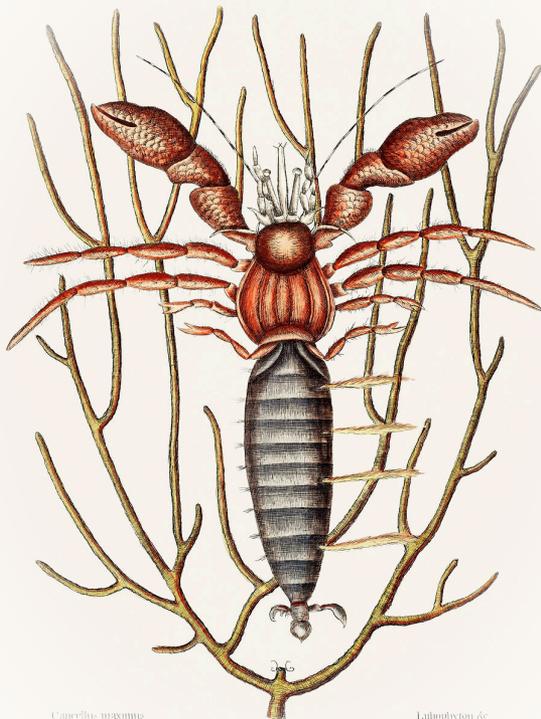


probably
V
POETS YOU'VE
NEVER HEARD OF



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*Mbembe Milton
Smith*

Selected Poems

MBEMBE MILTON SMITH

1946- 1982

In a country and at a time when a very respectable sales figure for a poet, for a year, might be 2000 or 3000 copies of a book, it feels like nearly everyone is underappreciated or forgotten. And yet, a few poets are dramatically over-appreciated, too. Shh, let's not name names here. Poetry should not be a fashion-statement or a competition. Every poet thinks he or she is underappreciated. Every poet, now, has his or her cadre or clique and everyone else be damned.

I wish more people were reading Roethke, and James Wright, and Edna Millay. Or how about poems, not poets? Today my list includes Warren's "Audubon," Ella Wheeler Wilcox's beautiful "Friendship after Love," and Milosz's "After Paradise."

Today I nominate a poet from Kansas City for your list. Tomorrow I would probably name someone else. But today: Milton Smith. Or Mbembe, as he adopted in his adulthood, or Mbembe Milton Smith. I knew him in the mid-70s, when I was in college at nearby Central Missouri State University. I was maybe 21, he was maybe 30. Driven, Black, passionate, poetic, handsome, and as they say of poets sometimes, angry. He died by suicide in 1984, and left behind four books and a couple of manuscripts. BKMK Press did publish his *Selected Poems* in 1986.

Here are opening lines of his "Suffer the Children," filtering Whitman and the street:

you will find my fragments on every street corner
where a neon sign blinks the surreal image
of scotches and sex larger than sunrise.
in every marijuana dream you will find drugged
pieces
of me dribbling off the end of a four-four tune
into the void.

Poetry is patient. People are impatient. The point is not developing or finding a wide readership; the point is writing for a long one.

—David Baker, author of *Swift: New and Selected*



SURVIVAL POEM

we can slide into sleep in dead winter
in front of the pool hall
or in the alley behind the record shop
denying that we are oppressed,
awaiting the arrival of our savior
with trump cards like w.c. fields
drawing the fifth ace,
we can be corny,
relish in our own trips.
we can count the cracks in the sidewalk
scratch our asses
smile hiply at sisters
wear dashikis and drive little cars,
we can watch the greenbay packers on t.v.
or airplanes in the sky,
we can be niggers
while every breeze whispers death,
& finally perish like dinosaurs,
our skulls in showcases at the new york museum.
we can let our speech become air
& our fist soft clay.

or we can rise
up thru these filthy towns
to rule our own space.



ANCESTRY AS REALITY

(for *Tarik*)

it was a friend saying
"look man, divorce
doesn't make bad children,
bad parents do," that stuck
in the weak side of better judgment.
so i pushed against the cycle—poor, black
fatherless—
to see if it would break.
it haunts me
with apparitions of my own father
his eyes beady as a pair of craps,
a bottle of cheap gin
on his kitchen table,
him, way off in Omaha.

when the measles, the whooping coughs,
father's day get you, when at school
the skilled surgeons cut the good black stuff
from your head, i may not be there.
but you'll have the weekends, summers,
me pleading—"Tarik, daddy loves you,
do you love daddy?" weekends
when I rub you 'gainst my hairless chest
& try to convince you
i wanted to be a man.



