



**in the dark, move slowly  
tuomas anhava**





IN THE DARK, MOVE SLOWLY





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Tuomas Anhava

Poems  
selected and translated  
from the Finnish  
by  
Anselm Hollo

CAPE GOLIARD PRESS LONDON  
In Association with  
GROSSMAN PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

All the originals of the poems translated here are contained in:  
"Tuomas Anhava, *Runot 1951-1966*" published by Otava,  
Helsinki, 1967.

Some of these translations have appeared in BLUE PIG  
(Paris), CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE IN  
TRANSLATION (Toronto), POOR. OLD. TIRED.  
HORSE (Edinburgh), STAND QUARTERLY  
(Newcastle-on-Tyne), TLALOC (Leeds), and  
WAYS GOOSE (Oxford).

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L. of C. No. 71 93576

SBN paper 206 61755 0; cloth 206 61754 2

Cover photograph by C. A. Breyer.

Tuomas Anhava:

Born 1927.

A master, of his time place language: of the short poem, epigram, tanka, haiku – and of the *ode*, a form having remarkable contemporary practitioners in Northumbrian and American poetry: Basil Bunting, Charles Olson, Frank O'Hara, Charles Boer.

Like at least three of those men, a master, mentor, of two generations of younger poets in his time place language.

Translator of Ezra Pound, Cavafy, others; critic, active anthologist publisher. Man who eats drinks / wakes and sleeps with poetry, nevertheless also lives in a time place language that is *shared*, "from eight to six".

Hoping he is here now, in *this* time place language

Anselm Hollo  
Iowa City,  
April 1969





ELEGY  
FOR THE NIGHT

The night I love  
but the days I have married,  
the day talks, my wife repeats it  
the day makes a mess, my wife cleans it up  
the street is loud, like of flock of children.

But the night, o the night. Her face, not to be seen  
only felt, and it is soft: her hair  
rustling like leaves, her speech, a wind  
without words,  
and her eyes beckon  
like streetlamps, to say nothing  
of the stars.

## WITH, THESE, CONCEPTS

Today, and always, may death be remembered.  
By moments we are killed, little by little: we are  
because there is, a little, to lose, that is, all  
we have; for others  
we are but mirrors, our words do not reach them  
but are transformed into thoughts, their thoughts;  
let our love  
be silent. Ourselves  
we look for, in others, and tire of it  
but a little, by moments,  
moment by moment is used, and worn away,  
our one, only, all, our self, its loss  
is the way, is the life, is what truth there is.



## THE BIRDS

When a bird goes  
  it is different  
when a bird goes  
  it is a light fall  
when a bird goes  
  it is an easy flight  
when a bird goes  
  it is quite different

from the departure of one dead: he drags himself  
away, crumbles onto the road, piecemeal,  
and nothing remains to be buried but his corpse.

When a bird comes  
  it is quite different  
when a bird comes  
  it is light knuckles on the door  
when a bird comes  
  it is a foot stepping lightly away  
when a bird comes  
  it is different

from the arrival of one dead: in pain, he is removed  
from the dying, a cry, from the cry –  
out, onto the road, from the dust, to dust.

## IN THE TWILIGHT

The child fell asleep  
and its smile followed it into sleep,  
curled up in the shadow  
cast by one cheek.

You slept,  
a shadow of grief on your brow.

I am awake  
                    and the smile, always new  
                    the grief, always forever  
rises into my eyes

and I see it is dusk and dawn,  
my night, my day  
between the two of them.

All these days I have been looking at the sky.  
A great deal of grey. Many shades of grey.

The darkness feels good now. I wait for it to be time,  
for things to come to a stop in the sky.



the dragonfly  
sun on its wings

scissoring scissoring  
the air

won't shift an inch from its place  
above the stream

I come and I  
go.

Harder  
and harder

to say any  
word.

From eight to six,  
eight to six.  
I don't know my children anymore.



Many's the time when the trees were blowing  
the trees were blowing and the air flew  
below me and past, many's the time  
I then thought of

the wing  
folding back, yes, thus  
of flying,  
the act

as air and trees  
and wings,  
they  
folded back and I fell  
a Philosopher's Stone, I fell, in the act,  
even deeper  
still deeper I then

thought of  
flying, like this:  
unfold the wings (and the tail),  
forward and down and up from  
the back, a beat and a beat,  
that simple –

then  
I thought how  
simple it is, and how treacherous  
for if flight  
needs wings, it is not  
perfect, no no, not  
universally  
applicable, no, not worth it

