KMV 2021 – angol műfordítás

Ajánlott szövegek

Xandria Phillips

**No One Speaks of How Tendrils Feed on the Fruits**

                                                no one speaks of how tendrils feed on

the fruits

                        of my demise     these dead hands                  for

instance     that alight                phlox

wild strawberry                 and pine             this is my body out of

context       rotting in the                wrong hemisphere

I died                     so all my enemies would tremble at my

murmur                  how it                      populates their homes

so I could say to the nearest fellow dead person

*I know more than*

*all my living  foes*                  I’ve derived sun-fed  design

for once                             from

                    closing my oak eyes                           now they’ll never

snare the civilian

                                                                     pullulating my throat

**Want Could Kill Me**

*for Dominique*

I know this

from looking

                          into store fronts

                          taste buds voguing

alight from the way

treasure glows

                          when I imagine

                          pressing its opulence

into your hand

I want to buy you

                          a cobalt velvet couch

                          all your haters’ teeth

strung up like pearls

a cannabis vineyard

                          and plane tickets

                          to every island

on earth

but my pockets

                          are filled with

                          lint and love alone

touch these inanimate gods

to my eyelids

                          when you kiss me

                          linen leather

gator skin silk

satin lace onyx

                          marble gold ferns

                          leopard crystal

sandalwood mink

pearl stiletto

                          matte nails and plush

                          lips glossed

in my 90s baby saliva

pour the glitter

                          over my bare skin

                          I want a lavish life

us in the crook

of a hammock

                          incensed by romance

                          the bowerbird will

forgo rest and meals

so he may prim

                          and anticipate amenity

                          for his singing lover

call me a gaunt bird

a keeper of altars

                          shrines to the tactile

                          how they shine for you

fold your wings

around my shoulders

                          promise me that

                          should I drown

in want-made waste

the dress I sink in

                          will be exquisite

**Edmonia Lewis and I Weather the Storm**

The places where Edmonia’s bones were fractured still hold violent reverberations. When it rains I massage the static hum out of each point of impact. There is nothing heavier than flesh that wishes to be on another axis, except perhaps stone she shaped. Tonight she tells me, it’s impossible to bring a lover to the small death she deserves. An orgasm is excavated, never given. She takes my face in her hands without permission. I take her waist with care not to treat her like a healing thing. My fear winnows. She is digging me out of my misery with her fugitive hands. No one has ever led me out of myself the way she does when we move as though the species depends on our pleasure. She makes a pocket of me until I cry. I’ve seen that field, the site of her breaking, in the empty parking lot I cut through to class. There is nothing left for us to forge in Oberlin, and still we remain, Edmonia a sentient rock, swallowing her own feet in want of motion. We fit on this twin sized bed only by entanglement. We survive here by the brine of our brutish blood.

**Social Death, an Address**

I write to you from the predicament of Blackness.

You see, I’ve been here all my life and found,

on the atomic level, it’s impossible to walk through

most doorways. I can, however, move through

walls. I write to you from the empty seat that isn’t

empty. I write to you when a feel is copped.

I write myself out of bed. I write to you as the spook

who sat by the door. I write to you from Olivia

Pope’s apolitical mouth. I am here because I could

never get the hang of body death, though it has been

presented to me like one would offer a roofied cocktail

or high-interest loan. I am only here because I started

eating again. I am only here because I am ineligible

to exist otherwise. I’m only here because I left and

returned through an Atlantic wormhole. I write to you as

the American version of me. In the American version,

Orpheus’ lyre is a gun. Eurydice thinks of doctors,

or, rather a cold hand. It feels like one is sliding its sterile

nails over the curtains of her womb. Once, a healer’s hands

passed through my flesh, and I went on trial for stealing

ten fingers. When my spoon scrapes the bottom of a bowl

it sounds like a choir of siblings naming stars after their favorite

meals. Physicists are classifying new matters and energies

every day. Dark matter, Black flesh are in high demand,

and we never see a penny. I urge you. If you see a sister

walk through walls or survive the un-survivable, sip your

drink and learn to forget or love the taxed apparition before you.

