“Sometimes it’s said that the end of every out breath is actually the end, the opportunity is there to die completely.”  Pema Chodron

(1)
Others ran in screeching and splashing, eager to swim away. At the edge, I stayed coaxing my small body to enter what turned my lips purple, my fingers white, my bones into a coil of cold in which I shiver for decades. Now I’m diving in, every hot blaze of my fifty-six summers alchemized into this desire to immerse my body in cold ocean to kick and kick harder, to frog leg and to reach and pull, reach and pull. Now there is no other challenge so easy to overcome. The thrill of this simple victory seduces me, this ocean I live next to granting a single, simple pleasure that depends on no one, frees me from bodies on the shore, in the cottages, the cars, from those voices asking too often for what I can’t give.

(2)

Head turned, eyes open to light shimmering across water, to kayaks laid like crayons of many colors, the parked cars luminescent beyond them.

_Breathe and blow. Breathe and blow. Breathe out._
Head turned to that long out breath into infinite ocean while my legs kick and kick through one stroke, two, three and twice that again before I breathe in, open my eyes to gold spread by summer sun on this ocean that holds me.

(3)

My hands reach into deepest cold that descends so far it will never be touched by summer. My body stretches across its sun-warmed top. I am touching both, pulling through what is
inseparable, opposite, side by side. This body
turned hungry now for rhythm that is known—
warm, cold, light, dark—keeps me moving forward
into the unavoidable, constant, and predictable change.
Reaching, kicking in this act of faith gives delight
as does my heart now only an organ

pumping blood, giving strength, not betrayal,
not loss, but thriving, resilient, amidst flecks of light, dappled
in the dark of the outbreath, in the light of the in.

My eyes open to what is ordinary, ongoing, then close
again to submerged, selfless, transmutable
nameless being.

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