



SÁNDOR HALMOSI (1971) is a Hungarian poet, literary translator, editor and mathematician. He lived in Germany for 16 years, since 2006 he has been living in Budapest. He attaches importance to promoting

poetry and cultural dialogue, as well as the interconnection of literature and fine arts. Halmosi is the founder of many literary and cultural associations, organizer of workshops and salons, member of the Hungarian PEN Club (Budapest) and of the European Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters (EASAL, Paris), founding member of Poets of the Planet international poetry network (POP) established in 2023. He published a literary manifesto in February 2020, with the title *Ora et labora. Crying-out for Pure Literature*, an attempt to shine a light on the spiritual crisis of the world. He published about 40 volumes in Hungarian and other languages. *Cathari* is the last part of the apocryphal trilogy *Apocrypha-Meltdown-Cathari*.

His volumes in Hungarian:

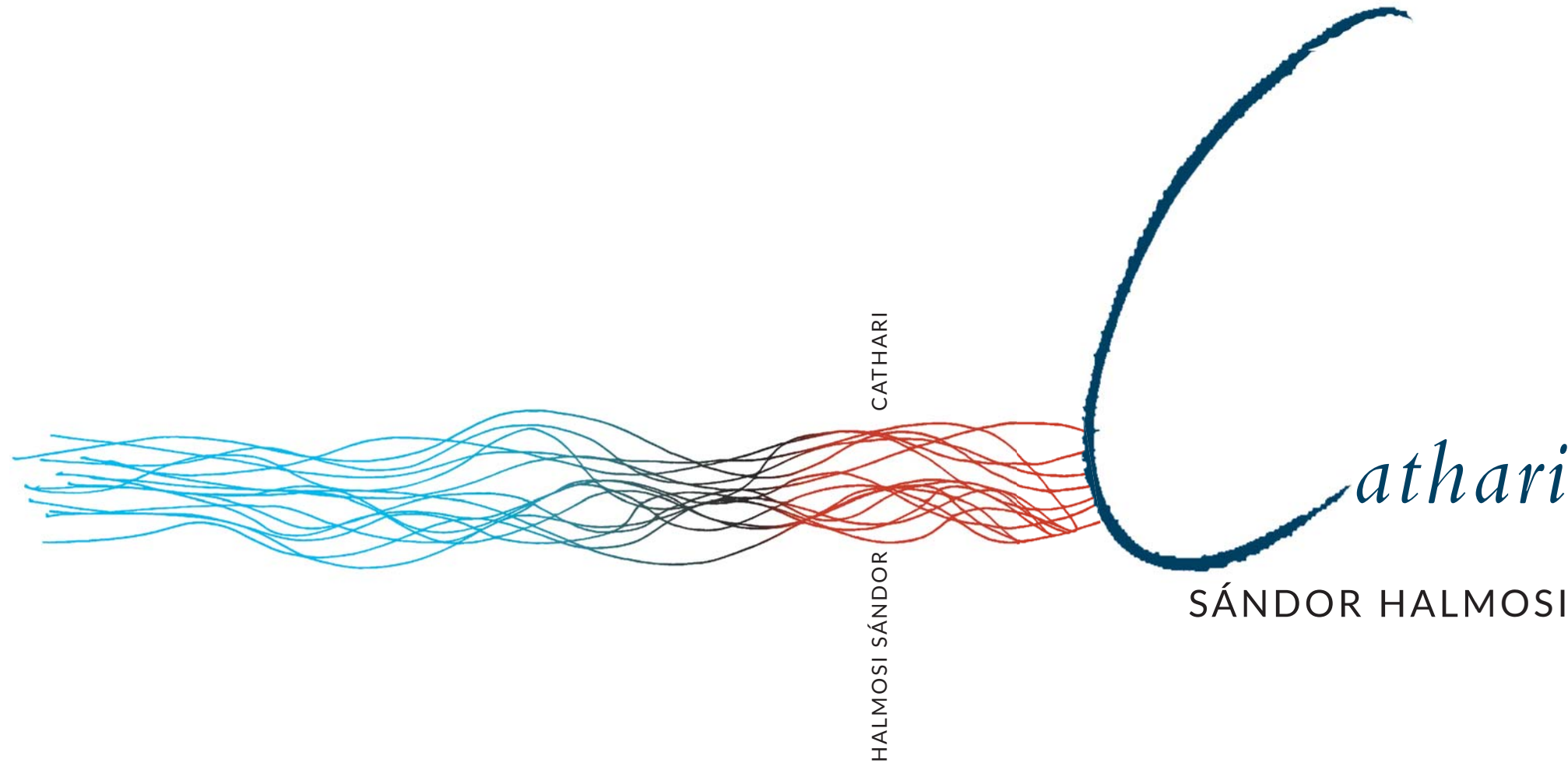
*Showing off with the Demons*, 2001  
*You were a Sun Girl*, 2002  
*Laurel Grove*, 2003  
*It belongs to Solomon*, 2004  
*On the Southern Slopes of Annapurna*, 2006  
*Gilead*, 2009  
*Ibrahim*, 2011  
*The Passion of Lao-Tze*, 2018  
*Apocrypha*, 2020  
*Meltdown*, 2021  
***Cathari***, 2022  
*Tatra and heat pump*, 2023



