

Three Poems Doubting Mikhail Mikhailovich Sensei (or do they?)<sup>1</sup>

Darko Suvin<sup>2</sup>

(to JMH)

The Return of the Ancestors  
(End of March)

Mrijeti ti ćeš kada sâm počneš  
U ideale svoje sumnjati.  
(S.S. Kranjčević)

Our dead return. We must meet them  
With short fir branches, light the lanterns.  
The fire is lighted: Grampa, Granma  
Ride a cow, ride a bull  
Please come by this light, take a drink with us.

Our dead ask: What have you done of our work,  
How continued our lives? Why are the dams collapsing,  
Who lives in the big house ruling the hill? What  
Interests extort blood in peacetime, brothers killing  
Brothers? Do you have too many sons to feed?

Our dead do not bless us. their stare is of stone.  
The branches grow brown. The lanterns gutter.  
The fire is damped. Granma, Grampa  
Ride a bull, ride a cow  
Please go back by this light, have pity on us.

O sons, O grandchildren, look how fat you are,  
Look how hard your women must work, where's  
Your powerful sisterhood & brotherhood? Pay  
Your ingent debts, to us, to yourselves, flow  
Over the banks: unclog your veins, have pity  
On us, on yourselves.

Fall Pastoral (et in arcadia ego)

This was a very Octoberish reddening landscape  
With yellow & mauve leaves all over

In which the unicorn befriended a very whiteskinned girl  
With prodigal tresses that overflowed all over

White cottages      light paths      fleecy clouds  
Flung bright nets all over the leaf-covered lawns

Shepherdesses in see-thru raincoats glided by  
Sprinkling scatterbrained smiles all over

Bewitched rulers peeped out of otter and beaverskin  
Behind the brook's bend, all over

Far off, mighty fairies rushed behind wheels of Cadillacs  
All over the speeding milk-glass roads

In a forlorn glade buried under tanned leaves there dwelt  
A greying magician everywhere famous

For whom the clouds gathered cool vapours  
That dripped off the stiffening branches everywhere

To whom shepherdesses waved from nearby hillsides  
Wherever he pensive strolled, in dresses

Red & yellow, & bashful green shepherds  
Everywhere sang hymns of loud praise

& he was dead like the chain & the sword.

From the Analects of Post-Modernism  
(Two Retrospective Tankas)

He composed the poem,  
grieving over the darkness  
in people's hearts/minds.  
(*Ippen Shonin Goroku*)

1.  
Glued in slime-trail of  
Slug-like history: end of  
An age, the slither-back  
Globe replays a re-entry  
Into monotone ice-age.

2.  
Past Master long gone  
Future Master not yet come  
Nightmare in between:  
Looking steadfast before &  
After is now life.

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Notes

1. *Sensei* (Jap.) -- Teacher, Master (as *guru*, but without the fake religious connotations).
2. Darko Suvin teaches English and Comparative Literature at McGill University. He has published two books of poetry, *The Long March* (Willowdale ON: Hounslow Press, 1987) and *Armirana Arkadija* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1990).