



Modern Poetry in Translation
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War Games

After 1948 we moved to the West Nicoforia neighbourhood
not far from the Franciscans' Pontifical Institute.
The street was named after Wauchope, British High
Commissioner.
We played war. On the stair landings
we set up a field hospital,
each step was a bed for casualties from the fighting.
The girls were tender-hearted nurses, the boys medics.
The mortally wounded we put on the topmost landing.
Activity there was frantic during emergencies.
We hung plastic bags for infusions,
we changed bandages, gave on-the-spot first aid,
stabilized the wounded case by case, gave transfusions.
There were sighs of grief, cries of agony from the wounded.
One of the neighbours, a nasty man, always trod on o-ur
patients,
the others were mostly considerate, seeing the difficult
situation
and tiptoed past on the edge of the stairs.
Conditions were awful. To clear a passage
we of course had to ask the wounded to scrunch up their legs.
Our emergency room was the mail-box area.
The wonders we worked there, saving the mortally stricken.
We tended everyone, regardless, with infinite dedication,
though sometimes our efforts failed.
And already we knew phrases like 'fell into a coma', 'departed
this life'.
Then we'd hold our valedictory ritual,
for we knew how to pay our last respects,
for we knew what war is about.