

Jonathan Monroe

DEMOSTHENES' MYSTERY

Somewhere on the path he lost his tongue. Where it lay is a mystery. Which is not present. Which is words are not mastery. As in "Thanks for accompanying me." Somewhere along the way of tongues in grooves, of hands in groves, of horse-drawn monologues, of hearts before curses and carts before kisses, of babes before misses. Some ancient locution's remotest locations, unsigned interdictions. Some resident longing, near abstention. Some off-the-path straying into life, into words, into nothing, nothing less. Some language of loss or release from not speaking. Some shelf or a shore where a part was left hanging. Some speech as of parts or an ankle of vision. Some nail of departure, some Nile of returning. Some ancient rehearsal of rooms as inversion. Some night of mares bolting, some dawn of yews listing, somnambulant listening. Some fact of some lingo, some lingering sulking. Some sullen, sidereal sunlight absorbing. Some flying in darkness, undoing.

DEMOSTHENES' DECLINE

After all he had offered them, how much he'd cared, surely there must be some reward. Not these empty speeches, bravado eulogies, encomia enough to fill a trough? "But seriously folks, if you dig deep enough--not to put too fine a point on it--you find, what, a common grave?" Why with enough time, enough money, nothing could stop him. He had a dream once, things were going his way. He could name every species, each mountain stream. The hills arched their backs to speak his name. Was the arc of the rainbow all there was, no pot of gold at the end? Half-way around the world, he thought of her, Penelope's twin, not waiting like her sister, thinking he'd vanished ages since. . . What was he thinking? When the rain falls for the last time, when the sun shines its last day, what conquests, reunions remain?