
All Worlds in One

Poems by William Wroth

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All Worlds in One

At midnight lightning across the lake two hundred miles away
Shoots and pulses above bands of black clouds and glow of northern lights
To the east the shy waning moon rises in clouds over the Sault
Above my head crystalline stars and the Milky Way,
Bright Mars holds the southern sky.
I turn back up the grassy sand gully,
Back to the womb of this world.

(August 19, 2003 Eileen's cabin at Dollar Settlement)

December 17, 2003

It is so cold this morning
even nestled in south-facing rocks
I would write more to tell you
what's in my heart
but my fingers can't move this pen

snow glaze on the high peaks
patches around me
inward joy of deep winter

December 21, 2003

Winter solstice
begins the expanding cycle
like the pine holding
onto the hill
we greet the new year

March Nights

Late at night listening
to the gentle drip of spring rain,
frost has left these deep ravines
even the most shaded nooks, flowers bloom.
Later still the full moon
breaks through blowing clouds –
is it warm or cool these March nights?
The sigh of a heart full of love
drawn toward the pure light of the moon.

Long may the light burn
that kindles our fires
may the words flow
may they sparkle and turn
bring down distance, down loss,
down pitiless streets, to remain.
May the chambers be opened to air,
past repair, past rainbow, past rain;
shadows recede before noon
casts all in its veritable light.

January 11th

We exist in fog, fog only
ghost trees washed clean of snow
gray deer stand like statues
breathless in the still-green meadow
new moon now opening all to light
the new year, new life begins
in these unseeming moments

Whitefish Point

Packed ice extends the point
two hundred yards beyond the summer shore
icebergs float along the edges.
Wordless we walk out into this world
by grace of winter gods.
The day dances before us
in sparks of light, and beyond
the sleeping lake.

Why do I read these old Chinese poets?
What do their verses really say?
A thousand years ago!
Here deep winter snow covers the path
no footprints lead to the door.

Life swift as the dart of a bird

– Li Po via E. P.

So familiar
wafting up
from the cup
sweet smell of chamomile
mountain nights by the fire
years of my life

Poem grasped out of the instant

Late blanket of snow
melting away
foxes crying down the ravine,
nearly midnight.
Wild cacophony
brings the dogs to bark
then suddenly: they stop.

Full moon, full moon
feeling of impending doom!
The woods are stark and bright,
where do they lead tonight?

Follow the courses down
watercourses
down
to the river
can you remember
the light flowing round
like water
like the water
the water's way
down to the river?

The song comes like
a stranger in the night
how did you find me here
mid winter's bare branches?

Could smell the animal smell
where the mountain sheep
bedded down
matted grass beds in the meadows.
Could smell the animal smell
bear close by in the thickets
along the lakeshore trail
later his prints cover ours in the sand.
*Delight in the senses
will clear the mind.*

Well the towhee walks
in fits and starts
kicking up leaves and dirt
gray as the gray sage
brown as the down pine needles
he vanishes in the rocks

Chickadee bushtit bunting
titmouse nuthatch flicker
birdnames form on our lips
and some they give themselves
birdsounds birdsongs
fill the bushes
bushtits titmice
chickadees flickers
and at night
bobwhite
and the whip-poor-will

At Menekaunee

For Gary Snyder

At Menekaunee Point
coyote tracks and droppings
up and down the beach
deer prints, no human traces
wild plums blueberries crawdaddies
bald eagle perched atop a boulder,
watching us, far below its nest.
After lunch swatting beach flies
with *Mountains and Rivers without End*,
a goodly weapon.
Snyder: "cussing & slapping bugs, four days from road
...fifty mosquitos sitting on the brim."
The warm south breeze brings them in
the beach flies at Menekaunee
they don't let off
until the north wind blows them out again.
"Me, I'm traveling on."

After Shalako Coyote

Who can talk about him
who can see him
as he passes through the woods?
Tail down, brown blur
in the fog of dawn
he lopes across the road in front of us,
at least six feet long!
Was I hallucinating,
up all night?
But Roy saw him too
saw him that way too.

The cry of the loon
on the lake at dawn
can be measured and told
as known
but not its beating, its sounding within,
the deep well untold
cry of the loon from the other world,
unknown.

On the level of that which is not yet knowledge
– Wallace Stevens

Not yet the realm of the visible
and still without words:
in the wood it's neither night nor day
through it we walk to meet
whatever phantasm is there,
dreaming.
Is it moon or sun in the bare wood,
white light fills the trees,
slender iced branches
or glistened with the summer dew?

The visible contains us
words define us,
all very sure.
Beyond the sighted
another country lies
wordless
stay there stay there and see.

Seeing the form of the formless, hearing the voice of the voiceless.
– Nishida Kitarô

Autumn cool seeps in around the window casements
stealing away last hopes of summer
the mountain rising like the moon
through settling mist, formless,
obliterated with first snow
and the road home now quiet as the night
time to turn in, turn
to the silence within.

Towhee laughs
I'm laughing too
head rolling back and forth
God you have given me
all this –
why do I want more?

Before Dawn

The world is enchanted
I can say because I know
It is my world
It flees from the ones
Who would clutch on to it
It is a sound in the air
And a voice we carry inside us
A voice from the other world –
I do not mean the dead, or the hidden
But what is all around us
This is the enchanted world we come from
And stand here fresh washed and ready
Like the bright light before dawn
Like fish flashing in the sun
Like white birds floating overhead, in a dream
It is here, all around us
And we know it.
Do not ask any more tonight.