



Poems by George Wallace

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FOR THIS MY HEART THE REVOLUTION

I bury the passion, i scrape the flesh, i set free the words that come out of my mouth, i go into the world, I speak in future tenses, like anger and surprise and men in *huaraches*, my shoulders cry, my cheeks sprout feathers, i am the monster my children and grandchildren learned to love and fear, to conjure up like wind, to cultivate their days with like fields of rice, i listen in the dark, i

let their dying be, i am the cry of lightning, fermentation in the eagle's nest, in the kitchen of the world beans fall from my plate, spoons scrape a tin cup, and the children are at it again, and the sun rises, the sea falls

Sometimes the sky is very still, and i am an icon in a church that has known no name and the women sing verses to me, the children dance in a circle, this is a song which i have never heard, i say grace with the women, i pray for their children, i explore their bodies like bullet holes, pray! pray for the river, pray for the fruit which is my flesh, i have known no other body but this one, i have loved and been loved, gather around my bed and do not try to touch me, my sweat is my testimony, i am a bunkhouse in an open sky, my eyes penetrate deep into the earth like miners

Blood and semen is mine and i am a man, i pour myself out of my bed and into the pit of men i go, naturally, i have prepared myself a long time for this, 3500 years is a teardrop in my eye, before there was heaven there was us, before us, a river

I prepare myself for this
For love, for death – for this
My heart the revolution

(fr 100 Years Among The Daisies, Stubborn Mule Press 2018)

ONE EARTH ONE PEOPLE

The more I sleep
The more I dream
The more I dream
The better I pray
So listen to this -
Here is the wall
Here is the people
No one can say it
better than that --
Here is the smoke
rising like a church
rising like campfire
rising like a kitchen fire
rising like the border
that separates us from
each other and blinds us,
town from town, pueblo
from pueblo and ranch
and farm animal and
farm family -- each from
each -- the smoke that blinds

us, the people who crossed
borders to just be with
each other, to just live with
each other decently. No!
Nobody knows this better
than us. This is no border.
This is the front line in the
war against lines and no one
can tell us what walls we
should build between us.
Walls! Inside us, around
us, behind and in front of
us. So many walls! Ridiculous!
I'm surprised we haven't all gone
blind and no one knows this better
than us, here where the people
are undivided, where the people
rise up like rivers and join together
with heaven to form one great
river, united as the sea -- to eat
to laugh to work and to prosper,
and to pray together, because the
more we pray the better we dream
-- one earth one people --
a wall which is no wall is a river
that is no river at all -- and we are
that river, one people, here and
everywhere we go, reverential,
strong, better than what anybody
takes us for, and what do they know
about us, we flow along and we listen
and we dream -- and nobody can stop
us from doing that, nothing and nobody.
No borders! No walls!

Open your hearts
Open your doors
Out come the people

(fr 100 Years Among The Daisies, Stubborn Mule Press 2018)

IF YOU COULD REMOVE THE DEAD FROM THE DEAD

If you could remove the dead from the dead, bomb by bomb, eye by eye, if you could pluck the mad bull screaming, from blood and from dust, from the arena, death unstrung, life returned, the fields of faces, their embraces, like clover, like honey, tooth by tooth like bees in grass, while the generals were not watching i mean, while the dictators were not watching, while the idiotic cheers and jeering of the crowd, while the circular race of steel and money and blood and macho, while the worship of the sword, nobody watching,

O it is crazy to think it, o it is stupid to imagine it, all the sleeping dead rising from death, standing at the bridge, looking down from the parapet, all the incoherent laughter, perfect innocents raised back up from the heap, all the untroubled song, no more disillusionment, no more oblivion, do you understand what i'm trying to say, can you see it for yourself, the slaughtered sons and daughters, sharecroppers and soldiers, students, nurses, peasants and miners, all the sweet lives returned to the living,

And all of us embracing them as they rise, i would have you embrace them, i would have you salute and sing them, and welcome them, the dead from the dead, eye by eye, released from their paralysis, liberated from the uselessness and consignment of their caustic dead sleeping, risen from the junta of dollar and nation and power and design, speaking truth to the ruling class, talking the true talk to those who carelessly plant them into soil,

No not again, no more this root and rock of going! the dead from the dead, taking back their plows and their farmhats, shaking the reins their fathers and grandfathers put in their hands and returning to their work, hands full of seed and dreams and callouses and sweat, can you hear them singing, the song of the living, can you see the morning sun in their beautiful faces, their penetrating smiles, can you feel all that, their small love, their bravery, men and women, risen, children of god again, risen, their mothers' voices softly ringing in their ears,

And am i so stupid as to suggest it, am i so stupid as to imagine it, all their faces in the mist of civilizations and idiotic rain, the dead separated from the dead, bullet by bullet, eye by eye, walking again, hand in hand, like the walking sun

(fr 100 Years Among The Daisies, Stubborn Mule Press 2018)

RAIN SKIP A STONE ON ME (Lake Ohrid)

I am a lake I live on this planet I love the way this planet rolls
it gets me high, I travel the world faithfully, I stay where I am,
here is where I belong, in one place, in one piece, I see the
future, the future is me, heaven rotates thru my belly, when
lovers walk along my shore they honor me and take me with
them, when small boys catch my fish with their fishing line
it tickles my belly it gets me high. Do things change for you?

