

**LUCIAN BLAGA**

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS BY

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## INTRODUCTION

I have been asked by the publisher to address briefly the special problems involved in translating Lucian Blaga's poems into English. My appreciations for the experience of immersion in a literature with cultural, poetic, and linguistic differences from my own – which a reader might share.

A reader or translator must realize that in Blaga's tradition the old priest / poets used poetry to heal, and that nature's mythological entities are still intact (although under attack). This kind of romanticism is positive rather than evasive. Pathos burns, melts itself, and gives out a lively light.

My own experience in American poetry conditioned me to think of modern poetry in terms of Ezra Pound's call for clear, hard, dry language, or in terms of W.C. Williams' "say it, not in ideas but in things." In this tradition, the poet knows nothing before the poem, and uses the poem as a vehicle of discovery. Blaga's poems might derive from a more "Eastern" attitude, which assumes that the essential poetic experience, and the expression of it, is already known. The poet perfects his version of it, as E. Fenollosa describes in Chinese poetry:

*. . . the lines of metaphoric advance are still shown, and in many cases actually retained in the meaning. Thus a word, instead of growing gradually poorer and poorer as with us, becomes richer and still more rich from age to age . . . manifold illustrations which crowd its annals of personal experience, the lines of tendency which converge upon a tragic climax, moral character as the very core of the principle-- all these are flashed at once on the mind as reinforcing values with accumulation of meaning . . .*

Blaga speaks with a distinctly original, major voice in the twentieth century. But the verities of his cosmos and Romanian earth arise from a 2,000-year-old civilization in a way which prompts one contemporary Romanian writer to say, "Somewhere in us we have already experienced everything."

This experience appears to reflect itself in the attitude, the metaphors, and the language of the poetry. If most current American poetry is anti-sentimental, direct, and pragmatic, it may be contrasted to a poetry that is emotional, complicated, philosophical, musical, and metaphoric. An American poet hesitates to identify self with landscapes, seasons, and galactic motions; avoids abstractions like "void," "heavens," "soul," "time." But Blaga's relationship to a cosmic environment and

timeless culture provides the seedground of large poetry. The taproot of Romanian poetry leads to a sonorously grave poem of emotional or philosophic contemplation, developed coherently, which moves to unify the poet with the earth, with the tree that grows his coffin, or with visions of space which annihilate and join him. Time may become geologic or even geographic, as in "Biography."

A Romanian experiences depth in phrases which in English might come across as romantic sentimentality. In these cases, one hopes the authenticity and emotion of the poem confirms the aptness of phrase and attitude. The metaphoric mode of Blaga's poetry is not a mask or an escape, but a necessary anxiety, the admission of mystery from which art springs, the nebula out of which humanity appears. With 25 books of philosophic essays as substratum, one must trust that Blaga used the conceptual word—the abstract "soul," "silence," or "impenetrable veil"—consciously because it is the most precise. Being first moved by those Blaga poems which use an ideal "fresh" language, I was tempted to wish all his poems were in that mode. I finally came to respect and be most deeply moved by the metaphoric poems in which "trite" phrases illustrate the culture's total experience. They gain—in long reflection of philosophy, folklore, defeat, grandeur, and earth-experience—the "consciously luminous" reference.

A corollary problem we have with Blaga in translation comes with the accumulations of meanings around a concept. For example, for "horizon" we think "distance," "view," or even the "boundary of knowledge and the beginning of expectation." In context maybe even associate "the great circle of the celestial sphere." But Blaga, with his pastoral horizon of gentle mountains and valleys standing in front of the cosmos, means even more. Seeking in old poetry and legend for the "soul" of Romania, he discovers it in "mioritic space." With his research in folk myth and apocryphal Bible stories, he perceived that the imagination of the Romanian is preoccupied with the origin of mountains and valleys, a specific engagement to the active-passive horizon. Like the Greeks, they might have constructed a mythology centered in their Black Sea (or like Americans, on open space). Instead, in Romanian stories, the greatest day of creation yielded the mountains and valleys of their particular cosmogonic horizon.

In one story, when God thought at first to create the world flat, but the mountains followed him until he relented and included them. In these old stories, the presence of their mountains is an exceptional fact that involves Romanian participation with the Beginnings of the cosmos. The rise-and-fall of landscape against a larger horizon represents psychic realities. In folk legends the mountains are not the same as other natural phenomena; they are a special secret halo on the earth created specifically Romanian. Their configurations are not sharp peaks and abrupt abysses, but old gentle

mountains, even sinuous (in his essays Blaga comments on the wide use of serpentine symbols). Even the Romanian sculptor Brancusi copied the repetition of these horizon-forms, and raised undulating figures to the vertical.

“Horizon” in the Romanian psyche also appears in stories with a Faustian motif. The Romanian Adam made his bargain not for Faust's personal beauty, power, or wisdom—only that Satan creates a Romanian specific on earth. In order to sign the bargain, the archetypal Romanian left the prints of his three strong fingers in a piece of clay. Satan's role is not unusual in Romanian creation myths. In another that Blaga mentions, God and Satan collaborated in creating the earth. Satan was holding out on his responsibility for the earth's mountains and valleys. At the last moment of creation they were formed when Satan had to spit out some Romanian earth he had been hiding in his mouth to get the best of God.

In his philosophic works, Blaga proposes the human condition as “existence linked and conditioned by the horizon of mystery.”

I hope that the myriad associations with “horizon” indicate the impossibility of translating its resonance. In Blaga's poems, please pause on other such resonant words as simple as “silence,” “clay,” “moss,” “sky,” “white,” “thread,” or “grandfathers.” One dare not oversimplify Blaga's preoccupation with the moon, which as a force attracts him more than the fire / light of the sun: it is the same horizon of mystery.

Besides the difficulty of translating such conceptual resonance, how to represent their emergence from Romanian folklore? Blaga regards the village as a specific entity, a paradise of archetypes, magic rituals, and ecstatic moods. He wrote book-length discussions of the folk stories “Miorita” and “Mesterul Manole” to demonstrate how they sublimated and transformed “orthodox” Romanian spiritual realities.

The folk ballad “Miorita” (“Ewe-lamb”) is a primary statement of Romanian poetic sensibility. To begin with, it takes place in a mountainous “horizon.” Miorita warns an innocent shepherd that he will be killed for his possessions by two jealous mercenary shepherds. He does not act or hope for personal justice. He makes his final wishes in a conversation with nature (in the person of the ewe-lamb); he speaks of his coming marriage with the bright bride of the world. The sun and moon are his attendants, the mountain his priest, with trees as wedding-guests and a falling star the celebrator of his wedding night. In a mixture of longing (“*dor*”) and fatality, he manages a kind of triumphal transformation. With his contemplative and projective powers, he realizes himself conceptually as part of ageless nature. “Miorita” emphasizes the inseparable qualities of Eros and Thanatos in ways not open to rational illumination. With

overtones of the Demeter-Persephone myths, it is a nostalgic hymn to nature-religion (see Blaga's poems to Pan). The shepherd's bone and beech flutes are left to sing a siren song in the wind, of one who lived and loved fully in his own conception of the universe— though he may not have seemed to act wisely in the eyes of other men.

One senses in this poetry a return of the house-gods, the forest- spirits, and a national historicity. Although Blaga thoroughly integrated himself in the traditions of a European culture, his roots are in old religious exercise, folklore, ritual experience. Romania has an active national mythologic center, a "history of the spirit" also evidenced in the story of Manole, the Master Builder. Manole is frustrated in his attempt to build the perfect monastery, because each night the day's work is destroyed. He learns from a dream that a woman must be built into the church in order to finish it. He and his men decide that the first woman to come to the site will be sacrificed. The next day, seeing his own wife coming from far off with his lunch, Manole prays for divine intervention. But she persists through three trials (typically storm, beasts, and fire) to become the victim and the inspiration for the most beautiful monastery ever dedicated. Even so, the nobleman who commissioned the work, jealous that Manole might be able to make another even more beautiful, takes away the ladders. In the place where Manole dies in his leap from the basilica arises a cross (and in some versions, a spring). Manole's "cross" of choosing between his personal love or his duty makes this story archetypal not only for the conflicts of the psyche, but also of the artist. As it relates to a poet's projections to cosmic centers outside himself, Romanians point out that Manole cannot put himself in the wall. He must bring in his Ana (the external reference for his personal love). He (the poet or the builder) experiences the temporal drama, but the catalyst and inspiration are external to him, to be called from mythic or cosmic metaphors: "the Great Bear echos back" or "stars rise and bid me hold my tongue." Blaga's interest in these stories might partially explain his uses of "mythic" poetry: to present his personal perceptions; to search for a place to fix memory or rest; to project the desired ultimate vision— as in ". . . where is the word -- that binds both footstep and thought to death?"

