

ERÍN MOURE / from *The Unmemntioable: Games of Chance*

*In the inner core of blinded love, which is not and must never
be realized, lives the demand to be unblinded.*
—Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

I'm awake, rubbing my eyes. Poring over the map of Hlibovychi, I look for signs: they had reached the Ernsdorf Forest. What were they thinking? Even the forest Jews who used to come at night for food had not come. The trees were silent. It could have been a shore; there was just the distant sound that air makes when there is no sound, air at the tympanum. An undifferentiated grey sky that morning. The road a strip of light not invented yet. Marja. Alex. Herm.

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In the dream, I was not able to answer the question: are you right- or left-handed? So I said both, but that I could not write with my left hand.

Animals asleep. A thinking man with a flying fish and a thinking man above, and representations of togas.

(so much of history is language here
(even the telling tells of language
(syllables seen with my own eyes in a plaster frieze of war

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In 1944, Soviets seized an UPA North order dated February 11, which said: Freedom for the Peoples! Freedom for the Individual! Liquidate Polish traces:

- a) Destroy all walls of churches and other Polish sites of worship.
- b) Destroy trees growing near homes so that no trace remains that anyone had lived there (do not destroy fruit trees by roads).
- c) Before Nov. 25, 1944, destroy all houses formerly inhabited by Poles (if Ukrainians are living in them, it is imperative that the houses should be taken apart anyway and turned into dugouts; if not, the homes will be burned and people who live in them will have nowhere to spend the winter). We alert you once more that if anything whatsoever remains that is Polish, Poles will have claims to our lands.

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What can I make of these side roads of grief? Horses in the stalls; we don't even need to rein them. Or hurt us. Ache is our alphabet, it has jewels and jewels, it has fringes. Don't ever let them tell you "decorum"! Or forget. I walk on Strada Plantelor in Bucharest, exiled, lonely. Strangely humid, for it rained hard earlier. The fires and dogs, leaves and dogs. Lilacs. Old women like my mother, and what a 19th century here! The fires. But there are no fires. Mobile phones and cigarettes. The new breed of dog, made out of all dogs. "I'm not then innocent."

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21 aprilie. Sunt bolnava, a kind of congestion in the head. Need ColdFX and much more water. I struggle as best I can to Strada Matei Voievod where Sampedrín lives. Her address is empty. Street dust on the window and lumber stacked on the floor inside, as if she'd been long gone. Along one wall, grey shelves of hats, one space empty.

Maybe she only went there to write the poems of Erín Moure and now they are written, she is gone from this city. Left-handed in București—for how long?

Here where each small territory of beauty is staked out, perfected, then hidden, is there use for metaphor? *À peine nous admettons le réel.*

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I wake still drunk on dreams at noon. Water. *DaDa* is still going strong a few streets away, one point on a four-point nexus: Amsterdam, Αθήνα, București, 東京. I sat at one of the red barstools, said—cafea, vă rog—and was served by a young man in white as if my bad accent didn't matter and “cafea, vă rog” was how one ordered coffee anywhere. As if Bucharest had stopped being in Turkey, as if we'd shaved off our shtetl beards, even the women, as if small colours and joy existed, and no need to flee from Gara de Nord to Zurich.

Dada, they say, originated in Bucharest. Is that why E.S. came here to research experience?

But E.S. has vamoosed. In her neighbourhood, the dogs, lumina de dimineața, the church and women cleaners with brooms in the park sweeping cigarette ends, and later Roma men and the dice game and more cigarette ends. And this cold. *Timpul învața pe cei fără școală.*

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Bucharest, I said to Răzvan, the film critic, when we met for coffee, is a microcosm of the world. As B. changes, so will the world, for better or for worse. I come here, walk on Businessman's Street and Stinky Street, on Prince Matthew Street, and draw my own conclusions:

“A lot of aching beauty.”

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Luceafărul se sorește. 118: Goats and sheep in bucolic hills.

