

SEEDINGS

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JORGENRIQUE ADOUM – ‘Ā’ISHAH AL-BĀ‘ŪNĪYAH – RACHEL TZVIA BACK – DAN BELLM

LUIS ENRIQUE BELMONTE – DANIEL BORZUTZKY – NANCY NAOMI CARLSON – KRISTIN DYKSTRA

GEORGE ECONOMOU – SARAH TUSS EFRIK – PAUL ÉLUARD – LUIS FELIPE FABRE – JOSHUA FREEMAN

MICHELLE GIL-MONTERO – LUPE GÓMEZ – JOHANNES GÖRANSSON – HAGIWARA SAKUTARO

TAHIR HAMUT – KATHERINE HEDEEN – TH. EMIL HOMERIN – ALEXIS IPARRAGUIRRE – ADRIANA X JACOBS

CARLOS LARA – JONATHAN LARSON – MICHAEL LIPKIN – ADITI MACHADO – FRIEDERIKE MAYRÖCKER

MARK MCMORRIS – ANDREI MOLOTIU – JAMES MONTGOMERY – ERÍN MOURE – SAWAKO NAKAYASU

NATHANAËL – MARÍA NEGRONI – VAAN NGUYEN – JOSEPH NOBLE – VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ NÚÑEZ

JOHN OLSON – GUILLERMO PARRA – OMAR PÉREZ – VIRGILIO PIÑERA – TÓRODDUR POULSEN

ANDREW SCHELLING – RYOKO SEKIGUCHI – ‘ANTARAH IBN SHADDĀD – RICHARD SIEBURTH

BRIAN STRANG – SHO SUGITA – HARRIET TARLO – EMILY TODER – KHAL TORABULLY – LINDSAY TURNER

MATT TURNER – RANDI WARD – MARK WEISS – PETER WEISS – JEFFREY YANG

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MARK MCMORRIS

ON LABYRINTHS (2)

CAMP

TRANSPORTED (1)

TRANSPORTED (2)

INVISIBILITY

INCOMPLETENESS

ON LABYRINTHS (2)

The labyrinth is a precise
cryptogram of detours
disappointed guesses
defeated insights
misreadings
luckless voyages
of discovery
mirror symmetry

Archetype
of many things
unconscious desire
reason
scholasticism
chance
metaphor of many places
racial homelands
impossible to escape

bantustans

favelas

migrant cities

(unsolved conundrums)

ghettos in Kingston

cemeteries

Though the archway

admit the hero

to navigate sheer walls

to follow knowledge

farther than prudent

and to meet echoes

of himself on thresholds

armed with answers

possibly valid

the labyrinth is not your ally

The labyrinth is a figure
that captures
a figure of the archives
faith and illusion
inexhaustible corridors
for study
many temptations
many fables
with many doorways
many paths to the light
many deceits
many rites of passage
many ordeals
the Minotaur lives there
savage, cannibal, brute, barbarian
the hero's task
to dissolve the hybrid

Lamentation

women of the camps

women of the ark

in reverse sailing

women of the provision grounds

Doors like sentinels

that open and close

too soon or too late

Although the moon

laminates the walls

of enamel blue mosaics

tiled mural with bathers

on the walls covered

in the ash at Pompeii

the labyrinth is not your ally

Although the diagram
reveal the profligacy
of mathematical idea
display the elegance
of ratio and number
like the metrical form
of complex stanzas
or palace of synesthesia
the labyrinth is not your ally

The labyrinth is many things
it outlasts the meaning
anyone can think of
to give to the building

CAMP

The camp is an enclosure
Ringed with posts and barbed wire.
Three generations have seen
Untold circuits of the sun.
There is only barbed wire ahead.

TRANSPORTED (1)

The wooden walls of the hold
Shelter things of darkness
Torsos arranged in stacks
Like books on shelves
Unreadable pages pressed
Together containing what
Inscrutable writing.

The faces more than empty
History or tragedy or—
The genre of the passage
Erased from all catalogues.
Shoulder to shoulder
Costly replicas in the dark
Forms are stirring.

TRANSPORTED (2)

The slave ship is a labyrinth.

The door lies in the past.

The structure has no limit.

The end of the voyage brings

Another enclosure.

The sun falls on living things

In green pasture and level field.

Not all things are living.

The sun falls on them that perish

Behind the barracks.

Tongues grow like weeds

In hard dirt by the pens.

Rain washes them away.

(The future is more of the same.)

Over the planted fields

The silence is unbearable.

INVISIBILITY

Most walls are invisible
the wall on the inside
that practices disguise
the walls of amnesia
behind which your past
the past of your nation
shelters and works.

On a wall the picture
of children reading
a book on the grass.
Cottages in a valley.
The natives of the picture
built on the slopes
below flame-red
poinciana branches.

A donkey pulls a cart
with cut grass and yams.

The deceit of painting
spreads bright sunlight.

Behind the invisible
wall the scene turns grim:
day after day of toil
here wi dig, here wi hoe
you know what I mean.

INCOMPLETENESS

The labyrinth is not a womb.

A chamber like a prison

The walls cover many acres.

No one has seen the last wall.

How would you draw its map?

The labyrinth is cunning.

Built by reason, it imitates

The disputes of reason

In the jousts of Abelard.

It copies itself endlessly.

Every passage is a detour.

The labyrinth will always

Be undiscovered: Terra

Incognita, like the future.

Godel's theorem explains:

The system does not hold

The complete diagram of itself.

NATHANAËL

THE SOLITARY DEATHS OF MIZOGUCHI KENJI

Make away.

If I stop at a single sentence as at an image, emptying the page of its signs having suddenly become superfluous, or else propelling themselves like a current, displacing the exact frame of a philosophical convention, what is given, to me as to anyone, and in any case, abducts and assigns me, in the manner of a dream, sometimes terrifically, and having arisen in a film, where, in the position of the only spectator, which is to say multiply, I become the mute witness, not by choice and therefore incidentally, and as a result by *accident*, and from reel to reel, of the *solitary deaths* of Mizoguchi Kenji, such as they arise in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, suspended between the eddies of otherwise rhetoric, the seizure of movement, its temporality, whereas it falls under the purview of no language, ultimately, the desire to say so, nor the name of the filmmaker, it is the words themselves detached from the density of a cine-philosophy,¹ as of an unverifiable truth, in other words driven by what it is given to see, without in fact wanting to, and in the margins of its own limits. The “solitary deaths” of Mizoguchi are females, all, and without a doubt, it is not enough to enumerate them, nor to catalogue the films fallen from the history of cinema, including the castaways, bodiless and named, to each its grave, the late cinema, from film to fire, starting at the insolite, and already much discussed, post-war image of an impotent goddess of christianity, abandoned to her shame, and looking down from her stone tower in the stomach of the ruined church, and by the dulled brilliance of its devitrified stain, onto the square where the night women are warring, *a posteriori*, under a voiceless icon and so with nothing more than a syphillitic promise that rejects the occidental prayer implanted in Ōsaka, a presumptuous compassion, but human matter reduced to its voluminous dust.² If, as the filmmaker affirms in his work notes, “emotion is needed, not a commentary,”³ one must question the aptness of verbiage intent on circumscribing the mechanism calling for flight, into the netting of language, the senses in question, the sequence shot of scarcely a thought because reduced to the silence by which it unravels. This silence, made plural, bears name of city and body of sector, from Kyōto to Ōsaka, and from Gion to Shinsekai, exfoliating the eras as the ages, from Heian

1 Gilles Deleuze. *L'image-mouvement*. Minuit. Paris, 1983 (265). All translations from the French in this text are by Nathanaël.

2 *Yoru no onna tachi*—in English as *Women of the Night*, 1948.

3 Yoda Yoshikata, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, tr. Koichi Yamada, et al. Cahiers du Cinéma. Paris, 1997 (107).

to Showa, and lingering over Meiji. The “solitary deaths”⁴ of Mizoguchi Kenji are females, all, and each dies in the eye of the cinema, under the invisible hands of convention, and in the flames of loves betrayed by their armatures, in other words the sensible stare of the filmmaker, turned over under a fragile lid, the mists of the fogged film strip. The concentric circles descend, infernal, from lowliness to lowliness, effacing themselves as assiduously as they are produced, the body as much as the face, abandoned to the grating city or the deported song of a mother or a lover. As much as these names are posthumously conceded to the screen scansioning their solitude, the individual subjects of the cinematic narratives prove themselves to be isolated inside the swell of history, an inexorable detainment as given affliction. Because *death*, without fail, is a sort of murder, decanted in time, with as its foil the devastated permanence (that of war and prostitution, conjugal or illicit). The final gaze carried over the reeds onto the end of Oyūsama,⁵ committed against her own person, bespeaks the absolute limit of a subjectivity that reveals itself to be absence of a possible limit, and renunciation of succession, of all intimate bonds with the world such as it is refused her. World without *I* to which the filmmaker bequeaths himself in aparté at the approach of the philosopher, giving resonance to the lines of Sōseki Natsume when, at the death of a friend, he writes :

Those chrysanthemums
That you find, cast them all down
In the coffin deep⁶

In Mizoguchi there is no coffin, but a hollow world, doubled over on the riverbanks, at the edge of a shallow island, or an uncrossable road, and even when its reach extends beyond a funerary mound, the gaze past an avowable lie, the body, weighted, loses face and the

4 The published English-language translation of *L'image-mouvement* renders “mort solitaire” as “lonely death” (196). Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I, The Movement-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. The Athlone Press. London, 1986 [1983].

5 *Oyū-sama*—in English as *Miss Oyu*, 1951.

6 Sōseki Natsume. *Inside my glass doors*, tr. Sammy L. Tsunematsu. Tuttle. North Clarendon (VT), 2002. These lines are dedicated to keishū writer Ōtsuka Kusuo (1875-1910). An essayist, poet and fiction writer, she was the author of *Sora daki* (Incense burner).

present can only resorb itself in time. Notably when the last shot joins the first, to the point of irrecognizability, for not being *the same*.⁷ The horizon is an ache, and its dizziness evinces a vertical incompleteness, free fall of a statufied vision,⁸ a pall made ever more appalling for its obstinacy.⁹

*

During an interview granted after the death of the filmmaker by screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata, the latter interprets a calligraphy written in Mizoguchi's hand : "You see, this *tense* (calligraphy) is comprised of four characters, the first of which is simply the drawing of an eye. The four together signify 'With each new look, one must wash one's eyes.' ..."¹⁰ Mizoguchi's mortuary mask was donated to Henri Langlois, and is today among the archives of the Cinémathèque française at Bercy. The mask, congealed skin, not only of the face of the filmmaker, but effigy of his own "solitary death," consolidates the concatenation of demises dissolved in his films, into the mute absorption of Anju,¹¹ silenced to save her brother Zushio, sinking in the exact place where the extinguished voice of the philosopher waits. In what does the gaze assume the form of what it sees itself beseeching. If all of these deaths, said to be solitary, captured only to be evacuated, cast themselves each individually onto a female body without an actual world, one must believe, with Mizoguchi, placed under the eye of Deleuze, in their declension for all time, in the feminine. Whereas the impossibility of seeing and the reversal of the knowledge upon which this thinking rests. The "solitary deaths" of Mizoguchi Kenji under the ensign Gilles Deleuze are nothing other than the self-less appeal to the transgendered world having fled the body thus designated.

--Chicago, 2017

7 *Ugetsu monogatari*—in English as *Ugetsu*, 1953.

8 *Yōkihi*—in English as *Princess Yang Kwang-Fei*, 1955.

9 *Tōkyō kōshinkyoku*—in English as *Tokyo March*, 1929.

10 *Mizoguchi, Cahiers du cinéma*, hors série, September, 1964.

11 *Sanshō Dayū*—*Sansho the Bailiff*, 1954.

PETER WEISS

**FROM THE AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE
VOLUME III**

TRANSLATED BY MICHAEL LIPKIN

She knelt in the snow, but she was not cold. Maybe it was soft, white sand. The hands grasped deeper and deeper, the light was blinding, even though the sky was overcast. Their arms were already sinking in up to their elbows, were lifting themselves, and flakes were falling from their hands. It was a constant up and down, a regular motion. Others knelt before her, she saw their backs, wrapped in gray, ragged cloth, she saw their naked feet, saw soles and toes stick themselves halfway into the white of the snow, and the hands went deeper and deeper. It must have been a beach they were kneeling on, facing away from the sea, whose edge was close, though there was no lapping of waves. Complete silence reigned. They were like children digging a moat, there were also children among the women kneeling before her. In the warmth some of them had removed articles of clothing, the skin on their shoulders and hips glistened when they bent their bodies and stretched them, and so it went on, no one stopped. My mother's face was empty and dull, her mouth was half-open, her eyes stared forward and didn't recognize me. My father sat next to her in silence, her hands in his. Outside, behind the window, the pruned trees in the schoolyard were turning green. My mother knew that this digging couldn't go on forever, but she held herself back from what was coming, the glimmer around the faces stirred from the summer day's warmth, the heat of the bodies, this could not be winter. Nonetheless she felt something behind her made of leather, something metallic, it was there and it was watching, the more strongly she felt it, the more impossible it became to turn around. She knew, however, that it had heads and claws, and that it didn't even need to touch her a single time to completely annihilate her. A tiny movement, a breath would have been enough to make all of them straighten up, for her too, there was nothing left but to release herself from the digging, which was almost soothing. So she knelt, she saw how their backs straightened themselves up, how the children's feet, their toes bored into the sand, and no one looked around. My father got up and walked to the window. He waved me over and pointed diagonally past the school to the freshly painted, light-gray façade of the factory on the street across from ours. This line, from the room of the apartment to the factory where he had found work, supported his existence, and it was as though a year of the darkest wandering did not lie between my parents' departure from Varnsdorf and their arrival in the small industrial city in the west of Sweden. On the way from the train station he had told me how, after the occupation of Bohemia, he had been assured the job at the textile printers, which was to be built in Sweden by the owners of the Varnsdorf factory. We were walking along the deserted platform, under the low, blue-gray clouds that were lit up only in the west, where the rays of sun had penetrated the gaps in the clouds. I had wanted to spend the weekend with my father and my mother as soon as I received my father's message. That he picked me up alone did not yet unsettle me, though in the sharp light of the late afternoon I could read signs of

agitation on his face. The station manager with the red signal sign had returned to his office in the train station, which was crowned with a little tower, crates were being loaded slowly and sleepily out of the freight car perpendicular to the ramp, the train rolled past us, it had become smaller on the ramrod-straight tracks and disappeared from view between the rolling woods and a shimmering lake. Young people stood in groups in front of the train station, leaning on bicycles, the levers of the bells on the handlebars were in constant motion. Music sounded from the open windows of the veranda of the city hotel, and the sun illuminated a strip of chestnut trees along the edge of the path, caused the multitude of still-yellow leaf buds to sprout forth, like sticky insect wings just emerged from the cocoon, and at the same time cast black shadows into the depths of the foliage, where the pinpoints of light were becoming more and more sparse. Behind the street, a figure poured in bronze rose up in the middle of the marketplace, and to the right a row of sheds joined a wooden manor, whose overhanging upper story rested on white columns. On the way down to the park around the waterway, which, coming down from the brewery beneath the railroad embankment, expanded before us into a pond where strangely artificial-looking swans swam between clumps of foam, my father spoke of dismantling and packing up machines and printing equipment in Varnsdorf, preparing drawings for the rebuilding of the dye works and the workshops where finishing was made. At that time, he said, as we found ourselves on one of the stone bridges that arched over the oily, shimmering water, a remnant of the Czechoslovakian state still existed, whose citizen he could have remained, in the disused factory, surveilled by the German state. There was still foreign capital invested in its velvet printers, there on the high-walled riverbed of the Mandua, which became torrential in the spring, and since the occupying forces were interested in foreign currency, the owners, who had emigrated to England, had been able to buy back the repossessed inventory, and received authorization to take it out of the country. In February of thirty-nine, my father had arranged the shipping and seen to the travel arrangement of the engineers and managers, but my father, whose specialization should have proved useful to the resumption of the enterprise, was surprised by the arrival of the German troops on the fifteenth of March, when he was staying with my mother in Prague to pick up his papers at the union office and at the Swedish consulate. We walked on the long plangata, at whose end lay, as my father indicated with an extended arm, the factory that he called his, like the factory in Varnsdorf, we went by a house decorated with artful carpentry, Beth's boarding school, where my parents had rented a room, they were then asked to leave when my mother became sick, and we reached the long wooden house in which my parents now lived. As he asked me about my work, explained his tasks at the printers, the wage rates in Sweden, discussed the situation of the unions, he wanted to affirm a practical kind of commonality

between us before he spoke about my mother's dazed state, and explained to me that the aftereffects of the experience still held her prisoner. As we passed through the doorway to the apartment facing the courtyard, I saw that tears were running down his broad, worn face. If the peace, the perception of safety could just last long enough, he said, as we stood beside one another at the window, then she would overcome her apathy, see us once again, and once again be able to speak with us. More than two and a half years had passed since we had last seen each other. We sat down at the table next to my mother, who remained motionless in her armchair, and I told her about Stockholm, Spain, Paris, and if these were only tenuous hints of an abundance of experiences, and the silence of my mother nearly paralyzed my voice, my father nonetheless asked me to keep speaking, and I learned to direct my words, as my father did, to my mother, as though she could understand what we were saying. Her left hand lay in her lap, as though broken off, with the palm turned up, her right hand was raised into a gesture by her arm, which supported itself, like she wanted to stop something that was approaching. It struck me that the room's carpet was the same green as the paint on the walls of our kitchen on Pflugstrasse in Wedding. At the mention of the kitchen in Berlin, the attic apartment on Grünenstrasse in Bremen, the basement parlor in Bohemian Varnsdorf, there emerged a sensation of nearness, which took away the severity of that which had not yet been said. That for a long time we did not know anything of one another, and had no way of letting each other know that we were still alive, belonged to the condition that we shared with many others. If I could see distress in my father as we hugged on the platform, he nonetheless showed himself to be composed and confident in the presence of the sick woman. Never had I seen my parents so devoted to one another as I did this Sunday evening in May, nineteen hundred and forty, just as the news came of the German offensive against Belgium, Holland, and France. My father spoke slowly, as though he wanted to make certain that every word imprinted itself on my mother. The measured, friendly way in which he spoke allowed the events to appear as though they were something everyday. My parents' departure belonged to the great wandering, the gazes directed over and across the oceans, towards other continents, harbors like Marseilles, Genoa, Rotterdam, Lisbon, Odessa were oracular places, places of magic hope, consulates and embassies became temples, their thresholds damp with kisses and tears. It was the natural thing, the normal thing, this begging for certifications of approval, endorsements, for a place in the quotas, a visa signified absolution, and this came only to those who possessed the money to buy mercy. The masses of those who had no more to offer than their despair swelled, and despair was the most worthless of all superfluous things, and soon there were to be found among the dispossessed those who were well-to-do yesterday, there was only the tumble into aimless wandering, with no rest and no way out. It was noted offhandedly, already

blotted out of his description of the last hours in Prague, how, after the destruction of the republic, in the midst of the confusion that ensued from the clearing of the union offices, my father had learned of my presence in Sweden. One of my letters, sent by the trade association from Stockholm to Prague, remained lying between the files, had fluttered up in the wind from the train when my father was given a card with a recommendation to the Swedish organization. At the party headquarters, my father still consulted with Taub, with the leader of the German Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia. This man, who intended to go in a sealed wagon with the other members of the leadership to Warsaw, in order to fly from there to Sweden, assured him that he would see to the journey of my parents right away. We, too, were supposed to try to reach Warsaw, said my father, and to get ourselves to the Swedish embassy, where Taub was to leave behind instructions. And yet, how were we, we who belong to the masses of those without influence, to make it through Poland and bring our cause to the Swedish ambassador, he said, and brought the coffee cup up to my mother's mouth. She saw the backs before her, naked or covered with tatters, wide, round backs and small, slender ones, she saw how they were shaken by an invisible force and were slumped forwards, at which point an indistinct beam shot out of their flesh, and how their hands had dug in so deep that they disappeared into the ditch. My father held the back of her head, passed her a piece of biscuit with care, and wiped off her chin. At the end of March nineteen hundred and thirty-nine, my parents successfully reached the so-called Tripoint, where Silesia, the Czech zone and Poland bordered one another. They had no baggage with them, only the advance that my father had sewn into the lining of his jacket. Amid the random movement in which they were caught up, another force, an overpowering one, made itself felt, a force that shook their nerves and tendons, that drove them forward and bore them along with it, a force that, exactly calculated, ran according to certain schedules, and while those in flight still clung firmly to the thought that borders could be crossed, countries traversed, goals reached, the paths and the highways were already leading them towards a machinery that would divide them up, separate them from one another, designate them for slower or quicker extermination. While they still gave themselves and the surroundings through which they moved names, they had already become numbers, and the regions were renamed, the divided-up corpse of Czechoslovakia had yielded a Bohemian and a Moravian protectorate, as well as a supposedly autonomous Slovakia, the Sudetenland had become part of the body of the Reich, Poland and Hungary had snatched up its crumbs, border stations were moved, it was unclear to whom the land on which they tread belonged, even those who had felt before that they belonged to their nation as a race, even as the first signs of persecution became visible, those who still believed that they were in good standing, were now forced to recognize themselves as outcast and condemned. These people, who

still dragged recollections of their own lives along with them, now began to stumble blindly, in the eyes of hidden observers they were nothing more than a herd, to be butchered in the cheapest manner possible. Against this tide, which advanced towards the East, creeping, shuffling through the blooming landscapes, and whose waves were the dust kicked up by their graying shoes, floods rolled into the homeland of the Reich with waves of leaf-laureled, flag-decked trucks, here surging cries of “Heil!”, of victory frenzy, there a pause in the stream of wanderers, an evasion before the crushing onrush, exhausted, misshapen accumulations, then more panicked advances, from which they were to run until they had tired themselves out, so that later, when the appointed time came, they would let themselves be caught more easily, or push themselves into the traps of their own accord. However, before they had put the border behind them, my parents were arrested and taken to a prison from Ostrava, together with Jewish dealers and craftsmen. They could have counted themselves among the members of the German nation, but my mother wanted to remain among those who had been driven out. In the dusklight of the evening, which left the corners of the room in darkness, I now saw that my mother’s lips were moving, and for several seconds it was as though her eyes lingered on us searchingly. The sound of my father’s voice made me think of the evening hours we had once spent at the kitchen table, once again I felt the feeling of consolation that there had been on Pflugstrasse, high over the railyard of the station in Stettin, or in the basement room of the villa on Niedergrunder Strasse in Varnsdorf. My father was speaking of a cramped cell. My mother’s fingers were moving. They stroked the grooves, the graininess of a stone wall. A moldy smell rose from the loamy soil, covered with wood shavings. More than a hundred people were in the cell, packed together. Use of the two cots was divided by the hour. The children, the women nursing infants, the sickly lay there. The bucket in which people relieved themselves ran over. Several elderly people died, were pulled to the doorway through the feet of those who were standing. The bodies clung to each other, asleep and awake. My mother felt the thick warmth, she belonged to these sweating bodies, she grasped one of the hot hands, clasped its fingers, and as the hands released one another, she pushed her face into a damp cheek. Arms, breasts, hips, shaggy beards, a jumble of limbs, beating hearts, wheezing breaths, and the fact that she was in the midst of them gave her strength. For her, the foul perspiration was like a blossoming, she drew the smell deeply into her, she lived in this organism, she would never want out of this closeness, a separation would have ruined her, been her downfall. One week, I heard my father say, went by in this dungeon. My mother would have stayed, had my father not pulled her over to the crowd of those who could prove themselves to be of German origin, when they were driven out into the yard and made to stand in rows in order to be transported to a camp. My father spoke forcefully, he emphasized the words

from the enemy's vocabulary with particular care. In the green room over the school yard, in which a pair of children were playing soccer, my father put his hands in the pocket of his pants, took it out again, and opened it. There lay the Iron Cross second class that he had been awarded in Galacia in 1917. He had brought along this cross, along with its certificate and the confirmation of his war injuries, as his only possession. And so he had become the young guards' comrade. Why had he waited so long to say something, they asked him. My parents were led to the commissariat, they were issued a convoy notice, and they obtained tickets to Trenčín, to their jurisdiction in Slovakia, they were also given provisions. So, instead of going toward Warsaw, they went south, where they found shelter for the summer as field workers. They had to save the sum of money necessary for a new attempt at reaching Warsaw. In the middle of August, said my father, as dull blows against the ball could be heard from the schoolyard, a guide led us by night through the mountains into Poland. They crawled carefully, anxious not to start the little stones along the slope moving, a few times, however, the stones slipped off into the debris, and an avalanche rumbled into the valley, they lay there, holding their breath, until it became silent once again. They wandered for another two weeks, often with groups of Czech and Slovakian Jews, in the direction of Oświęcim, the place where all the railroads knotted together, where they would wait for a train to Warsaw. Finally Bielsko Bialo lay nearby, which my father knew as Bielitz from his time in the Austro-Hungarian army. In the early morning, on a path in the field, they heard the noise from an airplane. Something dark fell out of the machine. Someone just fell out of there, my mother said. It was a pointed chunk that made the earth burst. They threw themselves into the dried-out ditch and remained lying there for a long time, because a buzzing could be heard, as though from the motors of larger air squadrons still farther away, a droning that was still coming closer and only increasing in volume. The fields of grain were shining in the morning sun, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, no breeze stirred the ears of grain, though far below, between the blades of grass, the poppy flowers, there was a scurrying and a flitting, tiny animals swished by, lizards, mice, rabbits, snakes, too. The noise grew into a clanging and roaring, as though thunder- and hailstorms were coming down, but still the sky remained clear and empty. They pressed their hands to their ears for fear that the clanging might make their ear drums explode, and they believed that the trembling earth was about to open itself beneath them. Suddenly the grain fell, as though from the sweep of a scythe, and gray monstrosities rolled towards us, on revolving treads, with arched armored backs, in dense rows, my mother pressed herself into the crumbling earth, through the grass she saw how the advancing tubes pushed over her into the grain, the steel bodies mowed their way through and receded into the distance. Sand ground in her teeth, the bits of earth before her were full of furrows and cracks, an ant,

carrying another dead ant, flailed its antennae over an abyss, jumped over it, its forelegs outstretched, a black beetle clambered up a blade of grass until it drooped down and it crawled off once more. My father, however, turned his attention from the hour of the first morning of the war to the two coming months. Just as he had attempted, technologically and economically, to secure his living in the little city of Alingsås by returning to the world of work, so too did he attempt to make the events in which he and my mother had been caught up lucid by means of mathematical calculation. Starting with the assumption that the exact number of all those torn out of their familiar lives could be fixed, he estimated the sizes of the various forces. Initially, he might have made these tens of thousands, these hundreds of thousands, tangible, they came from particular cities, one of them had left behind a certain address, and there were still traces of their work everywhere, but then they lost their faces in the masses. Again and again, in the vague hope that shelter might be found somewhere, unable to sense that they were wandering into their own annihilation, swept along by a superhuman force, not delivered to a natural catastrophe, not compelled by hunger and need to leave their countries, not in the search for a new land that might be built up, but rather swept away by a violence contradicting any reason, giving everything up that might have given their life order, not as pilgrims or pioneers, but having become overnight the lowest of the low, robbed of any aspirations, any dignity, now existing solely in a world that consisted of points of embarkation, transport, trans-shipment points and detention centers, they flooded eastward, through the provinces that Germany had lost to Poland in nineteen eighteen, and had now snatched for itself again. And as millions they became still more formless, together with the Polish Jews driven out of their villages, crossed by the deportations of captured workforces towards Germany, and the trains of people of German descent from the Baltic and Belarussia, who were to settle in the areas that had been cleansed of Jews. It was only in October that something like a destination became apparent for those in flight, the area between the Vistula and the Bug would be placed at their disposal, as it were, as a reservation. My mother seemed to hear nothing of what my father was recounting, although he was holding forth forcefully. She sat in the armchair, upholstered with worn green velvet, as though there was no reaching her anymore. Before her the straight white trunks of a forest of birches stretched into the murky depths, she ran between the trunks, sometimes straight ahead, sometimes sideways, the bark she brushed against was of a silky smoothness, and the thudding of the steps was closing in, the panting and chattering, once again she was among many, she ran over moss and crunching wood, and the others ran right and left, loaded with bedding, baskets, pots and utensils, a trampling and a hissing, flapping dresses with children clinging to them, a pair of riders, the horses damp with sweat, soldiers without helmets or weapons, cows, calves, poultry, there

was a screaming, a bleating and cackling, and it was like every other time, something was behind them, something overpowering was coming closer and was just about to pounce on them, and at the same time there was no end, it was like their kneeling in the sand, like the crush in the dungeon, the lying in the ditch by the road, it was all happening at the same time, they were inside and there was no way out. For a while, said my father, we pulled a cart behind us with the children, the elderly and the sickly. It went over the hills and over the mountains, this was in the old Austrian-Silesian country, in the country of mixed people, here Polish, Russian, German, Ukrainian were spoken, and Yiddish, the craftsmen, the shopkeepers, the innkeepers everywhere were Jewish, the Poles there were the farmers, they loosed their dogs on those seeking shelter. My father paused, after he had attempted to bring into recognizable coherence that which threatened to perish in strangeness. In the calamity that had befallen him and my mother in the spring of nineteen hundred thirty-nine, he saw the result of perfectly determinable forces. In their Voivodeships the Polish aristocracy were only continuing what had been arranged the year before in the old industrial zone between the Ore Mountains and the Bohemian forest, the peaceful provincial life had suddenly turned into a zone where one side, furnished with all the power, could unleash their fury on the other. What my father saw in Varnsdorf, as Jewish manufacturers were bound by their works to the horses of their coaches and dragged over the pavement accompanied by roars and jeers, or as shopkeepers were carried out of their stores and made to stand on display with signs around their necks in the marketplace, already attained such a magnitude at that stage that it could only lead to worldwide devastation. He, as an individual, rejected the system that had always tried to leave him and those like him in despondency and paralysis. He had not allowed himself to walk in the dirt. He paced back and forth, his face gray. He had never been able to sit still in Wedding or on Niedergrunder Strasse in Varnsdorf, when he saw this violence carried out in the name of one class over the others. The violence that he now invoked was the violence of a pestilence, and in naming it, he also diagnosed the sickness to which my mother had fallen victim. It was asserted again and again that this pestilence, which caused convulsions every three, four decades, came out of nowhere, out of the inexplicable, and yet it was always planned down to its tiniest details. The fever never disappeared between its peaks, even when it could hardly be perceived, somewhere it brought trembling and terror along with it. The epidemic that came from Moloch was spread in innumerable ways, from the deceitful kiss to brutal defilement, and already carried away more lives than any other pestilence. As long as it could not be erased, for my mother, too, there would be no cure. If a scream were to awaken in her, no living person could bear it. But this scream, like the scream of all those who had gone beside her, was stifled before long. At first those who spread the poison had taught

them silence, wherever the disgust wanted to come up it had been beaten down into silence with a single blow. And now, said my father, I am once again working for those who have oppressed me for my whole life, and I am still thankful to them that I can provide a tiny contribution for the maintenance of their bases, because it provides me my pitiful income. If it was my father's will to cling to that which could be verified, that which belonged to groups of numbers, orders, then my mother had distanced herself from everything with which we surrounded ourselves. And yet we were troubled by the question of whether she did not know more than we did, we who had preserved reason, and whether everything that was explicable by our standards did not become obsolete in light of a looming upheaval of thought. My father, who had remained standing, had once again turned to the late spring in Poland, while my mother drifted through images, none of which was able to evince a single sound of dismay from her, so far removed was she from any recollection of the familiar. Once, said my father, we came to a Catholic church, wanted to spend the night there, the priest refused us, foaming at the mouth, the children threw themselves pleadingly onto him, he struck at them with a crucifix. Only Jews, who were still located in this region of Krakow, could occasionally divide up the little that they had, they too wanted to leave for the east, toward the Red Army. German troops in wedge formation pushed past them with their baggage train in tow, they burnt down what was left of the cabins and stables, carried away sacks of grain, turkeys, piglets and now, this was near Gorlice, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, my father had lain there in the combat of nineteen fifteen, there the imperial-royal troops had pushed back the czar's army, from there his regiment had marched on to Przemyśl and Lviv, now, on the Sabbath day, the soldiers rounded up all the Jews, the rabbi did not cease his prayer of consecration, the soldiers knocked the Torah out of his hands, he kept singing, the men's black, broad-rimmed caps were torn off, they were yanked down to the ground by their hair and the singing did not cease, they were thrown onto a truck, men and women, children and the elderly, once again my father pulled my mother along with him, he showed his papers, he was a Slovak, formerly Hungarian, a war veteran, a distinguished recipient of the Iron Cross, wounded, here was the scar from the bullet lodged in his knee, and he was clapped on the shoulder, he was in the wrong place, he should head in the direction of his homeland, he got a pass, provisions, directions to the nearest authorities. They didn't go back, but rather towards Galacia, they came to Przemyśl, where my father had been taken to a field hospital in the late spring of nineteen hundred sixteen. They went around the city, in the loamy landscape surrounded by chains of hills, he recognized the old exercise grounds and the old freight yard, the locomotive shed made of yellow brick, from which he left for Bremen, bedded on straw in the livestock wagon. And the farther my parents, and with them a handful of Czech Jews, made it east, the more

quickly the trucks and tanks rattled towards them and past them, before them the villages were shot and ravaged, for the troops it was a matter of capturing several kilometers more, as was due them, soon they had run into the army that was moving towards them from the east. They moved through the haze and the smoke, came by the ruins of a courtyard, in the coal-blackened window frames of a stall, they saw a woman sitting, her feet stretched out on a board, her body leaning back onto the rubble, her legs spread wide apart, her hands pressed on her stomach, she pressed out the child, surrounded by the black flakes of grime. At the end of October, they found lodging in a village on one of the rivers branching off the Dniester, a Jewish baker took them in, you can live here, he said, the Russians are coming soon, they will protect us. How are they supposed to protect us, my mother had asked after the arrival of the Soviet soldiers, there was no motorized, oiled rolling, those who now came went on foot, in patched uniforms, with outdated rifles, a pair of rickety trucks were drawn by horses, how are they, my mother asked, supposed to stop the Germans. They dug out trenches, they dug themselves in, what was going on with this pact that had been spoken of for months, did the pact no longer exist, no, it did exist, and why were they getting into formation, because the pact could not last, because it would go on, because the Germans wanted to have Ukraine and Belorussia and the Caucasus. Hundreds of thousands streamed towards Lvov with them, in November my parents entered the once rich, elegant city. My father had hoped to find a position at one of the many weavers, printers, dye works that were located, as he knew, in Lemberg, but the concerns were all shut down, every space to be found was crammed full of people, the refugees camped in the streets, the Soviet army could not manage to provide for all the hungry. Still, something else unsettled us, said my father, among those driven out there were many Polish and Czech Communists, who had immediately come forward with their Party cards. They were rounded up, not, however, to be consulted for service, but rather to be deported to the German territories. The Communists who had fled Germany to the Soviet Union years ago fared no better. We met several, he said, who were to have been sent back to the German Reich. They had escaped from the train, in the meantime many others had fallen into the hands of the Germans. The fear that spread was not only of the winter, which was approaching, but also the question of where one was even supposed to go, where a way out might still be found. As they made their way north, they had ended up in the German zone of occupation. There, they had heard of the sanctuaries that were now established for the Jews, and they saw many who let themselves be taken in by the temptation to find a home finally and moved in the direction of Lublin. Once, my mother disappeared for an entire day, said my father, he found her in the driving snow, among Jews who had just lost their loved ones. Since then, he said, her sunkenness had grown worse, though he had often taken her silence during their wandering through

