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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Translator</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARIO BENEDETTI—tr. Flaurie Imberman</td>
<td>Miss Amnesia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALVADOR ESPRIU—tr. Martin Paul</td>
<td>And, Then, Silence... In the Fog</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAURENCE N. DE LOOZE</td>
<td>The Fitting Room</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCAR HAHN—tr. James Hoggard</td>
<td>At One My Fortune, At Two Your Watch Good Night Dear</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATIEN LAPOINTE—tr. Andrea Moorhead</td>
<td>Body Infinitely Other Book II</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RODRIGO PARRA SANDOVAL—tr. Elizabeth Lowe</td>
<td>Possibility Understanding Art History Absence</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHRIKANT VARMA—tr. Vinay Dharwadker</td>
<td>The Wind The Turnabout</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROL BONNER LANE</td>
<td>Untitled Evening at Arles</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERNAND OUELLETTE—tr. Steve Troyanovich</td>
<td>The Angel And the Light Just Keeps Crying</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYGIA FAGUNDES TELLES—tr. Eloah F. Giacomelli</td>
<td>The Objects</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>Poems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUINCY TROUPE</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>New Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Whose Death Is This Walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Riff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Sky Empties Down Ice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÖZCAN YALIM—trs. Özcan Yalim,</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William A. Fielder, Dionis C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEHÇET NECATIGIL—trs. Özcan</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>The Lamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalim, William A. Fielder,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dionis C. Riggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÜLKÜ TAMER—trs. Dionis C.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riggs, Özcan Yalim, William A.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fielder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SABAHATTIN KUDRET AKSAL—trs.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Poem Toward Noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Özcan Yalim, William A.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The First Snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fielder, Dionis C. Riggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGELINA MUÑIZ—tr. Lois</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Jocasta’s Confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkinson Zamora</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEONARDO P. ALISHAN</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.F. ANDERSON</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>I Am the Beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERNANDO SORRENTINO—tr. Clark</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>The Horn Player: Chapter Seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Zlotchew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMELIA BIAGIONI—tr. Melanie</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Gestalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALPHONZE PICHE—tr. Gary Wilson 68
Quai
Whirlpool
Retreat

JOAO CABRAL DE MELO NETO—tr. Rosemary Arrojo 72
Untitled

HARRIET ZINNES 96
Lover

R.M. CHUCKOVICH 99
Wounds

YUMIKO KURAHASHI—trs. Samuel Grolmes, Yumiko Tsumura 103
The Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels

HUGO LINDO—tr. Elizabeth Gamble Miller 114
Between Words
The girl opened her eyes and felt crushed by her own confusion. She didn't remember anything. Neither her name, her age, nor her address. She saw that her skirt was brown and that her blouse was cream colored. She didn't have a handbag. Her wristwatch showed a quarter of four. She felt that her tongue was pasty and that her temples were throbbing. She looked at her hands and saw that her fingernails had clear polish. She was seated on a bench in a square with trees, a square which in its center had an old fountain, with little angels, and something like three parallel plates. It seemed horrible to her. From her bench she saw stores, big signs. She could read: Nogaró, Cine Club, Porley Furniture Store, Marcha, Partido Nacional. Next to her left foot she saw a fragment of a mirror, in the shape of a triangle. She picked it up. She was conscious of an unhealthy curiosity when she confronted that face which was her own. It was as if she were seeing it for the first time. It didn't bring back any memory. She tried to calculate her age. I must be sixteen or seventeen, she thought. Curiously, she remembered the names of things (she knew that this was a bench, that a column, that over there a fountain, that other thing a sign), but she was unable to situate herself as to time and place. Again she thought, this time out loud: “Yes, I must be sixteen or seventeen,” just to confirm that it was a sentence in Spanish. She asked herself if she spoke another language. She didn’t remember anything. Nonetheless, she felt a sensation of relief, tranquility, almost of innocence. She was astonished, of course, but the astonishment did not cause her any displeasure. She had the confusing impression that this was better than anything else, as if she had turned her back on something abject, something horrible. Overhead, the green of the trees was two-toned, and the sky was scarcely visible. The pigeons approached her, but withdrew at once, disappointed. She really had nothing to give them. A great crowd of people passed by the bench, without paying any attention to her. Only some guy looked at her. She was willing to talk, she even wanted to, but those fickle on-lookers always managed to overcome their hesitation and went on their way. Then somebody withdrew from the
current. He was fiftyish, well dressed, impeccably combed, with a tie-pin and a black briefcase. She sensed that he was going to speak to her. Does he recognize me perhaps? She thought. And she feared that this person would thrust her back into her past. She felt so happy in her comfortable oblivion. But the man simply came over and asked: “Is something wrong, Miss?” She studied him for a long time. The guy’s face inspired trust. In fact, everything inspired trust. “A while ago I opened my eyes in this square and I don’t remember anything, anything that happened before.” She had the feeling that more words were not necessary. She became aware of her own smile when she saw that the man was also smiling. He stretched out his hand to her. He said: “My name is Roldán, Félix Roldán.” “I don’t know my name,” she said, but she shook his hand. “It doesn’t matter. You can’t stay here. Come with me. Do you want to?” Of course she wanted to. When she stood up, she glanced at the pigeons that were surrounding her again, and she reflected: What luck, I’m tall. The man named Roldán took her gently by the elbow and proposed a route. “It’s nearby,” he said. What’s nearby? It didn’t matter. The girl felt like a tourist. Nothing seemed strange to her, and yet she couldn’t recognize any detail. Spontaneously, she linked her weak arm with that strong arm. The suit was soft, of combed cloth, certainly expensive. She looked up (the man was tall) and she smiled at him. He also smiled, although this time he separated his lips a bit. The girl was able to see a gold tooth. She didn’t ask the name of the city. It was he who informed her: “Montevideo.” The word fell in a vacuum. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Now they were going down a narrow street, with raised paved stones and works in construction. The buses passed along the rope and at times splashed muddy water. She ran her hand along her legs to clean off a few dark drops. She then saw that she wasn’t wearing stockings. She looked up and saw some old balconies, with clothes hanging and a man in pyjamas. She decided that she liked the city.

“Here we are,” said the man named Roldán next to a double-leaved door. She went in first. In the elevator, the man marked the fifth floor. He didn’t say a word, but he looked at her with restless eyes. She returned a glance overflowing with trust. When he took out the key to open the apartment door, the girl saw that on his right hand he wore a wedding band in addition to another ring with a red stone. She couldn’t remember what red stones were called. There was nobody in the apartment. When the door opened, a rush of musty odor came out from within the closed apartment. The man named Roldán opened a window and invited her to sit down on one of the armchairs. Then he brought cups, ice, whiskey. The first drink she took of the liquor made her cough, but she liked it. The girl’s glance looked over the furniture, the walls, the paintings. She decided that the general effect was not harmonious, but she was in the best of moods and she
was not shocked. She looked again at the man and she felt comfortable, secure. I hope I never remember anything from the past, she thought. Then the man let go a laugh which startled her. “Now tell me, Little Miss Innocent. Now that we are alone, eh, you’ll tell me who you are.” She coughed again and opened her eyes wide. “I already told you, I don’t remember.” It seemed that the man was changing rapidly, as if from under the tie-pin or the combed cloth suit a thick vulgarity began to seep through, an unexpected nastiness. “Miss Amnesia? Is that it?” And that, what did it mean? She didn’t understand anything, but she felt that she was beginning to be afraid, almost as afraid of this absurd present as of the hermetic past. “Come on, Miss Amnesia,” the man burst out in another guffaw. “You’re pretty original, you know? I swear this is the first time something like this happens to me. Are you the new wave or what?” The hand of the man named Roldán drew closer. It was the hand of the same strong arm which she had spontaneously taken at the square. But to be precise, it was another hand. Hairy, anxious, almost block-like. Immobilized by terror, she sensed that she could do nothing. The hand reached her neck-line and tried to get in. But there were four buttons which made the operation difficult. Then the hand pulled down and sent three of the buttons flying. One of them rolled for a long time until it crashed against the baseboard. While the noise lasted, they both remained motionless. The girl took advantage of this brief involuntary pause to jump up, with the glass still in her hand. The man named Roldán went at her. She felt the guy pushing her towards a wide green-covered sofa. He only said: “Little Miss Innocent, Little Miss Innocent.” She realized that the guy’s horrible breath first stopped at her neck, then in her ear, then on her lips. She sensed that those powerful, disgusting hands tried to loosen her clothes. She felt she was choking, she couldn’t take it anymore. Then she noticed that her fingers still clutched the glass which had held the whiskey. She made another superhuman effort, half-sat up, and struck Roldán’s face with the glass, without letting go. He fell back, staggered a bit and finally fell near the green sofa. The girl was entirely possessed by panic. Terrified, she jumped over the man’s body, finally released her glass (which fell on a little rug, without breaking), ran for the door, opened it, got out into the hall, and went down five floors. Using the stairs, of course. On the street she was able to adjust the shirt thanks to the one surviving button. She began to walk swiftly, almost running. In terror, in anguish, also with sadness and constantly thinking: I have to forget this, I have to forget this. She recognized the square and recognized the bench on which she had been seated. Now it was empty. So she sat down. One of the pigeons seemed to examine her, but she wasn’t in any condition to make a gesture. She only had one obsessive idea: I have to forget, My God make me forget this shame also. She threw back her head
and had the sensation of fainting.

When the girl opened her eyes, she felt crushed by her own confusion. She didn’t remember anything. Neither her name, nor her age, nor her address. She saw that her skirt was brown and that her blouse, whose neckline was missing three buttons, was cream colored. She didn’t have a handbag. Her watch showed seven twenty-five. She was seated on a bench in a square with trees, a square which in its center had an old fountain, with little angles, and something like three parallel plates. It seemed horrible to her. From her bench she saw stores, big signs: Nogaró, Cine Club, Porley Furniture Store, Marcha, Partido Nacional. Nothing. She didn’t remember anything. Nonetheless, she felt a sensation of relief, of tranquility, almost of innocence. She had the confusing impression that this was better than anything else, as if she had turned her back on something abject, something horrible. People passed by the bench. With children, with briefcases, with umbrellas. Then somebody withdrew from that endless parade. He was fiftyish, well dressed, impeccably combed, with a black briefcase, a tie-pin and a little white patch over his eye. Does he know me perhaps? She thought, and she feared that this person would thrust her back into her past. She felt so happy in her comfortable oblivion. But the man simply came over and asked: “Is something wrong, Miss?” She studied him for a long time. The guy’s face inspired trust. In fact, everything inspired trust. She saw that the man stretched out his hand to her and she heard him say: “My name is Roldán, Félix Roldán.” After all, the name was the least important thing. Whereupon she stood up and spontaneously linked her weak arm with that strong arm.
Salvador Espriu

I, DESPRES, EL SILENCI . . .

I, despres, el silenci,
petit, tan fragil,
pell de tambor
que percudi la pluja.
Unes mans
molt suaus
davallaren la morta
canco,
ninot penjat,
dels llavis de la follia
i la duien piadosament
al repos de la llum.
Era protada en ales de paraules,
paraules mai no dites,
abelles resplendents.
I jo les seguia
fins al jardi llunya.
i faig entrar l’eixam
endins de l’oblit,
i fonello ja per sempre el rusc.

Salvador Espriu

ENDINS DE LA BOIRA

Endins de la boira
de l’alba,
què veies, cacador,
què veies ara:
home, cèrvol, arbre?
Guarda el teu ràpid dard,
Salvador Espriu

AND, THEN, SILENCE...

And, then, silence,
so frail, small,
a drumhead
the rain beats.
The softest
hands
took down the dead
song,
a hanged effigy,
from the lips of madness,
and bore it reverently
to still light.
It was borne on wings of words,
words never spoken,
glittering bees.
And I follow them
to a distant garden,
and force the swarm
into oblivion,
and I cover the hive forever.

Salvador Espriu

IN THE FOG

In the fog
of dawn,
what did you see, hunter,
what do you see now:
man, deer, tree?
Lay your swift arrow down,
deixa la fina llança.
Penetraràs millor
en el secret d'aquesta
profunda vida clara,
tan solitària,
si la fereixes amb
destral ben afilada.
Però mira'm abans,
enllà de l'hora calma.
Endevina què sóc
a la vora de l'aigua.
give up your fine spear.
You will more easily pierce
the secret of this
deep, clear life,
so lonely,
with a sharp ax.
But look at me first,
the still hour past.
Guess what I am
at the water's edge.
THE FITTING ROOM

LAURENCE N. DE LOOZE

In her later years she could not remember exactly when she had begun. Sometime shortly after the war, or perhaps still during it. At a period when men who had come back were beginning to put on weight and would come by to have their dress uniforms altered so that they could still wear them on national holidays. At a time when her work as a seamstress became steady. They would ring and she would let them into her parlour which doubled as a fitting room. A few that were married would come with their wives in those days, but most came alone, sheepishly explaining that the coat must have shrunk in storage and sucking in their chests till they turned blue while she buttoned the old coats on them and estimated how large the men really were when they did not try to hold in all their precious guts which had passed unscathed through the war.

That was when she had started—as a person begins to take a secret nip during the day, then more and more—at slack moments when there were no clients. She was still single, still quite attractive. She was standing before the fitting mirror early one morning in summer when it was still too early for customers. The breeze blew back the chintz curtains. She was straightening the suit she had carefully tailored for herself when she noticed something foreign about her face—as though there were water on the mirror or she were not herself but the mother of someone who looked just like her. On closer inspection she saw it for what it was: just under her cheekbone was a wrinkle on her youthful face, the first of the many wrinkles that would come to people’s faces now that the war was over and there was peace and people could return to the normal concerns of life such as eating and aging and getting fat. And without reflection she immediately pushed the skin back up on her cheekbone and, instinctively drawing a straightpin from the everpresent pincushion on her arm, she drove the pin into her cheekbone with a little wince. Just then the first of the day’s customers rang. She glanced quickly at herself in the mirror, saw that everything was back in place, dabbed a bit of talcum on the head of the pin to render it invisible, and went to open the door.
The clients came nervously into her parlour and stood shyly in front of her mirror. Occasionally she would get a commission from a woman—for a girl's first communion dress or some dancer's costume. But it was mainly men who came to her, who trooped in with their explanations about shrinking coats and with their guts sucked in.

She had a way of putting them at ease. She helped them on with their coats and fussed over their rusting medals, and the men gradually grew comfortable in her presence. Perhaps it was the fact of having a woman's hands—a pretty woman's hands—run over them unabashedly and professionally from collar to cuff, smoothing out their awkwardness as she soothed away the wrinkles of their coats and straightened their pants. Certainly this was not how their girlfriends (or wives for those that had wives) touched them. Only she could put hands on them so frankly, treat them so coolly, so candidly. And to their surprise (when, days later, they recalled it) they suddenly began to talk of things they talked of to no one else, not even to each other: of the war, of how it had been to be a part of it, of how frightened they had always been, of friends they had lost, men they had killed, even women they had violated. All these things would come tumbling out of their mouths as though by magic while they stood before the fitting mirror and she patted here and took measurements there. The room seemed to fill gradually with the people the men spoke about: mothers waiting patiently in armchairs, and wounded and bandaged men waiting patiently to be treated and dead people waiting patiently for burial, all of them waiting patiently, patiently, too patiently. And when her little parlour was completely filled with these remembered figures, so that all the spaces on the sofa and all the straightback chairs were taken and people had to crowd in here and there against the wall, she would finish measuring, write out a receipt, show the clients to the door, and the men would step out into the day again, whereupon the memories would vanish in the strong sunlight.

Another day during the sleepy part of the afternoon, she discovered another wrinkle when she looked in the mirror—down under her chin this time. But tucking the flesh back behind the bone, she stayed it easily and expertly with a straightpin. Then there were the little crow's feet and a crease that had to be pinned into place beside her ear. And one morning when she had slept less than usual, she discovered two bags of skin, one under each eye, which needed to be pinned up. This done, she looked as youthful as ever—looked exactly the same, in fact, as when the war had first broken out and she had truly been young and (just as truly) in love.

He had gone off to be a soldier, of course. She had carefully sewn his uniform before he left. Usually the mothers did it, but he had lost his when he was but a boy. So she had sewn it, lovingly passing the government-
issued material under her needle, lining his dress coat with gold silk, carefully applying the brocade to his hat. When he put it on he looked dazzling. Or rather his uniform looked dazzling, since he looked almost lost in it with its shiny buttons and heavy epaulettes and wide collar, like a boy in a full-grown bandleader’s outfit. During the war he had come back several times on leave. Each time he looked older, though no bigger; while he was there she would mend his uniform, stitch back together the little tears and patch the worn spots. Once during his leave she had to make a whole new sleeve because a bullet had drilled a hole in one side and out the other of the old one. But by some miracle his arm had not been in the sleeve at the time, so that only the coat was wounded. And once when he had visited her on leave, when there were hardly any spots to be mended, she had let him slide her dress off her lithe body and carry her to her bed. As of that day her love for him became sealed for all time. She loved him like a young bride and would always love him thus, so that when they brought back his shattered body in the last year of the war, she had instantly resigned herself to necessity, had resolved that nothing henceforth should change in her life, that whether she might follow him to the grave soon thereafter or not, she would cease all forward movement, admit no change, remain as she was at the moment of his death until such time as her own death caught up with him.

Not that she lacked in diligence. Her first task after his death was to sew his funerary suit which she did by toiling three days and three nights until she had made him the finest suit (of black silk) that anyone had ever seen. She also dressed his body herself, sewing on the limbs that had been blown off at his death, and made all arrangements for his funeral, so that in every respect her conduct at such a critical moment was irreproachable. Although people did not really have time to empathize with her in her sorrow (so many men were dying at that time), they did show her extreme respect for the superb craftsmanship she displayed in all details of the funeral arrangements, their admiration translating almost directly into commissions. Henceforth she was never lacking for work. She continued exactly as before, only more busy, taking orders and filling them. She would not change her habits. She would not change at all. She would never love again. She would never grow old.