I remain the same. This is how I do things, 30 million years,

Do you like this, can you dig this, this is how we do this thing,
like then like now, live like a swan, live like a fish, like a snail
like a minnow like muck, and I am straight as whiskey and
whiskey loves a duck, and a small bank of clouds on the blue
horizon is my best friend, that's where the sun comes from
and also rain and the tribes of men, and rain is snow and snow
feeds the mountains and the mountains feed me, they fill up
with women and men and they empty out,

And the mountains feed the streams and the streams feed me,
therefore the mountains and the streams are my best friend and
people come and people go, and every day I love you more --
more than wind rain and heaven and stone.

So stoned! Rain skip a stone on me.

(fr 100 Years Among The Daisies, Stubborn Mule Press 2018)

I AM SORRY DIANE DIPRIMA

I am sorry Diane DiPrima there was no
revolution, we cleaned things up just
about enough to carry on, we forgot
your necessary guns and Buddha,
the revolution of the body and heart
was no match for clean sheets and
prosperity, we brought down the man
and filled the lakes back up with rainbow
trout, we unpolluted the sky, closed the
factories and gentrified the Lower East Side,
hell I think it was a Rockefeller uncovered
the Sawmill River (have you seen the Bronx
River Parkway sparkling in the autumn sun),
we filled our gas tanks and bank accounts and
ran off to Cancun, into the mouths of our children
we poured laughter fireworks poetry and college
degrees, we forgot about filling our bathtubs up
with your grandpa's Marxism and coal, the life-
preserving waters of Sacco & Vanzetti went
down the drain, escaped us -- we put aside
your revolutionary letters and let our cup
runneth over with patriotism and football,
and craft beer, yeah we let the old sins

back in -- success for the many, fuck-all for
the few -- until the few became the many
again and now it's fuck-all for everyone
except the fatcats and their plastic wives in
golfcarts, country clubs and private towers,
and all the cleanup we done's about to get
undone—reach for the sky, the privileged few
are on high protected by their trolls and goons
and the rest of us hanging around the streets to fool
and to fuel, it's ten PM, 3 drunks crossing Church Street
pull on a young girl's hijab and shout Trump Trump
Trump --and the blood in the eyes of the people,
and the anger in their mouths, is for each other,
not for the oppressors – just the way they like it –
and where is the precious seed of your revolution
now, Diane DiPrima, when we really need it

(fr Smashing Rock and Straight as Razors, Blue Light Press 2017)

THIS SCATTERING OF LIGHT IN WHICH I DISAPPEAR INTO AN IMAGE OF YOU

This scattering of light in which I disappear into your image, the first anticipation of meeting you, the moment I took your hand and we turned to walk across a city park, autumn wasn't cold yet, simply to breathe was magnificent, crisp and cool and the pavement glistened, a weak light teased the auburn out of your hair, extraordinary light, natural, swinging along easily

You were always in your element you said, and I was trying to hold to your gaze while memorizing the movement of your eyes, and the shape of your mouth, which was a passage from Gabriel Faure, and your laughter, which was the ghost of illuminated summer, and your pensiveness and deliberate conversation -- in college it was always like this, you said, you were the one who didn't roll with the jokes

And picking our way through a crowd of Italian tourists a couple of gray squirrels sat stupidly in the autumn grass to watch you pass, and I could read in your stride and in the way you held your body the careful grace of an educated woman, how to find your way, how to navigate in an impulsive world, steady, slow, slow, slow, you never talked down to anybody, not even me, although you knew you could

And your voice was husky with French cigarettes and 20th century philosophy, and you pronounced my name like it was a perfume, cautiously at first, then boldly, George... George... as a blue and white wave of pigeons parted in front of us, and I fell hard for you, the full measure of you, your stride, your resolution, how you pulled us along, you were taller than me and your accent was perfect

And your shoulders brushed stars from the sky, into the undertow of autumn, I mean, below the canopy of trees, the leaves of autumn beginning to fall, on their way to oblivion, and the branches of wild cherries shimmied in anticipation of your passing, and out on the street vendors were crying and you wanted a coffee so we sat down at a cafe, and you shrugged your jacket from your shoulders

What was I expecting, Nirvana?

