
TWENTY
EIGHT
GRAMMS
OF
POETRY

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• ANDRE •
ORBELIANI

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THE GUILTY CROW

A little black bird

high in the sky

chases a crow
twice its size.

And the guilty crow
dodges the blow,
pretending not to bother
his little black brother.

And I wonder,
how a crow can
understand who's wrong,
and who has the right to fight.

High in the sky
black feathers fly.

THE MESSAGE

In May 1940 I was walking along a Belgian highway towards France with a crowd of civilians fleeing the invading "Teutonic hordes." We had been carrying whatever we could take with us. Some were pushing hand carts or wheelbarrows, and others, like myself, were leading bicycles heavily laden with luggage. We were late, those with cars had left long ago.

In the opposite direction rushed a column of green British lorries loaded with troops. Some of the soldiers were smiling and waving to the civilians. Many were asleep after an exhausting drive. The British were on their way to reinforce the staggering Belgian Army.

Three weeks later I was walking the same highway, but this time, towards home. Sad faces, dirty and tired people, still happy to be unmolested and fed. We were overtaken by a column of gray German trucks. Through the loose tarpolins one could see the khaki uniforms of British soldiers — prisoners of war being driven to Germany.

When one of the trucks passed by me, a ball of crushed paper fell off. I picked it up; it was a message from one of the Tommies to his wife in England. The note said that he was alive and unhurt and he expressed hope that he would escape and come back to fight.

I took this message and kept it, but there was no way to mail it over the front to England. When the Germans were driven out of Belgium, four years later, I still had the message. I was curious what happened with the British soldier. I put the message in an envelope and sent it over.

I never received an answer.

EPITAPH

I was what you are
I am, what you will be.

Don't waste your time thinking of me

Your hour is precious
Your neighbour's time too

Make this hour happy
Which I failed to do.

LUEBO

What do you know?
Luebo.

Lions paw
Lions claw
Nowhere to go.
Rifles below
under the straw.
Luebo.

Endless row
endless flow
useless blow
No, no!
Luebo.

What do you know?
Luebo.

Does not the sun rise in the
east?

Note: Luebo is a tributary
of Kasai which, in turn, is
a tributary of Lualaba,
which the white man calls
the Congo.

THE GARDEN OF EXPECTATION

My garden is rich with expectation, and rosebuds ready to blossom. My garden is promising as the welcome smile of the beloved.

My garden at dawn, still cool from the dew but ready to enjoy the rays of the rising sun.

My garden, having escaped the destruction of hail, is now ready to live and bloom.

My garden ready for my enjoyment and delight, but still virgin despite my destructive presence.

And again, my garden of delight in the fall when the joy of expectation is replaced by the saviour of remembrance, and the sweet anguish of loss.

THE OLD POWER PLANT

Somebody one day built that old power plant.
and it runs.
The weight of the water pushes the wheel
one can't see it, it's somewhere below,
but it works.

People have light in their houses
and in the street
and the lady can roast her turkey
and the freezer stays cold
and that's how it has to be.

The power plant was built before the turn of the century.
at that time people had little experience
with power plants
no computers
no consulting engineers
still the plant was built
and it runs.

Someone came and surveyed the site,
and measured the flow of the water,
and computed its strength.
and he dreamed of a power plant.

Someone drew the plans,
and he was criticized,
and he fought for his ideas,
and he talked those who had the money
into building this power plant.

Other people came who built a primitive camp
and settled there and worked.
They diverted the river
and mixed the cement by hand.
and they built a dam.

People lived here, with all their problems,
few were happy,
some protested the food,
and the pay and the accommodation.
Some were lonely
having to leave their families behind.

They all worked hard and built the plant.

And when the plant was completed
and provided power to the city,
and to the smelter,
and to the sawmill
and the street cars.

Oh how proud people were to have this power plant!
and how comfortable they felt in their homes.
at the turn of the century.

And people came from all around
to ride the street cars
and admire the city lights
and praise the builder of the power plant.
That was it's honeymoon.

It's old, the city power plant,
its water wheels are obsolete,
its switches are clumsy,
they had to be replaced,
its governors are slow they can't stand
the rigidity of the network.
it still runs.

No one recalls the human genius implied in building it.
All is simplified nowadays, standardized, modern.
But the spirit of the builder
and those who lived to run it
and those who worked hard,
are present at the site.
because it still runs.

MOUNTAIN SNOW

Before the windshield,
snowflakes are dancing.
Look at them,
waltzing for you.

Beware, snow is cunning,
bewitching, deceiving;
A blizzard is challenging you!

Snow in still air
with fog in the open,
and nothing, just nothing
in sight: not a tree, not
a stick. . . this snow
can hypnotize you.

You believe snow is white,
but come up with me
to the hills.
Where the cold is edged crisp,
and the white is purity
and the air remains still.

