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VISION & NIGHTMARE

PRISM *international*

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INTRODUCTION

Early this year we began a solicitation campaign for this issue. We wrote to many established writers, some of whom appeared in this magazine early in their careers, requesting a submission. Our intention was to publish an issue with a selection of foreign writers and a representation of Canadians.

A number of Canadian writers ignored our request. Others apologetically declined but wished us well. Fortunately, a distinguished group responded with work we have published in this issue, along with other fine writers who submitted on their own.

We thank those writers who have supported us—Al Purdy, R.A.D. Ford, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Florence McNeil, Margaret Laurence, Earle Birney, Margaret Atwood, Derk Wynand, George Ryga, Robert Bly, Esther Mürer, Helen Barolini, Jascha Kessler and Yannis Goumas.

This issue presents the work of writers from a multitude of nations and, despite the differing national, political, racial and linguistic origins and traditions, all these writers have transcended whatever cultural constraints may stand in their way. The writers' visions—visions of Mankind's dreams or its nightmares—are presented through individual voices speaking a unique, yet accessible imagery. Enough stars, moons and planets revolve through the works here to make them satellites of one another, however distant and private; and yet, earthbound, with streets and houses, flashing signs and vermin, maintain the commonality of our experience.

MAY 23,1980

I'd been driving all day
arrived home around 6 p.m.
got something to eat and slept an hour
then I went outside
and you know
—the whole world smells of lilacs
the whole damn world

I have grown old
making lists of things I wanted
to do and other lists
of words I wanted to say
and laughed because of the lists
and forgot most of them
—but there was a time
and there was this girl
this girl with violet eyes
and a lot of other people too
because it was some kind of a party
—but I couldn't think of a way
some immediate plan or method
to bathe in that violet glow
with a feeling of being there too
at the first morning of the world
So I jostled her elbow a little
spilled her drink all over
did it again a couple of times
and you know it worked
it got so she winced
every time she saw me coming
but I did get to talk to her
and she smiled reluctantly
a little cautious because

on the basis of observed behaviour
I might be mad
and then she smiled
—altho I've forgotten her name
it's on one of those lists

I have grown old
but these words remain
tell her for me
because it's very important
tell her for me
there will come one May night
of every year that she's alive
when the whole world smells of lilacs

JOURNEY TO THE SEA

Zig-zag on the switchback road
over mountain country
in alpine clarity
trees have eaten their shadows
and many-fingered cactus
stand like prophets
pointing in all directions
to the Promised Land
Then down to the tropics
in a sweatbox heat
and comet-blossoms of flowers
the yellow torch of primavera
a blue one for jacaranda
tents of blue-yellow
as the man-beetle floats down
—floats heavily down
with a pig-squeal of tires
Then a road not on maps
still being built
by prehistoric engineers
I daydream in the heat
of seeing a man waving
a red flag on the road
shouting Turn Back Turn Back
We slosh and dribble
thru thin brown rivers
near half-built bridges
and overturned wheelbarrows
—a crashed airplane at roadside
mashed aluminum bug
the pilot certainly dead
and thinking: how awful to die
reeling down from up there
alloting yourself just seconds
to remember the best things

counting from one to twenty
—eight my love and six my love
and three for yellow primavera
and then forgetting
Washouts and stone slides
where the mountain spared us
by acting a moment before
we came or a moment after
At the world's last corner
a mountain shelf
maybe a thousand feet high
and nothing but space
an empty blue room
—and if there was anywhere
a First Cause
it had hidden itself perfectly
by remaining in plain sight
without intention or design
blue robes and blue sandals
spread out before us
like the altar cloths of heaven
an aching majesty of nothing
while we drink beer

Mexico

THE DEAD POET

I was altered in the placenta
by the dead brother before me
who built a place in the womb
knowing I was coming:
he wrote words on the walls of flesh
painting a woman inside a woman
whispering a faint lullaby
that sings in my blind heart still

The others were lumberjacks
backwoods wrestlers and farmers
their women were meek and mild
nothing of them survives
but an image inside an image
of a cookstove and the kettle boiling
—how else explain myself to myself
where does the song come from?

Now on my wanderings:
at the Alhambra's lyric dazzle
where the Moors built stone poems
a wan white face peering out
—and the shadow in Plato's cave
remembers the small dead one
—at Samarcand in pale blue light
the words came slowly from him
—I recall the music of blood
on the Street of the Silversmiths

Sleep softly spirit of earth
as the days and nights join hands
when everything becomes one thing
wait softly brother
but do not expect it to happen
that great whoop announcing resurrection
expect only a small whisper
of birds nesting and green things growing
and a brief saying of them
and know where the words came from

FATHERS

—for Ron Everson

This year I realized my dead father
was sixty when he died and I am sixty
but it's a year like any other year

(The annuals in our garden
are only two months old
just babies in the arms of earth
our perennial peonies are fifteen years
and fifteen years I've watched them rise
in scarlet jets from earth
—their time is earth-time and the sun's)

He was fifty-eight and suddenly
became an unexpected father
with a look on his face in old snapshots
as if he'd never enjoyed himself much
and two years later he was dead

In 1919 the year after the first war
there must have been several times
when the baby face and old serious one
looked at each other like blank coins
a thought registered a look stamped itself
something now forgotten was interchanged

It seems there should be more
something I can put my finger on
when a spark jumps between connections
a flame wavers from bone to bone
—reach out beyond the tangible
to those dark castaways
flesh of my flesh that dies
that touched and held

FOR BUMPER — WHO CAN'T READ

Growing older it's permissable
to be a bit intolerant
of people
but how can one be intolerant
of a dog with collapsed main sails
for ears and body a bluish pretzel
face a wet diaper
wriggling toward you on his belly
a hairy agnostic holy roller
approaching his god
It's as if your ancient wife
had a baby at age 60
reading up on late pregnancies
attending a class for old mothers
you staring at the little critter
bemused and helpless
brain softening with age
forgetting the names of aunts and cousins
and friends lost in your brain's mazes
trying to find their way back to civilization
Learn tolerance
of bed-wettings and midnight howling
frantic Buchenwald terror
at car travel
My scorn from watching the dog-people
parade their shitty pooches
across my mental lawns
no longer magisterial
It is senescence
decrepitude and dotage
a kind of laughter at yourself:
it is the schizoid heritage
from benches of old lost seas

when a mongrel emerges
from under cedar branches
you'd been sleeping on and decides
in that one instant whether to lick
your hand or bite it off

Lord Pooch
sired by Loudondale's Aristocrat
out of Misty Blue of Pooch's Marbilland
gentry of Pooch's Peerage
blue blood of English manors
where your ancestors gambolled
while mine were stealing sheep
just north of the Scotch border
this dog salutes you

Italo Calvino

Moon and GNAC

The night lasted twenty seconds; and twenty seconds the GNAC. For twenty seconds you could see blue sky laced with black clouds, the golden crescent of a waxing moon made even more evident by a misty halo, and then stars which thickened in their pin-prick brilliance the more you looked at them, all the way to the great dust-cloud of the Milky Way—all this seen in a quick glance since pausing over a detail meant missing the whole because the sky's allotted twenty seconds were soon gone and GNAC went on.

GNAC was part of the ad for SPAAK-COGNAC on the roof-top across the way that lit up for twenty seconds and went off for another twenty, and when it was on there was nothing else: the moon faded, the sky became uniformly black and flat, the stars lost their shine, and cats which ten seconds before had been meowing amorously and moving languidly towards each other along roof peaks and gutters, suddenly, with GNAC, crouched down on the tiles, their fur standing on end in the glaring neon light.

GNAC faced the garret flat where Marcovaldo and his family lived. As each one of the family peered out into the night, he or she was rent by conflicting thoughts. When the night sky prevailed, the almost grown-up Isolina was moved by the moonlight, her heart seemed to burst, and even the faintest croak of radio which reached her from the lower floors was like the strains of some serenade; then on came GNAC and the radio seemed to give out another, more jazz-like rhythm which Isolina wriggled to, stretching within her skimpy dress and thinking of dance halls, all lit up and filled, while she, poor thing, was left behind up there.

Pietruccio and Michelino peered out wide-eyed into the night and conjured up the enveloping, warm fear of being surrounded by forests full of brigands; then GNAC! and they thrust their fingers, thumbs high, towards each other crying, "Hands up! I'm Nembo Kid!" Their mother Domitilla, at each stretch of night would think, "I should get these kids away, this air could be bad for them . . . and that Isolina there at the window at this time of night—it's not right!" But then everything

turned bright and electric again, inside and out, and Domitilla would feel transported, a visitor to some fine home.

As for Marcovaldo's super-developed fifteen year old son, each time GNAC went out Fiorello was able to see through the loop of its letter G into the dimly lit window of the flat across the way, where the moon-colored, neon-colored, night-lighted face of a girl was discernible—her still childish mouth, as he smiled at her, barely opened and seemed just about to smile back, when suddenly from the darkness that pitiless G of the GNAC flashed on again and the contours of the girl's face were lost, transformed into a faint light shadow so that Fiorello never knew if that child-like mouth had answered his smile or not.

In the midst of this tempest of passion, Marcovaldo tried to teach his children the position of the celestial bodies.

"That's the Big Dipper...one two three four stars and there's the handle; that's the Little Dipper, and there's Polaris which shows us the north."

"And what about that other thing—what does that show us?"

"That's a C, and it doesn't have anything to do with the stars. It's the last letter of the word Cognac. The stars mark out the Cardinal points: North, South, East, West. The crescent moon is to the West. Crescent to the West means a waxing moon; crescent to the east, a waning moon."

"Papa, then Cognac is on the wane? The C's curve is to the east!"

"What does that have to do with anything—that's writing put there by the Spaak Company."

"And what company put the moon there?"

"No company put the moon there. It's a satellite and it's always been there."

"If it's always there why does it change?"

"Those are the quarters. We only see a piece of it."

"We only see a piece of the Cognac, too."

"That's because the roof of the building in front of us is higher."

"Higher than the moon?"

And so, everytime GNAC lit up, Marcovaldo's stars were submerged by the world's business, and Isolina's sigh changed to a hummed mambo, and the girl in the attic disappeared behind the cold, glaring ring hiding her answer to the kiss that Fiorello had finally gotten up the courage to send her on his fingertips, and Pietruccio and Michelino played at aerial machine-gunning with their fists in front of their faces: "Ra..ta..ta..ta.." and aimed at the neon lettering which promptly went out when its twenty seconds were up.

"Ra..ta..ta..See that, Papa, did you see me put it out with a single round?" asked Pietruccio. But as soon as the lighting went out so did his warrior's bravado and his eyes filled with sleep.

"Don't I wish it!" his father let slip. "If only it would break to pieces! Then I'd show you the other constellations...Leo the Lion, Gemini the Twins..."

"The Lion!" Michelino got excited. "Wait a second!" He had gotten an idea. He took his sling, loaded it with the pebbles from the supply he always kept in his pocket, and shot them off with all his might towards the GNAC.

They could hear the hail of falling glass scatter on the rooftiles and gutters across from them, then the tinkle of it against a window, then the clink of a stone striking the casing of a headlight and a voice from the street calling up, "It's raining stones! Hey, you guys up there!"

But at the moment of Michelino's shot the neon lettering had just gone off after the usual twenty seconds. So everyone in the garret started counting to themselves: one two three...ten eleven...right up to twenty. At nineteen they held their breath, counted twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two for fear of having counted too fast, but no, nothing happened, GNAC didn't go on again; it was left a barely visible black curlique entwined on its framework support like a vine on an arbor. "Aaaah!" they all shouted and the mantle of heaven spread starry and infinite above them.

Marcovaldo, hand raised about to swat Michelino, felt himself thrust into space. The darkness that now reigned over the roof-tops made a shadowy buffer shutting out the lower world of whirling red, yellow, green lettering, blinking traffic lights, the bright circling paths cut by empty trolleys, and the cone of light spearheaded from the lights of invisible autos. Only a diffused sheen, filmy as smoke, managed to climb upward from this world. Raising his now unblinking gaze upward, a huge prospect of space opened before Marcovaldo, the constellations spread into deep abysses, the firmament wheeled all over the place like an all-containing sphere with no limits, and only one loosened strand in the tapestry, like a rent, opened onto Venus, where she stood alone above the earth's rim, her stilled burst of exploded light concentrated in one point.

Hanging in this sky, the new moon no longer appeared concentrated into a sickle but revealed its true nature of opaque sphere fully illuminated by the slanting rays of a sun lost to the earth but still (as can be observed only on certain early summer nights) retaining its warm color in the moon itself. And Marcovaldo, observing that narrow slice of moon cut there between shadow and light felt a pang of nostalgia similar to the sighting of a beach that had mysteriously remained sunlit in the night. Thus they stood, looking out, the children frightened by the immense consequences of what they had done, Isolina rapt, as if in ecstasy, Fiorello the only one among them to make out the faintly lit window across the way and, in it, finally, the moonlit smile of

the girl.

It was Domitilla who finally came to: "Get along, it's late, what are you all doing looking out? You'll catch something in all this moonlight."

Michelino pointed his sling upwards. "I'll turn off the moon!" But he was snatched up and put to bed.

And so for the rest of that night and all the night after, the neon sign on the roof out front said only SPAAK-CO and from Marcovaldo's garret you could see the universe. Fiorello and the moonlit girl sent each other kisses on their fingertips and perhaps by mute language they might have even managed to fix a meeting.

But on the morning of the second day the slight figures of two electricians in overalls, testing tubes and wires, could be made out among the framework of the neon sign on the opposite roof. With the air of those oldsters who forecast weather, Marcovaldo stuck his nose outside and said, "Tonight's going to be a GNAC night again."

Somebody knocked at the garret door and they opened it to a man with eyeglasses who said, "I beg your pardon. May I take a look from your window? Thank you." And he introduced himself: "Dr. Godifredo, representative of outdoor advertising."

"We're ruined! They'll want us to pay damages," Marcovaldo was thinking to himself, his astronomical raptures a thing of the past, as he chewed out the children with his eyes. "Once he looks out the window he'll realize the stones could have been thrown from here." He tried to fend off disaster. "Well, you know, boys will be boys, they were aiming at some sparrows in the air and I don't know how that Spaak sign got hit. But I've punished them, you know. And how I've punished them! You can be sure they won't do it anymore."

An alert look came over Dr. Godifredo's face. "Actually, I work for Tomawak Cognac, not Spaak. I came to consider the possibility of putting a neon sign on this roof. But go ahead with what you were saying—I'm interested."

That's how, a half hour later, Marcovaldo concluded a deal with Tomawak Cognac, Spaak's chief rival. The children were to use their slingshots against the GNAC each time the lettering was reactivated.

"That should be the final blow," said Dr. Godifredo. And he wasn't wrong: already on the verge of bankruptcy because of heavy advertising expenses, Spaak saw the constant ruin of its best neon sign as a bad omen. The lettering that first said COGAC, then CONAC, then CONC helped spread the idea of Spaak's financial difficulty among its creditors; after a certain point the advertising agency refused to make further repairs until the back bills were met; the unlit sign confirmed the creditors' alarm: Spaak had gone under.

In Marcovaldo's heavens the full moon rounded itself off in all it's splendor.

It was in its last quarter when the electricians returned to climb up to the facing roof. And that night, in firey letters twice as high and as thick as those before, you could read COGNAC TOMAWAK and there was no longer moon, nor firmament, nor heavens, nor night: only COGNAC TOMAWAK, COGNAC TOMAWAK, COGNAC TOMAWAK flashing on and off every two seconds.

The most stricken of all was Fiorello: the moon-girl's flat had disappeared behind an enormous, impenetrable W.

Translated from the Italian by Helen Barolini

A LATE SPRING

The snotty Spring sniffles
At the threshold, thrusting
Pamphlets and broadsides
Under the door, and when

We open it the snow, again
Falling in sloppy great flakes,
Contradicts you. And the wind
Pushes roughly between

Your legs and the light
Is thinned out and hugged
Against the wall. The garbage
Begins to smell in the thaw

And I'm sure the river is over
Its banks. Barely visible
The dawn spreads a stain
Like jealousy while

The prairies drag against the sky,
Colour of a winter rose,
And you stuff love into a corner
With last week's dirty clothes.

OLD GEOGRAPHY

In the humourless geography
Of an old continent we look
For a novel vegetation
In the fog-drenched valleys

From a new world star trek
Search out a formula for
Acceptance, not ghostly foot-steps
Upwards in the jargon of space

From our familiar shore discover
No philosophy to hide
The barrenness of the desert land
Already in our suburbs.

