

Poetry Series

# **Sonny Rainshine**

## **- poems -**

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# Sonny Rainshine()

Education: MA English; BA French.

Profession: Software trainer for health care organization.

Hobbies: Avid reader and movie buff. Light hiking and long walks in the woods.

Favorite Poets:

Wallace Stevens

Robert Frost

Robinson Jeffers

Antonio Machado

Rilke

Most of the 19th century Romantics, William Carlos Williams, and a host of others.

Poetic philosophy: I look for both interesting form and content in the poetry I read and that I compose. They do go hand-in-hand. If one has something to say, it's necessary to say it well.

# 1 Is Easy

One sex, one race,  
one religion, one face.  
One thought, one nation,  
one dream, one altercation—  
One is easy.

But gender,  
belief, and ethnicity,  
patriots and pariahs, authenticity,  
need not tender  
strife and bewilderment.

Two sexes and all between,  
a spectrum of creeds,  
not one, maybe fourteen,  
and dreams innumerable,  
left balancing right,  
one is not enough  
for any human heart.

One is easy  
but one is not enough.

Sonny Rainshine

# 100 Fireflies

He stayed up half the night  
collecting one hundred fireflies in a mason jar.  
Just before midnight he unscrewed the lid  
and released them inside the screen porch.  
Next door a man leaps high and says to his wife:  
Oh! Magic!

Sonny Rainshine

# 21st Century Rant

Growth! Progress! Expansion!  
Then downsize it all when it gets too bloated,  
and if that doesn't work,  
lower the borrowing rates  
so that the downsized people  
can get become Better Consumers  
and get deeper in debt.

Encourage the poor  
to buy that home with the white picket fence,  
even though they can barely make ends meet,  
then who will be the one  
to tell them that the payments are too high  
and foreclosure is the only answer?  
Can we at least keep the white picket fence?  
they ask.

I suppose there was a time  
when people went shopping  
only when they needed to buy  
bread and things to live on;  
When did it become  
a citizen's duty  
to keep the economy afloat  
while filling our homes  
with worthless junk,  
all bought on credit?

The time has come  
to pause.....

Sonny Rainshine

## 3 Seconds Before The Shot

The brown doe for a moment  
mesmerizes the boys in camouflage,  
broadcasting a telepathic message:  
I stand before you here,  
majestic as Nature,  
graceful as a ballerina,  
my beauty is never-ending  
and will lodge in your heart,  
as the bullet will in mine  
long after this deed is done.

Sonny Rainshine

# A Bow To Film Noir

Still warm on the scarlet chaise: a silver pistol,  
small enough to fit into a purse;  
lethal enough to send a man to his reward.

Sprawled on the thick-piled royal blue carpet:  
a man savoring his reward,  
handsome, immaculately suited, dead.

The woman at the window:  
relaxed, confidant, smiling,  
flicks the ashes from a Lucky Strike  
and watches the flickering neon sign  
outside the sleazy motel.

Vacancy; VACANCY; vacancy;  
VACANCY; vacancy; VACANCY;  
That's a laugh,  
she thought,  
eyes gazing vacantly.

Sonny Rainshine

# A Homeopathy Of The Heart

You sprinkle fresh ginger on your rice,  
and spearmint enhances your tea.  
Your hair is scented with plumeria leaves,

but your heart lies unseasoned  
and your mind is bland.  
No rich condiments can be found  
in your conversation.

Come out of your  
misty world of aromatherapy  
and esoteric alchemy  
and reveal to me  
the ordinary magic  
hidden in there.

Sonny Rainshine



# A Leaf Refuses To Fall

The leaves don't let go  
that easily either. It takes a bluster,  
a filibuster of north wind,  
and the wasp-sting of the first  
chill of late September  
to tear them off the page  
of summer.

Persuasion doesn't do it.  
Sometimes in the middle of winter,  
(the DEAD of winter, as they say)  
you might see one shriveled  
oakleaf, dangling from a frozen  
filament of stem,  
defiant, victorious.

Nothing likes to end;  
the October wind invites  
the leaf to tango in the frosty air.  
A shy curtsey, a twirling turn,  
a pirouette, then the dance  
is over and only the bare  
fingers of the tree remain.

Sonny Rainshine

# A Thousand Times Bitten

Bobby became a misanthrope  
after losing hope in the goodness of man.  
He found he could not cope  
with the everyday stings  
of human malice  
and he became callused,  
despondent.

Time after time he offered his heart  
to his fellow beings in part  
because, like all of us, he needed love  
and hoped to rise above  
the cynicism of antisocial attitude.

But people like Bobby collapse  
like the sensitive plant when touched,  
and repeated unkindnesses  
caused him to lose the hope he clutched  
in what it means to be human.

Now he lives among us all,  
separated by an invisible wall  
that protects but also banishes him  
from experiencing the warmth  
and joy of the common ground  
of being human; this man  
has become an island, severed and free  
from you and me.

Sonny Rainshine

# A Wealth Of Piety

He prayed to Christ;  
he prayed to Krishna;  
he even wished upon a star.

He said a novena;  
he chanted esoteric mantras;  
he bought a rabbit's foot.

He journeyed to Mecca;  
he knelt at the Wailing Wall;  
he crossed his fingers and hoped to die.

He studied Kabbala;  
he pored over astrological tables;  
he paid the palm reader generously.

After years of supplications;  
litanies, liturgies, and libations;  
after sacrifices and renunciation

of his sins and shortcomings,  
he at last became a wealthy man  
at 98 years old and died  
with his fingers still crossed.

Sonny Rainshine

# A Wilderness Without You

Particles of our last conversation  
fuse with the droplets of mist,  
and the last word you said, goodbye,  
hovers below the lush hemlocks,  
then descends to the needled forest floor  
alighting like a toy parachute.

What remains is the primitive splendor  
a wilderness affords, of places shielded  
from "development" and man's fixation  
with houses and office space  
from materials once round, now cubed  
and planed. Sand and wood transmogrified.

The quieting balm of running water  
and the whisper of wind through the spruce trees  
was always enough to salve my bruised soul,  
the chafed cicatrix of every day living.  
But now, that curative essence is diminished,  
the empty space right next to me  
that once held your form and your laughter  
seems colder than before, less real.

It was always you and nature,  
nature and you, for so many years.  
I see a long, long season ahead  
in which I must become acquainted  
with nature and loneliness,  
loneliness and nature  
and a million other wildernesses.

Sonny Rainshine

## After The Rain

One Chinese lantern,  
forgotten when the lawn party  
was spoiled by a summer downpour,  
waves in the drizzly wind  
from a nylon string.  
Something sad in the air  
comingles with the fragrance  
of yellow jasmine, yes  
yellow jasmine.

Sonny Rainshine

# After The Sonnet Ends

After the sonnet ends it begins.  
The final word glistens suspended on a string  
like an industrious spider on strands slender as pins,  
like a trapeze artist's precarious swing.  
The minstrel invites you to take the gift  
of vases of words and decanters of wit  
and parse them in your mind and shift  
the meanings and the mores to fit  
the memories of music and rhyme  
in the repository of your mind  
and perhaps to recall some other time,  
and in the recollection find  
another starting point where the thought ends,  
still another meaning where the line bends.

Sonny Rainshine

## After Words

Marlene, a famous grammarian, spent her final years  
if-ing and because-ing and whether-ing,  
neither-ing and nor-ing: trying to connect  
the intricate clauses of her past.

In her younger years she had to-d  
and before-d, of-d and until-d,  
making each preposition a loaded proposition  
dangling at the corner of her lips.

She smeared her middle years  
with nouns, like Love and Beauty,  
and her yearning for immortality  
was reflected in her use of infinitives:  
to live, to engage, to aspire, to create.

Now, at 94, she feels that language  
has betrayed her; she wonders  
if she has identified the mechanics  
of speech, the expression of living,  
but failed to see the underlying  
current behind the words.

In conquering speech so precisely,  
in defining so eloquently the meaning  
of being alive, she has neglected to live it.

Sonny Rainshine

# Age Of Degeneration

As to the fate of the universe,  
some who claim to know maintain  
that it is expanding, not contracting,  
and is simple to explain.

Two final phases, then eternity,  
the Age of Degeneration,  
then the Age of Photons, will thus ignite  
a continuum of illumination.

In the penultimate phase,  
things will disintegrate;  
the fabric of matter will rip apart,  
molecules will disseverate.

In the last phase,  
In  
the  
last  
phase, all that will remain,  
are tiny flickers of light,  
off and on, like fireflies,  
electrifying the night.

If then all is to end in a twinkle,  
and you and I dissolve into a blink,  
then power up your neon sign  
and greet me with a wink.

Something magnificent it will be:  
twinkle, twinkle, near and far,  
tiny dots like fireflies  
captured in a boundless jar.

Sonny Rainshine



# American Persimmon Tree Against Snow

The foliage had fled at first-frost  
and what remained were the gray fingers  
that had once clinched the fruit  
the same way the fruit contains  
the seed and the seed remains  
pillowed in the viscous orange orbs.

First-snow sifts down into the crevices  
of the desolate branches, cradling  
the ripening harvest, dangling,  
a hundred shrunken pumpkins  
in a tree.

The cold, filtering snow,  
the leaves on the browning grass below,  
the northwest wind clacking  
the sapless twigs all seem to say:  
all living things to the earth return;  
let go, let go.

Sonny Rainshine

# An Exchange With Change

Precipitously balanced on the crux  
of change, I sometimes long for flatter land  
away from the tumult and the flux,  
a niche where I can stand.

But the spinning wheel of passing time  
insouciantly lengthens its strand,  
and the bells of chapel belfries chime  
and the hourglass spills its sand.

This azure and emerald globe spins too fast;  
There's barely time to get our living done.  
Sometimes I see the mythology of my past,  
and how many miles further I have to run.

The clouds, they don't stay,  
even the sun sputters and spins;  
We hurry our lives and worry our deaths,  
but eventually impermanence wins.

Sonny Rainshine

# An Oak's Progress

An acorn drops,  
piercing the leafy humus.  
Heavy rain in the night  
entrenches it  
in the soil.

Leaves conceal it  
from foraging squirrels,  
and wind-sifted sunlight  
stirs growth  
within and splinters  
its protective walls.

Probing, thirsty  
roots like drills  
burrow for water.

Frail, taut shoots  
thrust in the opposite direction  
succumbing to the upward pull  
toward light—  
in it for the long haul.

The trunk grows muscular,  
and calluses with bark;  
branches terminate in twigs.  
Spring buds foliate,  
flowers burgeon,  
and fructify.  
And then  
An acorn drops.

Sonny Rainshine

## Anagram 4 U

I've been known to strip a horse  
of hide and hair and all;  
I take what I want with no remorse  
though I am weak and very small.

Maybe you know me by my scientific name  
Hymenoptera Formicidae Myrmicinae I'm called.  
But if you run into me I could make you lame  
and you'll be quite appalled.

I am a:

(Unscramble) :  
der rife tan.

Sonny Rainshine

# Another Light In The Window

This time will you ascend like Icarus,  
like a kite with no tail, without a string,  
with no-one on the ground to anchor you?

Or, will you, like last time,  
creep near the ground, like English ivy,  
or like kudzu out of control; or like  
a freight train roll, destination unknown,  
all aboard.

This time take me with you.  
Don't walk out on life,  
because when you flee,  
you flee from me  
and am I not your friend?

I worry.  
Tomorrow night, or the one after,  
or the week after, or maybe two months,  
or five years later,  
my phone will ring  
and it will be you—.

We cannot, we must not,  
build our relationship  
around departures  
and promises.

Stay! Stand! Sit!  
Breathe.

I have more to say to you  
than goodbye.

Sonny Rainshine

# Apology For Poetry

Some say that people  
who like poetry  
live in a rarefied world  
populated with pretty words  
and impractical thoughts  
and naivete.

Yet, who among us  
have to be told that a great deal  
of life is drudgery and routine,  
that there are bills to be paid,  
that there are people who  
do not wish us well.

People who love poems  
know that a simple arrangement  
of words will not re-arrange the world;  
that ideals are sometimes  
never achieved  
and that simply putting  
suffering into words  
will not abolish it.

We poetry-lovers  
do not need to be reminded  
that the world is not always  
turtle-doves and red roses,  
but the sublime  
and the magnificent  
are also just as real  
as the mundane.

Sonny Rainshine

# Arguing With The Echo

I sat down on the rim  
of the canyon,  
and bawled then bellowed that that  
promise, that that  
compromise that  
I consented to at this very spot  
lay now at the bottom  
all broken up,  
deposited there by me.

By me, by me, by me,  
my echo mocked.

Yes, by you; by you, by you,  
my ears cocked  
to wait for the silence  
that hushed both the echo  
and its source.

It was then that that  
understanding, that that  
tender wisdom that  
resignation and acceptance bestow,  
enveloped me and the clean sensation  
of self-forgiveness and regeneration  
returned to me, resonating  
like an echo.

Sonny Rainshine

# Arrow Of Time

>t  
>>>ti  
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>>>>>time  
>>>>>>time  
>>>>>>>time  
>>>>>>time  
>>>>time  
>>>>tim  
>>>ti  
>t

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# Art Forgery

In what she referred to as Reverse Art,  
she decided to re-create  
Van Gogh's "Sunflowers"  
in an arrangement of real blooms  
on the kitchen table.  
Afterwards she would photograph  
and then paint what she saw.

She succeeded admirably  
in getting every stem  
in exactly the right angle,  
every blossom in the perfect pose,  
removing petals,  
bending stems,  
artificially wilting some of the buds  
with a heat gun.

She had a ceramics expert  
mold and paint  
a precise replica  
of the two-toned vase.

On completion,  
she stepped back  
and declared her "painting"  
authentic, but a failure.

What was absent  
was the startling sunlight of Provence  
and the flowers' response to it,  
which was the painter's response to it.  
These flowers droop and bow  
with the punishing weight  
but cannot wholly absorb  
the exquisite passion,  
the contorted brush-strokes  
of indescribable anguish.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Art Movies And Naked Love

That night, that night  
we watched Roshoman again  
on Sundance  
for the fourth time even,  
you told me you thought you loved me  
but you couldn't be sure.

Kurosawa, you said,  
was right. We can never be  
completely sure.

Not completely sure,  
I struggled,  
but sure enough.

The last time we watched Roshoman,  
I asked you to marry me  
and we did not consult  
Japanese directors,  
nor did we try to reconstruct  
the scene of the crime.

Yes.

Sonny Rainshine

# Auntie Depressant

[Whenever she saw me feeling  
a bit under the weather or blue  
a long-dead aunt of mine used  
to offer the following remedy]:

Recollect the perfect moment  
in your life. [YOUR life, not someone else's,  
and not the IDEA of a perfect moment—  
you're not Plato, after all.]

Do it!

It has to be true  
and it has to be you.

Well....  
I'm waiting....

Here's some music to help you think:

"I wish I wuz an apple,  
a hangin' on a tree;  
an' every time my sweetheart passed,  
she'd take a bite of me."

Thank you very much.

Got it yet? Good.  
Now, contemplate this event  
with no regrets and no nostalgia.  
Just the tenderest memory.

Now, don't you feel better?  
A little?

Sonny Rainshine

# Ballad Of The Common Man

Just like ole Tom Joad  
in the Grapes of Wrath,  
he defends the down and out  
and seeks the higher path.

His hero is Woody Guthrie  
who said this land is ours;  
he longs to raze the strip malls  
and cover them with flowers.

He believes in New Deal values  
and good old charity.  
He salutes the common man  
and thinks he should be free.

He thinks money is fine  
but brotherhood is divine.  
Money means very little  
in the bread line.

Just like John Lennon,  
he imagines a different view:  
A better world, a sweeter life  
for me and for you.

Sonny Rainshine

# Bamboo

| | One

=

| | bamboo stalk

=

| | stately

=

| | and strong.

Sonny Rainshine

# Bathing In Beauty

Cornflowers and asters in fragrant meadows,  
where a goat with a goatee poses and a dappled cow lows,  
please me more than English gardens and potted ferns  
and pink hibiscus in mock Grecian urns.

Wild violets and modest white daisies  
delight more than intricate hedge-mazes,  
while happy black-eyed Susans  
dispense their happy infusions

and incite me to plunge into the scen'ry and take a bath  
along the fringed and frayed path  
and wait for the fragrance and the salubrious air  
to divest me of all distress and care.

Sonny Rainshine

## Beach Music Remix

These days,  
on understated evenings,  
those August afternoons  
in Biloxi on the beach-  
flimsy  
shrill  
transister radios  
planted in the sand  
screeching out a Motown hit—  
resurface and I don't care  
that love is not like that.

Sonny Rainshine



# Bean Seedling

What impetus, what push!  
The minute embryo,  
so fragile and yellow  
flings open the hemispheres  
of the bean  
as if they were brown shutters  
flung open on a sultry day.

Poking, propelling, drilling up  
through the musty earth,  
eluding earthworms  
and established roots  
of dandelions and vetch,  
the stem drives up,  
as saturated with energy  
as a live power cord,  
as brimming with fuel  
as a pipeline.

Toward something  
it cannot see, the sun,  
it strives. Once the process  
has ignited, there's no turning back  
toward the consoling dark earth,  
mother earth, yet scraggly roots  
drill a network down  
the opposite way,  
never to feel the warmth  
of the sun or to bask  
in the glory of the flamboyant  
flower and fruit,  
but vital still  
toward the birth and maturation  
of a bean.

Sonny Rainshine

# Beds

So much is about beds.  
My father's sickbed  
became his deathbed.

When I had my appendix out,  
I heard the nurse's new name for me:  
Bed Number Two.

My roommate, Bed Number One,  
complained unceasingly about  
his assigned bed and wanted mine.

Until I was seven  
I wet my bed. My brother said  
I did in on purpose.

Even when we fall in love,  
what do we do?  
We go to bed.

My mother said:  
You made your bed,  
now lie in it.

Then she said:  
Life is no bed  
of roses, ole pal.

Beds, then,  
are nothing but trouble.  
When it gets warm  
maybe I'll sleep on the grass.

Sonny Rainshine

# Bee's Eye View

And they call ME the busy one.  
Look at him there,  
thoughts buzzing  
around his brain  
like flies to carrion.

So superior,  
assured that his enterprises  
are more than mere  
gathering of nectar  
and making honey,  
which he calls money.

Perpetually biting his own kind  
with his barbed tongue  
and war-like nature.

Flitting, flirting, flouncing  
from one cup of calamity  
to another, his smugness  
smudging his chin  
like dusty curry, like pollen,  
stirring up the hive  
of language, words fluttering  
and cluttering up the air.

Oh, what a bother and a burden  
that I and my brethren  
are mandated with the duty  
of rescuing him from his folly  
now and then with a guided missile,  
a strategically aimed sting  
at a tender target.

Sonny Rainshine

# Before Los Angeles

Before, before, what did it look like before?  
Before Los Angeles and the loss of angels  
and lost angels.

There must have been a time  
when the coconut palms grew random  
and leaned in tandem with the tide,  
with the sea sighing psalms  
and the saline air was pure.

What was it like before asphalt  
and concrete covered the soft earth  
like rubble, like a sheet of pumice.

Listen. Is that the jangle of bells  
on the ankles of tribal dancers,  
the pulse of primitive percussion.

Now only the imagination can image a nation,  
gently verdant and meadow-lit,  
and conjure up what was there before  
Los Angeles.

Sonny Rainshine

# Between The Stars And Me

Today the opulent tiers of the huddling clouds,  
gather like a pleated blind  
to disconnect us from the radiance  
of the sun. We will summon  
no stars tonight, not even one.

It's like those days when our mood  
is overcast and an ephemeral haze  
of disarray and separation  
settles between our well-being  
and our innocent, childlike  
desire to see our surroundings  
drenched in light and anticipation;  
just one star tonight  
is all we ask.

But clouds are diaphanous objects,  
barely objects at all.  
Like restless bedouins  
they are born to shift about  
and the wind is their sheik.

As I scan the firmament tonight  
in search of a single intrepid star,  
December may seize me and set up his tent  
in my soul but I know he'll soon  
find it too crowded there,  
and his visit will be brief—  
too much light, too many stars there.

Sonny Rainshine

# Beyond Despondency

Those moments just before a late summer storm  
when wind gusts test the mettle of the branches  
of the trees and yanks on the mellowing leaves  
as if to loosen them for autumn's sweeping-out,  
it seems as if my thoughts are stirred and tested also.

And when the meadow is rippled by the bluster,  
and the grass becomes the sea, turquoise ocean,  
rising and falling like my breath and like the storm's  
respirations and exhalations, I sense the pressure  
of the air around me, and the solidity of being.

And then it's all over.

The tempest is spent, my response  
to the drama is modulated and I go back to my books  
or my housework (my sweepings-out won't wait 'til fall) .  
It seems that 20th and 21st century literature  
cannot get beyond the upheaval, the rage,  
the disruption of the storm.

Two world wars and their aftermath,  
and the despair remains in the rubble  
and the possibility that all is meaningless  
and random. I need stories, poems,  
plays, that look past the storm,  
past the despondency—

We know the darkness is there;  
why repeat it over and over and over?  
Lead us to light.

Sonny Rainshine

# Bias

In ancient sacrificial rites  
why did they slaughter the lamb  
and not the lion?  
Too inconvenient.

In modern sacrificial rites  
why is bias often directed toward the weak,  
the meek, those who stray from the herd?  
So convenient.

Sonny Rainshine

# Birds Of America

So much has been said  
about the lark, about the thrilling  
trilling of the nightingale,  
about wrens,  
sparrows.

But I wouldn't know one  
if I saw one. Every day  
little brown and gray birds  
hold congress in my backyard,  
then scatter like October leaves  
with no warning, all in perfect unison,  
like precision dancers.

Someday, I say to myself,  
(careful that no-one else hears)  
I'll buy an Audubon Birds of America  
or a National Geographic Guide  
to Northamerican Birds.  
Yet, something tells me  
I may never.

Still, I know  
that those plumed creatures  
foraging through last summer's  
marigold heads,  
don't know my name either,  
and will never buy  
Audubon's Guide to Humans  
of Northamerica,  
but they'll nod to me  
when I leave them  
a scoop of sunflower seeds  
mixed with a handful of good intentions  
to get us all through the winter.

Sonny Rainshine



# Birth Of A Rebel

Near the terminus of the twentieth century, he began to stutter and became more eccentric. The centrifugal forces of gravity weighed on his ability to cope. He catapulted toward a wayward flux and previously pedestrian processes seemed impenetrably insolvable. Mysterious. Arcane. True and beyond the polarity of conservatism or liberalism or the impediments of speech. SUDDENLY, something smouldering in his soul erupted and a schism of Self and The Status Quo bloomed and fruited.

Henceforth, he cried,  
I will no longer Settle,  
as sediment settles  
on the riverbed. I will not  
accept the fourth best  
or the fifth. I will not excuse  
my fellow man for his iniquities  
because he is a man  
or because she is not.  
I will speak  
and I will not pause  
for air.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Black Ice

Like an atom or a molecule,  
it is there, but you can't see it,  
or like the vibration suspended in the air  
after a chord has been  
played on a piano.  
Obstacles that could not be circumvented  
because you did not see them  
ahead—slippery, dangerous—  
black ice lurking on a highway  
in the dead of night,  
disguised, camouflaged,  
waiting. If only you had seen  
this tribulation  
or that consequence,  
you might have swerved  
or braked.

Sonny Rainshine

# Black Rainbow

It was as though she were writing her memoirs  
on black paper with black ink—  
all the words were there; all the details,  
but nothing was revealed; all was sealed  
in a penumbra of dark matter,  
the events were camouflaged  
like Elizabethan blackwork on black satin.

But by cloaking her identity  
in enigmatic conundrums and deliberate  
inscrutability, she paid a price.  
She became an insoluble riddle,  
like the locked-room mysteries  
of John Dickson Carr. The onion-peel layers  
of her profundity hardened into impenetrable  
shields, entrapping her heart  
and all her emotions.

Inevitably, she became a phantom,  
a blackbird in the night,  
so perfectly absorbed in obscurity  
that not only can we not see her,  
she can no longer see herself.

Sonny Rainshine

# Blue Flame

It always seemed incongruous  
to me that a flame could be blue,  
blue as a cold, hard sapphire is.  
Fire should be red or yellow  
or orange—warm colors,  
and blue reserved for the sea  
and the firmament.

But yet, even the sky  
at times turns to fire colors,  
purloining from the sun,  
and the ocean in certain light  
seems green as pine needles.

Is nothing then dependable?  
Prisms and spectrums and light  
are magicians who trick us,  
and sometimes surprise us.  
Who do they think they are?  
Picasso?

Sonny Rainshine

# Blue Water On Cloudless Days

A little boy found a blue rock  
in the street.  
He showed it to his mother  
who believed it to be very valuable,  
perhaps a sapphire.  
Why, it is the color  
of the lake where your father  
used to take us before he died—  
the lake on a cloudless day.  
She placed the stone in her  
jewelbox to have examined later.

One day the little boy stole the sapphire,  
walked down to the jetty  
on the lake,  
let out a piercing wail  
and hurled the stone  
as far as he could.  
The echo from the splash  
punctured the peace  
as the jewel-like ripples  
dispersed and then sank.

Sonny Rainshine

# Blumen-Sprache

Can I love them for what they were,  
after the wind, once their friend,  
has incised their delicate necks,  
like an ethereal Nosferatu, famished  
for the taste of death.

By then, in early December,  
after the first snowfall,  
only emaciated stems, sapless,  
colorless fingers pointing  
to the elements as if to say:  
Assassin, my nemesis, I am betrayed.

Will it be enough to remember  
the violets, the crimsons, the subtle greens  
that not that long ago mirrored  
the sun back in colors  
that seemed to make love to my senses.

Looking there, to the place  
where life vibrated and now is stilled,  
will sadness rise, anger?  
Winter will divulge these things;  
he will tell me soon enough,  
and most willingly;  
but summer is singing,  
and since its song is fleeting  
and wind borne,  
I have to stop and listen.

Sonny Rainshine

# Bored With The Keys

There's no ESC,  
he's lost CTRL,  
he needs to Shift  
gears and consider Alt  
resolutions. All his dreams have been Del  
and he can't get back to Home—  
the gate is open but he cannot Enter.  
No matter how much he tries to Pause/Break  
the cycle the Scroll  
of life is in Lock  
status. He can no longer keep Tab  
on his emotions and worries it's the End  
and that he will no longer be able to Function  
in the key of daily living.  
He wonders if his being has descended to 0  
or to a more rounded O.  
All he can do is take a backspace  
and attempt once again  
the solution to everything under the sun:  
Reboot.

Sonny Rainshine



# Bouquet Of Vengeance

She sent him a dozen  
withered roses with a note:

One for each year  
of our relationship.  
Smell it?

Sonny Rainshine

# Broken English

Because he was broken  
she spoke to him in broken English,  
in spoken anguish, in sighs.

She resolved to mend him,  
to exorcise all the trouble, trouble, trouble  
trouble, the heartbreak  
the broken heartbeat  
of his past.

He listened to the pulse  
of her empathy, the pah, pah, pah,  
pah of sympathy  
and something opened,  
something wept  
inside him, something kept  
secret and sacred.

She saw in his history  
a happy ending,  
or an ending that converged  
with her beginning;  
with him she would break through  
the inadequacies of language  
and make him understand  
the authenticity of her passion.

Sonny Rainshine

# Broken Food Chain

The ragged coyote gazes up at the orbiting hawk,  
mesmerized, ravenous, impressed.

The golden-winged hawk gazes down at the pacing coyote,  
as if into a crystal ball. She is brave, but she is weary.

If you were not my sustenance,  
you might be my brother.  
Circling, pacing,  
waiting: prey upon prey.

Sonny Rainshine

# Broom Sage

He called it broom sage,  
I guess because it was once  
used to make them.

Clumps of it  
were everywhere,  
blondish sheaves, heads up,  
looking as though  
a thousand determined  
homemakers had  
gone on strike  
and abandoned  
their sweeping chores.

It looked pretty  
there against the plain white daisies  
and edging the purpling fruits  
of dewberries kissing the ground.

It was our neighbor, Mr. Ladner,  
who named the flora and the fauna  
for me. I imagined him Adam  
cataloging the denizens of paradise.

It was he who showed me  
where to find the best wild grapes,  
where to see wild turkeys  
or to hear their haunting yap, yap, yap.

It was he who told me that  
man is good, but not all he's cracked up to be,  
not everything.

Mr. Ladner has long  
gone off for other edens  
or other dimensions.  
But I still own a sage-brush broom  
and on those days  
when life seems mostly memories,

I take it from the closet  
and sweep, sweep. Shhhhh....

Sonny Rainshine

# Brown Recluse

Oh, you spindley,  
ascetic misanthrope,  
why do you scuttle about dark  
recesses, lurking,  
waiting?

Why so withdrawn?  
What made you retire  
from the company of  
your fellow arachnids?

Some would call you antisocial,  
even a sociopath,  
creeping about,  
crawling about on tiptoes,  
dispensing your venom  
when approached,  
hiding in shoes.

Ouch!

Sonny Rainshine

# Bullying The Bully

Though it may seem so,  
yielding is not a passive thing;  
to withdraw from strife  
is a massive thing, rife  
with intention.

Sometimes it takes more courage  
to refuse to fight,  
to allow the bully  
to misuse his might and fully  
reveal his inhumanity.

Valor is a shifting word,  
that presumes a point of view.  
What's right for me  
may not be true for you,  
so let's just let it be.

Sonny Rainshine

# Candace Spells It Out

Talk to me not of infatuation and roses;  
fatuous poses are for the young  
and the hungry tongue  
of rhymster and harlequin.

Do not conjure up dervishing  
sensations to twirl in my mind,  
the dizzifying kind  
that ravish my senses  
and leave me wide-eyed  
like someone withdrawing  
from nicotine.

Refrain from "rescuing me."  
Leave me to float  
or miss the boat  
or gulp the water or the air,  
if you really care.

Sit next to me,  
here on this bench  
in the park,  
closer.

K-I-S-S M-E, dammit!

Sonny Rainshine



# Cannibal Tree

The freshly planted tree  
was devouring itself.  
The newest, tenderest leaves  
were surely diminishing,  
and changing shape,  
from perfect lovers' hearts  
to jigsaw puzzle pieces.

But this is not a cannibal tree.  
Consider a diner who feasts upside-down,  
underneath a suspended green wafer,  
hushed, hidden, camouflaged,  
rapacious, pitiless. The color  
of leaves himself, he is becoming a leaf  
inside and out.

The planter of the tree,  
inverting the disintegrating leaf,  
overturns the caterpillar's secret table  
and wonders how it not only  
hoodwinks birds and men  
to mistake it for a vein on a leaf  
but also how it knows to  
work on the hidden side.

Planters of trees too  
are vulnerable to hidden things,  
secreted under the surface,  
consuming life-energy,  
excreting pain, cutting perfect lovers' hearts  
into jigsaw puzzle pieces—  
Gardeners and poets must try  
to look beneath the leaf.

Sonny Rainshine

# Can'T See Utopia Because Of The Myopia

It's hard. It's hard to see the hardship  
that arises when we neglect the signs.  
When we can read only what's before us  
and not between the lines.

It's easy. It's easy to procrastinate to ease  
the heaviness of our guilt,  
in knowing that those who come after us  
will live in the chaos we have built.

So many of our problems today are probably  
the result of the past generations' failure to connect,  
to understand that nothing can be left to chance  
and that all things intersect.

Can we flash lies into the eyes of children,  
claiming that their assigned time here on earth,  
is just as important as ours  
and full of meaning and worth.

Yes, it's hard to envision  
a future we will not be here to see.  
But each generation is beholden to the one before,  
and that would be you and me.

Sonny Rainshine

# Caroline Puts A Damper On The Blues

Even the verbena, started in May from seed,  
seemed defeated, vanquished, resigned  
to the desiccating drought.  
Any condensation was doomed from the start,  
swallowed up by the thirsty wind.

Like the shrieking choirs of cicadas,  
and the harping crickets,  
Caroline sang also, deprived not of rain  
but of tenderness. Rain, rain,  
drain away the pain, she sang.

But echoing back, stoic,  
unmoved, aridity ran its course,  
both in the air and in her deepest self.

Moving like lightning, voice thundering,  
she dug up the verbena, resolute,  
transplanted it into a pot,  
watched it 'til nightfall, watered it  
and waited vigilant.

Sonny Rainshine

# Carrie Contemplates The Curtains

Carrie Gray gazed at the gauzy  
curtains billowing ghostly  
in the summer's dwindling breeze.

How like me you are,  
she thought: suspended there,  
anchored only by a nail or two,  
fluttering and flouncing so foolish.

Like loosely woven fabric,  
I too sift out the dust  
and dampness of existence,  
capturing the fine particles  
of tribulation and jubilation  
in the overlapping threads  
of thought and of destiny.

From a distance,  
I appear fresh-laundered  
and crisp. But look closely  
and you'll see the grime of the struggle,  
flecks of disappointment and the remnants  
of youthful dreams  
lodged there in the wrinkles and the folds.

Sonny Rainshine

# Chasing (And Catching) The Rainbow

Not too many people believe  
in Utopias any more.  
The last movement  
occurred in the youthful,  
idealistic 1960s  
when fresh-faced  
college kids became convinced  
that we as human beings  
could surely do better than this;  
that King's dream  
was more than a dream  
and the mountain top  
was attainable.

And yet,  
it seems that Utopias—  
call them El Dorados, Edens,  
Shangri-las, whatever—  
should never go the way  
of disillusionment  
and loss of innocence.  
As long as I can believe  
that a world where  
cooperation and brotherhood  
is at least a possibility,  
though an improbability,  
then maybe, just maybe,  
the morning star  
will seem a tiny bit brighter  
tomorrow.

Sonny Rainshine

# Cheap Noir

Penny dreadfuls they used to call them.  
Dreadful but cheap  
like a \$3 bottle of wine.

Fine entertainment, though.  
Two hundred pages  
of passion,

fashion of the forties,  
feathered hats,  
and hat pins,

sins and shiny pistols,  
Veronica Lake hair,  
Alan Ladd intensity,

immensity of neon, everything was black and white then.  
Kill me; no, kiss me.  
Which will it be?

Got a light?

Sonny Rainshine

# Chimera

An icy rain.  
A coyote stands shivering  
in my back yard.  
Lost.

