

**SING ME ONE SONG OF EVOLUTION**



# **Sing Me One Song of Evolution**

by

**Vernon Frazer**

**Beneath the Underground Books**

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To  
my wife Elaine,  
who saw in me what so many others couldn't see,  
and to  
my Brothers and Sisters  
in Tourette



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## INTRODUCTION

On March 18, 1994, psychiatrists at the Yale Child Study Center informed me that I had Tourette Syndrome, a rare neurological condition characterized by motor and vocal tics. Learning that I had lived forty-eight years with an undiagnosed condition commonly considered the social equivalent of leprosy left me feeling like the butt of a life-long joke that nobody had bothered to tell me about.

Once the shock wore off, however, I realized the diagnosis explained why I'd always felt like an outsider in the "normal" world. At age fifteen, thirty-three years before my diagnosis, the jeering of my highschool peers taught me that I would always be "different." Instead of struggling to gain a social acceptance I would never receive, I became a "cultural outlaw," rejecting mainstream values. Like many people with Tourette, I sought companionship in bohemian circles. But the Beats, the hippies, the jazz scene--even the criminal underclass--offered little more than superficial contacts. Aside from a few close friends, I existed beneath the underground.

My isolation didn't ease until I met other people with Tourette. Many Tourettics, I discovered, were energetic, intelligent people with enthusiastic, talkative natures. They accepted the quirks, tics and compulsions which had caused many people to dismiss me. I had more in common with them, physiologically and psychologically, than I did with my blood relatives.

Talking with other Tourettics taught me that many of us share a common history. Tales of ostracism during adolescence were virtually universal. Discrimination in the workplace seemed commonplace. My lifelong sense that the "normal" world had held me to a double standard was more nearly a collective Tourettic experience than one man's paranoia.

Our common history has led many of us to consider ourselves an ethnic group based on neurological characteristics instead of racial characteristics and geological origin. People with Tourette Syndrome have endured a history of oppression that parallels the oppression of other ethnic and racial groups. In addition to the daily indignities experienced at school, at work and at play,

anecdotal evidence suggests that people with Tourette have been accused of witchcraft and demonic possession, among other things, and hung or burned for their “offenses.” It is a history that must change.

*Sing Me One Song of Evolution* represents a step toward changing the historical misunderstanding, exclusion, ostracism and oppression of people with Tourette. If we are "differently abled," as the Politically Correct like to say, we are none the less human for our abilities. Anecdotal evidence and medical studies-in-progress indicate that Tourette Syndrome has nearly as many positive attributes as negative. The same energy that compels Tourettics to tic enables them to perform complex mental and physical tasks more quickly than the average person. If a deficiency of one chemical makes many Tourettics feel as though they're living in Hell, a surplus of another chemical gives them the ability to outfit Hell with an air conditioner and a barbecue pit--frequently simultaneously.

In my reading about Tourette Syndrome, I've learned that some medical writers regard Tourettic disinhibition as a "missing link" between civilized and primitive man. If this is the case, then our neurological constitutions enable us to experience the inner contradictions many “normal” people feel--only more vividly. It seems as though our neurological hot-wiring offers us a sustained view of the volcanic core of human emotion and, in more exalted moments, a glimpse of its apocalyptic eruption.

The poetry contained in this book uses the unique constitution of people with Tourette Syndrome to create a literature that documents the Tourettic experience within the context of the “normal” population. Whereas many African-American writers use oral structures of African origin to express their experience of living outside the American mainstream, I use structures rooted in the Tourettic mind to express the experience of living in similar isolation. Several poems offer biting commentaries on the injustices inflicted on people with Tourette. Others offer light-hearted glimpses of Tourettic mental and social lapses. Many poems in this collection use Tourettic symptoms such as echolalia and coprolalia as expressive devices. Several jazz poems employ repetitive Tourettic phrasing the way a jazz musician uses repetition to structure a solo's themes and variations. If Christian readers take offense at the sentiments expressed in "Tourettic Possession Rant/Dance" they should read the poem a second time; its underlying message

explains why Christians go to church. "Discoveries of the Damned" explores Charles Olson's concept of "composition by field" from a Tourettic perspective, crowding words against the margins of the page to create an atmosphere of opposition and repeating words at unexpected, tic-like intervals. The closing essay, "Ranting in the Mirror," offers a reflection on my experiences as a Tourettic and source material for people who seek a better understanding of the references I make in my poems.

In *Sing Me One Song of Evolution* I've used the workings of the Tourettic mind to explore the "human condition" as I perceive it, sometimes at its deepest and darkest levels. At times, my near-Faustian quest has made me dig so far into myself that I've wondered at times whether I'd find my way out. I believe I have (so far) and hope you find what I've brought back to be worth your while.

--*Vernon Frazer*



## The Boy With Green Hair

My earliest memory,  
at three: crying after this movie  
because I wanted green hair.

But I couldn't remember  
why the story made me cry  
with envy. What would I see  
when I replayed the cable  
connecting me to

the Boy With Green Hair?

A parallel destiny?

Or just a kid dreaming his own  
uniqueness, his follicles shrieking  
to bloom some favorite color from days  
so black & white then, so colorized now?

The dyed green hair I'd cried to have  
was brown, nearly black, & thick, nearly  
like mine. But a sheen, an aura, even  
a halo hovered above it.

The Boy With Green Hair

shunted from family to family  
while his mother & father rescued  
World War II War Orphans  
overseas & finally

to Charlie, a caring guy  
who couldn't dull the razors  
of ridicule slashing

the Boy With Green Hair

on the playgrounds or,  
worse, the wound of discovering  
his parents had died helping  
children now just like him.

*The Boy With Green Hair*

transformed my flicker of memory  
into some small foreshadowing of destiny.  
A domestic war destroyed my family.  
For years I shunted from mom to dad,

an afterthought wishing for  
an Uncle Charlie while the kids  
in school tore at the aura  
my head fluttered & jerked.

The Boy With Green Hair

became a poster boy  
for War Orphans. Forty-six  
years after crying at three  
a diagnosis makes me

the Boy With Green Hair

of Tourette Syndrome  
& a role model for the other  
untouchables in America's  
classless society.

The dye will look  
greener against my gray,  
anyway.

# Sing Me One Song of Evolution\*

*for Andy Tallarita*

1.

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

"STRUT YOUR PRIDE, MAKE IT REGAL  
DO THE ENRICO FERMI EAGLE"

the blink/twitch/grunt  
shunned & shunted  
to the corner  
won't stand at the vice-principal's

COMMAND.

"Why should I be forced to fit  
in, just to make their image

perfect?"

---

\*In 1994, Andy Tallarita, a person with Tourette Syndrome, received a two-day suspension from Enrico Fermi High School in Enfield, Connecticut, because he refused to join the rest of the student body in forming an eagle, as a demonstration of school spirit. When his mother appealed the decision, the suspension was reduced to one day.

For giving the unforgiving  
Eagle the bird  
Andy pays for his words

with a two-day suspension.

2.

Stand firm, Enrico Fermi High.  
Try the youth with your full authority:

"If you'd just play along,  
here's what you'd get:

pushed  
to  
the  
side-  
lines,

just  
like  
any  
normal  
kid

with Tourette"

3.

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

myself at his age:

"He's always wanted to fit in, always  
tried & found himself outside,"  
I read his mother said to the press.

