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Carlos Edmundo de Ory

A UNA MUJER

Estás aquí al lado mío
Y arrojas pétalos de rosas
en las aguas sagradas de mi cara

Carlos Edmundo de Ory

LOS BESOS

Los besos de frágil arquitectura
Los besos
Los besos como arañas quietas y los besos
que no se dan
Los besos que di y que me dieron los
persigo los señalo con rayitas
en mis huesos
Mis grandes besos atroces
besos monstruos
en todo cuerpo de mujer
en todas partes viajando
Quiero que uno un día
que un beso solo un día
como un instrumento de música
como un violín sí como un violín
sea visto y mirado
y que nadie lo toque
Porque ya no toca
es un violín sin cuerdas
Carlos Edmundo de Ory

TO A WOMAN

You are here at my side
Throwing petals from the roses
on the sacred waters of my face.

Carlos Edmundo de Ory

THE KISSES

The kisses with their fine architecture
The kisses
The kisses like spiders in silence and the kisses
not given
The kisses I gave them and they gave to me
I hunt them I trace out their lines
on my bones
My outrageous great kisses
my monstrous kisses
on all woman’s body
to all parts well traveled
and I hope that one, on one day,
that one kiss just one day
will be looked at and seen
like a musical instrument
a violin yes like a violin
and that nobody play it
because it cannot be played:
a violin without a string.
Carlos Edmundo de Ory

CANTO DE DESPEDIDA

También tú me abandonas mi última mujer
To amé te amo aún y me despido ahora
Ve y no mires atrás donde yo no estaré
Yo ya no sé decir adiós Me quedo solo
Errante continúo mi marcha hacia los árboles
que gimen en la noche y me comprenden
Me has creído inhumano y te apartas de mí
Gracias mujer por tus noches profundas
Los días nos separan y con su espada cruel
abaten el amor y su sagrado reino
Te di mi corazón No te di mi cabeza
Perdóname si mis caricias ávidas
te han gastado la piel Perdóname
por el roto violín de mis besos mujer

Carlos Edmundo de Ory

LLANTO

La noche besadora se enfriá
porque la mujer azul se ha ido
Queda el desierto y el trigo y el ángel
Vete a uno de esos sitios
¡Eso pasó! A nada se redujo
¿Quién explica el grandioso vacío?
Fragmento del pasado ¿en dónde cuelgas?
En la verbalización que es recuerdo
y en este llanto
Carlos Edmundo de Ory

A SONG OF FAREWELL

You too my last woman are going from me
I loved you still love you and now take my leave
Go and don’t look behind where I will not be
I no longer know the words to say goodbye I am alone
I am a nomad I continue on my journey to the trees
that moan in the night that understand me
You thought me inhuman you are going from me
Thank you woman for the depths of your nights
We are driven apart by the cruel sword of days
striking down love in its sacred reign
I gave you my heart, not my mind
Forgive me if my avid caresses
have worn out your skin forgive me woman
for the broken violin of my kisses

Carlos Edmundo de Ory

SOB

The kissing night is growing cold
because the azure woman’s gone
The desert the wheat and the angel remain
Get you to one of those places
It all really happened! And came to nothing
Who can explain the magnificent void?
Piece of the past—what do you hang from?
From its verbalization which now is a memory
and from this sob.
Carlos Edmundo de Ory

SI TUVIERA UN CABALLO...

Si tuviera un caballo en vez de una metáfora
Si callara mi boca como calla la luna
Volaría lejos de tanta tristeza
No escribiría ni una sola línea

No puede ser así camino lento
Y hablo solo hasta morirme
Puñados de sueños y alarmas
descienden de las nubes invernales

Te busco lontananza sé mi antorcha
que me libere del terror nocturno
La tiniebla es mi yugo caigo herido
en el pantano de mi mente odiosa

No veo más que la faz del misterio
Pasmo en lo mudo y en la infinidad
Sufro de ser poeta y de imprimir
mis facciones en el canto amargo
Carlos Edmundo de Ory

IF I HAD A HORSE

If I had a horse instead of a metaphor
If silence would come to my mouth as it does to the moon
I would fly far from such sorrow
I would write no more, not even a line

That cannot be so slowly I go
I talk to myself till I’m ready to die
Fistfuls of dreams and alarms
come down from the clouds of winter time

And I look for you horizon be my torch
to free me from nocturnal terror
Darkness is my yoke I fall wounded
In the marshes of my hateful mind

I see nothing but the face of mystery
I am stunned in muteness and infinitude
I suffer from being a poet and leaving
my impression on the bitter song
Ofelia Castillo

EL POEMA

Hubo la luz
   el cerco de las palabras
   las migajas del alba.

Salí a la sombra
   al resplandor.

En la noche violenta descifré la sorpresa.

Como un árbol donde debía sonar el viento
   seguí viviendo.

Ofelia Castillo

FRAGMENTOS

Atravesados ya los momentos difíciles
   los hermosos momentos
   cuando retroceder es imposible
   recordar imposible
   recuperar, una aventura incierta
   un paso de bailarín sobre la cuerda
   la memoria de un pie sobre la playa
   que no conocemos
   que no nos pertenece
   sobre la que quisiéramos tendernos,
   fragmentos
   fragmentos iluminados
   por una luz de acuario
   temblorosa.
Translator H.E. Francis

Ofelia Castillo

THE POEM

There was light
  the ring of words
    scraps of dawn.

I went into darkness
  into radiance.

In the violent night I unraveled surprise.

Like a tree wind must blow through
I went on living.

Ofelia Castillo

FRAGMENTS

The difficult moments long since overcome
the beautiful moments
when turning back is impossible
remembering impossible
regaining, an uncertain adventure
a dancer’s step on the wire
the memory of a foot on the beach
which we do not know
which does not belong to us
over which we wished to stretch our bodies
fragments
fragments illuminated
by a light from the trembling
aquarium.
A veces
como una llamarada
como un sonido inquietante a medianoche,
el material inaccessible y único
la mitad de una vida que no existe
pero que podría existir
si de pronto quisiéramos contarla
divulgarla
repartirla en pedazos simplemente.

Cierro los ojos y
aquí también, me digo, es necesario entrar:
el tambalcante ritmo del otoño
un río oscuro
la sombra conmovedora de las flores ajenas
una ladera inclinada dulcemente
bajo la niebla violeta
bajo el fragante peso de los árboles.

El presente me tienta
mi vida se exaspera
un pedazo de cielo de noviembre
la curva de una mano
me reparten me invocan
me conducen
a la presencia opaca de los vivos
a la memoria inventada de los muertos
y hablo para romper
descubrir relatar
el horizonte múltiple translúcido
la alegría el cansancio
y palabras palabras
para la soledad que no se quiere
para la luz que estalla
para la cobardía
para el ojo despierto
a pesar nuestro.
Sometimes
like a blaze
like a disquieting sound at midnight
the inaccessible, unique substance
half of a life which does not exist
but which would exist
if suddenly we desired to tell it
divulge it
simply share it in bits.

I close my eyes and
here too, I tell myself, I must enter:
the staggering rhythm of autumn
a dark river
the stirring shadows of the oblivious flowers
a slope pleasantly inclined
under the violet fog
under the fragrant weight of the trees.

The present tempts me
my life grows restless
a piece of November sky
the curve of a hand
divide me invoke me
lead me
to the opaque presence of the living
to the imagined memory of the dead
and I speak to break
to discover to relate
the transparent multiple horizon
joy weariness
and words words
for the solitude which no one desires
for the light which bursts
for cowardice
for the eye awakened
to our grief.
Ofelia Castillo
DEL POETA Y SU RÍO

Entre el poeta y su río no hay distancia.
Sólo la dilatada corriente
la vasta reverberación bajo la piel de los árboles
y el diálogo interminable y frágil
las palabras del sauce y los silencios del agua
el espejo del agua donde la mente del poeta
recupera sus antiguas imágenes.

Nada sabe del río, el poeta.
Correr es cosa suya, aprisionar la luz,
una vez más
el fervor de las cuatro de la tarde
o el insondable estremecimiento de una mañana idéntica
perfecta
inevitable.

En el agua del río del poeta
caben la soledad y el desamparo
la meditación con su fulgor de lámpara vigilante sobre
la angustia
y la mirada implacablemente dulce
empecinadamente fija sobre la corriente del mundo.

Nada sabe del río, el poeta.

Pero ha encontrado en él la violencia y el ritmo
la alegría y la furia susurradas
y también
vastos horizontes dorados
lechos de hierba donde toda la ternura del mundo
quizás sea posible
donde los cuerpos oscuros y amables de los hombres
puedan recuperar sus juegos
su armonía
el restallante triunfo de elevarse unidos
resplandecientes y puros
Between the poet and his river there is no distance.
Only the expanding current
the vast reverberation under the skin of the trees
and the interminable and fragile dialogue
the words of the willow and the silences of the water
the mirror of water where the mind of the poet
recovers its ancient images.

He knows nothing of the river, the poet.
Flowing is its own affair, imprisoning light,
once more
the fervor of four o'clock in the afternoon
or the unfathomable trembling of a morning, identical
perfect
inevitable.

In the water of the river of the poet
there is room for solitude and desertion
meditation with its radiance burning vigilant over
anguish
and the implacably sweet gaze
obstinately fixed on the current of the world.

He knows nothing of the river, the poet.

But he has found violence and rhythm there
whispered joy and fury
and also
vast golden horizons
green beds where all the tenderness in the world
may be possible
where men's friendly unfamiliar bodies
may recover their motion
their harmony
the resounding triumph of rising together
resplendent and pure
por sobre la sombra mortífera que ahora
los envuelve.

Nada hay
para el poeta
en el río.

Sólo la brisa profunda
uno que otro acontecimiento demorado y recóndito
y la pasión en vigilia sobre el tiempo
sobre la tenue luz de un tiempo sin preguntas
de un tiempo que lo rodea y lo escucha
bajo su niebla violeta
bajo el fragante peso de sus árboles.

Ofelia Castillo

**LOS AMANTES**

Sobre la extática curva de un día amanecido sin diluvio
surge la llamarada confusa de los que aman.
Sus cuerpos brillan se levantan cambian
sus cuerpos tatuados de temblorosas cicatrices
de tímidas señales
que les será necesario abandonar.

Y sin embargo
dulce es el sol sobre los árboles del verano
aunque ellos deban vivir
como un animal acosado por el relámpago
como la canción que irrumpe en el corazón de un solitario
como un puñado de palabras destinadas a hundirse
en el oleaje ambíguo de los años.

Porque los profetas del mediodía no cantan
como los pájaros.
Simplemente sucede
entre desposeídos y fantasmas
una piel que pregunta por su nombre
un brazo que se levanta para detener
el fuego.
over the deadly shadow which now
falls over them.

There is nothing
   for the poet
in the river.

Only the mysterious breeze
one or another delayed and secret event
and passion vigilant over time
over the tenuous light of a time with no questions
of a time which surrounds him and listens to him
under the violet cloud
under the fragrant weight of his trees.

Ofelia Castillo

THE LOVERS

Over the ecstatic curve of a day dawned without deluge
surges the confused blaze of those who love.
Their bodies glisten rise change
their bodies tattooed with trembling scars
with timid signs
which they will have to abandon.

And still
sweet is the sun over the summer trees
although they must live
like an animal harassed by lightning
like the song which bursts in the heart of a solitary
like a handful of words destined to be drowned
in the uncertain surge of the years.

Because the prophets of noon do not sing
like birds.
Simply there comes
among the dispossessed and ghosts
a skin which asks for its name
an arm which rises to hold back
the fire.
Jorge Amado

THE LIGHTS OF THE CARROUSEL

The "Great Japanese Carrousel" was nothing but a small native merry-go-round that arrived after a sad pilgrimage through inland towns during those winter months when the rains are long, Christmas is still far off. So faded was the paint, paint that had once been blue and red, that the blue was a dirty white now and the red was almost pink, and so many pieces were missing on certain horses and benches that Nhôzinho França decided not to set it up in any of the main squares of the city but in Itapagipe. The families there aren't so rich, there are a lot of streets where only workers live, and poor children would appreciate the faded old carrousel. The canvas also had a lot of holes along with an enormous gash that left the carrousel at the mercy of the rain. It had been beautiful once, it had even been the pride and joy of the children of Macció in other days. At that time it stood alongside a Ferris wheel and a sideshow, always on the same square, and on Sundays and holidays rich children dressed in sailor suits or like little English lords, the girls in Dutch costumes or fine silk dresses came to claim their favorite horses, the little ones sitting on the benches with their nannies. The fathers would go on the Ferris wheel, others preferred the side-show, where they could push up against women, often touching their thighs and buttocks. Nhôzinho França's carnival was the joy of the city in those days. And, above all, the carrousel brought in money, tirelessly turning with its lights of all colors. Nhôzinho found life good, the women pretty, the men friendly to him, but he found that drink was good too, it made men more friendly, and the women prettier. And in that way he drank away first the sideshow and then the Ferris wheel. Then, since he didn't wish to be separated from the carrousel, for which he had a special affection, he took it down one night with the help of some friends and began to wander through the towns in Alagoas and Sergipe. During this time his creditors cursed him with every ugly name they knew. Nhôzinho did a lot of traveling with his carrousel. After covering all the small towns in the two states, getting drunk in all their bars, he went over into the state of Bahia and even gave a performance for Lampião's gang. He was in a poor town in the backlands and he didn't just lack money for the transportation of his carrousel. He didn't have any for the miserable hotel where he stayed and which was the only one in town or for a shot of cane liquor or beer that wasn't cooled but which he liked all the same. The carrousel, set up on the grass on the square by the church, had been
still for a week. Nhôzinho França was waiting for Saturday night and Sunday afternoon in order to see if he could pick up a few pennies to enable him to get to a better place. But on Friday Lampião entered the town with twenty-two men and then the carrousel had to work. Like children, the big bandits, men who had twenty or thirty deaths to their credit, found the carrousel nice, found that looking at its spinning lights, listening to the very old music of its player piano, and getting on those beat-up wooden horses was the highest form of happiness. So Nhôzinho França’s carrousel saved the small town from being sacked, the girls from being deflowered, the men from being killed. Only two members of the Bahian state police who were shining their boots in front of the police station were shot by the bandits, before they saw the carrousel set up on the square by the church. Because maybe even the Bahian state policemen might have been spared by Lampião on that night of supreme happiness for the bandit gang. Then they were like children, enjoying the happiness they had never enjoyed in their childhood as peasant children: mounting and riding a wooden horse on a carrousel, where there was music from a pianola and where the lights were of all colors: blue, green, yellow, purple, and red, like the blood that poured out of the bodies of murder victims.

That was what Nhôzinho told Dry Gulch (who was all excited by it) and Legless on that afternoon when he found them in the Gate of the Sea and invited them to help him run the carrousel during the time it was set up in Bahia, in Itapagipe. He couldn’t promise any set wages, but there might be enough for each one to get five milreis a night. And when Dry Gulch showed his skills at imitating all kinds of animals, Nhôzinho França got all enthusiastic, ordering another bottle of beer and declaring that Dry Gulch would stand by the entrance calling people in while Legless would help him with the machinery and be in charge of the pianola. He himself would sell tickets when the carrousel was stopped. When it was turning, Dry Gulch would. “And every so often,” he said, winking, “one of us can take off for a shot of something while the other does double duty.”

Dry Gulch and Legless had never picked up on an idea with such enthusiasm. They had seen carrousels many times but almost always from a distance, surrounded by mystery, their swift horses ridden by rich and whiney children. Legless had even once (on a certain day when he went into an amusement park set up on the Passeio Público) got to buy a ticket for one, but a policeman kicked him out of the place because he was dressed in rags. Then the ticket-taker refused to give him back his ticket, which led Legless to stick his hand into the change drawer that was open and he had to disappear from the Passeio Público in rapid fashion while all up and down the street, cries of “Stop thief!” could be heard. There was tremendous confusion while Legless very calmly went down Gamboa de Cima, carrying in his pockets at least five times what he had paid for the ticket. But Legless doubtless would have preferred riding on the carrousel, up on that fantastic mount with a dragon’s head that was without a doubt the strangest of
all on the marvel that the carrousel was in his eyes. His hatred for policemen and love for distant carrousels grew even greater. And now, all of a sudden, a man had shown up who was paying for beer and performing the miracle of calling him to live alongside a real carrousel for a few days, moving with it, riding its horses, watching the lights of all colors going around from close by. And for Legless, Nhôzinho França wasn’t the drunkard across the poor table from him at the Gate of the Sea. In his eyes he was an extraordinary being, something like the God Lollipop prayed to, something like Xangô, who was the saint of Big João and God’s-Love. Because not Father José Pedro and not even the priestess Don’Aninha would be capable of bringing off that miracle. In the Bahian nights, on a square in Itapagipe, the lights of the carrousel would spin madly, moved by Legless. It was like a dream, a quite different dream from the ones Legless was used to having on his nights of anguish. And for the first time his eyes felt moist with tears that hadn’t been brought on by pain or rage. And his damp eyes looked on Nhôzinho França as on an idol. For him Legless would even open the throat of a man with the knife he carries between his pants and the old black vest that serves him as a jacket.

“‘It’s a beauty,’” Pedro Bala said, looking at the old carrousel when it was set up. And Big João opened his eyes in order to see better. Hanging around it were the blue, green, yellow, and red bulbs.

It’s old and faded, Nhôzinho França’s carrousel is. But it has its beauty. Maybe it’s in the bulbs, or in the pianola music (old waltzes out of a time long lost) or maybe in the wooden mounts. Among them there’s a duck for the smaller children to sit inside. It has its beauty, yes, because in the unanimous opinion of the Captains of the Sands it’s something marvelous. Who cares if it’s old, broken, and faded if it pleases children?

It was an almost unbelievable surprise when Legless arrived at the warehouse that night saying that he and Dry Gulch were going to work on the carrousel for a few days. A lot of them didn’t believe it, they thought it was just another trick on the part of Legless. Then they went to ask Dry Gulch, who, as always, was stuck in his corner examining a revolver he’d stolen from a weapons shop. Dry Gulch nodded yes and said a couple of times:

“‘Lampião rode on it. Lampião’s my godfather....’”

Legless invited everybody to come see the carrousel the next night when they would finish setting it up. And he went out to meet Nhôzinho França. At that moment all the little hearts that were beating in the warehouse envied Legless’s supreme happiness. Even Lollipop, who had pictures of saints on his wall, even Big João, who that night would go with God’s-Love to Procópio’s candomblé rites in Matatu, even the Professor, who read books, and, who knows, maybe Pedro Bala too, who never envied anyone because he was the leader of them all. They all envied him, yes. The way they envied Dry Gulch, who in his corner, his straight halfbreed hair hanging down, his eyes squinting, and his mouth twisted
in that rictus of rage, pointed the revolver, now at one of the boys, now at a rat who was passing, now at the stars, of which there were many in the sky.

The next night they all went with Legless and Dry Gulch (the latter had spent the day off helping Nhôzinho set up the carrousel) to see the assembled merry-go-round. And they stood before it in ecstasy over its beauty, their mouths open with admiration. Legless showed them everything. Dry Gulch took them one by one to show them the horse that had been ridden by his godfather Virgulino Ferreira Lampião. There were almost a hundred children looking at the old carrousel of Nhôzinho França, who at that time was in the throes of a tremendous binge at the Gate of the Sea.

Legless showed them the engine (a small motor that missed a lot) with the pride of an owner. Dry Gulch didn’t get off the horse that Lampião had gone around on. Legless was very careful with the carrousel and wouldn’t let them touch it, handle anything.

It was when the Professor asked:

“Do you know how to work the machinery yet?”

“Tomorrow I’m going to learn...,” Legless said with a certain displeasure.

“Tomorrow Mr. Nhôzinho is going to teach me.”

“Then tomorrow, when the show is over, you can start it turning with just us. You get the thing started and we’ll get on board.”

Pedro Bala supported the idea enthusiastically. The others anxiously awaited Legless’s answer. Legless said yes and then some of them clapped, others cheered.

It was when Dry Gulch left the horse Lampião had ridden and came over to them:

“Do you want to see something nice?”

They all wanted to. The boy from the backlands got up onto the carrousel, wound up the pianola, and the music of an old waltz started up. Dry Gulch’s somber face opened up in a smile. He was watching the pianola, watching the boys wrapped in joy. They were listening religiously to that music coming from the bowels of the carrousel in the magic of the night of the city of Bahia only for the adventurous and poor ears of the Captains of the Sands. They were all silent. A worker who was coming along the street, seeing the group of boys on the square, came over to them. And he stood there too, listening to the old music.

Then the light of the moon spread out over them all, the stars shone even brighter in the sky, the sea grew completely calm (perhaps Iemanjá had also come to listen to the music) and the city was like a giant carrousel on which the Captains of the Sands were spinning on invisible horses. In that musical moment they felt themselves masters of the city. And they drew close to each other, they felt like brothers because all of them were without love or comfort and now they had the love and comfort of the music. Dry Gulch certainly wasn’t thinking about Lampião at that moment. Pedro Bala wasn’t thinking of someday being leader of the city’s whole underworld. Legless, about jumping into the sea where dreams are all beautiful. Because the music was coming out of the belly of the old carrousel
just for them and for the workman who had stopped. And it was an old sad waltz, long forgotten by all the men in the city.

People are pouring out of all the streets. It’s Saturday night, tomorrow men won’t have to go to work. They can hang around the street tonight. A lot of them prefer going to bars, the Gate of the Sea is full, but the ones with children had taken them to the poorly lighted square. In compensation, the lights of the carousel are spinning there. The children look at them and clap their hands. In front of the ticket office Dry Gulch is doing animal imitations and calling for customers. He’s wearing a cartridge belt, as if he were in the backlands. Nhôzinho França thought that would attract people’s attention and Dry Gulch looks just like a cangaceiro with his leather hat and crossed cartridge belts. And he imitates animals until men, women, and children gather in front of him. Then he offers tickets that the children buy. A joy spreads out over the whole square. The lights of the carousel make everyone happy. In the center, squatting down, Legless helps Nhôzinho França get the motor started. And the carousel spins, loaded with children, the pianola plays its old waltzes. Dry Gulch sells tickets.

Couples in love stroll about the square. Mothers buy popsicles and sherbets, a poet sitting facing the sea composes a poem about the lights of the carousel and the children’s joy. The carousel lights up all the square and all the hearts. At every moment people come out of streets and alleys. Dry Gulch, dressed as a bandit, imitates animals. When the carousel stops spinning, the children invade it, waving their tickets of admission and it’s hard to count them. When one of them can’t find a place his face grows sad with disappointment and he impatiently awaits his turn. And when the carousel stops those on it don’t want to get off and Legless has to come and say:

“Everybody off! Everybody! Or buy another ticket.”

Only then do they leave the old horses who never grow tired in their endless run. Others get on the mounts and the race begins again, the lights spinning, all the colors making one single strange tone, the pianola playing its ancient music. Loving couples are also going around on the benches and while the carousel spins they whisper words of love. There are even those who exchange a kiss when the motor fails and the lights go out. Then Nhôzinho França and Legless lean over the engine and look for what’s wrong until the spinning begins again, drowning out the protests of the children. Legless has already learned all the mysteries of the motor.

At a certain moment Nhôzinho França sends Legless to take Dry Gulch’s place selling tickets. And he has Dry Gulch ride the carousel. And the boy takes the horse that was used by Lampião. And while the ride lasts he goes along pulling on the reins as if he were riding a real horse. And he makes motions with his arms as if shooting at those in front of him and in his imagination he sees them dropping, bathed in blood, under the shots of his repeater. And the horse runs
and runs faster and faster and he kills them all because they're all soldiers or rich ranchers. Then he possesses all the women on the benches, sacks villages, towns, trains, riding his horse, armed with his rifle.

Then it's Legless's turn. He goes along silently, a strange emotion overcomes him. He goes along like a believer to mass, a lover to the breast of his beloved, a suicide to death. He goes pale and limping. He mounts a blue horse that has stars painted on its wooden rump. His lips are tight, his ears don't hear the music of the pianola. He only sees the spinning lights, and he comes to the realization that he's on a carrousel, spinning on a horse like all those children who have fathers and mothers, a home and someone to kiss them and love them. He thinks that he's one of them and he closes his eyes to hold the certainty better. He no longer sees the policemen beating him, the man with the vest who's laughing. Dry Gulch killed them on his ride. Legless is tense on his horse. It's as if he were running over the sea toward the stars in the most wonderful trip in the world. A trip such as one the Professor had never read about or made up. His heart is beating so hard that he holds his hand tight against it.

That night the Captains of the Sands didn't come. Not only did the carrousel ride on the square and very late (at two o'clock in the morning men were still spinning around), but many of them, including Pedro Bala, Good-Life, Outrigger, and the Professor were busy on different matters. They made a date for the next day, between three and four in the morning. Pedro Bala asked Legless if he knew how to run the engine all right now:

"It's no good causing any damage for you, boss," he explained.

"I know it backwards and forwards. It's a snap."

The Professor, who was playing checkers with Big Joao, asked:

"Wouldn't it be good if we stopped by the square in the afternoon? It might just be worth something."

"I'll go," Pedro Bala said. "But I don't think a lot of us should go. The crowd might get suspicious seeing so many together."

Cat said he couldn't go in the afternoon. He had something to do since he'd be busy on the carrousel that night. Legless teased him:

"A day can't go by without your mixing it up with that bag, right? You're going to end up a dish of mush...."

Cat didn't answer. Big Joao wasn't going in the afternoon either. He had to meet God's-Love to go have some black-bean stew at the house of Don'Aninha, the mãe-de-santo. Finally it was decided that a small group would work the square that afternoon. The others would go wherever they wanted to. Only at night they'd all get together to ride on the carrousel. Legless warned them:

"You've got to bring some gasoline, for the motor."

The Professor (he'd already beaten Big Joao in three games) took up a collection to buy half a gallon of gasoline:

"I'll bring it."
But Sunday afternoon brought the arrival of Father José Pedro, who was one of the very few people who knew where the most permanent abode of the Captains of the Sands was. Father José Pedro had become their friend a long time ago....

But that afternoon it was with little satisfaction that they saw him arrive. Lollipop went over and kissed the priest’s hand. Dry Gulch too. The rest bowed. Father José Pedro explained:

"Today I’ve come with an invitation for all of you."

Their ears were attentive. Legless muttered:

"He’s going to call us to benediction. I just want to see who’s for it...."

But he fell silent because Pedro Bala looked at him angrily. The priest gave him a kind smile. He sat down on a crate. Big João saw that his cassock was old and dirty. It was darned with black thread and was too big for the priest’s thinness. He nudged Pedro Bala, who noticed too. Then the Bullet said:

"People, Father José Pedro, who’s our friend, has got something for us. Hur­ray for Father José Pedro!"

Big João knew that it was all because of the torn cassock, too big for the priest’s thinness. The others answered with a "hurray," the priest smiled, waving his hand. Big João couldn’t take his eyes off the cassock. He thought that Pedro Bala was a real leader, he knew everything, knew how to do everything. For Pedro Bala Big João would let himself be cut with a knife like that black man in Ilhéus when he did it for Barbosa, the big boss of the scrublands. Father José Pedro put his hand into the pocket of his cassock, took out his black breviary. He opened it and from it drew several ten-milreis notes:

"This is for you all to ride the carrousel today...I invite you all to take a ride today on the carrousel on the square in Itapagipe."

He had hoped that the faces would be more animated. That an extraordinary joy would reign in the whole place. Because then he would be even more convinced that he was serving God when from those five hundred milreis that Dona Guilhermina Silva had given him for candles for the altar of the Virgin he had taken fifty milreis in order to take the Captains of the Sands to the carrousel.

And since the faces didn’t suddenly become happy, he was puzzled, the notes in his hand, looking at the crowd of boys. Pedro Bala stroked his hair (which fell over his ears), he tried to speak, he couldn’t. Then he looked at the Professor and it was the latter who explained:

"Father, you’re a good man." He felt like saying that the priest was a good man like Big João, but he thought perhaps the priest might be offended if he compared him to the black boy. "As a matter of fact Legless and Dry Gulch are both working on the carrousels. And we’ve been invited," he paused briefly, "by the owner, who’s their friend, to ride free at night. We won’t forget your invitation...." the Professor was speaking slowly, choosing his words, thinking that
it was a delicate moment, making up a lot of things and Pedro Bala backed him up with nods. "Another time. But you won't be mad at us for not accepting, will you? It didn't work out," and he was looking at the priest, whose face was happy again.

"No. Another time." He looked at the boys, smiling. "It's even better this way. Because the money I had..." and he suddenly fell silent at the deed he was about to recount. And he thought that maybe it had been a lesson from God, a warning that he had done something bad. His look was so strange that the boys stepped closer.

They were looking at the priest without understanding. Pedro Bala scratched his head as when he had a problem to solve; the Professor tried to speak. But Big João understood everything, in spite of his being the slowest wit of all:

"Did it belong to the church, Father?" and he covered his mouth, angry at himself.

The others understood. Lollipop thought that it would have been a great sin but felt that the priest's goodness was greater than the sin. Then Legless came over limping more than usual as if fighting with himself and almost shouted first, then lowering his voice:

"We can stick it back where it was... It's duck soup for us. Don't be sad..." and he smiled.

And Legless's smile and the friendship that the priest read in the eyes of all of them (could those have been tears in João's eyes?) restored his calm, serenity, and confidence in his act and in his God. He said in a natural voice:

"An old widow gave five hundred milreis for candles. I took out fifty so you people could ride on the carrousel. God will judge whether or not I did the right thing. Now I'll just buy candles."

Pedro Bala felt that he had a debt to pay the priest. He wanted the priest to know that they understood. And since there was nothing else at hand he was ready to skip the work they could have done that afternoon and invited the priest:

"We're going to the carrousel to see Dry Gulch and Legless this afternoon. Do you want to come with us, Father?"