Sonny Rainshine

# Christmas Haiku

Once upon a time  
it was about peace, goodwill,  
not about shopping.

Sonny Rainshine



# City Vignette

She moans when  
he tells her  
the ice cubes have  
bruised the liquor:  
She feels cold  
and battered.

Her tears turn the  
concoction saline,  
and a Stan Getz  
bossa nova  
pours passion  
and jazz  
into the glasses  
and mingles with  
the Mediterranean  
taste of green olives.

The gauzy curtains at the open window  
filter the murmur  
of the nocturnal street sounds  
of the city—  
laughter, footsteps  
the howl of a madman.

All the night,  
and all its sounds,  
are funneled into  
two glasses,  
half-empty  
on a kitchen table  
in a walk-up apartment  
in America.

Sonny Rainshine

# Cloud Burst

How many tints can a cloud contain;  
And does it steal them from the sun?  
What uncharted shades of gray  
undulate amid this collision  
of vapors and spray?

Stay here today with me  
and witness the cloud burst  
that races over the hills first  
and then shrouds our little house  
on the hill with curtains  
of opaque fluidity.

Let our jubilation burst  
and flow through us both  
and into the air around us.  
To the elements we will betroth  
ourselves; thus  
after the rain has passed  
our gratitude will last  
and all that color, all that drama  
will warm our ordinary days  
like the sun.

Sonny Rainshine

# Cold Weather Countered

Cassandras multiply in winter.

“You just wait. This year’ll be  
the coldest,  
the snowiest,  
the miserablest  
of the decade,  
of the century,  
of the millennium, damn you! ”

And last year the same prognostications.  
The Almanac has spoken;  
The woolly worms bought new furs in the fall.  
Dogs howl,  
Birds fly backwards—  
All this perverse behavior;  
the seasons have run-amok.

Just once,  
(oh, what the hell, twice)  
I’d like to hear  
a prophecy that announces  
a friendly, playful winter,  
an early, warm, bright, vigorous springtime  
followed by a perfect July  
And an outstanding autumn.

Sonny Rainshine

# Concentrated Bliss

Bail out, bail out  
of the centrifuge  
of regret, the maelstrom  
of resentment; shirk the phantom star  
of self-destruction.

Accept the polarity  
of experience, but do not submit  
to emptiness and anguish;  
turn toward the beam  
of every smile and laugh  
without restraint.

Joy runs and joy streams on  
like alpine brooks  
and April rain. Let it flow  
over you and then  
let it go.

Sonny Rainshine

# Conch Shell

Conch shells in pyramids are stacked impeccably  
in the voluptuous heat, enormous severed ears.  
Flushed and pinkish as a newly bathed infant's face.  
The outer lobe seems supple and frail.  
Hollow, deserted, dislocated, and vacant,  
they resemble ornate abandoned houses.

Inside corridors meander and circle inward,  
like a loosely wound scroll,  
coiling, curling.

Physicists say that all the universe is a spiral.  
Galaxies are merry-go-rounds, giddy with motion,  
and the double helix will tell us who we are.  
Roses unfurl in swirls.

We spin and pirouette from birth,  
splicing our energy with the great pulse of the planet,  
envisioning it eddying toward something as benign  
and beautiful as a perfect conch shell.

Sonny Rainshine

# Constance's Tree

You're always dropping things—  
friends, lovers, world view—  
just as in November deciduous trees  
reduce their sap and strew

their cloaks of leaves and fruits and nuts  
merciless to the ground below.  
And like the unremorseful tree,  
you never weep or know

feelings of regret  
or discouragement,  
only a sense of lightness  
and content.

Look then down at last year's leaves,  
we whom you have done with.  
There will come a time  
when those you've had fun with

and cast aside will remember  
your rejections and phoniness  
and you'll live the rest of your life  
in isolation and loneliness.

Sonny Rainshine

# Conversation With My Pillow

I resent my pillow.

How you lie there  
fluffed (or waiting for a fluff from me) ,  
smug, full of yourself, puffed up.

You little shape-shifter, dream weaver,  
soul-devouring lozenge,  
sharing my bed  
as though we're wed.

Full of air  
and synthetic feathers  
from synthetic birds of prey:  
Release my troubled thoughts,  
my tormented dreams,  
and yes, my hopes for better days  
and lovely things  
from your repository  
of soporific curios.

Oh, that's right,  
you profess to be  
deaf and dumb, inanimate.  
How convenient.

Oh, well, tonight  
I'll have more fodder  
for your insatiable absorbancy.  
Safeguard them well, my dreams.  
You know me better  
than anyone else  
in the world.

Sonny Rainshine

# Cool Down: A Lover's Lament

Just like bindweed  
and the dandelion,  
you keep coming back,  
perplexed that everyone  
fails to see your  
obvious prettiness  
and stalwart petitions  
for love and admiration.

Like kudzu run amok  
you twine and writhe  
around other living things  
until they choke, broken  
and surrendering.

A friend cuts you down here  
and you spring up down there,  
the roots of your ego  
subterranean and expansive.

Cool down.  
You don't have to kill the garden  
to take your place  
among the flowers there.

Sonny Rainshine



# Corazon, Coeur, Herz

If you break it:  
hear deep within your ear the art.

Corazon, coeur, Herz:  
only the Spanish can impart

the sound of the region  
where both blood and love start.

How to settle on a word  
that represents the profundity of the heart?

Sonny Rainshine

# Crayola Crayons-Super Pack

White roses, white linens,  
kitchen appliances, automobiles.  
Color disturbs you,  
wrinkles your equilibrium, violates  
your sense of decorum.

Magenta! Scarlet! Chartreuse!  
Emerald Green! Shocking Pink!  
Black!  
Take that!

Sonny Rainshine

# Cri De Coeur

An Amazonian rainforest.  
Sounds of chainsaws  
and the grunts of bulldozers.  
Mingled with the shrieks  
of fleeing parrots and macaws,  
and orchid-laden trees toppling:  
A still, sad plaint:  
"Goodbye."

Sonny Rainshine

# Crowing Hens

A crowing hen,  
some rustic philosophers claim,  
signals some cataclysm,  
some calamity,  
an upheaval,  
such as financial ruin  
or even a death  
in the family.

Surely something ominous  
is rattling the bird  
to make her mimic the male,  
to make her  
so androgynous,  
so perplexed,  
to step out of her sex  
as though stepping off  
her nocturnal roost  
before dawn comes.

Perhaps any sudden  
departure from the ordinary,  
any unanticipated variance,  
is enough to make us  
reluctantly heedful  
of the natural Oracles and Cassandras  
whose duty is to warn us that something  
is about to change.

Sonny Rainshine

# Crows In Rain

Can it be that there are a hundred gradients  
of gray? that water and the residue of the sun  
transform the red of brick storefronts to gray-red,  
the green of the ash trees to a wash of ash?

Into the distorting mist come the crows, enraged  
by the sudden weight of the wind, sodden,  
shuddering in the earthbound cloud, watching  
on the wires, black notes on a suspended staff.

Two cardinals and a blue jay, equally incensed  
at the elements, perch near the black-gowned  
divas and dons, Their intense tints muted  
by mist, for once cannot upstage the crows.

Today the other birds seem like shadows  
of shadows. But the birds in black tails have no commerce  
with ostentation and showy apparel:  
They sit and wait like consecrated gods.

Sonny Rainshine

# Crows In Snow

Yes, when the night broke,  
dark words on bleached papyrus  
huddled in the cold.

Sonny Rainshine

# Current Currency

Dollars, euros, yen:  
they're all just pretty pieces of rags,  
cotton, linen, and silk,  
a bit of Crane paper, so we're told.

Those currencies that no longer  
predicate their value on precious metals,  
gold or silver, for example,  
have no more intrinsic worth than  
fancy rags made of shirt fabrics.

Paper money is then much like  
a wedding song "O, Promise Me"  
performed over and over and over  
until becoming superfluous.  
Then the wedding guests long  
for something more enduring  
like Bach, Chopin, or Mendelssohn  
(gold, silver, or real estate)  
with no promises attached.

Then the mints are inked-up  
the engraving plates polished to a sparkle,  
and the fat lady is ready to sing her swan song,  
"All of Me."

At least if the current currency  
breaks its promise and leaves me destitute,  
with no purchasing power at all,  
I can gather up all those little rectangles  
and make a quilt or a pair of trousers,  
if I can learn to sew.

Sonny Rainshine

# Damage Assessment

Which snowflake  
triggered the avalanche, or which branch  
first collapsed in last night's ice storm,  
weakened by borers and age?  
We could just as easily ask:  
What words were said,  
what gesture carelessly flung  
ended us? What barrier  
choked the conduit  
that channeled our affection,  
our respect for one another?  
And then,  
are there survivors in the mounds  
fresh snow? Will the tree  
regenerate new limbs,  
flower again and fruit?  
How peaceful it is  
now that the breakdown  
has passed and what remains  
amid the ruins are choices.

Sonny Rainshine



# Dancing In The Wind With Aunt Ana

'Lectrical storm,  
prophesied my aunt Ana,  
All fire and precious little water.

Drum-rolls of thunder  
bounced about on the western horizon  
like pin-balls.  
Ribbony fingers of lightning  
pointed toward town.

The wind has caught fire,  
shrilled my aunt.  
Reach up and douse the wind.

I reached up.  
I squeezed the wind.  
The wind warmed my hand.

My being is all  
birdsongs, wind chimes,  
a clarinet in the dark.  
Dance with me.

I danced.

Sonny Rainshine

# Dandelions Are Rare

Dandelions are rare.  
It is rare to find a living thing  
with so much tenacity,  
so much joie de vivre.

Like Susan Hayward  
in the movie of the same name,  
they want to live.

Dandelions grow root systems  
that are as complex and as sprawling  
as a New Jersey suburb.  
You can poison them,  
chop their heads off,  
put a curse on them,  
call them naughty names,  
and exhume their mangled bodies,  
but next morning they're grinning at you  
like smiley faces.

Can you do that?

Ambassadors of sunshine,  
all they ever wanted to do, I hear,  
is to properly accessorize  
our front yards—  
(hosta has its limits) and to  
carpet our front lawns with joy  
LOTS of joy.

Sonny Rainshine

# Dark Song Of The Black Bird

For days the black bird,  
whose features purloined purple  
and shimmering greens  
from the sunlight,  
homesteaded on the iron railing  
of the terrace on the hillside.

For days I spied on him,  
impressed with the range  
of his voice, the juxtapositioning  
of notes; what was he trying  
to communicate?

Well, I'd like to think  
he was sending signals of assurance  
to the nestlings on the roof,  
or warning them of impending peril.  
Perhaps at times  
he was simply happy  
to have been born with wings  
and the gift of flight.

It was some weeks later  
that the roofers came to repair  
the damage from the unrelenting  
north wind of the winter past.  
In the midst of their work. they had discovered  
a nest full of feathers and tiny bones.

It was black songs the black bird sang  
those days, monodies of mourning.  
Strange how we so readily  
misinterpret things.

Sonny Rainshine

# Daylight Moon

In the blue cereal bowl  
of the 8: 00 AM sky:  
a crescent moon floats

ghostly, watered down milk,  
an omen or mere astronomy.

Something to take along to work,  
with my granola bars

and my confections of  
worries and other wonders.

Sonny Rainshine

# Days Of Plenty

Plant-life becomes more efficient  
in deserts, on cliffsides, and on the beach—  
more frugal, more resilient to stress.

Those arid, precipitous, stormy  
periods in my life teach me  
to draw from the silos  
of past days of plenty,  
days of calm winds  
when hills seemed rounder on top.

Sonny Rainshine

# Dazzling Marble Dust

After the war  
(it is immaterial which one)  
painters who work in oils  
would often search the bombed-out rubble  
for chunks of marble,  
which they would surreptitiously  
transport back to their studios.

Painstakingly, they would  
chip away the edges of the remnants  
and pound the smaller pieces  
into a fine residue,  
a silvery, shimmery dust  
that sparkled in the direct sunlight  
of the levered windows  
in their garrets.

Next they would mix a defined portion  
of the marble dust with the white gesso  
that they used to prime their canvases.  
The final effect was to give the undercoat  
of the painting they were working on  
an ethereal luminosity that flickered underneath  
the thinner coats of paint  
much as flecks of quartz  
cause a city sidewalk to gleam  
in the sunlight.

It seems likely  
that artists who used this tedious,  
time consuming method must have  
understood the hidden significance  
of this almost ritualistic process,  
reminiscent of the Japanese tea ceremony.  
Not only did they honor the tradition  
of their craft, but also captured  
a memorial of annihilation  
and the horror and disruption of war  
and incorporated it into their art

for it there to shine  
as long as the painting survives.

Sonny Rainshine

# Declaration Of Deceleration

It's the quotidian actions,  
the everyday things,  
like taking the extra time  
to buy fresh beans  
from the local market,  
wash them in crystal-clear  
spring water, shell them,  
slow-cook them with  
with herbs that smell  
of paradise and green  
meadows in summer,  
that halt the breakneck  
struggle to finish first  
before the race  
has even begun.

Sonny Rainshine



# Demarcations Of Time

We are creatures who like  
to number things,  
name things.

We measure our lives  
in days, months, years;  
we measure our marriages  
in anniversaries;  
our years on earth  
in birthdays.

From conception  
our lives are parceled out  
in seconds, hours,  
days, years.

Sometimes it feels  
as though all this segmentation  
of time, this need to  
compartmentalize existence  
diminishes our experience—  
as though we ourselves are  
mere clocks and calendars.

Sonny Rainshine

# Demystifying The Rose

As he peered at the vase of red roses,  
momentarily ignoring the cliché,  
he found himself drawn to the vase,  
upon which were painted  
red roses.

And when he looked beyond  
the table where the roses sat  
and out the window,  
he noticed the bushes against  
the wall were heavy with  
red roses.

He had never looked at roses  
in so many different angles and attitudes  
and suddenly found it unbearably sad  
that artists and poets  
had reduced them to mere symbols  
and images.

Sonny Rainshine

## Discount Prima Donna

She was known for speaking  
in Victorian housewife earnestness:  
"He sweetened his tea that day  
with my tears" or  
"His lips flattened against mine  
like a jack-in-the-pulpit  
pressed in the pages of my diary."

No-one questioned her sincerity,  
even though she hadn't cried in ten years,  
had never been kissed,  
wouldn't know a jack-in-the-pulpit  
from an oleander,  
and found diaries frivolous.

Yet, there beneath her suburban accoutrements,  
behind her calm facade,  
lurked a bit of a ham.

Sonny Rainshine

# Domestic Rituals

She always washes the linens on Mondays.  
Glancing out the back door  
she regards the billowing sheets  
and hears the distinct Snap! they make  
when the wind fulfills its duty.  
Like enormous white flags they  
wave to her as if to say:  
We surrender.

She knows the ritual by heart:  
Locating the wicker basket she wove herself,  
cutting stems of lavender from the kitchen garden  
to place between the layers of the sun sweetened sheets,  
acquiescing to the hot fragrant fabric  
that caresses her face as she plucks  
the clothespins, one by one.

Invariably the wind will claim one as his own,  
as compensation, and send her on a mission after it,  
toward the lilac bushes.

She wishes she might prolong this cleansing,  
this baptism in ordinary things,  
to feel always as clean, as yielding, as free  
as these white banners flustered by the wind,  
released from hesitation and reticence.  
She yearns to say:  
I surrender.

Sonny Rainshine

# Don'T Drive Into Sedona

Don't drive into Sedona  
just before sunset.  
Carmine canyons and  
russet monoliths all  
converge at that hour  
to bewitch wayfarers,  
and wizardry pulsates like  
static in the stillness.

Don't lower the  
windows. Shriill  
whoops and the  
incantations of long-dead  
shamans might worm  
into your cochlea  
and make you mad.

They say an old  
Sinagua indian chief  
guards the cliffs  
and keeps the gods  
from stealing the red.

Don't drive into Sedona  
just before sunset—  
unless you are a good soul,  
or want to become one.

Sonny Rainshine

## Double Acrostic: Emotion

Every stimulus sparks a response.  
Memory, pain, and even a dream  
often conjures up deep feelings too.  
To experience the rush of sentiment  
inherent in the mind, all men, even I,  
often find themselves enslaved to  
nuances of red, raw, ruthless emotion.

Sonny Rainshine

# Double Rainbow

He made a vow that he would gaze  
upon a double rainbow before his last days;  
that he would listen to the opuses of Paganini  
and Satie, and discover the fount of paradise,  
if not of youth. That he would grieve on the grave of Pasolini  
and rebuke the lassitude and the lies.

He promised to himself and loved ones,  
his friends, his wife, and his sons,  
that he would climb Mt. Kilimanjaro  
and voyage in a raft around the Earth  
to right all wrongs most quixotically,  
to celebrate life with exuberance and mirth,  
to treat all people with pity and polity.

He thrust himself toward life,  
and therefore toward death and strife,  
but assignations with Paganini and Pasolini  
receded in face of the work-a-day world—  
Mt. Kilimanjaro had just as well be the moon  
and his ambition just a genie  
in an antique bottle or an indecipherable rune.

Now old, a grandfather, gray and arthritic,  
pensive, nostalgic and an armchair critic,  
he wonders if what he has accomplished  
is enough; if ordinary rainbows  
and pop music on the radio Saturday nights  
and all the rivers he'd fished  
had transported him to heights

far higher than Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Sonny Rainshine

# Double-Dare

The needle of the compass  
points to you, as does the shadow  
of the sundial. The drum roll  
quivers in the air like thunder;  
the aura around you crackles  
like chain lightning.

You are infused with life  
and walk among the living  
and the anticipatory desires  
of all mankind.  
You can make a difference.  
Will you?

Sonny Rainshine



# Dreaming Of Insomnia

His dream is to dream.  
At 3 AM his REM  
sleep remains elusive,  
fluttering under his eyelids  
like caged moths,  
not conducive to slumber.

The number of hours spent  
changing positions over and under  
like tidal waves coming and going,  
like a snake coiling and crawling,  
comprises the shank of the night.

Like invading goths,  
inconsequential thoughts  
battle the armies of Morpheus  
relentlessly until Apollo arises  
and the alarm goes off.  
Then sleep ascends,  
just as it's time  
to dress for work.

Sonny Rainshine

# Duel At Sunrise

Two human beings,  
both sure they are right,  
standing there, with guns  
aimed at the other's heart.  
Where has brotherhood gone?  
One of them will depart,  
one remain. Their disagreement  
also will remain  
and linger in the aftermath,  
and seep into the earth  
like blood.

Birds go on about their bird-things,  
insects buzz,  
as they shop for the day's rations  
and live on.

Sonny Rainshine

# Early Departure

Blood red  
is the color of the leaves  
on the sycamore in the cemetery  
where gardenia beds  
and peace lilies  
permeate the air  
with the aroma of grief.

You were born on the Day of the Dead,  
and by night  
you would lie here in this bed,  
a cradle of unfulfilled dreams,  
a repository of silent laughter  
and youthful tears.

For those who mourn you,  
every day is November first,  
a calendar full of ones,  
a year-ful of autumns.  
Their days are still-born,  
their nights starless.

Tomorrow they will plant  
tulips and narcissus bulbs  
on your grave  
and dare to imagine spring  
and the renewal of hope  
under the blood red leaves  
of the towering sycamore.

Sonny Rainshine

# Economics Of The Red Squirrel

I observe the red squirrel  
from the kitchen window,  
paused on a branch, acorn  
in mouth, looking like  
a knick-knack on a shelf.

I know what he's thinking,  
because I am thinking it too.  
Surely life must be more  
than accumulating,  
and stashing away,  
more than mere  
industrialization.

But maybe not, thinks the red squirrel;  
but maybe so, think I.

Sonny Rainshine

# Eleven Epitaphs

I.

I did not die alone:  
with me went my joy, my love,  
my sadness, my pain.

II.

Come lie with me;  
the chill here is hungry-no voracious-  
for your living warmth.

III.

Unbury this mirror.

IV.

Here among roots and earth  
death is enshrined by living things.

V.

Do not seek here my remains;  
ransack your memories of me;  
unearth any kindness I left  
back there among you.

VI.

Behold me and live  
your life!

VII.

Like a rose  
in autumn, I close  
my petals  
and repose.

VIII.

Death:  
merely a spoke in the wheel.

IX.

They told me life was not a bed of rose,

but now I'm deposited under one.

X.

You ask me if I envy you: Envy and such is for the living.

XI.

Dark journey,  
black veil;  
the dead sleep,  
the living wail.

Sonny Rainshine

# Emily Vents

You're so run-of-the-mill,  
Your art lacks  
originality, lacks  
authenticity. You're a hack, a jack-  
of-all trades; master of the prosaic.

Why do you have to be so  
lah-di-dah? so whoop-di-do,  
so cliché, so 18th century,  
for chrissake!

I'll bet you still read Milton.  
Aren't you done with Donne  
yet? What did you do with the Leaves of Grass  
I sent you? The shipping cost me  
a bundle.

Do not expect further criticism  
or correspondence from me;  
I have flies and corpses to address  
and Whitman and I can't be bothered  
with mediocrity.

Regards,  
Emily Dickinson

Sonny Rainshine

# Emotion In Black Vinyl

His favorite song was  
You've Lost That Loving Feeling,  
yet he had not a clue  
what the song was about.  
What is this feeling  
and why was the singer  
accusing him of having lost it?  
he wondered.  
He himself had never felt love—  
or had he?  
Still, he found himself  
humming it at impromptu times,  
and he owned the vinyl single  
and the vinyl album,  
which he had discovered  
at a garage sale.

Sometimes, when he sang the song,  
he was the singer,  
with his voice deep as the Pacific,  
warm as the Caribbean;  
other times he was the person  
the song was meant for.  
Each way it made him cry  
and want to die  
since he could not lose a feeling  
he had never had.

Sonny Rainshine



# Enclosures

It...

(an unfathomable wrong,  
an unforgettable song,  
a friend's betrayal,  
a grievous tale,  
a withholding of care,  
shame laid bare,  
growing old,  
love grown cold,  
your leaving,  
my grieving)  
...hurts.

Sonny Rainshine

# English Leather And Hai Karate

They were the masculine scents of choice  
in the 1960s, when the regulation white shirts  
and diagonal stripe ties  
that proliferated in the office  
began to blossom into paisleys,  
plaids, and those miniature daisy patterns.

I preferred the exotic aroma  
of English Leather Lime, picturing myself in jodphers,  
leaping over hedges in hot pursuit of a fox  
or some other beleaguered creature,  
confused by the odor of musk and citrus.

Hai Karate conjured up white robes,  
black belts and a whole lot of shrieking.  
What if I get asked to chop up some planks  
with my bare hands!

Curiously, I often look  
among the rows and rows of men's toiletries  
at the drugstore to see if these  
products are still available.  
I miss them and their provocative labels.  
Haiiiiiiiii! Umph!

Sonny Rainshine

# Enlighten Me Later

She argued constantly with Lao  
about the Tao; and Chairman Mao  
threw the Book at her.

She bowed to Hindu's sacred cow,  
and pored over the Zofar.

The Gnostic gospels rocked her boat  
and to Yahweh she sacrificed a goat-  
every day.

On the bus to the office she read the Koran  
and knew everything about the Greek god Pan.

A lapsed Catholic, a former nun,  
she could recite her beads in 5 minutes flat  
and found it fun.

One auspicious day, Mary, Buddha, and Mohammed  
appeared in her kitchen as apparitions.

'Sorry, to leave you in the lurch, '  
she said as she gathered her beads and books,  
and esoteric paraphernalia  
'but I'm late for church.'

Sonny Rainshine

# Enormity Of The Small

The smallest reveals itself quickest;  
there exist more grains of sand  
than sequoia trees.

If I were to say: Find the smallest word  
in this sentence, and then magnify the smallest  
character in that word to the smallest  
reduction technology allows,  
you could do it.

But what if I were to say: Find the largest word  
in this sentence; then regard the sentence itself;  
then note the screen it appears upon;  
then the desk your computer rests upon;  
then the wall behind the desk; then the room;  
then your house, your neighborhood,  
your city, your state, your country;  
then the continent, Planet Earth itself;  
then the canopy of the sky;  
the solar system; the galaxy;  
the universe and what's after that.

What a mystery;  
what a mandala.

What a beautiful beatification  
is the large and the small  
of things.

Sonny Rainshine

# Escape Route

He fantasized about hiring a sailboat  
and heading out to sea in a straight line  
and never coming back.

He dreamed of walking into the Amazon jungle,  
hiking deeper and deeper,  
never stopping to rest  
and never coming back.

He imagined getting into his car  
and driving until he ran out of gas  
and checking into a motel  
until he ran out of money,  
never coming back.

He visualized sailing  
and walking  
and driving  
toward  
better days,  
happier dreams.

Sonny Rainshine

# Essential Mystique

Which question? That is the question—  
which to ask, to whom, how and why.

Those which have ready answers  
are immaterial, dry;

those that we can't know before we ask  
transcend the question mark

and ascend to the exclamation mark,  
magnificent and stark. Cry,

for weeping is the expulsion  
of confusion, a profusion

of prayers made liquid  
and of fear made viscous,

melted queries gliding down  
like beeswax on candle.

It is the not knowing  
that we have to know.

Sonny Rainshine

# Every Day We Say Goodbye

Every day we say goodbye,  
until we say goodbye to every day,  
yet even in our dreams  
people are lost; things recede.

Observe the boy waving at the station  
to his father on the way to the city.  
This boy gets smaller and smaller,  
but the father fails to see,

that every goodbye  
is a sacred thing,  
that in so many ways  
it is the last word,  
the final amen.

Hellos and goodbyes,  
our comings and our goings,  
departures and arrivals  
all end with someone we left behind,  
waving.

Sonny Rainshine

# Excavation

Brackish water does not reflect the sunlight,  
you used to say, concerning my muddled  
way of airing my grievances, my puddled  
train of thought.

Ah, but if light is not deterred,  
it penetrates. Look closely underneath  
the stern and somber finish of my face  
and find there all shining things,

things captured underneath the pain  
like veins of silver encrusted in rock.  
If anyone can chip away the chaff,  
it would be you.

Excavate then the secret brightness,  
and purify the stagnant waters  
so that the silver stream  
flows unrestrained.

Sonny Rainshine



# Extra Ordinary

It's said there's nothing new under the sun;  
what you see here was once what was there.  
Prestidigitized by a shuffling of particles,  
this man might once have been a mountain;  
that woman a tupelo gum in a southern forest.

So death too is transformation—re-formation.  
The mountain is my brother, the tree my sister,  
the sun the father of us all; the planets comrades,  
circling round, circling round, circling  
round, like a whirling dervish twirling.

All things are new under the sun;  
I must remind myself every day  
to notice things, to truly grasp  
the profound uniqueness of ordinary objects,  
to exalt in childlike jubilation  
as all I love surrenders to change,  
and as I surrender to love.

Sonny Rainshine

# Extreme Unction

She gave up smoking  
and took up heavy drinking—  
targeting the liver this time,  
not the lungs.

She swore to all her friends  
that from this day she would  
throw caution and her  
cell phone to the wind—  
no more Ms. Nice Gal.

She painted her nails black-cherry  
and her toes chartreuse.  
Her lips were the color of her hair:  
ink-black.

To her friends  
who accused her of reckless  
indulgence, she replied:  
Screw you.

After three years  
of debauchery and promiscuity,  
she sat down for one last  
martini and a Marlboro Light,  
before admission as a postulant  
to the Sisters of Perpetual Devotion Abbey  
in Burbank, California  
where she is now known  
as Sister Mary Snow.

Sonny Rainshine

# Falling Star

Your friends marvel  
at your dexterity,  
envy your mercurial  
mobility—yes,  
you have wings on your heels,  
a combustion engine for a heart.

You speak of your  
“meteoric rise to the top, ”  
but aren’t meteors burning stars?  
falling suns?

No, darling, you respond  
in your ever-patient drawl,  
a meteor does not “fall, ”  
it arcs. It bullets across  
the firmament, as though  
ejected by heavenly catapults,  
lighting up the sky,  
possessing the sky,  
and titillating the masses.  
Shooting stars, some call them.

\*  
\*  
\*

Two days later  
I receive a telegram  
from her sister:  
Caroline dead stop  
Cardiac arrest stop  
Cremation arrangements to follow stop.

Sonny Rainshine

# Familiar Things

Home, some say,  
is more than walls and a roof.  
It is a place where familiar things:  
an inviting chair, a downy pillow,  
a photograph, a lover,  
even a memory,  
are always in one place,  
transcending the passage of time,  
never disappointing,  
always there  
when everything else  
seems transient  
and untrustworthy.

Sonny Rainshine

# Fashion Tips For The Egoist

Around your neck,  
you wear the burden of self-aggrandizement  
and your pockets are stuffed  
with platitudes and lies.  
Your two personalities overlap  
like a double-breasted suit.

Aren't you a bit over-dressed?

Sonny Rainshine

# Fatalism Is Fatal

You gotta hand it to `em.  
They are the masters of persuasion.  
They've convinced us all,  
yes, even me,  
that war, like death and taxes  
is inevitable, a fact of life.

Odd, too that war  
encompasses the other two inevitabilities:  
death and taxes: three for one!

They've even convinced us  
that nobody gets killed in war;  
bombs dropp like hailstones,  
mines go pow! but life goes on.

Life goes on.

Innocent bystanders,  
you'd think, are still standing by,  
not lying in eternal repose  
below a plastic flower arrangement.

No blood is spilled.  
We can't see it,  
so it didn't happen, right?

Those quadraplegics  
and amputees lying in Bagdad  
clinics are ghosts, right?  
They're not really there,  
merely, ghosts—  
nothing to fear.

And every time:  
this is the war to end all wars.  
But how can this be  
if war is inevitable?  
Must be one of them zen koans.

Death, taxes, war.  
Forget about life, plenty, and peace.

You gotta hand it to `em.

Sonny Rainshine

# Fertile Hearts

His heart feels hollow,  
like a red bell pepper,  
its chambers housing clusters  
of seeds. Feelings are like seeds;  
feelings engender thoughts.

Among the rows of moods  
and melodies in the garden  
of his grief, intrusive nettles  
and wild garlic battle  
with the new growth  
of tender sprouts, fragile tendrils  
of hope, of a way out  
of hopelessness.

Still the vacant spaces  
of his unattended heart  
wait to be filled,  
fallow now,  
and choked with weeds  
and bitter herbs,  
but as all things  
respond to nourishment  
and a sympathetic gesture,  
a broken spirit carries within it  
a seed.

Sonny Rainshine



## Film Noir II

He was perspiring like the greasy spoon's  
plate glass windows on a subzero afternoon,  
the drizzle of convection a reaction to the heat within;  
the heat was on.

The confectioner's sugar, dusting the day-old donuts  
on the diner's formica counter, reminded him of colder climates,  
powdery snow on the curvaceous mountains back East.

The splattered globs of Heine's ketchup  
oozing on a platter of oily french fries,  
made him think not of snowmen and sleighs,  
but of things less benign,  
like the messy corpse lying prostrate  
on the carpet back home.

Home. The idea seemed quaint,  
nostalgic, even. Just as his home had seemed a prison,  
now a prison would be his home,  
once the coppers caught the scent.  
Just like the contents of the cheap ashtray  
brimming with the detritus  
of countless men before him,  
strapped for cash, desperate, starved for love,  
his future was gray and crumbled.

In the mammoth oval mirror behind the counter,  
he thought he saw a sudden movement:  
a little boy, about 5 or 6,  
seemed to stare back at him  
from some far away place and time.  
He imagined he heard the phantom say:  
Why did you do this to me?

Sonny Rainshine

# Finding What We Lost

Where do you keep your joy?  
Did you install it  
in a strongbox or tuck it  
in your wallet?

Have you given all your zest away—  
Get it back!  
It's not something to sell  
or to toss in a sack.

You say the travails of life  
have snatched it away.  
Relocate it. Take it back;  
redeem it today.

Sonny Rainshine

# First Crush

It's like the whirlybird,  
the giddy rush, the pulse, pulse, pulse  
of white-hot blood,  
volcanoes, seismic dislocations,  
unrelenting, unbearable joy,  
unrepeatable, irrevocable,  
so tender it hurts,

and it happens only once  
in a lifetime  
and we never forget it.

Sonny Rainshine

# Fish Tale

Every day we fish.  
We cast our lures and our flies  
into the rippling reservoir of life and wish  
for a nibble.

Maybe we fish for a compliment,  
for a single kind word, for a nod  
of approval. For a lover's assent,  
or for a day without rain.

Like any good fisherman,  
we cast out and we wait.  
We sit on the riverbank  
and anticipate

the bounty of our catch,  
the catch-of-the-day.  
And we dream of stories to tell  
of the one that got away.

Sonny Rainshine

# Five Day Affair

Thursday:

They sit  
on a single bed.  
Purloined kisses.  
Awkward misses  
in the shadows. Chaste  
fumblings,  
one candle lit.

Friday:

They lie  
on a single bed.  
Bolder now.  
A trickle of sweat from a brow  
stains the pillow  
in the shadows. Tentative  
tumbings,  
a bedside lamp lit.

Saturday:

They rest.  
They sleep all night  
on the single bed.  
nothing much said,  
the rain falling,  
thunder and its rumblings,  
no lights.

Sunday:

The tiger  
awakes. The lioness is stirred.  
Sleep eludes them  
there on a single bed.  
From soft pulse to code red  
passion's stumbings,  
a strobe-light blinked.

Monday:

Back to work.

The sunlight glistens  
on the pavement  
and ricochets off the car bumper ahead.

Sonny Rainshine

# Fleeting Flames; Flickering Light

What about those turbulent years  
when lust and love tyranted over us  
like Idi Amin.

Appointments canceled, careers postponed,  
friendships withdrawn, adversaries disregarded,  
stellar and planetary matter deified,  
practicality defied,  
the moon was our counselor.

The quckening pulse  
that fired the raw wires  
of the brain; the dementia  
of love, its dimensions  
unchartered and therefore alarming,  
captured us  
like a channeled spirit,  
like meth, like opiates,  
like all consuming  
addiction.

Today you sleepwalk  
off to your sterling cube,  
you never notice the moon,  
waiting up there,  
still wise.

We've settled, yes settled,  
into a quieter dream,  
less fiery, more furious,  
but more likely  
to last another day.

