

Key for Readers

This collection of poems, free verse, short essays, and reflections is substantially factual, based on things that have really happened. For example, everything recounted “The Trumpian Avalanche” is based upon actual news reports (with the exception of a few snide asides by me) and every fact cited in the essays “Deportation Insanity” and “Prohibition 2.0” is verifiable.

There is also a healthy dose of nonfactual satire. John Wooden, who died 15 years ago, did not actually cut Donald Trump from his team because Trump would never have made that team. Likewise, Pete Hegseth has not actually renamed the Alamo or the Pentagon (at least not as of this writing). The GOP has not been plagued with an actual outbreak of Eye Diversion Spasticity (EDS), a syndrome that is a product of my imagination as a metaphor for the way Republican leaders pretend they don’t see Donald Trump’s corruption and criminality.

The biblical Job of Uz did not literally send a letter to Donald J. Trump from across three millennia, and even if he had it’s doubtful Trump would have read it. But Job’s message is of vital importance to the mental and spiritual health of anyone who has embraced the anger, hatred, and grievance of Trumpism. And anyone who considers themselves to be Christian but also supports Trumpism should carefully consider the warning at the end of “Trumpianity” that when they finally come before Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates, they might find to their dismay they are not prepared for the entrance exam.

Here’s a key for assessing whether an entry is factual or imagined: The more horrifying it is, the more likely it is to be based on real happenings. For example, “Unforgivable” and “If Satan Were President (RIP USAID)” each reflect the horrifying inhumanity of Donald Trump and his administration. Both are based on actual reporting that I’ve referenced in footnotes. “In Memory of Brian Sicknick” is based on an actual exchange of emails between Iowa’s GOP Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeke and me. The photo in “Good Old Boys for Life” is not AI-generated, it comes from the Facebook page of Texas Governor Greg Abbott.