

SINGLE POEMS

*These four poems were originally
printed individually in Italy.*

SHEE

To see your eyes burning red in the darkness
in the wilderness lost alone I strayed
so far the world of men I left behind
and the bright golden realms of the sun.
Just a handful of dust my flesh and blood
were, blown about by the fierce desert wind.
“No, don’t turn back to look,” I heard a voice
as if out of a conch shell to me say.
But I turned, and behold! my dwelling place
had fallen in, was but a heap of ruins,
the chimney now a dusky nest for ravens,
ivy and brambles cloaked the broken walls.
The snowy pages of my books, gone brown,
like dead leaves loose were rustling on the ground,
the lines I wrote in sweats of fiery dew
what were they but black stains on withered leaves
waiting there for the rain, rain of oblivion?
“Delve in the Book of Creation,” she said.
Then a goat screaming in the throes of labour
I heard, winds howling and laughter of rivers,
the storm on rearing manes of forests raged,
and within cliffs high to the sky the thunder
was growling like a boundless pack of hounds.
When I wandered away, searching for you
I lost my tongue, spent ashes filled my mouth,
it grew dark: the black flock of crows you sent me
robbed from my eyes all the gems of effulgence.
And surrounded by night I went astray,
no track nor footprints were for me to follow

nothing could lead me but your wild scent.
Could I repeat the voices to me speaking?
They called life dream and dreams they mocked to death.
But that murmur was hushed and I awoke:
a fox cried out, her eyes of red gold flashed.
You've thrown my limbs to the beasts of the wild
to feast upon, my blood spilt on the ground
to quench the thirst of your ravenous birds,
but you don't feed on earthly things although
your nostrils flare when free the blood is flowing.
You are the wind that sings inside my bones,
the shining rain that bejewels my skull
whose smile is mocking both at life and death,
you are the crown of thorns around my heart
where now the mice may build their secret nest.
And yet, just when the chords are torn and broken
I hear you play, though not for human ears.
Heaven and earth are then like open chasms
while near a raging torrent down I lie
as if I were a goat that's giving birth.
Here in my breast, where with his golden dagger
the sun stabbed me, the wound is harsh and deep,
nothing can ever heal it: that's my womb.
It is your breath of fire makes me pregnant
and I wax and I wane like the moon,
my blood turns into drops of flaming amber
and all the tears of my pain are pure pearls.
How can I call you if the step most light
of my thought makes you start and flee from me?
Unseen you run in the night, and the dogs
howl as you're passing, and you pass through me

honey-red eyes ablaze, your bushy tail
is like a shooting star, and who can hold you?
The hand that offers, the one that ensnares
you bite alike, you scream and lash your wings
against the cruel bars of any cage.
Men you will never trust, their distant voices
are unto you like the barking of dogs.
That's why the world of humans I've abandoned
and strayed after the footprints of the wind,
I lost myself to reach this desert where
the high mountains of darkness cast their shadow
to see how wildly your red eyes burn.

*Translated from the Italian by the author,
Il Porto, 1986*

WISDOM THAT'S GONE

Wisdom that's gone, gone beyond the beyond,
is the roots deep in the night of the earth,
the sound of the grass growing and the voice
of rivers that laugh cry down to the sea,
what the rocks know, the thunder of the waves,
the winds like foxes screaming their lament,
the veins of branches searching for the light,
vines like entwining snakes. Wisdom that's gone
weaves moss and hair and straw into round nests
with unseen fingers, makes the brambles pregnant
with drops of blood, she leaves her spirit-footprints
in wounds of trees and in strange shapes of stones:
yet never man could follow her wild ways.

Il Porto, 1988

A DEEP WOUND

When you've got a deep wound
you don't want it to close,
no! too harsh is the pain to be forgotten.
When you've got a deep wound
you want the blood on the cheeks of the dawn
oh, so pale with oblivion!
you want the fire of blood on the dark face
of the great night, oh so lavish with dreams!
and a proud scar to bear under the sun.

Il Porto, 1989

TO VALI OR TO THE SEA

I fell asleep in your moon-white arms
and when I woke they were foam of the sea.

I lay my head down on your breasts
and when I woke they were waves full of rage,

the hands I held were lashing fury
and your hips the white breakers on the shore,

your voice the voice of storms and angry winds.

Only your eyes didn't change:
the colour of the sea on a wild day.

Il Porto, 1989