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CONTENTS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 PETER WILD | <i>Batalla</i> |
| 2 R. L. HUGHES | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 4 GIL ORLOVITZ | <i>Art of the Sonnet: 263</i> |
| 5 ROBERT S. HAHN | <i>On Skiathos</i> |
| 8 JORGE CARRERA ANDRADE | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 13 ALEX SILBERMAN | <i>Father</i> |
| 14 KAREN SWENSON | <i>Pa-Phooey</i> |
| 15 WILLIAM WHITMAN | <i>The Dancing Galactic
Bear</i> |
| 27 MARVIN HOWARD ALBERT | <i>The Unsolved Murder
of Mrs. Glarp</i> |
| 28 VIRGINIA BRADY YOUNG | <i>Woodwinds</i> |
| 30 MARGARET ALBANESE | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 32 RUTH VAN HORN
ZUCKERMAN | <i>Frost Boil</i> |
| 33 JOHN PARK | <i>Ecumenical Sonnet</i> |
| 34 JON ANDERSON | <i>At Cold Pond</i> |
| 39 EVE ADAMSON | <i>Death of the Inspired
Man</i> |

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BATALLA

The dark forest
 echoed behind you
 with a rumble
of days
 falling on the rocks
 and nights consuming the trees;
coyotes' faces
 smeared with feathers
looked out from the bushes,
 and your heels
 flashed with needles,
your lungs collapsed
 for fear of air . . .

you grabbed at the tiger of the sun
 and the wolf of the moon
and drew them to the thicket
 of your bosom;
the tiger clawed at your hair
 and your eyes,
the wolf
 ate into your stomach
 and curled asleep;

and while you struggled
 in a storm of barbed wire and nails,
a fox slipped into your chest
 and cracked the sun of your ribs,
the wolf awoke
 and fed on the flowers
 of your womb.

Peter Wild

TWO POEMS

In Memoriam: P.F.H.: 1901-1965

There you were, slumped, sleeping, mouth open, teeth
 On the table beside your cigarettes;
 Curled like a child against the mountain of
 Pillows in the bed where at last you had
 Allowed me to take care of you — feeding
 And washing you; cleaning up your messes;
 Pleased almost to tears by the comfort that
 My arm round your bony shoulders gave you.
 (Boys, you once told me, don't kiss, they shake hands.)

Then the nurse, who had been quite
 Chatty, turned me out and,
 With professional tact,
 Got on with the job
 Silently, behind
 The closed door.
 Until at last,
 Like a sculptor
 Presiding over his
 Private view, he called
 Me in and, in suitable tones,
 Invited me to unveil his creation.

And I hardly knew you—it must have been
 At least ten years since I'd seen you so straight,
 Full-faced, such a fine figure of a man.
 And then I knew you were dead: noted the
 Cotton wool stuffed up your nose; wondered how
 He had managed to get your teeth back in.
 Your hair was brushed, but your face was yellow.

Oh yes, I knew then you were dead all right,
Lying there stiff as a stone king in a
Cathedral, laid out till eternity
Under the eyes of the curious crowd.

I could not cry (and not because, as you
Might have said, weeping is for the women),
But death had become too familiar,
Had turned my heart into a cathedral.
You were but the latest of my carved kings.

Old Woman Dying

Old woman dying, death is drawing out your bones
And leaving you shapeless, like an empty wine skin.
And, unaware, you do not resist: assume
A fatal resignation as the dark vomit
Dribbles like the dregs of your life from your lips.
I wipe your stained skin—a wrinkled husk from which
Death's sly fingers are stealing the nut.

Old woman dying, this night you have endured,
Ignorant of what you have endured;
Questioning this morning like a child the strange,
Unlooked-for ailment; postulating possible
Reasons for the state in which you find yourself,
Giving it familiar, innocuous names.
To give you a mirror would be cruel.

Old woman dying, bearing with you to your death
My childhood, when you stood, robust and laughing,
Against my horizons; a tree I played under,
Climbed, teased and loved; companion on countless
walks;

Dispenser of cocoa and family history.

Old woman dying, you have loomed too large in my life
Not to take part of me to your death.

R. L. Hughes

ART OF THE SONNET: 263

Last year, this autumn, this time, my mother
was alive. She stopped dyeing her hair black,
she let it go gray. She let everything
go gray, even her fingernails: color
was a bother. Her hands trembled on her
knees, the vast diamond wedding ring a mine
disaster of the blinding first magnitude
in the deepest shaft—my husband's trapped down
there, she said, and her mouth waited by
the opening. The oxygen's turning
gray, she said, my feet are down to earth, she
said, and turning black — I can dye my shoes
black, she said, and walk alongside my hearse,
she laughed. She recognized me from photographs.

Gill Orlovitz

ON SKIATHOS**Vassili Dancing Zambekiko**

Each time he jars
The floor, his heel
Hammers so fiercely we feel he might be poised
To fling

A knife. He springs,
His shoulder carves
Swerving comets, spinning stars out of the noise
And air.

And while we stare
At such burning,
The dance is turning him toward his spacious joys.
Desire,

The whetted wire
Coiled in his back,
Cuts the body from the mind's rack, almost destroys
Time's bars.

Vassili on the Veranda

Once we called him The Spanish Bandit
Because of his black mustache
And smile bright as a knife.

