Echoes from the Pages of History

Josef Lesser

If you listen surrounded by stillness
you can hear the black rose growing
the stretch of stem flow of life’s liquid.
You can hear the grass murmuring before blades
rotating full throttle produce the perfect lawn
even the song of the dead wren floats in silence
where voices in the crossword subways of history
survive way past their use by date,
voices orchestrated by foreign tongues with funny sounding names,
malka moshe dorka chaim shloime, laughing crying cajoling talking loud soft
whispering sad songs, tosia to efroim ‘icyk’ to zofia fruma to ‘zyg’
leszek whistles to malka silent as waves collapsing on clouds passing over
the crib at belzec treblinka auschwitz at kulmhof lublin and sobibor.

Inside the subway of history
echoes ride over the crib of pompeii
over the killing fields over my lai and kosovo
wounded knee and darfur, listen to voices
with suspicious sounding names, sitting bull
big foot ng ngo and nguyen abdel tuyen suong
funny names, dodo is a funny name for a bird
extinct, but you can hear the grass murmur
amina rusonga rugova attilius corelia ampliatus.
Listen tosia hums a sad tune to efroim, a strange sound
like sharks behind glass with eyes the exit of release,
mouths opening and closing.

Of Why of Why
(holocaust violins
always cry)

pearl
Mother of pearl
ivory and bone
bone of my Mother

bronze
silver and gold
handle of steel
of rust of tears
of why of why
blade of rust
stalagmite of sighs
blade of stone
of bone
bone of my Mother
my Mother of pearl
drowning in rust
razor of gold
rummage for ruby
silver in bones
of good-by of good-by
of why of why

scream rising high in the beak
of the hawk ----- then the still
then the cry of violins chiselled
for tone slice through the hair
through the middle of pearl
of bone
of silver and gold
dying in rust
eyes final wave
through windows of wire

stalagmites sigh
of good-by of good-by
blind ovens run dry
    as deaf violins cry

Of why of why?
Of why of why?

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