



Only Broken Waves Know the Ocean

Poetry & Lyrics

ROBERT AUGUSTUS MASTERS

Only Broken Waves

Know the Ocean

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For Diane

*my beloved & partner in all things
through whom
I continue to be drawn
from the prosaic to the poetic
in all that I do & am*

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POETRY DOESN'T EXPLAIN BUT REVEALS

Poetry doesn't explain, but reveals.

It simultaneously unsettles and roots us, opening unsuspected doors with keys crafted from an uncommonly creative interplay of language and what language represents.

The results of this — which include transporting us into intimate proximity with the mysteries of the obvious — eventually bring to mind the question:

What is Poetry?

Part, perhaps most, of the answer dwells in the mapless overlap — the endlessly fecund gap — between what Poetry is and what Poetry does. And so I offer what follows more as description than definition.

When language's preconceptual roots — anchored in sensory and motor experience — get intimately entangled with concept-transcending vision, Poetry arises. There's new ground, aquiver and surging with green, too fertile not to give birth to the unseen.

Poetry is the original, primary, and most fittingly fluent language of the essential.

It is the depth-igniting, aesthetically precise expression of revelatory significance, lucidly intoxicated with its subject matter, at once lyrically framed and slipping out of its frames.

Poetry both precedes and transcends prose.

Poetry is language that attempts to stretch beyond language, holding the tiniest details with surprising care, extracting from them forgotten gems, hidden labyrinths, sudden reminders, misplaced universes, much needed odysseys.

Poetry is the soul's native tongue, awake to both the finest of distinctions and the most immense of realizations, holding both with equal curiosity and care.

Poetry is articulation that uses not only words, but also the spaces between, below, beside, and above words, spawning realizations which have the power to reel us into unsuspected depths of understanding.

Poetry is simply prose gone native, prose on the loose, skinny-dipping in felt

significances, arranging itself so as to maximize the odds that it won't be read like standard fare, nor like a handful of symbols, nor like something in need of dissection or deconstruction.

Poetry usually says a lot without saying or having to say a lot, being just as intimate with existential paradox as it is with the soapy dishes that don't give a damn if whoever's washing them is young or old, wise or foolish, sinking or rising.

Poetry is what happens when we are outwritten by what we are writing, and not just outwritten, but outdanced, outshone.

Poetry wings the ordinary and roots the extraordinary.

Where prose reports, Poetry unveils. Where prose marches, Poetry dances. Where prose makes sense, Poetry makes more than sense.

Where prose proclaims the mystical to be ineffable, Poetry gives it a voice, daring to express the supposedly inexpressible, while providing its audience with hearing aids and front-row seats.

Poetry is aesthetically translated epiphany in verbal form. All we need to do is permit ourselves to see firsthand the dancing particles and pulsing fluidity in its crystallized presentations. The price of admission? A sense of wonder.

Poetry is more invitation than presentation.

Poetry is best read — and heard — in a state of natural intoxication, with no time constraints and with all the senses attuned to the slightest stimulation, the subtlest of shifts.

Poetry should not be so much read as imbibed, perhaps after releasing its juices with an unapologetically vital bite or two. No bibs. Sit as though you are at a feast, even if the fare is spare, knowing that the tiniest morsel can make the biggest difference.

Don't touch Poetry with gloves; seize it, hold it close, smell and taste it, go skin-to-skin with it, squeeze into its silences, navigate and ride its waves, making room for some messiness and turbulence in your relationship with it. Get into it until it is no longer an it.

If Life could be said to be the Poetry of Being, and Art the Poetry of Creativity, and Music the Poetry of Sound, and Intimacy the Poetry of Love, then how can we live without Poetry?

Poetry is evocation, incantation, excavation, nakedly dancing articulation. Surrender to its spell, letting it inhabit you, rearrange and change you.

Let Poetry take over your headquarters for a while. Let it touch you. Let it slip past your defenses. Don't try to figure it out; feel your way into it, just as you would with a dream. Don't expect an answer, but rather more intimacy with depth, and perhaps also with what's beyond depth.

Again, Poetry doesn't explain, but reveals.

Listen to it with more than your ear. Let its music get way under your skin.

Walk with it, talk with it, go a few rounds with it, dance with it, be diverted and courted and transported by it, giving it your hand and hunger. Let it plug you into your own natural-born poetic impulses, intuitions, and conversations, with no interference from your indwelling critics, so that you don't just read Poetry, but also live and breathe it, about which my words lose their tongue in an avalanche of sobering astonishment, leaving only what's been here all along.

Welcome aboard.

NOTE: The lyrics are from my wife Diane's CD O Breathe Us Deep — my words, her vocals and music, ours to share as a free download from:

<https://www.robertmasters.com/music/>

I Lay My Flesh

I lay my flesh
upon this broken bed
letting pillows
of pure space
have my head
undigested replays
rippling through
this infinite of days
brushing back
the edges of dreaming
erasing handholds
of meaning

I lay my flesh
upon this breathing earth
sinking deeper
than rebirth
sensing lands too
vivid to recall
hugely breathing
valley, peak,
and pulsing all
forest lungs
singing green
so green
soaked in green
enwrapping me
in what
cannot be seen

I lay my flesh
upon this flaming contingency
again drawn
into lucid transparency
where one touch —
one fingertip signature
lighter than
the lightest
dreamtime breeze
ruptures a million tiny

sacs of certainties
until only love's true shape remains

I stretch my flesh
over this perishing place
until it is but holes —
clearings in bare space
leaving me free enough
to not need a choice

Silence undresses me —
gives me its voice
making more than sense
out of the abyss
teaching me to be
awakened
by all that exists —
is there any greater kindness
than this?

Inviting Pain in for Tea

Early morning's dreams
lingering for
a few fast
fading scenes
spectral fists
hammering me
from the inside
gatecrashing
my dawning day

But I could
go another way
invite my pain
in for a visit
for more
than a quick stay
invite it closer
and closer still
while keeping
just enough
distance from it
so it remains
in clear view

The time — soon but space —
between thoughts
broadens a bit
I sit with my pain
minus its drama
and soon
there arrives
a trace
of anchoring ease
providing enough room
to unfreeze

My clenched hurt unknots
softens
spreading out
without a thought

What's left
of my distress
charges around
in a much bigger field
snorting and fussing
less and less
running its head off
slowing
into
lush green pasture

Discomfort's still
hanging around
but no longer
colonizing me
fuller breaths now — purer arrival
so much space here
such inviting ground
room for sun
 room for rain
 room for loss
 room for pain
all held in the grace
and vast care
of what
all of us
cannot help
but share

Each Deep Parting

Each deep parting
cracks our heart
but nothing gets broken
except the notion
we're apart

The cracks widen
letting in and letting out
what's too real to be spoken

Letting the space
between the cracks
breathe and expand
leaves us lovers
with love's core demand

Each deep parting
shoulders its own aching
but nothing's actually breaking
except our nostalgia
for an easier way

Our sharp and stormy hurt — shining dark
ferries us heaving
and weaving
through fractured places
until separation
cannot separate us

Each deep parting
skins our attachment
our ribcage sudden sky

It is not our heart that cracks
but its ossified shield — its bulletproof glass
a guardian from
a much younger time
crumbling to less than dust
as all constructions must

Crucified in a Field of Facts

Forget-me-nots
halo my scars
and help ring
ring the temple bell
dissolving amnesia's
infectious anesthesia
ancient seas
seizing my sails
waves stained
with splintered dawn
connecting
what's above
with what's below
without homogenizing the show

When Truth arrived
did you crucify it
in a field of facts?

When you condemned
the executioner
did you see in your hands
the bloody axe?

Unbroken light
cradles our scars
and schemes
tomorrow's children
painting our dreams
a rain of dying petals
lighting the crooked
way home

To See Anything

To see anything — anything! —
as it truly is
is to realize
and not mind realizing
that we don't know
and cannot know
what it — or anything else —
truly is

To see anything
as it truly is
is to recognize
with more than our mind
that it — like us —
is but Mystery
even as we keep
assuming otherwise

To see anything
as it truly is
is to see without eyes
this being both no big deal
and perpetual surprise

To see anything
as it truly is
is to see what's out of sight
to know without thinking
to homestead in the Unknown
to freefall into endless intimacy
with what we've been
dying to see

It is of this
that our undreaming eyes
cannot help but speak
even when speechless

Back, Back Goes He

Back, back to the clouds
of speechless smoke
Back, back to the charred shock
Back, back to his beloved's remains
Back, back to the day too bright
Back, back to the bleeding silence
Back, back to the fury
too enormous to scream
This, this his children
blackened and frosty red
This, this his tribe
young and old
and now so very cold

Back, back came he
back from forest and plain
Back, back came he
back from the edge of forever
Back, back came he
back from the single eye
Where he stands is holy
holy is the ground
Where he shakes is holy
holy is the sound
Back, back to his body goes he
the slaughtered stirring
through his flesh
the night closing in
wind whistling hard
Where he sits is holy
holy is the ground
Where he mourns is holy
holy is the sound

The fire he makes burns until dawn
Wreaths of blue flames
eating away his name
Away, away walks he
his goodbyes in the smoke
Away, away walks he

through the ruins of his pain
Away, away walks he
through his shattered remains
Where he walks is holy
holy is the land
Where he goes is holy
holy is the demand

Back, back goes he
back into the forest dark
Back, back goes he
back to what was old
when old began
Back, back goes he
back to the great waters
Back, back goes he
back to endless sky
Back, back goes he
back to what
cradles his sorrow
Back, back goes he
back to a love
with no tomorrow
Back, back goes he
back to the edge of forever

Where he sits is holy
holy is the ground
Where he dies is holy
holy is the ground
the Beloved within
and all around

An Armchair Arbutus

Onto my lap
you scramble
and I'm a lowslung arbutus
leaning rootbare — wild limbed
upon a lip of knotty coastline
receiving salty winds
with more than arms open

I'm an armchair arbutus
my skin polished fire
sap sighing
with your happy climb
your abundant chin-drool
anointing my bark
waves of unmapped places
overlapping in your eyes

Your laughter the sea's chant
your play melts me
where I'm weather-beaten
inviting me to let my heartwood
stream down to my roots
and up through my balding foliage

Onto my lap you scramble
uprooting my latest face
redesigning my gaze
your love soaks into me
dissolving my knots
releasing me
from my thoughts
until I'm resting
easy and wild
unconcerned
about who's the child

Eternity's Gypsies

Stalled at the intersection
of now and a truer now
hanging on
to vanishing solidity
losing too much
in the details
haunted by
disappearing trails

