

at home with the rainbow

how very grey
is rainbow's home!
chilly and untended
with dust
in thick foggy layers
that doesn't let make a step
without kicking up oppressive clouds
that never pass over
everywhere in corners
cobwebs are hanging
even God passing by
having pressed a curious nose to the window
is sneezing like hell
oh my!
it's dark and stuffy like the threshing barn
in the middle all alone
sits a spinning wheel
and stuck in its spindle
fluttering in the draft like a bat
a curly

hair of seven colours
from the white head
of an angel
gone to sleep

2013

burying the guardian angel

we have been on the road very long

all my life in desperation
with shaky legs drenched in sweat
every day I carry the dead body of my guardian angel
to bury it in the evening

rest in peace, angel

all night long I feel holy horror:
what if my dead guardian angel rises again
even more dead than yesterday
and tomorrow once again I will have to carry his body

to bury it in the evening?!

I wish that never, are you listening, God? I wish that never
morning would come!

yet it always does never fails

2012

chaindog or guardian angel in old age

in the hole-ridden doghouse

roughly hammered together

tethered on a rusty chain

for the daily bowl of chow

and a lean bone on special occasions

he still felt like a real angel

eager to bark at an occasional hobo

and accidentally fallen stars

serving his beloved master

whom enraptured he considered higher

than even his very own God

whom on moonlit nights

tail between the legs

eyes squinted letting out a long howl

he was still allowed to reach

by the chain

deeply embedded into his flesh

and its unlimited

grace

2013

chess

Borges and Jesus Christ

are playing chess

at the covenant table inside the temple

Jesus makes the crowd cheer

making a move with the pawn of the Holy Spirit

which Borges

making the crowd jeer

removes right away with the bishop of Homer

Jesus makes the crowd cheer

continuing with the pawn of the Holy Spirit

which Borges

ignoring the crowd's jeer

removes with a Shakespearean rook

Jesus makes the crowd cheer

dashing forth hotly with another pawn of the Holy Spirit

which Borges coolly removes with Mallarme's horse

even the moneylenders

stop for a moment their barter
they are in the throes of the game
that goes on without shame

Pontius Pilate

leaning down to Jesus
tries to prompt him the right move
but Jesus
sensing the wings of the Holy Spirit above
keeps the crowd cheering
by moving his pawn
which Borges
with the crowd crazy with jeering
kills off with the stubborn strand
of his mother the queen's royal hair

even Pontius Pilate

feels anxious

realizing the horror of this game
and not able to prevent its result

Leons Briedis
Poetry
Translated by Ieva Lešinska
Edited by Eluned Gramich

in the end
Jesus makes a move with himself
and Borges
having recovered his eyesight for a brief moment
baffles the indignant crowd
offering a draw to Jesus
in the name of the Holy Spirit

Pontius Pilate,
as usual,
washes his hands in the cheers of the crowd

2013

cold

it's cold
that's why poets hold Walpurgis nights
to burn their own books
on pyres
to get warm by the barely hissing words
that once helped to create their state

lukewarm

have become feelings and thoughts

virgin marys

don't get gravid as they ought

and Jesus Christ

has drowned in the shallows

the swallows of future

don't lay even addled eggs

hard

the plough that works

the soul laid fallow

the ashes of Alexandria

brought to us by Noah's dove

have stopped smouldering next to our hearts

2013

poems that cannot be written

that autumn

when he started to write his poem

meteor showers arrived earlier than predicted

and they brought to his dream a woman
who changed the order of things on earth
eternal spring was decreed for the globe
chaos reigned throughout nature
the apple-tree dead for two years suddenly burst in bloom
a great number of white butterflies matured in the cherry tree
dahlias, asters and gladioli went raving mad
and organized a massacre of aroma and colour
that killed the most determined of plans
and most serious projects
and he too was overcome by some secret malady
that made him so sick and so weak
that for a cure he promised to the woman
the rest of his life on earth
that's why the poem remained unwritten that autumn
when the meteor showers had passed
and he woke from his dream
chilly rain was falling outside
in a bend of the road he still spied the woman
but she soon vanished over the horizon
along with his unwritten poem
walking directly toward the next meteor showers

which were to take her to the dream of another poet
who had just started to write a poem

2012

poetry

the paper plane
that I released at dawn in my childhood
and that even at the sundown of my life
has yet to return

take wing, my dream, take wing!

you are the only verse of our common insomnia
that a spring-like smile attempts to utter
through the wintry tight lips of the soul

a rusted airplane
in the abandoned hangar
of the airfield of angels

2012

smoke from the hearth

his shoulders were always balanced
no matter,
if a rock was rolled onto his right one
a boulder
of all the injustices of this world
the smoke from the hearth of his land on his left one
held his will intact:
unbending
like the warm and crackling message to the future
on an unsealed white birch bark
that bitterly sweet wafted into the nostrils of the unborn
he smiled
he waved his arms like a pair of wings
and flew away
to perch on the left shoulder of God Our Lord

2013

the unborn one

gassed at Ypres
frozen to death by a bonfire in Kolyma
incinerated at Auschwitz
and crushed in the Courland pocket
melted to nothing in Hiroshima
deported
transported from prison to prison
and sentenced to salt mines for life
having the stateless or illegal immigrant status
silenced by tear gas or water cannons
forever on his way over here
though he'd never get any right here
to a corner or piece of land
where locked up in a ghetto
or under house arrest
he could simply light the hearth
and dream about stars
he has survived already

he has weathered already
all the injustices of this world
by making tight little fists in his mother's womb

2012

troubadour

in all the love crusades he was a mercenary
in every court he served them all
whatever gossip they tried
he was full of ardent pride
and even in the face of death he didn't put verse aside
he didn't have a clue
if he'll get paid his due
in this or another world
no matter he knew
that the gift of love
does not come free from above
and though his songs sounded dark
his feelings were bright
as he participated in all the crusades of love

in every court serving them all
no matter what gossip they tried
he knew
that no one will ever learn
the name of his only true love
he hid it even from her
and wore it like a golden never greying lock
like a twig of green myrtle
by his left shoulder
in purgatory wandering alone
with his heart torn out

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