Belorussia, which had lasted nearly a quarter of a year, for exhaustion. In March, they arrived in Latvia and in Riga, at the Swedish consulate, received visas and plane tickets to Sweden. Once again my father mentioned this event, which must have been accompanied by endless difficulties, only in passing, as though he wanted to draw my mother's attention to the fact that everything that had caused her pain belonged to the past, and that now there was nothing but safety. Late in the evening, when he had brought my mother to bed, and we sat for a long time at the table under the lamp, he told me that the union had offered him a place for my mother in a rest home, however, he didn't believe that a stay there would do her any good, instead he felt that, left alone among strangers, even with the best care, she would fall into a state of total darkness from which there would be no way out. The only possibility for her recovery would be, as he saw it, if my mother were to become aware of the change in their situation and then turn to something other than that unspeakable thing that held her in its grip. Every hour that he did not have to spend in the factory he was with her, concerned constantly with providing her a feeling of safety. He spoke to her mildly, as though there weren't the slightest reason for concern anymore. He knew, he said, that she was moving towards him in her way and that a slow shift was taking place in the balance between the twilight and the waking state. Just the fact that, now and again, she stood at the window, looking out onto the street, waiting for him to come home, showed him that, at the very least, the possibility of improvement existed, and in that, he agreed with the doctor, a psychiatrist, a friend of Hodann's as it happened, who had been to their apartment several times and had promised to visit several more times. What was holding my mother to life was this understanding, this silent acceptance of her absence, of her sojourn in the abyss. At night, in the little parlor near the kitchen, I heard my mother whimpering in the voice of a complete stranger. The following morning, however, I saw her differently than I had at the beginning, when she seemed to be completely broken down. I spoke to her as what she had once been to me, as my mother, which she would always be. In the afternoons, after my father retrieved their meal from Beth's Pension and assisted my mother as she ate, I told them what had been on my mind since my father had mentioned the city of Riga. The name Riga had stirred something that at first remained as hazy as my father's allusion to their departure from that city, though now, as I turned to my mother, without knowing what my thoughts might mean, I felt as though I were touching layers that might be accessible to my mother. I began with this city that I did not know, upon hearing its name, however, I thought of someone named Hjärne, a Swedish poet and scholar, who, in the middle of the seventeenth century, lived there as the private physician to the Governor of Livonia. I had put aside his play, *Rosimunda*, which was one of the plays that Brecht had wanted to rework, into a crate, along with my other books. I was thinking of how we, in

addition to our reading of strange songs, religious and folk songs, of choruses, of verse dramas about the power-mad, nymphomaniacal Langobard Queen interspersed with scenes of pranksters and harlequins, read the diary of Hjärne, in which he describes his journey from Riga in the year sixteen hundred sixty-seven, through Mölln, where he sketched Eulenspiegel's grave, to Bremen. And now I suddenly understood why I was recounting all this, it belonged to the secret connections that existed between all of us, and which over the years had contributed to our ability to understand one another. In Delmenhorst, a village near Bremen, Hjärne had stopped to rest along his journey, and since this village had taken on such a special significance for us, his notes on that hour had affected me so greatly that I could cite them almost word for word. When he glanced at the landscape that I knew from my childhood, he was overcome by a spiritedness, as he called it, a trembling, an ecstatic exhilaration, a powerful joy was awakened in me, the joy of the poet. I saw the Delmenhorst highway before me as I read these lines, with its rows of poplars, behind them grazing pastures and mills. Here, in the convalescent home, my mother had met my father, here, in February nineteen hundred seventeen, she had conceived me. For several hours the web of recollection that surrounded us became perceptible, but just then it was lost once more, nothing in my mother's face gave any indication that she had understood a single word that I had said. Looking out the window on the train during my return trip to Stockholm, I saw this face, large, gray, worn by the images that had torn themselves into it, a stone mask, the eyes blind in its broken surface. It was the face of Gaia, the demoness of earth, her left hand soaring up with its shattered fingers, the evening landscapes flew by, Alcioneus fell, bitten in the breast by the serpent, tilting away from her.

‘Ā’ISHAH AL-BĀ‘ŪNĪYAH

**FROM EMANATION OF GRACE
AND THE GATHERING UNION**

TRANSLATED BY TH. EMIL HOMERIN

I LOVE ONLY YOU

I love you, only you, and when my heart turns
to others I love, this is only out of love for you,
And when I must speak to someone else,
my heart is still recalling only you.
But there is no praise in this or that for me, my Lord,
for in both, my praise is for your face.
This sweet love and recollection, I did not earn,
for they flow from your pure and perfect grace.
You are the true God, all else is false;
You alone abide, all else will pass.
So please don't shun me, this would be Hell,
even if my misdeeds would merit that.

LOVERS, BE HAPPY

O lovers, be happy and joyful
 for the cup-bearer came ready to serve.
His cup was clear and bright in his tavern
 as he plied the tavern-mates with wine,
And they lived the blissful life with a drink
 that quenched them and cured all ills.
They spent their souls for it and disappeared
 with nothing left and so found peace,
As the gardens of my love were opened,
 where we drank a pleasant wine.
With God, there is nothing left to desire,
 for the promise was kept and the veil torn away!

OMAR PÉREZ

FROM CUBANOLOGY

TRANSLATED BY KRISTIN DYKSTRA

In 2002, while temporarily living in Europe (mostly Amsterdam), Cuban poet Omar Pérez began writing in a notebook. His journey began as a short professional visit that shifted into something less defined after he fell in love. Eventually the notebook became Cubanology, a book of days reflecting on three years of life at a remove from the island: “A memory of a flight, a journey, jour.” The following excerpts are entries from 2004. They include reference to the Zen center where Pérez practiced throughout his years in Europe, as well as a stream of practical realities faced by potential emigrants.

Vrijdag 10

Up 7. Amsterdam: School. *Eerste les na de vakantie*. Summarizing my flight from Habana to Madrid: long layover, jumpy landing. Boom! Ecuadorian classmate in Schiphol: he didn't want to come back, but his love awaits. So does mine.

Next day, Vondel Park, and then sea and dunes: for the first time I take a swim in the Dutch sea. Cold tonic, so cold that I go back to my everyday tasks with fresh body & soul. Life continues.

Zaterdag 11

In *de dojo*. Some eleven people. Loic directs and asks to dedicate the day's ceremony to the 9/11 victims – not only in the United States, but around the whole planet.

I propose the Exhibition of Cuban Painters, practitioners from the Havana *dojo*, to Paul. The proposal is accepted.

Visit to Haarlem. Ken always has a good story to tell. He says he'd like to write a play using his conversations in the Tax Department. For example:

Ken: So, what can I do if the Tax Department wants to take the money directly from my clients? (It's the income tax.)

Tax Man: You put that money in your wife's account, but don't forget to pay the VTV tax through your own account.

Ken: Ain't that fraud?

Tax Man: No, as long as you pay your taxes, that's good.

Ken: So, over time I can pay off my debt using my client's payments. Is that good?

Tax Man: No, that's bad. It's profit. Then you have to pay tax with the money you owe.

Ken: Then, I have to declare myself bankrupt and claim I'm in debt. Isn't that bad?

Tax Man: That's good. You pay your debt with the loan's money.

Ken: That's good.

Tax Man: Yeah, but if you declare a debt, that makes it harder to get a loan. That's bad.

Waiting for Godot in an office.

We talk about *Le Droit a la Paresse* by the Parisian born in Santiago, Cuba, Paul Lafargue. Then Ken gives us a lift to the train station. Good knight.

Sunday

The category 5 hurricane is getting closer to Cuba. It's important not to complain, *niet zeuren*, get angry or lose your sense of humor. Also physical exercise and *studieren* come in handy. Concentrate on just a few things.

I interrupt this note abruptly in order to clean my pipe.

Va bene. On my way back home, I throw the paper away, try in vain to withdraw money using my card, buy bread, and all this is Cubanology.

--That I listen to Cuban music and work happily during my translation of the North American anthology. I prepare the artworks for the painting exhibition. I clean the house, make a phone call to one Mr. Thomas, a Spanish Caribbeanized Dutchman, who contracts helpers for cleaning, *schoonmaken*: "I don't have much, everything's short," he says in a serious voice. Well, okay. I puree potatoes with onions, mushrooms, chives and celery. A little bit of TV and off to sleep. I miss the reading of *Women Who Run with the Wolves*.

Woensdag

Sampai, do de dishes. Congo prayer, Dutch breakfast work. Off to school at 8:30. Something is changing in me, around me. It's presence. Prescience, the science of foresight. I know, but it's something more: *ahselleraytion*.

Niente traduzione oggi. I try to fix the plumbing on the kitchen sink. Well, after cleaning out pipes, it's clear I have to call in the experts. I quit, listen to Irakere and discover new things.

Sometimes school is indecent.

At noon, I go home. My afternoon nap helps to pause the flow of events.

I wake up, finish reading *The Open Veins of Latin America*: thirty years later, things haven't changed much. Watching some Moroccan flamenco singers closely on television in Amsterdam, I discover structural contaminations between overlapping poems in Dutch and Spanish, at the same time, with a beat.

Bij voorbeeld, for example,

Het Poem, the Pum, el Poema

Probeert niet, Nederlander *No intentes ser, holandés*
te origineel te zijn *demasiado original*

Don't you go trying, Dutchman,
to get too original

Cristina invites me to Ardis, the Royal Zoo, to visit the new giraffe born five days ago. It's bigger than a Doberman. Mother giraffe greets us. Giraffes give greetings with their eyes and ears. Their eyes move as if winking, and their ears flick in all directions. We also visit the African turkey buzzards, or vultures, and they give us four feathers. The gorillas eat while maintaining thoroughly abandoned postures. A girl sitting by a giant window that separates her from the male exclaims, "What a beautiful stance!"

We go home on the streetcar, and I think about the book. A novel of three 100-page sections, *ongeveer*. "For the wise, few words are enough." The first volume tells of the encounter with Gaspar Guevara, an *andante* poet with *allegro*. And a character we will call Homer, poet and storyteller, also itinerant. Slang: Gaspar, a flamenco singer, without hurrying his rhymes, goes rhyming down his path through Spain, France, and other lands, where he learns an urban English: the English of advertising. Homer operates in Donne's elusive compositions: mystical gibberish: they converse in Tuscany, *terra antica* for poets, and in Provence. In Marseille, they eat at an African restaurant at the edge of the Old Port, and in Paris they attend a jazz concert directed by a Brazilian woman whose last name is Teresa. Their rhyme, *Teresa Teresa. No interesa*.

I discovered Gaspar Guevara on the day that I launched a new novel: *Into the Wind*. It was the first volume of the trilogy, "To Someone Understanding," a hundred pages stewing with

religious, social, domestic and virile passions. *L'Andría*, as the Greeks would say, about a nomadic Havana gentleman in the twenty-first century.

He reserved some passions for the feverish joy of activities that lead you down the roads of the saints. To others he dedicated great surges of yang energy, as experts would say. He would lose himself, or escape stealthily, to a variety of celebrations: carnivals, parties folkloric or otherwise, a *bembé*; or a wedding, in a Catholic church in Miramar, of an Austrian and a Colombian. There he plays bongo and sings a rumbita. Open-air concerts. Nor did he reject the crooning called *el feeling*, or what he himself described as “flamenco with no relationship whatsoever to that tradition.” A concept difficult to explain, which manifested in *romerías* with a guitar and mint tea. You could say that this gentleman is Gaspar himself, who finds his recollections in the flavors of mint and mendacity, but there is no other meaning for “expertise” in the first section of the story.

Homer will compose a short essay, two pages, about the aforementioned novel. What will happen to Gaspar inside my novel is not what happens to him within his own novel: the first is implicit, a vision of what is to come: science fiction. Meanwhile, the other novel conveys what happened inside the legendary reality. Neither this nor that. Polyfiction. For example:

Similar to the player of soccer or chess, warm by the time he reaches the middle of the game and field, one who tests an unexpected solution from a distance of various meters or moves, I write these notes. They are as uneven as I am. But suddenly, they're warming up. My name is Gaspar and for the moment I'm waiting. I'm aware that I'm inside a bunkered office by the Bijlmer prison, in a not-so-tidy Amsterdam neighborhood. How I got here, what I'm waiting for – like any other player, that's what I'm moving to tell you.

I arrived in Europe one steel-gray morning from Havana, then in flower. I had no reasons to abandon my walled city, only an impulse to set sail and stretch my frame toward other regions, like a buffalo crossing the steppe or a salmon swimming upstream.

Like so many others, I crossed the open sea with a doctored resume, a fake letter of invitation, and twenty nasty dollars in my jacket. I don't feel like describing procedures. It's the wrong time to entertain details, and I won't offer an emigrant's political explanations, much less economic ones, or any of the other chatter that humans invent in order to do what other species, supposedly inferior species, manage to do without thought.

But some nights, looking out through the open square window in my kitchen's back wall, between two large buildings, toward infinity, I had observed a star's sigh, and blinking slowly as I exhaled, as though my eyelids and bronchial tubes worked in unison, I felt nostalgia for the unknown. At the start of late spring, stretching myself, I set foot, a shaky foot, in the city adjacent to the Marne.

I'll call my friend, my smartass sometime girlfriend, by the appropriate name of Mademoiselle Savante. She was waiting for me on firm footing in her apartment. I won't say that here we managed a walk toward some famous cemetery or a residence of illustrious rubble, or that at sunset the mist from a seminal river clogged my throat. These trivialities were quickly forgotten in the little bars nearby, in cheap food troughs that don't even provide a place to sit down. Well: sitting down will cost you. And as I heard *ça va ça va* and said *ça va ça va*, the whole thing became real: I became savant, nothing mattered to me at all, and I learned how to shell and eat the nut.

Mademoiselle had a cat, not a fine cat, not fine like a grand piano, not fine like a dress with a train, just a plain old cat ... *Moche! pour quoi?* Demoiselle would get angry, too often. *Pas du tout!* She meant he was stubby, because he had no tail: his name, Tzigane, gypsy. Sounding a lot like Zidane, the soccer player. I'll add that then she and I no longer felt attraction as lovers, no pure drama. Instead we enjoyed walking arm in arm, yes, sleeping together because the spring was still too cold; there was no more to it.

And still, at times, a reminiscence, and we would curl up together: Out, *Zidane!* Out of the bed, stubby cat ... And she, now more softly, *C'est pas moche, pas non plus Zidane...*

Journals, pieces of letters, notes from newspapers interweave. Homer is a monk. At a retreat in the city of Amsterdam he meets another monk: "An expert in vacillation and in the theories, the most current versions, for accelerating the spirit." Meanwhile Gaspar has a good time in Rotterdam. He is invited to a poetry festival, garlanded in new euros and the smiling discipline that emanates from his well-earned social status. What gets written down is crucial; what happened is indispensable.

[...]

Now it's a question of Dutch. *Huiswerk: Informatie over werk*. Ethnic minorities, revalidation of diplomas, seats. *Test u zelf*, test yourself, are you flexible enough?! Dutch Curriculum Vitae:

send it, print it, turn it in. *Flexibel, economische*. Internet, mainly commercially oriented. Boring. *Werk*. Netherlands: *translator (Spaans) niet gevonden*. Listing not found. He's busy. Later. On the other hand, Barbara's new child is born. I talk to Ken; he calls for a quickie at Don Julio. Mo calls to get details for printing. *Expositie Kubaanse Kunstenaars*. A4 CD ROM.

HANDMADE/ HECHO A MANO

Exhibition of Cuban Paintings at the European Zen Center

15 pieces for sale, and one that is not:
Zen Monk playing *cajón*.

in a North Amsterdam bar
O Chung's real daughter
Chinese pumpkin belly
behind the bar at "Don Julio"
eyes scratched to amber infinity
papaya boiled in agave syrup and another beer?

Not today. For every thing there is a day,
says my friend. Hallelujah.

I'm not jealous of the mind. Solitary
karakter characteristic, fuck it.
Superior neither to dogs or sparrows.

The friend is Ken.

Caroline works well with her hands and creates solutions for framing and hanging. Who said that women ... ? Not me, man! *Ik ga, i go, naar de copyshop*, not the coffeeshop! 40 *kleur* posters: 60 E. *Werken met de posters. Hoe?* Take them to Cuba, distribute them, sell them. More things to take to Cuba: tools, paintings, material, charcoal, incense, needles, sewing items. Merchant sailor, A'dam.

C.V.

I was on that corner one afternoon
it was raining.

Yesterday at night i was looking
at the fool moon in the garden
i have a son and it was
one afternoon and it was raining
i was looking
at the full moon in the garden.

[...]

Friday

I go to the *dojo* and then to the copyshop. Not only are the copies not ready, but they lost the CD ROM. *Hoe kan dat nou!* Sorry, sorry. Always sorry. Sorry, I'm going to school to learn sorry. Luckily, Cristina calls Han and he can make the copies: 50 in total, big and small, for just 20 euros! And the text is free! Bad becomes good. *Allah akhbar*. I am happy.

Caroline, the monk from Alicate, is already in the *dojo*.

The weather is magnificent at the start of fall: soft, relaxing rain. From cool trees the green, yellow and red leaves are falling. The temperature is right for taking a walk in shirtsleeves, if you like. Back at home I listen to Camarón: Old World! Florian calls to ask me to take care of his cat Nefertiti, just for three days. Living. What is literal is no good for anything: all is dream. Lights, rain, Danae, the Greek woman singing with the piano. Singing a Greek bolero to it.

Why do you fool yourself, brother, dreamer
why do you burn your wings so cruelly
Icarus, Van Gogh ... If from each
according to his work, to each
according to his lunacy
the moon, too,
take the moon literally: danger
like a joke made in the wrong place

There's a way to have a fine touch. As in baseball, where a good hit doesn't have to go in a particular direction.

like the grape:
growing high
it doesn't have to get bitter
the heights of aspiration
have no exact zone.

Going out for bread, doing *zazen*, these things have no exact zone. And in the end, Hunger makes brothers out of all men.

Zaterdag

I go out for bread. Immigrants don't look at anyone. They go along with their head down, looking at the future, the one they already found: ah, a coin! Ten cents. To the *dojo*, *zazen*. I do what Paul requests. Then Cristina and I go to the public protest against the Balkenende government. *Museum Plein*, 300,000 people. Blessing: when the demonstration ends, the rain begins. Back at home, potato puree, the Dutch *stampot*. The afternoon is more peaceful than any other. Life, a succession of accidents comprehending all actions of the body in reality and dream. Accidental culture. Magical biological. Hey man!

RACHEL TZVIA BACK

WHAT USE IS POETRY, THE POET IS ASKING

I

What use is poetry, the poet is asking
of the evening news
where the experts

of military affairs have been assembled,
the political analysts and politicians
amassed, ex-generals

of measured pace and phrase all
called to the ideological front,
the starched and uniformed delivered

as fact, in lieu of truth, expert and
ex-general of the demarcated
worlds, barbed-wire words

hurled across the room, the anchor
confidently moored
with her earnest nod-nodding of head

stating stately readiness
for next round of certain warfare
around the news table.

There were troops moving south
under rocket-lacerated skies, arced anger and
armoured vehicles fully unarmed by fire,

there were boys pulling other boys from
the wreckage and flames, from the tunnels or into tunnels
beneath it all, an underworld amazed

while whole buildings collapsed from above,
bombed complete to the ground, perfect aim at
entire worlds behind walls, all destroyed, until

the buried alive and the buried dead the burned and the
broken are all one in the hearts darkest undertow so
what use is poetry, the poet

wants to know.

II

They whispered *peace* in the dark corridors, as though
it were a code.

With gun thrust into his arms first time, he saluted
as trained, and shouted back
I swear to uphold

but the soldier behind him in formation heard
green gold
from out of the fire's eye and glow
in the rhythm of his marching boots.

When the speakers blared *red alert red alert*
across the desert base,
he saw the furred
and antlered faces

at the horizon, waiting
in watchful patience.

In the barracks at night they listened for
home as one listens
for bells that toll

only in foreign cities
or for snow

falling on the already fallen
snow
in remotest hills

in contented and constant
quietude.

The mother who sent her son to war, didn't
Stop her son from going to war,
Was found to be
Guilty.

She, and the High Court, found her
There where she was
Lost, and forever

Guilty.

IV

Meanwhile, hating Crete, and his long exile, filled with a desire to stand on his native soil, the father applied his thought to new

invention, and altered the natural order of things. He laid down lines of feathers, beginning with the smallest, following the shorter with longer

ones, so that you might think they had grown like that, on a slant. Then he fastened the feathers together with thread at the middle,

and bees-wax at the base, then flexed each one into a gentle curve, so that they seemed like real bird's wings. His son stood beside him,

and not realizing that he was handling what would be his peril, caught laughingly at the downy feathers that blew in the passing breeze, and

softened the yellow bees-wax with his thumb, in his play hindering his father's marvellous work. When last touches were put to what he had begun,

the father balanced his own body between the two wings and hovered there in the moving air. He instructed the boy as well, laying down the rules

of flight, as he fitted the newly created wings on the boy's shoulders. While he worked and issued his warnings, the ageing man's cheeks

were wet with tears, and his hands trembled. *No heat or sun, no delight of blue borne flight. He was carried aloft in the metal belly of*

the roaring beast, unleashed into the sky. His arms were bare. His chest was weighted with vest and pack and gun. He rode the air

until they landed in storming dust, into the bellowing battle. Even as his mouth cried his father's name, he wrapped bandages around the wounded,

staunched bleeding, placed morphine in ravaged mouths of pain. The sky was orphaned of birds; there were no feathers, not on land or waves. Imagined

wing-span of the fallen.

V

There were the tales being woven
of others' lives, long narratives
unfolding, crafted with devotion.

She had been told, "This is the contract
you make: you agree to believe,
you agree to care." But she

was already elsewhere: what pretend
could hold through despair. Old
vows were now disavowed.

Shelves weighted with books, second-hand
stores sought in strange cities, her
ceaseless travelling

through storied worlds created
as though just for her, for she had agreed
to believe –

That was over now.
Henceforth the heart would disallow all tales
that weren't true.

VI

He was only three years old.
He was four and soon to turn five.
He already knew most of the letters.

He was first born, devoted to the baby sister.
He was second born, always the younger brother.

He was killed in the evening at play in the street.
He was killed in the afternoon in the home's shuttered
peace.

The domed play tent, yellow and red, stood undisturbed
also after.

In the photo, he is all little boy pride standing tall and
erect beside the colourful tower he's built, slender
and so serious.

In the photo, bundled in small denim coat, he
sits by the sea, he is smiling, it must be a
first evening breeze.

It was mortar fire. It was a missile.
It was or it wasn't pre-emptive, was or wasn't
retaliatory.

The little-boy body wrapped in shrouds
is now
the single certainty.

(for Sahir Abu Namous and Daniel Tragerman, in memory)

VII

It was a sea of roaring lions, he
had said, their soft white-padded feet
are pawing at the wind.

It was a sea of small feathered
things, see how they spread
their light-boned wings

not to take flight, she had offered,
but for the simple delight
of hovering on air,

over water, then touching back
down on dark and quiet
waves.

It was a sea they hadn't seen, it was
possessed, delineated green
depths, death-silent

swimmers with explosives, barricaded
waves, grey vessels patrolling
water and wind.

It was a sea of mortar fire fired –
mistakenly, intentionally – it was
that sea, so

what use
is poetry

the poet keeps asking.

PAUL ÉLUARD

**WHAT HAS BECOME
IN A NEW NIGHT
EVERY RIGHT
NECESSITY
RECITATION
FOR A MOMENT OF CLARITY**

TRANSLATED BY CARLOS LARA

What has become of you why the white hair and roses
Why the brow the eyes rent heartrending
Great misunderstanding of the wedding of radium
Loneliness haunts me out of spite.

IN A NEW NIGHT

Woman with whom I have lived
Woman with whom I live
Woman with whom I will live
Always the same
You need a red cloak
Red gloves a red mask
And black stockings
Reasons evidence
Of seeing you completely naked
Pure nudity oh adorned adornment

Breasts oh my heart

EVERY RIGHT

Simulated

The flowery shade of flowers suspended in spring

The shortest day of the year and the Eskimo night

The agony of autumnal visionaries

The smell of roses the smart sting of nettle

Stretches of transparent linen

In the clearing of your eyes

Show the ravages of fire its inspired works

And the paradise of its ashes

The abstract phenomenon struggling with the hands of the clock

The wounds of truth the unbending oaths

Show yourself

You may come out in a crystal gown

Your beauty continues

Your eyes shed tears of smiles and caresses

Your eyes are without secrets

Without limits.

NECESSITY

With little earthly ceremony
Near those who maintain their balance
Above this misery of complete repose
Very close to the right path
In the dust of all seriousness
I build relationships between man and woman
Between the fonts of the sun and the sack of bumblebees
Between the enchanted caves and the avalanche
Between the eyes of intent and seaside laughter
Between the heraldic martlet and the garlic star
Between the plumb line and the noise of the wind
Between the fountain of ants and the culture of raspberries
Between the horseshoe and the fingertips
Between the chalcedony and the pins of winter
Between the blackthorn and the clear mimeticism
Between the carotid and the specter of salt
Between the monkey-puzzle and the dwarf's head
Between the forking rails and the red dove
Between man and woman
Between my loneliness and you.

RECITATION

for René Crevel

Virtue this horn of fortune
Audaciously vocation esteem ambition
Raze the heads of the confused
Rather take up firearms
Against the leafy sycamore and the knife.

In his numb armor
In his armor that resonates with false shame
Only from the last kiss
This pirate without a feather in his hat
Who provokes the barking of crows
The pirate the boredom the enemy of waiting in the rain
The alarm clock of religious maintenance
The capacities of oil
The alarm clock that shaves down the sleeper
And leaves him only time not to get dressed.

Weeks and months and years of sowing
By paths that never even touch the cane
A brain sabotaged by germs of bad will
We do not cry and if we do not cry it is because of the fire
That ruins the plaster that keeps the eyes on their shores
That sears everything passing through animalistic doors in a panic.

Beyond the fire there is no ash
Beyond the ashes there is fire.

The ragged bleachers roar in the rain
Clamoring to the coquettes of laughter all the cobblestones of laughter
And greetings of courtesy to secure the clichés
The dust digs deeper into the pockets
But this will only happen after the mud
Celebrating this virtue that is not mine.

Beyond the fire there is no ash
Beyond the ashes there is fire.

FOR A MOMENT OF CLARITY

for René Char

Raptors
Drinking
Peaceful blood
Greedy blood
Poorly dressed in robes of flames
The devastations of charms
Smiles at the cleansing of spears
At the shields of airy heads
In the storm
All is permitted
Meet the halos
At the hopeless promenade
The countless swirls
On the uncovered breasts.

Inhumane deaths
Oblivion
Invisible deaths
Imperishable blind eyeball
Allied to what it would see
A cloud reveals
The night that was made without it.

Drinking
Day from the depths of a lock.

