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Song of the Ghost Dance

The wind stirs the willows
The wind stirs the willows
The wind stirs the grasses
The wind stirs the grasses

Fog! Fog!
Lightning! Lightning!
Whirlwind! Whirlwind!

The whirlwind!
The whirlwind!
The snowy earth comes gliding
The snowy earth comes gliding.

There is dust from the whirlwind.
There is dust from the whirlwind.
The whirlwind on the mountain,
The whirlwind on the mountain.
The rocks are ringing,
The rocks are ringing.
They are ringing in the mountains,
They are ringing in the mountains.

—Paiute, *American Indian Poetry: An Anthology of Songs and Chants* by George W. Cronyn (New York, 1962)

Nothing lives long
Nothing lives long
Nothing lives long
Except the earth and the mountains.

—Cheyenne, *The Magic World: American Indian Songs and Poems* by William Brandon (New York, 1971)

What is life?
It is the flash of a firefly in the night;
It is the breath of a buffalo in the winter time;
It is the little shadow that runs across the grass
And loses itself in the sunset.

—Chief Isapwo Muksika Crowfoot, *Studies in Comparative Religion*
(Winter-Spring, 1979)

You and I shall Go

It is above that you and I shall go;
Along the Milky Way you and I shall go;
Along the flower trail you and I shall go;
Picking flowers on our way you and I shall go.

—Wintu, *In the Trail of the Wind: American Indian Poems and Ritual Orations* by John Bierhorst (New York, 1971)

All doctrines split asunder
Zen teaching cast away—
Four score years and one.
The sky now cracks and falls
The earth cleaves open—
In the heart of the fire
Lies a hidden spring.

—Giun, *Japanese Death Poems* by Yoel Hoffman (Tokyo, 1986)

Seventy-one!
How did
a dewdrop last?

—Kigen, *Japanese Death Poems* by Yoel Hoffman (Tokyo, 1986)

Empty-handed I entered the world
Barefoot I leave it.
My coming, my going—
Two simple happenings
That got entangled.

—Kozan Ichikyo, *Japanese Death Poems* by Yoel Hoffman (Tokyo, 1986)

The pure morning dew
Has no use for this world.

—Issa, *The Moon in the Pines* selected and translated by Jonathan Clements (New York, 2000)

Story on story of wonderful hills and stream,
Their blue-green haze locked in clouds!
Mists brush my thin cap with moisture,
Dew wets my coat of plaited straw.
On my feet I wear pilgrim's sandals,
My hand holds a stick of old rattan.
Though I look down again on the dusty world,
What is that land of dreams to me?

—Han Shan, *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'ang Poet Han Shan*
translated by Burton Watson (New York, 1970)

Walking along a narrow path at the foot of a mountain
I come to an ancient cemetery filled with countless
tombstones
And thousand-year-old oaks and pines.
The day is ending with a lonely, plaintive wind.
The names on the tombs are completely faded,
And even the relatives have forgotten who they were.
Choked with tears, unable to speak,
I take my staff and return home.

—Ryokan, *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryokan* translated by John Stevens in *Buddhadharma: The Practioner's Quarterly* (Winter, 2002)

Eternal spring wind,
I know you won't be too rough
On the delicate
Branches and buds
Of the weeping willow.

—Rengetsu, *Lotus Moon: The Poetry of the Buddhist Nun Rengetsu*
translated by John Stevens (New York, 1994)

Why bother with the world?
Let others go gray, bustling east, west.
In this mountain temple, lying half-in,
Half-out,
I'm removed from joy and sorrow.

—Ryushu, *Zen Prayers, Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews* translated by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto (New York, 1963)

A dash of rain upon
The lotus leaves. But the leaves
Remain unmarked, no matter
How hard the raindrops beat.
Mind, be like the lotus leaves,
Unstained by the world.

—Chong Ch'ol, *Anthology of Korean Literature from Early Times to the Nineteenth Century* compiled and edited by Peter H. Lee (Honolulu, 1981)

By the highway of Release I came,
Yet by the highway I did not go.
Stumbling on the crazy bridge of fame,
Lost I my day, for I did not know.
Falling to the stream of death, I found
Naught in my mind for the ferry fee:
Not a cowry though I looked around,
Nor the name of Hari for saving me.
Birth in womb of woman thus for me
No more availed than an empty dream.
Birth from woman also is for thee:
Gain then Knowledge of the Self-Supreme.

—Lalla Yogishwari, *The Word of Lalla* translated by Sir Richard Temple
(Cambridge, UK, 1924)

Mother! Mother! My boat sinks in the ocean of this world:
Fiercely the hurricane of delusion rages on all sides!
The mind is my clumsy helmsman: stubborn passions, my six oarsmen:
I sailed my boat into a pitiless wind
I sailed my boat, and now it is sinking!
The rudder of devotion is split: tattered is the sail of faith:
Into my boat the waters pour! Tell me now, what shall I do?
With failing eyes, alas! I see nothing but darkness—
Here in the waves I must swim,
O Mother, and cling to the raft of Thy name!

—Bengali Hymn, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* presented by Whitall N. Perry (Louisville, 1992)

Selections from Dust from the Whirlwind

Feautres in

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