ALL THE TRUE VOWS

All the true vows
Are secret vows
The ones we speak out loud
Are the ones we break.

There is only one life
You can call your own
And a thousand others
You can call by any name you want.

Hold to the truth you make
Every day with your own body,
Don’t turn your face away.

Hold to your own truth
At the center of the image
You were born with.

Those who do not understand
Their destiny will never understand
The friends they have made
Nor the work they have chosen

Nor the one life that waits
Beyond all the others.

By the lake in the wood
In the shadows
You can
Whisper that truth
To the quiet reflection
you see in the water.

Whatever you hear from
The water, remember,

It wants you to carry
The sound of its truth on your lips.
Remember,
In the place
No one can hear you
And out of the silence
You can make a promise
It will kill you to break,
That way you’ll find
What is real and what is not.
I know what I am saying.  
Time almost forsook me  
And I looked again.
Seeing my reflection
I broke a promise
And spoke
For the first time
After all these years
In my own voice,
Before it was too late
To turn my face again.

- David Whyte