Table of Contents

Karen Alkalay-Gut
Carolyn Gregory
Bruce McRae
John Alexander
Margarita Serafimova
Walter Ruhlmann
Joe Farley
Steven Stone
Bruce Wise
No matter how much we enlarge it, 
That photograph snapped by a German soldier 
Of my grandmother in Lida, 1916, 
Remains perfectly clear. Her eyes 
Register her cold measure 
Of the soldier who could decide 
To shoot her instead of her 
Picture if that 
Was his hobby 
Instead of photography.
This is what war
Is like - I taste her fear
Even though I'm seeing her
Now from the eyes
Of the oppressor.
And I know the shame of both."

---

מבד

.ckett שלאה בנהיל אוות
מצלום טבח עצלו טול פֶּרֶנֶנָג
, 1916,דלייד',
נומר מד נכרה. עִבְּרִי
השופט את משהוב מקור
ל כהנה שפדה את כנף ישך
למקליים כליה על מככ
בברכה על קקיה מפקלכה
ליד עוה עוה מוחיב
ולא צלאה.

אות מusherנה
אני מוחמד מאצפתה — מפלצתה
אות גאוני מבישה בה מכלת
וחיה צעירה
המניחה.

שה עזה בורהющемceiveי וייח.
HARVEST

The harvest has come!
We will bring all our baskets
to carry it home
and the men will carry machetes
to chop the tall stalks
in all these acres of gold
below the arid mountains.

The whole family's here.
The women with their shawls
carry husked corn,
the new mother nursing her baby
in the field
and the one with a long hat
drinking the mid-day water.

This corn comes from the heart
and we all know it,
golden grains to nourish all of us
like the mother's milk
we started with.
DANCE OF THE DOLLS (for George Sand)

When women were wrapped in crinoline
and girdles down to the skin,
I wore men's clothes,
happy with the good construction
of shoulders and tailoring.
Now I could ride a horse!
Now I could conduct an orchestra!

I wrote all night.
Novel after novel about real love
where men and women expressed themselves.
I smoked a cigar
and read Plato and Shakespeare for inspiration.

We watched marionettes move
with sound effects for rain
and carriage wheels.
I could forget abandonment
in the dance of the wooden dolls.
All morning, I wait for the knock on my door, 
nervous as Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment.

Will the inspectors see my cracked tiles, 
smell cat litter? 
Will they imagine rats running sideways 
through my bedroom?

All morning, I wait for the knock 
on my door, 
ready to be sent to jail. 
What would Raskolnikov do 
in these circumstances?

Climb the walls, scrub the windows 
to make sure the bloodstains vanish, 
check the wall stash 
for what he pilfered, 
killing the nasty pawnshop woman.
Three hours waiting

by my two unlocked doors.

When will the knock come?
THE LOST BREAST

Little breast, you were not the best
wearing your flimsy gauze,
keeping your nipple down
like a dying sunflower in summer

when all you wanted to do
was guide her home, away
from the bad guys.

She didn't listen with earbuds in,
cavalier with her favors
and potions mixed by friends

walked a dark road
after her flashlight died
and she moved by dead reckoning.
ELECTRIC KING

Thin and electric,
he strummed until
bursting into flame
in feathers and suede.

If he had called me
on the phone,
I would have married him,
ready as I was to be plucked
by quick fingers
and Jimi’s were lightning!

He conjured up old spirits
from the midnight lamp,
smashed a mountain in half
with his bare hand,
mythical as Zeus
with lots more fretwork.
His blues drove down the highway
between Jupiter and Mars,
swept starfish into the sea
with electric grace.

All the long-haired maidens
bowed down before him
as he danced and glowed
like a saint in the dark.
FREEING THE WHALE

Singing with her slippery voice after being freed from crab traps and lines, she praises each name that has taken a curved knife to save her from death.

Each swimmer with his tank and hose, wetsuit flopping around him. Each man studying the line wrapped around her, a coffin to break.

Shaking her pectorals and dorsals, she is free to swim without nets holding her back like fate to contract, stop blowing and drop to the bottom, thirty tons forgotten like mud.

She sings and croons deep ocean tunes. The swimmers have set her free!
DINNER IN THE HOUSE OF DEMONS (after Hokusai)

When the dignified men assembled in a mansion
with a red ceiling and sliding walls,
they shared saké, setting aside business and families.