We arrive and depart
stop and start
doing our time
playing our part

When we leave a dream
what distance
have we crossed?
When we awaken
what is lost?
The deathbed a cradle
newborns gumming at the edge

If it seems
we've been
here before
it's because
there's nowhere
else to go
We are Eternity's gypsies
clinging to
ghostly solidity
a lifetime cupped
in one quivering moment
suspended
in a droplet of forever
hinting at
a mind-shattering enormity
as we make history
and history makes us

The Undoing We Fear

When fissures
appear in reality
admitting slivers
of a very different locality
injecting us
with dark unfamiliarity
and swallowing
another drink
or changing
how we think
doesn't provide us
with a return ticket
we have a chance
to ride a truer track —
if we don't get so
crammed and jammed
behind the wheel
of our ambition
that we run over
what's always
already here
already more

electrifying than fear

So let the fissures
wider crack
allowing curiosity
to get the better
of dread
letting the unknown
dissolve
in a deeper unknown
seeing more than
what is shown

The undoing we fear
is already here
the mystery of mysteries
closer than near

Beyond all familiarity
we eventually must go
this we fight

and this we know

When fissures
appear in reality
admitting slivers
of a very different locality
we may seem to be
at the edge
of insanity
but the light
streaming through
the light holding
every shape
and every view
is none other
than us
unbroken through
all the coming and going
all the fears
of not knowing

Crystal Cove

Can't recall what
I was reading to you
when through our cabin window's
wintry ocean view
a stone's throw behind me
a massive dome
of blackened boulder
did squat upon
the sunset's flaming horizon
underlined by churning white thunder

Your gasp cored the woodsy calm
parachuting my book to my lap — turning me
around to see with you — in high definition —
nosing up right beside
and as tall as that stony dome
an oblong presence
— smoky and dazzling dark —
rivers of silver

zigzagging across its throat

Big mind in the sunset waters
clearly casting its eye
across the suddenly crystalline shore
just long enough
for us to attach
our bare gaze to it
while we waited
in the quivering evening
without a thought
waiting
for the depths
to eject more of it
and us

Final Detox

Sometimes we feel so bad
convinced a fix
must be had —
whatever helps
take the hurt away
however much
we may have to pay

It might take a while
before we plunge
into our grief
holding nothing more
than a lifeline
to what's deeper
than all the dying

Detox works us
right to the bone
until we're at home
with being alone
our habits give up the ghost
when we stop playing host

Cultivating intimacy
with all that we are
is the final detox
helping digest
our deepest shocks

On the way
there are fixes
to be had
and not always
because we feel bad

But freedom
doesn't mind its chains
endless discovery
being what remains

Dysentery Dharma

Ten days pinned
in this tiny concrete space
sweating out the stink
and the hundred plus degrees
coughing dizzily heaving
staring through
my ragged breathing
jagged pain
howling in my skull
punching out my eyes
from the inside

Outside is India
in its glory and rot
matted cries and fragrant dust
clattering color
sledgehammer pain
anchoring me
squatting over a floor-hole
fifteen times a day
dysentery dharma
frying with fever
shivering and shaking
covering my swollen eyes
until night
resting in the gaps
between exhale and inhale

My room a hothouse
overgrown with my illness
the ceiling fan cools me
no more than my dips
into self-pity
I quiver and sweat
and sometimes float
agony my secret intimate
the shape of my flesh
burned onto
my filthy bedsheet
my focus straying

no further than my feet
ugliness in one hand
surrender in the other
my suffering now and then
but naked grace
telling me to stop, stop,
stop craving another place

Something's coming
ungripped here
amidst the phlegmy
hackings of dawn
and the too-bright
daytime shows outside
as I awaken
in this dank fever-box
this dirty little cubicle
this groaning space
so uncomplainingly full
of my labor
and the birthing
I must face

When the Night Pulled Back the Bedcovers

When the night pulled back
the bedcovers
and I sat knees-up ashaking
waiting for a sign sublime
my mind looking for the time
my body athrob
with an eternal rhyme
the windows did bulge
with something unborn
something I could not name
something I could not contain

When the night pulled back
the bedcovers
and my breath was
no longer mine
and I knew
knew the supreme design
and darkness stormed my room
so blinding bright
my spine a stem
so green and blazing white
I could not help but
give the night my hand
letting it lead me
through every shadowland

When the night pulled back
the bedcovers
and I arose from
the ruins of my dreams
and inside and outside
were lovers
and exhale was inhale
I glimpsed a love that could not fail
a love that was both ocean and sail
and did cry out for
having so much
and for wanting more
and for having done
all this before

an undreaming love
deeper than my deepest fear
inviting me to give
the night my hand
until I could not help but
look through the eyes
of every face
no matter
how dark the place

Surrounded by fiery womb was I
the doors gone
the walls immensely aquiver
my mind no longer looking
for the time
new growth running wild
through my room
the windows
a shattering of light
and my whole being
did shiver
and quake
until my frame of mind
did break
and I was in body
what I was in spirit
the great night
shining wild
forever full of child

LYRICS

Last Sigh of a Vagabond Wave

*My face is unveiled sky
and timeless dream
dew-brightened dawn
and shadow-dappled stream
gnarled coastline
and jagged-blossomed storm
ever bursting through the roof
of what's unborn*

*Gone, gone, gone am I
birthing me am I
struggling deep-sea drop am I*

*My body's spun from gravity
and boundless light
dreaming of gypsy joys
and knotted night
soaring over cobblestone
oceans of cloud
ever sailing through the walls
of what's allowed*

*Gone, gone, gone am I
birthing me am I
green fire of wild places am I*

*My life sings and bleeds
in colors bare and bright
riding waves of shattered moon
through the night*

*Nothing is moving
yet everything's in motion
only broken waves
will ever know the ocean*

*Gone, gone, gone am I
birthing me am I
last sigh of a vagabond wave am I*

*And this too am I
where Mystery is all that's known
where love is
what is being grown
where silence
tells the ultimate story
where life blazes
in all its pain and glory*

*Gone, gone, gone am I
birthing me am I
last sigh
of a vagabond wave
am I
dying to live*

Look for Me

Look for me

where storms blow open the gates

Look for me

where broken boats cross the straits

Look for me

where the sea shines with shattered sky

Look for me

where you can no longer lie

Look, look for me

where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me

where broken hearts take wing

Look for me

where hidden longings must sing

Look for me

where your body bends with grief

Look for me

where you feel the birth of each new leaf

Look, look for me

where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me

where the first of us searched the sky

Look for me

where the last of us is saying goodbye

Look for me

where you're broken enough to be whole

Look for me

where love's the ground and not the goal

Look, look for me

where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain

Look for me

where darkness sheds its shadow

Look for me

where buried dreams still glow

Look for me

where you forget and you fall

Look for me

where silence says it all

*Look, look for me
where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain*

*Look for me
where the land is wild with naked wonder*

*Look for me
where jagged shores moan with white thunder*

*Look for me
where the sea is ablaze with dawn*

*Look for me
where everything's already gone*

*Look, look for me
where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain*

*Look for me
where we must dance and die*

*Look for me
where forehead is an infinity of sky*

*Look for me
where you awaken in the night*

*Look for me
where there's nothing but unbroken light*

*Look, look for me
where joy and pain disappear into sun and rain*

O Breathe Us Deep

*The waves arrive one by one
sparkling with remembered sun
ancient songs seizing our tongue
the temple rising out of the blue
broken pillars now solid and true*

*O breathe us deep, breathe us strong
breathe us full, O breathe us home*

*The waves arise with shining grace
stained with dawn's burning face
we won't leave this broken place
until we release our golden chains
bursting through the slumber and pain*

*O breathe us deep, breathe us strong
breathe us full, O breathe us home*

*It is time to turn from the old
it is time to come in from the cold
frozen pain will bind our soul
until we're freed from our tomorrows
no longer chained to old sorrows*

*O breathe us deep, breathe us strong
breathe us full, O breathe us home*

*And once again
here we are
gathered together
from afar
each a spark
from a dying star
our awakening heart
is the clearing
for the Holy Deep
we are nearing*

*O breathe us deep, breathe us strong
breathe us full, O breathe us home*

Take Me to the Bottom of Your Pain

*Take me to the bottom of your pain
Take me to the weave of your true name
Take me, take me to what you require
Take me to the heart of the fire
Let's stretch to make the leap
Let's go to where love
must also weep*

*Take me to the bottom of your pain
Take me to the weave of your true name
Take me, take me over the rise
Take me through all your goodbyes
Let's shine through our every disguise
Let's go to where love
has open eyes*

*Take me to the bottom of your pain
Take me to the weave of your true name
Take me, take me right to your core
Take me through your hidden door
Let's throw away our every alibi
Let's go to where love
no longer lies*

*Take me to the bottom of your pain
Take me to the weave of your true name
Take me, take me
past your past
Take me where
only the sacred will last
Let's live where insights
lose their mind
Let's live where nobody
gets left behind
Let's go to where love
is no longer blind*

I Come to You

*I come to you through it all
I am the one who hears your spirit call
I am the one who is sky for your dawning light
Do not turn from me, even in your darkest night*

*I come to you through the high and the low
I am the one you cannot name but always know
I am the one who is earth for your deepest dance
Do not turn from me, even in your darkest trance*

*Love me now, love me full
Love me bright, love me day and night
I cannot be found because I cannot be lost
Love me whatever the cost*

*I come to you through the heart of now
I am the one who bows only to Eternal Thou
I am the one who is ocean for your streams
Do not turn from me, even in your darkest dreams*

*I come to you in every shape
I am the one beyond all escape
I am the one who is fire for what's dead in you
Do not turn from me, even in your darkest view*

*I come to you when love is sailing free
I am the one you always feel but don't always see
I am the one who is space for what you cannot face
Do not turn from me, even in your hardest place*

*I come to you when love is burning bright
I am the one aflame in every sacred site
I am the one rising from the ruins
Burning, burning through to you
until joy is the ground and love is all around
until our flesh speaks Truth's tongue
until our song is fully sung*

*Love me now, love me full
Love me bright, love me day and night
I cannot be found because I cannot be lost
Love me whatever the cost*

Again I Remember

*Again I break
my need dissolving my pride
Again I spill
my hurt streaming, streaming wide
Again I die
letting all the goodbyes
tear open my sky
Again I whisper and again I roar
swimming through the dreamy door
And again I join
what's above with what's below
And again I recognize the One
behind the show*

