
Four Poems

NUNO JÚDICE

Sul

Tudo, ali, é simples e complexo: a luz, a solidão, o olhar que se comove com o cair da noite e com o nascer do dia; e, até, os risos de mulheres que se ouvem desde longe, trazidos pelo ar cuja transparência se sente na própria respiração. No entanto, debruço-me da varanda e dou por que algo se oculta, para além dos muros e dos quintais, e chama por mim sem que eu possa responder. Então, volto para dentro: preparo o café; e enquanto a água ferve o mistério desaparece, inútil e excessivo, no início da tarde.

Linhas de Água (Linha 4)

Enquanto sobrevôo a página, como a ave que espreita a ocasião para capturar a sua presa, procuro a imagem que me permitirá agarrar o poema. Depois, prendo o poema à página, como fazem os colecionadores com as borboletas, espalmando as suas asas e deixando que a beleza nasça da sua simetria perfeita, como se uma flor dúplice pudesse viver eternamente.

South

There, everything is simple and complex: light, solitude, the gaze that is moved deeply by nightfall and daybreak, and, even the women's laughter heard from afar, brought by air whose transparency is felt in breathing. And yet, I lean over the balcony and notice that something conceals itself, past the vegetable gardens and the walls, and beckons without my being able to answer. And so, I return inside, prepare coffee, and while the water boils the mystery vanishes, useless and excessive, in the early afternoon.

Water Line (Line 4)

While I fly over the page, as a bird awaiting the opportunity to capture its prey, I search for the image that will allow me to grasp the poem. After, I pin the poem to the page, as collectors do to butterflies, spreading their wings and letting beauty be born from its perfect symmetry, as if a twin flower could live forever.

NUNO JÚDICE was born in 1949 Algarve, Portugal. A professor at Lisbon's Universidade Nova, he served from 1997 to 2004 as the cultural attaché of the Portuguese Embassy in Paris. One of the most important contemporary poetic voices in Portuguese literature, he has written more than forty books of poetry, fiction, essays, criticism, and drama. His poetry has garnered over a dozen prizes and has been translated into twelve languages.

PAULO DA COSTA was born in Angola and raised in Portugal. He is a writer, editor, and translator living on Canada's west coast. His first book of fiction, *The Scent of a Lie*, received the 2003 Commonwealth First Book Prize for the Canada-Caribbean Region and the W. O. Mitchell City of Calgary Book Prize, and he recently published the verse collection *Notas de rodapé* (Livros Pé D'Orelha, 2005). His poetry and fiction have been published in literary magazines around the world and translated into Italian, Spanish, Serbian, Slovenian, and Portuguese.

Teoria e Prática

Era no amor que pensava; mas
 poderá pensar-se o amor? Não serão incompatíveis
 sentimento e razão? Sim: estabelecia uma distância
 entre ele próprio, o ser real, com o corpo
 a impor-lhe as suas leis, e essa entidade abstracta
 onde se formavam as ideias, e onde podia
 desenhar um quadro mental de categorias em que entrava,
 de modo impessoal, o próprio amor. O problema
 é que esse espírito, ou alma, que formulava esses belos
 conceitos, não sobrevivia sem o corpo; e ao falar
 de amor, era um outro corpo que se materializava
 por dentro da ideia, com o rosto, os lábios, os cabelos,
 a pele, a voz, e as suas ternas inflexões,
 obrigando-o a pôr de lado todos os princípios
 da ciência. De facto, como delinear uma teoria quando
 as tuas mãos entram por dentro das frases, desmancham
 o equilíbrio dos parágrafos e das páginas, contaminam
 a própria secura dos substantivos com a humanidade
 de um murmúrio? Então, não penses no amor;
 deixa de escrever: e puxa para ti esse corpo que
 te inquieta, como o mais concreto dos ideais, ou
 o mais sublime dos paradoxos.

Gosto das mulheres que envelhecem

Gosto das mulheres que envelhecem,
 com a pressa das suas rugas, os cabelos
 caídos pelos ombros negros do vestido,
 o olhar que se perde na tristeza
 dos reposteiros. Essas mulheres sentam-se
 nos cantos das salas, olham para fora,
 para o átrio que não vejo, de onde estou,
 embora adivinhe aí a presença de
 outras mulheres, sentadas em bancos
 de madeira, folheando revistas
 baratas. As mulheres que envelhecem
 sentem que as olho, que admiro os seus gestos
 lentos, que amo o trabalho subterrâneo
 do tempo nos seus seios. Por isso esperam
 que o dia corra nesta sala sem luz,
 evitam sair para a rua, e dizem baixo,
 por vezes, essa elegia que só os seus lábios
 podem cantar.

