

Drownings

by [Romain P. A. Delpeuch](#) (December 2023)



Sleeping Woman with a Black Vase— Róbert Berény, 1927-28

“Abysmal” was the word that came to mind.
Abnormal dreams from gates of neither horn
(originating truth) nor ivory
(tremors and sweats that nothing would appease
swallowed the fantasies that came from those),
crammed our hard-won sleep hours and spilt a fright,
dangling from ‘yond our ceilings, on our days.
Embracing ghosts would seize us unawares—
rabbits we’d never chase in our right mind.
Inlaid from inside out, our blackened veins,

enameled in our flesh as maps and mazes,
grainy and itchy, led us where we wouldn't.

Quibbles gave rise to skirmishes, to feuds—
crippled our minds and bodies. Undermined
nations of unsuspecting slaves uprose,
collapsed, then disappeared to leave no trace.

Stumbling across the fields of madness where,
standing in vigil, sparse and dreadful mills
tremble in gusts and grind their memories,
dancers hallucinate from world to world.
Arrhythmic tunes are floating 'bove the lea,
quelling lucidity. There is no sun.
Acerbic waters flood the countryside.
Tulips won't bloom; they'll rot in their own stench.

Desert our sky. We know your signs are fake.
Heaven is not above. One day we'll see
without the boundaries of echoed lies:
asylum's out of reach, yet e'er in view.
Archways of glass may lure the prisoners'
affections, but we won't be longer fooled.
Askance they look, them preys of cowardice—
perchance they'll eat us up the while we stumble.

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