Zolita Sverdlove, Agony, etching.

Mundus Artium: A Journal of International Literature and the Arts, is published twice a year at the University of Texas at Dallas. Annual subscription $6.00; single copies $3.50 for United States, Canada, and Mexico. All other countries: $6.50 a year, and $3.75 for single copies. Manuscripts accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope, subscriptions and request for copies should be sent to:

The Editors
MUNDUS ARTIUM
University of Texas at Dallas
Box 688
Richardson, Texas 75080
U.S.A.

MUNDUS ARTIUM is a journal of translations and interdisciplinary studies. It will consider for publication contemporary poetry, fiction, short drama, essays on literature and the arts, photography, and photographic reproductions of paintings and sculpture.

Mundus Artium is published by the International Poetry Forum
4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213
under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Design by Don F. Stout—Athens, Ohio

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Printed by Richardson Printing Corp.—Marietta, Ohio 45750, U.S.A.
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A BIRTH

I am confined within a bud,
In a dim light filled with fear
And expectation.

A theme cherished for a long time
Gropes for the meaning of
Experience twisted
From subconscious roots.
It searches for light or words,
Like hands and feet lengthened in a dream.

The flower opens suddenly.
A life is a series of irreparable births.

Now, the flower and I, at the same moment,
Smile in light and wind, forgetting
A time of long bitterness.

A ROSE

It opens near
And always beyond.
There’s marvellous danger
And intoxication
In and around this white mass.

Who is it trembles
And vibrates faintly?
Who is moved and hesitates?
There appears an unattainable bright garden
Within this unearthly body.
Like a rainbow on water
Or beautiful negation.

You have an entrancing smile,
Playing on a piano.

I see a gentle and glittering round sphere
Where the breast feathers of a pigeon shine
Inside a dreaming sunny room.

Haruo Shibuya

A SHEEP

In the midst of the green meadow
Like a pile of warm dirty snow
There is a flock of sheep.
These gentle animals, which make me dream,
Have no dream of their own.
Like a still-life reposing perfectly within a picture-frame,
They nibble through an eternal present.
I, looking at this,
Am always standing between remoteness and emptiness.
I can only peep at the invisible inside from the outside
Of a circle described by a pair of compasses.

The sheep are asleep and awake.
All the bright afternoon
Their total slumber is a mindless thing

Having the form of peaceful idleness.

Haruo Shibuya

A SKETCH

With a presentiment of night
The evening, slackening its pace,
Pauses for a while.
A girl is getting on a swing  
On a background of hosts of maple leaves  
In a woody park.  
She is alone, shaded by brilliant counterlight.  
Little groups of light are talking to her hanging hair  
With glittering golden voices.  

After the girl goes away,  
A space like a window-frame without glass  
Is left behind, swinging a little.  

Then all at once branches of maple trees  
Draw near the vacant place.  

This quiet perspective  
Looks like a weeping face at times.  

Now, tensed evening leans over,  
And the space resists, holding its hands up  
Against night advancing from all directions.
Yorifumi Yaguchi

AT MIDNIGHT

At midnight
she and I both happen to awake
and, silently embracing each other,
listen, with bated breath, to
Death lurking,
its eyes of cancer glaring
somewhere in the darkness
of her body.

Yorifumi Yaguchi

VACANCY OR DEATH OF REIKO

Let this vacancy
sink
deep down
in me

and

let it stay
there
an old pond
forever.

Yorifumi Yaguchi

REIKO

You lie there
just in front of me,
still faintly warm,
but the silence between you and me
is so deep and vast
that none of my words can fly to you
but fall down like a dead leaf
at the edge of the silent gulf,
and there it trembles with fear.

Yorifumi Yaguchi

A SHADOW

I know before I was born,
Even before I was conceived as a seed,
A shadow stealing as a wind
Through a crack not existing
Into the room in which
No secret of the night shines,
Came secretly into me
Without my even slightest knowledge;
The shadow which is far darker
Than my blood, and is far larger
Than my body. The moment
It entered in me, the sudden
Shriek of an appalling woman
Sounded in the street of the night,
And with it, the wound of a womb
Being wildly torn down ran
Like a flame, which woke me up
From the dream of the dead before I was born,
Even before I was conceived as a wind.

Yorifumi Yaguchi

A SHADOW

A shadow
of someone
standing
on the other side
of the horizon
is now
almost
touching my feet.
Yorifumi Yaguchi

A SCENE IN AN ALLEY

a drunkard is vomiting hard
by a ditch of stinking water

when a water rat as big as a cat
draggles its swollen belly

sluggishly toward him and
begins to eat whatever falls

Tadae Shimada, Work, 1972, Bronze.
Mokuo Nagayama

IN THE DARKNESS

While I keep my eyes open
I can’t see well, so
I close my eyes and
Try to see.

In the boundless
Space with nothing visible,
Gradually, as mist
Lifts, as muddy water
Clears, there comes into view
The depth of the darkness—
A depth strewn with
Stars and pearls.

To keep sight of the jewels
I drill the depth with
A stare, eyes still
Tightly closed and let
My dream wander through
The lights in the darkness.

Mokuo Nagayama

A WHIRLWIND

A gust of wind
Wakes up the snow
Long asleep in me

And tries to whirl
And blow it away
Along with my thoughts.

I strike my pick
Into the stormy slope
Of my sentiments.
Mokuo Nagayama

A PRAYER

Powdery Snow,  
Sound the steps  
Of my heart.

Crystal Ice,  
Mirror the face  
Of my mind.

Silent Stone,  
Still the stir  
Of my soul.

Tadae Shimada, Work, 1972, Bronze.
Kaneko Mitsuharu

SEAL

I.

How foetid the breath
Steaming from his mouth—
His back wet and clammy like the edge of a grave-hole.
It all makes us feel sick with black despair.
O, what misery. . .

Its body's dead weight and languor, like a sandbag,
Gloomily elastic—glum rubber—
Self-admiring—banality incarnate—

Pockmarks—
Big balls—

"I was always trying to get away from the rest
As I was shoved around by crowds that
Made my nose blue with their stink.
The jostling town they are racing through like swarming clouds
Was for me as lonely as Alaska in a scratchy old movie."

II.

These—these vulgar crowds, as they are called—
These are the masses that drove Voltaire into exile
And thrust Hugo Grotius into prison.

From Batavia to Lisbon
These are the ones who dominate the dust and blather of the world.

Seal sneezing—seal spitting decayed shreds of fish
From yellowed teeth, from bristling whiskers—
Suppressing yawns—affected gestures—
These are the ones who congregate screaming
Traitor—you madman—
Pointing their fingers at breakers of convention.
They all seem to be each other's wives and husbands,
Each other's lovers and mistresses too.
Their sons take after them—even to the ill nature—
Dirty cyclings of blood.

Sometimes they form cliques
And these cliques link with other cliques
And their endless cliques and links create a wall of bodies
That seems to dam the tides.
Sunlight shot with sleet pouring over the withdrawing waves.
And always the wire nets imprisoning infinities of sky.

Today a wedding.
Yesterday a holiday—but all day long
In the slush they heard the ice-breaker
Breaking up the ice.

Bowing to each other all the time, rubbing themselves with fins,
Rolling their bodies like barrels,
Hustling and bustling meaninglessly, grubbily,
Wallowing in dirty sea-water foaming with their own piss,
Keeping each other warm by body contact,
Hating the cold, abandoning disintegrating groups,
They call to each other in feeble voices,
Longing for the sympathy of other eyes.

III.

O they—not one of them noticed that
The iceberg they are living on, darker than a midnight town,
Was starting to disintegrate and slide away into the abyss.

They go stumbling over the ice on fan-shaped, useless tails
Talking about literature and so on...

The sad evening shades into a hanging scroll
Where the sun declines like a great swollen chilblain!

Dragging their long shadows like zebra stripes on the snow,
The masses bow their heads all together in worship,
Bowing their heads as one, as far as the eye can reach.
But with an air of open contempt,
One alone
Is facing composedly in the opposite direction.

I am that one.
I am that seal who, disliking my fellow seals,
Can still be nothing but a seal among seals.

All I can do is
To turn my back on what the others bow to.
BILLY THE KID

TANIGAWA SHUNTARO

First fine clay upon my lips then bigger and bigger clods of earth between my legs and on my guts an ant whose home had been destroyed crawled for an instant over my shut lid people have stopped weeping and appear to be shovelling bathed in healthy sweat in my chest two bullet-holes blazed by that sheriff with the doe-like eyes promptly my blood pumped from the two mouths it was then for the first time I realized that blood was none of mine I knew that my blood and me hot on its heels were gradually galloping back all over me the only enemy I know the barren azure spreads when the thing that strips me of everything that azure heaven that went on stripping me as I was on the run shooting from the hip but even in loving fails once only and for good that moment is the death of me now I no longer lack anything now for the first time I am unafraid of the azure vault I do not dread that hush nor that infinite azure for now I shall be undertaken by the earth now I can go back to the place where the azure cannot frame his arm where I need not shoot it out any longer now my shout will be answered now the crack of my rifle will go on echoing in my ears now when I can neither hear nor shoot I tried to define people and find myself in the act of kill my callow kind of rule of thumb was garnished with the dyes of blood but with blood of others I could not paint out the azure I craved my own blood today I made it I saw to it that my own blood blackened the azure dome then returned to earth and now I no longer see nor remember the azure vault I smell the smell of my earth and wait for when I shall return to earth above me the wind streams I no longer envy the wind before long I shall become the wind before long I shall live in the azure dome unaware of the azure dome I shall turn into a star a star acquainted with every midnight every high noon and keeps on turning around and around.
Shiro Murano

LITTLE POEM

Something, like a cockscomb,
Started swaying inside me.
A fullness of blood,
A dignity of flesh.

With every one of my frequent
Vomittings and hiccupings
It is forced upwards, and soon
Becomes this crown on my head.

All its comical
And shivery shape
Is notched with my experience—
Image of an eternal flame.

Shiro Murano

A BASHŌ MOTIF

His body grew quite cold.
Stumbling among dogs’ bones and things,
He sensed the evening loneliness
Turn even paler.

At the entrance to a village, he found the way at last.
A scrawny cow was keeping watch.
There was no sign of human habitation in those houses,
But barbed wire strung out everywhere.

The village had already been occupied
By something.
Shiro Murano

HAMMER THROW

Look!
In a world circumscribed by iron
A poor dynamo is panting momentarily

Set in a white circle.

Shiro Murano

MONA LISA

Wipe that wretched smirk off your face.
Such contortions of thought are meaningless.
Please get out of the way.
We can’t see the landscape.
You get in our line of vision.
You always prevent us from seeing
Your background and our foreground.

You are really a bandage on our eyes.
Behind it, and you,
Our eyes are bloodshot.
Behind the veiled fertility
Which you vaguely project
There is no eternity or anything.
But what we want to know
Is the reality of painful change,
Desolate precipices and new bones,
All those things you are hiding from us behind your back.

Perhaps behind your broad facial expression
You are not able to see our own face, but we
Cannot see that landscape of yours.
Sachiko Yoshihara

THE NAME

Yes, one day
one day
it shall be revealed that

snow is not flowers
seas are not skies,

wind does not sing,
donkeys are not horses,
and fathers are not our mothers' lovers—

But I shall go on
wrongly calling
wind light,
clouds roses,
you my love,
just as I have always done.

Good things are all the same, and
beautiful things cannot be mistaken.

If one thing exists in all, and
all things exist in one,
we must call them all by the same name—

Sachiko Yoshihara

APPETITE

Starvation is
the sin born within me.
Why is there so little of it
in this grey, solid building?
Starvation is
the punishment I was given.
Now it too must be punished for seeking
seeking what there is so little of.

All the same, unfortunately,
I dislike overeating, and
whatever I eat seems to poison me.

Nevertheless, I am always ready to eat
what I am and what I am not—
autumn, love, a glittering airplane, and
time that ebbs and flows outside the window-panes.

Chimako Tada

A DIRGE

I

Soul, you have only
two colours in your world:
the blue of bottomless skies,
the whiteness of fresh graves on smothered desires.

II

Your silence was already beginning to
stink like Lazarus.
It might otherwise have been a voice that
makes air tremble, luxuriates in
florid language, gradually bears seeds to
drop secretly into the soil of human minds.

III

In the vast reaches of emptiness
shall you still be that individual who
refuses all others and is refused by all others,
a star independent of any constellation?
Even when your flesh is agonizingly tugged by
the inescapable might of universal gravity?

Chimako Tada

DEAD SUN

A child comes crawling into
a world not yet wrinkled, dripping
glistening drops all over.
The child turns a somersault; an hourglass too is turned, to mark the start of new times.

The child picks up stars to skim across the waters, while fish from prehistoric times laugh, waving their fins, drenching the feet of the gods with their splashings.

The child gradually grows up; now his world full of footprints is heavy with memories. Then he gives a long yawn, and is off somewhere never to return, with a dead sun stuffed in his pocket.
Rumiko Kora

A TREE

In a tree, there is
a tree still not in existence,
whose crest is even now
trembling in some breeze.

In a blue sky, there is
a blue sky still not in existence,
whose horizon is now being
pierced by a swift bird.

In a body, there is
a body still not in existence,
whose altar is now being
flooded with fresh blood.

In a town, there is
a town still not in existence,
whose main square is now being
swung in my direction.

Rumiko Kora

ENCOUNTER

I miss my footing on the stairs,
and find myself in front of a door
which I open and see you there.

(I don’t need you, so
I’d just as soon you vanished.)

Turned into a sharp knife, I
run through the town.
The air, like a balloon, comes billowing towards me. Wriggling among the staring eyes, I stab the folds of air and the invisible walls of words.

*

Tomorrow, another person who is myself and not myself will exchange friendly greetings with you, who will have missed your footing on the stairs and broken open the door.

Kozo Mio, Beach "A-4", 1969, oil on canvas, Galeria Bonino, Ltd., N.Y.
Zikkoku Osamu

ON THE SHORE OF NIGHT

On the shore of night
a fire burns

beyond the realm of sleep
where the stream of time runs louder

against the darkness
a fire burns alone

devouring one after the other
scraps discarded by the day
soundlessly spreading abroad

shuddering wildly
at its own stupidity

hopping dancing jumping on tip-toe
to reach beyond the darkness

it burns burns burns unquenchable
the flame of my own being!

From time immemorial
everywhere on the shadow-side of earth

has every one of us been burning like this
to burn himself out?

the depth of darkness before dawn...
Zikkoku Osamu

IN THE SWEATED HEAT OF NIGHT

Stomach churned with anger
Inflamed with pain
Bronchi the battered branches
Of dead trees choked by exhaust gas,
Penis standing or falling,
Ejaculates empty pleasure,
Brains burnt to ashes
On strange piles of iron skeletons,
Throat hoarse with streams of lies,
Hand crooked with greed cannot flex,
Legs swollen with flattery,
Torments blasting the whole body—
Yes, this is NIPPON!
Yes, this NIPPON is myself—
Just look at you!

