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Two Poems by JONAS MEKAS

Old Is The Hush of Rain

Old is the hush of rain over the branches of underbrush; and the hoarse cries of the black cocks are old in the red summer dawn

— old, this our speech:

of yellow fields of oats and barley, of shepherds' campfires in the blown wet loneliness of autumn, of the potato harvests, of the summer heats, of winter's white glint, creak and hiss of sleighs

— of wagons log-laden, of stones in fallow fields, of red brick stoves, of gypsum in the pastures

— and then at lamplit evening, as the autumnal fields go gray,

of wagons for tomorrow's market, of drowned October highways washed away

— days of the potato harvest.

Old, this our life — interminable generations that walked over the fields

and traced their steps over the black earth

— each foot of land still speaks and breathes the fathers. For from these cool stone wells

they watered their evening herds,

and when the clay floors of their cottages wore out

and the walls crumbled slowly,

from these fields they dug up the yellow sand,

from these pits, yellow clay.

And when we too depart, others will rest on the same boundary-stones, scythe down the same lush meadows, plough these fields. And as they sit beside the tables, after work, each table, each clay pitcher, each beam in the wall will speak. They will remember wide gravel-pits of yellow sand, and in wind-ruffled fields of rye the voices of our women singing from the flaxen edges

— and this first scent in a new cottage: fresh fragrance of moss!

Old is the hush of rain over the branches the horses whinnying in the summer nights, the chirp and chime of harrows, rollers, ploughs, grindstones of the mills, the green smells from the meadow, steeping flax, white gleam of kerchief of the weeders in the gardens.

Old is the hush of rain over the banches of underbrush; and the hoarse cries of the black cocks are old in the red summer dawn

— old, this our speech.

Translated by Clark Mills

From "The Talk of Flowers"

I do not know, whether the sun
accomplished it,
the rain or wind —
but I was missing so
the whiteness and the snow.

I listened to the rustling
of spring rain,
washing the reddish buds
of chestnut-trees,—
and a tiny spring ran down
into the valley from the hill —
and I was missing
the whiteness
and the snow.

And in the yards, and on the slopes
red-cheeked
village maidens
hung up the washings
blown over by the wind
and, leaning,
stared a long while
at the yellow tufts of willow:

For love is like the wind, And love is like the water
— it warms up with the spring, and freezes over
— in the autumn.

But to me, I don't know why,
whether the sun
accomplished it,
the rain or wind —
but I was missing so
the whiteness and the snow.

I know — the wind
will blow and blow the washings,
and the rain
will wash and wash the chestnut-trees,
but love, which melted with the snow —
will not return.

Deep below the snow sleep
words and feelings:
for today, watching
the dance of rain between the door —
the rain of spring! —
I saw another:

she walked by in the rain, and beautiful
she was, and smiled:

For love is like the wind,
and love is like the water —
it warms up with the spring
and freezes over — in the autumn,
though to me, I don't know why,
whether the sun
accomplished it,
the rain or wind —
but I was missing so
the whiteness and the snow.