

***Serge
Charchoune***

Versions

Mirror of the Sky (1949)

The sky is a flirt in front of the mirror.

A caterpillar has crossed the mirror.

The palms wear puttees.

Fish – figs.

During the day the lighthouse is wrapped in a silence, solemn and sad...full of a crystal murmuring. And it is only in the night that it draws from its sheath the swords that are like the blades of a windmill, not to cut to pieces the demons of fear but to make them surge.

Hanging over everything
the spread of wonderful perfumes.

There are almost as many house names
as there exist words.

Ezio Eolo, nurseryman.

The magnolia flower is a bowl of porcelain china
full of amber.

The snakes climbing in the olive tree are
slowly transformed into branches.

Fishing line floats are made in the style of de Chirico.

Palms and dragonflies hum in harmony.

The pines are yachts launched in the sky
by the wind.

The Australian shrub Agonis, preferred by fangoms.

The Australian Eucalyptus transforms itself into an African
giraffe and the Mexican Arbustus Xalapensis into
the Australian kangaroo.

The Californian palm Washington Afilitera,
transported to Europe becomes
a one-legged elephant cast in concrete.

The decorated sticks of fans, that someone forgot
to pick up after the party have become palms.

The mountains spread themselves to show
their immaculate white palace.

Couldn't one transport oneself to the horizon's
meeting : flaming coronet of diamonds?

The white curtain of the mountains, to the left, and the
white mirage of Black Africa, to the right, in coming
together will bury everything under their debris.

The wind in the pines will always sound like
a memory of the sea.

The aeolian harps perform a melancholy
Song of Farewell.

The Valve (La Soupape) No 8 (1962)

The French painter – does painting; the German painter –
hysteria: Russian – ornament.

The Latin peoples – fixed equilibrium – stagnant; the
Germanic – boiling over: Slavs – chaos.

Religious art instantly becomes – naive.

My drawings are – the imprints of my footsteps.

The masters of Russian painting: MUNCH and KLIMT.

One autumn night, the leaves – undressed the tree.

The shadow of a tree – fled like a cloud.

A tree walks by my window.

The sky is – full of angels.

The flowers in a vase – are snakes, which slide out, in a rainbow.

The drops of water – scattered themselves into a fan of Peacock feathers.

Through the rippling glass of the window, the protoplasmic cell of a walking man – transforms itself into a rainbow.

I turned my gaze onto a bush. It took fright and began to tremble... and fled as fast as its legs could carry it.

The flower towards which I extended my hand – faded.

Here, the shadow – separates from the man.

I hung out my raincoat, to air it... and look how the breeze fills the sleeve... it is already being worn by another man.

I was good looking from all sides – of course I had
bumped into my own statue.

The hand, made a tail.

The ringed finger became a revolver.

Someone, from inside a car, having turned his head in my
direction – became a dog.

He bites his nails –
he plays the flute.

Alley where no foot had ever trod.

A woman who never lets go, a handful of cherries – from
her hand.

Learn to play the fan –
as the bird does its wings.

For reasons of lyricism, needing to sing
like a nightingale, or a siren, woman –
has taken the form of a violin.

Eve has hidden – under her dress.

The unconscious man –
has fallen unconsciously.

We were feeling the itch and maddeningly.

Confession – confections.

Old age – is bent under the burden of responsibilities.

With age a casserole turns into an oyster.

Gentlemen of the Jury,
having pronounced the death sentence
you are the murderers.

Tiddly-pom-pom, of the Royal Academy.

Berlioz and Delacroix go hand in hand.

My universe is as narrow as my brow.

I grew into a giant, by standing up straight – by walking.

By chance, I caught – my bat.

Unvoiced Aphorisms (1969)

Cloud – palette.

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I am a complicated primitive.

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Religious art immediately becomes –
naïf.

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I do not come from the other side,
in the boat of life.
I have never been on board.

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The shadow of the invisible.

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The one who was seated has risen.
And the chair has begun to stretch itself.

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During the day, it is Tolstoï
who occupies this wall,
and in the night it's the turn of Dante.

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The woman who was seated in front of Pygmalion is transformed, under his dazzled gaze, into the Angel of Reims.

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Our communications with the outside world are conducted via occasional telephone calls.

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Charchoune by John D. Graham

Like most translations, these English versions of some of Serge Charchoune's French verse are of limited use without comparison to the originals. Those can be tracked down most easily in *Peintures de Poètes, Poèmes de Peintres*, Galerie Thessa Herold, Paris, 1997 (includes *La Soupape No. 8*), and in *Serge Charchoune, Soleil Russe*, Galerie Thessa Herold, Paris, 2007 (includes *Mirror du Ciel* and *Aphorismes Aphonés*). The majority of Charchoune's writing was in Russian, self-published in Paris, and has not been reprinted or translated.

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