

Comparative Poetry – Week 7

Modes of Reading

Sonnet V (2007)

Mahmoud Darwish (translated by Fady Joudah)

I touch you as a lonely violin touches the suburbs of the faraway place
patiently the river asks for its share of the drizzle
and, bit by bit, a tomorrow passing in poems approaches
so I carry faraway's land and it carries me on travel's road

On a mare made of your virtues, my soul weaves
a natural sky made of your shadows, one chrysalis at a time.
I am the son of what you do in the earth, son of my wounds
that have lit up the pomegranate blossoms in your closed-up gardens

Out of jasmine the night's blood streams white. Your perfume,
my weakness and your secret, follows me like a snakebite. And your hair
is a tent of wind autumn in color. I walk along with speech
to the last of the words a bedouin told a pair of doves

I palpate you as a violin palpates the silk of the faraway time
and around me and you sprouts the grass of an ancient place—anew

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No Second Troy (1916)

By William Butler Yeates

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

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Mother, the Great Stones Got to Move (1995)

Lorna Goodison

Mother, one stone is wedged across the hole in our history

and sealed with blood wax.
In this hole is our side of the story, exact figures,
headcounts, burial artifacts, documents, lists, maps
showing our way up through the stars; lockets of brass
containing all textures of hair clippings.
It is the half that has never been told,
and some of us must tell it.

Mother, there is the stone on the hearts of some women and men
something like an onyx, cabochon-cut,
which hung on the wearer seeds bad dreams. Speaking for the small
dreamers of this earth, plagued with nightmares, yearning
for healing dreams
we want the stone to move.

Upon an evening like this, mother, when one year is making way
for another, in a ceremony attended by a show of silver stars,
mothers see moon, milk-fed, herself a nursing mother
and we think of our children and the stones upon their future
and we want these stones to move.

For the year going out came in fat at first
but toward the harvest it grew lean,
and many mouth corners gathered white
and another kind of poison, powdered white
was brought in to replace what was green,
And death sells it with one hand
and with the other death palms a gun
then death gets death's picture
in the paper's asking

“where does all this death come from?”
Mother, stones are pillows
for the homeless sleep on concrete sheets.
Stone flavors soup, stone is now meat,
the hard-hearted giving our children
stones to eat.

Mother, the great stones over mankind got to move,
It's been ten thousand years we've been watching them now
from various points in the universe.
From the time of our birth as points of light
in the eternal coiled workings of the cosmos.
Roll away stone of poisoned powders come
to blot out the hope of our young.
Move stones of the sacrificial lives we breed
to feed to suicide god of tribalism.

From across the pathway to mount morning
site of the rose quartz fountain
brimming anise and star water
bright fragrant for our children's future
Mother these great stones got to move.