

PILVAX

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Dániel Dányi is a twenty-six year old Hungarian translator and poet from Budapest. His translations include the recently published *Tom Waits Reader*, András Mezei's poems in *Holocaust Remember!*, and contemporary Canadian verse in the bilingual anthology *Crystal Garden*. He is currently working on Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

Poems

by Dániel Dányi

Back on Square One

so kiss me a kiss
and riddle me this
who so me over stands

the square

strips naked reopened and bare
as concrete folks wander
and stroll nowhere
to sit, swinging and
singing like a
little kid

holds in his hand
in the grainy pit
a toothy green shovel with
rectangularity to sieve and sift
his castles crumbling to plain air sand

you of unsweetened bicycle hair
blue solitude too mingled there
into shade shining bleak sunblare
gray pigeons vanish and

three primary buses: yellow, red, blue
you take the blue one, the cool one, fare
to Húvösvölgy from Pollák Mihály tér
ascend to where they tell you what to do
teaching you to tie your shoe
and nice or bad or must or fair

encircled in a square you are not home

the gray that swirls from your hand
dig yourself out from this land
tunnel in the chill grave deep
excavate yourself to sleep
glide down a sliding chute
from playing with your soup
from children from their radioed blare
the sand-caked mashing crunching grinding square
away from Babylon
out mute

back in the wake
she comes
she shines
we radiate

Tea times

Water boils in the enamel pot on the electric stove,
of Soviet make like the wood-heated samovar.
Tea brews in a dinky red-spotted porcelain mug,
the evil brambles fittingly called Garzon -
the cheapest bachelor flatlet: kitchen and a half -,
a dash of Olympos lemon, and sugar too.

Steaming electric kettle – very hazardously wired
mass KGST import – well, it works, unplug to stop.
Splashed over Earl Grey filters – Pass the milk!
We brought some blackcurrant ones from Vienna,
you won't believe the things in Shopping City Süd!

Pour Ceylon from the Chinese china tea set –
emptied, it shows through rice spots, translucent.
The Garzon package, look, they changed design,
still tastes like ladled tea in sloshpitals.
Restaurateurs soak Lipton Yellow Label in small soup cups.

There came a flood of boxes, names and brands;
Who'd bother filterpacking things like rosehip?!
Fruits and herbs and aromas seemed congenial,
so all were tried, very amusing, yes. Like
oddly spiked and heated lemonades.

By that point, the time was overripe for Budapest
to see its first teahouses, roundabouts of '95.

The first I found was Demmer, down on Podmanicky street –
I thought they're British, but in fact from Bécs –,
and 'teázó's proliferate through downtown ever since.
Banana flavored black tea's sometimes hard to find.

Folkdancehall

the first poems ever
are the words to songs sung
by people at dances
and I was there with my Mama

in a different world within the one we dwelt
in suburban Budapest the early 1980s of
my early childhood years
concrete council blocks and communal dancing
houses

yes there they sang we sang
folk of high rise evenings me with them
winding through the dancing hall

and there was Mr Sebő like a Homer
wearing his Health Service prescription specs
he played on contra-fiddle and the hurdy-gurdy
and crowds stepped to the ancient dance recalled
rocking floorboards clapping calls and calls
I called and stepped the steps and danced

alive with no sign of traditionalism
requiring not at all to be explained
the words were songs the people chanted as we danced
our first poems were lively warm and fun

I know now how it was a movement nationwide
that folk bands dancers halls communities thrived on
and beside traditional songs Hungarian poetry
from times historic to contemporaries was embraced
and sung

lard and onion and pickles on bread and jaffa orange squash
served to refresh spiritual Hungry everyone
the dancers and all those who watched and
sat and stood around and wound the strand
of conversation spun here lighter and here thick and grave
as slurred

as the tune was as the hours progressed

matched masterfully to the lurching of the crowd
we danced what we could ultimately
disorientated as fiddlesticks

More of Dániel Dányi's poems can be found in the WINTER 2007 issue of PILVAX. Locally available in Budapest.