

## POETRY

### INTROSPECTION

by Nino Pepanishvili

It's raining today in New York City. Even the rain in the city is a miracle and a little surreal like it's raining in a noisy, crowded, roofless house with many rooms. On stepping into this house each September, it is like a door to me, an old, rotten wooden door with peeling paint, waiting to collapse and block the doorway forever. I am already leaving behind the eighth door and opening the ninth one.

But hasn't the plane just landed at JFK? Haven't I just seen Times Square for the first time? Isn't it the first autumn in New York when I began to see this city and myself in the colors of golden rain?

Nine is a sacred number, very complete, three times three, the ninth heaven. The ninth year being in the place that I dreamed of seeing for so long from my motherland. And the ninth year has turned out to be the quickest to come. Nine years, when I have crossed nine mountains and the sea most quickly.

Yes, it's already been nine years since this city has sheltered me, changed me like a pebble in a fast current, changed my views, dressed me in a particular way, shaped me in a particular way. Changed me inside and out, maybe for the better or worse, it doesn't matter. The main thing is, I am not the same me anymore. Even the people around me are not like their old selves anymore, the ones who came here with me at the same time. Probably even the ones we left behind in the nine mountains in my country.

These years have been both hard and less difficult. Hectic and less busy, 'cause this city ain't the place to chill. There were and still are periods when I want to run away from this dream city, when I have no more desires, when I feel that I can't get away from this place for a moment

But when I am released from my stress, I realize that I'm still in the same house that I was eagerly looking forward to nine years ago, when I rushed through that collapsing door. I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to be here eternally. I must move through every circle of Samsara\* and close every circle of my life here.

You might think this is no time for sentiment. That's what you think, don't you? There is no time for this, I do agree. When there is a war in Ukraine, floods in Pakistan. People are leaving Georgia with their families, apartment prices have risen in New York, the price of products has increased, somewhere in distant Africa masses of children are still starving and dying, a nuclear power plant is leaking, and one insane, evil man has taken thousands of innocent lives.

But it's all happening inside me as well. I am wounded and dying along with them, with the bullets shot at me, I am wiping my sweat with those on the Mexican border, I am fighting the floods and struggling to swim through my flooded hometown when I can't swim. Sometimes these feelings are so strong I don't know whom they hurt more, me or others. When I feel this unbelievable pain, I don't know why,

or whom to ask for painkillers. Who cares? I keep asking myself, but I can't help the desire to share since it brings relief.

It is September 2022, it is the beginning of the ninth autumn in New York. I feel as if I'm a different person every September, with a different version of features and emotions.

And now at the beginning of a new cycle, when it seems to me as if I am newly born, I have a burning desire to erase the past with a metamorphic wet wipe and clear the room for the present day. I want to look up at the sky without any shadows from the past and feel the golden light from the clear blue sky. These wishes may not be attainable, but I want to believe it is worth trying!

\*Samsara is a Sanskrit word for the repetitive cycle of death and rebirth. It encompasses the concept of reincarnation.

### Biographical Note



**Nino Papanishvili** is a native of Gori, Georgia, but she has just begun her ninth year living in New York City. Her poetry makes it clear that the city has claimed her as its own.