The only aspect of her resolution she could not actually control, of course, was that which concerned her body and its natural processes. While she maintained her youthful beauty for several years by power of will alone, it was inevitable that she begin to age. Thus her instinctive reaction the morning she discovered her first wrinkle was, if not a lifesaver, at least a prolonger of youthful beauty. In the following years she pinned and talcummed different regions of her face so that it remained exactly as it had looked during the war when her lover had gone off to fight, had loved her,
and had died.

With time, however, the wrinkles began to invade other regions of her body. They moved from her face down her neck. She reacted by stretching tight the skin from her jaw clear down to her collarbone and securing it with pins. She tucked excess folds behind her earlobes and pinned her earrings directly to her head. The townspeople marveled at the fact that she simply did not age, that she was as young and fresh looking as the day the war had started. While everyone else got fat and grey, wrinkled and suffered from liver ailments, she remained pristine. Of course she could not simply pin herself together between customers anymore. It became a more laborious task, but the reward of beauty eternally preserved made it worth the effort.

At the same time, her customers increased and had ever more need of her services. The men kept getting fatter and fatter. Some of them brought back their uniforms four and five times for alterations. She could hardly keep up with their corpulence. And then some brought back their uniforms, even though they needed no alteration, simply for the pleasure of being able to talk freely: to bring back their memories, their comrades, their fears, in the perfect ease of her fitting room. It was so soothing for the men to stand before the mirror and speak their hearts, while she ran her dispassionate hands over their uniforms like a doctor, that they were more than willing to pay for unnecessary tailoring. Occasionally one of the men would try to get her to talk—would ask jovially when she was going to come out of mourning and get married. They would point out that among the returned soldiers, there were many who would be more than willing to take such a handsome and industrious woman to wife. They would mention that she could have her pick of the lot; they would ask if there wasn't one she favoured; but she never made any comment. Occasionally a man would talk of his own wife or sweetheart, of their problems together, of their disillusionment with each other, of how things had changed, of how different everything was from the days of the war when they had been young and in love. But she would make no comment. And occasionally a man, as he stood before the fitting mirror and she knelt before him to adjust his cuff, would grow maudlin and begin to ramble, and before he knew it he would be blurting out that he loved her, loved her madly, that he could not live without her, he would be making a confession of his love, complete with tears. But she would make no comment. She would simply go on in silence pinning and measuring in her professional manner. Then, when his face had dried, she would give him a receipt and show him to the door, and he would leave feeling refreshed and renewed. And most importantly, all men would comment on her timeless beauty, on the fact that she did not seem to have aged a day since the war first broke out.
One day while dressing she noticed that her breasts had begun to droop. She went to check herself in the mirror, and indeed they hung down on her belly. It was as if they had descended overnight, as if they had given up. Instantly she went to work with her straightpins. It was painful work. She had to make use of several hatpins and even resorted to putting a knitting needle through the center of one breast to hold it in place, but in the end she triumphed. When she was dressed, her bust looked as young and fresh as that of a maiden ready for her first lover.

Another day she happened to notice that the joints in her hips were going. The wrinkles had been on a steady march southwards for a long time already, having advanced down her chest and across her stomach. She had been pinning furiously each morning but she could not check the advance. And now it had hit her hips. She drove a fistful of pins into each socket and, because she knew it would soon be necessary, she began to pin up her womb into its youthful position. She found that by oiling the sockets each night before going to bed they rotated much more easily, and at moments they even felt as flexible as they had been during that one furlough when her soldier had stayed with her in her bed.

As the townspeople grew old, their astonishment at her eternal youth grew in direct proportion to their age. The once-young soldiers were now grandfathers and doting old men. Their wives wore black and wrapped their heads in scarves and sat rocking on the front porches. The men shook their scraggly heads in wonder at, and admiration for, her as they might have done for a commemorative statue erected through the communal effort of the whole village. But if the men took pride in their ever-young seamstress, the women began to view her askance. It was not natural that one woman should entirely escape the ravages of time. The women whispered among themselves that only some foul power could preserve her like that. They shook their heads and crossed themselves whenever the subject came up. Meanwhile every evening and every morning she drove new pins into herself all the length of her body. One morning she woke to find all of her teeth beside her on the pillow where her lover’s head had once lain. Shocked, she immediately hammered them back into place with small nails to root them firmly in her jawbone. The pain of this ordeal forced her to close her shop for a day. And another time when, for some unknown reason, pieces of her flesh began to drop from her slight frame, she had to close for a week in order to sew them all back on with flesh-coloured thread.

Still when she opened her doors again, it was business as usual. But if business did not slack, it did change somewhat. Less and less did the men come to have their uniforms altered. People had stopped wearing uniforms so much on national holidays. And besides, the old soldiers were beginning to die off. More and more she got orders for funerary suits for
the same clients who had brought in their military jackets countless times. Now it was the women who would come to ring her bell—the mothers and wives, reluctantly, but forced in their need to do so—to place an order for a black suit. They would enter the parlour hesitantly, crossing themselves with each step they took. As they placed their orders, they would look around furtively, afraid that whatever power kept her young probably fed on old women. Sometimes she would look up from noting measurements and other specifications to discover a woman staring at her, into her, through her, and for one terrible moment she would be afraid that her secret was revealed. But just as soon, the woman would look away and mumble something about the deceased. Inevitably in her parlour the women would get to talking about their dead and how the dead men had been in life, and soon the women would not feel so bad, and the deceased would almost seem to be there in the room with them. When the women left, an hour or so later, they would feel much consoled.

She would dress, now, the corpses of the same men who had formerly stood before her fitting mirror. They lay flat where they had once stood erect, and she would put on them the suits which were to accompany them into the next world. At first she felt a sense of disquieting silence in their presence, she was so used to their constant prattle as she worked. But with time she began to relax around the corpses of the men and even to talk to them. She would tell them little anecdotes and confide to them secrets about their friends, much as they themselves had rattled on when they could still talk. And if a wrinkle suddenly appeared on her face while she was dressing a body, she would casually pin and talcum it with nothing more than a brief explanation to the dead man. With time she developed a practise of telling each dead body she dressed the secret of her eternal youth. The ones who had exclaimed to her about her beauty, the ones who had hinted marriage, the ones who had bewailed their aging friends and wives, the ones who had declared their undying love for her—to all these she told her secret. She showed them how she did it, and as a favour she even pinned up a sagging muscle or two on their faces as well. More and more frequently she would show them what she really looked like; she would wipe the talcum powder from her face to reveal the mass of silver pinheads that looked like a frame for making mannequins. One day, while showing herself to one corpse, her head began to wobble. Without the least self-consciousness she drove a spike straight down through her head to her shoulders, threw on her wig again (she had long since lost her hair), covered her face anew with talcum powder, and went on about her affairs without so much as a pause in her monologue.

Gradually her business evolved from being a seamstress’ shop to being a sort of funeral home. She made a regular practise of talcuming faces
when she dressed the bodies so that relatives, when they saw the deceased at the funeral, frequently said that he looked ten years younger, which indeed he did. With increasing frequency the wakes were simply held in her parlour. It was simpler than transporting the dead person an extra time, and anyway the association the women had for a long time made between her youth and some occult power made her shop the most natural place to receive Death. One by one each of her former clients paid her one final visit, to don a new black suit before being committed to the earth. To her surprise she found that she was rather fond of most of them and that, when they were decently pinned and talcumed and her own talcum was wearing thin, their ages rather resembled one another’s. Often as she finished dressing a dead man, she would say a fond farewell, weep a little tear, give a little kiss, even exclaim that she had rather loved him, although that was not quite true. Finally the day came when the last of the ex-soldiers was committed to her custody. She took extraordinary care in making his suit and dressing him, such care as she had not taken since the death of her lover so long ago during the war. She wept openly and kissed him repeatedly and pinned him extensively. At his wake she could not restrain her tears, and after the body had been removed and the mourners had gone she sat and took stock of things. She was no longer needed. Her work was done. She had seen each of the town’s soldiers to his final resting place, and there was nothing more to do. There was no future for an attractive young girl in a town of old widows. There was nothing to do but prepare her exit.

That evening she chose an empty coffin (she kept them on hand now), the simplest one she had, and laid it out before her fitting mirror. Then she set herself to the long task of removing every pin in her body, patiently working all night long. Bit by bit she watched herself age. She watched her hips go out of joint, her stomach go flabby, her breasts go sour. Her neck folded, her chin doubled, her cheeks sagged, her eyelids drooped. In the course of a night she saw all the changes of a lifetime. When she succeeded in pulling the last pin from her face, it was nearly dawn. She saw before her an old hag no one had ever seen before. Lastly she pulled the nails from her teeth and the spike from her head. Needing both hands to hold her head as she climbed in her coffin, she swallowed her teeth lest she lose them otherwise. As the sun first appeared over the horizon, she finally settled herself on her back in the coffin, folded her hands over her front, and went to sleep.

No one entered the shop for over a week. At length the women, worried about their strange young seamstress, opened the door and (having drawn straws to see who should go first) groped into the house. For safety’s sake they clung close to one another and swung burning incense as protection against any evil spirits. The ones in the very front carried silver crosses
and lit devotional candles to ward off any demons that might be on the premises. A murmur of prayers hung about them like a swarm of bees, cut short only when they stopped to take a head count (to make sure none of their number had been snatched away by any sinister force), which they did three times between the door and the entry to the parlour. As they approached the parlour they crossed themselves profusely and in unison they monotoned a call, in the event that she was in one of the back rooms of the house. When there was no answer, they huddled together to plan their next move. After a brief debate of furious whispers, they reached the decision to cross the threshold into the parlour. And drawing together they began to hum a psalm and slid into the parlour.

The first thing the women saw, even before they noticed the coffin, was the mirror. It was crisscrossed with a thousand tiny cracks. The sun, coming in through the window with the chintz curtains blown back, caught it, and the yellow light was refracted all around the room so that a thousand bright spots stared like so many faces at the huddle of women in black. Next they saw a simple wooden box. Gingerly approaching the coffin which lay there, the braver women peered over the edge to see what was inside. And there she was. With an enigmatic smile she might have copied from some great painting, their seamstress lay with all the repose and calmness of another, timeless world: as young, as fresh, and as pristine as the day the men had first gone off to war.
Oscar Hahn

A LA UNA MI FORTUNA, A LAS DOS TU RELOJ

Estuve toda la noche parado frente a tu puerta
esperando que salieran tus sueños

a la una salió una galería de espejos
a las dos salió una alcoba llena de agua
a las tres salió un hotel en llamas
a las cuatro salimos tú y yo haciendo el amor
a las cinco salió un hombre con una pistola
a las seis se oyó un disparo y despertaste

A las siete saliste apurada de tu casa
a las ocho nos encontramos en el Hotel Valdivia
a las nueve nos multiplicamos en los espejos
a las diez nos tendimos en la cama de agua
a las once hicimos el amor hasta el exterminio

Ahora son las doce del día
y tengo entre mis brazos el cuerpo de todos mis delitos

Oscar Hahn

BUENAS NOCHES HERMOSA

Buenas noches hermosa
que sueñes con demonios
con cucarachas blancas

y que veas las cuencas
de la muerte mirándote
con mis ojos en llamas

y que no sea un sueño
24
Oscar Hahn

AT ONE MY FORTUNE, AT TWO YOUR WATCH

I stood all night facing your door
hoping your dreams would emerge

At one emerged a gallery of mirrors
at two emerged an alcove full of water
at three emerged a hotel in flames
at four we quit you and I making love
at five emerged a man with a pistol
at six a shot was heard and you woke up

at seven worried you left your house
at eight we met in the Hotel Valdivia
at nine we were multiplied in mirrors
at ten we stretched out on the waterbed
at eleven we made love till exhaustion

Now noon strikes
and I hold in my arms the body of all my crimes

Oscar Hahn

GOOD NIGHT DEAR

Good night dear
may you dream about demons
and white cockroaches

and may you see eye-sockets
of death looking at you
from my eyes in flames

and let it not be a dream.
Gatien Lapointe

CORPS AUTRE INFINIMENT

père et mère de l’autre année sous la ronde écorce d’étincelles, frère créant son frère, dans le ras, dans l’aurore, nature affranchie, beau corps de plaisir

mots je vous touche et je vous nomme, les noms en premier, mottons de terre, bulbes d’étoiles, noyaux s’éprenant sans mémoire, deux et un, féroce corps à corps, toutes les racines, toutes les feuilles du désir—les mains et les yeux, le sexe les cheveux, la langue et le profond palais—oiseaux d’un coup trouvant la caverne, poissons de corail sur les branches, arbre avec ses canaux, ses pavots, ses fêtes de neige ardente

du cru de la chair mots je vous assemble piaffants nuages, tiges de griffes, glands de feu forant des notes, des sources, des frissons—demeure de l’éclair

parfois, aux noeuds du sang, quelques verbes, ceux qui violent et volent, fou violet, brusques sauts de rivière, escarpements, détours, roses de chevilles du corps, os et blondes consonnes dressant sur la colline la tour et les poutres, le fenil le lit, farouche accouplement, noires forges, fuselage inoxydable

soufflant sur la rosée des mots, terre qui tremble de bleu, humain à l’orée du divin, mûrs adjectifs par éclats basculant sur l’autre rive—bouche ouverte, colliers de lèvres, vulve céleste

et toute la phrase, ceinture d’astres qui clignotent dans l’ombre des reins, dévoile, revoile encore, morsures de jouir, aveuglant zénith, énergie qui s’exhale arbre d’un seul frémissement, d’une flamme corps entier du cheval rutile raque mât de fièvres et de fleurs, liqueur en chair de fruits, jutante braise sous les dents de juillet

je vous jumelle, mots, je vous jette deux à deux, à trois, à neuf dans l’inaugural fracas de l’image, pierre d’ébauche, rythmes abrasifs, saignées de couleurs et d’odeurs, changeant délire par glissements subreptices de sons, de tons, mutantes lettres frappant à toutes les portes, essayant chaque forme—orphées fraternels—corps autre infiniment
Gatien Lapointe

BODY INFINITELY OTHER

father and mother of another year under the round bark of sparks, brother
creating brother, tightly clasped, in the dawn, nature emancipated, beautiful
body of pleasure

words, i touch you and i name you, names at first, clods of earth, star bulbs,
kernels falling in love without memory, two and one, ferocious body to body,
all the roots, all the leaves of desire—the hands and eyes, the sex, hair, tongue
and deep palace—birds suddenly perforating the cavern, coral fish on the
branches, tree with its ducts, its poppies, its festivals of burning snow

from the rawness of flesh i assemble you, words, swaggering clouds, tendril
stems, fire glands boring notes, streams, shivering—
the home of lightning

upon occasion in the blood knots, a few verbs, those which violate and fly,
insane violet, abrupt twists of river, escarpments, detours, rose bolts of the
body, bone and blond consonants raising on the hill the tower and beams,
the hayloft the bed, the savage coupling, black forges, unoxidizable fuselage

breathing on the dew of words, earth which trembles with profanity, the
human at the ear of the divine, ripe adjectives rocking in flashes on the other
bank—
open mouth, necklaces of lips, celestial vulva

and the entire sentence, belt of stars which cling in the shadow of loins,
uncover, cover again, playful bites, blinding zenith, energy which exahles
tree with a single shuddering, with a flame the entire body of the horse glows
red rude matt of fevers and flowers, liquid in fertile flesh, juicy ember under
the teeth of july

i make you twin, words, i throw you two by two, by three, again into the
inaugural fracas of the image, stone skeleton, abrasive rhythms, bleeding
with color and odors, changing delirium with surreptitious sliding sounds,
tones, mute letters striking all the gates, trying each form—orpheic
brothers—body infinitely other
Gatien Lapointe

LIVRE II

A nous demain

à travers le frisson écoutant naître l’or et l’orange dans le verre grumeaux d’ours de quartz de muscat—brutes matières de langage—pénétrant dans l’énigme qui tinte et nous dénude, repérant par éclats les sigles du pers—originaire alphabet—têtant, questionnant, fiévreux nous accomplissant de renaitre dans chaque mot dans chaque instant trouvant des sens—et l’autre homme et l’autre femme avec le rêve de leurs mains liant sur l’os du monde les pulpes et les veines—et ce mufle qui rejette toujours au Nord notre enfance—paldant sur les murs du caveau la très noble courbe, déchiffrant l’écriture de l’hirondelle la gerbe d’étincelles sous le sabot du bison, demandant dans le très jeune vent—anneau qui nous séquestre O du creuset de l’espace—
sculptant des signes, modelant une parole dans un caillot de feu
for us tomorrow

gatien lapointe
book ii

across the shivering, listening to gold birthing and orange birthing in the
glass curd of bear of quartz of muscat—raw materials of language—
penetrating into the enigma which nerves us and strips us, marking with
lightning bolts and seagreen coded initials—original alphabet—feeling,
questionning, completing us feverish in rebirth with each word, in each
instance breaching sense—and the other man and the other woman with
the dream of their hands binding pulp and veins on the world bone—and
this snout which always hurls our childhood North again—feeling the very
noble curve on the vault walls, decoding the swallow’s writing, the germ
of sparks under a bison’s hoof, asking in a very young wind—ring which
sequesters us the O of the space crucible—

sculpting signs, modeling speech in a clot of fire
POSSIBILITY

RODRIGO PARRA SANDOVAL

"Then you have just died a life."
(Onetti, La Vida Breve)

The man (Height: 1 meter 70. Complexion: swarthy. Eyes: brown. Identifying marks: none. Name: Adán Bogotá, Adán Machu Picchu, Adán Buenos Aires? Age? Occupation? Might he be an office clerk, a businessman, a minister, a potter, a horse tamer, a snake charmer, author of languid tales, a poet. Is he sentimental, gloomy, tender, fierce, crabby, hooknosed so he can fish for light loves? A social oyster? Is he a rebel, a conformist, common, encysted, stiffjointed, comforting, electrifying, harmonious, rhythmical, pompous, talkative, tormented, crystalline, indecipherable, sarcastic, sybilline, fuzzyheaded, viperish, a whisperer, raucous, fruity, does he smell like a mango, a medlar, a lemon, a cypress, is he stiffnecked, clumsy, does he have a warped conscience, a bewitched psyche, indecisive luck, a checkered virility, an oblique gait, harsh thoughts, a quick tongue? Are his caresses renaissance, his embraces neoclassical, his kisses rococo, maybe? Atheist, Rosacruz, Jehovah's Witness, frugal, gluttonous, sensual, epicurean, spartan, prickly, simple, plural, ubiquitous, dreamy, perhaps?) looked at me and left.

