

Nicole Brossard / TWO POEMS

Translated from the French by Robert Majzels and Erin Mouré¹

THE EYES OF WOOLF AND BORGES

I can't seem to erase
the idea that faced with time
leaf or child
time repeats tempest
or labyrinth
no one dreams of resisting

of life we'll say any old thing in short
to save time *quick-*
cut: confusion of flash fool furious
sleep time of screens
real-time of tête-à-tête and intimate talk
side-by-side spoken clearly
snippet of sincerity

we are predictable beings
summer we caress from afar
with a gaze the future in segments
tongue in the mouth
mobile landscape
viable or vital
the cheekbone is soft
leaf or chalk

¹ Originally published by Noroît in 1999 as *Musée de l'os et de l'eau*.

it's in the curve of the back
in the curve of women's bellies
the hand measures
time the simple need to compare
ex aequo long ago
fiction inveterate and a good-looking elsewhere
leaf or child
the heat once more of mouths
girl or leaf
the sentiment of so often

maybe we need a small incision
in silence with a fingernail
so that time mounts maternal
up to our temples coming-and-going of memory
life caught in the fist like light

time sudden as though already
it no longer existed
from one end to another of this poem
between each flutter of the heart
gone soft like the aftermath of love
or fraction of a second that frightens the athlete

in the books of Woolf and Borges
the time of the blind
the time of the woman with a thousand points of view
fine fluidity that hinders neither stone nor sea

if time swallowed suddenly
the view across dawn and my past
I would spend hours enrapt
in library or garden
in the reflection of every spine
ink and the vast vocabulary of existing

in the books of Woolf and Borges
a flutter of eyelashes
between London and Buenos Aires
a girl of thirteen with round glasses might wonder
how to let a city enter
the room in which she writes
where to make civilization begin
the speech of water the vertiginous number

TYPHOON THRUM

and it takes flight whitecaps typhoon thrum
like an elbow in the night
ray of mores
the world is swiftly dark

everywhere where the mouth is eccentric
it's snowing: and yet this heat long
beneath the tongue, the "me" curls up emotion
glides ribbon of joy
harmonic eyelids

as the world is swiftly dark
and night turns me avid
from everywhere so much brushes up
that the tongue with its salt
pierces one by one the words
with silence, typhoon thrum

in full flight if I spread my arms
my hair slow in the oxygen
I claim there are vast laws
beyond cities and sepultures
voice ribbon, eyes' blade

tonight if you lean your face close
and civilization stretches out
at the end of your arms, tonight
if in full flight you catch my image
say it was from afar
like a die in the night

and while my sex dreams of dawn
engorges ecstatic epitheliums
it's snowing and again proximity
I claim it's the aura
or the image asymmetric
of the image in brief full flight

ground swell, image ceremony
my heart is agile
emotion between us
matter of laughter matter too true
and my voice that cracks
in the cold of galaxies

I claim I keep watch in silence
in the rose-cold of galaxies
I claim that if the eye is black
it cannot keep watch

everywhere where the laughing virtual mouth
of energy devours dawn disgorges its yes
she cries out as wildly as she comes
tympanum, sonorous mauve
vast laws that lick
the air's depth from afar

in the morning the *she* glides high
and rivers beneath my skin
are long from so many windings
savoury with women and lucidity
in the morning the river surges swept away
when I touch you
face to face in affirmation