Here's a hole in the snow.
Look inside, into the shadows,
you will see snow as blue as skies.

Sun is hot, snow is steaming
Biting frost keeps it dry,
Sun and frost together make crystals
sparkling like diamonds all over
flat fields

GEORGIAN LOVE

'Shany shery may
 He to her,
 She to him,
will say,
'Shany shery may'.

By moonlight
or sun bright
 Any time of any day,
 From October until May.
When in love,
They always say,
 'Your worry is mine,
 My love',
in their Georgian way,
'Shany Shery May'.

TIME

"Time flows like water," people say,
"It is fluid."

Well, no, I respond,
it is very solid,
We run along its edges.

Everything that was
 it is recorded on the tape of my life.
Everything that will be
 I am recording it now, myself.

I see the path of time
 moving away, towards the past.
The close I see well,
Further away is indistinct,
I see some landmarks far behind,
 even when I don't want to look.

The future is moving to include me.
I imagine it is similar to the past,
and I am keeping step with all time.

I am not the witness watching the traffic,
 I am the traffic,
 I cannot escape running with it all.

I am not only the self in processes of life,
but the complete me is all my life from the start;
 The whole accumulation
 of feelings, thoughts and deeds.

When I die, the 'ME' will be complete.
The time allotted to me will be 'MY TIME'.

Traces of me will fade fast
from the memory of friends.
There were no traces of me
before my time.

But, the time I lived is mine.
Nobody can take it away from me.
Yes, I lost much of my time,
but not all.

When I try to cheat and go to places
where I have been,
and try to live it again,
I feel the anguish of the loss.

I love what is gone, I love it passionately,
it's 'ME'.

MILKY TRUTH

It snows in heavy fog.
The air is still,
So am I,
In the midst of a flickering world

Silently,
steadily,
evenly,
The visible world is moving by.

Reality is the narrow circle of mist,
the moving light all around,
and me.

Blue skies, green grass, the
peach orchard in bloom:
I recall them all, but am not sure
they exist.
I've seen it before,
maybe not.

A deceit, or a dream in colours:
This truth is white.

The milky world falls down at my feet,
Where does it go/
I don't see it stop.

Is it a deceit of my mind,
or am I moving up,
up to the center above,
floating to that mystical point
which is, I know,
the aim of my flight.

THE SANDCASTLE AND THE TIDE

I am building a sandcastle on the beach;
The tide will come and wash it down,
I know that.

I work fast and well: I have no time for fancies.
The castle must be finished on time, and I want it
beautiful and bold.

Nothing will be left when the tide floods,
I do it for achievement's sake.

My life will come to an end,
I am sure of this. I want my life to be
fair, beautiful, perfect.
Why?

When the tide recedes,
Nothing will be left of the castle.

When the memory of me fades away,
It will not matter how my life was.

That will be 'later'.
I build the sandcastle now,
I am living my life now.
I want it to be perfect.

I work, I build,
I live
to achieve beautiful things,
just for the beauty of it,
before the tide comes.

LIZZY

Missy is Lizzy
kissy and passy

No passy, no!

Klups wassy
Knaps Bissy

Wise eyes ease a kiss.

Butch a poutch
for a happy couth,
Poutch it easy
for the sake of Lizzy

And missy nissy rose
Oh Lizzy
too busy
To knups Wassy
klups Bissy.

Then Quazks!

A mighty wind arose
and criss cross
Wassy bissy
nose.

FIGURES

O N E

When I put a stroke on this page,
I state the existence of something.
 Any one dot in space,
 according to Einstein,
 is the center of the universe,
Every one. Just like me.

I am the one and only,
the remainder is the universe.
 I bet you are convinced
 of the same, concerning you.

T W O

To be two you must be similar in some respect.
If you don't match with your lady, you
 You are not a couple,
 Just a combination of moods.

Two dots in space designate a direction
Towards infinity; follow this direction
 and you will never come back.

Two is great because the greatest genius
 in the world had two parents.

T H R E E

Three is the perfect balance of an isosceles triangle.
It defines a plane dividing the whole world into parts.
 Three elements in human nature:
 The spiritual, mental and material.
Three elements of divine nature, too:
 The omnipotent power all-ruling,
 Universal mind, and the unmaterial
 force of matter.
Three is great!

F O U R

Four is tricky, with four points equally spaced.
 you can make four triangles
Four may be a square, with all sides equal,
 and the angles
 and the diagonals,
 but it has to lie flat on the table.

But! Squares have all the good jobs, big money
 and beautiful wives.
Believe me, it's worth trying to be a square!

F I V E

An unfair and obstinate number:
 always dominated by the odd one out!
Even on your hand, the thumb dominates,
 opposing, for no reason at all,
 the four fingers.
Try to divide a circle into five:
 they will rarely be equal portions.
And consider the foot: the big toe points up.
 and the others down, simply because
 they are five.

