

## Heron

Heron  
spreads its wings,  
then banks within  
an imperceptible breeze,  
diving and disappearing  
into a thicket of cattails and  
other marshland flora

We of a more earthbound nature  
perform our own diversionary  
swerve into tangled shadows  
not readily perceived by others

Harvest hope amid twisted reeds,  
Tuck regret beneath a lily,  
Store memories in the murk  
till sunlight's filter  
draws them toward the surface

Even dreams seek shelter here  
thrashing like tadpoles  
just below the waterline  
persisting despite the unlikely chance  
that they might mature

before the heron swoops and  
carries them away

In this town  
where  
people live  
and  
people die

And  
traffic jams  
steal the  
headlines

The splinter  
of a blackbird's  
wing

snow sifts  
, settles  
in trees

Roundabout –

Never did matter much  
when she'd come around  
Just crep on in  
Make me do her thing

## Autumn

It is autumn  
and the petals have  
found their wings

It is autumn  
And the leaves have lost  
Their lease on the trees

Leaves fold  
And shutters descend

It is autumn  
even the window panes  
are sad

## Glacier

frost bit talons  
grip  
the sloping façade

wedge their way  
deep into the  
mountain bone

create crevasses  
and fjords;  
bleed the  
molten snow

bitter ashen tongues  
advance and recede

lashing out  
at the winds  
which move the sea

## Time Immeasurable

- time  
the way turtles walk,  
the way rabbits run;

I remember a time  
When time  
Seemed immeasurable,  
Bigger than the sky

I am not of that time  
Any longer

For now,  
Time is smaller,  
Shorter than  
That sky

More measured,  
Like the strides of  
a drummer,

to whose beat  
we all march

## Waves

like  
the rise and  
fall of  
polar  
bear claws

saline razors  
scratching  
at the  
shore

Taoist Moment

Each moment of  
the autumn leaf.

Each color  
on the tree.

Each prism  
captured in sunlight.

Each turning  
in the breeze.

Once it leaves  
the branch,

Never really touches  
the ground.

The autumn leaf sighs  
Winter has entered the room  
It is time to leave

## Gasp or Reach

The paddock sweeps  
upward from the highway,  
an undulating swell of  
emerald pasture that  
ebbs and flows with the  
full breaths of the soil  
which nurtures its verdure.

Down below, traffic snarls,  
the wheezing and coughing  
of clogged arteries heaving  
into the roundabout –  
a concrete wheel whirling  
endless slag  
along a Stygian sea.

Aloof to it all, a mare and her foal  
Manes bristling in the haze,  
Hoofs pressed firmly in the ground

Blackbird  
perched atop a winter tree

Oversees the sloping field  
freshly covered with snow

Both disturbed by no one, no  
thing save the ruffled  
undulations from the breeze

Blackbird  
sings an ancient song

Its voice rises and falls with  
the gentle swaying of the branch

Lyrics rich with wisdom,  
passed on to be learned,  
experienced again and again

Blackbird  
spreads its wings and takes flight

Its eyes as wild and alive as  
the landscape seems tame and barren

Along the slate gray sky  
traversing towards an unseen object,  
talon marks etched into the branch

Autumn wind

Paint specks flake,  
Flutter in colored chaos  
Round the base of  
A picket fence

The couple  
stands in awe  
while facing Mayan ruins  
and contemplating  
the strength needed  
to build them

Never pausing once  
to marvel at  
what they have built  
and endured  
on little more than a vow  
over fifty years ago

The man comes home  
After a late day of work  
To find his son asleep  
Clutching his favorite  
Stuffed animal and a  
Picture of a man who the  
Child calls his dad

The next day, the man  
Cancels all his meetings  
On the grounds that he has  
A more important job  
To tend to

Then hires himself on  
As the dad he is supposed to be

We talk about  
the wonders of technology;  
how rapidly it changes,  
getting smaller, faster, so  
quickly outdated

Yet we never comment on  
Human contact and the handshake  
And how little both have changed  
Yet never gone out of style

Bleeding heart of  
A love struck  
hemophiliac

Have you forgotten  
that roses have  
thorns too



After the operation  
I wonder,

bigger houses,  
bigger cars  
to keep the family  
closer

this talk of  
quality time,  
and  
family time  
and  
providing more  
to make things better

(none of it  
makes sense to me)  
as the three of us  
- my wife, my son and I -  
sleep soundly  
on his hospital bed

### The Details

Even porcelain must breathe

As father and son

Early morning;  
Springtime

Daylight's amber  
Collects beneath  
The trees

Two among  
budding leaves  
and branches

while the rising sun  
weaves its rays,  
laying tiger stripes  
along our path

- We set out  
and, although  
not quite  
three steps  
into his journey,

His shadow  
already begins to  
outstretch mine

## Proximity of Planes

Late night on the  
balcony, beneath  
a waning moon  
Falling leaves shake  
from a breeze that  
stills candle light

As we sit side  
by side, staring  
at the sky You comment  
on the proximity of planes  
And how they never  
touch

