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Etymology of Questions

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Bassiri: Etymology of Questions

ETYMOLOGY OF QUESTIONS

Kaveh Bassiri

Why is it called a tongue
this boneless palm doctors read
Is it the ladle for memories
the sail for thoughts

How is it that this heart with one artery
half stuck in your throat
is also a flag locked in an attic
of the house you'll never leave

How does a metonym work
that I'm to represent
that *you* is an understudy for *I*
and if I say yes to sand
nigger towel-head terrorist
if my body is an address
with a number an appointment a country
as if a proper noun tells you something
as if the DNA

As if I knew the first name of a blade
and I could address the pale tree in the yard
holding up its shaking hands
not as plane or sycamore
as if I have something for him

How is it that I stand for a stop sign
but ignore the homeless raising
the signs on the curb
How is it that a tongue grows out of its nest
that with the same mouth you can praise a falcon
and eat the fowl's flesh
that pomegranates the pomes of desire
are the grenades of war

What do you speak if you aren't speaking in tongues
if you evacuate the past
in the last boat of a name
rinse your mouth with questions
with the chill of the pen licking snow off a page

Why do I still have a tongue after losing one
can serve without having a home
as if by arriving at Mars we become Martians
as if he stopped talking once the prophets were gone
as if by holding the dictionary I grasp
the pulpy flesh of history

A boy with Time under his arm
is eating a hot lamb tongue sandwich
in the Alborz schoolyard imagining how
to take off the muddy coat in his mouth

Is it true that we're made of flesh not words
that bitter sweet sour salty are our custodians
that I can go on and I go on
iterating the same prophesies

What if we're the impulses
of some inner ear in a bony labyrinth
and it isn't us that's dying
but the words