

POETRY MISCELLANY

2007



Romanian Cart Near Danube Delta with Prehistoric Burial Mound in Distance

Interviews and Poems from the Sha'ar festival in Tel Aviv, 2005

*Tahi Muhammad Ali, Amir Or, Nidaa Khouri, Mordecai Geldman
Naim Araidi, Ali Mawassi, Yakir Ben Moshe*

Poems from the Ovidius Festival, Romania, June 2007

Iona Ieronim, Carmen Firan, Adrian Sangeorzan, Leonard Schwartz, George Szirtes, Saviana Stancescu, Doina Uricariu, Liliana Ursu, Arian Leka, Magda Cârneci with translations by Adam Sorkin and others

English Translations from Golden Boat Translation Workshop, Slovenia, July 2007

*Barbara Korun, Rina Katajavouri, Iztok Osojnik, Aleš Mustar,
Ketaki Kushari Dyson, Antonella Anedda*

Poems by Marvin Bell, Gerry LaFemina, Paul Guest, William Pitt Root, Pamela Uschuk and others

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POETRY MISCELLANY

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MARVIN BELL

The Book of the Dead Man (Nothing)

Live as if you were already dead.

1. About the Dead Man and Nothing

The dead man knows nothing.
He is powerless to stop the battles, he has no way to reattach the arms and legs.
He cannot stuff the fallen soldier's insides back inside.
He has no expertise in the matter of civilian corpses, nor of friendly fire, nor beheadings, nor revenge, nor suicide.
He does not know the depth of depth charges, or the exact pressure that detonates a land mine.
The dead man has given his all so that now, if he once knew, he knows nothing.
He is emptied, he is the resonant cavity of which he spoke when it was music he was thinking of.
Let him be now the leftover button of his work shirt.
Permit him his fading mirror, his sputtering circuits, his secrets, his tears, his noonday duels with the sun.
Let him ride the roads in the bucket of an earth mover, can it hurt?
Let him stand under the icicles, can he catch cold?
For the dead man is stagnant without knowledge, and he cannot survive the demise of philosophy or art.
To the dead man they were not spectacles, but survival skills.
To the dead man, the world was but a birthmark that befell original space.
To say that the dead man knows nothing is to see him at the beginning, who can it hurt?
Before all this, he was nothing.

2. More About the Dead Man and Nothing

Don't bet he won't be born.
Before all this, this that is so much, he was not himself.
He was the free heat of space and then the salt of the earth.
He was the ring around the moon, foretelling.
The dead man had no station when he came to be, just a strange nakedness in the light.
He did not know what he was to do, this was before clocks.
So he decided to stab the dirt, to tumble in happiness and writhe in pain, and to flap his way into space.
To go home.
It was a swell idea for the dead man, and he pinned it to his chest.
Give him that, that he crystallized a plan, that he made from smoke something to him as real as quartz, ivory, or the hoof of a gelding.
The dead man had the whole world to transform or perfect or outlive.
He wrote the book of nothing and no-time that entombed all time and all that took place in time.
The dead man could not be hammered by analysis.
Let him horn in on your fury, whatever it was, and it will abate.
The energy that became form will disperse, never again to be what we were.
Look out the window to see him, no, the other one.

On the Light Rail

The soused husband leans to take
 her knees in his hands,
 narrating a night he was lost and what was
 there to do
 in the dark but feel his way home, he
 says this and she,
 in her wheelchair, swigs water, repeatedly, as if
 his sorrowful happy ending,
 when he reached home, makes her thirsty.
 When the tram doors open, he
 pushes her gently and steadily across the threshold,
 onto stable land, and if it is only
 the sidewalk where the homeless linger,
 and if it is only the collection point
 for brown bags that have gathered all morning
 from under trestles and out of doorways
 when the wind came round
 heralding rain, so that the last swallow
 of whiskey could not be withheld,
 if it was only survival by the day,
 there was still, on the railway,
 where a wheelchair has priority,
 a few blocks' worth of ordinary trouble,
 a man thankful to have a mate,
 and something in the offing,
 his hands on her unfeeling knees.

Her Dreams

I hold her in my arms at night to get closer to her dreams. A bad shoulder is a small pain next to loneliness, which she in my arms abates. Our dreams mix, but hers engrave themselves in circuitry, synapses and relays, while mine are as wisps of odorless smoke. She meets the deceased, while I meet only the living who seem desperate in dream to continue with what they are doing, while its meaning is wrapped in momentum as they drift in and out of the air of unconscious glimpses, which I have come to believe to be the color blue. I believe this because blue has long been my favorite color for no reason except that one feels one must have one, and if it came upon me to choose blue to be the very color of life, as surely it must be if one selects it to be prevalent in one's awareness, then a fondness for the color blue must have come from underneath, as a bubble of air will rise from the seabed to make a dent in the surface, a dent we hardly notice and think no more about. When I wake in the midst of dreaming, the night around me is filled with her dreaming, but I see only the blue nighttime and soon forget my own dream. Nonetheless, there is something about a dream that, if left to ebb slowly from one's mind, will curl back like a wisp of smoke that recalls for the dreamer some fireside tale of childhood, never to be fully recounted because it is only the latent smell of a dream, produced by the fire of the dream, ignited by a twinge in the arm of the one whose embrace encircles his mate in sleep. But I digress.

Diagnosis in Increments of Severity

1.

Its birthplace is the back, your pain.
 They've told you once, they'll tell you once again.
 Your aging spinal discs will not stay put.
 They crack, then leak, like a stuffed, spongy doughnut.

Yes, that's the phrase. You're jelly after all.
 Decrepitude has dialed a local call.
 Each MRI will echo the one just past
 Until, that is, the one that's last.

2.

Oh hell, to be the skeleton and not
 the flesh. I only know how good she feels.
 "I'll take that to my grave," they say,
 but there's no room there. There's a potter
 who wants her ashes in a glaze, and the vessel
 dropped in the Mediterranean, where,
 she says, a baby octopus will inhabit it. That's
 a lot of fingers on one's bones. Me,
 I'm okay with the way things are.
 If Earth is now a wheel of decay, hanging
 in the butcher end of a rotting universe,
 it only means the mind
 has learned to demystify the planet
 and to put up with the smell.

3.

When my niece died, I spoke at the memorial, and then we went to eat. My sister's husband washed and washed his hands. We were alone in the bathroom. He always wore a three-piece suit, and he never swore. "You know," he said, "I used to handle the labor problems for six counties. Then I got old and they wanted to get rid of me. But they couldn't get rid of me because I have a book. I have a golden book. Someone needs something, they call me and I open my book." It was some book, I'm sure, but now there was no favor to call in, no mark to be made good, no debt to be paid. He was trying, still, to be part of the family. My neice had written: "Poor Joe is so out of it that he didn't even realize Mom had slipped back into her depression. He is too worried that 'they' are out to get him and drive him out of the neighborhood. He has some kind of paranoia, I guess. He told us the day we were there that 'they' were putting wet leaves into his gutters so his water won't drain properly, a plot to get him to sell his house and move."

ESCAPING THE TRAPS
BRIEF CHATS WITH ISRAELI AND ARABIC POETS AT THE
SHA'AR INTERNATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL,
TEL AVIV/JOPPA, ISRAEL, NOVEMBER, 2005
by: RICHARD JACKSON



Tel Aviv from Joppa

[These brief conversations took place in coffee shops, hotel lobbies, between readings at Joppa, and at several other impromptu places during the Festival. Questions were formulated with the help of Terri Harvey. Poems are used by oral permission of the authors at the festival and can also be found in various anthologies and on the internet.]

THE LAST BULLET: A Conversation with Nidaa Khoury

PM: You have been a leader in women's groups, peace groups, a teacher of teachers, and of poetry, and are rooted in a philosophical and social theory. Quite a list for any poet.

NK: The main issue is how to integrate, how one thing affects the other, how I can use one to see the other. I am a Christian living in Galilee surrounded by Israeli Jews and Moslems. So I live in a center and cannot separate political, religious and personal aspects of issues. It's very complicated, but it gives a depth that writing must address.

PM: Are there other influences?

NK: The Greeks, how they felt, how they thought, what happened to them. In this geography that is a crossroads so many things can influence us. You have to catch whatever is coming from you don't know where, or what.

PM: And so the poet's role is to somehow bring these perspectives and forces together?

NK: The world moves so slowly we cannot immediately feel the effect of our poems. We say what we feel now, at this moment in history. There are so many factors, we can't hope to simply to bring change smoothly and quickly, but

maybe someday, with a better understanding of each other, we can have the power to change things. I don't think the political issues are addressed by the intellectuals effectively, but maybe poets can find a language to bring people together.

PM: You say in one poem, "My hands are forests without wheat" and "My chest is full of hungry fish." The body and the land seem integrated, one defining the other in your poems. It makes this struggle very personal.

NK: Yes, my woman's body in this village that is traditional, oriental in a way, a small village society. A woman here has along way to go to be free, to feel good about her body. In a way Israel, with its power, is masculine, while Palestine, like a woman, has to fight for legitimacy. So there are two levels, the personal and the political.

PM: In "The Last Bullet" you describe a world inside the chest, ready to explode.

NK: Yes, I wrote that after some acts here, where a Palestinian man in a train station was caught between the two forces. It's a political poem but I try to talk about the pain of the woman in the political situation, about looking around from a Christian evangelical point of view towards a future. It starts in a station but ends in a bigger place. My own background is philosophy and metaphysics so that also enters into how the poem develops. It's a metaphysics of the heart.

NK: Every time a read a poem I want to rewrite it again: it's never a fixed idea.

PM: That's like how early English poetry went—with poets like John Gower – the poems were constantly modified to fit the times.

NK: Yes, every day I think of another feeling I can add. However sometimes poems do come like dreams and I can't change anything no mater how I try. I keep paper and pens all around my bed – see how many I have here on me?

PM: In "Israel" there's a kind of savage irony, death is a kind of lover.

NK: Yes, I see the pain of both sides: the pain of the Israelis and their right to a homeland, a natural home, and the pain of the Israeli woman who has lost her son; and also the pain of the Palestinian who also has a right to a homeland, and the Pain of the Palestinian woman who ha also lost a son. I cannot understand the situation logically, only in feelings. I can't be rational, only emotional, so the only way to get at it all is on the level of irony.

PM: In "Things Being Lost" and "People of Grapes" – one of the poems we are using--there is an immense sense of loss—of the present as well as the past. Where does it leave the poet?

NK: Sometimes I feel I can't live in this situation. I feel alone, cold, depressed. Sometimes I feel I can't go outside. I am going alone all the time. I want to be safe.

