A YEAR IN MANIFESTED EMPTINESS

Poems by Thomas Perez Jewell

December 2019
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poems

by

thomas perez jewell

The unnameable is the eternally real.
Naming is the origin
of all particular things.

Free from desire, you realize the mystery.
Caught in desire, you see only the manifestations.

Yet mystery and manifestations
arise from the same source.
This source is called Emptiness.

Emptiness within Emptiness
The gateway to all understanding.

Tao Te Ching

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Cover design & graphics
by

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to
e.l.f.

I do not know what it is about you that opens and closes
only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses
nobody not even the rain has such small hands
e.e.cummings

∞

Know then:
Form here is only emptiness
emptiness only form.
Form is no other than emptiness,
emptiness no other than form. . . .

The Heart Sutra
Timid and awkward
that moment
before our first kiss.
I met your averted eyes
and lip-curled smile
as if yes
on your lips had always been decided.

Welcome to twenty-one
in this lifetime:
On this birth event
how much do you remember your childhood traumas?
Even if the never was
did occur, would it bring more than you already are?

Celebrate your real self now; may you realize how whole your being is.
Let go of all those wishes for wanting what's always already so.

Eye to eye brown on green
World to World
What do you see when I am seeing you?

Teaching a feeling to be what you need?
Be the feeling.
Be what in itself is Empty.

You weaved your hair into a single pony-tail.
One cascading wave exposing your otherwise hidden skin.
How else would you frame those strengths that present themselves as delicate?

Bird songs return, return to the cold as if a dream:
awake, awoke, awaken to hear them be.
The frost not yet thawed as we walked in the woods through the chill of its shadows. Warmed by the centrifugal spin of our own making, interspersed with bursts from the sun through canopied trees.

The trickster with the hampster, who didn't what he did, frightened all the strangers to get what he couldn't give.

Life a seeming thing in a seamless reality--which one creates which? By whose kiss and intention do we become our beings?

What embodiments next will her elegance rest upon in this life's wanting need of touch.
11

Moon awakened
the sun
as yet.

Morning mist
filled emptiness.

12

Be calm my heart.
What in this life ever ends
how you want? Reality is not
what you think it is. Just this!
Just so! What confuses you then?
Perhaps some lack of control enters
the scene and reminds me just how
much control I lack?

Be at peace mind. Let go; let go!

Nothing is lacking here and now
but your surrender to this moment's
ultimate truth.

13

Witness to earth
from the moon:
A blue marble in
the void--
a perspective of our
world from
the outside with
a felt view of our own
interiors and
a mere inkling of its mysterious
genesis.

14

Learning of love by loving and not
being alarmed by a separation
that doesn't exist, by that
infinite ache that comes from your
perceived absence.

I used to plummet, body and soul,
into empty spaces, thinking
this feeling was the end
without realizing
what actually is.
A shadow not of our own making, 
at home yet invading the empty spaces:

Impulses and passions, virtues 
and values, we drink from them in

one another, but do we pick the fruit 
we consume or does the fruit pick us?

How we handle our dangling dilemmas decides, 

limb by limb, the futures we humans live 

into infinity.

What happens next to us 
when what's wanted happens:

Touching places we never 
thought we'd touch and tasting 
tastes from bitterness to sweet, 
yet in the aftertaste of what

we celebrated leaves us unsatisfied 
as if the gratitude we feel is 

being selfish?

As pleasure aches for more, 
it's so easy to forget that 
our form is emptiness and 
our emptiness is form. 

I can tell 
by the smile 
affixed to 
your face 
that you like 
the way I 
handled it, 
and dare 
I mention 
the wonderful 
way your 
world rests 
upon my axis.
I heard about your ending when I began this day.

What ends? Not even breath when breathed.

Who dies?

I ask as I breathe into a memory--You live in me as I live in you.

This is living's contingency:

Death's nakedness wears this life until we expose it in how we live our lives.

My lessons on impermanence come in the fatigue of my desire--those pleasures and these pains in their awakenings.

My lessons on Emptiness arrive in the silences as the chasms between us seem insurmountable yet we share the same oneness.

My lessons on interdependence grow commensurate with my willingness to trust reality's just this..., and that we are not separate.

My lessons on the nature of this suffering depends on my acceptance of living's painful ways without adding to its burdens with unnecessary illusions.

My lessons on not-self reveals that I am not what I see in the mirror, yet I am everything it reflects in the moment.
20

I know this ache
with many faces
to be touched beneath the surface
and the want of being wanted
with the fear of separation, yet

all of it equals illusion I've realized
as these endless forms keep arising

I mustn't for a moment reach
for any conclusions since my genuine I am

knows only fullness and endless freedom.

21

Whose level of comfort
do you seek

but your own when
you bruise and batter

with your words?

22

Curled wave
inside and outside,
individual
and collective,
dry and wet,
clear and opaque,
formed and empty,
in one movement.

23

Tea for two:
the tastes
of me,
the tastes
of you,
blended into
the oneness
of our
shared drink.
How deep is that body of water 
on the other side of these fences?

There are no shores when your imprisoned. 
No launching from in order to explore
the distances--adrift unless otherwise moored. 
I am curious about the exteriors of everything
after being on the inside, beneath the surface 
of the senses and their deeper structures
of emptiness. 
As a witness to that rush of seagulls skimming
the sky and water, I, through them, fly, 
measuring the depths and heights, ever-connected
to reality's, seen and unseen, measurelessness.

After we share 
in the heights of our pleasure
panic sets in and possession 
takes hold.

The fear of pain's conceived, 
as I listen through my suffering to
the ancient sages sing this wisdom:
"Let it come; let it be; let it go," now all is well
since it's never been otherwise so.

The moment's passed 
but has its purpose?
The past is always 
present and
our future's ever now.
Don't avoid what you can't escape.
Let life happen 
as it is.
Be what's brave 
when you're afraid.
Love is the answer 
to every question.
Eddies of memories
Whirlwinds of spirals
Never rest our moments
Inside living's endless cycles.

Today no exception
the ache that living gives
persists manifested in
my appetite for more than
you can give?
How we dance does not bring
the give from you I want to receive.
The rebuffs, the averted glances,
your surfaces that only hint of depths
to be plumbed by us.
The movements that you send move me
farther from than near, yet
these gestures of resistance could mean
an equal want beyond any expression's yeses.
You're next.
All of us is
a, bent and
crooked, smooth
and rough, parchment
like a ruffled paper
bag that's had enough
or not enough contents.
The secret inside one's
emptiness is
feeling's freedom and
fullness.
All of these never incomplete
at being what you are.
This is how it is when
next is now,
not some time else.

Coming around
our bond established
by the blood of our parents
and beyond.
Brothers in shared
childhoods--the same pains
as separate sufferings.
We hold and carry different
memories and wounds,
more and more,
realizing our self
in the other.
February
1

Here I am
in the deep pre-dawn awake,
missing the body I've wanted

a million times yet
only once touched and

the desire that we rise
side by side and kiss

the sun into its existence.
I embrace this infinite ache

of form with all its emptiness.

2

Never wasted
that daily effort
to be seen seeing you,
letting you see in me
the effortless effort
that true love is.

3

More than memorized
your words written in response
to an already realized path:
our feel, as grooves penetrating
eons, beautiful

and smooth our entrances and exits

into what we next

enfold as lovers. . .

4

Secret revelations revealed
with touching
by our hands, in curves, on
skin, in the language of us,
in the trust of our wants,
in our uninhibited styles and
already actualized
declarations.
5

Here you are Donovan
in this near's never far,
firmly formed for the same
moments we shaped long ago
with the exact elegance
attitude and stance as
our then's ever now presents.

6

This is my epistle and all
these letters to words to sentences
to themes configure you as more than symbol,
image or avatar, to celebrate all your parts
which surpass more than our wholeness.
I envelope you and yours with one embrace.

How can taste or touch or smell or vision
or voice render what can't be written?

From your energy our movements and intentions
engender, powerful and fragile,
what is us, as it is, moment by moment,
emerging spontaneous . . .

7

The overwhelm
and swell
when being taken-in
offers its impulse
and happiness to give
from being what receives
as everything's fullness
when realized as empty.
Curiosity captures us
a second time.

Now on opposite sides, I
don't know how to manipulate
our previous obstacles as you did
before our aftertastes occurred,
but "please let it happen again,"
sings my aching request to this
constant, spinning universe
for our next communion as us.

You genuflect
as I rush to touch you
for both of us.
What depths thus offered
as we sink in unison toward
the bottom of our oceans.

No time to linger
as I finger your finger
in a timeless caress, in
the middle of the moment
which neither begins nor ends.
This explains the open ache
that comes by being in touch
with the impermanence
of each other's firmness
which rises to meet again
and again in our open
ever-endless emptinesses.
Was my playful touch too abrupt?

I rushed off without response,

wanting the reality of us to linger in my absence.

What did you feel in this gentle gesture?

My intention to reach you is genuine.

After our dance of a thousand touches, first the emergent cries, and then the laughs because a new paradox in our lives has been enacted:

Doom's joys follow ecstasy's aches. Hand in hand, taste by taste, mind to mind, stage by stage, we ascend from our descent as embodied timeless spirits. In every direction our waves reach for deeper depths, delirious for the release of everything's All into genuine laughter's madness.

I kissed you through the universe and wonder if you missed it? Then remembered this celebrated wisdom: we're never separate whether lip to lip, skin to skin, all the way out or all the way in...

Love won't be avoided as is.
The sun had yet
to be our light.

As Venus shone bright
in the west,
we met this morning's bliss
as if we'd never left
our last embrace.
The mood's of yesterday
let go.

Our opposites had been resolved
the instant we both expressed
our resonant hellos.

You greet me in lotus pose_
open, open, open for whatever
comes as I weep with joy for your
beautiful surrender:

Your face, your skin, your hair.
I want to kiss everything and everywhere,
but you kiss first and envelope me
with your present desire.
We share
in the ocean's immense wet and
endless undulating waves. We
fill each other's bliss being one as us,
ecstatic simply being our Suchness
until we separate ourselves from those moments.
I depart our union gratified yet empty
with tortured want and pain possessed,
resisting the truth's embrace
as complete, unending Emptiness itself.
Stay!
Don't go away
with us still
left on your face,
that you and I,
which keeps missing
our spaces and moments
to be alone...

You listened
to my heart today
through the music I chose
I shared that those songs
"we're a look into my internal world."
You shrugged and scoffed.
I wondered whether from indifference or embarrassment?
I am still learning how to keep my heart open during the aches of wanting what isn't so.
"What's the alternative?" I question these old bones and answer:
"It's not wisdom."

