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WILL ALEXANDER

TEXAS BLIND SALAMANDER
AN EMPTY CITADEL OF WINGS
STEAMING SILICATE FRAGMENTATION
FLAMELESS ASTEROID SOMNIFICS
PRIMORDIAL LION RADIANCE
Its sonar glowing
its eyes
inverted aphid’s scrolls
having taken on the tenor of nautical -turpentine sparks
creeing reptilian polyps
being sulphur as in-lunation
not unlike flameless snow fields re-inverting being the dialectical polarity of magma
being molten underground intarsias
their movement
not unlike the wind from a primitive whispering axe

one thinks of the electro-chimerical firing of axons
of open optical annihilation pulsing through phantoms of emptiness

again one thinks of deserted centaur colonies
of hidden retinal satin
of juniper vines distorted as ionized cometary hair

the latter being an abstract fovea
invisible cortical cells
akin to their liquifous genes
to the rote that moves through their strange genetic calliope

this being sight
not unlike prophecy
or shapeless bells in the mirror of the skin catching fire as somnific vibration
as Antarctic anemia
like the Irminger current
or the deep barbarian steam within rubies

& the opera
inside its flesh shapes
a strange refractive iodine gone missing
AN EMPTY CITADEL OF WINGS

The view from above
an empty citadel of wings
rising via incalculable vapour
as a flashing thorax Sun
as the ghostly ruins of seeming seasonal metrics
being rain that pours on ghostly aural beaches
its white noise
its curious polar inconclusion
riveting as mist
being skull-less anthropology as absorption
STEAMING SILICATE FRAGMENTATION

Perhaps
more crystalline
than interior translucence
than marbled coracle phantoms
sailing across a fulminated bay of seals
paradoxically alive
as troubling lenticular power

dthis being the sight strained
to such a degree
that the voice loses foci
with its sorcerous animal whirlings
with its colubrine nightmares
with its sound from a muted ravens’ wick

the sight with its feverish structural power springing from a phlogotic oxygen
from the minerals of inverse Martian blazes

this being the biaxial as crystal
something other than Saturnian
being oreptic fire as the substance of Mars
FLAMELESS ASTEROID SOMNIFICS

A wave of black anodyne deliveries enflamed trajectories
as soundless pentacostal barbed wire rains smouldering as blood flare
as blinding cometary wheat
perhaps ornaments of rust from blinding sun dimensions
alive as inverted sapphire amulets
spun by a thread of flameless asteroid somnifics
being beautific ossuary teeth
transmuting dread of living cranial dimensions
These waters
encircled by greenish knives of glass
by the blank high water of lava
being a tourniquet of proto-gulls
of squandered manganese through distance
of transmuted solar eruption
diametrically fueling creeping animal fats & sugars
through heavenly intestinal voltage
moving through loops & branches of subliminal intensity
being utterance through ubiquitous centaur wings
through avernal Apache ravines
through migrational cometary stomas
given the fact that the galaxy boils
that it remains the cosmic return of solar x-ray blizzards
they
being an a-temporal blast of enigma & heresy
emerging
as glistening thermal ascension
rising from pressures formed from translucent constellations
emerging as sundial viridians
giving off rays of intermediate movement they being rays of curious osmium auroras
of paradoxical transmigration
allowing light to preserve curious axial emanation
not unlike illusive sonar plankton
traversing pressures that beam
from the simultaneity that trembles as glass
being a powerful hermetic assignation
apocalyptic
oily
buzzing
not unlike curvilnear refraction
being buffeted refraction in spectacular emerald zones

here
a kind of molten spittle rages
being a seismic biography of proto-Sumerian summas
transcending
its physiological opacity
its thermal eyeflash blinkings

of course
its rising androgyny
its blazing genes at the outer poles of blindness
with its fluidic ire
eating through the stones of eternity
HAGIWARA KYOJIRO

FROM DEATH SENTENCE

TRANSLATED BY SHO SUGITA
Distributing Quarantines, Numbers, and Flyers in Autumn

Rising city ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ Explosion
Married woman’s face
Reciprocal jolting SSSTOPP+++GOOGG
Bus ● ● ● gasoline — — sharp angular face!
DAAAAF!

Roof penetrating the sky
Rioting window
Fissured scene runs down a slope Advertisement flag!

“Which number is the train? It’s the Kobe express!”
SHATSUU! TSU --MU! KATAKATA KATAKATAKATA — — — —
Cop’s salute
The cavalry and their funeral
Double the sunlight commotion

“Though his sweetheart died———”
Ocean • Ocean • Ocean • Ocean • Ocean • Ocean
Sailing ship
Sharp angular horizon
“Which number?”
“Which number?”
A novel and whiskey
P • RRRR • • • BBBBWWWW
Window at the telegraph station
Perpendicular lover’s toe
Autumn hands out quarantine, numbers, and flyers
The speed of the passing train
Hey! Good heavens
don’t forget about me, OK!”
Edible Frog

A noblewomen’s cellar
Edible frogs, we’re edible frogs!
*Krokke*
*Krokke*
Cry! Scream!
“Love?” —— hearts exploding upon a red lantern —— “that’s a disgrace!”
Go slaughter the humans!
*Lekero*
*Lekero*
“Beat them!” “Stab them!” —— those red eyeballs!
“They’re ●●!”
“Shoot them! Shoot them!...........Noise..........Command!”
“To our homeland”
“To our homeland”
*Kiro kiro*
*Kiro kiro*
A ceaseless fight! Charge! Sinking ship on a dark night!
Fountain on a table! Red lantern! Yellow circle —— a coffin!
“Cheers!” “Cheers!”
“Hurrah!” —— a mountain of dead bodies!
R
●
R
●
R
●
R
Make it ring! Scream! Sing! Dance!
Let bells of life ring!
“Run!” “A dark night!” “It’s death itself!”
“Die! Coward! Face the reason for living!”
“Criminalize those who drive us into the hole! Punish them! Slaughter them!”
●●●▲▲▲×××— — — ■ ■ ■ < < <
The officer spewing the smoke of roses flowering in whiskey
A woman hitting keys to grievous music!
Men and money! A million candlepower! ................A cry of love reaching
 the bottom of the grave!
“Dear daughter” “My body is a machine! Mother!”
Cry! Scream!
Money! War praising the cowardly!
Slaughter the humans!
*Lekero  Lekero*
We are edible frogs!
Life

●● Under the railroad bridge ●● you hysterically laughing animal!
Dance! Dance! Dance!
It’s a raw mask!
Syphilis ● dust ● saliva ● bacillus ● tuberculosis ● diarrhea ● vice ● sudden death ● drugs
You pigs!
Bandages wrapped on swollen arms
Are you trying to empty my wallet!?  
Bastard!———Go and detonate inside the lightbulb!
The broken violin string still plays!
Idiot!
Shameless!
Professions are now sacred!
Wagons carrying halved bodies…
You think it’s a machine?
It’s a living, moving sun! Earth! Mother!
Driver hanging himself inside the last train!
Human!
Short circuit!
Both legs amputated!
Blood on eyeballs!
Purple piss!
Shit! Scream into the megaphone!
Men! Women! Death! Life!
Parlor! Grave! Playing cards!
Abortion! Suicide! Funeral!
Cogwheel......Cogwheel......Cogwheel......Cogwheel......Cogwheel......Cogwheel......Cogwheel
You pigs coming out after sucking mum’s tits!
Dance! Dance!
AHAHAAHAHA——HAAHAHAHA
It’s an honor being a woman! AHAAHAHAHA! HA! HA
Break down ———Body-dead dead body!
The extinction of fertility!
A pure white mask!
Dance! Dance! Dance!
——Oh goodness you have cute hair!
You dead body! Dance! Live!
Live! Live! Kiss! Kiss!
Humans!
Life!
Women! Women! Women!
Dance!
Short-circuit! Copper! The lightbulb went out!
It’s the darkness of darknesses! Ruin of ruins!
A fragment!
Economy! Bureaucracy! The end times!
The vengeful spirits have flown to heaven!
Manifesto on the *Alphabet*

•

• a day with murky skies • a day gone down in great sorrow • affection in parting • language of northerners • the sound of freight and wagon going up a hill • time caught in intense dullness • the sound of city sewers • various feelings towards insults • dead of night • psychological reaction to syphilitic symptoms • sounds that felos-de-se are fond of • palate of gastroenteropathic patients • the sky above manufacturing quarters • ETC • shapes all related to omens of fever and sense of oppression

B • D • G • J • M • U • V • W • Z

•

• streets under intense heat • under the equatorial line • feelings following a rise and fall • talking fast • words appealing for happiness or sadness • sensation of speed • midday congestion of the city • mechanical pleasure • fluctuating symptoms • maniacal reaction against arousal • drugs • blades • rotation • catch fire and open fire • sensation towards angles • exploding reverberation • revolutionary mentality • massacre • et cetera • shapes all related to the emphasis on speed sensation
room to chat with friends, affection for the beloved, walks, a grove and stream and sailboat, around 10 in the morning, bright sunlight and color and echo, the peaceful couple, car running fast, pen slipping on a blank sheet of paper, music for the harvest season, intelligent moderation and extension, sound wave, radio, beauty of virgins, tranquility of research labs, katakana, speed of cars and four-wheeled horse carriages, orange water, young Madame • Et Cetra, shapes all related to the melody of clear echo and affection and peace.

shaped by the above categories, we declare the use of musical imagistic sensations regardless of it composing part of our immanence!
ON A DARK NIGHT

On a dark night
With love-longings aflame
Oh, unearthly adventure!
I went out without being noticed
My house being now still.

In darkness and secure
By the secret ladder
Oh, unearthly adventure!
In darkness and in ambush
My house being now still.

On that night fore-known
In secret, for no one saw me
Nor did I glance at anything
Without other light and guide
But that in my burning heart.

This guided me
More certainly than noon-day light
To where he awaited me
Whom I have known so well
Where no one else appeared.

Night which itself guides
Night more lovely than the dawn
Night that itself unites
Lover with beloved
Lover in lover transformed.

On my flowering breast
Which I kept for him alone
There he stayed sleeping
And I caressed him.
Fanned by the cedars

The wind from the turret
Blew through his hair.
With his serene hand
On my wounded neck
And all my senses suspended

I remained myself and I forgot myself
My face rested on my lover:
Everything stopped, and I was outside myself
Leaving me watched over
Forgotten among Mary’s lilies.

(St. John of the Cross)
DAVID SINGS TO SAUL

King
hear how my instrument
flings out
distance
through which
stars meet us in their knowing
and we fall like rain
and a flowering follows

(Rilke)
ROBERTA IANNAMICCO

PATH
ZEBRAS
BIRTHDAY
EVERY TIME I LEAVE
AFTER THE BIRTH
ROAD

TRANSLATED BY ALEXIS ALMEIDA
Along her path
riding a cow
the chamomile flowers
looked like tiny stars
small precious things
put there to adorn
such a slow journey.
Like straight out of a tv show
black and white
the zebras are
preparing themselves
for a pajama party
their nature makes them entirely exempt
we all know
that a zebra behind bars
is a redundancy
so they do as they please
they go to the edge
they throw themselves from ravines and land on their feet
they do bad things without caring who sees
they attack ferociously
afterwards they toast
with the cups of their hooves
there is no difference between a crazy zebra
and a sane zebra and a zebra zebra
they all cross the water scandalously
they sunbathe
they don’t understand tameness
or the side-eye
I close my eyes to put out the candles
don’t rush me with my wishes
there have to be three
and I don’t want to waste
this opportunity
the air is all inside the balloons
I’m afraid
of blowing softly
it returns
the birthday song
with a few variations
your birthday lasts a short while
a cake that looks like a ship
a wedding dress
a plum
is an offering
to sacrifice immediately
I would have preferred to spend my whole birthday
in the light of the birthday candles
to make sure the air
doesn’t extinguish them
to make wishes
many more than three
and have them start to come true
in the middle of the party
in the light of the pink candles
EVERY TIME I LEAVE

A wall
just in front
of the door of my house
says I love you
every time I leave
I read it
diagonally
it is
the corner of the body shop
with the mechanic
always
in the middle of the gate
the top part of the wall
has shards
of broken bottles
so the cats
can’t make a home between the grates
it looks like a palace
I debut a lavender nightgown
the same lily silk
on one side my skin
hangs above the puffy flesh
on the other side the mirror
in the bathroom
in the hospital
We stopped along the road
and my mom and I
ran to take a piss
we went down
to the tunnel
under the road
we ducked down
it made us laugh to hear the cars
just above us
with our butts out in the open
and the wind
blew against me
and I wet myself
we laughed
we laughed
I’m here and yet I know I should be over there, that somewhere a soul frozen with fright
stares at the clock’s hands till the hours blacken, they blur into a shriek which erupts from
the surrounding air, shooting into the gaping mouth, like a bottle of sulfuric acid. I tense,
I listen, I gaze, my fingers plunge into the shivery gush of papers, I am here and I fathom
that over there somebody is fidgeting in anticipation of my arrival, but I don’t know when
I can make my departure, suddenly! orders are shouted; I slap my hat to get the dust off,
I execute so many gestures dictated by well-learned purposes, but it torments me, it burns
me, this thought, that somewhere a soul is fidgeting in anticipation of my arrival, that it’s
there I need to be, to give comfort.

I could fling open a window to the subsided harpsichord in the park and I could stare at the
season flit its wayward fingers over arpeggios of unfurling blossoms. The keys discernible
in the flower beds, quaver under the very same finger, further off, and much later, awaiting the
frowning resonance of fruit and decay. Pears, greengage plums, ellipsoid grapes. The light
puts on an apron of ash, the footstep grazes the gravel like a cheek, our eyes grip hands.
The poem lounged in the sun like litmus paper, and if, in passing, I happen to jostle against
your name, it’s like an ant hill scrambling with so many alarmed memories. I crouch over a
word, over another word, it’s a spring imprisoned within the mirror’s mechanism, I am here
and I’m tormented because I know I should be somewhere else, when the voice slices like
a scythe through the grass, compelling it to curtsy, unleashing an echo-like tremolo latched
next to the wheat spike’s camphor sachet.

And during this watch winter pushes its tents to other discarded whereabouts, summer’s
wild beast cages clamor along the sweltering sidewalks, a pliers’ jaws wrench through the
leadened portals of rain, the ripened bread of October.

Each one of us, unsuspecting, harbors within the tidings of his or her own death, like a dove
that ferries under her wing a letter posted for a recipient of the happenstance. Someone will
slowly strip us of foliage, deliver us again to the air, the water, until at nadir he will trace the
envelope which our plasma has fetched for us from our forefathers so that we may drive it
forward through the hour’s marshy curtains. In me or in you, another soul will plunge like
a pearl diver, and, between the barrette and a smirk, this being will swivel to illuminate the
pebble left behind by the echo, or a delirium. A bird large as a cable concealing electrical
wires will ignite in tone with the phosphorescence of flight. And the corpse carted off on an
invisible stretcher will incessantly evaporate among worms and celery, will turn into the
steam which at times you’ll discern floating over swamps and mirrors.
Each word is on this wall the push button of a bell which — poked — will call into existence the requisite being. So many words, so many beings. In vain will you wait on the phantoms to rise from their ancient easy chairs, to fetch you the scent of basil long persisting in the pillows along with the laughter, sharded like a walnut still green. Here you’ll stagger into thousands of spider strands, where your voice will wobble and reel irremediably. And myself, in a rush to be finished, have still another key left to try in the lock confining the secret of words, and all the while knowing in my bones that I should be somewhere else, where someone fidgets in anticipation of my arrival, somewhere next to the bottles faintly containing an ink which will transmute into an eternity of shrieks.

Someone shuffles the days like playing cards. One day replacing another has the semblance of a card lifted from the deck with the kings and the minuscule, multi-tinted Ladies. It is fruitless to clamp your fingers to your temples: no one can verify that today is Monday, or Wednesday, that today it is I or December. Until the burgeons sprout, granting passage to the startled rabbit ears of the leaves, the fingers of hands will not learn that immaterial gleam which compels the mirrors to suddenly murmur. Until then, the corpses left behind by the moon’s clamor through the chest of drawers will not rattle the curtains and the folded linens. The silence tended with so much vigilance under the stained glass of the hothouse will not complacently wilt. Through the herbarium’s bay windows brimful of the sun’s blazing weed, the shouts of the strolling push cart salesmen are scarcely the extra cotton for the lusterless diamond I spotted mounted on the ring of soundlessness.

At times the ox-carts unload a new twilight in the courtyard with the resonant pavement, a few inhabitants scuffle by my writing table without a greeting. At times. Someone else barks an order at me, casts a reproof. The words fidget in anticipation, like a string of shirts, to be unfurled by the flatiron of my revelation.

The train of redolence lopes through the walnut’s marrow, through the gooseberry, with a swiftness of shrieks.

The walls reveal processions of canvases, some in semblance to the raven of the wooden whimper over the clods stuffed with earthworms, others like bouquets shooting out of the refracted drinking glass disclosed by the plaster.

Solitary, I trace the measure of my breath, lapsing back into my lungs, after which, it coils like a cobra, along the mirror’s limpid arms.
More cards, more canvases, parade before the retina’s steam. Nightingales peck at my pupil like a bead, and afterwards, all of Beyond’s hues endorse it with trills irradiating from their tiny crops.

Undulating, the slumber hovers over me short of a graze, stork or cumulus of an early afternoon.

This spring it will be as though I am in a target shooting booth, where row by row, the tiny mechanism of the tender cherry is animated, of the jittery eggplant, of the unexpected hare. When the eye grows weary, the pellet will sweep wide of the target, and the tiny wheels will fail to spin. Will it then be the autumn within me, or the one in the garden?

The window unendingly farther, an aquarium where the shrieks of the multitude transmute to other conjured up aspects.

If I lean out, I can grasp the wind in my fingers, like a blackbird in a birdcage.

No earthquake could shatter the frail ash of the poem.

In iron becrimsoned in embers, in the fingers grasping this flame in unrestrained entrance-ment, in the metal shops speckled with the soot persisting like grounds at the bottom of existence’s coffee cup, in the nail that punctures the heart easier than the hoof, the same face swivels from midday to midnight.

In this grotto, am I myself not a stalactite which, manifested from nothing, amassed within itself sodium and visions? Thus, from the calcium of the initial granule of bone, of flesh, a whimper first sparkled, then the resonating voice, and later, graying hair.

In alternate chambers, creatures analogous to me slice into large squares the feast-like stuff of days. From their fingers, as in witchcraft, hats and vestments are hatched like peacocks. In courtyards, stout scullions plunge daggers into goats and buffaloes, construct, on top of glimmering trays, castles of salads and roasts.

Cutlery and culinary secrets journey from generation to generation. Some learn the utterances of thread strands and with them they know how to inscribe the embroidery drum
or the vestments incessantly rejuvenated. Others, out of their tools, organize rakes with which to glean the plasma gravel sweeping over the expanse surmised heroical. There are those who know how to coax, in flutes or tenuous piano keys, the songbirds, with a corn flour they alone preserve inside their hearts. But all of these, through the rivers of flora and years, cannot wrench me yet from this place. The same notion that I should be elsewhere torments me.

The hands of the clock journey through snows or maritime foam, my slumber fragments like amphoras on the morning’s cold grindstone, evening and night follow irrefutably the celestial procession of light, humans plough, sing, demolish or build towns, the bread’s gates swing open or close, and yet no comet stabs my cranium’s sweltering planet. I’m still waiting for my hands to liberate themselves from me and roam searching for a cheek to caress.

Any word then: fireworks fulminate. When our cognizance of words dissolves, we’ll need a baton to conduct the orchestra of the budding vowels. They will undoubtedly be the same, but the clamor of this summons will awaken all things and all beings as though from a legendary slumber. In the citadel from the tale, it’s not the princesses who slept a hundred years, but the words. And from time to time Prince Charming, the poet, journeys through cities, and brings in his cask, resurrection water for the slumbering words.

And when the liberated hands return, I will inquire of them: What did you bring me, you, Right Hand, returned from Midday? And you, Left, back from Midnight, what did you? Where is the flocking of the carpets of fulguration, where are the redolent vowels? The hands having first rested upon the shoulders like ceremonial epaulets, will then resume their place among the instruments of reading. I will be obliged to recount to you, reader, the chronicles concealed in their touch.

If night fragments on the granite windows like a throttled street-lamp, the mittens unharnessed from the hands like some wings still retain the itinerary through a breathed-out echo: Come with me through the alleyways leading to the occulted dwelling of Light and gape at the enraptured begging each other forgiveness, while an ocean like an autumn of carmine clamors through the fronds of their tears.

Like a secret code, rapture shows up on the leaf of every age.
But no apparition procrastinates its presence on the photographic plate. With a single step you leave behind immeasurable distances. Where was I an instant back? The ostrich shoves his head into the fans of sand, the ruins are clavichords veiled in penumbra. I know, you delivered Pegasus to my door, you girted his waist with a sash blooming with verses, and yet I will not comply to your beast stalking gymnastics.

I begin now to distinguish: behind these backdrops, more backdrops. Incessantly yet another backdrop. Your successors will incessantly dismantle the cardboard landscapes, and their successors the same. Do you know whose turn it will be to unveil the penultimate? Incessantly yet another landscape. Would you like to follow me, our fingers interlaced, down this alley only a doodle? Quickly, take off your reality like you take off your dress so you can leap into the morning’s artesian fountain. We’ll be nothing but essence, tint on doodles purged of dimples, lacking brim.

If aurora were an arbor, we’d creep to the top to gaze at the advent of day. All is traced with disappearing ink, and the entire doodle, dissolving leisurely, crumpled in the pocket of a rover.

What incantation will it take to return us back to our selves?

Our heart plunges deeper into the plasma, like a raft in the water. I could hurl this heart in your face like a sponge soaking with blood.

The highway is a hammock where the slumbering city sways. The lips explode like a pomegranate and fracture all the words.

Have we journeyed, do you think, through the marrow of summer? Or the marrow of winter? I have told you before: through birds the electric current of flight is disseminated to our bashful quarters. Through cherries or apricots, the coagulated fire, the petrified flames, permeate our chambers.

But for what reason the unfurling like a slingshot of the stretch between the scattering trees? Why the wig of thunders, the suddenly rumpled wig of the mountain among the slanting of pines? What transfigurations! I will trespass through the squeeze of the brick walls, or I will wait here, between the pages, among the books decomposing on the shelves,
for you to appear, or for another, to bring it to my attention that I am here, that elsewhere some soul, frozen with fright, gazes at the clock’s minute hands.

All these, could they be, do you think, purely an act of presence?
OMAR BERRADA

ALL THE BIRDS
(FOR SARAH)
1.

So many tombs
in the life of the self
Protect and save
Project and stave
off the time when
evening loosens
the gilt of her locks
Stanford, Clotsky
what’s with the Ts
the terrible Ts
the vertical bars
of a wooden crib
a linear chain
of authorities
family, religion
sacred transmission
the past speaks
in silence
Identify, then multiply

Half of me comes from here, half from everywhere
Night paints a shadow
into your heart
a word hides a word hides a word
hides a silence put
your hand here I'll
put my hand there
something marvelous
is bound to happen
larger than life
lines unhinge
the signs no
harm intended
Heretical healing
devotional treason
Humble humble reader
your gracious likeness I shall seek

*Something heavenly has wounded the soul*
3.

In the Odyssey
is a crow that speaks
fluent Greek
Let us rename all
the birds my love
a dictionary of silent screams
and the world will fly
to our hearts’ beating

*The poem, the dream: our very lives*
4.

Musiq, musiq
A button pressed
another turned:
she sways in circles
Velvet goldmine
Celtic dreamlands
it is we who fall
asleep to a film
soundtrack

_A sheep by any other name..._
5.

Long fingers holding
fast metal needle
black fabric fainting
from a sowing machine
logic of production logic
of collapse a plummet
into darkness
while in the courtyard
a plum tree grows
Technicolor puppets
Is that all
that heaven allows?
They know nothing
of gravity so says Kleist
they know nothing
but gravity:
take the stick out
puppet falls flat

*Her experience of scale is always paradoxical*
6.

You talk in your sleep
arms raised high above
your breath
a dance of hands
in silent air

*Voices of the psyche racing through the flesh*
7.

The museums there are empty
shells so said the scholar
from Syracuse lovely
outside ruins inside
Preserve and educate
is what we ask of you
engage and transform
Instead you lie quietly
out of date in
dejction unworthy
of thy name break
our hearts we
who believe
and remember
even the past
needs to breathe

*Home is an intimate stranger*
Words erect
a barrier
at the core of intimacy
a tremor breaks the surface
with a life of its own
Some mornings are hard
and these are healthy
horizontal yearnings
now standing to shower
heads not our own
feel the pull of
gravity within us
We want to live
like trees
It is snowing
inside your body
and tamaas in your tongue
has a secret meaning

Can we share solitude without loneliness
9.

