

# **Fireworks To Meet The Falling Stars**

**Poems from a lifetime  
And miscellaneous writings**

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## Preface

These poems are presented not as some lost manuscript, but as documentation of a life's effort to understand myself and the world through language. Many of them have been previously submitted for publication, some repeatedly, but without strategy or persistence. None have been previously published, which I do not consider a judgement of the work, or of the review process. Poetry is a hard life, and my competitive instincts were not strong enough. The work was the thing.

As a child of the post WWII era and the Sixties, my themes tend to center on alienation, the difficulty of making connections in a world of striving, the oppression of nature by the shortsighted pursuit of money, and the difficulty of communicating what is in your heart with language, that slippery beast. Similarly, my poetic influences have been wide but, for the first third of my life, shallow. The passing of time and the determination of the autodidact have led me from one poet to another, until now I feel I have a respectable suite of mentors, though I have never paid much attention to schools and theories, focused instead on individual expression.

Unlike most poets, I suspect, my student background and ongoing intellectual reading pattern was in philosophy, and my influences are skewed in the direction of those more abstract thinkers, another difficulty for poetry. I beg the reader's indulgence, but I do hope that (for instance) my tour of New Orleans through the eyes of Socrates as he descends to the Pireaus is both amusing and engaging.

We live in a hard and bitter world, slathered, in the case of my cohort, with the sweet, distracting frosting of consumerism and entertainment. The cultural flowering of the Sixties was both genuine and contrived, and this created a tremendous amount of dissonance in our developing spirits. One eventually became suspicious and cynical, after having been wrenched first one way then the other by opportunists and true artists alike. Which leads me to a few final words on the juvenilia at the end of this manuscript. I include it not because I believe it has any intrinsic value, but largely to demonstrate and document how a young person with the ambition to write, no mentorship, and shallow school influences ranging from Longfellow, Twain, and Kipling to Poe, was submerged under the tidal-wave events and pop-culture of the Sixties. Under-prepared and over stimulated, I fought to find a path and a voice amidst the chaos, with somewhat embarrassing and mostly unmemorable results. To know where you have arrived, it helps to know where you came from, so I beg your indulgence. Also, I am honoring that young person, and the landscape of his past, so isolated from the halls of culture, who sent an early version of the juvenilia section to the Library of Congress to register it for copyright, thinking that somehow this was a step that constituted (or would lead to) publishing. I thought he deserved to be remembered for his optimism, determination, and naivety.

About the Sixties in this regard. As a Southern white boy, certain expectations were laid on me, which I found ill fitting, though at first I tried to conform. It became obvious there were deeper forces at work, and that I was in a precarious social position. First of all, it took me years to figure out how isolated my family was and why. We were at the polling place in Baton Rouge around 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade when some kid straightened me out that not everyone was catholic. This shocked me – I thought all the public school kids were catholics who came to catechism at night to keep up. And the kid was insulted, too, I could tell, like I had accused his of something ugly. This led me to be more attentive to my surroundings, and I began to notice how many social categories there were, and how carefully they were guarded.

My parents were ill suited to parenting. My father was obsessed with financial security. Born on a truck farm in 1927, during the Mississippi Flood of that year, and knowing the limits put on him by his Italian

heritage (which he spent his life denying), my father worked hard at clean-hands jobs, smoked constantly for reassurance, and kept his mouth shut. Unlike many men his age, WWII and combat were not the source of his trauma, but growing up an immigrant kid between black and white in Louisiana was. In my neighborhood growing up, all the men were damaged, and most were not great fathers, their rage right below the surface. The stories people tell about their 'free range' childhoods are rationalization for the more mundane facts of having to get the hell out of the house for a few hours while things cooled down. So we learned to be watchful and amuse ourselves.

My mother's situation was even more complicated. She was certainly white, which pleased everyone, but then she opened her mouth and hun-phobia caused faces to wrinkle up, then she said her 'I-Talian' name and all bets were off. An exotic. Moreover, an exotic with no roots or support, since what few family members remained alive were in Germany or the East Coast, and not interested in the plight of their inconvenient family member. She was born in 1928 in Germany, and put out for foster care. Then the refugee situation got going and she got left behind. Then the payments for her care stopped and she became a servant. Then the war started to go badly, and she was on her own for the duration – you don't need a lot of imagination to picture that chapter of her life. Finally the war ended, and her mother, now a nice respectable lady from New York, with a son, returned and found her, This was the first time they had met, since the birth. It would be 40 years before her mother would acknowledge her in public; she was a 'cousin' who happened to be in the States and from their home town.

You can imagine the suite of abandonment trauma, PTSD, and assorted other issues this engendered in my mother, who was alternatively smothering and asphyxiating. Not someone reliably prepared to help a 12 year old at school. No mental health care in that era, and with no extended family and deep distrust of anyone outside the home, the kid had to sort it out himself, mostly. And it was like that up and down the block, by and large, families trapped in their circumstances, dealing with the emotional outfall of some of the most violent decades in American history and consoling themselves with 'shop therapy'.

No one thinks their own story is banal, though without talent and a sense of the reader, most likely are. This story has been covered and covered well, but that doesn't obviate the personal experience, especially as it pertains to the multi-generational effects of immigration on human and family values. So many people I know whose parents were forced to immigrate from war, autocracy, persecution of one sort or another – the refugee end of the spectrum, but opportunity seekers as well, have had that pain and disruption passed on to their children and grandchildren – the silent plague of assimilation – more often failed than achieved.

So if these juvenile works include a lot of walking around late at night, brooding, staring into the abyss, and wrestling with basic notions of an ethical life, it is because that was how this particular personality was largely composed – intense reading of books – many too advanced – and inadequate attempts to comprehend, judge, and incorporate them into my worldview. Good poetry? Likely not, but I hope an interesting sociological study. I see a pretty sharp break between these early explorations of self and the more mature work, I hope it is not an illusion.

**Part 1..... 2020-2000**

## Weary

Nobody  
Wants to read a poem  
About weariness,  
Ennui,  
Weltschmerz.  
Even the blues  
Are about overpowering  
The blues.  
Conquering  
With bravado, punch,  
Humor, rhythmic  
Repetition in shout  
And song, voices  
Raised in celebration  
Of misery and endurance.

But what of weariness?  
What rhythm  
Abrogates that?  
What shout will push you up  
When you are too tired  
To shout, too tired to rhyme,  
To stamp your feet in dirge time,  
To walk away  
From the sorrow  
And the weight of the past?

The breeze moves through the trees;  
The owls call back and forth  
In the moonlight.  
The yucca fronds clack  
and shimmer in the breeze.  
The breath of the world  
Is the poem of weariness,  
It reads itself.

## Adult content

How young was I  
when, as a child, I died?  
hairless yet, small enough  
that the bed was still wide.  
Still watching feet, faces still  
so far away.

Was it what it seemed  
to be?  
Or was it just the seed  
of doubt?  
Poisoned fruit  
from poisoned root.

The dream, the terrible dream.  
Run down by a roaring lion,  
two steps behind, then one,  
then the leap, the bite,  
the blinding pain at the base  
of my spine that was  
not a dream. No, not a dream.

The bed now to be entered  
from below,  
the pillow welcoming  
no longer.  
Nowhere else to go in the dark.  
Vague medical issues,  
but what can you say  
to the stranger in the scary white coat?  
Again? It seems so, but is it?  
Can you die more than once, does it matter?  
A not-dream to not-remember.  
Betrayed by my body,  
hiding in the bathroom at school,  
safe and alone in a stall.  
no longer belonging in this place,  
with these children.

Later the echoing voice,  
hot in my right ear  
*'You dirty, rotten, no good little...'*  
rolling under my youth  
like running on a rolling log.  
It passes. All things pass,  
except the not knowing,  
the not understanding,

the sorrow for the others.

How young were you?



## Accounting for Rivers

### I / Independence

I was the city kid,  
four eyed, husky, overdressed;  
out of place on the farm  
like my father, who liked  
a short sleeved white shirt  
with a little starch.  
I have a single image of  
his father: short, almost  
as wide as he was tall,  
grizzled but strong, lots  
of laugh lines.  
Despite its nearness, we almost  
never went to the farm;  
across the tracks, down  
the gravel drive  
to the little house and barn.  
The land sloped back  
to the Tangipahoa  
but no one ever took me back there.  
Like the fumes of Delphi,  
it's the smell I remember.  
The barn: gapped raw cypress planks,  
braids of garlic and a mule.  
The old man, mule, and barn  
all smelled like that first  
spring shovel of dirt,  
alive with death, fecund,  
just a hint of strawberry wine.  
Heady stuff. Like the old man,  
the mule was out of harness,  
a shared, wary look in their eyes,  
the barn their sanctuary.  
No one wanted me in there.  
The meal was loud, but the mood  
in the room was cool, despite  
the casual mention of a shoebox  
full of arrowheads plucked years back  
from rain soaked fields. The very words  
made my hands burn uselessly.  
It was the vanished arrowheads,  
everyone's complete indifference,  
which made me realize  
I belonged in the barn with the mule  
and the old man, another ghost  
passing time on the banks  
of the Tangipahoa.

## II / Calculator

My father worked for a man  
I disliked.  
Toothy. Rude. A bully  
in a suit with charisma.  
He ran several businesses  
from an old boarding house  
in Beauregard Town.  
In those days, Saturday was still a work day,  
at least a half day. Sometimes  
my father was persuaded to take me with.  
The house stood on a corner, two stories, high shouldered,  
deep porches with tall windows and a side yard,  
ceilings so high it was always cool indoors.  
The downstairs office held the delights  
of typewriters, staplers, colored pens,  
and the holy mystery of the Friden calculator,  
the 'thinking machine of American business'.  
The size of a rock you could barely lift, it was  
covered with buttons, on top a long carriage  
filled with little metal windows framing  
tiny wheels of enameled numbers.  
It was the most complex machine I have ever seen.  
The time one had its cover off, the innards  
looked a solid mass of wheels and gears.  
It spoke to my father,  
but we never learned to communicate.  
When you pressed its buttons and gave the signal,  
it would whir and grind and clank, the carriage  
shot back and forth for what seemed like minutes,  
and it would grimace a series of numbers in the windows.  
The reason the cover was off was I jammed  
it up asking it something unreasonable.  
What was it saying?  
My father never explained what it did,  
but he played it like Glen Gould on a Steinway.  
I envied the intimacy of their conversations.

So I went outside a lot. It was a quiet old neighborhood,  
quiet old people, a few old dogs wheezing in the heat,  
patchy with mange. If  
you didn't know them, you gave them space.  
I would wander around the yard, but like  
a lot of old folk's yards, it was empty and tidy,  
an outsized playpen.  
As the day passed, I grew restless.  
Pushing through azaleas,  
looking in, past rippled window glass,  
I could see the back of my father's

white shirt, his left hand  
on the ledger, his right  
in a pas de deux  
with the Friden.

I thought better of knocking,  
so I slipped down the block, around the corner,  
down the hill to the old Italian grocery.  
I never had any money, but looking was free.  
This was like the New Orleans French Market,  
a tiny replica of where my father and his father  
stood by the mule with strawberries and garlic.  
I thought I might learn something. The owners lived  
upstairs, there was a deep awning,  
boxes and bags and baskets of food  
spilled out almost to the street. The old man  
was always hosing down the sidewalk;  
it would shimmer in the sun, but he never spoke.  
By my knees, burlap sacks of chick peas,  
on the wall, baroque scrollwork  
of bottles and cans of olive oil.  
I'd walked a block  
downhill to 1934.

There were several diagonal streets  
in Beauregard Town, a rarity to me,  
and, since it was high ground, a couple of little hills.  
My own French garden. All I had to do  
was stay out of trouble. Books helped,  
but the sidewalk devouring cushions  
of live oak roots were uncomfortable,  
the cicadas like jet engines overhead. As time  
went on I wandered further  
afield, looping back to  
see and be seen.

I went within sight of the Frostop root beer stand:  
across a busy street, and out of my price range.  
I went past Kornmeyers furniture, leaned  
on the elaborate old brick, now painted white  
to symbolize the new era, and looked  
in the windows. I crept around the backyard  
of the old Governor's Mansion.  
It seemed I was completely invisible  
in a way that is hard to describe today.  
I had long conversations with a  
beloved red plastic indian companion,  
later lost out a car window, I still remember exactly where.  
I read a biography of Jean Lafitte, I read a book  
about the Louisiana Purchase.  
I was afloat on the stream of time until I passed  
the tall French windows and saw my father  
coaxing a jazzy clatter from the Friden,  
like a band greeting a riverboat

as it docks.

### III / Taking Stock

About the same distance as Independence  
but in the opposite direction  
lay Cajun country.  
Little low country towns, hugging the wet banks  
of flat water, slow water, shallow water,  
water that seemed to be waiting for something,  
water that usually had something waiting in it.  
The man my father worked for  
owned auto parts stores down there:  
Rayne, Kaplan, Crowley,  
Abbeville, Erath, Opelousas,  
I chant them now and then  
to myself for comfort.  
And there, on the edge of America,  
it was inventory time.  
I have no recollection of the drives,  
the roads like snakes in the fog  
seeking refuge.  
Maybe I slept; we did leave very early,  
like the kids who went hunting.

The supply chain is Heraclitean; even  
in the bayou, you cannot step into it twice  
because it turns over and over.  
Yet, out on the fringes,  
near the end of analog time,  
when 'Mekong' still felt odd  
on the tongue,  
it was necessary to stop  
the waters of commerce for a day  
and count.  
This happened in the winter, every winter.  
A dozen men in a dim room,  
counting gaskets, hoses, bearings;  
'balancing the books,' said with a serious tone.  
The stores were almost alike,  
show room and counter up front,  
stools in ragged black naugahyde  
barfing out foam stuffing, great greasy catalogs,  
basic black phones and cash registers.  
Stretching away from the counter  
in back, long bare concrete aisles,  
poorly lit, too tall, narrow, full  
of the dusty atoms of transportation,  
strange oily objects in dark boxes,  
which these men seemed to know  
the way a fisherman knows his baits.  
Box by box, column by column, row by row

the men counted while  
my father updated the ledger.  
These men drank coffee of incredible strength.  
They were boisterous. Their speech,  
different from city talk as the Sicilian  
in the other direction, but with a totally  
different cadence and sensibility,  
puzzled me. Only much later  
did I discover that not everyone lived  
in such close proximity to  
these shadow worlds, that the music,  
food, patterns of speech were  
not universal. My job was to stay  
clean and out of the way,  
not so easy in a building  
full of grease and oil but I  
did my best. I loved the creeper,  
it delighted me so much the way  
its twisted little wheels and legs  
let you scuttle on your back like a crab  
along the floor, looking up. I found a quiet space,  
practiced universal motion.

Lunch, so different from lunch at the farm.  
There was nothing in the air  
but the singsong of the waitress and the sharp  
aroma of gumbo and red beans and rice.  
Jostling, teasing, banter, jokes  
in French and English that made mockery of both.  
I saw the men slather hot sauce on  
their huge steaming plates and tried to imitate them.  
The error was immediately obvious, but the nuns  
taught me not to waste food, so I toughed it out.  
This pleases the men, who promise my father  
they will make a Cajun of me in time.  
He lets it pass with a sip of coffee.  
Once, while they finished eating, I went outside  
to investigate the gigantic oaks, short  
but more than six arm lengths around.  
Here and there in these towns were plaques to Evangeline,  
which talked of Longfellow and his descriptions  
of the 'sluggish and devious waters' as if he  
were a local boy. I had memorized some  
Longfellow. He was a city talker,  
but there was no one I could ask about this,  
so I played with the husks of cicadas,  
last remnants of summer's insect rapture,  
clinging to the rough bark like burned out  
cars abandoned on the side of the road  
on the way to the Mardi Gras.

By afternoon, I had wearied of the creeper  
and began circling the neighborhoods, so similar  
to Beauregard Town, but so distinct.  
Flat, for starters, flatter than flat,  
like you were always staring up from  
the bottom of a shallow bowl, a hapless  
crawfish waiting for the splash  
of soup. The air was thicker,  
even in winter, but unlike  
Baton Rouge, there were lots of folks  
about, mostly little old ladies in black,  
their thick twisted ankles, their red hands,  
fingers protruding in all directions,  
revealing hard work and poverty. People tooted  
their horns a lot, there was much waving and  
shouting so distorted to my ear I  
heard them as cheerful sound effects.

Darkness came early, and it must have been  
difficult driving back. The roads were  
poor, it was often raining.  
My father's smoke wreathed face  
seemed lost in a numerical fog bank.  
He must have seen some pattern  
in that vast ledger, that newly counted and released  
torrent of brake shoes and piston rings,  
but it eluded me. I thought of the waitress,  
carrying a bowl of gumbo, trying  
not to slosh it on the floor, while  
the windshield wipers scraped the world  
off my eyelids and I surrendered  
to the tide of sleep, leaving him alone  
behind the wheel.

#### **IV / Borrow Pit**

My last expedition with my father  
was to the banks  
of Thompson Creek.  
We drove up river,  
around 1964, give or take.  
This time our vessel  
was the powder blue '60 Bonneville.  
It was an ordinary day,  
that was just it, a weekend.  
The two of us, out in the country,  
away from business, upwind  
from the industrial stench  
of Baton Rouge.  
Thompson's was a lively little creek,  
sandy point bars, lots of gravel,  
outwash from the melting ice age  
far to the north.  
The ice between us not yet solid,  
we waded the creek.  
At least I did; my father did not wear shorts  
or go barefoot, that I recall.  
Upstream, underneath the old steel trestle  
we found agates,  
petrified wood, fossil shells,  
even a worn dinosaur bone pebble,  
and the occasional volcanic rock,  
as cryptic to me as he was.  
A goodly chunk of earth time  
in a bucket, scooped up like the  
loose pages of the big story,  
dropped down the stairs of ice  
and abandoned by the Mississippi  
in the crooks of its elbows.  
We didn't know what we were doing  
but it didn't matter.  
It was a pretty day and no one  
knew where we were.  
Next to the creek was a borrow pit,  
where the highway department,  
excavated to dredge up gravel,  
heaped it up incredibly high for this  
soft, low landscape. We climbed it  
like explorers, looking over the trees  
spread around us in a green quilt.  
Here rocks were really big  
but dry, hard to find  
the keepers. If you made



a little avalanche, sliding fresh wet gravel  
made searching easy, so I would climb up  
and push down, climb up and push down,  
hunting for the shapes and patterns.

My father stood on the stream bank, smoking,  
but for once, he was here, not somewhere else.

We never went there again. My father was  
never big on explanations.

I returned years later with a girlfriend  
in my '62 Beetle

but it wasn't the same, it didn't feel right.

The loose pieces of time had settled back  
into a new deposit, gravel pile gone,  
borrow pit full of water. The creek had moved on.

## V / Internal Revenue

My father never shared  
with me his filing system.  
When he died, it fell to me  
to sort out and return the identities  
of his clients.

It was taxing to hear them  
talk about his warmth  
and friendship.

I was happy for him,  
but I didn't know how to  
settle the accounts  
so I described my surprise  
at my discovery  
that he played baseball  
in high school.

That seemed to  
balance the books.

I scattered his ashes near  
the house, in a little park  
with a pond that was probably  
a borrow pit once. It overflows into a creek  
that leads to Bayou Manchac.

Sometimes you can smell smoke  
through the trees.

## Aubade After Larkin

Dark eons culminate,  
the first notes of a morning  
raga in a silent room : from nothing,  
something, effortlessly.  
A sudden inrush of air  
and I became cognizant  
of time and sense: ab initio.  
After long, deep passage  
beneath immortal seas,  
a brief leap, airborne,  
sunwashed, twirling, in day-fast  
strobe rhythms towards and away  
from the light, Into and through  
time's atmosphere,  
the powers of the universe  
distilled five ways, a ticket  
to a thrill ride that ends  
almost before it begins,  
so many heartbeats to a lifetime.

Then back into the deep  
where identity disappears,  
where unknowing reigns,  
where meaning has no context.  
Does the fly fear the elephant?  
Does the breaching whale  
wonder at the water?

I turn to the morning  
and in miniature  
I breach the surface of sleep  
sober, reconnected, back  
for another splash of space-time.  
A little shaft of sunlight fingers  
through the curtain, sets some  
mundane object aglow  
with the fire of absurd  
beauty in a cloud  
of dust sparks. It draws me up,  
not yet weightless, into the fragile  
warp and weft of coming to be  
and passing away, a seething  
surface of endless  
transition.

Today I vow  
to be the fern testing  
Spring underneath my window:  
to swell into warmer, longer days,

rise against gravity,  
unfurl with the upward flame  
of sap against the dark  
teeming earth, reveal my virid  
fractals to the dawn breezes,  
revel in awareness  
of the darkness fore and aft.

## Up and Down in Tiger Town

Lunch time on the roof  
for the fly lab crew,  
seven floors up on a little gravel island  
under the sky, well above the octopoid college oaks.  
The wind drags past tides of tower clouds,  
we squat on the parapet,  
eat our sandwiches, watch the  
ensweated coeds traipse back and forth.  
Tom thought it would be fun to fly a kite.  
So we go up on the roof of the elevator shed,  
our kite, so vibrant against the striped blue sky,  
swooping in the wind, our lab coats flapping  
on our bare legs in cut-offs.

The steel stairwell door crashes,  
a cartoon cop, heavy in the middle,  
clearly scared of heights, hand on pistol,  
erupts in a swarm of shouts and commands.  
Perhaps he had never seen a kite,  
saw it as some kind of threat to society.  
Then he spots the row of monkey skulls  
in their beetle boxes, where the zoology students  
thought they would be safe, baking in the sun.  
Shaken, he relents, allows us to retrieve the  
scary kite and depart in threatened peace.

We laugh, but we feel an undertow.  
At six o'clock, Walter  
gives us the day's body count,  
young lives crushed and upended,  
but underground, undercover,  
overseas. The narc who  
tries to give us dynamite, hoping  
whatever we blow up  
will increase the value of his intel.  
The philosophy professor  
tripping out in the bayou with his students.  
The Dean of Women, urging her froshes to  
get the PHT, and if you don't like the bars  
on the dorm windows, maybe you should  
check yourself in for observation.  
Off kilter, dragging the frame.  
But up on the roof, with our kite against the  
flat blue sky and the towering clouds,  
braced by the wind, watched by monkey skulls,  
we found the briefest peace, and it sustained.

## 1964 – In the Summer, in the City

My first plane ride.  
My first trip to New York.  
Not my first rodeo. My mother  
on a doomed mission to her mother.  
I'm the kid version of a seeing eye dog.  
Introduced as cousins, told to  
use first names, and oh, play in the back  
and don't step on the chives.  
Alleys! Row houses! So many new things to  
see in Gotham. The World's Fair!  
I have a picture of a tubby kid  
in Bermuda shorts,  
standing alone by the globe in the fountain,  
clutching his green plastic Sinclair dinosaur:  
fifty cents, still warm  
from the while-you-wait vending machine.  
The future! I loved the World's Fair,  
because there I could run ahead, pretend  
I was myself.

53<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, Manhattan. The hot subway platform  
terribly noisy. Scary fancy people  
and scary smelly people,  
hustling around, ignoring each other.  
My big, aching feet stuffed into dress shoes.  
Close beside me the mothers loomed,  
terrible perfumed angels, petulantly  
pretending to await my decision.  
One expecting to be obeyed in all things,  
the other determined I should do whatever  
she deems necessary.  
I just wanted to see the Empire State Building  
and the Statue of Liberty.

I already knew it wasn't going to happen.  
More important to  
lord it over the sales people at Saks,  
show us what bumpkins we were,  
lash us with stylish trinkets.  
But right now, trapped underground,  
the adults wanted  
something from me.  
That was new.  
I looked at the track pit, a filthy open wound.  
A dead rat lay between the rails,  
just beginning to bloat.  
The German inflected hectoring  
above me continued,  
one sound stream indignant, the other

wheedling. I strained to hear the melody  
under the dissonant, echoing solos.  
With a surge of anger, it hit me.  
The leitmotif was  
for me to declare  
that, yes,  
YES,  
I wanted to go shopping,  
nothing less would do.  
The Statue of Liberty, in fact,  
truly beneath us, *bas clas*.  
I stared at the rat,  
its yellow tooth protruding.  
I'm twelve years old in the biggest city in America.  
I do what I am told. I go where I am taken.  
But it is not enough to acquiesce,  
Now I have to kneel.  
My mouth went sour.  
They are making a scene because  
they are the children here.

The piston of hot air preceding  
an incoming train washes over us.  
I am so miserable  
I consider joining the rat.  
To hell with New York.  
But if I failed,  
I would I never escape.  
Determined to give up without giving in,  
I stammered and squeaked  
my disappointment in them.  
The music above me grew harsh  
with disapproval and twittering  
recrimination. I am making the scene,  
apparently.  
The train blew out with  
high metallic shrieks.  
I caught a whiff of the rat.

## Death Weather

Imagine (if you will)  
a network of satellites  
drifting geosynchronously,  
monitoring death.  
Providing a daily world map  
of transitional forces.  
Imagine it had layers.  
The most interesting one  
might chart departing souls  
color coded by cause  
like those mesmeric world wind maps,  
showing the high and low-pressure death  
systems boiling over the globe:  
red for war and murder  
blue for suicide  
pink for illness  
starvation green; a rainbow  
of suffering streaming off the surface.  
Then of course the natural products layer,  
killing and harvesting, death deliberate  
for food, fuel and materials:  
gouts of orange blowing away from  
feedlots, chicken houses, fishing trawlers  
at sea, yellow storms like tsunamis  
off the grain fields and forests.

Maybe in another spectrum we could  
map the motion of new life  
as well: sprouting fields, spawning fish, that first  
intake of breath  
around the world.  
Maybe if we saw it like this  
we would see ourselves  
a little differently.  
Or would it be just  
another place to post an ad?



## Lost Creatures

*A meditation inspired by Walker Percy*

As a child I hated  
having my picture taken  
with a ferocity  
I found it difficult to explain  
until recently.  
In 1962, a family photograph  
was a commemoration,  
a balm for the photographer,  
milestones met,  
achievements achieved,  
normalcy was official,  
part of your permanent record.  
I did not want a permanent record.  
I wanted to disappear.  
I did not want to wear a necktie,  
Or have my hair adjusted.  
I did not want a record of Christmas  
or Easter, some diorama  
of happy family life.

I knew agit-prop when I saw it.  
I was the Bartelby of the lens,  
a photo-refusnik.  
This caused much unnecessary grief.  
I was immortalized anyway:  
the whiner, the crybaby,  
the burden, the zit  
on the pretty face of domestic bliss.  
At least the images are few.

Forty some years later  
I began to notice  
other little urchins  
under the perpetual scrutiny  
of the parental paparazzi.  
Something had changed.  
Not mile markers, but staccato frames  
in an animation now, nothing too  
trivial, life cropped and filtered.  
Little celebrities in training, their whipcrack  
transformation, instantly  
shifting to camera face,  
phoning it in for the fans.

Oh lonely children,  
how could they do this to you?

At first I wished for your secret.  
Then I saw how tiresome it must be  
to hold up your shields with such tiny arms.  
Where do you shelter the little animal  
that wishes not to be seen?  
In this barrage of guarded moments,  
when do you receive the gift of solitude,  
how do you become yourselves?  
I marvel, in sorrow, at your poise.  
No tears, no anger, just that absence  
in your eyes.

**Throw Me Sumthin Mr. ‘Nekromenoi!**  
**[or: Socrates in da Slivah by da Rivah]**

I. “What Was Is What Is”

I went down to the CBD  
for the Mardi Gras  
in the city that care forgot.  
It was early that year,  
about a decade after Camille,  
just a bad memory and a high water line.  
Athens, Ohio,  
uncongenial, planar,  
pushed me down to St. Louis.  
Unlucky and unemployed.  
I wound my way down to the Crescent City,  
utility trucks proclaiming  
‘the nation’s largest drainage project,’  
bumping lower  
past each overpass,  
past the burnt out cars,  
where it was winter, damp and windy,  
plastic bag herons  
hanging in the trees, the days  
dividing raggedly  
into morning and evening.

At dusk I rode the Freret Jet  
‘cause the streetcar was cold, man!  
I had a ticket to some ball.  
I stood out there in a flimsy tux  
by One Square Shell. God it was cold.  
The parade was...  
I forget. Endymion? Momus?  
I wanted to go back uptown  
but my friends were there too:  
Mark from Mobile, whose ancestors  
drunkenly named the Irish Channel  
and occasionally washed  
out of its soil,  
Mark from the Midwest,  
a true New Orleans convert who  
took it all in stride but eventually  
moved across the lake, the Kathy I came  
to the city with and the Kathy  
who would leave it behind with me,  
Buddy the eagle, Nick, the ex-Jesuit,  
both gone now; and Bruce, who  
would probably prefer I not say more.

I felt dead inside from the wet  
wind off Lake Ponchartrain  
screaming through the Quarter,  
but with my friends I  
went on down to the 'Doomed Stadium'  
to see the boys and girls of Bacchus,  
the new-money Krewe from Houston,  
circle their giant parade floats  
indoors on the astroturf.  
I sat in my tux in the green outer ring  
by a huge black truck tire and ate,  
wealthy fathers dancing  
their daughters around the inner circle.  
Lots of drinking, flushed white faces  
red from the cold and the booze.  
Peering out past the diesel, cooling  
like an obedient pet beside me,  
out into the stadium's  
gloom, I watched small dark forms  
run back and forth, toss trays of trash  
on the floor, and shovel it up  
with the only snow shovels  
I ever saw in New Orleans.

