

Tightrope

Translated by Nigel Spencer

A day after the Christmas celebration, I was still feeling the effects of all this shared joy. On the way back to Montreal, I also travelled back to my childhood.

Between lines of her exercise book,
a strange acrobat walks the tightrope
an aged child
suspended on the thread of wrinkled young dreams

In her carnival world
deep inside
her ferrous thread leads to fairy worlds,
real and fantastic, bursting in firework colours
beneath her eyes
beneath her feet
cautiously placed, first one, then the next,
so as not to fall

her busy hands juggling
sounds and words and impressions,
leaves and flakes,
music and illusions,
out-manoeuving the seasons to draw eternity
in sweet delirium of feelings
haunted by indescribable beauty

Her pencil a cane to lean on in old age . . .
youth's walking stick too,
her hand plunges into the sky
to scribble fresh stories
amid the stars
and lighten her nights of torment

Her eyes alight,
fixed on the here and the elsewhere
and her voice bursts
into a roar of laughter

She knows where she's headed
She's known since she was five,

walking along the second-floor handrail
reaching for her other self, sweet craziness
in this unplumbed risk
this dangerous balance
and necessary control
to keep from tumbling into childhood death

Drawn by mysteries
at any time she could catapult
and fall to the underside of the world,
the flipside of everything
where the invisible is born,
the other side of heaven
far behind the clouds
heavy as eyelids
that enclose her characters in troubled sleep,
characters walled up between parentheses in her words
or crossed out as she goes along
or shredded in a thousand bits of paper
falling in a snow of silence
on her life
to submit her to winter and cold

Then one day
perhaps after hearing
her many appeals,
those who breathe behind the clouds
set her characters free,
and they started to dance
in the clearing of her life,
for it was their turn to juggle
with the meaning of her days

She knew who they were by their exaltation

For so long
they held the fictive wire for her to creep along
a thread of dreamweaving
a ferrous thread of fairy worlds
a febrile thread
like a tightrope walker's
a feverish thread
like a sleepwalker's filament of sound
thin and tenuous as a lifeline
in the hands of a gypsy enthralled
by the unforeseeable circus of existence