

Poetry

Eeva-Liisa Manner

**From: *Runoja 1956-1977*
(Helsinki: Eurographica,
1980)**

Translated by Seija Paddon

When shore and reflection are perfectly
one
the marriage of heaven and water calm
and whole

when mirror-image is deep and clear
and beasts wander, and clouds and dark
woods
hum in the deep without a wind,

only a bird's wing needs to touch the
surface to break the spell:
light and water's enchanted confession
to the world
thin as silk, but forming a bond.

And the world fresh and beautiful as if
after rain
or creation,
or a change of mind, or a long illness
is the one, pregnant, limb by limb alone.

**From: *The Distance
Between One and None
is Infinite***

He stood with his back to me
and I didn't recognize him
until he turned slowly
the light cutting him in half.
He shook ashes off his suit
while becoming ash himself
until he vanished, the image of smoke,
the way shadows of those on a bridge
in Hiroshima melted into light.

How I loathed decorative art
when I saw the handsome arrows
drawn.
They were rusty, of course — from the
fifteenth century —

or was it rust, what if it were blood,
blood filling in the tracks of fleeing
hooves
as if the earth itself were wounded?
I saw an arrow fired and a throat
coloured
a horse pranced and trembled with wet
flanks,
another hit by an arrow, legs paralyzed,
a prince in his iron shell fell from the
saddle
and ran, if you can call it running,
probably he too would have given a
kingdom
for a horse
and he did.

Finn Jacobsen

*Translated by
Cynthia Norris Grae*

Divorce 3

It is not easy
to be alone
other people
have impatient
waiting-room eyes.
The floor pulls
the steps out from
under you.
You hang on by
your arms from
hour to hour.
Not a hundred
word
vocabulary
came along when
the house was divided.

The yearning for
something unpleasant
the absence of
strong smells:
Stale smoke
in the curtains.
The bed is
too wide now.
Your girlfriends leave
at potato-cooking time.
Freedom
comes
with the next train
an unknown
traveler
who is not
fond of children.
The dog is
agitated
sniffs at
the wrong trouser legs
will soon
be in heat.
You read
books
watch television
understand
nothing

are suddenly
very happy
in the morning
and disconsolate
by evening.

It is a phase
your girlfriends say
something you have to
go through.
Weightless as an
astronaut
you hover around
in empty rooms
and wait
for freedom
to do
what you
no longer
desire.

Divorce 4

Married men
fill
the whole world
block
the horizon

arrange
make
decisions
are everywhere
never phone
on Sundays.

In the evening
they come
slinking in
with a bottle
of cheap sherry.
You let
them in by the horde
and try to
differentiate them
from each other.

They are thick
or thin
vertical
or horizontal.
They ooze
tenderness
and good advice
for hastily put-on
openness.

With a pleased

possessive look
they fry eggs
afterwards
gorge
pull the chain
repair
the television
tell
amusing incidents
about their children
pull out the wife
from their wallets.
You straighten up after the last one
empty ashtrays
smooth the hollow
in the pillow
go to bed
are alone
no longer make an effort
and begin over again
in the morning
in the hope
that one of them
one day will become
clearly defined
and unlike the others
and will telephone
one Sunday.