

# IN THE BLINK OF A THIRD EYE

Poetry, Flash-Fiction,  
Drawing-Collages

**Valery Oisteanu**

Spuyten Duyvil (\$30)

If you plan on spending some time with Valery Oisteanu's poetry and art, be prepared to move—not so much physically (though that's an option) as psycho-spiritually. Oisteanu is all about vectors, and his include the Soviet Union, where he was born; Romania, where he came of age; and the United States, where he settled in the 1970s and became a mainstay of New York's art and performance scene. His work takes the reader from the Lower East Side to the heights of Uxmal, from dreamscapes to the local bodega, and from the cemetery to the carnival fun house.

With his latest collection, *In the Blink of a Third Eye*, three formal vectors converge: poetry, prose, and collage. Oisteanu has been experimenting with all three forms for decades, but here, gathered in a single work, they feed off each other in a surrealist frenzy. The common thread, as in all his work, is a relentless exploration of the weirder crannies of human consciousness. Eros is always there somehow, whether in the background or in your face: "Fruits in the shape of breasts and

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vulvas / Wet dreams gushing as a volcanic vent / Deep caves inside caves, within caves."

Even in death Oisteanu finds an urge: to sing. Over the years he has gouged a groove for himself as an "obit poet," never missing a chance to compose an elegy, and this book—with a section titled "Ghost Purgatory," offering homages to the departed—is no exception. Take the elegy for Steve Dalachinsky, another downtown New York poet who embraced an improvisational aesthetic. In his simple and touching poem for a friend, Oisteanu rides a vector past specifics—junkyards, gin, and jazz—to zero in on a universal truth as plain as the cement sidewalk, though half-hidden by our frenetic footfalls: "Every day someone leaves their apartment and never returns."

From "Unsustainable Happiness," in which "you are unplugged but not yet dead" to

"The Dark Side of the Dream," where "Wilted flowers devour fresh flowers," the voyage never stops. The hitchhiker's thumb is always erect and the death that assails us in the end has something to say about the monuments we try to make for ourselves. Indeed, in his more mature collections, the end of the line's shadow is constantly edging against that dance of juxtapositions that is Oisteanu's hallmark.

In *In the Blink of a Third Eye*'s prose poems read deceptively like travel brochures, except for that odd detail or absurd premise that renders them otherworldly. And they most certainly come from another world. Whether through lyricism or expository narrative, we are always hovering a little askew with respect to conventional reality, adrift in a zone that might be best described by the author's own coinage: "zendada." *In the Blink of a Third Eye* will zendada you, and you may never be the same again.

The collages contained in this volume offer more of the same juxtapositions, only transposed to a visual mode. Oisteanu gives us strange sections of the body—mostly human, though often feral or mythical—scattered among obligatory legs, eyes, and stretches of nudes in repose: "Horizontal vaginas seeking square pricks / An upright piano housing giant locust-bees / The purity of intention pushing a dark abyss / A zeppelin flying against the solid darkness."

There's an easiness to all the oddity, as if to say this weirdness is as natural as any dream. Don't turn away; enjoy it for what it is. Because what it is amounts to what we can be, if only we let loose and allow our everyday reality to be penetrated by the marvelous.

—Stash Luczkiw