

TSVETANKA ELENKOVA

from Bulgarian by Jonathan Dunne

Hall of Distorting Mirrors

Every fair has its hall of distorting mirrors. The extended projection of the Parthenon, asserts Seferis, is a pyramid. Reflected, the pyramid looks like an ellipse, and the lemon tree in my yard with the five tips is probably a circle. Albeit not ideal. So many edges, shapes, images, points of glass, you'd say, so jagged, why reflect them? Why iron clothes that should be worn creased? Natural edges cannot be smoothed out, even with steam—from a combination of moisture and sun. From agitation. You wipe the mirror. For a rear view.

Inanimate Nature

Physics is a lie. Everything about inanimate nature is a lie. While I was weeding my strawberries, I could feel the rain approach with a waft of its cool body, with the wind. I made haste. Some grasses I removed easily—milk teeth. The roots of others broke—molars. Some mingled with my strawberries—they're weeds as well. To pull out the grass you must get a good grip on it. And the rain kicks in. Ice-pack or anaesthetic, which passes slowly. When I come to, stones have grown and more grass.

Wisdom—A Purged Conscience

Even though some go to bed and fall straight asleep, they do not even dream or have nightmares; even though they wake up late, at midday, after the birds have stopped singing and the air has become stale—that break between going to bed and getting up, between a clear conscience and wisdom, when the skin smooths out, taut, the body retreats, like the sea, which the following morning has thrown everything on to the shore—we call it Purgatory. Then we let our children into the water. Stark naked. And we to one side.

D. A. POWELL

no picnic

plainly cast upon the cool banks, the mere descanting frogs
the interrupted repast, uninterrupted pile of leavings
the parallax of bodies which are and are not ours
uncomfortable shift, uncomfortable shuffle

so many of the best days seem minor, the form of nearness
that easily falls among the dropseed: a rind, a left-behind

I watched the bluejays provoke each other, eager to scrap

if I could make the world my own and be satisfied
I'd say that you did not see them, nor hear their anxious fuss
but you were watching. I, in fact, was not

forget that hour of meanness. we should not have been
perched on the vestige of evening, treading that same gunny cloth