

Biographical Note

Mariacristina Natalia Bertoli is an assistant in American Literature at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. She writes in English, French and Italian: her poems, short stories, essays, reviews and poetic translations have been published in France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Her work has appeared, among others, in *Carnival*, *Chiron Review*, *Paideuma*, *Pearl*, *Philadelphia Poets* and *Poetica Magazine*. In 2012 her poetry production has garnered her the third place of the Petrarca Award as well as a nomination for the Pushcart Prize.

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15 lines

Poetry Has To Be Read Very, Very Slowly

– which is the reason why
it takes him a lifetime
to follow with his fingers
the words moles make
on my naked skin,
reading their swaying desires
as if they were
spiralling incantations
on some Persian porcelain ware.

A lifetime has never seemed
this short before,
as he – like an ancient augur –
dissolves it into drops
that fill the water clock
of my thirsty longing.

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18 lines

California Dreamin'

For Gerry Locklin, because it must be so

For most Swiss girls I know,
living among sexually repressed cheese-makers
on some alpine plateau
means wet dreaming every night
of hot Californian surfers
showing off their sleek six-pack abs.

Not that I would ever pooh-pooh them –
I'm used to spending hours just
ogling at surfers' hunkish accoutrements
when I'm on Zamir Beach in Haifa.
Yet, my tastes slightly differ from my friends'
when it comes to California dreamin'.

My kinda guy is more like Red Hawk cheese
than lined-up cans or allusive popsicles –
wrinkled, aged, marrying well with any flavor
(that of iceberg lettuce especially),
but with a bloody zest of his own
no Golden State beefcake may ever dream of.

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14 lines

Original Sin

*“Shicksal – That she's a gentile girl?”
(A Little Street Music, Daniel Stern)*

I have always been the Different,
alone among my own fellows.
And yet I cannot fit in the world
of the one who is my only kindred.

Haven't I, too, eyes – like he does?
Still, my begging for his love
would outcast him
from that people to which
I wish I could myself belong.

My very genes (the only means for me
to perpetuate his fleeting beauty)
would soil his offspring,
turning milk and honey into gall.

I myself am hell: my blood is
a faultless guilt for which I can't atone.

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16 lines

Chatoyancy

The art of being chatoyant
comes in time
and is hard to master.

It demands
skirting flamboyance
without ever
dimming the luster.

The toil to learn
how to unwind
a spool of silken syllables

and weave them
into ossified lace
may not prove enough to earn
his longed-for embrace.

Albeit a gem, a man may not wish
a stone to hang from his neck.

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6 lines

Flying to Tel-Aviv from Zürich Airport, 09:00 p.m.

Waiting alone for the last flight,
when the sun has long gone down
and janitors are ghosts bustling about
to clear away what remains of the day that is over
makes you feel as if you were the next in line for the trash can.
The Promised Land may stay an unfulfilled promise.