MUNDUS ARTIUM

Selection of African Writers and Artists

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AFRICAN WRITERS

POL NDU

1

Amerika is:
Eldorado,
millions desire the glory
more millions visit the gallery,
each stranger seeks his image.

2

The final cut came in a flash
to slash his mask and tear his flesh.

Cain drew his line with a guided sword,
The blood he drew continues to flow.
And Brudno fell with a sudden blow.

Power tastes salts from MiLai massacre
followed by a ball and ladies’ laughter.

3

Kafka to Proust:
Blankets keep you blindly warm
in the stale grave of dim-lit bedrooms
from which men rise each age.

Proust to Kafka:
Through a slit in the mock roof,
a star peeps,
impatient to be seen
among clamors of the galaxy.
Pol to both:
Though overcast heavily
the sky can decolor suddenly
insisting urgently
on folding the mock-roof blanket.

What life absorbs
in the net-spread womb
and the reception mat
produces this heat
and these stresses.

4

All these saints adored were persons:
flesh and bones, bowels and blood
become magic names among preachers.

Those rejected in love squat
head in cupped knuckles at “Eternity’s Gate.”
Those triumphant in war
blast trumpets Michael brought
from Jena to Hiroshima to Biafra:

horse-gallant generals galloping
into tributaries of silence
seeking the long-gone heroes of combat
praying in earnest that they come back.

Through tropical blackness
Eternity peeks at mankind
lightening the final bomb
which crowns the spinal chord.
At the split
(a necessary prelude)
Chukwu shoots the dot
to shut oaken doors
against a pestle pounding past midnight;
escapes through
the yawning slit
thundering:
'What I have put asunder
man must not put together.'

Tempus Tacendi:
the act was art
on two wheels;
The telegraphy
of a violent flourish
for another circle
around Ecbatan

Then he said
let us draw
backwards
pay $ billion
for the coliseum
now
toothless
with a tin wreath.
Dan Rakgoathe, COSMIC TRINITY, 1974, linocut, 14¼” x 14½”, The Brooklyn Museum, private collection.
Mauri Yambo

SAVANNAH

The sun sets, I rise.
The sun rises, I rise.
Come on over to where I'll be,
And I'll give all my being to you.

Love will pin you down.

Kindled by your fire
I am.
I am nailed by your steady vibes.
Your laughter alone
scorches my gloom.
As for me,
I am wild and rebellious.

What goes
Goes
Because we remain.

All my mischiefs
End in the morning.
Night be riotous where I dunk.

All my mornings
End in mischief,
And all my afternoons.
Day be riotous when I dunk.

Already, tomorrow
Reminds me of you.
I who did not know
Whether to remember or to forget.

I am love.
I will dance
To your titillations.

Ah, the eye of the storm
Is within you.
You are my one mischief
And my whirlwind.

The door opens, I enter.
The door shuts after me.
I who am obvious and elusive.

You are cool if you dig
My bad manners.
As for me, I dig you.

My ancestors were a nation
Of digging cats.
I follow them in their glory.

And here I am
Looking for you in momentary crowds!
I who landed
From across the vast waters.

I hate your
Absences.

Noontime be hot and sonorous
Where I find you.
Night be riotous ebony night.

Tickled by your
Silences
I am.
I am triggered by your body's music.

My veins throb with the rhythm
Of my native land.
Like the drums they throb for you.

I could run for a century
And not be afraid.
I will hate your absences.

You are fine you electrify
My calm,
The eye of the storm
Is within you.
I will aim for the eye of the storm,
Night be sonorous O night.

I hate the hours
Between us.
I hate the days.
I hate the weeks
Between us.

Yesterday I thought of you.
It's not cool to go away though I catch
The many phases of the wind.

In looking across the tables
My eyes have caught you.
In looking across the plains
My eyes have caught you.

My wild song will fill
The tumultuous air.
I will cross the street
To see you. And you
Will come down. Come down!

I will cross the plains to see you.

What remains tell me when we are gone?

Times I looked around
To find you gone . . .
I will look around
To find you gone.

I too will be gone.
a poem is the poet free of
the shackles of poetry.

poetry is the tears seen long
before the eyes are fit for
draining.

the poet beholds in public with the
public and vows for the public.

if the poet resolved the tensions
of structure and pith (ancient
and/or contemporary) in favour
of either, there comes poetry
but no poem.
E. Opoku-Agyemang

A FLOW LIKE DISCORD

And so they who have come to see
Sit in judgement over truth
Linking air to air shame to pain
And we see in them
Our dream-makers at point of departure

And so on and so forth
And so on on to our dying steps;
This is our life’s worth
And the only reality is a void
And the void is real
Only in the hereafter.

And so it is that
Our teeth rattle
Singing songs of battle
Against gums!

And toads sit in judgement
Making music at the sound of night,
Dream-makers at point of departure

If this is how it is
If this is how souls must go
Is it surprising that this joy
Which is our joy
Is a joy drained of all sweetness?

... and here we are
like a life without a fence
like a day without a dawn
like a large, very large yawn

And toads sit in harmony
Sinking songs into heart of night—
Dream-makers at point of departure
Pinning down spirit of tigare*
In a flow like discord.

18
And the sun sets at noon
And the moon grins with mirth
At our worried faces
And the pious pirates
They belch their concern
And they swear by thunder
to ease our hunger;
And their bellies . . . .
See how they shine . . . !

Pray for us O pray for us
You who are alive and dead
You who look so well fed

And so on and so forth—
Is this our life's worth?
Sighs are soft and anger
Transforms into hunger
When it comes when it comes.

And euphoria clings to our rear
Like mango juice.

This is it this is it
O gods why is this it
When you know
This is not it?

Transient hearts from here to eternity
Poised in time
Where soul touches man touches essence
In a communion of rebirth:
Here we are at life's end
And there's no salvation in the sands
Soul—lonely so barren
And the world that is our world
Return our sobbing sigh.

And we gape like an ape
And we gulp all that pass . . .
Through the bars of ignorance . . .
Here we are at life's end—
Pruned schooled and true
To every turn of the screw

And we hum hymns of hope
That dangle at end of a rope

jettisoned
into a nightmare
from which there's no awakening
learning through dreaming
how to live
how to give
and have your gift snatched
from your fingers:
this life, these dreams,
these dreams of desperate dreams.

and so on and so on
and we cry for death, the seal
to a dark deal
we have arrived in the heaven of our dreams
we have arrived in the heaven of our dreams
we have arrived chained
to the heaven of our dreams, and

The difference is enshrined
In a snore.
It's all lies, it's all lies:
This unfolding reel of dreams.

To see beyond the beyond into now
Link air to air and etch signs of the times
In rhyme and bring the dreamer home
To see the end receding
And the beginning being born
And to echo through the universe
Along the vast corridors of time . . . .

But time is air—
Heir to the filth
Of our daily breath
Sighs are soft and so is sleep,
And now it becomes flare-clear
That to sleep and to wake
Are one and the same—
The difference lies in a snore.

We stand at the edge of sense
And we surge over edge of sense

It is time to suck your thumb
When the blind leads the dumb;
But this not the time to rhyme
Nor make our grand auto da fé.
Twins Seven Seven, UNTITLED DRAWING. Photo Ron Springwater.
Twins Seven Seven, UNTITLED PAINTING. Photo Bernard Pierre Wolff.
Peter Nazareth

THE HOSPITAL
A Radio Play

NURSE: (Fade in) Here we are, Mr. Mutimba. We've put you in this ward.
556: Thank you, Nurse.
NURSE: This will be your bed, Number Five, Five, Six.
556: Only one other man in here?
NURSE: Yes, Mr. Mutimba. Oh, I should call you Number 556 now. We always call our patients by their numbers, you see. Your bed is 556, so you are 556 too.
556: (Whispers) What's his name, nurse?
NURSE: Five, Five, Five. I'll leave you to get into bed now.
555: (Loudly) You don't have to whisper. I'm not asleep. And I'm not dead—yet.
NURSE: Now, now, 555! Mustn't get depressed! (Whispers to 556) Don't worry about him, 556. Just get into bed. It'll soon be time for lights out. (Goes off)
556: Thank you nurse. (Pause. Coughs to attract attention. Pause.)
Hey!
555: Yes? What do you want?
556: Oh, just to say hello.
556: Don't you want to talk?
555: No.

556: Oh. (Pause) We are lucky to receive treatment in this wonderful new hospital, aren't we? This is the first time I've been in such a hospital. How long have you been here?
555: I've been here for weeks now. And I can tell you, I'm tired of lying on this bed. I don't seem to get any better or worse.

556: What's the matter with you?
555: Who knows? The doctors don't. The awful thing is that I keep getting nightmares practically every night. Some are simply unbearable. Last night I dreamt I rang the bell for the nurse and guess what walked in? A hippopotamus!

556: That's crazy!
555: You laugh, but you wouldn't laugh if you had that dream. It was so real! I was desperately thirsty. I wanted water, but couldn't get it. I rang the bell again and more hippos came in—scores of them. I turned to you for help, but you weren't there—there was a hippo in your bed instead . . .

556: How crazy! And I wasn't even here then!
555: I forgot. That was the previous 556. He died.
556: (Nervously) Oh. But as long as it was only a dream . . . (Pause)

555: (Begins moaning in pain)
556: What's wrong?
555: It's that pain again—oh—oh!
556: I'll call the nurse. (Rings Bell) Nurse! Nurse! (To 555) Where is your pain?

NURSE: (Coming in) What's the matter?
556: My friend here—he's in pain . . .
NURSE: He needs a sedative. Come on now, 555. Raise your head. Now, swallow this. You'll be all right soon.

556: (Pause) Tell me, nurse, what made you become a nurse?
NURSE: The nerve! (Going off) What right has he to ask me such personal questions? These patients!

556: No need to be so annoyed! Not very kind, these nurses. She wasn't very nice to 555 here. My friend! Oh. He's sleeping like a baby already! Think I'll read a little before going to sleep. It's a good thing they give us some books. Let me see . . . Nineteen Eighty-four by George Orwell . . . No, that doesn't look interesting. Umm—I'll just read a magazine. (Yawns) But I don't think I'll stay awake very long. I'll soon be sleeping as soundly as 555 (Yawns again. Fade out) (Dissolve voice, on Echo)
VOICES: Number five-five-five, number five-five-five, we are taking you to the operating theater (echo, "operating theater, operating theater").

VOICE 4: Strap him to the operating table.

VOICE 1: Number five-five-five, we are going to perform an emergency operation. Your lungs are diseased so we must remove your liver.

VOICE 2: You must get back to your job as soon as possible. Every day you spend in hospital costs your employers several shillings.

VOICE 3: But he is not properly dressed for the operation!

VOICE 4: Bring the supplies of blood.

VOICE 5: In a minute or two.

VOICE 1: We must do something immediately. You have nose trouble; we will remove your intestines.

VOICE 2: Shillings and shillings are thrown down the drain because you are unproductive while you stay in hospital.

VOICE 3: Has he filled in the forms for the operation?

VOICE 4: Bring the supplies of blood.

VOICE 5: In an hour or two.

VOICE 1: Hold him down. His eyesight may be bad so we must remove his vertebrae.

VOICE 2: Every moment you spend here costs the tax-payers a large percentage of their income.

VOICE 3: Has he spent the required amount of time in hospital? If not, we cannot operate on him.

VOICE 4: Bring the supplies of blood.

VOICE 5: In a day or two.

VOICE 1: We will amputate his hands. He suffers from fallen arches.

VOICE 2: It cost the Government a fortune to build this hospital. Money is being wasted because of people like you.

VOICE 3: Did he brush his teeth today? We cannot operate if he has not.

VOICE 4: Bring the supplies of blood.

VOICE 5: In a week or two.

VOICE 1: We are ready.

VOICE 4: The surgical instruments have been mislaid.

VOICE 1: Bring any instruments you can find. There are some plumbers' and carpenters' tools in the store. Bring them. He suffers from headaches, so we must remove his heart.

VOICE 2: That table cost the government several pounds. The medicines cost the government hundreds of pounds. The nurses cost the government thousands of pounds.

VOICE 4: I've found the surgical instruments but they are rusty.
VOICE 1: That doesn't matter. We will use them.
VOICE 4: Bring the supplies of blood.
VOICE 5: In a year or two.
GRAMS: (Clock strikes two)
ALL VOICES CHORUS: Time for our teabreak. Let us go. Don't move, 555.
GRAMS: (Echoing footsteps fade away)
555: I must escape before they come back! There, I'm off the table.
Where can I run to? There's a man at that desk, writing. He might help me. (Fade in) Help me, please.
MAN: Mmmm?
555: Help me—they'll come after me!
MAN: Mmmm?
555: Please help me!
MAN: Excuse me. I must finish this report I'm writing. If you have any complaints, please put them in writing and post them to my under-secretary.
555: You must help me. They'll come after me!
SPOT: (Phone rings)
MAN: (Into phone) Hello! Oh, I'm sorry, I can't. I'm very busy writing a report just now. I returned from a conference in the U.K. just a few days ago. Yes, yes, well—no. I have to attend another conference tomorrow. So sorry, goodbye.
SPOT: (Phone down)
555: I beg you—help me!
MAN: Just a minute, please.
SPOT: (Dials a number)
MAN: Please tell my chauffeur to get the car ready.
SPOT: (Phone down)
MAN: Can't you see I'm a busy man? How can this place be run if people like you keep bothering me? I repeat—if you have any complaints, use the proper channel. Put your complaints in writing, and they will reach me in due course. Now excuse me. I have to deal with some very important files. Good-day. (On echo) Good-day . . . good-day . . . good-day (Fades)
555: But—but . . . I must try elsewhere . . . That woman looking at herself in a mirror—perhaps she will help me. (Fade in. Highlife music) Please, can you help me?
WOMAN: (Gaily) Oh, I am going to enjoy the dance! I've been looking forward to it for days now! The hours at the office simply drag by. It's disgusting having to do all that work.
555: (Louder) Please, can you help me? They are after me!
WOMAN: I wonder if I’ll meet him at the dance? Perhaps he will ask me out! Ooh—wonderful. He has a highly-paid job—and he’s a graduate! He might even propose to me! Then I can give up this stupid job.

555: Help me—
WOMAN: And there’ll be no more insecurity for me!
555: Please. PLEASE keep them away from me!
WOMAN: How dare you! I’ve taken so much trouble over this dress and you just put your careless hands on it! Why do you think I slave at that office?

555: They’re coming after me. I beg you, you must hide me!
WOMAN: Not now. Some other time, perhaps. I’m getting late for the dance. I have to hurry. (Gaily, almost coquettishly) Bye-bye (On echo, “bye-bye, bye-bye . . . bye-bye . . .”) (Fade out)

555: No, don’t go . . . I must find someone to help me . . . There’s a man standing on the corner of that street. He looks kind. Perhaps he will help me. (Fade in. Streets sounds) Excuse me, sir.

