Across These Landscapes of Early Darkness

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Two Poems · Dionisio D. Martínez

ACROSS THESE LANDSCAPES OF EARLY DARKNESS

He is learning to play the elegant songs again. By ear. By heart. He is picking up a signal from America, a faint hummning, a plea. He doesn’t understand it. The elegant music will suffice for the moment. This time he will listen for the diesels slicing the fog as they come up each morning, their headlights leaving trails like a photograph’s version of life. There is elegance in this, too. But there is more. A sense of decorum as motif for a whole generation. He is learning to live in style again. Here’s the suit for the nights when all the stars are out and closer than usual and some tradition says that you must count them. Here’s the pale shirt with no purpose. Here are all the pointed shoes, all the hats, the ties with the wrong patterns.

It is no one else’s style. This makes it more solid somehow, more durable. This
makes him happy. He hasn’t laughed this hard in years. He is picking up signals from countries where the last transmission took place light years ago. This is how he learns about light years and how time equals distance and distance is a kind of salvation. He wants to come to America, home of the faint signal, land of stolen elegance. By now he has caught on to the way we package someone else’s tradition, the way we price each package. These days he is in the market for a new tradition.

It is all so obvious—the way we manufacture our legacies. We are not the best of thieves. Our music is always holding something back, always looking for its source. He is willing—at last—to take us as we are. He runs to catch up, but by the time he manages to get his hands on the essence of a song, the song itself is light years from his hands.