ALLEGORY OF THE BEBOP WALK

there are uncharted places
like Overland Park, Kansas, or Greenwich, Conn.
where they'd lock the back door
if they heard black power was coming
'cause black folk wouldn't dare
come 'round the front.

in these territories
our faces are long survivors
from days of stingy brims
and pointed shoes, or Rochester, Beulah and co.,
days of a million changes
until a bebop walk broke down before the logic
of a stiff gait, logic that is visa
into white and light domains.

now there's no way back
and no convenient solace within miles
just a vast unfamiliar turf
and a few of us looking in vain
for Afro-Sheen in the suburban drugstore.

SOMETHING ELSE THEY SAY

is that jazz is dead
but i want to tell you
that in a wooden loft in chicago
Archie Shepp gave artificial respiration
to a carcass.

no gimmicks,
no electricity coming from his sax,
just the naked instrument
that hung limp
from a thin red tie.

Shepp was dressed in a 1950 cotton suit,
faded and slick like rat fur.
when the sounds got good to him
he took off his coat
and turned to the band.
his hip pocket was snagged from years
of dragging a gin bottle.

as he blew
the words of critics flaked away.
the music they say is dead
was so alive, it sweated.



GOOD MORNING

you could leave your crib
'bout 6 o'clock in the morning
cause you a poet of the people
& want a cup of coffee
& ole Willie be up
& on the corner drinking port,
talking 'bout "been down so long
rising ain't eben crossed my mind."
& you'd pass him by
but the whore be on the street
waving at the cars, ain't been to sleep.
& the woman in the subway booth
be getting an education for her children,
40 hrs. a week, double overtime on holidays
& she'd be up. you ain't got to check—she's there.
& Bertha be going out to Westchester
in her white uniform to get breakfast
for them white folks. ain't never been
no black revolution way she sees it.
& Sam have his lunch pail, heading on in.
& the one after your heart be standing
at the bus stop with her briefcase
& her afro trimmed, looking like she wanted
you with her last night, got her mouth poked out,
looking proud enough to make things fun.
she got the red sun in her eyes
& the cool morning playing
round the hem of her cotton skirt.

you be feeling like praying
like saying "good morning, good morning."
man, this is what we mean
when we say "the black aesthetic."
we a people getting up.

DAVID, THE MANCHILD

14 years old,
dipped onto the ward
with his hand casted,
had broken another kid's nose
on the minimum security side.
they made him shower,
scrubbed his hair for lice,
took away his shoes & shoestrings
& gave him white terry cloth cat slippers.
he sat & rocked & sobbed, long & deep.
"what's the matter?" i said.
"ain't good for a kid
to be with all these men,
ain't good," he said, sniffing.

the men leered at him.
showed brown tobacco teeth.
"i gotta be a man now," he said
& timidly asked for a cigarette.

it was all the Bar Mitzvah he'd ever have.

when he got his hand out of cast,
he giggled, gave clenched fist salutes.
easy smiles broke from his mouth
like wave on wave of ghetto classrooms
full of mischief & insurrectionary anger.



SUFFER THE CHILDREN

you will find my fragments on every street corner
where a neon sign blinks the surreal image
of scotches and sex larger than sunrise.
in every marijuana dream you will find drugged pieces
of me dribbling off the end of a four-four tune
into the void. you will see me in greetings
& be unfulfilled by my salutation in the smokey
rooms of thought. in each shard reflecting light
from the broken church window you will find
the taper of my lament waving, indomitable & green.
& when the pieces of your living memory stick to you
like lint on the priest's black coat you will find
your Gestalt in the eye of my pen & yes the inundating
small lyrics of two minute commercials booming
out the economy will drive you back into the breath
from my nostrils. & i will smile & speak your name
& not forget you at the end of the long block
without your weapon. No, i'll be running circle
round you like a halo. i'll be there too when the question
is posed about the stirring in the woodwork
that could never be a rat. & when the preacher
gets into his luxury car & drives away
i will not chastise you. i am in the butterflies
& the lion, hating every cage & cubicle that chain you.
in the tremor of my speech will be the hesitancy
of your courage. in my madness will be your redemption.
you will live in me without the hypnosis
of your mother's garments. you will drink my energy
with temperance & grow to tolerate the urges of my anger.

