

All Fall Down

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The Masterpiece

I am at a turning point not where something
becomes something different but where what's real
becomes nothing other than itself where what's true
is no longer contradicted by its alternatives

A man stands in front of a painting and the painting
draws him into the moment of his being without recourse
to time or space and something happens outside memory
and meaning and the effect overwhelms him

Masterpiece he shouts and the moment takes on familiar
qualities education begins schools are built departments
are filled and the painting begins to fade from sight

I once knew a woman of remarkable beauty I saw men
become fools in her presence I wanted her to be
as real as the moment of her beauty

I wanted there to be no magic to bring these things
of magic into what we call the real not something we
elevate and denigrate beyond our reach

When my beautiful lover left me the clerk at the grocery
said *you lost her she was too much for you* I agreed
and I did not agree I saw a human being unable to accept
the moment of her beauty as simple reality

And neither could I accept myself as the same simple
beauty and so she pursued herself as a career
to make of her beauty a profession

This is what happens to masterpieces

Anyone can be a masterpiece if you accept your
life as the occasion of wonder if you do nothing
to give yourself a name not even in the mirror

This Empty Stage

I see this empty stage this room of others the revelation
of nature the open awareness of being and I surrender

I become clear in my surrender but my unhooked thoughts
seek to regain my attention images move in and out
replace each other they seek new ways to own
my interest

Disturbing and delightful thoughts move about
in my mind like familiar strangers

They fall like rain on the windows

My thoughts want my attention on love where even
the possibility of love becomes the object of another
thought the way I carry the thought of a lover I want to
hold my lover until I let go of holding the thought of her

I come to this open moment where she can come and go
like all patrons of this theatre of openness and being
this theatre of beauty and wonder

The object of another thought is the lover of *thought's*
desire but I am the lover of this wonder this beauty
this erasure this moment of being

Breezes Cool and Warm

We know breezes cool and warm we know gusts
and gales like creatures made of wind

The wind blows dust and snow and the wind blows
the air so clean everything looks fresh and new

One imagines life relentless upon us as one
imagines the wind in the quiet of the mind

The incessant wind the constant blowing wind
becomes the element one inhabits until every
activity becomes the decoration of the wind

And whatever one has within one's mind
becomes the parts of the wind and those who
come in out of the wind bring the wind with them

The wind in the trees becomes the wind in the eyes
the wind blows kindness from care it blows complacency
from serenity until we discover in ourselves a fierce
tranquility or we lift our feet and succumb to the wind

Some gravity holds us in place and we learn its weight
in the wind of our thoughts in the wind of our ruthless reality

But we have nothing to hold nothing to hold onto
no way to hold what cannot be held

In our windless being the wind is known for its coming
and going and when the wind relents when the air is calm
when we're at peace we rest in the tranquility of our
windless being this silent wind house is our home

We Assume the Stoic Hardens Himself to Feeling

We assume the stoic hardens himself to feeling but he
may have only cleared away the dross of his dramatic mind
the dross we keep in our love of animals children and
each other in times of romance remorse and regret

The wind blows for days without ceasing it seems intentional
as if it had a will but the wind has no design on us everything

and everyone responds to the wind

We give the wind our fears and desires and what if
these thoughts and feelings were no more of the moment
than calling the wind by a name

What if I am nothing but a man living a life and a wind has
blown through the generations from the beginning to this
moment of forming words to an expression of being itself

What if the doing and being of our reality were born
in emptiness what if our doing and being were
cleaned of what was and what will come to be

No wind can blow away what is unknowable yet this
unknown being is given the credit of the wind the same
wind that has blown us into this confluence where we
speak words aloud in the stillness of eternity

We are blown alive by this windless reality until we step
out of the dance of identification to speak in the recognition
of reality not reality's alter egos that occur in our communal
parade of characters and character

To let go of the commitment to definition feels like
a betrayal even when the definition is counterfeit

Every word I speak in this masquerade of language adds
to the dialog and I seem to cling to these approximations

The awareness of stillness is the way through this charade
I am this stillness my words are not merely a mask of sound

The stillness of my being stands in every word
I am the voice of silence I play in words and
stillness stays in every role I play

I Grieve the Loss

I grieve the loss of one I imagined
to be a partner of my heart

And when I hold my loss my heart holds sway over
the awareness that would free my heart to its acceptance