Back down then to the CBD,  
past the nearly ruined Piazza d'Italia,  
public art that wasn't either,  
past the Babylonian palace of NOPSI,  
old ladies in line with rolls of bills  
to pay for their power,  
past the ships looming over the coffee drinkers  
huddled across the street from St. Louis Cathedral,  
down past Congo Square, which couldn't  
be both, but was, feeling the past  
wriggling in the soft cold ground  
beneath me, gelid, undead.

## II. "Excuse My French"

I told my friends I didn't know  
could I stay in a place  
where only outsiders  
get respect,  
where people from Iowa and Atlanta  
were welcome with their outside money,  
but to get utilities or make your groceries  
was an ordeal from hell.  
We went down to Royal, down to Bourbon,  
which were neither, black men hosing  
down last night's wastes, and black men  
pretending to be cripples, since pretending

to be men wasn't working for them here.  
Police on horseback looking for someone  
unconnected  
to make an example of  
as little white ladies with little glittery dogs  
admired bombe front furniture and Gallé glass  
through metal mesh windows. Drag queens  
on their way to work – looking good!

We went down to Port of Call  
where the food was always delicious  
if you overlooked the roaches.  
Down then to the French Market,  
smelling of garlic and rotting fruit,  
where, like my grandfather once,  
forlorn in the ice-edged cold,  
a few shivering immigrant kids stood  
hawking leather goods. Even the Pie Man  
too smart to come down  
on a freezing day in February!  
Without the Pie Man, without his  
steaming aromas of pecan and sweet potato,  
without his booming “PIE MAN!” baritone,  
why was anyone there at all? We passed  
James Booker, heating himself up with  
bottles and needles, practically out in the cold  
street, strains of impeccable Rachmaninov  
seeping through his manic right hand.

I felt like a condemned man, watching the beauty  
of these people hammered down  
while the Times-Pic brayed the success  
of carnival by the tons of trash  
sanitation hauled away.  
Millions of plastic beads from the East  
destined for rear-view mirrors  
or the side of the road,  
and not a sou for schools,  
streets or drainage.  
Every time I left my Mid-City door  
I went down: below sea level,  
past Gunther's, where the old jockeys  
drank their disability checks, past  
Pandora's Ice Box, Pandora herself  
in hotpants lounging on her Camero  
curbed in front of the snow-cone stand, past  
Lucky Albano's not so lucky barbershop,  
down the drunken, cracked and tilted  
sidewalks, down past the fire station's  
broken windows, with the little kids carrying  
quarters in their ears, to the bus stop

down under the octopoid oaks now  
drowned, killed by salt, or eaten  
by Formosan termites.

### III. "The Temples That We Built To You Have Tumbled Into the Sea"

Should I exile myself?  
Sleeping, I tossed and turned upstairs  
where I could breathe, dreaming  
of drowning in Bayou St. John's rising waters  
flecked with moonlight out  
my window, while downstairs, the floor  
mildewed underneath my shoes.  
I asked my friends, especially  
old Buddy and Nick, the failed Jesuit:  
'Are doubloons really more important  
than schools and the souls they shelter?'  
They gave me their well-practiced sad looks.  
Nick wanted a smoke; 'One fa' now,  
One fa' latah!' Buddy looked over  
his great beak and just shook his shaggy head.  
But they died in time  
to save themselves.  
So did Tony who epitomized  
the shrug, who liked his Shakespeare,  
stood by his mother, and cut  
his hair once a year.  
When it came, did they sense the rising waters  
pushing them up from below?  
Lying under the moss and lichens,  
did they wonder where the pumps  
and levees were? Did they  
hope the mountain of plastic beads  
And trinkets would protect them  
in their final rest? Were they borne  
aloft in a second line  
from the heady strains of the speakers  
at the Rock 'n' Bowl?

Melancholy, I fled the frozen, buried  
souls of my companions  
upland to  
Athens Georgia,  
beneath the arches,  
under the B-52's. Unable to lift  
my voice and bend the harmony,  
unable to endure,  
incapable of treading water,  
I kept moving.

Many Krewes of Rex and Zulu later

I thought I had over-reacted  
back there in the lee of Camille  
until I was blinded by the news:  
sad, untraveled people  
without recourse, smeared out  
of homes, lives, and families  
by Katrina, Xerxes of hurricanes  
and the inevitable wet fate of neglect,  
mold blooming like understanding on  
the walls of abandoned caves,  
shadows of ideas in the  
city that forgot to care.

## **Paging the Book of Fire**

/ for JFW

I.

The turkeys  
have completed their inspection;  
time to get to work.  
An eagle on pasture patrol  
lifts  
on the thermals, annoying  
the ospreys, who, looking  
for breakfast, now  
have to watch their  
flanks.  
Curiosity and bellies satisfied,  
chicks accounted for, the turkeys  
strut and preen past  
six crisp logs, a tangle  
of crestfallen limbs and  
brown leafed branches,  
only weeks ago a sheltering  
red oak unfurling  
into Spring. Undone  
by the years, the steady  
depredations of carpenter ants  
gnawing at its heart, and a sudden  
thunderstorm, it lies  
fallen.  
The chain saw blade is sharp  
with a little slack,  
the funk of oil and fuel,  
heavy in the humid air,  
competes with the acrid tang  
of bug spray.  
The maul handles are tight,  
wedges clean,  
boots laced,  
gloves and earplugs on.  
The peavey, my  
one-armed consigliere,  
stands silent and ready.  
The tide is coming in  
this morning, brings  
a cool breeze that offsets  
the creeping probe of sun  
lighting up the newly opened  
canopy, giving the ferns  
and blue bead lilies notice:  
times have changed.  
Set the choke, and after



a couple of jerks the sound  
is harshly intense, isolating,  
energizing.  
The single minded chain saw  
knows what to do,  
the trick is not to  
get in the way.  
Soft drifts of damp,  
pinkish snow  
cover my boots. The smell  
of oak and two cycle  
engine fills the clearing  
with bluish haze.  
Then the silence of noise  
gives way to the noise  
of silence. The saw  
rests,  
clicking as it cools.  
My logs  
are now perfect stove length rounds  
wet and red, their anatomy  
revealing growth and decay,  
opportunity and threat,  
death from life from death.

## II.

Sweat time.  
it's pretty easy  
once you know how.  
First, a conversation.  
Address the log, make  
its acquaintance. It will keep  
you warm someday,  
get to know it.  
What is its history?  
Did it sprout under  
the hooves of sheep?  
Did it cast its early shade  
on spring corn?  
Did horses graze  
under its first limbs?  
Where are the twists and knots,  
scars on bark and heart  
that hinder splitting?  
Each round a deciduous chapter  
of a being with grain and texture,  
strength and weakness.  
Know it will yield  
more easily up the tree  
than down, know the knot

will split across  
with a satisfying tear  
of grain and burl  
but not at all  
any other way.  
The physics is not  
complicated, each effort  
is not great.  
Raise and swing, raise  
and swing; leverage,  
compression, fracture.  
Raise and swing  
the maul up,  
pull it down from the top  
of its arc. Gravity  
does the work.  
Guidance and control:  
swing up, pull down.  
Eyes can see, but  
shoulders and wrists  
hit the spot. You work  
with the wood or  
against it: it will tell you.  
Sometimes the round cleaves  
with a satisfying rimshot  
that echoes across the water,  
or a solid crack! that leads  
the way to the next swing,  
or a rip! as a neat wedge  
of glistening oak  
shoots away. A whole  
glossary of sounds,  
with dialects for oak,  
maple, or softwood.  
Your ears guide the maul's  
next swing and pull,  
continuing the conversation  
as you delve  
to the heart of the matter.  
Knots from branches green or rotten,  
fires, lightning strikes,  
more branches,  
thick wads of scar tissue,  
infestations boiling with ants  
or wormy fingers of white fungus:  
gelato for the gray wood lice, hiding  
like lost buttons under the bark;  
thick, yellow, corrugated oak borer grubs  
with rusty heads, in packed  
undulating tunnels of insulating frass,  
squirming in the light,

treats for the crows  
who will come later,  
peering and poking,  
seeking opportunity.  
Each log capturing  
the substance of time,  
slow cellulose twists in search  
of sun, packed in bundled fibers,  
long memories of wind,  
brilliant days, icy nights.  
The big logs dwindle  
with the rhythm of constant bending,  
reaching for position,  
for angle. Chunks lie scattered  
like badly diagrammed sentences.  
Piles of conversation fragments build,  
inchoate wedges of banked  
sunshine, pale now, drying,  
rough, mossy, monosyllabic,  
phrases torn from the biography  
of a place,  
a single story of many parts  
and players, shattered into a pile  
of energy and time,  
waiting to reassemble in  
the fire chorus.  
As treetop  
shadows reach across  
the pasture,  
the bay begins to drain.  
Ospreys cry in the distance,  
anticipating fish  
rising for evening bugs;  
my day in the sun also wanes.  
One red leaf, early warning,  
flutters  
to the ground.

## **Aristotle in Deepwater**

I was undercover,  
she was underwater.  
We met up in a dream  
to mitigate the mediums.  
An ancient water sprite,  
an agate eyed beauty  
from the near east, she came to tell me  
we had friends in common,  
and who they were was no surprise,  
but why?  
A family intrigue.  
Poison waters from the River  
Styx, vials made of  
mule hoof, unknown nephews to  
adulterate the wine.  
In a dream, underwater,  
though we rule the realms,  
life is not as it seems,  
and life is but a dream.

## **Meditation**

How many people will be born today?  
By the time they are  
actors in the world  
I will be dead.  
All these little buds  
opening to the sky,  
and I will not be there  
to see what  
they become,  
what fields of flowers,  
what orchards, what forests.  
And when I first looked around  
in understanding,  
did I give a care  
for the mighty structures  
all around?  
Or did I pick a four leaf  
clover and

**Part 2..... 1999-1985**

## **In Lieu of Cicadas**

The cypress trees are reddening  
against the autumn sky.  
I feel that way myself.  
A cloud of rich conifer perfume  
precedes the drifting needles to the ground  
where they break like shallow surf,  
back and forth in the cooling breeze.  
It reminds me of incense, rolling whitely  
from the altar during the resurrection  
rites. It rekindles  
a wondering in me.  
Am I the cypress tree, shedding days  
and years against the chilling infinite sky?  
Am I the feathery red leaf  
sloughed of by the tree of human time?  
Cells grow across the base of every  
cypress needle stem. The needs separate  
and grow red, they give off aromatics,  
they fall to make a felted carpet.  
They are crushed, they rot, they are carried  
away downstream – to what?  
What cells are changing in me, what colors  
do I turn? What, I wonder, swathed  
in this great sensory elegy, is it like  
on the other side of life, beyond  
the spreading nightline of the autumn sky?

## **Ridden**

I cannot name the fury  
which rides unbridled  
through my sleep  
so that I awake  
with flecks of foam upon  
my lips, cold  
aching knees.  
I do not  
recall those burning landscapes,  
but only the taste  
of the flick of the tip  
of the whip  
at the small of my back  
and the song of the accuser,  
hot wind inside my my head.  
You dirty,  
rotten,  
no good little  
dream, I'll turn you  
inside out and shake  
you off. I'll stretch  
this new day  
until it snaps  
my head back  
against the pillow  
of darkness where, perhaps,  
the sleep wraiths will find me  
uncooperative and leave me  
tethered in the stable.

## **Bearing Witness**

A virus comes to you  
in an envelope. The message inside  
is serious.

The postmark  
is dense and colorful,  
foreign but recognizable,  
all in all encoded with  
an exotic familiarity.

The message inside  
can be read and understood only  
with the finality of chemistry.  
It is hard to know whether the postmark  
matters. The message, serious  
though it is,

might be unintelligible. This time.

The message comes  
over and over again. Time  
after time the envelope, enclosing  
the virus. The postmark,  
colorful, foreign, not alarming,  
even interesting. Inside  
the same encoded message.

The postmark gets cancelled, or not.

The message noted as serious,  
alarming, or not. The postman  
regularly delivers more envelopes.

Some are personal,  
some just for the occupant.

Only one is ever deciphered.

Only one achieves recognition.



## **Road Food**

Somebody else is driving  
me through the night.  
I lay athwart the window  
in the wind, watching  
the glass shards on the road's  
shoulder under the close-in,  
lamplit sky.  
I lean my head to that shoulder  
and the broken glass flashes:  
fireflies, falling stars,  
bright and jagged flares.  
I'm fondling the wind,  
eyeing the speeding pavement,  
trying to taste it with the palm  
of my outflung hand.  
Hunger is as hunger does.

## **In Temple, In Texas, After the War**

My father went to Europe  
prepared to die.  
I went to Europe  
to eat Apfelkuchen "ohne Sahne".  
My mother left Europe to escape the nightmare,  
but she couldn't. Sometimes  
I see it reflected in her eyes, see it slip  
around the corner in the tilt  
of my father's wheelbarrow.  
The nightmare came along for the ride.  
They spent some time  
in Temple, in Texas, after the war,  
where I came to be.  
They did normal people things,  
hidden from me  
beneath the weight of time.  
I must go to Temple soon,  
to the grocery shrine, the bulging  
Piggly-Wiggly of my mother's fear;  
the movie theater where my father  
tried, one last time,  
to be young;  
to the place where the nightmare  
settled in to make itself at home  
among us. I'll stop  
for coffee and a slice of pie.

## **Exogyra Ponderosa**

A giant oyster once, beneath a  
brighter sky, gouged now from its ancient  
clay bed, strewn as landfill for a parking lot.  
This great rough handful, plucked  
from the bulldozer, sits now  
behind glass in a dry, well lit tomb,  
quite unlike its ancient one,  
or the reburial from which it was delivered.

The glass vibrates, fluorescent lights hum  
to me with a message predating language,  
reaching me across stellar time  
with the form of awe.

I and mine are like the ancient oyster beds,  
we too shall leave jumbled shells:  
hard parts, wordless.  
What creature will receive that faint vibration?

## **Dear Ray**

It's almost Spring here.  
The ancient resurrection,  
blind potential's strong  
sticky fingers fresh feeling  
the old textures, edges,  
and conjunctions, the timeless  
geometry of forms;  
smoother now.  
Certain of my ghost are swarming,  
oozing from the aspen buds, rising  
from my coffee cup, greenly  
winking from the cypress, crocus, beech,  
warmer now.  
The glue of the world, the memory sap  
has turned, upthrusting past the coldly  
glinting crush of already, of was,  
sprouting memorable scents.

## When Howdy Doody Died

This memory, this  
roughness  
dragging in my chest  
is a twig, snapped in half,  
lodged in the chambers of my heart.  
I must work it, like a splinter,  
to the surface. September, 1960,  
the midmorning sun unfolds  
its gleam on the polished oak floor,  
the electronic hearth glows  
on the south wall next to the cold gas  
logs in the false fireplace.  
I'm in tears,  
crosslegged, as Buffalo Bob,  
Howdy himself, and Clarabell  
make their last farewells.  
I'm giving further evidence  
of my otherness,  
letting down my guard  
for these phosphorescent ghosts.  
But Howdy Doody's flicker  
was more comfort to me  
than those other ghosts,  
mother, father,  
witness to my spectacle of mourning.  
Standing in judgement, they  
so often found, and left,  
me wanting that I  
let them see what I knew  
they would not understand.  
The real seed of otherness  
sprouting at that moment,  
the inner turn,  
the budding flower of self annihilation,  
fell, not on stony ground,  
but on the fertile wound  
of my desperate loneliness.  
Watered by the unrecognition  
I endured,  
it grew tangled,  
thorny, blossomed  
with my decision  
not to bear the fruit  
of this world, not to play  
the game of repetition.  
I have been asleep  
inside the perfume of

misunderstanding's  
sterile bloom  
ever since, waiting  
for release, for the voice  
of SummerFallWinterSpring,  
or some other princess  
calling me to my senses.  
Tangled up in Howdy Doody's  
strings, I have been unable  
to tell the tendrils of love from  
the withered stick of sorrow,  
and the boy I was  
makes a puppet of the man  
I have become.  
Buffalo Bob, I hear you ask  
what time it is,  
but I think Howdy Doody  
time is over,  
and, like Clarabell,  
my first words must be  
good bye.

## **In Case of Fire Do Not Use Elevator**

Elevators cannot put out fires.  
The circuits melt, the carriage  
called by the loving flames.  
The elevator opens to the fire,  
the flame rushes up the shaft,  
now a flue, in passionate twinning.  
Smoke obstructs the cyclops eye,  
seduces the machine that  
guides me up and down.  
In case of fire the elevator  
becomes a trysting ground  
for this passion of flames.  
What I thought was my conveyance becomes  
my womb of resurrection.  
But only in case of fire.  
Elevator doors are like dawns:  
you never know.  
Sameness and surprise  
And the possibility of flames.

## Snailtracks and Snailwheels

### I

Hysterical  
with the Spring  
I dance  
the ridges,  
fertilize the wind.  
Snail,  
on the razor  
edge of fate  
I explore  
with stubby sensors  
the trailing scent  
of the fumaroles  
where time erupts

### II

Despondent  
in the summer  
I creep the slopes  
gnawing gravel.  
Snail,  
in the scoured  
fields of time  
I eat  
with hungry lips  
the moist growths  
on the moraines  
where desire melts

### III

Uneasy in the Autumn  
I ooze the outcrops,  
search for sun.  
Snail,  
at the brassy  
harvest of will  
I fend  
with dying shell  
the growing dark  
on the stone  
where life cools

### IV

Nietzche  
And the equinox.

## **For Randall Jarrell**

Awaken.

As surely as the body  
you are wrapped around,  
for a moment you may feel  
the echoes of such  
dawnings  
cascading beyond knowing,  
reflections in two mirrors.

Should you allow  
yourself the memory,  
cherish it.

That's all the certainty  
you will ever have  
beyond the body  
wrapped around you  
one October morning,  
chilling Saturday.

## **Slice Of Life**

Shoe box of a dead man,  
rubber banded,  
overflowing with the past,  
his legacy in photographs.

A deer on the hood  
of a '48 Dodge.

Violence rims our lives  
like blood scum  
in the skinner's bowl.

Sure, righteous, razor strokes  
peel the facial flesh of us all,  
our very lives so thin  
they swing  
with the sharpness of frozen breath  
through possibilities.

On the Dodge hood there are  
spots of tongue smeared blood.

## **Song Of The Steel Shakers**

Animals and children  
crying in the darkness  
of our thirst:  
agua, agua.  
Who are we to notice  
ebony and emerald  
dragonfly on rusted  
steel or crystalline  
intensity of trees  
in May-light dawning?  
We are but friction engines  
whose fuel  
is the agua,  
whose transmission  
is the awful clutch  
of need  
hanging like a deadly weight  
about the groin at daybreak.  
Transpiring,  
we build the roads,  
hurl ourselves  
over chasms drawing  
bridges up behind us.  
Our need,  
inseparable from us,  
is for the agua.  
In the needy  
silence of our agua  
we can see  
we are but forward troops  
for other loveless specters  
yet to come.  
The agua is our strength,  
fever of our vision,  
seed of all our dreams.  
The agua and the silence  
make the hot steel  
that sings and echoes  
through the virid trees  
a human thing.  
We are human  
things.



## Nourishing Juices

A huge squarish French fried potato  
lay brown and helpless athwart  
the chair leg's gleaming chrome tube.  
A taut, squirming foot narrowly  
avoids mashing a gewasy spot  
into the pin striped gray carpet.  
The foot jitters with discomfort  
from the reading of a newspaper,  
from the photos  
of the starving who weep  
in their disgrace,  
discomfort at the biting,  
freezing wind that lurches  
when the outer doors slam to,  
luffing the weeping cheeks of the papers.  
The potato lies forgotten,  
its nourishing juices frozen,  
congealed on the stylish carpet pattern.  
Outside a thin tattered blanket of soil  
and rocks lies on top of sharp  
blades of frost heave  
like a penitent on a bed of nails,  
or the hungry lifting their barren bowls.  
The feet gather their burden,  
leaving newspaper and potato  
for some other, they are  
well shod against the  
sharpness of the cold.

### **By The Side Of The Road**

Midnight passes quietly,  
moonlit grey, street-lit  
yellow, up in an old oak tree  
the lone piping  
of an anxious mockingbird  
answers the measured lurching  
of the clock hands.  
Spiders tend store  
in the lee of the lamplight.  
How silent is this  
time, this night, this  
variously lit and average  
evening ending.  
Awakening from my reading  
I am startled by the  
well-lit silence.  
Almost done fighting  
this day, I pull my space  
closer to me,  
doze back into my page.  
I crouch in my warm place  
like the cat, rat, dog, possum,  
rabbit, raccoon, deer, waiting  
warmly by the side  
of the road, awaiting their  
appointments with destiny,  
blinking in the sudden illumination.

### **Untitled**

The well-lit woman  
married  
the man in the dark  
blue suit.  
There sprang up between them  
a chiaroscuro  
of heroic proportions,  
like smoke billowing  
from flaming tires,  
seen on a summer  
afternoon from the cover  
of yellow green trees.

## **Dissatisfied With Life On Land**

The high tide of the particular  
crashes, heaves, booms  
down on the beach of being,  
the foaming surf crashing out  
the breath of life,  
eyes and hair tangled in the  
rough bits and pieces of the days.  
I look forward to the smoothness  
of suffocation, a long moment  
of privacy in the space  
beyond the final cardiac pulse.  
Not a goal to be desired,  
but an end to be embraced.

Traitorous sleep lures  
me down silent corridors  
that always bend back  
to the light, to placement,  
to that place of grit and thunder.  
Always disappointing, sleep  
no longer knits  
the raveled sleeve of care,  
but rather pins it on.

At low tide, the ooze  
sparkles with the calligraphy  
of small creatures  
content with the abstract.

**Homage to Oe Kenzaburo:  
On thumbing the Michelin of the heart**

What do you think,  
thinking about her?  
The temptation is to recollect  
the flesh. There the poignancy  
centers, in that elegant  
immediate image, the swift  
decisive suspension  
of disbelief, what an old rival  
called the sudden  
pressure in the sinuses. Dermal  
images: dimly lit, guiltily  
incomplete, electrifyingly accurate,  
but insufficient  
like the flesh they recall.

What, then?  
Define this anguish,  
rising in the darkness like a milestone  
to a drunkard in a speeding car.

The distance from  
is the difference  
of the distance to  
on an road where all turns  
close on themselves.

Can this gaping pain  
be sutured shut  
by the motion of her  
eyes, by the rolling  
rhythms of her voice  
in keeping with time,  
keeping this time,  
the time keeping  
here, now?

The space between  
is the difference  
of the space beyond  
on a globe  
endlessly twirling.

From what direction  
blows the wind that dusts  
these loving ashes in my  
eyes, down my throat?  
Lightning plays like  
portent on the horizon  
but the cleansing rain  
is distant from my upturned face.

The time until  
is the difference

of the time when  
on a clock that  
measures heartbeats.  
In the pages of his novel,  
Bird still dreams of Africa

## Stance

Poets, these  
deflowered botanists,  
shake fingered  
surgeons stubbing out a light.  
Do they really try?

May a poet try  
to recreate the seen,  
the felt,  
to juxtapose by analog  
what can only in the end  
be lived?

These artless plantists, smoked out  
drunken healers  
would feed us the red fruit,  
would hold the pumping  
life of us in their  
determined but unsteady yellowed  
hands.

A potter speaking of his clay  
will squint, shape his knotted  
hands to say thus,  
and thus,  
feels upon his scarred skin  
the outward thrust  
of whirling clay,  
knows its density.

Time to watch  
more closely those  
poet eyes, their depth  
of field, and, too, the stance.  
Most assuredly  
the stances.

## **For The Love Of Clay**

At first the clay  
is responsive as a lover.  
More so.  
The clay is willful, but mindless.  
Fingers smooth and shape  
the shining wet skin and the  
moving clay rises, opens, closes  
as it is bidden, an unpolished  
but precise mirror  
of the shaping hands.  
Time's breeze circulates,  
endless, effortless,  
lures away the precious  
moisture of plasticity  
and even without form  
the naked clay  
grows rigid, shrinks,  
draws down imperceptibly  
upon itself,  
awaits the judgement  
of the hefting hand:  
to slake this rigid  
thirst or commit to  
the fire.

## **2-85**

There is an eagerness in the wings of birds,  
cold rain after long dry weeks.

Sisyphus and his stone,  
Tantalus and his grapes,  
Napoleon and – no, not waterloo, but Helena.  
Stripped of passion, but not desire.

## **Twenty years**

I thought I was lonely in high school.  
Twenty more years  
of thought about it, and  
I realize it was just a training exercise.  
I passed.  
Riding in my car each day  
back and forth to work  
I scan the eyes of  
the others. I'm still not sure  
what I'm looking for. They are  
just like me.

## **The Garden of Capital**

I have a little patch of dirt.  
Every month I send a lot of money  
to someone far away who has no idea  
where I am, so that I can continue to  
squat here.  
I will have to send money until  
I am too old to do anything else  
and then I will be permitted to stop.  
I spend a lot of time digging.  
I pretend I am gardening  
but really I just want to see  
what's buried.  
I would like to find arrowheads, bones,  
potsherds, evidence of real existence  
before me. Instead I find a lot  
of broken toy parts: doll hands,  
tin tea cup handles, plastic rings  
from the daughters  
of the previous occupants.  
Evidence of real existence,  
I suppose, but not the reality I wanted.  
I'm not even sure the dirt I live on  
is the dirt that belongs here. Whether it  
was ever really a place before we  
arrived here. A lot of the dirt's been  
brought in. Maybe the toy bits  
are from someplace else.  
But where would that be?



## **Wicked Frequencies**

Oh children that  
will not be,  
where went this  
land that once was?  
The encompassing sweep  
of the night sky  
is delirious with  
the wicked frequencies  
of our disconsolation,  
darkness backlit  
by our tepid frantic evils.  
There is the smell of ending  
here, and it is maddening  
to feel the small stalking  
motions of a fatal  
insect just out of reach.

## **Metamorphosis**

Trapped in the cloth  
cocoon of time  
we grow older  
by the buttonhole –  
a ritual gesture –  
mumbled fingers,  
the sign of the cross,  
down the daily shirtfront.  
Seal in the juices,  
if there are any juices.  
More often seal  
in the choking cascade of  
dry powdery selfhood,  
thwarting, daily, the explosion  
by static charge.  
The self of immolation.

## **Tree Rings of Time**

I don't care about the myths,  
the gods reside beneath us,  
the truth is of the stones,  
not of the dome.

No matter how we wish it so,  
the rush of feather wind,  
the crush of marrow bone,  
do not signify.

Dripping water, the slow  
response of stone, the  
patient rings of trees  
are markers that point true.

## Scattered

In my neighborhood  
there should be more  
animals. There should be  
possums, raccoons, deer  
and rabbits; the sounds  
of crunching  
gravel in the moonlight.  
Five years I have  
searched for proof:  
tracks, droppings, half eaten  
plants, raided trash, furtive  
noises at the edge  
of sleep. Nothing.  
Once I curled down the night  
streets, wondering about  
the lives enveloped by  
the dull roar of air conditioners.  
Now, nested late on my front  
porch, security lights holding back  
the stars, I picture animals. I  
wonder where the people like me are,  
people to speak a secret word to,  
people prowling past as I once did.  
The world falls silent between the cars.  
Like blood pressure singing in my ears,  
the air-conditioner drones too high.  
A trackless prowler  
once, I am now the bait,  
untasted in the trap,  
defeated again by sleep.  
When I am safely gone,  
imprisoned in bed, the silence  
between cars grows long, and longer.  
Then those animals,  
those strangers I would speak to,  
pad wonderingly past  
the dark and thrumming windows  
seeking evidence of being.

## Harvest Hunger

Sleepless  
in the plum colored  
October night  
I stretch out long  
on a lawnchair,  
uncoiled in the gloom.  
Hunger rises in me  
like the moon, and oh,  
my soul is a moondog tonight,  
running  
the hard cold ground,  
biting  
the dark, damp air,  
the sound  
of frantic footfalls in my ears,  
the rusty bloom  
of blood along my tongue.  
Grappling with the shadow  
I have run to ground  
in these moments of dozing liberty  
this harvest night, I shudder  
at the frightened scent,  
just beyond  
my muzzle in the darkness.  
Exertion, or the dew,  
wets the plastic webbing  
of my cheap lawnchair.  
As I slink indoors in search of rest,  
clouds take the moon.

## Reflections on a Photo of John and Yoko

Leafing through  
a book of photos,  
John and Yoko,  
black and white,  
taken near the end,  
I am struck, thanks to you,  
by the world I see  
encompassed in their gaze.  
I know the dream  
made real inside that space.  
In my own dream of love  
where I awaken  
with my face in your hair,  
I whisper your nickname  
in the half-light,  
I grow children with you peaceably,  
without remorse or shadows.  
In my dream of love  
I feel your curving hip  
against my body in first light,  
stand beside you in the kitchen,  
the smell of yeast and garlic in the air,  
graze the down at the small  
of your back in anticipation  
of our heat at twilight.  
In my dream of love  
I see your eyes look back at me  
from a baby's face, I taste  
the salty tears of your fierce pride  
in triumph and in loss, feel  
the iron of your will next to mine,  
the sting of the sparks and fire  
that we shower in the dark.  
I watch your hand dance  
in the air across the canvas,  
feel the potters clay rise  
like blowing silk between my fingers  
and think of you, my dream of love.

## With Her In The Car In Bastrop, Texas

I fell in  
the first time you turned to me,  
passed through clean,  
made no splash,  
afraid I would betray my obligations.  
Yet I remembered later  
opening my eyes at the bottom  
of the sea, crushed there  
by the darkness and the cold,  
your light that drew me once.  
I held that breath, pulled steadily  
on the long swim back  
to those blue-sky pools,  
to the soft cloud folds  
that arc over them like ferns  
in the breeze of your laughter.  
Emerging now, breathless, full of the joy of air,  
I see that I am trespassing. I am suddenly  
cold and the little fish are darting  
back and forth in fear.  
Breathe.  
Know that you have saved my life,  
that what I have is yours if you will  
drop the stone,  
make the ripple,  
carry us away through time  
as far as we can go.  
I cast these word crumbs on the waters,  
comfort the darting fins,  
resist the expectation of return.  
Content for now  
to dry in the sun reflecting  
off the memory of your eyes,  
there in the car,  
near Lost Pines.

