

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Arminé Iknadossian: Four Poems

Armine Iknadossian · Wednesday, January 9th, 2019

### California Love Poem

The sun has an orgasm across the valley  
as Pasadena opens up in front of me,  
the Suicide Bridge pushing an arm out  
of green sleeves, orange blossoms keening  
after a mid-spring heatwave,  
the Rose Bowl yawning in a ravine.

It is not enough to love the one you love,  
to drive towards the ocean just to fall  
into bed with him, then return home  
alone, drowsy from sex and no sleep.  
You want to keep driving East towards  
black rocks and tarantulas of Nevada

or South towards the unilateral mirage of water  
where the Salton Sea groans in her deadwood hammock.  
On a map, California looks like she's hugging Nevada,  
leaning in for a deep kiss.  
She is tentative, he is a sharp-tongued,  
diamond-studded menace, kissing her  
and at the same time, pushing her into the ocean.

\*

### The Little Sinner

Undone every morning,  
the devil at her knees  
as her mother combs her hair,  
grabs and tames the tangles.

Hundreds of wooden fingers  
unravel hours of twirling  
around an index finger

before bed, before dreams  
 of collapsing altars  
 and dark-haired women laughing.  
 By morning, a head full of spider  
 webs; so many evil knots to save.

She undoes her hair at bedtime,  
 a thing possessed – half-dead.  
 Unbound and spread  
 across the white pillow, around  
 her face, a black halo, a sea of little sins.

Budding, her breasts  
 blind kittens that will open their eyes  
 after many slow Sundays, unwindings,  
 elastic hours that stretch and shrink  
 like rubber bands wound around  
 a black mass of hair,  
 a fistful of worry,  
 a handful of worms in a dream.

\*

## **If Joan of Arc Were Still Alive**

She would be sitting by the Mediterranean  
 at sundown, the sky as red as Campari,  
 singing, or maybe sharpening her cutlery  
 on a large stone. She would eat black olives  
 as she watched the burning sea, its lashes  
 opening and closing at her feet, its stories rising  
 into evening before pulling away its long skirt.  
 A hurricane lamp would cast shadows  
 on the sand with its bright flame. Some nights  
 she would talk to the flame, ask it probing  
 questions as if all flames were related.  
 Other days she would just laugh, shake her head,  
 whisper the names of her enemies  
 while collecting bits of sea glass to rub  
 between her thumb and forefinger, one for each  
 word God spoke to her. Green for “daughter”,  
 brown for “pity”, white for “Orleans”.  
 But most often, she would talk to the sea,  
 its curling fingers of foam, its fists of water  
 like a woman climbing out of ash and bone.

\*

## The Locust

*In Plato's Phaedrus, Socrates says that locusts were once human.*

Everywhere I look there are truth seekers  
in their grandfather's green army jackets waiting  
for their lives to begin. Somewhere  
a light bulb is replaced, a doorknob turns,  
and so many appear with nothing to say.

Like a sentence that has no future.  
It is a ballast of shame, a rendering  
of stillness – a movement towards God.  
We feed, and feeding, grow,  
and growing, swarm. But this is not the message.

This prayer is far from that,  
as far as a sinner can be, as only a woman  
with hunger and pride would rather hide  
behind her words than give them up,  
would much rather live among the poison wheat.

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