

IRENE MARQUES

Three Poems

The evening country

She inhabited a country always on evening

There were always lunar and solar eclipses
and no matter how much she prayed to the gods
to get a handle on the deeds of men,
the gods stayed immobile and would or could do nothing,
and so, the men continued the ravaging of the country
and it was always, always night

She took so much in, and nothing ever came out,
except the prayers to the gods that never brought any solace,
any change to the stoned hearts of men

And then, one day, she could take no more
and flew with the birds, attached to their tiny tails
ends of beings that can transport you very far away,
set that they are on knowing more that their present condition

The men raged even more and said,
“What now, what will be of us now that she is gone?
No one to call us out and call the gods in,
we are forever doomed,
forever in evening country, our will has no return.”

Let this be a parable for the brute,
a low voice sung from above
in the voice of a willing tenor

She moves

She moves between light like a dancer in the dark,
a character of many talents who can only revel
in the pleasure of others

She leaves traces of her body everywhere she goes
and she goes to many places, constantly somersaulting between here and now,
between her desires and our needs
—a character of many talents that never finds solace in the suffering of others,
only their satiated laughter can cause her to rest

In the kitchen, she creates marvelous and clean meals
that steam our insides melting us into love
our bodies and souls growing to extreme conditions
(unless we are ungrateful and have been unmindful to her dancing light)

In the bedroom, she feeds my brothers and sisters and myself,
her chest against our sorry, sorrowful mouths
and we take and take from her

In the night, when we dream a bad dream,
she comes walking between light, picking us up from the terror we were in
and taking us with her to the bottom of a sparkling, clear, clean river,
where cicadas sing and butterflies are blue with rings on their noses

She moves between light, savvy and dexterous that she is,
or only because that is what is needed,
and she is called to do her best

Gods are those who do on earth
where everything dies
and everything hurts

My Self

My Self is not a mute stone:
it arcs toward the language that the other speaks
that sweet tongue that will extend my bones
and its marrow making me everlasting.

The satiated lioness of the prairies
at the altar of everything.
A flying bird,
transparent, transposing, transposed.

Irene Marques is a bilingual writer (writing in English and Portuguese) and Lecturer at Toronto Metropolitan University in the Department of English, where she teaches literature and creative writing. She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature, Masters in French Literature and Comparative Literature and a BA (Hon.) in French Language and Literature from the University of Toronto, as well as a Bachelor of Social Work from Toronto Metropolitan University. Her creative writing publications include the poetry collections Wearing Glasses of Water (Mawenzi House, 2007), The Perfect Unravelling of the Spirit (Mawenzi House, 2012), and The Circular Incantation: An Exercise in Loss and Findings (Guernica Editions, 2013), and the novels My House is a Mansion (Leaping Lion Books, 2015), Uma Casa no Mundo (Imprensa Nacional, 2021), and Daria (Inanna Publications, 2021). Uma casa no mundo won the Imprensa Nacional/Ferreira de Castro Prize (Portugal). Her academic publications include the manuscript Transnational Discourses on Class, Gender and Cultural Identity (Purdue University Press, 2011) and numerous articles in international journals or scholarly collectives. <http://www.irenemarques.net/>