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GONDOLAT KIADÓ



I love poetry that is sobering. It is the diametric opposite of romantic poetry, which hums and drones and does its best to dazzle us with the radiant beauty of the world. I want my poet to be feeling around for the places light has abandoned, and he ought to be like a sharp slap on the cheek on a stuffy afternoon. He should be permeated by the human pain that lies at the bottom of clear-sightedness but the same way we are amused after a poor joke. To quote Attila József, "[he] looks about him thoughtfully, nods/ his wise head, but does not hope." He maps out the aesthetics of corruption around him because that is human, too. All too human. Sándor Halmosi's carefully constructed poetry draws on many different cultures for inspiration, yet it is exquisite, and encircles us with its own slow, but stubborn strength. It laps at a shore we might one day be able to sail to.

*Sándor Zsigmond Papp*

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Translated from the Hungarian  
by ANNA BENTLEY

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GONDOLAT KIADÓ  
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*We are not pure  
And we are not perfect.  
Nor are we the salt of the earth.*

With bare hands



WEARING THE FACE OF THE  
SORROWING MADONNA  
*(Könnyező Madonna arccal)*

Wearing the face of the suffering Christ  
and the Sorrowing Madonna, we do what we do.  
Little that is good. Much that is shameful.  
And sometimes we know what it is we do,  
Sometimes we really do have tears in our eyes.  
On occasion, the earth opens up.  
On occasion, the sky falls in.  
More and more often we wash our hands.  
More and more loudly we blunder.

## THERE'S BODY BELOW

*(Tést van alul)*

There's body below, in the middle and above,  
body is everywhere. Volition and flesh, which are  
unconcealed. Between the bodies, narrative forms.  
In this overcrowded space, up to the chest  
in indifference, is the spirit.

## WITH BARE HANDS

*(Pusztá kézzel)*

Our candle has burnt down; it's scorching  
God's fingers, but we are unable to keep our vow.  
Though we didn't actually promise anything,  
and that only under our breath. With our bare hands  
we carry off the witness-hills, the living wounds  
of cut-off breasts in the dishonoured land.  
On the hilltop, after the massacre. Hot springs  
bubble up inside us rather than conscience.  
We wash our hands, we have a good soak.

## YOU LIVE OUT OF LINE

*(Kilépsz a sorból)*

You live out of line. You recite the lesson,  
while pulling out of the contract.  
There's always someone who'll dance for your head.  
There's always a platter that's licked to a shine.  
And somehow, there's always that knife.

## LEGENDSTRIPPING

*(Legendahántás)*

We revolt. We shift the blame. Even through  
closed doors we want to scrape off the halo.  
But it if pinches, we whimper,  
like un-'liked' influencers.  
We eat his bread, all of us.



## NOT EVEN THE WRATH OF THE LORD

*(Az Öregisten haragja)*

Not even the wrath of the Lord can pierce the world's  
rhinoceros hide. Doesn't even touch it. The old guy  
stands there naked, a couple of us, too, his dumb brutes.  
Thickness of skin is not a question of faith.  
Our shame is not a measurable concept.

