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**DIOGEN**  
pro kultura magazin pro culture magazine

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## I-She

This old woman wearing a hat and a mink stole on her shoulders  
celebrating her memory  
is me.

I watch her at close quarters. I can see clearly  
her laugh lines.

She lifts a doughnut to the place on her skin  
where my lips used to be.

She opens her face and shoves in a doughnut stuck on her finger.  
The finger has thickened joints like a spring twig, like Edith Piaf.

How will I touch your body with her claw-like tibia?

She raises her face to your face. I close my eyelids.  
She forgets she has no lips.  
I forget.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

## **For the New Century-A Conversation with Myself**

In some pose  
the mirror captured this  
moment of transformation  
when for the first time  
the tibia peeked out with all its  
literalness.

I didn't think  
about identity  
or about Emerson's equation  
or about the romanticism of burial mounds.  
I didn't think.  
I couldn't it couldn't.

Only it was or it wasn't  
at the tangential point zero or infinity  
a simple configuration  
of bones.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

### **To Moment's Measure**

A hand  
mine yours someone's  
on another hand on top of a white glove  
a moment's measure.  
Several hurried  
meanings which barely sound  
synonymous.

Suddenly  
right under my ring  
nail I feel  
the accelerated  
pulse of  
this  
other  
cosmos.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

*Translator Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough's poetry translations have been published in USA by Absinthe, Image, The New Yorker, Poetry, Tri-Quarterly, and other literary magazines.*

## **Snow**

*Ryszard Kapuściński died today*

You are falling as many of us fall under gravity's weight  
You are flying  
From where we all come.

You are leaning against time and earth  
Deer marks trace after you  
A dog falls inside you with such an obviousness  
In its eyes that it makes my flesh creep.

In Subcarpathian Słocina you are the same  
As in Turkish Kars  
A legend of Herodots.

Love, death and trash are under you  
Lightly stamped.

You are geometry on glass  
A glass on the road.  
They crush our fragile bodies  
In your majesty.

Pieces of rockets from Baykonur fall on your head for us  
But you are lying on your back in the Altai Mountains  
An untouchable equilibrist

Oh, my white idealist.

*Translated by Janusz Zalewski and John Guzlowski*

## **Krakow-Warsaw West**

I feel the greatest longing at train stations  
in angular waiting rooms  
on dim platforms  
and when the train pulls out and passes the backs of houses  
the city's cesspool the other side of walls

the pitch-black yards the rickety fences  
those unfulfilled garden plots.

I long for places and people left behind  
for the way they could have been for me but are for others  
I even long for those I have never met  
who still belong irrevocably  
to my past.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

### **They Come They Go**

For some time now people have done nothing but die.  
For instance, recently, Mr. Raczy the watchmaker.  
It gets harder and harder to look into the eyes of those  
who didn't consider such a possibility.  
Let's say, Daria, the wife.

The dead are overgrown with names, lips, hands.  
You can't die without them (anyway  
you couldn't till now).  
Hair and teeth grow after they're gone.

And it's difficult to imagine a country where they don't exist.  
They are such a presence that they cause us sleepless nights  
parch our lips. Like lovers' living bodies.  
And when after many years we accept their mercy  
they leave

in a hurry.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

**Love**

It gets up first and bustles in my head  
arranges images and the sequence of emotions  
steps aside  
tries to walk softly as if it's never existed.

I don't touch it mornings  
that's our agreement and I wait  
for it to wash away in the monotony of memory  
in the disloyalty of time.  
I wait so at last I won't have to wait  
all day long.

Evening comes and what's next my dear Lao Tzu?  
Here I stutter and confound the audience  
those squinting eyes of a chinese cat.  
Always at the same place in the dusk  
I cross over to the other side of the word beyond the image.  
The idea of self-eclipse doesn't exist there.  
There's an entry into light one period of time  
and love's trusting unhumiliated face  
at the level of our eyes and lips.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

### **An Overdue Letter to a Pimply Angel**

Do you remember the smell of snow  
with soot, still warm  
from the chimney?  
And the taste of cut fir branches?  
In the morning you meekly pulled my  
rusty  
sled so that I, the first of the first,  
would leave triumphant tracks  
of winter in the yard.

In the evening you hung proudly  
on the tree in pink  
skirts of tissue paper high

and low.  
I couldn't count you.

"Happiness is," you said, "when  
you don't know how much there is of it."

One winter you sneaked  
behind the Christmas tree  
in lacy hoarfrost  
stockings. The white girdle, your first  
stocks of femininity, wouldn't leave you alone. You caressed  
your thighs under the skirt  
to make their material real.  
You were hormonally sad from happiness.

Just like later that spring when  
your first egg was  
fertilized with one divine  
life and swelled  
in your mouth.  
It stretched your bitter-salty  
palate into a balloon  
of hopeless December hope.  
You knew all its parameters.

You still were my angel.

When you broke into limbs and fell  
slowly, I didn't hand you  
a wing. Forgive me.  
I myself was a pimply  
flightless bird.

Hail God's  
Bird  
from the Christmas tree  
of life.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

## **The Fifth One**

Every moment I kill one tender thought as if it were a persistent fly.  
But it wants only to live.

I imagined love like a gigantic fruit fly.

I wonder who would then be the first to die the unnatural death:  
I, it, or this fruit of paradise.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

### **O Torch, O Rose**

Who are you, o torch, o rose,  
wreath of thorns, spur and mare, djigit  
a blind mule at night, daybreak, the trumpet of Jericho?  
Weren't you the toppled wall that crumbles

and throws the fear of restraint into our eyes?

Were you Miss Capulet, holy adulteress Hester Prynne,  
the almost tamed shrew, seductive Mrs. Robinson, or maybe  
Cleopatra's enticing eye on the steps above the walls for your divine feet?  
Bloody Lady Macbeth or hemlock itself?

Or maybe you're life itself, its shiver, its prayer in clenched fingers?  
Maybe for you armies advance in alluring formations,  
ecstatic trumpets sound,  
for you cloaks are lined with opulent fabric  
and faithful praetorians bend the mountain shadow  
to make your forehead glow in the saddle?

O torch, o rose! Unveil the next scarlet letter  
of the era of the alphabet, let us read  
in what language we'll have to live and grow silent together  
to be ready again.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*

### **A Man Wearing a Cap**

A man wearing a cap  
slowly killed a goose.  
He held it between  
his legs as if it were  
a tongue-lashed  
child or a woman  
who'd drunk  
hemlock and then  
been forced to vomit.

A cat sensually  
watched  
the ritual.  
Nearby people  
busy with life  
were passing.

Only the sound of the forest  
and my heart  
could be heard.  
The silence of that picture  
hit me  
in the face.

Oh, well.  
The millennium goose, the cat, and us.  
All cannon  
fodder.

*Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough*



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