Father José Pedro said he did because he knew that was another step forward in his intimacy with the Captains of the Sands. And a group went to the square with the priest. Several didn't go, including Cat, who went to see Dalva. But those who went looked like a group of good little boys coming from catechism. If they'd been better dressed and cleaned up they could have passed for schoolboys, they were going along in such an orderly fashion. On the square they went around everything with the priest. With pride they showed Dry Gulch imitating animals, dressed like a cangaceiro, Legless making the carrousel run all by himself because Nhôzinho França had gone off to have a beer in a bar. It was a shame that in the afternoon the lights of the carrousel weren't turned on. It wasn't as pretty
as at night, the lights spinning in all colors. But they were proud of Dry Gulch imitating animals, of Legless running the carrousel, having the children get on, having the children get off. The Professor, with a pencil stub and a box cover, sketched Dry Gulch dressed as a bandit. He had a special skill for drawing and sometimes he picked up money sketching on the sidewalk men who were passing, young ladies with their boyfriends. These would stop for a minute, laugh at the still imprecise drawing, the girls would say:

“It’s a good likeness...”

He would pick up some coins and then he would set about fixing up the sketch done in chalk, broadening it, putting in men from the waterfront and women of the demi-monde, until a policeman chased him off the sidewalk. Sometimes he already had a large group watching and someone would say:

“That boy’s got promise. It’s a shame the Government doesn’t take note of these vocations...,” and he recalled cases of street urchins who, aided by families, were great poets, singers, and painters.

The Professor finished the sketch (in which he put the carrousel and Nhözinho França falling down drunk) and gave it to the priest. They were all in a tight group looking at the drawing that the priest was praising when they heard:

“Why, it’s Father José Pedro...”

And the skinny old woman’s lorgnette fell upon the group like a weapon of war. Father José Pedro was half-despondent, the boys looked with curiosity at the bones and the neck and the breast of the old woman where a very expensive barrett sparkled in the sunlight. There was a moment in which they all remained silent until Father José Pedro got up his courage and said:

“Good afternoon, Dona Margarida.”

But the widow Margarida Santos raised her gold lorgnette again.

“Aren’t you ashamed to be seen in this company, Father? A priest of the Lord? A man of responsibility in the midst of this rabble...?”

“They’re children, ma’am.”

The old woman gave a haughty look and had a sneer of disdain on her mouth. The priest went on:

“Christ said: suffer the little children to come unto me....”

“Little children... Little children...” the old woman spat out.

“Woe unto him who does harm unto a child, the Lord said,” and Father José Pedro raised his voice above the disdain of the old woman.

“These aren’t children, they’re thieves. Rascals and thieves. These aren’t children. They might even be the Captains of the Sands....Thieves,” she repeated with disgust.

The boys were looking at her with curiosity. Only Legless, who had come from the carrousel since Nhözinho França had now returned, was looking at her with rage. Pedro Bala took a step forward, tried to explain:

“Father was only trying to be...”
But the old woman gave him a shove and stepped back:
"Don't come close to me, don't come close to me, you filth. If it weren't for
Father I'd call a policeman."

Pedro Bala gave a scandalous laugh there, thinking that if it weren't for Father
the old woman would no longer have her barret or her lorgnette either. The old
woman withdrew with an air of great superiority, not without first saying to Father
José Pedro:
"You won't go far that way, Father. You have to be more careful about whom
you associate with."

Pedro Bala was laughing even harder and the priest laughed too, if he did feel
sorry for the old woman, for the old woman's lack of understanding. But the
carrousel was spinning with well-dressed children and in a short time the eyes
of the Captains of the Sands turned toward it and they were full of the desire
to ride the horses, spin with the lights. "They were children, yes," the priest
thought.

At nightfall there was a downpour. The black clouds then disappeared from
the sky and the stars shone, the full moon was also shining. In the small hours
of the morning the Captains of the Sands arrived. Legless started up the engine.
And they forgot that they weren't like other children, they forgot that they had
no home, no father or mother, that they lived by stealing, like men, that they
were feared in the city as thieves. They forgot the words of the old woman with
the lorgnette. They forgot everything and they were equal to all children, riding
the mounts on the carrousel, spinning with the lights. The stars were shining,
the full moon shone. But more than anything in the Bahia night the blue, green,
yellow, and red lights of the Great Japanese Carrousel were shining.

For I. Eurikhin
Juan Cameron

CUANDO SE ACABE

Aún no podemos anunciar nuestra partida
Hemos perdido los pasos del mañana
Ciertas imágenes de la infancia
(meras justificaciones)
nos acompañan al último fuego de esta casa

Cuando se acabe el kerosene estaremos lejos
El humo negro de la estufa describirá círculos en las paredes
buscándonos en las manchas de la lluvia
como un general busca en un mapa

Cuando se acabe el fuego no quedaran trazos de las complicaciones

Antiguos gestos crepirán en las cenizas
La rueca su estambre ya habrá adormecido
como los relojes
como los teléfonos
como fotografías de otro tiempo

Cuando se acabe el día los recuerdos
serán rehenes de otra tierra.
Juan Cameron

WHEN IT’S OVER

We still can’t announce when we’ll leave
We’ve lost the future’s trail
Certain images from our youth
(mere justifications)
come with us to the last fire
we’ll light in this house

When the kerosene runs out we’ll be far away
The stove’s black smoke will mark circles
on the walls stained with rain
looking for us
the way a general pores over a map

When the fire dies down the remains
of our dilemma will be gone
Old gestures will smolder in the ash
The spindle and its wool will fall asleep
like the clocks
like the telephones
like photographs from another time

When the day is over our memories
will be the hostages of another land.
Juan Cameron

PLAYA

Una piedra feliz nortea la bahía
al sur en la imagen del ausente
según dice la letra que leemos a oscuras.
Desde aquí se ve el mundo
los puertos encallados más allá de las nubes
los pueblos donde parlan de la perdida Itaca
donde a nadie despierta este organillo
instalado en la arena
Mas el sur no es el sur sino el este
el norweste acusando a los vientos
& el gallo en la veleta un petrolero
& la esperanza un container abierto por pandora
& la piedra feliz es sólo eso
una roca apuntando hacia el vacío
crecido junto a ustedes.

*Piedra Feliz es una roca ubicada en la playa de las Torpederas en Valparaíso. Allí el mar es bravo
y la gente usa la roca para suicidarse.

Juan Cameron

HERACLITO

Si regreso a tu arroyo
ya no seré el mismo ni sus aguas
bañarán mi cuerpo de la ausencia
Tu casa estará desierta
como los perros en sus huesos
querrán mover las colas que les faltan.
Juan Cameron

BEACH

A happy stone* juts north of the bay
but south in the song by someone
who isn't here with us in the dark.
From here you can see the world:
the ports running aground beyond the clouds,
the towns where people talk about the lost Ithaca
where this organ grinder playing
music on the sand wakes no one.
But south isn't south. It's east
the northwest accusing the winds
& the rooster on the weathervane is an oil tanker
& hope is a box opened by Pandora
& the happy stone is just that
a rock pointing toward the emptiness
that rose around all of you.

*Piedra Feliz is a rock located on Torpederas Beach in Valparaiso. The sea is rough there and people use the rock to commit suicide.

Juan Cameron

HERACLITUS

If I return to your stream
it won't be the same anymore
nor will its waters cleanse
the absence from my body
The rooms of your house
will be deserted
like the skeletons of dogs
who want to wag tails
they do not have.
Juan Cameron

CASO

Temprano vino una dama a pedir por sus hijos
(Disculpenme doctores de la lengua
publicistas del reino:
lo real es visible a estos ojos)

Temprano vino una dama a pedir por sus hijos
como en el cine argentino de los años 40
Con sus hijos & una pequeño en brazos

Llovía como en el cine
& yo soñaba imágenes realmente envidiables.

Juan Cameron

DURO OFICIO

Con cartón remendamos los zapatos
los lustramos con grasa las estrellas
danzaban sobre ellos
Con limón fijamos el peinado
planchamos nuestros trajes nuestros parches
& con una botella de vino bajo el brazo
subimos a la fiesta de los exiliados
donde juntos cantamos la internacional.

Juan Cameron

ZANCUDO

Mi vuelo torpe
se detiene
silenciosamente
buscando luz
Mi vuelo
cargado de sangre.
Juan Cameron

EVENT

Very early a lady came to beg for her children
(Excuse me doctors of the language
publicists of the realm:
the real is visible to these eyes)

Very early a lady came to beg for her children
just like in the Argentine movies of the 40s
With her children & a little one in her arms

It was raining just like in the movies
& I was dreaming images that were really enviable.

Juan Cameron

HARD WORK

With cardboard we mend our shoes
polish them with grease the stars
dance in them
With lemon we fix our hair in place
we iron our clothes our patches
& with a bottle of wine under the arm
we go up to the festival of the exiles
where we all sing together the Internationale.

Juan Cameron

MOSQUITO

My clumsy flight
pauses
silently
searching for light
My flight
swollen with blood.
Todo momento es igual a su momento
mas el instante que te arrancó del mundo
partió el mundo
como una guillotina o un gatillo
& entonces no fue igual
sino a mi vaguedad que presionaba
por tenerte
detenerte o denotarte como un ícono
inconcluso de luz
    quebrado
    lento
porque todo registro fue ese quiebre
que fragmentaba el tiempo entre mis dedos
que fragmentaba el mundo

Alguno fue el verdugo
otro el instrumento su mecánica
dispuesta al movimiento que detiene
la sonrisa en un rictus
Mas alguna palanca
una precisa fuerza motivada
por oscuras razones en la cámara
cruzó esa línea
el límite desierto de lo negro
el paso que no cesa
entre la realidad & su trazado

Todo momento es igual a su momento
sin crónica fugaz con su mordisco
aleve discontinuo
Salvo el instante que te arrancó del mundo.
Every moment is equal to its moment
but the moment that uprooted you from the world
split the world
like a guillotine or a Gatling gun
& then it wasn’t the same
except for my vagueness that persists
in retaining you
in detaining you or in denoting you as incomplete
icon of light
   broken
   slow
because every record was this break
that fragmented time between my fingers
that fragmented the world

Someone was the executioner
another the instrument its mechanism
disposed toward the movement that stops
the smile in a tic
But some lever
a precise force motivated
in the camera for obscure reasons
crossed that line
the limit empty of black
the path that persists
between reality and its trace

Every moment is equal to its moment
without history fleeting with its bite
treacherous discontinuous
Except for the instant that uprooted you from the world.
Clarice Lispector

IN SEARCH OF DIGNITY

Senhora Jorge B. Xavier just wouldn't be able to tell how she had gotten in. It hadn't been through a main entrance. In a vague, dreamlike way, it seemed to her that she had gotten in through a narrow opening amidst the debris of the construction work, as if she had gotten in sideways through a hole made especially for her. The fact is that when she did become aware of it, she was already inside.

And once she became aware of it, she realized that she was very much inside it. She found herself walking endlessly through the underground passages of the Maracanã Stadium—at least they looked to her like narrow caverns leading to closed chambers, and when the chambers were opened, there was nothing but a window opening on the stadium. Which, scorchingly deserted at that hour, was reverberating under an intense sun sending forth an unusual heat for a mid-winter day.

Then the lady followed a darker corridor. Which led her to an even darker one. It seemed to her that the ceiling of the underground passages was low.

And then this corridor led her to another one, which in its turn led her to still another one.

She turned the corner of a deserted corridor. And she found herself at another corner. Which took her to another corridor that merged into still another corridor.

Then, mechanically, she went on walking along corridors that always led to other corridors. Where was the room where the lecture was supposed to take place? For in its vicinity she would see the people she was supposed to meet. Maybe the lecture had already started. She would miss it, she who made a point of never missing anything cultural in order to remain young inside, seeing that her outside didn't give away her age, almost 70; people guessed her to be about 57.

But now, lost in the inner, dark meanders of the Maracanã, the lady began to drag heavily her old-woman's feet.

It was then that suddenly in one of the corridors she ran into a man who came out of the blue, and she asked him about the lecture, which the man said he knew nothing about. But then this man asked a second man for information, a man who had also suddenly come around a corner.

Then this second man announced that near the grandstand on the right side, in the unroofed section of the stadium, he had seen "a gentleman and two ladies, one of them in red." Senhora Xavier doubted that those people were the ones...
she was supposed to meet before the lecture; as a matter of fact, she had already lost sight of the reason why she had been walking without ever stopping. Anyhow, she did follow the man outside, where, dazzled, she stopped in the hollow space of the gaping light in the open-mouthed silence—there was the stadium, naked, disemboweled, without the ball and the soccer game. And especially without the crowds. The crowds existed only in the void of their absolute absence.

Had the two ladies and the gentleman already disappeared down an aisle?

Then the man said, exaggerating his defiance, "Just wait, madam, I'm going in search of those people and I'm going to find them somehow; they couldn't have vanished into thin air!"

They had in fact caught a glimpse of those people far away. But a second later they vanished again. It looked like a childish game in which muffled peals of laughter were mocking at Senhora Jorge B. Xavier.

Then she followed the man down other corridors. And then and there, this man also vanished around a corner.

The lady had already given up the lecture, which no longer mattered. All she wanted was to get out of the tangle of endless paths. Wasn't there any exit? Then she felt as if she were in an elevator that had stalled between two floors. Wasn't there an exit somewhere?

It was then that she suddenly remembered the full directions her friend had given her over the telephone: "It's close by the Maracanã Stadium." This recollection made her realize her own error, absent-minded, scatterbrained creature that she was, who only half-listened to what was being said while the other half became submerged somewhere. Senhora Xavier was very inattentive. So, the meeting didn't take place at the Maracanã at all, but somewhere nearby. And yet her small destiny had contrived to make her lose herself in its labyrinth.

Yes, so it was, and her struggle resumed worse than ever: with might and main she wanted to get out of there and she didn't know how, or where to start. And once more in the corridor emerged that man who attempted to find people and once more he assured her that he would find them because they couldn't possibly have vanished into thin air. These were his very words,

"Those people can't have vanished into thin air!"

The lady told him, "Please, don't take any further trouble to find them. Thank you very much. Because the place where I'm supposed to meet those people is not here at the Maracanã."

The man stopped short and stared at her, stunned. "So what is it that you're doing here, madam?"

She wanted to explain that her life was just like that, but since she didn't know what she meant by "just like that" or even by "her life," she said nothing. The man, somewhat suspicious and cautious, insisted on his question, what was she doing there? "Nothing," she replied, but in her mind only; she was now on the
verge of collapsing with fatigue. But she didn’t answer his question aloud and let him think that she was crazy. Besides, she wasn’t given to explanations. She knew the man thought her crazy—and wasn’t she really? For didn’t she use to feel that thing which in her shame she referred to only as ‘‘that’’? Even though she did know that her so-called mental health was so good that it could be compared only to her physical health. A physical health now somewhat worn out because she had been dragging those feet of hers throughout years of walking through labyrinths. Her via crucis. She was perspiring in her thick woolen outfit, feeling stifled in the unexpected heat of this day that belonged to the peak of the summer and was a deformity of the winter. Her legs hurt, they hurt under the weight of her old cross. She was already somewhat resigned to the idea of never leaving the Maracanã and of dying there, her heart collapsing.

And as it always happened, it was only after giving up things she most desired that they did come about. Because suddenly an idea came to her mind. ‘‘What a batty old woman I am.’’ For instead of continuing to ask for the people who weren’t there, why didn’t she look for that man and ask him how to leave those corridors? After all, she wasn’t there to meet anyone; all she wanted was to get out.

Finally, around a corner, she ran into that same man. And she addressed him, her voice a bit shaky and hoarse with fatigue and fear of hoping hopelessly. The man, suspiciously, readily agreed that it would be much better for her to go home, and he said carefully, ‘‘You don’t seem to be in your right mind, madam; it must be this funny heat.’’

After saying so, the man simply led her to the corridor ahead of them and from the corner two large, open gates could be seen. Had it been as simple as that? Just as simple as that?

Just as simple as that.

Then, without drawing any conclusions, the lady thought that only for her had it been impossible to find an exit. Senhora Xavier was only slightly surprised; at the same time she felt used to this fact. For surely everybody had his own road to travel through endlessly, this was part of one’s destiny, in which she didn’t know whether to believe or not.

And a taxi was driving by. She hailed it and controlling her voice, which was getting older and wearier, she said,

‘‘Young man, I’m not too sure about the address; I seem to have forgotten it. But I do know that it’s a house on a street called Gusmão...something at the corner with a street, which if I’m not mistaken, is called Colonel...something.’’

The cabbie was patient as if dealing with a child. ‘‘Well, just take it easy, we’ll just quietly search for a street that starts with Gusmão and ends with Colonel,’’ he said, turning to her with a smile, and then he winked at her, the conniving expression in his eye striking her as obscene. The car jolted away, jarring her insides.
Then suddenly she recognized the people she had been looking for; they were standing on the sidewalk in front of a big house. It was, however, as if her goal had been getting there rather than attending the lecture, which by now she had totally forgotten because Senhora Xavier had lost sight of her objective. And she wouldn’t be able to say under what pretext she had been walking so much. Then she realized that she was weary beyond endurance and she wanted to leave; the lecture had become a nightmare. Then she asked an important lady, whom she knew slightly, and who had a car driven by a chauffeur, to send her home because she wasn’t feeling very well in that funny heat. It would be another hour, however, before the chauffeur came back. So, Senhora Xavier sat down on the chair someone had placed for her in the hall; very upright in her tight girdle, she was sitting outside the culture that was taking place in the closed room before her. Not one sound came out of it. She couldn’t care less about culture. And there she was in the labyrinths of the 60 seconds and the 60 minutes that would lead her to one hour.

Then the important lady came up to her and announced that a car was waiting at the door, and that she had also to say that since her chauffeur had advised her that he would be late, and seeing that the lady wasn’t feeling well, she had stopped the first taxi she had seen. Why hadn’t Senhora Xavier herself thought of sending for a taxi instead of submitting herself to the meanders of the time she spent waiting? Then Senhora Xavier thanked her with extreme politeness. She was always very polite and courteous. She got into the cab and said, “To Leblon, please.”

Her head felt hollow, just like an empty stomach.

Soon she noticed that they were driving round and round in circles, always coming back to the same square. Why didn’t they get out of there? Again, wasn’t there a passage out? The driver ended up by admitting that he wasn’t familiar with the South End, that he worked only in the North End. And not knowing the way herself, she couldn’t tell him how to get there. Increasingly, the cross of the heavy years and this new absence of an exit merely renewed the black magic of the corridors of the Maracana. They couldn’t find a way out of that square. Then the driver told her to take another taxi and he even hailed one that was driving alongside. She thanked him with restraint; she stood on ceremony with people, even those she was acquainted with. Besides, she was always very gracious. When in the other taxi, she said shyly, “If you don’t mind, sir, I’d like to go to Leblon.”

And they soon left the square and proceeded along other streets.

When she unlocked her apartment door and let herself in, she felt like sobbing very loudly, but felt so only in the fantasy of her imagination. She never resorted to tears or to complaints. By the by, she told the servant that she wouldn’t take any phone calls. She went straight to the bedroom, took off all her clothes,
swallowed a pill without any water and then waited for its effect.

Meanwhile, she smoked. She remembered that the month was August and that people say that August brings bad luck. But September would soon be here like an exit. And for some reason, September was May: a lighter, more transparent month. While she was vaguely thinking of this, drowsiness finally invaded her, and she fell asleep.

When she woke up hours later she noticed the soft, cold rain outside, and the cold felt like the blade of a knife. Naked on the bed, she felt frozen. She remembered that she had been thinking of buying a woolen scarf. She consulted her watch: the stores would still be open. She took a cab and said,

"To Ipanema, please."

The man said, "How's that? To the Jardim Botânico?"

"Ipanema," the lady repeated, quite astonished.

It was absurdity of total incongruity, for what did the words Ipanema and Jardim Botânico have in common? But again she thought that "her life was just like that."

She was soon through with her shopping and then found herself outside on the already darkened street with nothing else to do. Senhor Jorge B. Xavier had gone to São Paulo on the previous day and he wouldn't be back until the following day.

Back home once more, and faced with the choice between taking another sleeping pill or doing something else, she opted for the latter because she remembered that now she could search once more for that misplaced bill of exchange. Little did she understand about it, except that it stood for money. For two days she had been meticulously searching the entire house, even the kitchen, but to no avail. Now it occurred to her: why not look under the bed. It was just possible...

Then she knelt on the floor. But she soon got tired of resting all her weight on her knees and so she leaned on her hands as well.

Then she realized that she was on all fours.

She remained so for a while; she could have been brooding. Who knows, maybe Senhora Xavier was tired of being a human creature. So she was being a bitch on all fours. Without any dignity. All her pride gone. On all fours, somewhat thoughtful, perhaps. Under the bed, however, there was nothing but dust.

With great effort her disjointed joints brought her to her feet and she realized that there was nothing else to do but realistically face—and it was always with a painful effort that she faced reality—realistically face the fact that the bill of exchange was lost for good and that to persist in searching for it would be never to get out of the Maracanã.

And as always, now that she had given up the search, as she pulled open the little drawer where she kept the handkerchiefs in order to pick one up—there was the bill of exchange.

Then the lady, tired out by the effort of having stayed on all fours, sat down on the bed and for no reason at all she started to cry very softly.
something like an Arabic rigmarole. She hadn’t cried for 30 years, but now she was so tired. And she wasn’t sure if that could be called crying. It wasn’t. It was something else. Finally she blew her nose. Then she thought that she would subjugate her “destiny,” thereby achieving a greater destiny. With will power one can achieve anything, she thought without the slightest conviction. And this idea of being tied to a destiny came to her mind because she had already, unwillingly, started to think about “that.”

However, it happened that the lady started to think that it was much too late for her to have a destiny. She thought that she would gladly enter into any deal to trade hers with someone else’s. And then it occurred to her that there was no one else to trade with, because what- or whoever she was, she was she, and she couldn’t turn herself into another unique creature. Because everybody was unique. And so was Senhora Jorge B. Xavier.

And yet, everything that had happened to her was still preferable to feeling “that.” And “that” arrived with its long corridors without any exit. “That,” now devoid of shame, was the painful hunger of her insides, the hunger for being possessed by that unattainable television idol. She didn’t miss any of his shows. So, since she couldn’t help thinking of him, then the best thing to do was to let herself think of him and recall the girlish face of Roberto Carlos, my love.

She washed her dusty hands and looked at herself in the mirror above the sink. Then Senhora Xavier thought, “If I desire very intensely, with the utmost intensity, then he’ll be mine for at least one night.” She vaguely believed in will power. Once more she became entangled in her desire, which was tortuous and strangled.

And yet, who knows? If she gave up Roberto Carlos, then things between him and her would take place. Senhora Xavier thought the matter over for a while. Shrewdly, she pretended that she had given up Roberto Carlos. But she well knew that the magic abdication proved effective only when it was actual and not a mere gimmick used to achieve something. Reality demanded quite a lot from the lady. She examined herself in the mirror to see if her face would look lewd under the influence of her feelings. But hers was a serene face which long ago had stopped revealing any feelings. As a matter of fact, her face had never revealed anything except good manners. And now it was merely the mask of a 70-year-old woman. Then her slightly made-up face seemed to her like that of a clown. Reluctantly, the lady forced a smile to see if it improved her face. It didn’t.

On the outside—she saw in the mirror—she was something dry like a dried up fig. But inside she wasn’t withered. On the contrary. Inside she felt like a moist gum, soft like a toothless gum.

Then she searched for a thought that would either spiritualize her or completely wither her. But there had never been anything spiritual about her. And because of Roberto Carlos, the lady found herself enveloped in the darkness of the matter where she was deeply anonymous.
Standing in the bathroom, she was as anonymous as a hen.

In the fraction of a fleeting second, almost unconsciously, she surmised that everybody is anonymous. Because nobody is the other, and the other cannot know the other. So...so, each person is anonymous. And now she was entangled in that deep, mortal well, in the revolution of her body. A body whose depths couldn't be described, depths that were the darkness of the malevolent blackness of her instincts, alive like lizards and rats. And everything ill-timed, a fruit out of season. Why hadn't the other old women ever warned her that up to the end this could happen? In old men she had seen that lecherous eye. But not in old women. Out of season. And she, burning as if she still were a somebody, she who was a nobody.

Senhora Jorge B. Xavier was a nobody.

Then she wanted to have a beautiful, romantic feeling for the refinement of Roberto Carlos' face. But she couldn't: that refinement merely took her to a dark corridor of sensuality. Hers was a base hunger: she wanted to bite into Roberto Carlos' mouth. She wasn't romantic; she was gross when it came to love matters. There in the bathroom, before the mirror above the sink.

Her age now indelibly defiled.

If some sublime thought would become her helm and ennoble her life.

Then she began to undo her hair bun and slowly to comb her hair. It needed to be dyed again, the white was already showing at the roots. Then the lady thought, "In my life there never has been a climax like those in the stories we read."' The climax was Roberto Carlos. Thoughtful, she came to the conclusion that she would die secretly, the way she had lived—secretly. However, she did know that every single death is secret.

From the depths of her future death she imagined that she could see in the mirror the coveted image of Roberto Carlos with that soft, curly hair of his. There she stood, tied to her out-of-season desire, which was like this summer day in the peak of winter. Tied to the tangle of the corridors of the Maracana. Tied to the implacable secret of old women. Except that she wasn't used to being almost 70; she lacked training and had no experience whatsoever.

Then she said aloud and completely alone,

"Robertinho Carlinhos."

And she added, "'My love.'"

She listened to her voice in astonishment, as if for the first time, without any feelings of shame or guilt, she were making a confession, which should, however, have been shameful. The lady was day-dreaming that quite possibly Robertinho wouldn't accept her love because she herself was aware that this love was much too mushy, mawkishly sensual and lickerish. And Roberto Carlos seemed so chaste, so asexual.

Would her lips, with just a touch of lipstick, still invite kisses? Or was it loathsome to kiss an old woman's mouth? Inexpressively, she narrowly inspected
her own lips. Still inexpressively, she softly sang the refrain of Roberto Carlos’
greatest hit: ‘‘I want you to warm me this winter, and may the rest of the world
go to hell.’’

It was then that Senhora Jorge B. Xavier abruptly bent over the sink as if she
were about to throw up her entrails, and she interrupted her life with a shattering
silence: ‘‘THERE MUST! BE! AN! EEEXIIIT!’’
Yánnis Rítsos

NEED OF PROOF

He hung up his coat on the clothes-rack in the corridor. The house was agreeable, tidied up, well heated, as though it had been transported into another time. The silent objects, chairs, sofas, picture frames, teacups, obliquely observed the ease of his movement, but so intently that he himself became aware of it. Then, under the cancelled accounts in his expense books, he tried to sketch the glass saltshaker, attempting to catch a representation of its transparency—a proof, at least in the sketch, of the usefulness of his freedom.

Yánnis Rítsos

PROCESS

Day by day he disarmed himself. First he stripped off his clothing, a little later his underwear, then later his skin, and finally his flesh and bones until in the end only this simple, warm, limpid essence remained which indiscernably and without hands he shaped into small jars, poems and men. And quite likely one among those things was he.
Yánnis Rítsos

THE SUSPECT

He locked the door, looked behind him distrustingly, and thrust the key in his pocket. It was then they arrested him. They harassed him for months. Until, one evening, he confessed (and this was proved) that the key and the house were his. But no one could understand why he had hidden the key. And so, though he was found innocent, he remained suspected by all.

Yánnis Rítsos

THE IDIOT

The wagon had stopped, facing the sea, loaded with six iron barrels, red, and another one in an astonishing green. The horse browsed in the meadow. The wagon driver was drinking in the tavern. The island’s idiot stood by the breakwater and shouted: “With this green I shall conquer you!” And he pointed to the seventh barrel, without knowing what it contained or to whom it belonged.
Yánnis Rítsos

AN INVALID’S DAY

All day an odor of damp, rotting floorboards, drying and steaming in the sun. The birds for a moment gaze from the rooftops, then leave. In the neighboring tavern at night, the gravediggers sit and eat fried minnows, drink, and sing a song with many dark holes—from which a quiet wind begins to blow, and the leaves, the lights, and the shelfpaper quiver.

Yánnis Rítsos

DEGREES OF SENSATION

The sun sank, rose-red, orange. The sea, a dark blue-green. Far away, a boat—a black, wavering speck. Someone jumped to his feet and shouted: ‘‘A boat! A boat!’’ The others in the coffeehouse left their chairs and ran to look. Truly, it was a boat. But the one who had shouted, as though guilty now under the angry gaze of the others, lowered his head and said in a low voice: ‘‘I lied.’’