UNDERSTANDING

RODRIGO PARRA SANDOVAL

"And such like consentive negatives as I may call them."
(Samuel Richardson, Clarissa)

The fugitive with the beard showed up sitting there talking about his trip and postdiluvian floods. His delicate watchmaker's hands indecisively
imprisoned the yellow leather suitcase full of books and shoes. He hid his eyes behind goldrimmed spectacles. He looked at the players' faces through a cobweb. He looked at the zinc roof. He looked at the screen that separated the two metal-framed beds. He looked at the messy clothes closet, the wooden benches, the plastic table, the laundry hamper, my sister's legs, the floor tiles, Sofia's arpeggio face. He dove, sniffed, looked at his nubby corduroy pants, sat down at the card table, picked up his cards, lost, drained the glass of wine Olga Sofia had brought him, talked about boxing, literature, television ads, the temperature of the water in the pool, the political situation, science fiction, the Bible, the card game, he breathed his warmth over the table, built invisible bonfires, heated up ironies, poked corrosive candles, until his legs grew long and heavy. He went to bed, they went to bed, I went to bed.

I only just realized that I didn't look at him either all night.

ART HISTORY

RODRIGO PARRA SANDOVAL

The man in the picture returns an ancient, almost prehistoric stare. His renaissance smile does not, perhaps, match his perfectly medieval conduct. His warrior hands subdue with epic gestures the throat of classic alabaster. His words, however, are a romantic festival. His actions wax more rococo, more churriguersque. On the other hand, his breathing grows more and more figurative and his heart beats to a contemporary, Beatles, rhythm. His skin takes on an expressionist coloring which looks very well on him indeed, very chic. Just his nerves fail him for an instant with a neoclassical, somewhat abstract tremor. An impressionist surrealism possesses us and our kisses fly from us like cubist doves into the liquid afternoon air. Our interlaced fingers construct transparent cathedrals in gothic realism and demolish with adolescent enthusiasm the cave dweller's symbolism of our embraces until roses bloom on our fingers and lilies on our lips and thistles in our baroque blood. And thus. And so. Until, of course, we love each other for the love of art, as in our best days, our golden age.
The sun doesn't show in the picture. It remained entangled in another afternoon. The burning dust in the streets does not bite the heels. You can't see the leaves of the roseapple tree dancing in front of the window. Nothing seems to stir. Not even your uncut emerald eyes. Your tight torero pants don't allow me to suspect the pulsations of your volcanic veins: petrified lava. Your miracle-working hands of a scion of sacred history do not incite my profane cells to rebellion. The afternoon doesn't ripen either. The night does not hurl out its immutable and transparent cry; present, oh Captain, my Captain. Your biology did not quicken raw and rebellious when I sweetened your thighs with my right index finger. The pan-pipes hold their asthmatic bellows sound before the wind blasts out of their angelic cheeks. The hammock is suspended in the air, snared in the deceiving quietude of the picture. He is not alive in the picture. He is alone. He doesn't come despite my crieshouts to tear him out of his photographic stillness. There is no walk in the park under the aqueduct, nor do we rest under celestine trees that cover us so his hands can press my hungry flesh and say to me in a honeyed voice: what a sweet little woman, how fine this is, I'm a dead man, you're fabulous, fabulist, fabled, Samaniegoed, Iriarted, Aesoped, Monterrosed. And everything goes along as if that day had been like any other day that we had gone out to see the sun softshoeing in the leaves of the roseapple tree and we sat down to suffer the ardor of fire in our flanks, that doesn't burn in the picture either now. The miserly sun did not appear this afternoon. It was frozen in the absence of time in the static lie of the photograph album.

This empty afternoon of my life has, for that reason, the name of a woman: Esperanza Godot.
Shrikant Varma

THE WIND

The rider rides no horse,
he straddles
the wind.
The wind feeds on nothing,
drinks nothing,
asks
for nothing.

The wind moves faster than a horse,
the wind stops
nowhere,
now and then
it hones
and whinnies like a horse.

Shrikant Varma

THE TURNAROUND

Where was I
when everyone was cheering?
I, too, was there
cheering,
fearing the consequence
of silence,
like everyone else.

What did I do
when everyone said,
we're Hindus,
Muslims like Aziz
are our enemies?
I, too, agreed,
I'm a true Hindu,
Aziz is my enemy.

What did I say
when everyone murmured,
keep your mouth shut,
silence is safe?
I, too, concurred,
don't risk words
since words betray,
say
only what the others say.

The cheering is over now,
Aziz has been lynched,
the mouths are silent.

Aghast,
all ask,
how could this have happened?
And I,
like everyone else,
repeat the question.
How did this happen?
Why?
Sometimes the telephone rings at night.  
Not here on this table beside my bed  
but far away  
as in a dream  
as in the house when I’m outside.  
rings half a ring  
and then subsides.  

I start awake  
but never in time to answer  

broken lions guard  
a bridge that isn’t there  
backs against the river landward stare  

protecting it from unseen harm  
they could not save the sun  
from drowning there
Fernand Ouellette

L'ANGE

L'ange pénétra la pierre.

Un long filet de sang blanc
coula dans le mal du paysage.
Que de fleurs alentour
comme des ormes se mirent à croître!

Et l'espace, l'impénétrable,
où l'oiseau se heurtait
où l'œil se fossilisait,
dans un tremblement de ciel
se fissura jusqu'à l'âme.

Fernand Ouellette

ET PLEURE LA LUMIERE

Dans l'homme je sais un vent mûr
un vent tout brûlant de fumantes musiques.
Et pleure

depuis

la lumière

et pleure le silence

au creux du matin
endormi dans l'enfant.
Fernand Ouellette

THE ANGEL

The angel pierces stone.

A long thread of white blood
flows through the pain in this
landscape. While marauding flowers
and these elms wait for their growth.

And space, that inscrutable closeness
where birds collide
where the eye freezes
shuddering skyward—
another spirit broke.

Fernand Ouellette

AND THE LIGHT JUST KEEPS CRYING

There is a soft wind within each man
a wind consumed with smoke and sound.
Yet weeps
   after
the light
and silence cries
in the hollow of morning
asleep within the child
Finally, he rested his eyes on the glass globe and his hand reached out for it.

"So transparent. It looks like a soap bubble but without the coloring of a bubble reflecting a window; there was always a window in the bubbles I blew. Papaya trees yielded the best bubble pipes. Did you also play with bubbles? H'm, Lorena?"

She stretched between her fingers a long red thread fastened to a needle. She tied one end of the thread into a knot and with the tip of the needle she pricked a bead in the small box nested in her lap. She was threading a string of beads.

"What did you say?"

As there was no answer, she raised her head. He was opening his mouth, and trying to fasten his teeth on the glass globe. But his teeth slithered away, making the fragmented sound of small castanets.

"Careful, darling, or you'll break your teeth!"

He rolled the globe over his cheek, and smiled.

"Then I'd buy a bridge of teeth green like the sea with its little fish or blue like the sky with its stars—wasn't there a story that went like that? What was green like the sea with its little fish?"

"The dress that the princess ordered for the party."

Slowly he turned the globe in his fingers, examining its base speckled with red and green crystals.

"Like a field of flowers. What's this for, Lorena?"

"It's a paperweight, love."

"But if it isn't weighing any papers," he wondered, glancing at the table. He laid down the globe and turned to the statue of a gilded angel lying on its back, its arms open. "And this little angel? What does this little angel mean?"

With the tip of the needle she was trying to unplug the orifice of a coral bead. She frowned.

"It's an angel, what else?"
"I know. But what is it for?" he insisted. And without pausing, for fear of being interrupted: "Look, Lorena, here on this table this little angel is worth as much as the paperweight without the paper, or this ashtray without the ash; in other words, it doesn't mean anything. Only when we look at things, when we touch them do they start to live as we do; they're much more important than we are because they live on. The ashtray receives the ash and it becomes an ashtray, the glass steps on the paper and proves itself, this string of beads you're threading... Is it a necklace or a rosary?"

"A necklace."

"Could it have been a rosary?"

"Yes."

"Then you're the one who makes the decision. This little angel is nothing, but if I touch it then it really becomes an angel, with the functions of an angel." He held it by the wings. "What are the functions of an angel?"

She dropped the plugged bead in the box and selected another one. She tested the orifice with the tip of the needle.

"I've always heard that angels are messengers of God."

"In that case I have a message for God," he said, and put his lips to the face of the statue. He blew upon it three times; he shut his eyes and moved his lips, murmuring. He groped about its features like a blind person.

"O.K., now, now it has become a living angel."

"And what did you tell it?"

"That you no longer love me."

She stood motionless, watching. She turned to the box of beads.

"Is it any good to say that it's not true?"

"No, it isn't. He placed the angel on the table. And with his back to her, he leaned over the table lamp, and shut his eyes tight, which were brimming with tears. "Listen, Lorena, listen... Objects only have meaning when they have meaning, aside from this... they have to be looked at, to be touched. Just like us. If nobody loves me, I'm turned into a thing even sadder than these, because I walk, speak, moving back and forth like a shadow—empty, empty. I'm the paperweight without the paper, the ashtray without the ash, the angel without the angel. I become like this dagger here, a dagger outside a breast. What's the use of a dagger outside a breast?" he asked, and held it in his hands. He turned around, suddenly cheerful. "It's Arabic, h'm, Lorena? A silver half-moon, so sharp-pointed... It was me who found this dagger, remember? It lay in that show window, half-hidden under a tray, remember?"

She held the string of coral by her fingertips, and then swayed it with the movements of a swinging hammock.

"Ah, don't even mention it! If you only knew the fancy I took to that tray. I don't think I'll ever like any other object as much... If I could,
I’d board a plane right away, return to the antique shop of that bearded Greek, and then come out with it under my arm. The handles were tiny snakes intertwined with leaves and vines, such tiny snakes with ears. I felt crazy about those tiny snakes.”

“Then why didn’t you buy it?”

“Too expensive, love. Our dollars were almost gone, what was left was barely enough for these knickknacks.”

“Hush, Lorena, hush!” he beseeched her in a tone that made her raise her head, startled. She was reassured when she saw him, his hands gesticulating in mock panic. “To call the globe and the dagger and the angel knickknacks... No, no! The angel might rush to God and tell him.”

“It isn’t a meddling angel,” she warned him, and looked at him. “And before it escapes my mind—you say that when nobody loves us we are turned into useless things without any meaning, right? Well, sir, let me tell you that much more important than to be loved is to love, do you hear? That’s what distinguishes us from this paperweight, which you’ll be good enough to leave alone on the table before you break it, O.K.?”

“The glass is already getting warm,” he said, and closed his hands over the globe. He put it to his ear, turned his head down to his shoulder, and spoke softly as if it could hear what he was saying: “When I was a child I liked to eat toothpaste.”

“What brand?”

“Any brand. There was one with mint flavor, it stung too much and I’d cry with pain and pleasure. My kid sister, who was two years old, ate earth.”

She laughed. “What a family!”

He laughed too, but was soon serious. He sat down before her, brought his knees together and placed the globe on his knees. His hands, conch-like, circled it protectively. He leaned over, breathing upon the globe.

“Lorena, it’s a magic globe, Lorena!”

Turned toward the light, she was threading the needle. She wet the tip of the thread, raised the needle to her eyes which squinted with concentration, and made the first attempt. She missed. She nibbled again at the thread and with a delicate, incisive gesture she gradually brought the thread close to the needle. The tip of the stiffened thread pierced the needle without any obstacles.

“The copulation.”

“What?” she asked, relaxing her muscles. Pleased, she turned to the box. “What did you say, love?”

He covered the globe with his hands. He was breathing upon it.

“It’s a crystal ball, Lorena,” he murmured, his voice heavy. He sighed deeply. “So far I can see only smoke, everything is so blurred...”
"Don't give up, Miguel. Isn't it clearing up?"

"No . . . not quite. Wait, the smoke is disappearing, now everything looks sharper! Wow, isn't that clear! The future, Lorena, I can see the future! I can see you in a room . . . it's this room! You're wearing red, talking with a man."

"What man?"

"Wait, he's still somewhat far away . . . Now I can see your father, it's your father. He's upset and you're trying to calm him."

"Why is he upset?"

"Because he wants you to place me in a hospital, and you're resisting, but without much conviction. You look tired, Lorena dear, you're about to cry, and you're saying that I'm better, that I'm better . . ."

She hardened her face. She cleaned a fingernail with the tip of the needle.

"And then?"

"Then your father says that I haven't improved at all, that there's no hope," he said, leaning over; his hands shaped like binoculars were over his eyes, which were scanning the globe. "Wait, someone is walking in; walking in in such a weird way . . . That's me, that's me! I'm coming in upside down, walking on my hands, I've done a handstand and can't get back on my feet."

She put the string of beads around her neck, holding the needle fast so that the beads wouldn't drop out. She smiled, stroking the beads.

"What a moment you chose to do a handstand, love. Why didn't you behave like a good boy? H'm? . . . And what did Father do?"

"He turned his head so that he wouldn't see me any more. Then you looked at me, Lorena. And you didn't think I was funny. There was a time when you used to."

Slowly she removed the string. She ran her fingertips over the larger beads, aligning them.

"I'm always afraid that you'll topple down and break the vase, the glasses. Not to mention that everything drops out of your pockets. A mess."

He put the paperweight back on the table. He leaned his head against the armchair and stood looking at the ceiling.

"There was a chandelier in the show window of that antique shop, remember? A funny chandelier, full of colorful pendants hanging from it, some tiny crystals that swayed in the wind, ting-a-ling . . . It stood beside the picture."

"What picture?"

"One already dry-rotten, it had a pompous name, The Funeral of Love; it sounded better in Italian, I can no longer remember how it was in Italian. It depicted a procession of barefooted dancers carrying flower garlands,
as if they were going to a party. Only it wasn't a party. They all looked sad; the lovers, estranged and weeping, were following dead Love, a naked little boy, curled up in a hammock. Or was it a coach? ... Flowers were strewn on the road, the procession walked along a road. A boy-faun was comforting one of the lovers, a pale, grief-stricken woman ...

She was focusing her attention. She replied, evasive: “Was this picture in the show window?”

“Next to the chandelier that went ting-a-ling.”

“Well, I don't know; the way you describe it, it's much too sad. I bet I wouldn't like to have a picture like that at home.”

“Even sadder was the dwarf.”

“Was there a dwarf in the picture?”

“No, he wasn't in the picture, he was near it.”

“But ... was it one of those garden statues?”

“No, he was a real dwarf.”

“Was there a dwarf in the shop?”

“Yes. He was dead, a dead dwarf in a smoking jacket; the coffin lay in the show window. White gloves and tiny shoes with buckles. Everything was brand new; only the roses were old. They shouldn't have placed such old roses.”

“Were the roses white?” she asked, putting away the string of beads in the box. She lowered the lid, which clicked shut. “Were the roses white?”

“Yes, white.”

“White roses fade faster. And it was hot.”
He bowed his head down to his chest, and remained so, motionless, his eyes shut tight, the eyelids twitching. The cigarette burnt out between his fingers. When he placed it in the ashtray, she was holding a book.

“Lorena ...”

“H'm ...?”

“Let's have tea. Tea and cookies. I want some cookies.”

She got up.

“A great idea, I'll make the tea. But we're out of cookies; I can make you some toast with lots of butter, lots of salt. H'm?”

“I'll go out and get the cookies,” he said, holding her head in his hands.

“My beautiful Lorena. Cookies for my beautiful Lorena.”

She disengaged herself quickly.

“I'll put the water to boil. Take the money, it's in my handbag.”

“In the closet?”

“No, on the bed; a green handbag.”

He went to the bedroom, opened the handbag and stood looking at its contents. He pulled out a handkerchief stained with rouge. He breathed in the perfume. He dropped the handkerchief in the handbag, placed it care-
fully in the same spot, and returned to the living-room. Through the kitchen door, ajar, came the sound of the tap spouting water. He left, stepping lightly. In the elevator he avoided the mirror. He stood looking at the buttons, his finger running over all of them until it reached the black button with the letter G, now faded to invisibility. The elevator was already going down and he still had his finger on the button, without pressing it, just circling it, caressingly. When she shouted, only his eyes moved, following the direction of the voice coming from above and falling down the well, muffled.

“Miguel, where’s the dagger? Do you hear me, Miguel? The dagger . . . !”

He opened the elevator door.

“I have it.”

The doorman heard and moved away, walking backwards. He gestured with exaggerated cordiality.

“A beautiful night, isn’t it? Going out for a stroll?”

