

## Street Beggar

Translated by Beni Gothajner and Andrew Firestone (2014)

Strands of hair inscribe his face  
As if with a brotherhood's secret code.  
Tears drip from his eyes, a constant rain.  
Year upon year has racked his body  
with vibrating teeth of jagged saws ...

In dark recesses of his ravaged face  
hang blood clots, congealed and hard,  
dark red, like withered dried-out cherries.

His filthy unkempt beard ranges wide  
over the still contours of his chest  
as if seeking a home for its old age...  
but his rough chest is grey as dried clay.  
It verges on ice, for frozen within  
sleep streams of his experiences ...

Light rays shine through his rags onto the streets  
a beggar's body tears strips off itself,  
throws strips of flesh into the day.

The day is ashamed, it hides, then flees  
behind high-peaked mountains seven times seven.  
The city is left alone in the dark,  
shadows in its heart, and awaits the first star.

Meanwhile the sky wires the houses and squares.  
It is fire and then blood; and finally grey tears.  
Darkness has silently unscrewed the heavens,  
they are ready to fall... but then in good time  
they grab tightly onto the fearful heads  
of rising spires... so that their blue bodies  
stay propped on the stone points...

just as here on the street the beggar has clamped  
high crutches under his arms, and props  
his wasted body so heavy...

The beggar feels:  
how the night grows like a dark field far away,  
beside which appears a lady, with a laughing boy  
who plays and frolics and jumps through a hoop.  
But arrived at the corner, the lamp casts its large yellow teardrop  
on a hat like a sieve, and a bushy face.

The boy's hoop freezes. He gapes: and sees  
one eye is cut and dripping  
the other, wide open with anger, burns  
and like open graves, a pair of begging hands.

The lady steps on lightly, wrapped in joy  
with shining eyes and songs from the town.  
But the child tugs at her dress and whispers  
"Mummy, the man there... that old one is he God?"

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