



Voice Versa is a powerful collection of more than 200 poems by Martin A. David, ranging from 1959 to 2019. The topics cover a wide scope of human experiences, emotions, and observations.

VOICE VERSA

A lifetime of poetry

by Martin A. David

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VOICE VERSA

A Lifetime of Poetry



MARTIN A. DAVID

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NATURE

Storms

Every wind dust-thick
The air is green
Of tree green
Grass green
Grey green death.

Heat is a breathing thing
World filling
Head filling
Blue spaces filling
Between purple clouds
And invisible clouds
Like tons of corpse hands
Stroking faces
Of walkers
In storm city.

Dust-thick wind
Grows crueler
Purple grows black
Gasping grey green of death
Filters light.

Far away
A white hot whip cracks
And huddled children count the seconds
Before the whiplash roars

The scary welcome sound
God moving furniture
Upstairs
(Why can't we run outside and see Him?)

Dust-thick wind
Makes trees drunk
Drunken trees dance
Like joyous Hassidim.

Torn newspaper
Gets up alive
And runs somewhere
In circles
Nowhere
Secret place.

First drops fall
Like bullets
Through dust-thick wind
Death grey green
Heavier
More
More
Splashing drops
Splashing
Flash and groan
ROAR
Crescendo crescendo crescendo
(Witches fly in that magic time)
When hot clouds

Burst
Like crushed bodies.

Storm wind
Screams
Whips tree frenzy higher
Blood drops
Rain
From black sky
Black clouds
Black rain
Black trees
Black wind
Black screams
Frozen in memory
By whiplash flashes
Of blue ice light
Darkness again
And then the roar
God breaking furniture
Upstairs.

Earth throbs
Turmoil of lovers
Rising falling
Rhythms
Faster
Slower
A million ecstasies before
Crescendo crescendo crescendo
Writhing

Fiercely tender
Biting Clawing Stroking
Now NOW
Lightning thunder
Rain
Surging rain
Bursting like rockets inside my head.

Thunder
And the wind subsides
Distant thunder
The lightning is no longer in the room
The earth is peaceful and tired
Trees tremble softly
Warm green winds whisper
And caress wet towers
In storm city.
1966

Call me

Call me
When the sky breaks
And the trees groan
I want to be
With them
In their sadness
And their fury.
1966

Coyote Chorus

Am I—

Yes, to me I am—

The only witness?

Quiet as ashes, the night.

Mid-melody—no warning tap of baton on music stand—

The coyote chorus starts.

Soloists overlay each other

With tone and rhythm.

Cante jondo—Deep song—

The combined joy and pain of existence

With improvisations on a theme engraved in group
memory

And a linguistic banquet table

Of ways to say, "My life is good."

2012

Deer in Firestorm

She waits

Fear shakes her slender legs

Shall we go now?

He, roaring rage at the storm that devours his woods,

Hesitates.

The fire reaches out for them—and misses.

Smoke scrapes lungs sore and paints red corners in soft,
brown eyes.

Shall we go now?

Together they race beyond the sound of death.

They will survive.

In spring the tasty bitterbrush will come again.
And life will rise again from blackened earth.
2000

Counting

Count
Counting
Counted
Count down
Count out.

Count the stars.
Number them.
Watch them change and burn.
How many many many many are there?
(And only one of me).

Come closer
Leave those unreachable dots of light alone—
Unless they fall.
They are not part of me.
They decorate my world but are not of it.

Count the trees.
Number them.
Watch them change and dance.
How many many many are there?
(And only one of me).

Come closer.
I can touch you.

We share breath
We share secrets.
The spirits inside you laugh to me at night.

Count the leaves.
Watch them cling in place.
Watch them make the wind blow with their quivering.
Watch them float on breezes
And find new homes
On the silent earth.
So very many many of them.
(And only one of me).

Come closer.
You are the flowerless flowers.
Let me read the messages
Written on you
By the wind
By the sun
By the night
By the trees who gave you birth.

Count the creatures.
Smell them on the breeze.
See their signs.
Listen to their voices—
The only part of them they do not hide.
How many surround me
As I paint word pictures?
(And there is only one of me—
One of me

And one wounded bee
Crawling in the dust by my feet—
Looking for a peaceful place to die).
2013

Flowers

The skeptical world announces clouds.
Flowers, in response, repeat life.
Enjoying snow,
Ignoring endings,
Witnessing with insistent flames of color
The adventure called tomorrow.
Flowers repeat life,
Invite life, lead life,
Call life's name
And life appears, carrying flowers.
1998

Spring

I must be part of it.
The old (sadly) fades
And newness seems to light my brain.
New showers of opportunity,
New thoughts,
New poems.
Trees wake up.
I am a blossom on a branch.
Come on spring—
I am so ready.
2013

Rains

I remember rains before.

Rains and winds that carried tree branches as big as

I was

Rains remembered and rains present

Blend like dreams.

The snarling roar of winds

Playing rough with trees

Fills the night and dances across the day's soundscape.

I remember small rivers replacing streets.

