

HELEN
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KAKO
KONSTRUIRATI
VJEŠTICU

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Zagreb, 2023.

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KAO
KONSTRUKCIJA
VJEŠTINA

S engleskoga preveo Goran Čolakhodžić

Buđenje

Postala sam jedna od onih žena koje se vozaju uokolo na kolima od šiblja i iskapa žene pokopane na raskrižjima ili posađene u šumama. Jedna od onih žena koja rekonstruira tijela, ligament nadomješta žicom. Od onih koje svoju krv miješaju sa zemljom ne bi li njima živo nabubrile kosti. Od onih žena koje se provode s vragom pri nestašnoj svjetlosti dana—zašto bismo bile okultne? Pridižem tê ponovno zažarene žene, pa se vrtimo, tulimo, od hvastanja nam pucaju prljava usta.

Neke definicije *vještice*

Krpena strvina
štakorski zadah pokvarenog mlijeka.
Sablažnjiva prosjakinja,
trinaesto prase.

*

Skupljačica trava
posvetiteljica kompasa.
Jahačica živica, lukava
mjeriteljica vatre.

*

Primalja sjenā
pritajena lija krvavih ralja.
Donositeljica tišine
u kokošinjac.

*

Lakša od Biblije,
popovska tinta sila je téža
pod hitrim joj stopama.
Tijelo joj piše u nebesa.

*

Stopljena sa zemljom
nosi plašt od mahovine.
Neki kupuju njezine ljekarije.
Žrtveni jarac za svačiju nesreću.

*

Utvara bez djece
u dječjoj slikovnici.
Najgora majka
koju je muško smislilo.

*

Kako obuzdati
rogate žene.
Dva galona crnog papra
u bljutave brbljarije.

*

Sljedbenica zaboravljenih načina;
obreda, izricateljica čarolija.
Bosonoga slušačica zemlje,
starija od Boga i televizije.

Postajanje

Bilo je duhova u vatri
uokolo sjene,
stoka je ošepavila, groznica
i ta vječita zima
koja nas je umalo dokrajčila sve.

To smo tlo
uresili lutkom od mesa i kostiju
naslagali ukrug sirovo drvo –
zato je gorjelo sporo
i svi smo ogrijali ruke.

Krici nisu bili važni
jer nije bila čovjek
jedva da je bila *ona*;
jalovo ništa, utvara
koju na okupu drži pakost.

Margaret Johnson

Suđenja vješticama iz Pendlea, 1633.

Dani su bili bez mjeseca, tmurni
a ja sam bila vreća kostiju
u svojoj udovičkoj kući.

Sedam godina išlo je tako—
što turobna, što napaćena
u potpunom zaboravu na sunce.

Onda je došao, sav u svili, glatkom krznu—
a tek obećanja!
Kao da je zbilja čuo moje molitve.

Bockao mi je meso
srkao mi sporu krv dok nisam živnula
i osjetila kako mi se duh odlijeva u njega.

Premda sad žalim tu razmjenu
nikakva prestiža nisam imala dok se nije
vražja sjena ugnijezdila kraj mojeg ognjišta.

Otkako me zapala ta nevolja, on me napustio.
Ne mogu svoj duh odaslati van
da osveti one koje valja mučiti.

Pa ipak me povijest odbacuje kao *nije vještica*—
ako *nisam* bila vještica,
kako sam primila krila noći? Kako sam letjela?

Lilias Adie (oko 1640.–1704.)

Vještica koja se seksala s Vragom (Daily Mirror, 2017.)

I opet klikbejt smišljen da pobudi groznicu –
mada klikom stižeš do lica iz susjedstva
stvorenog forenzikom.

Imala je metar osamdeset, kažu njene kosti
pokopane između plime i oseke, kao u samoubojice,
poklopljene kamenom da ih ne bi oživjeli.

Takva zloća traži duplo pogubljenje —
tko zna neće li je đavo probuditi
da stado opet zagadi bolešću?