That realization is my only strength,
And I must hold on tightly to it
As I wallow in the sweated heat of night.
Toge Sankichi

AT A FIRST-AID POST

You
Who have no channels for tears when you weep
No lips through which words can issue when you howl
No skin for your fingers to grip with when you writhe in torment
You

Your squirming limbs all smeared with blood and slimy sweat and lymph
Between your closed lids the glaring eyeballs show only a thread of white
On your pale swollen bellies only the perished elastic that held up your drawers
You who now can no longer feel shame at exposing your sheltered sex
O who could believe that
Only minutes ago
You were all schoolgirls fresh and appealing

In scorched and raw Hiroshima
Out of dark shuddering flames
You no longer the human creatures you had been
Scrambled and crawled one after the other
Dragged yourselves along as far as this open ground
To bury in the dusts of agony
Your frizzled hair on skulls almost bare as heads of Buddhist saints

Why should you have to suffer like this
Why suffer like this
What is the reason
What reason
And you
Do not know
How you look nor
What your humanity has been turned into

You are remembering
Simply remembering
Those who until this morning were
Your fathers mothers brothers sisters
(Would any of them recognize you now if they met you)
Remembering your homes where you used to sleep wake eat
(In a single flash all the flowers on their hedges were blasted
And no one knows where their ashes lie)
Remembering remembering
Here with your fellow-creatures who one by one gradually moving
Remembering
Those days when
You were daughters
Daughters of humankind
Takahashi Mutsuo

THE FINGER

Swathed in
Many and
Many a petal
Slumbers my dawn

Some day from that gloomy heaven blanketed in cloud
A single candid finger will emerge
And spurt forth
Discovering my rosy morn

My jumping soul
That had been sealed away
Will overflow the space between the heavens and the earth
With resounding echoes

In filthy garments, deep in sordid night
I am dreaming in rapture
Morning will come
Like the grace of bread

The finger stirs now
In the oceanic chaos
Of distant daybreak
**Kinoshita Yuji**

**SONG OF A WINTER NIGHT**

Quiet night is all around me
as I lean against my loneliness
as if against a scarred desk.
The north wind, which was crying all day long, is now
gone away somewhere; that fierce being of rage and sorrow
also has its own place to go and rest in.
This thought makes me warm, wanting to rest too.
Rodrigo de Haro

INSCRIÇÃO

Âmbar e Morte
Guarda no ventre o escuro peixe
Que anel de pedra fria?

Na prata azinhavrada
Gravarei teu nome
Mais claro que a nuvem.

Rodrigo de Haro

PARTIDA

Dormirei nas fendas da rocha
Acordarei antes do dia
Os silêncios fechados à minha volta
Sete silêncios coloridos
Outras sete batidas de bigorna
Sete pássaros do estrangeiro.

Na cela luminosa
Não vejo um espelho
Só vejo a bilha fria
Da manhã do mundo.
A subida do monte pede
Exata estratégia
Eu subirei por caminhos maliciosos
O vento da estréla será meu guia
Dormirei nas fendas da rocha
Acordarei antes do dia.
Rodrigo de Haro

INSCRIPTION

Amber and Death
The dark fish hides in its belly
What ring of cold stone?

On tarnished silver
I'll engrave your name
Clearer than a cloud.

Rodrigo de Haro

DEPARTURE

I will sleep in the clefts of rocks
And awake before day
Closed silences around me
Seven silences of color
Seven strokes on an anvil
Seven birds from far away.

In my luminous cell
I see no mirror
Only the earthenware jar
Of the morning of the world.
The ascent of the mount demands
Careful strategy
I will climb my malicious ways
The wind of a star will be my guide
I will sleep in the clefts of rocks
And awake before day.
Rodrigo de Haro

GIOCONDA

Conheces os segredos do túmulo
Áspides circundam tua fronte
Crepuscular
—Ou são frias espigas?
Imóvel sorris
E flutuas sôbre a névoa
Dos rios
Amas as espadas nuas
E teu jardim de estalactites
Mas
Quase não falas

Teu rosto se reflete nas pupilas
Dos cavalos enlouquecidos
Pela tormenta.
Atenta
Aos trinados do pássaro
Encerrado num corredor da alma
Ceifas
Mais éste dia de outono.

Nada queres do mundo
Curvada
Examinas a planta de algum labirinto
A forma estelar de um grão de gêlo.

As vêzes te dilatas
Teu busto rodeia-me feito uma paliçada.
Rodrigo de Haro

GIOCONDA

You know the secrets of the grave
Asps circle round your brows
Crepuscular
—Or are they frigid spikes?
Immobile, you smile
And float above the mist
Of rivers
You love naked swords
And your garden of stalactites
But
You scarcely speak

Your face shines in the pupils
Of horses crazed
By torment.
Pay heed
To the trills of a bird
Trapped in a passage of the soul.
You harvest
Yet another day of fall.

You wish nothing of the world.
Bowed
You scrutinize the plan of some old labyrinth
The star-like form of a grain of ice.

Sometimes you spread
Your bust around me
Like a palisade.
Augusto Frederico Schmidt

O RIO DA MORTE

No rio da morte
Contemplamos as paisagens da aurora.
No rio da sombra,
Debruçados sobre as águas,
Revemos o que se foi,
O que se perdeu.
Sentimos, de novo, as mãos que nos afagaram
E a voz que, outrora, nos levava ao sono,
Ouvimos, agora,
Misturada com a incerta e escura voz
Da morte
Que está rolando sôbre nós
As suas águas cegas.

Augusto Frederico Schmidt

SENTIMENTO DA MORTE

Serei só eu a sentir a lenta morte do mundo
Ou todos os seres humanos, que vivem comigo,
Estão penetrados também, como eu, dêste sentimento confuso e terrível?

Serei só eu, que estou debruçado sôbre a morte do mundo
E ninguém mais?

Serei só eu, que estou compreendendo
Que estas luzes tôdas se apagarão em breve,
Que êstes ruidos se amortecerão dentro em pouco,
E que a treva e o silêncio
Dominarão os sinais absurdos e incertos de vida,
Êstes misteriosos sinais de vida
Que lutam uns instantes—e vão cessar, em breve, para sempre!
Augusto Frederico Schmidt

THE RIVER OF DEATH

In the river of death
We contemplate landscapes at dawn.
In the river of shadows,
Bending over its waters,
We see again what has gone
And what is lost.
We feel again hands that caressed us,
And the voice that long ago carried us to sleep
We now hear
Mixed with the dark, the uncertain voice
Of death
Who builds above us, surging,
His blind waves.

Augusto Frederico Schmidt

A SENSE OF DEATH

Am I the only one to feel the world’s slow death
Or is all of humankind alive with me
Pierced as I am by this terrible, confused presentiment?

Is it just I bowed over the death of the world
And nobody else?

Am I the only one to understand
That all these lights will soon go out,
These noises in a while grow thin,
That darkness and silence
Will dominate these absurd, uncertain signs of life,
These mysterious signs of life
Which struggle for an instant—and soon will cease forever.
Tahar Ben Jelloun

VARIATIONS SUR LA MAIN

1
je voudrais te dire tout ce que je porte en moi
et traverser la ville sans découper le soleil
connaître ton pas initial
et le classer dans l'archive des signes.

2
il m'est plus facile de relire la brisure du temps
au travers d'une tendresse
que d'accumuler des sentiments à blanc.

3
il n'y a de rafale dans la mémoire que de la
transparence du corps dispersé dans le ciel
qui se lève sur les morts.

4
immaculée ta parole qui devance le temps d'une
mort rouge au coucher de tous les soleils
le temps de l'écumé souleve ta solitude
je compte tes retours
la face contre la dalle des choses.

5
j'ai demandé à l'énigme de tatouer une ville
entre les lignes de la main et dresser la pierre
contre le sort aveugle
mais j'ai vu l'œil-filant se poser et malmener le
soleil au bout de l'itinéraire lacté de ton regard
la main s'est refermée sur une petite lueur
égarée.

6
nacre et or l'absence
le voile cramoisi sur front et masque ouverts
la dune compose la main
l'aube.
Tahar Ben Jelloun

VARIATIONS ON A HAND

1
I want to tell you everything I carry in me
cross the city without shading the sun
know your first step
and file it in the archives of signs.

2
it is easier for me to re-read the fracture of time
through tenderness
than to wallow in bland feelings.

3
only a squall in the memory remains from
the transparent body scattered into the sky
which rises above the dead.

4
untouched your word flies beyond scarlet death
in the instant of all the setting suns
the moment of foam lifts your solitude
I witness your returns
a face against the slab of the world.

5
I asked the unknown to tattoo a city
between creases in my hand and to erect the stone
against blind fate
but I saw the eye-filament intrude and intercept
the sun beyond the milky way of your stare
a hand snatched away a glint of errant light.

6
mother of pearl now absence
the crimson veil exposed on brow and mask
the dune composes the hand
the dawn.
et il tomba
le désert plein le coeur
au début la pierre n’était pas angulaire
elle est devenue sacrée parce qu’une main l’a
frôlée
quant au Livre
il faisait la mer et roulait les yeux
le lendemain la fissure fit son chemin dans le
dos de l’homme tuberculeux
l’œil posa pour la postérité

je me relève

je multiplie les déserts/
mirages reclus
confondus avec l’astre inutile
c’est le Sud/
l’absence
et l’illusion nulle.

si l’astre voyeur remonte du puits
vérifie de quelle légende il s’est nourri
et s’il frappe à ta porte
n’ouvre pas ton visage
entre toi et lui
ta main
seule ta main pour arrêter le spectre
et pénétrer le mal
l’œil fermé sur la mort.

chaque main est une solitude usée
pâle la caresse amovible sur l’inquiétude
détectée à l’insu de la honte bue
la peur froisse notre mémoire.

debout l’extase d’une main que la lèpre a déta-
chée du corps
revenue au monde
and it fell whole
the desert
in the beginning the stone was not jagged
it became sacred in the cradle of hands
as for the Book
it made the sea and rolled its eyes
the next day the fissure traced its path in the
back of a tubercular man
the eye posed for posterity

I get up

I multiply the deserts/
    homeless mirages
mingled with the useless star
it is the South/
    absence
and no illusion

if the star-gazer climbs from the well
verifies the legend that nourished him
and if he raps on your door
don't face him
between you and him
place your hand
your hand alone halts the spectre
and stabs the evil
    the eye closed on death.

each hand is a worn solitude
pale the caress floating over worry
felt yet not known in the drunken shame
fear bruises our memory.

the ecstasy of the erect hand a leper ripped
off his body
comes back to the world
anémone
signe
et refus du temps.

11
dans ma tête
dans notre tête
un cheval fait du vent
dans ma tête
rire synonyme
mais ma tête s'est déplacée
la parole dément la figure éparpillée
depuis que je n'habite plus une chamelle je me perds
je hurle et tends la main
lorsqu'on se baisse je plante un poignard dans le dos
juste entre la cinquième et sixième vertèbre
(c'est une question d'habitude)
mais on renaît
ce n'est jamais fini
la terre se dérobe sous vos corps et vous restez suspendus
l'anus en trompe
vous fermez l'œil et imprimez la main sur le front des nuages.

12
il n'y a plus rien à emporter
les souvenirs tombent en arrêt devant le rasoir
les arbres n'ont plus de fonction systématique
les fleurs ne sont plus en papier
le sort se noie dans l'étang de la main vieille
de cinq étoiles

13
folie sans idiome
et me donne sur table froide
j'ouvre mon ventre:
  des chiffres
des guêpes
  et une lune d'acier.
anemone
sign
and refusal of time.

11
in my head
in our head
a horse breezes by

in my head synonymous laughter
but my head catapults
words deny the scattered figure
since I no longer inhabit the camel I lose myself
I scream and hold out my hand
when someone bends over I plant a knife in his back
just between the fifth and sixth vertebrae
(as a matter of habit)
but one is reborn
it never ceases
death gives way under your body and you hang
    suspended
trumpeting farts
you shut your eyes and imprint your hand on the
    foreheads of clouds.

12
nothing remains to be carried away
memories come to a halt before the razor
trees no longer serve life
flowers no longer bloom on paper
fate drowns in the lake with the aged hand
    of five stars.

13
madness without speech
and spread out on the icy table
I tear open my stomach:
    numbers
    wasps
    and a steel moon.
Alexandre Amprimoz

TO THE WINTER MAN

You must have winter in your heart
To dream of snow apples in spring

And later think of cherries as red ice.
Children make snowmen for a day or two,

But you say that even in August
Sand burns our feet like fresh snow.

If men would think of this instant as the best present
They would build cities of snow: white

Moments in the mind longer than the ruins
Of eternity. Frost, snow, ice, saliva

Of dead sailors, foam of the sea—all
Are equal. Of course there are no angels

Playing old lyres in cold attics; only
Something standing between the instrument

And the sound. For all things that you cannot
Describe there is a metaphysics of matter.

The trees look like still dancers,
This evening is a postcard. Of course there is

No god, only a shadow that shaped your winter
With snowmen. Will you ever melt?
SECOND MOMENT AT SEA

A shore
with sunshells
reverberating
with blue sand
is not a shore
but a sea

I wrote these lines
then images sprang
from all sides
but something froze
the motions
of my landscape

The pen ordered
please
one word at a time

What else was there to write
if not
A poem is a shore
where you can feel the pulse of the sea
William V. Spanos

HOMECOMING

I tear the day apart
and step through the shreds
into a broken landscape,

where beasts
I've never seen
heave towards
my nakedness.

I cry out names
but they come on.

In the distance,
from the west,
a lone rider
ramrod
makes his slow way
through the shatter.

When he passes
he lifts his visor.
And I see them crouching
in my father's
burning eyes.
Ameen Alwan
A TARTNESS OF MY ANATOMY

ants
walk
up and down
the hollow
of my bones
looking
for honey
in a misplaced
joint

Ameen Alwan
BY THE SEA

He wants
to insinuate
his revelations
into the conch
of my ear.
I listen
with the placid
calcium
of myself
to the sea
in his voice.

My ear
shall never
smell
his breath.
Alfredo de Palchi

Vergogna, io? di questa tridimensionale vita che mi mena di ruota
in sedia è viceversa
che compie scempiaggine giorno
dopo giorno sempre più breve
bestemmiato dal mio disdegno e che si oscura
in un lavoro di demolizione
—oltre questo
non uno spiraglio di luce ma una corsia
ininterrotta di uomini che s’aggirano:
la mia fortuna è di resistere questi volti
imprecisi—non vi è esito

sono una catena di subdole origini
ordigni ordini fantasie
che posseggono già l’estinzione,
una poltiglia di fango, un fastidioso silenzio
sulla brace di chi ancora vive;
io/che assisto alla crescita d’ogni alba/
alla sera non sono che il semplice
shock dei due estremi

Alfredo de Palchi

Esistere
—solitaria consuetudine—
ma chi vive, chi . . .
é come questo essere d’albero
striminzito, di forza cozzato dentro la fuliggine,
che esiste ma non vive
Alfredo de Palchi

Ashamed of myself? of this three-dimensional life that shuttles me from chair to wheel & return completing its absurdity day after day each shorter as I curse it & darker in the slow work of demolition —beyond all this there's no shaft of light but a groove that wandering men cannot break: it's my luck to resist these vague faces —there's no way out

I'm a chain of insidious origins orders mechanisms fantasies already charged with extinction gruel of mud, tedious hush laid on the coals of the still living— I / witness of each morning's crescendo / am nothing at evening but the simple shock of two extremes

Alfredo de Palchi

Existence —solitary habit— but who, who is alive . . . it's like this pinched creature of a tree, butted into city dust, existing not living
Alfredo de Palchi

Quello che mi intuisce
è la tua coscia felice—la notte abbrevia
il calore al suono della sveglia
e mi alzo orbo: talpa
vivente nel buio nel tunnel del corpo
nutrito dalla coscia

Alfredo de Palchi

Domani un altro giorno non sole solo
il cielo più immediato
elettrico di atmosfera che... non devo soccombere
alla mia pecunaria esistenza deteriorare
 cualcuno
qualcosa ni riabiliterà in una vita migliore
ma non c'è prospetto: ho preso una strada
per un'altra dove incontro gente che non capisco
e non capisce / come portare un fagotto
sulla schiena è la gioia / perché
temere quella strada /
sono un cane che si gratta le pulci /
il dominio del cuore è soggetto
femminile / non dimenticare che nessuno
mi ha crocifisso ma io stesso
Alfredo de Palchi

What senses me first is your
happy thigh—night shortens the
fever at the sound of the alarm
and I rise blind: a mole
living in the dark of the body’s tunnel
nursed by your thigh

Alfredo de Palchi

Tomorrow is another day not only sun
the sky is closer
electric with air ... I mustn’t surrender
to greedy existence or get damaged

someone
something will restore me to a better life
but there’s no prospect: I took one road
for another where I meet people I don’t know
& don’t know me /

how to carry a pack on my back

is the joy of it / why
dread that road /
I’m a dog who scratches at his fleas /
power of the heart is a woman’s
topic / & remember

nobody
crossed me up but myself
A PORTRAIT OF
PAUL-MARIE LAPOINTE

D. G. JONES

The director of the French-language news service of Radio Canada, Paul-Marie Lapointe, has spent most of his active life as a journalist, first in Quebec City, then in Montreal. But he has also become, in the judgment of fellow-poet Yves Préfontaine, the strongest, most incisive, most essential voice in Quebec poetry. In 1972, Lapointe won both Quebec’s Prix David and Canada’s Governor General’s Award for his work as a poet.

