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Braha Rosenfeld

Hour

Contemplating a Henry Moore Sculpture

Substance can be subtracted from stone
leaving content alone as the sorcery
that will spill a pink jet of light
on the wild noon hour
and contract my pupils
to a vagrant point between voids
secretly capturing forms of the Hidden
or nullifying
the tissue of inner stone
and leaving
only pure content
empty of context
like a one-time joining of the air

with soil and fire and water
hearing the susurrus of voids gaping
at beauty immersed in the eye's web
in the evasive hour of the birds
familiar

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yet retreating
from the possibility of definition.

From Hebrew: Riva Rubin

NEKOPIRATI

BLACK CORMORANTS

I didn't estimate the depth of the lake
and you didn't heed the plummet of the stone

the black cormorants, perhaps -

Chameleon words were flung
like gleaming sparks
sinning for a truth as for a lie.

I didn't estimate the depth of the lake
yawning between us.

We look into it like a mirror –
the shadows of the black cormorants
contort our faces.

From Hebrew: Riva Rubin

Scorched tongue

The fire in the windows
the burning doors
the roofs aflame
my mother carries
in her hand

I extinguish
With my mouth

a scorched tongue shouts water

Write / Erase

I write pain
like a bleeding dog
licking its wounds
with a rough tongue
to stop the pain
I bandage it
with a soft pencil
then I erase
the hand
that mutilated it –

the scar on my hand
validates
what is written \ what is real

Growing up

My mother stuck
Her salty orphanhood
Stone by stone
In the pockets of my childish dress –

And I became a little kangaroo mother
Jumping
Staggering
With a pup I didn't bear
Hidden in my body's pocket
By the claws
Of her darkened confessions
Clinging
Forever

My mother paints

My mother paints street rubble, cobblestones
like calluses amid the rims of cracked pavements
and half a tree charred like a crow
planted upright in a courtyard;
the house and what came to pass –
half a collapsing wall and no door,
no opening but the void of the window
still burning in the sockets of her eyes
and the family fleeing the bombardment
leaping
from the third floor

In the prison of herself

In the prison of herself
the pain of cold conquests
was poured
on dark histories

and the whip of light lashed out
to amethyst healing

From the magic lantern

From the magic lantern in her head
my mother projects onto her eyelids

afterwards
she opens her eyes
to transfer the picture

in its perfection

Silence \ noise

The silence collapsing into itself
activates
colourful background noise

shattered shadows leave their images
to shrivel
rebuked
in a mirror of water

Sherds of time

The light erased
is strapped
in restrained longing

suppressed in silence
fettered
to stillness

till it cracks into sherds
of time
retreating

to revive and defy

Time goes barefoot

Time goes barefoot
on the serifs of the letters

stepping on the corns
of longing

pleading with clauses
of expectation

with body wisdom
 measured
by faulty
 alertness-pointers

crushed
from tattered memory
and patched forgetfulness

From Hebrew: Riva Rubin

MODIGLIANI'S GIRL

Modigliani's girl sits before him
in a pose of simulated surrender,
relaying on secret channels reveries,
(he receives) soft and well concealed,
about desire, the restrained mutations
in colour and form
he mixes on the old palette
titanium white with the glow of the hour
flowing infectious
from her forehead down her cheeks and nose,
onto her chin, along her tender extended neck,
to her spine vertebra by vertebra with hidden
fear clamping her lips,
while in the hollow of her belly, Leonardo's birds spin
a multi-foetus magical pregnancy.
She inclines her supple body,
folding her hands on her knees –
thinks: rolling
thinks: camouflage,
but the flower of her head with the corolla of her face on the stem of her neck
she stretches
to the Lovehangman.

from Hebrew: Riva Rubin

NOW YOU CAN BE A MAGICIAN

To jiggle the house furniture into kites,
to bring the sky inside and lie cross-legged
on feather clouds.

To bounce the piano into the fountain
Burst walls and ceiling with resounding fireworks.

To stitch the houses of the city into a sail'
inflate it into a balloon.

Tie the roads in a ribbon.

To send the words as hunters
after water and fire,
after darkness and light
and the hours that skip
heedlessly
over me.

