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The Starry Womb

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The Starry Womb

**(The Song from Before Birth
or
The Song from the Never-To-Be-Born)**

My Mother's Interior

1. I Navigated by Sweet Ovules (A Second Nature)

I had decorated my mother's interior
with the most beautiful illusions in the world.
I had planted climbing flowers,
so her interior should look like nature,
with wonderful lawns, full of dells and bowers.

So I might create a second nature inside,
my nature, mine alone, for my personal use,
as you'd meet only in books.

I had spread large maps, oh ho!
and, even more, hung them from hooks in my mother's womb.
I pretended to be thor heyerdahl,
mercator and sir walter raleigh,
united under the same skin.

I navigated by sweet bleeding ovules,
as the ancient Phoenicians by the stars.

2. The Moral Law Within

My mother's womb was the universe.
I had no need for a second one.
I never thought of saying,
"the starry vault." But, on the contrary,
"the starry womb."
(I suppose that the first travelers also named the sky thinking of their mothers, of that primal vista.)
When they opened their eyes, they surely saw above them the vast bell of their mothers.
That's why they said:
The moral law within and, there above, the starry womb.

3.

And if there had been no stars in Mother's womb,
I'd still have gone to gather something, I'd have had to put something there
to look like stars,
to shine.
I don't know what, a garnet, a topaz, some precious stone.

4. My Mother Was the World

This is my world, I told myself.
What's here below is the same as what's on high.
I am, as the poet says.
I am.
I am the unborn who on his own barks at his mother and death.
And the dog that barks at the first stars
in himself
and in his mother.
My mother was the world.
I can't ever forget that.

5. In the Beginning (Voices and Weeping Are Heard in Rama)

My mother was the world. In the beginning.

All that I might remember, that I might forget.

**Beyond that, all I might remember would be the sky,
the worlds I come from, from which my soul descended to dwell in my mother. The original sin is that I
was snatched out of Mother. Hey, you! Hey, psychiatrists, idiotic shrinks! Stop wasting your time
foolishly, I'll tell you the whole story: my first drama happened when I was flung
by the catapult of my birth out of Mama.
Voices and weeping are heard in Rama.**

I'll No Longer Be Born Today

We've hung paintings everywhere inside her,
paintings of the world. We've hung them on red walls,
purple walls, hot walls, steamy walls,
pulsing walls, eternal walls,
walls of flesh and blood, in other words what generically we call tissues:
that's how flesh holds itself together:
we sit at the loom, the flesh gets woven,
we sit at the loom, pull the shuttle, push the shuttle,
the flesh gets woven,
thread by thread—
up-to-the-minute,
as in sportscasts.

We wanted to make Mama's insides beautiful,
to make her more beautiful,
to show slides—
so we installed an overhead projector there
(you can't imagine how we managed)
and endeavored to project the world on her insides.
We had fun, laughing uproariously as at a cartoon,
jabbering till we couldn't tell star from moon

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Inside her,
the world was much more beautiful.
Inside her,
the world was almost miraculous,
almost a paradise,
almost inhabitable,
almost bearable,
almost ready to open to our veins.
It was too close to hang yourself in there,
you hardly had room to take your life, of course
if this life were indeed yours.

It was almost good,
almost wondrous,
the world was almost breathable, through every pore,
just as in its every allure,
or the sky through its cloud mass.

Your heart could beat quietly there,
with tenderness.
When you got old, death would shut your eyes as with a seal,
kissing them tenderly.
You would have slowly grown accustomed to your life.
Life would have tried to teach you properly.

Not evicted,
not expelled,
not dynamited,
not propelled.

Not extracted like a tooth that's decayed,
not fired as from a job that's
been retrenched, retired,
a product that's too old, expired.
Not rebuked and spat through the clenched teeth of the uterus,
not puked.

And then I opened my eyes wide, scared out of my wits, sweat-soaked.
"Mama, I'll no longer be born today," I croaked.

New Adventures of My Increation

If she hadn't given me birth,
my mother wouldn't have suffered.

But she did suffer, she had to suffer, poor thing, suffer her whole life long
because of permanent abortion.
And even after she gave birth to me, she still suffered from my birth syndrome.
My birth syndrome every moment.
All her life, all her days, as many as god granted her,
she felt a void in her womb.

An extraordinary void, bottomless, a void with arms and legs
pressed against the chest, where I used to be. A void with its eyes closed tight,
covered with scales.
Like silver scales,
behind which tiny little insects of sight, their chitin horn-hard,
were getting ready to twitch for the rest of their lives.

A bald void
above which hair would grow.
But hair started to grow on my head while I was still in Mother's womb
and Mother's womb filled with my golden hair,
falling in curls.

At its appointed moment my hair tendriled out of Mother
and spread throughout the world
to conquer it.

It was a sort of new Alexander of Macedon.
My hair billowed everywhere
flooding the world
and the whole world found itself, almost involuntarily,
fondling my hair.
As if an amulet.
As if a good-luck charm.

My hair entered the world before my birth
and shook the worlds.
The stars trembled.

My hair made love to girls in their sleep,
tucked them in
and rocked them,
crooning to them,
luri-lu,
lori-la.
Lorelei, oh heart.
Lorelei, oh my heart.
Lolita-Lorelei, one and the same character, kiss me, oh so fair,
with your name
covering my hair.

My hair reinvented the world:
and the world was more beautiful
purer all its days
more chaste
and my world sang,
incessantly sang
hymns of praise
to the glory of God's ways.

Eucharist. First Breath of Air

The first breath of air entered my chest
and I inhaled it deeply, as if a havana,
then exhaled,
gaspd it back,
the first air of this world,
the first breath of air of this world so barbarous.