Juan Ramón Jimenez

THE FINAL VOYAGE

....And I shall go. And the birds will remain singing;
and my cottage, with its green tree,
and with its white well.

Every evening, the sky will be blue and silent;
and the bells in the bell-tower will ring,
as this evening they are ringing.

All those who have loved me will die;
and the village will be renewed each year;
and in that corner where my cottage stands
white and in blossom
my spirit wanders nostalgically....

And I shall go; and I shall be alone,
without my home, my green
tree, my white well,
without the blue and silent sky....
And only the birds singing will remain.

Translated from the Spanish by R.A.D. Ford

Eduardo Carranza

VAGUELY A SONNET

It is the hand of smoke which writes
the epitaph of this lovely even.
And it is the face of smoke which smiles
like someone arriving from a fine journey

There is a hint of moon-light in the jasmine.
Like an aroma the valley evaporates.
And between the fingers of distance
the rose of smoke unfolds.

It is the mouth of smoke which is silent.
It is the brow of the smoke which sounds
before my eyes this restless world.

And in the trees the first light sings.
Only my heart is heard, flowing over
the land, rising upwards like smoke.

Translated from the Spanish by R.A.D. Ford

Fray Luis de Leon

SONNET

Now with the dawn my sun of love ascends,
catches her ebon hair within a net
of beauty, shades her slender throat with let
of gold, and her unripe breasts with ivory hands.
Now she complains of my love's trifling,
now turns she to the chaste and holy skies,
raising her lovely hands and raising her eyes,
and now she plays upon her mandolin.
Thus I say, and by my sweet folly borne
away, before my eyes, her image facing,
I see her, and adore in love and shame.
But then she turns within herself, forlorn
and cheated soul, and madness foretasting,
looses her heart and weeps without restraint.

Translated from the Spanish by R.A.D. Ford

BALLAD OF THE HOME

1

He couldn't remember his father's home—
Men come to this world born as men,
But as if marked with sin,
He came to the world...exiled.

He couldn't remember his father's home.
When in Alexandreta, the hammer
In his hand to build a house—his own—
His mother said:
"My son, don't torture yourself,
Placing stone on stone in vain;
All you need is a shack to get by,
It's all the same,
Sooner or later you'll go away..."

His mother was killed, her words survived;
The Turks had reached Alexandreta,
And surrendering the half-built house
To the catastrophe, he left for Lebanon.

2

He couldn't remember his father's home—
But after he became a father,
In Beirut one day he picked up the hammer
To build a house, his own.
This time his wife:
"In vain you make the walls solid,
Dig deep foundations, adorn the pillars;
Don't take the foreigners' land as yours.
Sooner or later you'll go away..."

The poor woman died, her words survived;
Then welcome news of the Return arrived,
And, leaving the half-built house behind,
He went back to his father's land.

3

He couldn't remember his father's home—
Already feeble, shaky and old,
When in Yerevan, he picked up the hammer
To build a house—his own—
Death said to him:
"Old man, heavy with sin,
What more do you want from this fleeting life?
Who cuts stone and mixes mortar
With one foot already in the grave?"

4

But already the old man was painting
The roof, and in front of the new home
On the slopes of Ararat,
The grandson, stammering his first Armenian letters.

Translated from the Armenian by Martin Robbins

AND WHOEVER YOU MIGHT BE

And whoever you might be—even the whore
Whom everyone hates—when you love,
When you're inspired, or pregnant,
You become the Mother of God—or God.

You become clean as dirt or manure
From which flowers bloom—no more manure
Or lowly dirt by "Holy, Holy,"
"Ave," "Glory to God," "Alleluiah."

Seeing a pregnant woman touches me,
I warm to her, admire
The unrelenting apprehension
With which she sees deep into herself,

And hears what, sadly, we can't hear,
Smiling to the one smiling within,
Tearful when there's crying within,
Shaken by the concealed one's shifting—

Like the seven dolls of the old Russian toy,
Inside each one still a doll one smaller—
She carries her baby inside her
And the ones the baby will bear.

I love her crying without any reason,
Fear of the unseen, stir of unknown feelings,
And the goodness, the pure goodness
Of those gods with two hearts.

Translated from the Armenian by Martin Robbins

"SOME BODIES ARE LIKE FLOWERS"

Some bodies are like flowers
some like other bodies,
such fragrent instruments of thirst.

Some bodies are theatres, tragedies
of anxiety and hope.
Some are like snow in early Spring
everytime weaker, muter, and more pale.

Some bodies are like flowers
festivals of Spring that mount the skin

some are dry like Egypt
but jubilous and wet by the river,

some are feverish like the sick
beneath the tyranny of the sun

and whether they come too late, or too early
all will be burned in another body.

"MAY YOU KNOW YOUR OWN LOVELINESS"

May you know your own loveliness
for it is no more elusive
than the rose in my chest
that opens
the morning I leave your house.

JOGGERS

The dawn light puts out the stars
only the night could drive them wild
don't you know!

The stars never sleep alone
in the pain of rotting solitude

their light stirs our wonder
at the overall picture
and we say No! and big No!

to a life comfortable but miserable
a life happy but unpassionate

and if we have to breathe again
we will do it by dancing
not by running.

Jens Bjørneboe

from

"The Witches' Revolution"

An excerpt from *Powderhouse*

I was totally exhausted after the lecture.

Then a howl cut through the room, a familiar voice, not a real wolf howl. The ambassador's wife had risen, white-faced: "You have spit on Lenin!" she shrieked. "You have sneered at my people!"

Things got terribly restless in the hall, and I headed for the door. At the door stood our little general, and all at once I knew how his face looked when he was murdering black girls.

I don't remember exactly what he said, but it too was something about having spit on and sneered at and dishonored a great and mighty, golden and godlike fatherland.

Beside him stood Lefèvre, with his cigarette in his mouth and his drooping mustache. Without taking the cigarette out he said:

"Too bad we don't have a Chinese here too!"

al Assadun was standing on the other side:

"We'll have to order one from the embassy. They have their psychiatric problems there too."

But the general went on, he shook his fists at me and yelled. The little gynaecocide suddenly struck me as dangerous. He yelled that he loved his country and was loyal to his government—unlike certain other people present, who obviously didn't have any fatherland in the first place. And didn't I understand that the US invested both money and young men's lives in saving types like me from communism? At the other end of the hall the ambassador's wife was still howling.

Lefèvre had reached her and was holding her arm while he talked to her. At the same time al Assadun was talking in a soothing and friendly manner to *le général.*

As for me, I left the hall and walked down through the darkness in the garden toward my own place. It was very dark and still, and the evening air was cool and fresh.

When I came into my grape and tomato arbor, I heard the sound of

the brook. Running water and the smell of earth and plants. There were stars in the sky, but no moon.

I walked over to the edge of the brook and looked down into it. I could only just barely see the water moving, but I could hear the brook very well as I stood there.

I no longer thought about the fire under us and the endless cold above us, nor about how thin this crust is which divides the fiery porridge from outer space. I only felt that the night was dark and full of life, of snails and moths, of growing plants, and I knew there were trout and frogs in the brook. Sometimes the frogs here croak all night long, in a great chorus.

There were bats and owls; deer roam the neighboring forests.

The flowers have closed.

From the hospital there was not a sound. All was silence.

Then a great golden tone rose through the night, and it was followed by new tones. The nightingale had begun, and now filled the world with its abnormal voice.

There's something I'm thinking about.

Several years ago in Africa, below the equator. In a small capital city, abandoned by the colonial administration and with buildings more or less in a state of decay as remnants of the colonial rule. I walked around the town alone, and the heat was really tropical. You could recognize the smell of the marketplace long before you got there, and as you reached the market it began to stink like a carnivore's cage. The heat was terrible, and half the people in the square were asleep among the wares, which lay on tables or were stacked behind them. There were people lying and sleeping on their stomachs, straight across a table—with their legs hanging down on one side and their arms on the other.

I've always—ever since I was a child—been very fond of saying hello to people, and here I found others who liked the same thing. We greeted each other with deep bows.

At the harbor I took a ferry across the mouth of the river. It was a simple, roomy, open motorboat, but with an awning over it, so that you could sit partly in the shade.

When I'd sat down, a young woman with a little boy five or six years old came on board. Everybody smiled, everybody said hello.

The boy was naked and dark brown.

She was tall, very black and wore an orange cotton cape which reached from her shoulders to her feet. She was one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen, with a long neck and a firm, round

face. Otherwise I could see only her long, thin fingers, her slender wrists and a little of her feet.

The boy placed himself beside the bench which ran along the deck; it was as if he were waiting for something.

Then she put down her basket, and with a single movement of her hand took off her robe and stood there just as naked as the boy.

The slenderness and suppleness of the tall body went through me like lightning.

Then she folded up her robe into a kind of pillow, put it on the bench and lay down with her head on it. At once the boy bent over her and fastened his mouth to her breast. He was thirsty, and she seemed to go to sleep the minute she stretched out. She lay halfway on her side.

The boy, the five-year-old, stood there all the way over with his back bent to drink, and he drank for ten or fifteen minutes, only moving once: to change breasts.

I often walked through the streets in this town, and I always greeted everybody.

We said:

"Bonjour, mon cher monsieur" and *"Bonsoir, mon cher monsieur!"*.

And there was always the same smile, the same quiet bow.

Since that time great misfortunes have befallen the country, as happens in Africa. And I think about how things were with the mother and the thirsty boy then. First come the ministers, then come the massacres. Finally come the rats.

Then there was another time when I saw someone drink in the same way. A very little girl in a south Italian village, one hot noon on the piazza. She was drinking from the pump, and she was standing in the same position as this boy—with her knees slightly flexed, her back curved, her elbows bent and her hands hanging down like empty mittens. She stood like that and drank and drank with her whole body.

And you could see the water ripple through her. For to slake one's thirst is the greatest of all delights.

This night is eternal. I'm still sitting at the table in my garden, with my shirt open and my pants unbuttoned down to the crotch, so as to enjoy the coolness of the night after a long hot day. It is dark, and a heavy golden-brown moon is slowly rising over the treetops. The night teems with life: growing plants, mating animals. The bats flutter among the trees. The wine decanter stands on the stone table.

Across the terrace in front of me moves a soundless black lump, barely visible in the dark. Slow, sniffing. The hedgehog which always goes alone at night, searching for water. I've put out milk for it, and it knows where the milk is.

What did God intend by the hedgehog? What is nature trying to say by having produced the hedgehog? What does it mean when midway between a dead and sterile lump of matter, a moon which follows its idiotic path in the cosmos, midway between this moon—which we shall also soon poison and syphilize and pollute—midway between it and the flaming hell of seething liquid minerals under us, on a green and living crust of the only life which exists in the cosmos—what does it mean that in the middle of all this a lonely hedgehog goes around in the night sniffing for water?

But this evening the hedgehog is different from usual, and quite rightly: for after it comes another hedgehog, a mate. It's not just a question of water or my saucer of milk tonight; they've come out for the purpose of mating. And how in Jesus Christ's and Allah's name *do hedgehogs copulate?*

I've seen the frogs in the spring, in the clear ice water in the brooks, where they lie clinging to each other for hours, the female on her belly, the male behind her with his forefeet around her. For hours they lie like that in the icy water, utterly motionless. But the *hedgehogs?*

The heat has been intense, and it's a relief to sit like this with my shirt open and my pants unbuttoned all the way to my groin, with only the night and the animals—mice, beetles, snails and hedgehogs—living and mating around me. There's nothing but stillness, nothing exists but a hushed, indefinable murmur which says that something is alive.

And there's also a smell in the night, a smell of something decaying and something alive, of bacteria and mould, of humus which is not yet sterile and destroyed, mould which the earthworms can still live in, snails leave sticky wet tracks on. Something we haven't ruined yet.

And the moon has risen higher now and has changed color: it's reddish and golden, and you can see the mountains on it.

About this moon we know everything. About the whole machinery, the whole insane, mechanical apparatus, the solar system, Andromeda's nebula, ellipses and periods, motions, metals—all this we sit here on our feeble-minded, explosive planet and sail around in, an utterly meaningless, monomaniacal bedlam of a watchmaker's shop. About other solar systems we know everything; but go up to the ambassador's wife who howls her wolf howls and clings to the barred window, go up to the little black-slaying US general—and you'll see that we don't know anything about them.

We know everything about the cosmos, about outer space, but we don't know anything at all about Fontaine, our little Belgian sex murderer.

After this conquest, this assault on the dead, frozen space—after this there must follow a conquest of something else.

We've conquered outer space, but not our neighbor.

And we must conquer him *now*.

For either all is totally insane and meaningless — and ought to go under — or it has a *meaning* and ought to survive.

Conquering Lefèvre will be just as dangerous as conquering outer space, only scarier — but *there* lies the solution to the riddle Because this spiritual torture chamber in the absurd dead space is insane if it has produced us all by itself — us and our scared little consciousness on the little green crust of grass and flowers and life, a tiny little Paradise of moist greenery and oxygen where we, so long as history has existed — between the earth's boiling interior under us and the minus 459.7 degrees above us — have hardly done anything but boil, burn, maim and slaughter each other. It fills me with horror and dread. Our situation between the masses of lava under us and the deadly cold above us is frightening. But we must turn inward, toward Fontaine. If we conquer the cosmos, we must also conquer the general's interior, for there lies the secret. It will be just as dangerous, just as frightening — but there lies the meaning, if there is one.

Meeting *Homo lupus* will produce a greater dread than the Great Dread we have felt of outer space.

I would like to beg everyone for forgiveness.

Not many years ago I could still think: Maria, we are all thy sons, we are all thy children. Today I can't say that any longer; I can only say: *they* are all *my* children.

Ye are all my children, with prisons, madhouses, churches, gallows, schools, with La Morgue and Verdun and Dachau, with witch-burnings and torture chambers and headmen. . . Ye are all my sons, ye are all my children. I think this is God's loneliness. *Mea culpa.*

And I would like to beg everyone for forgiveness.

And in the night two hedgehogs go around sniffing for water before they can mate. And a little black boy still drinks from his mother's breast, and an old man sits on a bench under a tree.

The hedgehogs have found the saucer of milk and are drinking from it, quiet and motionless; for the greatest desire on earth is to slake one's thirst, when one is thirsty — for plants, children and hedgehogs.

All at once I hear something from out in the darkness. It isn't the sound of an animal or bird. It's human footsteps. Cautious, furtive. And they come not from the park, but from my own grape and tomato arbor. A couple of steps at a time, then silence, before I hear yet another couple of stealthy footsteps. I become afraid, because a human being is approaching.

Then there is silence again. For a moment. Then the watchful, almost soundless, careful steps come closer. All at once they become firm and decided, and I see something white between the tomato stalks and the grape vines.

It's the little nurse Christine.

"I didn't want to wake you," she said, "if you were asleep. But then I saw your lamp burning on the table and figured you were still up."

She came all the way over to me and sat down at the table.

I haven't told about Christine. She's very young, only a little over twenty, and she belongs to the type of girls who grow up here in Alsace: slender, with firm, slender limbs, a small waist and straight shoulders. In Northern Italy you have girls of the same Gallic type—a kind of gazelle race. Christine is a nurse, specializing in mental hospitals.

She sat down; she was wearing her white working uniform. I gave her some wine and she drank. Angelo Bevitore.

She, like the hedgehogs, was also out after a warm day to enjoy the cool of the night. It was strange to see the slim brown neck and the long supple brown legs against the chalky white nurse's uniform.

The night around us was replete with life and growth and abundance; the frogs sang in the brook. *"Buon rifrescamento!"* she said. Her mother is Italian.

The two silent hedgehogs crossed my little terrace, two nearly invisible lumps in the dark. They had drunk now. Then they disappeared among the plants to their marital duties.

"It's becoming—that severe, nunlike nurse's uniform of yours," I said; "it functions as a proof that nurses are sexless."

"But I'm not sexless," she said, and took another sip of wine.

We were sitting so close that I had only to stretch out my hand to stick it in under the cloth and feel her breast. She had nothing on underneath, and her nipple was taut and hard. After a moment I withdrew my hand and drank some more wine.

"What happened up there after I left?" I said.

"There was a real fracas; the whole assembly was scandalized by the ambassador's wife and the little American general. The atmosphere in the hall became totally anti-American and anti-Russian. Finally they both left."

We laughed for a minute, then we sat still and took in the smell of dew and earth and of the brook. The moon was higher now. It seemed like a big dead lump out there in space.