Sonny Rainshine

# Focus

Why does everything have to be  
subscripted for you? Taken  
to the nth power, multiplied,  
then divided among your admirers—  
your coefficients?

You have no grasp  
of the concept of one.

Having redefined chaos  
as multitasking and "functional freedom,"  
you have rejected domesticity as bourgeois;  
your studio reminds me of Chernobyl.

Miraculous, though,  
when you are separated from  
life, from all of us, your friends,  
by the lens, firmly anchored behind all your  
photographer's tools,  
when you open the shutters  
and a flash goes off  
and you lovingly zoom in  
on life, framed, unified,  
everything comes into focus  
for you with a singular  
click.

Sonny Rainshine



# Foresight; Hindsight

On her deathbed,  
Caroline was asked  
by her daughter  
if there was anything  
she regretted  
not having done  
in her lifetime.

After hesitating,  
Caroline said:  
"I wish that I had  
looked at the rain."

"Why mom, you've looked  
at the rain countless times;  
we live in Seattle."

"But I never saw it.  
Artists try to suggest it  
with those little slanted lines  
or by reflecting puddles,  
but that is not quite right.

"I was always trying  
to get out of it,  
so I never looked  
at it properly.  
I regret the beautiful things  
that I looked at,  
but never saw.  
I regret  
getting out of it."

Sonny Rainshine

# Fortunata Saves The Day

That year you were airborne.  
Like a sheet of loose-leaf paper  
you ascended, tumbled, dipped—  
intricate as an origami dove,  
but also made of paper.

Yes, it was a good climate for you;  
I was in the doldrums that year,  
but the Fates were writing  
masterpieces on your pages,  
on your fragile wings.

But the Fates are not famous for fidelity.  
Your fortunes shifted course that December.  
as sudden downpours and wet snow,  
saturated the pith of your soul, turned  
your paper wings to pulp  
and all the bright hopes written there  
bled gray on white to become indecipherable.

It was about that time that we met.  
I was riding high and the sun  
radiated hope. My pages were crisp and perfect  
and a tabula rasa. I picked you up  
and began to read. I read about  
your dazzling year and how it ended.

As we walked home in the lingering rain,  
I wondered: how many pages  
does it take to make a book: one, two?

Sonny Rainshine

# Fragment From A History Of Space Station Earth

That year everything was in reverse.  
Instead of expelling their foliage,  
trees retracted, folding in on themselves,  
as if in retreat from the sun,  
leaves gradually drew in and were reborn  
as buds, then as cells of pure energy.

The sun itself grew shy  
and reticent, expending  
its radiation profligately,  
having lost its ability  
to recharge and renew itself.

Men and women and their progeny  
gazed up at the night sky  
and cursed and wailed  
that fate had at last betrayed them.

Long revered human feelings  
such as love and empathy  
vanished, quashed by  
fear and uncertainty  
and from all quarters of the earth  
a creeping wall of silence  
was closing in.

Sonny Rainshine

# French Quarter Funeral

The crimson red sash  
draped 'round the saxophone player's  
black velveteen vest could have been a slash  
of murderous blood and the clash  
of the cymbals a gunshot.

The man in the box  
would never bleed  
or hear the reports of instruments  
of violent altercation again,  
nor would he read  
sad obituaries  
in the Times Picayune  
and sigh.

In choreographed synchronization,  
the widow and family,  
marched-and-stopped-to-moan,  
and marched-and-stopped-to-wail,  
and marched, and stopped.

Was that the trumpet? Was that  
the trumpet of Jericho I heard just now?  
the veiled lady asked.  
Was that the trumpet? Was that  
the sweet voice  
of my darling husband?

In choreographed synchronization,  
the widow and family,  
marched-and-stopped-to-moan,  
and marched-and-stopped-to-wail,  
and marched, and stopped.

Sonny Rainshine

# From Beth To Vickie

One summer he read rows  
and rows of Elizabethan verse,  
from an anthology whose jacket  
was illustrated with a red rose.

That was the summer  
he was in love with a sophomore  
named Elizabeth Forrest,  
soft and more precious than a dove.

Lovelier than verse  
and theology, Beth was both  
the tree and the forest—  
she rose above it all.

But summer dwindles  
and love loses its petals too—  
His Elizabethan period closed that fall  
when he met a senior named Victoria.

Sonny Rainshine

# From The Thirty-First To The First

From the thirty-first to the first,  
the urge to reassess, to recalibrate  
rises like the steam from hard cider,  
and as we celebrate  
the ushering in of another year.

This time we will strive  
for equilibrium, staving off excess;  
one slice of strawberry-rhubarb pie,  
not two. One glass of Pinot Noir,  
not three. One obsession,  
not a hundred thousand.

On the first we'll ferret out  
that old exercise bike  
and swiffer off the cobwebs,  
erecting the vile machine  
in the center of our living room,  
where it'll stand menacingly  
like a statue of Lenin  
or Mussolini.

On the first we'll open a savings account  
and find that piggy-bank we set out to graze.  
We'll clean the shower every day—  
maybe we'll vacuum the lampshades.  
Oh what frolicking fun!

But it's still the thirty-first, not the first;  
let us lay our heads down  
for a little brief respite  
and reserve our stamina for the coming day;  
I feel a bit tired, don't you?  
Maybe we're coming down with something.

Sonny Rainshine

# Garden Variety Poem

My mother always said  
(or was it my aunt Ida Rae?)  
that there are two kinds of people  
(both women were beautiful  
but not especially original) :  
Gardeners and Mean People.

Both of these sage philosophers  
have long stashed away  
their rakes and hoes,  
but I think maybe  
there is some truth there;  
don't you?

It seems to me  
that you can be a gardener  
without working the soil  
or raising prize roses.

It's all about tending  
to something, or someone.  
Gardeners, when they  
go on vacation,  
worry about their  
flowers and vegetables  
and make sure they  
get enough water  
in their absence.

A mother does the same  
with her children.  
Children do the same  
with their pets.  
Fathers care for their tools  
and fishing rods,  
as if they were blue-ribbon peonies.

It would seem that human beings  
must have something to see to,

something to oil every month,  
something to feed,  
something to clean,  
something that matters.

Sonny Rainshine



## Genuine Naugahyde, 100% Polyester

His affections for her  
were 100% synthetic,  
but she preferred sacharrine to sugar  
any old day—she liked the aftertaste.

Polyester love is wash `n wear,  
no ground-in emotions or jealousies  
to launder out, no residuals  
of unrealistic expectations.

Superficiality never lets you down,  
genuine Naugahyde or buffed leatherette  
has durability and can be restored  
to its natural sheen with a casual swipe  
of a moist rag, or a tissue soaked in tears.

Sonny Rainshine

# Global Hardening

A single particle of misunderstanding,  
One degree of uncharitable accusation,  
a discharge of corruption,  
an emission of malice  
an icing-over of the globe,  
a conflagration of ill-will,  
all merge and meld into  
a hardening of the globe.

As the earth heats up,  
humanity chills.

Suspended inside this ice age of antipathy,  
this bleak tundra of rancor,  
lies a proposal:  
If eons-old glaciers can melt  
into placid lakes,  
cannot the hearts of men?

Sonny Rainshine

# Goldfinch Devouring A Sunflower

The goldfinch clinched the pendulous  
sunflower head, yellow on yellow,  
beauty contrasted to beauty,  
more than a bird on a flower  
but an essay on art.

My thoughts scattered into the air  
much like the unripe seeds from the flower  
as the bird's beak dispersed them,  
some dropping like hailstones,  
some disappearing into his gullet.

The the beauty of the bird,  
according to a sunflower,  
lies not in its colors and shape  
but in its seed distribution system;  
a sunflower, to a goldfinch  
is a receptacle of delicacies  
and a conveyer of sustenance.

Beauty then  
must be more than meets my eye,  
must be as dense and populous  
as a million-seeded bloom.

Sonny Rainshine

# Gothic Romance: The Horrors Of Wolf Creek

Down in the murky black  
waters of Wolf Creek,  
my no-count buddies used to say  
when we snuck away from  
Miss Waverly's ninth grade English class  
(Poor soul, she fantasized about  
teaching us boys about Byron  
and Shelley; she died disillusioned)  
there dwells a murderous water-monster,  
with not two heads but three,  
and fangs that could frazzle you  
like battery cables.

Every time a tree branch  
fell into the water, rich black  
like semi-sweet chocolate,  
two or three of us would  
jump out on the sandbank,  
shivering in our skins  
like caught fish.

But that's not to say that  
Wolf Creek was devoid of monsters  
and watery wickedness.  
More times than not  
a sinister, swirly rope,  
a water mocassin,  
wiggled way too near my knees  
and once Martin  
saw a wildcat  
with vampire eyes  
watching us.

Many years later  
after Byron and Shelley  
finally got through to me  
(much to the chagrin  
of Martin and the boys) ,  
it occurred to me that the only wolves

on that creek were us.

But there's something thrilling  
about a wolf, isn't there?  
Something not confined to a river  
or a swimming hole.  
Someday, I'd like to see a wolf.

Sonny Rainshine

# Grandfather's Face

You had to look a second or third  
time to find the beauty in his face,  
but it lay there etched into the lines  
like crumpled paper, priceless parchment.

Just as his life had its wrinkles,  
meandering rivulets of time and trial,  
so his face memorialized them.  
It is the roughness that makes the smooth  
seem sweet.

It is more than skin deep, beauty.  
It radiates into the wise eyes that gazed  
upon history and survived it.  
It lodges in the warm chambers of  
the heart and the kindness  
of the mind after it has absorbed  
all the joy and the pain  
of everyday life.  
It is a face well earned  
and well worn.

Sonny Rainshine

# Grave Robber

She buries  
her worries in the obituaries;  
she mingles her fears  
in other people's tears.

The mock grass  
of new graves  
saves her from  
madness. She basks  
in the sadness  
of other people's grief.

So consumed by  
morbidly and the frigidity  
of death, she is presumed  
to be sympathetic,

and wise in matters of grief,  
but she is a thief  
of other people's feelings.  
Her blood runs  
cold as the grave;  
her emotions wreaths  
of plastic roses.

Sonny Rainshine

# Greeting Card Sentiment

The birthday card,  
dated 6/99, had traveled  
and had aged,  
a bit like its intended  
addressee.

Its borders had begun  
to fray and the white background  
had turned to a tentative ecru,  
one of the many colors of  
the effluvia of time.

On the front a Native American  
drawing of a ceremonial toy, a top,  
lay there suspended,  
as if hurtling through space,  
but having forgotten how to spin  
all of a sudden.

The insignia on the back  
tell us that the card  
was manufactured in San Francisco.  
Having been mailed from Lake Tahoe,  
the little gift had come a long way,  
eastward, over mountains  
and across the Mississippi.

I found the card,  
its two flaps folded  
like praying hands,  
inside a library book,  
its intimacy both  
thrilling and disturbing to me.

In my hands  
was an expression  
of someone's love,  
in this case, a daughter's  
for her father.



What would either of them  
think right now,  
to imagine a stranger  
reading their lives  
in such a way?

Sonny Rainshine

# Gutted Rooms

The room stood exposed  
in the afternoon sun,  
all that was left of its furnishings  
were imprints on the floor  
and against the peeling wallpaper—  
shadows with no source.  
Gutted like a fish, the space  
no longer breathed,  
but lay disemboweled  
and naked in the light.

Was it a mistake  
to come back here,  
a grown man in a little boy's room,  
gutted like a fish?  
Is there anything sadder  
than an empty room  
saturated with remembrance,  
inundated with recollections?  
People, like abandoned houses,  
can also feel empty  
and hollow.

Our childhoods don't lie frozen  
in gutted rooms, but are housed  
securely in our hearts and minds.  
Closing the door with resolution,  
I knew I would never go back there again.

Sonny Rainshine

# Haiku

Rouged jewel casket,  
compartments filled with rubies:  
ripe pomegranates.

(Note: the optional pronunciation of four syllables instead of three for pomegranate is used here)

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku 2

Bubbles from a wand,  
orbit around the children,  
like transparent moons.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku Proverb: Chiaroscuro

To truly see bright  
things, focus on the darkness  
encompassing them.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Asian Sunset

Pollen from saffron  
blossoms and pink silktree blooms  
tinge the western sky.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Chrysalis

Pale green-swirled cradle,  
rock-a-bye in the cool breeze.  
Dream of butterflies.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Concentric Circles On Water

How many ripples  
does one raindropp make in the  
trout pond? Let's count them.

Sonny Rainshine



## Haiku: Dangerous Moon

It was the color  
of curry and saffron mixed  
with a dropp of blood.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Dangerous People

Dangerous people  
see a pebble or a stone  
and think: weapon.

Sonny Rainshine

# Haiku: Death On The Savannah

The gazelle looked back  
into the lion's hard eyes  
seeking mercy there.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Fixation

Jade caterpillar,  
same color as his food, is  
consumed with eating.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Hail Storm

Pearls from a necklace  
slipping off a severed string:  
a sudden hail storm

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Iced Tea And Geraniums

Bittersweet thoughts of  
iced tea and geraniums.  
First chill of winter.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Message In A Bowl

Peace and harmony  
in our time: fragrant as a  
bowl of jasmine rice.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Old Nun

The bent old sister,  
questions her cloistered life.  
Children play beyond the gate.

Sonny Rainshine



## Haiku: Possible, But Not Probable

Cold snap in August;  
frost in June, March heat wave:  
Peace among nations.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Revenge

Black wasps, dark fairies,  
swarm into the night and kiss  
my adversaries.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Shangri-La

War, prejudice, hate:  
find a paring knife and cut  
them out like an apple core.

Sonny Rainshine

# Haiku: Sheet Lightning

Blink! like a flash bulb—  
Thor taking pictures of cloud  
formations. Blink! Blink!

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Slip

Irresistible  
in a red Freudian slip,  
she said: I hate you.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Solemn Forest Sounds

An orphaned fawn thinks  
he hears his mother, but it's  
the hunters' boot heels.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Spirit Trees

Listen! Wind still sighs  
in the redwoods after  
the trees are felled.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Still Water

Wind on a still pond,  
a blue heron wading,  
watching me watch him.

Sonny Rainshine



# Haiku: Sweet Breakfast

Aroma of fresh  
ground coffee and apple pie:  
Honey-sweet morning.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Vulnerability

She felt defenseless  
sans cigarette and a snarl,  
like a thornless rose.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: War Games

So, it's just a game.  
Toy soldiers, toy guns; no-one  
dies. Children, let's play.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Wildfire

Wildfire uncontained,  
stripping the hillside, raging  
poker-hot: anger.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku: Winter Sleep

Chilly in the night,  
the moon filched a downy cloud  
then slept warm and snug.

Sonny Rainshine

# Haiku: Writer's Block

Haikus are oh so  
hard to write, so hard to write.  
Now I can exhale.

Sonny Rainshine

## Haiku—storm

Gray and black dragon,  
engorged, belching fire and smoke—  
Thunderheads due West.

Sonny Rainshine

# Hawk's Reprieve

A young hawk surveys  
the mise-en-scene  
from a fence post.  
Post-prandial, quarry  
and killing elude his mind  
for a moment.

He crouches and considers  
sparrows building nests  
and meadow mice  
at play. Red poppies  
are rocked by the breeze  
to sleep in their grassy cradle.

Head bowed, acquiescent,  
he seems contemplative, monkish.  
Perhaps even birds of prey  
pray.

Sonny Rainshine



## Headline: Poet Driven Insane By Science

Because she believed in the theory  
of parallel universes,  
Hallie was devoid of remorse.

If she made the wrong choice,  
for example,  
in her other state-of-being,  
she was right.

If she was killed in a plane crash,  
her mirror image lived  
and was immortal.

The only thing missing,  
the only imperfection,  
was that she was never quite certain  
at any time  
in which world she was dwelling,  
which she was she.

Over time, this ambiguity  
threatened her sanity  
and she rejected her belief  
in parallel universes  
and felt remorse once more.

Sonny Rainshine

# Headline: Cleopatra's Loveboat Capsizes

Having taken on one too many  
dimpled rent-boys and  
ladies-in-waiting,  
the over-decorated  
vessel collided with  
a dozing croc this morning  
and punctured its portside.

Marc Antony, the Roman superstar,  
heroically tried and failed to seal the leak,  
so the stately  
barge finally gave up the ghost.

The stunning celebrity,  
fondly called the Queen of the Nile,  
reportedly sank like a stone  
under the weight of all  
the eye-shadow  
and gold baubles;  
however, Antony did manage  
to save her asp.

Cleo, articulate and regal to the end,  
purportedly bid her final adieu thus:  
blub, blub, blub  
Aiiiii, blub, blub, blub.

Sonny Rainshine

# Headline: Poet Arrested For Killing His Muse

He knew something had to be done  
when he was fired for submitting  
the financial report to his boss  
in rhyming couplets.

It has to be that damned Erato,  
or her tawdry side-kick, Thalia.  
He never liked that name Erato:  
it made him think of errors.

Well, rat poison won't work,  
they don't eat.  
A shotgun will miss the mark;  
how about a cannon  
or a dirty bomb?

Finally he thought he had found  
the perfect weapon:  
a deluxe, industrial-sized fly-swatter.

When She flutters annoyingly around  
his PC while he's composing resumes,  
he makes his move: Splat!

But muses are eternal.  
She rises up like the Phoenix  
and begins to quote Sylvia Plath's  
'Lady Lazarus':  
Dying is an art  
I do it exceptionally well....'\*\*

Curses!

\*\*From 'Lady Lazarus, ' Sylvia Plath, Vintage Book of Contemporary Poetry.

Sonny Rainshine

## Headline: Poet Od's On Rhyme

A man and a woman are playing dominos.  
The tiles look pretty, all in rows.

The woman wears second-hand clothes,  
but the man has pigeon toes.

"Why don't you write a novel like Joe's? "  
"You know I don't write prose."

"Hey, before the stores close  
should we buy beer? My thirst grows."

"No, you and everyone knows  
Beer makes me sick. I can't tolerate those."

"Ah, so it goes...;  
I was reading this poem of Poe's

last night about crows,  
or was it a raven he chose? "

"I never read the pros,  
Though I once read a book of Defoe's.

And some lyrics of Don Ho's.  
"Your erudition shows."

"Let's go catch some shows;  
I'm weary of Dominos."

Sonny Rainshine

# Heart-Shaped Ruby

Why is it that serenity,  
peace, and pleasure  
seem so well-hidden,  
so hard to uncover,  
when their brothers and sisters,  
rage, despair, and loneliness  
seem so prominent,  
right there slightly below the surface,  
like koi fish, all gold.

Sometimes I must burrow so deep,  
cutting so profoundly into the tangle  
of emotions there  
that that it leaves a wound,  
and then a scar.

And when finally found,  
tranquility disperses like mercury,  
like quicksilver, as if it resents  
captivity. It will not be my slave.

And yet, in order to find  
the most precious treasures,  
the rubies long sleeping  
in the tunnels of the mine,  
it is necessary to search  
far below the surface  
and to keep vigilant  
for glittering things.

Maybe they're lodged  
behind the more common stones,  
the pain, the regret, the remorse.  
Clear away the rubble,  
open an aperture.  
Gems only sparkle in the sunlight.

Sonny Rainshine

# Holy Basil

Bai gkaprow.

Its Thai name is difficult to pronounce,  
the way something sacred should be.

Like most herbs,  
we're told,  
it grows better in poor soil;  
blessed are the poor.

I sprinkle some,  
like holy-water,  
on a strawberry-rhubarb pie  
a saintly neighbor has left for me  
and place it in the oven,

.  
Instantly inebriated  
with the abrupt  
fragrance of divinity,  
thick with incense and heat,  
my kitchen has  
become a cathedral,  
an ashram.

After dinner,  
I walk around satiated, elevated,  
knowing something  
holy is inside me.

Sonny Rainshine

# Holy Exile

The pain around his shoulder blades,  
bursitis, his physician had declared,  
was rather the strain of maturing wings  
pushing against the dermal wall  
forcing an outlet with contractions  
and inflammation.

Vibrating auras and piercing spasms  
around the top of his head  
were not symptoms of migraine,  
but an intermittent nimbus in manifestation;  
the kaleidoscopic patterns before his eyes  
were apparitions, transfigurations,  
sanctified visions.

Festering lesions on his palms  
and feet were not the self-inflicted  
bruises of a neurotic masochist,  
but surely holy wounds,  
the stigmata of beatification.

Trembling in his misery,  
self-exiled from the small pleasures  
of ordinary time and place,  
he awaited his ascension  
and imagined a universe free  
from wickedness and suffering.  
An involuntary sigh escapes  
his thirsty mouth, as the black curtain  
between reality and the human mind  
began to descend and he felt  
lonelier than he ever imagined  
it was possible to feel.

Sonny Rainshine

# Holy Mischief

In endless suspended animation  
the sacred statues in Maria Immaculata Cathedral,  
Vieux Carre, New Orleans,  
pose, dressed in the wimples and habits  
of their time.

Pendulous rosaries of polished mahogany  
like berried vines rattle in the quietude  
as wind penetrates the sides of the carved  
oaken door. The faces of virgins and saints  
are ghostly with fleshy paint; the eyes  
are glassy and stare out but do not see,  
never shut, always questioning.

No question: they seem human,  
as if about to speak, or dance a jig.  
You have a disturbing feeling that  
when you look away, they have moved,  
that the sanctuary resounds with  
their laughter after you've left.

Sonny Rainshine



# Home Improvement Can Be Criminal

He was arrested for hitting the nail on the head.  
The plaintiff, a 2 and 1/4 inch (7d)  
blunt diamond point with a counter-sink,  
was said to have had a history of litigious behavior.  
As samples from the nail were found  
on both the hammer and on the defendant's fingernails,  
he was forced to plead guilty  
and forfeit his Home Depot credit card.  
When interviewed by the press, he responded:  
'I shoulda used a staple gun.'  
The reporter backed away  
upon hearing the word 'gun.'

Sonny Rainshine

# Homesteader

Somehow he had taken  
tarpaper and tin from an  
abandoned lean-to  
and rearranged them  
into the prettiest cottage  
you would ever see.

A rowdy bougainvillea vine  
clutched the black walls  
like a clinging lover, the dark background  
a chiaroscuro, watercolors  
on charcoal.

The windows were  
draped in clean burlap, dyed indigo,  
tied back with foxgrape vines.  
Polished pebbles formed  
mosaics around each doorsill.

Nobody really knew  
where he came from.  
Days before there was nothing  
there but pulverized cow patties  
and bitterweed.

At first I resented  
this interloper—the pasture  
belonged to me.  
One day I sauntered over  
with the intentions of serving  
an eviction notice.

But when he showed me  
his garden patch  
and picked a hamper of  
the freshest bibb lettuce  
and the ripest tomatoes for me,  
I hesitated.

Then he made up a batch  
of sassafras tea with honey  
from a tree-hive in the forest.  
Served in a mason-jar glass  
stuffed completely with  
spearmint and spring water,  
it tasted like nectar from paradise.

The next day,  
with thoughts of private ownership  
far from my mind  
and a new appreciation for good neighbors,  
I unhinged the No Trespassing sign  
from the gate by the road.

Sonny Rainshine

# Homme Fatale

She knew he was filth  
the minute she laid eyes on him.

What did she expect to find  
here in this brooding whiskey joint  
in the bowels of the Bowery?

"Buy me a drink? "  
he had said after she told him  
the barstool next to her  
was taken.

"You disgust me,  
you narcissistic bum, "  
she said.

"But, babe, you gotta admit, "  
he said as he got comfortable  
on the stool and lit a panatella,  
"I've got baby-blues  
you'd like to drown  
your sorrows in."

"Like you've drowned  
your liver in, I suppose? "  
she laughed, sinking into  
his heartbreak-blue eyes.

"Come on beautiful.  
Buy us a drink. I just got  
laid off. Sales exec."

"Oh, God, a traveling salesman.  
You're knocking on the wrong door,  
handsome. I've had plenty  
of what you've got for sale."

Pulling out his wallet  
and motioning the bartender:

"Now don't get vulgar.  
It doesn't suit a fine lady  
like you."

"You make me sick, "  
she insisted as  
she clinked her  
freshly poured bourbon  
and water with his.

"Sick with luv, baby.  
Sick with luv."  
He said as their hands  
abandoned the bourbons  
and sought warmth elsewhere.

Sonny Rainshine

# Horizon Road

I'm bequeathing the old Dodge Dart to you;  
(Guess that's not the right word  
since it implies that I'm dead, and I'm not) .

The Dodge is though. Its demise  
was heralded with much fanfare,  
hissing steam and incense:

She overheated and gave up the ghost.  
If you can get 'er running,  
I can think of nobody else I'd rather  
pass her on to. You and me  
reconciled the problems of the world  
in the front seat; I can still see you  
sitting over there in the passenger's seat  
telling me what's wrong with the world  
and how we might fix it.

Don't ask me why I ended up  
here in the middle of nowhere,  
broke down.  
You know me.

I was out on one of my "excavations"  
looking for spider lilies in the bayou,  
when I spied this little tractor trail  
marked "Horizon Road."

Now you know I can't resist poetry  
and I took the bait, riding off  
into that irresistible horizon.

When the car gave up the ghost  
I had to spend the night pulled over  
in a cotton field.  
The next morning a local farmer  
in a '57 pickup (Jesus, it was a beauty!)  
gave me a lift back to the  
nearest town.

From there I hitched west  
and just kept going.  
and I'm still going.  
I'd tell you where I am  
but it don't matter  
I won't be here tomorrow.

\*\*\*\*\*

I followed his instructions on the map  
inserted in his letter and found the old jalopy  
on the side of Horizon Road. I did not have it towed  
but left it there as a monument to my friend,  
who I knew I'd never see again.  
I ride out there looking for indigenous flowers  
every month or so.  
The old Dodge is all covered up with honeysuckle vine now,  
a sweet-scented sculpture pointed toward the horizon.

Sonny Rainshine

# Hotel Amenities

Someone had detached every  
crystal from the largest chandelier  
in the hotel,  
suspending each of them  
from the branches of the winter-bare  
maple tree next to the  
west wall of the house.

At 3: 00 someone flung open  
all 12 windows on the west wing.

At 3: 15 a thousand rainbows  
began to paint the walls of every  
room, new colors emerging  
every minute, illuminated murals.

At 3: 16 guests appeared at  
all 12 windows and applauded.  
Someone down below curtsied  
and went to get a ladder.

Sonny Rainshine



# Housewife, Reading

You settle into your chaise lounge,  
absorbed in a Silhouette romance.

The heroine is chaste,  
but ravishing, reckless. She is on a rampage  
for Love.

The hero is chaste,  
but wears his hair long  
so that it flutters in the wind  
on the moor.

You look up from the page  
and into the aqua ripples  
of the swimming pool.  
You peer deeply into the depths.  
You ask:

Is Love a lie?

Sonny Rainshine

# How To Be Gorgeous

"The latest statement in beauty is Warts! "  
the female celebrity asserted,  
as the camera panned in on her face  
to showcase two strategically placed  
lumps, one on her chin and  
another on her left cheek  
near the nose.

"You too can be a part of this  
exciting new fashion trend. And wait!  
It's not just for gals."  
A smiling young man appears  
on the screen sporting  
a wart precisely in the middle  
of his forehead.

"Yes, call Dr. Blemish today  
and make an appointment  
for the latest advance in cosmetic  
surgery: wart transplants.

"This is a relatively painless  
procedure that can be performed  
in your own home.

"Just think:  
no more sitting at home  
waiting for the phone to ring.  
No more singles bars.  
No more speed-dating.  
After your wart  
transplant, romance,  
sexual invitations  
and even marriage proposals  
will pour in like Oil of Olay.

"Act now to take advantage of  
our two warts for the price of one sale.  
And wait! Act now

and we'll throw in absolutely free  
a king-sized tube of  
our pimple-propagator balm.  
All this for \$9.99.

"If you wish to be a donor  
please send a sample  
in a self-addressed stamped envelope.

"Operators are standing by."

Sonny Rainshine

# How To Become An American Idol

She drives 100 miles in sleet and ice  
to the hospice where she works  
because she knows that Mrs. Greene  
is in the last stages of lung cancer.  
She is an American Idol.

He gives up his only free day  
to take his son camping  
so that they can watch the wildlife  
and name the trees.  
He is an American Idol.

She never says a bad word  
about what people are wearing,  
or how they speak,  
or what they do in the bedroom,  
or what they believe to be true.  
She is an American Idol.

He spends every other evening  
offering free legal advice  
to disadvantaged families;  
he gives them vegetables  
from his garden.  
He is an American Idol.

She does not believe  
that most poor people  
are that way because of something they did  
or failed to do.  
She helps when she can.  
She is an American Idol.

You don't have to sing and dance,  
to be an American Idol.

Sonny Rainshine

# How To Grow Backwards

I wonder if only wild animals and children  
experience the spontaneity, the ka-boom,  
the rush of everyday living. And if so,  
can I retrieve the gift, the youthful largesse  
of joy unfiltered through the eyes of age?

O to be a curious puppy,  
gallivanting around a suburban lawn,  
chasing the children, calling to them  
in dog-talk, arf-arf, bow-wow. Wow!  
O to use archaic expressions like "O."

It takes a lifetime, it would seem,  
to mature from an adult to a child,  
the exuberant depository of wisdom  
and unconditional love.

One must have a good teacher,  
a little boy or girl, or a puppy,  
or a gentle old soul  
who grows younger  
each day in his old skin.

Sonny Rainshine

# How We Hide It

How we hide it, our fear.  
In vaults inside vaults inside vaults,  
and under our eyelids even.

We do not hide, on the contrary,  
our rage, but flaunt it,  
and think it natural  
and even cool.

You can see it in my eyes,  
but in this society we hardly ever  
look at the eyes, except to seek there lies.

Let us make a pact  
to look there, and there,  
and promise to care  
if we see truth  
staring back at us.

Sonny Rainshine

# Hyphenated Happiness

I like those languages that combine words  
with a hyphen, like joy-luck. How I yearn to  
be in that club, if the dues are not too high.

I've had joy, but not much luck;  
maybe joy comes with luck,  
or maybe we get lucky  
when we are joyful.

Life is complicated-simple.

Sonny Rainshine

## Icy Emotions Buzz

We argue at the cottage gate  
like the cluster of conifers beside us  
pointing all winter to the sky, to the sun,  
as if in condemnation:  
You! Shiver me timbers!

And as last season's needles  
and ripening cones dropp from  
the snow-burdened boughs,  
so our discontents  
and failed expectations loosen,  
plummet, then disperse  
or sink into the ground  
perhaps to re-emerge  
another place, in warmer months.

Icy emotions buzz around us  
like snow flurries: white, light,  
but made of steel, each starpoint  
a razor edge.

We agree to part  
and I am troubled  
by the patterns your footprints  
etch into the snow-covered path  
and the noise of receding footsteps  
and the sound the brown needles  
dropping, dropping.  
Gone.

Sonny Rainshine



## If Verses Were Taxis

He liked the rimy verses  
of Robert Frost, and the vers libre  
bit him quick on his simmering ears.

He indulged in Tennyson and his bells  
and Poe's and Donne's which tolled  
as tintinitus in his simmering ears.

He himself was a poet  
whose pages were blank  
verse, whose rhymes were  
half-rhymes, whose meter  
was running,

running for his life.

Sonny Rainshine

# Imagining Home

Into the open window,  
the perfume of ripening pears  
meanders through the room  
like softly whispered prayers.

On the cherry sideboard  
cooling is a rhubarb pie  
covered with a linen cloth  
the colors of the sky.

Cinnamon, allspice, and nutmeg  
sprinkled on piping toast,  
and in the oven sizzling  
waits a plump and juicy roast.

This is home,  
whether in Massachusetts, Maine, or in the mind.  
Home is where good things wait—  
the delicious, domestic kind.

Sonny Rainshine

# Impenetrable

It was as though she were writing her memoirs  
on black paper with black ink—  
all the words were there; all the flourishes,  
but nothing was revealed; all was sealed  
in a penumbra of dark matter,  
the events were camouflaged  
like Elizabethan blackwork on black satin.

But by cloaking her identity  
in enigmatic conundrums and deliberate  
inscrutability, she paid a price.  
She became an insoluble riddle,  
like the locked-room mysteries  
of John Dickson Carr. The onion-peel layers  
of her profundity hardened into impenetrable  
shields, entrapping her heart  
and all her emotions.

Inevitably, she became a phantom,  
a blackbird in the night,  
so perfectly absorbed in obscurity  
that not only can we not see her,  
she can no longer see herself.

Sonny Rainshine

# Imprints

As her life became simpler,  
skeletal, like a stripped-down car,  
she began to crave minutiae—  
the pollen on the flower, not the bloom,  
the count of the cotton threads,  
not the patterns and color of the fabric.

She became immersed in the handwriting  
of long-forgotten historians,  
oblivious to the upheavals  
and cataclysms of the passage of time  
unraveling on the page  
like Rapunzel's hair.

She imagined she could hear  
the quiet squeak of the fountain pen  
or the quill as if the paper  
were resisting the scratching-on  
of letters, words, phrases, that mimic  
the grunts and breaths of speech.

One day, weary from  
her daily dissections of detail,  
she set out on a walk  
to a nearby forest.  
It was there  
that the gnawing of caterpillars  
and beetles on leaves  
began to suggest the gnawing  
of the pen on the paper,  
the beat of her pulse  
the rhythm of human speech.

Perhaps the closest we'll get to immortality  
is found in the scratches we've left  
on the things we touch:  
the chewed-on leaves of forest insects,  
the hesitant black strokes on a blank  
leaf of paper.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Impulse

That day the pine forest  
a quarter-mile down the road  
caught fire. Ponderosas, loblollies,  
stalwart Southern titans: all charred pillars,  
jagged wooden stalagmites now.

That was the day Louise  
left home for good. The pungent  
smell of burning timber, the black  
buttress of smoke above the cedar trees  
near the house, seemed to speak to her,  
like smoke signals.

Heart on fire,  
she backed up the rusted Chevy pickup,  
pointed it toward Memphis  
and drove like mad,  
the wildfire behind her,  
smouldering expectations before her.

Sonny Rainshine

# Inaction In Action

A sinewy copperhead  
contracted like a bedspring  
has hypnotised a fledgling  
on the riverbank.  
I shrivel up. I strain to say:  
Watch out!