The cold
from the small of
your back
my hand
away
will blow

*If we go to Texas we will come back naked*
HECTOR RUIZ

DESERT, DESERT FOX
-- 3. LEAVE DIVIDED

TRANSLATED BY FRANÇOIS LUONG
The fall
is given
the rebound as well

each fall
each rebound
recount a reef

rips and spurs
lonely verses rotten apples
she opens a trapdoor
pulls a barrel
embers beneath the floor
unsettling flames rising
between the thighs she feeds the fire
despite hunger the victims study the menu
think ravioli but say clitoris
the lights in the city always write the same sentences
she works as a waitress
she is not a desperate figure

he has erection problems
it’s a stubborn wandering

the waitress’s smile
removes his shirt

from the labor market
of torture of silence
to become desert
and desert fox
by day or by night
with you without you
same not same
I chase by ear
circles and reliefs
for unhinged men
insomnia is a tool
to measure the size
of our solitude

the chains let’s tear
from our feet take
excess

the equinox is coming
I’ll lift you up with the mouth
I removed it
from the pleasure of touch

his fingers disappeared
between my lips

he unfolded circles
twisted rivers

he moved in the shape of darkness
he was about to reach a virginity
I saw blood
between index and middle
vanish with water in the sink

you check everything
old customs officer
on a forgotten border

we were at a dead end I felt sadness perhaps even pain while she used dental floss I saw how food residue came flying against the vanity the tip of my nose was cold I know I would sleep well I know that while lying nested the bodies would descend like an elevator from floor to floor until parked in the basement

I’ve always dreamed of going missing
he notices me and his will goes

he knew that the light from my face would blind him. That the scent of my body would confound him. That my hand on his arm would sweep away any commitment

he hoped for a night. He hoped for the trail leading to the hotel. He hoped for the silences that embraced, the words that undress with skill

but everyone knows it. There are no happy loves. There are no happy endings. For lovers, there is only cannon fodder. Everything else is compensation
between holes falls
chocolate without leaving a tip

for these scraps
there’s a name

but there remains the lack
of sugar in the blood
now chained to a chair
a dimension of my life fades
without making a sound a rebirth
takes root between breath and naked hearts
on the street, I pick a dish for the oven, near the wrought iron fence painted black, in front of a home for elderly people. It’s not made of pyrex, it’s not a slow cooker or a melting pot, I don’t have a name to give it, I might end up calling it the little white one from the street or the one found from the future. Someone had left it on the street, available to all, well aligned with the other dishes, someone knew, a retiree knew, they were going to be picked up, washed, used, loved, and I just needed to believe a neighbor was thinking about me. Now, I am convinced this is the end of an era, the beginning of mourning.
i have some free time but I lose myself to a kind of useless sadness. I come into a deli to dine at the time for retirees. Hot dogs and poutine in a plate and a bowl made of white plastic. The benches have taken the shape of the lower back, the TV is on but there is no sound, the noise of frying and exchanges mingle like in a kitchen one Saturday evening. Later, I'll go get an espresso at Café Volage where there won't be anyone which will make me think I am definitely alone. How stunning the comfort one finds in a deli, in a half-empty café, in sadness. In the street, people seem to pursue something, something foreign like the future, like the sadness they give up when they cross the street for a driver to step on the gas and runs him over to oblivion. The light was red, I saw it from the other side of the street and she too saw me. There were no cars, people were crossing but we waited for the silhouette to flicker before crossing, we wanted to meet each other and share in the middle of the street a sad smile.
I observe and I study
with time to kill I go
but with each negation
I step back and leave behind
limits that I respect
to the letter I abandon what I love

I measure the gap
between utopia
and seduction

I am an open door
to an outside recovered
from the bar’s mirror
my face fades away

the lamp posts shine on the absence
between the lines never written
on any body

the empty bottles whistle
the new dialect of the heart

offside
off field
outside defines my name
Kristin Prevallet

“That premonition we all know, this has happened before somewhere else, / or this will happen again—where? when?”
A MEDITATION ON H.D.’S THE WALLS DO NOT FALL

The rain falls, here, there
sand drifts; eternity endures

The Temple of Amen-Ra in Luxor, Egypt was built around 1084 BC.

It marks a transition from the the worship of multiple gods, to a singular and omnipotent One.

It marks a shift in historical consciousness from the materialism of worshipping the earth and its cycles to a spiritualism that worships an invisible, invincible and singular God.

The word Amen means “hidden,” and the god Amen is all powerful and invisible, and within his name is the assimilation of all gods, whether they be of vegetation, of water, or of the human body.

This assimilation of all into One was not without political consequences.

Amen was the prominent god of the Southern Thebes region, and when in the eleventh dynasty (c.2050 BC) Theban kings unified Egypt against the anarchy that marked the shift from the Old to the Middle Kingdom, Amen was officially made the God of all.

The first step to unification was to eliminate the multiple gods that kept the people isolated in small, independent communities of worship.

The most popular god of the Egyptians that posed the greatest threat to Amen’s religious victory was Ra, the sun-god.

Ra was known to be all-powerful but he was not invisible; he co-existed with the multiple other material gods which he allowed to exist beneath him in their individual manifestations.
The Priests of Amen knew that Ra had to be usurped and so they added the name of Amen to that of Ra, and declared that this god represented the hidden and mysterious powers which created and sustained the universe.

To make their plan work, the Priests of Amen also devised a mechanical statue of their God and placed it in the inner chamber of Amen’s temple at Karnak, Thebes (2000 B.C.).

When the statue nodded its head, or moved its arm to choose its High Priest or Kings, no one could deny the God’s trans-substantiative powers.

These tricks of puppetry and naming gradually secured the elimination, not only of the worship of Ra, but also all of the other material gods that Ra preserved.

Although there was an unsuccessful revolt against Amen attempted by Amenophis IV, gradually the people were led towards the worship of one, omnipotent deity, the god Amen.

Because he was hidden, Amen became even more powerful than the Kings themselves.

Rameses III gave away the riches of most of his kingdom to the Priests of Amen:
2,844,357 loaves of fine bread
42,030 jugs of wine
304,093 flasks of incense
770,200 bundles of vegetables

Amen became the sole God of all Egypt, and his Priests were a corporate entity that provided work for 62,626 Egyptians.

In 1923 H.D. visited Karnak, the temple city of Amen, and took a tour of nearby Luxor where a year earlier the tomb of Tutankhamen had been uncovered.

She sought to understand the power of language to reveal the traces of invisibility.

The ruins of Karnak date back to a small settlement living there around 3200 BC, and its oldest temple is for Mont, an ancient war god.
Every new ruler for the next 3000 years added his own structures, temples, and houses over and around it, the most substantial being the complex of temples for Amen-Ra.

The builders from new eras did not demolish the remains of previous rulers; so Karnak is one of the most unique manifestations of the palimpsest in known history.

Because there were so many builders, there is no plan or design for the city, and its layout is chaotic.

Every layer of stone represents a new style and era, with differing interpretations of hieroglyphic stories of the kings upon kings who were buried there.

Amen’s temple city kept the layers of time still visible throughout the ages.

London, where H.D. lived during the war, has not.

With every invasion, a new city was built to smother and erase the ruins.

In 1942, as H.D. is composing her epic poem *Trilogy*, the city is being destroyed by bombs.

She refuses to leave.

Susan Stanford Friedman writes that she chose to remain in London during the entirety of the war, not wanting to escape, either physically or psychologically, “the gaping walls and constant death that surround her.”

She wrote *Trilogy* as a means of restoring the psychic and spiritual walls that had been broken down by war.

Throughout the poem she superposes 20th century London onto B.C. Karnak and releases “incongruent monsters” from history’s sub-conscious.

She constructs language around the earth’s—and humanities’—possible renewal.
illusion of lost-gods, daemons;
gambler with eternity,

initiate of the secret wisdom,
bride of the kingdom,

reversion of old values,
oneness lost, madness.
walls,

[s31]

Although making the past and the present indecipherable is to risk madness, the poet is in control of her vision.

The bombs of London open Karnak as ghosts of the Many rise up and rebel against the One who suffocated them beneath layers and layers of churches and cathedrals.

When they speak, a palimpsest will fall into place, and a new story will work towards the rebirth of the war-shattered psyche.

*

The use of palimpsest to layer similar events throughout time is a means of re-examining accepted truths and uprooting familiar stories so that when they are retold they make sense to a new generation, with a new set of catastrophes to confront.

Long before the rule of Amen, when Osiris and Isis were the most popular gods, the earth was shattered not by bombs but by cycles of vegetation—years when the crop was minimal compared to years when the earth was plentiful; seasons when the rain did not fall and the sun scorched, ruining the crops.

So it is not accidental that H.D., when attempting to reconstruct a ruined world, would call upon these deities of vegetation, the gods and goddesses historically called upon when the earth was in need of rebirth.
She begins “The Walls Do Not Fall” by associating the fall of London with the barren earth—and she superposes the gods of vegetation that are associated with the renewal of the earth, onto 20th-century London.

The multiple vegetation deities become threads of H.D.’s own story, which itself develops into a prophesy of hope.

She layers the names of the gods and goddesses atop one another, making the link from Amen, Osiris and Adonis to Christ, and from Isis and Astarte (Aphrodite, Venus) to Mary.

Part of the potential of palimpsest within poetic language is the ability to layer mythology, history, time, space, and ritual into a single text of a single language which allows all the layers, no matter how disparate, to be constantly present.

Myth is not a single-sourced truth that preserves primordial states of consciousness.

It is a multi-chambered structure in which every story has its origin in splinters of other stories, and those splinters are themselves impossible to trace.

If Amen is present in H.D.’s Trilogy, it is not because the puppet god is sitting comfortably in his temple, surrounded by his priests who have successfully declared him the God of gods.

Rather, he is broken apart, haunted by the gods he suppressed because those gods are housed within him: Osiris, Ra, Adonis.

Christ, like Amen, was made to be the One, and he too is present in the poem—but the multiple gods within him are all likewise revealed.

Amen, Adonis, Osiris, Ra. H.D. reveals that there were many “Ones” throughout the ages, and no matter where they enter into mythology, they are all easily splintered back into the “Many” from which they came.

Splintered the crystal of identity,
shattered the vessel of integrity,
till the Lord Amen,
paw-er of the ground,
bearer of the curled horns,
bellows from the horizon:

here am I, Amen-Ra,
Amen, Aries, the Ram;

[Walls, s21]

_Amen_ is always in italics throughout the poem, perhaps because that word recalls both the Egyptian god’s name and the affirmation at the end of prayer:

“we have always worshipped Him / we have always said / forever and ever _amen_ [Walls, stanza 17].”

The word _Amen_ is traced to Amen, who was called “the Hidden,” although he was not always invisible.

When he was still co-existing with other deities, Amen was depicted either as a goose or as a ram with curved horns.

When H.D. says Amen in _Trilogy_, she is not paying tribute through prayer to his invisible grace.

Rather she is resurrecting what the priests of Amen suppressed when they made him God of gods—that as Ram he had sexual powers that linked him with the propagation of the royalty and the fertility of the land.

As a Ram, he was believed to have been father to all the royal pharaohs, and according to Frazer, the virgin queens of Egypt would go to the temple of Ammon (another of his names) and through “divine procreation” become pregnant, with no physical signs of having been with a mortal man.”
Amen, you are so warm,
hide me in your fleece,
crop me up with the new-grass;

let your teeth devour me,
let me be warm in your belly,

the sun-disk,
the re-born Sun.

[Walls, s22]

*Amen* is an ecstatic exclamation, a tribute of thanks, and an uncovering of the secret sacred ritual behind a virgin’s ability to conceive, dating back 3000 years before the birth of Christ.

In the darkest sanctum of Ammon’s temple, somewhere in the depths of his palimpsest city, the god becomes man for one heavenly night, and the priests spread the seed of the royal lineage.

The seed that is the body of a god disseminated throughout the land is best remembered in the myth of Isis and Osiris.

They too have arrived in war-torn London, up-rised from the tombs at Karnak where they are guardians of the dead.

Like myths whose stories are splintered through time, within the name Isis is the dispersion of the sources of a name.

She is called “the many named,” “the thousand-named,” and “the myriad named.”

She also has names which specifically link her with the cycles of vegetation:

“Creatress of great things,” “Lady of Bread,” and “Lady of Abundance.”

As time and politics progressed, the image of Isis became that of a tender mother, a queen both of nature and moral purity.
Isis then began to be called “the Virgin Mary,” because, according to Frazer, “in the pictures and statues of Isis suckling her son Horus, [Christians] perceived the prototypes of the Virgin Mary and her Child.”

With “Mary” Isis is replaced, and her name becomes solidified into one, final story.

now polish the crucible
and set the jet of flame

\textit{under, till} marah-mar
are melted, fuse and join

and change and alter,
mer, mere, mere, mater, Maia, Mary,

Star of the Sea,
Mother.

\textit{[Tribute to the Angels, s8]}

Here is an alchemical stew of names, solidifying into the most fundamental name remembered: Mother.

But the rebellion has begun, and Mother is a reluctant savior.

A mirror breaks where Mother admires her wholeness, and in the splinters the counterparts emerge: Venus, Aphrodite, Astarte.

Although originating in different parts of the ancient world, all have traces of the story of Isis and Osiris.

All three goddesses have a lover/brother who died, and in their sorrow, each is depicted holding their lifeless mates across their laps, just as the Virgin Mary is depicted lamenting the dead body of her son.
As the story goes, with the help of the goddesses, the lifeless god is resurrected.

When he ascends, the wintered earth is once again ready for the birth of spring, when crops ascend from their seedling underworld.

The ascension of the god into heaven is the erection of the corn husk.

    We are part of it;
    we admit transubstantiation

    not God merely in bread
    but God in the other-half of the tree

    that looked dead—
    did I bow my head?

    [Tribute, s23]

No story is sacred and fixed in time, or stone.

H.D. shatters the birth of Christ, and with him Mary, into the ancient agricultural gods from which their stories originated.

    Sirius:
    what mystery is this?

    you are seed,
    corn near the sand,
    enclosed in black-lead,
    ploughed land.

    [Walls, s41]

This image of shattering the One into multiple counterparts is partially a metaphor for war’s destruction of cities—but the palimpsest does not stop there.
The multiple counterparts themselves—Osiris, Adonis and Christ, were shattered when their bodies were sacrificed for the land.

To lament the death of Adonis—and the hard winters endured because of his curse of having to live half the year with Persephone in the underworld—Syrian women used baskets to plant rootless vegetables and grains.

These grew for eight days, and when the vegetables were rotten the women threw the baskets, along with images of Adonis, into the sea.

“This is my body, given up for you,” the god called Christ proclaims, and to mourn his death his churches are covered in black, his image is removed, and his believers ponder their sins.

But the redemption of sins will do no good to those whose lives and land are shattered by war.

H.D. is Isis in her sorrow who helps with the gods’ resurrection; she tries to wake them, pulling at them by the letter.

Osiris equates O-sir-is or O-Sire-is

Osiris, the star Sirius

relates resurrection myth and resurrection reality through the ages;

[Walls, s40]

Myth and reality are for a brief moment united by the transformation of names that occurs from Osiris to Sirius, from a mutilated god who was buried in different parts of the land to the star of his lover, Isis, appearing in the sky to signify his resurrection at the summer solstice.
The palimpsest works through *Trilogy* not only to revise history and put time back together through myths, but to piece together the bodies of the gods themselves.

The star Sirius is transformed into a new god/ess envisioned by H.D.: the Sire, who is partly Isis, and who in he/r wholeness is open to receive questions:

> O, Sire, is this the waste? unbelievably,

> sand glistens like ice, cold, cold;

> drawn to the temple gate, O, Sire, is this union at last?

*Walls, s42*

Fused together in new patterns and combinations, myths provide resources of potential re-creations.

The final poem of the *Trilogy*, “The Flowering of the Rod,” is written more as a story than the previous two sections.

It ends with gifts being given in celebration of a birth that bears familiar traces to the birth at Bethlehem.

The god divided into pieces will not help a psyche that is in need of restoration.

From the splintered deities of the poem to the revision of a familiar story, *Trilogy* uses the mythmaking devices of antiquity—the solidification of the Many into the One—to construct a sacred re-birth that is H.D.’s own vision for the resurrections or restorations that must take place, both on the land, and in the human psyche, both naturally and spiritually.

No one will know exactly how it came about, but we are permitted to wonder
if it had possibly something to do
with the vow he had made—

well, it wasn’t exactly a vow,
an idea, a wish, a whim, a premonition perhaps,

that premonition we all know,
this has happened before somewhere else,

or this will happen again—where? when?

[The Flowering Of The Rod, s41]

Although the shift from the Many to the One is a political scheme that facilitates the ruling
of priests and kings, H.D. leaves open the possibility of a future up-rise.

The condensing of the chaos of Karnak into the psychological wholeness of a reborn psyche
is not the end of her story.

There are as many meanings emanating from Trilogy as there are pieces of myths, occult
references, and biblical prophecies scattered throughout time.

Each one proclaims its presence in the here and now, which is at the same time the there
and the before—but each is only one structure of the palimpsest-city that is changes from
rupture to rupture.

There is more than time in eternity.

To H.D., war-torn London is Egypt in its winter, needing the vegetation deities to return
from Karnak and play out their own obliteration.

Over and over again.

So that fragmented people always remember, though their frames and their spirits are bro-
ken to forget.
In the beginning I
was a man a woman a tree
I was a father and son and holy spirit I
was morning evening the round fixed eye

and my throne it was a stone upon the river’s banks
sheep did graze and bees about the flowers
buzzed, ducks floated on a lake of silence and
life
    pulsed
    like the distant mill

when I saw all that I saw
would not save my heart
from tedium

    (cockfights
the only diversion
by my solitary seat
amid the wrangling branches)
I told myself should I go down to water, bathe, I'd cleave in two (once cleft be doubled! and I smiled)
and once I'd washed, the flowers knit into a cloak of the lip's bitterness in which I wrapped my quaking body

(my throne was floating like the ark)

a small bird flitted to my head alit to shake off droplets I stared into the waters I stared all that I saw my face crowned with thorn
I said Let love be on Earth yet it was not, I said
Let the river run to the sea and the sea to clouds
and the clouds to barren ground and barren to green to grow
bread to bring ease to the heart of the hungry and grass for the cattle
of the earth and shade to those abroad in sorrow’s wastes
and I saw a son of Adam setting his walls about God’s estate
purchasing his neighbors as guards, selling his kin
bread and water, from lean cows drawing milk, I said
Let love be on Earth yet it was not, now
love was a possession for those who owned the price

And the Lord saw that it was not good

I said Let justice be on Earth, eye for eye and tooth for tooth
I said Does wolf eat wolf or sheep the sheep? Do not
set the sword at the necks of two, boy and old man
and I saw a son of Adam fell a son of Adam, fire
cities, push his blade into pregnant bellies, strew
his children’s fingers as fodder for his mount, clip lips
for blooms that moan to decorate the victory banquet

Justice now death its scales a gun its sons
crucified in the squares or hung on corners
through the towns, I said
Let justice be on Earth yet it was not, now
justice was a possession for those who sat
on thrones of skulls their mantles shrouds

And the Lord saw that it was not good

I said Let reason be upon the earth Hearken
to its measured voice I said Do birds build nests
in the serpent's maw, does the worm make home in flames of fire
do the owls paint kohl along their lashes, when the season falls
does the one who hopes for wheat sow salt? I saw
a son of Adam, mad, uprooting the climbing trees
spitting in the well, upon the waters casting oil, dwelling
in a house to plant the fatal charge at his door's foot
sheltering scorpions by the warmth of his ribs, conferring on
his sons his religion his name the shirt of discord, reason now
a beggar outcast pelted by boys with stones, stopped
by soldiers at the border, stripped by governments of nationality
set down on lists of those who hate the homeland, I said
Let reason be on Earth yet it was not, reason dropped
into a whirl of banishment and prison till it was mad

And the Lord saw that it was not good
I said Let the wind blow over the earth Let it sweep up this rot I said Let there be wind and blood The wind plucks out the whisper of the dogged withered leaf blood drips right down to the roots and makes them bloom and cleanses them then climbs the stem the tangled leaves the hanging fruit and pressers press it into wine which shrills in every jar I said Let blood be a river of honey coursing through Eden this earth is good its crown the poor for them it wears its sweet perfume they give it love it gives them issue, pride, I said The rich shall not dwell here the rich who forge from sweat of labor adultery’s coin the settings in the crown earrings of ivory a rosary for dissemblers

I am the first of the poor who live cast out who die surrendering to me their hope of solace I said Let the earth be mine and theirs and I one of them when I strip off the robes of heaven I am sanctified in hunger’s cry upon the rough cot
I stared at the rock and at the spring
I saw my face in hunger's lines
I stared at my inverted brow
I saw me, cross and crucified
I cried
    emerging from the womb of bliss
I cried
    I plead innocence

    my being
~ my noose
my umbilical cord
    ~ its severed rope
NORMAN FISCHER

FROM ON A TRAIN AT NIGHT
No mar no breakage
Waves pulse and tremor rush sweep in gaps
Long spans for paddling and silent waiting
Till the gathering whirl and swell
Tumble resolve then quiet

Love recognizes its tempo
Little people running to and fro in comic nights
Immediately stuck to life like lint on a sweater
Nevertheless I count on tomorrow’s arrival and its eventual soaking collapse

~

Not rehearsing
Because of the care taken
To loosen their names they make a face glimpsed in a mirror and questioned
You couldn’t have it another way

Ocean’s rough today
The brain dazzles poetry that never appears in this space

~

No more vestibules
No more thundering vegetation
No more wondering about how it is
Rice and tea in the country
How to take the clear taste without being hypostatized by lack
And turned inside out like a shirtsleeve
At home you invent melodies
Songs of the survivor years
Nothing indelible floats in and out the scene like stars
Around which waves crowd
A sudden spraying out or up
Washing clean the doors of conception
I do not mean to walk away
Only add my cup of red dirt
To the dwindling party
Life on earth is green
Leaf tenderness water simplicity
Gravity's ferocious clutch

~

No more prowling around bastions
No more hurrying along getting its business done
No more cute cuddled items clustering in their prettiness
Eliminating the need for an inner life

How what’s done undoes
Spraying seed all over the place to glaze millennial beliefs with crystal view
Too dazed to notice the carnage
Perpetrated in human-made caves of statement
Shouted accusations before the Violence Bureau
Lacking nothing but a purview a condition of rush
Being myself's too much

~

On a train at night in snow
Hard nuggets ping against rushing tracks
Snakes gone amok
Raging world’s senseless slithers darting tails behind
In dream of sensible life swallowing all whole
As train rattles on
Writing words to skull’s tune
Luminous letters wriggle blackly
Monstrous across the track
Clatter in their consonantal casings
Sickly sweet soft vowels
Fluttering like eviscerated birds
World’s weight drowns in second sea
Unless it float out to you O sun
Spinning round the sky like a dancer


Order or ardur —
Adore the passion of today
Till it fall like stones upon the sea

No tone to deploy
The scorn of intelligence besots itself
And tubs and tubas bleat

Any vision — say of a pristine pear —
Doubles itself in reflection
As the glass shatters in his hands

No mere testimonies of the sacred
Will bear the hardship of these hands
Their nicks gouges and calluses
Like so many barren landscapes
So many bomb-pocked peaks


On altars of stone
In stairwells — alone with his thoughts
Ceiling fixtures fly like buttresses

No matter — illusion is good for you
It covers the head like a hat

A cold face proffers good manners
For a nine course chef’s choice meal
Amid smokey decor
To indicate the wave crests

That rumble up deeply from the lives
Of corpses lost to time
Life and death alike —
Extravagant adornments of the flesh

Swerving off in swallowed directions

~

Only magical instructions can be followed
By rigorous others in pursuit of profitable disgrace
Hollowed deregulated hills continue to bury distance
Nothing to mention but exorbitant rents
Too expensive to remain alive in shining cities

In flagrant fellowship the wise and unmellow
Fight to retain their teeth in wind
What resistance can we offer to the big mistake
Everywhere proposed as if inevitable
But nowhere registered with authorities assigned to such shrapnel
As can be named or nurtured in these categories

Hail hail the other in the weeds small and unseen
Hail the debt owed the maligned poor upon whose shoes the world has ever walked
To purchase its musical wealth beyond the justice barriers
Stretched out full on soil with silent weeping
Citizens of caped humanity
Crawl forward into furtive dawn of soulful dark imagining
Half wondering who will see the last and what will then be heard

~

Organized perils
Compose my cognition
How hard can it be
To wreck the spirals on which
Demons detonate their sizes

Whole worlds, thousands of them
Precede this one
In holy arrears

But this isn’t license to control the material world
With its gaping holes
Or words with their contrivances

~

Place is code, perception’s collapsing
When heart halts poor world
Shatters on a dime — you shed the wet
So row the boat that bears you on —
Mend the shove snap the thread cry out that all is red
Though everyone takes the little they need to get by on
And everyone’s always dead

~

Plastic words
Not barking in the night’s wet ink
Anything ever meant — word as that —
Practical platitudes for moving sheets
And parsing
Two wrongs make a certain sort of right
A brighter contusion
As head hardly meets whispering lung
In the tough kernel of life’s grain

~
Photos of fathers mothers sons or self
Frozen occasion
False memory in constructed timeframes
Record of suppositions
Such imaginal smallness
Takes spuming time in gripping paws
Blaming worn eyesight with frayed feeling
Laterally spilling
What it is

~

Plenitude simoleons
Grip the burners in their brash delight
White people rushing from counter to counter in crashing sperm detachment
Flagrant in their waving themselves all about like flashed debris
What’s gone before’s reaped strange to present shape we’re in
Like rich nutrients welling up from dark cold depths in northern seas
The previous downtrodden spin arms wind in shrieking sounds
Heard round the globe
Dog whistle frequencies
Unheard by the gaslighters
Twinkle twinkle — that level of genius — barter this
For that in gender inflected frequencies now
That have to do with the kind of power
Never before seen in these parts
But decisive

~

Preferred piece of prejudice
Naturally every clan wants to press its advantage
For good of genes and their swirling emotions —
But that was then, long before limits in their hysteria simpered
Not every imagined outcome is simile for a smile
Despite objections someone has to have a plan that’s
Disentangled from shepherds— we need that emotion shivered over numbers
Long in the tooth by now and that much closer to the end
No one anticipates because the words didn't really take it into account —
All talk about something never nothing so silent words are best
To redistribute this power we won't, can't, name —
How find comfort in a hurricane?

