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Writing Sample

Simone Inguanez

Includes "alley no 1," "i will return," "barefoot," "nymph," "the first rain," "narcissus grows from your hands," "Nafra," "her voice in my ears," "this land," "i wish you smile," "some day i’ll create you," "an elegy for my siblings," "i left," "i’ll stay" and "little by little."
Simone INGUANEZ
From *fit mara fiti tifla*
[“water, fire, earth and I”]
(Malta: Inizjamed and Midsea Books: 2005)

alley no 1

there’s a girl peeping – standing in a lane
dark flesh gaping mouth hot lips
there’s naples sicily and sardinia
there’s crete and athens cyprus and madrid
– locked into the look of her fixed eyes
there’s the steel of sea and fire of voyage
there’s pain and tears
– the moon’s turned to sand and the sun is a question
heart soul and nothing have become one

*and there’s i* - strolling round the coast

close to the old woman who sleeps sitting up – her bed
in the door’s mouth
while she dreams

*  

i will return

you told me *cradle me*
and you thought or wished your own mother was found
who’s been gone a long time
– because she was afraid

and you squeezed my hand without quite knowing why
– i carry this womb which has never been filled
i press these breasts which have never been suckled

– *i will return*  

*
barefoot

i run barefoot on this pier waiting
for your voice and your gaze i wait –
between air and water
where the road starts and you don't know

when you don't come i sow my eyes in the earth

— i'll see what grows


*

nymph

i come from water – dive and surface
swim dive and surface
and stay
— or dart away
if you come close i'll dart away
i'm an island

sometimes i rise to light – let go where it sparkles
water sparkles and water soothes
— or it blinds
but my eyes are sealed no body shines in them
if you move close i'll burst them

i'm a creature of water – water moulded me
sometimes it lulls me sometimes it wakes me
waves dance like fire waves dance
but waves stay coming and going
— fire does not leave

if you come near i'll end my life

*


the first rain

for you because you grew on your own

remember the smell of the first rain
– which caught you as soon as your feet swung
and pierced and wet this weak stone and this land
and burst them
remember the smell and remember well how it echoed around you
– silent and shut
carpets absorbing curtains coughing
different smells and short colourless skirts
– they didn’t spread it out to drip
and your bare knees grazed and scratched
and sweat and chill – between your tight eye-lids
and the scorching needles at your soles a hole
and your body stops – and your heart – perhaps your soul as well
and you grow alone

remember the rain pounding at the window
– pushing the glass in
and smearing the white – it’s a lie – of your eyes

every time you look straight and deep down
and glimpse the pupils
– adrift in the void

*

narcissus grows from your hands

for you because water fell on your shadow

i am not – look closer
and you will not see me
because i am not
– except what you make of me
for you

you try to bind me
bond on bond knot on knot
– and each knot tangles you
ties you ties you so you are entangled
in every cord’s knot and you are conceived
– with me

and you are not – remember
whether i’ve ever seen you
because you are not
– except what i make of you
for me

i struggle to grasp you
i stop racking and knotting
and i let you
dissolve

– into nothing

*

**Nafra**

in the cavernous temple of your scarlet soul
the oil lamps flicker
smoke circles
the scrawls you leavened
the yawning heifers you forgot
the tree of life you sowed and left
is spreading is growing
i’m yearning and drowning
i’m choking
my chest is tight
i who danced for the gods
and for you barely clothed
i scorch in the chill on an arid land
listen to me:

*just a breath*
– why did you leave?

*
her voice in my ears

yesterday she took me home
took her clothes off and showed me – singing –
her wounds one by one her voice pitched high to numb
the pain in my heart – broken because of her

yesterday – as I lay in her lap
she told me the stories of her children – who never came
whom she’d longed for and given birth to alone in her soul
swaddled and suckled
yesterday before she left
and no-one understood – which had come first
that they didn’t understand or that she’d gone I

and I left too without a word
– her voice in my ears

*

this land

this land in which I was bred is choked by dust
it is buried by gravel by concrete
its soul and body crushed
silence falls valley by valley
till it’s gashed by the scent
which splits it

my grandpa ploughs my grandpa sows
my grand pa in his bed must know
if the beans have grown if the grapes have grown
if the dahlias are more beautiful
this winter this scent of fields
is locked tight in his nostrils failing
– the olive – the onions next to the hive
the fennel – and the old fig-tree – and the peach –

they split it
they split the silence
ripped valley by valley
shaken body and soul ashes
buried under the gravel concrete
*choked by dust and buried is the land I was bred in*

*i wish you smile*

yesterday I found god in your face
yesterday – this morning I saw your eyes shine
your face fragmented under your light hair
I found my soul yesterday
in your wide eyes – lashes damp
in your mouth – tight and cracked
I wish you smile – so the sun can rise

+++ for now
a ladder resting an ancient wall and pending rain
and nuns moving along long corridors
tile by tile, step by step
– white – black – white – black – white
cloud by cloud above their heads
music at a distance – someone sneezes
and children bug your grandma

and i

* sing granny sing yourself
shut everywhere up tight because time penetrates and I don’t know
– it will separate us
not you granny – don’t shut yourself leave your eyes
wide open because i’m afraid
– of the aging smell inside your nostrils and you choose life
you want to live–I want

+++ and now granny – I feel the rain and am afraid to look into your eyes
on the sill there’s a knotted rope and a window ajar with no pane
and a chair that’s hanging outside and the scratched wall’s fragrant scent
and the chest
– i’m noticing that everything in your house – gran – is sepia
and children fall rain fall – so that the grass will grow
holes and lakes and rivers – between your land and this reef
– they move further away with each breath
and I call you granny grandma – ma
you cannot – we can’t
lately you’re forgetting to feed me you’re forgetting to lift me

and I’m frightened granny i’ll dry up

* 

some day i’ll create you

some day i’ll create you ma – to speak to me
some day i’ll create you to see you smile
we’ll run away and spend the night walking and stop sometimes
and i’ll show you the air and water – i’ve wished for years
to show them to you
every time i turn you’re not there

some day i’ll create you now that you’re orphaned
i wish to nurture you

– if you let me

* 

an elegy for my siblings

and for you because you startled me

ma
the thought of a mother who has dried up hurts
– it hurts me
and perhaps it hurts you as well sometimes

my siblings are still locked inside you
– we’re choking them

*

i left

i left my country and too much behind me
– i cannot die

there are streets i have wandered
songs i have sung
newly-cut flowers which i left
and a coffee that’s cooling and crushed papers by
crumbs of close by a past which no longer is
though it lingers
– in crumbs
there are yellowing books and candles – candles dripping
and rain about to pour and sun behind clouds
and waves ironed out into calmness
rocks and gravel and sand
there are reeds which creak and an orphaned seagull
there are temples and empty spaces shivering
my mother and father growing wrinkled and old and bent
my siblings giving birth to me in new blood
– silent
sheets pulled back and open roof-doors
and now night has fallen and dewdrops on my door
and the tides of grains
blowing and growing fruit on the branches
at the end of the alley a cat and a dog which is barking

there is you flirting away
sms – i hear you laughing from here

– sometimes i feel you trembling

*
i'll stay

i don’t know not where i’m from
but i fit into your shores
their yellowing on the wind
doesn’t hurt –
nor does their green rustling softly in my ear
or their salt on the wave –
to and fro to and fro

i don’t know where i’m from

but if you let me – i’ll stay

little by little

you’re the word which stuck
to the tip of my tongue – for years

years in which i sought you without relief
from the pain it took you to take shape

— little by little

Translated from the Maltese by Maria Grech Ganado

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