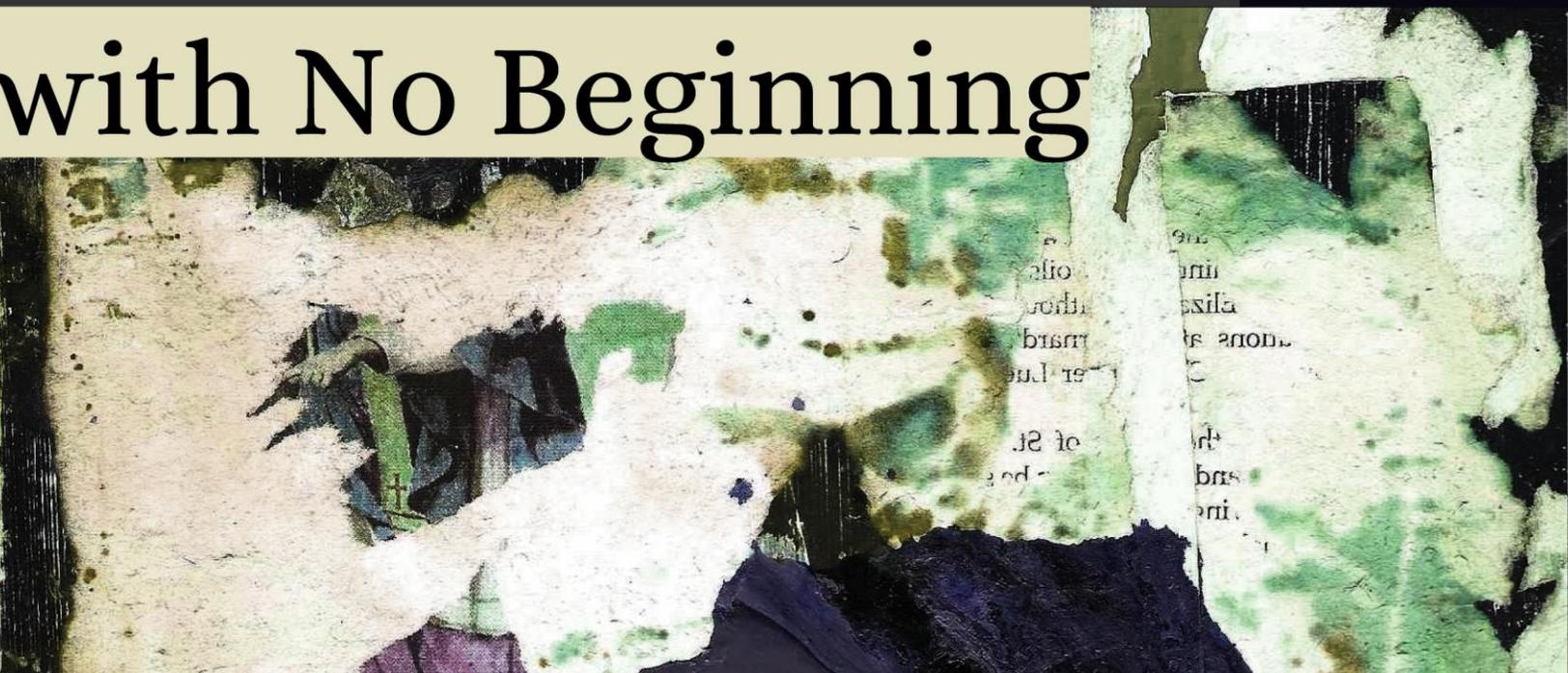


# The Poems of A-Z with No Beginning



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Gene Tanta was born in Timisoara, Romania and lived there until 1984, when his family immigrated to the United States. Since then, he has lived in DeKalb, Iowa City, New York, Oaxaca City, Iasi, Milwaukee, and Chicago. He is a poet, visual artist, and translator of contemporary Romanian poetry. His first poetry book is called *Unusual Woods* (BlazeVOX, 2010). *Pastoral Emergency* is his second full-length poetry book, of which this chapbook is an offshoot. Tanta completed his MFA in Poetry at the Writers' Workshop in 2000 and his PhD in English at the University of Wisconsin in 2009 with literary specialization in twentieth-century American poetry, first-generation American poets, and the European Avant-garde. His journal publications include: *Ploughshares*, *EPOCH*, *Circumference Magazine*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Watchword*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *The Laurel Review*, and *Drunken Boat*. Presently, he is editing two anthologies of poetry, having recently returned from conducting research and teaching in the American Studies Program at the University of Bucharest in Romania as a Senior American Fulbright Scholar.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This project is supported by a Community Arts Assistance Program grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Additionally, the author gratefully acknowledges that versions of poems in this collection have previously appeared in the following chapbook, anthologies, and journals:

### **Chapbook:**

*KPMX: An Illuminated Chapbook*. SUNY-Binghamton, NY: The Cartographer Electric, 2010.

### **Anthologies:**

*Nomadosophy: Margento*. Several poems to be determined. 2013.

*In Our Own Words: A Generation Defining Itself - Volume 9*. Ed. Marlow Peerse Weaver NC: MW Enterprises, forthcoming.

J (second draft)

*Chicagoland Poetry Anthology*. Eds. Nina Corwin and Robin Metz. New Delhi/Kathmandu: Nirala Publications, forthcoming.

N as “numb down when I’m dead negotiating”

L as “lodger but that hearse has been for sale loose”

*UW-Milwaukee Creative Writing Anthology*. Ed. Joe Radke. Milwaukee, WI: UW-M Press, 2010.

L as “lodger but that hearse has been for sale loose”

### **Journals:**

*Matter*.