## Platonic Thoughts While Vacuuming

In college I was hip,  
well fed, full of myself,  
basking on the student union portico  
reading Greek stories carefully  
pruned for my consumption.  
I thought I was impressed.  
I wasn't wrong.

Last night as I listened, the girl  
sidekick of Xena, TV's warrior princess,  
told Plato's tale to a delirious  
wounded friend  
of how the gods sundered us,  
left our souls halved and unhealed,  
doomed us to forever wander in  
self search.  
I remembered  
how I first heard that tale,  
giddy on Beatles love songs,  
my nose filled with spring  
and its urgings.

What their stories fail to say  
is the wonder of those old Greeks.  
That what gods have sundered no one  
may rejoin, though we may wander,  
thirsting for our twin,  
for that epiphanous recognition  
flecked back at us from other eyes,  
the solar plexus tightening  
where the umbilical scar turns inward,  
yearning for the taste  
of self-embrace  
from the arms of another.

In the east, the magazines tell me,  
there is a two-headed girl child.  
The gods are so witty.  
Is she one, to demonstrate the rule  
by exception?  
Or is she one-half twice,  
to crush us with her collective pathos?  
Xena long over, I cling to the edge  
of my half-empty bed beneath  
the strong night winds of March.  
Restless sleep,  
dreams of finding lost addresses.

## Two Years Later

It's come spring again  
outside, like that time at  
Avery Island,  
blue, so blue above and green,  
too green again.  
Two years now since you  
went down that well,  
never to return,  
the other well, the one  
no valiant fireman could  
dig you out of, the one  
I could only wait beside  
and watch you sleep.  
I'm in our old house,  
the well of sadness somewhere  
underneath the bedroom  
I don't go in anymore.  
You've moved on.  
Talking to you on the phone,  
looking out the windows at  
these colors, I hear you suddenly  
there, inside your laughter  
like a miracle, like the scent  
of fresh cut wood, the clean  
rhythm of the saw.  
You're drawing up plans,  
adding on.  
Last night in my dream  
these images returned to me as  
I met the architect of love and loneliness.  
He unrolled a drawing of my house,  
pointed to it:  
"Tell me where it hurts."  
"Not here," I said,  
pointing to the bedroom,  
"Not anymore. The kitchen,  
here by the sink, this is where the pain is."  
He looked up, handed me a pencil,  
and I woke with the idea  
that I had to draw myself  
out of it.  
I laughed and, looking out  
the window, felt free  
for the Spring again.



## **Outcroppings: Tahitian Village, Bastrop Texas**

Several small stones lie next to each other,  
high up in their beds, quiet now,  
a million year, more,  
between their last stranding surge of foaming  
riverflood and this soft  
spring day, warn and cloudless, the river  
incising now far below, evacuating time.  
Grass seeds, drifts of yellow pollen,  
oak and pine, sift into the dry  
crevices of this high exposure,  
Settling, gathering moisture,  
they exert themselves against  
the smooth, iron-stained stones  
warming in the afternoon sun.  
Thick green bundles of weeds  
tumble upwards, while underground,  
in the dark, infinitesimal root hairs  
feel their way down,  
pulling to the cool and damp,  
especially the damp.  
In search of moisture, they swell with it,  
bringing the restlessness of life below,  
stirrings immeasurable slight,  
without intention, without consideration  
of the long avenue of time and silence  
stretching backwards to that distant Spring.  
Unwitnessed, that ancient flood,  
but now, across from where I sit  
listening to the melody of time,  
a small puff of dusty pollen erupts  
from the tiny surface cracks  
as one large clast  
dislodges from the cliff,  
tumbles past me to the water's edge, shatters  
as it goes, startles nearby ducks and golfers,  
ends with three deep splashes as  
several small stones find themselves  
once again immersed in life's watery torrent.  
I measure off  
the span  
of a million years of stillness  
ended on this note.  
Pouring gravel through my hands,  
I hear the chords  
of a hundred thousand  
fossil love affairs.

## Call Me Lazarus

It was a stolen kiss.  
Unpremeditated,  
but indulged.  
I stole it, she indulged it.  
Just a touch, no time  
for counting between the flash  
and the thunder. For that instant  
all the words I hoard  
were obliterated, all the pictures  
in my head erased. Distilled  
to the surface  
of my own lips, so long  
bare of tenderness or passion,  
I sublimed in the jolt  
of contact, and instead of  
the full, dry, absently  
muscular lips, my lips,  
in tactile rote, expected,  
came the cottony touch  
of a summer coverlet: cool  
and thin, light, strong,  
non-committal.  
Resuscitated unexpectedly  
by the emotional voltage  
discharged  
at that moment,  
returned to myself  
with no instructions, I drove away,  
to the place I sleep,  
to wander the silver streets in my  
winding sheet, not sure  
where or why  
I came to be again.

## Sky Diving Off The Sofa

“If you could sing,”  
she said to me,  
“You’d have the perfect name.”  
Just a pun, or an old cage  
to perch in, but a  
mother’s words  
to live by nonetheless.  
Denied that voice  
I would never find the words  
to unpack the heartache  
blossoming  
like a parachute  
as she pulls  
the ripcord of my longing  
for her faith in me.  
I’m not new to this.  
I can shrug away  
the breathless moment  
of sudden drag  
as the cords in my neck  
pull taut.  
I can smile, dangling  
in my poisoned lie.  
Then comes the vertigo.  
I look up into  
the billowing silken  
sorrow of those repetitions,  
backlit, poised above  
me like some predator.  
I reach in, cut it loose.

Free fall  
is at least governed  
by some kind of law,  
and, in the rushing  
open air, I can sing  
as I please.

## Postcard From Mustang Island

Rabbit,  
I'm down here  
at the beach,  
the night sky is so black  
out over the Gulf  
you can reach  
up and rub it,  
like the speckled  
belly of a giant cat.  
The wind is just a force, so,  
with the gulls, you turn to face it.  
I'm sleeping out on the deck  
under the marching clouds  
and the flashing night sky,  
rolling back and forth in the surf  
with you in my dreams.  
Last night, Rabbit,  
under the stiff evening breeze  
I watched an old movie,  
Jason Robards in 1000 Clowns.  
It's all about holding on  
and letting go.  
His face was open and he sang  
for the child and the girl  
he loved. It was incongruous  
for him, and wonderful, but I  
took a little chill,  
hugged myself, as  
a meteor burned through  
my head. Suddenly alone, I realized  
I might never touch your breast,  
never anchor the love  
we need so much, might just pass  
you, another ghostly freighter  
on the dawn, heart's cargo  
sealed inside steely ribs  
against the salt spray.  
One hot tear gathered  
in the corner of my eye,  
but my anguish evaporated  
in the wind and, fascinated  
as the movie's players tried  
again and again to get it right,  
I released myself  
to what might be, Rabbit,  
no matter how salty.

## Walking On Waller

Early in the morning,  
morning after morning,  
even through the white heat of high summer,  
little Waller Creek stirs up the mud of my soul.  
Right across the bricked up conscious world  
it cuts an ancient trace,  
content to trickle or flood, heedless of us  
skittering around up on its banks.  
Wednesday: a turtle, huge, out of scale,  
high stepping up the rocky shallows  
like a dog with an umbrella  
second lining up some wet sidewalk.  
Friday: a blue heron nervously fishing, stalking,  
feels the air for my eyes on her back.  
Perfectly still she stares over her shoulder  
at me, the trigger  
of a loaded gun of wings  
in the shifting dawn light spearing  
through the cypress needles. We draw  
together. I pretend not to see her, shuffle on  
down to my own appointed place.  
Saturday: I go wading, trash collecting.  
As I make my huge clumsy way down along the bank  
I, too, feel the weight of observation. Instinctively,  
cued by echoes of the rippling stones  
I freeze, suddenly aware that a cloud of gnats shares  
my airspace. From the shadowed  
lowest cypress limb a pattern zigzags  
across my eyes: sharp bill, little black eye, staggered  
white stripes leading down to yellow legs.  
My friend the green heron has yielded  
her fishing spot to me, but she waits bravely  
for the running water's silence to descend again.  
Here, especially, it is rude to stare,  
so I snag another piece of litter and move on,  
at once connected and cut loose,  
gnat-like, temporary.

## Giving Her Room To Breathe

She said she had  
always with her an  
empty place inside,  
the homeless ache of mother-loss,  
the sorrow of her passages unregarded.  
Her questions unanswered,  
her answers sought  
from the ragged sunset,  
the eyes of strangers that might,  
just might, bear a message  
from the other side.  
I touch her hands to establish contact,  
they are anxious, as are mine,  
for I am not a curandero.  
“Close your eyes,” I say,  
“Reach inside, grasp that emptiness  
as it were a thing to grip,  
imagine it a shape, a color,  
as it comes within your reach.”  
In her left hand  
I place a tiny spirit bowl I made.  
Bluer than the cloudy sky  
above us it accepts her fingers  
as they curl in exploration.  
“Place the emptiness in this bowl.  
Draw it out. Imagine it  
taking form here, outside,  
where you can contemplate it.”  
While she dreams  
I place inside her bowl  
a polished old brown chestnut.  
Once she and it  
and the little blue  
bowl and I all stood  
briefly in a room together,  
and as we spoke  
I saw what I must do.  
Now, the four of us reunited  
on the cliff, over the water, above  
the city, I ask her to open  
her eyes, take in the world  
again. She caresses  
the bowl, the chestnut,  
seeing them now in the outer light  
for the first time, turning them  
over, reconciling touch  
with appearance. As she  
tastes them with her eyes, I hope

she feels a little fuller.  
“Now the emptiness is here,  
where you can see it.  
Yours to care for, yours  
to comprehend, but out here  
in the cooling air where the bats  
race the rising moon.”  
The scent of evening clings  
on the dew and I want  
to touch her one more time,  
to ground the charge, but the moment,  
like the flashing bats, eludes me.  
On the way down I glimpse her  
Attic profile, awash in lake reflections  
from the setting sun against Mt. Bonnell’s  
juniper and blueing limestone.  
In that instant I wonder  
did Helen, also far from home,  
feel such pangs,  
standing on those white stone walls  
alone, staring out  
beyond the wine dark sea?  
Over my shoulder night  
ripples down the long lake.  
Ahead I hear the chestnut,  
rattling in its bowl.

## Postcards From A Trip To Scotland

### I / Inheriting the Wind in Sutherland

I'm in Kylesku on Loch Glencoul,  
Rabbit. Wandering on the roads and hills,  
an idle child, staring at black slugs,  
red deer, and some kind of raptor  
wheeling high up in the sky along the shore,  
wings sharp as hooked knives.  
I came alone, to be alone, to take pictures  
of solitude. Tonight the wind roars  
through the late evening twilight. Thin  
ribbons of cloud soar overhead, sheets  
torn off the clotheslines of the gods.  
One after another, razors of white light  
slide over the shoulders of the hills,  
whip past black water rippling  
against the growling ferry at the dock.  
Far to the southeast the weather is being  
fired at me from pearly hills,  
hills lit from above and behind like a waiting stage.  
My reflection, caught  
between the window panes, stares  
back at the single streetlight,  
just winking on at 10 PM. In the distance,  
another white rag snaps over the hills,  
shoots the gap from the North Sea to the Minch,  
chasing the eternally setting sun.  
It occurs to me Rabbit, that I can't  
bring you a picture of the wind.

### II / Round Trip

It is flat, back where  
I am accustomed to sleep.  
Flat on my back on a flat,  
flat bed that I turn and turn in honor  
of flatness. There, the weather is up  
under the dome of the sky,  
pasted in, blue and white  
tiles in the ceiling of some vast rotunda.  
Sometimes when hot and cold collide,  
death tornados down  
from the high boiling zone above,  
the roof hurtles in, the light goes  
green and velvety, moss  
thick in the late afternoon gloom,  
upending all that flatness.

Where I have recently awakened, to drusy



early light and the taste of peat, the land  
is old and textured, the hills themselves  
are twisted, planed off pushed up against  
the sky, ruled in the end by water.  
Constant unrelenting winds, spirit voices  
by turns angry or seductive,  
always sharp, push clouds  
consequentially close over my head.  
Here, to stand is to stand against the sky  
alone, without the whispered brotherhood  
of trees, without the cocoon of human noise,  
too warm to be a stone that shapes the wind,  
too heavy to ride the column of chalcedony  
clouded air, an intruder called to witness  
the abrasive judgements of wind. Some  
sly fish, breaking the roiling surface  
of the aerial ocean.

Now I am back, flatly lying on my flat bed.  
The gray oyster morning light, though  
tardy, is huge. I have my little spot, safe  
in the shelter of a live oak, doors  
slamming in the distance, to sit  
and watch the slow parade of clouds.  
I am deep in the ocean of air, Rabbit,  
out on the abyssal plain, where the voices  
of the gods only reach at random,  
or in anger.

## MARBLES

### **I / Dusty**

There are missiles in Cuba.  
Lounging by the upstairs window  
at the classroom dictionary stand, I  
see our playground twinkle  
like the night sky. Sharp edged  
bits of quartz and mica  
glinting in the powdery coolness sparked  
waking dreams of serious play.  
The best marbles places were dirt bare.  
Not too deep or trodden, not those  
hammered troughs beneath the merry-go-round.  
Those were marble biters, toy indian eaters,  
ring tracks that, on quiet Saturdays  
became metaphors for rivers,  
places for panning, palms down, through  
the doodle-bug dens for steel pennies  
or lost shooters.

Shooters won't stay where they are put.  
In the whirling weekday recess frenzy  
shooter might slide out pocket, bounce  
off root's polished and projecting  
eyebrow, end up in those hot squeal-pounded  
reservoirs of dust. Saturday trolling  
might give back what Thursday spun away.

Clouds crossed the sun, breaking  
the playground's spell. On my desktop,  
long before me, someone with a protractor  
drew two intersecting arcs, carved  
them in an eye, a lazy marble player's eye-ring.  
My desktop eye rose before me, floated  
away in the flickering hot light,  
hovered, testing out the playground  
dust for fitness and depth, spun  
a mandala for marbles, dusty  
rings on socks and sweaty wrists.  
The shadows hardened. The bell rang.  
No need to run. In the green  
terrazzo stairwell echo chamber the urge  
to loose one cat's eye could not  
be restrained. Dropped from overhead  
It bounced slowly  
stair by step  
exploding  
on the way  
like bombs.

## II / Crystals

Under the mimosa tree, between  
the warty lawn-mowed roots,  
beneath the summertime acacia canopy  
where flower pom-poms pinkly  
sparkled, that would be a good marbles place.

Mimosa, a child's tree; smooth  
gently sloping branches to be ridden,  
dense, dappled shade keeping down  
the grass, making shelter  
for the run-around bugs. Brown,  
spotted underneath their wings,  
too fast for finger nabbing, they slip  
effortlessly out of reach to suck  
the sap and let it rain, soft and sticky,  
on the bare marble patch below.

Root-beer shooter, tawny brown,  
white swirling foam inside;  
in all but one direction, its inner light  
eluded the eye. Such cunning design  
identified the warrior shooter,  
committed only shrewdly  
to battle, held for power, shown  
for advantage. The esthetic remained  
unspoken among the players, but  
the elements were strength,  
depth of colored light, and casualness  
in its implication of the cosmos.

The sun, low through the folding  
Mimosa leaves, gleamed orange  
and violet, struck and entered  
the shooter by the secret orientation and, caught between  
my fingers, lit the gap of time

### III / Agate, Steelie, Bomber

Stone before sand.  
Sand before glass.  
Glass called crystals.

The water fountain stood inside  
the playground fence, some  
grey-legged ibis: the white porcelain  
trough with its rusty  
spoon billed head and kinked  
gunmetal piping legs, a statuary  
shorebird on the lake of recess.  
Circling it with nonchalance to avoid  
Head dunking tricks I would sop  
and wring a handkerchief in the gritty  
dribble. Rolled and tied around  
My neck it comforted me, and moistened  
My fingers for a better shooter grip.

Draw the ring with a crooked,  
barkless stick; a root, split,  
Smelling of sassafras. Each day.  
fresh sticks, Winnings can't be played  
until they can be trusted.  
Marbles carried in a pocket  
may not be mixed with money.  
Marbles touched by teachers suffer  
harm, shooters most of all, but crystals  
carry special power, can be sacrificed  
in difficulties. Crystals took less  
From the hand, changed not at all  
With ownership, were just what  
they were, like facts, only pretty.

Agate takes crystal.  
Steelie takes agate.  
Bomber takes steelie.  
Crystal takes bomber.

#### **IV / Disputation at the Lag Line**

Winning was easy to grasp  
at first, as I leaned and edged  
past the lag line,  
knuckle-walking for position in the shoot.  
So much more slowly came  
understanding of play by rule.  
Haste and passion like hair triggers;  
disputation and betrayal, bad  
tricks gone awry, dad's agate  
shooter confiscated by a knowing rival.

At such times I would stare  
witlessly at those hand-warmed  
bits of gaming glass.  
They did not know me. They  
would pass from palm to palm  
with loyalty to none but skill,  
oblivious to restiveness or violence,  
responsive only to the well-aimed  
eye and the practiced shooting hand.

Our confusion passed with our ineptness,  
knuckles callused, muscles  
of the hand grown taut  
as the eye commanded.  
Our skill became a wish  
for justice in the play. We won  
and lost and came to see that rules  
permit the game, shaped  
the inevitable into a rhythm  
that rose and fell like the raspings  
of cicadas in the treetops.

## **V / Busfish and the Cat-Eyed Spies**

With assorted other objects  
each marble chosen  
for the trip to school  
was a wager against time.  
A four-ribbed cat's eye,  
greenly gleaming in the early  
outdoor light was time's  
spy in the fine silt of tcurb and gutter.  
Practising shots, waiting for  
the yellow bus, a hungry fish,  
to swim up to the sidewalk  
flapping its doors,  
I watched the sly green  
glass roll the long slope to the rusty  
storm drain, bounce once past  
the diamond patterned cast iron  
top and fall away, out of reach  
to the darkness below.

## VI / Razoo

The sharp beaked bird, the hunter,  
dips without sound  
to the kill; black shadowed  
warning, outstretched talons  
stab the hunted mouse,  
whose tiny eyes reflect  
the deadly stroke of luck.  
I was familiar with that  
shadow. Bent over a shot, wanting  
Not to lose some favorite marble,  
comes the hawk's cry  
of the game breaker, some Shiva  
shouting RAZOO to the rooftops.  
Fear, disruption, powerlessness.  
The violated ring awaited  
resumption of lawful play,  
the grey steelie buried beneath  
Smear'd footprints.  
Call the hex, the ruse.  
Call truce.

Then try a little voodoo  
at the lag line:  
wipe that sweaty hand  
behind a wrinkled khaki knee.  
Cross fingers. Hold breath.  
Grind a knuckle in the dirt.

## VII / The Olive Marble

The aching fruit of determination,  
blood blisters were a badge we  
wore to draw respect.  
Alongside bruised fingernails  
they proved the marble player's seriousness.  
At table, showing off for girls,  
the olive made a fine mock marble,  
nestled cool and salty  
along my throbbing thumb joint.  
These lunchtimes now long past. Olives eaten,  
Ardent boys and girls  
grown and gone, the stubby  
marble washes up at last in some  
grandmother's yellow narcissus bed.



### VIII / Third Shelf

Child's closets  
are cul de sacs, heaped  
with broken clocks  
and watch parts,  
monsters piled toe  
to toe with gods.  
On the third shelf up,  
in a borrowed old red leather  
purse with a tassel on the zipper,  
my stock of marbles might sit  
heavily in winter.  
They might click and rub  
each other restlessly, calling to be seen  
or counted, wagered or admired.

Winter hoarding seems a natural  
obligation, cold water dripping  
from the sagging pines, from  
the eaves as from a leaking  
faucet in the half dark, while  
each soft plunk tugs  
and beckons. Marbles, wildflowers,  
autumn stars, each have their  
names and faces, histories  
and partnerships, needing  
nourishment from the hand and eye.

Spread out on my bed,  
a cold lake of marbles,  
deep with color.  
Such pleasure of the muted  
Lights, the quiet clicking  
around my diving hands.

## **IX / Mother May I**

The April moon tugs  
marbles from their lairs  
under bushes or underground.  
Common, obvious,  
given up for lost.  
Yet cryptocoded,  
Unexpectedly revived  
by the glint of moonlight,  
aquiver with my palm's heat.  
Agatized.

**Part 3..... 1984-1970**

## **Requiem for a Benevolent Dictator**

/Cyrano Cat 1972-1978

A sip of bad water  
or the wrong breath of air,  
perhaps some guilt beneath the foreleg scar  
lying white and quiet.  
Only once, by the sunlit winter window  
the blood rhythm skipped a beat  
during morning washing.  
The smooth oily sheen of fur  
rippling softly by that foreleg  
draws my hand, a morning touch  
only, no silent magic  
against an unseen foe.  
The growing day buds and flowers  
into heavy petalled restlessness.  
A small but raging spirit needing  
hands with reassuring warmth,  
hands to smooth static from the fearing fur,  
lift the weight from eyes  
now gone violet with pain.  
With pain, with pain, with pain  
the blood rhythm changes beat,  
the foreleg near the heart  
stiffens with the sadness of the truth  
while my hands must stroke and lie and live.  
my hands must hold the growing darkness close  
and beg forgiveness as,  
crushed between the sadness and the truth,  
a small life goes before me.

## **Kleingeld**

All I really saw in Europe  
were the children,  
their eyes glittering  
and passionless  
like those of insects,  
beholding other  
worlds than mine.

It was no help to sneeze  
into my handkerchief  
some words they knew,  
their ears seemed curiously  
deaf to my tones.

Perhaps there was a subtle  
piping in the air.  
Perhaps they were dreaming  
of a journey, watching  
the shadows for dark  
movement.

## **Whirligigging Through Wiesbaden**

And the Wiesbaden rain  
filters down on the icons  
where the princess lies dead in her tomb.  
Uphill on the lawn above  
the rotted gold dome  
lie the bathers of the Neroberg reach,  
overhung by the war bluff  
with the broad shallow steps  
and signposts that total the dead.  
On the tram to the tip of the berg  
nervous black shoes and tapping umbrellas  
make scandalized gossip of Japanese deals  
for a mountaintop Buddhist tea-garden  
while far below telephone cables are  
gently reeled into the ground.  
These voices, this damp dead stone girl,  
the Wiesbaden rain and the wind from the East,  
this tornado of a whirling down world.

## **Not At This Address**

Dreaming a life:  
ragged encounters  
with a moist wind in February.  
Every February  
the agony of metabolism,  
shared but impossible to share.  
In my hand  
the letter of a stranger  
to a stranger's friend,  
pulsing in its envelope  
as I pulse in mine.  
Assuming  
we are forwarded correctly,  
granting that our messages  
are undeliverable as expressed,  
we hold each other and hope  
to bear some imprint,  
some watermark, of this given,  
this moist February wind.

## **The Lake Beyond July Street**

The room was deep and white.  
The door rippled shut.  
My sinuses crackled  
as I dove and swam  
the distance  
to the floral love seat.  
My hips found the cushion  
with the deep cold feeling  
of a wading foot  
plunging into quicksand.  
Though settled,  
I felt no loss of motion.

Sunlight seeped  
through the balcony glass  
and puddled, lifeless, on the carpet.  
We were alone.  
I had arrived.

## Stroud's Run

At the lakeshore  
she and I went wading  
on the August afternoon;  
the warmth  
of the water  
gave the lie  
to the coolness  
of the air.  
Bare  
to the knees  
we waded,  
knew  
the weariness of wading.  
Warm water  
chilling about the knees.

After two years  
she and I,  
salt-encrusted  
from our ebbings  
returned  
to each other  
to the lake.  
Suited,  
we swam the cold air currents  
to the shore and back,  
satisfied with the echoes  
from an August afternoon  
still lapping there.  
Beach stones, polished by the waves.

## **In Need Of Change**

She took me by surprise  
at the laundromat.  
As I surveyed the stormy  
clouds of soap and clothes  
like some navigator  
searching patterns on a weather screen,  
I felt the radio go dead,  
a tingle at the base of my neck.  
Dropping the lid I slipped  
my last ten cents into the dryer,  
trying to get some time to think.  
Instead I heard her softly singing,  
took note of the mental hum and whine  
of the old high-altitude melodies.  
She was prepared for solo flight.  
I watched her run her hands  
along the sheets like they were maps,  
checking their legends wordlessly.  
She coasted towards me down the aisle,  
her eyes rose on the hot shimmering air  
and dropped out of sight  
beneath her silvered lids.  
As I watched her shadow over the hangers  
I heard the dryer prematurely stop.



## Soliloquy On A Skipping Stone

Near my home  
by the river  
the levee  
shakes like clay  
with the power  
of the water's passage.  
The river wants to move.  
It is all  
desire  
as it thunders past  
the fatal curve  
in the levee  
near my home.

The days pass  
like season-threaded needles,  
stitch year to year,  
ebb to flood,  
mud to stone  
to mud.  
Near my home  
the river  
wants to move.  
The levee shakes like clay  
and glistens, quivers red in the afternoon.

The river lies  
towards morning.  
With a roar some  
needle day will break  
the levee  
by its silver  
thrust in time.  
The levee whispers underfoot:  
'gathered and dispersed,  
granted and withdrawn,'  
as the days  
draw their unforgiving  
seams past  
the riverland,  
past this place  
where  
the river  
wants to move.

## **Biloxi**

The Summer sun shambles  
over the waves.  
In a blink of your eye  
the child describes  
the figure of a man,  
stooping in the sand  
like a shaman with a stick.  
Concentrating on his magic  
his lost to you.

Soon nothing  
brings him back  
but dreams and mirrors,  
faded, beach encrusted  
snapshots,  
the sun shuffling out of focus.

## **For Soren**

Am I then a priest?  
Never present, always  
casting past into future,  
making poets into penitents.  
I am all without me,  
nowhere near me,  
an atomized catalyst  
for distillates and vapors.  
Random molecules,  
bonding and rebounding,  
we alter our configurations  
at electrostatic whim.  
Optical isomers  
dancing on our axes,  
polarizing light:  
significant only in rotation.

Priestly perhaps,  
leading  
the fellowship of buried lives  
in reflexive mediations.

## **Air Perch**

Scaly,  
popping little gulps of moonlit air,  
I stand at the screen door,  
my back to the darkened kitchen  
wondering where that cat went.  
Whether that cat sits across  
the muggy darkness,  
cornered in the spidery garage,  
blinking slowly, knowing all about me. Regarding me as some atmospheric fish,  
some natural prey  
swimming in a tank, rising on occasion  
to sniff the nighttime cat air  
and latch the screen against it.  
Before I wriggle off  
to float stupidly among the bedsheet weeds,  
before I sink below  
the vision of those eyes,  
windows on the yellow night fire,  
show yourself cat,  
that I might call your name.

## **The Shifting and the Shiftless**

At dawn they entered,  
easing past our gates,  
their cosmos in a carpet roll,  
tightly clutched.  
Wandering,  
they came in quiet conversation  
to the market square,  
from a hundred repetitions  
sensing the familiar  
like migratory birds.  
Unwary only of themselves  
they were a singer and a strongman.  
Far from the well and trees  
in a desert corner of the plaza  
they spread their fringed intentions  
before early child call  
and deftly, selflessly,  
paced from worn to frayed  
in arid expectation of the day.

Throughout the afternoon  
there were tambourines and coins  
for continuity. Insufficient music:  
the players wanted more,  
the patrons less.  
She warbled, perching on his irons  
as he drove them to the air.  
The two as one:  
strongman, his toes  
gripping at the nappy carpet,  
singer on his shoulders preening.

Inevitable as hunger  
came the redness  
off the temple roofs at evening,  
The singer and her strongman  
slipped  
past the silent  
magnetism of hearth,  
of house, of sunset  
bounded by window frames.  
Their eyes like glazed tiles,  
their feet toe-deep  
in the swiftly cooling sand  
they bent, grumbling,  
to the re-collection of their world,

the collection of their future  
from the dust  
while silently they counted,  
infolding the one upon the other.  
Feeding on the table shadows and cook smoke  
they wafted  
towards the night narrowed gate.

The peculiar squeaking  
of their shoes in the darkness  
revealed them to me there as nomads.  
No cobbler in this place permits  
his wares to walk so dryly.  
Even when, as a soldier, before the wagon  
pounced and bit my legs in battle,  
the feet I wore so casually  
were shod with care by the leather men.  
These twenty years hence,  
stitched here to the gate wall,  
indistinct as lasting,  
like the packed floors of the temple  
or the shallow waters of the basins,  
I have serviced those with feet.  
Sentient and sessile, I am the city's memory.

The singer and the strongman  
passed in silence, oblivious to me as  
they cursed the blindness of this place.  
They should not be amazed.  
The heat  
shimmers up illusions  
every day.

## **She Stays**

Beneath the streetcar seat  
hang a pair of ankles  
sporting stylish shoes.  
These ankles,  
glowing in their hosiery,  
covered, I am sure,  
the snaps holding  
the collar band  
of the world on tight.  
It was five o'clock.  
I noticed the ankles pulling  
slightly outwards  
from the jugular luffing,  
the coronary rhythms of this day.  
The streetcar moves on  
like a hand,  
some sweaty hand across  
a clocked out neck  
and the ankles disappear  
as Tuesday turns its head.