The most reticent of moralists and the gentlest of revolutionaries, he has yet written that any vital poem is both a moral act and an act of revolt. Insofar as Eros is the motor of art and, as Freud maintained, civilization is a repressive anxiety structure, this is bound to be the case. The morality of the poet, said Wallace Stevens, is the morality of sensation—a view that would have been heretical enough in the Jansenist Quebec of Lapointe’s youth and that remains heretical in the contemporary world. For though it may not exhibit the puritanical morality of an older Quebec, the modern world is nonetheless oppressive, certainly more violent, and—as Lapointe’s news-gathering service would attest—not unjustly acclaimed the Age of Anxiety. In the wintry climate of Quebec or the contemporary world, in the confrontations between ideology and art, between the intellectual security of dogma and the sensuous risk of the poem, between power and intransigence and fraternity and accommodation, Lapointe’s poetry has always spoken for the latter and been subversive like the sun.
Paul-Marie Lapointe exploded into poetry with over a hundred poems, all written toward the end of his first (and last) year as a student of architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Montreal. Revised in the fall, they were published before the year was out as *Le Vierge incendié* (1948), *The Virgin Burned* or, perhaps, *Virgo Burned Up*.

Lapointe was born at Virgo, in 1929, and he grew up in St. Feli­cien near Lac Saint Jean, a hundred miles north of Quebec City. It is an area famous for its blueberries—three make a pie—and, as Lapointe once remarked with reference to his title, for its forest fires. It is also the country of *Maria Chapdelaine*, a classic Quebec novel dramatizing the traditional Quebec culture. Rural, French, and Catholic, it had little interest in the myth of progress, in the stock market or its failure. Life was centered on the parish and organized around the recurring rhythms of the land, the family, the ritual church year. It was a world where, according to *Maria Chapdelaine*, nothing changed, ever. Lapointe’s education, first at the Séminaire de Chicoutimi during the last years of the war, then at the Collège Saint-Laurent in Montreal, no doubt reflected the climate of this traditional culture.

In such a context, *The Virgin Burned*, with its profusion of images, irreverent, unpredictable, often erotic, arrived with something of the violence of the spring breakup. The poems reveal an exuberant delight in language and a spontaneous mixture of ironic irritation and lyric affirmation. Organized in associational clusters, they increasingly abandon conventional form and syntax. In both form and theme, they were entirely new in Quebec literature.

The overall thematic movement may be suggested by the divisions of the book: “Scalped Heads,” “Your Sleek Bellies,” “They Lay Waste My Heart,” “There Are Dreams,” and “Creation of the World.” In its underlying image of an old order razed, as a virgin forest may be swept by fire so that new life may spring up green, in its celebration of the sensuous body of the world, in its suggestion that language and art are arms in the imaginative recreation of one’s world, the book anticipates the major themes of a generation of Quebec poetry.

If Lapointe’s first book reflects something of the comedy of spring, his second, *Choice of Poems* (1960), reflects the romance of summer. But as we can see, it took nearly a decade to arrive.

World War II had greatly accelerated changes in the traditional life of Quebec and had brought to Montreal a variety of publishers, painters, and writers—notably André Breton and the surrealist program, creating an unprecedented cultural ferment. But with the end of the war a reaction set in. When the painter Paul-Emile Borduas pub-
lished, also in 1948, a surrealist-inspired manifesto, *Total Refusal*, rejecting both the traditional Quebec culture and that of modern technological society, he lost his job at the government-supported art school where he taught. The decade that followed under the regime of Maurice Duplessis has been referred to, especially by writers, as the Great Darkness.

By the time Lapointe’s *Choice of Poems* appeared in 1960, however, Quebec was on the brink of the so-called Quiet Revolution, which during the sixties was to transform radically the traditional culture and, for good or for ill, make Quebec part of the modern technological world. The poems signal the new, more expansive climate, and in them we find fully developed two of the main themes of the sixties, the celebration of love and of the land.

The magnificent poem “Trees,” inspired by a government publication on the trees of Canada and essentially written in a single burst one Sunday afternoon, is both one of the most richly detailed celebrations of the land and life of Quebec and an adventure into the world of total metaphor, where pastoral becomes apocalypse. Into the basic litany of trees, Lapointe weaves a host of free associations which integrate the human and the natural worlds to conclude the poem with a single image of a cosmic tree, its nests full of children.

Lapointe’s earliest mentors were Rimbaud and Eluard. Others he has mentioned include Whitman and Lorca, Neruda and Guillen. But “Trees” may suggest that Lapointe is perfectly serious when he speaks of the influence of jazz musicians John Coltrane and Miles Davis—with their emphasis on improvisation.

The last section of the volume, particularly the poem “We HaveTaken Our Places Under the Thunder,” reflects a totally different climate, which dominates his next book, *For All Souls* (1965). If the Quebecker no longer has to contend with the problems of an overly static culture, he must now contend with those of almost cataclysmic change: the world of the rat race and the arms race, the Cold War and the atom bomb, continuous dislocation and violence. Winter brings a satirical edge to Lapointe’s vision. Man is seen giving himself up, in smugness or in terror, to the cold, to the forces of division, aggression, and death. He becomes a “stupefied family.” His guardian angel peers through a bombsight. “Time Falls” and “ICBM” are among Lapointe’s most explicit and public poems and probably speak most immediately to the reader, in or out of Quebec.

The irony of these poems is tempered by an elegiac concern for the souls, albeit mainly of the dead, and perhaps for those fleeting glimpses
we get of summer, of birds, and of girls. Lapointe is not by tempera­
ment a satirist, but rather what Robert Graves called a Muse poet. 
Even the mysterious divinity he evokes and would serve, welling like 
water among the stones, or like suns bleeding warmth into a frigid 
universe, is more feminine than masculine.

This bias is more evident in “Short Straws,” a series of eighteen 
poems remarkable for their attempt to hold summer and winter in a 
tense balance, for their often simultaneous evocation of terror and love, 
for their extreme speed and concision.

In this latest volume, *Tableaux de l’amoureuse* (1974), rather 
freely translated here as *The Canvas of Love and Other Poems*, that 
difficult balance tends to be broken. As if by a kind of natural recoil, 
Lapointe returns in the first two sections, nearly half the volume, to 
evoke and to celebrate the vital warmth, the regenerative power, of 
woman, of Eros. He does so with a new intensity and a sometimes 
curious combination of intimacy and distance. Then with a short, 
mixed, rather unusually occasional series of poems on Egypt, the tone 
modulates back toward winter, the dominant climate of the final sec­
tion and of poems such as “Bad Times,” “Vietnam, USA,” and “Mis­sion Accomplished.” If there is a new note here it may be in the hint 
of autumn, with its melancholy but also its suggestion of a solidarity in 
death as in life, which is quite different from the ironic desolation of 
man’s own violence.

The climate of the poems, of the world, has become increasingly 
hostile. Only the metals remain serene—and in “Short Straws,” even 
they are menaced, to say nothing of man, the birds, or the tree, that 
recurring feature in Lapointe’s poetry. In one of the latest poems, the 
birds taking sudden flight trace on the air the pattern of a black seal, 
of a tree burned black in the midst of time. Yggdrasil, World Tree. 
One would prefer to suppose that like the forest of Lac Saint Jean after 
a fire, it too will become newly green.

Nothing is simple, says Lapointe at the end of the latest volume, 
and he is not likely to cultivate the cynical simplicity of the fatalist. 
Lapointe’s whole concern in poetry has been to resist such simpli­
cities. He has always put the emphasis on the first draft, on the spon­
taneous, on improvisation. He has resisted the trap of discursive logic, 
linear syntax, even of his own image. Rather than pursue a conceit or 
extend a metaphor, he would destroy the initial image. The poem ex­
plodes like a seed and ramifies. More accurately, perhaps, it is a series 
of luminous tracks that betray the invisible electrons startled from 
their atomic sleep. Lapointe would remain faithful to the ambiguity,
the indeterminacy, of the moment of experience. And with luck, the elliptical movement of the poem should retain something of its unpredictability, its mysterious coherence, its force.

We may make all kinds of large statements about the climate of the world, about life and about death, and yet not attain the kind of conviction a poem has when it succeeds in finding, in the curve of its rhythms and the structure of its images, its own internal coherence, its resonance and evocative life. It then puts us in touch with something vital and creative, in the writer, in ourselves, in the world. Of the poet, what more can we ask?
Paul-Marie Lapointe

Dans les vergers
les monstres du midi nous oubliaient
parce qu’ils étaient aveugles
ou c’est qu’ils n’avaient plus de nez

Ainsi nous allions aborder
le futur de cristal
le palais de chaque espoir
de chaque moire

Et déjà les plus agiles
surgis des cachettes de fourrure
les singes de cent membres
et tout le troupeau
on courait l’un devant l’autre
file indienne on est libre

Mais un vautour invisible
insoupçonné
avala subito le reptile

Paul-Marie Lapointe

14

un grand corps alimente la ville en oiseaux
longues sessions coiffées de paumes
où se préparent des paresse

une bête solide et peu vorace
qui ne demande qu’à être grugée
chaque printemps telle s’effrite la chaleur
et l’homme par l’intérieur

les musiques nous assaillaient
ainsi les satisfait-on
tièdes cannibales désirables entrailles
Paul-Marie Lapointe

In the orchards.
the noonday monsters forgot us
because they were blind
or could no longer sniff us out

So we set forth to lay hold
of the crystal future
the castle gleaming with every hope
streaming like watered silk

And already the most nimble
sprung from their furry hideouts
the hundred-limbed monkeys
and the whole troop
we went running one after the other
single file we are free

But an invisible vulture
unsuspected
swallowed subito the snake

Paul-Marie Lapointe

14

a great body feeds the city with birds
long sessions coifed with lifted hands
where ease prepares indulgences

a solid beast and hardly voracious
he asks only to be gnawed on
every spring whereby the warmth is released
and man from within

the sounds of music assail us
thus we satisfy
the lukewarm cannibals  the bowels of desire
nous savourons dans le velours des châsses
des mortelles valables
aux cuisses fondantes
tigresses
sanglots

Paul-Marie Lapointe

17

dans l’étreinte de la femme de lumière
l’outarde attristée s’envole

mais qu’après avoir enchanté les lacs
elle disparaissait aux plus torrides parallèles
tel est l’effroi des neiges

Paul-Marie Lapointe

18

ainsi que la pierre la veine de verre
et la fille ses artères
l’angoisse polit sa terre

Paul-Marie Lapointe

OS FRAPPE DE STUPEUR

pétrifiée
debout
yeux large ouverts

la concubine du mort
en ses mains croisées
tient un ventre d’ivoire

son pubis est un triangle triste
une fleur séchée
we savor in the velvet of reliquaries
bonified mortal women
with melting thighs
tigresses
their sobs

**Paul-Marie Lapointe**

17

in the grip of the lady of light
the saddened mallard takes to his wings

that having so delighted the lakes
he should disappear to more torrid zones
such is the terror of the snows

**Paul-Marie Lapointe**

18

as the rock its crystal vein
and the girl her arteries
anguish polishes its ground

**Paul-Marie Lapointe**

**BONE STRUCK DUMB**

petrified
upright
great eyes open

the dead man's concubine
holds with crossed hands
an ivory belly

her pubis is a sad triangle
a dried flower
Paul-Marie Lapointe

ICBM

c chaque jour étonné tu reprends terre
cette nuit n'était pas la dernière

mais le brontosaure
mais César
mais l'inca
mais le Corbeau te guette

monde mou

les cratères éclatent
cris d'oeuf

comme un crapaud le Nuage agrippe sa terre
et l'embrasse à petits coups répétés

mère de la poussière

l'oie vient des Andes malgré le radar

sur les passerelles de nylon
entre les mondes
vacillent les tendres hanches des filles

monde mou mille morts
aurore mauvaise dont je sais à la traverser
qu'elle n'est pas définitive

un bombardier repose à tes côtés
tes nuits sont assurées!

ô président ô pasteur
général des îles et des lunes

les enfants se recroquevillent comme des feuilles brûlées
Paul-Marie Lapointe

ICBM

each day astonished you land up on earth
this night was not the last

but the brontosaurus
and Caesar
and the Incas
and the Crow circling

watery world

the craters erupt
    embryonic cry

the Cloud like a toad squats on its earth
squeezes it with small repeated hugs

the mother of dust

the wild goose makes it from the Andes in spite of the radar

on nylon catwalks flung
between worlds
sway the delicate haunches of girls

watery world welter of corpses
day breaks bad but I know in getting through it
    it is not the last

a bombardier stretches out at your side
your nights are secure!

O President O Good Shepherd
General of the Islands and of the Moons

the children curl up like burnt leaves
FOUR MODERN ARABIC POETS

Translator Issa J. Boullata

Badr Shakir al-Sayyab

THE SONG OF RAIN

Your eyes are two palm groves at the hour of dawn
Or two balconies from which the moon recedes.
When your eyes smile, vineyards leaf
And lights dance like moons in a river
Which an oar shakes at the hour of dawn
As if, in their depths, stars are throbbing.

Like the sea when evening spreads its hands over it
They are drowned in clouds of transparent grief
Full of the warmth of winter, the shiver of autumn,
Death, birth, darkness and light.
The tremor of weeping awakes in my soul
With a frightful thrill embracing the sky
Like a child’s when awed by the moon.

As if the rainbow drinks the clouds
And drop by drop melts in rain
And children babble under vine trellises
And the song of rain
Tickles the silence of birds on the trees
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Evening yawns, and the clouds
Pour down their heavy tears
Like a child who before sleeping raves
That his mother—whom he did not find
On waking up a year ago and was told
After persisting questions
That she would return day after tomorrow—
Must by all means return
Although his comrades whisper that she is there
On the hillside mortally sleeping in her grave
Eating earth and drinking rain;
As if a sad fisherman gathers his nets
And curses water and destiny
And casts a song where the moon sets.
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Do you know what sadness the rain evokes?
And how roof-gutters sob when it pours?
And how in it the lonely person feels lost?
Endless is the rain: like shed blood,
Like hunger, love, children and the dead.
Your eyes come to my fancy with rain,
And across the Gulf’s waves lightning burnishes
With stars and shells the coasts of Iraq
As if they are about to shine
But night covers them with a robe of gore.
I cry to the Gulf, “O Gulf,
O giver of shells and death.”
The echo comes back
Like sobs,
“O Gulf,
O giver of shells and death.”
I can almost hear Iraq gathering thunder
And storing up lightning in mountains and plains
So that when men break open their seals
The winds will not leave of Thamud
Any trace in the vale.
I can almost hear the palms drink the rain
And hear the villages moaning and the emigrants
Struggling with oars and sails
Against the tempests and thunder of the Gulf while they sing:
“Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
And there is hunger in Iraq!
The harvest season scatters the crops in it
So that ravens and locusts have their fill
While a millstone in the fields surrounded by human beings
Grinds the granaries and the stones.
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
How many a tear we shed, on departure night,
And—lest we should be blamed—pretended it was rain.
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Ever since we were young, the sky was
Clouded in the winter,
And rain poured,
Yet every year when the earth bloomed we hungered.
Not a single year passed but Iraq had hunger.
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
In every drop of rain
There is a red or a yellow bud of a flower.
And every tear of the hungry and the naked,
And every drop shed from the blood of slaves
Is a smile waiting for new lips
Or a roseate nipple in the mouth of a babe
In the young world of tomorrow, giver of life.
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Rain . . .
Iraq will bloom with rain.”