Sonny Rainshine

# Indiscriminate

Wild violets grow  
in pasture and battlefield,  
they care not who graze.

Sonny Rainshine



# Infernal Wind Chimes

Tinkle, tinkle,  
BONG! tinkle, tinkle,  
BONG!

I wish to God you'd not bought  
those infernal wind chimes,  
those gongs announcing to all that chaos  
has arrived, that pandemonium is served,  
her husband bemoaned  
in his resounding bass.

Oh, but listen, my dear,  
and you will hear, she replied,  
the celestial harps of seraphim,  
the symphony of the universe,  
the bells, the bells,  
have something to say.

Hey, it's like tinnitus,  
puncturing the tissue  
in my cochlea; Bong, bing,  
such a prissy little thing.

Let freedom ring, my darling.  
The silvery cylinders sing  
only what the wind  
commands them to.  
Imagine, for a moment, luv,  
that I'm the wind:  
You have no music in your mind,  
everything to you intrudes.  
I'm leaving you, ding-a-ling,  
I'm sick of your moods.

Sonny Rainshine

# Inhospitable Places

Just as you to inhospitable places  
are drawn, so am I.

Just as some je ne sais quoi  
has taken you from me

and set you down among  
sage and saguaros  
and starlit desert skies  
like dotted swiss, like

symphonies both sweet  
and bone-chilling,  
so have I been seduced  
by the very thing that repels me:

long winters, blankets, quilts  
of snow, that provide no warmth.  
Why does someone so hungry  
for green, for green that lasts,

for warmth that pushes into  
winter with grace, not force,  
find solace and sense  
in the white chill of the North?

Inhospitable places,  
where scalding sand and white snow  
spread their welcome mats  
to accept us even as reluctant guests.

Sonny Rainshine

# Innoculation For Loneliness

A gypsy fortune-teller,  
for a nominal fee,  
once said to me:

It is your separation  
that will salvage you.  
Until you put away  
your arrogance  
and admit  
that you are not immune  
to the need for human affection,  
you will continue  
to sit there alone  
with your HBO  
and your latest  
Amazon purchases.

There is no inoculation  
for loneliness.

Sonny Rainshine

# Inquistion

Do you still still pause in the summer rain  
to absorb its cooling moisture,  
delight in the way  
its tickles your scalp  
and trickles into your eyes  
like reverse tears?

And do you still stand motionless,  
in awe when a sudden breeze  
turns the undersides of the silver maple leaves  
upward to reveal their glimmering undersides?

Do you still break for wild animals  
and swerve to give the curious  
squirrel another day of life?

Do Bette Davis movies make you cry;  
are you still thinking of joining the Peace Corps?  
Do you still believe that people  
are intrinsically good and that  
the wounds of the world will heal  
in time?

And her answer to my questions:  
'No. I'm all grown up now, '  
filled me with remorse  
and a sense of loss, as I wished her well  
and we went our separate ways.

Sonny Rainshine

## Inside And Back Out

A forest encircles the lawn,  
the lawn encircles sheets of English ivy,  
the ivy encircles the walls of a house,  
the house encircles its furnishings,  
the furniture encircles a family  
the family sits on the furniture,  
the furniture completes the house,  
the house is cuddled by walls,  
the walls are warmed by English ivy,  
the ivy loathes the horizontal lawn,  
the lawn pines to be a forest.

Sonny Rainshine

# Intergalactic E-Mail

Greetings to all.

The expedition continues to go well.

I'm lying here on a hillside

on Project Earth and

though it cannot compare with

our beloved Cassandra II,

I must say it is lovely

and peaceful here.

I am surrounded by yellow plant life

that an Earthling poet once danced among

and referred to as daffodils.

The breeze is from the southwest

and tickles my beard.

A quiet peace embraces me

as I sit here writing.

You will hear more in

my official report,

but I can say that the

quiet respite I describe right now

is not the norm

for this lovely but fragile land.

Though I have (incognito of course)

interviewed hundreds of earthlings

who were as kind and gentle as any

Cassandrian, many are war-like

and confrontational.

Nations across oceans

have weapons capable of obliterating  
all or part of the population.

All it takes is a push of a button.

The citizens of Space Station Earth

Engage in societal exclusion

of their own kind.

Citizens are penalized and isolated for

the color of their skin,  
their religious beliefs,  
their gender,  
or even for habits of love  
and affection.  
Some have suffered and died

And yet, I see hope for  
this land, as I lie here  
gazing up into an azure sky  
toward my Homeland up there.  
You'll recall that we too  
once went through sad times,  
dark ages. But we endured  
and we learned from our mistakes.

I miss my home  
and look forward to my return.  
A flying insect that my guidebook  
calls a monarch butterfly  
has perched upon my knee,  
brilliant wings spread wide.

Yours,  
042806

Sonny Rainshine

# Interview With A Dubious Lunatic

What day were you born?

I was not born.

What do you mean?

I have a photographic memory.

Had I been born, I would remember it.

What is your father's name?

I have no father.

I am your father.

I was not born.

Perhaps I am YOUR father.

Perhaps.

You are suffering from  
a severe psychological condition.

So are you.

What do you mean?

You think I am sick;  
therefore you think you will cure me.  
I am incurable.

What makes you say that?

You cannot cure someone who is not ill.

That's absurd.

Don't argue with your father.

Sonny Rainshine



# Intruders

Arriving home  
from work,  
I noticed that  
on the table  
lay a bowl of wisteria,  
purple irises, violets,  
and a single crimson tulip.

I live alone.

?

Sonny Rainshine

# Invisible People

There are people who love too much,  
and who thrive on the human touch,  
who luxuriate in the sweet confection  
of friendship and warm affection.

There are men who'd die for it,  
and women who'd cry if their lives weren't lit  
by the lamp of their children's smile  
even for awhile.

There are household pets  
from whom the owner gets  
strokes of happy gratitude  
and the joy of an ascending mood.

But there are also people who live  
lonely, sad, and captive  
without the flow of the common thread  
of love and instead

Go through their days  
in ordinary ways  
loveless, never missed.  
Yes, they do exist.

Sonny Rainshine

# Iris Flores, In Retrospect

Iris Flores still believed.  
She had danced naked at Woodstock  
to Jimi Hendrix's Star-spangled chords  
and the spasms of Joe Cocker's  
electrified body.  
The geraniums on her front porch  
still cascaded from hand-made  
macrame webbing.  
A purple VW bug  
rusted in the back yard,  
the painted-on daisies  
only silhouettes now.

She still wore floor-length  
shifts and granny-dresses  
to work and drank Constant Comment  
on her break.

She was used to people  
calling her eccentric,  
anachronistic,  
but she still believed  
everything she believed  
when she was 21.

She still felt  
that something was in the air,  
something flowery,  
something sweet,  
something warm and hopeful,  
like Constant Comment tea.

The state of things today,  
the status quo  
was for Iris not an option.  
For her the summer of love  
was more than just a season,  
it was the beginning  
of a life-long belief

in the potential of mankind.

Sonny Rainshine

# It Always Rains At Funerals

It rained all morning,  
and mourning reigned  
behind the lowered shades,  
the closed blinds,  
the drawn drapes.

Even the expectant clothes  
poised in the faux-cherry  
armoire seemed sagging,  
wet, disappointed, weary,  
wearer-less.

Do the elements  
notice a human death?  
Does a house contract  
and sigh when its occupants  
give up the ghost?

Or is death  
a lonely passing,  
memorialized by  
a relative, a friend or two?

Probably, but the drumtap  
of somber rain  
and the banishment of the light of day  
seem to punctuate  
for the living a passing from flesh  
to earthy things  
and to the sky.

Sonny Rainshine

# It Takes A Lifetime

It is only after all the pages  
have been turned,  
that we understand the story;  
only after the lessons  
have been learned  
that we revel in the glory.

We cannot judge our lives  
until we have lived them out  
and withstood the pain,  
and sought out every joy  
and embraced the doubt,  
waiting in the cool, gentle rain.

Sonny Rainshine

## It's Only A Bit Of Fruit

As I slice the orange and the lime,  
locating the equator of each,  
its cancer and its capricorn,  
then all meridians in between,  
I am reminded of temporal things  
and the hurtling of time  
through the universe.

It's only a bit of fruit, I tell myself—  
green and orange pulp  
with protective peel,  
but to think that a few months ago  
it was an ovule inside  
its parent! Have I the courage  
to slice into Time itself  
and consume it?

It's only a bit of fruit, I tell myself—  
just as I am a bit of mankind.  
I too was an embryo  
and someday the universe  
will consume me and absorb me  
in due time.

Sonny Rainshine

# Jewel In The Ashes

His spirit lay cracked,  
fissured like the branched webwork  
on an antique vase, still viable,  
but flawed.

His being hacked,  
as if by a machete;  
his will severed  
like canes of bamboo,  
fallen akimbo,  
no longer striving  
for the sun.

His mercy wracked  
and as withered  
as vines in November,  
still embracing the trellis  
though drained of sap  
and sinew.

Yet shimmering amid his misery,  
a tuft of green in sterile earth,  
the residue of his youth,  
the dreams he's packed  
for a lifetime  
waits in the rubble, patient.

Sonny Rainshine



# Judy, Joni, And Joan

Judy, Joni, and Joan,  
the balladeers of sixties folk,  
the minstrels of protest:  
where are you; where did you go?

Aren't you a little old  
to be sneaking joints  
in smoky cellars  
in Greenwich Village now?

Come out, come out;  
there's work to do.  
Sing us out  
of the funk.

Tell us about magic dragons  
and tragic heroes;  
Inscribe our anguish  
in clefs and notes and,  
most of all...

sing something pretty.

Sonny Rainshine

# Juggernaut

Like a juggernaut,  
propelled by an unseen forces,  
love vanquishes all.

Sonny Rainshine

# Kite Dreams

Think of a kite.

It is a handsome kite, a pretty one.  
Imagine the kite is you.

You're closer to the sun  
and the wind seems wild, new.

Though you're made of paper,  
you are strong, you bend,

you caper,  
you spin.

Above you azure, after that indigo,  
below is green, after that black.

You wonder when to let go—  
only a string holds you back.

The kite is on one end of the cord;  
you are on the other.

Who's leading who,  
brother?

Imagine you've let go of the string  
and it's let go of you.

Now will you soar and sing  
or just admire the view?

Or will you plop to the ground  
Weighed down  
by fear and the sound  
of your own voice?

Sonny Rainshine

# Knowing That I Don'T Know

Everything is circuitous,  
coiled or coiling like a snake,  
spiraling, spinning,  
whirling in my mind.

Just when I think  
I've figured it all out,  
and have achieved enlightenment,  
or gumption, or at least  
some horse-sense,  
doubt uncoils and spirals  
and spins and whirls  
in my mind, smartly announcing:  
You don't know squat!

Sonny Rainshine

# Krazy Karma

Inside the nested Chinese box  
a spinning spider spun.  
Beside the spider lay  
a nest of serpents and  
another nested Chinese box.  
Next to the nest of serpents,  
the spider ceased to spin.

Fearing the spider-eating serpents  
nesting near, he hid inside  
the nesting Chinese box,  
inside which housed another nesting Chinese box,  
and a spider-eating serpent.

...and so it goes.

Sonny Rainshine

# Lady In A Green Chemise

Not unlike a lounging  
caterpillar, arrayed  
in her green chemise  
she nibbled cold sprays  
of fresh parsley  
spilled upon her knees.

Her thoughts were pungent  
and bitter, like the herbs she ate,  
and she chewed them gingerly  
and she swallowed them whole  
with no regrets  
and with all her energy.

If I were a blade of grass,  
or if I were a worm,  
I'd have no worries to rile me  
or problems to resolve,  
and if I were a leaf  
nothing would beguile me.

Yet the leaf is consumed by the worm,  
and the caterpillar fears  
the poisonous leaf;  
there is no sure haven  
from danger for all beings  
and therefore no relief.

Sonny Rainshine

## Lake Scene With Ducks

For a moment let's not consider  
the beauty of the mallard  
paddling, paddling on the lake.  
Overlook her irridescent shawl  
shimmering green like a silk kimono;  
ignore her resplendent composure  
as she drifts in spendor  
like Cleopatra's barge.  
Disregard her breast, chestnut hued,  
a mahogany bib,  
and think nothing of her hind-feathers  
like soft gray cummulus clouds.  
Concentrate instead on the wake,  
the silver trail left behind  
as she's paddling, paddling on the lake.  
Take note of reflections,  
the expanse of water, the trees,  
bordering the water. The sky—  
and its reflection.

Now, close your eyes  
and consider the beauty  
of the bird itself

Sonny Rainshine

# Lament Of The Perplexed Student

Remember when you wrote your first essay  
in high school, and an eternally optimistic teacher,  
so sure that you could do it,  
she just KNEW it,  
wrote solemnly on the blackboard:  
Compare and contrast  
Milton's portrait of Satan  
with that of Dante?

How are they alike?  
she prompted,  
and how do they differ?

And you raised your hand  
and innocently asked:  
Who are these people?

Read the text;  
compare and contrast.

And how you thought:  
I wonder if there is some  
far away kingdom  
where there are no texts  
and no people with funny names  
and no comparing and contrasting.

And then you wrote your essay,  
and then you got it back marked "C-"  
with a note: Contrasted to a cogent  
discussion of Milton and Dante,  
your essay has no comparison.

High school is hard.

Sonny Rainshine



# Land Of Abandoned Journals

Under the settee, behind the leatherbound  
copies of The Great Books, queued up menacingly,  
like decorated infantrymen, laid out on the terrace  
half-submerged in last night's snow, pages chattering  
in the wind like birds' wings,  
lie my unfinished journals.

When I run across one of these tell-tale reminders  
of the hazards of procrastination, my sometimes haphazard  
way of abandoning projects,  
my first impulse is to burn the damn thing—  
lying there seeming to chastise me,  
to open its leathery jaws and bite my hand.

But inevitably I peek inside  
and note the date: January, 4 and ½ years ago.  
“Dear Diary, ” I begin, “I promise to stay faithful  
this time and will provide an entry every day—  
every other day; oh, once a week.”

I think one of those Great Books  
says something to the effect  
that the word journal derives  
from journey. If so, I've made  
many, many stops on my way  
from here to there.  
Perhaps my next journal  
will describe what I was doing  
all that time.

Sonny Rainshine

# Last One Finishing First

It is the lion we lionize,  
not the lamb. He who cries  
or tries to compromise  
isn't worth a damn,  
or so it's said.

He who roars and rattles  
sabers and bayonets,  
breaks in line,  
and abuses his pets  
calls himself a gentleman,  
but despises gentle men.

Yet, nice guys do finish first,  
more times than you would admit,  
and bullies are the worst  
by taking umbrage in their grit  
and brute strength.

But even the fearless lion  
is tender with his cubs  
and kills for food not fun  
or to vanquish anyone who rubs  
him the wrong way.

Brute, you may finish first,  
but your victories are curst in hell;  
the man who finishes first  
may not finish well.

Sonny Rainshine

# Last Summer Leaf On A Maple Tree

A paraquette prominent  
in a gathering of cardinals.  
One jade in a casket of garnets:  
Last Summer Leaf  
on a red maple tree.

Sonny Rainshine

# Late-Night Phone Call

Maybe old emotions  
are not like ashes,  
but more like embers,  
still pulsating with fire  
and energy.

Once they were towering,  
like loblolly pine trees  
or 100 year-old oaks,  
too high to scale.

Now they lie smouldering  
in the hearth of my heart  
cooling, dying,  
but still emanating heat.

They self-ignite  
on cold, rainy nights,  
when in the chill  
and loneliness,  
I dial your number  
and talk and laugh with you  
until midnight.

Sonny Rainshine

# Lazyboy

Goldfinches congregate  
in the mimosa trees.

The sun is rising,  
topaz and cerise.

The first roses radiate  
their signature scent

and industrious honeybees  
report to their stations.

The shadow on the sundial  
lengthens ominously

as I bathe in the pulsations  
of my garden and

I think up excuses  
to miss work.

Sonny Rainshine

# Learning How To Samba

In Rio de Janeiro one night you taught me to samba  
while you mixed blue moons at midnight  
and tequilas sunrises  
at 6 AM.

You never missed  
a beat.

The shadows of hibiscus  
and the musky emblems of the sun,  
marigolds and fiery zinnias,  
danced with us  
on the sepia flagstones,  
all terra cotta  
and terrible  
in their earthiness.

Where did Rio go?  
Where did that sultry  
lilt in your voice,  
that breath of life  
mingled with marigolds  
zinnias and ripe limes,  
go?

I imagined  
that night  
that there would be other nights,  
maybe not on a moonlit  
Brazilian courtyard,  
but in a room  
after the children are put to bed,  
a gentle fire singing at the hearth,  
when you teach me all over  
how to samba.

Sonny Rainshine

# Learning Patience From A Pomegranate

You cannot appreciate pomegranates  
without patience. First wait for the red  
crepe-papery blooms to announce  
the coming of the fruit by signaling  
and then shimmying out of the star-like  
hands that cupped them, then let them go.

It will be months before the fleshy buttons  
begin to plump and inflate,  
green balloons tinged with the same crimson  
of the blossoms now decaying on the ground below.

You'll know when the time has come  
at last to pluck them from their stems,  
conduits to the earth that fed them  
so that they can now feed you.

You'll know because they begin to crack open,  
breaking apart like fissures in the rocks  
after an earthquake. Through the thin cleft  
an entirely different shade of red,  
pomegranate-red is revealed.

You'll place the appleish ball  
on your cutting board and glare at it  
at first, perplexed, worried, wondering  
if it's worth the consternation.  
"Perhaps I'll just write about it."  
you say, unconvinced.

In a quick moment of decisiveness  
you snatch the angry red sphere,  
looking like a miniature of planet Mars,  
and pull each side with passion.

A few roseate seeds escape  
and clatter on the board like  
liquefied rubies; hundreds more  
of these edible jewels

cling to the pieces of hull  
eliciting still more apprehension.

You gingerly peel off a single seed,  
place it into your mouth,  
chew and expel the inedible pit,  
repeating the ritual until  
in a panic, you tear off a dozen at once  
and chew and expel, expel and chew.

Changed forever, now,  
from a being who had never grown  
a pomegranate and never had the tenacity  
to eat one all the way through,  
you fumble to the wooden bowl  
on the dining room table,  
reach in, and peel a banana.

Sonny Rainshine



# Leda And The Swan

Leda wanted something beautiful in her house,  
so she went to City Park to the lake  
and wrestled a swan,  
lugging it home to her living room.

But all the squawking and flapping  
began to get on her nerves,  
so she transported it to the bathtub.

The bird bit her, and  
that night she couldn't take a bath.

The next morning she  
evicted the swan.

Still desiring something beautiful in her house,  
she scoured the local yard sales and purchased  
a striking portrait of Elvis on black velvet.

Leda sighed contentedly  
as she cracked open a book  
she had also gotten for a steal  
at the sale; by somebody named Yeats.

Sonny Rainshine

# Lemons On Apple Trees

No tree bears all varieties of fruits:  
not apple trees or peaches,  
and not the tree of knowledge,  
and all the things it teaches.

There are cultivars unknown to man,  
awaiting to be brought to light;  
there are many now extinct,  
or ravaged by the blight.

Some species are alien to the earth,  
but perhaps inhabit other universes;  
others may never see the light of day  
anywhere but in verses.

Can we but permit a mystery  
to remain mysterious,  
to leave The Question unanswered?  
Is it really that serious?

Beware the arrogant tree  
that claims to bear all fruit,  
it's probably just an pretender,  
deceptive to the root.

Sonny Rainshine

# Let Go Of The Day

Hey! Remember that weary old English teacher,  
yes, the one with the sad eyes  
that seemed to focus in on you expectantly  
as you sat in the back row,  
trying not to attract attention?  
You, know, the one who mumbled something  
about Carpe Diem.  
Seize the Day! she shrieked,  
or he.

And remember that time  
you did indeed reach out and lasso in  
the moment. That time you  
saved the day by catching the touch-down pass  
or were elected homecoming queen?  
The day you found your love  
and lost it the next day?

The hard part, isn't it,  
is the letting go of the day.  
If we cling to the day and never let it go,  
how can we seize and savor  
the next, and the next?

Sonny Rainshine

# Letting Go Of The Leaves

Last year's growth,  
and remnants of the year's before,  
has scattered a plush rug  
underneath the budding maples,  
as though preparing a wide cushion  
for the first winged seeds of May,  
then autumn's sloughing off.

Up there, though, everything is birth;  
branch tips have advanced  
a quarter of an inch,  
and every leaf is a neonate.

This is birth, but not rebirth,  
these look nothing like the shriveled leaves  
which lie shrunken on the forest floor,  
victims of the diaspora of autumn.  
These buds, no green Lazaruses,  
but fugitive prophets,  
will abide their season,  
fulfill their reason,  
hide and house the birds,  
then move on, forced migrants,  
toward the rich, dark, promised land below.  
The performance over,  
they will not be back for an encore.

First they leaf, then they leave.  
Even the rising sap of the tree  
ascends like the phoenix from  
old growth.  
The sap, transparent blood of life,  
resembles the circuitous flow of a table fountain  
that recycles the water like a prayer wheel's  
revolutions.  
Young cells have  
mingled with the old  
and spring erupts again,  
and will again.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Liddy Soledad Was A Pretty One

Her mother often told Liddy Soledad  
that beauty lies within,  
that pretty girls are often grandiose.

Naturally, such lachrymose  
intimations pierced her heart like a pin  
and made her withdraw and turn morose  
when approached by local men.

Though perhaps it's true,  
that my own mother thinks I'm plain,  
I'd rather she had let me find it out myself,  
than to wrestle with this pain.

For Liddy Soledad was the prettiest girl  
for many a mile;  
but her beauty never surfaced to the top  
because she could not smile.

Sonny Rainshine

# Life Span

The professor quietly  
enters the lecture hall  
and begins to wind  
the timer.

This will be a timed  
examination consisting  
of equal parts oral,  
essay, multiple choice,  
and true and false  
activities.

When your time is up  
the buzzer will go off,  
but pre-knowledge of  
that time is not permitted  
for this examination.

You may begin.

Sonny Rainshine

# Life Studies

He paints a landscape,  
a still life, a seascape,  
countless nudes,  
an abstract, a study,  
a watercolor, a gouache,  
his mother.

He loads his palette like a shotgun:  
ceruleans, carmines,  
ochres, cadmium reds,  
burnt umber, viridians,  
chinese white, and  
raw sienna.

He paints boldly, sometimes  
with knives-full of pigment,  
or with a single sable-hair,  
shyly, brazenly, tenderly,  
brush heavy with paint,  
or only a nectar-drop.

Since finished paintings  
need a name;  
he calls each one "Self Portrait."

Sonny Rainshine



# Life Without A Glossary

The paradox of people who write  
and paint and compose symphonies  
is that the world around them  
sometimes can't compete  
within the world inside them.

"I'll go for a walk, " she says  
or "I'll climb a tree to see the view, " he proclaims.

But she has already recorded each step  
and he has captured the distant mist  
and the orchres and greens of the aspens  
in the sun, first on the canvas of his mind,  
then on the medium.

Are there persons, they wonder,  
who do not experience this yearning to capture,  
to elaborate, to elucidate,  
to captivate?

Once she left her notebook at home.  
and he his sketchpad,  
and saw the world for once without filters,  
without commentary.

"Too scary, " she said.  
"The colors are all wrong, " he proclaimed,  
and they hurried home  
to transform it all into art.

Sonny Rainshine

## Like Hot, Arid Santa Ana Winds

Like hot, arid Santa Ana winds,  
his fury pushed into the atmosphere,  
searching out stray flames of outrage,  
and unfolding them  
like a red and blue Japanese fan

Sonny Rainshine

# Lines Trickling Down

How many times will you go to the well?  
How many rhymes will it take to tell  
your story?

The cool water of the well of the soul is deep  
and poems are promises to keep  
for you and me.

How many waves can we count in the sea?  
How many leaves are blown from the tree  
in the fall?

The billowing waves of the sea churn  
and the leaves on the tree will return  
after all.

Here poems start,  
Cloistered in every heart.  
Pour, drink.

Sonny Rainshine

# Lingering Chatter

The space between you and me, the air,  
is a conduit for conversations past, all jumbled,  
declarations of love and idle curses,  
folded into the wind.

When vibrations leave a larynx  
and are released into the air,  
some will stream into cochleas,  
some will rise like smoke  
and disperse.

Chatter, chatter, chatter,  
it's in the very air we breathe,  
the space we bequeath.  
It lives on after the speaker,  
no matter how distinguished,  
has long been extinguished  
and lies breathless,  
speechless at last.

Sonny Rainshine

# Little Thoughts Like Gnats

At first he thought they were gnats,  
miniscule specks orbiting around each other,  
like neutrons and protons,  
you can't see them but you know  
they're there because they leave signs.

But when he really looked,  
he saw that they were tiny butterflies,  
brilliantly tinted, with intricate patterns  
on their wings, like fine crewel  
and that they had something to say.

Sonny Rainshine

# Locked Rooms

The mind has many chambers,  
nothing is lost,  
everything that happens to us  
resides there.

The doors to some of these rooms  
are padlocked—  
it takes a jolt  
to jar them open.

Maybe these sealed compartments  
are bolted for a reason.  
Is it advisable  
to live in the past?

Sonny Rainshine

# Lonely, But Not Like Garbo

But I like being alone,  
the woman was saying.  
I have no need  
for human interaction.  
I am independent  
and am beholden to nobody.

The following day  
I saw the woman  
sitting on a bench  
in the park,  
oblivious to the mist  
that was gradually soaking  
her to a chill.  
Nobody,  
she whispered.  
But the rain sighed  
gathered momentum,  
and did not seem  
to hear her.

Sonny Rainshine

# Looking Back At Destiny

Some people can sense  
the proximity of tribulation;  
be it from a sustained acquaintance  
with illness or incertitude,  
whether from some prescience  
or a fined-tuned sensitivity  
to change, any kind of change,  
they are barometers of bathos,  
reluctant Cassandras  
reading the signs  
and bracing for the worst.

Or maybe we are all clairvoyant,  
with pictures of our destinies  
tucked away in some pleat  
in our brain matter,  
like family photos  
in a shirt pocket.  
Maybe it takes enormous courage  
to open the gate  
when what lies on the other side  
seems unfamiliar  
and menacing.  
And yet sometimes it seems  
that looking back at what has already  
passed the gate and has taken up residence  
in our memory is just as forbidding  
as getting a glimpse of tomorrow.

Sonny Rainshine



# Lost (And Found) In Space

Something was missing,  
like the slender space left  
when a book is removed from its shelf.

The adjacent parts of his life  
remained upright, but unstable,  
exposed.

Did someone steal these  
pages from his life  
or did they self-implode?

Did they disintegrate  
from lack of use,  
or maybe they were never there at all.

If nature abhors a vacuum,  
this void in his life  
is only temporary.

Fill it with love,  
with happiness,  
with good books,  
with good friends,  
with reams of poetry,  
with music,  
with compassion,  
with tenderness,  
with...

Ah, I've run out of space.

Sonny Rainshine

## Lot's Pillar

This was to be her lot in life:  
Gazing over boundless desert,  
a sentinel of salt, punished,  
motionless, arid as the wind,  
still looking homeward,  
but no angel.

And does she stand there still?  
headless now, so we can no longer  
see the longing, the dismay  
in her granulated countenance.  
What mother, what being,  
should be deprived of one  
last glance of home?

Frozen in the radiating heat,  
she she sits guard like the Sphinx,  
forever looking back, eyeless,  
heartless, a crumbling memorial  
to the sacred bond of home.

Sonny Rainshine

# Louise Plants Tropical Flowers Outside In Winter

Well, she's done it now,  
said the neighbors.

Looking out their windows  
as the blizzard intensified,  
they witnessed a troubling sight:  
Red hibiscus in the dead of winter—  
like bleeding patches on the snow.

I understand she likes  
the color red.  
Why doesn't she plant, then  
poinsettias or nandinas  
or even holly?

But Louise (the woman who had "done it now")  
carried pot after pot  
of the tropical shrub outside until  
she had formed a perfect circle of  
crimson—a ring of floral fire.  
Next she took a lawn chair and  
sat down right in the middle of her handiwork  
and appeared to be praying, or weeping.

As the Nor'easter accelerated, the beach umbrella  
she had erected toppled  
and the garish plants  
gradually began to sink into the snow  
as did Louise.

The silent witnesses stood frozen  
against the window panes.  
Framed against the picture windows,  
they looked to Louise like family photographs.

Sonny Rainshine

# Lovable

Not that long ago, she was so sure  
that affection and love were entitlements,  
promised and secure,  
sort of a social security of the heart.

And then she became cynical about romance,  
like so many before her;  
when Pure Love never asked her to dance  
She learned to dance alone.

The affection of another human being  
is complex and sometimes has to be earned,  
so I won't give in to bitterness, she concluded,  
and will practice the lessons I've learned.

Love me; I demand it, she used to say,  
but human feelings resist the imperative.  
So she resolved to wait for eternity or a for a day,  
for joy that is a gift, not a given.

Sonny Rainshine

# Love Is Like Dandelions

Love is like dandelions,  
profligate and common.  
But have you ever picked up  
a dandelion and looked beyond  
its reputation?

Worn-out words,  
pretty yellow weeds.  
Love is boundless;  
Language is limited.

Sonny Rainshine

# Love Smoke

You've dismembered my soul  
like an atom smasher,  
and my being,  
my very nucleus  
lies in particles,  
like snow flakes  
made of slivers  
of glass,  
like steel sleet.

That was my sanity,  
splayed out there  
now streaming,  
now evaporating  
into the thin vapor  
of love-thoughts  
of a billion other lovers—  
this passion-mist  
hovering like a mushroom cloud  
after hearts collide.

Sonny Rainshine

# Magnificat

My life magnifies all life.  
All the shortcomings,  
all the victories, all the vices,  
all the vanities of this one man  
mirror and multiply  
all those of my brothers, my sisters.

Your life magnifies my life.  
What is poetry and music anyway  
if not a conversation, a convocation,  
a striving for common ground?  
If I listen with all my heart,  
I just might hear  
the very music that you hear.

Sonny Rainshine

# Malleability

A shrouding haze congregates  
in the south, glissading down Palomino Ridge.  
It could be rain, a late spring snow—  
maybe it's my cloudy thoughts.

The hills, like us,  
change all through the day,  
day by day.  
Just last week  
they were all amethysts and emeralds—  
all evergreens and the first redbuds  
of the season.  
Now they rise smoky, stone gray,  
all neutral tones.

I wish to be more like the hills,  
which change their moods  
as we change our clothes.  
Natural things surrender to flux  
and to the passage of time.  
Natural things ebb and flow  
with a supple grace.

Sonny Rainshine



# Man In Phone Booth On A Rainy Day

A cold November drizzle  
had dampened the pages  
of the phone directory  
as it dangled from a wire,  
flaccid, like a yellow and  
white tongue, a thousand numbers  
whispering: Call me.

The phone booth was enclosed  
in glass, unusual these days  
when people carry phone booths  
on their backs and in their cars.  
An accordion door shut  
out the damp wind.

From outside the booth  
the condensation on the glass walls  
of the enclosure made the man  
inside look pixelated  
and fluid. Tears on the glass  
obscured tears in his eyes.

Bad news can come through the mail,  
e- or snail. It can be overhead on the bus,  
packaged up and shipped overnight.  
It can be faxed, it can be filibustered,  
it can be forwarded.

But love affairs always seem to terminate  
at the end of a wire.

Sonny Rainshine

# Manual Work Works

How I wish I were not so lazy,  
then I would not get so crazy  
when misdirected energy and stress  
puts me under duress.

I'll bet the man who toils in the fields  
or assembles windowshields  
never spends a restless night,  
sleepless, frazzled, and uptight.

Desk work may be of worth  
but rarely offers any mirth.  
Constructing houses or picking peaches  
surely beats giving speeches.

Fatigue of the body seems sweeter  
than weariness from making meter  
and I would wager that manual work beats  
poring over yesterday's spreadsheets.

I often think about jobs I used to do;  
with the sun on my back, how time flew!  
I'm tired of not being tired,  
but too much a coward to get myself fired.

Sonny Rainshine

# Marchiness In May

Audacious, impertinent:  
this Marchiness in May.  
The seasons seem to have bumbled,  
bungled into anarchy,  
lost their way, like migrating birds  
whose inner compass  
has dislodged and whirrs  
futilely in the air,  
no longer pointing home.

It is as though winter and summer  
reject their separateness, their polarity  
and have vowed to amalgamate,  
so we'll no longer need twelve  
names for the markings of the moon.

May, the merry month,  
the mighty month, the harbinger  
of jeweled summer nights  
and the gilded dawns of June,  
what must we do,  
what burnt offerings,  
what incantations,  
what penance must we serve  
to break the spell,  
and remove today, this unsettling  
Marchiness in May?

Sonny Rainshine

# Marionette

I am your marionette,  
your puppet. What merits  
consideration, though,  
is not you, who wields the strings  
or me, willingly manipulated,  
but the tension  
and tautness of the string  
that connects us.  
Can it contain  
the strain?

Sonny Rainshine

# Mask Of The Panther

The black of the panther  
is so intensely black  
that in openings in the jungle  
their forms stand out, instead of blending  
into the shadowy foliage.

It's hard not to wonder  
if the constant onus of appearing  
ferocious, menacing, unapproachable  
instills a fear even  
greater than his prey's.

Never to be able to soften, to uncoil  
the lean, sculpted muscles of his back,  
or to gaze absently at the hypnotic  
trickle-trackle of the rain:  
so heavy the mission.

Surely even the fearless stalkers  
of the impenetrable rainforest  
can feel this—  
this disconnectedness,  
this separation. In rare, unguarded moments  
if you dared to get close enough  
you might find signs  
of another kind of hungriness  
in his eyes.

Sonny Rainshine

# Mayan Temples

The disintegrating steps of the ruins  
at Chichen Itza lay scorched in the sun.

The guide told us that for years the pyramid  
had been obscured with jungle vines.

I looked to the pinnacle before I began to climb  
and stared down eternity.

Step up.

Step up.

Step up.

Streamers of inexplicable regret,  
like choking lianas, descended on me  
when there were no more steps.

