

## SYNONYMS FOR SIX

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■  
Looking back has never caught on with me. Such an exercise can be dulling. There is too much to be done, I say to myself. I still can't remember with any comfort. I'm afraid I'll miss something.

*Steam has gotten into the room  
somehow, it gathers  
it billows. When I open  
the window*

*it rains.*

There are places sacred to me—mainly home, Georgia, where I sleep but rarely dream these days. The dreams evaporate into a clear night sky. I can scarcely hold such clarity. My name is here.

*Still there's dust  
when anyone passes,  
ruts where tires cut.  
Something poignant has happened  
too, something is more than lost.*

Down at Lake Sinclair during the summer. I might've been five or six. My parents, brother and grandparents were there. Cicadas. Frogs so loud, swirling choirs, a back porch that I felt was frozen in its remoteness, in its heavy nights. Some days Strategic Air Command bombers would circle up from Warner Robins, out of place in the skies above a thousand shades of green.

■  
*I slept soundly one night  
in a little town out between  
Bath and London  
deep pillowed safe  
just a child really.*

I had the good fortune of attending school in London, 1980. Politics was my study, music was passion. Being the token Southerner was fine with me. Writing songs on that old guitar above the pub and small grocery, it's all golden.

*Sometimes the sun shone  
clear like  
in sheets patterns faces.*

One professor was an expert in eastern European political systems and had visited behind the Curtain often. He was probably a spy for either side or both. I remember one morning his commenting about a harrowing car ride through Warsaw. What does he study now?

*I sense that I could not  
be so brave  
under similar circumstances.*

*If the occupation came  
could I resist?  
could I write?*

Two years later my band, Preface, came back to the City and lived in Catford, SE, but that's another story. I wrote a poem recently about that summer of 1982. It talks about youth washing down river and out to sea.

*One evening over brandy  
out in the garden speckled green and gold  
summer sun still fringing sky  
she told me in calm demeanor  
the little people were all around us.*

■

There are places sacred to me like where royal palms grow wild along a fenceline less than two blocks from Gulf water joining with sweet black Caloosahatchee. Or the bald above Sky Valley, almost Carolina, Rabun Bald, who watches over those below. Or home, where I sleep more than I dream these days. But it always changes. Like one of my songs, "Everything is Temporary." One of hundreds of my songs. The song is the poem. The poem is the solitary fixer of everything; it bows to a flawed god. That's why it'll never be religion.

*The song is the poem.  
The song is the railroad bridge.  
The song is cool shade.  
The song is frightening.  
The song is afraid.*

*Roberta smiled through broken glass  
her windows facing west,  
the highway cracked and busted there  
from something she transgressed.*

The songs poured like water for almost twenty years. They still come, just not as frequently. But there's a knowing now, as if having lived.

*I've reached out all my life  
I even painted.  
Knew it was all the same.  
Knew simple things  
could solve the puzzle.*

It hasn't bothered me that I've never made money from music. It would've greatly helped but I would write anyway. And these poems.

■

The time of my Law practice was twenty two years. Started out after Mercer Law School in property closings and continued for the duration. I had grown up in Jonesboro, so in a sense I was coming home to be a lawyer.

*How could such steepness  
come out of a topography  
of my routine?*

I worked very hard for those many years, even ran the place for two there at the end. Never let it be said again that I've not been tested. Money is war, and it all went to hell in 2008. Lost all my money, but my family survived while I've worked toward teaching.

Humility found me. I've walked in the shoes. All towns all streets are the same, with their greasy spots and broken lines. What is the answer when the cities are full of despair, power politics veiled as social justice, just ideology, distant stares, shattered don't-know-any-better ruin, living

in the bushes, behind cracked windows, victims in every way? While others have produced our things, earned rightfully a way to their comfort through hard work, luxury? Scarce liquidity makes it only look like greed. I was taught to think at Law school, and grateful for it. But I can't get my mind around the concept of finite resources and a benevolent deity.

*If I could run fast enough  
I would stay just ahead of the dusk line  
and remain in light as long  
as my legs would hold out.  
But I am overtaken.*

■

*There's no sunset.  
There's only physics.*

*Dreams don't replicate  
the touch the feel.*

*Swamps  
are wetlands  
dumps are green.  
These long days*

*of ruin  
this kingdom*

*with its empire down.  
Songs are light, irrelevant*

*mobile, compact  
enough to travel,*

*fleeting, that's all.  
Summertime*

*season of bloated road dogs  
of lightning*

*of eye walls  
with no pity,*

*deliver truth  
force wisdom upon me*

*or else leave me  
under the bridge*

*let Vincent's crows  
make a nest of me*

*more work  
for the county road crew.*

■

On a middle June night out on Captiva Island, there's an almost stationary storm northeast over Charlotte Harbor. She churns near silent, flashes, makes a statement for the whole coastline to see. And she never moves. Down on the dock the folks in their cruisers tied to posts laugh and pour another round.

Nights. On nights like this one, I am the Moses of this back bay. Exiled in my own country during the long war. Everywhere the home, it stretches out. Soon I'll learn my own poems.

—*Ft. Myers, FL, June 2010*)