

Three Poems from *The Ink's Path*

Bernard Noël

Translated from French by Eléna Rivera

4.1

and now the hand gropes around to find a habitable page
clearly it is necessary to leave behind the dark mouth
do we ever know what the other side of our face looks like
nothing murmurs inside us the why of reality and
the no longer are just as formidable as the not yet
while between both the present is a last gasp crushed underfoot
someone who isn't me expecting in me a noiseless sign
speaking isn't enough isn't gesture enough to reach depths
still speaking is all that remains even if lost in hearsay
flights of words loom in the hinterland of living we hear them
approach we dream for an instant of a shower of meaning
and it would be the grace that was promised to us in childhood
something latent and which suddenly blossoms in the body
equal to a caress over the whole inside of our skin
nostalgia for all that never was takes its place sometimes
as if the trace were the same for both the lived and the desired
too often we forget emotion has its night and its day

4.2

and now how is it possible to guess the shadow's distance
not the one that falls from the body the one that follows it
could be that this shadow might just be an idea of shadow
but nevertheless its substance as shadow would not be changed
nor the weight of this thing that's there for want of not being there
what is it continually at our heels this empty skin
already it's assumed our name and we know nothing of it
a trace in air exactly like a sound that fades in ringing
why are we beating the space behind in order to catch up
we dare not speak of a soul after speaking of a shadow
unless soul and shadow share qualities of a revenant
always disturbing perception with too much and too little
having come back from the cavity of an absence where it
irritates an appetite that can't ever be satisfied
someone walks behind our back and makes fun of the face-to-face
because that's how the body makes itself the shroud of all loss
its own mourning always rekindles the wound of its desires

4.3

and now why for what reason seek out the unknown once again
as if revelation could come at the end of insistence
it still involves finding the word that could light up the body
but what is it that the body and language have in common
one day there may exist between the two a coincidence
time at most for a cry of joy that didn't know what it was
what can a cry do thrown into ignorance of its meaning
nothing but turn against the mouth spitting out oblivion
ruined in the body itself the thrust toward the obvious
we listen to a rumor inside the hinterlands of voice
sometimes this resonates like a promise sometimes it's just noise
what are you waiting for says reason nothing arrives this way
but everyone seems to stroke illusion as their highest good
that which doesn't exist only has existence thanks to us
so the fiction strikes out reality or else takes revenge
for not being good enough for life while occupying it
syntax can do all but deflect the arrow that nails the age

