VIOLADES & APPLEDOWN
Also by George Messo

Poetry

Hearing Still, 2009
Entrances, 2006
From The Pine Observatory, 2000

Translations

Gonca Özmen: The Sea Within, 2011
İlhan Berk: The Book of Things, 2009
İlhan Berk: Madrigals, 2007
İlhan Berk: A Leaf About To Fall, 2006

Anthologies

From This Bridge: Contemporary Turkish Women Poets, 2010
İkinci Yeni: The Turkish Avant-Garde, 2009

In Turkish

Avrupa’nın Küçük Tanrıları, 2007
Aradaki Ses, 2005
George Messo

Violades & Appledown

POEMS

Shearsman Books
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ONE

Distances
Questions at Rize Fort

Have you noticed in poems about woods, or forests, or the places shadows gather and swell, how species start to talk only when the humans have gone?

Who remembers the mystery mirrored in the dew-cupped leaf moments before it falls and spins through the dusty half-light at dusk?

There are journeys back through tangled woods, all glottal stops then weird peripatetic syntax. What the hell could it possibly mean?

According to what we ourselves have seen, said the dragonfly shortly after I’d left, there are moments lived only once when a second’s pause decides everything.
Crossing the Pass

I

When Tu Fu sat on the west wall of his hut in Brocade city

wrapped in mulberry leaves and saw a shaft of young wheat erect

in river fields begin to sway he wondered first how long he had

and if he’d see this world again. But he’d never seen Zigana.
II

In the classical Chinese of Tu Fu
the character ts’ung meaning

to follow or hence shows one
man following another.

Those days folk believed
pearls were mermaid’s tears.

Tu Fu placed one in a box
to pay his tax which later
turned to blood. He wrote
his poems in red, inspired
by rising winds and tax.
III

A butterfly dreamt it was Tu Fu.
In the approximate centre of his reverie

—for a butterfly dreams from back to front
and in a sequence of three halves—

Tu Fu falls asleep in a melon patch
and dreams he is a butterfly.
IV

Cottage smoke over limpid *Kızılırmak*, Red River. The Catfish sweat-out thoughts like pearls, blood-wisdom. Pitiable fate, to guide the taxman’s boat.
A Tea Bowl

for Michael Hillard

Drink jewel-drops, master Kampaku.
Think *temmoku* of the black-glazed bowl,
your golden lip, floating in blue-dark spots
of a vessel made for tea.
Downpaths

from Bashō

Sunlight—its slow ascent
rising through orchard-apple scent.
Aligned Underfoot

In those days, your best poems
lived under bridges, in wild garlic;

tiny constellations dreaming out
from lost rings of darkness. Well,

there must have been other things too.
There were: flowers —small & white—

but precisely who was reading
that Book of Brilliance, I don’t know.

Go back a little, I missed something
—it’s all shade but there is a place

darker, deeper than the rest, where
earth is always bare, perpetually dry,

where nothing grows, nothing could,
a perfect where to hide: your enemies,

yourself, a treasure.
Uqair

Sun over sheet-metal bay.
The fish are in their drum.

Tap tap tap they sign
to us through blue

forgetfulness, a skirl
of clicking reels.

*
The Arab fleets
who sailed from here

brought
from the East

salinity
baked in amber.

*

Hagool, the needlefish.
Canad, the mackerel.

On springtide leatherbacks.
On neaptides gander,
cormorant, and weed
bowel-rank from the sea.