

# Flight into Egypt Spring 2013

by Kevin McHugh

*for Brendan—and Melpomene\**

Sloughing off the first three decades  
like some smothering winter coat,  
you waken feet-first in Egypt.  
In the beginning again.  
Emerging from the ancient sands  
as here the crocus or the fragile green,  
crossing the taxied wilderness  
like the antique Sinai and into Cairo.

For you the long-time coming pales  
against the longer going —  
the ripe rite of passage still fresh  
and raw from Chicago to storied Amman  
until at last you arrive hard by the Nile  
in the newborn hours of a 31st year.  
There in the retracing to recommence  
a prime and public life.

It's your Arab Spring,  
the frustrated fellowship,  
the brotherhood of hope.  
And so you belong—there.  
Not here with us. Where memory  
and selfish love transform  
even the least of what remains  
into artifacts of our apparent loss.

We have made good-byes before,  
many, many, too many times,  
and so we falter at each farewell,  
knowing that a simple act of taking leave  
can be in fact a final act of leaving—  
the fine print of the fragile, human condition,  
a contract for a time forgotten  
but consummated never the less  
by flesh and signed irrevocably in blood.

Aristotle foresaw it all:  
the tragic compulsion to transpose  
the ordinary liturgy of life into  
hubristic legacy—youthful aspiration  
rising like incense over the years

to the Muse, who blows it all away  
like passing footprints in the sand.

Save the magnitude of dreams.

While we have almost lived out  
this classic play ourselves  
and have outlived it all with some  
who came before, we cannot tell you  
what act you're in or what to do or say.  
And so we speculate as if your very life  
now hangs upon the unraveling  
of fine, enigmatic and narrative threads.

We know the end but not the ending:  
the what, how, when and with whom.  
But if you, our son, play out your part  
by heart in the dust of that archaic land  
you too may unearth your own Rosetta stone  
and hence decrypt the ageless  
hieroglyphic of the why.

*\*Melpomene—the Muse of song and tragedy*