Ah, yes! Thirty years of reflection  
past my anguished introspection  
& I still can't detect a change

but that the torturers  
have turned teachers  
& their kids wear their genes

like hearts on their sleeves

How I cringed, my daily dread  
catcalls windtunneling the halls  
behind me, making hell of what

YOU CAN'T HELP / BEING

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

with darkness  
the cruelty of the light  
so shiny, so desirable  
these Future Leaders

radiate:

seven years, not one  
friend, not one date,  
mirrored hatred of

their Social Order

---

"an impulsive disorder,"  
the Doctor told me, thirty years later,  
my diagnosis.

---

On impulse  
I pounded the punk  
who kicked my chair  
all year in class

On impulse  
I refused to stand  
to salute the flag  
breezing over the

land of the Future  
Leaders. On impulse  
against their  
indignant outcry

"WE NEVER DID NOTHIN' TO YOU"

why shouldn't I

refuse to be

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

the(ir)

Red White & Blue

nightmare

(the principal insisted on dreaming.  
When I told him why I wouldn't stand  
he threatened not to graduate

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

Andy, his life, my life, the pain  
surfacing again. I liked him from  
the first (exposure to my own

kind)

& wondered  
how many kids

if only they looked  
beyond the blinking, beyond the twitching  
beyond the grunting

if only they looked  
beyond what

YOU CAN'T HELP / BEING

would like  
his wired mind & wit,  
would like  
him just for

being

a nice kid  
& a mirror

reflecting

their basic decency.

4.

Stand firm, Enrico Fermi High  
Try yourself with your full authority

because thirty years past  
my adolescent introspection  
I still can't detect a change

because the torturers  
have turned teachers  
& their kids wear their genes

like hearts on their sleeves

because your  
teachers & their students  
have taught Andy

"The world is mean in general"

because you never  
tested yourself with  
a single question:

IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT

A NICE KID

& *YOUR* MIRROR  
TO SAY?

## **The Sane**

are always  
with us, the poor

bastards  
that we are.  
The sane

appease us,  
try, to please us,

their patience,  
our patience.  
The sane

try their balanced  
lives to balance

the rage  
with which we eat  
our skins.

Their  
condescending kindness

is the madness  
we measure with  
our attacks.

The sane  
are always  
with us, the poor

bastards.

## **Nice People**

They're out there.

I can hear them  
chirping like birds  
at the feeder.

Day after day  
they have only good things  
to say

Jennifer's job  
Jason's school play  
aerobics

class, the MBA  
program to help them  
stay ahead

like nice people.

Here  
in my troglodyte's cave  
I rave because

they're out there.

I can hear them  
gibbering, gerbils nibbling  
their giblets

like nice people.

The smattering  
that starts them chattering so  
brightly slights

my appetite.  
How unsightly my

hunger must

seem to them.  
I'm surly? Surely.  
I'm not

like nice people.

I'm strange to them  
for wanting & finding them  
wanting

for not wanting  
to test the festering flesh  
a life-grip

beyond  
the modest morsels they claim for themselves  
like nice people

as they block  
the way to my hunger  
just because

they're out there.

## **An Afternoon Break**

All morning the assholes  
trotted in their kids. The office  
oozed with oohs, ahs

& accolades just  
for breeding. I snarled.  
The fools! Their fertile

clichés birthed from  
barren lives make me puke.  
Or want to.

I break away  
when I can. Like today  
when I watched

a schoolgirl hand  
a dandelion to her crossing guard  
& broke a grin.

## Machine-Made Madness At the Self-Service Pump

Coming back from the beach, sun & sea  
& salt air still warming me, the afterglow slowing  
me to the brink of sleep, but my tank's on E.  
How are four bucks going to last me till payday?  
I need fourteen to fill the tank--

...PLEASE PAY CASHIER...

*--What!*

This is a Pay Before Using machine? Christ!  
I hate going in to pay & coming back out to fill  
the tank & then going back in again for change.  
Besides, I don't want to see anybody today, I  
just want to move slow, stay relaxed, just the way  
I was before--

...YOUR TRANSACTION IS CANCELED...

*--The nerve!*

Just as I was about to think  
before metal-mouth meddled in my plan  
& made me salty, the Major Credit Card  
in my hand (now rammed down  
its slotted throat) will--

...WELCOME...

*--Aha!*

Talk about transparent! What are you!  
Some new mind-reading machine?  
How did you know I had only four bucks!  
How did you know I had a Major Credit Card  
the moment I thought it! You buck-hungry  
mind-reading money-grabbing machine!  
I *hate* you. I HATE YOU. *I HATE YOU!*  
for making me crazy, for animating my rage  
against the Inanimate's Surrogate-Animate  
your ticker-tape voice not giving a--

....THANK YOU AND PLEASE COME AGAIN...

*--Damn!*

# Demon Dance

The night

CRIES

"Pharoah"

The night

CRIES

"Trane"

The night

CRIES

OUT

ANOTHER PLANE

of

EXISTENCE!



*Via negativa*

the mystics

called

IT

(what the

MUSIC

I hear

(Pharoah

&

Trane)

makes me

see):

point-eared Pans,  
dancing, pink bellies  
baby-round, prance on  
cloven hooves from

rock to

obsidian

rock, dance

across

sulfur

streams.

The steam

rises, my ego  
rides the flow.

I KNOW  
THE SAME OTHER

in the moment

I

SURRENDER

to the

*via negativa*

to the

NIGHT

CRIES

DAWN

of  
self-  
less-  
ness

SUR-

render-

ing

to the

SELF

till the

MIND

CRIES

NIGHT

---

MIND

As the

CRIES

NIGHT

so the

MIND

CRIES

DEATH

in the

DEMON DANCE

of the

LOWER DEPTHS

---

*Vinblastine sulfate*

the doctors

called

IT

(what the

CANCER

of Life

(THE NEEDLE

the

PAIN!

of veins

& guts

BURNING)

makes

me

feel:

the weight of  
obsidian feet  
crushing pink bellies  
that danced from

rock to

obsidian

rock, danced

sulfur  
across  
streams  
that steamed  
TRIUMPH  
over  
the flow of Ego.  
Bellies writhe  
against the flow  
of  
SURRENDER  
to  
*vinblastine sulfate*  
to the  
NIGHT  
CRIES  
DEATH  
of  
self-  
less-  
ness

sur-

render-

ing

to the

SELF

in the

APOLLONIAN

WAR

where the

MIND

CRIES

DEATH



As the

MIND

CRIES

DEATH

so the

MIND

CRIES

NIGHT

(alight

in the

LOWER DEPTHS

a

DEMON DANCE)

CRIES

---

NO

*vinblastine sulfate*

let the

DEATH

OF

SELF

sur-  
rend  
er.

END THE PAIN

self-  
with  
less-  
ness!

END THE PAN-

dancing pink, point-eared,  
baby-round bellies  
on cloven hooves  
dancing from

rock to  
obsidian  
rock!

END THE PAIN

of doctors'  
sulfur  
& your screams!

SING!

The steam  
rises from  
the stream

NIGHT

as the

CRIES

LIFE

as I

dance

to the

*via negativa*

(no more needles,  
no more pain)

to the

DEMON DANCE

of Pharoah  
& Trane

SING YES

to

ANOTHER PLANE OF EXISTENCE!

SING YES

to the

DEMON DANCE

of eyes

touching sight

in the

DIONYSIAN MIRROR!