Miguel stopped, stared at the man. Quickly, he walked out into the street.
Quincy Troupe

NEW TIMES

breath curling like smoke
weaves its way into the winds
trailing voices of ashes

speaks of holocausts
passed down avenues full of skulls
packed tight as no lip smiles
of conservative bankers

garroting

whatever flows as history
as legacy, flesh trembling
like confetti

in the wake of whatever
blooms as spirit
Quincy Troupe

WHOSE DEATH IS THIS WALKING

whose death is this walking towards me now
eye know its not mine, eye left mine
behind, back at the undertakers

so who belongs to this corpse that just passed
me now, wagging a st. james version of the bible
or was it a readers digest version

look, his eyes are black & flat as crushed
shadows, deep as hot tar pits
whose corpse is this walking towards me

now, eye know its not mine—
eye left mine behind
back at the cemetery

Quincy Troupe

RIFF

may days bring an explosion of music
bouncing off edges, walls, poly rhythms
nodding sad junkies seducing daddy death
swinging around corners, cool breezes
floating, touching everything
love left whispering now, new shadows
crisscrossing connections tucked away
in memory, winter yielding, spring
resurrects all things possible
& the sun laughing always on the run
Quincy Troupe
THE SKY EMPTIES DOWN ICE

the sky empties down ice
winter grows quickly in your face
of crowded ashtrays

you say
you have come this far for cigarettes
fun & a warm adventure
in bed
but your razor nails
clawing my back
tell me

another story

meanwhile the sea whispers
rapture on the other side of time
pigeons drop slimy
shit into
your vanilla ice cream cone

but dont get angry
just yet

just because this moment defies
gravity, takes off & lands
just there
where a fart just left

all eye know is this

the sky is emptying down ice
& winter is quickly growing in your face
of crowded ashtrays

in your face of butt-end

ashtrays
46
Özcan Yalim

SEEKERS

You have died - they have not told you
You cannot know when life became unreal
Is it a game, or actuality? Tell me.
Who are these strangers around you?

You have died - that means you have lived -
how wonderful!
Something moved in the twilight
One day seekers will find you
In the golden bowl in which your dreams melted.

Özcan Yalim

THE POET

A poem is a song that multiplies
The poet is lonely.
THE LAMP

Had he been another
He would have gone mad in this darkness.

On my bureau
There is a lamp, an old one.
The moment I light it, for some reason,
(The wind perhaps)
It goes out.

I shelter the flame
With my hand, but still
It goes out.

Probably the oil is finished
And then, of course,
There is no light.

In other rooms
Lamps
Are burning.
Ulku Tamer

ANSWERS

1. Poetry is brother to the night
   and mother to the day.

   Grandfather in the heart, is poetry.

2. Poetry is the spider’s voice
   and song of the wall.

   The mason’s ballad it is, poetry.

3. Poetry is the rain’s stream
   and sweat at the hairs’ roots

   A ship’s new banner, is poetry.

4. Poetry is the poster’s flame
   and the letter’s line.

   The clapper within the bell, poetry.

5. Poetry is the blue of pick-ups,
   the fearlessness of the trucks.

   The unwritten history of the carriage, is poetry.

6. Poetry is the pail’s spring,
   the well’s weary traveler.

   The source’s guardian, poetry.

7. Poetry is the acrobat’s balance,
   the conjurer’s audience.
The magician's dream, poetry.

8 Poetry is the grape's sunshine, 
the apple's worm.

The dust on the blackberry, poetry.

9 Poetry is silver's symbol, 
the forging of steel.

Mining of lead is poetry.

10 Poetry is the hedge's thorn, 
the plowing of the field

The field-hands' daydream, poetry.

11 Poetry is the midges' hour, 
the fireflies' second.

Nature's years are poetry.

12 Poetry is death's shadow, 
life's covering.

The child's defense is poetry.

13 Poetry is the sand's sieve, 
the rock's sediment.

The marble's vein is poetry.

14 Poetry is the bed of sleeplessness, 
the map of sleep.

The balcony's awakening is poetry.

15 Poetry is flame's messenger, 
fire's arsonist.

The bird above the volcano is poetry.
Sabahattin Kudret Aksal

POEM TOWARD NOON

If only a child lived within me
His hair more yellow than the wheat
If only a child lived within me.

If only he would ask of me all the mountains
And a long trip to India
Even if his feet were bare.

Sabahattin Kudret Aksal

THE FIRST SNOW

The candle's flame is ever flickering
Dreams are always fleeting
Now in their storm-tossed fishing-boats
Men whistle softly
And silently think of happiness
But no one knows where happiness lies.
The first snow is on the roofs.
As he climbed the stairs of the palace, slow, straight, proud in the certainty of his conquest, I knew that it was he. I did not doubt it for a moment. His eyes and his mouth reflected my love, my passion on the night he was conceived. And I loved him too: I loved his lithe, young body, the firmness of his muscles, his sculpted head and perfectly proportioned limbs, like a colt racing headlong toward the sea. I knew that it was he and yet I said nothing: the prophecy was sealed. My desire for his body and his lips, for his smile and the color of his eyes, his smooth, burnished skin, his hard chest with its light covering of hair, made me conceal what I ought to have revealed. I would not reveal his identity, even though I knew his name from the moment he set foot on that first step, his tense leg displaying the hardness of his muscles, entering the main door as if the palace belonged by rights to him, a hero and a liberator. He entered through the great front door not because he was my son, but because he had conquered the awful Sphinx. What he deserved by birth he had won by deed. His pride invaded me doubly. In his love, I saw the features of Laius, his father, and my own features as well. His love was also double. On that late afternoon, the sun that was burning the clouds and the sky, reflecting orange and black on water—river, sea, pond—was also illuminating the slow ascent of the stone stairs, the slow ascent of someone whom I knew well. And yet I said nothing, as if to avenge not my weakness but the cruel words of the prophecy, the lewd voices of the priests, the accusing silence of the people. Or perhaps it was to avenge my own weakness, which was again compelling me to accept fate's design, even as I deceived myself into thinking that I had made the decision. Who holds sway, the gods or man? I couldn’t pray to the gods because I was going to be impure, but man, the man who slowly climbed the stairs, filled me to overflowing:
he returned to me because he had come out of me, and I only awaited the moment when two pains—two pleasures—would unite us again. But my desire was not impure: I wanted to love both father and son again in one person. In that way, I would deny the jealousy that I might once have been able to feel and I would have sons again by my own son. Halfway up the stairs, when he hesitated for a moment and when I could still have cried out, I did not encourage his hesitation but bit my tongue instead. He would reach the top of the stairs and I would be delivered to him. My hand in his, he would lead me to the bedroom of his origin and his downfall. He would not recognize me at all, for I merely gave birth to him, although at times a certain flash of hatred would cross his eyes, earth-sea-blue. I dreaded the moment when he would speak and question me.

Every day that I said nothing, the silence became more and more necessary. The silence was as still as stagnant water. The silence stung like sudden hailstones. The silence sowed doubt and created words which were never spoken. He asked me if I had had a son, he asked me if I had lost him. He asked me if I had wanted someone to die and he asked me what Laius was like. I sensed his jealousy, his despair, and his longing to be loved. His questions came afterwards, after we made love, when we lay beside one another, our bodies touching, our odors mingling, our spent but wondering hands still searching for sensation. I would sometimes forget who he was and would think that happiness would redeem my guilt and that, because I had respected the prophecy when I could have ignored it, I would someday be pardoned by some god. But I knew that I was deceiving myself. I didn't speak because I didn't want to waste our nights—each night, every night, eternity, drop by drop—when his body warmed mine and his arms held me. I had forgotten Laius. I had only hatred for him, the hatred and fear that he himself had felt when his son was born and he had sentenced him, indolently protecting himself by obeying the gods. It was Laius who had brought bad luck: His ignorance and his naivete made him believe the ironic words of the priests. It was he who invented the prophecy when he saw me gaze with love at our son. So Laius is hidden in the black and forgotten reaches of my memory.

I believe in my son alone, in his unsatisfied and contradictory love, in his penetrating and futile gaze, in his body—statuesque perfection—that recognizes mine and loves me like a true lover, his mouth at my breast, seeking the pleasure that he did not know and that he had despaired of exchanging for the pleasure he was now experiencing. I wanted my milk to flow once again, milk that was never for him.

We have arrived at the point where neither law nor morality exists. I disregard the shadows and the remorse. At dawn, light enters my window, light and the sun. I contemplate his sleeping body, his lips that outline a
smile. He is mine, all of him is mine, I possess him as no one ever has or ever will.

The suffering won't matter later. I had expected all of this from the moment that I saw him climbing the stairs, slow and sure. I knew that the river could dry up, that stone could be ground to dust and the color of the petal fade away. I also knew that he would suffer and his memories would torment him. For me, only death remained, and when I was at his side I could do nothing but await the final blow. Step by step up the stairs, night by night on my body, doom prowled, not knowing where to stop, but the wound already open and the blood flowering upon my skin.

Afterward, nothing would remain but chaos and darkness.
Leonardo P. Alishan

Long winter.

I return from the field
with head bowed.

Even my dog blames me.

Leonardo P. Alishan

I've come to bury someone in the snow.

It's so cold
I've forgotten whom.

Leonardo P. Alishan

A tiger leapt at me
from a sunflower,

the sun licked
its golden claws.

Leonardo P. Alishan

Apple tree growing
in my throat, who's
this man they've hanged in you?

Think, love, when
I open my mouth, it's
not nicotine, it's not
alcohol. Think
this tree if you can
and him in it, rotting,
or
nothing at all. Think nothing
at all.
P. F. Anderson

I AM THE BEAST

I am the beast

with only that beauty
which is proper for beasts:

a nightfall of fur
lit
with many moons of claws

an invisible tail
twitching
and the soft eyes.

knowing no different
I stretch
as I am stroked

my pleasure purrs
until
my whole body
vibrates.

I am hardly aware
of what is to happen

knowing
that what is willed
where these things are willed
is

what comes to pass
and this
is what was willed
long past.

never think that I am
indiscriminate
for
I am still the beast
and
I choose
by smell.
with those
whose scent does not blend
(sweet
and salt
fresh warm)
with mine
the soft eyes cloud
lightning
is added to the fur
with every stroke
sparks fly
ungraceful limbs push off
stiffly
moving away.
yes
I am a true beast
not the beauty.
it is
all my beast's nature to
desire
nature to give
love
the nature in me that
I wish to be loved for
because
I am the beast.
Without even shedding a tear, Maria Alejandra left me, making her way along Oro Street in the direction of Charcas. At first I sadly thought: “She’s leaving for ever; it’s an irreversible act. It’s the end of a chapter in my life.” Then the spiteful thoughts occurred to me: “It’s the best thing that could have happened; she only complicated my life anyway. It’s her loss, not mine.”

But life—as they say in songs on the radio—must go on and, for openers, I had no reason to be standing on the corner of Santa Fe and Oro. Besides, the greasy smell of the pizzerias as well as the pushing and shoving of the crowds getting on and off the buses were grating on my nerves. I tried to walk home slowly and it’s very difficult to walk slowly when you’re being crushed by the idea that a meaningful relationship has come to an end. I couldn’t help thinking about Maria Alejandra, but my thoughts were so vast that it was almost as though I weren’t thinking about anything. I distractedly looked at the multiplicity of confused store windows on my left. To make the walk home take longer I stopped to look at a toy-shop window just before coming to Carranza Street. It was a heterogeneous multicolored world in which toy soldiers, guns and automobiles seemed to predominate. When I’m in a tough situation I tend to think about trivial matters. At that moment I thought about the injustice there was in the disproportion of sizes which prevailed among the toys. A dog made out of felt was ten times larger than a little tin train which was ten times larger than a little plastic puppy. I prophesied—but no one heard me—that life would be horrible in a world in which everything were out of proportion. I suddenly lost interest in those weighty matters and the image of Maria Alejandra forced its way back into my consciousness. That’s when it occurred to me to fight the annoying reiteration of Maria Alejandra by means of a truly trivial act; I went into the toy shop and acquired a fifty-cent plastic horn. The horn was divided into three sections: the mouthpiece was green; the middle was red and had three little holes; the bell was white and looked like a calla lily.
At home I started to play the horn. I fruitlessly tried to squeeze some melody out of it. I didn’t attempt anything sublime; I was only looking for something simple, catchy: popular songs, half-time tunes, television jingles. But the horn could barely manage to emit a few isolated, strident tones. I believe that this was due to the fact that I don’t know music and also to the fact that the horn was only a toy.

At that moment I heard the sound of Monica’s key in the lock. “The poor kid,” I thought with unaccustomed tenderness, “she’s back from work. She must be tired and bored to death with the routine of her job,” because the sudden image of Maria Alejandra afflicted me with the first feelings of remorse in four years. To escape them, so that my wife would secretly forgive me, I decided to act like a little kid; I decided to cheer her up. I took off my shoes and stood on the living room coffee table. Startled, my wife looked at me, first with surprise and then with relief when she realized that I hadn’t scratched the table. Then I blew with all my might and my horn let out some really joyful, shrill blasts. Monica laughed like a little girl and kissed me. The simultaneous laughter and kiss brought me back to those loving times when we were sweethearts.

From that day on, when I left my job at the bank each evening, I filled in for those past meetings with Maria Alejandra by going straight home to play my horn. I’d play only till dinner time; I’d prefer to go to bed after I ate. I don’t know whether it was because of the work my lungs were subjected to during the two hours a day I’d play the horn; the fact was that I’d doze right off and fall into a deep and peaceful sleep without dreams, a sleep like I’d never had before. Consequently, on the following morning I’d awaken in a great mood with a rosy outlook on life.

Then seeing how beneficial the horn was for my spirits, I decided to add a morning session. That’s why I acquired the habit of playing every morning for three or four hours, depending on the time I’d spend on the daily shopping. Then I’d have lunch and leave for the bank, where—it goes without saying—I never played the horn.

My ten years of banking experience have taught me that you can divide banker’s work into two great periods. The first four hours—in which customers come and go, have consultations, handle business, make inquiries—were bearable, even if not quite entertaining. But afterward, from four to seven—when the bank is closed to the public and whatever animation there is has to stem from the employees alone—a kind of sadness and restlessness invade my soul. It’s true that when there are no customers around the employees usually engage in conversation and joke around. It’s no less true
that some of the conversations weren't too boring and that once in a while a joke might be more or less amusing. Yet these pale pleasures were in no way comparable with playing the horn.

Therefore, it was to be expected that on Friday the 27th of March of 1970 I should place the horn in the attache case meant for carrying my daily sandwich. At about five in the afternoon I went into the bathroom and, facing the lavatory mirror, I began to play the horn. At first I blew prudently, almost inaudibly, almost sighing. And even though the notes issuing from my horn never managed to form a melody, I succeeded in giving them a plaintive tone and a certain romantic quality tinged with an ineffable nostalgia. When I noticed that I was becoming depressed and that my eyes were filling with tears, I fell back into a happier vein; I played cheery, optimistic music. Gradually, my playing became louder and louder until I reached the intensity with which I usually played at home. Depending on the mirror to guide me, I simultaneously made an effort to assume the facial expressions and gestures of a soloist (while admitting the non-existence of horn soloists). During that time, carried away by my own music, I was performing with my eyes closed. When I opened them I saw that my face no longer monopolized the mirror. Attracted by the stentorian notes of the horn, all the employees had entered the washroom. They were laughing their guts out.

One person who wasn't laughing was Mr. Ansinelli, the branch manager. His heritage is Italian; his face consists of three features: a sharp nose, a straight moustache and an imposing pair of eyeglasses. His manner tends to be imperious. Coldly staring at me, he dryly ordered me to cease playing the bugle and to get back to work. I had no choice but to obey him, but not without first setting him straight, courteously but firmly, with regard to my instrument's identity as a horn. Following this brusque epilogue we all stampeded out of the bathroom. My head high, I walked with dignity past the female employees who, not having dared to penetrate beyond the unseen barriers of the gentlemanly enclosure, crowded together in a chaste throng in front of the men's room.

I returned to my desk feeling that a frozen rage directed at Mr. Ansinelli, the man who wouldn't let me play my horn, had taken possession of my soul. But his jurisdiction stopped at the bank doors. I didn't allow my repressed desires to Freudianly manifest themselves in my sleep; I played my horn at home till two in the morning, at which time my bleary-eyed neighbor from the floor below made his appearance. I, probably respectful of the rights of others and certainly exhausted from lack of sleep, put away my horn and went to bed. Monica, insensitive to the charms of music, had been sleeping for quite a long time, her ears stopped up with cotton plugs.

Luckily, the next day was Saturday. I didn't let that Saturday and Sunday go to waste; the horn gave out with the bravest sounds of freedom.
Lamentably, inevitably, the fearful Monday arrived and, after it, the other four days in which I couldn't be the absolute master of my horn.

3

If I had any reputation at all at the bank, it was for responsibility and for having will power. That Friday, March 27, 1970, Mr. Ansinelli's im placable face definitely established the incompatibility which kept the horn separate from the bank. Two opposing forces mutely struggled in my soul: I loved the horn, I feared dismissal. My sense of responsibility told me that in no way was it advisable to lose a position in which I earned a good salary, enjoyed the esteem of my numerous superiors—Mr. Ansinelli included—and had the respect of my few subordinates. To the customary and incessant expenditures for electricity, gas and the telephone, I had just boldly added the anomalous and exorbitant payments for the apartment and the car. As a result, both abstract nouns—responsibility and will—substantially conspired in favor of my abstaining from playing the horn at the bank.

4

In order to obviate an unjustifiable state of anxiety in my multitudinous readers, I shall begin this paragraph by getting ahead of myself and saying that on Monday, February 1st, 1971, I was fired. The housekeeper said it was fate. I, in no mood to debate, think other factors were involved. Mainly the unfortunate disposition of the calendar. From a general point of view, I had hardly advanced a twelfth of the year and before me stretched, obstinate and lined up in an orderly row, eleven lethal months. And, more specifically, that week still had four days to go.