Days daily death
why fear it I say to myself,
seeing without indifference
a thought I am imprisoned by as yet to be invalidated.
It's only based on a feeling somewhere between the height of when we touch and the depths our hearts have yet to reach...
It's raining purples and blues and oranges like ripe fruit dangling down for our consumption and for the benefit of all the others we love.

"A long intermezzo of sadness" entered this piece of music: our chambers, our scales, our measures of what has yet to be played.
21

A friend's message this morning from California that
her daffodils are in bloom and the rain may turn to snow by
this afternoon brings stark contrasts to this early
Texas spring where I am hanging on a stem as a promise
yet received, that my love's tulips will
soon arrive to moisten and inspire
an otherwise arid desert.

22

Let it ring
the feeling that hurts everything--body and soul--
when nature won't cooperate with what you want--such
human suffering results without the proper resonance.

Listen for the taste from your experience--Ripe or
unripe? Either one's non-contingent
on love.

23

You beautiful fool
to think what you
thought alone would make
your dreams come true,
reducing your depth for smooth surfaces
and then elevate them to mystical levels
only to forfeit your capacity to engulf
the entire Pacific Ocean with one gulp
for a temporary taste of samara's shallow swallows.

24

When I whisper into the skin of your delicate ear do you listen?
Can you hear my heart with its rhythm in sync to your precious breathing?
Have you ever felt somebody else meet what you're feeling?
This is how it is being love itself on fire with identical desires:
Being who you are while I am being who I am being what we are as one
when I touch you where you offer touch.
Do you feel the depths of my reach?
This is what ecstasy is if you didn't know it yet.
25

Why did it take so long to know
the fear I hold of us my own?
I thought it a lack of control
to keep what I wanted alive.
But now that you're fully involved,
I want what we share to go on.
I'm mad for the feel of your touch
since touched with your feel on my life.
I'm moved by your level of trust,
and I want me to trust you as much.
Let's share with each other our needs,
fulfill them in ways that we please.

I need to feel the depths you feel
to know the gifts we give are real.

26

Friends as boys amid
the 60's revolutions:
too young for Vietnam, too
old for toys to amuse, so
we played scenarios in
various roles from
David Jansson on "The Fugitive"
to Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison to
motorcycle cops on bicycles
patrolling the neighborhood for
hoodlums like our fathers.
After fifty-years of wonder
between our friendship, where
are you besides my heart?

27

About this nothing
that is something--
What is absent in
this Emptiness?

How we reach for each
other becomes our tenderness,
so subtle sometimes we miss it,
but when we do meet, when
our looks penetrate the surface
with a glance, or in our facial
dances across the moment's
distance,
what we express and share
embraces even the us we've yet
to fully encompass.
How many miles have we traveled
since we're children?

How many miles separate the living
and the dead?

How many mistakes does it take
to gain wisdom?

How many miles yet from our awaited
reconciliation?

Where do we go from here
my little brother?

I understand from the saints and
sages that there's only now
in which we live and not even
time nor space nor death can separate us.

How do I bring you comfort
and bridge this perceived distance
between us?

Don't be afraid. You're not alone.
Through the miracle of Spirit,
I'm at your bedside this moment.

Can you feel my hand in yours, hear
my voice in your ear, my touch on
your brow?

I've come to sit awhile and share
some poems I've written about when
we were boys together, remember?

I've arrived in the silences of your
sleep and dreams to ease any suffering
and am present in everything that arises
within you and me.

We'll stay together no matter what
in every whole that makes us a part
and in every part that makes us whole.

And, whoever departs this lifetime first,
let's be sure to kiss each other bon voyage
with our deepest gratitude and undying love.
MARCH
(for Isaiah S.)

How can you not
out of your Mother's world
be beautiful and in this life
of loss and gain make
your own handsome way
that is also hers and ours.

Happy Birthday on your
twentieth anniversary:
May you continue to enfold
all that is in your,
as yet undiscovered, complete
unfolding emergent wonder.

The background
out of which
you and I exist,
we're in an immense wide-open field, face to face,
inches from touch, yet
too distant to kiss,
together on this earth,
yet apart among our own universe:
we've sung but do not sing.
Are you, as I am, eager
to rejoin our harmonies?

Adoring your face in
simple celebrations kept
silent but my telling
eyes scan
your translucent skin
asking you to listen
while kissing each
and every beautiful expression
you give.

A witness to your sleep
and face engaged
with what you wrestle...
Your beautiful map to all attached,
wanting inside your outside gifts
received to give if generous.
Conditions unmet?
And yet,
and yet with all those dreams
yet dreamt?
The drive into search: from inland to coast, from pole to pole, our outing beyond, yet within conditions met, skirt ing the boundaries on borders of oceans and unlimited shores? Closer than closer, nearer than near, touching yet not the oneness we fear.

Awakened within a dream to discover you being me being you, declaring a love that endures beyond the forms we once embodied.
We're still a society that kills its own people, still
a culture that promotes its own violence. How
do we reconcile this abhorrence in all contexts and locations?
Suicide by ignorance, homicide by fear, this seems to be our pursuit.
Whatever happened to happiness and wisdom?

I don't know for certain but I feel for sure, you are
letting me witness your complete consumption of
that large, delicious apple:
bite, nibble, chew then
swallowing its juices, reducing its size, bit by bit.

With unfocused eyes, you savor its flavor to the joy of our cores.
I'd give you another as if I'd given you the first, even if our lives
didn't depend on it.

Your embodiment of east melts west
in your dance: lean fresh movements as
you bring you and every witness to receive its graces
with all the elements enfolded: Earth, fire, water, air from
now's here into everywhere's disappear.
I was not the favorite, like the runt of the clan, but the one who resembled his mother, the solitary son, the one who knew nothing but his feelings so young in terrified silence, and the frequent slaps from his father's hand across the cheek that was already turned toward his own imaginings of a future family without the violence.

A death came again today after an article read in that magazine about the toxins we all ingest over time which overcome us until we die. How we treat our environment will determine our own survival. A bird just landed on my windowsill as a reminder that we are a part of a world bigger than ourselves while we continue to commit mass suicide by consuming more than our fair share, unaware we embody the creation we toxify.

Insideout or outsidein becomes the feelings of your music and your need to love and be loved, depending on your mood. I now see why it's hard to choose, to share what your favorites might be since driven by your passions for what matters most in the moment.

(for Tommy) How many questions I possess and I give you them as gifts. It's been many years since our lives together touched when you embodied seven. Now that you've turned fifteen I offer you my love unconditionally and wish you happiness and every wisdom.
(for Emma)

As your days advance toward
your already so

May you be true
to your always are.

Don't withhold a single dream
as you release your every fear.

Happy anniversary
o darling daughter dear

allow your self to be and breathe
as your beautiful being

manifests the Many
as your many includes the One.

The fact and desire
that I want to kiss,
as I miss you,

where your cheeks and
neckline meet

your exquisite skin
seems inconsequential

compared to all the grave
matters of the world, yet

that is my meditation
looking from this second-
story window into a peach-tinted

horizon and turquoise stratosphere.

All this Suchness and vastness
encompass your essence

I now become since I am love and
since being love--no other is:

no subject/object persists, then
realize what I've been

missing already exists on
these wanting lips.
(for Emma)

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missing already exists on
these wanting lips.
21
(for Emily)

Your smile everywhere
and constant, near or distant,
it's vibrant shine reveals a heart
no longer hidden, a laughing spirit
no longer fear eclipses.
Your teeth and lips and
openness naked in the world.
What in your present circumstances
allows such sweet surrender, such
vulnerable exposure from trusts
once rare to spontaneous and frequent?
Healed the hurts that harden.
Freed once frozen feelings, revealing
all of you at once—the fullness of
your beauty under love's unconditional
influence.

22

Through my window, I watch your powerful
beauty move with wind-swept gracefulness
over a brick-layered pathway toward
the entrance to the laundry. While remaining
undetected, I felt your energy, unless
your full-faced turn, through your own window,
felt my energy across the way on the second floor.
What surprises life offers. No immediate shock
of recognition registered of my presence during
those moments of caress, yet I wonder if,
in the feel of intuition our hearts met?
Let your false selves go and grow.

Stop re-enacting territories and scenarios that lead to where you've been before.

Release don't preserve.

Don't mistake the map for reality.

Be freed from your labored pains magnified by suffering, allow the births and deaths to proceed—transcend and include with compassion and love.

Embrace your actual self in the process of always already being the One and the Many. Let truth emerge out from my I your you our we.

Looking out and in van Gogh's windows, through his instrument to perceive--a little rectangle he called his "spy-hole."

"One can look through it like a window...," he said.

He would peer at any and everything wholly imaginable in order to give his heart the voice no body could silence.

Our evening swim when the surface of the lake and depth of the sky become one, you enter first and I follow after--the water now our conduit for the union of us.

Without want, without words, without thought, we reach and embrace a traceless space in timeless touch, still blood and flesh yet fulfilled within its Emptiness—the essence of All, ever-freed as complete embodiments.
I am the fresh infusions
from Emily's music--
around the world in an instant
I am sent.
Sometimes to land, sometimes
to orbit, being
in love—a challenge to balance
while integrating higher and deeper
truths with more than just
our shared oxygen.

Falling leaves
with wings--
birds descend on
the exit fence.
They sing their sing.
Rest their rest. Wait
their wait until they
decorate the sky.

Grackle spring madness
about the lawn all
morning and afternoon—persistant
in dance, in circular motions
with wings half-cocked in convulsive
flutters, wobbling around
a possible mate for
higher heights and deeper
flights.

Two lovely
and not so fragile
birds whirl,
onto an oak already
leave sprung and
bug ripened, then
hunt, peck and playfully
beak-parry
like colorful swashbucklers
in victory.
Resounds the sound.
Birds awaken to sing "I am."
What beautiful gifts this morning is.
Is this what being means for us:
Already complete without achieve?

The sounds resound from deep within.
I am's awaken in the wake of One.
One with every song that's sung:
"I am. I am. I am. I am."

31
Why so reluctant
am I
to decide
while you hide
the exact
fears of rejection
inside.
Why so resistant
am I
to comply
while my freedom
relies
on the fall
from this
temporary flight.
APRIL
Imagining your last
day, your last supper,
your last painful exit
my brother.

Your murder sent you
into the immediate.