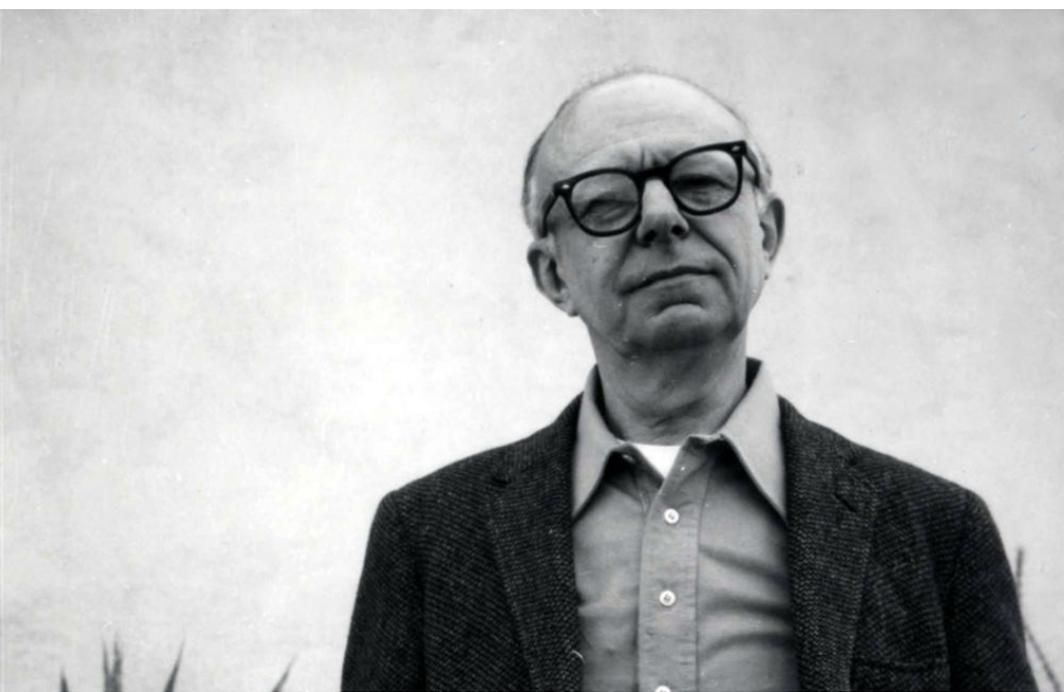
MYSTERIOSO

(after Thelonious Monk)

thru the neon window,
a large fluorescent Pabst beer sign,
the flicker of a diamond ring in the mirror,
a glass, another,
a flash of fire,
red cigarette ends, smoke.

i remember when we needed them,
even the one in the wig
 perched on the high stool near the door,
even the guy in the yellow suit
 & lizard shoes.

tonight, though,
i need only you,
only you, my curious reader, you
with your desire touching mine
like a child's nose on a cool window;
a distant soul to love these words,
their thin dangerous music
scented with the incense of narrow city streets
& the moonlight's pocket change,
these words perfumed by streetlights,
nylon stockings & the plastic seats of taxis
on the wet avenues, these words
that are a mustache for the moon
& the lipstick of lady death.



DAVID IGNATOW

1914- 1997

David Ignatow was born in Brooklyn in 1914, spent most of his life in New York City, and died in 1997 in East Hampton. He published numerous books of poems, including *Living Is What I Wanted: Last Poems* (BOA Editions, 1999), *I Have a Name* (Wesleyan University Press, 1996), *Against the Evidence: Selected Poems, 1934-1994* (Wesleyan University Press, 1994), *Shadowing the Ground* (Wesleyan University Press, 1991), and *New and Collected Poems, 1970-1985* (Wesleyan University Press, 1986). From 1980 to 1984 he was the president of the Poetry Society of America, and he taught at several colleges and universities, including the New School for Social Research, Vassar College, York College of the City University of New York, New York University, and Columbia University.

—Rick Barot, author of *The Galleons: Poems*

NO THEORY

No theory will stand up to a chicken's guts
being cleaned out, a hand rammed up
to pull out the wriggling entrails,
the green bile and the bloody liver;
no theory that does not grow sick
at the odor escaping.