MAN 2: (Kindly) Yes? Can I do anything for you?
555: Yes, thank God, you can. Please help me—hide me.
MAN 2: Why?
555: They are after me.
MAN 2: Who are after you?
555: They—the people who want to torture me—they say they want to operate on me, to cut me up.
MAN 2: But, my dear fellow, you obviously need an operation! You’re not looking at all well.
555: But they want to destroy me—
MAN 2: (laughs soothingly) Now, now—don’t be silly. The people concerned know their job. They know what they’re doing. If they say you need an operation, then you need an operation. Just take my advice and agree to whatever they want to do. They know their job.
555: But—I tell you—they’re coming after me!
MAN 2: Don’t be afraid. They won’t hurt you. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to catch a bus. And remember—they know what they are doing. (Echo, “know what they are doing, know what they’re doing . . .”) (Fade out)

555: Must find someone . . . so many people. But they don’t see me. They don’t see my need. They pass me by, their eyes blank. Where are they going? They’re all going one way. Oh, I see. A man addressing a crowd! He must help me.

ORATOR: (Fade in) And we will see that the standards of living are raised.
GRAMS: (Crowd applause. Vast.)
555: Could you help me, please.

ORATOR: ... So far, you have been living in poverty. You have had pitifully small homes to live in. You've earned such low wages you haven't been able to send your children to school—

555: They're after me—you must help me.

ORATOR: —but now that they have gone, all that will change. There will be more respect for all of you. We will live with the Brotherhood of Man. We will have Equality of Rights. We shall all live in harmony and form one Happy Nation—

GRAMS: (Crowd applause. Ecstatic. Continues under following)

555: Help me! Help me!

ORATOR: There shall be Equality of Opportunity for Everybody. The masses shall be uplifted. There will be more transport, more clothes, more jobs, more food, more money (Echo: "More jobs, more food, more money . . . more jobs, more food, more money . . .") (Fade out)

GRAMS: (Crowd roar, and fade)

555: Must get away—must run back to my room . . . must run (Screams, on echo)

VOICES IN CHORUS: (On echo) It's no good, 555. You can't escape us, 555. There's no escape, 555. We are going to operate on you, 555. Operate on you, 555. OPERATE ON YOU, 555!

555: Leave me alone, leave me alone, leave me alone, alone, alone . . . (Fade out. Pause)

GRAMS: (Clock chimes six)

556: (Yawns) What a beautiful morning. Wake up, 555! Hey! (Pause) Say, number 555—(Pause) He's still sleeping. I'll wake him up. Hey man, wake up! Wake—my God! Nurse, nurse!

SPOT: (Rings bell)

NURSE: (Coming in) What's all the noise? What is it that can't wait? 556: Nurse, nurse, my friend here— is he . . . ?

NURSE: Oh, I see. (Pause) Yes, he's dead. Ah, well, it's just one of those things. He would have died soon anyway.

556: If only I'd known! I might have been able to help him somehow.

NURSE: Don't upset yourself. No one could have helped him.
Vuminkosi Zulu, *Fright*, 1973, etching, 10" x 15¼". The Brooklyn Museum.
THE JOKER

I come from a land
where the sun smiles in the day,
the moon at night,
and electric has not killed the stars.

In the coming of Winter,
I was scared of ice,
slip and fall,
turtlenecks, coats fat
with hair or feathers,
and all that make men
walking birds, for none
ever spoke of Winter as a Joker.

In Manhattan, this winter dawn,
from my cabin ... down the lift.
"What! White smoke as my breath ... .
Like a dragon in the fables!
Must have burnt my lungs
somehow, somewhere at night ... .
Must see a doctor."

But then before me hurry
men and women, boys and girls,
their dogs on leashes,
their cats like babes in their arms;
all shoot white clouds through their nostrils
into the mist like pipers in a crowd.

Dogs and cats
like their masters or mistresses
shoot white clouds into the air!
Ossie Onuora Enekwe

BEYOND TEARS

Great men are not plucked from trees; they are the lone leaf sailing, the glitter, on the sea, calm or angry and rumbling with the agony of the waves.

They are not in the glint of hatchets; they are the flash in the beggars' roosts in the dark lonesome nights of storm.

They are like rain that falls in Harmattan. Without the drip, plants faint, birds burn, founts dry and fishes die; people sing to faggot gods and dogs bite the fingers that gave them bones.

But once in the meet of edges of life, the great like fallen statues lie among the dust and bones of Earth. We strike our drums and tune our chords, despite the tears, to chant beyond the seven hills where eagles weave crowns for the subjects of our song. We strike and chant till we burst our drums, for they did not die mere victims of the world.

But the cave darkens as the light falls.
We hear the clamour
of thorn and blade
drifting to the van
of this glorious march.

It's not the sun:
the pain in the gut
wakens the stag
in the drowsy dawn.

We marvel at the strain
in the carving of heroes.
The angels are slow
in the moulding of heroes.
The storeman is sparly
in sharing the parts.
The flames are white,
morning or sunset,
rain or drought,
and scald the fingers
of the Smith's servers.

Yet oh God!
make us great men
for thorns sprout anew each day.

We would count them,
as now, our blessing,
though we hear not the count
for the din of other men.
Ihechukwu Madubuike

THE SEQUENCE CYCLES

Prelude to Sequences

It was a sad day
That morning
When the laughter of the sea
Drowned in the iron-silence
Of the iron-day
When Nwanza the talkative
Buried her voice in her broken wings

Only the heavy voice of the owl
Poured the gloom
That day
As I woke in the morning
Of remembrances.

Sequences II

empty visions/
vacant dreams/
all is desolation
as monkeys eat bananas dressed for men
and toads parade the streets in borrowed suits

the man in the mask is my brother singing
a funeral song

the sun that whips the slave whips the master
the hand that holds the knife cuts the tree

ICHOKU. OJI ONU. OBUTE. NMUO.
Spirits that kill when life is sweetest
spirits singing a funeral song in the night
of our life

the hand that cuts the tree is blood
the knife that cuts the tree is blood
the hand that holds the knife is blood
the tree that has been cut is blood

desolation
as the spirits of the land cry
and weird sounds drift around the palm trees

Sequences III

The sky is wearing a garment of ash

Akwevu, man eater, drenches himself in blood
Akwevu, man eater, rattles in a guttural voice

The man that owns a house knows the entrance
He that made the trap can untie the knot

Akwevu drenches himself in blood, rattles in a guttural voice

Famine has ravaged the land of animals
Famine is eating the wombs of animals

Tortoise and his friends preyed on their mothers
to save their skin
Squirrel alone spared his mother

Eleke nti oba was caught yesterday flying
Men have learned new ways of shooting

Carry me home to dance the dance of my youth

The toad does not run in the daytime for nothing
Nor does one need to tell the deaf that the market place
Is in an uproar

Carry me home to sing the song of my childhood

Sing the song that squeezes my heart in sweet melody

Beat the drum
Beat the war drum

Beat it loud loud and louder

Beat the drum that fans the joys of my tears
Through the broken eye of my wound

Let it telegraph its torturing rhythms
Into the marrows of my bones and crush me
In self liberation

Let it grind me in self consumation like death.

Sequences

This memory will pass
This phantom around us
Will melt in the shadows of another day

*Painful remembrances of elephant foot*
*Heavily pounding our broken dreams*

This, too, will pass
Into the labyrinths of time
Skunder Boghossian, DUMB, DEAF AND BLIND, 1972, oil on cardboard, 24½” x 30%”. Collection of Quincy Troupe, Photo Bernard Pierre Wolff.
POETRY IS NOT

Poetry is not
the mere adroit splicing
of heady words

or an explosion
bursting out in print

or a canvas
splattered over
with gaudy language.

It is rather
a demon rearing up
its ugly head
impelling the victim
gnawing at his heart
pounding in his head
crowding his thought
interfering with his sleep
demanding an exit

till the unworthy vessel
now babbling mute incoherences
unable to contain the flood
bursts out leaking, sievelike
from every aperture.

And now at peace
the victim wakes up, delivered,
beholding a new baby
born to a surprised parent
and to the world.
Skunder Boghossian. UNION, 1972, oil on canvas, 75" x 49¼". Collection of the artist. Photo Bernard Pierre Wolff.
Tayo Olafioye

THE PANTHER AND THE MAN

Females share in masquerade cult
Females share in masquerade cult
Death's imminent only
If they scorn the oro cult
If they scorn the oro cult
Thus caution the unpracticed hunter
Not to tread the panther's grove
Lest he taste a sudden pounce
Obedience is better than sacrifice.

Every one to his own
They and their own
You and your own
Us and our own
Every one to his own
Please caution the unpracticed hunter
Not to tread the panther's grove
Lest he taste a sudden pounce.
Obedience is better than sacrifice

We are the Rain
Friendly to all Sundry
Rain beats all on its path.
We are the Rain
Friendly to all Sundry

I am certain:
He who is against us
Will not farm where he can reap
If he farms where he can reap
Will not draw where he can drink
If he draws where he can drink
Will never find where he can move.

They send the child a-shopping
To buy the head of cobra
Worth only nine pennies.
Seven pieces of 'Itun,' seven pieces
of 'Gator-peppers, plus
Seven pieces of bitter seeds
Made a compound with black soap
They gave it that fellow-deliver.
The fellow is such a fool.

The wicked be Evil no more
The Evil be wicked no more
Evil mauls the wicked
Fortune makes the kindly

It is certain
For the sower of evil seed
His wife will feed
His son will feed
He too shall clothe
In the garment of sin
He may be smart as the Ifa
Knowing as the Opele
He will still clothe
In the garment of sin.

All partridges are equal
On this Earth.
Except that
Which perches on a heap. Yet
the fowl can't harm the hawk
The fowl can't harm the hawk

After all,
The sly pace of the panther
Never a cowardly gesture.
Tayo Olafioye

THE AFFAIR OF THIS WORLD IS LIKE A PROVERB

Those with heads
find no caps
Those with caps
have no heads.
Fate only, is true Confidant.

The rain-wishing drone
cannot perceive:
WORK is cure for want.
Facing life’s chores
—today’s and the morrow’s—
is man’s constant share.
Failure will await
those who rest
On the success of yesterday.

The rich
owes fortune to his star.
Fate surely, never acumen alone.
The destitute
owns an evil chance
Fate surely, never acumen alone.
While man lulls
Time waits for none.
WORK is cure for want.
May Fate ordain one’s chances
That man may dream to no avail.

Pretend
as if we share in life.
For much as
humility is servility
we know that
The kola hoping to ripen
must age in the pod.
When one's stamina fails
Insight is one's retainer.
All things to its time
Add your wisdom to my foolishness please

Unity is talk of the wise
Physicians cure all
but not remorse
Physicians cure all
but not distress.
Let's make most of life today
Providence only, has clue for the morrow.
That the right rinse the left
That the left rinse the right
make the hands clean.
The proud can find none with whom to swap.

When those in front cry for help
you snatch the hoe and go your farm
When those behind ask for hand
you snatch the hoe and go your farm
If neighbours gather to host
you snatch the hoe and go your farm
claiming bushfowls menace your crops.
Someday it's your wedding
you howl nobody cares.
You selfish-fiend, who will back your kind
Oblong-shaped occiput
Whom have you ever lifted?

People moisten the Earth
That they tread a dust-less path.
Cyprian Shilakoe, SILENCE, 1969, etching, 15” x 23½”. The Brooklyn Museum.
There is the rumble of distant thunder
Through the country of the empty stomach,
Reverberating through the thin rib-cage,
A silent rage
Of frustration of people waiting.
In this countryside
There is starvation.
Here in this heat-baked land
Of hunger and fear
Only the crooked prickly pears still stand.
The grass, the crops, the land is dry and dead.
Even the lizard and snake have fled.
Long forgotten are the feasts
Of meat of well-fed beasts,
Of cow and goat and hen.
People wait beneath the sunbaked sky
And cry
While others merely wait to die.
By day, only the Summer sun floods this country,
Bathes this land with glaring light and heat.
From day to fruitless day
The prayed-for rain just stays away.
Only the bird of prey is seen,
The death-dark bird,
While within the stomach
Only the rumble of distant thunder
Is heard.
Peter Clarke

THE NOTICE ON THE WALL

It says clearly on that wall
"No Ballplaying Allowed."
But watch this little crowd
Of boys
Disobey,
Again today,
That strict order.
They give vent
To one of their
Great joys
And kick their muddy ball
Against that pure-white
Upright wall.
Daniel P. Kunene

COALESCEENCE

Pealing bells
    piercing ears
    splitting drums
    to
A deaf-muteness
    like
A blunting narcosis
Torn membranes
Crying blood
Stilled drums
Nor ear nor tongue
For Afrika

Deafening clamour of clanging steel
    Draining life
    from
    Black bodies
Now limp
    like
    Impotent phalli

Then
    A recessional of the bells
    Reluctantly the clangour
    falls into retreat
    finds refuge in convalescent homes

Drums once more pierce the sky
Reviving, advancing,
Trousered thighs
Flail mine-booted feet
Percussing with rattles
    of coca-cola caps
Shirted torsos
    heave in unforgotten rhythms
Snapped-off buttons fly
Heads rise
Eyes stare
Nostrils dilate

The royal salute thunders:
Bayede Baba
    Hail Father
Bayede Nkosi
    Hail King
Bayede Kristu
Son-of-Elephant-in-the-Sky
Baye ................ de

Daniel P. Kunene

THE GOING AND THE COMING BACK

Square piece of sky
    No perspective, canvas too cramped
Square measured by the size of a window-pane
    No horizon, vision controlled
    world shrunk
    reduced to
    a raised pillow
Supporting degenerating vertebrae
While watching the static scene,
    a square piece of sky
    through a square window-pane
Unbelievable.

