

Robert Bly Quotes

*Men, Sibling, People, Children, Thinking, Writing, Years, Adults, Grief, Moving,
World, Two, Needs, School, Able, Want, Distance, Renunciation, Boys,
Daughter*

To be wild is not to be crazy or psychotic. True wildness is a love of nature, a delight in silence, a voice free to say spontaneous things, and an exuberant curiosity in the face of the unknown.

~Robert Bly

... where a man's wound is, that is where his genius will be.

~Robert Bly

We did not come to remain whole. We came to lose our leaves like the trees, Trees that start again.

~Robert Bly

The door to the soul is unlocked; you do not need to please the doorkeeper, the door in front of you is yours, intended for you, and the doorkeeper obeys when spoken to.

~Robert Bly

Every part of you that you do not love will regress and become hostile towards you.

~Robert Bly

The beginning of love is a horror of emptiness.

~Robert Bly

We make the path by walking.

~Robert Bly

It's all right if you grow your wings on the way down.

~Robert Bly

There are a lot of men who are healthier at age fifty than they have ever been before, because a lot of their fear is gone.

~Robert Bly

Every noon as the clock hands arrive at twelve, I want to tie the two arms together, And walk out of the bank carrying time in bags.

~Robert Bly

We spend our life until we're twenty deciding what parts of ourself to put into the bag, and we spend the rest of our lives trying to get them out again.

~Robert Bly

The body weeps the tears the eyes never shed.

~Robert Bly

Every part of our personality that we do not love will become hostile to us.

~Robert Bly

As I've gotten older, I find I am able to be nourished more by sorrow and to distinguish it from depression.

~Robert Bly

I am proud only of those days that pass in undivided tenderness.

~Robert Bly

The best poems take long journeys. I like poetry best that journeys--while remaining in the human scale--to the other world, which may be a place as easily overlooked as a bee's wing

~Robert Bly

Grief is the doorway to a man's feelings.

~Robert Bly

The best presenters have conversations with their audiences.

~Robert Bly

The language you use for your poems should be the language you use with your friends.

~Robert Bly

There are very few adults in our culture able to imagine any genuine life coming from the vertical plane - tradition, religion, or devotion.

~Robert Bly

Reclaiming the sacred in our lives naturally brings us close once more to the wellsprings of poetry.

~Robert Bly

Rumi is astounding, fertile, abundant, almost more an excitable library of poetry than a person.

~Robert Bly

The lead either forges an instant connection with the reader, or the package fails.

~Robert Bly

When a father, absent during the day, returns home at six, his children receive only his temperament, not his teaching.

~Robert Bly

Be careful how quickly you give away your fire.

~Robert Bly

I have risen to a body not yet born, existing like a light around a body through which the body moves like a sliding moon.

~Robert Bly

A lazy part of us is like a tumbleweed. It doesn't move on its own. Sometimes it takes A lot of Depression to get tumbleweeds moving.

~Robert Bly

As a parent you have to do some renunciation.

~Robert Bly

There are years from my childhood that I cannot remember and I cannot forget.

~Robert Bly

I have daughters and I have sons./When one of them lays a hand/On my shoulder, shining fish/Turn suddenly in the deep sea.

~Robert Bly

Two birds fly past. They are needed somewhere.

~Robert Bly

I want nothing from You but to see You.

~Robert Bly

As the saying goes, you might as well be yourself; everyone else is taken.

~Robert Bly

Vertical thought likes to imagine the vast distances between the stars.

~Robert Bly

Wherever there is water there is someone drowning.

~Robert Bly

Myth and poetry represent a reservoir of vertical thinking, which we could also call longing and gratitude to ancestors. We need that gratitude desperately.

~Robert Bly

If a man, cautious, hides his limp, Somebody has to limp it! Things do it; the surroundings limp. House walls get scars, the car breaks down;

matter, in drudgery, takes it up.

~Robert Bly

In the society that has replaced the paternalistic society, women are able to develop their independent and social energies much more. That is good.

~Robert Bly

I have spent many years trying to recover a common language, one that can cross the distance between people.

~Robert Bly

I was unfaithful even to Infidelity.

~Robert Bly

One could say the higher the spirit goes, the more deeply the soul sinks down into the waters of melancholy and tragedy. Drowning in that water is as sweet as rising.

~Robert Bly

One out of three black men are in the criminal justice system in some form. Their despair is beginning to resonate through the entire culture; that is why suburban children want rap music.

~Robert Bly

By the time a man is 35 he knows that the images of the right man, the tough man, the true man which he received in high school do not work in life.

~Robert Bly

Male initiation does not move toward machoism; on the contrary, it moves toward achieving a cultivated heart before we die.