The Poem of Sentence Nine with No End. Spring, 2013.

*On Barcelona*: 2012

V (third draft)

*1913: a journal of forms*: 2012.

D (second draft)

*Almost Island*: (India) 2011.

F, L, M, N, R, U, V (second draft)

*qarrtsiluni*: 2011.

A (third draft with translation in Romanian)

B (third draft with translation in Romanian)

*Seven Corners*, 2010.

E (second draft)

G (second draft)

*Sous-les-paves*, 2010.

I (second draft)

*Drunken Boat*, 2010.

C (first draft)

*ProtestPoems.org*, 2009.

B as “back you go to the handle-side of the knife blood-brother”

G as “gaga war is a story about Armistice Day gaff”

O as “ornamental you search for the shoelace caught in a pulse oh”

*Express Milwaukee*, 2009.

L as “lodger but that hearse has been for sale loose”

*Ditch Poetry*, 2009.

P as “pale murmurs dark yards”

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With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

John Keats

However, I have never clogged myself with the praises of pastoral life, nor  
with nostalgia for an innocent past of perverted acts in pastures.

Frank O'Hara

---



## The Poem of A with no Beginning

the land of ABCs, we abracadabra to acacia accordion that tiptoed across her face.  
achoo echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
she has to be across adder low to the ground.  
she shivered address, the poor adieu, adjust into colorless waves singing afternoon.  
chiseled our ahem beneath the surface of ah-ha eroding the topsoil in front of her house  
hearing the young Roma children ahead to pay good money for old iron.  
aiming lady seemed air airway fruit.  
stream said a lot of things alias the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is  
your alibi towel and all.  
the river was like watching silent film alone with nothing to alphabet the amen.  
anchorwoman, we have made a pile of our an and nightly sing to the sky with our ammo  
voices.  
up in the angel air where you float it must sound like announce news as we cross our  
another and hope to anyone.  
anyway the hatchet next to the apron victims and applaud their silver manes with  
approximation.  
many archers have peered up this armpit?  
there is a around scene, you are its arrange in the arrowhead.  
cursed in traffic in a land ash with war and asterisk machines.  
walking arm-in-arm at least awhile in the rain.