I withered in the absence of the gods.

Sonny Rainshine

# Maypop

In her frilly lavender or blue fancy-crown  
with a luna-moth green star  
sequestered inside, *passiflora incarnata*  
trails majestically in the grass.

Coveted for her divine nectar  
by the handsome Gulf Fritillary butterfly  
and by *homo sapiens* for her  
luscious green berry  
which makes a pretty jelly,  
she is passionately courted.

A bit pretentious,  
and preferring her more dignified Latin moniker,  
she judiciously rations her nectar  
should anyone call her 'maypop.'  
Like men and nations,  
she can be confrontational at times.

Sonny Rainshine

# Meandering Back To The Fork In The Road

Comes a time  
when past actions seem so foolish  
to us now and we tell ourselves resolutely  
that had we to do it all over,  
we'd take a different path.

But would we have?

We see the diversions in the road  
ahead of us, the estuaries and bayous  
of the river we're sailing down,  
and wonder where they lead.  
The young are curious  
and easily distracted.

And had we not veered off,  
had we dutifully followed  
the worn path, the guiding current,  
would we be writing the same poems,  
singing the same songs,  
dispensing the same wisdom  
as now?

All paths and streams, it would seem,  
can take us somewhere,  
even if they come to an abrupt end  
and turn us back to where we began.  
Sometimes, even, we can retrace our steps  
and seek again the paths we passed  
back then when we were in such a hurry.  
And armed with experience,  
and a hunger for adventure  
see finally what we missed.

Sonny Rainshine



# Medicine Man

The newly licensed interne  
scoffs at shamans, herbalists,  
and witch doctors,  
as he lifts his vial of  
purple tablets  
toward his patient  
and shakes it  
rhythmically.

He scoffs at those  
charletans who "read"  
auras, prognosticate from  
palm prints and tarot cards,  
as he studies his CAT scans  
and EEGs as a theologian  
poring over the Dead Sea scrolls.

Thumping and rattling  
bones with his expensive instruments,  
he pooh-poohs poultices  
and potions, as he scratches  
out indecipherable hieroglyphics  
for narcotics and mood-enhancers.

Managed care, he assures us,  
will set us free from  
the stranglehold of our superstition.  
Step into my apothecary  
and behold the magic  
of modern pharmacology.

Sonny Rainshine

# Medusa Is Mad

The irony of it  
(sort of like Medusa getting bit  
by a snake)  
did not escape her.

She was the one  
who ALWAYS had the upper hand,  
who never gave an inch,  
whose venom was  
100 proof.

She could not  
for the life of her  
pinpoint the moment  
when she had  
lowered her guard,  
exposed her vulnerability.

Betrayal is a slithery thing,  
reptilian, if you will.  
She didn't see it coming  
or she would have coiled  
and struck first.

Sonny Rainshine

## Memento Mori: A Memo

If to dust we must submit,  
and with the cold December wind  
incorporate our breath,  
when lowered last into the pit,  
let the lees of my life blend  
with the ashes of my death.

I hope there'll be diamond or two  
dazzling in the dirt.

Sonny Rainshine

# Message To A Friend Who Has Become A Recluse

Since you've relocated,  
since you've taken residence  
in the sprawling ghettos in your head,  
there amid the tenements  
of pure thought and reason,  
we have missed you  
and you have missed  
a great deal.

You were away  
when we sent you the telegram  
that said:  
Open your drapes,  
there's a full moon tonight  
and she shines for you alone.

The summer rain is still  
as sweet as you remembered it  
and the breeze still caresses;  
the angel-wing begonia  
you left with us  
before you were smothered  
in an avalanche of books  
and esoteria  
seems to miss you too,  
your touch.

Step out,  
step out  
of your mind  
for just a moment  
and re-introduce yourself  
to Life. Nevermind  
the pain you'll feel,  
the uncertainty, the cruelty.  
It is where we live.  
It is home.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Messenger

The extravagant boy with the wing-tipped shoes,  
her Hermes, a man with a message,  
glanced her way twice—  
no, not her way but at her—  
twice.

Lately, she had felt an unexpected certainty  
permeating her perception,  
like warm green tea  
thawing her shivery thoughts  
and the chilly tunnels of her bloodstream;  
every occurrence seemed providential,  
every gesture a rune.

From that very moment,  
not after the first glance,  
but the second, she KNEW  
that the extravagant boy with the wing-tipped shoes  
would look her way—  
no, look at HER—  
a third time,  
and that the years of loneliness  
and yearning were about to dissipate,  
but only if she could summon  
the courage to respond.

Sonny Rainshine

# Metamorphosis

Chrysalis: jade pendant,  
suspended in the wind  
from a dill weed stem  
like a Chinese lantern.

Beauty concentrated,  
compressed,  
bottled up,  
wired to explode.

Sonny Rainshine

# Migrant Mother

Every wrinkle,  
marking her skin, burnt parchment,  
every ache in her body,  
every Great Depression,  
every dustbowl,  
all the backbreaking  
work of men and women  
who draw sustenance from the earth,  
every graying lock  
of her once-silky hair,  
all the tears she's shed,  
all the tables she's set  
all the meals she's cooked  
when the crops failed  
and winter loomed;  
the tender glance  
she gives her husband  
when he's broken  
by cares:  
All is written  
in the holy book  
of her eyes.

Sonny Rainshine



# Milky Ghosts Who Wander In And Out

In certain situations, some people dissolve,  
as trees lose their greenness when night descends  
and turns them into frozen shadows.

A woman of beauty, for example,  
is diminished in a congregation of beauties,  
like a rare orchid at a garden show  
obscured in a sea of blooms.

Shy, unhappy people  
who stand out in a rejoicing crowd,  
wander invisible among themselves.

It's as if we're phantasms,  
milky ghosts who wander in and out  
of perception, peripheral visions.

Perhaps it's only when we fall in love,  
that we feel all here; that another spirit  
has plucked us out of the murky  
river of life and said to us:  
There you are.  
You are there.

Sonny Rainshine

# Milky Light Of Early Evening

Cherish that sliver of time  
descending at the close of day  
like a window shade slowly drawn—  
a white gem glitters on the fabric:  
a solitary diamond, a star.

The day is as fatigued as are we,  
the nourishing sun has resumed  
its manic chase around the globe,  
like a dog in eternal pursuit of its tail.

But it has left behind for a few fleeting moments  
traces of its brilliant presence  
like white dust lingering in the firmament,  
as if to say: Remember me;  
I will not forsake you.

Sonny Rainshine

## Miniature: Woman On A Horse

Rippled like the red dunes  
of Oman, patterned by thirsty wind  
that meanders serpentine  
like a cobra,  
like ribbons of air,  
her hair is the color of the horse;  
her mount's nostrils are flaring,  
like beduoin tent flaps,  
its breath is quick,  
like the wind  
but wet.

Sonny Rainshine

## Missed Calls

That cell phone dude,  
Can you hear him now?  
Who is he talking to?  
You?

Why does no one ever  
answer him?  
Has his life come down to this-  
a dropped call?

That good man  
is trying to reach you.

TURN ON YOUR CELL PHONE.

Sonny Rainshine

# Mr. Wobbly Prepares For Work

Before he goes to work  
he must pack his briefcase.  
First, in goes a canister  
of insecurity (for a midmorning snack) .  
Next a couple of reams of worry,  
double-spaced, bolded.

Carefully, he positions his anger  
(a mixture of anxiety and road rage)  
next to a Ziploc full of disillusionment  
and perplexion.

Finally, he adds a protective layer  
of arrogance and  
Voila!  
He's ready for the day.

Sonny Rainshine

# My Dog Is Not An Existentialist

If my dog were an existentialist,  
he might lay awake all night,  
disturbed about the implications  
of dog spelled backwards  
and how it might add more responsibility  
to his already onerous life.

He might wonder if his gnawed-down bone  
is real or just perceived and even whether perception  
exists or whether there's a heaven  
or whether there are dogs in heaven  
and if so would he get in.

And what if humans don't exist?  
Who will take me for walks  
and fill my water bowl  
with fresh clean water?  
I bark, but where does the sound go?  
Are fleas saints in disguise?  
Dare I ever scratch again?

Did Little Sheba come back?  
What does it all MEAN!

But thankfully my dog  
does not read Schopenhauer,  
but never tires of Lassie reruns.

Sonny Rainshine

# Mystery Lady

I remember she used to  
rub the wings of luna moths  
over her eyelids  
for shadow,  
foreshadowing ingenuity  
and a darkening cruelty.

She was a colossus cocooned  
in a dollhouse; a behemoth  
among forests of bonsai,  
ever expanding,  
the world too small  
to contain her expectations,  
her wingspan.

I saw her the other day,  
on a dark street looking inside a café  
Gazing at a flickering candle  
on a bistro table,  
entranced,  
impatient,  
incomplete,  
waiting  
for me?  
for you?

Sonny Rainshine

# Nathaniel's Workout

Nathaniel approached his daily workouts  
with the determination of a tyrant.

Deviations in his routine  
were regarded as a sign of irresolute,  
a perverse weakness.

He mounted the treadmill  
as if stepping into a sacred river,  
gingerly and expectantly.

As he began the rhythmic  
pacing, he deftly lit up  
a handrolled, illicit Havana  
cigar, eyes watering pleasantly  
as the exercise room began  
to fill with its sweet smoke.

Placing the stogie on a silver tray attached  
cleverly to the exercise machine,  
he then enjoyed an enthusiastic swig  
of Wild Turkey from a crystal  
carafe kept within easy reach.

The liquor and the exertion  
produced a vigorous sweat  
on his bushy brow.

Setting the jug aside,  
he then (as was his routine)  
unwrapped his double-glazed doughnut,  
which he had luckily pre-buttered  
and dusted liberally with powdered sugar  
and swallowed it down in just two bites  
(a record for him) .

After a good 4 and ½ minutes,  
(his normal workout limit) ,  
Nathaniel switched off the machine,  
enjoyed another swig and smoke,



then retired to the master bedroom  
for a nice cozy nap.

When he woke up his wife asked him  
how his workout had gone.

"I think I overdid it this time, my dear.  
I'm afraid I'm becoming one of those  
over-eager health enthusiastists."

Sonny Rainshine

# National Forest Of The Mind

He never had need of nature;  
sequoia forests furnished his mind  
and pristine mountain brooks  
aflush with rainbow trout  
coursed through his being  
like capillaries.

He began to equate the memory  
of tupelo gums, wood ferns, and wild geese  
with the wilderness itself  
and all his expeditions  
and trail hikes were imagined ones—  
a real tree horrified him  
and seemed too intimate,  
too towering, so disturbingly real.

It was similar to those people  
who spend their holiday  
taking photographs  
instead of engaging with the surroundings,  
a lens keeping them separate  
from the intensity  
of experience.  
They return with a hundred pictures  
in well-organized albums,  
but the images in their hearts  
and heads are blurred  
and confused.

Someday, he says,  
he'll take a trip  
to see if he still remembers  
how to see a tree.

Sonny Rainshine

# Nature Class

Much like slender zebras queued up,  
an infantry in black and white camouflage,  
the birch trees in the distance  
motioned to me with palsied gestures,  
green hands trembling,  
torsos imperceptably bent.

I will teach you a lesson  
in grace, poise, and flexibility,  
they seem to say, though in a tone  
I could scarcely hear above the wind.

I will teach you to look at black and white  
while seeing the whole spectrum,  
and the gradients too, in the sky  
and in the black earth wherein my roots  
seek support and nourishment.

When I reached the hilltop,  
removing my shoes  
and entering the classroom  
with the blue domed ceiling  
and the floor carpeted  
in last year's leaves,  
my mind unfolded like a flower.

Sonny Rainshine

# Necessity Of Night

In renouncing his shadow he renounced the sun;  
his shadow turned white and succumbed to extinction.  
He became transparent, a colorless mist.

Regarding too late that if his shadow was banished,  
light must have failed and the sun must have vanished  
and he therefore did not exist.

It was only then that it came to light  
the terrible necessity of night;  
that happiness was wedded to despair  
and contrast is present everywhere.

Sonny Rainshine

# New York Stenographer, 1942

On her desk reposes a vase  
filled not with flowers  
but with exquisitely sharpened pencils,  
points up, a menacing porcupine,  
with stark gray quills.

A lined steno pad,  
flipped to a fresh page,  
lies serenely on the spotless blotter,  
waiting, thirsty to capture  
the baroque swirls and loops  
of her immaculate shorthand.

With perfect poise  
and dignified demeanor,  
she plucks a # 2 from its holy ark  
and applies its tapered point  
to her left index finger  
until the pressure releases the bitterness  
and disappointment from her face  
and replaces it with pain.

Mercifully, the intercom buzzes  
like enraged cicadas  
railing at the twilight.  
The white ruled pad knows its purpose,  
lies ready to serve.  
This thought, and this alone,  
will get her through the day.

Sonny Rainshine

# Night, After Lovers' Quarrel

The day is behind me,  
like the "V" of the wake  
a sailboat leaves;  
like the footprints  
of seagulls, crosshatching  
the wet sand.

I can hear the sea birds,  
squalling over the riptides,  
keening at the wind  
and the crouching clouds,  
the sole witnesses.

When the day began,  
we were lovers,  
scanning the shore  
for starfish, fishing for stars  
in each other's eyes.

Now the sun has receded,  
but left behind a ghostly residue  
of diminishing light;  
the night burns before me,  
a cold, black flame.

Sonny Rainshine

# Nobody's Looking

Go ahead; do it.  
Nobody's looking,  
nobody cares.  
Hurt him,  
toss her away,  
lust for him,  
abuse her,  
laugh at him,  
embarrass her,  
betray him.

Steal it,  
damage it,  
ruin it,  
throw it away,  
crush it,  
smoke it,  
loathe it,  
spit on it.  
Go ahead; do it.  
Nobody's looking,

but yourself.

Sonny Rainshine

# Noir

She left nothing behind  
but a three-quarters-smoked  
cigarette, menthol.

For a moment the  
spiraling column of smoke  
reminded him of her:  
wispy, thin,  
dead, deadly.

The smear of pastel  
on the filter  
clashed with the  
primary colors  
of the smouldering tip,  
fiery, menacing.

He picked it up  
from the crystal ashtray,  
hers, expensive,  
and took a deep draw  
from it.

Outside the night  
descended, darker  
than he remembered  
and he wondered  
if it would ever end.

Sonny Rainshine



# Nomads Going Home

It is said that the reason  
we keep going back  
to places from our past  
is to find out why we left.

Maybe some bedouin instinct—  
an irrepressible urge to fold our tents  
and move on when the seasons  
begin to change—is embedded  
in our nature.

Maybe we can't  
resist seeing what's around  
the curve in the road,  
on the other side of the hill,  
at the water's edge  
and beyond the water.

Melville called it  
that "November in his soul."  
Is it some icy zephyr in our being  
that makes us leave our  
families and friends  
to set off looking for  
the promise of April?  
for warm southern seas?  
for the neon beacons  
of the city?

Yet, we reserve  
a point of return,  
that place on a game-board  
marked "GO"—  
that place we left,  
not fully knowing why,  
(maybe it was just our turn)  
but still a place to where  
we can come home  
when the season turns

drizzly and cold again.

Sonny Rainshine

# Not About Art

You must learn to tell me,  
not write it. No,  
don't even speak;  
show me.

Don't even show me,  
let me see it myself  
in the irises in your eyes,  
in a gesture,  
in silence.

Do not reduce me  
to a simile, a convenient rhyme;  
wipe your heart off the page,  
This is not about art.

Sonny Rainshine

# Not Quite Silence But Almost It

It was in the Algonquin forest  
of Ontario that I first experienced  
it: Not quite silence, but almost it.

I only noticed it after we band of ruffians,  
weekend hikers from Ann Arbor,  
out to wrestle with the elements

and time-travel back to a time  
when mobile phones were not even  
a nascent idea in some geek's back burner

and a time when people worked  
for food and shelter, not rectangles  
of colored paper and did not call it work.

It descended upon me like the laciest snow flake,  
after we had all stopped our chattering  
and squatted down next to the crystalline

creek which ran like the deer  
and glistened in the last halos of the sun.  
Not-quite-silence, but almost it.

On days when primevel forests  
seem something found only in travel books,  
when it seems that the color green

has abandoned the spectrum  
and vanished in the hills far away,  
I ransack the million compartments of my mind

and I'm almost back there;  
not quite, but close enough  
to feel its mighty pulse.

Sonny Rainshine

# Not-Quite-Love

His greatest fear  
was what we all fear:  
that love has passed him by,  
or that what he thought was love,  
was something else,  
something inferior.

The interior of his heart  
was cluttered with these thoughts,  
and he began to love his fear  
and to fear his love.

How ephemeral is this emotion,  
this state of being  
so immortalized in poetry and song.

He was destined to fall in love many times  
in his lifetime, but never feel its joy,  
because he always feared it was something  
not-quite-love that he felt,  
something less than perfect.

Sonny Rainshine

# Not-So-Random Inquiries

Who are you?  
Are you a homebody?  
Are you a nobody,  
like Emily Dickinson professed to be?  
Are you everybody,  
as the pantheists suggest?

Are you what you do?  
A teacher,  
an accountant,  
a retiree,  
a mother,  
a father?

Does your identity abide  
in your gender?  
in your beliefs,  
in your heritage?

Does who you are change?  
Are you the same person  
you were yesterday.

Who will you be ten years from now?  
Do you like who you are?  
Do other people like who you are?  
Does it matter who you are?

Who am I to ask such questions?

Sonny Rainshine

# Octobering

Every year about this time  
you start octobering.  
You've long tired of  
juning and julying  
and it's too early  
to go decembering.

It's as if the world  
has turned brown, yellow,  
red, and mostly orange.  
Everywhere pumpkins pop up,  
in the field next door,  
on the window sill,  
in the reflections  
in your autumnish eyes.

You were made for fall,  
or was it designed for you?  
The tart crispness of nights,  
the tart ripeness of late harvest  
fruit, the tart taste of things  
dying, yes, dying but  
not yet dead.

As for me, I'll go marching,  
marching forward toward May,  
the month of warmth and  
expectation, the season of blues and greens,  
in which, of course,  
lie the saps and syrups  
of darker colors.

Sonny Rainshine

# Ode To A Mason Jar

Who is Mason?

Let us thank him for this work of art.  
How round the vessel, yet so square,  
a profound basin,  
so elegant, yet spare.

Crowned with a golden lid,  
it talks; it says: Pop!  
to alert us of good things  
to come; savory things  
bubble below its top.

Thank you Mason  
for giving us jelly,  
jam, and marmelade.  
Graceful as a Hopi jug,  
with a sugary, fruity belly,  
all homemade. We salute you  
with a hug.

Sonny Rainshine



# Ode To First Frost

Ah, there you are at last,  
you with your silver knife,  
an icy glint in your eye.  
Nosferatu from the North, you will siphon sap  
like blood tonight.

Your arrival this year  
has been late, but the clarion calls,  
anxious, flustered geese  
enchanted by a cyclical magnetism,  
impossible to resist,  
like Bela Lugosi's eyes,  
assemble into V's  
and leave us behind,  
huddled in our houses,  
blundled in our false feathers.

You've not spared one  
lingering aster, not one  
ivy runner from your  
killing touch; the crystalline crust  
stings like the wasps of summer.

Are you proud to be  
nature's executioner?  
Do you shiver in your own  
lonely frigidity?

I'll try to understand your purpose  
for being, and marvel at the delicate lace  
you leave behind to mark  
your victims, but come March  
I'll be sorting my seeds for next year  
and burying for you your dead.

Sonny Rainshine

# Okie From Skokie

I hear you bought a farmhouse  
in Sonoma, grabbed it for a song  
in foreclosure, and with a vinyard.

Had your fill of mergers and acquistions,  
you told me in your last e-mail.

Had it up to here in the phony  
intelligensia, the name-droppers,  
the white hiphop singers  
whose anger is based  
on deprivation,  
not rage.

Had enough of having too much,  
you opined. Want to feel the squish  
of grapes on your toes  
and want to watch the vines  
crawl toward the azure  
California sky.

The jpeg you sent of the adobe  
house where you will live  
looked sad to me; looked, well,  
foreclosed. Looked lonely  
and forsaken. Do you have enough  
heart left to fill the rooms,  
to ripen the grapes  
to bring your very soul  
to fruition?

Are grapes hard to grow?

Sonny Rainshine

# Old Man, Wondering

He told me of a time,  
a time longer than I can remember,  
or even imagine,  
when people were less cynical,  
when humanity  
was not embarrassed  
by sentiment,  
because the sentiment  
was as real  
as the grass,  
a time when people could say  
things like "Alas! "  
and not regret it.

There have been times  
when I yearned to say  
"Alas! "  
But mumbled some  
profanity instead.

When emotions are the fodder  
of comedians; when our deepest feelings  
are something that must be hidden  
like some drunken relative,  
then where are we to put them?  
Tears are real, watery things  
that I can touch.

Sonny Rainshine

# Omega Wolf

I'm told that wolf packs  
are rigidly hierarchical.  
Each member  
knows its station  
and its role.

The alpha male  
and his alpha wife  
typically rule without resistance.

The omega wolf  
eats last, and is  
kept in his  
place by all the other members  
of the pack.  
Any breach of contract  
is met with threatening growls and  
bared teeth.

It's said that  
some omegas  
stoically submit and accept  
their plight.  
Others rebel  
and leave the pack,  
seeking out other omegas,  
even finding omega mates  
and starting their own packs—  
proof positive that oppression  
is not inevitable  
and can be resisted  
if you're clever enough  
to sneak away.

I wonder if the omega  
refugees and their offspring  
have short memories  
and designate an omega as well.

## Sonny Rainshine

## On An Impulse

He spent his life at the rim of the vortex, teetering  
on the edge of the swirling miscellany of humanity;  
the cold indifferent thrust of time below.

But one day, an impetuous urge came from nowhere  
and nudged him forward. He stretched his arms  
behind him as if they were wings of angels  
and with one forceful inhalation,  
he dived head first into the spiraling-up  
and spiraling-down  
of life and all its giddiness and grief.

Sonny Rainshine

# On 'Death Rides The Pale Horse' By Turner

Death in this painting is not beautiful,  
as you'll find Him in Medieval  
allergorical etchings—all slender with perfect posture.  
The horse He rides here  
is sickly pale and grimaces  
in agony as He gallops  
onward to His ghastly destination.

No angular stick-figure,  
not draped in elegant white shrouds,  
not smiling as though the  
viewer had just shared  
a Knock-knock-who's-there? joke.  
Death rides bareback  
and appears to be in  
a distorted position,  
almost like an acrobat,  
reaching out toward the viewer  
all bloody bones, all red  
and ENRAGED.

I showed the print to my friend  
who wondered what it would look like  
up close—  
Too horrifying, too immediate.  
We turned the page.

Now,  
when I look at the painting,  
I hear hoofbeats.  
When I close the book  
and look inward,  
I hear my heartbeat.

Sonny Rainshine

# On The Contrary

Roses are blue,  
violets are red.  
Sugar is bitter,  
or sour instead.

Emeralds are red,  
rubies are green.  
Happy is sad,  
Fat is lean.

Up is down,  
water is dry,  
Clean is dirty,  
the earth is the sky.

The head is the foot,  
heaven is hell,  
love is hate-  
Oh, well.

Always be wary  
of being contrary,  
and making a fiction  
of contradiction.

Sonny Rainshine



# On The Widows' Walk

On the widows' walk the intoxicating perfume  
of early wisteria was blended by the blustery March wind  
into her own sachet of jasmine and lavender.

The purple vines themselves, grape-like clusters,  
crept up the crisscrossed trellis as if prowling  
for the invading scents, to repel or to merge.

Her shawl, which covered her head like a mantilla,  
whipped in the wind like an ultramarine banner,  
as if a signal or a surrender.

Out there where her eyes transfixed,  
were yellow buoys, their desolate bells  
clanging like church bells, funereal.

Out there where majestic clipper ships  
pierced the line of the horizon  
lay a promise of the sea

to return to her what it borrowed  
two years and three months ago:  
the man who hunted whales

and who was the repository  
of her heart.

Sonny Rainshine

# One Leaf Minus A Thousand

Why is it so difficult  
when looking at, say, a leaf,  
without the imprint  
of thousands of other leaves  
distorting the view?

To be able to observe something  
as we did the first time  
we set eyes upon it,  
when we were  
also as fresh and new  
as spring buds:  
ah, now that would be  
a noteworthy event.

If only we had known  
back then the gravity,  
the urgency of that first glimpse  
of a rainbow, or even the reflection  
of a rainbow in a still pond,  
might we have written  
better poems,  
lived richer lives?

Sonny Rainshine

# Ophiciophobia

He was not born with ophiciophobia,  
the fear of snakes, but  
the swamps of Louisiana  
hiss in the sun with crawly things.

You have to learn to tell  
a moccasin from a water snake,  
a coachwhip from a cottonmouth  
and to keep your eyes on the ground.

"Watch for snakes, son, "  
his mama said when she heard  
the screen door slam.  
"Yes, ma'am, ." he called back.

Now that he lives in New York City,  
the only reptiles live in Bronx zoo.  
Yet other venomous creatures  
wait poised to strike,  
and he never fails to warn his son:  
"Watch out for snakes.  
You have to know the difference..."

Sonny Rainshine

# Orbiting Eagle

The reflection of the orbiting eagle  
in the white-capped lake  
was somehow more beautiful than the bird;  
the white peaks of the waves in the wind  
accented the snowy feathers,  
and the blacks and sepias  
skipped on the water's surface  
like quarternotes on blue paper.

The circling of the bird of prey  
sketched the parameters of the circular lake  
and it became like a clockface,  
with its armless hands tracking the time,  
which was endless.

All angles become curves,  
everything strives for roundness.  
The bird will rest for awhile  
only to resume its rotations,  
ever searching for, perhaps,  
its original place, its point of departure.

Sonny Rainshine

# Our Own Kind

There are only a few creatures  
who kill their own kind,  
unless it's for food or in self-defense.

What do the birds think  
when they see the bombs  
break on the villages below;

What do butterflies think  
when they find themselves  
caught in the crossfire?

What do stray dogs think  
when kids beat a homeless man  
to death?

It's a good thing they don't think,  
(so biologist say) ,  
or they'd give us a piece of their mind.

Sonny Rainshine

# Pair Of Haiku

Spring

First bud on the plum,  
still huddled in brown shawls,  
Still stuffed with chill.

Winter

Plum bud sleeps deeply,  
pushing toward any sign of warmth,  
dreaming of springs past.

Sonny Rainshine

# Pandora's Prayer

Frozen tears, frozen tears,  
diamonds, tear-dropp pearls.

Tears aflame, tears aflame,  
garnets, rubies, red quartz.

Sad tears, blue tears,  
sapphires, sad sapphires.

Jealous tears, envious tears,  
chinese jade, emeralds.

Here, take this key,  
this seal, this solder of gold.

Lock the jewel-case  
of sorrows,  
this repository  
of aching hearts

and liquify the key.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of Five Stones

His son, eight years old,  
held out his perfect hand  
in which lay five perfect stones  
that he had gathered from the river bank.

This one (a purple one) is an amethyst,  
he said.

This one (a white one) is a diamond,  
he said.

This one (a red one) is a ruby,  
he said.

This one (a green one) is an emerald,  
he said.

This one (a blue one) is a sapphire,  
he said.

Ah, what beautiful stones,  
the father exclaimed, but they are  
not gems, not jewels.

But, the boy said,  
they are. Jewels are beautiful.  
Jewels are hard to find.  
Jewels glitter and come  
in glorious colors.

Ah, but jewels are more beautiful  
than these, more hard to find,  
more glittery, and the colors  
are more dramatic.

But these stones are beautiful to me,  
said the little boy.  
Then they are treasures  
beyond all price,  
answered the father.

Sonny Rainshine



# Parable Of The Inquisitive Boy

I want to jump over the wall,  
but there is no wall to jump over,  
said the boy to his mother.

Foolish boy, there are walls  
all around us. There is one  
between you and me,  
there is one of stone and silk,  
venom and honey  
between us here.

I want to sail on the sea,  
but there is no sea,  
said the boy to his father.

You are young, my son.  
Look out there: Oceans and oceans  
of life and love and losses  
stretch out as far as you can see.  
The water is deep, stormy,  
but there are quiet spots.

I want to travel to undiscovered lands,  
but there is no new land to discover,  
said the boy to himself.

Then explore the dark regions  
of your self, my friend,  
the places where goodness is kept,  
where courage is sequestered,  
where the man you are to become  
waits for you.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of The Perplexed Sitcom Fan

A venerable Buddhist master  
visited the honorable home  
of his Western friends  
upon their request.

Every day, upon finishing his meditations,  
he would retire to the living room  
(his friends both off to work)  
to peek inside the window of the mysterious  
black box full of pictures that moved  
and spoke. Ah, what a hoot!  
he exclaimed, in Chinese.

He watched Klinger put on a cocktail dress  
and sexy city girls take one off.  
Naughty, he murmured, in Chinese.  
He saw Diane marry Sam  
and then not marry him  
and run off with a psychiatrist,  
and then to a convent.  
Good idea, he grinned,  
in Chinese.

He saw Lucy have a baby  
and move to Connecticut,  
and then suddenly Lucy  
had no children and worked  
as a secretary for a curmudgeon boss  
in the city.  
No Chinese came to him  
to comment on this.

Finally, he understood what  
was happening: Westerners,  
when they die went directly to karma hell,  
where their lives repeated  
over and over and over  
until they were canceled.

From that day,  
he never again went into the living room,  
added an extra hour to his meditation,  
lit two incense sticks instead of one  
and prayed to the spirit of Buddha  
to release him from the eternal wheel of karma.  
A week later he was on a plane  
back to Nepal.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of The Proud Butterfly

A proud white butterfly  
desired to be the most beautiful,  
the most envied of his species.  
He rubbed against the reddest flowers  
and he pilfered a stripe of azure from the sky.  
He bathed in golden vats of pollen.  
He even gorged on sumptuous nectar  
to become sweet and fat.

The day came when he determined  
to make his grand debut.  
Poised on a begonia leaf,  
his point-of-departure, his runway,  
he flapped, flopped, but never flew.  
So encumbered by his accoutrements,  
aerodynamics weighed him down,  
as a streamlined salamander  
leapt and lapped him up.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of The Time-Stopper

Freddie Morgan, on an impulse,  
removed all the calendars  
from his walls, purged his belongings  
of watches and clocks,  
and uninstalled Outlook  
on his PC.

He carefully avoided the dates  
on newspapers and his onscreen  
TV Guide and flew into a rage  
when anyone asked him the time  
or the day of the week.

Disoriented at first,  
he barricaded himself  
inside his house  
and attempted to cook 3-minute eggs  
without a timer.

Soon he became adept  
at accurately estimating  
the passage of time  
without artificial means,  
and thus concluded  
that time is a bully  
who will assert his presence  
regardless.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of The Willow Leaf

A willow leaf flutters in the wind,  
loosens and drops into the thrusting  
current below.

Whirling, pirouetting, tumbling  
like an acrobat, like a ballerina,  
it is carried forth.

The tree from which it came calls after:  
Come back, resist,  
come home. The river  
will destroy you.

The willow leaf calls back:  
The river is wise;  
I've heard he knows the way to the ocean.

The willow tree weeps.  
The river laughs.  
The little leaf wonders  
what's around the bend.

Sonny Rainshine

# Parable Of This Man And That Man

One day two gods were talking,  
the god of This Man and the god of That Man,  
over coffee.

The god of This Man remarks, perplexed:  
The thing that gets me is that This Man  
thinks I care what he does in his bedroom,  
as if I didn't have my own life to live  
and live and live.

Yes, and That Man erects  
the most gorgeous architectural edifices,  
and then blows them to smithereens  
because he doesn't care for You,  
god of This Man,  
or because some one of them  
is irate about something  
or other.  
Such children!

Yes, and  
they spend half their mortal days  
staring at a tube  
watching That Man or This Man  
live his life, while their own  
is spent cursing at traffic  
and procuring tubes  
with wider screens  
and clearer pictures,  
so that they can live their  
lives vicariously with more clarity  
and without having to strain  
their aging eyes.

There's barely a tree left, a meadow  
without one of their living-boxes  
perched on it, or a mountain pass  
without one of their wheel-boxes  
rumbling through.

What to do? What to do?  
said both gods at once.  
I say let's teach `em a lesson,  
as he reached for his lightening bolt  
and volcano generator.  
Let's turn up the thermostat on the sun.

No, said the god of This Man,  
let's give `em one more chance,  
the way we've done through eternity.

Thus said,  
they continued their coffee,  
heads bowed, muttering softly.

Sonny Rainshine



# Passing Torches

It always happens that way:  
A generation grows cynical  
and youth steps in all wide-eyed  
and exuberant to exclaim:  
No, this is not right!  
We can do better.

A force to be reckoned with,  
they are aflame with possibility.  
They are the repositories of energy  
and we would be wise to rally  
behind them. Can they  
make things better?

Yes, they can.

Sonny Rainshine

# Passive Voice

You protest  
that love has passed you by,  
that life has passed you by,  
but was it you  
who were the passer-by?

Sonny Rainshine

# Patience And Cherry Blossoms

In March the Japanese  
get impatient.  
When will the cherries bloom?  
Too late; too soon. These  
days the latent  
energy of spring simmers.

But the cherry tree  
is not on our schedule,  
not penciled in for a Monday show,  
not under our control, but free  
and under the rule  
of the laws of Nature.

Take your time, cherry-flower.  
You're worth the wait.

Sonny Rainshine

## Peter Pan In Limbo

As a child he wondered  
why anyone would want to grow up.  
"Oh, grow up! " friends would say to him.  
"I'm tryin', " he would answer,  
noncommittally.

Growing up,  
it seemed to him,  
meant growing down:  
Lowering expectations,  
tempering emotions,  
having toys,  
such as fast cars  
or electronic paraphernalia,  
but not calling them toys;  
learning that being an adult  
means that saying I love you  
to anyone becomes laden  
with gravity, not spontaneous  
and beautiful the way a child  
says it.

Is growing up  
much different from  
growing old?  
he wondered.

Sonny Rainshine

# Picturing Peace

Picture a meadow  
sheathed in snow.  
Imagine the glow  
of a rainbow  
arcng toward the sun.

