Six Poems from the Second Cycle of *Lightduress*

Paul Celan

ONCE, death was much in demand,
you hid in me.
HATCHETSWARMS
above us,

conversations
with socket-axes in the lowland—

Islandpasture, you,
with the hope
fogging you
in.
PRECOCIGNITION bleeds twice behind the curtain,

Cognizance pearls
TWO AT BRANCUSI’S

If one among these stones
were to tell
what conceals it:
here, nearby,
on the old man’s crutch-stick,
it would open, as a wound,
into which you’d have to dive,
lonely,
far from my scream, the already also
hewn, white one.
WHERE I forgot myself in you, you became thought, something rushes through us both: the world’s first of the last wings, the hide spreads over my storm-riddled mouth, you come not to you.
LONG AGO boarded mudskiff.

A but-
ton, come
off,
nitpicks every buttercup,

the hour, the toad,
takes its world off the hinges.

If I gulped down the cartrut,
I’d be there too.

Translated by Pierre Joris

Pierre Joris’ translation of Lightduress, by Paul Celan, is forthcoming from Sun and Moon.

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