Ocean Vuong

**Immigrant Haibun**

*The road which leads me to you is safe*

*even when it runs into oceans.*

*Edmond Jabès*

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Then, as if breathing, the sea swelled beneath us. If you must know anything, know that the hardest task is to live only once. That a woman on a sinking ship becomes a life raft—no matter how soft her skin. While I slept, he burned his last violin to keep my feet warm. He lay beside me and placed a word on the nape of my neck, where it melted into a bead of whiskey. Gold rust down my back. We had been sailing for months. Salt in our sentences. We had been sailing—but the edge of the world was nowhere in sight.

\*

When we left it, the city was still smoldering. Otherwise it was a perfect spring morning. White hyacinths gasped in the embassy lawn. The sky was September-blue and the pigeons went on pecking at bits of bread scattered from the bombed bakery. Broken baguettes. Crushed croissants. Gutted cars. A carousel spinning its blackened horses. He said the shadow of missiles growing larger on the sidewalk looked like god playing an air piano above us. He said *There is so much I need to tell you.*

\*

Stars. Or rather, the drains of heaven—waiting. Little holes. Little centuries opening just long enough for us to slip through. A machete on the deck left out to dry. My back turned to him. My feet in the eddies. He crouches beside me, his breath a misplaced weather. I let him cup a handful of the sea into my hair and wring it out. *The smallest pearls—and all for you.* I open my eyes. His face between my hands, wet as a cut. *If we make it to shore*, he says, *I will name our son after this water. I will learn to love a monster.* He smiles. A white hyphen where his lips should be. There are seagulls above us. There are hands fluttering between the constellations, trying to hold on.

\*

The fog lifts. And we see it. The horizon—suddenly gone. An aqua sheen leading to the hard drop. Clean and merciful—just like he wanted. Just like the fairy tales. The one where the book closes and turns to laughter in our laps. I pull the mast to full sail. He throws my name into the air. I watch the syllables crumble into pebbles across the deck.

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Furious roar. The sea splitting at the bow. He watches it open like a thief staring into his own heart: all bones and splintered wood. Waves rising on both sides. The ship encased in liquid walls. *Look!* he says, *I see it now!* He’s jumping up and down. He’s kissing the back of my “wrist as he clutches the wheel. He laughs but his eyes betray him. He laughs despite knowing he has ruined every beautiful thing just to prove beauty cannot change him. And here’s the kicker: there’s a cork where the sunset should be. It was always there. There’s a ship made from toothpicks and superglue. There’s a ship in a wine bottle on the mantel in the middle of a Christmas party—eggnog spilling from red Solo cups. But we keep sailing anyway. We keep standing at the bow. A wedding-cake couple encased in glass. The water so still now. The water like air, like hours. Everyone’s shouting or singing and he can’t tell whether the song is for him—or the burning rooms he mistook for childhood. Everyone’s dancing while a tiny man and woman are stuck inside a green bottle thinking someone is waiting at the end of their lives to say *Hey! You didn’t have to go this far. Why did you go so far?* Just as a baseball bat crashes through the world.

\*

If you must know anything, know that you were born because no one else was coming. The ship rocked as you swelled: love’s echo hardening into a boy. Sometimes I feel like an ampersand. I wake up waiting for the crush. Maybe the body is the only question an answer can’t extinguish. How many kisses have we crushed to our lips in prayer—only to pick up the pieces? If you must know, the best way to understand a man is with your teeth. Once, I swallowed the rain through a whole green thunderstorm. Hours lying on my back, my girlhood open. The field everywhere beneath me. How sweet. That rain. How something that lives only to fall can be nothing but sweet. Water whittled down to intention. Intention into nourishment. Everyone can forget us—as long as you remember.

