

IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND

In life's vacation, a man
comes to the earth,
and finishes his time of life,
by returning home.

Death and birth
take turns, like day and night,
although being alive
is thought of as vacation.

When a man comes to the earth,
he weeps for himself,
and when later he returns,
his return makes others weep.

1957

THE SOUND OF A SILVER BRIDLE

I'm waiting for my lover to arrive,
the sound of horses' hooves pressed upon my heart.
Outside, the night is soundless, peaceful, and
the moon lights up the rafters.

Sleep has fled and, on my orphaned pillow,
I am snared by lovesickness.
And the dull sound of a silver bridle
brings happiness to my passionate heart.

1959

A POEM WRITTEN IN THE TATRAS

I am standing on a mountain.
The mountain is more silent than I.
Directly below me the mountain is moving.
Over there, the steppe is turning to skyblue.
I am standing on a mountain.
The mountain is more silent than I.
The peaks of my heart struggle towards the sky,
seem to taper below me.
The mountain is more silent than I.
I am a mountain peak.
Truly I am aloft.
I am standing on my feet.
Directly below me the clouds are moving.
I am on the peak.
Over there, the steppe is turning to skyblue.
I am standing on the crown of the Tatras.
The skyblue mountain is supporting me.
The clear sky is supporting me.
In faraway Europe,
the rocky Tatras
did not miss the weight of my body.
I am supreme.
And now I am aloft.
I am near the stars and the moon.
Beneath my feet,
the dark peak of Sumeru.
Atop the summit,
the shaman's skyblue sky.

Czechoslovakia, in the high Tatras.
1962

THE FOUR SEASONS,
WRITTEN IN THE STYLE OF JAPANESE HAIKU

spring

in the enclosures, noisy
flocks of rooks rush,
tearing the frozen dung

summer

by day, mouths open, the young
camels stand, longing for cold
upon their bodies

autumn

in the pool, where the willow-
lined river turned aside,
the return of a yellow leaf orphan

winter

the rush of the winter camp, the
winter shelter growing dark,
the cattle track hurrying along

1967

THE STARS PLUNGE INTO THE WATER
for Ch Chimed

Go to the river banks when the dusk is falling,
sit and wait a moment beneath the dense branches.
Gradually the parasol of light descends and
through the night, the stars plunge into the water.

When the silence returns,
the first stars fall to the water's surface.
And after swimming, the stars being slow,
the stars of Heaven fall straight down.

Watch how the stars of mighty Heaven swim in the water,
through the quiet night of our motherland.
They swim and glimmer, their forms amazing
and wondrous, like young girls.

Do not throw rocks into the river water,
the distant stars are modest, like young girls!
If ever you stir patterns in the water,
know the lovely stars to be from you!

When you sit beneath the moon, please make no noise.
Take pleasure in the nights of your broad motherland.
The stars of Heaven swim in the clear water,
they plunge into the Tuul.

1969

CAMELS

Look then at the glimmering sky
in the distant, distant blue,
and watch the airplanes, floating
in the vice of the dark horizon!

And this is the magic blue
mirage on the vast Gobi!
The ships of the desert,
these well-known camels!

This hooved herd in the wilderness,
these vessels of the Gobi
called camels, these lovely creatures
are embodied jewels!

Their color of corundum red,
their wool of gentle silk,
their bodies will not be calm,
their bright eyes are incomparable peace!

These *humps*, these walking vessels,
these ocean-going ships, their *vitality*.
Their yearning bellow is the horsehead fiddle,
and leaves have fallen to the path!

The column of caravans drops tears
for the camel who carries days and years,
and the two masters of the Gobi, full of mirages,
bellow out from the place of years!

Rare and fortunate are those who are purebred
on those few tracks across this earth!
Their sinewy bodies do not wear away
their feet crossing deserts of sand in ancient migration!

Drought sits upon these bony ships,
they feel such joy to cross the outer ocean.
Riding the elegant red camels,
we feel such joy to pass the desert of aeons!