My lips were, oh ho, bleeding
like a cirrhotic's,
cracked,
my mouth red as a raw wound
through which the world suffered once more.

My mother's cunt again flung me out.
Oh, like an arbalest,
like a ballista,
it blasted me.

My fingers learned how to move,
to love,
to take,
to stuff in my mouth
bread and Easter cake.
Bread, wine, and Easter cake.

Majoring in Your Body's Mechanics

**My first love happened there. I fell in love
with the living sweaty walls of my prison. Such a delectable prison! There I could learn
anatomy firsthand, by merely watching the muscle groups at work, piston-groups,
piston-rod-crank-groups. Thus I first learned about the hydraulic operation of blood
pumped into muscles, about the contraction and relaxation of the fibers. I was a top
student at the amorous mechanics of the body, of bodies. To my mind, this was most
savory science. Science applied to the science of dismembering the members, to the
facsimilation of muscle fascicles. Fasces and fascies, fascism of the body, where all the
fasciae are sublime and innocent. Now I know why we don't fall in love with our own
mothers.**

**Because we cannot control how our hearts look at others,
for our hearts stare at themselves in the mirror.**

**They look at other small goldfish, swimming,
in other enamored arms.**

Ichthyos, ichthyos,

I'm one of those chosen by God!

**I'm the fish carved at the entrances to the caves
where the Berbers spend their days.**

**And she's our only Fatima
winking at us from the caves, from the grottos.**

She's Yama.

And Kama.

She's all blame

yet knows we're tailored just the same.

**That's why we just sit around and are good for nothing more momentous
than drinking in taverns:**

to remember, for a moment, all the moments we stayed in Mama.

*At Perfusion's
(The Fountain of Perfusion)*

The patients clinked their perfusions in a toast
and called the bar inside my mother's womb
Perfusion's.
Out of pity, Mother had let them in, sheltered them—
they were homeless.
She hosted them.
It became a sort of asylum for those like me,
the unborn.
that's why Mother had agreed to take them in,
for they were like me, all of them were I, I was all of them,
at different ages, I with moustache and sword, a cavalryman,
I short with a fresh haircut,
ready to trudge to school, I clean-shaven, a clerk,
I an adventurer in the Andes,
I a mariner.
In fact, at Perfusion's,
I met only my own self.
It was a good tavern to meet myself
alone, single, twenty-eight years old,
still dark-haired, eyes black,
then thirty-six years old, married with a child, gray-haired.
My life wove itself
with many lives, all virtual,
every one mine, personal,
more bitter, more playful,
more hermetic, more venal.

My heart melted for me.
In fact, my life
nurtured itself on perfusions.
I was permanently permeated,
like one who had permanent delusions.
Such a perfusion, life! I said with great effusion,
itself the fountain of perfusion
from which I drank
and grew young,
my mother's womb itself the perfusion,
the lymph
and fluid amniotic,
otic
otic!
(the echo quoted).
The fountain of childbed
for my mother,
so the echo kept echoing. Mother had experienced a forty-year childbed, with me after me, that's why
she couldn't bear another child, that's why she couldn't even know another man.
I am, oh God, according to Your Will, may it be forever and ever, oh Lord,
the only man my mother has truly known.

I reflect on this every day.
Mother gave birth not to a baby but directly to a man,
so she could love me in maturity,
in maternity,
so she could take delight in my hair, already long and curly,
my eyes black as a raven,
my nature severe and authoritarian,
incorrigibly Russian.

The Ovule Library

The most beautiful library
was there.

The most wonderful library in the world. An ovule library
where, gene by gene, you could read the entire future of the world, all possible origins,
just as only in our ancestor Japheth's scrotum

could you have read all the tribes.

Page by page I could have disclosed every generation.

Every accident of genetics

or destiny,

every eye whose sight grows dim,

every dislocation.

Every baby's babble,

every mouth reaching for the nipple.

Every honeyed kiss,

every nibble.

My life itself was

a row of ovules beaded on a thread.

My life plucked out of life.

My life, broken off from life.

Wonderful golden streams of testosterone and folliculin
flowing toward me.

Pheromones. For I was a savage beast,

a young beast, with sharp teeth.

Raging to live.

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A beast roaring with laughter

who received the Eucharist with wine and Easter cake.

I was a gentle & delicious beast.

A candid beast, half grown,

that lay its head on your shoulder.

Melancholy and half-tempted.

You were the Shulamite of Mahanaim,

your body was like a date palm,

your breasts ripe grapes.

And I'd climb the trunk

and get drunk on the wine of the grapes,

and there, on your thigh, as on a rock in the sun,

with a bottle of beer, in the sun, I'd fall asleep.

And I'd sleep death's sleep.

On your breast, death's sleep was sweeter.

Sweet, bitter, it was I

resting

my head on your thigh.

You were the Shulamite,

whom life led me to.

To remain in an ovule library and read your fortune.

To learn the language of wild beasts from your pubis, tiered,

layered,

overlapped,

superimposed,

to learn from your internal organs

and from your nipples the language of birds

& of angels.

Then I'd live in you as in a forest.

As in a meadow where my life is on display.

And my life, rolled into a ball,

awaits me

between your thighs.

Prisoner of a Bubble

The first time I was born was inside.
I was born in Mother's womb for, truly, that
was my first birth. The first birth anyone can have.
My eyes sloughed off the amniotic scales, which fell away,
scraped by an invisible scraper.
And I could see! For the first time I could see.
My eyes were huge and wide open
to the liquid world inside. Since then I've never been able to imagine the world so well. I was like a
little old man, a hermit, in his lonely dwelling, in a cramped room where, if he leaves his glasses
someplace or loses them, he bumps into furniture. I was the prisoner of a bubble, a vintage champagne
bubble,
in the bowels of a medieval castle.
The champagne flowed over me, washed and flooded me.
The bubble floated everywhere across the world, wandering with me inside.
I was a pear preserved in a bottle, sleeping a vegetable sleep.
Skins kept falling from me like a rind,
the pellicle peeled easily, leaving opalescent layers behind.
A sleepy pear, drowsing in a virgin's womb,
oh, that's what I'll be until I'm in the tomb.