Now we reach you
as more than memory in
each and every breathing as
everyone who's died before us,
resurrected in complete Spirit,
ilike Jesus.

I feel desire's emptiness
because that's what it is.

Waiting for what? Listening
for how while contemplating why?

I feel my desires emptiness
like a wounded animal

because that's how it is
sometimes when Emptiness feels.

The space between us is not empty,
yet the pain and ache is full

of everything that's real.

Include what you want to be
exclusive instead of excluding
everything else that's already
inclusive.

Your pain and ache is empty as well
if you haven't felt it already.
Stuck am I on
the point of awe
and wonder at your beauty.

(At Stanford)
The size of the entire city
you continue to stand
like a monument
in my memory.

Sweet meeting tenderness
invites fragility,
releasing all its power.

Once surface
now depth:

One in our surrendered opposites.
Almost at the end of our string that clings to all beautiful things.

We share too many turns-away and not enough turns-toward, while I mistook you for a friend. Hurt as if and only if, by a betrayal only both of us can orchestrate.

"What a waste," you say when all that ever was still is.

Open your self's embodiments, awaken my friend to the abundance of as is.

There's no such thing as a waste of anything in the Suchness of us.

It took you years to realize how much I wanted you for lunch. During our first meal together you ordered yours and I ordered mine a la carte and after the countless times we dined, eye to eye, face to face, we never ate from each other's plate.
Eye opening horizons arrived
the day I strolled the Castro
for the first time with you.

Sister Boom Boom and Bud's ice cream
stood on the opposite corners
of fantasy and reality.
We ordered our favorites: yours
chocolate chip and mine banana-nut.
We walked while licking the drips
and consuming the sights.

After worlds of this and planets
of that, beyond the facades
of those and the pretense of these,
while witnessing private moments
made public,
the strange became no longer alien.
I found myself no longer separate from
but part of a whole's entirety.

I remember peaches, apricots,
berries and plums galore.
We don't get them in this prison,
so I'm recreating their textures
and flavors by making them
a solid and a savory delicious memory.

Clear you can't see through
your muddled responses
by rolling your eyes
at my adorations and compliments.
Have you never been
before adored?
I see the struggle through
your many storms and addictions
because I know my own
and their causes.
Not contingent on her or
anyone, I must be true to
who I am, not at anyone else's
expense according to my current
level of understanding nothing.

Emptiness feels
what Emptiness is
That and this--
Its deathlessness.
16
Hearts open
nothing rises
from nothing.

It takes nothing to realize
the Emptiness in everything:

Objects & subjects, wholes & parts,
form is formless,
formless form... 

In-the-moment's-notice-awakening
after eons of moments known realizes
in a
shock of recognition one's
already being One, the

All in All does not happen
It's always so.

17
Our three moments
of bliss were different
but the same: We gave
and gave and gave
until until until
nothing's been given since.

18
There's an imaginary poetry reading,
an "open-mike" opportunity
for poets, like myself, near Washington Square,
in New York City, that I can't attend because I am
in real prison in Texas, yet
my imagination remains free and can take me where
Cummings and Auden and Whitman
and Pound still haunt the halls with echoed verses
from their works... and their efforts to be effortless.
Not a pretty picture is it when another uses the other at the other's expense?

But then what's the use for being useful if one is not used according to his or her fitness?

Is it such a pretty picture when one gets used-up at her or his own expense then changes to another for the cost of the recompense?

It is useful to use and be used in the usual way, but not too casual as in abuse, as in over or under used for selfish purposes, yet it's not too un-usual to be used on purpose for mutual use.

Fear and trepidation say just build a wall and all our problems will go away.

Fearless responds, "why not grow a garden to solve our problems? Why not celebrate our oneness with our abundance?"

I like why you like how I like looking at what I like in you.

I love the look you give when you want us to touch but we're not close enough at the moment, and how that's understood without words.
"Let your false self go,"
I tell myself's self.
Stop re-enacting territories
and scenarios
that lead only to where you've
been before.
Release don't preserve. Don't
make the map your reality. Be
free from your labored pains
and allow the births and deaths
to proceed,
transcend and include, embrace
your original self, the
one and the many at once; let
the truth emerge as
the you of I that's always we.

Seagulls swarm
the freshly formed pond
after the storm.
They fly and light,
light and fly, reflecting
the sun on their wings, circle
and swirl, swirl
and circle their desire as
the water mirrors the sky.

In my effort to be
effortless in
my love for you I came
the closest I'd ever come
being the same as different.
I've been to Mexico, the land of my ancestors, but never to Guanajuato where my grandparents hail, where mi familia originated before we came north to La Cuidad de La Reina de Los Angeles where my father and this son were born with the remainder of our family. Boundaries are made not born where land is sold as if it can be owned. These practices defy reality and share a similar fate to those who defy gravity, eventually life gives birth to death dissolving all we think we possess.

That rain then

41 years ago in Karlsruhe is the same rain now in Seagoville, Texas torrential yet in each drop returns all fertile gifts to our planet now which in us exists, which is part of a greater whole inside every droplets all in All.
You never said.
I never asked.
What would our images
depict if
I read your mind
and you read mine.
I suspect after years
of deciphering
your gestures
we would have
made a match.

An empty space?
What needs replacing?
You leave for arrival. I
stay just as alive where I am.
What we share beyond what's
everywhere:
the great dissolve,
all worlds, all galaxies,
All in All.
Oceans of emotions still come
twelve years since your murder occurred.

Countless hours recounting our losses,
after years of months and minutes, I

know we share the same abyss:
painful painful painful painful painful

the falls and rises; our rises and falls.

How many times as children did we promise ourselves that our afflictions wouldn't ruin

our lives,
that we wouldn't wound how we'd been wounded,

that we wouldn't live our lives in denial? After so many lows and so many highs,

hope against hope, him against us,
us against them, us against us,

what as us comes next?

Sun descends
orange,
evening birds ascend
into the blueness.

Their wings whir and whish.
Listen. Listen. Listen to
the wind, listen to their songs
sing, sing while positioned in

the trees bright green,
alighted on limbs then silenced
under an illuminated moon.

At dawn's
first peek, flocks
flee

from limbs and leaves
create a wake -- clacks

of wings fly to find
what all birds seek.
Madman or sage?
Who knew other than him.
None of us really knew,
remaining silent,
before we heard his letters
at the funeral.

My brother's rants and rages,
his multiple voices and pains
entered all of us as torture.

After his murder then
all of us finally listened.

One seat removed
behind Darlene Kalac
I sat
as it remained
all the years that passed,
until I returned her smile as
a timeless fact
and realized location is only that.

Here we are,
she as I, I as she, embodied
as Spirit still:
Always full as form is--
forever formless freedom
inside and out.

"your love is like a shadow
on me all of the time..."

May I see you again,
again without
your glasses on,
and how you hold,
hold your hand over
your abdomen when
we share our shared sharing
skin to skin?

May we allow our shadows
to mingle and rise
for the occasion in the light
of our desires.

Let's own ourselves
as each other
not as lovers but
as love itself.

Listen!
Yes
that's our pulse
on earth.

All of us
the universe.
Our heartbeat
thumping:
The feel of smell,
the hear of taste,
our invisible vision
as yet
to be enacted.

Recall the night
we met in the market
after months of absence
and decided to dine
at the restaurant
that named itself
after an elephant?

You were you and I was I.
Now I am I and you are you,
yet we do not do us
any longer since I went
to prison.
What happened to our thirteen
years of friendship?

Was it real or imagined?
How do we reconcile the actual
with what we want to happen?

Isn't the same difference
between us only change
now that we remain strangers?

This tall tug of memory
that sweet taste,
soft touch, again and
and again the con-
tinuous embraces from
a moment of us
that could have begun
what didn't begin.

How did this earth
become perched
in gravity's tree
on this galaxy's limb
rooted in the universe
to what end?
Birds singing themselves
to sleep in evening's trees

not distant after the last remnants
of the sun's disappear...

Racing freeway cars whoosh a constant
lullaby, soft human voices

hushed with interspersed silences as
one lone soul on the park bench listens
equaling all souls present on earth.

All cadences weave intervals of intricate
notes as near and far as the stars

registering one song, one presence, one moment.

Little boy terrors,
monsters under the covers,
under my bed,

please Momma leave
the lights on. I can't find

my own mind in all these changes
of hands.

Dreams appear as empty faces
I am supposed to embrace?

Can't remember all the names,
all the places we've
called home. "Momma can

we stop long enough," I ask while
holding hands on the boulevard

once again taking refuge in
the headlights of another stranger with

his lights on then off.
The best business model
is no business at all?

Sell, sell, sell, selling our products and services
to the highest bidders.

We create the conditioned purchase
by making your want a need.

Sometimes subtle, other times blatant.
We confuse the consumer

with what comes first
Coca-cola or your thirst?

Can't afford what you deserve?
We'll sell you the credit

and own your debt.
We'll conceal what's true
to improve your image,
give great value to what turns

worthless.
Welcome to the market's illusion

we dictate the price
as you pay with your lives.

Listen
alone alone alone
not lonely but open.

All's
alone as one.
Nothing's nothing
to fear:

Never absent always present.

No separate selves
but us
in the ocean of our spaciousness.

Reed remembered
between the sleeves
and creme
for the peanut butter and
 crackers we'd
make and eat as soldiers
in the heat of being
lifetime friends,

who might never meet
again as
humans.
"Let the soul speak with
the silent articulation of a face."
Rumi

I know. I know. I know.
You no. You no. You no.

It's written on your face
in ten thousand different expressions.

We are not an embodied us
as much as I would want,
yet we seem enmeshed
as nets that catch
what can't be caught.

Your eyes betray your reticence
whenever our eyes meet
as they say yes, yes, yes and yes again
to the questions my aches ask.

What speaks more true than
the articulation of your silence?

Emily holds herself
in choice repose
as pink and purple
opened roses close.

Obdurate, cautious, indolent,
she exists in overshadowed sadness:

Not yet aware how to hold
love's letting go, this
lover's gaze, nor the fullness
brought when Emptiness brings
its sweet release.

These mysteries defy her reach
she thinks, which makes her more,
not less, afraid of love's next stage.
How I love the seen and
unseen about you.
Not just your beautiful face,
I love its correlations,
to know that I can touch
the subtle aspects of you
that remain hidden to
others and from yourself.