Tonight his eyes are red with wine.
The old moon drags its copper arm
Toward us over the oily harbor.

The island's lights are out,
And all its houses on the hill
Stand as tall and pale as graves.

Vassili's come up from the beach,
Strumming the guitar for mooning girls.
He laughs and calls us all old men.

All day he saws and sweats,
His face as dark as a Turk's
Beneath his carpenter's turban.

Wearing out the night now,
He drums the table in time
To the vein that throbs in his neck.

After Vassili's Wedding

Vassili and Stavro dancing hasapiko

In shapeless suits and brand-new shoes,
they might be convicts just released.

All their freedom is in the dance.
Each with an arm around the other,
they stand like lovers, heels together.
Their eyes look inward toward the song.

Vassili's fingers snap. With bending knees,
they lean out into space and then begin
to step and dip. One is like a mirror
of the other. The swing and slap of feet

is stylized flight, still so free
that Stavro thinks aloud, "the old times!"

The wedding guests applaud and talk.
Vassili's Suzie flirts with lazy eyes

And smiles at her completed desires.
The carpentry shop is doing well.

They'll have us home for dinner soon
and speak of the house they mean to build.

And sometime climbing toward Pascali's,
we'll look in at Vassili's window

to see them in their over-furnished room,
playing cards. The music still will climb

down the cobbled steps. As we pass by,
Vassili's hand will still be drumming time.

Robert S. Hahn

DOS POEMAS

Epilogo

Hombre de cualquier tierra o meridiano,
yo te ofrezco la mano,
Te doy en ella el sol americano.

Te doy la brava pluma
del cóndor, la candela ágil del puma ;
selva y montaña en suma.

Te doy la geografía
vasta y azul, el día
concentrado en el fruto de ambrosía.

Te doy nuevo tesoro :
el pimienta y el toro
y la cúpula de oro.

Te doy vulcána y rosa,
la clave de esa gente misteriosa
que en vasijas reposa.

Mi mano es de alfarero
solar, de navegante, misionero
y libre guerrillero.

Mano de constructor de un Continente,
mano de techo y puente
y alfabeto de amor para la gente.

El sol americano
te lo entrego en mi mano,
hombre mundial, mi hermano.

TWO POEMS

Epilogue

Man of whatever land or latitude,
in my hand
I offer you the American sun.

I give you the wild feather
of the condor, the nimble flare of the puma ;
forest and mountain in epitome.

I give you the endless
blue geography, day
focused in ambrosial fruit.

I give you new treasures ;
hot pepper, the bull,
the golden cupola ;

the volcano and the rose
the key of this mysterious people
buried in urns.

My hand is of solar
potter, navigator, missionary
and free soldier.

Hand of a continent builder,
hand of roof and bridge,
the people's alphabet of love.

Man of the world, my brother,
in my hand
I offer you the American sun.

Mujeres Escapadas de los Cuadros

Hay la mujer prisión, la mujer templo,
la mujer selva y la mujer molino,
la mujer alquimista que transforma
en oro hasta el suspiro.

La mujer galería de mujeres,
mujer obra maestra de un museo,
mujer circo de fieras
y hasta mujer cordero.

Témpano con dos piernas y dos brazos,
el Gran Hielo Polar forrado en tela.
o el Trópico vestido
con galas de doncella.

La mujer tribu ardiente y emplumada
o gran fiesta caníbal
alrededor del poste
donde sangra la víctima.

Hay la mujer de sombra a mediodía,
la mujer continente inexplorado,
mujer isla de flores,
mujer bosque de pájaros.

La mujer muro y la mujer espejo,
la mujer horizonte
o camino desnudo entre la niebla.
Hay la mujer orquesta a medianoche.

Autómata del cielo,
domadora de tigres y relámpagos,
mujer de nidos y mujer colmena
o cueva de tesoros ignorados.

Women Breaking from Pictures

We have the prison woman, the temple woman,
the wild woman, the mill woman,
the woman scientist who can transform
even a sigh into gold.

The woman's woman,
the perfect woman, museum masterpiece,
the wild animal woman
the gentle lamb woman.

Kettledrum with two legs and arms,
the Great Polar Iceberg, skin-lined,
or the elegant young
woman of the Tropics.

The passionate tribe woman in feathers
O great cannibal feast,
behind the pillar
where the victim bleeds.

At noon, we have the woman of shadow,
the woman, unexplored continent,
woman, island of flowers
woman, thicket of birds.

The wall woman, the mirror woman,
the woman of the horizon
or desolate misty road,
We have the woman, midnight orchestra.

Automaton of sky,
tamer of tigers and lightning,
woman of nests and beehives
O chest of unknown treasures.

Arrecife de rosas, faro oculto,
mujer de luz casera,
mujer jardin de estatuas,
mujer troje sin puertas.

Mujeres escapadas delos cuadros,
los parques y las fuentes,
hermanas de Raquel, luz en camisa,
música más secreta que la muerte.

Jorge Carrera Andrade

Rose cliff, secret beacon,
woman in the light of the home,
woman, garden of statues,
granary without doors.

Women breaking from pictures,
parks and fountains,
sisters of Rachel, shrouded light,
death has no greater music.

Jorge Carrera Andrade
translated from the Spanish
by D. M. Pettinella