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Left by Răzvan in the Muzeul Național de Istorie, I remember: icons are not representations, not likenesses, for god has no visible face; icons are embodied thoughts

of god. Yet to the neolithic Vinca whose memories are in the dirt beneath our feet, icons were tools. Menace paired with fecundity. Animals sleep, a woman has cosmic stars in her hips, slash of her sex leading into the blade.

On the stove tiles: Napoleon, beech trees, deer leaping, birds, magnolias, horns, mermaids. "We are the heirs of these traces; in us, they are the sign of the whole."

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On Businessman's Street, instead of lost pet posters, there are posters for lost old people. For people with tumours, needing intercession. I know now what Elisa craved about this city: what you find here is always different than what you came for.

Above the cluttered bar where I write these words, a framed photo of azure water at a resort on the Black Sea, the Romanian Riviera. The waitress is standing in the doorway, a figure outlined in white light. "A lot of aching beauty." My translation of Bucharest: "The dark star brightens."

"My offence was that I had eyes," wrote Ovid from Tomis, near here. Sometimes we are blinded by what we cannot see.

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Finally I brave my fears, and go back to the Folk Museum to explore looking. In the room with the church, the shirt is missing. No, it's on the wall beside where it was last year, spread now into an elaborate cross with the neck rounded stiffly. Behind the church, a pile of lumber, for the church roof remains unbuilt, so we might see in. A sign now lies on the hewn boards: "It would be a mistake to pass over the pile of wood! No one cuts wood like this any more..."

On an empty stand where an explanatory plaque would fit quite nicely, there is a typed note: "Nici noi nu mai știm ce era scris aici. Ceva frumos despre timp..." *Who knows what was once written here. Something beautiful about time....*

If Sampedrín is not here, her research on experience must be ended. Yet if you dream of her, it means she is close by, says Chus Pato.

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I can't believe it. I saw her! In the warren of rooms in the Palatul Parlamentului, third floor. I have to tell Chus. An exhibition of women video artists. She's in a blue anorak and beige jeans, and sings the song my mother made me sing as a child to make myself stop crying. Over and over, just as my mother insisted. Around her on park benches, people wake up, panic at her warble and microphone, leave.

Keep on the sunny side Keep on the sunny side " " " " " of life It would help us everyday It would brighten all the way If we keep on.t.s.s.o.l.

Julia Weidner, „Keep On” „Mergi mai departe,” 2003, 8'33

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It startles me to see her on video. That's my grandmother she's describing. And it was my mother in the cancer hat. She can't subsume what doesn't belong to her.

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What is inside, what is outside. What bears worth. What is a noise in the mouth. There are people in the north never conquered who laugh at death in strict ceremonies of pandemonium and refutation. I wait in Caru'cu Bere on Strada Stavropoleos for tripe soup with a long hot pepper on the side. R. arrives with an envelope for me, sent almost a year ago—when I was here last year—to the office at Time Out București.

When I pull out the first item, I recognize the turned-down black cover. I turn to the last page and read in a curious hand: "Fleeting glimpse of E.M. on Str. Negustari. Wearing my socks." I glance toward the floor, startled: I had taken them out of my suitcase that morning.

My notebook.

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Dear Chus: In Bucharest there is a street—Matei Voievod—where, when you cross it, time stops on one side and starts on the other.

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Dear Chus: everything I had dreamed turned out to be made of paper. The skin was an organ that suffered in silence the rays, the scourges, the cuts of trees and medicine. In 1922 in Hlibovychi, predeceased by her father Alex, blessed with more children, Anastasia and Tomasz emigrated in 1929 to the flood plain and mountain. Walking down the south side, the side with a road, the smallest daughter, my mother, went to school.

Forderung. "We must press forward to the schools."

Like Adorno, I know that in the innermost core of blinded love, which is and must never be realized, a woman is trying to open her eyes to see.