
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Arminé Iknadossian: Four Poems

Armine Iknadossian · Wednesday, January 9th, 2019

California Love Poem

The sun has an orgasm across the valley
as Pasadena opens up in front of me,
the Suicide Bridge pushing an arm out
of green sleeves, orange blossoms keening
after a mid-spring heatwave,
the Rose Bowl yawning in a ravine.

It is not enough to love the one you love,
to drive towards the ocean just to fall
into bed with him, then return home
alone, drowsy from sex and no sleep.
You want to keep driving East towards
black rocks and tarantulas of Nevada

or South towards the unilateral mirage of water
where the Salton Sea groans in her deadwood hammock.
On a map, California looks like she's hugging Nevada,
leaning in for a deep kiss.
She is tentative, he is a sharp-tongued,
diamond-studded menace, kissing her
and at the same time, pushing her into the ocean.

*

The Little Sinner

Undone every morning,
the devil at her knees
as her mother combs her hair,
grabs and tames the tangles.

Hundreds of wooden fingers
unravel hours of twirling
around an index finger

before bed, before dreams
of collapsing altars
and dark-haired women laughing.
By morning, a head full of spider
webs; so many evil knots to save.

She undoes her hair at bedtime,
a thing possessed – half-dead.
Unbound and spread
across the white pillow, around
her face, a black halo, a sea of little sins.

Budding, her breasts
blind kittens that will open their eyes
after many slow Sundays, unwindings,
elastic hours that stretch and shrink
like rubber bands wound around
a black mass of hair,
a fistful of worry,
a handful of worms in a dream.

*

If Joan of Arc Were Still Alive

She would be sitting by the Mediterranean
at sundown, the sky as red as Campari,
singing, or maybe sharpening her cutlery
on a large stone. She would eat black olives
as she watched the burning sea, its lashes
opening and closing at her feet, its stories rising
into evening before pulling away its long skirt.
A hurricane lamp would cast shadows
on the sand with its bright flame. Some nights
she would talk to the flame, ask it probing
questions as if all flames were related.
Other days she would just laugh, shake her head,
whisper the names of her enemies
while collecting bits of sea glass to rub
between her thumb and forefinger, one for each
word God spoke to her. Green for “daughter”,
brown for “pity”, white for “Orleans”.
But most often, she would talk to the sea,
its curling fingers of foam, its fists of water
like a woman climbing out of ash and bone.

*

The Locust

In Plato's Phaedrus, Socrates says that locusts were once human.

Everywhere I look there are truth seekers
in their grandfather's green army jackets waiting
for their lives to begin. Somewhere
a light bulb is replaced, a doorknob turns,
and so many appear with nothing to say.

Like a sentence that has no future.
It is a ballast of shame, a rendering
of stillness – a movement towards God.
We feed, and feeding, grow,
and growing, swarm. But this is not the message.

This prayer is far from that,
as far as a sinner can be, as only a woman
with hunger and pride would rather hide
behind her words than give them up,
would much rather live among the poison wheat.

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