

Sunlight is a Balm

Sunlight is a balm that falls on everything.
Orpheus singing is another balm,
along with sleep and curiosity.

Stillness is a dragon with clear eyes.
It will drink your thoughts, until even
fear is gone, the same as your balms.

In stillness, you can forget about time
and the fearful events that pass
for reality in your dreams.

All your contradictions, wars,
and engagements get pissed away,
like so much beer.

All temples of thought, luxury, and lust,
are gone in a flash.

Common Sanity Has a Fever

Common sanity has a fever
like an engine with gas in its heart,
like a fist flung against a stained-glass window,
like digging up dirt in hopes of finding a fortune,
like wagging your tongue in the mirror.

Some one of us has lost his bearings,
is bewildered,
has plants too big for his pots,
He sits in agitated peace,
in self-betrayal, in full bloom.

There's always time for second thoughts,
but this life becomes an errand of necessity.

Motives die in the night, are born again at dawn.
However, when true madness dawns, it shines,
and we wake up from time's deep sleep.

One Good Image

When one's image is dropped from the mirror,
the soul is soon seen separate from its gaze.

Seven sins are washed in the reflection,
a sun bird flies into the heat of itself.

Trapped among the feathers, freedom
is never lost in flapping or the heavenly furnace,
until one wanders off from following,
and creation occurs.

This is not juggling or dabbling in talk.
It's not walking on the moon, or driving too fast.

This is muscular song,
lying against the mountain range,
one arm along the crest ridge,
the other pulling the wind within.

Here's Our Little One

Here's our little one,
bursting up and out of the atoms,
and here's a thought to chew on;
the last one out gets to keep his tail,
the rest get pimples and complexes
and a host of delusions.

Here's the low one, the high one, the middle one,
diving in the waterfall, where the distinctions are lost.

Otherwise, we see the puffed up, the washed away,
the forgotten. Even a small mirror can't fail to reflect
how sad it all seems.

Here's our little one, a swimmer in mirrors,
never forgetting to notice he's also the ocean.

The atoms keep bursting in him, like openings to the sky,
like bubbles, up and out, like little pieces of nothing,
that pass into a much bigger nothing, that's known
or unknown in his knowledge and his knowing.

Like Tiny Monuments

With nipples like tiny monuments, the bloom is off the rose
and wandering all over town. Fast cars eat up the pavement,
like blurs of silver and green. The song transforms the singer.

Swollen from nothing into big things, we get a name,
and then someone demands a story, a rigamarole.

Pull back the veil, pull back the curtain, see the small thing
swollen into a big thing, playing in the vast arena of the world.

At the seaside, a great wave of nostalgia washes one's body
back and forth from tub to washboard and onto the clothesline.

Is there a shorter story than this one? Glitzy lights,
amusement parks, the internet, it's all another version
of the future, of memory, and then, dissolution.

The Wise One Says

The wise one says *there are no wise ones*,
from Kathmandu to Mississippi,
from the law makers to the totem carvers,
but the wise one's music flashes like fire,
even when the fire's gone out, so get here,
before the wash of time swamps us all.

Bright nights and milky days carry death on their backs.
The wise one walks with his eyes open, behind darkened lids.

One way to cross a bridge is to fly over it.

If you find a golden ring of sand in the desert,
it's a cause for celebration, or its another temptation
to ignore celebration for thoughts of enterprise.

No Naked Rumors

Rumor is all there is, until one rumor becomes a bestseller.
Another rumor becomes the source of a thousand rumors.
One rumor gets in hot water, when it begins to tell the truth.

In the desire to organize wonder and necessity
into a working plan with a congenial façade,
the structure of an airplane becomes
more valued than the embrace of flight.

If you wonder about the paths to enlightenment,
are you trying to get somewhere in yourself,
or are you trying to leave yourself behind,
or is it about achieving some perfect
and lasting ease and comfort?

Concerned people think they're in charge,
or someone else is.

If you're truly naked,
all rumors become rumors of rumors,
until they're rumored to become extinct.

Nearer My Life To Thee

Singing Nearer My Life to Thee,
with klieglights and the sword of Zorro,
women who look like waves, and sperm whales
dashing back and forth to the supermall.

It's a tragedy when people die, or get married, or have a baby.
It's also an occasion for rejoicing, like harvest time for the heart.

There's no reason to stay in school, when wild music
is playing in the jungles, full of amazing animals,
where bloodlust and jubilation rule the heart,
and sensation is outstanding.

You can let the police take care of your problems, your
politics, poverty, storms, sudden wealth, accidents, treachery.
Anything can become either comic, tragic, or both.

If you can imagine peace occurring in your center
only when you're dead, you may as well let the priests
take care of your problems, and your joy, and your love.