Now picture the world at peace.  
Nations sit down to feast  
on the bounty increased  
from west to east  
by proclamation.

The picture is blurred.  
How absurd,  
they say. But I've heard  
from the battle injured  
and from the dove

that it's worth the time,  
it's infinitely sublime,  
and hardly a crime,  
to want to climb  
toward universal love.

The fairy-dust of a dream?  
It would seem.  
But like gold dust's gleam,  
sparkling in a Sierra stream,  
it shines. It shimmers.

Sonny Rainshine

## Plaintalk, A Love Song

She asked me not to speak to her in colors,  
or compare her to the passing of the seasons.  
She told me not to talk of Grecian ruins  
or classic rhymes and lofty reasons.

Converse with me as an everyday man,  
tell me about the routine of your day;  
Assure me that you enjoy my company;  
ask me if I'll stay.

I will not speak to you in colors;  
I will not compare you to a morning in May;  
I'll speak to you alone and not the muses,  
then my love will have its say.

Sonny Rainshine

# Playing Golf At Midnight

Playing golf in the moonlight,  
at midnight, at night, when light  
cannot be trusted, when sight  
deceives, it can't be right.

He drives the sphere with the craters  
like the moon, white like the moon,  
orbiting like the moon; soon  
it will collide with grass or sand, and

the black night will swallow the white  
moon and the driving sphere  
and no one will know where  
went the white and where went the black  
and why.

And after the ball has divorced its tee  
and after the moon laughs  
and retires behind the roofs  
of the neighborhood houses,  
the silence of the green  
and the heartbreaking loveliness  
of the green emerge and converge  
and here in the suburban  
wilderness, the only home he has,  
he sees for the first time  
how clouds absorb  
and disperse  
the light of the moon.

Sonny Rainshine

# Pneuma

The icy exhalations of a sudden Alberta clipper,  
the temperate gasps of zephyrs in late July,  
The inspiration and expiration  
of Nature's persona, a heave to defy  
or a sigh of resignation:  
Everything breathes;  
everything hinges on the moment  
almost imperceptible  
between the taking in and the letting out,  
and the letting go.

Sonny Rainshine



# Pointillism

It doesn't take  
a lot of blue  
to turn yellow  
into green.

It doesn't take  
a lot of clouds  
to produce  
a summer shower.

It doesn't take  
much hurt  
to make us  
bitter, like  
green persimmons.

It doesn't take  
a lot of words  
to make a child  
feel unloved.

But it does take  
a lot of effort  
to carefully choose  
the colors we place  
on our palette  
everyday.

Sonny Rainshine

# Portrait In The Landscape Of Emotion

Where is the fear in your face?  
Is it ensconced in the crease  
beneath your right eye, or in that trace  
of blue in the Matisse

you bought on your holiday in France,  
that lonely blue period in your life  
when you felt exploited by circumstance  
and when you lost your wife.

I wonder if fear, or love, or joy  
become fixated in our flesh  
or do we destroy  
these feelings and start fresh

every time we weep  
or thrash about in anger.  
Can we sweep  
away danger

like lint on our coats  
leaving behind no debris,  
or does it take umbrage in our throats,  
an unarticulated plea?

I'd say if you look hard in every case,  
you can see the fear and strain  
there in every face,  
secreted behind the pain.

Sonny Rainshine

## Portrait Of A Lady Ii

Her allure was like a spider's web:  
intricate, purposefully engineered,  
designed for endurance,  
strong as copper wire,  
painstakingly developed,  
exquisitely esthetic,  
hazardous as a land mine,  
and utterly transparent.

Sonny Rainshine

# Potent Medicine

He followed the tracks  
down to where the wild azeleas  
staged their drama  
in pink jackets and perfume.

He'd heard wildcats  
had been spotted  
along the pungent banks  
of Pearl River,  
licking their paws  
after a kill  
among the cyprus stumps  
rising there.

It was an overcast day,  
a day when fishing was pointless  
and worries that usually  
simmered in the background  
surfaced like goldfish  
to nibble at his equilibrium.

It was a day  
he needed to be amazed.  
It was a day  
he had to see a wildcat.

Sonny Rainshine

# Pouring Tea In A Broken Cup

Let's compare Roderick to a teacup,  
brimming with the warmth  
that he syphons off his friends  
and diverts to himself,  
much as heating ducts do.  
His self-pity and lack of feeling  
exudes from his body  
like ribbons of steam  
from his Darjeeling.

All pretty on the outside,  
rimmed in gilt not gold,  
inside he's cracked.  
Miniscule fissures  
from age and the heat of incendiary  
ferocity riddle his psyche  
like tributaries,  
like capillaries.

Always emotionally arid,  
he looks at you as if to say:  
Fill me up.  
But all the love you give him,  
all the kind words you pour  
into his thirsty china cup  
evaporate  
and return to you as distilled  
condensations—ungratefulness,  
tea that has brewed too long  
and become bitter.

At last, drained and empty  
you decide that sometimes  
a favorite thing such as a teacup  
is broken and can no longer  
contain your appreciation  
and provide you with pleasure  
and you either consign it to the back  
of the cupboard, bequeath it to someone else,

or throw it away.

Sonny Rainshine

# Pragmatist Vs. Romantic

Her fiance was a metaphysician  
who constantly quizzed her:

Why are we here?

Who are we really?

Is there life after death?

Are there gods

and do they intervene

in our lives?

To which she responded:

That shirt needs ironing;

what shall we have for dinner, dear?

Sonny Rainshine

# Prairie Flowers Don'T Like Trees

Like prairie wildflowers  
she loathed the tree,  
obstructing her view of  
the pyrotechnics of the sun,  
the rising balloon and bubble  
of the Nebraska moon.

But she had not the heart  
to cut it down. There was  
something headstrong and hurt  
about it, like her.

Each year new growth,  
only a few scraggly branches  
struggling in the heated breeze  
of the plains, extended  
the slow, verdant inching  
toward the sky.

The tree was here to stay,  
to use up its allotted time,  
to try to be, well, beautiful  
and earnest,  
as she tried to be.

There are prairie flowers enough,  
she said to herself.  
One tree will not break me.

Many times, as she sat in its shade  
in the summer dusk,  
she looked up into its branches  
and saw there a different moon,  
a different sun.

Sonny Rainshine



# Pretense Enough

Last night you woke up in the middle of the night  
and said you were leaving for Berlin. When?  
Tonight, before I chicken out. I will write  
biographies of Wagner and Kafka. Why?

Germanic, Teutonic, they understand my pain;  
I will interpret them for you. For me?  
Your pain has many corridors, many chambers—  
you have neglected your suffering. I have?

You have neglected me. I am Suffering.  
I am the Immaculate Deception. You?  
You will come with me, my Beatrice, my Dulcinea.  
You will finally confront your heartache. I

will not. I will not. I will not. Because  
you are insufferable.

Sonny Rainshine

# Procession

A sinuous black worm,  
the funeral procession  
of black limousines crawls  
toward the cemetery.

The headlights on the  
hearse stare straight ahead  
like zombies' eyes,  
illuminating the way.

Automobiles passing  
the opposite way pull over,  
some passengers hushed,  
some restless.

Burdened with baby's breath  
gladioli sprays and black lace,  
a funeral is solemn  
departure—a journey  
before the journey  
after the journey.

Sonny Rainshine

# Proposals

You said you wanted to live  
where mandevillas grow wild,  
where the rain is warm all year long,  
where willows don't weep.

I said I wanted to live  
where flamenco music prolongs the night,  
where sunsets are infused with  
colors not yet discovered.

You said you would be happy to live  
where flamenco music prolongs the night,  
where sunsets are infused with  
colors not yet discovered.

I said I would be happy to live  
where mandevillas grow wild,  
where the rain is warm all year long,  
where willows don't weep.

Sonny Rainshine

# Quandry

Barefoot boy  
sees ten-dollar bill  
hidden in the middle  
of a poison ivy patch.

He recalls a toy sailboat  
that costs \$12.98.  
Will he retrieve the bill?

Sonny Rainshine

## Quandry II

A boy with a pair of scissors  
sees his older sister asleep  
out by the pool,  
her hand on the hilt of  
a large flyswatter.  
Next to her she has  
tied a cluster of helium filled  
balloons from her birthday party.

Will he release the balloons  
to watch them drift  
off toward Jupiter?  
Or will he give  
his sister a stylish haircut?

Sonny Rainshine

# Quantification Of Quality

How many feathers has the fan?  
he once asked me as we watched the peacocks  
shashay on the grass.  
Feathers? That's absurd; it is the beauty of the bird  
that brings me here.

Might not a specimen of 40 feathers  
exceed the loveliness of one with only 39?  
he went on. Does not a palette of 14 colors  
make a prettier landscape than 4?

The pleasure of nature and of arts  
is not found in quantification, I replied,  
or enumeration but in the whole and its parts,  
not in atomic tables and charts.

As he attempted time and again  
to sneak upon the birds to count  
their feathers, the sunset and its countless colors,  
the trees and their chaotic symmetry,  
the immeasurable vault of the sky  
encompassed the two of us,  
and I knew that tonight  
I just might count the stars.

Sonny Rainshine

## Questions Dangerous; Questions Dark

If you could be, which  
would you be: the moon  
or moonlight?

Would you choose to be  
feathery apple blossoms  
suspended by the wind,  
or would you be  
the wind?

If a wizard,  
a generous god,  
gave you a choice:  
You'll be a blue planet,  
whirling 'round the sun  
or you'll be the sun;  
which would you be?

Do you wish to be the lover  
or the beloved? The wishing well,  
filled with cool, life-giving water,  
or the wish?

Sonny Rainshine

# Rage Like Turkish Coffee

Your rage, like Turkish coffee,  
dispenses in unctuous streams.  
Dark, rich as concentrated syrup,  
you like the taste of it,  
and you serve it in miniature cups  
with no saucer to collect  
the over-spill.

You take it black  
and bitter as green persimmons.  
Fury and wrath are your substitutes  
for milk and sugar,  
and the taste lingers  
on your lips, and the heat  
is fiery on your fingers.

Take back your scalding pot  
of roiling words and boiling spleen.  
I have drunk your incendiary liqueur,  
once too many times, and now  
I spit it out.

Sonny Rainshine



# Rainy Nights When The Highway Becomes A Looking Glass

Mirror, mirror, on the pavement black  
the night has doubled and reflects the track  
of on-coming headlights piercing the dark,  
a barrier of air, menacing and stark.

It's disconcerting, seeing two of everything,  
light refracted and frenetically dispersing.  
A traffic light's red blinking  
gets me thinking

about danger, about the color red  
and people I've never known, now dead,  
who met their demise on a silvery street  
betrayed by the man in the driver's seat.

The rain is lulling on the windshield's sprawl,  
each dropp a mirrored ball.  
Alone in my car, I feel conflicted,  
both happy and sad, and contradicted.

Sonny Rainshine

# Random Wars

Shield me from  
wrath of the wraiths  
troubling the surface  
of the lake.  
Cradle me like  
albumen does the yolk,  
cuddling it toward birth.

Rein in the  
twitching fiends  
that annihilate my equilibrium  
and crush me  
like an atom smasher  
as they congregate  
like buckshot  
in the dense cartouche  
of another day.

Sonny Rainshine

# Raw Honey

Sing me a song without lyrics,  
like a jazz instrumental from the sixties;  
liquid emotion decanted from the funnel  
of a silver saxophone; the throbbing throat  
of a thirty-year-old trumpet.  
Sometimes words extinguish true feelings,  
reduce them to guttural noise,  
the ephemeral hissing of sibilants,  
words have too many associations;  
music is raw honey.

Sometimes I wonder what it felt like  
to be human before language was born;  
a new born baby communicates  
and doesn't know a vowel  
from a consonant. How alive  
must they be! How vibrant.

Yet, we're stuck with them, words.  
They bind us together as they keep us apart;  
the song of humanity pulsates  
throughout the earth,  
a rumbling cacophony.

Sonny Rainshine

# Rebellion And Renunciation

As if one of those cubist nudes  
had chastised the master Picasso

and whittled off the angles  
that chafed her skin like mangles,

she broods now among the rotund and exudes  
opulence and rotundity—

a pillowy Rubens angel  
with ineffectual wings,  
conversely, she feels  
lighter now.

Sonny Rainshine

# Reconsider The Lilies

True, they do not spin,  
but toil they do.

It takes a lot of energy  
to rupture the seed's strait-jacket,  
and then to drill upwards  
through soil and rocks  
with the flimsiest tools  
to reach the sun  
and photosynthesis.

Then they must  
develop sturdy stems  
to support them  
and leaves to store  
water and nourishment,  
the perfect pump.

Then there's the matter of sex.  
It takes a lot of effort to be a flower,  
to look alluring  
for some stray bee or butterfly  
even in the pouring rain;  
to put up sweet nectar preserves  
every day:

No, even the meadow flowers  
must work and worry;  
they are not exempt.  
But Solomon and all his glory  
could never preempt  
the product of their toil.

Sonny Rainshine

# Reconstruction

Now show me a picture of pain,  
the child said to his mother.

You are not ready, she softly said,  
let's find another.

We've looked at pictures of joy,  
of me as a boy.

You shown me daddy at your wedding  
and me wrapped up in bedding.

You've shown me our life,  
but where is the pain.

Where did you hear of pain,  
my boy, my love?

I hear of it more and more,  
and from the woman who lives next door.

Here, my son, go ahead and look.  
You'll find pictures here in this book.

"A History of the World" he read on page one.  
When you're older, rewrite this book, my son.

Sonny Rainshine

# Red Clover

I'm looking for  
red clover.

It used to grow  
in profusion by the  
highway that ran by  
my home when I  
was growing up.

Like a crimson  
brocade it lined  
the way for travelers,  
swirling gently  
when cars passed by.

It makes me wonder  
what else I'm looking for  
and don't know it.  
What do I need to see again,  
maybe only once more  
in my life?

When I find again my red clover,  
on the roadside, and I will,  
maybe I'll lie down,  
and bathe in its perfume.

Sonny Rainshine

# Rejuvenation

There is an unsettling experience  
of listening to a song that you loved as a youth  
and have never heard since.

The experience is more than hearing  
and reacting to lyrics and instrumentals  
once again after all these years.

The uncanny feeling is that  
you feel strikingly as though  
the ear into which the vibrations enter  
is the ear of the person  
who first heard the song.

You are 17 once again,  
and you are not embarrassed  
to get up and dance around the room  
like a madman.

Sonny Rainshine



# Rendezvous

Violet Crowley sat upon the cast iron loveseat  
in the backyard arbor and bloomed  
among the startling blue starburst of clematis  
and the lipstick smears of bougainvillea,  
prominent like crepe-paper swatches  
or Joan Crawford's lips  
in Technicolor.

Her dress, a willowy shift  
of Egyptian cotton, also bloomed,  
in chaotic confusion,  
fluffy peony prints and meandering  
lines suggesting, no, underscoring vines.  
A sprig of bridal's wreath  
lay clutched in her hands  
like a limp scepter.

There she sat as she awaited the arrival  
of her suitor, Marvin Singleton,  
who approached her gingerly,  
wondering whether he should  
pluck her or simply  
watch her grow.

Sonny Rainshine

# Repirations

Like a cyclone spiraling up,  
apprehension rises.

A maelstrom drilling  
toward darkness,  
despair falls.

The follies of  
mankind rasp and heave  
like asthmatic lungs.

Open the windows,  
air out the rooms.  
Breathe new air.

Sonny Rainshine

# Requiem

He dreamt that night  
that without warning  
the earth's magnetic pull  
let go, as a boy  
lets go a kite,  
to watch it careen  
untethered.

He and the people in the street  
began to rise  
ever so slowly,  
ever so gently,  
and it happened so suddenly  
that nobody had time  
to be afraid or to comprehend  
the gravity of the situation.

Thousands of feet  
into the atmosphere,  
he looked back toward  
the receding globe,  
a blue Christmas ornament now,  
diminishing, finishing.

So fragile, so exquisite,  
he thought. I lived there once  
and would give my very soul  
to go back.

Sonny Rainshine

# Rich Man's Rag

Bobby Bolt declines  
invitations and dines  
by himself on silver plates  
behind electrified gates.

Tawny port or ruby:  
What would it be?  
was the toughest decision  
he would ever see.

Bobby Bolt, who has never been poor,  
always orders the soup du jour  
at the finest eating places  
and never misplaces

his napkin. Open your gates,  
Bobby Bolt before it's too late.  
Your wealth and excess  
have bought you only loneliness

Sonny Rainshine

# Ricochet

She dispenses the lava of her wrath,  
molten and churning with chunks of regret,  
into everyone she meets,  
measuring it into compartments,  
like ice cubes.

After the rage has congealed,  
incubated inside its human receptacles,  
she drinks the resentment,  
as the now cold, cutting blocks  
of offense freeze her tongue,  
but only momentarily.

Sonny Rainshine

# Riding Perfection Piggyback

If I had your eyes,  
I'd have the vision of a mystic.  
I'd be generous; I'd be kind.

If I had your ears,  
I'd hear aubades and serenades  
permeating my mind.

If I had your nose,  
I'd be a renowned cook  
and learn to make quiches without a book.

If I had your mouth,  
I'd always transport the truth,  
gliding like a paper boat on a country brook.

Stay with me then,  
and share these gifts,  
my advisor and my friend.

Sonny Rainshine

# Right Smack In The Middle

Ha.

It was kind of funny at first.  
Barely March and a bird  
sat in the middle of a pot of begonias  
I had set out on a warm day.

Right in the middle.

He, like me  
could not wait for  
the Edenic promise of summer.  
He wanted his paradise now and  
he would have it.

Maybe heaven  
is sitting in a pot of flowers.

Sonny Rainshine

# River Wedding

The wedding bouquet,  
gardenias and baby's breath,  
swirl in the eddy  
as though looking for  
an escape.

Up river,  
a boutonniere of  
coral rosebuds  
catches the rapids  
and is pummeled forward.

Colliding with the  
vortex, it too  
merges with the whiligig,  
a churning water-garden.

Back upriver,  
a man in a tuxedo drinks whisky straight;  
a woman takes shears to her gown.  
Love is liquid.

Sonny Rainshine



# Romantic Dialogue

You're a phoney,  
she said.

You are a blood-sucking  
vampiress, he said.

You make me nauseous,  
she said.

You are bull-headed  
and where your heart should be  
is a hornet's nest.

You call yourself a man. Ha!  
she said.

You make a mockery  
out of womanhood,  
he said.

One of these days  
I'm leaving you,  
she said.

One of these days,  
one of these days,  
one of these days:  
You're repetitive  
and oh so prosaic.

You're disgusting!

You're repulsive!

Wanna go to Starbucks  
for a latte?

Sonny Rainshine

# Rosa Rugosa

Thorned temptress  
dressed in a shift of dusty pink,  
wide-eyed Irish rose  
rambling, reaching  
for the weathered fence,  
speak to me about love  
and music.

Emblem of the erotic,  
you represent romance  
and tenderness, yet  
you will not be touched,  
you nick us with  
your spiny canes  
when we reach for you.

Sonny Rainshine

# Rough Gabardine

It was her mercenary heart  
that made the deltas of blood  
in her veins molten rivulets  
of obstinance, hot resolve.

Look through the bay window  
on any given night.  
You'll see her silhouette stationed there  
in the sinister illumination  
from oil lamps filled with juices  
as blistering as her blood.

She sways in a rocking chair  
made from fox grape vines  
all twisted, all twined  
like the notions in her head,  
like the spinning notions.

She executes her crewel stitches  
because she likes the word crewel  
and the word cruel.  
For the pattern she uses  
gabardine and calico,  
because she likes the sound  
of the names of the fabric,  
reminding her of  
ladies gabbing and calicoing.

She sits and she sews;  
she sews and sits.  
She'd be outraged  
if she thought you  
felt pity for her.

She's a cruel stitch herself,  
rough as raw calico.  
She's embroidered her life  
in patterns of unfinished dreams,  
all in the wrong colors,

all in delicate spidery filament.

Listen to her ripping

out the threads:

Pop,

pop,

pop,

pop,

pop.

Sonny Rainshine

# Running To; Running From

He always coughed before he ran.  
She often thought of the sound a car makes  
just before ignition, which also  
coughs before it runs.

There seemed something purgative  
about his early morning jog,  
more than just a constitutional,  
beyond mere aerobic kinetics,  
something like an auto da fe  
or walking fast through fire.

Something there about flight  
or possibly pursuit.

Was he running from  
or running to, and to what?  
From what? From her?  
From his life?

Here, take this amulet,  
my kiss, she says as he opens the door.  
You must know always  
that my deepest affection  
runs right beside you  
and over you like a cool wind.  
Tell me what you tell  
the wind.

Sonny Rainshine

## Samara (Maple Tree Seeds)

Paper whirly-birds.  
They look so much  
like pairs of insects' wings,  
spi-  
ral-  
ing  
down  
to the ground,  
helicopters landing  
on springy tarmacs  
to deposit  
next year's forest,  
gently,  
like precious cargo.

Sweet to think  
that trees  
once had wings  
and flew.

Sonny Rainshine

# Scarlet Letters

Drown'd down deep in Dimsdale's eyes,  
probing, tantalizing, bottomless,  
Hester wears The Letter  
on her bodice, but in her bodice  
resides also the alphabet of love,  
tender, true, unrepentent.

Sonny Rainshine

## Scene From A Reconciliation

Who do you think you are, Grover Cleveland?  
she asked. Who?

You, know.

I do?

He was the only President to serve two consecutive terms.

I don't get the connection.

I've decided to take you back.

Back where?

Into my generous and incredibly well-sculptured arms.  
Cleave to me, Grove.

Sonny Rainshine



# Seeds Of Betrayal

All day long he worried  
about the nasturtium seeds  
he'd planted yesterday.  
Had he planted them deep enough?  
Were the seeds fresh? The soil  
rich enough?

All week he vexed  
about the seeds, the nasturtiums.  
Shouldn't they be sprouting  
now? Did I plant too early?  
Should I have planted zinnias?

All month long he wrung his hands.  
Maybe, maybe, maybe,  
maybe I did plant them too deep. Maybe  
they were contaminated.  
What a fool.

All year long he regretted  
having planted nasturtiums.  
Never again. Maybe I'll let  
it go to weed. Nature is  
a traitor. You can't depend upon her.

All his life he shuddered to think  
of the time he planted nasturtiums.  
All his days he pondered  
and grieved over the potency of things  
of the potential of things,  
and the lack thereof.

Sonny Rainshine

# Self-Reliance

From what do you wish to be saved:  
from yourself, from wickedness,  
from mediocrity, sickness,  
from being deprived, or depraved?

Not all redemptions are benign;  
aren't there times when we need to persevere  
to resist the gorgons, fiends and fear  
without a net, without a lifeline?

Some spend their lives  
waiting to be rescued,  
or to be subdued  
by husbands or wives

or a lover or a friend,  
who'll make them a project;  
nevermind the logic,  
they are trees that cannot bend.

Save us from saviors well-meaning,  
and knights on white horses;  
let us draw on our own resources  
with minimal intervening.

Sonny Rainshine

# Serenade

The stray dogs  
huddle in packs, gathered  
like galaxies, ravenous  
like black holes.

Canine brigands,  
prowling, growling,  
the dog star is their star,  
their mentor the cresting moon.

All orphans,  
all had mothers  
and all had human masters  
who turned on them  
and turned them out.

Now like their ancestors  
they are free,  
tribal covenants bind them  
for survival  
and they straggle in the night,  
and they struggle in the night,  
half-breeds, evicted from the human realm,  
creatures in perpetual flight,  
singing in the cold moonlight.

Sonny Rainshine

# Serendipity

We thought we were dharma bums  
back then, remember?  
You had just quit your job in sales  
and I was bound for the West Coast,  
to write heroic sonnets  
and get laid.

Do you remember that precise moment  
when the earth seemed reborn  
and all the planet benign  
and supple and awake?

We had just driven across the desert  
and up ahead,  
the High Sierras loomed.  
A quick September spritz came up  
and the highway became a mirror  
for a moment.

I remember you said:  
"Holy shit! "  
and I said:  
"I love you."

The highway, an endless looking glass,  
reflected all the firmament and its clouds.  
That day we were  
riding on the sky.

Sonny Rainshine

# Shades Of Green Eye Shadow

You capture the luna moth  
resting against the sliding glass door  
of your condominium.  
You carefully slide your thumb  
over the wings:  
the left, then the right.  
Then you rub the luminous jade  
dust over your eyelids:  
the left, then the right.  
Then you release him,  
after which he alights again upon the glass door,  
unaware of his loss  
and of the vanity  
of mankind.

Sonny Rainshine

## Shadowing The Genuine

Sometimes it seems that most of our living,  
our experience, is about sifting through  
acres of insincerity, inauthenticity,  
mounds—no mountains—of rhinestones  
and fools' gold, yards of burlap  
and synthetic fibers,  
just in the hopes of finding one or two  
genuine articles to clutch onto  
and trust.

As fluid as mountain run-off,  
thrusting toward the valley  
at spring thaw;  
as elusive as the rare puma  
stalking in the arroyos  
like a phantom who's lost his way:  
What is real, what is of value,  
lies so near and so ever-present  
that it sometimes takes a lifetime  
to realize that it  
has always been there.

Sonny Rainshine

# Ship To Shore

If you are an ocean apart  
as you say you are, not an island,  
not an isthmus, but deep and blue,  
then I must be a ship skimming  
your surface, blue too.

Beneath the aquamarine ripples,  
down where sunlight never penetrates,  
down where galleons and pirate ships  
navigate under a different sky,  
where muses and monsters  
congregate and where starfish  
twinkle in black milkyways:  
that, you say,  
is where I must travel  
to unravel  
your love, your music,  
your madness.

But your depth is not open seas,  
but tiered zones, impenetrable waters,  
so here I float in murky dolrums.

Oh that I had a seine, a wide fishnet,  
wherein I might capture  
your thoughts.

Sonny Rainshine

# Shooting Star Haiku

White hot snowball fight,  
a coy moon the referee:  
Meteor shower.

Sonny Rainshine



# Shots From The Attic

They can puncture like a bullet: snapshots,  
fading photographs that pinched a sliver of time  
from yesterday and plunked it into today,  
as if that moment had tried to escape,  
to scurry along to join its comrades, the past,  
but couldn't.

Photographs: pictures of light—  
and shadows too. We peer at the youthful faces  
and for a moment wonder who they are,  
the boy with the funny shirt: Me.  
the girl with the flaired skirt: My sister.  
the weary-looking lady: My mother.  
The empty space next to the weary-looking lady:  
my father.

Something snaps,  
sort of like the click of a shutter,  
the crisp break of a twig  
in a silent wood.  
This was my youth, fading,  
no longer glossy and immediate,  
but real. There it is.

Sonny Rainshine

# Silence And Silver

Whoever said silence  
is golden must have been mistaken.  
It seems silver to me, or mercurial  
like the substance in thermometers;  
it's volatile and on the move.

It is precious but not priceless  
like gold bullion or nuggets  
sparkling in a pristine spring.  
Against the golden voice  
of a newborn baby or the jeweled  
caress of a lover's hand  
it seems tarnished,  
an alloy, but incomplete.

Silence and sound,  
silver and gold,  
music, meditation.  
Sometimes it's the caesura  
that makes the poem whole.

Sonny Rainshine

# Singing Rivers And Roses, Talking Clouds

Someone whispered,  
the river does not talk;  
the river is mute  
and goes about its business  
of carrying water,  
carrying water.

Someone told me,  
you'll find no wisdom  
sleeping in the folds  
of a rose, like a resting  
beetle. Looking for a home,  
looking for a home.

Someone said to me,  
The clouds are vaporous  
things; they are up there,  
you are down here.  
Clouds make rain,  
clouds make rain.

Listen, "someone":  
The river, the rose, the clouds  
know more than you  
could ever imagine.  
They sing to us,  
they sing to us,

but not to you.

Sonny Rainshine

# Skipping Rope

He was at the end of his.  
After watching Hitchcock's classic film, ,  
he felt dirty and started to look for his soap on a.  
He gd around in the dimly lit room  
for several minutes but was unsucessful,  
so he resolved to write a poem, a t, about.  
After several impr attempts,  
he was back again at the end of his,  
and was provoked to shout:  
"Oh, for chrissake, skip it! "

Sonny Rainshine

# Sky Between The Trees

The vertical slashes of the birch trees  
and the horizontal lines of the patterns  
on their trunks somehow made the swipes  
of blue sky between the slender trees  
seem amplified, surreal, pulsating.

And when I looked up  
at the same aster-blue sky,  
domed and unshadowed,  
the color looked as it might have  
when as a little boy  
I first saw it.

Sonny Rainshine

# Slippery Guest

I see you have surfaced again,  
like cicadas do when  
the days get short,  
or are they long?  
When the moon's orbit  
truncates,  
or was it quickening revolutions  
of the sun that signaled  
your advent?

Have a slice  
of rhubarb pie here,  
with strawberries on top  
and graham cracker crust.  
Have a cup of orange spice tea.  
While you're at it,  
pour me some  
apologies.

There's no ghost  
like an old ghost,  
a specter loosed from  
the jewel box of the past,  
all a-twinkle with costume pendants  
and rhinestones unglued.

Have your tea and go.  
These are years  
that my soul craves constance.

These are days  
when fair-weather friends  
and birds in perpetual flight  
rattle me and make me say:  
Stay.

Sonny Rainshine

# Small Acts Of Unkindness

That one covert act of unkindness,  
you know the one, he said,  
you may think went unnoticed,  
but the sound of its detonation,  
the mushroom cloud of its repercussions,  
the deafening sound of its primal wail,  
its echoes throughout the abyss of cruelty,  
still reverberate.

There will come a time  
when the hurtful words  
you served on a plate of nonchalance  
will kill you.

My small acts of cruelty, and yours,  
attach themselves to the whole of mankind,  
like cancer cells  
and become eradicable.

Sonny Rainshine

## Snapshot: White Horse, Grazing

A white dot on a blue bedspread:  
ivory-toned palomino grazing  
in a meadow of indigo lupines:  
peace, beauty, unbridled freedom.

Sonny Rainshine



# Soil Amendments

I planted honeysuckle  
and trumpet vine.  
The hummingbird did not return that year.  
So I planted honeysuckle  
and trumpet vine  
but added patience and hope  
to the soil.

Sonny Rainshine

# Solid Geometry

Freddy viewed things through the eyes  
of an artist. The sun was a sphere on fire;  
a tree was a cylinder with a cone on top,  
or a parabola. A human being  
consisted of spheres and cubes  
all stacked precariously on top  
of one another.

And he saw emotions  
as spirals and intersecting lines,  
all seeking order, all bounded  
by circumference and calculations.

But try as he would,  
he could not dissect the feeling  
that he never really saw the sun,  
the tree, another human being—  
only forms, not substance.  
Life, for him, was a mathematics textbook,  
without the solutions.

Sonny Rainshine

# Sonny Koan

A perfectly healthy  
young man  
and an eighty-year-old woman  
with a cane and poor sight  
found themselves needing  
to cross a busy street.

The healthy young man  
tapped the bent old lady  
on the shoulder and said:  
'Will you help me across the street? '

The old woman  
helped the young man across  
the busy street and then said:  
'Thank you, young man.'

Why was the old woman grateful?

Sonny Rainshine

# Space Where The Birds Were

In December there's room in the air  
only for snowflakes and other objects  
that flourish in frigid space.

I look out on the balcony  
and the rails are just intersecting lines,  
gray and as cold as the wind.

Oh, the birds are still there;  
their images sit preening  
and grooming themselves—  
even memories of birds  
must attend to hygiene.

Maybe I should send them away,  
these imagined birds.  
They surely are shivering  
and would be happier  
on an equatorial terrace,  
with bougainvilla and geraniums  
to dawdle in.

But they'll have to do me  
until spring. They'll tide me over  
until summer when I sometimes  
imagine the rain to be snow.

Sonny Rainshine

# Spring Tones, Spring Tonic

Little green capsules  
swollen from within,  
the mid-March buds are filled  
with sap and sassiness,  
and concentrated chlorophyll.

Give me the pill.  
I'll swallow it whole.  
Magic medicine, laced  
with the liqueur of transformation,  
now plumped and graced

with promise, rejuvenate me  
in the whirling cycles of the year.

Sonny Rainshine

# Squeeze An Orange

The way an orange  
sprays mist, scented mist,  
into the air if you  
peel it by hand:

kind words on a gray day.

Sonny Rainshine

# Stardrops

The first time he witnessed  
the spectacle of the Leonid Meteors,  
he knew why they were called showers.

Instead of raindrops, stardrops  
were plummeting in pristine arcs,  
diagonally across the appalling expanse of space:  
There goes one! There, another!  
like roman candles they discharge  
fire-music, note by note,  
sizzling arpeggios.  
The milkyway is melting.

Who would have known  
that the pure act of disintegration,  
this celestial auto da fe,  
could conjure up such a blizzard  
of blazing snowflakes,  
vanishing so swiftly  
that you wonder if you  
saw them at all.

Sonny Rainshine

# Stay

Like a child leaps  
from shade to shade  
on a broiling hot sidewalk  
in July,  
you keep a lover  
long enough to release  
the heat  
and then hop-scotch ahead.

Shadows, though,  
follow the sun.  
The cool darkness  
you bathe in now,  
though blistering  
at noon,  
will return at 3 o'clock.  
Passion is variable.

Sonny Rainshine



## Still Life (With Flowers And Indifference)

As she arranged the nasturtiums  
in their depression-glass vase,  
to her husband she said:  
You're wilting.

See these fresh blooms,  
she continued, all they require  
is a splash of water  
and voila! the rainbow  
has pixilated and now  
our kitchen table sings  
in coloratura.

You, on the other hand,  
sit silent and fade  
like a winter sunset.  
Awaken! Bloom!

Yes, hon, I'll take care of that tomorrow.  
Dinner ready?

Sonny Rainshine

# Strait-Jacket

At first, he felt cozy in his new jacket,  
zippered, buttoned, laced,  
straight-laced like his attitude.

It had taken a lifetime  
to conceptualize the pattern,  
simple but elegant,  
in black with a conservative cut,  
always in fashion.

He spent his youth  
measuring thread,  
positioning the fabric  
to line up all neat:  
disorder in sartorial matters  
breeds haphazard minds,  
thoughts must be clothed  
in sensible material.

