

## *Five Poems*

Valentine Penrose

Translated from French by Mia X. Pérez

### **DEMETER**

If it is a stone of sorrow, there I am seated  
There, where ribbons fall sideways on the plain  
White veils. This is nothing.  
Where the wild-eyed goddess plunges the child of another into fire.

The tree refuses to orient itself. The emerald  
Keeps its fist clenched. If it is  
A stone of sorrow, I am seated there.

## VENUS

What do lovers do they love and torment  
Love and torment in order to love a little further still  
And to be passed and passed again under their own trees  
They lie scattered, unraveled arms in the forest  
Gnawing tips of fleche and branch.

Unoccupied unchanging starting stopping  
Charming herd kept to spellbound wood  
By the strongest and most nonchalant of hands

What do lovers do they love and torment.

    Their idioms their language  
    Their pearls their bees  
    Their usual energy  
    When goddesses of dawn  
    Proudly hunt

    Then the ancient stillness.

What do lovers do they love and torment.

## **CAPRICORN**

There is in the air an odor of savage dark  
There is in the air a frigid military odor  
A lacquered snap like a vulture's beak  
  Under the despotic sky.

I am on a bench as the sparrowhawk perches  
An old uniform fading in the branches.  
And I think about captains  
Whose wife, devout and overwrought, gives birth  
Facing the window  
By January night.

## NIGHT

The winter night will return  
For me to rest near you.  
The faces will gravely drink  
Moonlight and its wisdom  
Will be hunted by our kisses and arms.

The room is there alone, curtains closed  
You are there alone with your closed eyes  
Moonlight—the light of your arms  
Night carries this tranquil ship.

## THE SHEPHERD

Distraught fairy shepherd  
Every knowledge forgotten  
Down the drain the wind the moon.

Inside wood paneled rooms  
Dancing in hyena skin  
For the saraband  
Bittersweet Ancient  
Will meet you  
Smiling slightly  
In beautiful golden hooves.

Then you will feed yourself salted silver  
With water which runs on off.

And when that is enough  
Chaotic gathering  
Of gifts and senses

You will leave the candles and shadows to the ceiling  
You will leave the irritated eternal in its tendrils  
Charged bright by the fire, protesting against the beams

And you will go up there  
Where the sibyl spins  
Amethysts and wind.

