

sui generis

spring 2006

sui generis
OF ITS OWN KIND

Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

spring 2006

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about

Sui Generis is an annual multilingual magazine of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction and translations. Submissions are accepted from the entire Bard community.

This year we were proud to accept submissions from inmates at the Eastern Correctional Facility. In 2006, we also expanded Sui Generis into an interactive project that hosts monthly events such as foreign film screenings, panel discussions, poetry readings, and open dialogues on the subjects of language and translation.

thanks

Sui Generis appreciates the generous funding by the department of Foreign Languages, Cultures & Literatures and the dedication and support of our faculty advisors: Eric Trudel and Benjamin Stevens.

Also, thank you to Paul Marienthal and Susanna Armbruster for helping Sui Generis thrive and expand as a Trustee Leader Scholar sponsored project.

Additional thanks to Melanie Nicholson, Barbara Luka, Sven Anderson, Raluca Albu, Nadia Haji-Omar, and Tri-State Litho for their patience and expertise.

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arabic

Inside my heart lay uprooted trees
I am thirsty for you, hungry for you, and missing you
You, whose love is liberty,
In passion there is everything
and nothing is forbidden
You dark-skinned one
Your lips, when they sigh, make me a martyr living in fire
When your eyes turn, I am broken apart, no chance to get confused
Hug me, hold me, take me,
I am a refugee and for the first time I am honest
The passion took hold of me,
made me die and I no longer care, night or day
You dark-skinned one
Paradise is a flowering garden
Your silent eyes hide secrets
Nourish me inside with your magic
My heart is powerless
Against the tide
I know that I have nothing
Your eyes are everything; they are the end of the journey
Hug me, hold me, take me,
I am a refugee and for the first time I am honest
The passion took over me, made me die,
and I no longer care, night or day
You dark-skinned one

original song in Arabic can be heard
at <http://www.6arab.com>

a poem for jesse

original by **Sonia Sanchez**
translation by **Nina Gantcheva**

your face like
summer lightning
gets caught in my voice
and I draw you up from
deep rivers
taste your face of a
thousand names
see you smile
a new season
hear your voice
a wild sea pausing in the wind.

bulgarian

тВОИТО ЛИЦЕ КАТО
ЛЯТНА СВЕТКАВИЦА
СЕ ПРЕПЛИТА В ГЛАСА МИ
И ТЕ ИЗДЪРПВАМ ОТ
ДЪЛБОКИ РЕКИ
ВКУСВАМ ЛИЦЕТО ТИ ОТ
ХИЛЯДА ИМЕНА
ВИЖДАМ ТЕ ДА СЕ УСМИХВАШ
НОВ СЕЗОН
ЧУВАМ ГЛАСА ТИ
ДИВО МОРЕ СЕ СПИРА ОТ ВЯТАРА.

czech

Vypravte se zrána do lesa
a prosím vás,
neberte s sebou
ani sekeru,
ani pilu,
ni žádný z nástrojů,
co vymysleli lidé,
aby působili bolest.

Protože
- a to mějte na paměti -
stromy pláčou,
když je něco bolí
a považte:
nechat smáčet od slz dřevo
a potom jím chtít topit,
to nějak nejde dohromady!

Takže se vypravte zrána do lesa
jen s holýma rukama
a vycíděnou duší
a potom si vyhlídněte strom,
krásný strom,
velký strom,
rovný strom,
strom pro vás.

Dejte si načas
s výběrem,
nic neuspěchejte,
jako nic neuspěchá
strom, ten váš pravý strom,
který roste do výšky,
jenom aby jednou
padl do délky.

Take a morning walk to a forest
and please
take no axe
nor a saw
nor any
other instrument
invented by man
to cause pain.

Because
keep in mind
that trees cry
when they feel pain.
And just fancy:
letting wood get soaked with tears
and then trying to use it for heating –
this does not match, somehow!

Well then, take a morning walk to a forest
just with bare hands
and a polished soul
and then try and look for a tree,
a beautiful tree,
a big tree,
a straight tree,
a tree for you.

Take your time
with its choice,
have no hurry
just as the tree, your true tree,
has no hurry
growing to its height
only to fall
at length.

Až tedy konečně
spočine váš přelétavý zrak
jen na jednom stromu
a nebude chtít přelétat dál
a vy se budete cítit zakotveně
a srozuměně,
pak vězte, že toto
je váš strom.
Poté k němu přikročte
a ten strom obejměte.

Pamatujte, že mu nesmíte
zkřivit ani větvíčku,
nebo odlomit kousek kůry
protože by ihned
vytryskla krev
a po ní slzy.

A pokud se vám tohle
podaří,
pak v sobě seberte
veškerou sílu
a započněte strom
stahovat
k sobě,
k zemi.