Birds dance
just after and while
the sun surrenders to earth's
movement as partners.
Tight spirals, dives, twirls,
swirls and circles, over
and under and through, then alight
on trees only to uplift themselves
from leaves, shadows against
the sky's arms, stillness
then speed, low and high,
blue-green blurs sang, sung
in movements
to the music, dancing as mirrors,
pure their invitation.

Cloud spotting
in prison:
Birds, space, faces,
spirits from different
dimensions with every spieces
in this kingdom.
All of them alive as freedom.
All of them tangible yet empty.
All of them timelessly impermanent.

How many times must I
fight this desire--wanting
you to want what I want?
Then I remember after
the burning has been
reduced to embers and before
it ignites again its rage

Rumi's lesson about renunciation
and annihilation:
that "I am a soul that is both
food and hunger, longing
and what the longing is for..."

Be careful what your intention
seeks: it will consume more than
your current capacity can hold
unless your ready to surrender to
complete annihilation.
Separate yet together

Alone as one—won't this always be so beyond this anniversary wed or divorced?

We share our children—our continued remembrance of what we shared in love—a bond beyond our flesh and blood

that transcends our no, our yes, our then and now, our once upon a sacred vow...

Measured by a lifetime am I.

What is a you measured by?

How many ones measure an us?

Why can't be measured with just because.

Why must include the All which is as one as it's beyond us...

The sages say to let go and be what is.

How do I know what is true and what continues if?

The actual includes what's unknown, so must we leap to transcend what goes beyond what's ever been?

This answer resonates in those of us who jump into and from "yes and no, and neither no nor yes."
Not just the birds but
the trees sing along with them
as everything else listens, even
when discomfort happens, even when
the ugly and the beautiful reveal
their truths.

If we look and see, their movements
emerge inside its immeasurable stillness
as instruments that play us
as we play them.

Impressions carved
as high as mountains
and deep
like canyons on and in
the feelings and visions
of these adults and those children:
Once upon a Mexican village
impermanent yet
long-lasting until
their embodied spirits transcend
what separates
their time from space.

Amazed by and in
the close and open
of that rose
in the garden
and the folds and enfolds
of these hibiscus blossoms.
The here and not here
we experience
of deaths and lives
gone by and in
the everything that happens
to flowers
in a garden.
Beautiful, we felt
the pull toward
each other but
neither of us pushed
forward.

Time has not diminished
the feeling as we're
still standing face to face
under the afternoon's moon
gazing into our stares
like stars and stairs
far too far to climb.

At dawn
a cloud burst
of birds exit
the trees and
in mid-air meet
in intricate, unrehearsed
weaves with
whirlwinds
of
inseparable
ease.
JUNE
Ignored again am I
while side by side
in our enmeshed ignorance?

What roots do we share
but our thirst?

Now clear as our insides
there is no us. There is
no yes. Not that
an interest doesn't exist

as when we drank from the same
ocean of want to satisfaction?

Now the depths in which we swim
to meet our needs is as

shallow as the puddles
we've created of ourselves.

Again your anniversary
the event that makes possible
my memories of us.

We reached our each in our need
for touch and belonging, becoming
the depths we once

knew as only surface, and discovered
that love is not what we think
it is, nor

what we wanted it to be. As we
celebrate your birth,

may we put to death all such
illusions of our separateness.

Eighty years
of your memory lives

inside this son you delivered
into the world as

the communion of us continues
through our lives and deaths

and beyond all ever-afters.

More than every time and
less than any distance
does not equal
our existence.
June third again and again and again...

this interior became an exterior when you gave birth to a son, but first your birth and then your death, not always in this order, but that's how it happened with us--life's glorious occasions--more than miracles and wonder, more than the joys and pains, more than more than... 

Riding on the elegance of elephants, on their hugeness, contrasted with grateful grace, massive movement meets a fragile intensity responding...

Your birthday is my birthday and ours:

All your children and their children's children...

And in the Suchness of your constant touches, everything flowers--expands and contracts--during endless lifetimes on love's own path.

Our interdependence insists on one mind not two--with you, in you and through you we continue our continue.

You have no idea about your reality's reach, and how your sinews and muscles concoct themselves into what's so beautiful as we enter each other's play as interiors celebrating every touchable exterior.
Are we Strangers depicted in your smile, always open to interpretation, and what to make of those facial expressions?

Seminary hall sounds-- the rooms house memories of the young once.
The building, one hundred years plus, no longer exists, yet does the experience of a fresh God inside an aging flesh?

Present, above the crowd of other flowers, those yellow one-eyed aliens, who are not strangers beyond all roots and soils. They rise, rise like the sun out from dark places and shine, shine to live among the rest of us who want to be alive.

Welcome, welcome welcome death on each occasion. Stand in the middle of its abyss regardless of religion— be the experience... Find what’s never found among what’s never hidden.
It's difficult as an adult
to shadow dance with self,
to let go of the handholding
practice from fear. Both of us
afraid to neglect or worse betray
anyone we want to reach out to.
Can I let go of the string that holds
the kite which limits the sky?
Can I allow fear to fade and let
what's necessary grow?
Can I claim the feelings that emerge
when I want to touch beyond the surfaces?
Can I let go of what won't let go of me?
I must so that I may let go of afraid,
let go of alone, let go of what separates
the self from the self I refuse to own.

Every time we reached
for each other's reach,
we increased the frequency
and velocity of us.
Running head first into and
out of a mutually spontaneous
attraction which turned
into something more than
permanent?

Nothing brought
you to me
me to you.
What happened between us
happened in union,
and still
happens in
the how
of our own beings.
Seek a deeper happiness than a surface pleasure.
Release rather than preserve.
Reach out toward everything reaching in.
You'll know in how what you want touches you.
Be the elements which emerge from inside the being you thought existed without.

Walking the path into the wisdom of color: Zinias, violets, pansies and marigolds galore, all of us open and full, sharing in the miracle of soil.

I'm in Bremen, Germany again on the 32nd day of a fast consumed by the argument to eat. I split the difference and took a drink of fruit juice for my nourishment, yet to this day I don't know what decided which and how my journey inward continued...
Under the hot sun I am reflecting on the paradox of Aunt Roxie. Not lost on my seventeen-year-old confusion, She lied to the ticket-taker at Dodger Stadium: "What do you have in your thermos?" "Ice-tea," she called her wine as we moved toward our seats for the game. After a time, she turned and declared: "If Hell is this hot, Tommy, I'm changing my ways!" My laugh covered my worry at damaging her car while parking it, yet she acted as if it never happened, sometimes strict yet permissive, generous yet thrifty; her life was real not ideal. Feeling her love despite hate for myself, she reached places that couldn't be reached, already touching truths about life I had yet to understand. Even in her death, she transcended imagination. She died a multi-millionaire within a house full of threadbare furnishings.

As real as any memory and life experience, I kiss you as you kiss me as we kiss each other's lips in a dream scenario. As effortless as our breathing, we become this subtle event eager to give our release, to share in the self within ourselves, true feelings unlimited in the immensity of us.
Stange how familiar this all is,
the pause before the end,
before our fall that climbs
  toward the summit
  only to plummet again.
How familiar this strange revelation
before or after a life fully lived.
Is it as Eliot insists in verse:
After all that's been said and done,
  we ever arrive at the place
  where we've begun?

No after now
the moment's always still
  and here.
Night's rain takes
  on light as
spontaneous water bodies
  invite us,
winged and grounded alike,
  to these wet feasts
with uncharted depths.

At thirty-one continue to reveal
your beauty within.
The world's your mirror
reflecting what's true.
Lissome, blonde and blue,
you move us with allure:
immediate in mood,
  a butterfly in flight,
insideout & outsidein,
  turbulent yet beautiful
amid your transition.
Don't be afraid to be
who you claim.
Be true to your you
regardless of change.
Love as love is
  beyond limitations, and
live each challenge
  while being what's timeless.
Some moments before your departure,

the feel of fall in spring brings
the summer blues as

the rain ever so gentle descends.

Grackle shebirds eat
bread offerings beak-snippets

at a time in the yard you and I spent
lifetimes pondering imperfect pasts

and perfect futures yet ever-present-
attuned to our friendship and the truths

we discovered through our efforts
to be ourselves as each other's mirrors.

Did I dance this life
or was I just

a remembrancer
touched by a touch

in memory only,
taken to the peak on
countless occasions

only to remember the view
and leap from a distance?

Did I sing my own song or did I
memorize a hymn somebody else
composed?

Did I live my lives and die my deaths
or only strive to try
and try to strive, forgetting

to awaken the self
who needs to be awake.

That cat
I am,
bird-watching
my next
meal; chirp!

As I am
the bird
being watched,

watching
that cat
devour
myself; meow!
Just after sundown
birds whirl in flocks
rise and dive at
different counts and intervals,
yet remain in chorus with the sky,
circling while choosing their roosts,
one by one among two dozen trees then
disappear among the leaves,
in this fenced-in courtyard
called prison,
finding freedom in their secret communions,
in their contribution to evening's stillnesses.

In the gray light of day
the wind stirs in circles,
an all embracing scintillation,
as seagulls flee the dancing advances of the wind and rain.

Hibiscus on the path
orange, red-pink flesh
translucent in the sun,
opens out into light,
expressing life and beauty as is...
then closes for the moon,
enfolding itself upon that same light's darkness.
(for Will Handy, in gratitude)

Your presence convinces best
and with your gifts,
you have been so generous.

Extraordinary the useful wisdom you offer
to us the so-called imprisoned.
Not to your words alone do we listen,
but to your embodied awareness
of ancient truths and present lessons,
which help free us from
our impermanent circumstances.

Please accept our praise and gratitude:
   Thank you teacher, friend, and
fellow seeker on the path.

Thank you for your compassion
   and loving-kindness.

Thank you for the warmth
   of your felt embrace.

Thank you for your selflessness
   and being a mirror to our oneness:

   All of us complete as is,
   timeless, and
   infinitely awakening

to our boundless freedom and fullness

   in just One Taste.

30
Hot house
   fresh
Moist but
   not wet
Responsive
to touch
Fragile yet
   potent,
   multi-colored
   flesh.
JULY
Neruda knew the infinite ache  
to live and love, the want and wait  
that lovers carry, the enormous weight  
from touching another's  
wrists and waist. Like his,  
my pursuits have been wide and vast  
through travel and verse,  
being what I feel and felt  
in ecstasy as well as torment  
regardless of the consequence  
as ocean waves pound the shore in  
calm or in storm.  
Life is not the void I had experienced  
but is filled with actual pain  
as repeated births and deaths for realizations,  
for letting go of what can't be captured  
in photographs, or in memories, or on  
the tips of your fingers nor  
moistened lips.  
The ache for union I pursue is illusion  
I now know. Nothing opposite  
is love. I am not it's object.  
There's nothing to get rid of; nothing  
to obtain, just ocean wave after wave  
of life's ecstatic happenings...  