"Why did you come to me?" I asked.

She smiled and tilted her head, her thin face with its concave cheeks:

"Because I like you," she said. "It's something about your eyes—something utterly hopeless and utterly despairing. You seem more desperate than any of the patients."

"And so you came here to see if I was asleep?"

"I thought we could make an evening of it," she said.

I took her hand and held it awhile. The moonlight was strong and the shadows very black. I blew out the lamp, it was light enough without it now. The frogs were protecting us. The night was a fortress around us.

When we stood inside my whitewashed room, I lit the lamp by the little desk and put down the manuscript I had used.

"I locked your garden gate from the inside," she said. Then she looked at the desk: "Do you really always have that picture hanging there?"

"Yes," I replied; "it's been hanging there for months, maybe a year."

"It's a dreadful picture," she went on; "a terribe picture!"

We both looked at it.

It's a very coarse black-and-white photograph of a young man who is about to be hanged—a Yugoslav partisan. He's standing on a wooden plank which will be kicked out from under him in a moment; above him is the rude, heavy crossbeam of the gallows. The rope around his neck is very thin, so thin that it must be of wire to bear the weight of his body when the plank is kicked away. But the young man, still with the classic partisan cap on his head, isn't bound, either hand or foot; the only thing is the loathsome thin wire around his neck, fastened to a solid iron hook on the gallows. Behind and around him stand a number of men in uniform, looking at him with a spiteful grin. But all this isn't the main point; the point is that the young condemned man shows not the slightest sign of dread or despair. He stands erect with his feet slightly apart—his arms stretched staight over his head, his fists clenched. He stands there showing not even a sign of anger—only peace, and unending confidence in victory; in the straight arms and the clenched fists there's nothing but an incomprehensible, calm triumph. In a moment his bladder and bowels will empty automatically.

Christine looked at the picture for a long time, then she said:

"It's a marvellous picture, but it's terrible."

"It's the most beautiful picture I know," I said.

"Why do you have it over the desk?"

Christine looked at me with the strange, slightly sorrowful look which she almost always has.

"I have it there to be sure that everything I enter in the protocol will bear being read by him," I replied.

"You let him read it first?"

"Yes. I want what I write down to be true. Therefore he reads it first."

"How long have you had it hanging like that?"

"At least a year here. But I also had it up where I lived before. And it hangs on the other wall too—over there." She turned and caught sight of the same picture on the opposite wall.

"Doesn't it drive you crazy?" she said.

"Yes," I said.

We ate a piece of bread and cheese, then I undressed and lay down.

She took off the white uniform and was brown and strong with her thin, straight shoulders. Then she sat on the edge of the bed and bent

over me, offered one breast to my mouth. I lay perfectly still and did as she wished.

"Turn over," she said, and I rolled over on my stomach.

As I lay thus, she kissed me all over my back—but shiftingly, so that I never knew where the next kiss would come. It created a strange and almost childlike tension, and I lay there without moving.

"Turn over again," she commanded, and I lay on my back.

As she bestrode me I saw that she was glistening wet all the way down to her knees, and when I was inside her she slowly drew her own legs together and lay forward, on top of me. We lay like that without moving, I only felt her head on my shoulder and some of her fine, sandy hair in my face. She had both hands around my head, and I put mine around her shoulders.

We lay like that for a long time, almost without stirring. And around us was the night, the Alsation night full of insects, frogs, hedgehogs and snails and growing plants, full of scents and of grapevines and high treetops.

My walls no longer bleed in here. I have no dread of the empty space over us or of the fire under us. For I know that all, all has a meaning—not just the hedgehog who sniffs after water, and not just the flowers which have closed. I know that there's a meaning in lying thus and being among those who live in this night. And when I notice that she was fully satisfied and her body relaxed and soft, I let her slide down beside me with her head in my armpit. She was utterly still, she just lay there beside me, but she stroked my head a couple times. The thin body was moist with sweat.

I caressed her too, over her neck and shoulder. Her eyelashes were wet.

"Do you want to sleep here tonight?" I said.

She opened her moist eyes and smiled.

"No," she said, "I have to go on duty early tomorrow."

When I saw her up to La Poudrière we didn't go by the gravel path, but walked barefoot across the dewy lawns. Hand in hand.

"Will you come back to me again?" I said.

"Yes," she said. "As often as you like."

All at once we both stopped and stood still in the grass. We had heard people. And they were coming closer. Out of the big clump of trees—"the woods," as we call it— came two people. They walked quickly over to the garden path and up toward the light in front of the main door. There was no mistaking who they were.

The ambassador's wife and *le général* had been out sniffing for water.

Translated from the Norwegian by Esther Mürer

Florence McNeil

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

F. Scott Fitzgerald
reeling in a sea
of champagne of black ink
so enchanted with his own image in
the pool
that he jumped in
to embrace himself
staggered through the twenties
redolent with words and
adulation
on his lawns the doomed people
waltzed in transparent
flame
the men hair silky as their smiles
the women in their rippled chiffon
teeth glittering in the suspended moonlight
and the moon a tipped champagne bottle
splashed their pointed fingernails
and oh they were brittle oh they were strung
taut as spun gold
ready to break in the leather bedroom of a
rumble seat or a divan with peacock eyes
and so they waltzed on and on
out of the twenties
Until the day Fitzgerald stepped out
from the bathing lani the change-house
still in is silver swim suit his towel caped over
his shoulder
his head with a tentative ache
and passing through the silent roses the sweet peas
and the canopy where the ice cream people had all
melted away
he placed his hand distractedly over his brow
and wondered who had drained the swimming pool
and why the party moved on somewhere else.

IN MEMORIAM F.M. DOSTOYEVSKY

Bow down. (Prostrates himself.)
Stand up. (Gets up.)
Remove your shirt and trousers.
(Takes them off.)
Look me in the eye.
(Turns away. Looks into the eyes.)
Get dressed.
(Puts his clothes on.)

STAVROGIN'S FAREWELL

"I'm bored. My cape, please.
Before you commit anything,
consider the rose garden,
a single rose bush rather,
or one rose, gentlemen."

STAVROGIN'S RETURN

"You have not considered the rose garden,
and you've committed what is forbidden.

"From now on you shall be persecuted
and solitary, like the butterfly hunter.
Get under the glass, all of you.

"Under the glass, pinned by the point of the needle,
shining, a bivouac of butterflies shining.
You are shining, gentlemen.

"I'm frightened. My cape, please."

Translated from the Hungarian by Jascha Kessler

AT COLONNUS

I live far from the Aeropagus, the schools.
Fallen architect of the heavens.
See, child, it doesn't rain at home.
The soul doesn't hear the trickling sap.
Sweaty slain-eyed sheep
Vermin-ridden olive tree
And from sunken palaces
The breasts that fed us, which I kissed.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

EMBRACE

Before I die I want to see you naked
Shaking like the demon with the uppish stalk
Who saw his red mare stabbed to death.

SEASONS

In the snow, they say. On cold stony ground.
Afterwards, his mouth bleeding,
He made a woman of her again and again.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

I SAW THE MOON

I saw the moon, a pregnant girl.
I saw the pearly-toothed moon
Digging the earth with its foot.
So went another winter.

FLORA

"O precious, precious verdant girls
With red skirts and golden rings
Smelling of green soap and ink.
At dawn your mothers take you to be circumcized
Through these dusty footpaths."

So lamented the cypress trees.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

TWO DEPICTIONS ON A TOMBSTONE

—I mourn you, my girl.
—Not me.
My red pigtails.

—The sparrows seek crumbs.
—Not they.
The hungry, stony winter.

SONG OF MÁNI

He met his death and deliverance
The hero, the blessed lad
Who was to bring the spoils of virtue.
I'm told the moon torments him
With a maelstrom of sea numerals.
And in the likeness of the meek he is sorely grieved.
Come, full-breasted woman,
Cherish the kid of death.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

Alexandros Panagoulis

THE PAINT

I made the walls come alive
I gave them a voice
they became my mates
And the turnkeys demanded
to know where I found the paint

The walls were mute
no secret betrayed
the mercenaries searched minutely
But they found no paint

Not for one moment did they think
to search my veins

Translated from the Greek by Gary N. Sea

THE CELLAR OF THE MURDERER'S GRANDFATHER

In the cellar of the murderer's grandfather there is a window-like opening through which the daylight shines; people frequently peer through it, but they see nothing.

Frequently, too, the murderer's grandfather peers out through the opening; then he sees the vegetable garden and a bit of the field.

In the cellar of the murderer's grandfather there are the remains of an egyptian collection and several shelves of wine bottles.

The cellar of the murderer's grandfather is a cellar which one cannot see into, but from which one can see out.

The murderer's grandfather takes off his slippers and puts on frog-green rubber boots.

He tramps through the vegetable garden in order to erase his grandson's red tracks.

On the field, there is a field-guard's hut which is joined to the cellar of the murderer's grandfather by a subterranean passage.

The remains of the murderer's grandfather's egyptian collection come from the holdings of the murderer's grandfather's grandfather; there is a heap of scarabs behind dusty glass.

In the subterranean passage between the cellar of the murderer's grandfather and the field-guard's hut on the field, there is saltpeter, soaked-up puddles of urine, white spiders, nearly white woodlice and a crumpled search-warrant completely softened by the earth's moisture.

The grandson of the murderer's grandfather is the murderer, he should have several people on his conscience, but in fact he does not, for he is without conscience, a thing which strikes him as worthless.

In the cellar, the murderer's grandfather is engaged in enumerating the remains of his grandfather's egyptian collection.

The grandson of the murderer's grandfather brushes off his coat, washes his hands and remains stubbornly silent.

The thinitian period lies between 2850 and 2650, the cellar of the murderer's grandfather lies about two yards beneath groundlevel, the murderer's victims lie in dark suits, a rash word lies on the tongue of the murderer's grandfather.

A rat.

Civilization provides us with jackets, pants, shoes; the press provides us with headlines, funny jokes, advertisements; history provides us with news from dark antiquity, vague forebodings, ambiguities.

The murderer's grandfather blows the thick dust from the surface of the glass case; the electric light glows behind a wide-meshed wire grating.

Now the moon is rising!

In the railway station, travellers and a ticket-collector alight; it is already very quiet in the dark avenue, the crunching gravel is heard only now and again.

The cellar of the murderer's grandfather is a solid-walled cellar; red brick, by no means porous, a concrete floor, properly swept as of this day, the panes of the glass case polished, the collection with the remains visible thanks to excellent lighting—the muderer's grandfather broods over the idea of having conducted evening tours.

Translated from the German by Derk Wynand

HOMAGE TO DR. DEMETRIUS GAVRYSKY

Hush, I see a light! Someone appears to be trespassing in the abandoned pavilion. That's it! Long ago, what did I tell you?

When I bought the nightingale, I thought it was a male, but it turned out that I'd bought a female.

The american woman had just left the room when her darling little daughter ran in, crying loudly because she'd lost her little lantern.

Count Igor's key was in his pocket; he gave it to the little girl, who dried her tears and ran from the pavilion.

A cloud of smoke now covers the tip of the pagoda-like tower; when the ladies saw the burglar in the building's window, they were completely drained of courage, they could not take a step for fear and gave him all their belongings.

On the garden path, I met the two musicians from the same band that I had heard yesterday.

Last night, they said, we could get no sleep and tossed and turned from side to side in bed.

For the sake of order, I keep a daily record of my expenses and income, and thus find that year by year my fortune increases.

Last winter, the count was in St. Petersburg four times to buy icons; the trains that go there have *wagon-lits* and are very fast.

The tall smokestacks of the suburbs gradually faded from my sight, by the snow-covered bridge spanning the frozen river, I saw the willows in the hoarfrost of morning light.

The perverse count's purchased icons are so old that it's hard to make out whom they depict.

The pavilion beds are already so old and rotten that they must soon be replaced by modern ones; a single nightingale hardly makes a good morning.

The mythical city: is it located on the banks of the Neva or on the banks of the Duna? The capital of the English is located at the mouth of the Thames, the clouds above which now cover the sky, the winter sun is not to be seen.

I sort my coins and banknotes in a secret hiding-place in the country, whereby a lady watches me without my knowledge.

Your knife, my dear, is sharper than mine; it is the sharpest in this abandoned pavilion on which the winter sun is rising again.

Who threw that cute little girl into the cobwebs, gospodin?

The american woman sells herself to the wicked count for a quick glimpse at his rare icons; by night, her moaning sounds from the oak at the edge of the garden.

Note by note, he threw the piece of popular music into the wintery river, he delivered it up to the relentless cold, let it dance naked over the sparkling ice.

I picture myself hovering in a cloud of smoke above the two little pavilion towers, becoming aware of the movements inside it, following its mouldy and sweet smells with my nose.

The metal arteries of the railway trestle, a thundering from the direction of the metropolis, the passengers' fluttering handkerchiefs, the mysteries of the sleeping-cars in the light of the moons shooting by.

Do you know the tallest mountain ranges? I believe they are the yearnings of human beings. . .

Count Igor eats more partridge than hare; as far as I know, one feels himself observed by the uncanny eyes of his wild icons.

Hush, the american woman and her little daughter are leaving the sultry parlour of the counts, voyvods, boyars and vlads; that's it! Didn't I suspect it a long time ago?

Translated from the German by Derk Wynand

Summer Screen

CHARACTERS

REGGIE FISHER:	American, an accountant, about 30.
SALLY:	American, his wife, a school teacher, about 26.
JIM:	American, a family friend, a law student, about 30.
STARDUST:	Trinidadian, a bar fly, about 55.
A DANCER:	Female.

ALL CHARACTERS ARE BLACK

SCENE 1: SUN

MUSIC: In the theatre, the dark is performed by the sound of jazz whispering to the audience: a combo mothered by an extraordinary saxophone, superlative, bubbling with fluency, rich, driving, liquid, full-bodied notes like sweet grapes falling to the earth. "It's Sandy at the Beach", Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan. Carnegie Hall Concert Volume 2. CTI Records, 6055 S 1.

LIGHTING: A blinding Circle of Sun slowly comes into a hot and red being.

CHOREOGRAPHY: Across the Sun's face, the shadow of a softly-curved female figure curls, twists and turns. Her face cannot be seen: only her sensuous silhouette. Like a tree in a soft wind she dances with the male Sun, until they embrace and disappear on a bed of music in hot dark love. Then there is silence.

TIME: A day in 1965, about six o'clock in the evening.

PLACE: New York. Mid-Manhattan forested with apartments.

(The living room of an above-average, though not typically middle-class Black couple. Part of a concrete landscape is visible through the window at BACK. REGGIE *enters carrying a hammer and a screen for the window. He climbs up on a chair to nail it on.* SALLY, *in underwear only, enters mending a sunsuit)*

SALLY: Christ...
REGGIE: What?
SALLY: Needle got my finger. See the scissors?
REGGIE: Bathroom.
(She exits and returns in a few minutes)
SALLY: So you got the screen.
REGGIE: Let some air in.
SALLY: OOOoooohhhhh....hot....hot....hot....
REGGIE: You shouldn't stand in front of the window like that. Anybody could see you from outside.
SALLY: Nobody could see me through a screen.
REGGIE: It's not up yet.
(*Pause*)
SALLY: Reminds me of that tree when we first moved in here...when we were first married. Remember?
REGGIE: What tree?
MUSIC: "Solitude" Ellington Indigos. Columbia CS 8053. This selection will be referred to in future references as "Sally's Music"
SALLY: What tree??? It used to grow right outside this window! Big branches. Thick with green leaves. It was summer. Sometimes we used to spend all day in bed. Then we'd walk around without any clothes on because of the heat. Nobody could see us because of the tree...
REGGIE: It was dying. They cut it down. Only concrete and the smell of gas fumes from cars out there now.
SALLY: You remember those days? When we were first married.
REGGIE: That should stay up without another nail. You have a real screen up here now.
(*She puts on the brief sunsuit.*)
SALLY: Wish I didn't have to wear any clothes at all. OOoohhhhhh... the heat's gone right into my bloodstream...deep in my veins...I can feel it...
REGGIE: What's the time?
SALLY: Going on six.
REGGIE: Should be here soon.
SALLY: Talking about when we were first married reminds me of Eddie Baxter. Poor kid.
REGGIE: Yeah.
SALLY: We used to listen to him playing "Body and Soul" all day...all night sometimes....
MUSIC: Fade Sally's theme
REGGIE: It was listening to genius.
SALLY: That night at Carnegie when they introduced him as the Black Keats of the tenor saxophone, God! The applause went on for fifteen minutes! I didn't even know I was crying....

