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After the Vacancy of Darkness

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EDITH SHIFFERT

AFTER THE VACANCY OF DARKNESS

After the vacancy of darkness I awaken to space
in morning mists drifting like floating oil
to carry me ashore somewhere a magic body
spontaneous, myriad, in its motions, its unused senses.

A strange dawn of awareness shines on the clearing sky
of thinking and recollection, a world come with myself
dawn after dawn in a spread of widening colors
creating beaches for floating in.

With the curved jewel of my ego I make an island at noon
and stay, flesh and imagination parents of their own living
idyllic on a seashore in the midday warmth,
in a pillared hall by the sea's hushing.

One evening I bear fire, and the sea does not cool it.
Stricken, consumed, I fall on the sand in pain
for death and grief guessed, for how I must end,
homeless imagination, no waves and no shore.

In the night I follow a path and find the thing
that cannot return, shadows with worms,
and push a stone in the path to it from coming,
and put a sun in my sky, a roughness on earth.

That which is rough with fear, swift, impetuous,
breaks the place of the perfect light, soils the palaces,
and the sun hides in a cave while the island darkens,
while the waves sound invisibly like lamenting.

Under pale stars despairing thoughts assemble
beside long memories of tranquility, a river flowing,
to hear the birds of night and handle rocks
washed out by the reposeful sea, and rocks of the mountains.

Here grows a tree as sacred as the self, a holy tree!
I pull it up with soil still on its roots, while a thin moon rises,
and hang it with most precious thoughts, cloth, and a mirror
which shines if any light comes to the branches, dazzling.

Trimmed with fresh leaves and garlanded with growing moss
I stamp my feet and bare my body parts,
shaking with laughter that they will be corrupt,
that what will be corrupt can be like this.

The mirror on the tree flashes with jewels,
reflected imagination emerging again
to daylight dawn after dawn as when I lay
in the summer of an island and its blowing winters.

After the vacancy of darkness I awaken to space
in sunlit mists, in air like a sea rising and falling
to carry me ashore somewhere, a magic body
spontaneous, myriad, in its motions, its unused senses.

MARVIN SOLOMON

A GLIMPSE IN THE MIRROR

*(in reply to a well-intentioned
critic of my poetry)*

I check my tie, my suit
For threads, my fly; but do not
Check my "dignified, spiritual,
Meticulous, refined, fastidious" self.
Can I really go so dressed?
Methinks me more exposed
Zipped up and buttoned than
With all my flap undone.
Those adjectives hang me in the mirror's
Closet, faultless, startling crows
Out of my empty mind.
And all around the rim the moths will find
Me. Away fig leaf! I'd go
Indecent than be fashioned so!