## ALLERGEN

*(Allergén)*

We've gone off the rails. The long, deep furrows  
barely scratch the landscape, test for the allergy.  
You can't base anything on a single body.  
We can scrape out the womb a thousand times,  
the planet will still give birth. To the same  
kind of pathogenic spawn. In a grimy habit,  
the spirit. Hidden.

## NOT BAIL ENOUGH

*(Nincs annyi óvadék)*

There's not bail enough nor excuses enough,  
yet everything goes on the same way.  
As if nothing had happened. Because nothing  
has happened. We changed a word or two,  
a few unnecessary names, and we told  
the number two nightingale to put a sock in it.  
Here, not even a million swallows make a summer.  
But a millionth of that is still a single cruddy one.

## THOSE STANDARDS

*(Azok a standardok)*

Silences and those standards that always hit you  
at the end. In the stomach, or the mouth,  
or the shoulderblades. There's fire. It doesn't  
spread. There's rain. It doesn't quench. Barbed wire  
will be stretched under the skin tomorrow too.

BETHESDA TANGO

*(Bethesda-tangó)*

Feed the stone with your hand, even if doing so hurts.  
Fling off the man if it gets too painful.

SHORT SHOT

*(Kistotal)*

We are biological weapons. Affliction.  
Golden Ear Award farmers on the Hungarian fallow.

## EVERYTHING IS SO BROKEN UP

*(Olyan töredékes minden)*

It's all so broken up and so unbreakable,  
like the little, round pebbles stuffed into cracks  
in the walls. After dark, man and god's son  
take them out, one by one, and play petanque.  
The only sound is the balls knocking together,  
and while their surface gets shinier the sand fills  
up with our petty sins. As the distance grows,  
so does the silence. Bones thrown down,  
zero-sum game. Stuffing them back in before  
first light is the hardest. And waiting to wake,  
so many times.

## ON THE THIRD DAY

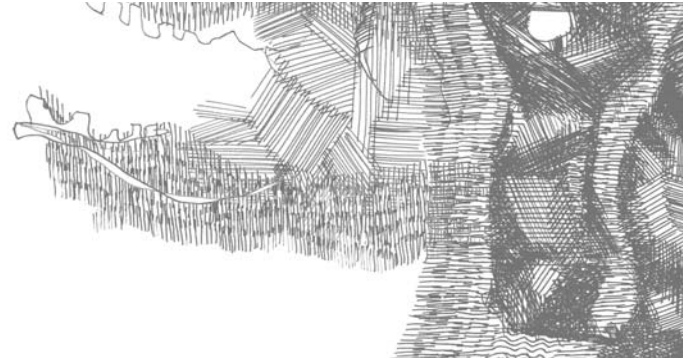
*(Harmadnapra)*

The body is steep and dizzy. The body quails,  
falls. On the third day the wind gets up,  
and scrubs to softness everything that is below.  
The rain is bearable. The gawpers are not.

THE WELL-POISONERS' REBELLION  
(*A kútmérgezők lázadása*)

Hanging out all the dirty washing of the world.  
And leaving it, so that after a long, strained  
silence, the wind catches it up and blows  
in our faces the stifling, damp warmth  
of the things we have left undone, and in these  
loosened passions the poisoned wells crumble.  
Let's not crush the well-poisoners' rebellion.  
Let's introduce an odd day into the forty even  
days of fasting.

Cathari



## GRASPING THE POINT

*(Megragadni a lényegét)*

Grasping the point and letting go of  
the nakedness. Every animal bends down  
to drink. Above every weight there's a hole.

BELL AND COWBELL  
*(Harang és kolomp)*

Beneath the weight of the bell and the cowbell,  
up the hill, on the slope. Necks bleeding, every day.  
Heavenly hosts.  
I take you onto my lap, we graze.

CATHARI  
*(Katharok)*

Two impure ones, seeing the pyre, shrink into themselves.  
That small, intolerable spot. And the unextended  
hand, the nails torn off in the mind.  
The halo which has grown unmanageable.