- "lovely,"

the forced smile that  
cracked from my  
closed eye  
caught the teardrop  
which had beaded  
and swelled like  
falling mercury  
and now was working  
its way down my throat

the ring on her finger  
wasn't the one I would  
have liked to have given her

<p>Bodies slump - Full stops where The scrawled text Of footsteps That have become Undecipherable</p> <p>We are all doodles, Swirls of carbon Wandering along the whims Of the great pencil tip</p> <p>The oasis our final destination The endless sand Keeps rocking back and forth Waves of the oasis move further In the dissipating heat, The trail is lost</p>	<p>Anger shoots From spiked hair, Spiked bands that chain the wrists and neck</p> <p>Hoops and daggers Pierce the skin Create tiny portals For the soul to scream</p> <p>Tattoo-scarred body, The skin bleeds What the needle tries to tame</p> <p>Boots Kick shadows - give color to a strand of hair</p>
<p>Bodies slump Like clocks in a Dali painting - desert heat goes on</p>	<p>Bodies slump Like full stops – Sentence fragments in the snow</p>
<p>Leaf – What color do you long to be?</p>	<p>Fingers intertwine Like roots of Two unsuspecting trees - spring rains fall</p>
<p>“How big is the Montana sky?”  “Close your eyes and forget about everything.”</p>	<p>Who is that Poking holes in the sky? And who is that Living on the other side?</p>
<p>Alone in silence I sit next to you As the hours extend Our shadows move further Into the past</p>	<p>How cool am I? How warm is bread?</p>
<p>Castro, Castro wherever you are Castro, Castro thanks for the cigar I flick the ashes from the neck of my guitar and wave to the embers of the fading red star</p>	<p>Montana sky - too big for dreams - cowboy tilts his Stetson, closes his eyes</p>
<p>Well, the train left the station, That is true – But the station itself Has got to move on, too</p>	<p>Kids grow up, Parents grow old...</p>

## One Liners

Nobody is nice  
Except to  
Their own reflection  
In the mirror

The only truly free  
man  
is a dead  
man

The only time I feel sane  
Is when I am sleeping

## Mind Prison

sitting,  
waiting,  
questioning,  
second guessing,  
wondering -

life in a prison  
isn't solely for those  
behind bars.

*"Don't you want  
To fuck me in the ass"*

She was right in front of me,  
But this time not on tv

When I finally got my head  
around to what she was saying

I stuttered something about  
Vaseline or jelly or some other

- Word that begins with a  
Rarely used letter of the alphabet

She was on all fours  
And I was on my knees

I pictured John Wayne or Clint Eastwood  
Or another such rugged man

Mounting Silver or Trigger or possibly  
Mr Ed each time she turned around to speak

All the while, the melody to  
"Rawhide" played in my mind



Trapped

Lights flashed, rocks  
spat, a cloud  
of chaos  
flurried

As I reached for  
my wallet, out of the  
corner of my eye

a feather  
fluttered from the  
cat's retracting  
claw

## U and I

There was a time not long ago  
And I don't remember why  
But I myself was lacking a U  
And you were missing an I

We shuffled in and out of days  
Two of life's passer-bys  
I, a leaf seeking a tree  
U, a star without sky

And then one day when we crossed paths  
A chance for us to try  
We let go of oblivious  
And caught each other's eye

And as you know the story goes  
No tears, just two shrugged sighs  
We went our way without a word  
No we, but still...  
...a U without an I

Words fly

Words fly  
From the mouth  
Like fists

Batter and batten  
Lash out, hold back

Nothing more than these  
Thrown wildly, a flurry  
Of jabs and rabbit punches

At such a moment when  
Even a flailing offense  
Comforts more than a  
Tight-lipped defense

To duck and move  
Is a worse defeat than  
The defeat of a relationship  
That has been flattened

By such bouts

## Liquid

Like milk in a glass  
you pour yourself  
into the patterned  
easy chair

pliant spine slides  
down side of glass  
curves and careens  
before easing in the seat

legs crumple like a wave  
collapse and splash  
against the bottom  
rise and fall again

head and arms float  
up near the rim  
ripple then rest  
staring straight across the room

## Cimmerian

Darkened night  
white lightning  
bolts zigzag from  
lone black cloud  
alternating cuts  
while moving in  
uninhibited style

Swathed thunder  
disquiets the  
fuliginous sky  
its measured strides  
a portent to the  
pre-determined  
shifting of the night

Somewhere near the edge  
of 4 am and the line  
that separates the overhead  
stove light from  
the rest of the room

A mother  
hunches over her child  
whose cries  
can only be silenced by her

The other side of the room  
nurtures life of another kind  
as dawn's infant rays  
slip uninterruptedly into the room

The child  
now fast asleep  
like a still life of  
a goldfish nibbling on  
the fig leaf of Eve.

