

## RUXANDRA CESEREANU

### Two Rivers

The Someș River is ink and a shop for black bread  
when it rains without stopping and things mix together until they rust.  
Old ladies with fancy hats have disappeared from the kiosks on the riverbanks,  
and gentlemen with pince-nez have buried themselves in sand.  
The sun burns on till the very end.  
The river grows as thick as halvah.  
From the windows of the apartment buildings,  
housewives throw scraps that putrefy in freedom.  
Men in undershirts guzzling beer fill the workshops along the river.  
They no longer can tell if it's summer or winter.

I knew why the city smells of bitumen and why poetry smells of bitumen, too:  
human misery remains a sort of pharmacy.  
This city's poem is made of sailors' knots.

Nobody was dipping their legs in the Thames  
when we climbed down near the reconstructed ship of Sir Francis Drake  
to gather gray shells.  
Passersby hurried after me, invading the water's muddy edge.  
Later, at Henry the Eighth's pleasure palace,  
we missed the boat to London,  
so we sat on the dock and kissed like a pair schoolmates  
while fishermen threw shy glances from the opposite side.  
Then we said together, from inside the kiss:  
a human life has gone by with our love, hasn't it?  
Later, looking at the bridges of the city at dusk,  
you tenderly took my head in your arms like a visored cap.  
We laughed and feasted for a last time,  
immersed in the English waters.

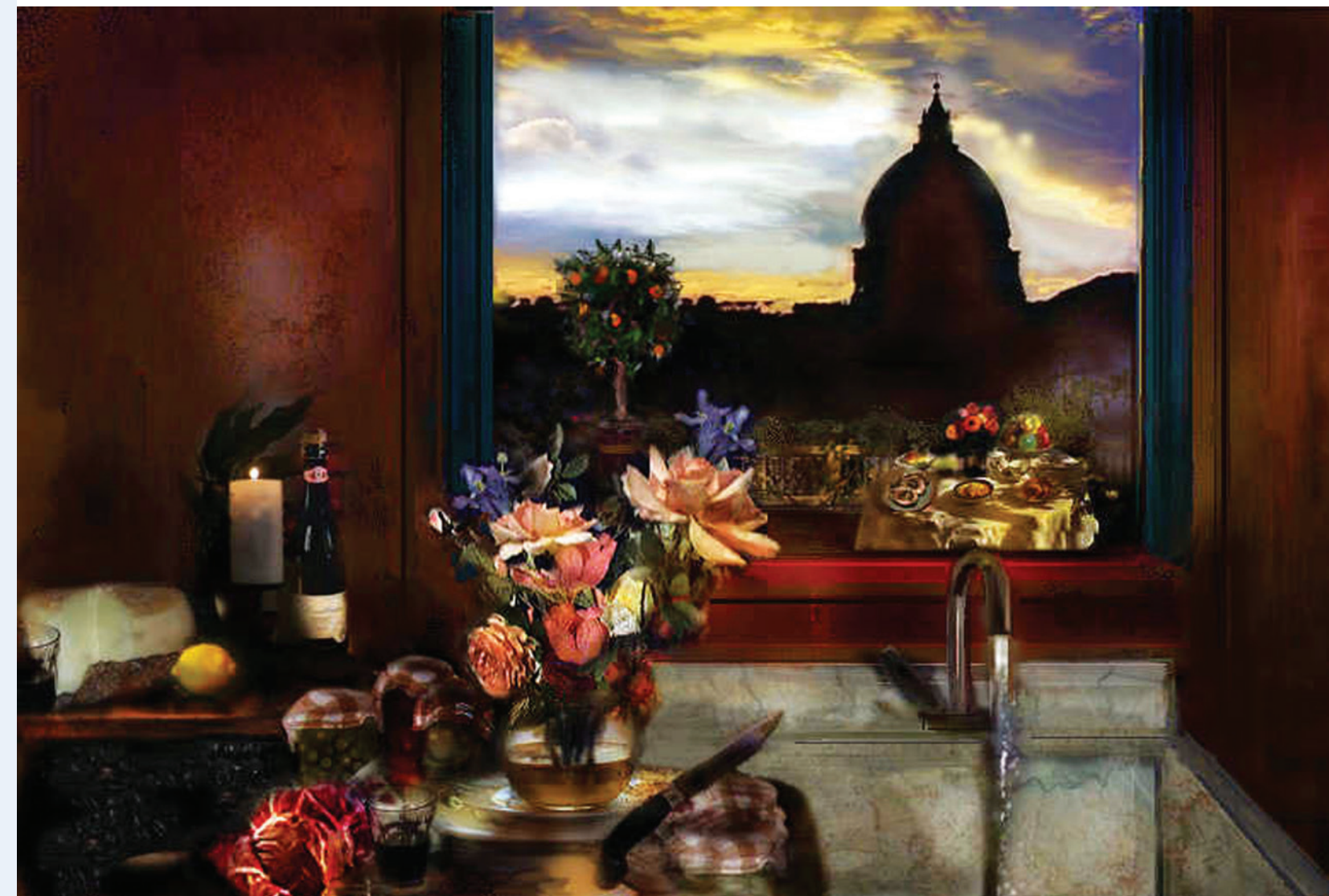
—translated from Romanian by Adam J. Sorkin and the author

**Ruxandra Cesereanu's** recent books of poetry include *Coma* (Cluj Writers Association Prize winner) and *California (on the Someș)*. *Submarinul iertat*, coauthored with Andrei Codrescu who translated it as *Forgiven Submarine*, and *Crusader-Woman*, translated with Adam J. Sorkin, both appeared from Black Widow Press. Cesereanu also publishes fiction and nonfiction.

**Adam J. Sorkin** has published more than fifty-five books of Romanian translation and won numerous awards including the Poetry Society (U.K.) Translation Prize. His latest book, *The Hunchbacks' Bus* by Nora Iuga, translated with Diana Manole, appeared from Bitter Oleander Press.

## BARBARA ARGENTO DENNIG

*Cena, 2016*  
Oil on Canvas, 36 x 54 in



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