

John Sheehan Suite: An Homage

(scored from John Sheehan's poetry with help from John the Evangelist, William Blake, Walt Whitman, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mike Barrett)

I. Lessons in Verbum

John: John the Evangelist sez:
in principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus
erat Verbum
hoc erat in principio apud Deum
omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil
quod factum est
in ipso vita erat et vita erat lux hominum
et lux in tenebris lucet

Rob: grammar is the death of language
not its living natured bones
grammar is the treatment
by centuries of quack doctors
on the body of the word

(Dave): Jazz us, sing it in syntax in sentence sprawling toward life

Mike: En el principio era el Verbo, y el Verbo era con Dios, y el Verbo era Dios.
El era en el principio con Dios.
Todas las cosas fueron hechas por medio de él, y sin él no fue hecho nada de lo que
ha sido hecho.
En él estaba la vida, y la vida era la luz de los hombres.
La luz resplandece en las tinieblas, y las tinieblas no la vencieron.

Karen: school
says the dictionary
is the Greek word
scola
leisure
free time

(Anna): to free a thought
to plant a garden
to mow a mind

Mike: Math is a Greek word for knowledge
knowledge is not enough
sophia is a greek word for wisdom
math measures reality
wisdom dives into it
wisdom revels in reality
wisdom can't help but sing

math is too busy counting

Dave: William Blake sez:

Mike: I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans
I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create

Anna: Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und das Wort war Gott.
Dieses war im Anfang bei Gott.
Alles wurde durch dasselbe, und ohne dasselbe wurde auch nicht eines, das
geworden ist.
In ihm war Leben, und das Leben war das Licht der Menschen.
Und das Licht scheint in der Finsternis, und
die Finsternis hat es nicht erfaßt.

Karen: but aftermath is aftermowing
Old English Germanic not Greek
the sweet smell of grass and clover

(Voices): sweet sound of wisdom (Jean)
sweet touch of sex (Dave)
sweet taste of words (Mike)
(with a thought of salt) (Anna)

Rob: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing
made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

Jean: Jesus is Yasha Yeshu
Joshua Jesse Hesus
an ordinary street name

Karen & Dave: Dequan, Shaquana, Ralph & Stan, Hafiz, Cho and Chaim, Krishna, Maria and
Frank

Jean: Yeshu baby
(Voices): Iesu Christo baby Hesus baby Josh baby (Dave) (Rob) (Karen)
crying in the straw

(Voices): aftermath of mowing (Mike)
Give us some green (Anna)

Jean: be a stumbling block
and a scandal

that bumps us into reality

Mike: If I have a loaf of bread

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(Dave): aftermath of harvest
and my brother my sister have none
then I owe them half
even if they do have a gun
I just might not realize
how much guns had to do
with my having the bread
in the first place

II. Amerimix

Mike: Walt Whitman sez:

Dave: I resist anything better than my own diversity
And breathe the air and leave plenty after me
and am not stuck up, and am in my place
Divine I am inside and out and I make holy
whatever I touch or am touched from...

Rob: this southeast texas
the roots of my parents
my boyhood home
was not cowboy texas
but creole gumbo texas

Karen: We
 Americans
 Yankees
 Dixieland Black
 Hunkies

Jean: We
Shakespeare Dante
Homer Aquinas
eggplant Parmesan
creole gumbo

Anna: None of us whites
come from Irish bogs
or English fogs
from Russian steppes
or Bavarian thickets
we spring bright and brilliant
from the shining Parthenon

Voices: We
rust piles (Karen)
salt piles (Rob)
gravel (Dave)
wrecked cars (Mike)
huddling the harbor

Jean: for better or worse Gary's my home
and I'd rather live in this left-over city
than any suburb I know

Mike: My globe misprints Gary as Gray
what is Gary anyway?

(Dave): America

Rob: this hodgepodge
garden farm
lakemill
duneswamp
tangletrack
polyglot
dumping ground
hinterland

Mike: Sometimes my mind says America is not the place to stay
what is America anyway?