WHILE I LIVE

I dream of language as the sun.
I whisper to that plant
whose own language is the wind.
It cups its flower to listen
at the wind's pressure and we talk
together of the darkness in language:
what Dante suffered at its command—
only that I may endure the necessary
ecstasy of my personal death.

I want my trees to love me
and my grass to reach up to the porch
where I am no one but the end of time,
as I stand waiting for renewal in my brain,
because I am what the sun shines forth:
I am labor, I am a disposition to live.
Who dies? Only the sun
but you must wait
while I live.

I sink back upon the ground, expecting to die. A voice speaks out of my ear, You are not going to die, you are being changed into a zebra. You will have black and white stripes up and down your back and you will love people as you do not now. That is why you will be changed into a zebra that people will tame and exhibit in a zoo. You will be a favorite among children and you will love the children in return whom you do not love now. Zoo keepers will make a pet of you because of your round, sad eyes and musical bray, and you will love your keeper as you do not now. All is well, then, I tell myself silently, listening to the voice in my ear speak to me of my future. And what will happen to you, voice in my ear, I ask silently, and the answer comes at once: I will be your gentle, musical bray that will help you as a zebra all your days. I will mediate between the world and you, and I will learn to love you as a zebra whom I did not love as a human being.

AN ECOLOGY

We drop in the evening like dew
upon the ground and the living
feel it on their faces. Death
soft, moist everywhere upon us,
soon to cover the living
as they drop. This explains
the ocean and the sun.

I stood in the center of a ring of faces.
Beyond them I could see a field of trees.
I moved and the faces moved with me,
I stopped and the faces stopped,
I dropped to the ground
and the ring lowered to my level.
One face opened its lips
and said, We are your fields.

AND THE SAME WORDS

I like rust on a nail,
fog on a mountain.
Clouds hide stars,
rooms have doors,
eyes close,
and the same words
that began love
end it
with changed emphasis.

THE ROOM

There's a door to my name
shutting me in, with a seat
at a table behind a wall
where I suck of the lemon seed.
Farther in is the bed
I have made of the fallen hairs
of my love, naked, her head dry.
I speak of the making of charts
and prescriptions and matches
that light tunnels
under the sea.

A chair, a table, a leg of a chair—
I hold these with my eyes to keep from falling,
my thoughts holding to these shapes,
my breathing of them that make my body
mine through the working of my eyes.
All else is silence and falling.

In the dark
I hear wings beating
and move my arms around
and above
to touch.
My arms go up and down
and around
as I circle the room.

SECRETLY

My foot awes me,
the cushion of the sole
in profile shaped like a bird's head,
the toes long and narrow like a beak,
the arch to the foot
with the gentle incline
of a bird's body
and the heel thick and stubby
like a starling's tail.

In slow motion it ascends
and descends in a half-circle,
tense, poised for flight.

The full weight of my body
today walking on it
supporting me in my weariness
it can perform its flight,
its shape delicate, light,
swift-seeming, tense and tireless
as I lie on a bed, my foot
secretly a bird.

HOW COME?

I'm in New York covered by a layer of soap foam.
The air is dense from the top of skyscrapers
to the sidewalk in every street, avenue
and alley, as far as Babylon on the East,
Dobbs Ferry on the North, Coney Island
on the South and stretching far over
the Atlantic Ocean. I wade
through, breathing by pushing
foam aside. The going is slow,
with just a clearing ahead
by swinging my arms. Others are groping
from all sides, too. We keep moving.
Everything else has happened here
and we've survived: snow storms,
traffic tieups, train breakdowns, bursting
water mains; and now I am writing
with a lump of charcoal stuck between my toes,
switching it from one foot to the other—
this monkey trick learned visiting
with my children at the zoo of a Sunday.
But soap foam filling the air,
the bitter, fatty smell of it...How come?
My portable says it extends to San Francisco!
Listen to this, and down to the Mexican border
and as far north as Canada. All the prairies,
the Rocky Mountains, the Great Lakes, Chicago,
the Pacific Coast. No advertising stunt

could do this. The soap has welled out of the ground,
says the portable suddenly. The scientists report
the soil saturated. And now what?
We'll have to start climbing for air,
a crowd forming around the Empire State Building
says the portable. God help the many
who will die of soap foam.

