

ÎNVĂȚAREA DE A NUMĂRA

Stăteau bārboși și nădușiți
barbarii hitiți.
Învățînd să numere, smulgeau din hoit,
degete, picioare, brațe, ochi.
O, tu, delabrare,
ce plină e de sînge
ideea de a avea idee!
Stăteau înnădușiți și păroși
frumoșii de hitiți, frumoși, –
smulgeau din hoit cîte un deget, cîte un picior:
opt, zicea unul
patru, zicea altul.
Învătau să numere.

FROM:

OPERA POETICA II by Nichita Stanescu

(Ed Alexandru Condeescu, București: Humanitas, 1999) p. 626.

Learning to count

Hairy and sweaty sit
the barbarian Hittites.
Learning to count they pull from corpses
fingers, legs, arms, eyes.
Oh, divided ones,
how bloody
is the idea of having ideas!
Hairy and sweaty sit
the grand Hittites, grandly —
from corpses they pull a finger, a leg:
eight, says one,
four, says another.
They are learning to count.

Trans. Gabriel Prajitura & JoAnne Growney

Biographical note for Nichita Stanescu:

Nichita Stanescu was born in 1933 in Ploiești (Ploiesht), a Romanian city of oil refineries, to a Romanian peasant and a Russian mother. With a childhood during the war and teenage years during his country's adjustment to a new Communist system, for Stanescu, his homeland and his language were intimately connected. That is to say, his words are best understood through knowledge of his homeland. In 1980 he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature (won by the Greek poet Odysseus Elytis). A poet who uses words not only as words but as objects; although his logic is familiar, his images are dark and are drawn from a culture largely unknown to the English world.