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## Two Poems

George Kalamaras

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# TWO POEMS

George Kalamaras

“I say / the word love / knowing the word / fails ...”

*with a title from lines by Gil  
Ott*

that parts of us are dead    dying    died  
I say the hound dog in my mouth  
is neither dog nor    mouth

but a cruel case of love    Love of    the world  
and its way    To stay    Or try the sinking    rain    October  
air    Leaves left as death-    scent    Word or

words made    whole    fractured death  
of the tongue-stung    I said I say  
love as a way to hold love    though it

falls    sending September away    Love of hickory  
leaf    Of elm    Ironwood’s strong riveting bark and    branch  
light when all the green goes gone    The hound mouth

is sound    delight    Hear my heart gone    howl  
Hear leaves in the    throat    Fluttering    wind  
in the way words work to loosen and    ooze    Resin

scent in the rosin ground    Hound snout water-witching  
the wind    Please    the leaves    Please my throat    Ease  
the falling failure in the flailing    word    What hound

lift and sound?    What dog in my mouth that is    not

a mouth?                      So it came and went and want and gone  
A home we built    a home we held    Hardwood trees  
  
in the damp coon holler    In the hollow mouth    Down the ravine-  
rain running red    Blood of    sycamore sap    Of an Indiana black willow  
grasp of wind    Walnut-ground—in the walnut    sound—broken yet  
  
whole    the way love falls    opening    its seed self    unto the tongue,  
saying we too might thrive    aside    athwart the pulsing  
pods    Gorgeous hound in the gorgeously warm    secret    dog-channels of the  
chest

## Desire = Pain (What Our Words Do)

*Based on a photo of a beagle placed inside an exhibit of jaws cut out of a 900-  
pound shark caught in Bodega Bay, California, July 27, 1959*

In mathematics, you don't treat any number with favoritism.

In words, test my mouth out with soup. Perturb the parasite beating below the  
tongue.

Diagnosis: Ninth bursal ray shorter than tenth  
Buccal capsule ratio 1:2.6-3.2

Near the Greasy Grass River, that place the final victors—defeated for once—  
called the Little Big Horn.

Pity our insides. The parts of ourselves we call *uncle*. The star we call *scar*.

Diagnosis: External corona with more than eight elements  
Vaginal short  
Coronal elements small

Now all I have is my life.

Now, count the jaw bone. The treacherous teeth. The husk of a mouth cut out of a 900-pound shark, placed as a prop around the frightened beagle-hound.

Remember the dog you loved? The person in the mirror once loving you unconditionally?

There's a yellow thread we follow to the curve. The sixty-three-day gestation of a hound.

Dear hound-dog intention of the world. Once I loved my life.

Diagnosis: Sublingual glands 13-16% of total body length

Diagnosis: *longispiculum*

Diagnosis: My own tongue eating my mother-mouth (*moutho-sporia*)

Hound dog. Hound-dog blame. Hound dog bleating blat your sheep.

What of the ocean does it scent, even in the non-stirring mouth? In the teeth, alert but unhinged?

Sleep comes in many storms. One way to find your life is to mimic the rain. Until you find in yourself a godly sorrow.

We lived by what our words did and did not do. Inside the dog bones we ate. Inside our relaxed, twitching need for sleep.

This photo is nothing but a dog shadow. The stillness therein. Words asking words the wordly way out.

: Ratio of vulva position to total body length 1:3

: Ratio of female tail length to total body length 1:10

: Ratio of one's desire to female body length 1:1

In favoritism, you don't treat any number mathematically.

Come back with me from the dead.

GEORGE KALAMARAS, former Poet Laureate of Indiana (2014-2016), is the author of fifteen books of poetry, eight of which are full-length, including *Kingdom of Throat-Stuck Luck*, winner of the Elixir Press Poetry Prize (2011), and *The Theory and Function of Mangoes*, winner of the Four Way Books Intro Series (2000). He is Professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, where he has taught since 1990.