Once, long ago, I went outside,
    looked at the mountain peaks
    climbed up, nostrils lungs
    drinking deep the mountain breeze
From the top I saw a vast endlessness
I went there, to that dreamful endlessness
Yet in the going (little I knew)
Was also the coming back,
And the long ago now is like
   a meagre yesterday
   a thwarted eternity
Then, as the coming back took quicker strides,
   I knew:
Coming back to repossess
   the warmth inside
Withdrawning
   limb-by-limb
   chin-on-knees
   egg-like
Watching
   immobile-ly
   as if in frozen time
The square piece of sky
Through a square window-pane
Waiting
   for the MYSTERY
   to unfold
Skunder Boghossian, Monk of Babalou, 1970, oil on board, 29 1/4" x 23".
Evelyne Accad Zerbe

WHEN AFTER A LONG SLUMBER

When after a long slumber
Of whips, of submission
Of blood shed
Coagulated
Transfixed by shame
mud of despair
All your hopes extinguished
even before the awakening
Your cries
convulsive wallowing
Sold into exile

When will you awaken
from this burial
that prevents you from being
women

RISE UP

Come out from behind your veils
stained with dishonor
your veils of shame
your black faces
your white faces
imploring, supplicating
clamoring
shrieking, clawing

THROW THEM OUT
STRAIGHTEN UP
ERECT
DEFEND YOURSELVES
DESTROY

Your hands still shaking
can be immobilized
Take this dagger
forever turned against you
Raise it you have the power
The myth of weakness
The weakness of the myth

OVERTURN
REND
SHRED
STRIKE OUT
SHAKE OFF

The millenial yoke
of your brothers

IN FUTILITY

Your hands stretched outward
In futility
In futility, your swollen wombs
festyering, ploughed
forever
ploughed, festering
"May it be
Inshallah, God willing
a son"

In futility your bruised nipples
dry leather
Your sagging breasts, withered
By ceaseless milkings
Your exhausted udders
Gluttonous mouth of the newborn
"May it be a son
Inshallah, God willing
a son will nurse longer"

In futility your puffy legs
disfigured flesh, trembling eyebrows
redness of glance, hands like bark
fermentation, putrefaction
Musty odor of whipped flesh

55
Torture of an imprisoned dawn
hidden, sewers running full of blood
In futility
your prostration upon the tomb

TO MY AUNT SUAD

Suad, they named you
Suad, which means Happiness
Happiness, such irony
Where is that happiness for which I search
in your dull eyes, reddened, tarnished, extinguished
in your swollen ankles, your varicose legs
the hills and valleys of your skull, shaped by beatings

Every time he drank
He would beat you
on the head
taking revenge for that job he lost
Once the blood flowed, blinding you
Your lacerated mouth could cry out no longer
Cry out for justice. For justice?
That of the power of man?
Of his hold on you?
You broke down, miserably shredded rag
flesh despised, sold, nullified

And when I saw you again wavering
shortened, silenced, bent
prematurely whitened
You said to me ever so softly:

  "Only wish for sons
   Boys, men
   They have a much easier life"
And I wanted so to say:

  "Do you even have a life, you
   Miserable aunt Suad
   Aunt sadness?"
IN MEMORY OF MY ARAB GRANDMOTHER

Barely twelve years old
Conscripted into a marriage bed
Sacrifice of a lamb
Sucking still the milk of innocence
Games in the sun, childhood crucified
Silence of a frozen morning

He was there, a man
a father
knife of sacrifice
Whiteness, marauding hand
He lifted your trembling veil
Your timid gestures, hiding
Yet imploring
Those greedy eyes, chin gritty with stubble
hoarse breathing
The sword awakens

He paralyzed you in the silence
Morning of blood
The detonation of rape
Dusty torsion of a frantic escape
Shredding of the dawn
setting beneath stone

In silence your abdomen was swollen
Staggering tumor
on rickety legs
Rending of silken skin
Gutted fruit
Millenial kneeling
of the woman
Mary keeping everything in her heart
Mary receiving the shepherds and magi
Mary cradling the child
A child was born to us
To us a son was given
You named him Fuad
Heart
Your heart offered in sacrifice
Dennis Brutus

Pray
if you believe in prayer
for those shipwrecked by love

else pity them;
the sunburst of your compassion
may heal their broken stems
may restore their crushed tendrils

they live in a drought-shattered continent
where the children are skeletal ghosts,
their music the hoarse death-low
of emaciated expiring beasts;
they cannot shutter their ears to the guttural rattles

those who should free them live in suave hotels
where chrome waiters glisten and glide
where magic is a signature on an authorized check
where rich food is discarded garbage
insulting the nostrils of famished children
where hope is a dead rat among the putrifying viands

in the cerecloths of devious strategems
the healers are paralysed
in the formaldehyde of their wise inertia
our viscera grow noisome and decompose—
our tears are maggots battening on our corneas
acid rains hiss as they corrode our membranes

Forgive us our anorexia, our anomy, our acidie
forgive us our arid eyes, our unresonating ears
our vanished mouths;
forgive us and pity us
permit us our oblivion of grief
and the dry abrupt lusts
that spasm us
We have soared among cloudpeaks
and splintered our hearts on their marble whiteness
we were sodden in the drizzling harmattan of tears
now we sear, sere, in the sirocco of lost hopes

we have known the rocks and the shoals
the organing breakers and the talismanic spray
we have stood transfigured and effulgent
we have known the jagged edges and the taloned reefs

Pray,
if you believe in prayer,
for those shipwrecked by love;
or pity us:

for still it will not rain
John Biguenet

EPITAPH OF A YOUNG PROTESTOR

Everyone was chanting.
We began to walk toward the soldiers.
It was a kind of dance.

A SONG

The opening mouth,
a stone under water,
a skiff poised in the bruised stillness of oars.

The voice,
ice cracking in warm water,
the flutter of wings startled into flight.

The lyrics,
words trembling, boiling water,
a man in the distance walking on gravel.

The music,
to the eyes, falling water,
to the hands, a rope unraveling into strands.

The final chord,
a wall of water,
already dead, a man about to fall.

The silence after song,
the hard edge of water,
glaciers advancing on the cities.

SUICIDE

One day I will take my pen
draw a line
and imitate a man
walking toward a horizon
THE INSUFFICIENCY OF PARKING LOTS

At dawn from the window
the parking lot stretches calm
and brilliant as water.

Concrete leached to earth
it cannot shrug nor carry
sound nor make sounds.

Fish cannot live in it.
Men cannot drown in it.
Light does not penetrate.

It doesn't give way
and so it cannot rise.
Its force is its refusal
to communicate force applied
to it. Women do not bathe in it.
It can be divided into property.

There is no healing in it.
No comfort.
It is hard on one's feet.

ASPECTS OF THE KNIFE

The knife against his throat cautioned his irony.
No one doubted that a knife had done this.
Fumbling for a knife in the drawer, his hand deserted him.
The loneliness of the knife quivered in a tray across the room.
If you drink your water with a knife, don't talk.
The eye being slit saw merely an edge.
Nine fingers.
A DOVE HUNTER'S FUNERAL

JONATHAN JAMES MOYA

And every day he would make us relive his funeral and every day we four dummies would comply. It's not easy pulling that polished mahogany up and down the stairs, back and forth between his bedroom, and pulling those brown splinters out of our fingers every night. And what does he do? He watches us from his wheelchair, occasionally beckoning his finger, we would go fetch his gun, put it in his hand, and he would shoot the gulls as they fly off the pier; occasionally he would miss, hitting some kids playing dice on the harbor. It was awful when he hit those birds, but it was God-awful when he missed them. All day long you would hear those sirens and the next thing you would see is the outline of little bodies in white sheets turned red, and the sirens fading. Then his beckoning finger would tell us to pull that black rectangle up the stairs again. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. NOW THEY WON'T BOTHER ME ANYMORE. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THEM DEAD. It didn't matter that those dumb birds he killed were seagulls; what did matter was that he thought they were doves; and it didn't matter that the kids on the harbor who got shot were just as dumb as the gulls; and it didn't matter that nobody ever took the time to prosecute the old bastard for all the killing he did, they just didn't care; it just didn't matter. This went on so long that it became his daily routine and it became our daily routine. Every day at sunrise (always at sunrise) and sunset (yes, always at sunset) we would
dredge that coffin of his back to his room and he would always watch us in his yellow pajamas (he never changed and he never changed them). And every day the gulls and the kids would come and every day he would do his shooting and missing, and the sirens would always come to clean up the mess. But today, today, the bastard wants us to plant lilies, in thousands of premarked plots along the pier. Plant them nicely, plant them deep, but not too deep. We did just that and it took six hours. And the work it was worse than having to pull out splinters and watching him shoot, so bad we couldn’t take it and we let it out of our stomachs in a slow trickle. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM NICELY, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. NOW THEY WON’T BOTHER ME ANYMORE. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THEM DEAD. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH. VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. And there they were; thousands of little white flowers planted along the pier, and the waves would come up and just always miss them by inches. Now we can see that beckoning finger and we lift that crate onto our shoulders, drag it past the porch, past the living room, up the stairs and into the bedroom. The old bastard, he stood, he stood, he stood, he stood, and watched, and watched, and watched, and watched, and we complied, and we complied, and we complied. Then he let us go to watch the moon and pull out splinters from our fingers and let our fingers heal. And we talked while we watched the moon and decided that we had enough of that old bastard, and his funeral, and his gun, and his dove killing, and his kid killing, and his lily planting. We were tied to him, chained to him, just like our fathers, grand-fathers, great-grand fathers; those generations of funeral pushers, gun toters, and lily planters. They all died and he continued to outlast them and he still may continue to outlast them all. We decided that he would do it without us, he would have to find himself another chain and other people to tie down. And we looked at the moon, eyes wide, mouth open, how like the sun it looked, and we curled ourselves into a ball along the pier among those thousands of lilies and went to sleep. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. NOW THEY WON’T BOTHER ME ANYMORE. REALLY KILLED THOSE DOVES. REALLY KILLED THEM DEAD. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THEM LILIES, BOYS. It woke us from our sleep, it dragged us from our sleep. And it came again. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE,
BOYS. No we won't old bastard. We won't lift that crate old bastard. We won't lift that crate. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. No we won't old bastard. No we won't. We won't plant those lilies old bastard. We won't plant those lilies. THEN GET ME MY SWORD, BOYS. MY FLAMING SWORD, BOYS. GET ME MY SWORD, BOYS. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN'T LET THEM BOTHER ME. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. No we won't old bastard. We won't get your gun old bastard. We won't get your gun. No more dove killing and no more missing, old man. no more. No more killing. No more killing. No more. No more. And we took his wheelchair with him in it and pushed him up the stairs and into his bedroom. And we took his gun and dragged it up the stairs and into the bedroom to keep him company. And we took his coffin and dragged that up the stairs and into the bedroom also. Then we worked on the lilies, unplanting them one by one, and piled them high into his room. And it took six hours and it was all very pleasant. And when we were done the tide came and filled all the holes in the pier. Then you would hear the old man screaming—and oh how like a siren it sounded. Then there would be a few moments of silence. Then would come the sound of the old man nailing mahogany to the floor; nailing that coffin to the floor. Then the wind would breathe through and within a few hours was followed by another sound; the sound of the old man loading cartridges into his gun. Then it stopped. Then the old man’s screaming would begin again. The way it sounded it was as if that old man had never been in that room before, and never touched any lilies before. It went on for a couple of hours and was interrupted by the sound of that bolt being drawn back and those cartridges being pushed out and the echo drifting out of the room, down the stairs, past the living room, past the porch, past the holes on the pier, and out onto the water and beyond. And for the first time in a long while we thought it would be fun to watch the old man shoot his doves for the first time from his room. So we all massed our bodies onto the porch and faced the pier waiting for the next dove to fall into the ocean. And we waited, and we waited, and we waited, and nothing happened. But upstairs that gun was still going off but yet nothing was coming from the window. Then he must of been doing his shooting inside the room all along. So we unmassed our bodies from the front porch and went upstairs to take a peeky at what he was shooting up there in his room. And we looked through that there keyhole that curved itself into a question mark, with our eyeballs glued to that hole in the door, and we saw that the old man was shooting those lilies. He shot them while he was hiding behind his coffin, screeching in absolute fear. GOT
TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN'T LET THEM BOTHER ME. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. And the screeching and the shooting continued for a long long time and the cartridges eventually counted themselves into the millions, the billions, the trillions, and the googols, and even beyond them numbers. At least it seemed that way. And it seemed to go on forever and forever finally stopped at noon the next day. He still was screaming at those stupid plants and they still remained as pale white as ever just a lot more broken looking than when we planted them. Then for some un-explainable reason the old man turned his rage away from those plants and started firing at the door. And we saw the first cartridge coming at us and we were just lucky enough to remove our eyeballs from the keyhole with God-knows-what other part of our bodies before it came. We always thought that old bastard was crazy, well, this time the old guy had completely flipped. And the cartridges continued to blast their way through the door. And the hole it was getting bigger, and now it was big enough to stick a fist through, and now it was big enough to stick a head through, and now it was big enough to stick a chest through, and now it was big enough for the old man to stick his entire body through. So out popped the old man and he waved the gun at our temples, our neck, our chest, in between our legs, down our legs, back up the legs, up the chest, the neck, and to the temples. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN'T LET THEM BOTHER ME ANYMORE. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. DON'T LOOK SO SAD, BOYS. BE GLAD, BOYS. DON'T LOOK SO SAD, BOYS. And he stuffed another cartridge into the gun. And we dragged the lilies one by one back to the pier and replanted each one in its original plot. And we pushed the old man out to the pier so he could do his usual shooting and missing. He did just that. And the sirens came to clean up the mess, and drag the little bodies away in white sheets turned red, and the sirens faded. And so everything was back to normal. And My God, My God, Oh My God, everything was back to normal. We slept that night no better, but still glad as hell to be alive. And in the morning we heard the same thing we heard all the time all over again. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN'T LET THEM BOTHER ME ANYMORE. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT
THOSE LILIES, BOYS........And something new was said........
BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. MY FLAMING SWORD, BOYS.
BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. YOU ALL PUSH ME TO THE HARBOR, BOYS. PUSH ME TO THE VERY EDGE, BOYS. PUSH ME TO THE HARBOR, BOYS. We still was mad as hell (and shit, we forgot his gun) but we pushed the old bastard to the edge of the harbor and when we got to the edge we still was so mad that we pushed him right over the edge of the harbor into the ocean. And when it was done we was so happy, so happy, so happy. Then we looked at the edge of the harbor and we could see bubbles coming from the bottom of the ocean to the top and we knew that they belonged to the old man. Then we went into the house destroying everything that belonged to the old man. We started with the bedroom and destroyed that coffin in there and the only thing that could stop us from hacking that rectangle to pieces was the roar of the ocean; the scream of the ocean, and it was too far away for it to do any harm. Then we broke the bastard's gun and dragged it into the ocean and threw it in to keep the old man company. Then we went through the living room and hacked everything in there, then through the other rooms, then we hacked the porch out and watched the house cave in on itself. Then we went to work on the lilies, unplanting them one by one and throwing them all into the ocean. And we would sit on the harbor and watch........and... Oh, My God; Oh, My God; Oh, My God...he would come out of the ocean, floating on his back. Effectively dead, but just floating there haunting us. We couldn't have that, we couldn't have that. So we dragged the old man out of the ocean, and tied two big boulders, the biggest we could find, and tied them around his waist, and tossed him back into the ocean. And he went down and for that moment we were happy again...but... Oh, My God.....Oh, My God.....Oh, My God.....he floated back up, this time face up and it was God awful. And we didn't know what to do. And we didn't know what to do. And we didn't know what to do. We tried poking him down. But it didn't work. We tried nailing him down. But it didn't work. We tried cutting him into little pieces and weighing each piece down with lead injected into them. But it didn't work. Nothing we tried worked. The old bastard was getting his revenge, he continued to tie us down even after he died. And what could we do? We couldn't leave him there to float, and then leave this place, and have someone else find him, and we couldn't leave this place as long as this bastard still floated on the water and the ocean. So, we could only try again. And we collected all the pieces and buried all the pieces as deep down as we could go. But no use, no matter how deep down they were buried the wind would gust and expose them to the light again. Then we tried burning the pieces. But no good cause they were too wet to burn. So we let the pieces dry for
a couple of months. But no good, they were still too wet to burn. And what could we do? And what could we do? And what could we do? There was just one thing left and we did it. Brick by brick, board by board, we rebuilt the house exactly as it was. It took years, but we did it. And when that was done we remade that coffin of his piece by piece and nail by nail. Then we gathered up the pieces of the old man and placed them in the coffin. Ah, Oh My God. . . . . Ah, Oh My God. . . . . Ah, Oh My God. . . . . the pieces reassembled themselves and there stood the old man looking at us and his finger, that horrid beckoning finger of his telling us that we must do everything all over again. And he sat in his wheelchair with his yellow pajamas, and watched, and watched, and watched, and watched, and we did everything he wanted. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. MY FLAMING SWORD, BOYS. BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN’T LET THEM BOTHER ME ANYMORE. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. And we did it, we did it all. And we brought him his gun and we gave it to him, two slugs right in the temples, and he slumped over the wheelchair, and the blood ran down in canals along his neck, his chest, his legs, and the floor. And yet he breathed. So we gave him two more slugs, this time in the ventricles of the heart. And yet he breathed. Then we gave him two more slugs, this time inside the right and left lungs. And still he breathed. So we gave him two more slugs, this time inside each lobe of the brain. And still he breathed. And we didn’t know what to do? And we didn’t know what to do? And we didn’t know what to do? Then a flock of seagulls landed on the ocean near the pier. And out of instinct we obeyed what the old man had drilled into us and shot the gulls (the doves) and we pushed more cartridges in and shot more gulls. And the sirens came, and the kids came, and occasionally we would miss the gulls and hit the poor kids playing dice on the harbor, and the sirens would come and always be there to clean up the mess, and then fade again. Then more lovely doves and more lovely children would come everyday, and all we could remember was that this once all used to be so repulsive to us but now it was so lovely; so, so, lovely. And then one day we noticed the most beautiful thing of them all, the old man had stopped breathing everytime we shot one of those lovely creatures or occasionally missed and hit the other lovely things playing dice on the harbor. And that truly was the most lovely thing we ever saw. But when all this beauty was gone (usually by mid-afternoon) the old man would start breathing again and his breathing became the most horrible thing we ever
witnessed in our lives. And we couldn’t wait for the doves and the kids to come again, so that we could have all that beauty with us again. And it was so lovely. So beautiful. This was paradise. And the old man smiled in his silence (whoever knew that the silence of his could be so beautiful). And we didn’t mind being chained if being chained was always this beautiful. And the old man smiled in his silence to show that he was proud of us. And we eventually began to love the old man, for if it wasn’t for him we would of missed all this beauty and moved away from this place a long time ago. How unthinkable! And of course the old man tried to make us see all the beauty we were missing by having us drag that coffin of his, that lovely coffin of his, up and down from his bedroom. But we were just too dumb at the time to see it. We were just too dumb at the time to see it. And his words would live on forever: GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. CAN’T LET THEM BOTHER ME. GOT TO KILL THOSE DOVES. GOT TO KILL THEM DEAD. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. LIFT IT HIGH, VERY HIGH, BOYS. LIFT THAT CRATE, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. PLANT THEM DEEP, BOYS. BUT NOT TOO DEEP, BOYS. PLANT THOSE LILIES, BOYS. BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. MY FLAMING SWORD, BOYS. BRING ME MY SWORD, BOYS. DON’T LOOK SO SAD, BOYS. BE GLAD, BOYS. DON’T LOOK SO SAD, BOYS. And they will live on forever. . . .and forever means more than just one afternoon. And, Oh isn’t that lovely. . . .there is a flock of doves coming in just beyond the horizon. And isn’t everything all right with the world.
**Werner Aspenström**

