

# Anchoring



*Poems*

*by*

*Si Dunn*

## Acknowledgements

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*Descant*, “Approached at Sixty” and “Anchoring”

*Duck Soup*, “Out of Would”

*The Pawn Review*, “Last Night”

*The Poet*, “Builder’s Lament,” “Fashioned,” “Spotter” and “Song from the Classifieds”

*Poetry: Dallas*, “Promising Talent”

*Poetry Northwest*, “Mirth”

*Rolling Stone*, “Superego”

*Sands*, “Turncoat”

*Sulphur River*, “Now Reveille”

*The Texas Observer*, “Song for Tenor of the Times”

*Visions*, “Small Change,” “How Nippon Froze Over” and “Found Fragments from a Tragicomedy”

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## Author's Preface

All of these poems were written, sold and published in the 1970s, during a phase in my life best described as my “Binkley Street Period.”

For several years, I lived in a small, dark apartment on Binkley Street, not far from Dallas’ Southern Methodist University (which I never attended). Sometimes, I worked as a feature writer at the *Dallas Morning News*, and sometimes, I got mad at something that was happening or not happening at the newspaper and quit. I “went freelance” at least two times and possibly three times while living on Binkley Street. I worked at the newspaper four different times, which stood as the newsroom’s “world record” for several years, until someone else came back for the fifth time. During those attempts to break free from Corporate America, I eked out a meager living as a freelance writer—typing day and night, cranking out magazine articles, newspaper articles, chapters of never-finished novels, editing and rewriting other people’s book manuscripts, and composing a few poems.

At the height of my poetic efforts, my first slim volume, *Waiting for Water*, was published in 1977. That year, I did my one and only public poetry reading at a bar in Austin, Texas, and earned \$6 when somebody passed a hat. Despite that bonanza, however, I still don’t like trying to perform my own poetry. I prefer that others read it, silently or aloud, while I lurk nearby—hopefully unnoticed—and try to gauge their response. That way, if they sneer or gag, I can slip out the nearest exit.

During the Binkley Street Period, and later, I sold three or four poems to *Rolling Stone* magazine, earning about \$10 apiece. A couple of them were bought by an editor who later became a millionaire screenwriter in Hollywood, and a couple of them were bought by an editor who later became editor of the food section of the *Los Angeles Times*. Glad I could help out, gentlemen.

*Denton, Texas, January 12, 2008*

## **Approached at Sixty**

Five in the road  
Were fast enough.  
The sixth, approached  
At sixty, was either  
A poet or a suicide.

Flew under the Dodge.  
Faith of act?  
You saw the body  
Leave its smashed spirit.

Your words were: "Oh, no!"  
My words—philosophy lies  
In rear-view reflections:  
"I didn't feel a thump."  
"I think I only stunned it."

## **Out of Would**

We made love out of would  
Not. We said we would not  
Make love. We said we would  
Not love. We said we would not.

We said we would—  
We said we—  
We said—  
We.

## **Last Night**

Dreamed I was a goner  
In paradise, mecca nothing  
But a mirage captioned  
In *The National Geographic*.

Dreamed you saw me  
Thirsting among the sandmen,  
Waved like water,  
And turned the page.

## **Builder's Lament**

An engineer I wanted  
To be, not a poet.  
Not a manager  
Of alloyed words.

I stack them up,  
Measure their stresses,  
Compute their reaches,  
And watch them go out,

New bridges that fold  
Meaningless into the sea.

## **Fashioned**

Once, words creased  
The starched air between us.  
We could iron indifference  
And stiffly dress in the clothes  
Of fashioned lovers. Now,

Your love for me is too small  
To wear, and mine for you  
Is in the closet, limping,  
A zoot suit too big  
To put on again.



## **Spotter**

The trees defoliate  
As I fly  
Over, calling  
For bombs to blow  
The leaves back on.

## **Superego**

What we oughta do now,  
Said Freud, bad drunk,  
Is rip the panties off  
Some sweet Jung things.

## Song from the Classifieds

Your muse explodes intent to shards.  
Mine accepts major credit cards.  
Yours fakes its art attacks.  
Mine drops metaphors to see them crack.  
Would you care to swap muses for a day?  
Gladly would I give my Calliope away  
To the first taker, or trade for, say,  
The unemployed inspiration of Pound,  
Or drowned Shelley's, if his can be found  
And refloated for minimum wage.  
Weary of writhings? Of lines blown off the page?  
I no longer can charge anything new to say.  
Would you like to swap muses for a day?  
Would you like to *swat* muses for a day?

## Promising Talent

I tell the night: *No*  
*Auditions. Go.*  
Darkness crowds in.  
The acts begin.

Silence soft-shoes.  
The comedian  
Sky tells jokes I  
Do not understand.

Suddenly, the stars line  
Up in ragged high  
School band  
Formations. I am

Touched by  
Their try.  
I promise to call them  
All down, if I need them.

## **Mirth**

It only laughed when we hurt.  
So our pains were recorded  
And played back, twice-speed.  
When we cried out,  
We were made to dance  
On hot nails. We  
Learned to endure,  
Only to be forced to flee,  
First on one finger,  
Then the other, fires  
That boiled our marrow.  
It only smiled when we  
Agonized to understand.  
At last we received  
Our diplomas. We broke  
Our arms, smashed  
Our feet, and grinned  
At the mirth in screams.

