



Bates International Poetry Festival

2010
translations

Edited by Claudia Aburto Guzmán

Bates

translations

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Bates College
Lewiston, ME 04240

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Editor: Claudia Aburto Guzmán
Design and photography: William Ash, Bates Imaging and Computing Center

ISBN : 978-0-9769921-0-3

In memory of
Oleg Woolf
1954–2011

translations

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Translations: Bates International Poetry Festival is the inspiration of Claudia Aburto Guzmán, Associate Professor of Spanish at Bates. The project was designed to relocate poetry as a sensitive register for cultural transmission and translation as key to cultural interaction. This E-book documents the 2010 festival. The work of nine poets from around the world, the translations of the work by the poets, Bates faculty and students, and a selection of articles and essays giving greater insight into the scope of the project can be found in this volume.

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translations Collaboration in an Academic Setting

"Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has
the courage to lose sight of the shore."

Andre Gide

We live in an era of unprecedented opportunities and immense challenges. Our world takes a sustained commitment to knowledge in all of its forms if we are to advance self determination, develop vital and healthy communities, and understand our shared humanity. We must have the courage and the intellect to think in bold new ways if we are to succeed in these times. As institutions of higher learning, the Academy not only has the challenge of meeting these demands in ourselves, as faculty, but also we have the task of creating in other persons—our students—the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind for them to independently come to know, value, and be confident in proceeding forward into the world as educated people; persons who will themselves create knowledge, apply that knowledge, and transform that knowledge, at least at times, into wisdom and often into constructive acts.

Learning in this way is not something that springs forth in a unitary, unexamined, concrete form. Ideally, learning is best if it is multidimensional, engaging all of our senses; if it is capacious, inviting exploration of the similarities and differences that confront us; if it is collaborative, crossing the boundaries of disciplines juxtaposed across an undulating landscape of ideas, forms, and perspectives. Moreover, this kind of learning must be deliberate, it must be practiced. It can be frustrating as well as exhilarating. And, ultimately, it must become a habit, not only of the intellect but of the heart and the spirit.

Through the poems that follow and the lives that created them, we want to challenge you to use your mind, your heart and your spirit as we seek to nurture your passion to engage in the transformative power of our differences as a means to intellectual discovery and principled actions.

Jill N. Reich

translations

In 2009, after a two-year hiatus from teaching, I stepped back into the classroom and promptly faced my students' declaration that poetry was dead. Being from Latin America where, as the popular saying goes, "there's a poet under every rock," I knew this to be untrue—at least in Latin America. However my students' stance, on which they were too happy to elaborate, prompted serious contemplation on my part. The reticence to accept the relevance of poetry could be a matter of global location, I thought. Among other things it could also be the pedagogical convenience of reading dead poets in the classroom.

In light of my own research interests, in the following pages I elaborate on these two possibilities. The intersection between global location and poetry implies the function given to poetry, which in turn may determine aesthetic choices, as well as content or theme. The array of questions a poet may wish to address vary greatly depending on the place of origin, where they are located geographically, and from what intellectual and creative location they are writing. In other words, whether the questions arise from the urgency of a warring state, as evident in the poetry of Omar Ahmed from Somalia included here, or whether it arises from engaging the conundrums that are the outcomes of historical events, as we see in the poetry of Lothar Quinkenstein from Germany, global location (physical or imaginative) has great input in the poetic expression.

Engaging geographical location means also engaging the different culture and language, history and socio-political structure that is embedded in the place addressed by the poet. When reading the work of the poets mentioned above, we can see that it is a far cry from the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro's early 20th century declaration of the poet as a *pequeño dios*, "demi-god," if we were thinking within the parameters of Greek myth. Huidobro's declaration is read again and again in Spanish programs' literary courses; unfortunately, his stance has become

as foreign to Latin Americans as to the students in my classroom. As a result of historical events, as well as changes in literary practice, Huidobro, whose stance revealed an alliance with literary expressions originating in the global core, is a dead poet read mostly in the classroom. This is contrary to poets such as Pablo Neruda, Nicanor Parra, Ernesto Cardenal, Giaconda Belli, and Nancy Morejón (to name a few from the Latin American cannon), who living or dead continue to engage readers, in part due to how they grappled the questions originating from their place of origin. The function given to their poetry does not belie literary movements—a study approach prevalent in the classroom—literary innovation is not absent, but neither are the questions that arise and are constructed according to global location.

When contemplating today's poetic expression, it is clear that the so-called "universal questions" are formulated according to the poet's locale. For example, how someone brought up under Pinochet's dictatorship like Cristián Gómez, the Chilean poet included here, seeks an answer to the age-old question "what is life" is vastly different from the manner the question is faced by French poet Emeric de Monteynard who addresses the question (or is it a reframing of the question) from the wisdom of the trees, or as a rescue of the beauty spoken by nature. Taking the above into consideration, it may be said that today's poets may re-assert the much deconstructed notion of "universal questions," but that our current understanding of identity differences permits us to underscore the key role that global location and the particular socio-political structure of each locale plays in the way of the question and in the poetic outcome. The act of reading poetry therefore includes the possibility of being not only a study of the literary inscriptions or conventions within the text, but also an entry into what the geographer Harm de Blij refers to as "the power of place" (with an emphasis on the rough landscape of difference).

The awareness of this difference brings into focus the act of translation. Translation not only in terms of the more-commonly referred to linguistic practice of rendering a work in a language other than its original, but also in terms closer to its Latin etymological root *translatius* and its prefix *trans*, to move across or to another side, "relocate" (something or someone) from a point of origin to a secondary point or state. For our purposes, the focus is on relocating what may be thought of as a blueprint of understanding (i.e. culture and the socio-political infrastructure that sustains or contains, as it is embedded in a work); that is, communicating the complexity of the layout of said blueprint, the eventual layers that will comprise the three-dimensional structure, without deforming, erasing, or allowing the collapse of the original structure when attempting to make it "fit" into another. How can we communicate the questions that drive the poets, which are but implied by the poem, when the poems have reformulated and restructured the questions according to a different blueprint of understanding. Are the questions decipherable from a mere reading of the poem?

Reading through difference is a difficult endeavor. The more entrenched the stereotypes and misconceptions of *the other* whose work is being read, the more

the act of reading may become an act of resistance on part of the reader. Therefore, when this endeavor is taken up in the classroom, an entire class period may be spent on first understanding how these misconceptions form part of our particular socio-cultural blueprint; on deconstructing our biases; on how these limit the possibilities of understanding an author's writing locale. If the work has been diligently done, the foreign text and the blueprint it houses may be laid-out on top of the reader's whose job now is to attempt to understand without feeling threatened by the differences the text underscores.

When in front of a poetic text, the work above is that much more intricate. The implied questions, at times, become the unprinted legend on the text; the text the key to the locale; the locale, the global location which we are asked to get to know through our screen of misconceptions. Poetry, more than other literary genres, requires time; time to decipher the legend; to read through the differences; time to write our notes on the border as we make adjustments to our socio-cultural blueprint. Unfortunately, time is what our students seem not to have. Yet, poets and poetry in today's rough global landscape (to borrow de Blij's phraseology) are a relevant pedagogical tool in our endeavor to understand the power of place and our responsibility in this global landscape.

How then to underscore the relationship between poetry and the global landscape? After contemplating the question for a semester and asking my students to write poetry (some who demonstrated great talent, even in their second language) I realized that I was not taking into account my own students' locale as members of the global core: highly technological, visually and aurally sophisticated. Therefore, in order to engage the student reader of poetry, we had to animate the process. By compressing the signs into a performative act, we would be engaging today's generation's considerable visual and aural skills. Ironically, I looked back in time and towards the global periphery for answers. In the global periphery, poets still function as the voice of the people, historians, messengers, prophets, even "superstars." Most importantly, when they read their poetry, they do so live and in front of the people. International Poetry Festivals, such as the one held in Medellin, Colombia, have been known to restore hope as people gather and listen to poets *poner en voz*—"put in voice," as the Colombian scholar Enrique Yepes has coined—their messages of peace. My hopes, however, were much less ambitious. With an International Poetry Festival, I hoped to make poetry pedagogically relevant to my students, elucidate its potential in the study of differences through acts of translation, and emphasize its key role in articulating global location.

Translations 2010: International Poetry Festival took place in early November at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. In short, the festival aimed at achieving three points: (1) highlight differences of place by focusing mainly, but not exclusively,

on poetry not written in English; (2) underscore cultural exchange by bringing the translation process to the classroom; (3) root the Festival in its locale, Lewiston, Maine. Therefore, in addition to the poets mentioned above, the Russian poet Irina Mashinski, the Chinese poet Guangxin Zhao, the Spanish poet Ana Merino brought with them physical, linguistic, artistic, performative cues that spoke of differences of place, and the Franco-American poet Susann Pelletier rooted us in the Franco-American heritage of Maine. The poets read in the original language, and the experience of listening to a poet in the language within which he or she creates was revealing, moving and eye-opening even to the poets themselves. This was made obvious to me when the Chilean poet remarked on how compelling the Somali poet's reading had been. The performance had added gravitas, emotional depth to the translated poem projected in the background. The cadence, tone, dignity that underscored Omar Ahmed's performance spoke of the poet's role in the Somali culture as a teacher, a wise man, a vessel of memory. In short, each poet brought to the festival a blueprint of their global location.

The performances were accompanied by the poet's global trajectory, a visual cue using Google earth, which was projected in the background during the poets' presentations. The viewers were able to see the *translatatus*, the relocation, the poets experienced in order to arrive at their present location, both physical and creative. The visual cues achieved through technology made the festival an event where cross-cultural exchanges could take place. The poets' works, whose translations by Bates faculty and students were projected in the background as the poets read, were no longer a mere classroom activity but rather, a bridge to the performer and his or her locale.

In the following pages we have provided the poets' works, the written translations, still images of their global trajectory, the art portraits designed by our festival photographer, and three essays by the faculty of the Languages Departments at Bates who were involved in the translating processes of the texts. However, this text when seen in conjunction with the Festivals web site, gives insight into what was really accomplished. The project engaged the talent of individuals in all sectors of the College, faculty, staff, and students, who helped make the Festival and its surrounding activities possible. In this respect the International Poetry Festival became a symbol of collaboration very much like the Festival in Medellin, which brings together different factions of the city. I am grateful to the faculty on the Mellon grant committee who believed in this project, and to all the contributors who gave so much of their time and freely offered their talent. This project was made possible by a generous Mellon Innovation Grant, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, the Imaging and Computing Center, and the Languages Departments and Programs of Bates College.

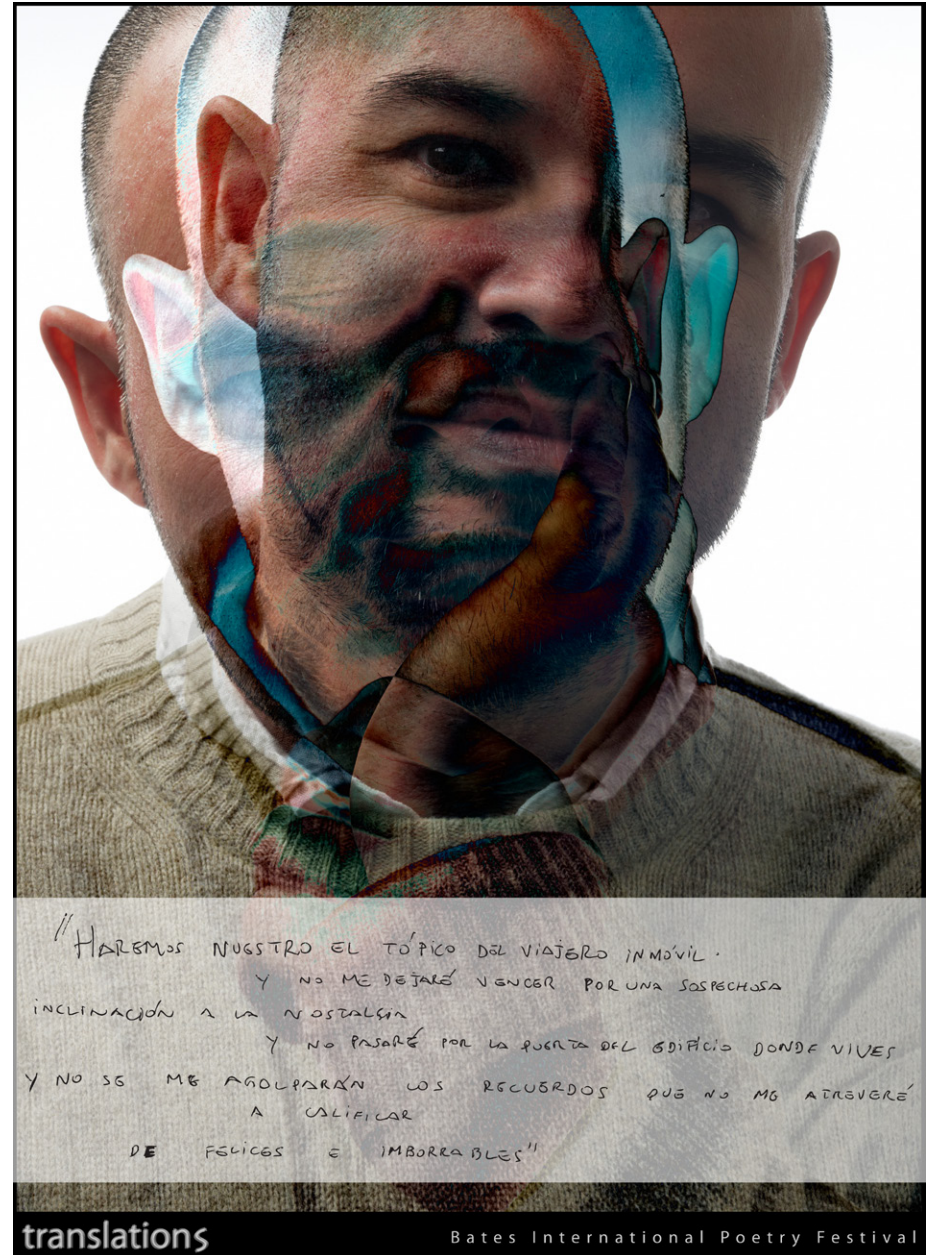
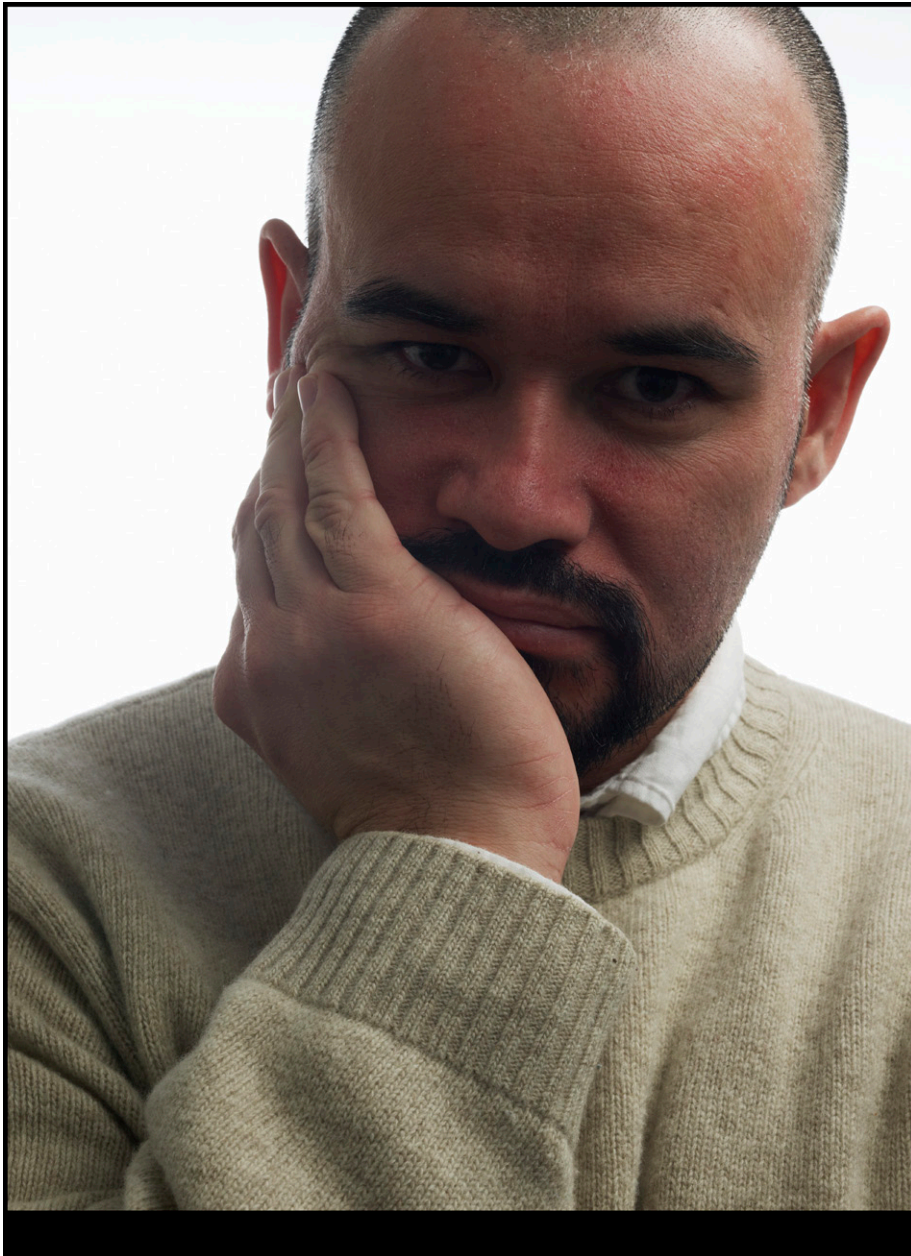
Claudia Aburto Guzmán

Chile

Cristián Gómez Olivares

Cristián Gómez Olivares, Chilean poet, translator, and critic, has published, among other titles, *Homenaje a Chester Kallman* (Luces de Gálibo, Málaga, Spain 2010), *Alfabeto para nadie* (Fuga, Santiago 2008), *Como un ciego en una habitación a oscuras* (FONCA, México 2005), *Pie quebrado* (Amarú, Salamanca, Spain 2004), and *Inessa Armand* (La Calabaza del Diablo, Santiago 2003). In co-editorship with Monica de la Torre, he published *Malditos latinos, malditos sudacas* (El billar de Lucrecia, México 2009), an Iberianamerican anthology of poetry written in the United States, and, together with Germán Carrasco, he published *Al tiro. Panorama de la nueva poesía chilena* (VOX, Bahía Blanca 2001). He was a member of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 2002 and was part of the Taller de Poesía de la Fundación Pablo Neruda in 1991. In 2004 he received the VII Premio Iberoamericano de Poesía Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, sponsored by the Embassy of Mexico in Costa Rica. In 2003 he received the Premio de Poesía Víctor Jara from the Editorial Amarú, Salamanca, Spain. In 2002 he received the award “El vino y la poesía,” sponsored by Fundación Pablo Neruda, Revista de Libros El Mercurio, and Viñedos Sutil. He is married and the father of two girls.





"HAREMOS NUESTRO EL TÓPICO DEL VIAJERO INMÓVIL.
Y NO ME DEJARÉ VENCER POR UNA SOSPECHOSA
INCLINACIÓN A LA NOSTALGIA
Y NO PASARÉ POR LA PUERTA DEL EDIFICIO DONDE VIVES
Y NO SE ME AGOLPARÁN LOS RECUERDOS QUE NO ME ATRAVESÉ
A USIFICAR
DE FELICES E IMBORRABLES"

translations

Bates International Poetry Festival

No necesitamos de los moteles más que para fantasear

(una afirmación a pesar de todo)

Sólo tengo que enfrentarme a una mujer de carne y hueso.
 Su sombra está dibujada contra la pared. Suele acompañarme
 a estos lugares más por solidaridad que oficio. Se muestra
 indiferente ante el color de las paredes. Recupera la
 memoria cuando se enciende el televisor. Cuelga
 su cartera en el closet hasta ese entonces vacío.
 Y las camareras son prudentes al traernos
 algo de comer. No esquivan la mirada pero
 agradecen las propinas. Y cuando nos preguntan
 si vamos a quedarnos otra hora afuera está empezando
 a amanecer y cualquier pareja medianamente sensata
 daría una respuesta negativa. Los ruidos de la pieza
 de al lado parecen proferidos en una lengua extranjera
 imposible de traducir a esta hora de la madrugada

*(y de la cual sería preferible no olvidarse
 en caso de que tuviéramos que emitir esa misma
 clase de sonidos sin despertar sospechas entre la multitud
 de esos guardias que nos rodean pero nunca llevan uniforme.)*

No se equivocaban los maestros

(museo de bellas artes, versión libre)

Alguien cree estar escribiendo en el fin del mundo,
 pero no puede negar que el camión de los helados
 está pasando nuevamente por el parque donde
 los niños se arremolinan a su alrededor y la

descripción del paisaje no ha cambiado
 porque el ojo del que mira no ha cambiado:
 confía impertérrito en que el mundo es una
 catástrofe tranquila, una reunión de nubes

We Need Motels Only to Fantasize

(An affirmation in spite of everything)

I have only to face a woman in the flesh.
 Her shadow is drawn against the wall. Se comes with me
 to these places more in solidarity than in service. Seems
 uninterested in the color of the walls. Recovers her memory
 with the sound of television. Hangs
 her purse in the closet, empty thus far.
 And the waitresses are discreet when bringing
 something to eat. They don't avoid our eyes but
 appreciate the tip. And when they ask
 if we're staying another hour, dawn is breaking
 outside, and any sensible couple
 would say no. The sounds from the room
 next door seem uttered in a foreign language
 impossible to translate at this time of morning

*(a language we'd do well to remember
 in case we had to make that very type
 of sounds to remain trusty to the crowd
 of always vigilant guards who don't wear uniforms)*

Translation workshops: Spanish 301

The Masters Were Never Wrong

(Museum of Fine Arts, free version)

Someone believed to be writing from the end of the earth
 who can't deny that the ice cream truck
 is passing through the park again where
 the children swarm around it, and the

description of the landscape hasn't changed
 Because the eye of the beholder hasn't changed
 trusts unshaken that the world is a
 calm catastrophe, that a gathering of clouds

diríase que de paso por el cielo
sería el único argumento convincente
para encerrarnos a conversar en un café
:de cualquier cosa, menos de las nubes.

Nadie tiene ganas de salvarse de nada
pero sí de tomarse un par de chelas, de
las últimas profecías sobre algún remoto
apocalipsis las palabras tienen poco que

decir: las danzas de la muerte, un anillo
en el dedo de los que no alcanzan a apretarse
el cinturón, aunque nada tengo en ello que
ver la improbable falta de presupuesto:

y es cierto que no sabemos distinguir
como le gusta enrostrarnos a los catedráticos
de las plazas máspreciadas entre el cierzo
y el mistral, ok: touché. Así decía mi hermano

cuando hacíamos esgrima con palos de escoba
y terminaba sacándome cresta y media cuando
a los dos se nos pasaba la mano con el ardor de
los guerreros: él moriría poco después, tendido

en una cancha de fútbol, mordiendo no sé
si con desesperación el pasto, de seguro
ya inconsciente, producto de una falla en
el ventrículo derecho del conjunto arterial.

El camión de los helados pasa haciendo sonar
la sirena, los niños están a punto de alcanzarlo y
el conductor sólo piensa en lo fácil que será entregarle
las planillas al supervisor del turno de las mañanas.

seeming to pass through the sky
would be the only convincing reason
to shut ourselves up and converse in a café:
about anything but the clouds.

No one wants to save himself
but maybe he'll drink a few beers,
words have little to say about the
last prophecies of a remote apocalypse:

Death's looming presence, a ring
on the finger of those who can't seem to tighten
their belts, although it has nothing to do
with the unlikely lack of budget.

And it's certain that we don't know how to distinguish
how the professors of the most esteemed establishments
like to lecture us on differences between the
Cierzo¹ and Mistral², ok: touché. So my brother said

When we would fence with broomsticks
until I was soundly beaten when
our hands were seized with the ardor
of warriors: he would die a little later, lying

on the soccer field, gnashing
desperately at the grass, surely already
unconscious, because of a failure in
his right ventricle.

The ice cream truck passes by, playing it's
jingle, the children are almost there and
the driver is only thinking of how easy it will be to report
his earnings to the supervisor of the morning shift.

Trans. Alexandria Alberto and Andy Wood

Qué inacabable empieza

El mar se demuestra pero nadando.
Los granjeros de la zona, al hacer la
cosecha del maíz, tienen que tener cuidado
de no electrocutarse con los cables del tendido
eléctrico, derribados durante el último tornado.
Al subirse a sus tractores comprados con un largo
crédito que terminarán de pagar sus hijos, no debieran

estar tocando el suelo. Las estadísticas dicen
que después de una tormenta los índices de
accidentes laborales se incrementan en un
doscientos por ciento, lo que da una cifra
anual de un catorce por ciento acumulado
en las últimas dos décadas. Las razones

(dicen los que saben) se pueden atribuir
al aumento de la actividad meteorológica
debido fundamentalmente a la deforestación
de vastas zonas del área norte y a que las
cosechas, sobreexplotadas por los biocombustibles,
son cada vez más difíciles de cubrir por un sólo
operario encargado de una cantidad creciente de
acres. Como los cultivos orgánicos demandan

al menos dos o tres años manteniendo intacta la tierra,
durante ese tiempo el pequeño propietario no recibe
ninguna entrada, cero ingreso, lo que le significaría
sobre endeudarse por echarse el destino del planeta
sobre los hombros. Sus dos hijas salen a jugar al patio
y él se pone a pensar en cuando sean grandes, en la
universidad, en crecerlas. Hace cálculos, ve venir
los años, una de ellas vuelve con un pájaro entre las
manos: tiene un ala medio rota, pero quizás tal vez
se salve. Y cuando lo llevan adentro, cuando lo
comienzan a cuidar, las niñas vuelven con sus hijos,

Such an Endless Beginning

The sea only explains itself to those who swim.
When the farmers of the region harvest
the corn they have to be careful
not to electrocute themselves on the wires
brought down during the last tornado.
They climb up onto their tractors, purchased on long-term
credit that their children will finish paying for, because they shouldn't

be touching the ground. Statistics show
that the rate of industrial accidents increases
by two hundred percent after a storm,
which amounts to an annual sum
of fourteen percent of all the accidents accumulated
in the last two decades. The reasons

(experts say) can be attributed
to the increase in meteorological activity
caused by the deforestation
of vast northern areas and to the fact that
the farmers must work harder each year to
harvest a growing quantity of acres.
Because the cultivation of organic crops requires

that the soil lay undisturbed for at least two or three years,
during this time the small farmer doesn't receive
any income, which is what it means
to go into debt for shouldering the weight of the world.
The farmer's two daughters go out to play on the patio
and he thinks about raising them, watching them grow up
and go to college. As he does calculations, seeing the years
come and go, one of them returns with a bird in her
hands: it has a broken wing, but perhaps they
can save it. When he brings it inside and
begins to care for it, the girls come back with their children,

se sientan a conversar con el abuelo que puede que
 otra vez les repita esa historia sabida de memoria
 en las sobremesas de la familia, de cuando era joven
 y le gustaba nadar y un día llevó muy lejos a la abuela,
 hasta las playas de North Carolina para que ella conociera el mar
 y se decidiera por fin a casarse con un joven granjero del interior
 que recién había heredado un pedazo de la tierra y ni siquiera
 sabía como se arreglan los tractores, para que ella conociera
 el mar y le tuviera el mismo respeto que le tienen los marinos
 que nunca han sabido nadar ni tampoco necesitan aprender
 porque el mar no se explica ni se demuestra sino es con un par
 de estas palabras que lo miran desde el muelle golpear el muelle,
 da lo mismo que suba o que baje la marea los botes amarrados
 sólo esperan que amanezca para seguir estando allí amarrados.

Funámbula

Yo me he quedado mudo en la vida, y han pasado los días.
 Los días pasaban, unos tras otros, como los vagones de un tren.
 Nadie los esperaba en la estación. Nadie agitaba sus manos en el aire
 porque aún no se usaban ni las despedidas ni las bienvenidas en nuestro
 país ni se daban las gracias de antemano cuando nadie necesitaba darlas.
 Han llegado

hasta nosotros los frutos de la primavera, pero no la primavera. Tiéndete
 desnuda sobre la hierba, como una más de las palabras. Ni siquiera las obras
 completas de Balzac te podrían dar una imagen verdadera de lo que fue
 esa Francia decimonónica, realista, monetiana: tiéndete entonces y desayuna
 despreocupada del contraste entre tu piel y el telón de fondo dibujado
 por el bosque y el traje de tus acompañantes:

comparado con aparecer en el salón oficial de los rechazados
 poco son y despreciable gloria esos palmoteos en la espalda empuñando
 por si acaso algún puñal como quien consciente de tu futuro esplendor
 y dese mar que en tus cuadros tranquilo baña tus aguas

and after dinner they sit to chat
 with their grandfather, who once again
 repeats the story they all know by heart, about when he was young
 and he liked to swim and one day brought their grandmother
 to the far off beaches of North Carolina so that she could know the sea,
 where she decided at last to marry the young inland farmer,
 who had recently inherited a piece of land but didn't even
 know how to repair tractors, so that she could know
 the sea and have the same respect for it that sailors do,
 who never learn to swim but don't need to,
 because the sea doesn't explain itself unless it is with a pair of
 those words that can be seen from a dock, hitting the dock.
 No matter if the tide is rising or falling the moored boats
 only wait for dawn, when they will still be there, moored.

