

POEMSONGS



THE POETRY AND SONG LYRICS OF

GAIR LINHART

POEMSONGS

The poetry and song lyrics of

Gair Linhart

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ALSO BY GAIR LINHART

DEDICATION

For Mary and Mr. Platt

WHO I AM

I don't carry a briefcase

I don't get off the train every night at five-thirty

I don't have adoring or rotten kids waiting for me

I don't have a sexy

Nagging

Or servile wife either

What do I have?

All I have is this

About once every ten thousand years or so

A real goddess of love will grant me refuge in her temple

I will sing songs

Fix her swamp cooler and

Roll on the floor with her dogs

I will sip wine and chop potatoes

She will create a stew more piquant

Than might any man's

Legal wedded doxy

Crickets will sing

Stars will shine in

Through her screen door

— Gair 1993

SITTING IN THE RIVER DRINKING BEER

We are sitting in the river

Drinking ice cold beer

Or I'm the one who's

Drinking beer I ought to say

The dogs are chasing woozles

They are woozle chasing poozles

But we're sitting in the river

Drinking beer today

The first thing we saw

When we reached the water's edge

Was a great blue heron taking flight

He'd been fishing in a hole

Where our catfish line now is

But we do not really care

If our luck's as bad as his

Because we're sitting in the river drinking beer

For a while I tried to sit
Up there upon the bank
The dogs would shake and drench me
Where the grass grows rank
The dragonflies are pretty
But the sand is rather gritty
So we're sitting in the river drinking beer

KERPLUNGE!

Goes Anny's body
As she plunges in the river
Has a more cheerful sound
Ever been perceived?
Ranger is more wary
He finds the water scary
He's much more of a desert dog
Than we

If a current sucks me down
If by chance I drown

At least I won't have
Tubes and needles stuck in me
And the distant, dreaming mountains
Just around the river's bend
Would be about the best last sight
That one could see

The apparel that I wear
Might cause some folks to stare
Or to quickly hide their eyes and look away
But my only sin is fatness
In fact I'm rather well dressed
As the good Lord made me on my natal day

As the crawdads thrill our toes
And the sultry sun sinks low
We ponder why we don't come every day
But it's likely all the sweeter
That we seldom get to be here
Sitting in the river

Drinking beer this way

— Gair July 3, 2009

YOUTH AND LOVE

Youth

Youth

My vanished youth

However laced with hurt and shame

I miss you still

There were the nights of romance

The blues singers we rode way 'cross town to hear

The girls who would drink red wine and jump the cemetery wall

Where have they gone those girls and folk singers?

Love

Love

You've burned me with each brutal iron

My heart is just scar tissue that can never be what it was

And yet

For all the scalding tears

I miss my lover's bed beneath the milky moonlight
When we kissed all night while trains and nighthawks called

Pity me

And envy me

For these things
I have known

— Gair 2/2000

NEW MEXICO WALTZ

(Song)

When the wild horses come down the canyon
And the desert is smoky and blue
When the sandhill cranes come home for winter
That's when I'll be dreaming of you

When the red, red wine
Runs through the valley
And the niños dance
Under the stars
I'll remember how
We used to be so happy
How we danced to
These same guitars

When the wild horses come down the canyon
And the desert is smoky and blue
When the chilis are ready for ristras

That's when I'll be dreaming of you

That's when I'll be dreaming of you

Dreaming of you

Dreaming of you

Dreaming of you

— Gair 1990

RUNNING OUT TO RECESS

We would be assigned arithmetic homework

In the evening I would watch TV or

Shoot my BB gun or

Ride my bike instead

The next morning

Mrs. Wressler would say to the class at ten-thirty

Anybody who did not do their homework

Can stay in for recess and get it done

Out I would go

To play softball with the boys

Too guilt ridden to enjoy it much

*RUNNING OUT TO RECESS WITH YOUR
HOMEWORK NOT DONE?*

Mrs. Wressler would gasp later on

As the whole class recoiled in horror

What will your parents say?

They would be disappointed and heartbroken of course

I'd be punished and would buckle down

For a while

But pretty soon

I'd be back out there

On the playground again

Half a century later

I can still be discovered to be

Running out to recess

Less guilty

By only the

Palest of shades

— Gair 2010

ROOM TO RUN

Build him a snug doghouse and
He'll sleep out in the driveway
In the driving sleet

Bring her filtered water and she'll prefer to
Drink from the drain ditch

The same dog who would gladly
Die for you
Still might try a mad dash for freedom
Now and again

When you must bury a dog
Dig the hole deep

But more importantly
Dig it extra wide
Flat and roomy

At its bottom

This way the dog

And your heart

Will have

Room to run

— Gair 2010

WRONG

Nuke a beef wiener

That's supposed to be wrong

Be fatter not leaner

It is wrong! It is wrong!

Light up a fag

Now that's really wrong

Say that church is a drag

Unforgivably wrong!

You voted for that one?

You must hate all mankind

You voted for this one?

You are out of your mind!

Schools, schools, schools

Rules, rules, rules

Fools, fools, fools

Tools, tools, tools

Just one thing's sure in life

As we stagger along

All we do or don't do

Someone will find WRONG

— Gair 2012

THE WHEEL'S GOING TO SPIN

Place your bets

Place your bets

Hedge them if you're able but you've GOT to place your bets now

'Cause the wheel's going to spin

It may crush you or caress you

But know it's going to spin

EVEN if you stand pat you are forced to be a gambler

It's a game you cannot walk from

But now's the time for skill

For even NOW the wheel is turning

It may crush you or caress you

But the wheel's going to spin

— Gair 1999

AT THE BECKER STREET PUB

At the Becker Street Pub

When the front door opens

Heads turn to see who's walkin' in

Most heads turn

Some don't

The blue felt chalkys look up from their games

To see if any big sticks

Or easy chumps are entering

The desperately lonely rubber neck for

Potential lovers, with undisguised longing looks

The socializers look for scandal and clothes

The working people look for co-workers

To blow off steam with

The real drinkers don't look at all

It's already in the glass in their hand

Some of them started out as above listed types

Then lost their amateur status

Most of us are running from something:

Despair

Failure

Guilt

Nagging spouses

Rotten kids

Stress

And of course

Loneliness

It ain't a good life but at least the

Laughter all around us is not canned

Cracked and braying though it may be
We ain't brain-wired to a
TV or computer for our kicks

I guess they'll stamp us out in a few more years
We already have to go and freeze outside
To have a smoke

The choices on the warmly throbbing juke box
Are way more exotic than
What's on at home
Good luck finding Ferlin Husky or Patsy or
Al Hurricane or Los Tigres del Norte
On the dish or cable networks

And even if you did
You wouldn't get to play
Deejay with your quarters
And hold the other revelers
Captive to your whims

At the Becker Street Pub

When the front door opens

Most turn to see who's walkin' in

Or at least

Sneak a peek in the mirror

— Gair 2013

AWAY TOO LONG

(Song)

I came back to this old town of mine
And the beer that used to taste so sweet
Something came while I was gone
That made it all taste stale to me

I went down to the old ball park
To hear the bats crack on a summer night again
But the grass was fake
And the bats went ping
And the players were boys instead of men

But pay me no attention
Soon I will be gone
I'm just a wayward shadow here 'cause
I...I...I've been away too long...

