

The Wonders of Many Sunsets

**A selection of poems by William A Emboden
Arranged by Jason Jenn for performance
at Memories of Tomorrow's Sunrise**

The wonders of many sunsets
Remain in my heart.

I have left my home and now a
Roof of starry sky is enough.

How am I to render this moment of sunset?
One must not ask for another sunrise.

From the lake the old lady loon calls to me.

An old friend comes to me to say that
It is the time to light my lantern.

I would ask only that you collect
And keep my poems
My most beloved treasure

About A Poet

I struggled to write
That which takes a man twenty years to unearth
Transforming fiction into poetry is onerous
But a poem can triumph fiction with careful crafting
One must simply allow one's demon to have its say
One really should not interfere with one's demons
This is why some of his poems have ragged edges
They are torn out of his mind
Shaken out by his demons
Lovely poems have no demons and are dead
Revision, therefore, becomes so very important
As many poems may not age well
First versions seldom sing or speak their truths succinctly
Every poem presents itself to the poet receiver
In it there are no absolutes, only pure expression
The poet must marry his poems
If he must later kill them, so be it!
The poetry of a youth seldom satisfies in age
But may well live a luminous life after his death
Poems will order themselves in time
They need no immediate chronology
Each poem will find its time place and circumstance
We know little of this poet's life other than that in his poetry
Do not ask if his poems are true
By definition all of poetry is truth
I have known this poet
He still lights the line of my pen

Poet's Dream

If poetry be my art
I am not swift at it
I adore it and pay attention
To my words, phrases, and context
But some days it comes so slowly
That composition begins to meander
This tears the very heart out of me
Leaving me soulless
I have need of mornings
As the day gets darker
My mind wanders and is dull
A rain begins
It becomes a blowing gale
I look out the window
And listen to the exquisite sounds
I should prefer to write
Of a handsome boy stretched out
Occupying my Persian carpet
With his bodily flesh as fine
As he is tired from gymnastics
His muscles glisten from effort and are engorged
What a handsome lad god-descended
His bodily contortions distract me
I return to my art of poetry
Knowing that this never really happened
He should rest from his toil
And I from mine

My Painting as Poems and Music

No

I cannot paint by chance

Nothing significant happens by chance

Chance is allied to infinity

A concept that none can perceive

No, not even mathematicians

When I paint I hold my breath

Involuntarily glyphs appear

Leaving me dizzy but satisfied

Heavy breathing follows

I have written my poem; I can hear my music

My language is new as are the tones

My medium is pigment

Yes there is music behind all of this

My own music pouring out of me

It feels wonderful

And yet I return

A twist of phrase in acrylic

A comma of coloration

The stave my brush for accents

Fate? No, success favors those with ideas!

Happenstance? No, organized subliminal thought!

The music of the spheres is real as is my own

All in a mosaic of

Sanskrit

Aramaic

Ancient Greek

Voila! A new era has erupted

Creation

Poetry is not the information of secrets dead
It is living words united
In patterns not before expressed
Ideas new to us
Even to the poet
These are the words that
Both dance and sing
Mourn and burst forth in rage
Words restored to a place they never occupied
Words that sometimes do the poet's bidding
Made of living flesh and feces
Bone and ashes
Skin and hair
All things human
We live in an empty silence
Awaiting the coming of words
We catch a few and absorb them
Then hope for an internal drumming
To which our words may march
A tune unexpected in timbre
Do these words ever deceive us?
Of course, they do!
It is the curse of all poetry
The darkness rumbling under the beat of wings
An agonizing fear
Have I said it before, I wonder
Are they the words of others
We must believe that all is new
Knowing that we can never own our poetry
Proceeding in ignorance
We hope to arrive where we have never been
It is that which astonishes us

Finding Poems

In my bed I sleep
Dreaming of days gone by
When I was at my peak of strength
Writing poems even then
Versifying into boredom phraseology
I fell into a state of disarray
Until I came upon Walt Whitman
It freed me as a poet
His broad seas and bridges
So very free in expression
In "Song of Myself" I found a new freedom
I found my own self
Free as a person and as a poet
No more procrustean verses
Yes, I stood at the bottom rung of poetry's exalted ladder
But I was proud, happy and free
A member of popular ideas
Those who died and those who are still alive
My mind listens to them
Still I brought to my muse things half-perceived
My lines were not fully consummated
For reason of my incomplete thought
I had yet to learn the shape and form of beauty
Setting down those superior sensations
I seemed to be a lover who has not known love
I needed power just for a little time
That which came to me were the words of Constantine P. Cavafy
A poet honest and true
Who brought the whole of man to the fore
He became my patron saint
I then could write
Those verses elevating me on that ladder of poetry

Stathis Orphanos

He calls himself Samian (*of or relating to the Greek island of Samos*).