BRIAN STRANG

THE INFINITE INFANT

1. HORSEMEN

“Now hear the fourfold roots of everything: enlivening Hera, Hades, shining Zeus, And Nestis, moistening mortal springs with tears.” --Empidocles

the four cardinals are flat relics
sacred bones like all bones
anonymous prone
the points of a compass:
ashen ravens of rain
milky land of winds
carmine lips of Lucifer
golden faces in soil
crux of poppies worms
become swollen scarlet
through skulls trees bud
scatter of petals four rivers
from this osseous cross
clouds crowd the sphere
to the roots of creation
deep in the other world
where antecedents
form a council
stream bright as flame
loam like the aether
between elders who know
this world is a shadow of their own
of stillness of waves
it multiplies and re-creates
as golden poppies
from the bones
of cardinals

*

the horsemen are consecrated
are merciful
exactly as pictured by that mind
that wanders amidst faces
waking or sleeping or liminal
senses into the kingdom
a newborn to be gathered
a cradle of breeze into
the unknowable eye
into the remembered kingdom
land of garlands and candles still
eternal is rest is nothing is blessed
in linen laid into the earth
by murmurs breathed by beloved
on skin then sinew then shining bone
horses undulating across the land
the wind through their ribs
sings a different song for every soil
breaks branches overextended
into the land rattles the bones of trees
the blood-filled limbs of every animal
shadowed by furies across the plains
medusas shred and scatter
carve their song across the land
their ashen eyes see nothing
but impermanence

*

the elements are not four but infinite
time relived eternally

caressed from itself infinitely multiple
lotus upon navel upon lotus upon navel
so that in the over and over of worlds
in their arrival and destruction
distances dissolve bend toward
aching equilibrium without gravity
governing earthbound days
grind with gravitas straining us
til we tick through the gate
and into depth of nubile night
where cells whirl and fires wake
into the warm crust of earth
in waters of the womb
deafening drumbeat
systole and diastole of devotion
waxes and wanes rises and falls
in the long slow universal rhythm

*

the kingdom within is sacred is profane
every breath every hand every one
every blood-dripping newborn beats
with a red-black heart unforgettable
the gift and curse of unforgettable
the kingdom within the very wind
fills the lungs of the furrowed wail
chant in a circle of shimmering souls
the kingdom is within and within it
the sacrosanct other kingdoms
creatures two legged and four
feather and fin and nothing at all

on the head of a pin every one
within every star every star
within a kingdom inside another
lotus from navel and lotus from navel
inside another inside another
all of it a land once thought mythical
but all the more real for it

2. FALLING FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE

“Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man.” Martin Heidegger

You write as you look at the flat Italian skies. “Flat Italian skies.” You wonder what the phrase could possibly mean. What is a flat sky? What is an Italian sky? What is a flat Italian? What is a sky?

You sit as a young person, the one you once were, at a kiosk café. What is a kiosk? A café? In a part of Spain, not Italy, you write the phrase that comes to you as a young person, seemingly from the air, from the sky, from the Spanish sky. The sky suspended over the café table, the one with the notebook and pen, the one with the coffee and spilled sugar and later that day with the red wine spilled from the nearby vineyards. Grapes grown and picked by people you know, by families who are not wealthy but prosper archaically, families that operate by land, by sun, by rain, by wind, while you struggle in an air-conditioned glass hallway over the ocean.

At this moment you are here, every age, every possible self: infinite worlds. But the infant appears to you in the middle of the air. A newborn is suddenly present, in the middle of the air, right in front of you, slowly twirling, its umbilical cord twisting away into the distance. To where? The sun? The soil? You look at your surroundings to assure yourself you are actually here, not dreaming.

Yes, you are here. Very much so. Yet the infant is also here, not a projection or a dream, but actually in front of you, very much so, just across the table and slightly above your head. It even casts a shadow. And so you write it down. You write words which approximate, which fail the experience. You leave symbols and marks, draw a picture, in your notebook. Each effort is a single experience, each a beautiful failure, each multiplies its presence. Each becomes another infant but none of them do anything to change the fact that this infant is in front of you.

You imagined an infant floating in the air still dripping its umbilical blood. Infant with ancient eyes, gilded by the many versions of itself. You imagined it and it appeared. Did imagining make it so? And now it exists irrefutably, not imagined but actual. It cracks its golden lids, licks its marbled lips, utters the first language, gives you the gift of language, a

language that creates itself, that floats a newborn in front of your very eyes. It looks directly at you.

You see windmills all around. Dozens and dozens of wooden windmills spinning wildly, faster than the wind itself. You know you have imagined these, projected these out to the world, that they are uniquely yours, that they exist but nobody else can see them. They become deafening, ringing your ears, propelling the sound through your body. They haunt you day and night, powered by the fury of your nightmares, by the terror of obligation.

But everyone sees an infant. You didn't imagine it; you woke to it. Everyone has always seen this same infant falling forward into the future. It existed long before you ever did. The infant is the same infant billions of times over, as it always has been. Its form is nowhere but its center is everywhere and everyone is born, collective wonder spinning from its own center, and it smiles and reaches to touch you. It smiles and reaches toward anyone who is ready.

3. PROPHECIES

*“Sadly we sing and with tremulous breath
As we stand by the mystical stream
In the valley and by the dark river of death
And yet ’tis no more than a dream”
Charles W. Ray*

the predictions went like this:
“the ones who now dance
will float just above the ground
the ones who lie
will be shortened—about a foot tall
the ones in the valley
will be flooded and will falter
they will be made of wood
and will become as old
this is what will become of
those left behind”
and they were true
in the lymph of your misgivings—
the hands of elves—
centipedes capsized and convenient
the uninitiated fold themselves
crows will grow to blind you
swarming with bees
harrowed holes for eyes
a coiled snake skeleton
is a coliseum of compost
ruin of renewal—the very center of the world
a wheel of toil—the very essence of the world
this is the city of after
city of forgotten faces

this is the holy city
faces peeled of rinds
of the roles they're playing
letting the precious gift
of unfolding futures fade
the prediction went like this:
"half-sized souls sprout legs
turning tadpoles to torpedoes
abandoned to anachronistic outposts"
each misfortune an omen
an open mouth
that refuses to heal that murmurs
the story of people twisted
from twigs by coyotes
now under land under lie upon lie
a heart in the soil keeps beating
leaking blood all the while
haunting the dreams of occupiers
sores on the face of their god
all around the dead listen
through the grass
hear your doubts and fears
you were certain
but now have only questions
become cleaner clearer soporific
impenetrable replicable
inconceivable city
is this the same world?
the same underbelly
in the gravel of speech
in a once-human figure circling
unconcerned with gravity?

or the circles of flame
and broken hoop of inheritance
never wanting to see itself
in either shadow or light?
people beg and line the roads
uttering a single whisper:
“nothing in the world
will be uncorrupted
dear hearts a blemish
and blight brought
not by justice but by
its abscess revenge
please tell us
how
we are
wrong”

*

the predictions went like this:
“liminal hosts
in a limitless
ovarian heaven
over agrarian land
with glass skin
and waxen hands
will come loose when you shake”
a circle of men in robes
listening to signals
in metadata

*

the eye sinks in the ocean
fish swarm from a bottomless pit
candy-colored and caustic

holy relics, divine images
longing and heartbreak
holy kneeling at holy places
the land where the tide goes out
where you may sleep day and night
and dream of sable crowns
empty sleeves
sweet nothings
below a painless sky
here you reside eternally
everyone lives eternally
everyone you know anyway
eventually
caterpillar to chrysalis
to butterfly
without a mouth
with which to eat
four paths
six directions
arc of a burning eye
the center of the earth
the tracing of a heart
a precious name
the tip of memory
marked by an aurora
new sky over the empty
ancient cities
over orange trees
from infant hands
kneel to say the prayer:
“fatal garden
fertile compass

cardinals
axis of the world
poppies splitting bone.”
a city silk-sewn
by a spider upon
lotus upon lotus
the eye entwined
in the roots of a tree
of a desire unwished
says come sing my song:
“a winter
carcass
hums with
living
voices”

4. THE TREE

“Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in symbols and images. The world will not receive truth in any other way.” --Gospel of Philip

Rooted into the underworld is the canopy of creation. The dead climb the branches and fall again with each leaf, born anew in the dying breeze, bedeviled by winter’s blackening until pierced by spring’s spears when they sink back into their circle, redoubling their efforts for the next cycle.

During the day, necromancers, men in red robes lying prone, facing each of the cardinal directions, lie face down as stepping stones. They ritualize to find the story they want to accept. You wander away and into your new reality, something is wiggling and gnawing into your head where it whispers intricate instructions, making you a cat’s paw to your celestial double. You sigh with relief. The land speaks through your mind.

The indelible moment circles on itself, the irreversible: the forests, the plains, depopulated towns. Flesh and blood are cleaved, strangers to their cascading former selves, each of which falls to the bottom of a starless lake. Twins stare at you from within, not seeing but knowing.

Their eyes are your eyes. Their eyes are the black mirror of water. Their eyes are the eyes of an infant.

The tree is endless, boughs bejeweled by stars, sphere upon sphere, tree upon tree, bloom upon bloom. A clatter of bones in the branches, feathers aflame. Cardinals dangle and adorn the branches, still seeking acceptable stories, until their gilded remains slip from their robes, blacken the soil and bring scions wherever they land: infinite infants, each with the snowy head of an owl.

Witches tell a story from one thousand seasons ago, written in silk, a story that repeats itself so many times that it becomes a forgetful old man in an infinite spiral. While you slumber, they stuff your belly with needles, circle your lips and leave a diadem of dread. In the morning, you sit up suddenly awake, touching the coarse twine stitches on each articulated pair of your ribs.

Endless. Boughs bejeweled by stars, sphere upon sphere, tree upon tree, bloom upon bloom.

The moon: a spoon of silver on the Elysian sphere, a medicine sewn into the sky. When swallowed by a fathomless blackened rose, when staring upward from the bottom of a deep lake, you will see the two birds in the sky, circling with wings spread, telling you of the shame of crippling servitude and how to float on the soundwaves above it. This is the gift you will receive, a gift of rising song. This is the touch of infinity, forever unfolding. The gift is this very instant and nothing more.

A newborn in the dark, initiates around a campfire, radiant horizons, a slaughtered bull.

Hawkmoth among the bees, rowan tree circled with candles, black-eyed raven, twilight forest of the hunt.

Black ocean, wind-whipped alabaster plain, the stretched bones of a cardinal rose, pyramid of golden skulls.

Saucers of stars for eyes, twin owls, messengers in a hail of diamonds, spiral arms of the Milky Way.

This very instant and nothing more. Endless.

TAHIR HAMUT

**THE STONE MIRROR
WALL
SAWUTJAN THE ICE CREAM MAN
PRAYER**

TRANSLATED BY JOSHUA L. FREEMAN

THE STONE MIRROR

I saw you looking in the stone mirror before,
dripping water, your idea was so close to me then.
Today you tasted the winter wind, a bitter taste.
The same depression, the same downcast features.
Two drops of the black night, your eyes!
You can't imagine a homeland you've never seen.
Where did you find the stone mirror? In a bygone age, or in your dream?
In those times all hearts were sand, were wind,
and they had a black smell that wouldn't fade.
Now, clouds crowd into the bottom of your ear, you can't hear,
you feel the mournful cold, you slowly lift your head,
loneliness follows loneliness, as sunlight sinks into sunlight.
Tell me, can I kiss you with frozen lips?
Tell me, will the sun that lights the stone mirror swallow us?
Goodbye my dearest, flee, get far from here!
But a tree will not defy the land.
Here it's still winter, the trees haven't yet grown leaves.
A handful of pale gold soul in my palm, in my fingers.
The spring season is my resolve.
Time is still long, like time itself.
Oh my dearest, tell me now: which one of us should die first?

November 1995, Ürümchi

WALL

At daybreak cold air brushed my face,
dawn's bitter smell is closing in.
The stars above me are small and high,
I stand wrapped in a coat of sheepskin.
The cold of Kashgar is nothing new,
nature is strange like my heart, and black as jet.
Up on a high wall I wrote these words:
My freedom—to remember, and to forget.
Last night's boiled water must be frozen by now,
the bark on the trees has probably split.
Rag shoes on my feet, a fur hat on my head,
my mood sours, I look around me a bit.
The sun will rise again from the tips of the trees,
in the east, in the mountains, still no dim light in view.
The wake-up horn will be sounded now,
Rizwan'göl, at that moment I thought of you.

February 1998, Kashgar

SAWUTJAN THE ICE CREAM MAN

On a familiar street where chilly winds stirred the firm city
in a cool season when desire and lust were forgotten
in a time when people whistled
to the lowly roadside flower's leaf
taking it for an iron bird
in conditions when no one could think of water or ice
in a place without boys longing to suffer and be men
without girls yearning for a thrill to quench their flames
I came upon Sawutjan the ice cream man

And before my eyes flashed
the weak and hesitant door
the humiliated bunk bed
the pockmarked table that gambled with fate
the constantly hungry half-open window
the melancholy four-legged chair
the spotless ceiling whose kin were senselessly slaughtered
This was a college dormitory
The dormitory where I first met Sawutjan

I thought
someone had inspired him to write a poem
as someone's apprentice he had learned a craft
someone had been his research topic
with someone he had opened a restaurant
he had worked for someone as an editor

Who could imagine Sawutjan making ice cream at daybreak
I haven't seen him
take off his clothes
ache with illness
become husband and father
take out a loan

tease his wife
vomit drunkenly
hit his child
dance
cry mournfully
and do so many other things

How miraculous that we keep on
for it makes no sense
I mean to say
we are miraculous

15 March 2015, Ürümchi

PRAYER

Every time
my two palms draw close to my face,
the light in my eyes
turns to silence between them.
It's true, I'm a sinner who takes care of himself,
who swallows his fury soundlessly.
When the heat of my palms and the wind of my breath
are joined with no help and no compromise,
my vague lips tremble without meaning.
When I hesitate shamelessly
amidst gratitude, songs of praise, blessings
I recall that a camel passed through a needle's eye.
Straining to understand love
I confirm that it's an elliptical field.
When the steady voice filling the universe
throws me off balance
I stroke my face with my palms.
Perhaps I do this too rudely, too quickly,
because there's something I'm hurrying to do:
I must find an old crow
I can lovingly call Dad
and look toward longingly!

November 2015, Ürümchi

CARLOS LARA

**CERULEAN RODEO
TRANSLATING ÉLUARD ON KĀ'ANAPALI BEACH
IMAGINARY EULOGY**

CERULEAN RODEO

Transient defibrillation of quotidian slur mentality with blood bucket

*

Depaginated hearing persona as fourth sun or fire's warp and mbira nebula

*

Deregulated suggestion of weather's amanuensis in a wig between winter and winter's
cream

*

Neutering symphonic verve with a looking bounty or beautiful Venn diagram death

*

Unusual depiction with tungsten interior and myriad of poplars in the tongue of light

*

Recuperative monitoring systems for emptied Aquarian blobs versus the dark web

*

Paginated diffraction as exact bleeding feat as unblessed sky's driveway druid

*

Defragmented conduction to sever palaver in discreet splendor with maple syrup

*

Substantiated spastics versus designated brain key in substandard housing projects

*

Translucent lecture on cholera and the vertiginous kitchen within a turquoise bosom

*

Resourced mnemonics and European blow-up dolls or else a butcher blow-drying the
fauna

*

Clandestine trigger of chance surgical dispensation with acorns of light big enough to
breathe

*

Proliferating perforation of the clinical layer of crows on Crow Beach

*

Connected triangulars within some exemplary she-male phantasms or mylar balloons

*

Triangular castration like immotile ocular theology or whatever slow scene corrodes

*

Patterning of the unequivocal substrata of other people or other pellucid octagons
engorged

*

Cathartic seasons of proactivity without nuanced burst or engineering wheeze when
vegetal baths go blind

*

Proactive recuperative nomination in auspicious flash distillery and similar Varsovian suit

*

Nonsensical egalitarian ministry as means of purification of rubies and ice packs

*

Dehazarding strangulation for the sake of heat or French toast or rental car

*

Alchemical vortex fricative with reverse erotic lobbying of course meaning baseball
tincture

*

Desensitized simulation elective or African architecture puddle with ruptured placemats

*

Derivative orchestral polemics by three-digit code and four falconers' words

*

Coalescing figmented mannerism in defense of immaterial savagery coupons cut from
brass beings

*

Material for referential massacre or phony colonial equipment sandwich

*

The core of mnemonic juggling as surveillance by California sin or cashew butter

*

Breaching suggestive numerology without exposure to covetous comas that read through
rose lenses

*

The signals of shuttling queries in regard to a mortal doorway or teaspoon in
Saskatchewan

*

Suffering regions of temporal devotion versus North Star elliptical browsing of deified
dumplings

*

Residual sublimity in a survivor's mirror squalor breach or blank black checkbook

*

Creative predestined wager on electrical polar bear experience with cranial torture
pampas

*

Subliminal heart as subliminal purple searching for instance purple coroner caffeine

*

Subliminal divination origin as prevalence of general neon fronds fallen by the bare bay

*

Retroactive sentimental pivoting bona fide and caustic with sporadic thespian tort riddles

*

Supernal gravitational botany foregoing any metaphorical quinine pie a la morgue

*

Adrenal wind gestation for a purposeful cipher of tangerine pursuits and pussies

*

Towing pure automatism like a puzzle of black flames in situ forgiving white trees

*

The bridge of coronal reasoning and sparrow-deepening with macro-distortion is a living
creature

*

Dislodging atmospheric variety and somehow producing zealous totemic abuse tablets at dusk

*

Cerulean rodeo beyond a vestal conniption of spectra beyond non-breakfast and black mass

TRANSLATING ÉLUARD ON KĀ'ANAPALI BEACH

everyone lives in Taiwan or China
not to exist in the world of memories
presence sponge
there is a two and a three a dolphin of bread that is federal and warped smoking baby
the fear of gazpacho at midnight the unmentionable outlandish ghost dunes
stalks cut in the razor home red labrador all madness
that's all it is
horror of ten wolves in time in a man in a shimmery pungent tux in a gorgeous canoe
my life is stealth glass but it's still mine
image of love unright talking of huge alabaster
talking of the unreined Camaro in your little putative residuum
in general women try to prove a cause post-wreck
and icy now now financial chains and black crafts in American summer fable
you prove by what you give and violently and remove the grand from larceny
a little green rip in every M
a screwy nest of dirt
emboldened by the softest pain or name or circular sheet of wet whips
and mainly this is so
from Charleston South Carolina to Cubism all the entrances to the palace are locked from within
it's like Vanuatuan wallpaper and if I cared to break my word I would

IMAGINARY EULOGY

where were we again never seeing
in goodness's camouflage or untrue distance ablation
I'll have the salamander bowl hold the pigeon pate
as murals distract me
dentists on the perimeter or printable lake blue Peshawar lube
my tears don't get out lest I lose them
I've seen no such thing as white orally or in the pie of real gel real Gherasim Luca detaille
putting fire froth of course in the visiting lanterns in the journalistic voir gilt
supposing both desires keep their long labradorite schemes conjugating
the few veterans I knew the few ducks in seaweed amputated door esperanza confetti for
seeing
doves doves doves come with more
so many kittens so much mylar in my way volt spillage in my soul
I'm on my way
Bonsall diatribe skullduggery
will the statues ever last again on the terrace I tell you to open wide
slowly
the patience of indelible palaver oxygen
the lightning of youth is a stab all at once
why don't you caress them a year apart
so much bad stuff is slated to stop so much cake and jewelry destroyed in the hold-up
unintelligible child truth
god pumped you like a cowfish
like a medicine kept in the movies for corpses or candy boring comma good life
it takes a good number to wear the desert down
we're not the only lungs that happen to appear in the here fowl
weeds begin to drip on the glassy blue beam
the smell of fennel or hydrochloric acid come with more
your head is bald like a grocery store
how do you deal with the womb of people

FRIEDERIKE MAYRÖCKER

FROM FLEURS

TRANSLATED BY JONATHAN LARSON

»the fairy-spook, thus JD, to just sit somewhere I mean bucolically. To sit somewhere and laugh, I mean on 1 bench, on this bench in front of the shoe-store, il giardino in your eyes. I felt as if I'd wanted to spell MUSICS these unrecognizable figures that pass through my dreams, where do they come from how do they get together I've never seen them, felt them, since it's raining scabiosas, etc., Pierrot, you whispered, as you turned over the page, the sentence not going on, broken off right in the middle the text as in GLAS by JD, proverbs I don't like, you know, in this wheat field we stood with the friends from America who suddenly appeared but I was unhitched and I was tired of having to stand and listen for so long namely snorting. So I let myself fall into the wheat field, I say. Sterile is like SAINT = St. = I remember this word thus more exactly, the physiotherapist laid her hand on my HEAD that it should grow warm and the pain vanish. How inmost her inner warmth must be, that she should be able to hand over so much to me for days on end not having pulled the curtains aside not opening the window, I've sealed myself off from the world, ach in tears the leaves of the olive tree in the dream the Carnic alps. Perhaps I'm crazy, my mother said 1 couple of years before her death, which I tried to talk her out of. Have lost 1 couple of limbs that's how you've left me without arms and legs I miss you dearly, the following day this swarm o.tears where are you? Wind working on clouds, lace-blossoms in the window = (the secrets of conscience),«

12.10.14

»when I sit I sit (kitchen) leaning forwards and silver-fir plunges out of my eye:
out of my memory, namely, then scrap the rest of the wood-honey from the
plate isn't it so wild duck, rank growth yellow pearl mimosa 1 tiny piece of
banana strawberry grape what color! Dominos you know, think of Roberta that
she her mother's fur coat (which was driven over by 1 car) gifted to 1 friend
: 1 shock 1 tear 1 drop of blood in the fur etc. quietly quietly the curls grow
along the brow the scissors of the tambourine and you kneel in front of the
frogs there in the puddle the branchlets, isn't it so and cry out »BRANCHLET!,
BRANCHLET!«- and you start laughing and with your foot you fling 1 of
the branchlets I mean fate's conducting (I'm burning. Am your kitty or doll il
giardino in your eyes ach in the cloth hall of my mania etc.) well yes like S'NOW
and the like I also stopped and stood there and we looked at each other:
such 1 Ischl! thereon this genre painting near the end of summer, or whichever.

1 heavenly hint or just the new donning o.cap, sewing the interior and cleaning. I also
took my pleasure in it: in this gala : that her = Angelika Kaufmann trembling like Cy
Twombly beyond the margins of the page, which charmed me

I mean 's the memory-ear
falling asleep, slumbering,
»between«««

Juliana Kaminskaja approached
me and said, you look like your
poems,

23.10.14

»in 1 cup cornelian cherry or rose hip red headlet, and fold hands then the crows staged their beautiful play on the sky etc., I felt as if I wanted to spell the music meanwhile, it rained scabiosas, since it rained scabiosas, you know. The physiotherapist laid her hand on my head that it should grow warm and the pain vanish: how mighty must the warmth of her body have been that she could give off so much of it to me sleepy head you!, finally swallowed 1 host, JD, naked wet foot wears headscarf, someone says to me in 1 dream that he has bathed 153 times in his life so far then he peeped through the door-gap or the judas-hole, which alarmed me, how often the sun on your head shimmering: reveling, WRINKLE OF THE EYELID, as Marcell Feldberg. As I my finger. Me in the finger. I mean slaughtered raising the wounded hand to the stiff eye and cried out »no! no!« because it was the red poppies (the Trabi that time), etc.

for Susanne Neumann: I mean act of love since you repaired the typing machine for me, what were you doing flossing around in my mouth oral cavity, il giardino in your eyes ach heavenlet (valley of tears) it's unbelievable!, I had taken this PRETTY AS PICTURE evening to bed. Ach the boys! : the paramedics took my blood pressure, the vows of the paramedics, the water service of the Sicilian water houndlet, 1 mezzosoprano on the meadow, I say, we rushed along we : cracked open late-summer's eye on the horizon have been listening to Fauré today, have the clear tear / ach so what! that at 1 great distance I only 1 couple of words on the phone, flashes o.silver longing, you know, I mean 's the memory-ear, 9 o'clock in the evening falling asleep, slumbering, am

out of my mind,«

27.10.14

»I mean it astounds me for about 6 ½ years now I've been reading from Jacques Derrida's GLAS. The book has been read apart its seam or seal has dissolved itself it's as sensitive as glass: 1 favorite color (it was THE POSTCARD by Jacques Derrida wherein I read daily before) Because I kept misplacing it, I've had to repurchase it 3X etc.) But back to GLAS which means death knell. I experience miracles with GLAS as far as my writing is concerned: I open the book e.g. to page 142 and catch sight of 3 columns of enigmatic text. At left the effort o.Hegel, in the middle the citation of 1 Jean Genet text (»like 1 thief's diary, so that 1 will have to run through it in every which way, in order to cut or collect all the flowers there«) and at the right, in cursive print, kidneywards, 1 X more 1 citation of Jean Genet's. Well yes, GLAS is my morning prayer: 1 word makes 1 word sequence, that I begin writing into my sketchbook: I let myself become infected with this language I throw up I throw up mind and mood in utmost arousal etc. On page 289 the book ends in the midst of things with the wordlet »from«: 1 heart- rending goodbye. I begin reading the book again, at night it lies on my pillow and I love it yes yes this drive home: soft as when 1 sled over snow frozen solid. It's the honey-licking it's the consecrated it's the scent of this book it's 1 tumble of language. To my feet the little roses it was 5 and I wanted to finish sleeping to continue writing,«

30.10.14

»at my morning window«

»swallow the host ach clear-cut blond wood, over the dinner table the lower lip (DALÍ). I style myself, my haircut, I puzzle over what day of the week, look back on my dream as I awake as if I were looking over 1 landscape that I had raced through, I ask myself, that time when I was writing this poem, how it changed. I mean expulsion of words: even in those times I let the doves flutter, I fantasized »1 morning window«: »my morning window« – that was not etc. The sentiment too flat: had I been listening to myself?: no depth : presumably 1 bad poem. VIGNETTES : I wrote vignettes the moon as 1 »jubilant guest« : 1 may not write like that : that just rattles, no flesh (of the poem) even though, 1 real (even if unexact) shadow namely the survived war (»shattered helmet of my church tower«), written on August 18, 1946, I was 22 then, had 1 long way before me, etc., was romantic was solitary. Well yes, I waved around for the longest time with Eros, flower and reverie, evermore these PRETTY AS PICTURE marginalia, at the feet (red poppy, delirium), wrinkle of the island (eyelid), »for every date 1 drop of blood«, JD.

In the present time to be cared for (»I'm cared for«). Meanwhile, he photographed her: that time with my first book between her bared breasts. I'd enjoyed it: this GALA : Angelika K. how she trembled beyond the page margin, while the cones I mean the sparse wood etc. and we felt around for the new virtues,

(I thought of Cy Twombly),«

1.11.14

»agnus dei the TINY FEET bound together, 1 tuftlet of white flowers in the mouth (to wipe the eyes with the back of the hand, I awake with a smile meanwhile my foot over stony preterite etc., the little plastic-lamb in its stable stands between rotten raspberries and nappy samani woe is me I watched how the green bud of the amaryllis began to unfold itself there I held my breath, the laying out of 1 dead bee in 1 hand towel that's unbelievable, bucolic namely am torn to pieces. 2 diminutives after another that won't work. The bud of the amaryllis has brought forth 1 red blossom overnight that's unbelievable ½ public Valkyrie ran 1 kilometer around my apartment today,) woe is me the multiplication of the lilac-peltlet on my skin etc.

left fingerlet fallen asleep meanwhile, it thundered, spooned 1 meal, meanwhile the red mallow in the red dawn. 1 dog's barking woke me up, but there was no dog, the townlet's houses diced down above it »the great alpine chain« = Goethe. I sit there every morning in fact in my kitchen that wears 1 gloriole etc., already 's the birdie warbling the dirge, you know. Woe is me I'm 1 torn human, woe is me, I'm treated like 1 child, woe is me nearness of death, I mean it was 1 Kahnweiler day. Horrified they glanced at me I mean as I wanted to part with the words »these little roses belong to me«: someone had given me this bouquetlet in the course of the evening and put it in 1 glass of water etc. the trees with rings around the eyes 1 hyacinth bent toward me,

I mean the St. Nicholas in
Bari you know«

for Nikolaus Brinskele
6.11.14

»this our roped party, I say from
my sleep, the plastic-lambkin like
plunder the tousled red-cheeked
apple in the stable Franz Liszt tears
apart my veins. What concerns the
art of this yg. Russian poet I didn't
admire her language so much as her
intimate = hidden imagination, but
this wasn't grasped

woe is me what I feel but can't describe (Beethoven), the pain walks back-and-forth
in my body and sometimes he squats in this sometimes in that corner there where the
föhn-clouds blossom in the westerly sky and change color, after the big storm in the
night the yg. trees felled in the street, isn't it so, I say »but see the branchlets« whereupon
you glance at me namely in tears it thunders in my chest and it lightning flashes in
my skull and I scratch up my face with my black nails, or the woven fabric e.g., as little
grapes I mean the fluttering smoke of my since we with the car: past the DOG-AREA
»I met him in Barcelona etc.« Woe is me what I looking back (in little jabs) my 1st
French book in grade school with pleasant every day sketches: the butcher, the dog, the
vehicle, the cyclist, the lantern: »dans la rue« ach how charming this was! – After 1 half
page am I DOPEY = after I'd written half 1 page this breakdown you know, 1 open
tavern, as Ely with wet garb: he was to be no longer able to hold back the urge, my God
/ when I read in GLAS, I receive 1 text that I myself would have liked to have written,
I'm touched because the shadow of JD's writing falls upon me = upon my mind etc. I'm
charmed and enflamed while airplanes and gusts of wind, I say, namely so blows the wind
in my innards

(because he looked to mirror me so, I found it hard to bear him) with 1
raw tongue I lick the crumbs from the table, ach as single berries of 1 grape
bunch and bundle in the depths of my throat and I struggle for air I mean,

TONSURE,«

7.11.14

»I promptly turned 13, 's the fistlet pressed up against th'mawlet : no! 2 diminutives
1 after the other: that won't work, play dead, close the eyes »AS ERROR« on the blood
pressure measuring-device (was I confused, etc.), ach spring-tenderly billy goatlet in my
dream while opening eyes pastose dark-red of my sailor-dress was 1 fighter pilot
in the 1st World War, the sun's fawn in the condition of the forest etc., hamster wheel
TIME, the moon as vignette, you know, and planted hydrangeas in front of your bag, well
yes 1 twilight-sleep : 1 Samaritan with 1 cravat in the »little café«, night-lip red (torn) by
Bernadette Haller, Jean Genet in the vase I remember, garden-make-up in dainty air etc.,
this tear-literature, heartfelt greetings with larkspur I mean LUNA!, the cold points on
your body your open arms when we see each other again!,

listen here! it was somewhat like I read from the presence of your face:
the reeled out flowers namely that it startled me and I jumped away. The
landscape I've watched incessantly: mountains valleys and pastures meads
miracle of the stars (domin0) gesture of glory the beloved mangy
Christmas tree from the year before on the tablet you know, your musing,

I'm cracked up and crazed,«

9.11.14

»I dreamt I SANK in your pair of eyes that looked like this



in each of your pretty large eyes floated
1 rectangle in which fairytale characters
romped about then you ran away with
the words »must go to the theatre to sing
XERXES«. Woe is me I bar-belled over the
ocean and listened to the opera to Xerxes
o.Georg Friedrich Händel's (she asked, do
you still think of Georg H. sometimes)

nothing but little Honeggers, »it's too early to regard etamine«, JD, Mom sewed me tiny
dresses out of etamine slept long today and dreamt 1 lot: if you hadn't woken me up
I would have slept over into the drunklet = into eternity etc. We phoned in the morning
mostly (but with hands full of flowers, JD), I always want to learn something from you
but you say, I can't talk about anything in the morning I haven't experienced anything yet!

this alpine glow slipped from my
hand, this moss in erring at the
sill of the house in D.

