

RICHARD KRECH

Poems
1966-1969

“the way you look at it”

the way you look at it
makes all the difference;
makes it the way
you like to hold her hair
in the sunlight,
makes the good feeling
warm in your heart
when you hear children play.
the way you look at it
makes all the difference
in the world;
makes or breaks it.
turns it into what you want
you can have it
whatever you want
you can have
if you look at it right.

Raga #1, Sanskrit Translation of The Earth

They drink Scotch for status,
the old maharajas;

have 3 or four servants,
sit around in a generally dilapidated house
watching the Jeep
drive across the horizon . . .

They hallucinate giraffes, antelopes,
the navel of buddha
riding across
the ocean
floor.

1954, what
more
could you expect them to do.

The world falling apart
at its stitches.

driving high in the hills : a good trip

You, sitting there
next to the window; the words
all spread out like blue flowing streams
the redwoods of big sur & the cross-hatched sampler
of fuzzy lsd forests sliding by your window
on the sharp curves
& steep hills of the night road
as we drive deeper in—
to the forest
beyond the orange sky
and purple hills
of the evening.

Your brown fur coat
wrapped about your nakedness,
your body, your openness
to the world you see about you
your kindness, knowledge
& beauty: “if that cop knew
 how beautiful he was
 he couldn't kill anyone.”

You say it all,
in a smile
in your eyes
the way you look at me
it's all wrapped up
in your fur coat.

Mythology For the People's Liberation

the poem begins in the last garden
of the courtyard.
a vast labyrinth of sound
winding down to this moment,
this muffling of voices.
private comments lost in the wind.

a fat sun disappearing
behind the crater like mountains
the seated rise from their wooden benches.
sunset making their outlines
hardedge red.

they move thru the white adobe walls
of the palace.
fine glasses tinkling.
stare passionately out at the valley
growing from their feet
on up to the stars
coming out one by one
they slip off into the cover of darkness
to perform their tasks.

Ababesque Theatre Fantasy!

these people are real!
going about their tasks daily
in yr. Neighborhood. when you are not home.

the poem is not changed
to incriminate the guilty.

for they are guilty
beyond any shadow of a doubt.

the poem's main purpose
is to see justice carried out.
lighting the fuse of the imagination.
drawing events together. amid sparking
flashing gun powder. cool air ticking
pointing the way.

The Logical Explosion of Hypothesis

oh lady, on the fourth night of his mission
when he found the keys
of the enemy
in your purse he had to
disregard your sensibilities.

murder after sex
isn't the natural order of the universe
but neither are the crimes
daily pushing the people toward revolution.

*We Will Celebrate
With Such Fierce Dancing the
Death of Yr. Institutions*

oh the smoke will rise
for many miles around
purifying the air
& no longer will our nights
be plagued by industrial fog,
purple skies.

*Nightclub. Billy Cop. Be Bop
"Got Any Identification, Boy"
Blues*

its all going to be
a brand new history
written by our children.
our job is to wipe the slate
clean.

"maybe by the time I'm thirty" he said
"there won't be such a thing
as over thirty."

they nodded silently
and parted in different directions.

the empty palace sat still for a few minutes
before dissolving
to assume its new role

in the revolution.

the eyes watching this scene
turn inward.
while the paper you are holding
& yr. hands
begin to tremble.

Who is Jan Palach?

I see dead automobiles
lining the highways.

the flash of a friend's face
before disappearing
into Mexican exile.

the shadows of martial law
approaching.

I hear voices warning us
from the past.

I see brothers arming themselves
with weapons.

This poem is a thin line
of soldiers marching
over snow mountains
to do battle.

