

## seven past lives

### caveman

I'm in a wild place  
squatting naked next to a lake  
no other people around  
maybe an animal or two  
it's peaceful here  
I see my reflection in the water  
the face looks cro-magnon  
or perhaps neanderthal  
but I feel fully conscious  
it's an experience of  
wholeness and awe  
wonder and peace  
maybe my first visit to earth  
in a human-like body.

### priest

pre-columbian central america  
I lead and perform religious rituals  
human sacrifice  
vivisections  
I inflict terrible agonizing physical pain on others  
I perform these cruel acts without malice  
but also without compassion  
motivated by a religious conviction so deep  
that it completely disconnects me  
from the reality of the suffering I cause.

### heretic

europa  
middle ages  
my head is being held underwater  
some religious authority  
is attempting to force me to admit something  
or perhaps recant or repent some blasphemy  
next  
I'm in the woods  
hung upside down from a tree by my left foot  
as punishment  
for contradicting the established order  
it's a form of crucifixion.

zealot

europe

1600s

I'm a member of a religious sect that practices self-injury  
I drip hot candle wax on my back  
I cut myself because the pain "brings me closer to god"  
I shove hot pepper up my nose  
to make myself sneeze  
"to get the devil out"  
I allow myself to be mock crucified  
when I'm 24 I hang myself "to be with god"  
I'm found hanging  
from a wooden beam in one of the rooms of the monastery  
I am dead  
the walls and floors are made of stone.

simpleton

colonial new england

I'm mentally impaired

my neck and hands have been locked in wooden stocks  
as punishment for looking at a pretty young girl  
my consciousness is primitive  
I feel bewildered most of the time  
but I find comfort and solace  
in a direct experience of nature  
standing in a meadow  
awes me  
calms me  
fills me with peace  
I have no concept of why I'm being punished  
but I have no ill feeling toward anyone about it either.

diplomat

japan

late 1800s

I'm a japanese diplomat  
working to open my country to contact with the west  
I want to bring the two halves  
east and west  
together  
I want to build a bridge between  
old ways and new ways  
I hope to be  
an ambassador to the future.

assassin

chicago

1920s

a dark alley at night

I'm an enforcer for the mob

a tough guy

a hit man

but this time

someone's put a hit on me

the nose of a revolver

kisses the skin behind my left ear

someone pulls the trigger

bye bye.