Sada je podcast, a Liliasino priznanje, čujemo,
kopija je ispovijesti neke druge seljanke,
pedesetak godina starije:

*Đavo mi je stavio jednu ruku na tjeme
drugu na tabane
i sve što je između proglasio svojim.*

Saznajete onda da su joj izgubili lubanju
prije sto godina, pa je prikaz njezina lica
izveden iz fotografija.

A kosti su joj skupljali kao drangulije —
čak je i drvo njezina lijesa izloženo u muzeju
izrezbareno u štap za šetnju nakinđuren srebrom.

Elizabeth Tibbots

Stoneleigh, 1672.

Prođe vrijeme, prođu ljudi;
imena im i veličanstvo
sve piljevina pometena
s kamenih ploča.

A ti me zazoveš
i, tri stoljeća mrtva,
uspravno stojim
u tvojoj sobi.

Mogla bi zamisliti
da sam te godine prehodala
u liku psa
u potrazi za publikom.

Baš bi rado
vidjela kako povraćam
džepni pištolj,
par kliješta —

htjet ćeš mi tražiti
po vratu tragove nasilja
po mesu rane od kandži.
Tu sam; iskoristimo to što bolje.

Jedna takva priča

Nakon duge noći hoda
sjena naiđe na kamenit brijeg
i lijepo se smjesti
među brdske ovce.

Znala je da nije ovca,
ali ovce nisu mahnitale –
nijedna nije podigla glavu
iz slatke, visoke trave.

U srcu je čeznula primiti ime
biti pozvana, znati na čemu je,
pa kad se pojavio pastir,
sjena se nakašlja.

Što sam ja? Ustrajala je glasom
blagim, mislila je, kao lokvica u stijeni.
O, ali pastir je bio zelena duha
i dao je petama vjetra, vičući pošast

pa otad oprčavao selo
pričajući o vili bez zvijezda
koja mu je krv pretvorila u zimu
i muškost mu zasjekla kandžama.

Mi smo čudaci, gospon

NANCY DOWNS iz *Opasnih čini*, 1996.

Puno nebo kiše gura se unutra
kroz smrvljene crijepove,
zmije ispužu u svim svojim obličjima,
a djevojke same
na svaki su način goloruke
u tim napuklim, sirotim kožama.

Nemojmo o tome kako sve završava,
radije o nužnosti sijela;
navlačenju oklopa od crnog baršuna
ispijanju sestrinske krvi,
eliksira u čaši vina zvanog *Ariel*,
anđeo zemlje, vatre, vode, zraka.

Svaka upaljena svijeća dašak svjetla u katranu
o, pomama pojanja:

now is the time, now is the hour

ours is the magic, ours is the power,

i dvadeset sedam godina poslije

anonimno, na zidu YouTubea:

Ne bih ovo znala bez svojih sestara.

Proricanje

Stavimo vranu u ovu kutiju. Stjerajmo gluha noć u kutove ovog kaveza i počujmo što ima reći. Graktanjem, grgljanjem, svojim ljeskavim sumorom. Lošim vremenom i kljunom punim krvi. Kakav će zaborav ovdje zavesti? Kakvu će Srdžbu donijeti? Sada se privuci blizu. Meko fokusiraj svoje zrenje na crno zrcalo njezina oka.

Menstruozna žena

... dobro je poznato da će pčele napustiti košnice
ako ih dotakne menstruozna žena;
PLINIJE STARIJI, *Prirodoslovlje*

Nije nikad elegantno govoriti o krvi.
Žensko tijelo, prevareno, izvan stroja,
prihvaća da je smjerna crna boja
ono što se nosi da se skrije purpur na rublju,
dok se menstrualni tok izljujeva iz nje,
a nered je prevelik za kupovne krpe.

Nije svaka dovoljno hrabra
da umjetnički shvati svoj menzes;
da krvlju iz utrobe riše po bijeljenoj pamučnoj ploči.
Neke prokrče cik-cak prolaz kroz tu kletvu
svim eufemizmima
koje im donosi crvena tetka.