The End of My World

I loved Mama for each molecule.

I loved her sub-atomically, for each particle, each tissue, each muscular fascia, each small adipose agglutination, each muscle group. The peritoneum was my world's Ptolemaic shroud. The peritoneum was the world's end and the universe's edge.

And the universe was round, as only a virgin's womb can be, a perfect curve, the world's perfect curvature, as only a mother's womb can be.

Levitation Class

**Mother was the best of all possible worlds
and I lived inside her.
Outside there can only be the outside world,
in the exterior there can only be the exterior world,
the worst of all possible worlds.**

**When I die, I'll enter again enter my mother's
womb. The tumulus. Mother will swaddle me like a mummy. I'll be a Peruvian mummy, pelvic,
swaddled in her tears and slobber, in her aboriginal lymph,
monstrous.
There will be a mausoleum. Her womb will be a race car,
a combustion head. I'll be the monster inside,
roaring at this nasty world.
Mama will once again swaddle me like a baby
rock me
take me home.**

The Tenth Month

**Oh, how I envy those born in their tenth month!
They were so reluctant to leave their first amniotic motherland.
How nice keep floating in a liquid
as in a steam bath!**

**They sit as in a sauna,
eyes shut,
the rays of the sun
and other stars
flow over them and bathe them. The rays of the moon. They hear
their fathers sweep their hands across the belly
and press their ears against the navel, to hear tick-tocks.
Other hands caress the huge voluptuous bubble in which they lie,
the eternal mausoleum.**

**Rocked by their mother's gait,
by her swing climbing the stairs,
by her wonderful floating,
dream-like,
when she enters her bath.**

**And they rejoice, at leisure,
at their mother's inward construction,
so pure.**

**Incomparable.
For in this world nothing's purer than
Mother's inner space, where the Sunday service
can be heard, clear and undistorted.**

***Against My Mother's Death.
My Mother Will Never Die. And Mother Died. But Just a Little.***

**My mother will never die.
As soon as one of her eyes grows old, I'll rush to her
and turn her eyelids young again.
As soon as her face begins to wrinkle, I'll immediately commission painters
to repaint her.
Without a moment's delay, I'll choose the greatest painters
and send them on an emergency mission
to restore her wondrous body,
fresco by fresco,
like antique friezes
in secret attics, naves, and balconies.**

**My mother will never die.
I'll swallow her myself, piece by piece.
I'll gulp her down and spit her up
more beautiful
and pure.
I'll sprinkle her with hyssop.
And she'll be as white as snow.**

**Mother won't die because I'll betake myself to her
and pray, and on the spot my prayer will become my mother.**

**Mother won't have a chance to die
because I'll turn into an air-bag
before the fatal accident. I'll die in her place every time.
I'll go and methodically rejuvenate her,
I'll bring her the water of life
from where hills clash and rear,
the mountains battling tooth and nail.**

**Everyone who tells me my mother will die
I'll butcher. I'll put them up in the coarsest, most barbarous salt
and throw their heads to steep in a barrel,
in a sea of wine.
Of wine and Easter cake.**

And Mother died. But just a little.

Playing Mother and Me

If Mother were ever to die, I'd run as fast as I can to where eagles fly between two butting mountains. If my life were to exhaust itself in her, I'd steal out and bring the water of life and water of death to resurrect her body, my first lodging. To have somewhere to enter and be born, I'd return to it again, I'd play at birth, I as myself—and my mother. In her, me—me, from her. Mama.

***If My Mother Were to Die
in My Chest, Your Heart***

**If my mother were to die,
I'd enter her body and live.
There I'd live eternally,
There I'd build my fortress, there I'd celebrate
all the anniversaries that were my mother's.**

**Sing, I told my body.
Sing.
Sing the gentleness that was my mother's.
Sing Mother's beauty, sing her anger whenever I made
a mistake, one of my life's jokes, whenever I broke something
in the kitchen.
Sing with fury how you loved Mother.**

**Sing my childhood's despair, whenever she ventured as far as the corner of the apartment building to
buy bread, bread and milk—I worried she'd abandon me forever. As if your shadow could abandon you.
Your body's own shadow. As if it could just go off and leave you. As if it could go off and leave behind,
in your chest, your heart.**

Wandering the Realm of the Dead

**If my mother were to die,
what about me, how could I survive?
I, who am just one of her terminations, a suffix,
a terminal in her airport, an appendix,
an extremity of her urge to live,
tending, unfortunately, toward death.**

I am just a fingernail of hers, rebellious, grown too long. An ovule that has gone astray. Rejecting all that is. A tiny hair of hers that lost its way and temporarily attained independent flight. That got into its head, little by little, that it could live on its own, could live and die by itself.

**I am one of her tears that has congealed,
solidified,
grown,
turned into a man
hardened so much it became a statue of salt,
seeing the dead and weeping for them
wandering and weeping for the dead
in the realm of the dead,
the stockyard and the bazaars.**

**I am just a tumor of hers that has grown unnaturally big
and now no longer knows how to get back inside,
that wonders how, from one single woman, beautiful and sad,
I was duplicated,
so that now we are two.**

Mother Wouldn't Know

If my mother were to die,
would she know?
Would she really know it?
Would she really feel it? For she'd still be busy scanning the world through my eyes,
still feeling it with my hands.
Like an alien, she'd stretch out my limbs toward things,
to control them, to grasp them.
My life, everything that's mine, would be hers.
In fact, as I've said before, I don't even live my own life.
Forever and frantically, I live my ancestors' lives.
And that somehow means my ancestors live me.
Every living moment.
They gang-rape me.
They gang-rape my life.
As if they were smoking the same cigarette in a trench.
Where a shell is death's cleansing and terrifying
face. I am Janus,
the head with two faces.
And death is my second face.
And Mother is my second face.
And death is my second life.