*Again I fall
chained to my lies
Again I rise
filled with blazing night
and newborn cries
Again I pump up my will
gunning for the holy thrill
Again I wake
Letting go of both hope and despair
no longer seeking
something better to wear*

*Again I reach through
the darkness shining wild
Again I rock in the cradle
of Eternity's child
Again I die
releasing all that I took to be mine
Again I howl
prowling through forests of palm and pine
one hand on a spear
the other on my fear*

*Again I gaze from one eye
my broken body aglow
Again I drop my sword*

*watching my blood cut rivers in the snow
Again I beat a sweating drum
urging you to leave your mind
Again I disappear
without leaving anything behind*

*Again I smile
touching what's always touched me
Again I dance in the fire
burning free
Again I remember
to not turn away from my wounds
Again I rebuild the temple
rising from my ruins
And again I join
what's above with what's below
And again I recognize the One
behind the show*

*Again I break and taste
the final goodbye
Again I ride a wave
of everlasting sky
Again I fall and forget
the Sacred Call
And again I remember
and again I include it all
And again here we are
in the flesh yet unborn
lovers with both the calm
and the storm
And again I join
what's above with what's below
And again I recognize the One
beyond the show*

This the Open Ground

*This the open ground
This the pure eagle's sound
This, this the breathing Earth
This, this the timeless dream
This, this the crystalline stream
This, this the breakthrough supreme*

*Take the grief from your brow
Wash away the revenge
from your now
Go, go where the river's dancing white
Go, go where you left your spirit-sight
Do you not feel
the sacred feather in your hair?
Have you forgotten it's still there?*

*Fly, fly the eagle's sky
Ride, ride the eagle's cry
Glory every cloud with your flight
Leave fiery trails in the darkest night
But do not let your mind
paddle those ruined lakes
Do not drown
in all the bloody heartbreaks*

*This, this is the time to let fly
This, this is the time to say goodbye
This, this is the time to take hold of the sky
Chant, chant your rivers sparkling wild
Chant, chant your rivers down to the sea
Chant for every bird and every tree
Chant, chant the great mystery*

*Take your hurt to
where the river's dancing white
Take your past to where
the drums beat all night
Take your naked spirit
into the firelight
Let the bare truth*

*raise you tall
Until you can see above every wall
This, this your spirit's door
This, this your farewell to a dead shore*

*This, this the open ground
This, this the pure eagle's sound
This, this the breathing earth
This, this the holy day
This, this the invitation
that will not go away
This, this the invitation
that will not go away*

Sacred Hymn

*O Father of my soul
O Breath of my breath
taking me through
death after death
O May I be a vessel
for Your Light
as I sail through the night*

*In You I rise and fall
pulsing with Your Call
ever dying into You am I
like clouds into endless sky
O Guide me, guide me on, guide me free
Guide me, guide me on, guide me into Thee*

*O Mother of my soul
O Cradle of my every birth
O Green, green heartbeat
of my earth
O May I make room
for Your Embrace
I awaken to You
in every place*

*In You I rise and fall
pulsing with Your Call
ever dying into You am I
like clouds into endless sky
O Guide me, guide me on, guide me free
Guide me, guide me on, guide me into Thee*

*O Source of my soul
O Joy beyond desire
Your Welcome is all
that I require
as I come alive
in Your Spirit-Fire
O May I open to You
up and down
until my heart finds*

sacred ground

*In You I rise and fall
pulsing with Your Call
ever dying into You am I
like clouds into endless sky
O Guide me, guide me on, guide me free
Guide me, guide me on, guide me into Thee*

*O Lover of my all
O Joy that cannot die
O Wonder beyond every goodbye
You are forever
forever here
this is how
You must now appear*

*In You I rise and fall
pulsing with Your Call
ever dying into You am I
like clouds into endless sky
O Guide me, guide me on, guide me free
Guide me, guide me on, guide me into Thee*

*O May all things
awaken me
until there is only Thee
O May all things
awaken me
until there is only Thee*

MORE POETRY

I'll See You There

There's a love
too real to die
a love that's both
ground and sky
a love that cannot lie
I'll see you there
our shared heart alight
in even the densest night

There's a bond
too deep to be designed
a bond that leaves
no one behind
a bond that does not bind
I'll meet you there
our connection
our benediction

There's a time
when every joy's ours to feel
a time when every wound
is ours to face and heal
a time not to explain
but to reveal
I'll see you there
sailing these forgotten straits
embracing what awaits

There's a wonder
that cannot be defiled
a wonder shaping our stride
a wonder waking us
from the inside
a wonder that's both
groom and bride
I'll see you there
opening to every pain
until only this remains

Blue, Blue the Spear's Deadly Flight

Blue, blue the spear's deadly flight
red, red the sharp sudden
slicing of metal
axeblade and sword
opening me to the bone

Earth and my falling flesh
have a final touch
and all this life is stolen
in a second
I reach without hands — no-body —
across the dreamy divide's
fading space
trying to reach you
to touch your face
but everything only blurs
and breaks
shock-wrapped
in vast heartache
One last shrinking glimpse
and there's nothing
not even black

A tumbling glance later — no telling how long —
something stirs, unfurls
spills colors
opens so wide
so huge and bright
until everything is but sentient light
yet if but a single thought
does intrude
there's an immediate
newly constructed world
into which what's left of me
does step
a real illusion
with a stellar surrounding cast

I must, must remember, but what?
And who — or what — is trying

to remember?
The worlds tremble, groan
fall apart
and I am gone
pulled beyond gone
gone into what
I never left
but only dreamt I did
the invitation still the same:
remember
to remember
what truly matters
even when everything
shatters

Homeward Bound

When the plunge is not later
but now
and how is no longer
a question
and love stretches us
beyond our edge
our mortality
brightening our breath
we are homeward bound
uprooted enough
to find truer ground
until suffering is just
bootcamp grace
a liberating
loss of face

When being off the path
is the path
and we no longer can invest
in any disguise
nor find sufficient comfort
in our usual highs
we are homeward bound
stumbling on
when we tumble down
no longer keeping our shadow
in the dark
knowing we may feel worse
before we feel better

When we are brought to our knees
and do not flee or freeze
rising up through our sorrow
no longer romancing tomorrow
we are homeward bound
joining in for another round
holding our fractured selves
close and closer still

Bathe in This Waterfall

Bathe in this waterfall
of unchained pain
letting the shafts of light
infuse you with a purer wonder
sagging sky and mossed cliffside
pulsing in resonance
with your wounds and
suddenly
conscious breath
your remembered encounters
with death

And bathe also
beneath the falls
below the cascading white roar
down where silent river-pools
glisten with roughly terraced grace
and crystalline welcome
for there you will find more
than greenblue embrace
more than reflections
of former faces
more than the stillpoint
of joy and grief

And do you not now
softly stretching now
hear a different kind of thunder
a greenly galloping tapestry
of original wonder
transparent yet increasingly
lush with gonged throb
and primordial demand

Do you not now
however obliquely
sense an unshuttered panorama
of eyes behind your eyes
overlapping dreams that are
more than dreams

wild-winged shapeshifters
disassembling your mind

There is an undoing here
an unraveling and reopening
a lucid vertigo
a macheted clearing
a velvet slide
a shrieking wasteland
a bloody snowfield
a sky-making plunge
and there is something else too
throbbing between the lines
and inside the designs
a knowingness eluding
even the most sublime
of semantic nets
and spiritual mappings
something you have always felt
inviting you to the edge
of the edge

Permit yourself remembrance
not just of history and mental footholds
but of boundless presence
and what exists
beyond the known
recalling through your body
what is not a something
but the raw heart of Mystery
the always already
paradoxical truth of you

Those who know
there is no escape
from Freedom
die into a deeper Life
bathing in a transparency
through which they
recognize all

A Deeper Solitude

I'd been dropping into my solitude
whatever the state
of my state —
it wasn't as bad a fit
as I had thought
a touch tight round the ribcage
especially when crowded
by the slumping echoes
of lonely times
my solitude left the door ajar
inviting me into its world
the more I cherished it
the more it cherished me

I was bobbing between
buoys far from shore
slowly drifting around
on a pale turquoise sea
denied postcard immortality
sleepy wavelets my rocking-chair
while I watched
the palm-backed beach
and the bathers — tiny legless puppets
colors splashing
spilling, selfing
voices faintly dotting
the wavy purr and then
an unexpected love for all
turned me to sea
then to shore

A deeper solitude this was
connecting more
than the dots
one vast weave
endlessly threaded
in which every self
remains imbedded
aloneness everywhere
packed with light

Seeds Grow in the Dark

Seeds grow in the dark —
so do we.
Let's stop making
such a virtue
out of the light
and more fully
turn toward
what's in the shadows
breathing it in
breathing it here
until we realize
with more
than our mind
that what
we are seeing
is none other
than us
in endarkened
disguise

Seeds grow in the dark —
so do we.
Let's not be
blinded
by light
let's unwrap
the night
building a faith
too deep
to be spoken
a recognition
too central
to be broken
until even
the darkest of days
lights our way

Attention

The late afternoon sky
bruised
sagging grey
plump with
parachuting snow
this suddenly silent day
ragged flakes
squeakily crunch
beneath my boots
deliciously cool
upon my hatless head
streetlamps
spilling fuzzy light
attention touring the scene
buried in
its snapshots

And once again
attention comes
to its senses
announcing the arrival
of what's been here
all along
as I remember
that the usual me
is but a thought away
awaiting
resurrection
to which attention
needs to give
more than
just a mention

Don't Miss It in the Translation

In the tiny gap
the lidless abyss
the unborn emptiness
uncorked
after each outbreath
and before the start
of the next inbreath
is room for all

Out of the blue
here's another breath
arising — arriving — all by itself
filling not just our lungs

Inhale exhale inhale exhale
a tide we ride
like dreaming drifters
forgetting we are being
breathed, exactly now —
another breath departs, disappears
emptiness and a deeper emptiness

Silence just said something —
don't miss it in the translation.
We're being invited
to hold what we are
close by — our every pain
and every face
so that we might
more fully embrace
the art of learning our
lessons by heart
while we roam these dreamlands
hungry for what
our dragons guard
and for what cannot be dreamt
being much closer
than we think
to running out of breath

Seeing What's Out of Sight

Those who uncover Thee
see what's out of sight
unless spiritual greed
blinds them with light

I've assembled
a rough altar
from this ragged disguise
these avalanching goodbyes
I soften before it
not minding
the broken glass
my blood cutting new channels
through what I thought I knew
carrying no survivors
but only Thee