One su nepouzdana; rano idu s posla —
recimo, dvadeset godina prerano.
One postaju *ženama svojih godina*.
Kome treba gadna neugodnost
ostarjelih ženskih tijela na javnom mjestu?
Tko zbilja želi biti zakinut za sav onaj med?

Promjena

Sjediš u sebi samoj,
a tvoje tijelo radi svoj posao.
Jedne je minute slatki vrčić estrogena,
sljedeće je glava s kojom si odrasla
talionik — a riječi *valunzi* i *hemunzi*
ni izbliza ne pogađaju tu potrebu
da pobjegneš što dalje od tog tijela.

Odjeća u tvom ormaru
šapuće *koka se prodaje pod piletinu*
iz nekog izvora zakopanog duboko u jeziku.
Mažeš *Lady Danger* na kokošji kljun,
a odasvud savjeti kako da sakriješ ruke —
ne daj bože da se razmećeš
time što te kolagen napušta.

Svake noći tvoji hormoni priređuju tulum
na kojem ne želiš biti,
brkaju levele kao loš DJ.
Čitaš da na tinitus utječe hopsanje estrogena;
da to još nije dovoljno istraženo.
Koža ti je gumena lutka nabrekla od lave
zalutala u hladnjaču u 4 ujutro.

Kuc-kuc

Cijeli si je život čekala da ti oštro zakuca na vrata. *Otvori mi otvori*, gura se ona u nježnu tkaninu skloništa koje si satkala golim rukama.

Zar se ne sjećaš kako su te upozoravali na šumu? Šume su mračno mjesto gdje ćeš susresti svoje mračno ja i druge užasne stvari. Zašto si pošla, zašto si onamo odnijela svoje ljupko svjetlo? Zašto si nosila onu sirotinju od bapskog ogrtača, kad si mogla biti lakonoga u jarkožutoj haljini?

A sad ti je u kupki, koža joj nalik na skute visi s kostiju. I sad skida vjenčani prsten, sočno pljune da ti ga lakše natakne na prst.

Samo su zle vještice ružne

Glinda, Dobra vještica Juga, *Čarobnjak iz Oza* (1939.)

Slijećeš li s neba u rumenu balončiću
u haljini tkanoj od zvjezdanog glamura
ili te izbljuje zemlja sa zadahom crvenog dima?

Jesi li prije breskvica sa šlagom ili žaba usred močvare;
napušena opijata u kolijevci od maka
ili probuđena bukom u navali mećave?

Jesi li dobrija od dobrog u košari dobara
dok raspuštaš zlo svojim milim bijelim štapićem
ili ti je skandalozno tijelo korijen tvoje moći?

Jesi li dobra ili zla vještica?

Odgovor

Čudo je što nitko nije primijetio kad su ženu prerezali popola. Ne poprijeko, kao u svakodnevnim kabaretskim skečevima, nego uzduž, skroz. Savršen rascjep. Zbog dima i ogledala koji su ostali iza opsjenara, ona je, obje, izgledala kao da odlaze na dvjema nogama na dva različita odredišta.

Jedna je otišla kući k obitelji i dobro izribala ognjište. Druga se odšuljala duboko u šumu, gdje joj se odmah pridružila mačka zlokobna urlika.

Kad joj je pastorčad stigla svadljiva, debelo kasneći na večeru, trapajući prljavim papcima posvuda po kući, poslala ih je van u šumu. Neka se ona ondje pozabavi njima, pomislila je. Stala je pred ogledalo, cereći se iskrivljeno kao što to dobra žena zna.

Duh oluje

Frederick Sandys, studija za drvorez, 1860.

Dode trenutak u životu svake žene
kad se prometne u Duh oluje.
Zašto ne bi pustila da ti umjesto kose izrastu zmijske
zazvala kišu i munje umješnim rukama?

Zaradila si tu srdžbu, nemoj je sad potratiti
na zbrzane kućanske poslove i svakakve jalove zadatke
u praznini svoje dnevne sobe —
izađi i pronajdi dostojnu publiku.