**THE CAVE**

No, not back to the countryside,  
to the sleepy animals.  
Not in the city either,  
among the photographers reproducing each other.  
To build himself a new habitat  
(where)  
of a new material  
(which)  
an igloo of air?  
The thought of the impossible takes root in him,  
hollows him out,  
till he himself is a cave,  
a man without images, without faith.

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**Werner Aspenström**

**THE COMMUNICATION**

Can be said.  
Can be set out on the table.  
Perhaps the birch-leaf's wrinkles  
in early May.  
Perhaps the month of March:  
they never posted their letter to the radio pastor,  
they went out together  
and looked at the snow thawing.  
Perhaps six o'clock on an autumn evening  
down by the shore,  
the water, slow to catch fire,  
is beginning to burn.
Bengt Nordenborg, PRESS, lithograph.
Bengt Nordenborg, MANIPULATOR, lithograph.
IDEA DE LA MUERTE

(Para Rene Davalos)

Hasta cuándo seremos solamente
un eructo de Dios,
o una moneda
jugada a cara o cruz?

Hasta cuándo seremos, hoy,
poetas,
creadores, amantes,
y mañana un andamio putrefacto
porque llegó la muerte?

Los dioses tienen mucho.
Tienen carros, amantes,
y cantores;
el hombre pide poco;
solemne su muerte,
no morirse
cuando aun no se muere
y acabarse
cuando la vida es muerte irresoluta.

ARTE POETICA

Olvidé los palacios y las fuentes
amadas por la luna, las doncellas
y el hierro de las gestas, fijando el mundo
hasta el preciso linde de mis manos
halladas en diaria labor.
Conozco el tedio y el horror pequeños
de imágenes y sueños disgregados.
Arriesgo su inventario porque dicen
una oscura verdad los simples símbolos
que no verán los necios ni los sabios.
Guido Rodriguez Alcalá

IDEA OF DEATH

(for Rene Dávalos)

How long shall we be only
a feeble burp of God,
or a coin tossed for heads or tails?

How long shall we be, today,
poets,
creators, lovers,
when tomorrow is a gallows
already rotten with death?

The gods have so much.
They have chariots, lovers
and singers;
man asks for so little;
only for his death,
not to die
before his dying
but to be finished
when life is irresolute death.

ARTE POETICA

I have forgotten the palaces and fountains
embraced by the moon, the maidens
and the swords of chivalry; I limit the world
to the precise boundaries that my hands
fix in their everyday labor.
I know the tedium and small horrors
of scattered images and dreams.
I dare take this inventory because
there is an obscure truth in the simple symbols
that the ignorant and erudite will never see.
NEW YORK

Venimos del recuerdo
sin embargo
el pasado no está
y es necesario
hallar la línea firme
en lo que entrega
como los nudos cíclicos
del agua.

Me dicen o recuerdo
que murieron los pájaros
y que el agua y el aire
eran profundos
en la ciudad de fierro.

No puedo asegurarlo.
La memoria
es memoria del recuerdo
pero también es ámbito
del hombre
por eso anoto
aquestas impresiones
que entrego
a quienes quieran
rescatar de las olas
la botella
con su mensaje escrito
en rara lengua.
NEW YORK

We come out of memory
however
the past is gone
and we must
find a strong line
in what remains
like whirling knots
of water.

They tell me or I remember
that the birds died
and that once the water and air
were full of life
in this iron city.

I cannot be sure.
Memory
is a memory of recollection
but also the circumference
of man
so I write down
these impressions
which I leave
to whoever wants
to recover from the waves
the bottle
with its message written
in exotic language.
DIETER WHELLERSHOF, Foto Brigitte Friedrich
DIETER WELLERSHOFF: A PORTRAIT

Reality is something that each writer has to interpret according to his own perception. The word has meant different things to different writers, but it was never something that a writer could ignore. For Wellershoff the act of writing is a commitment to enrich a reality which has lost its strangeness and mystery through overrationalization and logical precision. This is where he starts as a writer. He knows that writing is an extreme act of individualization—the writer must penetrate all levels of reality on his own to rediscover behind appearances the complexity of life that was lost in the routine of our daily perceptions. Social habits have preconditioned us to see our environment in a certain way which frequently prevents us from seeing it the way it really is. Devoid of multidimensions we state reality and forget to live and interpret it.

All his writing, whether critical or creative, starts with this recognition. A number of characters in his novels are hindered in self-realization in their life, and Wellershoff cherishes the idea of developing characters which are completely thrown out of all certainties and relationships that our ordinary environment provides for us as ordinary individuals. Only in a total disconnection from the routine of daily life are we able to recuperate new moments of freedom and creativity in which everything once again becomes real.
The writer's task assumes an important role in a society that has lost an inner focus. Whether the writer can achieve such a reorientation is questionable, especially in an age when the writer himself doubts the validity and impact of his own writing. That doubt occurs at different intervals of Wellershoff's thinking. The title of an essay “Alles ist Kunst, jeder ist Künstler” included in Wellershoff's latest collection of essays Die Auflösung des Kunstbegriffs reflects his inner concern about the fragile situation of the writer's art. Radio and TV have assumed some of the functions of literature, and the artist no longer walks on a separate stage in contemporary society. The traditional gap between audience and artist has often been effaced so that everyone claims to be an artist in his own right. Trends in modern psychology have strengthened such beliefs and indeed Wellershoff does have a substantial background in psychology. People like Rollo May come to mind who affirm the capacity for creativity in every human being. However, Wellershoff's probing into the validity of writing should not be misunderstood. His constant doubt is also the source of his writing energy. He has not given up on writing, he is a prolific writer deeply concerned with the revitalization of the society he lives in. Perhaps the doubt could be called the negative charge of his energy. And ultimately he does not believe that everyone can be a writer or an artist. Few people choose to jump outside the comfort of their life routine to start a process of individuation, of confrontation with one's self to begin the journey into the self. As a writer Wellershoff has taken this step. Doubting himself while undertaking this journey should be interpreted as an effort towards greater authenticity. Wellershoff makes a clear and necessary distinction between the writer who is depressed and the writer who writes about depressing subject matters. The former will hardly put down anything worthwhile on paper, since it takes tremendous energy and even enthusiasm to write about something, especially when that something happens to be of a depressing nature. Once again, a recharging duality of Wellershoff's mind is at work, a force that can be felt in the great variety of forms he has chosen for his own writing: novels, short stories, essays, poetry, radio plays, and a multi-media opera. Wellershoff strikes a balance between traditional forms of expression and experimentation with new forms. And one of the most amazing features of his writing—something that has become so rare in contemporary writers—is the intense essayistic thinking that surrounds his own writing. Three books of essays have appeared so far: Literatur und Veränderung, Literatur und Lustprinzip, and Die Auflösung des Kunstbegriffs.

The form of the essay has been greatly neglected in the 20th century, and often enough, essays have degenerated into tedious and unimaginative scholarly articles. However, Wellershoff explores the creative pos-
sibilities of the essay form and presents the reflection of his thought process in his essays, a process that is stimulated by intensity and lucidity. He combines knowledge with insight, understanding with experience, and critical confrontations with projections into the future. The stimulation we draw from his essays reminds us of essayists like Susan Sonntag and Octavio Paz. A few titles taken from his books of essays indicate the direction of his critical and aesthetic thinking: “Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit”, “Aesthetic der Distanz”, “Literatur, Markt und Kulturindustrie”, “Probleme moderner Aesthetic”, “Alles ist Kunst, jeder ist Künstler”. Some of the essays parallel the aesthetic and social concerns of Wellershoff’s novels and radio plays. Wellershoff is aware of the pulsating vibrations of his own time both as a writer and essayist which enriches the substance of his thinking and the fullness of experience represented in his writing.

Wellershoff has also edited the complete works of Gottfried Benn, a writer with whom he shares intensity of thought and perception, and from whom he might have inherited a feeling for those human beings who do not fit into the well-organized structures of contemporary society. Wellershoff has published three novels so far and is working on a fourth one right now: *Ein schöner Tag* (1966), *A beautiful Day*, *1972*, *Die Schattengrenze* (1969), and *Einladung an alle* (1972). In all three novels a similar pattern is developed. Under the pressure of society a passive, lethargic human being is confronted with a social problem that he is unable to solve.

His first novel *A Beautiful Day* takes us into the ordinary life of a middle-class family which lives in a small apartment in Cologne. There is nothing spectacular about the subject matter, nothing unusual that would immediately catch the reader’s attention. What Wellershoff wants to portray in his novels does not depend on the excitement generated by the subject matter, but rather by the intricate relationships that make human beings interact. A few pages into the novel the reader senses a certain dissatisfaction among the three members of the family. The daughter, Carla, who is taking care of her seventy-year-old father wants to see her father in a home for the elderly so that she can more fully enjoy her own life. The father tries to keep the family together at all cost and hopes to achieve this goal by building a new house. In his earlier years he had owned a house in East Germany which had been paid for by his former wife. He now believes that the state owes him a substantial amount of money to support his new building project and therefore sends his son on a trip to find a certain person who could serve as a witness that he indeed had owned a house in East Germany at one time. The son Günther, who flunked out of college, considers this trip the big chance of his life:
he plans to use the money that his father has given him to escape from the monotony of his daily family life. The trip marks the focal point of the novel, since it offers Günther the possibility of breaking into a different life style. Naturally, he fails with his mission, and when his money runs out, his sister goes after him to bring him back to the family. She in turn interprets her trip as her possibility to break away from the monotony of her daily routine. However, she does not have enough courage to get involved in new life situations and, disillusioned, she returns to her home. Nothing has changed in her or her brother; they have failed to assume the vitality of their own life possibilities and cease to function as real human beings. They live their daily life without living. The characters in A Beautiful Day are basically not different from those portrayed in subsequent novels of Wellershoff. These characters are weak human beings that Wellershoff has woven into the patterns of his novels to give sensuous context to his social and human concern: the recovery of a human wholeness which we have lost in the fragmentation of our contemporary civilization. The belief in this wholeness stands behind all of Wellershoff's artistic production, and perhaps the hope that the wholeness might be recuperated once again in our present environment. And since he so firmly believes in the wholeness of man to be realized in the future, he looks at the present with strong negative attitudes. His writing, and literature in general, could be one form to bring about an organic integration of man and his society. Out of a strong negative view could come the desire in the readers to be different from what we experience on the page of the written work, which by the very nature of its being finished in time and space gives the reader the possibility of enlarging his inner experience.

In an interview Wellershoff once said: "One can't consider art as something totally different from life. Literature is a medium through which life itself becomes transparent." And as a writer Wellershoff has to invent a technique by which literature takes us beyond the limits of our practical and routine experience: he chose to establish a strange distance between man and the things surrounding him so that the strangeness forces us once again to perceive things the way they are, in their richness, untouched by the deadening effects of daily routine.
Now that I am writing a new book I neglect my reading. I cannot muster any lasting interest for anything else. The books I open disintegrate into details and form new, transitory relationships with each other. Something different interests me in each one, single passages, scenes, dialogues or technical details like a change of perspective, a cut, a montage, an associative illusion, the peculiar interaction of perception and remembrance in a text, perhaps its form, the structure that organizes the material, but never the total work. I cannot let the book capture me, and perhaps it couldn't anyway, because I read against the order that the book wants to impose on me, leafing through, following my own inclinations, hunting for stimulation. More and more I gain the impression that the book I would like to read is exactly the book I am trying to write, which I see before me with varying degrees of clarity.

This seems to exclude a lot, but makes a variety of other phenomena interesting. My reactions are faster and more violent than usual, like a protective reflex against unwholesome food. Some books produce a faint
feeling of dissatisfaction, dull the senses, flatten the imagination. Be it those whose style presupposes and presents the world as a known entity, be it those that grant the reader an omniscient position, be it books with a low level of excitement, be it books with a decorative pattern, be it those that simulate subjectivity by bold stylization—the defence functions before I know it. Positive signals are just as spontaneous—a spurt of excitement, a moment of heightened, still undefined, expectation like in the movies, when it gets dark and the pictures begin; they are only separate images because I don't yet know their significance in the complete context. What is this? A world freed of all ordering principles. It promises that everything can assume new relationships.

"A train roars with a shrill whistle through his body . . . Rockets burst over oily lagoons . . . Gambling casinos expand to a labyrinth of dirty pictures . . . ceremonial gun salutes in the harbor . . . a scream reverberates through a white hospital corridor . . . down a broad, dusty, palm-lined street the whistle fades like a bullet in the desert . . ."

