

Three Poems

In the Case of Transparency

"In the case of transparency, if the wall were made of glass, one would see, for example, drawn on the verso, a sign or a figure that fills a gap on the recto."

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Temple in Man*, p.44

When you have three different ideas at the same time
and they walk the dog,
when you turn them upside down and they drift like the crab nebula exploding
when you realize that people are talking backwards, in waves
and it tastes minty green

When you realize that O Milagre do Sol was real, and crucial
but you can't explain why
when the column in the middle becomes a woman with flanking demons
and the cave is lined above with stained glass

And the fuzz around your head is two women, centuries apart, whispering in Pali
saying the most important thing in the world
like in a dream where you have the answer and can't remember it
and it smells like laurel here, after rain

Earth and air - sides of a transparent coin eternally flipped by a laughing Pan,
Dionysus and Athena dispute the shifting hexagrams
when text only becomes more authentic with each mistake, each misunderstanding
when who i am, and who you are becomes confused

When everything is just a little bit transparent
the glass between the yes and no
and you still can't figure out, after a lifetime of long walks

where the light is coming from
and this cool air, and not for the first time in a thousand years of glancing sideways
is more than you have ever expected from life

S. Francesco/Bellini

"St. Francis in the Desert" by Giovanni Bellini, oil on poplar, ca. 1480, Frick Museum, NYC,
November 6, 2015

I - Giovanni Bernardone

What did you smell like that morning?

Your feet smell of sand, your pits smell of oak smoke and ripe earth.

What did your skin taste like that morning?

Your wounds taste of salt, your skin the bitterness of old roots.

You got up abrupt- as if someone's there, you walked out barefoot.

I stay under covers, I move to the warm spot that you left.

That great book is closed now on last nights confusion, the birds

have been about their business long before a thought formed in the half light
and i see you there, a shadow against the sun,

taunt as a steel string, ecstasy and agony so strangely mixed
in your arched back and outstretched arms.

I am lost, i am found, i am with you, i am alone.

Brother, think of me sometimes, when you speak to god of love.

II- Giovanni Bellini

Did you want it both ways? - both God and the world?

You've sensed this light that's more than sunlight,

you've been surprised in the morning- walked barefoot and alone into dawn

and you've closed the great book after words and more words

of dead worlds made you sad and confused: your heart broken.

So you painted this ass and these flowers, this bird and these rocks.

These are the things you understand, the living beings all around us,

growing things crammed into every inch, between offstage sun

and these three massive rocks.

The fields, the herdsman, this ordinary morning,

the distant, sleepy city of women and men.

And this this dear plain man, Francesco, face lined with agony and alone.

You want to know what he knew, see what he saw, feel what he felt
without giving up this world that you love.

So you painted this picture and have put God-
who even Francesco found a mystery, outside the frame.
And i stand in strange brotherhood with you and God
outside this jewel toned world you've created,
with other hushed museum goers,
in some dead rich man's parlor,
and the woman in the gift shop says
that Franciscans come to see you often
and we all stand in the presence
of this glowing map of your broken heart
wrecked on God's reef of a world you held sacred.

'You Speak About Me'

You speak about me as if i cannot hear.
You write about me as if i cannot read.
I am here, but for you i am a million miles away
behind an invisible film of a past
full of horrors. A past that haunts our
thinking minds like the deadly slivers and shrapnel
of a tornado's logic pulling the world it's shredded for
fifteen thousand years into its I.
Everyone hears everything now.
Everyone reads all that is written.
We are all out here on one field
and it is quiet enough to hear.

BOBBY MARTINEZ is an architect and poet of Portuguese, Ute and Mexican heritage. He has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for over 45 years, where he is active in queer historical preservation and activism.