

## Poetry

I've included some of my poetry for a couple of reasons. First is to show how important it is to integrate the Feminine into our adolescent boys. Although boys worldwide are raised to be tough, part of the initiatory process is to help reintegrate the Feminine to temper the Masculine. This, of course, creates a healthy and balanced individual.

Secondly is to offer glimpse at how the Feminine can be used to HEAL the Masculine, and that it is never too late to allow the Feminine, or anima, to reappear. Adolescent boys are too often removed from the healthy masculine, which I believe is deeply associated with our 50% divorce rate and other male related cultural problems. And thirdly, I never ask adolescents to do something that I won't do or haven't done myself.

Most of the following poetry came about as I struggled to bring the Feminine back into my adult male life, and to integrate it and overlay it onto all my cultural boy training. Too many teen boys are ashamed and fearful of the Feminine, because it seems challenging to the Masculine. Some of the most common male teen insults, or disrespects, involve attacking the other boy's masculinity (i.e. girly-man, queer, pussy, fag, you're gay, etc.) It's critical that our teen boys come to trust the Feminine will help make them better men, have better relationships with girls and women, and will make them caring and compassionate fathers.

Many boys, even the most difficult, often write poetry to express their emotions, and I strongly encourage that. The following poems are in the sequence I wrote them over a couple of years, with the notable exception of the first, Trade Secrets, which expresses the dilemma I faced when I first "discovered" poetry, and how the Feminine paradigm battled against 40 years of cultural training. I apologize in advance if some of the terminology I this first poem offends anyone, but it was ultimately important to be honest about where I come from. Enjoy....

### Trade Secrets

I'm not supposed to write this poem.

I grew up in Nevada, hunting and camping.  
I worked in warehouses with other boys and men.

I can do Monday Night Football, including the mandatory Budweiser.  
I hated Howard Cosell and secretly loved Muhammed Ali.

I never read poetry, nor would I ever consider writing it.

Might as well watch ballet, or listen to opera.  
Instead it was: Quick, throw me the ball, I'm open.  
Let's go get a beer (or 12), and a girl (or two).

If I want culture, I'll get wine with a cork.

Continued

Poetry, they said, is for sissies. Besides, I don't understand it.

Instead they gave me the sports section and the comics.  
I've lived in the land of Sports Illustrated,  
And blessed them when they came out with swimsuit issues.  
I've been to Field & Stream, Golf Digest and Penthouse.

They made me read some poetry when I was younger,  
But I made sure they saw I wasn't interested.  
I knew somebody once who wrote poetry, but I never told anyone.  
I may have to take it up, though,  
This girl I saw in Playboy says poetry is a turn on.

Poetry didn't flow with my life.  
I couldn't find words to rhyme with pizza or cheeseburger.  
I've lived where every other word is a swear word,  
And if you had a problem with that I could probably kick your ass.  
Where I came from poetry didn't get you laid, two hours of begging did.

The food of poetry is wine and cheese and bread.  
Where I grew up, you wouldn't dare eat pizza with a fork and  
You can't cut a sandwich in half no matter how big it is.  
You never drink beer from a glass,  
And you eat the hottest peppers with a smile.

Poetry allows and encourages one to cry.  
In my old world, if you cry, you die.  
Stop that crying right now or I'll give you something to really cry about.  
Go ahead and keep crying like a baby if you want to act like a sissy, .  
If you're going to cry, I'm not going to play with you anymore.

We managed to sneak in some acceptable poetry.  
Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate?  
Your eyes are like starlit pools of something or other.  
The important part was, you couldn't really mean it,  
Or enjoy it.

Continued

Poetry teaches the art of communication between the sexes.

But we asked: Does a hamburger come with that shake?  
If you loved me you'd let me.

Can I buy you another beer?  
Does that mean a blow-job's out of the question?

Poetry explores the deep relationship between men and women.

But I heard women are here for the taking,  
that 'no' really means 'yes', and the more the better.

The perfect woman, they said, after great sex,  
Turns into a six-pack and a good cigar.

The erotic and the exotic can be touched through poetry.

Man, she had legs up to here!  
I'll leave the curtains open so you can watch me do her.  
Bet you she's got brown nipples vs. pink ones.  
Fuck her if she can't take a joke.