(and the tail:  
how do the tailless fare in that case and where  
are the wingless  
then),

and if  
it needs air it isn't true flight at all  
at all,

if it requires  
beating the air  
it is

in fact, in the act, a worthless  
diacatalectical  
spectacle

between the  
heights  
and the  
depths,  
thesis of wing  
to antithesis of air  
the synthesis, is it

flight?  
I then thought, and my thoughts  
ever deeper, all the way down to Germany  
and I grew weary and fell asleep, yes, thus  
with open eyes,

and the wings  
opened out  
and the air  
— in an instant, the air  
rushed below and above and by  
and the earth (which is tailless)  
stretched out and flew,  
it flew wherever  
a flying carpet

and, the trees, oh  
counter-clockwise  
blew and the air flew  
sky's ceiling drew ever higher, closer  
the clouds, the rain-bellied, radiant-backed  
looked on, looked on  
without moving, as if in a storm

my eyes  
were open too, like this:  
yes flying  
flying, the act, the metaphor  
the image  
in the air

1962: CHANDOGYA

Under my feet, the floor, and under the floor, an apartment  
and under that apartment, an apartment, and an apartment,  
down below, under those, the main central heating,  
and under that, always, the building lot.

In one wall there are two windows, in two walls there are doors,  
two walls of books, a floor and a table,  
a chair and a low wooden bench.

In the morning the sun shines, at night the lamp is lit.

Above my head is the ceiling, above that, the loft,  
above the loft there's the roof, on the roof, an aerial, on the aerial

I have become a resident of this building  
and my time here is like the city,  
very quiet,  
the days drone past steadily in the street's ravine,  
with swallows sparrows seagulls wind in the air  
and when the sky darkens to match the rooftops' colour  
each set of footsteps is suddenly audible,  
then fades

Harder to remain calm, when the silence grows

I said, I have said it already, I have nothing

but a restless mind,

at a loss

here I am *l'entre deux morts*

and all of a sudden I want to see how it is

when my son's face lights up in a smile

from just one little word

Never have I been able to concentrate

on any one thing

one understanding

one hatred

The world shrinks and increases in density,  
blessings and temptations draw closer to one another,  
the victories and losses of justice grow terrible and enormous.  
I do not admit, I do not deny, I do not give in.

Keep my eyes open

not understanding much

people and books

open up

like those windows in the wall

into worlds.

The fearless voice will not die: Chandogya

The fearless voice will not die

Windows, the colour of fish-scales, gaping like guns:  
the schoolhouse in the evening,

a symbol.

Remember to believe,  
remember to turn and bow down  
facing the place where you know

for certain

there is no one there.

MAY, 1964

I

A night in May, in the May of nights  
out of the day gone west into the sea  
    out of the day, and sweet now, with an offshore wind,  
    smoke rising out of the ship,  
    sails of darkness, remote islands,  
    star-studded masts and shores and horizons,  
northern,  
    budding forth from the cold,  
    a youth, a maiden  
    and the tree's maidenhair rustle so green! so light!  
    the earth, now moist and open,  
May, gone now,  
time without time  
    of the northern night,  
    high, leisurely, a migrant hawk  
    gliding at twilight speed  
    a waking dream  
    and the dew on the roads  
    stretching towards the morning and the city,  
morning, holding its breath  
    rooftops, mirrors  
    ablaze like the open sea  
    a youth as old as the sun  
everything held  
in its eyes,  
    the true, the green, the grey  
    the eyes, gazing far out to sea;  
wind on the forehead  
and transience,  
proud as a ship

## II

The moments, like statues, and the statue

its eyes blinded by distance  
its breath becalmed  
the marble heartbeat within the ribcage  
the hand's gesture, casting no shadow  
the frozen step  
the elegance of nudity

incontrovertible as dreams  
as youth, there is no return  
who would not find it beautiful  
to die into memory  
to be forgotten eternally

when youth dies  
it makes us feel so immortal



### III

Who is young, who would go  
would do every thing, everywhere  
say this and say that, meet others, always in new frames of mind,  
then sleep, in his sleep, in a peace of this world.  
Not having acquired that skill of statues, spectators  
of freezing into stillness,  
for a moment it takes your breath away, eternity,  
then gives it back,  
it is not in the fire, but the flesh is alive,  
it has its desires, its fears, it is at one with all living creatures,  
whenever the sky is ablaze, the sea rises, the wind  
touches his forehead

and transience, a message: the heat of crematoria.  
His pores are open, the world moves in and out  
in him who is young, most alive, most mortal,  
but we know that our peace is anguished  
and this certainty makes him uncertain, this skill makes him  
clumsy,

wealth impoverishes, cleanliness soils him  
and our shame forces him to avert his face,  
this labour, so productive, yet so useless in so many ways  
makes his heart sink, and the freedom he is permitted  
turns into anxiety in his mind,  
our dwellings force him out into the street.

One sees a migrant hawk and decides to follow it, into  
extinction.

But most of them follow us, well, what about us;  
some follow those who do not want anything any more,  
who don't even want to die, members of no class,  
there aren't many of them, anywhere, there are a few everywhere,  
a harmless amount of activity, in our bones.

