

POEMS

from the SEACycle

by Ilija Trojanow (Vienna)

Overgrown **Ta Prohm, 22/05/2002**

Green is the upper side of wet,
the sulphate shade of oblivion.

Who can decipher the doctrine
of tight nooks and parasitic syllables?

We will always feed on the past,
the exiled greenery proclaims.

The gods agree, of course,
the servants lose their heads.

They have misunderstood another order
the niches are empty of diamonds and gold.

Terminal detachment rooted in stone.



Killing Fields**Phnom Penh, 25/05/2002**

Wan to see killing fields, mista?
I give you cheap, mista!
Dead cheap?
Wise crack no bone.
Play the numerology game.
One million? Must do better.
Study the entrails of a dumb dog.
Two million? Better than that.
Hold your moistened finger against the wind.
Three million? Convene a round table of seers.
Silence one better than shame.
Ok, let's ride to the skulls.

A small compass rose symbol consisting of a circle with a cross inside, positioned to the left of the text.

In a school they gambled with the devil.
Another victory at hand,
he stood up, derision on his tongue:
You always let me win,
me, the most feeble of your excuses.

A horizontal arrow pointing to the left, positioned to the left of the text.

Afterwards, floating to the moon,
a voice of reason blew a fuse.
Wan to have lady massage, mista?
I give you cheap, mista!
Not as cheap as skulls, though.



**One notch higher the poet speaks to mandarins
Temple of Literature, 08/06/2002**

It was here
underneath these beams
that the students surfaced for clarity,
a well-worded page away from heaven.

Admitted to glory and concubines
your name carved in blue
and carried to posterity by turtles
you might choose to forget:

There is but one character
for pain, for despair
and the melting footsteps
of a retreating army.



Ilija Trojanow (born in 1965, Sofia) grew up in Kenya. In the mid-nineties, he studied law and ethnology in Munich, where he founded the Marino Publishing House for African Literature. In 1998, Trojanow moved to Bombay, where he wrote reportages and essays for *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, as well as *Along the Ganges: To the Inner Shores of India*. Trojanow's latest novel, *Der Weltensammler (The Collector of Worlds)*, is based on the life of the English adventurer Sir Richard Burton and was awarded the 2007 Berlin Literature Prize, the 2006 Leipzig Book Fair Prize for fiction, and was short-listed for the 2006 German Book Prize. Trojanow's other awards include the Bertelsmann-Literaturpreis, the Marburger Literaturpreis, and the Adalbert von Chamisso Prize. His work has been translated into Spanish, Russian, Czech, Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, Polish, and Arabic. His work has been translated into 18 languages. From February 2008 he resides in Vienna.
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