I dissolve in prayer
without reducing Thee
to a you
welcoming
my loss of face
all my qualities
drawing me
into their birthplace

What I know
is ablaze
already emptied
of its days
gone to nothing
in the Holy Deep
gone am I
yet still here
even when
there's only Thee

Taking the Suffering Out of My Pain

Uncovering my roots
climbing into new boots
my body no longer
penned up in my mind
my stride not

leaving me behind

Taking the suffering
out of my pain
teaching my flesh
to sing
no longer looking
for the key
in artificial light

Feeling what I cannot name
something I cannot tame
shattering the grip of time
rocketing me beyond

the reach of my mind

Not nailing myself
to a goal
no longer separating
body and soul

Every pain mine to reveal
mine to fully feel
every shadow
chained to a dark time
mine to embrace
until it's
no longer an it
but reclaimed me

Its Rain Willowing My Spine

The poplars bend low —
shimmering, jiggling
an almost brittle
chorus line
hemming the half-scalped
mountainside
hulking over
this blackening
slab of wintry lake
its surface jaggedly aquiver
in a chill and stormy embrace

Surging waves
in crisscrossing chaos
jigsawing together
and apart
jostling fragments
far from
any lasting fusion
each choppy reunion
a brief coalition
a scattering crowd
yet still dreaming
of staying together
no matter how frayed the tether

The reunion we crave
may not be
the one we need.
An assembly of pieces
bound together
is far from freed.
A crowd's cohesion is far
from a true unity —
the one providing
revelation and intimacy
without any annihilation of idiosyncrasy

This lakeside wind
storms my citadels
dismantles my sentinels
thrusting me past

cultivated reunion
not allowing
superficial integration
its rain willowing my spine
its thunder
unplugging my mind
its touch
invading my
dreams and schemes
its rhythms
none other
than mine

Universes Between My Thoughts

Daylight splits the clouds
spearing the thoughts
campaigning
for my attention
I shift from now
to a deeper time
traveling layered territories
with sprigs of rhyme
for gypsy minds

Tiny awakenings
elusively significant
crowd the spaces
between my thoughts
emissaries of what lies
beyond the known

Find me between the lines
find me before familiarity
repossesses me
because the daylight's getting thin
and what's beneath its skin
has me by more than the mind

The path has to be crooked
to hold all the twists and turns
I am falling
through the universes
between my thoughts
falling so far
that down seems up
explaining nothing whatsoever
while unveiling
one and all

And all this
in a single moment
stapling me
to endlessly open space

Where Love Cradles Fear

When we stop caring
who's right
we uncover enough heart
to recognize
what's right about
what's wrong
finding enough mutuality
to be more at ease
with our discomfort
including the fear
of being so close
so removed
from relational immunity
that even the tiniest unkindness
can cut to the bone

So brief the time to be together
yet time enough
to reenter sacred time
The day's tasks shout and pull
Summer floats by the window
like a truant dream
while we make shopping lists

and forget to breathe

Now everything's
out on the dancefloor
the music but
embroidered silence
the lighting framing
every window and door
forgotten flowers
suddenly in bloom
pain and joy
arm in arm
so much room here
where love cradles fear

Our Flaws No Longer in the Way

A fear may be revealed
in order to conceal
deeper fears
even as we bounce
between the walls
of places packed
with childhood souvenirs
making believe
we're not doing time
in bombed dollhouses
and crushed forts
letting our prevailing habits
adulterate and
masquerade as us

But again our trance unravels — and now
marvelously liberating now
our past ceases
occupying our future —
no longer
are we trying
to rearrange our face
no longer
dying for
a better parking-space
no longer
tearing things apart
to make them
make sense

But again
in one swiftly
cutting moment
we're flung back
stranded
in a lesser us
one hand on a righteously
parental whip
the other — so very young —
heading for the candy

or relationship
or whatever it might be
we'd decided we had to have
when we didn't see
any way out

And again we climb
out of our ruins
no longer
taking dictation
from our wounds
our flesh but
personalized Mystery
our eyes flooded
with bare recognition
our mind uncluttered
our sudden beauty
but nakedness of soul
our heart
broken enough
to be whole
our flaws no longer
in the way

When I Lived in an Empty Room

There was a long
and unbreathing time
when I occupied
an empty room
hating my shyness
hating my broken stride
weeping
without a single tear
my teenage heart

frozen, darkly bound

Starving was I
gobbling empty facts
seeking the glory
of envied report cards
despising the cheapness
of my victories
one more crumpled ribbon
pinned behind my forehead
one more medal

for the prematurely dead

Trapped, trapped was I
my shyness
not shy with me
thinning with my winning was I
feeling dead last
my future laid out
for all to see
long was I impaled
on that barren peak
mine its tinsel core
mine its loveless slopes
long was I the slave
of others' hopes
long did I ache

to be touched

by another's hand

There was a long
and unbreathing time
when I lived in
an empty room
the trap mine
and mine alone
its dungeon echoing
with a child's nightmare cries
his pain lost

lost in the icy fury of my mind

Down, down came the walls
one long day
Glad, glad am I
to feel
that sweet
hugely sad boy
looking this way
now
playing
in the heart
of my stride
his shy slenderness
now smiling
so deep and wide

So Solid This Does Seem

So solid this does seem
so firmly framed
and named
too here to be a dream
or so it does appear
until once again
unraveling
losing shape
and adding
depth

Eyes behind my eyes
open without a thought
as half-blind I
crawl out of
the stand-alone debris
that a breath or so ago
called itself me

The words sink
sink like forgotten dreams
sink like lead fists
through oceans of cloud
sink like post-crisis sighs
sink like bait
for deep-sea wonders
sink, sink out of sight
until what they describe
rises bright
and dripping bare
looking at itself
through my
undreaming eyes
seeing what's hidden
undisguised

Life's a Near-Death Experience

Wandering through
what we've made
of ourselves
we are still not
all that far away
from realizations
like the one
uncorked by
deeply considering
that the chains
we adopted
while alive
remain unless
shed
before
our death

What happens
after we die
is what's happening
right now
we are dying to
to truly live
dying to give
our gifts
dying to fully bloom
before our final winter
leaving nothing
in our wake
but what
really matters
recognizing
right to our core
that Life is
a Near-Death Experience

When I'm My True Size

Big sky stretching me wide
don't know what's gotten
into my stride
stony path
hugging this green rise
carrying me running
loose and long
and isn't it fitting, isn't it fine
to leave the known behind

Big sky bloody-gold
with forever's birth-cries
don't know why
it's still such a surprise
when I'm my true size
carrying me past
my past
and isn't it fitting, isn't it fine
to leave the familiar behind

Big sky holding me free
don't know what's
erased my history
this wrinkled land
rising to meet my feet
a long uphill and sweat
rinses out my eyes
and isn't it fitting, isn't it fine
to leave what's done behind

Big sky packed with Mystery
don't know why
it's now home for me
each moment already
in scattering embers
and isn't it fitting, isn't it fine
to leave tomorrow
so far behind

Plantation Whips

Plantation whips slice open
the cotton-picking day
laying crimson hieroglyphics
across dark skin
She bends
cradling every cry heard or not
She bends
her deeper tears seen by none
She bends
knowing her labor's just begun

Plantation whips hiss through
the sweating air
lashing the life out
of an unseen shadow
She weeps
seeing her children crushed low
She weeps
seeing her man gelded daily
She weeps
feeling hate eating her away

Plantation whips laying down
stars and stripes
on those who just don't know
their place
and also on those that do
just in case
She watches
her eyes flooded with sorrow
She watches
seeing her man cut low
and swinging high

She watches
chained beneath a burning sky
Africa rises in her dreams
hazy and green
bleeding
under a darkened sun

jammed into slave ships
headed for worse
oversize pain dulled
by nightmare chains
plantation whips falling
in a long black rain

She waits
seeing her unborn grandchildren
playing far away
on some far distant day
She waits
knowing she is soil
for their breakaway
She waits
growing wiser
with her dying
She waits
singing O all my children to come
rise, rise up from me
rise, rise up from me
I wait for you
now
and at the end of history

Heart-Anger

Your rage storms the breath
empties the stands
jump-starts the room
pours through the walls
a fiery blast from both belly
and heart
heat and light working as one

Your rage also weeps
drawing from those
within reach
a sudden softness
greening overgrazed eyes
and hidden hollows

Your eyes both yours and ours
pools of compassionate fury
your voice a summons
to wake up
exactly and fully now!

Not just release this rage
but holy fire and baptism
fueling needed stands

Your voice burns bright
then settles
into soft embers
Silence moves in
takes over
your whole body smiling
your tender immensity
inviting us
into truer lands
where anger and love
go hand in hand

All These Spilling Words

All these papered words
hanging in space
skewered
by gravity
pinned down
by what
they're trying to
pin down
bleached blank
by the light
that hatches them

All these spilling words
leapfrogging
over each other
so busy
making meaning
in already-shattered
dreams
reducing the Unknown
to a concept

Gazing into
the forever wild
glimpsing
what cannot
be seen
at the edge of being
already at home
with all
we've been
and will be
all the breaking
apart
and breaking
open

Coming Through the Gates

Coming through
the fabled doors
legs a bronzed blur
heels a winged delight
gates inlaid
with divine dreams
storybook clouds
piled dark
and boiling bright
blue burns the night
trembling with
so much to put right

Coming through
a deeper door
skinned to the core
longing passing pride
off drops the armor
off falls
the epic headgear
ablaze is
the root of fear
the supreme dreamer
closer than near

Coming through
a vaster door
heart rising through
resurrected eyes
flesh earth and stars
mind cloudless sky
cradling
broken cities'
concrete cries
Death's not
the final goodbye

Greener Than Green

The ground plunges up
darkly padded
to meet — embrace —
my bare feet
crushed lemon balm rushing
from my fingertips'
tiny greenish stain
deep into my brain — sudden scentuality —
bouquets of melissa
bursting above my palate

The softly flickering rain —
pure caress
soil a ragged and burnt
shade of dark
plumply edged with
neon indigo flowerbeds
in greener than green
reality-exposing scenes
bloom-sagging vines bending
squeezing me tight
densely purpled scent

blitzing my skull with light

The soil sings
muted backup
for what stirs and
stretches below it
pale tubes of sunlight
stripe the garden

And it all begins silently
and ecstatically screaming
screaming so soft and so deep
screaming and screaming
the sap, the nectar,
the bursting life
all the reaching green
green, green, so green
soaked in green