And your eyes were narrow and you were wearing a white chemise, a gift from your father, you said, he bought it in Paris, it was his business to know what was stylish, his taste had always informed your taste -- and yeah, that was an exquisite blouse, so was the intentional way you leaned forward to kiss me

This is meant to be done slowly, you said. Intentionally. Like a promise, like a disappearance, like a prayer

(fr Smashing Rock and Straight as Razors, Blue Light Press 2017)

POEM IN A COFFEEPOT

Life was good
it was finally good
there was God in the popcorn
poems in the coffeepot
there was sandlots
and crackerjacks
and picklejars and
pitchers of beer
There was tenements
and bosses and
Coney Island holidays
and the immigrants came
and the immigrants came
in their immigrant pants
and their immigrant dresses
and they built New York
out of glass and steel
in their own immigrant image
Olive oil and eggplant
prayer shawl
candelabra

chicken fat and wine
and they kept on coming
with their accents and their
operatics and their strange
music halls and melodramas
and stubborn political sciences --
Eastern Europeans, Southern Europeans,
Polish, Russian, Italians,
Jews, Greeks and Germans --
And they kept their big traps shut
when they were forced to but
they stuck to their guns
and they took the dirty jobs in the
dirty factories and the lights went out
on Saturday night at quarter past ten
and bedposts shook and radiators
rattled like an elevated railway and
late night jazz -- and the stubborn lights
of New York City glittering like a knife
thrust deep into the heart of heaven
-- and the immigrants of NYC
wrestled with each other
in the dead of night

For love, for loss
For consolation
For unreasonable
Unstoppable
Unnatural
Hope

(fr Smashing Rock and Straight as Razors, Blue Light Press 2017)

OUR FOOD IN YOUR HANDS

How can a man walk thru a supermarket anywhere in America without feeling the imprint of your hands on everything he touches -- hands strung in the dawn of cinch bug nematodes smell of dung -- plastic buckets bandanas & shorthanded tools -- hands which dream of beanfields straw beds & barbed wire -- cornsilk & buttermilk -- the watery music which leaps like fish out of blue mestizo night like your family's laughter & into day

You migrate thru South Carolina like drift of fog you harvest tomatoes in Florida you migrate thru Delaware Maryland Connecticut & Maine you harvest potatoes apples soybeans peas beets -

- beets spinach & beets -- you tend to broilers heifers hens & sows -- you harvest wild rice
you pick avocados & grapes you plant white tufts of cloud into the hair of your children like
seeds in heaven

O lettuce! O bold Salinas valley! -- O crates of California!

Plums apricots Oregon cherries in plastic bags -- in low country & on the high mountaintops
cucumbers string beans brussel sprouts walnuts peaches & almonds -- oysters in their shells --
broadcast spreaders sprinkler pipes & burlap sacks -- how can any man woman or child in
Colorado Alabama Arkansas Missouri Louisiana or Illinois -- any man woman or child in
Cochise County Arizona or New York City

ever walk through an American supermarket without feeling the power of your steady eyes --
balancing every crop & planted field in America against the remaining hours of day -- your back
your neck your feet your shoulders & especially your hands -- whole families of hands --tired cut
bruised bug-bit hard with work -- unwitnessed underpaid ripped off & oh yes ready to take
being kicked out

Because you come back don't you, you always come back -- you burn thru mist like the border
sun which migrates thru every supermarket in America

(fr Smashing Rock and Straight as Razors, Blue Light Press 2017)

OCTOBER RUNS LIKE A BE-BOP SHAKESPEARE

October doesn't matter much to me anymore, not in the city with its heavyhanded women, lazy
umbrellas and long green mushroom people, not in the suburbs with its doormats and SUVs,
autumn doesn't do it like it used to I need to go up country, pop wilderness into my mouth,
cohabitate with the psychedelic earthworms, be one with mushrooms that glow, get post-

Apocalyptic, jam to the jar and back again, juice with the fennel, go au courant with a hog eyed
snake and cozy with crabapples, the rainy dark pulp of autumn's my resurrection, I drool it down
my neck

Away with the ugly-ass city and its men in sheep's clothing, dead zone advertisements and
terrible manners, come agitate the gravel with me, brothers, sisters, I know the devil when I see
him, devil have your day, go ahead spit back at man and his work, but devil leave the gods alone,
leave the gods alone, when a man returns to the wilderness he becomes a little god, when a
woman returns to the wilderness she becomes great lord to another day dawning –

Earth's a swollen playful thing when death seems near, earth's belly's full and alive, with plenty
of rhizome yet for you and for me, spawn of three-seeded mercury, asters, tickseed and
goldenrod, let's weave with the chipmunks, slime along like an omni-sexual slug – let's go
spittle to mole, mole to molecule, man to man, cloud to toe and back again –

