

Sonja Manojlović

Selected poems

Translated from Croatian by Dinko Telećan and Damir Šodan

Impersonal Liaisons

Marching in place
he does not walk toward me,
across the light-bearing needles
swaying in powerful water
A bed and a table, shadows that crawl up,
glittering books
What game is this, I wonder
First a promise
then a gaze that is also a touch,
and better yet nothing at all
He gives impersonally, imperiously,
and doesn't ask for anything in return
For he leans forward without delay,
and pulls my heart out bare handed
in an absent ecstasy
So it has been, and so it shall be,
I am not afraid of big words
But you, tiny toothed dragon child, a recipient of the gift,
sit still
How pale are your nostrils!
Their flame cannot harm me
Let go of my hand,
it is Sunday, the day when I take my parents
into nowhere

But this is not allowed

You smile, even when there's no one to talk to,
with your eyes, at the open space, at the volcano crater,
at a human face that needs to be loved
but not at their market squares, nor
at the shadowy places
where things and people lose their names
and where fluttering shadows smile over human shadows
You walk through the city, look at their eyes,
but this is not allowed
You break the door down and enter, your mouth smiles on its own

doing its job, as always – let us infuriate the weak!
For the lower jaw is willing and eager
Since when do you know that, from a whisper, a concealed smile?
A feeling that precedes the word
is exhausted immediately
You do not speak, it is not in the words,
an infant tossed into the air

An ordinary, most ordinary enchantress

Everything is lit up, everything can be seen,
but once there was darkness for our hearts
and we walked through it silently,
just as the elf wanted us to
What he was giving , I no longer know,
I took what I could,
the child has not been hushed up, I love, I don't love,
it still can be heard
through the pedicle of night,
climbers have light bodies, I will climb,
live in airy houses,
eat light food,
slide through the corridor of familial icons
with my teeth sunken into the fast and the fine,
for I do not complain, I do not seek
except in the waking state,
an ordinary, most ordinary
enchantress

So what if I live unskillfully

So what if I live unskillfully,
if I stagger
mutilated to a thousand eyes
Until late at night I classify tiny little nightingales, almost killed
I open and open the screens of distance within them
What if I want to breathe, to eat
where there is nourishing soup of air and books
at which I will sit
lean my chin on my palm
until my hand withers
and my eyelids confirm

So what if I take only the books from you
mouth for our kiss

There's a werewolf in the windows

She wouldn't let me get into the house
I drum upon the wide door
The forest is spinning all around
The girl is sitting in there
and she's calling out
from behind her small triangle face:
There's werewolf outside!
I won't open! I can't!
Thus, the werewolf is out in the garden with me
we eat live rubies like strawberries
He hangs upside down upon a tree
Washes my linen in the rock
and his back is fast and strong
We go and turn
and she watches and watches

In a dark chamber

But that's not what your mother said about you
Polaroid star.
Stupor is a thought of death
putting out senses in a moment's cocoon
lightening up their silence.
Didn't she say
Put your faith in the bed's shallow relief,
in a dark chamber, the illuminator's trade?
Yes, I sort of remember her,
but I don't know who you are.
You'll fall asleep, you'll slip into an answer.
But, I am not human, one does not notice I'm not alive,
I don't look after myself,
I don't cradle anything alive in my arms,
I borrow, I sell, I spend it all,
I am a glittering mutant in a common darkness,
and you, who are you, do you rearrange things?
For the sake of that burnt gold of youth only.

I remember everything

If that's everything, I remember everything.
.ouses thrown around amidst the inaudible,
A child's speech, crowded, obsessed,
in the garden, amongst strawberries,
life's bites,
do you then pardon the simplest of things?
Those eyes so narrow!
It hasn't been forgotten!
All that I love will be killed!
I can read it from my mother's palm,
The dryness of the world, words walking over the water,
That's the kind of city this is, ruined into objects.
One after another,
that's left of home.

Drawing oneself is the easiest

Drawing oneself is the easiest!
En route, definitely en route,
as a dot a condensed circle.
Neither rain, nor sun, or air,
all that is full is empty here.
The reflection
of houses upon one's back.
But you won't calm down souls with a word
nor with a bang upon the door,
everyone darts out of the house at once.
Only the eye remains, round, petrified,
illuminated.
That's the easiest thing to draw,
the smile we need
a blazing wheel, a prayer's mill
to grind and grind down what's already been ground
until it turns red hot white.
It's clear then,
tomorrow I will be available for love
but not today.

What us means

I float in amber
hidden from the sun, from a beastly morning giggle
in thin gravity
dreaming of edible colours, the crimson of your heart
an android's gleam, the feast of manly and womanly limbs
When I enter this house
the table is already set, princes and princesses flee
and in a twinkle of an eye, if they still don't know who they are,
I find out what us means.