

Andrei Codrescu

VISITORS

1.

they don't use the door
but once they've come in the window
or a crack in the roof
they rest their parchment wings (the same
book bindings are made from)
and explain why they don't use doors.
a long time ago their god
assured them that as long as they
believed in him he would be a window
into the lights of the sky and a roof
over their heads
but not a door because he was a ball
of such energy anyone coming
into his house would be incinerated
the sadness of the kind of god I am
he explained cannot be explained
but stick to this simple rule of ingress
and egress and I'll keep you light
and fluffy except for those wings
those I have to fashion from parchment

2.

these two carry others on their backs
and in their suitcases and in shoulder bags
unpacked they are a crowd
verses trail them wherever they go
like medieval banners in paintings

when they eat it is with others
they never forget to mention thank
or remember even when they fail the exact
details they still carry enough otherness
to assure everyone that they are not alone
their heat is generous and communal
their bodies dignified and available
they are us in our youth and you in yours
time hasn't just passed it took the others
with it and this old age you can have it!

3.

oh philip lamantia the occult whirled you away
to see robert duncan you have a few things to say
to each other finish the sentences you never
finished over the decades of fog and sun and bay
leaf and espresso and certainties so thin and sharp
they were made by gilette from odin's best coke
your eyes were pools of sympathy I couldn't look
into them very long I got vertigo the sutro park
vertigo the same sage-wrapped inevitability falling
through space looking over at seal rock from
somewhere near diana the huntress worshipped
apparently by others there were always offerings
at her feet where squirrels and birds came to eat
as they did around you and your beloved st. francis
sayonara philip lamantia us birds still pecking
at your verses will still do so for a brief while

4.

do innocents exist
was the question
not innocence innocents
an unequivocal answer
could only come from an innocent

the guilty hedged their bets
yes those who believe
in the good intentions of others
are the innocents
and when evidence to the contrary
rises above their heads
they go down sure of an error
or else return as visitors
to take revenge on their own
naïveté and innocence
these are the saddest visitors of all

5.

the tourist towns were strung pearl-string
fashion in the mind of determined tourists
lugging an ocean of myth and magazines
mountains of longing and brochures
palm pilots full of internet sadness
churches cafes sex clubs on cliffs or caves
but never was one found so full of idealized
landscapes his very blood an agglomeration
of postcards and even ancestors smothered
by his desire to visit them in their old countries
cried enough enough but the saucy business
was a tidal wave the yearning so absolute
this one was the ultimate tourist we took him
home and hung him from the window a flag
warning figure of comedy something local
it was an insult not to use his form take his money
eventually he shredded to tatters it was windy
(in memory of the 20th century)

6.

fifty years from the publication of howl
allen ginsberg in 1955 in san francisco

the abyss looked back but the young were
not frightened they leapt into the mouth
of the future and it wasn't hell like the elders
said but awesome sweat of youth mixed
with hellish light driven by spilled blood
history not the same one that pulled naomi
in its undertow and my people too
1955 was much closer to 1942
than 2005 and do we know anything more
yes we know joy and the pleasures of peace
as kenneth koch so aptly put it civilized
the mouth of hell wide-open
keeps howling through the i-pods but its force
is parcelled and possibly diminished
Allen you called it and it called you
we were your visitors even when you visited us
and visiting you did everyone remembers
in prague in baltimore and in new dehli
this addition of happiness your work
(fifty years' worth for everyone forty for me)