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Deborah Small

CATEGORIES

Categories give us answers. We need answers. First we need problems and then we need questions. Questions about the problems. To stall for time, if the questions are very difficult, we make up categories, rephrase the problem, then paraphrase the question. Then new categories need to be made and after repeating this process several times, we might hazard a guess, I should say: answer. Categories lead to answers. There are strict connections between categories and answers. Actually, there are no answers, only examples. I used to be two feet tall. Now I am taller. But this example tells us nothing about broken teapots, or how the teapots came to be broken. If things didn’t exist, things wouldn’t exist. Some things are more important than others. And this is an important problem. If you can picture the tree, you know what is important and what is not. Go up the tree. All the things in the tree are necessary, but not necessarily important, and maybe not as necessary as you might think. Now you might ask why I told you to go up the tree, why we even need the tree, or the example of the tree, and why I didn’t tell you to go down the tree. Why up is necessarily more important than down. These questions are marginal, but necessary. Don’t expect to be told the right answer. It’s your answer that I want. And don’t expect to win money, no matter which answer you give me. Instead, think of man and a table. Without the man and the table there would be nothing, nothing else. X is primary, y is not. X is true, y is not true necessarily. What is said is true, but not necessarily true is in, inheres, trueness, and necessarily true and true, and accidentally true, said of, when in, when accidentally true. Some things are ambiguous because some things are necessary some of the time, and some things are necessary all of the time. Generally speaking, I can make a generalization which is sometimes, not always, but often true. I can disambiguate this further, and so on and so forth. A rule of thumb is in order: It’s Monday morning for all of us. You should object if you don’t agree. If I were to speak clearly, if I were to speak perspiciously, I could say certain other things. Call some things primary or secondary and everything else everything else. Think of the tree. Start at the bottom and go all the way to the top; it’s with good reason to go to the top. Only things in the tree are true. If you start with a part of the tree, you’ll understand part of, not all of, everything. Six hundred separate house foundations were found at Ipiudek from six hundred A.D., of course. Rational things don’t make sense out of certain contexts. But refer to the tree, a particular place in the tree. You can’t have a rational thing by itself. And of course there is sex. Sex is somewhere in the tree. One is better, one is not. Just as hats are worn, but only in photographs.
MARJORIE AGOSIN: A PORTRAIT
INTRODUCTION AND POEMS

by Cola Franzen

Although Marjorie Agosin writes prose as well as poetry, she is by nature a poet. Argus-eyed, she fixes on life around her and speaks about what she sees and what she feels with implacable honesty. She does not pull back; she goes on looking; she does not pretty up or make more palatable. She retains a child’s directness. Children can sometimes be very embarrassing since they will say what we all know but do not dare say. That’s Marjorie Agosin. She is the one who pointed out that the emperor wore no clothes.

Born in 1955 in Santiago de Chile, she has already published four collections of poems and two books of criticism. The collections of poems are Chile (1977), Conchali (1980), Silencio que se deja oír (1982), and Brujas y Algo Más/Witches and Other Things (1985). The two critical works are Las desterradas del paraíso, protagonistas en la narrativa de María Luisa Bombal (1983), and Pablo Neruda, scheduled for publication in 1986. The subjects of these critical studies provide a clue to Agosin’s literary affinities, but we must add to the list the name of Gabriela Mistral.

These three writers, all Chileans, have been very important to Agosin in helping her to define and refine her poetical intentions. Traces of their influence may be found in her work, but she has not used their styles of writing as a model for her own. She has rather continued to look at what they saw, to examine the new poetical areas that they unearthed for succeeding generations of writers to explore. About Neruda, obviously one of her greatest influences, she says, ‘‘He taught us how to look. He taught us how to see.’’ She is most drawn to the Neruda of Canto General and the Odes, when he began to look to the American continent and most particularly to Chile as source and metaphor for his new world view.

Agosin’s knowledge of international literature is extensive. She has read with particular attention the work of North American and English writers, especially the work of women. The work of María Luisa Bombal, for example, the first Latin American writer to explore the shadowy world of women’s inner lives and write openly about them, has deeply affected Agosin’s own work. Gabriela Mistral has also been an inspiration for Agosin both as a poet and as a person. After a recent visit to the Elqui Valley in the north of Chile where Gabriela Mistral was born and where she is buried, Agosin wrote that she was very moved to find that the old people there still remember that every year Gabriela sent shoes for all the children of the school in Montegrande. She never forgot the barefoot children who caused her to write: ‘‘Little bare feet/ blue with cold/ How can they see them/ and not cover them?/ Dear God!’’ Agosin writes that that experience
helped her to see that the person and the poetry can be integrated.

In her own writing she accepts no boundaries, no taboos. (Indeed, there is a vitality and openness to her verses precisely because she does not accept the limits that some of our tiresomely academic poets do.) She states her poetic credo in several different poems. In “Audience” she writes:

I’ve decided
that people should read me
on the bus
next to the slaughterhouse
and the parade.

And in “Wishes”:

And in “Wishes”:

I never tried to make the sublime ascent
toward the forefathers walled up in the
cloistered library.
Nor to be one of them: precise and without pauses
cautious in matters of spelling, smoke and alcohol.

She does not hesitate to thumb her nose at the literary demigods, including Neruda. “Garlic” is dedicated to him—“Brother garlic/ how I bless you/ as I kiss the one I love…” And in “Boom” we find her tweaking Neruda’s nose again: “…a heavy poet/ …not only in his words/ …heavy really/ …that is he loved French fries and eel/ grapes and why not? onions…” And about Nicanor Parra: “his needle got stuck in the groove/ too many colloquial couplings/ and mirrors filled with nuns and flies…”

Majorie Agosin is, then, of that rare and refreshing breed—a poet with a sense of humor that spills over in poem after poem, sometimes gentle and teasing, sometimes deep and disturbing, like that of Anne Sexton or Margaret Atwood. In fact many of her poems, the serious as well as the humorous or the celebratory, have hints of darkness or disaster in them, but Agosin’s attitude toward impending danger is often like that of a fearless child, as in “Dance,” for example:

I danced barefoot nightly and daily
I danced words semantics phonics…
...today I am dancing
and expanding myself like a round table
where feet going by applaud me
and seethe with this dance so like
the end of the world.
Because if today is the end of the world
who would dare to stop dancing?

Agosin’s work is also charged with an erotic intensity that is uniquely feminine. Her poetry often surprises the reader with unexpected juxtapositions that create an aura of sensuousness, which is at times counterbalanced with a disquieting abruptness:

But I always danced
between the legs of my rounded nana
my nuptial nana with breasts smelling
of smoke
I danced caught in her apron
and all the odors of the coriander
sprang up at my feet.
...
And I danced when the hymen grazed the coral
quivering inside myself
and danced when blood woke me up...

Agosin has many voices, but the one that speaks most often in her poetry is the voice that speaks of Chile, of her love for it, of her agony over its sorrowful situation, and the hard lives of women. But even though she is writing of real situations, the poems come from the realm of her imagination. In “Far Away,” she speaks of Chile in this way: “My country is a slender pier/anchored inside
me/curving between/my knees and skin.” In her poem “The Disappeared Ones,” several of her major themes are intermingled: the tragic situation of Chile and the women searching through morgues, hospitals and cemeteries for their disappeared ones. In this poem too one of her main poetic aims is clearly enunciated: to use her voice to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves:

I am an unarmed woman
small and with hair blue as acid
...
I swear to arm myself with the word
take it along the walls of the city
take it where the whip went
take this word
not given by God
to seek out the toothless mouths
as hunger does
go in search of your eyes.
In writing about women Agosin roams through the centuries, through mythology and fairy tales, searching out the women, bringing them back to life. Here are Penelope and Philomena, Snow White and Cinderella, Cecilia and Jacqueline, teen-age prostitutes—"Where are you going/ with 50 pesos/ in your heel and/ in mismatched shoes?" We hear about the lady from the Better Neighborhood:

She was an elegant woman at daybreak she would urinate very slowly.

There is also the Middle Class Lady as well as Anne Frank and other victims of rape and torture. There are women daydreaming—"I would like to fall asleep/ in the hip-curve of a gypsy boy"—and women, including the poet herself, speaking out in total frankness:

I am a warm poet fond of grapes and red wine ...
Of men with backs like a bed to close with me in the night savage wild volcanic like good verses.

The forms of Agosin’s poems can be very deceiving. At first glance, with their idiosyncratic kind of punctuation and with lines of extreme variation in length, they may appear as free-form as a finger-painting. But careful reading often reveals a strong structure underneath. "The Arpilleristas" is a double sonnet; in "Fairy Tales and Something More," nursery rhymes and rhythms pop out at us. Her prose poem "Naked Girls" displays a strict architectural symmetry. However, the forms of her poems are not the result of conscious elaboration. In some sense the poem comes already arranged, the genetic decisions having already been made in the gestational dark.

The special vitality of Agosin’s poetry presents certain difficulties for the translator. How to change the linguistic skin without having the life drain out? Because the poems are very much alive, flexing their sinuous, young words—the heart is still beating. Therein lies their strength, their disturbing quality, and their deep beauty.
Marjorie Agosín

VIRGINIA

Sabía que más que el vivir,
la muerte supondría ciertas
preparaciones:
un bastón de los ancianos incautos
una inmensa piedra robada de la
tierra
y el río
para hundirse.

Marjorie Agosín

LA TORTURA

Para Rosa Montero y para aquellos
que le contaron sus historias

Lentamente, cautelosamente,
ardía mi paladar silenciado
mientras ya desnuda y
tan lejana
conspiraban para atrapar
mis pezones, pequeños alambres de espanto.
Sus manos pequeñas, perdidas de escamas agrias
viajaban por esa lenta agonía, por su oscurecida
claridad entre mis piernas
y ellos, los ociosos verdugos
jadeaban mientras
la sangre de la luna
aullaba en las tablas
de un metal enfermizo,
me limpiaban la frente
para después verter las
desquiciadas palmas de mi historia
y entre el vacío del tiempo
entre los segundos del aire
Marjorie Agosin
VIRGINIA

She knew that more than living
it was dying that required certain
preparations:
a walking stick such as unwary old men use
an immense stone stolen from the
earth
and the river
to sink into.

Marjorie Agosin
TORTURE

For Rosa Montero and all those
who told her their stories

Slowly and in secret
the roof of my silenced mouth burning
and I already naked and
so far away
conspiring to trap
my nipples, thin wires of terror.
Their small fingers, sloughed off scales of bitter wormwood
venture along that slow agony, through obscured
brightness between my legs
and they, the idle hangmen
pant while
the moon's blood
howls on the sickly metal surface,
they wipe my forehead
so that later they can empty the
scattered leaves of my story
and between gaps of time
seconds of air
una electricidad de lanzas y lágrimas
se desprendía como las hojas de un otoño de guerreros desquiciados
las uñas extendidas sobre el suelo en llamas y menses,
los dientes machacados por picanas y escupos traicioneros,
se desligaban de la orilla de mis labios
que comenzaban a dejar de ser palabra, verdad, luz,
y ya era esa otra,
mientras mi cabello también se agrietaba, desteñida
entre las cenizas se dilataba como una flor mal parida
y desnuda los tenía que mirar
a cada uno de ellos,
tenía que confesarles
secretos que no poseía,
alojamientos inciertos
y ante cada silencio,
las mortajas negras como los brujos agrios
me enrollaban para
comer la lengua que no tenía que contar,
para destripar esa lengua
que antes sabía de pájaros luces, de cebollas
en un jardín
y otra vez la tormenta de hilos rojizos envolviéndome como un
hilo de mal agüero, en los cimientos de mis pies, en mis
pechos hundidos por el pavor de sus terribles garras verdes.
Ahora estoy muerta,
me llamo Carmen, o María,
soy una mujer
en medio de este silencio,
en medio de mi desnudez,
como una piedra
encarcelada,
soy una muerta que pudo sobrevivir
pero no contó nada
nuevo
que perdió en unos instantes los olores, las lilas, el amarillo,
porque durmió junto a otros cuerpos defecando, muriéndose
de pena y no de miedo,
soy esa que estuvo vendada por un segundo, por un mes
y para siempre
atravesada por la
ceremonia eterna de la
tortura.
electric spears and tears
explode like falling leaves of unhinged warriors
fingernails spread out over the floor in flames and menses,
teeth crushed by shocks and traitorous spittle
let go from the shore of my lips
now shorn of word, truth, light
now turned into something other,
even my hair splits, withers
among the ashes and fans out like doomed petals
naked I am forced to face
each one of them
to confess to them
secrets I never had
uncertain living places
and before each silence,
black shrouds like those of mordant warlocks
coil round me to
consume the tongue that had nothing to tell
to strip the tongue
that once knew about birds, light and onions
in a garden
and again the torment of glowing wires weaving me in
threads of ill omen, the soles of my feet, my
breasts shrunken by the terror of the
terrible green talons.
Now I am dead,
my name is Carmen, or Maria,
I am a woman
immersed in silence,
immersed in my nakedness,
an imprisoned
stone,
I am a dead woman who managed to survive
who told nothing
new
who in a matter of moments lost aromas, lilacs, yellow,
while sleeping next to other bodies defecating, dying
from pain and not from fear,
I am the woman who was blindfolded for a second, for a month
and forever
impaled by the
eternal ceremony of
torture.
Marjorie Agosín

MEMORIAL DE LAS LOCAS EN LA PLAZA DE MAYO

No hay nada aquí,
la plaza, en silencios,
diminuta, azulada,
entre los cirios que se despliegan
como ajenos bultos
revolcándose,
encima de las piedras.

¿Hay alguien aquí?
comienzan las peregrinaciones de las transparentes,
las procesiones,
las palabras de las ilusas,
son, dicen,
las locas de la plaza de Mayo,
en busca de ojos,
de manos tibias,
en busca de un cuerpo,
de tus labios para jamás poseerte
para siempre llamarte
amado.

Agrietadas, enjutas,
orando,
gritando de rabia,
preguntando
encima de los bultos
más allá de los ecos,
ellas,
en Buenos Aires, El Salvador,
en Treblinka
quieren saber,
necesitan saber,
¿dónde están los hijos de los diecisiete?
Marjorie Agosin

REMEMBERING THE MADWOMEN OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO

Written in memory of Marta Traba
(Died in the Avianca crash, Madrid, 1983)

There is nothing here,
the plaza, silent,
small, blue,
in the center of candles that fan out
like alien shapes
circling
over the stones.

Is there anyone here?
It begins, the pilgrimage of the invisible ones
the procession,
the words of the deluded women,
they are, it is said,
the madwomen of the Plaza de Mayo
searching for eyes,
for warm hands,
searching for a body,
for your lips not to possess you
but so I can always call you
beloved.

Wrinkled, skeletal,
praying,
screaming in rage,
questioning
above the shapes
beyond the echoes,
the madwomen,
in Buenos Aires, in El Salvador,
in Treblinka
want to know,
have to know
where are their seventeen-year-old sons?
¿los padres-esposos?
¿los novios de las más niñas?
¿acaso son los arrojados al río maloliente de los justos?

Se acercan,
míralas como vuelan las brujas de la verdad
míralas como la lluvia arrastra sus lânguidos y demenciales cabellos,
mírales los pies, tan pequeños para arrastrar el dolor del abandono, el dolor
de la indiferencia.

Ellas,
amarrando la fotografía demolida, arrugada, borroneada, vacía de la
memoria incierta
la fotografía cautiva
¿por quién? para quién?
mira el silencio en la plaza de las Locas, mira como la tierra se esconde,
se enmudece,
se revuelca como una muerta herida que sólo
quiere descansar,
y es solo silencio quien acude a oírlas,
es el silencio
de la plaza
quien oye
las fotografías
de los olvidados
presentes.

Marjorie Agosin
UMBRALS

De
tus ojos salen
hilos multicolores
balanceándose
el el
umbral
de
mi
pelo.

64
their husbands, fathers of their children?
the boyfriends of the youngest girls?
were they perhaps thrown into the fetid river of their judges?

They come near,
look at them how they flutter, the witches of truth
look at them how the rain plasters down their listless and demented hair
look at their feet, how small they are to bear the pain of abandonment,
the pain of indifference.

The madwomen,
holding fast to a photograph, tattered, wrinkled, faded, empty of uncertain
memory
captive photograph
by whom? for whom?
look at the silence in the plaza of the madwomen, look how the earth
scurries to hide
tires
falls back like one mortally wounded who only
wishes for rest,
and so it is only silence that comes to hear them
it is the silence
of the plaza
that listens to the
photographs
of the forgotten ones
here present.

Marjorie Agosin

THRESHOLDS

From
    your eyes come
    multicolor threads
    swinging back and forth
at the
    threshold
    of
    my
    hair.
Henrik Nordbrandt

SIDEN I GAAR

Jeg er blevet gammel siden i gaar
og mit værelse vil ikke længere

slippe mig. De slidte møbler
og ting, som vi har samlet sammen

i fællesskab, piner mig pludselig
som barberblade: Smaa modhager

som forgiftet af septemberlyset
blot bider sig endnu mere fast

hvis jeg vender mig om efter dig
eller forsøger at løsrive mig.

Henrik Nordbrandt

DAGE SENT I MARTS

Dage bevæger sig i en retning
ansigter i den modsatte.
Uophørligt laaner de hinandens lys.

Mange aar efter er det vanskeligt
at afgøre hvad der var dage
og hvad der var ansigter...

Og afstanden mellem de to ting
føles mere uoverskridelig
dag for dag og ansigt for ansigt.

Det er det jeg ser paa dit ansigt
disse lysende dage sent i marts.
Henrik Nordbrandt

SINCE YESTERDAY

I have grown old since yesterday
and my room will no longer

let me go. Shabby furniture
and things we collected

together torture me now
like razor blades: Tiny barbs

poisoned by September light
dig in even further

if I turn toward you
or try to break away.

Henrik Nordbrandt

DAYS LATE IN MARCH

Days move in one direction
faces in the opposite.
Endlessly they borrow each others’ light.

Years later it is difficult
to know which were days
and which were faces...

And the distance between them
seems harder to bridge
day by day and face by face.

That is what I see in your face
these bright days late in March.
W.S. Doxey

EDGES

The leading edge cuts to the
Bone
The trailing curls
The flesh
What is seen is
Known
As in the flight of
Birds, the flash
Of fish,
As in the line of lines
Moving
From one unknown
Through another into
The next

W.S. Doxey

BEING HERE

The ache of being
Here, the pain
Of seeing
There is something to be
Seen
No matter where
The eye might
Glance
Informs
Necessity for doing this
Or that
As rain
Dripping from leaf
To leaf
Gathers into pools
Underneath
YOUR SHADOW FALLS ON MY LIFE

Like the snow on the brook,
like the quilt of grass on the hill,
like the cover of the book,
the froth of frost on the sill,

like the porcupine shaped by quills,
like the locked door of the past,
like the fish defined by fins, gills,
like the tawny leaves hiding the path,

like the sun's eye blinding mine,
I surround myself with your light,
like the night changing the sky,
your shadow covers my life.
Hovhaness Shiraz

ORPHAN

My father was banished outside
the walls of our house night and day.
My mother, when it snowed would say
"Now he'll be cold, I'm afraid."

The gray man watching us grow
never, never came in.
He made our spring garden bloom.
In winter he changed ice to rain.

My father, locked outside our door;
my mother, locked in and alone,
would sigh when the dark winds blew
"Your father will be terribly cold."

Warm under the quilts
I shivered for him who was chilled.
My father was the white moon
the black cloud has swallowed whole.
THE GARDEN

Not long ago I came to live in this building. I noticed immediately that the people who live here are mostly older, set in their habits. I moved into a small, sunny sixth-floor apartment that looks out over the interior patio, where there is a garden occupying almost all the space below, in which the flowers and plants seem to receive unusual, almost exquisite care, given their perfection and beauty. It is odd to find a garden like this in a city where there are not even trees along the streets and hardly a park. From one of the windows, the one in my study, I can survey it all. Limited by the wall that separates us from the next building, very like this one, but with no garden, I also see, facing the great block of apartments, a small house like an extemporaneous appendage, which, as some of my neighbors told me, belonged to the caretaker, who had to abandon it once the automatic porter was installed. It was rented to a solitary old man who still lives there.

The house has the look of an enormous dovecote more than a real house, so naturally is it integrated with the nature of the garden, so in harmony that it rather appears to be a great ceramic adornment, one of those little houses that are found in children’s playgrounds.

In time I found that the old man who lived in that house was the very one who tended the garden, but I still think he was its owner because I saw no one else but that strange personage, who would approach as far as the edge of the plot. On the other hand, the old man spent long hours among the plants and flowers, at times apparently without a thing to do, but I’m sure he was always aware of everything that was happening there. It was clear to me that he spent a lot of time simply talking to his plants. I observed him from the window, but he didn’t see me. I believe he never looked up; perhaps accustomed to the indifference of the rest of the neighbors, he never expected anyone would notice him in his garden.

It was a late afternoon when I saw him the first time. He was there with a pair of scissors, cutting dead leaves and flowers. I watched him for a long time: he moved with a certain parsimony, with a tranquility and certainty unusual in old men, as if what he was doing were the things he’d been doing all his life, as if tending and maintaining that garden were part of the very motion of his life, like eating or putting on his slippers in the morning. He always wore blue coveralls, a blue faded from years of use; he had a very small face and wore small, round
glasses which accented penetrating, lively eyes too shiny for the age I calculated he must be.

On other days I saw him watering, pulling weeds, replacing plants, making cuttings. Then he’d go into his house and stay. His life seemed to be confined to caring for that garden; that bit of nature set into that square of cement without balconies seemed to be his only reason for living.

I couldn’t spend all my time spying on that old man. I went back to work, to the tedious translation of Italian texts, of mediocre novels for adolescents. Nonetheless, it was difficult to concentrate on what I was doing; constantly the thought of the old man and his plants leaped to mind and I left the typewriter to stick my head out furtively and cast a glance toward the patio. Once appeased, I went back to work. But still I hadn’t satisfied my curiosity, and one afternoon—almost at dark—I went down the five flights to the patio. The air there was different—purified by the plants, the air felt distinctive; like air breathed on a trip to the country, it had an aroma of plants, flowers, and ozone. I strolled around the garden, looking at it from outside, as if I dared not enter its tended paths for fear of profaning something unknown to me. The ground was damp under my feet. I could see the first drops of dew accumulating on the leaves.

I made it a habit to go down each night to look at the garden, to breathe its fragrance, to listen to its sounds, those that leaves make chafing one another, that of flowers closing and folding their petals. But I still did not dare to go into it, to tread its tiny paths, for fear of destroying some plant, of stepping on its thick grass. I believe that during all that time the old man never noticed me, never realized that he had an admirer of his garden. The windows of the house, when I went down, were already dark. It would not be long before I decided to go down during the day, when he was there, to express my admiration.

One morning I saw him. He was there as always with his scissors and his shovels, with all his small worn-out tools, and with his constantly dirt-covered hands. I descended at once to make his acquaintance; I had the greatest desire to praise his work, and I think as I went down I was whistling a melody. He must have heard me because immediately he disappeared into the house. I was alarmed. I didn’t know whether he went away by chance or because of my unexpected arrival. I dared not knock on the door but stood there at the edge of the garden, not knowing what to do—like a fool. I preferred to pretend I had stopped by chance, feeling for a cigarette in my pocket, and I kept walking aimlessly as if looking for something on the ground. I felt ashamed and ridiculous. I went upstairs, silent, and began to write, trying to forget that moment.

The bad thing is that from that day on I stopped looking out with naturalness; I stopped looking at the garden and that old man only to turn to spying on them—because from that moment the old man was conscious that someone was watching him, that from one of the windows eyes observed him continually. I knew
it not because he raised his head to seek the curious one, but because his attitude, his conduct changed brusquely, he no longer moved in that garden with the same naturalness and assurance he formerly had. Now I perceived certain doubts in his movements, some nervousness in his treatment of the plants and, above all, he no longer spoke to them as before. Someone, for the first time perhaps, had discovered him at his intimate task: the very reason for his being.

My curiosity was greater than my guilt, and it wasn’t long before I went into the garden; with the greatest care, indeed, to avoid stepping on grass or plants. I discovered it was even more beautiful than I supposed, seeing it from my window. In it were flowers of every kind, exotic plants I had never seen. I dared to brush with my fingertips this or that flower—they were all satiny, some hard, others more fragile and delicate. The fragrance within the garden was more penetrating and enveloping. But I always went down at night when the old man was sleeping in his ivy-covered house with its sills laden with flowerpots.

During the day I stuck my head out regularly and looked down. The old man was not always there. He gave me the impression that his appearance had become scarce after my intervention, but I could no longer descend each night to breathe the air saturated with fragrances from that garden, nor could I stop looking out the window—the attraction those flowers exercised was greater than my will.

For some days the old man did not water the garden; he seldom came out, always with some tool, always to move some plant or tear off dead leaves. Then something happened which caught my attention: the humidity of the ground. It did not seem possible that the garden could be kept so humid for so long in the hot weather we had at the time. It was as if the garden generated its own humidity, as if the plants returned to the earth the water they had absorbed. Now, watching the old man—to keep track of all his movements, to see when he watered with his little watering can—became an obsession with me.

One twilight a flock of blue and green parakeets descended to the garden. I don’t know where they’d come from or what they were doing in that garden. There were so many that they covered the branches of the lemon trees and the wire of the pergola. They made a deafening noise, which filled the whole patio; they flitted with agility from place to place, flapping over hedges, pecking the ground, not still an instant. They were blue-green flashes that became confused with flowers and foliage transformed by their flutterings. On my elbows at the window I watched them, expecting that my neighbors, drawn from their routine lethargy—from their boredom—would do the same as I did: raise their dark blinds and stick their heads out over the garden to contemplate that marvel. But I was soon deceived; none of them seemed to notice the noisy presence of the parakeets. My greatest disillusion was not seeing the old man peer out of his house and so remain unaware of how much was happening. He was nearer the noise than anyone and seemed not to notice it as if he were deaf. I was waiting for an opportunity
like this to talk to him; the excuse of an unusual event like the arrival of the parakeets would have been perfect. I wanted simply to talk to him, to show him my admiration for his garden and clarify that when I went down and entered it, I had no other reason then to enjoy its coolness, to rejoice in my visit with his flowers. I’m sure he’d have felt flattered, that would have been the beginning of a good friendship. But he did not appear—I repeat—he nor any other neighbor. The birds stayed there, restless, fluttering continually, their guttural sounds never ceasing, until all at once, as if obeying a signal from some law only they knew, they took flight all in unison, passed in a flock over the wall that separates us from the neighborhood, made a circle, barely clearing the roof of the old man’s house, and disappeared in the west, lost among the buildings beyond. For a long time I stood there waiting for them, looking uselessly toward a supposed horizon behind the towers of gray buildings. When I remember them, I see them as more part of the garden, as if they had been living flowers that had decided to loosen themselves from their stems in search of the freedom of other gardens, and I hope they will come back one day, surprise me with their colors and their noises, as if completing one cycle more in the life of the garden.

In the days that followed nothing important, so it seemed, happened; no one seemed ever to have seen the parakeets again. I heard no commentary nor did I want to ask my neighbors anything; after all, we only said hello on the rare times we met by chance on the stairway or at the street door. I continued going down every night to enjoy the aroma and the beauty of the garden. Now I felt it somewhat mine, as if by the sole fact of my having discovered it, the garden belonged to me—because in reality it was also mine from the moment when I came to love it, when I never stopped thinking of it.

It was one of those nights when I noticed that I was not alone; someone behind was observing me. I turned brusquely, perhaps a little frightened, perhaps surprised by the novelty of the event, and I discovered the old man standing beside the Chinese roses. He was smiling. I hesitated, immediately smiled, and timidly said hello. He stood there motionless, scrutinizing me, with that gentle smile.

“‘At first I didn’t trust you,’” he said. “‘Now I know that you like to come here because you love the plants and their flowers.’”

I was going to say yes, he hadn’t made a mistake, but he gave me no time—without my realizing it, he had moved off into the plants and disappeared toward his house. Before closing the door behind him, he added, “‘Come as often as you like. Love the garden if you wish...but never be surprised by it or expect anything from it.’”

The words startled me. I could only mumble a thanks and stood there, bewildered, disarmed, in the midst of the garden and the night.

All night I turned those words over in my head without being able to find meaning to them. I loved the garden, I believe I loved it from the first day I saw it,
but what was that about “don’t be surprised by it or expect anything from it?” if flowers were in themselves a surprise on opening up each morning and I expected only that they didn’t stop doing it. I asked only to be able to go down every day and walk in the garden, enjoying its most intimate recesses, to follow the rhythm of its tranquil breathing until I separated myself from the rest of the building, escaped from the world.

Perhaps the few slight details that had attracted my attention—like the fact that the ground was always damp despite the terrible heat and the infrequency with which the old man watered it—should not have surprised me. To me this was a mystery more than a surprise because it wasn’t the first time it happened. It was evident that the old man had neglected the garden lately, and despite this the garden had not in the least deteriorated, as if it continued being cared for by invisible gardeners who came at night while everyone slept. Of course I could easily be one of those invisible beings because without realizing it, when I went down each night, as if without wanting to, in a reflexive action I stooped to pick up a dead leaf from the ground. Before, I had never found dead leaves.

I was not mistaken—in time I could verify that the garden was losing its splendor, that each day I found it a little more neglected and that it was I who must take charge of cleaning and watering it. But my attentions were minimal, the garden had a vitality superior to the neglect of which it was the victim; my interventions were only slight enough so that thanks to them the garden was kept alive. They were only small signs: some carnations had grown more skimpy, some weeds had grown around the rose bushes. Each night by moonlight I cut the dead flowers and spoke softly to the plants. During the day, works to be translated piled up on me.

My confusion was growing; never had I imagined myself a gardener, taking hours from my work, substituting little scissors for my typewriter, and finding myself with dirt-stained hands. Why had the old man neglected his work? I thought he could have become sick, and I even came round to arguing that he had died and I despaired until one afternoon I saw him appear fugitively behind his windows, with his clean face behind the round glasses, but with a gesture of weariness—in his eyes there was not the same luster as when I’d seen him the first time.

One night like so many others, I was in the garden, watching over the flowers. For some time I hadn’t seen the old man. Near the petunias he had somewhat neglected the grass. On my knees I cut and evened off the edges of the plots when I seemed to see something glitter in the moonlight among some shrubs. I went near and parting the foliage a bit discovered a flower of silvery brilliance. I passed my fingers over its petals, holding my breath, and it seemed to me that the flower trembled lightly at my touch. I withdrew my hand at once without taking my eyes from it, to verify that it really had moved. It shone with the brilliance of
a firefly, encircled by a vague silvery halo. I don't know why—I took it by the stem, flush with the ground, and cut it with the scissors; I took it between my hands and felt a light palpitation like a trembling, and I let it fall, frightened and repentant of what I'd just done. The flower kept glistening on the ground. I looked all around to be sure no one had seen me and I picked it up, concealing it under my clothes and quickly raced to my room. There I put it in a vase with water and set beside it, not ceasing to look at it for an instant; toward dawn it stopped shining; slowly it had been losing its glitter until it was opaque and somewhat discolored, but it kept its beauty, a delicate perfection that distinguished it from any other flower I had seen before. On the following day, stressing its rarity, I showed it to my neighbor. After gazing steadily at it and touching it with her fingertips, she told me it seemed artificial. I noted a certain disdain in her words and preferred not to mention that I'd seen it glitter, less now that I had torn it from the garden, and I lied, telling her I'd bought it. During the next few nights I woke up several times to see if it had regained its glitter, but that was futile—it not only never glittered but, besides, began to wither and soon died.

