

LYRICS, NOTES & IDEAS FOR C.D. VERSION OF “SONGBREAD/ANOTHER OCEAN”

by BIRD BY SNOW

1. DOMESTIC FREEDOM::: Electric & nylon guitars, melodica, singing & dishes by Fletcher. Piano, & drums by Spencer.

::SUNG::: In the billowy dawn I am my own, I belong to nobody. But still I am held prisoner by my long life's responsibilities: to give and grow and work, and try to justify the life I lead. But there's no room in the world, no comfort or guarantees. Because we've made this modern world feel so unmapable, dark, weird, and wide, and full of tasks unnatural. So we are naturally blinded, and overwhelmed. But consider for a moment your domestic dog, who appears loyally to serve you, but in fact obeys only one law...and that's to rise at dawn, and each successive morning, to feed the heart that she was born to make beat...and to stare unblinking with eyes black as night, at the present moment and so the meaning of life.

::SILENT::: When I just wake up in the morning I belong to no-one, and no-one is also who I am. Boundaries are not set, and conditions don't control me. I am free. But my inner-own-world gives way eventually to the outside world which we all create together. In that world barriers spring up easily. Categories we create, and distinctions we accept, separate out our world, each other, and ourselves. The modern way is to lock everything and everyone into a dualistic role of "purpose" and "usefulness," meaning: "this is for that..." (that krill is for feeding that whale, that stone is for shaping and crafting, that dog is for companionship and loyalty) nothing exists simply for the sake of itself. This is such a rigid pattern of evaluation that the roles cannot even be easily reversed. Of course, a corollary exists also, and so we see some things as "useless..." (a dull and brittle stone is a worthless stone, a grouchy dog is a bad dog). We all live and struggle in this constructed world, we all inherit it and create it simultaneously; sensing its many short-comings people try to develop practices to undo our patterns, and this type of sight. Ironically this makes for more challenges, because often a privileging of one practice over another arises, one way of seeing is set at odds with another. I struggle personally with seeing certain activities as much more valuable, particular ways of being as more honest and true; convincing myself that poetry is more real than housework, that a wolf is more free than a dog, but really there is no separation. In an effort to work on my own shortcomings I have included a field-recording at the end of this song: "Mystic Sounds of Doing the Dishes..." which is actually just a few seconds of my own tedious time cleaning. By putting "nothing special" on a record, I celebrate that moment, and elevate its meaning for me... the same way I celebrate wind in branches, music, or mystery. I hope to raise each moment of my life, and all ways of being, to the same level, in order to be truly present, always.

2. IF YOU WAIT::: Electric shruti drone, bowed banjo, electric guitars, steel-string guitars, Kou Xiang & singing by Fletcher. Drums & percussion by Spencer. Cello & singing by Mania.

::SUNG::: At the end of the owl's voice in the quiet Heaven's Shadow, if you wait an old song will follow. And you'll be treated to all the histories and good of human living, the present-moment-gift, always present, always giving. At the end of your own self in the Empty Moment Hollow, when you surrender a new song will follow.

::SILENT::: We gather, don't we? Like the night, the forest, the oceans, or some notes to form a song. The world is a voice, and we are the breaths of life, the lungs of music makers. But what of beginnings and what of endings? How does our song travel, when does it end, and where did it start? I hear many sounds unfolding in the present-moment-drone, gifts of music held together in the air by nothing at all. Every sound seems to stretch on forever, getting longer and longer, quieter and further away but is nearly never finished. It extends to the edge of the void, and eventually joins all other sounds in silence. This is how I sometimes see myself...as a sound. – In this song I hear an owl calling out in the night, far off, and then it is gone, and it reminds me: there is an end of me, as there is to any sound, imperceptibly subtle are the changes from "quiet" to "silent," but there they are. Still though, one wave informs another, and a new sound, or new life, carries in it the first breath from the first song... and on and on, and on and on.

3. CAVEMAN BABY::: Electric guitars, dulcimer, distorted tape loop, ultimate ancient sound (singing bowl + slowed down cymbol), fire building & singing by Fletcher. Bass guitar & drums by Spencer.

