry Middleton

# You Don't Sleep Alone

you don't sleep alone  
on dexamethasone  
you lie wide awake all night

you may not hear a sound  
as something creeps around  
but never creeps into sight

still you know it is there  
you feel its icy stare  
you don't care anymore

you may not be in clover  
but soon it will be over  
then once more you can snore

no you don't sleep alone  
on dexamethasone  
you lie wide awake all night

you may not hear a sound  
as something creeps around  
but never creeps into sight

although it might  
yes it might  
yes it might

Barry Middleton

# You Passed My Way

you passed my way  
you touched my heart  
and though we are  
so far apart

yet I'll always  
remember you  
and I will not  
bid you adieu

beyond the stars  
I'll not forget  
your tender kiss  
our brief vignette

you left a mark  
upon my mind  
more treasured than  
a vintage wine

you left a mark  
upon my soul  
more valuable  
than hoards of gold

Barry Middleton



# You Were Spring

if winter was a day  
yet I would long for spring  
for the tropics are untrue

a green deceit endures  
and yet a chill prevails  
and I am locked within

so I must dream a while  
of days that are foregone  
when love was blossoming

and then I think of you  
and wonder how you are  
and if your night is cold

and if you still recall  
a spring as warm as touch  
when you were in my arms

Barry Middleton

# Youth On The Wing

All little girls just have to know  
the whys of life and how things go,  
like why it is that birds must sing  
and why the flowers bloom in spring.

Their mothers grow accustomed  
to the questions that they ask,  
but when they come and question you,  
you know it's quite some task.

It's like the child I see today,  
a fragile bird in every way,  
who lately ruffles my surprise  
and looks me straight into the eyes.

Is there a place for everything?  
she murmurs like a dove.  
Tell me father, if you know,  
where do they keep the love?

Barry Middleton