Soletti on the kitchen floor 1 cat plate, when
you're on 1 TRIP when you hearten me
that I nearly lose my mind, the reeled-out
flowers and 1 rain in the window. Listen
here it may have been like that, like 1 viola-
rain, fleur in the shower. That time in the
50s when we read the writings of Konrad
Bayer for the 1st time, you said »I don't understand 1
word, etc.«

the swallow turns southward the bushes wilt but I'd waved to the beloved mountains
every morning from the window, the dew in the gardenlet, resounding of impressions I
mean most agreeable LUNA and branchlet the thin thread of your voice from far away.
In the morning »effusion of the holy spirit« b.Arnulf Rainer 1952 watercolor on paper,
etc.«

14.11.14

SAWAKO NAKAYASU

**GIRL F WAITS ON THE STREET CORNER OF
LIMBER INTENTIONS
HORNS, DELIVERY OF**

GIRL F WAITS ON THE STREET CORNER OF LIMBER INTENTIONS

I can see her body pressed into what is commonly acknowledged as empty space as if the angular turn of the street could inversely cut her open, as if she was not already open, spilt, missing something here and there. I acknowledge her as I crawl by, she acknowledges me as I roll myself into a ball of tin foil, tightly pack myself in, to weather the impending fight. The team of tin foil balls is usually disqualified pretty early, and that's just fine with me, I'm wussy that way. That said, there are a whole bunch of tin foil balls gathering behind Girl F here on this corner that is quickly converting itself into a platform, which makes me just a touch anxious. Last time we only used four, but this time I can't count what must be hundreds, thousands of tin foil balls, oh here come a couple more Girl Scouts with the foil that was used for tonight's roasted turkey dinner. Ball it up, little girls. Who roasts turkey on a regular weeknight that's not even a holiday. That kind of troop leader. This is the kind of troop leader I need to keep Girl F away from – to the naked eye, Girl F may look like an innocent girl on an innocent corner, but I have been made of tin foil for quite a long time now, and let me tell you, do I know how these things work. Soon the corner will be an isle, for starters. Then an island, then a mountain. Just let me make sure I make it back safely and I will tell you everything, about every single forehead I have had the privilege of hitting and bouncing, hitting and bouncing, off of and off of and off of again.

HORNS, DELIVERY OF

Don't look directly at the horns of Girl H. The aggregate time you spend with your retina focused on either of her horns will, by some estimates, be equivalent to the number of speech acts you make, supposedly voluntarily, that will come back to haunt, bite, or exploit you in the end. Calculated in one act per microsecond.

The horns of Girl G, however, are relatively innocuous. She gets them delivered weekly to her home. You can look, even stare, at them with no direct consequence. Sometimes she covers them with a homemade felt cozy, but that's just for effect and there is no physical harm in having retinal contact with the horns of Girl G. This offer, however, is not valid in the realms of spiritual, ethical, micro- and macro-emotional realms of your well-being and that of the world, so I would still caution you against removing the felt cozy from the horns of Girl G, even if she invites you. Especially if she invites you.

GEORGE ECONOMOU

ROUGH TRADE--ANACREON

ROUGH, ROUGHER, & ROUGHEST TRADE

“In representing more adequately what translation does, and in raising awareness even among translators of the implications of textual instability for their task, this book may encourage us to translate differently—to expand our notion of what translation can do, and to imagine modes of translating that break the mold in which the reigning (if often disguised) discourse of originality and derivation seems to have trapped us.”—Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* (Bloomsbury, 2017), p.31.

Having explored the possibilities off and on for several years of translating poems from ancient Greek in stages I thought of as rough, rougher, and roughest, I made a firm commitment in the early spring of 2017 to the effort by formalizing it in two sets of translations following this three-way paradigm entitled “Theocritus: Rough, Rougher, Roughest Trade and Commentary” for a special issue of *Golden Handcuffs Review*: “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou Art Translated” (Vol. 11, #23, 2017). Put directly, the idea behind doing what I have come to call the “rough stuff” involves starting with a rendition that presents a version that is as faithful to the content and form of the original as I can make, followed by two more versions guided by the comparative and superlative degrees of “rough,” levels conceived and executed with the intention of exploring new and unexpected contexts and textures for the poem rather than by a wish to produce a more finished adaptation or do-over of the level of “rough.” As the “roughest” version in the latest addition to this project from Anacreon presented here begs, these final renditions can also—often should—be read as independent poems. My urge to reiterate—to tell again and again but with a difference—the poem in translation mirrors in its own way the textual condition of the variance of originals that Karen Emmerich so brilliantly explores in her rich and important new book *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*. Though arriving a year later, it comes in good time for me to enjoy a sense of confirmation and newfound inspiration for this work in progress.

ANACREON

(c. 563 – 478 BC) quoted by Athenaeus (c. 170 – 230 AD) *The Deipnosophists*, 12. 533e, following his observation that in these lines Anacreon says Artemon “shot from poverty to luxury”:

In the past he appeared in a shabby wasp-wasted covering,
with wooden knuckle-boned dice in his ears, and a bald oxhide
round his ribs, the never-washed wrap of a useless shield,
hanging with women who sell bread or who choose to whore,
pulling off a life of fraud--that arch rogue Artemon,
whose neck was often strapped to the wheel or whipping stock,
whose back was often lashed with a leather whip
and his hair and beard plucked bare.
But now low-life Kyke's son rides in a carriage sporting gold earrings
and handles an ivory parasol oh so very ladylike.

*

Once he was deeply down and out,
and really looked it in his shredded threads--tricky Artie,
who lived off recruited boys and girls on the street
while dodging the cops and his competitors,
too often without success.
Yet here he is now rolling by on fancy wheels
with windows down and volume up.

*

Once he popped out
at Coney Island Hospital
he was bound to turn hedge
fund tricks and Ponzi schemes--
that fool for fraud, Marty--
and raise the price of life saving drugs
five thousand percent with his impishly venal
smirk ear to ear but heading now with a hop
skip and a jump into jail back in Brooklyn.
That's the way the money goes--
Pop goes the weasel!

HARRIET TARLO

FROM CUT FLOWERS

cut flowers why would they when
it came to it lasting longer
long days before dawn sees
a fair light crows & robins upright
on the wall look out, learn to travel in
deep time blood fish & bone, find new
ventures prepare, parse, prey for
vegetables

offering a night's accommodation
only one understanding, staying
there while dog eats breakfast
neurotic we may not enjoy this
maybe checking all the time
still here really we made her
she ate it apparently
empty

I thought it was on the cover, on cover
shredding quilt imprisoned access
to silk, to skin not an amazing machine
give yourself a little lift, lovely
listening to nothing, not radio
waves listening to loud
in the night thudding doors
wild

waiting for the percentage to cut out
access to screen stage
writing in wood frame
hostile hacking against
running a temperature , then
out night-gathering
nuts & fruits, moulden
berries

lowly land, we lost years of it (in this country)
when all came sliding, side-fall in all of
all quiet-side before spring dives
too early draws out dawn
grows colder enlightens earlier
everyday too late for address
redress some kind of
season

slept at all the wrong tones, tines
slower than warmer, the train
four-square seats facing, make
light of legs look - between people - look
tessellation oblong out at weather
who actually comes around
any more stuck for single
words

JORGENRIQUE ADOUM

ECUADOR

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

TASK AND VACATIONS

THE MAJARAJAH AND THE SALAMANDERS

COINCIOMBEDIENCE

PASTOLOGY

HOTEL SAINT-JACQUES

TRANSLATED BY KATHERINE M. HEDEEN

AND VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ NÚÑEZ

ECUADOR

1. THE GEOGRAPHY

It is an unreal country bordered by itself,
split by an imaginary line
and still sunk in the cement at the pyramid foot.
If not, how could the foreigner have her picture taken
openlegged over my homeland as if above a mirror,
the line right below her sex
and on the back: "Greetings from la mitad del mundo."
(Children, great eyes surrounded
by skeleton, and an Indian crying
century mountains behind a burro.)

2. THE MEMORY

The soul decayed, the pasillo aches in the rootnerve,
and I, a Pavlov dog, in one jump
sit down at the door of the tinsmith's
(it was always daytime there) to sniff around the street
I went down to go back and they keep on hitting me.
When you still don't have a homeland but for
this irremediable sadness underneath the pride,
homeland is the memory pocket where I
take this out: corncobbed Indians in Catholic mass
drunkenness and kickshelled on Sunday afternoon,
the cemetery where I was a mate to so many classmates
to review the law tables: this,
bits of an ancient animal, this is enough for me, I rebuild
the torrid patriotic paleolithic folkloric completely,
the republic cracks, the commonlaw clay
where we slip to our liking. (You too, tiny dinosaur
bone, your ankle where you're tied
to me, great quartered girl, and your other ankle
where you're tied, because I am your banishment.)
And the song lulling the murdered man
so he'll die without saying a thing
and making the dog suffer
to see how its gland fills up.
Gladly. Just to experiment.

3. HISTORY

No one chose the iguana: Saurian
military periods: first Monday
on earth where the Pleistocene is still
the future the Bolshevik talks about.
When the *Beagle* docks, the autochthonous quadruman
still doesn't know he's defeated God
and gets scared, crosses himself with salt, repentant:
"Only the vulture is right." (The turtle,
with its historical sadness, still dragging
its laziness shell on its back.)

Volcano islands
and beast, Darwin data.

A slow
hungry fauna follows him in the hungry
landscape: only the vulture rules.

"Harassed
for spreading false rumors about natural
selection and survival of the fittest."

I was talking about the banished comrades.

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR*

1. THE CENOTAPH INSCRIPTION

Around the second night of that day I gathered my family in the hollow of my hand
caressed dry sediment until the verge
shoulders in dust crushed hair
not even pieces of the bride or half a child
not even skeleton checked for teeth and shoes
recognizing the name only from the flavor
divining in which street

I'm sorry

I don't know why the burning didn't reach me
why my shadow didn't incrust the splendor along with yours
in the stone letter to the happiest generations
and I can't ask you Perch settle deposit
mill sawdust ferocious explosion
only for the wind to scatter your bone syllables
and even the greeting even the voice even the breath
and the cough pushing you down the roads
and the cry dissolving you with the years and the river cry
openmouthed fear lye
Peaceless for the last time Maybe this way the error maybe
maybe it won't need to be repeated

2. ROBERT JUNK'S HORSE

It ran up against bones and metals in the walls
against stones and unread deaths statue water
cursed the cranium rehearsing the whinny it learned for this century
searching for the eyes it had until the temperature seized its gallop tempering its mane
and treading on the whips that hung from its very hide
it smelled of sadstep helmet grass or stable
no longer on the earth

You'd have to kill it so it wouldn't suffer but who can
kill now so sick of death it makes you want to throw up
and we who said we'd suffered so much
so our shape would be wiped out with just one blow before time
so the hero with his compassionate helixes would come
what bird more human than the American would devour us
Today the murderer and even more the soldier loved
because it's easier than forgetting
I rummaged beneath the rubble and there's nothing but rubble
remains of swearwords like humanism god see you later I love you
that we played with in childhood (Where is tenderness? It's turned to ash
And love? It disappeared in the water. Where is my brother? He dried out)
Nothing's left but this coagulation of surprise trotting
exterminated frantically
not knowing which spine where it chose the wrong hell
it went back to the future
hitting up against today against the fears

3. LETTER FROM THE REVEREND KIYOSHI TANIMOTO, METHODIST PASTOR

Yesterday, August 15, was the happiest day in our history
We were told that we were to hear important news.
We were the ruins off to the station in ruins where a loudspeaker had been placed.
Cemetery marching fellow mummies whose bandages opened
the animal necessity to know what's going on, why it's resuscitated.
Those who ended up eyeless leaning on their daughters
on crutches those daughterless.
Then we listened.
It was the voice of the Emperor himself speaking to us
to men as common as us
so incredibly common that we'd never listened to him.
We could hear him in person voice for the first time in four dynasties.
When we realized it we were crying
I don't think we'll ever feel so happy again.
He spoke of what had happened to us and we already knew
but thanks to so much destruction we were listening to him.
Oh wonderful blessing to have deserved it.
We are satisfied with such a voracious sacrifice.

4. MONUMENT TO THE CHILDREN

“It weighs” said the girl holding the bit of paper between her fingers “too much”
If you make a thousand tiny birds you’ll get better (empiricism of someone who
 had nothing but measles or tonsillitis)
It’s so hard to fold it wooden bird tin bird bad little bird
Surrounding her kneeled down addition tables gathered
adding units to certainty I put down five and take twenty to the column of gullibility
In a corner someone made a dove and threw it on the pile where the flock grew
to make it live even if it was a hoax
helping the woman project to know what it’s like to be a grown up
running down figures like in school years ages
When the choir was going to sing “five hundred eight” they swallowed the number with a
 fear sip
She couldn’t finish the other wing
Then the children who were left went to knock on the doors’ extinguished coals
they went into the undone room stones
cleaning their first doubt with the backs of their hands
they stirred bones collected papers ruin wrappers
newspapers where nothing had happened yet
and on the stifled city streets along the walls where the shadow of a man on his way to
 work lingered
the tiny hands folded day and night
as they cried they folded as they grew
tiny birds pink yellow green blue white
so no one dies that way before dying goodly
so each one has their quota secured various times a thousand doves various times a thousand
 days
Because the murderer moves everywhere *tourist tour* selling his carrot with gunshots
returns to the site kicking the cat so the ghosts don’t recognize him
brains marrow lights lilacs in the bar among the timid Japanese survivor breasts
 how many dollars
to admire the monument the ashes
to place his author signature at the foot of the fortythousand identified and the
 eightythousand who were never named a thing
to photograph *smile* disfigured girls

as if we could forget as if we could sleep yes
Souvenirs from Hiroshima Souvenirs from the wonderful world of childhood
Who gives a fuck about love or poetry now if we don't use them anymore
Goodbye Greek statue sciences of man golden proportion
Goodbye God

TASK AND VACATIONS

to be being –but deeprooted– and find the trace
of our own toes from our own steps
and not hiding in the other made for us
in parts with signs ID card 251/99/7
anobody voting
the whodoeshethinkheis
guy poorguy
the one who’s changed so much

to be able to be –if you could– honest intact like an animal
or at least not fall into respectable citizen
the one who has it all figured out (the heartjunk
in the bottom drawer)
or the one who only demands what he’s given
or the one who only loves what he should
or the one who with all his halves has never been alone
and to take a break from yourself wake up all at once
occupying your nothingness stuck in your deman
as if you were Hindu and died and it was true
you come back lizard spider dwarf
normallikeeveryoneelse wellbehaved oddball
cadaver burglars by phone
talking about some bones sent in the mail
and to be the addressee get them back whole like you had them
with all my musing splinters
with my dear problematic nails
and then to forgive me (even if I laughed so much)
for having gone and left me waiting

THE MAHARAJAH AND THE SALAMANDERS

plaza with the taciturn crowd the sicklysweet of its ancient quadruped open in the drought
the bridge shrine to the river memory
defeated by the last squadrons of the rain

dust wickedness its drifting fabrics
trap young girls shroud the great fly of their bellies
gathering flies it is poverty scratching away at its flies
bodies in exodus in the evening remains of the battle against midday
in search of shade like someone seeking a tomb
easier than the black umbrella palate
market of small sticks pieces petals of things from someday
stones of a country ended never was
wagons of the void dragged along by bovine skeletons from another prophecy
a thousand years rawboned cows a thousand years hides gnawed at the joints of history

(but somewhere on earth I gripe because the beer's lukewarm)

at the market no shoppers or onlookers charcoal food feldspar cereal and mica mucilaginous
drinks
and the birds screaming syllables more human than desert wind instruments
merciful parrots tarnished in their box with predictions of goodluck
charmners of snakes defanged
bitten long ago by friends and disciples

every beggar is a philosophy survivor
every man is untouchable and drones epidemic litanies
in this monastery of sores or pustule terrace
paralysis and scrofula
consumptives gilded by fever from the inside
mangy syphilitics hemiplegics
women with ataxia and gonorrhoea
women with hydrocephalus and cholera
dazed by melanosis

saints twisted by wisdom
tightrope walkers spasmodic cataleptic
rickets hypertrophy emphysema
languid mystical in agony
skeletons lined in brown parchment
skeletons wrapped in mosquito netting
two knees I recall of another leg two teeth
on a cheek old religion relic

and the woman whose forehead was washed by widowhood tries to defend what the dead
man left her of a breast for the new wedding
chews on a betel leaf adorned unsettled by it
her red gob of spit spider swallowing up the scorpion from the floor
and her furious love feet keep the mythological dogs at bay
they brush by her sexual papaver dampen her age beneath her soft hairs

(but in some hotel on earth the English woman asks me how much sugar and I respond
with my room number 32)

near the sky on the hill the maharajah's palace and the maharajah's hunting lodge and the
maharajah's zoo and the maharajah's stables and the maharajah's summer home and
the maharajah's guard barracks and the maharajah's resting place and the maharajah's
guest house

the temple is near I don't know which century
unfinished by architects prophets of ruin
the last gods representatives of the rock content in their sculpture
their bodies clustered from desire the changing baroque flower of their copula
giving audience to the lasting oblivion delegations
procession of summer cripples their stuttering in another tongue their fingers upon a tallow
flame
not burning their antiquity or the crust of the antiquity of their poverty or the bacilli of
their poverty
leaving behind alms price for an ashmark between eyebrows
to be carried away by the wind like a sign of the rubble to follow
and the maharajah's concubines and elephants

(and now somewhere on earth other delegations ungrudgingly gather their coins from
memory
for another less content god solitary in his wood
and another secondrate maharajah on his horse)

one day this too will be the human condition I think

COINCIOBEDIENCE

in my cyclopedic yet even more mathematic ignorance
i've just learned a group can be one
in other words i'm not as alone as i thought
i keep myself company unawares
but my other i's bore me so much
i'm always better off alone
than in bad company
and so once more we're back to square one
and by the way i'm not breaking the rules
of the state of siege we live in

PASTOLOGY

againstthegrain againsttraffic
countercurrent
againsttherain
counterheart and counteroblivion
counterblow of the been
surviving counterspouse
againstdestiny and against governments
which are all that's absurd about destiny
counterclarity and counterlogic
againstgeography (because it was
against passports dictators continents
and against custom
which is badder than our dictators*)
against you and your i'mafraids
against me and my backward certainty
against ourselves
in other words counterall

and all for what

HOTEL SAINT-JACQUES

wakemepearly tomorrow so we can rellove
and redo body pairedup
before the day splits us in two
and slathers your watch your stocking cognac
and hardens the evening wax in your havens
and closes on me your gateways where night burns
and washes your hands that having me so touched
they always wake with a scent of my exsorrowes

NOTES

* Title of a film by Alain Resnais, based on a script by Marguerite Duras.

* Because dictators were already the worst and because that's how it's said in my country and I'm not sorry.

ADITI MACHADO

WEAR SIMPLE CLOTHES

impecunious subject. Presently she deranges the
furniture. A sudden, pure stillness.
.
.
.
. A dream. But whose.
A red zone beyond the scrim. The absence of
reading is a bit lacerating.
.
I feel my throat, she says today, I feel my throat
swelling. I feel my belly swelling. Then I lose
consciousness. When I crush it, there is a pang,
then there is a climax that stops my breathing. I
am as though drunk, I cannot restrain myself, I
tremble but not from fear, she (mimics a frisson)
says. I don't think about the wrong thing I just did.
I sit apart from everyone so that I can touch it.
That's when I'm caught. Once the climax has
passed I become dejected. Sometimes my
breathing speeds up. She says, my limbs are all
aching.

. Her intellect is dull. Periods of disillusion
appear to rouse her perversions. Some attention
might be brought to the nature of being caught.
For the moment, sufficient to say: degeneration,
depression, electrification by silk.
.
. Mottled
by light.
. Mottled
by movements of shadow, the pile of mottled
cloths. A sudden, pure stillness. She is awake. We
have not read in weeks and are attentive to
outward aspects of the abyssal room in which we
mind the child and the child dissimulates. Bare
shelves. Embarrassing lack of speech. Kidskin
gloves, preferred when marked with the use of a
woman. Adoration of the left glove. Desecration of
the right. Semaphores.
.
.
Sometimes we wield her like a sieve against the

light, afternoon mesh, and are able to view a distant feature, water tower. This is our human interest, which vibrates.
. Today we note a brightness of the eye, a pouting, certain kinds of locutions and retorts. Calicot, she says, cretonne, these make no sound, little cries of nothing. What did she dream? She dreamed thickly furred animals. We have not read in weeks. The sensation is of violet leaking through the blinds. Epidermal sensations are necessary and decisive.
.
.
.
.
When she tears silk, she says, it is not out of sadistic violence but the violence of better understanding it. An expressive manner of speaking, an ingenious way of doing, and a flexibility with time, place, and person, as only the practice of an ancient passion would suggest. For the moment, sufficient to say: copacetic.

.....
.....
.....
Angular cloths, mottled dusk. Confusion. Or
depth, as by inverse inflorescence, talismanic, into
which the pile of cloths is deranged. Their rectoverso
scintillate differently. This is intense.
Ocular. Presently, she pees. It wets the dress. She
palpates the textile. We offer the anecdote of a
comrade (mimics). Ever since he became impotent
he is given to dipping his penis in milk, which
gives to him the sensation of velvet. No erection
follows. He drinks the milk with indifference. The
sensation of velvet, we offer, is not the sensation
of light. Light? she squawks. I'm perverse? *You're*
perverse!
.....
.....
..... continual
..... mottling
..... of the cl
..... oth piles

.....
..... Wet cerebrum.
.....

We are keen to read and therefore distracted from the present. In wielding the silk, she has soiled it, evidently by placing it against her genitalia. We refrain from asking precisely what sort of satisfaction

.....
.....
It is sufficiently clear the cloth does not intercede for the masculine body. In fact, it appears to agitate of its own accord, by dint of its solidity, brilliance, odor, and sound, properties nevertheless secondary to its tactile qualities, which are variegated, subtle, and bountifully responsive to the suggestions of a refined epidermis.

.....
.....
She is organically motivated. She is sensoriocensorious.
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

..... In the absence of reading every thing
vibrates out of orbit. Shadow-mottled. Wetmottled.
The epidermis feels itself becoming
passive.

.....
.....

..... shadow-mottled

..... wet-mottled

.....
.....

..... In the absence
of reading milky description coats us. This is
intense. Picturing it in the mind (mimics a frisson)

cannot compensate for it. Palpating, she says, palpating the textile is necessary here. Must the silk, we ask, be clean? Would a bit of mottled silk be entirely, we ask, devoid of charm? Would a man do, clad in silk, as silk does? A single of activity on the brow lit by angular light. Light? she squawks. You're perverse.

Was the girl dressed in silk or did she by the softness of her skin simply resemble silk? Is she aroused by the animals in her dreams? Does she associate fresh silk with some abstract notion of virginity? Etc.

. Other examples of haptically stimulating materials: roses, milt.

This poem (re-) translates portions of Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault's report "Passion érotique des étoffes chez la femme," which appeared in the *Archives d'anthropologie criminelle* in 1908.

RANDI WARD

PHOTOS FROM HESTUR

Hestur, which literally means *Horse*, is one of eighteen storm-swept islands situated north-northwest of Scotland, approximately halfway between Iceland and Norway, in the North Atlantic. These remote Faroe Islands, a self-governing archipelago under the sovereignty of Denmark, are home to fifty thousand people.

During her last six months in the Faroe Islands, Randi Ward lived on the island of Hestur. Fewer than twenty people reside in the island's lone village. There are no longer any children living in the village, and nearly all of the remaining residents are over the age of 65.

Faroese politicians have decided that an undersea tunnel, currently slated for construction between the islands of Streymoy and Sandoy, will not incorporate Hestur. Being connected to the main island of Streymoy, via tunnel, was considered Hestur's last hope for revitalization.



















VAAN NGUYEN

**CHAOS
FOR INNOCENCE
IN THE PYRENEES**

TRANSLATED BY ADRIANA X JACOBS

CHAOS

A fountain exits the city to water the village.

On the way—roadkill, a stoplight, a car

Overhead—helicopters hovering late at night

returning from the north.

Later,

the girl from Dimona arrives.

Later,

buildings in Beirut collapse.

This age is an ongoing epidemic, poetry's slaughter.

A bubble

of dying butterflies.

FOR INNOCENCE

A seagull and her hair, always seasons of sickness
In her cup
She serves a *tralalalala* spell from this toxic brew.
Hold him! For me.
Revolt—
He's naked.
Notes of eucalyptus and sage
Dung rise

I'll write on leaves because people are fed up.

Outside the window, foliage screens the noise
Sweat under the sun
Almost a breeze but no storm.

You taught me how to grab pomegranates
Before they fall
Careful, they are bursting on the ground.

The doors are locked again, they took the shoes
But left the laces.
This poem is written
For the sake of innocence.

I wish I could love you now
The sky is grey and two birds have taken off from here.
Tanks
Are standing quietly in the desert.

On the bus
From Abu Dis,
An old poet wonders
If his dead wife
Is his last one.

IN THE PYRENEES

We sat in an indoor pool in Firenze, staring
at two hunters dragging wild boars down autumn slopes
you met me without a map, with my high heels and combed hair
living with that guy who starved me
I am always living with someone
and hungry.

At the evening market, by the monastery, a seller pointed at his wares
a doll lying under a toy car
bang bang the peddler cried
then offered me panther milk
and a siren passed by
I thought about that stairwell in Tel Aviv, waiting for the shock of the Fajr
it's happening now
since the last Minister of War, I am someone else.

HAGIWARA SAKUTARO

ON TRANSLATING POETRY

TRANSLATED BY SHO SUGITA

The haiku that Miyamori Asataro translated into English is said to be fairly popular outside of Japan, but the impressions transmitted for foreigners through those translations are questionable. Most likely, the level of understanding of the Japanese is either through *The Mikado* or a reading of haiku as *haikai* humor. Too often, Japanese authors revered by foreigners are not purely Japanese, but rather the conceptualization of “Fujiyama” or “geisha girls” they would like to accommodate without any inconsistencies, a kind of “tempura frying” of pseudo-Japan. Because they do not understand what is truly Japanese, what is truly Japanese makes them yawn. Perhaps the reason Miyamori’s translations are accepted in the West is due to his translations of typical *haikai*-esque haikus.

Komiya Romioka, who wanted to provide examples for the impossibility of translations, references the following translation by Miyamori:

The ancient pond!

A frog plunged—splash!

(*koike ya kaeru tobikomū mizu no oto*)

Komiya claims that the rhetorical axis of haiku is placed on particles like *ya* from *koike ya* that serves as a *kireji*¹. In this particular example, *ya* implies a temporal development, accentuating the ancient pond as something that existed from long ago. In addition, he also claims the particle implies a permanent idea of reality in conjunction with the aforementioned idea of temporality, as the two are displayed against an emotional subjectivity. The poem is split by the *kireji*, and the following *kaeru tobikomū mizu no oto* (“a frog plunged—splash!”) is expressed as an “immediate impression of the real.” By cancelling out an “immediate impression” with “permanent reality,” Basho’s quiet view of “nothingness” is achieved. However, Miyamori translates this *ya* by using the “!” of foreign languages. The symbol “!” merely signals an interjection, so it cannot possibly express a conceptualization of the temporal or existential. Because *kireji* like *ya* used in haiku holds a wealth of meaning in this complex language, Komiya states that this very point is most problematic in translations.

Komiya also writes on the associativity of language. For example, the work *koike* (“pond”) can directly associate itself with ponds in old temples or the small moss-covered pools in gardens for the Japanese imagination; in the West, they would probably imagine the bright blue lakes found in the Alps or Switzerland, because they do not have the same kind

1 Lit. “cutting word,” a Japanese particle used in poetry to often provide emphasis/es on the preceding words. Because Japanese poetry does not traditionally use line breaks, the effect could be thought of as analogous (though this is only my own interpretation for the function of *kireji*)

of humidity in Japan. A frog jumping into such an image can't possibly be of any poetic value. Moreover, a "frog" has a special poetic value attached to it, making us feel a kind of seasonality specific to our experience of summer. For a Westerner, these special associations are probably replaced with hideous bullfrogs.

Komiya's criticism seems common sense and obviously truthful, and it's even strange to think that it caused a problem in the literary coteries. Even for someone like myself without much knowledge of foreign languages can read the English translations of Basho and think his haiku was not properly interpreted. To be honest, reading these translations is too much monkey business, and I can't help but to always bust out in laughter. What is more convincing of the impossibility in translation is that these translations are by a respected language scholar like Mr. Miyamori and regarded as a "classic translation."²

Someone long ago translated the poem *hana no kumo kane wa ueno ka asakusa ka* as the following:

The clouds of flowers
Where are the bells from?
Ueno or Asakusa

Westerners read this and responded by asking, "is this a poem about a funeral?" For such an eccentric question, their reasoning was very convincing. With the word "flower," the Japanese readers immediately associate the word with cherry blossoms, but to a Western reader, flowers are often associated with flowers like dahlias, tulips, and cineraria. And so, the phrase "clouds of flowers" provides an image of a flowerbed, wreath, or bouquet full of these Western flowers. In addition, the word "bells" would suggest to the Japanese reader a Buddhist temple or a subtle and profound temple bell; however, the Westerners think of the lively melodious bells of Christian churches. Thus, perhaps for the Western reader's mental image, a Christian church rings throughout the town and beautiful bouquets pass through them like clouds, rendering an image of a funeral.

If one is supposed to legitimately translate these haikus, some words should be kept in its original language, e.g. *hana* should replace "flower" and *kane* should replace "chimes" or "bells." In other words, without using the original words from the original poem, translation

2 Miyamori's translations are still reprinted today by Dover Press (2002, 2006, and 2011).

could be thought of as an impossible task.

Possible translations of haikus are limited to ones with very little associative and poetic content, but in place of that kind of content, provide an intellectual description. An example would be Basho's *mono ieba kuchibiru samushi* (Were I to say a word / my lips turn chill / in the autumn wind), or Buson's *makemajiki sumo wo nemonogatari kana* (An invincible sumo wrestler / never should have lost / a bedside conversation with his wife). Particular representative works of mediocre "humanist" haiku like that of Kagano Chiyojo, like *tonbo tsuri kyo wa doko made itta yara* (Dragonfly catching / where was it / that they went today?), *mi ni shimiru kaze ya shoji ni yubi no ato* (To impress deeply in the body/ the wind and shoji window / like fingerprints), *asagao ni tsurubetorarete morai mizu* (Morning glory / robbing me of my bucket / I ask my neighbor for some water)—these poems have diluted the poetic values from image and vision into primarily "humanistic" concerns, which makes the poems easy to translate for a foreign reader.