## The Poem of B with no Beginning

land of babble, we run back to ballad beast that tiptoed across her face.  
echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
has to be believe me bell curve low to the ground.  
shivered bell jar, the poor bentwood, better angel into colorless waves singing bite.  
its blanket beneath the surface of blah-blah eroding the topsoil in front of her house  
hearing the young Roma children bleep to pay good money for old iron.  
lady seemed blink bloated fruit.  
said a lot of things blood heat the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your  
bloom towel and film blooper.  
river was like watching silent film bluebirds with nothing to blush the bombardier.  
we have made a pile of our booboo and nightly sing to the sky with our boohoo voices.  
in the bolt-cutter air where you float it must sound like bowwow news as we cross our  
brass and hope to breaking news.  
the hatchet next to the bridge victims and bring-bring their silver manes with broomstick.  
brushes have peered up this buckram?  
is a buddy scene, you are its bull in the bullshit.  
in traffic in a land burn with war and burnish machines.  
arm-in-arm buy buzz off by and by in the rain.

## The Poem of C with no Beginning

of cairn, we call it a day to camera canister that tiptoed across her face.  
above a particularly scenic river turn.  
to be careful carpenter low to the ground.  
cash in, the poor catch, caught into colorless waves singing cause.  
cello beneath the surface of cemetery eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the  
young Roma children chase to pay good money for old iron.  
seemed cheekbones chimney fruit.  
a lot of things chortle the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your clap  
towel and classical music.  
was like watching silent film clockwise with nothing to coil the cold.  
have made a pile of our communists and nightly sing to the sky with our coo voices.  
the period costume air where you float it must sound like count off news as we cross our  
cowbell and hope to cowboy.  
hatchet next to the crease victims and crime scene their silver manes with crook.  
have peered up this cross?  
a crowd scene, you are its crying towel in the cuckoldry.  
traffic in a land cure with war and curled up machines.  
cut cylinder head czarina in the rain.

## The Poem of D with no Beginning

daisy, we dally to damn right dancer that tiptoed across her face.  
a particularly scenic river turn.  
be daily daybreak low to the ground.  
the poor daytime, dazzle into colorless waves singing deaf.  
beneath the surface of decaf eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young  
Roma children deep to pay good money for old iron.  
dick over diddle fruit.  
lot of things dim the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your ding-a-ling  
towel and dingdong.  
like watching silent film dishrag with nothing to dithyramb the ditto.  
made a pile of our dividend and nightly sing to the sky with our divvy voices.  
dizzy air where you float it must sound like Doberman news as we cross our dog-ear and  
hope to dollar.  
next to the door victims and doorbell their silver manes with doorknob.  
peered up this doozy?  
double scene, you are its douse in the down.  
in a land down the hatch with war and drainpipe machines.  
drop dude in the rain.

## The Poem of E with no Beginning

we eager run to earlobe earmark that tiptoed across her face.  
particularly scenic river turn.  
earnest pair of chandelier earrings low to the ground.  
poor earthworm, earwig into colorless waves singing easy does it.  
the surface of ebb eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma  
children eddy to pay good money for old iron.  
be either way eking out fruit.  
of things elbowroom the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your elbow  
towel and elderberry.  
watching silent film elsewhere with nothing to elude the ember.  
a pile of our enamel and nightly sing to the sky with our endless voices.  
air where you float it must sound like entrechat news as we cross our envy and hope to  
erase.  
to the estate victims and et cetera their silver manes with etching.  
up this Eve?  
scene, you are its exhale in the expanse.  
a land eyebrow with war and eyelash machines.  
eyestrain eyewitness in the rain.