And that he is

But more

For he brings with him

The magical box that captures souls

His third eye of glass

A lens to turn the world upside down

And in a moment capture a spirit

He burns images onto paper

Poets, actors, and ordinary figures

No longer ordinary in his hands.

Their essence cannot escape

While still a youth or in old age

The thou of that is there

Stathis is the lad

Who wandered among books

And there fell in love

Words were always dear to him

Like the palpable flesh of youth

That he came to know so well

He is the soil of all of Greece

And especially her islands

He is the one who preserved her

All of the athletes

Came to be photographed

Their muscled youth embalmed on film

They will forever be the Kouri

Reborn each century

As gods unaware

For that third eye of glass

Has given them immortality

Stathian immortality

The Path Created By Jason

The New Year came and I felt bereft
 Of all creative powers
Like a change of seasons
 In which one steals from another
But because you made a request of me
 I was again filled with power
My heart beat with strength
 As my hand guided my pen
You asked me for my words
 You valued them and I had not known
What powers come from recognition
 Being that shaft of light
 The Jay-sun encouraging a path
 From the solar orb to the sea
The light does not reach land that I can perceive
 But I am assured of that stretch
 Between the golden ending across the sea
 And my position on the shore

My Muse

Everyone should have a muse of their very own
One who loves and inspires unthinkable thought
A muse to turn to for words when poetry resists.
Muse of the dark nights
Dark nights can happen in the day's light.
A muse of one's own can change the moon into sun.
Within your mind carried at all times
Invisible but to you
Making itself known at strange times
Moving the land in cursive script
To say those things that you cannot say
Or will not say
Ideas that are your own given over
No logic or systematic thought
More importantly, expressing the unknowable
Creating the unthinkable
Your muse is free from your instruction
It cannot suffer the whim of control
Mercurial, it comes and goes
For it does not belong to you in your time.
You have invented your determined hours.
They mean nothing to your muse
Why do you think that at this hour
And in this place
You are now writing?
No not merely writing but taking divine dictation.
It is your muse seeding your mind
Moving your arm and wrist.
Do you not know
That these words do not belong to you?
They are not your thoughts
Assuming their own path they walk
And you follow.
The muse is life's great miracle
And yet you have never met
Even in the recesses of your mind.
Forget your expectations
For the words that you claim
Will be given to you.
At those times least expected
Follow.

Tulip

A dog remarkable
For her love and care for
Her two friends, not masters,
For she masters them with love.
One, her nanny in whose crooked arm
She sleeps, a hairy child of tail.
The other her morning walker
And evening plaything. Old that man.

Dedication to T

Though you are bound in thought
It is not sorrow nor a sullen disposition
Your love is known to me
As only you have the power to explore me
The power to change me
Each day you awaken my spirit
Awaken my consciousness
Of the goodness of your being
When you leave me with a kiss
It grows within me
Taking root as a flower well cultivated
Blossoming in my being
You don't yield to anything other than yourself
And in yourself, the die is cast and it is good
You have endured so much of me
I am broken inside in so many ways
You are always there to heal me
You are beautiful unadorned
I do not wish to fail you in any way
When you are gone I conceal my anguish
As it is unmerited and you deserve more
Fire has passed through you
In so many ways you have been tested
And never found wanting
I view you each day in a clean new awareness
None shall take you but myself
For only I know the oneness of ourselves
A mute and beautiful thing are you
All to me

To Those I Love: The T and Tulip

When I have passed to a better place
Think of me without disgrace
Don't bind yourself to me with tears
Revel in those many happy years

I gave you my love, in full, of grace
And you always put that love in place
I thank you for the love you've shown
And now, as then, I am not alone

Don't mourn, or regret, don't grieve or sigh
Keep in mind, I am always by
It's a brief time that we are apart
During that time keep me in your heart

I'm always with you and our life goes on
If you should have need of me just call upon
Although you can't see me, I'll be there
Say my name in a quiet prayer

You can hear my voice; listen and try to hear
My love surrounds you; I always near
And when you come my way, as you must,
Our souls will meet, the rest is dust

At the last breath reach out and say,
"I come to you; it is the appointed day.
When we meet I embrace you, oh so tight,
All shall be day, not that dark night.