2
(for Tommi Joy)
Out from life's  
giving flower  
our joy arrived—  
a baby girl and gift  
to the world,  
and in our inclusive gathering  
you grew and continue to grow  
into a form of love  
that's yours alone.
3

The breeze's sweet intermingling with
our mind stream,
the memory's clear
into my hands you appeared
already ripe for life
a beginning that only pretended
begin: wisdom
in the palms of each other's hands
already aware that an end
never ends...  

4

Learning to embrace
your grace
without the ache
of wanting touch.
We breathe in all that exists
about us.
All of this enters and exits
our movements when we both
embrace our stillness.

5

Since we don't kiss
it means something different
to each.
If we did, and our lips
touched,
it would mean
the same thing.

6

Don't think change won't;
it always does.
Even if you believe in never's
always, there's nothing
you can do to unchange what is--
only grow and grow
into ever letting go.
7
I must.
Must I quit this wishing that
that was this,
and you want what...
I want in love?
I might.
Might I keep this feeling bliss
that is not a wish,
but being immersed in what is what,
regardless of result, in love's unending emergence?

8
My gratitude pours forth for Joe's largesse making me monitor at the world's axis.
Back to the garden with naked snakes and dressed mistakes where what's hidden becomes revealed when truth versus myth, falling down and rising triumphant, sometimes lost, yet always found.

9
My primary desire is the wanting to be desired.
If I am the desirer then, why not desire who I already am?

10
He's been here before where else would his confidence come from diving head-first into... without the presence of any other surface evidence?
Not to think thoughts,

do I sit,

but to witness, as is,

these thoughts

think themselves

into existence.

That was not a miracle
yet the amazement's true:

this rain of monarchs
landing upon our
otherwise lives.

Is there exhausting love--
the feeling yes or maybe not?

I watch you across our work place
and you engage the other ones, yet

never seem to approach what we once
shared in private, except a glance

that remains open to interpretation.

I'm not afraid of you, yet remain fearful
in the shadows only I can feel.

I want to burst from the pent-up expressions
that await your approval before they surface,

before all is lost from lack of trust or courage.

I fear the rebuke, the rejection, the humiliation.

The cycle continues, yet one hope emerged

in a recent revelation from the Tao:

"Care about people's approval
and you will be their prisoner."
The show began
on the sand at
a distance.

How can I forget
the boundaries crossed in
plain sight.

I did not comprehend
the I of your invita-
tion, nor

how near after your display
your image still stays
within my naked vision.

Somewhere among life's debris
there are pictures, but

I don't need them to see you feed
the sealions at the end
of the pier.

Two little sisters, alive as
my daughters, spinning with
the world--delirious with laughter
as if they were the puppet
masters pulling the strings of
every living thing
into its infinity.

North of the rocks
but south of the Boardwalk,
you let me see you at the beach.

We mirrored
each other's secrets,
then kept them to ourselves.

Blinded by the light,
burned by the heat, we played
at being out of reach,
out of touch, then
out of reasons
for wanting such...

Precarious for years
the whole house
now rests
on the edge of the cliff.

A whisper away of wind or wash
of wave could send
somebody's realized dream
into the Pacific ocean
before it did.
Peaches this morning
in prison, an answer
to an unspoken petition.

Generous the universe is--
being grateful tastes
like this--
smooth, juicy, memorable
sweetness--tender
its textures, and such embraces.

So many in prison
join the rank and file.

Letting go too soon,
too carelessly.

They uncling to staying clean,
turn ripe
before death's harvest time
and stink the stench
of fear's undeath,
of death's not nearly yet.

"We are dust in the shadows"

Was it full from the earth on July twentieth?
I don't remember, but

I do know that my world filled
itself with wonder at the prospect
of a human being, being
on the moon.

At eleven, I watched
the models as if real, the live
pixelated footage as if I piloted the "Eagle" myself,
as if I walked, out of the shadows, onto its surface,
keeping JFK's pledge to be the first.

Even if it didn't happen, it did,
in living color on
our "Admiral" television.
"When will?" this poet asked
until his passion answered
and so he wrote and witnessed
and felt his own depth after
his him was silenced.

Alone along the way,
enjoying the story's own unfolding...

only subjects know objects as objects
own subjects, swimming with both
of them in the ocean of absolutes and
relatives, along with those delicious
and repulsive senses: the smell of touch,
the breath of sight, the taste
of listen as the pulses quicken into
subtle shapes and sizes that spiral
and curve all through this natural world...

Is there anything that can't be seen from all levels?
From if and only if to as is this poet can as when
everything matters.

The day
after the day, after the day
the "Eagle landed-- Emptiness?
Not void though no presence remained
on its surface
that's if nothing continues to equal
everything's depth.
Why do we still live as if
this paradox doesn't exist?
Greeted by Atlantic’s waves
to unfold into its white foam.

Body and mind opened as the moment’s shore
warmed by the welcome & unknown embraces.

Effortful toward
and for
Effortless wisdom
to emerge:
Nothing can force
the moment we surrender
all our guesses.

Forward toward nowhere
righting myself
in order to
write myself
in reverse--
all the effort to be effort-
less required of
every self
I thought I ever was.

A cloud-framed
full moon
and I am moved.

All as an invisible self
appreciating
the cloud, the moon,
the voluptuous fullness and
all its movements.

How can a brief glimpse
of eternity be brief?

What’s then suspect:
eternity or the glimpse?
What's so different
with a life lived in prison?

Death and dying still stinks
of rotting flesh and germs and decay.

Youth becomes old--
fresh turns rancid from insideout.

Confinements don't exempt
us from
death's temporariness
if you think so... 

We decided to go forward
with our pregnancy--our fussion
brought truth to this wisdom:

"We don't live in the world,
the world lives in us."

Carrying our child full term united,
our first unselfish act, now
in full bloom,
before and after she was born,
our world holds together
how we hold the world.
Sitting in the wind,
in the movements' stillness
Everything to apprehend
Everywhere open-ended...

Fear not father I am
still your son.
What can separate us but us?
You've taught me that by your steadfast love.
Now I must process alone as you have done through all the consequences from our human ignorances, and its wisdom within the time we serve then transcend our separate imprisonments.
August
1

(for N. A.)

Born a storm
  with calm blue eyes
  and blonde.

Beautiful, irresistible
  in charm,

yet dangerous in mood--
  edgy but smooth, outside

clear, inside confused.

Young and ancient at once--
  an approachable recluse

with wisdom in reach.

Cautious though risky, yet
  too often risk without caution.

Each day is your celebrated birth.

You swim these paradoxes with
  disastrous aplomb.

Please take no offense to this
  moment to moment wish:

Be happy. Be real. Keep being
  your present authentic self.

2

When I lay my body down
  and feel the feel
within me pull

as all past lovers blanket
  this nakedness which wants
their touch to touch.

This is not shadow but
  a torch that burns
inside what goes

without.
What does this mean
at this stage framed

in the infinite?
How much a part is
this in my life's

light and torment?

3

After years and years after
the strain that seeks approval
remains a part of my appearance.

I've stumbled onto something that
resembles myself in the mirror.

The subject now object now subject
again yet more hairless, more
beginningless, and more deathless.
(R.B.)

It's not what I think
that keeps
you and I's youthful identities
within reach.
How opportune now's birth occurs
to kiss you
this moment
on the lips
leaving no blemishes
nor selfish wish.

Seventy-two years since the drop
on
Hiroshima's
then
and
now.
The flash forgotten?
How convenient being
blinded and
ignorant is?
Continued dreams and nightmares continue
on either side
of our ocean's...
The sun remains as is and does what it does all day, but the rain, when it comes, and it does, is a wiser reminder of change.

Counting by the hundreds and then by thousands, birds in bursts and clusters, arrive at evening's end dancing in collective and individual movements through the sky. How many fit in those mulberry trees replete with leaves and limbs for the night in this summer's heat?

The Spirit is immediate in this imminent universe—contingent not necessary, not mandatory but optional...

Sunrise moon full, full on the opposite horizon identical hues mirror this is.
(for Billy)

Wrestling with all that's against,
   Billy "The Crusher" is not
   a professional wrestler but

a man who's found himself pinned
   between a limited intelligence
   and unlimited potential.

His crippled existence consists of endless
   rounds in a match he attempts to win
   again and again.

His constant conflicts batter him
   into different forms of the formless,
   into a one and only metamorphosis.

His resistance versus his caregivers and
   absent adopted-parents. These entanglements
   include seizures and spasms, stutters

and sputters, tempers and tantrums with serious
   injuries both imagined and actual.

I knew him while imprisoned in my freedom as "normal."
   While commissioned to release him from
   his bondage, I realized in my failures his successes--

more brave and less fearful he became
   through life's ever-evolving experiment,

being, without without, the world's undisputed champion
   of what can't be crushed or mangled.

12

Walking am I
   amid the

   light and shade

at play with

   all the opposites

I am.
13

It's not what we think about thoughts but how we hold them that matters in the body of our wisdom.

It's not what we feel about feelings felt that meet another's with our touch,

but how deeply our truth is reached on either end of what is given.

14

In the morning standing west of your east, from a distance that aches, I watch the sun rise on your face.

Only so for moments, all golden the sun's embrace.

Your beauty reaches deep beyond this moment's once inside this self you always touch.

15

Born in 1819 Whitman remains alive in my lifetime:

That American Bard with a list of whom he slept,

that inviter to thrive and throb among the multitudes, that genuine granter to be who you are

on the Open Road as a collective body or all alone as one underneath every star that's ever shined, that's died its die in our eyes alive, in the all that's All,

in how tall the sky is wide.

16

Even when I am not I am.

The answer to life's question? Live life as truly human.
(for Tony 1956-2005)

I read your letters after you were murdered to present you at your funeral.

I let you tell them, in your own words, of the worlds inside your worlds:

How what you thought was not what we knew.

How what you viewed was not what we envision about you.

How what you felt went deeper than what we were feeling.

How what you heard was not how we listened.

How you kept silent, for decades, the content of your voices.

How what you suffered to keep us from your torture.

Jake's example of living's formed formlessness is fingers dancing upon his instrument, creating movements and moments of invisible, improvised music.