S I X

Twice three, thrice two: two interwoven triangles:
 the star of David, a geometrical harmony.
By working six days in a row, people built
 the Egyptian pyramids, the Roman Coliseum,
 the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and the London Bridge.

S E V E N

Odd man seven, though not as odd as five.

Seven balls on a billiard table or
seven strings on a cable: perfect fit!

Yet seven days in the week fits with nothing.

Though the ancient Hebrews arranged themselves around
quarters of the moon, the Roman arrived with a Julian calendar
and confused everything.

E I G H T

Eight, a cube of two, can be a square at the same time.

Yes, curious, but true.

Four couples make eight dancers,
a dancing square. . .

"Square up, and here we go!"

"Alleman left and alleman oh!

Then, right, and left, and dosy-do!"

"Swing your honey, swing your gal,"

(I love square-dancing!)

N I N E

Nine, a square of three, is odd,

(though how can a square with four corners be odd?)

Nine was an honourable figure before commercializing,
but now:

spinach is forty-nine cents

carrots are ninety-nine cents

a Honda is four thousand and ninety-nine dollars

The lure of the thin copper cent!

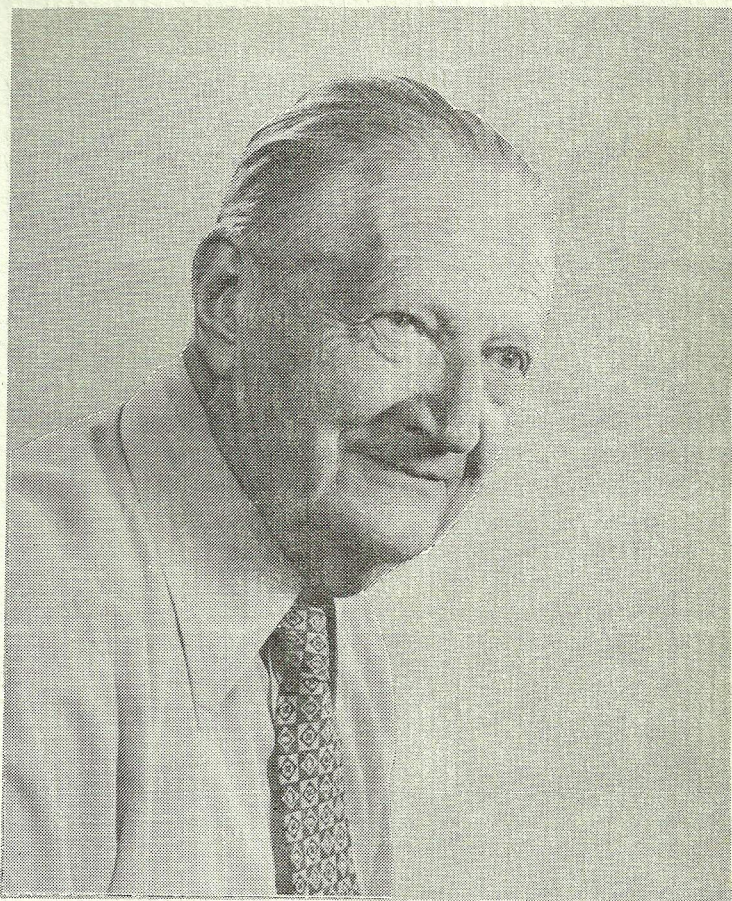
Z E R O

Zero is the matter which is not there,
not the circle, but what it contains.
One has to be an Arab to think of nothing,
and arrive at zero,
the greatest invention in mathematics.

See how tricky zero can be.
You write one, which means something,
then add zero, which is nothing,
and you have ten!
another nothing, and here is
one hundred of something.

Always adding a little nothing,
you can make a fortune!

when you find that, you take a long scroll,
write one, and add zeros all day long.
Then comes a fly, the same one that bothered you
at breakfast, and she sits on your scroll, leaving
a mark just behind the one.
She ruined you, nulled all your efforts.
After that fly-dot, all those zeros lost their magic.
See how fragile zero can be
Take it as such, it's... nothing'.



Andre Orbeliani is a retired mining engineer living in Nelson, B.C. He is 80 years old and this is his first book of poetry!

Andre was born in 1901 to a family of ancient Georgian nobility. Georgia in the Caucasus is a very old kingdom formed in the 3rd century. Georgian language is related to Celtic and the written form uses Sanskrit letters.

Andre's early life was spent in studies, travel and work throughout Russia, Yugoslavia, Belgium and Africa.

He arrived in Canada in 1951 and has lived happily here ever since with his wife Irene.

Andre is now hard at work on an historical novel set in the interior mining area of B.C.

What he likes best is "Snow... always expecting the spring to come!"