I Was Schizophrenic. I Lived

I was schizophrenic. I lived
in an profoundly schizophrenic way. I lived forever
in my mother's skin.
I spoke only with her mouth.
I kissed only with her mouth.
I couldn't live my life as a man,
I never had the chance.
Mother was too deeply embedded
under my nails. Like lead
dissolved in the hair's saturnism.
I suffered from Mother,
I was sick with Mother,
that was it, the sickness I died of.
Life is like AIDS, someone told me, a fatal disease,
a venereal disease,
an implacable disease that gets deep inside your bones.

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I was schizophrenic and always saw double.
With my own eyes and, at the same time, with my mother's eyes.
Other women should have been afraid, should have had good,
serious grounds to be afraid
of my lesbian love.
I still don't know how they managed not to realize that, when I caressed them,
in fact a woman caressed them. How they did not get disgusted with me
as a fairy when Mother sweated so often,
so profusely through me.
They did not realize that, in my case, my life was a sickness.
internally transmitted. Intrauterine.
Life is like AIDS, I was told, a fatal disease
that penetrates deep into your heart,
seeps into the marrow of your heart.

*

Listen closely to me and don't forget this:
Life is like AIDS,
catch it and you're done for.
Once there's life in you, you're dead.
Listen to me.
Or better, don't listen.
You're already dead.
Why should you listen?
You're dead.
Dead deep down to the marrow of your mother's heart.
To the marrow of your life.

Life is exactly like AIDS, well said:
Once you've caught it, you can't escape.
You can't possibly,
rid yourself of it.
You're trapped in a mousetrap.
Poisoned in an anthill.

Life is like AIDS, no denying it:
A fatal disease.
Fateful, mortal.
Once you've caught it,
angels are already using your mouth to sing.

***Just as Breasts Have Eyes
(So My Mother Writes Me)***

1. Written on the Body

**Just as breasts have eyes,
so am I my mother's son.**

**Mother has me,
as Ana has an Apple.
Bob has a Baton, Cy a Cylinder head.
Mother's a handwriting I've never mastered.
Written on the body.**

2. Just as Breasts Have Eyes, So My Mother Has Me

**Just as breasts have eyes,
so my mother has me.**

**When I'm hungry I write more fluently.
My hunger writes me.
The same as my mother: Mother writes out of me.
Mother writes me.
Mother writes me out of me.
Mother writes the world out of me.
From my depths she writes. I write nothing.
Never. I myself write nothing.
I sit with my hands together in me. I simply pray.
Because Mother writes out of me in a rage.
Mother writes violently, with hemorrhages instead of rubies.
Mother writes with moans, coughs, roars.
Mother writes with tears. With spit. With everything under the sun.
With oaths and with sweet words,
rash words, or tender words.**

**From the bottom of my depths my mother writes.
Terribly. From the saddle of my heart. That's why I myself
have no need ever to write anything.
Mother has swollen in me.
Mother's heart has swollen in me.
My cold comes from my ancestors.
My cold, and hers, comes from my ancestors.**

**Just as breasts have eyes,
so my mother has me.**

I Kept Sleeping My Amniotic Sleep

I kept sleeping and in my sleep wonders took place.
I kept sleeping my amniotic sleep
close to the sleep of death.
The womb was a soft coffin inviting sleep,
unbirth was absolute repose,
a total lack of hypocrisy.
A total lack of plans.
No, a meditation inside a lotus, instead.
Thus I reached the initiate's condition,
knowledge no longer much interested me—
I already knew the world,
I was sufficient unto myself,
it was sufficient to be known by me myself,
I myself knowing me myself was sufficient knowing me,
the me two worlds.

The womb was a soft coffin inviting sleep
in a chlorotic forest
close to the forest of death,
I kept sleeping my amniotic sleep.

Epitaph

**We can't discover freedom twice,
usually it's freedom that discovers us.
Freedom digs inside us, bores into us with desperation, has sharp talons,
and brings to the surface fragments from when we were younger.**

***The Immaculate Conception
(Imaculata Adorata)***

1.

If you're a dolt, no doubt you don't like sex.

That's definite.

And, if you're the common man, you've no excuse.

We understand you. Love you. Go so far as to construct you.

We don't give a damn you're a common man.

If you're a dolt, lucky for you.

We'll never meet.

I won't horrify you. I horrify everyone I meet. Programmatically.

Like the stinging nettle. *Urtica dioica*.

**Stinging, singing. I like nettles in the summer. People cook nettles,
their smell wafts from kettles through open windows. The moon cooks nettles.
Nettles for me alone.**

2.

If you're a dolt, you don't like sex.

A reciprocal truth. *Reciproca adorata*.

**Like a lethal sex, its corolla filthy, frenetic, wondrous,
the world turns to me**

and opens,

horrified.

Immaculate.

Coda
(The World of Gălățanu)

**Like a lethal sex that we have sex with and then dies on us,
with its corolla filthy,
frenetic,
wondrous.
The world turns to me.
It opens.
Horrified.
My world won't die.
My world will never die.
Only I will die.
I will die for it.
My world will never die.**

Bookish Sex. (A Burlesque)

1.