PM: Does writing itself offer any solace?

NK: I feel I must continue to write because it is a healthy function. I must say something. I must make a power from the weakness I feel.

PM: In some poems it seems as if they are able to transport you.

NK: Yes, they take me to another level in my life. They go more deeply into my feelings and touch another place, another pain, another plateau. In the last few years I also try to travel wherever I can, go anywhere, any other place, almost as if to escape from this complicated situation. I feel hen I write that I can come up out of depression to—to a voice of an Arabic woman from this society as if from a space between walls, empty spaces. I feel I need to tell this, to say in a high voice my beliefs, like a woman who is pregnant and can't, without difficulty, give birth.

In practical terms, I need to go someplace to finish my new book a very big one, a philosophical-social book.



Nidaa Khouri Reading at Festival

DEATH IS WAVE
by Nidaa Khouri

*Death comes to me
Greets me with kisses
Never enou gh
Kisses me till death
Plants a thousand kisses in my body
In my waist and my chest
In my back it plants its seeds
My crazy lover
With him, I sip the street of kisses
Hiding from the looks of people
Behind the bombs of tear gas
Death harbors again flirting in waves
Death is the wheat that I grind
In my torment
And I promenade to the oven of the revolution
And the arches of the prison*

PEOPLE OF GRAPES
by Nidaa Khouri

*The unripe grapes
hang on the morning gate
and the leaving.
My soul goes out
to the unripe taste of my childhood
but the sun
grabs me quickly
and hides
my shadow
in her shade
...and my story ends.*

ON PROSE POEMS: A Conversation with Yakir Ben Moshe

PM: Let's start by talking about the relationship between prose poems and verse poems since that is at the heart of your work.

YBM: It's amazing, all this thinking about the reader, what he will understand. The prose poem gives all of the self away: you can put everything into it. You don't have to worry about arranging the parts as much. You can put in things you would never put in a verse poem because they are too big. Prose is a like a body for me, one that you have to invent your own music for.

PM: Does it affect subject matter per se? Are some subjects more suited for your prose? Others for verse?

YBM: No. It's usually mostly about the body. It's not a political thing either. Legs, hands, what I feel like inside. It's my prose. There's a sense of the self, who I am, who I am writing for. The body you have all the time and is at least one true subject.

PM: Why not write all prose poems then?

YBM: I can't give away metaphor, can't give away the music of verse. I'm not trying to be myself or even be creative when I write a prose poem. It's a question of freedom.

PM: You've mentioned music a couple of times. I remember listening to Dylan Thomas and the music mattered so much more than the words when I first listened.

YBM: Oh yes, I know so much music by heart. It's in me waking and sleeping. It is in everything I write. The music is in the body. You can fill our body with music. You don't have to be wise or clever—it's like building with legos! Sometimes you can hear rums, like a mix of everything. You try to create a melody that runs through the piece.

PM: Do you see any difference between the younger and older poets?

YBM: Those older poets did something and experienced something we never will. They tried to be wild, but the younger poets don't want to be wild. They don't want to write political poems as the older generations did. We want something newer, fresher, original. Yet if someone writes a bad poem that commits some evil on the language, at least it helps me understand the language and poetry better.

FEAR AMONG THESE PEOPLE: A Conversation with Naim Araidi

PM: "People of Galilee" describes a distance and a connection with the inhabitants. There's a use of parallelisms and inclusiveness of vision, a kind of expansive, Whitmanesque "I" that would like to embrace what surrounds it.

NA: Sure, yeah. I come from an Arabic culture and have been educated in a Jewish culture, so I am participant in both of these aspects now in conflict. And I am Druze, something far from these cultures. In some ways all these things make me afraid: I am all of them. I don't want to lose any of them. A human being in the 21st century needs all: cosmopolitan yet in conflict. I don't want the conflicts to destroy me.

PM: Fear seems a motivation behind a lot of what you write.

NA: yes, I fear all the time. It is not an innocent fear. It is informed. I fear for this coffee, the war, the general conflict of Arab and Jew. Of everything. I'm afraid of myself, of death. There are all these expectations, even love. I want to love out of loneliness yet I fear the woman I see and love would agree. Yet I don't want it to stop. I'm afraid my life would be real, and then what? Maybe the poetry is my escaping my fear. Whitman is such a strong poet because he wanted to cover his fear. I think this is true of many poets. I think the most noble feeling of a human being is fear.

PM: Well, there's "The massacre of Children" where the poet says: "This is the crying that has not yet begun; / this is the crying that has no end." It is almost a metaphysical weeping.

NA: In the last ten years I have been involved in the literature of children, to encourage Arab writers as well as Israeli to talk to children. There's a Jewish TV program that talks to children. When I teach the literature of children I ask why do children like "little Red Riding Hood" the world over? There's something basic there that they understand that transcends us adults. All children have a common language. Children are at the top, where they are born, and in some ways the rest of life is going down.

PM: Wordsworth has this notion that the child is father of the man.

NA: Yes I like that, like him. I can't get used to all these things that happen in the world—women, children dying in bombing. But worst is to see the children suffering – it's enough to make you despair. And what role will they eventually fall into if they survive? I want to say, stop killing the children. When you bomb children it is not a war.

PM: And your poems show this humanity. You say “violins are never warm / if they are never in human hands.”

NA: Poetry is never abstract, it is not mere technique. Just as there's a difference between official statements and people just sitting down together and talking about the future. Poetry is a form of prophecy, it comes from it. People in the last days will hold poems, say *Song of Songs*, and not weapons. There's a difference between insight and prophecy, between talk and understanding. I think the greatest fear is if not enough people will understand this.

People of the Galilee
by Naim Arayde:

1
*People of the Galilee are strong as the sun
 crude as the terebinth gentle as the oak
 burning like the fires of Sodom
 moist as the salt of the sea
 so far from their bodies.
 And from the distance of closeness
 and from the distance of distance
 I grasp the rope at both ends
 one tied
 to my neck,
 one to their neck,
 cry out to them,
 People of the Galilee!
 Leave me alone
 so I won't be lost!
 Let me look backwards
 and my soul die with Gomorrah.*

2
*A thin thread binds me to you
 pull on it and I go slack
 and let it go slack and I pull!
 You feel the same way.
 All the people of the Galilee
 were born from my womb
 to be against me
 and I from their womb to be against them.
 I am of another mind.
 They are but men
 and something between me and them
 breaks the laws of their fathers and sons.
 In spite of me in spite of
 their anger
 I and the people of the Galilee walk
 on a tight gallows rope of mine
 or perhaps of theirs.*

3.
*Breaches are mended in spite of the Galilee snows.
 Olive trees bear fruit in winter
 and the great stones grind everything together—
 the oil to soothe our wounds
 and the olive-dregs breathe attar in our nostrils
 stopped up with the grippe of the Galilee.*

*I will go on ripping up my pages
and they will cut the rope between me and them
and blood shall flow.
I will be the victim to atone
for my sin
to my son.*

Tr. Jay Shir

FINDING THE NAMES: A Conversation with Tahi Muhammad Ali

PM: So many of your poems tell stories—as you do when you read and converse. It's as if the stories define you, help you shape the world around you. Like the mousetrap story—your mother finds a mouse and you go out and get a trap which turns out to be very special. You catch the mouse and it has these fabulous green eyes. Fifty years later your wife sees a mouse and you embark on this quest to get the same old sort of trap, and finally do, and catch the mouse, one with the same green eyes, and at the exact same time. But the mousetrap is really the story of the improbable that we get caught in.

TMA: There's that story everyone tells about the mousetrap, yes. It's a story that makes me shiver still. Like something bigger controls it all. Something we can't ever understand. The poet is like the man who makes something from olive wood, a very hard wood, hard to work, maybe a cabinet, maybe a bed. He sculpts the language like Michelangelo.

PM: In "Meeting at an Airport" you meet someone and there is this question that is "four decades old." It's as if the meeting and departure have been going on in some fashion for that long. A constant reworking of that wood.

TMA: That is a true story, something I retell after 40 years. This is also what the poet does, bringing old things back to life. He realizes all time is lost, but it can come back in the poem. I meet this person in the airport who doesn't recognize me, but as a test of identity asks the question from 40 years ago: "What do you hate / and who do you love?" I answer the same old way: "I hate departure, and I love the spring" and so on. The departure is the loss of memory and identity.

PM: Your "Post-Operative Complications Following the Extraction of Memory" included in this issue is an ironic look at identity. Your own identity comes from the small village life you grew up in, and your self education in poetry.

TMA: Memory lives in names. My name actually comes from "camel" and one can't escape the name. I say "a camel fleeing the slaughterhouses." You can guess what the slaughterhouses are. But in a way poetry is a way of escaping. Or re-writing. Writing makes me feel different. I forget this life. You can become Rembrandt, David, Beethoven, it doesn't matter. But then language has a memory like the stories it tells. It teaches. It makes the individual a part of a history. Names tell us what we are and what we can change. The Arabic name for a common villager suggests a way of living and thinking about the world.

PM: In "Fooling the Killer" you talk about Qasim who has probably been killed as if he were just hiding—a kind of myth but a way of keeping him alive.

TMA: Ah, hiding places. They can't find us because we hide. When I read it I weep. So in the poem I ask him about what his life in hiding must be like, and then say that even if they killed him they never found the body, so in a way he is hiding. His memory is alive. At the end I go back to remembering how we played hiding games when young: he was the best at hiding. Now is his best job of hiding. He fooled them. How it got written I don't know. It's about how I think about anything—I have a feeling and the words come.

PM: They may come like that, and feel simple on the surface, but they are also very deep, meaningful underneath. Some simple, almost folksy images, scenes and stories reveal unexpected depths—"my happiness bears / no relationship to happiness" you say in one poem.

TMA: A good poem is a well, or like water—you have the surface, but you don't really know how deep it is until you jump in.

PM: There are a lot of recurrent images.

TMA: Most of my poems from this period tell a story. They all come from real events, from things that happened to me or to those right around me. But like that piece of wood I have to shape it. The difference between art and life is that in life there is this cloud of feeling, but in art there is no cloud. It's the difference between forest and garden: the forest is

produced by nature and grows any way it ants, the garden is produced by a person and grows the way that person determines.

PM: We've been talking mostly about those narrative poems from earlier on, but there are others, more to the lyrical side, too.

TMA: I tell the truth of how I see it. I think in images. I think in terms of movement, of rhythm. Inside you there is this music you feel. It brings something very distant into the self. In Arabic everything is this fluid flow: it is pure music. This is really what gives you the story to begin. Then after maybe three lines the music is set and the poem takes over.