I cry to the Gulf, “O Gulf,
O giver of pearls, shells and death.”
The echo comes back
Like sobs,
“O Gulf,
O giver of shells and death.”
Of its many gifts, the Gulf strews
On the sand its salty surf and shells
And what remains of the bones of a miserable, drowned
Emigrant who drank death
From the Gulf waters and its bottom,
While in Iraq a thousand snakes drink nectar
From flowers blooming with the dew of the Euphrates.

I hear the echo
Resounding in the Gulf,
“Rain . . .
Rain . . .

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Rain . . .
In every drop of rain
There is a red or yellow bud of a flower.
And every tear of the hungry and the naked,
And every drop shed from the blood of slaves
Is a smile waiting for new lips
Or a roseate nipple in the mouth of a babe
In the young world of tomorrow, giver of life.”

And rain pours.
Mahmud Darwish

DON'T SLEEP

When the moon falls
Like broken mirrors
The shadow grows larger among us
And legends die.
Don't sleep, my darling.
Our wound has become medals,
It has become fire on a moon.

Beyond our window is a bright day
And an arm of satisfaction
When it embraced me and flew
I thought I was a butterfly
In necklaces of pomegranate blossoms.
Lips of dew
Spoke to me without words.
Don't sleep, my darling
Beyond our window is a bright day.

Roses fell from my hand
Without fragrance, without torpor.
Don't sleep, my darling
Birds are committing suicide
My eyelashes are ears of corn
Drinking night and destiny.
Your sweet voice is a kiss
And a wing on a string.
An olive branch wept
In exile over a stone
Looking for its roots,
Sun and rain.
Don't sleep, darling.
Birds are committing suicide.

When the moon falls
Like broken mirrors
The shadow drinks our shame
And we hide our escape.
When the moon falls
Love becomes an epic.
Don’t sleep, darling
Our wound has become medals
And our hands on the darkness
Are a nightingale on a string.
Ahmad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ti Hijazi

SUDDEN DEATH

I carry my telephone number
My name and my address
So that if I fall dead suddenly you will identify me
And my friends will come.

Fancy what will happen
If you don’t come.
I will remain in the morgue two long nights
Cold telephone wires will shake in the night. The ring will start.
No reply . . . once . . . twice.

Somebody will go to my mother and tell her I am dead
My mother, that sad country woman—
How she will walk alone in the city
Carrying my address!
How she will spend the night beside me
In the utterly quiet hall
Subdued by her loneliness
Comforted by her seclusion in sorrow
As she ponders alone
Over her hidden sorrows
Weaving my shroud from her black tears!

I wish my mother had tattooed my boy’s arm
So that I would not be lost
So that I would not betray my father
So that my first face would not be lost under my second face.
When I see men and women going out silently
After spending two hours in front of me during which
We did not exchange looks or see different scenes,
When I see that life has no madness
And the bird of quietness flutters over everybody
I feel as if I am really dead and lying silently
Watching this dying world.
Baland al-Haydari

BARRENNESS

The same road
The same houses tied together by a great effort
The same silence.
We used to say
Tomorrow it will die
And in every house will wake
Voices of little children
Rolling with day on the road
They will mock our yesterday
Our grumbling women
Our frozen looks with no brilliance
They will not know what memories are
They will not understand the old way
They will laugh because they will not ask
Why they laugh

We used to say
Tomorrow we will understand what we say
And the seasons will gather us together
Here a friend
There a bashful person
Yesterday it was a deep love
Perhaps
We did not mean what we used to say
For the seasons have gathered us together today
That friend
Is without a friend
That love
Is a callous face
And on the road
The same road
Are the same houses tied together by a great effort
The same silence
And there
Behind the closed windows
Are sunken eyes
Frozen
Waiting for the little ones
Afraid that the day will pass away
With the road
Herman Salinger

MIRROR: TWO SIDES

Behind the mirror:
the piano wires, broken.

In stiff succession
the mirrors move along
highways in rear vision.
(Was the novel a moving mirror?)

Each shows a cross-section of
someone else's reality
glimpsed without a temperament.

Marcel's magic lantern
rippled by curtains.
That other Marcel's face
distorted professionally.
Magic lanterns on
magic mountains.

Some or all of these
are we.
Jeff Havill, Form of the Head, 1976.
It's been a long time. I don't know since when. Just a long time. That should be enough to explain it. To say that: a long time. Very long. Very well. Since I've been here I mean. How could I forget? In this room. In this house. On this street. In this city. This state to be sure. This country of course. Naturally this hemisphere. On earth without reservation. This solar system what can I add? This universe I can't even go into. Wouldn't try. We all go a long way. Very possibly we all go the same way. Maybe we all add up to the same thing. This time: who can say? Nobody I think. Maybe some people try. Maybe a lot of people try and some people succeed. I don't know. But what is it I began to say? That I've never left this room? No. I've gone out. Several to many times. But the number of times isn't important. Let's say I've only been out of this room once. But stayed away for eighty years only to return to never go out again. It would mean I've been out a long time by our age standards but only went out once. But that's not what I began to say. It was something about myself in this room. But too late at least for now. For my next door neighbor comes in.

"Howdy do?"

"And how are you?" is what I answer.

"Just fine, and having a pleasant day yourself?"

"Pleasant. Couldn't be better."

"Enjoying the weather and the sights?"

"Wouldn't it be crazy if I didn't?"

"Well please continue to have a pleasant day."

"It isn't difficult to try."

"Then I'll see you then."

"And a goodbye to you," I say.
My neighbor leaves. I try to remember what we said. Nothing much. I look at what he left. Enough for a small meal. It takes little to feed me and I eat. It tastes all right to bad. But a person has to eat. That's what one of my parents once said when he or she spoke to me about needs. That's something I can remember that brings me way back. And a roof over your head. And clothes if people where you live still wear or ever wore clothes or the climate you finally settle in gets cold.

The landlady comes in. "Hello."

"Good morning," I say.

"But it is evening."

"Then good morning for this morning and good evening for now. For how are you today?"

"Fine, thanks, and you?"

"What's to complain about for really what could be wrong?"

"I'm happy to hear that and have a very good rest of day."

"And I'm happy to hear you're happy to hear that and to you the same a very nice rest of day."

"Goodbye," she says.

"Goodbye."

She goes. She left something. A blanket for me to wrap around myself and sleep under tonight. It's what I needed most. I had my meal. I've a roof and these clothes. Last night was cold. This morning, this afternoon, now this evening is cold. In my mind there comes a time in these seasons when it doesn't seem it can ever get warm again. Somehow she knew. But of course for she lives in the same building and so must undergo the same cold. God bless her I would say. Some people might think I should. Others might say or think I shouldn't. This is a world of many opinions and much diversity and different harmonies and strifes. I could almost say they're what I've come to like most about it, except for the possibility of the new day.

Someone raps on my window. It's my super who lives on the other side of me. We share the same fire escape. My window is gated and locked. Bundled up like a bear he signals me to let him in. I wave for him to come around and enter through the front door. He waves no, it's easier getting in through the window now that he's outside. Easier for you, I motion, though for me it'll take four times the effort to open my window than the door. Come on, he motions, you opening up or not? I unlock and open the window gate and window and close and lock them once he's inside.

"Nice to see you again," he says.

"Same here, Mr. Block, and make yourself at home."
"Think by now you ought to be calling me John?"
"John it is then, John."
"Fine, Harold."
"Why'd you come through the window, John?"
"Because you opened and unlocked it and the gate."
"I opened and unlocked them because you waved me to and then continued to wave me to open and unlock them after I motioned you to go around through your apartment to the public hallway and get in my place through the front door there."
"Then because I was out on our fire escape feeding my pigeons and thought it'd be nice visiting you again, and if I did, to get into your place through some other way this time but the front door."
"A good enough reason I suppose."
"Really the only truthful one I have."
"Wasn't it kind of cold out there?"
"Actually, I could probably think up several other truthful reasons, and almost as cold out there as it is inside our flats."
"One day it might not be this cold?"
"Something to look forward to?"
"One day it might even be considerably warm."
"More to look forward to?"
"And hot. Our rooms, out there on the fire escape, the hallways, the whole building, will be hot."
"It's always good speaking to you, Harold. Seems to raise my body temperature by a degree, which these days I don't mind."
"Same here, John. And have a very nice day."
"What's left of it I will."

We shake hands. He leaves through the door. He left a pair of woolen gloves. I put them on. He once said he only had two hands but two pairs of gloves and one day would give or loan me one. He didn't say this time whether the gloves were a gift or loan. No note either, which he likes to leave behind. But no matter. They're on my hands. My fingers are already warm. A person couldn't have more thoughtful neighbors.

Someone taps to me from the ceiling below. I get on my knees and yell through the floor to the apartment right under mine. "That you tapping, Miss James?"

Three taps has become understood between us to mean yes and she taps three times.
"Having a good day?"
One tap means maybe or just so-so.
“Not too cold for you outside?”
Two taps means no.
“You mean it’s cold but not too cold for you, is that right?”
Three taps.
“Well one day it should get warm again, though probably not too soon.”
Four taps means wonderful or great.
“Even hot. Maybe one day even very hot.”
Four taps.
“Though let’s hope it doesn’t get so hot where we’ll be as uncomfortable as we are when it’s this cold. But that’s such a long way off as to almost seem unimaginable.”
One tap.
“By the way, I’ve received a number of very nice things today. A meal from Mr. Jay, blanket from the landlady and pair of warm gloves from John.”
Six taps means an interrogative.
“John . . . the super . . . Mr. Block.”
Eight taps for good. Then a long silence.
“Well if you’re through now, Miss James, I’ll be speaking to you again.”
Three taps for yes.
“You’re through?”
Two taps.
“What else would you like to say?”
She taps for several minutes straight. Hundreds of taps, maybe thousands. I don’t know what she’s saying. A so-so here, a great, yes, no and interrogative, but that’s all I understand. Then she stops.
“Well that’s something,” I say. “Anything else?”
Two taps.
“Then goodnight, Miss James. And stay as well and warm as you can.”
She taps goodnight. I go to bed. I put the blanket over me and tuck it in. I wear the gloves and my clothes. It’s cold but not as cold for me as it was. And it could be considered a good day. When it began I had nothing to eat and no prospect of a meal and no blanket or gloves. Probably also been a better day for the rest of them because they gave me these things and for Miss James because she knows it and spoke to me tonight. I turn out the light and wait for what I hope will be beautiful dreams. Really, outside of my friendships and conversations here, dreams are what I live for most.
Ernst van Altena

KENTERING

mijn huid verandert met
de dag de spiegel
braakt de nachten terug
die ik gebraakt heb
en de spankracht breekt nu
cellen zich gaan delen
in een trager en vermoeider
regelmaat
en dat terwijl ik net
de kentering van eb
naar vloed
heb overschreden: glad
de jongenschuid als ebstrand
mul en zonder wind
maar nu geteisterd
door overvloed aan vloed
en brand van branding
heftige tederheid
tedere heftigheid
zo streelt de tong van water
de opperhuid van zand
en is mijn element
vaak in zijn (haar) element.
Ernst van Altena

TRANSITION

my skin changes day by
day the mirror
vomits back the nights
that I have vomited
and the tension breaks now that
cells are dividing with
slower and more weary
regularity
all that just as I
have crossed the turning
of the tide: the boyhood skin
smooth as a beach at ebb
loose and windless
now ravaged
by flood’s accumulation
and burned by breakers
violent tenderness
tender violence
so the tongue of water strokes
the outer skin of sand
and so my spirit often is
in its element.
Ellen Warmond

BIJNA OM NIETS

Al mijn woorden heb ik al opgedeeld
tussen jij en jou en jouw
meer kan ik niet doen

ik leg mijn handen op
het hakblok van je argwaan

ik roep de vogels aan
om bijval

de wind houdt zich afzijdig
maar goedmoedige wolken zeggen
dat het verdriet voorbij is.
Ellen Warmond

FOR ALMOST NOTHING

I have already divided all my words
between you and yours and for you
more than that I can’t do

I lay my hands on
the chopping-block of your suspicion

I call upon the birds
for approval

the wind stands aloof
but good-natured clouds say
that grief has passed.
David Cloutier

A CLEARING

This slow emptying
like a cup
that's the sky

even white clouds
whirl away

events poised within
stilled content
an opening of palms

you would say
this is another
place but

a clear stone glides
through pure water

David Cloutier

TING

shape of what
went beyond before

sky-wound
hand-wound

overturned vessel
spilt sun

what remains
holy shards

TING—an ancient Chinese ceremonial vessel: a hexagram of the I Ching.
what remains
some splintered wood

what will come
a little fire

a thousand quick arms
to grow

mold something
to raise

a vessel jade
handles eyes

ears smooth
rings hold

a circle to receive
sky

circle to feed
new tongue
Henrikas Radauskas

BENEATH AUTUMN’S TREE

Two tree branches carefully, like hands,
Placed a lyre by the sleeper’s side.
The bird of the Big Dipper flew over abysses,
A large copper arch rumbled,
But he slept beneath autumn’s tree.

He walked along dreams’ ruptured canals,
Dreamt of stillness turning to flame,
Dreamt of flame crawling through the field,
Yellow, terrible, craven, like a soldier.
The flame, having reached the water, turned
Into fish and playing melted in the ocean.

Night spoke with a cloud’s voice,
And the lyre began to sing like a siren:
Autumn comes in the air and on land,
Ruby and topaz whirlwinds
Cover the quietly sleeping man, who
Lies safely, having conquered Time.

Henrikas Radauskas

HOT DAY

A thin cypress scrapes the sky,
And the hot day’s perfume
Pours itself on the landscape’s wounds.
Delicate needles pierce the heart,
Fainting she smiles and hears
Her own screams but cannot die,
The way you and I cannot.

She hears: a metal bird sings
In a glass tree, copper fruits trundle,
Tremble in the dizziness of dying.
Toward an old faun’s golden foot
Soft music swims.
Having molded a glass tree with invisible buds
You don’t care if tomorrow ever comes.

Henrikas Radauskas

THE TASKS OF MIRRORS

When midnight comes, mirrors begin to work. The autumn night is long, the glass is smoky and lazy with age, it’s a long time until day, and they have no reason to hurry. The first leans over, and in him is reflected the shape of someone lying on the rug with a black stain on his temples, and the mirror gently hands him over to the next one, and the second pours him over to the next one, and that’s how they work until dawn when, in the last mirror, all that’s left is a dark stain, but that, too, eventually disappears.