Poems

1971

push on out

past time & space.
the acquisition
of a ticket
enables you to travel
more than
 geo graphically.

walking along a path
the sand colored walls
of Fez on the right.

the turrets, the mosque
crying in the distance.

a *gauche*—the caravan
entering behind some walls.

the timelessness.
the people moving steadily
along. growing smaller
in the distance. larger
as they approach.

the old man in Marrakech
in the café. pointed yellow shoes
& jalava. asked me if I like to smoke.
I said yes. we smoked kif
from a sebsi.
He said: "*je ne fume trop.
seulement cent pipes par jour.*"

we could see the mosque
from the café, against the night sky.
the inch long bugs
crawling the blue walls
in back of the table.

returned to the hotel
to watch the tile walls.

Fez, Morocco
May 12, 1971

I Am A Stranger Among Strangers

In Libya there is only
the desert & the petrol.
the pale Tripolitaine sun
burns unmercifully
in the dust colored sky.

here there are no women,
no drugs, no beer, no wine,
no amusements, *rien de tout*.
I have found companionship
among the Tunisians
who come here to work
because the pay is better.

the fat jovial barber
who the people call Ali Couscous
because he used to be a boxer.

Habib, & his illiterate brother
who shares a bond with me
because we both have tattoos,
& Mocen, who thinks I am
his lost wife's brother
& shares his food
& apartment with me.

today in the old market
buying camel meat for dinner
when a dust storm came up
he said—"this place is the end of the world."

he warns me
about the secret police
& asks me to send him a woman
from America.

today we listened to news reports
of an attack by Fatah.

Tripoli, Libya
June 3, 1971

Visiting the Archeological Museum

In Teheran,
in the old city
where tourists never go
behind the walls
in the house of our friend
his cousin draws the metal rod
out of the fire
& places it on the cylinders of opium.

I inhale the thick smoke
thru the rolled paper
with the persian writing,
pass it on to the next
in line.

We all smoke
expect the servant woman
who sits in another room
& the old man
who brought the O
& now sleeps on the floor.

Waving goodby
from the courtyard
as we leave
to walk in the night
up Ferdowsi Avenue
Klaus & i so stoned
we walked a mile past our hotel.

The next day we slept till 7
in the evening.

Opium dreams
of turquoise minarets singing
ever so slowly.

Teheran, Iran
June 17, 1971

The Hundred Afghani Busride

Taybor, the last town in Iran,
an Iranian army man
hands us a chunk of hash.

Driving the mini-bus
out of the middle east
into central asia.

The desert, south of the KaraKum.
Dim ridges far away in the distance
through years of sand.

3 hour halt at Islam Kala
the frontier.
Final busride thru darkness
to Herat.

Drink chai, smoke, take showers.
Several hours later
Linda & I asleep on rooftop.

The stars brilliant in the windy sky.
The horsecart galloping down the street.
The opium dreams going on forever
so real I could reach out
& touch them.

Herat, Afghanistan
June 24, 1971

Chahar Square

He came up towards me
to exchange greetings.

A young boy
perhaps 13, 14 years.

His back arched, pinched jacket
turban, the flowing white tail
blowing in the Afghani wind.

His long delicate nose
& green eyes burning
with the wisdom & mystery of the East.

“Hello, Hello” he said.
I replied “Salaam.”

We shook hands, touching
our hands to our chest
afterwards.

“Hello” he said again
& we parted.

I walking towards the Citadel of Herat
the wind carrying much dust with it
in this most ancient of Asian cities.

Herat, Afghanistan
June 26, 1971

Band-i-Amir Poems

1. Band-i-Amir, series of wild blue lakes
high up in desert mountain.
Walls of lake rise up out of valley floor
like glacial footprints.

The constant hot sun
is almost camouflaged by the cold wind.
The shepherd's valley.
The man in the cave
with the horse tied in front
and children peering out
from behind a bamboo reed screen
who offered me fish from the lake
strung on a reed.

No hotel in Band-i-Amir
a tea shop and you sleep on the floor.
Truckride over several mountains
from Bamiyan valley
where the image of the standing Buddha
watches over the town
and the green valley studded with forts.