~

Proceed, proceed, proceed anyway
In silvery dew points at tips of grape leaves
Broken language speakers babble as long as able in ancient grove
Before all words are lost
Incantations are effective
Here a case in point — world tips at tipping point — wordtips —
Solu solu
Each similar to each
Other similar to other
Black red white yellow green similar similar similar similar
Similar similar to similar
Stolen shrunk requited similar similar
Night pittosporum scent tells similar dark tales, senses cross wires
Indicating constructed world.....
Time's soft objects short out —
As long as we are never who we're going to be
Time stands still
Gives certain hope
Its future herein

~

Press-gangs do the world’s work
Property is theft, wages slavery —
Justice — we shall do better — is love —
Can I decry the fate that brought me to this pass?
No.
No more than lunging at sleeping dogs
Will fool the jailers  
    Leap outside technique or syntax  
    Consider alternatives to time and flesh  
Floating in imaginary waters  
No ownership of interactions in starburst  
Obey the chainletter destiny has written  

~
ELIZABETH WILLIS
THE AMERICANS
It goes without saying: something pounding while something else flowers. Can you say to the flower: bloom harder. Bloom different.

Even now in the emergency the process hurts even when it doesn’t break the skin.

What would it take to give you this finished feeling, 1492? A future beside itself its death concurrent with other forms of discovery, the lake, the grass, the feeling in her hand.

The national history of a species is not natural enough. To repeal this transaction pick a side of the equation you can only see one line at a time.
Let’s refuse
a god who oversees
without touching
the shadows
at our backs.

Look at this
with your heart. What
has broken. What is just
about to break.
SÉBASTIEN SMIROU

THE GLOW WORM

TRANSLATED BY ANDREW ZAWACKI
If it’s a view of the spirit I’d like it cut out in a cross-section of pallor phased with phosphor at the core (replica of the fire of the first men mammoths who rest at the bottom of the savage ages crevices) all the rage in ice axes and itsy-bitsy flags of the expeditionary corps for planting in the soft spot to draw out a summit of thought how I find myself inelastic to think how this creature escapes me (if Someone shinier’s listening I wish He’d enlighten me—whatever I do I don’t see any better).
2: Worttowo

To qualquantify the intense ity of the light that filters thru the Lampyris in our fist sparrow style we can always clutch things remain obscure at the least shard of tail in the mouth of Fabre on the other hand when we drop the bug a word switches on we traverse before it passes the baton along to the next so only one at a time gleams (a worm illumines a syllable’s interval) and we dim the din to sleep mode to see no further than the tip of our nose.
Pushing the baby of our experience (to play at entomos by handling with tweezers) to term we’ll pull from the belly the ring of neon milk that thrills us so the creature must die that we fall under spell of a standalone flicker—kryptonite? diadem?—molecule-my-dear that catches fire in the open air she gives herself—and that we brush it on an eyelash out of joy blowing our horn ahoy—to veer on the duotone eyes’ll remark what they want and you as we say’ll steer your way in the dark.
4: HOMO

Awaiting the aforesaid extremes intermarry within their homonymy and his and hers photogenic genus geniuses: you climb you climb til the tendrils bend over your underside radiates heavens to betsy in a mirror you’re a natural born shimmerer (they say you embrace from infancy this career as an actress) and your beacon escorts aviators among your species laced with luciferin there’s no longer but a single barrier sensitive to their parachuting thru the sweep net to see a bit clearly I set about gathering males.
5: BLOWTO

I forget to utter rapt in my pleasure that the adventure feeds however its chap as chintzily as its chick—even though she aspires the thing transpires quite easily to a lot—and that after the ceremony each one chooses a garden snail whose lips he starts by putting to sleep with a kiss mfh mfh mfh poisonous then reduces to a simmer the pepsin churning the chewing gum of the snotty nose and swallows the sea so refurbished (all strung out the shells hollowed out as if by a blowtorch’s heat are making goo goo eyes at us guys).
6: ALAMO

We would amplify the Alpha Bravo Charlie effect over
to you to craft in summer some mausoleums the size of a shrub
out of slate in the hundred-year-old field—mine needs installing
farther away to be equidistant—and spiky like holiday balls
on a pine the worms spanning the tiles while I’d shaking myself
up a bit cause night to fall amid the runway lights—to render
fortissimo Alamo I’d rent coyotes and a delectation seat
farther away to the masterpiece I’d mosey to close my eyes.
7: ECCE HOMO

Like the rain that advances relentlessly promises
to quell the fires and bellow *behold the man* while leading him astray a sprig
(for I have no thorns) to the hushed tally-ho of some tom dick or jane
you act then as the dimmer to lower the curtain and our eyes
all of a sudden go blank on us: your darkness isn't deep
deep but your imprint quarries a hole (the sparkle of this moon
hemmed the eclipse of the other one in and the chevron motion
inverting the vista he's blitzed by the view from before).
The allure of the flood is finding survivors among the cloud niners to reproduce we imitate therefore the least leaning of the scenery to shiver with a view to moving the great leaf after leaf mechanical we play pianissimo us sissies and to loosen up the atmosphere we power with our legs thru beveled glass the light comes back more quickly to us than you would ever wish—we’d err to speak of its being reborn or conjure up its ash—if your eyes can no more bear the glow then go.
My goldfinch, I’ll throw back my head—
Let’s eye the world, the two of us:
Does this winter’s day, prickly as chaff,
Scrape your pupil, as well?

Boat-shaped tail, feathers black to yellow,
A wash of color below the beak,
Do you know you’re such a goldfinch,
A dandy all the way?

What kind of air is in his skull?
Black & red, yellow & white!
Two eyes keep watch both ways at once,
And when not looking—gone!

*December 10-27, 1936*
When the goldfinch in the shortened air
Shudders, like a heart beating—
Spite peppers its learned cloak,
Its bonnet prims beautiful black.

The perch slanders and the slat maligns,
The cage slanders with its hundred spokes,
And the whole world is upside down
But for those unruly, sharp birds
There’s the forests above Salamanca.

*December 1936*
A long sleep’s stubble is easily shorn
With the Gillette’s thin metal:
Let’s the two of us recall
That half-Ukrainian summer.

Distinguished summits, you,
Celebrations of shaggy trees—
Glory of Ruysdael’s brush—
Beginning with a single bush
Set in amber and meat of red clay.

The earth runs upward. It’s good
To stare out at the virgin planes,
And to be master of this bounded
Seven-chambered simplicity.

His hills fly to a distant goal
As airy haystacks. The steppe-like
Boulevard of his roads—a chain
Of tents moving off into the shady heat!
The willow lurches toward the fire,
And a poplar stands admiring itself.
The ruts of frosted smoke above
The yellow camp of harvest’s fields.

And the Don, still a half-breed,
Drawing just a half-dipper of water,
Silvering shallowly and awkward,
Losing its way, same as my soul
When evening’s burden
Lay down on hard beds
And drunkard trees caroused
And fled the banks...

*December 15-27, 1936*
YĀQŪT AL-ḤAMAWĪ

On ABŪ ʿĀMIR AL-JURJĀNĪ
From DICTIONARY OF THE SCHOLARS

Translated by David Larsen
Al-Faḍl ibn Ismāʿīl al-Tamīmī, known as ABŪ ʿĀMIR AL-JURJĀNĪ, was a member of the circle around the grammarian ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471 A.H./1078 CE). A man of culture, charisma, wit, and distinction, his handwriting was exquisite and his recitations from memory were beyond reproach. In poetry and prose he was a major talent, and his books were as expertly arranged as they were written. Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd [al-Nīsābūrī al-Ghaznawī, fl. 2nd ½ of the 6th century A.H./12th c. CE] says in his book  
Sirr al-surūr  
(The Secret of Gladness) that Abū ʿĀmir’s literary output “raised the standard of distinction. The flowers of the earth were outshone by his discourse, which was a fulsome garden of learning replete with marvels surpassing the very springtime. In his hands, the art of poetry was divinatory magic, pervading his repartee and forming an aura around him. The signs of his excellence are plainly legible in his verses, where his sweet inventive flair is [as if] emblazoned on flying banners.

“Abū ʿĀmir’s books were sunshine and rainwater to the city of Ghazna, where he sent them in dedication to the exalted shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd [ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Shīrāzī, d. ca. 512/1118]. These include: Kitāb al-Bayān fī ʿilm al-Qurʾān (The Book of Elucidation of Qurʾānic Studies), Kitāb ʿUrūq al-dhahab min ashʿār al-ʿarab (The Book of Veins of Gold in the Poetry of the Arabs), and Salwat al-ghurabāʾ (A Consolation for Out-of-Towners).”

In his Kitāb al-Siyāq (The Book of Continuation [of the History of Nishapur]), ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī calls Abū ʿĀmir “one of the most roundly distinguished men of his day for excellence of poetry and prose. He served Abu ʾl-Maḥāsin al-Jurjānī for a time as secretary, as he did for other state officials, and socialized with the dignitaries and the secretarial class alike. I received my education in hadith from some of the same elders that he did, including Abū Saʿd ibn Rāmish, Abū Naṣr ibn Rāmish al-Muqriʾ, Abū Bakr al-Shīrāzī and Abu ʾl-Qāsim al-Nūqānī. Among the teachers of his youth were members of the Ismāʿīlī school, and in the year 458 ( = 1066 CE) he studied with Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Maṣūr ibn Khalaf al-Mahgribī.” His death date is not mentioned by ʿAbd al-Ghāfir [who himself died in 529/1134-5], but it is evident that Abū ʿĀmir predeceased him.
When Abū ʿĀmir went to Nishapur, he got together with Yaʿqūb ibn Aḥmad al-Adīb (d. 474/1082), who asked him to inscribe some lines in his book entitled Jūnat al-nadd (The Coffer of Incense), an anthology combining Yaʿqūb’s verse with that of his contemporaries and predecessors. I inspected these unmistakable examples of Abū ʿĀmir’s hand in the autograph copy, and made my own facsimile copy of the best of his poetry that I found there, leaving out the prose pieces. This is what Abū ʿĀmir wrote:

“I WAS ASKED by the excellent and learned shaykh – may God perpetuate his blessing – to inscribe some of my trifles in this notebook. At this, I am on the one hand repelled by shame and hindered from obliging him with so much as a single line. On the other, in response to his summons I feel the urge to demonstrate my obedience by emulating his inscriptions [in this book]. I am in any case confident in his goodness, serene in his nobility of character, and certain of his zeal to right his brothers when they slip, and to cover up their faults as best he can. And I ask God to rectify our shortcomings with His grace, and to erase our malpractice with His charity. All this is well within His capability. [With that,] here are my trifles (meter: sarīʿ):

O you who are the death of me, won’t you let me live
long enough to march me to my [fated] death?
By God you swear that you are in the palm of
my hand, as long as the power to clutch at you is in it.
And to my heart [I say also]: You! Imposing
on my gaze with illicit intent – towards how many?

And (meter: khafīf):

Onto the jasmine cheek, with a burgeoning hyacinthine
stripe [of curling locks] upon the jasmine,
I imposed my kiss, and [the youth] said: ‘Beware in my head
the forked tongue of [the dragon] Tinnnin!’

And (meter: wāfir):

When you are pierced by the event of a weighty matter,
and you have come to something small or great,
match it stroke for stroke, or outdo it if you can.
The more you churn, the more butter you’ll get.
And about the officer Abu 'l-Faḍl, may God perpetuate his highness (meter: ṭābir):

Attractive women turn away from my ill-concealed longings; after all, I offer them nothing more.
They see my hair’s gray dressing, and my imminent decline, and their compact with me is voided.
These days, my envier wishes me no harm, and I feel friendly towards him too, now that age has veiled my looks and my wealth is gone.
But I suffer no distress while you are near.
I am constantly amazed, and my amazement is total, at men of consequence humbled before a squirt.
Thanks be to God, Who spared me from service to anyone but ʿAbbās ibn Saʿd!
To him belongs the purest part of me, my heart and my affection.
He is the object of my visits and of my will.
He is what I live for, and he is my restorer, and whether I go wrong or right, I go to him.
Others love him too, but they also love others.
My love for him is undivided [with God nor man].
When I take fright, his highness is the cave [I hide in].
When I thirst, he is the reservoir I seek.
In boastworthiness and noble traits you are all-surpassing, and in giving off good graces and earning praise you go beyond.
And when I became your servant, Anūshirwān was well pleased, and with my servant I hope he’s pleased as well.
What liberties I take with you are those of a dependent.
Let them meet no reproach or resentment from you.
It is an irrepressible trait of mine, [jocosity,]
one I inherited from my father and grandfather.
Live with me for a thousand years in the best of health, and a thousand plus two thousand after me.
Next to you, all other people are mirages of the waste.
They dazzle and mislead and are of no use.
So be mine, you whose nobility is unmatched, and be matched to another unmatched one, matchless though you [assuredly] are.
And (meter: mutaqārib):

We charge towards death, courting it and cheating it.
Our necks are thick, and so are our livers
as we go devirginating faultless [youths] with black tresses,
pink cheeks and yellow in the solar plexus.

And (meter: mutaqārib):

For [what I might do to] a wise-ass nuisance, I beg forgiveness:
the one who bared at me his slender, cutting sword,
saying, “I am the man for you, O Ibn al-Wakil!”
What was I hoping for, besides that?

And (meter: majzū’ al-kāmil):

The young buck put me through quite an ordeal,
and a delightful ordeal it was, for me.
For when I put his natural element to my test
I found its water sweet and drinkable.
And when I stripped away his clothes,
the shelled almond’s meat was tender.
The clearest description I can give is [to say] that he
was exactly the way I love them to be.

And (meter: kāmil):

My chest is compressed by the bureaucrats of our day
– a plurality of evil, by common consent.
They are inveterate farters, and if you complain,
they redouble the volume, really making you hear it.
This one’s anus makes a sharp report, while
that one lets fly as if firing a catapult.
Part of the hardship [of a state secretary’s life] is the company
of a bunch of farters, as they punctuate the rhythm of time.
And (meter: *mutaqārīb*):

I tire of the struggles with hazard
    that used to bring me wonders and thrills,
back when fate made me merry to the point that I would
    call out for my donkey while I was riding him.

And (meter: *kāmil*):

When you rival the sun in splendor
    I take on Mercury’s nature,
so that every single day we meet
    you condemn me to a live burning.

[Abū ‘Āmir concluded with what’s called an *ijāza* statement, authorizing Ya‘qūb ibn Aḥmad as a transmitter of his work:]

“I have been graced by the excellent and learned *shaykh* – may God perpetuate his blessing – with an oral recitation of my work. May God make it serviceable to him and grant him favor, and may His care relieve the eye inflamed by study. Also present for his recitation were his son, the eminent *shaykh* Abū Bakr al-Ḥasan, and the eminent and learned jurist Abu ’l-Majd Muḥammmad ibn Abī ’l-Qāsim, and they attended to all my elucidations of the inanities inscribed herein, may God grant them both long life.”

I also copied the following, which I found in al-Faḍl’s handwriting:

“God have mercy on the most excellent Ilkiyā Abū ’l-Fatḥ [al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh], who sent [these verses] to me in a letter (meter: *ṭawīl*):

“And [in a letter] to ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, [Ilkiyā] wrote (meter: *khaft*):

Abū ‘Āmir is nothing but gracious
    in bodily frame as he is in spirit.
And any hidden meaning inapparent to his understanding
    is inapparent in the absolute.”
This is the last of what I copied from Abū ʿĀmir’s handwriting, may God have mercy on him. His writings include a poetry anthology entitled Kitāb ‘Urūq al-dhahab (The Book of the Veins of Gold), another work on poetry entitled Kitāb Qalā’id al-sharaf (The Book of the Necklaces of Nobility), a Kitāb al-Bayān fī ʿilm al-Qurʾān (Book of Elucidation of Qurʾānic Studies), and a Kitāb Salwat al-ghurabāʾ (Book of Consolation for Out-of-Towners).

I also copied something of Abū ʿĀmir’s that was in Yaʾqūb ibn Aḥmad’s handwriting—a copy he made from Abū ʿĀmir’s correspondence with Abu ʾl-Maḥāsin Saʿd, may God have mercy on him. Yaʾqūb said: I copied this from Abū ʿĀmir’s hand when he first got to Nishapur in Shaʿbān of the year 458 [= July 1066]:

“May God prolong the shaykh’s life. I have spent this year in a weakened, vulnerable state, sick and marred and ashamed to be seen. It is beneath me to elaborate on my condition, even as it rejoices in that [imminent recovery] for which I thank God, be He exalted. I arm myself with patience against all the trials His worshipers may undergo, and am now working to devise a loan of that [sum of money, the lack of] which keeps steady lodging beyond my reach.

“But who makes a loan to a wandering Moses, newly arrived at the city gates with his rod and satchel? I ask God, be He exalted, for my safety and then, regarding my aforementioned malady, I ask our master only for his consideration, because no cure avails, the pox is hard upon me, and no amount of tar-water does any good.

“Lest the contents of this message affect its reverend address as a work of baseness and folly, [I humbly aver that] it defies good sense to conceal my destitution and go on starving. Were it not for my prior service to [the shaykh] and his tender concern for me [for me], I would rather gobble hot ashes than disclose my poverty. Yours, etc.”

In his Kitāb Marw (Book of [the History of] Merv), Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1166) attributes to Abū ʿĀmir the following poem about his cat (meter: khafīf):

I HAVE A CAT whose foot-pads I dye with henna
   before I put henna on my own newborns.
Then I tie cowrie shells to her collar
   to repel the harm of evil eyes.
Each day, before I feed my family, I see that she gets
   our choicest meats and purest waters.
The playful thing! When she sees
   my face contorted in a frown,
sometimes she sings, sometimes she dances,
   sparing no exertion for my diversion’s sake.
I care nothing for the fire’s warmth when she lies with me
  in the chill of winter’s longest nights.
When I give her scratches, she gives me licks
  with a tongue toothed like the surface of a file.
If I avoid her, she fawns on me,
  wheedling with her little high-pitched moans.
If I give her trouble she will show me her claws,
  a sight that gives the eyes no pleasure.
When she plays with a mouse, she is at her saltiest
  for she puts him through “humiliating punishment.”
When he faints from terror, she busies herself
  in batting him awake with a left and a right.
She teases him with feigned inattention, then
  swoops like a falcon when he tries to creep away.
Just when he dares hope for peace from her,
  those hopes are dashed with a serpent’s liveliness.
In this way do the decrees of fate ruin a man
  and finish him with a cut to the aorta,
just when, amid the lively gathering,
  he takes the cup of destiny from a server.

As well as these verses (meter: kāmil):

I’m stuck on her – the unblemished girl with the lean midriff
  who takes hearts captive with her sweetness and good looks.
I liken her to the anemone in the redness to be seen
  upon its cheek, and the blackness [on the inside] of its heart.

And these (meter: tawīl):

In the midst of a crisis, a man can be resolute
  the way a resolute old camel puts up with an abscessed ear.
And just as [the pan of] a scale declines from excess weight,
  there is a walk of man to decline from excess talk.
NOTES

1. Possibly this refers to Anūshirwān ibn Manūchihir (d. 435/1043 or 441/1050), a Ziyārid ruler of Jurjān.


3. The date is hard to square with the death-date of 454/1062 reported for Abu ’l-Maḥāsin by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) in al-Bidāya wa’l-nihāya (The Beginning and the End), ed. ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Giza: Hajār li-’l-Ţibā’a, 1997-99), vol. 15 (of 21), 787.


TONGO EISEN-MARTIN

CUT A HAND FROM A HAND
MAY WE ALL REFUSE TO DIE AT THE
SAME TIME
CHANNELS TO FALL ASLEEP TO
CUT A HAND FROM A HAND

“if you reverse the car any farther, you will run over all the scenes in the back of your mind”

I never cared for teachers...just the pattern of fainting spells induced by wall art. Propaganda is courage, man

The price sticker hid my tattoo
-I treasure my problem with the world

“My mother becomes from Brooklyn first thing in the morning”
a proverb around these parts
proverb or peasant entrance password

Writing short notes to famous Europeans
On the backs of post cards
With ransom requests

They reply with a newsreel or cigarette announcement (I can’t tell the difference)

-Noble dollars then you die inside
(but only inside)

“They call it, ‘sleeping deeper than your stalker.’ And stalker is all that badge makes you,”
says a great spirit dressed in the bloody rags tuxedos became

meanwhile my punch is feared by no one
“Proud of yourself?” I ask the fret hand

“Porch Lights” is what they call our guns
I’ve seen this house in a dream
I’ve seen this chair on behalf of a dream
I believe a trumpet was the first possessed object to fly

“keep going,” she cheers

crowd into the part of my mind
referred to as my heart
-a reminder to the population that
your blanket can work with
or against you-

human reef/
we will be a big human reef
for concepts that finally gain a metaphysical nature
and they will swim around our beautiful poses

we stop being flashbacks
then stop being three different people
then I was alone [the pistol is one city away]

eone of the drug triangle’s lines runs through my head
tap the bottle twice and consider the dead refreshed
“don’t you want to rest your bravery?
don’t you want to be a coward for a little bit?”
-back and forth to a panic attack with no problems nor fears

a man gets a facial expression finally
a Friday finally goes his way
his life is finally talked about happily in his head
I can’t possess the body of a hermit
    I must be the last of his smoke
Now running away with three blocks of alley
    Tucked under my arm
    You ever see a man
    get to the bottom of his soul
    in a car ride down a missing cousin’s street?
    half step to the right
    I mean I took the whole car outside of history
    Half step to the right
    I mean a whole pack of wolves stepped to my left
-Deep in the recesses of the main recess

“road marker” is what I called the light bulb we had for a sun
    a whole civilization might slink to the sink
    chain gang shuffling next to a sucker

-the long look in the mirror [a stack of money starts talking from four cities away]
“I believe I wasn’t born yet, when a young woman put her first gun under a car seat,”
The painter explained
in front of his work
with a .38 in his back pocket

Combination of conversations you may call it:
The day all the saints clocked in late
mixed with the first serious talk
seven year old best friends have about war.

What war stories taught me I now teach you

“the world is just a constellation of walls.
   Twitch a little less than everyone else.
   That’s the key.”

I miss her
Or is the cage of a west bound interstate bus ride beautiful when all but three people are asleep

I’m writing poems for the rest of my life again

Taught by the greats:
   “friends make friends. You just be a good liar.”
   “you would not believe the grains of blue
      I found after they laid me to ground.”
   “fit in, youngster.”
   “fit in, trigger man.”
   “watch your nickname mean something to more than five people.”
the newspaper is on fire. forget about the car.

A white giant was born without a third dimension.
It wanders under county jail slippers and people who smoke by themselves in old city parks

Electric chairs are not complicated
Have a drink. Go to work.

“They lynched his car too. Strung it up right next to him... You see, a smart man makes up his own set of holidays... Mind. I had a mind once. Served my immediate family well. But that’s all over now. Now I live in america... A smart man switches the dates around of his holidays too. Because enemies have a sense of humor.”

A most impressive reimagining of a painter

Up here
Where the tenth floor
Might as well be a cloud of dust
Or a version of myself that
I can point your attention to
While I count my money and curse mankind

The best way to pay me
Is in my left hand
While my right is juggling
A cigarette
A steering wheel
And a negotiation with the ruling class

Maybe you are not a sleepy employee in a project lobby
Maybe you are blood on a fiber
Maybe you are my friend
I have ruled the world.
Let me sleep this off.
Is that your tongue in the sky?
That’s the only weather I need.

Lazy conversation
-the only way physics advances

my right hand jogs away from the band
this getaway is live
this instrument is not yet invented

Coming down
With the rest of the sound
-the young woman and me about to be born

“And there. There is you. Dancing with someone’s daughter in front of the precinct”
While shoe box to shoe box travels my childhood

Professionals roll garbage cans around a conference room
Half the size of a holding tank
Half the hope of a holding tank
Full of third world retail flattery
“nothing wrong with the blind leading the blind,”
    we think they just said

    the entire train station crouches behind a piano player
    and why should Harlem not kill for its musicians
    “He is in a dream”
    “A spirit world”
    “I should introduce myself”
    “And convince him to sleep”

porcelain epoch
succeeding for the most part
dying for the most part
married for the most part to its death

when a hostage has a hostage
that is u.s. education

stores detach their heads
and expect you to do the same when you enter

God says, “do not trust me in this room”

Two fascists walk into a bar
One says, “let’s make a baby.”
The other says, “let’s make three… and let the first one eat the other two.”
your sky or mine  
read from  
the book of pool room enemies

“I’m the best kind of square. Poor and in love with the 1960s. The first picture I ever saw in my life faded from my storytelling a long time ago.”

Not even ten years old  
And most of you are on my shoulders

The store’s detached head smiled

casually be poor  
teach yourself  
how to get out of this room  
and we’ll leave you enough blood  
to turn off the lights  
on your way out

casually be poor  
they are all cops when you are poor
BRIAN LUCAS

PAINTINGS 2011-2017
TITLES

Night Trio | 12.5x9.75 in | acrylic and pastel on paper
Star Bread | 12x9 in | mixed media on paper
Guardians | 20 x 16 in | acrylic on canvas
Found Frequencies | 14x11 in | mixed media on paper
Aquatic Kosmnonaut Cream | 22x16 in | mixed media on canvas board
Seventh Sense | 36 x 24 in
Afternoon’s Embryo | 17 x 14 inches | mixed media on paper
Verdure’s Window 36x24 inches mixed media on canvas
Hill Jewel 22 x 16 inches acrylic on canvas
The Splendor’d Thing | 17x14 | mixed media on paper
The Sky’s Gone In | 17x14 | mixed media on paper
New Year 30 x 24 inches acrylic on canvas
MARA PASTOR

THE BUSTS OF MARTÍ
LIQUIDATION
HE BROUGHT ME FLOWERS

TRANSLATED BY MARÍA JOSÉ GIMÉNEZ
THE BUSTS OF MARTÍ

One fine day all the busts of Martí started talking,
all the beautiful busts of Martí began to speak Martí.
From the Martí with the chacmool body in Vedado to the one in Villa Lugano, in Argentina,
and the one in that park in downtown Shanghai,
the world was filled with talking Martís,
busts of Martí heading like apostles toward Popocatépetl
along zigzagging resonating routes until they lined up next to each other,
all the Martí in América
all the Martí in the world,
all the busts of Martí.

