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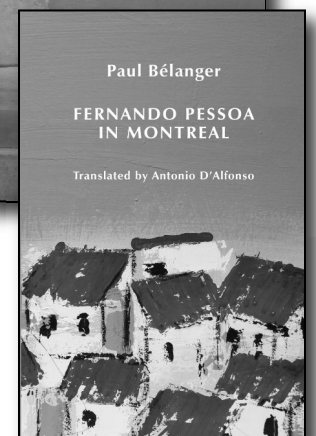
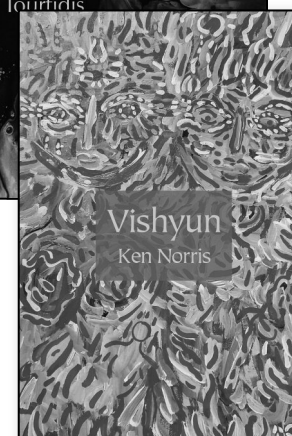
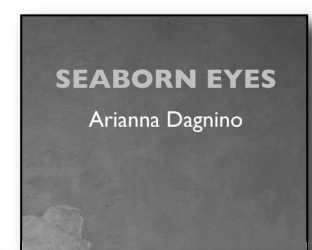
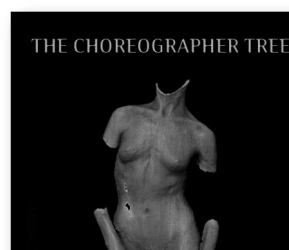
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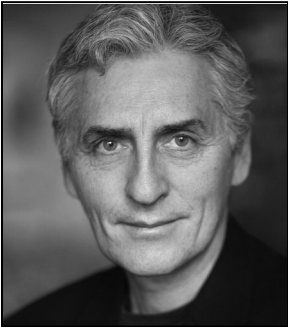
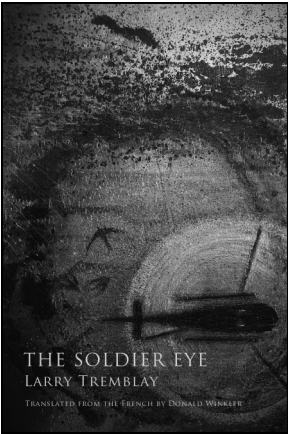
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Larry Tremblay  
from THE SOLDIER EYE  
translated by Donald Winkler

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Born in Quebec in 1954, **Larry Tremblay** has published some thirty books as a novelist, playwright, poet and essayist. His work, translated into some twenty languages, has had an international impact. Recently, his novel *L'orangerie* (Folio) won numerous awards in Quebec and France.

Am I alone  
in my head's vessel  
or does the horde  
keep watch beneath my skin?

Who sleeps  
in my childhood sheets  
me or the uneasy  
body  
of my thoughts?

I begin to resemble  
my name

And yet  
no leaf  
looks like another

Never  
a twin to its shadow  
the tree  
does not protest

My head waits patiently

My mother  
shatters mirrors  
brothers and sisters  
there see themselves being born

I am taught  
commandments  
my schoolboy shirts  
starched  
learn them by heart

The left eye (excerpt)

In this time so near  
God is everywhere  
and no one  
is killing him

I was born  
in the twentieth century  
it must be so  
if not  
who else

My infant  
skull  
makes a rent  
in the day

I don't know  
what a day is made of  
later the night  
teaches me

Now  
I leap  
into a new time

I turn up  
in a cat's eye

I sleep  
in the palms  
of a long-haired woman's  
hands

Questions  
do not exist

I confer on the sun  
a gaze

I fill  
my pockets  
with tiny knives

I observe  
beyond the window  
cars  
growing in size

The night's headlights  
puzzle out the fog

My father offers me  
a watch  
he chains it  
to my wrist

I know  
what's flawed  
the penumbra of dictionaries

On my guard  
beneath street lights  
I smoke the stars

I grow up  
with the crowd  
boulevards and hope

I drink endless  
glasses of water

The sky  
overflows gutters  
falls onto my lashes

Astounding  
to be  
poised over the world  
like an idea  
on a spider's  
thread