Although Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (also known under his Japanese name Koizumi Yakumo) was perhaps the most informed of Japanese culture of the Japanese, his understanding of haiku was limited to the type of mediocre haikus written by Kagano Chiyojo. Needless to say, there is no way that a Westerner who has not read Japanese literature or know anything about Japanese culture would understand Basho and haiku by reading Mr. Miyamori's translations. It is likely that what they would feel from the phrase *koike ya* through the translation would be akin to the aforementioned *hana no kumo*, painting an entirely different subjective poetic-vision with what they imagine through their fantasy of Oriental exoticism.

Quite reasonably, poetry's special characteristic is that each reader can have a different kind of subjective fantasy in relation to the work, and translation of poetry can construct a capricious vision by the foreign reader with a capriciously subjective interpretation of the work. It could be said that the translation of poetry actually welcomes that kind of interference, and that that interference is one of the goals of translating poetry. A rigorous linguistic investigation is therefore unnecessary, and from the personal standpoint of the translator, that free and capricious adaptation is favored. One could even say that all translations are better if they are mistranslated.

Against Mr. Komiya's opinion, Mr. Miyamori's response on the Yomiuri Newspaper was utterly senseless. Mr. Komiya simply quoted Mr. Miyamori's translations to illustrate an opinion that claims the haiku is impossible to translate into foreign languages. The intension

was not to criticize the work itself. However, Mr. Miyamori, after proudly boasting how his translations have been accepted abroad by making a list of his translated works, expresses his anger by stating that Mr. Komiya's criticism is outrageous—that even foreigners are praising his work, and that a criticism from a Japanese is a disgraceful act, not something a compatriot should do. For all that bickering, he never addresses the fundamental issue on the possibility of translation, not once providing an honest argument, only to cry like a little child that it's *possible*, playing a wily trick with a straw-man to beat up on Mr. Komiya's "linguistic capabilities."

Though a person like Miyamori is a famous language scholar, reading the Yomiuri article made me feel a kind of disdain for his character. The things he says are completely senseless, and his mind is like that of a junior high school student. Claiming that a Japanese couldn't criticize a translation that is praised abroad because of the social standing of a Japanese, he probably thinks that Komiya is commenting upon the linguistic results of his translations. Komiya's opinion, however, is not about Miyamori's linguistic capabilities, but rather about the mere possibility of translating poetry. In Miyamori's mind, the translation of poetry is possible as long as one has the linguistic capacity to do so. I thought to myself, language scholars must really be stupid. All honest translators in the past have put disclaimers in prefaces that are similar to that of Mr. Komiya's opinion. Horiguchi Daigaku, for example, titled one of his prefaces in a book of translation as "A Lost Jewel," and Professor Ueda Bin has constantly apologized in books for the impossibility of translations. The reason for this is that the more one reads poetry, or the deeper they get a taste for poetry, the more they eventually understand that it can't be translated into another language. Provided that Mr. Miyamori actually understands haiku, he must feel a sense of embarrassment when he is praised abroad. That would at least indicate that he understands that the translation of poetry (especially haiku) can never satisfy itself as a translation, no matter how much linguistic talent the translator might have.

Poe's expressive effect in the vers libre titled "The Raven" comes from words like "never," "more," and "Lenore"—words that suggest a remoteness, like a wind blowing through a cemetery, somehow sorrowful but at the same time creepy, with phonemes that constantly reverberate in that way. Poe consciously repeats these as a motif in his poem, and the poem is composed through the cyclic reverberation of his expressive language. Take out that reverberation out of "The Raven," and the reader is left with nothing but a meaningless word salad. With that in mind, can anyone translate his poetry into Japanese? I think this example illustrates again the impossibility of translation.

I once wrote a poem called “Fowl.” To be honest, this poem was an adaptation of Poe, expressing the cry of a fowl by elongating the mora of phrases like *toutekuuru* or *mourutou*³, imitating his poetic imagination and techniques of expression found in the “Raven.” What can be taken from this exercise is that poetry is something a poet should “adapt,” and not something a poet should “translate.”

Someone long ago translated the Chinese poem *Er yue san yue ri chichi. Dongxing xixing yun youyou*⁴ into Japanese. This was translated into Japanese as *Kisaragi, yayoi, hi nodoka. Todamayuki kozamayuki, kumo uraura*. This is definitely a faithful translation. The problem is, this Japanese translation doesn’t have any value as a work of art, and it fails to transfer a poetic impression into an effective representation. There is a waka in the Shin-Kokinshu that is a Japanese-style translation of the Chinese poem *Lushan yueshen caoan zhong*⁵, rendered as *Mukashi omou kusa no iori no yoru no ame ni namida nasoeso yama hototogisu*. This is not a translation, but an adaptation of the poet Bai Juyi. However, the song possesses an independent value as art, at the same time retaining the essential poetic mood of the original. In terms of a poem translated from a foreign language, what readers really want are not verbatim translations of a poem, but a direct *poesie* of the original, the poetic mood as a whole. That explains how poetry is something to be adapted, not translated. What I mentioned earlier about mistranslations being the favored translations of poetry lies here. The function of translated poetry is merely to transfer the ideas of the original poem. Its self-imposed limitations cause people to think translating poetry is possible. But thoughts in poetry are carried by words that wrap associations, images, and rhythm inside itself, living as an organism that can’t be analyzed by science. Only translating the literary composition of the original can’t possibly convey the meaning of the poem. To be able to convey the holistic meaning of the poem, one would be forced to analyze every single word of the original and provide exhaustive annotations, but ultimately to make it work, the translator would have compose his own creation as an adaptation—his only surviving tactic.

All translated poetry is a creation of the translator, and holds its own value as an adaptation. In other words, the translator infuses the original inside of himself as a “cellularization” of

3 Adds an extra moraic vowel sound to the phrases meaning “to pass through” and “in coming,” respectively.

4 “February, March, the days are slow. Towards East, towards West, the clouds meander.” The Japanese translation reads as a “Japanese reading of Chinese,” rather than a translation.

5 “While on Mount Lu, I listen to the night rain in a grass hut” The Japanese version metaphorizes the “night rain” as a cuckoo’s cry.

his artistic body, and with that successful infusion he gains authorship for the first time. An example of this can be Baudelaire's translation of Poe, still considered a "classic translation." All classic translations are the translator's creation, and are ultimately adaptations.

Mori Ogai's translation of "*Improvisatoren*" is said to have surpassed the original. The people who read the translation expressed their discontent and loss of hope when they read the original. "*Improvisatoren* wasn't a translation. That was Ogai's creation. We were duped by Mr. Ogai," they said. They're completely right about that—the *Improvisatoren* that we read in Japanese was definitely Ogai's own adaptation. Furthermore, that's what makes it a "classic translation." All good translations are "creations." People who are reading Poe through Baudelaire's translations are actually reading Baudelaire's poems—they're not reading Poe.

Horiguchi Daigaku is well known as a poet and translator of French literature. The Verhaeren, Simmons, and Cocteau translated by Horiguchi are written in Horiguchi's singular style, a "Horiguchi-style lyric." In essence, his translations are his own creations. I met a young kid once, who claimed he loved Verhaeren, passionately read Verhaeren, and adored Verhaeren in his heart. He wanted to show me his own poems, and he said, "I think I'm quite influenced by Verhaeren..." I answered him when I finished reading his poems, telling him, "I see no influence of Verhaeren here. It looks like an imitation of Horiguchi."

There was a time when the Symbolist Verhaeren was popular amongst the Japanese coteries. Back in the day, young progressive poets were praised for "being influenced by Verhaeren." Reading the poems written back then, what amazes me is that they're complete imitations of Kawaji Ryuko. Kawaji Ryuko translated many Verhaeren poems back then—there's no truth as laughable as this.

What I caution people who read poetry in translation is, first and foremost, that they make sure the translator is as a poet and literary scholar who is at least in equal footing or above the original author. In a worst-case scenario, the reader should see whether or not the translator has talent in line with the original author. If the translator doesn't have the credentials that compare to the original author—a bogus poet—it would be much smarter for them to avoid reading the translation. The reason is, poetry in translation is the creation of the translator himself, and only through the unification of the translator's various characteristics like conception, technique, and style passing through his bloodstream can one see through the spirit of the original poem. Moreover, the value of the original poem continuously matches the value of the translator as a poet. If

the translator is a bogus poet, the original poem's value becomes that of a bogus poem. Baudelaire sold Poe to the French at its retail value. However, many other translators have depreciated the value of its original authors, selling them at a give-away price.

The impossibility of translation, all together, as a fundamental problem, is not limited to poetry. It is a problem related to literature in general, and more essentially, it is related to the process of transplanting foreign cultures. As one example, the word real was translated as *genjitsu* in Japanese. The problem is, the word real has more implications than our word *genjitsu*—implications of a deeper philosophical meaning related to “something truthful,” “something certain,” something devoid of illusions and semblances, absolutely “something existential.” Because the Japanese mistranslated the word real into *genjitsu*, the so-called realism of Japan simply wrote the aesthetics of the everyday, penning the flat and meaningless reality of their lives, reduced into “*mijika shosetsu*,” a novel depicting the author's personal life. Such kinds of “realism” do not exist overseas—not one example of this would you be able to find in the West. Similarly, naturalism was translated as *shizen shugi*, a mistranslation of a similar magnitude. The malformation of naturalism in Japan created a fad in Japanese literature with a unique sense of sketch-like “ekphrastic” novels.

To be truthful, there is no way that we can translate foreign languages. We have similar words that can approximate the original—nothing more than rough “make do's.” However, because the Japanese don't historically have a literary ideology, we didn't have the approximate words for the importation of Western literature that is rooted in philosophical ideologies. Diving deep into the seas of words, we reluctantly chose the words “*genjitsu*” and “*shizen*,” forcing a strained translation onto ourselves. Eventually, realism and naturalism, along with various other Western literary movements, ended without ever faithfully translating its ideals.

In terms of importing foreign cultures, we find through the above example that translation is impossible, that we actually only “adapt,” and that all importation of foreign cultures are nothing more than our subjective “creations.” Our own Japanese history that assimilated itself with Chinese culture can be a testament to this truth.

The Japanese military takes all foreign loanwords and translate them into unnecessarily difficult Japanese (though actually Chinese). For example, they call tanks *gunyou jidousha* (“military automobiles”) or *soukou jidousha* (“armored automobiles”). Certain military officers tell their new recruits, “the Japanese military is fundamentally different from foreign

militaries,” and their naïve recruit asks them, “Sir, aren’t sabers Western swords?” The officer responds, “you’re not holding sabers, son, we call these *shidoutou* (“parade sword”) in the Japanese military. Do you understand me, rookie!” The recruit asks another question, “then what do we call *rappa*, sir?” The officer says, “you idiot! *Rappa*⁶ is Japanese!”

This illustrates a caricature of ultranationalism. Ultranationalists work hard to unnaturally create a strained translation of foreign cultures. In contrast, progressive and international people try to faithfully translate the original as it is. If we look at the end result, both merely adapt, but speaking in terms of conscience, the latter is more correct. The former mistranslates foreign cultures with a goal of mistranslating.

The converted Marxists knew the impossibility of translation. They’re more intelligent than literary scholars. The reason is, Japanese literary scholars still take their mock-naturalism and mock-realism, flatter themselves with their later-period capitalist modern literature, and they act as though it’s in equal footing with current trends abroad. Absurdly enough, the scholars are still proud of themselves.

6 Rappa: trumpet. The word “rappa” is usually written in katakana, a phonetic writing system that differentiates itself from hiragana. Katakana is usually used exclusively for foreign loanwords, while hiragana is used for domestic/domesticated words. Katakana is occasionally used for Japanese words when the kanji characters (Chinese characters) are excessively complex, which creates Hagiwara’s caricature of the ultranationalists. In addition, the caricatured officer doesn’t realize that the word “rappa” is itself a domesticated word of Dutch origin. 喇叭 (roeper [Dutch] → laba [Chinese] → rappa [Japanese]) → ラツパ *rappa*

JOSEPH NOBLE

FROM MIRROR SONG / WINDING GRACE

carrying his word
he could hesitate

what he didn't know
coming to say

the walking
altogether beside

he recognized
what growing before

dark for light
the threadbare wait

enlighten turn
grass bell

we move and abide
fable rain in time

if stone carries eyes
conjoined and unwritten

he turned the hammer
reel to frame

touch was difference
skin definition

his word was image
signal tree

mirror song
forbidden recognition

revolve and wrist
gesture noon

he was visible
dance threading

link its own finger
wrestle avail

skin cypher
measure as beat

his mistake a tongue
simple as dust

confounding complexity
for truth

we carry them through the trees
there was not enough breath

distance in dust
the eye a brass bone

told apart
spine rope

phrase wall erased
radio room riverbed

we turn space on its song
limb stair another glance

each warning a lexicon
hand span reeling smoke

the blood carried with it
an iron deliverance

wake each reconnoitering
momentum as a room

his displacement
a rifling through breath

gradient gaze
at hand and winding

link, decipher, measure
secrets stringing their rituals

shoulders ripening into light
tadpoles in the shallows

ALEXIS IPARRAGUIRRE

NOT A FABLE

TRANSLATED BY EMILY TODER

Not a Fable

It ought to go something like this, although it isn't a fable: "A few years ago, a young man returned to his native city and inquired about a job with his former mentor, a freethinking liberal. The latter asked him about his recent employment in the neighboring town. The young man replied: 'I was a professor at a large, rural university that paid quite well. But the books of the prophets and the wise men were hidden away in a guarded chest sealed with seven locks because the professors feared their knowledge would corrupt the people. For that reason, I decided to resign my post and return to my native city.' His old mentor praised the idealistic act, extolled the indifference to money, and pledged to do all he could for his former disciple. A few days later, the young man learned that his mentor had offered his services to the neighboring university, the well-paying one, and naturally, was of no help to him in finding work in his native city." That's how I came to understand how the university worked in my country.

The fable, or what might be a fable, doesn't end there; it could go on to include further similar episodes, just as an album always has room for a few more photos. Some might throw in my own misfortunes: times I accepted posts for which I was overqualified, times I served over and over as teaching assistant on useless courses, times I monitored students, for miserable wages, verifying that they weren't copying one another during exams given at remote departments. Until I found out that my former mentor had grown too senile to carry on making any decisions, and that the new go-getting academics on the upswing amidst their downfall didn't understand quite what to do with the minor detail of their old debts, pranks, and betrayals. Then I went back to suffering all the ceremonies of a sluggish novice, and effectively did everything I never did the first time by virtue of youth. I was low-key when fellowships were awarded to unqualified favorites, kept quiet when preferences were expressed on the basis of sex, race, or political orientation, criticized others only behind their backs, in the civilly fervent manner of the young teachers getting into gear. In fact, one of the new academics, when faced with my cultivated dullness, pointed out enthusiastically that I'd matured.

I felt at peace, because after all, I'd been able to devote myself, at a meager – but stable – wage, to the two things that fulfilled me most: reading and teaching. I know that teaching requires a certain degree of idealism, and surely I believe that such a notion has stayed intact in the text of my classes (on occasion, text means truth, only sometimes lending it a posthumous, and therefore cowardly, nod). But, as is always the case, every paradise,

even those built in secret, has its serpent, and in this instance it came in the form of a little academic, that of one of my rotating bosses who gradually grew to understand what my old freethinking mentor had known all along: that false friendship wins more battles in rivalry, that rivals are best when they don't realize they're enemies, and that the only loyalty truly possible lies in a five-second smile and a firm handshake.

I won't spend too much time on her. But a little description is necessary in order to understand how I arrived at this point, at this slightly sinister professorial post, at a place of forced exile within the voluntary exile of the world which lives and breathes outside the university walls. The viper, with an almost genuine smile on certain sunny days, made an unexpected move. She managed to team up with old adversaries from the prehistoric era of formalist criticism on the basis of the promise of bigger budgets, resorted to the familiar kindness of old classmates who might support her in a series of elections, invited friends of hers out of their golden exiles to postulate to snazzy professors who embodied a blend of exoticism and novelty. And with the affirmative backing of dead dinosaurs, she achieved the readmission of the cast-out, and with the additional votes from the trusted ex-classmates, she achieved an overwhelming majority within the council of professors, to the extent that she was met with a prominence not seen even during the most lucid years of our senile patriarch who, by the by, retired with the title of emeritus professor and a sloppy kiss on the forehead. Then she arranged for excursions to fine eateries in an exquisite gesture towards her new star professors; she met ceaselessly with university presidents, deans, and various authorities, switching off between exhibiting a refined dexterity and integrity; and when even old colleagues from her college days complained of the subtle but nonstop emergence of the principal department heads around her person, and of the gang of ousted pop-academics, the chains of power were so solid in the hierarchies of the heavens and the earth, that it was all one could do to mimic her half-true smile when bidding her goodbye, all the while appreciating, intellectually, that she actually allowed one to carry on in her employ.

As far as I'm concerned, she owed me the same treatment. I was obliged to remain unruffled before all her imperfections borne of a fondness for power that the world's finest literature illustrates much better than I ever could. I had to ignore her cheesily bigoted and telenovela-inspired melodrama: the privilege and renown that she, in an old-fashioned manner somewhere between miserable and moving, bestowed upon the student with the foreign or noble-sounding last name, in the dolled-up garb and inflected drawl of a heavily made-up stepmother on General Hospital. I had to have more faith in poetic justice. Or in myself. Or in my own strategy, whereby my dullness blended right in with the dark walls

of the department halls, or at least stayed far enough away from her so that no indication of my opinion ever reached her.

I know that it didn't happen. I know that I haven't learned anything, as it's obvious that we can learn only very little once a certain temperament is fixed in our genes. Genes are also to blame for all of this. The fact is that very kindly, one summer afternoon, she told me that my professional training wasn't a good fit with what the department was promoting (I recall that she smiled patiently at my unease) and that, in any case, the prospect of my staying on was contingent upon my performance in an elective course offered at an insufferable hour, nine p.m., in a semi-dilapidated lecture hall, that somehow suited me on the basis of my "adherence to orthodoxy in these times of shocking revolution." In short, she assigned me a course in Spanish Meter and Rhythm, a subject so arcane as to drive the pop-scholars away, and which the students, spellbound by how sex and evil capitalists could be so relevant in the writings of El Quixote, never wanted to take. That is to say, it wasn't just an exile within a land of exile, but a slow and grueling death: eventually the course would disappear from the curriculum due to a lack of willing registrants, and I would be fired; it was only a matter of time. I must confess that I ended up appreciating the care which the viper, now looking like a satisfied anaconda, took with my execution (my old mentor, most likely, would have gone to such efforts only for someone of a higher status; but there's no denying that my boss exacted my punishment with a level of devotion of which only woman is capable).

I threw myself into preparing for my classes and reviving the old curse of Oldrich Bělič, who understood the nuanced music of Spanish feet that nobody appreciated anymore. Once all the metaphors for my situation had been explored, it was fine to die in uniform, right there, giving a lecture. I needn't say that I would impart my dignity with the greatest respect for my students, for their commitment to classic Spanish letters, their heartfelt melodies and ominous cacophonies. I don't think I write for any other reason. The tyrant has made me careless. Her final intervention was only an additional confirmation that my country's university, that my country itself, and my very genes, were as I'd always seen them: half-blind, and in pieces.

I met Mario Venza my first year and he was perhaps the most intelligent of them all. He had transferred from the Law program, a discipline his parents had futilely pressured him to pursue. In the end, he got out of it because he convinced himself that it wasn't quite his thing during a creative writing workshop that he took with Paco Trigoso, a former student who later told him about me. He went on faith. I don't know if the students went

on faith to the other literature classes that discussed the phallus, the vagina, and a host of symbolic penetrations. But this kid came on faith to mine. He started off almost rickety, with Rastafarian hairdo, but without disavowing his convictions, little by little he began to adapt to the shirt-and-pant combination in the palette of grays that we young professors typically avail ourselves of, more from a lack of imagination when it comes to fashion than on account of any pre-accorded understanding. In his first paper, he managed to figure out that a poem by Góngora to the city of Toledo presented a rhythmic regularity that configured, in a Cartesian diagram, an analogy with the plateau upon which the old Hispanic urbane sat. To me, his interpretation was exaggerated, but that was well in the spirit of a true researcher. We worked on a few Machado poems that required the detailed analysis of a rhythm which was highly unique but generally regarded as being slightly problematic (that is to say, predictable in terms of the poet's habitual lyricism). Whenever I left work from my office, which is where I always ended my classes with him, we'd go and have a coffee at García's, a little bohemian joint where everyone took me for a journalist because my tortoise-shell glasses seemed like something a show-biz paparazzo would wear and not just a pair of frames salvaged from my father's belongings, which of course they were. Venza was shy and, in the beginning, only spoke to me in variations of my own specialized old-fashioned half-Spanish, half-modern formalisms. But later he let loose a bit. He lived alone with his older brother, where the ways of rural life were carried on by both brothers in a little pension near the university. He liked poems because they sounded to him like mysteries whose charms rationally escaped him and which he tried to reproduce in his own verses, which he never entrusted me with (but I knew they existed, and his squinty, narrow eyes and beakish mouth eventually tried to express his will to share them with me, but there was never that translucent vibe in the air that forewarned of an imminent poetic confession). He had a cute and poor girlfriend who worked as a tightrope walker, like many lost youths who devote themselves to sword-swallowing or street performance. But she had to make money some way or another. It was a delight to see Venza when his dark black and brilliant eyes lit up while analyzing the poetic rhythms of the works of Góngora, his favorite. Góngora seemed to him an awfully intelligent priest, a true "little gem" who had "escaped all the while from the evils of the Church" to push buttons and to write "splendid and sad magic." Sometimes he would tell me, lost in thought: "But how does the beloved in Góngora turn into nothing," and I believe he was picturing, in his frequent pauses, his beautiful tightrope walker tumbling ever forward. He told me that one night, as if inspired by the nearing onset of a nervous fit, he detected that the Petrarchian poems of the national poet Ernesto Amézquita had copied certain metric and rhythmic structures which corresponded, respectively and alternatively, to the compositions of Francesco himself. That was going

to be his bachelor's thesis. He didn't wind up using it in the end, because one day he felt fear, a greater fear than usual, a tachycardia or just a horrible kind of exhaustion from so much reading or studying. Or maybe it was the ailment of poetry itself, on which such a great deal had already been written, which exposed him as a sickly man, or perhaps a more lucid one. The fact is that the panic came over him after hours of thinking, surrounded by poems, just before the dawn. I still have his papers, and I can't accept that the solution for Venza's blend of audacity and shyness, of brilliance and submission, was that sad fact, that coarse and uncouth act of spending the entire day in bed out of photophobia, agoraphobia, or side effects suffered from copious doses of pharmacological drugs. I still remember when he wanted to buy my coffees for me but didn't have any money. The truth is he never hallucinated or heard any voices. It was just that he was "afraid... of understanding more," he told me, the time I went to see him, and he was skinnier than ever, and much quieter. "In poetry there was a secret that I couldn't see clearly anymore," he told me. "I understand it, but it makes me too frightened." He was almost crying. I, to be frank, only half understood.

Samanta Varas showed up in the fifth year (it seems incredible that the course could carry on with a mere half a dozen literature students sitting around at midnight, but so it was). I saw right from the beginning that she couldn't care less about meter and rhyme, she just wanted to see how poetry could be distilled in its purest state. She had registered for the course because she'd been told that I was the only one who'd be able to explain how poems came to be, unlike the others, who talked about Marx's balls or the small alpha object (the nickname they'd given to the Lacanian professor for his discreet stature and dependence on platform shoes). Really, her mistake was displaying a surprising ingenuity in how much she believed in the power of verse to rouse people, and in fact, she emotionally broke down from the work of Blake, whose poems I was able to include in the syllabus, by dint of pleading and conceit, when we were stuck on some anomalous French poetic foot, or perhaps it was English, by some minor author from the Generation of '27. She managed it by embellishing her former Anglican school student sweetness with a Goth-girl style, enhanced by an Egyptian cross necklace, an ashen paleness, and strokes of eyeliner that thickened the leonine lines of her eyes. She was intentionally clumsy when assigning merit to a certain poem by Calderón; when he was good, it was "What a motherfucker"; and Lope, "So fucking hot"; and Lorca, "Damn that shit's fine"; and Pedro Salinas, "I'll take it lying down any day of the week." But more than the street-savvy posturing, what prevailed in Samanta was that desire to share an experience that seemed to touch her only through extreme effusions of pleasure, which she delivered with every good poem we read before proceeding with her formal analysis. Later she'd lose herself rifling through her little books

of visionary English verse which was, without fail, the arbitrary conclusion which all my explanations led her to. To confront it directly, and without changing the subject, I introduced her to Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and on a whim, expounded my theory on their rhythmical innovations (it was undoubtedly a weird class, particularly for those expecting the articulate analysis of Bécquer, as promised on the course syllabus). But I managed to capture her attention for the class and for myself in an absorbing manner when I referred to the project of representing Nothingness in a collection of Mallarmé's sonnets. Then she enrolled in intensive French courses, she told me, and she read the complete works of the poet, meditating deeply on the Nothingness in each of his verses. She was also roused by efforts to spot a certain constellation described in those short songs that aspired to extract even space and time from the world. Her candor moved me, with that sickly tenderness that often drives men of letters straight into states of platonic enchantment. If nothing ever happened, it's because, one, I was her professor, and two, I preferred to think myself well beyond achieving any state of infatuation after having read tons of novels to the point of absolute boredom and knowing that that kind of attractive girl in all her defenselessness and vitality was already a known entity: she was half Natasha Rostov and half Nadja, with a little bit of the La Maga from Cortázar (or I fell in love with the young and wild Samanta. Who am I kidding. But I did so at an age at which one knows very well that such a mental effusion is useless, an age at which one can see love as no more than a flare of light that sparks and trembles in the shaky hand of a diabetic, before the limb is irremediably amputated). We ended up becoming good friends because Samanta had a job working as a seller at an enormous bookstore that was impossible to avoid, and while I looked for books she talked to me about Swedenborg's angels, about Mallarmé's pytx sonnet, about how maybe she was better off falling for girls who attracted her awfully in her lonely nights when she lay between her Winnie-the-Pooh sheets, about how horribly frustrated she was that she couldn't sit down and write the beautiful verses that she heard as clear as kettle drums in her heart and mind, but that she was trying to live as though her entire life were a poem, because she wanted that to be her only and vibrant work of art. She also told me she was nervous because, as is often the case with a big bookstore, most of the university students would steal the books and the managers, guided by a keen sense of the abundantly obvious, thought her suspect and had her under strict supervision. Naturally, she was the thief, but it didn't occur to me consciously then because Samanta left me no time to think: she'd go on about her musician boyfriend who played keyboard like Chick Corea and her lesbian lover who was the most beautiful Palestinian Arab in town, and the nude health spas of the legendary south, and what did I think about drag queens, being the García Lorca expert that I was. The only time she slowed down a bit was when I asked her about her

family. She would switch off between explaining that she was very happy with dad, mom and her two brothers, or that she was terribly cursed by her step-father, a fat clumsy man of dark coats who went to pick her up at the gates of the university when it got to be late at night and whom the class had nicknamed Umberto Eco. The fact is, one day when she failed to finish the exam and stayed after in the classroom grumbling on about her own slacking, she ended up confessing to me, perhaps in a call for help, or as an onslaught of sincerity, or maybe as an act of pure exhibitionism, that her biological father had been a cocaine addict. He had died of cardiac complications when she was twelve and they lived in a happy Portuguese city with beaches and thousands of different ethnic groups, and that her step-father had appeared in her room at midnight to molest her, or she had tempted him when she'd first met him, she admitted to the contradiction, to show that she was an adolescent with an uninhibited sense of sexuality, but, be that as it may, now he disgusted her, and he never failed to appear at midnight, and threatened to walk out on her mother if she didn't let him touch her or if she told anyone. That idea seemed awful to her and she'd thought it over about a million times, not so much as a conscious notion, but rather as a sensation that sometimes manifested itself in an electric numbness or in chest palpitations, or simply threw her into states of anxiety that forced her to crawl out and hide under the bed. On one occasion, when she was going out and getting dressed and taking ice-cold showers, she told me, she felt as though someone had stolen her feelings and stowed them on the other side of glass shower door. The rest of the day she read English and American poetry, or French, or she studied for my course on Meter and Rhythm without much interest, and later she went to work or went out dancing, but, another time, in the nightclub full of lights and lovers, life seemed like a movie to her, playing itself out in an empty theater. In that state, she sabotaged my course at her whim, listening intently to the images that led her adrift, as they issued from the mouths of others, and repeating them to herself in faint whispers, leading her still further astray. A single verse by Aleixandre could bring her into the stratosphere: "In your beating mouth his sky-blue quill." She relished them. But the rest of the day was devoid of images at all as potent, and her project of making her life into a poem was of lower priority because the beauty of her life of meditation, transgressions, and astonishments, seemed too instantaneous or suppressed by pain's control, or by the pain's imperfection. Besides, the kettle drums in her head had no more verses in them, they were intolerable echoes in her chest and only kept her up at night, as did the fingering of her step-father or the trembling which was itself an uncontrollable fright. At last, in her despair, she ended up drinking a bottle of toilet cleaner. "It will be a party of liquid phonemes," she scribbled in a written exam for the course and for me, but damn me to hell if I had any idea then of what I know now. She also wrote that poetry was rotten somehow

or had something wrong with it, and when I reread that after finding everything out, it wasn't only as though my quaking, flare-laden limb had been amputated, but a fair chunk of my mind, as well.

Miguel Kuwae took my course in the seventh year, after two years of classes without Samanta, in which everything was at first a blur to me, then a fog, the kind from which voices and even whole topics emerge, but certainly nothing human. I taught year after year using the same tattered notes and I myself grew sick of delivering monologues in class (my lectures during those years were far from inspiring enthusiasm, to say nothing of attracting avid followers). But Miguel Kuwae renewed some sense of brilliance in me, from his mere apparition alone, because it was immediately evident that he hadn't come to learn anything. He was ten years older than the average student in class and had finished his degree five years earlier. If he hadn't been my student before, it's likely because the gang of exiled pop-academics had lured him into graduate programs whose names were unpronounceable, with the promise of letters of recommendation, taking care to artfully dissuade him from taking any courses featuring the dinosaurs of formalist criticism or the like, hoping to save him from falling into such a mistake. He had lived abroad for five years, in a teeming metropolis of underground subways that stopped up dark tunnels, with tumults of people emerging from stations bisected diagonally by a sort of daylight which didn't seem to come quite from the sun, but rather from some alien star. On top of all this, he felt little empathy for anyone because his new graduate classmates didn't want to know a thing about literature outside of class, while he was himself propelled by an insatiable passion for poetic expression. In addition, his university was set in the middle of a meticulous city grid packed with bars where one had to drink like a fish in order to simply participate in a society that taught one nothing. Plus, he was trying to save money. He lived outside of the student housing because it was expensive, even with his fellowship (in a city that unpredictable, it was the norm to be only partially funded). Before bed, he read Whitman, or Faulkner or Miller, because he thought he'd likely be able to understand that country better by getting to know the works of the geniuses of its native tongue. He failed, however, with each attempt, because his level of literary English was a bit poor and because his housemates were amateur rappers who liked to freestyle into the early-morning hours, and his own Dominican landlady, trapped in the misery of charging rent, was in the habit of hosting raucous parties on any given Saturday. In the context of that routine, the seminars of his graduate program quickly became an amorphous blob of images and voices that seemed ever-fleeting, and most of his time was spent traipsing through the sudden snowfall only to arrive abruptly at empty dining halls, wondering what the hell he was doing there, why he wasn't warm and cozy at home, like everybody else, with their brothers and sisters and parents.