This is the kind of image sequence I experience while leafing through my reading. I don't know what it means, I only have the impression of a strong, expanding movement. As in an explosion, everything flies apart. Disparate incidents, but all motivated by the same impulse. It is the unity of the disparate which heightens the hallucinatory effect of individual images and strengthens at the same time the total impact created by their sequence as sound and motion. The text—it is only the beginning of the sequence—is supposed to be an imaginative correspondence to orgasm, a fantastic explosion of a sex-scene, that suddenly loses all individuality, bursts open time and space, and multiplies to the image of a thousand boys ejaculating simultaneously in different places. Then it passes over into a new sequence of tropical pictures. There is the black water of jungle lagoons, in which vicious fish grab for floating white sperm, howler monkeys hang in the branches, in slow brown rivers whole trees, full of bright-colored snakes, float by, a cobra rises up, spreads, and spits its white venom, "pearl and opal chips fall in a slow, silent rain through air clear as glycerine." And suddenly time jumps "like a broken typewriter" and the boys are old men, "young hips quivering and twitching in boy-spasms go slack and flabby, draped over an outhouse seat, a park bench, a stone wall in Spanish sunlight, a sagging furnished-room bed (outside red brick slums in clear winter sunlight) . . . twitching and shivering in dirty underwear . . ."

The text is a paragraph from Naked Lunch, by William Burroughs, a phantasmagorical prose in which everything is possible because the text has no subject that offers resistance. The ordering of his material is purely subjective, is perhaps directed by a goal calculated to shock and
surprise, or a hallucination of the author, but I don’t want to analyze that at all right now but rather expose myself to these flickering impulses, these sudden shifts of images. I read it as if going through a monstrous bazaar, excited by this confusion of stimulants, struck by details, but without stopping, without establishing any connection, any relationship. I can remain untouched by all of this. It is however the open, hallucinatory or kaleidoscopic structure of the text that intoxicates me to the heightened power of imagination: the prerequisite to writing.

Perhaps a variation in reading is already stimulating for that reason. One enters a different textual climate, and reacts to it with an inner adjustment, changes one’s expectations, one’s mood, the direction of one’s attention. This is the suspense of the beginning, every time one opens a new book and tries to find out what kind of a text it is. Will it appeal to me, what does it expect from me, what mood must it create in me in order to be understood correctly? If one has no secondary interest in reading, such as a scholarly investigation, that determines one’s point of view from a prior decision, then this very subjective choice takes place right at the beginning: now this is a book for me, that one is not.

In the novel *The Bell Jar* by the American author Sylvia Plath I come upon this sentence, that immediately compels me to read on: “Wrapping my black coat round me like my own sweet shadow, I unscrewed the bottle of pills and started taking them swiftly, between gulps of water, one by one by one.”

What fascinates me in this sentence, which is part of a suicide scene, as I rapidly find confirmed in the context? At first I am put off by this mixture of sentiment and precision. A young girl sits in a niche in the wall of a furnace room, she has wrapped herself in her raincoat, and this superfluous preparation for dying is at the same time the most intimate detail—it shows the lonely, autistic tenderness of the incident, a childish need for protection and security, especially in this fatal moment. This wrapping herself up has no practical value, only emotion turned back into itself and embarrassing for any witness, an emotion without partner, narcissistic, that she yields to now by wrapping herself up in her coat as if in “her own sweet shadow.” But at the same time she proceeds methodically, slowly and resolutely, she takes “one pill after the other between gulps of water.” Apparently I have never really imagined it, or quite differently, more agitated, more hasty, more violent, and now, through my alienation, I understand it anew and am taken in by an immediate, unintellectualized insight; yes, that’s how it is, that’s it exactly, now I see it, and it is important to me. I have had an experience through the text.

Surprise and certainty come together in such existential experiences. Both are effects of a sudden correction in my concepts through the
appearance of unexpected characteristics of a situation or a process. New, more concrete pieces of information reveal my previous conceptions as simple schematic patterns, and thus destroy the illusion of familiarity with which the world usually surrounds me and behind which it is hidden from me. The human organism can differentiate 7 1/2 million color impressions; the English language, for example, contains nearly 4000 designations for colors, but only eight are commonly used. We thus apparently have a tendency to strongly reduce the diversity of the world, and to establish in its place a simple code by which we communicate. Not only the apparatus of observation functions this way, but also memory; it polishes experiences to schematic recollected images that contain just enough information so that one is quickly oriented in similar situations and can act accordingly. And indeed, it is only through this formation of schemata that actually similar experiences are created, that repetition is made possible, that a store of related recognitions and routine behavior is generated. This is all very practical, it guarantees security in behavior and protection against confusing impressions, but if this process continued undisturbed, we would find ourselves, in the end, in an unchanging, completely familiar world, to which we can always respond with the same answers and actions. A completely ritualized society would correspond to this, with petrified morals and immutable institutions. New experiences can only be expected from a crisis in the previous formation of patterns, or at least a correction. This is what I expect from reading, not the confirmation of already fixed ideas which the light novel offers its readers, but their transformation. Freed from practical goals, not obliged to succeed, I can venture into imaginary experimentation and every risk of irritation. Adventure and travel novels still clearly show this need for the unexpected and exotic, but extensively the world has been opened by travel and new techniques; only intensively is it unknown. The disappearance of reality even assumes the form of knowledge. It is the deception of the newspaper reader who thinks he knows the facts when he has read the war or police report; it is the deception of the intellectual who takes a concept, a symbol, a formula to the essence of the thing. This knowledge is suddenly revealed as a weakness of imagination by the individual perspicuity with which for instance Sylvia Plath describes a suicide attempt. You think you know such cases from the paper or from psychology textbooks, however it is only now that the process becomes an experience.

I want to bring up two further examples that occur to me, also representations of incidents that are in the newspapers every day. The first text, the novel Sanctuary by Faulkner, was even written on the basis of a newspaper account. Faulkner writes how the murderer Popeye abducts the college student Tessie in a truck, to take her to a bordello in Memphis.
On the way, he stops in a small town to get gas and a few sandwiches. When he returns, Tessie has disappeared. One would assume that she has fled. Instead, he finds her in the yard of the gas station hiding fearfully behind a barrel, because she saw an acquaintance from the college in the street and is afraid he will recognize her in her embarrassing situation. This is unexpected, but immediately understandable, and reveals the normal expectation, that Tessie would have fled or asked her acquaintance for help, to be an unindividuated generality. A person would act like this who could assess the situation correctly and still had control over himself, an abstract figure, a kind of textbook person who is not hindered by particular characteristics in being rational and efficient. But Tessie is confused. She has not yet fully grasped the situation, probably because it is so atrocious and nothing in her previous life has prepared her for it. When her acquaintance turns up now, she sees herself in her old social pattern, and her position is not perilous, but rather compromising. But she also indicates thereby that she already feels herself completely helpless; she has gotten into something totally different, from which there is no return for her into her old world. The instinctive impulse to escape is still planted in her, but with a change in direction: she flees from rescue; and in this violent, distorted reaction we see that she is after all in a panic appropriate to her situation.

Only an author who had put himself into the situation with a trance-like clairvoyance could write that. And it is so easy to detect those passages in his works when he was not in the situation. The text immediately becomes rhetorical and sentimental; one senses the attempt to bridge a weakness in imagination which becomes more visible through the attempt.

Another example. Posdnyshev in Tolstoy's *Kreuzer Sonata*, after he has stabbed his wife in a fit of rabid jealousy, goes into the next room, lays his loaded revolver on the table, picks up the sheath of his dagger, which fell behind the sofa when he took it from the wall, and sits at the table with a blank mind. The servant comes and brings his suitcase into the room, for Posdnyshev had previously returned from a trip that was like a gigantic overture to his homicide. He sends the servant to the police and lights a cigarette; he falls asleep smoking it. In a dream he sees that everything is all right between him and his wife, they have quarreled and made up again, but at the same time, although he sees a great continuing friendship between them, he still has the vague feeling that something is not quite right.

Here Tolstoy, like no other author to the same degree, makes every detail part of a chain of behavior observed in its minutest details: the diversion with the sheath of the dagger which must first be put back in
its place, the next stage of self-protection with the subsequent blankness of mind and apathy, then further relief by objectivization of the situation and removal one stage further of the necessity for action by sending the servant for the police, thereupon a further drop in excitement by his attempt to smoke and being overcome by sleep, and in the dream the unconscious wish fulfillment, the horrible is cancelled out, down to a disturbing feeling, a little remnant of awareness, which however has been denied visualization by the dream’s censorship. The totality of behavior is captured here, consciousness, subconsciousness, and the body are equally a part of the discussion between the individual and himself and his situation.

While I read this, I no longer notice how it is written, I am totally wrapped up in absorbing all the details, and only subsequently can I convince myself that there is really nothing decorative, no excess of formulation or mannerism in this text. The author must have been in a state of self-forgetful insight completely concerned with writing everything he saw, and indeed he suddenly knew everything there was to know about this person.

Those are high points. However, when I get into reading, even secondary details become fascinating. Someone says “the package with the water-soaked paper” or “the crunching snow, not very deep, already hard-packed” or “he put his hand, already stiff with cold, into his pocket”—sentence fragments from Robbe-Grillet’s Defeat at Reichenfels—and immediately I see it before me, because, stimulated by the text, I create it myself, also as if in recognition, yes, I know that, I’ve seen that, but now it comes again, more consciously, more urgently, suddenly, perhaps by the isolation of details in the sequence of words, everything gains an intensified presence.

That is why I read. The same hunger for experience operates here as in writing. Earlier I said that in enthusiastic, fascinated reading lies a feeling of concurrence. I must supplement that with the observation that this concurrence, and the intensification of the sense of life that goes with it, are completely unaffected by the horrors that are presented. Death, misery, ugliness, can produce the same enthusiasm of recognition as the representation of a moment of joy. In contrast, any cliche, be it ever so humane, calls forth only aversion in me. A much more elementary need must be satisfied in reading than in writing, the wish for more life, for a broadening of existence, which would remain unsatisfied by establishing harmonies in which every movement would come to rest.
EXEMPLARY FROM

INVITATION TO EVERYONE

DIETER WELLSHOFF

Then it must be something else, that he doesn't know about yet. They don't tell him. But he'll remember soon, it will come back quickly when this is over, this stamping. I came downstairs in my undershirt. The shadow. Jumped over me, muttering. Someone came running toward him, but that must be something else. At the moment I'm trying to remember everything, an important task. I heard the screaming, yes, and I must have gotten up in the middle of the night. Don't die, hold on to every moment. Everything's all right, they say. Who is saying that? The flowerpot fell down and someone said: Shut up. A man's voice. Don't die. Almost everything was lost, was thrown away. Yes. And he had forgotten to turn on the light. The screaming must be something else, that he doesn't know about yet and they don't want to say anything about, another voice. Shut up. Oh yes, he will shut up now. Everything is all right down there. I must have gotten up in the middle of the night. When this is over, this stamping, that was me on the stairs in my undershirt. The shadow, I could hear it muttering as it jumped over me. And Erika was holding my head. Don't die. I always locked the doors. Yes, I'm trying to remember everything,
an important task. It was dark down there. A man's voice, no, that was Erika, who was holding his head. Shut up, he must shut up, it must be something else, that he doesn't know about yet. The door was always locked, an important task. Who is saying that, who is saying that? A man's voice, as soon as the stamping stops, the screaming. I had gotten up, running down the stairs, and had forgotten to turn on the light. The flowerpot fell down. Then the shadow jumped over me, a man's voice, running muttering in the dark. I did lock up. I must have gotten up, Erika was holding my head. Don't die, everything is all right down there everything was dark, everything was locked.

Meanwhile, everything was mixed up. Aimless and purposeful movements in inseparable confusion. Which way first, away from the moaning or toward it? They stood around him in their nightshirts, Erika knelt on the floor and held his head. He had closed his eyes and lay there with limp legs in his bloody undershirt, next to the stairs, somehow embarrassing or frightening, and what was one to do, he was bleeding from the breast and moaning. Alfred, what's the matter, are you all right, are you in pain, listen. But they only thought that or stammered it softly to themselves, while they looked at each other, bent over him, and stood around, shivering with cold and excitement, as he shivered too, his lips were white and trembled, and he had hardly any pulse.

What to do, he died. But that just wasn't possible, they simply could not allow it. No no no, they told him, they wiped off his forehead, but that was terrible, how limp he was lying there, bleeding more and more, breast and stomach and his whole back were wet with blood, and they couldn't find his pulse any more, they were groping around desperately at his wrist, leave me alone, leave me alone, and laid his feeble arm aside and instead wiped his forehead again.

But now something has happened, and probably hardly any time has passed. Mrs. Albers ran upstairs, threw open her living-room window, and cried across the street to the neighboring houses, Help, murder, help! She looked left and right down onto the snow-covered street. The man might be a maniac who would come back and shoot her. But there was no one in the short lighted stretch of the street, and she went on shouting, shouting the names that occurred to her, and light went on in the houses across the street, windows were opened, blinds raised, and she could hear the confused voices of the neighbors asking each other what was the matter.
With the feeling that she was cut off and living in a different, halted or slowed-down time, she now shouted her unbelievable, fantastic news across the street, which produced silence on the other side, an obstinate silence it seemed to her, and she thought she could not succeed in communicating to them what had happened. Then she noticed a movement, someone shouted that they would call the police and a doctor, and she ran down the steps again immediately, where the two other women knelt by the injured man.

Now the house filled with neighbors, most of them scantily clothed, pale haggard faces, they come in through the open veranda door and stare at the man who is lying at the foot of the stairs under a woolen blanket. They see his short gasps, his paleness. He can’t move, someone says. It is his legs, he has no strength, no feeling in them.

They’ve put a flat pillow under his head, and he turns his sweat-dripping face toward them, eyes closed. Often he moans and seems to want to say something, he wrinkles his forehead, he grits his teeth, then he tries to lift his head, and, eyes closed, he struggles against hands holding him down. It is a restive, confused face looking for an escape. Suddenly all strength disappears from it, it gives up, it collapses, and now there is only a slight trembling in the wrinkled eyelids.

That is him, that is no longer him. That is the one that they saw just a few hours ago.

They stand along a line that they don’t dare to cross, because that man there between life and death may not be touched. Only his daughter may do that, who is stooping beside him and pressing him back into the pillow again. At short intervals she blots his forehead and lips, as if there were something there that she must remove and that always forms again, it is a fleeting movement with a crumpled cloth that she squeezes in her hand while she looks into his face with a tense calm, and there she does it again, as if she saw something special, she wiped over his pale rubbery lips that grimace at her touch, and then the moaning is there again, and from the next room come a few high whimpering notes and another voice says, Quiet, Mrs. Bentrup, the doctor will be here right away, to which the woman answers with the same soft whimpering.

He’s in pain, someone says.

Yes, he is in pain, they all see that. Pains that are growing worse. Pain is the warning cry of the organism in face of an acute or chronic aggression.

No, he’s not in pain, says someone, No, no, it is something else. He can’t move his legs.

Quiet, they say to people who have just come in and begun to whisper. The man here will bleed to death if the doctor doesn’t come.
By shock we mean a failure of the circulatory system. The amount of blood per minute that the heart pumps into the circulation is critically reduced.