The

NIGHT

CRIES

LIGHT!

The

MIND

CRIES

LIFE!

## The Secret Life of Blondie L'amour

The eyes pan  
Blondie L'amour's killer gams,

her four-inch heels clicking heat  
against the walk. Watch her strut  
her stuff or, more likely, the stiff  
propriety that stems above

her curving calves,  
curving hams,  
& curving hips,

curving around the righteous swaying  
of her waist,

curving around the gold-bangled wrist  
crossing tight against her ample breasts & glittering  
like the faint, flame-red smile or the secret

parted

like & from the lips, but not  
from behind the green eyes  
that slit so narrow,

too narrow

for the Marilyn (or other Madonna)  
she teases with a high splash of bottled sunlight  
across the bright, so hot, yet so proper stare  
glowing above rouge & memories of roses

& ruses.

Behind there: her fiancé turned

husband to someone else, then returned  
for ten years of

Tuesdays & Thursdays  
& wide-eyed weekends  
beading hopeless with other

plans.

The mystery of her reserve stands  
revealed:

caught  
in the voyeur's private eye

naked  
as a piece on *A Current Affair*.

There!  
She squints, his camera fans her hair.

A 40's hit,

going platinum

## In Memory of John Coltrane, 1926-67

What is buried rises  
what is buried / remains

Man-spirit rides the sound of light  
digs the sounds of night out of hipster darkness  
churns the pit of Pound's Canto XIV. Digging  
its boiling hellfire core

his search turns the souls' cinderling coals. Up  
the demons' screaming faces blaze through the  
fangs of the golden snake curling his torso,  
tail caressing his tongue. Man-  
spirit's body shakes, his notes shatter  
against ears perched timidly at the edge  
of hearing.

*"This is not jazz!"*  
said the many who could not hear  
your ascension, John Coltrane  
nor bear its recording  
's dissonance.

But it is  
not,  
what you heard,

a definition,  
to those who dig  
being

where sound becomes light

& night a roaring glow  
of peaceful thunder

---

What is buried rises  
what is buried, remains

the giant steps from  
the "Well, You Needn't" junkie's nod  
Monk calling out "Col-trane! Col-trane"  
in time & on time, barely, you rose  
to play

a step of your ascension to ecstasy  
a step among the many Miles

from the cats still digging Bird  
's beat, heads still nodding old grooves,  
still safe within themselves, still  
safe from the demons that still burn  
within, safe from daring to know where

your sheets of sounds

--if speeded to light--

might lift them

---

Beyond the edge of hearing

what is buried rises  
what is buried remains

drumbeats at ear's edge.  
How few of your critics, how few  
of your fans could hear, even  
the musicians nearest  
you abandoned your ear pressed to earth.  
Your eye heard the sky  
at the edge

of seeing

out to the sunspoke

of hearing

the s (h) e (a) e (r) ing sounds

harmonic dissection, sonic deconstruction, willing  
its own resurrection

notes tearing down  
the gut's last rumbling wall  
calling to a plane beyond earthly pain

sound of sight, laser slicing night's darkness

time in motion  
time is motion

meter the clock of rhythms' pulse,  
pulse the meter beyond rhythm's clock.

---

You have to hear  
apocalypse  
before you can know it

you have to see  
apocalypse  
before you can show it

before you can go

there

where

sound becomes light  
& night a roaring glow  
of peaceful thunder

where

what is buried rises

where

what is buried remains

---

Many will never hear ascension, John Coltrane,  
no matter that your drumbeats rumble their ears.  
Many fear the boiling pit / your biting pitches  
swirling the brew / where the African mead might lead

*"This is not jazz!"*

the self-proclaimed ancient voices protested  
against the man who brought Egypt  
out of Pharoah

(though less far, less long, less strong than the next step, flight, required)

What is buried rises  
what is buried, remains

for a man cannot fill  
with light & live singing  
through a golden spoke

the way you spoke to  
the ears at the edge

of seeing

the golden sound soaring

out Out OUT OUT OUT!

beyond the tramping legions  
still loyal to your footsteps, still  
bound to your taps behind

the edge of hearing

---

You have to hear apocalypse  
before you can know it, you have to  
see apocalypse before you can show it,  
you have to be apocalypse

to sing out through the sunspoke  
out through the sunspoke  
out through the sunspoke

Man-spirit can see but cannot  
live as man as he (e)merges

with the sunspoke

singing

sound becomes light  
& night a roaring glow  
of peaceful thunder

that is buried

within us, that

(what is buried) remains

*OUT!*

*OUT*

OUT

Out

out

## Guidelines for Going Postal Over Guidelines at the Post Office

WHAT!  
WHAT IS THIS!

I just sent this out yesterday. Sent it out right after the damned Poetry Contest wrote me that it would reject my collection because, criminal that I am, I violated

THE GUIDELINES!

This same manuscript that I printed out again--& again--& finally (!) sent out again yesterday! My printer jammed at least twice & the header I so dutifully erased to meet

THE GUIDELINES!

surfaced

on page 25 & defaced the contest's required anonymity through page 155, as if trying to tell me Hell will not only freeze over but will offer skiing reservations for all eternity to all writers like me who persist beyond the normal person's limits to sanity.

Now this manuscript that I so painstakingly prepared splats a spot two feet down the floor from my mail slot. Its green sneer of the Curse of Persistent Failure quotes

THE GUIDELINES!

of the U. S.

Postal Service:

“Packages weighing 16 ounces or more must be presented to a Postal Retail Clerk at a Post Office. Such mail cannot be accepted otherwise because of heightened Federal Aviation Administration security measures being taken. We wish you the best of luck in mailing your manuscript elsewhere.”

Or that’s what it might as well say. I’m mad as hell.  
I swear there’s a curse on this contest. Now I can sense  
my poems won’t win because by form or by content  
they’ll violate

THE GUIDELINES!

“appropriate to the canon.”

THE CANNON!

I could have a BLAST with a cannon!  
Just let me get my hands on one  
& go to the Post Office. No, my dopamine surge,  
my manilla collection waving & my brainfired raving  
are weapons enough for the Postal Retail Clerk:

WHAT IS THIS!

ARE POEMS EXPLOSIVE!

IS LANGUAGE INCENDIARY!

He grins, says:

The pen is mightier than the sword.

I relax, crack back:

Especially if you know how to make letter bombs.

Uh oh.

I’ve violated

THE GUIDELINES!

& they've

violated my future, the Postal Retail Clerk & all  
the events that transpired (conspired?) to bring me  
here, where the Postal Retail Jerk hands me

the Poetry Contest's

loser's letter

dated in advance

under a grin triumphant green  
while Postal Security circles me, glowers  
belligerently, then struts forward, eyes flint,  
to read me

THE GUIDELINES!

## Tourettic Possession Rant/Dance

I AM THE DANCE OF MY SELF

the biochemical dance, neurons  
entrancing my brain, rapture captured  
in the Tourettic spin  
serotonin & dopamine whirling

CHEMICAL ELECTRICITY!

I AM THE DANCE OF MY  
supercharged cells, swelling synapses  
motion & emotion merging,  
urging the breakthrough to

THE PRIMAL LINK

---

SURGING

---

mind/body/instinct

SURGING

beyond the containment  
of

SELF.

