

OUYANG JIANGHE

FROM TAJ MAHAL TEARS

TRANSLATED BY LUCAS KLEIN

2

Sometimes a single eye sheds polytheistic tears,
and sometimes the gods will be moved by a tear of blasphemy.
God or no god, the flowing of human tears is constant.
Yet however many tears there may be, once wiped away
 they are grace
and *mono no aware*. The gods bestow tears, but never
eyes fit for these tears.
Unless infant eyes open in the eyes of the ancients,
unless uterine tranquility embeds inside teardrops,
unless the shadows of gods and men become the flesh of each other,
 each other's tears
flowing into one, only to flow apart again.
Flowing beyond sight's reach. Flowing beyond meaning. Flowing through the heavens.

3

And let the things of heaven flow on earth.
Flowing from past lives into this life, from the Ganges
to the Yamuna, irrespective of dirt
 or stagnancy,
no distinction between holy water and sewer water,
between smells of piss or water lily,
between colors of red dust or grey,
no asking about leaving or staying, into clarity or murkiness, into whose tears are flowing,
 or whether they flow for kings or princes
or flow for the outcastes.

8

Even the tears of the gods would not be enough for this flowing,
which flows sometimes just for one woman.

Does all of India owe her its mirror image?

Is the mirror too cold: the white moon entering tears, fish swimming in sunlight?

Or has the woman in the mirror turned from a fish into a bird,
wanting to fly, wanting to

be dreamt?

One thousand light years of tears, sleeping soundly on the back of a bird.

One thousand coinciding mirror images, reflecting each other's emptiness.

One thousand eyes falling to the earth,

where whatever they see shatters with them.

The mirror

calls back the divine right of the woman's body, splitting her from the half-bird god
into the half-human fish, believing she can swim out of the mirror,

but where does a fish get the strength for the swim from Mercury to Mars?

The moon in the water

doesn't have enough glass, or enough brahman or ātman,

with which to make a perfect circle, a sea of a mirror.

And this sea,

in tranquility, body illuminated, aided by the gods' immortal breath,

is blown, like a light, into the teardrop.

Poetry does not have an identity of its own, its prajñā and insight are polyphonic, beginning in two, exerted from other objects.

The gods and the departed face off
like the narcissus, intoning the original poem's splendor
and its fragrance. Tears extract themselves from polysemy,
elapsing and simultaneously creating their boundaries
and plasticity,
because the tears of poetry's minstrelsy flow from a statue,
within which flow the materials of consciousness,
e.g., the crystals in the nightingale's throat,
those tiny metals.

But in rural India, why is the peacock's cry choked up,
why does the history of words again become a history of dust?

15

Constructing an epoché for tears flowing for nobody.

Giving birth to a father for a child not yet born.

If there is not enough honor, then give birth
to a father

with failure and shame: because man is the orphan of the universe.

If out of ribs, then give birth with clay.

Then whose tears
would woman be, flowing from
herself, eye and womb both in bloom flowing down a face,
from swallow upstream to the eagle's roots,
hair flowing toward rhyme words, river flowing toward sleeves, heart flowing toward
jade?

This jade heart
has shattered so many stone heads!
Do people perennially age and die on the gods' bodies,
while gods
remain newborns forever?
Are gods also born of woman: born in the image of man?
Gods: this dead soul, that holy child.

Whose child
is mother, in the end, smiling like a girl
and epitomizing the world with a little girl's cries.