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iqxs>n]

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ylx#k|k#j#Q#N#b#nd
c#w#l#re] #n#m#Q#re]
ig#m#nd#n#z
B#j#j#G#nd#k#d#j#V
wn#u#i#j#m#n#y#j#i#h#k#d

ynw#poxv#i.Tm
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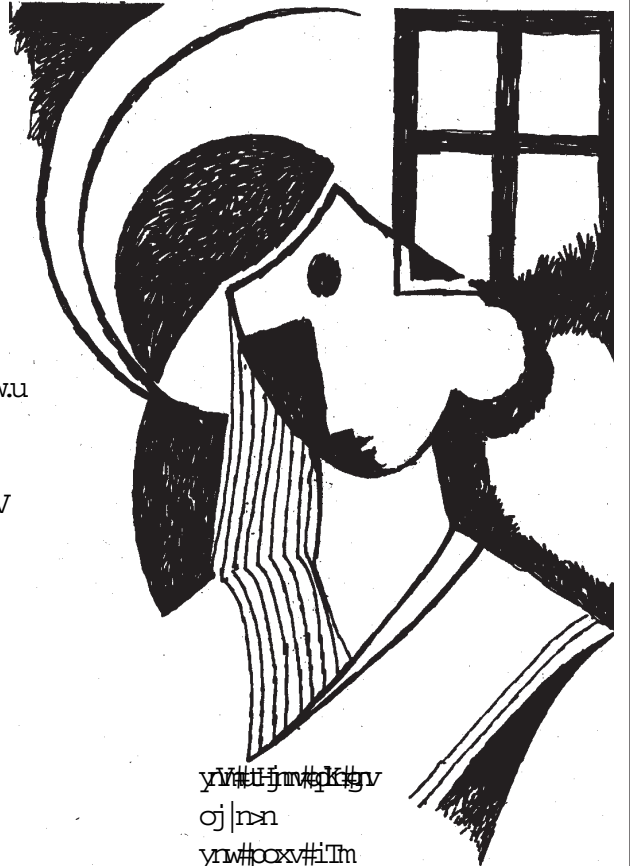
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yn#n#w#u#k#d#k
eci|>#f#v#w#u#n#l#o#|n#m#i#q#n
lzm#/#g#b#m
c#m#f#d#j#g#i|>#D

ynw#poxv#i.Tm
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j#d#u#j#p#f#n#v
B#b#b#j" .u#y#n#m
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s`m#|{n#n#D
m#u#h#d#j#d
x#w#n#k#j#d#p#re]
k#k#P.#n#k#P#g#m
f#v#o#i#f|^#u#m#|n#l#n#f#s#v#g#v
if|^#u#m#j#d#Q#v#P.#q#n
j#h#d#h#k
e#o#g#n#i#T.#n|uz#y#n#m#|n#m#i#o
x#j#d#h#j#v#p#o#n#l#>#m
y#n#/#g#d#h#t#j#p#o#g#v#k#k#u#n
j#n#n#j#y#n#D
p#n#i#T#m#E#E#>#n

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/g#/#g#n#v#s#l#m#q#n|^#j#V
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y#o|k#j#g#q#m

a#z#k#t#j#n#>#g#n
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x#j#d#j#n
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ylx#(#n|#m#o#j#n
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y#n#u#i#j#m#k#j#v
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ynw#poxv#i.Tm
ut#j#m#f#v#f#P.L#x#m
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Some Poems by Archana Varma

(translated from Hindi by Ruth Vanita)

The day's routine

*Today, once again,
she crumpled a poem,
lit the fire with it,
and put up the water for tea;
with the spice of her song,
cooked the meal, regretting
that the food lacked the flavour
your mother gave it.*

*Today, once again,
she polished your shoes;
held herself to blame
for all your misfortunes.*

*Today, once again,
she drew breath by your leave
and, since it was forbidden,
humiliated she gave up
a whole world -
shut the door on it*

