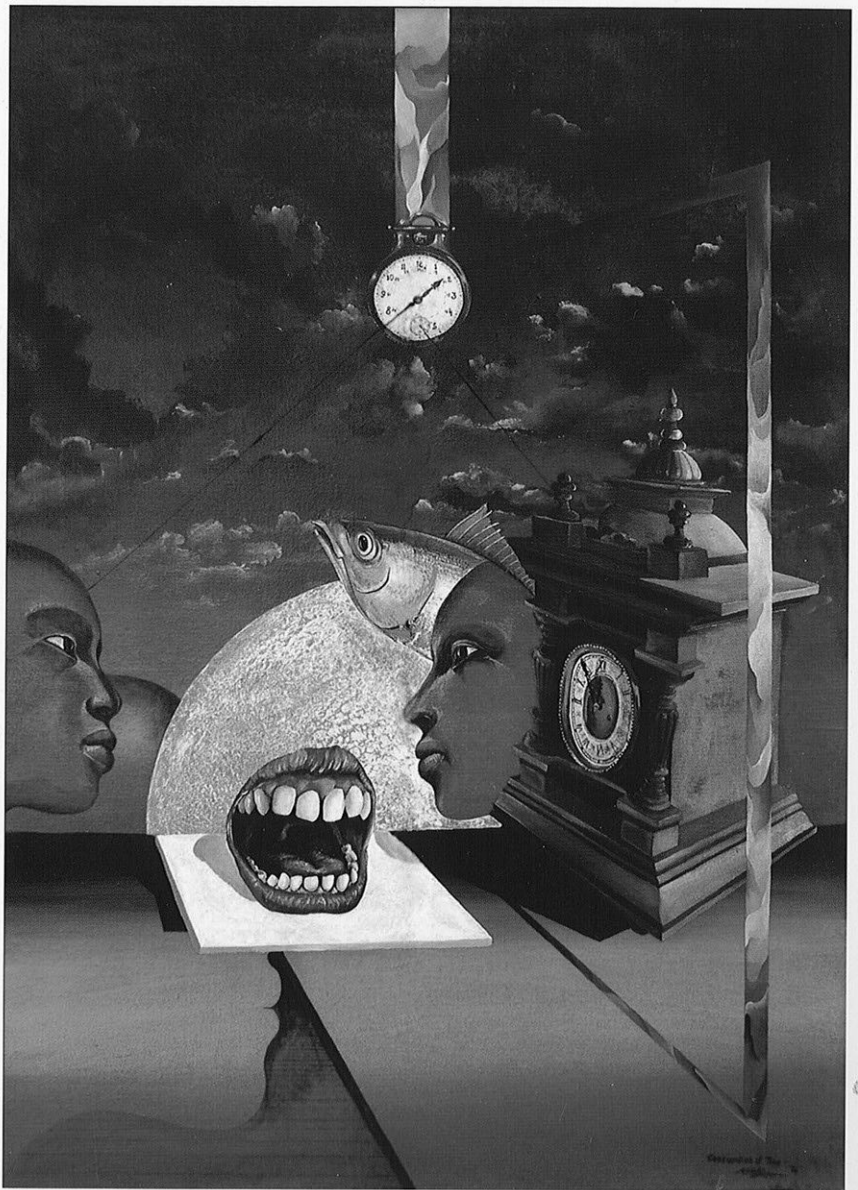


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No. 16

Autumn 2009

STEPHANIE SEARS

A Lantern in San Marco

There's blood in that light,
The warm radiant blood
Of converging longings,
Discreet, lavish, pure, unsound.
There's gold in the spirit
That coils and grips
With tropical diligence
And very nearly smotherers.

Angular voyagers, tressed whores, regretful ladies
Withdrew into these recesses
Helping their hearts to an hour's prayer
Draped in the fragrant smoke
And wavy chalcedony
Of this tangle of spells.

There cornered in marble and tide
Cosseted by precious reticulations,
Steadied by the mosaic's tempered glow,
A pulse strikes its telluric beat
To the barbarous and the effete:
A carbuncle of providence
Burning high on the staff of psyche.

Again dusky hour, again
Among sacramental scents and mineral puzzles
Bind supplicants to mystery
And let them secretly devise
In hope's fair rotundas
The eternal resolution.

Momentary Death

Along the smoky ice of the Neva
the frost-plated trees stand to attention
and the salmon sunset struggles against barriers of gray
unable to dissolve the dimness at palatial moldings.
The city is a dark print of itself.
A black lace of roofs and domes rims the blankness of dusk.
The mystery of oneself has become senseless,
lost to a baleful grandeur that has no innards,
left beside the frozen river like a reptile's skin.
The words come but the heart no longer pounds
for the conjunction of small clues and
private heresies.
The vigor of enigma has gone cold:
the steeples and the cupolas are insolubly trivial.
Between psalm and a shrug
the city is pasted on the outside of the mind.
Walking in sub zero past scattered headlights
– blandly adding their mechanical caution –
is to wander neither to nor from anywhere.