Dark Star

penumbral loops billow  
below the cold glare  
of fluorescent light bulbs  
stretched out along  
a candent-tiled sky

curled question marks breathe  
expand like a lotus  
then contract, embracing  
directionless bits of plankton  
afloat in a lost void of flesh  
that swims in its own tide pool

tentacles waver,  
fireballs from the wizard's  
outstretched hand roll, explode  
little more than stones  
skipping along a passive sea

- *dan franch*

We circumnavigate  
like  
skaters

Glide

Along ice  
Bare  
ly

taking notice -

Cool  
breeze

Lends its  
bite  
To the air

Blades rarely  
Scratch  
Surface

Each loop  
Weakens ankles



I saw my baby on the other side  
Of the orange picket fence  
I said,  
I saw my baby leanin' 'gainst  
The orange picket fence

Don't know  
Whether or not she saw me  
Ain't quite sure if I really care

There's a chain gang running beside me  
Down in the gutter by my side  
Yeah,  
Can't ignore the chain gang running beside me  
Down in the gutter by my side

Find it hard  
To forget what it look like  
Even harder forgettin' how it felt inside

Traffic cones all scattered out here  
Where no traffic's never been  
I say,  
There's traffic cones out here all scattered  
Where no traffic's ever been

Wonder  
Who put them out here  
Wonder how long before someone brings 'em in

I hear the open road's  
A free man with no reason to hide  
That's right,  
Someone told me the open road's a free man  
With no reason or need to hide

Still,  
I'm on it with the headlights down  
Orange picket fence still on my mind

Lamp light descends -  
A thin shower  
of radiance explodes  
casting an oblong  
aura over the black  
and white speckled  
roadside

While somewhere even  
More remote  
A teardrop from a passing  
Bird  
Interrupts the sleeping pond  
Dispersing rippling undulations  
That whisper secrets to a dream

In the meantime is

Lost among it all  
A tulip bows its head  
A lone petal

Cracks in the castle's damp wall  
Cricket moves its wings  
Survivors' forlorn song

who caught the  
white rabbit  
brought springtime  
to its knees

who sweltered in the  
August sun, turned  
skin into a  
beaded sea

who stripped the  
autumn tree of color  
left bare bones shaking  
in the breeze

who trembled on the  
frozen lake, made the  
rusted tin shack  
bleed

## Blue Urn

I saw her on the hilltop  
I saw her late last night

She was throwing ashes to the wind  
She was tossing the past aside

The blue urn held her secrets close  
The blue urn she held close

But when the blue urn opened  
The wind kicked up its ghosts

Her mother was in that urn  
Her mother now blew in the breeze

She tumbled down the mountainside  
She scattered like discarded debris

I asked her why she took so long  
I asked her, "Why. Oh why?"

She shook her head; she gave her reply  
She said, "I didn't realize time was going by"

then  
Poetry presented  
herself to me  
and

I took her  
in both hands

a roadside  
yeoman  
cupping the earth

- the sun  
no longer  
seemed so high

Let's get one thing straight,  
the sound card on my computer  
no longer works and the screen  
is fading around the edges, yet

that doesn't prevent me from  
hearing the voices of old friends  
and seeing the lines of their faces  
arch and curve and crease  
as they write the tales they tell

though it's been so long and  
the only thing longer than the  
distances between us is the amount  
of time we've been apart

now if I could touch them

MANCHILD

Imagine  
I was  
Once a boy  
Sitting  
In class  
Wondering  
Why it is  
I had to be here  
Daydreaming  
Just like  
You.

Now,  
Imagine  
You're  
A  
Man

Standing in  
A  
Welfare line  
Or  
Working  
Overtime  
For  
Minimum  
Wage  
Wishing  
You were  
Back in  
School.

Uh huh, Oh yeah

She said she liked  
jazz and jump and  
jive and swing and...  
    (as if to add  
    a bit more emphasis)  
she even included  
the blues and  
all that...

Trailing off  
As I raised one eyebrow

I said,  
*Yeah, that's really cool*



About the Blues

What is it about the blues  
Anyway,  
That keeps me awake  
When I can barely hold my eyes

Just buzzing  
In that neverland between  
The listener and the song

Nodding in and out  
Head bobbing up and down

Full beer in my hand  
Too strong to lift it  
Too weak to let it go

You say you got the blues  
Well, let me tell you something,  
I ain't felt this bad since the day  
I found out junior wells died

I was at a traffic light  
Round about where I last saw  
That feather-capped harpman play

I just sat there listening to the dj  
Eulogize about a time  
'ole junior bought him a beer  
and blew at his ear with some  
roundabout skit-skat

dj said it sounded something like  
the way he used to play  
Me all the while nodding and smiling

Thinking back to a similar scene  
At that round about corner bar  
Not so far from the green light  
Above my car where junior

Shook and shimmied and struggled  
With his words and blew harps  
Through holes more telling  
Than the lyrics of his harmonica

## Autumn Applause

Trees line the river banks,  
(types of trees)

crowd around to watch the river flow

## Enabler

What makes  
an enabling woman  
cry when  
her husband dies?

Is it

because she has  
lost the one she loves or

because she has  
no one to support or  
is it

a sigh in disguise  
because she has  
no more reasons to lie  
?

Even crumbled paper has  
Somewhere to go when  
The wind blows

Where does that leave me?

## Father's Day Rued

It's hard to believe that  
the boy who runs toward me --  
wide eyes and a wider, louder smile;  
whose open jacket mimics his arms --

will one day walk toward me  
with a shrug and sagged shoulders  
or maybe even turn and walk the other way

After the knee operation

on the third try  
she picks up,  
the voice on the  
other end  
familiar but tired

it is the voice of  
painkillers and  
other assorted drugs

it is also the voice  
of my mother, 68,  
from her hospital bed

*This is a pain in the butt,  
I mean a pain in the knee*

once again humbled  
by her strength  
and ability for humor  
at such times

I wonder  
, in my easy chair,  
if in another lifetime  
she might have been named  
Pangloss

*Neonudate, Linda*

No Matter How the News Arrives...

