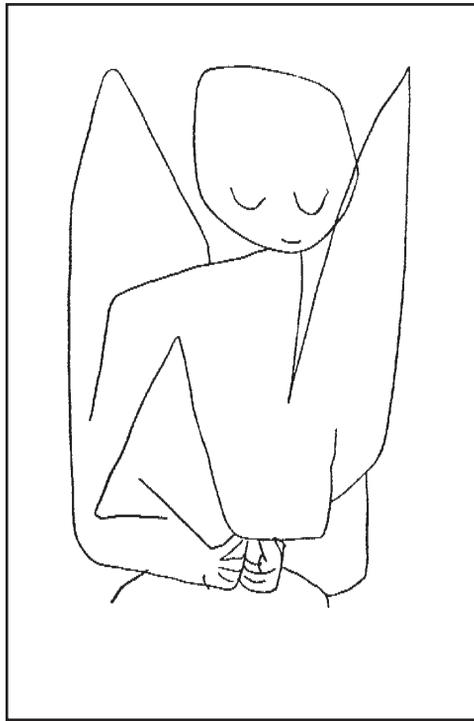


A Small Book on Exile



*Selected from the Pages of
Poetry East
Edited by Richard Jones*

EXILE

“Where there is sorrow there is holy ground.”

—Oscar Wilde

All We Can Do

All we can do on this earth is step into the future
with a sense of the many people behind us,
the living and the dead, as if we carried
our bodies like amphorae filled with sunbeams
into each new day, continually reaching inside ourselves
to scatter golden butterflies over the land before us,
or to fling them against the night, not like tears, but like stars
that will guide those who follow across the darkness.

Rain

Rain falling on the low built houses
that climb the back of this mountain,
rain streaming down the pocked roads
and bringing with it the hard yellow earth
in little rivers that blacken my shoes,
speechless as ever, like shy animals.

I wait in the doorway of a tobacco shop
and the men go in and out cursing the season.
They light up before they step back into it,
shoulders hunched, heads down, starting
up the long climb to a house of wet cardboard
and makeshift paper windows. No, this
is not the island of Martinique or Manhattan
or the capital of sweet airs or the dome
of heaven or hell, many colored, splendid.
This is an ordinary gray Friday after work
and before dark in a city of the known world.

Frayed

Only
if people
were
silk, would
a zig-
zag stitch
stop
them from
un-
raveling.

Luis

When I complain about
the hot, humid weather in July,
Luis from Ecuador tells me

he loves it hot and humid,
that's when he feels the happiest
and most alive.

What thrill to find patches
of shade when he walks home
with bags of groceries.

What pleasure to take a shower,
the skin becoming smooth,
the hair silken,

then sit at the kitchen table
and eat cold watermelon.

So Now?

the words have come and gone,
I sit ill.
the phone rings, the cats sleep.
Linda vacuums.
I am waiting to live,
waiting to die.

I wish I could ring in some bravery.
it's a lousy fix
but the tree outside doesn't know:
I watch it moving with the wind
in the late afternoon sun.

there's nothing to declare here,
just a waiting.
each faces it alone.

Oh, I was once young,
Oh, I was once unbelievably
young!

Solitude

Someone, finally, is here! No, unhappy heart, no one—
just a passerby on his way.
The night has surrendered
to clouds of scattered stars.
The lamps in the halls waver.
Having listened with longing for steps,
the roads too are asleep.
A strange dust has buried every footprint.
Blowout the lamps, break the glasses, erase
all memory of wine. Heart,
bolt forever your sleepless doors,
tell every dream that knocks to go away.
No one, now no one will ever return.

The Aliens

The aliens land and at first
we're scared but thank God
we have the sense
to wait before we shoot.
When we look closely,
we see that while they look
odd, there's something appealing
about them, too, even sexy,
and so we wrap our arms
around them, lie down together
and let a new world come to be.

Contributors

Morton Marcus
“All We Can Do”
Poetry East #67/68

Philip Levine
“Rain”
Poetry East #82

Jodi Adamson
“Frayed”
Poetry East #76/77/78

Helen Tzagoloff
“Luis”
Poetry East #76/77/78

Charles Bukowski
“So Now?”
Poetry East #70

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
“Solitude”
Translated from the Urdu
by Agha Shahid Ali
Poetry East #82

David Romtvedt
“The Aliens”
Poetry East #58/59

*At Poetry East,
we believe in words. We
believe poetry is the highest
art. A poem clarifies our deep
humanity, though its grace remains
a mystery. Poems illuminate the world
we live in—a slow dance in the kitchen,
birds in flight, a loved one's death, silence
in an empty room. As you read these
seven poems, we hope you will read
with fresh eyes and full hearts. Poetry
opens a door, inviting you into its
home. Here, come a little closer,
these are for you.*

Artistic Director: A.M. Prentice

