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Triumph of imagination

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We come from a land of misfortune
where literature, art and music are not needed
Apart from woeful folk poetry, now and then a verse like an anemic
decoration for national tyrants
So our poems do not have the expected charm
nor attractiveness, nor spleen. Not even the sound of melancholy
from the rain drumming on the roof
We have no roof

Our verses are not decadent
Their windows don't reflect big-city lights
Only tears, only lymph and blood in a broken windowpane
They tell of survival, of raw forms scattered in the mud
with a bit of absurdity. A happy life in divided cities
a space of metaphor like a space of the grave
Ius gladii, the whip of hunger, the scourge of revenge that hisses
over open graves.

Our literature lacks the principle of play, the Epicureanism of spirit
instead of a pirouette of eros, a cramp suspensis animis
Critics most often treat it as a psychological syndrome
Editors always place it in separate rubrics
in quarantine editions
The lack of joy is caused by the excess of truth
Baroque sentences give way to ellipses of howls
that flow into one point, into silence

But we have reached the triumph of the imagination
Speaking of reality we achieve wonderful, nearly incredible effects
In our case the signifier and the signified merge
Hell for us is not a symbol but an obliterating experience
Weltschmerz is a state of bleeding lips
Fire for us is not a flaming up of the spirit but a Heraclitean element
that has swallowed the world

Above the craters of temples we have revolutionized poetic forms
discovered the only essential rhythm, the rhythm of earth that one digs up and fills in
These poems are written for our dead
It is they who understand us the best

Translated by E. Wayles Browne

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