Where I grew up, poetry could get you kicked out of the club.

Lately I share male secrets with women.  
Not the usual secrets, but the unspoken ones I am  
Not supposed expose, like the fact that  
I'm not supposed to write poetry.

9/1/94

With that introduction to the world of de-feminizing boys, let's move on.  
Remember, these are written to the Feminine within me, not to some  
person in the real world. That anima projection is a midlife crisis,  
projected onto a woman rather than being integrated within:

### Restless Night

I went to sleep, searching for your scent in the clothes you had worn.

I wasn't sure if what I thought was you was really you.

The search was bliss.

8/3/94

### Meeting the Divine Anima

As I sat,

Growing and closing at the same precious moment,  
I withdrew and I reached out.

They backed me into a corner, and my  
Heart hid inside of you.

It lives there now, sharing space between

My fortress and your love.

Balanced precariously, closed in and

Peeking out;

A little boy finds solace in a woman's heart.

8/4/94

### Pain is a Doorway

I touched your face, and you touched my heart.

I looked into your eyes, and you saw my soul.

You gave me your heart, and with that came  
the power to break mine.

I'm captivated with someone I can't keep,

Who makes me feel love and pain, and for the  
first time, makes me feel.

8/5/94

## Discovering Poetry

My heart is so full I cannot speak.

    When I touch the depth of your love,  
I find myself waiting there,  
    Hoping only to be touched and felt by you again.

Poetry is a new tool, a means of giving

    Sound to the feelings and  
Feeling to the sounds in my heart.

My soul is reaching out for you,

    Knowing you, too, are reaching out from your hiding place.  
Our souls and hearts embrace, intertwine and merge,  
    Reminding us of our past, and of our future.

Poetry is a new gift, a means of giving

    Substance to the body of the soul.  
8/6/94

## That Place

Just the thought of returning to that place;  
    So sacred, so private, so hidden, so guarded.  
Just the thought reminds me  
    Of what used to be there.

They say it's that place where joy resides, but

    I only seem to recall pain being there.  
That's where pain lives, too, they say.  
    Where then, I ask, is joy?

Before we came here this time,

    I gave you the key to that place.  
When it's time, we agreed, you would  
    Open the door I had locked myself out of.

Continued

You came as you said you would, reminding  
    Me of the pain stored so carefully there.  
And when you touched my heart,  
    I found joy.

8/7/94

### Life, Time

I watched the clock stand almost motionless  
    As I waited for the moment when I could  
Finally talk to you.  
    As I feigned interest in the everyday  
Conversations going on around me,  
    I recaptured the feeling of the  
Last moment we had, and more of me  
    Left the conversation.

I backtracked slowly and carefully,  
    Savoring every bittersweet moment  
We had shared.  
    I slowly began reviewing my life with a new  
Set of eyes called a heart,  
    And used this new vision to see  
What my future could be or should be, or  
    What it might only be, without you in it.

This journey through our past, my past,  
    and my future, took a lifetime.  
As I glanced up, the clock had finally  
    Moved, ticking off another precious second.

8/10/94

## Losing Touch

I know you're in there,

I get glimpses as you pass through sometimes.

It's like those wide peripheral images you think you see,  
but they never seem to be there when you really look.

I can't seem to be here, and in there with you too.

Having found you, rediscovered you,

My fear was I would lose you, and although I don't think you're gone,  
I can't seem to find you, and I feel lost.

This emptiness follows me lately,

A great cloud passing overhead.

Casting a shadow on the greatest

Light I've ever seen.

9/1/94

## Falling

It's been ages since I last touched you.

Four weeks by the calendar in this reality,

A lifetime where I live.

I feel you drifting away,

Leaving an ever increasing chasm in my heart.

I tossed a stone in that deep hole the other day;

It still hasn't struck bottom.

9/2/94

## Lost

There are places where things go when they're lost.

Socks from the dryer, the \$20 bill you're sure you had yesterday.

The things you can't seem to lose

End up in that junk drawer haunting you.

The worst, though, are those things that are so important

And precious that you put them in a special place,

And then you can't recall where that place is.

I'm afraid I've done that with you.

9/4/94

## The Message

At first I thought the message was for your benefit.

From somewhere deep inside myself I was told

To contact you, to hold you and your vulnerability.