I AM THE DANCE OF  
barriers breaking  
--sound/speed/light--  
through/with/against

THE SURGING OTHER  
urging

FREEDOM

---

EMERGING, MERGING

---

within.

I AM THE DANCE

POSSESSED

not by demons,  
but by its spin.  
Some would call my energy sinful  
& punish me for eclipsing

---

DAY WITH NIGHT

---

NIGHT WITH DAY

&

the Self with the Other

within

the Dance of My Self.

I AM THE

metabolic whirligig  
of the

spinning surge of being

seeing

---

FREEDOM

---

seeking

---

FREEDOM!

---

from the mind outside  
& the body within  
the force that

I AM

the force that calls itself forth

---

& ITS OPPOSITION

---

the resurrection of the psychophysical connection  
the Life-Death neuroelectrical breath  
of

BEING

beyond contradiction,  
MIND & BODY

as one

POSSESSED

not by demons,  
but by the spin of the dance  
that is, that becomes, in becoming, my

I.

---

---

They say the bastards burned us at the stake  
as witches (but just hung us in Salem). We know  
they shun us, now as then, for shunning the proprieties  
of the justly organized & God-fearing societies

from which they exclude us.  
We intrude, ticcing lips sneering,  
throats clearing to challenge  
the verities given

by the pre-Ordained  
the Forgiven, for giving  
Judgement to

the Unforgiven,  
our faces bright  
with the inner

light of possession.  
Their faces bright with the inner  
light of possession

they still our twitches with flame  
they will our curses be damned  
as we, the Unforgiven, will be,  
as our voices (without & within)  
are, for speaking

GLOSSOLALIA

GLOSSOLALIA

tongues by spirits possessed  
expressing our exalted states  
exulting in the emerging of our surging beings

as one  
with the spirit within.  
As one  
against the spirit within  
us

their exalted State exults in its demagoguery  
their righteous hate elates their Xtian piety  
their righteous selves reflecting

tightlipped Xtian glee  
lighting the darkness  
of the Other purged  
of its surges, its tics,

its noises, the voices  
without & within, without  
which there is no within

but the containment  
of piety, glinting firm  
the fire-eyed fury

flaming the firmament  
to cauterize the Xtian community  
from the infection of

COPROLALIA

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

*Fuck, fuck*

the cursing chorus  
of the condemned  
blazing blasphemies  
from surges too  
strong to bear,  
surges beyond their

COPROLALIA

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

*Fuck, fuck*

*motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

own tolerance for  
ecstasy

*motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

dooms them to neurochemical  
apostasy

& fire

the hellfire of somber Godly Good  
against mockery

ECHOLALIA

(ECHOLALIA

"Your somber Godly Good would if you could"

piety

variety

the singsonging pingpong of antic wit

(NO SHIT)

---

EMERGING

---

across the pages of history,  
the Tourettic rage at play

until the blaze of blue-eyed Aryan smirks  
burns us as they would burn the energetic  
bridge between prose & poetry, the crackling  
song of vitality within living

the sin of neurological surging  
shunned at work, at play,  
at everyday life

as they exorcized us then, so

---

---

I

exorcize them now.

I AM  
the body's call to dance

I AM THE  
Self, the Other &  
the Other Within

---

MERGING, EMERGING

---

I AM THE DEMON  
of my Deeper Self

---

EMERGING, MERGING

---

the Self, the Other & The Other Within  
--the Tourettic Self--

POSSESSED

not by demons,  
but by the spin of the dance

---

EMERGING, MERGING

---

the Self, the Other & the Other Within with the Tourettic Self

---

MERGING

---

a unity  
not unlike the trinity  
only unholy

(so the Salemites, their predecessors, their confessors  
& even their secular successors, would say).

I AM THE DEMON THAT

cries the body's urge to surge

to

---

MERGE, EMERGE

---

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES

neurochemical electricity

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES ME  
I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES ME  
I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES ME

THE OTHER WITHIN  
C O N D E M N E D

by the pious

OTHER WITHOUT

caring, thinking or feeling

OTHER

than

F E A R

- - - - -

E M E R G I N G

- - - - -

urging

THE DEMONS WITHIN

(the Father, the Son & the Holy Ghost)

to give the devils their due. The others  
without an Other Within (as opposed to  
the Others within) the rumored anecdotal  
evidence as evidenced as theirs

defiled the beauty of our dance  
tied our mind/movement to a stake,  
acting on their stake & their mistake:

a crucifix.

To give the devils their due  
we do our coprolalia, our echolalia  
see visions of things obscene

- - - - -  
E M E R G I N G  
- - - - -  
evidence as evidenced as theirs  
of the Hellfire within  
- - - - -  
E M E R G I N G  
- - - - -

COPROLALIA

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

the cursing chorus  
blazes blasphemies  
from surges too  
strong to bear,  
urges the spinners  
to swear, shake their  
heads, their fists  
as they twist, resisting  
  
the neurochemical fire  
that dooms them  
to apostasy

&

the hellfire of somber Godly Good  
against mockery,  
  
dooms them to

ECHOLALIA

COPROLALIA

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

*Fuck, fuck  
motherfuck  
motherfuck  
goddamn*

(ECHOLALIA

&

a nerve-frayed opposition to the social norm.

(WHOSE NORM!

WHO'S NORM?)

The opposition of the disposition is its own justification

of being,  
right.  
The norm.

(WHOSE NORM!

WHO'S NORM?)

(What *is* He? Class President of the High School of Life?)

&

the Xtian fear of Heaven on Earth  
& Hell, where the Tourettic Heretics

- - - - -  
E M E R G I N G  
- - - - -

from the suffering surge  
of persecution for possessing  
bodies beyond their control

a persecution  
with no worse  
a justification in history

than the Crusades

emerges in the face of earthly hellfire,  
its metaphorical synapses snapping

## THE DIVINE BIRTH

of air conditioning  
& barbecue pits.

As they exorcized us then, so  
we exorcize them now, we  
heretic demons of Tourettic history

the collection of I's shunned  
crushed under the lead crucifix  
of the collective WE of the Other,

not the Other Within  
& burned with the pyro's  
maniacal glee which we

more than the Others  
purportedly know

as evidenced

by their anecdotal

Hellfire

---

---

so

I

THE MISSING LINK  
between primal & civilized man  
(so the psychiatrists say)

E X O R C I Z E

The Other(s)

from

THE OTHER WITHIN

themselves, hidden  
behind the rite masks of righteousness

- - - - -

E M E R G I N G

- - - - -

I AM

THE OTHER WITHIN

- - - - -

E M E R G I N G

- - - - -

M E R G I N G

with the Self that

I AM.

I AM THE  
FLAME OF WITCHFIRE BLAZING MY BRAIN

I AM THE  
FLAME OF YOUR WITCHFIRE BLAZING MY BRAIN

I AM THE  
FLAME OF MY WITCHFIRE BLAZING YOUR BRAIN

I AM THE DEMON

of the secular spirit  
the sound the sight the surge the urge

---

EMERGING TO MERGE

---

the rhythm that starts the spin within  
the serotonin, the dopamine

I AM THE DEMON  
OF  
NEUROCHEMICAL ELECTRICITY

DANCING THE SECULAR MOLECULAR TRINITY

I AM THE DEMON THAT

dances the energy/dance of my self  
though some take my movements for madness  
or weakness & would burn me at the stake

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES  
THE RAPTURE OF MY OWN BEING IN ACTION

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES

COPROLALIA

COPROLALIA

ECHOLALIA

in the

ECHOLALIA

GLOSSOLALIA

EMERGING

- - - - -

S U R G I N G

- - - - -

the spin of the neurochemical bioelectrical

DEMON

its serotonin & dopamine  
tonguing the being of  
SECULAR / SPIRIT UNITY

---

EMERGING, MERGING

---

the singsonging pingpong of antic wit  
across the page,  
the Tourettic rage at play.

