

DESIRE

GEREVICH ANDRÀS

Desire is a cramped, fusty apartment
noisy with the highway traffic;
scents line up before the mirror
but the fridge is empty, the handle sticky.

This is where the cutest guy lives,
the one you never find at home
because he sleeps in other men's apartments:
rows of alluring snapshots fill the wall.

Stick your own photos up among them,
put his pants on, slip into his bed,
adopt his surname – if you move in,
all you'll be is part of the furniture.

Translated by Christopher Whyte

DIARY

For days now fighter planes have been circling above us:
I stood in Riverside Park and scanned the sky,
others jogged or walked dogs as they did every afternoon.

Each person was three thousand less. We were afraid
of the day before yesterday, of the hatred painted
on walls and on benches: "Kill all the Arabs!"

Black women in their forties wept through the morning Mass,
and I sat in the pew alone, a stranger in the shared city,
but the priest hugged me like an old friend when I left.

I spent the afternoon rambling, empty and dejected,
past photocopied faces of those who were missing.
The cars didn't move: people's minds too were in deep-freeze.

For two days I carried food and medicine, volunteered
to save lives, but was sent home: the army took over.
There was nothing to do, nowhere for me to go.

I was empty still, and helpless, I watched the TV,
the same sequences several hundred times on the news,
no-one said anything, they were busy counting the dead.

I understood this was no theme for writing. Time didn't pass.
Just to keep busy, I went to the barber, went running and shopping,
visited the laundrette and gazed at the bright New York sky.

Translated by George Szirtes

TIRESIAS'S CONFESSION

“Sometimes I wake from dreams
and I have no idea what I am,
old or young, boy or girl.

I have to touch myself
to check: the only evidence is
my sweating body in the damp bed.”

Tiresias sat facing me. He'd been
walking his dog , I'd been running.
Both of us slumped on a bench.

“It has long ceased to matter whether
it is light or dark. The inner clock
that knew the time of day has stopped.

It's years since I lived in the present,
only in prophecies and myths;
I can't find my way in the street.”

He lit a cigarette and scratched his dog
behind the ear. “András, if I could
talk about it, just this once perhaps...”

in my dreams I am always a woman,
wild and desirable, and wholly out of reach,
adored and admired by men.

I play with my breasts in my dreams,
my skin soft and delicate. Light trembles
throughout the entire dream-sequence.”

He scratched his shin with his white stick,
the skin was peeling off his hands, his face,
the dog had found a hedgehog to play with.

“The loveliest time of my life seems
So short, a matter of minutes now.
It was when men still desired me.

He gave a deep sigh, spat and looked away.
“If you enjoy being a man be careful,
you could at anytime turn into a woman.

The line between the two is too narrow.
Perhaps if I become pregnant,
I would still be a woman, a mother.”

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