

# THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 2 | 1993

**Now Then**  
Imre Oravec

© Providence College

The author(s) permits users to copy, distribute, display, and perform this work under the following conditions: (1) the original author(s) must be given proper attribution; (2) this work may not be used for commercial purposes; (3) the users may not alter, transform, or build upon this work; (4) users must make the license terms of this work clearly known for any reuse or distribution of this work. Upon request, as holder of this work's copyright, the author(s) may waive any or all of these conditions.

*The Prose Poem: An International Journal* is produced by  
The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress)  
for the Providence College Digital Commons.  
<http://digitalcommons.providence.edu/prosepoems/>

## Imre Oravecz

### NOW THEN

in the manner of an anonymous, . . . century Chinese poet in the time of the . . . dynasty, I am O., the only son of the senior O. from Sz., the lineal descendant of the O. family from the M. mountain, as regards my occupation as scribe, the writing of verses I practice only for pleasure, I reside in B., the capital town, I have a younger sister, married, I have just completed my fortieth year, and for this occasion I visited the village of my birth, my father and mother are already old, but thanks to the Creator both are healthy, they received me very kindly, they immediately changed and put on their most beautiful clothes, and they seated me on the softest mat, they immediately wanted to know everything about me, and I was spirited in my telling and tactful, because I told them nothing that would have unsettled their composure, they entertained me well with food and drink, they served me tea in my favorite china cup, that very thin-walled one, on which there's a blossoming springtime grove with a delicately indicated path fading in the distance, after lunch I went into my sleeping closet, I took a nap, upon awakening I prayed at the household shrine, then as is proper visited all the relatives one by one, the living ones followed by the dead ones, I paid homage to them too in the graveyard, finally I came out here to the pond, where I am now, on a filmy, virgin snow, along the way a covey of partridges flew up before me, I came out here to meditate, to examine my life thus far, I am here by myself, the air is crystal clear, the sky cloudless, the sun has already set, there are no shadows, the moon has not yet risen, but the fox and rabbit tracks are still clearly discernible, between the trees one can still see deep into the woods, all is silence, the pheasants have already *risen branchward*, a gentle breeze blows from the gorge, it stirs the dried grass, along with the many bad things I have done in my life I have also done many good things, but the best thing I did, I feel, was when one summer, in this very same place, I cut for my small son, who began to cry when a quarrel broke out between my wife and me over one of my concubines, a red willow twig, I bent the year-old branch and tied a string to both ends, I still see how happy he was, how quickly his tears dried up, when I handed it to him and showed him how to hold it,

and where to insert the notched reed for an arrow.

Translated from the Hungarian by **Bruce Berlind**