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HORIA GÂRBEA

The Other Shore

English translation
by **Elena Nistor**
and **Loredana Manolache**

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Contents

the other way

- in the beginning / 7
- the past – a celebration / 8
 - the question / 11
 - the other way / 12
 - from the lift / 13
 - basho's hut / 14
- snow even in april / 15
 - west lake / 16
- The Bones of Guba / 17
- announcing victory / 20
- i will leave i will forget / 23
 - sunday morning / 25
 - million mornings / 27
- why the spider climbs the wall / 29
- looking for the same scents / 31
 - spring in the galilee / 32
- pagoda in the mountains / 34
 - cause / 35
- finger between the pages of the book / 37
- watching a blackbird on the shore / 39
 - tower / 40
- towards the end / 42
- my dog was young / 44

back then – in january

- the summons / 49
- infirmity / 50
- the throne room / 52
- on that weird river / 54
- sunday morning / 55
- more has passed / 57
 - the edge / 59
- back then – in january / 62
 - synaesthesia / 64
- the poem with the camels / 66
 - the ram / 68
- all the way up / 70
- the other shore / 72

An Interview with

Horia Gârbea by Loredana Manolache / 75

Biography / 88

in the beginning

at 17 poetry frightens you
at 20 you love her like a teenager
at 25 you only want to possess her
at 30 you find her disgusting
– what a vulgar mistress

at 33 you understand and forgive her
at 40 you can pat her on the back
as if she were an old horse
at 45 you forget her
at 48 you take her out

how many other faces
how many other ages
other stories
if there is still time
if there is

the past – a celebration

you know the carpenter
remember how he used to beat
the nails in the coffins
two strikes with the back of the adze
the whole nail got in not even god
could pull it out
you know the carpenter
he's grown so old
you hardly recognize him
he can barely drag himself
to basil's pub
he can barely raise the bluish
thick-base glass
it takes him an hour to have a gill
and for him to light up a cigarette
lasts until tomorrow

you know the grave digger you know
how he used to dig like an excavator
oh the graves he used to dig
they were wide deep

you could hardly see him inside
he used to find water
the dead used to float
in their coffins like little boats
well he must have grown old since if
he leaves for basil's pub
at noon he will reach it at twilight
and if he has two gills he will fall asleep

and you know the poor priest
remember how he used
to say prayers for the dead
at the speed of light
how he used to swing
his thurible over the dead
as if hammer-throwing in a stadium
he has grown old poor chap luckily for him
his parishioners give him rides
to basil's pub
drop him on the first chair
and luckily for him basil sometimes
raises the glass to his mouth

and you know basil
how thin he used to be he seems
to have put on some weight he seems
to have become taller younger he rolls out
the barrels like a circus juggler

if he gives a fillip to
a drunk that one will fall on his head
when he bangs
the grave digger's and the carpenter's
heads against the table
you can hear it from the bridge then
he grabs the poor priest by his collar
and throws his drink down the hatch

some say they saw basil fly
he would fly over the village like a bat

the question

i've got two cats
one's white with black stripes
the other's black with grey stripes
there's no way I could mistake
one for the other

one's tender in the evening
the other's affectionate
only in the morning
and both watch me
both know
they're young and
will live much longer than me

both are playful
rotate their tails
thanking me for
their daily food and
the eyes of them both
ask me
when
when

the other way

those who ask me
to choose
don't know
i've never chosen

i've been given everything
i've been ordered everything
everything's been
forced down my throat

those who ask me
to choose
don't want me to choose
just wait
for my choice to
shout at me not like that
not like that
the other way
the other box

from the lift

when in a lift
there are two angels
and one wants to go up
and the other down
they can do it
at the same time

as long as they go
in the same lift
all at once
one going up up
and the other down
the lift stays idle

when the lift
stays on my floor
for a long time
i understand there are
two angels in there

i take my hat off
and go down by the stairs

basho's hut

basho's hut was
on a hill
everything matters

snow even in april

someone told me
your life can be
equally subtle even if keep
your mouth shut

someone asked me
that dream
you never told
anyone that dream
is it right to keep it
just to yourself

from the other side of the lake
from the castle
the swallows are bringing spring