I came back to this old town of mine

The girls who verses once did sing
Something *changed* while I was gone
The pianos from the parlors no more did ring

So I sat outside on a summer's night
Where the children used to play till dark
They were all inside with a strange blue light
Their voices no more filled the park

But pay me no attention
Soon I'll be movin' on
I'm just an asterisk to a footnote here
'Cause I...I...I've
Been away too long...

Please disregard this message
Soon I'll be goin' home...
This was the place I once called home
But I...I...I've been away to long
Yeah, I've...been away too long...

Too long...

— Gair 2021

ABBY

I'll sing you one-o

Green, green

The rushes grow!

My big sister would load

Shadow and I into Mom's

Maroon Vauxhall

Unlike Mother

She could sail satin smooth

Through its finicky gears

We would be off to the country to

Ride horses and get muddy

Two, two

The lily white boys

Cloth-ed all in green-o

One is one and all alone and

Evermore shall be so!

The folk songs she would have us singing!

Three Jolly Coachmen

Sitting in an English Tavern

Away in yore we'd be

As we flew up and down green hills

Steep as roller coasters

If I got bored

I would peruse my collection of

Civil war bubble gum cards

Walls of corpses!

Bayonet impalings!

Even worse horrors designed to make

Small boys feel

Warm and fuzzy

Off on some old caballo we'd trot
(Abby always knew somebody who was
happy to have her
exercise their horse)

Me in the saddle in front of her
In my tall boots and Union Army forage cap
She in her kitty kat glasses
(The only type available for
young ladies back then, unfortunately)
And short modish hair

As the sun fell low
She would find
Some old lady to gabble with or
Some boy to flirt with

Shadow and I would track
Dubious creatures through
Dubious mud-holes

With

Dubious intent

— Gair 2010

I DON'T BELIEVE IT

I resent it when I'm told of realms beyond this life

By those who haven't seen

But I believe that the millions in the crowded streets and roads

And billions in the world do not exist

They are just manikins and chimeras

And after all

There was only you and me

— Gair 1990

MIXED UP

(Song)

I'm a mixed up sort of guy
In a mixed up sort of world
But I'm lucky still 'cause I
Have got a mixed up sort of girl
Even though we sometimes wish
Life was little bit more clear
Still I'm her lovin' daddy
And she's my little dear

She's got a kooky little house
And a real neurotic cat
Sometimes we wish that we could move
Sometimes we're happy where we're at

But we both hear distant music
It's been callin' all our lives
Sometimes that distant music

Cuts through us just like knives

Still we stay together

Through every thin and thick

We got the kind of lovin'

That makes me think we're gonna stick

In spite of all the troubles

On the big globe as she twirls

Round a mixed up sort of guy

And a mixed up sort of girl

We shoot pool on Friday evenings

She drinks Pepsi

I drink beer

If we make it to the dance floor

I always let her steer

In spite of all the troubles

On the big globe as she twirls

Round a mixed up sort of guy

And a mixed up sort of girl

Yeah, what we have's more precious

Than diamonds, rings and pearls

For a mixed up lovin' guy

And his mixed up lovin' girl...

— Gair 2008

FREE TO RUN NO MORE

And when at last the quarry's heart
Has flown its final flight

And the hound's teeth spill the warm blood
From the wildly fluttering throat

Then that lifelong hunted heart

Will be free to run no more

— Gair 1990

LATE BLOOMER

Dad

Dad!

Come look outside...

One squirrel is giving another squirrel

A piggyback ride!

Dad gave me a peculiar look

How old are you now?

Gosh, Dad...I'm twelve

Remind me to have a talk with you

The following Saturday

Wearing the same odd expression

Dad sits me down

Uh, son

Do you know how a man or a boy

Has something

That a girl or a woman

Doesn't have?

I think so

Well, a man—when he's married that is—has seeds...that he, um—

Puts with what he has, into where a woman—*his wife*, that is—

Doesn't, er, have...

With what he has...that is...

Where she doesn't have

What he has...

Seeds?

I am envisioning watermelon or morning glory seeds

Yes

The seeds go into her?

Yes!

What if he misses?

Dad looks twice as peculiar

As he had been looking

If this is possible

Well you see son, the man actually puts what he has

Into where the woman—*his wife*, that is—doesn't have...

DAD'S GONE CRAZY!

I think to myself, really worried, now

Bobby (my older brother) never told you any of this?

No, Dad

Well, in any case, now you understand

Yes, but why would the man

Do something like that?

I ask skeptically

Well, to make a baby

A BABY?

Yes! He plants those seeds to make a baby

Well, OK, I say doubtfully

Thinking to myself that

I'd really have to look into this

A good deal further

— Gair 2010

TO THE BIRDS

To the birds that streak across the mountains in the breeze
We are just a nuisance to be endured

Neither Troy nor Hiroshima left them much impressed
Or too concerned

If our race should quit the earth
The birds would carry on without a blink

But if we awoke one day without them
To lift us with song and flight

Then the poet in each heart would perish
And the window to the soul could pass no light

— Gair 1996

CAROL

On the inside

Carol is a night in early August

Beneath the magic moon's milky splash

Damp grass laughing between your toes

On her outside

She is the cool sunrise in the desert

Her smile glowing softly through lavender mists

What fool would debate which side of Carol is more beautiful?

— Gair 1993

MY TREES

(Song)

They came and cut my trees down

While I was away

There in the V.A. hospital

They cut them while I lay

I planted them in '39

Two years before the war

Hauled water out in buckets

From the pump behind the store

And Rosa and the boys

They kept those twigs alive

While I crawled 'cross Iwo Jima

Shot to pieces

Left to die

But when I got back from over there

We saw the desert bloom

Like a treasure in a ruin

Those trees our proudest room

Well, Jack, he went to Vietnam

But never had my luck

Then, Pete, he disappeared one day

Just drove off in his truck

And when my Rosie died last spring

Well, there was only me

But still our trees grew just as high

As all the dreams we used to dream

And the cops they said they cut them down

'Cause drug boys came there now

That they hid their stuff in the branches

And the mayor plans a road anyhow

I can't say I understand it

But I don't get much these days

There's no tune now to the music

None that I can hear anyway

And those pills the doctors gave me
I think of taken' 'em all at once some days
Maybe that's what they intended
But I wasn't raised to die that way

And somehow a spring has come again
And I need every day
There's trees I've got to plant once more
So I guess I'd better stay

But Rosa and the boys
They kept those twigs alive
While I crawled 'cross Iwo Jima
Shot to pieces
Left to die

And after everyone was gone and there was only me

Still those trees grew just as high

As all the dreams we used to dream

Still those trees grew just as high

As all the dreams we used to dream

— Gair 1996

ANGEL'S TEARS

A child dies in springtime

The ancient perfume tree

Massive

Black and twisted

Looking about dead itself

Is covered in white blossoms

Fragile as a morning dream

For it is May and

It has returned to pungent life

Watered by angel's tears

— Gair 2006

AN OMNIPOTENT GOD

An omnipotent God

Saw he was alone

And so he made physics

And history

And trillions of souls

And cast himself

As one of them unknowing

Yet the loneliness remained and

Instead of being omnipotent

He didn't have a clue

— Gair 1990

DIVINE

When my mother died
The desert bloomed in every color
For hundreds of miles in all directions
Like it had not done
Within any living person's memory

This was not a coincidence
My mother was divine

— Gair 2006

PRETTY STORIES

(Song)

Pretty Stories

For why we feel such pains and joys

Pretty stories

For why there's suffering for even little girls and boys

Dreams of heavens and creators and devils and stuff

They'll sure come true if you believe strong enough

Plush fur?

