



# THE DESCENTS OF ODYSSEUS

*Ethan Wedel*

If I feel come the death that's coming on, I'll empty  
my entrails and purge my brain with a point; take  
my heart out of everything I owned and burn it.

You should know that I have ordered in my will  
a procession for the purposes of mourning my passing--  
everyone must wear black, everyone must be old

[they must grind their shiny faces in  
the dirt until they're black and cold.]

in a dream  
I went to death  
a water bird

cracked dark  
and I saw the runny sun  
fractured in the river bottom

and shapeless mighty forms  
that do not live like living forms  
gathered round the seaweed will and cold

to carom off with all my aches

The lightning goes; the ecstasy of the body goes!  
Things are lost in the earth and we are almost, darling,  
down.

So shout at the casket  
So step light and step again  
on the threshing floor.

Let each boat slip its moorings and slip  
to purple wave; let every timber split itself  
again apart. Let you get yourself into the street; deliver

there a benediction: heart to  
heart with a corpse; put two  
quarters over your husband's eyes

for the dark: half-silvered,  
that stuff, the breath—what's left  
after a sigh.

[Bury me. Use your hands to dig and pour--  
and pour and pour! Slough salt and chloride on the grave  
that nothing will grow in the dim  
and rotting places where I go]

Remember I all the time when I was young;  
I stretched aching through the mountains  
and swam in sea from break to break,

stood on empty broken beaches  
through warful orange-streaked nights  
and listened to the drums at dawn.

But now no one comes  
and the vibrating  
in the boards is getting louder, humming out

the more violet with the curling flower spaces  
Inside the storm the howling stops—a going  
A going sets in, then the missing grinds The going

stops, and then some gesture of yours-- lift of hair  
from grey to black, your crumpled nose, and  
every elegy---sucks the mourners' rooms to dry

[Pity they for they will sing and sing  
and needless say and sing in day's  
cathedral for no one nothing and undone days]

And now each of your teeth is a white lapis  
and your tongue is a trilling plug that I see in  
the open of the moths' eyes: broad and wide and huge.

and when I was young I did not know that I  
was You and I together: unwinding together