Jiný strom by pod vašim
nápořem padl hned,
ale protože toto je opravdu váš strom,
má v sobě také vaši sílu.
Je to strom,
kterého nemůžete
porazit,
jen se o to pokoušet.

A vězte, že nyní teprve
začíná boj.
Za žádnou cenu nesmíte
povolit,
protože pak

Once your roaming eyes
have chosen
one and only tree at last
and don't want to keep on roaming
and you feel anchored
and placid and composed,
know then:
this is your tree.
Approach it
and hug your tree.

Be careful
not to bend a single branch
or tear off a single piece of bark
because at once
blood would burst out
and then tears.

And if you
manage this,
then gather
all your strength
and begin to pull
the tree down
to you,
to the earth.

Any other tree would
give in to the pressure at once,
but as this is really your tree,
it also has your strength.
It is a tree
you cannot fell,
you may only try
to do so.

And take heed: it is only now
that the struggle begins.
You must not give in
by any means
because then

byste už nenašli
sílu
k dalšímu stisku.

Takže nepovolujte
a děkujte Bohu,
že jste našli
svůj strom
a děkujte stromu,
že on
si našel vás.
Zkrátka - děkujte.

A počítejte s tím,
že boj to bude dlouhý,
(ale neříkejme tomu boj,
říkejme tomu poslání)
takže počítejte s tím,
že vaše poslání bude mít
dlouhého trvání,
než se naplní a strom porazíte.

Jistěže byste jej mohli
pokáčet ocelí slza neslza
a jeho dřevo pak vysušit,
jako to dělají jiní,
ale představte si,
jaké to bude,
až jednoho dne
ten váš strom padne.

Ale to se stane
teprve až si bude jist, že si to
zasloužíte,
že jste si oba navzájem řekli úplně
vše,
že už nerozlišujete kdo objímá
koho,
že už vůbec nerozlišujete kdo chce
porazit koho,

you would not find
the strength
for another grip.

So don't give in
and give thanks to God
that you
found your tree
and give thanks to the tree
that it
found you.
In brief – give thanks.

And rest assured
that this will be a long struggle,
(but let's not call it struggle,
let's call it vocation)
so rest assured
your vocation will take long
before it gets fulfilled
and you fell your tree.

Of course, you could
fell your tree with steel,
tears or no tears,
and then dry its wood
as others do, but imagine
what it will be like
when one day
your tree falls.

This won't happen, though,
until the tree is sure that you
deserve it, that you shared with it
every word there is to say,
that you no longer
distinguish who hugs who
that you no longer
distinguish who wants to fell who,

že překonáte milióntou první
pochybnost
o smyslu svého poslání,
že jej budete po miliónté první
nejen hanobit, ale i velebit,
že jste zkrátka přišli na to, že on je vy
a vy jste on.

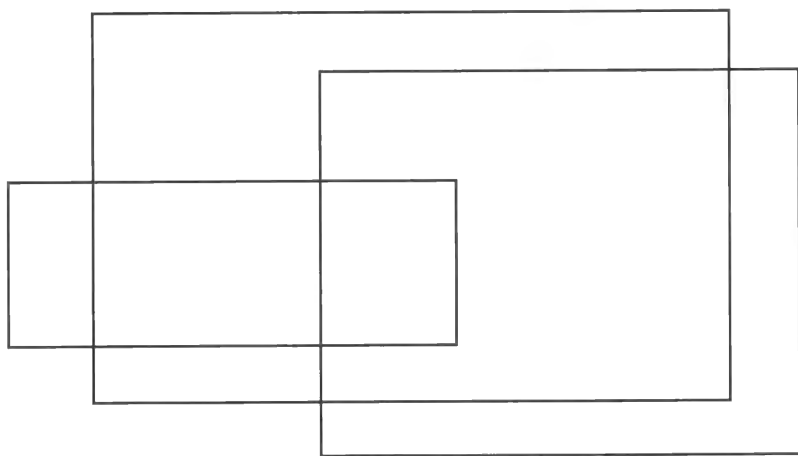
Až se rýhy vašeho čela budou
krabatět ve stejné hojnosti
co jeho letokruhy
a až mnohokrát spatřený západ
slunce vám bez milosti
ohlásí příchod stáří,
tu se svou ubohostí zželíte tomu
nádhernému stromu
a on pomalu, velmi pomalu
skloní svou korunu
k vašim nohám.

Tak pomalu,
že si toho ani nevšimnete.

that for the millionth and first
time you will
not only damn it, but also glorify
it,
that you have realized tree is you
and you are tree.

When your forehead gets rumpled
with as many lines
as there are its rings,
and when the sight of the setting
sun caught
for many many times heralds the
coming of old age
your marvelous tree will find pity
on your wretchedness
and slowly, very slowly,
it will bend its crown to your feet.