Godinama već objavljuju to mišljenje
pa ih uopće ne bi trebalo iznenaditi
kada ti otrov šikne iz grudi.
I gle! Ti si vrhovna, najrazvratnija od svih loših majki!

Slikaru

Kako se, molim te, tvoje ljepilo od kravlje kože
razlikuje od čaranja?

Uzimaš kože i tetive, papke
kuhaš ih u tom oljuštenom kotlu.

I taj zadah, dovoljan da prizove zvijeri
miljama udaljene, sve slinavih ralja—
više lovine za tvoj lonac!

Mašta ti pravi društvo
dok ti je krevet pust;
besposlene ruke posežu za kistom—
ah, kakvi prikazi ponoći!
Progoni te pût, zar ne?
Pitam se čisti li ovaj egzorcizam têk
ili ga baš pobuđuje?

Slikaj me sad kako jašem na metli
zgrčeno mi lice obuzeto letom.
Ovisno o dobu mog života
ja sam ti djeva dobra za grijeh
ili propala babuskara ovješениh grudi,
dok ste Vi, gospodine, rigidno fiksni;
najglasniji glas, a potrošen sav.

Dar

Bila jednom usamljena žena koja je svoje srce zamijenila jabukom. Uzela je oštar nož i urezala svoje ime i imena duhova: *Cosmer*, *Synady*, *Heupide* u svježe ulaštenu pokožicu. Stala je nasred mosta dok je oko nje vjetar na hrpe nosio jarko umiruće lišće. Pažljivo je držala jabuku na dlanu, ali nitko nije došao po njezinu ljubav. A Zemlja je napredovala kroz godišnja doba, i svejedno nitko nije dolazio. To se nastavilo dok jabuka nije počela nalikovati na nešto vražje, kažu, a žena se pretvorila u prah.

Onda se jednog dana iz jabuke začuo tih pandemonij i mještani su se sklanjali jedan iza drugog, previše ustrašeni da bi prišli. Iz mnoštva je iskoračio muškarac, držeći se kao sudac. Odlučio je da je jabuka doista prepuna zloduha i šutnuo je u rijeku svojom visokom čizmom.

Čari za otpornost

Čarolija za ponovno osvajanje noći

Kao lisica, onda. Hrđavu oštricu
u pivski trbuh mraka;
tako to ide.

Sjedni za radnu klupu
ispucaj mjehuriće dušika u člancima,
pokupi svoja vlakna i igle.

Učini to sad, dok sunce prelazi cestu
sve s rukama u džepovima;
sve vraški bezbrižno.

Bodlje tvoje igle za filcanje
zabodene u vlakna
skvrčit će ih u njih same.

Kad dovršiš tu kožu
i čvrsto se uviješ u nju
tada ćeš poći na ples.

***Čarolija za otključavanje željezne uzde*¹**

stoljeća obuzdavanog govora
čvrsto zatvorena u muzejskoj vitrini

prignite se i poslušajte ih sestre naše
razbijte staklo

pretvorite uzdu u kavez na litici
hrđav od nevremena

slana voda neka žvače željezo
polu stoljeća
dok im se ne razvežu jezici

odmah im obznanite imena!
urežite ih u prolaznu kožu
običnim čavlom

1 *Scold's bridle* (ili *witch's bridle*), sprava za mučenje i kažnjavanje žena u Škotskoj i Engleskoj u 16. i 17. st., željezna maska sa šiljkom koji ulazi u usta i nanošenjem boli sprečava pokretanje jezika i govor.

Čarolija prizivanja: Tijelo

Prizovi opet krv u krv.
Prizovi opet spektakl mesa.
Pričvrsti svoju glavu žicom,
drži je kao kristalnu kuglu
umješnim rukama.

Vidjet ćeš sad, jasno kao što jasno
pali kiselina, lotosova stopala²,
šopane i izgladnjele.
Lice ti pluta tik ispod
površine stakla.

