

Elixir is a multi-personaed action movie, a love poem, a trip down memory lane, a Kulchur lexicon, an ode to NYC and tribute to exotic ports everywhere. It's a tender balm for the paranoid and lonely, and a tentacular tonic for the heart of Time. I loved, once married, and have kept attentive to half a century and more writing of this genius of The Poem. Lewis Warsh opens the doors of perception with wit, suspense, beauty, surprise.

— Anne Waldman

I want to talk about how beautiful a book *Elixir* is, and describe its mastery, and soulfulness, but then I imagine Lewis teasing me about using “mastery,” then teasing the word itself, then placing it in five different phrases to create a tonal scale out of amusement and precision. There are so many layers of possibility Lewis Warsh tended to in his writing, without signaling that he was doing so, which make the poetry inviting and mysterious—steeped in recognition of common experience and wry depths of personal idiosyncrasy. His sense for arrangement of line and sentence across formal vessels that allow everything to be let in and go together is one I've loved and learned from for years. To have this book is to have a gift to dive into.

— Anselm Berrigan

NIGHT SKY

Night-life in the country,
beyond the sighting
of a raccoon,

and the headlights
of a pick-up returning from the
dump

night-life in the treetops. The
3-legged dog next door
doesn't bite. Do I hold

on for a moment or do
I slip over the edge?

Night-time in the
parking lot outside
Arizona Pizza, the Metro

North train
arrives in Wassaic, I get
off at the last stop.

Tuesday matinees
at the Triplex. The forklift
operator's wife at the end
of the bar.

Night-life in the Bronx.
A dead carnation
in your lapel.

My mother knots my tie
before I walk out the door.

Night-life on the Pacific
Rim. I wear a bullet-proof vest
in Coconut Grove.

Night-life anywhere filled
with stars in the night sky.

Night-life in the baggage
claim area with no where
to go.

STOWAWAY PANTHEON

1

I saw you from a distance but
you turned away
as if you didn't know me, and
then I saw you up close

and it was someone else
but you said "hello"
like ships in the night

you were coming up the aisle
and I was going down
to my seat in the front row
and you were calling my name
from the top balcony

and I was sipping a cold one on the edge
of the pier and watching the dancers
on the waves when you walked by
for the first or second time

and I didn't remember your
name under the purple
sky but as you turned to leave

I asked you to stay
or maybe I said "hey!"
and you didn't hear

2

Pots and pans need to be scrubbed
with Brillo.

Sometimes penicillin is needed
to cure the common cold. Free

flu shots are available in the local
drugstore, if you didn't know.

High tide, flash flooding, an old
pickup with a clutch.

Split the difference or rake in
the chips.

A glass of hot milk in the dead
of night.

A slice of pie à la mode (left over
from yesterday)

for the road ahead.

3

The twist has been out of fashion
for decades. All you have to do is stand

in one place and move your hips.
It would seem like you might want

to count your blessings for having
survived this long into a future

you never thought was coming. Better
melt back into the night before

anyone recognizes you, and calls
your name.

4

I'll go on record and say
everything twice, in case no one hears,

and you can play the record back one word
at a time and you might even translate

what I said into a different language so
"I don't know what you're talking

about" might be something she said in

response to something I was thinking

out loud, something I said
to someone else

in another life.

5

It's time to collect our coats
and go home
but there aren't any coats
and there isn't any home.

Do the math, for god's sake,
and make it come out right, tonight,

on the road between
Albany and Troy.

6

It occurs to me that
the world could end
at any moment

but sometimes I think
it could go on forever
as well. The idea

of the world ending
makes more sense
than imagining some

kind of endless future
that might include people
walking around on other

planets and never kissing.
In the scenario about ending
now I see an absence of water,

a cloud in front of the sun,
I see scorched earth
and the bodies of fish floating

on their backs. I see some
tumbleweeds blowing across

the floor of the ocean

and a lot of bones.

7

afterthought
blemishes

stationary
viaduct

hotel room
indents

expectation
inhabit

perseveres
armband

forsaken
kiosk

inanimate
peristalsis

Ovaltine
penumbra

somnambulism
infection

absent
proprietor

scapegoat
dyspeptic

humidifier
sandwiched

mainland
rivulets

retired
ombudsman

zipper
anesthesia

bellicose
microwave

humbug
Mediterranean

vintage
caramel

stowaway
pantheon

OLD FLAME

There are movies that come back
to haunt you at the end
and you can hear the music building
to a crescendo like Hollywood
so you in the audience and you in the
starring role are almost the same
good looking clean cut up tight all of
the above and none
I wouldn't recognize you on a bus
if you paid me
to get on and off
and you wouldn't remember my name
for all the nights in the world
we crawled into bed
with the lights on
and the radio playing
soft and low
we might as well have been blind-
sided by a two-ton truck
for all it matters
because there's only the present
like a movie played backwards
with a cast of thousands
hanging on for dear life.