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HAMLET

DANUTĖ PAULAUSKAITĖ

Translated from the Lithuanian by M.G. Slavėnas

*It's almost midnight
soon Hamlet will
be talking to his father's ghost
soon my own eyes will fill up
with sand rather than tears as
the immense white ghosts of my forefathers
come wandering through the city streets
but I am not Hamlet
for years I have craved your love
while standing on bones
without homeland or friends without a destiny
the night places my head
on a scale
but I am not Hamlet
it's my insomnia which sharpens my brain
it's the autumn nights
tossing skulls beneath my window
my Country—on my lips that one hushed word
which in childhood pierced my ears.*

* * *

*Go outside and listen:
Does the Bell still sound?*

There is so much noise in Lithuania.

*My Country,
have I failed to recognize you?*

How patched your dress!

*You will be deceived
by this not-paid-for-with-blood
liberty.*

*The snowless winter will pass,
your smoothtalking
daughters and sons
will reclaim their government seats*

*while a storm sweeps through the streets
and scatters torn proclamations.*

*On a soggy road
a peasant slogs
to his distant farm.*

*Let us ask him
if his old television set
still works.*

*Let us offer him
spiritual consolation*

*as we ourselves become
more and more material.*

* * *

*Grand Inquisitor,
our grand sins
are safely stacked behind
a multitude of little sins.*

*To love the dead
is cheaper than
to love the living,—*

*It is autumn again, soaked in rain
are the tricolored flags,—*

*It is Judas Iscariot
from German lands
who whispers in our ear:*

*Most important is
not to miss
the splinter in your brother's
eye,*

*otherwise you may not
look good.*

*But whose life is that
bad
to stand at night by the window
soaked in rain,
uncalled for,*

*as if begging in vain for
a charity, like a reproach:*

*I was given to you whole
from the first pagan altar.*

* * *

*This is not a Lithuanian raven
this is an Edgar Allen Poe raven
old, hoarse*

n e v e r m o r e

*I won't scare you anymore.
I will not disturb the placidity
of those who have
no more hope*

n e v e r m o r e

*rest at last by the fireplace
which is going out.*

*This firewood was your
very last wood.*

** * **

*Who would go to a house
that waits
for death?*

*But outside the windows
is a nightingale night
and full moon.*

Like a poison in slow release

*it drips drips drips
into my heart
which is flowing over
with the future.*