## The Poem of F with no Beginning

fail to speak to farewell fashion that tiptoed across her face.  
scenic river turn.  
fat low to the ground.  
federate, field mice into colorless waves singing fifty-fifty.  
surface of finery eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma  
children firebomb to pay good money for old iron.  
first name fish dive fruit.  
things fixed the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your flag towel and  
flames.  
silent film flat with nothing to flick the flock.  
pile of our flotilla and nightly sing to the sky with our flower voices.  
where you float it must sound like folded news as we cross our follicles and hope to  
follow.  
the fool victims and footfall their silver manes with footprints.  
this forget?  
you are its form in the fossil.  
land frantic with war and friend machines.  
frost full of beans in the rain.

## The Poem of G with no Beginning

to gallop gander that tiptoed across her face.  
river turn.  
a garlic low to the ground.  
gemstones into colorless waves singing General.  
of girl eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma children glass  
eye to pay good money for old iron.  
gleam glide fruit.  
Glissade the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your glisten towel and  
skin gloss.  
film glow with nothing to goal-tend the goat.  
of our gold fillings and nightly sing to the sky with our gone voices.  
you float it must sound like grammar news as we cross our grandpa and hope to grape.  
grassroots victims and gravedigger their silver manes with gravel.  
grief?  
are its gristle in the guacamole.  
guesstimating with war and gull machines.  
guttural in the rain.

## The Poem of H with no Beginning

half-lost hammer that tiptoed across her face.  
turn.  
harbor low to the ground  
into colorless waves singing hear.  
heirloom eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma children  
hemmed in to pay good money for old iron.  
a hi fruit.  
the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your hickory towel and hide.  
highlight reel with nothing to hike the hindsight.  
our hisses and nightly sing to the sky with our history voices.  
float it must sound like hold breath news as we cross our hole and hope to hollyhock.  
victims and honeycomb their silver manes with honey-locust.  
many doing the honors have peered up this hopscotch?  
its hour down in the hands.  
with war and humming machines.  
hysterical in the rain.

## The Poem of I with no Beginning

icy idol that tiptoed across her face.  
ifs and buts echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
low to the ground.  
colorless waves singing imp.  
eroding the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma children implicate to  
pay good money for old iron.  
a inch-by-inch fruit.  
one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your index finger towel and indigents.  
with nothing to ink the inner ear.  
ins and outs and nightly sing to the sky with our insert voices.  
it must sound like instance news as we cross our interstellar space and hope to intimate.  
and invite their silver manes with one iota.  
irises have peered up this irk?  
ironfisted in the irony.  
war and itch machines.  
in the rain.

## The Poem of J with no Beginning

jack-boots that tiptoed across her face.  
echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
to the ground.  
waves singing jam.  
the topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma children jar to pay good money  
for old iron.  
javelin fruit.  
thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your jazz towel and jealous.  
nothing to jetty the jeweler.  
and nightly sing to the sky with our jillion voices.  
must sound like jitters news as we cross our New York jiffy and hope to jihad.  
jobholder their silver manes with jog.  
have peered up this jolt?  
down in the jug.  
and junkyard machines.  
the rain.

## The Poem of K with no Beginning

keepers that tiptoed across her face.  
above a particularly scenic river turn.  
the ground.  
singing kick ass.  
topsoil in front of her house hearing the young Roma children kielbasa and cabbage to  
pay good money for old iron.  
fruit.  
I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your kin towel and kinfolk.  
to kindle the king.  
nightly sing to the sky with our kissy-face voices.  
sound like kitty news as we cross our knee-high and hope to knickers.  
their silver manes with knitwear.  
peered up this knock wood?  
in the knothole.  
Koran machines.  
rain.

## The Poem of L with no Beginning

that tiptoed across her face.  
a particularly scenic river turn.  
ground.  
law.  
in front of her house hearing the young Roma children leaning to pay good money for old  
iron.  
leopard lady seemed let go libel fruit.  
remember whistle-clear is this: here is your light industry towel and lightning.  
limp the linear.  
sing to the sky with our liquorish voices.  
little by little news as we cross our lock and hope to lodge.  
silver manes with loose.  
up this lopper?  
the loud.  
machines.  
walking arm-in-arm lunging luscious luster in the rain.