Or dead skin

If I wrap myself in

A pretty story

Pretty stories

Some sound so sweet I really wish that they were true

Pretty stories

Some with gods too cruel for me to bow down to

What came before this life?

What's comin' in the next?

I don't know why people gotta get so vexed
A mystery seems better to me
Than pretty stories

Blessed are the righteous
For they will shine
Like the stars in heaven
Don't need no ticket
We're already on board

Pretty stories
So I'll address my prayers
To Whom It May Concern
Pretty stories
At the shrine of love
My candles I will burn

Compassion and forgiveness
I'll worship as divine
But I'll respect your beliefs and hope that you respect mine

There's too many wars
Have been fought for pretty stories
A mystery seems better to me
Than pretty stories
Plush fur?
Or dead skin
If I wrap myself in
A pretty story

— Gair 1992

THE ANSWER

Me 'n Billy scored two hits at Ruckison's drug store
From Tom Nordstrom on a Friday evening
We knew it was supposed to make you see God

But Billy's Mom loaded me into the station wagon at 8:30
And drove me home early

Mom and Dad weren't home so I called Rog
And his girlfriend Lisa who had never tripped
But they also knew all about what it was supposed to do

I'd puffed weed in the past
But it had never gotten me off at all
Aside from Ripple wine and Romilar cough syrup I was cherry

But all anybody ever talked about then was
Getting high
Getting high

So of course

I was desperate

We wound up at a pool hall / bowling alley

The greasers strutting and posturing

Around the pool tables

In their Ban-Lon shirts,

Regal shoes,

And checked pants

Struck me as the funniest spectacle

That I had ever seen

I was fractured with laughter!

Fortunately those tough-shit grease-balls

Thought I was

Too pathetic to beat up

Next, I pulled out my three dollars and change

And flung it up towards the ceiling

Rog and Lisa grew alarmed

And pulled me out of there

A monkey in a store window

Carved from a coconut

Had been intended to be Buddha

I explained

It was all so clear now

The answer was

That there wasn't any question!

Thank heavens Mom and Dad were out late

That time

— Gair 2010

THE VALIANT ONES

I won't fight I said

Oh you'll fight alright said he

You'll fight or I'll kick your teeth

Out through your guts

And then I'll kill you

And he began to do just that to me

And that was when I began to see

That all we are and hope to be

We owe to the Valiant ones

Their blood courses through you

Know it or not

Everything we have and are

We owe to the Valiant Ones

They brought us to this Promised Land

Every note you sing or clap of your hands

Every word you speak

Every kindness you give

The light in the grass on a summer's eve

I say

We owe it all

To the Valiant Ones

— Gair 2009

A SWEET SIXTEEN SONNET FOR INDI FROM HER DOTING UNCLE

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle

Is sweet sixteen today

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle

Is sweet sixteen today

The folks out west are missin' her

The boys want to be kissin' her

'Cause Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle

Is sweet sixteen today

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle

Is sweet sixteen today

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle

Is sweet sixteen today

She'll be behind the wheel

Brakes and tires will squeal

Because the frisky young Miss Goozle
Is sweet sixteen today

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle
Is sweet sixteen today
Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle
Is sweet sixteen today

She's almost too danged charmin'
Her mom finds it alarmin'
The alluring Mistress Goozle
Is sweet sixteen today

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle
Is sweet sixteen today
Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle
Is sweet sixteen today

When she's in the infield
Base runners have their fates sealed

She is so long and lanky
They try no hanky-panky
The demoness of the diamond
Is sweet sixteen today

She's kind to critters
Big and small
Adored and loved by one and all
So to the world sound the call:

Miss Goozle-oozle-oozle
Is sweet sixteen today!
Happy Birthday oxoxoxoxoxox

— Gair 2003

WORDS

Don't you ever get sick of hearing words?

Thinking in words?

Being words?

When all words become animal bleats

Only the hills and the stars and the sea can save you

— Gair 1997

I WAS THE ONE

I was the one who slung the first jagged pebbles
That took the outcast's life
I was in the moiling mob as well

I was the pimp who beat those girls who dared to feel love
Round back of their necks so the bruises wouldn't show

I worked the valves at Auschwitz
Were you my helper?
Are there those who never once were devils beside me?
Of course
But mostly children who are dead and angels now

I know that it was I who did these things
But as I see the scenes in my memory
They are like somebody else's magic lantern theater
And I only want to spill my last drops of blood
To merge with the torrents

That might drown the world

With love

— Gair 1990

EVERYTHING THAT YOU FEEL!

(Song—for Special Orchestra)

I don't speak...with the same words you do

But everything that you feel...I can feel too

Yeah, I can feel it, feel it, feel it, feel it too!

I can't hear...all you're saying to me

But we're the same...

We want to be happy and free

Wanna be, wanna be, wanna be, happy and free!

And if you'll look into my soul's window, look into my smile

I can tell you all about me, you can learn to read my style

And everything...that you feel...

I can feel too...

I can feel too...

I can feel too

I don't ride...in a fat limousine

I'm not on the cover...of a glossy magazine

I don't live...in the south part of France

I don't pose for photos

Wearin' just my underpants

What do I have? Just this! Just this! Just this!

What do I have? Just this! Just this! Just this!

I've got a voice and I can sing

I have hands and I can play

I have feet and I can dance

I've got something you might need

If you just give it a chance

I've got a heart...and I can love

I've got soul...and I can feel

Everything...that you feel...

I can feel too...

I can feel too...

I can feel too

— Gair 2009, for Special Orchestra

MUSTARD SEED

I don't know if there's a god above
But I'm a Christian

Don't know how much of the Bible is true
But I'm a Christian

I don't believe in salvation via
Grace or faith or good works even
But I'm a Christian

I'm not too sure about everything that
Jesus actually said or did
But I'm a Christian

Buddha and the great Kung
Centuries B.C.
Were Christians too
In my book

I'm skeptical about there being
Lives before or after this one
But I am a Christian

As far as going to church
I'm just an old backslider
Point a sky-pilot at me
And I vaporize quick
But I am a Christian

Though Christ's name has been used too often
To murder and enslave
Still, I choose to be a Christian

This title I claim
And so might all
Who worship:
Forgiveness
Peace

Love

Justice

And the eternal chance to start anew

Or anybody else

Who has been

Touched

By his

Great

Great

Heart

— Gair 2010

ADDICTED

To the idiot siren songs

To the mermaids singing from the rocks

If I weren't addicted you would be beside me now

We'd watch old movies on your beat up black and white TV

The way we used to

You'd cook us cabbage and sour cream and we'd

Maybe have kids to try to make happy which would

Make us happy—that's how it works

Isn't it?