It's all right here in the fallen leaves for the asking, brother – all right here with the bees and bugs, sister – bees bugs and rain – and death, death in brilliant transfiguration

So tra la to the sugarmaples, let's go running like Be-Bop Shakespeare in deep October, naked thru the forest, with hairy armpits and bosoms flying, while tulip trees do their academic dance in the heavy scented dew – sly in the mist and crafty too –

Let's go upcountry with the newts and possums, throb and stomp in the wild grapes, let's go scour the underbrush foxy as musk, roll in autumn rust with the woolly bears,

A duet with you! I want to drink you, sister, drink your eyebrows up, your curly hairs, your ample architecture – I want to taste you, brother – devour the sweat and bear fat of your dirt-flecked chest –

Stride manfully with me – manfully through the wilderness – only the boldest rituals will do

(fr A Simple Blues With A Few Intangibles, Foothills Press 2016)

PASO A PASO

Step by step, by seed and by soil, by wind and by wing, by raft rail steerage and quad bike, by hydrofoil and sail, this passing through, this worst nightmare, stacked like cordwood, hidden in the oranges, locked in a vehicle trunk, this great trespass, this due north, the next passageway to the next century, a new America, crossing itself like headlights on the Rio Grande, singing with new blood, new intonations and meanings, do they think they can stop us with fences and walls, with cameras, sensors and drones, no, never! the sun beating in its veins, workboots bandanas and no explanations, only poetry, poetry, a song of new tools and utilizations,

Hush! a footfall in the clearing where the deer graze, hush! the big transgression, on foot across the desert when the water runs out, look at the thorns, so many thorns, we are your fathers and mothers, we are your daughters and sons, we will get ourselves from here to here because this is one world, one people and you are coming with us though you are already here, because you came from somewhere too! to be here, under barbed wire, over walls, dodging jeeps and pickup trucks, defying guard dogs searchlights and rifles, because the big guns of money and ownership are of no use against us, this solemn processional, this great inevitable mixing in,

And mile by mile, and household by household, bloodlines converging and voices and tongue, converging, because the land belongs to everyone, and the cities and planting fields, and the road curves equally towards you and me and everyone else, because every mile is the same mile, because equal is equal in this land which is your land and which is not your land, plain, bold, invisible, in valleys, on boulevards, over mountain passes, paso a paso and coming now, by desert by ocean by river by raft,

by wind and by wing

by seed and by soil

(fr A Simple Blues With A Few Intangibles, Foothills Press 2016)

WE BURNED OUR WAY TO NOWHERESVILLE

She needed to rest that's all, she said,
somewhere which was anywhere and
out of the cold, she needed to wash a
certain something out of her memory,
something bad that happened back in
Guatemala or maybe just out there in
the street, and there was not enough
light in the candle to burn but it was
new year's eve and new year's eve in
New York City is supposed to be special,

a time of new beginnings and happy
endings a moment when time stops
worrying about itself and considers
itself lucky and fine and almost alive,
and maybe I could help her with that,
could I buy her a drink, and she was
nearly seventeen, but she couldn't
exactly prove it, and her sister lived
in Brooklyn and told her to look for
a place with a phone and there was

a booth in the hallway but her sister
hadn't called yet and that's why she
was hanging around you see it took
two and a half days on a greyhound
to get here the people on the bus
were stupid and crazy and the man
in the next seat wouldn't leave her
alone and this place was warm and
cozy and they left her alone, thank
Jesus for that, people ought to leave

each other alone and just be kind she
said, there was a war back home and
it had ruined everything, the people
were poor and the people got angry
and decided to do something about it
so the soldiers began to come on with
their yanqui guns and the people were
dead and dying and the villages burned

and her brother was dead at the age
of 14, a bullet through his forehead,

and she liked my eyes, they were empty
and inviting, could I just show you how
we dance, back in my village, she said –
and I said sure of course why not I'm
not much of a dancer but it was a dance
my body recognized – I could dance to it,
a refugee dance, she swung me in her arms
like a cradle, like a grave, like we were two
shipwrecked sailors swinging in the bottomless
pit of the same empty sea –

and the weight of the world lifted and lifted,
the phone in the hallway rang off the hook,
and time stopped -- we burned our way to
nowheresville -- and then we sat back down
and it was New Years Day

(fr A Simple Blues With A Few Intangibles, Foothills Press 2016)

OFFROAD FOURWHEEL BUSTED UP COLLARBONE ROLLBAR MISS AMERICA

She loved to dunebuggy she loved to ride she loved to be outside to spit and to cry to hop like a
toad to burn like a barn – shoot like novocaine – she spit in the bushes she spit on the
mountaintop on the prairie on the bayou in the mouth hole of the universal universe –

She loved Shenandoah Mississippi Oklahoma Tuscaloosa – she loved hotwheel all weather
souterrain space jam blues

