

Thanks

BY W. S. MERWIN

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water thanking it
standing by the windows looking out
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks we are saying thank you
in the faces of the officials and the rich
and of all who will never change
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us
taking our feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
thank you we are saying and waving
dark though it is

In Time

BY W. S. MERWIN

The night the world was going to end
when we heard those explosions not far away
and the loudspeakers telling us
about the vast fires on the backwater
consuming undisclosed remnants
and warning us over and over
to stay indoors and make no signals
you stood at the open window
the light of one candle back in the room
we put on high boots to be ready
for wherever we might have to go
and we got out the oysters and sat
at the small table feeding them

to each other first with the fork
then from our mouths to each other
until there were none and we stood up
and started to dance without music
slowly we danced around and around
in circles and after a while we hummed
when the world was about to end
all those years all those nights ago

For the Anniversary of My Death

BY W. S. MERWIN (he died on March 15, 2019)

Every year without knowing it I have passed the day
When the last fires will wave to me
And the silence will set out
Tireless traveler
Like the beam of a lightless star

Then I will no longer
Find myself in life as in a strange garment
Surprised at the earth
And the love of one woman
And the shamelessness of men
As today writing after three days of rain
Hearing the wren sing and the falling cease
And bowing not knowing to what

ELEGY FOR A WALNUT TREE

Old friend now there is no one alive
who remembers when you were young
it was high summer when I first saw you
in the blaze of day most of my life ago
with the dry grass whispering in your shade
and already you had lived through wars
and echoes of wars around your silence
through days of parting and seasons of absence
with the house emptying as the years went their way
until it was home to bats and swallows
and still when spring climbed toward summer
you opened once more the curled sleeping fingers
of newborn leaves as though nothing had happened
you and the seasons spoke the same language
and all these years I have looked through your limbs
to the river below and the roofs and the night
and you were the way I saw the world