Primalja budi vlastitom tijelu na povratku
kući iz jazbine svakog otrcanog plejboja,
pa operi zrak dimom svete kadulje.
Prizovi opet spektakl mesa.
Prizovi opet krv u krv.

2 Ženska stopala vezivana po staroj kineskoj tradiciji, tako da izobličena stanu u posebne svilene cipelice.

Čarolija razoružavanja: Čarobnjak

Ovo je lekcija iz zaboravljanja;
vadiš se, poput šavova,
iz ljubavne pjesme koju je sazdao
koju si mu upropastila
svojom nespretnošću.

Trenutak je to kad prestaneš govoriti *oprosti*;
kad odlučiš koje ćeš cipele nositi.
Opiši oko sebe krug;
upotrijebi raspon svojih ruku
da sabereš sve nebo koje ti treba.

Iz te ćeš slobode promatrati
ženu koja je oprezno tapkala
obavljajući kućanske poslove;
onu koja je toliko pregrizala jezik
da su joj riječi zamrle.

Ako želiš, stupaj bosa —
kritičar koji je rigao sažete ocjene
tvojih dnevnih postignuća
čisto se istopio.
Neka tvoje blatne stope dobro uprljaju tepih!

Ovo je, k tome, lekcija iz samoprizivanja.

Napomena: Ujedinjeni narodi definiraju nasilje nad ženama kao:
bilo koji čin nasilja zasnovanog na spolnoj/rodnoj osnovi koje rezultira ili može rezultirati fizičkom, spolnom ili psihološkom povredom ili patnjom žene, uključujući i prijetnje takvim djelima, silu ili svojevoljno oduzimanje slobode, bilo u javnom ili privatnom životu.

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HOW TO
CONSTRUCT
A WITCH

The Waking

I have become one of those women who goes about with a rattan carriage, salvaging women buried at crossroads or planted out in the woods. One of those women who reconstructs bodies, replacing ligaments with wire. The kind who mixes her own blood with the earth to bring swell to their bones. The kind of woman who tarries with the devil in the naughty light of day—why must we be occult? I hold up those rekindled women and we reel, we howl, and we shoot our filthy mouths off.

Some Definitions of *Witch*

Carcass of rags
the dead-rat stink of old milk.
A beyond the pale beggar,
runt of the litter.

*

Gleaner of herbs
hallower of the compass.
Cunning hedge rider,
measurer of fire.

*

Midwife of shadows
low vixen with blood on its maw.
Deliverer of silence
to the henhouse.

*

Lighter than a bible,
priestly ink is gravity
beneath her flying feet.
Her body writes into the sky.

*

Blended with the earth
she wears a moss cloak.
Some procure her remedies.
She is a scapegoat for bad luck.

*

A childless wraith
in a child's picture book.
The worst mother
man ever invented.

*

The method of kettling
troublesome women.
A peck of black pepper
in the milk-and-water blether.

*

Practitioner of forgotten ways;
of rituals, sayer of spells.
Barefoot earth-listener,
older than God or television.

The Makings

There were sprits in the fire
shadows stood about,
livestock gone lame, fever
and that perpetual winter
that nearly finished us all.

On those grounds
we festooned a flesh and bones puppet
placed green wood all about—
thence the burning was slow
and we all warmed our hands.

The wails didn't matter
because she was not human
she was barely a *she*;
a barren nothing, a wraith
fused together by spite.

Margaret Johnson

1633, Pendle Witch Trials

Days were moonless, drab
and I was a sack of bones
in my widow-house.

Seven years this went —
part-sombre, part-vexed,
wholly disremembering of the sun.

Then he came, all silk-garbed, all sleek furred —
and the promises!
it was as if he'd heard my prayers indeed.

He pricked my flesh
supped my slow blood till I quickened
and felt my spirit siphon into him.

Though I repent this transaction now
I had no prestige until the devil
lodged his shadow at my hearth.

Since this trouble hatched, he has forsaken me.
I cannot send my spirit out
to avenge those who need tormenting.

Yet history casts me out as *not a witch* —
if I was *not* a witch,
how did I meet the night's wings? how did I fly?