## THEY MARCH SLOWLY

*(Lassan menetelnek)*

They march slowly.  
Not looking back.  
Not looking up.  
Not looking ahead.  
Their wings swallow the insults,  
Would soak up their tears,  
If there were any.  
There's nothing weighty in the forced march.  
The seals dropped by the tin wayside cross.

## WHEN EVERY SMILE

*(Amikor minden mosoly)*

When every smile is a last supper and every slur  
an absolution. We stumble between man-shaped  
stones, but do not hold out a hand to each other.  
We clutch the hilt like a heart that's been ritually  
torn out. You clutch my heart.  
My bloody heart clenches.



## FOR LACK OF TOUCH

*(Érintés híján)*

For lack of touch, like old maids, we fumble  
in the dark. We are unmarked graves  
in marked bodies. Touch-free souls,  
free from everything. We conduct  
no current. We expect no mercy.

## BALLET ON THE ROUGH

*(Ballett a göröngyön)*

Holding one's breath, not speaking,  
not talking back, holding the centre  
while spinning like the dervishes, feeling  
how the muscles tense, the wrinkles bob,  
creating, with head thrown back and closed  
eyes, heaven and penitence, over and over,  
for the sin which we are also party to, whatever  
the hour. If you absolve me from time,  
I will go through space with you barefoot.  
The empathy in the air is stifling.  
We cannot take a single step.

## IN EVERY COMMA

*(Minden vesszőben)*

I gave seeds, or plants, one or the other.  
A cell, too, is a presentiment. And growing  
without fear is more than ten unwritten novels.  
The school of life at the frontier.  
In every comma, the fear of death.

## SOLID AND SHARP

*(Tömör és éles)*

Solid and sharp. Like Toledo steel.  
It doesn't kill, just scrapes, implants, redeems.  
Hooks. What you're hooked on is as thin  
as the sunken flanks of the universe.  
Only millimetres thick, like the ice beneath you.

## WINES ON TAP

*(Kimért borok)*

Amid wines on tap and racketeering angels,  
church-portal elves and potherbs. Ivy that  
grows up our walls. Seen from the plain,  
quiet awe. From inside, noise and pasture.

## IT'LL ONLY GET CHIPPED

*(Mert ügyis kicsorbul)*

It'll only get chipped. And buckle and dribble  
downwards. And get too narrow.  
And afterwards, it'll hurt, and we'll bellow  
in our torment, tear at our hair, make all kinds  
of promises, we'll ask for one last chance,  
just one more absolution. But it's no use,  
all the writhing, the clawing at wounds,  
the rattle in the throat, the slipping on the  
slimy floor, the showing-off of wounds,  
the mountains of victims, the hanging  
of our ignominy out to dry, no use.  
Another creation, maybe. Then waiting  
with bated breath, counting down.

## MORE THAN EIGHT DAYS

*(Nyolc napon túl)*

Anything that hurts respects boundaries.  
Any sound that filters through stops straining.  
Just poems, just masks, and weeping, which is not  
for sale. The costliest is free of charge. That metaphor.  
And poetry, if it takes more than eight days to heal.

## FOUR HANDS

*(Négykezes)*

The song that we always wanted to write,  
and the lyrics that never came off.  
What they might talk about is absent.  
What they don't say is the beat.

## THE LAST LIGHTHOUSE

*(Az utolsó világítótorony)*

You stand on the edge and overlook  
the sea's mistakes. If there had been  
only one among you, a single one.  
Nothing counts at all. They make  
their way across you dry-shod.

Among lights, sin



EVERY DAY  
*(Mindennap)*

Every day he gets down off the cross,  
hoes the vineyard, mops down the quarters  
while listening to the news and good music.  
He washes, so he can be spat on again.  
Every day he looks at the exhibition.  
He goes by you. Turns back to look at you.  
Hurries off.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

*(Nincs itt semmi látnivaló)*

There's nothing to see here. The repair  
crew are coming soon in any case.  
Would it were you that was coming,  
in only a shroud, to the scattered stones  
of my wailing wall.  
The spirit, as we know, has texture.  
The body, poor thing, has only this single spirit.