## The Poem of M with no Beginning

tiptoed across her face.  
particularly scenic river turn.  
she has to be many maps low to the ground.  
she shivered mark, the poor mash, math into colorless waves singing mean.  
front of her house hearing the young Roma children medium to pay good money for old  
iron.  
lady seemed melted memory fruit.  
whistle-clear is this: here is your meningitis symptoms towel and mere.  
the message.  
to the sky with our met voices.  
news as we cross our minus and hope to minutes.  
manes with mock.  
this moment?  
more.  
cursed in traffic in a land mouthing with war and a slow-moving machines.  
arm-in-arm murder music my-my in the rain.

## The Poem of N with no Beginning

across her face.  
scenic river turn.  
has to be narrative narrow low to the ground  
shivered natter, the poor nearby, nebula into colorless waves singing neck bone.  
of her house hearing the young Roma children neighbor to pay good money for old iron.  
seemed neon nerve gas fruit.  
is this: here is your nestle towel and neutral.  
nick of time.  
the sky with our nightmare voices.  
as we cross our nitpick and hope to noises.  
with nostalgia.  
nouns?  
there is a nowadays scene, you are its nuance in the nudge out.  
in traffic in a land numb with war and nun machines.  
nuts nylon nuzzle in the rain.

## The Poem of O with no Beginning

her face.

river turn.

to be obscenities observed low to the ground.

ocean, the poor o'clock, octave into colorless waves singing odd.

her house hearing the young Roma children offspring to pay good money for old iron.

often oily fruit.

this: here is your okra towel and oldies.

the river was like watching silent film on and off with nothing to once in a blue moon the onion.

sky with our ooh voices.

we cross our oral and hope to orchard.

oyster.

many out cold have peered up this out in the open?

is a ouch scene, you are its outline in the oval.

traffic in a land over and over with war and overdub machines.

arm-in-arm owie oww oyster in the rain.

## The Poem of P with no Beginning

face.

turn.

be pardon me pastel cow low to the ground.

the poor on patrol, pause into colorless waves singing pecan tree.

house hearing the young Roma children perhaps to pay good money for old iron.

pews photo fruit.

here is your ping towel and pinning away.

river was like watching silent film pissing with nothing to pitch-black the pixilation.

with our play with fire voices.

cross our plunge down and hope to pocket money.

poetry the hatchet next to the poison victims and police station their silver manes with polyester.

pony up have peered up this potato salad?

a precision scene, you are its promenade in the pretty.

in a land pronouns with war and proportion-calculus machines.

prune juice purchase in the rain.

## The Poem of Q with no Beginning

the land of quack, we split the quad to quadrillion quail that tiptoed across her face.  
quake echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
quality qualm low to the ground.  
poor quarantine, quarrel into colorless waves singing quarrelers.  
hearing the young Roma children quaver to pay good money for old iron.  
queasy queen fruit.  
is your quesadilla towel and questions.  
was like watching silent film quench with nothing to query the queue.  
our quickie voices.  
our quick to listen slow to speak and hope to quiescent.  
the hatchet next to the quietest victims and quill their silver manes with quilts.  
have peered up this quirky?  
quite scene, you are its quit horsing around in the quitter.  
a land quittance with war and quiver machines.  
quota quotable in the rain.

## The Poem of R with no Beginning

land of pissed on rabble, we rely on radioed news to ragtime rail that tiptoed across her face.  
echoed above a particularly scenic river turn.  
rain low to the ground.  
rangy, rasp into colorless waves singing rattling off.  
the young Roma children ready to pay good money for old iron.  
rearrangement fruit.  
your rebellion towel and rectum.  
like watching silent film reeds with nothing to book reference the refrain.  
rest easy voices.  
riffle-loosened and hope to always right.  
hatchet next to the ringing victims and rip their silver manes with riverside.  
peered up this rock?  
scene, you are its rooftop in the rose bushes.  
land roughhewn with war and rough speech machines.  
rust in the rain.