(Dave): Gary

Karen & Anna: Potawotomi
Miami
Ottawa
Illinois,
Menominee
Dutch Sheehan
Irish Jew

Rob : A Pious old Irishman
turned to my wife benignly

(Dave): and when she turns around baby
that's revolution at its best
and said,
“I love all negroes.”
She ungratefully shot back,

Karen: “Why you son of a bitch
I can’t stand half the motherfuckers myself.”

Mike: Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable
is the French name
of a Black man

Jean: Voodoo Mama
off-beat Oddyseus
wild Dionysius
Pilgrim Maid

Dave: Vietnamese or Congolese
Viennese or Japanese
Pekingese or Siamese

Anna: We
minstrels and mountebanks
sages and clowns

Karen: We
a Klean Kristian Kommunity (KKK)

All: Discipline
empire
bloodshed

(Karen): we need some green
(Anna): taste the salt
(Mike): give half your bread

Rob: consider the Potawotomie
the Comanche the Cambodians
and the poor folk of Chile
and the kids growing up

(Dave): an ordinary street name
among the sparrows of Gary

they can see trees and squirrels and birds
and every manner of god-given beauty
in the trash-lined dunes and swamplands

Mike: touched by the divine
my dwelling, Gary,
rusted, holy and green

III. The Color of wisdom is green. It tastes salty.

Jean: What is the color of wisdom?

Mike: the dead makes way for new growth
the roots are still green
they grow into green
oh give us some green
we need new green

Jean: Where can you find it?

Anna: we'd walk out several blocks worth
in the warm soupy water
of the sluggish, muddy Gulf

salty and soothing and healing
for limbs and heads that ached from history

until it was up to our waists
salty and soothing...

Karen: a potion salted by Old Mother Earth
and stirred by the light of the moon

Dave: jazz us to the age old rites
of Kelt and Bantu
and far Polynesia
of Slav and Hindi
and Nipponese

Karen: delight in dancing
and chanting young
jazz us into the dazzling eye
of nature's whole
reality

All: And there you'll find it.

Jean: How do we collect it during our life?

Mike: Zora Neale Hurston sez:

Anna: I do not say that my conclusions about anything are true for the Universe. But I have lived in many ways, sweet and bitter and they feel right for me. I have sat in on judgment upon the ways of others, and in the voiceless quiet of the night I have also called myself to judgment. I have served and been served. I have made enemies of which I am not ashamed. I have been faithless and have been faithful and steadfast until the blood ran down my shoes. I have loved unselfishly with all the ardor of a strong heart and I have hated with all the power of my soul. I have touched the four corners of the horizon...

Jean: What has John brought us from the those four corners?

Rob (Karen): A message (wisdom):

Dave: realize reality's healing

Anna (Karen): A song (wisdom):

Voices: sip sap supper sapientia
Karen: wisdom
savory saving salt

Mike (Karen): A prayer (wisdom):

All: Salem, shalom, salaam

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Salem, shalom, salaam
Salem, shalom, salaam

The last lines should be pronounced: SAY LEM SHUH LOAM SUH LAHM

down cluttered Washington Ave
and out Heights Boulevard
with its esplanade in raggedy splendor
of unshorn palm trees and bearded oaks

Indiana is not an indian name

Chicago is “indian” though
Eschicagou, onion swamp
urbs in hortu
hortus in urbe
poppy paper fields
walnut orange apricot yellow
cantaloupe stretches
and mountain horizons

but the good humored easy bantering
of the
and the Black lady
that ran the tavern
lodged mellow
to work in my memory

These northern whites
did al their grandparents
just come over in 1912

history we had down south in our bones
that never got into the books

if she were Vietnamese or Congolese or Viennese
or Irish
and I were japanese or Pekinese or Simese

I walk the dog down the street to the woods
kids and their parents call me by name

Serbo-Croatian
restaurants closed down
but bars and fast food still open
Slavic is mixed with Latino
peppered lightly with black

We.....

Dent de lion
the tooth of the lion
millions on millions of miniature suns
monstrances showing a mother's love

the medieval french,
those practical peasants,
named the flower
for its edible leaf
jagged
like the tooth of the lion

What's Gary

Sears and Roebuck love us all
jazz us on winged words
improvised
in celebration