When I resist acceptance my life becomes its own façade

Still I am drawn to the façade and when I sit in agitation
and feel the nearness of peace when I neglect the awareness
that would ease my agitation I grip my old familiar pain like
a pleasure in the same fist that bars my freedom

Desperate Dreams

I love my desperate dreams the same way I love
dramatic characters caught in terrible circumstance

This emotional binding engages my love of engagement

in the theatre of life and when I walk out of the theatre
of engagement I engage my love of relief the same as
when any fiction ends its temporary life

I use imagined freedom to soothe the pain
and fuel the pleasure of my engagement

I love this dramatic production of neglected
awareness and postponed freedom

I love this moviemaking life this film of reality

My Mind Rebels

You will die without this thing you think you need

My mind rebels at freedom freedom sounds foolish
in the mind addicted to itself the shadow of death
is a shadow show

In love with light I wrap myself in shadow I sit in shadow
and love the light until I walk out of the contract of thought
this belief school these ideas I hold close that soothe
and savage my life

In my mind I am another example of the failure
of wisdom this is the kind of thinking the mind enjoys

My believing mind tells me I am the deceiver the deceived

and the deception united in the way we are human

Clearing away self-deception breaks the contract
of delusion that I enter into as a citizen of this life
this clearing away makes me a traitor to my history

The Shadow School

If dropping out of the shadow school is this difficult
how can I recommend it to anyone else when even
among those intent and committed to the pursuit
of freedom *freedom seems unattainable*

This is another message from the mind's failure
to find freedom in its own abilities

What comes naturally is forever unattainable
we are already our own freedom

To stay in the shadow school dims the light

And when I don't feel peace and when I don't think
of peace I may still become conscious of peace

I fall awake in the awareness of reality

Even in my darkest days I have known that darkness
is nothing more than darkness and not a sign to deny
the sun

In Anxious Attendance

I don't need to construct a cosmos for this awareness
I don't need new names or other names to match
the gods of our naming

I see the masks of the real that give meaning to life and
I see I'm more alive in the moment shed of its meaning

When I'm not in the moment beyond meaning I know
I am being deceived by the habits of my life that cling
to the habits of all our lives

I attend to the crowded moment and when I surrender
to the nameless moment of my reality I stop running
around myself in anxious attendance

Masks of the Moment

I seek the heart of the poet who died too young
but his story is not of a young man who died too soon

He lived in the truth of beauty and dying was his foil

Aware of his mortality he lived in pain before he died
except he was a poet but that is not what makes him
present in his life or ours

His rise from the dying fire of his life was a look
in the eye of eternity

He was not his mortal death not his immortal soul
he was their common reality he stood in the terrifying
nowhere of his own beauty and told the truth of it

He stirred free the phoenix from his own ashes

Destined to die our lives are often graceless we want
to invest them with grace and survival we want eternity
as our password we want to fashion a fine mask of a life

The poet discovered that submission to the beauty
of our masks does not save us but when we surrender
to the beauty of our being we become our own eternity
in the moment of our own forgiven mortality

We forgive ourselves for dying when we surrender
to the identical moment of life and death and our life
and death become mere masks of the moment

My Lover Leaves Me

*Whenever any lover leaves me I'm left alone
grateful for the love that lives in itself*

This has been my expression and I have
no more use for it

I have been romantic in the world I have been romantic
in the spirit and now I walk my days not in love

Before on the occasion of anything like this state
of mind I may have gotten drunk drunkenness was
an occasional expression of a romantic urgency

Now I live past these addictions and the romance
of their uses even past the use of a romantic reality
in thinking I am living well

The purpose of meditation is to stop meditating

With Nothing Left

With nothing left but being I seek the source of doing
whatever is done in doing is done again and again
until nothing is left but nothing itself

Nothing is the state of awareness I inhabit in my undivided
being nothing is the state I shun in my divided habitual self

In myself the world

I thought to change what does harm to the spirit
of all beings but in this moment I let go of the balance
of the imbalance as something to be done instead
I see it as something seen in being

From Our Origin

From our origin as thinking creatures we fell in love
with the workings of the mind

Every being from the beginning has lived in
the fullness of being itself in a mind that thrives
in the manufacture of separation

We fell in fear

I fell into the feeling that we're alone
in this life in an immense empty universe