My gums ache  
I love storms  
the scent of earthworms  
the petrifying forest

My eye  
during lunar evenings  
is as small  
as a sharpened pencil

I am  
fed with pasteurized milk  
gorged with honeymoons

I sometimes kill a fly

An ancestor within me  
bark fisted  
rocks my heart

# Larry Tremblay

## from THE CHOREOGRAPHER TREE

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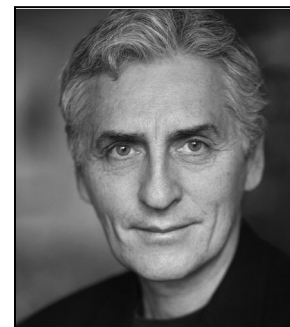


### The Inconsolable Thirst L'inconsolable Soif

La poésie meurt souvent. C'est qu'on l'assassine facilement. Personne ne s'en plaint. Quelques personnes peut-être, oui, de rares et fugaces silhouettes se couchent sur son cadavre frais et tiquent. Ou montrent une moue. Puis vaquent à leurs affaires. La poésie est un poisson d'or qui, une fois sur un milliard, lance un éclair. Sa fulgurance écorche le banc compact où il se confondait. Banc de quoi...? Au choix : truites, sardines, enflures, slogans, pubs, convenances, mots paresseux, souffreteux, dévitaminés, phrases cardiaques, paragraphes neurasthéniques, long déroulement de rouleau de papier hygiénique dans l'air piétiné par des matins monotones.

C'est un secret éventé : peu lit de la poésie. Trop en écrit qui n'en est pas, qui pourrait en être mais, pour des raisons de rigueur et de densité de la pensée, n'en sera, au bout de la phrase, que l'effort non soutenu. Paresse ? Illusion que fracturer un cœur et laisser s'échapper sans contrôle ce qui en sort deviendra texte et, forcément, poétique ? Cependant, la poésie n'est pas qu'affaire de mots. C'est une expérience. Ça se vit. Au mieux, ça s'existe. Demandez au poète encore vierge, enraciné dans le vert de son désir et dans les bleus de son angoisse : des braises reviennent au feu comme un évanoui à la conscience.

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Poetry dies over and over.  
It is simple to kill.  
No one protests.  
A few people perhaps,  
yes, there are some rare,  
evanescent silhouettes that stretch themselves out  
on its fresh corpse and grimace.  
Or pout.  
Then go about their business.  
Poetry is a fish of gold that,  
one in a billion,  
lets loose a flash of lightning.  
Its brilliance sears the teeming school  
in which it's been merged.  
What school?  
You may choose:  
trout, sardines, swellings,  
slogans, ads, conveniences,  
idle words, sickly, vitamin deprived,  
cardiac sentences, neurasthenic paragraphs,  
a long unreeling of paper  
in air weighed down by monotone mornings.

It's a time-worn open secret:  
few people read poetry.  
Too many write what it is not,  
what might have been poetry  
but for a shortfall in rigor and substance,  
yielding at the end of a sentence only a labour unfulfilled.  
Is it laziness?  
Or the illusion that in opening up a heart  
and letting everything within spill out unconstrained,  
one will produce a text that is bound to be poetic?  
Yet poetry is not just a question of words.  
It is an experience.  
It has a life.  
At its best, it endures.  
Ask the still virgin poet,  
grounded in the greenery of his desire  
and the blueness of his pain:  
embers come back to life the way someone  
who has fainted will regain consciousness.

Poisson or. Jaillissement. Pétrole pensée. Flèche œil. Cible joie. Échappée. Lièvre feu . Zigzag glace. Verbe fusée.

(On soulève un mot comme un tapis. On regarde ce que le temps a caché sous sa surface. Qui fait le ménage devant le bric-à-brac du lexique ?)

Qui n'a pas fabriqué, au sein de ses organes, une panoplie de cadenas, de retraits, de caillots de verre ? S'abandonner : se défaire de cette collection coûteuse ?

Il n'y a pas que soi dans le sac du monde. Pas que soi au fond du miroir. Déchirez le sac, cassez le miroir, vous y découvrirez la multitude.

Fish gold.  
Spurting.  
Petrol thought.  
Arrow eye.  
Target joy.  
Escape.  
Hare fire.  
Zigzag ice.  
Word rocket.

(We lift up a word as we do a carpet's edge.  
We see what time has hidden beneath its surface.  
Who puts order into the lexicon's odds and ends?)  
Who has not assembled,  
deep inside,  
a panoply of padlocks, discards, shards of glass?  
And if one were to let oneself go?  
To dispose of this costly collection?  
You are not alone in the world's sack.  
Not alone in the mirror's depths.  
Tear open the sack, shatter the mirror,  
there you will find multitudes.