Feeling guilty, I couldn't go down to the garden for several days. I was afraid that I'd run into the old man, that he'd reproach me; and I was also afraid—why not!—that the rest of the flowers might reproach me.

I moved my vacation up a week and the next day went off to the ocean. I believed that a few days of rest far from the city and that garden would make me forget, that I'd be able to efface from my memory the flower I had cut and the old man whom I imagined deceived by my attitude. But two weeks were not enough, nor the tranquility of the beach where I gave myself up to the sound of the waves and to the sunshine, to free me from the constant recollection of, the almost obsession with, the garden. I went home and the first thing I did was to look out the window to see it. I desired nothing but to find it as I had seen it the first day, with the old man, now restored, tending it as always, unaware of everything that had happened between the flower and me. I believe I fainted for some moments after I saw what was there below: a quadrangular patio filled with dried plants, weeds, a naked pergola, dried branches heaved into corners, and rubbish, plenty of rubbish, which the neighbors had been throwing down from all sides. I descended in despair and went to the old man's house and knocked at the door several times. All was silent. From there, I could see the tramped earth, the remains of some stalks sticking out of the trash, diminutive trails of wild bellflowers that were beginning to climb the pergola, the empty, dried pots on the windowsills, ribs of old ivy furrowing the walls of the house like crevices. I struck the door again with all my strength. The silence returned—for a long time, and was suddenly interrupted by the screeching of the hinges of a window being opened. From a first-floor window a woman stuck out a sleepy face. She looked at me with
half-closed eyes, made a gesture as if saying, "Ah, it's you," and shouted:
"The old man's dead."
I was struck dumb, questioning with my eyes.
"Last week," she added, and closed the window.
At that instant I understood the words the old man had spoken that night, the only words I'd ever heard from him: "Love the garden if you wish... but never be surprised by it or expect anything from it." Then I cried out, with all my strength I cried out to all those who were sleeping behind all those identical windows: Why? Why had they let the garden die? What right had they to throw all that trash down here?
A woman like the other, who appeared in a similar window, scrutinized me with the same sleepy eyes and hurled my cries back at me. Indignant, she told me to let them sleep, what garden was I talking about?, they'd always thrown trash there. Her cries still sounded behind me as I went up the stairs to my rooms. Once in my room I could still hear her. Then other windows opened and from them came other shouts for silence. I sought the book in my library, opened it, and became absorbed, contemplating my marvelous flower, dried between the pages, pale and fragile, now with no trace of splendor, no touch of beauty. I don't know how long I stood gazing at it before I took it between my hands, carefully so as not to destroy it, and tossed it out the window into the patio below.
Sometimes the moon comes to me
so haggard that a pigeon
might brighten the sky as much.

A mist flavors the air.
A long kiss, a voice—nowhere
all gone as the eye that dreams.

I don’t know what might save
my country. These are the nights
when the idiot makes a fire

and warms his hands till they blacken
when he yanks two bones from a bull’s nose
and beats on a log.

Everybody comes out slightly unzipped
and smiling. The lights flicker.
The carpet is covered with shrimp.

Tonight I realize all this
is inside my face. If I keep my secret
I keep my job and steady pay.

If I rip off my clothes and start
drooling on everything The Respectables
will say I’m going mad.

I’m already mad. If it wasn’t for you
I’d see a blade in every hand
and blood in every grin.

The moon is teething on stars.
It’s January. I’m stranger
than I’ve ever been.
Tim Seibles

HOPE

Listen. Someone is dead. The eyelids drop like two leaves into the shallows of a pond. Listen.

The phone rings—a low voice bleeds through the wire—the hard news crowds everyone toward that one

last breath. Listen. We are still breathing. All over the world the lips keep shaping the words. Listen.

We are not dying— the brain stays in its private room spreading the map like a Caesar.

New cells chirp like toads in the body’s shallows. Listen.
It is this life that matters.

Tim Seibles

THE SNAIL

Sisters, I am weak of your kisses— the wanting of them the scheming for them, even now with the sun out, even now as I say it, even now while the world warms in the sky’s wide mouth I am broken for the lack of kisses I
am bereaved of all the tongues shut away
in the black moonlessness behind teeth
behind smiles behind faces bruised
with unspent desire—what are we doing
so far apart? How many times has evening come in
like a woman and found me
kissless as a snail? How many hours
have I bullied the silence
talking about lips about the way a good kiss
spills into every untouched crevice
of the brain, talking
till my own ears bled of the words
and the sun rose again only to find
me, the same mad snail, talking
through the frost on my window
to the nubby grass, to the squirrels
the paper-boy, to all of America—talking
about the wasted night and the nights
that will be wasted
while I'm drowning in the kisses
the way everyone is drowning
in that hot river of kisses
never tasted never tried
What drives the work of Christopher Mangiaracina is the tension between order and motion expressed visually through images of grids, intense brushwork, and the superimposition of canvas, plexiglass, and metal. Mangiaracina focuses on the fundamental signs of order and motion in Western art, the grid and the brushstroke, and he has set himself the task of working directly with these signs on multiple painted surfaces.

First some clarifying thoughts on *signs* as a term applied here to describe the grid and the expressional brushstroke. These two elements in painting have by now become so charged with meanings, they have become the target of so much speculation, reverence, and irreverence, that they can be addressed by painters as images with a wide range of significations. That is, they can be approached as symbols. The grid is the Renaissance’s principal device for ordering space and producing representations of the tridimensional world on two-dimensional surfaces. Shedding the Cartesian grid and its connotations of order and the measureability of space has been one of modernity’s most arduous adventures in painting. The brushstroke and its adjacent textural notations (e.g. stray lines, spills, slashes, dots, and smears) came to replace the grid—or more precisely, the blocks of space delineated by the grid—as the compositional unit of a modern composition. This is amply evident in the late Cézanne and in all this century’s expressionisms. It is also evident in Torres-Garcia and Jasper Johns, the two major artists who come to mind when one thinks about modern approaches to a reconciliation between the grid and the tentative freedoms connoted by texture and brushstroke. In replacing the grid with the brushstroke, modernity was shifting the emphasis of art from reason to will and emotion, or at the very least it was shifting its source of pictorial energy from order to motion, from measure to physicality, and from spatial constancy and predictability to spatial relativity and indeterminacy.

To be sure, the various re-emergences of a yearning for order among many artists and architects of this century have been characterized by an uncompromising use of the grid as a directly apprehensible presence in the work. That is, as a counterweight to the cult of the tentative that pervades modern art, prophets of reason have focused on the grid as an *image*, as a physically immediate presence in the art work so that it might thus acquire a tangibility at par with that of a found object, a color field, or dripped paint. The recent outburst of neo-
expressionism has focused once more on the pungency of distortion and neurotic texture. The radical swings of the pendulum, from emphasis on personality and the will to emphasis on pattern and order, are finding a new synthesis in the pictorial syntax of artists like Mangiaracina.

One evidence of this synthetic thinking is Mangiaracina's painterly approach to the grid itself. He does not counterpoint the constructivist grid with the expressionist brushstroke but rather images forth both elements at once and in terms of each other. The result is a space that provides both structure and freedom to each piece and that can work ambiguously with the figures that inhabit the painting. To understand this ambiguity in Mangiaracina's work it is best to address the paintings directly.

In a work like *The Wait* a man is sleeping on a sofa next to a table and a lamp. More precisely, he is dozing in anticipation of someone or something. His dozing on the sofa denotes a process (sleeping) that is not only finite but that we know is brief. In his waiting he has ignored the burning lamp and surrendered to dreaming lightly. The dozing man evokes both process and stasis by his act of being asleep. In his sleep he dreams and anticipates. His body is in absolute repose, oblivious to the world. Images of beings asleep are traditionally ambiguous images in art and literature. Mangiaracina appropriates this image with its inherent ambiguities in order to make his own personal statement on this theme.

Above the sleeping man is a space completely filled with Mangiaracina's characteristic brand of textural grid work. This grid covers the painting's surface like a veil that interposes itself between the viewer and the image of the dozing man on the sofa. But it is in the space above the man and the lamp that the grid becomes thickened, turns on itself to go beyond the appearance of being the skeleton of a scenario, and so it becomes a pure, abstract image. It is in this top half of the painting that the same ambiguities represented on the bottom half by the dozing man are played out in abstract terms. Stasis and process are evoked by the tension between calligraphic brushstroke and the spaces of the grid. The dual nature of sleep—as action and inaction, as process and repose—is echoed within the same painting in the reconciliation of opposite elements in the conception of space: the grid and the brushstroke, reference and abstraction.

In *Watch* a different composition and different protagonists serve to expand the statement Mangiaracina is making in simple terms in *The Wait*. The bottom half of the painting is dominated by a blurred self-portrait derived from a photograph. The top is dominated by the front half of a cat about to pounce on a bird, and so the cat as image is about to "enter" the painting fully. The textural, calligraphic grid is worked into the representation of these three images so as to make them less precise. The bird, for example, is almost unidentifiable. The interplay between action and inaction in this painting is the result of the tension between two possible outcomes of what is anticipated—the cat's devouring...
The Wait
1983. Oil/canvas, plexiglass, wood. 77" x 48"
Watch
1983. Acrylic/canvas, plexiglass, wood. 80" x 40.5"
The Playground
1983. Oil & acrylic/canvas plexiglass, wood. 88” x 48”
The Table
1983. Acrylic/canvas, plexiglass. 40.25” x 44.5”
The Gift
1983. Oil/canvas, metal. 48” x 61”
the bird or the latter’s escape—and by the inactive image of the blurred self-portrait. The image of the figure does not denote a witnessing to the cat’s stalking of the bird. As a representation within a representation, the figure loses its import as a witness, as a human presence within the actions dramatized in the painting. So as to underscore the passivity of the human presence, Mangiaracina has highlighted the dark background of the self-portrait, and he has painted himself in the detached pose of a face-blurred entity with arms obstinately crossed. The freer handling of the textural grid in *Watch* produces a crystalline effect that heightens the impression of impending action and change within the painting.

In *The Playground* Mangiaracina confronts ambiguities of order and motion on an existential level. The figures are not blurred, human presences but specific beings. They turn to the viewer and gaze at him through the textural grid, some of whose blocks are now filled in. This introduces a new connection between interaction of negative and positive spaces “in” the playground and those at the level of the grid itself. These children are represented as stopping in mid-action, in the middle of a game, to confront the viewer. The element of time is present in this stop-action as it is in the youthful identities of the figures and the fact that they are painted in a playful milieu—playing being a kind of action. There is something perturbing in the faces of these children, and it is that elusive, muted presence of the grotesque that saves the painting from becoming an indulgent if skillful tribute to nostalgia. Temporality is evoked by the swing in the background and, as always, by the gestural quality of Mangiaracina’s energetic, calligraphic brushstroke.

Mangiaracina is forging a style based on the handling of the textural grid and calligraphic brushstroke as devices that can best represent a contemporary painter’s awareness of the paradox of representing motion and process in terms of static imagery. These discoveries are augmented by his use of layers of painted surface. Some of Mangiaracina’s paintings are composed of three layers—canvas on or behind a plate of plexiglass with a sheet of metal behind these two layers. More often, however, his paintings operate with two layers, be it canvas and plexiglass or canvas and metal. When the canvas is behind the plexiglass, Mangiaracina often paints on the plexiglass as well, exploiting with great effectiveness this duality of painted surface. He also scratches lines on the plexiglass to augment the linear vibrancy of the painted canvas.

The results of Mangiaracina’s layering, or superimposition of pictorial surfaces, are sensations that strengthen the focus on ambiguities of order and motion evident in his imagery. The plexiglass cools and makes distant the gestural quality of the brushstroke, allowing formal considerations to obtain a greater immediacy. Yet the hardness of this translucent plane is made vulnerable by scratches, cracks, and openings. These signs of violent impact make the plexiglass emerge with a connotative dimension of its own in these paintings. In Mangiaracina’s works,
plexiglass evokes fragility, or more precisely, it evokes the fact that art both deals with and is present amid great violences which it cannot always elucidate or dispell and against which it can never really defend itself.

The most art can do is to assume the difficult illusion of transcendence. To do this the artist must acknowledge art's paradoxical predicament, that it represents a life in flux through static imagery. This much Mangiaracina has done. But art has a timelessness that Mangiaracina has also recognized. The sign of this timelessness is the metal sheets he uses. Like the plexiglass, the metal suffers lineation through scratch and tear. It too adds to the rich, varied textural world of Mangiaracina's paintings. But metal contrasts formidably with the canvas. It introduces a harsh, cold opaqueness with which the canvas and its powerful brushwork interact. As with the plexiglass, Mangiaracina also paints on the metal, but it is clear that this artist is aiming at a variety of surface qualities as images in their own right and not merely as support for pigment. The canvas is always present and it is the principal domain where the actions of the painting occur. Finally, the metal stands at the opposite extreme of translucency from plexiglass. The connotations it brings to the paintings at this level are those of might, resilience, armor, impenetrability. In a sense, then, metal represents a temporal dimension too by virtue of its endurance. It is the opaque stuff from which the illusion of the painting cannot be hewn. In its brute presence, metal gives evidence (by contrast) of the fragile heroism implied in the making of art.
Marianne Larsen
fra BAG OM MASKERNE

stavelse for stavelse
overvejer vi hvem vi er

gruset bliver rodet og hemmelighedsfuldt
jo mere vi tegner og streger over i det
jo mere vi deler stavelserne op
i dem til tingene
og dem til det andet

det andet
den syvende farve i regnbuen
den tredive leg
den unummererede lov

det skrøbelige for fuld styrke

indret omkring os
ordene vi kalder vores sprog
en hviskens fremdrift

det klareste ved en dag
vi har oplevet
det letteste ved en følelse
vi engang har faft
det mest stille ved a glas vand
det blideste ved et blik
alt strømmer sammen
bombarderer os fra alle sider
som atomer og molekyler
til nye sprog

90
Marianne Larsen
from BEHIND THE MASKS

syllable by syllable
we reflect on who we are

the gravel turns messy and secretive
the more we draw and cross it out
the more we separate the syllables
into those for things
and those for something else

something else
the seventh color of the rainbow
the thirtieth game
the numberless law

fragility at full strength

the inmost self around us
words we call our language
an impetus of whispers

the clearest thing about a day
we have experienced
the easiest thing about a feeling
we have once had
the most still about a glass of water
the kindest about a look
all flow together
bombarding us from all sides
like atoms and molecules
of new languages
Marianne Larsen
fra KAERE LEVENDE

Med stammende lave stemmer
naar de taler med sig selv

deres ivrige ansigtsudtryk
naar de ser ned for sig

deres lige netop synlige vilde
gestikulationer med haenderne
skønt de hele tiden holder dem
presset mod tindingerne
Marianne Larsen
from DEAR LIVING

With stammering low voices when they speak to themselves

their eager facial expressions when they look down

their just barely visible wild gesticulations of hands though they hold them all the time pressed against their temples
Jorge Teillier

POEMA DE INVIERTO

El invierno trae caballos blancos que resbalan en la helada.
Han encendido fuego para defender los huertos
de la bruja blanca de la helada.
Entre la blanca humareda se agita el cuidador.
El perro entumecido amenaza desde su caseta al témpano flotante de la luna.

Esta noche al niño se le perdonará que duerma tarde.
En la casa los padres están de fiesta.
Pero él abre las ventanas
para ver a los enmascarados jinetes
que lo esperan en el bosque
y sabe que su destino
será amar el olor humilde de los senderos nocturnos.

El invierno trae aguardiente para el maquinista y el fogonero.
Una estrella perdida tambalea como baliza.
Cantos de soldados ebrios
que vuelvan tarde a sus cuarteles.

En la casa ha empezado la fiesta.
Pero el niño sabe que la fiesta está en otra parte,
y mira por la ventana buscando a los desconocidos
que pasará toda la vida tratando de encontrar.
Jorge Teillier

WINTER POEM

Winter brings white horses that slip in the ice.
They've lit bonfires to defend the orchards
from the white witch of the frost.
In the white smoke, the caretaker stirs himself.
The chill-numbed dog growls from his kennel
at the drifting icefloe of the moon.

Tonight they'll forgive the boy for sleeping late.
In the house his parents are having a party.
But he opens the windows
to watch for the masked horsemen
waiting for him in the forest,
and he knows his fate
will be to love the humble smell
of footpaths in the night.

Winter brings moonshine for the machinist and fire-stoker.
A lost star reels like a buoy.
Songs of groggy soldiers
returning late to the barracks.

In the house the party has begun.
But the boy knows the party’s somewhere else;
he looks through the window for the strangers
he’ll spend his whole life trying to meet.
Jorge Teillier
RELATOS

I
El vuelo de las aves
es un canto recién aprendido por la tierra.
El día entra en la casa
como un perro mojado de rocío.

Mira: se encienden las hogueras de los gallos.
Los cazadores preparan sus morrales.
Los caballos los esperan
rompiendo con sus cascos
el cielo que apenas pesa
sobre lagunas de escarcha.

Tú eres un sueño que no recordamos
pero que nos hace despertar alegres.
Una ventana abierta hacia el trigo maduro.
Busquemos grosellas junto al cerco
cuyos hombros abruman los cerezos silvestres.

II
Un viento de otra estación se lleva la mañana.
Huyes hacia tu casa
cuando el viento dobla los pinos
de las orillas del río.
Ya no quedan grosellas.
¿Por qué no vuelven los cazadores
que vimos partir esta mañana?
Tú quieres que nunca haya sucedido nada
y en la buhardilla abres un baúl
para vestirte como novia de otro siglo.

III
El abandono silba llamando a sus amigos.
La noche y el sueño
amarran sus caballos frente a las ventanas.
El dueño de casa baja a la bodega
Jorge Teillier

NARRATIVES

I

The flight of birds
is a song recently learned by the earth.
Day comes into the house
like a dog soaked with dew.

Look: the roosters’ fires are lit.
Hunters get their gamebags ready.
Their horses wait,
breaking with their hooves
the sky that hardly weighs anything
over frost-covered ponds.

You’re a dream we don’t remember
but that makes us wake up happy.
A window open on ripe wheat.
Let’s look for gooseberries by the fence
whose shoulders the wild cherry limbs overwhelm.

II

Wind from another season carries off the morning.
You run toward your house
when wind bends pine trees double
on the riverbanks.
No gooseberries left.
Why don’t they return, the hunters
we watched depart this morning?
You want nothing ever to have happened
and in the garret, open a trunk
to dress like a bride from another century.

III

Neglect whistles, calling to its friends.
Night and dream
tie their horses before the windows.
The master of the house goes down to the wine cellar
a buscar sidra guardada desde el año pasado.
Se detiene el reloj de péndulo.
Clavos oxidados
cuen de las tablas.
El dueño de casa demora demasiado
—quizás se ha quedado dormido entre los toneles—.

Una mañana busqué grosellas al fondo del patio.
En la tarde este mismo viento
luchaba con los pinos a orillas del río.
Se detienen los relojes.
Oigo pasos de cazadores que quizás se han muerto.
De pronto no somos sino un puñado de sombras
que el viento intenta dispersar.

Jorge Teillier

LA ULTIMA ISLA

De nuevo vida y muerte se confunden
como en el patio de la casa
la entrada de las carretas
con el ruido del balde en el pozo.
De nuevo el cielo recuerda con odio
la herida del relámpago,
y los almendros no quieren pensar
en sus negras raíces.

El silencio no puede seguir siendo mi lenguaje,
pero sólo encuentro esas palabras irreales
que los muertos les dirigen a los astros y a las hormigas,
y de mi memoria desaparecen el amor y la alegría
como la luz de una jarra de agua
lanzada inútilmente contra las tinieblas.

De nuevo sólo se escucha
el crepitar inextinguible de la lluvia
to look for last year’s cider.
The grandfather clock stops.
Rusted nails
fall from the boards.
The master of the house delays too long—
maybe he’s fallen asleep between the casks.

One morning I looked for gooseberries
at the far end of the courtyard.
That afternoon the same wind
fought with pines on the riverbank.
The clocks stop.
I hear footsteps of hunters who perhaps are dead.
Suddenly we’re no more than a handful of shadows
the wind intends to scatter.

Jorge Teillier

THE LAST ISLAND

Once again death and life get mixed up
like the rattle of ox carts
coming into the courtyard
with the bucket’s clank in the well.
Once again the sky recalls with hatred
the lightning’s wound,
and almond trees don’t want to think
about their black roots.

Silence can’t go on being my native tongue,
but I only meet those unreal words
that the dead address to stars and ants,
and love and joy disappear from my memory
like light from a water jar
flung vainly at the shadows.

Once again I hear only
the incessant crackle of rain
que cae y cae sin saber por qué,
parecida a la anciana solitaria que sigue
tejiendo y tejiendo;
y se quiere huir hacia un pueblo
donde un trompo todavía no deja de girar
esperando que yo lo recoja,
pero donde se ponen los pies
desaparecen los caminos,
y es mejor quedarse inmóvil en este cuarto
pues quizás ha llegado el término del mundo,
y la lluvia es el estéril eco de ese fin,
una canción que tratan de recordar
labios que se deshacen bajo tierra.

Jorge Teillier

OTONO SECRETO

Cuando las amadas palabras cotidianas
pierden su sentido
y no se puede nombrar ni el pan,
ni el agua, ni la ventana,
y ha sido falso todo diálogo que no sea
con nuestra desolada imagen,
aún se miran las destrozadas estampas
en el libro del hermano menor,
es bueno saludar los platos y el mantel puestos sobre la mesa,
y ver que en el viejo armario conservan su alegría
el licor de guindas que preparó la abuela
y las manzanas puestas a guardar.

Cuando la forma de los árboles
ya no es sino el leve recuerdo de su forma,
una mentira inventada
por la turbia memoria del otoño,
y los días tienen la confusión
that falls and falls without knowing why,
like the lonely old crone who goes on
knitting and knitting,
and I want to flee to a town
where a top won't stop spinning
till I pick it up;
but where my feet step
the roads disappear,
and it's better to stay put in this room
because maybe the end of the world has come,
and the rain is its barren echo,
a song that lips dissolving
under the earth try to remember.

Jorge Teillier
SECRET AUTUMN

When the beloved everyday words
lose their sense,
and we can't give a name to bread,
or water, or windows,
and all dialogue not with our own
abandoned image has been false,
we can still look at the ruined prints
in our little brother's book;
it's good to greet the plates and linen
set upon the table,
to see that in the old cabinet
the cherry cordial our grandmother made
and the apples put by for storage
still keep their joy.

When the trees' form
is no more than the slightest recollection,
a lie invented
by the troubled memory of autumn,
and the days are disordered
del desván a donde nadie sube
y la cruel blancura de la eternidad
hace que la luz huya de sí misma,
algo nos recuerda la verdad
que amamos antes de conocer:
las ramas se quiebran levemente,
el palomar se llena de aleteos,
el granero sueña otra vez con el sol,
encendemos para la fiesta
los pálidos candelabros del salón polvoriento
y el silencio nos revela el secreto
que no queríamos escuchar.
as the attic nobody climbs to,
and the cruel whiteness of eternity
makes light flee from itself,
something reminds us of the truth
that we love before knowing:
branches break gently,
the dovecote fills with flutterings,
the granary dreams once again of sun,
we light for the party
the pale candelabras in the dusty salon,
and silence reveals to us the secret
we didn’t want to hear.
Oscar Hahn

FOTOGRAFÍA

En la pieza contigua,
alguien revela el negativo de tu muerte.
El ácido penetra por el ojo de la cerradura.
De la pieza contigua, alguien entra en tu pieza.
Ya no estás en el lecho:
desde la foto húmeda miras tu cuerpo inmóvil.
Alguien cierra la puerta.

Oscar Hahn

Y AHORA QUE?

Y ahora
qué haremos tú y yo
tomados de esa mano
que termina en un cuerpo
que no es el nuestro?
Oscar Hahn

PHOTOGRAPH

...someone developed
the negative of his death.
—Braulio Arenas

In the next room,
someone develops the negative of your death.
The acid seeps through the eye of the lock.
From the next room, someone enters your room.
You are no longer in bed:
from the damp picture you watch your immovable body.
Someone closes the door.

Oscar Hahn

AND NOW WHAT?

And now
what shall we do you and I
each held by that hand
at the end of a body
not our own?
Oscar Hahn

SABANA DE ARRIBA

Me instalé cuidadosamente doblado entre la ropa blanca del closet

Sacaste las sábanas de tu cama y me pusiste de sábana de arriba

Te deslizaste debajo de las tapas y te cubrí centímetro a centímetro

Entonces fuimos barridos por el huracán y caímos jadeantes en el ojo de la tormenta

Ahora yaces bañada en transpiración con la vista perdida en el cielo raso y la sábana de arriba aún enredada entre las piernas.

Oscar Hahn

RESTRICCION DE LOS DESPLAZAMIENTOS NOCTURNOS

o el animal super-chico cuyo cuerpo crece o decrece de izquierda a derecha:

o el cazador moviéndose hacia la bestezuela de derecha a izquierda:

o la línea que se borra o se marca en el pizarrón de izquierda a derecha:
Oscar Hahn

TOP SHEET

I folded myself carefully slipped myself among the linens in the closet
You chose me among all your bedsheets to be your topsheet
You slid under the covers and I covered you inch by inch
It was then we were swept by the torrent and dropped breathless into the eye of the storm
You lie there now bathed in sweat your gaze lost to the ceiling and the topsheet still tangled between your legs

Oscar Hahn

RESTRICTIONS AGAINST NIGHT TRAVEL

or the super-small animal whose body grows or dwindles left to right:
or the hunter stalking this creature right to left:
or the line erased or written on the blackboard left to right:
Oscar Hahn

LA MUERTE ESTÁ SENTADA A LOS PIES DE MI CAMA

Mi cama está deshecha: sábanas en el suelo
y frazadas dispuestas a levantar el vuelo.
La muerte dice ahora que me va a hacer la cama.
Le suplico que no, que la deje deshecha.
Ella insiste y replica que esta noche es la fecha.
Se acomoda y agrega que esta noche me ama.
Le contesto que cómo voy a ponerle cuernos
a la vida. Contesta que me vaya al infierno.
la muerte está sentada a los pies de mi cama.
Esta muerte empeñosas se calentó conmigo
y quisiera dejarme más chupado que un higo.
Yo trato de espantarla con una enorme rama.
Ahora dice que quiere acostarse a mi lado
Sólo para dormir, que no tenga cuidado.
Por respeto me callo que sé su mala fama.
La muerte está sentada a los pies de mi cama.
or the eraser sliding towards point blank
right to left:

or the hunter or the eraser as the only survivors
on this page:
or this page I crumple or toss in the trash:
or this silent something that advances toward me
in my room

from bottom to top: top to bottom:
left to right or right to left:
and crumples me and tosses me in the trash.

Oscar Hahn

DEATH SITS AT THE FOOT OF MY BED

My bed’s undone: sheets on the floor
and blankets ready to sail.
Death says she’ll make my bed now.
I beg her, no, leave it undone.
She insists and whispers that tonight’s the night.
She settles in, admits to loving me tonight.
I tell her I’m horny but that I’m still true
to life. She tells me to go to hell.
Death is sitting at the foot of my bed.
She warmed up to me, wanted
to suck me out like a fig.
I try to scare her away with a huge stick.
Now she wants to lie by my side
only to sleep, and I shouldn’t worry.
Out of respect, I keep her reputation to myself.
Death is sitting at the foot of my bed.
Oscar Hahn

NACIMIENTO DEL FANTASMA

Entré en la sala de baño
cubierto con la sábana de arriba

Dibujé tu nombre en el espejo
brumoso por el vapor de la ducha

Salí de la sala de baño
y miré nuestra cama vacía

Entonces sopló un viento terrible
y se volaron las líneas de mis manos
las manos de mi cuerpo
y mi cuerpo entero aún tibio de ti

Ahora soy la sábana ambulante
el fantasma recién nacido
que busca de dormitorio en dormitorio
Oscar Hahn

BIRTH OF THE GHOST

I entered the bathroom
wrapped in my top-sheet

I wrote your name in a mirror
fogged by the steam from the shower

I left the bathroom
and looked at our empty bed

Then a terrible wind blew
and off flew the lines on my palms
the hands off my body
and my whole body still warm from yours

Now I am the wandering sheet
the new born ghost
who searches for you from bedroom to bedroom
Kim Bridgford

THE WALLS OF TIME

The walls are your boundaries.
White, white and without end,
They draw your eyes upward
Until you look straight at the sun.
You feel the way you do in a museum,
Standing and looking
At a hump and slender neck of bones
That in their vastness dwarf you,
Only more so and more.

You walk around, running your hands
Along the whiteness as if it were something
You could tame, cat-white, sun-white,
The wet white of lilies of the valley
And their crumpled bells.
At times it’s everything to you.
Other times you sit smoking,
Ignoring the steady hum of it around you.
Yet time’s always there. You can hear it,
The sound of that white, that grim white
That shadows turn almost blue.