REGGIE: You feel things too deep in yourself.

SALLY: Princess Margaret was in the audience. She's supposed to be a big fan of his. Maybe we could try to get her to help him now.

REGGIE: No. We can't.

SALLY: Who can stop me from writing to the British government, or Buckingham Palace, or some place?

REGGIE: What about the race track? The British Royal Family spends a lot of time and taxpayers' money there. Setting an example.

SALLY: Why not try that angle for help?

REGGIE: I wonder if you could really do that?

SALLY: Anything I want to.

REGGIE: They usually don't let people like her get involved in things. Can't take sides. You know? Except on a horse race.

SALLY: Who's they?

REGGIE: How would I know? I'm not the king.

SALLY: We can't go too high for Eddie Baxter.

REGGIE: The other night on the news, somebody said that judging from where he is now at 19, he's going to be more famous than Stokley or Malcolm—regardless of what happens.

SALLY: What did they mean—regardless?

REGGIE: Well. . . suppose. . . .

SALLY: Suppose nothing.

REGGIE: We're in this alone.

SALLY: You and I were always alone against the world. Ever since we got married.

REGGIE: Don't underestimate the people we're fighting.

SALLY: They shouldn't underestimate me.

REGGIE: The orange juice cold yet?

SALLY: No. We still have a few beers left over from Sunday. This sunsuit looking alright?

REGGIE: Yeah.

SALLY: You remember it? I bought it the Saturday we got engaged. Haven't worn it since that afternoon. . . the first time. . . in the park. . .

REGGIE: I remember.

SALLY: Feels tight around my hips now. . . around my breasts too. . .

(*The apartment bell rings*)

REGGIE: He's here.

SALLY: Where does the time fly?

REGGIE: Come in, Jim.

(*Enter* JIM *and* STARDUST)

SALLY: Who is that?

STARDUST: Stardust in the Twilight! Heh! Heh! Heh!

SALLY: Whoever you are, you'd better sit down before you fall down.

JIM: This is Stardust. He's from Trinidad. He likes a little drop now and then—mostly now, know what I mean?

REGGIE: We better get him to a chair.

MUSIC: "Valdez," Donny Hathaway. Newport in New York. BDS 5616.

(STARDUST *is as comically drunk as universal chaos. He is a portrait in disorder. He is floating on the wings of liquor. He weaves a falling, stumbling, zigzag choreographic pattern as he tries to cross to a chair. He moves in perilous circles and hazardous squares. To make matters worse, he is hearing the music and tries to dance. His comical choreography is extended as much as possible*)

SALLY: In his condition, staying on his feet is the bottom line. He's trying to dance?

REGGIE: Take this chair. Quick!

SALLY: What did you have in mind?

JIM: Extra help for us.

SALLY: I've heard of miracles. But you're imposing on God.

JIM: Stardust, this is Reggie and his wife, Sally.

SALLY: Glad to meet you—I hope.

STARDUST: Is my pleasure man. I like your dress, darling.

SALLY: Sunsuit.

STARDUST: It fitting you just tight enough. . . .

JIM: He's got all kinds of contacts in almost every bar in Harlem and Brooklyn.

SALLY: I could tell that as soon as he walked in here.

REGGIE: Can you circulate a petition?

STARDUST: Circulate a who? That is what kind of drink?

JIM: I didn't tell him anything.

SALLY: A good place to start.

STARDUST: Is a hot day today, eh? A cold drink would come in handy.

SALLY: Can I offer you a cold drink?

STARDUST: No, but a hot one like rum would do. (*To audience*) That was my trap question when I want a shot.

JIM: Saw the judge today. He still wants to help.

STARDUST: Be careful. Who in trouble? I is a West Indian. My immigration papers ain't fixed up yet. Soon as you say judge, I gone like the A train.

SALLY: Somebody should tell him something—if that will make any difference.

REGGIE: You ever heard of Eddie Baxter?

STARDUST: What bar?

REGGIE: No. No. He's a jazz musician.

STARDUST: Oh. . . *that* Eddie Baxter. Why you didn't say so?

REGGIE: You know anything about jazz?

STARDUST: You looking at me, a West Indian living in Brooklyn, near the Eastern Parkway, for twenty-five years now, and asking me if I know anything about jazz?

REGGIE: Sorry. . . I. . . .

STARDUST: Look man, when it comes to jazz, is something I eat, breathe and live. Is my very soul you talking about. I could tell Eddie Baxter's trumpet in my sleep. . . .

SALLY: Really? He plays a saxophone.

STARDUST: Eh? Oh. . . I was just going to say—you ever hear how he does make that trumpet sound like a saxophone. You could add a little rum to this rum lady? You go ahead son. (*To audience*) She almost trap me back there.

REGGIE: Eddie Baxter is only 19 years old. But he's already greater than Lester Young, Hawkins, Johnny Hodges, Cannonball, Coltrane. He's genius.

STARDUST: Who could doubt he's the greatest trombone player in jazz today?

SALLY: Saxophone.

REGGIE: But he's going to be destroyed.

STARDUST: Oppression must stop!

REGGIE: Three months ago some white cops arrested him for pushing heroin. . .

STARDUST: They lie! He would never do that!

REGGIE: He pleaded guilty. . . .

STARDUST: The honesty of Black people!

REGGIE: And he was convicted by the judge. . . .

STARDUST: White oppressor!

REGGIE: . . . who was Black.

REGGIE: Traitor!

REGGIE: It's his first offense, but they can give him the full sentence—15 years. That's what the prosecutor is asking for. He's white.

STARDUST: I knew it. You could spare a next drink?

REGGIE: The judge has suspended sentence. . . .

STARDUST: A proud, noble and outstanding black man trying to do his best for his race.

REGGIE: . . . to consider if he should or shouldn't give him the full 15 years.

STARDST: Injustice! Injustice! Injustice!

JIM: Postponing his decision gave us enough time to start a campaign to save Eddie Baxter. . . .

STARDUST: Black Unity. I always telling them West Indians in Brooklyn the same thing. You have another ice cube? I does like my drinks chilled in this weather.

JIM: The more character references and good testimony for Eddie we can get from the public, the better plea we can make for clemency. . .

STARDUST: Give me clemency or give me mercy! Somebody famous in this country say that. . . .

JIM: . . . and the more help we get, the easier it is for the judge to reduce the sentence. We need thousands of signatures. You can help by circulating our petition in the bars.

STARDUST: Give me either one. The circulation or the petition. I will circulate like I gone mad!

JIM: That's why I'm going to be a lawyer. Because one white prosecutor hates Black people, we can't sit down and let a young genius like Eddie Baxter waste fifteen years of his life. . .

STARDUST: I say prevent the waste of a clarinet player!

SALLY: Saxophone.

JIM: If the white prosecutor succeeds, Eddie will be 34 by the time he comes out of jail. He needs constant practice now, swinging with the best sidemen in the business. That's how geniuses like him grow.

STARDUST: But of course. Growth and freedom go together.

JIM: The judge is going to sentence him in a week. And we're stuck. I've been walking the hot sidewalks uptown and downtown in the mornings and in the evenings, before work, after work, during my lunch hours. . . .

REGGIE: I've sat in the office of everybody who's anybody in New York. Hundreds of appointments. . . .

SALLY: And I've been putting in about 18 hours each day on the telephone. My ear is sore from hearing "No I can't help you." And my fingers hurt from dialing.

JIM: Jazz is dead. And nobody cares.

SALLY: The judge wants to help, but the Whites are against us. Eddie said loud and clear that his music was for Black people. He didn't want it stolen by White musicians.

REGGIE: They don't like being called thieves by a Black teenager.

SALLY: Now they have him trapped. Pushing heroin is really bad.

JIM: It's criminal to push heroin, but that prosecutor Lewis Evans, he's acting for a lot of whites who can't do the job themselves. That's why we can't get support.

REGGIE: We've been turned down by the Governor, the mayor, the conductor of the Symphony Orchestra, the two Chambers of Commerce, the quarterback of the football team, the presidents of three universities, ten television personalities. . . .

SALLY: So we have to change strategy.

REGGIE: Now we're going to follow Sally's idea. We want grass roots support. Signatures on petitions from poor ordinary Black men and women on the streets.

SALLY: The thousands of ordinary Black people in Harlem and Brooklyn. Nobody ever hears about them.

STARDUST: Right! Power to poor people!

JIM: That's where you come in, Stardust.

STARDUST: Eh? Is where that is? My immigration papers ain't. . . .

JIM: They know him in every Black bar in Brooklyn and Harlem. In fact, that's how I found him this evening. I just followed his trail. They not only knew he was there. They even knew where he would be next. When he's through with Brooklyn, he takes the GG train to Manhattan, and the uptown train to Harlem.

STARDUST: I don't use tokens. A fella from Jamaica give me a whole set of slugs. You just drop one in and walk in like if you is a priest.

JIM: He hasn't bought a drink for himself since he came to New York.

STARDUST: Buying your own drinks is a waste of money.

JIM: As soon as he enters a bar, he gives his password. . . .

STARDUST: "STARDUST IN THE TWILIGHT". Heh! Heh! Heh!

JIM: . . . which makes him the most popular man in Brooklyn and Harlem.

STARDUST: On a Black per-capita basis.

REGGIE: You're just what we need.

SALLY: We hope.

JIM: They wouldn't trust you or me, but he's one of them.

REGGIE: If we gave you a petition and you took it on your daily rounds from bar to bar for a whole week, how many people can you get to sign it?

STARDUST: One thousand in round figures.

SALLY: You???? A thousand?????

JIM: I woudn't doubt it.

STARDUST: Is a conservative estimate. I included out those who ain't know how to sign. And some of the boys does work with cheques. They have to pretend they can't write. That cut the number in half—automatic.

SALLY: Wait. We can do better than that. Those who can't write, can march. A poor people's march to save Eddie Baxter.

JIM: Damn good idea.

STARDUST: Is a excellent idea.

SALLY: It should have all the Black rejects, the people who have suffered, who know the taste of hell.

REGGIE: That white prosecutor, Evans, he can't fight this. The first time for this kind of march. She hit the right number.

STARDUST: A woman with a brain is a credit to her race. Somebody famous say that. The bottle still handy?

SALLY: Can we rely on you to make it in *and* out of those bars in the next week?

STARDUST: STARDUST IN THE TWILIGHT!

JIM: . . . will be his battle cry.

REGGIE: I'll spread the word to the newspapers.

JIM: I'll call radio and TV stations.

SALLY: And I'll keep the telephones ringing.

STARDUST: (*Hums "We Shall Overcome"*). I remind myself of the old Dr. King.

JIM: I'm going to start tonight. Come on Stardust. No time to waste.

STARDUST: We shall overcome! Freedom Now! Uhuru! Political Power Lies in the Barrel of a Gun! Power to the People! And if You're not part of the Solution, You're part of the Problem!

REGGIE: I'll drink to that!

SALLY: What drink? The bottle's empty!

(JIM *and* STARDUST *exit. Pause*)

MUSIC: "Worksong," The Best of Cannonball Adderley. Capitol. SKAO 2939.

REGGIE: You're the one who's going to save Eddie Baxter.

(*Pause*)

SALLY: Why pick me out. . . ? We're all working for him. . . .

REGGIE: No. It's you. I just saw a flash into the future.

MUSIC: Fade out "Worksong" and fade in "Sally's theme"

CHOREOGRAPHY: The silhouetted figure of the female dancer appears against the huge circle of sun again, just above SALLY.

SALLY: Phewww!!! Getting hotter and hotter. Night heat. . . .

REGGIE: Should be more air. Window's open. Screen's up. Where's my little book with the telephone numbers?

SALLY: On the bed. This heat. Just can't stand clothes on tonight. . . .

(*She undoes the top of her sunsuit.* REGGIE *exits and returns*)

REGGIE: Amsterdam News. Who's the editor again?

SALLY: OOOooohhhhhhh. . . .so hot. Can feel the heat. . . crawling through my body. . . all over. . . like a river of fire. . . .

REGGIE: What do you think you're doing?

SALLY: Makes me restless. . . so restless. . .

REGGIE: You shouldn't stand in front of the window like that.

SALLY: Nobody can see me through a screen.

REGGIE: They can, if the light's shining on you.

SALLY: Only you can see me.

REGGIE: Up to you.

SALLY: Am I putting on weight?

REGGIE: Um? No. . .

SALLY: Sure?

REGGIE: What?

SALLY: My figure. . .

REGGIE: Where's that number?

SALLY: You have to phone right now?

REGGIE: What?

SALLY: Nothing.

CHOREOGRAPHY: The dancer and the Sun embrace and disappear on a bed of music in the dark heat.

(Blackout)

SCENE 2: THUNDER

MUSIC: At lights up, "DUKE'S PLACE" Ellingtonia, Volume 2. The Impulse Years. ASH 9285-2. Side A.

SCENE: The same.

TIME: Few days later.

SALLY: (*On telephone*) Yes. . . the NAACP's behind us. . . .
(REGGIE *enters with several newspapers*)
REGGIE: Even in the Times. . . .
SALLY: . . . the Urban League's helping us with the cost of the placards. SNICK is giving us some money to buy cold drinks. . . CORE is sending thirty people to act as marshals. The Young Lords is lending us two trucks with sound equipment. No. . . no white organizations. We didn't ask them. . . fine. . . thank you.
(*Hangs up*)
SALLY: Zippp!!! Got them!
REGGIE: Who?
SALLY: The Panthers.
REGGIE: You're kidding.
SALLY: They're going to lead the march.
REGGIE: Whose idea was that?
SALLY: Mine.
REGGIE: It's spreading like fire. . . look at these papers. . . .
(*Telephone rings*)
SALLY: Hello? Yes, she's speaking. Yes! No. There'll be no liquor before and during the march. No. No cops. We're having our own marshals. Thank you.
REGGIE: Even out of town newspapers. . .
SALLY: Even I don't believe this. The Black Muslims read the story. They're sending fifty of their new converts.
REGGIE: It's the idea of criminals and outcasts marching for a teenager like Eddie.
SALLY: Lewis Evans may as well give up. I'll be surprised if he gets even a fine.
REGGIE: Evans was interviewed in one of these papers. . .
SALLY: (*Reading*) "The law must take its course. We cannot be ruled by mobs, Black or White." Crap! Lewis Evans, your days as the great white prosecutor of helpless Black men are over!

(*Telephone rings*)

REGGIE: It's for you.

SALLY: No thank you. Blacks only. Because we want it that way.

REGGIE: Who was that?

SALLY: A very white voice from the Junior Chamber of Commerce offering assistance. Not help mind you. Assistance.

REGGIE: They turned us down, remember? The very first people we went to.

SALLY: But there's all this free publicity going now.

REGGIE: The moral flexibility of the American business mind. Wonder how Stardust is making out? They should be here by now.

MUSIC: Sally's theme

SALLY: Notice anything new?

REGGIE: Jim's bringing over more papers. Eh? Notice what?

SALLY: Right before your eyes.

REGGIE: What?

SALLY: New sunsuit.

REGGIE: Oh. . . that.

SALLY: Bought it today. The first one since that afternoon in the park. I'm going to wear it for the march. You don't think it's too. . . too. . . showy?

REGGIE: Um? If you think so. . .

SALLY: You're not even looking.

(*Apartment bell rings*)

REGGIE: That's them.

(*Enter* JIM)

REGGIE: Where's Stardust?

JIM: Couldn't find him this evening, but he knows how to get here.

REGGIE: You see the papers?

JIM: Yes. I got the march permit today. Just like that. No problem. You heard it on the radio today?

SALLY: Twice.

JIM: It's going to be on TV this evening.

REGGIE: Wonder where Stardust is?

SALLY: Caught in the twilight—a wet one.

JIM: He navigates like that all the time. You're looking different.

SALLY: Me?

JIM: Pretty. . . sexy. . . yeahhh!

SALLY: Must be the new sunsuit. I'm not what you call an attractive female. . . as beautiful women go. . . .

(*Pause*)

REGGIE: What's in your papers? Can I see them?

JIM: Some of them don't believe us. Some are laughing. Some think we're heading for one hell of an embarrassing fall.

SALLY: Wish I knew where the hell Stardust was.

JIM: Listen to this about you and Reggie. (*Reads*) "The idea, for what must be the most unusual march New York will ever see, because of the underworld characters involved, belongs to Sally Fisher. The dynamic 26-year-old public school teacher, and her husband, Reggie, an accountant. The attractive Mrs. Fisher. . ."