## **For Asclepius**

It's Wednesday  
in the realm of coins,  
the electric cock is crowing.  
The morning skin is tight  
and fisted fingers  
crackle as they  
soothe unwilling eyes.

On the streets  
ragged armies muster.  
Soldier ants,  
lacking in design,  
aware only  
of the motion,  
of the time of day.

Helped by stimulants  
the thick-tongued morning  
mutters into afternoon.  
In an endless nearing  
Wednesday closes  
on its official limits  
with a latch of doors.

Soldiers in disarrayed retreat.  
Haste veiling furtive curiosity  
at the others,  
the never seen,  
the one upon the stairs,  
the owner of the white-whatever  
who does battle while we rest.

Depressants ease  
the passage of the evening.  
Stiffness creeps like smoke  
from the ankles to the aging head,  
exhaling into sleep  
and the cursing  
of the blessed night.

## **Desiccant sands**

In the dream  
two women  
came upon him  
dreaming in the desert.  
Four eyes  
surveyed him  
deserted  
in the darkness.  
Six arms  
twinned together  
darkly  
in the sun.  
Eight wings  
flew low  
suddenly.

## **Gusts**

The night wind  
moves the trees  
like chaos in the spring.  
Through my heart  
the self-same rage is stirring,  
slapped at and fanned  
by the lustrous leather leaves  
frantically waving, waiting  
for the storm  
that in coming  
never more than comes.  
Only windy passages,  
nothing more  
than shadow shadows,  
leaf on limb, heart on mind,  
viscid juxtaposition  
heralding cold rain  
that the night wind,  
chaos of the spring,  
will not allow.



## **Acts 1**

Having purged nerve worms  
from my entrails I  
feel momentarily reborn.  
I have acted in the world,  
recognized and held the face and hands  
of her whom I never thought to see  
and turned to leave.  
Walking to the car.  
My hand sliding to its pocket silences  
the jingling of coins.  
Judas did the same.  
An hour later, driving home,  
Judas drapes across my hood,  
dead to keep a secret,  
eyes silent, robes billowing  
in my field of view,  
betraying trucks and night birds.

## **Bronchi**

I sneezed you out this morning.  
Suddenly, without forewarning  
I caught you in my throat,  
just a moment and you were gone.  
Deep pain in my lungs,  
satisfying, a heart sneeze:  
searing and brief.

## **June Bugs Bashing the Window Screens**

Books and letters  
guard the perimeter of the lamp light,  
vaguely buttressing my will  
against the sleep  
as I reach to out the light  
without awakening.  
The chimera gently stirs my pillow.  
Three times the pile of clothes and covers  
arch suddenly beside me in the dark  
and three times I sink back  
to await the smoldering, two-alarm dawn.  
Some wild animal tears  
at the thatch of my dream hut,  
violates my forgiveness  
just to wake me up,  
urges me to face  
the deep impressions  
books and bedspreads make  
on the face of a man.

**Part 3..... 1984-1970**

## **Dying Like a Dream**

Driving in the car.  
A sound  
like chewing  
on a fat rubber band  
and a smell  
that could be chocolate,  
a pungent smell  
like the fluid from the brakes.  
Feeling odd and empty,  
the sound is from the brakes:  
no brakes.

Like the feeling of the eating  
as I snuffed  
The hollow easter-man  
comes the sigh like a crack,  
the line from nowhere  
on the glass.

## **With Fronds Like These, Who Needs Anemones**

/ Judy Holiday

'Twas frissy in the Bolger maze  
an wighty was the Blump,  
the meagre Hussum wizzed and jimped  
And quilbered at the Groberslump.

All about in Manx and Minx  
the Tweebers granked and wheemed  
while Sacksen Lumpetts strummed their twucks  
and whimpered by the beam.

'Twas frissy too in Holcum State,  
the Glump staggered blindly home  
and along the way the green Gahoof  
freeps his mate with a bone.

The Whiffer sniffs about the wall,  
seeking sawdust scents,  
and all the spastic higaloos  
whip their twisted frobishers.

Ah, but then in Whilomburg,  
'twas frissiest of all...

## **Cancel Your Next Trip Home**

Hack away with a pair of short dull scissors  
at an old piece of heavy cloth,  
at a pair of pants with patches at the knees,  
a blanket, a towel made for the beach and sanded clean.  
Cut against the bias, cut the seams  
thread by thread  
until thumb and forefinger stiffen,  
until one joint or another seizes  
with disbelief at the endeavor,  
but persevere.  
Cut all the way across to make  
new rags from old clothes.

## **Formless**

Like a leper  
with a bell,  
dying piece by piece,  
I go waking,  
clutching hands  
that seldom feel the pain.

Like a leper  
I am torn  
between the silence  
of the cave  
and the empty noise of movement,  
cadenced clamor  
of the warning note around my neck.

Like a leper  
I wander through the streets  
and leave my scent for dogs,  
dying as I go,  
piece by piece.

## **Summer Lightning**

Alone at the window,  
sultry jazz  
sings to my hips.  
Chimes jangle,  
rain chases cars in the darkness.

Power lines explode in green;  
jazz agonizes  
to a halt  
and begins again  
to stop  
and begin again.

Almost compelled,  
I slouch through the streets  
to find a stranger,  
crickets sing,  
celebrating moisture  
in the ground.

### **Without Benefit of Grace**

Walking in the Christmas  
darkness,  
silence but for footsteps  
beneath streetlights,  
my shadows  
like negative refractions.

A single set of footsteps  
unable to hold a pace,  
the great halo of the moon  
only one more fact  
to a single pair of eyes:  
no parallax,  
no possibility of art  
from shadows.

My shadows  
of a man,  
not a man.

### **The Tortoise Drove a Peterbuilt**

It must have been near midnight  
when, to obey some errant metabolic urge,  
she dashed,  
was destroyed by a road-god.

I saw her from my second story window,  
a piece of Zeno's motion,  
as I was preparing  
to obey the selfsame whim.

I carried her remains,  
pop-eyed, limp, swiftly cooling,  
to the bin,  
recalled it had been her idle pleasure  
To claw on tires.

Later, running,  
Wondering at the gods  
That motion makes.

## **Lean Into Spring**

Tuesday morning,  
out of character with the days,  
a silent phase.  
The chilly waiting for the rain  
in an easy chair with amber teas  
that steam and ripple;  
one sweet sip might last an hour.

Later in the day  
old people meet old friends  
in a new café,  
still waiting for the rain.

## **The Smell of Sycamores**

As a girl, she drew  
a tiger for a man  
who didn't care;  
she gave up drawing tigers

Older, she translated  
angel songs for a man  
who dreamed of power;  
now she rarely sings.

As a child.  
I clambered to the treetop  
to wonder at my solitude;  
now tigers and angels  
ring my tree,  
I don't know  
where to turn.



## **Insomnia**

A certain urgency demanded it:  
touch-talking what the lips  
Were too remote to tell,  
making time that never was  
to fill the gap beyond  
and behind us.  
Awakening to nothing  
more than the knowing,  
why the dream  
had been forgotten

How wide is the space of death?  
will it hold a moistened finger,  
or a life of spatial searching,  
overreaching?

## **Thirst Remaining**

We spoke.  
The words  
glistened and fell  
like sweat  
into the toe-deep  
summer dust:  
a dampness  
like that other,  
overlooked,  
dissipated soon  
into silent sleep.

We walked on.  
We slept side by side,  
dreamed the world  
beneath our feet;  
the dust swarmed and glinted  
like chaos

We awoke.  
The knowledge  
spattered and vanished  
like rain  
into the dust-drowned  
summer path,  
overlooked, soon  
dissipated.

## **Homecoming**

The arrival.  
Keys, doors, kitchen floors,  
monuments  
to something more  
or less depending.

The meal.  
Spoons, tiny shovels,  
digging graves on plates  
with timeless rhythms  
like water pouring  
later, down the drain.

The darkness.  
Then the moaning  
of the wind  
blowing morning.

## **The Darkness of Attic Windows**

Words  
like red tile roofs,  
guarding windows rarely used  
or plastered over.  
I have witnesses dying love,  
as thread by anguished thread  
eases, rotten, from the warp,  
hangs in tatters  
waiting  
for the loosing  
of the thread  
whose final  
sighing snap  
is never heard.  
Death like  
a bolt of faded cloth  
lying tumbledy  
beneath its frame.  
Yellow light  
through wordless windows.

## Reflections On New Love In The Next Booth

She sits smiling,  
all the angel,  
for the whole world  
is known to her at last  
through this one.

At last, through the feel  
of this one's curls  
between her practiced fingers  
every stranger  
is only half forgotten.

This one will be true.  
This one, curls the finger,  
this one, slides the lock of hair.  
Fleeting, somewhere fleeting,  
perhaps on the street outside,  
an image of a hound  
once hers,  
one that happened to survive,  
waiting back home  
for a tugging of the tired ears,  
a blink and a shrug.  
Magic lever, magic fulcrum,  
she eases off the burden.

Glancing over once again at  
what can only be returned  
in the end, she burrows  
through his locks,  
a misdirected fluke.

The salvation of the world  
must lie in motes.  
We are all blinded in the end,  
conquered by some stranger;  
restless egg succumbed  
by red-eyed fur.

## **Testudo on Friday**

In the evening of the morning  
of the dusk that dawns  
at noon I raise a loggerhead,  
gaze out of the window-room.  
Slow consciousness of dreams upended,  
unattended, unrelieved;  
underneath the eaves  
springing bees drone the season-menace.

Terrapin to water,  
crawling to the sink to splash.  
Lash myself in cloth and leather,  
lather up my face in froth.  
Aged razor breaks the budding bristle-twigs:  
the children's weary snapper  
on a dry July afternoon.  
Groomed and sure in soft shell shoes,  
lock the door and ease away.

Drawing back a water-drink,  
brinking, still dreaming, unforeseen.  
Born in the middle of the day,  
older than you think.

## **The Exile**

Beyond Greatness then,  
the questions a man asks himself  
when, alone, he sees  
his fingernails are dirty  
once again.  
Wondering  
why he think  
there is a difference  
between the leap and the fall,  
or knowing both,  
why he still tests  
the rotten step  
before he eases  
over onto it  
his weight,  
sniffing as he goes,  
the tatters  
of a half-remembered dream.

### **Athens The First Time**

Discovery through quiet days.  
The carmine sun  
drips innocently past the evening  
yet seems eternally fixed  
in folds of velvet textured steel.  
Nights with time suspended  
on a hillside in the moonlight.  
The topaz dew  
rises weightless,  
crystalline.

Still, I am a man  
sometimes woman,  
never holy.  
I give myself to love,  
indulge in dreams and fears,  
the bittersweet reunions  
and the partings.  
Clutching like a child,  
never sure.

### **October Rose Early**

The stem  
held three pink roses.  
splayed and untended  
they grew for sheer  
amazement in an ancient  
corner of the widow's yard,  
never expecting to be picked.  
I picked them.  
Robbed three stems of maiden hair,  
arranged a simple wheel,  
pink and green,  
in a water glass with water  
on a saucer rimmed in blue.

I never learned to feel  
the dying shame of flowers.  
Now their stiff black centers  
stand attentively,  
conscious  
that their nakedness  
still pleases me.

## **Candles After Sundown**

Coins in pockets, sliding  
through empty fingers  
in the dark,  
making echoes  
of the window-splashing rain.  
There are no fingers on a coin  
to hold,  
no features on the polished glass  
to touch.  
Soft sounds, all the wrong ones,  
not the breathing, not the reaching,  
just coins, deep  
within pockets  
late at night.

A face, but not the right one.  
Sunday passes like a stranger.

## **Equinox**

The wanting comes softly  
at the onset of winter  
when the sun hovers thinly  
on the edges of the afternoons.

Evening-stiffened hands  
call visions from the vapors  
of the steaming cups.  
The careful growth of ice  
on midnight windows  
crystallizes resolutions.

The sun comes softly  
On winter mornings.

## **Song Of The Steel Shakers**

Animals and children  
crying in the darkness  
of our thirst:  
agua, agua.  
Who are we to notice  
ebony and emerald  
dragonfly on rusted  
steel or crystalline  
intensity of trees  
in May-light dawning?  
We are but friction engines  
whose fuel  
is the agua,  
whose transmission  
is the awful clutch  
of need  
hanging like a deadly weight  
about the groin at daybreak.  
Transpiring,  
we build the roads,  
hurl ourselves  
over chasms drawing  
bridges up behind us.  
Our need,  
inseparable from us,  
is for the agua.  
In the needy  
silence of our agua  
we can see  
we are but forward troops  
for other loveless specters  
yet to come.  
The agua is our strength,  
fever of our vision,  
seed of all our dreams.  
The agua and the silence  
make the hot steel  
that sings and echoes  
through the virid trees  
a human thing.  
We are human  
things.

## **Smoking Out The Day**

Seated by the lake  
at night.

Wine dark, oily swells  
in heedless spectacle,  
like a drunken workman  
idly whacking the shore  
with a stick.

I am silenced by it.

Down the slope  
behind me,  
amplified by stillness,

I can remotely hear  
the rainstorm water  
trickling to meet the reeds,  
yet I can't recall the raining.

On my way back  
to my bed

I brush someone,  
only barely.

It occurs to me  
that life is not enough,  
though it fills the silence.



## Untitled

Thankless darkness.  
The evening papers  
have thudded  
to the curbstones,  
window shades and wonder  
drawing down a little more.  
Insects drown  
the need for stars,  
while preludes and postscripts  
lay buckled by the rain,  
black as night.  
Oh, the impotence of ink.

I dance in the silence  
of the eye  
to sounds unseen,  
interrupted by the word,  
by the world.  
Memories of melodies,  
fearless, so graceless  
that I stitch them  
to myself in motion,  
in silence.  
One man dancing.

## Empty Bottles

Thorns  
are the reasons  
for the roses.  
Some people  
can be pierced,  
and still not know the pain.  
Drown  
and never lose  
their breath.  
Sleep and die  
and never dream  
of death.

## **The Observers**

Rail thin hound  
trotting past the tracks,  
growling down  
the night streets.  
Shadows on the window sill  
raise his hackles  
in alarm,  
but bouncing low  
on stone-bruised pads  
he winces off  
into the storm.

The window closes  
with a shriek  
as rusty hands retreat  
into their sheaths.

## **For Jo Hopper**

It's an Edward Hopper evening,  
only colder,  
heavy objects sucked back  
against the ultramarine and topaz  
nightfall.  
The back paths and outbuildings  
of the town,  
bruised by their Christmas solitude,  
discolor slowly  
in the spreading strength of streetlights.  
Walking seems too easy,  
the feeling is too thin-hipped,  
too sharp  
for an Edward Hopper night.

## **Breakers**

Confronted by some woman  
in the supermarket  
with the miserable  
worth of spoken words  
my legs demand to walk.  
The April night wind  
is husky and straightforward.  
it noiselessly accommodates my presence  
but denies the sharp illusion  
of discipline in motion.  
Sagging clay in the potter's hands  
I return home  
left alone with angry dreams,  
a damp sense of the way life  
always only seems..  
On the bureau  
sixteen shells  
that will alleviate the pain.  
Shells vaguely odorous  
that will explode  
beside my ear  
like the sea,  
like the roaring intentions  
of a metaphor.

## **Ashes**

Blue sky,  
depth without surface,  
clear and measureless  
as birds fade past  
or descend  
to dusty yellow paths.  
Strolling lovers,  
some with cigarettes,  
some without.  
At last, second guessed,  
the revelation of a star,  
then a thousand.  
The empty becomes filled  
though still unmeasured.

## Static

From what expanse  
of slowly turning charges  
does the lightning's echo  
reach to etch  
A moments stillness,  
heart?

This fearful thunder,  
the universal gravitation of desire,  
hurls the vitals  
to their telos  
each wretched time  
without resolution.

Stranded on that shore  
in that ceaseless, self-resisting storm  
brace one leg  
against the other  
and in that shocking stillness  
of the given moment  
fetch the fabled peach.

## **Angel Flight**

Divorce. The loss  
of having lost losing  
the love-leaping  
the lost-sleeping.  
Divorce. A sour note  
of making-do.  
Illusion disillusioning  
to delusion,  
a silent cry in the mirror's ear.  
The one you wanted to have loved  
leaving, returning,  
asked to leave and leaving  
Withdraws the pound of flesh  
the law requires.  
Dishes lurking in the sink  
Begging you to wash,  
to think. Dust devils nip at heels,  
unfamiliar hours clog the clock.  
Driven out into the streets you walk,  
hands stuffed in pockets,  
dreaming and disjoining,  
disbelieving your divorcing.

## Midnight Music

Indigo is the color of my soul,  
black, some men would say,  
who know yet naught of life,  
and depthless to human eyes,  
including mine.

Indigo lies on the edge of every blade,  
in the corners of every laugh,  
at the source of every ocean.  
Indigo this burning beneath my eyelids.  
Indigo is silent, and men fear it.

Indigo is the night  
awash with clouds  
and whispering lights  
to pacify the eyes of man,  
staring madly at the hooded cowl of sky.

Indigo is the color of my fears,  
in the taste of every kiss,  
the touch of every hand,  
framing every strangers face,  
floating on a tone.

And indigo is grey,  
becomes a flaming silver surface  
as the light of day  
comes creeping over growing,  
everlasting reaching things.  
Grey am I, indigo is my soul.

## **After Talking To You**

The stranger has arrived  
and quietly tonight he threads  
his way among the falling,  
running waters.  
His eyes are thunder.

His splashed out footprints  
weave a melody as he walks,  
guitars reflecting off the street,  
violins twining on the yew trees.  
His cloak and hood are grey skies

He blinks and shadow casts  
flood the heavens; ghostly then  
are the sprouting trees, and flowers  
quiver in the freezing rain.  
Spring is in his step,  
tomorrow is his song.  
Flowers are his laugh.

## Matchless

I am a man: a flash, a scratch.

I am a match  
that flickers, floods, flutters  
and fails.

Knowledge that makes  
the gloom I am to dispel  
no blacker.

How does a match  
convey the vastness  
of the universe?

By its very inadequacy.

How does the seashell share  
the beauty of its inmost twist  
unshattered?

By the silence of its curves,  
the mystery of its grace,  
by its shadows.

There are times when shadows  
speak louder than sunlight.

How does a man define life  
and live it?

For whom does this silly match  
sputter?

I know neither, not care,  
but I pray.

My prayer is for a hotter flame,  
a broader, gentler ring,  
and company while I burn  
that remains as I burn low.

A single spent match  
is too lonely to have been.



## To The West Wind, Harbinger Of Spring

The west wind came  
creeping round my window,  
curling on a moonbeam,  
a bouncing arc across the  
silent vault:  
went dancing with my wind chimes  
to a graceful strain,  
unrestrained,  
laughing gently at the icy touch of brass.

The west wind ran its  
fingers through my hair  
and with a sigh went  
sliding over the rooftops,  
slipped its arm in mine  
and carried me away.

As we flew  
I heard the trees  
whisper to this west wind breeze  
“Be careful, bear him lightly,  
you travel now beneath  
blue skies as have never yet  
been painted.”

## While Gemini Danced

I oozed into a color store  
and to the man behind the counter  
I said  
'What do you have in sadness for three cents?'  
And he replied  
'I'm sorry,  
we're out of three cent sadness.  
The closest I can come  
is nickel melancholia.'  
I thanked him, for I couldn't afford  
nickel melancholia,  
though it was well worth the cost.  
The next door I went in  
was much too low,  
I had to kneel to enter.  
The shadow behind the counter  
waited.  
I said 'Hollow, this is an author's supply house.'  
The shadow said, 'Yes, can you help me?'  
'No', I replied.  
'You may like to know that this is a three cent sale.' remarked the shadow.  
'Sorry, I don't have a boat at this time,  
I'm searching for an oaken table  
and a green leather chair to match.'  
'Too late, the oaken is broken and  
the green leather chair is in hiding.'  
'Then I'll take one blues eraser and an  
idea to go.'  
'On wheat bread or rye?'  
'On double toasted whys,  
well-seasoned with blue skies,  
in a storm cloud wrapper.'  
'Beware, beware  
the driving after,  
the striving laughter,  
the giving faster.  
Three cents please.'  
With that and my money  
the shadow fled  
and I bled out the door.  
So low,  
solo,  
never to return.

**Part 4..... Stories**

## On Wings of Song

Everyone thought it was about the bees and the bats in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but all along it was about the birds. Well, not the birds themselves, but about the things they carried. By 2020, the memory of the 1918 flu pandemic was academic, a kind of racial memory, like the hiss and rattle in the weeds. Flu, a tiny innocuous word that snagged your attention like a sharp fish hook.

People were so much more numerous than in 1918. Bigger, too, with an insatiable appetite for protein. Huddled up against the world's coastlines, which they could not defend against the angry warming seas, pushed together in high coops, they darted about, scratching and pecking at their devices, constantly eating. Providing protein for these great flocks, doing it quickly and cheaply, required great rivers of meat, meat cities – feedlots, piggeries, fish farms, and chicken houses. Or turkeys. Or ducks. Antibiotics sloshing around like dirty flood waters, the people and their meat steeped in it, while a ring of resistant and emergent organisms grew on the rim of the world.

The people and the meat grew closer and closer together, one organism feeding upon itself, and the wild shrank and shrank away, withdrew to refugia in the high places, the dry places, the swamps, the deep wells of the world, to wait. All but the birds, who owned the air and flew where they pleased, jetting in crowds like shards of glass whirling and sparkling in the light. They followed the sun, the rain, the ancient paths of magnetic fields. The birds came and went, respecting no sovereign borders, holding no properties, obeying no commands. We called them vectors. Arrows of change pointed to the future, carriers of flu.

It began in China, informally at first. Birds were scarce there anyway. After all, meat is meat, social action there is less subject to debate, and birds could just fly away from air thick as pudding and water that would curdle milk. The embarrassment of several flu scares in a row, the loss of a few million chickens and ducks, and visitors began to notice the silence in the trees in cities, then in the countryside. No one knows when the first official policy was enacted, but by 2035, birders in other places began to notice that the great migratory flocks from greater Asia were thinning, then suddenly gone, like cod before them. From there, whether by accident or design, the phenomenon moved west. Probably the migrating vectors were interrupted in the Middle East and North Africa, and in a decade or so, the air over Europe went still, and the ravages of flu, by then quite fierce, showed pockets of decline.

The new world resisted, but the people and their meat must be protected, and with belated UN backing, the war on birds began in earnest. That was almost 50 years ago. There hasn't been a mass chicken kill in the US in three years, and the last mass grave for flu victims was in Chicago in 2080, probably started by the last flocks of Canada geese. The Amazon Basin, the Okavango, and a few other places have been the most difficult to finish scrubbing, but before long the last vector will be stopped in mid-flight, and after 150 million years, the skies will fall silent again. Our victory.

Not completely silent, of course. We have good pesticides, but it is hotter and wetter now, and the bugs are coming on strong. Every year the cicada broods are larger and louder. Other strange side effects are starting to bubble up, but we adapt. Bugs are good protein too, and most of the other changes, well, they are far away from where we are in our soggy high rise cities. I find the emptiness of the sky a little unnerving, looking out my window and there's nothing moving but the occasional con trail, but I am getting on now. The children don't understand what we are talking about, and find the idea of birds preposterous and frightening. I have a feather I found when I was in my twenties. I think it was an owl, a bird that flew at night and hunted other birds and small mammals. So strange, that texture, the beautiful subtle colors, the lightness of the structure. I miss those flashing wings, those little snatches of song, but the children are safer now, and we have plenty to eat.

## B-4, B-9

We told my parents we were going to see Joe. It was an inside joke for New Year's Eve, 1970. Joe was a movie about an angry white man seeking vengeance, but we never went. As college freshmen in 1970, we were spooked enough already. Besides, that sounded like a date, and I never went on 'dates'.

Delilah, meanwhile, was a deep well of darkness, to me anyway. She had dark hair and eyes; she looked Irish, but had a Cajun name. She had dark moods and what little she said was full of dark undertones. I was bonded to her in some strange way I still can't explain. There was trouble at home, but I hadn't seen it first-hand; she just needed a friend. She was like a feral cat that had taken up residence; she was there but not there. She wrote me inscrutable notes in curly script warning me to keep my distance, but made me a lovely piece of embroidery that I still mourn losing. She was shortly to head to Arkansas to live on a commune, and the last I heard of her, she quit her job to go to Mexico to help the Zapatistas.

We got in the car and rolled away. Like most Louisiana winter nights, it was damp and chilly. The car was an old 1960 Pontiac Bonneville – the trunk was big enough to have a picnic on. Long bench seats. Powder blue with a white top. It was like riding down the road in your own personal sky. We just drove, happy to be out of our respective houses and moving.

The Mississippi Bridge on I-10 was new. I-10 didn't really go anywhere yet, instead you had to hop-scotch around, so traffic was light. We drove to the middle of the bridge, parked and got out to lean on the railing and watch the giant oil tankers pass below. Can't do that now. The only thing taller nearby was Huey Long's big state capitol. We went across to the other side – empty square miles of fields and pasture -- turned around and drove back, then went to the other end of I-10 on the East side of town, where it began angling towards New Orleans as Highway 61.

Driving 61 from Baton Rouge to New Orleans at night was alternately exhilarating and creepy. Just over a year ago, Camille had ripped through Biloxi and flooded New Orleans. Locally there was no need to precede a woman's name with 'hurricane' – everyone knew who did what. Here, there was swamp on either side, flat water teeming with crawfish and walls of impenetrable grey-green and brown winter vegetation, broken at intervals by the little human islands of Raceland, Sorrento, Gramercy, and the industrial constellations of Geismer, Norco, Alcoa, and god knew what, blinking, hissing, and spewing in the darkness. The smells! You'd have to be an organic chemist to even begin to describe them. At intervals there were roadhouses for shift workers and roughnecks. Pick-ups spraying drunkenly out of oyster shell parking lots and screaming semis were our only company as we drove south and east.

The clammy night with its smells and swamp noises drifted over us as we floated like space travelers in suspended animation down the blacktop behind the headlights. I tried to figure out a picture of New Orleans, to imagine some frame we might fit ourselves into on our New Year's Eve adventure. Kids out where they shouldn't be with a big car and not even ten bucks between them. The first rule of being outlaws was not to get caught, so we drove and daydreamed until civilization grew close. There wasn't a lot of talking.

We could hear planes coming in over Lake Ponchartrain and I suggested we stop at the airport. Delilah shrugged, engrossed in the wind from the open window and the swamp going by like a cartoon backdrop. So, we pulled in at Moissant, as it was then called, the big catenary arch of the terminal not as overwhelmed and tawdry as it is today, and landed the blue bomber in a parking spot. We were both silently relieved to have a destination that was not the French Quarter on New Year's Eve. We drifted into the terminal, quiet this time of night, the terrazzo floors gleaming in the bright lights. The airport was perfect; we both had leaving on our minds.

It was the time just before gate security, before hijacks, there was no one to stop us. We strolled down the deserted concourse, looking at the gates, looking at the departure signs. I had little fireworks going off in my head at the prospect of so many destinations. Gate B-4 had a flight to Boston posted. The gate area was deserted, the plane visible beyond the sweating windows. Boston sounded good, so we sauntered on board. The plane was deserted; the cockpit was empty, no flight attendants, nobody. We slid down the aisle, feeling the seat fabrics as we went, saying nothing, but the hair on the back of my neck was tingling. At the back, we got a drink and a snack and sat down, completely invisible. We flipped through magazines. The flight was due to leave in an hour or two. By New Year's, we would be out over the Appalachians.

We talked it over but, wary like little swamp animals, we began to reconsider, the downside developing in our heads like a black and white print blooming in the tray under the red darkroom lights. Even if we managed to get to Boston undiscovered, then what? We had no money, no way to get back. We'd get caught, there would be a brou-ha-ha, maybe it was some federal crime. We'd get our wings clipped before they were strong enough to hold us up. No, that was not the way to escape, not certain enough. Someone would find us, someone would bring us back and make examples of us. Coming back was worse than not leaving.

We eased off the plane, unnoticed by the housekeepers who were starting to tidy up the cabin. We shoved our hands in the pockets of our bell bottoms and listened to the swishing noise we made as we shrugged back down the concourse, our spirits lifted by what we 'almost' did, and at the same time diminished by our limitations. We floated back through the swamps in the blue barge to our respective houses in chilly silence.

Recently I flew into New Orleans from Boston, not long after Katrina, on my way to Baton Rouge. We landed at B-9. The airport was sad, desolated, security guards everywhere, but not many planes. Walking down the concourse again, sliding past B-4, I didn't have bell bottoms on. There was no way I was ever going to get on a plane again without a boarding pass. Delilah was no more there than she had ever been. But the terrazzo still gleamed in the lights, and I kept staring at the departure boards.

## **Departures**

One day in a busy square an artist selected some entry stairs to a building in which he knew no one and sat down as if to meet someone. He examined everyone who entered or departed with a look which seemed to say "No, I'm sorry, I'm waiting for someone else." Later in the day, the occupants of the building began to be puzzled when the artist made no move to leave. But no one wished to be rude to a person who might be someone else's guest, so they left him alone

Throughout the day, the transparent moon accompanied the artist; it was a shining silver coin balanced on the curb of a rooftop. Slowly the world turned her shoulder to the sun. She let the evening breeze flutter through her ancient violet shawl. The moon drifted up and away like a prayer sent to heaven. In the cooling air, wheels sounded like coins falling into poor boxes. The candle of the moon was soon extinguished, the turning coin thinner than a razor.

The artist meanwhile had fallen into a confusion. It has slipped his mind that he was merely acting out a whim and he began to wonder exactly whom he could be awaiting in this unfamiliar place. It was late into the night before he gave up and went away.