On the other hand, that decisive Monday found me in a terrible mood. I was just beginning to overcome, or to be overcome by, some marital difficulties. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's having my enjoyment contaminated by anger. And that very last Sunday in January was a day on which the joy of playing my horn had been clouded by an exasperating bit of stubbornness on my wife's part.

On Sunday I got up early feeling content. I leisurely lingered over my coffee and read the rotogravures unhurriedly. Later I devoted myself to playing the horn. Toward nightfall, Monica, incredibly enough, preferred our going to the movies to having me play the horn. A shocking scene ensued in which Monica thought it appropriate to go in for screams, tears and reproaches. Her arguments were varied and contradictory. I had just one coherent argument: I repeated that they don't allow horn playing at the movies. My point of view won out and we stayed home. While my sour-faced wife
watched an endless television program in the living room. I locked myself in the bedroom and kept playing the horn until I fell with exhaustion. I missed dinner and slept with my clothes on. My exhaustion was extreme and on Monday I awoke after eleven-thirty. And that's how I entered the frigid, mechanistic enclosure which is the bank without having eaten and without having been able to play the horn even for an instant.

Even those who don't cultivate psychological fiction will be able—maybe—to imagine the frenzied state of nervousness and excitement with which I was seized. I suddenly realized that I wouldn't be able to make it to seven in the evening without playing my horn. Pretending to have forgotten my glasses I asked Mr. Ansinelli for permission to go home to look for them. Since I promised to return in ten minutes and since Mr. Ansinelli knew that I lived only two blocks away from the Pacifico branch of the bank, he granted me permission, not without first assuming the severe look with which he reproved me for having morally obligated him to slight his duty.

Running with desperation, I devoured the two blocks which separated me from my house and, as if in a fit of insanity, I frantically began to play the horn, trying to make the absolute most of the few minutes I had. Going down in the elevator I pressed the STOP button when I was between the third and fourth floor and went back up to my apartment. I wrapped the horn in a newspaper and returned to the bank. On the way I thought that it would be a good idea to sell the car. I really didn't need it anyway; after all, I walked to the bank and on weekends I preferred staying at home playing my horn.

"This gentleman is the assistant to the credit officer. He'll be very glad to advise you." Mr. Ansinelli directed these remarks to an impeccably dressed gentleman who looked like a retired general and who awaited me in my office. I learned that he was the proprietor of the famous Patriotic Bubble soda pop plant on Fitz Roy and that he had "hied himself"—he had recourse to this strange verb—to the bank to request a loan toward the acquisition of I don't know what cryptic equipment which, nevertheless—before I could prevent him from doing so—he described at length with an abundance of extractors, pistons, governors and other incomprehensible terms. The man was excessively polite. He aggressively squeezed my hand, lighted my cigarette, absolutely refused to sit down before I did. Then, in a melancholy tone he orally composed a detailed outline of his struggles to advance along the arduous road of progress. Attracted by the sudden remembrance of the first horsedrawn streetcar—one of the horses figures in an ample collection of anecdotes—he suddenly backed away to 1947 only to vertiginously return to 1971 at the controls of one of the modern German trucks of his fleet. Next he spoke to me about his family in general and in particular about a highly intelligent daughter who was studying public relations and on whom he and
his wife pinned their highest hopes. At this point he took out his billfold with a furtive gesture that made me think he would attempt to bribe me in an effort to obtain the loan. However, what he showed me was a snapshot of the daughter who was studying public relations; I glimpsed some hair and a pair of eyeglasses.

To mitigate his uncontainable autobiography I handed him some blank forms and told him to fill them out. While the soda man was writing with an iron hand, I bent over—as if to look for a piece of paper in the box under the desk—and quickly blew on the horn. The man didn’t hear a thing and kept writing. Now he had unfolded his identification and his social security card whose numbers he determinedly was copying. Then, taking advantage of the fervent buzzing of voices that held sway in the bank at that hour of the day, I’d bend over from time to time and stealthily play my horn, producing a few short and muffled notes.

And playing the horn under those circumstances is just like smoking in a railroad car in which it’s not permitted. The lawbreaker smokes nervously, fearful of the conductor’s approach, a passenger looks at him disapprovingly; smoking is no longer a pleasure but only a reason to be fined. In that kind of situation it’s better not to smoke, not to play the horn. The soda man, his mouth over the papers as if he were going to eat them, framed a question for me every so often (he called it a doubt). The passenger, even though it’s at the risk of having to stand for the rest of the trip, can change cars. This is not possible for the horn player.

Without thinking about it I took the horn out of the box, and pointing its white, calla lily shaped bell at the greyish head of hair poring over the forms, I blew with all my heart and soul and wrung a short high-pitched note out of it which blew a few strands of hair out of place on the soda man’s head. Frightened, he raised his head and stared at me in wide-eyed wonder.

“Oh, for your kids,” he smiled as he doubted.

“I have no children,” I responded with tranquil ferocity. “It’s mine and I play it whenever I feel like it.”

To emphasize this affirmation, I blew even harder, and not for just a few seconds this time, but for more than a minute. My office is nothing more than a glass partition with a little sign saying CREDIT: I rose in my seat a little to be able better to observe the effect produced by the unexpected sounds. All the employees and customers conticuerententique oratenebant, as if I were Aeneas and the soda man, though it grieve us, queen Dido. Then, idiotically epical, I thought: “Let it be as God wills.”

I brought my horn to my lips and, having recourse to all the variants permitted to me by the rudimentary structure of the instrument, I began to play in earnest. At times I’m a bit theatrical; not satisfied with the confined quarters of the credit office, I emerged in the lobby, climbed onto the
counter with an agility not devoid of a certain faun-like quality and began to march up and down on it from one end to the other. The customers fearfully removed their elbows from the counter. It gratified me to be the unquestioned protagonist of the episode; it cheered me to see everyone else in confusion. I heard fragmentary comments: “It’s a strike”; “It’s an act of repudiation”; “I think it’s an employee whose wife just died.”

At that moment I saw Mr. Ansinelli swiftly advancing; he had the bearing of a Providence-sent man whose appearance was breathlessly awaited by a multitude which faced insoluble problems. Scarlet, he entreated me in quite a loud voice. “Mr. Del Prete, be so kind as to go to the Manager’s Office immediately. I must speak with you.”

I responded by intoning a sort of outlandish burst of laughter on the horn. The bystanders were overcome by a general hilarity which made Mr. Ansinelli look like a fool. Then, renouncing his earlier majesty, Mr. Ansinelli attempted to knock the horn out of my hand. An angelic grace guided my movements; with elegance, maintaining my poise, I leaped from the counter into the area meant for the public. Thus entrenched, I looked at it triumphantly and executed a couple of bellicose blasts in which a scornful challenge was implicit. What a grotesque figure Mr. Ansinelli was as he laboriously clambered up on the counter, dragging his high position, his fifty-five years and his 200 pounds after him! And how hilarious as he came crashing down into the public area trailing behind him the same attributes as when he had climbed up!

Immediately getting to his feet, Mr. Ansinelli charged me like a fighting bull. I broke into a swift zigzagging run keeping up my horn playing, stepping on feet and jabbing my way through with my elbows. Uncannily, an affair which had been private and artistic turned into one that was public and political. An absurd panic spread through the tranquil banking premises. People began to run and shout. A lady intuitively protected the nursing child she was carrying in her arms. A few misfits took advantage of the situation by making off with the ballpoint pens, breaking the chains with which they were fastened to the wall. Two men began a fistfight. I could hear the noise of glass shattering and right then I was captured.

When the effects of the tear gas had dissipated and when the minions of the police force had pulled out, calm was laboriously restored. Mr. Ansinelli, after hysterically placing several telephone calls, rushed to the bank’s main branch and came back with the victorious order to fire me on the spot. Our bank is efficient, I’ll give them that; in just a few minutes they had arranged my dismissal, they had paid me and I was on my way out of the bank with my horn under my arm.

Since I didn’t know what the street was like at five on a Monday afternoon, I decided to wander around down there until seven o’clock. Curiously, now that I could play my horn I no longer had any desire to do so. I went all
the way to Dorrego Street and began to walk toward the flatland. The whistle of a train that was passing overhead, off to the right, seemed to inspire me briefly. I couldn't get myself to play more than one or two notes; I was no longer interested in the horn. When I got to the polo field I tossed it at a cat that was suspiciously watching me through the iron grillwork. And that's where the horn remained, at the foot of some bushes. I have no idea whether or not someone later picked it up.

But what really strikes me as weird is the fact that hardly had I forgotten the horn when, as I was getting ready to cross Libertador Avenue, I strangely came upon Maria Alejandra who, dressed in a sort of man-tailored suit, was taking a diminutive mouselike Mexican dog for a walk.
Amelia Biagioni

GESTAL'T

De mi boca brota el bramido de los soles. 
Orión recién despedazado 
sopla el cuerno de caza 
halalí 
que reverbera en astronaves y galaxias. 
En flecha en selva y en turbina 
con ansia blanca y negra 
las estirpes 
   del polvo al angel 
devorándose comulgándose 
persiguen la persecución 
   halcón azor amor neblí radar 
para alcanzarme límpidas a mí que soy el Cazador.

Amelia Biagioni

TIGRE

En la curva del salto 
rujo 
   Vil cazador 
aún no ha nacido el rey 
que ha de contar mis manchas.

Yo estoy 
dentro del bosque 
dentro del tiempo.

Y él 
afuera 
temiéndome 
sentado sobre mi piel.

66
Amelia Biagioni

GESTALT

From my mouth bellows the roar of suns.
Orion lately torn asunder
sounds the hunting horn
halali
that reverberates in spaceships and galaxies.
In arrow in jungle and in turbine
with black and white anxiety
the races
dust to angel
consume themselves take communion
pursue the persecution
falcon goshawk love peregrine radar
aim to reach transparently
the Hunter that is Me.

Amelia Biagioni

TIGER

In the curve of the leap
I roar
Vile hunter
the king who will count my spots
has yet to be born.

I am
inside the forest
inside time.

And he
outside
fearing me
seated upon my skin.
Alphonze Piché

QUAI

Un soleil humide
Bave sa chaleur
Sur le faubourg:

Des brises putrides
Vous tirent le coeur
Par les alentours.

Des cordes pansues
Où depuis des jours
S'agrippent en vain

Par-dessus la rue
Des linges à jour
Au genre incertain.

Aux façades lasses
Des vieillards trapus
Obstinément laids

Chauffent et prélassent
Leurs angles perclus
Aux rayons en biais.

Les seins sur le ventre,
Se pinçant des poux,
Les femmes paressent;

Des enfants s'arrangent
De rein et de tout
Sans couche et sans fesses.
Alphonze Piché
QUAI

A humid sun
Drools its warmth
Down on the slum;

And the putrid air
Pulls your heart
Right out your mouth.

The drooping clotheslines
Day after day
Cling in vain

Above the street
Where underwear
Of one sex or another hangs.

At the tired fronts of buildings
Squat old men,
Stubbornly ugly

Sun themselves and sprawl
Their stiff figures
Awkwardly on the sidewalk.

Their breasts on their bellies,
The women idly sit
Picking out each other's lice;

The children are naked
And have no place to sit,
And no flesh to sit on.
Alphonze Piché

REMOUS

Fuis cette onde placide
Ou s’ébat trop de soleil;
Je saurai de mon ventre fluide
T’arracher au soleil.

Je saurai,
Tes jambes à mes jambes soeurs
Et ton cœur enserré de mes bras,
Epuiser l’ultime paysage
Du dernier souvenir.

Ta nuit seule en ma nuit;
Ton âme flétrie à mon agonie;
Ta musique ardente morte à mon long silence:
Je glisserai sur toi mes lentes caresses d’algues . . .
Et dans les conques nouvelles de ta bouche et tes yeux
J’éterniserai
La mortelle douceur de mon baiser
Et de mes larmes.

Alphonze Piché

RETRAITE

Murer les seches répugnances,
Les peines, les douleurs sans fruit;
Venir à la saine souffrance
Simple comme descend la nuit:

Nous serons la bête blessée
Qui se dérobe pour mourir;
Nous serons l’être et la pensée,
La loi, le but et le désir.

Nous creuserons le sanctuaire
Propice aux longues oraisons,
Où nos vingt ans octogénaires
Déballeront leurs cargaisons.

70
Alphonze Piché

WHIRLPOOL

Flee this placid water
Where too much sunlight shimmers;
I will pull you from the sky
With my fluid belly.

I know how,
Your legs entwined in my legs,
Your heart embraced by my arms,
To drain the final scene
From the last memory.

Your night alone in my night;
Your soul faded in my agony;
Your ardent music dead in my long silence;
I will slide over you my slow seaweed caresses . . .
And in the new conches of your mouth and eyes
I will eternalize
The mortal sweetness of my kiss
And of my tears.

Alphonze Piché

RETREAT

Wall up the old, useless troubles,
The fruitless pains, dislikes;
Arrive at a healthy suffering,
Simple as the falling of night.

We will be the wounded beast
That steals away to die;
We will be thought and being,
Law, intent, and desire.

We will dig out our sanctuary
Propitious for long orations,
Where our ancient twenty-year-olds
Unpack their hoards of frustrations.
João Cabral de Melo Neto

I

(Paisagem do Capibaribe)

A cidade é passada pelo rio
como uma rua
é passada por um cachorro;
uma fruta
por uma espada.

O rio ora lembra
a língua mansa de um cão,
ora o ventre triste de um cão,
ora o outro rio
de aquoso pano sujo
dos olhos de um cão.

Aquele rio
era como um cão sem plumas,
Nada sabia da chuva azul,
da fonte cor de rosa,
da água do copo de água,
da água de cântaro,
dos peixes de água,
da brisa na água.

Sabia dos caranguejos
de lodo e ferrugem.
Sabia da lama
como de uma mucosa.
Devia saber dos polvos.
Sabia seguramente
da mulher febril que habita as ostras.

Aquele rio
jamais se abre aos peixes,

72
(Landscape of Capibaribe)

The river passes through the city
as a dog
passes through a street;
a sword through
a fruit.

The river sometimes resembled
the soft tongue of a dog,
the sad belly of a dog,
or the other river
of the soiled watery fabric
of a dog’s eyes.

That river
was like a dog without plumes,
It didn’t know of the blue rain,
of the pink fountain,
of the water in the water glass,
of the water in the water-jar,
of the fish in the water,
of the breeze on the water.

It knew of the crabs
of mud and rust.
It knew of slime
like mucus.
It must have known of squids.
It certainly knew
of the feverish woman who lives in oysters.

That river
never opens itself to fish,
ao brilho,
à inquietação de faca
que há nos peixes.
Jamais se abre em peixes.
Abre-se em flores
pobres e negras
como negros.
Abre-se numa flora
suja e mais mendiga
como são os mendigos negros.
Abre-se em mangues
de folhas duras e crespos
como um negro.

Liso como o ventre
de uma cadela fecunda,
o rio cresce
sem nunca explodir.
Tem, o rio,
um parto fluente e invertebrado
como o de uma cadela.

E jamais o vi ferver
(como ferve
o pão que fermenta).
Em silêncio,
o rio carrega sua fecundidade pobre,
grávido de terra negra.

Em silêncio se dá:
em capas de terra negra.
em botinas ou luvas de terra negra
para o pé ou a mão
que mergulha.

Como às vezes
passa com os cães,
parecia o rio estagnar-se.
Suas águas fluiam então
mais densas e mornas;
fluiam com as ondas
densas e mornas
de uma cobra.

74
to the brightness,
to the knife-like uneasiness
that fish have.
It never opens into fish.

It opens into flowers,
poor and black
like black men.
It opens into dirty flowers
poorer than black beggars.
It opens into mangroves
with hard leaves, curled
like a black man.

Smooth like the belly
of a fertile bitch,
the river grows,
never bursting.
Fluid and invertebrate
the river gives birth
like a bitch.

And I have never seen it boil
(as dough boils
when it rises).
Silently,
the river bears its poor fertility,
pregnant with black earth.

Silently, it yields itself
in coats of black earth.
In boots or gloves of black earth
it yields itself to the foot or the hand
which plunges into it.

And, at times,
since it passes with dogs,
the river seemed to stagnate.
Its waters, then, flowed
denser and warmer;
they flowed
with the dense and warm waves
of a snake.
Ele tinha algo, então,
da estagnação de um louco.
Algo da estagnação
do hospital, da penitenciária, dos asilos,
da vida suja e abafada
(da roupa suja e abafada)
por onde se veio arrastando.

Algo da estagnação
dos palácios cariados,
comidos
de mofo e erva-de-passarinho.
Algo da estagnação
das árvores obesas
pingando os mil açúcares
das salas de jantar pernambucanas,
por onde se veio arrastando.

(É nelas,
mas de costas para o rio,
que “as grandes famílias espirituais” da cidade
chocam os ovos gordos
de sua prosa.
Na paz redonda das cozinhas,
ei-las a revolvar viciosamente
seus caldeirões
de preguiça viscosa).

Seria a água daquele rio
fruta de alguma árvore?
Por que parecia aquela
uma água madura?
Por que sobre ela, sempre,
como que iam pousar moscas?

Aquele rio
saltou alegre em alguma parte?
Foi canção ou fonte
em alguma parte?
Por que então seus olhos
vinham pintados de azul
nos mapas?

76
The river had then
something of the stagnation of a madman.
Something of the stagnation
of hospitals, of prisons, of asylums,
of the dirty stifling life
(of dirty stifling clothes)
through which it had dragged itself.

Something of the stagnation
of decayed palaces,
eaten
by mould and mistletoe.
Something of the stagnation
of obese trees,
dripping with the endless sugar
of Pernambuco dining-rooms,
through which it had dragged itself.