\*

Summer in the mind.

God opens his other eye:

two moons in the lake.

Céline Cantat

**Solidarity**

Tak-tak-tak-tak-tak-tak.

Each time a pickaxe meets the rocky land, a sharp sound resonates loudly before escaping into the night. From the middle of the valley, where they are standing, you can hear it bounce off the walls of the hill and continue its increasingly muffled course, until it dies out. By then, the beaky noses of axes have again hit the soil, and new sounds take over – brotherly sounds, following the same course, respecting the same rhythm, then slowly disappearing. The valley is an echo chamber of their labour.

It strikes Samah that the lifespan of a pickaxe’s echo is a metaphor: for her life, that of her friends and comrades, for the revolution. When it began, some ten years before the first pandemic, they threw their hearts and fists into it: sharply, decidedly, they hit at the rocky façade of misery and injustice, chipping away at the structure of humiliation and rage, one blow at a time, just like the metal head of the axe opens up the soil of the valley with slow but determined repetition. And, just like the muscular arm of Jacques rotates around his shoulder to bring momentum to each stroke, their rising was moved by decades of anger and frustration; it felt inexorable, propelled into the open by the slingshot of history. Then, comrades started fading away, their shouts an increasingly distant echo, their dreams quieter and quieter.

It was when she learnt about Khaled’s death that she really panicked – the pain and sadness were so overwhelming they transformed into waves of anxiety– the words of the uprising collided, freedom, solidarity, unity… What did they all mean if Khaled could be killed, if the immortal could die, and she could not do anything? His photo appeared on social media, his sweet faced crowned with the word “martyr”; tales of his heroism were typed on Facebook; accounts of his sacrifices added to the ever-expanding cenotaph of the uprising – where deaths without corpses ran into disappearances without witnesses.

She was tempted, too, to fixate in her memory this image of her brother as a hero – how else could she reconcile the vitality of his struggle, of his laughter, with the bottomless blindness that swallowed him? But she knew that the greatness of his involvement did not reside in a superior exemplarity or in isolation: on the contrary, its immensity came from the transformative experience of comradeship, from the thousands of anonymous names that resonated in his. Khaled. When she calls him, as she still does sometimes, walking alone, down the hill, back to the fields, she speaks to all those who, like him, faced death because they believed in life – theirs and that of others. Words take their shape again: freedom, solidarity, unity.

Here, in the fields where they work at night to avoid the excruciating heat of the day, these same words unfold differently, expand in new directions. Here, just like her body rocked in rhythm with those of her comrades on the square during protests, like her hands clasped into their shoulders to form long human columns that made her feel like their hearts beat as one, her movements follow those of others as they plough the earth in concert.

In the years between the revolution and the pandemics, Samah had passed a lifejacket over her head, secured it around her waist, before embarking on a small boat. She prefers not to talk about that part. A world of water, a gulf of anonymity, the cemetery of the unknown. In the whiteness of the sun, the emptiness of the maritime horizon sometimes seemed populated by trees that resembled those of her grandparents’ house. Those carrying cherries, walnuts, and tangerines all year round, and offering freshness during the warm season. She remembers how her grandpa used their shade to screen his plantations from the heat, how he brought the sheep to graze on the pasture around their roots. Just the other day, she was describing to Jacques this meticulously designed garden, where carefully located ponds provided reservoirs to water vegetables, and where each fruit tree was given the vigilant mission to shelter its own small harvest of fresh herbs, strawberries, spinach, or lavender.

On the boat, the terrifying feeling that only a few planks of wood separated her from the endless sea made her feel like her body had become liquescent, and would itself soon turn into water and leak away, returning to the waves, soaking up the salt, and that her soul would remain there, a forgotten marinade for a meal that would never come. When they reached the coast, she and the passengers who remained ran out, water up to their chests, and as they felt their bodies emerging out of the liquid mass, they hurried to the shore, kneeled down and planted their fingers in the sand. They cried tears of salt and felt like the sea was finally leaving their bodies, one drop at a time. She promised herself that for the rest of her life she would cherish the land, caress the earth, root her hands and feet in the soil, ditch, plough, furrow.