Top down hood up piston busting woman of the blue sky her rack and pinion tietack shoeshine
shotgun home on the range, no not the kind you cook on –

And o! she loved her own thick hair like nobody's business she combed it back she let it go wild,
she tossed it back like a steel drum band like a back door Catholic prophylactic Mormon figure-
eight pagan little miss America crazy drunk or spying on her own sweet self –

O no, o no, o no no no Miss Fourth of July drunk by the campfire girl the embers do not go out
on you, not on YOU, not the lights on Broadway or the poolhall lights not the jailhouse lights or
the junkyard lights or the headlights or the supermarket lights all night long in the supermarket
parking lot – and o her mulish temper and o her talking back, and her racked up men with

metallic skin – skinny men, fat men, muscle headed men, gold bond men – no one could stop
herm no Grease Gun Jake no Feedbag Joe no coke dust dipstick tin shield sawdust sheriff

And here's what's important – she loved herself, her body her muscle her calves her skin her
ankle thigh hip-high highheel boots -- she shuddered and waved like the prairie grass she secretly
wanted to be – she loved to be outside herself, she loved and she loved and she needed to be
loved

And she shoved it around and she shook it out – got took got lost got rediscovered wasted and
found – ripped open given away put up on a pedestal took for a ride stolen in the night

She yanked it all out, every ounce of it, the flesh the earth the river the rain, the red rock forest of
oak, she plummeted like eagles she grew like silver corn she spooned up asphalt and plowed it
back under and trucked it away and bombed and bombed and bombed, unfairly unwisely
arrogantly (which is normal and faulty and human too) and acted foolish when she wanted to and
wise when you didn't expect it

Offroad fourwheel busted up collarbone rollbar Miss America -- tossed her helmet fifty feet in
the air and caught it in her right hand -- just like this! A big yahoo pop fly sixpack beanbag
woman, headphones blaring, dung busting shit crazy headed off to anywhere doomed as a devil
dog Little Miss American Paradise!

Leaped out of the darkness & into the sun

(fr A Simple Blues With A Few Intangibles, Foothills Press 2016)

SOME ACCIDENTAL CATEGORY OF MIRACLES

It is all audible to me, the alchemy and the telling, triunfo del amor, the secret telling, the terrible
rosebud of your heart, volcanic, circular as a jewelers saw, the robust harmony, the
melodramatic padlock of your circumstances, even the sharp intake of your breath, all audible,
all audible, Si! I could listen for hours, all night in the darkness, the shape of your living breath a
candle flame, terrible majesty, anything could move me, what your lips say, what your teeth
what your tongue, how they shape the darkness, how in the dark, darkness of night, dispeller of
gloom, an otter slips through river mist, blue smoke from the cabin fire, what was supposed to be
loneliness, sunburst has been held up in the clouds for years, this longing to be inside you,
restless, restless, to feed and to kiss your secret mouth, be an otter to a muskrat, rainbow trout
too, loon, to be fed and kissed by you, tell you unspeakable things, sacred things, all foolish, all
audible, these wings these hands this fluttering of wings, on the tip of my tongue, at the base of
my spine, where my manhood begins, I can taste this silver going, this snowmelt surging, these
are your earrings these your pearls, I place them in my mouth and suck them like stone, I fill my
nostrils with them, their pitiless breathing, for you a rock to cradle, for you a river to rock, for
you, merciful, your lips your tongue your teeth your hair, midnight approaches, molding to these
contours, in my imagination I am ten feet tall and naked and yours, this falls outside the category

of miracles and makes light of material day, this zone, this hoofprint, flint, flint, flint, persistent stomping of shard and rock, some accidental category of miracles, this triumph over the natural order, of you, in you, beside you, fill my lungs this will make me weep, this will make the crying of foxes palatable, the field and restless woods, holy, holy, a brace of pheasants moves along the edge of a cornfield, I lean my ear close to you, the whirr of your voice in your throat, like a thistle breathing, all audible, all audible, this eternity, this first embracing, all miraculous and new and forever audible,

to me this flight of birds, to me this fall of alpine water, wings and cries and icemelt, icemelt and riverrock, I hear it all tonight, and you lying here beside me

your extraordinary breathing,
your tender gasps of miraculous wonder

(fr Drugged by Hollywood, NightBallet Press, 2106)

BLUES ON SEVENTH AVENUE

the blues has 365 hands it doesn't go away
it's a fake a phony a fraud – an insane high
tide lover, little kid full of spume & brine -
it plays all over you & goes away a baby
spitting up on you on me on everybody –
mugger in the darkness which separates
every human being from every other human
being

