



Modern Poetry in Translation
Series 3, No. 10: The Big Green Issue

Extract from the Editorial
By: David and Helen Constantine

Genesis 1:28 is a bad start for sure. That and the demonisation of women – first Lilith, then Eve: altogether a very bad beginning. Dominion over the earth and misogyny, it is no accident that at the outset they get couple up. Hard to recover from a start like that. Millennia trying to grow out of it, and still not clear. Of course we can't just blame our religions – Rome was emptying Africa of its beasts, for the Circus, even without a Holy Book as premise – but among the uncivilised, among the primitive, there have been attitudes towards Mother Earth which, to put it mildly, would have done less damage. But Civilisation arrived on their shores, pushed into their forests, spread over their plains, rose over their mountains, with weaponry, diseases and a quite peculiarly murderous cast of mind.

The harm we do the planet increases with our ability to do it. You can get a long way in the destruction of forests with fire and the axe, and our ancestors did. But thoroughly to poison the rivers and the seas and to clutter up space with toxic debris, only Progress can manage that. Know-how, cleverness, the inventions that are, in Oppenheimer's phrase, 'technically sweet'. He said, 'When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it and argue about what to do about it only after you've had your technical success. That is the way it was with the atomic bomb.' Perhaps we need some primitive taboos, things we would never do? For the planet, once thought to be big, turns out to be small. So 'Trash and move on!' won't answer any more. There's nowhere to go. This is it, earth, our dominion. (Though bet your life there's an elite somewhere, the real avant-garde, the Elect, the Righteous, even now preparing a Starship Free Enterprise, to lift off for pastures new, bide there a while, trash them, move on.)

Editing MPT we never know what to expect. We may think we do, but come the contributions, come the surprises...