Sometimes, though, you escape it,
And then, afterwards,
Staring at the white walls,
You forget how.
Touching your lover’s smooth skin
And the soft fuzz along her neck.
A sudden rainy night
And the gleam that’s left after it goes. Petals.
A cup of coffee and that sudden turn in the air
Before the leaves fall.
Your lover's bracelets, scent.
The scent you can sense in a crowd.
This night, this night.

And yet what about the walls?
Looking up at the length of them
And the dazzling whiteness,
You fail to see the outlines
Of the smooth white door.
At the moment, you can see me, a stocky, bearded forty-year old man, sitting upright at my paper-cluttered desk, scribbling away in my already pretty thick pad of notes... Nora, the girl I love, is scribbling away in the other room. The walls are so thin that I can hear her pencil squeak now and then, as she presses it on paper a wee bit too hard, and I can hear her whisper words and whole sentences—which she would later discard, with the impatient toss of that golden hair I so much adore. In these hours of our creative separation that I myself have established, enforced, and nourished with my own lifeblood; in these wonderful, I repeat, hours of our joint efforts at re-working reality, re-inventing it, consciously, pen in hand, in these wonderful hours of sublime transubstantiation (a wonderful medieval word! but that’s what we are—alchemists!); in these hours devoted to the most civilized process a civilized man of any time can engage in—in these hours I still miss the sight of that gold splashed over my darling’s shoulders, such delicate thin shoulders, the limbs of a bird, so tasty, I could swallow them away with kisses, I could eat them raw—although I eat nothing raw, you understand, not until my system has digested, and cooked, and spewed out, so to speak, whatever feeling or experience is begging to be taken in—and only then do I take it in.

A short look back now, at the past we left behind. I caught the first little glimpse of Nora between the Frozen Foods and the Tea-and-Coffee aisle in our Safeway market, of all places. I was brought there, despite my many protestations, by my current girlfriend, an insipidly pale blond, the fluttering of her lashes so doll-like, that it was not at all congruent with her forty-year-old status. That doll, that Nancy, that dull blond had managed to turn my life into something so cozy, that the year I had spent with her, I had not read one-fifth the amount of books I am used to consume per year, nor had I written much. The muse does not visit a man who is fast asleep on a plush sofa. And that’s what my life with Nancy had been: the plush, the mush, the soft oblivion of an unimaginative life. But to return to our supermarket scene. While my Nancy, in her flowery frock, was stooping over a lower shelf, unable to choose between the two, both sugarless, kinds of a frozen cake, I saw Nora. She approached us and asked—why us? why not the salespeople?—some irrelevant question: where the artichokes were or the
lemons..."Go left; left; the last aisle on your left," Nancy told her; but Nora, of course, for it was Nora!—went to the right. I did not know yet who she was, Nora, but it was then, in a sudden flash of prescience, that I understood what she would become for me, this thin twenty-year-old girl, going right off in the wrong direction with her bewilderingly resilient stride and those equally bewildered eyes in which I could see so much, so much.

But back again to the scene currently being described; the Safeway scene. I and my blond dummy were at the register, paying for our cartful of goodies. For some reason, still rather vague to me, Nora, too, was there. Was she paying for her artichokes? for her lemons? Or—just standing there, sensing promptly what I have sensed; mentally removing the poor plush Nancy from my side where she stood as my loyal sentinel, and placing herself there instead—my Nora? I asked the cashier for a pencil. I handed it over to Nora. She scribbled her address on the back of our receipt and, now stepping out of the store, she opened up her palm to my surprised, charmed laughter and my blond's vacant stare: a little silvery pencil, the property of the store, was lying across her palm. She explained that she had lost hers while writing down some nonsense that had come into her head yesterday in the street; now she needed something to write with; so she just took this one, the property of the store, you say? so what? anything wrong?

Later, when my life with Nora had reached its full and colorful sway, I often recalled the silver pencil incident as my first glimpse at her atavism, as I call it, her primitivism even; or more mildly, her wholesome closeness to the earth: if given rein, she, like wild nature itself, would overthrow all that civilization has built over the aeons. My saying this to her would not be flattery or merely pretty words. It would be admonition; a gentle chiding. For she had stolen that pencil with the nonchalance of a barbarian. For there were many other instances when she seemed simply unaware of the way civilized people act. There were strange repetitions; odd obsessions; veering again and again onto the same weedy paths she knew quite well she had outgrown. For instance, long after my poor doll Nancy had been discarded and no mention of her been made, the same subject would creep up, with the stubbornness of a brat, into Nora’s rueful monologues in my paternal presence. Rodney. Rodney was, as I understand, a nervous, moody man, a professor at Nora’s former school, the first man and, I admit the unpleasant truth, the only man she had ever loved. Or she thought she had loved. For I have taken very good care to distill somewhat, with waters of sobriety, the thick and intoxicating potion Nora used to call her “true love,” her “obsession” with her one and only Rodney. Lucky Rodney! He could enjoy the status of an obsession in Nora’s heart forever, I suppose, for he had one quality that made the obsession last, and that was unattainability. Rodney, whom I can see as clearly now as she herself did, thanks to all the stories she never tired of telling me about
him, the Rodney of the translucent brow and the enigmatic shiver in the far corner of his left eye, the Rodney of the fragile and animated hands and the milk-white skin, the Rodney of the brilliant perorations in class, that Rodney was altogether out of Nora’s reach. I do not want to use here the trite noun for that sort of man... well, I will put it like this: his passionate interests excluded the female sex.

"Don’t you see," I would almost shout at her, while she sat there, with her eyes stubbornly lowered; stubbornly running her fingers through the layer of dust on a shelf in front of her, "Can’t you understand—you are not in love with your Rodney but only with your own image of him. You never even knew the real Rodney," and then I would hurl at her a cascade of psychoanalytical terms to support my argument. "You hardly ever talked with him. You don’t know, for example, how he groans when he wakes up, unshaven, his eyes drunk with sleep, vapid as any man’s; you don’t know any live, revoltingly physical details to complete your image of him, and then—smash it, smash it to pieces, as reality, the groaning, ill-shaven reality always smashes your idols, your phantoms, your milk-white figments. I-ma-gi-nation! Oh, that’s a wonderful thing, wonderful, and I cherish it more than I do anything else in the world... in fact, that’s why I was drawn to you... I saw it in you: brooding, dark, uncontrolled... huge, interesting... When at the Safeway, you had stumbled in the wrong direction for your artichokes... when you had simply taken that silvery pencil... It’s in your face, in your every gesture: raw fantasy. But," I would continue, placing a sheet of paper and a pencil on the table in front of her, "please understand, darling: imagination must not remain the raw force you’ve been floundering in until now; it must be worked on." I would add an eraser and a pencil-sharpener to the writing tools already gathered on her desk. "Work it out. Write a poem about your Rodney. Write a story about your obsession. You will have him out on paper—your love, your man—and perhaps you will stop missing him in your daily life, with me, who is your love, after all, and the only flesh-and-blood character in your otherwise phantom-filled life."

But she would not look at me, silly girl; she’d stare sullenly into a corner whose yellowy wall-paper or whose vacuum she suddenly found very engaging. And then would come the most important part of it all: my own need to leave her for five or six hours a night. For I myself, after some time spent with my darkly brooding girl, would be literally brimming with ideas for poems, stories, essays that poured out of me like tons and tons of grain out of a bag too tight for it. I only had to sit at my desk and concentrate, with my door tightly shut, letting nothing—not even my muse Nora—disturb the flow of my work. But I had to shut the door, and that was not a simple thing to do, taking into consideration the infantile and often so helplessly confused disposition of my... my pupil, that’s right; for, by that time, I had become the regular mentor, the loving guardian
of this lovely, strange girl, herself not quite sure what to do with all her natural endowments. Her imagination was a burden to herself; she could be crushed any minute under its weight, her personality being so slight yet, and undeveloped, and completely at a loss as to what to do with all those riches weighing her down, down...threatening her with some brightly colored psychosis perhaps...some melodious madness...Thus it was that without ever saying "I love you," she did cling to me, her savior, her mentor. And although her clinging was of a child variety rather than that of a grown-up woman, it not only sufficed but indeed added extra spice into my life with her. But the door, the door had to be shut.

"Now I will go," I would draw her close to me, holding her by her thin wrists, kissing away the implied tears, tickling her ear with my newly acquired beard: a goat stretching his bearded chin toward an exotic flower. "Now Daddy will disappear behind the Big Oak Door," I'd smile, "and what will the Little Red Riding Hood do?"

"Get eaten by a wolf," she'd reply glumly.

"No," I would say again, "no, she will work." And I'd put another piece of paper on the table in front of her, later adding to it a chewing gum, a pack of mint life-savers, and a modish nail-clipper.

"Now, sit here, honey, and concentrate. Without, though, biting your nails off," I'd say, pointing at the gum and the clipper. "They are so pretty and painted." Then, I would take her fingers into my hand, like a bunch of crumpled flower stalks, and I would bring them to my mouth and kiss them, one by one, ever so gently, and then I would tighten my grip on them and rub them against my beard, as though rubbing them with a sponge; as though to improve circulation in those elegant stalks, make them fit for work, fill them with blood and energy—whereupon I would leave, carefully shutting the door behind me.

And she would diligently sublimate, or at least make ferocious attempts at sublimating the anguish, the loneliness, the sadness, all the uncouth emotions that flooded her at night, every night, as she sat in our living-room, trying to make as little noise as possible, even as she fidgeted on her chair, forbidding it to squeak, or as she put down her despairing elbows on the table, forbidding them to fall down with a thud, and still fearing that I might hear, if not these dull physical sounds, then the noise within her head, a glum, cacophonous hymn to the emptiness which was her head, placed, like a wounded private on the stretchers, on the two soft palms of her elbow-propped arms.

The door to my room—my study, we called it—was shut. The door was shut. A heavy, brownish door; made of wood, with uneven circles on it, like the ones left on a stump, after a tree is cut. But to Nora it seemed to be wrought of iron.

Behind that door I was turning myself into a blade; that was the word I used speaking to her—a blade. It meant that my face, which already seemed carved of stone with an iron chisel, sharpened still more, until it became itself a chisel;
an instrument; thin, pointed; a sword; oblivious to everything but the battle it waged on paper—a concentrated mind. She, too, I said, must become like that. She must live in the daytime, performing all the daily tasks of life; work, love; open like a flower to all experience. But at night, flowers fold their petals, I told her; become a knife; a knife that cuts the head off live experience: to better preserve it; to be master over it; to make men and beasts and plants of your own choosing... When? At night. Out of what? Out of a day lived fully. One lives; and then, one creates. Up to now, I told her, she knew how to do neither one nor the other. She confused the day and the night. She made a mishmash of both, I said, by populating the day with the night’s beasts.

But, I’d add hastily, there was no reason for her to get upset, feel neglected, slighted, hurt... “Because it’s only thanks to you, darling, that I can write at all! Because you inspire me! Because of all our little talks and smiles and kisses! Because of that restless, twitchy little imp in you that looks out of your eyes of a doe!” (I like to express myself poetically, especially in the evening, as the work time nears). “Because of your deeply romantic nature, darling,” I’d say good-humoredly, without the pathos such words tend to be associated with. And then, I’d clasp again her thin wrists, and pull her close to me, and kiss her eyes, cheeks, ears, as one kisses tears off a child’s face or pets a kitten. Later, a night’s bout of work over, I would crawl into her bed, not quite myself yet, the pull of my work on me being so powerful, it could not be easily cut off—and shower her with penitent caresses, or at least she liked to think of them as penitent when she was lying awake well into the small hours of the morning, after that physical aspect of love whose existence she still did not like to admit, was over, and I “became myself” again and fell asleep, my inanimate back facing her, for, as I told her, I would never be able to fall asleep in her arms: there was a time for sleep, and a time for love; it was sleep now.

I suppose she stayed with me that long because at the time she was ready and waiting for some new kind of life. Even before she met me at the Safeway, she knew she’d change from the vague, vainly dreaming creature that she was, senselessly and with a bewildered smile holding on to her ideas of “Platonic” love for her unattainable Rodney while discarding the world and herself with it, like an aborted foetus. And here she was lucky to meet a willing mentor. She was lucky to have me ram into her brain my view of what she was and what she ought to do. What she should be like in the daytime and what—at night. What she’s supposed to read, what she’s supposed to write, how she’s supposed to paint her nails and how—to stop biting them. Even those irritating changes—irritating’s not the word; they drove her to hot tears of despair, those moments when I’d seem to be slipping away from her, as if suddenly unaware of our union, of her existence and mine—joined, sealed, stamped; those hours when she’d see me turning into an utter alien with my eyes narrowing, narrowed like slits of a Mongol,
and my face like a blade; when I'd slip, slip away from her into the world of my book—she accepted even that, those changes. For she wanted to learn. Learn how to be happy and nice; light, like a silver butterfly among June tulips. Happy because obedient; nice because approved. She wanted to lift the burden of herself off her thin shoulders; have someone else carry it. I was there; I took it. The burden, the responsibility; her fate. I would carve her name on the coppery plate of wisdom. But that copper itself was heavy; wisdom—a burden. Now she had assignment after assignment to carry out. It was getting increasingly difficult to flower all day, flap quickly her silvery wings, be smily and tender, all the while knowing, knowing that at night she would be sitting again by my shut door, trying to squeeze a word or two onto the paper—so as to have something to show me in the morning; trying not to make noise—but she might scream, she might scream any moment now, and dash up and make a hole in that wall, with her head which must be leaden because so heavy... trying not to make noise, trying not to bite her nails—trying, trying...

"What I write about, honey, when I am behind that scary door—you really ARE scared of it, aren't you? ah, how silly, how silly of you—what I write about is you, honey. Your temper. Your tempers, rather. Your funny character. Your feelings. I'm making a portrait of your inner world. The inner Nora. Now, I imagine everything you feel, sitting by this door, waiting for me... You suffer, you say? Oh, I know that, honey, I do... Charming. You are charming." (A kiss on her left cheek). "I will dedicate this book... to you, little one, you inspired it. You'll turn to the first page and you'll see yourself. Your very self!... Oh, of course, the way I see you, but that only makes for the more objective seeing, doesn't it, honey? Just teasing you, just teasing. Tell those little tears to go away," (a kiss on her right cheek) "we'll wipe them off, the little honey beads; here, what a nice velvety skin we've got, here, oouua-auau" (indistinct sounds)... "Now, I will go into my study and work, but I trust, now, that you know I'm writing about YOU, concentrating on YOU, thinking of YOU behind that grim door... well, honey, don't you want me to write a good book?"

Nora smiled a faint yes.

Thus I lived with my Nora—for how long? two years? three?—and what a creative union it was. She, who had been but a vague teenager, with all the usual, though intensified, teenagerly problems, one of which was the lack of money to pay for a good psychiatrist, has turned now into a blooming twenty-two or twenty-three-year-old, with smooth voice and assured gestures. And although sometimes she still drifted into her former ways, and her voice grew hoarse with uncertainty, and her gestures became abrupt with impatience, and the mist of unintelligible fancies clouded her otherwise cleared vision, she still, I dare say, has matured a lot under my guidance; she has transferred most of her complexes
onto paper: out of a grain ready to give birth to a psychopath, a creative person has bloomed. I took a great pride in my teacherly skills. Until one day...

Until one day, just before we were going to separate for five hours, as usual, into our respective studies, she asked me to stay a while longer. "What is it?" I asked, a bit impatient, but still tender, a tender mentor. She lowered her eyes as she lowered herself onto the sofa. She pointed at her stomach.

"A child," she said. "Over here," she tapped on the center of her tummy, where her lovely-shaped belly-button lived, under her gauzy dress.

"Well-ll, it is... our child," I drawled, not quite sure what to say next. I could never accept news, just like this, unprepared. I needed a couple of days to absorb the situation, and then, I knew, then I would rejoice. I would rejoice at the prospect of having a child, and although my financial affairs not at all encouraged our settling into parenthood, I would have rejoiced anyway; only I needed to think it through.

"No," she said, giving me a mistrustful look, a relic of our first months together, when I had to breach the thick wall of her neurosis and her memories, to let in through the window thus breached the fresh breeze of creativity that saved us both. "No," she repeated, "it is not our child. I mean, it is not yours."

"Whose?"

She cringed in her corner of the sofa; she said nothing.

"Now tell me, my golden muse, now tell me what have you done," I lifted her arm off her knee, encircled my strong fingers around her flimsy wrist, and started to squeeze it, oh ever so gently.

"It's Rodney," she said.

"Rodney," I echoed.

"Yes."

Ah, again, I thought. The same old Rodney, the same old fancy. We are back to where we started. All my efforts gone to pot.

"But, Nora, listen, my girl..." I let go her wrist, "listen to me. He’s so far away, your Rodney. His school is miles and miles away—did he travel all that distance, just to see you, who had hardly spoken to him three years ago, when you were his student? Three years ago! And new students in his class each term. Just think, would a profesor, as busy as you have described him to me, interrupt his academic year, and travel thousands of miles merely to... I'm not even mentioning his general unavailability. And they must be having their exam periods at the school, and their paper check periods, and his tenure’s soon to be reviewed, and..."

"You will not believe me," she said slowly, "but so what. I did not mean the child was Rodney’s. I meant Rodney was the child. I carry him inside me. I will give birth to him." She did not look at me. "I do not expect you to understand this. You will quickly explain it away with one or two glib formulas you’ve
got: creativity versus psychosis, imagination versus reality, and so on. But I am pregnant," she paused, and I did not say a word.

"You see, several months ago I began thinking of him again. But I didn’t want you to know I’ve been thinking of him. So I didn’t let my thoughts fly out, you know, out to the surface. I let them sink in, deep, deeper—you understand? And so they settled there, deep, deep inside of me, I myself could not reach them, once they sank in... Oh, I know what you think, you think I’m talking nonsense—but I don’t care, not any more... And so, once they sank in, they grew heavier, heavier every day. Even though I knew they were just thoughts, just longings—idle longings you’d say—I felt them take a shape of an embryo, of—what’s it called?—a foetus..."

"Wait a second," I carefully covered her small hand with mine. "Why don’t you think it feasible that the baby’s mine?"

"But it can’t be," she said convincingly, "we were so careful."

"You are right," I lifted my protective hand off hers.

"And I believe it’s possible," she rattled on excitedly and with more verve now, as though she had defeated me in a battle, "that when you think very hard of someone, he becomes a part of you, your blood is his blood, you become literally pregnant with him, you carry him with you everywhere you go—until finally, one day you give birth to him; his reborn self..."

"Wait a second, wait a little," I said. "You are not giving birth to this baby. Not to the little Rodney. I don’t think I’m willing to supply pampers and baby-food and rocking-horses to the little assistant professors, propagating themselves in my house, without any regard for me. Did you ever think of me?"

She got up and went to the door, as if to leave.

"No, wait a second," I grabbed her by her waist, not tenderly at all. I shook her so hard that her golden hair jerked out of that neat bun I so liked her to construct. "Did you ever think of me as your lover, and not your wise older friend, your helpful guru, your creativity prompter, your psychiatrist, your free-of-charge mental clinic nurse?"

"I knew that you wouldn’t understand." She tried to unclasp my fingers clutching at her dress but failed. "You wouldn’t understand that my feelings for him are completely separate from my feelings for you. I love you. And I love him. You are out here," she tossed her head a little—at what? at the room? the furniture? "And he’s inside," with her eyes she pointed at her belly which indeed was slightly bigger than I remembered. "Despite all your advanced humanitarian talk, you are not yet perfectly civilized man, you know. You are intolerant. You won’t suffer a rival. But don’t worry. You won’t have to bring up a baby-Rod in your house. I haven’t got much money, but I will find some job...some community...some place, you know," she again tried to unclasp my fingers, and when again her attempt failed, she tried to wriggle out of my hold—and I finally
let her do it. She went into her room to pack. The next day she was gone, my Nora, my golden-haired love.

There is not much to tell of the two years that followed her departure. I tried to write. I tried to read. Sometimes, my efforts were more successful, but too often they were but miserable failures. I did not look for another girlfriend, as was my custom before I had met Nora. I let things seep by, as though they were not—each of them—a fascinating subject for a story, a novel; my mind worked less often on framing and molding the excruciatingly dizzying beauty of the world into what people so proudly and so hurriedly sometimes call "ART."

I had no news from or about Nora. I supposed she went back to stay with her parents. They had missed her and had promised to support her whenever she would be in need of their support: parents' clever way to lure their children home.

Then, one morning, awaiting nothing to lift off the wretched loneliness that had been squashing me under its wing more thoroughly each day, expecting, I say, no surprises from the treasure-bag of my always-on-time brusque mailman, I stuck my hand into my mailbox and, instead of the expected air squeezed to nothing between my thumb and my index finger, I held—that's right, a letter from Nora. I recognized her baby-scrawl right away, without even checking the name and address of the sender.

It was funny to notice how immediately my breathing returned to its normal rate, that of about two years ago, active and vigorous. My step as I went upstairs was steady and even springy. When, in passing, I looked into the mirror, I saw my cheeks glow with the color of joy so rosy that it looked almost indecent on the face of the grown-up man, beard hiding his chin. I sat down on the sofa where she and I had our last row, the one about the imaginary baby she professed to bear. I unsealed the letter.

Upon arrival into this mirage-steeped land,
I was encircled by a motley, shouting team
Of women. Words they screamed I did not understand,
Nor did I care to shout with them, for I was dead:
So tired and sick of what I carried in me.
(My baby's weight I carried happily—but pain!
Pain made me want to die.)
Afraid to bore you, I'll be short: when I
Got hold of an interpreter (whose English, though lame,
Sufficed), I learned that I had just the face
Of their much loved queen, you see, she died last month,
When giving birth to...her baby's dead, you see.
The coal-black hair those women had, was tied in Braids, and silver shone in them like cream.
Hurray!—they shouted, all.
Hurray, the queen!
And the golden bracelets in the air tinkled and shone,
And the brides with the braids called me bringer of luck,
And when, by the bush, in the grass, I heard a moan,
They said it was the son of the sun, it'll yet run amuck.
Then came the men, my loyal body-guards, away
They took me, to a little hut...
Though, this is all a lie, all that I've told you...
It may be true; it may have happened, but
The main thing is: next day I saw the Chief.
He said, he liked the sun, and fire, too.
His tribe, he said, will live as long as it'll believe...
Believe in what? I asked; I was naive.
"You are the longed-for queen," he said.
"I am?" And his Assistant nodded: yes, you are.
"Your son, when he's born and grown up, will be a prince."
I said to them: "This is a dream. This is bizarre."
"Before he grows up, he'll be unprinced,"
They said, "in two years' time we'll have a feast,
The major feast that will restore the faith to our tribe.
You and your son'll be present there, though you'll have ceased
To live, that very day." The Chief and the Assistant smiled
( Have they lied?)
Then the Assistant said, he thought my son'll resemble him.
I told him again I knew they were but clouds in a dream.
They said: "You'll see." And I was led away.
When, in my hut, I bore my son, my little Rod,
I knew that what they said was riddles not to play
With. For Rod did have the eyes of the Assistant to the Chief,
And I, I was that queen of whom the Chief had been bereaved.

I often think of you, who taught me to distinguish dreams
From certain other things...
I miss your beard. (Though it is rather like the Chief's).
...But something's being planned: the Feast! the Feast!
I think of sacrifices and of ancient myths.

Your mind, so sharp, will quickly mince, then—fry,
Then—munch the meat of all I've said above.

Good-bye.  
Love.
I have just finished Nora's letter.

I was in the process of folding it, folding it carefully, again and again, with a quiet relish rolling the same tasty thought like a butter batter, in my brain: I am a very good teacher. (Kneading, kneading the dough, so to speak...) I'm an excellent teacher of creative writing. (The crumble was a little ball by now). Of creative writing,—yes, but first and foremost,—of creative thinking. (The thought-pie was ready, and I started to bite off little pieces from it, one by one). My student has trained her muscle well. The muscle of imagination. Of expression. Words! (A real treat! I wish I could see myself licking my lips...) Words, words... This letter is a fine composition. Quite mature for her age, I must admit. As an author, Nora supplies her reader with a feeling of an immanent—indeed, tangible at times—reality, the reality of that fugitive, imaginary world strewn with the darkly bright symbols collected from her own insights, from her deep and committed reading, as well as from her association with a more mature author, who guided—ah, how insistently and lovingly I guided the development of the girl’s poor little ego, until it began to bloom into the understanding of itself as of merely an exercise, merely a try-out in imagination, a fancy fallacy, so to speak, until it has un-learned to take itself seriously: to take nothing seriously—is the motto of a mature ego, and this world, this so-called reality is nothing but raw, unpalatable, rank, insipid... nothingness... and only the quick swerve of the mind, of the mind trained to such deft and swift moves that would make an uninitiated dizzy, only the mind with a knack for playing volley-ball, with its own brain-waves for the net, a mind with a flair for the transubstantiation...

A knock on my downstairs door.

With a tiny square of Nora's letter on my palm, I started to descend, thinking: only... I wonder if my talented student is playing her volley here... Perhaps she again believes—as she believed in the beginning of her life under my creative tutelage and then, by the very end of it, fancying herself to be pregnant with her thoughts—perhaps she indeed believes her bad thoughts to be... reality, ah, this dreadful, insipid word... and if so, then she is as confused as she has always been, my girl... And I'm to blame, I'm to blame: I shouldn't have tried dragging her onto my heights. My little dear golden fool. The air of my heights, the air I breathe in and out with such playful zest, may be quite harmful for someone with a weaker heart... Kneading the jumble of psychosis as she is, she needs a doctor, not a creator such as myself. A doctor: someone who breaks apart the palace of imagination, brick by brick, rather than someone who builds it, like me, toy by toy by fun and games. She hasn't learned anything, I thought disappointedly. Indeed, I'm afraid the poor girl's quite honest about what she's writing... She really believes it's happening to her, my poor psychotic darling.

By now I was downstairs, fumbling for the keys.
I opened the door just wide enough to distinguish a figure of a man, in a wet raincoat, his right hand meekly stretched out, and a small white box lying there, in that waiting hand. Immediately, I shut the door. Too many of these mongers walk around, knocking on people’s doors, all offering their girl-scout cookies, hard as pebbles, no girl could have ever baked anything as unsavory... Can’t fool me, you know!—Just wasting my time, I thought on my way upstairs when, having peeked into the side window, I saw the man still standing there; and so patient he was, that I let myself take a longer look at him through my little side window. An extra piece of curiosity is welcome in my creative work, you understand. Oh, in its “cooked” form only, of course: aestheticized, chiseled with my creative scalpel that cuts off, so to speak, all the parts irrelevant to the process of transubstantiation... my writing process... my mind’s tricks and trimmers...

The man was lean and tall. His raincoat was all wet, although the day was dry and sunny. A bag hung over his shoulder. It was only by the bag that I understood what he was: a postman. Not my usual blue-jacket, always-on-time young fellow who had already delivered me my mail this morning, my girl’s letter in it; no; but—so what? Another postman. With a parcel for me. I rushed down to the door, picking up the flaps of my robe, I rushed like the southbound wind.

“A parcel for you. Sign your name here, please.” I signed, I took the white box, I said “thank you” and shut the door. Only now do I recall that the man had an odd sort of accent for a United Parcel Service employee. And the box had no return address on it, while my address was printed on it in large square letters. The box was very white, and neat, and I had a hard time opening it up. When finally I managed, with the help of a kitchen knife, to puncture its carton, hard as a girl-scout’s cookie, I found another box inside. And another. And another. Far from exasperating, the game amused me. I was certain that, as I’d get down to the last box, emptiness would be its only treasure. What a perfect metaphor for art! A mystery wrought of nothing. It was enough for a piece of vacuum to be enclosed in a white carton to travel miles and miles and have a whole long row of grown-up men work—and even send a special delivery car to my house, at an unusual time of day, all just to bring me a piece of vacuum! I grinned and I grinned. What friend of mine had a disposition as playful (read: artistic) as mine, to think up this joke?

I stuck my hand into the last box. This particular piece of vacuum was slippery wet. What I will say next may sound shocking, but I have to say this: between my thumb and my equally strong index-finger I was holding a piece of raw, unctuously dark liver, whose smell, despite my recent breakfast, led me to experience such a deliciously savage hunger that, no longer puzzled, or rather—no longer interested in resolving the puzzle of fresh a liver, in a many-layered carton with no return address being delivered to me by a mailman in a wet raincoat on a sun-
ny day..., happy, at least for the moment, to have a live, simple experience of hunger, a sensation with no retrospective thoughts and mini-thoughts and maxi-doubts on the artistic value of the experience, I threw the magnificent-smelling meat onto my frying pan (buttery since breakfast), waited a minute or two, letting my face swim in the clouds of that luscious smoke, watching the meat shrink and shrivel and the little bright butter-bubbles jump and jerk, jerk and jump in the frying pan. A fork. A knife. I cut off a small piece. I chewed. I swallowed the first piece so hurriedly that I worried somewhat about my digestive tract. But the rest of the dish was begging to be eaten. Too good to wait. I stuffed my mouth so full of liver, I couldn’t close it. I couldn’t even bring the lower and upper set of my teeth together to chew it properly. So I just stood there, enveloped in that tasty smoke of the first-class liver, I stood there and I swallowed and I swallowed and I swallowed.

Meanwhile—the first fit of hunger over, the usual perception of myself as a civilized man and a writer returned to me. My right hand grabbed a pencil and a pad to jot the experience down.

