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Two Poems

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Two Poems

THE STING OF THE PAST

A song stops in the middle of singing
a reel snaps while being viewed
a failure turns back as it walks
a voice ends in the middle of speech
the ancient wary black cat
glaring at you in the dark is set to pounce
from the farsighted wall of the past
there is a certain place to look
a corner to see oneself in
a picture album tossed away in some cupboard
that keeps distracting the self
the past has a certain enclosure
yes and all around a smell
the smell of a familiar crone-girl wife
maybe the smell of an old newspaper
or the stench of an old vest
drenched with sweat stuck to the skin
teeth clamping down on ancient duskiness
breath moving up and down an aged chest
the dilemma of old honor old warped glasses
old torpor old fear and blame
a newborn son peering into an ancient mirror

THE NAUNDANDA HILLS

Along the trail of the Muktinath pilgrimage
a simple old Nepali woman
examines me for quite a while and tells me
her son's gone to work in Brunei
I can't be translated into her son
figuring I'm here to sell hashish the old woman
puts on deferential airs and asks for a joint
then she spends a long time lamenting:
what else do we have to sell to tourists
except for hashish and our bodies

Translations by Manjushree Thapa