Little did they know
their stories would summon demons, bright and tall
from the white-faced witch inside her willow
to the huge rat with his tail
that licked a bald man's pate
and the one with its claw of pincers,
poking through a grate!

A will o' the wisp turned to fire
near the garden path,
ignored as the men pulled their cloaks close
and bent down to pray.

The demons were out tonight!
Dancing on cloven feet, licking the walls
around them,
scattering needles on the floor
as they laughed and stalked.
The quiet, being taken apart
for easy handling and shipping,
the movers tip-toeing, their breaths
measured, working swiftly, yet
cautious. The quiet being sent
away, moved to another part of
town, in sound-proofed boxes, in
padded crates, in rubber cartons
marked 'Handle With Care'. You
can almost hear it, the way its
weight shifts, the dust being
disturbed, the absurd lengths
that the movers go to not to say
a word, their dark eyes rolling.
Painting

Of a river, which is riverish or riverlike, if not riverine. Which is a copy of a copy. A painting on a wall with a painting of a wall in it. And the rain with teeth in it, with a few deft strokes a rain implied. Art crime, deliriously uninventive, that I bought in Hyde Park yesterday, foole upon foole that I am. With its few representational smears; that are people, that are peoplesque. Their faces blobs, like gobbets of drool, or flecks of redoubtable snot.
Intolerable Mirage

A morning so heavy that light cannot escape its surface. A moving cloud of barely visible excitement crossing a frost-burnt field as if to get a last word in, a sort of *ism*, the messenger and message in one, an irrational phenomenon of largely indifferent anomalous forces trying to hitch a ghostride back into Darktown. A random thing lurching our way, proffering us its poppies. And some birds too, somewhat bored with this, their laughs infectious.
Eternal Flame

The night the house of love burnt down. The night the eminent shrink informed us: Sometimes, a cigar is just a cigar, but his erection more than obvious, the Bluestockings in hushed awe, some of them quietly reaching for their tissues. "What do women want?" the world-renowned psycho-analyst asks as he fumbles for his matches on the dais, an elderly matron first crossing and then uncrossing her legs. A poem in which alarm bells are going off all over town, firemen throwing their trousers on, fire engines entering the first of the long dark tunnels.
They were winding down a quiet weekend evening at home, working their way through both a bottle of chardonnay and their seventh time watching "Inglorious Bastards," when she paused the show and headed off to the bathroom.

He sat there and waited, sipping on what amounted to an empty tumbler, then reached over and poured what remained in her glass into his.

Returning to the sofa, she sat down, looked at her empty glass and asked, “What happened to my wine?”

The knowing look on his face told her everything that she needed to know.

“But I had a sip left,” she protested quickly.

In retrospect, it must have been some combination of the accents in the movie and the quickness with which she said the words- "sip left"- that triggered something in his head, which caused him to turn to her and ask- in an almost perfect German-English accent-

“You know the Sip-Lefts of Vienna?
Hans und Matha?
Who,
but for the grace of God would have fallen into the hands of the Nazis?
Only to come to New York where- one day- when trying to get across Queens Boulevard- they were hit-

and killed-
KILLED!
I tell you!
By a drunken Guatemalan illegal, driving a stolen- two-thousand-and-nine- white Silverado-
with Arizona plates!
You know these people?
How is it that you know them?”
She took up the remote, looked over at him and laughed, before she told him in no uncertain words- "You’re sick!"- then pressed the "PLAY" button.

END
Margarita Serafimova

Black eyes full of light,
black hair full of clearly defined vitality,
and invisible fear determining the direction of everything:
void.

*

A dark light was surging from you,
and putting me under the reign of pain.
Your love is freedom’s night.

*

Your naked shoulder that I want to bite,
the sun has covered in its sheen.
The night of desire is leading to day.

*

Dark light was streaming from you,
your head its own halo.
Life was transcending death,
death was transcending life.

*
Your love for me, mine for you –
they were holding onto each other as curled petals of an intoxicating hyacinth clinging to its elongated, upright leaves.
It was before spring, in the heart of bonding.
Walter Ruhlmann

**Cables and Fuses 1**

Cities of concrete
perfumed with carbon
and blending
propane
blow out.

Viscus linger
along the greedy
motorways
and highways.

Black and grey
machines
drive hastily
towards the sink holes
and the cemeteries.

****
Cables and Fuses 2

Nothing more than the rotten and infertile humus.

