

I looked at the world  
and saw emptiness:  
tides of evil washing higher  
than my pebbles,  
my bulwark of good effort.

I saw smiles like shells  
no love nor care within  
Gracefulness as armor  
or weapon.

I emptied: hollowed as an eaten tree  
Why work?  
why smile?  
why love?

A sage said: good and evil are  
tied together like a hand:  
without each side,  
nothing can be grasped.

A sage said: work is living  
work when hollow to fill;  
work when full to overflow

A sage said: these things I know are good —  
dinner with friends in laughter — the  
sun rising as the lake steams — the kiss  
of the love of one's age

Hollow, I worked  
until I turned from work to realize I was filled

Hollow, I smiled  
and heard my laugh ring forth with friends

Hollow as a broken reed, I kissed  
and found my head resting on my love's shoulder, watching the sun.