Dirty waters

Rushing on secret errands

(As if they had always lived there)

Then retreating to leave a sludge of leaves and trash

as memories.

2012

Lizard

Endless acres

Of spreading

Green expanse—

A fly

On a single leaf

Grey lizard

Running up

Garden wall

To find sunlight

Bzzzzz—

Goodbye fly.

1961

Counting the spots

Counting the spots

In the sky

I lost track—

One fell.

1961

Waves

Why did you dress up

For my lonely crossing—

Harbor waves

In white hats?

1965

Sunflowers.

Two hundred thousand sunflowers.

Yellow hatted and staring—

Shoulder to shoulder to shoulder—

At the same

Fiery sky god.

Not one feeling less special,

Not one knowing that it and it alone is not

Blake's own "Sunflower

Weary of time who traces

The steps of the sun..."

None caring about

Being a cash crop—

Next door to a field of corn.

I salute you,

Sunflowers—
But only in passing.
1987

The seashore is full of long today

The seashore is full of long today,
Long wings, long beaks, long legs.
Waves break long,
From distances beyond the eye,
Running to gasping demise and peace at last
An inch away from shoe tops.
Pelicans with long, lunch box mouths
Store fish for journeys yet unplanned.
Long-legged egrets—always preparing to dance—
Stand still and record the scene with glinting eyes.
Long-winged gulls argue over morsels
And soar in search of fantasies.
Long, lithe otters roll playfully and dine
While floating on their backs.
Bright sun casts long shadows.

Across an inlet, long-robed pilgrims slosh in water to
their knees
And, hoping to scratch an itchy longing for eternity,
Are blessed and pushed under long enough to share a
prayer with fishes.
1999

River Whisper

The river whispers,
Lulling me

As I gather
Sunshine, relaxation, fresh air.
The river whispers
Giving sibilant warnings to the fish,
“Watch out, he’s here again,
Offering tasty bits of bait.”
But like so many freebies,
There’s a sharp hook attached.
The fish, in fish talk, give their thanks.
I, warmed through and filled with life joy,
Say thanks river for your song.
2018

The Bud

The bud that burst in summer sun
From rouge bourdeaux
To flaming red
To flame
Embracing
Fast
Went down to winter withering
I watched
Not understanding why
A flower had to sleep or die
Hoping
In summer again
You will choose life again.
1970

Tell Me About Old Friends

Tell me about old friends
Riverwater
Has no old friends
Only good friends
Bridges are my old friends
My good friends run with me
And we meet
Around rocks and rapids
Dashing together
And apart
Communicating
Each time different
But always sharing
Riverbed
And laughter.

After Rain

Sunny morning after rain.
It's a sky wash, light wash, air wash
And music on the radio doing a soul wash
As I drive under cottage cheese clouds
Spilling out against blue.
Moments of OK-ness
Contrast the static inner voices
Yammering in chorus of peril.
Heart beating faster.
Adrenalin pumps urging flight
Or fight the mind mastodons
And sabre-toothed worries.

When—this is not a rhetorical question,
I really want to know—
When will peace come?
Does this tightrope stretch from here to death?
What wrong choices did I make
To get strung out, strung up, strung along like this?
Is it really necessary—won't somebody tell me—
To go on buying safety forever?
A gram of flesh for a piece of peace
Until I've paid my pound and pound and pound.
The sanctuary is a dream
And the distance grows with each step along the way.
Promises have no currency—not yours, not mine,
not life's.
In blue sky sunshine these mildewed thoughts all grow.
Oh, please, please, please, please, please don't send
the rain.

Eclipse Poems

A final step in a long beginning
Dragon Monster eats moon
The old moon is swallowed
As I am swallowed.
My shadowy fade
Like the moon's
Is an illusionary disappearing act.
Spoiler alert: Lunar globe and I
Show up again in the next scene,
Chewed up and spit out by mythical creatures
We both emerge
With fewer toothmarks than before

To shine as bright or brighter
In new places.

.....

The moon disappeared tonight
I watched in wonder and promised to be good
If only it would come back again.
My neighbors came and went
Glancing upwards—shrugging.
What are you doing sitting out here, they asked.
The moon, I said, the moon has gone away, I said.
Oh, they said.

2014

Summer Springs Over

Summer springs over.
Obstacles fade in sunlight.
Fall rushes forward.
New plans plant and grow.
Coagulated anger can turn to music.
Music disappears as notes decay.
Old lives condensed to memories.
New memories hurry past,
Painting traces of themselves
On a canvas too empty to be old,
Too old to be new.

1999

Sun

Weight shifts
Weight lifts
Hoo-ha, the power sun returns—

Sheds silent rays.
Gray winter fingernail
Clings to crumbling cliffs
To no avail.
Spring into summer
Spirits prevail.
Seed sower, I envision a new crop.
The essence of I don't like it is change it.
The conjoined twin of problem is solution.
Hoo-ha, the power sun returns.
The son of powerlessness spreads not so silent rays
And plants a song.
2012



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