I waited for  
the mail to come, the phone  
to ring, the knock on the door

By the time I got around  
To connecting to the 'net  
the news was no different than  
if it had arrived by  
homing pigeon

Howl. Wind.  
More like a command  
than a  
description of its sound.

Tree limbs shuffle  
back and forth  
like bullets dodging people.

Gray eyed dog  
Grits its blood stained teeth.  
Licks its paws. Barks

At a paper cup  
Rolling downhill  
Headlong into traffic.

Long hair man  
Fights a cardboard sign  
That spells out  
His dilemma. Grabs

The paper cup that  
Stops below his feet,  
Lifts it to his lips,

Drops it down again  
Fills it with  
Brown bag brew, then

Watches as the wind howls,  
Dog scowls, his  
Cardboard sign got  
No one else to talk to.

Hey you,  
Cleaning lady  
Or  
Janitor

I've been  
Up  
town  
I've been  
Down  
town

Hell, man,  
I've been  
All around  
Town

And  
, let me tell you,

After two  
Years of  
shittin' in

Little  
dark holes  
In

Countries  
More  
Backwards than  
This

Town  
I ain't seen  
Nothin'

As  
Dirty,  
Dark and  
Disgusting

As  
The restrooms  
In  
This joint.

## JUERO

I just learned it the other day  
"White Kid"  
Now I use it all the time

That's what I am  
Not because I'm not from here  
Though I'm not

More so because  
I don't know the culture  
I don't know the language  
I don't know the meaning...  
But, I'm learning

Where I come from  
Is the suburbs of Chicago  
-a *rich-kid* part of town  
(relative to here)  
When in reality  
It's nothing more than blue-collar

Up there the issue is  
"Mayates"  
Another word I just learned

Here, that doesn't seem to matter  
Here there is no issue  
Here there is no matter

And that's a good thing  
For a *white kid*  
Who's still learning  
The true meaning of la palabra  
"Chicano"



### Figurehead

George Lumm is dead. And I  
am on the Duoro drinking  
port wine. It is 10 am when I  
raise my glass to him --

a bit later than he usually  
liked to get started. Yet, I am  
sure he would appreciate  
the gesture.

### Lilacs

She said she liked lilacs  
And their ephemeral beauty

I suppose it was  
the same with us  
and our relationship

Though at the time, it felt  
Like it would last forever

### Eastern Frontier

We bank,  
turn ourselves  
away from dry land

Backs to the rays of  
the setting sun, we  
make our way again

The lengthening of  
our outstretched shadows  
the only thing to guide us

### Pure Snow Haze

Pure snow haze  
descending  
Delivered from  
a fertile sky

A single snowflake  
emerging  
Fresh with  
all that might be

## Lonesome Headlight on the Highway

Been riding this or that pathway  
Since I've been old enough to ride a bike  
Been riding this or that pathway  
Since I've been old enough to steer a bike  
Just my way of rambling  
My way of doing what I like

My eyes are closed and dreaming  
That lonesome headlight is my sight  
My eyes are closed and dreaming  
That lonesome headlight is my sight  
The other one burned out long ago  
Lost its flicker, then took flight

You can run but you can't hide  
Good thing I've got no one on my tail  
They say  
You can run but you can't hide  
Glad I ain't got no one my tail  
At least no one that's a someone  
Just a lonesome headlight trail

The wise man, he's a poor man  
Baby, that's more than I got  
Lord know,  
The wise man is a poor man  
That's still got more than I got  
He's got himself a steamer full of learned lessons  
While my trunk is full of hard knocks

Horizon line in the distance, it's the road  
I'm on right now that's gonna right my wrongs  
Yeah,  
The horizon line in the distance but it's the road  
I'm on right now I'm hoping to right my wrongs  
Don't got nothing else to turn to  
Now that my past is long gone

The bobbing eye of a freight train and its whistle  
Make a lonesome sight and sound  
The bobbing eye of a freight train and its whistle  
Make a lonesome sight and sound  
Yet t'aint quite as hollow as the spectre of a man  
That's got no body to hold him down

I've been lost out on a lifetime of highways  
Some so foreign that I couldn't read their names  
Ever been lost on one of those highways  
Where you couldn't even read the name?  
Asking questions about directions  
Never really noticing the language ain't the same

That highway's like a woman  
Curves on her body and a mind of her own  
Damn highway's like an hourglass woman  
Curves run up and down her body, with a mind of her own  
I get lost every time I ride it, or run out of time,  
Or get dropped off in the middle of the road

There's a freight train running next to me  
Out my window on the passenger side  
Yeah,  
There's a freight train running next to me  
Out my window on my passenger side  
If you think this old highway boy is lonely  
Listen to the whistle, watch its headlight get swallowed by the night

That same freight train's pulling coal cars  
Bearing down the track with its heavy load  
That ole freight train's pulling coal cars  
Bearing down the track with its heavy load  
Though we're both sagging behind one headlight  
At least I've got more options on the road