All shall be harmony, peace and rest,
You shall know that I love you best
So as you ascend that final mile,
I will be there with this same foolish smile.

Art Opening

When people gather for art it is lovely
Conversation becomes increasingly intense
A cacophony of intellect and florid imagination
There one gentleman stands in rapt observation
And he in time is observed by she who
Senses a certain harmony in these interests
How novel to see strangers come together
Sharing ideas as if they were bread
Two are becoming one

The cities meet and art speak begins
Words that have no meaning
Are given artificial wings or weights
Neither belonging to the work in question
Little do they know the artist stands by
He smiles a knowing smile being faintly amused

Then the lady with the hair like a broad-brimmed hat
The voice and face of an eagle declaims
“My daughter could do that...”
If her daughter could she would have
But of course, she didn't, can't, and won't!

The humble balding little man
Has stood before this painting now for an hour
It is his moment of adoration and tribute
He is drinking in its pleasure

The two gay gentlemen and their lady friend
Are all fingers pointing
Hands drooping at the wrists
They seem to be informed and one is heard to say
“We have three of his works in our Malibu home”

The one tall strange youth in a straw hat
Wanders as though lost
Until a gentleman offers his hand
And generates a frightened smile

How curious a crowd
What sounds ebbing and flowing
Strange dresses and informal wear
Torn jeans and hand-painted shirts
Not knowing that they are, for me, the exhibition

Art Now

Our obligation is

To leave tangible signs that we were here
Evidence that we created
That we understood that which went before
And believed in that which is to come

We must leave art as our one common language

We must propagate and transport knowledge

In all that we create
Enriching all, impoverishing nothing

Exciting and fascinating in its temporality

Building upon cultures past, going forward
These must be the footsteps that we leave
Not the entertainments of our times

We shall show that we extended a way of creating

Showing that we too had visions
There is always a future in imagination
These are those things yet deep and undiscovered
They will be the tangible signs of our passage here

Will the door to the future both open and close?

When open shall we see a bright horizon?
In this we must believe as
It is our motivation and driving force

When will we see a marriage of past and future

Of forms, materials, techniques that yet await us?

We must not lose the spiritual in our arts

Or our works will be mere reason alone

We must use all of our sensations

Even though we know that the present
Is ephemeral and the past exists only in our arts

Remember, it is ours

And all that we created changes

Self Portrait and Eulogy

I don't know how to be natural
I was born a chameleon
My colors change constantly
And my eye is on the fly

It is a joy to be untamed
And also to live one's own convictions
It is the giver of freedom
Assuring that no time or place is real

I am a wanderer in my mind
The frontiers are boundless
And the vistas spectacular
My life is an exotic fable

I have a taste of risk-taking
And I detest routine
Life must be curious
And Death - a splendid confrontation

I don't know my exact prognosis
Other than I am destined to be transcendent
Continuing onward through numerous miracles
Life – that great feast

Some think of me as eccentric
They are so correct
I would not have it otherwise
Yet my ideas are very clear
I am a disciplined savage
Quietly attacking without revealing
Every thought is a fiery encounter
A sequence of conflicting emotions

I have a passion for painting, sculpture, music, and movement
The garden of life is where passions are cultivated
Plants grow, flower, wither and die
It is a grand ordering of things

When I die tell them
“He is *in absentia*, changing costumes”
For my return will be swift
I am too rebellious to stay away

