

Odysseus

HAIM GOURI
translated by AVI SHARON

Returning to his native town he found a sea
with grass and fish above the swelling waves
and the sun fading on the sky's rim.

'Error always returns' said Odysseus to his weary heart
and came to the crossroads of the next town
to find that the way home was not water.

Faint as in a dream and full of longing,
among people who spoke a different Greek;
the words he'd left with, the journey's provisions, had meanwhile expired.

For a moment he thought he'd slept a lifetime
and appeared to a people unmoved by his return;
whose eyes did not gape wide with wonder.

He spoke with his hands; they tried to hear him
across the distance.
Purple ripened into violet on the sky's rim.

Parents rose and took the children from round him
and drew them away;
lights were kindled in house after house.

Dew came and settled on his head,
wind came and kissed his lips,
water came and bathed his feet like old Euryclea,
but saw not the scar, and flowed, as water does, down the slope.