Gulls and waves  
Screech the battle cry  
Of a thousand million  
Shipwrecks  
And the men and women  
Who died as well  
As those who survived

Circle and roll  
Tumble and dive  
Is it enough that their  
Monuments are still alive

Battered bodies  
Broken hulls  
Scattered remnants  
Hopes and dreams annulled

Along the coast where  
Gulls and waves erase the  
Footprints and remains of  
Wrecked ships  
Men and women who've  
Died or barely survived  
Trying to tame them

are *gathered* *cluster*

This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
This is where I leave my youth behind  
This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
My knell to all that never became

dry grass, scorched dreams  
letdowns and promises, a litany of blasphemes

This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
Save for "the crisis" this is my end  
Autumn soon approaches  
My hair is like the leaves

no one calls or writes or bothers to sing *that* song  
mired in mediocrity, it's hard for me to ~~keep on~~ *get along*

*Forty years, where have they gone*  
*Forty years, been dead so long*  
*Forty years, how many more till the end*  
*Forty years, how much more till then*

This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
The one the other 39 tried to avoid  
This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
The years that follow already buried in dirt

what are candles when the flame is already burned  
what are future birthday wishes without anything in return

*Forty years, where have they gone*  
*Forty years, been dead so long*  
*Forty years, how many more till the end*  
*Forty years, how much more till then*

This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
No one knows for whom...  
No one knows, no one knows,

This is my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday dirge  
Even the clowns have remembered  
Not to celebrate

*Forty years, where have they gone*  
*Forty years, been dead so long*  
*Forty years, how many more till the end*  
*Forty years, how much more till then*

From my chair  
 I saw you standing  
 Next to a male friend  
 Thought he was your boyfriend  
 Decided then  
 Not to mingle  
 In a surefire dead-end  
 That's how it goes, it's not a trend  
 Best play it straight, not to rule bend

Took one last drink  
 Made me bold  
 Decided then to take the chance  
 Then I caught your first glance  
 I knew right then  
 That this wasn't  
 Just some sort of a happenstance  
 You too were out seeking romance  
 You wanted more than a one night stand

chorus  
 One of us, make a move  
 If not  
 We are both going lose  
 One of us  
 Make a move  
 One of us must  
 One of us must

I stop right here  
 Turn my head  
 I ponder hard on my next move  
 I have nothing to lose  
 Guy by your side  
 Disappeared  
 And now we're both in the same room  
 You're trying hard to look aloof  
 I'm standing here, not sure what to do

chorus

bridge  
 One of us  
 Must bring it about  
 One of us  
 Because our time's running out

chorus

When I look back,  
 I hear a certain track  
 From my younger days  
 (It) leaves me all in a haze  
 Get lost in time  
 I travel in mind  
 To that time back then <sup>an old</sup>  
 To my favorite song, like a close friend  
 One I could count on no matter when  
~~that~~

Recall that song  
 That made you feel (like somebody understood)  
 Finally understood  
 It left you feeling so good  
 You knew the words  
 And could sing them  
 In the way that the singer did  
 The song made you feel good to be a kid  
 Even if it never became a hit  
 (was)

chorus  
 Where's that song of my youth  
 The one  
 That spoke so many truths  
 Where's that song....  
 gone?  
 Where's that song gone?  
 Is it long gone?

You know that tune  
 Made you swoon  
 Each time you gave it a listen  
 You wished that it never would end  
 Played it again and again  
 And once again  
 The lyrics you held tight <sup>it held you tight</sup>  
 You wanted to get all the words right  
 You played it from day on through the night  
 all

chorus

bridge  
 Where's that song  
 The one to bring back the fun?  
 Where's that song  
 To take me back when I was young?

chorus to

right  
 right  
 to get  
 right  
 alright  
 like  
 to get

from day <sup>on</sup> through the night  
 you wanted to get all the words right  
 the melody's rhythm held you tight

Alighting near the Shore

Expanding shadow  
Descends toward the earth

Encompassing all  
That can be surveyed

Spread wings  
Cut through

Trees and buildings;  
Even level mountain tops

Slowly touching down,  
It leaves its wake

A silver swan  
Alighting near the shore

the random pages  
tell  
the best stories



<p>Between The time we meet And when We go Our separate ways</p> <p>Let's talk About what we share</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- a meal, a drink, stories of our day,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">- a joke, a cigarette, a moment from our past</p> <p>We even share the same bed</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">at least</p> <p>once we drift asleep</p>	<p><b>She was nice...</b> <i>Inspired by the fact that nice just doesn't cut it</i></p> <p>and the page was blank</p> <p>and the box was empty</p> <p>and the walls were bare</p> <p>and the room was plain</p> <p>and the pretty painted vase needed water</p> <p>for the flowers that were dying.</p>	<p>I like to let the phone ring</p> <p>watch it fill the empty room maybe chase you down the corridor</p> <p>I like to stare right through the mouthpiece</p> <p>bore a hole into your conscience lobotomize each sole</p> <p>I like to hang up just as you close the door</p> <p>Make you wonder when it is I'm coming to get you</p>
--	---	--

