

From the volume *The Trojans* (1985)

THE QUESTION OF THE LION IN LANDSCAPE ART

A landscape (a French master
would have called it two centuries ago).
That's why I can't paint it (I don't even want to).
For, look, the lake is unacceptably reddish
because of the setting sun,
and the wind, much truer now
than the many things that tenderly
swing in its wake,
points to the forest;
and I notice that the forest is the mane
of that reddish striped-water creature-body
and the water, struck now by a stone,
flung from the shore by a skinny little boy,
acquires perfect order
heading in full circles
towards the lakeshores, breaking thereafter
into four little bays, which are,
of course, the four lion paws.
The moon reflected in the water
is a lion fang,
and that round willow is an eye,
a greenish-yellow eye and that's why
I can't look any more (I don't even want to).
My gaze is redeemed
only upwards, above the forest.
But, God, nothing can be painted!
Nature's fate is the same up there:
now the forest, that used to be only a mane
is the body, the mane is the sky, the morning star the eye.
And the real moon is a fang.

So two lions merge,
but, alas, if you look better, the sky can be a body
and the forest a mane again.
The Big Bear and the Little Bear are the paws.
And this time a lion shows up,
A huge lion lying on its back.
So everything in this world can be lions,
that's why I cannot paint and I don't want to.

Master, master, that's a terrible error;
for, look, here are some people,
willing to show you in the middle of the central piazza
a thing that resembles an enormous lion's mouth.
"What's this, you ask, I have never, never
painted such a thing."

"Go and see!" one man with a particular smile
who encourages you,
as if intent on putting something down,
writing about it as if it had already happened.
While you turn your gaze, immersed
within the lion's mouth,
to find astoundingly the blue sky and the clouds.
The upper jaw drops with a metal roar.

THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN

Shigemitsu took out a pen and looked puzzled at the document.
Mac Arthur said harshly: "Sutherland, show him where to sign"
(William Craig - The Fall of Japan)

On the horizon Japan stands up again,
growing from the ocean like a birch tree,
covering the water's surface
with the shadow of its foliage...
The weather is fine. There's nothing strange.
Nothing. You will see it for yourselves.
You'll see me bending a little,
touching the Japanese on the shoulder ...
The breeze blowing ... and the blue sky ...
Next to you, in the water, for an instant or two,
a whirlpool, a shape will try to emerge
from the churning water, but then
with a groan will perish in the deep...

Summer light. The continents have grown
towards the sky, shady, like a rustling forest ...
Light. The light is piercing the ocean now.
The water boils heated up by the light,
rises up to the sky, bubbling forth, falling.
A moan floating in the deep.
The azure descends among us.
The breeze is blowing. I slowly bend ...
His hair rustles in the breeze
and the breeze, the azure, again ...

The harsh voice, my harsh hearing,
the harsh echo. The voice says:
"Here." "Here"- I repeat - and point my finger
towards that immaculate and fragile place.
But the Japanese is nowhere.
And all alone, a splendid gold pen,
glides shakily across the paper sheet.

From the volume *LIGHT AND OBLIVION* (1989)

THE GLASS MASKS

So much water rises from the city and abandons it.
Opposite the street the windows are shut
and when a face leans against its glass,
the window bends outward.
Contours are precise today,
but facts are like in the past.
The faces deepen into the glass.
And merge with the glass masks in the street.
And nobody can see anything...

The glass mask has no openings
for the eyes or the mouth, just a crack
in the forehead. From there, as if from a
crack in a rock, the source of a dormant
spring wells up.
And all the thirsty huddle toward it,
trampling themselves and shouting, roaring,
goggling crazily into the sun.
These are the ones who can see and die of thirst.
But this still untouched water
when it touches the lip – it burns.

SOLDIERS

There's no obstacle for the Earth.
Its revolution is like man's shadow,
which imagines the clock of the day
from morning till evening.
Don't be sad. A new time starts.
The soldiers always burst into our homes,

They burst into our minds.
There are double-dealing worlds; this one is not,
it flies up like a crazy bird above us.
The soldiers burst in, get out, burst into our rooms
again and their golden fingers
poke into our eyes, and our eyes are humble
when gold fingers pierce them.

Everything bathes in beauty,
everything is subject to the same ruthless laws.

The soldiers come up now and then
and set everything on fire, as they should;
the soldiers strike pitilessly with their sword and their spear,
and we don't understand anything,
nothing can be made of this,
only a sort of fume passes now and then,
and wraps both us and them,

only a strange scent rises from the grass.

VIOLIN CONCERT

To Ladislau Horvath

The walls are melting down. The wooden beams remain,
torn from the extinct forests.
Yet in the violin wood one can hear
more thundering, the leafage
thrown about by wind and rain,
and different echoes of
the incomprehensible voice of the beasts
crushed together with the forest:

the voice of the exhausted old bear,
of the stag lost in time,
and maybe dead already, floating like a rumor, a fume
through absent trees he used to know
as cheeky seedlings,
in their ruthless youth.
Then there are squirrels that cannot frisk about,
and foxes, powerless now,
hunted by small, nimble creatures,
avenging their parents. Wolves
are dragging along, aimlessly,
on the empty field. They're dying of hunger;
of grief, above all. All this
musters in the humble and proud
wood of the violin, the healing one.

The violin alive of their death descants.

From the volume *FRAGRANT ABYSSES* (2006)

FRAGRANT ABYSSES

Meandering paths, wind petrified
among trees, a star fallen in the fields...
From the cup of the instant the bad teachings drip off
after having haunted us every day
we were perishing
and deceiving colors and shapes,
crushing them in the huge plains,
Crushing and ripping them off ... But they didn't die;
there's a knife that cuts things apart.

It does not hurt anything, it simply slides
among creatures, gods, thoughts put together
without any sense: man, rocks, oblivion, evening...
It is a candid, sentimental knife.
It cleaves around itself abysses of fragrance
and makes it so that the same wave
starts pushing up towards the healing chasms.

We huddle all together, called by the fragrance,
our nostrils are now like the deep chasms,
with fir-trees and rocks
slipping towards their great vocation.
Meandering paths. The wind starts,
the whole earth, lit by a star,
is like an infant who doesn't know what it wants;
but deeply feels, down in its flesh,
knife wounds, and the knife keeps growing
through it and beyond,
ruthless and delicate, angel-like,
dreaming to pierce the bosom of a god.

Translated from Romanian by Gabriela Dragnea Horvath