

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Thomas Ahneesan: Two Poems

Thommy Ahneesan · Wednesday, April 21st, 2021

### “How Can I Say Who I Am if the River is Gone?”

*-after Natalie Diaz, the Scorpion Queen*

never has a river  
belonged to me  
nor I to any  
body of water.  
who am I,  
if I cannot even  
remember a house?  
a special place I used to hide in,  
or even a rock  
to slip into my pocket  
and name?

I don't remember a bedroom,  
but a carpeted floor with a TV  
instead of a mother, the TV  
loving and braiding my hair  
-gloved in static.

so who am I  
if I couldn't hear  
a single word  
from the muddy, broken mouth  
of the Missouri?

even if it were to speak  
to me, I wouldn't know  
its sludge-talk, or its memory.

when history is a tossed archive  
on paper, and the paper is white  
and the paper is wet  
and the paper has flown

in a whirr of fastfood bags,  
lotto tickets, lost bets  
dead leaves and dollar store  
receipts prancing  
in their own ratchet-ass  
tornado down any given street,

when a childhood  
is a tossed and finished bone—  
when leaving Iowa  
nobody cried or even  
waved goodbye  
to the slaughterhouse.

even though I cried for the pigs  
when their screams echoed through  
the downtown stockyards  
many days when my dad  
held a tiny office full of  
mysterious tools, nail guns.

maybe if I had met one of those pigs  
I could have loved him and set him free,  
sounding drums of victory.

maybe then I'd know what I was made of,  
or who I was going to be.  
Driving over the bridge between  
Sioux City and Omaha,  
the Missouri  
gurgled and folded into  
its own swirling mud  
I waved,  
I swear—  
I tried.

\*

## BANGARANG

Cleaned my hair  
to chase the smoke out.

ladled burnt eyes  
in two frozen spoons

on the table, bedside  
the next day, too soon

morning screams in glass language,

the dialect of double pane

bobbing like a kite through my city  
tail-ribbon tied to hulking frame

to order booze in the broad  
daylight, I say I'm planning a party.

Lose the gravel, turn my face  
upside down or whatever they say

-a regular Mrs. Dalloway.

All that's needed are the flowers.  
I'm still pretty so it's well believed

that smell is not my smell.  
a sweet & sour garden.

unwashed-and-still-metabolizing  
the pleasure undone

it was me last night, you idiots  
who was the funny one.

later, I will throw a hammer  
thirty yards with great skill.

Just look at that hammer flying—  
eventually it will puncture the night.

Not a death but an undoing,  
a wound to walk out of.

Black felt fabric gaping now,  
wind whistling against

a branch that won't bend,  
but I will be long gone by then.

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