*Today, once again,
she drank no tea, gave no opinion.
but, panting and puffing
made the rounds -
home to office,
office to home,
never raising her eyes
on the way.*

*She left a helpless, crying, lost child
on the crowded street, crying -
she stayed within the bounds.*

*After all, her love is no free,
no unclaimed thing -
What though an ocean
is swelling in her?*

*The tides of compassion
rose, then ebbed,
Must not even the ocean
stay within bounds?
Each drop is claimed
each corner is owned -
all around, everpresent,*

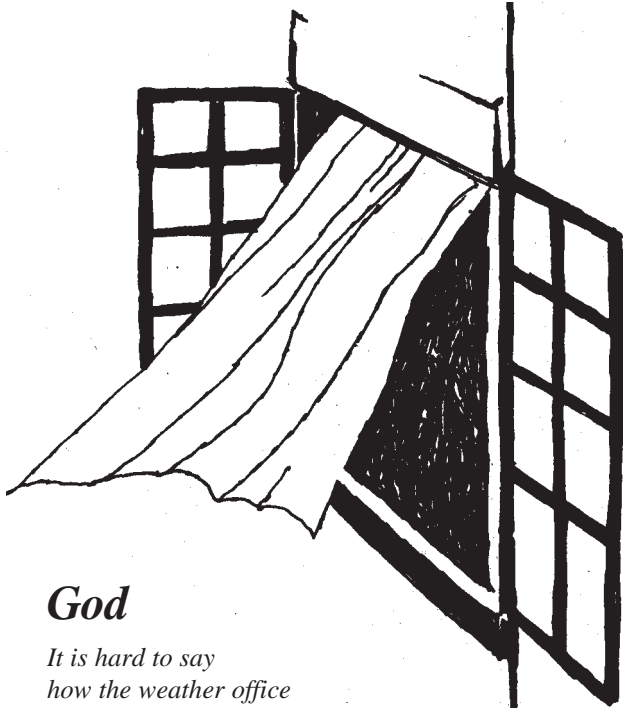
*are the real claimants.
Clinging to the badge
of chaste wifehood,
she swallowed her anger,
bore the shoves,
the rude stares,
the unspoken comments.
Shrinking, cowering,
irritated, exhausted,
laden with packets
of spices, lentils,
bags of vegetables,
she reached home.
Today, once again,
she paid freedom's price
and was grateful.*

*Today, once again,
your wrongdoing
she did not call wrong.
and felt on her cheek
the uncalled-for slap
given to the child,
heard your joke
about women's idiocy,
pretending not to hear it,
but then herself offered
proof of her own idiocy
to stroke*



*your ego.
Today, once again,
she pitied your
helpless greatness,
today, again made
her worn out body
ready in welcome.
Today, again,
this daily dishonour
she labelled duty, and rights,
and love:
yet again saved
from an earthquake
her world.*

*Today, again,
she refrained from asking,
where will this end?
and was fitted with the pride
of being a wife.
Before crumpling a poem
for the morning stove,
she sting to the child
a lullaby.*



God

*It is hard to say
how the weather office
would have decided its speed,
at how many miles an hour.
Only one window remained open.
Wrenching the curtains,
banging the panes,
the storm
burst inside.
Before it could be closed
the whole window
with its frame
fell outside -
then there was nothing to stop it.
Pictures, flower vases,
books or the table lamp -
who knows
which fell first -
all were smashed.
The labour years
was telling a fearsome tale.
I stood, trying to tell
whether or not
there ever was anything there.*

*Next morning he got up late.
He asked for tea
- in the same godlike style.
He had no idea
that all was not well*

Love

*It was a net
and I was not water
that could run through, escape.*

*It was a froud
which I,
to escape
from myself,
had, with many more idols,
sculpted
within me.*

Security

*Planting a small sapling
he set up around it
a fence
of thomy branches.*

*The sapling was to blame.
It grew.
What could the thorns do
but pierce it?*