Meanwhile all the sleepers in the town dream that they are being born and just can’t be born and that they choke in narrow corridors and fall into ravines where they begin to rush about,—they’ll kill themselves and kill those on the bottom and scream but can’t scream and wake up, drenched in sweat, and hear a fading blow of a bell stretching toward a damp cotton-stuffed sickly November morning.
Phil Williams

SNAKE HANDLERS

“A religion which should become more minute, more preemptory and more charged with small observances at a time when men are becoming more equal, would soon find itself reduced to a band of fanatical zealots in the midst of an infidel people.”—Alexis de Toqueville, Democracy in America

My husks fill their dance, their timbrels and shouting, speaking in syllables not snake or owl but of words to drain the venom from their cowardice. We are creatures of the pine needle floor, quiet and leaf colored among the fawn’s awkward rush, folding our liquid teeth away for lame starlings and plump rats whose misadventures lost them in the grassy shadows. We wrap our cold bones among the eggs to give something besides life to these vile worms that spring from us in fear. And now they quote the scriptures and strangle us in sunlight too sharp to open our teeth and say that we once had dignity and a world where demons fled up the dark trees into tears.
Phil Williams

DYING WITHOUT HEIRS

The owl betrays its body in my hands
as the night waters move the pond
past its reeds into the sea apples.
Clutching the small meat, she rises
to meet the vessel’s moving air
and calls to those past her in life
of green fish and convulsions
this flight has shamed in the waters.
The disease of morning has torn us both
from these lutes and screechings;
I pretend this is death,
the poem I may not enter.
Kemal Ozer

ALL THE KING'S MEN

you were a king how can I help recall
who could not find a place to put his hands
except the sagging shoulders of his subjects
you were the king this was certainly your right

the sea was yours the sea of plunges and hugs
when the moon stood on one side of the night
and while hairs almost reached the other hairs
yours was the night of sleeping side by side

blood is more valiant than all we have known
you reached it as if your hands had put it there
how can I help recall you were the king
your men poured out of the city’s fountains
Ismet Özel

A SHROUD FOR MY DARLING

The shrine of a woman whose hair blazes in henna
soars overhead in an undertone
these violet autumn days inflict their madness
driving you out of your senses and books
tumors, dead ants
chills and shivers cover me
curiosity
is the genesis of a revolutionary
and above me in an undertone fly
cancer, begonia, death.

White gauze behind the windowpane
and eyes plucked out
real human eyes heavy like rocks
a mother who endures all the agony
and the dust stirred up by her corpse,
you warden of anguish, you autumn days.

Under the rain of the rebel leader
I clobber my own scorched and paltry beauty
Saturday afternoons pierce like a cramp
my hope
is a ferocious animal
which keeps toppling the banknotes and mass meetings
and chokes the houses we live in
with the aroma of cinnamon and with weariness,
curiosity
is the genesis of a revolutionary
in the bazaars some coppersmiths wash
and women who knead dough are dragged with clangs
in their mortars they pound their stubborn streak
and their vile hopes too.

I cannot love a girl secretly
a thousand curiosities prick me all over
those gloomy smells of incense, our mothers
craving food in pregnancy must eat dirt
untie the ropes of my heart against the moon
my heavenly pain throbs in my wrists
sawdust convulsing sawdust
sawdust of the sledge that beats on my temples.
Abdullah Riza Erguven

TOWER OF BABEL

Night draws near
So hold me by my eyes like sleep
A coolness resounds out of the softly playing organs
A coolness that cuddles the acacias

I call you out
Standing on the skirts of empty evenings
Into the hubbub of the bamboos
See the stones of the walls are loose
A wire snaps inside me
Which I attach to the telegraph wires
Because they know my loves
Because they understand

A sparrow chirps and croaks
Perched on my heart
I could not stay put three times
And three times I staggered
Without wine and liquor
Since I am not the Tower of Babel
I understood

This pure green eye
This pair of eyes green as grass
Cringing like the hearts of walnuts
This single spasm of heart
This single drop of blood
This single tear drop
Warm as April showers
Gülten Akin

ON THE WALL

Was it snow that came down or our habits?
Amazing how long I slept as I talked here.

If the gun speaks out and its eyes keep quiet... 
Did they shoot a partridge? I heard it fall.

Just this. This was the voice in the yellow chamber 
If it remains unused—I am frightened.

Now I love most of all, never was there such love 
They hoodwinked you again, I wasn’t here now

How swiftly they die, this is the last one 
Inwardly my walls conceal a grave.


**Edip Cansever**

**BEDOUIN**

In the desolate shrivelled brown town of my eyes  
White-necked camels trudge behind the weary herdsman  
Who still grope for a meaning day after day  
Staring into a place far away  
Ask them if they saw at least as much as they see a tale  
In the desolate shrivelled brown town of my eyes.

Towards an unknown place neither day nor death  
They just stare  
A bedouin stands among the white thorns  
Among gods and suns and fires  
Not even a flame nor a plant nor a prayer  
In the desolate shrivelled brown town of my eyes.

Who knows what he seeks perhaps a satiating sip of water  
Not a stop not a rest  
The white-necked camels could sense nothing even if they came  
Even if the weary herdsman knelt down and crouched before them  
As the chilliest desert bird dies once again  
In the uniform color of the world.

---

**Edip Cansever**

**EYES**

It seems nothing can provoke  
Our inner silence  
No sound no word nothing  
The eyes bring out the eyes!

Nothing else but this unites us  
A leaf touching another leaf  
So close and so docile  
The hands bring out the hands!

In our age love is an opposition  
Let us unite to cast two single shadows...
Attila İlhan

THE DEAD HAVE GROWN OLD

the torrent of stars is just like an obsequious salute
lilies are white and whites are just like lilies
over swamps mosquitoes breed by the million
insects and bugs are linked forever in embrace
the torrent of stars is just like an obsequious salute

* 

all the old horsemen drive the wayworn horses up the hill
sweltering in galaxies horses will burst
on gray battlefields the wounded and martyred lie
willows and pines are linked forever in embrace
if a girl comes alive or a mortal dies or a star falls
all the old horsemen drive the wayworn horses up the hill

* 

hyenas refuse to remember festivities
life’s flight from the body and man’s flight from humanity
a hundred killed a hundred orphaned a hundred lost
mothers raise sons for combat overseas
hyenas refuse to remember festivities
if a girl comes alive or a mortal dies or a star falls
whoever is dead is dead and the dead have grown old
Ece Ayhan

A FLOOD OF FIRST SUMMER

Moon. It has torn its net, the algae green monster. Night has advanced. Bats without wings; wet guns. The streetcar capsized on the road. These, the emblems of the flood of first summer. They stole my kite in my madness, a violet, child-dead Sunday, I can not find it.

Ece Ayhan

A BLIND CAT BLACK

An absent-minded tightrope walker comes. From the sea of late hours. Blows out the lamp. Lies down next to my weeping side, for the sake of the prophet. A blind woman downstairs. Family. She raves in a language I don't know. On her chest a heavy butterfly, broken drawers in it. My Aunt Sadness drinks alcohol in the attic, embroiders. Expelled from many schools. A blind cat passes in the black street. In its sack a child just dead. His wings don't fit, too big. The Old Hawker cries. A pirate ship. Has entered the port.
Sureyya Berfe

THE WALL

My youth is surrounded
If I cross it over...

No stone, no plows
Paper, ink, star
If I take a step

A wedding in the house across
A wall between
At night watch me
If I leave and come
For a drink of raki

On the other side of the wall
Gathering bones
Two flowers newly in bloom
They fell into the garbage can
Before the sun came down,
If I smell them...

One day I collapse one day I laugh
Papers grow yellow
Words give no sound
Stars drop
A wind starts up
I blow away
Erdőgan Alkan

A SONG FOR HUNTING

With his lance a gift from gods
He hunted his endless loneliness
Because mountain flowers did not speak
And time was sharp at the tip of the knife

A hunter with expertise on guns
A hunter who could not do without love
Because mountain flowers did not speak

Waters were singing a strange song
When Thespis came down to the shore
His hands were dark, his lips, his irises

As he kisses blood goes mad in his lips
Dates go mad in the trees, cherries go mad as he kisses

He flew down to his cave in blissful waters
Yet the goddess was dark, was silent
As the day withdrew, aging his languid eyes
In solitude
He lit that big fire
For making children deathless
Feriha Aktan

Come, when you can,
Drag the winds after you,
Borrow the stars for your brain,
Come, just
When you can.

I know the hooker that sleeps
In you;
Yet, douse some storm from the clouds;
Just be here,
Near the dawn.

Flowers blush red, they say, in the spring,
I heard,
Bad dreams are nibbled;
Still,
Come,
Tell me about it,
As you can.
Bring a kind of laughter
To my brain.
Cemal Süreya

EARLY AFTERNOON

His father is strung up by a snake instead of a rope
A child's fear of a horse's kick is exactly like that
His scarf slowly loosening from his neck
Lengthens towards a lute's sound

His eyes slide for a moment in the sky
A woman's kiss is made of knives
Not finding a place to hold
It rolls, ends by a brook

As his tears dry
He drops a slow platinum
Gently
On his executioner's veins

Oh dear loneliness
In your sunny streets
A full blasting noon
A bird is carrying his rain-droppings
To death's solar plexus in exile

Find me a city which will tell me a thing
Besides the rage of climbing up to the North
Metin Eloğlu

LIE

When I left the lake an evening was spreading,
I was sort of pleased,
Was it worth drying myself without you?
I lay down on the thorns, all wet.

When I woke, a scream of moonlight,
Why don’t you be yourself, and we make the night, all night,
Climb over this aging by loving...
Dying? No, too early. And forbidden.

Why should one not tell the truth?

Metin Eloğlu

NO NOISE

The wings of the drunk bird slowly limped
No noise
From the lazy violet of early morning
From the gnarled beauty of burrs
With what shall I whip the flames of my domestic madness

No noise

They have all cracked against the dark, fallen on the snow,
the sulking windows
Is this a borrowed home overlooking the egotistical sea
The fresh water fleas bred in the lukewarm jar
On the warm cozy shelf feed
The ornamental fish

No noise
These are all sweaters knit in the summer  
Water freezes in the hands of a lonely man  
A weak string in the roll of love  
No noise

Snow shines, but also makes shine

Translator  Murat Nemet-Nejat

Nazmi Akiman

GAFF

whatever there was walked with the rain  
the glass in the windows kept silent  
on our back there was always that sun

our foreheads were stuck to the water  
a scream at every crossroad  
if we take one step it is the sea

boats have come and have gone  
as though they are fire in a lion’s mouth  
a gaff pushes us to the blue
Kamran S. Yüce

THE BED RECALLED

Your amazement will grow again
With each new shape behind a thick smoke
Removed from all familiar forms
You may find yourself on the seashore
Your hand your stand your hips renewed

Within narrow frames
The sadness of the vanquished
The beauty of the unknown
Beyond all that is white and bright in you
Your figures on the pillows you shall wait

Suppose your fist shatters the glass at one blow
Forget how the bed binds you
The smell of wind fells all premeditated sin
Yet you know all things begin with me
Blue comfort and sleep after making love

My hand is manly and gruff
Against your female tenderness
Rooms are too small to hold the shrieks
For a moment it's a purple line to live
Reluctant, ashamed of what you stand for

Along the vibrant wriggle of the body
The trees and the sea will writhe away
You shall begin to live where the books end
With a new-born joy on your breath
Tired and proud you shall look on.
Ayhan Kirdar

A CAMP IN HELL

A dagger in each hand
I must have woven red sins

These hands are my hands expelled from heaven
Into the bloody night gushing in streams
Drowned in spit crushed damned
How many times have I fled from those foul looks
How many times have I clawed my heart with my nails
But I died not
Why not

I kissed the mouth of death reeking of boiled glue
With its damp hair where no light touches
And where black crabs make their home I hanged myself
And perhaps I hanged there for a thousand years
But I died not
Why not

I am sick of carrying the giant burden of my loneliness
In this country of friendly midgets
From my exhausted forehead
Drops of sweat streamed into dank wells
And those seas which quenched the thirst of
Snakes scorpions and biting insects
They were all kerosene and
All I did was to build fires on shores called the sea
But I died not
Why not

Puny desires open their hungry mouths
Their teeth gnaw at my flesh like nettles
I go and break the doors of temples open
I look for God
They say he is not but why not
I become a fist and squeeze myself
My fingers fall and
I break a few glasses of the frozen heaven
I know I am more than half guilty
More than half dark is this place these people this ocean

—And after how long the calendar shed its
Leaves like a boat departing from the docks—
All songs had stopped the god of death was quiet
Quiet were the bells within me I was quiet
It was hard to find space in hell

I hung my most embarrassing sins on the bridge to heaven and hell
The sun was blonde like a prostitute I was cold
From the marble thresholds of iron grilled hot doors
Slimy flames were flowing
We were bathing in a sea of flames—yo ho ho—
In a sea of flames
Flames
Sea
Flames

From the skeleton of God blood was trickling
Sound makes night sweat:
A huge—
Hard by, dull water
where fish drift:
Wait
in a tenderness of smells.

Song, slow-unfolding, joins
strummed string and wood.

Mean-wild like river swelling surges
through all nature, the sky, sea, fields:
wild following storm after waters
recede.

Each step we take, nature clings behind.

The sky
worked / scorched soot:
Smell / to weary us. Cold,

and dawn tones.
I need old people because they put me to sleep, and for years I have had trouble sleeping. Not that I actually fall asleep in their presence, but an old man’s babbling rocks me, soothes me, and I find peace.

After a particularly difficult night I paid Maurice a visit. Maurice is a voluble gentleman in his late seventies who, the result of a stroke, has lost the use of his left arm. It lies limply at his side, and the hand—as pink and as plump as a young woman’s—sprouts from his sleeve, a tender bud, a rose of sugar. As he speaks I look fondly at this useless hand, and its effect on me is hypnotic. Ah! The lovely waxen member dead to all activity! I speak to my heart:

"Be twin to this hand! Be still!"

Maurice talks—it does not matter to me what he says. The important thing is that he asks nothing of me, not even that I listen. So I may sit in silence, deep in my comfortable chair, and let the sight of his hand—my precious, immobile talisman—and the patter of his words falling—a gentle, tepid rain—caress and clutch me in a crystal charm that alone restores the honeyed contentment of deep untroubled sleep and from which I arise as from a clear pool.
Today as Maurice speaks I soak up the familiar setting. His apartment is well suited to my needs—the perfect complement to his person. Everything reflects the pink and helpless state of his hand; the books bound in soft red leather and stored in the elegantly carved glass-fronted bookcase are locked in and sealed there like so many bits of red coral in a glass paper-weight. And there is so much bric-a-brac posed behind the glass—tea cups too fragile or too precious for use, jade figures, ivory elephants—that should the doors one day be unlocked, it would be impossible to reach the books. (O blessed inactivity!)

The table upon which my coffee is served is waxed beyond credibility; its surface is protected by a lace cloth in turn protected by three small doilies; the floor is blanketed by a profusion of Chinese carpets and rugs and the maid crosses the room as silently as an angel crosses heaven. All this scenery is wonderfully conducive to my psychic rest. The liqueurs gleam in their carafes, the pralines glow in their gilded paper.

“Never stop, never stop!” I pray as I thrill to the murmur of Maurice’s idiotic babbling. He utters enormities, the man is a bigot, a fool. But no matter—he is fitted to my need as his chair is fitted to my body. He speaks on and on; I am as content as a cat before the fire, a baby at the breast. No, I do not nod off, but sit frozen in a gesture of attention, a figure of jade. The magic is complete; my inner landscape is a calm pool, my body a bottle, my spirit—so troubled the night before—as still as these liqueurs in their carafes of crystal. His hand nestles in his lap. Ah! My tiny pink doll! My nerveless, satin puppet!