So slowly
you won't even notice.



english

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censorship be damned

written by Linda Mishkin

I listen with every part of my body
to the guttural sounds you spew,
as if you knew
what you were saying.

Your make-believe authority
is your only erection.

The Salem fires burn in your eyes,
as you disguise
self hate and fear
with *deep concern for decency*.
You find imagined smut in art,
projecting all your inner filth.
Stuck in the quagmire of your
pseudo-Christian prison house,
struggling to drag us all into the muck,
with flailing arms and fetid breath,
even your prayers pollute.

Clean out your cesspool first
and you will see,
the sun's the sun
and not a dragon.

french

pas des mots à ma mort

written by Peter Sourian

Criez, antique, aigu, seulement une fois.
Pas de tristes saccades. Un dieu caché hurlait
Rien que l'unique fois, et se taisait après.
Et tenter de vivre ? Ne faites pas cela.

Plutôt vivez, enfin, que mollement tenter.
Les discours s'embellissent et c'est à nos dépens.
Dans nos vies la chose qui le plus importait –
L'amour – ne se disait jamais, auparavant.

Paroles malignes – tremblant nous les craignons,
Cachant notre bonheur sous un grand édreton.
Exprimez la douleur, mais protégez sa cause,
Belle miniature d'une céleste chose.

papillon

original and translation
by Ian Turner

Quand j'avais dix-huit ans,
j'ai eu un rêve très émouvant.
J'ai rêvé que je devenais vieux.
Mon corps ralentissait et devenait gris.
Il mouvait de plus en plus lentement,
et puis plus lentement encore,
jusqu'à ce qu'enfin il ait arrêté.
Il y avait un calme aigre-doux,
qui durait infiniment.

J'ai commencé à m'éveiller,
mais je n'ai pas pu bouger.
J'étais attrapé, dans la coquille grise de
mon cadavre.

Mais quand j'ai respiré, je me suis
étendu,
et mon corps a commencé à briser
et à tomber loin dans les petits
morceaux.
J'ai émergé un énorme papillon
vibrant et coloré
Et j'ai volé loin dans la nuit.

When I was eighteen
I had a very moving dream.
I dreamed that I was growing old.
My body slowed and became grey.
It moved more and more slowly,
and then more slowly still,
until at last it stopped.
There was this bitter-sweet stillness,
which lasted infinitely.

I tried to move,
but could not budge.
I was trapped in the grey shell of
my body.
But as I inhaled, I expanded,
and my body began to break
and tumble away in little pieces.
I emerged an enormous butterfly,
vibrant with colour
and I flew away in the night.

souvent un air de vérité

original by **Voltaire**
translation by **Elizabeth Przybylski**

Souvent un air de vérité
Se mêle au plus grossier mensonge:
Une nuit, dans l'erreur d'un songe,
Au rang des rois j'étais monté.
Je vous aimais alors et j'osais vous le dire!
Les dieux à mon réveil ne m'ont pas tout ôté;
Je n'ai perdu que mon empire.

Often the appearance of truth
Blends itself into the coarsest lie
One night in the slip of a dream
I climbed to the level of kings
I loved you then and I dared to tell you so
The gods, at my awakening, did not take everything from me
I only lost my Empire.

tant pis

written by **Lisa Ellerby**

chaque vol de nuit
sans son sourire
il n'y a que des étoiles méchantes
futur stupide
livre finit
jamais écrit
en attendant rien

chanson du mal-aimé amoureux

written by **Peter Sourian**

On est quelquefois aussi différent de soi-même que des autres

La Rochefoucauld

Ma vie, être coulant, ne dépend pas de moi.
Moi, aveugle arpenteur, se met fixe aux tourelles,
Ma vie m'assiège en vain; au mur tombe l'échelle.
Ma vie quitte le champs; boitant avec émoi.

Ma vie m'assiégeant ne bronche toujours pas.
Moi fixe, avec ma vie, constituent mon sort.
Ma vie n'est jamais loin; l'échelle est toujours là.
Ma vie réussira, et moi je serais mort.

non, la fidélité

original by **Lataignant**

translation by **Elizabeth Przybylski**

Non, non, la fidélité
N'a jamais été qu'une imbécillité
J'ai quitte par légèreté
plus d'une beauté,
Vive la nouveauté!
Mais quoi... la probité!
Tra la la...
Puérilité,
Le serment répété!
Style usité
A t'on jamais compte sur un traité
Dicté par la volupté
Sans liberté?
la la la...
On feint par vanité, d'être irrité
L'amant peu regretté
Est invité
La femme, avec gaieté
Bientôt s'arrange de son coté.