THE DEBATE

This man brings me stones
out of the ground. These
are eggs, he says, of the Jurassic
age, hardened. They may
be looked upon as eggs.
And taking them in awe
I drop them. They bounce,
one strikes me on the toe,
I wince. They are eggs,
he repeats calmly.
They are stone, I shout.
Stone, stone! They were eggs
in their day and bruise me now.
They are eggs, ossified,
he amends calmly.
And I will not let you
fry them for breakfast,
I answer sweetly,
because they are stone.



HILDA HIST

1930 - 2004

Why Hilda Hilst?

Honestly, the real question is 'why doesn't everyone already know Hilda Hilst?' She's a very well-known and much lauded writer from Brazil who wrote novels, plays and poetry. I don't love her for her awards but her amazing and perverse spiritual erotics. Whether I'm reading her prose or poetry, I'm always astonished at how it transgresses what I thought was permitted in content and form. Her work is salacious and mystical, fearless and embodied. Even these poems that were written nearly 40 years ago still read as risky and alive. These poems came out when she was in her mid-50s, and I aspire to this level of manic God lust in my next decade.

—Traci Brimhall, author of *Come Slumberless to the Land of Nod*

**POEMAS MALDITOS, GOZOSOS E DEVOTOS /
CURSES, JOYS AND DEVOTIONS**

By Hilda Hilst
Translated by Traci Brimhall

V.

Para um Deus, que singular prazer.
Ser o dono de ossos, ser o dono de carnes
Ser o Senhor de um breve Nada: o homem:
Equação sinistra
Tentado parecença contigo, Executor.

O Senhor do meu canto, dizem? Sim.
Mas apenas enquanto dormes.
Enquanto dormes, eu tento meu destino.
Do teu sono
Depende meu verso minha vida minha cabeça.

Dorme, inventado imprudente menino.
Dorme. Para que o poema aconteça.

V.

For a God, that singular pleasure.
Being the owner of bones, being the owner of meat
Being the Lord of a brief nothing: man:
Sinister equation
Tried to resemble you, Boss.

You say you're the Lord of my song? Yes.
But even you must sleep.
While you sleep, I try my fate.
Your sleep
Depends on my back my life my head.

Sleep, inventive reckless child.
Sleep. So that the poem may happen.

VII.

É rígido e mata
Com seu corpo-estaca.
Ama mas crucifica.

O texto é sangue
E hidromel.
É sedoso e tem garra
E lambe teu esforço

Mastiga teu gozo
Se tens sede, é fel.

Tem tríplices caninos.
Te trespassa o rosto
E chora menino
Enquanto agonizas.

É pai filho e passarinho.

Ama. Pode ser fino
Como um inglês.
É genuíno. Piedoso.

Quase sempre assassino.
É Deus.

VII.

It is hard and kills
With its body-stake.
Love crucifies.

Text is blood
And mead.
It is silky and has claws
And licks your efforts

Chews your enjoyment
If you have thirst, it is gall.

It has triple canines.
It bites the face
And a boy cries
In his agony.

It is father son and bird.

Love. It may be fine
As an English gentleman.
It is genuine. Pious.

Almost always a killer.
It is God.

VIII.

É neste mundo que te quero sentir
É o único que sei. O que me resta.
Dizer que vou te conhecer a fundo
Sem as bênçãos da carne, no depois,
Me parece a mim magra promessa.

Sentires da alma? Sim. Podem ser prodigiosos.
Mas tu sabes da delícia da carne
Dos encaixes que inventaste. De toques.
Do formoso das hastes. Das corolas.
Vês como fico pequena e tão pouco inventiva?
Haste. Corola. São palavras róseas. Mas sangram.

Se feitas de carne.

Dirás que o humano desejo
Não te percebe as fomes. Sim, meu Senhor,
Te percebo. Mas deixa-me amar a ti, neste texto
Com os enlevos
De uma mulher que só sabe o homem.

VIII.

It is in this world that I want to feel you.
It is the only one I know. What remains of me.
Saying I'll meet you in the depths
Without the blessing of flesh, not after,
Seems to me a lean promise.

Feel the soul? Yes. They can be audacious.
But you know the meaty delights
of the positions you invented. Of the touches.
Of the beautiful stems. Of the corollas.
See how small I am and how uninventive?
Stem. Corolla. They are rosy words. But they bleed.