*I became so finally alone
I uncovered the peace of who I am*

I am called *I am* so I might recognize this reality
without inventing any being beyond being itself

I fall into wonder
in the abyss of my own being

Accustomed to This Life

It's been said that everything that's not
needed for recognition will be taken away

People we call wise say these things

In the despair of existence there is nothing
upon which to found our lives

I founded my life on everything and my place
in it I founded my life on something of nothing
as if bare existence gave me meaning

Accustomed to this life as the physical children
of physical others we create structure
where no structure exists

Hello mother hello father

This Glorious Thing of Nothing

*We want life to have meaning until meaning
becomes greater than life itself*

To know myself without form did nothing
to rid myself of this personal pillar of meaning

*I held a romance of existence
I held a romance of myself*

I created a formless self that has no named reality
we have named this nameless formless self a *soul*

I have lived in the fullness of my being as a rich
romantic reality I kept a meaning of meaninglessness
I shaped nothingness to my liking

I named myself a selfless soul

I became a nameless selfless soul greater
in selflessness than I allowed myself as an ego

I became a hero of concentrated emptiness

I created a romantic version of the real in the loving
ownership of my self and my mind stayed at play

*Always a thing in everything and in letting go of myself
as a thing to be named I face the letting go of my life*

I joined with the god of gods in the thought
of no thought where there's no one present
to have the thought of no thought

Where there's no one to witness the absence
of thought except this soul this being of being
itself this glorious thing of nothing

In This Pretense

I became a self that knew its
creation and loved its performance

This romance of presence is a relative
reality I might have enjoyed for a lifetime

In this pretense I created a self that allowed
despair and the disillusion of meaning until
consciousness was seen as a keeper
of what cannot be kept

I gave my existence a passionate persona
with all the character of anyone I might
meet on the street

But in existence there is no familiar form
and no unfamiliar form either

By what name shall I call this nameless being
when in this only genuine reality of who I am
I can no more be named than can any god

The Placeholder

Ego is the placeholder of meaning ego
is the center of its own invisible universe

Ego is my human attempt in human thought
to match the deepest reality of who I am

Ego is a creature of thought who believes its beliefs

are dominant even when it knows its creation is imaginary

*This domination of thought is no small feat we've done
ourselves proud as a self-imagining creature of being*

But this is the romancing of existence this is the romance
of naming the unnamable

The tiger in the jungle has no name until we name it *tiger*
and the ego of the tiger follows its name into our thoughts

Being has no name but we given it many names this
naming has gone on for so long the love of existence
has become the love of its definition

*Here is the book of our thoughts here is the book
of our gods we have made them the same book*

But if I let go of the making of ego's beloved self
I discover I am an endless expression of this wonder

Love Has Been a Haven

I have been in love with family with children with women
with friends and with all others in this wide humanity

I have loved God and life itself while my most
cherished love has been with this nameless reality

In this love of being itself love has been kept a lover
until I am no longer in love with love's thought
or its definition

Depression and despair try to claim my romantic
character so they might claim my character's place

I have been brokenhearted in love but in love itself
I have never been broken

Love has been my otherness my sameness my fullness
my torment my soporific and my awakening

I have been asleep in love and I have been
awake in love this is the trance of love

Being in love has been a haven to keep me
from disappearing in love itself love has
kept me from the reality of my being

*But why should I go deeper into
this reality when all is love*

One should be as one is in love itself
not love as we have named it the eye
of the hurricane has been my home
but I am the eye and the storm

I refuse any refuge

The Approximating Mind

One man lay on the ground to discover
what happens in the death of the body

I lie in being to see what happens in the death
of my hold on the approximating mind

In this threat to their domain my thoughts try to
convince me that my life is the same as its misery

But I am the moment of living this moment of misery
I am not the misery that lives in this moment

As protection in this life from the threat and the fear
of death I have loved what might do me harm and
as reassurance I have loved what might return love

If I fall in love with death or if I fall in love with
some belief in a reprieve from death I might believe
myself free from fear but when any kind of love is
only another intoxication my freedom is obscured

The nearness of death opens the acceptance
that lives in our vulnerability but the mind is fitful
and love cannot relieve the indigestion of the
mind's practices

Mind will be mind and desire and fear
are its stock in trade

Awareness is clouded by desire and fear

I want awareness to be true to itself and not
its imitators not born from some thought or feeling