(It is in them,
but with their backs to the river,
that the city's "great spiritual families"
brood over the fat eggs
of their conversation.
In the rotund peace of their kitchens,
there they are, viciously stirring
their pans
of sticky idleness).

Could the water of that river
be the fruit of some tree?
Why did that water
seem so ripe?
Why did flies always seem
to be landing on it?

That river:
did it gaily spring some place?
Was it some place
a song or a fountain?
Why then were its eyes
painted blue
on the maps?
(Paisagem do Capibaribe)

Entre a paisagem
o rio fluía
como uma espada de líquido espesso.
Como um cão
humilde e espesso.

Entre a paisagem
(fluía)
de homens plantados na lama;
de casas de lama
plantadas em ilhas
coaguladas na lama;
paisagem de anfíbios
de lama e lama.

Como o rio
aqueles homens
são como cães sem plumas
(um cão sem plumas
é mais
que um cão saqueado;
é mais
que um cão assassinado.

Um cão sem plumas
é quando uma árvore sem voz.
É quando de um pássaro
suas raízes no ar.
É quando a alguma coisa
roem tão fundo
até o que não tem).

O rio sabia
daqueles homens sem plumas.
Sabia
de suas barbas expostas,
de seu doloroso cabelo
de camarão e estopa.

78
(Landscape of Capibaribe)

The river flowed
through the landscape
like a sword of thick liquid.
Like a dog,
humble and thick.

Through the landscape
(it flowed)
of men planted in mud:
of mud houses,
planted on islands,
coagulated in mud;
a landscape of amphibians
of mud and mud.

Like the river,
those men
are like dogs without plumes
(a dog without plumes
is more
than a ravaged dog;
is more
than a murdered dog.

A dog without plumes
is a tree without voice.
It is when a bird
has its roots in the air.
It is when something
is so deeply gnawed
that it loses
even what it doesn't possess).

The river knew
of those men without plumes.
Knew
of their exposed beards,
of their painful hair
of shrimps and tow.
Ele sabia também
dos grandes galpões da beira dos cais
(onde tudo
e é uma imensa porta
sem portas)
escançarados
aos horizontes que cheiram a gasolina.

E sabia
da magra cidade de rolha,
onde homens ossudos,
onde pontes, sobrados ossudos
(vão todos
vestidos de brim)
secam
até sua mais funda calica.

Mas ele conhecia melhor
os homens sem pluma.
Estes
secam
ainda mais além
de sua calica extrema;
ainda mais além
de sua palha;
mais além
da palha de seu chapéu;
mais além
até
da camisa que não têm;
muito mais além do nome
mesmo escrito na folha
do papel mais seco.

Porque é na água do rio
que eles se perdem
(lentamente
e sem dente).
Ali se perdem
(como uma agulha não se perde).
Ali se perdem
(como um relógio não se quebra).
It also knew
of the big sheds at the edge of the quay
(where everything
is a huge door
without doors)
wide open
to horizons smelling of gasoline.

And it knew
of the meagre city of cork,
where bony men,
bony bridges and houses
(all dressed in sackcloth)
dry up
to their deepest ashes.

But it knew better
the men without plumes.
These
dry up
even further
than their final ashes;
even further
than their straw;
further
than the straw of their hats;
even
further
than the shirt they do not possess;
much further than the name itself
written on a sheet
of the driest paper.

Because in the water of the river
they lose themselves
(slowly
and toothlessly).
There they lose themselves
(as a needle doesn't get lost).
There they lose themselves
(as a watch doesn't break).
Ali se perdem
como um espelho não se quebra.
Ali se perdem
como se perde a água derramada:
sem o dente seco
com que de repente
num homem se rompe
o fio de homem.

Na água do rio,
 lentamente,
 se vão perdendo
em lama; numa lama
que pouco a pouco
também não pode falar:
que pouco a pouco
ganha os gestos defuntos
da lama;
o sangue de goma,
o olho paralítico
da lama.

Na paisagem do rio
dificil é saber
onde começa o rio;
onde a lama
começa do rio;
onde a terra
começa da lama;
onde o homem,
onde a pele
começa da lama;
onde começa o homem
naquele homem.

Dificil é saber
se aquele homem
já não está
mais aquém do homem;
mais aquém do homem
ao menos capaz de roer
os ossos do ofício;
capaz de sangrar
There they lose themselves as a mirror doesn't break.
There they lose themselves as spilt water is lost:
without the dry tooth that all of a sudden
snaps the life thread of a man.

In the water of the river, slowly,
they lose themselves in mud; in the mud
which, little by little, stops talking;
which, little by little, takes on the dead gestures
of mud;
the sticky blood, the paralytic eye
of mud.

In the river's landscape it is hard to know
where the river starts;
where the mud from the river starts;
where the earth from the mud starts;
where the man, where the skin from the mud starts,
where the man in that man starts.

It is hard to know if that man
is not already less than a man;
less than the man who can, at least, gnaw
the bones of his trade; a man who might bleed
na praça;
capaz de gritar
se a moenda lhe mastiga o braço;
capaz
de ter a vida mastigada
e não apenas
dissolvida
(naquela água macia
que amolece seus ossos
como amolecou as pedras).

III

(Fábula do Capibaribe)

A cidade é fecundada
por aquela espada
que se derrama,
por aquela
úmida gengiva de espada.
No extremo do rio
o mar se estendia,
como camisa ou lençol,
sobre seus esqueletos
de areia lavada.
(Como o rio era um cachorro,
o mar podia ser uma bandeira
azul e branca
desdobrada
no extremo do curso
—ou do mastro—do rio.

Uma bandeira
que tivesse dentes:
que o mar está sempre
com seus dentes e seu sabão
roendo suas praias.

Uma bandeira
que tivesse dentes:
como um poeta puro
polindo esqueletos,
in the square;
a man who might scream
if the mill chews his arm;
a man who might have
his life chewed
and not merely
dissolved
(in that smooth water
which softens his bones
as it has softened the stones).

III

(Fable of Capibaribe)

The city is fertilized
by that sword
which flows over,
by that
sword's moist gums.

At the end of the river
the sea was spread out
(like a shirt or a sheet)
on its skeletons
of washed sand.

(As the river was a dog,
the sea could be a flag,
blue and white,
unfolded
at the end of the course
—or the mast—of the river.

A flag
with teeth:
for the sea,
with its teeth and soap,
is always gnawing its beaches.

A flag
with teeth:
like a pure poet
polishing skeletons,
como um roedor puro,
um polícia puro
elaborando esqueletos,
o mar,
com afã,
está sempre outra vez lavando
seu puro esqueleto de areia.

O mar e seus ácidos,
o mar e a boca de seus ácidos,
o mar e seu estômago
que come e se come,
o mar e sua carne
vidrada, de estátua.
seu silêncio, alcançado
à custa de sempre dizer
a mesma coisa,
o mar e seu tão puro
professor de geometria).

O rio teme aquele mar
como um cachorro
teme uma porta entretanto aberta,
como um mendigo,
a igreja aparentemente aberta.

Primeiro,
o mar devolve o rio.
Fecha o mar ao rio
seus brancos lençóis.
O mar se fecha
a tudo o que no rio
são flores de terra,
imagem de cão ou mendigo.

Depois,
o mar invade o rio.
Quer
o mar
destruir no rio
suas flores de terra inchada,
like a pure rodent,
a pure policeman
devising skeletons;
the sea,
laboriously,
is continuously washing
its pure skeleton of sand.

O mar e seu incenso,
the sea and its acids,
the sea and the mouth of its acids,
the sea and its stomach
which eats and eats itself,
the sea and its glazed flesh of statues,
its silence, achieved
at the cost of always saying
the same thing,
the sea and its pure
teacher of Geometry).

The river fears that sea
as a dog
fears an open door,
as a beggar
fears a seemingly open church.

At first,
the sea refuses the river.
The sea closes its white sheets
to the river.
The sea closes itself
to all that is flower of earth
in the river,
image of dog or beggar.

Then,
the sea invades the river.
The sea
wants
to destroy all the flowers of swollen earth
in the river,
tudo o que nessa terra
pode crescer e explodir
como uma ilha,
uma fruta.

Mas antes de ir ao mar
o rio se detém
em mangues de água parada.
Junta-se o rio
a outros rios
numa laguna, em pântanos
onde, fria, a vida ferve.

Junta-se o rio
a outros rios.
Juntos,
todos os rios
preparam sua luta
de água parada,
sua luta
de fruta parada.

(Como o rio era um cachorro,
como o mar era uma bandeira,
aqueles mangues
são uma enorme fruta:

A mesma máquina
paciente e útil
de uma fruta;
a mesma força
invencível e anônima
de uma fruta
—trabalhando ainda seu açúcar
depois de cortada—.

Como gota a gota
até o açúcar,
gota a gota
até as coroas de terra;
como gota a gota
até uma nova planta,
all that could grow or burst forth
from that earth,
like an island
or a fruit.

But, before it goes to the sea,
the river pauses
at the still reaches of mangrove swamps.
The river joins
other rivers
in lagoons, in swamps
where life boils coldly.

The river joins
other rivers.
Together,
all the rivers
prepare for their fight
of still water,
their fight
of still fruit.

(As the river was a dog,
as the sea was a flag,
those mangroves
are an enormous fruit:

The same patient,
useful mechanism
of a fruit;
the same invincible,
nameless strength
of a fruit
—whose sugar continues to work
after being cut—.

Drop by drop
even the sugar,
drop by drop
even the crowns of earth;
drop by drop
even a new plant,
gota a gota
até as ilhas súbitas
aflorando alegres).

IV

(Discurso do Capibaribe)

Aquele rio
está na memória
como um cão vivo
dentro de uma sala.
Como um cão vivo
dentro de um bolso.
Como um cão vivo
debaixo dos lençóis,
debaixo de camisa,
da pele.

Um cão, porque vive,
é agudo.
O que vive
não entorpece.
O que vive fere.
O homem,
porque vive,
choca com o que vive.
Viver
é ir entre o que vive.

O que vive
incomoda de vida
o silêncio, o sono, o corpo
que sonhou cortar-se
roupas de nuvens.
O que vive choca,
tem dentes, arestas, é espesso.
O que vive é espesso
como um cão, um homem,
como aquele rio.

Como todo o real
é espesso.
Aquele rio
90
drop by drop
even the sudden islands
gaily emerging).

IV

(Discourse of Capibaribe)

That river
stays in the memory
like a live dog
in a room.
Like a live dog
in a pocket.
Like a live dog
under the sheets,
under the shirt,
the skin.

A dog, since it lives,
is sharp.
Whatever lives
doesn't grow dull.
Whatever lives, hurts.
Man,
since he lives,
clash with other lives.
To live
is to be among other lives.

Whatever lives
disturbs with its life
the silence, the sleep, the body
which dreamed of making itself
clothes from clouds.
Whatever lives, clashes,
has teeth, edges, is thick.
Whatever lives is thick
like a dog, a man,
like that river.

As everything real
is thick.
That river
é espessa e real.
Como uma maçã
é espessa.
Como um cachorro
é mais espesso do que uma maçã.
Como é mais espesso
o sangue do cachorro
do que o próprio cachorro.
Como é mais espesso
um homem
do que o sangue de um cachorro.
Como é muito mais espessa
o sangue de um homem
do que o sonho de um homem.

Espesso
como uma maçã é espessa.
Como uma maçã
é muito mais espessa
se um homem a come
do que se um homem a vê.
Como é ainda mais espessa
se a fome a come.
Como é ainda muito mais espessa
se não a pode comer
a fome que a vê.

Aquele rio
é espesso
como o real mais espesso.
Espesso
por sua paisagem espessa,
onde a fome
estende seus batalhões de secretas
e íntimas formigas.

E espesso
por sua fábula espessa;
pelo fluir
de suas geléias de terra;
ao parir
suas ilhas negras de terra.
is thick and real.
As an apple
is thick.
As a dog
is thicker than an apple.
As the blood of a dog
is thicker than
the dog itself.
As a man is thicker
than the blood of a dog.
As the blood of a man
is much thicker
than the dream of a man.

Thick
as an apple is thick.
As an apple
is much thicker
if a man eats it than
if a man sees it.
As it is even thicker
if hunger eats it.
As it is even thicker
if the hunger which sees it
cannot eat it.

That river
is thick
as the thickest reality.
Thick
with its thick landscape,
where hunger spreads out
its batallions of secret,
intimate ants.

And thick
with its thick fable:
with the flowing
of its jelly of earth,
when it gives birth
to its islands of black earth.
Porque é muito mais espessa
a vida que se desdobra
em mais vida,
como uma fruta
é mais espessa
que sua flor;
como a árvore
é mais espessa
que sua semente;
como a flor
é mais espessa
que sua árvore,
etc. etc.

Espesso,
porque é mais espessa
a vida que se luta
cada dia,
o dia que se adquire;
cada dia
(como uma ave
que vai cada segundo
conquistando seu vôo).
Because the life which unfolds
into more life
is much thicker,
as a fruit
is thicker
than its flower;
as a tree
is thicker
than its seed;
as a flower
is thicker
than its tree,
etc, etc.

Thick,
since the life that is fought
each day
is thicker,
the day that is won
each day
(like a bird
each second
conquering its flight).
LOVER
HARRIET ZINNES

She decided. He was the other. Not the lover. The lover would talk to her in her own tongue. Speak to her with the music of her own words. Touch her with the rhythms of her own body. He would not be the other, but the lover. The lover was not the other. The other was alien. His face a map of rude continents. His smells belonged to other animals. Not human. His touch, not warm, soothing, casual. No. His touch was stinging. Like a sudden electrical impulse. A cold shock of water. Not of rain. No. Rain was familiar. Rain was from the lover, not from the other. She put her face toward the sky. Not even a drop of rain. No lover.

She was a child when it began. She played with blocks. She stung her toe. She turned the other cheek when the sullen boy hit her. She did not cry. She knew he was the other, not the lover.

She was betrayed. Not by the lover, by the other. The lover tried to reach her. Through the window pane. He could not break it. He touched the glass with his lips. She placed her lips on the opposite side. Opposite each other. Opposites together. She and the lover. He was not the other.

The train stopped. It was a long station. Between the waters and the mountain. She looked out the window. She saw the other: scraggly beard, one eye, arm in sling, pipe in mouth. He signaled to her. He was the other. Not the lover. His stench circled the train. She saw its emanation. Saw it. A thick yellow mass, covering the tracks. She closed her eyes. She choked on the scrofulous air that did not come from the lover.

She reached for her coat. It was black. Worn. Worn thin from long wearing. She was cold. She hugged it to her body as she walked. On 42nd Street. New York. The city. A man swayed back and forth. His pockets bulged: bottles, rags, three bent keys dangling. He came close to her. "Are you . . ." she stammered. She drew back. She saw his bloodshot eyes. You are not the lover. You are the other.

He touched her left breast. Kneaded it. She looked down. Black, blue, new colors on her left breast. He looked. He marveled. She smiled. You are the lover. You have transformed my body.
“You are six years old,” the teacher said. “Why do you clutch your desk at the corners? Why do you do that? Why?” She looked down at her hands. They were clenched. She had closed them so tight they hurt. She could not relax them. Why? She looked at the board trying to read. She spelled out five letters: O-T-H-E-R.

She ate the carrot. A sweet carrot. Who had cut off the green stem? Who had washed the clean soil from this bright orange carrot? She bit the carrot. The noise was loud. Familiar. She looked out the window. Into the garden. He was gathering more carrots. Four eyes met. He was the lover.

It was outdated. The language. Too many words. Each word an embellishment. Lushness disguised the meaning. She could not decipher the code. It came from the other. Not from the lover.

“A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine. Beckett writing. The voice is the signal. The signal of the lover.

She approached the room. The dining room. The table was set. One setting. For the other. She retraced her steps. She walked out the door. The back door. Down the street. Toward the lover.

He reached the stair. Was standing there. At the landing. He did not ascend. She did not know: was he the other or the lover?


The bell rang. She ran down the stairs. At the door a green coat, green hat, green shirt, green tie, green pants, green suitcase. His green pipe was moving up and down from his mouth. “What are you saying?” she shouted. He took the pipe out of his mouth, spelled out the word: O-T-H-E-R. She stepped backward. He leered. He was not the lover.

She raised the hood of the car. A knocking sound hurt her ears. The engine? The muffler? No shock absorbers? Her eyes looked at the dirt, the grease. She saw his arm. In a sling. She smelled his odor. He was not the lover.

She turned the knob. Of the rococo door. Reliefs. John. Paul. The desert. She could not enter. Not through the door. The reliefs held her. He was behind the door. The lover. He did not greet her. He received her stare.

She lay flat. On her back. The shades drawn. It was four o’clock. In the morning. A bit of light near the sills. Just a bit. On one sill a stone. On a second a book. The book was green. It was the other’s.

She walked in the garden. Near the tree. The two cardinals pursued each other. She watched the red. She watched the brown. She saw them fly. Their pursuit. Lovers.

Near the roses. The rose bushes. Only a single rose. She touched the
petals. She bent down. The light fragrance soothed her. Until she turned. Saw the snap turtle. In the shell. She walked near it. It opened its mouth. Its pink baby mouth. She picked it up by the tail. Held it. Saw its lively eyes. Staring at her. Saw its phallic body extending. She put it down. The mouth opened. She placed a stick in it. Snap went the mouth. It was the other.

This is the attic. This is the stair. This is the cellar. These are the doors. This is the stove. This is the table. This is the fireplace. This is the bed. He is not here. Neither other nor lover. But who is the shadow near the tulip tree? It is the lover.

She tasted the soup. She tasted the roast. The potato, the spinach, the peas. She ate all the salad. She cut through the melon. Drank all the tea. She looked at the tea leaves. There were three: one for the lover, one for the other. She could not say “one for me.”

