

The Other Penelope

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Translated by Edmund Keeley and Mary Keeley

Penelope emerges from the olive trees
her hair more or less tidy
her dress from the neighborhood market
navy blue with white flowers.
She tells us it wasn't obsession
with the idea of "Odysseus"
that pressed her to let the suitors
wait for years in the forecourts
of her body's secret habits.
There in the island's palace —
with the fake horizons
of a saccharine love
and only the bird in the window
comprehending the infinite —
she had painted with nature's colors
the portrait of love.
Seated, one leg crossed over the other,
holding a cup of coffee
up early, a little grumpy, smiling a little
he emerges warm from the down of sleep.

His shadow on the wall:
trace of a piece of furniture just taken away
blood of an ancient murder
a single performance of Karagiozi
on the screen, pain always behind him.
Love and pain indivisible
like the pail and the child
on the sandy beach
the ah! and a crystal glass that slipped from one's
hand
the green fly and the slaughtered animal
the soil and the shovel
the naked body and the single sheet in July.

And Penelope who now hears
the evocative music of fear
the cymbals of resignation
the sweet song of a quiet day
without sudden changes of weather and tone
the complex chords
of an infinite gratitude
for what did not happen, was not said, cannot be
uttered
she signals no, no, no more loving
no more words and whispers
caresses and bites
small cries in the darkness
scent of flesh that burns in the light.
Pain was the most exquisite suitor
and she slammed the door on him.