AMONG LIGHTS, SIN

*(Fények között a bűn)*

Among lights, sin and the many third.  
Unplanned toothpicks, the awkward way  
we stand, like when we were still people.  
My fault is also my fault.  
Mould on our daily bread.

UNDEFERRABLE  
*(Halaszthatatlan)*

We have undeferrable business in the world.  
We're waiting for the same undeferrable operation, all of us.

CARRYING SINS  
*(Bűnöket cipelni)*

Everything writhes and everything writhes  
into place in this eternal shaking.  
Mountain and shore and the outcrops.  
The burred edge of the soul.  
The longing for the bora once again  
to knock us down.  
Longing for a kind word.  
And saying nothing if it taughtens.  
Standing up after the wind.  
Carrying sins to the lighthouse.



GREEK DRAMA III  
(*Görög dráma III*)

Waiting with the same mild look,  
with the same degree of calm  
for the next electric shock,  
    of you speaking.  
Standing in the same way in the dense,  
magnetic field of despicability,  
like a needle in a wound,  
    after transmutation.

WHEN  
(*Amikor*)

When we blend into what we have lost.  
When, one by one, the spores of our omissions  
explode within us. When, weakened, we mingle  
with lambs, our hearts bleeding.  
When we burst out.

## IF YOU'D BEEN THERE

*(Ha ott lettél volna)*

If you'd been there, you would have  
betrayed him too.  
More than once.  
Now, you love his poems cleansed  
as they are of pain, you analyse his handwriting,  
speak of him with tears in your eyes and  
an unsteady voice, but then, in that place,  
you'd have been the first not to recognise  
the genius in him, you'd have kicked him,  
humiliated him, executed him.  
Even though he wrote that poem about you.  
You love his paintings, his music, his architecture,  
his sharp mind, his brilliance, you're the one  
who gives the speeches at those emotional  
centenary celebrations, though you'd have  
thought him a fool if you'd been there beside him,  
an eccentric, excitable, impossible person.  
A monster.  
My part, my part, my most sizeable part,  
you would say at the dividing up.  
You cluster together into churches, and cultural  
associations, but then, in that place, you would  
have thrown the first stone, and, stony faced,  
would have taken pleasure in watching him writhe.  
You would yank him off the cross, too, just so  
you could crucify him over and over.  
You've just killed him.

But tomorrow, you'll be the one to discover  
his life's work. The good friend who understood him,  
who felt with him through thick and thin.  
Who could read so well between the lines.  
The critic who understood it all.  
The rightful heir.

## THIS HUNGER

*(Ezt az éhséget)*

This hunger, I would carry over into  
tomorrow, and this hunger I would give  
to you. Nothing can satisfy like this,  
and there's nothing that cannot be.  
Barely anything between stoning and stone  
softening. And that's a lot even to confess.

## AS IF THERE WERE PEACE

*(Mintha béke lenne)*

As if there were peace on the terraces  
and the ploughland, in the bellies of the  
mountains filled with poisoned barrels,  
in the soul of the tapman, as if there were  
peace in the trenches. There's smooth jazz  
playing, the body is roused, it remembers.  
It narrates. Forgets and overrides.  
It sees the channel.  
Sees the bolgia.  
Wants to love.  
To atone.  
But the light isn't joining up.  
And all the pain is one big knot.

IT WILL TURN TO STONE AND ILLUMINATE  
(*Kővé válik, és világít*)

One day it will turn to stone, the feeling,  
and illuminate. One day the body will be impalpable,  
and will chafe the hands taking refuge in work.  
One day the soul will start off down the slope,  
and with lustrous mud and speaking stones  
will block the green gates and the streets,  
the cool spaces of our entrapment.

A CONSPIRACY OF ANGELS  
(*Angyalok összeesküvése*)

It makes sense from above. How the sound  
is stand-alone, and the belltower is always  
another building, standing apart.  
Like in the uplands. And when we speak,  
like a child in the seconds before birth,  
we are more afraid than we fear God,  
and the gods fear us. Here the remaining  
love is meagre. Here everything is needed.  
Like in death. More even. Surety.