## The Poem of S with no Beginning

of saber, we samba to say so scald that tiptoed across her face.  
above a particularly scenic river turn.  
a segue low to the ground.  
serif into colorless waves singing sew.  
young Roma children sheriff to pay good money for old iron.  
a silkworm fruit.  
sing towel and sinker.  
watching silent film slender with nothing to smudge the snag.  
voices.  
and hope to speaker.  
next to the spice victims and spider their silver manes with spiff.  
up this spoonful?  
you are its staple in the star.  
stoke with war and story machines.  
swivel in the rain.

## The Poem of T with no Beginning

take it easy, we parse talkers to talcum tango that tiptoed across her face.  
particularly scenic river turn.  
teenybopper low to the ground.  
into colorless waves singing up there.  
Roma children thin to pay good money for old iron.  
a thistledown fruit.  
towel and thug.  
silent film thunderstorm with nothing to tickle the tidal.  
tidbits, we have made a pile of our tilted in and nightly sing to the sky with our timberline  
voices.  
hope to toddle.  
to the topic victims and topless their silver manes with torture.  
this toucan?  
are its townsfolk in the ticking.  
with war and tuba machines.  
in the rain.

## The Poem of U with no Beginning

we forget the ululation to umber umbra that tiptoed across her face.  
above a particularly scenic river turn.  
low to the ground.  
colorless waves singing unbutton.  
children underfoot to pay good money for old iron.  
underline fruit.  
and understand.  
film underwater with nothing to underwear the underway.  
we have made a pile of our unending and nightly sing to the sky with our unfurl voices.  
to unify.  
the unlit victims and unmeant their silver manes with unmentionable.  
unshod?  
its up his sleeve in the upholstery.  
war and upset the apple cart machines.  
the rain.

## The Poem of V with no Beginning

planted vagrants to vague valence that tiptoed across her face.  
above a particularly scenic river turn.  
to the ground.  
waves singing varsity letter.  
vaulting horse to pay good money for old iron.  
fruit.  
venom.  
verse line with nothing to vertebra the very.  
have made a pile of our victim and nightly sing to the sky with our videotaped voices.  
violinist.  
virtue victims and vis-à-vis their silver manes with visible speech.  
many visions have peered up this visor?  
vodka in the voice over.  
and volley machines.  
rain.

## The Poem of W with no Beginning

to wahoo waist-deep that tiptoed across her face.  
a particularly scenic river turn.  
the ground.  
singing washrag.  
to pay good money for old iron.  
water blister lady seemed watermark water under the bridge fruit.  
stream said a lot of things waver the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is  
your wave towel and wear down.  
with nothing to weave the wedge bone.  
made a pile of our wetness and nightly sing to the sky with our whaler voices.  
whiplash and hope to whipstitch.  
victims and white-lipped their silver manes with whom.  
wiener schnitzels have peered up this wiggle?  
down in the wing.  
wishes machines.  
walking arm-in-arm within word for word wrong in the rain.

## The Poem of X with no Beginning

Super Bowl XX x-amount that tiptoed across her face.  
particularly scenic river turn.  
ground.  
xanthophyll.  
pay good money for old iron.  
lady seemed xenograft xenon fruit.  
said a lot of things xenophobic the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your  
xenopus towel and xenotime.  
nothing to xeric the Xerif.  
a pile of our xerodermia and nightly sing to the sky with our xeroma voices.  
in the xerophile air where you float it must sound like xerotes news as we cross our  
xerosis and hope to Xerox copy.  
and xirself their silver manes with X marked.  
have peered up this XOXO?  
the x-wife.  
machines.  
arm-in-arm xylophone Xyris X, Y, Z in the rain.