For a long time I didn't understand the message.

My heart, unaccustomed to inner communication,

Responded with fear and trepidation.

I sought intermediaries, those who understood

Voices from the heart.

They pointed out your pain, your openness, how fragile you were.

I know, I said, that's what draws me.

So in my confusion, I tried to put into words

A message that was pure emotion.

I stumbled through those attempts trying to explain

Why I was driven to contact you, connect with you.

Your heart smiled and quietly listened.

Continued

Slowly the message became more clear and  
Fewer words were necessary.  
Soon, our hearts spoke and there was no sound.

Part of the message came from that other world that  
Happens before we are born into this life.  
For a moment we touched that other time, and understood.

But then the message became bigger, and we  
Became dwarfed by the immensity of it.  
It seemed to grow, and again I stumbled to follow it.

This message was no longer linear like a statement.  
It came in width and depth and from all sides,  
Enveloping and encompassing us.

How sharp a line we walked trying to  
Focus on the growing message.  
How close we were to falling off this world.

You were a mirror, although I couldn't see myself.  
And I; I was an open book for you to read.  
I looked beyond you, through you, following the message.

And slowly I realized what the message was.  
The message was the Divine, the Beloved,  
And the message was for me.

9/5/94 - 9/14/94

## October

This feeling of you is like October in the mountains.

At once warm but somehow cold also.

Indian Summer, time to prepare for the upcoming changes.

October is nostalgic. We sit and dream

of what we did not do this year, and

Hope we will get another chance with next year's birth.

Or we reflect on what we did, and what it all meant.

This year is dying, and once again,

A part of me goes with it.

A time of longing and bittersweet, I crave this time of year

And this feeling, dreading them both.

The leaves change to beautiful, different colors;

Caused by chlorophyll's retreat from the cold.

My heart has the same defense.

Some say we are in the autumn of life,

Which could also mean it's almost winter.

Lately, when I touch your memory, I think of Fall,

And wonder where you've fallen to.

9/18/94

## Waiting

I don't understand what the holdup is, where you're hiding.

You came to me first; touched me, tempted me, teased me.

I responded; I've waited this

Whole life for you to come.

Continued

That's your divine feminine, they said,  
    Mirrored in that other person.  
Make it safe enough, woo her, flirt with her,  
    And she will come to you.

To touch your feeling, and remember your depth,  
    I have to go to that longing, wanting place, and just stay there.  
Good, they said, for the word is the masculine and  
    The yearning is the feminine.

I write you poetry, and long for you,  
    And long some more.  
You still haven't come, and I don't know where to go.  
    I'm homesick, and uncertain which of us is trying to get home.

9/26/94

On September 28, 1994, my daughter was born, prompting this next one...

### The Traditional Cigar

Becker brought a bottle of port and cigars to celebrate the birth.  
    Good cigars; three dollar Brazilians.  
Somewhere along the way cigars became traditional, although most of my  
    Friends don't smoke so my last one was blue bubble gum.

The night lured us outside, and the beach called us by our new names.  
    Father, Godfather and Grandfather, each in our new role  
For the very first time, walking toward the water with  
    Our celebratory cigars.

We toasted the night and the water and each other, and  
    Mostly my new baby girl who inspired it all.  
We rolled the smoke around in our mouths, savored it and  
    Watched it disappear, casually flicking ashes as we talked of new life.

Continued

The next afternoon, Becker and I sat outside in rocking chairs,  
Drinking cheap beer and smoking expensive cigars.  
We talked of the world, old and new, and I thought if this is what  
Old age will be like, I won't mind at all.

I recalled other cigars from other times:

Rum Crooks we thought might get us buzzed,  
Cheap, foul smelling types that have their own long tradition in poker games,  
And those occasional ones shared around various campfires.

I probably don't appreciate good cigars as I should, but I've  
Come to realize cigars are one of those things men do together.  
Like this night, we met and shared space for a short while, enjoying our  
Masculinity, and the fact a baby girl could bring us all together.

10/7/94

### The Chasm

It's like you're everywhere within me,  
But nowhere at all.  
There's this incredible void; I feel you walking high along the edge  
While I'm waiting for you at the bottom.

I've heard the most dangerous thing in the world  
Is to try to leap a chasm is two jumps.  
But you're not of this world;  
You're from that other side where the Divine lives.