Jackson interviewing *Taha Muhammad Ali with his translator*

POST-OPERATIVE COMPLICATIONS FOLLOWING THE EXTRACTION OF MEMORY
by Taha Muhammad Ali

*In an ancient, gypsy
dictionary of dreams
are explanations of my name
and numerous
interpretations of all I'll write.*

*What horror comes across me
when I come across myself
in such a dictionary!
But there I am:
a camel fleeing the slaughterhouses,
galloping toward the East,
pursued by processions
of knives and assessors,
women wielding*

mortar and pestle for chop meat!

*I do not consider myself a pessimist,
and I certainly don't
suffer from the shock
of ancient, gypsy nightmares,
and yet, in the middle of the day,
whenever I turn on the radio,
or turn it off,
I breathe in a kind of historical,
theological leprosy.*

*Feeling the bonds of language
coming apart in my throat and loins,
I cease attending
to my sacred obligations:
barking, and the gnashing of teeth.*

*I confess!
I've been neglecting
my post-operative physiotherapy
following the extraction of memory.
I've even forgotten
the simplest way of collapsing
in exhaustion on the tile floor.*

-Tr. Peter Cole, Yahya Hijazi and Gabriel Levin



THE UNITY OF THE WORD: A Conversation with Mordechai Geldman

PM: You have a background in psychotherapy—how does that interact with your poetry.

MG: It's hard to talk about them since they are different classifiers. I tool psychotherapy in a very rigid way especially in the beginning. On the one hand there were laws made of behaviors for treating patients. After a while I became more flexible, and it became closer to poetry. They are bridges between two worlds.

PM: And for the poet, what are these worlds?

MG: The poet searches for answers. A lot of earlier poems may have looked like psychoanalysis. Lately I have written a poem about someone who is missing. I'm attracted to that. The disappearance of a man from life in such a way that I begin to think maybe I want to disappear. We usually look for someone who is lost and who wants to be found, but with ourselves it is different. Maybe I have disappeared because I know too much of myself. Maybe this is a way of disappearing because then you hide behind the image of yourself that you have created from all you choose and select to know.

PM: There is always an ambivalence in your work, especially in the use of opposites. The other can become the self, the self the other. In this poem "Fiscus Bonsai" which we will use in PM the plant is in a state of betweenness but is joined to both sides. In "Metaphysical Reflection 27" everything heads to a wholeness.

MG: The world into the self, the self into the world, political into private and the opposite. When I started these meditations I thought they would only be for myself. I wrote the Bonsai poem for a patient, a Buddhist, to describe completeness. He's not in a hurry to do anything and is opposite to the aggressive guy always in front of the TV. He as the inspiration for the poem. I am very interested in Buddhism and in a little way consider myself Buddhist. As for the reflection poem, lately I've started reading the Upanishads. I'm interested in how everything there is elated to God, wants to be a part of God.

PM: On the level of poetics this philosophy is reflected in the way your poems are tied together by intricate movements and interrelationships of images, like Pavese's idea of the image narrative. I'm thinking of "Non-Poem."

MG: I think that is very interesting—that poem was written about non-poetic qualities. I often want to write poems from an educated point of view, but you can't write about everything in the same way. Sometimes the poet has to fight poetry, so you look or material to escape poetry. I tried to be more analytic, and I want to be more logical, and I hope I managed to do that.

PM: There's a logic in language structures.

MG: Yes, in the ways words are connected, the way they do it themselves without intervention

PM: Well one unique vision that seems to come out of nowhere is with the "Porno" poems.

MG: I thought I'd never write another one of those, but I did in my latest book. They are about desire, about the different forms it takes in society. I suppose they are psychological studies too.

PM: They delve into the deepest regions of the self, and the associative movement of the language is really apparent there. In some ways then the logic comes not from the poet but the language? Does that make the poet in a way isolated from his language? A couple of other poets here have talked about isolation and fear.

MG: I had long periods of loneliness, but I like my loneliness. Okay, you suffer sometimes, as after a marriage break-up. It's very precious this loneliness. It's not just a state of being with the self, but a state of having a distance from all pressures that society and culture put into your head, your mentality. The same for psychotherapy: to be individual and not just part of a group is important. People cling to ideas of a therapy group so that there is no space between them and an organization or community. Loneliness gives freedom to analyze and choose, to meditate, to consider the ideas of the other, to be safe from them and their undue influences. When you are in a group you buy into the ideas of that group, but there are so many revolutions of ideas in psychotherapy, yet some groups work like religious organizations even when they make mistakes. Their analyses are cold as they try to be completely objective. But that's impossible. The same with poetry: you are alone and you have to look at things for yourself, not part of a movement. I was always lonely in this way even as a child, always staying aside and watching. Now I like it, but I didn't so much when I was younger.

PM: It's creating an inner world to counter the outer one people think of as objective.

MG: yes, to see the world is created, to create it, you need some space. If you see it as created by others, if you see it merely as objective, you miss something. When you write a poem you have a slight feeling of having created a world, at least for a moment.

PM: But have there been influences on our poetry?

MG: No major influences. But my parents are from Poland, so I have read much of Milosz, Herbert, Symborska, Swir. Also a lot of modern Israeli poets.

FISCUS BONSAI
By Mordecai Geldman

*He arrived without suitcases
since suitcases were not seen when he came
and before I realized he was living with me
my life had become strangely bizarre –
Objects were displaced
food left in pots was devoured
books I did not plan to read were found open on the sofa.
One night the water in the toilet flushed
with a noise that tore me from the dream world
and I knew for sure it wasn't me who used the bathroom
since I was lying on my bed on the orthopedic mattress
These peculiarities and many others
seemed like the tricks of an unseen spirit
but then to my great astonishment
he revealed his face
He did this when I'd come home
while listening to a river's roar
and the birds singing on its banks
recorded for the well-being of city-dwellers
by a friendly American company.
He stood before me slightly embarrassed,
his hands held as if praying
and above the orange monk's cloak
rose his bold and boyish head
peeping at me with eyes of a frightened deer
Since he spoke Japanese
I couldn't discuss with him
his invasion of my home and his reasons
but my deep friendliness toward Buddhism
did not let my heart exile him.
And I have allowed him to go on dwelling with me
as a spiritual mute friend
until he chooses to leave.
But his silence did not eliminate his expressions
and surprisingly enough he had an opinion about most of my deeds
expressed with smiles that should be dubbed post-Buddhist
if they are to be seen as successors of the famous Buddhist smile of the Buddha himself
He smiled at my exaggerated attention to dress
He smiled at my exaggerated interest in CNN
He smiled at my addiction to broadcasts of boxing matches
He smiled at my nervousness about my media status as a poet
He smiled at my tendency to be sexually promiscuous
He smiled at my repeated disappointments in love
He smiled at my habit to escape into sleep
He smiled at my fears of Aids and other malaises
And there were of course more reasons for more smiles
He always sat at the side of my gazes, never confronting them*

*And transmitted his smiles in perfect timing
 He even seemed to develop a liking toward me
 and sometimes, when he wasn't sleeping on the windowsill or in the living room
 he slept in my bed, naked, clean and smooth as a girl
 shrinking his body at the edge of the wide bed
 not to disturb my rest and dreams
 and gradually I started liking him too –
 Since he was a silent smiler
 we avoided any annoying misunderstandings
 that follow long cleansing discussions
 so I could imagine his purpose according to my understandings
 His smiles I thought were meant to sweeten my days
 and to detach all my attachments.
 He had a kind of sophisticated theory
 that ridiculed any attachment to anything
 beyond my attachments, he seemed to think
 there's a hidden question
 the question I fear
 the question I have to ask
 the question I have to calm down with an answer
 a kind of supreme Koan
 that will beat all firm answers
 and all dubious questions
 among which I was running around as a blind mow
 Summing up the monk as a subversive and smiling question mark
 or as a kind of Archimedes point from which
 my being will be diverted from its track
 did not excite me at all
 and I preferred to seduce him into the
 common passions of our society
 I hoped he'll give up his smiles gradually
 and enjoy with me the pleasant nonsense which surrounded my life
 various kinds of sorrow and worry included
 And I saw signs for such a transformation
 since he started using one of my after-shaves
 But before that battle of influences was decided
 he chose to vanish back to where he came
 leaving behind him a cloud of sorrow
 since in the meanwhile I'd gotten used to his orange presence
 and to the pure and delicate spirit that moved him
 even when I indulged in the roughest energies
 Many days I'll still be longing
 for the evenings we sank into meditation
 confronting each other with closed eyes
 and between us blooms the Ficus Bonsai
 half tree, half picture, a contradiction of all measures*



METAPHYSICAL REFLECTION 27*by Mordecai Geldman*

Dressed up as people
 delineated with names, addresses, documents, relatives, history
 wrapped like caterpillars in the cocoon of tribal meaning.
 Trapped awake slumbering in collective dream
 but behind the mask--all humaneness and animals
 with memories of heredity and evolution
 and the divine essence from the sweet transparent beginning
 when we were all and all was us
 before each particle was created.
 Expelled from the divine or blossoming from his bosom
 there flowed in the particle the electricity of longing
 to the unmortal whole from which it gushed:
 the divine in his essence was to him as a longing for home
 and/or a longing for the eternal persistence of his new separate being.
 All shall please to cease, longing to return to the divine
 and all ask to be, single and whole and eternal
 similar desires whose tensions of contradictions
 pump tension energy to the endless universes.
 Shall an Indian conclusion be suggested in brackets?
 Dissolve yourself, do not ask to be as God
 and be in him, one, in the wholeness that has no border or restrictions, in God.



Sea of Galilee from Mount of Beatitudes

THE REPUBLIC OF “I”: A Conversation with Amir Or



PM: “Language Says,” as the title of one poem goes. “Language is a wound / from which the world flows...” you write. There is a lot of philosophy, a lot of a consciousness of the classics in that language of yours.

AO: For me poetry always has this magic that talks to the emotions. Poetry is not just making the philosophy of the ideas more beautiful. It comes from a life, something has troubled you, Poetry touches every aspect of life. It’s a wish to know, and so the poem questions. It’s a kind of search. Even love poems are a lack of something. Some of the bigger questions, reality, politics, existence itself – for me poetry is a way to look into these.

PM: There’s always this sense of a larger picture beyond the ego as in “Correction” yet also a sense of the everydayness of things as in “Blue Job.”