On the dried lands the machines of war make fear and blood disappear.

Tomorrow the pieces of plastic.

*****
Cables and Fuses 3

The cellars blown with helium
open their doors
on the mysteries of the lives
of latex
and chilblains.

The underground caves
are fitted with infernal
canals
bearing
the contemporary oxidations.
*****
The gears of the mad humanoids go haywire under the sensations of the funeral pains and their internal chips spit the nebulous rhythm of another time.
Cables and Fuses 5

The scalpels break
on the ellipsoidal fuses.
Metals are worth nothing
when the things of ice
invade our realms

and under the emperor of bronze
and clay
the revolts of titanium
trigger new affronts.
*****
Cables and Fuses 6

The contemporary forges
spill their complaints
along the rivers of gas
and the solitary eyes
of Vulcan's slaves
shift towards
the lead mines.
*****
Cables and Fuses 7

In the interstellar cosmos
the damned spaceships
unload their demons
of silicon

and under the surviving pillows,
yesteryear's nightmares
make their way
of adulterated glycerine.

*****
Cables and Fuses 8

The hooks and the bills –
instruments of torture
from the past –
are passed through the blending
claws of Laser

and in the cybernetic fear fields
lurk forever
the skinned spirits
of the forgotten human
ancestors.
Bang

There are people
who want to kill me,
and others that should.
Not that I’ll say much,
my lips have been sealed
with a kiss;
Black lipstick and black eyes,
Noir and Gothic thoughts,
stilettos in the dark,
clicking down the hall.
Friday’s Love

Black sorrows
and pauper days
tomorrow’s resolve
a loaf of bread,
possibly a wine bottle,
and there’s you,
alone and unknowing
of happiness
yet to follow.
Meal Time

In cannibal days
we lived so fine,
I eating you;
you eating me.
Then we learned
the sin of religion,
and turned our teeth
to cows and rice.
Too bad my dear
that we improved
so much, despite all
that later came,
you still remain
my favorite lunch.
Here and Now

In another world
we are angels
polishing our halos
and doing good deeds.

In the here and now
we're shy demons,
hesitating before
each act of evil,

regretting both
what we did
and not doing more.

Ah, what if
we should try harder
and become the devils
we were meant to be?

Too lazy for that,
we'll go as we please,
righting no wrongs,
but doing no good

for anyone much
including ourselves.
Fibbers

There's a promise
we should keep,
and yet we'll never
make it.
We may pretend,
but that don't count.
Just do as you do.
I'll do as I am.
We'll try to learn
forgiveness,
but we won't.
That's a promise
we'll both be sure
to keep.
The Small Things

The tragic part
has just begun.
Hold the new born
in your arms.
Whisper love
and kisses.

All will try
at first
for a little while,
then it becomes
what it becomes
without crying
or cantatas,
just the natural decay
of love
down to its
component parts.
Crooked Promises

I shall love you,
    because it's what's expected.

I shall spurn you
    because it's what I do.

You shall spurn me,
    because it's what you are.

Together we shall make
    a perfect pair

of ceramic figures,
    brittle, breakable,

and destined for
    the kitchen floor.
WORD-BITES.

1

she is spaghetti
and confetti
torn from the
blue acres of
afternoon

she slides down
the wedding steps
without a stumble

who she is
A secret of the sun
we turn green with
the age of envy and
time

And dare we ask again:
who are you?

2

in rapid succession
running
The children
of spring
launch themselves
against
The dimsighted
ways of their
fathers
all of it
is a thinning cloud

I have mastered
the sky

I leave a chemical
trail around the sun

It is destiny’s
heat, fate, longing
for the fire

Light veins
over our eyes
Do we incur
the wrath that
holds the ax
high?

Certain tribes
with their medicines
offer balm and salve;
in snake-like trance
We submit.

July 2018
Bruce Wise

The Bearded Man
by Eric Albu, "Swede"

He turned his head up to the left, as if moved by a god,
and what he saw look down at him left him unhitched and awed.
It was as if great Odin spoke to him in poetry,
or Thor caressed him with his healing and fertility.
He lifted up his eyes to see the mighty power there,
and felt it deep inside his holy soul, o, hard to bear.
He hung around the tree of life, in Asgard, Yggdrasil,
and longed to stay there for forever, on that big, rude hill.
But he would have to leave that gorgeous forage of a forge,
and fall from heaven's paradise into space-time's dark gorge.
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