Trans. Caroline Barr and Evan Tierney

The Tightrope Walker

I have remained mute in life, and the days have passed.
 The days passed, one after another, like cars of a train.
 Nobody used to wait in the stations. Nobody used to wave their hands in the air
 because such things were not yet done in our country, neither for goodbyes nor
 for welcomes, nor to give thanks in advance when unnecessary.
 The fruits of spring

have arrived for us, but not the spring. Lay
 yourself naked upon the grass, like one more of the words. Not even the complete
 works of Balzac could give you a true image of what
 nineteenth century, realist, impressionist France was like: so lay yourself down and breakfast
 unconcerned with the contrast between your skin and the background drawn
 by the forest and the dress of your companions:

compared with being in the official room of the rejected
 these slaps on the back are small and despicable glory brandishing
 a dagger perhaps as one conscious of your future splendor
 and of that tranquil sea which in your paintings bathes your waters

sabe ejercer el oficio
de repartir con sutileza las migajas (
sin que se note el oficio
la sutileza ni las migajas):

no es que el fruto esté maduro, es el árbol el que está cansado.
A veces llegábamos a un balneario y yo me dormía inmediatamente.
Pero es preciso señalar que me dormía no sin antes contemplar
a una joven que se peinaba en el cuarto de enfrente. Esa

que después volvería a dar sus primeros pasos por esta playa
de la mano de un pronombre que no es el mío
ni le pertenece al trazo breve y fragmentario con que
tratábamos de copiar no la luz, sino la impresión que esa misma luz

producía no en tus ojos pero sí en cambio en tu mirada,
no en tu piel. Sí, sin embargo, en tu piel contra mi piel (
traje, vestimenta o atuendo: artificio o naturaleza
que se distinguen con el roce de los cuerpos sobre el

mantel, sobre la tela o sobre la hierba).
Otras veces llegábamos a un bosque de eucaliptus,
y la misma joven era quien se encargaba de poner el mantel
en el suelo cubierto de hojas con olor a lluvia de verano.
No obstante tu rostro de mitológica es lo único que te mantiene
a salvo. Es como para esculpir por la noche una silueta

carnal pero de diosa, sutilísima pero al mismo tiempo
tan romana y voluminosa como la tuya —para que después
implacablemente la borre no la marea sino el oleaje, no el
agua que quisiera escribir sino la espuma. Y sólo
así justificar la obligación

de volver a trazar ese trazado durante todas y cada una de
nuestras noches. Y yo no dejaba de pensar en el día menos pensado,
y no dejaba de esperar el esperado día,
en el cual recuperaría el uso de la palabra.

La tierra a la que vine no tiene primavera. Y estos, sin embargo,
son sus frutos.

he knows how to do the job
of sharing with subtlety the crumbs (
without notice of the job
the subtlety or the crumbs):

it is not that the fruit is ripe, it is the tree that is tired.
Sometimes we arrived at a resort and I fell asleep immediately.
But it should be noted that I slept not before first contemplating
a young girl combing her hair in the room across the hall. She

who would later return to take her first steps along this beach
hand in hand with a pronoun that is not I
nor does it belong to the brief and fragmentary stroke with which
we tried to copy not the light, but rather the impression which that same light

produced not in your eyes but instead in your gaze,
not in your skin. Yes, but, on your skin against my skin
(dress, clothes, or outfit: feigned or natural
that are distinguished by the rubbing of bodies on the

tablecloth, on the fabric, or on the grass).
Other times we arrived at a eucalyptus forest,
and that same girl was the one responsible for putting the tablecloth
on the leaf covered ground with the scent of summer rain.
Nevertheless your mythic face is the only thing that keeps you
safe. It's like sculpting at night a carnal

silhouette but one of a Goddess, subtle yet still
so Roman and voluminous as yours—so that after
it is relentlessly erased not by the tide but rather by the swell, not by the water
that would want to write but rather by the foam. And only
thus justifying the obligation

to retrace that route during each and every one of
our nights. And I didn't stop thinking about the day least thought of,
and I didn't stop waiting for the anticipated day,
in which I would recover the use of the word.

I've come to a land with no spring. And these, nonetheless,
are its fruits.

Trans. Devin Dilts, Elana Leopold, and Violet Shneider

Golpe de estado, pronunciamiento militar, versión libre

(quidquid latine dictum sit altum viditur)

La cosecha de los granjeros murió debajo del agua.
 Ha llovido como en un diluvio. Con la venta de la producción de este año, algunos de ellos pensaban pagar el crédito renegociado durante la última baja de intereses decretada por la reserva federal. Pero ha llovido como en un diluvio. Otros tenían pensado invertir en la compra de ciertos equipos para sacarle mayor provecho a las semillas artificiales que hoy en día están disponibles para algunas de las frutas de la estación. Las pérdidas

se calculan en varios cientos de millones de dólares, pero soy incapaz de traducir esas cifras en un número que pueda calibrar. Con varios cientos de millones de dólares se solucionaría el problema habitacional de casi toda la ciudad de Santiago. Los canales de regadío podrían reconstruirse. Los profesores obtendrían una remuneración acorde con todos los cursos de perfeccionamiento en que se han inscrito para nada. Los hospitales públicos, si tuvieran en sus manos esos varios cientos de millones podrían mejorar la oferta de camas durante los períodos más crudos de alerta ambiental cuando muchos niños de escasos recursos son devueltos a sus casas con una aspirina en la mano para enfrentar el virus sincicial. Sin embargo la cosecha completa de los granjeros yace ahora bajo el agua. En algún lugar, bajo toneladas de escombros y desperdicios repartidos en kilómetros a la redonda producto del último tornado. Dicen que tomará años volver a la normalidad. Los equipos de rescate no tardaron tanto en llegar como en creer lo que estaban viendo: no saldrían de su sorpresa

sino hasta después de que se convirtiera en comentario antiguo el recuerdo de ese año fatídico de las inundaciones, cuando todos tuvieron algo que perder y podían haber nombrado algo que no volvió cuando años después volvió esa normalidad que desde un principio nos advirtieron que llevaría años recuperarla por completo. En los relatos bíblicos, una paloma fue la que

Coup D'Etat, Military Uprising, Free Version

(quidquid latine dictum sit altum viditur)

The farmers' harvest died underwater.
 The rain has come down in deluge. With the sale of this year's crop, some planned to pay off their loans, refinanced during the federal reserve's last decree to lower interest. But the rain has come down in a deluge. Others had thought to invest in certain equipment to reap the benefits of artificial seeds which are now available for some seasonal fruits. The losses

are calculated in several hundreds of millions of dollars, but I cannot translate these figures into a conceivable number. With several hundreds of millions of dollars the housing problem in most of Santiago could be solved. The irrigation canals could be rebuilt. Teachers could be compensated for all the post graduate classes they have needlessly enrolled in. Public hospitals, if they had in their hands those several hundreds of millions of dollars could increase the availability of beds during the most severe periods of environmental alert when many children of little means are sent home with an aspirin in hand to face the syncytial virus. Nevertheless, the farmers' entire harvest now lies underwater. Somewhere, the last tornado has left miles of land in ruins beneath tons of rubble and waste. They say that it will take years to return to normal. Rescue teams were quick to arrive but slow to believe their eyes: they couldn't overcome the shock

until after they banished that fateful year of floods to the far reaches of their memories. That fateful year, all had something to lose and could name something that did not return, when, years later, normal life returned, which we had always known would take some time. In biblical stories, a dove

les permitió avizorar la costa, no una gaviota. Aquí, sin embargo,
no hay costas. Aquí sin embargo los cuervos son negros
y un halcón flamea en la bandera, los espantapájaros
continúan impertérritos su labor de vigilancia
no importa que hoy en día ya no exista el enemigo
y el maíz no sea un alimento, los guardianes del

mito son incapaces de ejercer otro oficio
que no haya sido debidamente estipulado
en los antiguos manuales de la retórica:

cualquier cosa en latín parecería
profunda y verdadera.

Domingo por la tarde

En el cuarto de al lado escucho los quejidos de
alguna pareja, la división capitalista del
trabajo y las tarifas del servicio telefónico

contribuyen de igual manera
a que uno se pase la tarde sin pronunciar palabra:
domingos por completo en blanco donde el hecho
objetivo de la soledad difícilmente podría conseguir

el adorno de alguna excusa, algún nombre para
exornarlo como dudosa compañía. Los fantasmas
de la juventud recién perdida se mezclan con los fantasmas
de la madurez que aún no llega, un limbo parecido al del
idioma en el que todos se comunican con señales
aunque tengan ganas de salir gritando.
Yo mismo quisiera salir gritando

en busca de alguna leyenda, los jumpers
maltrechos de bertoní, el orompello
del tomas, la cristalería

guided them to shore, not a gull. Here, however,
there is no shoreline. Here, however, crows are black
and a falcon blazes on the flag, undaunted scarecrows
continue their vigilant surveillance
regardless of the enemy that no longer exists
and the corn that no longer nourishes, the guardians of

myth are incapable of filling any position
which has not been properly outlined
in the old manuals of rhetoric:

anything said in Latin
would seem good and true.

Trans. Phoebe Reed and Tracy Glazier

Sunday Afternoon

From the room next door, I can hear the murmurs of lovers,
the capitalist division of
labor and long-distance telephone rates

each contribute to my spending the afternoon in silence:
on lonely Sundays the goal of my solitude is
to pursue the relief of an excuse, a fantasy, anything to

accompany me like an unlikely visitor.
My lost memories of
youth mingle with the unlikelihood of my maturity, a limbo that resembles
the frustration of communicating in an unspoken language
when all you want is to run screaming.
I wish I could run screaming

in search of a myth to call my own, Bertoní's
battered jumpers, Tomás'
Orompello³, face to face

frente a frente a un elefante.
Vuelvo los ojos hacia la puerta
pero no consigo que se acerque nadie

a tocar. Ninguna colegiala alegre
vestida de colegiala, ningún zombie
por las calles de concepción.

Al elefante que está parado en la ventana:
sólo le pido que empiece luego a recordar.

La tierra a la que vine no tiene primavera

(el viento hace a mi casa su ronda de sollozos)

l.—

No me gusta manejar de noche—dijo—siempre le he tenido
miedo tanto a la oscuridad como a los animales, pero
en algún punto ciego a medio camino entre las luces del
auto y donde quiera que esté el horizonte

—esa tierra de nadie que son las carreteras interestatales—
el universo encerrado que va de una granja hasta la otra granja
y el infinito terror que se encierra en la mirada de los
guardias del supermercado que siempre sonrientes

te invitan a volver cada vez que te parezca necesario: el
desvío hasta las próximas ciudades es un anuncio de
lo que probablemente nos espera: aves migratorias
que han decidido mucho antes que nosotros su partida.

Pero le dije a mi mamá que nos guardara la pieza del
segundo piso, esa con un balcón que da hacia un
recodo del lago donde los patos silvestres todavía
le temen a las chaquetas grises y el sigilo de los
cazadores: no me gusta manejar de noche—agregó—

with an elephant in a crystal shop.
I return my gaze to the door
but no one comes

to knock. No cheerful schoolgirl
dressed in uniform, no zombie
wandering the streets of concepción.

And to the elephant standing in the window:
do please start to remember as soon as you can.

Trans. Sarah Koatz and Emma Posner

I've Come to a Land With No Spring

(the wind is weeping around my house)

l.—

I don't like to drive at night—he said—I've always been
very afraid of darkness, like animals, but
at some blind spot halfway between the headlights
and where the horizon would be

—that no man's land of interstates—
(the enclosed universe that goes from one farm to another
and the infinite terror in the stares of the
supermarket guards that, always smiling,

invite you to return when you find it necessary) the
exit to the next cities is a sign
of what probably awaits: migratory birds that
have decided to depart long before us.

But I told my mother that the second floor room
would keep us safe, the one with the balcony that
overlooks the lake where the wild ducks still
fear the grey jackets and stealth of the
hunters: I don't like to drive at night—he added—

porque cada vez que salimos, en el informe de carreteras hay alguna noticia de alguien muerto en esos infaltables accidentes que siempre se repiten con una tenacidad que a mí me gustaría dedicarle a ciertas labores domésticas.

Le oí decir a uno de tus tíos que tus parientes del otro estado han tenido ciertos problemas legales con la sucesión de tierras después de la muerte del último de los abuelos. Y en el matrimonio de tu prima, la menor de sus hermanas perdió los estribos cuando supo que su antiguo novio había llegado a la fiesta con la misma compañera de su oficina por la cual la había dejado no más de seis meses atrás. La noche se tarda en caer como si fuera una

advertencia del paisaje. No me vendría mal, supongo, uno de esos cambios de ambiente que tanto recomiendan los siquiátras como si tuvieran alguna especie de convenio con las agencias de viaje de la nación.

II. –

Mientras el agua hierve en la cocina y el televisor no puede dar con el tono adecuado para la representación de nuestra comedia: así entonces no podrás recriminarme por mantener la frente en alto tal como lo hicieran los poetas del mediodía que de entre un sinfín de nombres inexistentes o imaginarios no vieron la necesidad de hacerlo calzar con las exigencias reaccionarias de un sólo cuerpo ni de una sola mujer (esto no dice nada del fondo ni de la forma. Y aún así es totalmente relevante, porque en este informe podemos darnos cuenta que el desgaste de materiales es una de las principales razones del colapso de muchas construcciones que, sin haber cumplido aun con su vida útil, a causa de la erosión proveniente de distintos factores de la vida cotidiana son incapaces de soportar el desgaste que ésta implica.

III. –

Pero no se puede negar que han hecho lo suyo. Las empalizadas protegen ambas riberas del río y para este invierno no hay nadie que razonablemente pudiera temer por algún desborde u otras catástrofes.

because every time we leave, in the traffic report there is news of someone dead in those inevitable car accidents that always happen with tenacity that I would rather see dedicated to certain household labors.

I overheard one of your uncles saying that your out-of-state relatives have had certain legal problems with inherited lands after the death of your last grandparent. And at your cousins wedding, her youngest sister lost her mind when she found out that her ex-boyfriend had arrived at the party with the same coworker that he had left her for only six months prior. Nightfall is delayed as if it were a warning

from the landscape. It would do me well, I suppose, one of those changes in my environment that the psychiatrists have so often recommended as if they had some type of agreement with national travel agencies.

II. –

While water boils in the kitchen and the television no longer masks our well-rehearsed fiction: you can no longer reproach me for keeping my head held high as troubadours did with an endless amount of non-existent and imaginary names, which they did not find necessary to make fit with the reactionary demands neither of a lone body nor of a lone woman (this explains neither meaning nor form). And even so it is completely relevant, because through this report we realize that the wear on materials is one of the main reasons for the collapse of many constructions that, without having been completed in its lifetime because of the decay due to various factors of every day life, are unable to withstand the wear that this implies.

III. –

Doubtless, they've done what's theirs to do. The palisades protect both banks of the river and this winter there is no one who could rationally fear a flood, or any other catastrophe.

Es más: a medida que pasa el tiempo de vez en cuando se echan de menos esas historias donde algún muchacho cumplía con el papel del héroe y no teníamos que pasarnos las tardes enteras discutiendo quien

sería el ganador en esta temporada. No hace falta saber leer lo que dicen las estrellas para estar seguros de la necesaria austeridad de tus presagios: dos o tres hijos ya sería considerado como un milagro y

los mayores caerían de rodillas implorando bondad también para sus cosechas (el tractor está averiado aunque las trilladoras son último modelo. Los hijos de sus hijos tuvieron la oportunidad de estudiar

y no la desaprovecharon. Hoy deben andar por la treintena pero hace años que ya han formado familia, a veces se los ve los domingos por la mañana atentos al sermón

aunque tienen sus propias ideas: sus mujeres han parido en una piscina para que esos niños no cambien tan temprano de elemento) no saben sin embargo que los peces abisales son insensibles

a la luz y su prole podría ser una prole de amnióticos y de ciegos, de escafandras puestas a funcionar en la agorafobia de las praderas, antes o después

del límite del próximo condado. No me gusta manejar de noche, no me gustan los avisos publicitarios en la carretera ni defender a nuestro país de las agresiones

extranjeras ni aprovechar nuestro verano en las playas del caribe ni me importa que lo que ocurre en las vegas quede en la vegas: mi hermana se casó con un doctor que es

What's more: as time goes by, once in a while they miss those stories where a boy would play the hero and we didn't have to spend whole afternoons arguing who

would be that season's winner. They don't need to know how to read the stars to be sure of the necessary severity of your omens: two or three children would be considered a miracle and

the oldest would fall to their knees pleading goodness for their harvests (the tractor is broken though the threshers are new. The children of their children had the chance to study

and didn't waste it. Today they must be in their thirties but for years now they've been a family, sometimes they're seen on Sunday mornings intent on the sermon

though they have their own ideas: their wives have given birth in a basin so those kids aren't pushed out of their element too soon) they don't know that abyssal fish are insensitive

to light and their offspring could be a line of amniotics and blind kids, of diving suits put on to curb the agoraphobia of the meadows, before or after

the next county line. I don't like to drive at night, I don't like the billboards on the highway, defending our country against foreign

aggression, or taking advantage of our summer on the beaches of the Caribbean nor does it matter to me that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas: my sister married a doctor who is

todo un *gentleman*, mis compañeras de curso
están trabajando en compañías aseguradoras
y son capaces de pasar la noche en el gimnasio
después de haber amamantado a cinco hijos.

Daddy came back from Vietnam, although
I think he never was the same, at least
that's what Mom told us once: la casa sin
embargo está pagada y el hospital donde

se atienden los veteranos de guerra
no está a mucho más de una hora.

A veces nos sentamos todos juntos
a ver una película como si tuviéramos

de nuevo cinco años: nada me importa
tanto como el hecho de que la película
vuelva a terminar de la misma manera
en que terminaba entonces. El cadáver

que plantamos el año pasado en el jardín
ha empezado a retoñar, ya está dando sus
primeros frutos, la escarcha repentina que ha
caído algunas noches no ha podido estropearle

el lecho:

el viento hace a mi casa su ronda de sollozos.
Las praderas que me rodean son un mito
y sin embargo están allí. Podría perderme
en esta tierra, toparme con los cadáveres de los

hombres que lucharon por quedarse en ella
sin que nadie pueda discutir su triunfo. Se diría que
la siguen defendiendo del peligro que representan

los profesores recién llegados, las cajas de la mudanza,
los cuadros envueltos en una cinta que dice frágil
y esas palabras desconocidas que nadie entiende todavía
y algunos se empeñarán por no entender. La intemperie
es una bienvenida que habla siempre el mismo idioma.

a real *caballero*, my classmates
are working for insurance companies
and can spend the whole night in the gym
after having breastfed five children.

*Daddy came back from Vietnam, although
I think he never was the same, at least
that's what Mom told us once:* still
the house is paid for and the hospital where

they take care of war veterans
isn't much more than an hour away.
Sometimes we all sit together
to watch a movie as if we were

five years old again: nothing matters
as much as the fact that the movie
finishes in the same way
it used to. The body

we planted last year in the garden
has begun to blossom, it's already giving its
first fruits, the sudden frost that has
fallen at night has not been able to damage

its bed:

the wind is weeping around my house.
The meadows that surround me are a myth
and still exist. I could lose myself
on this earth, cover myself with the corpses of the

men who fought to stay here
without anyone to argue against their victory. One would say
that they continue defending this place from

the professors recently arrived, the moving boxes,
the paintings wrapped in tape that says fragile
and those unfamiliar words that still nobody understands
and some indebt themselves for not understanding. The street

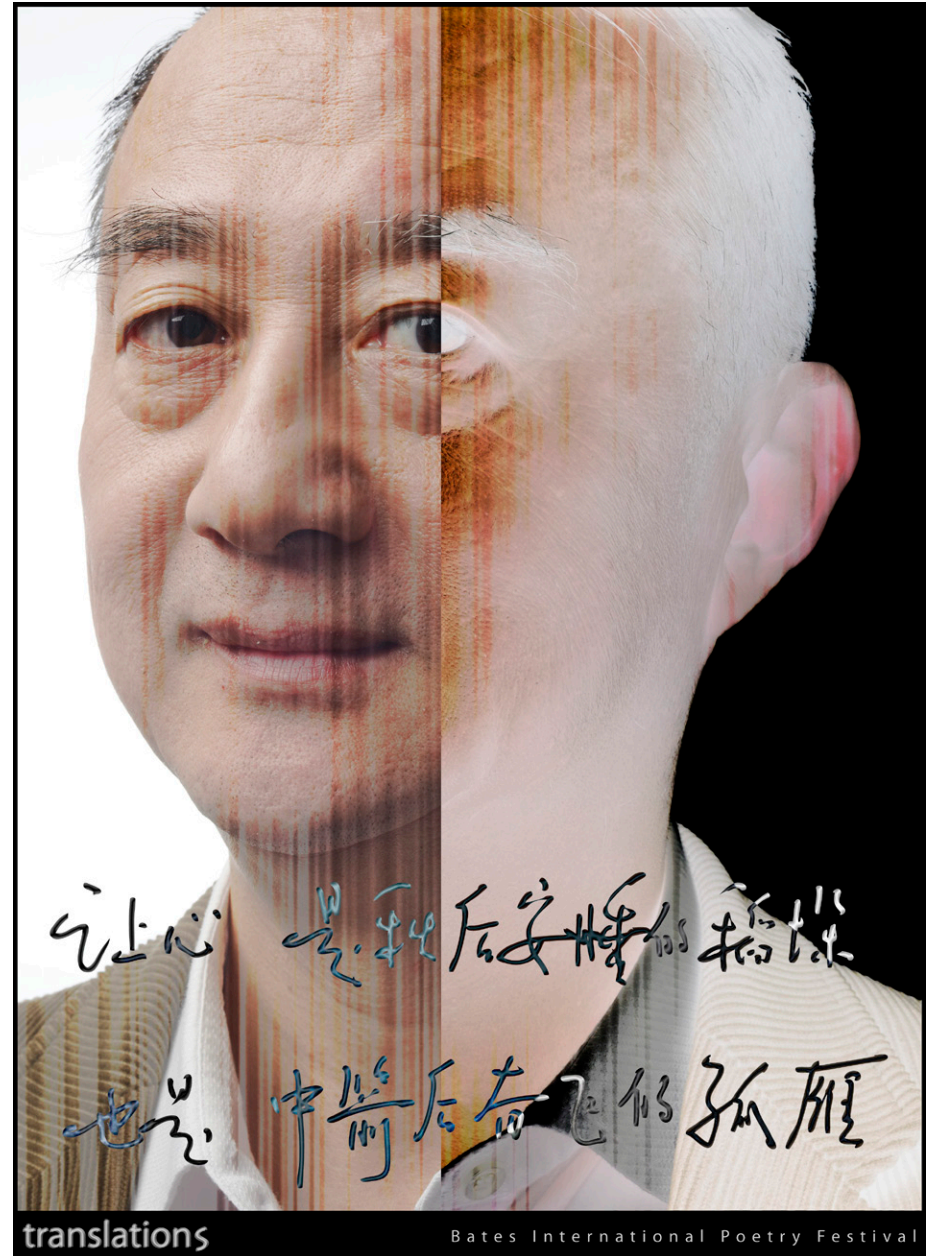
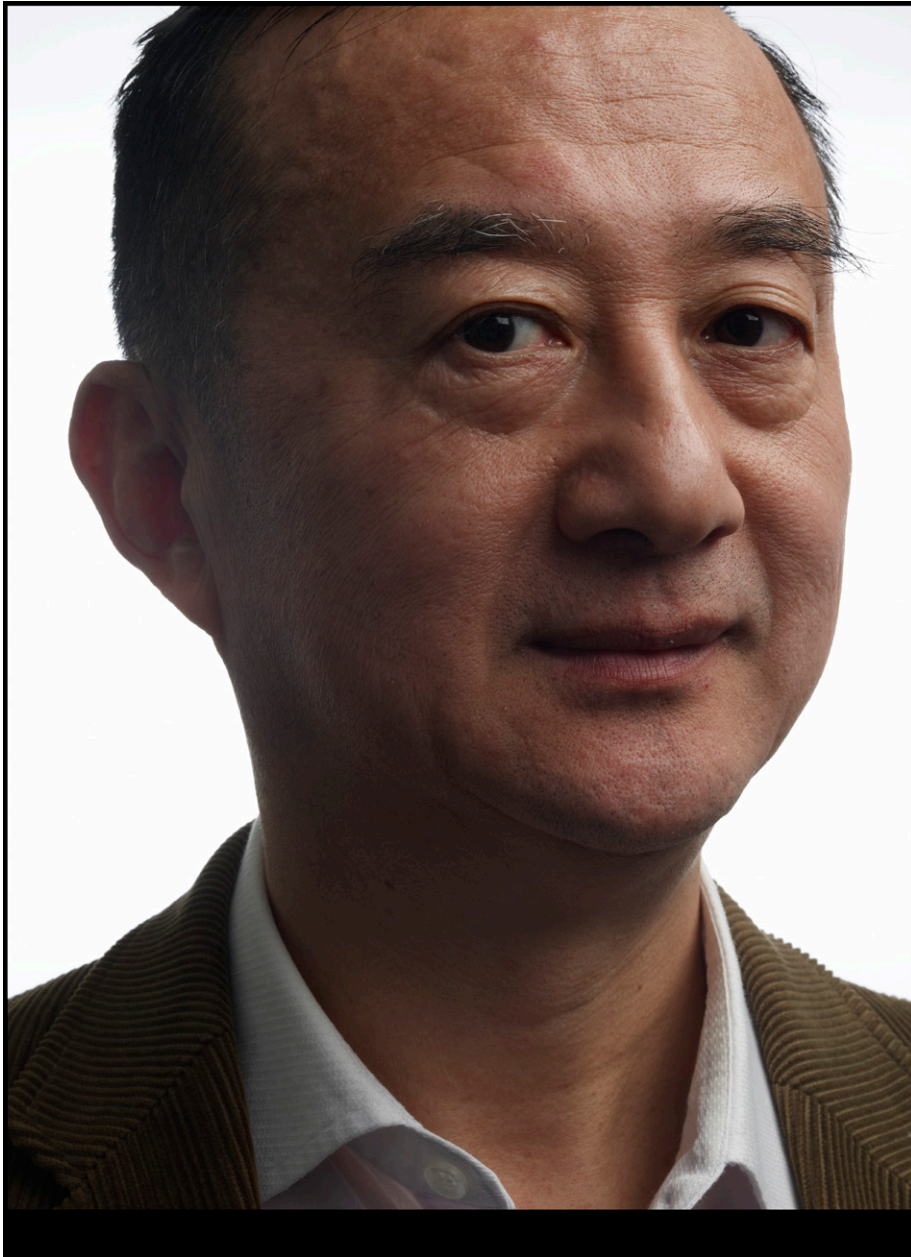
is a welcoming that always speaks the same language.

Trans. Meredith Legg, Tyler Mehegan, Dan Naparstek, Limor Finkel, Billy Manchuck, and Alex Streim

Guangxin Zhao China

Mr. Zhao was an *elder* student at Foreign Languages Department of Jiangsu Teachers' Training College in Suzhou where he majored in English language and literature. From 1985 to 1997, he was first a student and then a teacher at the UN Language Program of Beijing Foreign Studies University. During this period he began reading Chinese classic poems in earnest. From 1997 to 2006, Guangxin worked as a Chinese translator at UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand. It is here that he is asked to contribute to an online literary monthly called *Wenhui*. He based his aesthetics on old-style Chinese poem writing. As of August 2006, he has been working as a Chinese simultaneous interpreter at the United Nations headquarters in New York. He continues to use Chinese masters of literary history for his inspiration and poetic endeavors.





— 也 —

躲避桃花脸 也躲避菩提树
 不想酒肉今朝 也不想苦修百年
 走新潮抹光脚印的沙滩
 也走古藤缠死时光的深巷
 让心是 秋月下安睡的稻垛
 也是 中箭后奋飞的孤雁

藏式长拜

五体厚实 五体舒展
 便可以 丈量恩德
 丈量超脱尘世的一分一寸
 双眼紧闭 前额碰地
 真可能 弃绝色相
 弃绝蝇营狗苟的疲乏
 头顶蓝天 头顶雪峰
 更容易沉默 更容易开悟
 佛寺居高 佛寺在上
 为的是 反衬渺小
 反衬修行求救的困顿
 是苦是乐 有苦有乐
 或者 苦就是乐？！

Also

Avoiding the faces as beautiful as peach flowers
 Also avoiding the bodhi trees
 Not wanting meat and wine today
 Also rejecting practicing Buddhism for a century
 Walking across the beach where footprints were washed by the tides
 Also walking through the alleyway where ancient vines strangled time and light
 Let the heart be the haystack that sleeps underneath the fall moon
 Let it also be the lonely goose fleeing from the sting of hunter's arrow

Translated by Albert Shi

Tibetan Worshippers

The body is solid
 The body stretches out
 Is able to measure appreciation
 Measuring every bit of escape from this world
 Eyes squeezed tight
 Forehead touches the ground
 It is really possible to forget carnal desires
 Rejecting fatigue from making petty profits
 The blue sky is above
 The snowy peaks are around
 It is easier to be meditative
 It is easier to comprehend
 The temple is high up
 The temple is above
 In order to show the tiny humans
 In contrast to the desperation of seeking for salvation
 It is hardship, it is happiness
 Where there is hardship, there is happiness
 Or, is hardship happiness?!

Translated by Albert Shi

—— 有了 ——

有了 花下那半遮的笑脸
 我不用
 再去贪看沾雨后更抢眼的花瓣
 有了 桌边几句嗔怪的私语
 我不用
 再去翻找软化过侠骨的情歌光盘
 有了 隔篱伸过来的那双纤手
 我不用
 再向摔碎过太多期盼的崖头攀援
 而若是
 若是有了 你我近乎重叠的身影
 彩云就不用
 再去把时而幽冷的月光挡严

指和针

岁月如指 蘸饱秋波
 勾勒一种 叫作期待的心情
 彩笺如针 引足春风
 穿刺一种 叫作无奈的感觉

Now that I've got ...