Theory and Practice

It was of love he thought, but
 can love be thought of? Will emotion and reason
 not be incompatible? Yes: he created distance
 between himself, the real being, with his body
 imposing its laws, and that abstract entity
 where ideas were formed, and where he could
 draw a mental picture of the categories he entered
 impersonally: love itself. The problem
 was that the spirit, or soul, that formulated those beautiful
 concepts, could not survive without the body, and
 at the mention of love, another body materialized
 inside the idea, with a face, lips, hair,
 skin, voice, and its tender inflexions,
 obliging him to put aside all principles
 of science. In fact, how do you delineate a theory when
 your hands enter the sentences, undo
 the balance of paragraphs and pages, contaminate
 the dryness of names with the humanity
 of a murmur? So, do not think of love,
 stop writing: and draw toward you the body that
 makes you restless, like the most concrete of ideals, or
 the most sublime of paradoxes.

I Like Women Who Age

I like women who age,
 with the hurry of their wrinkles, hair
 down to the shoulders of a black dress,
 gaze lost in the sadness
 of draperies. Such women sit
 in the nooks of rooms, peering outside,
 into the courtyard I do not see from where I stand,
 although I imagine the presence of
 other women there, sitting on wooden stools,
 flipping through cheap
 magazines. Aging women
 sense that I watch them, that I admire their slow
 gestures, that I love the subterranean labor
 of time on their breasts. That is why they wait
 for daylight to pass through these dark rooms,
 they avoid going to the street, and
 sometimes, murmur those elegies only their lips
 can sing.

Translations from the Portuguese
 By Paulo da Costa

three poems

Yevgeny Slivkin

Odysseus's Companions

As if the plug in the bathtub had been yanked out,
 the water is gone, smacking its lips
 in farewell, and over us the flag
 is hoisted like a pair of wet pants.
 But we've choked down too much bile –
 and our widows won't be happy to see us again.
 Odysseus stuffed our ears with wax so that
 when the ship listed to one side,
 nothing would stream over the deck. . . .
 In port we sang a different song to the sirens.

Ostrich Farm in the Midwest

As if marooned at the fence
 where the highway veers off
 the ostriches pace out the distance
 between bushes
 with their Prussian gait: the legs straight,
 their beaks stick out in a depressed pout.
 And they can't even bury their heads in the sand –
 there is no sand in the corn stubble.

Untitled

As he rose, got dressed
 and filled the teakettle,
 the refrigerator's sounds rhymed
 with the steady sound of the sea.

Over his tea, sleepily and gloomily,
 he thought, Here is my reward,
 to wake up in a place where you can't even
 tell these two sounds apart.

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*Translations from the Russian
 By Vern Rutsala*

YEVGENY SLIVKIN is the author of three collections of poetry published in Russia and a number of scholarly articles in U.S., European, and Russian academic journals. His poems are included in several significant anthologies of contemporary Russian poetry. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, he received an MFA from the Union of Soviet Writers' A. M. Gorky Institute for Literary Studies in Moscow and worked as a screenwriter and a journalist for the editorial office of Artistic Broadcasting of St. Petersburg Television Company. He earned a Ph.D. in Slavic languages and literatures from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has taught at Georgetown University, George Washington University, Grand Valley State University, and the Defense Language Institute. He currently teaches contemporary Russian poetry and prose at the University of Oklahoma.

VERN RUTSALA was born in McCall, Idaho; graduated from Reed College and the Iowa Writers' Workshop; and spent most of his academic career at Lewis & Clark College in Portland. The author of twelve collections of poetry, his many awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, two NEA grants, the Juniper Prize, an Oregon Book Award, two Carolyn Kizer poetry prizes, the Duncan Lawrie Prize, a Pushcart Prize, the Akron Poetry Prize, and the Northwest Poetry Prize. His verse collection *The Moment's Equation* was nominated for a National Book Award in 2005.