These poems do not demand a complete understanding of Greek, folk, or Christian mythologies (of creation, birth, vision, and death), but they are enriched by careful attention to them. Blaga often seems to say that he will not be understood except by these gods. Certainly his philosophic, folk-tradition, and mythic references place special demands on the translator and reader. However, Blaga's ability to strike to the communal resonance or archetypal patterns results in richness, not obscurity.

Among Romanian poets, Blaga is not exceptionally formal, is more "open" than technically structured. However, a special problem of translating from Romanian to

English is translating from a rhyme-rich to a rhyme-poor language. From time to time we tried to render into English the formal elements of music, rhythm, and rhyme, especially with those poems which depended more on music than on other elements. But more often we translated regular rhyme into blank verse, slant rhyme, or occasional rhyming patterns that would approximate in English its normal frequency of rhyme--as the more frequent rhymes are normal in Romanian speech. We could thus be truer to the diction, syntax, inner movement, and linguistic deviations that represent Blaga's personal style.

Our working premise for this translation has been just that: to represent in the most literal ways possible Blaga's special language and style. We never regarded the texts as something from which a poem in another language could be derived. Interpretative versions of our own translations might in some cases result in poems that seem more "finished," but we have left some poems as more-or-less raw literal equivalents because we regard this collection as an inclusive statement of the resources of Blaga's poetry, not a translator's uses of that poetry.

Still there were problems peculiar to the very literality we desired. One language's polysemy (Romanian) meeting a richer language's synonymy (English) required a judicious selection of the corresponding synonym. Often we had to decide what the poet might have liked to remain ambiguous. We did not interpolate English parallels for many special phrases or words that in Romanian give birth to a complex series of indefinite responses, sending a Romanian almost unawares to myths, ballads, or traditions that don't have to be told. Someone reading the whole of the collection will be able to discover some of those nuances for himself.

Translating from a synthetical to an analytical language brings its myriad difficulties, but they are not peculiar to Romanian. What leaves a translator feeling most inadequate is that Romanian poetry not only springs from the heart of the language, but also has a larger than usual role in forming and defining it. In many ways Blaga's lexicon is modern Romanian, and his poems give reference to what it feels to be a Romanian. But the nuances that reveal what makes a histo-geographic space hold a unitary consciousness are exactly what cannot be translated.

DON EULERT

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## **POEMS OF LIGHT (1919)**

## I DO NOT CRUSH THE WORLD'S COROLLA OF WONDERS

I do not crush the world's corolla of wonders;  
my mind does not kill  
the mysteries I meet  
on my way  
in flowers, eyes, on lips or in tombs.  
The light of others  
strangles the spell of the hidden, unpenetrated in depths of darkness,  
but I,  
I with my light increase the secret of the world--  
as the moon with her white rays  
does not diminish, but shimmering  
intensifies night's mystery.  
I do myself enrich the dark horizon with shivers of sainted secret,  
and what's not comprehended  
becomes even more incomprehensible  
under my own watching--  
because I love  
flowers and eyes, and lips and tombs.

## LIGHT

Is not the light  
that floods my heart when I look at you  
a speck of the light  
made on the first day  
from light thirsting deep for life?

Nothingness lay in agony  
when all alone drifting through the dark  
the Unfathomed gave a sign:  
"Let there be light!"

An ocean  
and wild storm of light  
straightway was made:  
a thirst for sin, desire, elan and passion,  
a thirst for world and sun.

The blinding light that was,  
where has it disappeared? Who knows?

The light i feel flooding  
my breast when I look at you-- wonderful one--  
is maybe the last speck of light  
made on the first day.

## THE OAK

In clear distances I hear in a tower  
a bell beating like a heart  
and in sweet echoes  
it seem to me  
that my veins carry drops of silence, not blood.

You, oak, at the forest's edge,  
why should I be defeated  
by so much peace  
with its soft wings  
lying in your shade  
coddled by your playful leaf?

O, who knows -- From your trunk  
they might soon cut  
my coffin  
and even now I seem to feel  
the peace  
that I shall taste between its boards:

I feel it dripping into my soul by your leaf--  
and dumb  
I listen to the coffin in your body growing  
my coffin,  
with each growing movement  
you, oak at the forest's edge.



## SILENCE

There is such silence here that I seem to hear  
the moonrays striking at the windows.

In my chest  
a strange voice wakes  
it sings a song of longing not mine.

They say, grandfathers dead before their time,  
with young blood in their vein,  
great passions in their blood,  
living sun in their passions,  
come now,  
come now to live on  
in us  
the life they did not live.

There is such silence here that i seem to hear  
the moonrays striking at the windows.

Oh, who knows, my soul, in what body singing to yourself  
you will play after ages  
on strings, sweet chords of silence  
on harps of darkness, your strangled longing  
and your broken lust for life? Who know?  
Who knows?

## I WAIT FOR MY DUSK

My eyes washed by the starred dome,  
I know that I too carry  
in my soul many, many stars  
and milky ways,  
wonders of darkness.  
But I can't see them,  
there's too much sun in me,  
that's why i can't see them.  
I wait for my day to set,  
for my horizon to close its eyelids,  
I wait for my dusk, my night and pain,  
the darkening of my sky  
so the stars in me might rise,  
my stars  
which I have not  
yet seen.

## **BUT THE MOUNTAINS-- WHERE ARE THEY?**

From the clean caves of eternity  
moments fall like drops of rain.  
I listen and my soul says to itself:

I was brought up on the mystery of the world  
and in her palms fate holds my course;  
the infinite has kissed my brow  
and into my big trunk  
I quaff hard belief from the sun.

From the clean caves of eternity  
moments fall like drops of rain.  
I listen and my soul wonders:

But the mountains-- where are they? The mountains  
I am to move with faith out of my way

I can't see them,  
I want them, I shout for them, and--they are not!

## THE SHIVER

Is this death then at my bedside?  
In the dead of night,  
when the moon directs her blank look at me,  
when flights or bats  
kiss the brow of darkness at my window pane,  
I sometimes feel a shiver  
run my body from top to toe  
as if cold hands  
with fingers of ice we're playing in my hair.

Is this death then at my bedside?  
And in the moonlight  
is she counting my grey hairs?

## **DON'T YOU SENSE?**

Don't you sense my madness when you hear  
life murmuring in me  
like a gushing spring  
In an echoing cave?

Don't you sense my heat when in my arms  
you tremble like a drop  
of dew held  
by rays of light?

Don't you sense my love when passionate  
I look down the abyss that's in you  
and say:  
O, never have I seen God  
greater !?

## HEAVEN'S LIGHT

I laugh to the sun!  
My heart is not in my head,  
nor have I brains in my heart.  
I am drunk with the world, heathen that I am!  
Might so much laughter thrive in my field  
without the heat of evil?  
Might so much magic flower on your lip  
you Saint,  
were you not worried  
with the hidden voluptuous sin?  
Like a heretic I brood and wonder:  
How has heaven  
Its light? - I know: - hell lights it  
with its flames!

## THE SHELL

With a daring smile I look into myself  
and take my heart in hand. Trembling  
I press this treasure to my ear and listen.

It seems to me  
that I am holding a shell in my hands,  
in which  
long and unfathomable  
sounds the murmur of an unknown sea.

Oh, shall I ever reach  
the shore  
of that sea, which today  
I can feel  
but cannot see?