My blood rushes
brakeless and hugely awake
through my roots
branches and trunk
fleshing out
the pale lilac-fringed blossom
atop my spine
blood-gold petals opening
the once-soft place
atop my head
while the earth plunges
up through my breathing feet
the breeze stained with lavender
and traces of stormy sea
and through my waking eyes
the gardener gazes
silently crying for this
no more than this
quietly working
in even quieter bliss

The Flowers of Disappointment

Lonely are the flowers of disappointment
Who picks them, loves them
cradles their scent?
Who sees their shy petaling?
In our ordinary daily unsung grief
we come undone in
so many ways
not seeing
beneath the breakage
bits of upstart green
minute missiles
breathing open

our too solid ground

So many upflung buddings
emerald lips aquiver
some become flowers of hope
some of disappointment
How seduced we are
by hope's bright flowers
romancing tomorrow
while rejecting
disappointment's flowers
withdrawing from their fragrance
yet it's that very scent
that reminds us
of a place where entrapping dreams
must shatter
where what really matters

cannot help but matter

Disappointment, unrejected
embraces me
its touch cool
unadorned
sobering
but is it what I want?
I go for more than asking —
disappointment's gift
is rooted not in questions

but in something much
closer to home.
Disappointment bleeds
through my dreams
humble and secretly green
interrupting me
disrobing my trance
the torn fabric
not something
to repair
but to see
with eyes
for which
disappointment
is not disappointing

Somewhere Past the Edge

Somewhere
past the edge
there's a place
with no name
I'll meet you there
I'll be wearing
my latest face
though I know
it may disappear
as soon as I let
you in

Somewhere
past the edge
there's a place
owned by none
but belonging to all
I'll find you there
I'll be leaning
on my crutches
secretly waiting for you
to light the match
feeling the flames
already wrapping me

Somewhere
past the edge
there's a place
with no history
I'll greet you there
home sweet home
the Holy Deep
filling every room
your smile saying
nothing to fear
everything's
right here

Notes from the Abyss

When what
is happening
is not
what is happening
and the ground
is nothing
but quicksand
and familiarity
vanishes
eating our maps
there come
rippings
in broad daylight
fissures
in the twilight
just big enough
to squeeze
through
but only if we
take nothing with us

You want me to stop
speaking in riddles
but the final detox
includes being
at home
with paradox

The Feeling of Being

Before thought, feeling
Before feeling, sensation
Before sensation, presence
Before presence, this

Before persona, soul
Before soul, this
birthing us
out of the blue
not yet separating
journey and goal
not yet broken enough
to be truly whole

Before now, a deeper now
Before time, this
never not already here
older than fear

Feeling is the first
and last tongue
revealing more
than can be said or sung

Feeling is
relational electricity
rendering us
capable of intimacy

The feeling of Being
pervades us
whatever the scene
whatever the dream
wherever we may be
our every emotion
both sail and ocean

Perception Reception

My attention flips
through optical data —
raindrop-bombarded
puddles
with jiggling sunset rims
on an asphalt pause
in a potholed alley
one puddle half a hand wide
sheds its name and frame
softly cutting through
my assumptions
that I know
what I'm actually seeing

What's seen starts holding
less attention
than the act of seeing
peekaboo slivers of other-light
slip in behind my eyes
immune to retinal lust

I see, says blind me
reaching for his latest lenses
misunderstanding
the entire spectacle
I glimpse what makes
more than sense
while my mind eases
into speechless space
my attention more
on presence
than perception
no longer minding
sensory deception
as it seeks to
improve the reception

Discobolus

Discobolus — ancient companion
poised upon your pedestal
of ambition
and petrified fire
frozen in a shapely crouch
packed with frozen desire
ever prepared to
further coil and unfurl
and let fly
your stone discus
watching it arc up
up and away
leaving no trace
in the laureled sky

You are stone yet you feel
hints of inner cracking
secretly awaiting
the bursting
of your untouched center

Discobolus — containing
all the crushed years
when hurling a discus
was my highlight reel
my adolescent
stab at immortality

Discobolus — gloried ancestor
something below
your pitted surface
yearns to unwind
yearns to awaken
beyond your design
to breathe and grieve
Something within
is cracking your hidden heart
aching to leave
your protection
your solitary perfection

Pilgrims at the Crossroads

Getting sicker
with each new cure
clearcutting today
to secure tomorrow
sidestepping a grief
beyond sorrow
not seeing beneath
all the fury and fuss
the crushed yet leafy reach
of an emerging us

Pilgrims are we
all too often tied up
in well-educated knots
and cultural headlocks
our sky then no
more than the ceiling
of our loftiest thought

Pilgrims stalled
at the crossroads
missing what's more secure
than security
more moral
than morality
more us than we
can imagine

Fear is the threshold
and also
the ticket home
when we cease
turning away
stop waiting
holding our fear close
cradling in our hands
the dragon's heart

Stranger at the Gate

When young and on the road
I'd dream of a great future
but my history
remained behind the scenes
directing me
more than I thought
however novel my days
the old repossession blues
keeping me in the loop —
another spin of the wheel
trying to outlast
my past
cards face up
one-eyed kings wild
my trying to be
someone really special
obscuring what was
pulling the strings

Down the tubes I again go
implanted in a mouthless hello
thrust into the bloody
marrow of rude arrival
explanations just confetti
aflame in a cosmic storm

But here's something
upstaging my mind
my dying flesh
lit by its blooms
all my self-making
devoured once again
Hello to the stranger
at the gate
your face in one hand
mine in the other
erased
ready again

Making More Than Sense

Dying the body
undying the love
again we enter these rooms
of longing and promise
through lovers' dying cries
through resurrected goodbyes
through lagoons of seductive night
through all the recycled
shock and fright
pausing to rest
in the fiery dark
of an unsleeping eye

Dying the body
undying the love
dating a deeper time
outshining its every design
and how the passages
pulse and gleam
with the
long-awaited rendezvous
our need to know
moaning blue
so very old
so very gone
in the incandescence
of holy dawn

Love feasts on us with us
until we can no longer
stand apart
from the already open secret
of our awakening heart

Swinging in a Locket of Mind

Oak trunks darkly clad in ivy
root his still sleepy gaze
leafless branches
sprawling out

like muddy
prehuman stick-figures
like summer-hungry
children's bony arms

waving in dawn's
dirty-yellow light
skinny sharply angled
muted contortions
providing a
fractured framing
not only for the jagged
blue wind
but for the secret ache
behind his glance

Tattered birdsong thin and shrill
embroidering the winter chill

The lonely face of a long-ago self
floats across the window
almost transparent
a half-fractured eggshell
with no mouth

The night's dreams
drift nearby
a sprawl of warped
shimmering rectangles
spilling too much
to remember
vapors of would-be meaning
flee through the glass
elude his sudden grasp
riddled and cut into

disappearing pieces
by the daylight

And still
a larger dream
holds him tightly
enraptured
dumbly captured
swinging in a locket of mind
ivy-bound and mute
assuming a wooden reach

Such a busy still life
such a narrowly framed hustle
such a stranglehold
of mental muscle
his face a smeared window
bound to its shutters
his oaken torso
dreaming
of luminous axes
biting right to heartwood
bloody sap
tracing new horizons
surrounded by windowless sky
and a suddenly green
backyard
that at last
makes him
cry out
the long-denied goodbye

Explaining Nothing

To transcend yourself
be yourself

Life makes sense
once we stop
trying
to make it
make sense

We are dying
to fully live
entering
a love older
than creation
a love that empties
our mind
a love that is
its own sun
our bodies
a marriage
of gravity and
unbroken light
explaining nothing
and recognizing
everything
leaving us
where we've
always been
in every
possible scene

Every Face

Every face
a roadmap
but who will read
the hidden lines?
Every face
an open sky
but who will cradle
the clouds?
Every face
the Supreme
in unique bloom
but who will see
the difference
between the eyes?

Wingprints brushing
away the sky
dirty dishes
in sudsy embrace
tiny moments
suddenly vast
none of it
holding still
because none of it
is a something
built to hold still

Every face
a saga
of weave and twist
a personalized intersection
of then and now
as well as
the Supreme
in cameo
tales in every line
even as we
lean toward
outgrowing our design

But Still Mattering

Not only does it all matter
but remains at the edge
of being already shattered
less than atomized dust
scattered in far memory

Let the words
shed their meaning
until what
they point to
rises bare and alight
amidst the fast-mixing ripples
the smallest of the small
packed with the presence
of the vast
each arising
passing so very fast
but still mattering
requiring for its birthing
all that ever was

We're in a
remarkable position
no matter
what our condition
the frontier everywhere
words evaporating — just like us
consumed
by the aura
of a faraway fireball
singing traces
of personified song
leaving nothing
but what's been here
all along

Traveling Was I

In alleys of long-ago longings
overgrown with disowned pain
crowds of would-be me's
wandered loose
trying to turn a profit
from the rubble
spawning new batches
of survival schemes
shrinkwrapped in
the same old dreams

In ancient arenas
a youth sprinted hard
sun-dappled and fleet
before phantom crowds
stone discus awaiting
his bronzed touch and spin
plundered temples
entombing him
in bloody marble
sacred circles holding
his last breath

Traveling was I
through voluptuous wastelands
bound in mind-knots
dreamy wraps, steamy pitstops
caught in the neon ricochet
of overloaded thoughts
until my trance did break
and in my dreams I lay awake
being in body
what I was in spirit

No resurrected achievements
enthroned here
just this wild grace
that nothing in particular
can replace
since it wears every face

A Deeper Surrender

No fighting this endless
perishing any more
don't need
to have things
be as before
the lines of my face
speak of more
than my years
my body no longer minding
my mind's fears

No righting this sinking ship
don't need a longer-floating trip
my hands no longer
obediently bail
avoiding death is
the surest way to fail

No more relighting
these old candles
my heart keeps seeing
endless emptiness
while breaking open
to hold all of this

No igniting
what's gone to ashes
don't need to redo my crashes
my dying flesh brightens
as it ages
No fighting this endless
dying any more
my hands expand
reach out far
and wide then return
the circle newly whole
dying into a deeper life

Memory

When memory becomes
a self-erasing screen
and today drifts by
almost unseen
the shell housing our core
sometimes cracks a little
and time, time leaks away
unlatching gates
we'd locked long ago
dropping us
deeper into now

This is a passage
not bound to our years
don't bother
asking for maps
just take the time
to take the ride
knowing it's fine
to daydream
and also to scream
as we white-knuckle
the corners
don't try to pin the view
sightseeing can be blinding