And we'd go to sleep with the souls of our

Feet against each other

Or like spoons

— Gair 1990

ALL FIGURED OUT

(Song)

You don't have to bust yourself up farmin' anymore

It's all figured out, all figured out

All you've got to do is read their books and take their tests

And work their stores

It's all figured out, all figured out

You don't have to see the sunrise

Just get there on time

You can still get high if you only drink their wine

And your kids will have the privilege of being like you

It's all figured out, all figured out

If you get to feelin' sick you get a doctor with a FIX

It's all taken care of, all figured out

If your friends turn away, they'll get you new ones real quick

It's all taken care of, all figured out

If you want to see beauty you can look at painted dolls

If you want to feel glory you can watch boys play with balls
And the cold and the wind can't touch you in your walls
It's all figured out, it's all figured out

You're free to vote for either party of your choice
You'll qualify for treatment if you find your own voice

And your kids will have the privilege of being like you
It's all figured out, all figured out...

— Gair 1998

PARALYZED

The wind howled today so long and so hard that
I was afraid to leave my house

Afraid of everything

Afraid to leave my bed

I was paralyzed with fear

I called in to work and felt guilty 'cause I said I had a stomach ache

But I was paralyzed

paralyzed

paralyzed

With fear

— Gair 1990

SUNSET

(Song)

What makes the sunset
The saddest part of day?
Her poignant colors
Would warm each heart you'd say
But for the lonely
They burn cold fire instead
The coming nighttime
Brings only deepest dread

I had a sweetheart
We once would kiss all night
While freight trains sang songs
Beneath magic moonlight
But love can go wrong
Even when it's most real
And what was beauty
Now cuts like coldest steel

Because the sunset
Once was our sweetest hour
It shut out hard life
From its roseate bower
Now as the crimson
Fades into purple night
So fade my fond hopes
Till they are gone from sight

What makes the sunset
The saddest part of day?
Her poignant colors
Would touch each soul you'd say
But for the lonely
They burn cold fire instead
The coming nighttime
Brings only deepest dread

— Gair 2/2000

THE FAT OLD POET

The fat old poet

And the beautiful young poet

Have one thing in common

Both

Insist upon being adored

— Gair 2003

TO DIE

If to die is what it takes
To make the hurting stop
Then that is what I want

Even if the pain is caused by myself
It doesn't hurt any less

And I only want to die

— Gair 1990

PERFECT HEAVEN

(Song—for Special Orchestra)

This is not a perfect world

This is not a perfect life

You know

I know

‘Cause if we want a perfect world

If we want a perfect life

We will surely cry

We will surely cry

But if we find a little love

Wherever it may be

Water it like a flower

Tend it like a tree

Maybe for a moment

Perfect heaven we will see

Maybe for an instant
Perfect heaven we will see

Eyes and arms and legs can fail
Dearest ones can slip away
Sometimes it can seem like
Even God has turned away

But if we give a little love
We can touch what is divine
Maybe for a moment
Perfect heaven we can find
Maybe for an instant
Perfect heaven we will find...

— Gair 4/1999, for Special Orchestra

NOT QUITE YET

We climbed the mountain one day
My dog and I

Up through a deep arroyo

There were carpets of cactus
Boulder slides and scree
And snakes with slavering fangs

And ever-above
Each time we'd rest our tortured
Lungs and gaze aloft
The cloudy summit would
Laugh down upon us

As the sun began to set
We were forced to hurry down

We built a driftwood fire and drank juice of
Prickly pear fruit to survive the night

So we never did quite reach that notch above the clouds
To peer into the golden valley on the other side

But I can see now
That the reason was

That it was
Not quite yet

Our time to die

— Gair 1988

HELL AND PARADISE

Hell and Paradise are now
Now and always somewhere

Like the Bible speaks of
But not later

NOW

Somewhere at this moment

NOW NOW NOW NOW
NOW NOW NOW NOW
NOW NOW NOW NOW
NOW

It's happening to someone
Somewhere
NOW

You or I may well

Be next

Be next

Be next

Be next

But Hell and Paradise

Are not later

Hell and Paradise are NOW

— Gair 2006

FLAWED

I've recently been thinking
That I am seriously flawed

Man
Am I ever flawed!

Sometimes I think I'm damaged goods

In fact
About the only flawless thing about me
Is my ability to recognize my flaws

— Gair 2010

JEANIE

My Jeanie

My darling girl

All I can give you are words on a page

But I love you

Even though some say it can't be much

Or I wouldn't let my selfishness

Keep us apart the way I do

But they never could take the pain

I've learned to stand

— Gair 1990

LUPITA

Lupita is Guadalupe Tafoya

She lives in Cottage Nine

She weighs one hundred and seventeen pounds and is gaining

She knows this because the Developmental Disabilities Technicians

(a fancy title for the chugs who have to lift her a little

to change her diapers)

Won't let her forget

But she is a trickster, my little Lupita is

"You're gettin' old!" or "You're puttin' on weight!"

She'll tell them to make 'em even madder

Even though she might not get coffee for a week

We have a game, we two

When I am a substitute teacher in her class

At the funny school

Where Lupita lives

We are still called teachers even though

We don't teach students—

We “program clients” like her

We have a game we love—Lupita and I

I casually rest my foot on the front of her wheelchair

“You know, Lupita,” I say, “my work is awfully hard...”

“Yeah?” she answers, leaning forward, with difficulty

“Yes, why my feet get so tired

From all the walking and lifting and—Hey!!!”

Lupita laughs and shakes till tears come as I pretend

To thunder and storm at her for untying my shoelace

I rant and rave and she says, between helpless chortles

“Look what you did”

And I rave louder

But nobody likes our game except us

And some of the other clients

“Not age appropriate!” the directors fume

(Lupita is thirty-five years old)

They took our puppets too

But we know it’s the laughter that bothers them

So we’ll go to the canteen or somewhere on the sly

To play the forbidden game

That makes us feel so good

— Gair 1990

LUCKY NUMBER

(Song)

Honey, you are...my lucky number
Sent to me...from the stars above
Aphrodite...she looked down on me
And she sent me...somebody to love

I was a bluebird...trapped in a glass house
I'd torn my wings...against the pains
Till you came to me...and you set me free
And I could sing and...fly again

In the days that we walked together
And the nights that we locked forever
Safe at harbor there, from harms
In the anchorage of our arms

Honey, you are...my lucky number
Thought I was meant to...live alone

Sad tale of only...friends and lovers

But never one to...call my own

Stars shine light

On darkened trails

Hearts are blind

To all our fails

Darling, you are...my lucky number

I'd really reached my darkest hour

Then you came to me...and you made me see

The brilliance of your lovin' power...

— Gair 1983

NOT TOO LATE

(Song)

It's not too late

I promise you

There's a rain that can

Wash all away

A spark remains

A spring is here

It's not too late

We are still here

It's not too late

The past can die

We can't buy back

Those tears we cried

Except to know

That all the while

The only truth

Is in a smile

It's not too late
We're gonna see
The birds come back
Again—you'll see!
And those we've lost
They still are here
In us to live
Another year

It's not too late
I promise you
There's a rain that can
Wash all away
A spark remains
A spring is here
It's not too late
We are still here...

