

DeWitt Henry – Five Poems

Confluence

Mingle, flow together, join
like Pittsburgh's Monongahela and Allegheny
creating the Ohio.

Affluence comes from income streams
or even tributes from debtors
as well as from rivers swelling
from tributaries.

I'm only fluent in English,
halting in French and German.
However English itself is influenced
by many languages, just as rivers
are by watersheds and mountain snows.

Effluence: something that flows out.
Effluvium, usually waste.

Everything is flowing
according to Heraclitus, "No man
steps in the same river twice."

Eterne in mutability.
Time stop photography speeds up
cycles of growth and decay.
Thus do we ripe and ripe, rot and rot.
The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb.

The meeting of waters. Ocean currents.
The Gulf Stream, a river flows in water.

Walden Pond is fed by deep, cold springs.

Yoked purpose. Human chains.
Marriage, friendship, partnership,
and parenting. Gene and spirit pools.
From many, one. Go with the flow.

"Fields of inquiry," goals, discoveries,
memories and heritages.
Your thought meets mine.

Our “minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy’s images
And grows to something of great constancy.”

Or merge to echoes in a Marabar cave.

Three Takes On Spirit

1.

Opposite of matter.
From spirare: to breathe.
Our need to inhale oxygen
and exhale CO₂. We speak of
dying breath. Last gasp.
Frazer’s Golden Bough
relates rituals where families gather
to breath in the passing spirit.
Breathless. She sucks forth
my soul, see where it flies!
Give me my soul again!
Inspire, conspire, respire, expire.
Low spirits and high.
Hard stuff or Sprite?
Breathalyzer.
Zeitgeist. Spirit of the times.
Spirit of St. Louis
(Lindy’s transatlantic
high wing monoplane).
Spirit Airlines.
Glendower: “I can call spirits
from the vasty deep!”
Hotspur: “And so can I or any man;
But will they come if I do call?”
Exorcist. Drive out bad spirits.
Lift my spirits, raise my spirits.
“I am risen! ...Magnificent,
blazing indomitable in the depth
of his loins, his own sun dawned”
(The Man Who Died).
Purgatory, bardo.
Spirit world. Spirited away.

2.

Pep rally, cheerleaders,
chants, cheers,
locker room harangue
one for all.
Fighting spirit.
Pumped up.
Go team, go!

School, group, civic.
Spirit of the place.
Boston Strong.
Unconquerable:
master of my fate,
captain of my soul.

Join in, Scrooge.
Get into the spirit.
Cup of kindness.
Joy to the world!
Don't litter.
Curb your dog.
Be a good neighbor.
Do unto others.
Keep the faith.
Don't let things
get you down.

Your huddled masses
And your poor.
Great Spirit.
The spirit moved us.

3.

You're here, you're gone.
Don't tell me reparations

or rewards. You have
or don't. I'll keep mine.

I know the score.
It's me satisfied,
you lost. We'll see who
floats after the flood.
Final judgment. Just
rewards.

Kill flies for sport,
why not? I'm bored.

All fools but me.
Pleasure in your pain,
because I can;
even self-inflicted,
me over me.

A good man is hard
to find. Spare
me lame gestures, please,
as I shoot.

We're not bad,
just misunderstood.
Hey, I'm deprived
on account I'm deprived.

Iago's my mate.
And Richard too.
The older sisters Lear.
Sadistic Cornwall:
Out, vile jelly!

Coward, you say?
Psychopath? Monster?
Transmigrated predator?
Don't kid yourself.
I'm human still, and
smarter than you.

On Levity

The opposite of gravity,
a serious person, grave as graves,
but also weighty, as in heavy matters.
Gravid. Levity is buoyant.
From the French, “lever,” to raise.
To make light of hardships;
or to levitate, defying gravity,
rising in air as if in water—
unless we’re astronauts in free fall.
Any muscle that lifts
is a levitor. An elevator
lifts us from our day.
We raise or levy taxes to pay for
levies—earthworks to protect
us from rising waters.
As yeast leavens dough,
we ferment deeper thought
with humor or with
counting small pleasures.
Colors in a garden,
dewy spider web aglow,
toss and nod of breeze-
blown, full-leaved trees.
Tug of kite, strike of
fish. Voice echos.
A sentence well-made.

DeWitt Henry’s most recent collection is *Sweet Marjoram: Notes and Essays* (MadHat, 2018). A new collection, *Endings And Beginnings: Family Essays* is scheduled for 2020. He was the founding editor of *Ploughshares* and is Prof. Emeritus at Emerson College. Details at www.dewitthenry.com