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES YOU  
in your bristled-backed propriety.

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES YOU  
I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES YOU  
I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES YOU

I AM THE DEMON THAT POSSESSES YOU

IN ME

## Discoveries of the Damned

---

(Headlines of the Mind)

### **ABANDONED BOY FOUND, WILD MAN RAISED BY WOLVES**

&/or

### **PARENTS KEPT BOY LOCKED IN BASEMENT 42 YEARS**

---

There he was,  
among the litter,  
years of hair  
matted to a body carpet  
from spewing the bitter  
aftertaste of bark  
to the animals  
that spared him isolation

He was there,  
among the litter  
bitterly spewing  
the aftertaste of  
his isolation, his  
animal bark a  
pain of hair matted  
from his lonely years

down there

---

**WHAT THE HELL DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHICH STORY IT IS?**

---

(Laboratory Dreaming)

he sees himself outside  
himself, younger, face free  
of hair, tightskinned cheeks  
of youth bulging at the jaw-  
bone, his sullen face swollen  
there, body betrayed to a frail  
frame splayed across a tray,  
feels the cold metal of it beneath him,  
hard against him. Then his left leg

**jerks**

up & clanks back down. His eyes  
search the yellow light peeking through  
the door for Mama, Papa, even Doctor

Wolf.

He sees himself. Outside  
himself the yellow night,  
inside, a room of shadows.

*"I WAS A GOOD KID!"*

No doctors come,  
nor wolves,

to comfort  
the silence

---

**SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:  
Tourette Syndrome Can Cause Symptoms  
in Laboratory Animals.**

---

**(Laboratory Animal Waking)**

hears the words of Dr. Wolf:

“According to personal history and observation specimen presents:

motor tics,	(30 before I reach my nose
vocal tics,	(cough, hack, clear my throat, cough cough
attention deficit	(what did you say I was thinking of
hyperactivity disorder,	something else
obsessive-compulsive	(my counting toothbrush strokes, my my
disorder,	my, I've got several thousand
depression,	(I was a <i>good</i> kid
aggression,	(back off or I'll beat you bloody you
panic attacks,	(what are you going to <i>do</i> to me
anxiety,	(what if I can't make it in this world
polydipsia,	(I'm parched can I have a pitcher of water
heat intolerance,	(you found me with a wet sweat band
echolalia,	(echo lala land
dyslexia,	(backwards, that's the way
oppositional,	I think <i>you've</i> got it
high IQ,	(about time you said <i>something</i> good
false paralysis	(my first symptom 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade I <i>remember</i>

---

**stuttering, self-induced skin lesions, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, all the things that define me as myself, as what I am, all of these are me, all of these are my symptoms**

---

What!

What am I?

Am I the sum of my symptoms?

Sum, some / some, sum. Sun.

SUN! How strange, I used to think,  
its name, what it meant

sitting in Science class, the sun  
rising behind whatever the teacher was  
saying, my mind fixed  
not on class but on classic philosophy

---

**AHA! A CLASSIC CASE OF TOURETTE SYNDROME PLUS  
ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER, TOURETTE  
PLUS ADHD, A. K. A. TOURETTE +, STARING VACANTLY**

---

What!  
What am I?  
Am I the sum of my symptoms?  
Sum, some / some, sum.  
Some but not all, all but not some.

What am I?  
Am I human, am I wolf?  
Am I the sum of my symptoms?

Aha!  
Disease.  
Symptoms. Am I the sum of my symptoms?  
Am I *some* of my symptoms?

Am I the hair-faced werewolf of my Full Moon rant?

---

# WHAT AM I?

---

I.

I start with I because I  
have no other place to start from,  
not the basement, not the den  
of wolves  
certainly not  
the wolves outside my door  
where

I AM  
nothing more than a specimen  
found too late to feed a medical researcher's  
career

I AM  
here because  
I satisfy their curiosity  
about the possible long-term results of their research  
on children raised  
with full-moon hairy faces  
chanting echolalia  
ranting coprolalia  
panting from the terror of panic attacks.

I AM  
reclusive

I AM  
intrusive

I AM  
a constellation of contradictions  
whose afflictions include  
obsessive-compulsive maledictions  
& a tendency to confound medical predictions

because of the complexity of what  
I AM.

I AM THE  
mystery of the brain in the Year of the Brain  
but  
the specialists's reluctance to train me in their civilized ways  
says they discovered me too late  
to clack them down the medical fast-track.  
Though I know a shortcut through my woods  
&/or stairs from my basement  
they won't listen to me  
because

**jerks**

I AM THE  
mystery of abandonment found howling his abandon  
in the woods or in the basement  
(regardless, the forest of abandonment)  
howling the mysterious  
neurochemical reactions  
that limit my attractions / to others

so whole & wholesome as they.  
They say (in so many words)

I AM THE  
chemical antichrist.

I AM THE  
chemical antichrist  
because they only see  
the mysterious forest  
that is me  
at night  
in my brain chemistry.

I AM THE SUM  
of their summations predicated on  
the eradication of my symptoms, their turning  
the chemical antichrist angelic  
through the sweets that breed the numbness  
I AM NOT.

I AM NOT  
the chemical antichrist.

**jerks**

I AM NOT  
the Elephant Man born of a hotwired electric brain.  
Cut me. Like Shakespeare's Shylock, I feel

**jerks**

pain

at being carved for being considered what  
I AM NOT.

I AM THE SUM  
that added himself up in isolation  
that survived situations of gratuitous cruelty  
in the mysterious forest  
of people, schools, playgrounds & jobs  
that is more than the night of my mind.  
In the light of my mind, if the doctors looked, they would see  
the cruelty even they inflict on me  
when their rigorous analysis dismisses my humanity  
as I try to explain how I came to be the way

I AM, THE SUM OF  
a neglect that persists, that goes unnoticed  
except in the mysterious forest of my brain, dark even in  
their daylight, dark even when I try to explain the light of what

I AM. THE SUM OF  
my responses seems irrational outside the context  
of my mysterious forest where none venture to enter  
except pills that numb my flora, dumb my fauna  
& slow the growth that comes of my thoughts' speed.

I AM THE SUM OF  
experiences of a world outside their

**jerks**

experience  
but they insist the world I live in doesn't exist  
except as my mind's mysterious forest  
even though I show them that what I've grown  
on paper alone  
could blossom  
in a world that gave my word light.

I AM THE SUM OF  
their darkness, though I admit that some of my darkness  
shadows it too. Too many times I've tripped  
over my own roots in the mysterious forest, foraging  
for food buried too deep to find  
though my tingling tells me it's there  
not far from where

I AM. THE SUM OF MY  
senses tell me what only wolves should know  
though I learned then & even now  
in the mysterious forest of the laboratory  
how quickly I can leap, how sharply I can see  
how easily I can perform the complexity of the tasks  
they assign me to test the balance of the hemispheres of my cerebrum  
& even answer questions in a tone of civility  
if unprovoked.

