

THOU AND I (2003)
for tenor, baritone and tape

Thou and I is based on material from my electroacoustic opera *Powers of Two*, but in this setting the two singers represent lovers. The opening love duet, a setting of one of 131 stanzas written by Tennyson in memory of his friend, Arthur Hallam, is followed by a tenor solo using a Whitman text from *Leaves of Grass* which also celebrates male bonding. In the baritone solo, the singer appears to have passed into another realm beyond our reality as expressed by R. M. Rilke, yet he longs for his lover, with whom he is reunited in the final duet, based on Rumi's poem "Thou and I" and Katherine Philips' ode to a female friend.

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, CXXX

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,
I give it especially to you, do not forget me,
An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd, more direct
darts awakening rays about me, So long!
Remember my words, I may again return,
I love you, I depart from materials,
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.

Walt Whitman: *Leaves of Grass, Songs of Parting* (1860)

Eeeh, eeeh
I do not see, I cannot breathe.
Nothing is there for my eyes to grasp
And I no longer exist
... no eye, not I

It is strange to no longer live on the earth,
to abandon one's habits, so recently acquired,
to no longer give to the rose
the significance of a human future;
to no longer be that which with endlessly trembling hands
one once was, and to have even one's name
drop away like a broken toy.
It is strange to no longer wish for things,
to see all that once had substance, connection,
flutter about so freely in space. And yes, it is tiring
to be dead, filled with recollection,
until gradually one might sense
a piece of eternity.

R. M. Rilke: *Duino Elegy I* (trans. by Norbert Ruebsaat)

Our chang'd and mingled souls are grown
To such acquaintance now,
That if each would resume their own,
Alas! we know not how.
We have each other so engrost,
That each is in the union lost.

Inspired with a flame divine,
I scorn to court a stay;
For from that noble soul of thine
I ne'er can be away.
But I shall weep when thou dost grieve
Nor can I die whilst thou dost live.

Thus our twin-souls in one shall grow,
And teach the World new love,
Redeem the age and sex, and show
A flame Fate dares not move:
And courting Death to be our friend,
Our lives together too shall end.

Katherine Philips (1631-64): *To Mrs. M. A. at Parting*

Happy the moment when we are seated in the Palace, thou and I,
With two forms and with two figures but with one soul, thou and I.
The colours of the grove and the voice of the birds will bestow immortality
At the time when we come into the garden, thou and I
The stars of heaven will come to gaze upon us;
We shall show them the Moon itself, shall be mingled in ecstasy,
Joyful and secure from foolish babble, thou and I.

Jalal al-Din Rumi: *The Divan of Shams I Tabriz* (trans. by R. A. Nicholson)