

Translated excerpt

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Elke Erb
Suspicion of Poem

Translated by Andrew Shields

roughbook 048
Die Olympiade.
Jammerschade,
daß es nicht
gelingt, diesen
Traum zu
erzählen, der so
merkwürdig
seltsam skurril
kurios
absonderlich ist.

Trip to Poland

Something to keep an eye on:
Some never leave the land of their childhood,
others never see it again.

1975

6.10.79

I go down a path, it glimmers,
but I've brought too little along.
(It glimmers with light feet that shine.)

I turn back with the regret
of wanting to love everything again,
of wishing I'd kept

and then all the more lost
what strives and is in the dark
but, before that greater love that licenses it,
illuminates itself so strikingly

that it puts the forms now my own
(right down to the deeper black, as if rotten,
of anxious vision)

(but always bright and warm in the light
of the latest meanderings)

into the last shadow of superfluity and salvation.
The urge to protect myself even makes me

infer an optical illusion: by light, one sees
nothing was there.

I'd so like to flee, I feel I'm in a trap,
I hear someone say: I remember that you ...

I narrow my eyes at what I'm about to hear.
And I go in secret, I cloak the present, name, occupation.

But I feel the flickering, clearly perceive
the blackest terror, to breathe.

breathes hard
it breathes
there she
breathes.

Fetches from the diary: mid-April 2015

So, there, just look, on the paths,
there's the girl who was premature, with some strict (photo)
idea round her mouth, her nostrils, too: who knows what was up.

No, just let her run across the field, over the mountain,
toes turned in, fishbone trail in the snow,
spine bent forward, arms swinging?

Why, what's a heart neurosis? – Most like: Heart knew roses.
I took the two strangers into the living room, into the unlived space,
I told the guests: My heart knew roses.

Yes, Frau Buchwald, Herr Tann, Mama's not home,
but look here (I pointed – visibility itself behind the curtain)
at our little bowl, where, cool in the window, between inside and outside,
where the milk sours.

What else can I point out, she's not here, back soon. Stood in for her,
entertained visitors: "My heart knew roses."

Look, I took myself, on the way to school at only eight,
on over the mountain, arms swinging? – hands
on pigtailed, hands on backpack straps

or hands raspberries dandelions, thoughts rabbits, goats,
to pick food for them, look.

January 1986

28.12.10

I fall asleep easily,
as if on the great night all the way to the next day,

but after two hours I wake up, not beside myself, not beside her,

a boat drifts down there
(harmonica, moon)

round a high cliff, high cliff
that's them, as it should be

is that

alone on the wrinkling water
me below, how can I still be beside myself

so insecurely

to no life, the sea
heartbeat

Berlin, 20.10.12.

I lie on my back, but my mouth

lies on my teeth.
What's there? It.

Under my nostrils
is a tension.

If I stir it with my fingers,
my mouth yawns.

If I think it yawns, then it yawns, too.

The sky in the mouth is called its roof.
In itself, it is red. Otherwise dark.

Behind the root of the tongue
lies the gullet.

Oh, lust –
sudden lust for the lump ...)

Feel like crumpled paper.
It is late afternoon.

30.3.13

31.7.13

I just woke up and turned on the light.

I turned on the light and expected
it would lead me to something!

Nothing happened.
I turned it off and on again,

and waited again for it to lead me,
like a computer, to something.

It didn't.
That's true.

I tried it, gave up
and went to
the computer.

I was awake after all + did some work.

But if this continues,

a piece of wood in the woods can,
finding such a thing can

still lead to a blinding.

Heartache, lonely

Good advice is hard to come by.

Nobody's here.

No way around this nothing.

14.10.14

16.9.15

Though I live in the country and have a pelt, as it were –
because I went a logical way, away, that is,

I noticed the contrast that all too automatically formulated itself –
pelt, with all its hair conforming to the vegetality all around. Eyeballing.

Another moment that rolls the heart around a little.

2.8.16.

Not getting my strength back. Sluggish. Slack. Wonder: What's wrong. What to do?

–

Nothing's wrong.

This very condition is full of itself. Filled over the brim
with itself.

(I wanted to, I really should Drink More Fluids. For example.)

"*Schlapp*" is such a good word for this.

But not if it imitates the sound of the cow drinking.

Suspicion of Poem

Lying on the bed on my belly, reading

(recovering)
(with mental discipline).

My lower back hurts a little.

When I start to notice that ache,

the arch of a bridge rises
in front of me.

Why that now, I wonder?

– I give my lower back a bit of air ...

Down the hill we have a grassy shore ... water ...

suspicion of poem.

– When I write poems. – maybe otherwise, too, I am the spring, nothing more –
and how I love spring water now, as I write that, how I see it come forth between
stones, around them ...!! the little divisions ..., the dark ground, the brightness, little
round mirrors, all the tiny eddies ...

14.12.16.

Helga

We were just having a chat (on the phone)

I don't know how it crossed my mind, the keyword must have been "Alex"

"anyway", I remembered how I came back from the physiotherapist, and because the masseuse had relaxed my muscles, I was still slightly wobbly when I came out on the square there and two police officers stopped me and asked for my ID, and while they were looking at the ID, I asked, looking past them: "Who are you looking for in this huge, empty square?"

For where hares once still hopped in hedges, now we had to be proud of one or two high-rises, hotel buildings, that kind of thing.

Helga then remembered how a Stasi car had once been in front of her house, and when she came out, she'd said: "I'm going to the Union of Fine Artists now, then to the department store, and in about one-and-a-half hours I'll be back."

Today is 19.3.17. I thought I'd make a note of that.

Poesie

At breakfast with the two here in the country I suddenly said:

Somehow one is always eleven, and Geli: true, she is always 12.

Ah!

27.4.17

I wake up

and find a piece of paper with these words:

What do I care

Every morning I read

"the bright-blue brook"

(with the forget-me-not
on the shore).

And: my horse is in the stall.

It's not the goal of a horse to show itself.

The peacock carries all its feathery finery on its back,
knows nothing.

I go pick flowers.

That's the case here.

1.7.18

The thing with the tree

I've been awake a long time.
Wandered around, cleaning up (hopeless).

I lie down again. An image,
not of my things – an airplane sound.
In the dark sky.

Outside, away. Far away.

– And a tall tree.
Tall, stripped tree. – Leafless, you know.
Full of day and night.

Far away into the dark sky.

Turn right into the green woods on past the forester's house,
the trunk cut down, gray and bare

and delimbed lengthwise.

There it lies. It's been there since the summer.
I've seen several such trunks in the village.

They will outdie me.
The palms of my hands think: too bad about them.

12.12.18, six thirty