CHOREOGRAPHY: Again the female figure appears just above SALLY, *dancing to Duke's Place.*

SALLY: The second time today that a man's called me attractive.

JIM: Well. . . ? You *are* beautiful.

SALLY: No. I don't fool myself. I'm not that kind of woman. Not beautiful pretty.

JIM: How come you believe that? Give her the word, Reggie.

SALLY: Let's concentrate on the march.

REGGIE: One thing we have to prevent is the march overshadowing Eddie Baxter. We still have to place solid concrete evidence before the court that he's a good guy.

JIM: Especially before that prosecutor, Lewis Evans.

SALLY: I've got letters vouching for him from seven black female teachers, a music instructor in Harlem, a social worker and three girls he used to date.

JIM: A woman-killer.

SALLY: They're crazy about him. They told me he had this way of making them feel special, superior.

REGGIE: That's great for them. But we'll need better recommendations than a good screwer for Eddie.

SALLY: I don't know. Appreciation from a Black man is the best recommendation any Black woman can get. . . in a white world.

REGGIE: I've got character references for him from all kinds of night clubs where he played.

JIM: Hardworking. . . honest. . . thrifty. . . quiet. . . reliable. . . courteous.

REGGIE: I even got letters from people he went to school with in Birmingham. Didn't have time to open them.

JIM: Hey! TV news.

REGGIE: O Christ yes! I almost forgot.

(*They turn on the TV and watch*)

JIM: Beautiful. How can we lose?

(*Apartment bell rings.* STARDUST *enters*)

SALLY: The man's floating. He can hardly walk.

REGGIE: Quick. Put a chair under him.

MUSIC: "The Middle of the River" The Crusaders.

(*Again* STARDUST *does his drunken choreographic walk*)

REGGIE: Does he know where he is?

SALLY: Or who he is?

JIM: Relax. He can navigate like this for days.

SALLY: The man is a complete blank from head to toe. A trance.

REGGIE: How about pouring some cold water over his head?
JIM: Water!!!! O Christ, no! The shock will kill him. Too much of a sudden change from rum. Give him a straight shot.
REGGIE: He's not immunized yet.
SALLY: He tossed that down without blinking.
REGGIE: His eye-balls moved sideways. There's hope.
JIM: STARDUST!!!
STARDUST: STARDUST IN TWILIGHT TIME!!!
JIM: He's back.
SALLY: Incredible!
REGGIE: Where's the petitions?
STARDUST: WE SHALL OVERCOME!
(JIM *removes the petition from his pocket*)
JIM: How many signatures did you. . . ?
SALLY: Just two scribbles on this. . .
REGGIE: What the hell happened to all the names you said. . . ?
SALLY: I should've known better! You can't trust men!
STARDUST: (*Hums "We Shall Overcome"*)
JIM: We must have them if this thing's going to work.
SALLY: This is going to be the biggest failure.
REGGIE: I'll hunt down those people myself. Go into the bars. . . .
JIM: Won't work. You need his contacts.
SALLY: Trust a man to screw up anything! Stupid drunk bastard! Useless tramp! GET OUT OF HERE!
STARDUST: Jazz. . . music. . . jazz. . . wonderful. . .
(*He exits*)
JIM: Where's the letters you got from Birmingham?
REGGIE: This one's alright.
JIM: Here's the one from the headteacher.
REGGIE: What did he say?
JIM: Christ! More trouble. Listen to this!
SALLY: What now?
JIM: "Dear Mr. Fisher: I regret that I cannot, in all honesty, grant your request for a character reference for Eddie Baxter. Four years ago he was a student at this school. He was arrested by police and convicted of possession of marijuana, and of contributing to juvenile prostitution. Mr. Baxter had enticed two white teenage girls, also students, who had been sexually intimate with him, into prostitution to get money for drugs. The incident caused unspeakable public embarrasment and brought disrepute to this school, Mr. Baxter and the two girls involved, all of whom were, of course, expelled. I am sorry that again, because of narcotics, Mr. Baxter is in serious trouble with the law, and may be given a lengthy jail sentence".
MUSIC: "Them Dirty Blues". The best of Cannonball Adderley. Capitol. SKAO 2939.

REGGIE: Must be a forgery.
JIM: Official school stationery.
REGGIE: But nobody knows about this. It never came out at his trial.
JIM: A hell of a big slip up by Lewis Evans. A huge one.
REGGIE: We have to keep it quiet.
SALLY: He screwed those two white girls?
CHOREOGRAPHY: The female figure of the Dancer appears again.
JIM: That's not important. It's the convictions for pimping and marijuana.
SALLY: I'm getting out.
JIM: What?
SALLY: Eddie Baxter will have to swim on his own.
JIM: What are you talking about?
SALLY: Count me out.
JIM: Reggie! What's wrong with her?
SALLY: He made Black women feel so beautiful, so superior. It was white women. I'm quitting.
JIM: You really mean that?
SALLY: You know me. . . when I make up my mind. From now on, they can lynch him from the Empire State building.
JIM: Reggie! Tell her she can't quit now.
SALLY: Black men are all alike. You can't trust them.
REGGIE: It's her decision.
JIM: I can't understand you, Sally. How come you're taking it so personal like? I mean so what if he screwed two Crackers. What's it to you personally?
SALLY: With White. . .
JIM: What's got into her?
SALLY: Just leave me out of this.
JIM: Alright. The two of us can continue alone. Okay with you?
REGGIE: Sure.
JIM: How come you're so bitter about this Sally?
SALLY: Forget it.
JIM: You're not going to change your mind?
SALLY: Never.
JIM: Evans will crucify us if he ever finds out about Eddie.
(*Exits. Pause*)
MUSIC: Sally's theme
REGGIE: What's wrong?
SALLY: Where were you during lunch today?
REGGIE: Out.
SALLY: The day before too.

REGGIE: What are you looking at me like that for?
SALLY: It's hot. You're standing in front of the screen.

(Blackout)

SCENE 3: FIRE

TIME: Few days later. Evening.

PLACE: The same.

(JIM *and* REGGIE *are working*)
JIM: More character references from New York.
REGGIE: Good. We can't use any from Birmingham at all. Just in case.
JIM: No luck with Stardust. Not a trace of him.
REGGIE: May as well forget him. I got the huge sum of ten signatures in the bars today. They won't trust me.
JIM: I got seven.
REGGIE: Two days left.
JIM: This is hell. We'll need more time.
REGGIE: We won't get it.
(*Bell rings*)
JIM: Sally?
REGGIE: No. She's got her own key.
JIM: You think it could be. . . .
REGGIE: No. . . .
(*Enter* STARDUST)
STARDUST: Gentlemen. Good evening.
(*As if by some universal miracle, he has been completely transformed. His dirty disorderly clothes have disappeared. He is washed and combed. He is now wearing a clean white pressed summer suit and tie. To make the miracle even bigger, he is completely sober. He stands straight and elegantly*)
REGGIE: This must be a bad dream.
JIM: It can't be. Why is God always playing these jokes on Black people?
REGGIE: That can't be the same man.
STARDUST: I used real tokens on the subway to get here today.
JIM: No. I refuse to believe. He sounds sober.
STARDUST: As a former school teacher in Trinidad years and years ago, my advice to this younger generation is—never mix serious business with social drinking. It will ruin your life and your career.
REGGIE: Where have you been?
STARDUST: Business pressures have kept me unusually busy.

JIM: What about the. . . ?

STARDUST: I circulate that petition like I gone mad.

REGGIE: This is full of names.

JIM: Where did you. . . ?

STARDUST: That list come from them West Indians in Brooklyn near the Eastern Parkway. Some of them can't use real names. They have to make up American names to hide from the Immigration. . . .

REGGIE: (*Reading*) Gold Teeth. . . Talkative. . . Bison. . . Cut-Outer . . . Fish-Eye. . . William Turkey. . . The Last Call. . . King White Rum. . . Sharkie the Money Lender. . . .

JIM: General Motors. . . Bitter Man. . . Watergate. . . The Fairy Prince . . . Kissinger. . . Mud-in-Your-Eyes. . . Prince Henry the Navigator . . . Midnight Sun. . . .

REGGIE: Are these real people?

JIM: You're damn right they are. I know some of them from the court cases we study.

REGGIE: Incredible! Tojo. . . the Scrambler. . . the Queen of the Nile. . . Mayor Beame. . . Percy Sutton. . . Straight No Chaser. . . The Mournful Hangover. . . Prince of Paupers. . . Macy. . . Gimble. . . Bloomingdale. . . The Holy Weed. . . Filter Tip Ganga. . . .

JIM: Pages of it!

STARDUST: Weeping Willow Willie, the Silent Intruder, the Black Knight, Robin Hood, the Mighty Eater and all that gang visiting relatives in the country. . . .

JIM: He means they're in jail. Immigration caught them. You have to translate.

STARDUST: Magnet Fingers, Appetizer, Flying Marvel, Puss in Boots. . .

REGGIE: Why would anybody be called Puss in Boots?

STARDUST: That is a fella from Trinidad who does take off everything to make love, except his boots.

JIM: It's true.

STARDUST: Shake-Well-Before-Using, Bottoms Up and St. John the Apostle—they doing the night shift with their family. . . .

JIM: They're planning a hold up in Queens for tomorrow night.

STARDUST: The Fat Rat, Atilla the Hun, The Iceman, Charlie the Shadow, No-Teeth Horace and Bruiser the Bishop working overtime with some cousins from Jersey. . . .

JIM: They have to stay out of sight for a few days.

STARDUST: The Grim Reaper, Wheels Williams, Snake Hips, Idi Amin and the Prophet of Doom—they ain't know how to sign their names, but they will be ready for the march. I tell you, I circulate like I gone mad. Freedom Now! Uhuru! Black is Beautiful! Power to Poor People—and Right On!!!

REGGIE: We're rolling again! Thanks to you.

JIM: Come on Stardust. We have more work to do. Let's go!

(JIM *and* STARDUST *exit*)

MUSIC: "Bernie's Tune" Gerry Mulligan-Chet Baker. Carnegie Hall Concert as before.

(REGGIE *continues working, then* SALLY *enters*)

CHOREOGRAPHY: As she does, the Sun and the female figure of the Dancer appear again. We still know or can see nothing more of this dancer.

REGGIE: You see them? They just left.

SALLY: Who?

REGGIE: Jim and Stardust.

SALLY: I didn't use the elevator. I walked up.

REGGIE: It's going to work. Stardust came through with all kinds of signatures.

SALLY: Did he? I'm glad.

REGGIE: Sorry. Forgot you didn't want to talk about it. How was the movie?

SALLY: I didn't go to the show after all. Changed my mind. Went to the prison to visit Mr. Eddie Baxter.

REGGIE: But you promised. . . .

SALLY: I didn't say anything. I was curious. Just to see him. His face. His eyes.

REGGIE: Everything's moving again. If you're staying out of it, why punish yourself? Why not leave it alone?

(*Pause*)

MUSIC: Sally's Theme

SALLY: Damn heat. . . you can feel it burning deep. . . inside your soul . . . scorching. . . as if the sun was in there. . .

(*Goes to window. Opens her blouse*)

REGGIE: I need a break.

SALLY: I love the touch of a cold drink on my hot throat on a day like this. Weather leaves me so hot and restless. I can tear off my flesh. . . like tearing off clothes. . . .

REGGIE: Heat wave can't last.

SALLY: Wonder what he saw in them?

REGGIE: In who?

SALLY: Eddie Baxter. . . those White women. . . .

REGGIE: Girls, weren't they?

SALLY: Women.

REGGIE: Okay. Women.

SALLY: He probably thought they were attractive.

REGGIE: Why can't you stop yourself from thinking. . . talking. . . about it. . . .

SALLY: I was walking in the park this evening. Saw a white couple. Lying on the grass kissing. Really kissing. Her skirt was so short. . . .

REGGIE: You know you shouldn't walk in the park alone.

SALLY: It was near the grassy slope we used to go to.

REGGIE: What slope?

SALLY: We went there that Saturday afternoon. The first time we ever made. . . .

(*Pause*)

REGGIE: I'm going out for a little while. See you later.

MUSIC: "Cotton tail". Ellingtonia. Vol. 2. The Impulse Years, as before.

LIGHTING: Now for the first time in the play, the lighting changes on the dancer. We can see the female: she is a blonde White woman. She dances a spell over SALLY.

SALLY: I know you're sleeping with a white woman. . . from the office you're working in. . . you take her to the park. . . I saw you in broad daylight. . . holding hands. What went wrong with us, Reggie? What's wrong with me? I'm human. I feel too. I've been a good wife. I'm not a bad woman. Not a revengeful person. But I love my husband. I love him. . . .

(*She paces in agitation*)

SALLY: I'm beautiful. . . . White women! White women!

MUSIC: The drums from "Cotton Tail" are roaring

(*She goes to the telephone several times. Makes several attempts to dial. Several hesitations. Walks away from it. Recoils.*)

SALLY: No! No! No! No! Not that. . . . I can't do that! No! YES!!! YES!!!

MUSIC: The drums are more frantic now

(*She goes to the telephone again. Dials.*)

SALLY: Hello. Is this the white prosecutor, Mr. Evans? No, I won't say who's speaking. This is the biggest telephone call I ever made in my whole life. As if my soul has to open itself in pain to God's huge eye. You don't know me. And I don't know you. That's life. In this city, a woman's voice has to stretch across the dark night and the tall buildings to communicate. Listen carefully, Mister, because I'm going to say this once, and I'm not going to say it again. Eddie Baxter was convicted in Birmingham four years ago for possession of marijuana, and contributing to juvenile prostitution. . . two white teenagers. . . two white girls. . . he was sexually intimate. . . sexually. . . .

(*She hangs up suddenly. Goes to the window. Pause*)

CHOREOGRAPHY: The light goes to black on the White dancer. We cannot see her at all.

MUSIC: Jimmy Smith, "The Sermon" Blue Note, Re-Issue Series. Side 3.

SALLY: I can feel the heat burning deep in my soul
As if the sun was in there
burning
shining hot.
They cut down the tree

but the light is off
Nobody can see me through the screen.
Jazz is dead.

MUSIC: Jimmy Smith's organ and saxophone cascading in a sudden release of pent-up tension. A surging orgasm of hate. Keep the music going.

LIGHTING: Lights come back up on the White dancer.

CHOREOGRAPHY: As she dances her final movement, she undresses. She takes off her blonde wig. To our surprise, instead of a White woman, we have been watching a Black woman all the time. She wears her own hair in the same Afro style as Sally. She then takes off her outer garments. Underneath, she is wearing a sunsuit exactly like SALLY*'s. In fact, the name "SALLY" is written on the top, just like* SALLY*'s. The dancer is in fact* SALLY.

(Curtain)

FROM A DIARY BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN

The battle will be fought tomorrow,
the air thickening
with gunpowder and the stench
of the dead in the heat
of midsummer. We cannot win, of course,
for the sense of destiny
necessary to stand firm against
the crush of men coming at us
with their sisters' socks
knitted freshly round their ankles
is lacking among us.
The air is sweet with honeysuckle
at Manassas, stifling our senses.
Like fools or family we remain.
Another hillock will be gained,
the enemy's maneuvers, the gaping
picnickers from Washington
becoming visible. The battleground,
stretched out in rise after rise,
affords advantage to no side.
In my dreams I am running
with those I was sent to defend,
unable to ask why we were there at all.
The hum of disorganization
penetrates our ranks
like disturbing music.
Within it, the campfires are lit
and this last page signed.
The air is heavy and resonant
with crickets. We are separate
from what we see or do.

HOUSEBREAKING, THE RUINS

The Walls

The walls began it,
the walls written over
with the advent of summer
in green, moldy script. The walls,
unfolding shadows like travelers'
palm leaves breathing out
night. Here the roaches claimed
their sunless solstice,
scratched forth
from the most intimate
cracks, hog-wild
in our kitchen, rotted
from the moisture of
a thousand insect breaths.

The Fleas

The dogs left us to run free
in open pastures; the insects
that had tortured them
remained, slicing red canals
along our open flesh.
From room to room we moved,
seeking some one place
to rest without torment. Our eyes

through the myth of sleep
saw the dimensions of
each wall shrivel
against the backs of fleas.

The Base

The concrete base is solid enough;
the pillars of the house
hold the roof above us
like sky, which despite legend,
is not falling, shall not
fall. If your basement
is hewn of the earth itself,
makes of lime and boulders
its own lineaments,
what stranger is there among us
would tear its stones
from the mouth of this
iron-forged ground?

