

The Dead wordlessly lean on the arched window to watch the scenery of
the country temple

I and my comrade are there, crowding among the Dead
Watching, and thinking about the last campaign

Beneath the window, the familiar monk who sweeps fallen leaves goes by
Also, the three wood-cutters go by
Look, my grown-up son is among today's visitors
He has put on my old army uniform dyed in a different color, he's pointing
Squabbling with his science-major girlfriend about how long a pinch of
phosphorus can burn at night

Translated by the author with William Golightly

MARIN SORESCU / ROMANIA

Frames

The walls of my house are covered
with frames
in which my friends
see nothing.
They think I put them there
just to annoy them.

There was an empty place
there, above the bed
and I used to wake with a strange feeling
that somebody was watching me.

In fact, there is a sphere of light
bobbing about in that place.

There is no light anywhere else
no open eye
no phosphor mine.

And yet
somebody is breathing, breathing
there above my bed.

Who knows what star
is burning out somewhere, far away
and thanks to the odd system of reflection
of things
its soul is now breathing on my wall.

Tomorrow I shall have to put
a frame there
too.

Translated by Roy MacGregor-Hastie

Chatting with the Builders

In the Style of Constantin Abăluță

Give me a brick.
See, I will insert it into a poem,
even in its foundations, right where gravity riots.
Give me another one. Give me another,
this one has cracks.
(A crack in a brick is the root of junking;
let's be all eyes when it comes to cracks).
See? With your help,
the help of the plumb line, the level,
the winch and the tackle,
the bulldozer, prefabs,
scaffoldings, and the manual
on material stresses,
poetry grows; and grows, comrade builders.
This is going to be a poem
about as useful as a brick. Maybe more.
It's going to be like two bricks
wedded to each other
with the ring of the builder's mortar.
It will be a poetic tower, or, if you wish,