## **Hot Sand Witches**

One requirement for the completion of University studies was that the student write a paper demonstrating understanding of the works of the Danish Philosopher. The student began and began his researches into Kierkegaard without the glimmer of an idea for the resolution of this task until several years had passed and only this one obstacle stood between the student and his graduation. In despair, he dreamed one hot spring afternoon that a voice spoke to him and said that what he required was distance. The student awoke with a start and asked no further questions. He abandoned his dwelling and struck out westward towards the desert.

Three days and nights later, riding in the middle of the desert, the student passed the fringes of a great city of entertainment, and from the roadway he caught a glimpse of a mechanical sign which alternatively displayed advertising along with the time, temperature and financial reports. In his weariness he thought he saw a message flash by which read "Despair Or Do Not Despair, The Result Is The Same." The student was so startled he pulled over to the side of the road, thinking that perhaps here was the true occasion, the thread from which he could spin a solution to his dilemma. First, however, he would have to view the message again to be sure.

Several days later his dehydrated body was found leaning out of the car window, his fly-crowded eyes staring absurdly across the desert to a sign which displayed the weather conditions, market reports, and an advertisement which read "Desperados Do Not Disperse, They Regroup At The Sands."

## Hellions

I remember the storms. Gulf Hurricanes of a certain vintage: Betsy, Hilda, Camille, others too. First, that stillness like death and the gray-green light. We were too young to be frightened but old enough to sense the spiky concern around and above us. We were probably in no serious danger. The storms were strong and regular, but everyone knew what to do. We only had to stay out of trouble, and –just barely – we did.

Those were the bicycle years. Waking up with cramps in calves and thighs, needing that rushing pavement under my feet like a drug. The day of waiting for the storm was always a fish or reptile day: numb, hot, oppressively humid and still. Bike riding was agony, each drop of sweat clinging like a towel, refusing to evaporate and cool the skin, lungs straining for oxygen till legs began to burn with deficit.

Low bushy eyebrow clouds like stern fathers slid over and over until they began to pile up against the northern horizon and finally the wind began to blow and the rains started to sheet down. Because of radio, we knew where the storm was, so the weather confirmed the news, and when the storm began in earnest, it was like a sigh of relief from the land when the wind turned cold and the giant fat raindrops began to explode on cars and roofs. The actual storm came on less strong than adult fears, though strong enough with salty smells and wheeling birds from the coast, flash-lit by lightening. We kept waiting for it to rain frogs or shrimp, but it never did.

Then came the scary part. The dogs all threw up on cue as the pressure fell.. We were isolated in our houses – power and phones out, miles of the twentieth century turned into the nineteenth in two hours of wind and rain. Lots of crashing as trees broke apart, then at last the eye overhead. We had no plan, but like magic, we tumbled from our homes when the wind died off. We had an hour more or less, and we rode like escaped crazies around and around the borders of our little world checking it out, blundering through ditches, careening around trees and power lines, great gusts of wind lifting us from behind or pushing us over. Roofing was everywhere, like seasoning sprinkled on a bitter soup. At some point the roar would reach a crescendo and we scurried home, drying off and listening to the emergency radio, comparing it to what we had seen.

Sleep finally came amid the creaking trees and the battering of the wind-blown rain peppered with loose bits crashing into the house. I dreamed of lions and dinosaurs. I thrashed to escape their talons and woke early. How clean the sky was that next morning, but the town was silent and disheveled like an empty room after a wild party. Soon the choking roar of chain saws and the stunned adults, hauling stuff up and down like ants in a disturbed nest, trying to restore order and control. After it was over and all the other traces were gone, we could haul the piles of loose roofing out from the hidey holes where we had collected and stored it. We would strew it around upside down on the quiet back streets at dusk, ride our bikes as fast as we could and slam on the brakes as hard as we could just on top of the roofing. We would squeal and carom down the street, great fish tales of sparks arching in the dusk and leaving huge skid marks – proof of our existence. And the reason we anticipated those storms with such enthusiasm. We were just little hellions, that's all, and a hurricane suited us just fine.



## For the Eagle in the Camera's Eye

Honeyless, dreaming, bone to bone they lie.  
They waken only at the Phoenix cry  
Who find to love as lonely as to die.  
--E Sewell

Day broke like a silver needle pushed through dark cloth in the sunlit lap of a Victorian lady on a picnic-day. In fact, it was quite the opposite; the needle pushing up between the woven threads of fabric caught taught in the embroidery hoops of Glenna Algrace signaled a kind of dawning, but the trickle of sweat against his stiff collar delayed Walter McCutcheon from fully realizing what had taken place in his mind. The sun was quite hot in the clear sky on the slopes outside Denver, but only for a few hours past midday, when the altitude began to exert its force. Dr. McCutcheon noticed Glenna's needle again, now a thin black line between her fingers, grimly echoing the hideous tattoos that ran like thick dried blood in five straight lines from her lower lip to her handsome jaw line. The sudden darkness of that silver needle meant that the sun was passing, time to gather up and return down the steep path to the portico of the home, time to further soothe his charges with a little soft piano music before Sunday supper and the prayers that ended another week.

"Nurse Johnston, please assist the ladies with their parcels, we must proceed back soon."

"Certainly, Dr. McCutcheon, but if you please, I must ask you to deal with Miss Algrace today; out here, like this, I simply can't go near her."

"If you will. Take care that no one leaves their sewing lying about today; the director was angered last month when I was forced to report a miscount of completed work." The Director's words echoed in Dr. McCutcheon's head as he approached Miss Algrace. He averted his eyes briefly from her to the shimmer of sunlight on the metal roofs of the mining camps scattered about and let the conversation repeat itself.

"McCutcheon, I say, just because these women are insane is no excuse for them to be idle.

Perhaps at that fancy school of yours in St. Louis such things are not done, but among those women who are deemed harmless here some kind of domestic discipline must be enforced. This hospital is able to offer a haven of refuge for a number of unfortunate women at pittance from their families because they in turn help us defray costs by their refined labors."

In fact the conditions were not bad at all, but only because these women had money. All but Glenna Algrace, he thought; muse, hideous Glenna Algrace who had not spoken in four years. He came up on Glenna's left side, slightly behind her as if to examine her work, but in fact because her face still frightened him. He touched her elbow with a slight forward and rising pressure; she recognized the signal, stood and held out her fancy work for him to take.

Walt McCutcheon's friends in St. Louis had thought him mad to take his new skills to the western mountains instead of settling into a solid midwestern practice. His career, two years later, had been jeopardized when he had interceded to save Glenna Algrace from a life of abuse and degradation as an exhibit in a freak show, to have her brought from Santa Fe to Rocky Mountain Manor, a home for women of means who had taken leave of their senses. Walt McCutcheon was impulsive, a trait generally considered dangerous in a young doctor. He was beginning to see that somewhere at the heart of things there was a contradiction, which was a dangerous thought for any young man.

Walking two abreast down the path, nurse Johnston in the lead and he and Glenna Algrace drawing up the rear, Dr. McCutcheon watched an eagle slowly rise on an updraft, over the shadow of the mountains and up into blazing high blue. He thought briefly of Glenna's needle in the sun, and swiftly he imagined Glenna Algrace as a nineteen-year-old Mohave squaw, pointing out an eagle to her young children; he tried to imagine her rescue by her brother Petr, her return to the white man's hospitality, her terror at being saved from her parent's murderers. Walter most wanted to see what young Miss Algrace had faced, what the configuration of her madness was, but he always stopped short at the horror of her small, pale, tattooed face.

“Nurse Johnston, does something about Miss Algrace puzzle you? Not about her person I mean, not her curious walk or her silent obedience, but somehow doesn't her very presence hint at a mystery to you?” It was late in the evening of the same day; Walter McCutcheon was having a smoke by the fireplace and thought his confusion aloud to his assistant. Her response was swift and nervous.

“It isn't her that's confusing Doctor, with all due respect it's yourself that puzzles me. Why you have brought that hideous Indian's woman here and continue to torment all of us with her presence is beyond any understanding I'm capable of.”

The doctor made an irritated motion and flicked his cigar end into the fire where it spluttered and vanished. “Yes, so I've heard. I had what seemed unimpeachable reasons. She is human, and it would be immoral to leave her with her impoverished brother as a freak for hire. She presents a scientific question also, one that deserves close study, but for the life of me she has some kind of veil around her; I can barely see her.”

“She carries the mark, Doctor; she has bourned her parents' murderer's children and the only mystery is how you can expect medicine to absolve divine retribution.”

Preparing for bed, arranging his clothes on the tree for the next day, McCutcheon looked at himself in a new way—saw his bearded, boyish face reflected in the shaving mirror as that of some moral outlaw, an atheist scientist bent on dark labors. He was new to himself as he crawled into bed, and he slept the uneasy sleep of those who sleep with strangers. He dreamed of contradictions; the small of his back crawled away from imagined talons.

The next day he was called after lunch to see the director. There was to be a new patient, wife of a wealthy rancher to the north overcome by the solitude of the high plains. Dr. McCutcheon would please depart for this ranch within two days, perform the necessary examination, make final the contractual terms of agreement and provide escort for the lady back to Rocky Mountain Manor. Walt tried not to appear too pleased, but his willingness was apparent. He was somewhat elated at the prospect of a trip, an opportunity to get away briefly from a situation that was puzzling and stifling him.

He traveled by stage to the nearest railroad connection, and then relaxed for the remainder of the trip. In a narrow pass the train pulled into a siding for water. Sitting alone in his compartment, McCutcheon opened a window to stare into the wilderness to the east. He was staring absently into a stand of mountain pine when one disconnected series of colors turned its yellow beak, met and held his gaze. McCutcheon curled his toes in his boots in astonishment, but did not turn away. The golden eagle, quietly roosting in the trees, made no motion either, and so they sat assessing each other for several minutes until the train once again began to move. At the echo of couplings pulling taut up and down the line of cars, the eagle blinked once slowly and leaped from her perch, vanishing down the side of the mountain only to rise with wings stretched on an updraft and float up past the train again.

Dr. McCutcheon reached over and raised the window against the drifting soot from the stack and stared again out into nothing in particular. This time a face materialized on the glass before his. It was his own, but he was thinking about the eagle, and it startled him; it passed in a flash of sunlight, but he was reminded of Glenna Algrace's needle and that other eagle, and the intervening events that had spread into his life suddenly, like the inextricable dampness of his clothes every July in St. Louis. He rubbed his neck where the celluloid collars had given him a small callus of sorts, and like thunder after distant lightening things fell into place at last.

The remainder of the journey passed with the speed born of convictions; it was invigorating to be away from the petty derangement of Rocky Mountain Manor and the new client was a man anxious to see that his poor wife was properly provided for (and removed from his care).

Assurances made on all fronts, Dr. McCutcheon and his charge departed. There might have been other incidents of the return trip but Walter was closed to them, almost as absorbed in his wordless ruminations as his new patient was in hers.

After two days of rain back at the manor Walter wanted something to do. He rolled out the piano and played for several hours through a high cerulean blue afternoon and oblivious to everyone else's pleasure he felt he finally knew what course to follow.

The following Saturday after rounds Dr. McCutcheon requested that the director give him the remainder of the afternoon off in order that he might tend to some business in town. What business a handsome single doctor could have in town on a fine Saturday afternoon seemed suggestive enough to the director to prompt him to reveal those venal characteristics which Walter McCutcheon found unworthy of response and they repeated what had become a ritualized exchange of disrespectful niceties. Freed finally, Walter decided on a horse rather than the more dignified buggy and vanished from Rocky Mountain Manor until shortly after sundown.

Several weeks passed unremarkably, then another Saturday and Dr. McCutcheon did his rounds early, instructed one of the nurses to dress Miss Algrace in clothes suitable for a journey, and stepped in to see the Director.

“I’ll be needing to travel into town again today and I will need the Manor’s buggy because I’m taking Miss Algrace along. If I can do any business for the Manor while I’m there I would be glad to do so.”

“McCutcheon, whatever it is you do down there is your business, but we have a responsibility, both to our patients and to those people who tolerate our presence here in the name of charity. I want a full explanation.”

“Miss Algrace, as you have reminded me, is my responsibility, and that charge is part of the reason for this trip, the substance of which is, as you say, my business, and thus not yours. As for the townspeople, they have nothing to fear from either of us, and I will take precautions for their precious sensibilities.”

“I don’t believe I can permit this.”

“I don’t see how you can prevent it.”

With that Walter curtly dismissed himself, and he passed through to the barn with the distinct impression that the entire Manor was already astir with the new mystery.

The buggy readied, he stepped into the corridor to assess the climate of the Manor.

“Nurse Johnston, Miss Algrace should be nearly ready for our outing. I must ask of you however that you provide her with a veil.”

The nurse took a breath as if to say something, but turned and left the room instead. In a couple of minutes she returned with Miss Algrace, who was not very handsomely veiled.

“Preferably, Nurse Johnston, a veil with a touch of fashion if that is possible. One such as you yourself might wear; she isn’t some falcon in need of a hood you know.”

Dr. McCutcheon prepared for himself a list of stops in order that he might minimize the risk of offending the tastes of the townspeople. He had already, in fact, made preliminary arrangements to that effect, and after assisting Glenna Algrace into the buggy he started the horse slowly off and they moved away from the Director’s angry red sun of a face like some slowly swinging comet, a great dusty plume rising behind them that shone in the bright light, a peacock’s tail billowing up out of the dirt.

Glenna as always neither spoke nor revealed consciousness of her surroundings. The trip passed in silence and the afternoon in haste. Dr. McCutcheon pulled the buggy up in the narrow shade behind one of the wooden buildings recently added to the side street of the town. He knocked at the rear door and assisted Glenna down from the buggy. The door opened and a slight, youngish man with a wispy beard appeared. His gold rimmed spectacles blazed in the sun a moment as he looked the woman up and down and he came forward slowly.

“Afternoon, Dr. McCutcheon; afternoon Ma’am. I’m called Gabriel.”

“Afternoon, Gabriel; this is Glenna Algrace. There isn’t much use addressing her directly, I’m afraid. It’s been over four years since anyone heard her speak or got her attention. Watch now, this is what you must do.”

Walter touched her elbow with a slight forward motion and guided her into the cool interior of the building’s lower floor. It was quite dim inside and somewhat unreal. There were small pieces of scenery and various draped booths with chairs and tables. The whole place seemed like the back of a rustic theater. It was, in fact, a photographer’s studio, and the camera stood on bandy legs like some monstrous insect in one corner.

Dr. McCutcheon removed Glenna’s veil and Gabriel inadvertently sucked in a short breath. Walter deftly touched Glenna’s forearm and she obediently sat without looking in the chair behind her.

“Gabriel, we’ve already discussed what I need. I will leave Miss Algrace here with you while I tend to some business elsewhere. I shall return in an hour or so. She is both quite harmless and quite literal in her obedience. If she responds in any way to the camera, stop and await my return.”

“Sure, Dr. McCutcheon. This all seems kind of strange, but I’ll do the best I can. I might need two hours; she has me a little confused.”

They shook hands and Walter left out the front door. An old man seated by the door of the stable looked at Dr. McCutcheon in surprise as he stepped across the street to the bank, wondered briefly where he had come from with no horse and sauntered slowly behind him over to the bank. Through the iron grillwork on the windows he saw the young doctor seated with the banker talking and signing some papers. The old man shrugged and moved back to the stable where he seated himself again and waited. In about a half hour Walter came out and walked, glancing at his pocket watch, down to the telegraph office where he stayed another half our or so then emerged again into the advancing shade of the street. Looking at his watch again he hesitated, lit a small cigar and walked slowly to the saloon where he remained for about three quarters of an hour.

He came out alone, calling something over his shoulder, and walked back up and into the side street where he disappeared. The old man walked back into the stable to think about all this, wrongly surmising he would discover what he wanted to know later when he went to the saloon for a beer.

Dr. McCutcheon knocked at the young photographer’s door, upon which a small sign hung which read “session in progress; please come again.” After a moment the door opened a crack and Gabriel appeared narrowly in the door frame.

“Oh, Dr. McCutcheon, it’s you. I’m almost done; come right in.”

Walter stepped inside where he saw Glenna standing with one hand on the back of a small, ornate, armless chair, her stiff dress carefully arranged, one hand at her side, her hair severely parted down the middle revealing a streak of white scalp which was startling contrast to the dark smears of the tattoos on her chin.

“I was a little rattled at first, but this last pose will finish it up. She just stares off into nowhere like that all the time, does she?”

“Yes, except when she sews. Even then she doesn’t even seem to look at her work. It’s amazing; and a little frightening at times.”

For most people, the length of the exposure would have been excruciating. It was for Dr. McCutcheon, but Glenna Algrace did not move a muscle. The session over, Glenna’s veil was replaced and after Dr. McCutcheon made arrangements for the photographs to be delivered and payment made, he and Miss Algrace departed into the approaching dusk and arrived back at the Rocky Mountain Manor shortly after nightfall.

Walter brought Glenna to Nurse Johnston and went to groom and stable the horse, which he found at times both relaxing and enjoyable. Certainly it would permit him to elude conversation on this particular evening.

At this point, Dr. McCutcheon was himself a contradiction. To the obvious jeopardy his insubordination had placed him in he now added the medically dangerous risk of dereliction of duty; or so it seemed. He spent a great deal of time on the front gallery of the Manor with his spyglass, but no one had an inkling of what it was he watched over the hills so diligently. Nor could anyone ascertain what it was he no longer did, just how he had failed his charges, even though that must obviously have been the case.

Late the following Saturday a horse and rider appeared, and shortly Gabriel announced himself at the front door, in search of Dr. Walter McCutcheon and on personal business. The Doctor, it seemed, was grooming his horse, and the young photographer was directed to the stable where he found Walter half earnestly grooming an already scrupulously clean horse.

“Gabriel, this is grand, I’ve awaited you somewhat faithlessly all week. Has our experiment met with some success?”

“Your subject was withal rather unnerving, Doctor McCutcheon, but the lens was unafraid and captured her likeness quite well; so let’s have a look. I expect you will be right pleased.”

They stepped into the solid beams of sunlight streaming through the loft door, where dust motes circled slowly like great birds and Gabriel produced a half dozen portraits mounted in embossed boards from the bag slung over his shoulder. One by one he handed them to the doctor with a small introduction, and one by one the doctor stared at them as if at something altogether new to the world.

“Almost beyond belief! Really quite incredible! You must understand, Gabriel, it was not your camera’s willingness to capture this likeness which I was experimenting with, it was the likeness’s ability to reveal something to me with which I was concerned. This is perhaps confusing, but all I can say is that we are successful.”

The two young men, pleased if not altogether enlightened, spoke for awhile as friends about many things, then the doctor paid the photographer and they parted, one wiser and one richer.

The following day was Sunday, but the customary concert gave way to something less soothing as the Director made an attempt to settle his score with Dr. McCutcheon.

“McCutcheon, what kind of dangerous foolishness is going on around here, anyway?”

This comment began the inquiry as the Director and Walter McCutcheon were leaving the breakfast room, and to the director’s surprise, Walter fairly grabbed at the opportunity.

“What is going on around here, Sir, in my opinion neither dangerous nor foolish, however perhaps we can meet in an hour in your office and I will be pleased to discuss this and other matters with you.”

The Director, quite upended by such unexpected directness gruffed his agreement to the short delay and, scowling, turned back towards the kitchen to vent his spleen elsewhere for the moment.

At the same time Walter realized he should lose not time being about his business, and so he turned directly towards the sunny rooms where those ladies whose humor permitted would be seated about silently sewing. As the nurse looked on, a disapproving set to her jaw, Dr. McCutcheon guided Glenna Algrace up and out of the room. He felt a small rush of anticipation, and for the first time caught himself studying Glenna’s face as they walked. His eyes traced the clumsy lines of the tattoos that ran in crude stripes down her lower lip and under her chin. He thought of how it must have pained her to endure such a process, and he realized they were not merely black as he had always supposed them in his darting glances, but a rich blue-purple, almost iridescent in the sunlight.

They stepped out into the kitchen garden, a fragrant and relatively private place. Walter moved around to face Glenna and again scrutinized her face. He noted how small her mouth really was and how grotesque the tattoos had always made it seem. Finally he found his voice, but she continued staring down and to one side as if intent upon the parsley there.

“Glenna I don’t know if you hear me, or if you comprehend me, but through various means I have tried to hear you in the past months and I believe I am beginning to do so. I brought you here, and since I will be leaving I have tried to make provisions for your care. I doubt the details are of any consequence to you, at least not now. I have decided; but rather this. I am going to show you some portraits. When I took you to town the man Gabriel took photographs of you and I have them here.”

Dr. McCutcheon pulled an envelope from his breast pocket and slowly, one by one, he showed Glenna her portraits, carefully and slowly pointing out to her where she was and softly reminding her how it all had occurred. They were in order as Gabriel had taken them, and at no time did she ever betray understanding of what they were. They were merely there between her gaze and the parsley in the garden, and Walter was not even sure her focus changed when he placed the portraits in front of her.

By this time there was but one left, the last and the one that Walter knew [was] the best, the one which he had seen Gabriel shoot. As he placed it in her field of vision he only said “Glenna, this is the last; do they not mean anything to you?”

All she did was blink slowly, almost thoughtfully. Then she raised her face and looked Walter straight in the eyes. With a shock Walter noticed for the first time her bright green eyes, shot with yellow sparks, then he saw confused movement; her lips and the lines of the blue iridescence around her mouth and chin quivered slightly and a slow mute smile developed, then vanished, and it was over.

Suddenly Dr. McCutcheon felt the callous under his collar begin to itch furiously, and he realized his entire torso was hot and flushed with fright, pleasure and astonishment, then that too fled over the hills

with the breeze. He hesitated a moment, then selected one of the photographs, not the last one, and placed it in Glenna's apron pocket. "There, this one is for you; remember it if you will." He touched her left elbow and as obediently as always she turned and walked next to him back to the sewing room. He sat her down, checking his watch. As he put his watch back in his pocket, he glanced back out of the corner of his eye in time to see Glenna, her work in one hand, touch her apron pocket with her right hand, her face as blank as ever.

Walter McCutcheon was beside himself, but he was ignorant of what exactly he felt. He went to the kitchen and helped himself to two dippers of cold water, then methodically turned his attention to his meeting with the Director. As he walked softly down the hall, his hand brushed the breast pocket where the other pictures were.

"There you are McCutcheon. Here, sit down. Now just how do you explain yourself these last few weeks?"

"Different ways to different people, Sir. What exactly did you want to know?"

"Your attitude, Doctor, is not very professional of late. Have you a medical career or not?"

"In fact, I do, and at the moment I am quite intent upon it. My experience here at the Manor has demonstrated to me in a very personal way that medical arts are insufficient for the care and healing of the mind and soul. I have been in turmoil and I have been in touch with friends. This telegram from San Francisco is an invitation for me to come and study there under the direction of doctors recently returned from their own study of madness in Europe. With your permission, I would like to tender my resignation effective within thirty days.

This was an expected blow. The Manor required the presence of a physician, and it was no easy matter to get one far from large cities. The Director was now confused as well as angry, and struck at what he expected would be McCutcheon's weakest spot.

"So, you come here, relax under an easy regimen, perform our humanitarian experiments and then decide to advance your career elsewhere, do you? All fine and well, Doctor, but what of your Glenna Algrace? Is she to be your own exhibit now? The key to your advancement perhaps? Surely you don't expect to abandon her here, to cast her upon the charity of the Manor? That is not possible; that just is not possible."

"There is a man in town, his name is Gabriel; there is another, Mr. Lofton at the Bank. You will have occasion to meet these gentlemen after I depart, for Miss Algrace is staying here. Her care will be paid for with the silver from a mine I own by Mr. Lofton. Her well being will be assured by unannounced visits from the photography, Gabriel Drummond. These men will continue in their duties until such a time as providence sees fit, and so shall you, and I."

"This is outrageous, young man! Just who do you think you are and how..."

"I am a doctor from St. Louis. A colleague of mine there is waiting for word from me to begin his trip here to the Manor where he wants to take up my practice. If you wish to have him or any other physician out here, I suggest you calm yourself and consider my offer. The terms are certainly generous."

"This is extortion! This is unethical, I'll have your license."

"On the contrary, Sir, this is unequivocally ethical, especially towards that pitiable creature there in your sewing rooms and none less towards yourself."

To someone reared within the closed horizons of the great undulating lap that is the Mississippi Valley, the mountains of Colorado were ever new; yet even this polarity was no preparation for what was to unroll outside the train window before Dr. McCutcheon on his trip from Rocky Mountain Manor to the bay of San Francisco, to the place where the weather seems in defiance of the seasons and the very air carries minute shimmering crystals of the exotic. Thus it was that the purgative effect of the western deserts coupled with the timeless abandon associated with oases drew out from Walter McCutcheon the fears and frustrations of his recent past. It was not until he, many weeks after his arrival, took a day out to get acquainted with his new home that the consequences of his actions began to sway back and forth on the scales of the young doctor's conscience.

Leaving had been no easy matter, but after the shock of beginning, and once the Director had recovered from his anger at being trapped into a Christian act everything had seemed to develop in an inexorable motion westward.

Here then, where the last American mountains fall away into the Pacific Ocean was where Dr. McCutcheon had come to complete his training. As he passed from one visitors' spot to the next he thought of why he had made these decisions; his new studies were neither so exciting nor so enlightening as he had hoped. Darkness was still the principle element in the picture of the deranged, and as he thought it over it seemed to him that his exposure to Miss Algrace may have demonstrated more to him than all his lectures so far had, namely that in the most hopeless cases there might be a spark, a spark that might or might not take kindling. He lightly touched his breast pocket at this point, and sensing the continued presence of his talisman, the photo of Miss Algrace he so vividly remembered, he broke through his surroundings long enough to ascertain that he was hard by the zoo, and he strolled inside to look about.

At first he made an effort to see, to distinguish the animals from their surroundings, to classify and examine, but what struck him was something other. The gaze of each animal was flat and bottomless, a familiar Rocky Mountain Manor stare, and Dr. McCutcheon fell back into the warm pool of his musings. His regimen of studies was beginning to tell on him. He went over his recent experiences countless times in his head, searching for new premises or undisclosed conclusions. He thought he knew, did in fact comprehend, what he was about, yet when the revelation came it was suddenly incomprehensible. The perfectly obvious had revealed itself as the backside of truth. There was something of art in this, but Walter McCutcheon was not prepared for art, did not even know the alphabet of that strange tongue, and so was all the more confused that what his skin charged as truth his eyes could not begin to read. Rising for air Dr. McCutcheon found himself before the graceful and piercing cries of the great aviary, and next to a bench. He sat down, fished about for a smoke that irritated him by eluding his searching fingers in his dark coat pocket and finally he flung himself vacantly back to stare into the aviary at nothing in particular.

Nearby at the rail stood a young couple with an opera glass between them. They were courting and unexceptional, passing calculated pleasantries between them like a plate of suspiciously sweet foreign bon-bons, but Walter McCutcheon, having added his column of figures so many ties to the same incorrect sum, distracted himself by eavesdropping. He fingered his breast pocket where the cigar should be, but where Glenna Algrace's picture was, and his eyes followed the couple's eyes as they discussed the various birds.

The young man identified a large eagle alone in one corner of the aviary and a debate ensued, the substance of which escaped Dr. McCutcheon until the calm of regulated civility gave way under the surprise of unexpected emotion.

"I don't know why you must torment me with your 'understanding' of that hideous eagle's bloodthirsty ways, Thomas. The bird is a killer and marked by its solitude. At least that one stays nearly out of sight so the other birds don't hide."

"The eagle is an animal like the others Janet, a great one, and it deserves to be understood."

"Leave it for the scientists then; come let's go look for the flamingoes."

They absolved each other then and walked away, but Dr. McCutcheon's attention by this time was riveted to the eagle in question. He too walked from the spot, but over to a better vantage point, and squeezed his face together to block out the sun and get a better look up into the dead branches of the eagle's tree. Something seemed to him wrong about this bird. The aviary was not really large enough for a bird that size, for this bird was truly large, and something about the light—at this juncture the eagle turned and dropped to the ground, and Dr. McCutcheon read the message that had confounded him these many weeks by its ordinariness. The eagle remained an eagle in spite of her clipped pinions, and the strength of the bird was still in her eyes, not lost with the clipped beak that so changed that stark and ancient face. There was food there, and the bird ate, but Dr. McCutcheon was not hungry. He never returned to the zoo, nor to Rocky Mountain Manor, though he did travel occasionally, perhaps it would be better to say retreat, to the mountains from his home in Chicago and his patients. When he died his effects included an

old photograph in a clear celluloid wrapper, much worn, of a striking tattooed woman with the inscription "Gabriel's captured eagle" on the reverse; this caused much puzzlement among Dr. McCutcheon's heirs.



**Winter '67**

## THE LONELY MOUNTAIN

There was a man of no singular fame,  
Who had to climb a mountain old.  
With him went many both whole and lame,  
And they left their homes to seek the cold.

The slopes at first were very steep,  
The men upon all fours did crawl.  
Up the slopes they slowly crept,  
Until at last they reached a wall.

When one by one they reached the edge  
They stood up straight and tall,  
And clambered over the rocky ledge,  
Up and over the stony wall.

But some there were who went too fast,  
And stood to run too soon.  
Their footholds lost they fell at last,  
To meet their appointed doom.

And some there were who were too slow,  
Who never even saw the wall,  
For they died of col on the slopes below,  
When over the wall was warmth for all.

On the second stage 'twas not so bad,  
And the men walked tall and straight,  
And time went fast and men were glad  
As miles passed quickly 'neath their gait.

Rut some there were who walked too fast,  
And would fain break into a run.  
Into a crevasse they fell at last,  
To lie- forever hidden from the sun.

And some there were, were much too slow;  
Who, while others with lightened pack  
Passed into the sunset's glow,  
Lay starved because of their lack.

At last the remainder neared the top,  
Only the third stage left to go.  
But the ground was broken,  
they had to stop To bring a staff in tow.

