

Two Poems

Samira Negrouche

translated by Marilyn Hacker

Gida

At Taverna Slavia
a shadow
the streetcar slides
across an evanescent backdrop
the sky is so grey and low
that buildings' facades slip away
and civilizations
and inheritances
only the sky imposing
on the straight proud back

*

Where does this woman come from who walks
on the naked path
who silently sings an unknown
opera
who gives birth to the mountain
and returns to it?

*

On the banks of the river that crosses
Mozart
the fog made me feel
Gida's uneasy gaze

from her trees drowned in the Taksbet dam
lost in a filiation
that doesn't know
her ballad

*

That woman comes
hands crossed behind her back
face hard and welcoming
she comes to Taverna Slavia
and the steaming bowl begins to make sense
the fog straightens my mountain-dweller's spine
I open my body
to what brings me back
the olive-trees' jazz

The Olive-Trees' Jazz

Before the sea/ the wind escapes
from time
gives to the swooning sun
the taste of a switched-off lamp
the sea always weighed down
by its lurching steamers
never on time
not exactly in the right spot
almost demure in the shadow
of a storm
before the sea, this timid day
it was even a nocturnal day
at a distant sun's zenith

sometimes before the sea it's
a country grey with sunlight

*

Before the sea/ like a book
against the grain of time
that took a snowy road
the one where tomorrow
where elsewhere
tenderness waits for no star
where the ancestors go off in the distance
like oil flowing
at its own rhythm

It's before the sea
the promise
the justification
the gleam
of a meter restarted from zero
where everything begins and begins yet again
to wash the grey away
the sky's false grey

*

After the sea
my oil that measures
and slows its spilling
that takes the breath of its pulse
that thinks each encounter
has already changed a life
has already given life
has conquered the meter
put back at zero
all is to come
to leave and return
in the recaptured flow of the sea