

EVA COX

Translated by Gwyneth Lewis

Three poems

I Want

a city for my birthday
with people houses and a square
and a pond with a pig of stone
a small pear tree full of blackbirds
and men I want the hunks with cases
on their shoulders old boots
and girls in hats with rabbit fur
and hard lashes and sweetened lips
and dots I want instead of stripes
no, zebra crossings are so thin
you see their ribs through tarmac
and letterboxes I don't want nor rain
I just can't bear rubbish bins
nor babies smelling powdery and sad
no, not even babies, pale and bald

She takes the fabrics out of the wardrobe, shakes them open, raises them to her chin.

The head above them, like a conjuror's ball, rolls left, rolls right.

She wakes up

like a blank page, an empty mould, a tailor's dummy,
hangs clothes on her shoulders, begins to live.

Or is it the clothes that start to breathe? Outside her,
outside the empty depths within, they're concrete, visible,
you can touch them if you like, the parts she shows.

See-through fish that slip through your fingers.

He'd do better to look into her eyes, the light in it,
marks, the shadow that slides over the white.

Or read the rules in her hand.

The legend. Who she is.

The one who watches her walking, what does he see? A girl of glass,
on too-high-heels, avoiding puddles and holes.

She mustn't fall or stumble,

on the tiles her smile would smash in pieces

(quickly, collect them in her bag, stick them together at home, later)

Hand

When a hand thrust out of the cupboard, not insistent, in fact even shy, slowly turning over in the pale light, I pulled up a chair and had to sit down. I reflected on existence, its rhythm, its unspirited limpness, and decided not to slap the hand away. Since then, I've shared my time, my cupboard and my emptiness, and it's true that for the first time and almost to my regret I'm dependent now but, still, I'm relieved that it's a hand and not a tongue, thank God not a tongue, or a nose, what noses can start, how one covered in rags has to chase them, no a hand, empty hand, smooth, shy, slowly turning over slowly in the harsh light, to the rhythm of the sun and some hours.

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