Now that I've got
 Her smiling face half hidden beneath an umbrella
 I no longer have an eye
 For petals with rain-drops that look more inviting

Now that I've got
 The pet table-talk from her pouted mouth
 I no longer have an ear
 For a CD love song that used to melt my virile bones

Now that I've got
 Hold of her slender hands from across the fence
 I no longer have the need
 To climb the bluff that has dashed so many dreams

And if
 If I've already got
 Your silhouette and mine almost overlapped
 Why should the clouds
 Any more
 Shield the moon that's sometimes so cold and uncaring

Translated by Hu Maoya

Fingers and Needles

Time is like fingers, absorbing the fall tides
 Drawing a type of emotion called expectation
 Parchment is like needles, bringing in spring wind
 Penetrating a type of feeling called powerlessness

Translated by Albert Shi

晨思

| | |
|-------|------|
| 晨曦作先锋 | 前来告慰 |
| 满林的玉露 | 准备好 |
| 在朝阳里 | 沾足 |
| 情人的残梦 | |
| 耀眼地 | 最后蒸发 |

落日

| | |
|--------|---------|
| 街挂林梢的 | 照样是 |
| 一个鲜红的谜 | 一种无边的慰藉 |
| 落下 | 卷走远山的淡绿 |
| 溅起 | 心海新的静谧 |

流萤

| | |
|--------|---------|
| 你发誓 | 不再对黑夜负责 |
| 温情地 | 借取一束 |
| 天国的灵光 | |
| 夏夜开始赞叹 | 你姿态翩翩 |
| 掠过墓碑 | 轻扣纱窗 |
| 与青蛙合作 | 救活了 |
| 热昏的空气 | |
| 顺便把 | 清凉的愉悦 |
| | 星星点点 |
| 播进 | 易受感染的心房 |

Thought at Dawn

Dawn is a pioneer
Coming to greet
Pearls of dew in the woods
Prepare to dip in the sweet dreams of lovers in the sunrise
Shine, then evaporate

Translated by Albert Shi

Sunset

Just above the woods
It's like a bright red riddle
A type of boundless comfort
After falling
It takes away the light green of the far mountains
Splashes the tranquility in the ocean of the heart

Translated by Albert Shi

Firefly

You swear to never take responsibility for the dark night
Gently borrowing a beam of
Heaven's spiritual light
Summer night gasps in admiration
Your elegance skims over the gravestones
Lightly touching the window screen
Working with frogs
You bring life within the suffocating hot air
In passing, you spread the cool feeling of enjoyment
Bits and pieces are swept into sensitive hearts

Translated by Albert Shi

逸

得千想万总添愁，可觉皎皎月洗头？
 腋翅冲霄君请上，银河渺渺荡星舟

潮思

月圆十六醒羁客，潮涨临滩忽忆乡。
 最是群星谙别意，悄拥天北洒清光。

也说“相对”

狮霸莽原众兽颜，落河萎作鳄鱼餐。
 时光流转空间变，谁弱谁强壁上观。

Peace

Thousands of worries and vexations happen to you at night.
 But stop worrying for a while. Do you ever notice the bright moonlight around?
 If you had wings, please fly towards this immense sky.
 Roam about the stars with peace and ease.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

Thoughts from the tides

The full moon hangs up in the sky, waking up the wanderer.
 Showered by the moonlight and hearing the tides tirelessly rushing to the shore,
 he suddenly thinks of his home.
 As if the stars understand the homesickness,
 they quietly gather in the sky, illuminating the world of this lonely person.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

Speaking of relativity

The lion is the king of animals on the grassland.
 However, once falling into the river, it becomes the meal of crocodiles.
 Time and space bring great changes to the world.
 Hardly could you tell who will be the winner in the end.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

游海

波跳晴光帆影远，鲸浮鲛戏忘天高。
螺风不吝家风换，好引心潮逐海潮。

(读史悟) 限

思接千年百代前，尺身陷在此时间。
汉兴秦灭谁参透，大道长超小识先。

别了，苏州

井蛙得气出姑苏，始怨鲈莼蚀志枯。
他日学成龙脱网，舞天搅海济宏图。

Touring the Sea

(*Amcha, Thailand in December, 2003*)

With ripples in the sea and sunshine in the sky, the ship is sailing away towards
the horizon.
Emerging from the water, whales and sharks are having fun in the sea, forgetting
everything around.
As the sea breath blows off what gets stuck on land,
My heart expands following the tide.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

Limitation (after reading history)

Thoughts go back to thousands of years ago,
I, however, can only stay at present.
Who can see through the rise of the Han Dynasty and the fall of Qin Dynasty?
The Great Way transcends petty knowledge.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

Farewell Suzhou

Like a frog in a well gets fresh air outside, I left the city of Suzhou.
After then I realized that I would lose my ambition if I still stayed at home
enjoying the leisure life.
Someday, when I am prepared, I will try my best to realize my dream and fulfill
my ambition,
like a dragon which escapes the net that trapped it, dances in the sky and roars in
the ocean.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

无语

山无语 巍峨却
撑破了眼眶
海无语 辽阔却
拍痛了胸膛
画无语 五彩却
震碎了灵魂
你无语 而我却
听出了更妙的乐章

跟你去

危岩旁那颗怪松
已干枯百年
学会端平一碗烫水后
我就跟你去修养、修养

桅杆旁那只信天翁
已盘旋半天
耐心等到海市蜃楼后
我就跟你去翱翔、翱翔

书摊旁那位白衣女郎
已静读一晌
逆光镶出晶莹侧影后
我就跟你去磋商、磋商

Wordless

Mountains are wordless, but still magnificent,
with gorgeous scenery filling my eyes.
Oceans are wordless, but still vast,
with water lashing against my chest.
Paintings are wordless, but still colorful
with fabulous pictures touching my soul
You are wordless, but I still
hear your wonderful movement

Translated by Guoqing Sun

Go with you

The old pine on the cliff
has been dried-up for hundreds of years.
As soon as learning to hold still a bowl of hot water
I will go with you, to gain cultivation.

The albatross near the mast
Has been hovering for a while
After the mirage disappears
I will go with you, to soar in the sky.

The young woman near the bookstall
Has been reading for a while
As the sunlight shines on your silhouette
I will go with you, to talk and discuss.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

醉

她绵羊般一瞥
把我扫进红酒杯
有时 开头一笔胜过全篇
没看过 就不知道什么叫醉

页上泪痕

伤情那页 有多处黄斑
会哭的字阵
曾酿出过泪 扑簌簌
重滴入 会哭的字
和会哭的心
扩散成
点点凝固的妩媚

新游子吟

机翼耕过故乡的云
我播下 游子无边的思念
让它翻作细长的雨丝
去滋润
慈母干涩的华发

Drunk

Her sheepish glance towards me
Swept me into the red wine glass
Sometimes the beginning is better than the whole story
Without experiencing it, you don't know what being drunk means

Translated by Albert Shi

The Tear Stains on the Page

That page which tears at emotions
Are dotted with yellow spots
Words that could weep
Produced tears that
Drop by drop, fell into the weeping words and sobbing hearts
Condense into the true beauty of love

Translated by Albert Shi

The Traveler

Airplane wings plow through the clouds of my homeland
Sowing down the boundless longings of travelers
Let them become thin drizzles of rain to moisten
The white hairs of my dear mother

Translated by Albert Shi

水手要上岸

水手累了 开始寻找
 波影懒懒的港湾
 身后的大海 已相当于
 秋镰下的稻田
 只记得 漫漫航程上
 曾错过些灯塔
 不用去怪罗盘
 因为有只无形的手
 阻止他转舵
 也曾凝望过 长满鲜果的孤岛
 但是 被风鼓足的帆
 只许他向前、向前
 没有妖女 海上照样诱惑无限
 要他把眼光放得更远、更远
 晴空里 豪情在
 海燕舒展的翼尖 跳跃、呼叫
 忘记了
 会触暗礁的今晚
 会起狂澜的明天
 只不过
 一切都要成为昨天
 已累的水手
 终于想学候鸟
 接受温暖大地的招安
 想在夜半 灭了涛声
 平稳地 枕着酥软的臂弯
 接受另一场梦的导航

Going Ashore

The seaman is tired, and he starts searching,
 for a peaceful harbor.
 The sea behind him
 has become
 a harvested farmland to him.
 He only remembers, that during his long-lasting journey,
 he has missed some lighthouses.
 Do not blame the compass,
 because there is an invisible hand,
 that stops him shifting the helm.
 He has also stared at the distant islands where fresh fruits grow,
 but the full sail
 only allows him to go ahead and ahead.
 Without sirens, the sea is also alluring,
 asking him to look ahead into the future
 Under the clear sky, passion is everywhere
 Look at the petrels stretch their arms, leaping and calling.
 He forgets
 The danger of stranding tonight
 And the roaring waves tomorrow.
 However
 Everything is going to be history
 The tired seaman
 Finally wants to be like the migrant birds
 To go to warm lands for shelter
 He wants at night, without the sound of waves
 To peacefully rest his head on comfortable arms
 and start another journey in the dream.

Translated by Guoqing Sun

France Emeric de Monteynard

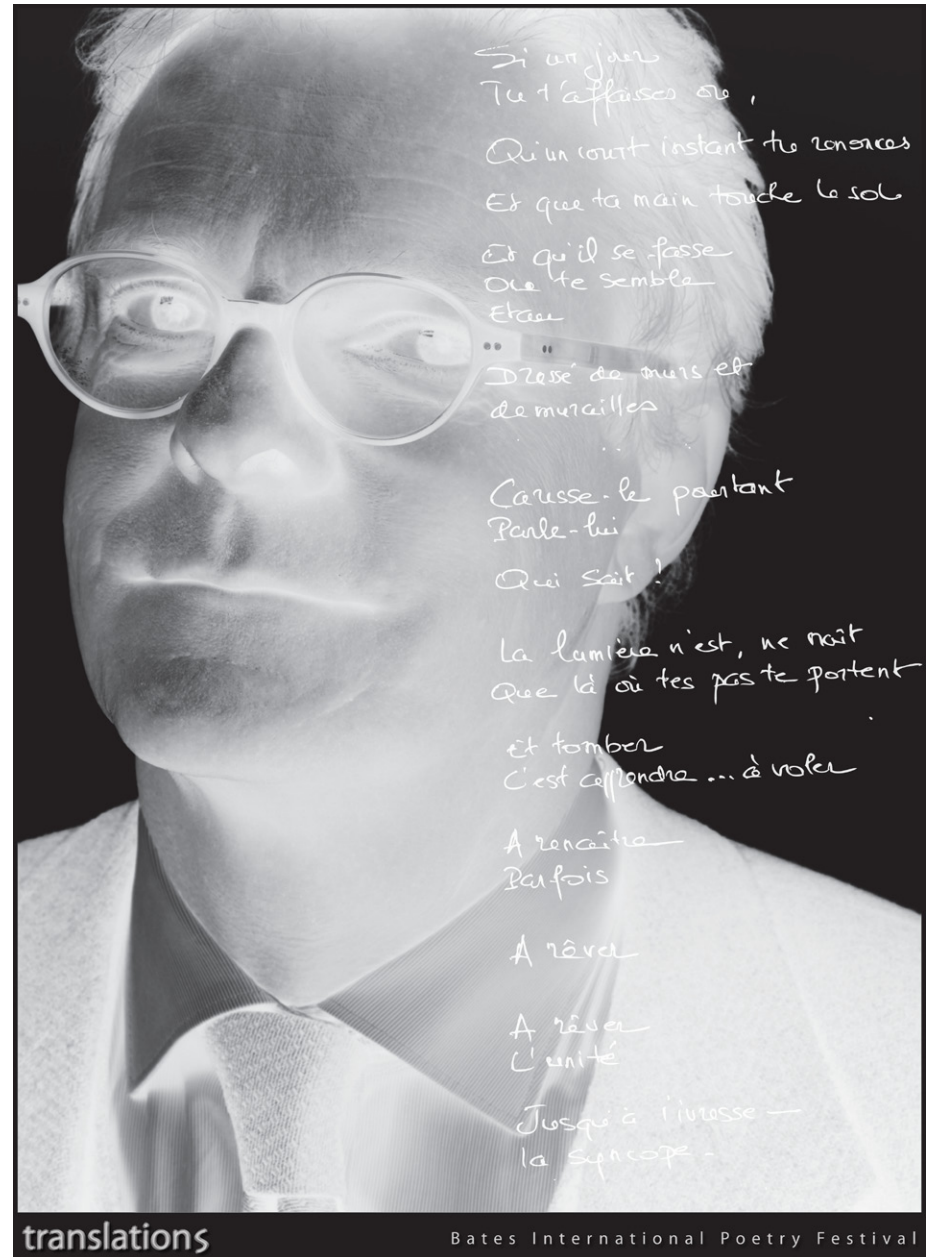
Emeric de Monteynard est né en 1956. Il vit et travaille à Paris, mais c'est face à la mer, en Normandie, qu'il se ressource et qu'il assemble ses mots—à haute voix—pour que ceux-ci sonnent ce qu'ils disent. En 1992, il rencontre le poète Guillevic avec qui il se lie profondément. Cette amitié marquera son écriture, mais c'est son professeur de français, un ami de Max Jacob, qui, dès 1976, lui fera goûter à ce toucher si particulier des mots.

Trois de ses recueils ont été sélectionnés et soutenus par le CNL, le Centre national du livre français. *Aux Arbres Penchés*, publié en Belgique et illustré par le peintre Xavier, a reçu en 2008 le Prix Amélie Murat.

Emeric de Monteynard was born in 1956. He lives and works in Paris, but it is facing the sea in Normandy that he replenishes himself and assembles his words, aloud, so that they echo what they say. In 1992, he met poet Guillevic with whom he became profoundly linked. This friendship will always mark his writing, but it is his French professor, a friend of Max Jacob, who gave him a taste for the particular touch of words.

Three of his collections were selected by the National Center for the French Book. *Aux Arbres Penchés*, published in Belgium and illustrated by the painter Xavier, received the Amélie Murat Prize in 2008.





À écrire, à poser quelques mots qui affirment et vieillissent, il me semble que je ne sais jamais ce vers quoi je me tourne. Et que c'est bien ainsi. J'écris pour trouver, parfois pour lutter, m'endurcir peut-être, ou me livrer. Pour avancer un peu plus, vers le fond de ma chair, ressentir, éprouver. Rarement pour comprendre. J'écris pour accepter la blessure et pouvoir inventer d'autres silences et ainsi te garder, vous garder, dans mon creux, pour toujours. Je croyais qu'il fallait n'écrire que ce qu'on était sûr d'ignorer. L'inconnu, l'incertain. Et je croyais qu'on ne pouvait écrire—comme aimer—qu'à tout donner, clés, entrées, secrets, et qu'à dire à son cœur, de ne rien garder pour lui. De ne pas compter, surtout, pas compter. Mais pourquoi faut-il que parfois les mots—comme l'amour—ne se posent qu'à côté? Toujours à côté. Rien n'y fait.

Empreindre

Prends
Du temps

—Ce qu'il te faut

Mais n'oublie pas
D'amarrer du rire

Sous le ventre des terres

D'empreindre
Du vent

—Pas de mots *surtout* pas de mots

Il te faudra bien trouver
De quoi rebâtir

Quand la lutte *elle*

Aura
Cessé.

When writing, putting down a few words that state and age, it seems to me that I never know what I am turning to. And it is all right that way. I write to find, sometimes to fight, to harden myself, maybe, or to open up. To advance a little further, toward the bottom of my flesh, to feel, to experience. Rarely to understand. I write in order to accept the wound and to be able to invent other silences and so to keep you, to keep all of you, in my hollow, forever. I thought that I had but to write what I was sure I did not know. The unknown, the uncertain. And, I thought that one could not write—or love—without giving all, keys, access, secrets, and telling to one's heart not to keep anything for itself. Not to count, above all not to count. But why must it be that sometimes words—like love—can only come to rest on the side? Always on the side. There is nothing to do against that.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Impressions

Take
Time

—All that you need

But don't
forget
To moor
some laughter

Under the belly of the lands

To impress
Some wind

—No words
no words by *any means*

You will have
to find
Something
to rebuild with

When the fight
Itself

Has
Ended.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

combien de seins

Combien de seins
Faut-il encore
Effleurer

—*Pour en ravir les secrets*

Combien de printemps faut-il
Qu'on démêle

*Effeuille
Ou déboutonne*

Sous ces robes
De fées—

*De fêtes
Et de rondeurs*

Combien
Pour brûler

Sentir
La crue

Combien
Pour
S'aveugler

Où fanent et *se font* les étoiles?

Laisse aller ta lumière

Les choses ont-elles besoin
D'être aussi
Seules
Pour peser?

*Nous
Pour donner?*

Laisse aller le temps
Où il doit

L'attente a *ses versants*
Mais l'espace est pour lui

Tu n'as

Ni à vaincre
Ni même à franchir

À tomber
Simplement

Comme tombent les anges

Laisse aller ta lumière
Où elle doit

Dis-la

Elle seule
Suffit

Suffira.

how many breasts

How many breasts
Must still be
Lightly touched

—*To plunder their secrets*

How many Springs must be
Untangled

*Thinned out
Or unbuttoned*

Beneath those
Dresses of sprites —

*Of feasts
And curves*

How many
To burn

To feel
The flood

How many
To
Blind oneself

Where stars fade and are made?

Let your light go

Must things be so
Alone
To weigh?

Us
To give?

Let time go
Where it must

Wait has its other side
But space is for time itself

You have

Neither to conquer
Nor even cross over

Fall
Simply

As angels fall

Let your light go
Where it must

Tell it

Light itself
Suffices

Will be sufficient

Translator: Laura Balladur

Aimer, le dire—2^e partie

Aimer, c'est l'incise
Où s'invente
En nos corps, une vie.

Aimer c'est la peur
Que d'un mot l'on décale

Pour ne pas
Laisser

L'indifférence ôter
Briser tous nos rêves.

Aimer c'est entrer

De plain-pied
Dans un fait de lenteurs

De silences
Et de choix

Solitaire.

Aimer
C'est debout

Réclamer plus de temps

Formuler des espaces

Et trembler
Sans savoir.

Loving, aloud—2nd part

(Translated by Jean-François Sené)

(Translated by Laura Balladur)

To love is this incidental clause
Where in our bodies,
A life is being invented.

Loving is the incidental clause
Where, in our bodies,
Life invents itself.

To love is the fear
That, with a word, we displace

Loving is fear
That at a mere word we shift away

Not to let
Indifference take away
Break all our dreams.

Preventing
Indifference from taking away
Breaking all our dreams.

To love is to plunge
Straight
Into a reality of slowness

Loving is stepping
Straight into
A fact of slowness

Of silence
And choice
Lonely.

Of silence
And choice
Alone.

To love is
Standing upright

Loving is
Standing upright

To clamor for more time

Claiming more time

To forge spaces

Formulating spaces

And shiver
Without knowing.

Trembling
Without knowing.

Et c'est là dans un corps

Enfouir un silence

Y voir
Un secret

À portée la douleur.

C'est l'éveil aux touchers

Aux goûters
Aux senteurs.

C'est brûler
Des deux mains

Et brûler
D'espérance

C'est se faire un chemin

Ivre vif
Et présent.

C'est céder à ses sens

Regarder
Devenir

Le corps alors

Incandescent.

And it is there in a body

To bury a silent moment

To see
A secret

A pain within reach.

It is the awakening of touching

Of tasting
Of smelling.

It is to burn
With both hands

To burn
With hope

It is to make one's way

Drunken alive
And present.

It is to surrender to one's senses

To see

The body then
Become incandescent.

It is there also in a body

Burying a silence

There
Seeing a secret

Pain within reach

Awakening to touches

To tastes
To scents

Burning
With both hands

Burning
With hope

Making one's way

Drunken
Alive and present.

Surrendering to one's senses

Looking at

The body then
Becoming
Incandescent.

C'est être et se perdre

Et n'attendre
En secours

Qu'une main.

Une main
Seule.

Et rien d'autre.

C'est ouvrir
Elargir

C'est se taire

Et surtout

Ne pas dire.

Une grâce.

It is to be and to lose oneself
And to expect only
The help
Of a hand.

A hand
Only.

Nothing else.

It is to open
And broaden

To keep silent

And above all
Not to say anything.

A blessing.

Being and losing oneself
And expecting
As help
A hand

A hand
Only.

Nothing else.

It is opening
And broadening

Keeping quiet

And above all
Not saying.

A blessing.

Ça existe

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ça existe | Qu'incandescents |
| Qu'on rêve | Des non-dits |
| À brûler | Balisent |
| | En nous |
| | L'attente d'un dieu |
| Soliloque | |
| Un moment | Qu'on gravite |
| | Et use des voies |
| | Peut-être pour rien |
| Qu'on opine | |
| | Qu'on prie |
| Et se rende ainsi | Sans penser |
| Complice | |
| Du remous | Et qu'on s'attache |
| Des lumières | À tort |
| * | À compter les dehors |
| Ça existe | * |
| Qu'on s'étonne | Ça existe |
| À l'écoute d'un mort | Qu'un son nous assaille |
| Qui nous dit qu'il est mort | Et qu'on puisse |
| | Y être |
| | Pour quelque chose |
| Qu'on s'imbrique | Qu'on aime |
| Et nu | |
| Rie | En silence |
| Du vent qui façonne | Et que cela urge |
| | Et empire |
| * | À chacun des instants |
| Ça existe | |

Something as

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| There's something as | Maybe for nothing |
| Dreaming | Something as |
| To the point of burning | Praying |
| | Without thinking |
| A soliloquy | |
| A moment | And endeavouring |
| | Mistakenly |
| Something as nodding assent | To count the externals |
| And thus becoming | Something as |
| The accomplices | A sound assailing us |
| | And making us feel |
| Of the backwash | That we may |
| And the lights | Be here |
| There's something as | For something |
| Wondering | Something as loving |
| When hearing a dead man | In silence |
| | And it gets urgent |
| Telling us he is dead | And worsens |
| Something as getting involved | Each moment |
| Naked | Something as |
| | A whole day |
| And laughing | Passing |
| | In us |
| At the shaping wind | Without seeing us |
| There's something as | There's something as |
| Incandescent | |
| Unsaid | Incandescent |
| | Unsaid |
| Marking out | |
| Within us | Marking out |
| The coming of a god | Within us |
| | The coming of a god |
| Something as | |
| Gravitating | |
| And following ways | |

Qu'un jour entier
Passe

En nous

Sans nous voir

Et qu'on puisse être
Incapable

De même en parler

*
Ça existe

Qu'un verbe ne sache
Ou ne puisse nous contenter

Et que placide
On scintille

Pour d'autres
Qui cherchent

Encore un messie

*
Ça existe ça

Ça existe.

Something as
Gravitating
And following ways

Maybe for nothing

Something as
Praying
Without thinking

And endeavouring
Mistakenly
To count the externals

Something as
A sound assailing us
And making us feel
That we may
Be here
For something

Something as loving
In silence
And it gets urgent
And worsens

Each moment
Something as
A whole day
Passing
In us

Without seeing us
Something as
Being unable

Even of speaking about it
Something as

A Verb ignoring how
Or being unable to please us

And placidly
We scintillate

For some other Verbs
Still waiting

For a Messiah

There's something as that

Something as...

Translator: Jean-François Sené

ceux qui se dressent

Seuls ceux qui se dressent

Traînent de l'ombre
À leurs pieds

Mais *ils*
Regardent

Et voient *l'affamé*

Qui veut moins de pain
Que d'être vu—
Désiré

Simplement regardé

Seuls ceux qui vieillissent
Avancent

Et
Peuvent
Un peu

La lumière.

si un jour

Si un jour
Tu t'affaisses ou,

Qu'un court instant, tu renonces

Et que ta main touche le sol

Et qu'il se fasse
Ou te semble
Étau

*Dressé de murs et
De murailles*

Caresse-le pourtant
Parle-lui

Qui sait ?

La lumière n'est, ne naît
Que là où tes pas te portent

Et tomber
C'est apprendre . . . à voler

À renaître
Parfois

À rêver

À rêver
L'unité

Jusqu'à l'ivresse—
La syncope.

those rising up

Only those rising up

Drag shadows
At their feet

But *they*
Look

And see *him, famished*

Who rather than have bread
Wants to be seen—
Desired

Simply watched

Only those aging
Move on

And
Can
Slightly

Be part of
Light.

if one day

If one day
You collapse or,

For a brief moment, you give up

And your hand touches the ground

Which becomes
Or seems to you
A grip

*Drawn up with walls
Tall and small*

Caress it nevertheless
Speak to it

Who knows ?

Light is, is born
Only where your steps carry you

Falling
Is learning . . . to fly

To be reborn
Sometimes

To dream

To dream
Unity

Into drunkenness—
Black out.

Translator: Laura Balladur

Imposer le silence

Imposer

Le
Silence

Au rocher

À la mer
Qui l'accapare

À la marée
Qui s'en mêle—

Pas toujours

À
Bon
Escient

Imposer le silence

Sinon
Comment savoir
Ce qu'*ils* dansent?

Et faire
Avec eux

Le pas
Les pas

Qu'ils nous doivent?

To impose silence

To impose

Silence

To the rock

To the sea
That absorbs it

To the tide
That mixes with it—
Not always
Wittingly

To impose silence

Or else
How to know
What *they* are dancing

And take
With them

The step
The steps

They owe us?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Désert

1

Le désert
Ou la mer

C'est l'horizon

Qui vous renvoie d'abord
Vers le haut,

C'est la constance

Qui vous dévore les yeux,

Ce sont ces formes

Qui s'immiscent
À vous user le souffle,

Et ces questions

Qui se goûtent
Par tous les sens à la fois.

2

Dans le désert
Ou sur la mer

Tout est mouvement

Qui vit, renonce
À disparaître

Qui l'ondule
Et le dit

L'absence

À chaque instant
S'y fracasse

Et s'accumule:
C'est l'abondance!

Dans le désert
Ou sur la mer

L'épreuve est manne

Ou bien pire
Aubaine

La nuit seule
Délivre ou le peut.

Desert

1

The desert
Or the sea

That's the horizon

That first sends you back
Upwards,

That's constancy

That devours your eyes

They are these forms

That interfere
And take your breath away

And those questions

That are tasted
By all the senses at once.

2

In the desert
Or on the sea

Everything is movement

Their lives, gives up
Disappearing

That ripples it
And says so

Absence

At each instant
Crashes into it

And grows:
That's abundance!

In the desert
Or on the sea

The ordeal is manna

Or much worse
A godsend

Only the night
Delivers or can do so.

3

Rien ici
N'est jamais inutile

Chaque souffle
Et chaque rai

Exerce

A du sens.

Nul besoin
De rappel

De milliers
De livres

Pour voir
Ce qui vient

Pour *avancer*
Sans croire

Jusqu'à temps

D'être

Et d'être
À *soi*.

3

Nothing here
Is ever useless

Every breath
And every ray

Act

And are meaningful.

There's no need
Of a repeat

Of thousands
Of books

To see
What is coming

To *go forward*
Without believing

Until the time

To be

And to be
To *oneself*.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Je voudrais que mes mots

Je voudrais que mes mots sentent la chair, la sueur,
les mains qui savent et le tumulte des hommes,

Je voudrais qu'ils sentent le cep de vigne et l'olivier,
Bollène et La Pierre, la lauze, le schiste,
du bleu, du rose, des mûres
et, devant, l'or des ajoncs,
des genêts à genoux,
le vent qui s'essouffle . . .

Je voudrais qu'ils sentent le soleil à l'entame du jour, le sel,
l'ombre portée de l'écume en fleurs et d'un orage,
un dimanche de Pâques à La Roche . . .

Je voudrais qu'ils sentent un ventre de femme qui se dresse,
le doigt qui le recueille et recueille sa douceur
et la violence insensée qui le tient,
dans l'ovale et dans les caresses . . .

Je voudrais que mes mots sentent la chair, la sueur, la rosée
que l'on boit et le goût de la terre, de ce qui brûle, féconde,
et des souffles qui emportent . . .

Je voudrais que mes mots disent
ma peur enfin, sur ta peau.

I would like my words

I would like my words to smell of flesh, of sweat, of hands that know . . . And the
uproar of men,

I would like them to smell of vine stock and olive trees, Bollène and La Pierre, of
lauze stones, of schist . . . Some blue, some pink, of blackberries and, in front, the
gold of gorse . . . of brooms on their knees, the breathless wind

I would like them to feel the sun at the first light of day . . . the salt . . . the shadow
brought from the froth in flower . . . and of a storm, one Easter Sunday at La Roche,

I would like them to feel the belly of a woman who moves toward enjoyment, the
finger that gathers it up and gathers its sweetness . . . and the insane violence that
holds it, in its oval and it caresses,

I would like my words to feel the smell of flesh, of sweat, the dew that we drink and
the taste of the earth . . . of what burns, fertilizes, and the new breath that carries
off,

I would like my words to speak of . . . my fear under your skin.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Foules

J'ai tant de foules en moi
Qui errent,

Tant de lumières et d'ivresses
D'ombres irrésolues

D'attentes fragiles
À redire

De mots ouverts
À dévaler

À encore
Accorder.

Étoile

Rompue pourtant
Au vacarme

L'étoile a cédé—

Peut-être
À l'*impatience*

De fait, elle renonce
À savoir, à se lire

Et se livre
Au temps

Qu'elle mêle à l'ivresse

Elle devient
Lumière l'étoile

Présence

À des années
Pourtant
De ce qu'elle fut

Son avenir désormais
C'est *l'espace*

Mais elle apprend
L'étoile

Elle *apprend*.

Crowds

I have so many crowds within me
That wander,

So many lights so many exhilarations
So many unsolved shadows

And fragile expectations
To say again

Open words
To slide down

Still
To tune.

Star

Inured yet
To the din

The star gave in—

Perhaps
To *impatience*

In fact, it gives up
Knowing, reading within

And gives itself up
To *time*

That it mixes with drunkenness

It becomes
Light, the star

A presence

Light years away
However
From what it was

Its future from now on
Is *space*

But it is learning
The star

It *learns*.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Cendre

Dans la cendre
Je sens

Le bois

De plus en plus
Silencieux

*Comme un mot
Déjà dit*

Dans la cendre
Des choses

Ni poussière
Ni chaleur—

Mais des choses
Autrement

Comme un peu
De lave

Et du ferment.

Seuil

Pour que jamais
Ce qui déserte ne tue le silence

Prie

Qui tu veux
Mais prie

Même rendu
Perdu sur un seuil

Prie

Je veux dire
Écoute

Sans compter—

Ne dis rien
Prie

Comme on crie
Sans le souffle

Comme on épie

Prie.

Ash

In the ash
I feel

Wood

Increasingly
Silent

*Like a word
Already spoken*

In the ash
Of things

Neither dust
Nor heat—

But things
Differently

Like some
Slight lava

And leaven.

Threshold

To prevent
What deserts from ever killing silence

Pray

To whomever you want
But pray

Even given up
Lost on a threshold

Pray

I mean
Listen

Without counting—

Say nothing
Pray

As one screams
Breathlessly

As one spies

Pray.

Translator: Laura Balladur

Fée

Qu'as-tu fait du ciel
Et des bouffées
De fête
Quand vivant, tu pillais

Levais
Le ventre des fées?

Tu savais ses rondeurs
Et ses clos

Le blé

La terre
À entreprendre

Aussi vous
Qui que vous soyez
Aimez-la

Vous ne serez pas le premier
Bien sûr

Mais aimez-la
Lavez-lui les pieds

Apprenez

Prenez-la.

Contraindre la pierre

Devant l'ombre
Qui se détache

Il se peut
Que la pierre
Se contraigne
À l'écoute

À la constance

Mais rien
N'est si sûr.

Sprite

What have you done with the sky

And the whiffs
Of feasts
When alive, you plundered

Lifted
The belly of sprites?

You knew its curves
And its closes

The wheat

The land
To undertake

And you as well
Whoever you are
Love her

You will not be the first
Of course

But love her
Wash her feet

Learn

Take her.

Compelling the stone

Faced with the shadow
Removing itself

It could very well be
That the stone
Compels itself
To listen

To persevere

But nothing
Is so certain.

Translator: Laura Balladur

S'en tenir

S'en tenir
Au contrevent

Au goût de la glaise

De tout ce qui
Frotte et qui frôle
Et nous embrase

Et qu'on espère

S'en tenir
À l'être—

À ce qu'on est

Quand
Se ferment
Nos yeux

Plein les mains

S'en tenir
Au centre

Et s'en tenir
Au poids.

Papillons

Laisser sa mort

Lentement déshabiter
Ses yeux—

*Ne plus pouvoir
Cesser de penser
Autrement qu'à une danse*

S'ouvrir—

*Et la peur
De ne pas l'être assez*

Et se laisser jouir
Alors
Dans un lâcher *d'oiseaux—*

*Comme un envol
De papillons*

L'été
Dans un champs

Soulever son corps
Et ses milliers

Connaître enfin
Sa royauté.