The thousand caves reflect in the silent witness.
The white boat reflects on the blue water,

O the radio brings Oriental mountain music.
stuttering out of the tea house kitchen
from over the Hindu Kush in Kabul.

2. The fish at the edge of the lake
swim on a coral reef
just inches under the water.

They dive in the air, swim
with great numbers and silver beauty
in the blue waters of Band-i-Amir.

Band-i-Amir, Afghanistan
July 16, 1971

The Pool Players of Upper Burma

The pool players in Mandalay
wear sarongs
as does almost everyone else
in Burma.

They learn over the table
large cigar clenched between teeth
calculate the shot.

A man told me it is "Russian Pool"
7 balls, not numbered, or striped,
but with each consisting
of a certain point value.

You must sink a ball & also
have the cue ball touch 2 others,
but its heavier than that.

The moist air makes almost everyone shirtless
a young boy shouts out points
& spots balls.

On the street
a drum procession passes followed by
young monks with large gongs.

In Mandalay
the people are very friendly.
Old man in Rangoon
who said he can levitate
told me the people of Upper Burma
are even more pious
than those who live near the sea.

* * *

I send this message from the pool hall
West Palace road,
Mandalay, Burma.
This must be in the Free World.
September 27, 1971

Gun-Fire On The Mekong

3 shots heard from far away
out the window
past the tall thin palm trees
& the wooden houses
along the river bank
maybe from the blue mountains
10-20 miles away
where you cannot go.

At night in town
you cannot go out after 10.
Smoke French cigarettes
& drink beer with Air America pilots.
In the daytime
speak with the monks
& walk in the villages.

Ban Houie Sai, Laos
October 11, 1971

Poems
2001-2004

The 1932 3Af Claret

In July of 1932 the Afghan post office issued its first regular series of stamps displaying a pictorial design instead of being confined to geometric patterns and calligraphy. These postage stamps depicted modern and ancient monuments and buildings in Afghanistan.

The three Af value, printed in claret on thick paper had an image of the giant buddha statue carved into the mountain at Bamiyan some fifteen-hundred years before. The entire series was questioned but criticism of the 3Af was particularly fierce because the stamp portrayed a graven image of the Bamiyan Buddha. The 3Af was withdrawn from circulation in September of 1932.

Sixty nine years later the government of Afghanistan destroyed the statues themselves.

The course of human progress
winds both backwards and forwards
as it journeys on its path

towards what end?

The Statue with No Face

The statue with no face and broken legs
no longer stares out at the long green valley.

The frightened men have shattered their own
image. They
diminish themselves as they step beyond
their banal legacy of oppression
and turn to destroying the very history of the world.

The statue no longer stares out at Bamiyan valley.
the enlightened gaze takes in the reflection
still.

The Location of the Triple Jewel

“You never step into the same river twice”

Heraclitus sd.

**His pronouncement anticipating formal atomic theory
by over 2000 years.**

**Not thinking of the Mekong, the Ionian spoke of
constant change.**

**Yet the river flows from the mountains
forever.**

downstream . . .

**Looking the same three years ago
as it did during the time its people refer to as
“the American War”**

**when I first stood on its banks,
crossed in a motorboat of cannibalized truck parts . . .**

**Almost 30 years later the quiet main street
of Ban Houie Sai leads very quickly out of town
into the jungle
where the two-lane red dirt road
parallels the Mekong—the eternal water road of Laos.**

**Always changing
but always there
like a living entity on the planet
a growing evolving part of this bigger lump
rushing thru space
the atmosphere so turbulent at times.**

**So still at others. You can hardly believe
the earth is moving.**

**The river I think of now is a few
hundred miles downstream
the same river . . . the different river . . .
the boat traveling north towards
the triple mountains on the east
coming into focus thru the distance
towering above the mouth of the Ou river on our right
as it meets the Mekong—the mother of waters.**

On the other bank we enter the cave of 1000 Buddhas,
observe many of them before they merge
into the darker shadows at the edge of our vision.

