Phases translated by Robert Hauptman

Christine Busta
PHASES

To whom nothing remained,  
they see in the roundest moon  
only the curve of the sickle,  
the two-faced sign  
of the unavoidable reaper,  
who strikes with either hand.

But the merciful pause  
between the alternation of hands  
remains granted for the wonder  
of pure uselessness:

Because the fruitless blossom of snow  
grows beautiful on black roofs,  
the ghostly voices of birds  
of our defoliated summers  
turn homeward in hearing,  
the pale silk of poppies  
again reddens the skin,  
in the plexus of affectionate letters  
we copy once more  
the old illegible  
landscape of the heart.

We place lamps in the window  
for the starless swimmers  
and know, how small the bowl is,  
how exhaustible the oil  
against the night and the sea.

With a single ear  
we penetrate into the wild  
hordes of thistles  
and stew the grains in the weeds.  
Between the uneven aristae
the blackish ergot
conceals itself for us,
poisoning and soothing. And again
the moon tests its sharpness
on the silent Cross.