Lilias Adie (c 1640–1704)

Witch who had sex with the Devil (Daily Mirror 2017)

And still the clickbait designed to pique a fever—
though clicking arrives you at a neighbourly face
conjured up forensically.

She'd been six foot tall, according to her bones,
buried intertidally, like suicides,
pressed down by a stone to dam reanimation.

Such wickedness requires a belt and braces execution—
who's to say the devil will not wake her
to bring about more sickness to the fold?

A podcast now, and Lilias' confession, we learn,
is duplication of another peasant woman's admission,
some fifty years before:

*The devil put one hand on the crown of my head
another on the soles of my feet
and claimed everything between as his.*

Then you learn they lost her skull
a hundred years ago, and the image of her face
is drawn from photographs.

And her bones were gathered up as trinkets –
even wood from her coffin you can see in a museum
whittled to a walking stick, fancied up with silver.

Elizabeth Tibbotts

1672, Stoneleigh

Time goes, people go;
their names and majesty
all sawdust swept
between flagstones.

Yet you call me
and three centuries dead
I'm up on two legs
in your room.

You might fancy
I walked these years
in the shape of a dog
in quest of an audience.

You've a hankering
to see how I vomit up
a pocket pistol,
a pair of pincers—

you'll want to examine
my throat for signs of violence,
my flesh for claw marks.
I'm here; let us make the most of it.

One Such Tale

After a vast night of walking,
the shadow happened upon the tor
and arranged herself nicely
among the high-grazing sheep.

She knew she wasn't a sheep
but the sheep did not craze –
none lifted their heads
from the sweet high grass.

She yearned in her heart to be given a name
to be called for, to have bearings
so when the shepherd appeared
the shadow cleared her throat.

What am I? She implored, in a voice
she thought kind as a rockpool.
Oh but the shepherd was sapling of spirit
and he ran and he ran, screaming pestilence

and thence flew about the village
recounting a starless fairy
that turned his blood to winter
and ripped at his manhood with her claws.

We are the Weirdos, Mister

NANCY DOWNS *The Craft* 1996

A skyful of rain meddles in
through a rubble of rooftiles,
serpents unleash in all their forms
and the girls themselves
are every manner of weaponless
in their damaged, orphan skins.

Let's not focus on how it all turns out
but on the necessity of the coven;
of pulling on an armour of black velvet
and drinking of your sister's blood,
elixir in a cup of wine called *Ariel*,
the angel of *earth, fire, water, air*.

Each lit candle is a breath of light in the pitch
oh, the urgency of chanting:

now is the time, now is the hour

ours is the magic, ours is the power,

and twenty-seven years later

anonymous, on YouTube's wall:

I wouldn't be here without my sisters

Scry

Let's put a crow in this box. Let's push the dead of night to the corners of this cage and harken what it has to say. With its caws and its rattles and its shimmering drear. With its bad weather and beak full of blood. What oblivion will it wreak here? Which Fury will it bring? Draw in close now. Soft-focus your seeing on the black mirror of its eye.

The Menstruous Woman

*... bees, it is a well-known fact, will forsake their hives
if touched by a menstruous woman;*
PLINY THE ELDER *The Natural History.*

It is never elegant to speak of blood.
A female body, tricked and out of whack
adjusts to wearing kindly black
to shroud the purpling of her clothes,
as menstrual fluid falls from her
too pell-mell for any shop-bought rags.

Not everyone is bold enough
to turn their menses into art;
to scavenge gore across primed cotton board.
Some zigzag a passage through this cursed spell
with all the euphemisms
their red aunt instilled in them.

They are unreliable; leave work early—
say, twenty years too soon.
They become *a woman of a certain age*.
Who needs the foul embarrassment
of ageing female bodies in a public place?
Who really wants to be deprived of all that honey?

The Change

You sit inside yourself
and your body does its thing.
One minute it's a honeypot of oestrogen
the next, the head you had grown up with
is a crucible—and the words *flushes* and *flashes*
don't touch the sides of this urge
to run clear of this body.

