

# curving for the coast lyrics

## half-way round the world waltz

the idea for this song was fueled by a trip to the gift shop at the national museum of australia with my children. each of us bought a wind-up music box melody. hayden chose an excerpt from swan lake, zinta chose jingle bells and i chose waltzing matilda (over hey jude). half-way old, half-way young, another song just begun

## curving for the coast, part 1

we were living in canberra which any aussie, will tell you is nowhere near the ocean. we eventually went coastal one February day. right-hand drive, left-side leaning

## wrong way go back

australian freeway signs for the hard-of-thinking. so you're over down under

## curving for the coast, part 2

when i gave the first draft of this song to a friend to have a listen to, it was just under thirteen minutes long. he said he put the song on and stepped out to go the corner store somewhere around "bateman's bay" and it was still playing when he returned. it's your first trip and you are that small

## lifeline

there are a lot of architecturally-challenged buildings in the hard scrabble areas of rural eastern ontario: barns, shacks, sap-houses and out-buildings of one sort or another. for me, these crooked buildings evoke an imagined accompanying lifestyle for those living without and within: a grass-through-cement kind of living required of one who commits to living off (and on) the land when the land happens to be the hard-assed, unforgiving canadian shield. (oh, ya, ask me what the 'forty foot' is all about sometime.) hold your own

## painted yellow

i can't really be held responsible for writing poems (or songs) about corn. at harvest time, the corn stalks are taller than the fences meant to keep them contained. it's feast or famine, you wait all summer and then one day corn is everywhere and it must be eaten .

## another year of song

scratching in a journal, paddling a canoe. hard not to think a certain canadian singer-songwriter; two of his songs surface then dive back down into this one. "north vancouver island song" and "campfire light" find their way in and out of "another year of song" and this borrowed tune says, "thanks for that." how many years? back to back

## black letter stammer

i mustn't blame it on the frogs, the typewriter made me do it. more necessary tips of the hat to teilhard frost who accompanies my typewriting with an astonishing array of percussive tools and toys. a confusion of night with sound otherwise the gift is completely realized

# half-way round the world waltz

i flew half way around the world  
i flew half the way round, half-way lost, half-way found  
sang the song without making a sound  
half-way up to come half-way back down

i swam half-way around the world  
trying my best not to change, now isn't that strange?  
how despite everything i've been shown  
how a person will cling to what's known

half-way around (going up and coming)

i stumbled half-way around the world  
it was nothing at all, just a trip then a fall  
but the landing felt good just the same  
another chance to remember my name

half-way round the sea the sky the ground and you will always be  
half-way round the sea the sky the ground the waltz will set you free

and now i'm half-way around the world  
it's not always a test i just needed a rest  
a little courage to help find my way  
a wing a prayer and a borrowed cliché

and what i'm trying to say in an unspoken way  
half-way old half-way young another song just begun  
with the sky upside down the stars floating around  
i'll take the true with the false and do the overseas waltz

and if you'll all be so kind, that is, if no one would mind let's go half the way  
round until the world's upside down and do the half-way around the world  
waltz do the half-way around the world waltz

# curving for the coast, part 1

(it's just the light)

you become a straight line, curving for the coast  
become a straight line curving, you've never been this close

and the light is why, you're on this road  
it's a weight yet has no load, there's no baggage to unload

yes the light is who you are right here  
on this road for love and fear, colour blind and crystal clear

yellowy fields, tumbled out, tired and scattered. scratch and scrub.  
everything looking for a name, here. no name needed. nothing needed.  
but still, the light. still the light moves from the inside out.  
but it's too soon to invoke Grace this early in the trip, it's just the light.  
it's just that everything it touches turns to

the landscape run backwards now, a strange familiar scene  
shot straight through a projector, spooling green and green

just a place between the ground and sky  
ours is not to question why, watch the colours as they fly

like a voice you've heard but never seen  
like a watercolour dream, a place you've never been

papery grasses, held, waiting in windsway and the sun pouring itself out  
over everything. the soil: spectacular, rusted. and all the colours in and out  
of focus. in and out of focus. unfamiliar forest bears witness: bark, frayed  
and  
hanging. tinder dry. eucalypt. paper bark tea-tree, spotted gum, grey ironbark,  
tall mallee scrub.

it's early but you're in for the long haul with tension enough to pull the

unsuspecting. tinder dry and then ferns. ferns become fragile cover as  
you sudden-drop down into valley and shadow and then climb back up  
into parched abundance. perfection enough to disorient with the line  
running out and out

right-hand drive, left-side leaning  
left to contemplate left over meaning  
right-hand drive, left-side leaning  
left to contemplate left over meaning

the great dividing range  
the familiar swallowed by the strange  
the great dividing range  
the familiar swallowed by the strange  
the great dividing range: this world, that world  
this world, that world. it's enough to pull the unsuspecting