A Path Through Life

The color of love

 And then the color of oblivion
Between the two that thing called life

I own my aged face with pride

 Different every day
A quiet visage, but oh so telling

Those eyes pale and watery

 Glisten still in late age
A certain happiness is behind them

I have great sorrow for those who weep at dawn

 They are the visions of pain and sorrow
Within me death grows as does acceptance

I have found a certain sweetness in life of late

 Some find it incomprehensible
Perhaps it is my pursuit of beauty within

Those with blank faces

 Have a mechanical gait with no expression
I like to think of my crooked walk as a kind of dance

Every street side must be a garden that I plant

 As I pass through I pluck the weeds
This so that flowers can flourish

No one weeps over pain if and when

 They already own another world

For A Time

I know that you wish to hear me laugh
But it is not always possible
There are those recently lost
And they who must yet suffer
Thus this shall ever be
So I must pull myself together
And behave as one filled with happiness
It is not so very difficult
Forgetting grief and pain
We all must endure
Making another happy with laughter
Is little enough to ask of me
Life has been kind for over eight decades
So there is much to repay
The joy inherent in age is very special
Much that has been given to me
Will soon disappear, both the joy and the pain
Why not a smile for another
Why not laughter, given freely —hahaha
For it implies the little pleasure
As this life unfolds
It is appropriate to share
Happiness through laughter
How contagious it is
Each of us is uplifted in a different way
Pain disappears for a time
We have together created a small space
In which all is bright and beautiful
True it is fleeting
Yet one in which we find ourselves fulfilled

Searching

I try to unite
Day and night
Summer and lost spring
Tides of the broken seas
Waves in conflict
This moment and timeless moments
Have I arrived where I started
Is this life's pattern
Spoken in the loud waterfall and silent within frozen ice
Extracting the exact words
Making them dance together and sing together
This is not a simple calling
I work these words out of stone
Stones and the Earth remember
Do not find them to be illegible
Hold to every pebble
And seek its rhyming voices
For each is a part of Earth's soul
Forged by fire and loved by water
Holding the stone I understand
The union of millions of years
And I have no need to seek union in it
All has been accomplished

In Death Poetry it became customary for a person to write a “farewell to life” poem just before death or upon his death bed. Rather than being restrained these poems became rather open. They were the manner in which the poet would prefer to be remembered. Some are rude or even defiant.

Poems of Death are essentially an individual’s spiritual legacy. They may deny any further life beyond this, and they may even be jovial in content. There are no real boundaries to expression. Most frequently the moon, the sky, lotus blossoms, plum blossoms, mountains, etc. become almost standard symbols. More interesting are the personal reflections to include the desire to end life by suicide, seeking refuge from the hardships of life, speculation on the very nature of death, the nature of the good life or an apology for a life not well lead. The diversity is great, and yet all are cohesive expressions of final thoughts.

Poems of death were, among the Japanese, serious final thoughts whether religious, sentimental or light hearted. They do form a poetic genre apart from the rest of haiku. There is a point of crossover. Where the mundane enters into these final thoughts to include love, food, drink, or gossip. Whatever the subject, poems of Death tend to inspire in their construct and content a tradition that continues among some to this day. We would do well to accord the same considerations to our own lives.

Jisei are poems of one’s final thoughts, spontaneous verse, inexplicable verse, verse of anger at leaving or hilarious remarks at the end and the transiency of life. Many monastics went out on their own to lead solitary lives. Some became quite eccentric and the poems that they left seem strange to us.

Asked about my death poem I replied
Any of these poems that I have given to you
May be my death poem

It is a vain thing to write many death poems
I have done so as a transgression

These poems are to pay for my entrance to what
Birth and departure

I imagine that some fine final words would be
“The party is over.”

I am sure that my death is a mistake
For a poet of my stature would not be
So suddenly removed said the imperious monk

Do not speculate on any paradise
For it was never promised to you

For eighty years the drop of dew persisted
At the tip of the grass leaf and then disappeared
As did the poet

I have passed the final scene and now
Must make new preparations

Our lives are like fireflies
We light up so brilliantly and as easily
Our light fades and goes out

Why seek the meaning of life when it is and nothing more

On a long journey punctuated by grave illnesses
I am at last prepared

These are final moments in my life
And I have no laments

I shall end but I ask that you allow
My poetry to survive

When I have passed go to the shrine
Hit the gong once and clap three times
Wish my soul a safe journey