The clothes in your wardrobe
carry a whisper of *mutton*
from a source buried deep inside language.
You smear *Lady Danger* on muttony chops
and everywhere advice on how to hide your arms—
heaven forfend you make a spectacle
of your collagen depletion.

Every night your hormones throw a party
you don't want to attend,
messing with the levels like a bad DJ.
You read that tinnitus is affected by oestrogen's
jitterbug;
that not enough research has been done.
Your skin is a rubber doll plumped up with lava
that's stumbled into a cold store at 4am.

Tick-tock

All your life you've been expecting her to come rapping at your door. *Let me in let me in*, she pushes at the tender fabric of the shelter you'd assembled with your bare hands.

Don't you remember how they warned you about the woods? The woods are a darkly place, where you'll meet your darkly self and further ghastly things. Why did you go, why did you take your pretty light there? Why did you wear the woebegone smock of the crone when you could have been spring-step in a bright yellow dress?

And now she's in your bath, skin draping from her bones. And now she's taking off her wedding ring, sliding it onto your finger with a gob of her spit.

Only Bad Witches are Ugly

GLINDA THE GOOD, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

Do you light from the skies in the blush of a bubble
your gown all glamoured with stars,
or does the earth spew you forth in a retch of red
smoke?

Are you more peaches and cream or frog in a quagmire;
opiate stoned in a cradle of poppies
or rattled awake in the dash of a blizzard?

Are you gooder than good in a basket of good
unbinding the bad with your charming white wand,
or is your scandalous body the root of your power?

Are you a good witch, or are you a bad witch?

The Answer

It was a wonder no one noticed when they cut the woman in half. Not from side to side, as they do in workaday cabaret acts, but straight down the middle. A perfect bisection. Making use of the smoke and mirrors left behind by the illusionist, she appeared, both of her, to walk away on two legs to two different locations.

One went home to her family and scrubbed down the hearthstones. The other stole deep into the woods and was presently joined by a cat with a ruinous yowl.

When her stepchildren arrived quarrelsome, too late for dinner, stomping their muddy hoofs all through the house, she sent them out to the woods. Let her deal with them there, she thought. She stood before the mirror, smiling as crookedly as a good woman is able.

Spirit of The Storm

FREDERICK SANDYS, *study for wood engraving 1860*

There comes a point in very woman's life
when she transmutes into The Spirit of the Storm.
Why not grow snakes for hair,
conjure rain and lightning from your artful hands?

You've earned this wrath, don't squander it
on slapdash chores and sundry empty tasks
in the hollow of your living room -
get out and find a fitting auditorium.

They've been opining it for years
it should come as no surprise
when venom spouts forth from your breasts.
Lo! you are supreme, the most debauched of all bad
mothers!

To a Painter

How, pray, is your cow skin glue
distinct from charming?
You take the hide and tendons, hooves
boil them up in that scarred cauldron.
And the stench enough to bid the beasts
from many miles, all slaver-mawed—
more quarry for your pot!

Fancy keeps you company
while your bed is bare;
idle hands grope for brushes—
ah! such renderings of midnight!
You are haunted by flesh are you not.
I wonder if this exorcism purifies
or stirs up the appetite?

Paint me now astride a broomstick
my contorted face all seized by flight.
Depending on my time of life
I am the maid ripe for corruption
or the long-dugged ruined hag,
while you sir, are fixed rigid;
the loudest voice, all penn'orth spent.

The Gift

There once was a lonely woman who replaced her heart with an apple. She took a sharp knife and engraved her name and those of the names of the spirits: *Cosmer, Synady, Heupide* in its freshly shined skin. She stood in the middle of a bridge as the wind heaped bright dying leaves about. She balanced the apple in the palm of her hand, but nobody came for her love. And the earth moved through the seasons, and still nobody came. This carried on till the apple resembled some devil they say, and the woman herself had transmuted to dust.

