

THE OLD WALLER

I see him now, the rangy, dry-stone waller,
his long, lean frame and shabby greening hat;
his twinkling eyes; the way he'd greet a caller
with friendly nod, content to work and chat.

His long, sinewy fingers, scored and calloused,
selected stones with judgment long matured
and placed them firmly, neatly - and unharassed -
where the perfect stability ensured.

The wall and he seemed almost kin together,
dun-coloured, earthy, with a touch of green,
elemental and piquant as the weather
that sweeps the rugged, Lower Pennines scene.

I shall not forget the rangy, dry-stone waller,
his long, lean frame and shabby greening hat:
where is he now, and what celestial caller
hails him today and pauses for a chat?

Gordon Allen North

To Harden the Earth

To harden the earth
is a stone's occupation -
till stone became
winged
and flew.
Those that survived
climbed the lightning,
cried out in the dark:
a watery token,
the violet light on a blade,
a meteor.

Our succulent sky
holds more than the clouds
and the void, with its odour of oxygen -
it holds a terrestrial stone,
it flashes out here and there
with its look of a dove
or a bell,
takes on magnitude,
the cutting edge of the wind:
an arrow in the phosphorous, a facet
of salt on the sky.

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Silence Packs itself

Silence packs itself
into stone:
the great circles close
and a whole tremulous world
with its wars, birds, houses,
trains, forests, cities,
the wave that repeats the enigmas of ocean
the consecutive journey of dawn -
all come to stone, the nut of the firmament,
to offer their witness.

The stone in the dust of the road
knows the old generations of Pedro,
the water that broke at his birth
the mute word of earth:
it inherits primordial silence,
the sea's immobility,
the void of creation, and has nothing to say.

Before man was, or dawn, before
wind was, stone was:
the first movement of stone
and the music of rivers were one.