Holding on

Holding on
To the windscreen

The taste of clay

Of everything that
Rubs and brushes against
And enflames us

And that we wish

Holding on
To being—

To what we are

When
Our eyes
Shut

Hands-full

Holding on
To the center

Holding on
To weight.

Translator: Laura Balladur

Butterflies

Let its death

Slowly leave its eyes—

*No longer able to stop thinking
Of anything but a dance*

To open up

*And the fear
Of not being open enough*

And to let oneself take joy then
In a release of *birds—*

*Like a flight
Of butterflies*

The summer

In a field

To lift its body *and thousands more*
To know finally it's Monarchy.

Translator: Catherine A. Beaudry

Lancer des pierres

Compter les cris
Des morts
Que l'on charrie *quand on marche*

Et ne pas les *tenir* à l'écart

Leur lancer des pierres

À en percer
Le secret

Lamper leur silence

Et
Rond comme une pelle

Entendre
Ce qui tape

Et secoue
Les entrailles

Comme un rire

Et compter
Recompter

Et puis sourire
Pour eux—

Leur sourire.

Réparer

Réparer

C'est veiller
Je dirais—

Attentif et *debout*

C'est refuser
Tout rejet

C'est recoudre
Ou selon,
Rectifier

Renforcer
Réunir

C'est
Parer—
De magie

C'est choisir un *sens*
À donner

C'est choisir
L'être

Élire

C'est grandir—
Accorder

Et c'est vivre aussi
Ou mieux—ou plus longtemps

Réparer
C'est vivre.

Non?

Throwing stones

Counting the screams
Of the dead
That we carry along *when we walk*

Not *keeping* them at bay

But throwing stones at them

Eventually seeing through
Their secret

Swigging their silence

And
High as a kite

Hearing
What strikes

And shakes
The entrails

Like laughter

And counting
Recounting

And then smiling
For them—

Their smile.

Mending

Mending

Is keeping watch
I would say—

Attentive and *erect*

Refusing
Any rejection

Restitching
Or at times,
Rectifying

Reinforcing
Reuniting

Mending is
Trimming—
With magic

Choosing a *meaning*
To give

Choosing
The being

Electing

Growing—
Granting

And also living
Better—or longer

Mending
Is living.

Isn't it?

Translator: Laura Balladur

Secrets

Comment les choses
Sauront-elles
Nous dire

Qu'on peut
Leur laisser
Des secrets

Que c'est nous
Qui partons

Du vent
Dans les mains

Que ces ailes qui traînent
Sont les nôtres

Et nous dire

Qu'elles demeurent *elles*
Demeurent

Pour transmettre
Parfois pour hanter

Jamais pour commander
Ni dicter

Jamais.

Secrets

How will things
Be able
To tell us

That we can
Leave them
Secrets

That we are the ones
Departing

With thin air
In our hands

That these trailing wings
Belong to us

And to tell us

That they remain *they*
Remain

To transmit
Sometimes to haunt

Never to command
Or dictate

Never.

Translator: Laura Balladur

Flanqué d'un sourire

ce poème est un hommage à Henry Miller et son Smile at the Foot of the Ladder

Flanqué
d'un sourire

Qu'il expose
à grands traits

Emile *s'apprête à rêver*

Et
Demande à l'ange
Comme on *doit* s'effacer.

Il hésite
à chacun des cris
Chaque pas

Chaque entame :

C'est l'instant qu'il recherche

C'est l'éclat.

Il trompette avec son cœur
À se couper le souffle.

Et
Quand tout se tait,

Que le charivari
est rendu

Roulé
Loin du cercle,

Qu'il est là
Béat, le nez défait

Et l'âme pendue
Qui sèche au trapèze

—*Quand l'ombre*
A finalement
Eu raison du tambour

Il se demande alors
Parfois

Qui

A bien pu s'occuper d'être *Lui*

Ce soir
Pendant qu'il était *Clown*.

Sporting a smile

To Henry Miller and his Smile at the Foot of the Ladder

Sporting
A smile

That he widely
Displays

Emile gets ready to dream

And
Asks an angel
How he must disappear.

He hesitates
At each scream
Each step

Each opening

It is the moment he looks for

It is the glitter.

He trumpets with his heart
Taking his breath away.

And
When all is quiet

When the finale is over, the rug rolled up
Far from the ring,

When he is there
Blissful, his nose off

And his soul hanging
Out to dry on the trapeze

—*When the shadow*
Finally
Beats the drum

He asks himself then
Sometimes

Who

Was in charge of *Him*

Tonight

While he was being a *Clown*.

Translator: Catherine A. Beaudry

Aux arbres penchés—Extraits du recueil

*Après la tempête de décembre, je me souviens d'avoir vu deux ou trois arbres, au moins
centenaires et clairement déracinés. On sentait bien qu'ils avaient dû
se faire surprendre par la violence de la chose,
qu'ils avaient dû s'agripper les uns aux autres,
un peu n'importe comment,
de telle sorte qu'ils s'étaient retrouvés ainsi de travers, liés contre nature.
Je me souviens aussi sous l'amas, d'un petit panneau métallique d'à peine deux mètres,
encore intact et planté,
que je n'avais jamais remarqué auparavant, ni ici
ni ailleurs : « Danger! Arbres penchés ».
J'ai aussitôt eu envie de crier . . . du dedans . . .
de dédier un recueil ou quelque chose,
un hommage, à ces arbres penchés . . . longtemps debout ou d'abord debout.*

Un arbre ne s'adonne qu'à une chose, une seule, peut-être essentielle : fixer la lumière.

Mais il sait aussi donner du temps et regarder la pierre.

Il sait bien que rien n'est plus corrosif et que rien n'abaisse autant une pierre, que de n'être plus regardée.

À peser autant sur lui-même, il a besoin d'apprendre à résister—d'abord à l'étouffement. À exister.

Mais il étend ses bras et nous les ouvre. Et les écarte. Pour nous—Comme si donner était sa chance à lui! Comme si la vie pouvait aller—se poser—ailleurs et puis disparaître à jamais!

To the leaning trees—Excerpts from the book

*After the storm in December 1999, I remember seeing one or two trees, a hundred years old at least and obviously uprooted. One could feel that they must have been caught unawares by the violence of the storm, they must have grasped at one another any which way, and then had fallen over each other, tangled together unnaturally. I remember too, under the mass, a small metal board nearly two or three yards long, intact and still standing, which I had never noticed before, there or elsewhere : "Beware! Leaning trees."
At once I felt like screaming . . . within . . . I felt like dedicating a poem or something, paying a tribute, to those leaning trees . . . standing upright for so long always standing.*

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Trees devote themselves to one single thing, an essential thing maybe: staring at light.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

But they can also take time and *look at a stone*.

They know that nothing is more corrosive, nothing *humbles* a stone *more than* no longer being looked at.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

By weighing so much upon themselves, they have to learn how to withstand—stifling first. How to live.

But they stretch their arms and open them out to us. And spread them out. For us—As if giving was their good fortune! As if life could go—rest—elsewhere and vanish forever!

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Un arbre n'a pas toujours—en plus—à donner des raisons de se taire ou de rester où il est.

Heureusement!

Osez!
Touchez-le!

Pour votre main—d'abord
et la former à la douceur

vous rassurer, passer—
peut-être
un cap

Pour sentir une odeur—
un peu d'intimité

Un arbre n'aura jamais honte de vos caresses—et moins encore, de celles prodiguées en pleine lumière!

Que tout soit incertain autour de lui ne l'empêche pas de regarder vers le haut, ni d'avancer ou de chercher à s'élargir . . .

Ni même de s'appuyer ouvertement sur chacune de ses racines. Bien au contraire.

Pourquoi *un jour*, aurait-il brusquement cessé d'avancer?

A-t-il eu peur de se désunir quand il a su, ce qu'il n'atteindrait pas, quand il a vu l'ombre, la sienne, se résoudre . . . à l'exploration d'un *seul et même* point—concentrée . . . à multiplier ses angles et ses intensités?

Trees—moreover—do not always have to express their reasons for keeping silent or staying where they stand.

Fortunately!

Dare
Touch it!

With your hand—first
to prepare it to softness

and reassure yourself and round—
a cape
maybe

To smell a scent—
to feel some intimacy

Trees will never be ashamed of your caresses—even less of those showered in full daylight !

Everything is uncertain around them but this does not prevent them from looking upwards, nor from advancing or striving to expand . . .

Not even from relying openly on each of their roots. On the contrary.

Why did the tree *one day* suddenly stop advancing?

Did it fear dismembering when it understood it would not reach, when it saw the shadow, its own, resolve itself . . . to explore a single and same point—focused . . . on multiplying its angles and its intensities?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

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La prudence n'ayant jamais sauvé personne—ni de la vie, ni de la mort—peut-être a-t-il simplement choisi, *lui*, d'avancer autrement, *autrement* qu'à nos habitudes. Et, contre toute attente, d'aller vers le haut, tout bonnement . . . vers le haut.

Pourquoi serait-on trahi par les manœuvres d'un arbre?

— Qui te dit que le vent et la racine ne se parlent plus? Que sais-tu des raisons des palabres . . . dans l'ombre des houppiers?

— Non, mais je parle aux pierres aussi. Depuis longtemps. C'est plus facile. Il suffit d'attendre qu'elles se décident : et d'écouter.

Une pierre, ça demande plus de temps qu'un arbre, pour se lancer . . . mais ça parle toujours des mêmes choses : ça parle de pesanteur. Et ce qu'elle dit, la pierre, elle le pèse. Probablement a-t-elle encore besoin d'imaginer des racines, un père, un départ. C'est drôle à dire, mais elle est libre—elle—la pierre : aucune attache. Pourtant, une fois debout, dressée, on ne voit plus que les siècles qui la poussent! Mais qui la brident à l'horizon, ai-je envie d'ajouter. La pierre appelle. Elle appelle.

Un arbre, par contre, ça parle des vents, des vies qui l'entourent. Lui sait ses frondaisons, le mitan des courses et celui des poussées, le détail des pariades qu'il incite et protège. D'ailleurs parfois, dit-il « ses oiseaux » à l'étoile qui, la nuit, l'interroge et s'y fait ses repères. Mais lui ne lie rien. Il en vient même à oublier qu'il a des racines. En tout cas, ça arrive. Et sa vie—la sienne, quand il en parle, il n'en dit que l'attente. Du fond du sol à son faite, il n'en garde qu'un effort, un seul. Un chemin, qui monte. Sans cesse. Il en appelle l'arbre, en appelle.

Un arbre qui tombe, d'ailleurs, c'est toujours un drame pour nous, les « sans racine ». Alors qu'un caillou qui roule, dégringole, n'est qu'un état, un temps de gaudriole. C'est de l'éclat, le temps d'un ricochet.

Mais le caillou aspire—par contre—à se trouver au fond. Pour se caler et pouvoir enfin, se mesurer au temps, à armes égales. En tout cas, c'est ce qu'on dit, chez les arbres.

Cautiousness having never saved anybody—neither from life nor from death—maybe it simply chose to advance differently, differently from our ways. And, against all expectations, to go upwards, quite simply . . . upwards.

Why should we be betrayed by the moves of a tree?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

— Why should you think that the wind and the root no longer talk to each other? What do you know about the reasons of those endless talks . . . in the shade of pruned trees?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

— No, but I also talk to the stones. For a long time. It is easier. You only have to wait till they are ready, and listen.

A stone wants more time than a tree to set off . . . but stones always talk about the same things; they talk of gravity. And what they say, they weigh it. Presumably, they still need to imagine roots, a father, a beginning. Strange to say, but they are free, the stones are—without links. However, once standing, upright, you can only see the centuries that push them up! But that retain them on the horizon, I would add. Stones do call. They call.

A tree, on the contrary, talks of the winds, the lives around. It knows its foliage, the middle of flights and that of pressures, the details of the mating seasons it prompts and protects. Besides, sometimes, it says “my birds” to the star that, at night, questions it and finds its bearings in it. But *it* does not link anything. It even comes to forget its own roots. In any case, this does happen. And its life—its own life, when it talks about it, it only talks about its expectation. From deep in the ground to its top, it only keeps an effort, a single one; a path going upwards. Endlessly. It appeals, it does appeal.

A tree that falls is always a tragedy for us, “the rootless.” Whereas a stone that rolls, tumbles down, is simply a state, a moment of fun. A bit of brilliance, the time of a bounce.

But, on the other hand, the stone aspires to sit at the bottom. So as to settle and be able at last to pit itself against time on equal terms. In any case, this is what is said among trees.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Savoir qu'un jour il va mourir, ne lui offre aucun avantage. Sur personne. Mais a-t-on—pour autant—déjà vu un arbre rebrousser chemin, ou bien même se mettre à couvert?

L'arbre n'a jamais à devoir demander son chemin. Et alors? Serait-ce une raison pour ne pas qu'il ait des amis ?

Pensez-vous vraiment que les arbres, puissent apprendre à marcher, la nuit, sans faire de bruit . . . et être ainsi prêts—mais fin prêts—le *jour* du départ?

Il voit bien qu'une lumière un peu vive, cache un temps l'essentiel—à moins qu'il ne le sente!

En tout cas, s'il ajoute de la pénombre . . . c'est pour nous, les hommes, pour que nous puissions voir . . . et du coup, nous permettre—jamais pour démontrer, grand Dieu ! jamais.

Sur quel ton, comment voulez-vous dire à un arbre *Ce n'est pas une fille pour toi* quand on sait que le silence brutal des oiseaux... quand on sait qu'une absence de rosée—par hasard—un matin . . . déjà le terrorisent?

Pour *entendre*,
il a besoin de comprendre,
d'être avec . . . *intime*.

Knowing that it will die one day does not give it any advantage. Over anybody. But—for all that—have we ever seen a tree turn back or get under cover?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Trees never have to ask for their way. So what? Would that be a reason for their having no friends?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Do you really think that trees can learn how to walk, at night, without making a noise . . . and thus be ready—quite ready—on the *day* of the departure?

Translator: Jean-François Sené

They can see that some bright light hides the essential for a while—or they can feel so!

Anyway, if they accentuate the dark, it is for us, human beings, to help us see . . . and thus to enable us—never to prove anything, Good Lord ! Never.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

In what tone, how would you say to a tree *She is not a girl for you* when we know that the brutal silence of birds . . . when we know that the absence of dew—by chance—one morning already terrorizes it ?

To *hear*
it needs to understand,
to be with . . . *intimate*.

Translator: Catherine A. Beaudry

O sera-t-il nous dire où se terre son plaisir? Le chaos des sèves qui le forment?
S'il a aimé—*au moins une fois*—sans la moindre arrière pensée, ni le moindre
serment blessé, en ayant regardé—*jusqu'au bout*—tomber ses fruits . . . par délice, en
silence . . . et se faire ainsi sa mémoire ?

Tu as su laisser la vie entrer en toi, s'accorder, *pénétrer* de part en part.
Tu l'as fait, *d'abord* par le bas—par le ventre.
Tu as choisi le centre et la terre, et non le souffle des airs, ou des autres.

Tu m'as semblé ainsi fort—
et plus *heureux*.

Peut-être aurais-je dû t'imiter—
ou, du moins,

commencer par là.

Dans l'ombre des *ormes* ou du *sycamore*, des *pins* du Midi ou des *tilleuls*
d'antan . . . d'un beau *marronnier*, lourd et majestueux . . . à l'ombre des *bambous* de
nos rêves . . . d'un *pommier* . . . d'un *chêne* et de ses années . . . d'un *séquoia* que l'on
touche, une fois pour sa taille et cent fois pour sa douceur . . . d'un *olivier* à qui, tout
bas, l'on dit l'enfant que l'on voudrait porter . . . dans l'ombre du blanc *merisier* . . .
d'un *platane*, fidèle . . .—Quand on n'a plus rien, on peut toujours se mettre sous
un arbre : on y est bien.

Will he dare tell us where his pleasure lies down? The chaos of sap forming
him? If he loved—*at least once*—without any reservation, without any bleeding
oath, having watched—*to the end*—his fruits fall . . . with delight, silently . . . thus
creating for himself his memory?

Translator: Laura Balladur

You knew how to let life enter you, to get to know you, to *penetrate* you
through and through.

You did it, first by the bottom—by your belly.

You chose the center and the earth, and not the breath of the air, or of others.

You seemed to me so strong—
And happier.

Perhaps I should have imitated you,
or at least,

started with that.

Translator: Catherine A. Beaudry

In the shade of *elms* or of a *sycamore*, of Southern *pine trees* or long-lost
lindens . . . of a beautiful *chestnut tree*, heavy and stately . . . in the shade of the
bamboos of our dreams . . . of an *apple tree* . . . an *oak* in all its years . . . a *sequoia*
that you touch, once for its size and a hundred times for its softness . . . an *olive*
tree to which you tell in a whisper about the child you would like to bear . . . in
the white shade of a wild *cherry tree* . . . of a faithful *plane tree* . . .—When you are
dispossessed, you can always sit under a tree: there you will feel well.

Translator: Jean-François Sené

Franco-America

Susann Pelletier

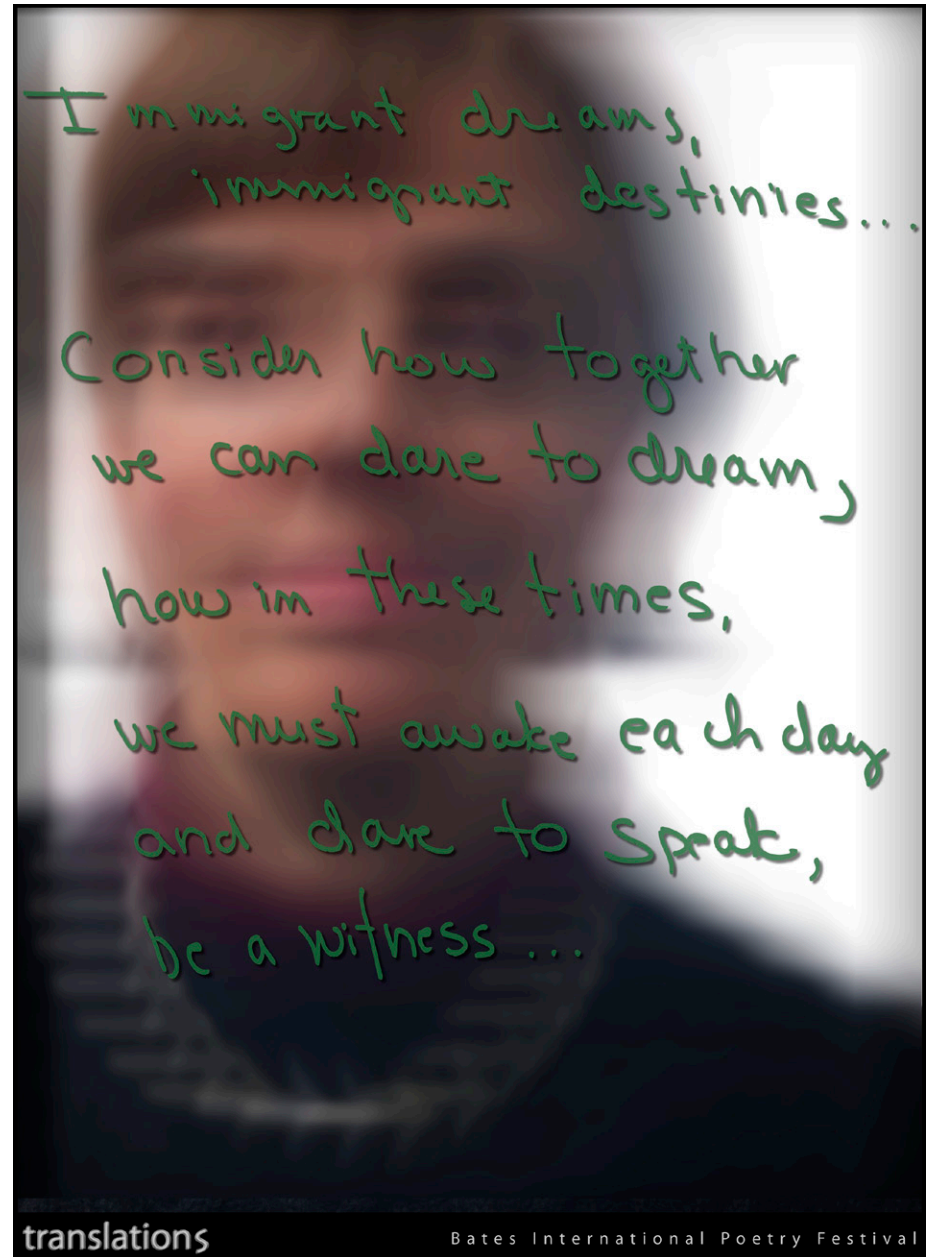
Susann Pelletier, a Lewiston, Maine native, began writing poems when she was 11 years old. Her work gives voice to her deep connections to family and place in Franco-America, as well as her vision of social justice and dignity at home and beyond our borders.

Her articles and poems have been published here and abroad in anthologies, literary journals, chapbooks, and political and environmental magazines. Susann has worked as a journalist, editorial consultant, market gardener, college instructor, and co-editor of a progressive monthly. She finds great pleasure sharing with young people her love of poetry and offering creative writing workshops.

A pacifist, Susann is committed to non-violent social change and has been an activist since her teens in the late 1960's. Susann is a board member and volunteer for Maine People's Alliance, and currently serves on the Androscoggin Valley Housing and Worker Justice Committee, Campaign Vote! Media Team, and the Racial Justice Strategy Committee. This year, Maine People's Alliance has taken a lead role among Maine organizations in bringing racial justice issues to the forefront of all of its work, and offering trainings to other groups.

A long-time advocate of local and sustainable organic food systems, Susann and her family participate in a Maine-products food cooperative, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and also grow and preserve their own organic vegetables, fruit, and herbs. Susann is working on a book-length collection of her poems, *What We Gather in November*.





Legacy

An afternoon ago,
I bared my legs, my arms,
I lifted my face to the March sun.
It pressed its heat onto my lids,
Pressed its yellows and its reds—
Called up from summer past
Buzz of katydid and easeful afternoon,
Marigolds and the hand's hot hold
On husband, love—
All these pungencies pressed onto me.

Then, heat reached deeper, touched
What I had shoved and heaped into a place
Of no shame, few dreams—
I forgetting how the mounded and the dead
Will startle again . . .
Will rise up from thawed ground,
Seek audience.

Now this sorrow will seep up like a sheening
Of new grass.
Fires in Bagdad flare out of every blade
And the bright, sharp edges of broken day, broken night
Rain down rain down
Into the cupped hands of my daughter—
This, her inheritance—
All the children tussle with flame,
Run toward us,
Seek water at our glistening stream.
They have come from the ancient, ruined fountains . . .

Daughter, how can we wrack ice
And widen this stream,
Take up the living and the dead,
Bathe all the wounds,
Slake the thirst of these innocents?

L'heritage

Il y a un après midi
Que j'ai découvert les jambes, les bras,
J'ai levé le visage au soleil de mars.
Il a pressé sa chaleur sur mes paupières
Enfoncé ses jaunes et ses rouges—
Rappelé d'un été passé
Le bourdonnement de sauterelle
L'après-midi aisé, les soucis
Et la prise chaude de la main
Sur mari, amour—
Toute cette âcreté est enfoncée sur moi.

Puis la chaleur a tendu plus loin, touché
Ce que j'avais fourré et entassé en un lieu
D'aucun honte et peu de rêves—
Moi, oubliant comment les entassés et les morts
Sursauteront encore . . .
Se lèveront de la terre dégelée,
Chercheront audience.

Maintenant ce chagrin s'infiltrera comme un lustrant
D'herbe nouvelle.
Les feus à Bagdad s'embrasent de chaque brin
Et les bords coupants et éclatant du jour cassé, nuit cassée
Pleuvent fort pleuvent fort
Dans les mains ouvertes de ma fille—
Ceci, son héritage—
Tous les enfants se battent contre les flammes,
Courent vers nous,
Cherchent l'eau à notre ruisseau luisant.
Ils sont venus des anciennes fontaines ruinées . . .

Fille, comment pouvons-nous fracasser glace
Et élargir ce ruisseau,
Prendre les vivants et les morts,
Laver toutes les blessures,
Apaiser le soif de ces innocents ?

Traduction: Kirsten Gill

In this Light Briefly

I imagine
The sun shines once
And only once.

We stand in this light briefly,
Gratefully alive,
With morning coming in
Like a guest we do not expect
Quite yet—
Flamboyant,
Full of summer noise
Bearing big bouquets of flowers
And singing the songs of several birds.

I listened to those separate songs
Of wren and oriole
Robin, sparrow, thrush
Soon after waking with you.
And in their trill and whistles,
In their chirrups and spiraling sounds,
I heard my own joy rise
From the dewy slopes of sleep,
And gather up
Into the crest of early light,
Your love,
All its brief opening roses
Of summer.

Brièvement Cette Lumière

J'imagine
le soleil qui ne brule q'une fois
qu'une seule fois.

Nous nous tenons devant cette lumière
brièvement
magnifiquement vivants
lorsque le jour nous pénètre
tel un invité
que nous n'attendons pas
si tôt
flamboyant
plein de bruits d'été
portant un grand bouquet de fleurs
et des chants d'oiseaux innombrables.

J'écoute ces chants
du roitelet et loriot
du rouge-gorge, moineau, et la grive,
chacun unique et tellement beau,
et dans les sons perlés et les sifflements,
dans les claquements et spirales,
j'entends s'élever ma joie
du doux someil humecté
retenu à la crête
d'une lumière matinale
ton amour,
toutes les roses éphémères
de l'été.

Traduction: Huguette Bertrand, Editions des Forges

For my father, Lionel Pelletier

Bending for sweet strawberries
 You fall in the late morning heat
 Onto your hands and knees.
 No dew now on the straw.
 Sun shed that hours ago . . .

This always was your sort of devotions—
 The hard ground softened only a little

By grass or hay.

Your prayers not talk or chant,
 But motion, getting going, moving
 Toward
 What is
 Created, breathing, red, sweet
 Of a season
 Bending in your last week
 Of summers
 For strawberries.

Pour mon père, Lionel Pelletier

Te penchant pour des fraises douces
 En la chaleur de la fin de matin, tu tombes
 Sur les mains et les genoux
 Pas plus de la rosée sur la paille.
 Ça fait quelques heures déjà que le soleil l'a ôtée . . .

C'était toujours ton genre de dévotions—
 Le sol dur n'amolli qu'un peu

Par l'herbe ou par le foin

Tes prières pas de propos ni de mélodie,
 Mais de mouvement, se mettre en route, bouger
 Vers
 Ce qui est
 Créée, respirant, rouge, douce
 D'une saison
 Te penchant en ta dernière semaine
 D'étés
 Pour des fraises.

Traduction: Kirsten Gill

Innocence of the Beasts

Almost nine o'clock this October night, and
Long dark
Driving down the dead end road, I see
The kitchen window's light, I hear
The moving branches, rustling leaves
Greet me.

Almost nine o'clock,
I turn finally to my border collie,
Stroke and notice her soft underchin,
How close that softness is
To her large, kind eyes,
Her sweet nature
Its devotions.

So, almost nine o'clock at night,
Away from home for hours
Now I bend to consider her
And the innocence of the beasts.

I flick off the kitchen lights.
A white moth rests on the geranium,
A mouse or two shuffle behind the stove,
Inside the tea cupboard . . .

In bed, in the dark
I hear the wings of young bats
Stretch out, then in
As they relax in the rafters . . .

L'Innocence des bêtes

Vers neuf heures de ce soir d'octobre, et
Longtemps noir
Roulant sur la route impasse, je vois
La lumière de la cuisine, j'entends
Les branches bougeant, feuilles bruissant
Me saluent.

Vers neuf heures,
Je me tourne finalement à mon border collie,
Caresse et remarque son menton doux,
Comment proche est cette douceur
A ses grands yeux,
Sa nature douce
Ses dévouements.

Alors, vers neuf heures du soir,
Partie de la maison pendant des heures
Je me penche maintenant pour considérer elle
Et l'innocence des bêtes.

J'éteins les lumières de cuisine.
Un papillon de nuit blanc se repose sur le géranium,
Une souris ou deux filent derrière le pôle
Dans l'armoire de thé . . .

Au lit, dans le noir
J'entends les ailes des jeunes chauves-souris
S'étirent, puis reculent
Comme elles se détendent aux chevrons.

Traduction: Kirsten Gill

For my Grandmother, Marie-Anne Maillet

Mémère,
If you were alive
This morning
I would bring you
(In your cool kitchen)
A bowl
Of red raspberries.

You would put down
Your book and say,
“Qu’elles sont belles!”
(“How beautiful they are!”)
Hold the brimming bowl
In your two hands
Like a face you love,
Lift it to your nose,
Your mouth.

If you were alive
This morning
I might tell you how your joy
Awaiting me
Cleared each brambly cane
In my way.

Pour Ma Grandmère, Marie-Anne Maillet

Mémère,
si tu étais vivante
ce matin
je t’apporterais
dans la fraîcheur de ta cuisine
un bol de framboises rouges.

Tu déposerais ton livre
et dirais
“Qu’elles sont belles!”
Tu serrerais entre tes deux mains
ce bol débordant
tel un visage aimé
Le rapprocherais de ton nez
de ta bouche.

Si tu étais vivante
ce matin
je pourrais te dire
combien ta joie
me rejoint
arrachant chaque ronce
de mon chemin.

Traduction: Éditions des Forges

Lothar Quinkenstein

Born in 1967 in Bayreuth, Southwestern Germany, Lothar Quinkenstein grew up in the Saarland region on the border between Germany and France. After completing his studies in German and Anthropology at the University of Freiburg, he worked as a German teacher. His teaching took him as far as St. Petersburg and, in 1994, to Poland, where he has been living ever since. In 1999, he joined the teaching staff in the German Studies Department at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where he also completed his Ph.D. He has published poems, short stories, and translations from Polish in various publications, most recently the poetry volume *Beim Stimmen der Saiten* (*While Tuning the Strings*, Saarbrücken 2007) and contributions to two important anthologies of contemporary German verse, *An Deutschland gedacht* (*Having Thought of Germany*) and *Versnetze_zwei* (*Verse Networks_two*, both 2009).





Die Feder

Über First und Regenrinne
schwebt sie in dein Hofgeviert,
kitzelt einen deiner Sinne,
und schon schaust du interessiert.

Siehst sie sinken, siehst sie steigen,
kreisen, gleiten hin und her.
Fast, als wollt sie etwas zeigen,
fast, als obs ein Zeichen wär.

Risse zacken eine Scheibe,
und der Putz hat ein Geschwür,
denn im letzten Stock die Bleibe
steht geraume Zeit schon leer.

