



Jaan Kaplinski

Ice and Heather: notes of a migrant

singularly alone in the night when she spreads open her legs, one no more
without beginning and end than the other, like two world wars – transcribed
between them those twenty–one years of him
when *he entered her*, the interwar
period, cutting the precise measure of her gait, the line of the thigh, the *bird in
space* of air in the emptiness between the legs, as, with a German *das ewig
weibliche*, his French
pronunciation
gets polished (*chercher la femme*) – a comparison which will be of
inspiration to him owing to the birthmark
in the form of a tank along the flesh inside her thigh, its barrel
pointed straight up, aiming at her sex (a story of gesture: a hand applied to the
belly of the young maths teacher exactly at lesson time when, dividing it in
two, a column of Soviet tanks had entered the village, so as to safeguard her
pregnancy
the foetus in the maternal turret twitching
for the first time at her touch,
she who, at the blackboard, a stick of chalk between her fingers – herself as if
coated with lime – explains: "two parallel lines
never intersec...")
in her maidenhood, the girl curses *Damn my mama's birth* prays
O Lord,
Mother of God. she lets her name be Tanka even though it's Mary.
in the name of The Holy Virgin, she wears the two
wars – the left with the varicose vein! – through the very heart of town,
graceful and indifferent to time's passing – zebra crossing of white days and
black – under the oblique fire of men's glances –
my mama always said, "from cat
and man you must separate yourself upon your entrance, otherwise
you can't escape either" – as if crossing
a minefield without a map, closed within her own shell – tank–
woman from birth – like a goddess robed in armour. iron–
clad by her mama's birth! carelessly as if her mother had never
been pregnant with her nor the Virgin Mary with the One born but not
conceived (a story of
love: how the emptiness
between his legs took as wife her emptiness, mistress of all, in the
sense that *like attracts like*)
history proceeds with a woman's gait; in '89, on the 7th of November
during
the military parade, is bedded beneath the tanks beside the hundred
others taken in the carriage
of Officer Ulysses spending himself according to his (how many?) horsepower

up to his epaulettes: "This man treads lightly, not f...!" ; is raised upright in '91
at the same time as the state, a golem
inscribed traced with
a finger in the dust, fitted solely for the name "worm"; so as not to see the
mark of the beast? the warts? on legs, black earth clinging to
boots drawn up
over the eyes (*Requiescat in pace!*) and on the roads in recent years;
is in-gathered
with knees drawn up to the mouth, as if rocking a pair of twins just
torn away from her nipples. in her power: conception. only writing has been
granted for his
handiwork.
and then, after he enters under her skin, it comes about that, in the tank along
the inside of her thigh, the engines start, the pistons thrust,
he shoots,
aiming at her sex
(the poem of the immaculate conception tears itself
from the lips: "open me!")

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