

Hassan Melehy

Glimmers of the Day

News travels from cell to cell, making its way through my body until finally it glows on the radar screen of my attention.

It scatters the spoore—the long road as deep origin, bulbous Arabic phonetics alighting on Western doorsteps.

With as many accents as I've had to imitate I could accurately be called an actor.

If there are too many roads to choose from the best alternative is to travel by river, where the sheer age of the oaks and sequoias on the banks will make the trip a humbling meditation.

Taking the rough route is also a good way to steer clear of the jokers.

Riverbanks are spotted with the shades and flowers of Ophelia, who isn't the eternal feminine so many scholars take her for but a delegated female bloodbearer.

My name has a whiff of sesame but there are countless doors it won't open.

On the far side of every threshold a minor god sits smiling, quietly hoping for the arrival of a lesser poet.

Staying at least one step ahead of all petitioners is a gatekeeper's job, so how can you ever curry favor with one?

When I try to play Hamlet some joker calls me a thief.

The middle is somewhere between point A and point B, those two locations varying with the priorities of the transaction.

(Love binds the roughest and the smoothest souls together.)

Under the pressing weight of green skies and black suns I reach for the tail of nipple-shaped whirlwinds, the ones Rimbaud set in motion all the way to the Maghreb but not quite to my ancestral Egypt.

There's no need to go that far back—since ancestry became purely commercial all revolt is complete.

Mirroring Data

Following ancient advice I allowed
myself to sink into still repose, and
after a few minutes or maybe a little longer
an idol drifted into my eye,
launching an orchestral hymn to the virtues of
correspondence between image and thing

the only way to guarantee
that cause leads to effect, labor to salary,
love to happiness or children or both,
manufacture to product,
teaching to knowledge

the only way to be sure that
the supply chain steadily stocks food
in each household, though in
some neighborhoods the shadows
run deep, keeping things in the distance,
murky idols demanding stiff reverence.

In those days I had a small living space,
my own imprint was on every surface,
friends were at all hours welcome,
and strangers, especially when we got
to talking about whether our minds
really touch the world or just dash off in
all directions on their own, became friends.

Only for Use in Bartering over Creeds

Basic European trade skills get shrouded in
the sackcloth of American mercantile mysticism,
a garment that elects a few to stand tall
in the eyes of some lost desert tramp who never
once thought of placing himself at the heart of
such crass worldly repossession. But hell,
who'd say no to something like that?
It's not like you'd even know from any of the
epics written in previous eras about
gathering grains and meat for a meal
cooked over a fire or a hundred thousand
dying in the bloody rivers of war
that such a thing was even possible.
In the beginning there was no word
for weaving a single fabric large enough to net
the whole world, and damn if folks would've
done anything but laugh at the idea, die
laughing even, maybe to be remembered
for millennia as an extinct race of gods.
How else could it happen but with more
than one claim to control how tight
the threads are, and the only result can be
that everyone chokes if their head doesn't
just roll, far more savage than in any war they
wrote about in those crummy old books?

Our Divine Nowhere

Heads tilt
to the night sky
to catch the watch
of those beings of
plasmatic dimension
ethereal duration
who we strive to know
were once here

who wouldn't just
abandon their
sweet creation
to the vagaries
of fortune or
the black holes of
self-seeking desire.

They left their marks
in crystalline rocks,
starfish symmetry,
foliar veins, rainbows,
at least our legends
keep telling us
that's where that order

comes from, the
shimmer the iridescence
pumping its way
between the stars,
and matter
long ago shattered into
uncountable pieces
striving to reunite.

Stone Steps

On an old stone staircase leading to
a tall sloping house, decades ago I caught
a line of love, my friend looking at me,
wondering, I'm sure, about that
cold moment late last night when suddenly
I asked her to stop, to roll her body off mine
and just lie next to me and just touch
my arm and maybe my chest, please leave
the tenderer parts alone, they're just
craving quiet. She's wondering, I'm sure,
if I'm receding from her embrace,
and she's ready to let me drift,
anything, she let me know late
last night, she can do to make
me comfortable, comfortable with
her soft body and her soft needs
just sitting near me evenings,
both of us dressed, hearing
each other's breath—and now on
the stone steps, remembering, her eyes
alone letting me know she'll always
give it to me. Love I mean. Decades ago.