Now that I have leisurely taken in the entire room, and relished in the contemplation of the hand, been rocked by the monotony of Maurice’s endless conversation, I raise my eyes with some difficulty to his old, scrubbed face. A smile on my lips, the smile of a bloated baby in a magazine, I admire his perfectly shaven cheeks and neck, the silver hair combed into place, the faded eyes that demand neither answer nor recognition, the mouth. He never breaks the rhythm of his speech to eat or drink, if he does I do not notice—so flawless is his art. For he is an Artist, a well-greased automaton could not out-shine him. The mouth opens and closes over the words ever so delicately. But what was that? Something has happened. Something has gone wrong. Maurice continues to speak but everything has changed.

I pay close attention to the old man’s face. Perhaps he notices the difference in my look, for his pale blue eyes stare suddenly into mine and for the first time in our long history of afternoons together I fear that he has seen me. And is afraid that I have seen him. But just what is it that I have seen? My heart pounds and the pool that was so calm
within me is turbulent and stewing with unnameable horrors—and I am gripped in the noisome pincer of a sudden and execrable panic, my heart at once engorged with fear. It costs me a tremendous effort to keep myself from striking Maurice and tearing out of the room. But I must find out what it is that has happened—must I pay for the knowledge with my peace forever! I stare at Maurice and the sweat pearls beneath my nose, on my forehead, my chin. The room is suddenly terribly hot, the liqueurs stagnate, the bookcase threatens. For a moment I fear that Maurice wants my life. That a trap has been set in the room—that he is the spider and I the fly.

Maurice stops talking. He looks at me curiously. It is obvious that he has caught a glimpse of the upheaval going on within me. I stare at his face, into his eyes—and wait. For it to happen again. And then it does: all at once his hand, his dead hand, is gripped by a violent spasm that twists it into a hideous, grasping claw. The claw fills with blood, turns lobster red and then fades as the spasm passes. Once again the hand, a plump and frozen bud of pink flesh, rests immobile in Maurice’s lap.

“You must excuse me,” says Maurice in a voice that is no longer equal, but into which has crept a note of pleading; “I have these spastic attacks more and more often—and I really cannot do anything to stop them. They are not painful,” he adds, hoping that my disarray is the result not of distaste but of friendly concern.

I try desperately to look into his face, smile, shake the whole thing off. But it is impossible.

“I-I-forgive me, I do not feel very well.” I manage to mutter, “I’ll get my coat myself.” And grabbing my coat in the hall I run from the building and do not stop running until I notice that people are looking at me.

Three weeks have passed and it has been impossible for me to sleep. I survive by paying visits to the park and watching the little children at play. I dare not get into a conversation with any of the old people, for the slightest tic, the slightest stutter throws me into the blackest despair.

There is a little girl who comes to the park in the afternoon—a charming, quiet creature with pink skin and pale blue eyes. She plays alone with her doll and for hours I watch her dressing it and undressing it, and telling it stories. She is so occupied that she rarely seems to notice me. I have upon occasion smiled at her.
He stopped outside the door of the darkened cubicle behind him to let his eyes adjust to the light. He blinked several times and was preparing to walk toward the exit when he noticed the two men waiting, one on either side of the door. One was a large man in a suit and hat, the other fairly short, suited, but hatless. They were watching him, rather obviously watching him. He smiled toward them, fear ticking inside him, hesitated a moment and then began his walk toward their door. He had his hand on the door when the smaller of the two addressed him.

“Mr. Vance?” The eyes were gray, the face somewhat pasty and unexpressive in spite of the smile on the lips, the body a bit slouched.

“Yes?”

“Please come with us.” He turned and walked back toward the cubicles, entered one marked “Public” and climbed a set of stairs. Vance followed him, and the second man, in the hat, brought up the rear.

At the top of the stairs, they entered an office, small and sparsely furnished. The gray-eyed man sat behind a desk, totally uncluttered except for the name plate Dr. E. M. Fitz. He motioned for Vance to take a chair. The other man stayed by the doorway.

Vance hesitated.

“Don’t be alarmed, Mr. Vance. Do sit down. This is my office. I’m Dr. Fitz. I’m sorry about the peremptory way with which our interview began, but we were in the lobby and one doesn’t want this sort of thing,” he paused, laughed and waved a hand, “you know.”

“I see.”

The doctor’s brows lifted, a smile touched his lips. “Do you? Well, very good. Shall I begin with an analysis for you?”

Vance’s throat was dry but he did not want to swallow. “Is analysis customary?”
The doctor laughed and leaned back in his chair. "Really, Mr. Vance. You aren't a stupid man. You're a Technician II. You have never experienced the phantapsychies before today it is true, but certainly you know something of our procedures."

"I thought," Vance said, his mind racing, "they were open to everyone."

"And so they are, so they are."

"Then what is this about analysis?"

"The phantapsychies are open to everyone, and everyone is free to ask for analysis. Analysis is not customary for people who come to enjoy their recollections or fantasies, but they may request analysis. I might add that they do not. But you, Mr. Vance, did not come to enjoy, and for you analysis is imperative." The doctor was still smiling.

"Must everyone enjoy to experience the therapy?"

"No indeed. This is why we are having this little interview. For the State the phantapsychie provides therapy for the viewer, and for the viewer it provides enjoyment. After all, where else can one go and experience in the mind's flesh whatever the body's desires demand? But you are a Technician II. You are twenty-seven years old and your life has been so rewarding that you evidently have had no need for this particular service of the State all of these many years. You have not come to enjoy. Rather you have come for a kind of, what shall we say... the old word no longer much used because no longer needed... shall we say catharsis? You understand the word, don't you, Mr. Vance? That in itself is remarkable today, isn't it. An old word. But to return to the point. That is our business. If you had come to enjoy, we wouldn't be here. But you came for therapy, and that, very simply, is our job. To help you with the therapy. Because you need help, Mr. Vance. You are a very sick man." His eyes left his feet and played quickly over Vance's face.

Vance's hands were sweating. He did not want to think now of anything that might hurt his chances. His best bet was to keep his mind in the present. "And can analysis help me?"

The doctor still smiled. "Mr. Vance, you doubt our profession. No, no, Mr. Vance, it isn't necessary to apologize. I know you didn't mean anything by it. I was just poking. But yes, we can help you, analysis can help you. You see, it must. If it couldn't," he paused, smiled, and slowly lifted his hands before him, "well then."

"Then please help me."

"Oh, aren't we contrite!"

"No, I'm not contrite. You say you can help me. Help me."
"That's more like a good Technician II," the doctor laughed. "Very well then," he slapped his hands together and pushed his chair back toward the desk, "I must begin by establishing for you your own sickness."

"Is there some doubt?"

"I suppose there is always some doubt, Mr. Vance. Few things are certain. Your sickness is not a matter of doubt to me, but it obviously is to you. All right?"

"All right."

"Let me begin by making some distinctions for you. First of all, it is not unusual and therefore quite healthy for a young man to come here and mentally recreate his wife's social interactions with another man. After all, such recreations are necessary in our culture. They are everyday, or to be more exact, at least every week occurrences for someone of your age and education. And to relive this in a phantapsychie is perfectly normal."

"Then how do you conclude that I am sick?"

"Because, Mr. Vance, you were not reliving an experience. You have never witnessed your wife socially interacting with another man, have you?"

"What makes you think that?"

The doctor laughed. "Because the light on the screen was quite bright and your wife's eyes were dilated during the act. It very simply never happened. Or you never saw it happen."

"Perhaps I don't care to."

"Now there may be a very honest but damaging admission."

"Perhaps she's reluctant. She's not very strong."

"None of which would incriminate you. It could even be worked to your benefit, couldn't it? Your wife is reluctant to enter into the world of social interaction. You feel guilty about her. You come to the phantapsychie to alleviate the guilt?"

"What then?"

"What then is beside the point, Mr. Vance. I said you are a very sick man, which you admitted when you said you did not care to observe her interaction with others. I said nothing of your wife, although I have some reservations there. Your sickness possibly has warped her. But your sickness is of the worst kind. Because while you were watching an act of the most normal type that had never taken place with your wife and another man, you were weeping, Mr. Vance. You were in agony. To deny your wife normal social interaction, as you have done, is sadism. For you to respond to it as you have is masochism."
Again old words, but you know what they mean too, don’t you?"

Vance was looking at his own feet now, not wanting the doctor to see his face. Valeen had led him to this, not he her. He was indignant and he felt guilty about feeling indignant. He heard the door open behind him and turned to see the back of the departing second man. He turned quickly back to face the doctor.

“Don’t you, Mr. Vance?”

“I’m not sure, they are old words.”

“Old words for old crimes. We don’t use them anymore because they don’t exist anymore, except in a few warped minds. Fortunately for you such warps need not be permanent. And now,” the doctor rose to his feet, “will you accept my rather crude analysis and submit to voluntary admission to a thorough diagnosis and treatment at the rehabilitation center, or will you be difficult?”

“Do I have any choice?”

“That is not an attitude conducive to proper rehabilitation.”

“I submit.”

“Very good.” The doctor slapped his hands. “Let us be going then.”

“May I call my wife?”

“That won’t be necessary.”

“I’m ready then.”

“Follow me, please.”

Vance followed the doctor out of the building and into the underground where they stepped inside a shuttle car. Sitting in the darkness of the shuttle, he felt some relief. The interview was over, he would be gone a few months for reindoctrination and rehabilitation. He knew the pattern from the textbooks. He could then come back and resume his life. And if he were more careful the next time, he wouldn’t have to undergo this again. It had been a mistake to go to the phantapsychies, he could see that now, but it had seemed the only thing to do at the time, the only thing left ever since he had seen the big brown man leaving his door some ten days ago. “What was he doing here?” he had asked Valeen. She had laughed, low, sultry, musical. “He wanted to know if we wanted to interact with them.” “What did you tell him?” “I told him we were very busy.” She lay in his arms and looked up at him. “Don’t you know me well enough by now?” she had asked. “Have you forgotten how I feel about you?” And she had kissed him and kissed him and he could feel her all over his body. But he couldn’t get the big brown man out of his mind. And every day the thought was there and he had had to do something. So he had gone to the phantapsychies. And now this.
He was aware of the rocking of the shuttle and he was grateful to
the doctor for not talking to him in the darkness. It was stupid of him
after all. It had been Valeen with her long, slender body, her soft
hands who had said after the first two months of their union, “I care
never to be touched by another man.” “That’s sinful,” he had said. “I
don’t care. It is true.” “Ah, Valeen, Valeen.” And some weeks after
that when he had mentioned that if they didn’t soon invite people to
interact with them people would begin to notice and to talk, she had
said, “Am I not enough for you? Do I not love you entirely and com­
pletely?” And they never had interacted and nothing had been said,
nothing had ever been done. And even now nothing would have hap­
pened if . . . Maybe this was it though. Maybe he could spend his
month or two at the rehabilitation center and everything would be all
right.

The shuttle bumped to a stop. The door opened and light flooded
inside. He followed the doctor outside and was surprised to see that
they were before his unit complex. He looked quickly at the doctor.

The doctor was walking toward Vance’s unit. “You know, Mr.
Vance, rehabilitation isn’t always easy.”

Vance could feel the fear in his gut. He walked beside the doctor.
“What are we doing here?”

The doctor smiled. “I said you wouldn’t need to telephone. I
thought you might like to say goodbye to your wife.”

Outside his unit was the man he had first seen with the doctor. He
advanced a few paces from the door as they approached. Vance stepped
around him and went inside.

The doctor stopped to talk. “I guess he has to go inside, doesn’t he.”
“It’s prescribed.”

The doctor sighed. “Well, how many did you bring?”
“Four.”
“How it is going?”
“Fine. She took the shot okay and she’s really performing for the
boys. A classic case.”

The door to the unit opened and Vance walked slowly outside to
the edge of the walkway adjacent to the unit complex. The vision was
the same. She was lying there in ecstasy. He had imagined it complete­
ly except for the sounds. My god, the sounds. He could still hear the
sounds. Sounds like echoes. from deep inside, deep inside. He bent
sharply at the waist and began retching.

The doctor stood beside him. “You are experiencing a true purga­
tion now, aren’t you? Catharsis? Yes, and after purgation comes inter­
action. Where would our culture be without it?”
Zolita Sverdlove, Bouillabaisse, etching.
Zolita Sverdlove, *In The Beginning There Was Light*, etching.
Antonio Hernández

CUANDO EL HUMO

El humo llenó
la boca de los peces.
Las llamas estaban bajo el hielo.

Mi corazón en el árbol
recordaba la lámpara,
el fluir de la miel
sobre las piedras secas.

Ofelia nadaba entre naranjos
con golpes de reloj sobre los senos.

Luego, el solitario del otoño,
el dueño del apacible invierno,
acumuló cenizas
hasta obtener la llama
para el fulgor de la ciudad.

Antonio Hernández

COMO UNA LAMPARA

Cuando caminas, andas de cara al monte, vas contando los pasos
como espinas, piensas
en tus buques, tus talismanes fríos.

El invierno cruje dentro de los cedros
como si un fantasma removiera
los huesos en la niebla.

Tu espalda va cansada con un doble peso,
tu angustia y tu partíbulo, cuelgas
Antonio Hernández

WHEN THE SMOKE

Smoke filled
the mouths of fishes.
The flames were under the ice.

My heart upon the tree
recalled the lamp,
the flow of honey
over the dry stones.

Among the orange trees Ophelia was swimming
with clock strokes on her breasts.

Then, the autumnal recluse,
the master of easy winter,
gathered cinders
until he built the flame
for the bright surge of the city.

Antonio Hernández

LIKE A LAMP

When you walk, you walk with your face to the mountain,
    you go, counting the steps
like thorns, you brood
on your boats, your cold talismans.

Winter creaks within the cedars
as though a skeleton were shifting
its bones in the fog.

Your back moves weary with the double weight,
your anxiety and your gallows’ noose, you hang
como una lámpara cuando el día amanece
y el bosque entrega al viento
el canto de los pájaros.

**Antonio Hernández**

**ANTES DE QUE EL POETA**

Alguien dijo
que encendió las lámparas
cuando el poeta confundía
su vida con la niebla
y desplumaba el viento
de la tarde
para buscar la poesía.

Y no fue así.

Las lámparas ardían
antes de que el poeta
empezara a soñar
y a decir sus cosas simples.
like a lamp when the day dawns
and the wood surrenders bird song
to the wind.

Antonio Hernández

BEFORE THE POET

Someone said
the lamps lit up
when the poet confused
his life with the fog
and unfeathered the evening
wind
to find poetry.

And it wasn't so.

The lamps burned
long before the poet
began to dream
and to say his simple things.
Mauricio Fernández

Estamos fuera del destino.
La verdad se esconde bajo el mármol.
Los árboles se humillan
ante el viento del amanecer.
El salitre coagula la sangre del poeta.
Los arrecifes señalan la marea
que deja los caracoles en la arena.
Otros pasos recogerán
el justo tiempo que desaparece
en nosotros: meridiano presente.
Poesía y espacio gravitan sobre la tierra
mientras las aves emigran al sur.

Dicen que el viento no tiene espuelas,
que los caracoles no mienten.
Pero el rumor de la queja avanza.
El sol no quebranta la sombra,
no detiene la mirada.
Dicen que todo termina,
mas la hoguera se mantiene
y el día comienza.
Dicen tantas cosas
que las calles se llenan de papeles
con la rúbrica del tiempo,
que ajeno al dolor que se escribe,
deja su huella
en las esquinas de la ciudad.

