

Editor's notes

It is a little known alternative fact that the 45th President, Donald J. Trump, has long been a remarkable poet. This book aims to redress this oversight on the part of the literary world, and showcase his finest and most revealing words in a previously unseen form. Whether discoursing on politics, walls, gender issues or his own excellent genes, Trump's poems are nothing if not beautiful. Terrific, in fact. Amazing. And they reveal a sensitive and shyly artistic side to Trump that may prompt a reappraisal of the man even among his critics.

One of the many charges levelled at Donald Trump by those in the fake news media is that his use of English is lazily repetitive, perhaps indicating a dunderheaded and unimaginative thinker. But consider works like 'My two favorite words' (p. 117). Repetitious yes, but to deliberate, mesmerising effect. And look at the words that he most often comes back to: 'love' twelve times in 'Everybody loves me' (p. 45); 'beautiful' twelve times in 'A beautiful, simple life' (p. 3). This is not the work of a monotonous man, but an aesthete for whom love and beauty are wells of feeling to return to and draw from.

There is a rebuttal here too to the charge that Trump's rambling public speaking style evidences a disordered brain. 'Slowly the hair dries,' 'I am open-minded,' 'Get ready for some excitement' and 'Fake news, folks' (pp. 53, 55, 95 and 61) display

the precision and concentrated brevity of a modern-day Basho or Larkin. Then there are the Trump Haikus ('Little Marco', 'Sad sack Rosie', 'Lyn' Ted', 'Crazy Megyn Kelly', 'Crooked Hillary', 'Low energy Jeb', 'Deviant Anthony Weiner', 'Dopey Lord Sugar', 'Barack Hussein Obama (aka Barry Soetoro)', 'Wacko Glenn Beck', 'President Putin', 'Failing comedian Bill Maher', 'Goofy Elizabeth Warren' and 'Very foul-mouthed Sen. John McCain' – pp. 49, 81, 47, 75, 25, 99, 13, 39, 9, 63, 33, 109, 43 and 93). All are in formal 5-7-5 meter. All hit their targets like laser-guided Paveway missiles – testimony to a writer of supreme discipline and power.

On a superficial reading of some of the poems, critics may hear only the voice of the Trump they *think* they know. 'Photographic memory', 'I have the best words', 'Good genes', 'I'm really rich', 'Bad Hombres' and 'I am the most fabulous whiner' (pp. 87, 111, 91, 5, 31 and 17) are bracingly braggadocious. Others are elemental in their anger, as though he woke at 4 a.m. in a white-hot rage to gouge them into Mar-a-Lago letterpaper (see 'These people are losers', 'This country is going to hell in a handbasket', 'Pervert alert', 'Does torture work?', 'Get the oil, get the oil, get the oil', 'No days off' and 'We've got to stop the stupid' (pp. 37, 7, 77, 59, 69, 83 and 65). But there is more here than technique and combative spirit. If we allow ourselves to listen, we can also hear the counterpoint of a quieter, less self-assured Trump, as when he breaks off his list of boasts in 'I am the best' (p. 23) to worry about the size of his appendages.

Trump fully exposes his vulnerable underbelly in the poems 'I want to be good', 'What's going on? What's going on?', and the ironic 'I won!' (pp. 101, 119 and 19). Here we get a glimpse of real tragedy – a man born to win coming to terms with his awareness of his own failings – and it is hard to come away

unmoved. Yet he never succumbs to self-obsession. In 'All I ask is fairness', 'Very dishonest media', 'My hands are normal hands', 'Look at the way I've been treated lately' and 'I am the least racist person there is' (pp. 35, 57, 103, 115 and 11), it is the injustice of a broken system and the effect of biased journalism on his country that drives Trump to verse.

'A dream', 'I love to read' and 'I don't know' (pp. 113, 107 and 121) explore the innermost and least mapped parts of Trump's psyche. 'I am the innocent (pure) one!' (p. 97) marks a foray into metaphysical poetry; in effect, it is a love letter to the entire universe. Although Melania Trump is, interestingly, not mentioned in any of the poems, we can also see Trump's more traditional romantic persona rising to the fore in poems such as 'Hot little girl in high school' (p. 67), and 'Look at this baby' (p. 51) while two further poems comment wryly on the issue of gender relations, something Trump perhaps understands better than he lets on ('I respect women, I love women, I cherish women' and 'Women have one of the great acts of all time' – pp. 41 and 79).

The greatest misapprehension about DJT corrected by this volume, however, may be the idea that he sees money and power as ends in themselves. In fact, just as Wilfred Owen turned his wartime experience into poetry, and Sylvia Plath found the dark beauty in her own depression, Trump is able to transform his unique experiences of being a winner into 24-karat verse. He didn't build a huge real-estate empire for the billions; he did it so he could write poems like 'Treat yourself to the very, very best life has to offer' and 'We are going to have to get rid of them' (pp. 71 and 27). He didn't go to Washington to be feared; he did it so he could alchemise his experiences into the poems 'MAGA!', 'There's something going on that we don't know about', 'I make this promise', 'You can do anything' and 'We have by

far the highest IQ of any Cabinet ever assembled' (pp. 15, 85, 21, 73 and 29). And for his verse, he is prepared to risk everything – quite literally, the Earth (see 'We'll be fine with the environment' and 'Pittsburgh, not Paris' – pp. 89 and 105).

For readers who have trouble enjoying Trump's poems because of their pre-existing views of his politics, one poem in particular, the Whitmanesque 'You have to be everything' (p. 123), is key. Here Trump advances a sophisticated theory of identity. He posits that we each contain many overlapping selves, each enacting different, sometimes contradictory performative roles. This helps us see how Trump the President can coexist with Trump the CEO, Trump the TV Mogul, Trump the Family Man – and Trump the Poet. You do not have to accept one to appreciate the other.