SUMMER JADE

—for Rich, after Su T'ung-Po—

Kite Flying

Carrying a goldfish kite up the hills
at sunset. No wind. Live oak trees
scattered like dancers on a frieze.
At the crest a faint breeze
catches the paper fins as you
throw the kite in the air
and run. It falls back on you,
diving to the ground, short of wind.
What is the old kitemaker
in Taipei doing now?

Blackberries

A modern highway runs below the hills.
We walk home along it, the setting sun
gilding the dried grass above us.
Dogs bark at our heels.
Are we in the country or the town?
Blackberries stain our fingers.
Not many have found them along this road.

the Stanford hills

SONG FOR MY WIFE'S LANDLORD

You bring apples and plums,
before the morning worm tenses,
bring plums and cornflowers.

Blue juices dissolve the bag
that almost contains them.

You rap on her door, gentle
as a worm savouring the flesh,
tap gently in case she is sleeping.

She wakes to apples, to plums
and cornflowers, the blue scent
of your shaving lotion on them.

What can the tenor of plums
and cornflowers be, of a worm
in the core of the heart?

By noon, she has left me
alone with these questions.

All day, she eats apples and plums,
the overripe flesh that confines
the drunken worm.

She watches the cornflowers
stiffen in a vase; she invents
ambiguous names for your lotion.

Then she groans into her sleep.
The white flesh and blue
and clashing in her dreams.

All night, something tenses
and relaxes within her,
as my ear closes to her mouth:

I hear I don't know what blossom.

FETISHISTIC

ghosts in any fire
shaped if not kindled
by memory

your brain the perfect
host of that fever

the shadows the patches
of flint on the wall

a match in some book

in the eye
dancing there as you lead
into beginning middle
age

your body slow to be
taken still bent
on siren and smoke

as your wife's consumed
by a discrete fever
the wallpaper curling
from the wall ghostlike

the match in your hand
not yet flaring

Tomas Tranströmer

CITOYENS

The night after the accident I dreamt of a pockmarked man
who walked along alleys singing.
Danton!
Not the other one—Robespierre took no such walks.
He spent one hour each day
on his morning toilette, the rest he gave to the People.
In the heaven of broadsides, among the machines of virtue.
Danton
(or the man who wore his mask)
seemed to stand on stilts.
I saw his face from underneath:
like the pitted moon, half lit, half in mourning.
I wanted to say something.
A weight in the chest: the lead weight
that makes the clocks go,
makes the hands go around: Year I, Year II...
A pungent odor as from sawdust in tigercages.
And—as always in dreams—no sun.
But the alley walls
shone as they curved away
down toward the waiting-room, the curved space,
the waiting-room where we all...

Translated from the Swedish by Robert Bly

Vilas Sarang

An Excursion

Since daybreak I'd been hearing the roar of airplanes in the sky. Were air force exercises under way, or had war broken out overnight? I thought I should go up on the terrace, and check to see if there were actually airplanes zooming above. Perhaps the roaring sound was originating in my mind. That kind of thing had happened before. Once I lay in bed all day listening to the patter of falling rain. Towards evening I rose, went to the balcony, and looked around. The sun was shining brilliantly, and the road and buildings before me were dry, without a trace of rain. Whenever I hear a voice, I look around me. If I observe a person nearby, and see his or her lips moving, I conclude that that person is speaking, perhaps to me.

Before I had time to climb up to the terrace, the sound of airplanes ceased abruptly. Perhaps peace had been made. Anyway, I was preoccupied more with a toothache than with the chances of war or peace. I'd been to a dentist the day before, and he'd told me that he would have to pull out the tooth that was hurting. I was horrified. For some reason I had always thought that teeth were a part of the skull, and thus solidly connected to the entire skeleton. When I mentioned this to the dentist, he laughed and said that wasn't true. This fact shocked me even further. To realize that teeth, which looked so firmly embedded in the body, were just clinging precariously to our flesh was distressing. That day I lost faith in teeth.

This was my washday. I spent an extra hour or so in bed, put off by the thought of having to struggle with lumps of soggy clothes. Then I bounced out of bed, went to the bathroom, and got through the chore with great speed and verve. In fact I think I expended more energy than the job required, strictly speaking. With a sense of exhaustion and relief I went to the balcony. Leaning upon the parapet, I watched the traffic flowing below. Numerous little pieces of paper floated down from above, danced around lazily, and landed upon the ground. I fancied that it was God in heaven, writing a poem, or drawing up a legal document, not happy with the drafts he was making, and tearing them up. Leaning out, I looked up and saw a small boy two floors above

tossing pieces of paper into the air. I watched the pieces floating down. One landed on my balcony. I picked it up and drew a picture of the Sun-god on it, complete with mouth, nose, large eyes, and a Stalin-type moustache.

In the afternoon I went out for a walk. I have a habit of walking straight down a street as far as I want and then returning the same way. Not for me the adventure of right or left turns, of weaving through alleys, or of wandering in a bazaar. The only thing is, when I want to go back home, I cross the street, and walk back on the other side. I don't have the heart to simply turn around and start walking straight back, as if it were an innocent and inconsequential act.

This afternoon I walked farther than usual. The sun was hot, and I felt enervated. I didn't see a restaurant anywhere nearby. Then I saw a bus-stop, which was really just an iron pole painted red and capped with a sign. There was no one at the stop. I walked up to it and leaned on the pole. It was not the most restful of positions, but it was better than nothing. Then a bus rumbled by and stopped in front of me. A couple got off. The bus-conductor, with the bell-string between his fingers, looked at me impatiently and shouted: "Come on, hop in quick."

I was confused. I was vaguely aware that I wasn't standing at the bus-stop to catch a bus, but I didn't know how to explain this to the bus-conductor. For one thing, he obviously had no time to listen to explanations of this sort, and, moreover, I thought that he would start laughing at my words. To make matters worse, I didn't seem to have much time to think. The conductor stood in the door of the bus, ready to pull the bell-string the moment I got in. Like a somnambulist, I stepped into the bus, the conductor rang the bell, and the bus hurtled on.

The conductor came up to my seat. I took out some change. "Where do you want to go?" the conductor asked. "Oh, give me a ticket anywhere," I said. "Don't get on my nerves, man," the conductor rasped. "Tell me where you're going. I'm not a tour guide." What a nuisance, I thought. I wanted to tell him that I hadn't wanted to get onto his bus in the first place, that I got in only at his insistence, and that he had no right to ask me now where I wanted to go. But I saw that this might sound silly, and therefore kept my mouth shut. The conductor stood before me, his punching machine held out like a knife.

"Okay, give me a ticket for Parel," I said. "Sorry, this bus doesn't go to Parel," the conductor said. I got more annoyed. "Where does it go then?" I asked. "Wadala, Sion, Kurla...," the conductor click-clicked his punching machine. "I'll have one to Sion," I said. Stuffing the ticket into my pocket, I looked out the window with relief.

The bus passed Wadala, and headed towards Sion. When it was nearing a stop, an old woman sitting in front of me got up excitedly.

"Have we gone by Wadala?" she asked loudly, as if she were putting the question to everyone on the bus. "Why didn't you call out the stop?" she asked the conductor. "I did; maybe you didn't hear me," the conductor said. They went on bickering for a while. Finally the old woman got off at the next stop. Although I had bought a ticket to Sion, I didn't care if I went there, so I hopped off too.

The old woman walked back towards Wadala. I walked behind her, without meaning to follow her. The woman was carrying a large bundle, and walked with difficulty under its weight. Her legs were bent with age. Though I walked in a leisurely fashion, I soon caught up with her. I was about to pass her when I turned round and said, "Give me the bundle. I'll carry it for you."

The old woman looked at me with a frown, thinking that I was a coolie looking for work. Then she seemed to wonder if I was a con man. When she had made up her mind that I was neither, she smiled and said, "All right, young man. Not that I can't carry this; I'm strong enough, God be praised. But today the bus kept me waiting a long while, and I'm a bit tired. I'm glad to see that there still are nice young men like you in this world. Here, take it."

While I walked alongside the old woman carrying her bundle, she told me about herself. The bundle contained a huge doll and a few other things. The woman lived in Wadala with her granddaughter. The child's mother was dead, and the father had married again. The child didn't want to live with the stepmother, so she lived with her grandmother instead. The old woman had a brother living elsewhere who helped her out. Once she took her granddaughter to his place where the child saw a huge doll and wanted it very much. At home, she kept asking for the doll all the time. The old woman finally went to her brother's place and was now bringing the doll home.

We reached the building where the old woman lived. On the second floor, as she informed me. "I'll come upstairs and leave the bundle," I said. We climbed the stairs. "Open the door, Chima," the old woman shouted. "It's me."

There was no response. The old woman knocked loudly upon the door. "Such a wicked, wicked girl," she said. "I wonder what she's doing inside. I wouldn't normally leave her alone at home. But today I wanted to go and get back quickly, so I didn't take her along. I told her to sit quietly and not open the door unless she heard my voice. I didn't want her messing around in the kitchen, so I locked it up. Still, I can never trust that kid."

The old woman called again. I put the bundle down and knocked hard upon the door. Still no response. Now the old woman got panicky. A few neighbors gathered and deliberated, wondering what was the best thing to do. Someone suggested calling the fire department. The old

woman became more and more agitated. I leaned over the parapet along the passageway and looked along the left side of the apartment. The living room had a large window with bars, but one of the bars was missing, leaving a fairly wide gap. I thought for a minute, then jumped over the parapet, and gingerly made my way towards the window. I got to it and wriggled through the bars.

Taking a deep breath, I looked around. Chima was right there, lying in bed. I didn't go up to her, though. I went straight to the door and opened it. The old woman rushed towards Chima. I had thought that she was just sound asleep, but she didn't wake even when the old woman shook her. Then I checked if she was breathing. She was. Perhaps she had fainted. Someone went and got a slice of onion, and held it before Chima's nose. At that, she began to cry, "I'm dead, I'm dead. Why did you do that? I'm supposed to be dead, don't you understand?"

It took us a little while to figure out that Chima had taken it into her head to die, and had simply done so. She expected her decision to be respected, and was annoyed by our meddling.

"What devilish games you play, Chima," the old woman said. "I almost died myself a few minutes ago." But Chima was in no mood to pay attention to her granny. Fixing her large eyes upon the ceiling, she was lost in thought. She seemed to be puzzling over her existential status: *I was dead, these people woke me from death; now what am I?* Then she seemed to have found an answer. She clapped her hands loudly, and declared that she was a ghost. Spreading her arms out and making weird noises, she walked about the room. She seemed to like that particular category of being. She didn't want to be her old self again. Her granny opened the bundle and placed the doll before her. "Look, Chima," she said. "I've got the doll that you wanted so much. Aren't you happy now? Come on, give up all those silly notions."

The old woman had thought that Chima would forget about being a ghost as soon as she saw the doll. But Chima obviously had a one-track mind. She stared at the doll for a minute or two, and then announced: "There, *that* is Chima. The dead Chima. And *I* am her ghost. Do you see?" And she made another round of the room making noises and flapping her arms about. When her granny talked to me, Chima said, "Quiet, Granny. You mustn't speak when there's a dead person in the house. Didn't you tell me to be quiet when Mama died?"

So far Chima hadn't paid any particular attention to my presence. But then I became aware of her eyes fixed intently upon me, as though she were determined to discover my role in the scheme of things. I became uncomfortable.

"Oh yeah," Chima screeched. "I know who you are. You even look like the man who came to take Mama away when she died. Now you've come to take away Chima, right? What do they call a man like that,

Granny? I *know* the word, But—," she looked at Granny. "Yeah, undertaker. That's it—you're the undertaker."

I shuddered, as if I had suddenly been blinded by a searchlight. An undertaker! Numbly, I looked at Chima.

Then Chima insisted that I should take away the dead Chima, that is, the doll. I gave a start. To carry away a doll! And what would I do with it?

Her Granny was about to lose her temper now. "What's all this silliness, Chima? I went all the way to Bhai's place to get the doll, and now you want it taken away? You're driving me crazy. The next thing you'll be wanting us to sit in front of the doll weeping and moaning!"

"But we mustn't keep a dead body in the house, Granny," Chima said, following up the inexorable logic of the situation. "When Mama died, didn't you tell me that we couldn't keep her body any longer?"

The old woman made tea for me. After tea, I rose to leave. Chima went into a terrific tantrum. "Take her away! Take her away!" she screamed, pointing her finger alternately at the doll and at me. Finally, in exasperation her granny picked up the doll. Holding it towards me, she said, "Take it away then. I can't stand this anymore. You've been so nice, though. Come to think of it, I didn't even know you a few hours ago, and you've done so much for me. I wonder how many boys as decent as you there are today. You know, I had so many hopes for Chima. I've done so much for her, but I can see what it's all going to come to." For a moment she stared past me into emptiness, then looked at me. "Here," she said.

Gingerly I stretched out my arms. With sad eyes that lingered over me, the old woman placed the doll across my arms. It was quite a large doll, and heavy too. It was almost like holding a child in my arms.

I turned and walked towards the door. I didn't even remember to say goodbye to the old woman. The doll lay across my forearms. I didn't hold it with my hands. With slow, careful steps I climbed down the stairs. I got to the bottom and stood on the sidewalk, holding the doll in front of me.

Now I faced the task of getting home. On my countless little forays into the world, how my heart used to leap up at the thought of turning homeward! But today was not the same.

I decided that the wisest thing would be to take the same bus that I had caught earlier. Like a fool, I hadn't even noticed the number of the bus I had taken. I went to the stop at which I had alighted and read the sign. It carried only one number: 315. So I crossed the street intending to catch a 315 going the other way. I went to the bus-stop on the other side of the road, but couldn't find 315 on the sign. It showed number 314 instead. I was puzzled. Then I asked someone and learned that number 314 did go to Mahim, where I wanted to go. Numbers 315 and

314 were circular routes, which meant that I could not only go home by taking a 314, but also, if I wished, by getting onto a 315 and continuing along the same way that I had come. I found the idea of returning home without retracing one's steps, as it were, fascinating. Crossing the street again, I went back to the stop for 315.

I got home, placed the doll upon the table and stretched out in bed. After some time I began to feel that something was wrong. I felt as if I had gone out, and never returned! I tried to persuade myself that I had in fact returned home, that I was now lying cosily in my bed, and that nothing was amiss. But it was no use. Then I got out of bed and switched on the light. Like a magnet, the doll upon the table attracted my eye. Propped against the wall, it loomed so large in my room! It occurred to me that I hadn't as yet had a good look at it. I sat on the edge of the bed and watched the doll. It was a woman in Rajasthani dress. She wore a long red skirt with a bright green bodice. She held her arms in such a way that you felt she was about to clap hands, or to begin dancing. Her eyes were large and shining, like the eyes of goddesses in pictures. On her feet she wore silver anklets.

I rose and went towards the table, and stood in front of the doll for a few moments. Then I gently lifted her skirt and peered underneath. She wore yellow panties, bordered with white lace. I returned to my bed.

Later I warmed some food, and ate. While washing the dishes, I realized that I was thinking again about my excursion during the day. I was still puzzling over the experience. There was this nagging feeling, for instance, that I hadn't returned home, and I didn't know what to do about it. Then I noticed how the doll on the table appeared to have arranged everything in the room around itself. With quiet self-assurance the doll had made itself the center of my room. And it's only the dead body of Chima, I said to myself. It's strange how something dead becomes a kind of center, whereas the living never keep still, and therefore can hardly be the center of anything.

I wondered what I would do with the doll. Maybe, I thought, I should give it away to some child living in the building. Or maybe I should go to the beach and bury it in the sand. Or I might visit the old woman's house again and return the doll. Perhaps Chima would forget the idea of the doll being a corpse, and might welcome the doll's return. Then my tooth started hurting again. In the excitement of the day I had forgotten to take the pain-killers the doctor had given me. I took the tablets now, and switched off the light. Lying in bed, I pondered over the difference between natural and artificial light. You switch off an electric light, and instantly plunge into total darkness. On the other hand, sunlight graduates gently into darkness, almost imperceptibly. I remembered the evenings when I used to sit among the rocks by the sea and watch darkness growing, enthralled by the metamorphosis of day

into night. Yet darkness increases only to a certain point, beyond which it cannot grow at all.

