

Margo Berdeshevsky

Taste Of Vanilla

Somewhere on a bed, a woman, tasting rain.
Somewhere on the Seine, a motorboat, three
monks in grey cassocks and life-vests, reach.
Their little launch idles where they clamor
out and up a jetty wall to buy ice cream cones at
Berthillon, re-board, and river-borne, lick prayers
as potent as vanilla – to bells, the most surreal
tourists in sight of Notre Dame, her silvered sky.

Small pleasures, how we invent the one for
the moment. They too will remember the taste
of *marron glacé* and *vanille*, and the water spray
of the filthy river, mixed, for all their lives. It will
taste like God, like love.

Summer torpor makes us want to weep all
week, weep, to help the choking blossoms,
weep for independence fallen, in our country,
weep for the cities of old light.

Then cooled enough to cross again, the sky,
metallic with albumin, golden with vanished sun
– stains left behind like a slaughtered goat
carted off in pieces, magnificence of its blood-
color, smeared, where it cried.

Quieted and kinder, sky watches its monks on
the platinum Seine ...
... There is a Russian story ... three
hermit monks on a desert islet, so old they
have forgotten how to pray. Their bishop's
voyaging ship stops, he lowers in a tiny boat,
and lands it at their shore to bless them.

We've forgotten, they confess, teach us, please,
again. And he does. And leaves them to their lonely
holiness. No sooner gone, than the old men forget
their prayer, bereft, one runs and chases after
–running on waves to cry oh Father,
Father we've forgotten, tell us again.

[from her new unpublished manuscript, "Between Soul & Stone"]
Margo Berdeshevsky (c) 2007