Settle deeper into now
not bothering to ask how
Just take the ride
until there's
very little left
between what's outside
and what's inside —
less even than
the echo
of what you were
while doing time
in your solid mind

His Such a Familiar Land

When the sun bulged
atop the stubbled hills
cloud-light blushing
away the day
a lone man
long past his middle years
squatted by the riverside
on a pitted lip of dark stone
his thoughts but shipless river-froth
his gaze unfocused but steady

In the thickening twilight
he sits undisturbed
looking through
unthinking eyes
his voice the river's
his breath the sky's
his such a familiar land

his an ageless stand

By the river's edge he sits
lily pads cupping
shards of moonlight
wild dog-packs crying
behind the fading hills

Again and again
we have killed him
our shadow stained
with his blood
and still here he is
offering no perfect path
no final rung
no nirvanic immunity
but only the half-written
poem of us
our uncovered need
sprouting new depths
our eyes suddenly
awash with whitewater

our necessary leap
vastly ashiver
spilling our mind
into the river
the night sky unveiled
the Great Mystery obvious
as it's incomprehensible

And here's the shadow
of a shadow by the riverside
taking us where the river
begins and ends
his such a
familiar land
his such a
reality-unlocking stand

Incandescent Ice

Draw forth your thunder, my drummer
stick stroke inflame blur
coax your drums
until their skin
moans gallops hums
spreading the passion-beats
riding the speeding pulse
beating it
into incandescent ice
wild as it's precise
rocketing through the roof
of what's unborn
blasting through every
tindrum sideshow
until the room loses its floor
ceiling and walls
leaving nothing but this

This music flames through
what's hidden
luring forgotten songs
from weary faces
pulling me past its edges
past its design
freeing me from what I took to be mine
This music turns me inside out
skinning my confusion
disarming my doubt

Everyday life but a solidified dream
its music a shadow of this music
its melodies but variations
of a broken note
this music obeys a much deeper beat
not being stuck on endless repeat
heard without ears
sound within sound
its heartbeat
our deepest ground

Neuroses Out Getting a Tan

The city sparkles —
an outbreak of wobbling tinsel
across the milky blue flats
of the sun-slicked bay
its concrete canyons flimsy
as barbequed thoughts
but who really cares
now that summer's here?
Beach-chatter willowing
over the dimpled sands
neuroses out getting a tan

Unzipped days stretch out
drunk with light
baked beauty slaloming
through beached flesh
but who really cares
now that summer's here?
Let profundity wait for a chillier spell
days blurring
into an eternal weekend

Thought I'd something deeper to say
but my fingertips keep sticking to the keys
my voice surfing away
upon the lazy blue air

What we are
is never out of season
even when we act without reason
but who gives a damn
now that summer's here?
Birds embroider the cloudless sky
children bicycle the streets away
out the door we go
beachward bound
armed with towels and breezy dreams
looking for a place to lay down
beneath the summertime sun
and cook
until we're done

My Stride Not Yet Mine

Hummingbirds unstitch
dawn's dense mist
exposing bowlegged cliffs
backing a boulder-fringed
rendezvous of ocean
and Vancouver Island rainforest
It was 1976 and far
from I was I
trying to get more of
what I didn't need
looking all about
for a way out
without having gone in
walking the ocean's edge
day after solo day
slowing to gaze at broken shells
and plump anemones
in tidepools awaver
with fragments of my face

I'd a quarter-mile
of undisturbed beach
Eagles otters deer bears my company
sea-lions roaring midnightly
near where I slept
my roar a frozen fist
trying to emigrate
to my mind
my grief bundled and gagged
but never far behind

Alone was I
stranded along that wild edge
Aching with what I was housing
pacing along my rainy shore
trying to outwalk and
outtalk my pain
gathering shells
lining them up
on the windowsill

of the tiny cabin
I'd built from beach wood

My stride not yet mine
my dissatisfaction not yet an ally
my gypsy ways entrapping me

There was another shore
unseen and unknown
its echoes muffled
inside my shadow
I was so near
but could not yet hear
though I knew
I could be much freer

Two months later I left
my cabin an abandoned playpen
my shells still adorning the windowsill
my stride not quite so far
from being mine

Before Meeting Diane

Paths strongly interlocked
may before death still part
despite the protests
of attached hearts —
sometimes separation is
what love requires
no matter how compelling
the mutual desires

Now we've the company
of a goodbye
we no longer can deny
you with your view
and me with mine
entering the winter of our time
this distance in which
we are taking root
this apartness we cannot refute
I step through our leaving
already having done
most of my grieving

Our bond seeded with its ending
beyond any kind of mending —
something never really fit
there wasn't enough
ground and calling for it

I step into the end of our time
welcoming the tomorrow
of your absence
welcoming this parting
that separates
what needs to be separated

Now silence and silence alone
says what must be said

The Green Longing

Clouds acurl and sky a dimpling pearl
plumtrees blossomed all around
robins tugging at the dewbright dawn
yanking pink spaghetti from the ground

Emerald buddings
tender and ashiver
lips starting to open
moistly aquiver
Spring has burst
splitting Winter's seams
greening seedling dreams

Spring pours through the stiff damp
breaking Winter's knotted clamp
bringing forth its green arts
visual music for awakening hearts

So easy not to fully feel
so easy to disconnect
making a virtue out of recoil
locked into shallow soil

False Spring smiles from glossy covers
featuring the masks of fashionable lovers
marketing notions of rejuvenation
and distraction from unpleasant sensation

So much grasping
at plastic embraces
so much invested in giving Winter
Springtime faces
and what a sad and broken run
it is from all the pain
a flight through skies
without real sun or rain

But a remedy for Winter
Spring is not
despite the popularity
of contrary thoughts
seedling wonders honed by

Winter's icy hands
rising renewed from such darkened lands

Spring asks only for
a letting go of the old
asking that new life
be allowed to unfold

What madness to let anything divorce us
from Spring's wild green forces —
the bare longing surging green so green
in even the most battered being

The green longing
beyond every high
alive behind
even the hardest eye
the green longing
within and all about
pulsing through
even the thickest doubt
shining through both
seen and unseen

Bus Station Meditation

Greyhound station a long time ago —
glistening blues zigzagging
up and down shadow-free
dirty white walls
housing the stink of diesel
and travel fears
plastic flowers atremble
on the midnight cafeteria table
overseeing someone's
deserted dinner

Soon my bus will lumber in
and swallow me
and my sledgehammering headache
cocooning me out of
this massive casket

It was one of those nasty half hours
denied postcard glory
my forehead aflame
my nerves doing double time
the table tipping with
my head-heavy elbows

My breath suddenly drops its suitcases
I stop dreaming of nicer places

I take a seat in my pain
my suffering fades
my thoughts but dried scraps
at the edge of my plate.
Nothing else to do while I wait
released from the tyrannies of bus-longing
dropping down through
the timetabled buzz
parachuting down
into my everywhere ground
sitting easier with
the garbage and the glitter
the crippled glance, the cocky stance

the fluorescent hustle, the grime and bustle
the cold grey rumblings
of this hulking concrete cave
this transfer womb packed
with promised zoom
my still buzzing headache
inviting me
not to fix its pain
but to sit with it for a bit
until it and I
are on the same side
ready for
the needed ride

A Deeper Adios

(Written right after my father's death in 2009)

Horses, horses, horses — thoroughbreds all
munching on just-mowed grass
heads swaying in steamy stables
sprinting in blurs of hard-leaning power
saddled with your
racehorse dreams of glory
horses, horses, horses — your first love
more your children than I ever was
one hand on the reins
the other on what could be
the boy in you gripping the mane
riding full-speed bareback
Aiming for big wins
at the racetrack
until the man got saddled by other needs

Horses, horses, horses
on your walls and in your dreams —
mine too when I was young
fields and fields of horses
straining to be unbridled
to soar over every fence
leaps you wouldn't take

The last time I saw you
your mind had a mind of its own
your memory had shed its grip
You were doing time in dementia's
no-one's land
fiercely vise-gripping my hand
as we were saying our usual goodbyes
and there was a tiny sideways
wildness in your eyes
something unbroken and young
something galloping free
just for a blurring moment —
a long unbridled moment when
what was looking through
your eyes at me

was looking back at you
through mine
just for the slightest fraction
of a speeding moment —
in which our difficulties
as father and son
receded before something vast
something unsaddled by any name

You and I were not close
never had been
I grew up knowing
you didn't like me
but the last time I saw you
we met for a bareback
sliver of a moment
me on my wild steed
you on yours
saying a silent goodbye

Horses, horses, horses
I remember being with you at the racetrack
six long decades ago
all the gleaming horses and parading excitement
jockeying for position
the high-strung smell
of stables and sweat
the snorting intensity
the promise of big payoffs
staining the air

The racetrack announcer always
wrapped up a day of racing
with "Adios, amigos!"
and so now I say to you a deeper adios
may you ride into the grassy
mesas of the Great Mystery
and may you ride unsaddled and unbridled
until horse and rider operate as one
beneath an undying sun

One More Nap

(For my mother, who died in 2021)

Did you ever think
when you were
not yet twenty
pursued by
your husband-to-be
that you'd one day
turn ninety-six
looking out over a farm
that you didn't choose
crosswords calling to you
from inside
hayfields calling
from outside
daily naps
a consistent delight
your days now
(with your husband gone)
like one long day
with no pressure to please
no more dinners to make
just getting through
another day

All the years gazing
out your kitchen window
at fields and fields of horses
over-adapting to
your husband's world
your dreams deep
in the background
making no sound

Motherhood came early
five very different children
all the library books
you brought home
feasts for me
sanctuaries I loved
how patiently you listened

When I so very young
insisted that
you had to read
all my Tarzan books

You and my father
had little in common
I watched you endure
your narrow world
wanting to protect you
from him
and hating myself
for not being able to
even as I watched you
always putting him first

I couldn't wait
to leave the farm
I dove into a very different life
you heard my adventures
staying put but enjoying them
like a good book
telling me that you didn't
know how I did it

Ninety-six years
inching toward
one last nap
into which you dissolve
without any fuss

Uprooted Until I Find Truer Ground

The shoreline pulls me closer
sand hard-pressed
shimmering wide
tucked under sheets
of slumping sky
surf's thunder
and a deeper thunder
within and all around
and I'm ground
ground to sand
drowned in torrents
of broken cloud
spilling shattered
against another shore
my blood-rise the ocean's roar

Bonelessly I slow
walk the rippling sand
sea-gossamer making islands
out of my feet
I let the wind
have my many faces
letting the sky swallow
my ambition