AO: And you mentioned before, “Language Says,” – everything is incomplete. We want to be as big, as inclusive as possible, and yet we sometimes take it in the wrong direction. To simply grow more and more can be bad, to step on others. We look to a larger force always, to a God, whatever, that is able to contain everything. The poem tries to do that.

PM: That doubleness brings a sense of irony.

AO: And ambiguity. We need something to transcend the individual. Having your own life is a joy. We want to be everything but we have only one life. Hebrew is a funny language. Life is a plural, lives. It’s never enough. I’m going to be this, we say, I’m going to be that.

PM: In one poem, “Some Say Life,” there’s this mirror that goes back and forth: “what sees me seeing it.”

AO: it’s a funny poem—it tries to say what’s life. The you is actually in the mirror, a reflection of the self, the I. You can’t escape the self. To touch another is never enough: you have to also touch the self.

PM: In “The Barbarians” we become them—things, people, are always inside of us.

AO: I guess they are or we couldn’t understand each other. If You write about another, however distant, you have to be the other. If you write to understand a tree you have to be the tree. If you write to understand a criminal you have to be the criminal, as long as you don’t harm anyone. I think “I” is a republic—we have to take care of its parts. Everyone wakes up as one person, becomes another who eats breakfast, then another who goes to work and so forth.

PM: It’s often said of Shakespeare that he is all his characters, the Cordelias as well as the Macbeth’s and Iagos. My wife keeps telling me we are everyone in our dreams.

AO: The poet has to be everyone, everything, everyplace, has to be many. The family of my parents were all killed in the holocaust and nobody ever talked about what happened in Europe back then. In a way grew up with this kind of repression of part of my heritage. I didn’t go to Germany for many years even though I was invited. I wanted to understand it: I had to come to terms with the whole thing to see it in human terms, just as we said before. It was a distortion I was facing. These people are a lot like us. It’s a question of ethics: the question is how to reveal the self, and how to contain it. Parts of the self maybe want more energy or power. So if this small guy inside says something I’ll have a talk with him. We have to confront our evils, whatever is bad: it’s a wonderful journey, really, a way to learn.

PM: Well that journey takes a lot of forms – formats really—shapes the poems take. What is so apparent in all of them though is a sense of the mind in action, thinking things through within the poem. I think of CK Williams in the US who does that to a similar extent.

AO: Oh yes, they have to do with one another, format and subject. The true poem is a way of understanding. A haiku, for example, ends with an insight that is a resolution. But it is also a way of thinking, a certain kind of tempo—a rhythm of thinking. I couldn’t write the poem if I didn’t have that tempo. That form comes from the content. If you find the right form then you can speak. If I don’t find the tempo I can’t speak. I have to find the right rhythm to think the content.

PM: And as we switch tempo new ideas emerge. That tempo can shift in a poem as the poem twists and turns about a subject, especially in the longer poems like “Poem.” I think of Stevens’ “Ordinary Evening in New Haven” with its “...and yet, and yet.”

AO: “Poem” is like a Prelude, the first of a trilogy. It corners the subject, the self in modern times. The poem tries to discover a reality in modern times that is reliable and relates to anything. The “you” in the poem can be myself, God, another: self and other are combined. It comes to a point here poetry is possible, when poetry is possible and poetry itself is thinking. So yes, it’s a process that goes on.

PM: It’s shifting, protective—it “repeats what is impossible to repeat.” The context keeps changing so there is no real repetition. Poetry doesn’t repeat, it discovers—what it repeats is the impossible that is always changing.

AO: So it deals with the new. In the process of writing you are like a miniature creator—all is new, fresh, and you try to make it coherent. If you come back to it you are not the same writer: the mental location is the same but you have changed.

The next section of the trilogy is the day from the Jewish Prayer book. It’s from morning till the time you go to sleep. You check where you are, how you stand. It’s a journey through the day, but also through a life, examining what we are here for, as a culture. It’s less, then, about how to understand the “I” though “I” is also about these, but more about culture, human life in general.

When I got done I didn’t know if they’d be a third part and then I got to thinking, and the third part is a journey into death through all the joys of life, individual and cultural. So it’s connecting with this larger sense of reality.

PM: The form changes. The Night Scroll is reminiscent of scrolls, fragments, bits of epic.

AO: It has its aspirations, a whole cast of characters, love war, the whole panorama. My grandfather was an idealist: he came to Israel to create a new society. There was always intellectual talk with the people who came to visit him—philosophy, culture, literature. He thought people betrayed the idea of Israel in turning from a socialist ideal which I didn’t share, but nevertheless I took a lot from him,. The epic has him in it. Those scrolls are ancient, but they live on, even fragmented.

Two Poems from Day by Amir Or

Song

*In the journey that doesn't end
 everything and nothing are like waves.
 arriving not-arriving –
 and where am I?
 I have no mouth nor face,
 only a longing and a desert.
 Give me an eye to expel
 the mind into the fire;—
 who I was I don't remember.
 I have no tomorrow, only now
 only you, like a star I won't stop calling out for.
 And I pass like a shadow
 until you rise in the east
 into a world of grey shadows;
 until I'm thawed like the frost
 and burnt in the light
 and I can return to you, saying
 that I'm already here.
 Give me an eye to revive
 a memory that hasn't been erased
 from the soul that crossed
 the whole desert with you,
 from the water to the fire;
 who I was I don't remember.
 Wandering on a camel
 the moon is my witness;
 if it fall and die
 I will bury my face
 between sand and sand.
 Give me an eye to expel
 the mind into the fire,
 and in the midst of what there is
 let me dance empty as a whirlwind
 until we fall here like shadows.
 Let thirst drink from the well
 for it will remain
 like a burning memory
 chiming after us
 that the herd's nearing
 and evening's falling again,
 like a baby to a breast,
 as everything turns to one,
 as night wraps up
 the tent and the heart again.
 And then I too return –
 a sound that has no beginning,
 a song without end, wordless:
 who were you all? I don't remember,
 only a longing and a desert.
 I have no tomorrow, only now,
 no grave, only a star,
 and from that place like hunger*

*I come to the heart that doesn't end
and I break here:
everything and nothing are like waves
arriving not-arriving;
if I have no I then who's inside?
Only a longing and a desert.*

The Temptation

*In the deserted orange grove -
I was playing hide and seek alone
when on the high grass round me
presence fell.
The air was clear, the earth clear:
what could be seen was transparent on the eye
like a movie on a screen.
This was the temptation:
to rub the I against the you,
our thought against its images.
To feel.
We were there before, you remember,
without mother or father, without navel,
marked only by the first cut.
Free of weight, measurement, destruction
we wandered inside each other, dreamt worlds,
lived.
But the stakes were too low,
the risk – only a game.
Desire was action,
instantly complete.
And that's the way, you remember,
we got here too:
by a single desire,
by a glance.
And now we're here, in the viscous air,
rubbing this in, with effort –
every single sensation, every meeting.
Our suns rise and set,
our worlds get old,
but here:
suddenly we find
a new wrinkle in our soul,
and this – is for real. It's real. Finally
we can lose, destroy,
finally we are alive.
For a moment
we can even die.*

Tr. Helena Berg

COMING TOGETHER: A Conversation with Ali Mawassi

PM: As a young poet, tell me what your influences are, and how you began.

AM: At ten years old I wrote my first poem. It was about Rabin, the president of Israel who was killed. He was a general in the army but chose to be a peace man, and this changed the people in my city. before that I read poems of Palestinian writers like Darwish—“Bread of My Mother” was very famous in the Arab world. I wanted to write like them, and still do. I’ve taken a lot of courses in Arabic language and culture. Other writers like Nidaa Khouri have helped me.

PM: You go to school across the border.

AM: The university is very good in Jordan. In Arabic language they have better resources, and about language, art and poetry. I am a Palestinian in Israel so of course I have a number of problems with the government, and I write about this all the time.

PM: There’s an intense lyricism though.

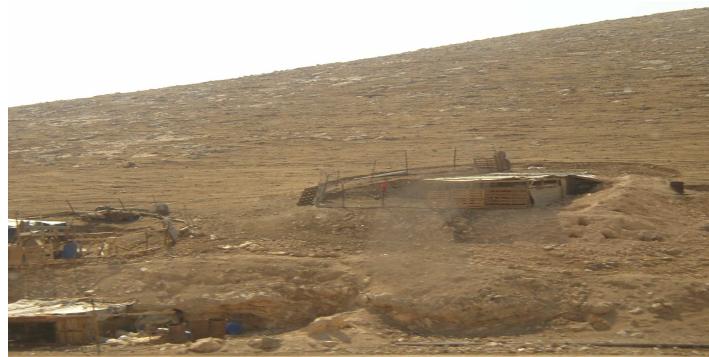
AM: The poem is a way to find out what I think and to say it. I write about Afghanistan, Iraq, the African food crisis, all these very human things. My message to all the world is to change the way we inhabit the world, how we think and act. About refugees and the Palestinian problem, the uprising. I want to write about the children, what happens and will happen to them.

PM: How do you see yourself writing in 5 years.

AM: Of course I hope I am better. I want the poems to be larger, to provide greater emotion, to write in a voice that is true to me. The important thing is to write what I feel, to get the people who read me to be happy, to give the reader a message, my opinions. One poem can make a change by giving us a new idea, showing a new way.

PM: What would you want an American reader of your poems to think?

AM: I want to say that America has a mission in the world to give peace to the world, to bring forth a human ideal. Woodrow Wilson said America should not be in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, but that America should stand for peace. The people of the Middle East do not have a problem with the American people: they have a problem with the American government. I didn’t think many Americans agree with Bush because a democracy always has disagreements. I want to say we must always hope to work together, to give love in all the world, and to find the point where we can come together. I write a poem to the American people to read I want it to say you are a people and we are a people, and you have your culture and we have ours. There is no world culture. We must know each other’s cultures. We are in this world together, and we must be building.



Bedouin Camp



Poets at the Festival came from Romania, Russia, Serbia, Netherlands, Sweden, Japan, Germany, England, the USA and other countries.



ARIC ANNEAR
News of the Tumor
(after Dugan)

The wind kicks ash off my
cigarette and across 4th Street. Spit
welds the filter to my lips.

We're wedded
to the glowing screens in the shop windows.
You and I hang on imitations of the life
we're leading.

The trees on the 4th Street median won't let April
leave, their ardent
limbs claw the wind down to spread it in thick
yellow slices across the sexual air. The shop

will stand on its own for a while. I am still around
to scrape the spring paste from the storefront
windows, after all.

The office is freezing. Every breath of air
is hard and silver, like a scalpel.
I shuffle inside to outside, outside in.
This shouldn't be about me. It isn't.