— Gair 4/20/1993

EL CADEJO

(Macabre poem of Costa Rica)

Night after night

Until first dim light

When the howler monkeys come down

Joaquin at cantina remains and remains

Drinking cacique from the tall sugar cane

Awash in cacique from the tall sugar cane

Till the black howler monkeys come down

The coffee spoils in the bushes

As Joaquin sleeps away the daylight hours

The small ones cry in hunger

As Joaquin sleeps

All through the daylight hours

What a dishonor!

Rails his father

Borracho! Parrandero! Jugador!

May you roam as un perro
By the lake's haunted shore
As the very
Black dog that you are!

It was there that he stalked me
In that eldritch forest
When the howler monkeys came down
I'd been drinking cacique
From the tall sugarcane
It was there that he ran me
With his red eyes and slack jaw

Demon Dog in pursuit of those who remain
Drinking too late in the volcano's shadow

Drinking cacique from the tall sugar cane
Awash in cacique from the tall sugar cane

Night after night

Until first dim light

When the black howler monkeys resound

— Gair 2006

NO PESOS NO BESOS

(Song)

When I had dinero

I was your caballero

But now that I have zero

I'm not even your perro

If you ain't got nothing

Don't be looking for no loving

Si no hay pesos

Pues no hay besos

My money's missing

So no more kissing

Once she used to love me

But only for my money

I think it's rather funny

That now she ain't my honey

Thought she loved me heart and soul

But now I'm in the hole

Si no hay Pesos

Pues no hay Besos

My cash she misses

So no more kisses

My money's missing

So no more kissing

She wants my bucks

So no more f——

rijoles!

— Gair 2008

LA SEGUA

(Macabre Poem of Costa Rica)

Jade green eyes

Jade green sea

Long long hair

Long long skirt

Hips that sway

With the jade green palms

From the balcón

Up over the bistro

He watches her movements

Down there on the beach

Through the glass vaso prism

He watches

He watches

He watches her hard

After more drinking
He goes out to find her
But the water's turned gray
Not so different from lead
The siren and seagulls
Have vanished or fled

He's fast up the mountain
Sunset behind him
Like blood or red wine

Around a sharp corner
He comes on the woman
Her thumb in the air
Standing by the roadside

She tosses her long hair
With a motion that fires him
He asks where she's headed
Where you are heading

She says

As he turns more sharp corners

She's thrown close against him

Her bare arm against his

Hotter than flame

She says that she watched him

Sitting above her

From down on the playa

From under the palms

And that she has been waiting

For tú

Solo tú

As they come near the summit

A white moon is rising

Besame ahora

Please kiss me now...

He slows the machine
He hastens to please her
But his lips barely touch hers
When he's ripped from himself

The white moon reveals
The head of a horse skull
Eyes shot with blood
Deep in decay
Black lips pulled back from grinning teeth, yellow
Whickering laughter
Laughter or brays

He spins hard the wheel
No mind where it's heading
The Jeep leaves the mountain
Long it does fall
Deep into the chasm
Deep into the rocks

Long to be found

By only the moonlight

Long to be found there

By just the white moon

Jade green eyes

Jade green sea

Long long hair

Long long skirt

Hips that sway

With the jade green palms

— Gair 2006

KEEP ON

(Song—for Special Orchestra)

If you can't Run

Keep on walkin'

If you can't roll

Keep on rockin'

If you can't sing

Keep on squawkin'

But you gotta keep on

You gotta keep on

If you can't swim

Just keep on floatin'

If you can't sail

Keep on boatin'

If you can't read

Then keep on rote-in'

But-cha gotta keep on

You gotta keep on!

It ain't no good to sit there cryin'

Stay in that pan, even though it's fryin'

You'll win the race if you die tryin'

Keep on pushin'

I ain't lyin'!

If you can't fly

Then keep on glidin'

If you can't slip

Then keep on slidin'

If you can't drive

Then keep on ridin'

But-cha gotta keep on

You gotta keep on

You gotta keep on

You gotta keep on!

— Gair 2015, for Special Orchestra

TROUBLE FOLLOWS ME

(Song)

Trouble follows me

Trouble follows me

A shadow I can't see

Trouble follows me

Well you size people up very quickly

But I don't like gettin' sized up fast

You criticize my Buddha nature

But you wouldn't know it

If it waltzed up and bit you

When I was a young man

I didn't have no girls

No car to drive, no social world

So I ran with the rats

In the streets at night

When you rolled past me

You rolled your windows up tight

Now I'm a man and it's plain to see

I've got what your wives

And sweethearts need

And your bobby-socks sisters

Who passed me by

Now they sit outside my door and cry

Trouble follows me

Trouble follows me

A shadow I can't see

Trouble follows me

So if you get you a lover

From down in East Cleveland

There are two things

You can be sure of—

One that it's got

A heart full of soul

And one that it knows
How to rock and roll and

Trouble follows me
Trouble follows me
A shadow I can't see
Trouble follows me...

— Gair 1986

BEAUTIFUL VALLEY

(Song)

Beautiful Valley

I'm goin' back someday

Where the pronghorn deer

And roadrunners play

Down by the banks

Of the Rio Grande

I'm gonna catch that train

They call the Santa Fe

It'll take me there

Almost all of the way

And underneath the full moon

I'll cross the Rio Grande

My little Juanita

Oh, please meet me

At festival time

When the wine runs free
And then we'll dance
'Neath the cottonwood tree

Beautiful Valley
I'm goin' back someday
Where the pronghorn deer
And coyote pups play
Down by the banks
Of the Rio Grande...

— Gair 1985

I MISSED HALLEY'S COMET

I missed Halley's Comet
There above old Silver City
Like the Boy Bandit King
I went to the bad
(my biographers may write)

Away beyond the hills
In the back of my station wagon
I made love to a black eyed coquette
Throughout that whole blessed night

My nieces and my nephews ask
How could I have missed it?

But I try to explain
That though many saw the comet
None saw a brighter flash that night

— Gair 2006

SILLY VAIN AND FOOLISH

Silly vain and foolish

Puffed up with himself

Silly vain and foolish

Put it on a shelf

Come on Daddy-o

Come down off your patio

Listen! Listen!

The angel mind knows

— Gair 2013

DOWN TO MEXICO

Down to Mexico we went
Across the ditch that keeps the world
Half slave
Half free
And into old Juarez

*Hey, boys—
Here's a good place
To eat some pussy
Or something...*

But it was Sunday morning and
We weren't interested

I bought a pink drink
with strawberries floating

What's it made from?

Rice, I think the vendor said...

Your stomach might be in for it now

Douglas commented

I bought a silver (or nickel) belt buckle

Such as any boy would envy

I bought two pairs of castanets

I bought six bullfighting posters

The old men in the shop told us that if

We would go to the library we would learn that

It is not a cruel sport

They'd been playing dominos when we walked in

I bought a blanket with birds

Doug picked up two bottles of Kahlúa

And some Indian masks

We would have stayed longer

But we'd sustained

A major bender the previous night in El Paso

— Gair 1990

HOT JOINT

(Song)

I love a Hot Joint

A Cold beer

A Juke Box

And a Spinnin' Eight Ball

A Hot Joint

Cold beer

And a Juke Box

And a Spinnin' Eight Ball!