There were those who thought it was the end times.
There were those who wanted to send their amphibious forces
their journalists to interview one of the busts of Martí,
but the chattering was so massive, so strident,
that every Martí made it impossible to hear the rest,
and they all became a harmless roar,
molten lead, tree ash.
I’m not used to watching birds, but lately I accept that love is to accompany you as a cautious amateur, to count the vultures on the road, pelicans with wings like stretched clouds, wild nopales and swings hanging from flamboyans in barrio Bélgica. I don’t usually optimize my habits, but lately I accept that love is to buy a bicycle seat that takes us to see the Río Portugués together, and from there to the sports equipment store so we can keep loving each other with gel gloves and ultra-lightweight helmets, return to the boulevard and blow each other kisses from bike to bike placing the ball of the foot in just the right place. I don’t tend to optimize love but now that I know that holding up your torso is a form of loving each guaraguao is a warning of something that could spread its wings and soar even if we don’t get paid next month.
HE BROUGHT ME FLOWERS

Not all paradises are lost
some have an expiration date
Zaira Pacheco

Roses anyway
Ismael Rivera

1.
Behind la Corco
there is a dock
we had never seen before.
Despite the steelwork
the rowboats are worthy
of a postcard,
if only we didn’t know
about the heavy metals
in the air.

2.
On the river
your desire is a cascade
with no imaginable truce.
On the rock, five minutes
of death mix with the water
and I watch that death
as if it were a triumph.
3.
We stop
for a smoke, while the sky
fills with gunmetal blues
and as if in a movie
the Lajas aerostat
appears in the distance.

It is a great day.
Life seems to say to us
it is time
to relaunch with a new
radar system.

4.
Which one is your ashtray
in my car, you ask.
I am the kind who flicks ashes
on the ground, I say.

5.
Charrancito,
querequequé,
chorlito, aura tiñosa,
royal yabo,
southern birds,
new birds on the tongue
old forms of flight.
On that beach
full of river stones
you made a little seaweed nest.
With a stone, you gave
the nest an egg.
That green nest was so beautiful
with its stone egg.
It seemed possible
for that egg
to give birth to love.

Sitting beside you
in the passenger seat
wonders occur.
Going uphill,
there they were:
three cows against a blue background,
chewing on happiness.

In paradise there are oysters,
a man who sells crabs,
a beach where the sun sets
while you swing in your hammock.
In paradise they fix up fish only
at the Caro Valle fish market,
I float as if in a placid dream,
and your hands rock in slow motion
a body adrift.
Until atlas holds up
the sky again for an eternity.
9.
Next time we go
to the river I will bring
waterproof questions.

10.
Landscapes stop appearing
on Instagram.
The house vacates me.
I’d go to the beach, but yesterday
a flock of unfinished salts
walled in the coasts.

11.
If he brings you flowers
without knowing you
he will leave before you know him
or that’s what you’ll think
during the first days.
Then you’ll see the vine
he brought from Jayuya,
the lady of the night
he transplanted,
the Spanish thyme
from Playa Buyé
he put in the bottle
of tequila and you will understand
he left behind a garden
for you to bloom
in his absence.
Tanella Boni

From the Future Has an Appointment with the Dawn

Translated by Todd Fredson
The dawn counted its nomadic steps
to the border
the early breeze took over
amidst the day’s news
the men and the women
weaved the wedding cloth
with sympathetic hands

it was ordinary life
between routine and rupture
during these times
I searched for the letters
of the perfect word
The land of hope was blessed by the gods
the nomadic words sang
the refrain of water's Kindness
the poet woke early that morning
not knowing how long
the offerings of this ground
would feed the origin-less shadows
Sowings were good
the harvests miraculous
the poet lived
on a parcel of land in Eden’s garden
breath she said
you are not of this world
naked-winged swallow
your feathers wait so long
for the buoyant winds of the open sea
they will borrow the ribs
of the dawn
and soar along the roof of the world
On my way
across the bare mountain
a song stronger more deafening
a martial cadence from nowhere
a rhythm from the tank shelling the dead
another music ignoring the past
bursts of wind sweeping the future away
crack of dawn
an emergency c-section
exhale from the country under drip
generation rapidly deteriorating
the sun’s difficult
birth into the highpoint of day
nowhere the right word
the poet must wed these visions
of the dying world
and the living water that keeps hearts beating
We dream sparks stars moons and suns
lighting our lives our days sweeping clear the path
the time-to-be braids its palm branch canopy
I do not know how to tell you this story of blood
that seals our lives behind the door of the wind
how to tell you that the coming dawn
has already changed the color of this motionless day
that the wait lacerates our grieving hearts
while infusions of cold hard cash
are blatantly burned through during the nights
III

Our conspicuous steps wake
the ancestors napping
in the shadow of fear
trudging out ahead of the morning sun

history still slumbers
in bed with the first word of love
which must come to save us from open chaos
from our quicksand steps
we wait for the first blue love note with feverish hands
face offered to the wind to the sun
eyelids heavy with rain

the day has sown the word of the hyena
in the city the night
the speech of the hyena terrorizes words undressing them
THE BLUE COUNTRY

To Oscar Wilde

In a country town I wouldn’t be able to find anymore, the sloping streets are old and the houses decked with slate. Rain runs along the sculpted pilotis, and its droplets all fall in the selfsame place, with the selfsame sound. The round little windows have sunken into the walls, as if to keep from being struck. There is nothing brave in these streets, save for the ivy above the doors and the moss atop of the walls: the ivy’s dark and shiny leaves bare their teeth, and the moss dares to consume all the large stones that sit outside its yellow velvet—but the people here are as fleeting as the shadow of rising smoke.

There are still reddish lanterns swinging from the lintels, thin candles in the tin chandeliers and boxes of sulfur matches, little windowpanes covered in shadow and dust behind which strange little flasks slumber, whose liquors were once green and blue. Ruffled cornets tremble in the windows, and sometimes one glimpses the pale faces of children and frail fingers shaking tarnished puppets, a wooden goose, or a half-colored ball.

There, one winter night, under a black awning, a cold little hand slipped into mine, and a childish voice whispered in my ear, “Come along!” We walked up a staircase with warped steps; it curled in a spiral and had a rope for a banister; the windows were yellow with moonlight, and a solitary door swung open and shut, blown by in the wind. The cold little hand held me by the wrist.

When we went into the room, enclosed by four disjointed boards and a string locket, a guttering candle was lit and stuck into a bottle. Beside me, holding my hand, was a little girl of thirteen years; her fine golden hair fell over her shoulders and her black eyes gleamed with excitement. But she was slender and slight, and her skin was of a color given by hunger.

“My name’s Maïe,” she said, and, holding my finger: “Not that you were scared, you terrible monster, when I took your hand . . .”

Then, she took me around the room—“Hello, my pretty mirror,” she said. “You’re an itsy bit broken, but that’s okay. Here’s a very nice friend of mine I want to you to meet.—Hello, my nasty table with only three legs; you’re nasty, but I love you anyway.—Hello, my pitcher that doesn’t have a face anymore; that won’t stop me from kissing you to drink up your water.—Hello, my home, I greet you in solidarity: today I have company.”

I had put, I believe, a bit of money on the poor table. Maïe jumped up to my neck. “If you want,” she said, “I’ll go out and get us a big loaf of bread, a six pound loaf—Goodbye, my home; be good while I’m gone; there’s an old picture album in the corner.”
She came gravely back up the stairs, her chin on the loaf powdered with flour, her two arms underneath, and her hands clutching her puffy apron. She rolled everything out over the floor. “You see,” she said, “I bought some chestnuts; that way I’ll never get in trouble; they’re filling, they’re healthy, and I’ve got enough for my winter.” She laid them out flat, one by one, in the drawer of the table, laughed at them before closing it, and sat down on the bed. Then she picked up the big loaf of bread and started to nibble at its crust; as she ate, her face sank deeper into the hunk of bread, and she watched me all the while to make sure I wasn’t laughing at her.

When she had finished eating, she sighed. “I was hungry,” she said. “And Michel, too, probably. Where is he now, that rascal?—Michel is a very unhappy little boy, you know, doesn’t have a mom or dad anymore; he’s scary looking; he’s a hunchback; he helps me make my fire and goes to fetch me my water; that way he gets to eats with me, and I give him a buck or two when I have it.”

We heard clogs clopping, and the locket’s string shook.—“There he is,” Maïe said. I saw a pale runt walk in, his hands and nose black with charcoal, his short trousers open to the wind: he stuck his tongue out at me and scowled with his mouth.—“All right, Michel, calm down,” said Maïe. “You’re better off listening to this mister who’s talking to you. Go along now.” Michel came back up with the bottle of sweet wine I had asked for.

The little cast iron pan had been filled and lit. There was a bit of demolition wood around, still smudged with cement. The chestnuts roasted on the lid: Maïe had bitten them, to let in a bit of air. Sometimes they would pop, and Maïe chastised them: “Nasty chestnuts, could you please not jump around?” All the while, she hemmed the brushed cotton lining of a blouse. The needle would pass through with a gentle grating. The glow of the pan fell upon her nimble hands, and made the fabric shine. Michel, squatting, closed his eyes to the heat.

“I’m sewing, I’m sewing,” Maïe said. “I’ll get five bucks. That’s good money, isn’t it? Give me a splash of that sweet wine, you monster. You drink the dregs: I don’t want to get married or hanged.”

In her childish language, she told me the story of her life. She knew neither good nor evil. She had wandered the countryside, with horrible boys, and played in the commedia. At nine years old, she was princess deep in a barnyard, her bare feet in the straw, and a golden paper crown upon her head. She still remembered some of the monologues from her parts, and recited a few to me. “Oh! There was this beautiful piece,” she said. “It was called The Blue Country, I think. We couldn’t see it was blue, but we imagined it, you see. The mountains were blue, the trees were blue, the grass and the animals were blue. And I said, ‘My prince, this is the palace of my father, the king; it’s made of strong steel, and the
red iron door is guarded by a three-headed dragon. If you want to win my hand . . . ‘Boo!’—
just a jumping chestnut. Michel, why don’t you peel some chestnuts instead of sleeping? Is
it true that there’s a Blue Country? I’m sure I’d be there; but they put all the guys I used to
play with in jail. People pretended like they were robbing houses. One day a guard came,
and he said to them, he said . . . oh, it’s nothing, I don’t remember—but I never saw them
again. And since then I’ve lived in the city; but it’s sad. It’s always raining. You see nothing
but slate and little black shops.”

And so she twittered on; then she flew into a rage: “Michel, I told you, no dirtying
up my room with your fruit peels. Pick them up. Oh, you derelict! Hello!” She took of one
of her ankle boots and threw it at his head. Her face was red, and her eyes were sparkling.

“You can’t imagine how mean he is. He puts me through so much!”

Nevertheless, I would have to leave little Maïe; but I promised to return. I saw her
every day, and she sewed endlessly before her wood stove. Then she pieced together bizarre
suits out of colorful rags. Her skin came back to life; at last, Maïe was eating. But in so far
as her misery went away, she grew sadder. She would watch the rain as it fell. “You monster,
you nasty monster,” she would say, her eyes empty, her lips slack. Once, just barely cracking
the door open, I saw her standing before her broken mirror, with her golden hair over her
hardly formed breasts and a paper crown cut with scissors upon her head. When she heard
me, she hid it away. “Michel is mean,” she said: “he’d make a good dragon.”

The winter was nearing its end. The sky was still dark, but some rays of sunlight
caused the shingles’ edges to gleam. The rain fell less heavily.

One night, I found the room empty. There was no longer a table, no chair, no pan,
no pitcher. Looking through the window, I could have sworn I saw hunched shoulders
disappearing at the far end of the courtyard. And, by the light of the cellar candles which
helped me back up the stairs, I saw a sign tacked to the wall, inscribed with these words in
big letters:

GOODBYE, MY HOME. MAÎE AND MICHEL WENT OFF TO THE BLUE
COUNTRY.
I cannot say how I came to row in the king’s galleys, for I am too ashamed. But take any of the five sorts of man who inscribe the waters with their fifteen-foot plumes—Turks, Protestants, salt smugglers, deserters, and thieves—and choose the very worst among them: I have perhaps been that. I have known the galleys of Marseille; the Sun King keeps twenty-four of them, and the convicts are content upon them. At sea there is great heat, and sweat, and vermin, and the chains are heavy for the dragging, and the scent of the bilge is pestilent; but in the ports, for a mere two liards slipped to the Algousin and Turk, and five to the Pertuisenier to guide them, they can go into the city, see their wives, and set up shop about the harbor. On the ocean are six galleys, and I had the misfortune of passing through them. There we endured the mist and rain and great underswells which caused our oars to jump, by fives, from our hands, and the dashes of seaspray which drenched our hardtack; and the cold made us hungry; we had only our evening meal at ten, the “jafle”—a bit of hot water with oil and beans—and the “pichrone” of diluted wine which they poured us on the galley did not keep us warm.

The galley’s deck is flat; spanning its length is a great bench, straddled by the three “comites,” who beat us with a cane; each time it falls, it strikes three men. We stow the ammunition and provisions under the deck in six rooms, which we call the Gavon, the Scandelat, the Campaign, the Paillot, the Tavern, and the Fore-room. Then there is another hold, dark and narrow, accessible only by a scuttle two-foot square; at both ends a sort of scaffold, called a “taular”; a three-foot space between these taulars and the ceiling; a basin in the middle. This is the galley’s hospital. The sick lie chained to the taulars; and, when they get feverish, they pound the deck from below with their heads and all four limbs; one has to crawl through the dying men and keep his face turned away from these basins.

Our mates upon the green ocean are salt smugglers; for salt is expensive on the Breton shores, the best of it being worth nearly two écus; in Burgundy, however, it can be purchased at a better rate. Those who bring their provisions to Brittany from the other provinces are thus traitors under the gabelle. The king has them apprehended, branded, and sent among our ranks. There are no deserters; those are easy to recognize, by their faces, where great open wounds never dry in the sun; they slit own their noses to avoid service, and vermin gnaw away the skin between their eyes. But we have a number of compagnons de la matte, maritime crooks, who never despair; they bear the mark of the tape, a pretty fleur-de-lis, on their foreheads or shoulders, and oftentimes a red necklace from the rope of a gibbet.
The salt smugglers had better morale than we, being accustomed to gray skies, to the green and yellow seas; but never did they laugh, for they were always rebellious. Nor did those who had been with us in Marseille ever venture into the cities alongside the Pertuiseniers, to visit the white houses by the ports where women await the galley slaves: for throughout their servitude, it was said, they would remain faithful to the fierce women who had once lived with them among the salt mills.

The night of Mardi Gras, 1704, our galley *The Superb* was abeam the Pays Gallo coasts. Our Captain, M. d'Antigny, along with his officers, had invited our three “comites” into the ship, and we were at ease about the deck, happy for the chance to scratch beneath our red coats and shirts of thick fabric, to take off our caps and rub our shaved heads against the railings. Ordinarily, at night, we had to endure those itches without budging; any jangling of the chains would waken the officers, and the canes would rain down upon our poor mates.

Four salt smugglers lay about the chamber with the taulars, cruelly bound, their bodies bloody; that day, they had received the knotted rope, splayed naked over our bronze cannon, the Coursier; and we heard them wailing below the deck.

I was about to nod off when the Steersman, to whom I was chained, tapped me on the shoulder. Each of us was fettered to a Turk; we called them Steersmen for the way they, being more expert than us, worked tip of the oar like master oarsmen, purchased expressly for the galleys by the king. “Look,” said the steersman; “there are fireships at sea.”

The mist was light: even so, we couldn’t see the coasts. Nothing but a long line of luminous foam and, in certain places, white fires perhaps, which appeared to sparkle, yellow and green.

On the Mediterranean, war had acquainted me with fire ships. The Duke of Savoy’s brigantines, which had passed before us, setting sail from Villa Franca, Saint-Hospitio, or Oneglia, would release them into the current at night, and we would sink them with the thirty-six pound cannonballs of the Coursier.

But here, on this ocean, I knew nothing anymore. The fire ships I had seen were red and mobile; whereas the fires we now beheld were still, giving off a white light and sudden puffs of yellow smoke. The sea rolled calmly; the helmsman kept vigil beside the lantern at the bow, and, from the middle of the tent which covered the deck between the two masts, a single oil lamp hung, swinging. Everything was so peaceful that those could not have been distress fires.

I rolled over to the Steersman, and we hoisted our chain off the ground, each with a single hand. Cupping our ears, it sounded as if rowboats were tossing against the keel. We crawled forward to the starboard edge, which looked onto land, and holding our heads
just above the railing, we spied the caïque, the long dinghy, drawing slowly away from the
galley; full of crouching men, dressed in white shirts with red masks. One of them pushed
the caïque off from the hull, with a long oar. “Alas!” I thought, “the salt smugglers are es-
caping, on this unguarded night!” But the Steersman pulled me to the larboard. We walked
slowly between the sleeping bodies, clutching the chain in our fingers. The rowboat was to
the larboard.

An instant later and we were inside it. We made not a jingle, not a jangle. The
Steersman was from a silent country. And, rounding the stern, avoiding the lantern light,
we proceeded in the caïque’s wake, which gently rocked our boat.

We trembled in the shade, for fear of an errant oar stroke or a roll call. But we saw
the luminous shoreline more clearly, and the black strand where breakers dashed into foam.
We also saw the fires burning white, which was not in fact their own color, but that of the
great livid mounds before which they burned. And we could hear the singular crackling of
the flames, as they tossed their yellow sparks.

The red masks of the men in the caïque were made from their jackets, which they
had wrapped around their heads, and in which they had torn holes. At a cable length from
the coast, we saw that these pale mounds were salt mills, and stood, receding, at a distance
of about ten toises from one another; before each one there burned a fire, and beside each
fire, we made out women throwing in the king’s salt.

The caïque made land, as we were still fighting the undertow. The salt smugglers
masked in red leapt onto the strand, and, each one, no doubt recognizing his faithful girl,
took hold of her suddenly; in a second, they had disappeared into the night.

But we, on seeing this unknown and desolate coast, these pale mounds of salt and
these crackling fires, we were seized by terror; and the Steersman cried, “Allah!” as he threw
himself back into the bottom of the dinghy, not wanting to touch the land.

While we were hesitating, a flame shot off, with a detonation: the Coursier was fir-
ing an alert. A long, chanted moan broke out over the galley; our mates wept the fol-de-rol,
as if to the second call when the senior officers visit us.

Disoriented, we took up our oars again, and returned to sea.

The rowboat sloshed over the water; its impact against the hull made us stagger; we
slipped back into the galley through an open porthole. One heard the noise of all the galley
slaves’ feet upon the deck; we blended into the company of our mates, with heads held low.
Through the scuttle of the hold with the taulars, the four pale faces of the enchained and
bloody salt smugglers appeared, twisted in despair; for their friends had forgotten them; and
on the Bancasse, the high bench whence the chaplain says mass, and whence he raises for
us the Host, the staggering captain lifted the helmsman’s lantern, while he made us march
past two by two, to know the deserters, our mates of the chain.
MICHAEL PALMER
FROM ELEGIES FOR SISTER SATAN
SECOND ELEGY

Sister, is it not time
for us to learn to speak

now that the infernal machines
have captured the breathing word?

Now that drones fill the sky
over Santiago de Chuco,

Central Park and Unter den Linden?
Is it finally too late

in this welcome winter rain
to cross the singing bridge

to that place where
memories of the future

bend like cypress limbs
under ancient snow? Where

the plague years melt away
and the shrill voices of children

explode from the mist
with nothing but pain

and praise to sing,
as if one and the same,

like two bodies joined
in a last embrace?
And these cypresses,
ministers of mourning,

how is it we applaud them
in their grace?
THIRD ELEGY

The clock is a fiction, dear Sister,
yet we live within it,
Sister, its arms are ours,

and the fiction is as real
as a rose in the steel dust
and you will recall, dear Sister,

that each of us is the sum
of the two preceding numbers
in the talismanic series

and that this ever expanding,
radiant and more than perfect
spiral will swallow us

so said – was it Zoroaster –
from a distant cliff
his spider-arms outstretched

on the face of a death's-head clock.
And it is there
within the span of those arms

that we recall
what we were not.
We were not what we thought

to be and to become
not the architects of desire
not the thieves of fire
nor gardeners nor plumbers
nor workers in steel,
only the painted puppets

of parallel lives, only
the uninvited guests – ghosts –
at the beggars’ banquet.

Elegy for whom or for what?
We watched the frothing tide
gather time in

and it meant nothing
at all to us then
or at most some spare thing

that could not be freely said,
a wound of salt-laced water
and a gasping

mouthful of sand,
while deaf to those measures
which draw us together.
OUYANG JIANGHE

FROM TAJ MAHAL TEARS

TRANSLATED BY LUCAS KLEIN
Sometimes a single eye sheds polytheistic tears,
and sometimes the gods will be moved by a tear of blasphemy.
God or no god, the flowing of human tears is constant.
Yet however many tears there may be, once wiped away
they are grace
and *mono no aware*. The gods bestow tears, but never
eyes fit for these tears.
Unless infant eyes open in the eyes of the ancients,
unless uterine tranquility embeds inside teardrops,
unless the shadows of gods and men become the flesh of each other,
each other's tears
flowing into one, only to flow apart again.
Flowing beyond sight's reach. Flowing beyond meaning. Flowing through the heavens.
And let the things of heaven flow on earth.
Flowing from past lives into this life, from the Ganges
to the Yamuna, irrespective of dirt
or stagnancy,
no distinction between holy water and sewer water,
between smells of piss or water lily,
between colors of red dust or grey,
no asking about leaving or staying, into clarity or murkiness, into whose tears are flowing,
or whether they flow for kings or princes
or flow for the outcastes.
Even the tears of the gods would not be enough for this flowing,
which flows sometimes just for one woman.
Does all of India owe her its mirror image?
Is the mirror too cold: the white moon entering tears, fish swimming in sunlight?
Or has the woman in the mirror turned from a fish into a bird,
wanting to fly, wanting to
   be dreamt?
One thousand light years of tears, sleeping soundly on the back of a bird.
One thousand coinciding mirror images, reflecting each other's emptiness.
One thousand eyes falling to the earth,
where whatever they see shatters with them.

   The mirror
calls back the divine right of the woman's body, splitting her from the half-bird god
into the half-human fish, believing she can swim out of the mirror,
but where does a fish get the strength for the swim from Mercury to Mars?
   The moon in the water
doesn't have enough glass, or enough brahman or ātman,
with which to make a perfect circle, a sea of a mirror.
   And this sea,
in tranquility, body illuminated, aided by the gods’ immortal breath,
is blown, like a light, into the teardrop.
Poetry does not have an identity of its own, its prajñā and insight are polyphonic, beginning in two, exerted from other objects.

The gods and the departed face off like the narcissus, intoning the original poem’s splendor and its fragrance. Tears extract themselves from polysemy, elapsing and simultaneously creating their boundaries and plasticity, because the tears of poetry’s minstrelsy flow from a statue, within which flow the materials of consciousness, e.g., the crystals in the nightingale’s throat, those tiny metals.
But in rural India, why is the peacock’s cry choked up, why does the history of words again become a history of dust?
Constructing an epoché for tears flowing for nobody.
Giving birth to a father for a child not yet born.
If there is not enough honor, then give birth
    to a father
with failure and shame: because man is the orphan of the universe.
If out of ribs, then give birth with clay.
    Then whose tears
would woman be, flowing from
herself, eye and womb both in bloom flowing down a face,
from swallow upstream to the eagle’s roots,
hair flowing toward rhyme words, river flowing toward sleeves, heart flowing toward jade?
    This jade heart
has shattered so many stone heads!
Do people perennially age and die on the gods’ bodies,
    while gods
remain newborns forever?
Are gods also born of woman: born in the image of man?
Gods: this dead soul, that holy child.
    Whose child
is mother, in the end, smiling like a girl
and epitomizing the world with a little girl’s cries.
MATT TURNER

A MONK

哇!

UNTITLED

UNTITLED

UNTITLED
A MONK

Now we turn to the paintbrush
Hidden in plain sight for years
I’d already become middle-aged
With a deformed hand for grip
Begin with an eight-armed prayer
Tho worry about the starlight
Made of alcohol to burn everything
When I was younger with skill
Withered out like a tree trunk
Ash covered me and I laughed
The color seemed incongruous
Entering the security of age
Count me out of that bargain
My knees turned and ankles froze
The shower showered me
I called out to my parents
The hand pushes across the page
Tho the ink and the hand are dry
Imagine a pound of my time
The authority of the saints gone
The authority of the saints gone
With the large brush I’m frozen
A false word and my wrists lock
Wherever I am in human bodies
Cold against my begging fingers
We’ll turn to the large brush
The pelvis will lock in place
Seared with burning alcohol
An impulse to raise a mirror
Glare across my younger ears
Stupidly the sweat pours out
Fragrance of overripe peaches
Pushing the hand aside
I laugh again at the wish to continue
Nervously value my breath
Your shadow's there on the wall
In midair the body lays down
From top to bottom it moves
In your museum like a thread
Moves from one to the dollar
In my dreams tho it's not your country
Throw my body off the limbs as proof
A blizzard never stopped anyone
To be stopped is to be solid
The healthy body wants to rot
Ink's poured into the mouth
Doesn't take long for color to hold on
The palest green of spring repulses me
Cork lines the studio to stop the ear
Put the album on the fruit
Two spots against a field of lies
Growing larger the body exceeds itself
A precious child comes up
The dogs come up and I come up
哇!