Translated from the Marathi by the author and Breon Mitchell

NOCTURNAL VISION

Well, what nights!
the rolling rain
irons the river
and the aureoles of stars
creak dully
I watch the silent crowd
filing past the tombs
(such despair, such endurance)
when the tremor of the frozen dream
shall be measured outside the cellophane
and the eyes of cats shall gleam
strangely on the flagstones
and the heart's herbs stir
in that rare crossing of a rose
with the sweet volcanic hour.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

SPARK

This tree was once
our own,
its crop would fill
our sacks alone.
So said the spark,
and burst into flame.

ASHES

From the balconies I see the species
sawed in the streets.
Decisions are made
on cereal grass
at woundup noon.
Everything is the wind's in time.
And a dense cloud of ashes settles overall.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

UNFORTUNATE INTERVENTION

Open plains after the rain.
Leaves and grass don
their brightest vestments.
A timid star comes out of the heavenly
garage
upsetting the harmony
with its limp walk.

VERSION

Overcome by fear
of colours,
you descend unclad in the greenish
background.
Mute among seaweed
and silent branches
slowly you subside into a sea
of kiosks.
The hymns you carry fragmented
from my chapel.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

COSSACK SONG

a dirty Pruss
with just one foot
yelled from out of the forest
the Cossacks are coming
on little steppe horses
and all they do is laugh

the blind neighbor
living next door
hanged himself
and the Cossacks came
on little steppe horses
and all they did was laugh

young Bess
in the bloody dress
jumped off the roof
because the Cossacks were coming
on little steppe horses
and all they did was laugh

the war passed on
the smoke was gone
and Hitler got burned
because the Cossaks came
on little steppe horses
and all they did was laugh

Translated from the German by Sammy McLean

UNDER THE MULBERRY TREE

paper burnt black filled the street with snow
zigzag street lamps bent over to drink
the latticed windows of the brick school house
kept forty children safe in the cellar

the walls of the city burned down to dust
across from the school stood a mulberry tree
and a boy stuffed his mouth by the light of the fire
full with the sweet mulberries

the brick school house is all burned out
the latticed windows held
the forty flamed like screaming books
lashed on their outstretched arms

the boy has stopped growing
—shy like the rest—and
while onions blossom on ashes now
he keeps stuffing his mouth under the mulberry tree

full with the sweet mulberries

Translated from the German by Sammy McLean

MY LANGUAGE

I remember
our first meeting
when your words
on starving winter days
flowed from the throats of wood cutters
mixed with the steam of vodka
I drank you in

I remember
your sound
ringing nights at ten o'clock
when we pushed our way through the factory gates
like unhitched work horses

you followed us
into the freedom of the neon city
into the freedom of the kettle-hot street cars
into the three-dimensional color of the shop windows

you burst the wrapped skirt of lies
with a joke
but our sighs curses cries
wore your coat
and zigzagged high up the house walls

and followed me
into the freedom of a back yard
starry with an almond tree

Translated from the German by Sammy McLean

SOCIALITY

I kill myself in figuring out the details
of that last hello,
that first goodbye, that inbetween affair
with hopelessness or lust, that tallest ladder
where I reach up and kiss a cloud,
and tie my shoe before the falling out of grace.
Figuring out the last way to run, reaching
my friends, I notice I have tripped over
their heads; I notice fools have opened shop
for saving earth; the interest rates for air are
marvellous. I go to sleep now, I pull the flesh
about me tightly, nothing gets out, no dreams,
not that vain concoction, that ether, precious
fibrous air, that smile to lure my wishing.
No dreams please. The body has its latches. There
is a quota on everything. How was that first hello?
Did you like it? It is afternoon. You reach out,
touch my hand, assume me human, half-way there to
hopefuls. The story of your life. That too.
How we have much in common is a figuring. Five years
after the fact, I say that first goodbye was glamorous.
I could have told us so. It started in the wishing
of the walking in our sleep when all the doors are shut,
and we walk safely, eyelids shut; we cannot stub
our toes on anything. Meanwhile the world was
flaming. The manuals for sleep-walking are all
alike. Put down by god for murder. I kissed you
in the husk of what I had believed. Which is the way
we love, hoping ourselves the wonder, not the nightmare.

THE DANCING

Everything dances.
Don't you see everything dancing? If you
open your eyes for a minute or if you
close them, you see thousands of
brain cells shooting at tremendous speeds
into your pocket. I knew a girl the other day,
I think I knew her, she went off
under a stop sign; she reassembled in Buenos Aires,
at least I think so, didn't you see her, at least
the dancing?

I threw a kiss across a couch, I threw and missed,
I hit a portrait by surprise, didn't you smile anyway?
Didn't the snowflakes come down in platoons?
Let's call these things ridiculous, but the dancing, didn't
it stay with you? Aren't you provoked to laughter,
you on the far end of the first row—didn't your hat
fall off, didn't your ears hum, didn't you wave to your
mother when the fellow beside you whispered "nonsense"?

At least I think I know the dancing when I
hear it. It sounds like everything loved, or the
look over the shoulder that says *the door's open.*

The girls are flocking around you, the men that want
you are smoking cigars and edging towards you,
the soup is simmering on the stove, the bird flies out
of the chimney and lands on the cigarette
box. 25 times the words *I love you* were said in
this room. I can still hear the dancing going down
the roads. Here! I'll call it back: "the loveliest thing

you touched will stay with you—your happiness will seem reasonable
at last". That's not the whole dance. What do you want?
Robins all afternoon? Well then, huge clouds are
bumbling in off the left elbow of dawn. Something will

put its arms around you if you stay off guard. Yes,
please—god the knife-grinder is going off, dwindling down
an alley. Put out the laundry,

it's all right, the rain is fireflies, your head is
gentleness, your children are putting up the house
again. You won't tell their father.

VISTA

The world is planeted so. Atop the CN Tower
the lake appears to be stretching in several ways;
the curvature of the earth is apparent. We are so
many feet high, with so much concrete on this side,
and so much water on that, brown water, blue water,
yellow water, piss from the city, and we can make out
this and that and gee it's a big earth—then again—the
cars are this small and people invisible and smoke and
la-la, and
the sun seems small to warm up so much skin, and cars
droning along can make it down to Washington and back—
in four days. Not that much earth, really.

It seems ridiculous to be alive, to have dreams in a tiny
skull, to imagine longitudes of breath. Thanks then, to
the imbeciles that put us up here, narrow-eyed hard hats
dangling by their waists for photographs.
That much nearer heaven, are we? I need no language to
be brought down. Here I am with an umbrella a thousand or so
feet up. I graduated here and there, below us trains
carried the lumber of my body. My sister is waving to me 10
miles west of here. I can see fantasies I've left in
New York State; might even hear Niagara cracking.
Who imagines everything? I imagine I am loved,
even up here. What makes no sense is life inside
my head. What is amazing is a small planet. We had to think
so much for elbow room. We're out of room after this earth,
I say to the woman next to me. She understands logistics and
she loves, meanwhile, the earth is small
and still love is not measured, and still they hang men upside
down to paint in windows up and down the sky; this is amazing—
if I fall out now I travel revolutions to my sky. Wasn't
this what reading was about? I had a dream of flying and

a friend brought me back to earth to keep the heart from
bursting. I live my life as a practical man and live forever—
or I have loved the world and perish in my sleep.
Whichever, a sheer drop won't do much.

Clouds are ridiculous too, and the sun will go out,
and being alive, preposterous. I'll go on living like
myself, after the shoulder roll from mother's womb—there's
no extinction, on the flat palm of the earth we're running
a scurrilous race, so fast, so growing, it may as well
be flat, or dreaming has been more than man could bear, and
so he took up optics.

MISERICORDIA

Everyone mumbles something in the night. Joe his
loneliness, Dave his sneaking passion, Bob his wife's
cold thievery.

I see cars carrying bodies off further north, bodies
without names. The snow packages things up to look like
weather, but who's fooling? The angels came and
put disasters in our beds; we woke up drunk with hope.

I say, amaze me, love, kiss me. Make breakfast. Certainly
the house will stay up. Things don't always float
away. I mean when death came knocking at the door he brought
a foundling in exchange for good times. Kisses, get the spelling
down for *kisses*. I hear their loneliness. The friends are
wailing. I'd take a train ride north and ask reprieves
of Santa Claus. I'd say the world is fine if you'd
let it alone; the children are sleeping, banking on one good
day. I'd crawl back into bed. Oh what a world, surprised to have
kisses not in foreign language, conversations more like gold.

I'd take the tie off the cadaver, kiss it, and take
its place, sending dreams off to a uselessness,
and remember Angela, the sixteen year old, who deserved
better, how it took years to put things topsy-turvey, to say
you were alright, you were not married to a scoundrel, my
mother lives forever, the kisses I share with the woman
beside me are reasonable, expected—my friends do not fear sleep.

PRESSURE RIDGE

The mountains
bark
with thoughts of algae
ice & earth.

Their language
is words lost
in drummed gatherings,
rituals
on the flesh-cured
wind.

With soft gestures
they shape the rib
release the trapped mind.

Deep tongue, guessed chants
thick & stringy
like the flesh we eat.

I learn
to wear my skin
slowly.

THE SPEAR

In the rhythm
of the bone
my sons

carve out
their flesh,

soaped cliffs are riderless,
black arching stone
dissolving sea.

In the lust
for a vision
my grandmother

still wrestles
with the spear & flesh
of salmon.

FOR MY LOVE

With two bones
I've split the whale
to mend a seal.
The wing of earth is close,
crops the sun.

Lover movements
flounder
in a thick walrus bed.
Your tooth grows, lust
plucking out my quill
& feathers.

We coil
the frost
deep
within us,
four feet thick in winter.
In the yellow hum of night
the game on rib leaves us,
files away our whispers.

Life is a dance
on stretched canvas.
You plant herbs
with a waiting cry.

Martin Robbins

ON SOLSTICE EVENINGS:

When a paled sun smears
winter window panes;
when a bronze line flames
summer-flat water;

the chill light's disk,
the late sun's shaft
balance the earth
for time to roll

this green hoop
around its axis, spinning
light from the blue ice,
from the yellow warmth.

YORK HOUSE FIRE

No one died asleep. The heat
at dawn burned off the fog above
the house, but smoke plugged
that glimpse of sky with oily wads
while hoses from below blew
rubble through the dormer roofs.
There was no open flame.
They all died crazy, looking
for loopholes in a fire
that took them without illumination,
by hot poison.

WHAT THE MOTHER SAID

I'm giving you away
I have already given you away
I am your husk
your broken shell.

Yes, and turning husk and shell
back into earth, I bear your leaving
as a field would, somewhat beneath stars,
only partially forgetting.

FOR MY FATHER

After you died I carried
you up the big cedar and tied
you there, as high as I
could reach.

You were a wind
chime made of nails, and when
the wind was strong
I heard your delicate message.

I wanted you to be
enormous.

María Laïná / *Three Poems*

LANDSCAPES

I

White bodies moving
among
stone masses,
children's faces
walk
in suspended time
forsaken
their eyes,
burnished metal plates,
cut the night into small shouts
as the body presses them.

II

Dust
broken teeth
chemical substances
life sowed in sand.

III

The human face is absent
from its own landscape
green and booming
the light puts out
the eyes
the body remains exposed
it sleeps in coiled terror
awakes aghast in the middle of the night
and dreams
a sudden moment
gives it a face in the eyes of children.
Fine threads tie it to the surrounding landscape.

IV

There are people who do nothing but wait
They are not poets
Never have been revolutionaries
Nor can they attract light to their side
Now and then a tuft of cloud
Passes over their heart
And covers it.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

JOB

Not one of us
ever speaks up
for his voice
each one of us
makes for
the caves of fantasy.
Shadows
bottles of spreading scent
multi-folded
dust-jackets.
Thus another piece of glass cuts our wounds
and we scrape them with another.
And go on herds of sheep, sons
girls of marriageable age
houses and servants.
Not one of us ever speaks up
for his life
each one of us makes for
the hideouts of fantasy.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

VARIATIONS

A

Love
dissolves into froth
its eyes blink in the night
moist
among pebbles

The girl combs the brightness in her hair
and sings.

B

Love
dissolves into froth
its eyes blink in the night
when molecules of water break;
it is madness which stimulates it
the madness that irons the brightness in her hair
and sings.

A

Freedom abides in the eyes
neither too high
nor too low
and its breath, so pure and gentle,
you cannot feel it in the still night;
it is only dimply lit
and smiles a little
when it rains.

B

Freedom abides in the eyes
neither too high
nor too low
and its breath, so pure and gentle
that in the still night
words remain motionless.
Freedom ties fear outside your door
like a tired horse;
it is only dimly lit
and smiles a little
when it rains.

Translated from the Greek by Yannis Goumas

RAIN

The south wind brought a soft goddess
wetted the bronze
the fountain
the wings of a swallow and the golden hair
the tide
the sand
the fish
quietly wetted a temple a bathroom a theater
This serene procession of the soft goddess
Wetted my tongue

THE SUN

The countryside of Karumogine produces marble
I spent one summer there
Neither skylarks nor snakes were to be seen
Only the sun came up from a blue orchard of damson
And went down into an orchard of damson
A boy laughed as he seized a dolphin in the brook

Translated from the Japanese by Hosea Hirata

HAND

The spirit's artery snapped God's film snapped
When I grope for the darkness of lips
taking the hand of a ghostly air
which dreams through the withered timber
A honeysuckle reaches out
making a rock fragrant
and killing a forest
A hand reaching for the bird's neck and the dusk of gems
In this dreaming hand
Lies Smirna's dream
A burning rose bush

PLATE

Long time ago when yellow violets were blooming
dolphins raising their heads toward both the heaven and the sea
a sharp-pointed ship adorned with flowers
Washing his face in a plate with a pattern of sailing while
Dionysus crossed the Mediterranean Sea with a jeweler
That boy's name has been forgotten
A glorious morning of oblivion

Translated from the Japanese by Hosea Hirata

WINDOW CLEANER

last sunday
i felt your presence
even through the glass

i watched you fascinated
as you peeled layer
upon layer of grime
from the window

i blew out the lamps
and welcomed the light
that poured into the room

even when it exposed
my negligence the dust
and cobwebs that had built up
over time i was stunned
by the novelty of it

gradually i became
overwhelmed my eyes stung
and i felt as though
i were burning
at the mouth of the sun

you arrived that sunday
full of good intentions
a pail in one hand a rag
in the other and i admit
you scrubbed all morning
until finally you could
see my eyes

but then last week
even i didn't know
how thin the panes had become
from years of melting
slowly downward

how they had become
like fine sheets of ice
after a century
of settling
close to the earth

WHAT MEN ARE FOND OF

men are fond of lemon crêpes
with their high meringue topping

men are especially
fond people

and proud too

of their dexterity and precision
when measuring the flour
of their stamina
when beating the batter
especially proud
of their perseverance
when treating the pan

men are fond
and not limited in their taste
they are interested in a variety of ways
to top their crêpes
for instance
strawberry and blueberry
are high on their list

in general
men are not as fond of cream
as are women
for men cream is a luxury
an extra
something women imply
they have forgotten
in order to subtly criticize
their overall
culinary performance

but men
being basically generous
and fond people
do not abandon their art
in spite of such intimations

and women
are apt to notice
and appreciate men
who prepare their crêpes slowly
who pour them with love

on the whole
women are fond of men

especially of men
who demonstrate
a certain mastery in the kitchen
men who have some control
over all their utensils

PARTY WOUNDS

This morning I examine them—
these, my party wounds: the abrasion
running down my back like a strip
of hot tape, the twisted ankle,
the swollen jaw and the stale memory
of whiskey that slid down my throat
like warm honey.

These are the wounds I gathered
in my arms in a moment of inspiration
as though they were a bouquet
of long-stemmed daisies. Struck
and impassioned with my own despair
I left the fireflies, the wine-
crazed wasps, and the flailing
night-bodies to their own
wild, erratic devices.

These are the wounds I stuffed
in a sack and flung over my shoulder,
stumbling through the night
as though it were an up-hill
obstacle course. These are the wounds
I accumulated in a single evening;
combined they developed monstrous
proportions. They became huge
like the boulder I pushed over the cliff
for the sole purpose of shaking
the solid earth
loose of its flowers.

Susan L. Hamilton

FROM AN OLD SONG

We bathed in the river
in a place that had been made sacred
for this occasion
we must celebrate then we were separated
and I went back to the house
                it was empty
except for the gifts that you left.

Reds and yellows
I put on thin gold rings
silver chains around my neck
and waist
I have bracelets of little bells
osprey feathers and shells
have been arranged in my hair
    my scarf is silk and the fringe
is touching my ankles
    I hold a white stone
with a broken circle around it.

