

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/3

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Tectonics

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall...

Second Inauguration Speech, Barack Obama, January 21, 2013

Seneca Falls, Selma, Stonewall,
The sibilant sequence shocks.
To hear these places together,
A surprise.
Far-flung geographies move closer,
Unthinkable, til now.
Tectonic plates move slowly, yet inevitably,
Closer in space and time.
A new continent formed,
Not separate,
Not apart,
Resonating close and together in sound and mind.

Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall.
Those who know only of Selma,
Now know Selma is adjacent to,
And borders on,
And shares space and land with Seneca Falls and Stonewall.
Once separate, now together.

Seneca Falls, Selma, Stonewall,
Simple and sonorous.
Speak their names to make them closer.
Three countries inhabited by different tribes,
Now neighbors.
Separations in space and time reduced,
Silence given these places now broken,
Once invisible, now clear in our eyes.
They shout to us in a joined cadence never heard before.

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Seneca Falls, Selma, and Stonewall.

A new melody of names,

New rhythms and tones.

New frontiers.

The greater melody we long to hear,

The larger map we wish to see,

The grand country we want to inhabit,

The land of the Free and the Brave.

The one country, the one larger country,

Not three.

Once apart, now together.

Sing it again, hear it again,

Speak it again, see it again,

Seneca Falls, Selma, Stonewall.