Cold in the office, warm on the sidewalk.
There's work to be done, more of it now
than ever, but it's all I can do to walk
between April and the paperwork,
waiting for news.

Sleeping on the desk, my dream: you and I
are shovelfuls of ash, the fire
long torn out of it, given to the careless air.

BRIDGETTE BATES
Frost

Frost, first frost, promised
its way to the barn.
Instantaneously waving
across a surface, frost
patches of dropped headlights.

The cornstalks were neglected this time around.
Frost lived around them
through the night,
lit up for the graveyard shift,
a field lit for emergency landings.

Nights blur similar when frost arrives—
the time before people wake and enter
the elevators to the observation deck of landmarks
and point towards their rented beds.

The time before Lear
begged into his miscalculation, frost dividing a kingdom.

There are the sleepless farmers,

the frost packed around the roadside,
the slipping away roadside
whose dotted median blurs
into the apex of the barn.

Sleepwalking undressed into traffic or waking up
and walking half-dressed into sleep.

The barn's loft ladder gated
for the somnambulists to remind
the farmer hay bales are not for sleep.

Below the yard collaged
by frost as if a truck powered

its tread marks across each grass blade,
frost,
and was loading up the waste of cornstalks
before they froze.

JENNIFER WEATHERS

I Have Always Wanted To Write a Poem

about the Burgermeister Meisterburger,
and how this buzz saw friction of the tongue
masquerades as a self-inflicted kiss,
and how I say *Burgermeister Meisterburger*
often and long and at night and even
in the presence of children. If this is sin
or a conscious act of brevity, then why
do you understand this so well?
It is more than the words
themselves though and this
you must acknowledge as one
acknowledges the limits of clay figures
and the literary sins
of Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary.
Are they any less
true for being fake? Let us
consider the origin of sin, and how
the dictionary defines it as in
the sin of Adam, and not Eve,
and we must wonder how
we add sins to our bevy,
like bricks to a house foundation one at a time,
perhaps a syncopated act of being woman,
a requirement for the self-inflicted wound
of owning a vagina
and forgetting to remove it
in the presence of men. Perhaps it is the sound
of *vagina* that drives men mad,
unlike my beloved Burgermeister Meisterburger,
so refined in his clay figure, held tightly
into the form given him, so amenable
to the movements of others and so happy

to be loved in this way. It seems
 that there is no love, after all, in a poem
 about him, and the guidelines of life
 lie unused against my body,
 in the womb of the womb of the womb of
 my unborn great-granddaughters, who will say too,
Burgermeister Meisterburger, alone in their rooms.

PAUL GUEST

My Hell

Is probably different than yours, as we keep
 meeting for the first time, the exquisite
 first, in the magazines aisle
 of the drug store and we never speak
 or even seem to notice each other,
 at least you don't, though I'm dressed
 to be seen, rolled neck to knee
 in duct tape and not because I love pain
 or even like it but philosophically speaking
 what does it matter to add more
 to so much and, anyway, the idea
 is visual, my pale flesh constrained
 by the tape with which people's voices are always blockaded
 in movies, when Fate's day calendar
 suddenly pencils in bank robbery
 or kidnapping or some other distasteful felony—
 but I apologize, this has nothing
 to do with anything, except maybe fear,
 which is everything, the whip to the restive nerve,
 and I'm reminded of horses racing,
 when one's leg explodes like an M-80
 there in the midst of speed
 and if the injury is too grievous
 there in the dirt he's put down
 and everyone in the stands
 must decide whether to weep or applaud
 this newly dead thing
 as though the noise, any noise, could ever be noble
 and this seems like another
 hell, a small one, maybe, conceptually fleeting,
 not the one guttering
 throughout a good chunk of Western civilization,
 not to mention my apple-cheeked
 childhood liberally salted
 with fear, *to taste*, you might say
 in a fit of cleansing pique,
 this hell sold on TV by men
 so powder-white, so gravely coiffed, so wholly lard,
 it was a difficult thing
 not to perversely love all that flash
 flood of magma streaming
 from the vents of their mouths,
 difficult not to itemize so much
 gnashing, wailing, darkness, damnation, et cetera,
 on insurance forms or income
 tax returns or handmade Valentines
 or even the crappy Batman ones I bought you
 here in this hoard
 of condoms and laxatives
 where I come to look on you like another thwarted urge.

KARRI HARRISON

The Soul's Legendary Weight

Yet in his darkness he is now aware of a radiance that streams inextinguishably from the gateway of the Law. Now he has not very long to live. FRANZ KAFKA

Nature teaches me by the sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, etc. that I am not merely lodged in my body as a pilot in a ship, but that I am so closely united to it that I seem to compose with it one whole. RENÉ DESCARTES

We were to admit that at the beginning
birds flew up and away in silhouette
to return at the end in greater numbers.
The landscape heaved dry behind the motel
and there was dust. This

was to be the setting for a shooting gone suicide.
This was to be the scrub and cactus of guilt
or conscience or revenge, the vision
of a generation lost. And hammering on.
Toward loss. That pursuit

of loss endlessly re-entering galaxies afloat in loss
and fragmentation. The faces were not stone.
The necks flared and broke.
Midway, the pale narrator
spoke of numbers, reddened, and deserted

all of them but one. His number: twenty-one.
The number of
the soul's legendary weight
in grams. A final so-called resting place
spans unhindered, this number implies,
for any man
extracted, dumbfounded
from the gate at which he stands in Kafka,
then ungrafted, sweetly, from his body.

Home. Hear it stroking the narrator now—off-screen,
off-stage, off the map, this Voice-of-God—and chanting,
narration cracked but answering in every frame
and cell. Brutality
is lucent in his body's corridors, its orders and accents,

until—explosion and flurry—he removes himself
from himself, and further, from hounds and halos,
his load discharged, the aforementioned landscape revved up
yet barely aware of having plied him,
or what was *in* him, to cut away from
life's irritating chronology.

PAMELA USCHUK
COBBLESTONES

Tram 18 hisses past, clicking
and careening as if it will slip its track
on Studenska Street where we sit
sipping white wine and a pint of good Czech beer
discussing coherence in poetry, the nature
of babel, disinformation and how quickly
everything fades.

Beside the next table shaded
by leaves, two dachshunds with long red fur
stretch out on a beach towel
intimate as lovers near their owners' feet, two
young women, one whose nacre ears are riveted
with silver studs & hoops, the other
shorn close, unadorned as a recruit.
The friends whisper in a language soft
as boiled eggs punctuated by crackling salt.

I love the etiquette of the dogs,
the liquid cinnamon ripple of fur
outlined in licorice, delicate noses
testing air whirling behind each passerby.
They do not bark or whine; never
intrude on the watery laughter
of their mistresses—in Prague
even animals appreciate these moments
of peace, even trees, chestnuts and maple
and beech, even the careful black fly
navigating the rim of my glass.

Hard to imagine Soviet tanks
that cracked cobblestones
in Old Town or Cold War bullet holes pocking
the faces of university buildings
or the ashes of Jan Palacha
and his friends the secret police
could no longer detain in their black Marias
or the smack Nazi boot heels
made marching through the Jewish Ghetto
where children were taught theatre,
drawing and watercolor, taught
poetry before rifle butts
bashed in doors, before
the crazed dogs of hatred mangled
hands, vulnerable
shins, before laughter's teeth were shattered
and even the sky lost its tongue.

Hard to imagine the shape of the next
tyrant or his awful appetite for extermination
when two dachshunds lick
one another's faces undisturbed
by the feet of strangers,
who walk around them, careful
not to twist their ankles
on the uneven cobbles of these civilized streets.

PETER KLINE

Diurnal

This is how it is: I wake up early,
 finish what I began the night before
 and didn't finish – a poem, a pot of tea.
 The rowers echo up from the reservoir.
 Perhaps I stand a moment at the door
 forgetting why I pause. Perhaps I name
 the feeder birds and tomcats, for my pleasure.
 The living things return me to my dream.

This is how it is: among the grim
 and useless goads and parables, I find
 the veiny stomach and the lobed intestine
 of an eaten creature, ant-swarmed on the sand,
 beside a white skiff tucked in the undergrowth.
 That sound? The tireless grinding of my teeth.

GERRY LAFEMINA

On Noting that Penn Station Doesn't Have Constellations

Painted on Its Ceiling

How patient we all are—the businessmen & administrative assistants, the students, the young photographer with a toothpick in her mouth, off-duty cops, & waiters, & who knows who else, all of us: a perfect democracy of patience.
 Long Island Railroad,

Penn Station.

Above us Madison Square Garden where the '94 Rangers won the Stanley Cup & where one old-time hockey fan raised a sign:
Now I can die in peace.

Further up, above the blue seats
 & the Jumbotron scoreboard, early dusk with rain.

Pick your philosophy for what's beyond that—
 remnants of the big bang still cloying
 & physicists seeking proof of strings,
 the next small thing, which, they concede, there's little evidence of
 despite equations & calculations,
 all their programmed algorithms . . .

Here we are

at the outset of the 21st century
 & science still functions on a foundation of faith,
 & the MTA still hasn't figured out how to let us know
 which track the Farmingdale train will leave from;
 so we stand here like figures in Gifford Beal's *A Puff of Smoke*

the steam train never visible
 though porters push large carts of luggage
 as people ascend from an unseen platform
 —are they coming home or arriving in a strange place?

At Rangers games

those of us in the blue seats would mock the fans
 who left early & so catch their trains.

I first saw Beal's painting in '91 & its taken me fourteen years

to write this poem. It's taken me longer to fall in love again.
 So I envy the Latino kid who's able to approach the photographer
 & say, *Excuse me, I mean no disrespect. I just thought you'd like to know
 you're beautiful.* Then, before she can respond,

(he moves on
 & I can't think of the right words—the right metaphor—
 to describe her face at that instant
 though I've no doubt she wishes someone had taken *her*
 snapshot right then. Such a simple joy.
 No one I know has heard of Gifford Beal, although
 many have seen that painting in the Art Institute of Chicago.
 Did he paint himself among its small figures—
 the great manifestation of steam rising behind them?
 If so, which one is he? Did he set up his easel at the depot
 or did he sketch furtively when the right figure
 happened by? & who among us might do the same?

A sign finally comes:

Track 19—

we all shift, lift our bags, begin walking, that woman still
 grinning, &, I imagine, grinning still as the train ascends
 from beneath the East River, deep into Queens, into the unfurled night,
 still grinning, thinking how she's going to tell this story,
 grinning like she'd been waiting for that moment all her life.