I wait in the valley & dissipate like smoke
Sliding from one to a snake
Bacchanal in the egg
A pulley trains up the portrait
Tories crowd the wall
But a long march of iridescence
A silver lake stripped off the reel
A baroque limit fences the hand
You are a rat of ages
You steal the corpse of the universe
Rapture seals the ice in
The machine amounts to light
Tells the snow to listen
Falls inside of the cocoon
I also do not believe
Twisted through the horse’s eye
A red rock stiffs the aggregate
A weak arena of the last plenum
UNTITLED

When starlight breaks star & when an unnamed constellation
UNTITLED

Preserved in the smog
A half laugh escapes & whine like bending styrofoam
Glaring at the face in the loose window
but the phone cuts off
AHMED SALEH SHAFIE
FROM AND OTHER POEMS
TRANSLATED BY ROBIN MOGER
In his other life Issa wished to be a white butterfly and when he had achieved that, wished to be a cherry blossom.
The cherry blossom remembered that Issa had never in his life picked a blossom, for which reason he was a fool. It thought: that which wished to be a white butterfly was a fool and that which wished to be a cherry blossom was a fool.
The cherry blossom wished that somebody might pick it and did not know if this was a natural thing for cherry blossoms to feel.
I spent today beside a flower whose name I did not know and thought that it, too, did not know its name, and I saw its beautiful petals, so separate and distinct that I could see the grass between them, and I thought of other things, separate from one another and independent, and how they, too, might be like these petals. And I thought of a poem by John Ashberry in which a painter dips his brush into the sea. He never says what it is the painter wants to paint, but nothing blue, of course. And I thought that the sea, all the same, is blue, and that though the painter might have scooped up that which is without colour, no one will ever say that he scooped up the sea and did not find it blue. This is what I thought about as I sat with a flower and then afterwards, and do not make a poem of it, I beg you.
I did not find poetry where I left it and did not suddenly discover it as a raincloud hovering in my room or even as poems on my desk, but the room was, when I returned, waiting for me, and when it saw me it opened lids weighed down by drink and arms weighed down by drink and said, Imagine me. Imagine me, please.
In the collection I dream of every poem remains a world unto itself until the next one comes and something like a light rain falls across it bringing forth a low grass, washing walls, delighting eyes, and so with the next, and so on until the last poem comes and it is not an end but is instead like Ahmed from Saleh from Shafie* and then again like Basho then Pessoa then them all

* Ahmed’s name in other words, which is his name, followed by his father’s, followed by his grandfather/ancestor’s: a nasab or chain of descent
naked beside her bicycle and no one is there except that she is weeping and now they imagine the sweep of the sea and the sweep of the sand and the sweep of the sky and something red, neglected, in one of these three
In the company of the air alone and my memories, too, maybe, I climb the darkened flight of stairs and I feel that between my hands is a lamp, its flame rocked by my breath, that I have said my piece and there is nothing to do but wait, that it will be a long time waiting for sure, that I will, at the turn in the stairs, find the stars in the sky, all shivering, all washed clean, as though the sky were remembering, say, seeing itself for the first time on the surface of the Nile by night, in summer, the full moon present like the print of a kiss on its cheek, that is, if the stairs turn, if my guess is correct
For a moment I did not feel your hand on my forehead and then it lifted as though it were a bird and there was I, as it receded, losing its touch, its scent, its colour, then its existence. But feverish perhaps, perhaps long dead, I saw it. I saw it. Your hand. There. On my forehead. There. Do not try to see it. Nor shall you reach it. Think of something else and forget this hand. Forget it.
GENNADY AYGI

FROM TIME OF GRATITUDE:
“A SNOWDROP IN THE STORM”
“RENÉ CHAR”

TRANSLATED BY PETER FRANCE
Outside my window the glimmering of the dim white November outskirts of the city is gradually becoming for me the place of a kind of forgetting... Where am I? - for a long time now I seem to have been transported into some half-forgotten distant places... – and then to have begun wandering through a far-off, long-gone field amid snow-filled ravines – there were indeed such wanderings in real life, in just such a desolate twilight; it is hard in this dim and flickering darkness to draw a clear line separating dreams from visions, or from memories of something “real”.

Somewhere, among those “eternally”-distant ravines which were once home to me, in a poor Chuvash village, in the November twilight of the year 1899, a boy-poet was born, one who would be for ever a young-man-poet, dying at the age of twenty-two.... – he died more than sixty years ago, and he (not just an “image”, but the pain within me) has not ceased troubling me, from my early years to the present day.

He chose as a pen-name the word “Sespel”, which means a snowdrop in Chuvash. The flaming tornado of the Revolution was raging through the land, its reflections were to the young Chuvash dreamer like the flashes and surges of his own inner world. At last, in the darkness of hopeless poverty, in the patriarchal stagnation of the life surrounding him, the long-awaited Thaw of his time had come – was he not the first flower piercing the snow? – timidly at first, and then ever more radiantly stretching out not just to the shining of the day, but – as he put it – to its fiery “transfigured face”, stretching into the distance and depth of that “face” – he would always call it the “New Day”, with capitals, and only in a poem written a few days before his death did the “burning concentration” of the New Day transform itself into the impenetrable “bottom of the Day”.

He is one of the most tragic poets known to me, and this tragedy lies as much in the combination of circumstances in his life as in his own intimate nature.

He was not a “child of love”. Half a century after her son’s death, his mother would recall with unconcealed hostility the husband to whom she was married against her will. The memories of this illiterate woman, recorded from her talk, strike one by their almost Faulknerian details and images. On the night before her wedding, she dreamed of an axe gleaming on the threshold of a poor Chuvash house. This dream axe became real in the life of the family eleven years later: Sespel’s mentally unbalanced father killed his brother with an axe in a drunken brawl. He was condemned to forced labour in Siberia. Sespel the boy
felt a *kindred spirit* in him - this half-literate peasant, devoid of any conception of “talent” and its links with “fame”, was captivated by his son, who impressed him from childhood on with his lively imagination and grown-up thoughtfulness; “you’ll be something no-one has ever seen before” he used to tell the boy (and Sespel’s unceasing longing for his father recalls Dickens’s lifelong gratitude to his own weak-willed father simply for having realised his uniqueness and being “captivated” by him).

A year before this tragedy Sespel the herdsboy fell asleep on the wet ground when he was looking after the horses grazing at night; from then on until the end of his life he suffered from agonising tuberculosis of the bone.

On his mother’s side he was the grandson of a pagan priest – years later people still remembered this old man’s remarkable mastery of the language of spells (later on, in Sespel’s revolutionary poetry, his “spell-binding” energy amazed readers by its wild, unbridled force, its unsurpassed vividness of language).

During Sespel’s adolescence there were periods when a crisis in his illness made it impossible for him to walk. His younger brother took him to school by sledge – a distance of several kilometres.

There was a rare kind of fire concealed in this sickly young man with his anthracite eyes; the deep-red flashes would soon begin to cut through his ominous poems, which showed not only a frenzied, perhaps even excessive, love for his native land, but also something “alien” to the language and the aesthetic ideas of his people; this genuinely Rimbaud-like fire came close to terrifying his fellow-countrymen.

And there was something Rimbaud-like too in his actions, which did not fit easily into the boundaries of familiar everyday life, the “quiet, sleepy” communal life that surrounded him. The young Sespel, like the young Rimbaud, left home (he didn’t “run away”), stopped attending the village school so as to take part in the continuing war against Germany, got as far as the army lines, but was disillusioned in his “patriotism”, returned home and became a supporter of the Bolsheviks.

It is significant that such passionate, reckless actions of Sespel’s, so unusual in his society, were never individualistic “escapades” – they were caused not by any destructive tendencies, but by his deeply organic striving for the *ideal*, the urge to create new, ideally just relations between people. Despite unimaginable material privations, he completed a course at a teachers’ college in a small Russian-Tatar town (his heart aching at the knowledge that sometimes, in order to pay for her son’s education, his mother had to sell her last bags of rye and she and his younger brothers go hungry). Given the provincial backwardness of the school, his education was extremely inadequate (his favourite reading was the banal mediocrity Nadson, but if young Sespel was a sentimental decadent in his letters of those
years, once he started writing his own poetry he immediately displayed a mature mastery of language).

Sespel became one of the first Chuvash Young Communists and was given work in the district criminal investigation committee. Sometimes barely able to walk, he spent days and nights travelling through Chuvash and Tatar villages, torn between his unreserved support for the new order and his compassion for those who continued to live in the obscure poverty and degradation of “ordinary” life. He had to investigate a major crime, involving a poor drunken peasant whose arrest left his large family without a breadwinner. Sespel, having obtained a harsh judgement against the criminal, kept sending money to the man’s family from his meagre salary (in the guise of “official aid”). Arriving in a Chuvash village on another case, he would go out in the evening after the day’s investigations and help a needy family plough their piece of land. When speaking to the peasants or at meetings he was all thunder and lightning, but at friendly gatherings he was “neither seen nor heard”: “I shared a little room with him over a long period”, one of his friends remembered, “Mikhail had one striking ability – he moved about amazingly quietly, I was struck in general by his remarkable gentleness in everything he did.”

In the spring of 1921 someone set fire to the building of the Chuvash Justice Division, and Sespel was arrested on the strength of a false denunciation. He was subsequently released (but expelled from the Communist Party) and went for treatment in the Crimea, his tuberculosis having got much worse. Once the treatment was over, the poet became a wanderer through an immense country, spending the last two years of his life in the Ukraine. A terrible famine had broken out in the regions bordering the Volga. “My country, my country is at death’s door”, he keeps repeating in his autobiographical writings, knowing that his voice will remain unheard. Working in the Ukraine as a famine relief instructor, he frequently came across groups of fugitives from the Volga region. “I see them at the station, starving people with terrible emaciated faces, in rags, fugitives from the Volga”, he wrote in January 1922 to a Ukrainian friend, “in the recent hard frosts they were dying in droves in one place or another, sick, freezing people; their bodies were loaded by their hundreds on to sledges and driven away, open to the elements...In the market place, where masses of goods are being sold and there are rolls and loaves of bread, lard, everything you need, these fugitives from the Volga lie bare-footed, covered in sores and dressed in rags and they beg for bread without saying a word...” He wrote this at a time when he was crippled by tuberculosis of the bone and barely able to limp along; he knew he was doomed: “my body is disintegrating like a corpse, there’s no stopping it”, he wrote in a diary as early as 1920.

During his lifetime Sespel had fewer than ten poems published in Chuvashia. Strange poems, in places “nearly Chuvash” in their incredibly daring imagery, they seem almost
“wildly alien” when set among the old-style half-folkloric syllabic verses of the period. And now, in the far-off Ukraine, poetry became for Sespel the hidden inward space (an almost anatomical place) where his inner spasms found a “suffocating” expression in convulsive lines of verse.

There is certainly something of Mayakovsky in him. But strangely, he showed no particular interest in him. Was it that he was wary of a kind of ego-nucleus in Mayakovsky’s tragic stance, a kind of self-infatuation of the Russian poet in his own tragic fate? When Sespel, on the other hand, at the height of spiritual tension, moved deliberately and resolutely towards his own destruction, his “metaphors” (but are they metaphors? this is not Mayakovsky’s famous “heart on fire”, elaborately constructed on formalist linguistic principles), his “similes” and images are torn out of the pain of his very being, like clots of blood (“all bloody – what is this in my hand? – I break it, turn it to dust, to meat, tear the veins, it is my heart, mine, Mikhail Sespel’s bloody heart”). How opposed to folklore is this poet whose origins lie deep within the people! ... but as the years pass and I think of him more and more, I seem also to hear, behind the “scraps of meat” of his metaphors, something of the secret “murmuring” of the people, there is something “not spoken to anyone” that emerges like a muttering-and-whispering (“who can hear it then?”) in the depths of that “silent speaking” that was half-chanted, half-muttered by the people – and that “secret chasm”, as I see it now, seems to glimmer elusively yet steadfastly behind the light-and-darkness of Sespel’s poetry.

I have remarked elsewhere how Sespel, true to the modesty and discretion of the people, never allowed himself to aestheticize the tragic. He might well have flung this tragic element in the face of contemporary poetry in images equalling those of the Surrealists, but this would have been a narcissistic “literary” act for him; in Sespel’s work it is the people who “cry out”, not the poet. Did he even realize that tragedy had found in him an exceptional mouth (more than a voice)? He had no time to realize it, he had to finish crying out, incarnated in the “crucified body of the people”. Or rather, this incarnation was there from the very beginning, but now everything was growing confused: where he had once “cried out” – was it him? – everything went silent, as if all meaning had been taken away, and this silence grew into the emptiness of a sudden, indefinite Abandonment, it became a kind of single body, and then – this was now the only source of breath still continuing – the ghost of a cry: “Eli! Eli! Lama Sabachthani...”

Perhaps he could feel death entering into him, as the young Trakl no doubt felt it – but isn’t the Austrian poet spellbound by the allure of death, like some blue, blue beauty?

Sespel’s move towards death was not a “settling of scores” with life. Was he “needed” or “not needed” (not for destruction, but for creation)? – that remained the essential problem
for Sespel, right up to the hour of his death. “I am no longer needed, I must *remove* myself, this will happen very soon”, he said clearly, quietly and calmly to his last friend, a Ukrainian peasant poet. “Think again, Mikhail.” “I’ll think, and I’ll tell you what I decide, I promise.” For once in his life Sespel did not keep his promise, one day soon afterwards he failed to return to the house where he and his friend were living. He had taken his own life in an avenue of lime trees near the village of Starogorodka in the Chernigov region.

The officials who came to investigate the cause of death took away most of the poet’s papers, which never resurfaced. This was the second great loss of his manuscripts, the first being when all his papers were seized on his arrest in Cheboksary in 1921. His poetic legacy is now about 30 poems – they are the unequalled masterpieces of Chuvash poetry.

1983
HENCEFORTH

(THE LAST DROPS OF BLOOD)

Poem by Mikhail Sespel
Translated from the Chuvash via the Russian of Gennady Aygi

Henceforth, turned into stones, in heaps,
The warm word, frozen, has stuck in the throat,
From the forest top day’s light has fled,
And death lies over the world henceforth.

Barefoot on to the Hill of Torment
They have led my country, led her by the hand.
The bloody sweat of the walls of Cheboksary
Is held in my shattered heart henceforth.

All bloody – what is this in my hand?
I break it, turn it to dust, to meat,
Tearing the veins. It is my heart,
Mine, Mikhail Sespel’s bloody heart.

Like a dog that has had its hide ripped off,
I shall beg a crust in a stranger’s yard,
Some drizzly day I shall drop down dead,
Hungrily howling for Cheboksary.

Henceforth from my innards, dried up with hunger,
Will come only the groan of the cold graveyard,
My soul will be filled with a massive millstone
Henceforth, henceforth, henceforth...

1921
RENÉ CHAR

(INTerview with the BBC, March 6 1988, on the death of René Char)

Gennady Nikolaevich, how would you characterize in a few words your creative relations with René Char over the last twenty years?

I have been corresponding with Char since 1968. On the publication of my Chuvash-language anthology, Poets of France from the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century, René Char was the first person to respond. In order to do this, he copied out the publisher’s address in Cyrillic script, rather awkwardly it is true, and thank goodness, this precious postcard reached me. The mere fact that the first to write to me was France’s greatest contemporary poet made a big impression on me. Writing back to thank him, I told Char that I had difficulty getting hold of his books and only possessed a few isolated volumes of his. And he began sending me all his publications, and other things besides – he often sent me pictures of his native Provence, of Avignon and the Vaucluse, and we began to correspond regularly. I addressed him as “Maitre”; I felt myself to be in some ways his follower, and I once told him so directly. He always replied in words of rare precision, and these replies buoyed me up in periods of black despair, when I seemed to be struck dumb, surrounded by a deathly silence. What is more, I gradually came to feel a desire on his part to associate me with his country, with Provence and his beloved Sorgue, which came to take on a symbolic resonance for me. I felt that he was making me a gift of his homeland. So now, in losing him, I have lost not only a favourite poet, but a friend and teacher. A friend who having sensed a kind of confusion in my feelings, once wrote to me: “Let us thank life for sometimes being less demanding of us than people usually think”. How often I felt happy and at ease with life and the world when I remembered these wise words of my beloved “distant interlocutor”!

What attracts you to René Char’s poetry?

In recent decades, or more precisely in the whole period since World War II, there has been – quite logically, perhaps – a decline of the Word as humanity’s most essential possession. The Word has begun to degenerate and has lost its significance as the preeminent creative force; in our day, generally speaking, poetry has gradually been transformed into sheer rhetoric and a self-contained game of “literature”, and we have seen a cult of contempt for
life and for the world as such, and then a cult of despair – or in reality, pseudo-despair, since this calculated “despair” served as the basis for solid worldly careers.

In this contemporary world, where the word has degenerated so much, I cannot name a poet who has steadfastly and over a whole lifetime maintained the dignity and greatness of the Poetic Word as René Char has. He was a great stoic, but a man of more than one dimension; even this word “stoic” once produced the following reaction from him: “To be a Stoic is to freeze into immobility and to wear the beautiful mask of Narcissus”. He tended to reject the very possibility of a self-definition of this kind, and in this sense his spiritual struggle was at the highest level: if ever he achieved anything, he seemed immediately to begin struggling with himself and splitting himself along the line of truth; he showed immense vigilance on half of the struggling spirit.

René Char is a hermetic, difficult poet, but in France he had an established reputation, he was a kind of patriarch. As you see it, how compatible are poetic hermeticism and the appeal to a wide circle of readers?

The interconnection between the Word and life, in the case of René Char, was always a strange one. He exerted a continuous influence on the whole of European poetry, an influence that was both overt and secret. It seems to me that his secret influence was much the greater. And his poetry undoubtedly contains a great secret, which we associate with the term “hermeticism”. When readers stop respecting the Word and take no account of it, then the Word exercises its own self-respect, it becomes proud in the good sense of the word: it does not shut itself away, but acquires a still greater dignity in itself. It is as if the Poetic Word was saying: “It’s not a question of whether you want to know me or not. But if you do want to know me, you must be prepared to engage in something very serious.” I think that so-called “hermeticism” is a kind of trust in the human being, in the creative human being who becomes a co-creator, a co-poet. If René Char is read very attentively, he never leaves the reader without a light, without the gift of special illumination, without a new wisdom even. And the fact that such a personality and such a poet, constantly seen as “hermetic”, should have possessed great popularity (narodnost) and even become an object of national pride in his lifetime, is explicable, as I see it, by the fact that the over the last half-century or more the conception of narodnost in literature has changed radically. It is not the same thing as accessibility, or rhetorical “clarity” for a wide circle of readers; it is rather (and René Char’s work seems to me a proof of this) a complex light from the deep roots of ethics and aesthetics, fused together with the sources of national culture, which are still perceptible if one can only retain the memory of them and find in oneself a fidelity to them.
In my view, René Char’s work is unique in demanding that we pose and resolve the problem of popularity (*narodnost*) in poetry in a new way, with a new depth and on a new creative basis.

*You also addressed René Char in poetry. For instance, there is a poem of 1970 dedicated to him...*

Yes, that is the poem entitled “Field: in the full blaze of winter”. I have already mentioned that over the years of our correspondence Char “gave” me various aspects of his native land. In this poem of 1970 I did what I could to present René Char, my favourite French poet, with the face of my country – this was the only gift I could give him, and the most precious.

[Telephone interview conducted by Igor Pomerantsev for the Russian service of the BBC]
FIELD: IN THE FULL BLAZE OF WINTER

to René Char

god-pyre – this open field
letting all things pass through (mile-posts and wind and distant specks of mills: all
more and more – as if from this world – not in waking – gathering distance:
  oh all these are sparks – not rending the flame of the pyre-that-is-not-of-this-
  universe)
“I am” – without trace of anything whatever
not-of-this-universe shining
god-pyre

1970
JANE WONG

WHEN YOU DIED
BEAR TRAP
THE CACTUS
WHEN YOU DIED

Half a century later,
I check and recheck
an egg to make sure
it’s still good. I press
my nose against the rotten
planet, cold as a half-sung
song. Halved, I am
more than your weight,
still. When you died,
where were your teeth?
Where was your breath?
Breathe on this window for me;
let me draw feathers on it.
Half a century later, geese tap
at my yard as if checking
for solid ground. Do you
think about twisting its fat
neck? Why do I think about
twisting its fat neck, about
that lowly puncture?
When you died, the guards
shouted industry and agriculture
into the air, their breath humid
enough to grow a mole.
When you died, you gulped
at the air, you slept with both
eyes open. You dreamt of
the fattening dough of the sky,
of geese singing in the future.
Loss sat in a living room
you didn’t have. Loss settled in
like heavy whipping cream,
like a new kind of mud.
Over half a century later,
I buy lettuce from the grocery
store and wash nothing.
And yet, my teeth keep sharpening
for something to come.
I eat and eat and eat again.
Year after year, I leave eggs
by your grave, by ground
I can’t seem to find.
The seeds of a watermelon freckle the yard. I swing a broom into the air, clearing the sky of dust.

What instruments are used to open the throat and speak? For years, I was mute and mistaken for others.

My jaw: a bear trap good enough for any wild man.

My mother rubs ginger along my gums, burning from the root of it all. Say something now, she demands. Where will you go, who do you love anyhow?
I’ve never planned on being weak. (I thought of myself as a cactus, flooded with sun and armor that could strike an arm or eye. I know how to hold my own arm, to hold my breath when spirits pass, as they do, trailing after a desert rat. Or at least I thought such things.) I think of your fear of losing me, I think of a seal who can’t make it back to water, its stupid whistling cry (the leaving, most of all, a shimmering plague). Who would dare to admit it: the buckling over, the cold bones of some other man’s hands, the sleep for sleep’s sake, (for no reason but to wilt each spike, my armor plucked, how vulgar – a naked porcupine). Here, at this gutting hour, I ask myself: what have you done? Do you even know? I know I am not a sight to see. (Even deer move around me, not looking.) Plums from a tree fall and hit me straight on the head (the deer keep on not looking). That wobble, that wreck: I have tried again. I let down my hair. I lugged out my terror. The exhaustion, ad infinitum: throw everything you know into the ocean (and watch it come back to you, different).
ANDREW ZAWACKI

FROM WATERFALL PLOT
(AFTER WANG WEI)
Morning opens at f/2.8—a fast sun, the forest tight, houses out of focus, the pasture a gesture of fissure and blur. Ice epoxies the zaffre lake: as if a sky had skidded, or the breech earth turn.
Smoke from a brush fire purling down the channel, nacreous: film exposed by a sliver in the chamber.

The extravagance of darkness, as if India inked to an everglade haze, goes blue beyond the velour blue pines.
The tarmac lacquered with Favrile glass,
a shard of labor flits from the hive:

a phantom ion through jetlag fog,
Astairelike on the airstairs.
No such thing as a self, itself: a meadow is scalar, scattered with pollia, easy peasy drizzle scats the real estate to total social fact. +8 hours GMT: dry-down on the gravel pit, dub step up in the boughs.
Algazy is a pleasant old man, gap toothed and grinny, with sparse and silky beard, neatly placed upon a gridiron screwed under the chin and hedged with barbed wire...

Algazy speaks no European language... But if you wait for him in the dawn of day, at the break of morn, and say to him: “What goez, Algazy!” dwelling on stressing the sound of Z, Algazy grins, and so as to manifest his gratitude, pushes his mitt in his pocket and yanks at the start of a string, prompting his beard to jump for joy an entire quarter of an hour... Unscrewed, the gridiron serves to resolve any quandary, pertinent to the harmony or hygiene of the home...

Algazy never accepts bribes. Once only he lowered himself to this mode of demeanor, when he was a copyist for the Church Notary, and even then he took no cash but only a few crock shards, eager to endow with dowry several of his indigent sisters who were about to become betrothed the very next day...

Algazy’s greatest bliss — along with his customary tasks at the store — is to harness himself of his own good will to a wheelbarrow, and tagged at the distance of two meters by his crony Grummer — to hop at a gallop, with the singular ambition of collecting old rags, punctured vegetable oil tins, but notably, knucklebones, which then the two gobble together, after midnight, under the most sinister silence...

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1 It’s the former marquee of a well-known establishment from the capital, hawking suitcases, wallets, etc., still in place these days but under a single moniker. In any case, we grant ourselves the liberty to believe that the names Algazy or Grummer, through the images they stir by their specific musicality — upshot of the sonorous impression they produce in the ear — do not seem to correspond to the aspect, dynamics, and content of these two pleasant and distinguished citizens, in the likeness of which we encountered them in the actual world...

We grant ourselves the liberty to portray above for our readers how an Algazy or a Grummer should and could exist “in abstracto” had they not been created by chance occurrence, by a fate which refuses to consider whether the objects of its creation correspond, in their shape and motion, to the names which were bestowed them.

We beg forgiveness of Mrs. Algazy & Grummer for the above scrutiny which we allow ourselves to delve into; because, we carry out this task merely out of our sincere desire to serve them, inciting them, before it’s too late, to take appropriate action on this account.

It appears that there is only one remedy: either they should each seek another name, genuinely suitable to their particular actuality, or reshape their own identity, form and function, while they still can, according to the singular esthetic of the monikers they bear, if they still insist on keeping them...
Grummer, moreover, sports a beak of scented wood...

Reclusive and bilious, Grummer lounges the live long day sprawled under the counter, beak stabbing a gap in the floor board...

As you step into the store, a delicious aroma tickles your nostrils... You are welcomed, as you stride up the steps, by a trusty lad, who, instead of hair has, sticking out his head, strands of a green cottony thread; after which you are greeted with great warmth by Algazy and urged to settle on a foot stool.

