

## Magnification Forty

SAMPLE

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(AS EDITOR)

*At the End of the World: Contemporary Poetry from Bulgaria*

SAMPLER

# Magnification Forty

Tsvetanka Elenkova

*translated from Bulgarian  
by Jonathan Dunne*

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SAMPLE

*To Gabriel*

SAMPLER



*Every thing that is above another is  
concealed from what is beneath it.*

*The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian, Homily 26*  
(Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011)

SAMPLE

This book is divided into three parts.

In the first, 'Samples', the poet examines objects through a microscope at a magnification of forty and describes what she sees. In the second, 'Waterfalls', she takes language outside and examines waterfalls in her native Bulgaria and in Greece. And in the third, 'Directions', she describes different places in Europe she has visited, from Rome to London to Berlin, passing through the island of Skopelos and the commune of Lodève.

SAMPLE

SAMPLES

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SAMPLE

SAMPLE

## BISCUIT

In the crumbs can be seen sugar  
cacao bread  
and other things  
because it is a kaleidoscope  
It can be seen how the continents have separated  
from a single whole  
how mammals (bear, dog, etc.)  
descend from the seahorse  
how a shadow is a man's  
darker angel  
and how going between two steps  
is also flying  
Most of all  
how you want to dive from these islands  
into the white circle of the sea a spotlight  
that hasn't been burnt up yet  
You skate or pull a sledge  
at the South Pole

## BREAD

### White

candy floss lung driven snow  
you thrust your finger into  
until it goes blue  
not from pain  
from purity  
pollen stuck to your finger  
from a butterfly's wings  
sponge with lather  
from homemade soap  
the inside of a stone the mask of a bee-keeper  
and in each hole spit  
like the one our grandmothers used to knead bread  
in the world below

### Brown

a shade thicker  
a shade darker  
the way a snow-eating wind lifts  
dust from the road

## CHOCOLATE, dark

It is so black so hard  
you only see the details  
when you take a bite  
because only uneven things  
capturing the light with their corners cliffs and ledges  
like an ice-cream scoop  
permit themselves the luxury  
of reflecting it  
Then you notice the structure  
which is not frightening at all  
the structure of a flower inside a tree  
of bite marks  
You piece together the pieces  
and understand how little  
darkness really is  
Like paper stuck to a window  
like a layer of cocoa powder flour  
clinging to the side  
of a glass jar

## DAMASK ROSE, thorn

sawdust  
where it joins the plant  
double-sided adhesive tape  
it is impossible to get off  
wrinkled skin along its length  
with spots on the hands  
the end is no sharper  
than a sharpened pencil  
but still draws blood  
mica on the flat side  
on houses with mosaics  
seen from top to bottom  
an erection  
all of this  
in quick succession  
old age and passion  
are what protect the flower from damage

SAMPLE



## DUST

Have you ever thought how  
for dust  
every surface is deep?

SAMPLER

## EARTH

I felt it alive between my fingers  
cotton ball on a vein  
pulsating throat  
But when I looked at it under the microscope  
those tiniest grains  
it had a face  
and a cross in the line between the eyes and the nose  
All the brittle matter  
which at first glance is homogeneous  
coffee or salt  
(I even put it in a paper salt cellar)  
is actually made up of lumps and stones  
each with its own features  
and forms come about there where  
the whole falls apart crumbles separates  
into lots of hearts  
the small and the big are interlinked  
in something like a molecular structure or DNA  
Every time I tried to sprinkle a little more of the sample  
they looked like petals  
like kneaded dough or crumbly biscuits  
At this magnification there were no animals to be seen  
only reefs  
but I'm sure it was teeming  
I wanted to examine the earth on a white piece of paper  
to see whether I could discover letters  
but instead of that  
a triangle from the contours of two pine needles  
just like nibs  
Then I said to myself

ah that means it's not only the word not only the word  
but also a writing tool  
a sword in the hands of Archangel Michael  
and those glints here and there in the moonlight  
to show them the way

SAMPLE

## FEATHER

A birch in the sun  
with a transparent trunk  
and black roots  
that write in the soil  
an angel's pen  
Silver-plated barbs  
like branches  
after the first snowfall  
they do not crunch under our feet  
because they are on the window  
Goose bumps  
but when it grows dark  
luminous bones  
two tones grey and pink  
whiter than grey  
So many lips eyelids  
that stick and unstick themselves  
envelopes  
with the Guinness record  
for the longest kiss