

NO.MAD.ICH

*we are what we lost. and never went back for.
alienation is not the choice of the alien.*

— are you even in the country legally? — yes. i am a citizen. — huh...
the woman grabs her groundless feet into her knotty old hands and rolls away.
my palms are dry and washed out as the dotted old maps of my wanderings.
am i even in the country legally?

we had no money, then we had some, then none again, a little, none, enough, barely
enough, none again, and then, all of a sudden, sufficient.
but it never changed the way that we loved, laughed, prayed, endured loss, danced.
food is food, its main value is presence. absence makes the stomach grow fonder.

in empty rooms, stuffed rooms, stuffy rooms with or without windows, white rooms,
cold rooms, rooms without doors, wards, cells, our hands grew fonder of mittens,
boiling water, our own breath, and candle ends.
and suspicious of other hands, kindness of strangers, and unclothed skin.

cultural differences are as traumatic, both mentally and physically, as any form of abuse or violence.
— i didn't realise it was this grave. — i have been telling you for four months of mondays.
— yes. but you say it so calmly. you show no outer signs of grief. — isn't it enough that i tell you.
— usually, people cry in therapy. or show other emotional distress. you don't. — i don't.

they say: i want to go home. and they do. go home – a finite point in space, time, and memory.
while i look at their lit windows, locked doors, through infinite customs, security checks, airfields.
home. filled with furnitures, sounds, moth balls, smells, generations of births and deaths.
mine followed me in a suitcase. and a carry-on.

loyal. filled with visas, passports, boarding passes, statements of birth, life, function,
other important papers, paper to write on, paper cuts, plasters, clean socks,
dog eared booklets on sightseeing and finding peace. the longer the flight the better –
one can catch up on sleep and budget. getting used to not be seen on the other side.

never getting used to clapping upon landing. not here for long. land is ending under my feet.
i am too stubborn to stop breathing on the brink of my lungs. i have three greedy tongues
and a stomach that shrinks at the glance of abundance. i dance when everyone on the plane
is asleep or airsick. — no, i don't want to upgrade to the first class.

— are you going to celebrate *yolka* instead then? — no. and yolka is not a holiday. it's the tree.
— but that's what you russians celebrate... — no. and i am not a russian. — huh...
the woman drags her sockless feet away. she knows that she knows better.
because she knows a few immigrants and she picked up a thing or two. her feet smell.

Sblood, so you think you know my stops, my controls, my ranks, my pitches, my timbre?
Sblood, so you think you can play me as you think you can play a bone pipe?
i am the pipe organ. i am the hydraulis and the organon. my great leaden pipes embraced
Constantinople and bled into Danube and Avon. my heart lost not its nature.

i am sorry if my heart beats too loud for your liking, and i got you lost in translation
of being human, and thus [potentially] different from what you are used to
or fascinated by due to delusion of knowledge. i am a nomad. i am no mad man, i am not
mad. nor am i a man seeking shelter and fries. please, take your box away. i am not a cat.