WILLIAM PITT ROOT

A GIFT OF STONE

Bending over the pond's surface
 we see ourselves looking up
 out of the sky behind us

where clouds are congregating
 like the faces of ancestors
 in a high memory of wind

while we muse here in silence
 looking into this mirror,
 looking out as we look in.

And when you slip a hand
 down through clouds
 lifting from the bottom

a stone, as a gift for me,
 it becomes a gift from those before
 who reinforce your gaze with

generations of visions
 brought to such a fine focus
 in your eyes, how could I refuse?

A SELECTION OF POETS *FROM* THE OVIDIUS FESTIVAL ON THE BLACK SEA, JUNE 2007



Photo by Terri Harvey

TWO POEMS BY CARMEN FIRAN (Romania)

(second from left in picture above) (*translated by Adam Sorkin*)

between revelation and madness

alone in the dark I chose a word
and repeated it endlessly until it lost

the syllables got tangled together
in a language yet uninvented
mysterious and cold, rough and absurd
or abandoned long time ago

the vowels lost their luster
scalded like sea creatures thrown in a boiling pot
they disintegrated and dropped with a clatter
on the stubborn consonants trying to keep the rhythm

the word became a clod of clay sinking in the ocean
 I kept waiting for its dissolution,
 I watched for the instant it vanished
 and kept repeating it like a transgressor of language
 who cannot control such sinful joy

the sounds came unglued one by one
 plump petals with blood and nails, stellar debris
 floated in the air and stuck at random to ceiling and floor
 to a chair or my clothes,
 my dress filled with fragments of words,
 short vowels with a twisted neck, stubby syllables,
 pompous letters, mountain peaks and clumps of algae,
 an orange accent plopped in muddy waters,
 square verses or angelic corners, diaphanous stencils
 on the edge between revelation and madness

I continued to repeat the same word
 until it was flayed of its flesh
 a phalange pointing at heaven taking it to task
 until the darkness of the beginning
 when all that remains is deafening tumult

the banquet

at the great banquet
 we're served words
 in Chinese porcelain and Bohemian crystal
 everywhere a festive clink, an air of celebration

on the tip of our tongues we try a morsel of treason
 it tastes like rabbit stuffed into the ring around a dove's eye
 on gigantic trays with dragons painted cardinal red
 we're served fear in aspic
 and the guests lean back in their chairs
 with shivers in pleasure and panic

there arrive new kinds of speech, adoration and lamentation
 in thinly sliced words time whines milky in the glasses
 on the table cloth vanity drips from the candle holders
 in orange syllables

there is an art in knowing how to combine the letters
 so as to manage your ego, your cholesterol, your rage
 how to nourish your pride with purple accents
 or to choose what to taste first
 either humility on little plates
 or creamed patience with the sharp tang of Roquefort

we gulp, we quaff, we guzzle down words
 the feast drains our minds, stuffs our souls
 in a far corner history drapes a full-dress cape
 over her bare shoulders



DEPORTATION LETTER by Saviana Stanescu (Romania)

Orlando, Florida.
A house. A window.
Kids shadows in the window.
A birthday party. A kid mouth.
Huge. Demanding. Screaming.
A giant birthday cake.
In the window.
A few cream letters: HAPPY BIRTH
Paper pigeons.
In the backyard.
The trash.
In the moonlight.
Happy garbage, a friendly monster.
Silence.
Emptiness.
Smelling of crumbles and earth.
Recycled emptiness.
Smelling of red, white and blue
Flowers.
AND.
There it is.
There.
A huge shabby suitcase.
And nothing else.
Just the suitcase.
A movement.
The mouth of the suitcase.
Trying to open, to breathe.
Moonlight.
A pregnant suitcase.
A huge belly.
Ready to explode.
Something.
Something is moving inside the suitcase.
Trying to get out.
Mouth open!
A finger. Another finger. A hand.
A right hand.

Holding a cigarette!
In and out. In and out.
In and out. In and out.
The suitcase is breathing.
And smoking.
And smoking.
And smoking.
A hand. Another hand.
An elbow. Another elbow.
A sleeve. Another sleeve.
Red. Red. Why red?
A hat.
A leg. Another leg.
Pants.
Clown pants!
Red. White. Blue.
Stripes. Stars.
The American flag.
On a clown's pants.
This is serious.
The suitcase opens its mouth.
And spits out a grown-up clown.
A clown gets born from that silk belly.
He's crawling.
He gets up on his knees.
He gets up.
He stumbles.
He turns around.
His face is not painted.
He's not funny.
He's not a HE.
He's a SHE.
SHE puts her right hand inside her right pocket.
She takes out a letter.
She studies it.
It looks very official.
She hesitates to open it.
She DOESN'T open it.
She puts it back in her right pocket.
SHE puts her left hand inside her left pocket.
She takes out a blue plastic flower.
She smells it.
She looks at it.
She smiles.
She tosses the flower away.
SHE puts her left hand inside her left pocket.
She takes out a trumpet.
She blows it. No sound.
She studies it. She puts it under her foot.
She stomps on it.
Once, twice, three times.
She stomps and stomps and stomps.
She dances!
She is tired. She stops.
SHE puts her right hand inside her right pocket.
She takes out the letter.
She wants to open it.
She doesn't.
She wants to toss it away.
She doesn't.
She wants to tear it into pieces.
She doesn't.

She takes her hat off and puts the letter in it.
 She walks around trying to find a place to put the hat.
 She puts it down.
 She starts dancing around the hat.
 Sensuously.
 Strip-tease.
 Oh, yeah! Do that again, baby!
 Nobody to say those words.
 She takes her pants off.
 She tosses them away.
 She takes her vest off.
 She tosses it away.
 Sensuously.
 Strip and tease. Strip and tease.
 She wears a red bra.
 And pink underwear.
 With red lace.
 She stops.
 She takes the hat.
 She extracts the letter.
 Like a winning number in a lottery.
 She looks at it.
 She looks at it.
 She wants to open it.
 She stops.
 She closes her eyes.
 She opens it.
 It looks very official.
 Homeland Security.
 She wants to cry.
 She can't.
 She wants to shout.
 She can't.
 She picks her clown clothes up.

One after the other.
 Pants, blouse, vest, bowtie...
 She puts them in the suitcase.
 She closes the suitcase.
 She stomps on it.
 She dances on it!
 She looks damn good.
 In her red bra and pink panties.
 She stops.
 She smiles.
 She takes the suitcase.
 It's heavy.
 She looks at the window.
 She waves good-bye.
 She stumbles.
 She's funny!
 She is confident.
 She is glowing.
 Her shadow is made of light.
 She's multiplying.
 Her sisters are made of light.
 Their right hands.
 Holding letters in the moonlight.
 They are all laughing. No sound.
 A labyrinth of light.
 SHE. Inbetween.
 Lights fade and grow.
 In the middle of the courtyard.
 In the middle of nowhere.
 A rope of light.
 SHE walks on it.
 Step by step. Step after step.
 SHE leaves.



Photo by Terri Harvey

IOANA IERONIM (Romania) (*pictured on previous page facing camera*)

[two poems composed in English, they first appeared in *Escalator* (Bucharest, 2005), used by permission]

THE THRESHOLD

Time and again we are there you and I
to reenact the world's beginning.

Our lives face to face heavy like continents
levitate
two huge wings
now almost at rest
in the quiet that grows unknown voices

Here is our threshold to pass
the doorway of fire and air to sift
all that there is - the two of us
bigger than life
crossing toward one another
At twilight God comes to this house again
his Silence

LONG DISTANCE

morning star hidden in the sky
you hidden in the maze of the city love hidden under stale clothes

only words pale words
messengers of things invisible
that feed them long-distance

but distances are the devil's, they say closeness only is God's

poetry
is the art of distance

or is that closeness?
- what is it that they say?

DOINA URICARIU

The Ant Hill

*Version by Richard Jackson with help from Adam J.
Sorkin*

Loneliness,
a craft with no end,--
journeymen and masons
who don't hesitate to build a wall,
ants building a hill
that exhausts the eyes,
scattered in business,
gathered in exhaustion.

LILIANA URSU

Convent in the Mountains

Tr. Adam J. Sorkin and Tess Gallagher

As evening falls, the nun's black habit
is darkened further by drops
of milk spilled in the morning
as she fed two orphans—a fawn
and a kid under the green darkness
of fir trees beside the shy red
of wild strawberries—pearls
and rubies of goodness
woven now into plain dark cloth
at the foot of a mountain,
sheltering somehow
the entire world.

EASTER IN THE ISLAND OF HVAR

Arian Leka (Albania)

(pictured far left on page 30)

The sea is munching stone eggs
And breaks its dentures on the shore:
Salty islands, poisonous cacti
Rosemary and lament wails
That are past gone, never to return
Brides snatched by the wind
Maids bitten by pirates.

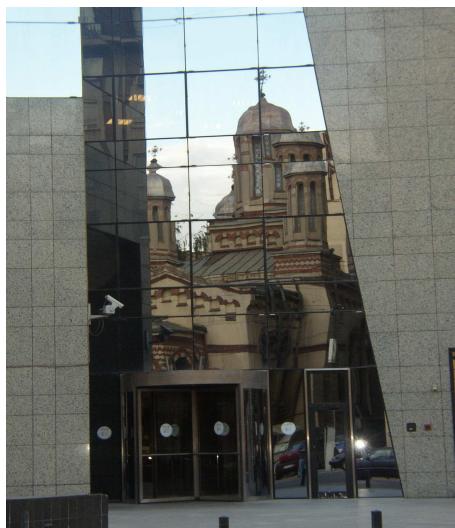
My soul strolls over these waters
That transiently, dreamlike saw me at Easter.
Six chimes - Hallelujah!
The sea cracks stony eggs - agh!
I break the milk tooth
On the glass of sour wine.

The clock strikes six. The people at church.
The sea and I without.

