

Five Poems

Ivan Malkovych

Lubok (*Kitschy Art Print*)

Somewhere in a junkyard, among thistles,
on moldering coals dumped years ago,
two angels dally:

they wax each other's wings,
kiss each other's eyes,
waiting for Christmas.

Beside them lies a beautiful child
no one can recognize:
who's guarding whom?

does the child watch these angels,
or do the white-winged ones protect the baby
who dares to rise into the sky.

On this dark earth, what can the white
angels do? should they crush coal
or weep into the blue?

Every angel wants to bring
the baby back to heaven's garden,
but God does not will it...

Where stripped Christmas trees are left,
our dirty orange peels lie
on the frozen grass

two angels and with them a baby
who holds a carol in his fist,
yet Christmas has already passed.

June 23-24, 1992

From Night Prayers

O Lord, fill our lonely souls
with summer's stalk,
let us each build our nest,
and let it so remain.

Let gleam from behind dark cliffs
and around every heart
the circle of your faith;
may everyone in this world be saved.

May 3-9, 1992

Christmas Garden

Someone with a child wanders
through a Christmas garden.
The child says: "I am God"
and shakes snow from branches.

Grace envelops them
in the quietest of gardens,
white gosling footprints
crunch like icy feathers.

The older one follows the footprints,
stands still in the middle of winter,
he stuffs the child's pillow
with a sky full of angels.

He knows: kings will come,
he knows: kings will kneel instantly,
he knows: goslings
will grow up overnight.

November—December 27, 1992

Useless People

i'm another of those who were deceived
and answering from the chromosome mine
succumbed to the foolishness of life

i departed the paradise of the misty mine
where, like living dew, the invisible
seeds of people flutter
(in the invisible honeycomb)

i arrived—bloomed—faded—
and rushed into the earth
everywhere beneath the earth
barely deeper than a potato
lay naked before the Almighty
an inventory of identical bones

(as if the only reason to be on earth
is to stretch out your own bones)
banal hieroglyphs of people
like matchsticks laid out.
by a child's hand

useless people whose faces
even God can't remember

February 25—March 14, 1992

She's still sleeping, she's still half asleep.
On the table, macarons, a cell phone, and perfume,
and I don't know what's coming next—
hugs, tears, reproaches, kisses?

No score to follow. And the pin is pulled,
pull ring clenched in your fist, and—you carry it,
and you can't charm or coax her—
explosively-tender—so fiery.

O, this changeable duality of hers,
this immaculate, defiant viciousness,
when you're driving over a hundred
and she covers your eyes on the highway.

And it seems there's no chance
for affection because the Pre-Raphaelites
would have dipped her in water like a flower
and just admired her.

You clear the landmines from her lips,
sprout within her to last somehow until spring,
you sing her a lullaby and rock her,
and watch like a dog her unfaithful dreams.

Translated by John Hennessy and Ostap Kin

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