The Life of Death

Don't die sooner or later, death is constant.
Death is a ball bouncing from moment to moment.

The underlying moment is what counts,
unless you're bent on counting moments.

It is the nature of death to interrupt living and dying,
to call attention to itself, but death's big vision
is without images.

The life of death is a big sky, with new clouds
and more birds than you've ever seen in your life.

The big picture is full of birds flying and dying
among the sudden, evanescent clouds.

A Criminal Mind

I have a criminal mind.
Look where I am now.
I'm in a graveyard,
and I refuse to be dead.

In a world of dread,
disturbed by my lack of fear,
I'm a condemned sorcerer,
drenched in amazement,
wandering in fire.

The old ones are in a bunch,
the young ones are bunched up,
their closeness eases them into wars and disputes,
or else it opens their compassion.

Forgiveness forgets the crimes that are done to it.

I open my mouth, and out comes my own birth
and the birth of the universe.

Nothing could more simply done
or more impossible to name.

Climb Any Mountain

Climb any mountain.

You might come across a sign that says,
This mountain was built by the mountain builder.
Take heed!

But you took heed, you took steps, you bought a jacket,
you took pictures, you took time to write in your journal.

You see the stars floating in a purple sky,
like bright lights cast against an ebony night,
like millions of tiny flames in a vast motionless lake,
but there's a shadow on the water that claims credit
for your comparisons, even as you wonder where
comparison and credit came from.

If everything you ever thought was real,
was made real within the eye of your mind,
how could you not feel grateful,
whether or not you ever thought
there was a builder of anything?

Here's a Toast

Here's to a well-constructed Ezine,
with love and war and fashion, and pretty faces,
among the pics of struggle, triumph, and defeat.

Forgive me, but we must have been lovers in a previous life,
said one wave to another, as they were pulled back from the shore,
as their dramatic features become indistinguishable from the sea,
before and after their birth astounds the shore, once more.

Rain is everywhere, like music and parts of the night,
that merge and withdraw from even darker parts of the night,
until the morning's light makes night a musical memory.

Here's a handful of something.
China produces them, so does Nebraska.

These handfuls appear everywhere.
Holding them is common,
letting go is less so.

A Rolling Apple

A rolling apple, a peach on a branch, a peeled banana,
a pear, appear like rain falling from a human structure,
like images put together from a lovely or an unlovely afternoon.

Let's be kind, it's a gift.

A pool of water may not stay a pool for very long.
Even a tree will fly away, if you wait long enough.

Miracles are common, but the one who sees
a miracle and calls it common is the true miracle.

Look at the marbles in our mountains of marble.
Look at the marvels in our marvellousness.

They are diaphanous, transparent and thick,
like a giant brick Trojan horse, empty of war.

Build your house into a home free from the Trojans
and their rolling war machines shaped like toy animals.

Toss Me a Flower

Toss me a flower, a wine bottle, some fruit,
sprinkle my night with lights,
toss a hat on my head,
throw a pair of pants on my legs,
glare at me in reproach,
the world is sickly sore.

Eden is a graveyard.
You can only stack so many bodies in one place,
and pretty soon, it's not the same old paradise.

The language of the heart
calls for fewer and fewer syllables.

No one broke his leg today,
no one spilled anything hot,
not one homemaker had a problem,
every skier made it down the mountain.
Who's to blame when nothing is wrong?

Standing atop the Himalayas
lends one no particular advantage in love,
so the next time you reach the top,
plant a kiss on the sky.

Music in the Summertime

I'm shown what I imagine,
or is it the other way around?

Or might it be both,
with no difference between them?

Does music rise in the summer,
or does summer rise in the music,
or do we rise, like music in the summertime?

If I'm wearing an ugly color the day I die,
will I then be free of such petty concerns?
And what about now, in my choice of colors?

The most serene landscape appears
on the same screen as *Death's Dormitory*.

If I wear bright colors the day before my funeral,
maybe I'll forget to remember death.

Flying Up the Down Ramp

As a diligent self-examiner, use your fingers.
Pull the flesh apart, looking for worms.
Among some, it's a social bonding ritual.

With the skill of a physician with bedroom eyes,
the intensity transfers from internal to external,
from gangrene to the Ganges to Gangnam Style.

There's an endless parade of glamorous strangers,
cars, trucks, livestock, angels, and swimsuit models.

Breathe it all in, as deep as you can,
and then breathe it all out.

The cattle, cars and trucks,
the strangers, angels and models,
will keep coming, as long as there are paths
from there to here and here to there.

Everyone is a Fountain

Everyone is a fountain of glory, worms, and regeneration, clever names for the kids, genocide, inspiration, helmet laws, ways to drink beer, words that sing, table manners, bad jokes, international conferences, and folk art. Yet one's interest in these things seems worn down in time.