This swallowing takes a long time. I can see other men do it. They are sitting around the smouldering fire, and just like me, they are busy swallowing. We all here know how swallowing must be performed: with the focused awareness of one’s whole being, with the divine concentration—no chewing, no butchering the pieces in your mouth, but—swallow, swallow them whole; whole—you understand? Whole! I hear myself shout in my native dialect, of which the notes that my right hand is jotting down are but an approximation, a translation omitting much. My people, my dark dale people, so dandyish with the festive-clothes upon their rejoicing bodies, their golden bracelets tinkling in the smoky air, how busy they are swallowing, swallowing... men, women with silver as shiny as cream in their coal-black braids, children of both sexes, sitting around the parched burned ground where the sacrifice took place. “Swallow! Swallow!”—I shout again. They heed my command without lifting their eyes at me. For we all here know: the whole being of a swallower must be fixed on his mouth-teeth-lips. That is the eldest law of the tribe, and the one who transgresses it, risks a lot. The law is: imbibe but do not look at the remains of the victims at the center ground. Only I, the Chief, the censor, I raise my eyes. I look around, I see the blood-stained attire of the young woman we had been calling our queen for two years, until the features of my Assistant began to show through her small son’s face; I see the two thin, ripped bodies freed at last of their insides, freed, emptied out, freed... I shift my glance to the left, and my eyes meet those of my Assistant: he, too, may shift them. His skin is so transparent, I can see his vein pattern. When the female victim was alive, she called him Rodney; we never understood why. He and I are the only ones to taste of this most dainty morsel: a human liver.

Usually such a fidgety guy, Rodney, now calm, puts his right hand on my loin-
cloth. I put my left hand on his. With his left hand, he points up. I raise my eyes. So spongy, so soft are the clouds. The two of us stand up, slowly, ceremoniously, and look at the two figures, one larger, one smaller, clambering up, higher and higher, from cloud to cloud, two hazy figures, one—gracefully female, another—that of a male child cast out, cast in, cast out of that female's body so many times, so many times—as a son, as a lover, as a son—that now the two of them can't help being one, their innards thoroughly mixed in my tribesmen's stomachs. Up and up they go, you see, you see? The two of us wave our last to the two waning figures, to our shrinking, shriveling, shrunk memories of some distant lives in some distant land... My Assistant turns and faces me. There is in his eyes something... I... I don't... No! You can't! No one will heed my cry for help—the people can't raise their eyes, their eyes are fixed on their own facial muscles, they are chewing and swallowing, chewing and swallowing... Don't! I think he is thinking the same thoughts as I do, my face must have frightened him, here, he is stepping back... I... But I can't write anymore, the pencil keeps falling out of my hand, I'm forgetting that language, that second language of mine, that English, forgetting its strucsense, its structure sentence, it sentence structure, once again the only tongue I know is my first one, and no written alphabet there, no letters, I can remember only one—yaatakuyuu!—only the rows of biting teeth,—grin—bite—teeth—eeth aka—tako—oko—SWA! SAW! ALO! ALO! LO! A-A-A-A—-
you leave me with no choice
but to play the wordless tune
in the echoing veins of my mind,
reaching toward the crescendo
that will shatter me
to the countless corners
of this cage:

this cage, the shell
of the body that keeps us
from each other;
fragile before death,
an iron curtain while we live,
which screams cannot tear apart.

like a whip studded with knives,
the song of the switchblade
spurs me on to the crime
of self-defence.

believe, if you will,
that the painted face
of my transvestite ego
is the skin-rash
of a sickness
this generation
is heir to.

but how will you explain
the venom in my cells,
the fallout in my genes,
the pinpricks in my arm?

—the eagle is extinct,
and only the ostrich survives,
a pasted symbol
on the shellshocked sand
of our attitudes.

II
too swiftly the dream
has left my side tonight,
travelling in search
of a less demanding lover.

a werewolf moon leers down,
twirling his eldrich cloak of clouds,
mocking me—unprotected
from icy talons of rain
and lightning-edged emotions.

with dawn
comes the sun,
bellybutton of the sky,
offering its umbilical cord
of light;
but i refuse to leave
the dark temple of the womb.

once again
the slow painful crawling
up the waterfall of time,
and the vampire night
awakens me to the ritual
of giving and taking;
exchanging blood for venom,
understanding for peace.

sometimes,
a poet is a prisoner
of his own magic,
escaping only
in the restless sleep
between nightmares.
Níkos Karouúzos

THE LESSER ANGEL

I came to the slaughter house again holding in both my arms most of the orangeades, the dreamy cock kept saying "I will die" but life functioned on his wings as always. I showed it my hands that had sprouted once more but it kept saying "I will die" a bitter flute amid so much coolness in such an August of the stars month of the Madonna filled with votive offerings and ships until blood poured out from every throat and the cock began to dance.

Níkos Karouúzos

THE SUM OF AMBITION

As my mind erects the rain on its feet
I breathe as I smoke and meditate brandishing the enormous relics of the stars:
the gurgling of the crow is a number and can be counted, but Hell does not create poppies.
Now let us see what poems are. Death puts them out to browse and these wretched things chew on that impregnable grass called the breast.
A pile of rubbish in a dark room are poems.
Dark blue toward dusk and logs pushed aside.
Today as I was walking small mountains came into view the remnants of a small church, a fistful.
Truth pops out on the road, it comes very suddenly: there is not a tomb where it may be verified in intact equations.
The future is a tormenting form of the present.
(Let the Ideals, its in-laws, hate me.)
Although pure, I was ignored and remained
the night's monarchical and effacing darkness...
Pamvó, the Plurality of the Poor, Pausílypos, Papyrínos
foreseeing the earth night and day like the one in the well.
We remembered together with the Lady in White
the curvatures of love we remembered
the deserted stone wall which in one sweep gathers
the lizard into the infernal chasm of panic.
I arrived in time for the flowers and from those as hopeless as flowers
I learned life to its depth and justified the generative blindness of Oedipus.
The sky tensed a little and the sun
Showed me plodding on alone toward the savagery of thought.

Níkos Karouúzos

BEHAVIOR
I like that man who sees a cockroach
and says No I will not kill it.
He takes joy in watching it scurrying here and there
and then says Yes to death by squashing it.

Níkos Karouúzos

DAREDEVIL MOTORCYCLING
Neither pyramiding mathematics
nor the linked glittering of crocodiles
nor love of the future
nor the broad justice
of electronic asphasia,
nothing can conquer
the magician of the tribe.
With his many-colored feathers
with his painted face
with copper rings in his ears
with a bone through his nose
with a stupid
and speechless conceit
with thick
blue wrinkles—
this is the poet;
as he spreads out his hands to make contact
ready to bolt out of his own sight
as he wrings the air like an infant
irritating the drum's hide
treating us to spiritual situations.

Níkos Karoúzos

ENDLESS WINTER

Perhaps there is a moment of music
superior to the gunfiring of the futile:
our hearts.
Death dies of boredom in desolate places
and gasps.
Such is the hopeless land of the intellect.
We are drunk with serenity
we are faithful to deaf-mute time.
We reap ideas useless in their magnificence,
unrestrained descriptions of war,
academies of emotions,
impotent ministries and solemnities
to compete with the honest cockroach
that scurries on the floor
with so much nostalgia.
There is no plan for any terrifying overthrow
nor can St. Antony of the Wilderness help us.
We must continue the dreadful journey.
No harbor exists for us to anchor.
We proceed fruitlessly in a sea of seconds.
I am not the competitor of rain,
I am not the competitor of pity.
I listen to music and squander time.

Níkos Karouzós

ANTI-NEBULA

silence is not freedom silence
is not captivity
silence is not a donation silence
is not property
silence is a canary in the microphone
silence is the town-crier made of ashes
every stream of hers shouts that only silence is spoken
her every moment smacks clocks in the face
cogs and springs tumble out, time is screws and bolts
silence scoffs at all deadlocks
silence does not originate in China silence
swaddles language with syntax and rules
rests in irregular verbs falls in love with adverbs
swarms about orators as they shake balconies
goes to church on Sundays to sing psalms
quite often fries potatoes
drums belong to silence the generative
spasms of love
the screams of women in the maternity wards
all weeping is hers and all revelry
and yet what a calamity
silence can nowhere find her name.
Whenever I hear the rain beating against the window-panes, I hear their screams again—those screams that stuck to my flesh like cupping glasses. They would get shriller and shriller as the kettle warmed up and the water began to boil. I can also see their eyes, tiny black beads that popped out of their sockets when they were cooking.

They sprouted in the orchards during the rainy season, hidden among the leaves, clinging to the stalks or to damp shrubs. They were then pulled out and sold at a steep price: generally at three for five centavos, and when there were a lot of them, at fifteen centavos a dozen.

At home, two pesos' worth were purchased every week, since it was the traditional Sunday dish, and they were bought even more frequently when there was company. My family served this course as a treat for distinguished or very special guests. "This is the only place where they are really well prepared," my mother used to say, bursting with pride, whenever this delicacy was praised.

I remember the gloomy kitchen and the kettle—cleaned and cured by an elderly French chef—where they were cooked; the wooden spoon, blackened with use, and the fat, ruthless cook, impervious to all pain. Those heartrending cries moved her not at all; she just kept on stirring the fire and fanning the embers as if nothing were happening. Up in my attic room, I could still hear them squeal. It was always raining. Their cries always mingled with the sound of the rain. They would not die quickly; their agony was prolonged interminably. I would spend the whole time locked in my room with the pillow over my head, but even so, I could still hear them. When I'd wake up, at midnight, I'd hear them again. I never knew whether they were still alive or whether their screams had remained inside me, in my head, in my eardrums—outside and inside—hammering away, tearing away at my very being.

Sometimes I'd see hundreds of tiny eyes pressed against the dripping window-pane; hundreds of round, sparkling black eyes, moist with tears, begging for mercy. But there was no mercy in that house. No one was touched by such cruelty. Their eyes and their shrieks followed me everywhere—and still do.

Every now and then, I was sent out to buy them; I would always return empty-handed, saying I hadn't found any. One day, they finally became suspicious and never again was I asked to go. The cook went instead. She'd come back with
a bucketful and I'd just glare at her, as one would look at the cruelest of executioners. She'd merely turn up her nose and sniff disdainfully.

Their actual preparation was a complicated business and took a lot of time. First, they were laid in a box lined with grass and given an odd sort of herb which they ate, apparently with great relish, and which served as a laxative. They were left there an entire day. The next day, they were washed very carefully, so as not to damage them, dried off, and placed in the kettle filled with cold water, herbs, spices, vinegar and salt.

As soon as the water got hot, they'd start squealing and squealing and squealing. Sometimes they screeched like newborn babies or like squashed mice or like bats or like strangled cats or like hysterical women.

The last time I was home, we had a long, leisurely, delectable feast.
Jacques Crickillon

Visage d’ambre ventre de jade épouse d’amertume
Le couple royalement regardait descendre des fleurs de pierre
et des prières et d’hommes et de femmes pour l’heure dépareillés
O visage de flamme ventre de femme consommation du jour
Ourle encore dans le secret la triple torsade celle des parfums
celle du serpent celle du poisson dans la main
Nuit pleine et submergeante et me couvre
Mon ombre mon ongle mes yeux mon autre comme l’eau
comme l’herbe comme le feu
Nous unissant du bout des doigts seuls dans la plus haute lumière.
Jacques Crickillon

Face of amber  belly of jade  wife of bitterness
Like royalty the couple watched stone flowers falling
men and women pray for unmatched time
Face of flame  belly of woman  drink of the day
Sew in the secret again  the triple stitch  the one of perfumes
The one from the snake  the fish in the hand
Full and submerging night blankets me
My shadow my thumbnail my eyes my other like water
like grass  like fire
Joining us by our fingertips alone in the highest light.
Tu fus le fou joyeux de dix rois fainéants.
Tu teignais tes cheveux. Le soir, devant la table,
Tu pensais, faux jongleur, à de tendres géants,
Pendant que l’on buvait tant de vins délectables.
Mais les géants dormaient dans leurs châteaux d’Espagne,
Sans penser un instant au pauvre fou du roi.
Mais les géants dormaient auprès de leurs compagnes.
S’ils sont fiers et heureux, on dit que c’est leur droit.
Ils ne viennent jamais, ces héros sans courage,
Délivrer de sa tour la princesse, ou le fou,
Ni laisser les oiseaux s’envoler de seur cage,
Ni retirer à l’ours le collier à son cou,
Car, pareils aux enfants turbulents de ma ville,
Après avoir franchi rivières et rochers,
Ils dorment du sommeil éternel et tranquille
Du veau d’or trop joyeux pour apprendre à pêcher.
Et tu seras le fou de dix rois gros et gras
Et tu seras jongleur, poète ou chorégraphe…
Un jour, ton petit-fils sur ta tombe lira:
“Ci-gît le fou du roi” comme seule épitaphe.
You were the fool for ten do-nothing kings.
Gladly you dyed your hair. Nights, as you dined,
Cheating juggler, you thought of tender giants,
While we were drinking all that good wine.
But giants slept in castles in the air,
For the king’s poor fool, they hadn’t a thought.
The giants were asleep beside their lovers.
If happy and proud, we say it’s right what they’ve got.
They never arrive, these weak and fearful heroes,
To save the fool or set the princess free,
Nor allow the birds to quit their cage,
Or unleash the bear chained to the tree,
After they have crossed rivers and rocks
Like wild children from the city I live in,
They sleep the lasting and ever quiet sleep
Of the golden calf, too happy to know sin.
You’ll be the fool of ten big fat kings
And made to juggle, rhyme or choreograph...
One day, your grandson will read upon your tomb:
“Here lies the king’s fool,” the only epitaph.
Marco Martos

RITO

Hoy, ayer y mañana, hoy, en este instante, en el punto inmóvil donde todo y nada sucede, para purificar el dialecto de la tribu colocando cada palabra en su lugar, habla la poesía, habla poco, cumpliendo su obligación, y sin que nadie la invente, esparza o desordene, evidencia el orden y desorden de la vida, orden y desorden y furor.
Y para que la tribu quede contenta usa palabras del lenguaje de hoy pues las palabras del año pasado pertenecen al lenguaje del año pasado y las palabras del próximo año esperan otra voz. Y en el punto inmóvil donde todo y nada sucede, esa voz es esta voz.
Marco Martos

RITE

Today, yesterday and tomorrow, today, in this instant,
at the still point where everything and nothing happens,
in order to purify the dialect of the tribe
putting each word in its place,
poetry speaks, speaks little, fulfilling
its obligation, and without anyone inventing it,
scatters or disorders, demonstrates the order
and disorder of life, order and disorder and furor.
And so that the tribe remains content
uses words from today’s language,
because last year’s words
belong to last year’s language,
and next year’s words
await another voice. And at the still point
where everything and nothing happens, that voice is this voice.
Luchesar Elenkov

DEDICATION

(To Tamara)

Water splashes from the tap,
spills cold from the village fountain
where sunlight shimmers in copper jugs
that rock with the face of a poet.

Time stops for all this while
to pause about the chimneys.
We lived in Koprívštítsa
bisected by a light.

Rooftops bring me back
to scenes almost forgotten.
I sense a powerful secret
that is to me forbidden.

Here will always be relived
what happened then between us.
I dip into a thought
continuing to disturb me:

the way you spoke with blood
ticking in your skin.
It is as if I lay
swirling at a vase’s bottom.

Beside me, the edge of the field
is all aflame with flowers.
Behind me, I leave a spring
spilling from stony ledges.
Kolyo Sevov

SONG BETWEEN THE SEA AND SKY

For fifteen years I’ve sent words off on waves
to teach to you the secrets of the ocean bed
and you received them, along with echoes
from the beach and the fanatic flights of gulls,

viewing, unperturbed, both waves crashing ashore
—tamed and timid but keeping all my trusts—
and those that fell with furious pounding
on starlit nights when acacias dream.

Like sky and water we are merged
by perfect songs which rise and fall
to offer equally greeting and goodbye
in the nether zone that floats between us.

So if I should savor the daily flux of tides
and you should weary of being dashed
by sudden impulse, please do not sever
the rocking moon-track leading us to shore.
Blaga Dimitrova

A WOMAN ALONE ON THE ROAD

It's a risk and a bother
in this world that's still male
when around each bend may lie
ambushes of absurd encounters
and the streets fix her
with cold stares.
This woman alone on the road.
Her only defense
is her defenselessness.

She hasn't made from any man
a crutch, or wayside shelter.
She never walked over a man
as if he were a bridge.
She went off alone
to meet him as an equal
and to love him truly.

Whether she'll go far
or falter in the mud
or be blinded by horizons
she doesn't know. She's stubborn.
Even if rebuked along the way
her setting out itself
is accomplishment enough.
A woman alone on the road.
And yet she goes on
and does not stop.

No man can be as lonesome
as a woman on her own.
Before her the darkness
drops down a locked door.
A woman alone on the road
ought not go out at night.
The dawn sun, like a turnkey,
will unlock her horizons.

She still goes on
even in darkness
not glancing about in fear
but each step measuring her faith
in the Dark Man
with whom she's been threatened
for a long time.
Her steps echo on the paving
and stub against a stone.
A woman alone on the road:
quiet brave steps over a sad earth,
an earth, which against the stars,
is a woman alone on the road.
Raúl Zurita
DOMINGO EN LA MAÑANA

I
Me amanezco
Se ha roto una columna

Soy una Santa digo

III
Todo maquillado contra los vidrios
me llamé esta iluminada dime que no
el Super Estrella de Chile
me toqué en la penumbra besé mis piernas

Me he aborrecido tanto estos años

XIII
Yo soy el confeso mírame la Inmaculada
Yo he tiznado de negro
a las monjas y los curas

Pero ellos me levantan sus sotanas

Debajo sus ropas siguen blancas
Ven, somos las antiguas novias me dicen

XXII
Destrocé mi cara tremenda
frente al espejo
te amo me dije te amo

Te amo a más que nada en el mundo
Raúl Zurita

SUNDAY MORNING

I
dawn
A pillar has broken

I'm a Saint I say

III
All made-up against the panes
I was called this enlightened one
tell me it's not true Chile's Super Star
I touched myself in the half-light kissed my legs

I have loathed myself so much these past years

XIII
I am the confessor look at me the Immaculate
I have blackened
the monks and nuns with soot

But they raise their habits for me

Their clothes are still white underneath
"Come here, we are the aged brides," they tell me

XXII
I ravaged my frightful face
before the mirror
"I love you" I told myself "I love you

I love you more than anything in the world"
XXXIII
Les aseguro que no estoy enfermo créanme
ni me suceden a menudo estas cosas
pero pasó que estaba en un baño
cuando vi algo como un ángel
"Como estás, perro" le oí decirme
bueno eso sería todo
Pero ahora los malditos recuerdos
ya no me dejan ni dormir por las noches

XXXVIII
Sobre los riscos de la ladera: el sol
entonces abajo en el valle
la tierra cubierta de flores
Zurita enamorado amigo
recoge el sol de la fotosíntesis
Zurita ya no será nunca más amigo
desde la 7 P.M. ha empezado a anochecer

La noche es el manicomio de las plantas

XLII
Encerrado entre las cuatro paredes de
un baño: miré hacia el techo
entonces empecé a lavar las paredes y
el piso el lavatorio el mismo baño
Es que vean: Afuera el cielo era Dios
y me chupaba el alma sí hombre!
Me limpiaba los empañados ojos

LVII
En la angosta cama desvencijada
desvelado toda la noche
como una vela apagada vuelta a encender
créí ver a Buddha varias veces
Sentí a mi lado el jadeo de una mujer
pero Buddha eran los almohadones
y la mujer está durmiendo el sueño eterno
XXXIII
I assure you I am not touched really
nor do these things happen to me often
but I chanced to be in the bathroom
when I saw something like an angel
“How are you, dog?” I heard him ask me
well that would be all
But now the damned memories
won’t even let me sleep at night

XXXVIII
On the craggy cliff face: the sun
below in the valley
the earth overlaid with flowers
Zurita enamoured friend
gathers up the photosynthetic sun
never again will Zurita be friends
it has begun to grow dark after 7 p.m.
The night is a madhouse for the plants

XLII
Shut in between the four walls of
a bathroom, I looked up at the ceiling
and began to wash the walls and
the floor the washbasin the whole lot
I just want you to see: the sky was God
outside and my soul was drawn forth
it’s true! He wiped my bleary eyes

LVII
In the narrow worn-out bed
awake all night
like a candle snuffed out and lit again
I thought I saw Buddha several times
At my side I felt a woman panting
but the pillows were Buddha
and the woman was sleeping the eternal sleep
LXIII
Hoy soñé que era Rey
me ponían un a piel a manchas blancas y negras
Hoy mujo con mi cabeza a punto de caer
mientras las campanadas fúnebres de la iglesia
dicen que va a la venta la leche

LXXXV
Estoy mal Lo he visto
yo no estaba borracho
Pero me condené

XCII
El vidrio es transparente como el agua
Pavor de los prismas y los vidrios
Yo doy vuelta la luz para no perderme en ellos

DOMINGO EN LA MAÑANA/EPILOGO

C
Se ha roto una columna: vi a Dios
aunque no lo creas te digo
sí hombre ayer domingo
con los mismos ojos de este vuelo
LXIII
Today I dreamt I was King
they dressed me up in black and white fur
Today I am lowing my head about to fall
and the funereal church bells
ring the start of the milk round

LXXXV
I don’t feel right I’ve seen Him
I wasn’t drunk
But I damned myself

XCII
The pane is transparent like water
Dread of the prisms and panes
To avoid getting lost in them I turn the light round

SUNDAY MORNING/EPILOGUE

C
A pillar has broken: I saw God
I’m telling you even if you don’t
believe it it’s true last Sunday
with the same eyes I use for this flight
Trilussa

FELICITÀ

C'è un'Ape che se posa
su un bottone de rosa:
lo succhia e se ne va...
Tutto sommato, la felicità
e una piccola cosa.

Trilussa

ABBITUDINE

Er giorno stesso che la Capinera
fu fatta priggioniera,
ingabbiata che fu,
nun volle cantà più.
E disse:—Come posso
restà lontana dar boschetto mio
dove ciò er nido su l'abete rosso?
—Ringrazzia Iddio che nun t'è annata peggio;
—trillò un Canario che je stava accanto—
pur'io, sur primo ciò sofferto tanto:
ma poi ripresi subbito er gorgheggio.
E mò, piutosto che schiattà de rabbia
m'adatto a fa' li voli su misura:
Me bevo er Celo e canto a la Natura
che vedo tra li ferri de la gabbia.
Trilussa

HAPPINESS

There was a bee that settled on a rose petal.
It tasted, and off it flew.
Happiness, too,
requires little.

Trilussa

FORCE OF HABIT

From the very moment that the linnet was snared, then caged and kept, her wings hemmed in, she lost her spirit, and she wouldn’t sing.
She said, “How can I ever get used to staying here, far from my forest where I have my nest, high in a red fir?”
“Cheer up. Cheer up. Thank God it isn’t worse,” trilled the canary in the cage next door.
“I was like you, dying from grief at first, but then I picked up where I’d sung before.
At last instead of choking on my rage, I learned to adapt. Now I take measured flights, drink in the sky and sing to what’s in sight out there between the wires of my cage.”
Peter Engel
EIN NICHT GEHEURER FREITAG

am telefon meldet sich
in aller frühe
das amt für öffentliche lyrik
und gibt ein gereimtes grundgesetz
bei mir in auftrag

aus dem briefkasten
flattern beim öffnen friedenstauben
ejede von picasso handsigniert

da wundert es mich schon nicht mehr
als mir mein lebensmittlerhändler
zuflüstert mit verschwörmie:ne:
heute findet die revolutionierung
des alltags statt

später finde ich in meiner jackentasche
ein stück kinderschokolade
NOT YOUR USUAL FRIDAY

the first thing in the morning
the office of public poetry
calls me on the phone
and commissions me
to rhyme the constitution

when I open the mailbox
peace pigeons flutter out
each signed in Picasso’s own hand
so it doesn’t surprise me by this time
when my grocer
whispers conspiratorially:
today we revolutionize
the daily grind

later in my jacket pocket
I find a piece of penny candy
Jaime Sabines

TÚ TIENES LO QUE BUSCO...

Tú tienes lo que busco, lo que deseo, lo que amo, 
tú lo tienes.
El puño de mi corazón está golpeando, llamando.
Te agradezco a los cuentos,
doy gracias a tu madre y a tu padre,
y a la muerte que no te ha visto.
Te agradezco al aire.
Eres esbelta como el trigo, 
fragil como la línea de tu cuerpo.
Nunca he amado a mujer delgada 
pero tu has enamorado mis manos, 
ataste mi deseo, 
cogiste mis ojos como dos peces.
Pero estoy a tu puerta, esperando.
Jaime Sabines

YOU HAVE WHAT I WANT...

You have what I want, what I need, what I love, you have it.
The fist of my heart is pounding, calling.
I thank you for the stories,
I thank your mother and your father, and death which hasn't seen you.
I thank you for the air.
You're as thin as the wheat, delicate, as the contour of your body.
I have never loved a slender woman but you have made my hands fall in love,
you bound my desire, you caught my eyes like two fish.
And I am at your door, waiting.
Hugo Dittberner

VOM NUTZEN DER LIEBE

Es wäre schön, die Kinder studierten
das Lesen und Schreiben an den Liebesbriefen
ihrer Eltern.
Sie buchstabierten, sie schrieben ab,
sie hätten zum Lückentest Wörter
zu finden.

Es wäre schön, auch für die Eltern,
die bisher vergessen haben,
Liebesbriefe
zu schreiben und zu lesen, und die nun
um die Bildung ihrer Kinder
besorgt sind.

Hugo Dittberner

DER LÄNGSTE TAG

Zeig mir den Platz
Für meinen Kampf.
Die Spatzen sind erschossen.
Jetzt will ich die großen Taten.
Es ist fünf Uhr morgens, und so
beginnen die bedeutenden Tage:
Ein Gesicht voller kaltem Wasser
für meine Freunde, die wie ich
in Gedichten leben. Von hier
bis zu euch ist es ein Kannonenschuß weit—
das letzte war in Klammern gesagt;
Hugo Dittberner

ON THE UTILITY OF LOVE

It would be nice, if children studied
their reading and writing from love letters
of their parents,
spelling, copying
and looking for words
for fill-in-the-blank tests.

It would be nice, even for parents,
who have already forgotten
how to write and read
love letters, and who are now
only concerned with
the education of their children.