Something whispers:
give me your hidden fear
something sings:
give me your shield and spear
something shouts:
give me your despair
something calls:
let me electrify your step
brighten your stride
unbuckle your pride
undam your heart
free your belly and throat
burst through
your skull and ribcage
looking through your flesh and eyes

until you know
without thinking
know it's you looking through
everything at everything
no longer lost in your roles
recognizing the Real
in every scene

And now my body
is no longer just mine
now all my bodies sing and weep
rise and fall —
the body unbound
the body bright, the body dense
the dream-body, the daily grind body
the body doing time
the body shattered
the body reborn, the body Divine
the embodiment of every possibility
flesh of mud and stars
flesh of gravity
flesh of joy, flesh of history
body after body, body within body
all speaking their mind
in infinite tongues

I arise both as cloud
and endless sky
cradling my own birth cries
this sagging sky pulled taut
temples by pearly pillars of light
broken waves pouring
through all I see

This I walk, letting the day have me
uprooted until I find truer ground
the Mystery making itself plain
and I've nothing
nothing to attain
as I ride
this wave
of endless ocean

And We're Also the Flesh

Life outlives us
yet we are Life —
don't just chew on this
as metaphor
it is and also
something more
something to bite
into so fully
that the juices of what
matters most
stain what we're wearing —
about which
I'd surely speak
If my words were not
already fading
sea-gossamer
out of breath
upon the waiting shore
and if I was not already eaten
by what cannot
be said
beaten into
endless transparency
while rocking
in the cradle
of stories that cannot be told

We are Light
and we are Darkness
and we are also the flesh
be it of mud or stars
born and torn
between the two
yet already the One
inseparable
from the broken many

POEMS TO DIANE

Airport Blues I (April 2005)

Silver arrow
piercing the night
Los Angeles a fiery grid
far below
I'm strapped-in
under artificial light
flying north
while my heart flies south

I find your van
on the freeway
and sit on the empty
seat beside you
touching your cheek
your shining hair
I know you know
that I'm there
sadsweet forever's
in your smile
knowing we've only
a short while

So little time
to be together
but time enough
to flesh out forever
time enough to live
a love sublime
your presence running wild
inside me
until all that remains
is undressed Mystery
When you sing
my blood takes wing
When you sing
I touch everything

Freed by this meeting
so raw and sure
this recognition

so deep and pure —
so much had to happen
before this
all the wandering
the trying, the dying
and into the heart
of our longing we go
I its wordsmith
and you its songstress

You're touching me
in many rooms
each alive
with full-blooded knowing
again I kiss your throat
so slender and
so very tender
back, back falls your head
my poetry all
over the place
Silence sings
between your sighs
deepening the bare
beauty of your cries
When you sing
my blood takes wing
When you sing
I touch everything

Airport Blues II (September 2005)

So again — again! — we parted
letting the pain
sweep through
knowing it was coming
didn't make it any easier

Blazing sea of clouds below
clear superblue
skies up here
and I'm raining inside
our parting
ripping me wide

We found a half-private corner
airport crowds streaming past —
being undistracted
by them was easy
letting you go
was not

We stood tenderly trembling
in our little concrete corner
wrapped in our shared heart
knowing we'd very soon
be apart
I leave
but am not leaving

I carry our parting kiss
up the bustling stairs
leaning into the buzzing hustle
looking back at
the space between us

Beloved, take my hand
let's travel through every land
until separation
cannot keep us apart
and we are
what beats our heart

What Then Shall I Call You?

Not just in love's sobering swoon
but in all we do
you and I are without name
to each other.
What then shall I call you?

I know your true name
but for it there's no word
only this naked knowing
that speaks and sings of you
through all we are
and all we do

When navigating the daily grind
sometimes — rarely — I call you
by your everyday name
and how strange it sounds!
I know it's not
the one for you
for I remember
your true name
the one that has no word
but only the pure
feel of you
the way
you turn your head
and so happily
lean into me
as we windingly walk
hip to hip
joined right to the core
in the vastly liberating bondage
that full intimacy can be
the signature of your being
written everywhere in me
seen and unseen

Only This Love

In the deep
of your womanly wilds
and your sweetly compelling otherness
I am at rest
and homeward bound
You are my harbor and heartland
the ground
of my ground
my intimate in all we do
our no-exit mutuality
our baseline reality
our intimacy our odyssey

These waves we're riding
are the waves of which we're made
the waves for which we've prayed

Both together and alone
we stretch beyond the known
until we rest
in unbroken light
clearer than any insight
twin flames doing
whatever it takes
to hold and shine
through every heartbreak

This is love's doing
the love before the beginning
the love that expands
without thinning —
only this love can bend the light
only this love can hold all the history
only this love can contain every view
only this love can shape the light
shapes like you and me
transparencies unveiled
divinely detailed

My Solo Travels Are Done

Your face a landscape
my eyes love to wander
your gaze an oasis
for my gypsy ways
I've done time
in many places
running out of land
with nowhere to stand

Your face a familiar mystery
my hands and eyes
know by heart
your deep-awake
electric flesh
luminously entangled
with mine
transparent
to the divine
yet still so exquisitely personal
in this full-blooded
container for two
this fierce grace
holding all that we are

Your face an ever-eloquent territory
I have committed
to far memory
your naked
recognition of me
all the welcome I need

My solo travels are done
our shared heart my sun
as we together die
into the undying One
without forgetting
the broken many

Husband of Your Heart

This edgeless depth
we share
this fluid mutuality
so bare
this quick-kindling ecstasy
leaving us awake
and easy
in love's
ever-virgin eternity

We trade the slightest glance
and our flesh begins
to dance
soon an ocean
of conscious electricity
a communion
of sublime simplicity —
uncovering the one
through the two
again meeting
beyond what we knew

Your delight in my
newly shaved head
and in how I worded
what I just said
My delight in
your unwavering care
and in the familiar deep
of your gaze
is but part of
a very long list
that began long
before we first kissed

The more we blend
the more we don't end
the more we hold
what's dying
the more we're held

by the divine
expanding without thinning
to include each other
our only shared name
that of lover
I the husband
of your heart
you the wife of mine
long have we been apart
now we have our time
bound together
yet free
twin flames
of intimacy

This, This the Beauty

This silken glide
this succulent ride
this deepening dying
this joy beyond trying
this melting mutuality
this everwild commonality
this rupturing rapture
this, this which no telling
can capture
this pleasure
beyond pleasure
this depth none
can measure
this the heartland
of bliss
this the Holy Deep's
pure kiss
this, this the art
 that cannot be framed
this, this the beauty
 that cannot be named
this, this the love
 that cannot be contained

Hold My All in Yours

Long the seasons
of preparing have been
stretching for
the needed ripening
now you hold my
all in yours
as I hold yours in mine
can't count
all the doors
can't remember
all the dyings
but you, you I remember
I love this brief
but timeless rendezvous
and love that you
love it too
recalled
from head to toe
as into bare Mystery
we flow
in this heart-sealed
container for two
making room
for our true size
and the work
we were born to do
Our bond is without plateau
guiding us past
what we know
the wonders of the obvious
lining and lighting our path
with colors swaying
and pulsing bright
blossomings of
reality-unlocking arrival
bouquets of everfresh intimacy

And upon our shared palm
rest a few dying petals
still richly lit

appearing as distillations
of you and me
so purely and surely us
all dramatics aside
wrinkles, whitening hair
and all the fading
revealing everything
that is needed
through each tiny
immensely vivid moment
giving us enough time
to do what we must
no matter how
short the season

Reconnection

When the two are one
and the one
appears as the two
and details are not allowed
to block our view
and we don't reject
what's mute or broken
we're both contained
and unbound
occupying and stretching
love's frontier
disarming and outbreathing
our fear

Your touch easily
reaches my core
unraveling my knots
on the way
a love too real
to be spoken
easily occupying me
breathing me deep
breathing me here
breathing in all we are
Breathing out all we were
Holding both steady
and tender

Our shared time packed
with timely forever
abloom with what
nothing can sever

One glance and
what's needed
is said
one smile
and the distance
is shed
one tremor of disconnection

one breath of rejection
and my task is simple:
remember to remember
to see through
whatever seems to be
in the way
of my loving you
without delay
no matter how
dark the day
no matter what
my distractions
might say

Until Love's All My Body Can Say

In the long darkness
you again come to me
bringing needed rest
and sanctuary

The sky softly explodes
with dawn
clouds tinged
with my bleeding
I am emptied
but not gone
swept into the
far knowing of your song
surrounded by
my dreams' debris
approaching a geography
of care
where love only
deepens the mystery

I've fallen hard
once again
you catch me
in your gaze
and out spills
all my pain
until love is all
my body can say

I awaken more than
entwined with you
your all and mine
an uncommonly easy fit.
Freed are we through
this vessel for two
knowing we've
come far too far to quit

In the time beyond time
you come to me

reminding me of
our long-shared ground
as I pour into our
everfresh familiarity
my shape clearly cast
and unbound

I've fallen hard
once again
you cradle me
in your gaze
and out spills
all my pain
and the knowing
the knowing that overflows
the joy, the joy that speechlessly knows
all the dyings
large and small
that bring me alive

Undressing Me from the Inside

Your eyes endlessly here
endlessly warm and wide
undressing me
from the inside

Your touch effortless balm
effortlessly attuned and awake
holding me where
I once did break

Your love surrounds me
ceaselessly kindling my core
inviting me to leave
this manmade shore

And again I freefall
through all
that we share
the holy deep
clearly everywhere

With you I both
take root and fly
fleshing out both
stand and sky
I reach across
the sheets for you
crossing more than time
in the crucible
and sanctuary
of our deepening mutuality

Further Baring Our Shared Heart

We touch and our
flesh parts
further baring
our shared heart
the smallest shift
the lightest touch
undoing universes
of solidity
giving us
deepening ground
for our ever-evolving bond
so nakedly personal
spiritually full-blooded
from toe to crown
immersing us
in a rare intimacy
a sacred yes
and mutuality
that both binds
and frees

Wherever I touch you
I touch all
that you are
while recognizing
what I am anew

My hand cups
the side
of your face
drinking in its angles
its shapely softness
hearing the stirring
of tales too old
to be told
eloquent expanses
of pure knowing
eluding any translating

My hand is no longer

just a hand
I'm touching something
so vast and sweet
something so
boundlessly deep
something cradling
our total mutuality
until we are more
mystery than history
never so alive
in our intimacy
our uncommon bond
seasoning and freeing us
even as we feel
the breath
of our death
brightening every room
of our remaining time