I'm talking man on man woman on woman
man on woman on woman on man
& o the pain & o the glory & o how the blues
goes fast & it goes slow - what the hell you
looking at, blues? it's a poolhall hustle it'll
steal your cuestick - bald as an eight ball
hairy as a lamb - all chalked up & nowhere
to go – Game On rolling on the green green
pitted carpet of doom & torn, baby, torn on
every level - banking the six ball banking
the trey & o the blues has got the old eagle
eye & knows how to use it - hat trick for annie
cheap date for jake - the combinations keep
coming, right cross uppercut, enough English
to knock your ass flat -- but enough of that shit,
man the blues, the blues, the blues! 365 hands
feeling you up & one hand left over for halloween -
joystick ballroom jellybean bride - a jam a joke

you can hold it in your fist, shake it like a cock
put it to your ear & listen to it growl - it's a slide
trombone a temporary tattoo a crystal ball - a
song you never even asked to hear

because whatever the blues wants the blues gets –
feel it taste it put it on your tongue - before it goes away
I mean - the new sensation the latest craze, amused
by the irony of its own magic & how you play into
it's game for one shit-ass minute of your life –

one more sucker one more ride & then Game Over!
off it goes - because the blues is never satisfied –
it's got to find itself another live one – got to find
itself another schoolyard like you to play in

(fr Beauty Parlors, Trainyards, and Everything Else In Between (Spartan Press 2014))

MEASURE ME NEW AGAINST THE BLUE BENDING HORIZON

Yes I am
descended from
shepherdesses
Balkan of course
there are vapors
that rise up from
earth and set fire
to my brain untilled
soil grass tumbling
stream against neck
the Sybil's hallucinogens --
iron nickel cobalt lime
wild berries of Thrace --
the mineral magnetics
my roots are alimentary
and feminine the soil,
which holds me in its
palm, panpipes hypnotize,
an earth goddess stitches
patterns in my blood tatting
the serpent lacing me white
in the broad fabric of my going --
but every rope has its purpose
and the wind in practical sails
will have its day and lead us

to various stars beyond our
original calculations; thus when I
close my eyes I measure heaven
by a different light, my dreams
speak a salty language, my hands,
which are anyhow Mediterranean,
my wrists oarlocks, and the crank
and pull of halyard and downhaul is
the music of my manhood and my
becoming (I am moreover comfortable
in Aegean harbor towns, where there is
something about men's rough laughter
in a taverna that intoxicates me beyond
booze or religion) O! The ultimacy of
the sea, crashing rocks swinging
boom of bad weather, cord of rope
rocking all night at anchor and in the
morning the phallic practicalities
of deck sounds that unbalance me
with masculine joy -- and the harbor
seals applauding freely, freely
as we go, island to island, out
over Jason's open waters
where only the sun goes --
O witchcraft! O
beating heart of
wooden hull

Back to the sea which named me

Send me
land-splitting
fish-spearing
trap-hauling
piratical! O
measure me
new against the
blue bending
horizon

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

RUNNING WITH THE ANIMALS, MORE ROOTED THAN THE TREES

You don't look like me but you're an island boy, Walt Whitman, like me a man of the world, limitless in the scope of your vision and the specificity of your origins, one with the field mouse and the hatchling bug, and boy do i like that, i want to be like you ready as a weakwing moth to blow free, get up under way with every tide, sail with the boys in the chowder boats, hold tight to the seam rock soil and fold of the world (barebottomed if necessary where's my trousers), walk with you trip-footed upright and wandering aimlessly;

No shoelaces for these shoes, no shoes themselves, no shackles, admiring all the physical calculations and geometries;

Yeah you boy, born inquisitive under a fifth month moon, detecting the scent of God in the sedge grass and the lilac, crossing an ocean of humanity consorting with owl barnlouse rosehip and crustacean, conversing with the sour-singing shrub-bird;

Lie plentiful as acorns, Walt Whitman, where the black oaks stand, talk back to the dead and the rotted stump;

You with your chest solid as glacial rock; you and your necklace of whelks and horseshoe crabs; you studying Hindu scripture in your Quaker beard, your cannonade of lust and wonder fit for any man, a man no empire or hardship of nation can contain or break; yes you, your hard shell flung wide open, your absorbing patience;

So much humanity!
So humanly transmitted!

