

MARIO AZZOPARDI
ALLA TAL-MURTALI

Alla tal-murtali l-alla tagħna,
jiekol is-swaba' mtajra,
il-kliewi w il-pulmuni mifqughin.
Alla tal-putassa u l-ġelatina,
jixrob id-demm jisplodi minn ġol-vina
l-alla tagħna,
jiekol il-bajd ta' rġiel
li jtiru miftuqin mal-bomba.

Fil-kmamar tan-nar,
b'sidirhom barra jtiegħmu t-trab l-irġiel,
itiegħmu l-kloru min-nitrat
u jhazzu n-numri w ir-riċetti
għat-tfaqqiġ tal-ftuħ u l-berqa,
forsi jixgħel wiċċ alla bejn il-kwiekeb.

Alla tal-murtali l-alla tagħna,
jixrob l-ilfiq tar-romol
u krib l-iltiema jfarfar minn saqajh.
Alla tal-putassa u l-ġelatina,
jisker bid-demm jixpakka minn ġol-vina
l-alla tagħna,
jherwel 'l-irġiel tan-nar,
li jtiru miftuqin mal-bomba.

Dan alla tal-murtali,
f'kunċert mal-qaddisin patruni,
jittfewwaq b'hoss divin l-offert'umana:
it-tqattigħ f'biċċiet zgħar ta' l-irġiel tagħna,
zmembrati f'ismu, fil-kamra tan-nar.

U hemm seba' snin wara
jew sebgħa w sebgħin sena,
fl-istess arena, quddiem l-istess tempju,
l-ispirti mċerċera ta' l-irġiel tal-berqa,
iduru ma' l-irdieden kuluriti,
f'ritwal irripetut min-nies tal-miti.

U mbagħad jgħibu fid-daħna ma' l-iħirsa,
imqartsin biċċa biċċa, f'hemda twaħħax.

MARIO AZZOPARDI
THE GOD OF PETARDS

Our god the god of petards
feeds on shattered fingers,
burst kidneys and punctured lungs.
The god of potash and gelatine
drinks blood erupting from the artery
our god,
eats the testicles of men
ruptured by the bomb.

In the firework factories,
bare-chested men savour the powder,
relish the chlorine from the nitrate
and scribble numbers and recipes
for bursting showers of coloured stars and lightning,
perhaps to light god's face among the stars.

Our god the god of petards
drinks widows'sobbing
and brushes off orphans' cries from his feet.
The god of potash and gelatine
gets drunk with blood bursting from the artery
our god,
drives the fireworks-men insane,
ruptured by the bomb.

This god of petards,
in concert with the patron saints,
burps the human offering with a divine noise:
butchering in small pieces our men,
dismembered in his name, in the firework factory.

And seven years later
or seventy seven years,
in the same arena, before the same temple,
the ragged spirits of the men of flashes,
spin with the coloured Catherine wheel,
in a repeated ritual of the myth-makers.

And then they vanish in clouds of smoke with ghosts,
Wrapped up piece by piece, in a chilling silence.

Translated by Charles Briffa