## **THREE FACES**

The child laughs:

“My wisdom and my love is play!”

The young man sings:

“My wisdom and my play is love!”

The old man is silent:

“My love and my play is wisdom!”



## MARCH

Out of a tangled skein of clouds  
the wind spins  
long threads of rain.  
Frolicsome flakes of snow  
would seat themselves in mud,  
but how they loathe it--  
they rise again  
and fly to find  
their nests on boughs.  
Wind and cold--  
and the buds,  
over-greedy for light,  
now pull their ears  
into their collars.

## EVE

When the serpent handed eve the apple, he spoke to her  
in a voice that tinkled  
from the leaves like a silver bell.  
But he also happened to whisper  
something in her ear  
softly, ever so softly,  
something the scriptures tell us nothing of.

Not even God could hear what the serpent whispered,  
though He listened also.  
And Eve would speak none of it to  
Adam.

Ever since that day, woman keeps a secret in her eye  
and quivers her eyelash as if to say  
she knows something  
we don't know,  
something no one knows,  
not even God.

## THE DREAMER

Hanging from the air among branches  
a spider in his silk  
frets.

The moon's ray  
woke him from his sleep.

Why does he toss about? He has dreamed  
the moonbeam is a thread of his own, and  
now he tries to climb  
up to the heavens on the beam.  
The daring fool keeps struggling  
and hurls himself upwards.  
And I am afraid  
he'll fall -- the dreamer.

## THE ETERNAL

Bewildered we seek it, groping in the dark  
we scent it in ourselves or in the glory of the world,  
even sense it into morrows  
and in nights that have been, in resignation might find it.

An impenetrable veil hides the eternal in darkness.  
Nobody can see it, nobody--  
And yet everyone finds it  
just as in the dark I find your lips,  
my love, at midnight when we whisper  
in secret big words the meaning of life.

## **SPRINGS OF THE NIGHT**

You beauty,  
your eyes are so dark that in the evening  
when I lie with my head in your lap  
it seems  
your deep eyes are the springs  
from which the night mysteriously flows  
over the valleys, over mountains and plains,  
covering the earth  
with a sea of darkness.  
So deep-dark are your eyes  
my light.

## THE THORNS

I was a child. I remember, I once gathered  
wild roses.

They had many thorns,  
but I wouldn't break them off.  
I thought they were -- buds  
and one day would bloom.

And then I met you. Oh, how many thorns,  
how many thorns you had,  
but I would not strip you of them--  
I thought they might blossom.

Today it all comes back  
to me and I smile. I smile  
and ramble through the valleys  
restless in the winds. I was a child.

## THE STALACTITE

Silence is my spirit--  
and as I stand petrified and calm  
like a hermit of stone  
It seems to me  
i am a stalactite in a huge grotto  
where the vault is the sky.

Gently,  
gently,  
gently -- drops of light  
and drops of peace -- trickle down increasingly  
from the sky  
and petrify -- in me.

## HIGH UP

On a mountain peak  
High up. Only the two of us.  
Like this: when I am with you  
I feel unspeakably near  
the sky.  
So near  
it seems if I should shout  
your name to the horizon  
I would hear its echo  
thrown back by the vault of the sky.  
Only the two of us.  
High up.



## LEGEND

Shining at heaven's gate  
stood Eve.  
She looked at twilight's wounds healing on the sky  
and dreaming  
she bit the apple  
held out by the serpent.  
So it happened,  
a pip of the cursed fruit stuck between  
her teeth. Preoccupied, Eve blew it into the wind,  
she lost it in the dust, where it sprouted.  
An apple-tree sprang up there -- others followed  
in the long line of centuries.  
One rough, strong trunk was  
the one  
from which the master Pharisees  
cut Jesus' cross.  
Oh, dark pip cast to the winds  
by Eve's white teeth.

## **PAX MAGNA**

Why, on burning summer mornings,  
do I feel I am a speck of godhead down on earth  
and kneel before myself as if I were an idol?  
Why does my ego drown in an ocean of light  
like the blaze of a torch in the day's furnace?

Why, on deep winter nights  
when distant suns kindle in the sky  
and eyes of praying wolves below take fire,  
why does a shrill voice cry out in the dark  
that the Devil laughs nowhere more at home  
than in my heart?

Maybe, after their eternal war,  
God and Satan thought it wiser to clasp hands  
that each might thus be greater. So they've made peace  
in me; together they have dripped into my soul  
faith and love, doubts and lies.

Light and sin  
Embracing in me became brothers for the first time  
since the world began, since angels  
in hatred crushed the temptation-scaled serpent,  
since the venom-eyed serpent lay in wait  
to bite and poison the heel of truth.

## MELANCHOLY

A stray wind wipes his cold tears  
on my windowpane. It's raining.  
Vague sorrows are born in me, though all  
the pain  
is not inside me  
in my heart,  
in my breast,  
but in the rivulets of rain.  
The wide world, grafted on my being  
hurts me like a wound.  
The full-uddered clouds glide to the mountains.  
And it's raining.

## **THE PROPHET'S FOOTSTEPS (1921)**

## PAN

Covered by withered leaves Pan lies on a rock.  
He is blind and he is old.  
His flint eye-lids  
uselessly try to blink,  
His eyes have closed -- like snails for winter.

Warm dew-drops fall on his lips:  
one,  
two,  
three.  
Nature waters her God.

Oh, Pan!  
I see his stretching out his hand, taking a twig  
and feeling  
its buds with small strokes.

A lamb comes close among the bushes.  
The blind God hears him and smiles,  
since Pan knows no greater joy  
than to take lambs' heads gently between his hands  
to feel for their little horns under the soft wool buttons.

Silence.

All around him the sleepy caves yawn.  
He gets caught and yawns, too.  
He stretches and says to himself,  
"The dew-drops are big and warm,  
the little horns crop up,  
the buds are full.  
Can it be spring?"

## **FOLLOW ME, COMRADES!**

Come near me, comrades! It's autumn,  
the wormwood in grapes  
and their venom in dewlaps of adders  
is ripening.

With a shout today I would like to toast  
my wild wonder which goes,  
leaving me alone  
with my weeping,  
with you,  
and with autumn.

Come closer! - and let those  
who have ears hear:  
pains are deep only when they laugh.  
So let bitterness laugh in me today  
in roars of laughter and throw  
his goblet to the clouds!

Come near me, comrades, let us drink!  
Ha, ha! What glitters so strange in the sky?  
Is it the moon's horn?  
No, no! It's a shard of a golden cup  
that I broke against the sky  
with my iron arm.

I am drunk and want to pull down every dream,  
every temple and altar!

Come near me, comrades! I may die tomorrow,  
but I leave you  
my superb skull, out of which  
you should drink wormwood  
when you crave life,  
and poison  
When you want to follow me! -- Follow me, comrades!

## SUMMER

On the horizon -- far off -- voiceless lightnings  
throb from time to time  
like long spider legs -- pulled out of  
the body owning them.

Heat.

The whole earth is a wheat field  
and locusts' song.

Wheat heads hold the grain to their breasts  
like sucking babies.  
And time lazily stretches his moments  
and falls asleep among the poppies.  
A cricket chirps in his ear.

## THOUGHTS OF A DEAD MAN

I'd like to take time's hand and feel  
it's slow pulse of moments.  
What might be happening now on earth?  
Are the same flights of stars still flowing over its forehead  
and are swarms of bees  
flying out of my hives to the forests?

Heart, you are quiet now?  
Is it a long time  
since you turned up in my brief chest  
a new sun every morning  
and some old suffering every twilight?  
A day?  
or maybe ages?

There's light only two years above me.  
Milk-breasted flowers press my clay.  
If I could  
I'd stretch my hand and gather them in a bunch  
and bring them down here,  
but  
maybe the earth no longer has flowers.

My thought and eternity are as alike  
as twins.  
What world struggles in today's waves?

A thud often makes me jump.  
It might be my lover's quick steps,  
or has she also been dead  
for hundreds and thousands of years?  
They might be her talkative little steps,  
or is it autumn up there on earth,  
when juicy heavy fruit falls  
down on my tomb  
from some tree grown out of myself?