::SUNG::: Beyond the thin veil of the Modern World lies a naked set of lungs, long hair, forked-tongue. And though we stamp our feet and trample trails the Wild still waits to be unveiled. Beyond the thin veil of our modern selves the Ancient World still dwells, with distance seeking eyes and sloping brow, and limp arms bearing fruit like sagging bow...dotted lines and empty moments showing how to be naked in the Naked Moment now. Become a caveman baby.

∴SILENT∴: There are 50,000 years of human history in you and me, with the unfathomable ancientness of the Earth as the setting for our small stories. We've changed a lot of things around us in a short period of time, changed the way we live, and the world has changed by our hand. But even in our greatest arrogance, it is hard to deny that life goes on no matter how destructive we are. The Wild won't be stopped. And no matter how far we run from the dark woods, it is still home, and the mountain still calls us her daughter. The veil isn't so thick, it doesn't take much to push it aside, perhaps just a little time swimming in a lake, or maybe sharing love, or sitting by a fire made at your own hand...forgotten old ways reveal themselves in you. Even with the sounds of the modern world not far off, a freeway or sirens, we can still hear the ancient. – I wrote this song on Lofoton, an archipelago in the Norwegian Sea, in the shadow of the oldest mountain range in the world. I squatted in a parking-lot and wrote, while my friend called Brooklyn on a payphone. I closed my eyes and the mountain was still there, flowing, and shining, with a gazeless stare. And I rolled around laughing on the ground...I traveled so far, just to find myself home again.

4. **YOU ARE MOM**∴: Electric guitar, placental sound (bowed pedal steel + fan organ) & singing by Fletcher. Drums, bass guitar & electric guitar by Spencer.

∴SUNG∴: A pregnant dog with her face turned to the night sky, howls and feels her puppies kicking. When I close my eyes and sing in a room full of strangers, I feel exactly the same thing. Though the days are long and years feel like many, since I looked as a baby, within my grown body of long bones, and hairy places there is always myself as an infant. Every time I give thanks his hearts beats, and every time I show love his blood flows. So in this way I'll go through life always pregnant with thankfulness, this is why I call myself "Mother." In this way I'll live my life in the smell of placenta, each birthday on the threshold of another. So this what I mean when I say: "I am born in the world each day," I mean that I am born in a song. Every time I give thanks his hearts beats, and every time I show love his blood flows.

∴SILENT∴: "You should understand the meaning of giving birth to a child. At the moment of giving birth to a child, is the mother separate from the child? You should study not only that you become a mother when your child is born, but also that you become a child." (so said Dogen Kigen in his "Mountains and Waters Sutra" over 800 years ago) When I sing I become a singer, but I also become a song. I sing mostly of gratitude, and thankfulness...I use different words, but that is "it" mostly. I am pregnant in a pregnant world, over-flowing. And I am wishing myself awake, so I can see the world, and my life, as it is: full of sorrow and love, in limitless abundance...a generous universe ripe with song.

5. **LOVERS ON OUR BACKS**∴: Electric guitar, organ drones, bowed dulcimer & singing by Fletcher. Piano & electric guitar by Spencer.

∴SUNG∴: Yep that's me, walking down Main Street with a blanket around me, mushrooms in my boot-print, black vulture on my head. Yep that's me, tiny baby in my bed. I am the smoke from the chimney, and I am the fire in the spark in the stone. I am the city teen-center, and I am the wigwam prairie home. So now the whole world is in my bed, and we're lying there together, (we're) just lovers on our backs, hell-of helpless, so whatever. But at the edge of where you end, and beginning of my blood flow, you know you know, you know you know you know.

∴SILENT∴: Brief for this world, I leave pieces of me as I travel, I sew some seeds. But the vulture sits always on my head, because I keep him close, not forgetting that death is my wondrous destination. I still carry myself as child, as beginning, since this is the only moment. And I practice undoing separation, remembering how it felt to be part of the big blanket that is community, history, youth, warmth...a neighborhood of everything ever. I practice making love to the world, we share a bed. Knowing it is all hard and helpless, impossible to be always "one," and letting that be truth that sets me free.