That breeze which cools the heat, its origins in mystery bring everything into its already here; its always been; its all in All.
These birds, this morning, bring the moon into view between those trees, which invite the wind and All that is to be what All does—receive the energy of infinity's many, many kisses...

An eclipse visible gives us this unity's lesson: Force nothing—nothing's separate.

That's passed and is still, and I am in that as all of us is moving into a never was that's already now.

You're more than the story you tell yourself about yourself.

Be kind to perfection.
Once again
underwater in dream,
basking in, this living's
abundance, a more than
experience, a more than enough
to play with and embrace
like pendulums we swing
through undulating waves
surrounded by all that is
being what we touch
all shapes, all colors,
all sizes which fit
into the All in All...

A beautiful surprise
your arrival in my life--
blonde and blue, blue
and blonde, larger than
what mind imagines.
Amazed our eyes looking
into a mirror at each
other's allure.

Identical mysteries embodied
as recognized in that instant.

Were we what we wanted or
what our image wanted to meet?

So sad the memory of us separated
after the question asked of you
I now regret.

Is your memory of me the same
since my request of you?

What do your feelings reveal
about the nature of our
relationship?: Surface or depth?

Image or actual?
Did we ever happen as I remember?

The wonderful--
being still with each other in
and after our throes--
continues to continue
less temporary than all
the rest of what is.

We remain enfolded
and unfolded--embraced
embraces with whatever's
touched in give,
we, forever entangled, love.

Realized even from
a distance our
freedom to want or not,
and without boundaries
how we dance
laugh and
kiss with our eyes,
loving, not just each other,
but all the world
at once.
29
There you are,
now as ever.
Welcome to (my) our
awakening
otherwise your you would
not be
here's
we're (I am).

30
These repeated morning breaths
greet our dawns with
love's hungry demands
to let us love
as love loves.

31
(for Vera)
Your gift
the day itself
What else needs
cour we?
Mistakes we make mercy's born.
Being your Birth day
what else means
no longer separate?
September
1

A dream apology

in the flesh?

An explanation

that I was not abandoned

after all that's happened,

after all that's expanded

and contracted since then.

"I am being who I am

within my own prison..." you said.

Ideals build their own walls

and bars when embraced as

truth itself.

How many of us realize how

powerful thoughts think

themselves into imaginary

worlds which confuse and

distort our actual truths?

2

(for Joe Alarcon)

Up at three
to start at four, "
everything must be done
by nine and ready
for the customer..."
you said to this apprentice.

Unnerved, afraid you'd be
displeased as my father-figure,
manager, and mentor...

Within the learning curve,
you set, could not meet nor
perceive the height you saw
in me until I recognized
myself in what's produced.

3

(for e.e.cummings, 1962)

The inevitable
collapse,

the final phase

of decay for being

so human Mr. E. E. C.

Everybody's body

must return
to its or-

i-
ginal nature.

("gently") you went

into that

("very whiteness: absolute
peace," by peace ("never
imaginable mystery") finally
putting to death what's not ALIVE

with your own dying...
(for Dr. Rico)

Our final meeting was the first
in years framed
in blue and silver,
silver and blue.

You gave me your latest book
on Recreations embodied
with your genius
as mentor and friend.

You showed millions
how to write The Natural Way,
helped us cluster our own perspectives
into expressions and essential pieces
to our entirety. You shared
your Pain & Possibilities

before leaving us to our own unique genius,
yet you return as continuous through

your greatest lesson thus far imparted:

"Flexibility is the essence of intelligence."

The telephone
that kept its ring
despite the caller wanting
an answer, keeps and keeps
and keeps its sting.

"I will not hold," this mantra
creeps into, into, until
dissolve, so nothing holds

after all; after all... for those of us who love and love
and love through whatever comes and goes.

Nameless
to all else,

but I know
the always now

that words betray.

What we do and did
is not undone

by forced or unforced
forget.

My "I" remembers your
"you" in "we," and

in the absolute surrender
Truth gives, being

who we are as is, whatever
may occur within our
reaches to touch yet
not possess the Suchness

beyond all our surfaces...
Wonder if you're still walking this planet?

If you still remember you were my step-father

in this lifetime once upon a once upon a time?

I remember when you asked no longer for my visits after the divorce from my mother . . . .

Hurt after thirty-three years of being your son, of sharing blown-out candles when both of us were young, and for years after my devotion for you continues to deepen and persist especially after sharing the death of Michael and Kerry and every moment after.

Precious body spacious mind

as these I entered this particular circle:

sixty-two years ago and ever since I've only become what I am
to let go of how I understand that I am what I am beyond what I thinks I am.

Don't and do allow your self the wonderful, ever-present release, the thinking that thinks it knows the why from thoughts which keep the joy of each and the ecstasy of every from being our us in the ordinary.

The joy oranges, when eaten, make: their skin & flesh awash with its ecstasy of juice,
yielding nourishment & purity's mess.
A room won't hold
the loves I've loved, those
wanted wants, the
skin
on
skin, nor the countless selves
my lips
have kissed.

The God you worship is
the God you must
transcend, even if it
means the ruin
of everything--
because it does.

(for Elijah, Happy Birthday)

The son I held
and hold continues
to grow
out of my light
and from my shadow.

As his co-creator
I am as near
as I am far
much closer than
any distance knows.

My son lives in me
as he is
and as his father,
I live in him with
birth and death
our bond.

In blood and flesh,
until dust and ashes,
we embody our nature's
most accurate reflection.
14

(for M)

I felt you listen
with your eyes
and become
the lovers in my poems.

I witnessed your transformation
from guarded admirer
to heart wide-open.

The evening leaned
into us,
warm and moistened,
as we sat, shoulder to shoulder,
drunk on the madness
that awakens.

If I'm not mistaken,
as much as I did,
you wanted to share a kiss,
and just in case, if again,
that urge emerges,
you're more than welcome.

15

Your birth moment
more than
remembered--
the great unborn in
the form of one person.

Everything included:
skin, hair, eyes, voice,
movement, wrists, limbs,
heart, mind, feelings. . .

That poet's soul, those
unwritten poems, the yet
to be delivered, the touches
yet to touch beyond
either one's surprises.

16

Gifts given
this is birth--
the grateful receive
to life's everything.

Sixty years plus since my entrance
and after the dance
of countless nows,
let's celebrate
infinities. . .

17

That night we sat
arrives even in
broad daylight--face
to face, breath to breath
mirrored in fear as your
cigarette smoke draws me
in as well as repels
my instinct to extinguish
this you and I from us.
18
Consumed I did
ten thousand times
Because I did
what I consume
Realized I did
what I allowed.
I found I did
what I deserved.
I died I did
to how I lived.
I live what I did
to be undone.
I live to love
beyond what's love.

19
It looks like a prison where we live
because it is.
History informs us
that this brick
and mortar structure
used to house "foreign enemies"
and women prisoners.
The halls are haunted by them,
and even still men die here
from human causes, men, even without
their complete narrative,
we condemn. Who knows what's beneath
a surface unless we allow
its depth to emerge?
Are we any better just outlasting
the other? Who remembers this
embodiment when everybody dies?
What transcends our annihilations
from countless struggles to survive?

20
I'm afraid and not afraid
for those who knew me then,
do not know me now, if they
ever did, but it's not
their fault. I didn't know
myself enough to grow beyond
what I thought I was, so no
wonder who I am remains
their stranger and dangerous.

21
The spell's been cast.
The magic's already happened, so
"What comes next?" one might ask,
but that's not the question that will
resolve our growing problems.
There is no solution to what's our
evolution, but transcend and include.
Can we awaken from the fractured
paths we've taken?
How powerful
my own thought
when collected with others.

How it rules the reins
as we grapple with as if,
prisoners to every possibility,
devastated when what we want isn't.

It's this fear
that prevents our release, our reprieve
from what we suffer.

Two skunks
on the distant prison lawn dance
as I view them from a window
barring exits and freedom
of movement.

What must another sentient being
think of these
human fashioned contraptions,
those chain-linked fences
and razor-wire?

What keeps us cruel enough to punish
the animals in us while
the rest of the world continues
uninhibited by hatred and vengeance.

My world was tiny yet
magnified
in the hurts living gives.

Mercurochrome soothed
every ache and visible
scratch, but it couldn't reach
the invisible wounds
inflicted from abandonment
and neglect.

(For M)
We're here
as the us I've wanted since. . .
walking the inner courtyard now.

Flowers rise and bow
during this momentous
ordinary thrill.

Side by side & inside the
inside of our shared silence,
we listen to the music
our syncopated movements make
as timeless embodiments of
form and emptiness.
Rain, rain, rain, falling mulberry leaves all day:
one by one, in multiples, in colorful multitudes under cool azure skies from nothing to fullness to empty again—nature's cycles in bloom, effortless gifts in abundance, giving us visible evidence of life's essential emptiness.

The stations of "Nathan" and "Roy," the positions each adopted in discovering the other's joy, the stance each of them admired and mirrored as friends, as enemies, as lovers. The courage to resist, the bravery to enter what could be resisted. No want arose for meeting their needs. Each by each, inch by inch, fear by fear released after once received. All their pain like a river emptied into the oceans their giving emotions created.

A song emerges as they depart the lives they sought to escape. . . . "They never look back," nor lose their way looking inside themselves for the other's interior.

One with the birds and deaths in the City.
I am alive and walking the arteries of Cincinnati.

After hours discovering among the multitudes, the river and I merge at the stadium. Individuals versus collectives, the Dodgers against the Reds, win and lose together transcend into an evening of unending bliss.

The anniversary of us nears and what to give so many years, so many since we even were, and still I learn about what's separate and what's distant between now's then and this then's now.

(Bar Kippur)
Where is the One?
Its in all of us:
Every single
October
1
(for Grandma Sally)

Counting the years
in countless wonders
of our collective existences:
1903 to 2019 equalling
one-hundred-sixteen years
this lifetime—
a span with unlimited depths...
You are, I am, we beyond beyond
beyond what we even comprehend.
Remembering everything I am
through living births and deaths
in infinite celebrations.

2
Not the usual day
filled with celebration.

We shared our invitations
though not all of them oc-
curred between us.
The ones we did and didn't do
still live inside the body of this
mind, not as if, but how
did these ever happen with
or without our permission.

3
(for M)

We served each other
our warmth and want;
we offered ourselves
as edible gifts;
we shared our share
with eyes and smiles,
in words and touch,
through laughter and silence
until full, full enough,
until consumed, consumed by us.