Photo credit: Maël Galisson

These memories seem like a creation of her mind now that borders are opened. At the beginning of the first pandemic, people stayed home and governments closed borders. Perhaps they imagined that these separations – only existing because they were declared and guarded – would become real, that viruses would recognise and respect them? For a time, everything stood still. When the world started moving again, it was as if people wanted to catch up on time wasted by not destroying it: cars poured into cities, fertilisers flowed onto fields, smoke rose from factories, boats carrying oil spilled into seas, planes forcefully taking away unwanted people left airports...

It was after the third epidemic that the world got back on its feet, Samah tells people too young to remember. Deep inside, she shares their bewilderment when they ask, incredulous and, perhaps, judgmental: “but how could it go on for so long?!” She recalls the attempts at creating alternatives that failed during the pandemic years – the petty interpersonal tensions and dramatic fallouts, the divides over diverging ideological lines, the egotistic characters and exclusionary attitudes, the indifference in front of death and exploitation, which all continued as new diseases broke out, each time taking more lives away, picking among those most exposed by poverty and exhaustion. She remembers the escalation of repression and violence and the same anger pounds in her heart, the tak-tak-tak-tak of axes accelerating its tempo – there seemed to be no exit door, no way to extract herself from the chronic and deepening cycle of devastation.

The third epidemic was by far the most brutal: population plummeted and, over time, structures decayed. Shops closed, schools stopped, offices were abandoned. Food was hard to come by. When there was electricity and she could watch the news, she heard – first with disbelief and increasingly with the nonchalance of habit – about institutions being dissolved: garbage collection was interrupted first, then public transportation. Then, it was announced that there weren’t enough individuals of working age to keep armies and police forces. The news stopped. “Our priority is to ensure nutritional and medical continuity,” the authorities stated. People were placed into agricultural labour camps or mobilised to provide healthcare. In the camp, Samah heard, petrified, about farming sites nearby turning into mass graves as diseases struck labourers, leaving no one behind.

When young people eagerly ask for tales of the years before the establishment of the valley cooperative, she focuses on their climax: “Us, agricultural workers, were the first to rise. Health workers soon followed. At first, the repression was merciless: they burnt the land to starve us and choke the revolt.” “But” - (she smiles) - “there were not enough of them left; especially men, the diseases had hit them more forcefully. It was us women who led the movement. By then, surviving policemen, guards and soldiers had become laborers, they fought with us.” She doesn’t mention how, when victory was declared, she had lost any sense of its meaning, any trust they could build things anew, freed from the horrors of the previous decades.

She remembers how anxious they were, fearful of any collective formation that could again turn into endless dispossession. She simply glosses over this period, referring to it as “the autonomy years”. People attempted to live outside larger social structures: alone or in small groups, in abandoned farms and homes, producing their own food and energy.

During those years, she decided to return. Jacques went with her. She saw the square again, visited her grandparents’ house. Following her grandpa’s farming techniques, they slowly brought life back to the parched land. There, she planted a tree in memory of Khaled.

Rebuilding social ties was the hardest part. When they established the valley cooperative and started welcoming laborers who wished to join, the solidarity and education committee firmly inscribed into its programs the apocalyptic story of the previous world. “We need to remain careful; history can always repeat itself.” The youth listens enchantedly. She pleas, “The only guarantee we have is our vigilance and dedication.”

Unlike them, she knows that behind any story lie myriad smaller, untold tales, and that those are the ones we remember at night, when sleep refuses to come. Unlike them, she knows that each tree in the valley has been planted in the memory of a lost one, and that the shade sheltering them belongs to Khaled.