6. **WHEN YOU SURRENDER**∴: Drums & other percussion by Spencer. Cello & singing by Mania.

7. **WHAT I AM DOING**∴: Nylon & electric guitar, steel drum, banjo, singing & tape collage of drones, field recordings & surprise by Fletcher. Drums, (almost inaudible) steel-string guitar, mouth percussion, piano, singing & bike tire spokes by Spencer.

∴SUNG∴: In a world, in a world...In a world of invisible light, and too invisible music, to you (Invisible World) I give myself. And in a world of invisible songs, and so, invisible heartbeats, to you, I give the rhythms of my cells. In a world, in a world...To you, invisible sound, that I believe to surround me, I give myself to listen for your hum. And I'll lie down in the river within the sound that's resounding, become "one" by filling of my lungs. In a world, in a world...With you, invisible lungs, that sit just behind my real ones, I've heard your voice and tried to sing along. But now you, Invisible Band of living-light-sound-music, it's up to you to finish off this song...

:::SILENT::: A “song” for me is constantly describing around the indescribable. I’ll never do a better job than that, because a song is an extension of the way we relate to the world, therefore it relies heavily on words to create meaning. And yet language so seldom helps us see things and people as they are, existing outside of associative relationships with our memories, impressions, categories and other loud packets of information that deprive us of real communion with the “thusness” of something or someone. But a song also spirits words away from their inherent limitations, because so often we (songwriters & songsingers) strive not to call a thing by name, not to be entirely beholden to our chatter. The unpronounceable vowels and syllables of music, and the mystery behind it, can sometimes wash our words clean, and sew them back into the wondrous unknown. We can cast lights and invite shadows with language, but lights shine and shadows fall when we let words go too. – This song is my most plain undertaking... it is about giving, and giving up, in this and every way. Gestures toward that feeling of surrender that we all have felt... forgetting and remembering at the same time... an embrace for all the spiraling rhythms and great surprises in this wordless world. So in the end of this song the “invisible band” takes over, and I shut my mouth.

8. **ANOTHER OCEAN**::: Electric & nylon guitars, dulcimer & singing by Fletcher. Piano, cabasa & cajón (into the piano for resonance) by Spencer.

:::SUNG::: This song is a current in the ocean, but you only have your ear to sea-shell. In this way we fool each other into believing that you can hear me singing. But the knowledge carried on my voice is really something you, yourself, are bringing.... Just a reflection of...another ocean.

:::SILENT::: We believe in language, we reinforce its significance constantly... most of us believing it is the only way we can communicate, learn, or even be conscious, but really we are reaching out in a bigger way. “Communication” is just an expression of a shared reality, a confirmation of unity, an aspiration towards oneness. If consciousness is an ocean, expansive and infinite, surely we are not separate, but each simply exploring the path of a particular wave rising up gradually, arcing and falling back into the sea. The wave never leaves the ocean, nor does it separate from other waves. If there is no separation we can let hierarchy, identities, and language go; we can deny them their role as mediators between perception and being. We can stop sorting out each other, stop attempting to own places and thoughts, and stop being owned by the boundaries we set and the powerlessness that comes with them. All wisdom, ritual, and goodness in this world comes from within us, and is already known to us. All ways of seeing, being and loving are ours already. We are the ocean and we reflect each other, in relationships, in civilizations, in song. Each being, each thought: the whole ocean & just a wave.

9. **MY LIFE IS EASY**::: Electric guitar & singing by Fletcher. Piano & bass guitar by Spencer. Cello by Mania. Recorded live with minimal overdubs.

