SEASHELL
Birhan Keskin
translated by Öykü Tekten

O[1] took me out of the hardened, wet sand on the shore where
I had buried myself, touched me.
I lived through the sorrow and the joy reserved for me, I had
thought.
The fragile animal inside me had long been dead.

O took me out of the shore…
That is, I had nothing but my mother of pearl

In deep seas, cold seas
I grappled with salt, with waves and my animal had come
out of me.
Am I not a cold stone any more
curled up inside who forgot its own dream?

O gave me a dream – I couldn't believe it
(the joy of almonds, O said, take a look, very brief.)

O touched my mother of pearl.

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(1) Translator's Note: Turkish has no grammatical gender, thus the equivalent
to "he," "she," and "it" is a gender-neutral pronoun "o." In Keskin's poem, the
gender neutrality of Turkish also establishes a certain degree of ambiguity that
blurs the distinction between the human and non-human subject. Thus, I left "o"
untranslated, instead of using the gender-neutral English pronouns "they" or "it"
since both would alter significantly the meaning created through the sonic and
ontological ambiguity of "o."

MOUNTAIN
Birhan Keskin
translated by Öykü Tekten

How difficult it is to speak against the morning!
You are left like fine ash
The mountain knows the path to silence
you don't.

The stone gapes open to a flower, gives way to it
Briefly speaking the flower says: "the world,"
"I saw it, completing itself with me."

How difficult to speak against the earth!

Look down the hillside, see the cliff!
-see it, stutterer!
The fragile blood in you, the flimsy language,
the unripe mood
are all melting on a silver peak.

PENGUIN II
Birhan Keskin
translated by Öykü Tekten

I forgot in that grand hour
My wings have long been cold
Falling onto my chest in this white desolation
That's why my neck is aslant

In me remains the memory of a bird, hidden
That's why the rocks in my eyes,
The rascal icebergs

Don't jab at the pomegranate in me
I am wearing a white shirt.