The rocking chair, recumbent, sighs,  
The shadow of its last tenant  
Long gone to far off lands

Waiting in the corner,  
A new denizen tends to it  
The familiar creaking sound  
A new sound to the squatter

Soon, monotony *till there is*  
*a sedan no more*

Feeling profligate  
She rues the passing of time  
With remorse reflective of  
A woman whose arms were never  
Formed into a cradle

What becomes of  
the rocking chair  
once everyone has had  
a turn

In her sleep she spoke  
while dreaming  
;a language that I  
could not understand

I pulled her close  
and  
asked if she was ok

She smiled aloud and told  
me she would  
tell me in the morning

Wide awake I held her  
the rest of the night

The echo of her laugh  
more restful than sleep

They called him *Office Butt*  
and I suppose that's because of  
the way his fanny took form to  
the shape of the chair.

Girth pressing down  
like a  
slow motion can crusher  
compressing his ovular frame

Belly succumbing to  
the steady flow of  
snack foods and  
oversized drinks

Grease stains from a  
potato chip crumb  
deeply embedded in  
the seat fabric  
still lingers and  
bites him in the ass

We all look away as he  
Walks away and  
Sucks his fingers  
Pudgy stubs fondling two quarters  
A nickel and one dime

## MUSICAL CHAIRS

For that moment  
The wind did disappear  
As if El Maestro lifted  
The bow of every violin  
Simultaneously

Various greys did  
Stop their whirl  
And November hung  
Like peeling plaster

Across the frozen pond  
The sweet melody  
Of a music box  
Precluded a crow's cry  
From up above

Bows resumed their masterpiece  
Sending divergent swirls  
Of ashen clef notes  
Circling amid the sky

## Back On

That first one wasn't as easy  
As we thought it could be

Intertwining one another's  
Expectations with the way  
We as individuals think  
It should be

Weaving has its snares –  
letting go while  
still holding on

Bringing two pasts together  
Into what should become one future

Yet the present means giving in  
Distancing ourselves from that  
Which we have known  
For so long

Occasionally  
Pinpricks cause  
short, sharp pain  
Like lovers' hands  
grasping the thorny  
side of a rose

**e.e. is not me**

If ever you find it to be  
You yes I am lost

Woman at one with  
Infinite stars

Eliminating darkness  
And cool with one  
Silent smile

Like warm liquid  
Poured into a tumbler  
Of ice ever so  
Smoothly stitching tears

Well, anyway, who  
Am I kidding

You are a slide  
And I am a child  
And it is good to laugh  
When one is so  
Easily found

## By the Sea

Meeting you by the sea  
on a quiet cloudless night  
two shadows in the dark  
- nondescript  
save for sapphire eyes

Rocking-chair moon  
skims itself atop the sea  
swaying to and fro  
along whispering undulations  
carrying its glow upon the shore

light waves chase each other  
swallow footsteps  
then ramble back out to sea

while just beyond  
stand you and me  
barefoot in the dark  
- an island of smooth sand



## No Way Out

Propped  
up against scattered stench  
of discarded debris  
Girl  
wraps tight 'round  
blanket of tattered  
„might-have beens“

Wind  
whips through the alley  
spewing thoughts that  
keep her from being free  
Trapped  
in the sleepless shadow  
of a mind filled  
with crumpled dreams

Audible musings from  
a voice whose owner  
is the only one who  
fully understands  
ruffle the shadows  
of receding darkness

Slowly shaken from his sleep  
The recipient of such  
vowelless sounds  
dusts his half-closed eyes  
With the feathered broom  
of morning sunlight

Shuffling barefoot  
whilst successfully navigating  
the toys and books and clothes  
that outline  
the diary of yesterday

He finds the source  
Of babble engaged in  
A conference of

You are mine  
though I know so little about you  
trusting eyes gaze at me  
as I hold you in my arms  
big blue pearls  
flawless in their unassuming appeal  
to be held  
still empty on the other side  
day be day  
the translucent darkness  
records the successes and scars  
of experience and  
the happenstance occurrences  
of life and how it is endured

etched

All questions and concerns,  
hopes and promises,  
wishes and wonderings  
that yet lie dormant in you  
already scatter in my mind  
like the toys on your play mat  
waiting to be picked up and pondered

“What’s it like to hold the future,”  
a friend asked me not so long ago  
Looking down at you  
With an unspoken smile  
And skin that glows with aspiration  
It’s hard to say when no one can predict  
The doings of closed eyes  
Like pearls in their shell  
Waiting to be alighted (swathed) by the sea

You think you know  
What you don't know  
But  
The sad truth  
Is  
I know you don't know  
What you think you know

Spent many nights a' wonderin  
Where it is you've gone  
Spent many a day a' sleepin  
Wondering why it is you didn't stay

Hawk moon lurking outside the blinds  
Cold rain sleeping by my empty side

Autumn, don't come round here no more  
Trees got nothing left for you  
Cold snow and bare limbs don't stay too long  
Smell of fresh blood is chasing after me and you