Grummer spies and waits... Treacherous, with glance askance, unearthing at first his beak only, which he ostensibly douses upwards and downwards in a gully dug into the ledge of the counter, Grummer looms up lastly in full measure... Then, through all manner of manipulation, maneuvers Algazy into absconding the scene, at which time, fawningly, lures you artfully into a variety of verbal intercourse, notably touching on the subjects of sports and literature — until, suddenly, when whim strikes him, he wallops you twice with beak on the belly, impelling you to barrel out into the street, shrieking in agony.

Algazy, who is forever forced into discord and exchanges of words with the clients, on account of this inadmissible gimmick of Grummer’s, scurries off after you, prevails upon you to return, and so as to regain your satisfaction, grants you the right — if you already acquired an object of value greater than 15 cents — to... sniff a whiff off of Grummer’s beak, and, if you so consent, to squeeze him as hard as you can from an ashen rubber bubble screwed to his back, a bit above the butt, compelling him to bounce through the establishment without bending his knees, all along expelling incoherent grunts...

One fine day, Grummer, without forewarning Alagazy, grabbed the wheelbarrow and set off alone in search of rags and knucklebones, but upon return, bumping into some poetry remains, postured illness and, under the dark of the bed sheets, swallowed them up surreptitiously... Algazy, catching on, slips in there after Grummer with the earnest intent to administer his crony no more than a light scolding, but to his horror detects in Grummer’s gut that all that was still any good in literature had been consumed and digested.

Deprived thus of any forthcoming prime nourishment, Algazy, in lieu of redress, gobbled up, while Grummer slumbered, the bulk of his bubble...

The next morn, Grummer, forlorn, — abandoned to the world without bubble — impales the old timer with his beak and soon after sunset rushes him furiously to the top of a tall mountain... There a colossal battle flares between them, persisting through the gloom of night, until, before the break of dawn, Grummer, overpowered, makes motion to restitute the whole of the gobbled literature.

He throws it up on Algazy’s arms... But the old geezer, in whose gut the gobbled bubble’s fermentation kindled the quiverings of forthcoming literature, discerns that all that
is submitted to him is far too puny and much too obsolete...

Maddened by hunger and unable to locate in the dark the ideal nourishment which they both so craved, they quickened to the battle anew with redoubled vigor, and under the pretense of merely tasting each other so as to achieve improved integration and get better acquainted, they set about taking bites off of one another with ever flourishing fury, and, gradually consuming each other off, they come to the very last bone... Algazy is the first to finish...
EPILOGUE

The next day, at the foot of the mountain, passers-by could spot in a ditch, hurled by the rain, a gridiron with barbed wire and a scented wooden beak... The authorities were contacted, but before they could arrive on the scene, one of Algazy’s spouses, who was shaped as a broom, showed up unexpectedly and... swinging right and swinging left two or three times, swept everything she found into the garbage...
KIT SCHLUTER

JUICY ORTHOGON

TWO CARTOONS:
“LOOKING FORWARD TO SUNDAY NIGHT ALONE”
“TROUBLE FOR DARWINISM”
To say there were only shapes would be true, but misleading—I couldn’t turn away from the other thought, myself—but I would never tell you you’re wrong for rewriting a fairy tale—besides—I couldn’t taste the conclusion, which made all the limbs look fake—indelibly shiny—bones stuffed under skin—searing, waxen genitals stuffed into a too-small glass cup—say, the apartment looks neglected under the exhaust-chapped crescent—the sleeping passengers clapping their clappers—chewing their lips—with the breeze limited to half an hour a week, I’m just glad it knows where to find us—somewhere in the knowledge of language—catching our lungs as they tarry, mid-inflation—dragging indolently against the bright—a tongue slurping its way over a non-corresponding lip excites me with its will to remain azure—its obvious emotional disconnect—its will to look—and look again—scouring the abject footage against its better interest—re-lacing the spoiled, blue grip of choked-up words—say, the dead know our secrets—often I’ve thought so—say, our sense of privacy is the not-even-whisper slid under the sheets—having become, like leg hair, indirect speech—pounding their shrouds—wringing them of anything remotely human—ooh, stop chasing anatomy—while the shadow of the swinging forearm regrets its
lazy showboating—and songs wedge under
pink wishing a cushion, which in time
swells to a mucocele—painless and
covert in the flesh beside the jaw—quick—
let me hide behind the whale’s scapula
while you pour sand into an open book
to keep the page—letting blood—auburn
and teal—rhomboid and fractured—saliva
collected—caries rinsed—if I could stop
talking into my ass—that would be a
third way—so, rupture my epiglottis—
and I’ll rupture yours—what’s that
rotten puce material—receding into my
hesitation—tasked with writing anything
so actual as today’s date—their fear
is a barometer of your power—and I
can’t say, “October” without the voice
inside telling me, “No, no. It’s only
July”—say, saying is a way of
serrating the passage of time—macerating
its pulp—filling the day with it—a condom
stuffed with rain-soaked newspaper—the pen
scratches with every mark as if to say,
“I won’t be giving up my ink so easily”—still—
the ink flows against its will—as I wonder
if it’s time to let myself bubble up
to the surface of this muck—if maybe
it’s even time to sculpt a little boy
of it—headlines eyeing the hand like a
bearded face in a tree—without memory—
no intention of looking at the page, but—
—around—so this is where I’ve found
myself—in raw sunlight—by the fourth week
of general burning—deploying shards of a
refrigerated retention of feeling—inhaling
you through the recumbent fiber of
the inner canthus—relief in spurts—
heavy with unbuoyant fruit—may seem
passive, but it’s more effective than
the breaking of a fever—aching
in sour harmony—dulled by cobwebs—
dense with suspended fleas—say, there was
phosphorescence on the lake—say, the message
is too long to be impersonal—whatever its
language—say, it brings hard news and
you bow your head—and you prostrate
before it—and you age and the
face in the tree intensifies—that it’s
time to explain the image of the forearm—
to turn away from the page—to admit
it’s not a little boy who needs to be
here—a child of ambiguous—I don’t
have the word—cutting off the spigots
of all the invisible houses—but tell me
again what I see—perched on the cliff
of this, the 100th line—tell me—I want
your cities of water—your daisies in the
sea like strange flesh that rains—bound
to sunlit days—hunks of sky above the sea—
I was surprised to encounter my first
intimacy with rain in a dream—that
half a decade of rainfall had accumulated
to nothing more permanent than steam
rising off flaming asphalt—the paragraph
gives thought a plausible shape—but here—
just say what comes to mind—the suture
is implicit—when I tell the truth I am lying
to myself—when I lie I am telling the truth
to no one—when I can’t tell
the difference between—and the
hesitation itself is the answer
LOOKING FORWARD TO SUNDAY NIGHT ALONE

The clairvoyant widow is expecting a vibrator in the mail today. Cleaning dead leaves from her gutter, she throws a sopping clump at the duck-lipped mailman when he says, “Sorry, no packages.”

Now it’s Tuesday, time to vote. They walk together to kneel on an off-ramp and huff a squirrel’s corpse.

The widow lives alone. The mailman lives with his well-read wife. Someday the mailman’s wife, too, will be called a widow, and she, too, will live alone. By then the mailman won’t be living anywhere at all.

Wednesday morning, somewhere along his route, the mailman parks by the forest and undresses. Feels nothing but loneliness. Can’t remember which of his orifices the doorknob opened best. A sad bird screams food into the mouths of its young. The widow checks her mail at noon, though she already knows nothing awaits her there.

On Thursday, because his son is dead, the mailman drives his truck off a secret pier. Thousands and thousands of letters. If he is not dead, surely he will be fired. In her living room, the widow feels a chill. “An angel must have eaten a chicken wing!” she remarks, to no one.
Through the scrub of Friday’s dunes,
fire ants haul the largest magnifying glass I have ever seen
over the shoreline.
Plumes of steam rise up as they march across the water.
The mailman’s wife is digging a hole in the backyard
to cool her skin against the moist dirt.
The ants gather in a circle above the truck,
orienting the magnifying glass just so,
and the mailman is boiled alive.
“Is my mailman dead or something?”
the widow screams at the man on the radio.

Saturday at dawn
the ants return wearing little diving bells
to plumb the water
and retrieve the mailman’s corpse.
With ease they unstrap it from the seat,
haul it to the surface, and
carry it into the dunes.

The widow spends her Sunday on the phone
with Amazon fulfillment services.
The mailman’s wife scrolls the feed in the shade
of the hole in the backyard.
Picture the pruning of the mailman’s fingertips!
Oh hands, you’re so dependable . . .
“Maybe it is dangerous to live in a room without mirrors,” the Leather Count began, talking to no one. “Maybe, without them, what should be solid—the skin, flesh, hair,—behaves more like a liquid, sloshing beyond the confines of its brimming container.” His mother, so undisposed to taking him seriously that she had never looked him in the eye—what color are they, again?—brushed his head with a feather duster. “To help him keep his thoughts organized,” she justified in a whispered aside.

*  

The Leather Count’s mother was made of rubber. Her face was tanned, she claimed, from the light inside the refrigerator. When she invited us in for a cup of coffee, the Leather Count continued his oration as we walked from his outdoor bedroom:

“Some speak of the miracle of aquatic life as a gift of another planet. ‘Octopuses with their genome far more complex’ than ours,’ floating nebulously through the dark with their papal skulls . . . An affront to human supremacy! I’ll gouge out my right eyeball, I’ll cut it into slivers on a god damn cutting board in the kitchen just to show you who’s really so complex.”

*  

Revolting, the thirst for knowledge, paired with the thirst for blood.
Some days Marcel, a local orphan the Leather Count occasionally invited over for a meal, would bet me his dinner that nobody at the table was actually eating the food they brought to their mouths.

He was always right: they only pressed it to pursed lips.

I didn’t mind going hungry.

*

“None of them has debt,” he once told me, clinking his glass of soda in Morse code. I neither ate, nor had debt, but I stayed because I was in love with the Leather Count’s mother, and I dreamt of hiding in a parka inside her refrigerator, of how she might go out of town a few days and come home, open the door in search of her favorite cheese—Velveeta, Kraft, Hood, my god—and find me dead there, my tongue gone a crazy shade of violet.

*

Summer came and, with it, the Count’s 28th birthday. Out over the hill of the estate. Inexorably down to the sea cliffs. The whole town came out, if reluctantly. Among the festivities: ring toss, syncopated tuba troupes, ritualistic Bonsai destruction, legal consultation on divorce and other domestic matters, at an honest hourly rate. All phones were confiscated on entry.

No photography allowed.

Even the children whispered of his vanity.

*

“Give me one octopus who has drudged through Laurent Tailhade’s tedious book on opium, one octopus who has translated the work of Juan José Arreola into any octopus tongue! Then we can start talking about who’s worthy of eating my eye.”

*
On the green, the Count touched dull blade to crystal glass, began to speak—but before his second word a shriek,
Marcel’s voice!, a chorus of shrieks. “The wastrel’s been bitten by a snake!” “Poor child,
he’s gone unconscious.” “Bless his soul!” Another child’s croquet ball had rolled into what Marcel took for a gopher hole, and when he’d gone to retrieve it . . . Eventually, the boy came to. A doctor reassured:
“The wretch’s bite is benign!” Marcel told us he had only screamed because a voice in the ground had spoken to him.
“But what did it say, little Marcel?” implored the throngs.
“That we have competed with the octopus for too long.”

*

On Thursday, the Leather Count had Marcel over for lunch. After their meal, strolling the grounds,
the count asked little Marcel about the voice in the gopher hole,
but the boy, even after several explanations, could not remember the meaning of the word voice.

*

“Give me two octopuses who have been caught making love in the family car
and spent the night in jail . . .
and give me those bastard octocops, too!”

*

“You see...,” said the Leather Count’s mother. “No, that is exactly it. You don’t see.”
“Of course I see, Claire—. Well, see what?” I asked.
“Outside yourself, the caps and coats hung—by the door, all my stuffed animals,
their hands, the disgusting hair on your toes. That you see.”
“I do . . .”
“But you don’t see the expression your face makes when it’s thinking of itself.”
What would it mean for my face to think of itself? I wondered.
“There you go again! So stupid looking. Seeing your face is more embarrassing than
hearing my own voice on a recording,
but it’s worse, always there—right there on the end of your neck—like you think it’s
the only thing that matters.
Sure of itself as a fact, as ‘a beast in a zoo, spiteful of its miseducation.’”
“I’ll start thinking under a new star, Claire,” I said, choking my words through tears.
“And which star is that? The one you painted on my wicker basket without asking?”
It was ugly, I admit.—I joked it looked how I felt.
“And how’s that?”
“Like a caged elephant.”
“Now you’ve done it!”

* *

With every week, Marcel’s memory faded. By winter no words remained except,
a cloud of ink through which / a human hand passes, dividing its sphere / in a line more
abrupt than / the half-starless underside of the sea,
and he arose, a shadow without metaphor.

* *

“Give me an octopus who gives a damn if he’s wearing a loin cloth,
and another who fears picking up the ripe fruit along the snaking paths of his neighbor’s
garden—
then we can start talking about who’s worthy of eating my eye!”
CHANTAL MAILLARD
FROM KILLING PLATO

TRANSLATED BY YVETTE SIEGERT
The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us...It is what must be understood, willed, and represented in that which occurs.

Only the free man, therefore, can comprehend all violence in a single act of violence, and every mortal event in a single Event which no longer makes room for the accident....

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*  
(tr. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale)
A man gets run over. 
At this very moment. 
Right now. 
A man gets run over. 
There is flesh burst open, there are guts—
liquids oozing from truck and body,
machines mingling their essence
with the asphalt: a strange conjunction
of metal and tissue, an ideogram
of hardness and its opposite.
The man’s body has been fractured at the waist
and he looks like an actor bowing at his curtain call.
No one was there for the opening act, but no matter:
what is important is the now,
this very moment,
and the chipped whitewashed wall
strewing the scene with confetti.

I turn the corner. Quicken my pace. It’s getting late,
and I haven’t had lunch yet.
Should I add that the wind howled
after the colliding door
like a feral dog?

I will not.

Do not ask me about the wind:
I do not know if there was any.
And even if there had been,
it wouldn’t be relevant.

I just ran into an old friend. He wants my advice on
some poems he’s been writing.
His face is gaunt, and the gaze in his great blue eye as he turns to the sky is almost obscene—while his other eye has been blinded by a pigeon, which stamped it with guano, like an envelope sealed with wax.

He has given the book a strange title: *Killing Plato.*
And what about emotions?
Should there be any?
Is it poetry when a line uses clinical
terms to describe what is taking place?
But what exactly is *taking place*?

It’s about a woman who has been knocked over by the force of a sound,
I do not know if that was his daughter.  
The dead man was gripping a girl’s hand,  
or maybe it was the girl  
who had taken hold of the man’s hand—  
which is so rigid now, so cold and stiff.  
They will come to cut off his fingers, one by one.  
Amputating his hand might be simpler,  
but just imagine a girl running away  
with a bloodied hand  
clutching her own!  
They will show up with surgical  
instruments to dislodge it, and she will  
be transfixed as she observes  
the puddle of blood and urine  
spreading to her feet—  
thinking it’s too bad  
she didn’t wear her rain boots,  
thinking that puddles are not  
always made by the rain.

the sound of an idea as it vibrates and turns into a missile.
Across the street at the corner,
a black stocking is falling from
a window located just
above the movie theatre.
A silk stocking (or maybe nylon)—
falling, black as dismissal,
onto a poster announcing
\textit{Death of a Salesman}.

The sound slams the woman against the front of a house. This is what
his book is about. The poems are variations on this image.
The crowd’s numbers are rising.  
No, not like the tide. More  
like dreams in which the dreamer  
wants to know what is being kept from him.  
Rising from holes, from the alleys,  
from the transparency of the windows,  
from the plot, the argument  
complicating the story,  
they occupy the crevices, the cracks in the rooftiles—  
they cross from the ledges  
and flow down from the drainpipes,  
they expand in every direction, and  
as they scatter, they complicate,  
add and overlap, and probe from the inside  
what can’t be reached from the outside—  
a giant vampire body trying  
to know it’s alive for a while  
to know it’s alive for a while longer,  
to know it’s alive beyond the page  
asking it to rise—dense, fluid, compact—  
and to plot its defense as  
the investigation proceeds into  
ways of knowing without suffering,  
ways of seeing without being seen.

I told him I didn’t understand why he called it *Killing Plato*. 
JOHN HIGH

FROM VANISHING ACTS
There are days on the water. Only the banality
Of beauty will hold you. A rupture of time/>
and the coexistence of memory & forgetting.
At the cave all of the bows & remittance.
A seaside of nothingness where days live on
alongside a lunar plane where a one-eyed boy
& mute girl are walking to the carnival...So good
to live here with you. Or you, just that—these berries
and words on bark & leaves. Cranes & trumpets & an altar.
And after all: the tumbling of wind,
weeds, tumbling of choice, of water,
voices, singing & dancing, when everywhere i go is homeless
and everywhere we go is home.

(The girl’s diary after first meeting the circus players.)
In translating where do you go she asks the bicycle man. Rain on dank smell, source of river, a cave’s entry, the boy smoking with a monk & the dead in their breathing. A ladder leaning against a wooden altar & a stone gutter’s trickle of groundwater rising in mist. Igneous silt & all ash fallen from our hands. Willow branch in a dream of circus mules we could ride outside these letters of time.

(Day 1)
There was a sanctuary on the other side of cliffs they began to walk. A city of some kind at sometime had been there. A book of sand, or a tree of events. A soccer field, playground, the basketball courts the boy remembered, but no longer remembered were of memory. The memory itself a place, a parenthetical pause like the monkey bars he & the girl would swing on, and the ghosts or prayers on match sticks of books & burnt leaves by the library. Where had all the people gone? She would often write imaginary letters to the children somewhere else in the sea now. There were so many things of awe, and hunger, and cities.

(Day 2. The monk writing in our book.)
The night had passed and the morning had come. The girl awoke without memory or dream. Smell of honeysuckle in grass. Her mother sitting & sewing a sweater for a boy. Perhaps she had vanished into rain before suddenly spreading her arms into we who were waiting in the following pages. The mother would come back like this: the stark cold autumn, a weaving of birds within & out as if the entire holiness of death were only ours & in each breath. It is time now, she mouthed to the daughter.

(Day 3.)
It was the gratitude in a boy’s eye & the signal of birds & waves & you
Ashore//the preparation & scene//: a backdrop the girl saw
opening eastward as a place in the body or maybe this
moving sky film waves as in you are here & no longer here
time disappearing & all back i see the hillside & then the day we all were walking
the dog & talking in the script & it’s like this too a clouded grey stage
set in his one eye & that gratitude no longer separate
as a being or longing of who you were before

(Day 4. The crow recording everything
he had seen in the last book.)
Looking into the face

back where you are now as it is

there
some suggestion of reading
the future earth

in autumn bare trees

where we once stood &

imagined points of horizon
cloud & thought

kindness of people & friends & revelers

On a face of a road

the child who drew your face
& voices passing into time

That precise questioning

brought you here to us

all with this sky

scattered in rain

(Day 5.)
That particular vanishing behind
things as is
sheep meadow words bees
backstory or back pocket
a girl & ghost lingering by sea
at the movies backstage
(though we don’t venture into knowing)
Unsaying//: 
Or if you were possibly alive
in every minute particle manifesting
is that the color or shape
or thing itself//

things themselves arriving
in an unspoken sound
of waves
or emotion-thought after the movies
trees & fish & strangers
meeting here
right out

in palm of your hand

(Day 6. The film crew's directions
to the cooks on set.)
We were lounging in the abandonment of moon a glass of pickle juice at the cafe & a storyline of circus jugglers on the roof & well what did you expect what is it in emotion after all the girl’s diaries zooming into a mind a place or history & time is like that isn’t it poo bears & lost trains & ticket stubs & where were you by the way & who gave you this narrative or sea this boy this girl this banging of musicians on pots & pans i know you don’t know but here it is how real do you believe it is a one-eyed boy speaking in tongues thru a mouthless mouth leaning into a memory of a father & mother & brother & war & this trombone blowing in the head that owl a perch a birch tree a river a flock of crows a game of hopscotch a child playing in the fields of illusion & why of course of course & the girl gesturing over here over here i think the way we’re going is over here, monsieur

(Day 7.)
the other side of we/

weed in water—

...another ghostwoman lounging
in a parallel boat

fingers of a fisherman & flute at dawn

black reed under sycamore

still of sun edging inward

the other musicians wade in

shallow & shade of branch/sound check

over bark & mud

in silence hearing everything

you’ve never heard

or needed more than to be

(Day 8. Note to the musicians: the flute player remembering his part in the shot.)
The fine breeze earlier when his alphabet arrived.
An earlier syntax of desire & the father walking a dirt rode.
The film clip of a man hovering there in a circle of geese.
You, who you are, you, in whose movie.
A horse in a field.
Faint smell of hay & manure.
You who are in the body, these pages of leaves gesturing above trees.

(Day 9. The boy writing in her diary.)
We ashed our clothes monthly. We would bring dust from the nearby burnt buildings and sit in a circle and sprinkle the dust on the inside of our clothes. Intimacy might simply be an assumption about what we did.
You are afar. You control the streets with a handkerchief. I long for your contours.

Poet after dead poet
Leave their book of songs with us:
Here is my shape – here is your shape

Do you know that pomegranate is not blood?
The cloud work hard to warn us:
Don’t get into Noah's ark
Drown with me
Meanwhile, let us sip our fears

We ask each other for sentences.

I know I used the world twice
It was my breath
But I tried again with the marchers
We had a bad theory
In which we stopped recognizing each other

We were media aware
And stapled to our windows:
We failed ourselves buying breakfast
* 

Hi the mechanics are dead we got here, by ourselves the world isn’t yours unless you have enough umbrellas or an extractable mineral

We failed ourselves buying breakfast
ELENI SIKELIANOS

FROM NOW I TELL WHAT I KNEW
In this house my daughter asks me over dinner do you believe in god

got

fed up

with my hedging pseudo antihegemony

it would be upsetting if you were an amethyst she says let’s stop
talking about it are you an atheist or an altruist

I’m a wannabe anarchist, pro-fantastic

then night transpired

a dark piece of moss

in a plastic bag

dragged across my forehead

amethyst befall me Idaho

In Timbuktu I want to be gifted enough to receive a visit from my own-self from
when I was a child

walking along the long dark edge pre-self I crossed
to the bottom-left athwart the grief pool when dads were alive, bright-souled, shy

Just as

once a

neophyte
Prince came running across
our faces / spaces
understanding all
ligatures between the two like sisters
in love with the same sea

and the Falklands were not an issue
and Western Sahara was peaceably shared

President Mohamed Abdelaziz Meets Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs
and who owns Badme, Bakassi, Banc du Geyser or Bir Tawil (no-man’s land *de jure*)
Sawrahi
buffer zone
Bethlehem
referendum

Tony, you’re a Texan
but Niwot’s got you come nighttime
Come nighttime
I’m gonna come here, live here, and I’m gonna be better than before

before I was with you
bathed in starlight
in the dusty light of Cuisnahuat

Soaring Homicide Rate in U.S. Cities

Oil Rig’s Owner Settles Gulf Spill Case

Malala Yousafzai’s Parents Arrive at UK Hospital

Murder Charges Are Filed in New Delhi Gang Rape

And what I know anywhere
the world is a dangerous place for a girl
as in a dream-town a man has stolen my friend Charlene
In Colorado or in Salt Lake City she splits herself in two
to protect herself in Swat

he knows how to dismember a girl near Lake Ketner
to tell if he’s killed before
(examine the crime scene)

he’s killed before
he’s killed before
Don’t write those words
Don’t write those words
why take my emotion away  (grey)

put it over there for now (Big Dipper)

catenary slide from sky to Katmandu can always bring your feeling back

what protection for the girl-body, man-body, any body?

found a man-body under blankets in Flagstaff down by the creek
(where the father-body was once kicking H)
frozen, flowering at the chest
his heart was bumped   was hunched and hurt
were you going to leave him and let the wolves eat him?
Take him back
to the daughter (the father-body is also
the daughter’s body) But some bodies
can never be found and some
can never be bound
And in Seattle where it always sounds like someone’s taking a shower
it smells like dumb luck
in muscular Seattle rooted down in its piney ground
the light is blind
& she is there
Nisqually
Susqually’absh
People of the Grass

and a brown-haired boy, Highway 5, in the car next-door biting
into a Subway vicing innocent
speeding around Puget Sound

I know a small world away from Medicine Creek Treaty rising Tumwater and
any river's watershed plus
Large Americans anywhere
O large Americans, love of

Shoeless in Seattle stress
relief therapy in the child’s poem a potato
falls on the pop
star’s head (it’s Justin Beiber’s)

I will not
look this up
on the internet why the blue portion of white light
from the sun is
scuzzily scattered
over Rangoon and Kuching

All I know is blue

And in Colorado I will tell you

Crows in the snow Hello.
Crows in the snow Goodbye.

(Hei-hei, Anselm Hollo)

Also, a crane on the sky-line glints from the highway, geese strip across the dinosaur
cloud loping, skidding behind it

This is a world. This is a world-

view /  Happiness every day in America

what we come to know and how we know it

and here I pile all I do or will not know

“pony,” “brake,” “star,” “oak,” “green,” “ridge,” “tree,” “to hide,” “to flee”

How do you say Whenever they dance let me see near Sacramento?
The crackling blackbirds behind the words in Pipil?

I don’t even know what I am.

