

Posidonius and the Druid

Ridges of bone, moulded, you'd think, by awkward thumbs,
freckles, red stubble, and the large pale astigmatic eyes;
the voice hoarse, fluent, not deep.

Well. People come, like you, he says, looking for secrets.
What we learned from Pythagoras. For a consoling echo
of your sweet doctrine from the untouched caves
of us poor primitives. (Leaning to me.) Do you like
what I've to show you? On his open hand
a knife, bone-handled, stained and smooth.

Your logos is a child, he says, chattering to itself
while it plays on the sand. I am a swimmer.

I am a salmon and a seal. My streams
are made of many fluids, dark swaying planes
on which I travel still as sleep; or where
I leap like silver. The sea. Rain on the skin,
and sweat. Tears and the river over stones.

My blood and yours: the tide that beats below the skin
or in the pulsing from the severed vein,
or from my organ, or from yours, or else the urine
from the hanged man, jerking among the leaves,
whose motions speak to me. Over these waves
I learn to skim my hands, and in these wells
my tongue explores, drinks words.

I take the knife;
like rubbing fingers on a worn inscription,
read it. In my mind, briefly: flat plains,
a straight road running to the edge of things, drab
unfamiliar carts packed close with silent people,
knowing and not knowing what this journey is
on which they're sent by blood and wisdom and
dark quiet waters, and I reach out breathless for the shore,
children and sand, the noise and the unsafety,

drift, spars and groundlessness, but still the anchorage proper to talking beings.