There was the green room, the blue room, and the pink. She looked into all three. Only the shadows moved. In the green, the other; in the blue, the lover, and in the pink, her shadow. Quivering.

In the mansion a huge ballroom. An orchestra playing. Gowns and tuxedos. Soft sounds of speech, of laughter, of feet moving. She was dancing. In the center. Her white gown was gossamer. She smiled at her partner. Was he lover or other? He had touched her bare arm. He had kissed behind her ear. He had removed her gleaming pearls. He had touched her shoulder. They were dancing and gliding. They had the whole floor. She opened her eyes. A green jacket on the floor.

In the garden. Again. A fountain. She turned her head. In the direction of the sun. A shadow in front of her. Tree behind. She walked toward the fountain. Toward its spray. Brushing away drops of water from her face, she looked into the basin. At that mirror. At her face in the mirror. At the face behind the mirror. Peering at her. At the slant of the sun. The length of the tree. At the shadow behind that tree. At the shadows behind that tree. The moving shadows behind that tree. At the tree.
"He mumbled something about bleeding, and then ran out of the house," said the woman into the phone. "Not needing, Mother, bleeding." She paused with an irritated expression, and simultaneously, painted her mouth perfectly in one continuous swipe with a gold-cased, red lipstick. "No, I couldn't find a mark on him. Of course I looked!" The woman rolled her eyes in exasperation, then lit a cigarette. "I know you've always said he was a strange bird ... Yes, a mother does know that kind of thing ... Yes, especially you, because you're more perceptive than most. I haven't the slightest idea who's the best psychiatrist in the area. I should find out? Okay, I'll find out. Yes, Eric's very emotional ... A strange bird, right ..." The woman glanced toward the door. "I have to hang up now, someone's at the door," she lied. "Who? I really can't tell you that until I open it, now can I? I'm sorry if that sounded smart ... I have to hang up! Mother, we moved because Eric got transferred. No, you're not going to hold while I answer the door ... It won't be a mugger, Mother, I promise ... I'll write and tell you it wasn't a mugger ... Okay, if it is, I'll write from the hospital and tell you it was a mugger ... I'm not trying to be funny!" The woman pulled the last curler from her hair. The blond strands hung in unbrushed ringlets. "I know you don't understand why I stay with him ... The word is 'masochist,' and I'm not one of them ... Thirteen years of marriage counts for something ... The marriage is not on the rocks! Eric's just going through one of his emotional binges ... Anybody who spends half his life programming computers deserves a good hurt now and then ..." The woman was brushing her hair now. The ringlets began to fall into an adequate frame around her face. "These little outbursts are never serious. How do I know that? Because I know Eric, like the back of my hand. It's just a game he has to play every so often ... No, not like Checkers, Mother ... Checkers isn't the kind of game I'm talking about ... You're right, Mother, life certainly isn't a game ... What? ... Oh, the door ... Whoever it was isn't knocking anymore ... No, we'll never know now, will we?" A sigh escaped the woman's lips. She shook her head ... But the expression on her face was a mixture—a conglomeration of frustration, resignation, and a seemingly contradictory allurement. There was something about talking to her mother that made her feel good. She'd never been able to exactly pinpoint what it was, but nonetheless, the conversations were never as distressing as she projected. If they were, she knew she was selfish enough to hang up forever. "Let's not talk about Eric any more, Mother ... Why? ...
Because I've already said everything there is to say. . . . You're right, he's got nothing to bleed about. . . . Yes, he's got everything a man could want. . . . I told you, it's nothing serious. . . . He always comes back before dark. . . . And he only does this once in a while. . . . The rest of the time he's a model husband. . . . Where does he go? . . . I haven't the slightest idea. . . . He says he pretends he's a poet. . . . It isn't as crazy as it sounds. . . . At least not when he explains it. . . . No, I can't explain it the way he does, so you wouldn't understand. . . . Do I? . . . No, not very much of it. . . . Why? . . . I guess it's because I'm not interested enough. . . . I mean, I'd rather just let him have his little bizarre fantasy, and leave it alone. . . . After all, most of the time everything makes sense. . . . I'll bet most people can't say that. . . . Okay, Mother, so you and Daddy can. . . . Everybody you know can? . . . Not everybody, Mother. . . . You know me, and I can't. . . . It's not a shame. . . . What's that? . . . Has he ever asked me to go with him? . . . Sure, lots of times. . . . Today, he almost begged me. . . . Why don't I? . . . Because I don't like him when he gets like that. . . . I like him when he's strong. . . . I told you, just once in a while. . . . Well, lately it's been more frequent, but. . . . I've really got to hang up now, Mother. . . . Love you too. . . . Yes, I'll be sure and look up a psychiatrist. . . . I know. . . . I know. . . . An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. . . . Yes, you're absolutely right. . . . It's much better to be safe than sorry. . . . I know calling is expensive. . . . Next time I'll call. . . . I promise. . . . Yes, I will. . . . Next Tuesday. . . . I'll call next Tuesday. . . . Right. . . . Goodbye, Mother. . . . Next Tuesday. . . ."

The woman hung up. Another sigh escaped her lips. She gazed at her reflection in the mirror. She smiled, and it was obvious that she liked what she saw. She then moved to the closet and began rummaging through her wardrobe, looking for precisely the right dress for the party that night. And thoughts of her mother, and of Eric, were far away.

Outside, the day was cloudy. Eric walked down the sidewalk. A crescendo of traffic noises surrounded him, but he didn't seem to notice. A deep red tie tufted up from under his vest toward a carefully tied knot at his throat. His gait was mechanical. He reached a corner, turned right, and proceeded a long block. He stopped and gazed at the park. Though the park was surrounded by what seemed an insurmountable cement wall of city buildings, the freshness of its greenery still managed to penetrate his senses. He welcomed the refreshment without resistance. He moved onto the park grounds and made his way toward the gymnasium.

He entered the gymnasium and moved by a group playing basketball. He walked to the locker room. Once inside, he went directly to a particular locker, quickly twirled the combination lock until it opened, and within moments, he was out of his gray business suit. He hung it carefully inside the locker and then began putting on a most incredible outfit. The pants were ragged, torn in many places, and obviously hadn't been in style for a good twenty years. The shirt bore the same trademarks. His shoes had no

100
laces and the soles were thin and scarred beyond repair. The coat was bright red, missing a sleeve, and it hung on him like an upside down tent. Lastly, he placed a derby hat on his head—a hat that possessed all the tattered ragged qualities of the accompanying attire. He closed the locker and clicked the lock shut, and walked off. His gait tried to be lively.

The two old men were deeply involved in a game of Checkers, but their eyes turned away from their game and toward Eric as he approached the row of benches that were lined nearby.

“That’s him!” exclaimed the old man with the long nose.

“Him?” questioned his short, squatty companion.

“You know, the one I told you about—the one that came around here a couple o’ weeks ago . . .”

“The one with the poetry that didn’t rhyme?”

“Yeah, that’s right,” answered the old man with the long nose. “Damn eerie stuff it was too . . . kinda got me caught up in it . . . made me shiver all over . . . All that talk about bleeding to death . . .”

“Strange looking bird,” said the short squatty one.

Eric had now climbed atop one of the benches and assumed a lively, theatrical pose. His eyes tried to dance. His face tried to assume an expression of delight. His insides tried to open, but it was as if some mysterious fluid was drowning whatever it was that was trapped inside him.

“The wounds!” Eric screamed. “Too many wounds! The lies of the world tear at me and I bleed! But how much blood does one man possess?! How much blood does one man have to shed?! How many vicious slices can life’s sword inflict upon him before he dies?! The world’s falseness rips me, shreds my very core with a razor’s keenness until my wounds are as plentiful as the stars! The wounds are too numerous to be bound! They are too severe to be treated! And so, there is only bleeding to be done . . . only a bizarre transfusion to maintain the strength of the sham . . .” His voice diminished to a whisper . . . “Nothing is what it’s supposed to be . . . Everything’s a lie . . .”

“See what I mean,” said the old man with the long nose. “Nothing rhymes.”

“That’s not poetry,” said the short squatty one, “that’s just a crazy man talking drivel.”

“Maybe so,” said the old man with the long nose. “Maybe so.”

“You move,” said the short, squatty one.

The old man with the long nose nodded, but his eyes remained on Eric. Eric slowly climbed down off the bench.

“The last time he went on for over two hours,” said the old man with the long nose.

“You move,” repeated the short, squatty one impatiently.

Again the old man with the long nose nodded, and this time he turned his attention to the Checker board.
Eric slowly started off, and then suddenly stopped, transfixed. A short distance off, by a tree, sat a severely deformed girl in a wheelchair. Her body heaved convulsively. Her mouth chewed on a rubbery device that was strategically placed, and specially designed to keep her from biting her tongue and lips as her jaws moved open and shut spasmodically. A nurse in her starched, snow white uniform stood some twenty yards behind the girl, watching her dutifully. It was obvious to Eric that the girl had been there for some time; he knew instinctively that she had wanted to hear him. He knew she had made the nurse let her stop and listen. Eric approached the girl. They stared at one another for an eternal moment. Her eyes were all that she could control. They were blue and full of pain.

Then, he whispered it: “Your body, my mind . . . They’re the same, aren’t they? We’re both trapped. Cripples. Neither one of us can ever come out. I’ve had today—one day that makes sense—you’ve had none. I’m sorry,” he said. And then he turned and walked hurriedly away. Her sad blue eyes watched silently until he disappeared in the distance. Then, the whirring drone of the wheelchair interrupted the silence as she turned the chair around and headed it back toward the nurse.

The woman was pacing impatiently when Eric arrived at the house. “We’re going to be late,” she said angrily.

He half mumbled an apology which she ignored.

“That gray suit won’t do—your black one’s hanging in the bathroom. I had it pressed today. And you’d better take a quick shave, you’ve got a shadow . . .”

Eric nodded and went into the bathroom. The woman moved to a full length mirror and began primping.

“I talked to mother today, Eric,” said the woman. “She thinks you need a psychiatrist.”

There was no reply. All that could be heard was the sound of running water splashing down the bathroom sink drain.

“Do you like my dress, Eric? I bought it specially for you. I saw it in the window and all I could think of was how much you love red . . .”

There was no reply—just the sound of running water.

“You’re not angry, are you, Eric? I know I shouldn’t have spent the money . . . But I did do it for you. Eric? Are you listening to me?”

She moved to the bathroom.

“Eric? . . . Oh, sometimes you’re so frustrating!” She said it as she opened the door and entered the bathroom.

Her screams catapulted to every corner of the house. Eric lay on his back with his eyes staring upward . . . Red fluid poured from both of his wrists. He had slashed them with a razor blade.

“My God, you’re bleeding to death!” she moaned. “Bleeding to death!”

And the woman ran from the bathroom, screaming for help.
Reading the article in the newspaper that morning he realized that "The Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels" had begun. It made him salivate, yet he was surprised when he noticed that he was actually drooling over the article. He sucked the saliva back into his mouth and glanced at the mirror. His face looked like a stale roll, filling its own huge space, large and exactly defined. Below it there was a giant pajama-wrapped paunch protruding like a horse's massive feed bag. K smiled courteously at the mirror. Still smiling, he shouted for his wife. "Coat!" and simultaneously reached back an arm, fingers scratching in the air for the coat that should have been handed to him. But there was no one there.

"Oh, I remember now," he mumbled to himself, and then went to look for his coat.

"She must have been captured in this Mongrel Extermination. She shouldn't have gone out wandering around in the morning."

He looked down at the street from his apartment on the thirtieth floor and saw little thumbtack-like objects scattered all over, moving in the direction of the station.

"Ants. No, they're human beings."
K had trouble getting his arms into the coat, and once he had it on, it was binding and uncomfortable. It had gotten too small for him without his having noticed. I've gotten fat, he thought, and pulled his trousers up over his stomach as hard as he could. They were too small. He decided to go to the university.

"Hey, Professor," it was the barber climbing the stairs. "They got your wife. Wiped out with a single blow."

"Is that so? In a single blow, you say," K replied. "That must have been a pretty good man. Who was it you say they caught?"

The barber shook his arms violently as if he were on the verge of lunging at K. He thrust a finger at K's face and screamed, "Your wife! Professor."

The barber was panting. His pink tongue stuck out like a flame, and his mouth was twisted in accusation.

"Oh," K trembled, perplexed. "My wife? Oh my god, that's awful. How about it, will you walk to the station with me? You don't mind, do you?"

The barber said he would, that it was on his way to work. "Will you wait just a minute? I'll go get ready. Be back in a jiffy."

"Go ahead," K said. As soon as he was sure the barber was in the apartment he grabbed his bulky briefcase and ran noisily down the stairs. The thought crossed his mind as he ran, Why didn't I take the elevator? When he finally reached ground level he felt as if his overworked heart was about to pop out of his mouth.

"Taxi!" K screamed.

But there were no taxis in sight. It was a very clear morning, yet there were only a few people on the street. There were dark stains on the ground where they had been hurrying by.

The people of the Sanitation Department must really be active, K thought. In other words, she . . .

The barber tapped K on the shoulder and said, "It's no good trying to run away." He was in his white uniform. K blinked in surprise as if the sun were in his eyes. The barber, somewhat startled by his expression, took a step backward.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, nothing," the barber said in a frightened tone, "but it has gotten to be a real problem, you know."

"Yes, yes it has. Are you walking to the station?"

"Yes, let's walk fast, though. It's dangerous."

"What is?" K said, almost coyly. He strained to move his heavy legs forward as fast as he could.

"What I mean is," the barber said slightly irritated now, "the Exterminators are aiming at us. If you're marked, one of those Temporary Employees from the Sanitation Department comes immediately. It's Extermination,
don't you understand?"

"Oh!" K said breathlessly. "Hey, would you mind walking a little slower? I don't know why, but I'm not with it this morning. Can't run. I've gotten so fat all of a sudden."

There was a look of disdain on the barber's face. "Incorrigible, these University Professors. You really will be exterminated if you act like that."

"I'm in agreement with the movement, but I don't want to get too involved in these political problems," K said, wiping the sweat from his brow.

The back of the tall, slender barber had been sucked into the crowd in front of the station.

Oh, I'm thirsty, K thought.

The train was not very crowded. Absent-mindedly K got into the first car, but as soon as his massive body, which occupies so great a space, both horizontally and vertically, had passed through the doors, the gang of students who were crowded behind him darted past toward the empty seats. K lost his balance in the push. There were no vacant seats left. He looked around for an opening to crowd into.

"Won't you move over a little?" he said to two students seated on either side of a five inch gap. But the students, as well as the other passengers just leaned in the direction the train was moving. Some were sleeping or just relaxing their facial muscles. K laughed to cover his embarrassment. His cheeks were rough. I even forgot to shave.

K was standing directly behind the conductor's cabin watching the track that the train was reeling in unendingly. The train ran smoothly, but after a while K noticed something like sand bags lined up along the rails ahead. They'll disrail the train, K unconsciously laughed. A few men with red arm bands were standing near the tracks, and they seemed to be signaling the conductor to proceed without concern. When the train speeded up, the drowsing passengers toppled into one another, like dominos, and K felt strange as he watched them. One man sat straight up, catching the swaying leaners. That must be an Exterminator, K began to think, but at that instant the train started to pass over the sandbags, and the vibrations from the elastic, rubbery obstruction pierced his mind as if a body were being cut in two.

"Hey, is that you, K? What happened to your coat?" It was one of his colleagues from the university. K blinked, not understanding what the man was talking about. The other professors who were standing around K, surrounding him with patronizing smiles, all tightened the flesh in their cheeks, and their smiles, which seemed to have lost their way, wandered around on their mouths like spittle.

"Has something happened?" K said. Then he saw his reflection in the glass. Without his having noticed, his trousers had slipped down below his
stomach and his wrinkled coat hung on his shoulders like the skin of a locust. His navel was exposed between his coat and trousers. K laughed brokenly as he looked down at it. He blinked quickly and the man in the mirror blinked with him. It was a strange sort of blink. It amounted to the drooping bags under his eyes being jerked up. A crow, K thought, but he wasn’t quite sure why that came to his mind. He felt he should look around to see how other people blink. The other professors had all turned their eyes aside or were looking downward.

K was self-conscious now, and he tried to straighten out his coat and pull up his trousers, but his coat was a mass of horizontal wrinkles, like a snake’s abdomen, and when he let go of it it rolled vigorously back up. His trousers would not come up above the protrusion of his stomach no matter what he did. He ran his fingers through his hair nervously, and sent out a fog of dandruff.

“Oh ho, that’s rude of me,” K said. He suddenly bellowed out an unguarded laugh.

He took one of the smaller men standing near him by the neck and lifted him bodily off the floor. He rubbed his nose against the little man’s nose and then licked him on the cheek to show how friendly he was. “Pardon me, who might you be?” K said. The small man’s face burned with indignation as he urinated through his trousers onto the floor. “I am a Professor, a poet . . . and you?”

“Oh! Mr. Poet! I used to be K. I think I still am K, the Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages.”

“Excuse me, but . . . ” the young man was imploring with a look of desperation on his face, “would you please let me down?”

“Oh, my! That’s a shame,” K said disappointedly and released his hold. He felt that his genuine sense of kindness had been betrayed almost whimsically by this person.

The other professors standing lined up in the train had been watching the sequence of events, and now they moved in a file back into the next car. K was surprised. He waved goodbye to them. I wonder if there’s a faculty meeting today. There were traces of excrement on the floor. K suddenly felt disgusted and he looked at the still steaming turd. He said, “That’s an unfriendly bunch.”

Perhaps the air conditioning wasn’t working. When the sun comes out, the rooms become extremely hot. K was wandering through the halls, carrying his fat briefcase looking for an empty classroom. A clerk stopped him.

“Professor K, would you please go to the cashier in the accounting section of the business office. We have your salary ready.”