4
(for M)

While
sun-kissed
and wind caressed,
we make love
as we walk
side by side,
step by step, in
our own skin,
touching us
as touch itself.
"Illusions fade, but the sublime remains."

Vincent van Gogh

Let's return to the scene of the sublime when your once delicious lips touched mine: the gives we gave, the feels we felt in full embrace as our depths received and reached ecstasy's embodiments.

Saddened today as the witness to my own emptiness, feeling invisible although seen as you altered your path to avoid mine, walking away rather than toward.

"Why ask why?" I ask while stupified in my heart's mind at your silent reply.

I heard at the close of the day, and like the bird departures we pondered ten thousand times, you took flight; you had gone away, so I walked the walk we walked, inch by inch, stone by stone, orbiting the sun to once again touch our touch and feel our feel in that space once occupied by us, but in my efforts to deepen our kiss, to extend our reach, I had forgotten how wide the sky, how vast the emptiness, how immense the pain is when present to the actual ache of absence.
8
(for M)

A face framed
with eyes and smiles
as we share ourselves.

If I were a painter I'd
use bronze and gold
with infinite light
to celebrate
your beautiful spirit,

but I am a poet in love,
so I'll paint
your beauty with words
which have interiors
and mirrors
so your eyes continue
to look at me as now
inside my own.

9

The longest departure
from the sun, a river
of clouds kept its
fire alive
for hours.

All the beauty burned
every worry and
those memories of other
suns, now parted,
did not consume this
moment's moment.

10

I just sent a friend
an email
to alleviate her loneliness
and mine.

Pressed with memories am I--
pain and pleasure thoughts
that take but do not give.
Mistakes well made remain
unfixed, impermanent, and
nothing special when
reality is.

11
(for Tommi Joy)

Your moment's
conception
when thought and action
became flesh
whose decision?
You're actually beyond
all becoming.
How beautiful:
this freedom's
ever-present being.
The flocks have departed,
in an instant it seems,

those furious flickers of wings
that paused on the fence prior to flight,
obscuring our temporary imprisonment
as we rounded the bend on our evening walks.

Remember how we would wonder
"Where next?" and "How far?" when

the Fall arrived
as now I wonder why you're not here
to know they've gone, to share the ache
the absence of your beauty brings.

Perhaps they went with you or
you with them?

Perhaps inside the heart of everywhere?

News of another friend's
death--owned as my own.

How do I embrace it?
The wind blew every cloud
from the sky this afternoon--
as if rearranging reality. Wait
this is not accurate. Reality
is what is and miracles don't
rearrange our Suchness.

Everything embraces us as us as is.

Carnival noises
in the distance, arrive as
voices on voices in screams,
carry-over in joyful rushes,
from riding the rides as ageless wonders, while
releasing freedom's fragrances
on a warm October Texas evening.

I listen. We listen
from the other side of fences
among the sentenced and condemned, wanting
another chance.

The reader's posture
and right hand on the page
captures the artist's
expression.

What surprise comes
the moment
when notice happens.
16

Early
Autumnal-colored
sun
reaches equally
into
as away from
anywhere's
only
here.

17

The science
of a plum
equals emptiness.
Only in its
succulence and
plumpness exists
the delicious
truth.

18

Two glad
dancing
squirrels
prance about
a tree, landing
on the grass
in flashes of red-
dish orange
then back again as if
this happens
to all of us
in the sentient
world.

19

What has
been
the precision
missed
head to head
face to face
toe to toe
lying down or
standing tall
from the bed
neither one of us
has made?
Among worlds
that collide, orbit, or
influence the planets which
glide through us:

Aren't we moons, stars, dust,
and every so often a comet,
stirring the universe diverse?

Our beautiful ruin,
the dissolve of all
that's natural
is actual. Do not be
afraid of birth's
inevitable death;
death is living's best
expression of our
timelessness.

To our mutually denied desires,
remember the feelings
our last meal offered

at the taqueria on Front street,
where we sat face to face

still fresh as the food
our curious eyes consumed.

The wonder
between us still alive after

years of wanting more from
the random chances we created

for the other to take the first
initiative to kiss.
24
(for ELF)

Three sketches of her
in twenty-one words...

1

Lissome
Liquescent
Embodiment
Wavy
Raven
Hair
Cascades

2

Deep
Brown
Eyes
Framed
In
Lustrous
Skin

3

Lean
Angular
Features
Beauty
Kissed
As
Is

25
(for Sun-Fai)

Seemingly brief
but timeless:

we touched our touch,
smelled our smell,
tasted our taste,
heard our hear
to see ourselves as
endless beings

in infinite forms:

thinking our think,
playing our play,
working our work,
feeling our feel,

hurting our hurt

for countless counts
as deaths and births.

26

Hotel California
our San Francisco landmark

for just such occasions,
meeting half-way between

our world's slowly separating,
yet every intention at this juncture,

for us, was to couple.
Still strangers at intimacy but
not when it came to releasing

and receiving what neither of us
thought we deserved.
Lost? I contemplate that plot.

Even though imprisoned
I am found out,
not lost.

Ignorance is not a culprit
but a condition
I was and am inflicted with,
yet lost I am not, never was,
nor shall be because
everything's in the moment found--
Being present in the ever-present present.

Do you remember?
You lived at the river
a comfort added to my many bridge crossings.
I lived over the hill from where we met
for lessons.
Your presence continues
to exist.
Do you remember,
what I can't forget?

Constant currents crossed,
feathers in the wind,
always meaning never,
close enough to not yet,
empty spaces caressed
his undelivered gifts.
This is how it was being friends with him,
being who I am with all we never did.

Twenty-eight when...
may you live more
nows than thens:
Thens exclude the actual for wishes.
Nows include all that's happened and to us what happens.
May you learn to forgive yourself and others.
May you forgive us how we learn to live.
May you live more nows than weres.
Twenty-eight years opposite already timeless, May you live into who you are, more than what's accomplished.
May you live more here's than there's as everywheres.
May you live more nows than time allows.
What magic we've made
for ourselves
and a day.

What conditioned engines of fun.
Dress in costume to give
and receive.

Everybody plays the Halloween
game, every.

Even the ones who refuse
to play, who mask
the masked with their own
masquerade.

The trick is on us
if we mistrust
this occasion, so
treat all tricksters
how you want to be treated.
November
1

(for M)

Since the doom
of your departure, I am
as empty and distant
as the full moon,
in the east separated
from your west,
suspended
on how to bridge
the distance between us
and our first and only kiss.

2

(for M)

Our paths merged
from our personal prisons into freedom,
from silence into singing. . .

We grew deeper through shared
meals, walks, and separate solitudes,
unsure until trust dissolved our fears,
as we gracefully bloomed, exposing
the hearts inside our minds, transforming:
our smiles into laughter, our
space into embraces, our listen into
kisses, our alone into together.

We felt ourselves feel
the evolution of us, dancing
with the timeless truth in timelessness.

3

When Autumn sings,
the winds play
through
the leaves's remains,
the color tones in waves resonate
these transformations
as new life becomes departures
and fresh deaths new arrivals.
I remember that November
this November--
the last good-bye:
our final feel
of arms, of lips, of
wants entanglements,
of traveling such
a crooked path which
brought us these joyous
uncertainties... .

(For M)

While in the custody
of illusion,
what about us?

What about the walks
we walked
within the circles
we live?

What about your abrupt
departure from
perception's prison?

My senses insist you're
no longer here,
but love's feeling persists
inside this spirit's
interior.

Is this what death is:
an absence while being
present,
embracing our life's pains
and aches without its
suffering and regrets?

Wrapped in the boundariless
past, present and future
called now,

Here I am
in a prison
in Texas
sitting on the steps
in the seminary
courtyard
that no longer exists
in the world of its
at 62 and 23
sundrenched and content
whenever this moment is.

Unfolding
out of emptiness
which has no "yours" nor "mine"
--Dips and curves--
--supple and firm--
--smooth and lissome--
inside out and
upsidedown,
into and out from
wherever
beauty's found... .
The season of leaves,
beautiful wind, cold
turn, turn, turn, as
the earth
into something other than
its surface...

Knows nothing but air
on the ground.

Borne by the wind
yellow-golden falling
leaves--
sky gifts received
from the other-
side of fences.

The day after all
the celebration.

What's left is
what really
needs to be celebrated--
what outlasts that which
survives our ignorance?

The revelry to what actually
reflects our presence.

The delicates
among the harsh--
pretty purple flesh
against gray metal
skies:
conditions
not meant
in a universe controlled:

Reality is, regardless of
sensitivity,
soft and rigid, both
and neither.

This once, unbidden,
that glorious morning,
in complete surprise,
you placed your handsome face
upon my chest. We shared in
our ecstatic paralysis.

This gesture rests
as love abides in our
ever-unwinding timelessness.
(for Emma)

After our visit,
afraid no more of the pain
called separation.

Here we are in the actual--
sitting side by side
in these visitor's chairs:
no longer the other in mere
imaginings,
in fear of all departures.

Neither of us, any longer, prisoners
to living just memories,
finding what is timeless
in our reunion and
in what is us.

In our unique expressions,
anywhere we're fearless,
we embody again and again
our permanent communion.

Looking into a self-portrait
of a no-self is an I with
a toothful smile
and lithe, still,
fresh and fine, reaching-
out and meeting this
moment with beautiful laughter
and light,
meeting each other again
and again in the mirror--
this particular existence.

(for Emma and Tommi Joy)

This was
the us
that is
swimming with the turtles
on the black sandy beach
in Hawaii as one.

Each and every place
we've been in the world
has changed yet remains
the same.

The nows we live, living
our lives where we are,
alive in the communions we share,
being everyone and everywhere,
being just this--what is
as all of us this instant.

(for Vera)

Our pretzel meal--
our curves in love--once
married now divorced--amazed
though salted & pulled-
apart: Already consumed,
metabolized, perpetual.

We're still alive together--
within within--as
deliciously intertwined
entanglements.
In prison
    I am's on a plane
in flight
but where is he going?
How has he come to such
a destination?

There is no there
at everywhere's arrival.
Is stillness
a prison in the middle
of movement
while evolving, growing,
and rotating on
his axes?

Always back
to your fresh,
open face--
translucent. This memory
and feel returns
as solid as our bodies,
as clear as once your eyes
reading into and out from our
familiar forms,
touching the emptiness
as wide and as deep
as touch itself.

