**AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE WALLACE**

**BIODATA.**

**George Wallace is writer in residence at the Walt Whitman Birthplace, editor of Poetrybay and co-editor of Great Weather for Media, editor of Long Island Quarterly, Walt’s Corner and many others. He travels internationally to present his work, perform, lead writing workshops, and lecture on literary topics. A graduate of W.D.Snodgrass(BA Syracuse U) and Marvin Bell (MFA Pacific University). He taught writing at Pace University (NYC), Westchester Community College. Research resident at Harvard’s Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington DC.He had worked as a Peace Corp Volunteer, health care administrator, community organizer, community journalist, active duty medical military officer and local historian and others. George Wallace is recent recipient of the Orpheus Prize (Plovdiv BG), Naim Frasheri Laureateship (Tetovo MC), Corona d’oro First Prize (Korca AL) and the Alexander Gold Medal (UNESCO-Pireus GR), Centro Studii Archivio d’Occidente Award (CSAO, It) Blue Light Book Award, Laureate, National Beat Poetry Festival, First Poet Laureate, Suffolk County LI NY amongst others.**

**George Wallace published 35 chapbooks of poetry: I Feed the Flame and the Flame Feed Me, Sacred Language of Wine and Bread, One Hundred Years Among the Daisies, The Sulphur of Troy/ Lo Zolfo di Troia, Smashing Rock and Straight as Razors, A Simple Blue With A Few Intangibles, Drugged by Hollywood,**

**Beauty Parlors, Trainyards and Everything in Between, Belt Buckles and Abductor of Men, Incident on the Orient Express, Sleeping Beauty’s Revenge, The Hard Stuff, Jumping Over The Moon. He was in many anthologies, and journals.**

**Q. Tell me more about your childhood and early life, family, schooling and education background.**

**I'm from a working class 'ethnic-New York inner city' family, which migrated to suburban Long Island in the 1950s -- a family with perhaps a disproportionate number of artistically-minded individuals in it (read theatre, visual arts, music, haute couture). We were people who didn't fit in all that well with the old neighborhood, or with the middle class environs of the suburbs. Artists and divergent thinkers are so often outsiders in their communities, and it's up to them in adulthood to find like-minded people with whom they can confederate. That goes for family too -- there was a lot of tension between family members in my house -- so many strong personalities, impossible to hold them all in a cracked little bucket called family. We did the best we could.**

**As for the schooling and education bit, you can read the specifics on wikipedia or at Poets and Writers if you want -- but my real schooling came as I 'grew into' the loose association of artistically-minded poets and writers that are my community now.**

**Q. When and how did you start writing and going into literature?**

**When I realized that I would never make a Bach fugue truly sing, or compose music so moving - so architecturally magnificent or so perfectly attuned to the cosmic tick-tock.**

**Q. What inspires you into writing?**

**The overwhelming passion to be a 'little god,' as Vicente Huidobro put it, to be a creator. Writing poetry is an opportunity to reveal the sacred geometry which exists below the surface appearance of material objects, existences, circumstances. The intrinsic life in the world is present in our lives because of our perception of it; but doubly alive for creative people because of their ability to tease out, to re-enact, that intrinsic life in their art. I love to make the dead dust dance.**

**Q. Tell me more about the genres of literature you are involved in since beginning until now.**

**Surrealist European writers were big for me for a long time, lesser so Dada deconstructionists and more the Cubists. South American and Greek surrealists have inspired me, too. Beat writing is more than an involvement, Kerouac and Ginsberg, in particular, are mentors (in terms of bop prosody and flow, and Blakeian ecstatics). I have a lifelong affinity to Ferlinghetti's kinetics. In recent years I have begun a serious charge into the Greek classics.**

**And of course, I am an American, I am both son and daughter, lover and friend, to Walt Whitman.**

**Q.Your publications since beginning till now?**

**As one of the cadre of poets outside the mainstream, I think of publications as the offspring of relationships, with individuals and/or with communities of poets.**

**Here in New York, I was a Long Island poet first, and published a few books with David Axelrod Writers Ink), but in recent years my work has been more NYC-based, and some of my very finest recent publications have come through Kat Georges, Peter Carlaftes (Three Room Press).**

