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# Nostalgia

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Now  
The phallus abandoned by God  
Comes this way.  
Being young and gay  
And full of clumsy confidence  
It, surprisingly, resembles the shadow  
Of an experienced smile.

The phallus seems to grow beyond all numeration,  
And, beyond counting, comes this way.  
It is in fact in the singular. It comes alone.  
Seen from whatever horizon,  
It has neither face nor words.  
I would like to give you, Sumiko,  
Such a thing for your birthday.

When therewith your whole life is enswaddled,  
You will become invisible to yourself.  
Occasionally you will turn into the will of the very phallus  
And wander endlessly.  
I would wish to catch in my arms,  
Endlessly,  
One such as you.

*Translated by Ikuko Atsumi*

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TAHEREH SAFFARZADEH / IRAN

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## Nostalgia

We are nostalgic  
For the earth we know well  
For the fraud we know well  
Our own bread, our own compliments  
And the fresh air of our own narrow streets in the mornings of yesterday  
My sister wrote that my postcards do not arrive if they are attractive  
But the safety of a registered letter is so sad

We ought to go home  
And watch happy faces on TV  
They will invite us to be patient  
They will invite us to listen to Nero's lament for Rome  
The General's daughter insists that in our country  
We grow superior tea but herself partakes of Calcutta brand  
We are tired, we ought to go back and sit  
Under the tree of our neighbors' hostility  
And pass round the cup of mutual trust  
It is hard to attract strangers  
Without Aphrodite's belt.  
We might forget our mother tongue  
The last time I was murdered by a man in my bed  
We ran into linguistic problems.  
We ought to go back and buy our ration of love on the black market

Our trip is from one Continent of blood to another  
There is such chaos  
The only dignity left is the willow tree bent over the water  
People disappear on the hazy road of "We shall overcome,"  
Our brothers die in Sinai  
There is no tomb for them  
All the orchards in the Nile Valley are let  
In Poland the right of veto belongs to the aristocrats  
In Taiwan you would be like potatoes served with every dish  
You have to agree well when your brother conspires against you  
He is right—he has to live his damn life—he is right.

Why should we feel so nervous so scared  
We are surrounded by men  
Policemen businessmen security men

Men who are wrapped up in their insurance like packages  
Men who hang curtains  
Men who lurk behind the curtains  
Men who grow claws  
They all have once made nests with the small fingers  
Of their childhood.

We are nostalgic  
For the fraud we know well  
For the earth we know well  
We ought to go home and watch the hide and seek

Played between millions of mouths and a few loaves of bread.  
There is a long queue of wandering spirits  
Their corpses—at the other side of the river—  
Are waiting for somebody to put a coin under their tongue  
The greedy boatman is cracking his whip in the smoky air  
Look into your pocket, friend—  
See if you have a coin  
Perhaps this is your father who has spent all  
His pennies bribing his way through life  
Now frightened by soul-eating dogs he is running around muttering  
the Kalb Surah  
Look into your pocket, friend,  
Even though it might be empty.

*Translated by the author*

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WAN KIN-LAU / HONG KONG

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### At an Execution Square in Vietnam

one by one heads tumble down the sandbags  
they fasten their ears to the earth  
and listen to someone  
singing an elegy for himself under the grass

the circular loosely stuck on the pole has floated away  
in the wind  
always  
good-looking faces  
disappear in mirrors

*Translated by the author*