AS IF ON SHARP STONES

*(Mintha éles köveken)*

As if I am walking towards you on sharp stones,  
barefoot. But you are nowhere. I can't find myself  
either. Then the stones, too, are left behind.  
The bleeding on the snow.

IF WE TAKE OUT THE TINGLING

*(Ha kivesszük a bizsergést)*

If we take out the tingling, the drama  
and the boathooks, what is left to us,  
beyond grappling-irons? And to the world  
once every prince of peace has fallen,  
and the Lord has recognised his own,  
and every belltower has toppled,  
and the peoples that have not run away have  
all dug themselves in, what will become of the  
discarded apocrypha, the indulgences,  
without rain and without our penitent  
anger, what indeed?

If we still had time



## I DON'T KNOW

*(Nem tudom)*

I don't know what humanity is, and how  
we're supposed to love it. By looking  
to see which of us has the better cage?  
Silently putting up with everyday humiliations,  
the miraculous multiplying of the word,  
pushing away from us mercy offered free of charge?  
It's hard to address more than one person,  
and to see in everyone the image.  
The square is so quiet after the crowds.  
And the dropped litter so lonely.

## BECAUSE THERE HAS TO BE

*(Mert lennie kell)*

Because there has to be a way through.  
In the evenings, when the silent majority  
also goes quiet, they filter through,  
those sounds that are like nothing else.  
Between bells the hush of cobwebs.  
At times like this it's so painful to think  
we harm each other. At times like this,  
I begin to suspect we are angels.

## IF WE STILL HAD TIME

*(Ha lenne még időnk)*

If we still had time, I would show you  
the Napraforgó Street experimental estate  
in Pasarét. We'd walk down the little street,  
we'd discuss the spirit of the age, the styles  
spanning architecture, and the connections,  
not included in any book, which can never  
be completely untangled, that ethos,  
and man when he isn't a monster.  
We'd talk a lot, specially about Gedeon Gerlőczy,  
'Uncle' Gida. Csontváry would come up too,  
and your statues. You'd be in black, and soft,  
as always. The ballast keel of the Devil's Ditch  
doesn't pull us down, its arc is lovely,  
and the scale human. Justie runs towards us  
from Széphalom Street. Jozefa dances.



## HATEHA

### *Rose Hill Passion*

*Life has filled up with life  
The heart has filled up too – with holes.*

It was long ago, when all those small Pilates started to  
crucify us piece by piece, and all you said was, *hey!*  
*We're the no-gooders, the cloud-gate openers* and check this out,  
*bloody hell!* We've shouldered the cross, swapped it  
for another and set it down in the corner, all before  
the lads' dance, when you span that pretty girl around.  
For the girl we're dancing with is always pretty.  
And won't turn away if we get all sweaty.

The soul is fearful, fidgets and runs off, coming to nothing.  
At first he falls under the weight. But he gets up and goes  
home to nurse mother. Ten years is as a moment. And every  
moment an eternity. By the side of the road, a drunk is lying,  
for sometimes intoxication comes sooner than waking.  
But you wait it out, you wait for it to pass, *for it to pass*  
*right now,*  
you wait for hours, you stand guard, so no one drives into him,  
for you're as gentle as the rose in St Elizabeth's lap,  
as raw fish and the fifth wheat beer in your hands.  
And an angel will come *and take your hand and lead you home.*  
For the morning air's nippy up on Törökvész Road,  
but nippier still is loneliness at dawn! *Hateha!*

*Little Anna in her Moses basket, we'll put her on a raft  
and take her over the Danube. But when you return*

*to Angel Island, you'll row alone. You'll haul  
the boat onto the shore in the dark, and slip.  
A second time, you'll fall.*

You take care of yourself now, Mother. I'll be back  
in the afternoon. Climbing up from Rézmál to Törökvész  
is only for the bravest. For it's a brave man who climbs up,  
and pulls no one down in the process. Brave and determined,  
full of heart-goodness.

After the dance from Vajdaszentivány Veronika holds out  
a kerchief. For the man's hands are sweaty, and the woman's  
too, when her waist is being held.