“Oh, ho ho,” K roared in a huge hollow voice. “Ho! Salary? Oh, ha ha,” he laughed. It was as if he were vomiting air.
“Are you pleased, Professor?” the clerk asked.

“Of course I am.” K twisted his body and shook his hips in an odd rhythm. Actually, he was trying to pull up his trousers. The clerk laughed mockingly, and then he pointed to K’s belt, which had broken in the back. K felt the blood rush to his ears in shame.

“This is awful. It’s a conspiracy,” he screamed.

The clerk shook his head back and forth almost arrogantly.

K opened his salary envelope, and satisfied he headed back toward the classrooms. He was not prepared for his lecture yet, so when he located an empty classroom he went in, opened his briefcase and was going to start his preparation. He emptied the contents of his briefcase—dirty napkins, a few pieces of smoked ox-tail, a few canned goods such as filet of shark. The filet of shark was K’s favorite food. He had no idea why these things happened to be in his briefcase, but finding them there aroused his appetite, so he started with a piece of the smoked ox-tail.

He chewed it noisily, both chin and jaw working. The gnawing motion which pulled the ox-tail into his mouth resembled a machine at work.

How can I manage this can? K turned the briefcase upside down, but there was no can opener in it. That fool. At least she could have put in a can opener, he thought.

K calmed himself, then he put his teeth to the can and opened it with one strong bite. Hmm, it breaks so easily. He remembered a gorilla he had once seen in a zoo. He felt satisfied when he had finished half of the second can. His head dropped and he dozed off. The vague image of the face of an Exterminator was being projected onto the yellow screen that began to emerge through his snoring. As the screen gradually formed into a thick curtain of gaseous substance, the image became clear. The Exterminator, strangely enough, was a man who had no self-confidence. He had the look that is peculiar to bureaucrats. He wore glasses and had his head shaved bald, perhaps for religious purposes.

Half a month ago when the Diet had formally announced the decision to proclaim a period as the Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels, an explanation of the purpose of the movement had been transmitted as far down as to the desks of the Exterminators, filtered down through the bureaucracy, thinning as it wore through the regimented mesh of veins and capillaries. The Exterminators had received the announcement with feeble sighs. They were spread around throughout not only the prefectural offices, but also police stations, post offices and government hospitals. The very complexity of the system made it impossible for anyone to alter the policy.

The first group selected to be exterminated on a large scale were the people that did not possess citizenship. They were taken to the local disposal areas, marching hand in hand to the giant incinerators, enticed by the Ex-
terminators appointed by the local village offices. They dropped to the
ground en masse, as if in some religious ecstasy, seduced by the wiles of the
Exterminators. The Exterminators drenched them with gasoline and did
the job.

However, the choice of that group of non-citizens had been based on a
misinterpretation by the Exterminators themselves, and when that was
discovered it became necessary to exterminate the Exterminators, that is
to say, execute them.

Whatever the nature of the unity, whether one is a member of society
and has solidarity with others on the basis of that membership, or whether
certain individuals find solidarity in sharing a common bond, be it blood or
some professional connection, or even in terms of conviction or prejudice,
which is to say that there would be some reliable ground to heritage in that
society, those having such solidarity would be exempt from extermination.
Consequently, the unemployed should have been the first chosen for ex­
termination, yet these were the people who had been appointed Temporary
Employees—all of them—to serve as Exterminators, and as such they
were essential to the conduct of the mission.

It was places such as the successful department stores in large cities,
bookstores and movie theaters that were good areas for the Exterminators
to search for the Mongrels. For example, people who would go into book­
stores, stand there reading magazines and leave without buying anything
were considered Mongrels. Likewise, the ones who did not cry with the rest
of the movie audience were to be considered Mongrels.

They were to be exterminated in groups. In places like government
offices and industry, the Mongrels, the ones without any real interest in
their work, were disposed of. The number reached three million. Students
too were to be exterminated. Approximately eighty per cent in all. But they
were the ones who were often absent or who had poor grades, the delinquents,
those who did not belong to any clique. But for the movement to be thorough­
ly successful the body politic, otherwise known as the families, would have
to be exterminated. Children, for example, who, when they got up in the
morning did not greet the other members of the family, and refused to take
part in the exchange of pleasantries and family conversations. The young
unmarried couples were to be unquestionably considered Mongrels. Simply
the fact they they did not accept the procedure of getting married consti­
tuted a passive rebellion against society. Sooner or later they would be
stepping out of bounds, breaking the solidarity. Infants and old people too
should be subject to extermination. The reasons seemed clear and simple:
In terms of eugenics, those who are undesirable for procreation should cer­
tainly be exterminated as Mongrels. The mentally disturbed, too, were ex­
terminated. They did not show any resistance or make any protest, which
is a point that should be impressed on the minds of the other Mongrels. On the contrary, the ones who were the most difficult to dispose of were those with some degree of intelligence such as university professors, writers, painters and critics.

It is recognized that their existence is absolutely futile, wasteful, but their objection to that is quite severe. Men of culture, intellectuals who had no connections with the academic society or journalistic world were poisoned: extermination was not appropriate for them; but the others were in a situation that permitted them to continue protesting persistently, asserting that their degree of solidarity with the social community could be measured in terms of what is called achievement. So, the problem remains.

Incidentally, the Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels is achieving noticeable success already, but the most significant point is the collaboration and willingness on the part of the citizens to act. It may be said that it is in fact the very energy of the citizens which actually exposes and annihilates the Mongrels in the social community. That is to say, in many places, it is the citizens who identify the mongrels, actually going to the trouble of notifying the exterminators. This has been especially true in regard to uncovering Mongrels within families. There should be no other way than through the citizens of the community; although very severe warnings must be given about the inclination of the citizens to dispose of the Mongrels by themselves. One regrettable example occurred the other day when a student from X University, a member of the University Student Council, ran over and killed a few dozen Mongrel students. The movement of the Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels is at its peak. However, it remains extremely difficult to uncover the latent Mongrels, those whose only differences from normal humans are buried inside. We ask your further cooperation.

The figure of an Exterminator can be seen walking in the street in K's dream. He has somewhat rounded shoulders, and he blinks self-consciously and has a nervous laugh. A giant incinerator is visible in the distance. The Diet building has been temporarily rented and remodeled. The Temporary Employees can be seen carrying the corpses of the Mongrels there. Occasionally crowds form and make noises as if they were at a festival, and K watched the crowds gradually disperse like oil in water. Small groups were being extracted and exterminated on the spot.

K was suddenly awakened by someone tapping him on the shoulder. When he raised his face, the saliva which had dripped from his mouth and accumulated on the desk was almost as dark as blood.

"Hey you! It's your turn." said the student next to him, his voice low. "If you don't hurry, the teacher will be over here."

Before K had time to rub his bloodshot eyes, the professor, a man with
a bent back wearing a black suit, was at his side.

"Hey, why are you so slow? Didn't you do your homework? Heh?"

"What did you say? I'm just getting ready to do my preparations. Who

are you?" K said gruffly.

"Who am I, you say?" the old man responded in a loud voice with a pain­ful tone. "You're pretty rude for a student. This is the kind of rascal that

should be turned over to those Mongrel Exterminators!"

K finally realized what was happening.

"I am Professor K, I am K Zorobachen. I'm no student. It looks like I've
gotten mingled in with your class."

The students all laughed, and the laughter filled the room to the ceiling

and turned into a vicious roar of joy.

"Extermination! Extermination!" shook the classroom.

K hurriedly picked up his briefcase and offered a modest smile to the

class. The students quieted as if they were frozen.

"Excuse me." K plunged into the corridor, holding his trousers up with

one hand. Beyond the steel door that had slammed behind him he could hear

faint voices saying "Mongrel."

When he looked at his watch he realized that his class was to have started

some time ago. Somebody is probably taking care of it . . . he began to think,

but he knew that he was the only one to do it and he was a little upset. He

couldn't distinguish whether it was fear or anger, but some fluid was con­stantly being secreted in his abdomen. He started to look for his classroom.

This is my room, isn't it? Yet somehow, without knowing why, he hesi­tated a moment. The door did not open. When he peeped through the keyhole,

there was an eye peering through at him from the other side.

"What's that?" a student's voice said on the other side of the door. "Hey,

look! The eye of an orangutan, a madman."

"Hu hu hu hu," the students were chuckling like pigeons. K could feel

the warmth from the students' bodies through the thin steel door.

"Open up!" K shouted. He felt a sense of dignity in himself, a University

Professor.

"He's shouting something," someone on the other side of the door said.

"You shouldn't put your eye up too close. It's dangerous," someone said.

The students, it seemed, were taking turns looking through the keyhole. K

straightened his back, made a fist and began to pound violently on the door.

"I am K Zorobachen. Open up!" The door opened suddenly. The students

gave a shout of joy. K was not conscious of the fact that his trousers had

slipped down to his ankles. The protrusion of his huge stomach and the

whorls of hair around his navel as well as his penis, hanging out all wrinkled

and limp, detracted from his academic dignity.

His coat, as usual, was obstinately curled up to the point that it was im-
possible to distinguish it from the skin that covered his shoulders. K had nearly lost his composure. He stepped into the classroom, leaving his trousers in the hall. He locked the door and hurried to the platform, sat down heavily in the chair behind the desk, and wiped the sweat from his face.

"Sartre," he said, and as he said the name he opened his briefcase and began arranging the contents on his lap behind the desk. The students had their pens ready, waiting, watching. K felt around inside the briefcase for his book.

No. It isn’t there. Really a stupid ass. K was angry. The cursing phrases inside his mouth bubbled in foam.

"We can’t hear you," one of the students shouted.

K raised his face, surprised. He noticed that the students were still patiently waiting for him to continue, and he blinked in disbelief. At that moment the faces of the students hardened, and they all lowered their heads. Oh ho, good grief, K thought. He was relieved, but they were still holding their pens and seemed to be waiting, looking at their notebooks. K groaned without thinking, sensing their stubborn expectation. Then the students’ pens dropped. Meanwhile, K’s eyes moved to his lap and he began to eat the canned meat which he had not finished. This is really good. The delicious flavor seemed to calm him down. As he finished the can he regained his sense of generosity, and he recalled that he had to say something to the students.

"... born in Holland," he rumbled. "His mother ..."

He looked into the remaining cans, but they were empty, so he reluctantly took out the rest of the smoked oxtail, which was not so delicious, and slowly chewed on it as he looked at his watch. About forty minutes left. He had nothing to say, and he merely stared at his lap, blankly gazing at his penis. When he raised his head, the students who seemed to have been staring at him dropped their heads to their notebooks.

"... was a whore." K said, continuing in a tone of disgust, "And his father was a mortician. ..." This is about myself, K thought as he spoke.

The hot wind was blowing into the room, and K noticed that the window was open. There was an unfamiliar face peering into the room. K thought, he must have climbed up a ladder. The next instant he felt something coming up his throat. He stood up and shouted. The face in the window disappeared with a scream. That must have been an Exterminator.

The students ran to the window and looked down at the paved street a dozen or so meters below. K stretched his neck over their shoulders to see. The suspect was in a student uniform. People were forming a circle around the body.

"Professor, it was a student who came late. The door was locked and he tried to get in through the window," one of the students said. They looked
at K with an expression of hatred. At that moment K noticed the girls among the faces and blinked wonderingly. He returned to the platform.

"Sartre was, after all, a Mongrel," K said. The students looked at him, their faces hard. They did not pick up their pens.

"Sartre," he repeated, and his voice sounded as if something were sticking in his throat.

"Let's get rid of this guy," one student with a beard shouted. His eyes were slanted sharply, and there were traces of saliva on his lips. K looked absent-mindedly at the students and waved his hand for them to quiet down.

"Sartre . . ."

"He's a Mongrel!" The students were screaming. K had a nonsensical smile on his face. He winked at one of the girls. "You're fairly pretty." The students went into a huddle.

"Let's throw him out. This guy is really a typical Mongrel."

"Yes, that's it. What the hell does he think we are?" a girl screamed. She seemed to be squeezing her own breasts.

K was amazed. He stood up. The smoked oxtail dangled from his mouth. He thought that some situation he could not comprehend was developing. Besides, when he tried to say something he found he wasn't able to speak because his mouth was full. He spit out the wad of smoked oxtail. He looked around at the faces of the uniformed students, their pupils were bulging.

"This guy is really insane. I thought so before, but . . ." one student said with disdain. "A mad Mongrel."

When K realized that the condemnation was actually directed at him, he smiled with no particular purpose. It sounds like they are talking about some animal.

The students positioned three husky men around K as guards, and the others started telling one another what they thought of K. It was like an execution committee.

"There was somebody in the hall that looked like an Exterminator," the girl said. The head of the group said, "Have him wait a little longer." They put their heads together and continued talking.

K pushed at the guards and slowly approached the door. He tried to look through the keyhole. Something shining like a pair of glasses was on the other side. He looked over at the students, feeling satisfied, and with his stomach protruding, he asked them what they were going to do.

"We'll expose you as a Mongrel!"

"Do you mean me?" K said blinking. "You can't do it!" he said and laughed. He was aware that the muscles in his face were tense.

"By our common will," screamed the head of the students, "a mongrel like you, we'll exterminate you. A thing like you doesn't have the right to live."
K felt his eyelids rise and his lip curl, as if all this were some sort of miracle.

“What in the hell are you talking about?” he whined. “You're the ones that are going to get exterminated. I am The Mongrel! and the Mongrel is going to line up the dogs that pretend to be loyal, and simply exterminate them! You mean nothing to me. Listen, what in the hell do you think this Mongrel Extermination Week is, anyway? Don't make me laugh.”

K grabbed one of the students near him by the neck, lifted him completely off the ground and rammed his head into the wall. A crushed skull fell to the floor with a dull thud. It was a very slow movement, but there was overwhelming force in it. The students pushed back against the wall waiting their turn. Their faces were like the faces of prisoners waiting to be shot. K continued the operation in his ponderous way. The girl screamed. K thought, Only the Mongrel will survive.
Entre Palabras

HUGO Lindo

Y, a Elizabeth Miller, la excelente traductora de Solo la voz, y dilecta amiga de Hugo Lindo

Yo anduve entre palabras.
Amaba sus perfiles, tornadizos o estáticos,
su doble ser de sílaba y secreto,
la agudeza de las letras con filo
penetrando como agrios fermentos en el alma.

Era aquello ir andando
entre la madurez de ocultas músicas
y descubriendo en ellas
signos apenas, gestos, menudas reverencias
a una verdad que huía.

No era una vanidad de oídos puros
prestos a la cadencia, al ritmo, al canto,
sino algo más:
un sacramento: un lucido
sentir la creación por la palabra,
hacer surgir los seres desde la entraña de las voces
y anticipar sus luchas todavía en proyecto.

De la queja al dolor, ¿qué espacio queda?
¿Por qué no recorrer esta distancia
yendo ahora del grito a la tortura,
o del beso al amor,
ó del sudario
a la concreta imagen del reposo?

Cuando hablo soy el mago en el conjuro,
el tiempo acumulando verdes en la semilla,
soy la semilla misma
ó el inicio del viento casi brisa en la aldea,
I travelled between words.
I loved their shapes, shifting or motionless,
their double essence of meaning and mystery,
the incisiveness of sharp-edged letters
like sour ferments infiltrating the soul.

I was traveling the full resonance
of hidden harmonies
to discover within their music
minute signs and gestures, gentle nods
honoring elusive truths.

Not merely a display of sounds
for rhythm, cadence or song,
but something more:
a rite of devotion: lucid sensitivity
to create through the word,
to draw living entities from its innermost recesses,
to anticipate its inevitable struggles.

What distance lies between moan and pain?
Why not span this interval,
move from scream to torture,
and from kiss to love,
or from shroud
to the solid figure in repose?

I speak and I am the magician casting his spell,
the greening time within the seed.
I am the seed itself
or rising wind, a soft breeze in the village,
que agitará mas tarde sus aspas de catástrofe.
O el orgasmo,
el recio, el crudo orgasmo generador de sombras
y pastor de la historia y de la sangre.

La palabra es mi oficio y sacrificio.
Es la prisión sonora y sin murallas
donde la libertad halla acomodo:
lo demás surge de ella.

Todo el mundo se allana
a su secreta realidad,
al tono y al acento,
a los contornos
de su tañido,
a la sustancia música,
a la escultura vaga de sus formas.

Pero llega el instante
de construir la palabra con silencios,
con reticencias largas, con memorias
que no se dicen, con fantasmas
entrevistos apenas a la leche del sueño.

Y uno se halla de nuevo a la orilla del mar.
Con un cansancio tierno en la bahía gris de las retinas,
dibujando en el aire
 cosas que no se ven,
cantando cosas que tampoco se escuchan,
pero transido
de una redonda plentitud
que es casi dolorosa.
K felt his eyelids rise and his lip curl, as if all this were some sort of miracle.

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cosas que no se ven,
cantando cosas que tampoco se escuchan,
pero transido
de una redonda plenitud
que es casi dolorosa.
which later will flail its wings of catastrophe.
Or I am the orgasm,
the strong, the harsh orgasm, creator of shadows,
pastor of history and of blood.

Within the word lies my duty and my destruction.
From this echoing prison without walls
where freedom fashions its place
all else emerges.

All creation is contoured
to its secret reality,
its tone and accent,
the shape
of its chord,
its musical inclination,
the vague configuration of its forms.

And the moment comes
to construe the word with silences,
with lingering insinuations, with memories
spoken and apparitions
scarcely glimpsed in the milky haze of dreams.

Again one faces the water's edge.
With sensitive weariness in the retinas' gray deeps,
sketching in the air
things unseen,
singing of things unheard
and overwhelmed
by replete wholeness
that is near to pain.
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118
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HUGO LINDO is El Salvador's best-known living poet. He has received international recognition for his poetry, short stories and novels.

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