

1976

The Biographer

Agnes Gergely

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It is coming to crush me with its unseen weight.

If there's a train bound for Heaven
on the Canadian National Railway I'll take it sometime.

Now I hold my knees and sit in the doorway.
It's a long time from morning till night. Life is short.

Fear is my enemy.
I don't see reconciliation as wisdom.

Alcohol can't remove stains on the soul.

Not a prayer, but fire; give me instead a cold fire.

Translated by Takako Uthino Lento

AGNES GERGELY / HUNGARY

The Biographer

And I had no shoes.

My father was a porter and he had no shoes;
my father's father had been herding the baron's
sheep from barnyard to barnyard,
in his dreams, and he had none either;
my love was a tubercular chorus girl,
oh, *chant macabre!* the war;
the reconstruction; sure, I made mistakes;
however, on a certain October morning
I had seen it all; ever since
I've kept on telling myself "I had no shoes"

besides, I gave some Jews a hiding place
and Attila József the poet was my friend

on several occasions.
Why, I even loaned him my shoes.

The Radio Reporter

Hungary's largest sub factory!
Her most sought-after export item!
The match of the century
In the world's largest stadium!

On the most outstanding scholar-----
To the excellent artist-----
With the important writer-----
In the largest jungle of our country . . .
The Hungarian Athens!
The Hungarian Stockholm!
The Hungarian Père Lachaise!
The Hungarian dinosaur.
Hungarian jazz.
The popular mannequin-----
The world-famous egg painter.
The reporter

in the jungle;
the reporter in the Père Lachaise;
the reporter in the egg.
On the earth, in the air, under the water.
Under the earth.

Translated by the author with Larry Levis

DARIO JARAMILLO / COLOMBIA

The Art of Poetry: One

You ought to make use of poetry
to speak badly of your family;