

## One Hand

The measure of one hand clapping  
essentially homeopathic, in a world where less is more

alas, one hand cuffed to silence  
none are safe in school  
protecting social deviance is done  
and genocide from any side is nigh

Can the sound of one tear be a cry?  
one anguish is enough to stop these wars?  
a piece cannot be peace while one candle is the light I am drawn to  
like a moth in crisp night sky of Madagascar or Nebraska  
the same sweet home I cherish while permitting it to perish  
in suicide

while the leaders' fallacy  
stews commode-like with my own fowl waste. Listen now to one hand  
my own hand stained with blood of generations  
engrained with oceans ancient shame  
what right to plead when I've acquiesced to every bad deed?  
my choice without voice in the only election that counts

corporate favors, masking the sound of one hand washing another  
flies in the face of gender and race  
I wave on the graves of ancestors, good and bad  
north and south  
it will not rise again  
our brown sons won't be fodder for the trojan horse.  
toy guns deadly, they may not come home, since one bullet  
is enough to kill the will

while one wing flaps solo, never reaching utopia  
leave that dated hippie thought in its lone abyss  
perpetually penning poems with one hand writing to  
deafeningly silent applause.

## **Holyoke had Putrid Smells and Muddy Skies**

Small city with supposed illustrious past;  
the dam, canals, many hungry jobs  
Puerto Ricans seduced here after Irish and Portuguese  
deserted down stagnant fetid waterways  
once teeming factories empty, and in the evening imagine  
gondolas propelled by quiet ghosts  
after mummy rags were used for paper pulp  
and exploitation the mercenary hope  
echoes diversity of accents beneath the bloody grind of machinery  
no OSHA guidelines then  
churning out silk garments  
for others soft skin.

## Leatherman

Leatherman, I wish I knew you on your peripatetic route for 30 years circa 1800's  
your moribund appearance, scraps of hide sewn into all-season garb  
face hard, jaw immutable, rare utterances possibly in French  
an icon, village clocks were set by your compulsory schedule which varied only 5 minutes  
through Connecticut and New York; 365 miles every 34 days.  
fed by a generation who admired your rigorous route and willful pride  
pacing your well-worn trail, sleeping in caves  
sweating profusely, heavy attire malodorous  
armor against snakes and such  
affect flat, but benign...even kindly

Leatherman, were you alive today, same curriculum  
I fear you'd be an outcast, lost among the mass of urban nomads.  
you'd shun shelters, choosing highway underpass instead  
since condos long swallowed all your fond camp sites.  
now a soup kitchen patron by necessity, as few will feed the homeless  
due to poverty fatigue  
and begging is a full-time job—no point to keep a timetable.  
pushed aside by drunks, rolled by addicts  
bewildered. Your muteness an impairment  
white privilege of no merit  
now mental issues make you suspect, homeless outreach teams  
coax you into care for autism, PTSD or schizoaffective disorder  
no matter—needs medication, risk reduction, not acceptance

Leatherman, no need to set your roster as the cock crows.  
the chicken coops are dust, and cell phones tell the time now  
quite precisely.

## Addict's Anathema

She prays on the bus cross town  
that she wants to love her children  
more than crack  
not just today, but tomorrow too...  
forever! Promises, but fears she can't deliver.

*Look, there goes someone like ma*  
shaking her wide based waddle down the aisle  
*At least I'm not like her she gloats*  
*stinkin' a beer*

she examines her hands  
and pictures the tremor of the lighter last night  
geekin', the pipe an orb  
*Well, kept my nails nice at least*  
lifting them from walgreens, applied with care.

*After all* she ponders  
*Why work?* There's no gain, just a trigger  
for *the same damn pain*, she prays again  
on that bus cross town  
that God *will* make her love her children  
more than crack.

Eyes glazed, stroking frayed extensions which are  
half undone. Her own hair, wild, uncontrolled  
threatens to escape the cheap weave  
that's coming apart, like life.

Desperate, abject  
gazing down at thighs spread thinly  
on the laminate seat like flaccid hot dogs now  
where tree trunks used to be,  
*nothin like the crack diet.*  
*always works*, she mutters  
but the thick façade  
her once dense defense, vanished...

She once liked being slim until men  
pawed her breasts which now sag with marbled striae  
'cross once rolling almond mounds

Her chest heaves. She prays for rosy futures or any future  
or at least more than the taste of promised rapture

so cruel and brief...

*Shit!* Did she miss her stop?  
barely flinching, seconds away from grasping the cord,  
she resigns  
*oh well.*  
the bus swings past her sisters and she squints down the block  
for a glimpse of her kids who play oblivious

As now she's heading deep down town frowning  
her prayers deficient, betrayed  
*See? Where was God?*  
*I need a rock*  
*Ain got no money. so what? Don't need none.*  
she has her technique well known on the street  
kicks her feet in the aisle cross the furrowed mat  
hollow prayers neglected like the transfer  
trashed beneath the sole  
of her shoe  
*Lord help me!*