

Annie Seikonia

BUDAPEST

Crazed by desire
I study the black hairs on her left leg.

At once lilacs and thunderclouds edged with light
Melt into spires.

I look up at a silhouette
Of Baroque lanterns,

Remembering the whelk towers,
The progression of tiny windows in the Fisherman's Bastion.

She turns to me and says:
"We are not characters in a novel."

Lakes and cake shops: cafes: baths:
Snow: lace: whitewashed houses: vegetable faces.

Every day the head of the Apostle
Looks out from the fresco as if about to break the silence.

This city is a harsh woman
With the mouth of a whore and the eyes of a child.

Factory chimneys fume like black cigarettes,
Peasants plow in the foreground of a nuclear plant.

Saints and minarets:
Easter eggs and punks.

I open my eyes from smudged landscapes
Of factories and grime to a room filled with yellow light.

I run my tongue along the streets,
Fingering ornate railings, tasting the rich sweat scent.

White oxen dream in the land of gypsies.
Over the ice, storks fly into a field of clouds.

A lone minaret bisects the horizon
Like a hypodermic missile.

The present is numb,
The past a repertoire of hints.

Smoking a hand-rolled cigarette
I eye the sanitarium concealed by mountain pines.

Sirens thread the night in her apartment . . .
A vile river runs through my brain like unromantic erotica.

That day at the farm I ate the sausage
From the pig that had been slaughtered at dawn.

We walk past the illumined Chain Bridge
Up steep stone steps as the smoke merges with the haze.

Pretending to pass the time I submerge into old photographs,
Pressing my face against the glass between the portraits and myself.

She is a painter
With large bony hands.

That first night in the club I danced with her
Until I hallucinated skeletons.

“You must go home now,”
She repeats as she fondles me.

Finally I go outside into a springtime
Through which I see snow obstructed by seconds.

An exile exits the yard, enters another city
In another place and time.

Back in America I eat a nectarine
And find her house hidden in the contoured wrinkles of the pit.

Smoky side street: rain: snow: spring –
It is all there.

Starting with her last caress the city becomes real
And my life the kind of sleep from which one never wakes.