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Phases translated by Robert Hauptman

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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.

*translated by
Robert Hauptman*