## GIVE ME A BODY YOU MOUNTAINS

I have only you, my passing body;  
however  
white and red flowers  
I do not put on your forehead or in your hair.  
Because your feeble clay  
Is too tight for this mighty soul  
I carry.

Give me a body  
you mountains,  
you oceans  
give me another body to pour my madness  
in totally!  
Big earth, be my trunk,  
be the chest for this tremendous heart  
be shelter of the storms that crush me,  
be the amphora for my stubborn ego.

Then, through space  
my magnificent steps could be heard  
and I could be tempestuous and free  
as I am,  
holy earth.

When I love,  
I'd stretch to the sky all my seas  
like some sinewed, wild, hot arms,  
to the sky  
to embrace it,  
to crush its waist  
to kiss its sparkling stars.

When I hate,  
I'd grind under my stone feet  
unfortunate suns  
travelling  
and I might smile.

But, I have only you, my passing body.

## LINES WRITTEN ON DRY GRAPE LEAVES

I

*Hafis*

At the beginning -- it is known -- the stars had their tracks  
drawn clumsily, at random, on the sky;  
from the graceful arch of your brow  
The moon leaned once  
Its curving way along the vault  
--over the sea.

II

*The Psalmist*

When you walk without sandals under the lindens,  
the pigeons asleep on the riddled eaves  
wake up, believing  
that your little steps are seeds thrown  
to them by some kind hand.

III

*Anacreon*

Among vines, red grapes look like the naked breasts  
of autumn, taking off their leaves  
one by one.  
Pluck them off their robust trunk  
and squeeze them,  
squeeze them for the earth  
in your mouth, so that I may see your little hands  
trembling with generosity  
and your fingers wet with must.

IV

*The Mystic*

Your body and your high spirit are like twins: they look so much like each other that one never  
knows which is which.  
I don't know only the face of your soul. Still, when I accidentally come across your body, I cannot  
recognize it, I am puzzled and think it to be your soul.

# THE DEATH OF PAN

## I PAN TO THE NYMPH

With frog's grasses in your hair you rise from rushes  
a wave  
reaches to envelop you and sands start to boil.  
As from a round amphora, unseen,  
You pour your naked body undulating into the grass.

And the veins of my temple throb  
like the dewlap of a lazy lizard  
that bakes in the sun,  
Your movement wafts the murmur of spring to me.

I would tear you like warm bread,  
your movement casts sweet moments into my blood.

Sand start to boil.

Summer,  
sun,  
grass!

## II THE GOD WAITS

In the stubble  
calves and mice play  
and grapevines  
hold in their palms  
tiny tree-frogs.  
With a dandelion  
between my lips  
I wait for her  
to come.

I want only  
to pass clean  
open fingers  
through her hair,  
through her hair,  
and then through the clouds  
to gather  
as from a fleece  
lightning bolts-- as in autumn

you gather from the air  
seedtufts.

### III THE SHADOWS

Pan tears honeycombs  
In the shadow of some walnut trees.

He is sad:  
monasteries are spreading through the forest,  
he is hurt by the glitter of a cross.

Martins flying around him  
and leaves of elm  
misconstrue the toaca's\* sound.  
Under the evening bell Pan is sad.  
Along his narrow path goes the shadow,  
the color of the moon,  
of Christ.

### IV PAN SINGS

I am alone and covered with burrs.  
Master, once, of a sky of stars  
and to the worlds  
I sang through my pipes.

Emptiness is tightening his strings.  
Today no stranger penetrates  
my grotto,  
Only the freckled salamanders  
And sometimes

The Moon.

---

\* *Toaca*: refers to the rhythmic hammering on a thin beam, usually a call to prayer in a monastery.

### V THE SPIDER

Chased by crosses planted in the path

Pan  
hid in a cave.  
Restless rays of life jostled  
and elbowed their way to him.  
He had no companions  
except a lone spider.  
The little snoop spun himself a net of silk  
in his ear  
and Pan, good-natured,  
caught mosquitoes for his remaining friend.

Autumns with starfalls raced by.

One day, while the good carved  
a flute from young branches of elder,  
the doltish dwarf  
walked up his hand.  
In glitterings from coprosant wood  
Pan discovered, astonished,  
that his friend had a cross on his back.  
The aged god stood frozen and mute  
in the night with starfalls,  
startled into suffering;  
the spider had converted.

On the third day he closed the coffin over his fiery eyes.  
He was covered with hoar-frost  
and dusk descended from the sound of the toaca.  
Unfinished, the flute of elder.

## **IN THE GREAT PASSAGE (1924)**

## IN THE GREAT PASSAGE

The sun in the zenith holds the day's scales.  
The sky abandons itself to the waters below.  
With quiet eyes, passing animals  
look fearlessly at their shadows in water beds.  
Flora arches deeply  
over a whole fairy tale.

Nothing wants to be different from what it is.  
Only my blood shouts through the woods  
for its distant childhood,  
like an old stag  
for his doe lost in death.

Maybe it died under the rocks.  
Maybe it sank into the earth.  
In vain I wait for news of it,  
only caves resound,  
streams require their depth.

Unanswered blood,  
o, if it were silent, how well one could hear  
the doe walking through death.

Further and further I stop on the road,  
and like a murderer whose handkerchief smothers some defeated mouth,  
I stop with my fist all the springs,  
forever silent,  
silent.

## HERACLITUS BY THE LAKE

Near green waters the paths come together.  
There are silences here, heavy, deserted by man.  
Hush, dog-- sniffing the wind with your nostrils-- hush.  
Don't banish the memories which come  
weeping to buy their faces on the ashes.

Leaning against logs I guess my fate  
on the palm of an autumn's leaf.  
Time, when you want to cut the shortest road  
What way do you go?

My steps sound in the shadow  
like some rotten fruit  
falling from an invisible tree.  
O, how hoarse with age is the spring's voice?

Any lifting of the hand  
is nothing but another doubt.

Pain requests  
the low mystery of the dust.

I throw burrs from the shore into the lake,  
with them I unfold myself in circles.



## A SWAN'S SONG GAME FROM THE SKY

A swan's song came from the sky.  
The virgins walking with barefoot beauty over buds  
can hear it. Both you and I can hear it everywhere.

The monks have shut their prayers  
into the cellars of earth. All of them stopped,  
dying behind the bolt.

Our hands, our thought, our eyes are bleeding.  
Futile you look for something to believe in.  
The dust is full with the hum of mysteries,  
but it is too close to the heels  
and too far from the brow.  
I looked, I walked, and here I am singing:  
whom shall I bow to, what shall I bow to?

Somebody poisoned man's wells.  
Not knowing that, I also dipped my hands  
into their waters, and now I am crying;  
O, I am no longer worthy  
of living among trees and among stones.  
Small things,  
big things,  
wild things -- kill my heart!

## THE SOUL OF THE VILLAGE

Little girl, put your hands on my knees.  
I think eternity was born in the village.  
Every thought is more silent here,  
and the heart beats more slowly,  
as if it were not in your breast  
but somewhere deep in the earth.  
Here the thirst for salvation is healed,  
and if your feet are bleeding  
you step on a bank of clay.  
Look, it's evening.  
The soul of the village is fluttering by  
like a shy smell of cut grass,  
like a fall of smoke from thatch eaves,  
like the tumble of kids over tall tombs.

## THE SECRET OF THE INITIATE

Doomsday. Man, it's true:  
all that has ever been  
has never changed,  
the same sky rotates on high,  
the same earth stretches below.  
But a song wells up in the open sea,  
grand and mysterious in the open sea.  
You might say that coffins opened in the depths  
and out of them  
countless larks have flown skywards.

Man, doomsday  
is like any other day.  
Bend your knees,  
wring your hands,  
open your eyes and wonder.

Man, I would tell you more  
but it's useless--  
and, besides, stars rise  
and bid me hold my tongue  
and bid me hold my tongue.

## **HAND IN HAND WITH THE GREAT BLIND MAN**

I lead him by hand through the forests.  
We leave riddles behind us in the country.  
From time to time we rest on our way.  
From the rotting muddy grass  
slimy snails climb into his beard.