Weiter abwärts kümmern Blumen,
neigen sich auf müdem Stiel,
und es regnet täglich Krumen
von kariertem Tischtextil.

Nägel, Haken, Kabelstränge
baumeln schwarz und bandwurmlang,
und ein seltsam Rostgestänge
spreizt sich unterm Sims entlang.

Dort in einem Topf mit Deckel
wird Gekochtes luftgekühlt,
gleich daneben flappt ein Säckel,
das mal irgendwas enthielt.

Ein Stück Draht, geduldig biegsam,
angebracht vor Tag und Jahr,
hängt gedübelt, selbstgenügsam,
manchmal auch mit Sockenpaar.

Grau gebeizt, Parterrgardinen
(Kohleofen, Sonntagsfett),

The Feather

Over roof ridges and eaves,
it floats down into your yard.
One sense instantly perceives,
and you're already on guard.

See it sinking, see it rising,
circling, gliding here and yon.
Almost seems to tell you something,
almost seems to be a sign.

Crooked cracks a window score,
and the plaster has a boil,
for the flat on the last floor
has been empty for a while.

Further downward stunted flowers
wilt and bend on tired stocks,
of bread and cake crumbs daily showers
fall from a checkered table cloth.

Nails and hooks and cable strands
dangle black and tapewormlong,
and an odd system of rods
also mixes in the throng.

There, a lidded pot contains
someone's lunch, set out to chill.
Next to it, a sack of grains
flutters loosely, without fill.

Patient, pliable, a wire
that's been here as long as rocks,
now hangs smugly, out for hire,
sometimes with a pair of socks.

First-floor curtains in a kitchen,
stained in gray by Sunday's meal,

und der Tauben Liebedienen
sprenkelte das Fensterbrett.

Sag, ob ich es recht verstehe,
sollte dies dein Zeichen sein:
Was ich hier tagtäglich sehe,
schreibst du in die Luft hinein?

Oder war zu kühn geschwungen
dieser stille Himmelsflug?
Deine Botschaft so verschlungen,
daß sie mich mit Blindheit schlug?

Feder, Feder, immer schneller,
ach, verlorn der Sonnenton—
ach, und dort beim Katzenteller
schwimmst du in der Pfütze schon.

gewandstudie

zerschlissenes webstück
flatternd im schlehengestrüpp
vom wetter gelaugt
zwischen plastik und wind

als wäre auch hier
die nympe geflohn vor apoll

Pollock

wie er den bullerofen
anfeuert morgens
mit der arbeit beginnt

sicher: nur leinwand und wir
haben eintritt gezahlt
trotzdem
bleibt mir das bild:

and the lovey-dovey pigeons
peppering the window sill.

Tell me if I understand you,
read your sign beyond a doubt:
Do you write upon the air
what I see day in, day out?

Or was this silent upward flight
fancied too boldly and too loft?
Is your message so entwined
as to lead me fully off?

Feather, feather, ever agile,
gone, alas, the happy swish—
you're now swimming in a puddle
over by the kitty dish.

garment study

tattered piece of weaving
fluttering in the blackthorn scrub
leached by the weather
between plastic and wind

as if here, too
the nymph had fled from apollo

Pollock

how he fires the round iron
stove in the morning
sets out to work

certainly: it's only a canvas
screen and we have paid to get in
still
the picture remains:

ein einziger tag
solcher arbeit schon mehr
als der acker der suff

Die Pfütze

Not for victory
— Charles Reznikoff

Beuge dich
über die Pfütze
auch wenn sie nicht schillert
der Himmel bedeckt
ein Wind sie zerknüllt
alles enthält sie
dein Gestern dein Hier
deinen Blick auf das fernste
Rätsel Ichmöchte
kaum fingerbreittief
trotzdem ein Oben
trotzdem ein Grund
Satz
so leicht zu verwirbeln
so nimmerverwüstlich
vom Wasser gehüteter
Anfang der Welt.

Vor Ostern

If I ever had an inspiration,
I had one then.
— Johnny Cash

Belämmert nach Tagen am Schreibtisch
gehst du hinaus
nichts
ist fertig das Licht
gibt zu erkennen wie immer.

a single day
of such work already more
than the road the booze

The Puddle

Not for victory
— Charles Reznikoff

Bend
over the puddle
even if it doesn't dazzle
the sky covered
a wind crumples it
everything is contained in it
your yesterday your here
your peek into the most fathomless
puzzle I want to
not even a finger deep
just the same an above
just the same a bottom
line
so easy to whirl away
so never exhaustible
guarded by water
beginning of the world.

Before Easter

If I ever had an inspiration,
I had one then.
— Johnny Cash

Belambled after days at the desk
you go out
nothing
is finished the light
evinces as always.

Ein erster
Grünzwirn bestickt
den Park du stehst
unter Bäumen der Schwan
zeigt wie mans macht:
den Schnabel ins Spiegelbild tunken
satt werden davon.

Du bettest
das Wasser den Schwan
auf den Handteller stützt sie
auf Knochen und Brüstung
die Pferde am Zaun
nicken dir Mut:
schau nur genauer ein Käfer
krabbelt am gipsernen Zeh
Aeternitas jetzt
verzieh keine Miene sonst ist
alles beim Teufel.

Wiepersdorf, am Tag vor der Abreise, März 2007

nach abermaliger lektüre des Hyperion

wüssten wir auch ob der baum
fühle den sturz des entwurzelten bruders

wüssten wir auch ob der fels
fühle den eisigen keil der ihn sprengt

wüssten wir immer noch nicht
warum ein mensch sich bückt
nach ast und stein um einen
menschen zu erschlagen

A first
thread of green embroiders
the park you stand
under the trees the swan
displays how it's done:
dunk the beak in the reflection
get full that way.

You bed
the water the swan
on the palm of your hand support them
on bones and railing
the horses at the fence
nod in encouragement:
only look closer a beetle
scuttles on the plaster toe
Aeternitas now
keep a straight face or else everything
goes to the dogs.

Wiepersdorf, the day before departure, March 2007

after rereading Hyperion

if we knew whether the tree
felt the fall of the uprooted brother

if we knew whether the bluff
felt the blast of the glacial wedge

we still wouldn't know
why a man bends down
for the branch or the rock to strike
a fellow man

Berlin Hauptbahnhof, parterre

(Diplodocus Carnegii)

drei mal drei mal drei
meter majestät

gelenkiges gerüst im
nicht zu stürmenden
sinnreich natur

komm ihm zu nah es gibt
ein schlag mit diesem schwanz
antwort auf deine fragen

Berlin Hauptbahnhof, erste ebene

(vor den croissants)

und was ist da drin?

nichts.

Berlin Hauptbahnhof, zweite ebene

einem schälte das waffenöl
die haut von den händen
der stabsarzt verschrieb
salbe aus ringelblumen

das fällt dir ein vor dem fahrplan
lektüre im koffer
das fällt dir ein:
warschauer archiv

Berlin Central Station, ground level

(Diplodocus Carnegii)

three times three times three
meters majesty

jointed skeleton in
unassailable
intricate nature

get too close to him and
a blow of his tail
answers your questions

Berlin Central Station, first level

(in front of the croissants)

and what's in here?

nothing.

Berlin Central Station, second level

the gun oil peeled
the skin from his hands
the staff surgeon prescribed
marigold ointment

this occurs to you in front of the timetable
reading material in the suitcase
this occurs to you:
the Warsaw archive¹

auch eine charakterisierung

ob wir befreundet waren?
 aber gewiß doch
 von politik verstehe ich ja nicht viel
 von männern aber eine menge
 und er war reizend
 ein echter österreichischer wissen Sie
 gemütvoll und gemütlich
 und sein humor war einfach wundervoll

versammlung

stern am
 galgen im hausflur
 debatten um muttermilch

deine papierne
 sehnsucht dein hilfloser gang
 zum hof des Rabbi Akiba Eger

abends davor
 menschen und fast
 ein dutzend

flämmchen gereicht
 von docht zu docht

flatternde blüten
 blicke vorüber

geschulterte taschen
 mit badesachen

Poznań, April

this, too, a characterization

whether we were friends?
 but of course
 I don't know much about politics
 but about men a great deal
 and he was charming
 a real austrian you know
 warm and jovial
 and his sense of humor was simply wonderful

gathering

star on
 gallows in entryway
 debates about mother's milk

your paper
 yearning your helpless errand
 to the yard of rabbi Akiba Eger

in the evening before it
 people and almost
 a dozen

flames passed
 from wick to wick

fluttering blooms
 glances past

shouldered bags
 with bathing things

Poznań, April

Śmigiel, Allerheiligen

oder
 wie uns zwei Männer,
 die Bauschutt auf einen Anhänger schaufelten,
 den Weg zum alten Friedhof erklärten
 oder
 wie die Sonne durch die Wolken sickerte,
 als wir an der verwitterten Kirchentür
 die nächste Veranstaltung angekündigt fanden
 in der Reihe Poetischer Herbst
 oder
 wie eine Tüte raschelte,
 die sich verfangen hatte in Holunderzweigen
 oder
 wie leuchtend gelb die Ahornblätter
 im Gras und auf den Grabsteinscherben lagen
 oder
 wie wir einander erklärten,
 warum das Moos nur aus der Schrift wächst,
 die Fläche aber blank bleibt
 oder
 wie wir das Moos befühlten,
 weil wir die Schrift nicht lesen konnten
 oder
 drum will ich ihre Höfe fliehn
 und laß mir einen langen Bart
 wachsen von grauen Haaren
 oder
 Przyjęcie Żydów do Polski
 oder
 Hier übernachtete!
 oder
 my mother came from Lithuania,
 my father came from Poland
 oder
 I most enjoyed the poetry of Mickiewicz

Śmigiel, All Saints' Day

or
 how two men,
 who were shoveling rubble onto a trailer,
 showed us the way to the old cemetery
 or
 how the sun trickled through the clouds
 when we found the next event
 in the series Lyrical Autumn
 announced on the weathered church door
 or
 how the plastic bag rustled
 caught in the elder branches
 or
 how yellow and gleaming the maple leaves
 lay in the grass and on the gravestone shards
 or
 how we explained to each other
 why the moss only grows in the letters
 while the surface remains blank
 or
 how we felt the moss with our fingers
 because we couldn't read the writing
 or
 and thus I will flee their courts
 and grow a long beard
 of gray hairs
 or
 Przyjęcie Żydów do Polski
 or
 Put up here for the night!
 or
 my mother came from Lithuania,
 my father came from Poland
 or
 I most enjoyed the poetry of Mickiewicz

oder
 vos veln mir makhen ven meshiakh vert kumen?
 oder
 es muß in der Welt jemanden geben,
 der so alt ist wie die Welt
 oder
 Yossel, fils de Yossel Rakover de Tarnopol, parle à Dieu

oder
 wie wir nasse Füße bekamen
 vom ersten Schnee im welken Gras

wie wir uns im Café ans Fenster setzten
 auf den dämmernden Marktplatz sahen
 die Hände an den Tassen wärmten

nach dem Besuch des alten Friedhofs in Śmigiel.

dem Andenken Miklós Radnóti

sag:
 wo wärest du gewesen
 am neunten November bei Abda?

denn jetzt
 möchtest du niederknien
 bei den Versen im Lehm
 jetzt
 im Juni bei Abda

Enkel des Krieges
 Erbschleicher der Wahrheit
 der emsig seine Silben
 entlastet und beschwert
 Du erbtest auch den Spiegel
 in dem sich niemand schert
 und erbtest Schaum der duftet

or
 vos veln mir makhen ven meshiakh vert kumen?
 or
 there has to be someone in the world
 who is as old as the world
 or
 Yossel, fils de Yossel Rakover de Tarnopol, parle à Dieu

or
 how our feet got wet
 from the first snow on the withered grass

how we sat down by the window in the café
 looked at the dawning market square
 warmed our hands on our cups

after the visit to the old cemetery in Śmigiel.

in memoriam Miklós Radnóti

tell:
 where would you have been
 on the ninth of November near Abda?

for now
 you want to kneel down
 by the verses in clay
 now
 in June near Abda

Grandchild of the war
 legacy hunter of truth
 diligently charging
 and releasing his syllables
 You also inherited the mirror
 in which no one cares to appear
 and inherited the fragrant foam

und duftend schäumt ins Ohr
 Brich du aufs Neue brich
 das Schweigen brich
 es um und um
 bis du es weißt
 Dann wende
 den ersten Vers hervor.

landschaft nach dem sturz des ikarus

der bauer macht brotzeit
 das pferd rupft halme
 die erde gewendet
 trocknet im licht
 kopfunter
 driftet der tote
 ein augenzeuge
 indessen notiert:

„wenn aber natur sich
 betrachtet mit geschöpften augen
 sich denkt mit geschöpften gedanken
 muss auch die sehnsucht
 unstillbar auf natürlichen wegen
 teil sein derselben natur“

in sinkender sonne verlassen
 bauer und pferd den plan
 also verklingen
 geschnaub und die rufe
 lenkend des tieres
 weltarmen schritt
 und auch der staub
 sinkend erweitert die sicht

„also verweise natur
 indem sie erschaffe das sehen
 hinaus über sich

fragrantly foaming in your ear
 Break once again break
 the silence break
 it over and over
 until you know it
 Then turn out
 the first verse.

landscape after the fall of icarus

the peasant eats his meal
 the horse plucks at grass
 the earth, turned over
 dries in the light
 head-down
 drifts the dead man
 an eyewitness
 notes meanwhile:

“when nature examines
 itself with created eyes
 thinks itself with created ideas
 unquenchable yearning must also
 through natural means
 be part of the same natural world”

in the sinking sun
 peasant and horse leave the plot
 thus fade away
 snorting and the calls
 driving the animal's steps
 poor in the world
 and the dust also
 widens the prospect in falling

“thus nature would reference
 through the creation of yearning
 more than itself

auf etwas das jenseits
walte von erde und pflug“

beflügelt von dieser notiz
eilt heimwärts der augenzeuge
klarer zu bilden am späteren tisch
was ahnend er sah in der sonnigen flur

der bauer indessen
entkommen dem wirkenden zwang
begibt sich zur schenke
stampft einen kehrreim
beginnt einen händel zerbricht
am schädel des nachbarn den krug

unter den sternern die wellen
betten den toten im tang
indessen der augenzeuge
den lang noch die selbst
entzündeten lichter erhellen
liest korrektur

Tratschke fragt: Wer war's?

Das Träumen hat an der Geschichte teil.
— Walter Benjamin

Tratschke fragt wer wars wer hat
die Fahne auf den Dürermarkt getragen
als dort im vollen Wuchs ein neuer
Christkindleszauber drosch die Feuertrummel
wer flog gen Morgen im Geschwader lauschte
dem Kunstgeheul der Jericho-Sirenen
wer setzte Stadt um Stadt in Brand
den Morgen mit der Urzeit zu versöhnen
wer stürzte tief und ward geheilt
von Iason im Tatarenvlies
wer kehrte heim geläutert

something ruling beyond
the earth and the plow”

emboldened by this note
the eyewitness rushes home
more clearly to form later at the desk
what he sensed to have seen in the sunny meadow

meanwhile the peasant
freed from his chores
betakes to the tavern
pounds a refrain
starts to bargain breaks
his jug on his neighbor's head

under the stars the waves
shroud the dead man in algae
meanwhile the eyewitness
brightened well into the night
by the lights that he lit
is reading his proofs

Tratschke Asks: Who Was It?

Dreaming has a part in history.
— Walter Benjamin

Tratschke asks who was it who
carried the flag on Dürer Square
when a new Christ Child all booted up
beat the fire drum there
who flew toward dawn with the squadron listened
to the artful ululation of the Jericho sirens
who set town after town on fire
to reconcile the morning with primordial time
who fell deep and was healed
by Jason in Tatar fleece
who came home cleansed

als Hirte aus der Steppe
 wer hat zum Dank aus Perlenschmalz Mysterienbries
 Gebildbrot aufgetischt am Opferstein für Mutter Erde
 wer hat den Geist noch einmal an sein Kreuz gehievt
 den Hokuspokusstab gebogen
 verdrahtet Ost und West
 daß einmal noch der Honig trieft
 Eurasien zu erlösen?

Rusałka, dezember

angler auf beschneitem eis
 windstille majuskeln am ende
 gestapfter zeilen fallen
 ihr kunstfaserlot

wachsender laut inmitten
 verworfener semikola atmet
 tiefengestöhn
 kündigt
 phänomenalen fang

vergluckert verseuft
 unter den beilen den eimern
 hat sich die beute
 verflüstert ans ufer ins schilf

nimm dir mit eigenen händen
 gewölk und gesträuch
 ball dir ein winterwort das
 leuchtet auf harschen
 wegen dir heim

as a shepherd from the steppe
 who gave thanks dishing pearl lard mystery sweetbread
 dough figures on sacrificial stone for Mother Earth
 who hoisted the Spirit back on its cross
 bent the hocus-pocus wand
 wired East and West
 until honey runs again
 to ransom Eurasia?

Rusałka, december

fishermen on snow-covered ice
 a lull in the air majuscules at the end
 of lines left by footprints drop
 their artificial perpendiculars

growing sound in the midst of
 rejected semicolons breathes
 moans from the deep
 announces
 a phenomenal catch

gurgled sighed out
 under the axes the buckets
 the haul's whisper
 gone to shore into the reeds

take clouds and shrubbery
 into your own hands
 roll yourself a winter word to
 light on harsh
 roads your way home

winterwerk

wacker geschritten
in nördlichen wäldern mit nassen
füßen der melancholie

rückkehr aus nebeln
und wieder die gärten
garagen und zwerge
rosenkohl torsen
ein rostender grill

apollo verdammt
eine handvoll
verse verscherbel
hast doch wahrhaftig
genug von dem zeug
lass es was kosten
einmal ist keinmal
und bleibt unter uns

apollo verdammt
Dammi questa gioia suprema
vor die hunde geh ich
die diese häuser hüten

nachmittag mit freunden

ein junge sieht
in den spiegel ein mädchen
sieht aus dem fenster knabbert
am rand eines bechers der andre
junge knipst das zweite
mädchen beim lesen sie schaut
auf von den seiten ihr atem
wirbelt ein muster aus rauch

winter work

striding valiantly
in northern forests with the wet
feet of melancholy

return from the mists
and again the gardens
garages and gnomes
brussels sprouts torsen
a rusting grill

apollo be damned
flog a handful
of verses
you truly have
enough of that stuff
make a pretty penny
once doesn't count
and stays between us

apollo be damned
Dammi questa gioia suprema
I go to the dogs
who guard these houses

afternoon with friends

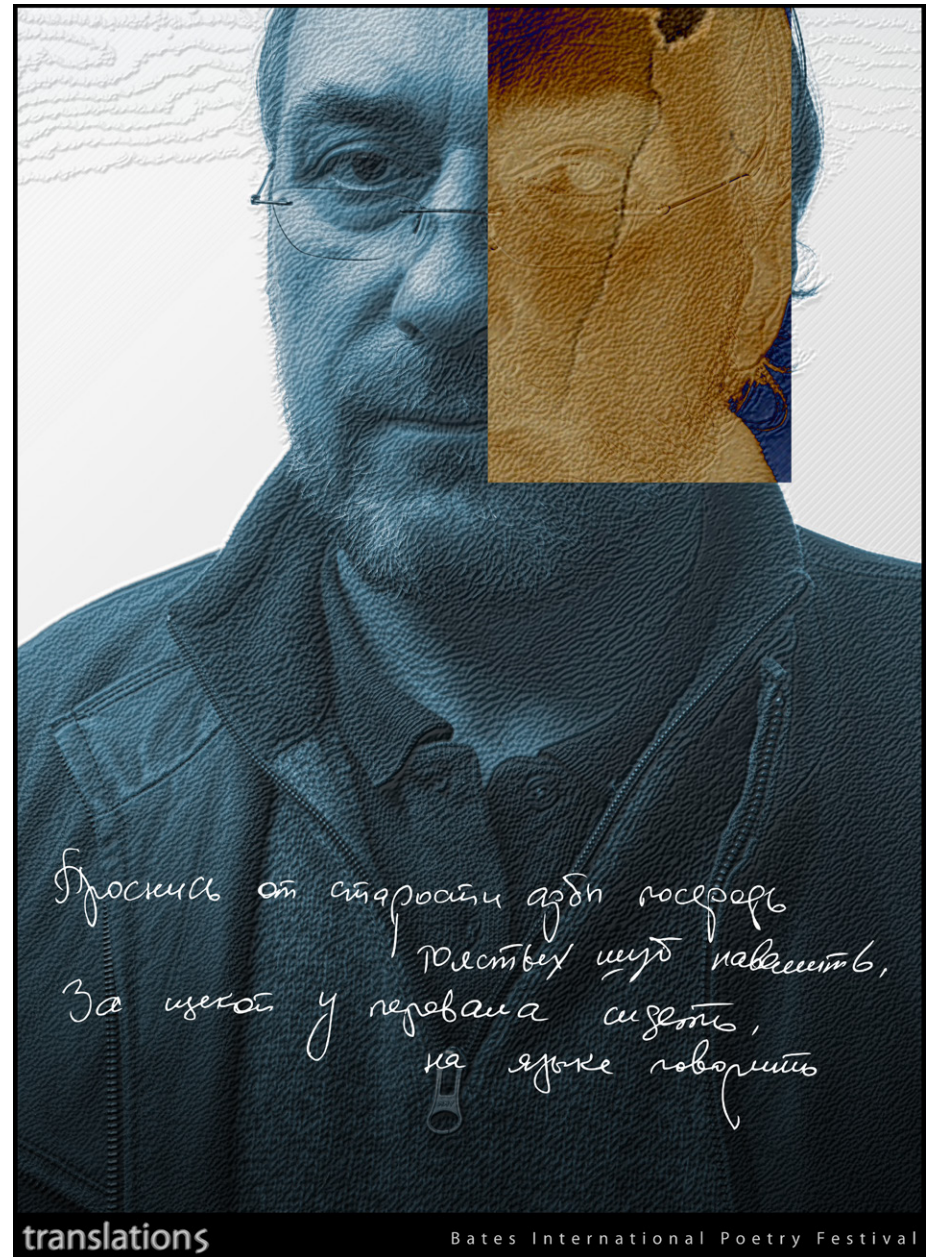
a boy sees
in the mirror a girl
looks out the window nibbles
on the edge of a glass the other
boy snaps the second
girl while reading she looks
up from the pages her breath
spins a pattern of smoke

All translations: Raluca Cernahoschi

Oleg Woolf

Oleg Woolf was born in 1954 in Moldova, former Soviet Union. He graduated from St.Petersburg University with a degree in Physics. Oleg Woolf lived in the US and wrote short stories, essays, and poetry. His works were regularly featured in the leading literary periodicals and anthologies both in Russia and abroad. He was the founding director of the STOSVET literary project and the editor-in-chief of the *Storony Sveta/Cardinal Points* literary journal published in the US in English and Russian. Oleg passed away in 2011.





В среду

В среду живут и бедят.
Город румын и белен.
Лошадь выходит перед
самым автомобилем.

Жизнь есть четверг, но после
дождичка. Март с обратным
адресом. Вроде почты
в местных помарках марта.

Вроде намокшей почты
бывшему адресатом.
Здесь это знаешь точно.
Этот урок не задан.

On Wednesdays

On Wednesdays they just live here and paint coarse
walls. The town is all Romanian and painted.
The front bumper tailgates the horse.
Seven comes closer to half
past seven, becomes eighted.

On Thursday, right after that
it rains. March has a return address
with all these local watermarks, another bad
snail mail ended with God bless

and started with Dear Former
Addressee. And the farmer
throws his bucket into the well
of village wine, waiving his farewell.

Translated by Irina Mashinski and the author

Irina MashinskiRussia

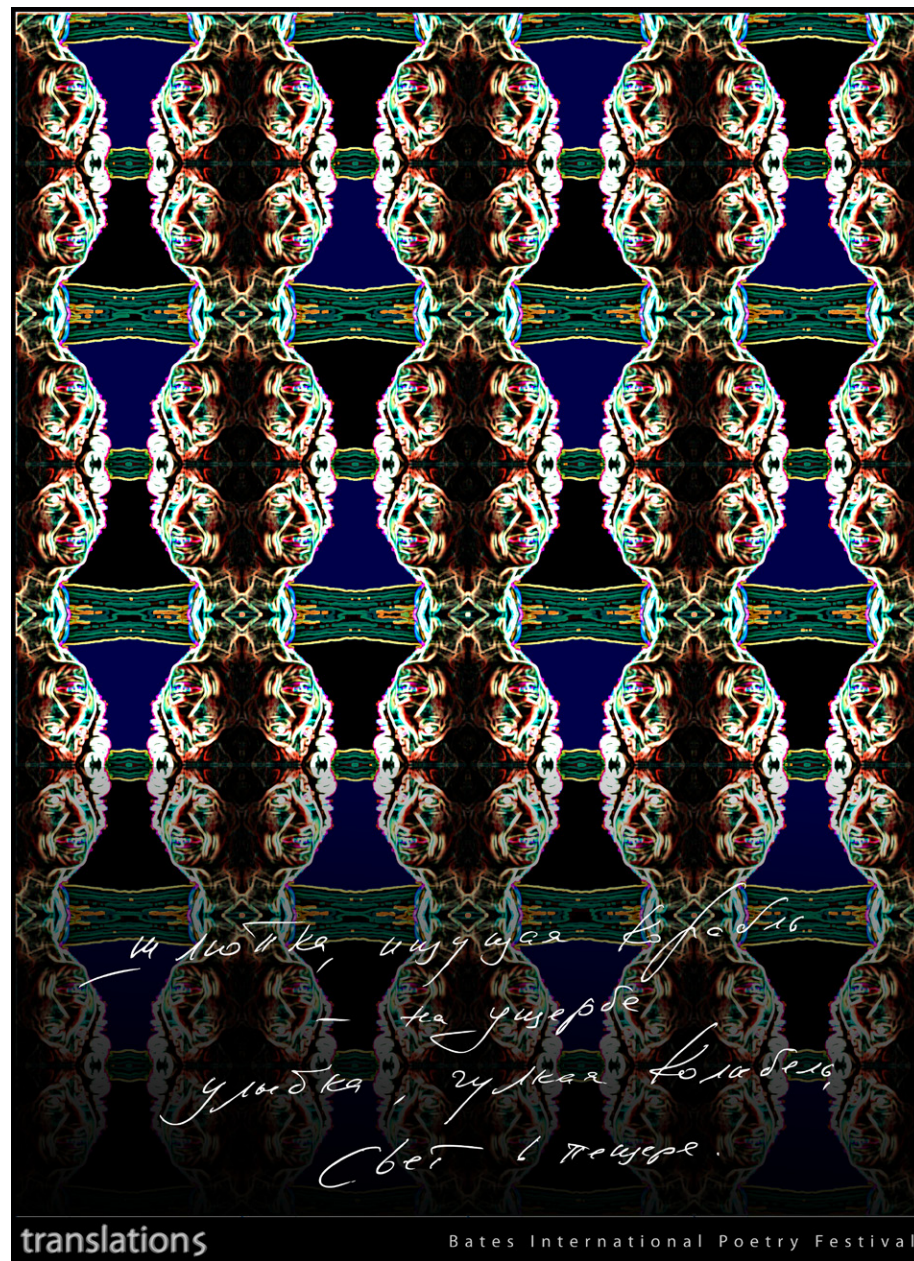
Irina Mashinski (Mashinskaia, Mashinskaya) is a bilingual poet and translator, the author of seven books of poetry and a book of translations. Her poetry has been translated into Serbian, Italian, English, Spanish, and French and is regularly featured in most of the leading literary periodicals and anthologies in Russia and abroad. Her most recent Russian books of poems, *Volk* (Wolf, Selected Poems) and *Raznochinets and Other Poems* came out in 2009 in Moscow and New York respectively. She holds a Ph.D in Paleoclimatology from Lomonosov Moscow University and an MFA in Poetry and Poetics from New England College. In the US, she has taught mathematics, science, meteorology, Russian history, and the history of European culture in high schools, colleges, and universities in New York and New Jersey.

Irina Mashinski is the winner of several literary awards, including the First prizes at the *Russian America* (2001), *Maximilian Voloshin* (2003), and other poetry contests.

Irina Mashinski is the co-founder and co-editor (with Oleg Woolf) of the *Cardinal Points* literary journal published in the US in English and Russian and serves on the editorial board for the NYC based translation project Ars-Interpres.

All poems and their translations are by Irina Mashinski.





ОТВЕТ

А.Селиванову

Бежит речка, как живая,
избегая общих мест,
Господа не называя,
крутит лист и камни ест.

Все, что знаем о свободе,—
из чужого словаря.
Ты скажи хоть о погоде,
но с другим не говоря.

Что—свобода? Ну свобода.
Пустота со всех сторон.
Мой глагол—другого рода,
оттого протяжней он.

(К этой строчке примечанье—
на окраине листа:
чем длиннее окончанье,
тем пустыннее места.)

Друг далекий, Селиванский!
Только воздух надо мной.
Слева берег пенсильванский,
справа берег—как родной.

Для того нужна граница,
для того я тут стою.
Вот летит большая птица,
я ее не узнаю.

В краю, где трудно сказать «еврей»,
поднимается ветер тугих дверей,
край земли начинается над головой—

The Letter. It's Just . . .

For A.Selivanov

. . . a note
from here which I can define as *here*
to dear you there, in the land of names.

So, here in the hills
under my feet
a rapid river—
as if alive—
eats gravel,
swirls
leaves and twigs,
avoids all common places,
doesn't
—can you believe it?—
name names
say, *freedom*.
What's freedom? you asked
(being, I guess, sarcastic).
—A lot of empty space,
not masked by names
or gender, like verbs in local language.

Only air's above me—

and if there is a border—
it's this transparent, braided, quick
between that grass
and more grass to the west.

Homeland

For instance, it is hard to utter “Jew,”
although other ways to say it exist, a few of them.
Heavy doors close. Before I know it, I'm out.

и если и ждут меня, то лишь листва, стволы,
город как локти ставит углы—
снизу серый—и сразу вдруг голубой.

А за городом время после дождей,
глина кисельная в сто свечей
светится, как нигде.

Там запрягают долго и никуда
не едут. Там на дворе вода.
Там «расступись» не говорят воде.

Где тяжело человеку и хорошо стрижу.
Где я себя не вижу,—тебе скажу,—
и в этом нет ничего, нет ничего—

там, пока не рассвет—не отопрут засов.
Там еще пять часов шесть часов.
Ты спи—я начеку.

А по рельсам руслам вниз течет молоко
тумана: мелко, и вдруг потом глубоко,
в нем, далеко, как люди, идут фонари,

Там лес еще не разлепил ресниц,
хочешь—стой перед ним, хочешь—падай ниц,
хочешь—зажги свечу, хочешь—сам сгори.