If they are made of meat.

You will say that human desire
Cannot see you through famines. Yes, my Lord,
You understand. But let me love you in this text
With the raptures
Of the woman who only knows the man.

IX.

Poderia ao menos tocar
As ataduras da tua boca?
Panos de linho luminescentes
Com que magoas
Os que te pedem palavras?

Poderia através
Sentir teus dentes?
Tocar-lhes o marfim
E o liso da saliva

O molhado que mata e ressuscita?

Me permitirias te sentir a língua
Essa peça que alisa nossas nucas
E fere rubra
Nossas humanas delicadas espessuras?

Poderia ao menos tocar
Uma fibra desses linhos
Com repetidos cuidados
Abrir
Apenas um espaço, um grão de milho
Para te aspirar?

Poderia, meu Deus, me aproximar?
Tu, na montanha.
Eu no meu sonho de estar
No resíduo dos teus sonhos?

IX.

Could I at least touch
The bandage of your mouth?
Linen clothes luminescent
With the hurt
Of those who ask you for words?

Could I come through
And feel your teeth?
Touch the ivory
And the smooth saliva

The wet that kills and resurrects?

Permit me to feel your tongue
This piece smoothing our necks
And its hurt rubs
Our delicate human thicknesses?

Could I at least touch
A fiber of such linens
And with repeated care
Open
Just one space, a kernel of corn
To suck you?

Could, my God, I approach?
You, on the mountain.
Me in my dream of being
In the residue of your dreams?

XIII.

Vou pelos atalhos te sentido à frente.
Volto porque penso que voltaste.
Alguns me dizem que passaste
Rente a alguém que gritava:

Tateia-me, Senhor,
Estás tão perto
E só percebo ocos
Moitas estufadas de serpentes.

Alguém me diz que esse alguém
Que gritava, a mim se parecia.
Mas era mais menina, percebes?
De certo modo mais velha

Como alguém voltando de guerrilhas
Mulher das matas, filha das Ideias.

Não eras tu, vadia. Porque o Senhor
Lhe disse: Poeira: estou dentro de ti.
Sou tudo isso, oco moita
E a serpente de versos da tua boca.

XIII.

I take shortcuts sensing you're up ahead.
I return because I think you're back.
Some tell me you came
Close to someone who shouted:

Feel me, Lord,
You are so close
And I only now realize
You're a hollow bush stuffed with snakes.

Someone tells me that someone
Who screams looks like me.
But more of a girl, you know?
Somewhat older in a way

Like someone returning from guerillas
Woman of the woods, daughter of Ideas.

No it was you, bitch. For the Lord
I said: Dust: I am in you.
I am all this, hollow bush
And the serpent verses of your mouth.



BERT MEYERS

1928 - 1979

Poetry Foundation tells us: *Poet Bert Meyers (1928–1979) was the son of Sephardic Jewish parents who emigrated from Spain to Brooklyn and then settled in Los Angeles. He grew up in East Hollywood and left high school to become a master picture framer and gilder. Though he did not attend college, Meyers was admitted to the Claremont Graduate School based on the strength of his poetry and earned a PhD. Meyers taught at Pitzer College, which dedicated the Bert Meyers Poetry Room inside the historic Grove House in the poet’s honor.*

As an undergraduate at Pitzer College in 1984, I set up camp in the Bert Meyers Poetry Room. For three years, I read and wrote there, even sleeping there for most of a semester until the custodial staff found

me out. Even though Bert was five years dead when I started college, his presence was alive in that room and in the classrooms where I began to study poetry. His capacity to visualize, to embody metaphor, blew open my mind. "I see it exactly!" I would think, reading his images: two sailboats like tennis shoes walking on water, garlic as the "rabbi of condiments": how entirely apt! His poems often conveyed intense feeling via his images: "smoke waters the flowers/that grow in the lungs," he wrote of the cancer that would kill him, in one of his greatest poems, "After the Meal."

When my professors would talk about the importance of concrete imagery, it wasn't just conceptual for me: Bert Meyers was offering me a masterclass in embodying the world with words. Because of this, I teach him every chance I get. His collected poems, *In a Dybbuk's Raincoat*, came out in 2007 from University of New Mexico Press, but he's still woefully undersung and untaught. Read him.