Symptoms of shock. The wounded person is restless, anxious and often confused. He suffers from dizziness and great thirst. The pulse is accelerated and hardly palpable. The skin is pale, damp and cold, especially the arms and legs. The veins are scarcely or not at all visible. The need for air increases with the loss of blood.

It is a restive, confused face, looking for an escape. He is struggling with his eyes closed. He wants to get away from something.

With a blood loss of 30 to 40% the following symptoms exist. The skin is pale to white, the lips are cold and clammy, the pulse is accelerated to over 100 beats per minute, breathing is rapid.

Emergency measures! Act quickly, but not hastily! Soothe the injured person, calm his anxiety! They stand along a line that they don't dare cross, while the change goes on before their eyes.

With a blood loss of over 40%, the injured person is white as a corpse, his lips are cold and bloodless, the pulse is weak and thready, the number of pulse beats is over 140 per minute, the breathing is rapid, shallow and gasping.

What now? Emergency measures! Counteract immediately the life-threatening conditions. Calm the anxiety of the injured person.
Reporters have written about it, people have talked, photographers have taken pictures, but not the right ones. For a while everyone knew about it, but soon most had forgotten it. That's normal.

It ends with the picture of a hotel corridor in the late morning. Almost all the guests have left, and the new ones have not yet arrived. The stripped sheets, the used towels, lie in the hall in wrinkled heaps. Dirty, besmeared breakfast trays with crumpled paper napkins stand outside the room. Butter and marmelade have been scratched out of the little flat plastic containers; spoons stick out of the empty shells of boiled eggs.

It is Monday morning when the stretcher-bearers come down the hall. Most of the doors are open, and you can look into the rooms, all the same, the little entranceway with the closet and the door to the bathroom, behind that a part of the room, with the foot of a double bed sticking out with its blue or grey mattress that is turned every morning. A little thin-legged desk with an artificial leather top is pushed against the wall, and in the corner, next to an old-fashioned floor lamp, are a green and a blue armchair with pleated floor-length edgings. The drapes, also blue-green, are open, and a diffuse morning light falls through the curtain.

All this is noticed in passing as something familiar, in ridiculous repetition. The noise of a big vacuum cleaner can be heard from a room at
the end of the hall. Now it is turned off, and a young, dark chambermaid
with frightened eyes appears in the door. The dead man is carried past
her, a vague body shape, a human-like mass under a grey blanket that
covers his face, but not his white, bloodless feet, the feet of a man whose
age cannot be guessed. The chambermaid's gaze is fixed on these lifeless,
whitish formations of flesh with short-cut nails and yellowish soles. Both
feet have fallen away to the sides in a complete loss of tension, and bob
a little when the bearers change their grip or make any other sudden move­
ment. But now they have fallen into a steady, quiet pace, and the dead
man's feet lie still.

"This way, please," says the hotel manager, and the little procession
turns into a side corridor, first the manager, a plump, almost bald man
with disturbed gestures and a worried face, beside him the young doctor
from the ambulance in his white jacket, the red rubber tube of a stetho­
scope peering out of its side pocket, then the two bearers with their bur­
den, and last the bellboy and a chambermaid with the dead man's luggage,
a shabby, but perhaps at one time expensive, leather suitcase, a grey coat,
a black umbrella, and black ankle-high shoes that belong to those feet.

The terrible thing about those feet is not that they are the feet of a
corpse, but rather their repulsive deformity. Both little toes are pushed
upward and bent inward, set almost on top of the instep, wormlike, sense­
less growths. As a youth, the dead man must have worn much too tight
shoes, he must have suffered great pain, because he didn't like the shoes
that would have fit his broad feet.—Who is he? A dandy, a fantasizer who
couldn't stand reality and pursued a little tenacious dream of himself?

It would be better to uncover the dead man's face and hide his feet.
Anyone who had ever seen these feet would recognize the dead man by
them. But they were probably his well-kept secret: Perhaps no one had
ever seen him in a public bath, in open sandals; he wore expensive ortho­
pedic shoes, his walk was deliberate and solemn, he probably always seemed
a little older than he was.

"This way, please," says the manager, and that means, we will not
use the elevator, the dead man will be carried down the emergency stairs.
The new arriving guests who may be in the lobby already should not be
greeted by a corpse.

The eyes of the dark-skinned chambermaid follow the crippled feet.
A second, older chambermaid, holding a carton of little cakes of soap,
stops against the wall to let the conveyance pass. It wouldn't be surprising
if she dropped to her knees and crossed herself. Perhaps she isn't thinking
anything, or thinks that that's a dead man, that she has never seen a dead
man and that even this one is covered up. Because the head and body
are hidden by the grey blanket. The naked, misshapen feet appear to be
an obscenity put on show.

Look who I am, who I was!

But no one knows him here, no one is interested in him, except in his
rapid disposal.

The manager had the elevator blocked for a few minutes, the red
“occupied”-signs next to the automatic doors are lighted, all the elevators
stop on the second floor. The porter has posted himself unobtrusively
down at the main stairway, to catch any guests and beg them to have pa­
tience for a moment. He’s supposed to say the stairway is blocked by furni­
ture being moved.

The measured, swaying pace of the bearers who don’t look at anyone
to the right or left of their path. Their silence is transmitted to the others,
or it is the silence of the dead man, his mouth covered, and one would
think closed, by the grey blanket. The manager feels relieved as he tele­
phones the reception desk from the last room in the hall: Everything in
order, let the elevators and stairway go. The noise of the vacuum has re­
sumed, in the corridors lie the heaps of laundry like melting, dirty-white
remnants of swept-up snow. It’s often like this on Mondays, when the
weekend guests have left. Over the weekend, the hotel accommodated
a convention, contractors, bankers, marketing and advertising people,
speaking about how to stimulate the economy. The dead man was among
them.
Roel D’Haese, **ANGEL**, 1974, bronze, 175 x 100 x 100 cm. Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris.
Michel Butor
Selections from Exploded Meditation

THE ROOF

On the sand I draw a house, complex and remote, a room for my friend, our project of society, wings to carry us, a forest to hide us, a rock to teach us, an incline to direct us, a terrace to cradle us, a cellar to slake us, a garden to intoxicate us, her looks to decide me, her palms to heal me, her nails to till me, her silence to seed me, her words to harvest me, her calm to contain my rejuvenation.

SLEEP

Stretched out on the sand, his weight increases, he submerges; rents open between his ribs through which he inhales minerals; he submerges still farther, his hands become flat and trenchant, he has disappeared beneath the sand; for a time passers-by still see a depression, as if someone there had scooped a hole at high tide, and the water had seeped away hours before, then a wind had sprung up and leveled it all out, while his eyes have taken on a crystalline consistency, and his respiratory system has been entirely transformed, his skin converted to carapace, his digestive tract to grinders that permit him to live within the terrestrial mass where he submerges, swimming very slowly between veins and strata, drinking from phreatic streams, seeking a gentle lava woman to whom at last he would give children of granite.

THE INSECT

On their wing sheaths the breeders, through controlled mutations, have succeeded in obtaining the plot of the city streets; and that is why each family cherishes a nest of them in its garden. For every excursion they provide themselves with one of these flying guides, perfectly tamed, who return at the slightest opening of the pollen capsule to which they are accustomed; but there are so many of them buzzing about the streets, the arcades, the corridors of moving sidewalks, that these days there is no longer the slightest danger of becoming lost. It is an ornament and a game. The breeders of other cities are working night and day to attain equally spectacular results; but for the most part upon opening the chrysalids they find no more than designs which albeit harmonious bear no relationship to their city. One of the most ingenious researchers, however, has estab-
lished that a variety found in Siberia bears the plan of a village in South Africa, save for one alley-way; and they say that in a region of Persia a city-planner, amazed by another that he is trying to acclimatize, derived from it the master plan for his entire province.

THE RUIN

The conflagration lasted several days. Beams hang across the breaches. One can make out what used to be windows, steps, a porch, or even a balcony with its columns. The bluebird came to sing its plaint at that tower. In the cellars casks now calcified once held the ripening wine that cooked as it poured out, tingeing with its intoxication the sinister smell that pervaded the ravines. A dragon has made its home beneath the ruptured vaults; those who venture into these devastations divine his scales by the light of the moon and the fangs gleaming within his tarry maw. A petrified hooting, as the sorcerers of my race come seeking terrifying neums to intensify the incantations with which they surround the distillation of their philters. The ancient moats are strewn with stray bones.

BREAD

The way in which the surface curves under the injunction. Space is kneaded, risen, baked, gilded in its black and white, savoury, crusty, nourishing, exposed on the white board, giving off its odor in the light room, in the light street, the light cave, the light abyss. He had had to work the fields of ink, sow the seeds of ink, watch their germination, their flowering, their maturation, harvest the ears of ink, thresh them, mill and unite with this flour of ink the yeast of the brush while the oven of eyes with all its embers heated conjunctions. Famished workers we, here is the darkness of the sky changed into oven to bake the bread that we are, here the darkness of the sky changed into light abyss so that we may devour it with our eyes.
Matei Calinescu

SLOWLY, NO ONE

Slowly words went away from things. 
Word lights are spinning somewhere else, 
a change of air into air. 
Sisters of the unheard, untouched, unseen.

And he was left alone, 
couldn't name anything around him, 
could say nothing about what was being born 
and perishing, 
couldn't scream about what was hurting him. 
Words slowly were emptied of the meaning of things. 
And were filled with meanings of air.

Slowly, slowly, slowly. 
Almost secretly: leaving him relentlessly alone, 
from me to you, 
from you to him, 
from him to no one.

Matei Calinescu

LET ME SAY, LET ME READ

for Lucian Raicu

I lost everything, I lost nothing. 
I won nothing 
at all and I am happy, 
I am ready to smile, 
to say things and no things. 
Tea time, expected, 
unexpected, let me read: 
A letter with no news, 
a dry leaf,
a whisper in which a word died away.
Or: First snow.
That morning I forgot
to wash my face.
Or: Outside the window, white roofs, skies.
Mildly blinding daylight.
A bird, two birds, other birds, nothing.
Or: The air is filled with cries
of unseen children
in unseen sleds, sliding, sliding.

Matei Calinescu

TO THE END

You can take only a void to the end:
the void of good and evil,
of fire and water,
of heart and name,
of earth and air,
of thought and sleep,
sweetness of a honeycomb,
leaf and flower,
fruit and pits,
evening, just look:
a child stopped in the road
aiming his bow at the moon,
but the arrow—a moonray—
has and will always be
one with the target, one with the eye
gazing into the void.
THE DOVES OF MY EYES

Barred by the steel body of the sky
the doves of my eyes
daily return to this earth,
where you wait alone
to grasp the meaning
of life, death and disease.

When the ocean-waves
with tiny palms stroke
the body of stolid sands,
I get perturbed
and search for ancestral memories
in your livid body,
beyond the hot, arid noon sun.

You speak and speak
of secrets of grass and leaves
of ghats, forests and hills
of shells, seas, moss.

You speak of the death
of a livid moon floating from this shore
to the other in frayed clouds
of a downcast night.

You pick up
summer's withered body
drifting around
in small whirlpools of sand.

You, too, fall in love,
hold hands and plead.
But, where is your soul?
And, how is my body alive?

Unmoving stands the steel body of clouds,
and there the doves of your mind
get thwarted.

When the doves of my eyes
return fording sky's blunders,
time flows in a stream

in your body
with the dreams of my body
through fatigue, thirst,
hunger and excitement.

Quiet noon;
no sound of leaves falling
or sun breathing.
Pine forests vanish
like smoke in the sky.
I cannot remember
when the doves of my eyes
discovered you
at the city limits
of Cuttack*
or Ujjain.

*Cuttack: a city in the state of Orissa, where the poet was born. Ujjain: a historic city in India.
Michael Bullock

MIGRATION

Beneath the leaves
life moves mysteriously
small and intimate
coated in mud

edging towards
a slipway to the abyss
waiting to tumble
into a wider world

no move without water
no water without wind
when the leaves stir
the migration begins


Michael Bullock

THE DAY OF RIVERS

Today is the day of rivers. One river is flowing in a circle round my house. A second is flowing round and round, in the opposite direction, in my brain. On the bottle-green surface of the outer river float a multitude of objects: red blossoms, isolated petals of various colours, a celluloid duck, a pair of wooden shoes joined by a lace. The inner river is black and shiny like obsidian or jet. It reflects a moon and the branches of trees and undulates in a strange and unpredictable rhythm, so that the moon and trees bob up and down on its surface. A moment will come, I am sure, when the two rivers will meet. I cannot tell which direction will win the day, but I am certain that this conjunction will give rise to a flow so powerful as to carry all before it. Where I shall stand in relation to this flood only time will tell.
Michael Bullock

DISTANCE

Distance is a black branch covered in birds
birds with limed feet that cannot fly

Distance is a bed of flowers
whose roots are held by a subterranean hand

Beyond distance a black locomotive
thuds rails of crushed shells

and sand that turns to glass beneath its wheels
reflecting its belly like a bull’s about to die

Around distance black threads are wound
to stop the circulation of blood

and as a sign of mourning for the not yet dead
those to whom life has presented as a prize

the certain knowledge of the existence of love
and a vision of white doves nailed to a wall of black rock
Pedro Lastra

INSTANTANEA

Luciérnagas, el río:
la ribera que se ilumina
y es la luciérnaga en tu mano.
Su luz veloz me sobrevive
ya no luciérnaga ni río.

CAPERUCITA 1975

I
Para verte mejor no necesito
cerrar los ojos
no necesito verte
con un fondo de árboles
no eres fotografía eres el bosque
que se echa a volar y yo te sigo
con los ojos abiertos por tu vuelo
inocente de ramas que me pierden
en la noche del bosque

II
Y para oírte nada de teléfonos
ni orejas grandes
no soy lobo ni oveja
no sé quién soy
oído para tu voz
espacio
que se instala en el mundo
para tu voz que late
rápida y lejos
lejos de mí que soy
menos feroz y astuto cada noche.
Pedro Lastra

SNAPSHOT

Fireflies, the river:
the shore that lights up
and it is the firefly in your hand.
Its swift light outlives me
no longer firefly nor river.

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD 1975

I
To see you better I don't need
to close my eyes
I don't need to see you
against a background of trees
you're not a photograph you're the forest
that begins to fly and I follow you
with open eyes through your flight
innocent of the branches that lose me
in the night of the forest

II
And to hear you, no telephones
no large ears
I'm neither wolf nor sheep
I don't know who I am
ear for your voice
space
that settles in the world
for your voice that beats
fast, in the distance
far away from me
who with each passing night becomes
less ferocious and astute.

Translator: Lilvia Duggan
NOSTRADAMUS

El futuro no es lo que vendrá
(de eso sabemos más de lo que él mismo cree)
el futuro es la ausencia
que seremos tú y yo
la ausencia que ya somos
este vacío
que ahora mismo se empecina en nosotros.

BREVISIMA RELACION

y entonces empiezan a entrar en tu noche
y te miran con sus ojos fijos
y tu sueño es ahora su acuario
un medio difícil para un ser tan terrestre
y no hay tiempo ni espacio para otros prodigios
NOSTRADAMUS

The future is not what will come
(of that we know more than he himself believes)
the future is the absence
that you and I will be
the absence that we are already
this emptiness
that right now,
stubbornly,
inhabits us.