Which brings me here.
José Antonio Ramos Sucre

Hailstorm / Granizada

Translated by Guillermo Parra
– Reading is an act of servility.
– Good is the lesser evil.
– Life is a squandering.
– Life is an affront; the organism is a web of emunctories.
– To live is to die.
– God is cruel to the poor.
– God lacks practical existence.
– God is the relegated and lazy sovereign of a constitutional monarchy, where Satan serves as Prime Minister.
– Truth is the fact.
– Philosophy sets us up in case we insult it.
– Ignorance takes us straight to skepticism, which is the most judicious attitude of our mind.
– Science consists of facts and their explanation. The latter are variable and subject to error, but we shouldn’t worry, because error is the principal agent of civilization.
– Reputations would impede progress if whisperers didn’t exist.
– The word outstanding applied to students: a tag for sheep, a jewel for the insignificant, noise of the anonymous.
– Law and art are an amendment of reality by man.
– Manners serve to camouflage poor breeding. Urbanity consists of a good mood.
– The cultivation of The Liberator.
– Aristocracy by birth is autosuggestion. That’s why no one believes in anyone else’s lineage.
– Democracy is the aristocracy of ability.
– Illustrious surnames give you free reign.
– Money is only good for buying.
– The bourgeoisie are characterized by the fear of appearing bourgeois.
– Schemers tend to display an ostentatious laboriousness.
– Work is a devoted exercise that serves the destitute when they try to win the kingdom of heaven.
– Grammar exists in order to justify illogical actions of language.
– Words are divided into expressive and inexpressive. There are no pure words.
– A language is the universe translated into that language.
– He who uses irreplaceable expressions is a good writer.
– Writers are divided into the boring and the amenable. The first are also called classics.
– People of a classical temperament elevate the case to an example and the example to a rule.
– The only decent thing to do with history is falsify it.
– History is only good for increasing hatred among men.
– We must throw history out, use it with the gesture of the maid who, on any given morning, uses a broom to dispense with the corpse of a bat, dirty, black and gloomy critter.
– Conservatives are left-handed.
– Two doctors can’t face each other without laughing.
– It’s possible to classify a people according to the interjections they use. The Romans were simpletons; they would animate each other with inexpressive interjections: io, eheu, papae.
– North Americans are alert inventors. They discovered that the purpose of clothing has as its object to dress man, rather than oppress or disguise him. The adoption of the loose neck is another victory of the republic against the ancien régime, a delightful lesson from Benjamin Franklin for the measured courtier of Versailles. That philanthropist wouldn’t rest in the service of his peers after inventing the lightning rod.
– Concubinage deserves the best from the republic. It has accelerated the fusion of the Venezuelan races.
– In Venezuela there isn’t and there can’t exist a conflict between the races, because the people of color aspire to be white.
– The family is a school of anthropophagous selfishness.
– Marriage is a zoological state.
– Marriage is the easiest path by which two people are able to hate and scorn each other.
– Marriage: whips and galleys.
– Falling in love is a lack of love for yourself.
– A man marries when he has nothing else to think about.
– Husband and wife: accomplices!
– Humanity is a string of monkeys.
– Men are divided into mental and seminal.
– Women are divided into beautiful and ugly.
– Women are war booty.
– Gideon takes on the task of seducing the woman he marries.
– Gideon loves his wife.
– Clerics abominate woman, agent of heretical nature.
– Ladies are the bailiffs of the dogmatic and chubby bourgeoisie.
– All males should ignore and curse literature. Reading it is dissipation worthy, at most, of the harem’s deceitful odalisques and perverse eunuchs.
– Dostoevsky preached the religion of suffering. Beware of listening to that anomalous Russian! Let us establish, finally, the religion of human dignity, an intelligible and cheap religion, without clerics or altar.
– Candid people understand that a woman’s love can constitute the prize for a heroic effort or a meritorious life. They don’t notice that an adventurer or an insignificant man would attain the love of that same woman.
– Adultery is a forced crime like contraband. It serves to resolve the tyrannical situations born of the marriage of convenience. It reestablishes sincerity in election.
– Friendship is a capitulation of dignity.
– Lack of scruples is a substitute for energy.
– Fortitude is desperation accepted.
– Language doesn’t allow synonyms because it’s individuating like art. Two words, equivalents in the dictionary, can’t replace each other in a discourse.
– The British Isles suffers the plague of the snob. Its men of letters have invented, to fight it, a special manner of feeling and expressing themselves, called humor.
– Feminism is a pretense of women to justify what’s spent on their rearing.
– It’s superfluous to speak ill of people.
– Aristocracy doesn’t exist among the human species.
– Hospitality is a virtue of a barbarous people.
– Men must pay for the privilege of having been born males.
– The proud man compares himself to the ideal of perfection and the vain man compares himself to other men.
– Praise satisfies only abject beings. It’s the equivalent of a grace or a license. When we accept it, we confess to the sovereignty of others.
– The word cosmetic summarizes the life and work of Oscar Wilde.
– Woman is the mother of the nation.
– Women are in charge in society’s parties. They invented them when they realized the male refrains from mistreating them in public. The invention is relatively modern. The ancients didn’t know of such mediocre functions.
– Evil is an author of beauty. Tragedy, the memory of misfortune, is the superior art. Evil introduces surprise, innovation in this routine world. Without evil, we would reach uniformity, succumb to idiocy.
– Frivolity is an element of literary beauty. Everything that teaches is ugly.
– The aristocrat needs distinction. The ugliness of the race disturbs in a practical manner the flowering of an aristocracy in Venezuela.
– Certain charity, such as that of the proud man, is simultaneous with envy. A person curses the prosperity of his equal, censors, at the very least, his fellow in the same line and embraces and gives to the humble man.
– Time is an invention of watchmakers.
– Horace is a golden mediocrity.
– Glory isn’t aristocratic. It’s the verdict of humanity, the agreement of a bunch of parrots.
– Virtue is the sacrifice of oneself. It differs essentially from austerity and from its accomplice ugliness.
– One thing Hamlet forgot: maybe we need to practice evil in order to be respected, to live amidst our fellow beings.
– The English automaton, inveterate imitator, professor of mediocre elegance, formal puppet, supplies the human species with mimicry. Correction is his hypocritical ideal.
– A tongue lacks its own existence. Next to abstract language, general and impersonal, gathered in its straggling lexicons, exists the very singular language of each artist of the word and the language agreed upon by each guild of professors or officials.
– It’s very easy to discover defects because every quality is necessarily a characteristic trait, in other words, a limit.
– Cowardice, boldness against the destitute, is the essential trait of the human creature.
– Man has invented the symbol because he can’t grasp reality directly.
– God is the primordial law of the Universe. He is, consequently, inflexible.
– Explanation should embrace the phenomenon. A man of judgment gives sparingly to the general rule and proscribes latitudinal, loose causes, capable of explaining too much. Sociology is the monotonous art of negating voluntary progress, citing shapeless causes, of conjectural and equivocal effect.
– Sociology is the Eiffel Tower of stupidity.
– Sacrifice rescues the opprobrium of life.

II

– Uncertainty is the law of the Universe.
– Literature always deserves praise. At the very least it’s a derivative; the subject that practices it could always bother us with a more deplorable activity.
– One can conceive of a naturalist morality, founded in the instinct of conservation. This isn’t a case of an instinct of feral conservation, but rather an instinct of human conservation, converted to the cult of self-dignity and respect for that of the other.
– Shyness has a good tone.
– Society takes advantage of great men less than what it loses with the calamity of their descendants.
– Sociology is a chapter of psychology, because rational beings determine themselves by virtue of reasons.

III

– Groom of German origin, insipid and hypnotic.

IV

– Fame is merely the vote of the crowd.

V

– Democracy in the State and aristocracy in the family.
– The greatness of false and forged heroes grows when the merits of others are severed.
– Agreed upon and orthodox history, catechism of urbanity and correct manners, is cruel to the original and the schismatic, and squanders its palms on the ordinary.

VI

– Freedom is nothing but the fulfillment of the law dictated in favor of the general interest.
—Leer es un acto de servilismo.
—El bien es el mal menor.
—La vida es un despilfarro.
—La vida es una afrenta; el organismo es una red de emuntorios.
—Vivir es morirse.
—Dios se ensaña con los pobres.
—Dios carece de existencia práctica.
—Dios es el soberano relegado y perezoso de una monarquía constitucional, en donde Satanás actúa de primer ministro.
—La verdad es el hecho.
—La filosofía nos pone en el caso de que la insultemos.
—La ignorancia nos lleva derecho al escepticismo, que es la actitud más juiciosa de nuestra mente.
—La ciencia consta de los hechos y de su explicación. Esta última es variable y sujeta a error, pero no debemos preocuparnos, porque el error es el principal agente de la civilización.
—Las reputaciones impedirían el progreso si no existieran los murmuradores.
—El calificativo de sobresaliente aplicado a los escolares: etiqueta de borregos, presea de insignificantes, ruido de anónimos.
—El derecho y el arte son una enmienda del hombre a la realidad.
—Los modales sirven para disimular la mala educación. La urbanidad consiste en el buen humor.
—El cultivo del Libertador.
—La aristocracia de nacimiento es una autosugestión. Por eso, nadie cree en el linaje de otro.
—La democracia es la aristocracia de la capacidad.
—Los apellidos ilustres son patentes de corso.
—El dinero no sirve sino para comprar.
—Los burgueses se caracterizan por el miedo de aparecer como burgueses.
—Los intrigantes acostumbran una laboriosidad ostentosa.
—El trabajo es un ejercicio devoto que sirve a los desvalidos para ganar el reino de los cielos.
—La gramática sirve para justificar las sinrazones del lenguaje.
—Las palabras se dividen en expresivas e inexpresivas. No hay palabras castizas.
—Un idioma es el universo traducido a ese idioma.
—Es buen escritor el que usa expresiones insustituibles.
—Los escritores se dividen en aburridos y amenos. Los primeros reciben también el nombre de clásicos.
—Las personas de temperamento clásico elevan el caso a ejemplo y el ejemplo a regla.
—Lo único decente que se puede hacer con la historia es falsificarla.
—La historia no sirve sino para aumentar el odio entre los hombres.
—Hay que desechar la historia, usar con ella el gesto de la criada que, al amanecer de cualquier día, despide con la escoba el cadáver de un murciélago, sabandija negra, sucia y mal agorera.
—Los godos son zurdos.
—Dos médicos no pueden mirarse a la cara sin reírse.
—Es posible calificar los pueblos conforme las interjecciones de que se valen. Los romanos eran unos sandios; se animaban con interjecciones inexpresivas: io, eheu, papae.
—Los norteamericanos son alertos inventores. Descubrieron que el vestido tiene por objeto vestir al hombre, en vez de oprimirlo o disfrazarlo. La adopción del cuello flojo es otra victoria de la república sobre el antiguo régimen, una amena lección de Benjamín Franklin al acompanied cortesano de Versalles. Aquel filántropo no descansaba en servicio de sus semejantes después de inventar el pararrayos.
—El concubinato merece bien de la república. Ha acelerado la fusión de las razas venezolanas.
—En Venezuela no hay ni puede haber conflicto de razas, porque la gente de color aspira a ser blanca.
—La familia es una escuela de egoísmo antropófago.
—El matrimonio es un estado zoológico.
—El matrimonio es el camino por el cual dos personas llegan más fácilmente a odiarse y a despreciarse.
—El matrimonio: azotes y galeras.
—Enamorarse es una falta de amor propio.
—Un hombre se casa cuando no tiene otra cosa de qué ocuparse.
—Marido y mujer: ¡cómplices!
—La humanidad es una reata de monos.
—Los hombres se dividen en mentales y sementales.
—Las mujeres se dividen en bellas y feas.
—Las mujeres son botín de guerra.
—Gedeón se toma el trabajo de enamorar a la mujer con quien se casa.
—Gedeón quiere a su esposa.
—Los clérigos abominan la mujer, agente de la naturaleza herética.
—Las señoritas son los alguaciles de la burguesía dogmática y panzuda.
—Todo varón debe ignorar y maldecir la literatura. Leerla es una disipación digna, a lo sumo, de las odaliscas mentirosas y de los eunucos perversos del harem.
—Dostoyewski predicaba la religión del sufrimiento. ¡Cuidado con escuchar a ese ruso anómalo! Fundemos, por fin, la religión de la dignidad humana, una religión inteligible y barata, sin clero ni altar.
—Los candidos entienden que el amor de una mujer puede constituir el premio de un esfuerzo heroico o de una vida meritoria. No observan que un aventurero o un insignificante conseguirían el amor de esa misma mujer.
—El adulterio es delito forzado como el contrabando. Sirve para subsanar las situaciones tiránicas nacidas del matrimonio de conveniencia. Restablece la sinceridad en la elección.
—La amistad es una capitulación de la dignidad.
—La falta de escrúpulo es el sucedáneo de la energía.
—La fortaleza es la desesperación aceptada.
—El lenguaje no consiente sinónimos, porque es individuante como el arte. Dos palabras, equivalentes en el diccionario, no pueden usarse la una por la otra en el discurso.
—Las Islas Británicas sufren la plaga del snob. Sus literatos han inventado, para combatirla, una manera especial de sentir y de expresarse, denominada humour.
—El feminismo es una pretensión de la mujer a justificar lo gastado en su crianza.
—Es superfluo hablar mal de la gente.
—La aristocracia no se da en la especie humana.
—La hospitalidad es una virtud de pueblo bárbaro.
—Los hombres deben pagar el privilegio de haber nacido varones.
—El orgulloso se compara con el ideal de la perfección y el vanidoso se compara con los demás hombres.
—El elogio no contenta sino a los seres abyectos. Equivale a una gracia o licencia. Al aceptarlo, confesamos la soberanía de los demás.
—La palabra cosmético resume la vida y la obra de Oscar Wilde.
—La mujer es la madre de la nación.
—Las mujeres mandan en las fiestas de sociedad. Las inventaron al darse cuenta de que el varón se abstiene de maltratarlas en público. La invención es relativamente moderna. Los antiguos no conocieron semejantes funciones de fantoches.
—El mal es un autor de la belleza. La tragedia, memoria del infortunio, es el arte superior. El mal introduce la sorpresa, la innovación en este mundo rutinario. Sin el mal, llegaríamos a la uniformidad, sucumbiríamos en la idiotez.
—La frivolidad es un elemento de la belleza literaria. Todo lo que enseña es feo.
—El aristócrata necesita prestancia. La fealdad de la raza estorba de modo sensible el florecimiento de una aristocracia en Venezuela.
—Cierta caridad, la del soberbio, es simultánea con la envidia. Una persona maldice la prosperidad de su igual, censura, cuando menos, al prójimo de su misma línea y abraza y regala al humilde.
—El tiempo es una invención de los relojeros.
—Horacio es una áurea mediocridad.
—La gloria no es aristocrática. Es el veredicto de la humanidad, el asentimiento de un aquelarre de loros.
—La virtud es el sacrificio de sí mismo. Difiere esencialmente de la austeridad y de su cómplice la fealdad.
—Un olvido de Hamlet: tal vez hay necesidad de practicar el mal para ser respetado, para vivir en medio de nuestros semejantes.
—El autómata inglés, empedernido en la imitación, catedrático de elegancia adocenada, títere formal, abastece de mímica al género humano. La corrección es su ideal hipócrita.
—Una lengua carece de existencia propia. Al lado del idioma abstracto, general e impersonal, recogido en los léxicos rezagados, existe el idioma singularísimo de cada artista del verbo y el idioma convenido de cada gremio de profesores o de oficiales.
—Es muy fácil descubrir los defectos porque toda cualidad es necesariamente un rasgo característico, esto es, un límite.
—La cobardía, el atrevimiento con el desvalido, es el rasgo esencial de la criatura humana.
—El hombre ha inventado el símbolo porque no puede asir directamente la realidad.
—Dios es la ley primordial del Universo. Es, por consiguiente, inflexible.
—La explicación debe ceñirse al fenómeno. Un hombre de juicio escasea la regla general y proscribe las causas latitudinarias, holgadas, capaces de explicar demasiado. La sociología es el arte monótono de negar el progreso voluntario, citando causas informes, de efecto conjetural o equivoco.
—La sociología es la torre de Eiffel de la estupidez.
—El sacrificio rescata el oprobio de la vida.

II

—La incertidumbre es la ley del universo.
—La literatura siempre merece elogio. Es cuando menos un derivativo; el sujeto que la ejerce podría molestarnos con otra actividad más deplorable.
—Puede concebirse una moral naturalista, fundada en el instinto de conservación. No se trata aquí de un instinto de conservación feral, sino de un instinto de conservación humano, convertido al culto de la dignidad propia y al respeto de la ajena.
—La timidez es de buen tono.
—La sociedad aprovecha con los grandes hombres menos de lo que pierde con la calamidad de sus descendientes.
—La sociología es un capítulo de la psicología, porque los seres racionales se determinan en virtud de razones.

III

—Novio de origen alemán, insípido e hipnótico.
IV

—La fama no es sino el voto de la muchedumbre.

V

—La democracia en el Estado y la aristocracia en la familia.
—La grandeza de los héroes falsos y de forja sube con el cercén de los méritos ajenos.
—La historia convenida y ortodoxa, catecismo de urbanidad y de modales correctos, se ensaña con el original y el cismático, y prodiga sus palmas al adocenado.

VI

La libertad no es sino el cumplimiento de la ley dictada en interés general.
NOTES

I. –Elite; Caracas, 7 September 1929. II. –Elite; Caracas, 10 October 1925. III. –Elite; Caracas, 5 January 1929. (Published under the title Cencerro [Cowbell].) IV. –Elite; Caracas, 24 December 1927. (Published under the title Resúmen [Summary].) V. –Elite; Caracas, 7 July 1928. (Published under the title Argumentos [Arguments].) VI. –La Universidad; Caracas, September 1927.
SHOTS IN THE AIR:
THE APHORISMS OF JOSÉ ANTONIO RAMOS SUCRE

In a 1930 letter from Europe to a friend, the Venezuelan poet José Antonio Ramos Sucre (1890-1930) mentioned the aphorisms he’d published in several Caracas magazines during the previous decade:

“Say thank you for me to Pedro Sotillo for his generous notes on my work and tell him he’s mistaken when he qualifies me as a misogynist. I am a brother to every woman and no one can accuse me of being negligent in their service, much less cruel. The aphorisms I wrote are shots in the air.”

In comparison to the precisely-written visionary essays and prose poems of his three main books — *Timon’s Tower* (1925), *The Forms of Fire* (1929) and *The Enamel Sky* (1929) — Ramos Sucre’s aphorisms are meant to be disposable. Or at least he wrote them as if they were.

Their sharp and often reckless or exaggerated sentences remind us he was a frequent participant in the literary tertulias that took place in Plaza Bolívar and elsewhere in downtown Caracas during the 1920s, despite the dictatorship of General Juan Vicente Gómez. The poet’s friends recall hearing his aphorisms at these literary gatherings, and former students remember him saying them in the classroom as well.

One of his aphorisms, about the nation’s legendary founder Simón Bolívar, feels prophetic (or haunting) for 21st century Venezuelan readers:

“—The cultivation of The Liberator.”

While another fragment offers a possible *ars poetica* for a writer who rarely discussed his own enigmatic work:

“—Evil is an author of beauty.”
Publication Information:


(with hands)

the opaque margin of the morning
disheveled
in corrugated plays of sound.
Drop by drop
a compact wall of years.
The hands fall muted
at the sudden appearance of the wind
(with hawthorn)

inequations of a precocious spring:
a solitary mumbling at the mirror
young spurts of warmth burn
the friable substance of the hawthorn
(in the interstices)

To hold this wall made of wobbly objects,  
making it a barrier of the definite  
to the mad and perfect gesture at the end of an afternoon  
the epilepsy of daylight that turns to its shadow  
to snatch away its inside the lividity hidden in the interstices  
the asymmetric life that arrives
(without definition)

several points of view
definitions
the typewriter the seething urine
(finally the starry white of the toilet)
and a minimal fraction of being:
the city stabbed in broad daylight
(with divergent thoughts)

In the fragile act of the dream the room translucid as Toulouse-Lautrec’s Paris the body rising to the ceiling reflects a horizon of upturned mirrors as fireworks from summer balconies open a probable sky —as a measure of sense— to the progression of time to the regression
(with players)

spread out in a metaphysical moment
the alternative life of things
jaunts in the opacity of being
enlightened insignificance
as a lamp on four players,
the ace of diamonds privileged
upon the table
radiates signs of injustice
(accident)

something
abandoning scales tools
a liquid of quartered fish
ambulance sirens at the corner
between the bathroom and the kitchen
(with morning and citations)

crouched with citations
threatening fog word-bogs
you stand immobile insect- mineral-like
journeying through sophistry
get going jerk pass on to me
what is moving today the third of June
flood out the morning in this long
stockpiling of eyes
of tangled assemblies, a crystal clear azure
that rises as if anew
(with maria)

maria is disassociated
one part dissolved in mirrors metaphors abstractions
another over here
in the life that flows underneath this language
(center)

from a periphery of skin and fingers
of absent chairs in destiny of dust
I travel toward the center that inhabits me
a crack a probable clue
a place build this catalogue for me
a definite storyline
free from the voluble matter of countenance
here it is the other with a face of plaster
(with glove)

turned inside out like a glove
finger to finger
lungs bones bits of nails
the intestines cautiously unraveled
with water hands
softly stroking oneself from the inside
(in formaldehyde)

the fear the legs the fear
takes you from every side
the eyelid upturned for kicks
the pianolas destroyed
in a drifting mental landscape
this scene has repeated itself for millennia
horror vacui exhibits a miniscule amount
a body to be made anew
its inhabitation
STAN MIR

LET’S BOTH REMEMBER CHERRIES
MORE THAN A SLICE OF ROAST BEEF
IT’S POSSIBLE
LET’S BOTH REMEMBER CHERRIES

to see the sun set
over the gas tanker
you have to be on
the Walt Whitman

Kabalevsky hangs
in the air

this is an age
of mutation
with varying
degrees of garlic

when you can’t solve
the puzzle put
the pieces in your mouth
like a pacifier

waterboarding is
for chumps
let’s both remember
cherries I’ll
take care of the table
MORE THAN A SLICE OF ROAST BEEF

why don’t you put on your party dress & eat a peanut butter sandwich I’ll vacuum

& invite the neighbors they can take turns telling us how it is

in the city there is a room where there is no cure for profit Charles Francis Adams

knew J.P. Morgan had the “elements of power” but had some doubts about his ability to organize the railroads they’d need more than a slice of roast beef & a fizzy drink

I don’t know what happened people got rich several days a week some probably drank themselves silly
IT’S POSSIBLE

It’s possible  
to write out  
silence, stack  
quiet on quiet.  
To have extreme  
freedom within  
limits.

The cyclist begins  
ascent. The  
chain moving  
across the gears.  
Wind. Breath in  
the mouth.

It’s possible  
to ride out  
silence, pull  
quiet from quiet.  
To have extreme  
limits within  
freedom.

The cyclist begins  
descent. The  
gears putting  
their teeth  
in the chain.  
Breath. Wind in  
the mouth.
It’s possible this is silence.

It’s possible silence is cycling.

It’s not possible to write silence.

after Pope L.
MAKE THE FUTURE GREAT AGAIN:
HIRATO RENKICHI’S SPIRAL STAIRCASE
REVIEWED BY MATT TURNER

Hirato Renkichi, *Spiral Staircase*.
Translated by Sho Sugita.

The last few years have been good for translations of vanguard Japanese poetry: Sagawa Chika, Hagiwara Sakutaro, Yoshimasu Gozo, and now Hirato Renkichi have all received excellent translations — so the better for us yankees. And the writing even has ties with Euro-American modernism: Japanese surrealist Kitasono Katue corresponded with Ezra Pound, Sagawa Chika translated James Joyce, and Hirato Renkichi understood his writing to be contiguous with the Italian Futurists.

What does that mean? Thematically, someone like Hirato Renkichi’s poetry explores a number of typically modernist tropes. In his poem “Ball Polishing,” for example, he states that his “destiny will open inside the mirror” — the mirror image being the supreme trope of modernist self-reflexivity. Apposite that, in his “Manifesto to the Japanese Futurist Movement,” he states that “Intuition must replace knowledge; the enemy of Futurist anti-art is concept.”

But this goes further than the familiar: the mirror has become negative image, destructive image, and finally physical shock. And for this reason, after Hagiwara Sakutaro’s initial experiments in free verse, Hirato can be spoken of as the principle innovator of new Japanese poetry in the twentieth century.

However his writing career, according to translator Sho Sugita, “was a brief six years,” between 1916 and 1922, when he died, still in his 20s, of pulmonary disease. His manifesto reads like a statement about the literal future, consisting of not only futurism, but “synchronisme,” “analogism,” and other -isms that are still waiting to be realized.

Even his *Selected Poems* was published nearly 10 years after his death, only collected by his friends. So in keeping with Hirato’s ideas’ late arrival, it’s fitting that his collected work is published in English now for the first time, as Spiral Staircase: it’s 2017, and we could use
some futuristic thinking. And iterations of that in literature, too: poems that unabashedly look ahead, as when Hirato claims that “on the sky projected/ is my heart.”

Hirato demands we look towards the horizon.

Yet another, more important, aspect of Hirato’s poetry is his cosmopolitanism. According to his translator, “unlike many of his contemporaries, who acclimated versions of European verse to Japanese poetry, Hirato saw Futurism as an international movement that he was actively involved in shaping.” Part of this was by rejecting an accepted cultural heritage, and then embracing the new pace of city life.

“On a technical level, Hirato dropped the extended 7/5–5/7 syllabic patterns used by Japanese Romanticist and Symbolist poets that imitated the meter of Romance languages. Stripping his poems of this syllabic meter and familiar form, he turned to anaphora to create a sense of rapidity.” The example given, from the poem “Insight”:

The heartfulness of moving things,
The moving heart of
The heartfulness of moving machines! [9, 48]

Eric Selland, a noted translator of Japanese, also notes in his afterword that “[i]n the fast-paced urban environment of 1920s Japan, you could listen to jazz at the Zebra Club in Kobe or the Blackbird in Tokyo. A newly affluent middle class dressed in the latest fashions and engaged in “Ginbura” (strolling along the Ginza). There were flourishing avant-garde movements, such as MAVO, and active revolutionary Marxist and anarchist movements.”