:::SUNG::: I’ve felt shadows long and lengthy, and the chill kept in their shade. And I’ve suffered sorrow and deep boredom and I’ve lost the light of day. And I’ve shouted loud across a canyon, and lost my voice atop a hill. I’ve written songs in pits of vipers, or by a lion and her kill. And although the pictures that I frame in words, reveal a worldly wonder, I’d gladly swap my words for faith that I’ll not thirst or ever hunger. My life is easy! Mother Earth feeds me. Each dawn can free me. And the light can be me! So I crackle, and I hatch, in the breath of bird beginnings. My downy feathers’ soft and wet, with a cat below me grinning. But I’ll lunge out from my nest, although my wings are not quite ready. I’ll dive into the tiger’s jaw, and strike a match inside his belly. I’ll let my light be seen through the skin of any force that would contain me. I’ll even lead them to my own front door, and show myself all pink and tasty! My life is easy! So set the sky upon me! And once the world consumes me, may blossoms bloom me. Well now I’ll take moments pause to say: I realize I’m displaying an image of a greater self with my hyperbolic sayings. But if we all just close our eyes, or keep them open ‘til they’re fuzzy... we’d feel our molecules divide, under the sky above you and me. And you’d know yourself as someone else, or everybody ever... or a fire of light in a star at night, or star clouded in weather. You’d know the hundred-million worlds of light, that exist beyond our seeing, and the vibrations of our spirit-selves that define our separate beings. Our lives are easy! Our lives are easy! Our lives are easy! All life is easy.

:::SILENT::: This is hyperbole, this is a sketch of life, and of my own. I think maybe you can even hear me smiling when I sing some of the lines because they are ridiculous. But really, really, really my life is easy because it takes care of itself; the sun rises, food grows, and I grow if I stay open... there is no struggle. I’m not calloused, there is suffering in the world, I suffer too, and there is great sorrow, hunger, oppression and misery...which I try to illuminate in the first verse, through my own small pain and pin-point-of-view...but the world isn’t broken into good and bad, it is one happening, one moment, one celebration. And I choose to leave the fight behind, to still always invite challenges and surprise, but to also always surrender... To live leaping from my nest with half-strong wings even when cats prowl below me... To love my weakness in the world, and to let the world come and go as it pleases; after all, inevitably life/time/fate/chance/the unknown finds us all helpless, but only some of us fearless. This song, like all of my songs, is an intention... I sing about surrender, barely understanding it, knowing that it will come if I sing. And in myself, then so in the world.

10. I GIVE MYSELF::: Electric guitar by Fletcher. Drums, mouth percussion, piano, & bike tire spokes by Spencer.

Tracks 11-16 compose a separate EP entitled: "SONGS OF SURRENDER". They do not appear on the LP version of "SONGBREAD/ANOTHER OCEAN"

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Tunes and words by Fletcher. Arrangements by Fletcher & Spencer.

Recorded on 8-track cassette by Fletcher at homes in Pacific Grove, Oakland & San Francisco California. Mixed by Fletcher, CD mastering by John Acquadro, vinyl mastering by John Golden.

Cover and gatefold photographs taken by Elliot M. Tucker, assisted by Stephen M. Tucker. Concept and back painting by Fletcher.

In case you are confused about the title of this album: each side of the record has its own name, side "a" is "Songbread," and side "b" is "Another Ocean." This album is not 2 EP's presented as an LP, the sides are connected and deeply intertwined, but some thematic and stylistic changes that occur and grow sometime between songs 1 & 10 prompted me to title the sides in this confusing manner. You may choose, as I do, to see side "a" as "nourishment" and side "b" as "expansion." Can you have one without the other? Does it matter in which order they come? Either side can be played first or second... although this will be challenging if you have the CD version.

Thanks be to my family, always supportive and overflowing with love: mother Debbie, father Stephen, sister Brandl, brother Elliot, cat-friend Nico, dog-friends Chloe & Mo. Great are the blessings and bounty of California North, in friends and song. Thanksgiving for the inspiration and tenderness of all my friends everywhere and ever! Most of these songs were written on musical tours of the world, tours put together with the help, and always staggering generosity, of strangers who also play music, host shows, or plan and promote happenings in some awesome "do-it-yourself" kind of way. This record is dedicated most humbly to everyone who has given their time to me in this way, and, in fact, to anyone that ever will.

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