Then one day, a quiet pandemonium emanated from the apple and the townspeople hid behind themselves, too cowed to approach. A man stepped from the crowd with the air of a judge. He decreed that indeed, the apple was infested with foul spirits, and pitched it into the river with his long-legged boot.

Resistance Spells

Spell to Take Back the Night

As a fox, then. A rust blade
through the beer belly of midnight;
that's how it goes.

Take to your workbench
crack the nitrogen bubbles in your knuckles,
gather your fibres and needles.

Do it now, as the sun crosses the street
all hands in its pockets;
all devil-may-care.

The barbs of your needle
stabbed into the fibres
will ravel them in on themselves.

When your hide is complete
and you are fixed safe inside
then you shall go to the ball.

Spell to Unlock the Scold's Bridle

centuries of pent-up speaking
held fast inside a museum cabinet

lean in to heed them sisterfolk
break the glass

now render the bridle a cliff-perched cage
roiled up by bad weather

let salt water chaw on iron
for half a century
till their tongues are loosed

without delay make known their names!
scratch them into passing skin
by virtue of a common nail.

Summoning Spell: The Body

Call back blood to blood.
Call back the spectacle of flesh.
Fasten on your head with wire,
hold it like a scrying ball
in your savvy hands.

You will see now, clear as clear
the acid burns, the lotus feet,
the force-fed and the skinnied-down.
Your face floats just below
the surface of the glass.

Midwife your very body home
from every shabby playboy den
and launder up the air with smudging sage.
Call back the spectacle of flesh.
Call back blood to blood.

Disarming Spell: The Enchanter

This is a lesson in forgetting;
unpicking yourself
from the love song he constructed
which you ruined for him
with your clumsy ways.

This is when you stop saying *sorry*;
when you decide what shoes to wear.
Trace a circle around yourself;
use the wingspan of your arms
to gather all the sky you need.

From this leeway you will behold
the woman who trod warily
about her daily chores;
the one who bit her tongue so much
her words were cancelled out.

If you desire it, tromp barefoot—
the critic spitting résumés
on how you have performed each day
has melted clean away.
Let your muddy footprints sully up the carpet!

**This is furthermore
a lesson in self-conjuring.**

Note: The United Nations defines violence against women as:
*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in,
physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats
of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring
in public or in private life.*

On the Author

Helen Ivory is a poet and visual artist who lives in Norwich, England. Her fifth Bloodaxe collection is *The Anatomical Venus* (2019). She edits the webzine *Ink Sweat and Tears* and teaches creative writing online for the University of East Anglia/National Centre for Writing. A book of mixed media poems *Hear What the Moon Told Me* is published by KFS, and chapbook *Maps of the Abandoned City* by SurVision. She also has work translated into Polish, Ukrainian and Spanish as part of the Versopolis project. *Wunderkammer: New and Selected Poems* (2023) is published in the US by MadHat Press. She is currently working on her next collection for Bloodaxe *How to Construct a Witch*, which will appear in 2024.

O pjesnikinji

Helen Ivory pjesnikinja je i vizualna umjetnica koja živi u engleskom gradu Norwichu. Kod poznatog nakladnika Bloodaxe objavila je pet zbirki poezije, a posljednja je *The Anatomical Venus* (2019.). Uređuje internetski časopis *Ink Sweat and Tears* i podučava kreativno pisanje pri Sveučilištu Istočne Anglije/Nacionalnom centru za pisanje. Multimedijalnu knjigu poezije *Hear What the Moon Told Me* objavio joj je KFS, a pjesničku brošuru (chapbook) naslova *Maps of the Abandoned City* tiskao je SurVision. U sklopu projekta Versopolis neke su joj pjesme prevedene na poljski, ukrajinski i španjolski. U SAD-u, kod MadHat Pressa, objavljuje izbor *Wunderkammer: New and Selected Poems* (2023.) Trenutno radi na novom rukopisu za Bloodaxe, naslovljenom *How to Construct a Witch* (Kako konstruirati vješticu), koji je predviđen za objavu 2024. godine. Iz njega su izabrane ovdje predstavljene pjesme.

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