# Ken Norris

## from VISHYUN

### Address

As if time didn't exist,  
as if books didn't speak,  
as if sweating rivers  
didn't wash clean  
the decaying wooden villages they pass through.

As if ashes from the pyres  
weren't rising to the sky,  
as if vacated bodies  
floating down sacred rivers  
weren't being greeted and consumed  
by crocodiles.

As if density were a value,  
green a feeling, dogs  
an aspiration, the slow-burning incense  
wafting from the shrines.

The enchained world is infinitely green.  
And sunlight attacks it like a swarm of bees.  
All the eyes see everything that's happening—  
look away in shyness, look away in terror—  
the heart becomes invisible,  
and one is lost forever in the opulence of rice fields.

As if the ox, struck,  
didn't fall to its knees,  
and hunger didn't fall like rain.

In the temples  
the orange-robed monks are chanting,  
in the mountains  
the purple-robed girl is carrying water  
back up the thousand steps  
to her family's leaning hut  
there above Pokhara.

As if colour didn't conceal,  
as if love didn't conspire,  
as if snakes didn't shed their intricate skins.

As if stone weren't malleable,  
as if tenderness wasn't limited,  
as if compassion easily resided  
in the branches of a tree.

As if illness were a paradox,  
and suffering a simple dream  
forgotten upon awakening,  
as if to exist were, in fact, to be free.

### Identity

In the time it takes  
to divest one's self of shape,  
in the instant of awakening,  
in the sudden dropping of the dark.  
In the insistent instinct for survival,  
in the grim reaching out for what's needed,  
in the plenitude of what's been lost,  
I see shadows dancing with shadows.

The discursive trees sway in an emptied breeze,  
and night is gathering force.  
There are fabrics that speak of this.

The mine you are digging  
isn't much to dwell upon,  
the ropes and mules are also nothing much.  
It's a landscape that resists all tinkering,  
and the human possibility elapses in an instant  
while all this earth goes on.

In the inn at the end of the road  
they are having a few short, quick drinks.

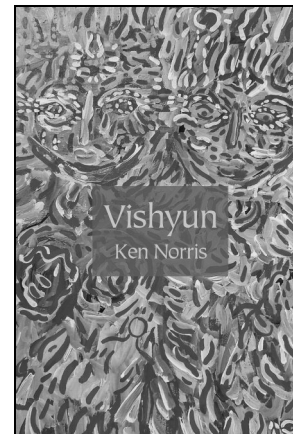
In the inner folds of the evening  
you may find, perhaps, what you were looking for,  
the naked girl in knotted ropes  
hanging from the ceiling.

Or something quieter,  
something less submissive.

The galley slaves of History  
are rowing back to Ithaka,  
while the siren's song you heard  
becomes a distant memory.

Unsettled, in confusion,  
you are reaching for a candle  
that is in another century,  
a pleasure that is in another house,  
an identity that isn't tied to anything.

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**Ken Norris** was born in New York City in 1951. He emigrated to Canada in the early seventies, where he quickly became one of the infamous Vehicule Poets, essential in helping to develop and maintain a particular style of Anglo-poetry in Montreal. Norris retired from teaching Canadian literature and creative writing at the University of Maine. He divides his time between Canada, the United States and Asia.



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### Invocation

This mute sky.

Under whose oversight  
we prevail.

The broad green leaves  
of the banana trees.

And the cocopalms  
proclaiming heaven.

Humanity sighs  
in the moments when  
the world goes dumb.

I was looking  
into the face of beauty  
and it could not speak.

The slow night touched me  
with its silences, its stars.

The hands moving across my body  
could easily read my skin.

Falling and falling  
into an endless, boundless world.

The antidote, at last, to drowning  
in a desperate sea of noise.

# Ilya Tourtidis

## from THE FIRE WE SHARE

### Night World

We continue to winter through  
old sighs and groans  
that jealously guard us like a hedge.  
And as we do,  
we remember the voice  
we ignored in our youth.  
The same voice that made a promise  
of sky and earth,  
then sent us whirling  
into the world  
with nothing more  
than our skins.

