

From Mark Behr's Embrace

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But here! Here, here. Beside him in the Alcamino, it doesn't matter and that's where I want to keep him. He speaks a hundred experiences and memories and plants and birds I know nothing of, and his talking grabs me like a fist enfolding my Adam's apple: my recall forms but a tiny selection of imprints from his: his life here, their life here, my life here, intersecting but divorced. If we were to write them down, his and hers and mine, what would be the same? What would be different? And as mine are fewer, drawn from the time I was five and younger, does it make the place more or less real for him or for me? And if all our memories - no, the world's memories - could be written down or even just manifest as they were thought - then what would become of us? If the thoughts of each one who has lived from where we came out of the sea or from dust or a rib whatever you want to believe was breathed out into the world for all to hear or see? How would we distinguish anything from everything? And if we included the thoughts of Jonas and the black people, the millions of them! Thoughts in words, voices in words, memories in words, histories in words: a mist of words littering the world. Words covering amoeba and algae, the waves, sand, the leaves, the plants, the animals, the people, the books, the air. The globe, the universe, and the universes that lie behind it. And not a single one's words will be ignored! Memories and thoughts will be written on everything in a hundred thousand languages. Cantonese, English, Maori, Arabic, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Zulu, Spanish, Ndebele, Hindu, Swahili, and even languages no longer spoken. The language of history and musicology and art and science and geography, and memoir, and novels, and love, and families, and film, and conflicts, the language of birds, of insects, of animals, and biology, and the hunt, in

pictures, in poems. In grunts! And signals from before we wrote or even thought in language, let alone through alphabets in a time before calendars or time. The words would envelop everything and turn into tides that bump up against each other like waves breaking and the memories would go to war like storms and hurricanes and histories will be clouds colliding in trenches and tearing veins and fault lines causing lightning and fires that burnt to cleanse everything till we'll know a single word means a million things. An Armageddon of the word. Of thought, memory. From where it will all begin again, repeat itself over and over, also because a single word left out is a lie, a single voice silenced, betrayal. Until from the cycles of chaos something evolves that will not require language. Something that will communicate without sound, perhaps with only touch. The epoch in which we will be nourished by and live from a nail tracing an eyebrow, a cheek. A knee resting against a thigh. Toes meeting in the grass. A palm on the belly. The lifting of a hair from where it has landed on a shoulder. An orifice opening for the rubbing of a finger. Foot soles on warm sand. One nose brushing another. A shadow catches my eye. "Rhino at ten o'clock." At once Bok brings the truck to a gentle stop. It is a cow, being led by her calf. Right in front of us. Bok turns off the ignition and we sit quietly. Do nothing but watch as they graze from the sweet grass on the side of the road where the water run-off makes the grass grow longer, greener.