~Robert Bly

But our gusty emotions say to me that we have / Tasted heaven many times: these delicacies / Are left over from some larger party.

~Robert Bly

Adulthood has something to do with not choosing any of the pure points of view, but living about half of what you really want to live.

~Robert Bly

It is surely a great calamity for a human being to have no obsessions.

~Robert Bly

What you feel in Japanese poetry is always entirely longing.

~Robert Bly

The older I get, the more beauty I see in the word renunciation.

~Robert Bly

In the sibling society, both the adult and the elder get lost, and no one knows where they are.

~Robert Bly

When an elder turns to face the dead, that means he turns away from facing the future and his own retirement in Phoenix, let's say. He turns and finds himself facing the children.

~Robert Bly

If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth: Friend, listen: the God whom I love is inside.

~Robert Bly

The deeper question... is not whether ancient religious forms can reform... but whether new forms of nature-related spirituality might emerge.

~Robert Bly

People tend to take stories literally these days.

~Robert Bly

Tragedies are about the depths that call up to certain men and insist that they descend.

~Robert Bly

Those of us who make up poems have agreed not to say what the pain is.

~Robert Bly

The dead made this world. We didn't make it. They made the poetry and the songs and the customs.

~Robert Bly

If we call the young ones, say 10 to 30 years old, 'siblings,' we can see they tend to be naturally ecological. They regard whales and owls as siblings too. That's a great advance.

~Robert Bly

My life failed on the very day I was born.

~Robert Bly

Poetry keeps longing alive.

~Robert Bly

The candle is not lit To give light, but to testify to the night.

~Robert Bly

I use the phrase 'sibling society' to suggest a culture fundamentally without fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, or ancestors. The thinking is horizontal.

~Robert Bly

I think that poetry is important when you are shipwrecked, when the ordinary structures that hold you up are gone.

~Robert Bly

There's a quality we could call vertical attention, which is an attention upward toward ancestors, spiritual states, angels, gods.

~Robert Bly

And why shouldn't the miraculous, / Caught on this earth, visit / The old man alone in his hut?

~Robert Bly

Adolescents are in just as much trouble in Native America as they are in the white community.

~Robert Bly

The ancestors are very much invested in the children, because the children are the ones who are going to continue the world that the ancestors made.

~Robert Bly

What I am trying to do is bring people into grief in relation to the society we have.

~Robert Bly

Sociological prose is generally written without images in an exact form for an academic audience.

~Robert Bly

Sociological prose can tell you everything, but it can't point out the grief.

~Robert Bly

The French still offer Sartre and Derrida rather than Pascal.

~Robert Bly

I wanted to spend all my time writing poetry. But when I had children I couldn't do that anymore.

~Robert Bly

The sibling society is the flattening out of the previously democratic society.

~Robert Bly

You say to yourself, Well, this poem isn't going to be any good, but I'll write it anyway.

~Robert Bly

One man wrote me, saying, 'You know who you are? You're nothing but a Captain Bly peeing up a drainpipe!'

~Robert Bly

It's good to have poems that begin with tea and end with God.

~Robert Bly

There is no hierarchy in Japanese Buddhist poetry.

~Robert Bly

Some people can't go into church any longer to feel this longing, but they still have the longing, so what do they do? Well, one thing you can do is what people do in prison; they turn to poetry.

~Robert Bly

Siblings tend not to care much about boundaries and borders. Having worn each others' T-shirts, it's unlikely that they'd go to war over a border.

~Robert Bly

I knew this friendship with myself couldn't last forever.

~Robert Bly

I felt a longing to compose a radical or root poem that would speak to what has its back turned to me.

~Robert Bly

You have an utterly sincere glance when you look around after you are shipwrecked. You weep a long time on an island when you realize what's happened to you.

~Robert Bly

Hierarchy, as in the Catholic Church, has to do with power, and vertical attention has to do with longing.

~Robert Bly

The models of adulthood are disappearing fast. How can two people have a new marriage if neither of them is an adult?

~Robert Bly

Some men live with an invisible limp, stagger, or drag a leg. Their sons are often angry.

~Robert Bly

A person who discreetly farts in an elevator is not a divine being, and a man needs to know this.

~Robert Bly

Every breath taken in by the man Who loves, and the woman who loves,
Goes to fill the water tank Where the spirit horses drink.

~Robert Bly

I think more and more people are recognizing how much adults and elders are actually needed. That's a gift of the sibling society.

~Robert Bly

An elder is someone who understands that the world belongs to the dead.

~Robert Bly

The distance between the adolescent and the true adult is about five thousand miles, but the distance between the adult and the elder is almost as large.

~Robert Bly

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