I AM THE SUM OF MY SENSES  
tingling, supercharged, capable of sudden speed  
toward directions I sometimes cannot see  
in the mysterious forest by night or by day.  
When they dismiss my experience  
so vital to understanding those cubs of others' breeding  
(by rejection, isolation & finally choice I have none)  
I react with the full force of contradictory urges stimulated equally,  
of affection like a cat surging to unpredictable hostility  
from purrs to claws with no apparent cause  
but the fertilizer that feeds the mysterious forest that

I AM. THE SUM OF MY SYMPTOMS  
suggests disorder, the chaos of contradictions clashing  
at the borders of consciousness. But there is a unity  
there, the verge where the conflicts merge  
into perception, even comfort, despite

**jerks**

the tics of the mysterious forest  
hinting fear, hinting terror, hinting  
to anyone there watching me that

I AM THE SUM OF MY SYMPTOMS

---

**“...the missing link between Civilized  
Man and his primitive predecessors...”**

---

**(Enter Dr. Wolf)**

“There, there, now. Let us help you.  
We have a plan that offers you coordinated  
medical care. Our staff is familiar with  
the medications that will alleviate  
your symptoms

though there are some side effects,  
mostly benign. We can assure you

clonidine”

“Why do I feel so slow, so sluggish, so....what  
goes through one ear goes out the other with-  
out my know...so stupid & I’m going to faint”

“Your blood pressure just got  
a little low, so why don’t we

try a little”

“Tenderness?”

“No, Prozac.”

“Oh, wow! This is great!  
Everything’s so sharp & bright  
even the night shines.  
This is better than soma  
in *Brave New World*. I feel so  
great but...but, down there, my, my...  
my dick feels like a dead eel!”

“We still have

haldol.”

“NO! I WON’T LET YOU  
POISON ME, MAKE ME AFRAID  
TO ENTER YOUR MYSTERIOUS FOREST.  
I DON’T WANT TO GROW FAT & SLOW.  
I DON’T WANT TO GO THERE,  
TO BE THAT WAY OR STAY HERE  
TOO DULL TO SEE THE LIGHT  
IN MY DARKNESS. I DON’T WANT  
PSYCHOTIC’S ANESTHESIA.  
I DON’T WANT TARDIVE DYSKINESIA.”

---

**“LET US HELP YOU”**

---

there he was

he was there

snarling,  
edging for the open  
door  
before they could reach

mind  
snarling, edging the door  
open  
before they could reach

HIM / IT

---

(Headlines of the Mind--Late Edition)

**WILD MAN ABANDONS DOCTORS FOR WOLVES**

&/or

**BOY LOCKED UP 42 YEARS RETURNS TO BASEMENT**

---

(In the Mysterious Forest)

Some symptoms.  
Some, sum.

Sum symptoms.  
Sum, sun.

SUN!

**aaaaoooooo**

*SUN!*

“Let us help--”

HELP / NO

HELL / NO

NO HELP / NO HELL

What if--?

*SUN!*

“Let us help--”

*RUN!*

*RUN!*

**jerks**

*SUN!*

**AAAAA OOOOOO!**

## **Ranting in the Mirror: An Interview With My Tourette Syndrome**

*If Tourette Syndrome has proved an elusive subject for medical practitioners--psychiatrists, neurologists and other specialists--it has proved an equally elusive subject for the people who live with the medical condition, including this interviewer. During my attempts to get in touch with my Tourette Syndrome, I left numerous messages on Tourette's answering machine, none of which he returned, and knocked on his door, which he never answered. It wasn't until I made vigorous threats into my bathroom mirror that Tourette finally made himself available, and then only for brief periods during which we discussed the issues affecting this interviewer.*

*At first glance, Tourette seems intimidating. More than a mere reflection, he revealed himself as a man of many faces, moods and styles, none of them predictable, though over time one could anticipate the changes in much the way one might look in the mirror on a Tuesday before work and find one's reflection acting the way one did the previous Saturday one beer before Last Call.*

*For our first interview, Tourette wore a gray suit and a blue tie and projected the image of a psychiatrist with an entrepreneurial bent. As he sat behind the desk of his expansive office, he conveyed the easy demeanor of one in charge: of himself, his subordinates and this interviewer.*

**Vernon:** You don't know how hard I've been trying to reach you.

**Tourette:** I've been here all along.

**Vernon:** Then, why didn't you return my messages?

**Tourette:** Sometimes I'm oppositional.

**Vernon:** Oppositional?

**Tourette:** If you want me, I don't want you. Or vice-versa.

**Vernon:** That's nice to know, but it doesn't help me.

**Tourette:** It *does* help you. You just don't know it yet.

**Vernon:** How does it help me?

**Tourette:** Any knowledge is helpful. But you have to know how to use it.

**Vernon:** Use what? Being oppositional?

**Tourette:** Now *you're* being oppositional. It's not an appropriate way to conduct yourself when you're the person requesting the meeting.

**Vernon:** I'm sorry. I guess it's my frustration...

**Tourette:** Or maybe your Tourette Syndrome?

**Vernon:** Then, you think I have Tourette Syndrome too?

**Tourette:** What makes you think you have Tourette Syndrome?

**Vernon:** You sound just like my shrink.

**Tourette:** I hope I get paid as well as he does.

**Vernon:** For not knowing anything! Give me a break. I'm not some pill-swallowing hypochondriac.

**Tourette:** You sound as though you need a Time Out.

**Vernon:** I'm *stressed* out. I'm *FREAKED* out. My wife's best friend from high school came to stay with us for a week. She told me she thought I have it.

**Tourette:** What does she know?

**Vernon:** For one thing, she's a nurse. For another, her ex-lover and daughter have Tourette Syndrome.

**Tourette:** Relax. You can't get it from sharing toilet seats.

**Vernon:** Don't tell me to relax! I've heard that all my life and I'm sick of it. "Relax, relax!" And all the while I'm as calm as my body allows me to be.

**Tourette:** This does sound familiar. Keep talking.

**Vernon:** Well, I have this cough (*coughs*) and this throat clearing hack (*hacks*). I've got these twitches, too (*twitches*). I've been to psychiatrists, social workers and psychologists ever since I was ten years old. And none of their therapy has been very effective.

**Tourette:** Did it ever occur to you that maybe you're just plain nuts?

**Vernon:** Look. I've got a third cousin who had Tourette. My mother was diagnosed as having Saint Vitus' Dance when she was a girl. So neurological disorders seem to run in my family. Does that help make my case?

**Tourette:** Some. A number of doctors used to misdiagnose Tourette as St. Vitus' Dance.

**Vernon:** Good. Maybe now we're getting somewhere.

**Tourette:** Be careful where you want to go. You might get there.

*For the second interview, Tourette appeared in the bathroom mirror wearing a 1970's leisure suit, hair permed over his ears and a shirt open half-way down his chest. A gold chain nested in his black bramble of chest hair. At the base of the chain hung a key.*

**Vernon:** So, there I was, just diagnosed, and sitting in my car. It all started making sense, the way people had always treated me differently, never taken me seriously, never even acted as if I had the *right* to be taken seriously. And this mood just like, uh, *crystallized* in me and just before I turned on the ignition, I said in this low, really determined voice, "The abuse *stops!*"

**Tourette:** You're mad as hell and you're not going to take it anymore. Right?

**Vernon:** Right. After they diagnosed me, I stayed around for a few tests. Granted, on the one hand it's like being told you have a case of leprosy that isn't degenerative or contagious, but on the other it's like being told you have -- I lost my thought. What was I talking about?