But some there were who went too quick,  
And as the top drew near,  
They leaned too much and broke their sticks,

And fell and screamed in fear.

And some there were who went too slow,  
And when the darkness came  
They tripped and fell and could not go  
To see the mountain's fame.

The top at last a few did reach,  
And from that narrow dell,  
Far below could descry a beach,  
And suddenly down they fell.

And none there were who went too slow,  
For here they could not stay.  
So down they flew as arrow from bow,  
And fell into decay.

They tried so hard to reach the top;  
Why, they did not know,  
That when they finally had to stop  
'Twas but one way to go.

They travelled far and they travelled fast,  
And not a one did cry;  
As their labors before their eyes were passed,  
And they knew they had to die.

**Spring '68**

## OUTSIDE

I am an outsider.  
I see, but do not speak.  
I watch, for I am a ringsider.  
I am in, but I am out,  
I am not sought, but I must seek.

I am an outsider.  
I hear the sounds and see the sights,  
But can't join in, for I am a sideliner.  
I sit and watch or stand and hear,  
And memorize with no sensation.

I am an outsider.  
There are others like me,  
Others who are ringsiders.  
But they are on another side,  
And outsiders make no separate peace.

I am an outsider.  
Too much for some, not enough for others,  
I am a left-outsider.  
Last to be chosen, first to be dropped,  
To no man a friend, to no child a brother.

I am an outsider.  
And yet I forgive.  
For though I'm out to an insider,  
To myself I am in  
And my life I must live.

I am an outsider.  
Yet perhaps not forever  
Am I doomed to be a sideliner.  
I'll knock on the door someday,  
And I won't be left out forever.

I am an outsider.  
And though I go my way, do my thing  
I'll always remember the inside;  
And then someday, when I've got the guts;,  
Those inside will hear a doorbell ring.  
For even an outsider feels the cold.

I am an outsider.

**Autumn '68**

## CONSTRUCTION

(a conversation with conscience)

There is darkness-it is morning

Why is it dark?

It has always been dark.

How can you tell morning?

Morning is a feeling:

awaking up time,  
a time of newness,  
a time of ideality.

Morning is a time of re-creation:

a re-affirming of reality,  
a renewal of faith,  
a regeneration of love.

Then is this morning?

Yes, yes feel it is so.

Yet no, for it is still dark.

But hasn't it always been dark?

Yes...no, once I read...

But you aren't sure?

No, I'm not.

Is it really dark,

Or do you refuse to admit the light?

No, if it were light,

I would surely see it.

Are you sure?

Darkness is quiet

And easier to hide in.

Hide? From what?

From yourself- narrow is the cleft

Which admits no light.

Why should I hide from myself?

Because you built walls and forgot the door.

But it's me, I'm a loner.

You're a name dropper and an

Excuse maker-

admit it.

All-right, all-right,

So I'm lonely,

So what?

Is that all.?

No, Hell no, I...

There's lots more,

More than you'd guess:

I've built walls,  
And if that were all  
I'd be content-  
But I built windows too.  
I can only watch and  
Hate my walls.  
Yet the mortar's hardened,  
The die is cast,  
The windows barred.  
I'm trapped in my cell,  
Longing to be a part,  
To mingle;  
Yet hiding in my own darkness.  
When someone reaches out,  
When a voice calls out,  
Mine falters and I  
Retreat in inner shame.

Look, it's morning.

Where? Yes, look-a hand,  
And listen- a voice.  
No, many voices,  
Many hands,  
Calling out, reaching,  
Tearing at my walls.

Now, open your eye.

The light!  
Stop, it hurts.  
Go away, so bright, so blinding-  
I can't look!



## MEDITATION

A squirrel scampered overhead  
In the slanting afternoon  
Rays of the early Spring sun.  
His capers brought down a  
Brown shower of neatly turned,  
Bravely fluttering oak leaves,  
One of which settled to the ground  
Between my feet.  
The squirrel gone,  
I watched the leaf's descent,  
And surmised at the purpose of life.

Man could be that squirrel,  
Rushing recklessly about in search  
Of juicy acorns,  
Heedless of the destruction he causes  
Or the things he misses as he  
Pursues the elusive target of Utopia.

The leaves are Man's outcasts and  
Bypassed.  
Those irreplaceable individuals, each.  
With a place in the order of things, each  
With a measure of beauty.

The leaf I was watching  
Settled slowly upon an ant,  
Who typically,  
Though industriously attempted  
To remove the offender to the nest,  
Tugging reticently at the harmless object;  
And finally managing, with the aid of  
Several local foragers, to drag off his  
Prize to adorn some nursery chamber.  
I watched the leaf's departure,  
And surmised at the purpose of life.

The ant also typifies man.  
His blind obedience  
And lack of curiosity are  
Often mirrored in men and  
Women of our modern age  
Who have always had electricity.

The leaf once again is Man's ignored,  
Although men themselves now  
Their intelligence and curiosity can  
Be overcome by the persistent tugging of  
Closed minds.

As ants and leaf rounded my toe,  
They encountered a safari beetle.  
With little pomp, he unceremoniously  
Flattened both ants and: leaf.  
Yet while delighting in the joys of combat  
He was devoured by a frog  
Who was gulped by a heron that I  
Saw later being hunted by a falcon,  
Later killed by a large cat.  
Feathers still clinging to his whiskers, the  
Cat was shot by a hunter, who left the carcass to  
Rot  
As he moved on after the squirrel,  
While I toyed with the shattered leaf  
And surmised at the purpose of life.

As the world drifts  
Slowly through space,  
Wending its way past  
A myriad of suns and  
Planets, each of which  
Follows unhurriedly  
Its own predetermined path;  
The puny, inconsequential  
Inhabitants of Earth  
Live and die, assured of the  
Universe bending power  
Of their own crises and  
Accomplishments,  
Positive of their uniqueness  
And aloneness in the cosmos.  
Yet for all their impudence,  
These creatures are in constant  
Conflict,  
Involved inescapably in an  
Attempt to make their own  
Planet, home of life and  
Civilization  
As barren as the multitude.

## REWARDS OF AN ERA

“All right guys-Give ‘em Hell!”  
“Yaaaaaaaaa!” Crash, Bang- Bang!  
Raat, tat, tat tat....  
.....!” We interrupt this show to bring  
You an important announcement:  
The president of the United States  
Has just been shot, and may be  
Mortally wounded  
As a result of wounds inflicted  
From five parts of the convention hall  
Where the president was addressing an annual  
Meeting of the Eagle Scouts here in Washington.  
At the present time  
Six young scouts are being held on  
Suspicion of attempted murder.  
Cries of indignation and fearful  
Protest towards the perpetrators of this, deed  
And their organization are  
Pouring, avalanche fashion, upon our capitol.  
Repeat: the President has been shot,  
And may be dying”.....  
....“We now return you to Wednesday Night  
At the :Movies, featuring your favorite war  
Heroes in, “Guns of Taipei.”  
.....“You, can’t stop Me,  
I’ll kill who I damn well please,  
It’s a free country!”      Bang!  
AHHHHHHHHH !  
“Help?!”  
“Die Yellow Dog!”      “UGH”  
Rat tat tat tat...  
                    **SAVE ME!!**

## FORECAST

The next voice you hear will  
Be that of God:  
“Good Morning,  
Here is your inspiration  
For the coming day.  
For each and every one  
Of you, today will bring sorrow.  
Today will also bring joy, anger,  
Frustration, and love in appropriate  
Proportions; approximately in accordance  
To your planned emotion ratio.  
This has been plotted in advance to  
Be in continuity with your relative  
Positions on the Space-Time Line.  
So whatever occurs today, do not fear.  
Nothing which is not planned or prepared  
For somewhere can happen.”  
This is a recording.

# **Juvenilia**

**Reflections 1967-70**

**Winter '68**

## Membership

It is 12:00 midnight  
And the ceaseless rhythm  
Of my clock leads me into  
Distant realms of thought,  
All of which seem phantasmagorical  
In the daylight.  
Yet my wanderings all funnel  
Down the same path to the  
Conclusion that Man  
Is a useless burden upon Natural Society,  
And that perhaps he is alien to it,  
Owning the Earth, but not possessing it  
In his soul.  
Moreover, that the Biblical creation  
Is accurate that man has no  
“Missing Link” to nature.  
Is “Life” on Earth the “Death” of a Utopian?  
Life is, after all, a series of refusals and misery  
Culminating in rest.  
Yet the worst misery of all is our  
Unnatural tenacity and masochism as  
We strive for immortality in our barbarism,  
And circumvent a short, civilized  
Existence culminating in  
Peace on Earth, Good will towards Men.



## SAMWISE

The time has long since passed  
When a man could idle,  
And spend his days innocent  
Marvel at nature's majesty,  
Or pursue quietly his chosen  
Task without being hampered or  
Restricted in body or spirit.

It has been long since man  
Could safely fantasize and not be  
Scorned or spurned by the Chant of History  
Or simply wander,  
Within or without, down little trodden  
Paths of the mind or forest.

Yet there are some who make determined  
Efforts to regain a life without  
Neon signs,  
And preserve places where their  
Friends can live in the same manner,  
For these too are disappearing under a  
Veil of concrete and conquest.

## REMEMBERANCE

When I was six,  
I played a game;  
A game of action and adventure,  
Of exploration, of laughing and of  
Innocence mingled with transient joy.

When I was twelve,  
I paused in my studies  
And thought of my game of six,  
And wondered at the fate of  
Friends who had passed into obscurity  
But left a mark or saying as a remembrance.

When I was eighteen,  
I saw an old friend with  
Whom I'd played at six;  
And we laughed and joked,  
And stared into the distance  
Over the gulf of time.

When I was twenty-four,  
My research led me back, and I  
Discovered a box of mementoes and  
Pictures of days long passed.  
I thought then of my old  
Friends and daydreams of long ago.

When I was thirty  
I attended a High School reunion and  
We spoke of the good old days to  
Mask our surprise and ease the  
Passage of time through the  
Narrow straits of memory.

When I was thirty-six  
I met in my travels abroad a buddy  
I'd had in the armed forces who  
Reminded me of a grade school  
Friend. Over a drink we spoke  
While the tide of reminiscence rolled in.

When I was forty-two  
A visit home led me to all  
My old familiar spots.  
But they had gone, and the new  
Had come, and I watched  
Their remembrances forming.

When I was forty-eight

A newspaper article read  
Disaster in old hometown,  
And I saw the names of  
Six whom I'd known and  
Loved when I was young.

When- I was fifty-four,  
I met an old chums son,  
A tall bright lad with a  
Grasping mind.  
I laughed out loud and said  
To, myself, "How unlike his father."

I'm seventy-two now and still quite alone,  
There was another reunion last year.  
The distant past was clearer then  
Than it had been for many a year.  
And the young people all sat around  
And listened to the old folks  
Jawing about the good old days.  
Yes, that was a year ago, and at  
My age, that goes mighty fast.  
My home is as quiet and lonesome as  
Always, though I'm just beginning to  
Notice the ticking of my mantel clock.  
And aside from being the  
Neighborhood Grandfather,  
I'm left with my memories.  
Now don't get any way mixed up-  
I'm not sad or unhappy,  
Because I've got my remembrances  
And that's the same thing as joy.

All those fond little details that happened,  
And offered a little joy then,  
And offered joy when remembered,  
Are here to bring joy again.

I know my time left is limited,  
I won't live to be eighty-two  
So I'll sit and remember and be happy,  
And hope, as you too will someday,  
That no matter what happens to hurt,  
However, it seems to drag down,  
That since remembrances bring joy,  
That my soul has a memory too.

I am bitter, for I  
Am an idealist,  
And there is no room in the  
World of man for ideality.  
Man the Pacific,

Who cries out for peace,  
Yearns yet for the horror of combat.  
Man who moves war towards impersonal,  
Distant maneuverings in an attempt to destroy  
Its hold on the human soul,  
Seeks personal battle and the bloody  
Hand to hand combat of the ages.  
As man's wisdom increases,  
His sight shortens  
Until only a narrow, slanted view presents itself.

## REMEMBER

Awaken,  
Rouse yourself from  
Your technological slumber  
And embrace again the  
Warm Earth.  
Renew your soul upon the  
Rush of spring green  
And refresh your  
Vision upon blue water and  
White snow.  
Leave your harsh metal  
And unnatural fabrics.  
Forget the crises which  
So rack your conscience with  
Turmoil and step into a world renewed  
In an unbreakable cycle of  
Events, unperturbed by the  
Passage of Time.

**Spring '69**

## QUIETUDE

The room is silent  
But for the low murmur  
Of bored voices, barely  
Audible in the lethargy  
Following the Spring  
Rain.  
The water splashes  
Bravely over the roof and  
Tumbles hurriedly to the ground,  
Shattered into a thousand  
Tiny droplets by the force of  
Its strike.  
The sounds of destruction  
Merge into a seemingly  
Cheerful cascade of  
Clarion noises  
As one drop becomes thousands,  
Which merge and flow away  
To fall again.  
This is life....

## MORNING ILLUSION

I walked this morning,  
Early, when only the birds were out.  
It wasn't cold,  
Nor was it warm.  
The sky was pink, a star could be seen  
Still between the leafless branches  
Of a large pecan tree.  
The sun warily spread its benevolent rays  
Over an Earth which had managed to  
Survive for one more day.  
As I walked slowly, methodically  
Down the concrete sidewalk which  
I had swept the evening before,  
I assisted a bug over a large rock,  
And watched an early bird bathe.  
I investigated every plant  
In the yard, examining  
Each bud,  
Pacing it as it swelled,  
Strained and finally burst  
Forth in unrestrained growth.  
I compared the delicate pink-green  
Of the crepe myrtle to the  
Heavy, dark azalea leaf and  
Removed an enterprising weed from  
A small plant and carefully  
Replaced the damaged earth.  
A light sprinkling with the hose  
Produced a rainbow effect, and I  
Created a million tiny diamonds,  
Sparkling in the sun of new-spring.  
After my daily reconnaissance I awakened  
My neighbor's dog and received an affectionate  
Nuzzle of welcome and a stretch and  
Yawn of gratitude.  
We ran together for a short distance and  
I became lost in musings  
As I was carried back to  
Grander places and better times.  
The dog, seeing my inattention,  
Wandered off to investigate some new  
Grown clover and chase a late moth,  
And I dreamed of a castle and a  
Mountain brook flowing with icy  
Water; of Ireland in summer, and  
Of Germany in fall.  
The pecan tree became a mighty



Forest of oak, stretching into the  
Unseen distance, and the  
Car which broke the silence a wild  
Stallion, seeking new adventures on a  
New day.

I turned back, walking slowly again,  
The dog gaily cavorting with a  
Grasshopper in the dewy grass.  
In the middle of the sidewalk, I came  
Upon the rock, which had not been there  
Yesterday. I pondered momentarily on how it had  
Gotten there, kicked it,  
Watched it bounce in its carefree way along,  
Finally to drop into the grass;  
And looking up, noticed the Morning Star  
Had gone.

## REFLECTIONS

Last night I dreamed,  
And in my dream I stood at a  
Crossroads where the path upon which  
I had been walking  
Split into four smaller paths,  
None of which could be clearly discerned  
As the main road.  
All four paths had a common destination-  
Death,  
Yet each led in a different direction,  
And three roads I knew were illusions,  
Ending finally by remerging with  
The main road, yet negating all  
Which was seen in traversing them by the  
Knowledge of their false direction.  
Not wishing to thus waste my precious time,  
I carefully read the road markers, and the first read:

“To Death-Oblivion”

This would have been a likely route to choose, for  
From nothing comes nothing,  
And with nothing behind to betray, and nothing  
Ahead to lose, much of the futility of mankind  
Is explainable.

The second branch read:

“To Death-Damnation or Exultation”

For this path I had been trained, yet I  
Still hesitated, for Eternity is forever,  
And as my present status leaned decidedly  
Towards damnation, I had far too much work ahead  
Of me to qualify for even a little Exultation.

The third sign more cheerfully read:

“To Death-A Rebirth”

A pleasant path stretched ahead, and  
Logically so, for the idea of death as a  
Rebirth is novel if nothing else, although  
Life without memory is little.

The fourth road was gloomy and the sign read:

“To Death-”

The rest was either obscured by Time or perhaps  
Was never finished. In the middle of the path bloomed  
A black rose, and as I stood transfixed a large  
Night-blue butterfly soundlessly glided up and drank  
Deeply of the nectar within the flower and departed.  
This was the fastest road to death, and the one  
Which I chose; I had no wish for long detours  
And pretty scenery, for masks and illusions hold  
No fascination for me.

## TIME

It was near eight o'clock when the boy  
Looked up from his book, glanced at the  
Time, and adjusted the volume of his  
Radio.

Putting down his book momentarily he  
Stretched, yawned, and lay quietly, listening  
To the quiet tick of his mantle clock and the  
Nearly silent whirl of the alarm clock  
By his bed.

Thinking of long ago and joyous things to  
Do, he let his eyes wander appreciatively about  
His room, and in their course they passed the  
Telephone.

The phone was plain and black and  
Silent;

Next to it was a small brown leather note-book.  
Smiling suddenly, yet oddly, he went back to  
His book- his world of reality- yet he could not  
Concentrate, and his eyes wandered back to the  
Phone. He reached over, picked up the booklet,  
Gingerly opened it up and began his chant-  
Ritualistic and memorized- as he thumbed the pages...

“Busy...Out...Studying...

No Thanks...Maybe... We'll See...”

Opening it finally to the center  
Page- its edges finger-printed and worn from  
Thought- he pondered,  
Travelling slowly over twelve years of casual  
Acquaintanceships.

Not friendships as such, but the see-you-every-day-  
Never-know-you. style of lax relationship.

Knowing he wanted to, by now HAD to  
Call someone, the boy sat,

A rueful smile on his lips,  
Chewing his glasses and waging a battle  
Of blood and guts inside, tearing at the  
Polished glass walls of his cell.

Finally, he shut the book decisively,  
Picked up the receiver and quietly, a  
Little nervously at first, began to dial...

Ring...Click...

“Your money earns two ways at Fidelity National Bank.

TIME: 9: 05”

## MATURITY

The house was quiet, yet not  
Too quiet when the child slowly  
Sat up in bed, being careful to avoid  
That squeaky spring as he stood up.  
He pulled on his shoes and padded noiselessly  
To the open window where he eased to  
The ground and replaced the screen he had  
So carefully loosened earlier.  
Picking the small bundle from  
Behind a bush where he had hidden it,  
He sneaked around to the dark side  
Of the house and sat down, perplexed concerning  
His next move.  
His first impression was to run, far and  
Fast, for he had been done a grievous wrong,  
A breach of confidence and betrayal  
Of trust unheard of to him in his youth.  
Yet, when he looked around and considered  
His possibilities, he abandoned this idea as careless  
And stupid; he had neither  
Food nor money enough to get far,  
And he was above all practical.  
But something had to be done.  
Perhaps a single night out alone  
Would suffice. Still, it was awfully  
Wet out, and sickness would not  
Help anybody, especially  
Himself.  
So he returned to his room, still  
Determined to do something in defiance.  
After making himself presentable in bedtime  
Attire and replacing in their former spots  
The screen and his clothes, he  
Padded softly out of his  
Room, flapping his feet through the  
Den to arouse his father from  
His reading as he looked the other way  
In the supreme pose of defiance.  
“What’s the matter son?” floated deeply,  
Sonorously by his ears as he walked  
To the sink, slowly clambered to the top,  
Knelt on the counter as he got down a glass  
And half-filled it from the tap, turned and  
Sat abruptly, his small feet dangling, took  
One deep swallow and said:  
“Getting MYSELF a glass of water.”

## Super Sport

Do not conserve Joy,  
For it is, at best, transient,  
And storage for even a short  
Period of time causes Evaporation,  
Whereas spread constantly from a  
Faithful source, the evaporated  
Mists condense and rain upon all  
To replenish the dry Earth,  
Gently soothing the shattered images of self  
Even more delicately than  
Time can.  
Rain, of course, which falls on one man,  
Falls on another in equally the same  
Manner; yet it is how they receive it  
Which determines how wet each gets.  
Thus joy, to be properly felt by anyone, must  
Be felt by everyone, and those distributing  
The Waters of Youth, for Joy is youth in maturity,  
Must allow the recipient to decide whether  
To bundle against it  
And run to shelter;  
Or walk openly and proudly and let each  
Drop that will, sink down deep.

**Summer '69**

## A QUESTION

I am constantly surprised at  
Man's inability to be satisfied.  
Take for instance, a wildflower  
As it is found-beautiful, natural.  
Man will insist upon making it bigger,  
Better, more colorful and better smelling,  
Until the plant is perfect, yet totally  
Dependent upon man for its survival,  
Its native strength lost in a flash of color.  
Is man perhaps more subordinated to the idea  
Of being master of other dependent beings than  
To the creation of beauty?

I HAVE WALKED THE CAVERNS OF  
TIME,  
SEARCHING FOR THE PASSAGEWAY TO  
JOY,  
AND FOUND ONLY THE DUNGEON OF  
EMPTINESS.  
I HAVE FALLEN, INTO THE WELL OF  
LONLINESS,  
AND CAN ONLY ESCAPE BY CLIMBING THE ROPE OF  
FEAR.....

### THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Little Girl, why are you crying?  
What is it that fills you with dread?  
Have you lost one who was dear?  
Do you grieve because he is dead?

You say he died so young that  
Innocence still showed on his face?  
You say he sank without a sound  
Into the timeless depths of Tomorrow?  
Then he did not die in suffering?  
And his death was quick, not slow?  
You say he had no time to think?  
Yet his death was bereft of point?  
Do you think he died without purpose?  
Like the rose that withers before bloom?  
And do you wonder at the justice of life,  
And thus mourn and weep such silent  
Tears?

Little Girl, why are you crying?  
What is it that blinds your sight?  
Do you not see him there crying with you?  
Do you not know it is you who are dead?

Do you say you think life is precious,  
And you'd bring him back if you could?  
Do you say it's so silent without him?  
Do you long for the sound of his voice?  
Do you yearn for the Joy that he brought,  
And softly remember the sadness?  
Are you angry that it was he?  
Do you wish someone else could exchange?  
Would you extend the time of his punishment?  
Or shorten that of another?  
Do you not see that there's justice  
In dying, that you cling  
To a soul now free?

Little Girl, why are you crying?  
Do you not know that your tears are chains?  
Dry then your eyes, laugh for him who no longer can-  
For do you not know HE is the one who lives?



JANUARY 19

It happened one day,  
As it often does,  
That unknowingly  
i entered a race-  
Of sorts.  
It was a winnerless  
Race and unusually,  
Some time had elapsed  
Before i  
Realized  
That i was even racing.  
However, this was perhaps due  
To the unusually  
Advantageous start  
i had incurred, well  
Pacing the others, so as often to be  
Totally alone.  
The terrain through which i strode-  
Yes, i was striding,  
For speed is not always the basis  
Of a race-  
Was singular,  
Beginning with a simple  
Slope through a lightly wooded area.  
Time stood still, or seemed to,  
As one moment appeared either stationary  
Or silently, evenly melting into the next.  
The sun, far off in the beginning,  
Shone with soft, gentle, yet warming  
Rays, and the path as i  
Remember  
It was well lighted and nearly level.  
i walked ahead and alone for  
A long time it seems now, looking  
Back;  
Yet then there was no time.  
Much ground was covered,  
But as i progressed the  
Terrain grew more heavily wooded.  
The road led up and down hill, and  
Occasionally was in need of repair.  
The trees were higher and denser and  
Darker, and the sun, although i  
Suspected its nearness, could barely  
Be visualized through the screen of  
Leaves.  
As i continued, i slowed down,  
Ever searching for the sun, ever

Seeking its bright, warm rays.  
The path lost its perspective as  
Depths became deeper and heights no  
Higher.

Eventually i stopped altogether  
And after several attempts to climb  
The trees, all of which were now clearly  
Beyond my capabilities, was about to  
Submit to the futility of progressing  
In the darkness when i was overtaken.  
It had not been the first time, as i  
Had been passed before, but always  
By groups of unknowns, groups which  
i feared.

Now however, clearly by chance  
?

At any rate- so it seemed,  
i perceived a solitary  
Figure approaching in the gloom,  
Paying no apparent attention to the  
Increasing size and density of the  
Forest.

She disappeared momentarily in a hollow  
And i quickly looked for an  
Obscure

Place to sit and wait.

Not expecting any reply  
i made my usual sign of

Greeting,

Wondering constantly at her  
Attitude.

To my complete amazement

She stopped and began

To speak.

“Hello, I’ve passed you before,  
Haven’t I?”

Yes, but then you were in a  
Group, why aren’t you still?

“Why? Because at times I want to  
Walk alone. One needs to be alone-  
Occasionally.

I’m an individual you see, and  
Come and go a lot.

But why aren’t you  
Moving along the trail?”

What is the use- the sun is  
Blotted out by these vast  
Trees, and further on it’s  
Darker yet.

What good does it do-

These trees can't be climbed  
Or cut down, yet they screen so much light  
That nothing can be clearly seen.  
The road gets worse ahead-  
We were told that. what if  
i fall or if the blackness  
Obscures all?

“My friend I see your  
Dilemma and know your  
Thoughts. I suspected  
As I approached that your  
Problem was of this sort.  
Come, walk with me,  
For although I  
Can't experience for  
Anyone but myself  
Together we may be of  
Mutual aid;  
It is bad to be  
Always alone.  
You say there is no  
Meaning in walking when  
You cannot see what you are  
Passing,  
Yet realize that nothing here is  
Forever, and eventually even this forest must  
End.

It is not your place to seek the sun or  
Attempt to understand the forest,  
But merely to follow this path-  
If this is the path you have chosen-  
To its conclusion.  
True, it would be  
Wonderful to see the sun  
From here and walk on a  
Sunny, illuminated path  
And identify trees and  
Birds and life of all  
Sorts.

Being completely absorbed  
In the life of your area  
Is great, yet remember that that is  
Not our plight- you must  
Take what sunlight comes in  
Patches and rays, accept them  
As your allotment  
And walk on.  
But if you sit  
And Wait,  
Believe me it will only get

Darker.

So come, accept the path

For what it is- a means

To an end.

Walk it and receive what

Images you can in passing.

Above all, do not linger,

And do not fear.

If you can think no other thoughts,

Think only that others have passed

This way before you.”

So may i then walk a ways with

You , and learn by your example, and

Perhaps assist you in broken places?

“Yes, for a time, but do not forget,

The path is long, make no

Vows you will later regret.

Think and experience the present moment first;

We have many miles to go.”

To Tita- Wherever She May Be

The miles hurry by-  
And I cry.  
An early fog drives  
North and a long sighing  
Wail escapes the steel  
Beast of burden.  
A sun has risen in the  
East  
And helplessly I sit and stare  
As it drops a few glittering  
Jewels upon my eyes and  
Mind and sinks  
West,  
As once more I am in darkness.  
My eyes uselessly strain to  
Leap the vault of time and stare back  
At a rustling quiet creature  
In the company of strangers,  
At a friend in the company of Friends  
But the Gulf of Time is too deep,  
It's mighty vault too high, and growing  
Higher  
With every quiet tick. So I sit and watch as  
The miles hurry by-  
And I cry.

Wait!  
Don't go dog.  
Hey, please stay  
Here with me-  
Just for a little while.  
Where 'you going anyway?  
Nowhere I bet.  
Oh well, go on,  
You probably wouldn't like  
My mother anyway.  
She'd say you were too big,  
And you must belong to  
Somebody.  
So what?:  
And besides if you weren't going  
To stay why'd you stop anyway?  
Just to make me sad?  
I hope not,  
You're too pretty to be  
Mean like that•  
Come on dog-here fella!  
Gone- phooey.  
Maybe I can see him if  
I climb this tree.  
Ugh! there, whew.  
Scary up here.  
There he is,  
Gosh he's nice.  
Here dog- oh well, he can't hear me.  
Now he's getting friendly  
With those kids.  
Bet he leaves.  
They're feeding him.  
Gosh, he sure likes it.  
Hah! now he'll go.  
He's staying!  
But why?  
Why not with me?  
He only stayed  
A minute with me,  
Now he's gone.  
But I feel just like I  
Could reach out and touch  
Him...  
Just reach out and touch him.

## Day's End

It is said you know  
That poets love man  
And hate mankind,  
And the more I think  
About it,  
The more I agree.

Which of me is  
Really me  
?

How does one tell rose  
From thorn.  
?

Or they one and  
The same  
?

How does a man know  
Which love is real  
Until all are dried and  
Twisted vines,  
Torn from the  
Tree of Life,  
Until the Tree of Life itself  
Is gaunt and bare  
?

## SOUNDS

A cat makes a soft  
Swish  
As it stalks through high grass;  
A moth flying hurriedly softly  
Bumps  
A light bulb;  
A bird alights with an- imperceptible  
Sigh  
Of closing wings;  
A morning breeze offers a cool quiet  
Flutter  
To a dew drenched plant  
As she walks by, bringing a hopeful  
Rustle  
Of silver to a world nearly filled with  
Sound, a world now one sound closer to  
Beauty.

## DELERIUM EFFECTS

Spirals twisting  
Turning,. whirling  
Back and forth,  
Time has come,  
Here I am,  
All alone.  
The wheat is ripe,  
My memory cells  
Are damaged:  
Hair in the breeze-  
Black- no brown.  
Last piece of paper  
Where will I go?  
Who do I know?  
Orchids turning,  
Getting smaller,  
Absorbed by Andromeda.  
My soul cries out for...  
For what?



