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JULIUS KELERAS

Translated from the Lithuanian by Vyt Bakaitis

archaeology of memories

While fruits in a blind still-life are waiting for moist lips,
the rooms and walls, wine and hunger, thirst
and rain, all merge into one: it's the oxidation of
an everyday morning as it becomes the exponent in opening
consciousness, and the voice in box-windows of a daily
to survive a torrent intolerant of dates.

But the sand won't give up any tracks: early gulls
toss above watery thresholds, bending the dawn
like letters erased and returning once more to pages
inscribed in blue. I know that the footsteps have to
start at the silver dock before the Gate of Dawn again,
at the grubby palaces of the Sapiegas, at the clotted
pit below Antakalnis, where winter still holds and judgment
still waits and spring is dressed in clothing worn equally
the same. Where the color of the wine has changed slightly
from waiting around in the goblets, but the solitary lights have not yet
abandoned a crossroads where consciousness melts: gothic eyebrows, banked
snow, blue dress, wine and breakfast at the same basement
locale. And then I'd try to find at least one
single footprint from the summer by the Cathedral, back
ten years, one single glance the sidewalk or store-windows
may have retained. And then the irrepressible
grammar of a diary (lips moistened) would align with reality
(still life) as another autumn returns to the pages of consciousness.

things that sting

Things that sting conscious sense, an evaporated summer campari:
the book you opened in a harbor on the Šventoji: the fleet gone,
just a fisherman on his knees, trying to reach the unreal sunrise
that lights up consciousness: the rain dried out, a morning aroma
of smoked perch, and dunes that can't find us.

Things that sting: jaybird dozing on the porch, the pages
and sand-grains in your mouth, as once sometime back. Though now, here
ever so briefly, the orderly thresholds bed down again for the night:

a clean mouth, obedient solitude, hands washed for childlike sleep,
white communion and naming syllables.

The way corals grow into a cave, colonies of things nourish a dream. You thought
the things fingers no longer reach all fall apart. Not true, though.
The window still creaks in counting silence: words
throb, encrusted in dust; those desires, tied up
in wires from other dreams; those cities still shining their sunset bridges.

Plazas murmur, bound up in ivy of other days. Even though now
nothing can be made secure enough. Only the few things that keep stinging
will vanish from sight like tracks of rain and still resurface
like a hand pledging its independence from the roulette-wheel,
from grapes or your hidden initials, then falling to keep it.

And what should I now revive, if everything that stayed behind
in dreams consists of trashed parks, blackened carousels that no longer work,
willows conversing by the Vilnelė at night, and a fog dead as dead.
Though while words sleep, everything comes up again. So the day
toward evening will get ready really to live but then run out of time.

So we two go to sleep to condemn the dream guillotine,
while the effort to wake in Vilnius becomes the one thing that stings
the most. And then I pray the door open and, again, start counting the rain
that things touch before dawn as though it were
a single distant-sounding string.

girls with cherried lips

Girls with cherried lips are dancing the Beginning. The indiscreet
flare of a minuet lights their bodies, and spectators instinctively
step back for fear of turning to ash. Outlines
change in an instant: extending their flutters they
become the sign of spring that determines peace, and history
loses its great seal.

Girls with cherried lips, frail as willows,
lose the laces binding them, and spectators glimpse the sun
sliding down their knees. Divine bodies with a smell of
the north, unfit for any anatomical atlas,

or any niche where plaster Venuses display
ordinary boredom with their longing for pet names and
tobacco. Girls with growing shadows under their lids are dancing
life: goblets full of the past, old still-lives,
the scent of swamps waded in childhood. angels, aged
cherry orchards, sunsets. Finally, they bow to the audience. And yet
this exact replica of moonlight has managed so slyly to fool
our eyes, we are left incapable of perceiving any change.

the cold abolishes all play with a ban on
music, body radiance, allocating use of light and beauty
only the slimmest ration, according to
decree. And history, the slut with plucked
eyebrows, claims to have vanquished nature:
lips no longer smell of cherries.

remembering Hamlet

treachery and intrigue; a folded homeless newspaper
the wind takes through the park, a scoop of honey on a plate left for bees
already long asleep: January leaves your mouth dry,
and a far-off blues, like news a palm reader's surmised,
quivers somewhere to the East, where pansies stretch pallid

the sea broke down winter's restraint, now trickling easy
as a happy tear from the woman who has found the husband she's waited for
with her forehead pale, pupils widened, hands
scrubbed clean and properly crossed in the parish hall,
where the dove flew in like the hand of God touching your head on its crown

everything, though, is oddly prolonged: the frost keeps a crush on language,
a hoard of spiders in dunes filled with cooled tears:
wherever you are, if only I knew I'd be staring, rapt in that direction
like the good Lord from the chapel's tall column, all the way up to
your childhood, my dear one; but for the treachery and intrigue

small piece for snow violin

I

Now the heirs of winter grip your hand, you won't have time. Where autumn's a blank
postscript, with black gas masks settled into hives, the four slopes
of the rooftop drinking moonlight will leave no place for the swarming bees to return to: shoreline
security will keep a stray beam from entering. Fingers will fail to get through to
autumn in the woods by chance. Joy of being in two places at once keeps knocking at the stray rowboat.
Is there anyone who knows this? Yet real chill steps up in an effort to surpass
the way this sturdy sax player tries his waiting audience to a resolved legato
that floods tunnels, Greek towns, a longing legato, snuffing
a blind inner-city seabird legato, that offers you absolution.
Winter moves are jagged, like floating on a sea of glass:
John Coltrane, Joe Henderson, David Sandborn.

II

Moonlight shines on naked clay. A shroud is laid out, but the frost manuscripts draw no ink from evening wings to finish
the last sentence: a sullen perspective of salt footprints gleam in.
Past there runs the lake, then meadows, a feast of rowboats. Glinting chains
are oppressive; not one oar will reach spring without being chained,
nailed down, or totally done in. Not one will reach the outstretched hand.
Maybe Jean Luc Ponty. But a shower of arrows has stung St. Sebastian again, so
it's no time to choose what's not meant to be. Legato drives us. Anonymous
keeps playing on the subway platform, and names announcing summer flicker through his
main theme between passing trains just like his temples
with the sun powerless to help out. If you make the climb, you'll reach a city
no longer foreign to you. The windy city an ivy of sunsets
has overgrown.