**If you don't like sex, you're a dolt.
That sticks to you. Stains you.
Sex, like salvation, illuminates my life.
Sex is a lesser salvation. Sex for love, I mean.
It's a temporary salvation. Like when you know it's going to rain
so you take your umbrella when you go out.
Sex is a lesser salvation. It's my own lesser salvation.
Very small. The tiniest. A local salvation. Frisky.
Frolicsome. A game of innocence, utterly. The last drop of oil
in the icon lamp of candor that remains in us. Smoking
like a mortar. Secret oil. Oil.**

2.

**If you don't like love, then definitely you're a dolt.
That's certain. It's axiomatic. And love always counts on a larger
or smaller share of sex. Sex and genuflection, as one critic said.
Sex and genuflection, the critic repeated. And that already makes me think of
the sex of books, which is so bookish.**

I Would Have Taken My Time and Dallied in the Womb

I would have taken my time and dallied in the womb. My outer eyes would never have opened. The world would have existed for me only inside my eyes. Only inside my ears. Below the threshold of hearing. The world behind the scales on the eyes, which had never fallen off. What an adventure! What an experience! I would have seen my body only with inward sight, as initiates see. It would have opened and just the eye in my forehead would have turned on like a lighthouse, like a vectorial beam scanning the eternal dark of ignorance. Some say it might have been merely a gland, the pineal, but how can a just a gland break up the dark? That's the eye of God, the very eye of God. Which sets things in order. And purifies them.

Your Breasts Have Spigots

1. Lethal Saps

**You've got two spigots on your breasts.
You can turn them on more gently or more forcefully,
with drops of ambrosia
and other lethal saps.**

**Two spigots,
and out of them flows
compassion.**

**Two spigots,
and out of them gushes
the good wine
in a sudden shower, in an
avesta. That severs me, tears me
to pieces, pulverizes me,
disperses me.
And the other way, flowing from breasts to mouth,
the inverse. Sometimes.
Sometimes, why, you have your head in the clouds. Overcast.
The terrible sky.**

2. *Death Licks Me*

**Two spigots,
and out of them flow
the two rivers that enclose paradise.
Death licks me, and my dream must arise.**

**You've got two spigots
out of which
your essence
trickles into the world.
Some abstract.
Some concrete.
Some gentle.
Some ferocious.
Some seductive with their charms.
Some ascetic.**

**And the lives of my deaths
flowing out of the spigots.
Some timid.
Some vestal.
Incorporeal.
Concrete.
Two.
Only two
spigots.**

I've Never Been I

**I've never been I.
I've been the other.
Only the other.
Always the other.**

**Hey, living people, your skins dressed in cloth, you who stare at me,
you're not actually looking at me, look more closely,
you're actually seeing the other.**

That's why I keep feeling myself, pinching my cheeks. Slapping myself.

**Good people, don't let yourselves be deceived.
I haven't been I.
I've always been the one you can point at from far away.**

The Poet Mocks Everything Else

The poet mocks everything else that nobody mocks. That nobody else can. Our lives mock us. The poet mocks our lives. The poet doesn't give a damn. The poet doesn't need to have style. Style is a foolish prejudice. If his feet smell, isn't that nothing else but style? If he sweats like a buffalo every night, and has to change his sheets, pajamas, and covers, isn't that much more than style?

I'm Happy to Feed on Ambrosia

I'm happy to feed on ambrosia. Every day they fill me up with ambrosia through a funnel. That's why I don't grow old, for ambrosia can't make you grow old, but instead makes you grow young day by day. In this way, I relive each day before. Every day, food comes to me through a miraculous tube, as if from God, and I even think it's divine sustenance. And, whenever I pray, I include everyone in my prayer. For my food comes from everyone, as if from the holy monks, through a woman. From Mama. Manna comes from Mama.

***She's Naked and by Her Nakedness She Pays for the World's Sins,
Beginning With Mine***

***1. Every Line Granted Us
Is a Postponement of Death***

Every line granted us is a postponement of death
as a small odd reward for the fact that we'll die.
That is to say, we'll pay for it all,
all these extravagant lines.

We'll pay for every wonderful line in our lives
the same way we'll pay for every woman we've had,
for every coin-like nail of hers
that dug into our flesh,
and the nail itself will be the coin,
if mother-of-pearl nails can redeem life.

Sometimes I imagine every prominent mole
on her body as a brown coin,
as a small brown coin
with which she pays for all my sins.

2. About How She Redeems Me

She's a good payer,
she's a good payer for all my sins.
She turned a light on, vertical,
as the poet says, beside her knee, virginal.
But all my life, all my life, I've only groped in the dark
and tried at all costs to draw nearer to this light.

She's naked now and above me. And by her nakedness she pays
for all the world's sins, beginning with my own case.
The world's sins, the most base...

Increate Song (I)

**My eye's full of increates,
my nostril's full of increates.
Thousands, dozens, hundreds of thousands, millions
of billions of increates
jostling about in my eyes, inchoate.
My life is increate,
despite all its purity.
Glued into it.
Despite all its severe purity,
a monster's,
absolute
unwonted
undaunted
dissolute
astonished
abolished
now splendiferous, now hideous.
Wondrous, hideous. Wondrous-hideous.**

Song for Increates

Creation is increate.

**Increates exist. Only increates exist,
we exist not.**

There's only an apparent world, false, horrible, disgusting.

Orgiastic. A world like a false wall. Of cork. In front of which there's a false wall. In front of which there's another false wall. In back of which there's a false wall. Behind which there's another false wall. False labyrinths. A stainless-steel tooth in which there's another stainless-steel wall, with a pair of stainless-steel-toothed walls inside.

The world is increate.

We've not yet been born.

Nor in truth will we ever be born.

I'll Write and Pay in Blood to Redeem My World

Where am I going, to what world?