This hooved herd in the wilderness,
these vessels of the Gobi,
red Gobi ornamental camels,
a rider's ornamental pleasure!

This fine beast called the camel,
this rare beast in the world!
Without the desert, no camels, no camels would there be!

Without the camel, no desert, no desert would there be!

Look then at the glimmering sky
in the distant, distant blue,
and watch the airplanes, floating
in the vice of the dark horizon!

And this is the magic blue
mirage on the vast Gobi!
The ships of the desert,
these well-known camels!

1977

MY VERSE, MY HORSE

My verse, my horse, you and I
must sing until the flowers weep, glinting dew.
My verse, my horse, you and I
must sing until the moon, brimming tears, sleeps in open country!

I, the verse, need a divine voice
to sing until the golden sun rises from the void.
You, my horse, need powerful sinews
to gallop until the song I sing is spread across the lonely world.

My verse, my horse, you and I
have received from the people an order beyond words.
My verse, my horse, you and I
have a thought of far away hidden in our heart.

My verse is unresting sleep, is unwearying exhaustion.
My horse is born, upright and slender, from my wisdom.
They do not begrudge us precious topaz, and
we must never forget the Mongol people's merit!

My verse, my horse, gallop quickly!
We need the distant land, where the horse's sinews appear.
Again and again think of our people's order, and gallop onwards!
My horse, we need the field of the world!

In the field of the poetic world, my people,
do not complain if you are equal among a hundred horses.
Along the distant path, our wisdom and our muscles tire,
we do not enjoy getting dust on our crowns!

My verse, my horse, you and I
must sing until the flowers weep, glinting dew.
My verse, my horse, you and I
must sing until the moon, brimming tears, sleeps in open country!

1977

MONGOLIAN VERSE

A fine woman's feet
 reach the Asoka tree,
and every branch
 comes into bloom.
The beautiful and fine ideas
 of ancient Mongolian verse
whisper something
 to me in this life,
indistinctly aglow,
 lighting the fire of my spirit,
causing the mind to boil
 through love of women.
On the banks of the Yamuna,
 in ancient India,
around the ruins, brought down
 under the rule of the Haan
a man and a woman
 became eternally friends,
and, at the entrance
 to the noble Taj Mahal,
the beautiful ideas
 of ancient Mongolian verse come to mind,
and, deep in my heart,
 whisper something more.
In one of the precious pearls
 of distant Africa,
a dance theater
 in Addis Ababa,
he sighed as he watched,
 in a moment of joy,
his male desires
 brought forth under the moon,
a woman, the beautiful Askala,
 dancing barefoot,
and this idea in verse
 whispers something more.
He worshipped beauty
 as a god in this life,
he immortalised in art
 La Gioconda, born in beauty,
he cleared away what, below
 her waist, separated her from men,
and the tiger cub of his mind
 enthused his love of women,
and the pure gold works
 of Leonardo da Vinci
are similar in the way they feel
 to lines of Mongolian verse.

A fine woman's feet
 reach the Asoka tree,
every branch
 comes into bloom, and
there is nothing but to purify the mind,
 and sing through life.
The Haan's destiny is borne
 upon the earth beneath the moon,
and nothing exists but to take refuge
 in a woman born in beauty.
Though nature in its splendor
 is in every aspect art,
it really does not chime
 with human beauty.
And, though many people
 are beautiful in every way,
this also does not chime
 with a fine woman.
Because a woman
 is mother to man,
all human culture
 values beauty.
And because woman
 is the mother of beauty,
beauty, better than all else,
 is gathered in ourselves.
A fine woman's feet
 reach the Asoka tree,
and the deep meaning of
 fruitfulness is in the branches.
In the power of Mongolian verse,
 in its singing of the beauty of women,
there is the key
 to purify the mind.
He worshipped beauty
 as a god in this life,
he immortalised in art
 La Gioconda, born in beauty,
he cleared away what, below
 her waist, separated her from men,
and the tiger cub of his mind
 enthused his love of women,
and the pure gold works
 of Leonardo da Vinci,
we feel, are similar
 to lines of Mongolian poetry.