## AND YET -

It is dark,  
Nearly as dark as  
I am.  
I sit in the light of  
A sole candle  
Whose flame glistens  
To my poor myopic eyes  
As a tiny star  
Flickering in the silent depths  
Of a hollow universe.  
A miniature, uniquely timed  
Strobe, my candle pierces my  
World with shadow.  
Mass music drums and strums  
In my ears.  
I cannot say I am alone,  
For within my mind dwell  
People, a multitude,  
A throng who for  
Now  
Are mine,  
Mine to love, and  
Yes,  
And hate, for I do hate,  
I hate because I am selfish.  
Selfish,  
For this too I love.  
I do not love  
I love.  
I do not hate,  
I hate.  
So I am no better,  
I am shallow and phony.  
I hold a mask to protect me  
From mirrors,  
I write poems  
To myself  
About me.  
That speaks for  
Itself.

To Light A Candle

Silence;

tap,  
tap,  
tap,  
slam.  
rattle,  
click;  
tap,  
tap,  
tap,  
tap,  
bump;  
click,  
rattle,  
rustle,  
slam.

silence,  
tap,  
tap, slam;  
flush,  
rush,  
click, tap,  
tap,  
tap,  
bump,  
tap,  
tap,  
silence,  
tap,  
zip,  
rustle,  
shuffle,  
scrape,  
rustle,  
bump,  
slam.  
scratch,  
flash, hiss,  
rustle,  
squeak,  
sigh,

Silence.

Flicker,

OVER?

NIGHT FIRES BURNING BRIGHT,  
DARK. WITHIN THE HAZE OF LIGHT.  
INTROSPECTION TRAVELS DEEP,  
REACHES OUT, DRIPS AND SEEPS,  
MY SOUL IS WHIRLING, NO LONGER BOUND,  
LIKE A COLOR PHOTOGRAPH OF SOUND.  
AS LOVE SINKS SLOWLY OUT OF SIGHT,  
HER FACE RECEDES INTO THE NIGHT,  
A MEMORY ONLY LEFT TO KEEP.  
A MEMORY GUARDING TORTURED SLEEP.

**Autumn '69**

SEPTEMBER 22

A book, a magazine  
To keep me company,  
And the eyes of the travelers.  
A tattered sofa in an obsolete station  
Filled with obsolete people-  
The left over, washed out, thrown up,  
Obsolete people, travelling to nowhere  
Through a world of grey colored only by the  
Tinted glass of the bus window.  
The busses too are scattered  
Forlornly about, hollow and empty,  
Crying carbon monoxide tears.  
Lonely, doubtful, the entire  
Gambit of human weaknesses  
On parade.  
A vacant stare, a shy glance,  
The bus driver's surly appraisal;  
A key turns in a lock,  
A light clicks out,  
A waitress prepares to leave...  
It's been a long day, just like yesterday,  
Just like tomorrow.  
I board the bus and my face answers the  
Silent questions  
Of my companions in solitude.

To Whom It May Concern.

A poem is a child of  
Self-pity,  
And the mother of  
Despair.  
I no longer therefore  
Write poems.  
Rather I think on paper;  
And try to avoid  
Writing directly of myself.  
It is however,  
Impossible to suppress the images  
Of my subconscious,  
Or write totally objectively about  
You and Yours.  
Expect me then, for I am coming,  
Bringing my pen,  
My thoughts, and an image of you.

To Danaus's Last Daughter

The wind blows her hair,  
Brown and long;  
And as I watch,  
Enjoying the kaleidoscopic patterns,  
My eye is caught by my shadow.  
There it stands, a handsome shadow, as shadows go,  
Tall and slim, with a strong stance  
And a carefree expression of power and intellect.  
Did I say my shadow?  
Not a chance. Yet there it is,  
Connected to my feet,  
Imitating my actions....  
Yes, imitating them, not guiding me.  
So, I'll turn back into the wind and seek  
The long, flowing hair of tomorrow's tide  
And ride her rippling strands until....  
Until she casts me up upon the beach,  
With only my shadow to protect me.

## To A Debatable Eventuality

The North Wind blows its icy chill  
Down the mountain slopes; across the plains  
So long accustomed to the farmer's till  
That it seems much more like seasonal rains  
Than wounds bleeding moisture to the cold North Wind.

Blowing farther, faster, with a rapier's edge,  
The North Wind meets no match  
As it rips the leaves from the cool green hedge,  
And whatever it then decides to snatch  
Whether living or dead is given up to the cold North Wind.

I was standing there at the end of May  
When the North Wind blew and before I could shout  
It blew my very soul away,  
It snatched my heart and blew it out,  
And I gave it up to the cold North Wind.

I've followed the North Wind for many a day,  
I'll follow it for many more,  
Before I find a way to make it stay.  
There's just one place-the ocean's shore-  
To live and make love to the cold North Wind.



THE DARING DEEDS OF GEORGE AND PAUL

vol. I

'Twas October 13th, a misty eve,  
When forsaking their homes taking their leave,  
Two brave lads in a blue Chevy II  
Took off for N.O., sixty minutes they flew.

The old blue bomb rattled and shook  
As George the pattern of shifting forsook;  
Perched nervously next to him Paul would shout  
In fear and dire alarm- "Look Out!"

Their purpose was secret, very few knew  
That the rumor of the Playboy flag theft was true.  
White silk on orange, black silk on white,  
The cop on the motor gave them a fright.

The people all over were dressed in suits  
But Paul and George in their tennis-shoe boots  
Skulked around cat-burglar style;  
Casing the front of the joint all the while.  
The flags of silk with the white bunny heads  
fluttered arrogantly overhead,  
But George and Paul soon lost their zeal.  
When they found the flags were encased in steel.

"Well what the hell," Paul heard George tell,  
"I'm really grossed out, this place smells,  
Let's go back down to that strip tease show."  
"Not me,-" said Paul, "I won't go."

I'm gonna go to that pornography place,  
Then go next door and feed my face."  
So, George tagged along just for fun,  
And they both strode off towards the setting sun.

The night was dark, the air was cold,  
George and Paul felt no longer bold  
On the long ride home  
In the old blue bomb  
That rattled and shook  
As George the pattern of shifting forsook.

Do I waste my time on these words?  
Does anyone really understand?  
Most of all, do you understand what I'm  
Trying to say?  
If not, I must find another way,  
For I have failed.

Wait, there may be a way-  
My eyes might be able to speak  
What my voice is unable to say.

Dance, for in the dance you  
Escape from the rigors of reality,  
Rounding into euphoria, a world  
Of quiet inner peace, a  
Realm of  
Amnesia from which you can  
Help, I need somebody.

Care; care for  
All people, because They all need your  
Help, they need somebody.  
Endeavor to  
Reach out; will you take my hand? No?  
I understand.  
Never can we be,  
Ever will I wish.

Ever will. I wish as I  
Venture through life.  
Always will I remember.  
Never, I hope, will my memory slip,  
or Slowly sift through the hourglass of life.

What more can I say?  
It's the end of the day,  
Though to say "Day's End" would be a far better way.  
Helped my protege today  
Write an essay  
On how men pay  
For the legal ballet.  
The cost of the fray  
Is not easily allayed  
When two men pray  
By prattling play  
To delay, or dismay, or better yet waylay  
The judicial bouquet  
Through which is conveyed  
The message belayed.  
But in turning away from the essay of the day  
Let it suffice to say  
That in no possible way  
Could I ever repay  
You.

## D E's Blues

I've got D E's Blues,  
The weepin' wailin' rejection-itis blues.  
Gonna get a big bottle of booze,  
And drown myself in D E's Blues.

I won't be alone, the ocean's deep,  
Where D E's Blueser's drink and sleep.  
Drink and sleep and try to rise,  
D E's Blues-Men search the skies  
For a brand-new day, the rising dawn,  
But the coldest sun they ever looked on.

I've got D E's Blues,  
The weepin' wailin' rejection-itis blues.  
Gonna get a big bottle of booze,  
And drown myself in D E's Blues.

The coldest sun and the coldest breeze,  
She sends her chills to the far South Seas.  
No place on Earth can I hide my bod,  
From the ever growing DE Blues-Men Squad.  
There'll come a day, this I know,  
When the sun won't rise and the breeze won't blow,  
When D E's Blues-Men break their chains,  
And sing no more these loud refrains:

I've got D E's Blues,  
The weepin' wailin' rejection-itis blues.  
Gonna get a big bottle of booze,  
And drown myself in D E's Blues.

The sun may fall from out of the skies,  
That may be seen by other men's eyes,  
But not by me.  
No man's fee can make me see,  
For D E's Blues have blown my mind,  
D E's Blues have made me blind.

3:05

The wind gently flows.  
The blades of grass-  
    green, green-  
Are bent by the billowing dust-  
    brown, brown-  
Overhead in pleasing patterns the clouds-  
    white, white-  
Fly through a sky of  
    blue, blue-  
Dyed by a sinking sun-  
    red, red-  
As I sit and think of  
    you, you.

Child of the Rain  
In Search of the Sun

The sun rose,  
And so did I.  
The fog was lifted,  
And so was I,  
But clouds, clouds hung low,  
And so did I.  
The trees were quiet,  
And so was I,  
We both spoke softly  
And called the sun.

The breeze was beckoned,  
And so was I,  
The wind it heralded whispered,  
And so did I.  
The sky was blue,  
And so was I,  
The clouds...cried,

## FOR YOU

Why is tomorrow so far away?  
Why does it take so long to live through today?  
When you're gone why do I miss you so much,  
Why do I quietly sit here and long for the touch  
Of your eyes?

Why did yesterday go so fast?  
Why do I sit and dwell on the past?  
Why do I like you the way that I do?  
I guess it's just because you  
Are you.

Why is the future so hard to see?  
Why is the past so precious to me?  
Will I miss you as much as I think I will  
When our paths are parted; and then until  
We meet again?

Why do you mean so much to me?

## SUNNY

The sun rose one late spring morning  
As usual.  
But this day wasn't the same.  
This day I waited for the sun,  
I hid behind a tall shade. tree and waited.

It was dark at first, and rather cold:  
I wasn't quite sure it all  
Was worth it as  
I looked around and asked myself  
How this blackness could ever become  
Tomorrow's open landscape.  
Only by a miracle, and looking further,  
I lost sight of my objective.  
I almost fell asleep.

While I wasn't paying attention,  
The sun began to rise.  
Beyond my limited scope at first  
But soon the sky was nearly light.  
I began to see a greyness,  
A whiteness,  
A blueness,  
The fog was suddenly gone.  
Pink flooded in, and  
Blue, a beautiful blue.  
The sun, a flaming drop of  
Molten gold, eased into my  
Sight.

The cold was  
Warm now, the  
Miracle had occurred.  
And I abandoned myself-  
Lost my heart and  
Found my mind.  
I watched the sun that whole long day,  
I loved the sun, and dedicated  
That Endless Day  
To making the Earth a pleasant place  
For my sun to look upon.

The sun went down,  
But I wasn't afraid, I knew it would rise  
Tomorrow.  
So I spent the night in endless search of  
Words to sing  
To my friend the sun.  
I walked in lands where the  
North Wind blew,



I spoke to the stars in the sky;  
For-the North Wind is so  
Crystalline, so cold  
That it blows life into the pale stars' souls.

I wrote my words in the ink of  
Night, and when the black ran out,  
I slept the sleep of the weary,  
And dreamed, now differently,  
Of tomorrow,  
And of how the sun would shine on me.  
I welcomed the rains,  
For they would pass,  
And they soothed the earth of my sun.  
They gave me pause for  
Memory,  
Of glad times had  
Beneath a cloudless blue.

The sun became my very life,  
But worship it I did not do,  
For I trusted now, it would come,  
And enable me to see my path,  
And help me down the crowded way,  
And save for me a quiet spot,  
Where a single dandelion grew.

So now I sleep with curtains wide,  
and shutters thrown away,  
For I'll be awakened by the sun,  
On this and Every mortal Day.

This paper that I'm writing on was once alive,  
A tree it was, it touched the breeze,  
Felt the rain as animals walked upon its knees.

This pen that I am writing with will soon be used,  
Will write no more, the ink is to run out,  
And I will sit and do without.

This hand that's writing's bigger now than it's ever  
been before,

But this hand will not much larger grow,  
In fact before it's over, this hand will be smaller  
you know.

But the paper only holds the words,  
The ink only sets them apart,  
The hand only writes them down,  
The meaning must come from the heart.

#### AN APOLOGY

There are times when I am happy,  
There are times when I am sad,  
There are times when I am grateful,  
There are times when I remember,  
But the only important thing is that there are times.

There are times that I spend with you,  
There are times spent without you,  
There are times written for you,  
There are times I think about you,  
But the only important thing is that you're with me all those times.

There are times that I am happy,  
    Times that I spend with you.  
There are times when I am sad,  
    Times spent without you.  
There are times when I am grateful,  
    Times written for you.  
There are times when I remember,  
    Times I think about you.  
And the only important things are you and all those times.

The streetlight stands, tall and straight,  
Watching the homes, guarding the gate,  
By day a pole to kick and beat,  
By night, lonely, lighting the street.  
By day a worse than senseless thing,  
By night, lonely, in safety's ring.  
By day, there to block the view,  
By night, lonely, for me and you.

The sun goes down, the light goes on,  
The shadows cast upon the lawn,  
By night a pole to hit with a car,  
By day, lonely, bearing its scars.  
By night bringing the lover's wrath,  
By day, lonely, straddling the path.  
By night only helping us see,  
By day, lonely, for you and me.

#### BROWN BAG REBELLION

Forty years ago today  
An acorn blew along this way,  
It hit the ground, there to stay,  
Blossomed forth, took root in the clay,  
The trunk grew straight, never astray,  
The leaves in the summer breezes played,  
And under it for many a day,  
Children were gay,  
Farmers rested from baling their hay,  
And a squirrel high up was occasional prey  
To dogs that bayed  
And hunters that flayed;  
So I read today  
To my great dismay  
That for forty years that oak tree grew-  
And now: a paper bag.

## The Lamb Is Dead

The streets are lonely, dark, asleep,  
Ribbons of black, lines of white,  
We travel between in order to keep  
Within our ordered lanes of light.

Once again a starry night,  
Black and deep, the north wind's sky.  
Each mile of road bares to my sight  
An answer and the reasons why.

Far below the white light gleams  
Through holes in the sky black bright,  
Across these reflections of the inky stream,  
A flock of birds in flight.

A flock of birds across the night,  
Cross, re-cross the endless black  
Of street- banded white with circles of light-  
They and I, on and on, there and back.

A road of dark, a star of light,  
A sky of black, a bird of white.  
And on I go, down the street,  
With only the echoes of my feet.

## SEASONAL

The sky is grey, no longer blue,  
The deep black night seems shallow too.  
The wind is not the one I knew,  
And the time has come for movin' on.

Each day the sun still rises high,  
It always will, don't ask why,  
But the clouds in the sky have eased a sigh,  
And the time has come for movin' on.

Reap the grain long past sowed,  
Hay is ripe, watch it mowed  
Travel on, down some road,-  
And the time has come for movin' on.

Hundreds of roads under the sun,  
Hundreds of roads I've never been on,  
But all are one,  
No beginning or end,  
And I will pass this way again.  
Another winter, another day,  
The sun, the wind, a flower gay,  
A starry night, clear and cold,  
Many years, I'll be old,  
Once again upon this road,  
And the time has come for movin' on.

**Winter '69**

## Barr-ly Visible

Through a tiny spot in a fogged-up glass,  
Just clear enough for my sight to get past,  
I watch the world as it rushes by,  
Searching for the reasons why.

Just a tiny spot, rain besmeared,  
The very thing I've always feared:  
Only one little place in a giant glass  
That's clear enough for my sight to get past.

The window fog is closing in  
And I can't see, I'm trapped within  
This place, I'm driving blind,  
And that, my friend, is a state of mind.

## “PERSPECTIVE”

Tonight I took my mirror down,  
Looked at it, turned it around,  
Checked the plating on the back,  
Except in spots, still intact.  
The front of it held an image fine,  
But I realized it wasn't mine;  
The mirror that is, the image too.  
The mirror belongs to whoever's image is cast into  
Its shallow, thinly plated face;  
The image you see is not from your eyes,  
but whatever your mind will therein trace.

Placing the mirror in front of another I let it there swing free,  
And flashing in the 2-D depths I caught a glimpse of eternity.  
But a glimpse of it was all I could see,  
So I turned the mirror back to me  
And saw there was nothing the image could say.  
So I waited for the break of day,  
Watching with the curtains wide  
The sun come up as a part of me died,  
And I placed the mirror way up high,  
Out of reach, I'll tell you why,  
I looked outside and saw the sky.

## PRACTICAL POETRY

The side-walk is concrete, cold and hard,  
And I am the side-walk's concrete bard.

Walking alone, day to day,  
Make some friends along the way,  
I'll walk some near, walk some far,  
Remember them all upon a guitar.

Friends are nice to have you know,  
But the day after tomorrow is coming, and so-  
I'll walk the side-walk, cold and hard,  
For I am the side-walk 's concrete bard.



## MUSIC. #1

Musical fires dancing high  
Under a starlit musical sky.  
Musical clouds fly by day  
As musical men chase them away.  
A musical wind blows through the trees  
As a musical man thanks god on his knees  
For the musical rain that falls from a cloud  
Covering the musical Earth like a shroud.

Musical embers burning low,  
No music'll make the fire go.  
Musical clouds stay by night  
As musical men have stolen their flight.  
A musical wind mourns for me  
As I thank a musical god on my knees,  
For the musical rain that falls from a cloud  
And covers my musical self like a shroud.  
For music is, I know to be  
The soul and true salvation of me.

## MUSIC #2

Music,  
Music, makes me sad;  
Music,  
Music, makes me glad.

Music  
Lifts my spirits high,  
Music  
Makes me want to fly.

Music, music, helps me think,  
Music fills this page with ink.  
Some thoughts I have I won't write down;  
For a song will make them roll around.

Rhythm, blues, any old way,  
There's music for whatever I have to say  
Other people's music will do for now,  
But maybe someday I'll show 'em how.

Someday, maybe, people will smile,  
Yet think and feel all the while,  
As a song of mine goes rolling on,  
Chasing someone long since gone.

Someone or something, who can tell,  
For an ivory tower that long ago fell,  
Was toppled by a mighty blow-  
From one small horn at Jericho.

So sing and dance and clap and play,  
I'll sit and listen through the day.  
Before I go, one last drum roll,  
For Music is my very soul.

## Pleasant Thoughts

A thought is not a living thing,  
Like a cloud it flows,  
As an early morning's filmy wisp  
Into a rainstorm grows.

Yet clouds have life, as much as we,  
They roil and boil and toil along,  
Burnt by the sun, bourn by the wind,  
Like the melody of my favorite song.

The melody weaves among the clouds,  
My thoughts follow swiftly after,  
And near the end, way up high,  
The memory of her laughter.

## Shower Power

The cloud that I was seeking for  
Has blown itself away,  
My thoughts have followed it and  
Both are turned to grey.  
But after grey comes white then blue  
If I will only stay  
And wait, for rain is not a living thing,  
Like a thought it falls,  
And like my thoughts it flows away  
Down time's hallowed halls,  
As the rain becomes my favorite song; my favorite  
Song a cloud that calls  
My thoughts to follow after,  
With feet that are moving, ever faster.

December 23

Time is but an Autumn leaf,  
Nourishing the ground,  
Time is but a moonlit sky,  
A star for each bit of joy I've found.

Time is just a lonely streetlight  
Waiting for someone to pass it,  
Time is warmth in the winter of life,  
Waiting for something to surpass it.

Time is one small lonely bird  
Hurrying to join the flock;  
Time is the thundering avalanche  
And the first tiny tumbling rock.

Time is the light from nowhere, really,  
That shines in your window at night  
And time on a hot and sunny day  
Is the only shade that greets your sight.

From time to time I'll take some time  
To think of you sometime;  
From time to time I'll take some time  
To make a poem rhyme.

I can't think anymore today,  
They're not good thoughts anyway,  
I'm lonely.

I might not always like you,  
I may not ever love you,  
But I will remember.

I'll remember the times  
When I said goodbye,  
So long,  
Fare-well,  
Thought to myself that's it, it's done,  
And called you up the next day.

I'll remember the times  
You were nice to me  
And didn't know it;  
When you hurt me too,  
And I tried not to show it.

Our yesterday's sweep  
Like cleansing rain  
Over my moody mind,  
Making melodious memories,  
Fragments of songs:  
Words that say  
What I can't.

So there it is,  
Just a few thoughts.  
I'm lonely still  
But that is inevitable  
Occasionally,  
Even when you're around.  
Anyway, it feels better.

H ow will it be when the years have flown,  
A nd we've gone down our lonely  
P aths?  
P erhaps will we remember us, will the  
Y ears blot us away?

N ow think about the days and nights,  
E ach one was flashed so hurriedly through,  
W hen will they again come to our sight?

Y ears can't be heard or seen, but  
E ach will have its way,  
A nd so before they pass and  
R end our paths apart:  
  Today.

## Dried Dandelions

I've written so many songs for you,  
I've had so many thoughts of you  
That it just don't seem right somehow  
To leave you here and turn around,  
To look elsewhere and maybe say  
"See you 'round somewhere, someday,"  
I don't know how to make you see  
Cause I've tried it with imagery,  
And I've tried it with scenery,  
And I've tried it with this poetry,  
And I guess that there is just one way  
To make you see and that's to say  
I want you-  
To be my friend,  
I need you-  
To be my friend,  
Now

And for a long time

After.

Well, I'm not known for confidence,  
Hope this don't seem like impudence,  
Don't want to knock you up or down,  
When I think of you, I just can't frown  
But since I've put that picture on my shelf,  
Ain't had time to dwell on myself,  
Cause I wasted it on a lotta wrong ways  
To make you understand; to say  
I want you -  
To be my friend,  
I need you-  
To be my friend,  
Now

And for a long time

After.

I never had too many friends,  
Never dropped one and started again,  
But I can't stand it anymore,  
If ya don't want me here I'll find the door.  
Don't you see what I'm tryin' to say?  
If things don't change there ain't no way,  
Baby, can't you see the score?  
I'm standin' here beside the door,  
But before I leave I'll try once more:  
I want you-  
To be my friend,  
I need you-  
To be my friend,  
Will you-

Be my friend-  
Now

And for a long time

After?



## TRAVELLIN' SONG

Today I left my nice warm house,  
Hit the road, decided to roam,  
And then I'm looking for a brand-new home.  
I stayed back there as long as I could,  
Maybe stayed longer than I think I should;  
'Least I don't have to go back anyway.

I've seen everything there is to see,  
In that old house of mine I mean,  
I went upstairs and stayed awhile  
But the furnishings there just weren't my style;  
And on my way down I stopped on the stair,  
Thought for a moment as I lingered there,  
Wondered if maybe I ought to stay,  
Went outside, but to my dismay,  
The house looked, well, as usual.

So now I'm walking on the street,  
Hearing the music of my feet,  
Looking ahead for one more try,  
Looking behind to say goodbye.

## STREAM OF CONSCIENCE

Weeping willow by a stream,  
With limpid leaves that swing serene,  
Your hollow heart is in my dream,  
My softly singing sadness.

Weeping water in a stream  
With rolling ripples that strike serene,  
Your sea-bound soul is in my dream,  
My softly singing sadness.

Weeping Wanderer by a stream  
With anguished eyes that stare serene,  
Your tortured thoughts are my dream,  
My softly singing sadness.

## PUNDEROUS THOUGHTS

I was walking through a field today,  
    Didn't have no special reason,  
When I saw this bird not far away:  
    Harbinger of a new Spring season.

I said, "Hey bird, if you got a brain,  
    You'll fly away right now,  
Cause I'M a man, you ain't been trained,  
    I ain't no friendly cow"

This bird musta been mighty dumb,  
    At least that's what I thought,  
But when I got too close he moved back some,  
    I guess he had been taught.

So I sat down to ponder my doubt,  
    Wonderin' what I'd find,  
And this is what I figured out:  
    That bird had peace of mind.

Now you may wonder why I've used  
    All this time, these words, and sheets of paper,  
just let me say to me it's news,  
    The moral's coming later.

I watched that bird with mind so free  
    From doubt about what to do  
That bird's peace of mind was smarter than mine,  
    So now I've got it too.

## MORNING-CALL

I was waiting for the sun to rise  
In s tower-top of steel and. stone  
When I realized how easy it was to  
Turn ivory to steel and not be alone.

An ivory tower's fortified,  
But take one step outside the door,  
Turn around and look for it,  
And it won't be there anymore.

The tower looks tall, the steps look steep,  
It can't be won from without,  
The only way to tear one down  
Is to look out and see what life's about.

Anyway that's what I've found,  
The river of life is deep,  
But you'll never get wet if your soul is bound,  
Or your intellect asleep.

If the river of life is bridged with ice,  
The water beneath it flows,  
If the water's so warm as to entice,  
There's a cool spot there you know.

And a river of course  
Can change its course  
And decide to course  
Upstream;

But never fear,  
It won't be for long,  
For once it's ended, tower career  
Can never again be strong.

## DILEMMA

An eagle flies across the sun,  
I sit and wish that I was one  
Of those majestic birds.

But somehow I doubt that I could be,  
For freedom's responsibility,  
And I doubt that I could make it,  
I doubt that I could take it,  
I doubt that I could fake it.

## PERENNIAL

When Spring is gone,  
And Sumer's leaves are whirled away,  
And shorter is each Autumn day,  
And sky and clouds and trees are grey,  
Remember me as I am today.

When today is done,  
When youth has flown,  
And we're living the lives we call our own,  
When you notice children and how they've grown,  
Reap my remembrances long past sown.

When our debt is due,  
And the river of life runs icy and cold,  
When we realize that we are old;  
Be content with the happiness memories hold,  
For it will be easier then than now I'm told.

And in between I only hope  
You won't put thought of me away.  
If you don't, I think I'll think of you,  
And if you do, well that's okay,  
I'll think of you some anyway.

## FULL BLOOM

It was late,  
Of course.  
Although I didn't notice it  
The moon was full..  
Across the street a tree,  
Almost as cold as we could,  
Have been, shook its  
Grey branches in the cone  
Of light we shared.  
It had been a trying day,  
But I got better than I deserved;  
There were flowers in her eyes.

## LATE

A hand once cold is warmed,  
An empty seat is filled,  
One by one the barren pages  
Are written on  
Until my eyes are shut by sleep,  
And the hand. that writes is cold again,  
And the road I'm on comes to an end,  
And I can look back and remember  
When.

## WHO'LL GET USED TO IT?

The sky is blue today.  
It may be a long time  
Before that comes again.  
But I suppose I'll get used to it.

There's a breeze-  
I can't smell anything,  
But I know it's there:  
The dead leaves are assaulting my feet.  
Kind of strange, but I'll get used to it.

I like flowers, and I saw this rose  
That reminded me of somebody,  
So I picked it.

It's healthy, but I can't smell  
Anything except rose.  
Oh well, I'll get used to it.

There was this little kid just now-  
Kind of a cute kid actually.  
He was stirring up the junk  
On the water's edge with a  
Stick when he saw a minnow.  
    "Gosh ma," he yelled,  
    "There's even a Live Fish in  
    This lake!"  
Poor kid. Oh well, I guess  
He'll get used to it.



## WALKING

It's kind of strange you know  
To be alone sometimes,  
Especially since I didn't expect it.  
I walk along, not really sure  
If alone is what I want to be.  
I get used to it though,  
It really helps-  
Sometimes.  
I have a little time  
To sit, and exercise my  
Precious memory,  
And recall my  
Precious memories.  
A snatch of a song,  
Something nice I did,  
Someone special's  
Special look.  
I find a nice dark place;  
Quiet, and I'm really alone.  
Someplace where I can  
Watch other people,  
And write a few lines.  
Like now.

## SITTING

I'm sitting in a quiet place  
Where not too many people go  
That not too many people know  
Where I can sit and be  
Exactly what I want to be  
Where people let me be,  
And be nothing if I want to be.

I'm sitting in, a quiet place  
But there are sounds that come and linger,  
The magic sounds of six tight strings  
And ten inspired fingers.

I'm sitting in a quiet place  
Gently take my glasses off,  
And now I'm really free,  
Because now it's easier to see  
Inside.

My thoughts tonight will remain with me,  
My thoughts tonight are not for thee,  
With glasses off I only see me,  
I cannot write more poetry.

## THE BITTER FRUIT OF PRIDE

I wish that I could sing  
Sometimes  
I wish that I could play  
I wish these words would say  
What I want them to  
Without me.  
Call it a dream.

And so I'll pass on through,  
And write a few more  
    Soundless Words,  
And think a few more  
    Soundless Thoughts,  
And live a few more  
    Soundless Years,  
And cry a few more  
    Soundless Tears.

**Spring '70**

## PAUSE

Water courses down a hill,  
A new-born bird discovers flight,  
The sun that set will rise again,  
And you can have my love tonight  
Without so much as asking.

## GLANCES

Her quick shy looks- a June sunrise,  
Her happy laughter- wind in the trees,  
Her quiet sigh - a symphony

Her dancing eyes - trying to please,  
Her gentle touch means more to me  
Than sifting rain or an evening breeze.

## COMPANY SONG

There comes a time for every man  
When he must ride some road again,  
But he need not ride the very same way,  
And it may not be the very same day.

The first time may be a riding out,  
The next may be part of another route,  
For the very same road in spring and fall  
Won't offer the very same vista at all.

Or to all either; I'm trying to say  
That a tree can be seen in a thousand ways,  
And a sky is never the same way twice,  
And watching it with you is, well,  
kind of nice.

## THE EARTH CAN WAIT

A wall of bricks,  
A mound of stone,  
A heap of wood  
We call a home;  
A patch of dirt  
We call our own,  
All these things  
Are just on loan.

Look around you, look inside.  
See the seeds of hate you've sown,  
Eat the bread made from the wheat  
Of ignorance that you have sown.  
And do not weep,  
And do not moan,  
Your house and land  
Are still your own.  
Even though love of  
God has flown,  
And love of man we have not known .

