

PUSHING WATER : The Scaffolds

other pushing waters by Charles Alexander

Pushing Water I-6 (Standing Stones Press)

(in) Certain Slants (Junction Press)

Pushing Water (Cuneiform Press)

Some Sentences Look for Some Periods (little red leaves textile editions)

Two Pushing Waters (little red leaves textile editions)

AT the Edge OF the Sea: Pushing Water II (Singing Horse Press)

Pushing Water III / Truro Shift (Cuneiform Press, forthcoming)

PUSHING WATER : The Scaffolds

Charles Alexander

a dusie kollektiv
chapbook
2019

(for Marthe Reed)

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Pushing Water: The Scaffolds

one passes a theme around
or trips over a wire and finds
a path a stream a rivulet over
and under beams hold it all
or parts of it together in love
among the present lands, mutual
fibers knit or woven or quilted
provide a veil, the hills procure
a valley, black memories
unlight the night, remind fathers
of their losses and gains

we and they weep, we and they
bereft of faith and fortune, at
least sometimes lean on each
other's shoulders and elbows or
slipping onto hands and feet, the
holes in the fabric show some
light, holy light through, just a pin
prick, just a moment for a look,
not I, not you, not yet residing

one more look across that valley
and toward the uplifted plateau
a wave away and a turn down where
some sole element delights or
deceives, but not alone, not
only you or I, there where the peak
lifts a cloud above, and some victory
glimpses us, or we manage a wing
toward water, the rivers unhidden,
not darkened, not beyond us

drawn lines on incoherent air
where starry wheels circle
without blood or trembling
drawn on and into the skin
into the small stream, swallowed
at the brink of our voices
among the scattered ampersands
the ands of choices the ands
of uncertainty the ands of
possible delights in the stream

without trembling we forgive
and open into the unkempt
and unsealed imaginings where
pours all into some new rock
whose fault lines portray the
terrors of it all, the generative
errors of language confront us
and turn us and point and lead
to permutations that include
one and two and other and halves
and all transgressions and
multiple colors here in the spaces
and in the time that we have
the water that we taste together

Plunlumon looms, a point, a peak,
a place to see, a mass to be
seen, an origin, all points
are origins, one point that
contains multitudes, all
points contain multitudes,
we are, and are among
points and punctuations
surrounded by waters and words

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^ ^

if we inhabit and revolve east and west
and within our internal shields when
hungry or doubtful, driven into the furies
and the families where a loom weaves
and figures stand over fires, what can
we say to our daughters who perhaps
contained powers and dance steps
predicting possibilities of union, we
are undone if not untied, and they,
lovely among the streams whose lights
are starry and beyond anguish but not
beyond a cloud seen to loom above,
that moves to the outstretched void,
the untempered hand we try to hold
open as we are opened each night,

looking west toward the mountains
from which rise peaks and pines and
revolutions for which all lament,
from which fall the waters, lines
that connect and separate and demand
we speak through and across rivers and bodies
of salt, and where children gaze through
a mathematical uncertainty, cut in deep
gashes away from the westward horrors
of past divisions, driven back, again divided,
stood up in the dark and bitterly
clarifying red and open passages
where raged and could rage again
a terrible and thorough cleansing
in which we might rise with pain and

cover our eyes to see a darkness spread,
in which we might speak and call into
witness an emerging light that travels
into and through the water's circulations

Note: Plumlumon is a mountain in west Wales, and is referenced in William Blake's prophetic poem, "Jerusalem," a reading of which partially prompted the present poem. I once spent a week in the vicinity of that mountain, looking at it every day, and walking upon its slope and at its base.

Thank you to Maryrose Larkin for her important role in helping me to imagine this poem.

Parts of the poem were written while in Fruita, Colorado, in a visit hosted by Danny Rosen of Lithic Press and Bookstore. The uplifted form of the Uncompahgre Plateau occupied my vision while working on the poem.

Conversations with Marthe Reed were always searching, and useful, while also rich with laughter, smiles, and concern — for the planet, for the people, for everything. It was a pleasure and an honor to know her, and to participate in this Dusie project to attest to Marthe's wonder and how she passes it on to others. In addition to the book's dedication to Marthe, I also wish to dedicate it to my partner, Cynthia Miller, and to my daughters, Kate Alexander and Nora Alexander. If there are lights circulating in the waters, to me, Cynthia, Kate, and Nora are the luminaries.