N.B. To ensure the poems' clarity of meaning, the Editor has changed references to people's Twitter handles to their names, eliminated hashtags, has on occasion reduced words in all capitals to lower case, and, where aesthetically appropriate, removed the occasional exclamation point and changed ampersands to 'and'.

Rob Sears, 2017

- 1 *Happening Now*, 12 October 2016
- 2 *With All Due Respect*, MSNBC, 29 March 2016
- 3 Remarks from the USS *Gerald R. Ford* in Virginia, 17 December 2016
- 4 Remarks at the Congressional Republican Retreat in Philadelphia, 26 January 2017
- 5 *Anderson Cooper 360*, CNN, 5 July 2016
- 6 Campaign rally in Muscatine, Iowa, CSPAN, 25 January 2016
- 7 Tweet promoting Miss Universe Pageant, 7 December 2012
- 8 Key Capitol Hill hearings, CSPAN, 27 February 2015
- 9 *The O'Reilly Factor*, Fox News, 28 April 2016
- 10 National Press Club luncheon, CSPAN, 31 May 2014
- 11 *Hannity*, Fox News, 15 July 2015
- 12 *Hannity*, Fox News, 15 August 2015
- 13 Hotel opening, CSPAN, 27 October 2016

A beautiful, simple life¹

Beautiful bikes²

Beautiful aircraft carriers³

Beautiful coal⁴

Beautiful lie by Crooked Hillary⁵

Beautiful hats⁶

Beautiful women⁷

Beautiful tanks⁸

Beautiful Humvees⁹

Beautiful copper piping¹⁰

Beautiful auto plant¹¹

Beautiful marines¹²

I've never seen scissors that look this beautiful before¹³

- 1 Presidential bid announcement at Trump Tower, 16 June 2015
- 2 Tweet promoting his 'Elmsford' crystal collection, 13 September 2011
- 3 Interview with *The Des Moines Register*, 1 June 2015
- 4 Speech in Hilton Head, South Carolina, 30 December 2015
- 5 *Playboy* interview, 2004
- 6 Tweet congratulating Rush Limbaugh on 26th anniversary of broadcast career, 5 August 2014
- 7 Tweet sharing the golden rule of marketing, 21 March 2013

I'm really rich¹

I'm very proud of my new crystal collection²

I have a Gucci store that's worth more than Romney³

I order thousands of televisions a year⁴

Six people do nothing but sort my mail⁵

Sorry haters and losers!⁶

He who has the gold makes the rules⁷

- 1 Explaining why he was considering running for President in an interview with *The Washington Times*, 10 June 2013
- 2 Tweet commenting on USAF anti-sexual assault unit head's arrest for sexual assault, 7 May 2013
- 3 Tweet criticising New York Fashion Week, 15 September 2013
- 4 Tweet criticising *Vanity Fair*, 9 April 2012
- 5 Interview at the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, *The New York Times*, 1 May 2011
- 6 Tweet criticising US Postal Service, 6 February 2013

This country is going to hell in a handbasket¹

It just seems that our country is not what it used to be²
New York Fashion Week is really bad and used to be so
glamorous and exciting³

Vanity Fair Magazine, which used to be one of my favorites,
is failing badly⁴

A lot of people are switching to these really long putters.
Very unattractive⁵

Our poor, poor country⁶

- 1 Tweet criticising Barack Obama, 17 October 2012
- 2 Tweet criticising Barack Obama, 15 October 2012
- 3 Tweet criticising Barack Obama, 6 June 2014
- 4 Rally in Sunrise, Florida, 11 August 2016

Barack Hussein Obama (aka Barry Soetoro)¹: a Haiku

Is not who you think²
The worst ever president³
Founder of ISIS⁴

- 1 *Fox & Friends*, Fox News, 9 May 2011
- 2 Interview on Talk1300 AM, 14 April 2011
- 3 Tweet referencing Tiger Woods' marital infidelity and later victory at Trump National Doral, 20 March 2013
- 4 In answer to a question about possible VP picks in an interview with Larry King, 7 October 1999
- 5 Press conference, 3 September 2015
- 6, 7 *Playboy* interview, 1 October 2004
- 8 Annotation by Trump on article by Jonathan Capehart, which he sent to the journalist – tweeted by Capehart, 8 July 2015

I am the least racist person there is¹

I've always had a great relationship with the blacks²

I remained strong for Tiger Woods during his difficult period³

Oprah, I love Oprah. Oprah would always be my first choice⁴

Kanye West – I love him⁵

I think Eminem is fantastic, and most people think I wouldn't like Eminem⁶

And did you know my name is in more black songs than any other name in hip-hop?⁷

You are the racist, not I⁸

- 1 Tweet criticising Anthony Weiner, 18 March 2013
- 2, 3 Interview with Greta Van Susteren on Fox News, 24 July 2013
- 4 Tweet criticising Anthony Weiner, 24 July 2013

Deviant Anthony Weiner¹: a Haiku

Very sick puppy²

A screamer and a shouter³

He will never change⁴

- 1 Tweet criticising Hillary Clinton, 21 December 2015
- 2 Tweet referencing Will Smith's red carpet incident, 21 May 2012
- 3 Campaign rally in St Augustine, Florida, 24 October 2016
- 4 Tweet criticising Sarah Jessica Parker, 26 October 2012
- 5 Tweet, 3 February 2017
- 6 Discussing female beauty in an interview on *The Howard Stern Show*, 2005
- 7 *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, MSNBC, 22 April 2016