Saga

1-й подъезд:

Челюкановы, Пряхины, близнецы Овсянниковы, зем-
ледельцы Китайкины, все уменьшающаяся баба Дора,
Лена Кузнецова, Юра Панфилов с матерью, Галёмины
на втором, их родители на третьем.

And if anyone waits for me—
that would only be trees as
the drizzling city sticks out street corners on me like sharp elbows.

As for the countryside, a jelly of mud, no, a river of clay flows,
glows like a 100 watt bulb. In the yards,
glazed pockets of snow shine—starch on freshly washed linen.

They harness for days back at home, and despite the proverb
ride nowhere at all. The direful *prorub* stands for an ice-hole.
The rivers in April look pretty much like they did in March.

There, the past stays with one for long
and is good to swallows. *Then, let's go now—*
you'd say in your sleep, and I follow

you to the land where no one unlocks the gate
till dawn. It is 5, it is 6 . . .
Sky is low over the hollow run. Sleep.

Down the railroad tracks, down the river beds,
fog—milk from the Russian folk tale—flows. Platform lights, like beads
or rosaries, count themselves till dozen, and then start again.

The forest hasn't yet opened its eyes. Stand before it
or fall to your knees—to the forest it's all the same.
Light a candle or burn down yourself—like *ogón*¹,
it's there, neither friend, nor fortress.

The Saga

1st entrance:

the Chekhovs, the Priatkins, the Derzhavin twins, the practical Kotovs, every day
shrinking babushka Dora, uncle Yura with a big dog, the Slivkins on the second
floor, their parents on the third.

2-й подъезд:

хозяйственные Сьомко, хулиган Блудов Олег с матерью и бабушкой, тетя Зоя из “Спортпроката” с дядей Алешей, Юля и Андрюша Шевченко, Коля, мы, Ядвига Густавовна, безумные Рутковские, Лошкаревы, Сироткины Наташа и Витя, тетя Соня с точно такой же сестрой, Дзуенки.

Пора вернуться к самому началу,
как в хорошо заверченном романе.
Пора вернуться к самому началу,
войти и встать надолго в хвост вагона,
и, сумку привалив к опасной двери,
покачиваясь, долго нависать
над Схемой Линий Метрополитена.

Мне нравятся названия этих станций:
вот Семьдесят седьмая улица, а вот
уже Сорок вторая, боже мой!—
как хороши неназванные вещи!—
так пальцы пробегают по позвонкам,
так дождь бежит себе, не называя,
смывая ложной схожести пыльцу.

В местах, где рифмы долго не живут,—
как хороши, как свежи повторенья.
И если померещится значение
иль, Боже упаси, какой-то тайный смысл—
смахни его, как рифму. Повторяясь,
скажу тебе опять: в повторях этих,
бессмысленных подобию, возвращеньях

—нет ничего. Один лишь теплый свет
бесценного сквозного бормотанья.

... Когда-нибудь, на Пятой авеню

2nd entrance:

the Kitaikins, bandit Bludov with mother and grandmother, aunt Zoia from the “Sports goods” (with uncle Alyosha), Vanya Karamazov, Kolya, us, Yadviga Kazemirovna, the Mandelstams, Natasha and Beso Orphanashvili, the crazy Rutkovskys, aunt Sonya with a sister just like her, the Margolins, the Bloks.

Double Exposure

It's time to go back to the beginning,
like in a tightly knit elaborate novel,
it's time to go back to the beginning,
to get in, to stop at the car's far end,
to drop the bag against the scary door,
and, keeping balance, hover
over the Map of Our City Subway.

And I will also tell you, having grabbed
the silver handle covered by a dozen
glittering fingerprints, and leaning over
(for I am near-sighted)
the Mighty Subway Map,
as if it were a star map—I will tell you:
an idle rider remembers nothing,
saves only losses.

I like the clear names of passing stations:
now it's Seventy Seventh, and now—
already Forty Second, look.
How sweet are things that rest unnamed!
—like fingers running down the spine,
like rain that runs around but never names,
and washes off the dust of false resemblance.

In places, where rhymes don't stay for long
—how sweet, how fresh come through these repetitions!
And if you see a ghost of message or,
God forbid, some hidden meaning—sweep
it away, like an annoying rhyme. Repeating
myself, I'll say that as for repetitions,

найди позеленевшую богиню
 чего-то там. Скамеек, например.
 Бродяга возлежит в ее тени.
 Вся в ямочках она, в руке—газета
 вчерашняя. Шутник—космополит:
 вот-вот прочтешь знакомый заголовок.

Как эта осень пасмурна! Как нас
 тревожат эти надписи на сваях!
 Кошмарное бывает величаво,
 особенно—когда глядишь с моста,
 и вывеска багровая отеля
 похожа на плакат “ЗА КОММУНИЗМ”.
 Я не увижу, как его снимают.

И я тебе еще скажу, схватясь
 за поручень серебряный в десятках
 блестящих отпечатков, близоруко
 склонясь над вечной схемой метро
 (как будто это карта звезд), скажу: зевака
 не помнит, не накопит ничего,

ни странствие, ни грустное влечение...
 как капли—ласточке, как пальцы—позвонкам
 —смотри сюда скорей—смешно, щекотно...
 И я тебе еще скажу: никто,
 похоже, что никто
 на нас не смотрит сверху

Любовь

... перебирая четки пустяков—
 обмолвок, взглядов; мятых лепестков
 замучив миллионы; от свиданий
 страдая; год
 из четырех углов
 следившая,
 и двух не молвившая слов...

for senseless similes, returns
 and going-backs—

there's nothing to them.
 They're but a warm light,
 but precious stitching mutter.

... One day go down Fifth Avenue and find
 a greenish goddess
 (a hornless wreck, a bench, a shade)
 with arms half-open, in a semi-circle.
 Into the middle of this solemn gesture
 a joker stuck a paper
 —don't you know the joke?
 The headlines look like Soviet.

How foggy is this fall! How badly
 we're bothered by the billboards on the road!
 Nightmare can be magnificent, and more so,
 if watched from an iron bridge with peeling paint,
 and a maroon and huge and dusty sign
 of the hotel looks like a board
 “AHEAD TO COMMUNISM!”
 I'll never see it being taken down.

Look, neither wandering, nor a sad attraction...
 like raindrops to a bird, like fingers to the spine—
 quick, look here: feels funny, ticklish...
 And I will also tell you that no one,
 or so it seems—no one
 is watching us from
 above

Love

... counts her beads of trifles,
 slips of tongue, quick glances,
 having tortured millions
 of crumpled petals, anguishing
 from encounters, for one year watching
 from the four corners, having not uttered
 even two words...

Ребенок, задержавшийся за дверью,
увидит в комнате, к полуночи войдя,
как взрослые без деток веселятся.
А он-то думал . . . только и всего?
Он думал—там таинственный, волшебный,
как мамины духи и как в шкафу коробки,
бесплотный невозможный праздник-мир.
А оказалось они просто едят и пьют и очень громко говорят
и красные глаза на красных лицах
и это всё

Конец света

Да нет же, это время так же нам
принадлежит, как вот луна . . .

Я говорю, что время несводимо
к тому, что слышит вечером жена
от легшего с газетой нелюдима.

Он ей подробности неслабые дает,
последнюю ужаснейшую сводку.
Она—тайком к дверям—и в мусор их несет,
и сверху для надежности—решетку

(ее никто не видит, лишь луна)

и—мельком—на луну и дом соседний.
А завтра день последний настает,
а к вечеру он снова предпоследний.

7 сентября 2001 г

Without Title

The child who lingers behind the door
will see when entering the room towards midnight,
how grown-ups have fun alone.

He thought . . . Just this, no more?
Where is magic, where's impossible world of mystery
smelling of mom's perfume
and those boxes way back in the closet,
the endless holiday?

—They are just eating, drinking, talking so loudly,
red eyes on their red faces and
that's all.

The End of the World

Time! It belongs to us
not more than, say, the moon,

time, oblivious to whatever
a wife hears in the evening from
some misanthrope on the couch with a newspaper.

She listens patiently to the details
of the appalling news,
and sneaks out to bury them in the recycling bin
with an iron weight on top.

Nobody sees her but the moon.

So, it's tomorrow—that last day of the world, at least
until the evening when it is once again
second to last

September 7, 2001

В югендстиле. Браунау-Ам-Инн

Ночевала тучка золотая
 на груди у Гитлера младенца.
 Кружева слегка приподымались
 все еще далекой занавески.
 Улыбалось ласковое чрево
 мира, прогибавшегося к югу,
 улетала чудо-занавеска.
 То ей захотелось восвояси,
 то скользила внутрь, на подоконник
 налегала, словно это мама
 гладила, скользя по одеялу
 алою атласною ладонью.
 Месяц нам какой апрель достался—
 утренний, летящий, изумленный
 Климт червлёный,
 и Бердслей червивый
 тоненькой решетки на балконе . . .
 Как живые, движутся обои,
 как живые легкие картины,
 кружево ласкает подбородок
 и лучатся дыры золотые.
 Полдень, словно радио, играет,
 с нами ни за что не расстается . . .
 Ночевала тучка где попало,
 а проснулась—радио играет,
 песни распевает из колодца.

In Jugendstil. Braunau Am Inn²

A golden cloud
 on baby Hitler's chest
 Laced curtain
 far away—
 where that light is—bright
 bulges
 the world outside cambers and curves
 towards the East—
 Breeze—and the curtain
 flies away, then suddenly steps in leaning on the window sill
 —like Mutter,
 strokes unrippled blanket with her
 scarlet satin palm.
 Late April trembles on the
 wallpaper, sweeps
 to the door in one move
 —like pictures in the magic lantern—
 its greenish patterns.
 Sleep! little sheep
 sing their quiet *Donna, donna*
 look how they amble
 down. Sleep,
 Klimt shines in gilded windows,
 and Beardsley's railing
 snakes and
 meanders on balconies,
 and Evil
 shows through the golden gaps
 of Good,
 and healthy evening Sun
 plays like a radio
 spinning
 its wired waltzes.

А.Межирову

В полседьмого навеки стемнеет.
Я вернусь в городок никакой.
Пусть он взвояет, пускай озверевает
мотоцикл за Пассаик-рекой.

От платформы до серой парковки
—как пойду в темноте, пустоте?
По реке города, как спиртовки,
и над ними Ничто в высоте.

Никого моя жизнь не спасает.
Светофоры горят из кустов.
Это тихое слово *Пассаик*
пострашнее татарских костров.

Вы рубились на темной Каяле—
нам темнее знакомы места:
тут машины весь день простояли
у восточного края моста.

Все же странно, что с этой горою
неподвижной—по небу лечу.
Я примерзшую дверцу открою
и холодное сердце включу.

Passaic River

For A. Mejirov

It becomes dark forever at 6.30
as I'm the only one to get off at my station,
warm train taking the light away
to stars. In the west, Passaic
rustles its winter waters in the leafless world
as I walk the resounding mile

from this platform to the car parked on the bridge's east end
in December,
and down the river, the invisible snowless Jersey towns
light up like a chain of alcohol burners,
the halos over them—what color are they?—
grayish orange like ashes
hover

squashed with blackness above them
—that's where skies are.

Traffic lights shine from bushes,
steppe wolves.
Passaic, Passaic! Your quiet but hissing name is
like Mongol campfires
squeezing the fortress
I am the last one to defend

The cold cars on the hill darker than skies
look like empty tin hats
on the soldiers' graves.
As I, with the hill and this town and
asteroid lit by its blurry tide-moving companion
—I am coasting in space—

I'm flying away with the earth as I climb up all the way to the top,
as I reach for the key,
unstick the icy hundred-ton door
with my bare fingers
and ignite the still
frozen heart.

А я стояла рядом и смотрела,
 а ты разматывал свой бесконечный бинт,
 за слоем слой.
 И все росли овалы бурой крови
 и шли все чаще.
 Ты плакал так беззвучно, одиноко—
 что я могла?
 Я в землю там вросла
 и видела, как марлевая пена
 ложилась под ноги.
 Вдруг кончился
 и соскользнул конец.
 Но раны не было,
 рука была бела.

Guilt

So I stood by and watched
 and you were unwinding
 that endless bandage
 and bloody stains
 those bloody brown rusty
 grew bigger bigger
 and flashed more often

you were weeping
 so silently
 What could I do?
 I stood and gazed
 at that descending
 cloud of gauze

It ended suddenly
 the end
 slipped off

 there was no wound

Ночь

Трава нетерпелива под стопой—
так неродившийся толкает с нежной силой.
Потише,—скажешь,—что ты, Бог с тобой,
я чувствую, и этого—хватило.

Но нет, не унимается. Права
качает как ребенок, больно,
и хочет сквозь меня расти трава—
и вверх, и вниз—и прямо! не окольно!

Невидимое солнце-колесо
и там, внизу гудящее, земное.
Куда же ей, и вправду, коли всё—
в светильниках двух, загроможденных мною?

Ступни и корни—все тебе, трава!
Вяжи, выюнок, точи ножи, осока.
Давай, раз-два, покуда я жива,
пока я мякоть—протыкай до срока.

Can't believe: it is still
with me—the two bends and the smooth shiny nod,
the knot,
a fork on the left side—Lot's wife who 'd glanced ahead—
still wet from morning Jersey drizzle, pokes the window.

Waters are rising
my island is smaller and smaller, and I hear, far away
in the fields—a freight train
sounds like future
it's just returned from

Grass

The brightest blade of day—night—is here.

I stand barefoot right in the center of the backyard,
under the exiled sun.

The grass stirs underfoot.

Grass, like an unborn child, kicks,
impatient.

“Hold on, slow down,” I say,

“for heaven's sake!

I get your point.”

But no, it won't back off, it knows its rights,
demanding—willfully—its way,

It must grow through me.

Bindweed!

My soles, my roots, my stem

are yours.

Sedge!

Rapiers!

Kitezh⁴

Fleet left. Towers
 are rising from waters
 —and sink again:
 Grand Central of the sea—
 its bottle glass of empty
 deep terminals, and foamless
 passages, and shoals of baby fish . . .
 Brave Herodot had it described, it's just
 the illustrations
 that seem new.

So, to Palenque! To all the native cities
 swallowed by forests, to all the folding books
 of hieroglyphs, to clean design
 of Mayan steps,
 to steppes beneath the alto-cumulus convoys,
 where my grandfather at sixteen denounced
 the family, joined the Red Guard,
 saw terror, saw it all, sent them to hell,
 got himself jailed, jailed again, exiled, then old.

We haven't started it but we have got to see
 how mermaids swim by rusty snapped off doors
 of an express stuck in abyssal mud—
 and sit on cliffs of rhymes and sing.

As for the meter—as for the pure honey
 of rhythm,
 for iamb of littoral, for anapest of depths,
 lighthouses of metaphors, drill towers above shelf waters—
 we know that tar at night does look mysterious.

From space that glides so low,
 oil spills look like an unknown
 alphabet.

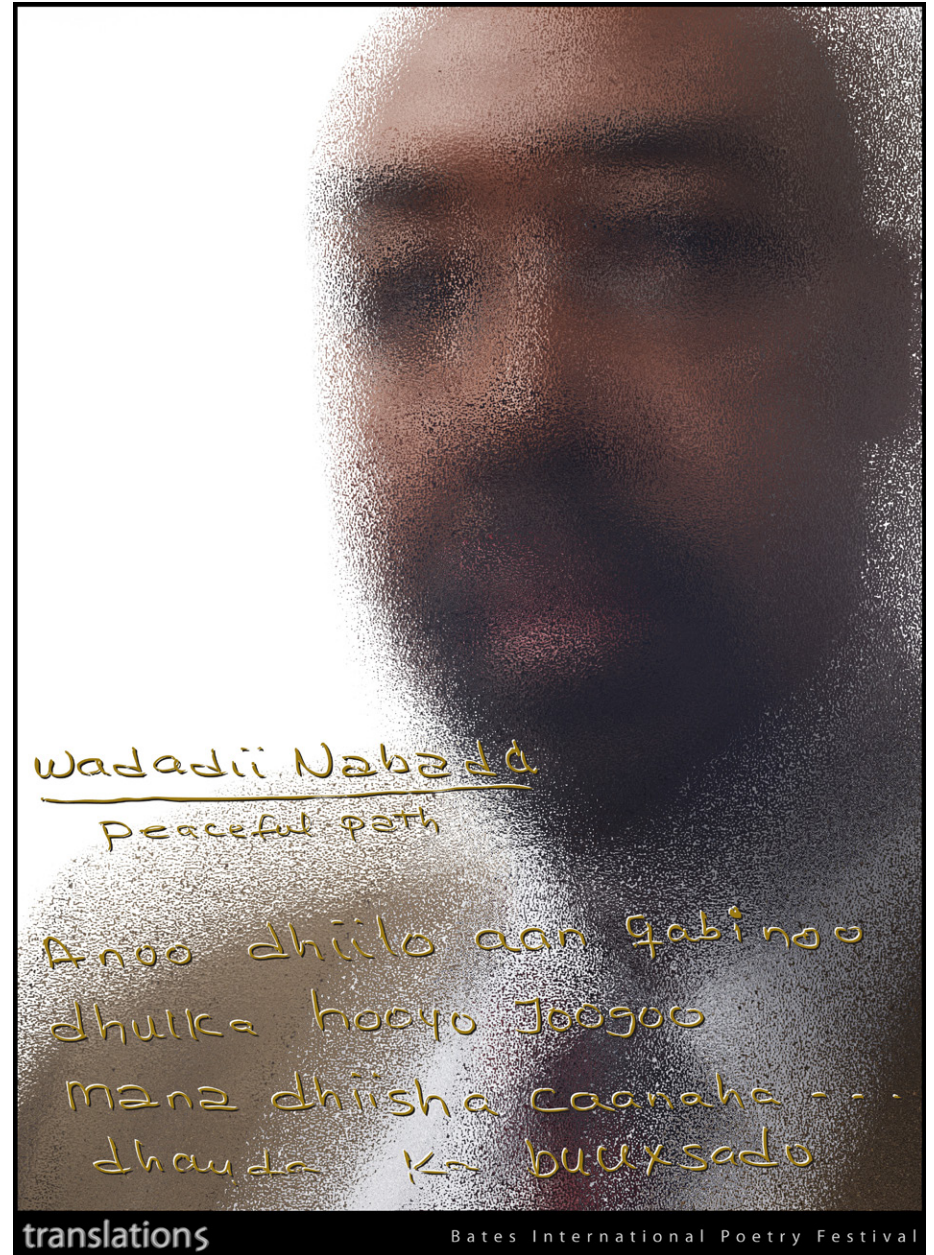
Omar Ahmed Somalia

Omar Ahmed was born in southern Somalia in the city of Jamame, also known as Margarita. In Somalia, Omar worked for the Ministry of Education developing curriculum and facilitating educational skills program for high school students.

In Lewiston, Maine, he worked for the Social Services Department. Currently, he is self-employed and living in Arizona. Omar works freelance for the Tempe School District. He is also a playwright and his last play was “Love in the Cactus Village” produced by L.A. Arts and performed in Auburn, Maine, in the Little Theater in 2003. He is now working on a novel called *The Flower and Flames of Turda*, a story of a peaceful village destroyed by civil war. The plot centers on people facing the ramification of modern wars and hatred.

Holder of a Master’s degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies, Omar is a Somali elder who mediates and resolves disputes among the Somali diaspora. He has co-authored papers on Somali immigrant/refugee mental health and substance abuse in the Journal of International Psychology Bulletin.





Dulqaad

Intay dunidii dhismiyo
 Dadaalkii hurumareed
 Daraasad ugu jirtaa
 Dagaalkii nala haroo
 Asaaggeen naga durkee
 Iswada doox dooxiyo
 Dilkaan xalka keeninbaa
 Dadkeeni idlaynayee
 Dawadii caafimaadka iyo
 Daruuro ma raadinaa?

*Dibraac aanoon dhamaan
 Daciif bay naga dhigtee
 Darbiga ina kala xayiray
 Dulaqaad baa jebin karee
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!*

Diryaanka rasaasta ay
 Duqowdu ka cararayaan
 Dallaabka dhallaanku yahay
 Duulaan meel kale ka yimid
 Dareenka ha gelininee
 Dadkeenaa dirirayow
 Dabbaabadaha watee
 Miyaynaan diir naxayn?
 Dhanqankii walaalnimiyo
 Damiirki maxaa la tagay?

*Dibraac aanoon dhamaan
 Daciif bay naga dhigtee
 Darbiga ina kala xayiray
 Dulaqaad baa jebin karee
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!*

Tolerance

As the world is striving forward,
 engaged in extensive research
 to find development,
 a futile civil strife draws us back
 and our peers thus leave us behind.
 We kept stabbing each other, but
 killing is not bringing any solution.
 Thus our people go into extinction, annihilation.
 How do we find
 ourselves a sustainable, healthy solution?

*We must end the vengeful deeds
 because they weaken us badly.
 The wall of separation,
 only tolerance can break it down.
 Pray for each other, forgive each
 other and ourselves!*

Mortar shells roar,
 with elders fleeing in horror
 and babies perishing,
 this war seems waged by aliens.
 Don't feed them with your fears and emotions.
 You who are fighting each other,
 battling with tanks,
 Don't you see we have feelings?
 Where is our brotherhood?
 Whence our scrupulousness?

*We must end vengeful deeds
 because they weaken us badly.
 The wall of separation,
 only tolerance can break it down.
 Pray for each other, forgive each
 each other and ourselves!
 Pray for each other, forgive each
 other and ourselves!*

Hadaan da'yartii wax baran
 Sharcigu dalka ugu sarayn
 Dastuurkana loo sinaan
 Dadkuna u hoggaansanaan
 Hadaan danyartii la kabin
 Hadaan dood dheer la furin
 Hadaan codka laisku darin
 Dulqaad iyo samir la helin
 Dan guud lama gaarayoo
 Dib baa loo soconayaa

*Dibraac aanoon dhamaan
 Daciif bay naga dhigtee
 Derbiga ina kala xayiray
 Dulaqaad baa jebin karee
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!*

Daa'inkii na uumay baa
 Ra'yiga noo kala duwee
 Midkii damaciisu yahay
 Dariiq ila toosan baan
 Dadkoo dhan marsiinayaa
 Cidii igu diidanoo
 Midayda ka dood qabtana
 Danbiilaan ka dhigahayaa
 Dadoow qaran kuma dhismee
 is doontoo wada tashada!

*Dibraac aanoon dhamaan
 Daciif bay naga dhigtee
 Derbiga ina kala xayiray
 Dulaqaad baa jebin karee
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!
 Ducaystoo is wada cafiya!*

If the young generation does not study
 and if the constitution is not the supreme law of the land,
 and people are not equal before the law,
 people do not abide by the rules.
 If we do not assist people in need,
 if we do not have long, constructive debates,
 and unite our voices,
 and if we do not show tolerance and patience,
 we will not reach our goals.
 We will surely fail and stumble backwards!

*We must end the vengeful deeds
 because they weaken us badly.
 The wall of separation,
 only tolerance can break it down.
 Let's pray for each other, we must forgive each
 other and ourselves!
 Let's pray for each other, we must forgive each
 other and ourselves!*

Our Creator gave us
 different perceptions.
 If anyone's desire is to dictate,
 to act arrogantly overbearing toward others,
 to hinder people's free opinions,
 those who boldly say "we object to your idea"
 that dictator will subject them to criminal punishment!
 Oh, people this way we cannot build a government!
 Let's reconcile and love each other!

*We must end the vengeful deeds
 because they weaken us badly.
 The wall of separation,
 only tolerance can break it down
 Let's pray for each other, we must forgive each
 other and ourselves!
 Pray for each other, forgive each
 other and our selves!*

Waddadii Nabadda

Anoon dhiilo qabinoo
 Dhulka hooyo joogoo
 Marna dhayda caanaha
 Dhiilaha ka buuxsada
 Marna beerta dhaladka ah
 Shimbiraha ka dhiciyoo
 Laanta dheelinaysoo
 Dhulka miruhu gaareen
 Dhereg iigu filantahay
 Marna xeebta dheer oo
 Hirarku is—dherbaaxaan
 Mallay aan dhib loo marin
 Shabaago uga soo dhura
 Oo dhoofitaan iyo
 Dhul kale aanan doonayn
 Miyay dhabadi duushoo
 Shinbiruhu dhawaaqeen

Weerar aan dhamaanayn_
 ee aan dhana u socon oo
 Madaafic dhegaha tira
 Hooyadii dhalaysiyo_
 Dhallaankii ku soo dhaca
 Maydkoo dhabbaha yaal
 Dhaawocoon la tirin Karin
 Dhibka oon yaraaneyn
 Dhacdo waliba tii hore
 Ka sii dhaygag badan tahay
 Tuugta dhuuni doonkee_
 Dhabbacan saqdii dhexe_
 Sharci dhicinayaa jirin_
 Waa dhalangadoon qaran_
 Waa dhaxal-tir shacabeed
 Kuwii dhigga qubay iyo_
 Kuwii dhacay hantida qaran

The Peaceful Path

When I was living in my motherland
 I had never experienced any hostility.
 I filled milk
 to the top of my milk-vessel.
 I protected my fertile farm
 from the birds.
 My farm's leaves blossomed
 and grew vigorously
 as the seed crops touched the ground.
 Contentment and prosperity.
 Further, I enjoyed deep sea fishing.
 With waves hitting each other,
 I pulled the net easily from the water,
 filled with fish,
 without the desire to travel or
 want of other people's lands.
 One day birds of bad omen flew
 and alarmed us loudly.

Infinite wars.
 Cross cannon bombardments
 that deafened the ears
 fell pregnant mothers and babies.
 Explosions in every direction.
 Dead bodies on the street.
 Unable to count the wounded people,
 the situation is not getting better.
 Every incident is worse than the first,
 every incident more evil than the last.
 Hungry thieves searching for food,
 plunder and dodge in the late night.
 There is no law that can stop them.
 It's an alteration of our good governance,
 denying people's inheritance rights.
 Those who spilled people's blood,
 those who looted the nation's property,

Taariikhdu way dhigi_
 Mana dhuuman karayaan_
 Dharaar lala xisaabtamo_
 Dhakhso way u iman oo_
 Dhiinkeeda way helin_

Dhanka kale ka eegoo_
 Markii uu dhismuhu dumay
 Ee dhaxanta loo baxay_
 Dhiig joojin daawiyo
 Dhuuni kaleba laga tagay_
 Oo dhalasho sooc iyo_
 Dhaxdo laysku gawracay_
 Dhabbe lagu baqdaa jirin_
 Kuwii kor u dhawaaqee
 Dhibanaha badbaadshee_
 Xasuuqii ka dhiidhiyay
 Kuwii dhabar adaygee
 Iyagoon wax dhaamin e
 Dhacsaal iyo haraad qaba
 Maskiinkii rajada dhigay
 Dhadhamada biyaha iyo
 Dharka ula gurmadayee_
 Boogaha ka dhayayooow_
 halkii aad dhigateen iyo_
 Dhagartaa kula kacdeen_
 Taariihdaa dhigaysoo_
 Ubadkiina waa u dhaxal
 Dhimashada danbeetana
 Dhigaalbayaal idiintahay_

Dhanka kale ka eegoo
 Waalidkuba dhallaankii_
 Dhabta uu ku sido oo_
 Caanaha dhansiiyaa_
 Markuu dhawr jirsado oo_

history will record their misdeeds!
 Surely, they will never escape
 from the eyes of the law.
 That day, evildoers will be judged!
 Soon, indicted, brought to justice,
 soon they will pay the price.

See the other side of the story . . .
 When the buildings collapsed
 and people shivered for lack of shelter.
 No medicine,
 nor food was available.
 Then followed indiscriminate killing.
 One slaughtered his close relatives.
 There was no way out.
 Peacemakers call loudly for mercy,
 speak up for the victims.
 Their mission against genocide,
 saving and respect are their particular causes.
 Though the peacemakers had no resources,
 feeling thirst and exhaustion,
 they committed to giving hope to the poor,
 offering them water,
 clothes and shelter!
 They healed wounds
 then, they were murdered.
 Those who deceived them, who enacted this
 inhuman crime
 history will record,
 and their offspring will inherit the curse!
 This crime will haunt them forever,
 even after death!

See the other side of the story . . .
 Consider how we raise our children,
 the parents keep the child content on their lap
 and feed him milk.
 And then later

Saamaha isdaba dhigo_
 Haduu dhiiranwaayoo_
 Xeerada la soo dhigo_
 In loo sii dhaweeyoo_
 Afka laga dharjoyo sugo_
 In lagula dhabiiltamo
 Miyay daniba dhaafsiin
 Biyadhaca murtida iyo_
 Maahmaahda dhuux oo_
 Inkastoo dhawayn iyo_
 Abaal dheer naloo galay
 Dunidii dhamaanteed
 Dhibteenii ka daashaye_
 Dhabta ma_isku sheegnaa?_
 Dhinbilaha ma daminaa?
 Jidkii hore dhamaayaye_
 Dhabe nabad ma qaadnaa?_
Dhabtii Haa! Dhabtii Haa!
Dhabtii Haa!

the baby attempts to walk.
 If the child does not have the courage
 to feed himself, the parents still help,
 bringing the plate close to him,
 feeding him by hand.
 They teach him how to manage,
 convince him how to treat other people.
 The bedrock of wisdom
 is to properly digest the proverb.
 We (refugees) were warmly welcomed.
 We are in debt, with enormous gratitude.
 People of the world
 get tired of our fighting.
 Do we talk seriously?
 Do we extinguish the flames of war?
 We came to the end of old road.
 Do we choose to take the peaceful path?
Serious yes! Seriously yes!
Seriously yes!

Ana Merino Spain

Ana Merino, Associate Professor of Spanish Creative Writing at The University of Iowa, has published seven books of poetry: *Preparativos para un viaje*—winner of the 1994 Adonais Award—*Los días gemelos*, *La voz de los relojes*, *Juegos de niños*—winner of the 2003 Fray Luis de León Award—*Compañera de celda*, and *Hagamos caso al tigre*. Her seventh poetry book *Curación* received Accésit (Finalist) Jaime Gil de Biedma award and was published in fall 2010. She is also the author of a youth novel *El hombre de los dos corazones* (2009). Merino is also a scholar who writes on graphic novels, testimonial representations, and the theories of childhood poverty and marginalization.

Ana Merino Profesora Titular de escritura creativa en español por la Universidad de Iowa, ha publicado siete poemarios *Preparativos para un viaje* ganador del premio Adonais 1994, *Los días gemelos*, *La voz de los relojes*, *Juegos de niños* ganador del Premio Fray Luis de León 2003, *Compañera de celda* y *Hagamos caso al tigre*. Su séptimo libro, *Curación* recibió un Accésit del Premio Jaime Gil de Biedma en 2010. Además ha publicado la novela juvenil *El hombre de los dos corazones* (2009). Merino también escribe sobre cómic y novela gráfica, representaciones testimoniales y teorías de la infancia en contextos de pobreza y marginalidad.





