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Pagoda for Urns

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Rather than suffer that terrible affection
That murderous excess of care

The ornithologist Schüz once overheard a young penguin crying out in despair:
Why wasn’t I born a stork?
Mother would eat me by mistake
And I could have some peace

Translated by the author with John Batki

Ch'ou-yu (Ch'eng Wen-t'ao) / Taiwan

Clear and Bright: In the Grave

I am still drunk, and the quiet night flows within me
As I stop up the ears, myth echoes around in my body
A smell of blossoms percolates through the skin
At this moment of ultimate beauty, I accept their worship
Receiving the sacrifice of a thousand streamers

Stars droop down in string, stirring up the wine between my lips
Fog is crystallizing, as cold as the prayerful eyes
So many so many eyes stream fast on my hair
I must return, to do something with these plants growing on limbs

I have returned: I have always been a stretch of blue hills

Pagoda for Urns

The Dead sit quietly in a small chamber in the matless pagoda
When spring wind rings the wind-bell
The Dead wordlessly lean on the arched window to watch the scenery of the country temple.

I and my comrade are there, crowding among the Dead Watching, and thinking about the last campaign.

Beneath the window, the familiar monk who sweeps fallen leaves goes by.
Also, the three wood-cutters go by.
Look, my grown-up son is among today's visitors.
He has put on my old army uniform dyed in a different color, he's pointing Squabbling with his science-major girlfriend about how long a pinch of phosphorus can burn at night.

*Translated by the author with William Golightly*

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**MARIN SORESCU / ROMANIA**

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**Frames**

The walls of my house are covered with frames in which my friends see nothing.
They think I put them there just to annoy them.

There was an empty place there, above the bed and I used to wake with a strange feeling that somebody was watching me.

In fact, there is a sphere of light bobbing about in that place.

There is no light anywhere else no open eye no phosphor mine.