I could lie and say I don't

But to tell the truth I do

Love a Hot Joint

Cold beer

Juke Box

Baby and you

Gimmie a Hot Joint
And a Cold beer
And a Juke Box
And a Straight Pool Cue

A Hot Joint
Cold beer
Juke Box
And a Straight Pool Cue!

I'd love to go to heaven
But the other place will do
If there's a Hot Joint
Cold beer
Juke Box
Baby and you

Get your quarters, get your quarters
Dig 'em on out

Slap them down on the table

Rack 'em up

Rack 'em up

Bang 'em on in

Try to beat me if you're able

I love a Hot Joint

A Cold beer

And a Juke Box

And a Spinnin' Eight Ball

Gimmie a Hot Joint

Cold beer

Juke Box

And a Spinnin' Eight Ball!

As bad as things can get

I still can make it through

If there's a Hot Joint

Cold beer

Juke Box

Baby and you...

— Gair 2013

BACK IN THE CITY

I'm back in the city tonight

So long I've been away

Off behind the hills

That this place I know the best

Seems new once more

Not this city in particular

Just the call of the nighthawks over the buildings

And the cicadas in the trees

And the electrical wires flowing through their branches

And the soft traffic noises and the hot sidewalks

And the fireworks in the distance over the stadium

And the achingly beautiful college girls with their

Books of poetry

And their short hair and cigarettes

Who might love me if they knew me

But can't because they don't

And the coffee house where we will always come to

Here in every city

With the beautiful ebony boy

With sides worn thin guitar

With spliced and borrowed strings

That he plays just like Calypso

While he sings like Belafonte

Though it likely won't bring romance

To either of us tonight

But that's OK

We're used to it

That's why he can sing this way

It's probably the only way that

It could be and

We're just glad that we can taste

The fragrant sting

Of night

Once more

— Gair 1990

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER

(Song)

She's our substitute teacher

She's got my heart in a whirl

Our substitute teacher

She's not much more than a girl

If she'd teach me 'bout her lovin'

I could float right on around the world

Our substitute teacher

Has got my throat in a lump

Our substitute teacher

Has got my heart goin' bump

We're supposed to write somethin'

But my pencil's chewed right down to a stump

She's got freckles on her nose
And a twitchy little skirt
I'm a grown man nearly
And I wish you wouldn't flirt
I could teach you 'bout things
That you only thought you knew

And I'm a-gonna tell her somehow
When her substitutin's through
Oh yeah...

Our substitute teacher
She's got my heart in a whirl

Our substitute teacher
She's not much more than a girl

If she'd teach me 'bout her lovin'
I could float right on around the world...

— Gair 1996

WHEN THE TREES ARE BARE

When the trees are bare

The blue mountains become visible

When the trees are bare

There is such beauty in their leafless limbs

That my fears of winter are assuaged

I saw Satan

He was I

I prayed to the Lord

Who was in me too

And my soul was restored

I honored the suffering

Who prayed to die

But had not that choice

I honored the pure and young
Shot dead in their motorcycle saddles
Before ever riding up the coast
Past Monterey and Big Sur

And I will honor myself
And the Lord

That my soul might be restored

— Gair 1998

ROUNDER MAN

(Song)

I'm a rounder man

I am the rounder man

I take it where I can

I'm a rounder man

I don't want your sweetheart

I don't want your wife

But if you treat them cruel

Their hearts will steal away to me at night

Because I am...

I'm a rounder man

I take it as I can

I take it where I can

I was born in 'fifty-three along with rock and roll

If you take me home

I'll show you hidden corners of your soul

Because I am...

I'm the rounder man

I take it as I can

I need a place to land

I ain't especially pretty

I ain't especially smart

But I'm an artist still

And lovin' women is my art

Because I am...

I'm a rounder man

I'm the rounder man

I'm a rounder man...

— Gair 2000

RETIREMENT

Yeah, I know—I'm gettin' kind of old in some ways
More and more frequently, I run into people
Who ask me if I'm getting close to retirement
Or who tell me how much they like being retired

God bless 'em I say as they stagger from their
Casinos and restaurants to their
Doctor appointments and Yoga lessons
Then home to their widescreen TVs and
Odious grandchildren

Then I realize that this is another of the
Many differences between
Artists and most people

Most of us artists cannot retire
Retirement to us would be the same as death

Slow death by drowning

In a vat of

Cold

Gray

Rancid

Smelly

Coagulant

Congeaing

Mucilaginous

OATMEAL!

I'd rather dig latrines

— Gair 2013

HOW MUCH LONGER

How much longer must I wait

My love

Till I can be with you

How many more times must I hit the pavement hard

Break my teeth on gravel

How many more times must rapacious life pull us so far apart

The greed and pride are all around me

The greed and swollen pride are inside of me

Swollen like a bloated black corpse with staring eyes

How did I get this way?

Maybe death will be my cure

— Gair 1990

FIESTA

I rarely go down to the church fiesta anymore
When it comes around
On its cool Saturday evening in September

I'm too old and crabbed up by in large
To go round and dance and drink and eat
Like I once did

Too many friends are gone
Too much time has passed
Too many dogs sleep in the graveyard
Out in back

But after vespers
I keep an ear out for the bell to ring so clearly
Through the brittle autumn air
And for the polka band to start its happy beat
(Thank God that in these jaded days there are still a few

polka bands left here and there)

At about eight-fifteen

When the sounds do waft across the town

And down the acequia madre

And over the fields to me

Part of me uncoils

For we have brooked another year somehow

By our survival we are reborn

Autumn

To me

Is the same as

Spring

— Gair 2009

HARD TO PLEASE

I get one girl

I want another

I leave one woman

Then I want her back

Am I sick

Or just another type of animal

In the human zoo?

— Gair 1990

NEVER DOUBT IT

I love you my friend but I can walk away

Never doubt it

I've walked before from those I've loved most

You see I've never had the character

To love anything or anybody

More than I have loved myself

— Gair 1990

DEEPER SHADES OF BLUES

(Song)

There's deeper shades of blues
When you despair of being alive
There's deeper shades of blues
When you despair of being alive
When that train whistle blows across the river
And you are fading with its cry

Just to love and to be love
Once was all that I asked for
Just to love and to be loved
Once was all that I asked for
Too many lyin' hearted babies
Burned my love out long ago

You could take your blues down to the doctor
Beg him to take away your pain
Take your blues down to the doctor

Beg him to TAKE away your pains
But I'd rather live with these blues
Than let them cut into my brain

There's deeper shades of blues
That seem to settle in and stay
There's deeper shades of blues
That seem to settle in to stay

No little girls, champagne, or reefer
Could make those bad blues stay away

Oh yeah...