BRIEF ACCOUNT

and then they begin to enter your night
and they glare at you
and your dream is now their aquarium
an unlikely medium for such a terrestrial being
and there is no time nor space for other portents.
Edgar Correal, *APOLOGO II*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 120 cm. Galeria San Diego, Bogota. Photo L. F. Puerta.
Lucia Fox

Estaba el señor don Gato, ron-ron
sentado en el tejado, ron-ron
cuando pasó doña Gata, ron-ron
con los ojos relucientes, ron-ron,
el Gato por darle un beso, ron-ron
se cayó del techo abajo, ron-ron
(Copla infantil)

Se me estira el corazón
como la lengua fría de un gato,
se me pega el tiempo en sus brazos
y solo cuando le paso la cola
rompo la monotonía.
El anda por mi vida como por el techo,
soy su maullido reluciente, su muerte vestida
de fiesta. Me abraza hasta descoyuntarse
mientras yo piensa en todo lo que no en sayo,
en los techos en los que no he podido perderme.
Siento el ronroneo en las tripas,
se me hacen tirabuzones y digo: “Ya...”
(el sexo corre perdido en varias partes
y presenté que le hacía un regalo con mi presencia
y me puse a maullar mis fantasías)
El salta—arañaba la penumbra por un beso
y así nos sorprendió el día...
(Copla adulta)
Lucia Fox

There was Mr. Cat, purr-purr
Sitting on the roof, purr-purr
Along came Mrs. Cat, purr-purr
Her eyes all shining, purr-purr
When he tried to kiss her, purr-purr
Down fell Mr. Cat, purr-purr

(Nursery rhyme)

I stick out my heart
Like a cat’s cold tongue
In his arms time thickens and stops
and only when I wave my tail at him
do I break the monotony.
He meanders through my life as though it were a roof,
I am his shining meow, his death dressed
in gala attire. He holds me to the breaking point
while I think of everything I haven’t tried
on those roofs where I can never lose myself.
I feel the purring in my guts,
they turn to corkscrews and I say “Now...”
(sex spills all over
and I felt that my presence was a gift to him
and I started to meow my fantasies)
He pounced he scratched the darkness for a kiss
and that’s how the day found us...

(Author's rhyme)
COSMOS

The transcendent the unsayable
the untamable act
of writing poetry—
as if dreaming

I walk up-stream
searching for trout
along the stream-bed
under the rocks

and the sun standing there dazed
as I lift
the luminous, cool
the wriggling rainbow body
against it

how the breath catches
the soundless gasps
in the little thirsty mouth

how the tenderness which would detain it
grown in the finger-tips
which may never keep it
and with closed eyes I feel
how the trout is slipping from my hand
falling back
into the water of the brook

And you.
Man-of-the-sea.
Like every man
you cast anchor like a tired boat—
then joyous you sail away.
Look!
I set my ear on your burning chest
lose myself there in the deafening pulse
of the sea.
And in the infinite silence
between the ninth and the first wave
I rest.

Bengt Nordenborg, THERE CAME A SHIP, 1970, linocut, 50 x 64 cm.
A fat man dragged me into the house and sat me clumsily in a wooden chair. She sat beside me and embraced me excitedly.

“My watch is broken,” she murmured and kissed me on the mouth. “That’s why I can’t take your pulse today.”

“The sun was trying to burn my eyes away, my blood’s pounding,” I answered. My voice rebounded from the stone columns.

“My husband wants to see you.”

“Why?” I answered, startled.

“He wants to measure your days.”

“Pretty soon you’ll really make my head explode!” I shouted and plunged toward the door, but I couldn’t get out. The sunlight obliterated all the exits. It was at that moment that her voice resounded along the columns, echoed out in the patio, across the streets, and was lost in the hills.

“Francisco!” she roared several times and her animal aggressiveness passed before my eyes. Then I felt the blow and fell to the marble floor. It was noon but no one came to help me. I got up and ran to the library.

“It must be in the garden. after the horns blow,” said David, hiding his red face inside the light of a large lamp shade found in the left corner of the room.

The hour of the final combat was set, but I was not impatient and went to my bedroom to wait for the sound of footsteps and the nearing of their panting. I began to read Cortázar’s “Reunion” and I realized that no one was moving in the house. The laughter had stopped, and the wind. So I got up and was just about to leave when they came in, as always, abruptly. They assaulted my body, sent my blood mad, pressed my teeth up, bruised my tongue, while I defended myself with my arms, legs, mouth.

It was a rabid, murderous battle, but no one capitulated until we were
exhausted and Sara got up and left, staggering. David also got up and could drag himself only as far as the corridor. Only I lay on the floor, moving from one side to the other, trying to keep my body from falling apart.

I went back to Cortázar’s story but I was shaky, my lips were trembling, and my eyes could not make out the letters, so I went down on the floor again and remained, almost still, staring at the spiders that crawled over the ceiling. They were all big and crawled nimbly between the yellow stains. Those spiders too belonged to them, as everything else in the house.

Me they took possession of one incredible night when I was tired of wandering the downtown streets and, as a last recourse, had remained standing on a corner in order to see at close range the makes of the cars going by. It was Sara who invited me to get into the automobile that David was driving. I got in without hesitating and sat down beside the woman.

“We were looking for you,” said David, a little excited.

“You know me?” I was quick to answer.

“No. But we were looking for you.”

I couldn’t say anything because Sara had surprised me with a kiss on the mouth and David had begun to speed up and the auto raced like a shot through the city streets. When we came to the house, my companions were euphoric and excited. We entered the hall and I wanted to explain that I would no longer receive the money my parents sent me every month for my keep because someone maliciously had told them that I was falling behind in my law studies faster than they could imagine, but when I began to speak, what I didn’t expect, happened. It was an incredible night in which I too shouted as wildly as they—I too rolled on the floor, ran through the gardens, and sought the heat of their breaths. That night the two of them knew every form of my being, and they imprisoned me. I no longer wanted to go back to the street.

When the horns sounded, I had already finished reading the story and I went slowly out into the garden. There the two were waiting for me. A mature pomegranate fell to the ground and burst, and the grass was splattered red with seeds. Sara opened the enormous iron gate for me and David gripped my shoulders firmly. It was time for the siesta, and the sun was trying to burn us all away.

“Today is Friday, and you must get there before three,” Sara said when I went out into the street.

I began to walk. I knew where I was going although nobody had said a word to me about the places I had to find. I walked an hour and stopped before the gate of a white house, opened it, skirted an abandoned garden, pushed open a wooden door, and entered a house which smelled of vinegar. It was two minutes to three. Quickly I undressed and threw myself onto the bed. Her body was young and her hair extremely long so I em-
braced her cautiously. My mouth ran over every inch of her soft skin and my feet crawled insistenty between her legs. We both began to sweat as our teeth became more and more restless. Suddenly she looked up and stopped moving for an instant. I was so excited that at first I didn't realize it.

"What's wrong?" I said. It was the first time I spoke to her.

"Do you know my name's Ismelda?" she asked in turn, in a tired voice. Then she sighed deeply and little by little recovered her earlier vigor. The smell of vinegar invaded the room and drove me to take her completely. It was at that moment I noticed that the sweat which poured from her body was red; her whole body was bathed in that red liquid.

"Jesus!" I exclaimed, desperate. "What's wrong?"

"Today's Friday," she said calmly, "and on Fridays I sweat blood."

I tried to embrace her again but that strange sweat was hot and burned all my body, so I leaped out of bed, dressed, and went running out to the street. Sara and David were waiting for me at a nearby corner and I got into the car hurriedly. I was completely disconcerted and didn't know what to say to them.

"You spurned her because on Fridays she sweats blood. Isn't that right?" David finally said.

"And you know that Ismelda is our daughter," Sara said immediately afterward.

The car was moving at normal speed, and I noticed that David was as furious as Sara. My body burned and at times even my teeth ached with the pain.

"I was afraid," I answered after a silence.

"Of what?" one of them—I don't know which—said.

"Of that girl's blood... her sweat. My body was covered with red stains. Look at it if you don't believe me."

"We're going to keep you till you make it with her," said the man and braked suddenly.

"Get out!" ordered Sara. "Next Friday we'll pick you up."

I got out of the car rapidly and it pulled out and was lost at the next corner. They had left me near the pension where I lived, and I hurried into the hall. When the landlady saw me come in, she asked where I'd been all that time they had not seen me, and I said studying at a friend's house. She handed me a letter and suggested that next time I notify her because so many things happened in big cities and more frequently with each passing moment. I knew that the letter was from my father and opened it hastily. There was the note which began with the unfailing "Dear son," and there was the money order, carefully folded, in a very clear hand.
Lon Jules Otto

IN THE WINTER DIAGONALS

Child, when the counsel stars
are undercover a night's chaos of snow,
know then that crystal law
draws crowns and constellations out of air.

Where there are fish in the stone ponds asleep,
a deep, blank, and boring rest,
your breast may wrap itself in furs of vision,
given gloriously as royal children.

Dear, when the robed branches
avalanche the storm clear,
fear then no fallen trance:
dance leaves the trees austere.

EPILEPSY NOTES

1
The storm seed rides in my brain always
packed for howling in the little room,
too cluttered to clear any way
but suddenly to flush the flood through.

2
Overcharge in chemical tides
makes hurricane in the skull; cornered
teeth yawn the scream open,
waves tower black the gulf mourns
its seawrecked order.

3
Afterwards, white fingers of absolute
starch needle through the bleached brain root;
peace washes up like an old bone on the shore;
the corpse sails into forgotten ports;
the stars clear; and my soul always
has gotten up and returned home again,
in possession again, before.
Alicia D. Rawson

OFICIO REPETIDO

El silencio se escapa de tus ojos
se oculta entre palabras y
la sombra de mis manos lo detiene

No hay que olvidar que se caen
las estrellas
las hojas del otono
la lluvia
y la tristeza

que tomar una palabra y enseñarla
es repetir un oficio doloroso

EL MUERTO ES OTRO

Yo sé que dejo desgarrarme
El muerto es otro

Aquí las manos
para formar la cárcel invisible de la nada

Más atrás la oscuridad

Este es mi yo doliente en la locura
que busca una mirada
Alicia D. Rawson

WORK REPEATED

The silence which flees your glance
is concealed by words and
the shadow which my hands delay

It must be remembered that
the stars fall
the leaves in autumn
    the rain
    and sorrow

that taking a word to teach it
repeats painful work

BUT THE DEAD MAN'S NOT ME

I've let myself break down—I know
But the dead man's not me

Here—hands that form
the unseen prison of nothingness

Further back—the dark
That's me there—hurt in that madness
which craves a glance
UN MIEDO OSCURO

Y ahora el sueno
un paso más hacia la muerte
Un desafío más
frente a mi miedo

Un miedo oscuro de la sangre que se escapa

El silencio elegido me rodea
Un gesto en el vacío
Una palabra

LA PRISIONERA

Estoy atrapada entre dos reflejos
Sólo me llega el murmullo del sonido
lejano de relojes
a los que apura el miedo

Una vez existió un dolor muy grande
y muy profundo
que se dejó crecer
como si fuera un grito
y olvidó todas las palabras
Entonces trató de retener los gestos
para guardar alguna imagen

Entre un abismo y otro
conoció la fecha de su muerte
Y el silencio
fue solamente una palabra
A DARK FEAR

And now the dream
one step more towards death
One challenge more
in the face of my fear

A dark fear of the blood that escapes
The silence I’ve chosen surrounds me
A gesture in the void
A word

THE PRISONER

Trapped between two reflections
I hear only the remote
murmur of clocks
hurried by fear

Once there was a grief
so huge it
let itself swell up
like a scream
and forgot all words
Then it tried to freeze its gesture
and guard some image

Between one abyss and another
she knew the date of her death
And silence
was only a word
Glauco Capozzoli, Untitled. Sala Gaudi, Barcelona.
Glauco Capozzoli, DENTRO DEL NICHO, 50 x 50 cm. Sala Gaudi, Barcelona.
Glauco Capozzoli, UNTITLED. Sala Gaudi, Barcelona.
Mehdi Akhavan Sales

A PARCHED PITCHER

Brimming with emptiness
the moments stream by.

A parched pitcher dreams it sees water, and sees the rock in water,
and I know friend from foe.
Life I take as friend;
death an enemy.
But, my god! whom to tell?—having such a friend,
I'd rather shelter with my enemy.

The moments stream by.

Mehdi Akhavan Sales

ROSE

Color the same, same hue
Leaves the same, same buds
The same smile, so many secrets dormant in its silence
Modesty the same, same trifling
The same white leaf, like a drop of dew, a tear brimming
The same look, the same pretension.
Never to wilt,
Never to droop—the saddened face
Drinks from a wilting heart.
Leaves it may bear, and buds,
But not of earth and water.
Keep your distance though.
Set it out, sit and contemplate,
But never tell it how your heart hopes for happiness.
Don't smell it.
It won't hear a word of your tale.
Don't reach for it.
Your hand holds nothing but some colored scraps of paper.
For a moment she was silent, then
up in the air
she tossed the red apple she held.
The apple spun round and returned.
She sniffed at the apple.
She said:
“That's enough about irrigation and grafts.
Well,
what have you got to say?”
“Oh,
what can I say? Nothing.”

She wore a green dress bright with flowers.
Her full skirt billowed up fresh waves.
A garland of peach and cherry blossom neatly clasped her throat.
Velvety she was, sheen and shadow—purring
like silk softly stirred.
The joyous spirit of my neighbor's garden,
sweetly tipsy, stepping undulant,
telling me her amorous tale.
I leaned my head on the iron
that fenced me from her garden,
and my gaze wandered through her garden
like a butterfly,
like a nymph wandering the legendary garden inconsolable.
She glanced at my eyes,
my tears,
and said,
“Yes! how clearly I remember—weeping is something too.
Grafting with tears sometimes or curses,
sometimes exaltation or smiles,
remorse, or hatred.
Whatever—but grafting there must be.”
She sniffed the apple again, and said no more.
I carried my gaze like a dead bird to my own garden.
Ah,
better silence.
What else should I have said to her, what else should I have said?
Though forgetting begins with silence,
better the silence.
Sometimes the silence is the grafting she said was needed.
What shall I say? Nothing.
The brook's dry, so parched that
the cress, spearmint and mullein on its banks
are sleeping.
They are unconscious, as if dreaming
they are floated along by water, and it may be
that their sap is withered too.