“I gave in to stupefaction,” Kuwae told me. In my classes on Meter and Rhythm, he delivered spontaneous and subtle reflections on the poetry of Whitman and Vallejo while taking long drags on his cigarette, which I didn’t prohibit because honestly, using tobacco seemed just as stupid to me as not using it (the students, like me, paid more attention to Kuwae’s musings; he thought that avant-garde poetry ought to contain the tight coherence that he introduced in his analysis; most times I was unable to follow him, but on certain occasions, the metaphors he used approached the most illuminating of hypotheses). He told me that in order to not understand himself, or to not lose himself, he’d tire himself out walking up and down the streets in the heart of the party-going city (amongst 500-inch screens, multitudinous 50-block parks and a half a dozen gentlemen’s clubs). He spent money he didn’t have to forget himself in the rooms of washed-out over-stylized nudists from Eastern Europe and sharp, eloquent ones from Southeast Asia. He even found confirmation, which the days had instilled in him, that losing himself was like being stuck in a traffic jam that delivers you to the same spot, because the sensitive contortionist whose body he chose to fondle was obsessed with whispering the writings of Whitman. She wasn’t a day over twenty-five, he later learned, she had left India a few years prior and had studied Old English, for beginners, purely for the pleasure of the sound of its verse. That was the most unusual thing about her, because aside from the poems, she had almost nothing whatsoever to say, and she focused on the bare necessities: food, money, and clothing. It seemed only natural to Kuwae when she told him that she loved taking Cloud Nine because the verses always kept better tempo when they were reverberating without other distractions in her head. The animal brain freed her of her inhibition, the most primitive part of the animal brain, it produced a mounting perspiration and a need to walk quickly around in circles. And then both of them would take their clothes off, because the heat gave way to a reciprocal suffocation, and they ran around throwing their clothes all over the place, out of the irrepressible desire to simply move around. And they recited Whitman’s Song of Myself like dueling rivals. Kuwae screamed softly whole passages of its verses. They crawled up the walls of a room in whose center their eyes met, at the same time scattering their glances any which way, as though hunting antelopes or toads. And the Indian girl would read from Leaves of Grass without missing a beat, taking it in as if she was earning a degree in it, in that or in talking. “You understand?” she asked him. “One’s-self I sing, a simple separate person!” And he understood. Vociferous multitudes rose up from the poem.

“A work by Picasso or Juan Gris,” Kuwae noted. “Each voice had its own unique, distinctive rhythmical sequence.” He was returning to the room in the Metropolitan Museum of Art on that other planet which was the graduate land of exile, his fifth visit, so that he could learn

the marvel by heart. The first time he mentioned it, I wasn't sure if he was serious or if he was just a victim of loneliness, or of addiction, or of love for the nudist Indian and of general stupefaction, but it was completely reasonable when one recalled that Whitman, on more than one occasion, wrote that in his verses, he was singing to the multitudes he contained within him. Kuwae explained that the voices sang in unison, but each was unique, like the planes traced by a Cubist, and that the meeting of a glance, like the blending of different voices, produced a chorus identical to that of a symphonic hymn. He did not ignore the fact that affirming as much was almost akin to suggesting that any rhythmical analysis made previously lacked any basis. He was experiencing time in the frenzied way it sped by in the halls of the Metropolitan. He saw in the poems an invisible polyphony that multiplied itself in verses composed deliberately like works by Picasso or Juan Gris. He introduced me to the nudist at a little table at García's, one day after class. He said she was his partner or his wife, or his escape to poetry without anyone after we read César Vallejo's *Trilce*. "In those poems, he made everything up," I explained to them. He held his Indian's hand. Vallejo had put himself in the center of a cube called reality and discerned various scenes without actually separating them: a claustrophobic prison, an isle on which the sun sets, a bird in the fog of the sea. "Pure Cubism," noted Kuwae. "Just some of the poems," I corrected him. "Let's the three of us read *Trilce* in unison," he said, squeezing his Indian's hand. The idea was simple: just reading it aloud with our three voices would unleash all the resonance of the multitudes in each of the three planes. "*Trilce*, just as Vallejo imagined it." And every echo of that time went motionless into the room that Kuwae shared with his partner. Cloud Nine, cigars, the four whitening walls of the cell. How was it possible? I myself didn't even care. And under the effects of Cloud Nine, an almost unknowable synchronicity in thinking and speaking came about. Perhaps it was poetry at the center of life at last, in some way? And the three of us with the power to utter it and enjoy it. Or was it just a hallucination induced by Cloud Nine? For practical purposes, it didn't matter. In that room that two poor lovers used only to read in, we shouted in unison that the future was made of montages, close-ups and panoramic shots, lines inhabited by rain, by thousands of voices of a strange and unknown people. Lacking all control, we shared the poetry of the brute. Soaked, like Vallejo says, "in the water that stokes all fires." "This piano travels within," we crooned in the whirlwind of rain of a thousand fingers, of a thousand bodies. We could perceive that Vallejo was talking about us when he presaged a glass that waited to be drunk from by a coming mouth. That mouth was our mouth. And the glass was the poem that lay clearly in the future and that had finally arrived, today. But the future was ending as well. The last poem came in an instant. "And then what?" asked the Indian, and asked Kuwae. I didn't pause for a second: "Spain, take this cup from me," I told them. "Vallejo writes for the new

man who vanquishes death because it is all men at once.” That’s what it was, or so I wanted to think, or Cloud Nine was allowing me to understand that that’s what was happening in those poems with a greater lucidity than I’d had in all my years of teaching: Vallejo had chosen, in Spain, each sound, each word in each verse as if it were a complete and perfect thesis in and of itself, and the next verse, the next word, the next sound, as though it were its antithesis, and the result in the new verse was the complete synthesis of the new word, of the sound, of the new man, which in turn was the thesis of the next verse, of the next word, of the next sound, of a new man dialectically always superior to the anterior. It was an ascent of glances that could cross all conceivable voices and planes in all their teeming variety!

“Volunteer of Spain, militiaman,” we called out to the new man, “of trustworthy bones, when your heart marches off to die.” But that night, nobody came. Nor the next night. Nor in the naked mind that shot potent glances at the infinity of rafters holding up the darkened room. “Poetry doesn’t fail,” said Kuwae. However, we were still on the edge of darkness. We were the same, the same voices, the same vertiginous confinement of rhythms. The difference, and it couldn’t be anything else, was the potency of the songs. They were simply shocking. The poem flung our voices afar. Kuwae was the first to realize. We weren’t quite naked enough. We still hadn’t lived off the same marrow of the brain like the brute, and the vestiges of a domesticated human consciousness were impeding our access to the vision of the poem in all its purity, a vision of the new human being. We had to break free of all that residue. The next night, Kuwae increased the dose of Cloud Nine and recited Vallejo’s last poem and it wasn’t as though a veil had fallen, but more like a quick and precise movement. He had the vision of the bird, the instinct to hunt, the sensation of the vociferous cannibal, and the thirst for water undrunk, of the mind uncorrupted. It was with that movement that he drove into the middle of the Indian’s face the kitchen knife that had been left on the table, and then used it for leverage, and burst it open, and chewed up her sphenoids, and swallowed her tongue, and chomped hard on her bone and conjunctive tissue, and he choked on her brains until finally taking deep breaths and almost suffocating on the sacs of coagulated blood that had emerged from the pressure. Then he ran to the kitchen. Smashing the cabinets to bits, he found a meat cleaver and drove it swinging into his forehead.

That same night, Mario Venza threw himself out of the ninth floor of the clinic in which he lived murmuring.

That night I wasn't with Kuwae because I had to go back to my classes. I had almost abandoned them, but the survival instinct drove me to hold onto them because a nebulous anxiety like mine called for a malleable beneficiary. My classes had always been for me like a fundamental room, even more than the little room for Kuwae's rhythmical delirium. In this other room, my bones were docile: I expanded, I contracted, I dilated, I seemed to pass out and then again I swelled. I was overinflated like a balloon blown up by a mischievous, invisible child, perhaps the child was in fact myself, or even poetry. The room always saved me and it also saved me from that night, after which all the organs of my body did a 180. I hadn't been able to look anywhere without seeing the panicked expression of death, but I had just stopped giving my class and the rhymes were rhythms, just for a few more hours. The administrative assistant who gave me the abominable, incomprehensible, latest gossip, went back to her desk. The other details I know by way of the cultured psychosis of the trifles of the sensationalist press of my country, of its police, which drops information and leaks sensational photos strategically in exchange for grisly crime tips. And they return like the atmosphere of a surgical intervention in the midst of a battlefield. That night, I took a cab home. In the morning, I still didn't understand, I couldn't hold onto any part of the scene of the crime, which I believed I'd experienced with complete abundance, with joy, or with the miracle of the verses themselves. But I gave my class. I received the new day with an anxiety which grew in time with the light, but without any expectations. I got dressed and headed to the university. I was told that the viper who was my boss, that victorious anaconda, wanted to see me immediately. I walked towards the administrative building with a chill in my spine. She received me, equipped with an arsenal of arms for Armageddon, I foresaw it all, or what in her understanding she had on deck, the smile for the sunny day. Her tone progressively shifted into nuances of cordiality and she admitted to a professional solvency. My classes had acquired questionable standing at the university. It wasn't that my approach was conservative, she explained. But she couldn't ignore the lamentable amount of guys registered in my course who'd made fatal decisions. These kids are impressionable, and I understand that you have nothing to do with it; I even realize that your conversations with some of them in that passé little café are part of the anecdotal university experience that old-school professors tend to have, and which young romantics feel the need to cultivate. But they aren't advisable, because the kids have a tendency to conflate the study of poetry with their own personal troubles. The students lose sight of the fact that the study of literature is a professional track, and not a sentimental journey. I find it hideous that that girl Samanta, the niece of the poet Sandra Varas, my friend, ended up believing in hallucinations that arose from an overactive imagination. And that boy Miguel, who was so promising, and came to us so highly recommended by Danielle Protheroe, my graduate professor at the

New School, how could he have committed such an atrocity. This morning I had to deal with police officers who wanted to see you for questioning. Luckily, you know how criminal investigation works in this country, and the name of our university does hold some weight. But I'm sure you'll understand that it's rather inconvenient for both the department and for yourself to maintain any relations that lend themselves to such suspicions.

Of course I understood. I had broken out in a cold sweat. It was moving to see how she emphasized the most ridiculous aspects of it all. Her oration was a hodgepodge of clichés and prejudices. Characteristically, she left out any mention of Mario Venza, who we both knew was nobody's relative or friend (I went to his funeral, and saw his tightrope-walking girlfriend, who had fallen into a nothingness, of which he used to speak, and now inhabited. Or was it a conscious fear of poetry?) And in the half-light of words that never appealed to reason nor led to any requests, my boss was magnificent: she exposed the possible consequences of my insubordination and laid out the threats of ordinary slander. I signed the resignation papers she handed to me with an emotional convulsion. But I had nothing to complain about. The pencil ran across the page mechanically bidding my farewell of its own accord. But I had always known. That's how these things work. Perhaps I'd nourished the illusion (no, I definitely believed it) that, if sent to my lonely building to give my classes in my own way, they'd leave me alone. But I knew that all my actions and my classes were devoid of reason, even if they led every now and then to that sensation of mutilation and to all those dead kids.

While I headed home through that confusing city behind my eyes, like the emotion and impetus of the classes, I was sure that I was experiencing what Samanta had told me about before dying, that my feelings were hanging on the other side of a glass shower door, plainly visible but still out of reach. I wanted to sneak into the first open door and I realized that nothing was working properly. Was this, in the end, photophobia, agoraphobia, the disease of poetry? I don't know how I got home with one leg trembling frenetically and one eye completely out of focus, with an electric current that ran from the base of my spine to the tip of my cranium.

The fable would go like that, but this isn't a fable: "The middle-aged teacher who didn't believe in wise men nor in the books of wise men but rather in the gold of kings and in the grand mirrors of courts, or in the tight-fisted shine of the skin of noblemen receiving the visit of the young professor who returns after being sold at a slave auction, or traded to butchers getting ready to feed the beasts in the pens of the coliseum. The young professor

explained that he had returned thanks to those wise men, and to madness. She thought it was a nightmare from which she'd soon wake up. He woke her up with a dry bullet to the head and explained that it was the revenge of the God of Poets." But it didn't go like that. It would be fitting, but I'm not like that, and the fable should have a bit more truth to it, like genes or like the imaginations of my dead kids. Like Samanta, whose voice I sometimes hear from afar, in a static early morning, as I write this memorial. The fable should say that there is no such thing as poetic justice, or that its pursuit is violent or thoughtless, depending on who's watching. But it's not a fable, or it would have to be a wholly new kind of fable, one which captures the movement of the present. The young professor wouldn't be so young, he should have a PhD in unpronounceable matters, wear platform shoes, and be known as the little alpha object. And she would receive him with the welcoming smile she bestows on all her favorites. But he had just arisen from a bad bender, and had pledged himself a radical Communist before the feces amongst his Lacanian friends in a bar with art deco lighting, and the DTs had given him all he needed to go, with a loaded gun, to kill that ugly and mediocre woman, whom he had served only because she'd paid attention to his fantasies, omitting that he was good for nothing when it came to everything else, and that any civilized country on earth would have only granted him a guaranteed slow and starving death.

JEFFREY YANG

琮

CAVE

MARFA BOOK COMPANY

UNTITLED

琮*

Alive in the fragments
heaven-shattered shards
of stone divine particles
gleaned in the half-light
perquisite of the gods bestowed
in the shadow of the signs by
the gravity of the center
seated spirit humanity encodes
for the given sequence a
simplicity of form channeled
energy entombed for
millennia now un-
buried useless
absolute in the actual
object function lost to time
and circumstance civilization
long gone its power lost
its aura unfading gently
tapers down the carved
symmetry corner
bars theriomorphic mask
heaven embedded in earth
ladder bracelet or
marked ancestral heraldry
found around the dead
body placed in a circle
the relevant passage

* *cong* (or *tsóng*): Neolithic ritual vessel made of stone, often jade, carved as an elongated square block that encloses a hollow, cylindrical tube. Its original use possibly astronomical.

CAVE

Carbon handprint in a cave

beside a ferrous oxide antelope

Figure approaching a gate
to sun, one standing astride

flowering star, swallow nests of mud
above: barnacles on the cliff-face

MARFA BOOK COMPANY

Tim & Caitlin sew the blue sail
at the center of Echo City

hoist Pythagoras's "friendship
makes the many one" with Sun

Congtian's "books occupy
the same position in the universe
as the soul does in the human body"

UNTITLED

Like the land of the lost
driving down to the old fort
Pterodactyls
in the air
really glossy
ibis, passers-by
watering in the pool
at the center of the flat crater
orbiting the air, returning to water

KHAL TORABULLY

**[WHEN THE SEA VANISHED AT LAST]
[OUR CARGO HOLD IS A TERRITORY]
[THE SEA WILTS]
[TO THE NACRE DARKER THAN MY FLESH]
[I HAVE SEEN THE SEA]
[AHOY FROM THE BLUE BOAT]
[BURNING ALBUQUERQUE IN GOA]
[BEFORE, TO TELL ABOUT LEAVES]
[BEFORE FORGING THROUGH]**

TRANSLATED BY NANCY NAOMI CARLSON

When the sea vanished at last
like wizard's ink
I saw Signal Mountain
casting its fires directly north.
My seaweed-filled dreams slid
toward the Citadel, look-out of light,
and I set foot on land
like a bird fallen from a cage.
My compass in my flesh,
I touched my ship
yet never resented the waves.

Translator's note: Signal Mountain and the Citadel are located in Port Louis, the capital city of Mauritius.

Our cargo hold is a territory
that's lost our birds:
let the muffled sound of bed sheets
make the light call out between our dreams.
Only the sail is unnerved
by a woman's cry.

The sea wilts for the drowned,
And mermaids perform their ablutions
when camphor wafts by.
O praise be to phosphorus
whose legend interred
the stars in my native land.

To the nacre darker than my flesh:
for the star to find the full-fledged
sea, give me a single name flush
with light on my marrow's flesh.

for J.M. Fournier

I have seen the sea, the pond,
bees, compasses,
triangles, zithers—
designs of starfish
I measured
with your golden rule—
and in the green water
I saw trees
give shade to the stars.

Ahoy from the blue boat.
How do you lull dusk to sleep
without shutting the eyes of the untouchable orb?
Without passing through to the other side of the sky
and making a ball of sparks?
Ahoy from the gangway of wind
where the light absorbs me to such a degree
that thinking makes me live on in my soul.

in memory of Poivre, from Lyon

Burning Albuquerque in Goa
at the cape of storms
without hope,
stealing spice from the Maluku Islands
and ripping up Marco Polo's book—
tearing my gaff sail muslin of wind,

the only mission I didn't fulfill!

Before, to tell about leaves,
I'd watch the wind.

Before, to close the sky,
I'd draw the curtains.

And to absent women,
I'd picture their birth.

O never before the wound
had I suffered so much from my senses!

Before forging through
firm sea, firm mother-of-pearl—
scar from now on—
I seize the dawn
without wavering
wearing my turban of waves.

**SARAH TUSS EFRIK &
JOHANNES GÖRANSSON**

**FROM A NEW QUARANTINE
WILL DEVOUR MY BODY**

5.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS'S WEDDING IN THE RIBCAGE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Oh mon dieu! I hang myself in the noose and watch how the red flowers grow out of my strangled head, how they proliferate and grow their own tiny skulls. I don't remember anything anymore. Who is sending the images and who is receiving them. I just know I want to rest. Don't I deserve a little rest?

Fuckers.

There is no rest for the wicked.
There is no pomegranate for my mouth.
The bomb has made a big hole in the garden.
Every leaf has been torn or burnt.
Or every leaf has been infected by mildew.
Or the spider mite.
Or my skull has mildew on it or my mouth
Has Hanahaki disease
That is how you know we're in the underworld.
Everything here is so beautiful, for example my face.
Or this tattoo of a spider on Sara's thigh.
The face is always in the sun.
The thigh is always with the spiders
Underground, in the ground, in the suburbs.
It's not a genuine spider
but a translated spider. It used to mean something
more in the mother tongue. I used to tongue
the spider while listening to a shark rot
some 20 feet away. In the corner of the factory.
The superstars of Chile come here
To party. When it's a party I play the mother
Of all bombs. I'm so small. So small.
I open my eyes slowly and look at you.
I have a tube in my mouth
In parties I always have a tube
In my mouth. I party on other texts
For example the poetry of Emily Dickinson
Or hospital manuals from Indianapolis.

I'm sitting under the beams. I'm sitting here yearning for the ugliness and the fat man with the belly. *I am your hostess*. I sit here and send out hologram of Shirley Temple from exactly the moment she will be shown to the world. I'm the only one to see her age. No one knows that she belongs to me. I'm also the only one who gets to witness her menopause. I'm the one who plays with botox and fillers in her face and pussy. Do you see how she changes? How she becomes herself?

Overall, I think her most elaborately bodily feature is her drowned violets.

The underworld is a kind of factory where Sara Tuss can reshape memories and acts of violence and turn them into ruins and where Johannes can hang himself in the noose and see how out of his broken head flowers grow, how they proliferate. All these flowers, all these skulls. The singular is what's lost in translation. I can't remember anything except the bomb. I say bomb but it was really a child, a daughter with a hole in the diaphragm of her lungs. But the flowers grow out of the hole in my head, the story is changing.

I acknowledge everything as the raw material for my self portrait as mother. I call out to Louise. I ask her to bring me the rain water. I know it's toxic I tell her. I am making art. Fake art for a fake child. The mother of screams. I'm becoming her in the poem by the American Son. The counterfeit son. I will fuck this poem up but the poem is already inside me. Louise is inside of me. With her spider veil. I can't even see my own face in here.

I only remember riding around with daddy.

That was America.

In the translation of your trip your dad becomes the foreigner and you become the nymphet. A rewrite in which the grotesque sexuality that the classic withholds seeps back into the foreground. It's a book about prostitution. About counterfeits made in translation. The Swedish girl, the Polish whore. It's a book about childhood. The underworld is littered with your daddy's cigarettes.

Here's what happened to you in the poem about pig slaughter: You fell in love with the arms manufacturer's daughter.

When you fell in love with Shirley, you thought you were falling in love with an arms manufacturer's daughter. When you fled from her, you hid a fist full of Christmas decorations in her dress, maybe as a gift, I do not know for sure, maybe it was a totally irrational act of revenge, I don't know, maybe because she was your hiding place.

You still think of the arms manufacturer's daughter when you feel alone and want a pistol up your ass. You always return to the uncertainties of that light, whether it radiates from your mouth or ass, whether it is a light at all. I know at least one thing for sure and that is that Louise's care is not enough. When she turns your insides inside-out, you think of the Greek chorus which also has knowledge of what is going on inside the skin. Perhaps you just want Louise to accept you for who you are.

Sara takes off the beaked mask.

She's butchering a sex poem.

The creature that was just breathing a second ago is now making strange noises.

Someone puts on a soundtrack by Satie. I've never ever fainted because I've never ever relaxed. Not now either. I play the lead role in my own farce. The music repeats and repeats. I can't put it into words because it's not words. I cannot translate it except to say it's black out music.

Repeat after me: Shirley is a girl. Shirley is a stained pig. Shirley thinks she's a celeb but she isn't. Shirley is a hologram. Shirley gives me her tiara because I meet all her demands of masculinity. The tiara is full of rusty nails. The tiara is my thorn crown. I thank you humbly. She seems to keep track of the story, Shirley, maybe she already knows the end I'm heading toward. Shirley applauds my feminine masculinity. She believes in my suffering. How lucky. My suffering is the only thing I believe in. Shirley isn't dumb.

There's enough parasites in this bed to make me royalty. King of milk. Street of thighs. I could make such a wonderful cake of your face, Shirley, but I'm too tired right now, I can't perform my own farce the way you want me to. Also you are a farce, my little thigh-cake. Oh Shirley, I could have made such a beautiful paradise out of you if you had only let me. I could have filled your body with even more: candy, drowsy pigs, abducted children, soldiers who have been tortured to death and continue to be tortured to death, poison candy, candy apples, appropriated death reports. Oh Shirley I could stuff your silk band in my mouth if it hadn't gotten so filthy. Oh Shirley, I'm a pig and you know it and I know you know it. That's why you will never leave me. That's why I will keep loving you. Because you can't leave me. You're locked up in my ridiculous story and I'm locked up in yours. I only talk about things that make you anxious. I have started numbing my anxiety with alcohol. I stand in line with the other animals. This is our army. You will not get away.

Shotgun.

What am I going to do with my own wreckage when I'm lost in the quarantine? What am I going to do with my body when everything seems like carnage and paper roses? Will I ever get out of here?

The gnats are drawn to my wine. I have to follow the cut to get out. My ex died two months ago. No one informed me of his death. That too is a farce. But his parents will be punished with hellfire. God has promised me that. Virgin sieve, birth sieve, death waits around the corner. Why did you not take care of the child that blew up? I think it's late. Everything is too late. I leave cigarette butts with lipstick marks on his grave. I fantasize about fucking all his friends to get him close again. It's a wonderful party we have, me and my dead boyfriend, even though I no longer remember what we're celebrating. That we are sober or that we are dead? That there's only one of us left living? Now I have to start over again from the beginning again. How does one do it? Take a deep breath. Empty your lungs into the balloon. Leave the balloon for the grave even though your boyfriend doesn't need either nitrous oxide or breathing.

Do you still have air in your dead body? Do you still have a sow in your dead body? Are you still a sieve? Still stuck in your sty. If I bend over your face while pushing into your chest, can I get the air you once breathed? Will you give back? No, you're not the type who gives back. That's why I still love you. You hit me and it felt like a kiss. Now I don't have any more room for love. I have nothing to give you, you stole everything. I only inhale nitrous oxide when I feed all my children, all other breaths seem unnecessary, and infinite.

VIRGILIO PIÑERA

ELEGY LIKE SO

TRANSLATED BY DAN BELLM

ELEGY LIKE SO

I invite the word
to wander barking and deserted among dogs.
Everything's sad.
If it crowns its breast and brow with shiny leaves
a cold smile will flower on the moon.
Everything's sad.
Later the sad dogs will eat the leaves
and bark out words with shiny sound.
Everything's sad.
A dog invites hyacinths into the river.
Everything's sad.
With moony words, with doggy arrows,
with toothy little leaves
the hyacinths hurt the mute maidens.
Everything's sad.
The black grass grows with a tranquil hum,
but shiny blade edges stroke the rhythm.
Everything's sad.
In back of words, serpents laugh.
The deaf earth won't allow a sound.
Everything's sad.

A celestial bird barks across the sky
to ward off death,
uncovers it with flowers of night,
entices it with words of dogs,
buries it with a cup of earth.

Everything's sad.
I invite the earthy word
to bore through life and mirrors
and the echo of its image split in two.
Everything's sad.
A play on words, with barking.

Everything's sad.

A wand whips through wild wind
with the machinations of a man.

Everything's sad.

Half a cup of earth silenced the music.

Everything's sad.

Later the earth drank itself.

Everything's sad.

And when the time of death arrives,
stand me at the mirror to see myself.

Everything's sad.

RYOKO SEKIGUCHI

FROM ADAGIO MA NON TROPPO

TRANSLATED BY LINDSAY TURNER

When one of the apartment buildings in the city center is demolished, though the space might remain entirely empty, a part of the naked wall remains attached to the buildings on either side of it like they couldn't quite get it off all the way, and the variation of colors and wallpaper patterns, like a multi-colored screen, gives a sense of each of the rooms as they once were. If streets are also like this, the meetings of long ago will be stacked on one of those floors and the meetings to come will be suspended, or—following several times with my eyes the phrase “to keep in my heart,” in spite of my new leather shoes, my pace didn't slow at all.

“There are extraordinary things. I was missing you a lot. I wanted to see you.”

The faces of the living who aren't here and the shadows of the ghosts and the air stirred by those who never existed: in what ways are they similar, in what ways different?

The map of the city spread out on the desk, I was hunched over wanting to identify a building, on a whim I wanted to look for the street called Morais Soares and soon I found the letters “rua Morais Soares,” but the street seemed larger than I thought it should, as if it were a boulevard, and a bend in it that should certainly have been there wasn’t on the map although I can even now make it materialize before my eyes, the climbing vine half-yellowed and falling from the top of the short white arch that runs between the sides of the street, the scent of those flowers, fully in season despite their state, or the dark magenta door just to one side, just a little shorter than a person’s frame, and then the breath of the person walking beside, the little movement of her switching her purse from one hand to the other, the feeling of the moment when we turn the corner, where we slow just an instant and where her cheek brushes my chest: I stand up, suddenly dizzy, is it that I was reading the map all wrong until now, or is it the wrong way of crossing the street, or is it that we’ve misread your story,

Ghosts don't need to arrange their meetings, but for you it's still necessary,

At the moment when our lips touch I think: this moment in which we encounter each other, really, the only space where we don't have to wait for the hour to approach boldly, face-on, what happens there, between meetings, in general?

In a city built among the hills so consequently all the streets are sloped, the irregular reflections of sunlight reach their fullest and for almost half the year, from May through September, this paradoxically deepens the shadows. No way to know what phenomenon this might cause among the strata of those who lived here long ago. The southern zone opens wide onto the Tejo river, the streets exist for those who pass through them, and in front of the English bookstore, a man who arrived some time ago for a meeting at six o'clock starts awkwardly up the hill, while the meeting set for seven descends in a rattle of beating wings.

ANDREW SCHELLING

FROM TENTH SONG OF THE MEADOWLARK

One question

One question
where does a book begin
does it begin the last 1000 years
paper parchment
sheep's hide palm-leaf bamboo
it changes what you think of the petroglyph
to see frog as a clan sign
horned figure pecked into
desert varnish
it was cold the night Jack Collom died
we had a dream
we were chipping acrostics
into rock

The hand that shapes

The hand that shapes the mind
clay or written word
is subject to accident & time
finding it is the meander
they say purity
or straight lines
let troublesome spirits arrive
the good teacup has a flaw
it wobbles
the avant-garde continues
an exotic not very hardy species,
survives in greenhouse environments
academia the so-called
art world
the gallery ghettos
once outside it tends to shrivel and die
sheer irrelevance
on the phone a message
nearly a year old
I intend to keep it my dead father's voice
it may help me imagine a new Kuksu
a bird mask to cover
or is it sheepishly disclose
a lifetime of error
accidental design in the imprint

In his visions

In his visions he's
composing acrostics
the dying enter a sphere of visions
this is a no shooting zone
the binding is Japanese, sewn,
he inscribes it for me in running grass script
black ink jotting left to right
unseen electric currents
grief preys on the living but
not the dead I hear
footfall darjeeling flute blade sunlight day
can you give your name away?
that's from a friend
a poet whose name I withhold
we all might have been going to have lived
a long, long time ahead
but on this continent
outlaws & anarchists by the fire
listen to Kishori Amonkar sing the
rain-season song
she regulates the monsoon
here the Southern Rockies
skirts of rain
go trailing down valley

In my tradition

In my tradition we don't tell
coyote stories,
said James in Cañoncito—
until the first hard frost.
I marveled as the three hard syllables
fell like three
raven feathers, no, like kernels
from a raven's open beak
Next morning blue corn *atole*, crisp
ice on the windshield when I took
the sleeping bag out
to the car
A pinch of corn pollen
rubbed on the hands for the drive north
I came through Blackhawk
canyon blasted into a furious gorge
dynamite & heavy
equipment Clear Creek's seen it all
a thousand yards casino glass & cement
bigger than Mesa Verde
crow crow crow
rip up a wild place for thrills crow crow
How different is walking?
what's it to you gambler dog-face?
If your heart don't know
that walking is different than gambling
no one can tell you
 crow crow

tomfoolery

Four Mile Creek
its bramblebush of dialects—
They kept manhandling
Algonkian words—last century's Scottish miners—
& we all enjoy bunkum, flimflam,
moonshine
the jazz language North America

Up here's pettifog & taradiddle
(sleety rain fog cloud
spits down-ridge)
tomfoolery makes me think
of King Lear
I bet that's where it comes from
moor thrashed with night wind, lightning
(white quartz in blocks
on the far hill add
bedlam ghost hulks to storm)
Denver or DC this land of beguile, swindle, bilk, defraud
rock & each pine needle clump
sways its own careful pace
gypsy cant, bog Latin,
jackhammer sound in the distance, a truck
hauling Amazon boxes

(night ponderosa shagged juniper really
snowing now
you can hear deer hooves
scrape the hillside

Dog Tank Spring

Not a light
between here and Blanding
way past Comb Ridge
a swarm of dreams into the wintry
tent

it was Freud's old book
a handbook for seeing
& symbols I can't read under sandstone cliffs
balance it with Teton Sioux
dream songs
looked up in the library

How-to-do-it
excavating the strange things
come out of slickrock
Dog Tank Spring
bear paw
 bear paw
crumbled droppings
whole juniper berries
in the mash

Here it goes again
one more treaty broken—
solitary older Navajo man
in a pickup
watches the sunset
wavering cliffs of the Bears Ears Buttes
reddening behind him

Winter Solstice 2017

LUIS ENRIQUE BELMONTE

**FINAL ACT
BOOK FAIR
BONFIRE
AS TIME GOES BY
THIS BONFIRE WILL BE OURS EVEN MORE**

TRANSLATED BY GUILLERMO PARRA

FINAL ACT

Turn off the streetlights
 hurry the last cup,
let's listen to stories in the dark
until the curtain falls.