**Tourette:** Obviously, nothing you know about.

**Vernon:** It's all there, like it was written on a blackboard. But what happened just now...It's called thought-blocking. I didn't realize what it was until the doctors asked if it happened to me. You have thought-blocking too.

**Tourette:** So, what's wrong with that?

**Vernon:** Nothing. It explains why sometimes an answer to a problem will flash in front of me almost instantly, but I won't be able to find the words to tell people about it.

**Tourette:** I can't hide it. It happens to me, too.

**Vernon:** Now I remember what I was saying. One of the doctors was explaining that one of the tests he was doing seemed to indicate that people with Tourette were better at multi-tasking than people without Tourette, and that they could handle complex tasks forty percent faster. He said he thought it had to do with brain development. I mean, you know, like, in normal people one cerebral hemisphere dominates over the other, but people with Tourette have more balance between their cerebral hemispheres.

**Tourette:** I'll bet that's the first time in your life someone said you *weren't* mentally unbalanced.

**Vernon:** I don't need to take abuse from *you*, either.

**Tourette:** Sorry, dude. I'm just being oppositional. Part of my nature.

**Vernon:** Part of my nature too is that I'm creative. The doctor said people with Tourette tend to be creative.

**Tourette:** Next thing you'll be telling me is that it makes us better lovers.

**Vernon:** If it does, I'll take it. Do you have any evidence?

**Tourette:** Hey, dude. I wouldn't be wearing this shirt and chain if it wasn't true.

**Vernon:** That's *anecdotal* evidence.

**Tourette:** Hey, dude. You want anecdotal evidence? Any time you're having one of your sleep disorders, just let me know. Have I got some stories to tell *you!* Take last night, for example. I met this blonde and this brunette. *Killer!* I mean, both of them. When the three of us left the club, we—

**Vernon:** Multi-tasked?

**Tourette:** You got it.

**Vernon:** You mean multi-bragged. I'm talking about things like, well, like the doctor suggesting to me that maybe the equal development of my cerebral hemispheres is why I can play bass and recite poetry at the same time.

**Tourette:** You've always had enough trouble chewing gum and walking at the same time.

**Vernon:** And you're coming across just like a lot of the normal people I've known.

**Tourette:** I've already told you, I'm oppositional.

**Vernon:** I think you're just trying to assimilate with the normies. And I don't believe your story, either.

**Tourette:** You're right. When I left the bar last night, you know what really happened? The blonde and the brunette got in their car and went home and I went home in mine. Alone.

**Vernon:** That's more the way it used to go with me.

**Tourette:** Up until the last minute I expected to get somewhere with one of them. Then, they up and left without even saying good-bye. It was humiliating, actually.

**Vernon:** You're digressing. You know what's humiliating to me?

**Tourette:** What?

**Vernon:** That I've had Tourette symptoms for forty-two years, ever since second

grade, and I've been to all these shrinks and doctors and *none* of them ever diagnosed it. You know, I consider myself reasonably intelligent, reasonably well-read, reasonably well-informed...

**Tourette:** Sounds pretty reasonable so far...

**Vernon:** Wise guy.

**Tourette:** It's called echolalia. I can't help it.

**Vernon:** But after getting this diagnosis, I feel like I mean, like, I feel like I was some kid whose parents kept him locked up in the basement or the attic all his life. You know, BIG TABLOID HEADLINES! Like, "ABANDONED BOY FOUND, RAISED BY WOLVES."

**Tourette:** Raised by wolves! At least you had parents, regardless of species.

**Vernon:** The point is, where *was* everybody--my family, my doctors--while all this stuff was happening to me?

**Tourette:** Well, you can take this key. Unlock the basement door or the attic door and find out.

**Vernon:** That's what I was afraid of. I go home alone either way.

**Tourette:** That's the way the deal goes.

**Vernon:** Now I know what to expect. But, you know what? Now that I know it, there's still this part of me that's asking, "Why me?"

**Tourette:** Why not you?

**Vernon:** I mean, I close my eyes and I see this image of myself, maybe ten or twelve years old, lying on a cot or some kind of institutional bed. A hospital bed, I guess. The left side of my jaw's all puffed out, kind of like the left side of my neck when I had Hodgkins Disease the first time. And then while I'm lying there, my left leg just kicks straight up. Like rigor mortis or something.

**Tourette:** More like Tourette, I'd say.

**Vernon:** Is that a symptom?

**Tourette:** Could be. One of many.

**Vernon:** And I keep thinking, "I was a good kid." Looks like life threw me a major league curveball. I've been going through what I guess must be mid-life crisis, I've been on antidepressants since a record deal fell through, and now I find out I've got one of the most highly stigmatized medical conditions around. I mean, really:

WHY ME?

**Tourette:** You remember the old joke from about sixth grade?

**Vernon:** Which one?

**Tourette:** I don't remember it all, but it's about this guy who has all kinds of really terrible things happen to him, kind of like the story of Job. Finally, he asks God the very same question you're asking. You remember the punch line?

**Vernon:** No.

**Tourette:** That's too bad. We're not supposed to use profanity here.

**Vernon:** Well, you've led me this far. You've got to tell me *something*.

**Tourette:** I'll modify the punch line.

**Vernon:** Come on. Just *tell* me.

**Tourette:** To adapt it to your situation, the punch line would be: "You know, Frazer, for some reason, you just tic me off."

*The next interview wasn't formally scheduled. The interviewer was studying himself in his bathroom mirror, when Tourette appeared off to one side of the reflection, wearing casual clothing identical to the interviewer's: a sports shirt loud enough to border on luminescent.*

**Vernon:** ...27, 28, 29, 30.

**Tourette:** I'm glad to see one of your Obsessive-Compulsive behaviors is achieving maximum efficiency.

**Vernon:** This isn't my counting OCD. I'm trying to count my total number of tics. I started at the top of my head, and haven't even reached my mouth yet.

**Tourette:** If you've only gotten that far, you'll need to be an autistic savant to count all of them.

**Vernon:** Is it ADHD if I stop before 1,000?

**Tourette:** How do you expect me to answer that? You're beginning to see how different each of my manifestations can be.

**Vernon:** Really? According to this book (*waves a hardcover copy of Tourette Syndrome: The Bad Seed? at the mirror*), I've had about two-thirds of the listed symptoms, at one time or another.

**Tourette:** You haven't had all of them at once.

**Vernon:** They'd shake my body apart if I did.

**Tourette:** Then you've seen the spectrum.

**Vernon:** Yeah. Alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, crime, ADD, ADHD, overeating, depression...It's enough to make you --

**Tourette:** Commit suicide?

**Vernon:** Yeah, uh, execute a terminal symptom.

**Tourette:** You should have started at page 298.

**Vernon:** The part that tells what's good about Tourette? I read it.

**Tourette:** So you know about promiscuity, you sly old devil.

**Vernon:** You're being oppositional again.

**Tourette:** Sorry. I can't help it.

**Vernon:** I meant the creativity, the photographic memory, the extra-fast reflexes...

**Tourette:** Tourettic speed...

**Vernon:** Is that they call it? I guess that explains why I used to leg routine singles into doubles when I played softball.