I say: Father, the way of the suns is right.  
He is silent -- because he is afraid of words.  
He is silent -- because each of his words changes into deed.

Under the rough oak vault  
mosquitoes form a halo over his head.  
And we start again.  
What startled him?  
Blind Father, be quiet, there's nothing around.  
Only above a star  
parted from its sky with a golden tear.

Under high leaves we go farther, still farther.  
Dark beasts are nosing behind us  
and tamely they eat the dust  
that we walked and sat on.

## THE WORKER

You waste away, straining in an arc  
beside the big steel wheels.  
Between your thumbs you crush the breasts of matter.  
Your hands are smeared with grease and smoky are your dawns.  
Oh, worker with your apron of blue leather,  
the songs machines sing are sweeter to you  
than songs of nightingales.

Oh Worker, with your apron of blue leather,  
you know that only things  
born of man's power are beautiful.  
You know there never was a star  
made by your hand,  
and say to yourself: whatever those too-talkative poets may say,  
no star is beautiful.

From wells drilled into the axle of the earth  
you draw your buckets of fire.  
I don't know you, you don't know me,  
yet a light flickers off your face to mine;  
unintentionally I join your annunciation,  
Its cry to the holy winds.

## ON THE WATERS

I let my pigeons loose  
to check the sky's lawn,  
but torn by winds  
they turn back. On the ship's hearth  
I bury my heart under ashes  
to preserve its embers. The firebird  
no longer flutters over my walls.

This flood lasts forever.  
Nevermore my coming  
to make offerings under the high sign  
of the magic rainbow.

For a barren honey-comb  
I killed my hungry bees.  
The last animal  
wisely disappeared.  
His prophetically open eye  
is the only intelligence through the mists.

Mount Ararat remains in the sea,  
forever a sea-bottom,  
ever more deep,  
ever more vague  
sea-bottom.

## I AM NOT THE SON OF DEED

You are numberless, Sons of Deed,  
everywhere on roads, under the sky, in houses.  
I alone stand here useless, worthless,  
fit to be drowned.

Yet I wait, I have long waited for  
a kind and righteous passer-by by that I may say to him:  
O, don't avert your eyes.  
O, don't blame my idleness.  
I grow among you all, but shaded by my hands  
the mystic fruit ripens elsewhere.  
Don't curse me, don't curse me!

Friend of the depths,  
Comrade with silence,  
I dance above deeds.  
Sometimes through the ancestral flute of bone  
I send myself, in the shape of a song, towards death.

My brother looks at me questioningly,  
my sister greets me with wonder,  
but coiled at my feet the serpent,  
the serpent with his eyes ever open  
to the wisdom beyond,  
listens and understands me too well.

## ANNUNCIATION

In this long, endless night  
a woman walks under the near sky.  
She understands less than anyone  
the miracle that happened.  
She hears singing suns and asks,  
she asks and doesn't understand.  
In her body confined, as in a kindly dungeon  
a baby.  
Nine times the moon's disc goes round  
the unborn child.  
He holds motionless and grows, wondering.

.....

In the new endless night  
shepherds watch the burst of celestial signs.  
I go among them and proclaim:  
Kill your lambs on a cross  
in remembrance of the sacrifice to come.  
Stand up from near the fire  
in sheepskin coats with woolen flames.  
Take that torch that I have lighted  
from a star fallen  
to the oxen - gnawed manger  
and pass it on  
from hand to hand.

Soon the son of man shall seek a place  
whereon to lay his head,  
leaning it just as you do  
on stones or sleeping dogs.  
Soon wounds borne through our valleys  
shall be healed,  
closing like flowers in the dark.  
Soon white feet  
shall walk on waters.



## **IN PRAISE OF SLEEP (1929)**

## BIOGRAPHY

Where and when I came into light I don't know;  
from the shadows I tempt myself to believe  
that the world is a chant.

A smiling stranger -- enchanted, climbing  
in its middle -- I fulfill myself wondering.  
Sometimes I speak words that do not fit me,  
sometimes I speak words that do not answer me.  
My eyes are full of winds and dreamt deeds.  
As to walking, I walk like anyone else:  
now guilty on the rooftop of hell,  
now without sin on the mountain of lilies.

Closed by the circle of the same fire-ring  
I exchange mysteries with my grandfathers,  
the ancestors washed up by waters under stones.  
In the evening I accept and silently listen,  
how into myself pour  
stories of the long-forgotten blood.  
I bless the bread and the moon.  
In daylight I live scattered with the storm.

With words quenched in my mouth  
I sang and still sing the great passing,  
the sleep of mankind, the wax angels.  
From one shoulder to the other  
in silence I pass my star like a stone.

## SLEEP

Full night: stars dance in the grass.  
Paths retreat into forests and caves;  
the beetle is silent.  
Grey owls like urns seat themselves on firs.  
In the darkness unwitnessed  
all quiet down: birds, blood, country,  
and ever-recurring adventures.  
A soul pervades the breeze,  
There's no today,  
there's no yesterday.  
With muffled sounds among trees  
hot ages rise up.  
In sleep my blood wavelike  
draws back from me  
into my parents.

## FRAYING PARADISE

The winged porter still holds out  
the stump of a flameless sword.  
He fights no one,  
yet feels defeated.  
Everywhere on lawns and fields  
greying seraphs  
thirst for truth,  
but the waters in wells  
refuse their buckets.  
Plowing listlessly  
with wooden plows,  
archangels complain  
about the weight of their wings.  
The dove of the Holy Ghost  
passes through neighbor-suns,  
extinguishing with its bill the last lights.  
At night, naked angels  
shivering lie down in hay,  
woe is me, woe is you,  
Many spiders have filled the water of life,  
One day angels too will rot under the sod,  
Dust will dry the fairy-tales  
out of the wretched body.

## THE HOLY BIRD

*Molded in gold by sculptor C. Brancusi*

In the wind nobody started  
Orion blessed you hieratically  
weeping above you

his high and holy geometry.

You lived once on sea bottoms  
and circled close to the solar fire.  
Over floating forests you shouted  
long, over the first waters.

Are you a bird? Or a bell carried through the world?

We could call you a being, an earless grail,  
a golden song circling  
above our fright of dead mysteries.

Lingering in darkness as in fairy-tales  
with a would-be windflute  
you play to those who drink their sleep  
from dark subterranean poppies.

The light in your green eyes seems to us  
phosphorous peeled from old bones.  
Listening to worldless revelations  
under heaven's grass you lose your flight.

From the air of your arched noons  
you can guess all the mysteries in the depths.  
Rise up endlessly,  
but never disclose to us what you see.

## IN THE MOUNTAINS

Near the hermitage, midnight finds  
standing sleeping beings. The spirit of wet moss  
Wanders through the hollows.  
Owl-large moths come from the east  
to look for their ashes in fires.  
At the roots of firs, near the curse of hemlocks,  
the shepherd throws earth over  
his lambs killed by the powers of the forest.  
Going over the summit  
Sheep-fold girls rub their naked shoulders against the moon,  
their adventure supernaturally penetrated  
by the dust raised in swarms from the crescent's light.  
Yellow horses gather their life's salt from herbs.  
Smoldering under the trees, God makes himself smaller  
to give the red mushrooms room  
to grow under his back.  
In the sheep's blood the forest's night is a long and heavy dream.

Riding four deep winds  
sleep penetrates old beeches.  
Somewhere, under a rock shield,  
a dragon, his eyes turned to the polar star,  
dreams of blue milk stolen from the sheep-folds.

## ELEGY

The same water and the same leaf  
tremble at the chiming of the same clock.  
On what shore and in what sleep have you stopped?  
Under what gets do you remain celestial?

All the roads you walked on  
flow into me.  
Your mirrors still holds your image  
even though you have left.

Without thought, without promoting, without voice  
I wipe wet windows with my sleeve.  
A neighbor hears through my wall  
the dark patience of the same footstep.

## **PERSPECTIVE**

Night. Under the spheres, the great shapes,  
the monads sleep.  
Compressed worlds,  
soundless tears in space,  
the monads sleep.