Later hearing that during the American War
people sought refuge in this cave.
The bomb shelter shared with the images
is the triple jewel: the Buddha
the Dharma of Shelter
& the Sangha.

Phu Si

Climbing up Phu Si
the steep steps,
the *otherness* of the world
under the shaded hillside.

The bustle of Luang Prabang
the covered market, the streets
do not intrude into the sanctuary
the hill we climb
its carved steps ascending
to the templed summit
the Mekong seen through the trees
the setting sun in the west,
we linger

then descend the hill
as night falls
and enter on the street
to join the sangha
in the parade
going past the gate,
endlessly.

Political Acts

Yesterday I saw a political act
performed on television. A boy
flew a kite.
Men shaved their beards.

The most political of all acts—
I saw women in public.

And there was music in the air.

All Is Aflame

"All is aflame" the awakened one said
referring to the dance of electrons,
neutrons & quarks
in the six paradises of the physical sphere
beyond your eye
beyond your ear
beyond your nose
beyond your tongue
beyond your body
beyond your mind.

It is all tantric layering
perfectly still & empty.
solid space.

One thousand years later
Vasabhandu the Younger realized
that past, present & future all occur at once.

Later still, Einstein declared space curved
like a hot bubble expanding
with concentric force.
all burning furiously
[perfectly still & frozen
solid]

We rush over the surface
or build towers of Babel to the sky,
worrying about what time it is
or how much grain we have put away
for the winter.

Right mindfulness
is already here.
You have only to realize it.

Relax.

[pause]

then action.

Towards Spring

Prayer flags re-strung slowly
undulating horizontally
then dropping down to hang
when the evening breeze subsides.
Sunset hitting the bushes
to the South of the tree,
it's top still drinking in full sunshine
already departed the garden floor.

A piece of ground
I see daily.

My house a shelter
my companion, my refuge.

**Saturday Night Journal Notation,
McKinley Street**

When you make an offering
to the Buddha image, he said,
the statue doesn't need
the stuff. It's you
who benefits from the offering.

Road 63 in One of the Ten Directions

Not understanding all the viewpoints
but grasping their salient aspects
is all anyone can claim.

Awakened ones know
that the real fool is the one
who's self-image is of wisdom.

Omnipotence
in any realm is truly a phantom,
a transient illusion, the molecular structure
of all objects can disengage,
a thought could even cease
with its thinker's demise.

Impermanence,
a fact of nature testing the maxim
energy is neither created nor destroyed.
Could a thought cease with its thinker?
Into what form would it change?
Where would it go?

Always more questions
than answers.
This is only one of the ten directions.

The First Discourse

The one with opened eyes
spoke at Deer Park in Benares
setting in motion the practice
of the middle way
based on the theory that matter
can be neither created nor destroyed:
*Whatever is subject to arising
is subject to cessation.*

The Four Noble Truths
[there is suffering suffering has a cause
suffering can cease there is a way
to the cessation of suffering].
The roadmap of the
Noble Eightfold Path
a short sermon, the first
sermon, the first step
of a continuing journey.
I step carefully along the path
picking and choosing the flowers
growing there.
Avoiding parts of the path
I take the middle way
of the middle path.
The end is inevitable.

Not believing in reincarnation
makes some Buddhist teachings
difficult for me to fathom, yet
the allegorical implications
the poetic license if you will,
of the remainder is so potent
that I attempt to travel
in its mindful path.

ten five oh two

It comes down to capturing the feel
of hearing the garden being watered at dusk;
the dogs barking over fences,
the train's whistle . . .

knowing what's occurring
without seeing it with my eyes,
the *feel* of it.

The universe captured in the twinkle
of an eye.

Disaster Eradication Mantra

**Tonight
we recited the
Disaster Eradication Mantra
three times.**

**The dharma master said
if it works
we can meet next week
and do it again.**

January 25, 2003

**Coda—sometimes more direct action
is necessary**

February 12, 2003

Feng Shui of Modern Living

Urban Planning.