RIDE

She  
the tip of a pen  
was all I really knew of her

Would  
write and tell  
me things she said that

She  
told no others  
and I believed her

Now

She  
marble and a mound  
of fresh cut grass

Could  
never take the place  
of all that

She  
meant to me  
in the letters that were read

## The Plan

Here in this seat  
I sit and  
Plan  
- mingle in my mind

Discuss with self  
What to do  
This night ; this weekend ; this life

I'm not listening to you  
The way I learned from  
Em n' Pee  
Who never listen to me

What is important?  
What is important  
Is that I be left be

Here in this chair  
Yet somewhere else  
Plotting my escape  
Plotting my plea

## THE LEDGE

Two feet on the ledge  
Yet still afraid  
To look down

In my mind I am

37 stories high  
arms stretched wide  
like Jesus Christ

out on the edge  
looking down over  
the ledge

empty air  
and fragments of  
black traffic  
slowly passing by

leaning out  
floating effortlessly  
caught up in the wind  
soaring down:  
down, down, down

like a kite  
it keeps me tied  
always on a string  
never hitting ground

Up and down  
The new neon strip  
Of what used to be  
Nothing more than a  
Nother run-down part of town

A host of rag tag blues hacks  
Butcher blues standards to  
A crowd of wanna-be white kids  
Who clap and tap their feet  
To tunes that they ain't  
Never heard but one or two times before

The hacks do their best to revive  
The nitty-gritty sound to these  
Dapper suburban transplants  
Who smoke and drink white-kids mixed drinks -  
Whistle and scream and act  
The way they learned to act  
From film clips and their peers

Then hustle out into the  
"done-up too right" neon glitter  
that exploits a fifties street scene  
the way those pseudo-studio musicians  
contort and distort such a  
classic, home-grown sound



The day that I turned thirty-three  
I felt a pain wash over me  
Twas in my feet, my hands and bones  
Twas harbored deep within my soul  
Nary a crowd did stand and jeer  
Nor did anyone call with cheer

Despite this apparent isolation  
I did not quiver in desperation  
I knew that I was not alone  
I knew that I, too, would soon be called home  
I trimmed my locks, I shaved my face  
An attempt at imitation might test my fate

I wish I could say I felt great fear  
But truth be known I

## Travelers' Tale

“tell me where you been,” I said  
and she started reeling off a lot of  
those common destinations;  
Paris, London, Rome, New York  
The ones so many of us have  
All ready seen and done.

“no, no, no,” I shook my head  
“that ain’t what I meant,”  
What I want to know is,  
“tell me where you *been*”

once she caught my drift,  
twas the I fell in love  
and when she started talking  
that’s when I fell in love

Along the alleyway  
Underneath the arches  
Steam rises like salmon  
Swimming upstream

Streetlight  
In the periphery  
Glowing hazily  
Absorbed by broken glass  
Hovering atop the  
Jagged cobblestone

Tucked away  
In a darkened niche  
Beyond elongated shadows  
Is the ashen end of  
A lit cigarette

Embers drizzle down  
Like lazy fading sparks  
As they smolder in an  
Accumulating puddle of spit

The room was small  
Bruised red apple walls  
Knotted wood ceiling  
Slats running parallel to the floor

Treading mindlessly  
In the hejira  
Of the late afternoon sun  
I stole into your garden  
And watched your  
Coild body roiled  
Aside the river bank

I would like to go again  
To the land of  
The dark skinned man

a place where I didn't  
Once want to be

See things with new eyes;  
Learn things that once I could not understand

I would like to go again  
To where the earth is brown  
And the sky is blue

where I once lived  
And hated it

Learn things with new eyes;  
See things that I once could not understand

I would like to go again  
And be reminded that  
No  
My impressions  
Still have not changed

For Nonna

Hypnotic how  
the wheel of life  
spins

    baby's born soon  
    after grandma dies

Meanwhile  
yellow-orange-blue  
moon  
waxes then wanes -

the never ending sky

Sweet  
the  
sound of

pulsating veins

trembling beneath  
the steady,  
silver eye

        blood  
    *racing*  
        heart  
    *racing*  
        mind  
    *racing*

darkness  
closing in

the basic jist  
of the Buddhist  
is this:

There is  
    no-birth  
There is  
    no-death  
There simply  
    was, only, always  
just

is

They're coming;

-walking

-driving

-sometimes swimming

(as we in the North are told to think)

They're dreaming;

-of what they've heard

-of what they've read

-of what they want to believe

(constantly questioning the validity of these visions)

They're dripping

-with water

-with sweat

-with naivete

(as they pursue opportunity that may or may not still exist)

They're yearning

-to have more

-to live more

-to be more

(dying away from all they've known and left behind)

If it is true (being common knowledg/being held true)  
That opposites attract  
We must ensure the uninterrupted  
Effortless, seamless flow  
Of substance  
Permitting the chaff (to fly wayward with the wind)  
To coerce w the wind (lose itself with in the wind)  
Finding a perceptible balnace in another time and place

communicate with me  
speak the language imperceptible  
to those who try to hard to undertsand

lets lose ourselves in the  
circumlocution of opposing lingo

let's stand at odds with one anther  
polar forces, polemic if you will

sway to the ebb and flow  
of that which, logically,  
is incompregensible



In the dark of night  
He calls for mom  
The words more clear  
Than the outline of his figure  
Against the black night

