



NATURE

Better

Lenn Stewart

NATURE

Letters
Lenn Stewart

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FIRST EDITION

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if Walt Whitman were a youngish woman walking to work
along Northwest Marine Drive in the Endowment Lands,
just west of Vancouver, BC; if to her north were a series of
mountains, just on the other side of Burrard Inlet; if to her
south were mansions, mansions, mansions up the hill; if she
had a first trimester miscarriage, and then another one.

dear diary,

when mornings I tramp gleefully to school
my hillside roofed abundantly with pinkish eagles
my eyes roll back awhile
the sea buoy clangs

and I, my head cocked, listen
ollalie bushes, bloodshed, Spanish ships
perfect in youth, perfect of mouth, I tilt my head, and listen

the sea's beside me, and I hear some silver fish

inside my ribs I'm singing silently
of Maggie's heron's mashed-up summer eye

I loiter in bright intervals, in red cord-knotted wood
in forests, torrents, tree-cathedrals

I flatter all my feathers, quite vestigial
my crest-like armour rises shining—I'm never dull, nor sad

I'm fond of worms, and ribbons
I grab fish with my bill, I do not spear it

dear diary,

today I rise in concert with the sunrise
I clean myself and shout at May

then up the hill with me, I'm rising through an atmosphere
I'm damp with haste & shrubbish

this morning, while disintegrating, I slant myself against the rains
restless waters, feelings maternalish,

a breeze, a ship, a smear of history,
a sudden plaque of Spain, a sunset coast

I will subsume it, someday, or it'll subsume me

I'll go to the bluffs and
I'll become mad with the wood and
I'll contract with it pragmatically

peel off with violence over
plunging seas

The shock of my own skin
in the sea, on the rocks, in barnacles
their feathery "urge and urge and urge"

the "urge and urge and urge" of the world

and as I strike out 'cross the inlet,
every goddamn mountain of my self
will gleam and wink at you

dear diary,

I know the flukes will feed on me
(they always threaten to consume the seas)
but who but me could sympathize, could writhe
with all this colour, all this zeal?

And when I think, dear diary, of those I have known
Thrown off from the planet like free-swimming bodies

and when I think of beards, glist'ning like the days of Noah
Such bodies, like an unseen edge,

the force of trepidation like a waterfall
the sheen of their fine waists—Their massive arms

When I try to compare, when I try to consider,
which, of all chronology, might I like best?

O, the loveliest of Vegetables is beautiful to me

There live, there rise their tender germes:
so sure

I see them there—stood stock-still like an age
lined up like letterboxes in a National Park

And what have I obtained, smooth sphere,
from all this fine rich pasture-land?

Amoebas are themselves: they sit, and fatly amplify themselves

Likewise, dear diary, I'll graft a new tongue on myself

I will be greater than the mother of men

I will be cheerful, I will dilate

aggression, like a whale's tooth, might arise
but mostly when confronted with perfection

o separate object, my maturest anger,
look on the bright side:

this rage could be adaptive, or libido—a therapeutic flaw?

you know when it comes down to it
I can resist anything better than a moth
or a fish-egg a comrade a fancy-man a physician

These really are the thoughts of all men

A sill pine-neededled, and a half-spread dog
I see 'em & I trap 'em in myself

these days, even the cheapest bear
adorns himself with aircraft

and though I can't prove I've a limp hand
nor been Treated

That same old law's still here: an empty invitation

The sweetest traitors come and leave
or else they come and stay

I strike deep oaths with an axe
gather deadfall

I grumble along this old inchoate road
this green and leafy road

and Have you heard that it was good? For conquered
and slain persons?

Viva to those, I have failed

Like a war-vessel sunk in the sea
Like a general's broken engagement
Like a numberless unknown appointment

Like a thoughtful duet, or an intricate purpose

Mica on the side of a rock
A hankering for beef

Sweet fat sticks to my bones
Like a doctor's dose
or a burnt stick

I'm told, Grieve not so casual mistakes, the mispositioned organ
another of these gloomy fruits
These fibrous and indecent grains
brought forth before their time

It's palpable folly, the number of parts produced

What do you call these scapes
that issue forth
before the body's framed?

The Abscission of a Flower, and a Pod

Having just a week ago been a clean-haired Yankee girl
Having just a week ago these open'd lips
Having just a week ago a tipsy neck

Like a stump I stand thick 'round this hole in the ice

I am stuffed with the living sleep of the patriarch
drowned in his time

Over lakes or bays or along coasts

For a short time I became a bay