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The Poet Establishes the Height of the Building

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of dawn rattles in night's dry throat,
glitters with the leaden polar cross.

By incomplete by light by love
she is a naked girl facing the mirror
lifting her hair high above her neck to pin,
her shadeless skin all mortal.
The angel hasn't filled the day's labyrinth
with thunder. The green planet roars
and the blue thrush circles her arms
in feathered rings.

By love incomplete and light
the travellers escape through a large valley
with heads bared to the clouds:
a black pinion cuts a brown galaxy of grass.

By love by incomplete by bright world structure
dream: let the years and valleys be open.

*Translated by the author and Jerzy Przewdziecki
with Burt Blume*

AFFONSO ROMANO DE SANT'ANNA / BRAZIL

The Poet Establishes the Height of the Building

This is such a tall building
that you can see the Hudson and the East River all the way round,
though you can't read the names of the freighters
neither can you figure out whom or what they are carrying.

It is so tall
that on top of it even the foreigner is filled with a vicarious pride,

but not so tall that it can hide us from
the mushrooms and other products of the atomic kitchen.

It is taller than the Tikal pyramids,
taller than those of the Moon and of the Sun in Teotihuacan,
taller than the cruelty of Assurbanipal,
but not tall enough for us to see
the watermen of San Francisco wasting away on their own shores.

This building is very tall,
taller than sequoias,
though some of them have been stretching upwards for two thousand years,
taller than any of the hills around my childhood,
tall as schoolroom Himalayas
but not as tall as the leap of its early suicides.

It is as tall
as the flame of the self-immolating Buddhist,
as tall
as the eyes of the girl from Oklahoma,
as tall
as the shots of the Cananéia ambush.
But the tunnelings of the guerrilla are even taller
and the planes which fly napalm fly no higher than its elevators.

This building is very tall.
So tall that I can see the streets I came through
though I can't see who is profiting or losing in the corridors of Wall Street.
I hear my girl, her accent is German.
Auschwitz is not visible.

There is no question that this building
is the tallest. Tallest in the world,
maybe,
the tallest-maybe in the world,
the tallest in the maybe-world,
this building is a concrete-maybe,
the most concrete, maybe, in the world,
the concrete world
the world more
or less
 maybe
this is the building of buildings,

the best built building
the buildingest building
built builder builtest
buildingissimus.

Translated by the author

STEWART YUEN / HONG KONG

The Faceless Man

It seemed to be morning
I walked to the mirror and saw
my feet in British boots
my legs in U.S. Levis
my neck with an Italian scarf
my waist with a Spanish belt
my head with a French cap
But the face beneath it was missing
Totally faceless, I don't know
whether I was crying or laughing
sad or angry
So I've realized
that there has never been a Stewart Yuen
there never was
there never will be
And now in the mirror
as the colors of these nations clash
I lose even my shadow

Translated by William Tay