

Great Swim Dream

By Derek Hanebury

I must strike out and swim. And I am swimming ahead in the beautiful magic water of the bay. From the clear depths of the water comes a wonderful life to which I am not entitled, a life and a power which I both love and fear. I know that by diving down into the water I can find wonders and joys, but that it is not for me to dive down; rather I must go to the other side, and I am indeed swimming to the other side. . . . I know the Child will come, and He comes. The Child comes and smiles. It is the smile of a Great One, hidden. He gives to me, in simplicity, two pieces of buttered white bread, the ritual and hieratic meal given to all who come to stay.

Thomas Merton: *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*

If thoughts were money,
I would have been buried alive in pennies
a long time ago, so this is my prayer:
Let my breath be my currency; let me breathe in the name of God
and breathe out the name of God, and in the space between I will listen
for the Beloved to call my name.

I am easily seduced by the long sleek lines of sailing yachts
but love the thud of my boots echoing in the hollow-hulled trawlers
of my ancestors, the decks slippery with cod and lobsters' blood
and a thousand Lord Mother Marys hurled like curses to the wind.

From the bow of that ship I took my first timid dive
and I have been swimming ever since, the cool green water
parting over my shoulders, or else I've been treading water or waving,
okay drowning, while below me shimmers
the outlines of so many wrecks: my past lives lost
to the glinting promises of Spanish gold
and the world's approval.

Derek Hanebury, a Vancouver Island writer of poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction, holds a master's degree in creative writing from the University of British Columbia and taught writing at North Island College on Vancouver Island until his retirement in 2017. His poems and stories have been widely published and broadcast on CBC radio. Among his books are the novel *Ginger Goodwin: Beyond the Forbidden Plateau* (1986) and *Nocturnal Tonglen* (2006), a volume of poems.



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At what point the dog appears beside me I can't say,
but I'm guessing it will be a golden lab
who will teach me about service and obedience
and tail-thrumming joy. Without his help
I never will find that sacred cove let alone the sandy beach
where the Beloved waits with his face both familiar and new
waits to welcome me to the summer house
where every room has a view of the sea,
waits to feed me a sweet buttery roll
like my mother used to bake
and a slice of the dark crusty bread
that ends all hunger.