And I am resolved to be like you, pitch my voice like a seabird's, triumphant as spray of salt, skirt of fog and the sands uplifted; gossip with the partridge and the risen hawk, soar sharp-winged in carving skies;

"Do you hear me, hills of Derry, sands of Morecambe Bay? Feel me, Haifa? I am hovering over the flint hills of Kansas, I follow the river froth to Creole New Orleans and back again with America's news -- yet I sing to you as I have sung in Alexandria Palestine Calabria Provence, in Portugal and in Spain, waded thru North African marshes and in the olive groves of Thrinacia; and now I pick starlight from heaven on the Hempstead Plain";

Aye, I emerge, blinking wide as the sun on your ragged shoreline Walt Whitman -- a Jason, a legendary, pirate of the Hellenes fleecing barbarians and being fleeced, I am Dionysus dripping with sea-wrack, stealing toward Thebes, the hidden wolf among Helios' sacred herds;

Touch me, child of the rock-cradled island, caress me with your fingertips and large welcoming hands, strike fire in my wine-bleared blinking eye;

I am with you, immodest in the fog of your lips, ruddy as the blush in your Quaker cheeks, the deepest breath you'll ever draw, and passionate, in the modest lying down you take with

camarado and lover -- when evening comes, when evening comes, incomplete and open-mouthed and entirely fulfilled;

And at your touch I am myriad, solemn with the solemn and gay with the gay, with all creatures profound and imaginable and strange, a civilization yet to be born;

No limitations for me! No definitions!

And the despot and the priest shall hold no sway -- only the ferryboat churning, the transcontinental train chortling harmlessly through my manly blood and across endless plains;

And the sun rising up in my own groin like spring corn;

Show me the proof of your love -- in your eyes, Walt Whitman, in your stride, in your relentless urging; in the fearless yearning curve of your neck, o ibis of the marsh! Sacred, hungry, eager, your massive shoulders leaning forward always;

Good Gray American! Poet! Friend!

You are the blood-hold of generations, running with the animals, more rooted than trees; you are the good restless energy of the people, which courses through my willing veins -- an island boy like you, unchained and free.

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

I AM STONE

I am stone, the religion of stone,
its mate and its government, I am
the cutting and hauling, carried from
quarry to dray, carelessly dumped,
meticulously accounted for, I am the
stone walls of Avignon, Oscar Wilde's
prison, my dust on the stonemason's smock,
I have been contemplated by history and
found wanting, encircled by motorways,
prized by the poor and hungry, a rich man's
pleasure, irreverent and proud, manhandled
by laborers, fearful of the whip, I have been cowed
by factory chimes; I am stone, whispered to life
or blasted out, delicate as cut fruit, the scent of me,
my marble veins, stolen from mountains,
paid for with a broken nose, liberated,
put into position, grappled with, the heart

of a nation, ready to bust a skull,
the replica of a man, of many men,
I have been stood by and stood against,
trottoir and motherlode, filing stone
to sharpen kitchen knives, gravel
for a pothole, cut the umblical,
baby stone to try your first teeth on,
common and pure, firm as an emperor,
jawstone, cliffstone, not precious or rare,
indelicate as a jester's oath, a levy, a
moat; I am the democratic army of stone
standing shoulder to shoulder
with peers and patriots -
I hold my place!
the whetting stone,
solemn as a vow;
toss me at the cat,
roll me from the tomb-mouth
of your god, build a temple of me,
or a bridge, or a pier for bowline,
a cloister, a castle -- no hurtle too high,
no keystone too much to bear, archway
to forbidden places, gardens, coliseums,
cribs, crypts, a barrier to climb, a gate
to break down or to piss on, marker
to civilizations, miles to Rome, graves,
graves, aqueducts, graves; I bridge water
from tribal mountains, I am easy going
in wet or violent weather, I lighten the utopian
load - I am the stone at the leper's window,
kerbstone at the solicitor's door, o heave me at tyrants,
hold me up against a wilderness of seawaves,
hoof or heel me, ironhooped, I am catholic,
saddled, barrelbusting, cobblestone, I am a
channel for blood and beer, sling me at
biblical goliaths -- lapidary, secret,
penitent, solitary in the masons' hand --
or in your hand, placed to mine --
eternal! as the lovers' cool embrace,
as water is to water, engraved by
Camille Claudel, carved into exquisite life
by the light of a new mad Mediterranean moon

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

IF THERE WAS NO LOVE, THERE WOULD BE NO REVOLUTION

If there was no love, the lure and the loss of it, there would be no going, not for a man of the road, equal in power to the moment, as continents drift, as rivers unfold valley by blue-shadowed valley and the rivercrest before him, not for a man who strays beyond the double helix of doubt and the perplexing arms of a lagoon called permissible oppression

A makeshift refugee liberated from the smothering inertial powers of government, and into the horizon where the lure and the loss of love is no more than the wind to juarez, no plexus of death

And life is trouble yes, only death is not (*zorba*); and *ya nos cayo el chahuistle* yes, so what, trouble is only a test to a man, not his destination; and a moment in time is not time itself, which anyhow doesn't even exist except in a man's head and among certain physicists

And anyhow even if it does exist it is without music or soul or dimension, until a free man inhabits it, pure, contradictory, momentary, a free man shooting straight into the revolution and beyond it, into the revolution and the light, and also into love, a kind of love, anyhow, shepherd crook and bony fingered, with dawn's thumb pointed skyward declaring all men here are equal and the passage to the eternal now and open to all