Yet this very same eloquence  
now coils in our mortality like a serpent,  
and glares at us as if we were a blemish  
that needed to be cleansed.  
And in the disorder that follows,  
we realize there is more to life  
than just words.  
There is fire—  
that divine burning  
of rhyme and syntax—  
calling us out of unshed tears  
and self-made curses.

How we stray and drift  
in the endless sameness  
that forms the night,  
only to herd like sheep  
around the pageantry  
of something still forming.  
Something refusing the garland  
of form and matter as if it were a lie.

We are being reconciled, it seems,  
to a beginning before things  
ushered us out of their embrace  
into the riot of meaning.  
And it is there,  
that we find ourselves cresting  
through the undertows of reason.  
We cannot fathom why,  
other than to say that what shines in us  
is still waiting in its tower  
and continues to remain  
out of sight.

Surely,  
what the eternal  
has chosen to conceal in us  
must be our purpose.

Surely,  
this sea-want  
that performs its miracle upon our backs,  
must be our only defense against chaos.

### The Simple Truth

There were so many things  
that threw us into confusion.  
So much longing, arrogance, and lack.  
So much *now* we could never fully inhabit  
that what stood still before us  
could only be viewed  
with divine detachment.  
Even when we picked up our pens  
and circled back  
into the shelter of our words,  
what light remained  
was swallowed  
by the void.

The simple truth is this:  
the worlds we create  
continually deny us  
as one would an imposter  
or a slave,  
or a worm hushed back  
into the cadence  
of its hollows.

Only the cries  
that fill us with name survive,  
but they too are muted  
when we drop our disguises  
and begin tearing down  
our barricades.

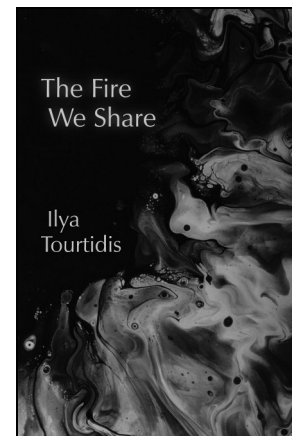
### Awareness

Awareness has no end  
in the mind we now occupy,  
even after we are effaced  
by the cold touch of its gaze  
and made ready for death.

It is our inheritance, we think,  
to fear what we once idolized.  
And if that were not enough,  
it seems, it is our calling  
to fan the flames that shaped us.  
So, we take little comfort  
in truths we have come  
to mistrust.  
Truths that cradled us  
in the shimmering folds  
of their garments  
then scattered defiantly  
into the night.

But sometimes—  
sometimes, when we sense  
what roams from tomb to tomb in us,  
we remember the cost of our desires  
and like weary pilgrims  
bow our heads  
and repent.

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**Ilya Tourtidis** was born in Greece in 1949. He emigrated to Australia when he was four years old and to Canada when he was fifteen. Educated at the University of Victoria, he worked as a teacher and later as a counselor in the Comox Valley where he now resides. He was co-winner of the Gerald Lampert Award in 1994 for his first book of poems *Mad Magellan's Tale* (Sono Nis Press, 1993). A subsequent collection of his poetry, *The Spell of Memory* was published by Oolichan Books (2004). This was followed by *Path of Descent and Devotion* (Libros Libertad, 2009), *Bright Bardo* (Libros Libertad, 2011) and *Romancing Eternity* (Ekstasis, 2017).



### The Cost

Again, your sleep is fettered  
and your longings bound.  
Again, you stagger  
out of half-formed sentences,  
almost beastlike  
through the burning.

But you cannot escape the notion  
that you are dying for something.  
And that for all your pious hesitations,  
you are still fleeing like someone  
who has drained his cup,  
and now must face  
the emptiness  
that remains.

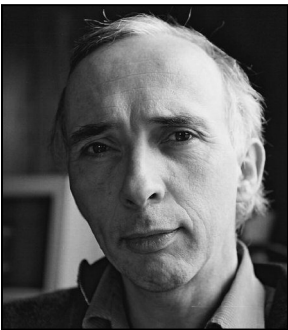
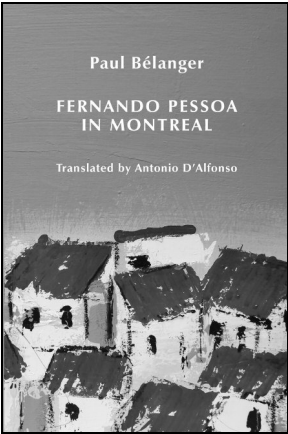
And that is what you fear the most,  
is it not?