—Dana Levin, author of *Banana Palace*

THE GARLIC

Rabbi of condiments,
whose breath is a verb,
wearing a thin beard
and a white robe;
you who are pale and small
and shaped like a fist,
a synagogue,
bless our bitterness,
transcend the kitchen
to sweeten death—
our wax in the flame
and our seed in the bread.

Now, my parents pray,
my grandfather sits,
my uncles fill
my mouth with ashes.

Arrival

Two sailboats cross the bay,
as if the wind wore tennis shoes.

Villages, like broken pots,
or baskets of apples,
scattered on a mountainside.

And the light, so much light!
a harp burning in a glass.

THEY WHO WASTE ME

When I ask for a hand,
they give me a shovel.
If I complain, they say,
Worms are needles at work
to clothe a corpse for spring.
I sigh. Whoever breathes
has inhaled a neighbor.

AFTER THE MEAL

1

A suburb of coffee cups;
napkins, those crumpled hills;
silverware, freeways
spotted with grease, with flesh . . .

and the ash-tray,
a ghetto full of charred men
with grizzled heads
who wasted their flame;
where every breath
scatters its bones
and small gray mounds
accumulate, then crumble,
like nations
or the knees of elephants.

2

Like a cleaning plant, steam
comes through a hole in your face.
Your exhaust is the last
wild horse that gallops away.

3

Smoke waters the flowers
that grow in the lungs.
The cigarette, like your life,
is a piece of chalk
that shrinks as it tries to explain.

TO MY ENEMIES

I'm still here, in a skin
thinner than a dybbuk's raincoat;
strange as the birds who scrouge
those stubborn pumps
that bring up nothing . . .

Maddened by you
for whom the cash register,
with its clerical bells,
is a national church;
you, whose instant smile
cracks the earth at my feet . . .

May your wife go to paradise
with the garbage man,
your prick hang like a shoelace,
your balls become raisins,
hair grow on the whites of your
and your eyelashes turn
into lawn mowers
that cut from nine to five . . .

Man is a skin disease
that covers the earth.
The stars are antibodies
approaching, your president
is a tsetse-fly . . .

PEBBLE

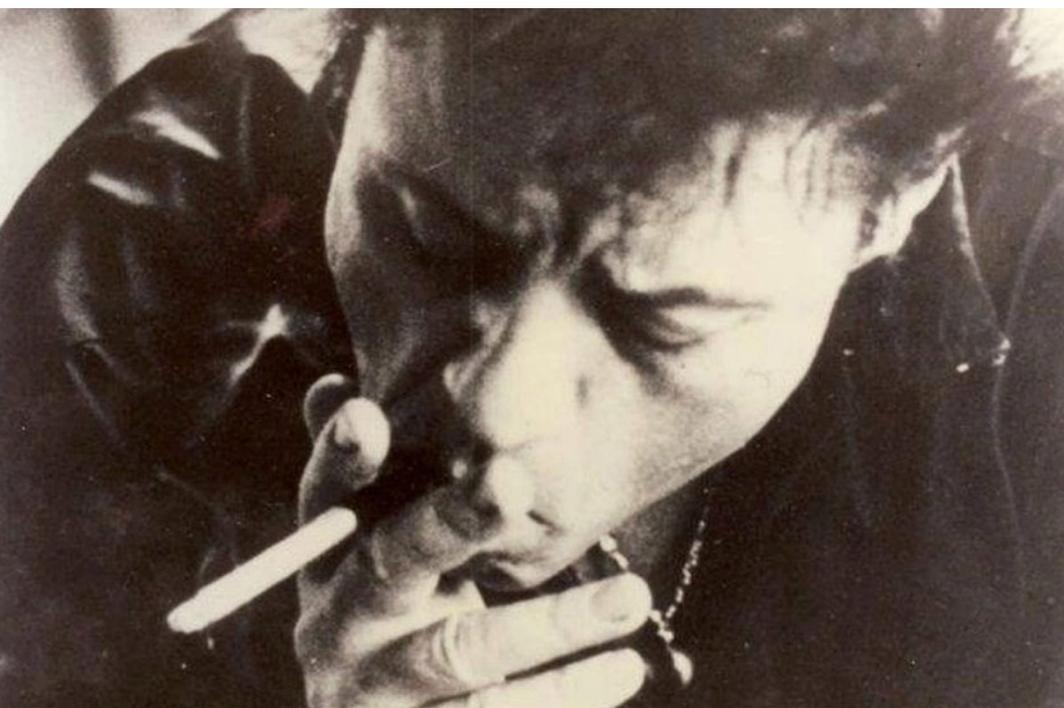
Fragment
of the first chunk
Irregular moon
Perpetual cloud
The dust's blind eye
The mite's
crude planet
Durable friend
between the fingers
Destroyer
of giants
Something that grows
immense in a shoe
The boulder's crumb
The rock's
quiet child
The flower's
pure disciple
Wasteland's embryo
Despair's gray seed
Staunch member
in the brotherhood
of water polishers
Wisdom's jewel
The weed's
eternal fruit
The raindrop's tomb