**Tourette:** Maybe the coed outfielders had weak throwing arms.

**Vernon:** Could be that, or it could be your oppositional nature trying to put me down. Anyway, once I got past the frightening stuff, I started finding explanations for my whole life.

**Tourette:** You mean, alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence, crime, ADD, ADHD, overeating, depression...

**Vernon:** I was thinking more the echolalia, the polydipsia --

**Tourette:** You drink too much even when it's non-alcoholic.

**Vernon:** ...the obsessive-compulsive behaviors. I never knew I had so many.

**Tourette:** How many do you have?

**Vernon:** Somewhere up in the thousands. I don't think I could sit still long enough to count them all.

**Tourette:** Neither could I. I've got enough trouble watching you count the number of strokes of deodorant you put on, or watching you run in and out of the house three or four times to make sure the stove's turned off.

**Vernon:** Ever since I was six or seven, I've been trying to cope with all those tics

and symptoms or conceal them. I even found my very first symptom, a fake paralysis of my left side, when I was six or seven. According to the book, it's a typical first symptom.

**Tourette:** And you always thought you were so weird, so different, so...outrageous.

**Vernon:** But in terms of Tourette I'm outrageously typical. The problem now is, where do my symptoms end and my personality begin?

**Tourette:** You have no personality. Only symptoms.

**Vernon:** That's *my* line! You stole my line!

**Tourette:** I couldn't help it. One of the criminal symptoms of the disorder...

*For the next interview, Tourette wore a doctor's white gown and juggled brown plastic pharmacy bottles in front of a manic grin. Occasionally a bottle would fly out of range and Tourette, in the act of retrieving it, would nearly stick his hand through the mirror where the interviewer stood, a distressed expression on his face.*

**Tourette:** How about a little Haldol?

**Vernon:** No way will I even *touch* that stuff.

**Tourette:** The first one's free, dude.

**Vernon:** That's what every pusher says.

**Tourette:** For some doctors it's the first line of treatment.

**Vernon:** And the easiest. Just load the guy up, let him turn fat and sluggish so he sits around all day poking his tongue into his cheek.

**Tourette:** It's just a small dose. Minuscule, actually.

**Vernon:** And trade one set of irreversible twitches for another? No way!

**Tourette:** You're very resistant to treatment.

**Vernon:** Resistant! I've spent the past four months more zoned out than I ever was in the sixties. Prozac turned me into a blissed-out sexless geek fit for writing Birthday Cards. Clonidine knocked thirty points off my IQ and at least as much off my blood pressure--which is already on the low side. I'm ready to adopt the Reagan Slogan: Just Say No! I knew going into this diagnosis that I've lived most

of my life with this condition. I made a choice before I even scheduled the appointment: I'd rather twitch and swear and rant and rave and be the creative person I am than take some poison that will turn me into a socially appropriate zombie.

**Tourette:** I think I'd like you better as a socially appropriate zombie.

**Vernon:** I don't care what you think.

**Tourette:** Now you're being oppositional.

**Vernon:** I'm mad as hell and won't take it anymore.

*Tourette was more composed at the next meeting, as was the interviewer. Each appeared well-groomed and relaxed in the bathroom mirror, the meeting site deemed mutually convenient between oppositional outbursts. Both Tourette and the interviewer wore brightly-colored shirts, characteristic of their flamboyant personalities. Sprawled across opposite ends of a modular sofa, each spoke with a relaxed demeanor.*

**Tourette:** You look pretty chipper today.

**Vernon:** I am. I had a great day yesterday.

**Tourette:** What happened? You experienced a Harmonic Convergence of alcoholic and narcotic excess, overeating, and promiscuity? Way to go, dude.

**Vernon:** Maybe overeating. That's about all I could do at a picnic.

**Tourette:** How disappointing.

**Vernon:** Not at all. It was the first time I ever met other people with Tourette.

**Tourette:** Did they twitch and shout at you?

**Vernon:** No, but one guy whose kid had Tourette apologized for coughing. He had a cold. I told him he didn't have to apologize, that I coughed whether I had a cold or not.

**Tourette:** You're getting a sense of humor about it. That's a good sign.

**Vernon:** It was a good day. In some ways it was one of the best in my life.

**Tourette:** A picnic? One where you didn't indulge in every intemperate device and personal excess known to sedate the Tourettic's hyperactive central nervous system?

**Vernon:** There was plenty of brain juice flowing. I was talking with two Ph.D's, there were three musicians there, a successful businesswoman...It was a group of some of the most intelligent and accomplished people I've ever spent time with.

**Tourette:** Doesn't surprise me one bit. Some people say we're 15 IQ points above the norm, on average.

**Vernon:** It sounds about right to me. They had a lot on the ball. And you know what? When I talked, they actually listened to what I had to say.

**Tourette:** There's no known correlation between IQ and common sense.

**Vernon:** Come off it. You're just --

**Tourette:** Being oppositional. I know.

**Vernon:** Anyway, it was fascinating. I heard a lot of kids who had the same reedy quiver that I have in my voice.

**Tourette:** Ah, the Eternal Adolescent!

**Vernon:** No, the Eternal Patsy. That's the tone "normal" people sense as uncertainty or insecurity and use as an excuse to pounce on us. They think the sound means we're weak.

**Tourette:** Oh. The Eternal Paranoid.

**Vernon:** Come on. You know the stories. Each of the people I met had some harrowing tale of deprivation to tell. Social ostracism, job discrimination...What I heard was that most of us consider ourselves as discriminated against as any racial or ethnic group, except that our difference is based on brain chemistry.

**Tourette:** Next thing, you'll be demanding Civil Rights.

**Vernon:** I'm already demanding Civil Rights. I've used the Americans with Disabilities Act to get a bad boss off my back and to get myself a computer to use at work.

**Tourette:** Way to go.

**Vernon:** Another thing that happened at the picnic was that I found a kid who memorizes telephone numbers, like I do. We traded ours without writing anything down.

**Tourette:** Sounds like you had fun.

**Vernon:** I did. But that's not the most important part. You know, I've spent most of my life as an outsider. I've tried to fit in everywhere, even among the so-called

misfits, and no matter where I went, no matter what I did, I always ended up on the outside. That picnic was the first time in my life I felt like I really belonged somewhere.

**Tourette:** You mean, in the High School of Life you've finally been accepted into a clique? Way to go, dude. Put it there. *(His hand, thrusting forward for a handshake, crunches against the back of the mirror.)* OOOOUUUUCH!

**Vernon:** It goes a little deeper. It wasn't just friends, it wasn't just family. I found a People.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vernon Frazer's books of poetry include *A Slick Set of Wheels*, *Demon Dance*, *Sing Me One Song of Evolution*, *Free Fall* and *Demolition Fedora*. Frazer has released five recordings that fuse poetry with jazz: *Beatnik Poetry*, *Haight Street 1985*, *Sex Queen of the Berlin Turnpike*, *SLAM!* and *Song of Baobab*. He appeared as guest artist on the late Thomas Chapin's *Menagerie Dreams* CD and *THE JAZZ VOICE*, a compilation of jazz vocalists and poets. *Stay Tuned to This Channel*, Frazer's first collection of short fiction, finished as a finalist in the 1996 Black Ice/FC2 Fiction Contest.