Now the ensemble is complete.  
He stands in front of the mirror,  
confidently posed,  
comfortably poised,  
and is troubled to find  
that his movement is restricted  
and he is trapped in his  
own creation.

Sonny Rainshine

# Strange Seance

Whose ghost are you?

-Yours.

I am not dead.

-Yet.

Then you are a ghost of things to come.

-Ghosts are not bound by things temporal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Whose ghost are you?

-Mine.

The ghost of a ghost.

-Yes.

I do not believe in spirits.

-I do not believe in you.

We're a sinister pair.

-Yes, we are.

Sonny Rainshine

# Stray Mutt

No Pekinese, no poodle,  
no twinkly-eyed terrier,  
his supper was served  
in garbage cans and backyards.

Every evening he would slink  
up to the front doors  
of the neighborhood,  
tail recessed, head down,  
whimpering.

His fur was spotty  
from untreated mange  
and scars from the scalding  
hot water  
of unsympathetic residents,  
having seen him  
lurking outside  
the sparkling white  
doors with the musical chimes  
and chrome knockers.

Some say dogs don't feel  
the way we do,  
but this one does—  
all living beings do.  
His eyes express  
all unkindnesses,  
and his body, like  
an interpretive dancer's  
has been contorted  
by barrages of merciless  
beatings and hard words.  
But yet he still  
makes his rounds  
every evening,  
not understanding  
why no one cares  
about him and his simple

need for food  
and for love.

Sonny Rainshine

# Sudden Insight

A sort of shaking-out, a trembling  
gesture, as though the emotion  
dislodged itself from the body  
and escaped through  
the cranium:

such is the sudden recognition  
of something we know at first glance  
to be universal and true.

Sonny Rainshine

# Sufficient Closet Space

And here is where  
I store the flour and rice.  
And here the silverware.  
Here the bread, slice by slice.

Over there in the nook  
is where I keep the dustbin and brooms.  
Around the corner, look  
and you'll find the other rooms.

Everything in its place,  
my mother always said.  
If you can't find for it a space,  
throw it out instead.

Too many stars,  
an excess of trees,  
Too many cars,  
park them, please.

But where do you store your heartache,  
where is love sequestered?  
How do you contain heartbreak  
and dreams that have festered?

Oh, don't worry about the gloomy past,  
There'll be plenty of room.  
I'll make a place for them at last  
in the chambers of my tomb.

Sonny Rainshine

# Sugar Shock

Remember that time  
you went catatonic  
and succumbed to sugar shock  
when you doused your Little Debbie's  
with coffee liqueur  
and powdered sugar?

We attempted to stop you,  
but you had just broken up  
with Mulroy  
and boy were you wired  
and fired up  
about speed dating  
and dating  
and even offline  
dating, god forbid.

Took three of us  
to hold you down  
and two bottles of  
Pepto-Bismol—It was dismal.

Now when you're depressed  
you pass on the sucrose,  
lock yourself in the bathroom,  
and cry the sweetest tears.

Sonny Rainshine



# Sunrise

Night thrusts back the light.  
Summer moon fades like a ghost.  
Stay with me awhile.

Sonny Rainshine

# Superfluous Saint

What happened to you in Guadalajara?  
That day you found yourself  
in a parish church, soaking wet from  
a sudden cloudburst.

That day you felt the madonnas  
with their oh-so-human faces  
staring at you, beseeching you with their  
glassy eyes.

And the robed statue of St. Teresa  
glaring at you  
and you saw the Pieta, the lean, limber body  
sagging across the lap of the virgin  
transform into your body  
and you were dead  
and she was grieving  
for you.

You told me after you came back  
that you left the sacred place  
to become a sacred being,  
though you never wanted such a thing.  
You have lost your passion  
in order to become passion.  
I don't need another holy relic.  
I want you back.

Sonny Rainshine

# Sylvia Plath

She reached for grapes  
and grasped a cluster of words,  
which she crushed in her fingers  
to make a concoction of nouns  
and verbs, demonstrative adjectives,  
and then she drank them,

bitter.

Sonny Rainshine

# Take A Soap Bubble

Take a soap bubble:  
spherical but graceful as clouds,  
ethereal and transparent, but solid  
enough to reflect all around.

Like an emotion,  
you can describe it,  
you know it's there,  
but you can't hold it in your hands,  
and make it stay.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tale Of The White Adirondack Chairs

My sister not long ago suggested  
that we rent a car and make a visit  
to the house where we grew up.

At first I liked the idea,  
but as the time for departure drew closer,  
I begin to feel a strange reluctance,  
whenever the trip came up.

Something eerily white, like light,  
something made of wood, yes,  
chairs on a lawn, Adirondack chairs  
painted white with tall glasses of iced tea  
resting on the wide-open arms,  
etched themselves in the populated  
areas of my mind  
and would not leave.

Then the cause of my consternation  
revealed itself: I needed the chairs  
who would not leave to stay.  
If I went back to the magical lawns  
and the familiar days of my childhood  
and the Adirondak chairs were gone  
(which after so many years they surely are) ,  
the loss would be too much.

I had my sister (long accustomed to my fickle whims)  
cancel the rental car.

So, somewhere in the tangle  
of memories, as distorted and inaccurate as they may be,  
my family still sits with our cool iced tea  
laughing, oblivious of the future,  
snatched from time like a photograph,  
framed forever in my remembrance.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tanka

Shuddering branches  
thrusting sharp toward the sky.  
Twigs twitching in wind.  
Limbs lengthen as sap rises.  
Spring goes up like fire and smoke.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tanka: Saved By The Cliche

Let's talk about Rose,  
not Rose the woman but Rose  
the image, the over-used  
cliché, so maligned  
by lit'ry types, to their loss  
when flower-words are required.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tasteful Arrangements

Mrs. Parsons would buy the flowers  
for the dinner party.  
She'd not permit pretense to intervene-  
There'd be no dissembling, nothing arty.

To impose  
a tasteful subtlety-  
to command restraint:  
that's the key

to buying flowers.  
Dahlias, therefore, she despised.  
Peonies she found intrusive-  
either might antagonize

her guests. These white mums  
will look quite nice.  
A simple spray of  
baby's breath will suffice.

As she digs deeply into her handbag  
To pay for the bouquet,  
A photograph falls  
to the shop floor and lay

at her feet. A long forgotten thrill  
resurfaces now  
and arrests her breath as  
she wipes her brow.

'I'll take a dozen crimson dahlias  
and ten gladiolus stems.  
How much are those sunflowers?  
These orchids are gems.'

The florist obliges, but  
Shaken to her core,  
Mrs. Parsons has fallen with the baby's breath  
in a heap in the floor.



## Sonny Rainshine

# Tea And No Sympathy

Now, dear, let's not quarrel anymore;  
in fact, love, let me pour.

This is absolutely heavenly;  
from what is it made?

It's a hearty herbal tisanne  
of belladonna, nightshade  
and a soupcon of henbane.

So soothing, so light  
I think I shall sleep well tonight.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tell Me A Story

Tell me about a place  
where pundits and politicians  
have mastered how to use diplomacy  
and mutual understanding  
as weapons instead of missiles  
and mustard gas.

Tell me about a place  
where people can pay  
their own medical bills  
and insurance is obsolete  
because no care is beyond  
anyone's means.

Tell me about how  
people in that place  
are different, but the same,  
how they tolerate and respect  
each other's differences.

Tell me how people  
in that place  
all have flowers in the windows  
of their freshly painted homes.

Then tell me that it's not a story,  
not fairy-tale fiction,  
but the absolute truth.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tempered Steel

All the highpoints of his life  
were like bookmarks, beauty marks,  
landmarks, delineating his passage  
through this enchanted region  
where all things are captivated  
by gravity and by the gravity  
of having been born.

Like all of us,  
he did his best.  
He married young, but not for love;  
love seemed to him an abstract thing,  
too mythologized to make much difference.

He resented those who insisted  
that failure was the fault of the man,  
that fortune had no function in the destiny  
of us all.

Cruel! Unbearably cruel,  
indifferent and merciless  
Lady Fortune could be, the bully.

But strength and courage  
do not come to the coddled kind,  
those ones who never flirt with fate  
and who glide through life  
without resistance.

This man would mark his  
place in the book  
of the struggle  
and carry on until the last page.

Sonny Rainshine

# That One Night When You Drank Too Much

That one night you drank too much,  
but you did not drink enough.

You consumed the rare air  
between us, humid with hope  
and inhibitions. Ionized  
with Spenserian sonnets  
and Warwick singing  
Walk on By.

That night I did not ask  
you to marry me  
and wondered if  
I should have.

Now I don't even know  
where you are,  
but there is a chamber  
in my mind  
where we meet.

Sonny Rainshine

# That Word

Definitions are dangerous—  
sinuous loops within loops,  
mulligan soups,  
tenuous.

Take the word love.  
Look it up in your dictionary;  
But be wary:  
for the meaning of

this short but laden word  
is slippery as oil,  
like wet soil,  
elusive as a bird.

Other tongues specify:  
Eros or agape,  
but in English we have only one syllable to say,  
one syllable to try

to express the word of ages,  
the utterance of all time,  
the feeling sublime,  
the subject of sages.

Webster's, the source of exaction,  
claims it's a strong, tender affection  
or a sexual attraction,  
or deep devotion.

But then what constitutes  
devotion; and can't I feel attraction  
without feeling affection?  
The tree of love has many roots.

Will a new word do,  
or a million, or two?  
For such a feeling, false or true,  
I'd like clarification; would you?

## Sonny Rainshine

# The Abbess Of The Abyss

The frayed hem of her solemn habit,  
skirted the quartz pebbles along the path  
on the perimeter of the abbey's grounds,  
polishing the stones like the mahogany  
aves and paters of the rosary  
spilling from her belt,  
clattering as if praying itself.

The way by the cliffs  
was her via dolorosa,  
a passage to those interior castles  
inhabited by her namesake.  
The trail followed the canyon's rim  
like gilt on the brim of a cup,  
and never exceeded a foot in width.

More than once her booted heel  
had encountered a small root  
or a stone that the rains had unearthed  
and more than once had she escaped  
catastrophe. She recalled the beads  
rattling in alarm,  
like a startled diamond back.

Occasionally she would pause her walk  
and squint into the space between the cliff edge,  
that vast abyss that echoed her own doubts,  
and the copse of evergreens far below.

Oh, if only my love for My Lord  
were as alive as my reverence  
for the fragrant green sanctuary there,  
I might walk on higher ground,  
might resist the momentary  
impulse to leap.

Sonny Rainshine



# The Alchemy Of Growing Old

She was born  
with a coronet  
of wispy gold twine.

At seven  
Sunlight and weather tempered  
and forged for her  
a tiara of fine copper wire  
which she wore until middle age.

At forty  
she was bequeathed with  
a diadem of diamonds  
and topazes.

At sixty  
time has refined the contours of her face  
and filaments of silver  
have modeled a halo for her head.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Asters And The Goldenrods

I always dread to see the first asters  
and the goldenrods,  
those flushes of cornflower blue  
and tawny plumes  
that stand on the edge of the roads  
as though hitchhiking  
or waiting to get across.

Most people praise them as summer's  
swan song, a final extravaganza,  
fanfare for the fall.

Without even thinking,  
I begin to look for them  
as early as late June,  
peering out the corner of my  
eyes as I drive to my job,  
for a blur of blue,  
a glint of gold.

But when it's scarlet poppies I see instead,  
white zinnias, black-eyed susans,  
and acres of the greenest grass;  
when I let down the car windows  
and inhale the reviving wind,  
and absorb into my innermost cells  
the scent of late honeysuckle,  
I understand once more that asters  
and goldenrods are,  
like us in our season,  
temporary guests.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Bell On The Buoy

He dreamed that night of separation and mortality:

Land ho! there the continent rises from the sand and spume,  
dead ahead, but it recedes, not approaches.

Veiled with vapor, sandpipers and terns speckle the beach,  
calling, cawing, watching.

The ghost of John Donne, somber sailor-saint of souls,  
treads the surf prophesying of islands and bells.

'I'm severed now from terra firma,  
adrift, unmoored, anchorless,  
and the bell on the buoy  
is tolling for me.'

He awoke, shaken,  
moist with mist-no, sweat.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Bond Of Star-Gazing

Son, his father says,  
why do you stare at the stars?  
How can something millions  
of miles away be of any use  
to us?

Son, of what good is a nest-full  
of blue-speckled birds' eggs?  
They won't feed your children;  
nobody will buy them.

Son, why do you plant  
marigolds and zinnias  
in furrows that could  
be used for lettuce  
and radishes?

Hummingbirds, butterflies,  
wild ducks on the pond  
over there: pretty, but we  
have chores to do,  
by the sweat of our brows.

\*\*\*\*

One clear night, though,  
walking out into the moonlit field,  
the son saw a man standing  
among the zinnias and marigolds,  
looking upward:  
Father, why do you stare at the stars?

Sonny Rainshine

# The Burden Of Obscurity

Larry, Larry, why so contrary?  
It can be ninety-one degrees Fahrenheit  
and there you are shuddering right  
in the dog days of August.

You receive a letter from your sweetheart  
who vows her perpetual devotion,  
and your shoulders make a sagging motion,  
as if you'd been drafted.

The mortgage payment  
bounces and instead of weeping  
you cavort like a kangaroo leaping:  
picturing a bouncing check.

You win the Publishers' sweepstakes  
and grinning celebrities knock on your door  
and hand you roses and you're poor no more,  
but you sulk in righteous indignation.

Larry, Larry, why can't you be normal?  
When happy, smile; when blue, rue.  
Your friends are weary of the riddle of you;  
Your schtik is showing its age.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Butterfly Effect

The sun is dimming,  
as at the end of a play.  
Particles in the stratosphere  
bommerang heat  
and radiation back to its source,  
disguising the warming of the globe.

If the flutter of one butterfly's wing  
in Guatamala  
can ignite a tsunami  
in Indonesia,  
consider what a rise  
of even one degree farenheit  
will do to a cornfield  
in Wichita.

Deferring the  
problems of the planet,  
is like playing chess with  
pawns made of ice,  
like reading a book  
whose pages are on fire.

What if we spread our own wings  
in Everytown and Everycity and cause a wave  
of resolve to innudate the earth.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Cannibal Tree

The newly planted tree  
was devouring itself.  
The newest, tenderest leaves  
were surely diminishing,  
and changing shape,  
from perfect lovers' hearts  
to translucent lace.

But this is not a cannibal tree.  
Consider a diner who feasts upside-down,  
underneath its green wafer  
hushed, hidden, camouflaged,  
rapacious, pitiless. The color  
of leaves, it is becoming a leaf  
inside and out.

The planter of the tree,  
inverting the disintegrating leaf,  
exposes the caterpillar's secret table  
and wonders how it not only  
hoodwinks birds and men  
to mistake it for a vein on a leaf  
but also how it knows to  
dine on the hidden side.

Planters of trees too  
are vulnerable to hidden things,  
secreted under the surface,  
consuming life-energy, excreting pain,  
cutting perfect lovers' hearts  
into jigsaw puzzle pieces—  
Seekers, gardeners, and gourmands  
must look beneath the leaf.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Chimera Of Knowledge

Most people do not like not to know,  
and especially despise those who know  
they do not not know;  
and furthermore loathe those who admit  
that they don't know.

There are even those who claim to know  
the Unknowable, unknowing that they  
are being contradictory.

Am I right?  
Who knows?

Sonny Rainshine



# The City Down There

When I drive home from work,  
on the perimeter of the hill where I live,  
and will forever,  
I look to the right  
at the city over there, and then  
to the left, toward home;  
my thoughts scale the incline  
before I do.

Living above the city  
seems more important than it did  
when pretty girls and the swirls  
of crowds aroused me, sustained me.

Urban persuasions undulate down there—  
music, cafes, dance—romance. Up there,  
only the dahlias are dancing,  
the only diva the sparrow,  
the day ends at 10 PM not 2.

Up there  
the exuberance is defined  
in the breeze. The air  
above the city ignites,  
like colliding weather fronts,  
as the spirit of the city  
waves goodbye  
while I motor on up the hill.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Court Is In Recess

Did your mom ever say:  
"If you can't say something good  
about your neighbor,  
Don't say anything? "  
That way  
is not in favor,  
today, if I've understood.

Doesn't he get it?  
She's so inane.  
What's the matter with him?  
I'm so right;  
you're full of shit.  
Remove them  
from my sight—they're a pain.

Wouldn't it be fine,  
(what an idea!)  
to hold our judgments  
in check awhile.  
Not to renege  
but just to opine  
that our resentments  
are the result of fear.

If you can't say something good....

Sonny Rainshine

# The Day Sunita Cut Her Hair

India ink and all the nuances,  
all the associations that spill  
from those two words  
applied to Sunita's hair.

Splashing over her angular shoulders,  
the inky tresses curled loosely,  
like fine Sanskrit calligraphy,  
mysteriously pulled apart  
and left suspended and askew,  
like a dangling participle.

And like the Ganges it flowed,  
but downward toward the ground,  
as if seeking a place to pause,  
to momentarily cease its purposeful  
rambling, like a semicolon  
or a dash.

Thus, when Sunita cut her hair,  
ordinariness descended upon her  
and she knew she had made  
a grave mistake. It was as if  
subcontinents had severed themselves  
from the terra firma,  
as if ink wells spilled their contents  
on white-tiled beauty parlor floors,  
and there in serpentine coils  
lay exposed her error,  
black and indelible,  
like India Ink.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Disgruntled Catfish

A sudden spring cloudburst:  
mud-colored catfish pissed off—  
splatter, patter, splat.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Ecstatic Thrill Of Monotony: A Parable

At first he tried to pinpoint the precise time that it materialized, or that he became conscious of it, since he suspected it was always there, recessed, praying, cursing, whatever it did when not creating anarchy.

The problem was that inertia, ennui, boredom, or whatever you want to call it, would not be dispersed by motion, activity, or by resolve. It, like Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*, would not be ignored.

Today, instead, he would give it the attention it so craved; he would not get up and turn on TV Land or load up Solitaire on the Mac.  
Hello Mr. Boredom, what do you have to say?  
If anything?

Well, you'll be cheered to know, this story has a happy ending.  
"The purpose of my being here, " the nagging presence revealed, "is to jar you from the compulsion to always be doing, of transposing motion for emotion. To teach you the difference between discontent and malcontent."

Well, la-di-dah.

At that he retreated to the place where reflection lies, but promised to return for another lesson.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Empty Bee Hive

I never really thought  
about their connection to the food supply  
or what perfect testaments  
to the fragile interconnectedness  
of all beings they are.

I never considered  
their intricate navigation  
systems or their astonishing ability  
to hover in midair  
or to zip away in a nanosecond.

I never noticed that the minute hairs  
on their bodies helped  
to transport pollen from blossom  
to blossom. That they loved  
borage flowers, but not so much  
marigolds and petunias.

But now I hear they are  
vanishing en masse,  
abandoning hives,  
deserting our gardens.

If I plant another row of borage this summer,  
will you come back, happily humming creatures?  
I miss your industry and purposeful lives,  
and what would life be like  
without honey?

Sonny Rainshine

# The Eyes Of An Abandoned Building

Blackened windows, rectangle  
cavities, naked, screaming  
like open mouths  
of beings strangled,  
they gape where café curtains  
used to dangle  
concealing the creatures inside  
from us  
and us  
from them.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Face In The Clock

Life has become for him  
metered pulses of time,  
a rosary of sequenced spaces.  
Minutes: small beads,  
hours: large beads,  
decades, days,  
weeks, repetitions.

And the numbers on the clock  
seem also like  
strung beads,  
an invisible hand  
pushing toward  
the next Ave Maria,  
the next Pater Noster,  
the next sorrowful  
mystery.

Peas in a pod,  
the seconds seem  
frozen and unwilling  
to thaw into minutes.  
Time has run down;  
it no longer flees  
toward culmination  
toward resolution  
toward fulfillment.

He feels  
that something must be done  
about time,  
that he grows more anxious  
by the minute;  
he's unwinding.

Sonny Rainshine



# The Feather In The Hat

Ah, there it is.  
The feather I found  
on a hike in the Maine woods  
that day.

The apartment is nearly empty,  
I'm returning to Maine for good.  
Ten years lie there crated up and tagged.

I thought I'd lost the feather—  
from an eagle, the park ranger had said—  
but there it lay.

Leaving New York City,  
kindles no regrets. The tall buildings  
don't need me to lean upon.

But should I take the feather?  
Will it have the same meaning  
when I've returned to the woods  
where the bird who wore it lives?

On the floor in the closet,  
I spotted a hat that had been my father's.  
I tucked the feather into the band,  
hoisted a box,  
and headed for the realm of eagles.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Fly-Tyer

For his black salmon-fly  
only cat-gut imported from Nigeria  
will suffice.

The veiled belly will be  
a bronzed eagle-claw hook  
with an eye upturned—  
Pretty things.

Pretty things  
are often illusory things;  
the hook will be  
painstakingly looped  
in Christmas tinsel  
which will flicker in the sun  
and refract in the trout brook  
when the first cast is hurled.  
Finely shaped hairs  
from a deer's tail must mimic  
a shimmering wing.  
A hunter-comrade  
saves them up for him—  
calves' tails can be used,  
but they are not as magnificent.  
Over the years he has learned to bind  
the tuft of hair in precisely the right spot:  
three-quarters, with the first segment  
the head, the second the wings.  
One black seed-bead  
will represent the insect's eye.

After five hours of steady work,  
eyes strained and aching  
he places the finished fly  
with the others in his tackle box.  
Rows of stunning, frozen bugs  
gaze grimly back at him  
with with exquisite,  
murd'rous eyes.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Forest Is Silent For Some

The forest is silent for some.  
In order to hear the subtle arpeggios,  
adagios, the animato of woodland animals,  
the bisbigliando of breezes  
among the pine-needed canopy,  
dappling and dimpling the the grass below,  
you have to stop being human.

You have to regress to a time  
when we stalked the forest  
barefooted or in hushed moccasins,  
before I-pods, before recorded music,  
a time when the tones and rhythms of the wilderness  
were thrilling, were enough,  
were tender, not rough,  
were soothing stuff.

The tempo of forest sounds  
is so natural and so ordinary  
that many never hear  
the tat-tat-tat of the woodpecker  
or the silky trembling in the brush  
of the garter snake.  
It seems tragic,  
a renouncing of magic,  
that city children  
dismiss a walk in the country  
with "I'm bored! "

I count myself among the lucky  
in that a parent taught me how to listen  
to the ever-changing orchestration  
of the woods. Crescendoing  
and diminuendoing,  
accelerandoing and decrescendoing,  
and accented periodically  
with pure silence, a serendipity caesura—  
the perfect antidote to the cacophony  
of the work-a-day world.

## Sonny Rainshine

# The Girl At The Bus Stop

I thought you were a ghost  
when I first saw you hovering there,  
ethereal and vaporous.

You were lost,  
you wore wisteria in your hair,  
diaphanous.

You crossed  
the street and we sat there  
as I waited for the bus.

In your gypsy dress you tossed  
your skirts with flare,  
beauteous.

I stood up to see  
if my bus was in sight  
and when I glanced back  
all I saw was a sprig of wisteria.

Your absence  
haunts me.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Gradual Approach Of The Storm

It has been gathering since mid-morning,  
the wispy mares' tails around the breakfast hour  
were the first harbingers, the haze over the water tower  
the second warning,  
a barely perceptible change in temperature  
and now I'm sure.

It takes a day to make a storm;  
or does it take countless ages?  
Like a sonata or a sonnet,  
or the shaping of a bonnet,  
the work is done in stages.

I'll study the storm  
and its dynamo of energy  
and how it took an entire day  
and intricate interplays of synergy  
to conjure up and to form  
this magic interplay.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Grass Is Greener

When we lived in the country,  
in a cottage painted blue like the sea,  
with window boxes of violets in spring  
and cerulean asters to usher out the summer,  
you talked of moving to Manhattan,  
and told me you never cared for blue.

So we rented a loft in Soho  
and grew American Beauties  
on the terrace; you bought  
fresh crimson tulips, even in winter,  
imported from Spain. One day you spoke  
of moving to Barcelona and  
how bored you had become  
with the color red.

In Spain you cultivated sunflowers—  
our Moorish villa obscured with hundreds  
of golden faces, tracing the arc of the sun.  
You even sowed dandelion seeds,  
mowing them down before the yellow  
daisies went to seed.  
Yellow is a heavy, harsh color, you said  
the day we departed for Paris  
after the sunflowers ripened.

One could say  
we lived a colorful life back then,  
but the colors ran.

Sonny Rainshine



# The Grumpy Grammarian

She lives her life in lower case  
with no punctuation.  
Her moods are subjunctive  
and she is just plain tired period, new paragraph.

She shuns participles  
and finds objects of prepositions intimidating  
if not objectionable.  
She looks upon her existence  
as a run-on sentence  
and each day as an infinitive.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Haunted Bus

He dreamt he was on a bus, dreaming.  
He awoke with a jolt  
and looked about at his fellow passengers.  
One wore a grin that filled her face.  
One grimaced at him.  
One looked puzzled.  
One guffawed unceasingly.  
One looked clinically depressed.  
One looked like those ubiquitous happy faces.  
He had boarded a busload of emoticons.

The next day he deleted his screen name  
and resigned from the chatroom.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Heartbreaking Beauty Of Innocence

While governments come and go,  
as politicians duke it out  
and vulgarity and tawdriness  
define the day,  
a six-year-old boy  
sprawls on the floor among his friends  
with his coloring book, thinking  
about the ice-cream party  
tomorrow honoring  
his perfect attendance  
in first grade.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Idea Of Perfection

The day finally came.  
The island was part  
of a sheltered archipelago  
off the coast of Greece,  
secluded, renowned  
for its serene beauty.

Years,  
years! of planning  
and doing-without,  
poring over maps  
until his eyes stung,  
combing the ads,  
reading travel books and logs,  
consulting the best travel agencies  
and eureka! his painstaking  
research paid off.

He booked the perfect flight,  
first class,  
the perfect hotel,  
four-star,  
and purchased the perfect  
travel clothes,  
white linen suits  
and a panama hat.

It was the very first day  
of his stay on the island that  
he admitted he had made  
a grave miscalculation.  
Lying on the perfect beach,  
on perfect sand,  
in a perfect beach chair,  
to the background of ocean waves  
a perfect blue;  
looking up into a Grecian  
sun that could not be more  
exquisite, sea birds that

performed pristine gymnastics  
in a cloudless sky,  
he suddenly felt a darkness  
descend, a sadness deeper  
than he imagined sadness could ever be.

For he had both lost and found something  
there in paradise:

By fulfilling his dream,  
his fantasy,  
he had annihilated it;  
and in its place a profound  
emptiness filled the void,  
descending and deepening  
as the perfect sun  
sank into a perfect sea,  
and night approached.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Kingdom Where Rainbows Stay

Have you heard of a kingdom  
where flowers never wilt,  
where rainbows never dissolve  
and nightingales sing all day?

In this idyllic place the trees  
are never leafless, the grass  
is always verdant and green,  
and the temperature neither rises nor falls.

Here lions purr and serpents never bite,  
babies never cry and grief has been banished;  
Love has become commonplace;  
happiness just a word.

And over near the horizon,  
a glorious rainbow arcs transfixed;  
It is a rainbow that stays, but stays  
because it is perpetually raining  
in the kingdom where flowers never wilt.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Last Buffalo

The last buffalo died quietly in the snow  
where he had fallen against a solitary scrub oak,  
one of dozens of swelling mounds, white graves.

That night the wind blustered and swept  
a top layer of the snow from the bison's  
frozen crypt, leaving his head exposed.

His eyes, capturing the glint of the post-blizzard moon,  
gazed upward, gazed across the Great Plains,  
as if to say to them: I'll return again to graze

in meadows that rustle in the wind and sun,  
and slake my thirst in the streamlets and ponds,  
sequestered there among my fellow beasts.

The moon then vanished behind a cloud,  
the wind gathered up the snowy shroud,  
and the last buffalo dreamed of tall grasses.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Lonely Buddhist

He traveled to Rangoon  
amid lotus blossoms strewn,  
there to learn not to flinch  
at the withering and the stench  
of the bodies of monks  
in decay.

In some way  
he sought release from the pain;  
he thought from deprivation to attain  
the shining, sharp dagger of peace  
and to plunge into it until the cease  
of suffering.

Buffering himself  
from the rigors of life,  
his fear was the butter, he was the knife.  
Never did he suspect that loneliness  
was the root of his stress,  
his banishment,

a vanishing point  
of no return, his achilles heel.  
There, drifting in the incense, he'd feel  
for once the yearning of us all,  
to break the membrane of self-absorption and the wall  
of separation.

Sonny Rainshine



# The Loop In The Wall

Sometimes the most impenetrable walls  
are the ones we erect to protect  
ourselves from pain.

Sometimes the most excruciating pain  
is the kind that topples our emotional walls  
and makes us vulnerable.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Origin Of Discontent

A quart mason jar  
filled with sprays of lavender  
heather and a spike of borage  
dominates the rustic kitchen table,  
constructed from the 100-year  
oak tree that held sentry  
over her front porch  
until toppled by a windstorm  
last July,

Leila gazes at the pinkish-purplish-blueishness  
of the bouquet and waits  
for The Feeling.  
She had bought the farmhouse,  
as it was advertised by the realtor,  
after she decided to leave New York  
to seek the serenity of pastures  
and crystalline brooklets,  
and to awaken to birdsongs  
and the soothing lowing of cows.

But after two years  
of country living,  
the same city-thoughts  
returned and began to whirl  
around her head, like the bumblebees  
in the lavender patch  
in the backyard.

Perhaps, she thought,  
the origin of discontent  
lies not in where we abide,  
but in the circumstances  
of our lives and the rich  
alluvium of our perceptions.

For the first time,  
she saw not the bouquet,  
but the bouquet's symmetry

and textured colors;  
running her hands  
over the rough oaken  
surface of the table,  
she sensed the spirit  
of the fallen tree  
and knew for sure  
that The Feeling  
had come at last.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Parrot On The Porch

The parrot on the porch  
stood out from its white-washed surrounding  
like the dropped uppercase character  
of an illuminated manuscript  
from Medieval times;  
his throaty kwaaarrkkkk! ,  
along with the argumentative  
kaw-kaw-kaw of the crows  
in the yard,  
sounded sacramental, momentous  
and perhaps apocalyptic.

Was it envy,  
or was it vanity that caused  
the common crow  
to descend upon the parrot on the porch  
to provoke and assassinate him?  
The brilliant yellows and reds  
and greens were mirrored in the glossy  
black wings of the crow  
as they fought until the sun set,  
the crow's cohorts  
growing quickly bored with the spectacle  
and fluttering off  
to attend to more pedestrian affairs.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Perils Of Paul

He took up  
tango,  
mambo,  
limbo.

He tried to learn  
Swahili,  
Danish,  
Cherokee.

He learned to  
fence,  
channel his soul,  
wrestle,  
knit.

He dabbled in  
voodoo,  
judo,  
I Ching,  
Go.

He read  
Melville,  
Ayn Rand,  
Kierkegaard,  
Peanuts.

But he still can't  
get a date.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Pessimist's Answering Machine

I am your quintessential cynic,  
he said, I'm a nihilist.  
Don't put me on your speed dial,  
Pollyanna, cause my voice mail  
is half empty, not half full.

Call me later, luv.  
I'm watching "It's a Wonderful Life."

Sonny Rainshine

# The Power Of Peace

He dropped the a-bomb on me  
when he whispered in my ear:  
'It's a lie.'

'What's a lie? '  
I whispered back.

'It's a lie that peace is unattainable.  
That's what the hawkish say.'

The thought exploded  
in my hand-a detonation  
that sounded like jubilation.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Sanctity Of Tears

I was about 11 or 12 then.  
She and I were sitting in the living room,  
not the den. Maybe that had something  
to do with it.

Living rooms back then were for company,  
a lavishly draped and bedecked  
holy-of-holies which made me,  
the rare times I entered,  
feel as if I had entered a chapel,  
quiet, the scent of polished wood  
like incense.

My mother sat there eating grapes  
and I peeled an orange.  
Inexplicably, I felt something was about to happen.

In one quick movement  
she let the basket of fruit fall to her lap,  
placed her hands over her mouth  
and began to shake silently and gently.

Something was occurring that had never occurred  
and never would again to my knowledge:  
My mother was crying.  
Drops the size of seed pearls  
were falling into the basket of grapes.

It was over in less than a minute.  
She picked up the fruit  
and went back into the kitchen.  
I remained in the sanctuary for a moment  
embarrassed, disturbed, and suddenly older.

She never told me what had made her so unhappy  
that day, and I never asked her.  
I sensed that it was something far too  
personal ever to talk about.



To this very day,  
I often wonder what I witnessed that day,  
what holy thing, what immeasurably sad thing.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Sea Between The Trees

Learning to know you  
is like cruising along a beach highway,  
heavily fringed with trees and brush;  
only an occasional glimpse of a vertical cerulean sliver,  
or a blinding glint of the sun's refraction  
on the sea tells me there is more there  
than meets the eye.

You reveal yourself in waves,  
subtle breakers that lap against  
my senses, eroding the distance  
from the shore to the deep fathoms  
where treasures lie.

Between the clumps of oleander,  
the frilly branches of ocean pine,  
like the frames of a reel of film  
in fast motion, you call to me:  
"It's not I who is in perpetual motion,  
but you. Knowing someone  
takes time.  
Park the car; take off your shoes  
and come meet me on the sand."

Sonny Rainshine

# The Simplicity Of Surrender

Like an opulent cluster of Concord grapes—No,  
more like the silky conical impression of wisteria vine—  
the thought first dangled before him, a sign  
that creativity had emerged and begun to flow.

The sudden thawing after a winter prolonged:  
first the shocking cracking of the ice,  
then the pooling of water at the interstice  
of the expanding veins, branched and pronged,

softened his self-denunciation;  
he would begin to oppose the simplicity of surrender  
beginning today, to imagine the possibility of elation  
and to slant toward the true and the tender.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Singular First Person

Do you feel a barely perceptible quiver,  
a frisson, as a Frenchman might say;  
someone walking on your grave,  
as my mother might say,  
when you write the word "I"?