## THE EASY RIDER

The miles roll swiftly,  
Swiftly past,  
And I have found  
Someone at last  
To ride with me.

Time is -passing,  
Rushing by,  
No longer do I  
Question why.  
It is not for me to know.

I'll watch the road  
Beneath my feet  
And watch her in  
The other seat  
And never fear the road beyond

For the miles roll swiftly  
Swiftly past,  
And I have found  
Someone, at last  
To ride with me.



## VIOLETS AND OAK TREES

Youth, youth, so fancy free,  
No problems with reality,  
It is whatever you want it to be.

But youth, youth is not to be  
An image of tranquility,  
Or a portrait of serenity.

Questions, questions chaining me,  
There are no answers, there is no key,  
I see that I am not to be free.

So I'll take a lesson from this tree,  
Chained to the Earth next to me,  
To grow and flourish naturally.

Thank you for this lesson tree,  
And with the help of such as she  
I'll live my life out happily.

## SMALL GREY BIRD

Rolling storm and toiling sea,  
How I wish that that was me  
Afloat up in the air.

Skimming low or soaring high  
How I wish that I could fly  
Above the Earth and sea.

Escape the Earth, no longer bound,  
Escape the sea-surf's crashing sound  
High up in the sky.

And there to look around and see A fleeting glimpse of eternity,  
The sea-bird of reality,  
The she-bird of my memory.

## IN PASSING

Life is a canvas of reality  
Stretched on a frame of time  
Painted with the oils of memory.

## RETROSPECTIVE

Another winter has passed me by,  
I'M soon to be eighteen,  
And were I asked back then to tell  
I could not even guess  
What I till now have seen.

Today I saw a burning sun  
Set over a blanket of Winter grey,  
I saw a tree in bloom,  
A bird, a cat,  
I saw some happy couples  
And I no longer envy that.

I saw a face of happiness,  
Of enthusiasm, and of faith,  
Of sadness too, and security;  
And all these things  
On just one face.

## WANDERING

These hands are sore,  
Beset with grime,  
And yet I still recall the time  
When they were young,  
When I was told  
They'd do great things ere I was old.

Time has flown, Raced away,  
These hands grow older, day by day,  
And still no greatness  
From these hands,  
No imprints on immortal sands.

Just some flowers  
In hand-worked earth,  
Several bricks in a hand-worked hearth.  
Not much more  
Of mine I found,  
A few words for my burial mound.

Nothing great.

## WIND-SONG

Listen to the booming of the wind,  
Feel it thundering through your soul  
And rumbling through the caverns of your mind.  
Feel it tearing at my sight,  
A life so fast I cannot  
Force my eyes to see the light.

You can't escape the wind.  
So stand with me, and we'll be warm,  
Stand with me, we'll both hold on,  
Or the wind will sweep us away.  
Away, away, and on we'll fall  
Through a hole in the asphalt sky.

For the wind from above is taken from us  
By a wind we've made ourselves  
And the smoky blue and shifting grey  
Have been replaced  
By a wind way that is asphalt paved.  
But now that it's gone, who's to say  
That we've thrown something good away?  
So ride upon the wind today.

And so will I,  
And so will I,  
I'll ride along this asphalt sky  
And feel the booming of the wind  
As it thunders through my soul  
And rumbles through the caverns of my mind.

## WHILE STILL YOU CAN

Go and hear the setting sun,  
Go and watch the thunder roll,  
Go and hear an oak tree grow  
Or touch a seagull's soul.

Listen to the ocean deep  
Watch the wind blow by  
Taste the depth of a red, red rose  
Or feel the warm blue sky.

Walk the waters of the land  
Taste a black lit night,  
Be friendly to a fellow man  
Or here a seagull's wings in flight  
While still you can.

Rain is dripping on my soul,  
It shivers cold and wet,  
But when I stop and look around  
The sun is shining yet.  
There are no clouds,  
No seeping rain,  
And yet my soul aches  
All the same.  
I'm in a hole,  
Dank and damp,  
And something's missing from my soul,  
Or something's that's there  
That shouldn't be;  
Something old, something cold,  
Some malignant fantasy.

## SUNSET

Darkness far ahead of me,  
Darkness far behind.  
In between a fragile capsule  
Lighted from the mind.  
And if there is no inner light,  
If the eye of mind is blind,  
Then what?  
Then I'd only darkness find.  
All around,  
All Around.



## DEDICATION

As a sapling it was just a tree,  
With more color perhaps than most,  
And as it grew its branching way  
Children took it for their own.

Years passed by, the children left,  
And men and women came,  
Bringing children of their own  
To the tree they loved.

Through the years the tree acquired  
A sort of quiet fame,  
And the children and the tree grew  
To simple, classic unity.

Then one year as winter passed  
And horizons were once again green  
The children ran and laughed and stopped,  
For there was no sprout on the tree.

And no one could explain,  
Though there was little need for words.  
A living thing they loved had died,  
What more was there to say?

And the branches rattled dryly  
In the warming breeze  
Till a small child tripped  
And by his knee he spied a bit of green.

## INCIDENTAL

Small quick thoughts are flooding me,  
Thoughts regarding poetry  
And things in general.

Like why is there such a thing as pain?  
And why is evil replete with fame?  
Why do only grey clouds rain?  
Strange my friend, very strange.

Yet the North Wind's icy chill is gone,  
No wind now assaults my face,  
And as I walk the long road down  
Of restless mind I find no trace.  
Today

## EARTH \* WATCH

Spring has come to Earth scarred land,  
And she once again applies her hand  
With brush and such  
To greenery.

Trying ever valiantly  
To bring some life to last year's tree,  
Which from now will spread no shade,  
As shadowed cobwebs are the trade  
For road and street that billow on  
With lighted lamps to light the dawn.

And man-made paths of water flow...  
And so, and So,  
A strange thought just occurred to me:  
Though we're still outnumbered by the trees,  
We'll beat them yet.

## SPIRAL STARES

Isn't it wonderful to know  
That soon no living thing will grow  
'Cept 'tween the cracks  
Of layered, textured,  
Permanent snow,  
That round and round  
And round you go?

## SWINGSET BLUES

Swing!  
Push off,  
Lighten up.  
Soar!  
Bits of sand,  
Legs up high,  
Touch the sky.  
Wind!  
Rushes by,  
Tangles hair,  
Now you fly.  
Up, over,  
Up again.  
Jet plane rushes  
O'er the sky.  
Won't wait for me,  
Wonder why,  
Past my feet,  
And then goodbye,  
But I'd better stop,  
My vapor trail  
pollutes the sky.  
So slow we go,  
Weight down ,  
Come low.  
Remove your eyes  
From rushing skies  
And think ground,  
Scraping sound,  
Feet on sand,  
Time to land,  
Bid goodbye  
To bird and plane  
And rushing sky.  
Shoe-heel skids,  
Piles of sand,  
Imprints marked:  
"Tread-Rite-Brand".  
A lighter shade of grey rolls by,  
The concrete sweeps on towards the sky,  
And leaves me here,  
Leaves me near,  
Won't carry me far away.  
Lights flash by,

Rob the sky,  
From my brain  
Steal the strain  
Of a lover's song,  
Now it's gone,  
Bourne away  
Like a cloud of dust  
In a driving rain;  
A mud-ring stain  
Upon my soul.  
Cleanse it bare  
Till nothing's there,  
No soul at all,  
Just chain and ball,  
And river deep,  
And mountain high,  
And grey clad sky,  
And concrete sweeping towards it there,  
That leaves me here,  
Leaves me near,  
Won't carry me far away.

It is not death I fear:  
But pain, and years.  
The extended, interminable drops of time,  
Dripping in chaotic rhyme,  
Slowly filling up the well,  
The clapper swings towards the bell,  
But does not touch on this occasion,  
The plan has gone awry.  
Can I wait for one more try?  
It is not death I fear,  
But the deathlessness of feeling free  
Till the Earth falls up to envelope me  
For an unsure waiting moment is the longest death of all.

Will I then die?  
Time to fly?  
Earth and sky,  
Bid goodbye,  
Farewell,  
I loved thee  
More than well  
Though it is not death I fear,  
But pain, and years.

## HAIR

Long hair  
Back there,  
Grow some more,  
To the floor,  
Way, way down,  
Way down outside.  
Flying free,  
Just you and me,  
Feel it thwack and crack  
At neck or back  
In howling wind,  
How I grin.  
How good it feels  
To stand or kneel  
In an open car  
That's driving hard  
Or a sailing boat  
That flies afloat  
On wings of wonder.  
Or just to run,  
Shade trees under,  
Around and round  
Some quiet place,  
Beating myself  
In a sure thing race.  
Stopping for my laurel crown,  
Stooping low, bending down,  
And standing up,  
Such is fate,  
I, myself, must set it straight  
On long hair  
Back there,

'Tis said man hurts the one he loves,  
'Tis said he drives it away,  
Yet he seldom hurts his love  
For one,  
It rarely goes astray;  
He seldom keeps the ONE he loves  
And sends the love away.  
There is a basic fear in man,  
This thing returned from dust,  
Despite the mantle of hate and greed  
He weaves for other men,  
There is ONE that each man loves  
Till mountains turn to dust,  
And dust returns to man;  
And the love that each man feels,  
He feels like sifting sand;  
Coursing past his fingertips  
He clutches to it strong.  
Too strong, and so he hurts it,  
And so, must let it go.  
That handful of sifting sand  
Is everywhere, my friend,  
It covers the delicate marriage bands  
Wedding sea and land,  
And wherever you see it,  
Barren and bare,  
Water and shelter there,  
And the seeds it stores  
Ignore the wars  
And turn the sorrows gay.  
And the white of sand,  
Of desolate land,  
Is broken, as it should be,  
Into brilliant spots  
And colored knots,  
Yes my friend, love should be free;  
To come and go as it will,  
For that handful of sand,  
There hot in your hand,  
Holds no majesty.  
Or finery,  
Or mystery,  
Or anything that sand could be,  
If you would but let it go.  
So let it sift,  
Sift it slow,  
Watch it fall, and mound, and grow,  
And so...and so  
The world, you know,  
Is made of bits of sand.





## INSPIRATION

Secret apostle of the night,  
Swaying, swinging, black eyes bright,  
Chanting incantations old,  
Round him hell-hounds of gaeol,  
Shadowed in the ghastly light  
Of pallid moon and sylvan night.  
Thundering pads of galloping feet,  
Canine steeds without deceit  
Harbinger East wind's chilly meet  
With the timeless word-bane of man's soul.  
A dripping thought  
Is caught within a basin stone,  
From the dankness comes a groan  
Of torture, as the shadows dance  
And mime weak spirit as it fance  
To hear a growl,  
The hell-hounds howl,  
The East wind shrieks away.  
The warlock's mane is whipping now,  
His shadow's creeping o'er the- ground,  
Away from him, cloaking me. Upon my brow  
Icy dew is forming now,  
Shadows! Flames across my sight,  
Night fires, burning bright,  
Dark within the haze of light.  
Introspection travels deep,  
Reaches out, drips and seeps;  
My soul is whirling, no longer bound,  
Like a color photograph of sound.  
As love sinks slowly out of sight  
Her face recedes into the night,  
A memory only left to keep,  
A memory guarding tortured sleep.

The icy flames linger on,  
Casting, shadows on the dawn,  
The wordless messenger is gone  
And ember paw prints on my face,  
That is the only malignant trace  
Of madness in this night I found,  
On Inspiration's hallowed ground.

Blue sky,  
Birds fly.  
Hear the wings.  
How they sing.  
Stop.  
Look up,  
Pretend to see.  
Can't fool me,  
Blind you are,  
No distant star  
Reflected in your eye.  
Back and forth,  
Slowly, quietly stopping, testing,  
Quietly tearing  
Chunks from the soul  
With each inconspicuous,  
Tentative tick and click.  
Toe first,  
Gentle now,  
Same as before,  
Curve to the left.  
Back and forth,  
One more time,  
Make it sure-  
Seven, eight, nine,  
Stop.  
Cool breeze,  
Rustling trees,  
Newborn birds,  
Dancing leaves.  
Stare hard,  
Stare where?  
You there-  
What is green?  
Wait, don't ask,  
Feel the eyes?  
Burning deep,

Fill the hole  
With sudden tears.  
Dip the well,  
Quenches thirst,  
Eases pain,  
Still the same.  
What color is flame?  
Tapping song.  
Tap, tap go the nails,  
Click goes the bone,  
On the place of the skull,  
At night, alone.  
Hanging on a cross of night  
By nails of light unknown.  
Tapping on,  
Tap a song,  
A sightless melody.  
Cannot see the mouth that sings,  
Words and things.  
What are 'Wings of Song'?  
Is she really 'blue'?  
'Feeling blue'...  
Wish I knew.  
Tapping alone,  
Going home,  
Quiet streets.  
Empty?  
Well,  
Who can tell,  
Who cannot see  
To throw a glance  
Who cannot see  
To look askance  
Or read between the lines?  
Up the stairs,  
Down the hall,  
No trouble at all.  
Key, lock, door.  
Carpet floor.  
Softly now,  
No problems how,  
Know the way around.  
Close door.  
What for?  
Change clothes,  
Darkness grows,

Coldness knows,  
And so does he.  
Very in the dark.  
Dark for him,  
Dark for me.  
Hidden now,  
Underground,  
Caverns of the mind.  
Through a door,  
Across the floor.  
Flash,  
A scratch,  
Light a match. Candle flares,  
Deep reaches  
of the soul it bares.  
Into bed,  
Softly said,  
“What color, I wonder, is love?”

Walking in an unknown land,  
Treading hills and slopes,  
Writing with an unknown hand  
Dashing out my hopes.

Running in an unknown place,  
Deep rifts of my mind,  
Seeking things I cannot trace.  
Lives I cannot find.

Lives of others in my brain,  
Other I's I've lost.  
Other eyes unseeing strain,  
Blind at so much cost.

To find no peace in constellations  
Running madly through the night  
Thousands search in desperation  
Seeking for the hidden light.

That light of truth I shall not find,  
The lamp of it burns small and dim  
In dark recesses of my mind  
O'ershadowed by inhibitions grim.

Fear to love and let it show.  
Fear to be what I am  
Fear to love and let one know.  
Fear to be an open man.

What a waste of waters deep  
That spring from natural wells.  
To cap it off and hold it there-  
For this men go to hell.

The natural flowing well denied,  
The saving waters not allowed  
To weary men and passersby;  
To ominous rumblings I have bowed:

Lightning's thunder rings  
My name in inky blood,  
And so I heed, Uncap the springs,  
Ride on with the flood.

Ride on with the flood.

Warm was the night that the moon woke in,  
Warm was the tread of the sun.  
Warm were its feet as it swung along  
And the lighted leaves it walked upon.

Warm was the moon as the sun walked up,  
Warm as it faded away;  
Warm was the night that we awoke in,  
Warm was the place we stayed.

Warm were our thoughts  
And warm our hands.  
Warmer than would ever be  
A sun-lit, sea-side strand.

The night was old, the day was young,  
The moon-king was the one  
As yet enthroned as daylight groaned,  
And our warmth was the warmth of the sun.

MAY 29

Had an unusual thought tonight.  
Didn't really intend to write,  
But you see I must -  
For so many times I've almost died,  
So many times I've valiantly tried  
In dream and thought,  
Though I knew I ought  
Not do such things,  
My soul does not to frail flesh cling  
And fain would flash away.

And so before it ever flies,  
Before it lives while these hands die,  
I'd like to take some time to lay  
A thing I discovered between the days  
Before you.  
And this is what it is - my soul.  
And this is how it looks - a hole;  
Deep and filled with fireflies,  
Big as all the night,  
Hidden away  
Throughout the day  
By the blindness of man's sight.  
Yet while men sleep  
And dream away what they cannot live  
My soul leaps out, and peaceful, gives  
The love of blackness deep.  
My soul-the night.  
My worship-flight;  
Among around the stars  
Of memory afar.  
The moon of present thought,  
In whose web of warmth are caught  
The troubled clouds of sorrow  
Fear and wonder of tomorrow  
Lights the vastness of my soul.  
And so you see, before I go,  
And soon it is to be,  
I thought I'd write and let you know  
That every man is free  
Who understands and is not grim,  
That man was made for the Universe,  
It was not made for him.  
Man's arms were made to embrace the night,  
The day, the Earth, the sky, the sea,  
Whatever each feels to be greater than he,  
Wherever each feels that infinite sigh  
That does beyond the senses lie,



Of life gone unsubdued,  
Of love not starved for food,  
A sprout of joy from sadness grown,  
Or a cloud of nepenthe from seashores blown.

Abandon your soul you foolish man,  
As I but now have done.  
Your journey last is chained to land,  
My free-flight's just begun.  
Up I fly,  
I'm past the clouds,  
The moonlight's far behind.  
Look outside and you may see me  
Travelling on my mind;  
Sailing in a wonderous ship  
On a sea that has no shores.

**Summer '70**

Grey ranks on a field of blue,  
Slipping through  
Defenses:  
Raining down,  
Upon a clown,  
Bullets of defeat.

Blank wind on a field of grey  
Puffs away  
Defenses;  
Smashes the face  
Of paper mâché,  
Traces of despair.

Goodbyes on a field of May  
I leave today  
Defenseless.  
The crying sound  
Of the broken clown  
Carries me away.  
    Away.

## AMERICA

Darkness is rolling, gathering fast,  
Songs extolling virtues past,  
Voices roaring down the roads  
Spirits soaring on new modes  
Of transience.

## TO A MOURNING CLOAK

Silver bells on the mountain  
On the shoreline, on the sea;  
Silver bells to toll and tinkle  
All mankind's' sad melody.

Mourning cloak' s the morning,  
Grieves the passage hence  
Of creatures small who ruled it all  
On naught but false pretense.

Stones rumble, fall and tumble,  
Hurling messages to the sea.  
And so do we, tumbling after,  
Raining faster, dying free.

EDITH,

Flowing,  
Falling,  
Softly, slowly, settling;  
Peacefully poised  
On the edge of existence.  
Ready to rally,  
Ready to rain  
Tears of mirth,  
Renew the Earth.  
Tears of sorrow,  
Tears of pain  
From the eyes of awareness:  
Flowing,  
Falling,  
Once again.  
Tears of being  
Awareness seeing  
The ecstasy of life.

All is darkness.

All is fluid.

Immersed in liquid,

Water of Life.

And from beneath,

From. under the pulsing

Polyp of sky,

Gratefully buoyed and tangled

In the tentacles of existence,

Five senses:

Touch the air

That fills the void,

That flows and follows,

Caressing, giving, taking.

Taste the dew.

Settling, slowly

Gathering, gradually

Renew, revive, replenish.

Smell the night.

Living, loving,

Hiding, hating, teeming,

Flowing on the touch of air.

Hear the world

And all it holds,

The stars-

What have they told you?

See the night.

Round, out of sight,

Filled with glittering specks

Of light.

Five small things,

This to say:

Perceive.

Madness, Madness,

Shrieking on the heated air.  
The stench of evil, the color of blood,  
The taste of farce my friends.  
The universe lies watching  
As we sit upon a mounded throne  
Made of our brothers souls,  
The better to be seen.  
And seen we are,  
And seen we are,  
A horde of grinning, grasping ghouls,  
Naked for what we are,  
Naked to each blinking star.  
For each and every laughing star,  
Howling in its pain,  
To each and every dying man  
Becomes a drop of quivering rain.  
And so men die by other men ,  
And so the raindrops fall  
And nurse the lands,  
And cleanse our hands, While yet a child is born.  
And as mists rise  
Through children's eyes  
Become the stars again.

So do not mourn,  
I go to join the stars.

Shafts of darkness pierce  
The misty moonlit night.  
Shining leaves, silver beneath,  
Sailing ships on soaring flight.  
Darkling water chorus  
Sings a thousand moon's lights.  
Island clouds caress the moon  
And roll the deep sky tide about.  
Stones shiver, huddle and quiver,  
Stars glimmer and all without  
The slightest doubt of a god.



## CHRISTENING

Emptiness.  
Void, haze,  
Lost in a maze  
Found in a days  
In a number of ways.

Clouds stumbling  
Over the moon.  
Falling, tumbling,  
Roaring, rumbling,  
Climbing the sky,  
Reaching  
For a distant why.

We are men, we are man,  
We will strain  
And fall again,  
Fall once more  
Like gentle rain  
That once was clouds,  
That fell from a  
Whipping purple  
Sunset shroud:  
Made of countless tiny waves  
Of woodland streams  
And ocean spray,  
That carried over  
To climb the sky,  
That reached  
For the one great  
Distant why,  
And patters now  
About our feet,  
And noisily runs  
Down towards the street  
And flows away to woodland streams  
And ocean spray.      Hear the crashing of the tide.

Spirits join a dead man's dance ,  
Fanciful snakes are to enhance  
The doleful dreams;  
The dead man screams,  
The shadows roll  
Like stumbling stones,  
Over and away.

Hermes speeding through the brain,  
Quicksilver messengers disdain  
From rolling back: the ashen sky,  
The child screams "why",  
The future shrinks,  
Drips from the brink,  
Oozes watchfully away.

Silver sabers swiftly dodge the dancing feet  
As pattering vermin harvest the wheat  
For the scythe is elsewhere swinging,  
The bells are nowhere ringing,  
No-man pulls the cord.  
The last Silverbird has soared,  
And the Earth grows tired of fear.

A moonbow arches, see it there,  
Fairy shadows clothe the air,  
Rain glow rings embrace the moon,  
Daylight will be dawning soon.

Concrete heel tread echoes loud,  
Tomorrow's flowers unborn bowed  
Tiny vessels of time await  
The flowing of the morning tide.

Dewey sabers, surfeit of sorrow,  
Wait the coming of the morrow  
To flash their greetings for the sun,  
To leap and dance for everyone.

Insects scatter, legs and wings take hurried flight,  
From moon to stars and lamp to light;  
I do not wish to follow  
Them.

I went for a walk tonight  
Late.  
Because then there is a certain light,  
Intensified by its surroundings,  
That makes life tread soft,  
Love hard.  
A light that makes life love hard,  
Tread soft .  
When life is willing to speak to me  
And tremblingly say  
The unusual saddening things it sees  
On a saddening any-day.

I spoke to a flower tonight  
As it hung, one petal short  
And sadly spoke  
Of golden rain that burned;  
And children that hadn't learned  
That laughter is to make one free,  
Not chained to toys of pain.

A butterfly met me tonight,  
Beating battered wings,  
And asked me why men  
Didn't see that flitting  
Does not make one free;  
And asked me if I didn't perceive  
The helplessness it felt.

And I remember now  
This afternoon  
A sparrow hawk I saw  
That spoke to me  
In the turn of a wing,  
In a shudder of spiraling  
Grey,  
Of night turned day,  
Of dives as effortless  
As rain.  
And what it said  
I find I cannot relate;  
There is someone who knows  
That I wish to be like the tree that  
Grows  
For hawk to nest,  
That children like best,  
Where battered butterflies can rest.

For You.

A sea gull blown far in from shore,  
A fish washed up on land,  
Lamplight spilling on the floor,  
Water dropped on sand  
A rusted link of chain  
That seems to hold no worlds together,  
Nor any shadow realms apart;  
A branch too lost in twining  
Through the light between other links  
To show its twisting beauty  
To birds who need a resting place;  
The star that's ever hidden  
Behind the cloud that never weeps,  
The soul that made one halting cry,  
Before its eternal leap.  
And then there was a hand that grasped at empty air  
As the feather floated by.

## FIRST

Orange fires scream their rage  
In shadowed notes on a crumpled page;  
Indigo messengers alight,  
Speak to her of the realm of night. Silver seeds sprout from the heat  
And blossom rusted steel  
That sings the tune of shrieking feet  
Pinned beneath the creaking wheel  
That's groaning to a halt.

As the man-child  
Dances in the garden of tomorrow.

Uprooted trees weep boiling tears  
That spatter and burn on the mounded biers  
Of her siblings: scattered broken shards,  
Discarded, twisted playing cards,  
Blown about by the winds of hate  
As the remaining man-child's hair blows free.  
Heaped together by a common fate,  
The dancer left is one in three  
With bare and bleeding feet.

As the man-child  
Dances in the garden of tomorrow.

The sun is breaking pieces fly,  
Inky blood smears the sky  
From dawn to dark  
While in the converted burial park  
Clouds are knocking headstones down,  
And the man-child's hands are weeping,  
Molten yesterdays cover the ground  
And the dancer's eyes are creeping,  
Seeking skies o blue.

As the man-child  
Dances in the garden of tomorrow.

The man-child's feet can dance no more,  
Her mother has become a whore  
And from the pit of deadly, weeds  
The dancer quietly plucks a seed,  
Picks a path  
Looks once last at the broken day  
Laughs a laugh  
Seeps transparently away,  
One in three.

As no man—child

Dances in the garden of tomorrow.

## SECOND

The blind man's cane is broken  
The purple shadowed funeral token  
Glistens in the breeze,  
Mimicking the trees  
Whose silver leaves  
Have dying danced  
Across the redly empty  
Hours,  
Whose settling pale brown rain.  
Lowers flowers  
To the ground' again;  
Bends them low  
Snaps them free,  
The blind man too  
Has been set free  
By the snapping of his  
Cane in three,  
One in, three.  
The blind man sings a song,  
The man-child dances on  
But is no more,  
The blind man is the only one  
Dancing on the floor,  
Dancing singing through the door  
In the center of the eye  
And down the cheek  
Dancing, riding on a tear,  
No more fear,  
The blind man now is crying.  
The blind man has been trying  
To see without a rap,  
To walk without a tap,  
The blind man will succeed  
The blind man now is freed,  
The blind man's but a seed  
Blowing over barren, ground  
Seeking sight without a sound.  
Sadness.  
Gladness.  
Mystery.  
The blind man now can see.  
The blind man's once more free  
No three-piece cane;  
The sea of ground  
Sprouts oceans of  
Sight again.  
Goodbye,



The passageway to eye  
Is open.

## KATYA'S SONG

I don't know where I'm going  
And I'm not sure where I've been,  
I'm crawling through some ovoid mass  
Sometimes I'm out, some in;  
It's dark...it's grey...the light of day,  
I'm basking in the sun of love  
But as I (wait) another (wait)  
The sunlight shrinks away  
It's grey...it's dark,  
My fragile bark has met a reef  
And sailed on by,  
I greet the sky I'm sailing toward  
But wonder if I'm still. on board.  
All aboard!  
Everywhere is in between  
Two other places;  
I've been seen with many faces  
Mostly I am just the spaces all around,  
Lost and found and lost again.  
Remember when you didn't have to know,  
Just go?  
I've got to go, I've lost the track,  
Get back! Get Back!  
And do it different again some more,  
Let's do some more;  
What for?  
What for?  
I'm shrinking, sinking  
Thinking about weeping tears,  
Hiding fears,  
Creeping quietly away;  
Once again the light of day,  
The sun seems cold,  
It's not I hope,  
I grope,  
I find an opaque lining  
Coats the sky, it smokes and burns  
As I paint on whys  
With a brush that is not art,  
And the sky soon clears,  
I gladly eat my bread of fears  
Slowly down the cup of tears  
Made warm by the sun,  
And the bread and the cup

Are the warmth of the sun,  
And the sun and I  
Are one.

**Autumn '70**

The mind is the master  
The master is gone  
The steward is all in a drunk.

The games that I played  
The thoughts that I laid  
Have risen to make war  
Against me.

The master has gone to war.

I didn't want to leave you there,  
But it was time to go.  
I didn't want to leave your side  
But well, I guess you know,  
I didn't want to say it there,  
I didn't want to tell you so.  
I'm not even really sure  
I know exactly what I'd say  
It's just that, well, you see  
I couldn't find the proper way  
And I refuse  
To abuse your eyes.  
I cannot save your gasping whys  
From drowning in my sea of  
Fallen stars.  
I wish that I could save my words  
From spilling glass-like to the floor,  
Swept up broken shards,  
Ordered pieces of a thought that  
Once pronounced can be no more.  
And yet it lingers on,  
I didn't want to leave you there  
But it was time to go.  
I guess.

Wishing for some happiness,  
Now it's time to go.  
The dog digs in the empty lot  
In vain to find a bone.  
The flowers, I see, are fading now,  
As all such things must do  
But now it's time to go.

I've ordered the house,  
I've set things straight  
But I know it cannot last.  
I don't expect it to.  
I'll be by again someday  
When I have found some other way  
Than flowers.  
Flowers fade.  
But now it's time to go.

Your hands were softly threading  
The needle as it tugged the cloth  
And shaped the seam  
And not a single stroke  
Was one you could recall.  
The rhythm rose  
The rhythm fell  
And shaped the shirt  
I wore  
The day I found  
That the you I knew  
Was no more,  
Was never more to be.  
And now my hands are softly wiping in  
The tears that fell upon the cloth,  
As I thread another I,  
And button on another shirt;  
Another face,  
Another farce.



## QUOTE

Delia

with an outrush of air  
and a tiny splash  
that echoes in the blind  
cavern of my memory.

Where?

while I search the  
sky as empty blue  
as it was grey  
that day it rained-.

Have

as I follow  
the streetlights now  
so suddenly barren  
of light and warmth.

You

to seek the  
smoky pearl,  
the moon, the fruit  
of the starry tree of night.

Left

for an endless twist  
of two lane  
black and white  
tomorrow.

Me?

a single set of  
hollow heels  
resounding on  
the formless night.

**Winter '70**

I am the walker,  
Footstep my name.  
I am silence  
Shaped by the  
Passing of seeking  
Feet,  
By cedar sentinels  
And fog:  
Making light a solid  
and sound a silence.  
I am the walker,  
Stepping off the night  
In fog-wrapped shoulders.