Our Shared Ripeness

I awaken
with your imagined absence
wrapped around
and further ripening me
I feel your death and mine
closer than
my next breath

Not that I mind this
it carries me even
closer to you
until your breath is mine
quietly pulsing
with our living
and dying

Our late-life dance
overflows with its ending
brightened by its
remaining slice of time
and the abundance
of our shared ripeness
There's so much
to bring forth
so many gifts ready
to be shipped
a few more decades
would be great
but there's much
we can now do
with just enough juice
to carry it through

Beloved we are so ripe
the riches of our
shared labor
now so ready
to be harvested
dropping down into
our rising hands

already on their way
to waiting lands
no ladders needed
for the picking
the weighted branches
bend low
all their bounty
falling, falling —
all the ripeness
of a full life
a life intimate
with its passing

Beloved we are so ripe
our bodies so
clearly aging
a mix of gravity
and unbroken light
cradled in our shared heart
our offerings
now our final fruits
our gifts to all
shared in full

And my gift to you?
Living in endless love
with you and through you
until all that remains
is what's been here
all along
we its pure melody
twin notes
of its song

Meeting Me in the Holy Deep

I see you
holding your pain
and the pain of the world
see you cradling its cries
see you tending its broken wings
I see you
looking this way
meeting me in the holy deep
You are my harbor and sky
beloved sharer
of my heartland

Our mutual history
without beginning
our bodies thinning
alight with all the dying
the music playing us
the notes not needing
any translation
Every goodbye
deepens the tale
ripeness staining
whatever we wear
allowing ever fuller care

Things are getting creakier
bones taking their time
our moves slower
our height lower
the ground closer
our step losing its spring
but not its reach
Leaves raggedly dance down
coloring remembered winds
branches stiffen
sap shrinks
but how the roots fly!

Things are winding down
as they must, so we're told

but there's no sinking
and less and less thinking
Fabled rocking chairs
await us on vanishing porches
final breaths of dreamt deaths
but have we ever been so alive?
The moment trembles, bends
with the weight of light
gratitude the core practice
darkness shining bright

I see you
back home again
singing loving harmony
with everything you are
I am never other
than with you
whatever our form
whatever our dance
whenever our time
whoever we may be

The daily grind
the business of mind
the dying bodies
the heartbreak and glory
the pain and all the stories
do not separate us
This we know
and this we are
brought together again
me downstairs writing this
you upstairs cleaning up
the snow is still falling
a ragged crystal shawl
cradling our house
with plump silence
cradling the soft fire within
the mutual warmth of us
I stop writing
I see you seeing me
our love
does the rest

Since I First Heard Your Voice

It's been a long stretch
Since you reached across
a thousand miles
and ages of history
to reintroduce
yourself to me
that first touch
of your voice
singing the echo
of a hello
through the phone lines
easing me greatly

I'd been without you
for so long
that I didn't remember
I'd forgotten
I still like to linger
on the first sound of you
I hear it now
and I curl up in it
like a lion unbound
from his wandering
there's that first
sound of you
music without trying
to be music
and all the rest of
you follows
fresh amidst all the weathering
the eloquent
elegance of your face

I see you
seeing me
my armor shed
what's left
steps into you
Into the field of us
both of us undressed

while our bodies
creak in the winter
the chill of a thinning sun
warmed by the fire
of our thousands of days
and all our ways
of moving through
our last chapter

One Touch From You

One touch from you
transports me
to my core
your gaze
held for just a few seconds
fills with what's deeper
than depth
and all the great moments
of our well-seasoned dance
hold me in an
avalanche of kindness

The end of our final chapter
is already speaking to us
deepening our care
for each other
pointing us to
what outlives death
while reminding us
of the wonder
of each newly arriving breath
hummingbirds visiting
your flowers
watching you watch them
is such a delight
our aches and pains
leavened with insight
our shared heart
holding so many
our time
overflowing
with unspeakable
recognition

Which of Us Will Die First?

Which of us will die first?
We talk of this
at odd times
the moment flares
bare and bright
across the dinner table
or somewhere else

What will the one
who is left do?
no sure answers here
other than a bedrock knowing
that's okay
with not being okay
how easily we shift
into marveling
at what happens
in just one day
for most of our days

So much to navigate
as we sail into
tomorrow's wilds
our horizons near and far
pouring into our shared being
like holy melting gold
finding new ground
and fresh color
in the boundless
ease of our gaze

The mysteries of the obvious
illuminating our days
another shared breath
does its rounds
if you die before me
I will recognize you everywhere
and if I die before you
I will be everywhere
you look

inside and outside
our aching and our love
holding us
as we come apart
undone
yet respun
the end
that's in sight
is not the end

Another Smoky Summer

Another smoky summer
I was insisting it's a bummer
when you with great care
told me that my complaining
was nearing the threshold
of being draining
how right you were!
we even bet
that I'd keep fussing
I took the challenge
haven't complained since
even though the smoke
is still hanging around
reducing the sun
to a bleached potato
you have stepped into me
many times
leading with your heart
not soft, not hard
but bedrock real
thank you for again
interrupting me
helping me get back on track
when I've derailed myself

No resting on elderhood's wise perch
for me. There's a deeper resting
In our shared gaze
as we ease into our edge
we're walking slower now
the vehicles
need more and more care
but what fuels us
remains in ample supply
our final chapter expands
so much room
for so much more
which we will explore
be we in sun or smoke

Warm in The Winter of Our Days

I rest in your recognition of me
settling into the long
stretch of our history
your face softly cupped
in my hands
as I stand behind you
letting my touch
slow down
well-seasoned are we, feasting
on what we've
made of ourselves
warm in the cozy
winter of our days
our bones full of our heartbeat
new doors awaiting our reach

What dies and
what doesn't die
are not really so far apart
theirs is an endless dance
you and I know by heart
I rest in your recognition of me
feeling into what we are doing
behind the scenes
In travels glimpsed
like the gossamer
of some dusty dream
at memory's far edge
questions about final partings arise
the answer lies in our gaze
its radiance more than light
its surprise pure revelation
its welcome cupping our bond
pouring us into new lands

Outshining Our Decline

What your presence radiates
is love and
more than love
you recognize me
this I instantly see
as I see you
seeing me
we light up
across the dinner table
the winter dark
softly framing us
the poetry gets very simple
all the complexity
needing no explanation

Even when we're not connecting
We are still in connection
plugged in all the way
our deep dive
so present and so alive
including when we're exhausted
bending under the weight
of the daily grind
even as something else
shows up
outshining our decline

The poetry meanders
carving subtle channels
in our autumnal topography
my wordplay stumbles
my phrasing blurs
and we smile
our shared living
spilling its colors
out of which
we continue to arise
the mysteries of the obvious
calling us home

Eyes That Are More Than Your Eyes

Your undressed beauty
effortlessly radiates
through your every form
your everyday angelhood
and oracular
singleness of eye
both newborn and
from a time
preceding time
You sit before me
planted solid and true
your body smiling
your forehead an open gate
eyes that are more
than your eyes
tenderly stripping me down
to the barest basics
with such clear care
that I happily surrender
to the one seeing me like this
the one behind
the deepest door
the one who is
never other than you
whatever the place
no matter what I do
You abide on a throne
that's neither higher nor lower
getting closer than close to
reading without analysis
whoever is sitting
before you
unrehearsed words
emerging from you
bearing a power
that is not yours
but is yours to share
You are deeply at home
with connecting the dots
on every level

revealing a three-dimensional weave
from many times
times too easily forgotten
lost in the daily grind's mind
but no rush
no hurry from you
a timeless pool spreading
around you and me
into which you
do more than dip
amid opalescent
silver and blue
I marvel that we get
to be together
until one of us dies
dissolves in Mystery
and even then
who's to say
we still won't be together
in one form or another?
You are a sacred clearing
In which core matters
get translated
into something edible
or at least digestible
You are a heart-medium
an ego-free oracle
my beloved co-traveler
partner in all things
no matter what our age
your heart my homeland
You take and keep taking
your true seat
a deeply human angel
transmitting both message
and sanctuary
I take refuge in you
deep currents
of our communion
ushering me down
to home ground
big sky and all
the rest of it
in your gaze

Your 70th Birthday

You're having a late nap
and I'm looking out my windows
at a leafy emerald sea
we are starting again
happy for all the rain
we are returning
to old stomping grounds
taking perhaps our last stand
our final chapter
has more pages
than we thought
no matter what our years
doors behind doors
inviting us to pass through
our recognition
of each other
has no end
our cats laze
in the container
of us, their naps
curled into our days
thought I'd more to say
but this is all
that's left:
love and an ever-deeper love
rooting us in many lands
and endless sky
we walk heart-to-heart
through all the details
and what remains
when it's all gone
our death already here
deepening our living
just another door
nothing more
it doesn't matter
what you're saying
your presence
touches me in all places
and all times

Together Again

Together again
our final chapter
the richest read yet
pages turning themselves
the end just more mystery
just like our mutual journey
I love feeling you so near
wherever we may be
our communion
cannot be broken
only paused
countless years
pass in no time at all
we have shared roots
seen and unseen
ancient yet still green
we have shared sky
starlight unmasking us
revealing landscapes
older than history
the Mystery beckons
abiding in its own infinity
showing up as us
through all we do
this doesn't explain anything
but reveals everything
about which
we don't need to speak
although I now and again
try to wordsmith it
about which
you eloquently smile
as we let our days arise
infusing the hard ones
with deep care

remembering to remember
pages turning themselves
the upcoming end
not the end

Winter blooming bright
packed full of Spring
Birth and Death
bound together
a love beyond love
already here
cradling us
reminding us
awaiting us
unlocking Reality
as we further ripen
even as our bodies creak
and more easily tire
our shared bounty
gifted to one and all
our shared heart
still my sun

About the Author

Robert Augustus Masters, PhD, is a pioneering psychotherapist and group leader, relationship expert, and psychospiritual guide and trainer, with a doctorate in psychology.

He's also the author of many books — including *Transformation Through Intimacy*, *Spiritual Bypassing*, *Emotional Intimacy*, *To Be a Man*, and *Bringing Your Shadow out of the Dark* — and the audio program *Knowing Your Shadow*.

His intuitive, uniquely integral work blends the psychological and physical with the emotional and spiritual, with an emphasis on full-blooded embodiment and awakening, emotional authenticity and literacy, deep shadow work, and the development of relational maturity.

At essence, his work is about becoming more intimate with *all* that we are, in the service of the deepest possible healing, awakening, and integration.

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