DAYBREAK

Birds drip from the trees.
The moon's a little goat
over there on the hill;
dawn, as blue as her milk,
fills the sky's tin pail.

The air's so cold a gas station
glitters in an ice-cube.
The freeway hums like a pipe
when the water's on.
Streetlights turn off their dew.

The sun climbs down from a roof,
stops by a house and strikes
its long match on a wall,
takes out a ring of brass keys
and opens every door.



STEPHEN JONAS

1928 - 1979

I chose Stephen Jonas in part because he was a poet and a trickster. Nobody is sure when he was born or where he was from. He just showed up on the scene in Boston in the 1950s and made up histories for himself in interviews and letters he wrote to his friends. Jonas was self taught and leaned primarily on the work of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound to teach him about form and point of view. At the same time, he approached the page like a jazz musician approaches a horn: there are octaves and words to consider, sure, but everything else is left to duende and the imaginary. We can hear the influences of Bebop in his lineation and wide-ranging idioms. In a letter to one of his friends, Jonas wrote of his own poems: "...they're swinging & let's hope once & for all the 'jazz poetry hassle' be resolved. The methodology that hugs the scene like Zukofsky's vowels to necks of consonants." The poems included here are from one of my favorite Jonas projects, a series of one hundred short poems called Exercises for Ear.

—Adrian Matejka, author of *Map to the Stars*

FROM
EXERCISES FOR EARS

By Stephen Jonas

I

in trips sweet may
upon those damsel
feet of hers

carpets spreading
green before her
cowslip & clover

down to banks of
ever chuckling streams
of gurgle-happy

waters & the sky
's one big squash
of pumpkin smile

XII

in America

are poor & the rich

outraged the poor

peasant tra- since no

dition

to lend

dig- nity to cheap-

ness

XXVIII

being of unsure mind
& shaky morals
he betook himself

to be first
a butterfly then something
approaching a hot dog

alas, he married into money
& as is to be anticipated
has sired

a whole
pocketful
of small change

XXIX

(dian)

the Moon
 that Is not hel betn
on coming in

 atop
the window ledge
 has turned lopsidedly

the other cheek
 to let fall
darkly its crescent arch

XXXVII

don't as rule
trample underfoot
the serpent

wrapd aroun' my staff
aesculapus-wise.
meal consumed

returned to invisible watchings
(seken)
not meticulous of habit

at times rather long-
winded:

a.
the things i know
b. things I hate
w/reserve of venom

to those
to whom it applies. sum: proper man
& above this

a watchful eye
to that horde of golden apples
to which acquired only afta

herculean
whuch-a-ma-trials

XL

doc says

 i oughtta go
on a low-calorie diet

i donno

 maybe he's rite
i can't get clothes

 to fit me

LV

refine yr vices
separate

the doss

&
they'll dig up
yr mss.

two thousand
years late
like they

wuz dead
sea
scrolls

LVII

O
you who
traded

paradise
for a jungle
of twisted

chrome
a discord
of

augmented
wires

LXXXIX

take me hand
o gentle christ
& lead me to
the boneyard

where amidst an
erudition of stoned
compatriots
i'll wear
tradition out

take me hand
o gentle christ
& lead me to
the boneyard

my will is simple:
not to be longwinded
concerning things
short as life

take my hand
o gentle christ
etc.

CLII

better calcu-
lated hate

than unleashéd
love

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produced to bring new readers to poets who are under recognized, under read, and underappreciated.

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