

*Written in the Language of the Heart*



*An Anthology*

**Rick and Louise Nelson**

Written  
in the Language  
of the Heart

For  
Brother David  
with love,  
Rick & Louise

Poems and Prose  
For Those Who Travel  
the Inner Way

Selected and Woven Together  
by  
Rick and Louise Nelson

MMII

For transforming handwritten drafts into printed pages with love  
and creativity, we deeply thank Patty Matthews.

© Copyright 2002 by Richard C. Nelson and Louise K. Nelson.

See Acknowledgments.

All rights arising out of preexisting copyrights revert.

This anthology is also dedicated with admiration  
and respect to

- Brother David Steindl-Rast  
and David Whyte:  
teachers of The Language of the Heart.
- Robert Bly, Stephen Mitchell  
and Coleman Barks:  
fine poets but also inspired translators  
without whom much ancient beauty  
and wisdom would be lost to us.
- All those who are our companions  
on the Inner Way.

# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>I. POEMS AND POETS</b>	<b>5</b>
Arthur O'Shaughnessy, George Leonard, Kūkai, Antonio Machado, Pablo Neruda, Lu Chi, Jeremy Reed, Anna Akhmatova	
<b>II. ONE SONG – DIFFERENT SINGERS</b>	<b>15</b>
Katy Butler, Robert Bly Lao Tzu - Gia-Fu Feng/Jane English, Witter Bynner, and Stephen Mitchell Kabir - Robert Bly and Czeslaw Milosz/Robert Hass Rilke - Robert Bly and Stephen Mitchell Omar Khayyam - Edward Fitzgerald Rilke - J. B. Leishman and Stephen Mitchell	
<b>III. THE HEAVY HEART — THE COURAGEOUS HEART</b>	<b>29</b>
William Ernest Henley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Walter de la Mare, Matthew Arnold, Rainer Maria Rilke, Anna Akhmatova, Ojibway- Frances Densmore, Marcus Aurelius	
<b>IV. TIME AND JOURNEYS</b>	<b>37</b>
Zimmer/Campbell, Mandukya Upanishad - Robert Hume, Louise Nelson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Alfred Tennyson, William Blake, Naomi Nye, Brother David Steindl-Rast, T. S. Eliot, W. S. Merwin	
<b>V. SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON</b>	<b>49</b>
Chuang-Tzu, Su Tung-p'o, Antonio Machado, Mary Oliver, Mundaka Upanishad - Stephen Mitchell	
<b>VI. THE TREMENDOUS ATTENTION REQUIRED FOR SEEING</b>	<b>59</b>
Rainer Maria Rilke, W. S. Merwin, Frederick Franck, David Whyte, David Wagoner, Rudyard Kipling	

<b>VII. THE NECESSITY FOR PASSION</b>	<b>69</b>
John O'Reilly, William Wordsworth, David Whyte, Rainer Maria Rilke, Antonio Machado, Mary Oliver	
<b>VIII. INTROSPECTION — KNOW THYSELF</b>	<b>77</b>
Jalaluddin Rumi, Miguell de Cervantes, Lu Chi, Apostle Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Tilden Edwards, Brother Lawrence, Robinson Jeffers, Rick Nelson, Derek Walcott, Juan R. Jiménez, Mirabai	
<b>IX. VISIONS OF THE WAY</b>	<b>89</b>
Jalaluddin Rumi, Kabir, Angelus Silesius, Lao Tzu, Charles Simic, Robinson Jeffers, Apostle Thomas, Aztec Prayer	
<b>X. MOMENTS OF TRANSCENDENCE</b>	<b>99</b>
W. H. Auden, Andrew Harvey, Anna Akhmatova, Pablo Neruda, William Butler Yeats, David Whyte, Sara Teasdale, James Wright, Wendy Downey Teichert, John G. Magee, Jr., Goethé, Brother David Steindl-Rast, St. Francis of Assisi	
<b>XI. CHRISTMAS</b>	<b>117</b>
William Shakespeare, John Betjeman, Rick Nelson, T.S. Elliot	
<b>XII. THE INVISIBLE ROPE</b>	<b>125</b>
Czeslaw Milosz, Wendell Berry, William Butler Yeats, Steve Kowit, Al Zolynas	
<b>XIII. BECOMING AND BEING</b>	<b>135</b>
Joseph Campbell, H.D. Thoreau, David Whyte, T.S. Elliot, Alfred Tennyson, C.P. Cavafy	
<b>XIV. ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS</b>	<b>145</b>
Robert Frost, Teilhard de Chardin, Stephen Mitchell, Fleur Adcock, Jalaluddin Rumi, Kabir	
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>AUTHOR AND TRANSLATOR INDEX</b>	<b>161</b>