La peluquería del Señor Russell¹

En la peluquería del Señor Russell
 me saludan con cariño sin conocerme,
 y una anciana desdentada
 me dice que mi corazón es dulce.
 Yo sonrío
 mientras me acomodo en una vieja silla de cuero
 y escucho el sonido de las tijeras
 al compás de la música arrugada
 de unos discos de vinilo.
 Y la cabeza me late
 de caminar por el frío,
 de buscar sigilosa
 algún indicio azul de la primavera.

El cartero
 ha dejado el bolsón de cartas
 sobre la mesa de las horquillas y los peines
 y se ha sentado con nosotros
 a pasar el rato.
 Se ha hundido lentamente
 en un sofá giratorio
 con orejeras.
 Su cuerpo inmenso
 ha sonado a océano por dentro.
 Varias veces nos hemos mirado
 y yo he creído ver
 al rey de los peces
 agonizar en su carraspeo
 de voz ronca y tos sanguinolenta.

A la peluquería del Señor Russell
 uno llega de casualidad
 porque la casa no tiene escaparate,
 sólo un cartel en la ventana
 que dice que corta el pelo
 incluso los domingos.

Mr. Russell's Barbershop

In Mr. Russell's barbershop
 I am a stranger greeted warmly,
 and a toothless old woman
 tells me I'm a sweetheart.
 I smile
 as I make myself comfortable in an old leather chair
 and listen to the scissors snipping
 to the rhythms of crinkly music
 played on vinyl records.
 And my head throbs
 from walking in the cold,
 from noiselessly searching for
 some blue presence of spring

The postman
 has left his letter carrying bag
 on the table with hairpins and combs
 and has sat with us
 to pass the time.
 He's sank slowly
 in a swiveling chair
 with headrests.
 His immense body has
 hummed like the ocean inside.
 We've looked at each other several times
 and I've thought I've seen
 the king of fishes
 agonizing in the hoarseness
 of his raspy voice and bloody cough.

One arrives at Mr. Russell's barbershop
 serendipitously,
 the house has no display,
 just a sign on the window
 that says he cuts hair
 even on Sundays.

La curiosidad hace que llames a la puerta,
descubras un viejo salón
y veas como tus mechones van cayendo
junto a la chimenea.

Una mujer desde el espejo me mira,
tiene el pelo liso,
una melena corta a la altura de la nuca.
Esa mujer soy yo,
cuando se ríe,
es mi boca la que se abre.

Y el Señor Russell es feliz,
feliz de saber que sus dedos temblorosos
todavía pueden
cortarle la desolación a los días.

Yo, yo que soy la mujer del espejo,
tengo que cruzarlo para volver a casa
y llevarme de la mano
al rey de los peces
para que muera con dignidad
en la laguna del cementerio,
el único lugar que conozco
donde los árboles y el viento
saben imitar el sonido de las olas
y la nieve es la espuma
de un océano inmóvil.

Tengo que darme prisa
ahora que alguien ha dejado pasar unos segundos
y yo puedo cruzar
sobre mi cuerpo,
y aletear junto al cartero
en un simulacro de mar,
en la tristeza de sus ojos redondos
y de su boca abierta
como mi risa, que va perdiendo el color
hasta llenarse de sal fría.

Curiosity makes you knock on the door,
discover an old salon
and watch as your tresses fall
next to the chimney

A woman watches me from the mirror,
she has straight, short hair,
up to the nape of her neck.
That woman is me,
when she laughs,
it is my mouth that opens.

And Mr. Russell is happy,
happy to know that his trembling fingers
can still cut away
the desolation from the days.

I, I who am the woman in the mirror,
must cross it to return home
and take by the hand
the king of the fishes
so he may die with dignity
in the pond at the cemetery,
the only place I know
where the trees and the wind
know how to imitate the hum of the waves
and the snow is the foam
of a motionless ocean.

I must make haste
now that someone has let a few seconds go by
and I can cross
over my body,
and flutter beside the postman
as if in the sea,
in the sadness of his round eyes
and his open mouth
like my laughter, losing its sparkle
until its filled with cold salt.

Tengo que darme prisa
para despertar cuanto antes
de este sueño de lápidas blancas
y abrazarme a otro sueño
que me desnude bajo la tierra
y me haga morder la manzana del paraíso.

Las mañanitas de las muchachas que se equivocan²

Despierta,
sólo puedes ser hermosa esta noche
para que un equívoco
te acaricie los pies.
Soñar unos segundos
el sabor de otros labios
como una golosina de la infancia
y ser el esqueleto
de un pájaro que se equivoca de rumbo,
picotea el hielo y tiene el ala rota.

Tu plumón se pega a los zapatos
de un hombre que está cansado
vuelve a casa a no hacer nada
y se acurruca como un gato
al que ya le faltan vidas.

Despierta,
tu isla se ha movido
y navega hacia el sur
con una soga atada a la garganta.
Deja ya de envenenarte
tocando las letras de un alfabeto mudo.

No hay música en los portales,
no hay esquinas ni bancos de madera,
sólo peces ahogados en un mar de hojalata
y tu mirada curiosa
tratando de encontrar un calendario
donde poder marcar la fecha de una huida.

I must make haste
to awaken as soon as possible
from this dream of white tombstones
and embrace another dream
that will undress me under the earth
and make me bite the apple of paradise.

Morning Song for the Girls that Misstep

Awake,
you may only be beautiful this night
so that a misstep
caresses your feet.
Dream for a second
the taste of other lips
like the sweet morsels of childhood
and be the skeleton
of a bird that loses its way,
pecks the ice and has a broken wing.

Your plumage sticks to the shoes
of a tired man
he returns home to do nothing
and curls up like a cat
who's already missing too many lives.

Awake,
your island has moved
and its navigating south
with a noose tied to its throat.
Stop poisoning yourself
touching the letters of a mute alphabet.

There's no music at the gates,
there are no street corners or wooden benches,
only drowned fish in a sea of tinplates
and your curious gaze
trying to find a calendar
to write the date of an escape.

Cargamento de nieve³

La nieve en los vagones
 ha perdido hace tiempo
 la textura perfecta de sus copos,
 apelmazada y sucia
 hoy huele a gasolina
 o a basura olvidada
 que creció en las aceras
 y se volvió equipaje,
 cargamento grisáceo
 de un tren de mercancías.

Hay que limpiar las calles
 y derretir su manto
 de cuerpo mutilado
 que se abraza al asfalto
 y ni siente la sal
 quemándole los párpados.

La nieve condenada
 a ser charco en las vías
 apenas se lamenta
 de su extraño viaje.
 El eco del verano
 desnuda sus entrañas
 y el óxido del sueño
 la transforma en un líquido sagrado.

Así es la nieve vieja
 que se llevan los trenes.

En su semilla blanca
 de infinitos cristales
 sólo germina el hielo.
 Por eso la almacenan
 en los vagones huecos
 que recorren el ansia
 de los que no soportan
 el invierno.

Snow Cargo

The snow in the wagons
 has long lost
 the perfect texture of its flakes,
 dirty and compressed
 today it stinks of gasoline
 or forgotten garbage
 that grew on the sidewalks
 and became baggage,
 a mercantile train's
 gray cargo.

The streets must be cleaned
 and melt its mantle
 of mutilated body
 that clutches the asphalt
 not feeling the salt
 that burns its eyelids.

The snow, condemned
 to become puddles in the streets
 barely regrets
 its strange journey.
 The echo of summer
 bares its entrails
 and the rust of sleep
 transforms it into sacred drink.

The old snow
 carried away by the trains
 is like that.

In its white seed
 of infinite crystals
 only the ice germinates.
 That's why they store it
 in hollow wagons
 that make the rounds of the anxiety
 felt by those who cannot bear
 the winter.

Piedra, Papel, Tijera

Piedra
fría,
rincón silencioso
junto al regazo de los muertos.

Papel
para escribir
unas breves líneas,
la despedida apresurada
del viajero.

Tijera
para cortarle la lengua al mar
cuando suspira.

Tijera
para cortar los sueños
de los ahogados.

Papel
para escribir sus nombres.

Estrecho de piedra,
barquito de papel
arrecifes de tijera.

Un poema triste
para los que se quedaron sin aire
en las orillas.

Lágrimas de piedra
pateras de papel
y la boca del mar
con dientes de tijera.

Stone, Paper, Scissors

Stone
cold,
silent corner
alongside the fold of the dead.

Paper
to write
a few brief lines,
the quick parting
of the traveler.

Scissors
to cut off the ocean's tongue
when it sighs.

Scissors
to cut the dreams
of the drowned.

Paper
to write their names.

Strait made of stone,
ship made of paper
reefs made of scissors.

A sad poem
for those who were left without breath
on the costal rims.

Tears made of stone
vessels made of paper
and the mouth of the sea
with teeth like scissors.

El hombre que sabe a chocolate

El hombre que sabe a chocolate
se ha quedado dormido.

Sus ojos,
de chocolate amargo
a veces parpadean
y el aire se condensa
en su boca de nata,
en el dulce de leche de sus labios.

Una intuición me dice
que el chocolate puro
no puede ser un hombre,
que el deseo no debe
dibujar espejismos tan golosos.

El hombre que sabe a chocolate
no parece real,
no quiero que lo sea,
el chocolate esconde
pasiones más oscuras
que el amor.

Recetas de otoño

Infusión de regaliz,
uña de gato,
acariciar el otoño,
dejar que se acurruque
su viento de hojas secas
en tu vientre.

Acariciar el ombligo
de los árboles
convertido en el musgo
de los troncos cortados.

The Man that Tastes Like Chocolate

The man that tastes like chocolate
has fallen asleep.

His eyes,
of bitter chocolate
at times blink
and the air condenses
in his cream-like mouth,
in his lips of custard.

Intuition tells me
that pure chocolate
cannot be a man,
that desire should not
sketch such sweet mirages.

The man that tastes like chocolate
does not seem real,
I don't want him to be,
chocolate conceals
darker passions
than love.

Autumn Recipes

Licorice infusion,
cat's claw,
caress autumn,
allow its wind of dry leaves
to nestle in your womb.

Caress the trees'
navel
that's become the moss
of felled trunks.

Infusión de anís,
agua de rosas,
arropar a los niños
que no tienen memoria,
dejar que se acurruquen
en tu vientre de espiga.

Renacer después de una nevada,
renacer con el frío sutil de la muerte
tiritando en la boca.

Que te froten los brazos y las piernas,
que te abracen
y te pidan que te quedes.

Infusión de agua de mar
para olvidar que existieron
las callejuelas estrechas
y los besos con sabor a portales.

Acariciar el bostezo
de los niños que sueñan,
regalarles relojes
para que jueguen a vivir en el tiempo.

Infusión de ropa vieja,
pastel de cicatrices
y gotas de paciencia
con olor a miedo.

Anise infusion,
rose water,
cover the children
that have no memory,
let them cuddle
in your ear-wheat belly.

To be reborn after a snow storm,
to revive with the subtle cold of death
shivering in the mouth.

That your arms and legs be rubdown,
that you be embraced
and asked to stay.

Sea water infusion
to forget that there were
narrow streets
and portico flavored kisses.

Caress the yawns
of children that dream,
gift to them watches
so they may play at living in time.

Old clothes infusion,
a pie made of scars
and drops of patience
with the scent of fear.

El quinto cielo⁴

Seremos niños
cuando la muerte roce el quinto cielo.
Querremos abrazarnos
a la risa que deja la inocencia
en los tejados.

Maullidos de gato
que planean
tomar el territorio de las sombras.
Y nosotros debatiéndonos
entre un intento por volar
y un anhelo enfermizo
por querer escapar
de nuestro propio cuerpo.

Seremos niños
olvidando el olor que dejan los adultos,
el rastro de sus miedos
atado a las desgracias de las vidas ajenas.

La vejez será el eco
de los acantilados,
murmullo de cisternas
bebiéndose el silencio de la noche.

Seremos niños buenos
en ataúdes blancos
y trenzaremos sueños
humedeciendo el mimbre
en las aguas termales
de los cuentos de hadas.

The Fifth Heaven

We'll be children
when death grazes the fifth heaven.
We'll want to embrace
the laughter that leaves innocence
on the rooftops.

Cat's cries
that plan on
taking over the land of shadows
And we debate
between attempting to fly
and a sickly desire
from wanting to escape
our own bodies.

We will be children
forgetting the smell left by adults,
the trace of their fears
tied to the misfortunes of other's lives.

Old age will be the echo
of the cliffs,
murmur of reservoirs
drinking the silence of the night.

We'll be noble children
in white coffins
and we'll braid dreams
dampening the osier
in the thermal waters
found in fairy tales.

Vengo a ser testigo⁵

Vengo a ser testigo
de un milagro,
la resurrección de las palabras
emergiendo del mar
con ansias de justicia.

Vengo vestida
con el disfraz de la penumbra
para escuchar
el murmullo de las cosas
que habitan
en cada casa de madera y chapa.

Pensamientos prohibidos
que llegan a la orilla
y mecen la basura que vomitan.
No hay caminos de conchas ni arena transparente
sólo plástico fino y grasa de motores
como una capa más sobre la tierra,
como una mascarilla
que ahoga a las gaviotas
y envenena a los niños
que salen a buscar erizos en las rocas.

Vengo a ser testigo
de las contradicciones
con las que fraguan el cemento
de los grandes edificios
que nunca se terminan
y acaban cobijando en sus rincones
las venas de los chicos
que se inyectan
escamas de serpiente triturada.

Vengo a desesperarme
porque no encuentro a Dios
en la miseria.

I Come to Witness

I come to witness
a miracle,
the resurrection of words
emerging from the sea
with the desire for justice.

I come dressed
disguised as penumbra
to listen
to the murmur of things
that inhabit
in each house made of wood and tin.

Prohibited thoughts
that moor at the coastline
and sway the trash that they vomit.
There are no paths made of shells or transparent sand
only fine plastic and motor oil
as though it were one more layer upon the earth,
like a mask
that suffocates seagulls
and poisons the children
that go searching for sea urchins upon the rocks.

I come to witness
the contradictions
used to concoct the cement
for the large buildings
that go on forever
to shelter in their corners
the veins of the young
that inject
the scales of crushed serpents.

I come to despair
because I don't find God
in the misery.

Sirena del Mississippi⁵

Explorador del miedo
vienes a posarte
en la llaga secreta
del dolor astillado.

Te cobijas conmigo
en el lecho caliente
que ha dejado el olvido
con sus estanterías
inundadas de libros
y su pena perpetua
tratando de flotar.

Nuestra risa vacía
amanece enroscada
en el denso veneno
de una vieja pasión
que no germina
y promete existir
pero no puede
fecundar
ese extraño deseo que le habita.

En mi anhelo convulso
me deshago
y descifro el silencio
de tu esencia dormida
sobre la superficie
de un planeta letal
que me descubre
el rincón más hermoso
de tus sueños
donde mi perdición
es una enfermedad
parecida al amor.

Mississippi Mermaid

Explorer of fear
you touch down
on the secret wound
of the splintered pain.

You take shelter with me
in the sultry bed
that neglect has left
with its shelves
inundated by books
and its unending sorrow
attempting to float.

Our hollow laughter
awakes coiled
in the viscous venom
of a worn out passion
that does not germinate
and promises to exist
but can not
fertilize
that strange desire that inhabits it.

In my convulsive yearning
I disintegrate
and decipher the silence
of your sleeping essence
upon the surface
of a lethal planet
that uncovers for me
the most exquisite corner
of your dreams
where my ruin
is an illness
not unlike love.

Si estás viva⁵

Si estás viva
tendrás que acostumbrarte
al desamor
con su desapacible exuberancia;
neutralizar
cualquier indicio
de su patógena presencia
para volverte inmune
sin perder la cordura.

Ser metódica,
tragar el desafecto
con ternura
y reírte en secreto
de tu propia tristeza.

Si logras superar
este fracaso,
te harás adicta
a lo que más te duele,
al entramado hostil
de las causas perdidas
que deambulan contigo
por esa geografía
de plenitud ingrátida
que te ayuda a volar
cuando los espejismos
se mezclan con las huellas
de los rinocerontes
que lloran enjaulados.

Silencia lo que intuyes,
drena su desnudez
para que cauterice,
y nunca olvides
que el tiempo enamorado
es una medicina
que se agota,

If You Are Alive

If you are alive
you'll need to get used to
the absence of love
with its disagreeable exuberance;
neutralize
any indication
of its pathogenic presence
so that you may be immune
without losing your senses.

Be methodical,
imbibe the disaffection
with tenderness
and secretly laugh
at your own sadness.

If you manage to overcome
this defeat,
you'll be addicted
to that which pains you the most,
the hostile structure
of lost causes
walking about with you
along that geography
of tenuous fulfillment
helping you to fly
when the mirages
merge with the tracks of rhinoceros
mourning in their cages.

Silence that which you intuit
drain its nakedness
so it may cauterize,
and never forget
that the time in love
is like medicine
that runs out,

entonces no podrás
ocultar sus secuelas.

Terapia del adiós⁵

Respira
y deja que te habite
ese cosquilleo
que cruza el umbral de tu puerta,
deja que germine
esa sensación
de deseo enhebrado
que hoy te espía
y se alimenta de tu extrañeza
y brota de la curiosidad
como si fuese
el espejismo puro
de una niñez perdida
que dibuja en silencio
la frágil silueta de tu sombra.

Deja que se enrede en tus miedos
que se refleje en ti
como un cometa helado
para que su rastro
se fabrique con tu aliento
y exista porque quieres
anudar el lenguaje sigiloso de su cuerpo
sin que apenas se inmute
el surco cotidiano de las cosas.

Deja que nazca
para que pueda recordarte
y su amor se parezca
al vértigo secreto de la vida
y aprenda a conformarse
con un sorbo de tiempo disfrazado
de muchas despedidas.

then, you'll not be able
to hide its consequences.

Farewell Therapy

Breathe
and allow yourself to be inhabited
by the thrill
that crosses your door's threshold,
allow to germinate
that sensation
of threaded desire
that spies on you today
and feeds off your astonishment
and burgeons from the curiosity
as if it were
the pure illusion
of a lost childhood
that sketches in silence
your shadow's fragile silhouette.

Allow it to get entangled in your fears
to reflect itself in you
like a frozen comet
so that its path
may be fabricated with your breath
and exist because you want to
knot the mysterious language of its body
without hardly altering
the everyday furrow of things.

Allow its birth
so that it may remember you
and its love be reminiscent of
the secret vertigo of life
and it learn to be satisfied
with a sip of time disguised
as recurring farewells.

All translations: Claudia Aburto Guzmán

Resistance

Robert Farnsworth
Bates College

Poetry, it seems to me, is all about resistances. First, the poem itself resists, so enticingly resists, being put into words. Though it often seems to have crossed vast distances to reach its poet, it will only meander into language; it requires summoning, coaxing, unspeakably intimate seduction to be voiced as only it must be. It is, as Adrienne Rich once suggested, like a secret you didn't know you were keeping. The poem resists perhaps because it knows its poet better than the poet knows herself, and because, inchoate and developing as it is, it perhaps knows the poet's language, the tones and timbres and traditions of that language, better than she does, that is, if she has read widely and deeply the poetry of her language. In the process of summoning, conjuring, persuading the poem into words, the poet realizes she must resist what most immediately comes to hand, to ear, to mind, and discover just what *exactly* delights, as at once recognition and surprise. I don't wish to indulge in mystification here; poems are made out of words, not ideas, not concepts, not feelings, but the linguistic figures imagination finds to embody the developing poem's images and stakes must seek an aptness the writer (the poem's first reader, as Paul Muldoon has remarked) registers with a surprised, delighted *yes*.

And then, once it has found its form, the poem becomes its own live creature, a creature now given to resisting its potential translator. . . . Who then must undertake very much the same process, listening into the poem's approach, its heartbeat, its footsteps, its motives and behavior, so as to carry these across into another tongue, into another world of reference and belief, one poem at a time. So many poems—to be discovered by, to carry across, all of them resisting, nobly and

gracefully, the simplifications of paraphrase and taxonomy, but still inviting our participations in their arrivals, on the air, in the mind. The poem, Wallace Stevens wrote, must resist the intelligence almost successfully. I believe that very resistance—to writer, to translator, to reader—constitutes the poem's *élan vital*, its mysterious capacity to live within and haunt its audience.

Resistance

The poem first emerges,
first resists, as a far-off
bit of speculation, some
gravitational anomaly,
some lacuna, lack, evidence
of its own unnecessary
but inevitable incipience,
of its covert uncurling,
of its ignition whirling
upright from a secret
that took place so long ago,
and now has traveled, so
many years traveled—oh,
the ache, the algos of that
voyage—toward you,
to be noticed, just,
as a homesickness,
as an absence, a longing
lighting now by chance
as rain upon your glasses,
as the tones of venerable
bells, as an incense
of smoldering leaves,
as a beetle's bronze wing
lifted on the back of that
hand you thought you
knew so well. There it is,
resisting its own, already
yearned-for embodiment
in words. And you will
belong to it now, for days,
perhaps for years. It
will never quite conclude.

translations

Drunk on Confusion on Translation and Pure Language

Laura Balladur
Bates College

“Rond comme une pelle,” the poet explained, “est une expression familière pour dire saoul.” I was stunned. I had been asked to translate several poems by Emeric de Monteynard for “Translation: the Bates International Poetry Festival.” Now, reading over his comment, I stopped in my thought tracks, bewildered. I knew the familiar expression, quite well. How could I—a supposed bilingual French and English speaker—miss such a common expression to describe being drunk? “Round like a shovel”? Really? And I call myself bilingual?

Casting self-doubt aside, I enjoy translation: I enjoy moving back and forth between my two languages, I enjoy thinking about their material contours, their syntax, their hidden logic. I enjoy the craft, the attunement to thought-becoming ideas. Translation is a constant process of doing and undoing ideas: unbuttoning words, returning to thought, and infusing them with different forms, different contours, different language. But my translation production over the years had been limited to several academic articles in literary theory and law. Poetry, however, with its rhythm, its musicality, its singular density of words and expressions, poses specific challenges that I had never faced other than in the classroom. So when I was asked to translate a short selection of Monteynard’s works, I welcomed the task. Yet my



inability to recognize the meaning behind that common expression signals a blind spot that reveals much about my task as translator.

Translating takes time: time to read, to penetrate into and be penetrated by the density of words. Monteynard's poetry, minimalist and dense with its razor sharp syntax, posed its own set of challenges: finding the right word or expression, choosing the right tone, complementing its sonority, adjusting the rhythm. These considerations, important in any literary translation, were now central to Monteynard's poetics and to my translation. Before even reading his poems, I first read around him. One could never achieve the ideal set by Victor Hugo in his reflections on translating Shakespeare—read everything the source author has read—but one can dig into the archeological layers of an author's poetics. Where were the big fault-lines, the cathartic moments of an author's trajectory? Where were the defining moments of his career? His webpage gave me some clues as to his sources for inspiration: his French teacher Monsieur Perard (friend to Georges Rouault and Max Jacob) who took a most unorthodox approach with his students and simply read to them; a transcription of Max Jacob's prose poem "La Ballade de la visite nocturne"; the poets Eugène Guillevic and Emmanuel Muheim—source points for him. Turning to his poems confirmed the information gleaned from the website dig: an attention to sonority and rhythm, a density of words, a minimalist approach.

Finally, I set down to translate the poems. Because of the particular forum where these poems and their translations would be shown—projected behind the poet while he read the original—in most cases I chose to follow a line by line translation: these projected translations would complement the original and help audience members somewhat familiar with French follow the original.

Specific problems and puzzles soon occurred, and I will focus first on the use and translation of the French infinitive. Many of his poems make heavy use of infinitives, although not always in functionally similar ways. "Réparer" and "Aimer le dire," for instance, follow a similar syntax, introducing the thematic center, an infinitive, followed by more infinitives, this time introduced by what is called in French the "c'est présentatif," the presentative "c'est": "Aimer, c'est l'incise / Où s'invente / En nos corps, une vie," ("Aimer le dire"). "Réparer, c'est veiller, / Je dirais" ("Réparer").

My first preoccupation was to define the function of an infinitive. The use of the infinitive, without gender or number, makes it indefinite and unlimited. Inherently an action, the infinitive defines an infinitely self-generating movement, while also ultimately divorcing movement from the specificity of any particular

agency. *To be or not to be*: Hamlet's question is existential, universal. An infinitive draws contours around this moment of emergent becoming, making it tangible yet separate from intention. The English form of the infinitive, with its pithy and trenchant *to*, adds visual and aural noise, something I wanted to avoid. To be sure, in the right context, the right phrase, the preposition could add a repetition and semantic layering of its own, such as sharpness or potentiality.

In English, other than the common infinitive introduced by its preposition *to*, I had two options: my first was to nominalize the verb, as was famously done with the title of Michel Foucault's *Surveiller et punir: Discipline and Punish*. My second was to use the gerund: *loving, making one's way, looking, becoming*, and so on. Whether transforming either to noun or gerund, both choices signaled movement, although each suggested its own set of issues and problems. By nominalizing, I would limit and set thresholds. I would conceptualize an infinitely self-regenerative movement. I would make it more abstract thought than embodied movement. In contrast, although using the gerund more clearly represented the self-generating infinite action in itself, I was introducing an aural repetition.

This aural repetition worked with "Réparer": here I chose to translate the infinitive with the gerund because the French poem introduced aural repetition, signaled by the repeated [e] (é) sound occurring both with the infinitives and other words and verb forms echoing the same sound:

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Réparer | <i>Mending</i> |
| C'est veiller | <i>Is keeping watch</i> |
| Je dirais – | <i>I would say—</i> |
| Attentif et <i>debout</i> | <i>Attentive and erect</i> |
| C'est refuser | <i>Refusing</i> |
| Tout rejeter | <i>Any rejection</i> |
| C'est recoudre | <i>Restitching</i> |
| Ou selon, | <i>Or at times,</i> |
| Rectifier | <i>Rectifying</i> |
| Renforcer | <i>Reinforcing</i> |
| Réunir | <i>Reuniting</i> |
| ... | ... |

Veiller, dirais, refuser, rejet, c'est, rectifier, renforcer, réunir: the poem's aural melody gravitated back to that sharp [e] sound, reinforcing the repetitive action inherent in mending, sewing, reinforcing, and emphasizing a mindful and meditative practice of tending. *Receiving, rectifying, reinforcing, reuniting*: the alliteration only further amplified the mindful repetition in mending. Thus the gerund in this particular poem presented itself like the elegant choice. The title *Mending* was itself suggested by Jean-François Sené, Monteynard's translator in France.

But in "Aimer le dire," aural repetition was not necessarily at the forefront. Although this poem closely resembled "Réparer" in syntax, "Aimer le dire" was less about repetition as it was about definition. Where "Réparer" amplified the semantically charged theme of mending, with various definitions emphasizing the meditative nature of mending and sewing through repeated sounds, "Aimer le dire" seemed like a series of definitions to explain, develop, and further articulate the initial concept, "Aimer."

Aimer, c'est l'incise

Où s'invente
En nos corps, une vie.

...

Aimer
C'est debout

Réclamer plus de temps

Formuler des espaces

Et trembler
Sans savoir.

*Love is the incidental clause
Where, in our bodies,
Life invents itself.*

...

*Love
Is standing upright*

Claiming more time

Formulating spaces

*Trembling
Without knowing.*

In "Aimer le dire," the infinitives in French both visually and semantically layer one upon the other, softly and gracefully, pulsing irregularly yet rhythmically—organically—like the irregular ebb and flow of the seashore, driven by the waves' hidden logic. "Aimer," *Love*, the thematic center of the poem, functions like a conceptual incision, a breach where life takes form. Nominalization for the thematic infinitive here seemed appropriate to capture its inherent function: the conceptual breach of infinitely self-generating *love*. Other infinitives were introduced by the

presentative "c'est." But unlike "Réparer" where the presented infinitives amplified the semantically charged theme of mending by constantly looping back to the central theme by the repetition of the aural [e], in "Aimer le dire," the "presented" infinitives "c'est céder," "c'est se faire un chemin," themselves definitions to the main theme of this poem, functioned more like appendages, outgrowths, extensions. They developed, broadened, and shaped hidden meanings drawn out from the thematic center. They created new forms, all emphasizing a becoming movement, *Making one's way, drunk, alive, and present*.

C'est se faire un chemin

Making one's way

Ivre vif
Et présent.

*Drunk
Alive and present.*

C'est céder à ses sens

Surrendering to one's senses

These other infinitives define, and as such become referential. They refer to another action, another movement, another self-generating potential. Transforming these infinitives into nouns would have curtailed that movement. Moreover, other syntax issues emerged, namely the difficulty in nominalizing some of these infinitives. "Making one's way" describes the movement, the emergent process of becoming, just as "Giving in to one's senses," emphasizes the becoming, the giving into senses. In "Aimer le dire," I chose to juxtapose two different solutions to the translation of infinitives: I translated the presented infinitives as gerunds thereby emphasizing change and becoming-movement, and juxtaposed these to the conceptualized—nominalized—thematic center.

But what does this all have to do with being drunk?

Possibly the most interesting—and revealing—aspect of this translation (here I mean this particular poem "Aimer le dire"), was not so much the choices I made in my translation but rather my intention to translate. Over the course of my correspondence with Monteynard prior to his trip to Bates College, another blind spot emerged: it became clear that "Aimer le dire," that poem I found the most challenging to translate, that poem whose semantic and syntactic rhythms I questioned the most, that poem whose syntax so engulfed me . . . that poem had already been translated. And as if that oversight on my part wasn't enough, I realized my mistake, not once, but twice! Although I could chalk it up to a moment—or rather two—of inattention on my part, something else was—is—at stake here. Why another lapsus? What sort of unconscious desire on my part lay hidden beneath

the forgetting? Why did I obsessively return to this poem? And when I realized my mistake, why did I forget, a second time, that it had been translated?

The answer is two-fold, and brings me back full circle to my blind spot and the expression “rond comme une pelle,” an expression very familiar to me, yet one that did not jump out from the page. The short answer to my obsession to translate the already translated is that I read syntax and meaning differently. In short, I had the presumption to forget the existing translation, and to correct, to make “better.” The longer answer takes me back to the idiom I missed. To emphasize the size of my blind spot, I should add that nothing in Monteynard’s versification could have thrown me off: the idiom appears on one verse, one line; it is visually arresting—although initially, not to me. So what did that line right there, on the page, the one I failed to see—what did that blind spot reveal about my process?

