

Death is Before Me Today

Death is before me today
like health to the sick
like leaving the bedroom after sickness.

Death is before me today
like the odor of myrrh
like sitting under a cloth on a day of wind.

Death is before me today
like the odor of lotus
like sitting down on the shore of drunkenness.

Death is before me today
like the end of the rain
like a man's home-coming after the wars abroad.

Death is before me today
like the sky when it clears
like a man's wish to see home after numberless years of captivity.

Anonymous, c. 1900 B.C.
Trans. from Egyptian by W.S. Merwin