

**GALINA RYMBU**

The Law Has No Force Here and the Constitution Will Not  
Save Us From Pain and Hate

*translated by Joan Brooks*

The law has no force here  
and the constitution will not save us from pain and  
hate. I have only two free hours in my life  
to write this – from 5 to 7 in the morning.  
The remaining time does not belong to me  
just as the law does not  
belong to me. The constitution never  
guaranteed safety  
for me and my family,  
we hid under a blanket whenever something happened.

We hid from my papa under a blanket  
in 1993, we drank thick juice  
from glass jars and gutted a pumpkin.

I always want to simplify everything,  
sometimes all of history fits  
into a few personal events for me.  
Sometimes poetry and the law  
are just as simple as they are false.

Poetry, equality, fraternity – everything  
exists. One should not believe what is written.  
A bruise can't change the "objectivity" of the fact  
of its absence, just like shards of glass in a vagina.  
like the rumbling of tubes in an old angel-dog,  
slowly moving across the neighborhood,

its fur magnetizes:  
theft, humiliation,  
men and women  
cannot be equal.

I write long poems,  
long as nights spent in lockup,  
because I always get mixed up about what I wanted to say,  
as if I'm giving evidence  
and I'm not completely sure  
what happened.

This is not an article of law – it is a street  
of confused facts, there is no ethics here,  
no good or evil, truth or lies. In these  
stairwells people fuck ambivalently and  
in a hurry, there is no gender here, nor age,  
nor good food. As for murder –  
it depends on how things go. Here

no one asks – who rules us  
what powers are necessary for the future. What happens—  
that is power,  
the rest is just spare parts for the old car  
of the state and time.

The human being is far-sighted, woman is furious,  
man weeps, children solve  
problems. Postal workers still  
distribute paper letters, bills, fines for non-payment,  
summonses. This is not a street – it is an article  
without a constitution: about who we are,  
without liberty-equality-fraternity –

without a computer –  
just frightened sisters,  
only hotbeds of skin disease:

not hotbeds of resistance

they aren't burning

we don't have to  
please anyone,

or think clearly.

This is the music of the street.  
The bass notes of concrete housing blocks  
and the cry of the bird inside, when  
you squeeze into a mini-bus, this is frost on the windows and  
cold radiators.  
The state grows old, but we  
renew ourselves.  
We can wipe our asses  
with the constitution. We don't need oil,  
our thoughts are energy.  
Politician, listen to life:

Tubes in the kidneys are singing,  
canker sores are singing,  
a track mark from shooting  
a quarter-gram is singing,  
a dose is singing,  
naswar is whining behind the lip,  
a yellow gob of spit is singing,  
handcuffs are singing,

a demobilized soldier is singing, a queer boy  
of conscription age is singing, violence.  
Behind the garages,  
girls are singing of  
simple worlds, a cigarette is singing,  
infected milk is singing,  
my father's foreman is singing  
with an accordion,  
a storehouse of food is singing,  
an abandoned village,  
a dead lawyer, a journalist,  
gonorrhoea, chlamydia,  
furunculosis,  
an empty  
bread factory.  
Booze is singing in the belly,  
the intestines are singing, rolling around in the troubled times  
of the body, a multisyllabic people, and  
the delicacy of condensed milk is singing.

Our god of color with special needs is singing  
from the Baptist brochures they handed out  
to our moms on the way home from the shop in the 90s.  
A bad student with a child is singing.  
The drill of hunger is singing in the belly.

And again there are beats: Dukh. Dukh. Dukh.\*

\*translator's note: I have left the word dukh ("spirit") in the original Russian to preserve its sonic quality, which reproduces a techno beat. The final consonant in dukh is an aspirated velar, similar to the English /h/, but pronounced further back in the mouth. The reference to Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit is self-evident here, and another possible rendition would be "Geist. Geist. Geist."