I'm given a new body.

There's a vortex taking form in Mother's womb. Through a narrow chimney I'll be hurled upward, like Santa Claus I'll break loose from between Mother's legs. Covered with sweat she'll strain to give birth to me, and she'll fear for her life. And for my life. With sweat I'll be bathed all my life.

In that sweat of hers.

She'll hold tight to the delivery room table and cry at the top of her voice, as if I were a cry. As if I came out as a cry... There, on the table, will be plenty of light—and, around the light, doctors with masks over their mouths.

I'll be an operation. A pure operation.

Smocks will encircle my birth.

Around the black hole through which I'll catch a glimpse of the light.

The table will be cold and only my mother's tears will warm it.

And the blood of our cut umbilical cord.

Cut day after day.

Cut, always deeper, day after day.

Am I the golden calf?

The saint of this world, much dreamt of?

Will I be able to redeem at least a part of my own world?

I'll cry, I'll suffer, I'll write—and pay for it in blood.

The Reticular World

Inside her the world's lenticular.

Reticular.

Inside her the world's tentacular.

The world, the world.

**It encompassed more than you could imagine,
especially at first sight. Spectacular.**

Her womb was like a lens, like a viewfinder through which things look different. Her womb magnified things, reflected them differently. Gave them different birth. Multiplied them. Revived them.

I'm Young and Life Grips My Heart in Its Teeth

**I'm young and death hasn't made my acquaintance.
Hasn't sniffed, poked, pried at me. The god of my groin and limbs is God, from the limb of vigor to the limb of knowledge and that of decency. The god of all my limbs is God. Of my black eyes and my soul is God.**

**I'm young and death hasn't made my acquaintance.
For my God, the All-Promising and All-Fulfilling,
doesn't allow death to know me.
He dispatches a little angel with a little oilcan—to oil
every joint of mine when it gets rusty.**

I'm young and life grips my heart in its teeth.

Deceiver's World

*For Lili, in hope of an unusual friendship
this singular masterwork*

*Prologue
A Church of Chalk
(My Mother)*

I forgot how the starry womb looked inside. All I remember
is that it seemed like a church, a church of chalk, like the chalk churches
in Dobrogea. It looked sweet, like a small chapel with a fluted dome.
When I say sweet, I mean burnt sugar.
It was a chapel that blossomed overnight,
iridescent across our earthly world.
Arch by arch the vault was woven—that was my only sky,
the only sky I can remember.
So many years have passed, thirty-nine of them,
now all the paint has dried out.
Second by second, it crumbled inside.
And I'm altogether crumbled within it.
In this way, my mother remains forever in me.
In this way, I remain forever in my mother.

1.

Come into the world,
the Tempter cries to me.
Come into the world,
he whispers in my ear.
Come—and, my son, I'll grant you youth without old age.
And life without death.
You forget one thing, I reply to him: Father, I'm not the son
of this world.

2.

Come, come into the world,
the Whisperer whispers.
Come into the world,
see
how beautiful the world is,
how perverse,
see the irises sway
in the April breezes.

Look at the world's thighs
and juicy breasts,
big and juicy like pomegranates,
ready to cure old men's oozing gums,
ready to cure all men's oozing gums
and their red rheumy eyes,
their eyes infected with every eye disease,
and their rheumy lives,
their lives infected with every life disease.

Come into the world, come!
Join life and see the wonderful ass this whore of a world has,
what a well-rounded fundament,
what a wonderful mausoleum—
where you'll be consigned,
where I'll be enshrined.

Deceiver, all these
are instruments of torture, I reply.
The breasts are iron tongs
that squeeze pleasure out of us
and snatch us from the breasts of peace, the true and the divine.

Oh, the belly, too, even the pubis,
that suck you from within, take you captive,
thus you must enter the first woman you meet.
Sin sucks you in,
exhausts you.
And you can never get away.

3. Deceiver, Take Back Your World

Deceiver, take back your temptations,
take back your temptations.
Deceiver, I don't need them.
I don't need you.

Take back your blue skies
And the flowers that smell so sweet.
Take back your calyxes & women in which the perfume
of folliculin casts its shadow.
Take back the earth altogether, on which I cast my shadow in vain.

4. "The World Will Be No More, for My Thought Keeps It Going"

Deceiver, here amidst your trees,
I will no longer stay.
For, Deceiver, I go forth to join God.

I still can do one thing or you, Deceiver:
take you with me.
God is All-Forgiving,
He will have pity
even on you.
Deceiver, leave your world—come along with me.
Leave your world, for your mere thought can hardly keep it going.

5. My Birth Is Endless

I never suffered claustrophobia. I never felt the least claustrophobic
in my mother's womb. Neither lonely nor downcast.
How can you feel lonely when you're inside another, a woman?
When another being takes you in, contains you?
At most, you can be
happy.
I never was a claustrophobe.
My life had a happy ending.
Birth.
And my birth is endless.

*

I'm born from everything, repeatedly, obstinately, suddenly,
completely, I'm born from every valid mother.
Every woman hastens to give birth to me.
Every woman offers to rend open her belly to encompass me,
to take me in.
To lay siege to me.

I'm under attack.
I'm surrounded. Completely surrounded. By women.

Every woman hastens to press her breasts to my mouth,
so I won't be without sustenance,
won't starve, won't suffer,
so I'll have something to suck.
Every woman hastens to press her vagina upon me,
so I've got something to part, something to thrust into,
something to make pregnant,
something to conceive.

(When I was younger, I'd have said: something to fuck.)

But now, I'm less a man,
more an angel.

6. *Every Woman Comes to Me*

Every woman comes to me, takes me by the hand and says:
Be my lawful man
and at the same time, be my son, the one not yet given,
be my father
and the father of my father
and the father of my mother
be, in turn,
all the men who embrace me. Gather round me,
pay court to me,
besiege me.

