

Selected Poems

Adisa Bašić (Translated by Mirza Purić)

I SPEAK

It's not just *my* scarred face, *my* riven soul,
my tormented body.

I also speak for three lepers
one who is filthy
four who are pitiable
a thousand mutes
two with a club foot
ten who've never had a man
five thousand cloistered ones
and four whose heads are covered.

For three who are denied a job
two who don't go to school for they *aren't whores*
three hundred who've been raped for they *are whores*.

For a little one
who believes she's leprous filthy pitiable mute.

And for one who is free
who meekly waits
to be born.

TAMENESS

You love me mindlessly precisely because I'm *mad*.

I perform stunts in bed.

I cook naked.

I press the citrus squeezer on my mouth
and talk like Darth Vader
and you laugh.

When I smuggle bits of my madness outside
in my hair, my bra, or under my tongue —
that makes you sick.

Beyond our four walls
even laughing out loud
is quite, quite inappropriate.

HEROINE

He's gone and gone and gone.

His smell evanesced from the clothes in the wardrobe.

Kids think they remember him.

Long hath he lain here before thee
And after thee
Long shall he lie ...

Underneath a virgin patch of grass.
Underneath a layer of leaves.

He's gone and gone and gone.
And you wake over a shriveled memory.
His likeness: a pressed flower.

Profusely we praise your dignity.
 You're the love we dream of.
 You're the loyalty we wish for.
 You're the picture that fits our frame.

And he's gone.

And gone.
 And gone.

Nobody hears the night.
 You bite your hands till you bleed.
 Put fingers into yourself.
 Bang your head on the headboard.

In your lonely bed, you know:
 you don't remember him.

DOMINATION

the well-groomed old man says
*you will return the favor someday
 we'll celebrate once this is over*

kisses me on the mouth lest there's doubt
 as to what he has in mind
 and how he means to collect the debt

towering over me he hugs me like he owns me
 as if we were in the poster
 for a black-and-white film from his youth

we both pretend that
 the threat frightens me
 not him

THE BODY LAUGHS, PENS A POEM

my body's betrayed me
in every way imaginable
it never seems to run out of ideas

it swells puffs up and flakes
cricks sticks and contorts
bleeds as it pleases
it's creative — I must put up

I do not have a body

I am my body

I read this sentence aloud

my body laughed from the heart
across the lungs kidneys and ovaries
all the way to the colon

it sat down
and penned this poem

The poems “Govorim” (I speak), “Heroina” (Heroine), and “Krotkost” (Tameness) were published in the collection *Promotivni spot za moju domovinu* (2010, A promotional video for my homeland). The poems “Nadmoć” (Domination) and “Tijelo se smije i piše pjesmu” (The body laughs, pens a poem) were published in the collection *Košćela* (2020, Nettle tree). They were translated by Mirza Purić and edited by Si Sophie Pages Whybrew and Dijana Simić.