Ninguna pregunta ha sido contestada.
La interrogación aguarda.
El error persiste.
No se enmiendan las causas,
el olvido aparente queda engavetado
como si el hambre tuviera
las reservas del camello.
Las arenas nos envuelven,
borean la anterior imagen de nuestras espaldas
inclinadas hacia el vacío.
Mauricio Fernández

We are outside destiny.
Truth hides under marble.
Trees bend down
in the morning wind.
Saltpetre coagulates the poet’s blood.
Reefs name the tide
that scatters the snails in the sand.
Other roads will embrace
the impartial time that disappears
in us: meridian of the present.
Poetry and space gravitate above the earth
as birds migrate south.

They say that the wind has no spurs
and snails never lie.
But a moaning sound advances.
The sun does not dissolve the shadow
or absorb the glance.
They say everything comes to an end
but the fire continues to thrive
and day begins.
They say so many things
that the streets fill up with paper
in the flow of time,
that free from the pain it describes
leaves its footprints
on city street corners.

No question has been answered.
Interrogation holds on.
Error persists.
The causes are not resolved.
The daily oblivion hangs on
as if hunger had
the reserves of a camel.
The sand envelopes us,
erasing the previous image of our shoulders
sloping towards emptiness.
Luis Suárez

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS

I

Cercados por el instante mismo de la acción,
no sabríamos gestar el dilatado porvenir.
El hombre existe por el mañana que no le pertenece.

El pasado está en nosotros, aunque nos disminuye;
se desplaza en sentido contrario de nuestras fuerzas.
Nos ha formado. Es un espejo donde no logramos vernos
como somos ni como fuimos. Un espejo lleno de humo.
Y esa fue nuestra vida.

II

Sabemos que alguna vez faltarán nuestras fuerzas
en el desmesurado Universo que nadie creó y que nunca
será definitivo.
Enretanto, volvemos cada cierto tiempo a nuestra obra,
esto otro mundo. Un libro nuestro sacudirá el polvo
que ya no seremos. He ahí la gloria, la inmortalidad...

Quién sabe cuál es su obra verdadera. El hombre es mortal.
Su gloria es saberse inmortal, en el hombre que viene,
hacer un gran fuego con su corazón, para que nada falte
al sucesor extraordinario, ese desconocido.

III

¿Y el estremecimiento de vivir?
¿Y el dolor que a menudo se asoma por los ojos del buey
o el perro en peligro?
Pero esa es otra cuestión. Desayunemos, afeitémonos. Y andando
que mañana será otro día.
Luis Suardiaz

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I

Immersed in the very instant of acting,
we would not know how to gestate the slow-moving future.
Man exists for the tomorrow that is not his.

The past is inside us, although it lessens us;
it takes a direction contrary to our powers.
It has formed us. It's a mirror in which we are unable
to see ourselves as we are, as we were. A mirror filled with smoke.
And that was our life.

II

We know that eventually our powers will fail
in this chaotic universe that no one created, that will never
be finished.
Meanwhile, we return, from time to time, to our work,
that other world. One book of ours will stir up the dust
that we will not even be. That’s glory, immortality. . .

Who knows what his true work is. Man is mortal.
His glory is knowing he is immortal, in the man to come,
kindling a great blaze with his heart, so that
nothing’s lacking
for his extraordinary successor, that unknown one.

III

And the shudder of living?
And the constant pain that brims in the eyes of an ox
or a threatened dog?
But that’s another question. Let’s eat breakfast,
shave. And keep moving
for tomorrow’s another day.
**Luis Suardíaz**

**LA VIDA NO ES SUEÑO**

También para ti se han hecho estas ausencias... Regresas a tu almohada, por entre sonoros sucesos, inventas y deshaces, proteges tu cabeza de pensar; evades tus propios laberintos. Mas no puedes levantar tus cifras hasta la eternidad.

No cuenta el orden general de tu universo, no sabemos si está escrito, si de antemano se sabe las vueltas que le quedan a tu planeta; de cualquier modo, también a ti te apagará el morir que no es el sueño.

**Luis Suardíaz**

**EL POEMA**

Como el niño ante el fuego, digo que viene a mi; pero soy yo quien se acerca, quien se detiene, quien extiende las manos y retrocede.

Como el niño frente al aire encendido.

El dolor, la destrucción, está en la llama fácil de penetrar, en la caliente lengua que nos limita. Y es la luz.
Luis Suardiaz

LIFE IS NOT A DREAM

These absences were made for you too... You return to your pillow, between high-sounding events, you make and unmake things, you protect your head from thinking; you escape from your own labyrinths. But you cannot lift your messages to eternity.

The general ordering of your universe means nothing, we do not know if it is written, if the orbits remaining to your planet are known beforehand; in any case, you too will be extinguished by that death that is no dream.

Luis Suardíaz

THE POEM

Like a child before a fire, I say that it comes to me; but it is I who draw near, then stop, then stretch out my hands and back away.

Like a child before the burning air.

Pain, destruction, is in the easily entered flame, in the hot, confining tongue. And it is the light.
Pedro de Oraa

AFIRMACIÓN DE LA PALABRA

La luz de la ventana sobre el papel desierto
y la mano cuantiosa deslizándose
llenándolo de frases serpentinhas
que germinan en el silencio entero del cuarto, de
la casa,
no sólo en el silencio de mi cuerpo.

En la sagrada palidez de la página
estoy viendo las nubes, el azul de la noche
transparente en el día,
el gris, el violeta de las sombras inconstantes,
las nubes inverosímil que alegra o entristece
según quieran el azul y las nubes.

Es la palabra entonces algo más que palabras
incisas en la dócil espalda del papel.
(¿Cuándo fue la palabra desgracia, regalándonos
siempre un ámbito anejo a sus mundos yacentes?)

En la luz diferente de otra tarde
tomaré aquei papel poblado ya de signos,
o esta página aún desértica en horas,
y abrirá la palabra de súbito el momento
en que fue realizada: una noche de frías estrellas,
un día lluvioso,
o un azul de frenético sol o una sombra de gris
doloroso,
y el silencio, este silencio
del cuerpo que la palabra habita
que es el silencio del cuarto, de la casa y el silencio
del mundo.
Pedro de Oraa

AFFIRMATION OF THE WORD

The light from the window on the blank page
the extended hand overflows
spilling out serpentine phrases
that nest in the silence of the room,
the house,
the silence of my flesh.

On the pure whiteness of the page
I see clouds, the blue night
transparent in the day,
restless violet shadows, shades of gray,
the uncertain light that rejoices, becomes saddened,
according to the whims of the blue and the clouds.

The word is something more than signs inscribed
on the obedient page.
(When was the word oppressed, endlessly giving us
a horizon close to its world in repose?)

In the discordant light of another afternoon
I will seize this paper peopled with signs,
or this page still deserted by time
and the word will blossom
in the instant it was created: a night of cold stars,
a rainy day, the blue delirium of the sun,
a shadow with shades of gray,
and the silence, this silence
where the word lives,
is the silence of the room, the house,
and the silence of the world.
Rene' Batista Moreno

KAMMER

Hoy es un nuevo día,
una nueva muerte,
una muerte blanca
con mortajas azules.
Una muerte blanca a tal extremo,
que mis ojos accionan como el diafragma
de una cámara fotográfica.
Y más arriba de esos lentes
pardos y pestañudos,
la ósea cavidad,
donde durante 26 años
he guardado millones de metros
de cinta cinematográfica.

Rene' Batista Moreno

¿VERDAD QUE HAY RAZÓN PARA?

Hoy mi corazón ha dado 103 389 latidos.
Mis cuatro litros de sangre (dudo que los tenga)
han recorrido en mis venas 270 millones de kilómetros.
He respirado 23 040 veces lo que equivale
a 13 metros cúbicos de aire.
He botado fuera de mi boca 4 800 palabras.
He ejercitado mis músculos principales 898 veces
y he puesto en actividad 15 000 000 000 de células cerebrales.
Tengo veintiséis pies de intestinos y 208 huesos.
¿Verdad que hay razón para sentirme cansado?
¿Verdad que soy un hombre común y corriente?
Today is a new day,
a new death,
a white death
with blue shrouds.
A white death so strange,
that my eyes open and close
like the shutter
of a camera.
And above those dark-lashed lenses,
the bony cavity,
where for 26 years
I have stored countless meters of film.

Does it make sense that I should feel tired?
Does it make sense that I am a common and ordinary man?
Esther Pérez

POEMA

Nos quedan
sólo las palabras
que nos cubren como sábanas,
como la ropa,
que no deja hablar a los cuerpos, tan hermosos,
palabras que no nos dejan
oírnos ni entendernos,
palabras que no nos dejan hablar.
Que barajamos y cambiamos de lugar
como fichas de colores,
hasta que las dominamos,
y nos sentimos satisfechos,
y no decimos nada.
Esther Pérez

POEM

All we have
are words
that wrap us up in sheets,
like clothes
that don’t let us talk to our bodies,
so beautiful,
words that don’t let us
hear or understand ourselves,
words that don’t let us speak.
Let us mix them together
and arrange them
like colored chips,
until we control them,
feel satisfied,
and say nothing.
Jorge García Gómez

Mi cuerpo es como estatua o árbol.
Su perfil parece hundirse hasta el fuego
de la tierra,
como presencia de una sombra
o sólo inminencia de unos gestos
que se agitan
como un niño que nace eternamente.
Mi cuerpo es entonces como el mundo.

Jorge García Gómez

Nos sentamos cada tarde y aguardamos
la caída del sol
hasta que no hay ya sombra entre los árboles.
Nos miramos, tristemente,
y junto a nosotros se desvanecen
las ramas.
Nos sentamos y aguardamos
sin levantar nuestra mirada.
Sentimos el silencio nacer en las gargantas,
en esa víspera que llega sin cesar
para aún no hacer morada entre los hombres.
Escuchamos en el pecho
el arder de soledad, el vacío, la memoria desvastada,
y sabemos que el rayo llegará
y quebrará nuestras cabezas.
Lo sabemos, en silencio,
cuando adivinamos entre carne la eterna voz de los dioses.
Es entonces que las horas se detienen
y que nuestros cuerpos se transforman
como los árboles entre la noche.
Jorge García Gómez

My body is a statue or a tree.
Its contours seem to sink into
the fire of the earth,
like the presence of a shadow
or just the imminence of some gestures
that become excited
like a child who is continually reborn.
My body is then like the world.

Jorge García Gómez

Every afternoon we sit and wait
for the sun to erase
the shadows of the trees.
We regard ourselves sadly
as the branches disappear
around us.
We sit and wait
without lifting our eyes.
We feel the birth of silence in our throats
in this evening that never stops flowing
but still does not dwell among men.
We listen to the burning solitude
in our hearts, emptiness, our memory
wasting away, and we know that a light
will arrive to consume our faces.
We know it in silence
when we sense in the flesh the ever-present voice of the gods.
Time suspends itself then
and our bodies are transformed
like trees in the night.
Mercedes Cortázar

LA NOCHE HUELE A TIGRE DESPUÉS DE LA LLUVIA

sobre tejados que se multiplican
y que resplandecen al llegar la noche
oscilando entre el violeta y el rojo
aparece la luna
vibrando como un ala de insecto color azufre
atravesada por una red de venas azules
la luna se prende a la garganta de la noche
y sus garfíos no conocen la piedad
desde la noche viene el recuerdo como
un silbido lejano
como un pañuelo que se pierde en
una anónima ventanilla de tren
y que nos devuelve la imprecisión
de los días de infancia
cuyas tardes se disolvían lentamente
en una tierna bruma gris
como una demente con los ojos desorbitados
así pasa la noche
coronada con espigas de trigo recién cortado
y de su frente se desprende un antiguo rumor
como rozar de piedras al pie de las cascada
o como el chasquido de la piel
cuando la serpiente avanza
la noche construida por variados cristales
cuyos centros se han estriado como la escarcha
la noche que despide un olor en remolino
que ha atravesado siglos
y que se mueve con su cuerpo nebuloso
rozándolo todo y ascendiendo
en partículas diminutas
que contienen un inusitado fulgor
la noche huele a tigre después de la lluvia
y su aliento feroz envuelve a la ciudad
como una túnica o un féretro
dentro de sus entretejidos puentes
los hombres se pasean
llevando en las pupilas un paisaje de ruinas
Mercedes Cortázar
THE NIGHT SMELLS OF TIGER AFTER THE RAIN

over tiled roofs that multiply
and shine as night arrives
waverer between violet and red
the moon appears
vibrating like a sulphur-colored insect’s wing
crossed by a network of blue veins
the moon seizes the night’s throat
and its claws know no pity
memory issues from the night
like a distant whistle
like a handkerchief lost
in the anonymous window of a train
giving us again that vagueness
of days of infancy
where afternoons slowly dissolved
in a soft grey mist

like a mad woman with wheeling eyes
the night goes by
crowned with ears of fresh-cut wheat
and from her forehead an ageless murmur flows
like a rumble of stones at the waterfall’s foot
or the rasp of skin
as the serpent moves

night is built of varied crystals
their centers striated like frost-patterns
night gives forth a whirl of odor
which has crossed through centuries
and moves its misty body to caress everything
ascending in tiny particles
containing an unfamiliar brilliance
the night smells of tiger after the rain
and its wild breath enwraps the city
like a tunic or a coffin
across its interlaced bridges
men go by
bearing in their pupils a landscape of ruins
Santorontón! He had come to Santorontón—how many, many years ago?—when the fingers on his hands were more than enough to count the houses there. He built the church with his own efforts. —Could that shed that laughed with cracks all over it be called a church? Only partly roofed at first? Where the congregation sat on the ground?—He drove in the stakes. He set up the roof beams. He tied boughs together to support the bijao leaves. Watching him struggle alone, a few Santorontonians offered to help him. They began working together on Sundays. And they ended up doing it every night. After work. That was how the bamboo walls were made. The rough wooden benches. That table that was transformed into an altar. In addition, from the first days on, he had to take trips to surrounding villages. The Bishop had warned him: “There aren’t any priests there. You’ll have to be a kind of missionary. If you can, build a church. If not, fulfill your sacred ministry by seeking out the faithful wherever they
are." He was doing both. Building the church so that they could visit him later on. And seeking out the faithful "wherever they were." Wherever his small boat and his courage could take him. The Santorontonians advised him: "Don’t go too far away from shore, Father. You might get caught in a treacherous wind. A hammerhead might attack you and break a hole in the canoe. Or a contrary tide might drag you away . . . who knows where? Don’t go too far out." He paid no attention. He felt that his sacred function made him invulnerable. And if something unforeseen happened to him and he paid for his imprudence with his life, what more could he ask for? It would be a quick step toward God. That was why on days when the Sun squeezed him like a mango. Or on dark nights when the cold was a set of teeth in his bones, he was never absent from where he was needed. It was to all that that he owed what was doubtless his most miraculous adventure. It happened one night when they came to get him for a stranger. He thought that perhaps it was the case of a premature voyager to the Land of the Bald. Four men came to get him. Four. Four evil-looking men. Four oarsmen in a lighter. Their speech was somewhat strange. They wanted him to come with them at once. Four. They said they had no time to lose. Four.

The Santorontonians were against it.

"Corvinas don’t chase after harpoons, Father."

"Why don’t they bring the one taking his last breath here to him?"

"You don’t gather unknown eggs, Father. They might be snake eggs."

"Did you see their faces?"

"Aha! And their eyes."

"That’s it. Their eyes are like dry blowfish."

"They talk with cemetery voices."

"And they have a smell about them. The smell of death."

"Maybe they’ve got some connection with the Taily One."

"Don’t mention him. Just mentioning him brings bad luck."

"Really and truly, Father. It would be best if you didn’t go."

"It’s best not to look for wrinkles on a shark."