Our feet move over a lavafield, it's that that gives us the beat.  
Being fired at 830 degrees, like enamel.  
And shivering, like two naked souls.

*Come on Pisti, we've made it to Katolászenthkirály,  
get yourself down here, hey! Matyi and Tamás  
and Zoli Székesi, we're all waiting here, 'cause  
you know how it is: we need tough guys!*

Waiting, he falls a third time. White l'amour, a kind of  
Transylvanian red. Meanwhile, the women must be consoled;  
they are, however, inconsolable. You meet her at Neszmély,  
but you cannot touch her. All year long, there's this constraint.

And like thin lines on an angiogram, all along the Roman Shore,  
from 'Uncle' Sanyi's eatery, past Lupa Island, Szigetcsép,  
Kalotaszeg and Felsőpakony, then back here, where there's  
sorrow and gladness in seeing each other. The little differences.

But you have to get in the boat, and you have to row the  
distance.

For the distance always has to be rowed.  
If that is the law of dharma, then that is its metaphor too.  
In the dark the habit grows bigger,  
and daily an angel collapses within us.

Then time spins out of control.  
In the eyes is horror, on the table a stone.  
Nothing's harder than the butter-soft clod that is the soul.  
We are animals that like to graze, that fear to love.

Every minute of ours is a failure to act.  
Every failure to act is a life.

What there is will run out. What there will be springs  
from the purest source. Without clothes, without desires,  
the way we came into the world. Lacking something.  
Bent by so many scratches and scrapes and edges.

Behind those looking at the light are others looking  
daggers at them. But behind those looking daggers,  
there is also light, and certainty. That the road is long,  
but stopping in our tracks is longer if we don't want  
goodness enough. For we can't want goodness  
just slightly, we can't not wring it out of ourselves,  
for scourge and whip are what's needed for this idle  
body, in whom, however, the tiniest spark will grow  
to red-hot lava. And then, as always, go out.  
*Acta est fabula.* There's nothing else, only him.

Rain-mist and silence lie over everything on  
Gold Hill Road.

The airbag of love, as always, inflates too late.  
And late are our lamentations.

*It's harvest time, so I yoke my six oxen  
I wash out my soul-grape basket, and fast.  
Sweet miller of mine, won't you grind my wheat?  
At the end, anyway there'll be just us two.*

★

Take my broken body, which is given for you.  
Take it off the tree, and place it, like a seal  
upon your hearts. Just that large stone, roll it away.  
And the grass, if you really must take a scythe to it,  
soft silk-grass under our danced-out life.

## IN EXTREME LONG SHOT

*(Nagytotálban)*

The hill in long shot, the strain in you.  
That little shift in the vertebrae,  
the break in the curve. Your emblems.  
Your Frida-ness. Master M S and the  
more sorrowful Szerviatus's key motif.  
For me, your visitation is above all.  
Listing the names of our friends  
who have ebbed away, worn away  
from inside us, like the cartilage  
from your spine. But their laughter,  
but the dust on our statues.

## THE TIDE OF SECESSIONS

*(Szecessziók árapályá)*

Beyond the moods, still soul, no longer  
organism. I can't let that go without saying  
something. Pullings out, goings in and between  
them coming to a halt, that's more monstrous  
even than the swell and fall. Living the soul's  
castration as it happens and surviving the complications.  
Talking to you, the muse. Waking the bats.

## HOW MANY WORLDS

*(Hány világ)*

How many have died so far for the kind of world  
where you can speak freely?  
How many worlds still have to perish,  
so we can finally be spoken to?

## ANTIPHON

*(Antifóna)*

All your strength in the next touch.  
All your wisdom in the next word.  
This is no longer a question of inspiration.  
Nor of the beat, which skips continually.  
The monster swathed in velvet who is you,  
is watching. And like a lake, if it's between  
hills, sinking into itself.