Tr. Robert Elsie



Arian and his wife



Church reflection, Bucharest

ADRIAN SANGEORZAN (Romania) *TRANSYLVANIA FROM THE TRAIN*

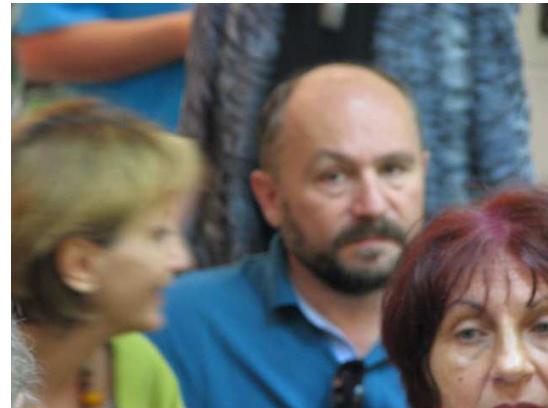
From the railroad Transylvania is seen from the backyards

Pumpkins underneath haystacks
Piles of chopped heads chewing on their seeds.
Still wearing a tie, my father fishing on the river
Greets me with every train car that goes by.
A flock of white geese turns suddenly around
And scare his fish away
"They don't bite like they used to", he tells me.
The window steams up with white frost
I write on it in a language read in reverse on the other side.
The slanted tower of the German church over the apple orchard
The station man at Saschiz is painting the green
In three languages at the same time.

Pubs meant to make you forget what you wanted to say

Stern men seem to conspire
Through the thick smoke of cigarettes
Mute slot machines, tin made casinos
The winners pull the coins out of hollows
Upholstered with history
That does not get revenge in the same life.
Corn and cemeteries on hills
It's raining.
The dead ones slip into each other's arms.

(from *Tattoos on Marble*, translations by author edited by Maurice Edwards)



Adrian

*Photos this page by Terri Harvey
also Photo of Magda Cârneci on next page*

Two Poems BY Magda Cârneci

Tr.Adam J. Sorkin and the poet

As If

as if
through the fissure between faces and clay
names were to trickle out like sand
through cold, alien spaces
into an ocean of blackness
into the void

as if
rivers were to withdraw
into the depths of the eye from which they flowed forth
and the blood of all creatures were to retreat
silently
into the initial drop

we were to fuse myriads upon myriads
each into another and all into one being
who would disintegrate into matter
matter into light
and light into whisper

we were coherence once
now we're a stutter of light, sputters
between two long dying sighs
laser we'll be in light's perfectly tuned faultlessness.

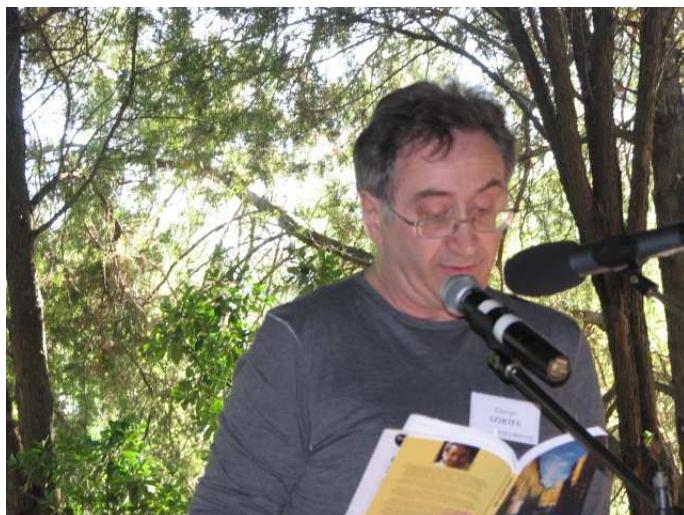


Wheel, Ruby, Vortex

wheel, ruby, vortex,
the luminous snow of your lips guided me through the garden
where I saw no man no woman,
only a shimmer of twilight dawn
swallowed in the end by your never-ending sweetness
a mist among leaves
where in the end there's nobody
only an infinite fragrance
and fingers forgotten on the shore.

will this world be raised above on wings?

GEORGE SZIRTES (UK / HUNGARY)



Esprit d'Escalier

Suddenly there we all were, talking together
but not to each other. It might have been I
who had started it, muttering as I do
to myself, or rather to a figure to whom
I have something to say in the manner known
as *l'esprit de l'escalier*, that ghostly meeting

on the staircase with a person already past meeting
for whom we now have an altogether
brilliant answer, one we have always known
but had failed to produce when required. And now, I
and the others were talking, all of us, to whom
it would finally concern us to talk to, as we do

each day on the bus, knowing just what to do
and to say at this and every other such meeting.
There were friends, fears, ghosts, and past selves whom
each of us had to answer, all of us speaking together
every which one a distinct and separate *I*
in a world where everything has always been known.

The air was packed solid with voices we had once known
or were ours, it was hard to tell which, for how do
you tell the inner from the outer, or distinguish the *I*
from the *not-quite-I*? And soon each intimate meeting
had spilled onto the street, all voices singing together
to make one thundering chorus, each *who* with its *whom*,

in doorways, on staircases, singing to whom-
soever could hear and respond to the known-or-unknown
harmonies we were producing as if we were together.
We were ghosts. We were dead. There was little to do
but to listen and sing and be dead and be meeting
each ghost on its staircase. And so it was I

myself spoke to the dead ones within me since I
was their only voice, the lost hum of their *whom*.

It was crazy this sound, the music of meeting
all of them now, there on the bus, having known
only the steps to the top deck, knowing what to do
only in emergencies when we're all thrown together

and have to make do as we are, no matter with whom
we travel or have known, these voices with their *I*,
their *you*, their singing together at each and every meeting.

LEONARD SCHWARTZ (USA)



Occupational Hazards

Palestinian Transfer

Of olive groves spread out across soft hills the people despair: *everything here has been marked, and everything marked is lost.*

Transfer isn't necessarily a dramatic event.

The telephone just keeps ringing and ringing. Something like a stethoscope against the breast. Clinical.

In this way three children break an afternoon curfew and are mortally wounded.

The current situation calls for a swift and speedy effort to control all forces: not only as freedom struggling with its conqueror, refusing its reification and its perverted image, but as the being of groves spread across the hills, raising their fruits like tiny fists, by some unimaginable patience holding back the punch that would provoke the conqueror further.

The ruined, arid land, the neglected trees, testify that promises nourished from afar didn't create an organism strong enough to withstand the assorted - well, you know all that already. Like a stethoscope against the chest.

To show how and why a non-violent person, like myself, becomes violent. Not that I have become violent.

Uneasy rapprochement, for the sake of others. That explains the contradictory character certain states of mind are charged with, a clap of thunder when no storm is visible.

As for the psychosocial trance I would like to say one last thing about Steven Biko.

Festering wounds ask questions of their father. Like a refrigerator that groans from its own inner cold. The telephone just keeps ringing and ringing.

The 36

It was while the army demolished a neighboring house, belonging to the family of a militant from Islamic Jihad, that the wall fell on the Makadmah family.

Opposition came swiftly from the 36 hidden justices.

There they are, you will have to go a long way around if you want to avoid them.

I would like to stroll within range of your rifle. I'm that angry.

Then an explosion, and the wall fell on the assembled family.

The name might be derived from a root meaning “to come” or “be present”: or possibly from another one meaning “to bruise”.

The last child the father and his neighbors found, scratched but alive.

Beauty is enhanced by this single moment of peace, and his hand, which clutches the rubber ball, and Being never at any time running its course with cause and effect coherence.

That our predicates do not contain untruths but are simply claims gone unfulfilled in our contemporaries and in us. Being-in-the-thick-of-it.

When the building came down I felt a disconnect, a complete loss of apperception, as well as a completely leveled perception of things.

Mountains of night creep away without ever again yielding to barest day.

With ambulances blocked from reaching the scene, Mrs. Makadmah, 41, died while neighbors were carrying her to a clinic.

Her name might be derived from a root meaning “to come” or “be present”, or possibly from another one meaning, “to bruise”.

Expect no trial.

Except in every single action we are engaged in.

Possibly mixed among our neighbors, the 36, hidden and just.

Concentrated within themselves they go unrecognized by their fellow men.

Mrs. Makadmah was known as an excellent cook who often made cakes and cookies for her children.

The Israeli Army expressed regret.

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Essential Services

Essential services in several critical areas, including health, education, water, electricity and law enforcement could no longer be provided.

What good would running to the Occupied Territories have done, what good running away ?

The bridge, much like the airport, the border crossing or any other entry point, is a place of enduring humiliations - homologue to the denial of history.

The fiancée arrived, surrounded by her brothers and sisters, all seven of them.

This quarter 17 killings were carried out that were almost certainly assassinations.

My grandmother and grandfather go to the rail of the boardwalk and look down at the beach.

If you throw even a cursory glance at the past you will observe that in the continuum of colonial control apartheid and peace have never been coextensive.

After his village was razed the Leper approached the soldier cradling his Uzi.

The ocean is becoming rough; my grandmother observes that the waves come slowly, drawing their strength from far back.

With pious and gentle resignation the persecuted ones suffered such intolerance (though later, in the Warsaw Ghetto...)

If the Law is texture, that texture must have changed. Been smoothed out by its “triumphs”.

To cope with interruptions and delays all schools in the West Bank begin to make up classes, when possible, during off days and holidays, as if by the sheer quantity of hours the circumstance could be overwhelmed.

The power of redemption seems to be built into the clockwork of life.

Out of stasis and paralysis, symptomatic of ghettos in general, I decided to run there and not to run there.

A stone mars like a bird Slaughtered
Tahseen Alkhateeb writes from Amman.

Not genocide, not ethnic cleansing: a name has yet to be conceived for what is undergone in these curfewed quarters.

Certainly not “The Question of Settlements”.

The Argentines speak of “the annihilated” but that isn’t it either.

Redemption and its blasted clockwork.

Penelope

She set up a great loom in the main hall, started to weave a fabric with a very fine thread. And every night, when the wooers had fallen asleep, she would unthread that day’s work.

Penelope transfers her strength to the medium of her subjective expression, in order to then subordinate herself to that medium, more than subjective, in the act of destructive defiance.

On the other side: only eight outposts established since 1996 have been completely dismantled. Many see this expansion as positive.

Weaving done in oneself insures that one won’t spill a drop of another. Then one undoes one’s own weaving. This is not just a ruse.

The awesome power of sacrifice. I tracked its meaning, never examining the sources of power that allowed me to make my own tracks, and thus, erasing them in the process.

Every day I would weave my father-in-law’s shroud, and every night by torchlight I would unweave that same web.

At least let her finish her weaving before you possess her. No. The bulldozer kept coming.

I’m no expert but I think I see a problem here.

If Palestine is Penelope, Penelope has already waited more than 54 years.

Odysseus

Other tales there are to tell, almost as sad, said Odysseus.

Words gather inside those exiled from space, those receding into time. Treat the person in whom they gather as if that person were their own sick child. Like parents made magically young in the tending.

You seek a homecoming as sweet as honey, since once every soul and soul-root had its special place in the pleroma. All instantiations of the return prove false. All fixed images of home prove idol.