I dwell at the bottom of the void,  
A black hole where nothing escapes;  
Not sound nor light, nothing real nor imaginary,  
And certainly no emotion.

Continued

I look upward, a small speck  
    Peeking into your vastness.  
Wondering if I'm too small to see or  
    If you're too large to touch.  
10/15/94

### Dancing with the Divine

As a young man, or perhaps more accurately an older boy,  
    I stood slow-dancing in the dark,  
And dreamed of kissing her for the first time.

Feeling ultimately alive while scared to death,  
    I often turned my head from side to side,  
Hoping our lips might accidentally meet in passing.

For the infinite time that short song played,  
    Time stopped as I desperately searched for the courage  
To risk, to feel, to love, and be loved.

Certain she also wanted to kiss, I was too  
    Frightened of rejection and terrified of my growing hardness;  
I could not stop it, nor did I really want to.

Now, so many years later, I realize we weren't alone.  
    You were there. You were that feeling, and you were that moment,  
And I'm still clumsily trying to kiss you.  
10/17/94

## To the Point

Chasing the Divine Feminine,  
I write poetry, trying to describe  
How you make me feel and what you do to me.

As I've searched for all the ways to tell you how I feel,  
I realize now I'm simply flirting  
With the ultimate tease.

From my end, it's simple: I love you.  
But I don't know how to tell you, or  
Where to tell you, or even who to tell.

10/26/94

## On Hold

You're just a feeling;  
Where does a feeling live?  
How do you follow a feeling?  
How do I contact you,  
And where do I find you?

This feeling sits on my chest, teasing and  
Taunting me like a schoolyard bully.  
Enough, I say.  
"Uncle," I cry,  
But you refuse to let me go.

10/26/94

### I Wonder...

I wonder how softly I could touch you,  
or how deeply I could love you.

I wonder how quietly I could say I love you,  
or how eagerly I would say it to you.

I wonder how delicately I could kiss you,  
or how wantonly I could be kissed by you.

I wonder how closely I could look at you,  
or how openly I could give myself to you.

And I wonder how quickly I would give it all up for you,  
or how easily I could surrender to you,

If only I knew where you were.

10/24/94 - 11/4/94

### The Wind

The air around me is quite elusive;  
Odorless, weightless and formless,  
It's too delicate to touch and impossible to hold.

And then a breeze stirs, hinting at the  
Subtle substance of moving air  
That can now be felt and possibly heard.

Breeze matures into wind,  
Absolute in it's power and  
Ability to make itself known.

That wind reminds me how little control I really have,  
For I am small leaf, ripped from  
My tree, and drawn inescapably into your wake.

11/10/94

## Hard as a Rock

I was raised to be like granite;

Cold, hard, sharp, unmoving and unmoved.

Be like a rock, they said, and you'll never get hurt.

But each year, when times are at their coldest,

Little bits of soft, feminine moisture find

Their way into the smallest of cracks within the rock.

At night, the water freezes within the granite.

It manages to expand, and slowly

Widens the crack in the rock.

You've become those tiny drops of water,

Slipping through the cracks in my hardness,

And breaking them away.

11/20/94

## Passing Through

Perhaps I'm getting used to you not being here.

Emptiness and mere existence have become bed partners.

A void fills that great space you created,

Turning fulfillment into an empty vacuum.

I desperately miss that longing feeling, and long for the yearning you create.

You used to break my heart every moment, touching me,

While never quite being there.

The hopeless longing is better than the emptiness.

There's such a thing as being too elusive, too removed.

Play hard to get, I heard, and you might not get chosen.

Continued

Lately the world and it's reality come  
At me like a freight train, relentless and unstoppable.  
I'm so busy getting out of the way, I can't hear you calling.  
Are you calling me?

Eternity is that time span your head can cope with  
But not your heart.  
When you're near, the yearning and craving I feel make reality  
Worth tolerating. I miss that longing.

1/11/95

### The Wall of Tears

She asked me who told me not to cry.  
Everyone, I thought, but  
Nothing came out of my mouth.

Why did they make me hide you, bury, you, deny you?  
What makes all those men so afraid  
Of the Feminine they can't even see?

I found the gate that acknowledged pain, and  
I found the door that hides the rage.  
Behind them all is the wall that leads to tears.

