

Poets

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Rain City

*It was I who covered the earth like a mist. My dwelling-place
was in high heaven; my throne was in a pillar of cloud. Alone
I made a circuit of the sky and traversed the depths of the abyss.*

— *Wisdom of Ben-Sira, 24: 3-5*

The rain thickening its static. The hissings, whisperings, outcries —
sounds the inside of a radio is searching through. The rainclouds
come in off the ocean, halt at the mountains, slide down through forest
and down along the rivers and creeks, across the inlet,
and the rain-mist winds in through the city streets, the back alleys,
to swirl around the dumpsters, crows, seagulls, sparrows,
around the people who sleep outside, and around the one
whose shawl is the searching rain-mist's glow, whose veins search —
and who is a rain-eyed bride, and goes about the city,

the alcoves and curbsides, to meet an invisible wave,
to open herself to it, to take it into her, let it fill and warm her,
and feel it pulse and undulate through her and feel it is the one true song.
There are the sounds the half-block-away high-rise suites
keep within walls of rain-blurred glass — the sounds of desirers
who try to find themselves in each other, who hear their names
and bring to a culmination the trial they conduct unknowingly
in the court of their searching carbon, where their names
are the same as those of the ones who buy her, or who seize her.

There are the sounds of the despair no grief can enter. That go out
in the crow's cawing, the seagull's shrieking, the sparrow's chirping,
and become wilder, while the mist presses closer, blinder
at the alleys' entrances. The machines on the city's wharves hum louder,
the inlet ships' horns groan louder, and the rain turns colder.
There are the sounds of the clipped cries of those who can do
nothing except search for the ones gone missing from the alleys,
while the rain-mist floats through like the smoke of burning sweetgrass,
while the fallen raindrops lock themselves in black pools,

while the rain pours down into the city harder. There are the sounds
of a funnelling alley wind — and of vessels smashing, sparks scattering.
There is the rustling, the stirring of wing-feathers, the quick flowing,
of the alley dove lost in its dark Jerusalem of rain, and the sounds
of this one calling softly. There are the struck and bruised ones,
and there is the rain-mist that hides in their veins and the sound of its voice:
I am nothing but a path. Your body is the way you look for me,
and the way I look for you. Your body is the way you look for your body,
and the way the rain-mist moves through the song-wet streets.

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