

ANDREI MOLOTIU

FOUR POEMS FROM THE 90S

LULLABY

Not fathom this tower of puppets; unravel
the stutter of signs: tremulous, speaking
only of what's three days past & their chatter
deafening. Nor to waver
over the hours;

for it's the same in the mornings
of spearing light, where
wombats unfasten your eyelids:
the waking forgets there
the cassowaries & the marionettes
alike.

MIDMORNING

Into the spilled horizon
of your daydark floor—
its squirreling away
into the powdered light—
allow for
the small soft tatters of the night—
they overlay your bed &
scattered upon your arising.

FROM A BEACH-GUARD TOWER

Like seams span things:
the cast strike's lilt & slack
astride these stacked stilts scan—
untying near & there—
the sea's dreamed glare:
its quilted back
& the sun's wings.

THIRD ELEGY

after Propertius, Elegies I.3, 1-30

Like Ariadne, asleep
 upon the empty beach
as Theseus's ship stole
 into the faraway—
or like Andromeda, her
 wrists once freed from the rock—
or else like the Thracian dance-
 drained bacchante collapsed on
the river bank's damp grasses—
 so lay Cynthia, her lips
barely breath-shivered, her cheek's
 flesh crushed on her fingers,
when I staggered in, enslaved
 by Bacchus (drunk, that is),
dragging my unsteady feet
 by the slaves' uncertain
torchlight that withered and died
 in the senescent night.

Urged on by two unyielding
 deities—Wine and Love—
I leaned above her on the
 couch and meant to touch her—
slither my arm beneath her
 wasp-waist and raise her to
my long-overdue kisses:
 but then I didn't dare.
What can I say? I feared her
 sharp and cruel tongue
she's often had me taste; so
 I kept still and watched her

like Argos stared at Io's
knobby, misshapen horns.

There I was, tearing garlands
from my hair to drape them
round your temples, my Cynthia,
delighting in curling
back your unkempt curls, and then
I placed on your sleeping
breast the apples I'd brought you;
but you stirred and they rolled
off. And whenever you sighed
and your chest heaved and swelled
(oh, how I knew that heaving!)
I held my breath and bit
my lip, afraid some demon-
lover in your dream was
taking you the way that *I*
wished I'd been, but wasn't.