

TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

A Dog Running Through Human History

Everywhere at the end of the world
Even far away Bohemia
Was once the centre of the world
At least someone's world

Now an imaginary garden in which this poem is blooming

I lost time and started bleeding flowers
The poetic pharmacy always has customers
Especially those wanting to shop in the psychogeography of Prague

Someone just ate my Sistine Chapel
And I swear I woke up in an ironic sweat
To hear that Austrian bitch say,
"Let them eat poetry, *c'est moins cher*."

The new room in the old room
Is the room in which everyone is lying
With its chamber pot of fresh and used people
Sprouting unmentionables in the corner

However, if you escape the secret door in the Doge's Palace
You might avoid the Bridge of Sighs

"How nice to see you, Jean-Pierre, after all of this time,
Looking so well preserved.
I myself am keeping well, not that I can claim to be any longer young,
Though I do have the distinction of not being dead."

Some talk of the small talk of eternity
Some walk the small walk of modernity

In Berlin, human tornados have terraformed the city,

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Tearing up its history time after time like a papier-mâché doll,
The river running its unexpected calming fingers
Through the psychotics of blonde rebirthing

Why is it my poem for Prague can't keep its mind inside the world of these streets?
The nature of the difficulty is always being updated
It's the sacrifice of straight lines

It doesn't do to ask yourself too many times why you are here
The question jaywalks around to nothing,
The god of because,
Unpacking the e.g.

As for me, I did it my way, I thought I had a choice
But don't worry, my aliveness will still be here when I am deadness

It was stupid to think I could belong in anyone's tribe

There are no permanent solutions to human problems, we like change too much

The sunshine never sets on the empire of our unhappiness,
We just learn to live in the day for night,
Taking our naps in *la nuit américaine*,
Where the adventure begins without us knowing it,
The way a cat creeps up on a toy,
Both unaware they are part of a new kind of game

I am not that good at not being depressed when I am depressed.
Depression is skill, which requires practice like anything else.
The problem is that when you are depressed, you don't feel like practicing,
Which makes it hard to get any better at it.

We are united by the unglamorous things we do

Too many beautiful moments under the bridge

Too many perfect beings up in smoke

Better to have another soy mochaccino while

On the left hand side of the map of Zurich, out of the way of the tourists,
An old couple are arguing in Swiss German on the back of a motor scooter,
There are cobwebs growing neatly in the leaves next to the parked cars
And a Hassidic Jew asks me nervously why I am taking pictures
Around the synagogue. Am I Jewish?

Art is the fingertips of power. The question is whose hand is behind it
And when does that become a fist?

You can't send a text at the Cabaret Voltaire,
Dada's roots are too deep underground

A curly-haired New Yorker says,
"I have small feet, but when I put on trainers they look like 90% of my body mass."
What would Freud say about that, in the dark little rooms in Vienna he was lucky enough
To be evacuated from by presidents and that rare stuff of revisionist legend,
A sympathetic Nazi?

Wash your hands.
The sticky secretions of antisemitism are everywhere in Europe,
An invisible glue made from a once secret, now long-lost, recipe,
Holding the walls of its history together.
Century after century, whole generations have gone mad on its fumes
And, upon recovering their sanity,
Have been unable to begin to fathom their behaviour.

I am not crying, I just have rain on my eyeballs

There is no irony like an old irony

Back in Sydney I find myself asking,
Do birds make such a ruckus at sunset
Because they think the world is going to end
And this will be their last chance at conversation?

They are blissfully ignorant that yesterday and every day

The sun came and went,
An eternal flame of questions that never get answered

But not to worry, the cheat sheet to life
Is now available online,
And the internet never goes to sleep

No one is waiting for Godot any more,
Google has already arrived and swallowed us whole.
We are like Jonahs trapped inside the gargantuan whale of our insatiable god,
Our every hope and fear, dream and despair,
Gorged on by the intangible hunger of the digital Beast.

Those fir trees remind me of when I was a child.
Was I happy then?
I don't know, but at least I was a child.

Is every poem a poem from another era?
Is poetry, even before it starts, de-situated in time?

Here is our communion.
Whatever else, the earth is round
And I am sitting somewhere on it,
And presumably so are you.
So at least we have that in common.

As for everything else,
You can't go on a journey of discovery
Unless you are willing to discover something.
Welcome to the brave new world of yourself.

Whip pan back to Prague, where Kafka still grows up through the sidewalks

I am teeming with dreams, this place itself must be made of sleep

Wherever you are, if you walk long enough, you will find a park

But if you blink, you will never know what you lost,
Even if it is piled up high in front of you,
Twelve bodies deep

Life is a process of liberating oneself from things you think you have to have,
Including, finally, life itself

I remember this now
On the dark internet
Where the scorpions are crawling out
From under the rock
Of 9/11
And I see the best minds of my generation
Haunted by the mundane demons of very ordinary lives

We have less choices than we think

We panic at the edge of the void
When we just need to breathe

We are void
We belong in the geography of silence

Richard James Allen