**We step carefully
thru the mindfields,**

**navigate streams
of commerce,**

**raise kids
go to work,**

**dodge bullets
& politicians,**

**pay taxes
meet death.**

**Then thru the door
to the next room.**

[Is it empty?]

**Approaching the City
from the Ten Directions**

We stand on the shoulders of others.
Through generations

the City rising
out of the dust.

The porter in Istanbul
in 1963
carrying an armoire on his back;
the men pushing bullock carts of grain
outside the mud walls
of the medieval city state
a millennium ago;
the crack addict
pushing his shopping cart
full of bottles to the recycling
center. The business district
gleaming in the distance.

A few years after the end of the century
when the town came to be the city:
and we are all
trying to find our way
in a new place
w/ technological changes
not even yet contemplated
approaching the horizon.
Religious and ethnic intolerance
still holding us back.

We,
standing on the shoulders of others
can only stand so
tall.
For we stand on our own
feet.

It is our choice to act or react,
or to refrain from acting.
We walk down the road

from the town towards the City.
the City always beckoning ahead;
pass thru the high gates
the outer perimeter,
some signs appear over establishments
pictures, then writing;
we drive down the avenue
past the recycler w/ his huge load
towards the office buildings,

towards the center of a City
which has no center.

and on out
to the other side.

In the Moment

The moment
is the only place to live.
("At least for now" teased the Chorus.)

The time spent dreaming
about the future
or reminiscing about the past
is frozen in the moment
by yr inaction.

* * *

After the Industrial Revolution
has become "way-old history"
well past the Millennium
& when the world turned,
we will still move forward
one step at a time
into the present.

Life on Appeal

One heartbeat at a time
we keep going forward
towards our ultimate verdict.

Live yr. life the best you can.
There is little likelihood
of success on appeal.

In Chambers

“It’s the most high stakes poker game
in the world” he said,
exaggerating only slightly,
leaning over in his chair towards mine
as we spoke in quiet voices
heard by no one else in the chamber.

Advocates and adversaries
sitting in a circle
as they have for years.
The black robe in the center
of attention, the center of power
the robe changing its inhabitant
on a cyclical basis.

Showing enough of your hand
to create a threat to the opponent.
Keeping as much powder and ammunition
dry as possible
for use in battle if it comes.

Presenting technical legal issues
or broad constitutional claims
always against a factual background
limited by provable facts
and evidentiary objections of your opponents.

Always the facts. Yr. skill
or that of the adversary
must always bow to the provable facts.

Yet the sieve of evidentiary objections
of “hearsay” and 352 and 1101(b),
the sieve of “judicial discretion”
strains that factual material
so thin sometimes
so fat at others
that its rough weave resembles the truth
like a general outline
but details, perhaps crucial
perhaps not, are distorted.

The advocates and adversaries
discuss with each other
trade facts and arguments
and often turn to the robe for approval
or to tweak the deal
one way or another.

The currency of these transactions
are paid in bodies and time.
Time taken from a life.

There is no symbolism here. The words
are used to describe exactly what occurs.
Time taken from a life in being.
Occasionally,
the adversaries try to take a whole life
all at once
and destroy it.

What I Did On My Summer Vacation

**I have accomplished several remarkable
feats in poetry, I thought,
after coming off a 25-year line break.**

**I wrote a poem about the vibrate mode
of a cell phone;
another about Valerie Solanis
and Enver Hoxha.**

**I saw old friends and made new ones.
I found out that my spelling
has improved.**

**Deconstruction of Early October 2004 Mass
Reality Consensus & Ode to a Wicker Basket***

Bending wave of light
tracing contour
of the material world.

* I have tried for weeks
to find a satisfying poetic way
to describe sunlight at evening
coming in thru the front door
and a shaft bending
as it illuminates the woven edges
of a wicker basket
sitting on the table
in front of my couch.