First, someone invented the piano, and by now, you'd think every song would sound the same, yet we keep hearing original music.

Perhaps the ear chooses to remember what it wants, or the mind is easily fooled, or delight stays fresh in the mind, as wonder transforms the mundane.

The temperature of the sun cools as it reaches the edge and then inexplicably heats up, just like you and me.

Heros Are Not New

If you want to know the truth, dance.
Put on the shirt of your truth, and then rip it off,
before you can remember your name, and dance.

The way the ear works is no concern to the ear,
though it may assist in the ear's discovery.

Don't give your machinery a pet name.
Heros are not new.
Drowning doesn't surprise the ocean.
Birds fly up and dig a hole in the sky.

Simple joy is revolutionary.
Arrest yourself in joy, even as you commit
all the other petty crimes of the heart.

The Biggest Ranch

Even the biggest ranch has a fence around it,
with cars on blocks, and religious volunteers
knocking on the door. Its estate is surrounded
by flying bugs and so-called wild horses.

We are Macadam, married to asphalt.
Our children mate with creatures from outer space,
in this dust-mote-memory forest-primeval among the stars.

Despite sand dunes in the mind, and wind storms in the heart,
despite fences inside and out, the spirit is never deranged.

Master of the Dream

Forget everything I say, my love.
Better yet, forget what I say, before I say it.

I guarantee you'll fall in love with me and my words.
This trick works just as well on all the other poet/lovers.

Forget everything, right before it occurs,
forget everyone, just before you meet them.

Forget love itself, and love will be your legacy,
and you will be its originator.

Every other animal is blessed with this forgetting,
except you, Master of the Horses, Master of the Fields,
Master of the Dream, except you, Master of the Mystery.

Now is your chance to outdo them all.

Secret Rumbling is My Nature

Secret rumbling is my nature,
along with a rumbling generosity.

I rumble in the most generous way,
nearly always in secret.

It's natural for me to vulcanize, without fanfare,
often in private and still willing to give generously
of the innate self I was born to form islands from.

I am a singer, quietly, au natural, with a song in my heart,
open to the wind, the sun, the sky, the stars.

Hidden mostly, I teach my untaught,
unteachable being to all those I meet.

I erupt, I flow, I scald, I burn. Let me burn
until I have become an oasis in the sea.

I Hear Three Songs

I hear three songs,
from three birds,
singing three times.

One bird keeps time for the others.
Their harmony delights them all.

Here comes a hunter.
Bang, the birds are dead.

This is a sad homage to beauty
and a paltry version of myth.

The oldtime poets never really cared
about urns or birds or even words.

Talk is a row of candles.
Poetry is a row of light.
Love itself is a row of no rows.

Once Upon a Time

My ambition has always been to fly over
the lands and the waters of the earth
and weave them into a sea and landscape,
just as they are.

I saw the face of Jesus among lichen,
not a lichen Jesus, but Jesus rising
like any one might from a pond or a pool,
with his hair slicked back and his eyes closed,
then open. He smiled and then he winked,
and then he sank again.

I have dreamt of flying above the earth and folding
the four directions into every moment and every place
as they are now, at any imagined crossroads.

I fly above and see myself below, looking up.
I see myself, above, without ever leaving my eyes.

This Mud

You could say that nothing is real.
You could invent things to fill the void.
You could call this life *a crazy box*.
We know we live in a fascinating, distracting reality.

There are swells in the river and uncertain royalty.
There are friendship rings and groping animals.
There are gods who revere and reveal themselves.
There are flights of fancy gone into a hard stall.
There are stronger drugs and all night kennels.
There are ala carte tales and overlapping stories,
in this life, on this earth, in this mud of muds.

This mud abhors a vacuum and loads it up with swellings,
caterwauling, overturned refrigerators, a fortress mentality.

In this surfeit of disorders, this leaning tower of babble,
this messenger service, this overweening language, this tick school,
wonder is never far away, in this inevitable slide from nothing
to something and back again.

One of the Mysteries

One mystery of poetry
is to sing the empty air,
until one is free to the ocean,
wide beneath the words.

In the beginning, we don't like poetry,
until it starts to sound like something,
and then we take relief in its verisimilitude.

Then we despise routine and begin to die,
until death and birth are green again.

In the life song and the death song
everything rhymes with everything else.
Each breath is ripped asunder by wonder.

To disguise while revealing,
these bundles of old words
are born anew,
wordless in their noisy beauty.

The Chair Outside the Door

Swift kiss of birth,
you win the reach of death,
you concede to conquer.

Eternity sings the heart
of stillness in its own words.

I sit in the chair outside the door
I open to the empty chair before me,
in which I sit, outside the door I open.