**In England, a number of publishing opportunities have developed through friends and colleagues of Geraldine Green. In Italy, I have a very good relationship with the poet Marco Albertazzi (La Finestra Editrice). And in Macedonia, the Tetova-based Shaip Emirlahu (Ditet e Naimit).**

**Other US vortices for poetry, and people in them who I've worked with on chapbooks, include**

**Cleveland poets, particularly Bree Bodner (Green Panda), John Burroughs (Crisis Chronicles) and Dianne Borsenik (NightBallet)**

**California poets, including Diane Frank (Blue Lights) and Cathy Cusimano (Amethyst & Emerald);**

**KC poets, initially through my introduction to Prospero's Books by Eero Ruttilla but then with Jason Ryborg (Spartan Press) and Jeanette Powers (Stubborn Mule);**

**And a number of people, through those associated in some way with neo-Beat writing or other special communities, have been important to me, including David Greenspan (Butcher Shop), Shiv Mirabito (Shivastan), Michael Czarnecki (Foothills), Yuyutsu Sharma (Nirala), and James Wagner (Local Gems).**

**Q. What are the awards and achievements you had received from beginning till now?**

**I've received a number of literary awards and prizes, particularly in recent years in my visits to the Southern Balkans and the Mediterranean-- including the Naim Frasheri Prize in Tetova, Korona d'Oro in Korca, Orpheus Prize in Plovdiv, Centro Studii Archivio d'Occidente Award in Trento, and Alexander Medal in Salonika. Here in the states I have been named Poet Laureate of Suffolk County, on Long Island, and the first laureate of the National Beat Poetry Conference. Won some poetry prizes (Blue Light Press, CW Post Poetry Prize), too. And of course to have served for nearly a decade as writer in residence at the Walt Whitman Birthplace has been a great honor.**

**Perhaps my most prized award was one I received from the little town of Faison, NC, the Key to the City, for community service -- that was back in the 70s, when I was a rural health organizer. And I would be remiss if i failed to mention the medal of appreciation I received from Soong Ju Gun county in South Korea that same decade, as a Peace Corps volunteer.**

**Q. Future plans and projects?**

**As I enter my 70s, it is time for me to tend my garden. I anticipate pulling back, at least temporarily, on long distance travel, and engage in a more intense focused way on my 'inner' work, and on my engagement with the NYC writing community. This will be a time of redirection, reflection -- a time to 'reap the whirlwind' of my travels.**

**POEMS BY GEORGE WALLACE**

**FOR THIS MY HEART THE REVOLUTION**

**ONE EARTH ONE PEOPLE**

**IF YOU COULD REMOVE THE DEAD FROM THE DEAD  
RAIN SKIP A STONE ON ME (Lake Ohrid)**

**I AM SORRY DIANE DIPRIMA**  
**THIS SCATTERING OF LIGHT IN WHICH I DISAPPEAR INTO AN IMAGE OF YOU**

**POEM IN A COFFEEPOT**

**OUR FOOD IN YOUR HANDS**  
**OCTOBER RUNS LIKE A BE-BOP SHAKESPEARE**

**PASO A PASO**

**WE BURNED OUR WAY TO NOWHERESVILLE**

**OFFROAD FOURWHEEL BUSTED UP COLLARBONE ROLLBAR MISS AMERICA**  
**SOME ACCIDENTAL CATEGORY OF MIRACLES**

**BLUES ON SEVENTH AVENUE**

**RUNNING WITH THE ANIMALS, MORE ROOTED THAN TREES**

**I AM STONE**

**CHERRY BLOSSOMS, BUMS AND ANGLES ON THE WING**

**IF THERE WAS NO LOVE THERE WOULD BE NO REVOLUTION**

**BLOWING WITH THE SWEET ANGELS OF RESPOSE**

**GREAT MEN AND SMALL**

**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

pperatics 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 & shorthandled 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 churtling 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 stonecutter'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 cowled

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)**

**Thank you very much respected writer, George Wallace. Its been a pleasure to meet, know and talk to you,Sir.**

**Siti Ruqaiyah Hashim Co-Author Diogen Pro Culture For The World Peace.**