Their motion -- the praise of sleep.



## **BIBLICAL**

Noon is upright. Blue silence rounds off.  
Flights grow towards the skies.  
Voices waste away. Creatures stop.  
The calf kneels in the cow's belly  
as in a church.

Holy Mother, you still walk and laugh today  
along paths with fountains for turtles.  
Among tall, naked herbs  
you undress your baby  
and teach him to stand.  
When he is too naughty  
You put him to sleep with poppy juice.

For you the world is a seal  
stamped on a greater mystery:  
thus you never strain your mind  
About anything.  
In the house, beside the cupboard with rare enamels  
you patiently guard, every day,  
the great child's sleep.  
Winking a reproach  
you get angry  
only when coming and going angels  
slam the doors too hard.

## METAPHYSICAL SORROWS

In harbors open towards the mystery of great waters  
I sang with fishermen, tall shadows on shores  
dreaming of ships laden  
with the foreign miracle.  
With the journeymen girl in black mail  
I raised bridges of steel  
over white rivers, over the flight of the pure bird,  
over deep forests,  
and every bridge arched  
taking us with it, as it were, to a legendary land.

I lingered long among rocks  
among saints as old as the country's rifles,  
and I waited for a window  
to open an escape  
through powerful spaces of evening.  
I have writhed on roads and on shores  
with everyman and every woman  
among machines and in churches.  
By bottomless wells  
I opened my eye of knowledge  
I prayed with the ragged laborers,  
I dreamed with shepherds beside their sheep  
and I waited with the saints in abysses.  
Now I stop in the light  
and weep in the last remnants  
of the star we walk on.

With all creation  
I lifted my wounds to the winds  
and waited: oh, miracles never happen.  
Miracles never happen, never!  
And yet with words simple as ours  
was built the world, the elements, day and fire.  
With feet like ours  
Jesus walked on the waters.

## CENTURY

Underground machines whirl. In the ether above towers  
intercontinental electric sounds.  
Housetop antennae feel the spaces  
of other tongues, of other news.

Blue signals crisscross streets.  
Lights scream in theaters, the freedoms of the individual are extolled.  
Downfalls are foretold, words end in blood.  
Somewhere they are casting lots for the beaten man's shirt.

Archangels, come to punish the city,  
lost their way in night clubs, scorched their feathers.  
The white dancer runs through their blood, laughing she pauses  
on tiptoe, with a leg like an unturned bottle.

High up, at an altitude of one thousand meters, to the east  
stars tell their tales through fir-neededled boughs  
and at midnight the wild boars' snouts  
unearth new springs.

## JOHN SCOURGES HIMSELF IN THE WILDERNESS

Where art thou, Elohim?  
The world has flown out of thy hands  
like Noah's dove.  
Maybe even today thou art awaiting it.  
Where are thou, Elohim?  
Confused and trespassing we walk  
we try to find thee among nights' elements,  
we kiss the star under our heels in the dust  
and ask of thee - Elohim!  
We stop the sleepless wind  
and sense thee with our nostrils  
Elohim!  
We stop strange animals in space  
And ask them of thee, Elohim!  
To the last bounds we search --  
we the saints, we the waters,  
we the thieves, we the stones  
we no longer know the way back --  
Elohim, Elohim!

## DENIALS

Trees with branches healingly bowed  
fashion a bark round an inner sigh.  
On all paths of the day  
with an autumnal smile  
tall Christs crucify themselves  
on crosses of alder.

Heavy skylark fall from the heights,  
like tears of the Godhead sounding onto fields.  
Having started along roads  
I probe for signs  
of the remote complete whole:  
there is sorrow everywhere. There is negation. There is end.

On my ripe footprints  
death sets his yellow kiss  
and no song can urge me  
to be once more.  
I take a step and whisper to the north:  
Brother, you live, if you like.  
I take another step and whisper to the south:  
Brother, you live, if you like.  
Out of my blood nobody else is called on  
to start another life  
no, nobody is called.

On the thoroughfares of time there come and go  
with fate-like deep footsteps  
white virgins and black virgins:  
heavenly exhortations  
to be once more  
to be a thousand times over  
to be, to be!  
But I walk beside singing waters  
with my face buried in my palms -- I am on guard:  
not me ! Amen.

## END

Brother, any book seems to you an illness overcome.  
But he who has spoken to you is now under the earth.  
He is in the water. He is in the wind.  
Or farther away.

With this leaf I lock the gates and take the keys out.  
I am somewhere up or somewhere down.  
Blow out the candle and ask yourself,  
“Where has the secret gone, that once lived?”

Has a word remained in your ear?  
From the fairy tale of blood once told,  
turn your soul to the wall,  
your tear to the west.

## **AT THE WATERSHED (1933)**

## IN THE FOREST WITHOUT GLORY

In the forest without glory  
a great stricken bird is sitting.

It sits tall under low skies,  
no chance that it can be healed,

Unless it could drink some dew  
mixed with ashes, ashes from a star.

Stricken, always it sits looking  
at the star above the forest.



## **LIGHT FROM LIGHT**

In the middle of the morning stands the unyoked bull.  
He master a field. He shines like a newly peeled chestnut.  
The sun enters the village between his horns.

In full dawn by the smooth water stands the motionless  
bull. Erect and handsome.  
He's like Jesus Christ:  
light from light, true god.

**IN THE COUNTRYARD OF YEARNING (1938)**

## **ANNO DOMINI**

Night entered the town, paying no customs.  
And again it will snow under grey hours.  
The medieval spirits of the forest  
sorrow on the eaves of the cathedral.

The clock's gong starts the bat  
from the long sleep he had fallen into.  
The ashes of angels burnt in heaven  
fall in flakes on our shoulders and houses.

## THE RAVEN

White field. A raven made of soot  
falls down. Can you see it, my little girl Ana?  
About here the golden story burned out in autumn.  
The squirrel sprang, the chestnut fell down.

The raven measures its steps, writes in the snow  
a new testament or some old news from heaven,  
for somebody who might cross the country,  
who hasn't completely forgotten how to read.

We people, we have.

## UNINVITED GUESTS

The Dacian voivodes left again  
to the north, where they had come from  
with their sheep and bison.  
And the others, who came from the east  
with blackamoors and camels,  
also decided to leave  
a little later, towards evening.  
In the great bustle, the virgin did not wonder  
At having lost her shoes.  
Mary wants silence  
after so many guests,  
From now on she wants quiet  
and full happiness.  
Maybe she had better  
blow out the star at the gate.  
She alone is guilty  
for so many travelers coming from the four winds, with a neigh of doom.  
Even the old mule  
Is of the same serene opinion --  
he chews to bits the shoes  
found among straw and hay.  
So far Mary has not had time  
even to see her baby  
with so many heralds from so many places.  
She bends over the manger,  
she bends over the light.  
With love, milk gushes from  
her breasts, and wets her shirt.

## **FISH-POND IN A PARK**

Facing the elements  
the fishes get together  
their eyes turned upwards  
they look at the moon.

Shuttles of gold,  
tiny gods of the waters,  
following her advice  
they learn silence

## **UNSUSPECTED FOOTSTEPS (1943)**

## MAY 9, 1895

My village, carrying in your name  
sounds of the tear \**lacrima*,  
answering the mothers' deep calls  
that night I chose you  
as my worlds threshold  
and passion's path.  
He who directed me to you  
from depths of centuries,  
he who called me to you,  
let him be blessed,  
incurable village of tears.

\* In Romanian, "tear." Blaga's village in Transylvania was Lancram



## SELF-PORTRAIT

Lucian Blaga is as silent as a swan.  
In his country  
bird's snow is the word.  
His soul has been searching  
for ages, silently searching  
To the last bounds.

He is searching for the water from which the rainbow drinks.  
He is searching for the water  
from which the rainbow  
drinks its beauty and its non-being.

## THE POTTER

For centuries their home has been here, since the first  
beginning - grotesque and idiotic, the speechless goiterous people.  
Potters they are, doomed to douse and bake clay.  
Like some belated, kind dragons,  
their faces stretched to bagpipes,  
archaic fellows, they carry along the foothills  
a fragile dream through heavy days.