## **Turncoat**

I wanted to be a hero: one man  
At the end of his continent  
Holding out against invading winds.

I last until the air  
Surrounding me rises  
In ultimatum: He who enlists

In armies of loneliness  
Dies like wind, no matter  
How many winds die before him.

I surrender. I drop my arms.  
The bayonet breezes  
Touch my back and softly

Push me home.

## **Now Reveille**

Where are we now in the nightmare?  
At *NO FURTHER ENTRANCE*?  
At *EXIT LEAPING*?  
God would not dream this,  
These blood shadows,  
These brain tics.  
This is the Devil's conjuring,  
This head heat,  
This taste of the flames  
That would forever roast  
Our sleepwalking. Attention!  
This is our wake-up call.  
Do not arise and see us still  
Sleeping, unless we have dreamed  
All night of being dead, unless  
We have jumped at the last moment  
And landed. Wake up. This again is where  
We escape the everlasting dark.

## **Song for Tenor of the Times**

Expedite the satellite,  
Employ the decoy,  
Fake the cake  
And run, son:  
Art is flow chart.



## **Small Change**

Riker, feeling a waster  
Of hours and minutes,  
Still did nothing but watch  
His seconds roll away  
Like pennies, the ones  
That—once dropped—  
Are not picked up again  
Until the eternal janitor  
Arrives with his broom  
And swath of clean,  
Slick, glistening doom.

“Too many to carry,” Riker yawned.  
“Too small to spend.”

## How Nippon Froze Over

Riker, excavating in Texas,  
Found these words on a stone:  
*Maid in Japan needs rescue.  
Send no money. Your credit good  
Until Nippon freezes over.*  
It was snowing in Tokyo  
When Riker deplaned. The stone  
Rolled hot from his hand  
And grew cold where he lost it.  
As he walked away, shrugging,  
It changed into a dead maid  
In a shallow snowdrift. One kiss  
And she again would have lived.  
But she was not beautiful.  
And Riker, who never looks back,  
Never knew. While he shivered, ate  
Sushi in the Ginza and wondered how  
The hell he would get home to Houston,  
The puzzled but efficient police  
Lugged away the body. *Maybe  
American Express*, Riker decided  
As he gagged at raw squid. *Maybe  
VISA, if my credit's still good.*

## **Found Fragments from A Tragicomedy**

### *Fragment One:*

Cut to Riker, stymied, slouchingly posed.  
Dissolve to all he has wrongly supposed  
Would happen. Lip-synching his future's gags,  
Enter the Chorus, embarrassed, in rags.

### *Fragment Two:*

Riker forgets his lines,  
But the show goes on and on and on,  
Building suspense even  
As he flees to the men's room  
And surprises the drama  
Critic for *The New York*—

### *Fragment Three:*

--the essence and the kazoo.  
Riker is confused. He pleads:  
“Does anything matter  
If there is antimatter?  
Exit Anti-Riker  
Into the silences  
That swallow light.

## **Going Off**

A night bad for the ego circus:  
The words in my fingers  
Don't come out;  
The trick phrases  
Get caught in my sleeves.

At show's end, we diverge.  
The numb sorcerer  
Watches his love,  
The disappearing lady,  
Go off

With the human cannonball.

## **Anchoring**

(1978)

Seventeen years since pistols  
Cracked: *relay*.  
Whipple runs a Dairy Queen.  
If life is laps,  
Summers died two miles ago  
At Chu Lai.  
Myers. His face  
Is time-lost. But not  
His handoff of batons.  
The crowds come back.  
The coaches. Timers.  
I ride my old stride  
Again, anchorman.  
*Bring it home!*  
I bring it.  
Rubber-legged, heart  
Hating me, guts in flames,  
I kick the long curve  
Toward the end of it all:  
Strings of glory,  
Thin. Gone.

## About the Author

A native of Hattiesburg, Miss., Si Dunn grew up in Little Rock, Ark., and attended Little Rock Central High School during its infamous desegregation crisis. He served in the Navy as a shipboard radio operator aboard a destroyer and wound up in the middle of another controversial moment in American history: the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incidents that led to a dramatic escalation of the Vietnam War.

Dunn received a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas). He has worked as a feature writer, reporter or photographer at several newspapers, including the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Dallas Morning News*. His articles, poems, short stories and photographs have appeared in a variety of national and regional publications, including *The New York Times*, the *Texas Observer*, *Computer User* and *Indie Slate*.

His other books are: *The Everything Online Auctions Book*, co-authored with Steve Encell and published by Adams Media; *Waiting For Water*, a collection of poems published by Calliope Press, and *First Team: A History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division*, published by Taylor Publishing Co. Dunn also has edited several books, including *Thunderbird: An Odyssey in Automotive Design* by William P. Boyer, chief designer of the Ford Thunderbird.

Dunn currently operates Sagecreek Productions and writes and edits screenplays and other manuscripts. He has sold several short screenplays and has had several feature screenplays optioned. Some of his screenwriter and producer credits are listed in the Internet Movie Database. His short screenplay *Weenie Wednesday*, directed by Philippe Roberge, was produced in Montreal in 2006 and has been shown at a number of film festivals in France, Spain, Puerto Rico and elsewhere. His short screenplay *Long After Midnight*, directed by Todd Parker, was produced in New Jersey in 2008.

For more than 20 years, Dunn has written book reviews for the *Dallas Morning News*, and he has been a contributing editor for several magazines. He lives in Denton, Texas.

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