From Hebrew: Riva Rubin

SHE HAS A DEEP POCKET COAT OF SILENCES ©

She has a deep pocket coat of silences
ownerless downgraded shades
compartments for unnatural deaths:
limb-hacking, voice-cutting, head-chopping,
desire-crushing
quietly, quietly,
she doesn't groan
because she has a deep pocket coat of silences
best at secrets and demonic coronations
with a multi-purpose neckline
and wide wind-hugging sleeves

she has learned to act within limits
to send her eyes as scouts

her fairness turns malignant:
she stifles her voice to hide her nakedness
regards herself in the mirror with revulsion
sits with her knees together, drinks with little sips
from fine bone china cups careful
not to spill not to stain her good name and uniform
fragility bows her head
a mane of silences spreads from her hair

she's been tamed by secret fingers not to break
the ice of her reticence,
her ringing bells will remain unheard
her lyre has been claimed, its strings confiscated
Red Ridinghood they said
seduced the bad wolf – she believes and atones,
seeks Bluebeard's hand in her death

her coat is fine and light and airy hued
cunningly sewn with hidden stitches
invented eons ago it has grown to her body
put down roots like tentacles
scheming how to slough

a deep pocketed coat of silences
amniotic depths rustling with embryonic meditations
as well as a nightingale choir with a cricket orchestra
and flocks and flocks of different fauna
so they sent undercover agents
keepers at the gates and openings
to guard her against secret Gardens of Eden

she never cheats, never steals horses
only now and then steals wondering glances
and keeps silent about stolen fire and borrowed water
and has a deep pocketed coat of silences

she doesn't believe in one-breasted Amazons
neither in moirai, liliths, or vampires
her senses are robust, she loves the sweet scent of passion
she will not be a made-up corpse, a pale-faced sweet singer

she has full pockets
she'll swap a quickened pulse for words
that burst dams
and many waters and many waters
and an unbelievable abundance

by God.

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SHE SLEEPS

After a painting by Lucian Freud

Her esteemed body reclines in imperial inertia
full of steamy summer to the point of putrefaction
her pink is leaden, her apricot – soon to rust
bitter purple tinges the stress lines
multiplying with the excess load imposed
on the abundance of her infinite flesh

She sleeps

listening to the wailing of predators in the darkdense forest
in the liar of her body daily filing a gaping abyss
in the big hungry belly of the Little Red Riding Hood
who swallowed the bad wolf, the hunter, granny and herself
entering, emerging through her navel.

Now she sleeps,

But her body in the storm of silence moves: high and low tides
of each in and out breath, a strange tremor in her nostrils,
in her affluent thighs, in her arms, in her imperial belly
that overflows its bank and in the dual kingdom of her breasts—
twins who swore a secret covenant against each other
and all the burgeoning landscapes of her flesh prepare for war
against the engulfing fear distorting her face and inflating her curves
with her own hands she expands the borders of herself
into a power of pain
guarding soul-territory forever dedicating herself to Sir Sleep
in the frame of the picture.

Translation from Hebrew: Riva Rubin

SHE'LL GROW CLAWS, SHE'LL GROW HOOVES ©

She'll grow claws, she'll grow hooves and fangs
her belly she'll defend with an armour of scales
her back – with quills
and she'll stamp
and she'll roar
throw manners to the wind

make a graven image and a mask
worship the golden calf
turn it into a heifer

then she'll worship other gods – female gods
and turn the One God into a woman

and she'll give her one of her ribs
and marrow from her bones --
milk from her breasts
blood from her blood
and she'll seek
to create a man to live beside her
a helpmeet for her
and not against her
and they will plant an Eden
for love

TO DISTANCE MYSELF

pp.12-13

I want to bring forth white ravens
feed them on crumbs of bible verse
like dandruff flaking from my hair
a plague of words

I want to hear echoes of the old books
their impassioned pages
the sallow silence in their margins
and the prying tone of their titles
carried in the corridors between
the letters

I want to soar on a mint flavoured cloud
bathe in a rosewater mist
let white incense assuage me
like sparkling apple wine

I want to be a greenish forest woman
scents of desire waft from her
streamlets sing
the horizon runs riot
with raw time
as the god of perpetual present
spreads across eons
and a springtime clatter of intoxicated wings
taps against my skin
from here on I can heal

Torn braid

The morning veiled itself in a foreign language
And the sun was profuse with unfamiliar heat
A hot wind like a steamy breath
Stirred warm ripples in the blood
And the pulse of days
Interweaved dried braids in time's scarecrows.

-“the sun hurts so much” – said the girl
with the braid torn between the ends of the world,
“water, water!” – she called
Water bubbling in her head
Water calling her back
“Water, water!” -
still the echo is rolling her voice.

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