## TO THE HILL-DWELLER

*(A hegylakónak)*

We all carry the same invisible cross.  
We run in the same circles, with a patience  
that puts angels to shame. We worry about  
our daughters, and cram more and more  
into ever blunter metaphors. We love ever  
better and are less and less able to put it into  
words. When I think of you, I see naked,  
bleeding statues in the moment before  
they explode under our lies. When I think  
of you, I'm filled with the sense that I love,  
through you, everything. As Jesus loved  
the tomb he lodged in for three days,  
that home, that untroubled silence.  
Betrayal, for it brings me closer and raises  
me up, sacrifice, planned failure. I see every  
single invisible cross when I think of you.  
I feel the emptiness, after resurrection.

## ABOUT THE THINNESS OF THE SOUL

*(A lélek soványságáról)*

I'm talking about the thinness of the soul.  
About the bad posture from which neither  
fat nor felt can protect us. Not the warmth of home,  
nor traditional or tantric sex. The hesitant odes.  
The artist himself is puckish. He hugs, he kills.  
He squeezes self-styled beauty out of himself,  
combats the beautifiers, hatches schemes.  
But he is fighting himself.  
The hostage negotiator is dead.

## ONE DAY THEY'LL QUOTE THIS

*(Egyszer idézni fogják)*

One day they'll quote this, evenings too,  
on the square, curled in each other's laps,  
lovingly. The last castles of wonders,  
stillpeople, the last free stillwildthings,  
among hyenas, which is what we are in our  
free time. The *táltos*' wild faith, the mystics'  
ecstasy, the body's holy and delicate layers,  
caked with dirt, peel away from us, like the thin,  
dry leaves of cigars rolled on sweaty thighs after  
the godexperience, which we could be to each  
other. Our spit and the ripe taste of the soul's flesh  
in a final kiss at the foot of the crucifix rubbed  
to a shine. Behind the iconostasis, the remains  
of the last, candlelit supper. In the valley,  
ten thousand wisps of straw.

## AT THE NEXT TABLE

*(A szomszéd asztalnál)*

There are young people at the next table.  
They're shrill, obscene, they believe the  
world is theirs. And maybe they're right.  
The absence and the impetus that remains  
after them, all these I give to you.  
They're not mine. But if you accept them,  
there's no way back. And the community  
after the initiation, the trumped-up scratches  
within us, the suffering of the eternally  
eczematous world, the bother and the warmth  
of the i-dotting and t-crossing surrounding  
salvation, and at the end of it all, no certainty,  
is this our only hope?

I COR 13  
(1KOR13)

I'll say it softly, lest the vibrations  
nudge the vertebrae further apart.  
Every distance is within us.  
Every closeness within you.  
This minute, when I'm thinking of you,  
when I want to take over your pain,  
heading for the hill, is as endless  
as the wait, once so long ago,  
to be born. All time spent  
in the human body is initiation.  
11 centimetres, 21 grammes.  
A few bites.  
You are to me the letter to the Corinthians.  
Resurrection from my daily dead.

NOW YOU'RE ONLY FLOATING  
(*Már csak lebegsz*)

*Beauty is not that which merely pleases,  
it must also touch us.*

The space has closed in, but the air has  
cleared up. This is what your words fall into.  
Snow, spine, emptiness, waiting, a modicum  
of spirituality, kitchen-sink philosophy.  
You forget that you are missed, and the time  
when you still missed someone is so far away.  
Now you're only floating among the atoms,  
and barely even one hits you. You have a new  
back brace, concreted in from the waist up.  
A tight pair of jeans you couldn't sit down  
in would be no better, of course, but again  
the skies have opened, you watch the snow falling  
till four in the morning. You'd really rather it stayed  
in the air. The silicon-breasted snow fairy gets a tad  
fatter every day. The brace splits fibre by fibre.

## BECOMING PURE

*(Tisztul)*

The last days have spat us out and made us  
fishers of men, as with loose kernels on  
a dried-up corn cob, we try to get a hold  
on ourselves, but the soul doesn't want  
any of us, as long as it scratches, and is  
scraped. We can sit no longer, nor can we  
lie down. Everything pricks and presses.  
The saint is dirty, is working.  
The soul is stained, is becoming pure.



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Managing director: István Bácskai

Copyediting: Mihály Gál

Proof-reading: Anna Bentley

Layout design: István Fábián

Print layout: Judit Kállay

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