I can't begin to count them
the countless encounters
of love's expressions
and expansions.
The times we danced our dances
and kept exact our distances
and attractions.
    How else could we celebrate
the shapes we shaped,
apart yet one, our formidable forms
pushed out from these and those
formless embraces and timeless kisses.

Our journey--
traversing you and I
as we climbed hills and
mountains, under and through
half-perfect moons, shaded
landscapes all afternoon.
We met where desert dunes
meet ocean waves--
dry riverbeds now wet
with the anticipation
of as yet and the untraversed--
those hidden waterfalls and caves,
those ever so swayable openings,
passages and territories.
Re-breathing
for her--remembering
and turning my sister Kerry's
ventilator switch
to what if...?
The doctor made it clear, failure
after failure, that she
could only live with artificial breaths:
her lungs and esophagus
because of cancer now "mush."
All of us in the room nodded "yes"
to his question:
Assisted life or assisted death?
We chose the obvious
instead of what if...?

Reading a brief
to Stieglitz from O'Keeffe:
Sixty-eight words,
or signs, or symbols embraced
by her offered curves and swirls inked
with intent to reach
love's deeper depths or perhaps
cement what wasn't set
lest her efforts go unmet?
A "good night kiss" to Alfred she sent
the letters bold & fluid & spent.
I felt Georgia feel
what she really meant.
In our wake
    before the dawn
torsos, arms and legs... the world gyrates and whirls.
    Wrapt within,
while wrapped around,
    we ride its waves with
the waves we make,
    being as one belongs.

Not yet painted
    but its him
Huck Finn
    on the river
    with Jim.
What looks like escape
    is true freedom:
Giving effort by releasing
    the net
and yet
    and yet already met
outpours living's multiple
    robust colors
on a movable canvas.

Just a face away
    from that distance
between
the navel of your existence--
    that sacred spiral
through contingency's
    timeless funnel.
How much do we control,
surrender, or cling to?
Letting all go, this is freedom,
    these ever flowing moments,
empty and glorious, come from
    everything's complete
    fullness.

Moments before the storm
    bird songs continue
uninterrupted by what is.
Rain songs do not wait
    for bird departures,
no gaps--disappearance
    is illusion.
Entangled, entwined, enamoured, ensconced, wrestled into knots as beings undone.

Unsprung springs who dance out from into thus:

unencumbered, unclutched, unclung for what's to come already embraces us.

It's not the end the way we thought it would be. These words offer unroads yet unseen. We can enter each other's groves and grooves as we do, and as we did spontaneously without needing the world's approval.

(Machu Picchu, 2005)

Being here's everywhere among the stones, amid the ruins between the peaks a single heart beat contains these altitudes and depths-- a history of just truths.

One unnecessary word would prevent this instant apprehension.
December
Submerged and subsumed and
submersed is not dismorphia.

Feel free to swim nude or
else free with madness.

Distortion drowns what it doesn't
know, nor does it know

how to swim in depths beyond its
shallow limits?

Flesh and blood--

statuesque--
that vision

continues to dance
in a clinging white garment
and an earth's worth
of skin,

wrapping itself about
this beauteous

glance which
quickly passes but

lasts again and again.

The art of what hearts and hands
create in fulfillment
and restraint.

I keep seeing you make
your bed inviting then

keep being the one invited in
until you ended our sharing.

I keep the memory permanent of your quiet allure
and shape shifts--those

lean, rounded contours, a reach away,
while your smooth rare-touch

neatens the grooves, massaging every wrinkle
after wrinkle as our soft and supple

becomes taut and firm. I keep being, keep
remembering our movements and moments

like fresh ocean waves
licking the shore and undulating us.
Hurricanes and typhoons come through me into you.

We never from our ocean separate.

Blue eyes on blonde waves all the way to shore come through you into me.

Our celebrations ever present.

We're never more connected through curls, tubes and crests, falling for our rising, rising toward its crash.

Being whole the ocean every part our welcome, sweeping through our wetted oneness encircled is our us.

A freckled-face existence that couldn't wear another face. Red-haired with freckles all over.

I saw him in the mirror, saw them on my body, saw them into disappear, like everything that's entered by the senses eventually fades away like this "freckled-face disgrace," and his torments of derision, as an object of opinion, a subject not worth mention...

That couldn't be a destiny calling with its horrid supposition that I should wear this prison, ensnared by the myth of the pre-given?, or could it be just another contingency from one of living's naked, double-edged lessons?
Sense this day, there is no other,
    the crinkled leaves
skittering across the walk,
the freeze upending all touches
& exposed skin. . . . Smell the smell
    of what burns,
    the residue ashen.

The wind befriending the invisible
    into visible worlds--
the sounds that hear, the tastes
    that stay, after as before.

Spirit as winter
    the moon so large then
small as a marble
    in the sky.
We received light and
guidance--
a purity mirrored
distant yet near.
No wonder,
    just this night,
dark and clear.

I met Lao-tzu on
    the
Way when
and where
    all paths
emerge
    and
knew better
    than
to ask him
    for
directions.

One by one,
song by song,
the birds have gone.
Two by two
    the trees still stand.
Three by three
    the wind blown leaves.
Four by four
    a season's change:
Many by many,
few by few,
none by none,
    until until
we realize one,
    the One in All
the All in All.
11

I am a buddha not
outside the palace walls but
in a federal prison with
a collection of all the world's
inflicted.

Surrounded am I by the three poisons
and all their symptoms among
battered bodies and attitudes:
bruised, brittle and broken.

No escape from the moment you realize,
it happens to all of us
until we awaken from the terror of time.

12

Filled with Emptiness
in prison,
the hollows of
impermanence,
the timeless freedom
of feeling all things
connected--
not one instant is
"I" separate.

The earth of burdens carried
now weightless.

13

A Mulberry tree
naked makes
the full moon
its ornament:
Without promise
without hope
without without
Emptiness
blossoms...
15

Olive and almonds
these textures
of Emptiness
form their permanence
within our temporary
touches and feels,
tastes and smells.

Everything shared.
Everything heard.
The opposites of same celebrate
our differences inborn.
The never was occurs
again and again
in the always so
as always us.

16

(for R.B.)
The summer knew but
no one else.... The secret
safe without the sound. What
a madness began, which made
my life ripe, my senses acute,
my desire blind.
Exposed to a stranger self I
wanted to be known but not
found out.
Side by side, we sat on
Saturday nights
at different depths, or
mutual fright? Imagined or real,
our mutual feel, before
or never this life's ever after?

17

(for J.D.)

In the pool,
our conduit to ecstasy,
cool heat emitted
simultaneous
as our passion
summons us
to quench the fires
we can't ourselves
extinguish.

Diving in head-first
and fearless, we
self-combust
in our fresh, wetted
waters.

18

The undersides
of who you are reveals
those tender places worth
discovery while I am positioned
(wholes inside wholes inside. . .)

as am I, invited
to explore your secret
surfaces and hidden
depths.

as entrances
to your deepest core.
A fence gathering  
at this prison's exit,  

the moon's always full but  
not yet visible.  

Birds arrive and light  
in a finite number but  
their thickness, so dense,  
present as infinite...  

The sun, a plume of orange,  
including the clouds—  
a sun within a sun, and then  
all disappears:  

the birds, the fence, the  
plume, the exit, even  
the invisible part of the moon.  

A fence gathering  
at this prison's exit,  

Birds arrive and light  
in a finite number but  
their thickness, so dense,  
present as infinite...  

The sun, a plume of orange,  
including the clouds—  
a sun within a sun, and then  
all disappears:  

the birds, the fence, the  
plume, the exit, even  
the invisible part of the moon.  

Celebrating you Katie H.  
not in the accustomed fashion  
since you didn't make that turn home  
but arrived at your departure  
in a coffin.  

Wider become our smiles living  
in the present, and never  
wider is yours this moment.  

Remember the laughter our first summer  
brought us?  

Why ask, I ask myself, if one's  
omniscient in death?  

Why are we, the so-called alive  
so ignorant?  

It's how why's never become answered  
and corpses stay trapped with  
unchangeable faces.  

Swimming in  
the eye of the mind, in  
liquid images on either side  
of the surface.  

What a revelation:  

Nothing is this  
solid world.  

There is  
No other side to what is.  

No after-life.  

No permanent death. No  
need to want—  
just this—living beyond  
the opposites.  

The habits  
of your  

hands  
that dance  
through every  
task  
make magic of  
what is not.  

How wonder-  
ful  
this caress  
when felt.
Is your prison experience
a pinch of
cotton candy
at a carnival?

Cell-blocks like engaging
midways to enjoy
your latest fancy?

What flower best suits
your personality
in bondage—
a camouflaged mum or purple
pansy?

Prison is not what
non-inmates fashion but
46 flavors & combinations
of your garden variety human.

Taking the train naked
from San Francisco to home,
you and I and those coupled women alone
with our private lives exposed?

The truth cannot, about the love
that engulfs us, be hidden,
so misunderstood by a "them."

Although naked and vulnerable, we
share in the ignorance
of the other if our love of us excludes
the hate of "them."

Welcomed in your garden--
fragrant orange and
your freckled-face smile
a smile I returned.

Your natural companion:
woman on woman.
We shared and shouldered
this secret while
friends in the Army:
Soldiers in subterfuge and
survival with
one desire: to thrive
in our loves different than
the others.

Self-exiled as an
exiled self,
tasting not
the tastes so
craved, or
kept well hid from
all depraved?

What is it then: freedom
or imprisonment?

I does not know
what I should
upon reply.

The wants once "me"
will no longer be
achieved as self-exiled
nor as an exiled self.
What to make of the thoughts
that don't agree
with me about
the appetites and tastes
that you embody?

How do I fit inside what
the world calls fitness?
Isn't such an argument moot
since I'm locked inside
this prison?

What to make of the thoughts
that don't agree
with you about the appetites
and tastes that embody me?

Where do you fit inside what I
consider fitness?
Isn't such an argument useless
once I dismiss your
imprisonments?

What to make of the thoughts we
call us about the appetites
and status we consistently embody?

How do we fit inside the limits
from all we've excluded?

I see you
seeing me,
seeing you
--mirrors--

eye blossoms in
love's full bloom,
within these
reflections, our
moments' unions
continuous.

Who is this fresher Tommy
standing in the shadows
as another self, side by side,
in flesh and blood with his own image.

Inside our insides, who is inside
blood and flesh, in agency and
communion, unaware of being already

aware as the subtle witness to his own
perfect form--touching his own touch
with trust and wonder, looking

into the mirror of his what is, making
every one an us out of form and

uncaused Emptiness...