**The boat shouted, waving bright flags,  
its silver hull blinding in the sunlight.**

**But you had this idea you were going by train.**

**You kept checking the time-tables,  
digging for tracks.**

**And the boat got tired of you,  
so tired it pulled up the anchor  
and raised the ramp.**

**The boat bobbed into the distance  
shrinking like a toy—  
at which point you probably realized  
you had always loved the sea.**

**Naomi Shihab Nye**



We've mentioned the "artificial time" humans invented; "empty time", a space that is silent but defined by what is on each side of it; inner-world journeys that seem to occupy time, and "vehicles" we may conceive we will use for them. But what about "no-time?"

A great deal of valuable and poetic thought has been given to the idea of avoiding the conception of time entirely. As more and more Westerners — through meditation, dream work and other devices — explore alternative states of consciousness, the realization grows that there are realities where time is simply not one of the dimensions.

Ram Dass, in his first book, put it in the title: *Be Here Now*. To be fully present in the "instant moment" is not to be in "time" at all. The Zen meditator's nirvana is precisely this, but the concept is not exclusively Buddhist. Consider these words of Brother David Steindl-Rast, a contemporary Benedictine monk, relating the stillness we spoke of earlier to the moment which is outside of time:

The moment we let go of our time, all time is ours. We are beyond time, because we are in the present moment, in the now which transcends time. The now is not in time . . . For certainly the future is not, it has not yet come; and certainly the past is not, it is no more . . . Assign the shortest span of time to the now — you can still divide it in half: one half for future, one half for the past . . . And so we find that in time there is only the seam between a past that is no more and a future that is not yet; and the now is not in time at all. Now is beyond time.

Our Latin tradition defines peace as *tranquillitas ordinis*, the stillness of order. Order is inseparable from silence, but this is a dynamic silence . . . Silence in this sense is not only a quality of the environment, but primarily an attitude, an attitude of listening . . . Let us give to one another that gift of silence . . . Only in this silence will we be able to hear that gentle breath of peace, that music to which the spheres dance, that universal harmony to which we hope to dance.\*

Eternity is not time without a perceivable end, as is commonly thought. Like the “now”, it is a conception that excludes time completely: eternity is something that never began — it always was, is now and always will be. “Attachment”, one of the most difficult obstacles on the Way, can only exist where time is part of one’s reality. As Blake put it:

from POEMS FROM MSS

He who binds to himself a joy  
Does the winged life destroy;  
But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity’s sunrise.

William Blake  
1757 - 1827



\* From *A Listening Heart*. Crossroad Publishing Co., New York, New York, 1988.



When someone has known a number of peak experiences, it is not surprising to find him seeking a way to live which will allow him to spend more time in transcendental states of consciousness. As Brother David Steindl-Rast says:

**... Self-understanding attained at the "still point", this is the core of the peak experience; the burden of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets; the hidden source of Haiku poetry; the goal of the monk... If you have experienced, no matter how marginally, the painful bliss of it all, why not concede the possibility that others might attempt to center their whole life on this one goal ... \***

Which may explain how a mere human, who did so center his life, could become a Saint; and set forth in writing what is possible for all humans to become.

**Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.**

**St. Francis of Assisi  
1181 - 1226**

\* From *A Listening Heart*, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, New York, 1998.