# wrong way go back

large sign bright red miss it: you're dead

red sign large print. go back: your first hint

driving too fast driving too slow  
no in-between nowhere to go  
driving too slow driving too fast  
driving right by driving right past

so you're over down under your head's out of wack  
you're over and under: wrong way go back

freeway confusion better pick up the slack  
you're on the left side: wrong way go back

now you're all caffeinated smoked the whole pack  
now you're so over-rated: wrong way go back  
wrongwaygobackwrongwaygoback

bright sign dim wit short sight deep shit

one sign two eyes. wrong way: surprise

driving too fast driving too slow  
no in-between nowhere to go  
driving too slow driving too fast  
driving right by driving right past.

summertime and the driving is  
concrete surfing no time to be slack  
watch for the road kill: keep the southern cross at your back

## curving for the coast, part 2 (and now, the ocean must be mentioned)

there's colour coming through the trees from such a long way off  
colour coming through the trees it's a hard blue painted soft

and the blue is why you're on this road  
it's a blue that might explode there's no language there's no code

and you're pulled toward this kind of blue  
like a spell you can't undo for the many for the few

there's colour coming through the trees from such a long way off. the air gives itself away. and every ocean you've ever seen now conjured. inlets and arms are the messengers that send word. there is nothing else This Big. colour coming through the trees. and the long descent. don't even mention blue. the tides doing all the work. the waves unseen. send word: there is nothing else. the sound blinds you to any other sense. there it is. look as far as you will. cue the waves

all the words you cannot speak are here: torn away, torn away rip tides, wind, cloud-chasing. but the sand says, 'walk here,' as far as you are willing. mystery bay really isn't. really is. there is nothing else this big. the towns will try to tell you otherwise. rooms with views and any number of stars above the door. contradictions abound. the world held upside down for the tourist with traveller's intention. climate control and other oxymorons are poorly signed.

roadways cling to the coast. roadways cling to the coast with an awkward sense of normalcy and go on and on toward forever, or at least melbourne.

but not you, no, not you, not you. it's your first trip. your first little trip go on and stumble feel the long stretch of humble because your loop is finite and tiny. the ocean will give way to mountains that shake themselves back out into scrub and outback without notice. only a

faded, 'give way,' nailed on a post to suggest otherwise.

it's your first trip, your first little trip and you are that small.  
unwanted almost, but the sun pouring itself out and all the colours. the  
sun pouring itself out. and all the colours. the line running out and out.  
and all the colours

# lifeline

your horses don't fit your barn  
your tractor don't match your farm  
twice the work half the charm: hold your own

all the while your crops were thinning  
papers say the blue team's winning  
hard to keep your head from spinning: hold your own

all this time gone  
all this time gone: so long  
down a dirt road, the forty foot, it's like a twisting song

your lifeline is in the field  
you're crazy trying to farm the shield  
but pickin' rocks is part of the deal: hold your own

all this time gone  
all this time gone: so long  
halfway left and partly right, it's like a twisting song

you said you're never going to leave this farm~never  
no, you're never going to leave this farm~never  
no one's ever going to twist your arm~never

the factory farm is hungry now  
it's got an appetite that won't allow  
your life your land your own two hands  
or maybe a government with different plans

your tractor don't fit your barn  
your horses don't match your farm  
second mortgage and a lucky charm: hold your own

# painting yellow

scene 1, late summer dream:

i'm thinking august, late august. a still-awake-but-growing-tired august.  
late, late summer: the Big Lull. laneways lined with weeds that won't  
quit. rural ontario. fields on fields on fields. and corn. fields of corn.  
i'm driving. drifting. dreaming. driving, drifting, dreaming. drifting,  
dreaming, driving, thinking impossible thoughts of last march, april, may  
those tiny seeds trying to remember what a whole field painted yellow  
smells like. but now children float in butter-dipped dreams of water  
barrels that spell august in fields taller than the tallest kid in the  
whole school. yes, recess is right around the corner of every mouth  
poised and every september lunchpail ever packed, chores chores and more  
chores and all the wiry old farmers smiling the machinery back into the  
drive-shed and why are they smiling? they're smiling because it hurts so  
much. (anyone spoken with a farmer lately?) someone whispers frost but  
laughter melts the thought of school bells and rubber boots and the summer  
still feels fatter than a big old moon. a harvest moon~the yellow face of  
fiction shining right through myth

scene 2, harvest. (the big gathering):

butter and bad jokes (the same ones as last year)  
butter and bad jokes (the same ones as last year)  
dust. crooked teeth. paper plates. dust. crooked teeth. paper plates