Because the table is already covered in ashes
and you can't hear the hooves in the square anymore.

They've taken the cauldron away, comrades,
 and the crackling embers
seem to say it's time to go to sleep,
lunatics, mountain critters, moving shades,
the same vampires as ever, dear readers.

and napkins with telephone numbers and directions
or requests and messages for other writers
who couldn't come.

Other writers go as representatives of the Poetariat
protesting because no one paid for their plane tickets
which is why they stared out bus windows
trying to find inspiration
in the Egyptian darkness of nighttime roads:

 they write in hotels with no pools
about what happens to them when they're alone in their rooms
assailed by books they were given by their authors

and napkins with telephone numbers and directions
or requests and messages for other writers who couldn't come
but who might already be on the list of those commissioned
for next year's Book Fair.

BONFIRE

I write in the kitchen.

The night nods off like a dozing sentinel
after all the whirlwinds have passed through
the polar arctic circle.

I write in this kitchen
where your hands find the best herbs,
where your hands find my own hands.

And the fresh, quiet night
like a song by Otilio Galíndez.

I write in this kitchen
where we chop add condiments
simmer this sweetness at a low flame
this joy of being here together and alive.

AS TIME GOES BY

As time goes by
you learn how to make a compass of silence,
we accept the noise of crickets,
we remember our grandfather's jacket.

As time goes by
you don't get mad when you stumble on the same stone,
you decide to sacrifice yourself
 [for anything]
and no one leaves the room
without a lighter in their pocket.

As time goes by
you're not overwhelmed by distance.

And in the darkest night
you're better off whistling low.

THIS BONFIRE WILL BE OURS EVEN MORE

The boats will burn on the shore.

We will wander foreign lands.

Surviving comrades will appear
who will once more pulse
the Lines of the World.

[And of course someone will slap hands
or stamp with joy
when some rabbit
crosses our path].

We will finally reach the promised forest:
the creek will lull us to sleep.

This bonfire will be ours even more.

LUIS FELIPE FABRE

STILLED LIFE

TRANSLATED BY DAN BELLM

ANDREI MOLOTIU

FOUR POEMS FROM THE 90S

LULLABY

Not fathom this tower of puppets; unravel
the stutter of signs: tremulous, speaking
only of what's three days past & their chatter
deafening. Nor to waver
over the hours;

for it's the same in the mornings
of spearing light, where
wombats unfasten your eyelids:
the waking forgets there
the cassowaries & the marionettes
alike.

MIDMORNING

Into the spilled horizon
of your daydark floor—
its squirreling away
into the powdered light—
allow for
the small soft tatters of the night—
they overlay your bed &
scattered upon your arising.

FROM A BEACH-GUARD TOWER

Like seams span things:
the cast strike's lilt & slack
astride these stacked stilts scan—
untying near & there—
the sea's dreamed glare:
its quilted back
& the sun's wings.

THIRD ELEGY

after Propertius, Elegies I.3, 1-30

Like Ariadne, asleep
 upon the empty beach
as Theseus's ship stole
 into the faraway—
or like Andromeda, her
 wrists once freed from the rock—
or else like the Thracian dance-
 drained bacchante collapsed on
the river bank's damp grasses—
 so lay Cynthia, her lips
barely breath-shivered, her cheek's
 flesh crushed on her fingers,
when I staggered in, enslaved
 by Bacchus (drunk, that is),
dragging my unsteady feet
 by the slaves' uncertain
torchlight that withered and died
 in the senescent night.

Urged on by two unyielding
 deities—Wine and Love—
I leaned above her on the
 couch and meant to touch her—
slither my arm beneath her
 wasp-waist and raise her to
my long-overdue kisses:
 but then I didn't dare.
What can I say? I feared her
 sharp and cruel tongue
she's often had me taste; so
 I kept still and watched her

like Argos stared at Io's
knobby, misshapen horns.

There I was, tearing garlands
from my hair to drape them
round your temples, my Cynthia,
delighting in curling
back your unkempt curls, and then
I placed on your sleeping
breast the apples I'd brought you;
but you stirred and they rolled
off. And whenever you sighed
and your chest heaved and swelled
(oh, how I knew that heaving!)
I held my breath and bit
my lip, afraid some demon-
lover in your dream was
taking you the way that *I*
wished I'd been, but wasn't.

‘ANTARAH IBN SHADDĀD

DID POETRY DIE?

TRANSLATED BY JAMES E. MONTGOMERY WITH RICHARD SIEBURTH

‘Antarah ibn Shaddād lived in the second half of the sixth century (CE), on the eve of the advent of Islam. The greatest warrior of pre-Islamic Arabia, the black outcast son of Shaddād, a free-born Arab father, and Zabibah, an Ethiopian slave mother, ‘Antarah was doomed to the life of a slave in the highlands of Najd, in what is today Saudi Arabia. The story goes that it was on the field of battle, when he single-handedly defended the tribe from a surprise attack, that ‘Antarah won his father’s recognition and his freedom.

‘Antarah was a poet as well as a warrior and a small corpus of poetry attributed to him was written down in Iraq in the early ninth century. This is his most famous poem, one of a collection of the canonical poems of pre-Islamic Arabia known as the *Mu‘allaqāt*, “the Suspended or Hanging Poems.” Legend has it that these poems were so called because they were inscribed on fabric and “suspended” from the walls of the Kaaba. The original meaning of the word was probably “Choice or Precious Odes.”

‘Antarah’s *Mu‘allaqah* is a complex work in which its poet’s crazed war-lust and psychotic bellicosity plays itself out in radically paratactic fashion against a background of his hunt for ‘Ablah, the unattainable woman who is the object of his obsessions. Grotesquery abounds and the ode is driven by a manic energy. Many pre-Islamic odes engage in a conversation, whether with the poet’s beloved, his patron, his tribe, or his opponents. ‘Antarah’s ode is not in conversation with ‘Ablah, as we might first suspect, but with Death, who, with its avatars (the hyenas and vultures), arrives at the end of the poem like a god in response to a prayer. Through its presence in the world and in the poem, Death, the ultimate absence, sanctifies the poet’s worshipful act of killing and the soundscape in which he piously chants its majesty. In the end, the exultant savagery to which the ode gives voice wreaks havoc on all but its own stridency, as ultimately meaning is found only in Death, and in the poetry that sings of it.

–J.E.M.

DID POETRY DIE?

Did poetry die in its war with the poets?¹
 Is this where ‘Ablah walked? Think!
The ruins were deaf—denied reply,
 then shouted out in a foreign tongue.²
My camel tried to withdraw—
 I couldn’t move,
ranting at the charred stones.
 “Speak. Live. Prosper.
Here in Jiwā’ ‘Ablah dwelled,
 a timid gazelle, doe eyes,
sweet smile, soft neck.”
 I reined in my camel, big as a fort—
I needed to weep, needed the shame.
 ‘Ablah lived in Jiwā’,
our people in Ḥazn, Ṣammān, and Mutathallam.³
 Rise, desolate traces, from dust,
now that ‘Ablah’s gone
 too far for a lover to chase.
The pursuit’s too hard, Bint Makhram.⁴
 By chance we came together
as I battled your tribe.
 By God, this is no idle boast.
You seized my heart,
 make no mistake
about my love—
 with your people in ‘Unayzatān,
ours in Ghaylam, how can I come?
 Did you decide to leave?
The night was black, your camels
 readied. I shuddered at the sight
of pack camels by the tents,
 chewing khimkhim⁵, and forty-two
dark milch-camels,

their sheen like a raven's wing.
Then a sudden light, a flash
of teeth sweet to mouth and tongue.
I'm caught—the thought
of this young fawn and her tender stare,⁶
her scent wafting before her smile,
sprung from a merchant's musk pouch⁷
or strong Adhri'āt wine
which foreign kings like to age,
or from a rain-soaked field of flowers
known to few beasts of the wild,
where showers have been kind
and pools glint like silver coins
in downpours from the clouds—
evenings when water flows unchecked
and the lone hopper, look,
screeches its drunken song
scraping out a tune
leg on leg like a one-arm man
bent over a firestick.
By day and dark she lies on her pillow.
My nights I pass in the saddle
of a black horse, bridled,
its leg strong, flank round, girth lean.

Can I reach her on a shadanī camel⁸
her teats snipped, cursed to be dry?
She's a high-stepper, tail still twitching
after a long night's ride,
feet like mallets as though
I were smashing stones and hills
on the back of a dock-ear, pinch-toe
ostrich dashing to his flock
as Yemenis rush to a stuttering stranger,⁹
sprinting to his nest in Dhū l-'Ushayrah¹⁰

his crown like a cover draped
 over bier posts held high,
tiny head and thin neck
 a dock-eared slave wrapped in furs.

My camel drinks at Duḥruḍān and sprints
 from Daylam's wells with a mad stare¹¹
swaggering to and fro, groaning
 as if fleeing a cat strapped
to her right flank, against whose claw
 and fang she wheels in a rage.¹²
At the ride's end, she looms, massive
 as a fortress, kneeling at Ridā's well
long legs like hoarse bass horns¹³
 sweat oozing from her neck like syrup
or the tar blacksmiths boil for pots—
 an angry, noble tail-switcher
bulky, big as a bite-scarred stud.

Turn away, if you wish, 'Ablah.
 Hide behind your veil!
I crush knights in armor and mail.
 Praise me for what you know me to be—
easy when not wronged
 but when wronged, savage in wrath
bitter as a desert gourd.
 After the midday heat I drink
good wine from a streaked yellow glass
 strained from a gleaming jug
held fast in my left hand,
 paid for with minted gold.
I squander all I have on drink—
 keeping my honor whole.
Sober again, I'm still lavish
 'Ablah, as you know.

With quick thrust of my pliant spear
I felled a decent man
his jugular hissing, split like a harelip,¹⁴
spurting 'andam resin red.¹⁵
'Ablah, Daughter of Mālik, ask
the riders if you want to hear
how I live in my horse's saddle
swimming through troops
exposed to spear thrusts
wound after wound
charging the great harvest of bows.
The riders will tell you—
I enter the fray
then decline the spoils.

I gave the iron-mail warrior
relentless, feared by his foes
a swift thrust with my war-tested spear
straight and true.
A gash opened, wide as a bucket
the thud a signal
to hungry hyenas—
nobles like this are fair game.
My spear mucked him up.
He didn't look so fancy
lying there, a feast for night predators
ripping him head to wrist.¹⁶

Next came the standard-bearer
that fierce champion—
My sword split
the ripples of his mail!
He was nimble
gambling in winter

and blamed for his largesse
 with the year's stock of wine¹⁷—
a hero born for battle
 sarḥah-tree tall¹⁸
an only child¹⁹
 in soft leather boots.
He saw me charging and bared
 his teeth without a smile.
I speared him and finished him off
 with a keen, hard Indian blade.²⁰
That morning his chest and head lay
 dyed dark in indigo.

Why, my doe, is it lawful for others
 to hunt you, but not for me?²¹
I said to my slave girl, "Go!
 Find out what you can."
Her news: "Your enemy's distracted.
 The freeborn doe is yours for the taking—
a snub-nosed gazelle offering
 her tender neck."

'Amr, I hear, didn't like my gift—
 ingratitude blights the soul.
When battered by waves of war
 heroes do not gripe,
their teeth aglint in a grimace
 as the fighters grunt
in a sea of battlerage.
 I heeded my uncle's counsel.
The soldiers used me as a shield
 against lances—
even sore pressed, I wouldn't flinch.
 The army was on the march.

I wheeled and charged—
 true to my code.
“Antar!” they roared—
 spears taut as wellropes
pierced my black steed’s chest.
 Again I battered them, and then
again. My horse, its withers and chest
 robed in blood, withdrew
from the spearclash,
 grumbling softly
—if he could speak
 he’d have grumbled more—
as the steeds
 and giant mares
scowled and sank
 in the soft soil
and the knights shouted
 “Ho ‘Antar, Onward!”
And how it healed my soul.

My camels go where I wish.
 My heart and will comply.
You think you know why I’ve been unable
 to visit you, ‘Ablah
with Baghīd²² barring the way with spears
 petty warmongers, picking a fight?
I wheeled my bloodied colt.
 The knights cowered
behind Ḥidhyam’s sons.²³

I feared I’d die before war’s mill²⁴
 could grind ḌamḌam’s sons to dust.
Unprovoked, they vowed revenge
 and stained my honor.

There's still time for them to act!

I killed their father—
carrion for gimpy hyenas
and grizzled vultures!

ENDNOTES

1 My rendering of this famous opening hemistich may seem unusual to those familiar with the standard renderings such as Arberry's "Have the poets left a single spot for a patch to be sewn?" (*The Seven Odes*, 179). The pre-modern commentators and lexicographers focus on *mutaraddamī*, a hapax in the corpus of 'Antarah and in the anthology of the five other pre-Islamic poets to which 'Antarah's poetry belongs. The line is then construed in terms of the meaning ascribed to this rare and obscure epithet and in terms of the unexpressed substantive the epithet is presumed to qualify. The missing substantive is implicitly and invariably taken to be *shī'r*, "poetry." Thus, al-Shantamarī (d. 476/1083) glosses the half-line as follows: "The phrase *min mutaraddamī* has the sense of 'I patched (*radamtu*) the thing,' i.e., I fixed it and repaired its weaknesses." He then explains the hemistich as follows: "What he means is, 'Have the poets left any theme (*ma'nā*) for anyone that they have not already used?' This resembles the phrase, 'Has the first person left anything for the second person <to do>?'" This is corroborated by the variant ascribed to Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 209/824-25): *mutarannimī*, i.e., "trilled, or modulated <presumably chant, or verse>." My reading of the line seeks to give full weight to the verb *ghādara*, and harmonize it with its two other occurrences in the corpus of 'Antarah's poetry and with the meaning it carries in the wider corpus of pre-Islamic poets, where the verb invariably means "to leave an opponent lying dead, and unburied, on the battlefield." This raises several possible interpretations. If the sense of the hapax *mutaraddamī* is that of being patched up or sewn together, then in the context of the verb *ghādara*, it could mean "a piece of cloth that requires patching up as a result of the thrust of my spear and slash of my sword." The trope of a weapon spoiling an opponent's fine clothing is found in line 56 of our poem, for example ("My spear mucked him up.//He didn't look so fancy//lying there."). The lexica also note that the root *r-d-m* can be applied to the protracted nature of a conflict or illness or fever. The example given is *taraddamat al-khuṣūmah*, "the conflict became long-lasting, protracted." In this case, the meaning would then be something along the lines of: "Did the poets leave <poetry>, which had persisted so long <like a conflict or hostility or fever>, dead and unburied on the battlefield." I find the grotesquery of my reading of the line much in keeping with similar instances of the grotesque and crazed bellicosity I hear in the rest of this magnificent poem.

2 Both of these first two verses begin, unusually, with a double instance of a technique (known as *tarṣīf* in Arabic) encountered in the opening verses of many poems, whereby the first hemistich of the verse closes with a repetition of the rhyme of the ode (in this case, *mutaraddamī*—*tawahhumī* and *yatakallamī*—*al-a'jamī*, respectively). Some scholars have

construed this as a sign that line 1 is a later addition to the poem, which would then have originally started with the current line 2. The *Mu‘allaqah* (the “Suspended Ode”) of Zuhayr is a companion piece (known in Arabic as a *mu‘araḍah*) to this poem. Zuhayr’s ode is a panegyric in honor of the chieftain who brought peace to the warring clans of ‘Abs and Dhubyān and thus brought to an end the conflict (known as the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā’) that nearly annihilated ‘Antarah’s clan and its wider tribal group. For example, both poems share the same rhyme consonant, though they do not share the same meter, and there are resemblances between ‘Antarah line 1b and Zuhayr line 4b, and ‘Antarah line 7b and Zuhayr line 1b. See Arberry, *Seven Odes*, 170–71.

3 The topography in line 7 and in line 12 is geographically precise, however polysemous the names in the ode may be. Larcher, “Fragments d’une poétique arabe,” argues that the toponyms and proper nouns that are scattered throughout the poem contribute to the poem’s linguistic and semantic polyvalence.

4 That the beloved has four names in this poem—‘Ablah, Umm al-Haytham (i.e., Daughter of Makhrām), Bint Makhrām, and Bint Mālik (i.e., Daughter of Mālik) (line 49)—is a sign of the poem’s instability. Most pre-Islamic poems attribute only one name to the object of the poet’s desire.

5 *Khimkhim* was a non-stinging nettle (*Forsskaolea tenacissima*), dried and used as camel fodder. The name is variously given: it is also written as *khumkhum*, *ḥimḥim*, and *ḥumḥum*.

6 The fawn described in this line is said not to have a twin. This is balanced by the same claim made for the hero felled by ‘Antarah in line 60 (“an only child”).

7 Musk heralds the presence of the divine.

8 A *shadanī* camel was one bred in Shadan in Tihāmah, the western littoral of Arabia.

9 The “Yemenis” who “rush to a stuttering stranger” are usually taken to be Yemeni camels, though the phraseology is also used elsewhere by ‘Antarah of a “troop” of raiding horsemen.

10 Ostriches live in groups of about fifty birds, led by an alpha female. They lay their eggs in a nest dump, tended diurnally by the female (which is dust-colored) and nocturnally by the male (which is black and white). They do this to take full advantage of the camouflage offered by their different plumage coloration. The Arabian ostrich (*Struthio camelus syriacus*) was declared extinct in 1966.

11 The commentators explain that “Daylam” is the mountainous region of northern Iran on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. Presumably an alternative local toponym has been masked.

12 The origins of the image may lie in the practice of conveying cheetahs by camel to

the hunt. See Montgomery, “The Cat and the Camel.”

13 A difficult verse. The groans made by the camel as she kneels to drink are compared with the bass notes of the *qaṣab*, properly a reed fife or pipe, and not a horn. One commentator proposes that the poet is describing the sounds of the camel drinking from the water.

14 This line is fully, “<the air from> his jugular hissing like <breath from> the lip of a hare-lipped camel.”

15 ‘*Andam* was a red tree resin or plant dye used by women to color their hands.

16 One commentator suggests that the monorhyme constrains the poet to say “wrist” (*al-miṣamī*) rather than “toe,” though the bottom half of the slain warrior may be clad in full-length chain mail, thus preventing unhindered access to the scavengers.

17 There are two distinct heroic virtues intoned here: excessive generosity at the communal game of chance, when camels were slaughtered to feed the tribe in winter and times of famine (known in Arabic as *maysir*); and excessive generosity with and consumption of alcohol.

18 *Sarḥah* here means a large tree, in what is a poetic usage, as the word *sarḥah* generally designates the plant *meru* (*Maerua crassifolia*) or the shrub *Cadaba farinosa*.

19 The reference to leather boots does not mean that the poet’s opponent is soft, but rather that he is rich and so has never wanted for anything or gone hungry: in other words, he is at full strength. The remark that he is an only child (properly, “he does not have a twin”) has the same force. The commentaries suggest that having a twin makes a person weak.

20 The curved Indian blade (*hindī*, *hunduwānī*, and, as here, *muhannad*) is distinct from the straight Yemeni blade (*yamānī*).

21 In other words, the object of the poet’s obsession, ‘Ablah, is both a wild animal in a sacred demesne (*ḥimā*), and so cannot be hunted, and a woman promised as bride to another.

22 Baghīḍ was an ancestor of ‘Antarah’s clan, ‘Abs, and their kinsfolk Fazārah (a clan within the larger group of Dhubyān), foes in the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā’.

23 The Arabic specifies “the two sons” of both Ḥidhyam and Ḍamḍam, in the next verse.

24 The pre-Islamic poets often think of war as a mill-stone that moves on its pivot and grinds combatants to death. Some seem also to have viewed the cosmos as such a mill, i.e., as a universe of war.

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--J.E.M.

LUPE GÓMEZ

FROM THE WILD SPRINGS OF PARADISE

TRANSLATED BY ERÍN MOURE

52

You made cheeses on the hearth
and I lay in the sentimental lap of my father,
facing you, on the hearth bench. You looked at me without stopping.
You were happy reinventing yourself in me.

—The eyes of cows brim with foundlings.—

53

You tended your cheeses with so much
love! You formed prodigious architectures,
like a woman who disguises herself in a flourish of camouflaged
hair, while the world vanishes in the throes of war.

I was a peach, a girl of democracy, quiet, good.

54

In the afternoon I did my homework,
and you fed me warm fresh cheese.
Maps of an totally new geography.
A poem of love that no editor
would wish to publish.

—My brothers took the bus to Betanzos, to the Professional Training School. They walked on appalling muddy roads when it was still night and the frost barked underfoot. An aching dog. I liked to go to school. I felt myself leave darkness behind and knock mightily on the radiance of clouds.—

55

I too learned to make cheeses
and saw myself tall as the Tower / of Hercules / .
Going out with the cheese basket to the fairgrounds / in disguise / .
Playing the violin.
Starring in films in the Rosalía de Castro Theatre.
Camouflaging myself in a foreign country.
Slaking the immense thirst of automobiles that need
cheap and urgent oxygen.
Crossing myself. Confessing sins to the priest I did not commit.

56

We all went to bed
and you stayed up in the political silence of the hearth.
Sometimes you dozed off with a cheese in your hands.

The village glowed, like a guerrilla girl
in the Viet Cong.

57

Death is a political project.

MARÍA NEGRONI

FROM BERLIN INTERLUDE

TRANSLATED BY MICHELLE GIL-MONTERO

Who's afraid of an artist's self-portrait? The thought assaulted me when I was half-asleep, and I had no answer. No elitist retorts, I told myself, no jargon that leaves the reader dazzled and devoid of faith. Then I found a method and applied it: I jailed myself in a play pen, to explore theories of malice, the hazards of harmony, the desires that linger when desire wilts. I stopped peeping out at the world. Every author in transit ends in herself, in her resultant syllogisms.

“Poor but sexy” would apply to this city if I didn’t happen to be here, like a queen, her melancholy wafting through museums with precious little sun and smoldering cold. But the clocks of the world aren’t urban, and no one’s free from the prosodies of what they need. Here, east and west and the shaded area, there’s plenty more to come. Shit and gold splatter. That blind music where one thing gets lost inside another, until no one has a home, not even a home in language.

Dear author: What do you get from an imported item, other than lessons edging on trauma? Never trauma itself, which is the stuff of confusion and the poem. Don't write what they expect of you, even if you're drawn to deception in its many forms, soaring as whims. There must be some abstraction somewhere that isn't abstract. Some autumn. A kiss with no translation, to polish your astonishment, now and at the linguistic hours to come.

Today I wrote eleven words. I tossed ten. That left the word *music*. Wiggly like a child who, unable to sit still, rolls cherries across the table cloth. I look at it without understanding. I don't know what catastrophe it's announcing, what night of visions, what sound of gushing water, all lost causes like me. Levity and the luxury of shutting up. That music in the life of life, which always falls and rises, to attain grace in all its senselessness.

Hours staring at the wall, all the loftier for having fallen. Brief theater travelling for a cold you can't see. In what, not where, am I? I make it precariously from the shade to the sun, from arrival to departure, from a gashed landscape to a gash with suffixes. Don't even say that I can't conjugate pain. Or that I can't martyr myself. It's not easy to embark on the scandal of creation, on the luxury of living like a hungry, skittish little animal. Listen well to what I'm not going to say.

DANIEL BORZUTZKY

LAKE MICHIGAN, SCENE 13

The police came but we confused them with terrorists

The terrorists came and we confused them with our neighbors

And there were nationalists who spoke to the early Americans about love

And the early Americans spoke to the economists about protecting the homeland

And the economists spoke to the nazis about fiduciary responsibility

And the nazis spoke to the journalists about hope

And the journalists wrote about the disaster and we said no no our bodies don't look the way you say they look they are not filled with yellow clots they are filled with purple holes our skin is not ashen it's fluorescent our bones are not broken they are mending

And they took away our pills and said be happier

And they took away our doctors and said be healthier

And our perspective shifted from we to I from they to you

And they shaved our heads and burned us and asked us to find the perfect word to describe the water

And the lake looked like a filthy mop and we searched for the perfect word and I said disaster

And they searched for the perfect word and they said peace

And they said listen listen if you stand over here the voice of god says one thing in the wind and over there the voice of god says something completely different

And the authoritative body said the city has a collective challenge ahead not with our words but with our deeds in our everyday work whether it's instructing or leading or guiding

We must continue to move the needle we must significantly push the envelope we must think outside the box the bubble the vacuum

We have only scratched the surface of our full potential and we are ready to cement this chapter in the city of Chicago's history

We must be the highest performing city in America

Do I believe that's doable said the authoritative body to the functionaries absolutely absolutely it can get done we are not there yet but it can get done and it will get done so let us build a lasting culture of accountability to sustain our excellence

I look forward to the beach becoming a new beach said the mayor to the lake becoming a new lake

God is a tough act to follow the mayor said to the functionaries

The mayor is a tough act to follow the nazis said to the nationalists

The nazis are a tough act to follow the nationalists said to the economists

The burning lake is a tough act to follow

We must provide our citizens with a transformative experience said the mayor to our bodies as they broke on the shore

We do not want to merely retain your bodies we want to recondition your bodies

We want you to know that our collective commitment to your development reflects the city's collective commitment to what is small to what cannot be seen to what cannot be heard and nothing is more important than you

Nothing is more important than your bodies

You have the most face time with your children

You have the most face time with the media

You have the most face time with the terrorists

You have the most face time with those to whom we deliver our services and you are not alone in this crucial work

Your bodies are our machines and every day we will use your teeth your eyes your hair

But right now there's too much sand in your mouth

There's a lightning storm in your mouth

There's too much light in your eyes

There are swarms of bees in your nose

This is not what the city intended for your body

This is not what the city intended for your collective experience

The rain that falls is trash and the bus can only get you home if the door opens

I speak to you today said the authoritative body about social security

But what I really mean is that the windows only appear to be covered in shit

Look closely and you will see the horizon it only appears to be covered in blood

Look closely at the lake it only appears to be colonized with E.coli

Look closely at the healing body it only appears to be covered in wounds

I do not know your name or your number

I only know that your body is the burden the border between light and the balance of time

TÓRODDUR POULSEN

**SUFFERING
BLAZES**

TRANSLATED BY RANDI WARD

SUFFERING

suffering
is set
on the table
and eaten
before she's
had a chance
to beg
for mercy

BLAZES

a blaze
out in the fjord
has to convince
us
the devil
doesn't
exist
so long
as the bonfire
burns

MARK WEISS

A SUITE OF DANCES XI: HAND GAMES

A SUITE OF DANCES XI: HAND GAMES

First and last gardens.

A gray day
and I cast no shadow.

Doubt this, doubt that,
and doubt the other.

What did I say and what forgot to say?

Dark form on the water
skimming the surface.
Each hollow space a habitat.

Brief life, eternal this-or-that.

A dull brown down the trunk of a gray tree.

The “is” of isness.
“Am” of amness.
Amless, am
lessness.

“Let’s chatter about the cat, chatter, clatter, and the cha cha cha.”

GRAVESEND BAY 1945

Sea-bleached, a house by the bay and a yard
full of weeds and the junk of sailors.
Hark! I say, as if the bark of grief
across the continent.

“Different place,”
he said,
“dead wench.”

Here failed
the body’s symmetry.

Each writes in an alphabet
fashioned to hoof or hand.

A is for Aurochs
B for Behemoth
M for Mammoth.

I am whatever beast.
This the mother
this the daughter
sorting bones.

Who from among
would hear of angels?
Have been
was
will be
won't.

The tattooed lady dreams of her newborn adorned
with pictures—a rose grows
from its navel and its vulva
a pair of lips.

HALLOWE'EN

Dogs are dressed as dogs
asters asters
and the wind says
farewell to wind.

The dog is aware of its master's freedom.

The mouth of the gifted horse
the horse with the gifted mouth
the gift of the mouths of horses.

One sees a hand
in a mirrorless place.

CONTEXT

It's a matter of scale. From the point of view
of gods and the dead, Troilus
looks down and laughs. On the scale of
feeding the kids it's a question
of who gets fed
who starves.

Sniff the air—there's something
that wants you.

In the rhythm of things
we eat the young.

Lebensraum lebensraum no easy answers.

Imagine a pathogen
at the base of the food chain.

A scale of values:
there are microbes
kept in storage
in case there are more to kill.

Put otherwise,
lords of creation: we decide
what lives, what dies.

A casual triage:
Let us impose a limit
on biomass per species.
Let us include ourselves.
In the hunt for this,
kill that.

The cut worm
forgives the plow?
Poor beastie.

Nice to pray for the souls of the dead
as a cow prays for grass.

Do we imagine
an end
to be wished for?

Not or, but and
be eaten.

In the war between those above and those below
the river killed everything.

I am the master of grass
the master of cattle
the master of men. Eat, then,
until there's nothing.
Store up corn against the morrow.

Come, I shall give you fat and meat.

The tree came down, and the mocking birds
shouted their panic in all their languages.

“There is a war
of all against all
of which I'm not a part. I'm not! I'm not!”
he said.

I killed the woodchucks
that ate the lettuce

trapped the skunk
that dug the garden
and the fat green things on the tomatoes
I squeezed until they popped!

Catastrophe, he wrote, rides in on pretty horses.

PARADISE LOST: SHORT FORM

Oops,
lost garden.
Was lovely.

Here at the shore border edge
a child made much of.
A leaf
a twig
a furry thing.

Great sigh of the sea.

HELEN

Here's a girl who bears a warning.
Makes much of an ordinary self,
a face reconfigured as the launch
of a thousand ships. "I deal
in death," she seems
to say, "and sell it
wholesale." Dressed, as she was,
to kill.

Replaced the laying-on of hands,
body-to-body a transmission line. Let us.
The mad salad of intent.

The day the daze the test.

To make of brother "other"
and set him wandering.

Sometimes it seems a bad bargain.

Noise of dogs.
Strangers.

For a' that.

Ah weel.

This brittle desert morning
a rough cabinet beside the irises.
Pattern of rust and aquamarine.

Must be mountains,
these clouds with rocks.

Clouds rocks mountains.

How do we see.
How do we know.

For instance, a slow
arrival, or a dawn
advancing across meadows. The shadow creatures
retreat before it and those of daylight
emerge in the clearing.

Where is that school to say nothing?

A song
marks the hour.

Up from sleep,
tapping the surface.

Just a bone of contentment
in the house of the king of teeth.

Let's remember the built environment.

Mother and daughter in jeans.
What the one
what the other.

"You're the daughter
I never had," he tells the boy.

Faster than the bird the shadow falls.

Charting storms in the age of saplings.

The tree rots, become prey to stray breezes.

So the dog's death
kills the marriage.
Do I have to tell you it's a jungle here,
that he she it walk past and he she it,
aware,
his hers its theirs.

A pendulum. Like a dance.

Now clouds move in and a wind from the south catches the torn pennant at the station
across the street, where, as here, if the man was right who struggled to tell me "rain is
coming," there'll be no sun
in sunoco.
Finished. A boundary found,
foundered, become one
with "the destructive element."

Springtime, and a new life.
Today the sun shines on the woman shoveling it in
at the table by the window and on the space
between the infant's toes, visible
above the pram.

Am he who sees
and listens.