O blessed incantation yapping like a sheepdog as we make our break, o mad incantation purring in wait as we stop to relieve ourselves in cantina and bushy canyon, o brilliant incantation as you sparkle in your metaphor of gravel and waterfall and cliff and rock

See how your asphalt gleaming see how your milky way, see how even the sun itself, the gloom of rain, cortege of snow, flakes rising and falling, celebrates you, see the dust and mite and speck of human limitation disappearing with the horizon

Onward! this motorized going, piston by piston, this running light this open heart and taillights swaying; these pipes unmuffled, this collar turned up, this hat turned back

Toward possibility
Toward uncertainty
Away from death

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

BLOWING WITH THE SWEET ANGELS OF REPOSE

Nowadays I lie with the sweet angels of repose & dream
& time goes slow but once it was the spring of '65 bumping
with the big boys in Fort Lee I think it was St Pattie's Day

for the Irish March 17 & somebody said Herbie Hancock was up in Englewood Cliffs & that was big for us we were lost troubadours we showed up at the backdoor intending to pay our respects but just missed him because of a little

Trouble at the Mobilstation so we got there late & some people tried to talk us down & some people tried to shut us off & yes my mom does sleep in her galoshes & Johnny's got a face like a pizza pie but so what it was all a lot of jazz and that's what all the jazz in America was about, to us, so we forgot all that & Herbie Hancock too & went back to our business which was celebrating the Irish in

Fort Lee & the traffic & the streets it was a game only a game we played but the cops materialized out of nowhere & the next thing you know Johnny's lying prostrate on the cold pavement they cuffed him & took all our names -- yeah that was the night Herbie Hancock recorded Maiden Voyage in Englewood Cliffs & nowadays time goes slow, I sleep like an old man & dream about the lost troubadours of Fort Lee

& blow in the blue New Jersey night
with the sweet angels of repose

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

CHERRY BLOSSOMS, BUMS, AND ANGELS ON THE WING

Sitting on the A train last stop in Manhattan listening to Leonard Cohen I almost forgot to get off it's 7:42 April 9 and I have to cross the park quick and get to class, a kid next to me is holding a book in his lap (Coney Island Of The Mind, Lawrence Ferlinghetti) I'm thinking about Jacob Shuttlesworth played by Denzel Washington in that Spike Lee movie, everybody in Coney Island trying to hitch-hike a ride to fame or redemption or paradise on the back of his son Jesus, including him (how nice it would be to be able to play basketball or stay on the subway and ride all the way to Coney easy and cool instead of getting off here);

And the ladder to heaven swings both ways and the walk thru City Hall Park will be cold and complicated and depressing, bums will be reading newspapers on the park bench (like Jack London used to 'til the beat cops run him off), dogwalkers pulled along by pugs in

sweaters, sanitation men muscular and proud and Italian tourists
with their warm accents and hot cups of coffee -- still, the cherry
trees will be holding their own with their pink pretty blossoms
in their tight little fists;

And there are times I wish an angel would come down from heaven
and touch America and make us beautiful and good again like it did
for Ray Allen in He Got Game instead of ass-fucking us like that sick
little rich kid from Santa Monica California (secret vampire genius
of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue who thinks it's fun to lock immigrant
children up in borderland cages);

And o I hate this government and that terrible man at the top but
I also love spring and angels don't always fall out of trees or climb
down out of heaven sometimes they jump out from behind rocks
they crawl out of any crack in the universe between the living and
the damned and some of them love to do mean things and tell us
what to do (it isn't just light that gets through that crack in everything,
Leonard) but not all of them;

And when Ferlinghetti turned 100 I said hooray! he's still going strong, I'm
not (I'm 70 and if I make it to 100 I don't know what, but Ferlinghetti
will probably still be alive and kicking crap out of the bastards);

And some people will live forever and do the right thing and that's okay
and makes me glad (other people not so much but hey let's not go there,
you can't always judge things by appearances -- cherry blossoms, bums,
or angels on the wing)

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

GREAT MEN AND SMALL

Great men and small are made
of the same ordinary stuff, as
bread is to wheat or tower to
stone, and put to the test one
man rises and ten thousand fall;
and there is no shame in it, a
clay pot drops to the nearest
rock eventually, breaks the same
(and what is this liquid spilling
out like wine, like blood);

No glory in the acts of flawed
men, poorly made, who have
shaped themselves into images
of greatness -- shameless leaders
who crack, in due course, let slip
their gain, or those of us who have
followed or failed to oppose them
soon enough, marching home from
their victories defeated, our sails torn
from the mast, our spirits broken;

The armies of the already
dead, doomed from the start,
returning to the graves
from which we have come.

(fr Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, La Finestra Editrice, 2019)

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