

## 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

(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

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 toothe of the lion

What's Gary

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