If I look for peace in an easier or even a more
difficult reality no matter how satisfying it might be
in the meantime even if that meantime lasts a lifetime
it darkens the reality that is who I am

The Rock Mother

Every mother is the first other

Every mother is the one who first bonds us to union
and separation hers is the life and death that shows
the bond of fear and desire

But when we let go of all relationships we see the union
that lives beneath all our attempts to unite in relationship

I am the rock mother I am she who is no longer
here to anchor my thoughts in love and fear

Motherless I have been an entity in a formless reality
it has been the way I hold onto myself as a soul until

the death of all relationships finds its honest despair

Whenever anyone seeking union dies or goes apart
the other may fall to despair I feel despair in the death
of my love for love itself

I feel despair in the love of my own being
I feel despair in the love of being itself
I feel despair in the love I feel in the world

This is the trinity of the romance of reality

This Feint of the Real

Love has become an unnecessary bond
this binding is the source of love's despair
when there is no need to bind what is

I have lived in the glory of being a lover
when there is no need for this feint of the real

We have always been what we take glory in naming
and holding as if it were a passing thing

Whoever has lost a love may find the reality
that lives before and after all transient realities

This enduring reality does not go away
the source of who I am deep in my own being

is greater than anything I might do to find it
in the heart in the mind in the world

I accept this despair to see the fullness
greater than my loss

To let go of myself as a lover I stay in the
recognition of this unknown unknowable reality

Without calling it a love of my heart
I stay to see disappear the separation
that exists between all forms of love

The Wisdom of the Wise

We are wise to listen to the wise until
we leave the wise behind to go into
the unknown the wise can only describe

An old troubadour speaks of his time as a monk
where the rigors of training are designed to break
a young man of his attachments

He discovers his aging has done the work for him
that the experience of age is a monk's rigor

The death of the romance of reality
comes to those who are ready for it

Yet we profit in knowing of the wilderness
even if we never trek to its center

Nothing is seen as clearly in the mind
as when the mind no longer holds it

What follows any release in the mind is the despair
of loss old patterns of thought seek to stay alive

I stay in the awareness of these thoughts until I am
no longer seduced by the persistence of their habits

I Live in the Regions of Love

I live in the regions of love until I see love
is only another camouflage

When I release romance from the habits of imagination
romance becomes its occasion and not its domination

*Knowing where I come from is not the end of travel
being free of romance is not the same as being sent
to a Gulag*

I don't love any hero or god or other any less
for cutting them loose from the romance of reality
I live in the wider reality that includes them all

Knowing I'm nowhere named in the language

of my poetry or the paint of my art opens them
to their source and me to my awareness

I once said I was no longer the one who wrote
my poems but change in a man's life is only
another part of what defines the image we
have of him no more true than a still picture

I am not the shadows of my stream I am not water
I am not movement I am not the course of my flow

In force and fury I am only their occasion

I am nowhere to be seen in what occurs
my pain and pleasure live in themselves

What you do with what I describe is yours
in the unraveling of your own invisibility

My amazing friend

Waking Up in Paradise

I've stopped eating my favorite sugar

And when we stop one thing we think something
different needs to take its place but there is
nothing different to be defined

There is no definition for this awareness definition
depends on distance to make itself clear

Recognition beyond definition abandons
the desire to be named or loved

Being is without borders love itself
leads nowhere but to itself

Beyond the undefined is more of the undefined

This is what is so disconcerting about awareness
it has no walls to define it this freedom contains
no containment

Letting go of sugar is not a call for more sugar
or for bitterness or a bland diet without sweets

Whatever my sugar is it speaks of paradise
it guarantees my ticket on the plane until I
discover I'm living at my destination

Waking up in paradise is a disappointment to the airlines

I Live in Town

I let go of seeing through the eyes of romance
and I see being greater than any romance
I might encounter or conjure

After living in the heart of romance *I live in town*
and familiarity is gone from everything familiar

In the presence of reality without its romantic cast
I lose the play of filtered light and sight becomes
vision with no division between them

We as children see with vision until we're trained
to see with sight but vision is our birthright

I Took a Trip

I took a trip to a foreign land it was magical
I went a second time and it was real

I preferred the real but I might have denied it
that first time *I drank espresso in Progreso*
romance is a dance that doesn't seem false

Romance makes the familiar miraculous and
the miraculous familiar but what's familiar has
lost its romance and romance its familiarity