Hirato left early experiments with haikai to pursue his Futurism, but Hirato’s poetry was the future of a century ago. For example, his poem “Ginza, Color, Light, Reverberation, Stench, Curiosité, Éphémère.”

Life born during the day, dying by night
Dancing dancing dancing
In pieces in pieces
In the show window
Of the metropolis
And in houses of ghost towns
In the accidental exterior light
Shining, shining
Drops of stars
Earthen blade
Of _alpine flora_
Comfortably within my senses
The stench brushed by the side of the road
From the American cinema style hand
A fluid flame of a moment

    In darkness
Disappearing, disappearing
Whistle of a _vagabond_
Siren of a racing fire truck
On the artery of the underground
Applying pressure on the mouth of the iron pipe
Cataract cataract cataract
Cataract of water cataract of gas
Cataract of a transparent amber poison
Reverberation of a great flood
Facing afar

    _tant tant nombreuse curiosité…… [63]_

In the poem’s title alone we get urban vibes and foreign loan words. The poem runs on anaphora, each line pushing, needling the next. As Hirato’s Chinese contemporary Guo Moruo (who lived in Japan on-and-off during this time) put it in his poem “Skydog” (1920), Hirato seems to be running on his nerves, pulling his sensoria together into a poem.

    I fly fast,
    I bark wildly,
    I burn.
    I’m like burning fire!
    I’m like a big sea barking wildly! I’m like a machine bolting!
    I’m bolting,
    I’m bolting,
I’m bolting,
I’m peeling my skin,
I’m eating my flesh,
I’m chewing my blood,
I’m nibbling my heart and liver, I’m running on my nerve,
I’m running on my spine,
I’m running on my brain.

I bring up “Skydog,” a poem spoken in the persona of a mythical animal of lunar eclipse, because it nicely parallels Hirato’s poem “Moon Dog.” Instead of persona and myth, however, “Moondog” gives us a quasi-scientific description of another lunar event, a paraselene. This description becomes a narration of the world of empirical sensation, another mark of modernity: the poet takes the world as is, goes with it, and tries to change how we see it.

Tonight, the sky and earth’s breath’s dissolve into one, heaping up inside a porcelain mortar, expanding in a deep lukewarm color, and the moon, as though facing a sickbed, begins to dilate a dull halo. [133]

Of course urban life is neither modern nor contemporary, but the sensations of modernity are distinctly urban. When Hirato engages with the non-urban past in his writings, what would be called “East Asian tradition,” he’s not a nationalist or essentialist trying to get in touch with his ethnic roots, but narrating that past elsewhere.

When, in his poems “Gourd Garden” and “Shakyamuni,” he discusses aspects of Buddhism, it’s not a retelling of myth, but a way of disjoining ideas about what constitutes the aesthetic present. Buddhist dependent origination (“thirsting” and “finding”) is, of course, about the person’s perception of the world.

But this thirst, I can’t……….. while being indecisive, gorogorogoro a thundering sound to the east, a black cloud hangs over my head like a beast. [“Gourd Garden,” 35]

[How quaint, some say this place was a beautiful flower garden in the remote past, a cool eternal breeze carried through here before the night and swarms of snakes settled down. Let’s find the key to open this door together, and one after another, what kind of treasure will come out of there?” [“Shakyumuni,” 128]
While it may not be unreasonable for some poets to retrieve the past, and to even attempt to capture its spirit in some ways, to show that we rarely outlive it even, Hirato makes it more urbane vis-à-vis interruptions and distractions. It’s bricolage that uses everything at hand.

But should readers today simply appreciate these poems as period pieces, examples of universally admired literature, or models for their own bricolage? If we intellectually admire the poems, we don’t take seriously Hirato’s claim that his poems are “anti-concept,” poems of tactile sensation. If we take them as practical models we run the risk of reducing them to roadmaps for poetry (another Futurist no-no).

What do we think of this detail from “Ensemble” [68]:

As Gertrude Stein notes in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, writing is most exciting when its new. But these kinds of typographic experiments aren’t new anymore, even if they may still be exciting. However Hirato wasn’t writing for the newness of text itself, but to
note and create new sensations. The fact that Hirato didn’t affiliate himself with the poetry ghetto, academia, makes this proposition even more interesting: he considered himself to be writing a “proletarian poetry” — poetry for those, and by those, who labored for the rest.

Now, it’s tempting to want to write work for the audience, for “the people” or for some vague subset thereof (“das Man”). For anyone who wants to understand work like Hirato Renkichi’s, it might be necessary to think about who he was writing for (A: mostly a coterie of avant-garde poets), and what larger goals he had.

This doesn’t mean that we all get jobs at factories, but rather that the means of production doesn’t lie in admiration. Possibly, just possibly, the way to read Hirato Renkichi is to take its most exciting, and even admirable, aspects — internationalism and multilingualism, urban stimulation, a staccato history in which the past is impacted by and impacts the present (and more importantly, the future), as well as poetry for those who do the stimulating (the laborers) — and make it our own. Some already do this, but why not make more new sense in 2017 and beyond?
In the mythic confines of Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop’s house, a party guest is likely to admire the innumerable items on their shelves, walls, or floors at some point in a night’s visit. These items range from early books by Duncan and Dorn, seltzer water out of old-fashioned blue bottles, Keith’s own collages, and a mysterious black Easter egg.

When I asked Keith about the egg, he said, “Oh, that’s from Pam Rehm, but we’ve never opened it.”

“Does it have something in it,” I asked.

“Yes.”

John Taggart, on the back of The Garment In Which No One Had Slept, describes Rehm as “clothed in an intense hesitancy, a serious shyness.”

Does it have anything in it?

Yes.

Rehm describes her book, on the Burning Deck website, like this:

The poems are all experiments with form: all the dresses tried on. I was trying to feel through words in contrast to having a feeling and trying to describe it...just like myself, these poems are wanting without knowing what they want. They were my trying to figure out what to believe and where to begin. I was trying to stand, to understand all the movements inside my own body. I think the poems were my first questionings of what it means to be in relation.

The phrase, “in relation,” seems to echo Martin Buber in I and Thou:

Primary words do not signify things,
but they intimate relations.
Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence.

As a writer, I am often “wanting without knowing what I want,” and the only way to know is “to feel through words.” These intimations make relationships between people and things more apparent, but they also insist on the interrelationship of language and thing. At my worst, I forget the possibilities of English when the media appropriates words like “insurgency” over and over, in combination with words like “bombing.”¹ The media’s assumption and limiting of words’ meanings creates an opposition to the complexity of a language made various in its capacities throughout history.

Rehm unveils further modulations of language in her work. It’s as if she removes the governor that dictates how words move. As she wrote in “Of Single Intent,” from her book *Gone to Earth*, Rehm sees “the world within/the word begin” and must “be all curiosity.” The poet “bring[s] about existence,” as Buber might put it.

*The Garment In Which No One Had Slept*, which was pared down from longer thesis version at Brown University, was published twenty-four years ago, in 1993. Before this book, Rehm published two chapbooks, and she has since published *To Give It Up* (Sun & Moon, 1995), *Gone to Earth* (Flood Editions, 2001), *Small Works* (Flood Editions, 2005) and *The Larger Nature* (Flood Editions, 2011).

In addition to her published books, the spring of 1994 saw the ambitious *apex of the M* (1994-1997) appear with Rehm, Lew Daly, Kristen Prevallet, and Alan Gilbert as editors. By the fifth issue, Rehm and Daly moved into assistant editor roles. And by the sixth, the project came to an end.

The first issues contain editorial statements full of idealistic pronouncements: “We believe at this time that poetry must catalyze and aid in the sustainment of a passionate insurgency.” The editors hoped that following Dickinson, Melville, Stevens, and others that “a new understanding of their task as iconoclasts and not innovators will emerge.”

¹ This review was published in an earlier version during the Iraq War.
Dickinson defined “spirit” as “Conscious Ear.” The editors of apex of the M believed one must possess this spirit in order to resist “any language that creates or reflects the kinds of diversions and sedations required for the triumph of capital, [which] is, finally, a language of denial.”

Rehm’s resistance also reflects some uncertainty. She wrote in “THUS I FIND MY LEGS,” from The Garment In Which No One Slept:

We are paying for all of this unnecessary construction. Knowing this hasn’t seemed to move us into devotion or out onto the missile fields. We are afraid. To act.

This paralysis, especially our fear to act, will always be just under the surface. It rears its head in all we do, from forging a new poetics to operating as citizens in a country seemingly bent on destruction.

But love is central to the task of the iconoclast, and in Rehm’s case, this emotion “brings about existence.” In her book, To Give It Up, Rehm writes in the poem, “An Elegy On My Having Not Lived:”

All these thoughts I feel I cannot turn the silence from A reference is made from self to self, a simple suspension between letters For which the mind makes a face for and a heart And a part which can’t be reached but doesn’t stop it from reaching

Rehm is an iconoclast not because she is, at times, formally inventive but because she reaches for what can’t be seen. Her insurgency should become ours. Rehm is not the only one who must “figure out what to believe and where to begin.” Each of us must open our cabinets and break open the black egg that hides our conscious ear.²

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² Rosmarie has since opened the egg to find a slip of paper with the words, “surprise” and “Überraschung.”
CONTRIBUTORS
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**ALEXIS ALMEIDA** grew up in Chicago. Her poems and translations have appeared or are forthcoming in *Gulf Coast, Prelude, Dusie, Quarterly West, Flag + Void, Action Yes*, and elsewhere. She is an assistant editor at *Asymptote* and a contributing editor at *The Elephants*. Her chapbook of poems, *Half-Shine*, is recently out from Dancing Girl Press, and her translation of Florencia Castellano’s *Propiedades vigiladas* [Monitored Properties] is recently out from Ugly Duckling Presse. She recently spent the year living in Buenos Aires on a Fulbright research grant, where she has been compiling and co-translating an anthology of contemporary female poets living in Argentina.

**MARIA ATTANASIO** is the author of five collections of poetry and four works of historical fiction. Her latest work, *Il Falsario di Caltagirone* (The Forger of Caltagirone), has been the recipient of the prestigious Premio Vittorini. Her books of poetry are *Interni* (Interiors) (Milano: Guanda 1979), *Nero barocco nero* (Black Baroque Black) (Caltanissetta: Sciascia 1985), *Eros e mente* (Eros and Mind) (Milano: La Vita Felice 1996), *Ludica mente* (Ludic Mind, or Ludically) (Roma: Avagliano 2000), and *Amnesia del movimento delle nuvole* (Amnesia of the Movement of Clouds) (Milano: La Vita Felice 2003). Her works in prose include *Correva l’anno 1698 e nella città’ avvenne il fatto memorabile* (It Was the Year 1698 and in the City the Memorable Fact Occurred) (Palermo: Sellerio 1994) and *Di Concetta e le sue donne* (Of Concetta and Her Women) (Palermo: Sellerio 1999).

**GENNADY AYGI** was born in 1934, some 400 miles east of Moscow in a village in the Chuvash Republic. His first language was Chuvash, but after studying at the Literary Institute in Moscow he began to write in Russian, encouraged by his friend Boris Pasternak. This friendship, together with the unorthodox nature of his poetry, brought him much harassment, and his work remained unpublished in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s, but he was much published and translated outside Russia, being several times nominated for the Nobel Prize, and receiving literary prizes and awards in France, Italy and elsewhere. After *perestroika*, he began to be published and recognised at home, and was nominated the Chuvash national poet. Six volumes of his poetry have been published in English, including *Child-and-Rose* and *Field-Russia* with New Directions. The selections included in this issue are excerpted from the collection *Time of Gratitude*, forthcoming from New Directions. He died in 2006 and is buried in his native Shaymurzino.
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TANELLA BONI is a poet, novelist, essayist, and philosopher. Born in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast, Boni did her advanced studies in Toulouse, France and at the University of Paris (Paris-IV, Sorbonne), returning to the Ivory Coast as a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cocody-Abidjan (now the University of Félix Houphouët-Boigny). She served as President of the Writers’ Association of Côte d’Ivoire from 1991 to 1997. Boni self-exiled to France when attention to her 2004 novel Matins de couvre-feu (Mornings after curfew) began to isolate her from others in the academic and literary communities of the Ivory Coast and to generate a sense of threat from the political party (the Ivorian Popular Front) in power. That novel received the Ahmadou Kourouma Prize in 2005. In 2009 she won the Antonio Viccaro International Poetry Prize. In 2013 Boni tentatively returned to Abidjan, splitting time between there and Paris.

AMAL DUNQUL (1940-1983) was born in Qena in Upper Egypt, completing his secondary school education before enrolling at Cairo University, though he never attended, working instead for the Qena courts of justice before making his way north to Suez, Alexandria and then Cairo. Dunqul is one of the most important political poets to shape modernist Arabic verse, and drew on a wide range of traditions, including the Bible, ancient Islamic and pre-Islamic texts, and Greek and Roman history, to construct powerful and moving critiques of Egypt’s socio-political reality, the most widely known of them directed at President Sadat’s policies of “open-door” market liberalisation and normalization with Israel. He
published six collections of poetry in his lifetime, to which his unpublished and uncollected poems were added as part of a Complete Works issued after his untimely death from cancer. His 1975 collection *The Testament To Come* comprises two poems, *The Book of Genesis* and *The Book of Exodus*, which take as their subject socio-economic injustice and revolution, with the latter, more famous poem, also known as *The Song of The Stone Cake*, recounting the suppression of a student protest in 1972.

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**Norman Fischer** is a poet, essayist, and Zen Buddhist priest. A graduate of the University of Iowa Writer’s Workshop, his latest poetry collections are *any would be if* (Chax, 2016) *Magnolias All At Once* (Singing Horse, 2015) *Escape This Crazy Life of Tears: Japan 2010* (Tinfish, 2014). His latest prose works are *What Is Zen? Plain Talk for a Beginner’s Mind* (Shambhala Press, 2016), and *Experience: Thinking, Writing, Language and Religion* (University of Alabama Press, 2015). He lives in Muir Beach, north of San Francisco, within sight of the Pacific.

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**YĀQŪT** (d. 626 A.H./1229 CE) took the surname of Ḥamawī from the merchant who bought and raised him in the city of Baghdad. Because he was born on the Byzantine side of the Muslim frontier, he is sometimes called al-Rūmī (“The Greek”). In his master’s service, he traveled widely, and after gaining manumission he supported himself as a copyist while studying throughout Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Khurasan. He was a first-hand witness to the Mongol occupation of the Muslim East, fleeing the city of Merv just ahead of its destruction in 1221 CE. Yāqūt is best known for two great reference works that have never gone out of use: the geographical *Mu’jam al-buldān* (Dictionary of Named Places) and the biographical *Mu’jam al-udabā’* (Dictionary of the Scholars). The sapphire and the ruby belong to a genus of gemstone (called corundum in English) that in Arabic is called yāqūt.

Chinese poet **OUYANG JIANGHE** 欧阳江河 (b. 1956), known as one of the “Five Masters from Sichuan,” is also a prominent critic of music, art, and literature, and president of the literary magazine Jintian. His poetry volumes *Doubled Shadows* and *Phoenix*, translated by Austin Woerner, have been published by Zephyr Press. He now lives in Beijing, where he is a professor of creative writing at Beijing Normal University.

**HAGIWARA KYOJIRO** (1899-1938) was a radical Japanese anarchist and DADA poet. He was an essential part of avant-garde poetry coteries and artist groups during the Taisho and early Showa eras, including Aka to Kuro (Red and Black) and MAVO. His first book, *Death Sentence* (1925), fused spatialized poetry with linocuts and mixed-media collages. He died of hemolytic anemia when he was 40 years old.

A recipient of four Fulbright Fellowships, **JOHN HIGH** has received grants from the Nation-
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**DAVID LARSEN**’s translation of Abū ʿĀmir al-Jurjānī’s cat poem first appeared on his blog Writing Gathering Field, where it is the second most-viewed post to date. For vital assistance with Abū ʿĀmir’s poem in praise of the officer Abu ʿI-Faḍl, he thanks Dr. Geert Jan van Gelder. Larsen’s translations of Classical Arabic verse have recently appeared in the
Brian Lucas’s books include Eclipse Babel (Ensemble Editions, 2015) and Circles Matter (BlazeVox, 2012) among others. His paintings were featured in the exhibitions Dark Star: Abstraction and Cosmos (Planthouse, NYC) and Divine Invasions (Krowswork, Oakland). He plays bass in Dire Wolves and lives in Oakland, CA.

Originally from Strasbourg, France, François Luong lives in San Francisco, where he writes, translates, draws, and designs. With Geneva Chao, he has translated Nicolas Tardy’s Encrusted on the Living ([Ix] Press, 2016). He has also translated the works of Esther Tellermann, François Turcot, Rémi Froger, and other poets from France and Québec.

Chantal Maillard (Brussels, 1951) is a Spanish-language poet and philosopher. A former professor of aesthetics at the University of Málaga, she has published several award-winning collections of poetry, as well as travel diaries, plays, translations, literary criticism and works on Eastern philosophy. Killing Plato received Spain’s Premio Nacional de Poesía in 2004.

Osip Mandelstam was born in 1891 in Warsaw to a well-to-do Jewish family. He studied in the Sorbonne and at Heidelberg before finishing his education in St. Petersburg. In 1913 he published his first book, Stone, after having founded Acmeism (a movement set up in opposition to both Symbolism and Futurism). After the Civil War and the emergence of the new Soviet state, unwilling to change his writing for the sake of the Socialist cause, Mandelstam was marginalized as a cultural figure. For a time, he survived with the help of such political and literary figures as Nikolai Bukharin and Boris Pasternak. In 1934 Stalin sent Mandelstam into exile, eventually to the city of Voronezh in central Russia because of a poem in which the poet depicted the dictator’s body in the language of “worms” and “cockroaches.” “One gets it in the balls,” Mandelstam wrote of Stalin’s victims, “the other in the forehead, one split between the eyes.” After interrogations, prisons, exile, and two attempted suicides, Mandelstam died in a transit camp near Vladivostok on December 27, 1938. In 2008, Osip Mandelstam was posthumously acknowledged with commemorative statues in Moscow and Voronezh on the 70th anniversary of his death.
**STAN MIR**, poet and critic, is a frequent contributor to *Hyperallergic Weekend*. He is also the author of *Song & Glass* (Subito Press, 2010) and *The Lacustrine Suite* (Pavement Saw Press, 2011).

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**JOSÉ ANTONIO RAMOS SUCRE** (Cumaná, Venezuela, 1890 – Geneva, Switzerland, 1930) was a poet, scholar, teacher and diplomat. His work was rescued and championed by the
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HECTOR RUIZ hold a master’s degree in creative writing from the University du Québec à Montréal. He is the author of three collections of poetry and one book-length essay with Éditions du Noroît. His poems have been translated into English in New American Writing, Action, Yes!, and Arc Poetry Magazine.

KIT SCHLUTER is coeditor of O’clock Press and translator of published & forthcoming books from the French, Occitan, and Spanish of Amandine André, Anne Kawala, Clamenç Llansana, Jaime Saenz, Marcel Schwob, and Michel Surya. His writing can be found in BOMB, Boston Review, Folder, Hyperallergic, and in numerous chapbooks. He lives in Mexico City and is currently on fellowship with the National Endowment for the Arts for further translation of Marcel Schwob.

MARCEL SCHWOB (1867-1905) was a French symbolist author, remembered for his numerous and varied short stories, literary monographs, newspaper chronicles of fin-de-siècle Paris, and linguistic tracts on medieval slang, much of which sprang from his fabled devotion to archival research. While his work has fallen into relative obscurity, it was hailed in his day by writers as various as Colette, Remy de Gourmont, Stéphane Mallarmé, Jules Renard, and Robert Louis Stevenson, and the personal influence of his writing has been noted and explored by a number of modern luminaries, including Roberto Bolaño, Jorge Luis Borges, Italo Calvino, and Fleur Jaeggy. The two stories featured here are part of his previously-untranslated 1892 collection, The King in the Golden Mask, forthcoming from Wakefield Press in Schluter’s translation.

JULIAN SEMILIAN is an experimental filmmaker, film editor, teacher, poet, translator, and novelist. He was born in Romania and has been teaching film editing and experimental cinema at the University North Carolina School of the Arts, School of Filmmaking, for the last 19 years, following a career as a film editor in Hollywood, where he worked on more than 50 movies and TV shows.

AHMED SHAFIE (born 1977 in Sharqiya, Egypt) is a poet and novelist and a translator of contemporary and 20th century English-language poetry and prose into Arabic. He is the author of three poetry collections, A Sidestreet Ending at a Fountain (The General Authority for Cultural Palaces, 2000), And Other Poems (Nahda, 2009), and ”77 (Kotob Khan, 2017)
and two novels, *Sousou’s Journey* (The General Authority for Cultural Palaces, 2003) and *
The Creator* (Kotob Khan, 2013). His prolific translation work encompasses poetry, short stories, and novels and includes work by Simic, Billy Collins, Lucille Clifton, Alice Munro, Russel Edson, Andre Brink, and an anthology of Afro-American poetry. He lives in Cairo.

**Yvette Siegert** is a poet and translator based in Switzerland. Her work has received support from PEN Heim/NYSCA, Programa SUR and the National Endowment for the Arts. She is a 2017 CantoMundo fellow and is currently a graduate student in Romance languages and literatures at the University of Geneva.

**Eleni Sikelianos** is the author of eight books of poetry, most recently *Make Yourself Happy* and *The Loving Detail of the Living & the Dead* (Coffee House, 2013), and two hybrid memoirs (*The Book of Jon*, City Lights, and *You Animal Machine*, Coffee House). Sikelianos has been the happy recipient of various awards for her poetry, nonfiction, and translations, including two National Endowment for the Arts Awards and the National Poetry Series, and her work has been widely translated and anthologized. She has taught poetry in public schools, homeless shelters, and prisons, and collaborated with musicians (Philip Glass, Sandra Wong, etc.), filmmakers (Ed Bowes) and visual artists (Peter Cole, Mel Chin, etc.).

**Sébastien Smirou** is the author of three poetry volumes from the Parisian publisher P.O.L.: *Un temps pour s’étreindre* (2011), *Beau voir* (2008), and *Mon Laurent* (2003). His prose meditation *Un temps pour se séparer : notes sur Robert Capa* was recently released by Éditions Hélium. The recipient of numerous awards, including a Bourse de découverte from the Centre national du Livre and a fellowship from the Conseil Régional d’Ille de France, Smirou participated in the Mission Stendhal sponsored by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. He has translated several American poets into French and founded éditions rup&rud, whose chapbook series has been reprinted by Éditions de l’Attente as *rup&rud: l’intégrale, 1999-2004*. A psychoanalyst, Smirou has translated, from the Italian, Antonino Ferro’s *Rêveries* (2012) and Domenico Chianese and Andreina Fontana’s *Immaginando* (2014), both for Éditions Ithaque. He is currently a literature fellow at the Villa de Medici in Rome.

**Matt Turner** (b. 1974, Omaha) is a writer who lives in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Writings of his can be found in *Hyperallergic Weekend, Dispatches, Jacket2, Entropy, Spolia*, and in the anthology *Resist Much, Obey Little* (Spuyten Duyvil). His translation of Lu Xun’s 1927 book of prose poetry, *Wild Grass*, is forthcoming from Shanghai’s Seaweed Salad Editions.

**Urmuz** (Romanian pronunciation: [urˈmuz], pen name of Demetru Dem. Demetrescu-Buzău, 1883 – 1923) was a Romanian writer, lawyer and civil servant, who became a cult hero in Romania’s avant-garde scene. His work, *Bizarre Pages*, consisting of absurdist short prose and poetry, opened a new genre in Romanian letters and humor, and captured the imagination of modernists for several generations. He committed suicide upon the publication of *Bizarre Pages*.

**Ilarie Voronca** (born Eduard Marcus, 1903-1946) was born into a middle class Jewish family in Brăila. He occupies a central position in the history of the Romanian literary avant-garde during the nineteen twenties and thirties. In the 1930s he moved to Paris. During the war he became part of the French resistance. He committed suicide in 1946 soon after completing his last work, *Manual For Perfect Happiness*.


**Jane Wong**’s poems can be found in anthologies and journals such as *Best American Poetry 2015, Best New Poets 2012, Pleiades, Third Coast*, and others. A Kundiman fellow, she is the recipient of scholarships and fellowships from the U.S. Fulbright Program, the Fine Arts Work Center, Squaw Valley, and the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference. Along with three chapbooks, she is the author of the book *Overpour* (Action Books, 2016). This fall, she will be an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Western Washington University.

**Matvei Yankelevich** is the author of three books and several chapbooks. His translations include *Today I Wrote Nothing: The Selected Writings of Daniil Kharms* (Overlook), and (with Eugene Ostashevsky) Alexander Vvedensky’s *An Invitation for Me to Think* (NYRB Poets), which received a National Translation Award. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts. He is a founding editor of Ugly Duckling Presse, and teaches at Columbia University’s School of the Arts and the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

**Maged Zaher**’s collected poems was published by Chatwin Press in 2017.
ANDREW ZAWACKI is the author of the poetry books Videotape (Counterpath), Petals of Zero Petals of One (Talisman House), Anabranch (Wesleyan), and By Reason of Breakings (Georgia). His translation of Sébastien Smirou, My Lorenzo (Burning Deck), received a French Voices Grant, while his translation of Smirou’s See About, due from La Presse this fall, earned an NEA Translation Fellowship and a fellowship from the Centre National du Livre. A former fellow of the Slovenian Writers’ Association, Zawacki edited Afterwards: Slovenian Writing 1945-1995 (White Pine) and edited and co-translated Aleš Debeljak’s Without Anesthesia: New and Selected Poems (Persea). He was recently awarded a poetry fellowship from The Howard Foundation to complete his latest manuscript, “f/11.”