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Accordion Road

Tin Ujević

After Tin Ujević's *Fisharmonika*

No notebooks map my soul. Accordion
Strains and fingering capture the terrain.
In country lanes membranous bats drop
Like cataracts. All dream? Does dreaming stop?
Earth sprouts a wig. That moon's a myth
From yellowed picture-postcards I'm besotted with.
We went by road, the long route, just to find—
Too late—it looped to all we'd left behind.
The moon's foreboding light dogs us all day.
Limes shed their scent, horse-chestnuts bloom whitely.
With us it's visceral to wander.
Dark sends the pygmy owl, its harbinger.
Squalls, like chthonic dread, ruffle our nights;
Black fedoras crowd the air like kites.
The woods might wall us up, like giant arboreal
Cells, till twiglets bristle from our skulls.
Is this my cadence or do rose skies play?
The hub of peace is a roadside café.

We have dwelled behind true being's disguise.
Raw pollen rusts the thatch over our eyes.
Tonight we wake up as the bell-tower clangs
Day shut: a mute band soon to wet our tongues.
Again unquenchable legs support our thirst
To gain hope's ground, enlightenment's gemischt.
Ablaze, ablaze, roosting birdlife seems
To skraik when through dusk edgeland that dreams
Grey dawn spotlights' incandescence streams.
When those shafts, smoke-laden, rake our song
Grove-dormant fountains awaken, and long-
Toppled springs and stony river-beds
Down which stray echoes sough to shreds.
Listen, the earth is speaking, woods weep when

A roadside tavern greets the music men.
But now the accordion’s crepuscular voice
Quells conversation with another noise.

Yet someone’s missing as the song lulls on.
Wan stares are swopped. We’re each the missing one.

Translated by Peter Loney
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