I wanted something
to remind me of you
    but this is all you gave me
    everything I am wearing tonight
    and the name taken from an old song
in a special ceremony on the last day
I am asked to leave them here
my old clothes are returned to me
and then the house is burned
I am not allowed to take anything
with me
and I will probably forget
where I have been.

I accepted these things
because I wanted gifts
    they must be discarded now
before I can discover their significance
    it is too dark to find
what I brought with me
I will have to go
    without the usual necessities
these colours
and the weight of grief or anger
would make me conspicuous
and endanger my survivial
    outside the dancers are waiting
I raise my arms
and know that I shall sing

    the white stone in my hand
may be the moon.

Wolfgang Borchert

"After All, Rats Sleep At Night"

The hollow window in the isolated wall yawned blue-red full of early evening sun. A cloud of dust shimmered among the towering carcasses of chimneys. The wasted ruins slumbered. He had his eyes closed. Suddenly it became a trifle darker. He realized that someone had come and now stood before him, dark, silent. Now they've got me! he thought. But as he blinked a little, he saw just two somewhat poorly dressed legs. These stood before him bent a bit so that he could look through between them. He risked a fast glance above the trouser legs and glimpsed an old man. He had a knife and a basket in his hand. And some dirt on his fingertips.

So, you're really sleeping, heh? asked the man and looked down at the bushy hair below him. Jurgen squinted into the sun between the man's legs and said: No, I'm not sleeping. I have to stand guard here. The man nodded: I see, that's probably why you have the big stick there?

Yes, Jurgen answered bravely and held the stick tightly.

Well, what are you guarding then?

I can't tell you that. He tightened his hands around the stick.

Probably money, right? The man set the basket down and wiped the knife blade back and forth on the seat of his trousers.

No, it's not money, said Jurgen contemptuously. Something very different.

Well, what then?

I can't tell. Just something else.

Well, don't then. And of course I won't tell you what I have here in the basket either. The man nudged the basket with his foot and flipped the knife shut.

Bah! I can imagine what's in the basket, said Jurgen disdainfully, rabbit food.

Tarnation, yes! said the man astonished. You sure are a smart fellow. How old are you?

Nine.

Well, imagine that, only nine. Then of course you must know how much three times nine is?

Sure, said Jurgen, and to give himself time to think he said; That's really an easy one. And he looked through between the man's legs. Three times nine, right? he asked again, twenty-seven. I know that one, too.

Right, said the man, and I have exactly that many rabbits.

Jurgen's mouth went round: Twenty-seven?

You can see them, many are still quite young, too. Do you want to?

But, I can't. I have to stand guard, said Jurgen uncertainly.

Always? asked the man, at night, too?

At night, too. Always. All the time. Jurgen looked above the bent legs. Since last evening, he whispered.

But then don't you go home at all? You certainly have to eat.

Jurgen lifted a stone. There lay half a loaf of bread. And a tin box.

You smoke? asked the man, do you have a pipe?

Jurgen held his stick tightly and said timidly: I roll. I don't like a pipe.

Too bad, the man stooped over his basket, you could have come and looked at the rabbits. Especially the young ones. Maybe you could have picked out one for yourself. But of course you can't leave here.

No, said Jurgen sadly, no, no.

The man lifted the basket and straightened himself. Well, if you've got to stay here—that's too bad. And he turned around.

If you won't tell on me, said Jurgen quickly, it's because of the rats.

The bent legs stepped back a step: Because of the rats?

Yes, they eat the dead. Eat people. That's what they live on.

Who said that?

Our teacher.

And now you're guarding the rats? asked the man.

No, not them! And then he said very gently: My brother, he's lying under there. There. Jurgen pointed to the sagging wall with the stick. A bomb hit our house. The light in the cellar went out. And he was gone. We called again and again. He was much smaller than I am. Only four. He must still be there. He is so much smaller than I am.

The man looked down at the bushy hair. Then he said: Yes, but then didn't your teacher tell you that rats sleep at night?

No, whispered Jurgen looking very tired, he didn't tell that.

Well, said the man, what kind of teacher is he if he doesn't even know that? After all, rats sleep at night. At night it's safe to go home. They always sleep at night. As soon as it gets dark.

Jurgen poked little holes in the debris with his stick. Nothing but little beds, he thought, all little beds. Then the man said (and his bent legs were very uneasy, too): You know what? I'm going to hurry on and feed my rabbits, and when it gets dark, I'll come back to you. Maybe I can bring one with me. A little one, what do you think?

Jurgen poked little holes in the debris. Only little rabbits. White, gray, white and gray. I don't know, he said softly and looked at the bent legs, if they really sleep at night.

The man climbed up over the remains of the wall out onto the street. Naturally, he said from there, your teacher should be dismissed if he doesn't even know that.

Then Jurgen stood up and asked: Could I really have one? A white one maybe?

I'll see, called the man as he left, but you'll have to wait here in the mean time. Then I'll go home with you, alright? After all, I'll have to tell your father how to build a rabbit stall. You'll need to know that.

Yes, called Jurgen, I'll wait. I still have to stand guard until it gets dark. Sure, I'll wait. And he called: We have some boards at home, too. Packing case boards, he called.

But the man did not hear that. With his bent legs he hurried off into the sun. It was already red with evening and Jurgen could see how the sun shone through his legs, they were so bent. And the basket swung excitedly back and forth. There was rabbit food in it. Green rabbit food that was dusty-gray from the rubble.

Translated from the German by Eric J. Campfield

Wolfgang Borchert

"Jesus Wants Nothing More To Do With It"

He lay cramped in the shallow grave. They were always plenty short so that he had to bend his knees. He felt the icy coldness in his back. He felt it like a little bit of death. He found that the sky was very far away. So horribly far away that one didn't want at all to say anymore, "God is great, God is good." His distance from the earth was horrible. All that blue sky up there did not make the distance seem any smaller. And the ground was so unearthly cold and sullen in its icy stiffness that he lay very cramped in the much too shallow grave. Was one supposed to lie so cramped his whole life long? Oh no, just his whole death long. That was indeed much longer.

Two heads appeared in the sky above the edge of the grave. "Well, how is it, Jesus?" asked the one head, and in so doing let escape from his mouth a white bundle of clouds like a wad of cotton. Jesus thrust out of his two nostrils two thin, equally white cloud pillars and answered: "Good enough, it'll do."

The heads in the sky disappeared. Like smudges they were suddenly wiped away. Without a trace. Only the sky was still there with its horrible distance.

Jesus sat up and the trunk of his body towered out of the grave. From afar he looked as if he were buried up to his stomach. Then he propped his left arm against the edge of the grave and stood up. He stood in the grave and looked sadly at his left hand. In standing up he had again torn open the recently mended finger of his glove. The frozen red finger tip stuck out here. Jesus looked at his glove and became dismayed. He stood in the much too shallow grave, breathed a warm cloud against his bare frozen finger and said softly: "I want nothing more to do with it." "What's wrong?" gaped one of the two who looked at him in the grave. "I want nothing more to do with it," said Jesus once again as softly as before and stuck the cold naked middle finger in his mouth.

"Hear that, sergeant, Jesus wants nothing more to do with it."

The other, the sergeant, counted the explosive charges in an

ammunition box and growled: "How come?" He blew wet clouds out of his mouth at Jesus: "Hey, how come?"

"No," said Jesus still just as softly as ever, "I can't do this any longer." He stood in the grave with his eyes closed. The sun made the snow unbearably white. With his eyes closed he said: "Everyday the graves multiply. Every day seven or eight graves. Yesterday even eleven. And every day the people squeezed into the graves which never fit them. Because the graves are too small. And the people are usually frozen, bent and stiff. They crunch so when they are squeezed into these tiny graves. And the ground is so hard and icy and miserable. They're supposed to endure that their whole death long. And I, I can't listen to that crunching any more. It's like crushed glass. Like glass."

"Shut up, Jesus. Get out, get out of that hole. We still have to make five graves." The cloud from the mouth of the sergeant fluttered angrily away toward Jesus. "No," he said and thrust two fancy cloud pillars out of his nose, "No." He spoke very softly and with his eyes closed: "The graves are just too shallow. When spring comes, the bones stick up out of the ground everywhere. When it thaws. Everywhere the bones. No I don't want that any more. No, no. And always me. Always I'm supposed to lie down in the grave to see if it is suitable. Always me. I've started dreaming about it. That's horrible for me, you know, that I'm always the one who's supposed to try out the graves. Always me. Always me. After a while a person starts having dreams about it. That's horrible for me, that I'm always supposed to climb into the graves." He clambered out of the shallow grave and took four steps over to a dark heap. The heap consisted of dead men. They were twisted as if they had been taken by surprise in a confused dance. Jesus laid his pickaxe softly and carefully beside the heap of dead men. He could have just thrown the pickaxe down, the pickaxe wouldn't have harmed anything. But he laid it down softly and carefully, as though he didn't want to bother or awaken anyone. For God's sake don't wake anyone. Not just out of respect, but also out of fear. Out of fear. For God's sake don't wake anyone. Then he took off through the crunching snow for the village, past the other two as if they weren't even there. Repulsively, the snow crunched that same way, quite exactly that same way. He raised his feet and stilted like a bird through the snow in order to lessen the crunching.

Behind him the sergeant screamed: "Jesus! You come back here immediately! I'm giving you an order! You come back to work immediately!" The sergeant screamed, but Jesus did not look back. He stilted like a bird through the snow, like a bird, in order to lessen the crunching. The sergeant screamed—but Jesus did not look back. Only his hands made a motion as he said: "Softly, softly! For God's sake don't wake anyone! I don't want that anymore. No. No. Always me. Always me." He became ever smaller, smaller, until he disappeared behind a snowdrift.

"I'll have to report him." The sergeant made a wet cottony bundle of

clouds in the icy air. "It's clear, I must report him. That is refusal of duty. We both saw it, and he is gone. I must report him."

"And what do you suppose they'll do with him?" grinned the other. "Nothing much. Nothing much at all." The sergeant wrote a name in his notebook. "Nothing. The old man will order him to report to his office. The old man has always gotten a kick out of Jesus. He bawls him out so that he won't eat or say anything for a couple days and lets him go. Then he is alright again for a while. But I still have to report him. Even though the old man likes him. And the graves must be made, too. Someone must get in to see whether they are suitable. That doesn't help anything."

"How did he get to be called Jesus?" grinned the other. "Oh, there's no reason. I guess the old man named him that because he looked so gentle. The old man thought he looked so gentle. Since then his name is Jesus. But of course," said the sergeant and made another explosive charge ready for the next grave, "I must report him, for the graves indeed must be."

Translated from the German by Eric J. Campfield

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

H.C. ARTMANN was born in Austria in 1921. He is a popular and leading poet, known particularly for his dialect poems.

HELEN BAROLINI is a writer and translator. Her novel, *Umbertina*, was published by Seaview and just released in paperback by Bantam.

PAUL BELSERENE has published poetry and fiction in numerous periodicals. He edited *Canadian Short Fiction Anthology II* for Intermedia Press.

JENS BJØRNEBOE was a dominant figure in Norwegian literature until his death in 1976. He has written a number of plays, essays and novels. The first volume of his trilogy, "History of Bestiality", won the Norwegian State Prize of Culture. (cf Esther Murer.)

ROBERT BLY is one of the leading poets and translators in the U.S. He received the National Book Award in 1968. A new anthology he edited, *News of the Universe*, is published by the Sierra Club.

WOLFGANG BORCHERT was born in Hamburg in 1921. Drafted into the German Army in 1941, he was sent to the Russian front where he was wounded and his health ruined. He was sentenced to death for anti-Third Reich statements, released to serve on the Eastern front, discharged due to ill health, retried and sent to prison. He was freed at war's end and walked 400 miles home. A broken man, Borchert lived only another two years, during which he turned out virtually all his writings. He died at 26.

LENNOX BROWN is a playwright living in London but soon to move to Canada. *Summer Screen* was professionally read in New York.

ITALO CALVINO is a leading Italian writer. He has published eight books in N.A., including *Cosmicomics* and *Invisible Cities*.

ERIC J. CAMPFIELD is a free-lance writer and photographer. He has recently completed translations of Brecht.

EDUARDO CARRANZA was born in Colombia in 1915.

PIER GIORGIO DI CICCO is a free-lance editor and literary consultant and has published eight volumes of poetry, his latest being *The Tough Romance* (McClelland & Stewart, 1979).

GEVORG EMIN is Armenia's leading poet. In 1977 he received the State Prize for the best book of poetry published that year in the U.S.S.R. *Land, Love, Century* (New and Selected Poems) will appear soon.

R.A.D. FORD was awarded the Governor-General's Award in 1956. He is well-known for his poetry and translations. His latest book is *Holes in Space.* Mr. Ford is presently Canada's Ambassador to the U.S.S.R.

SUSAN L. HAMILTON is a poet living in Vancouver and on Vancouver Island.

HOSEA HIRATA is a poet and translator living in Vancouver.

DHÍMITRA HRISTODHOÚLOU was born in Athens in 1953. He has published two books of poetry.

JUAN RAMÓN JIMINEZ, one of Spain's best known poets, was a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

JASCHA KESSLER is a well-known, accomplished translator. His latest anthology, *The Face of Creation: 21 Hungarian Poets,* has just been published by Illuminati Press, Los Angeles.

MARÍA LAÏNÁ was born in Patras in 1947. She has published four books of poetry and is a translator of Pound and Eliot.

M.P. LANTEIGNE is a 25 year old student at the University of Winnipeg.

NÍKOS LÁZARIS was born in 1947 in Piraeus. He has published two volumes of poetry and a volume, translated by Yannis Goumas, will be published by Oasis Books, London.

FRAY LUIS DE LÉON was born in Spain in 1527. He was a teacher, translator and monk. He spent five years in jail for his unorthodox interpretations of the *Bible.*

SAMMY MCLEAN teaches at the University of Washington in Seattle.

FLORENCE MCNEIL has published six books of poetry. Her latest is *A Balancing Act* (McClelland & Stewart, 1979).

BREON MITCHELL is a professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana University and has published a study of Joyce's influence on the German novel.

ESTHER MÜRER lives in Philadelphia. She has translated four novels by Bjørneboe, including his award-winning *Moment of Truth* (Norton, 1975).

JUNZABURO NISHIWAKI was born in Japan in 1894. He is an important poet and has become the centre of the modernist movement in Japanese poetry.

HELGA NOVAK is a well-known German poet.

ALEXANDROS PANAGOULIS was a principal figure in the revolt against the military Junta that ruled Greece, 1967-74. After an attempt to assassinate the junta leader he was imprisoned and tortured. He wrote poetry on scraps of paper, sometimes using his blood as ink. After the overthrow he was released, became an M.P. and died in an accident in 1976, shortly before his announced intention to reveal documents incriminating certain politicians. The story of his struggles is presented in the soon-to-be-released book, *A Man* by Oriana Fallaci. Some of his lyrics have been set to music by Mikos Theodorakis.

JÁNOS PILINSZKY is a well-known Hungarian poet. These poems will be included in a forthcoming anthology of Hungarian poetry (cf Jascha Kessler).

AL PURDY is one of Canada's best known poets. He is also a critic, editor and anthologist, and was a recipient of the Governor-General's Award. These poems are from Mr. Purdy's latest volume, *The Stone Bird*, to be published by McClelland & Stewart in January.

MARTIN ROBBINS is a poet and translator living in Massachusetts. His collection of Emin translations will be published next year.

VILAS SARANG was educated in Bombay and Indiana and taught in Iraq before returning to India. He has published one volume of poetry and his prose has appeared in numerous magazines. He was included in the anthology, *New Writing in India* (Penguin).

GARY N. SEA lives in Switzerland where he is working on a new translation of Rilke's *New Poems, First Part*.

EVE SIEGEL is a San Francisco poet whose work has appeared in numerous periodicals.

TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER is one of Scandinavia's finest poets. He has published six volumes of poetry.

MICHAEL TREGEBOV was born in Winnipeg and is presently living in Barcelona, writing, and translating Lorca. He has published one book, *Changehouse*.

DERK WYNAND was born in Germany in 1944 and came to Canada in 1952. He has published three volumes of poetry with a fourth to appear this year, *One Cook, Once Dreaming*. His translations of Artmann appear courtesy Residenz Verlag, Salzburg who hold the copyright (1974) of *Unter der Bedeckung eines Hutes* by H.C. Artmann.

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