ya, i know, paper plates. they're flimsy. they're pretty much useless but  
rituals are rituals

butter and bad jokes (the same ones as last year)  
butter and bad jokes (the same ones as last year)  
dust. crooked teeth. paper plates. paper plates  
home-baked pies to follow

scene3: late summer dream2:

the clouds drift without moving and green has painted the landscape so long now that white seems pretty much unthinkable (winter having not yet been invented). i grow these poems, well, because they're all i know how to grow (all farm hands having weathered storms much worse than poetry, mine or anyone else's.) i grow these poems, call them songs, sometimes. grow these poems, sometimes call them songs. and corn on the cob? yes, corn on the cob always comes with such a sweetsurprise ending, like old jimmy graysan who spends the whole summer sitting on the porch resting his eyelids only to pull out a tired old fiddle and dance summer backwards.

nightfall: darkness starts a fire and nobody's thinking about corn stuck in their teeth or mortgages or wage freezes with a campfire calling the tune never mind the key or the fancy chords. the dance floor's just a dirt patch anyhow. cut the rug, jimmy!

scene4: writers, farmers and heavy machinery

still, i know i,ll never fit in here with just my words to plant. (hell, i've still got all my fingers.) so, i shove some words in the ground when the calendar reads May and watch them grow in crazy rows all summer tiny seeds trying to remember what a whole field painted yellow smells like

paint it yellow

# another year of song

jump in my canoe i'm coming out to see you, i'm rolling  
jump in my canoe the sky is in full blue, i'm rolling

the forest pulls you slide from shore  
you wave as if there's something more  
the surface holds you in its sway  
the kind of blue that makes the day come rolling

jump in my canoe coming out to see you, i'm rolling  
jump in my canoe there's mist and rock cliffs too, i'm rolling

you write it down or else it's gone  
you write it down you build a song  
'cuz if you don't you'll never know  
that this is how your lifeline flows, you're rolling

how many years? back to back, some like this and some like that  
how many years? just like that, a glacier bed a welcome mat  
the places where the buddha sat

jump in my canoe coming out to see you, i'm rolling  
this may be nothing new but the day is up to you, you're rolling

coming back again so much more to say  
the road that curves round thunder bay  
coming back again the curve the flat  
another song carried on his back  
a borrowed tune says thanks for that

“out in the night the waves beat the shore  
you can hear ‘em pound you can hear ‘em roar  
you can roll me and rock me in my dreams”

jump in my canoe coming out to see you i'm rolling, rolling  
jump in my canoe coming out to see you

# black-letter stammer

black-letter stammer: for a 1948 underwood typewriter that lives in the forest. word machine. black metal creature. beautiful monster

22 frogs are making love in the south swamp, i swear it's true. yes, i swear it's as true as a metaphor for moonlight or black as the paddle's dip into midnight where there's no need for push or pull.

22 frogs are making love, I swear, and the south swamp is a metaphor for directions lost. 22 frogs. and the metaphor is love making itself known. love making itself. love-making, where there's no need for metaphor, no need for moonlight. love, where there's no need

the words are songs and the songs are poems and the poems are type-written. type-written and dead afraid of these metal signposts that point to where i am not. type-written memos complete with cryptic references and existential font. maybe to be lost first would suggest a way out instead of worrying about where the keys are on this heavy metal acoustic typewriter, where the keys are type-written and dead afraid. dead afraid. dead afraid but never better off dead than afraid.)

a confusion of night with sound otherwise the gift is completely realized  
a confusion of night with sound otherwise the gift is completely realized

a confusion of night with sound when metal strikes a chord to pattern the owl. it's like a locomotive waking up the forest, metal-on-metal:  
a black-letter, d stammer, hammering the night colourless:

a confusion of night with sound  
a confusion of night with sound

a confusion of sound with night otherwise the realization is completely a gift. afraid of adjusting the ribbon, touch without touching until everyone guesses a winner~under the B: bullfrog. black. blackness.

earth stone naked jewellery tab-keyed night noises, the odd carriage return. tab tab tab. the odd carriage return. dark and darker still, words that move downhill to fall below sunset which has already kissed so many full and hard and fleeting. red and orange stains that remember dying and a locomotive waking up the forest, metal-on-metal: a black-letter,d stammer hammering the night colourless, colouring the night hammerless~imagine ,being so awake in the forgetting. i swear it's all true. i swear it's all true, it's all true, all true, all true, especially when there's nothing but metal-on-metal, metal-on-metal, metal-on-metal, metal-on-metal, metal-on-metal, metal-on-metal, on-metal, on-metal, on-metal:

could there be more than 22?????