

George Bishop

TO WALT WHITMAN

Your words bathed me,
lapping at my naked sides
like the salted dreams of sailors.
I listened for your voice
in the quiet talk of the ebb,
in the bugles of the gulls
chasing our silence,
pulling the sea from a tiny pair of gills.

O if souls could wash ashore
instead of bones, you would come
in a conch to a child's ear
exchanging treasures of immortality.

But it is August,
and we are all weary of rebirth.
We are ready for death to blossom--
for a salute to fear.

Unfurl your sails, grey friend,
the tide is here.
Our image in the sand is gone.

It is good we have met, Mr. Whitman.
Perhaps we could talk again,
over a storm.