Be the man,
the only man

*

I'm born of every woman, and even more,
of all women at once. I'm born every moment
everywhere on earth. No one is born apart from me,
ever.

7. *I'm Born Before the Moon Sets*

I'm the perpetual newborn. Newborn forever. The newborn
by profession. I'm born before the moon sets.

I'm born and I die before the moon sets.

8. *From My Mother's Womb I Looked at the World (I Never Dreamt I'd Be Male)*

From my mother's womb I looked at the world
as through a window.
The world seemed small and chaste.
The world seemed ugly sometimes, beautiful other times.
Oh, there were so many occasions for wonder!
From my mother's womb I watched the snow fall.
I watched wars snow upon the world. I kept under observation
and integrated in the system the foamy sea.

From my mother's womb the world seemed a dream.
Intended deliberately to tempt me.
As if from time to time it declared:
Come, joke-joke! Come out, little joker!

**But I couldn't be deceived at all.
I couldn't be lured.
I just stayed there, giggling, knees to my chin.
I never dreamt I'd be male.**

9. *A Crust of Rays*

**My womb has its sun. The womb in which I stay is lighted. Mother
is my womb's sun. A second sun, an interior sun,
the God inside my mother. The sun in my mother light's womb.
Mother is made of rays. Mother is sewn from rays.
Mother is a crust. Of rays. Everyone is lighted, in their turn,
by their God. From my mother light and heat radiate.
At the same time, Mother's my beach. I'm lying
on one of her folds
on an edge
on her sweet-fragile-crisp sand
and get a tan from her.
From her light.
And from her God, who lights up inside her.**

The Womb with a Rash of Thousands of Stars

1. *Mother's Hole*

Sometimes I stretch out as other people do,
an arm cushioning my head, and look at what's above me. The sky.
In my case, of course, the starry womb.
The womb with a rash of thousands of stars. The sweet,
revolving,
stupefying,
and matchlessly wonderful
hole, my mother's hole.

3. *The Household God*

I'm the unborn baby who
still can't be born.
Yes, and who keeps waiting for
his unborn dog
to bark at him.

Until it barks at me
I cannot be born.
It barks,
barks once
—and my bonds fall free.
It's the trembling little dog of the moon,
the old hag and, at the same time, my god,
all of them living in the household.
Stay here, soul, I say to myself,
be quiet, wait,
wait and hear bark,
from the earth's depths,
the little stone dog.
The (your) household god.

***Mama, Will Your Womb Take Me Back?
(Will Your Womb Look Back?)***

**Mama, will your womb take me back?
Mama, will your womb ever take me back?
And when will that be?**

**Can I enter there along with all my friends?
With all the women I've loved?
With my precious wife and our newborn baby?
With all the manuscripts I've written?—
whether they're good for anything in this world I don't know.**

Mama, will your womb ever look back?

**Will I be allowed to play inside you the way I want to, Mother? To move in my desk, computer,
printer—all sorts of equipment—and connect you to the Net? To log you into the world's vast database?
Your life, like death's spume.
My life, like the seed of the spume.**

The Adventurous Life

The Adventurous Life of Her Legs

1. We're Her Legs' Pimps

At our house, her legs are the biggest stars.
Her legs grin at us from billboards. They glitter at us from magazine covers.
They're making a pile of money. Together, we're her legs' pimps. They show up
all sorts of places you least expect. On T-shirts, even on labels.
There's a sort of wallpaper of her legs, which broke previous box-office records.
Everybody's sticking them on their walls.
They had to devise a new classification: best legs
in the human race. A perfect 11. No. 1 in the top ten, the top forty.
From time to time, even I wake up thinking I should cut her legs off
and glue them permanently between my own.

No, no, they'd be much better
above them
above my abject, crooked legs.

2. A Check Drafted in Varicose Veins

Day in, day out, I hang around gossiping with her legs
which tell me their life story. How they got tangled up with the ferentari gypsies
when they were young and naive.
And how those mountebanks with knucklebones burned them with cigarettes.
How they laughed when their first lover abandoned them, their first
pair of lover-legs, and how, to get them back, they went for love charms
to the witches in maglavit.

Her legs had an adventurous life, more spectacular than
edith piaf's. They don't know much about cooking,
about making pilaf and soup, soup and pilaf.
Her legs led a bohemian life, an artist's.
They boozed it up at every joint in the neighborhood.
Now they've squirreled away what's to come due in the future, the sign of their recklessness,
a bag packed full of bruises, a check drafted in varicose veins.

3. Death Notice Dedicated to Her Legs

Her legs are called isadora duncan, andreea andreevna, masa mashenka,
grusenka, anna karenina. They look like ballerinas
in a *pas-de-deux* with a behemoth tomcat. They fall into temptation
and squander fistfuls of dollars on
on vodka, salmon, sturgeon, caviar.
To her shameless and boozy legs
which must surely repent at the last trump,
I am dedicating this death notice.

Oh, woe, oh poor legs, oh angelic,
sinful legs
slowly, secretly
suck very drop of marrow
from my bones
that straddle and sprawl between your marvellous websites
where,
boj moi, my god,
I've languished month after month feverish with typhoid.

4. Poetus Captivus to a Pair of Legs like Hers

Oh, legs, wretched lands,
paradise rank with blossoms,

yielding to all my desires in turn! By your nails I'd sit and weep, because there's no greater torment in this world than to be *poetus captivus* to a pair of legs like hers. The moon rises from beneath you every night and the sun sets upon your heights. Your thigh soars into the sky, your ankle anchors the earth. With a myriad of little kisses I cover your paws soiled with ordure from the world below. But high above the angels sing in the firmament of your golden tuft, beneath which I'd gladly lie languishing long after death. I'd wait for the bus which has no route across these twilight zones. Gladly I'd map the pubic triangles and compromising bowers of your territories.

