Editing Poetry – Exercise 1

Rewrite the following poems, making them as compact, vivid, and "powerful" as you can, remembering that "power" doesn't just mean brute strength but could also be gentle and graceful.

In your rewrites pay special attention to:

1) **Editing Down** the words. Focus first on "to be" verbs (is, was, were…), prepositions (to, from, with…), relative pronouns (that, which, who).

2) **Constructing Form** if necessary (and it almost always is). Contrasts, especially: could they be clearer, more powerful, or provocative. Or structures of similarity, like better metaphors, or metaphors that connect better to the overall theme. Maybe even some rearranging, or just totally taking some parts out?

3) **Avoiding Clichés**. You don't want to be writing Hallmark cards…at least not here. In other contexts they're certainly more lucrative than most poetry.

SHOOTING STARS

Lying on the grass in the middle of the night
I watch stars rip across the sky
The moon is big and bright
Great in its stature and grace

A star glistens across the sky
And I close my eyes and make a wish
I hope for the greatest possibility
Of my wish and fantasy coming true

CALIFORNIA

Western lights blind my eyes
For I don't know what is in store
East bound wind blows memories by
With a bitter sweet chill in the air
A past that must surely be forgotten
A new place, a new start in California

The closer I get to the sun
The easier it is to forget that desolate place
I am travelling into my mystery
My only companion a pen
Capturing what I see on the horizon

There are others on this voyage
To a new start
No one wants to admit the life that lies behind
But I can see it in their eyes

Oh California, I can go no farther west
For it is you that holds my future.

SEARS TOWER

Steel framework
Elevators soar to the top
Aluminum exterior
Radiant black exterior
Swaying like a huge tree on a windy day

Tallest building ever
Observatory showing miles of city
Windows glowing in the sunlight
Exhibit of man's intelligence
Retail stores filling it to the top