Hugo Dittberner

THE LONGEST DAY

Show me where
to do battle.
The small-fry have been killed off.
I want in on the deal.
It’s five a.m., and this is
how I begin important days:
A face full of cold water
for my friends, who, like me,
live in poems. From here
to you is only a cannon shot—
this is said parenthetically;
ich knüpfte an den großen Ton
und Atem: ich huste;
kein Traum, das Frühstück
mit Cornflakes und Milch.
Die Vögel haben mich aufgeschreckt;
ich kann ihre Stimmen nicht
unterscheiden, aber sie kämpfen.
Der Wecker tickt laut
und aufgeregt: WIESE DRINNEN AUSSIEHT,
GEHT KEINEM WAS AN!
Das ist nicht albern, das ist
das Leben, in Cinemascope,
das heißt: in langen Einstellungen.
In unseren Köpfen platzen
Atombomben von Gewinnen.
Ich träume, ich verliere ein Kind;
aber ich bin ein Mann,
der einen Karabiner mit einer Hand
abschießen kann und in der anderen
eine vietnamesische Frau zu Tode schleift.
Nein, ich hebe mich nicht auf
für das Landleben und einen 16-Stunden-
Leib in der Furche vor mir:
meine geliebte Frau, genährt
von unseren eigenen Früchten
und wieder eingeübt in den Geruch
nach saurer Milch. Aber die Berge
kommen näher, das dunkle Blau
lichtet sich zu einem Panorama,
in das meine Sehnsucht fließt, ich sage:
tröpfelt, den matt bin ich vom freien Markt
der Lieblingsvorstellungen:
ich gehe hinaus und schnaufe.
Drüben im Fenster erscheint
ein Todesschütze; er meint
nicht mich, aber ich
bin sein Opfer.
I turn on the tunes
and inhale: I cough;
no dream, breakfast
of cornflakes and milk.
The birds startled me;
I can't tell their voices
apart, but they are fighting.
The alarm clock ticks, loud
and nervous: WHAT MY INSIDES LOOK LIKE
IS NOBODY'S BUSINESS!
That's not absurd,
life, in cinemascope.
That is, life finely tuned.
Atom bombs burst
in our heads about winnings.
I dream I lose a child;
but I'm a man,
who can shoot a carbine with one hand
and with the other
drag a Vietnamese woman to death.
No, I'm not saving myself
for the country life with a
worn-out body in the furrow before me:
my beloved wife, nourished
by our own fruits
and again accustomed to the smell
of sour milk. The mountains
are coming closer, the dark blue
lightens to a panorama
which my yearning flows into: I mean
trickles, because I am weak from the free market
of favorite mental images:
I go outside and draw a breath.
Across the street in the window
a sniper appears; it's not me he's after,
but I am
his victim.
Francisca Aguirre

FLAMENCO

De la tierra,
esa música viene de la tierra,
viene de la contienda, del asalto,
del oscuro atropello
de las arterias del planeta.
Viene de la preponderancia del fuego,
del confuso lenguaje de los yacimientos,
del desconcierto de los minerales.
Esa música es ciega como las raíces
y es terca como las semillas.
Sabe a tierra como la boca de un cadáver,
viene y es de la tierra:
redobla a geología.
Esa música es parda como la corteza,
compacta como los diamantes.
No dictamina:
sólo muestra la voraz certidumbre de lo vivo,
el vértigo que va desde el sustrato
a la calamidad que grita.
Esa música narra el agujero
que delata en los hombres su ascendencia.
Esa música es toda ese agujero,
un sordo abismo que reclama
la primer soledad,
el primer llanto en la primera noche.
Francisca Aguirre

FLAMENCO

From within the earth,
that music comes from the earth,
it comes from battle, assault,
from the dark outrages
in the veins of the planet.
It comes from the prevalence of fire,
from the confused language of the mines,
from the grief of minerals.
That music is blind like roots
and is stubborn as seeds.
It tastes like dirt like the mouth of a cadaver,
it comes from and is from earth;
it resounds geology.
That music is brown like bark
compact like diamonds.
It doesn’t pass judgment:
it only shows the voracious hunger of the living,
the vertigo that goes from the substratum
to the scream of disaster.
That music narrates the hole
that denounces the ancestry of men.
That music is only that hole,
a silent abyss that reclaims the first solitude
the first cry in the first night.
Francisca Aguirre

LA OTRA MÚSICA

¿Qué música te cantan?
¿Por qué te cantan esa música?
¿Y para qué la escuchas
como si te trajese algún mensaje
y no silencios desarticulados,
timbales de distancia,
calderones de llanto oscuro?
Esa música suena a guerra macilenta,
a deserción en campo de batalla,
a despojo que corre
contagiendo desdicha.
No creas esa música,
no la dejes medrar,
ocúltale tu corazón,
cállalo a tientas.
Tápate de esa música de espanto
o te destrozará
como a un violín arrinconado y torpe.
Francisca Aguirre

THE OTHER MUSIC

Which music do they sing to you?
Why do they sing such music?
And why do you listen
as if it held some message
and not just disjointed silences,
drums of distance,
pauses of dark weeping?
The music sounds an extenuated war,
a desertion of battle in camp,
spoils that rage
spreading misfortune.
Don’t create this music
don’t allow it to grow,
hide your heart,
silence the probes.
Hide this music of dread
or it will shatter you
like a dull and neglected violin.
Sibilla Libica

Sull’acqua e sulla sabbia scrive il vento
cosi rapido—e rapido cancella.
Ma sulla sabbia un po’ più a lungo restano
i suoi segni. Li studio
tra queste dune dove siedo e dove
è un evento vedere come s’inclini
l’ombra del minimo fuscello, e quarzo e mica
arroventati risplendano come frammenti di specchio ustorio.
Intuisco un disegno... Ma tu non chiedermi
solitario viandante (che ti fermi
davanti a me come alla Sfinge) di mete
troppo lontane. Le vie che posso indicarti
vanno tutte a forare l’orizzonte,
ma quasi sempre portano a un miraggio.
Anche la mia divinazione
è, come la tua vita, un gioco amaro
voluto dagli dèi, qui nel deserto.
Io nulla mai ti svelerò, di più
della manciata di sabbia che sollevi
e lasci poi ricadere pensoso
tra le dita dischiuse, grano a grano
gli opachi grani del tempo, il cui fluire
è il tuo fluire. E torna, questa poca
sabbia, confondersi all’altra innumerevole
da cui la raccogliesti, fatto per qualche istante
a te stesso clessidra. Se insisti a interrogarmi,
il mio sguardo si svuota, ed è quel vuoto la sola
risposta che in me affiora. Pure ti dico “Persevere.”
Che tu sia giunto naufrago da un’aspra
tempesta della Sirte, o volontario
abbia intrapreso il tuo cammino in questa
distesa inospitale, persevera, viandante,
finché alla fine, anche se non avrai
alcuna guida fuorché il tuo sgomento
e la tua ansia. La verità attende l’uomo,
ma lo attende soltanto
per quando l’ultimo passo sarà compiuto.
How quickly the wind writes on water and on sand,
and how quickly cancels.
But on sand, the marks remain
a little longer. I study them
from these dunes where I sit and where
it is an event to see how the shadow
of the slimmest stalk bends, and quartz and mica
shine white-hot like splinters of a burning-glass.
I sense a pattern...But, solitary wayfarer,
(stopping before me as before the Sphinx) do not ask me
about too distant goals. All the roads I can point out to you
continue on to pierce the horizon,
but nearly always lead to a mirage.
Then too my divination,
like your life, is a bitter game
willed by the gods, here in the desert.
I will never reveal to you anything
more than the handful of sand you lift,
then let sift thoughtfully
through your opened fingers, grain by grain,
the opaque grains of time, whose flow
is your flow. And it returns, this tiny bit
of sand, to lose itself in the other uncounted sands
from which you gathered it, turned for the moment
into your own hourglass. If you persist in questioning me
my glance will go blank, and this blankness will be the only
answer that surfaces in me. And still I tell you: "Persevere."
Whether you have come shipwrecked by a harsh
storm of the Sirte, or undertook your journey voluntarily
in this inhospitable expanse, persevere, traveller,
to the very end, though you have no other guide but your anxiety
and dismay. Truth awaits man,
but awaits him only
when his last step shall have been taken.
Giorgio Chiesura

GLI SCACCHI

In quei giorni Ercolino ritornò
in baracca portando un lungo ramo
che non si sa dove avesse trovato
e per prima cosa lo lisciò,
gli tolse bene tutta la corteccia,
lo pulì di tutti i suoi piccoli nodi
e poi ne fece tanti cilindretti
dei quali riempì tutta una gamella.
Qualcuno gli domandò cosa facesse
e lui lo guardò in su con gli occhi torti
ma poi chinò la testa sul lavoro
e rispose brusco «Te vedarè»
e più di tanto non si sbottonò.
Tuttavia fu chiaro dopo un poco
che lavorava a un gioco degli scacchi.
Ci lavorò per molti giorni nel suo angolo
con le gambe rattrappite sotto quel
suo deschetto veramente troppo piccolo,
fulvo scarruffato corrugato,
e raramente se ne distaccò.

Fece torri e cavalli di forma classica
ma gli altri pezzi furono una novità
perché dovette rimediare con coraggio
al non avere un tornio e non poter fare
correttamente i gambi e le rotelle.
Fece grandi elmi e barba e baffi ai re,
diadema trecce collana e perfino
un principio di seni alle regine,
elmo ed armatura anche agli alfieri
ma non barbuti, e le pedine furono
solo teste con il collo a piedestallo.
Era un lavoro nuovo per Ercolino.
Non si trattava più di batter chiodi
o di raspare a tutta forza il legno
o di tagliarlo come viene viene.
Ma si trovava ora a lavorare
Giorgio Chiesura

THE CHESS SET

In those days Ercolino brought back to the barracks a long tree branch, got who knows where, which he made smooth, first thing, taking all the bark off, paring its knots, and then cut into small cylinders filling a whole mess-tin. Someone asked him what he was doing and he looked up crossly then bent over his work again saying roughly "You'll see." And he wouldn't give out any more. However, it soon became clear that he was making a chess set. He worked at it for several days in his comer, red-haired, disheveled, creased, legs stiff under the little desk, much too small for him, and which he rarely left.

He made rooks and knights of classical shape but the other pieces were a novelty: he had to remedy, courageously, the lack of a lathe which kept him from making the stems and round bases. He gave the kings a mustache and beard and a great helmet; diadem, braids, necklace and the beginning of breasts to the queens; helmet, armour but no beard to the bishops, and the pawns were only heads with necks resting on pedestals. It was a new kind of work for Ercolino. No longer hammering nails or scraping wood vigorously or cutting it any old way, he was now working on those small tender
sopra quei piccoli cilindretti teneri
su una materia bianca e delicata
a fare forme minuscole e difficili
come barbe nasi bocche e orecchie.
Era costretto a trattenere la violenza
e a esercitare sempre, sì, la ostinazione
ma proprio a contenerne la sua foga
ed a costringerla a diventar pazienza.
Era meraviglioso ci riuscisse.
Ma qualcosa, una traccia del suo carattere,
passò intanto dentro il legno e vi rimase.
Non più che una qualità del suo lavoro,
una pertinenza di quei tratti
e tagli che venivano precisi
nudi duri angoluti e scabrosi.
E infine apparve come una rassomiglianza
tra i suoi personaggi. Strana cosa.
Ed era il chiaro segno della sua
paternità sopra di loro e, tra di loro,
era l’unico segno della stretta
parentela che li univa, ché nel resto
nessun pezzo somigliava al suo gemello
poiché bastava un piccolo incidente
nel legno o nel maneggio del coltello
a fare l’uno allegro e l’altro truce.
Ma un’altra e più strana cosa si faceva
mano a mano sempre più evidente
in quei molti giorni di lunga pazienza.
Una qualità differenziava
quella solitaria ostinazione
da quell’altra ostinazione dei discorsi.
Qualcosa di ben diverso era nel modo
di quella tenacia delle mani
dall’altra sua tenacia di parole;
quals’altro qui si rivelava.
E non c’è da esitare: era l’amore.

Era amore quando lui se li guardava
quei suoi piccoli feti bianchi e deformi
e, a mano a mano che uno se ne formava,
lo posava assieme agli altri sul deschetto
cylinders, on the white delicate stuff,
making minuscule difficult shapes
like beards noses mouths ears.
He was forced to curb his violence,
and to exercise his stubbornness, yes,
his stubbornness, to restrain his compulsiveness
compelling it into patience.
It would be marvelous if he succeeded.
In the meantime a trace of his own nature
passed into the wood and stayed there.
Not more than a quality of his work,
relevant to those traits and cuts that came out
naked precise tough angular and rugged.
And in the end it showed as a resemblance
among his characters. A strange thing.
It was the clear sign of his paternity, the only
sign of the close kinship that united them,
since there was no other resemblance
a small accident in the wood
or in the handling of the knife
was enough to make one cheerful, the other grim.
But another thing, stranger yet, became little
by little more evident in those
many days long with patience.
A quality differentiated this solitary
obstinacy from the obstinacy
of his speeches. Something quite
different from the tenacity of words
the tenacity of his hands;
something was revealed here.
No need to hesitate; it was love.

It was love. You could see it
from the way he looked at them
the way he looked at his small
fetuses, white, misshapen,
pencolante e ostinato li rialzava
ogni volta che, urtati, gli cadevano.
E durante la giornata spesse volte
si fermava a riposarsi e li mirava
e li variava nelle disposizioni:
prima a scala e poi i più bassi al centro,
poi li opponeva e dopo li alternava.
Ma se arrivava un altro lui faceva
finta di niente e li nascondeva
in gran fretta o con un colpo rovesciava,
quasi a dispetto, tutto, bruscamente.
Era un amore chiuso duro tacito
insistito e quasi ribadito
con il solito gesto delle mani;
un amore che partecipava
insomma anch’esso della ostinazione
e durezza che sono il suo carattere;
e quasi un po’ ritorto contro gli altri
e non lieto se non per poco tempo;
ma c’era. E in qualche modo lo ammansava.

Trovò delle matite colorate.
Il seme bianco si ebbe giustacuori
rossi, elmi d’oro e collari azzurrini,
il re barba e baffi neri e la regina
trecce violette. L’altro seme invece si ebbe
elmi pure dorati ma giustacuori
verdi e collari rossi e facce nere
con barbe baffi trecce ed occhi bianchi
del bianco naturale dell’abete.
Ed Ercolino, dopo averli finiti,
se li allineava e se li guardava
con occhio attento agli ultimi ritocchi
ed era in fondo segretamente ansioso,
ruvidamente ansioso di un elogio
per le sue grottesche e orribili creature,
the way, once one was formed,
he would put it down next to the others
on the small wobbly desk
the way he kept straightening them up
every time they fell when bumped.
And many times during the day
he’d stop working to look at them
re-arrange them, in steps first, then
the shortest in the center, opposite
each other, staggered.
But when someone approached he feigned
indifference, hid them hurriedly or,
suddenly, brusquely, knocked everything
down as if in spite. It was a love
turned inward, tough, silent, insisted upon,
clinched, you may say, by the usual
hand gesture; a love which was also part
of the obstinacy and toughness of his character;
perhaps somewhat turned against everyone else
and happy only for a short time; but it was
there. And it seemed to tame him in some way.

He found some colored pencils.
The white pieces got red jerkins,
gold helmets and pale blue collars,
the king a black beard and mustache
and the queen violet braids. The others
also got gold helmets, but green jerkins,
red collars and black faces with white
eyes, beard, mustache and braids;
the natural white of the fir wood.
After he was finished, Ercolino
lined them up and checked them closely
to see if they needed re-touching,
and was secretly anxious, deep down,
in his rough way, he was anxious for praise
for his grotesque and horrible creatures,
so when I went to see them
così quando andai a vederle non si oppose come io avevo temuto e come al solito.

Un cavallo aveva il naso un po’ più lungo e puntuto ed un’aria un po’ maligna; l’altro invece si era avuto un muso grosso e rotondo e le orecchie tagliate via e lo sguardo quasi folle ed atterrito di una buona bestia sempre bastonata. Il re nero aveva il naso appiattito e rassomigliava a un negro vero, ma il re bianco sotto il cimiero d’oro e la regina sotto le chiome turchine tutti due avevano gli stessi occhi tagliati profondamente a croce con il naso e la fronte piatta e dura per cui erano tra tutti i personaggi quelli che più somigliavano a Ercolino.

Egli mi andava mostrando quei suoi esseri uno ad uno, tenendoseli in mano e girandomeli in aria delicato sotto gli occhi. «Belli» diceva «belli! Non è vero?» «Belli» dicevo io, e a un tratto mi pareva anche simpatico. Ma ebbi il torto per simpatia di dire «Peccato per il naso del re nero» e lui allora si arrestò, si rabbuiò, scosse il capo, lo abbassò, si concentrò come per qualcuna delle sue sentenze e infatti «Il naso è niente» dichiarò bruscamente. E rimise tutto via.
he did not keep me from doing it
as I expected, and against his wont.

One of the horses had a slightly longer
slightly sharper nose and a spiteful look,
the other a big round snout, cut-off ears
and the somewhat crazy terrified look
of a good beast that's always been beaten.
The black king with its flattened nose
was the only black piece resembling a real black
and the white king under his golden crest
and the queen under her indigo braids
both had the same deeply cut eyes
forming a cross with the nose
and the flat tough forehead
which made them, among all of them,
the ones most resembling Ercolino.

One by one he showed me his little people
holding them in his hand
turning them delicately under my eyes
"Beautiful," he'd say "beautiful! Right?"
"Beautiful," I said, and suddenly he seemed
even likable. Then I made the mistake
of saying, sympathetically,
"Too bad about the black king's nose,"
and he stopped, then, clouding up; shook
his head, lowering it in concentration
as if for one of his pronouncements
and in fact, he declared brusquely,
"The nose doesn't count."
And put everything away.
Claude Vigée

A CŒUR PERDU

I

Comme du pressoir dans la cuve
à chaque tour de vis
le torrent gris des grappes écrasées
s’enlise dans l’écume,
ainsi dans ton haleine
le sang noir du poème
s’apaise entre les mots
dans le lit blanc des pages.

II

Avant un seul poète
mille générations qui découvrent l’espace,
mille humbles cœurs s’exaltent
aux premiers vins de l’aube
lorsque la nuit s’envole
et leur songe s’attarde
pour reprendre à tâtons
l’œuvre aveugle du jour.

III

Avant le moindre mot
il faut le monde entier,
avant un seul écho
l’oiseau sur l’églantier.
L’enfant qui s’en souvient
fait surgir du poème
dans la langue de rien
la voix de l’amour même.
Claude Vigée

HEART LOST IN THE WORLD

I
From the wine-press into the vat
at each turn of the screw
the grey torrent of crushed grapes
is squeezed into the froth;

so the black blood of the poem
quenches itself in your breath,
between the words
on the white bed of pages.

II
Before a single poet,
a thousand generations who discover space,
a thousand humble hearts are exalted
in the first wines of dawn

as night takes flight
and their dream lingers
and fumblingly they set about
the blind day’s task.

III
Before the least word,
the entire world is necessary;
before a single echo,
the bird on the briar.

The child who remembers it
makes the voice of love itself
spring up from the poem
in the language of nothing.
Coeur perdu dans le monde
et pétri par le vent,
à l'aube chaque aronde
se trouve dans ton chant:

mais parmi la toison
des fleuves des montagnes
les étoiles qui battent
dans la paume noire de la mer

Claude Vigée

CHORAL EN DÉCEMBRE

Sous les bois en pleurs
quel oiseau rêvant?
O la terre en fleurs
au soleil levant.

Si la flamme émonde
l'arbre calciné,
sa cendre féconde
l'astre enraciné.

Souffle créateur,
parole profonde,
soleil incarné
dans l'hiver du monde,

Viens illuminer
la nuit et la peur:
seul oiseau vivant
dans le gel d'un cœur.
IV

Heart lost in the world
    and shaped by the wind,
at dawn each swallow
    finds itself in your song:

but among the fleece
    of the mountain streams,
the stars which beat
    in the black hand of the sea.

Claude Vigée

CHORALE IN DECEMBER

In the weeping woods,
what dreaming bird?
O earth flowering
in the rising sun.

If the flame prunes
the charred tree,
its ashes will fertilize
the deep-rooted star.

Creative breath,
profound word,
sun incarnate
in the winter of the world,

come light up
night and fear:
sole bird living
in a frozen heart.
Souffle créateur,
l’abîme te fonde:
tu jaillis du vent,
parole profonde.

Solitaire et nu,
sans havre sur terre,
par naissance exclu
du sein de la mère,

Oiseau pour ta perte
par la nuit couvé,
dans ton aile ouverte
l’espace est trouvé.

Soleil géniteur,
planant sur les ondes,
extase et terreur
en toi se confondent.

Dans la nuit du cœur
que ton jour inonde
tu viens achever
la strophe du monde,

Souffle créateur,
parole profonde.
Creative breath, 
founded in the abyss:  
you rush out of the wind,  
profound word.

Lonely and naked,  
without haven on earth,  
by birth excluded  
from the mother's womb,  

bird hatched by night  
to your own misfortune,  
within your outspread wing  
space is found.

Fathering sun,  
soaring on the waves,  
ecstasy and terror  
are mingled in you.

In the night of the heart  
flooded by your light  
you come to finish  
the stanza of the world,  

Creative breath,  
profound word.
Moi qui serai, que suis-je?
   Dans le temps hasardeux
l'étoile est mon vertige,
   l'attente est ma compagne.
Mais au bout du combat
   qui nous brise tous deux,
si l'un de nous s'abat,
   c'est dans l'autre qu'il gagne.
Le vent noir sur le seuil
   dit l'amant qui pénètre,
l'hiver, quand j'ouvre l'œil,
   quel printemps n'ose y naître?
La nuit d'angoisse endure
   déjà l'éclair de l'être:
l'attente est sa blessure
   où je peux me connaître.
Claude Vigée

PATIENCE

I who shall be, what am I?
   Within fickle time
the star makes me dizzy;
   expectation is my mate.

But at the end of the struggle
   which breaks the two of us,
if one of us falls,
   it is in the other that he wins.

The black wind on the threshold
   tells of the lover slipping in;
when I open my eyes in winter—
   what spring dare not be born there?

Already the anguished night
   endures the lightning of being:
waiting is its wound
   in which I can know myself.
Roberto Juarroz

I

La vida dibuja un árbol
y la muerte dibuja otro.
La vida dibuja un nido
y la muerte lo copia.
La vida dibuja un pájaro
para que habite el nido
y la muerte de inmediato
dibuja otro pájaro.

Uno mano que no dibuja nada
se pasea entre todos los dibujos
y cada tanto cambia uno de sitio.
Por ejemplo:
el pájaro de la vida
ocupa el nido de la muerte
sobre el árbol dibujado por la vida.

Otras veces
la mano que no dibuja nada
borra un dibujo de la serie.
Por ejemplo:
el árbol de la muerte sostiene el nido de la muerte,
pero no lo ocupa ningún pájaro.

Y otras veces
la mano que no dibuja nada
se convierte a sí misma
en imagen sobrante,
con figura de pájaro,
con figura de árbol,
con figura de nido.
Y entonces, sólo entonces,
no falta ni sobra nada.
Life sketches a tree
and death sketches another.
Life sketches a nest
and death copies it.
Life sketches a bird
to live in the nest
and death immediately
sketches another bird.

A hand that sketches nothing
wanders among all of the sketches
and every so often changes the place of one.
For example:
the bird of life
sits in the nest of death
on the tree sketched by life.

Other times
the hand that sketches nothing
erases a sketch from the series.
For example:
the tree of death
holds up the nest of death,
but no bird sits in it.

And other times
the hand that sketches nothing
changes itself
into leftover image,
in the shape of a bird,
in the shape of a tree,
in the shape of a nest.
And then, only then,
it has neither too little nor too much.
Por ejemplo:
dos pájaros
ocupan el nido de la vida
sobre el árbol de la muerte.

O el árbol de la vida
sostiene dos nidos
en los que habita un solo pájaro.

O un pájaro único
habita un solo nido
sobre el árbol de la vida
y el árbol de la muerte.

3

Derivaciones de la luz.

Un árbol se cansa de ser árbol
y se crea una rama
de otro árbol.

Una sombra se suicida
con un cero en el centro
y comienza a manar luz de la sombra.

Una mirada apócrifa
revierte sus cristales
y todo queda así: sólo cristales.

El ideal de estar loco
estira sus depósitos de fiebre
y salta un trigo hecho de harina y pan:
la lucidez y el hambre.
For example:
two birds
occupy the nest of life
on the tree of death.

Or the tree of life
holds two nests
inhabited by only one bird.

Or a single bird
lives in a single nest
in the tree of life
and the tree of death.

3
Derivations of light.

A tree tires of being a tree
and makes itself a branch
of another tree.

A shadow commits suicide
with a zero in its center
and begins to gush shadow light.

An apocryphal glance
spills over its crystals
and everything remains as it was: simply crystals.

The ideal of being crazy
stirs its fevered depths
and up springs a wheatstalk made of flour and bread:
lucidity and hunger.
Mientras cae de sus manos,
alguien halla sus manos.
Después vuelve a caer,
ya con sus manos,
ya entre sus manos,
ya por sus manos.

El mundo es un juego de niños,
de niños fracasados en un mundo
que se juega a sí mismo.

Y la luz es un toro
que atropella a una flor,
en un jardín que nunca tuvo flores.

7

Una mosca anda cabeza abajo por el techo,
un hombre anda cabeza abajo por la calle
y algún dios anda cabeza abajo por la nada.

Tan sólo tú no andas esta tarde,
a menos que las ausencias puras
inventen otra forma de andar que no sabemos:
andar cabeza arriba.

Exploraremos el encuentro del amor y la piedra,
el viaje de la mano a su duelo,
la playa de banderas con que sueña la sangre,
la fiesta de ser hombre cuando el hombre despierta
y se cae en el hombre,
la fábula que se convierte en niño,
la mujer necesaria para amar lo que amamos
y hasta lo que no amamos.
While it falls from your hands,
someone finds your hands.
Afterward it falls again,
now with your hands,
now between your hands,
now through your hands.

The world is a children's game,
children broken in a world
that plays with itself.

And light is a bull
that tramples a flower,
in a garden that never had flowers.

7

A fly walks head down on the roof,
a man walks down the street
and some god walks head down through nothingness.

Only you don't walk so alone this afternoon,
unless pure absence
invents another form of walking we don't know about:
walking head up.

We will explore the meeting between love and stone,
the journey of the hand to its sorrow,
the beach of flags which blood dreams about,
the celebration of being man when man awakes
and falls into man,
the fable that turns into a child,
the woman necessary to love what we love
and even what we don't love.
Y exploraremos también el espacio vacío
que dejaste en tu poema,
el espacio vacío que dejaste en cada palabra

y hasta en tu propia tumba
para alzar el futuro.

Allí te encontraremos
y juntos echaremos a andar cabeza arriba.

(A Paul Eluard)
And we will explore also the empty space
you left in your poem,
the empty space you left in each word
and even on your own tomb
on which to raise the future.

There we will meet you
and together we will begin to walk head up.

To Paul Eluard
MARIQUITA’S STORY

I never managed to find out why we moved so often.

Each time, our main problem was figuring out a place for Mariquita.

It could never be my mother’s room; because she was extremely nervous, my mother was filled with anguish by the little girl’s presence. Putting her in the dining room was, above all, inconvenient. My father would never have allowed us to put her in the basement. The living room proved impossible since our visitors’ curious questions would have driven us crazy. So, my parents always ended up putting her in our room. I say “our” because it belonged to all my sisters and me. Counting Mariquita, seven girls slept there.

My dad was a practical man who had traveled a lot and was familiar with Pullman cars. They were the inspiration for that system of bunks he devised to save space so that each of us could have her own bed.

As I was saying, the important thing was to find a place for Mariquita. Sometimes she stayed under one of the beds; other times, in some strategic corner of the room. Most of the time, we confined her to the top of the armoire.

That detail in itself only interested us two older girls; the others were too young to care.

Personally, once the initial shock was over, I found her company very entertaining; but my poor sister Carmelita lived in terror of the child’s existence. She never went into our room alone. I’m sure it was that fear that caused her jaundiced appearance. Although she saw Mariquita only once, she assured me that the little girl followed her all over the house.

Mariquita was the first-born; she was our eldest sister. I met her when she had already been in the water for ten years. I had to work hard to find out her story.

Her past is short, but very sad. One morning, there was an unseasonable drop in the temperature. No one was ready for it. My parents had to warm the cold cradle with hot water bottles and had to bring in blankets. They took care to close the bedroom up tightly. The woman who was to be her godmother at the baptism arrived and found her as pale as a faded almond, like the tulle on her pillows. She felt Mariquita was so helpless in that canyon of window panes that out of tenderness she buried the child in her arms. She predicted that Mariquita would have blonde curls and eyes bluer than her own. But despite all that care, the child was too sensitive and delicate, and she began to die.
They say my father baptized her quickly and stayed by her little cradle for hours, not accepting her death. No one could convince him that he should bury her. His obsession reached the point of hiding her in a chili jar which I found one day in the armoire. That jar was protected by crimson packing so strange looking even the most casual observer would have to ask what was in it.

I remember that at least once a year, my dad replaced the liquid in the jar with a new solution of his own chemical blend which I imagine was grain alcohol and caustic soda. Although this task upset him, he may have thought about how his other daughters might benefit from being completely embalmed in six silent glass jars away from all the dangers he foresaw awaiting us in the world.

The thing is, my sister did not have a shocking appearance. On the contrary, she looked like a tiny little doll with wonderful, long eyelashes asleep standing up inside the jar.

Of course, this was a secret which we kept in the family. Few people ever found out; none of those were our friends for very long afterward. At first, they were stupefied, then distrustful, and finally they deserted us, making less than pleasant comments. They debated whether we were really crazy, even more so when an aunt of mine revealed that my dad kept the umbilical cord of one of his daughters in a silk box. That part was true. And I have it now; it looks a little like a sea horse. I don’t throw it away because it might be mine.

Time passed and we all grew up. My parents were no longer with us, but we continued to move often. The problem created by Mariquita’s presence began to weigh on us.

We rented a lordly mansion in ruins, with cracks that advertised its decrepit condition. To stop up the mouths that made faces at us in every room, we grouped paintings and pictures over the holes with little concern for artistic arrangement, determined to forget its run-down condition. When one of the cracks was as large as a tunnel, we covered it with a Gobelin tapestry. The hole was so vast that the herons that swam on that indigo cross-stitch could have floated right through it. Our house, like all the rest on that street, had a fountain we felt obliged to keep up. The fountain, which was surrounded by a courtyard of square tiles and faced a row of bedrooms, did not escape our delusions of grandeur. We plastered that fountain’s crumbling cement with marble dust, leaving its pitiful white shell in bad shape. In back, where everyone else kept chickens, we were able to brighten up the whole yard by putting in an American-style garden, with grass, a white arbor, and a variety of vines and rose bushes. The house looked very cheerful; but despite all this, it was haunted. During a rare moment of silence, a crash of trays and crystal would ring out, causing the oil lamps to rock and sway. We ran through the house but never found anything. We got used to this. Whenever
it happened, we didn’t do anything at all; but our servants looked for an explana-
tion and invented the story that the guilty party was the little girl we hid in the
closet, that at night her ghost ran through all the houses on the block. Rumors
began to spread which we had to explain. As we were all single women with
rather good reputations, things became very difficult for us. There were so many
rumors that the only respectable one of us was the little girl in the bottle. At least
they couldn’t dig up any gossip about her.

We needed a death certificate to bury her, but no doctor wanted to sign one.
Meanwhile, the little girl, three years without a change of water, had sat down
at the bottom of the bottle, definitely bored. The yellowing liquid clouded her view.

We decided to bury her in the garden. We marked her grave with a ring of
nasturtiums and a little cross like the ones used for canaries’ graves.

Now we have moved again, but I can’t forget the field that imprisons her little
body. I would really like to know if anyone takes care of the green limbo where
she lives and if the doves still coo to her in the afternoon. When I look at the
familiar jar that held her for twenty years, my heart clouds with the longing peo-
ple feel about an empty cage. The sadness I lived with on the other side of her
dream rushes in on me. I consider my loneliness and discover that she tied my
childhood to her silent company forever, a childhood already fading from my
memory.
Elena Shvarts

**ELEGIES ON THE CARDINAL POINTS**

I. (North)

Down the winding lanes of Moscow, down its hopeless convolutions
Someone's shadow flew past in sweet desperation,
On a pool she kissed an emerald duck,
Pressed some crusted leaves against her eyeballs,
Shrieking with laughter dodged a tramcar-bull
And warmed herself up on a tramwire spark.

At night—come to the picture show, they pleaded,
"Bergman films!" Moments from your life repeated
Hundreds of times. Who knew that nightly cinemas hire out hell?
That strapped into their seats the dead sit in the hall?
Gazing with tilted heads into the past?
Escorted there like soldiers to the baths?
"Waiting. Love. Your Marat."—for Charlotte, a telegram.

I've cast off seven skins, eight souls, all my clothes,
And in my breast I've tracked a ninth soul down,
A gentle mole it trembled in my hand,
Pale blue iceflaw snowman, with a broomstick
I poked his little eyes in and he died.

