



Burning Braille

[excerpt]

by Katerina Iliopoulou

In what language can we make poetry today? How do we engender a poetic discourse that is alive, with edge and attuned to the present, the inner existential present as well as the historic and social one? How does that discourse not merely attune itself, but initiate a dialogue? *Drapetomania*, Iana Boukova's new book, answers these questions in its own artistic way, having assimilated in a thoroughly idiosyncratic manner both poignant lyricism and intensive image-making, which comprise her poetic ancestry, as well as the contemporary trend towards documentation poetry. The outcome is a one-of-a-kind book, a poetry of thinking which produces in the form of well-crafted poems the language it needs in order to reflect.

The nexus of linguistic tropes which succeed one another in the book create its unique idiom. The pared down exposition of events, carefully selected so that they constitute linguistic and mental events on their own right, often along the dimension of a poetic revelation, is interwoven with a philosophical, poetic thought assuming the guise of a riddle, or a sequence of dense aphorisms. Although it avails itself of an array of terms and disparate stories from a variety of sources, there is no 'found text' as such in the book, insofar as the poet successfully uses all the different 'languages' she employs, to mould her own. We are simultaneously the spider web and the spider, Boukova's poetic work seems to indicate, with its continuous engendering of connections. It transforms the self-evident, adds itself to the mystery without solving it, aware that it is a part of it, and expounds its unrelenting logic, stretching it to the point of absurdity. Every such move of her poetic baton does not lead to redemption or to a solution, but, rather, to emptiness. *The sky – Kepler discovered, / is no dome; it is a siege /His*

union of perfect Platonic solids/ collapsed./ It came to be proven mathematically / that every orbit has two centres / and one of them is emptiness. Perhaps emptiness constitutes the book's pivotal issue, its geometry, as it focuses on the void, whether of logic or morality, a poetry sniffing out the gaps in logic, thought, history, yet not defeated by this. On the contrary, it takes up residence there, as the space of an endless quest for meaning, against the discontent of civilization and the hopelessness of comprehending reality.

At the same time, this is a deeply political book which methodically revisits, with a scientist's soberness and a poet's inventive imagination, with both irony and directness, human cruelty, hypocrisy and the disguised totalitarianism of idealist intentions. Although it frequently leans towards horror, it is saved by the humour and beauty of the poetic utterance.

The Phantom-woman orchestrating the book is the invisibly present witness-poet, the one who has been turned into a ghost across the entire spectrum of the totalitarianism of merchandise, disguised as a cartoon-like superhero, showcasing the incredible transforming powers of poetry. Because the poetry at hand is not one of defeat but, rather, a battle-ready poetry, the poetry of the present coming-to-be, which makes the point: we're perfectly able to use your own weapons!

By means of a reverse 'anti-poetical' move, Iana Boukova adopts a firm stance against intoxication, demystifying, overturning, shaking up a series of theoretical, political, aesthetic and social stereotypes and run-of-the-mill ideologies, to create a book that is intoxicated by the soberness of a detective-artist intent on demystification in order to reveal the creaking mechanism of the global circus, the acrobat's wedged knickers, the clown's scary face. In this, she is simultaneously the magician and the magician's assistant, the one who orchestrates and enacts and the one who is acted on, as it is clear that all the things she coolly lays out for us she has undergone herself and that this wandering, this quest and transformation, have traversed a living body, and are now traversing your own.

This poetry does not stop short of being fearful, and alarming us, exposing folly and cruelty, the impasses of reason, the absurdity and laughableness of our world, the inaccessibility of the real. Only at the very end, after consuming one by one the magic mushrooms of her poetry without becoming any the wiser, have we been drawn along with her to the other side. There, where the despair of ever

comprehending reality leads to new signification (σημασιοδότηση) and the reconnaissance of the mechanisms of hate becomes a reconnaissance of love, because, indeed, much love is needed for someone to write these poems, to expend the incredible effort necessary for the uplift, i.e. the surveying from a different point.

/Incidentally, let me point out/

that we as well are endowed with a bird's-eye view.

During the first one or two meters

of struggle against gravity.

The seconds during which

an airplane howls the most.

It's not easy.

Poetry always neglects to mention this fact.

Translation into English: Konstantinos Matsoukas

Katerina Iliopoulou is a poet and the editor-in-chef of poetry magazine "FRMK"