The wheel turns whizzing in every house.  
The old molds are present -- in their hearts.  
They toil as if in sleep, the potters, and smolder near the ovens.  
Only seldom are they watched  
by some light and by fairies.

In the valleys of sublime harvests  
There is no other village with slower spirits,  
but there is no other village  
where more handsome and lithe pitchers are burnt --  
the waists of sinful holy girls.

## BURNING

Shall I ever find the right  
sound of silver or fire  
or the ritual of an utterance equal  
to your eternal burning?

I am the last of my stock.  
Handful of light -- you handful of earth. You pomegranate.  
You, flower to me, with the powers of the zodiac.  
Where and when shall I find the only word  
to charm you in the sphere of night?

Uncomprehended in the house  
but understood by gods and stones.  
Where is the word -- like a halo  
to raise you above time?

Where is the word -- that binds  
both footstep and thought to death?  
I give myself up to this year, you flower to me,  
to end in burning.

## VIGIL

Even my eyelids are now heavy  
with the long and heavy game.  
The black manna of dream  
would serve me.

You white beauty without sunset,  
you devastating wonder,  
the thought of you,  
kept me awake in the night!

Up to the hour that is born  
with no stroke. Look now  
how playful ardors are extinguished,  
and a road falls off the world.

I am alone, the last awake!  
Servant and master  
of vigils - I start after you  
in my broad sleep.

## **THE IRON AGE (1940-1944)**

## HOUR

Late, at the hour of bitterness, when I saw that I uttered  
all my words in vain,  
That their meaning never reached you,  
I came out into the night.

Oh, I wholly believed  
there would never be an end.  
I told you sometimes: follow the vestals' advice  
if you want to keep the flame.  
Other times I asked you:  
Can you see the embers, the toil on the hearth?  
From the blue smoke going up  
the sky is being woven.

I suspect you sat a long time at the table, mourning,  
your head propped on your hands,  
your sight lost in your dream  
circles. I suspect it's not easy for you even now  
in the citadel with the bridges drawn up.  
Lest somebody drink the wine, among  
Other things that remained,  
Pour ashes in the jug.

## **SHIPS WITH ASHES**

## APRIL

Fecund twilight, from another age,  
it's a fecund twilight of April,  
as it was another time,  
when white Leda agreed  
to bear, in the daffodils' white,  
the burden of a swan.

On an anvil, the bobwhite  
strikes its hot song.  
Under soft clothes, under frog-silk,  
the lake gives birth.  
The strength of wing descends from air  
into a reedy happiness.

And the water's vegetation  
bursts into emerald.  
The seed of the divine swan  
sings everywhere in the evening.  
sings in the bodies of Karins,  
Marys, Floras, Margarets.



## ECHO IN THE NIGHT

Motionless suddenly the firs!  
The sap quiets down in the night.  
Silence comes out of the mountain  
where its room was too cramped.  
Only somewhere, in the ravines  
a spring still whispers  
and an owl talks.

Closed under the sordine  
like a flicker of light  
the heart throbs.  
And the great bear echoes back.

## EPITAPH FOR EURYDICE

Somebody held your hand one day, Eurydice,  
and took you far away  
through the parting fog.  
Since then you live  
in my darkness like a star in a well.  
When you are no longer anywhere  
you are in me. Here you are Memory,  
the only triumph of life  
over death and mist.

## QUATRAIN

Not even song is easy. Day  
and night -- nothing on earth is easy:  
dew is the sweat of nightingales  
toiling all night, singing.

## THE SONG OF SLEEP

Pleasant is sleep near running water,  
near water that sees everything, but has no memories.  
Pleasant is sleep when  
you forget yourself like you forget a word.  
Sleep is the shadow  
that our future grave  
casts over us into mute space.  
Pleasant is sleep, pleasant.

## **MOSS-COVERED INSCRIPTION**

My life!

What if it lasted only a moment --

I have interrupted  
an eternity.

And I atoned --

with sufferings -- for a thousand others.

I expiated each  
with a joy.

## DE RERUM NATURA

Has dew really fallen on things

or is it only my fancy?

Maybe their faces weep

from an inner pain.

Does any heart beat in things?

Gathered in clusters around us

might they have thoughts and passions?

Eyeless they look into the world

carrying meanings

bearing tears.

## LOST HORIZON

When the year is not favorable  
you turn back to find sympathy among shadows.  
Somewhere in your past the threshold meets you.  
How close to each other stand  
the contrasts, day-night, in Lancram  
under the blue dome.

How slowly one knits oneself into the law.  
How naturally bravery and fate tie up  
along the centuries' hearths,  
and pain always flows over into higher meanings.  
The mothers are still alive. Where they mourn in a heathen wail,  
where the tear falls in the dust,  
the swallow still takes a mouthful of mud  
to build its house under the eaves.

## DE PROFUNDIS

One more year, a day, an hour --  
and all the roads will withdraw  
from under my feet, from under my footstep.  
One more year, and a dream, and a sleep --  
and underneath the earth I shall be  
lord of the bones that levelly sleep.



## THE FATHERS

One after another the fathers descend into clay,  
while gardens still grow in us.  
They want to be the roots  
for us to extend under earth.

The fathers stretch slowly under rocks,  
while we remain in light,  
while we borrow from each other happiness,  
suffering, and the water of life around hearths.

## JUDGEMENT IN FRUMOASA'S FIELD

In my village, in Frumoasa's field,  
around the tower, stones lie  
under poplars. It's spring and the stones -- lie.  
Some of them bear Cyrillic inscriptions.

Something always stays behind.  
They belong to our parents -- the stones --  
and to our parents' parents.  
Clay is today's and tomorrow's beatitude.

A dark wax-beaked blackbird  
runs from one tomb  
to another, as life asks him to.  
But I think further,  
much further, much further.  
I think of the day  
when a plow will cross the dead  
to level the face.

## **THE SONG OF THE FIRE**

## THE SEVENTH DAY

April was mild. Warm stars were born in the neighborhood.  
And God groped for his sea. He could discern both mountain and fire.  
What hearts, still lighted, the creatures carried  
in their chests, everywhere!

He could see among four rivers the lion and the ewe-lambs.  
Nothing praised him more deeply than the springs.  
Atoms and peacocks sounded among pine boughs,  
invisible wings were heard at the moon's gate.

A talkative spell, far and near, in common.  
And He watched. He saw you tall on my right,  
Delighting that Sunday of mine.  
And he said: everything's very good!

We were excited by the call of herbs. The air called us.  
A river of blood woke up the evening, consuming,  
burning it's bank. We had no wings, but our shoulders --  
our shoulders were ready to fly.

## OUR LEGEND

That night, grave tumults ago,  
something inexpressibly changed  
here in the earthly epoch of darkness and clay  
and in neighboring lunar realms.  
The earth gained carats  
unweighed on scales.

The stairs, our foreheads, turned to silver --  
pure witnesses of the histories of the universe.  
Meanwhile we could be discerned in the shade, expiated,  
like two silken beings walking.

In that high hour of celestial alchemy,  
we compelled the moon -- and some other heavenly bodies --  
to revolve  
round our hearts.

## THE AIR MOVED SEEDS

At the hour, on the mountain's mane --  
where we stopped under the firs,  
defeated by the burning blue  
of the clear autumn forenoon --  
you fell asleep, pierced by the sun,  
near me, in the whistle of needles,  
an occasional whistle coming from depths  
like a wave of cold air.  
In the valley left behind  
any sound long since died out.  
A beech leaf held like a flame in your hair.  
Falling, spinning around, the leaf dreamt  
that in its year it could again  
be an ornament of fire in another tree.  
On the mountain's mane any sound  
long since died out.

Diaphanous winged seeds  
were flying above us  
along invisible threads,  
carried from one age into another.  
Thus we are tempted sometimes  
to cruel, sacred amazement.

Nature still has, still has substance  
and in this unbelievable waste  
of fancy, between one moment and another,  
not everything can be an illusion.