The Priest calmed them down. What could happen to him? Would they beat him? Would they kill him? Would they throw him overboard? . . . They wouldn’t dare mistreat a defenseless priest. Besides, there was no reason to prejudge things. The ones who did have good reasons to persuade them, on the other hand, were the strangers. When he said that he looked significantly at the weapons they carried: long daggers and double-barreled shotguns. He finally convinced his new
counselors. He went off with the other men. They didn’t exchange a single word during the whole trip. Not among themselves. Not with him. They rowed ceaselessly in a rhythmic way. They made the boat go very fast. After about three hours they drew alongside a sailing ship. It was an eerie ship. With three masts. Huge in size. They climbed up on deck along a rope ladder. His attention was drawn to the number of cannons and armed men. Most of all because it seemed to have been drawn out of another world. Another age. Could it be a warship? Or was it perhaps the ship of the pirate Ogazno who was sailing along the coast in those days?—Those days or a hundred years before? Had the Santorontonians told him? Or was it an old tale he had heard from his grandparents?—It was the pirate Ogazno’s ship. They took him into the latter’s presence at once. He was lying in a wide bunk. Half-dressed. When he heard the footsteps he raised his head. He opened one eye. Not the other. It was closed forever.

"Come closer!"
Cándido obeyed.
"Are you the priest?"
"Yes, sir."
He raised his voice in a menacing way.
"You must say: ‘Yes, Captain.’ I am Captain Tiburcio Ogazno!"
"Yes, Captain."
"Did you know that?"
"No, Captain."
"Well, you know it now."
"Yes, Captain."
He stood looking at him for a long time. He took out his good eye. He brought it close to Cándido’s face, studying him minutely. Then he put it back into the empty socket.
"You’re young for a priest. You’re not tricking me, are you? You’re not the sexton?"
"I’m the priest."
One of the men who had brought him intervened. "He’s the Priest, Captain."
The latter’s face grew ironic.
"Do you have any idea as to why you’re here?"
"To help someone die a... ."
Ogazno interrupted him with a loud laugh.
"Oh, you dummy of a priest!"
He turned to his men.
"Didn’t you tell him anything?"
They answered in a chorus:

"No, Captain!"

He faced the priest.

"Mr. Dummy: you’re not about to help anyone die a proper death here. The ones who were supposed to die are already good and dead. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Captain!"

He laughed again.

"You can’t tell, maybe we’re the ones who are going to help you die a proper death."

He got goose pimples. He controlled himself. He lowered his eyes.

"The Lord’s will be done."

"Lord? I’m the only lord here."

And to his men:

"Get everything ready! We’ll soon see how this priest behaves! All hands on deck, right now!"

He got up with difficulty. He had bandages all over. He began taking wobbly steps. Cándido went over, attempting to help. He was refused.

"Leave me be! That’s all I need! A priest to keep me on my feet! I can go by myself. Besides, I’m used to it. I’ve got more holes in me than a sieve. I always walk like this. It’s an occupational hazard!"

Limping. Stumbling. Leaning against the walls and whatever he had at hand. He went forward. He left the cabin. He went up the steps. And he went on deck. The Priest went with him, not saying a word. On deck, the Captain made a sign. Obeying him, they brought a stool over to the rail. He sat down on it and waited. Almost immediately several men emerged from the hold carrying something. Cándido saw what it was at once. But he thought it was a hallucination. No. What he was seeing couldn’t be. His own eyes were deceiving him no doubt. Or could it be that he was dreaming while he was awake? Because that something was a Cross with an almost life-size Christ. They carried it over and stood it up beside the Captain. The tall Priest could bear no more. He fell to his knees and kissed the feet of the Nazarene.

"Stop acting like a clown! Besides... the Christ is yours!"

He was paralyzed with emotion. He gained control of himself. He babbled:

"Mmmmi...ne?"

"Yours!"

He stood up. He looked the image all over. Then he touched it in
several places. As if to convince himself that it was real. He repeated:

“Mine!”

“Now it’s only proper for you to know how it came into our pos-
session.”

Almost as if walking in his sleep, he agreed:
“Yes, Captain.”

“Some time back we attacked a town. To the South. Far away
from here. When we got there most of the inhabitants had run off. It
was all quite easy. All we had to do was go from house to house picking
up everything we wanted. We saved the church for last. When we got
there we went half crazy. There were a lot of gold items. Jewelry. But
most of all, there was a chalice. What a chalice, Jesus! I’ll bet that all
they ever did there was work to pay off that chalice. We carried on board
all we could. This Christ among other things. The Cook had taken a
fancy to it. Or, rather, he planned to send it to his wife. Since he was
the only cook we had, I had to humor him. Because as far as I’m
concerned, I never take images! They take up too much room and
they’re hard to sell. Besides, they’re not worth very much. But the
cook died yesterday. And I don’t know what to do with that thing.
Do you really want it?”

“Yes! Of course! But . . . ”

“But what?”

“What if its owners want it back?”

“Oh, God damn it! Do you want it or don’t you?”

“Of course I want it. The only thing is. . . ”

“So don’t start begging! Now we’re going to throw you overboard
with it. If you get to shore it’ll be because it’s miraculous. And you’ll
deserve it. If not, give my regards to the sharks!”

Without another word he raised his arm. Lowered it. And the
Crucified One and the Priest were immediately thrown into the sea.
They still hadn’t touched the surface of the water when the mocking
voice of the pirate could be heard.

“Bon voyage!”

Cándido saw the three-master—with its rusty cannons and time-
gray sails—immediately disappear into the mist. He swam the short
distance over to the Crucified One. He said reverently:

“Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do!”

Christ raised his head! He looked at him somewhat sardonically.

“As far as I’m concerned, they’re forgiven. And since we do know
what we’re doing, let’s hurry up so we can get there soon. I’m made
of wood and it’s no good for me to get all water-logged.”

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"That's true."
"Get onto the Cross the way I'm going to!"

With an agile movement, the Son of Mary detached himself from the Wood. He hung over it. With hands and feet he began to move it. Cándido did the same as he. And in a short while the little improvised craft slipped rapidly over the waves. Behind it a strange cortege had formed: everything from crabs to sharks. From that moment on Jesus and Cándido were blood brothers. That is, perfect comrades. Sometimes the priest had his doubts. Didn't he carry the Nazarene inside of him? In order to see him might he not be drawing him out of his own eyes?
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DEMETRIO AGUILERA-MALTA is Ecuador’s foremost writer of the 20th century. He was a member of the Guayaquil Group of the 1930s. His novels Don Goya and Manuela have appeared in English and his play Black Hell is being translated into English. He currently resides in Mexico.

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D. G. JONES is a Professor of English at the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec. His most recent book of poems is a collection entitled *Butterfly on Rock*.

AYHAN KIRDAR is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts (Istanbul) and makes his living as an artist.
JAMES KIRKUP has lived for many years in Japan. “Shiro Murano, Haruo Shibuya, Mutsuo Takahashi, Yorifumi Yaguchi, and Tanigawa Shuntaro were among the poets who actively helped me to translate their works. To all of them I owe an inexpressible debt of friendship, scholarship and poetic collaboration unique in my literary experience.” Kirkup’s anthology *Contemporary Japanese Poetry* will shortly be published by the University of Queensland Press. His most recent collections were *The Body Servant: Poems of Exile* and *A Bewick Bestiary*. His adaptation of Kleist’s *The Prince of Homburg* will be presented this fall by the Chelsea Theater Center at Brooklyn Academy of Art.

RUMIKO KORA was born in Tokyo in 1932. In 1952 she joined the literary movement “Espoir” at Tokyo University. In 1963 she was awarded the “Mr. ‘H’ Prize,” a highly coveted prize for younger poets, for her *Place*. She published a book of essays in poetic form, *The Language of Things*, and in 1970 she published her fourth book of poems, *Above the Invisible Ground*.

ALEXIS LEVITIN has held teaching positions at Dartmouth and Tufts. In 1972 he was hired by the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina to develop a new graduate program in English and American Literature. After two years of teaching in Brazil, he returned to the U. S., where he has been teaching at Colby College, Maine.

GEORGE MCWHIRTER is a poet and translator who teaches creative writing at the University of British Columbia. He is currently spending a year translating poems in Mexico.

KOZO MIO was born in Nagoya, Japan, in 1924. He has participated in group shows of younger Japanese artists since 1952 at the Municipal Museum of Art, Kyoto, the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and the Prefecture Museum of art, Tokyo. In addition, his works have been included in international exhibitions in São Paulo, Munchen, Paris, and Los Angeles. Kozo Mio is represented by the Gallery Bonino, New York.

KANEKO MITSUHARU (1895-1975) enrolled in and dropped out of several universities, and traveled extensively. During his lifetime he published many collections of poems.

FUMIKO MIURA has collaborated with James Kirkup on translations of several poets. Many of them have appeared in anthologies of Japanese poetry.

RENE BATISTA MORENO was born in Cuba in 1941, and has worked on the literary magazines *Hogano* and *Vanguardia*.

HIDEO MORI was born in Mie Prefecture in 1935. In 1968 he participated in the Contemporary Art Exhibition of Japan at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Gallery and in 1970 he received his first one-man show at the Kinokuniva Gallery in Tokyo. His works are in many public collections including the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City.
SHIRO MURANO (died in 1975) was a successful businessman and poet. Originally a haiku poet, his later poems were influenced by modern French, German, and Italian poets. He edited the literary quarterly, *Mugen*, and published his own collection of poems, *Pale Journey*. His work is included in many English anthologies.

TAKAHASHI MUTSUO was born in Fukuoka in 1937. He was a disciple of the late Yukio Mishima. A selection of his poems translated into English by Hiroaki Sato has been published under the title *Poems of a Penisist* by Chicago Review Press (1975).

MOKUO NAGAYAMA is a high-school teacher and a mountaineer. A member of The Poets' Society in Japan, his first collection of poems (in English) is now being published.

MURAT NEMET-NEJAT has published many original poems and translations in literary magazines in this country.

PEDRO DE ORAA is a Cuban poet and artist. He has published several books of poetry and his paintings have been exhibited all over the world. He is currently Secretary of the Plastic Arts with UNEAC.

ZIKKOKU OSAMU was born in Kagawa in 1917. He is a teacher of Japanese language and literature in Kagawa.

ISMET OZEL is a poet and editor in Turkey.

KEMAL OZER has worked as the editor of several influential literary magazines and has operated a book shop in Istanbul.

ALFREDO DE PALCHI is a poet and translator whose own poetry has appeared in *Commonweal*, *The Nation*, and *The American Poetry Review*. His translations of Italian poets have appeared in *The Atlantic* and the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, among others.

MATEO PARDO is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at The University of Texas at Dallas.

ESTHER PEREZ was born in Cuba in 1951 and studied at La Universidad de la Habana.

GREGORY RABASSA is a translator who won the National Book Award in translation in 1967 for *Hopscotch*, by Julio Cortázar. He teaches at CUNY.

HENRIKAS RADAUSKAS was born in 1910, and made his living as a translator and critic while in Lithuania. After he came to the United States he joined the Library of Congress in 1959, where he remained until his death in 1970.
SONIA RAIZISS is a poet and translator whose work has appeared in many literary journals, including the *Sewanee Review, Prairie Schooner, and The Massachusetts Review*. She is the editor of *Chelsea*.

RIKKI is a writer and artist who lives in the Loire Valley. “Sleep” is from *The Butcher’s Tales*, to be published by Transgravity Press, England. He has had fiction, poetry, and/or graphics appear in *The Canadian Fiction Magazine, Prism International, The Malahat Review*, and *The Tri-Quarterly*.

FRED RODEWALD is a Professor of English at Stephen F. Austin State University. He received an honorable mention in the Martha Foley awards for a story published in 1972.

HERMAN SALINGER is a Professor of German who has recently retired from Duke University. He has published two volumes of his own poems, and many translations of such poets as Heine and Krolow.

TOGE SANKICHI (1917-1953) was born in Osaka. He was in Hiroshima when the atom bomb was dropped, and wrote many poems and pamphlets about the horrors of the A-bomb and the lives of its victims.

BADR SHAKIR AL-SAYYAB (1926-1964), a poet and translator, was born in Iraq. Several books of his own poems have been published, as well as his translations of Louis Aragon and Edith Sitwell.

AUGUSTO FREDERICO SCHMIDT (1906-1965), an important Brazilian poet, was also influential in government. He has published many volumes of poetry, and his work appears in many anthologies.

HARUO SHIBUYA was born in Japan in 1924. He studied economics at Tohoku University, and graduated in 1949. He has edited several poetry magazines and has published a collection of his own poetry, *Fountain*.

SHOGO SHIMADA was born in Tokyo in 1940. He received his first one-man show at the Ichibankan Gallery, Tokyo, in 1970. Since then he has participated in the Second International Sculpture Exhibition at the Hakone Open-Air Museum, 1971, and was selected as guest artist at the Twenty-Sixth Shin-Jyu Kai Exhibition, Tokyo.

TADAE SHIMADA was born in Tochigi Prefecture in 1932. She has exhibited regularly in shows of younger Japanese artists at the Nippon Kokusai, the Mainichi Gehdai Exhibition and the Second International Sculpture Exhibition at the Hakone Open-Air Museum.

TANIGAWA SHUNTARO is a poet and essayist, and the Japanese translator of the “Peanuts” comic strip. A productive post-war poet, some of his works are intended to be sung or accompanied by music or jazz.
WILLIAM V. SPANOS is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at SUNY, Binghamton, and co-editor of boundary 2: a journal of postmodern literature. His poems have appeared in such journals as Clarendon, West Coast Review, The Charioteer, and Interstate.

FREDRIC STARK has been living in Turkey since 1963. He has published numerous translations from Turkish.

LUIS SUARDIAZ was born in Cuba in 1936. He has published two books of poems, Haber Vivido and Como Quien Vuelve de un Largo Viaje.

CEMAL SUREYA is an Inspector for the Turkish Ministry of Finance. He is a prolific poet and essayist who has won most of his country’s top poetry prizes.

ZOLITA SVERDLOVE has had her work included in many juried and invitational shows. Among her honors are the Purdue University Purchase Prize, 1970, and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts Purchase Prize, 1976.

BRIAN SWANN is a Professor at Cooper Union. A widely published poet, he has translated Italian and Rumanian poets into English.

CHIMAKO TADA was born in 1930. She graduated from Keio University, and now lives near Kobe City. Besides a number of books of poetry, she has published many translations including Margaret Youcenar’s The Memoirs of Hadrian and the poems of St. John Perse.

GUVEN TURAN is a young experimental poet.

ELLEN WARMOND lives in The Hague, where she is the curator of The Netherlands Literary Museum and Center of Documentation.

PHIL WILLIAMS is the editor of the literary magazine, Atarazia. He has published poems in many places, including The Kansas Quarterly and Beyond Baroque.

YORIFUMI YAGUCHI is a lecturer in English at Hokusei University. He has published one book of poems, A Shadow, and is at present collecting a new volume.

SACHIHO YOSHIIHARA was born in Tokyo in 1932, and graduated from Tokyo University in 1956. In 1964 she was awarded the Muro Saisei Prize for her Litanies of Infancy. She has also published The Grave of Summer, Ondine, and Hirugao, all books of poems. In 1974 she was awarded the Takami Jun Prize.

KAMRAN S. YUCE has been a professional actor in Turkey for more than a quarter of a century.

KINOSHITA YUJI (1914-1965) was born in Hiroshima, and worked as a pharmacist. His work includes “The Piper.”

JONAS ZDANYS recently received his Ph.D. from SUNY, Buffalo. His poems, translations, and reviews have appeared in several magazines and journals. He is currently revising an anthology of post-World War II Lithuanian poetry.
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