As if the light
were tide-swept.

TYPO

On the back of her shorts:
"Peace."
Offered to all who seek to see.
But noli mi tangere,
as it's always been.

ANNOINTED

Oil for food or light.
So, marinate the king and bring the
fire
for the people's feast.
So much did he love them.

The pulse in im
pulse passeth
one to another, body
to bodyness.

A matter of much sweat
blisters infections insect bites
the random itching
that troubles sleep. To wake
to renewed exhaustion and another slog.

Accident acting on a multitude of compounds that,
when the mix proved optimal, quickened.

The ancient costumes of humility.

The act
of tunnel and slither.

It seemed at the time worthwhile
to allow their self-deception.

Appetite seemed sufficient, asked no apology.

Try to decode the songs of birds.
In the interim the tide rushed in.

There might have been other continents no less improbable.

The man of beautiful business the beauty business man the beautiful man the man of
beauty.

Occasional stops at the mirror, and the moments when distracted by a hungry stare.

Somewhere there's a clue to this,
the day for the moment
broken, instinct
as sure as rain or river.
What lingo you slingin,
hombre?
Restless/reckless/reckoning.

And saw in him a kind of gentleness.

A daily ritual.

The plea involved in tooth paste
hair brush
soap
as if the order of things. So,
a man in shirt and tie strides down the street
and another in shorts and sandals
and another in sweats
and the girl in slacks
looks at the window and smooths her hair.

To extract the pattern from.

The sweet boy become a father
the sweet girl a mother.

A bird alights.

An end of time.

Beyond is the true forest, and a squirrel
attentive to my presence
foregoes an itch till it finds me harmless.

It's the cleft that counts.

In mind

or mindful of.

The lost America of porches.

Never replicates
but replaces.

Meanwhile,

back at the ranch,
a world of concerns.

On the subway sings a Mexican love song and plays the accordion.
Does what he can. His worker's hand held forth.

Two little girls play hand games. They alone
know the rules, and will never tell.

Of the clapping of hands and the different manners
of the clapping of hands.

THE PASSING SHOW

The show keeps passing.

Think of the pointy parts.

A catalogue of clouds.
Loves of the sun god.

Will end
unctuous.

No one before had asked of us such restless perception.

Rattle of coaches on cobbled roads,
the noise of chariots on stone, the jolt of wagons.

The present clangor.

There where the stained light strikes.

No one has told these children about winged things.

Raised in an aerie and learned their strategies.
Inhabited fantasies.

Convinced of insects
crawling beneath his clothes.
Sloughed off the deaths of friends.

I am become what I see and hear.

A gathering of consensus too slow
to save the farm.
Destruction in the service of distant masters. Borne
across rivers and mountains to sustain
a set of lives. Something
we thought
to sing about and still
to sing about despite
the consequence.

Time was.
Chasing wind.
Straining to make static this constant motion.

How many have been at home there?

Eat if possible the less
familiar. Incorporate
cows, pigs, ducks.

Blasé cat shuns the finger.
“Hidden, in the dark days that followed..”

As if youth were a catalogue
of expected behaviors,
or a set of textures.
Paths through the mind-field.

To have learned the languages of power at an early age
like lord or servant.

The bleat of a desolate cow.

Was a time when winter's rasp
was breath of life and an uphill run
was life itself.

“Who would you be if you were she?”
As she sat collapsing downwards.

You were talking about
you were talking about
you were talking about

Long strides. She binds
her yellow tresses, oh.

At the back of it all the awareness of slaughter.

HIS FANTASY

So this guy gets on—
rumpled suit, bad day
at the office—fumbles
for a moment at the closing door
as if to hold it for the redhead
 juggling her metro card
 at the turnstile, the sum
of all his longing, but it's too late,
 and his face
follows her
as the train pulls away.

How do I tell this story?
Worn feet
in sad sandals.

NIGHTLY NEWS

To place her in the frame with the
 building
behind her she's posed
on a platform, and to be just right
 she's
barefoot, perfect,
what the frame contains, but her feet
are cracked and uncared-for.

NOTES & REVIEWS

Arrivals and Departures: Poems, Memoir, and Chronology, Wai-lim Yip

Hong Kong: Musical Stone Publishing, 2017. 378 pages

Reviewed by Matt Turner

The poet, translator, and theorist Wai-lim Yip was born in 1937 in southern China. When he was a child, his family fled Japanese imperialism to Hong Kong, and Yip himself later ended up in Taiwan — which, in the 1950s, was embarking on experiments in democratic governance and society unlike those happening in communist China. As a young man he affiliated himself with writers in Taiwan and Hong Kong who were attempting to understand China's cultural past as well as its new directions in democratic governance and language. This required engaging more than traditional Chinese learning. They looked to their immediate forebears — the generation that included modernists Lu Xun, She Zhecun and Bing Xin — as well as to the European litterateurs like Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Eventually, they discovered Pound and Williams. These cross-currents of Chinese poetics, European symbolism, and American high modernism were decisive in shaping Yip.

Arrivals and Departures: Poems, Memoir, and Chronology is a major selection of Yip's English-language poetry spanning much of his life — poetry that is a refreshingly uncomfortable hybrid of dense French symbolism with a more laconic voice, the affected kind of verse Americans might expect when reading traditional Chinese verse in translation. The volume also includes a memoir of his experiences growing up outside of Mainland China, and as a Chinese poet studying and working in the United States. This serves to illustrate Yip's decision to write in English — a decision informed by his desire to better voice himself to an American audience, as well as part and parcel of a poetics project that is both Chinese and international, traditional as well as modern.

The “chronology” or timeline of the book is a clarification of Yip's life: when and where exactly did he get his first teaching job, what was the name of the magazine he published, how he ended up in the United States (for doctoral studies) and other questions of that nature. After the generous selection of poetry (more than half of the book) and an at times abstract memoir, the chronology gives the reader concrete details to fill in the gaps. This is necessary: it is easy to get lost in the details of his poetics as well as the images his poetry creates.

One sees how Yip's work and life are in many ways inseparable, as a person who reimagined a tradition through foreign modernities as well as a foreign language. Like many of his

contemporaries in Taiwan, Yip received a thorough education in the Chinese classics, and an introduction to literary works of the Western world — “Western” being shorthand in the Sinosphere for pretty much anything deriving from European heritage — which he explored as an adult. And Yip has internalized these contrasting modalities.

For Yip appears to be skeptical that any single tradition or practice can continue without deliberate effort, and that it can exist without other traditions continuing to inform it. This skepticism was born by his own experiences as a war refugee at a time when both established and new political systems vied for legitimacy, and the question of Chinese culture was central to any such claims. Yip sees China’s continuing struggle for global representation as still a question of culture, and ultimately tied to its legacy in letters.

“[W]hat is at stake here is not a question of *inclusion*... but also a question of *representation*. Simply put, it is a question of whether the indigenous aesthetic horizon is allowed to represent itself *as it is* and *not as it is framed* within the hermeneutical habits and the poetic economy of the West.” (318)

If China and its culture (conceived as a tradition in letters or, more specifically, poetry) are to represent themselves to the world, then it needs to be able to speak on behalf of itself, and not simply in response to Western claims about China. As such, Chinese culture here is seen as a matter of aesthetics first. The claim — a claim that is not unique to Yip’s thought, and can be seen in many other Chinese thinkers, going all the way back to Confucius — is that the culture is an act of artifice to be shaped rather than received. The “aesthetic horizon” is an imagining of what is possible in the future, i.e: poetry gives, through its form, a model of what can and cannot be written or thought. That the “poetic economy of the West” has distinct habits which have not accommodated this is in contrast to Western modernism, which Yip believes is more pliable, and international.

But how exactly does this aesthetic horizon represent itself? For Yip, by superimposing an understanding of the Chinese language over what are considered Western modernist techniques. The Chinese tradition from the early shamanic songs all the way to the present day is framed by poets and the state alike as a tradition of the creation and control of language. In contrast to his contemporary François Cheng, the French structuralist who theorized that Chinese poetry was more or less symbolic of (Daoist) cosmic orders, leaving real-world relations unaffected, Yip sees verbalization as a decisive factor in poetry. Language performs actions in the world; it is decisive in shaping human relationships. And here he

borrowed from Ezra Pound, who theorized that the Chinese language, when properly used, was a demonstration of Confucian social values — a stance not far from Confucius, who saw the function of naming as giving correct proportion to human interactions. Incorrect naming would result in an inability to perform concrete tasks.

So it will not be surprising that Yip is not interested in the stereotypically Chinese features of poetry: moons, drinking, gauze curtains and so on. By incorporating English into his poetics, the “indigenous” is given a different, artificial voice. The slippery language of his poetry demonstrates that modernist techniques of verbal layering and oblique reference alongside the traditional Chinese techniques of figurative distance and subjective alienation are nearly the same techniques, but yield surprising effects. From “Beijing: August”:

Sky-reaching tombstones, The Transnational Commerce
Shadows over shadows over shadows of ghosts
Closes in and tightens in rings
A thousand, ten thousand pounds of memory
...
A young poet crippled by reality
Is about to speak only to
Find his throat
Stuffed with balls and balls
Of crumpled paper written all over with his poems (140-141)

The poet Yip writes of has his voice “blocked” by drafts of writing that are no doubt weighed down by “ten thousand pounds of memory” — cultural baggage. Although he is in Beijing, the cultural capital of Mainland China, modernity in the form of trans-national finance “shadows” him to the point that he is “crippled by reality.” But the poem is not mere commentary, because it describes the poet’s writing: his writing demonstrates an aesthetic horizon alongside larger facts of existence, like the late summer of the title. Through Yip’s poem, the imagined poet’s writings reach readers. And as Yip is writing the poem in English, the character of the Chinese poet ends up writing a trans-lingual poem. Together — the poet in the poem, Yip’s presentation of the poet in his English-language poem, the imagined trans-lingual poem and its community of readers — a poem is written.

Of And, Keith Waldrop.

Cornwall: Guillemot Press, 2018. unpaginated

Reviewed by Matt Turner

A small press from the quiet seaside area of Cornwall, England, has published an elegant, unobtrusive chapbook — a pamphlet, really, containing only 13 pages of poetry — bound by abstract, elliptical art from Tony Martin, enclosing poetry by Keith Waldrop — in my opinion one of the signal figures in American poetry for the last, well, fifty years, though “signal” isn’t quite the right word, since a signal acts as a beacon whereas Waldrop’s poetry is often quiet, anachronistic, elliptical, unobtrusive. In a word, contemplative.

The poems, largely without punctuation and capitalization, shimmer on the surface of the page, and their beacon glint misdirects the reader (I say misdirects instead of leads because the poems do not form narratives as much as they almost imperceptibly dislodge expectations). Stanzas, if they can be called that, retain little formal regularity, often breaking over several verses; verses break between words, sometimes; few verses are end-stopped, and most do not stand alone as conventional semantic units. But that’s not to say that there’s no sense to be made, or that sense need be created.

One of Waldrop’s themes, aging, was previously explored in his book *Transcendental Studies*, paired with notions of animateness, what it means to be alive.

Things age and, when old
enough, no longer able to resist,
become inanimate. Unable to stay
free of life.

(“Plurality of Worlds,” 95)

And in “Before Leaving,” in *Of And*, Waldrop continues:

if I sit in the dark I
remember or

sitting darkly
forget

there, my

Soul, among local
motions

*

above-mentioned
sky, high
ceiling

scrim

nose
visible be-
yond bonnet

Two views in “Before Leaving”: one of contemplation, where the “Soul” is subject to both outward perception and memory; the other, maybe, the view of a baby in a carriage. Presumably the speaker in the poem is objectifying himself, “unable to stay free of life” and so detaching himself from it. But it’s difficult to say exactly *where* the speaker is — as he puts it in “By Cold Starlight,” “I decline my soul in / writing.”

This kind of self-reflexivity makes it difficult to summarize or point to positive tendencies. Yet that’s what I mean by a signal beacon of indirection. There aren’t many writers — poets or otherwise — who write with this degree of subtlety, where meaning is pressed through form as well as semantic units. For the stanza-verse structure of the poems does not so much open the poems up to multiple meanings (the way many experimental poems do) as much as it deflates meaning, unmooring it from the things it refers to. Nevertheless a strong sensibility and even urgency is present in the poems. But this calls into question what we mean when we talk about obscurity or quietness or subtlety, as these are present in all senses.

A CONVULSIVE BEAUTY

The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire

Bilingual Edition, Translated by A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman

Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2017. 962 pages.

Reviewed by John Olson

There is no evident way to speak of this book. It's extraordinary. Extraordinary in its strengths and complications, extraordinary in its depths and invocations. Open it at any point and sparks of sacred fire fly across the page. One is in the realm of ghosts and shadows. There are fiery rages and volcanic epiphanies, voodoo enchantments and torrents of words tied into knots of radiant energy. There are ferocious ragouts of hot chili and squid, the fragrances of hibiscus and frangipani, the sting of the plantation whip.

This is a book that teems. Swarms, pullulates, boils. The glands under the mantle of a cephalopod swarming with luminous bacteria send a glow into the ocean water of unparalleled beauty, and is the kind of image I need to describe the phenomenality of this work; the effects of its verbal conjurations confer - and are the product of - the phantasmagoric marvels of surrealism, but the rawness and brutal candor of its experiences and observations are, in fact, quite real. The beating heart at the core of this book is an actuality, a rhythmic muscle circulating tremors of beauty and passion. And it is precisely that combination of the marvelous correlated with living, breathing actualities that so distinguishes the work in this book.

In his meditations on the material world, *Earth and Reveries of Repose: an Essay on Images of Interiority*, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard observed that profusion and turmoil are parallel occurrences, each symptomatic of struggle, each emblematic of a powerful life energy: "Notice in the first place," he writes,

...that a static disorder is imagined as an agitated whole: the stars are so numerous that they appear, in the beautiful summer nights, to swarm. *Multiplicity is agitation*. There does not exist, in all of literature, a single immobile chaos. At the most one finds, as with Huysmans, an immobilized chaos, a petrified chaos...But here is the reciprocal paradox. Just look - or imagine - a multitude of bodies going in all directions so that one must attribute to them a number that surpasses reality: *agitation is multiplicity*.

This formula is pertinent to Césaire; from beginning to end his poetry teems with volatile, white-hot intensities, a continuous pullulation of untethered, fecund transmutations engendering and perplexing one another in what André Breton referred to in *L'Amour fou* as a “fixed explosion:” “convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosion, magic-circumstantial or it will not be.” Images crowd together in a furious surge of animus and incantation, mutating, tumbling, convulsing, all of it engendered by huge emotion, not a single emotion, but thousands of hungry, contradictory, entangled emotions. There are rages, and there are raptures; there is resignation and defiance, sometimes fused together in a non-dualistic dynamic of transcendent symbiosis; great sympathies and horrendous cruelties, the “docility of ticks” and “hearts of iron.” Take, for example, these lines from *And The Dogs Were Silent*, a book-length, dialectically structured poem of antiphonal voices lamenting and lambasting the barbarities of colonization:

a rumble of chains of carcans rises from the sea...
a gurgling of the drowned from the green belly of the sea...a crackling
of fire a whip cracking, screams of the murdered...
...the sea is burning
or it is the tow of my blood that is burning
Oh the scream...always the scream bursting from the mornes...and
the drums rutting and wind swells vainly with the tender odor
of the musty ravine
with breadfruit trees with sugar mills with bagasse harassed by fruit flies...
Earth my mother I have understood your cloak and dagger language

One is reminded of Rimbaud and the fantastic deliriums of “The Drunken Boat” in a dizzying, psychically liberating leave-taking of industrialization, capitalism and the oppressions of a culture obsessed with scientific rationalism. There, too, in the violent splendor of the imagery are obvious echoes of Lautreamont and *The Songs of Maldoror*.

All of which is quite deliberate, and no small irony. Césaire, a black man living in Paris in the 30s of the 20th century where he attended the Ecole Normale Supérieure and turned to poetry for release and therapy after the exhausting, intellectual cramming required of the students. Two key developments occurred in these formative years: he became hugely influenced by surrealism and met and became close, life-long friends with the Senegalese poet, cultural theorist and politician (the first President of Senegal) Leopold Sédar Senghor. Together, they would establish a literary and cultural movement called negritude, which

might be best described as an affirmation of Pan-African racial identity as a dynamic, oppositional force to the Euro-American values that had enslaved and degraded them. Negritude is a highly plastic and generative term emphasizing different values and different strategies at different times. In its early manifestations it was unabashedly Marxist and fiercely anti-colonial.

It makes total sense to me that surrealism would play a part in this. The irony that a European literary movement of the early twentieth-century might inspire an anti-colonial movement becomes significantly less ironic when you realize the fact that surrealism began as an oppositional alternative to scientific rationalism and provided means for psychic liberation and a medium by which to tap into the sources of the collective unconscious and alter the leaden realities of the mundane, workaday world through the divine madness of poetry and its athanor of alchemical transmutation.

Read anything by, or about, Aimé Césaire and you find the name Leo Frobenius pops up a lot. The name sounded familiar to me, and then I remembered that I first encountered his name reading Ezra Pound, who refers to him in *Guide to Kulchur* with admiration: “The value of Leo Frobenius to civilization is not for the rightness or wrongness of this opinion or that opinion but for the kind of thinking he does.”

That thinking went deep into the collective unconscious of culture, for which Frobenius used a term: Paideuma. “To escape a word or a set of words loaded up with dead association,” Pound observed, “Frobenius uses the term Paideuma for the tangle or complex of the inrooted ideas of any period.”

In his preface to *Leo Frobenius on African History, Art and Culture*, Léopold Sédar Senghor takes it further: his reading of Frobenius suggest something deeper, broader, more universal than a cultural substrate of mythic resonances. He identifies it as the “essence of life,” “that spiritual energy in the Other which causes emotion...It is this ‘possession’ of the ego by the Other and the reaction of the ego to the Other which explains the differences in style between different artists – and this is what interests us here – between different races...For every race possesses its own Paideuma, that is its own peculiar capacity for and manner of being moved: of being ‘possessed’...the artist, whether sculptor, dancer, or poet, is not content to relive the Other; he recreates it in order the better to live it, and make it live. He recreates it by rhythm and thus makes of it a higher, truer reality, one that is more real than the factual reality.”

In his monograph on the work of Aimé Césaire, *Modernism & Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire*, A. James Arnold (who is also a cotranslator, with Clayton Eshleman, of this collection), sees the influence of Frobenius on Senghor and Césaire in their formation of the negritude movement as a conjoining dynamic, “a link between negritude and surrealism.” “Surrealism,” he writes, “was a necessary steppingstone for Césaire between the first exploratory efforts to define negritude in prewar Paris and the resolute commitment, artistic and political, to destroy the edifice of colonialism after the war.”

In “At the Locks of the Void: Cotranslating Aimé Césaire,” from a collection of essays titled *Companion Spider*, Eshleman elaborates further on Césaire’s singular ability to combine the marvelous and strange with an unflinching, down-to-earth social realism. As someone who has been long influenced by the psychic liberation and phantasmagoria that is surrealism, but frustrated by an equal compulsion to bring the real world into the mix, I find this of great interest.

How did he do it?

Césaire, Eshleman writes, “commits himself to a sacred, whirling, primordial paradise of language, open to his subconscious depths and destructive of ‘the reality principle,’ or as he himself puts it, ‘the vitelline membrane that separates me from myself.’ On the other hand, his quest for authenticity will also include confronting the colonial brutality in his own overpopulated and defeated Martinique...” “This is a vision of Eden,” Eshleman continues,

...that also includes its night side, a dyad that is incredibly difficult to maintain, because a vision of paradisaal wholeness and existent human suffering in the present negate each other. A significant part of the energy in Césaire’s language is generated by his attempt to transform the language of the slave masters of yesterday and the colonial administrators of his own day into a kind of *surfrançais*, as in *surreal*, a supercharged French that in its own fashion is as transformational as surrealism attempted to be of bourgeois, patriarchal, French mentality.

The collection is divided into eight sections, each section representing a previously published book: The original 1939 *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, *The Miraculous Weapons*, *Solar Throat Slashed*, *Lost Body*, *Ferraments, i, laminaria, Noria*, and *Like a Misunderstanding*

of Salvation. It also includes ample notes on the poems, a glossary (Césaire loves seeding his poetry with the names of plants, figures from world history, biblical and religious references, neologisms, deities and phenomena unique to African, Martinican or Caribbean mythology), a chronology (Césaire lived a long, full life), an introduction by A. James Arnold, and essays introducing each section.

In addition to his work as a poet, Césaire led a vigorous and important life in politics. In 1945, he was elected mayor of Fort-de-France, during which time he co-sponsored a law that transformed France's Old Colonies (Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, and Réunion) into overseas *départements*. Later, as a member of the Communist Party, Césaire was elected deputy for the first district of Martinique to the Constituent Assembly in France.

I remember being rather stunned to discover that Césaire was still alive when, circa 2005, there was a news story on Le Journal de France2, a French cable station we'd begun watching, about Césaire's refusal to receive Nicolas Sarkozy whose government had recently passed a law that called for the recognition of the positive aspects of colonialism. I took delight in this, mainly because I saw Sarkozy in the same light as Clinton, Bush, and Obama, predatory capitalists pushing a scheme of neoliberal economics that seemed taken out of a playbook written by Ayn Rand, brutal "austerity" measures that eviscerated Greece, created horrendous income inequalities globally and destroyed the middle-class in the United States. I continue to hold it responsible for a litany of many other social ills, including depression, loneliness, eating disorders, crushed labor unions, deregulation, privatization, massive tax cuts for the rich and an opioid addiction crisis. I felt peculiarly represented by the old man and poet in Martinique.

I also find it amazing that anyone can write poetry and lead a high profile political life at the same time. And why might that be, I ask myself. Do poetry and politics conflict? Well, yes, they do. But that would require a whole other essay.

An immersion in Aimé Césaire can have startling consequences. Tropical shadows bejeweled with hallucination. The liquid moonlight of surrealism. Mad invention. The liberating energy of a spider singing karaoke in a Tokyo bar. Each word comes out like a juicy cyst, intricate mineral skeletons tapdancing on a numb arm. Cymbals crashed together. A hidden blue-green waterfall behind the eyes.

A washrag draped over a kitchen faucet.

The mind finds quick release in surrealism. Why is that? Why does surrealism continue to work its magic after all these years? And so many wars.

It's like getting slapped by a sonnet, pulled into life by a powerful shaman splicing images alloyed with rage and frustration.

You can sing your head off with an electric guitar like Buddy Guy and almost obtain the same result, but poetry doesn't leave you with ringing in your ears, or a hangover.

Some energies die instantly if you harness them. Each molecule is a world. The palm of a hand can be soft as a mushroom. And the next instant make a fist and punch a hole in the wall.

Poems are extraordinary messages from outer space, torrents of words flashing in spurts of erotic energy in a Singapore discotheque.

There's always something creepy about too much harmony.

You need dissonance. Some poetry is very careful the way it steps around on the page. Césaire isn't like that. Not at all.

It's the opposite: fixed explosion. A continual combustion. The rain of ash empearled with tiny fires. Hummingbirds rocketing out of a blind man's rancor. Blast furnaces on onionskin paper. Thoughts penetrating as X-rays. The glow of bones on a black background. The feeling of sand trickling through the fingers on a Martinique beach.

Some women look great with tattoos. Others not so much. Why is that?

The world is the movie of everything that is. The flowers of a hibiscus used to clean somebody's shoes.

A laundry basket vibrating on the top of a washing machine as it goes into spin cycle.

If words could burn this book would burn down.

TRIPLE TONGUE COCOON IN TUBE SAUCE

Words on Edge, poetry by Michael Leong

New York: Black Square Editions, 2018.

Reviewed by John Olson

Can you feel it? There's something out there. It could be anything. It could be an obelisk, a cosmic blooper, an amalgam of pillow ticking and infinite space. It could be nothing at all. But it doesn't feel that way. Whatever it is, it feels huge. It feels like the sublime, like the shine of the ineffable. Which probably doesn't shine. Because it's ineffable, and ineffability eludes all category, no matter how many words I throw at it. It stays ineffable. Incommunicable

This is the kind of mess that words get us into. They lure us into communicability, and then drop us. Flat.

They lead us to an edge and dare us to leap. "Writing," observed Roland Barthes in *Writing Degree Zero*, "is always rooted in something beyond language, it develops like a seed, not like a line, it manifests an essence, and holds the threat of a secret, it is an anti-communication, and it is intimidating."

The book is called (aptly) *Words on Edge*, and I'm intimidated. Michael Leong's poetry is exquisite. We say something is exquisite when it is alluring and elegant, but also when it is razor-fine, when it has an edge, and that edge might be used to slice open a section of air and pull something out of it that hadn't existed before, something that we did not know existed, something that existed outside of language and was conjured into being by an unorthodox employment of that very same language. This is called invention, and can lead to great and wonderful things, what André Breton would call the marvelous. "Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful," he proclaimed famously in the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, "anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful."

Words on Edge is chock-a-block with keen, subtly elaborated lines that combine a euphoric semiotic arc - signifiers liberated from referential content - with an intellectual aura. Lines like "...the explosion of the mind / into a cryptic lace of radiant thinking," or "how a descending tone / implied the mysterious solace of chiffon."

A better example might be the poem dated "April 13, 2013," which is part of a sequence

titled “Fruits and Flowers and Animals and Seas and Lands Do Open” that grew out of the 2013 National Poetry Month initiative sponsored by the *Found Poetry Review*. Here is how Leong describes the project in the appendix:

Entitled “Pulitzer Remix,” this online and ephemeral project entailed eighty-five poets posting new poems every day based on the language of the eighty-five books which have won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction. After volunteering to participate, I was assigned Booth Tarkington’s *Alice Adams* (1921), a comedic novel of manners set in the Midwest. All of the words in this thirty-part long poem, with no exception, were derived from Tarkington’s text, and all of the thirty sections of this poem were composed daily throughout the thirty days of April. This is, in essence, a document of my life as I lived it in April 2013 through the obsessive reading, rereading, and remixing of a single book, an experiment of what happens when a life makes poetry, at least the writing of it, a priority of thirty continuous days despite all else.

I like the phrase “despite all else.” I know what that means. I think anyone that devoted to the writing of poetry knows what “all else” is all about. Jobs, chores, kids, noise, intrusions, etc. Ah, world, go away! And take your tedium with you.

Rock musicians need garages to practice. Concert pianists need fingers. Tuba players need a large lung capacity. Dancers need to maintain high energy levels, strong bones, and flexible joints. Poets need solitude. Leading a normal life as a poet can be a son-of-a-bitch.

It also helps to have a language lying around.

Leong’s commitment to the work of converting Booth Tarkington’s text to distillates of weldable alloy has resulted in a work that is characterized by a haunting, oneiric beauty. He leads us well outside the parameters of socialized discourse and presents us with (to quote Barthes again) “a Pandora’s box from which fly out all the potentialities of language.” Here is “April 13, 2013” in full:

The earth was swallowing our words,
stamping out our solemn breath
with its footsteps.

Overhead, a Chinese silhouette
appeared in God's
abandoned factory.

A new generation
continued an endless divination,
which, they said,
could make presentable
the black bones of the absolute.

Going to the movies,
we sometimes discover the rarest woodcut.

I'll go. I thought you'd forgotten.

It was a protracted promise, a figure of speech.

The evening had already begun
deteriorating into Sunday.

Leong likes using “found language.” Found language can be anything, overheard conversation, social media, snippets of code, movie dialogue, essays, articles, stories, ad copy, instruction manuals, science projects, quite literally anything. It's all about collage, fusing, mingling, combining. The more disparate the sources, so much the better. But what about originality? If originality is an issue then language is the wrong medium for you. The entire language is a collage. “Good morning” is plagiarism.

T.S. Eliot, who famously proclaimed “good poets borrow, great poets steal,” said something pertinent in his essay “The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality... It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I shall, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.”

What happens is catalysis. According to Eliot's description:

When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more completely separate in in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

Is the chemistry here correct? I don't know. I'm not a chemist, and I don't have any platinum or sulfuric acid lying around (thank goodness). I can pour some baking soda and vinegar in the bathtub drain and show you what happens (it's actually pretty cool, the baking soda come bubbling out in a jubilant fizz), but I'm not sure I can derive an appropriate metaphor from that.

What Eliot is getting at here with all this fancy chemistry is the idea that a poet's mind is a "receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together." In alchemy, that receptacle was called a "philosophical egg," or (in Latin) an "*ovum philosophicum*." The concoctions the alchemists were looking for was gold, which was a metaphor for spiritual transformation. Not everybody who collages scraps of found text may be looking for spiritual transformation, but any time disparate elements are brought together in a literary or artistic medium some very powerful magic takes place. "In Alan Yentob's 1975 documentary *Cracked Actor*, David Bowie describes how he used Burroughs's cut-up technique to "ignite the imagination," and in an interview from 2008, Bowie further elaborates "I use it for igniting anything that may be in my imagination...You write down a paragraph or two describing several different subjects, creating a kind of 'story ingredients' list, I suppose, and then cut the sentences into four or five word sections; mix 'em up and reconnect them... You can get some pretty interesting idea combinations like this...You can use them as is or, if you have a craven need to not lose control, bounce off these ideas and write whole new sections."

Leong takes this principle to an extreme in a major section of the book titled "The Philosophy of Decomposition / Recomposition as Explanation: A Poe and Stein Mash-Up," in which

Leong brings together texts primarily from Poe’s “The Philosophy of Composition” and Stein’s “Composition as Explanation.” The melding is virtually seamless. It flows together nicely. I’m guessing that Leong put a lot more work into this apart from just bringing the texts together; the overall effect works as a single voice. Stein’s energy and exuberant prolixity somehow manages to flow with Poe’s considerable density and rhetorical elegance. Here is a sample paragraph:

I now have to rapidly combine all that has been previously narrated into a concentrated solution – from the first act to the ending description – before the poem soon demands a moral and turns into prose. In a fantastic tone of the most profound seriousness, it spoke to me of a certain beast remaining in the syllable that was forming an elaborate window within the general arrangement, that was inventing a different time-sense, that was throwing open the very being of the inevitable.

I sense a little more Poe in this sample than Stein, but the fluidity of the piece belies any obvious engineering; the line “In a fantastic tone of the most profound seriousness” contains both a feeling of creative excitement and a tinge of nineteenth-century loftiness of purpose. It’s significant, as well, that both texts are concerned with the philosophy of composition. This is a dynamic that goes much deeper than technique, it takes a phenomenological approach and explores how writing affects us on a perceptual and ontological level.

Leong uses other source material in this collection to produce some remarkable results, such as “Menu in Chinglish,” dedicated to poet John Yau. As Leong describes its genesis in the appendix, “This poem was inspired by the phrase ‘monolithic tree mushroom stem squid’ which occurs in the New York Times article ‘Shanghai Is Trying to Untangle the Mangled English of Chinglish (May 2, 2010).’” I will leave you with the poem in full; you can order anything you want:

monolithic tree mushroom stem squid
braised rainbow mangrove maw
double pronged rhizome berry pig sniper
shepherd’s sponge spigot
beef cheek ricochet
preserved duck eggplant implosion
pungent heliotrope of oyster pouch

salted forehead belly blossom
chicken web monad broth
silver fin swimming membrane flavor
retinal eel matrix
bamboo vertigo
triple tongue cocoon in tube sauce
gluteal libidinal shrimps