Who would not like to set his course the way youth does,  
the cunning radical, the middle-aged, the jovial bishop at the  
bazaar,

and old age, guided by right and might and reality, faith  
and beauty and terror, all the sisters of our dreams  
and finally, always, indifference,  
the sister no one invited.

Not a springtime, no sea, no creature  
left unpoisoned. And it is only twenty years, now.

We ask what is going on, the world replies,  
it is all of it going on, it is, all of it, real.

No one would like to wait for that answer.

The songs have died. I grieve,  
grieve for Scylla and grieve for Charybdis,  
both of them sirens, both of them choked to death.

The immortals? I do not think of them often. I think of the others, all the others one cannot remember, only consider, cannot imagine, only know. The mortal ones, more and more often I think of them. *Manes et maiores*. Just names, if that. Dates, if that, but years, yes, endlessly, years. Gone with their days and with those who did remember, if they ever had any of those.

Among them, perhaps,  
 an old man who kept telling his ailments like a rosary.  
 A difficult child, subnormal, pacified with cold water.  
 The nurse who told me about it and smiled.  
 The polite young man who had a few rare words in  
 his vocabulary.

Workers idlers finger-tappers talkers runts gluttons blondes  
pedants hotheads rawbones.

Farewell  
Goodbye

We'll come as soon as

V

The last day of May  
 of the last May?  
 the invisibility of tomorrow  
 but this May is pushing its leaves into June  
 in the morning, the rock dove  
 covered in dust, turned its head, trembling  
 the sun was out, the air was blue to breathe  
 the sun is still out, the air is bright  
 and in the midst of this day, this pay-day, the daily reckoning  
 I appear in the doorway of the Bank  
 suddenly filled with wonder at all that goes on  
 with tenderness  
 the women! the women, like perennials  
 the men like wardrobes  
 their steps in the street  
 the sun is out, howl of cars  
 trams lorries ignorant armies  
     If rain has fallen,  
     where will our nostrils meet with the scent of that grove?  
     how does the twig lie across the path?  
     where does the cloud go? when there is no one there  
     and what is blue?  
 I go in through the door  
 the lift squeaks to a stop, the doors slam  
 the world is a city and does not cease  
 these rooms where I live receive it, the surge of the surge  
     What did you say? it does not cease?  
     and suddenly all is quiet:  
     sometimes, it is.  
 And that, too, is received here,  
 through the open window.  
 Then you hear it again. Someone whistling.  
 A boy. Down in the yard. No tune.  
 Just whistling. His own.

Murdering  
four mice – too much  
for my conscience. It was. I  
murdered them.  
They had come when I'd known how to sit there,  
calmly, just right,  
they had run, trying to get away  
their hind legs slipping and sprawling,  
brought tears to my eyes.

I thought how each  
tree, house, man  
stands apart when there is no one to see them

Such a *callous* thrill  
when plant roots tangle and grope the Earth  
And is there a sky; and what does it feel like  
if one is a horse



I am the truth of my dreams

a dream,  
not for your eyes

and  
intermittent.

Again        as then  
everything grows huge  
the whirr of the fan  
I am        and not

Feel cold  
would not        do not  
want to speak about it  
me  
and there is  
wine and bread on the table for me

That mouth  
won't open        ever  
mouth out of your mouth  
and mine  
it was then that I began to die  
and now it is  
soon over  
we do not meet in him who was to come  
for ever        we are removed from each other

Having a sad time  
in a forestful of wind  
one morning  
I wake up  
remember my father's name  
times houses islands  
soft childhood waters

I want to be  
                    with you  
want myself into you  
away from this place  
now  
      right now

This night  
one more  
once more  
these trees  
are green  
the sun  
sets  
back of the sky

This glimpse  
under the curtain's hem  
that rustling sound  
that bird  
voice breaks  
time and again  
(monotonous)

Once more  
this night  
these thoughts  
this heaviness  
once more  
to sleep  
through this one

My hand

open

you come to mind

to the mind  
in my fingers

How he gets to me now,  
Zeus

Leda, the swan

as slowly suddenly everything  
turns lovely  
under my hand

is a high downy bird-cry  
is a shiver

is huge, wings



Small night talk with you:  
the children have settled down

Then, it's an owl  
calling  
loud and clear

another  
answering

The rain's confused chatter, the child's babble  
rock me to sleep in the long stories I read to my sons,  
the rain makes them restless,  
my breath evens out, I go out of myself

the whole long memory of the rainy day revives in me  
and I remember the rock I used to lie on,  
full of consciousness, of pain.

My son came to me, he was troubled,  
I said something absurd, and he laughed;  
his laugh cut straight through the tears  
and the weeping entered into me, the one who knows.

Everyone who believes what he sees  
is a mystic.

In the dark  
move slowly.

I do not remember.

Summer

like a woman against my skin.

It is November.

It has gone.



This first edition was designed, printed and  
published by Cape Goliard Press, 10a Fairhazel  
Gardens London N.W.6.

Printed in Great Britain.









**\$4.00**

**0170**