**THE BENEDICTION**

From sea to shining sea …

Evergreen cliffs lean into the Pacific,

beneath a leaden sky where avocets play

along the strand that stretches forever.

Glad to be alive!

I sense a building tide sweeping across

a discontented land that needs renewal.

When the change comes, who will be ready?

Who will be ready? …

Throw away your easy answers,

they will not help you now.

Rolling along a Dixie highway,

kudzu cloaking the tallest trees.

A place of ghosts,

piney woods and savage seasons.

We are crying out for truth and reason.

See how the path is overgrown!

In the green fields of the heartland

towns are thinning out, dreams downsizing.

A chill wind blows through the empty mall.

Somewhere a young man cleans his gun.

“*They* have stolen my America,” he cries.

Who will draw the poison from his heart?

… From his heart.

A girl or God, we pray.

Far New England, autumn time.

A child stares at red leaves

and wonders how a miracle is made.

She will grow and she will know before long

the path of grace, the changing face of our age

-- ever shifting, elusive, turned toward the future.

Of this she is sure: Yesterday is gone

and open hearts must point the way.

And with her go the hopes of all,

from sea to shining sea.

*--- Mark Abel*