— Gair 1997

THE DEATH OF WANDA'S SISTER

My little girl cried today
They put her sister in the ground
They opened up the coffin once more for her to see
And my little girl who'd been so brave since they'd
Told her yesterday
Couldn't help herself and
All their pretty lies of heaven
Were forgotten and
She wept and I was also
Scalded by her caustic tears
And had anybody
Seen me lurking
Watching
From beneath the old trees
At the cemetery's edge
They'd have not imagined that she
Is my little girl
My pretty

Darling

Darling

Little girl

— Gair 1990

BLUES TOO MUCH FOR ME

(Song)

Blues

Too much for me

Darling why can't you see

You're all there is for me

Blues

Too much to bear

Oh why did to my heart dare

To think that you could care

About us

For too long I'm drifting, drifting

On this sea of hopelessness

And even now the sands are shifting

Towards what end

I dare not guess

Blues

Too much for me

Darlin' why can't you see

Without you, I can't be...

— Gair 2005

PISS DRUNK AT ELEVEN A.M.

I rassed my friend for his keys a few times
Stayed up late nights doing it
I sent him in through his front door only to have him
Reel on out through the back
Got in trouble myself at work
Was repaid with abuse

By and by I had to quit
I don't let people treat me that way
I can't make people change

I saw him yesterday pouring gas into his car
Shitfaced at eleven o'clock a.m.

He drove off
Like an infantry soldier charging
Machine gun entrenchments

— Gair 1996

UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAY

(Song)

To awake and think you heard her footsteps

Ringin' on your porch below

Only to remember that she's gone for good this time

To return to you no more

And to think of how the way she hurt you

How she lied and lied

How when you made her go

She still could have cried and cried and cried

And the tears that blind me

And the fears that bind me

Dance on dancer to the dawn of day

Play on player till the darkness goes away

As shadows come let the shadows go

Dance on

Till we taste no more sorrow

Streetlights cast an X-ray on the city

That was meant to be so fair so long ago

Hey cab driver

Please

Turn the dial to

The blue end of the radio

Take us to the place where there is

Laughter gay and life's a dance

Take us to the place where even

Broken hearts can stand a chance

From the tears that blind me

And the fears that bind me

Dance on dancer to the dawn of day

Play on player till the darkness goes away

As shadows come, let shadows go

Dance on

Till we taste no more sorrow

To awake and think you heard her footsteps

Ringin' on your porch below

Only to remember that she's gone for good this time

To return to you no more

And to think of how she's in some other city

You couldn't find her if you tried

And you know it was what had to be but

Still, it hurts so bad inside

Dance on dancer to the dawn of day

Play on player till the darkness goes away

As shadows come, let shadows go

Dance on

Till we taste no more sorrow

— Gair 1978

WHEN YOU ARE IN LOVE

(Song)

When you are in love

When you really are in love

You know...

It can feel so good that sometimes

It's hard not to be afraid

When you think of what would happen

If your baby was to go

When you are in love

An old movie on your beat up

Black and white TV

If you are together, then that's even better

Than opening night at the Paris Grand Opera would be

And a love song is

The hardest kind

Of song that you could try to write

'Cause words like heart and soul
And want and need
Have been used in more love songs
Than stars are in the night
But when you are in love for real
Your whole life is sad, sweet poetry
And when your darlin' smiles it's like
A field of sunflowers on a summer day would be

When you are in love
Fried rice and egg rolls from the Chinese restaurant down the street
If you are together, then that's even better
Than pheasant from uptown at Delmonico's would be

When you are in love
When you really are in love
Ya know...
It can feel so good that sometimes
It's hard not to be afraid
When you think of what would happen

If your baby was to go

— Gair 1986

ANOTHER MORBID POEM

I wake up this morning thinking and thinking of

Cool

Cool

Gun barrels pressed against my fevered temple

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures

He leadeth me beside still waters

I need to go back to sleep but can't

Is this self-pity?

Or self-hatred?

Is there a difference?

Where is my medicine?

— Gair 1996

BEAUTIFUL DAY

(Song)

It's a beautiful day
Outside the sky is blue
Spring's love is in the air
No one should have a right
To feel unhappy but I do

It's a beautiful day
Clouds are drifting by
And birds are singing too
But somehow I cannot hear them
'Cause there isn't any you

About separations
I will never understand
About separations
That let love
Slip through your hands

It's a beautiful day
Life is a short, sweet song
There is no time to cry
Like fireflies on a summer's evening
Our lives flicker by

So I'll try to forget
A happiness so true
That it could make a day
As lovely as today seem sad and blue

Without you

And it's a beautiful day
Beautiful day
Beautiful day
Beautiful day...

— Gair 1986

RAINBOW BOYS

Because those boys
Got rainbows round their shoulders
Because those boys
Got mistletoe in their hair

The songs they sing
Are what the whole world yearns for

They plumb the depths for treasure
They are the rainbow boys

— Gair 2006

HARD HARD WORLD

(Song)

If you're gonna hang around
In this hard, hard world
You're going to feel life's sadness
Someday

Because hurtin's very common
In this hard, hard world

You can't hide from pain forever
Sad to say
Oh, no

You can't hide from hurt forever
Sad to say

Once I had a sweetheart
In this hard, hard world

Till we let misunderstanding

Have its way

Now she's gone and fallen

Into another's sway

I never thought I'd miss her

This-away

This-away

I never knew I loved her anyway

So if you're going to hang around

In this hard, hard world

You'd better learn to give and take some love some day

Because love is all that matters in this hard, hard world

If you can find some love

Don't let it slip away

Oh, no

If you find love

Never let it slip away

— Gair 2006

RADHA

I've tried writing poetry

And songs to you

As my angel-thing

Deity of love

Also in verses with rainbows

And wildflower hats

As symbols of the happiness

We're all such slaves to attain

But you aren't really these things

You aren't really a woman

As I am not really a man

As Lucky and Pinky

Aren't really dogs and cats

Just splashes of God in animal bodies

— Gair 1992

UNTIL I LOST YOU FATHER

Until I lost you Father

Death was a fearful thing

But now the slimmest chance

That we might walk and talk again

Causes me to embrace my end

Because when I am rolled out

With the dice

Perhaps we'll be together

Till then

We bide as surely

In my heart

— Gair 2006

LUCKY WITH MARY

I got lucky at love

Late in life

With my Mary

I was a gambler

Till I drew the Queen of Hearts

And her name was Mary

I hedged bets with Jane of Spades

Who wouldst me bury

I wagered all on Ann of Diamonds

Who wouldst me marry

But at the card house

I no longer tarry

For my heart dwells only

With my Mary

— Gair 2006

HIDING AND FORGETTING

My dad died thinking he was Dutch or Swiss
He didn't know that he was a Revolutionary Son
Insurrection in his veins

Our branch of the family had long lost track
Of how great-great-great-grandfather
Had sailed the stormy seas

Had fought with Washington at Brandywine
Had been a leather stocking pioneer
Land grant signed by Franklin

In just 125 years we were working a rented farm
Hiding our glorious ancestry

So we'd not be dirty Huns
Niggers of the day

Hiding

Then forgetting

— Gair 2006

FIVE DOLLAR BILL

(Song)

With just a Five Dollar Bill

All I've got to win your love tonight

With just a Five Dollar Bill

All I've got to try to make it tight

My place looks like it has been bombed

But I'll just turn the lights down low

My car is caved in on one side

I'll park it so it will not show

My cleanest dirty shirt will do 'cause

Now I'm late I've got to go

With just a Five Dollar Bill

All I've got to win your love tonight

With just a Five Dollar Bill

All I've got to try to make it tight

I'll take you to the park

I'll take you to the art museum

The fountain's not expensive

If you just pitch nickels in

You ask me what I wished for

The air starts getting thin

OBSESSION

COMPULSION

FIXATION

INFATUATION

I know a little place that has

A little band that plays outside

The doorman is my friend and

He will turn his back and let us slide

And underneath the stars

I'll look for words to make you decide to stay

Don't go away

With just a Five Dollar Bill

All I've got to win your love...