Such a short, vertical, twig  
of a word, perched there on the paper  
looking like a Greek column  
but signifying my very self,  
a lifetime shriveled into a scratch  
like a hairline fracture  
or a healing scar.

We wonder why in almost all tongues  
the word we use to represent us most  
is among the most condensed:  
je, yo, ich, etc.  
It takes a lot of time  
to discover who we are,  
who I am, and you—  
all the letters of the alphabet  
and still we often find  
that mere language is limited;  
it comes up short.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Sound Snow Makes

Sometimes on those days  
in February just before the snow lets go  
and the air gets as dark as black lace,  
as dark as possible  
without succumbing to complete obscurity,  
it feels as if the sun is gone for good,  
scurried off to another planetary system,  
leaving this one enshrouded  
in a cowl  
of quiet velvet.

Then, when flakes at last begin to descend,  
like eiderdown,  
it seems as though the drooping clouds  
were slit through, as a ripped pillow;  
and though the falling of the snow is exquisitely silent,  
the sound of a quick, distant whisper  
is unmistakable.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Space Between The Space Between

So many miles of earth and rock  
and we linger here on the surface,  
living on the crust, and dying just beneath.

Why does nature not optimize?  
Why are there stretches of nothingness  
between the planets, separating the stars?  
Merely elbow room?

As an artist does,  
can we make negative space  
beautiful? Meaningful?

Can we embrace the economy  
of emptiness? Voids violate  
our sense of purpose.  
We look up and see black space,  
and can only assume that beyond that lies

black space,  
sprinkled with spinning spheres  
and spiraling wonders.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Space Where The Boy Was

One war ends; another begins;  
both armies are sure they're right;  
that's why they fight.

I knew a boy,  
he used to make me laugh.  
He used to play with his toy trucks  
on the sidewalk,  
under the elm tree.  
Where has he gone?

One war ends; another begins;  
both armies are sure they're right;  
that's why they fight.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Taste Of Beauty

The peas he planted in April  
are bearing now, not sweet,  
not ornamental, but gentle  
and tender—a treat  
for a late summer suppers.

All summer he had watched  
the progression from bursting sprout  
to vines entwining, tendrils  
clutching, pods getting stout  
with emerald cylinders dangling.

Now the last harvest,  
the final picking of the year  
has come, the sum of summer  
bounty is here,  
culminating bitter like chicory; sweet like cherries.

His pleasure has been squared,  
his joy is double.  
The beauty of growing things  
was well worth the trouble,  
for this miracle is a matter of taste.

Sonny Rainshine



# The Tyranny Of Time

Who rules?

Kings, emperors, presidents,  
prime ministers?

aghas, shahs,  
queens, princes,  
potentates?

.....

Clocks rule.

And calendars,  
and watches,  
and Earth's breakneck  
orbit.

Bow low:  
time is passing.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Veiled Tints Of Blackbirds

They roost upon the railing, stentorian.  
Laser-eyed sentries scanning the vista,  
they will guard the nest on the roof  
'til the last hatchling gets its wings.

Not crows nor ravens  
and curiously not black,  
though at first glance that's the shade  
that registers on my sight:  
no these are smaller, neater,  
and do not caw-caw-caw,  
but cast soprano notes  
into the chilly, late spring air,  
songs not nearly so dark  
as the shadows in their wings.

If you look more closely,  
beyond the inky textures of the feathers,  
iridescent emerald and orchids and yellows,  
like gold dust in the stream glint and glimmer,  
fine applique on shimmering velvet.

It's rather disconcerting, isn't it,  
to discover that what we first perceive  
is not always what's there.  
Though the fundamental whole  
is only the sum of its parts,  
sometimes the parts themselves  
are whole universes.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Vociferous Vine

The vine has reached the top of the stake  
and waves at me as it billows in the autumn wind.

You betrayed me,  
it seems to say.  
You directed me toward the sun  
and then you left me groping, reaching.

But, I would answer,  
such is the paradox of life.  
As a young man I scaled the ladder  
of opportunity, buoyed by dreams,  
by aspirations, by the glittery  
promises of youth.

But all journeys end,  
mountains peak,  
love dies, or transforms into something else-  
with luck, affection or friendship-  
and we find ourselves  
a vine with nothing to cling to.

As I go out on the porch  
with a string and a slender  
bamboo branch to extend  
the vine's support,  
feeling the first chill  
of fall, I feel I'm  
ready to face the long nights of January,  
and to push upward toward May.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Wedding Ring

My mother bought her own wedding ring.

My father was too young to make much money  
(it was the custom to marry young  
in the South at that time)  
and my mother did not want to wait.

He was devastatingly handsome  
back then, she said.  
I thought I was buying happiness,  
a ticket out of my father's tyranny,  
an escape from boredom.

I'm sorry,  
I said.

Oh, my money was well spent,  
she responded,  
as she hugged me  
as if she would never let me go.

\*\*\*\*\*

She would tell this story  
(and others)  
many times before she died.  
Most of these things happened  
years before I was born,  
before I began to write poetry  
to put them into words  
and finally comprehend  
their beauty,  
their aching sadness,  
the love hidden within them.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Well-Digger

This drought of serendipity,  
famine of the heart,  
this dry spell.

This caesura  
of expectation.

The well-digger knows  
where ice-cold springs  
are buried.

The well-digger knows  
where to look  
for things that flow.

The well-digger  
has grown old  
and has forgotten where  
the water runs,  
where the water runs.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Whole Peach

Ripe, striped peaches.  
The first of the year.  
Their seductive fragrance  
escapes from my palm  
and plumbs the pleasure sites  
in my head.

I gingerly slice  
a pristine wedge;  
she raises the fruit intact  
like a sacred host  
and bites it whole,  
the residue on her lip  
yellow like the moon  
in October.

You slice up your  
days, your duties  
your life, halving  
and quartering,  
quantifying your senses,  
your feelings,  
your hopes,  
she said.

Here, just this once  
take the fruit  
and eat it whole;  
let me watch the juice  
dribble down your chin  
as a fresh stream  
trickles over a smooth rock  
after the ice has melted.

Sonny Rainshine

# The Worth Of Weeping

Measuring his days from high to high,  
barely getting by; living on the fly,  
Henry Worth began setting by  
vials of tears for a rainy day,  
treasuring the warm fluidity of them  
in a dirth of heat,  
and in the absence of good fortune.

Pleasuring his ego, marking time  
with petty crime; he carries the vial of tears  
into the vale of tears and gritty grime,  
and a veil of tears  
that hid his valor from his fears  
is parted and for the first time  
he can breathe.

Sonny Rainshine

# These Days Are Those Days

Every generation thinks it's the best  
and thinks it's the worst;  
we think in superlatives and comparatives  
and who will be first.

Some say society is in decline;  
others insist it's sublime.  
Optimists say it can only get better;  
pessimists say we're out of time.

Positive thinkers are bullish on good cheer;  
Naysayers say Nay!  
Stoics and nihilists say drink some beer,  
while believers proceed to pray.

This is our age, our stage;  
do with it what you will.  
Like the wind on a March day  
it is never still.

It's a mélange of good and bad,  
pretty and sad, up and down.  
Let's take it for what it is  
and order another round.

Sonny Rainshine



# Three Stalwart Stanza

I remember when she first  
responded to the cicadas,  
that stentorian August  
when the winged choirs  
chanted their hallelujahs  
in the crinkly grass.

I wish they would stop,  
she murmured, hand on ears,  
a gathering terror lapping  
at the edges of her eyes.  
It's as though all the women  
of the world were keening  
and all the old men of the world  
were rasping, a distorted OM  
from cauterized larynxes  
of Eastern monks.

Her cri-de-coeur  
resounded in the ponderous air  
and converged with the desperate  
telegraphy of the insects,  
then subsided just within the rhythm  
of the cicadas' song,  
rising and falling like the tide  
under the moon,  
as she let go her breath.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tireless Duplicity

Some people are indefatigable.  
Many never tire of doing good deeds,  
of righting wrongs, of fighting  
good fights.

Others toil endlessly to destroy  
their neighbors' good mood,  
to seek ways to get revenge  
or to create havoc.

Some greet everyone  
with a smile or a compliment,  
genuine, open,  
and freely bestowed.

Others see you or me  
walking down the street  
and their first thought is:  
What can I do to get his goat?

Sonny Rainshine

# To A Friend Feeling Low

Your largess is large as the Indian Ocean,  
but your famous generosity stops with yourself.

You peer into your filmy-dark waters,  
in depths only you can access,

and behold there only the stony matter  
clinging to the crystals, not the rubies and the gold.

You see the dross not the silver, the leaves  
but not the refreshing tea;

Your respect for all others is renowned,  
but in yourself you see only the unforgivable

and thus the unforgiven. Have pity.  
The legions of unkindnesses, the black thoughts,

the hurtful things you've done—all are from  
a heart that is human.

Here is all the love we possess:  
take it—apply it like balm

on your suffering so profound  
that only you can know it.

Who would have thought sometimes  
the hardest one to love is ourself.

Sonny Rainshine

# Toward Home

He pointed to the jade horizon  
shadowy in the morning mist  
and said, "See the hills,  
the Kentucky hills, the heartbreaking hills?"

"Yes, there are the hills,  
the Kentucky hills, the heartbreaking hills.  
Is it your heart you speak of? Your heart—  
splintered, bruised? "

"Severed right into.  
Half my heart festers over there,  
what's left languishes here.  
I can never go back,  
though the Kentucky hills, the heartbreaking hills,  
beseech me every night."

We gazed together at the darkening hills  
as a snow squall obscured our view.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tragedy Strikes At The Big-Rig Grill

Bobby Bolt lost his napkin last night  
at the Big-rig Grill.

He'd made his chauffeur stop  
there for water to take his pill.

Driving back to New Jersey  
from seeing La Traviata at the Met,  
his heart began to murmur,  
presaging an ominous threat.

Smirking at the stainless steel  
tableware, he shoved it away,  
while his paper napkin  
slid under the salt and pepper tray.

Inquired Louise, the waitress:  
"What'll it be today, honey? "  
"A glass of water, miss,  
and I don't find that funny."

"I didn't mean to be forward, "  
Louise offered shyly.  
"You've given me no napkin, "  
Bobby responded drily.

"This is atrocious!  
The poorest service I've ever got."  
Bobby jumped up, stormed out  
and passed out on the parking lot.

When Louise called 911  
as she cleared the setting away,  
she was startled to find  
a paper napkin under the condiments tray

Sonny Rainshine

# Tropical Heat

And let's not forget that week  
in Isla Mujeres  
when you were inebriated  
with tropical sunsets  
and tequilla sunrises.

We booked a room  
in that hotel,  
where wild orchids  
were tamed  
and potted palms  
were mulched  
in old cigarette butts.

The owners,  
expats from L. A.,  
had almost succeeded  
in bringing the jungle  
into the hotel  
and the hotel into the jungle.  
You found a fake  
anaconda  
in the restaurant  
ladies' room.  
I observed cell phone towers,  
slender gray Eiffel towers,  
on the hiking trails.

One night  
one sultry, cicada night,  
I woke up and you were  
not there. The Aztec-motif  
sheets still held your impression,  
but I lay next to your absence,  
not your warmth.

Last I heard,  
from your mother,  
you had left Mexico

and headed for Bolivia  
to seek solace  
in Change,  
in Chance,  
in Risk,  
in Revolution.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tropical Noir

The night held the consistency of Turkish coffee,  
dense, deep, heavy, viscous. They kiss  
beneath the sinewy bougainvillea vines, drinking  
up the cascading passion and the mingled scent  
of frangipani and sweat.

Her husband was back at the hotel,  
he wouldn't mind,  
being dead and all.

Like a jaguar she purred  
and lit her Lucky Strike  
with a hundred dollar bill.

Sonny Rainshine



# Tropical Sundown

Tremulously, tremulously,  
green-blue, radiant light  
filters off the lagoon.

Green-blue, radiant light  
reflects the waning of the day  
folding into night.

All the hours of the  
day converge and dissolve in  
green-blue radiant light.

Sonny Rainshine

# Truth Melts

Purple and pungent are our lies,  
counterfeit cobblers, mendacious pies.  
Poppies made of blue ice, discarding petals  
of pretense and deception: integrity settles  
slippery on the ground and dries.

Sonny Rainshine

# Trying To Make Wine And Getting Vinegar

So, what does Thoreau have  
that I don't? he asked.

Thoreau is dead, you said.  
It's 'what DID Thoreau have  
that you don't.'

So, what did he?

He believed that the industrial revolution  
heralded the end of mankind's individuality.  
You and I, according to Henry David,  
are living desperate lives.

You should not be enamoured of the deceased;  
it could be misconstrued as necrophilia.  
Who's Henry David?

You're making my life desperate,  
you said.

Your life is desperate because you are promiscuous.  
What's with this Henry David and Thoreau and all.  
Who else?  
I'm very concerned about this new lifestyle  
of yours.

Never mind, you say,  
I'm off to check out some real estate  
on a rural pond in Massachusetts.

Sonny Rainshine

# Tung Trees

Blooms ivory with roseate veins,  
like brush strokes from a single hair.  
Low and spindly, they remind you  
of bonsai and things Japanese,  
being indigenous to there.

The fruits, nuts, begin apple-green  
and are tapered at the end like  
a child's spin-top.

When they mature they burnish to  
a matte black, become dessicated,  
and fall to the ground.  
Everywhere they fall a tree will be.

The oil inside  
stains the harvesters' hands  
an ocher yellow.

For years they were  
planted in orchards  
for their oil, additives to paint  
and varnish.

In the 1960's Hurricane Camille blew in  
and leveled the fragile trees  
like a samurai's sword.  
They were never replanted.

Take a drive in rural Mississippi  
and you can still see their ancestors  
shinto gods rising resolutely from residual kernels,  
orphaned, displaced, exotic emigres.

Sonny Rainshine

# Turn Of The Page

Will I shuffle my 2008 mindset  
into 2009? Different digits;  
same old issues?

As I flip the page on my At-A-Glance,  
a parting glance at my life to date,  
I feel a moment of anticipation,  
followed by a moment of dislocation:  
It's just another grid of numbered squares.

What had I expected? Trumpeting heralds?  
Confetti? Pornographic jpegs?  
31 boxes, all meticulously aligned,  
poised to receive all sorts of urgent messages,  
not-so-urgent messages.  
There's something hungry  
about those boxes,  
voracious, demanding.

I like the clean,  
uncluttered look of January,  
white as a midwinter blizzard.  
Before the month is over,  
the pristine page will be littered  
with the little details  
of my life,  
as I toss the old calendar into the wastecan  
without-a-glance.

Sonny Rainshine

## Two Haikus: North Wind; South Wind

North Wind:

Let me in! the wind  
against the windows demands.  
It's cold out here.

\*\*\*\*

Southern Breeze:

My lungs are sweet with  
fragrance and heat from the sun.  
Savor my warm breath.

Sonny Rainshine

# Under The Veil

Colors soften  
under a patina of frost.  
All that's left of the original tint  
resides in the film footage  
of our memory,  
though antiqued there now  
and sepia-toned  
by the mach-speed  
of time.

I wonder if faces  
are like that.  
The rimy shadows  
of pain and suffering,  
those coldsnaps of turmoil,  
descend over a visage  
like a white wedding veil  
concealing the innocent  
softness there,  
muting the illumination there,  
like a summer garden  
blanketed with frost  
or covered with ashes.

Just as May faithfully melts  
the frost,  
maybe a warm convection of summer thoughts  
will lift the veil  
and disperse the ashes  
and restore us to  
our original glow.

Sonny Rainshine

# Unsaid Words Before The Word Goodbye

Breaking off from Cara  
was as uncomplicated as detaching the pit  
from the peach,  
as fluid as extracting  
the loose rinds of a tangerine,  
but deep inside he knew  
the separation would bear no fruit.

Sonny Rainshine



# Unsetting The Unsettling Sun

Not unlike the constancy of the sun,  
always descending in its assigned place,  
a little north, a little south,  
depending on the season,  
I keep going back  
to the same place.

And just like the horizon  
that in the evening bites the sun  
and consumes him,  
I seem far away;  
I seem hungry  
for light, for white and yellow,  
not the blues and blacks  
of night.

And the places I go  
are always the places I've been,  
cold, sad places of shame  
and regret, stagnant seas,  
burnt hillsides, desolate dunes.  
I go obediently, irresistably,  
to my master, my memories.

I cannot unset the sun  
but I can chase him.  
Maybe some day, I'll catch up  
and wrestle him and capture  
the light and heat  
to carry with me  
when I visit  
the dark places of the past;  
then I'll finally see  
what's really there.

Sonny Rainshine

# Unwanted Gift

It was when I drove by your house  
and noticed that you had never taken down  
the Christmas decorations  
that I first understood what had happened to you.

It was the beginning of March  
and the plastic reindeer seemed eerie,  
disoriented—the bluster of winter's last fury  
had broken the neck of one  
and he stood shaking his head  
in disbelief and horror.

The angels on the front porch,  
with hymnals open, with mouths open  
all in unison, sang silent carols,  
to the silent night that was  
filtering in from the east.

When you didn't answer my phone call,  
I drove back and knocked on the door,  
all pasted over with wind-ripped foil  
depicting snowy, happy scenes.

I could see from your empty stare  
that you didn't recognize who I was  
and that the world had stopped spinning  
for you around mid-December,  
about the time that you got the news  
that he had left you.

I saw beyond you the brown-needled  
spruce tree with the unopened boxes  
underneath. I held you in my arms  
tenderly and felt suddenly cold like the lingering  
snow on the window-sills;  
inadequate like the glistening tinsel  
on the tree.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Upon Outing My Friend As An Optimist

I want the old you back.  
You were my Edgar Allen Poet  
and I could always be sure  
that no matter how crappy I felt,  
you felt crappier.  
Now you've betrayed me  
and have become happier.

Who do you think you are,  
Walt Whitman? All smiles  
and lilacs blooming in your dooryard;  
It's all very disturbing,  
curbing your lack of enthusiasm.  
You're up on the pinnacle of joy  
while I'm teetering on the chasm.

Your favorite past-time  
was to crash a funeral,  
pretending you're Maud  
and I'm Harold.  
Now it's weddings and christenings  
every day. Hey,  
what happened to serious stuff like Death?  
What led you astray?

It looks as though  
everyone I know  
is embracing la vie en rose.  
What's the gloomy-gus to do;  
where are we to go?  
I must find an antidote to purge  
the happy virus. Anyone know  
a good elegy or a dirge?

Sonny Rainshine

# Ups 'N Downs

Like white ink on black paper  
sometimes life seems turned around.  
Like ice in summer, desiccated leaves in spring,  
like fish swimming in the Gobi Desert,  
like a bell that will not ring,  
it's disconcerting, I've found.

Like black ink on white paper  
sometimes things seem straight ahead.  
Like iced tea in summer, cherry buds in spring,  
like fish catapulting in the thrusting whitewater,  
like a bell that rings and rings-  
then life's a dancing thoroughbred.

Sonny Rainshine

# Utilitarian Music

He listens to music,  
to mask the rhythm  
of his loneliness.

When he drives to work,  
he turns on the radio loud  
to dispel the pervading  
anxiety beside him  
and in the back seat.

He never goes to concerts,  
because the music  
demands to be heard.

When someone asks him  
who his favorite singer is,  
he responds: The Beatles  
or ABBA, and quickly  
changes the subject.

He goes to sleep  
to the sound of  
easy listening radio.

What would he do,  
without music?

Sonny Rainshine

# Veiled Tints Of Blackbirds

They roost upon the railing, stentorian.  
Laser-eyed sentries scanning the vista,  
they will guard the nest on the roof  
'til the last hatchling gets its wings.

Not crows nor ravens  
and curiously not black,  
though at first glance that's the shade  
that registers on my retina:  
no these are smaller, neater,  
and do not caw-caw-caw,  
but cast soprano notes  
into the chilly, late spring air,  
songs not nearly so dark  
as the shadows in their wings.

If you look more closely,  
beyond the inky textures of the feathers,  
iridescent emerald and orchids and yellows,  
like gold dust in a rivulet glint and glimmer,  
or like fine applique on shimmering velvet.

It's rather disconcerting, isn't it,  
to discover that what we first perceive  
is not always what's there.  
Though the fundamental whole  
is only the sum of its parts,  
sometimes the parts themselves  
embody a universe.

Sonny Rainshine

# Vices And Benefits Of Alliteration

Violetta, accompanied by her vintage viola,  
and with vocal vivacity, sang of violets and violent vendettas,  
victorious viceroys and virtuous virgins.

One vastly vanquishing day, though,  
she lost the vivid evocative value of V  
and could not longer utter vuh.

Blithely she brightened, bothered no more,  
as she borrowed a banjo  
to beat out ballads and the blues  
of beasts and belles and billy goats,  
and her favorite insect, the bee.

Sonny Rainshine



## Violet Haiku

Wild violets: blue  
and white ribbons trim the creek.  
a lacy brocade.

Sonny Rainshine

# Waltzing With Eureka

Mrs. Carolina spent most of her days  
in the valiant deification and praise  
of sanitation. The very elation

of wiring up the Eureka,  
stopping to seek a  
just-right attachment, a match meant

for heaven, yes sir.  
And then the whirr,  
like a purring cat, stirring that

sanctified feeling in her  
that will occur  
when she cleaning, leaning

her toward contentment  
and resentment  
of those who don't see dirt, who hurt

the balance of things  
with bathtup rings  
and lint on the sheets. "Beats

being deadbeats, " she purrs.  
"Dust bunnies and cockleburs  
make me ill. I will

not yield to the filth of the world, "  
she said as she twirled  
around the floor,

waltzing with her upright gentleman,  
Eureka.

Sonny Rainshine

# Wanderlust

Glancing down from his aerie, cityward,  
outward, toward towers drawing squat shops  
minaturized by distance and contrast,  
he observed how like the intricate tunnels  
of a schoolboy's model ant farm  
the sprawling freeway down below seemed,

and how all things seemed to be thrusting outward,  
upward, toward some indefinite space,  
any space but here. Likewise he envisioned  
his own coursing blood like a highway,  
looping in cloverleaves, passing over, passing under,  
transporting platelets, minerals, nutrients,  
like automobiles, like ants: all travelers.

Nothing and no-one stays in place!  
How I long to be a passenger  
in one of those cars down there,  
bound somewhere, bound to nothing,  
tunneling to freedom, my few belongings,  
like the constituents of the blood within me,  
in the backseat sustaining me,  
with the only thing on my mind  
the next white stripe  
extracted from the throbbing night  
by probing headlights—  
I'd be a happy vagabond.

Then, glancing inward, into the life  
he'd chosen, into familiarity and routine,  
he looked away from the persistent momentum  
of things, from man's ancient  
instinct to roam, to pull up stakes,  
this curiosity to see what's around the corner.  
And as he fixed his supper  
and prepared for the evening,  
he luxuriated in the warm sensation of home-thoughts,  
as these thoughts propelled through his being  
like all things in motion.

## Sonny Rainshine

# Warm Nights, Restless Hearts

That night you stayed out all night  
and came home drunk at 4 AM:  
What were you looking for? Flight?  
Was it wine or was it roses  
or other pleasures that night discloses;  
Was it a reaction to routine—  
a keen sense of deprivation,  
a holy ritual, a pilgrimage  
to the consecrated zone  
of the demi-monde?

Were you like Proust  
in search of lost time  
in the sparkle of the grime  
and quartz particles of  
city sidewalks?

I know that it is possible  
to feel lonely even with  
people you love.  
I hope a time will come  
when we can battle our demons  
together.

Sonny Rainshine

# Weathering

Such is the case:

The first flowers of autumn,  
the last of summer,  
are asters, golden rod, and queen anne's lace.

There is a changing of seasons  
in your eyes, and all the reasons  
are vague and disturbing—  
I can see it in your face.

There's a trace of a more rugged  
blossom there—  
a bloom that can bear  
the coming chilly nights.

Permit me to stay by you,  
for this disconcerting equinox  
of mood. After the zinnias and phlox  
are wilted, we'll plant together  
next years daffodils and hyacinths.

Sonny Rainshine

# Western Fantasia

Follow the trail 'longside the red arroyo,  
where the thirsty sage stands resolute.  
Under the spiky joshua tree, repose  
and contemplate it, ask it how it got its name.

Recline under the desert sky,  
a concave bowl of blackberries and diamonds,  
inverted and seeming to spill  
into your lap.

Is that the grieving of a lost lobo  
or is it a coyote's madrigal  
for his lover waiting beyond the mesa?  
Or is it the war-whoop of some warrior  
who does not know he's dead.

The sand flickers in the moonlight—  
diamonds again! The trembling flame  
of your campfire nibbles at the night,  
and at last the desert in yourself,  
the solitude, the vastness of being  
rises up and radiates into the night.

Sonny Rainshine

# What-Nots

Life is not  
a river;  
love is  
not a rose.

Grief is not  
a bottomless well;  
joy is  
not a flower.

Wisdom is not  
a pearl;  
pain is  
not a knife.

Strength is not  
an oak tree;  
fear is  
not a color,

but all the world's  
a metaphor,  
or so  
it seems.

Sonny Rainshine



## What's The Big Idea?

Greyson made a living  
selling plot ideas  
to aspiring novelists.

As a result  
his wealth had increased exponentially,  
as had the world's quota  
of fourth-rate writers.

One day, however,  
Greyson was reading the local rag  
and noticed an article  
in the "Literary Luminaries" section  
that mentioned one of his clients:  
"Joe Fitzmeyer, a local author  
strikes it rich with sleeper  
blockbuster."

The name of the novel was  
"The Plot Merchant."

Sonny Rainshine

# When Blue Is Blue Enough

On some days the sky is not cerulean blue,  
it is not azure or indigo, nor is it the tint  
of someone's grandmother's antique ewer.

It cannot be compared to the aquamarine,  
or the ultramarine of the sea,  
or your lover's memorable eyes;

It defies classifications on spectra  
or color-wheels, spinning, spinning  
the names of the layers of light.

On those days, we look up  
and though astounded, we are content  
to plunge through the labyrinth of words  
and reconsider the sound and sense  
of the unassuming word  
blue.

Sonny Rainshine

# Where The Earth Bends

I often look at the azure sky of mid-morning,  
or the purpling crawl of twilight,  
the Joseph's-coat of the sky at sunset.

And countless times I peer out beyond  
glass doors toward the gray-green contours  
of the hills, broken by the points of conifers  
and the sparkle of white houses.

And the river there:  
color that travels,  
color that changes  
and robs the palettes  
of the trees and sky.

But hardly ever do my eyes  
focus on the horizon where  
the earth abuts the sky; where  
the sphere arcs  
and reminds me  
that I'm planted precariously  
on a twirling ball.

Artists say there is no such thing  
as a true straight line.  
All creation curves  
all things resist uniformity.  
Yet, we strive for straightness,  
building our homes in cubes,  
our streets in immaculate grids,  
lives in neat compartments.

Lately, I find myself looking  
more at the ever-receding horizon,  
marveling at the soft roundness  
of things. And wondering  
what's beyond it  
and beyond the one after that.

Sonny Rainshine

# Whirling Disease

Something is wrong  
with the trout in Huntington Creek.  
Instead of following the current's flow  
they mimic eddies and whirlpools—  
drowning dervishes  
striving to scratch their tails,  
sensing that something is wrong there.  
Unnatural maladies should not have  
pretty names.

(Note: There really is an outbreak of this illness currently afflicting fish in Utah's freshwater streams.)

Sonny Rainshine

# Why Karen Left Miguel

I am neither violet nor villanelle,  
not a torso nor a bust. I am flesh  
and feeling; I perspire  
when you make love to me,  
and my face contorts  
as I surrender to the agonizing  
mysteries of love.

When you see me, you don't.  
It is a mirage, a collage of femininity,  
culled from the yellowing pages  
of 19th century novels—  
I am not Mme. Bovary.

It is not Anna Karinina who leaves you,  
Do svidaniya! Goodbye, comrade;  
it is Karen, your high school sweetheart.  
Remember me?

Sonny Rainshine

# Winter Solstice Invocation

No need for you clanking old sycamores  
to shake your death rattle at me,  
Wild goose from Manitoba,  
precise in your perfect V:  
honk if you love summer,  
if you remember the blue  
of the last of the autumn cornflowers.

Nobody need broadcast  
the flight of the sun  
and the triumph of night,  
I can feel it in the tips of my fingers,  
in the pores of my skin,  
as the solstice crawls  
like wooly caterpillars  
toward consumation  
toward annihilation  
and finally toward light.

No regrets, only the embers  
of remembrance flickering  
in the ripe kindling  
of the first fire of the season.  
Winter will have its way  
and winter will go its way.

Sonny Rainshine

# Winter Thoughts On A Summer Afternoon

He resisted it,  
nostalgia.  
He longed to be  
here now,  
reacting to events  
as they occurred,  
not reliving  
long past victories,  
calamities, assignations.  
Not living where the dead live,  
in tombs where cobwebs and dust  
linger in the silence.

But at night,  
when ghosts assemble  
and remember when they lived,  
and where they lived,  
and how they lived  
and want to live again,  
the fingers of remembrance  
beckon him back—  
to times back then, back when  
he was happier,  
to where he first fell in love,  
and how deeply he felt  
things then.

No resisting  
nostalgia.  
It never forgets us.

Sonny Rainshine



# Wooden Phoenix

A single needle drops from the pine,  
but the tree remains.

A storm snaps off a branch,  
but the trunk stays.

The logger saws down the tree,  
but the stump is still there.

The wench uproots the stump,  
but leaves a hole

in the earth

into which has fallen

a seed.

The seed

is embraced by the earth

which closes the hole

and roots form

from the mulch of the stump.

At first a fragile stem

then a trunk pushes up

and branches out

in the shape of a tree

tinted with thousands

of fragrant needles.

Sonny Rainshine

# Word Unspoken

In some religions, I'm told,  
the word for God is never spoken.  
It is verboten and a taboo  
that must never be broken.

I wonder if there's another word  
that would be better kept unsaid,  
since it's overused and quite cliché  
and ineffective when it's read.

Love, amour, amore, amor,  
over and over and over again,  
We wink, or sign, or moan it,  
but must we quote it in a quatrain?

I love your hat,  
I love your style,  
I love your love,  
I love your smile.

I love the theater,  
I love to dance,  
Surely there's a better way  
to indicate romance.

So, from here on out,  
tell your darling true,  
I've something to say,  
but it's not I () you.

Sonny Rainshine

# Working Poor

A tin can of flour,  
the last tablespoon of oil,  
an egg. He listens to the news  
as the water begins to boil.

For months now he's been  
out of work and looking.  
the GM plant closed last winter  
and he stands here cooking.

His wife took the kids,  
but he doesn't blame her.  
Her parents could feed them;  
he could no longer claim her.

The man on the TV was saying:  
"All this talk about the poor.  
Lazy, unmotivated people—  
Nothing More."

All he had ever done,  
all he ever knew to do  
had revolved around hard work,  
oh, and love too.

The TV man went on:  
"Not a penny out of my pocket went  
to charity last year.  
Not a cent."

He thought about that  
and then made a decision:  
to turn off the television.

Sonny Rainshine

# Working The Simple

Working the simple,  
playing the plain  
notes of ordinary time,  
tumbling into the gentle  
swirling smoke  
of our lives today,  
or lives after today,  
seems appropriate,  
seems perfect.

Like a white shirt for a man  
or a basic black dress for a woman,  
satisfaction does not need  
to be coordinated with complex  
accoutrements, with the encumbrance  
of precious beads  
or beatitudes.

Working the simple,  
playing the plainsong  
while sifting through the hours  
of our days for smiles  
and kind words  
and other precious beads  
and beatitudes:  
These are the gestures  
that make life worth wearing  
every day.

Sonny Rainshine

# World History

Now show me a picture of pain,  
the little boy asked his mother.

You are not ready, she softly said,  
let's find another.

We've looked at pictures of joy,  
of me as a boy.

You shown me daddy at your wedding  
and me wrapped up in bedding.

You've shown me our life,  
but you haven't shown me pain.

Where did you hear of pain,  
my boy, my love?

I hear of it more and more,  
and from the woman who lives next door.

Here, my son, go ahead and look.  
You'll find pictures here in this book.

"A History of the World" he read on page one.  
When you're older, will you rewrite the book, my son?

Sonny Rainshine

# Yellow Epiphany

This time of year  
hundreds of pale yellow  
butterflies descend upon  
the early purple thistle  
blossoms and daisies,  
buttering up  
the landscape.

Common as dandelions  
and not nearly as brilliant,  
they churn and suckle,  
insignificant, ordinary.  
I'll wait for the monarchs  
and the swallowtails—  
now there's glamour;  
there's glory.

I'll wait.

But wait!  
Yesterday, I went outside  
to bring in the laundry  
when a single pale yellow  
butterfly alit on  
a white sheet, resting,  
drinking the cool,  
moist whiteness.

I never knew yellow  
could shimmer so.

Sonny Rainshine

# Yellow Is The Sunniest Color

Give a child a coloring book,  
a box of crayons and a lined sphere  
to represent the sun  
and she will resolutely  
fill in the circle with yellow.

But the sun is not yellow,  
is it? More white, but the sphere  
is already white and  
it's such a boring color.

But yellow is the sunniest color  
and the happiest one.  
Perhaps the spring blooms  
know this, as daffodils  
and forsythia are the first  
to affirm the season of Helio  
and express their homage  
in buttery and lemony bliss.

Sonny Rainshine

# Yes And No And Yes

I was born unhappy.  
I will live unhappily.  
You are the only person  
who can release me  
from this curse,  
and you have  
said no.

No,  
you were born happy  
and you will live happily.  
You are the only person  
who can release yourself  
from this curse  
and you must  
say yes.

Sonny Rainshine



# You'Re Not The Same Person You Were A Nano-Second Ago

Yes, you honeyed your tea  
or sugared your Kenya coffee,  
but did you sweeten your outlook?  
Are you a softie;  
can you cook?

Or do you drink it black  
and drink it in the dark,  
reading your Rilke,  
so immediate, so stark,  
both rough and silky.

Are you lofty,  
thoughts like cave bats  
fluttering in your brain,  
or do you crave stats;  
are you sane?

As for me, it's all day-to-day,  
I change with the weather,  
I shift from mood to mood,  
both linen and leather,  
constantly renewed.

Sonny Rainshine