The gaze of what remains,  
glaring back at you like Medusa  
ever ready to mirror the silence  
and turn you to stone.

And so,  
you make yourself small  
and your steps light,  
wondering when the giant in you  
will be done feasting,  
and finally point the way.

Paul Bélanger  
from FERNANDO PESSOA  
IN MONTREAL  
translated by Antonio D’Alfonso

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A poet and publisher, **Paul Bélanger** has lived in Montreal since 1978. For several years, he organized public readings of poets and writers in Montreal. Since 1982, he has published texts and poems in magazines in Quebec and abroad. Some of his poems have appeared in anthologies and a few have been translated into Spanish and English. He has published several collections with Éditions du Noroît, of which he is literary director. He also created an artist's book, *L'Hôte*, with artist Jean-Pierre Sauvé in 1994. He devotes part of his time to teaching by giving courses and workshops in creative writing at the Université du Québec à Montréal. He was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Liberté* since 1998. In 2010, he won the Prix Alain-Grandbois for his collection *Répît*.

Departures do not make us strangers. What is strange is the foundation of thought. Here I am in a city that I did not choose (had I ever heard of it?), that has not attended any incident in my life (all in Lisbon). Perhaps I have already felt it as a sensation?

La voix suggère. Je ne vois pas quoi. Je ne dis pas cela au sens psychologique. On dirait la métaphore d'une autre métaphore tout à fait incertaine. C'est à peine une lueur, comme retenue dans une glace ardente.

Il faudra que j'en parle à mon ami Reis. Après tout, il est Américain. Il pourra peut-être me renseigner.

The voice suggests. I do not hear what. I do not mean this in the psychological sense. It sounds like the metaphor of another metaphor, quite uncertain. It is barely a glimmer, as if held in a fiery mirror.

I will have to mention this to my friend, Reis. After all, he is American. Maybe he can help me understand.

The Interloper from the Palace of Shadows (excerpt)

Comme je n'avais rien pour écrire, j'ai demandé à la femme de chambre qu'elle m'apporte un cahier. Mais que vais-je raconter, tant il semble que je suis vide? Pourquoi faudrait-il raconter? Je n'ai jamais pensé qu'il faille raconter pour écrire. Raconter quoi, à la fin: le récit de sa propre naissance? L'écriture n'a pour but que son combat pour naître. Le plus souvent la naissance est ratée. Ce ratage constitue l'essentiel. Écrire demeure le but ultime.

As I had nothing to write with, I asked the chambermaid to bring me a notebook. But what am I going to write, as I feel so empty? Why should I write? I have never thought that you have to tell a story to write. To tell what, in the end: the story of one's own birth? The purpose of writing is only its struggle to be born. Most of the time the birth is failed. This failure constitutes the essential. Writing remains the ultimate goal.

Je suis parti de Lisbonne par inadvertance sur un bateau de fret qui cachait de l'opium. Je l'ignorais au moment de monter. Je ne savais même pas que j'en étais le passager. De sorte que j'ai fait une traversée des plus opiacées. Je m'en remets à peine. J'ai habité, durant plusieurs jours, cette sensation du ronronnement infini de l'immobilité. J'ai plongé tel un Faust nouveau, lavé et salé par la mer, vers l'ombre de mon inconnnaissance. Les heures qui heurtaient le navire passaient aussi dans mon corps.

I inadvertently left Lisbon on a cargo ship that was hiding opium. I didn't know it when I got on board. I did not even know I was a passenger. So I had the most opiate-filled trip. I am slowly coming out of the haze. For several days, I lived in this sensation of the infinite hum of immobility. Like a reborn Faust, washed and salted by the sea, I plunged into the shadow of my unknowing. The hours that splashed against the ship also splashed against my body.

L'opium m'a jeté dans une série de sensations: j'ai voyage pendant des années dans l'Himalaya tibétain que tout homme a connu; j'ai longé les côtes californiennes jusqu'à l'Alaska et suis passé de la blonde chaleur du sable à la blancheur glacée des roches anciennes; je fus nègre et roi de la fraude et de la tromperie. L'humanité entière battait dans mon corps comme le coeur du navire butait contre les vagues tout en pompant le mazout qui circulait dans ses cales. Je fus tout et si peu; à la fin, je n'étais plus qu'un amas grinçant de rouille.