— Gair 1981

YEARNING AND LONGING

When I was thirteen I heard the girl sing
Of yearning and longing

She sang of all that I was
She sang of all the world

Come winter
Downtown and at church
The Christmas carols played

Yearning and longing
Yearning and longing

Now as a soon (perhaps) to be old man
I burn candles and listen to Puccini, Saint-Saëns and Verdi
Operas the plots of which I know little

No matter

Again and again

I am back

To the yearning and longing

As they scathe me and they soothe me

With their deepest cruelest cuts

In languages not my own

I feel once more

The perfect love of my mother and father

And I despair that the world should not know such love

But it was all

Right there

In that Supremes' bijou

That came out of the tinny transistor radio

When I sat beside the Shaw High pool

Praying for a girlfriend

— Gair 2008

EVERY POEM

In the course of this thing

We call existence

We often feel as if

We are walled up inside of a tomb

Very little wiggle room

We have to remind ourselves

That at least we are alive

(Even if we wish we weren't)

We want to branch and flower

Like beautiful trees

But we keep getting

Bombed by defoliants

And chopped away at with saws

As if we were weeds

Struck by lightning

Devoured by beetles

EVERY POEM is an attempt to crack

The stone walls that confine us

To send a small green tendril

Up through the slabs

So that it might feel the sun

— Gair 2008

BLINK AND IT'S GONE

(Song)

I didn't know it then
But the days I spent with you
Would be the best I'd ever see
And I didn't know the truth
That the fortunes I was seeking
Would be only traps for me

So if you find a little happiness with someone
You'd better grab it, grab it, hold it and hang on
'Cause real love comes just rarely in a lifetime
Then blink...
And it's gone...
Just blink...
And it's gone

I didn't know it then
But the rapture of the sunset

Came from seeing it with you
And I couldn't see the truth
That without my darling
All the rainbow's colors
Would be blue

But in memories and dreams we're still together
Rapacious life could never break that bond
Like a dragonfly whose whole life lasts one summer
Blink...and it's gone...
You just blink...
And it's gone...
And it's gone...

— Gair 2021

CLOSE TO THE WIRE

(Song)

Ease off the gas pedal

Don't let that cop hear the muffler

You haven't got

If he calls in these funny plates it'll be

Sing Sing for sure this time

They'll lose the key no freedom to be bought

And cars streak by through the night

Leaving trails of blue fire

You want to kiss the ground at her door

Safety entire

No lights are on, it's empty, not even a note

Wait a minute...here's a message

Let me see what she wrote

In two weeks' time

I suppose

You haven't had a dime for a call

You should have been an actor, really

How low can you fall

Now here she says you're a liar

Selfish desire

And in closing would like to inquire

How do you like things close to—

Close to the wire

Can't go to your house

By now it would be much too hot

So you drive and you wonder how

Your life turned into this kind of a plot

That you should be homeless

In your own hometown

All hands have deserted

This ships goin' down

You risk a call

The dark voice answers the phone

He says you got yourself in

Now get yourself out on your own

Not bad luck entire

Subconscious desire

Like a moth to the fire

That drives you to live your life close to—

Close to the wire

Break for the outskirts

Forgotten trails and roads

The cards have been dealt

Now it's time for the show

Just one more night by the sea

As your mistress so fair

You pray that she'll hide you

Still, you know they'll be there

And stars fall down through the night
Leaving trails of red fire
Waves pound the rocks singing songs to you
Songs of a choir
Nothing that's higher
Never a liar
Burning desire
That drives you
To live your life close to—

Close to the wire...

— Gair 1979

LOSE SOMEBODY'S LOVE

(Song)

When you lose somebody's love

And there's nothin' you can do

All that once was good in life

Has turned to ashes

Cold and blue

When you lose somebody's love

And there's nothin' you can say

Like an old dog that you've long loved

Whose life has flown away

At the moment that you realize

There's no turnin' it around

Whose fault it is don't matter

What's been lost can't be refound

You are standing at the crossroads

When you lose somebody's love

When you lose somebody's love
And the curtain has come down
Though you've taken off your makeup
Still, you are a clown

It may be the darkest hour
That you will ever see
You'll be tried now in the furnace
'Twill determine who you'll be

Your heart is bound and gagged
Struck blind for asking why
It's as desperate as it gets
You'll either live or you will die

Your ship has really sailed from shore
When you lose somebody's love

When you lose somebody's love

Makes no difference how you tried
Doesn't matter that you filled the
Seven oceans when you cried

What else is there to do now
But to try to push on through
Though the only colors left
That you can see are black and blue

There just ain't no turnin' back
When you lose somebody's love

It's both sunset and it's sunrise
When you lose somebody's love

You are standing at the crossroads
When you lose somebody's love

— Gair 2013

CHEATIN' STREET

(Song)

Down on Cheatin' Street

Down on Cheatin' Street

The only place I'll ever hope

To feel your wild heartbeat

I love you till it scares me

And burns my soul down deep

To know you'll only ever love me

Down on Cheatin' Street

In a house up by the country club

A woman-child waits for night

Later on for just a while

Her arms will hold me tight

But never will she stay with me

To see the sunrise sweet

'Cause sunrise comes up lonesome

Down on Cheatin' Street

So tonight when she comes to me
She will not guess the truth
That tonight's the last time that she'll have her cake
And wear me too
I'm goin' 'cause love turns bitter
When you're not allowed to dream
And all dreams die at sunrise
Down on Cheatin' Street

Down on Cheatin' Street
Down on Cheatin' Street
The only place I'll ever hope
To feel your wild heartbeat
I love you, though you snared me
In the web of your deceit
Knowin' you'd only ever love me
Down on Cheatin' Street

— Gair 1983

FOREVER TOGETHER

(Song)

Life is brief

Love is rare

Life is hard

And seldom fair

Let's hang on

To what we have

Together

Life is tough

And love is sweet

Life is rough

Unless hearts meet

Let's hang on

To what we have

Forever

Friends are few

Those that are real
I had a few
That time did steal
Every day
I hope and pray
That our love won't slip away

If you're cut
I'm gonna bleed
If you cry
I'm gonna weep
Every day I hope and pray
That our love won't steal away

Life is brief
And love is scarce
For poor folks
And for millionaires
Let's hang on
To what we have

Together

Let's hang on

To what we have

Forever...

— Gair 2021

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