

## **LA BRUJA: GHAZAL**

Sadly I walk to the sea, carry bunches of roses.  
La Bruja, where are you, my witch with your bunches of roses.

Your girl wanders at midnight, black car spinning fast.  
Everywhere along the sea, pockets of roses.

Your mother knew nothing but childbirth and whiskey.  
Who can love this broken tree touched by roses?

Your father tends his garden, aqua vitae, magnolia, apple tree.  
La bruja makes the shivering boy a lunch of roses.

A country we loved, broken and dying, now bags of dry leaves.  
A man knows how to fly, how to flee, crouched in roses.

She loves wearing dresses made of spiders and cobwebs.  
He tastes women's painted lips like brunches of roses.

Bare fists or knives, your father loves a good beating.  
Who first kissed our garden door, its scent of roses?

Your old woman prays and dances. She stops the wild fires!  
All I have is dried fruit and a crutch of roses.

Your healer lays black roses in a silver bowl.  
How those pesky deer love the munch of roses.

Brett covered his scrawny body with a green tattoo.  
Who was the old woman, crying, hunched in roses?

I could barely remember Margaret, my name at dawn.  
In white gowns all young girls to the river. Stench of roses.

Margaret Szumowski 2002

## TOUGH CUSTOMER

I could float in a lagoon of badness  
draw men into my gondola,  
but only a dope

chooses John the Baptist  
as her first customer.

Fresh from living on swamp grass  
and mosquito wings, he turns  
those eyes on me.

“Would you get into my boat.  
spread the canopy of trees for cover,  
wear soft air for clothes?” I offer.

He looks at me with eyes  
that nail my soul to the twisted bayou tree,  
must be related to Nathan

the buzzard who tormented David.  
His glare crumbles my bones.

I'll have to go back to the city  
and get to work, but not  
the kind of work I had in mind.

My soul a flaming petal.  
Roots straight to hell. The real me  
evil as licorice. I'm the devil's cancan girl.

The prophet laughs,  
Woman soft as magnolia,  
you fall, petals onto the earth.

You better ride the sloop Desire  
straight to paradise  
to the lover you long for.

Margaret Szumowski 2002

## TAKING HIS NAME IN TRANSLATION

Margaret Szumowski loves the mouth of her last name,  
the zoom that gave her the last name,  
the zoom that gave her the oom, the oom pah pah  
of a lover, the zooming in of a morning lover, the zoo  
of marriage and children, the oom of loving his  
delicious self again and again, the ski of the downslope  
and the strength to ski up the mountain, the bloom of the zoom  
of marrying this Polish wonder, Chopin of the West,  
the slips and lips of loving him, the ow of some moment,  
the awe of his lips, his touch, the groom she always wanted  
on skis, prince of skis. The sh of shmowski as it should  
be said, the sh of the two of us softly together, the show  
of bodies, the moving, the garret of my name, the favorite  
garret where I visit the mar that I love so much. What mars me  
and what keeps me, the mar at the edge of the sea. Mar ski,  
the love of water, the love of my Polish boy,  
the sea of marriage to my Polski, making the mouth  
of love to my Polish lover, Szumowski.

Margaret Szumowski 2003