Opium threw me into a series of sensations: I traveled for years in the Tibetan Himalayas that every man has known; I went from the blond heat of the sand to the icy whiteness of the ancient rocks; I was both slave and king of fraud and deceit. The whole of humanity throbbed in my body as the heart of the ship throbbed against the waves while spewing fuel oil that rushed in its holds. I was everything and so little; in the end, I was nothing more than a noisy pile of rust.

L'objet même de la sensation m'échappe et je ne parviens pas à demeurer lucide au milieu de ce qui m'aveugle ou me jette dans le noir. Des ombres exigent leur voix. J'en entends une de jadis, fossile. En voici une autre sans mots que je dois écouter. Je dois les identifier, aussi nombreuses soient-elles, une à une, sans me préoccuper de l'ensemble. Ce moment à Montréal permet d'éprouver ma vie différemment. Toute la terre paraît muette à jamais.

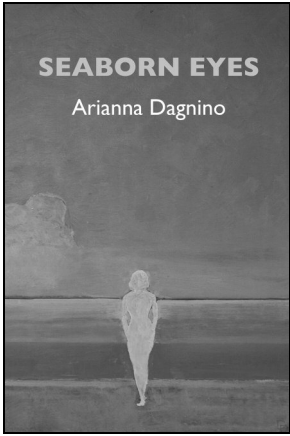
The very object of the sensation escapes me, and I do not manage to remain lucid in the middle of what blinds me or throws me in the dark. Shadows demand their voices. I can make out one from long ago, a fossil. Here is another voice, without words, that I must listen to. I must identify each one of them, as numerous as they are, without worrying about the whole. This moment in Montreal allows me to experience my life differently. The earth in its entirety seems silent for keeps.

Les départs ne font pas de nous des étrangers. L'étrange fonde la pensée. Me voici dans une ville que je n'ai pas choisie (en avais-je seulement entendu parler?), qui n'a assisté à aucune des circonstances de ma vie (toutes à Lisbonne). Peut-être l'ai-je déjà ressenti comme sensation?

# Arianna Dagnino

## from SEABORN EYES

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**Arianna Dagnino** is a writer, researcher, and literary translator of Italian origin based in Vancouver. She is the author of *The Afrikaner* (Guernica Eds.), a post-apartheid novel inspired by the five years she spent in South Africa working as an international reporter for the Italian press, and currently lectures in Italian Studies at the University of British Columbia. For over 20 years she has worked as an independent journalist, travel writer, editorial consultant and literary translator (English/Italian, French/Italian) for major Italian publishing houses.



### Returning

The dry stone wall,  
the nettles,  
the rosemary plant.  
The key hidden under the slate.

It's all still there.

The sun digging into the earth.  
The breeze silvering the olive trees.  
The waiting by the sea.  
The sting of bitterness.  
The weariness.

So many years later.

They will ask her why.  
She will have no words.  
Just this end-of-the-race feeling,  
this taste of exhausted oil.

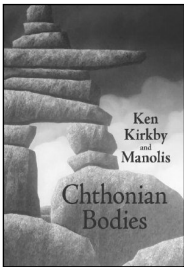
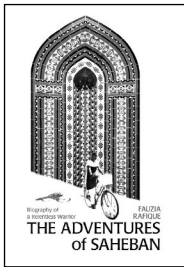
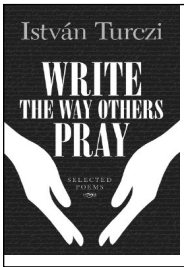
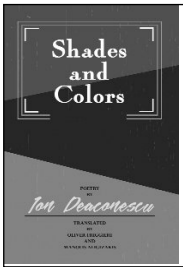
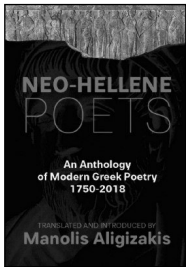
### Seafaring

Living the future  
as a distant emotion;  
peeling it layer after layer,  
amidst a boundless nought.

### Seal Skin

Seek my protection while  
I expose you to the world.  
Live through my hard cover  
while I mend your wounds.

Take refuge in my membrane  
before taking flight.  
Learn to honour your skin  
– your mould, your liberator.



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