This reality doesn't come dressed as something familiar

Without the look of the familiar the real is randomly
terrifying and almost unbearably beautiful

We First Spoke of Creation

We first spoke of creation in terms of desire fear
and romance before anyone is said to have seen
its face and called it by a god's name

We have known the desire to see and be with
the source of our creation until starry-eyed proclaimers
dull the reality and the Grand Canyon becomes better
known for its photography than its wonder

The romance of gods is no different
from any other romance

I feel the loss of my own gathering of the congregations
but I grew tired of the avoidance in love's approximations

I step off the bus and stand with my feet
on the ground the ground beneath my feet

Before Thinking Began

Life is the art of my life

In this theatre I see other dramatic characters
moving around me dancing singing talking
loving fighting killing themselves and others
being born growing dying denying the
existence of each other

Embracing in fear and passion acting
in and out of control and power we remember
before thinking began

Our character is born of humanity yet without
costume and history there's nothing holding up
its performance

My chair is empty

I look around in this emptiness I see arms I see
the tip of a nose I see the trunk of a body I see legs
I see feet I hear the resonance and echo of a voice

Deep breathing flows past the uvula

Out of my mouth comes the call of kings and I
become a king I hear a cry and I become a naked
baby on a dark highway the roar of the crowd
makes me a hero or a villain

There's a picture on the wall

I begin to sing the voices in my throat
there is no end to them

Someone enters through a door

Since I am none of what I appear to be I'm free
to be who I am in the most congenial way

Walking across the floor

I let my characters come to the stage
I let them have their day

I'm content to run the gamut of thoughts
and emotions of intimacy and idiocy

I hear a clock ticking

I speak of reality and yet I remain
no one ready at the center

Wearing a sweater

My mind wants to know the script
and what happens next

I look across the footlights my throat constricts
there's stage fright in being born a human being

As soon as I am able to speak I become fearful
of the empty silent stage I want to know
where I should stand and what my role is

I tighten my belt

I want to learn the comings and goings of the
other players I want to know their lines and mine

We smile at each other we greet the other

I become one in the company of others
I write and direct the drama

Here is the director's chair

I stammer when I can't remember my lines
I posture and pontificate and when I am
speechless I become an extra holding a spear

I fade into the background I come to the front
I tear at the scenery toppling the walls ripping out
the seats trying to find the meaning of my words

Nothing I say or do can change
my awareness of this reality

Mirrors only reflect what's in them

The Art I Create

The art I create is the role I play until I see
I have been the embodiment of fulfillment
since before the beginning

I am this art but there is nothing I can do
to surpass the theatre of there being no theatre

I sit in my empty chair conscious and aware
witness to my existence

I comb my hair

I am the essence of my appearance
but the appearance of my essence
is not mine to hold or keep

I see a book on a table

I cannot find my place on the stage yet nothing
that comes of who I am is out of character

I am the character of being I can't be
misunderstood even when my character
fails to understand what it knows to be true

Something tells the truth

I stay on stage I create a depiction
of the reality of being knowing nothing
can demonstrate what is but everything does

I take a bow

There is nothing that does not reveal
what is yet I cannot tell it without
becoming its unnecessary salesman

There is music

In Describing the Air

In describing the air I make the space empty
of my presence yet I speak as if I am present

I speak myself into being I am a sound born
in a shape that composes a soliloquy to its
own empty beginning

I lift a piece of paper

I take heart in the disappearance
of what makes itself seen and heard

I shout I am not here

I whisper here I am

I speak to the farthest reaches
of this empty space

This is a big theatre

All Fall Down

Those who recognize the reality of my sight
and sound are already present in awareness

This knowing falls on open ears
that are deaf to my words

All fall down

My head swirls with thought when
no-thought is thought's conception

No-thought populates my thinking no-man
inhabits my body no-stage is built in my presence
no-universe stretches to the limits of my existence

The man who was born a boy to parents in Illinois
is this one who appears on the stage of consciousness
speaking to nothing and no one to everything and
everyone after swimming he talks to his friend

*We talk so our souls may commune
so being may commune with itself*

The one who says there's no one present
is the same one who appears in place of
his emptiness

It is what we do

The art that frames me human is the same art
that reveals me artless and in this artless being
a voice comes out of the darkness

Everyone is naked and dancing all the time