

3. Europäisches Musikfest EUROPAMUSCIALE
Mai 2004

M a l t a

2187A

Café Jubilee, photo – Norbert Bugeja

I recollect each shot choking in sorrow,
and this small place turn into a black shriek
when you came in, and with your usual quickness
downed every mournful glass you were offered
and let them all, story after sad story
melt into your frame's unruly discourse.
Bailamos, let the rhythm take you over
bailamos, accompanies the wheezing Paul
making the most of his last year of dancefloor
and puking by the woman who had dumped him.
Amidst crowds of untold stories he found you
dancing, made you, for an instant, his idol:
this woman clad in a black salsa, dancing
an untamed prayer amid the solitude,
as coy and lengthy as el greco's crying
after the tears he was afraid of painting.

Drawn out, my friend, drawn out's my buddy's
pathway;
reaching your gaze took half an hour's limping,
to watch the prancing pigtailed in the courtyard,
the thousand nameless souls roving your eyes.

Interlude I

ALLEY NO. 2 - Maria Grech Ganado

When I first arrived, as nervous as a snail,
to help serve my mistress, when my sister wed,
I was struck by the lights sparkling in the rain
I was struck by the crowds of every shape and hue
I was struck by the voices playing like smoke
with the dew which was drunk by dawn.

*Because I loved him! Shhh,
the air musn't overhear!
It loves to lick into each voice
not concealed by a whisper.*

As soon as the sun sets, the snail dares
put its horns out, because it doesn't understand
that every man's an island, and cannot carry
his home upon his back.

In the village
every house was just like mine, all the fields the same,
we dressed the same, spoke the same,
there was no need for thought.

But I took to thinking.
Because all was the same, I was made to think
different,
and I thought in this city, I would surely find some
island,
in the past or in the present, which was searching for
mine...

*How I loved him!
He took my cupped hands from my chin,
smiled provokingly, and
laid the first stone of a structure
that can not be eroded,
not even by time,
since he plastered it with kisses.
First he showed me the bastions. We forgot
sounds, smells and the fields now shrunk*

into pots. Lit up at our backs, life throbbed on
uncontrolled. Beneath us black blankness –
which swallowed the farm on which I'd been born.

I was afraid. I laid my head on his shoulder, and wept –
I don't know why. Except that I felt I was not who I'd
been,
without fully knowing who it was I'd become. All I was
was blank. He changed every tear into one of his
kisses.
his hands formed a cloak to protect me from darkness,
his fingers were lamps to light up my Fate.

*My soul became the breeze which feeds the cracks
of crumbling buildings; where it is rumoured
that a nun who died was born in a whorehouse.
And the whore who expired came from the convent.*

I might have forgotten.
It is possible that it was he who joined his hands
to gather me like water. And when he had drunk his fill,
he lay in my lap and rested. All I'm sure of is, I was
amazed
that a man was a man, and a woman no more than a
woman.
He was himself, I all but myself!
For the first time I'd experienced a moment
where I felt I belonged; for the first time
I understood what it meant to be so alone.

And if I loved him, I loved him for the city
I found in his Self. I was a room in a house
which waits to give shelter. Whenever he left
to build, to plan, to expand the city, I
was left to remain in a house, buried by houses
with fields kept in pots – not unhappy,
not happy; neither a peasant nor a city-girl,
without desires or thoughts. In this city, in this house
I am a candle melting into the dreams of others,
a numberless room, rented out by the hour.

SOULS - Priscilla Cassar

My body's dry wood

A dug-out husk
Gnawed at by time.

Bark
Dropping
Scab after scab
Of experience

Withered skin
Clothing the heart
Of my life.

Milk oozes
From the crusts of my arms
Spilling

Like tears
On fragile twigs.

I look around me
With the eyes of a blank heart.
I live in a forest
of souls like myself,
Alone

I am thought wise.
But in vain.

Why did you shed me?
The fruits of my arms are dry.

Look how they're
Hacking me down

I n t e r l u d e I I

LAKES IN THE CITY - Claudia Fiorini

In the city of giant buildings,
the rain
falls grey,
exhausted.
It lets me turn to water,
become
lakes
grow dirty
in pores of walls,
slide tired
down glass of locked-up houses.

In the lakes a face appears
of a strange girl,
holding out her hand
to touch me,

who withdraws suddenly
on hearing the Spaniard's voice
singing of sun, of blue and gold.

The girl could not understand.
She let the lakes
run with the blood
and the songs of the Spaniard
echoing gold, and blue and sun.

The city of giant buildings still stands
tasting
alone
the sourness
of a dry lake,
like a stain.

A city beseeched – Stanley Borg

*How doth the city sit solitary,
that was full of people!
How is she become as a widow!
She that was great among the
nations,
and princess among the provinces,
how is she become tributary!*

Lamentations 1:1

The past is your natural colour,
where every street sighs in its corner
and 'long lives' an Empire,
only to shadow it
under dead white towels strung sinewy
from eavesdropping panes,
or drowns it
in curried voices fried with onions.

The morning mist is shaped
by yawning flags flapping at the clouds,
whispering at two young girls,
ten colours in their hair,
joining naked smiles with their long earrings,
while their cheap perfume
creepers through my window

and coughs me up from a night without fags,
crumpled as an old man's tattoos,
or like cold sheets
crying over spilt dreams.

Meanwhile,
Francois Sagan mourns her *bonjour* and yesterday's
hair,
caught in a comb,
as I dunk my eyes in cold coffee
and run them
one across

three down
the lonely hearts –
beautiful people and beautiful love
beautiful Sunday,
two papers,
no mass.

II

Shiny black morning shoes,
and each afternoon dragging its flip flopped feet,
greying more hair.
He sleeps on her left,
she on his right
in a bed shared for thirty years.
And all their children are asleep,
except one,
hanging suspended to the light cast by a mobile.

Out in the street,
lovers argue
perch and chirp
and never mind,
as the holes in cars' silencers
scratch the night.

III

I will tell you where to find me,
now that time weighs,
like a hangover
and I pant like a bus in summer.
I'll be at the Imperial Bar,
staring down old men's butt cleavages,
remembering
how I used to open the steamed up windows
and the car,
filled up with night.

You're beautiful,
like a lazy one week's growth,
long sleeves on the first winter day
and a clock ticking the night
in an open window.

I'm not,
like Saturday shopping in Merchant Street,
or slow Sunday driving.

Only here,
will I open my wrists
like a book which has never been read
and my throat will scream like an island in an empty
sea,
leaving my face for dead.

It will be months, or maybe years
before you smell my silence.
Then I'll know,
as shadows drip by drop,
one cigarette at a time,
that yet again the night arrived before me.

Interlude III

ALLEY NO.1 - Simone Inguanez

there's a girl looking out – standing, in an alley
dark flesh, sealed mouth, hot lips

there are naples, sicily and sardinia,
there is crete and greeks, cyprus and madrid
- locked in the gaze of her fixed eyes
there is steel, the sea and fire

there is pain and sobbing, the moon turned to sand
and the sun
+ a question
heart, soul, and nothing mixed up

and there is I
- walking the coast-line
next to the old woman who sleeps sitting up
her bed in the door's mouth

as she dreams