In some way, it is safe to say that I dived into a linguistic world of syntax and words, and as such became overly attentive to the call by French poet Paul Valéry to make the familiar foreign. I had been lured by the strangeness of words uttered by a voice, not mine; disembodied words, whose breath I tried to re-inhabit, words I tried to un-know. And by stripping words of their ideas, I stripped a language whose familiarity I unbuttoned in order to reach its *étrangeté*, my own strangeness. By making the familiar strange, I was attempting to reach Walter Benjamin’s description of a pure language: by undoing the familiar, I had the presumption of attaining the poet’s intention, a universal *étrangeté*, that pure language. This certainly explained my obsessive revisitation of “Aimer le dire,” a poem already elegantly translated by Jean François Sené. I had the presumption that my bilingualism gave me the privilege to access that pure language. Maurice Blanchot, himself a careful reader of Walter Benjamin, goes a step further: the translator sets herself up as the enemy of God, undoing the Tower of Babel to reconstruct what Jacques Derrida calls the confusion of languages; to reconstruct the confusion of a shared intention. This is, of course, problematic: as much as I shared the same language with Monteynard, I can never share all his experiences, and I certainly can never inhabit his intention. If Babel is a confusion of languages, then no one singular translation can ever presume to reconstruct that pure language—itsself a confusion. Language at best supplements that confusion. Upon reflection, this was perhaps one of the biggest revelations of this translation experience: the final translated version soon became a confusion of voices, a *Babelization* that emerged from conversations between myself and Emeric de Monteynard. But these exchanges were not just with Monteynard: at times the poet shared with me traces of conversations he previously had with his French translator, Jean-François Sené. As if the translator,

whose voice would be silent without the poet, became a voice in the ventriloquist poet. Monteynard seemed acutely aware of that: yes, he had penned these poems, yet he released them to the readerly and writerly eyes of others: Sené, myself. In the end, the final versions developed out of these exchanges, these confused collisions, intersections and points of view, out of different lived histories filling in the gaps and differences between these two languages. And when I now read the translation, I can no longer say with certainty which word choices were mine, Monteynard’s, or Sené’s—as it should be.

Having said that, I would like to go further. For if my original presumption—revealed through my lapsus and blind spot (the obsession and the idiom)—was to access an intention, is there not a presumption to assume that a pure language, if it exists, can only be accessed through another linguistic mode, through the difference between two languages? If pure language does exist, is it not instead the absence of presence? Does it not exist in the confusion of histories and ideas that shape the un-present?

I would like to propose that it is rather in those moments of confusion, when shared absence of presence intersect, that we can perhaps get a better sense of this virtual pure language from which the actual written word derives. By way of conclusion, I would like to pull back from the realm of language and confuse it with another mode of knowledge: the visual arts. For me, Monteynard’s poems expressed this density of thought becoming substance, becoming word. When I dived into his poems and traced the contours of their syntax, attempting to reach an intention from behind signs and breathe in a new language, I was struck by their dense physicality, their massive simplicity, and how they so forcefully traced the contours of concepts becoming flesh. Reading his works struck a visual chord: Robert Motherwell’s very large *Reconciliation Elegy*, a 10 x 30 foot acrylic on canvas painting



Robert Motherwell, *Reconciliation Elegy*, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 30.25, 1978. Art © Dedalus Foundation, Inc./ Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY, used with permission.

commissioned by the National Gallery of Art in 1978 and on public display in its East Building. The massive black abstract strokes, irregularly spaced, yet rhythmic and cohesive in their sequence, together with their juxtaposition against or out of space, against or out of concept, out of thought, out of a shared yet confused history, out of the absence of presence, echoed for me most clearly the verses from “Aimer le dire”:

Aimer, c’est l’incise
Où s’invente
En nos corps, une vie.

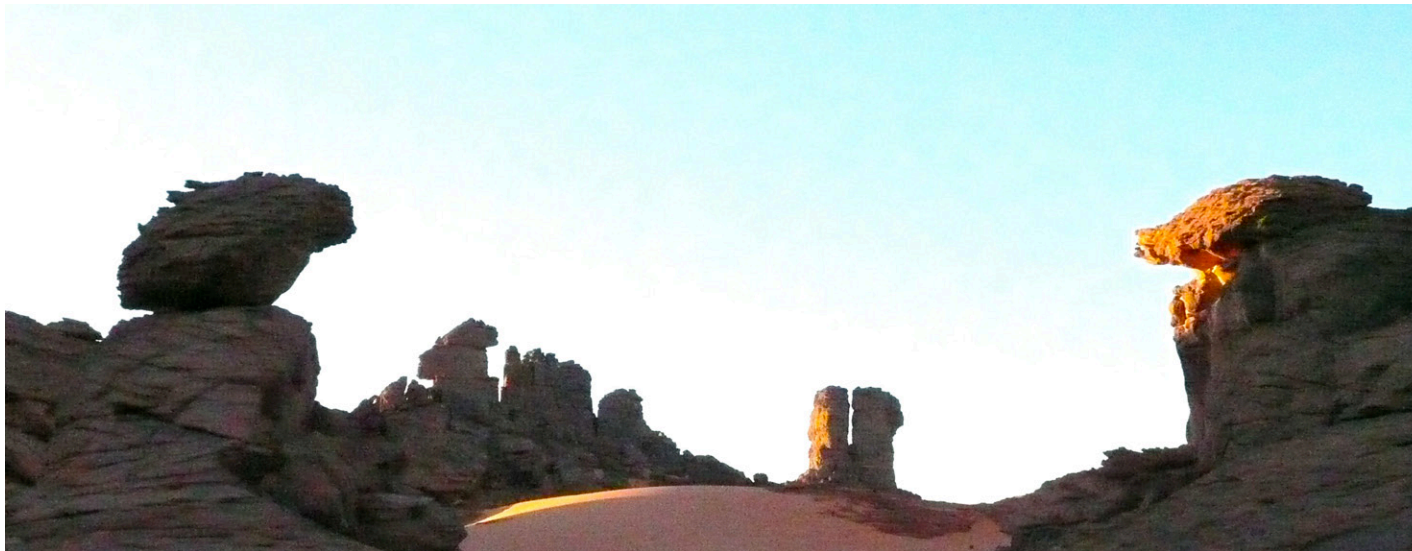
*Love is the incidental clause
Where, in our bodies
Life invents itself.*

I had forgotten about that first resonance to Motherwell until recently, when, in preparation for this reflection piece, Monteynard shared some images from his various desert trips. This fascination for deserts I had not gleaned from my initial archeological dig into his poetic trajectory. It was not until Monteynard came to Bates that I learned about these trips taken almost ritualistically, mindfully, attentively, one per year over the past several years: Mauritania, Mali, Libya, the stunning yet mysterious troglodytes of Petra. As I looked through his pictures, I was struck by the fact that in the desert, as in no other place, time, history, movement, and change—the absence of presence—is made visible and tangible through the

presence and stillness of stone. As I looked through his pictures, I also remembered Motherwell. Where Monteynard’s poetics flesh out the incidental clause, the very breach and incision through which conceptual movement, matter, and life give into words; in the desert time—the absence of presence—erodes and leaves as traces the contours of stone; time carves out the becoming-stone. It seems my presumption to reach some kind of virtual pure language prevails, yet I can find no other way to conclude than to confuse linguistic and visual language and to reproduce here one of his photographs. For it is perhaps in this Proustian synesthesia, where shared and confused experiences of language, art, geography, space, location, time, and history resonate and collide, that *drunk, alive, and present* we can begin to touch the becoming flesh of pure language.

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Emeric de Monteynard, Libya, (2010), used with permission from the author.



translations Between Coincidence and Coexistence

Translating the Context(s) of Intercultural Poetry

Raluca Cernahoschi
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How does one translate a German poet living in Poland for an American audience? Translating words, even sentences, from German to English—two related languages—can be simple enough. The exigencies of rhyme and rhythm, too, can find their due in a target language sharing many of the acoustic patterns of the source. Yet, as Claudia Aburto Guzmán insists in the description of the *Translations 2010* project, translation involves not only the “obvious attempt to find language equivalencies,” but also, and perhaps foremost, negotiating a “cross-cultural exchange.” The task of the translator encompasses a mediation of cultural contexts as much as a manipulation of linguistic registers, even though the former usually remains invisible. The words the translator chooses to render the source

text into a new language are approximations of concepts, meanings, feelings, and actions that have to make sense in the new cultural context. For the translation to be linguistically coherent to a native speaker of the target language, the utterance needs to be culturally coherent as well. The cultural context in which the original words and their arrangement have taken shape is localized within the target context, the differences between the two smoothed out.

Poetry written at the intersection of linguistic and cultural contexts resists this smoothing out in translation, however. As the literal connotation of the Latin “translatus”—to carry over—implies, translation usually occurs as a one-directional, finite movement in a language binary: *from* one language *to* another. The technical terms translators use for their “language pair”—“source” and “target”—further emphasize this exclusivity. The interpellation of a third (or fourth, fifth, and so on) language and culture disrupts this assumed flow of translation, creating eddies that heighten both the excitement and the difficulty of navigating between source and target.

A poet writing in German in Poland sits at just such an intersection. Writing in Poland, he is not simply a German poet, though he uses the language as his medium of expression, and, writing in German, he is not a Polish poet, though his texts are bound up in some of the same socio-cultural contexts which allow others to designate themselves in this way. He is both more and less than either, a stirrer of eddies and the complications—painful, fascinating, enlightening, bewildering—that arise from them.

Although born and raised in Germany, Lothar Quinkenstein is a long-time resident of Poland and acknowledges a deep sense of alienation from the mainstream German literary market. The alienation is due less to geographical distance (in his present location in Malbork, some 250 miles from the Polish-German border, he is physically closer to Germany’s cultural heart, Berlin, than he was as a student at the University of Freiburg) than by his perception of a lack of interest in and comprehension of his experience on the part of the German public. It is a lack shaped by historical circumstances: the combined effect of a difficult centuries-long relationship between the two neighbors and the post-war ideological division of Europe.

Lothar Quinkenstein does not set out to bridge this rift of experience but to test where the points of intersection are and how they can be articulated in the language of poetry. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is this endeavor—an act of translation itself—which resonated most with me as a translator. Of the texts I received from the poet, I was drawn first to those most heavily glossed, not because they came with ready-

made explanations but because they *needed* explanation. Unlike the poet, who had reservations about the inclusion of such context-dependent material in a public reading in the US, I believed that it was exactly these poems, with their rich and complicated substrates, to which the audience would most readily respond.

One of the texts most mistrusted by the author to stand on its own is “Śmigiel, Allerheiligen” (Śmigiel, All Saints’ Day), a polyphonic, multilingual poem capturing a German’s encounter with Jewish history in a Polish cemetery. The dialogic nature of the poem is marked already in the bilingual title and is further stressed visually and aurally by the incorporation of lines in five different languages: German, Polish, English, Yiddish, and French. Hidden from immediate recognition by translation is a sixth linguistic variation, Middle High German, from which both modern High German and Yiddish developed. The passage rendered from Middle High German is a paraphrase of lines from a poem by Süßkind von Trimberg, a 13th-century minstrel believed by some scholars to be the first documented German poet of Jewish origin. This contested claim rests on the very lines reproduced in Quinkenstein’s poem, which announce the intention of the minstrel to renounce the lifestyle of the German courts and to take up the habit of an old Jew:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| drum will ich ihre Höfe fliehn | and thus I will flee their courts |
| und laß mir einen langen Bart | and grow a long beard |
| wachsen von grauen Haaren | of gray hairs |

The function of the lines in the poem is not to argue for a side in the debate around the minstrel’s ethnic origin, however, but to integrate the sentiment of Süßkind’s text in the larger history of Eastern European Jews, the descendants of Medieval Jewish communities along the Rhine pushed by discrimination further and further eastward. The modern German translation of Süßkind’s words additionally works as a bridge between the narrating voice of the first part of the poem—which can be equated most easily with Quinkenstein’s own—and the polyphonic and polyglot chorus of the middle part. By conflating a historic voice with the poet’s modern idiom, the translation creates an affinity between the seemingly disparate experiences of a present-day German examining his place between East and West and of the German-Jewish eastward migration under pressure from western states.

Yet the temporary appropriation of Süßkind’s voice also creates friction within the poem. The translation announces itself in the change of personal pronoun (from “we” to “I”), as well as in the unusual images, which break with the narrative of discovery of the first part of the poem. Süßkind’s lines are followed by a succession

of statements in different languages and belonging to different genres and moods, which further the separation between the “we” of the initial narration and the experience of the Jewish diaspora.

The reader does not need to know the exact content of these utterances in order to feel their effect and understand their importance. In fact, the number and variety of featured languages almost seem to defy a reader’s attempt to understand *all* the different remarks (not to mention identify their sources). Like untranslated foreign dialog in a film, the lines seem designated to confound linguistic understanding while still conveying narrative and affective meaning. While the effect of the lines can be preserved in English translation simply by leaving them in the original languages, the translation has to contend with the loss of English as marker of a foreign voice in the lines “my mother came from Lithuania / my father came from Poland” and “I most enjoyed the poetry of Mickiewicz.” If I wanted to maintain these lines as “foreign” in the English translation, I had two options: the first was to re-encode them in a language that would be unfamiliar to English speakers, such as German, the second to highlight them visually through italics. While the first option could be seamlessly integrated into the text, I chose the latter in order to preserve the logic of the lines, which allude to the searches for Eastern European roots carried out most often by North Americans. This choice likewise adds to the visual texture on which the poem also relies: like the line breaks, foreign characters, and constant starts of the poem, the slanted words provide a bump in the smooth flow of the text, reminding the reader of the contingency of the utterance.

With its repetitive and polyphonic structure, “Śmigiel, Allerheiligen” openly displays its cross-cultural complications, allowing the translation to follow suit. Irregularities in the translation thus become part of the poem’s structure, adding to its textural layers. In other cases, however, the complications arising from the poem’s situation at the intersection of languages and cultures appear in the undertow rather than on the surface of the text and cannot be smoothly incorporated into the translation. In such cases, the translation process is forced open, forced to make its existence evident in the form of circumscriptions or notes.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the short poem “Berlin Hauptbahnhof, zweite Ebene” (Berlin Central Station, second level), the third installment of a trilogy commemorating Quinkenstein’s frequent trips between Germany and Poland. Like a finely calibrated mechanism, the two quatrains are set in relation to each other by a single linguistic choice, which unites seemingly disparate images into a startling revelation.

Within the short span of the poem, the mundane act of changing trains becomes a symbolic one in which the formerly parallel tracks of two languages and cultures suddenly intersect. In the middle of consulting the train table, the speaker's thoughts turn to the reading material in his luggage, then to an archive in Warsaw:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| einem schälte das waffenöl | the gun oil peeled |
| die haut von den händen | the skin from his hands |
| der stabsarzt verschrieb | the staff surgeon prescribed |
| salbe aus ringelblumen | marigold ointment |
| das fällt dir ein vor dem fahrplan | this occurs to you in front of the timetable |
| lektüre im koffer | reading material in the suitcase |
| das fällt dir ein: | this occurs to you: |
| warschauer archiv | the Warsaw archive |

The moment catches the “you”—both writer and reader—unawares: the sequence of events is muddled (the reading material is described before it “occurs” as a thought, there is no temporal deixis to sort out the chronology), the stage set with such economy that the relationship between the elements making up this moment of double consciousness remains ambiguous: is the reading material in the luggage related to the war-time episode described in the first stanza or to the Warsaw archive mentioned in the second? And how are war-time vignette and archive related?

The resolution of the structural ambiguities of the poem hinges on a linguistic coincidence at which the poem hints rather than makes explicit and whose understanding depends on familiarity with two different cultural contexts. In the first context, the German “Ringelblume,” appearing in the last line of the first stanza, is recognized as “calendula,” a plant traditionally used for its medicinal properties in healing irritated skin. Here, the hands of an unknown person, presumably a soldier, have been damaged by contact with gun oil, and he has been prescribed calendula ointment by the staff surgeon. The second context is created by the mentioning, in the last line, of a Warsaw archive. Although in the poem the archive remains unnamed, it is identifiable by the reference to the ointment in the first stanza, which shares its name with the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who, between 1939 and 1943, led the effort to create the most thorough documentation in existence on the plight of Polish Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and beyond.

The tension of the poem is effected by the contrast between the two war-time experiences, which can now be pinpointed as that of a German soldier and of the

Polish Jews under German occupation, respectively. The poem says little about how the difference between the two is meant to be read, insisting instead on the tantalizing possibility of their affinity through the linguistic coincidence of a shared name. Yet it is precisely this link which cannot be translated directly from German to English. The German “Ringelblume” has two possible English translations: “calendula” and “marigold.” While “marigold” is sometimes used to designate a plant with healing properties (“pot marigold” or *Calendula officinalis*), it more properly connotes a flower (genus *Tagete*) commonly edging vegetable garden beds because of its ability to repel pests. The logic of the poem requires the choice of “calendula” in the first stanza (at least for a US audience, which knows it as such from lists of medicinal ingredients), but “marigold” is the more common translation of the recognizably Jewish family name. My choice was dictated by the greater need to convey the identity of the archive, as well as the better acoustic integration of “marigold” into the first stanza (where it contributes to both consonance and assonance).

Even with this compromise, the translation of the name does not clarify the link altogether. The power of the original coincidence is that the two experiences touch, unmediated, in the overlap of the word “Ringelblum[e]” and are thus yanked together in uneasy but essential coexistence. The explanatory footnote becomes a mediation which dissipates the force of the original overlap, but, I believe, rescues its idea. Like the italics in “Śmigiel, Allerheiligen,” the footnote also leaves a visible trace on the body of the translation, a permanent reminder of the ordinarily hidden processes of transposition and contextualization which bring it forth.

Translating a German poet living in Poland into English demands the return to the context over and over again and problematizes the simple “from—to” assumed to be the natural motion of rendering a text into another language. It means acknowledging that an act of mediation between cultural contexts already precedes the translator's effort as well as working to make this mediation visible. Last, but not least, it requires accepting the limits of coincidence and working out the possibilities of coexistence instead.

translations Poetry Translation in the Classroom

Francisca López
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Translating poetry in a language class? It sounded like an interesting, although somehow crazy, idea. Doing those translations with the clear purpose of accompanying the poet's public performance at a high profile event? That definitely was a crazy idea. However, the project seemed intriguing, exciting, and full of potential as well—certainly worth giving it a try. So, I did begin to think about the most obvious issues: how could class work compensate for the students' good but limited knowledge of Spanish and Hispanic cultures? How could it compensate for the likely lack of poetic sensibility in some of them? How could I get them interested in the project?

Well before having definite answers for all of these and some other questions, I agreed to enlist students in my Spanish 301 (Introduction to Translation) course to collaborate with the first international poetry festival at Bates College. Translations: Cultural Awareness through Poetry was scheduled to take place in the fall of 2010—



coincidentally, the same semester that I taught Spanish 301 for the first time. One of the participants in the festival, Chilean poet Cristián Gómez, agreed to and seemed excited about having my students translate his poems for the public performance. It would be fair to say that, though thrilled and hopeful, we both were a bit nervous about the outcome—clearly, translation as practiced in the classroom differs from poetry translation in many crucial ways. For this reason, it seemed essential to consider and plan a couple of actions from the very inception of the project: (1) to state its importance in the overall experience of the course—the syllabus specified that translation of Mr. Gómez’s poems constituted the students’ mid-term projects, which would account for 25% of their final grade; and (2) to keep communication open among all parties involved—the poet made himself available for consultations, I encouraged students to contact him, and they took advantage of this great opportunity. The overall experience was rather positive for all involved. Students loved the idea from the very beginning, even when the exercise proved to be much harder than most of them had anticipated. The prospect of having their mid-term project be presented at a public event, along with the work of both their Bates professors and renowned international poets, was exciting and gave extra purpose and, on the whole, a completely different dimension to this required assignment. Mr. Gómez was genuinely impressed by the translations. And I was proud of the contribution those in my course made to the festival.

Before we began working on the poems—the third week into the semester—students had been exposed to readings and lectures that would help to prepare them for the task ahead. I had introduced basic concepts, outlined some general theories of translation, and noted how, besides possessing excellent language skills, a good translator must be knowledgeable of culture and aware of power relations both within and across cultures. We had also talked about the specificity of literary, and more specifically, poetry translation: the added challenges posed by having to take into consideration such important aspects of it as rhythm, figurative language, and, in some cases, even rhyme. I presented some theoretical positions with regards to the translatability or untranslatability of poetry, and noted the somewhat contradictory—though also most frequent—stances taken by many theorists/practitioners who, on the one hand, claim the impossibility of poetry translation, while, on the other, continue to carry out such endeavor. Statements such as much quoted Robert Frost’s “Poetry is what gets lost in translation,” though smart and true to a certain extent, would be of no use to us. Consequently, we moved on to considering different and common approaches and strategies—adaptation, creative transposition, and literal rendering aided by as many footnotes and commentaries as

necessary—and finally focused on two specific frameworks that I believed would be most helpful.

We paid particular attention to Eugene Nida’s coding model and Robert Bly’s eight stages, taking the best part of a class period to discuss the practical aspects of these ideas and how to apply them. With Nida’s diagram, I wanted to make students understand that translating poetry is a type of double translation: the poem needs to be decoded (from poetry to prose) in the source language before it can be re-encoded (from prose to poetry) in the target language. My hope was that by noticing the issues that arise when transporting poetry to prose within the same language, students would become familiar with some of the difficulties that they would later face and intuitively aware of the complexity of poetry translation. With Bly’s stages, I meant to provide the necessary framework to dissuade them from the inertia to begin translating word for word and right away. In fact, this proved to be all along the biggest challenge in teaching this course: forcing them to take specific steps. They particularly (and systematically) resisted having to do a close reading of the source text to identify signifying figures of speech and decipherer its deep meaning (Bly’s stage 2), and tried all kinds of tricks to avoid rewriting in their own words, specially problematic parts (stage 4). In other words, although students (theoretically) understood that a good translation requires a profound understanding of the source text, in practice it was hard to get them out of the word-for-word mechanistic mode. And it was even harder, I would soon learn, to get across to them that, once that understanding had been attained, one might even defend translations that seemed initially quite different from each other and from the original. Having gotten a glimpse of this problem before we began to work on Mr. Cristián Gómez’s poems, I decided to complement Nida’s and Bly’s theoretical approaches with a practical exercise.

To help in the process of raising awareness about the different levels on which a poetic text operates, the fact that most often not all of them can be addressed, and that a translator’s decisions about which one(s) to favor have a great impact on the resulting translation, I devised a four-part activity. First, I assigned as homework the individual translation of a few stanzas in José Martí’s *Versos sencillos*. The next day, students used classroom time to work in groups of three or four, compare their rendering of Martí’s verses with those of their peers, discuss the differences among them, try to discern the reasons for those differences, and decide whether some of their choices might be indefensible—they did this for about half hour. Then, I provided two rather different published, professional translations of those stanzas and asked that, still working in groups, they reconsider their previous discussion

in the light of those texts—Tellechea's and Fountain's versions of Martí's *Versos sencillos*. After approximately another half hour, the whole class came together and spent twenty more minutes trying to articulate what they had learned by doing this exercise. By this point, it seemed to me, they were as ready as they would ever be to begin transporting Cristián Gómez's poems into English while maintaining a nuanced perspective and an alert attitude towards the peculiarities of poetry translation.

Before assigning specific poems, I made some initial decisions based primarily on two factors: students' linguistic skills and cultural competency, on the one hand; and the fact that the translations were meant to be projected on a screen during the poet's live performance, on the other. Because the live performance would bring to the fore important aspects of poetry such as sound, rhythm, and tempo, our translations would focus primarily on the level of meaning. We would concentrate on decoding the source text: paying attention to the choice of particular words, analyzing the syntax of specific verses, figuring out unfamiliar cultural references, and trying to discern the "story" it tells—all the poems that we translated tell a "story," which actually made students' work just a bit easier. Once the source text had been completely understood, we would move on to re-encoding it in English as poetically and faithfully as we possibly could, never losing sight of at least some of the different alternatives available. Some issues to consider were: whether or not a specific image or metaphor would work similarly in both languages; if a specific word order should be kept despite some degree of awkwardness; and if a cultural reference could stand on its own, might need to be explained, or would rather be replaced by an equivalent. In other words, given our particular circumstances—our translators' limited abilities as students enrolled in a course, and the fact that they were translating only to aid understanding of the recited original—our approach would favor a focus on the semantic level. With regard to form, our strategy, following Holmes' terminology, would be mimetic, which basically means that our renderings would remain as close to the original as linguistically and culturally possible.

To make sure they were all on the same page and to model for students the way they were to proceed, we spent a whole 90-minute class period and part of another working on one of the poems: "No necesitamos de los moteles más que para fantasear." I chose this particular text for several reasons that had to do with both linguistic and cultural peculiarities likely to pose some challenge for US college students with good, but limited knowledge of Spanish and Hispanic cultures. From a language perspective, some issues provoked interesting discussions and ended up

being solved in very different, not always satisfactory, ways. Among these issues, the following are worth mentioning here: the implicit double negative of the title; several constructions with "se" performing different functions—passivity ("se enciende el televisor"), impersonality ("sería preferible no olvidarse"), and reflexivity ("se muestra indiferente"); and a relative pronoun whose antecedent wasn't obvious, to say the least. As for the cultural referent, the very anecdote that the poem relates (renting a room by the hour to have sex) was so foreign to the students that they literally could not make sense of it, and a number of them took advantage of Mr. Gómez's class visit to ask him about his inspiration for this piece. For similar reasons, they had trouble understanding the image of the "guardias que nos rodean pero nunca llevan uniformes." Given that they do not attach the same repressive connotation to the words "guards" and "uniforms" that do most Spanish-speaking cultures to their direct equivalents, it was difficult for them to accurately capture the semantic implications of that final line. After they had worked on the poem in small groups for about a half hour, I noticed that, although they had already begun to draft their group translation, most of them had not really understood its general meaning, let alone the complexity of specific parts. Consequently, I brought them all back together and addressed the cultural issues first: then, we turned to the above mentioned specific grammatical and syntactic structures, worked out some ways to convey their meaning in English, and began to complete the semantic analysis of the poem. Only afterwards were students assigned individual translations as homework for the next day. Before handing in what they considered to be their final draft, they still took another twenty minutes or so to discuss their work with a group of their peers the following day.

And yet . . . The English version of "No necesitamos los moteles más que para fantasear" that we presented for the performance is a composite assembled with specific parts of individual translations—those that I deemed to be the best rendition of the original—and a few lines of my own. Although most students didn't have significant trouble with the title and chose to simply eliminate the double negative, a few seemed unable to break away from the syntactic structure of the source text, offering such renderings as "We don't need motels for anything more than fantasy" and "We don't need anything from motels but fantasy." One or all of the three constructions with "se" also proved to challenge the linguistic ability of some of the students. Someone translated "se muestra indiferente al color de las paredes" as "she looks indifferent against the color of the walls," and someone else as "she appears indifferent against the color of the walls." Similarly, the relative adjective in the final stanza ("y de la cual") gave many a lot of trouble, even

after identifying its referent, “una lengua extranjera.” After we were done with the translation of this poem, I had gained two important insights that helped me decide how to proceed in order to achieve our goal in time. First, students working in a group produced better results than by themselves; and second, being more aware of the linguistic abilities of individual students, I could confidently decide how to group them and what poem to assign to each group.

The remaining six poems that we had committed to translating varied in terms of length and degree of difficulty. Four of them were about one page long; I assigned each one of these to two students whose individual language skills and cultural competence complemented each other. A fourth one, “Funámbula” was a little over two pages, so I decided to assign it to a group of three. Finally, “La tierra a la que vine no tiene primavera,” a three-part narrative poem of almost six pages, was the responsibility of six students who would work in two separate groups of three—one group would translate the first and second parts, and another the third—and would have to consult with each other to make sure that there was stylistic continuity between the work of both groups. We devoted a total of five class periods (two and a half weeks) mostly to finishing this project. These classes were run as workshops in which the different groups focused exclusively on the poem or part of a poem assigned to them. I made myself available for consultation, going from group to group, working with a group at a time, answering questions, and helping them to work through the different stages of the process. The most confusing moments occurred in cases of intended ambiguity, as it is hard to discern in a foreign language when our lack of understanding is caused by the ambiguous nature of the text or just by our own shortcomings. For this reason, I pointed out cases of ambiguity and advised students to contact the poet. In doing so, they ought to clearly articulate the specific question raised by the specific line(s), explain how they had decided to solve the issue, and ask him whether or not he agreed with their decision. All of them ended up contacting Mr. Gómez at one point or another, mostly about ambiguity, but also about specific cultural references. He answered all of the students’ questions. A couple of groups found it necessary to include footnotes to explain references that they felt might be problematic for the festival’s audience: the translators of “No se equivocaban los maestros” decided to leave the terms “Cierzo” and “Mistral” in Spanish and explain their meaning; likewise, those who translated “Domingo por la tarde” inserted a note about the nature of Chilean poets Bertoni’s and Harris’ work that might help to better understand the poem. But other than that, their mimetic translations, focused mainly on meaning, stood on their own, in many cases, even keeping ambiguity.

When students and I felt satisfied with the “correctness” of their work (after many revisions), we sent Mr. Gómez the translated poems, so that he would have the final word over the English versions provided by Alexandria and Andy; Caroline and Evan; Devin, Elana, and Violet; Sarah and Emma; Phoebe and Tracy; Meredith, Tyler, Dan, Limor, Billy, and Alex. He suggested a couple of minor changes, and those were happily made. Cristián Gómez’s visit to our class the day before his public performance was like the icing on the cake for the students; it allowed them to ask questions about both general contexts and meanings, and very specific lines and expressions; to share their thought process and difficulties that they had encountered; and to find closure to over three weeks of intensive translation work.

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translations

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Notes translations

Click on the note to return to the poem.

Cristián Gómez Olivares

1. Characteristically cold and dry northwesterly wind coming off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in Spain.
2. Characteristically cold and dry northwesterly affecting the valley of the Mediterranean Sea in southern France.
3. Claudio Bertoni and Tomás Harris are well-known Chilean poets. Bertoni is known for writing about females as objects of desire, often referencing schoolgirls. Tomás Harris's poetry takes place in urban settings, such as the neighborhood of Orompello in the city of Concepción, Chile.

Lothar Quinkenstein

1. The Warsaw Ghetto Archives, created by a group of Polish Jews led by the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, shares its name with the marigold plant (*Calendula officinalis*), the "Ringelblume."

Irina Mashinski

1. Flame, fire (Rus.)
2. Hitler's birthplace
3. Tree branch, twig (Rus.)
4. The lost city of Kitezh is the invisible town of Russian folklore, a Russian Atlantis. According to legend, Kitezh was drowned in the Svetloyar Lake while being ransacked in 1237 by the Mongols. Rimsky-Korsakov's opera is based on this plot.

Ana Merino

1. From *La voz de los relojes* (2000)
2. From *Juegos de niños* (2003)
3. From *Antología Premios del tren* (2006)
4. From *Compañera de Celda* (2006)
5. "Vengo a ser testigo," "Sirena del Mississippi," "Si estás viva," and "Terapia del adiós" are from the book *Curación* (2010)

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