The air moved seeds  
towards aims barely discerned somewhere  
in myths.  
And while you smiled in sleep, as in rituals  
I left a kiss in the middle of your palm --  
you will never know about it! --  
I left a kiss in the warm paleness of your palm  
on the forming life-line.

## A VOICE IN PARADISE

Come, let's sit under the tree,  
There still is a heavenly age above.  
In truth's wind  
in the big shadow of the tree,  
I want to unplait your hair  
and let it fly as in a dream  
towards earth's limits.

What voice have I held in my blood?  
Come, let's sit under the tree,  
where the guiltless hour  
plays in twos with the serpent.  
Both you and I are human.  
How hard it is for us  
our fate: staying in the light!

## THE SONG OF THE WHEAT HEADS

The heads in the fields shiver with death and longing  
while the crescent comes on the vault.  
They, like golden-haired girls, look  
to the god on the sky-line.

They whisper some word: burning maidens,  
the sickle of the moon is nothing but light --  
how could it cut us  
at our knees and lay us down to the wind's fire?

This is the wheat's great misfortune,  
that it is not cut by the moon,  
being doomed to die of iron --  
iron of the earth.



## **FORTRESSES, ARCHIPELAGOES, OCEANS**

Everywhere on your ways you are met  
by fortresses, archipelagoes, oceans  
and flames on peaks.

You caress women with arms of lava in the summer heat.  
You bring children onto earth under the clouds, under the sun.  
You wrest unknown secrets from nature.  
You make chimeras take shape, you lay down foundations and laws  
create history, found empires,  
and throbbing among meridians  
night and day you feel you are.  
Yet one day, at a sign, in a deep sort of way  
you will leave them all,  
with face upturned and eyelids shut -- you will leave them,  
perhaps wordlessly calling them -- you will leave them.

How can you  
see the moonlight once  
and them betray it,  
going into darkness?

## SILVER WINGS

If seasons, the north wind,  
or the south wind were to look for me  
they would find me on your doorstep.  
And if travelers and envoys from afar --  
if homeland, graves, and stones  
should ask for me,  
through the wind they would find me near you.

Or days, weeks, months, years  
I have lost myself in your eyes, proud love.  
As from mirrors that alone are true,  
I try to find in them the truth,  
are the wings I feel on my back  
really made of silver feathers  
or are they an imaginary weight?

**THE UNICORN IS HEARD**

## THE YEARS OF LIFE

In the mystery of night unwitnessed  
I became a living being.  
Laughing, singing, my parents made me.  
They, weavers of life and death,  
gave me what fate permitted:  
They put the sun and the night in me  
and brought a path to my gate.

“This is your path,” my parents said,  
“you start through valleys and reach the glories of the mind.”  
I set out in the dark world.  
I walked, I saw, but I didn’t take shape.  
I saw, I walked, but yet I was not.  
Through the long year, the long year of time gone,  
it was love only that made me.

## QUATRAIN

We live under the weight of air  
as on a deep sea-bottom.  
No suffering is too great  
to be changed into song.

## THE QUATRAINS OF THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL

I

Since the sun cannot set  
without turning his eyes after the maidens  
of the city, I wonder:  
why should I be different from the sun?

II

A beautiful girl is  
a window open to paradise.  
Sometimes a dream  
is truer than the truth.

III

A beautiful girl is  
clay filling its molds,  
reaching perfection at a stage  
where fairy-tales are waiting.

IV

What a clean shadow  
a girl in light casts!  
It's almost like nothing,  
the only spotless thing.

V

A beautiful girl is  
life's requisite,  
the sky's sky,  
the ring's ornament.

VI

Beauty, from beauty you appeared  
embodied unexpectedly,  
as in "the thousand and one nights"  
the story is born from a story.

VII

A beautiful girl is  
a fancy like smoke,  
to whose walking soles  
both dust and road would cling.

VIII

A beautiful girl is  
the mirage on the horizon,

the voice's gold,  
the tear of heaven.

IX

A beautiful girl is  
as the sun shows her to us:  
a new wonder on an old road,  
a rainbow springing from dew.

X

You, beautiful girl, will remain  
a dream-extension of our world,  
the only true memory  
among our legends.

## PAEAN FOR A YOUNG GIRL

*Embodiment in clay*  
*by Romul Ladea*

Only stripped of garments should you  
pick up, friend, the pomegranate  
from the silver basket, when we are gratified  
by the favorable sign.

Only thus should you consent  
to plunge into the fruit's heart  
the passion of your white teeth.

Only appearing thus  
should you caress with your ankles,  
other times, weeds and stones and herbs.  
Carry, young as you are, your truth  
where the stakes rise high  
in the vineyard, as only thus  
can the trees also see you  
blinking your green eyelids.

Only stripped of any garment should you  
walk through century's clearings,  
through ripe fields, through the grove, to the spring.  
Only thus should you step on the carpet of moss  
facing the serpent's danger,  
thinking the serpent is healing.

There still are many paths  
to the aim of soothing,  
but only stripped of any garment --  
lost, lying on one elbow --  
I want to see you, dream creature,  
along my valleys on evening's path,  
or, in the day, walking through Eden to the well.

Only thus at the end of the road, of the tracks,  
comes true in the lake's calm mirror,  
in the eyes of the old stars,  
earth's law, the rare mold  
embodied in pomegranates that don't deny  
the roundness of breasts.



## THE VERSIFIER

Even when I write original lines  
I only translate.  
I find this only right.  
Only thus has the line some reason  
for unfolding into bloom.  
I always translate. I translate  
into the Romanian language  
a song which my heart  
tells me, softly murmured, in her own language.

## **UNDER TWILIGHT'S SHIELD**

The world's eyes are casting shadows  
over you, over me,  
over each of your hours  
over all the roads.  
May a god guard you,  
only a god, if he can.  
him and me, him and me.  
Come love, let me hide you in my twilight.

## THE SPRING

Empires have fallen.  
Great wars desolated us.  
Only at Lancram, from the grass,  
a thin spring remained.

Forests died. And one after another  
people retreated into shadows,  
putting on earthen garments.  
But the spring, it remained.

Through the long years,  
whenever I return to the village  
I go to see it. It's like a thread  
spun by the weird sisters.

**[WONDEROUS SEEDS] (1960)**

## **VIOLINS IN FLAMES, THE WOMEN**

Violins are the women,  
vibrations echoed in upturned palms.  
I glorify them and sing them  
for the end of the journey  
they take on earth.  
Soft wood, sacred wood!  
Violins are the women,  
speechless vibrations,  
violins kindled underneath the bow  
in flames and smoke.

## **I STOPPED BESIDE YOU**

I have always searched for the shadow of eyelashes  
on a face. I have searched for it in the geography  
of eastern and western  
fairy-tales. But I never found it.

It was late when I found it here. Here  
in my own country, among my kind.  
I stopped beside you when your silence  
said to me, "Do not touch me!"

I stopped beside you  
discovering that your hair was a flame  
that the wind does not extinguish.  
And at this simplest of wonders  
I stood, as one should.

## AMONG MOUNTAIN LAKES

We are having a rest in the grass  
with what's weary in us, like the soul.  
Among the mountain lakes we sit and watch.  
The sun has set in western silver.

In the crystal air  
rocks, firs, mountains, everything,  
even the most far-off things,  
are more clearly outlined.

What calm! What purity!  
If the lakes were our eyes,  
the stars would draw nearer,  
meeting us -- half way.

## ODE TO RUNA

Nothing of yours limits you,  
not even your beauty that seems  
a sweet delimitation from the world.  
Your meaning begins with your longing,  
your shadow begins with your hair.  
You'll never know where you end.  
To these eyes, your being extends  
to the last star.



## AT HIS LONELY CASTLE

A titmouse couple  
circling the thistles  
built their nest  
in the letter-box,  
at his garden gate.

Be it rain or sun,  
no sign, no news.  
No expected letters,  
never, from nowhere,  
but in the letter box  
what talkative ardors !

From morning till night,  
from night till dawn,  
birds struggle in the lilies  
in the summer of sin,  
at his lonely castle.