What a cascading cartography extends under your vulva and what magic realms, sinuous and oleaginous!

Gladly I'd gallop to the new indies, yee-ha! yee-ha-ha! whinnying as I lie moaning, beaded by sweat.

Gladly I'd emigrate to the united states of your legs. The prenuptial canada of your calves covered decently by a maple leaf. The tropical mexico of your knees, the florida of your sphincters, the torrid trinidad-tobago between your legs. Gladly I'd lick panama hanging in the fringes of your clitoris an ascetic of perspiration in its humble state, little dictator in the boat. Gladly I'd say: oh wondrous is the study of your geography, when you learn it on the lascivious drawing board where humble and docile lie all the continents of our love so burning hot yet in this poem, so chaste.

translated by
Adam J. Sorkin and the poet

At the Virgin's Breast

1. My First Love

My first love was the icons.
When I was a small child, I'd bring my lips close to the Virgin Mary, for I was just like Jesus.
The obscurity of the background seemed so obvious to me.
Now, I don't know why, it doesn't seem that way.

My heart was so placid and clear, it flowed.
At that time I was afraid, ashamed to speak about my love.
I'm really saying, you discover such simple things much too late, sometimes not till old age.
But you're heading toward them.
That's why my first love was the icons
and my small lips sucked at Mary's nipples where
she holds the child to her breast.
To be in love with the Virgin wasn't sacrilege
but on the contrary adoration,
which you'll never feel later.

Oh, and how I bit my new teeth into the Virgin's teat!
She only beamed at me!
Her milk splashed my face.
The Virgin's breast was so heavy with milk.

2. Noli Me Tangere

The icon in front of the altar was tall, nearly a meter and a half,
and I measured my height against it.
The Virgin Mary made me a sign from there,
overjoyed because I was able to get closer and closer to her,
as if behind the glass.

She let me caress her all over.
She pressed her cheek to mine.
Later, scholars challenged me in endless debates
about profanation, sin, the Virgin Mary's breasts.
Noli me tangere, they kept saying that this portion of her All-Holy body
screamed at me.

"Why do you go on interrogating me?" I protested. "Devils, pharisees, betrayers,
why do you doubt my love and put it up for sale?"

I couldn't lend an ear to their rubbish. I said, "The Holy Virgin's breast, you damn fools,
is nothing other than
the altar screen on which our world is propped.
And, before all things, my world."

3. Why I Never Found My Mate

My first love, it's a fact,
was the icons

which were too high to touch and kiss. I groped my way toward them.
I aspired to grow as tall as the breast of the Giant
Virgin and to lap up the light
that poured down the painting from above, as in a church.

Sex is a mystical substitute—I understood this later. As things stand,
Saint Virgin Mary was my beloved, too.
Now I understand whom Jesus loved his entire lifetime
and why there was no room for any other woman in his life.

**He was the baby pledged to his Beloved. He cuddled
only with His Trinity. Only with the Holy Ghost did he unite.**

**Oh, yeah, yeah, this is why it's hard for you to find your mate, my mother
would tell me. Too many icons luring you to pray
are budding their thighs in your mind.**

**translated by
Adam J. Sorkin and the poet**

I Come from Tradition

I'm a warrior.

I come from tradition,
as in the middle of a cart heaped high with the bones of all my ancestors.
I'm a shaman of my people, the feared shaman who leads my ancestors' spirits into battle, the terrible
combat
with matter and the spirits of darkness.
Standing tall on the horse's back, in my hands
the bloody sword
of the Spirit,
I'm like Indra, Avalokiteshvara.

I'm a warrior. A brave. I come from tradition.
Tattooed on my chest, I bare the totems of my tribe.
I'm smeared with war paint.
And that's the way I fight, Ho-o! I'm a fighter,
A brave. Há-wi-mo-o
Ó-ma-ta! Ho-o! Ha-a!

I'm a warrior.
I come from tradition. And I assume my tradition, all of it,
from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. I'm frightful to lay eyes on.
Here I am, full of blood, the blood of matter. Wounded, still wounded,
dying, ever dying,
Yet alive, full of life's bitter blood,
more than alive.

I'm a warrior.
Since the moment I was born, I came here to die,
I found nothing better for me to do.

I come from tradition.
Not to destroy it, but to complete it.
Nobody can stand in my way,
not even the way itself.

I come from tradition.
My war chariot is Poetry. As I've said before, I'm Labi□ resurrected, Labi□ returned among us. Because,
Ho-o! Ha-a!, my friends, my brothers, Labi□ always returns. Or at least from time to time.

I'm Moldavia who has returned
to rewrite Moldavia. I suck once more at my mother's breast,
raising high for a moment the foundation of the house
to place it at my mother's breast, to catch one more drop
of milk from the breast of the tradition,
to return strengthened.
I'm seated on the throne of the kings of Moldavia. Because I'm a Mu□atin. I'm bone of Mu□at. In its
comeliness from ugly to handsome,
I will pass the whole world through my sword,
through the sword of my mouth, bone through bone.
Through bone. To bring it to my Moldavia
as an offering. My grandmother on my father's side was known as Niculina Mu□at, the sister of Catrina
Mu□at, with property granted as a freehold, from Upper Moldavia to Moldavia, from Vlăde□tii on
the Prut, flowing through the village from Moldavia to Lower Moldavia. Oh, beautiful Moldavia,
flowing through the cemetery of our bones. Under the fields, and the carts...

translated by
Adam J. Sorkin and (some of them) with the
help of the poet