

Incarnations

“...it was clear that the full, embodied disclosure of God to men and women was not only multiple in time and place, but potentially infinite.”

-Diane L. Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Boston, 1993), p. 82.

1

The rain keeps being
gray. The trees are skeletons

of sky. On the beach
we find a dried plant, a thousand

years old, bones of some extinguished
animal, hardened into dust.

It is summer. No one sits
outside the shops. In the light

my face darkens like a fossil,
dangles like old string.

2

There are so many greens.
Each leaf is a line of music;

deep notes warm to yellow
in the sun, then disappear

again in silent shadows.
Each color focuses a moment,

gives it shape and weight
and transience. The leaves

bend and blur, violins and cellos
coalescing, aching, and then gone.

3

This is silver you can see through
more a film, or nothing.

Light suspended, yellow spreading
from a sun that is not there

yet. If you could see your eye
seeing, it would look like this.

4

The petals of the ocean
are light and darker blue

and fall off in the sun. A burst
of berry is elusive, the whisper

of a flower where you have to be
up close, inside the louder wind.

5

Ice cream inside colored ice,
surprising double sweetness.

The orange sky runs down
the outside of a warm glass.

6

Your shirt waved to me
from the bus window, leaving

purple pollen on my hands.
Residue of lavender, softly fragrant

in the humming of the garden,
gaily indicating your return.

7

In the pipe tobacco light
of *Far's* apartment, he takes out

two sepia photographs, you
at age one, smiling through

thinning finger stains, himself
around twenty, a small town

handsomeness, impossibly clear
and unknowing. Four clocks,

wooden on the wall, dispute time,
their sound brown like old pictures.

8

On windy days, the sea
turns cobalt blue; heavy

waves compress the water.
White caps flutter in the air.

A gull rises from the liquid
flock, carrying the sun.

9

The sleeping town is slate
gray, a place you pass

through on a train
without seeing it. There is

only your own waking and
a few faint lights of something

else. Across the water,
the first sun is thin yellow,

too transparent for the town,
that is only passing by.

10

From a chalk and feathered
Danish church, the organ

lifts the gray sun softly,
feeds it, and flies quietly away.

11

We could only stare; the lines
of lavender and teal as solid

as a painted wall. They hung there
for an hour, as if the sky were like this

all the time. Above us, swirls of red
billowed like Giacometti birds, all

bodied in the air so I could touch them.
I felt the colors in your hand.

The wind was purple, turning dark;
late that night it rained.

12

The beauty of gray days
is that there is very little

separation. The sea looks
like the shore; the shore looks

like the sky. If there is a fog,
there are no lines between them.

God could be the color of gray
days, the birds and trees

shadows of shadows, the world quiet,
incomprehensible, just happening.

13

They are pieces of sky,
the red *hyben* berries dotting

the beach. They hang between
the sand and khaki grass

like tiny stars, focusing the yellow
and the dark blue spaces of the sea.

14

The wet clouds over the water
are streaked with yellow green

like a painting turned inside out.
Only the background colors show,

residues of all the evenings when
the ripe sky hung like overflowing fruit.

15

A patch of rust surprises
in the sand. The dark red

gathers in the cobalt of the sea.
So many shades of green

stick up here and there; it is
impossible to pray to just one name.

16

The sand shifts and balances;
layers of beige, wind-walked,

spotted with worn stones, some
as yellow as an all-day rain.

The rubbed brown grasses are old
linen. Red bursts of berries

weave between the reeds and sky.
The wider blues contain and free

the shore, the air alive,
all the incarnations of itself.

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