O fouled garden, by the grief coming upon you
when you are given over to the winds for good
by whatever wherever wrathful clouds may be,
may they be pregnant with tears of hatred
raining down like my silent regret!
O barren trees your roots buried in lewd ground,
not one decent shoot shall one of you put forth
O filthy webs filthy leaves and branches the lot of you
relics of dust-raddled years of drought,
no rain will ever wash you clean
Philippe Soupault

FACE A FACE

Me voici un jour ou l'autre
presque seul comme nous tous
en face de toutes les semaines
vécues oubliées inconnues
en face de la pyramide de Chéops
et de milliers d'années
en face du soleil de minuit
à l'autre bout du monde
que reflètent encore les étangs de ma jeunesse
en face du soleil mori bond
qui n'en a plus que pour quelques milliards d'années
à vivre aussi longtemps
que les milliards de secondes que j'ai vécues
où qui me restent à vivre
peut-être sait-on jamais
et encore si mes souvenirs sont aussi exacts
que les murs de Machupicho
en face des pyramides du Yucatán
et des crépuscules en face de mon miroir
l'avenir et l'espoir de chaque matin
de chaque soir de chaque nuit
puisqu'il faut bien vivre
puisqu'on ne m'a jamais demandé de choisir
ni mon avis ni ma vie ni ma destinée
puisqu'on frappe chaque soir à ma porte
et que des rêves attendant au bord de mon lit
au rendez-vous des amis disparus
morts ou vivants on ne sait plus
que je reconnais un à un peu à peu
comme mes meilleurs amis les nuages
enfants du vertige
que je salue au passage
ils ont déjà disparus dès qu'on les regarde
fidèles compagnons du soleil
au chevet de son agonie quotidienne
lors de son dernier soupir comme un drapeau en lambeaux
où il faut découvrir le profil des amis
ceux qui vont m'acceuillir
Philippe Soupault

FACE TO FACE

You'll find me here one day or another
almost alone like all of us
facing all the lived out
forgotten and unknown weeks
facing the pyramid of Cheops
and the billions of years
facing the midnight sun
at the world's other end
reflected once more in the ponds of my youth
facing the dying sun
that's ours for only several billion years
to live just as long
as the billions of seconds that I have lived
which are left for me to live
perhaps to never know
and again if my memories are as exact
as the walls of Machu Picchu
facing the pyramids of Yucatan
and the twilights in front of my mirror
the future and the hope of every morning
of every evening of every night
because we have to live
because no one ever asked me to choose
my opinion or my life or my fate
because every night someone knocks at my door
because dreams wait at the edge of my bed
for rendezvous with friends who have vanished
dead or alive no one knows anymore
because little by little one by one I recognize them
as my best friends the clouds
children of madness
that I greet at the doorway
they have already vanished when we look at them
faithful companions of the sun
at the bedside of its daily agony
at the moment of its last sigh like a frayed flag
where we must uncover the profiles of friends
those who will welcome me
la main tendue
les mains tendues
comme autrefois
à l’aube
tous vous tous
ceux que je n’ai jamais oubliés
meme ceux dont je ne me souviens plus du nom
et qui chevauchent les nuages esclaves du crépuscule
Face à face seul en face de cette agonie
qui n’en finit jamais et quotidienne
puisque demain est un autre jour et d’autres jours
et que déjà s’approche la nuit mine de rien
cette meme nuit toujours la meme impitoyable
quiannonce le sommeil ou la mort
en dépit de sa planète morte depuis si longtemps
couleur de squelette couleur du souvenir
témoin pour le meilleur et pour le pire
et pourtant lumineux comme un reproche
toujours de profil automatique impitoyable comme un calendrier
maîtresse des marées et mère des catastrophes
dévouée des peuples impavide
qu’on déteste et qu’on admire tour à tour
belle comme un miroir
infidèle ces jours de pluie et de misère
les jours d’ennui et de mélancolie
il faut bien les oublier
et retrouver les traces des pas perdus
guidé par cette mémoire insolente
bourreau des insomnies
à travers tous les champs où fleurissent les regrets
toutes les occasions perdues peines perdues
avant et après les naufrages
au moment où l’on n’attend plus de salut
ni personne à qui se fier
les femmes et les enfants d’abord
celestes qu’on avait abandonnées
et qu’on retrouvait comme si tout était encore une fois
à recommencer
naufrages en série
comme des anniversaires
mais voici échoué sur cette plage déserte
et qui était désertée une fois de plus
an outstretched hand
as before
hands stretched out
to the dawn
all all of you
those I've never forgotten
even those whose names I no longer remember
and who ride on the clouds slaves of the twilight
Face to face alone facing this agony
that daily never ends
because tomorrow is another day and other days
and already the night is advancing with its look of innocence
the same night always the same merciless
ushering in sleep or death
in spite of its planet that's been dead for so long
color of skeleton color of memory
witness for the best and the worst
and yet luminous like a reproach
always the automatic profile unrelenting like a calendar
mistress of the tides and mother of catastrophes
devourer of peoples fearless
that we in turn detest and admire
lovely like a mirror
unfaithful these days of rain and misery
days of boredom and melancholy
we must forget them
and find again traces of lost steps
guided by this insolent memory
insomnia's hangman
across all the fields where regrets are in flower
all the lost opportunities lost pains
before and after shipwrecks
when we no longer wait for rescue
nor anyone to trust
women and children first
those abandoned
and found again as if everything once more
were to begin again
shipwrecks mass-produced
like birthdays
but stranded here on this deserted beach
once more deserted
un homme celui qui voulait oublier
et qui croyait avoir tout oublié
un homme cerné par tous les coquillages
ces souvenirs que la mer crache et vomit
un homme qui sait et ne sait pas
si c’est l’aube ou l’aurore

C’est l’aurore cette lueur qui est l’espérance
qui est cette petite fille qui joue au cerceau
quand le soleil apparaît
celle qui saute à la corde
quand les nuages disparaissent
et ne sont plus que des songes
puis encore des lueurs incertaines
fugitives comme les doutes
voici le soleil invincible
vainqueur muet de la nuit
du sommeil et de l’insomnie
qui exige le silence
avant les fanfares et tout ce qui s’ensuit
avant le tumulte et les cloches du réveil
avant les regrets les remords
avant l’inventaire des rêves et des cauchemars
avant les fantômes des obligations quotidiennes
quand on sait qu’on ne peut échapper

Chacun son tour et tour à tour
pour le malheur ou le bonheur
Il faut savoir jouer tous les jours
pour le pire et pour le meilleur
Ne pas être impatient
puisque nous savons tous
que viendra le moment
où nous ne pourrons plus choisir
notre dernier mot notre dernier soupir

Dernier souvenir dernier nuage
qui va s’évaporer comme un adieu
Adieu mauvais jour mauvaise nuit
Bonjour bonne nuit et ainsi de suite
Mille bonsoirs de bonsoirs
Mille adieux
C’est à prendre ou à laisser
Bonne mort c’est la grâce que l’on souhaite
à Philippe Soupault
is a man who wanted to forget
who thought he had forgotten all
a man surrounded by all the shells
memories that the sea spits and vomits
a man who knows and does not know
if it's daybreak or dawn

It is dawn this flash this hope
this little girl playing with a hoop
when the sun comes up
the one jumping rope
when the clouds disappear
and are nothing more than dreams
then again uncertain flashes
fleeting like doubts
here's the invincible sun
mute conqueror of night
of sleep of insomnia
demanding silence
before the fanfares and all that follows
before the uproar and the morning bells
before the regrets the remorse
before the inventory of dreams and nightmares
before the ghosts of daily obligations
when we know we can't escape

Everyone has a turn in turn
at misery or joy
Every day we must know how to play
for better for worse
And not be impatient
because we all know
the moment will come
when we can no longer choose
our last word our last sigh

Last memory last cloud
dispersing like a good-bye
Goodbye bad day bad night
Hello good night and so on
A thousand good evenings of good evenings
A thousand good-byes
To take or to leave
A good death is the best you can wish

for Philippe Soupault
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WERNER ASPENSTROM belongs to the generation of poets that emerged in the Forties in the shadow of World War II. The Swedish poet is the author of Under tiden (Meanwhile).

AMIN BANANI is Professor of Persian and History at the University of California, Los Angeles, and is collaborating with Jascha Kessler on a volume of selected poems by Forough Farrokhzad.

WILLIS BARNSTONE is a poet, critic, editor and translator. He recently published a book of his translations of Mao Tse-tung's poetry, an anthology of translations entitled Greek Lyric Poetry, and a book of his own poetry entitled A Day in the Country. Mr Barnstone teaches Comparative Literature at Indiana University.

JOHN BIGUENET is a young poet from New Orleans who has recently founded a new literary journal called Black and White.

SKUNDER BOGHOSSIAN works professionally as a painter in Washington D.C. In 1975 he was featured in a major show at the Museum of Natural History in New York.

DENNIS BRUTUS, author of China Poems and Strains, has been active in campaigns for the release of South African political prisoners and exclusion of apartheid teams from the Olympic Games. He presently teaches at Northwestern University.

MICHAEL BULLOCK is a prolific translator, poet and writer. He is the editor of Prism International and a member of the permanent staff of the Creative Writing Department, University of British Columbia.

MICHEL BUTOR is a widely known French author. The selections that appear in this issue of Mundus Artium were taken from Les Cahiers du Chemin #17.

MATEI CALINESCU won the Prize for Fiction of the Writer's Union of Romania in 1969 with his short novel, The Life and Opinions of Zacharias Lichter. He is presently a Visiting Professor at Indiana University.

GLAUCO CAPOZZOLI was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1929. His works have been shown in South America, the United States, and Europe.

PETER CLARKE is from Ocean View, South Africa. He attended the International Writers Program in Iowa City, Iowa in 1975 and has now returned to South Africa to continue his writing.

EDGAR CORREAL was born in Bogotá in 1943. His works have been shown in Colombia, America, and Europe.

ROEL D'HAESSE recently had an exhibition of his sculptures at the Galerie Claude Bernard in Paris.

OSSIE ONUORA ENEKWE, a native of Nigeria, teaches Black Literature at New York Community College and lectures at Comstock Prison as part of Skidmore College's University Without Walls program. Broken Pots, a volume of his poetry, is forthcoming.
H. E. FRANCIS teaches English at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. A translator and writer of short stories, he received the Iowa School of Letters Award for Short Fiction for his collection of nineteen stories, *The Itinerary of Beggars*. He is founding editor of *Poem* and poetry editor of *This Issue*.

ROBIN FULTON has published several translations of Swedish writers, in addition to his own poetry.

LUCIA FOX was born in Lima, Peru. She is currently at Michigan State University where she is working on a critical study entitled *Family, Social Class and Sexuality in Women's Novels in Spain and Spanish America (1637-1976)*.

CHRISTINE FREEMAN has published several translations of Latin American poetry.

YURI KARAGEORGE has published several translations, poems and stories in various journals. He is presently an instructor in Comparative Literature at Indiana University.

JOHN KARIRU teaches at the University of Calgary. He specializes in lithographs and intaglio. A distinctive feature of his work is the presentation of elongated figures of Masai warriors.

JASCHA KESSLER received an NEA Fellowship in Writing for 1974-75. He has completed recent work on contemporary Hungarian writers.

DANIEL KUNENE, born at Edenville, South Africa, is a poet and expert in African literature and linguistics. He is presently teaching African language and literature at the University of Wisconsin.

GREG KUZMA is a poet and the editor of *The Best Cellar Press*. He currently lives in Nebraska.

PEDRO LASTRA is a Chilean poet and professor of Latin American literature at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. His most recent book of poems, *Y éramos immortales*, was published in 1974.

LEE LEGGETT is completing her Masters' thesis, a translation and critical essay of *La Fabrique du Pre*.

JOHN M. LIPSKI is assistant professor of Romance Languages at Michigan State University. Among his major research interests are literary semiotics, societal bilingualism, and the structure of the modern Latin American narrative.

IHECHUKWU MADUBUIKE'S poetry has appeared in numerous journals of African literature. A native of Nigeria, he currently teaches at Ohio State University.

CARLOS MENSÀ was born in 1936. He lives in Barcelona and his paintings have been compared to the works of Unamuno and Garcia Lorca.

GURU PRASAD MOHANTY is the author of two books of poetry in Oriya. At present, he is an educational administrator with the state government of Orissa.

JONATHAN JAMES MOYA is currently studying creative writing at the University of Miami. *A Dove Hunter's Funeral* is the young writer's first publication.

PETER NAZARETH, a writer from Uganda, has an impressive list of publications.
to his credit, which includes a number of novels, short stories and radio plays. He is a Visiting Lecturer in Afro-American Studies at the University of Iowa.

POL NDU is from Eastern Nigeria. He died tragically in a car accident during the summer, 1976. One of his latest published books was *Songs for Seers*, 1974.

CHARLES NNOLIM is a writer and poet who currently teaches in the English Department at Babson College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

BENG T NORDENBORG was born in Karstad in 1938. He studied in Goteborg. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Europe, South America and the United States.

AMIR I. M. NOUR teaches at the University of Chicago. He deals primarily in sculpture, cast bronze and metal piping.

TAYO (PETER) OLAFIOYE is a twenty-seven year old Nigerian. His activities have included producing a weekly television program about Africa for a Denver San Diego State University.

KOLE OMOTOSO is a young Nigerian poet currently attending the University of Ibadan.

E. OPOKU-AGYEMANG is a native of Ghana. He writes poetry and attends the University of Cape Coast in Ghana.

RUBEN ALONSO ORTIZ is a young Argentinian writer. The Latin American Fiction issue of *Mundus Artium* included one of his short stories.

LON JULES OTTO says he has “one foot in a novel and another in an opera libretto, which makes it awkward to get anywhere at all. I may know more about bicycle repair than any other poet of my generation.”

DEBA P. PATNAIK is Writer-in-Residence at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, N.Y. His latest book of poems *Prathama Purusha* was published by Heinemann, 1976.

DAN RAKGOATHE, a Northern Sotho, was born in the Transvaal in 1940. His work was first shown publicly in 1967 in “Art South Africa Today” and he has since been included in group exhibitions in South Africa, England, and the United States.

ALICIA DELLEPIANE RAWSON is a poet and mastercraftsman in leather who lives in Buenos Aires. She held a fellowship at the State University of Iowa Writer's Workshop in 1974-75.

MARTIN ROBBINS recently completed the text for Phi Beta Kappa's dramatic oratorio *To Form a More Perfect Union* which was performed at the College of William and Mary on December 3-6, 1976.

GUIDO RODRIGUEZ ALCALA has published several books of poetry, including *Ciudad Sonambula*, *Apacible Fuego*, and *Viento Oscuro*. He was born in Asunción in 1946.

MEHDI AKHAVAN-SALES became one of the leaders of “new poetry” in Persia when he broke with the centuries-old isometric couplet to embrace a more natural form of poetic expression.
CYPRIAN SHILAKOE, a Northern Mosotho, was born in 1946. He was killed in an automobile accident near Johannesburg in September 1972 at the age of twenty-six.

SNEZHINA SLAVOVA was born in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and has been writing poetry since the age of fifteen. Her first book of poems The Rain My Friend, appeared in 1968.

LILVIA SOTO-DUGGAN, who was born in Mexico, has published critical works and translations in various journals. She is completing her graduate work at SUNY at Stony Brook.

PHILLIPPE SOUPAULT is an internationally known writer whose poems have been described by William Carlos Williams as "intensely subjective," expressing a "primitive, a child-like truthfulness." He currently lives in Paris.

TWINS SEVEN SEVEN is a member of the Oshogbo School of Artists. He had a major exhibition at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. His mother had seven sets of twins. He is also a musician.

PAULETTE WEINSTOCK, a graduate student at the University of Arkansas, is a poet and translator. She recently represented the United States at the Struga International Poetry Festival in Yugoslavia.


MAURI YAMBO has published two volumes of poems, Flame Hands and Man without blood. He is a Kenyan doing graduate work in Sociology at the University of Illinois.

EVELYNE ACCAD ZERBE was born in Beirut, Lebanon. She has been active in the Women's Movement and is currently working on several pieces dealing with the role of women in African fiction.

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