He is on the top of the stairs  
Looking down  
Into darkness darker than  
The dark dreams that have  
Brought him to this precipice

Somewhere in that blackness  
Where his words have  
Seemingly been swallowed  
He knows that they have been heard

Rocking at the top of the stairs  
Knowing that his words are like  
An anchor sifting slowly through dark waters  
Drifting like the two arms  
That will

Dead of night  
Lost Somewhere in the  
Womb of winter

Stars entwined in  
Falling snow

The paddock sweeps  
Upward from the roadside  
Emerging from the grays  
Which hover above the highway

I met a man  
Who was not blind  
At least as far as  
the eye can see

But this man wore  
A blindfold and  
Carried cane

By the time the  
Antidepressants kicked in  
I was already  
On my way to being gone

Taking the that first step toward  
annihilation  
Slicing lengthwise through the skin

Descending into the lowest realms  
Of the Inferno  
A chamber of self-deprecating doubt

The dropping of the razor blade like  
The reverberations of a gong  
The first drop of blood,  
The undoing of Damocles' sword

*- I didn't cry the day  
my shark died either,*

its taut string  
tied tightly to my wrist  
as she handed over a coin  
that was buried inside her purse

It trailed me through the park  
As I weaved and ran,  
Its shiny fins and harmless teeth  
Bobbed in the breeze

People gawked and ducked  
As we made our way home

Then, as the sky dulled  
I slipped it from my hand  
And watched as it slowly  
Drifted away despite my efforts  
To cling to it

*- It wasn't until  
a few days later,*

when I looked up in the sky  
and I realized that  
It was gone for good

In the paragraph where  
she mentioned; what  
to say, how to  
address her or  
at least some  
guidelines about  
such things, I started thinking,  
“hey, this is something  
I can do”,

Then she asked for  
publishing credits, not  
just one,  
which would be  
daunting enough, but  
five or six... five or six? -  
had to go back and  
see if I read that right -  
and I did, so I lied,

Mentioned that moment  
in the college  
newspaper, as well as  
the Peace Corps rag  
that was sent out bi-monthly  
while in Morocco, then there was  
the...I stopped and wondered...  
“Is this what she means”, “Does she  
really care about this crap?”  
then continued to lie

There were the  
two or three that made it into  
the official school  
literary magazine while teaching  
in the inner city and the,  
dare I mention it...contest...you know  
the one,  
probably the same one, and we  
all almost won -

how I wished that last part  
wasn't true

## Tivoli

Beyond dull grey  
turnstiles and before  
bursting bright lights  
in the nighttime sky  
I found you one  
warm August night

Hand-in-hand  
slipping through crowds  
from line to ride to line  
waiting anticipation

One ride later and  
50 meters back to the ground  
I knew just how you felt

If laughter has  
a face it's eyes  
are sea blue pearls;  
If a smile has a voice  
it's the sound of your  
eyes laughing

## Seurat

early morning  
4 am

Fingers of dipped light  
dripping with the palette  
of the rising sun  
slip through cracks of  
awakening sky

I rise  
to watch as

Pointillistic droplets -  
reddish hues of light  
part the evanescent darkness  
infusing your  
pastel countenance

Magic and Loss

Fender Strato-Caster  
Restrung backward  
Flipped upside down

No look bounce pass  
Triple-Double  
Hall of Fame bound

-such are the innovators

Drive-by  
In the projects  
Ghetto's all aflame

Hot-doggin  
Near the end zone before  
The ball's stripped clean

-such are the instigators

Which do you remember when a new day has begun?

Nigger  
Or  
A black man

-what do you call them while drinking with your friends?



In the pretty vase  
The flowers stood  
And bowed their heads

- no one was ever  
really sure why

## JAZZ, COKE & THE BLUES

### Revitalize

They're snapping fingers  
Down at that little jazz joint  
On the corner of...

Them new cats  
Playin' them ole' cats jazz  
An' all the young cats  
In the crowd

Everybody actin' real cool

Swingin' , Swayin'  
Smoke draggin' in  
Horns blowin' out  
Dancin' n' laughin'  
Splishin' drinks  
Slappin' backs

Cats on stage  
Makin' it sound all fresh and new

Everybody gettin' in the groove  
Just havin' a good ole' time

Whole scene  
Makes me wanna say;

I think it's time  
(bop,bop) I said  
I think it's time  
(bop,bop) that's right  
I think it's time  
(one more time)

...I revitalize

## Spool

The 2 am sewing machine feet  
weave a zigzag pattern from  
one room to the next –  
pillow in hand; smile on face

he is the next stitch  
in a long line of thread

They say it shouldn't  
be like this  
a child should sleep  
in his own bed

But these late night visits  
sew the three of us  
together instead of  
tearing us apart

Teacher/Student  
You whispered  
After making love

Staring at our shadow on the wall  
I wondered what you meant

Sand slipped through  
The shuttered window  
As  
Hooded men shuffled  
Down below

Donkey carts grumbled  
Along mud-rutted streets  
Amid early morning chatter  
And hb

Sharing space and mind  
Engaging in intangible exchange  
Student/teacher  
I replied in my head

It was sometime  
Early morning  
When you interfered  
The call to prayer