Look—the vault of heaven's bestrewn and snowing wings and feathers,
No sweeping them up in a week, stay buried in them forever.
Look—under the Moon fly Lion and Eagle and Bull,
And you sleep, you lie back in your body's serpentine coils.
Where's the angel?—you ask, and I will most surely respond:
Where there's gloom—there's a radiance, all the world is maimed,
The angel twined in gloom like a tenacious plant.
Steer for black point, for desolation and gloom,
Steer for darkness, for dark, for the rocks, the muddle, the pit.
Does the angel play hide-and-seek? But it's there in earth-underfoot.
It's no worm. Don't try to dig for it in a field.
See—toward winter shining birds fly to the pole?
She gave a glance, began to groan
And stumbling on crenellations flew all night
Dripping as bloodspots hospitals, boulevards, mills...
Don’t worry! Your death is the birth of an angel of light.

II. (South) To a marble statuette.        For I. Burikhim

Young lady! Have you dropped something?
Who cares. That’s how it is. A foot
Narrow as a glove. And the calf
Has dispersed in resonant dust.

And when I looked at you I missed myself—
Old loves do not exist, nor does this winter
Or the next—but on the topmast fire
Burns bluely and there’s howling from the darkness
And flocks of hands circle above my head
Like seagulls, pecking and bearing off memory,
And darkness ossifies and boulders snore
And nearby, furiously, it seems that cloth’s being torn
And life seeps out into an oily blot—
That point of anguish. Fragments of wreckage float.
Tell me, darling—was it me who lived
On earth? And floated, gliding through the blue?
With a goose, nipping and tearing out emerald grass,
She and I whispering together tra-la-la, tra-la-la?
Eternity lay in a pool, from it I took a drink,
This pool drained like a sea with knives in waves
That hack and slash. O lengthy farewells—life!
But surely God Himself constructed us—diamonds
Set within a frame of bone. But surely God Himself constructed us—
Like the cyclamens he sowed in snow,
And doing so He trembled all over and burnt and shivered,
And saw to it that everything should tremble, shiver, whistle,
Shattering like fire and blood, and into darkness hurtle—
where straightaway they’ll rip you into shreds
Sinking unsated fangs into your shoulders,
Take out the honeycombs of memory—they’re no longer in your power.
And only love like Lot’s wife glistens,
A spear suspended in this dreadful chasm.
Where is the pole of the Universe, tell me, diamond magnet!
Where is He, radiant, icy, white,
Who Nansen, Peary, Scott now speed toward
Driving through darkness a team of hungry shades?
I'm headed that way too—where buried in ice-blocks sleeps
The lilac bear, the way shown by the diamond magnet.
Do ethereal fires blaze in that sky?
And a flight of eyes wings to the south.
Birds—crosses worn by God against his skin!
Many of you get torn and once again you are many,
You come with us up to the very brink
Of inky darkness, where they'll give us teams and sleigh,
Where through the eternal tundra there's a track,
And there we'll no more wander from our way...

III. (East)                              For E. Feoktistov

Get up! Shame on you, sleeping in common view.
Get up! for resurrection's shortly due.
A crematorium—fine place she's picked to sleep!
Get up! I'll have a wine-flask set.
Lord! that reflection in the window—is that me?
Here incarnated as that poppy-seed?
So what! I'll take a look at cyclamens in crunchy snow,
Creep under their glass like a little bird and scuttle away.
And everyone's a little bird carolling on a bough,
And nobody wants to listen, but it trills out all the louder.
I'll deck myself more lavishly in golden plumes,
Read, read my fortune in the coffee grounds.
Because I'm similar to that snuffed-out cordial,
Because I feel the strength to face some future torment.
O God, I feel—I'm like such countries as Korea,
Just try to step on me, I'll scorch your heels.
O God, just peck the grains off me as fast as possible.
I'll be salt of your tears and I'll drink myself sick.
Everyone's a carolling bird—just take a look.
Drawing breath through snow a burning flower sprouts.
Ranks of backbones fly toward the East.
Wind is the angel's form, it enters unnoticed.
Death gnaws your edges, etches out your borders,
That vitriolic brew, that aquafortis.
On crowded sails fly off into the blue.
Wind is the angel's form, it blows around your brow.
Westward, Westward along the shadow’s track,
Everything’s carried off howling—into the deepest black.
Old rags and rings and faces, like a ball down a bowling alley,
Like refuse down a chute—everything melts into mist.
And what am I? Vessel of pre-eternal abysses,
As it ebbs and it flows within me the Mediterranean shimmers.
I’ll block my ears and hear—the sound inside a shell,
And seas and all their hearts run dry.
On the fast-drying sands what remnants linger?
Woefully I’ll add up on your fingers:
Molluscs and verses, slugs and a curl,
But rising sands begin to smack their lips.
The human voice crescendoes, climaxing in a bird’s shriek, in a singing,
Oh, squall like a seagull and you will obtain acquiescence.
I’m so subdued as it is it’s simply disgusting.
(Flowers bloomed in horror although there was frost.
Antichrist walked across the sky in clouds and stars,
Now, his descent begun, he grew before one’s eyes.
He walked in a slender, sky-blue ray of light,
Behind him, faithful as lapdogs, helicopters in flight.
And the people knelt and crossed themselves in the night.
He approached—eternal cold streamed out of his eyes,
Wooden he seemed and painted and still unborn.
No, you were never crucified for us!
But evenly in measure he laid hands on bowed heads.)
Everything’s carried off howling and only the saints come back.
(There’s Xenia, barefoot—see?—Guard’s greatcoat down to her heels,
Under a blazing halo of ice, Xenia is carrying bricks.)
Wind carries off everything westward along the shadows’ track.
Cruciform space has torn the cardinal points.
Among these crevices and rifts how can you stand your ground?
Best, let’s just flutter off into the sky.
Toward the sunset where Persephone, pale
And in despair, stares at a telephone dial.
Where howl in yearning shades and parts of shades—
You will assuage both thirst and hunger with a pomegranate seed.
Tsarskoye Selo

Three times it came to torment me.
I woke with an anguished cry
And saw slender hands,
And a dark, mocking mouth:
"Who were you kissing at sunrise,
Swearing that you would perish at parting
And, hiding your burning joy,
Sobbing at the back entrance way?
He whom you saw to his death
Will soon, oh soon, be dead."
It was a voice like a falcon's cry,
But strangely familiar.
My whole body curved,
Having felt the death chill,
And a dense, congealed spiderweb
Fell and shrouded the bed...
Oh, you didn't laugh in vain,
My unforgiven lie!

Tsarskoye Selo

Over the snowdrift's hard crust
Into your white, mysterious house,
We walk in tender silence,
Both hushed.
And sweeter to me than all songs sung
Is this dream fulfilled,
The gentle clinking of your spurs
And the swaying of branches we've brushed.
Tsarskoye Selo

THE VOICE OF ANOTHER

1

I didn't mean to trick you, my angel,
How did it happen that I left you
Behind me, a hostage in bondage
To every earthly, irremediable pain?
Under the bridges, patches of open water steam,
Over the bonfires, golden sparks gleam,
The heavy wind howls like one of the damned,
And beyond the Neva the stray bullet
Searches for your wretched heart.
And alone in the icy house,
White, in white radiance you lie,
Praising my bitter name.

2

In that year long ago, when loved flared
Like an altar cross in a doomed heart,
You didn't nestle like a gentle dove
On my breast, but clawed like a kite.
You gave your lover to drink of
The cursed wine, the first betrayal.
But the hour came for you to stare
Into green eyes, to beg those cruel lips
In vain for the sweetest gift
And for promises such as you'd never heard,
Such as no one had ever uttered.
It's as if someone poisoning the waters of a spring
For the one who comes after him into the desert
Gets lost himself and, suffering terrible thirst,
Does not recognize that same spring in the darkness.
He drinks death, clutching at the cool water,
But can thirst be quenched by death?
I  Through the magnifying glass skin becomes thin and glossy, patterned with white hairs, like grass eaten by frost. He tried to discover signs of glory on himself, on her, on the people who consider him their friend. Recipes for success are tested. But fame doesn’t depend on recipes. It depends on the cook’s intuition. His own intuition is tricky. He will listen to it only if it brings pleasure. No pain. Refracted sun finds its focus on his skin. The frost is melting. Smoke rises from the white hair becoming pain, unbearable pain.

II  Her pain is a knot in her stomach, the hell of the tight-rope walker, maybe even fear of being ordinary. Every morning she wakes up at half past seven, washes her face and dresses up. She has a cup of tea and goes to teach her students differential calculus, integrals and trigonometry. When she comes back her face is pale. There’s always the fear of finding another woman in his bed; the invisible rival whose skin she touches and kisses in her dreams. His sleep is nervous and troubled, waiting for her steps. The skin that wakes him is icy. The knot in her stomach becomes harder and even more tangled as she feels his sickly heat.

III  Pain always comes unannounced. It grabs everything in its way: stomach, chest, head. With every second torn from the future, the chance of pain’s arrival grows. You stop being human if it never comes. If you learn how to meet it—without kneeling and curling up—it leaves a germ of power in the soul that is ready to stand up and walk. Walking ahead, without hesitation or turning, never brings pain. But it’s so hard not to glance at the suffering world over your shoulder. At the world that is still drunk with what it sees and what it eats. Great is the pain of those who see everything.

IV  Do you ever think about how long you can stand pain, your own or somebody else’s, he asked them one night, sitting at the round table. They reached for their beers, surprised. Suicide is the end of all suffering, he
continued while they gulped their beer in perplexity. *All the suffering in this world*, she suddenly interrupted.

**V**  
*What’s on your mind, she asked, trying to get closer. I’m walking through the snow and rain, he answered. You are withdrawing, I know you are.* Her hair is wet from the rain. Fear stalks her, gnawing at masks, breaking down walls.

**VI**  
She dreams that there’s a rope stretched across the street. Children stretch it. They want to see her down, in the dust. But the thought of the fall is always faster than the fall itself—she keeps it at a safe distance, avoiding any possible trap.

**VII**  
He spends mornings listening to the birds. He stopped dreaming about flying ten years ago. But there are some traces of those dreams in his talk. He talks in the moments when everybody else thinks it’s impossible to find a way out. Love, light, life. He’s never sure whether they believe the words they consider cheap and worn out. Doubt gives birth to weakness and death. He believes that listening to the birds will help him fly again.

**VIII**  
The book says: when you leave the realm of pleasure and pain, all suffering stops. Does life without suffering become too long? Would it become only spreading slime? Would we wallow in it without thinking why we had to discover it in the first place? She wants to run away from his questions, to hide under the blanket and close her eyes, to close her eyes and breathe in deeply, to forget about the world. Awakenings are different. They always wake up together.

**IX**  
He bites the nail on his forefinger, patiently destroying part of himself that bothers him. *Don’t bite your nails*, she says looking into his eyes. He doesn’t respond, devouring himself. They feel that somebody else is sucking the power from their souls. The crescent of nail falls into the ashtray.

**X**  
On Sundays, they wake up at noon and go to the marketplace. He spreads the blanket over the wet asphalt and the pain sales start. Everything is there: magnifying glass, cookbook, logarithmic tables, empty beer cans and the book. They come back without their burden and drink coffee on the way. They don’t talk much because breaking the silence becomes dangerous.  
Darkness comes quickly, without dusk.
Barbara Horton

I DREAMT OF FLOWERS

I dreamt of flowers and woke
to the word love on my tongue like mint
like something rain-washed
the purity of woods.

Each stroke of my hairbrush was
fresh, the descent, the opening into air.
Nothing could disturb the quiet going on inside me.

When trees hold their breath
words like mist, like sea green catch in the throat.
The body disappears because it is not real.
Only those words are real—or, rather,
the thought that comes when they are spoken.

When you say you love me I want
to pull a wool cap down over my ears.
It is an old story. It is comfortable. It keeps me warm.
The thought stays between us like music—nothing more
than a disturbance of air, or less.
Teresa Calderón
DE LAS AVES SIN NOMBRE

Y mañana,
quién será mañana de los rostros
que inventé para buscarme,
de las palabras que no pude
imaginar en mi presencia.

Mañana, pregunto,
que será de la tierra
llovida de araucarias
y del ave sin nombre
que mordía los ciruelos
más allá del cemento y los alambres.

Mañana,
quién será del refugio pensativo
entre los tilos,
aquellos que esperaban tanto
algún regreso,
quién será
del beso que dejaron
envuelto en las violetas
y parpadea todavía
como un secreto entre nosotros.

Y mañana
quién será de la lluvia
que entibiaba los manzanos
a la vuelta de los ojos.

¿Será la vida, tal vez,
un crepúsculo infinito,
y la calle
un inmenso espejo inmóvil?
And tomorrow, 
tomorrow what will become of the faces 
I invented to look for me, 
of the words I couldn’t 
imagine in my presence.

Tomorrow, I ask, 
what will become of the earth 
where the araucaria pines rain down 
and of the nameless bird 
that pecked at plums 
beyond cement and barbed wire.

Tomorrow, 
what will become of the refuge 
where I think among the lindens 
the ones that waited so long 
for someone to return. 
What will become of the kiss 
they left tangled in violets 
and still blinks there 
like a secret we share.

And tomorrow, 
what will become of the rain 
that warmed the apple trees 
when the eyes come back.

Will life be 
an endless dusk, perhaps, 
and the street 
a great, immobile mirror?
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MARJORIE AGOSIN, originally from Chile, is now an assistant professor of Spanish at Wellesley College. She has written five books, three of poetry and two of criticism. The most recent book of poetry is Brujas y Algo Más/Witches and other Things, published in a bilingual edition by Latin American Literary Review Press with translations by Cola Franzen.

FRANCISCA AGUIRRE has lived most of her life in Madrid (Spain). She has won several poetry prizes for her books which include Itaca and The Threehundred Steps. These two poems were taken from The Other Music, in which the author uses music as a prolonged and multiple metaphor to explore love, reality, rhythm, and life.

ANNA AKHMATOVA is now recognized as one of the greatest of Russian poets. Her work was unofficially banned from publication for fifteen years, yet she was never fully silenced. The first bilingual collection of her complete poems will be published in 1986 by Zephyr Press with Judith Hemschemeyer as translator.

JORGE AMADO, of Bahia (b. 1912), is dean of Brazilian novelists. He is author of Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon and Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands. The selection here is from one of his earlier novels of the city of Bahia, Captains of the Sands, to be published in 1986 by Avon Books, who have recently brought out Jubiabá and Sea of Death in the same series.

JOHN BALABAN is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Penn State University. His most recent book of poetry is Blue Mountain (Unicom Press, 1982), and he has a novel coming out in June 1985 from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich entitled Coming Down Again.

ASHOK K. BANKER is a young poet living in Bombay where she is employed as an ad copywriter. A selection of her poetry is to appear shortly in India.

KENNETH LAWRENCE BEAUDOIN is the author of numerous publications such as The Moon in Jefferson Street and Selected Poems and Eye Poems 1940–1970. Friend and confidant of the late William Carlos Williams, Beaudoin is known for his experimentation in poetry.

JULIE BESONEN is a student in the MFA/Translation Program at the University of Arkansas. She spent last year in Belgium on a Fulbright scholarship. She has previous translations of Sylvain Garneau and Yves Bonnefoy in The Poetry Miscellany and is currently at working translating a novel by French author Catherine Rihot.

KIM BRIDGFORD was the winner of the 1983 National Society of Arts and Letters' National Career Awards Competition in Poetry. She received an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and an M.A. in English from the University of Illinois, where she is currently working on her Ph.D. in English. Her poetry has appeared in several journals nationwide.
TERESA CALDERÓN’S studied approach to writing produces an exactness and imper-turbability in her work. Her poetry appeared in the anthology Uno x Uno and, in 1983, she received a prize in the “Gabriela Mistral” poetry competition. She finished her studies at the Universidad Católica, and currently works as a teacher in Santiago.

JUAN CAMERON Lives in Valparaiso, where he was born in 1947. He has published five books of poems; however, most of his recent work remains unpublished because he refuses to write to fit the censorship code. His poetry is a corrosive blend of irony and black humor that often ridicules the institutions and habits of the upper class. A section of his book Perro de circo (Circus Dog) won the Rudyard Kipling prize in 1978, and in 1982 he won the prestigious Gabriela Mistral poetry prize.

PAM CARMELL received her MFA in Translations from the University of Arkansas. Her translations have appeared in numerous journals.


GIORGIO CHIESURA was born and lives in Venice. In addition to La Zona Immobile, he published Sicilia ’43 and Premio Trieste, and was one of five finalists for the Premio Strega. He is currently working on a novel.

Born in Brussels in 1940, JACQUES CRICKILLON is a literary critic, poet and author of fantastical tales. He has received numerous awards for his work and continues to live and teach in Brussels.

MARY CROW teaches at Colorado State University. Her translations from the Spanish appear in several current journals.

INA CUMPIANO is an MFA graduate of the Translation Workshop of the University of Iowa and a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature. A poet, she has new work appearing in Antioch Review and The Bilingual Review.

MARÍA AMPARO DÁVILA was born in Mexico and has published several volumes of poetry and three books of short stories. Dávila has won a number of prizes for her works, having received the 1977 Villaurutia Prize for Arboles Petrificados.

HUGO DITTBERNER was born in 1944 in Gieboldshausen near Duderstadt. He has written two novels, two collections of poetry, and three collections of short stories, none of which have yet appeared in English.

WILLIAM DOXEY is a professor of English at West Georgia College. His work has appeared in several magazines, including Esquire and The Atlantic. Three novels of his are in print and a fourth is scheduled to be published by the LSU press this year.

JOHN DUVAL is director of the translation program at the University of Arkansas. His books of translation, both with Raymond Eichmann, are Cuckolds, Clerics and Coun-

LUCHESAR ELENKOV was born in 1936 and is from the Danube area that he frequently writes about. He is the author of several books of poetry and is currently General Secretary of the Union of Bulgarian Writers.


BILLIE ENGELS is currently a student in Translation at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

RUTH FELDMAN’S poetry and translations have appeared in many magazines and anthologies here and abroad. She has two books of poetry to her credit and seven books of translations. She won the Italian Circe-Sabaudia prize with her collaborator, for a book of translations in 1984.

RINA FERRARELLI is a poet and translator who has just received an NEA award in translation to work on a large selection from Giorgio Chiesura’s La Zona Immobile. Her work has appeared in many journals and magazines, including Chelsea, The International Poetry Review, New Orleans Review, and Translation.

H.E. FRANCIS, a professor of English at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is the author of several collections of short fiction, the latest (A Disturbance of Gulls) published by Braziller. His stories have appeared in the O. Henry, Pushcart Prize, and Best American story collections. He translates Argentine literature.

COLA FRANZEN is the translator of Marjorie Agosin, Saul Yurkievich and Juan Cameron. Her translations have appeared in several literary journals. She is presently co-editing an anthology of Latin American women poets with Marjorie Agosin.

KIMON FRIAR is now finishing his companion book to his Modern Greek Poetry, Contemporary Greek Poetry. His translations from the Greek have appeared in numerous journals. The anthology of his Ritsos translations that appeared in Poetry [1981] received the Jacob Glatstein Memorial Award for Translation.

SYLVAIN GARNEAU was born in Montreal in 1930. His poems are always rhymed and have a fairy tale, adolescent flavor. After a tour through Europe as an officer-cadet in the marines, he became a journalist and radio announcer in Montreal. His first and only book of poetry, Objets trouvés, was published in 1951.
ELOAH F. GIACOMELLI lives in Vancouver, Canada. Her translations from the Portuguese have appeared in many literary journals, including *The Latin American Literary Review*, *The Malahat Review*, and *The Antigonish Review*. She has recently translated two books by the Brazilian writer Moacyr Scliar—*The Carnival of the Animals* and *The One-Man Army*, both to be published by Ballantine Books.

MARGHERITA GUIDACCI was born in Florence, lives in Rome and is one of Italy’s finest women poets. She has published many books of poetry, among the most recent of which are *L’altare Di Isenheim*, *L’Orologio Di Bologna*, and *Inno Alla Gioia*. She has also published a book of translations of Elizabeth Bishop. She now teaches English literature at Maria Assunta College at the Vatican.

OSCAR HAHN is a Chilean poet born in 1938. His poetry is a combination of formal elements derived from the poetry of Spain’s Golden Age and contemporary everyday Chilean Spanish. Until 1981 his work consisted of 42 gem-like texts joined in a single self-anthology—*Arte de morir* (Art of Dying). His most recent book is *Imágenes nucleares* (Nuclear Images). He currently teaches Hispanic-American literature at the University of Iowa.

JUDITH HEMSCHEMEYER is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Central Florida. Her translations of Anna Akhmatova are forthcoming from Zephyr press in the first bilingual collection of the complete poems of Akhmatova. Hemschemeyer has published two books of poetry herself, and her translations have appeared in numerous journals.

BENTE HIERHOLZER was born and raised in Copenhagen, Denmark. She received a B.A. in Letters at the Univ. of Iowa and is currently completing her Master of Fine Arts degree in literary translation at the Translation Workshop, Univ. of Iowa.

BARBARA HORTON has had poems published in many small press publications. She won a *Spoon River Quarterly* award in 1980 and a Hirshfield Memorial award in 1982. She is an advertising copywriter for McDougal, Littell & Company.

DIANA DER HOVANESSIAN has published poetry in numerous journals and is the translator of five volumes of Armenian poetry. She is a New England native and president of the New England Poetry Club.

JEREMY JACOBSON was born in England in 1950 and has studied English, American, Spanish and Latin American literature. He has lived in Portugal, Chile, and the United States. While in Chile, he became involved with a group of poets and helped edit a literary magazine, *Postdata*. He has published several stories as well as translations. His book translation of Raúl Zurita’s *Purgatorio* is due to be published this year by Latin American Review Press.

ROBERTO JUARROZ is an Argentinian poet who publishes his poems without titles in an on-going series of books entitled *Poesia Vertical*. 
NIKOS KAROUZOS was born in 1926 in Náfplion, the Peloponnesos, and there completed his early education. He attended the University of Athens, spending most of his time reading and writing poetry. In 1977 he visited Stockholm on the publication of his *Selected Poems* in Swedish. His poems have been translated into English, Swedish, French, Rumanian, and Italian.

WILL KIRKLAND teaches English and does carpentry to make a wage, which he spends to support an addiction to writing and translating. His work has appeared in *American Poetry Review, New Directions Anthology, The New Orleans Review* and elsewhere.

NINA KOSSMAN was born in Moscow, but has lived in the United States for about ten years. She has published widely in Russian emigré periodicals in the U.S. and Europe. "Enmeshed" was originally written in Russian and translated into English by Kossman.

WALTER KREEGER was born in Poland in 1944, but moved to West Germany at an early age. In 1956 his family immigrated to the United States. A commissioned officer who served in Viet Nam, Kreeger now teaches German at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville where he is finishing his MFA in Translation.

MARIANNE LARSEN was born in Denmark in 1951. She studies Comparative Literature and Chinese at the Univ. of Copenhagen. Her first book—a collection of poems and prose pieces—was published in 1971. Since then, she has published numerous volumes of poetry and a collection of short stories.

CATHERINE LAWSON is currently an MFA student in the translation program at the University of Iowa. She has completed a booklength translation of Francisca Aguirre’s poetry.

J.R. LeMASTER is Director of American Studies at Baylor University. He has published three collections of poems, and his fourth collection, *First Person, Second*, is now ready for publication.

CLARICE LISPECTOR is a leading modern literary figure in Brazil. Her reputation as an important Brazilian writer was established with her first novel *Pero do Coração Selvagem*, in 1944. Available in English translation are her novel *The Apple in the Dark* (Knopf) and her collection of short stories *Family Ties* (University of Texas Press).

TOMISLAV LONGINOVIC was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1955. He belonged to the avant-garde circle of young Serbian thinkers gathered around the magazine *Vidici*. He has lived in Iowa City since 1982, and received his MFA in Creative Writing.

CHRISTOPHER MANGIARACINA is an important new artist in Florida. He had a one-man show at the Ana Sklar Gallery in October 1983 and has participated in various group shows. His work is included in two essays by Ricardo Pau-Llosa due to appear this year and early next year in *Art International* and *Dreamworks*.

MARCO MARTOS is from Peru, and has published a half dozen slim, terse volumes of verse, including *Carpe diem* and *El silbo de los aires amorosos*. He lives and teaches in Lima.
MICHAEL MOLNAR is the English translator of the Russian poet Elena Shvarts as well as other contemporary Leningrad poets. He was born in England and studied Russian in Leningrad on a British Council scholarship. He is currently living in London.

ELENA MURRAY is a freelance translator who lives in Mexico. Her translation of Arturo Azuela’s *Shadows of Silence* was the first to appear in English.

HENRIK NORDBRANDT was born in Denmark in 1945. He made his debut with *Digte* (Poems) in 1966, followed by *Miniaturer* (Miniatures) in 1967. He published numerous volumes during the seventies and eighties. Among these are *Omgivelser* (Surroundings) 1972 and *Guds Hus* (God’s House) in 1977, translated into English in 1979 and published by Augustinus/Curbstone Press.

CARLOS EDMUNDO DE ORY was born in 1923 in Cadiz, Spain. He is most often associated with the bold and eccentric group of writers in Madrid of the mid-nineteen-fifties that styled its work as “postismo.” He has continued to work outside the main-streams of contemporary Spanish writing and has often been ignored by those who write in it. He has written some 21 volumes of poetry and is living now in Amiens, France.

RICARDO PAU-LLOSA is currently employed as an independent art critic and adjunct professor of twentieth-century Latin American art at Florida International University. He is Senior Editor of *Art International*, and has published widely, both his own poetry and translations.

GREGORY RABASSA teaches at Queens College and the Graduate School, CUNY. He has translated several Latin American authors including Gabriel García Márquez and Julio Cortázar. His most recent translation is *Return to Region*, by Juan Benet (Columbia University Press). He is currently working on the translation of Jorge Amado’s latest novel *Tocaia Grande* (Big Ambush).

YANNIS RITSOS is a Greek poet born in 1909. He is the author of twenty-four books of poetry, poems for dance, and two plays. He received the State Prize for Poetry in 1936. Six sections of his poem “Romiossini” have been set to music. Following the military coup in 1967, Ritsos was detained for a year, then permitted to join his wife in Samos, where he was under house arrest.

NORBERTO LUIS ROMERO, born in Cordoba, Argentina, is now a citizen of Spain and lives in Madrid. He is the winner of the first Noega Short Fiction Award for *Transgresiones*, 1983, from which the story in this issue of *Mundus Artium* is taken. He is a specialist in animated cartoons, film, and TV advertising.

MAURICIO ROSALES is a student in the MFA program in translation at The University of Arkansas. He is a native of El Salvador and is currently translating fiction by Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar.

JAIME SABINES is a Mexican poet born in 1928. He has published various collections of poetry and is known throughout Latin America. Selections of his work have been translated into English by American poets, and have appeared in anthologies. He lives in Oaxaca, Mexico.
YURI SAHAKIAN was born in Karabagh in the Soviet Union in 1937. He graduated from the philological faculty of Erevan State University and received his advanced degrees from the literature department of Moscow University. His several books of poetry also include a volume in Russian. He works as an editor in Erevan, Armenia.

KOLYO SEVOV was born in 1933 and is Secretary of the Writers Union on the Black Sea at Varna. He is editor-in-chief of Prostori, a literary quarterly. Among his many books of poetry, essays, scripts, and interviews with foreign writers are Autumn Sea, Oncoming Winds, and A Pledge.

ELENA SHVARTS has lived all her life in Leningrad. At 36, she has already proved herself to be one of the leading unofficial writers working in the Soviet Union. The translations that appear in this issue of Mundus Artium are the first English translations of her poetry.

HOVANESS SHIRAZ was the most popular Armenian poet of his time. When a book of his work is published, in runs of 50,000 copies, it sells out within a week. He was considered a hero in Armenia because of his political daring and outspokenness.

TIM SIEBLES is a young poet who is originally from Philadelphia, but now lives and teaches in Dallas, where he is very active in the contemporary poetry scene.

DEBORAH SMALL is currently working as Art Editor for Fiction International. She has recently published fiction in The Minnesota Review and Central Park.

JORGE TEILLIER was born in 1935 in Chile. He began writing poetry at the age of twelve, and his first book appeared in 1956. He has since published many books of poetry, winning several prizes, among them the Gabriela Mistral and Municipal Prizes. He has spent much of his life in Santiago and Victoria, working as a reviewer and journalist for many of Chile's leading magazines and newspapers.

Although he wrote in Romanesco, TRILUSSA (Carlo Salustri) was so well known and respected for his poetry throughout Italy that after World War II he was named Senator for Life. His complete poetry (Tutte le Poesie, published by Mondadori a year after his death in 1950, is now in its twenty-eighth printing. Mondadori periodically reissues his selected poems (Poesie scelte) in paperback.

CLAUDE VIGÉE was born in 1921 at Bischwiller, in Alsace, where he lived until World War II. The author of several books, Vigée has occupied a chair in French literature at Hebrew University in Israel for a number of years.

STEVEN F. WHITE was born in Pennsylvania in 1955 and was raised in Illinois. His poems and translations have appeared in numerous magazines including New Directions Anthology, New Orleans Review, and Greenfield Review. In 1983, he received a Fulbright grant to translate poetry in Chile. He has edited and translated two bilingual anthologies of Latin American poetry, both for Unicorn Press: Poets of Nicaragua, 1916-1979, which was published in 1982, and Poets of Chile, 1965-1984, which will be issued in 1985.
CAROLYNE WRIGHT was born in Seattle, and attended Seattle University and Syracuse University, from which she received Masters and Doctorate in English and Creative writing. She has received numerous awards and fellowships for her writing and translations. Her translations, poetry and reviews of poetry have appeared in many journals.

RAÚL ZURITA is a Chilean poet born in Santiago in 1951. In 1979 he co-founded Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (Art Action Collective), an attempt to make art intervene in the city. At present he is working on La Vida Nueva (The New Life) with the help of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He is due to visit the States both this year and the next, and will be touring American universities.

No information available on Rosario Ferre, Guadalupe Duenas, or Blaga Dimitrova.