## The Poem of Y with no Beginning

yack away yahoo that tiptoed across her face.  
scenic river turn.  
she has to be Yankee yap low to the ground.  
she shivered yar, the poor yardstick, yarmulke into colorless waves singing yarn.  
good money for old iron.  
seemed yearned-for yearling fruit.  
a lot of things yee-haw the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your yell  
towel and yellow.  
to yellow-liver the yelp.  
pile of our yes-men and nightly sing to the sky with our yesterday voices.  
the yesteryear air where you float it must sound like yet news as we cross our yield and  
hope to yikes.  
yodeler their silver manes with yogurt.  
peered up this yore?  
youngster.  
cursed in traffic in a land you're welcome with war and yours truly machines.  
yoyo yummy yup in the rain.

Poem of Z with no Beginning

Zambezi River that tiptoed across her face.  
river turn.  
has to be Zan in Tehran Zaozhuang low to the ground  
shivered zap, the poor Zapata, zarf into colorless waves singing zealot.  
money for old iron.  
Zen zenith fruit.  
lot of things Zephyr the one thing I remember whistle-clear is this: here is your zeppelin  
towel and zero in.  
Zeus the ziggurat.  
of our zilch and nightly sing to the sky with our zillion voices.  
zinc white air where you float it must sound like zinger news as we cross our Zion and  
hope to zip code.  
their silver manes with zodiacal light.  
up this Zola?  
there is a zombie spirit scene, you are its zone fire in the zonk out.  
in traffic in a land zoom in with war and zoom lens machines.  
catch some Zs zucchini bread in the rain.

*Advanced praise for Pastoral Emergency:*

“Gene Tanta comes from a land where the place of words and even of letters was challenged one hundred years ago. Tristan Tzara, born and educated in a very small town of Eastern Romania, Moinești, as Samuel Rosenstock, and Isidore Isou, pen name of Ioan-Isidor Goldstein, broke the new wood between mimetic language and language as material. Twisting together the spectral traces of the Romanian and North American avant-gardes via the "fronde" (Dada's sling against illusionist art) and the formal concerns of the Language poets, Tanta continues the path blazed by Tzara and Isou. Pastoral Emergency asks how words or even letters still manage to coexist without colliding after such a cultural and universal "Big Bang"?” – Radu Andriescu

“From “all that glitters” to “catch some Z’s before you zag,” Gene Tanta’s *Pastoral Emergency* is a vertiginous alphabetical romp. The twenty-six poems deconstruct each letter into a surreal and hypnotic brew of sound, non-meaning and sly signification that conflates the Danube and the Loop, the personal and the poetic, making the fusty fresh, the meta-chaotic a brave new word-cosmos. Tantalizing and triumphant.” – Adam J. Sorkin

“W.H. Auden and John Ashbery have published books in which the poems are arranged alphabetically. Gene Tanta goes them one better with a book of poems which are themselves alphabetical. PASTORAL EMERGENCY has a hypnotic feeling of inevitability about it as it demonstrates the way in which language writes our poems and our minds.” – John L. Koethe

"Oulipo meets Simic under the aegis of American elliptical poetry." – Robert Archambeau

“Gene Tanta’s Pastoral Emergency is emergent alliteration as arrivalist’s dreamsphere molted in the fruit of rich anxiety and tensile love. We are getting there and writing the magic carpet simultaneously holding our coattails and devouring them. Yummy alphabetic alarums in the path of cultural littering; do read.” – Lisa Samuels

“Gene Tanta is like that amazing stranger you find whispering on a bus. Leaning closer, you understand that he is saying almost more than language holds. His audacity dazzles—“a phantom-limb in actual lust,” “scenic as the hungry gurgle of ground-water say,” until one is overcome by his dream in language flexed to breaking. I admire this poet’s range and vision and ability to spread words in front of this reader’s eyes. He is a pointillist of the imagination.” – Maxine Chernoff

“The title - Pastoral Emergency - suggests that we long for a less complicated time, yet urgent intervention is required before things worsen. We are pulled between poles, wandering alphabetic territory between constraint and incantation, simple taxonomy giving path to rich passage.” – Lane Hall