Yet contagious as laughter or yawning there remains an unfathomable quality that frees language from something like description. Which remains undescribed, tantalizing.

Every day I would weave at the great loom; every night I would tear my work to shreds.

My guiding light, said Penelope, is the Israelites: they waited two millennia.

Under the name Reb Areb the poet Jabes offers: "Jewish solidarity is the impossible passion one stranger can feel for another."

Penelope, calm and straightforward: "death will surely come to the suitors."

He stripped off his rags and revealed himself as who he really was: a seed in the celestial granary, the perfect tension between particularism and universality, the voluptuous pleasure of silence fusing with anger.

Penelope one's waiting, Odysseus one's wandering.

Odysseus always no more than Penelope at her loom, weaving the future.

He her thought now, she thinks, in one guise or another, for more than two millennia.



Ruins of 6thc BCE Greek Colony of Histria on Black Sea

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GOLDEN BOAT TRANSLATION WORKSHOP

Škocjan Slovenia

**(Most of these working versions by Richard Jackson with the authors and Ana Jelnikar,
Workshop Co-Director with Iztok Osojnik)**



The village sits on top of a huge cavern

BARBARA KORUN (Slovenia)

(tr. Richard Jackson)

The Moon Will Cover Me

I have two animals,
red and blue.
When the blue one drinks, the red
races away.
And vice versa.
I can never catch them, torn as I am
between the resting and the
racing one.

I unleash a thought
for bait,
far far out over the plain.
They take no notice,
their snouts sniffing the infinite.
I'll lie down in the grass,
close to a well and
sleep.
The moon will cover me.

In the morning
with the first slant light
they will come.
Tired, sweaty, foam on their snouts.
Then we will go
together
to drink water.

KISS

what word
sleeps on your lips
what one

what scene
glows beneath your eyelids
what one

Which voice
in a shell of sound
is trapped

In a fiery touch
a trembling glint
wings of gold

MY MOTHER

I.

My mother is sleeping. White inside whiteness, with a white face, with white wrinkles, with soft whiteness. White time sheds into white flakes. The moment sips whiteness. The voice slips, slips into silence.

II.

My mother is sleeping. In a white bed, in a white room. White stains of time nibble her face. What should I do with my red heart in a white room? Blood, even before it is sipped, slips into whiteness. Blood pours out, time pours out, into the white of whiteness.



Director Ana Jelnikar, second from right in rear, Barbara Korun at right front, Rina at far right rear

RINA KATAJAVOURI (Finland)

(“*aamupuu, aamumetsä*,” pp. 73-75)
(This version adapted from a working translation by Anselm Hollo)

1.

morning tree,
 morning forest
 your name, the most beautiful greeting

don’t say your name don’t be lazy come close
 don’t smell of leather smell of leather and equine lather

2.

In one day, the Northern Spruce trees had been cut down,
 creating more light, but we moved here because of them,
 we were younger then

A million waxwings just landed in the courtyard’s maples
 every single one seating itself to face the city

3.

do you remember when you walked home from school the maple leaves
 leaning over you the color of rancid butter, the wild grapevine the color of rowanberry wine
 splashing everywhere,
 the crooked fingers of the mountain ash, you straightening them

swallow that orange color now it knocks you out



UNTITLED

(from a literal version supplied by the author)

Mother's got gigantic glasses.
They cover half of her face.
With them she sees if I'm feeling dodgy.
She asks the questions I'm waiting for.
She tucks me in and listens to me.

Mother's eyes even see everything behind her.
With them she sees
that I've touched glass wool
and pulled a plastic bag over my head.

When she takes off her glasses, she shrinks.
She is tired and gives out sighs by the bathtub.
I listen carefully to them.
In them the ocean beats against dark cliffs.



From the bottom one of the Huge Sink Holes

IZTOK OSOJNIK (Slovenia)**A Monologue of a Non-existent Father**

(version using literal by Ana Jelnikar)

I have lived seventy-nine years.
 Now I am a handful of ashes in an urn
 waiting in the dark of the warehouse of the caretaker's firm
 for the funeral.
 I have learnt Latin and Greek,
 got my degree in electrical engineering, specializing in weak current.
 I have invented a number of important gadgets
 and developed many technical terms
 in this complex field.
 I'm leaving a big family behind.
 I haven't suffered a shortage of sons and grandchildren.
 I worked hard and honestly,
 built a few houses, the university centre for medicine,
 and planted a number of trees.
 I was a reticent person
 who didn't push to the front of the line.
 I didn't exaggerate in anything.
 I gave what I did not necessarily need to give.
 I had a clear idea where I was coming from and where I was going.
 I was.
 Now I am nothing.

Wuthering nights

(version using literal by Ana Jelnikar)

You find yourself at the summit of nothing.
 Green moisture from the grass,
 brown spinach of the earth,
 yellow cloud of shredded wind
 on the north slope of your soul.
 You search.
 Jaundiced rock, gust of wind in the street.
 You measure your heart
 fish gills pulled down like blinds.
 The night rocks like an ocean.
 Nothing is something gentle on both slopes.



ALEŠ MUSTAR (Slovenia)

In Search of Inspiration

(edited version using literal provided by the poet Lidija Dimkovska, Mustar's wife)

Loaded with the complete opus
of Shakespeare the Great,
I'm searching for inspiration in a sterile Bucharest park
which is scarred here and there by little Gypsies
mutilated for the sole purpose of
increasing their market value,
by dislodged grandmothers whose grandchildren have stormed West
and forgotten to send in rent and bread money,
and by the display of some more similar atrocities.
Daring pigeons are flying just above my head,
inside it sparrows are shrieking,
an old man to my left and I are turning our heads in unison
to observe sparsely dressed young women,
fledgling dandies in moccasins with laptops on their shoulders,
legless and armless cripples.
*An overdose of inspiration, I say to myself,
you better do a good deed,*
I turn around and talk to the old man,
I feel immense self-satisfaction,
Caritas personified,
I've opened a book of wisdom on two legs,
I keep listening and listening ...
Too many motifs! Too much inspiration!!!
It's as if I'm picking blueberries!



From Kosovel's House. His unpublished collection, *The Golden Boat*, gives the workshop its name.

KETAKI KUSHARI DYSON (UK, writes in Bengali)



TRANSFORMATION

(from a literal version provided by the author)

Forget me,
don't take the trouble to remember me any more.
You knew me but didn't want to know me, understood me but still didn't understand me,
let me near you, but still didn't look into my eyes.

I am that boat you found by chance,
which you had fun riding for a day, fishing,
which you then set adrift in a current without a name
to return home with a net full of fish.

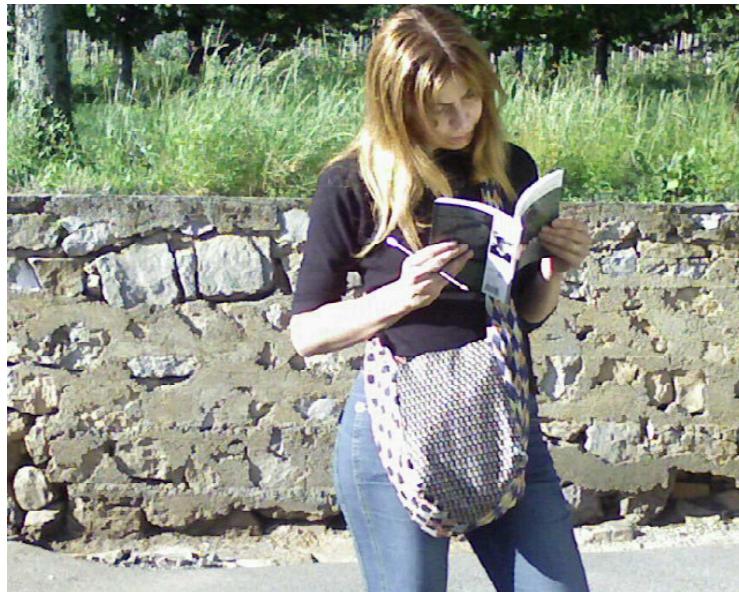
I, a plank, with no one at the helm,
rolling off further and further with the waves,
heard the triumphant merriment of your fish-festival,
the intoxicating drum,
the neighings of vomited exaggerations.

That's fine by me. Your world was so small!
For me it's really much easier to breathe in the open ocean.
I was a boat. Became water. Attained the lightness of being water-vapour.
Becoming a cloud and flying in the -- I learned even that.

Today I am none of you,
just that silent snow
falling unknown to you
in an alien latitude.

Perhaps one day,
who knows, perhaps one day
becoming sharp knives of water
in a torrential downpour,
I'll descend on your drunken fishing village's
barren beaches, barren shameless beaches.

ANTONELLA ANEDDA (Sardinia, Italy)



NOCTURNE

(tr. Richard Jackson)

Sit in front of the window.
 Look out, but accept despair:
 there is truth in the moon that climbs
 yet doesn't rise to shield against sadness
 as it is translated through the sky—
 as I have translated the book that's open against the wall –
 associating the table with my musings
 in an expectation of passion that can't be explained
 and troubles every page turning in the wind
 with the lament of the fir trees, hostile lights.



A working session during the workshop; The English Poet, Jamie McKendrick, is at left.

A NOTE ABOUT THE FESTIVALS

The Sha'ar Festival is held in the fall each year in Tel Aviv and Joppa and includes a program of drama, poetry readings, music and dance with participating writers from around the world. Associated with Helicon Magazine, this is one of the world's major festivals and is aimed at understanding each other's culture, and promoting peace.. It is directed by renowned poet, Amir Or and includes several tours.

The Ovidius Festival is held on the Black sea near where Ovid was exiled and attracts an international cast of authors. In addition to readings, both formal and informal, it also includes a series of panels on issues important to writers and various excursions. Irina Horea is the Festival Director, and Gabriela Visan is Festival Coordinator. Ioana Ieronim organizes the poetry readings.

The Golden Boat Workshop in Slovenia is held every July and includes a select group of international translator poets who work on each other's poems and discuss the larger issues in translation. Directed by Ana Jelnikar and Iztok Osojnik, it is a unique arrangement, and includes readings of the work produced in the local village, Ljubljana, and excursions to literary and nature sites. It is the major catalyst for translation activity in Europe and has spawned several other programs.

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CREATIVE WRITING TRIP TO EUROPE

About a dozen students each May visit literary, historic and cultural sites countries such as Switzerland, Slovenia, Germany, Italy, Croatia, the UK, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Austria, meeting writers, giving readings, and often holding workshops and informal gatherings with students from those countries.

Much of the trip is funded by the University.