I cried many times today;  
All but one were for other peoples' pain.  
An acceptable loophole, I suppose, in my training.

Pain led me to the wall of tears, but  
I found no way through.  
The sadness of not knowing how to cry, made me cry.

3/25/95

## Opening

When I finally found the armor,  
    Admitted it, acknowledged it,  
I saw the potential for softness.

Hammering away at the armor,  
    Slowly, methodically, painfully;  
A scratch here, a small dent there.

Unable to locate the straps and  
    Catches, I've been forced  
Into trying to break in.

This armor is heavy and uncomfortable,  
    And I'm weary of wearing it.  
Besides, I've just noticed a slight tear in it...

12/29/95

## Mentor

He was perfect: he had been homecoming king and  
    Captain of all the teams he played on.

He was 25, my first mentor, and to those of us  
    Wrestling with adolescence, he had it all.

He was a carpenter; capable of creation, and he  
    Made more money than we ever dreamed of.

He took my brother and I places; ball games and to the dumps,  
    Sneaking us a beer now and then.

Continued

He had the perfect girlfriend to my young eyes:

Buxom, high heels, and sometimes she stayed the whole night with him.

He had the perfect cars: a truck for hunting and fishing,

A '57 Chevy Nomad for all the rest.

He was the perfect neighbor: crafting a dresser for my brother,

Building a mantle for my father, giving me my first down sleeping bag.

He was the perfect son; visiting his mom every week,

Mowing her grass, painting her home.

He once brought the perfect girl to dinner at mom's house,

Being the perfect son.

He excused himself from dinner for a moment,

Went into his childhood room and closed the door.

He pulled out the rifle he had hidden in the closet,

The rifle he had cut short sometime earlier.

He sat on his old bed, swallowed the barrel end,

And in one great, loud moment, ceased to be perfect.

3/20/99

### Apathy

If it's our culture that's struggling with apathy,

Then why am I, the passionate one,

Also beginning not to care?

Continued

My Internet provider asked me how I felt  
About Kosovo bombing and Kevorkian's verdict.

Click here, it said, and tell us how you feel.  
Click there, I thought, and tell them how I feel?

If only it was that easy. Can the depth of my  
Emotions, my despair, be calculated with a  
Mouse click and drop down menus?

The written word has long attempted to  
Explain how we feel, to paint a verbal picture.

To describe my fear, my dismay, my depression at it all,  
Takes all the words in the universe.

Maybe I do need more apathy. I have to quit caring so much;  
Caring about the way things used to be, and mostly, caring  
Too much about the way things are supposed to be.

3/28/99

### The Mall

Shopping has become a drug, a cultural fix to  
Fill our emptiness, pacify our hunger.  
The stores tell us who we can be, and who we  
Should be. Endless possibilities.

Adolescent girls wear their new sexuality like a  
Prom dress: beautiful, special, uncomfortable;  
A powerful new tool with no instruction manual.

Continued

The unspoken rules are clearly written: look, but don't touch.

Look, but don't let me see you look. I hope he  
Looks at me. What's he looking at me for?

Old people walk slowly past the shops, trying to keep up with

Changing times and styles. Minimum wage clerks offer to help.  
He looks at her, frustrated, and says "Remember when...?"  
"Yes," she says, "but that was a long time ago..."

Middle aged parents spend more than they should, trying to give

More than they had. They watch boys and girls the same age as their  
Children: making out, groping one another, and pray their kids are different.

Like most people I went to the mall looking to fill a need.

Once again, I left, one bag in my hand, and  
Feeling more empty than ever.

4/3/99

### Return

Two halves unite, reunite after

Unknown lifetimes, countless moments.

Together again, they become whole;

Complete, a purpose fulfilled,

Only to be separated again by

Fear and suspicion.

The desire to remain whole persists,

Driving them forward, forward toward wholeness.

A risk is taken, a risk is received,

And wholeness returns.

4/8/99

## Crying

The song brought feelings

Unable to be expressed in my own words.

I couldn't speak; the words trying to open a floodgate

Of emotions I normally avoid.

Tears came easier than words, and flow they did;

Crying the words that wouldn't speak.

The silence was powerful,

And perhaps that was best.

1/31/00

all material Copyright Bret Stephenson