No, no, fidelity
Has never been more than nonsense.
Frivolity has made me leave
more than one beauty.
Long live newness!
But what of restraint?
Tra la la...
Frivolity
The repeated oath
In current style
Has one never expected an agreement
Dictated by pleasure
Without liberty?
la la la.
We vainly feign being annoyed
The unmissed lover
Is invited
The woman with mirth
Soon arranges things to suit herself.

on a dit mal de mon ami

original by **anonymous**

translation by **Elizabeth Przybylski**

On a dit mal de mon ami,
Dont j'ai le cœur bien marri.
Qu'ont ils affaire quel il soit,
Ou qu'il soit beau ou qu'il soit laid,
Quand je lui plais et qu'il me plait?

Un médisant ne veut onc bien:
Quand le cas ne lui touche en rien,
Pourquoi va-t-il médire?
Il fait vivre en martyre
Ceux qui ne lui demandent rien.

Quand j'ai tout bien considéré,
Femme n'est de quoi n'est parlé.
Voila ce qui m'avance
De prendre ma plaisance.
Aussi dit-on bien que je l'ai.
Plut or a dieu qu'il fut ici
Celui que j'ai pris et choisi,
Puisqu'on en a voulu parler!
Et, dussent-ils tous enrager,
Je coucherais avec que lui!

People have spoken ill of my lover,
To whom my heart is wedded.
What business is it of theirs who he is
Whether he is handsome or ugly
If he loves me and I love him?

A slanderer never seeks anyone's good:
When the situation concerns him not at all,
Why must he slander?
He forces into martyrdom
Those who ask nothing of him.

When I think of it carefully,
No one is concerned with a woman's deeds.
This allows me to do
As I please.
And they are right to say that I have him
God must will him to me,
The one who I have taken and chosen,
As he remains untouched by their slander!
Even should it anger the whole world,
I would go to bed only with him!

Maître Corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage.
Maître Renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage:
"Hé! bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau.
Que vous êtes joli! que vous me semblez beau!
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,
Vous êtes le Phénix des hôtes de ces bois."
A ces mots le Corbeau ne se sent pas de joie;
Et pour montrer sa belle voix,
Il ouvre un large bec, laisse tomber sa proie.
Le Renard s'en saisit, et dit: "Mon bon Monsieur,
Apprenez que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute:
Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute."
Le Corbeau, honteux et confus,
Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus.

Master Crow is perched on a tree
With a piece of cheese hanging from his beak.
The aroma beckons Master Fox,
Who calls out the following words:
"Hello there! Good day, Mr. Crow.
My but you are lovely! Most beautiful!
Honestly, if your voice
Is as radiant as your feathers
Then you are the Phoenix of the forest."
The Crow, delighted by these words,
And so as to show off his lovely voice,
Opens his beak widely, letting the prey fall out.
The Fox catches it, and says: "My dear sir,
Learn that every flatterer
Lives at the expense of those who listen to him;
No doubt this lesson is worth its weight in cheese."
Dazed and ashamed, the Crow
Swears too late that he would not be duped again.

CHAPITRE I

Je me regarde souvent dans la glace. Mon plus grand désir a toujours été de me découvrir quelque chose de pathétique dans le regard. Je crois que je n'ai jamais cessé de préférer aux femmes qui, soit par aveuglement amoureux, soit pour me retenir près d'elles, inventaient que j'étais un vraiment bel homme ou que j'avais des traits énergiques, celles qui me disaient presque tout bas, avec une sorte de retenue craintive, que je n'étais pas tout à fait comme les autres. En effet, je me suis longtemps persuadé que ce qu'il devait y avoir en moi de plus attirant, c'était la singularité. C'est dans le sentiment de ma différence que j'ai trouvé mes principaux sujets d'exaltation. Mais aujourd'hui où j'ai perdu quelque peu de ma suffisance, comment me cacher que je ne me distingue en rien? Je fais la grimace en écrivant ceci. Que je connaisse enfin une aussi intolérable vérité, passe encore, mais vous autres! À vrai dire, il se glisse dans ma gêne ce léger sentiment de plaisir acide qu'on éprouve à proclamer une de ses tares, même si celle-ci n'a pas la moindre chance d'intéresser le public. On me demandera peut-être si j'ai entrepris de me confesser pour éprouver cette sorte de plaisir un peu morbide dont je parle et que je comparerais volontiers à celui que recherchent quelques personnes raffinées qui, avec une lenteur étudiée, caressent du bout de l'index une légère égratignure qu'elle se sont faite sciemment à la lèvre inférieure ou qui piquent de la pointe de la langue la pulpe d'un citron à peine mûr. À cela je suis obligé de sourire et c'est en souriant que je vous répons que je me flatte d'avoir peu de goût pour les aveux; mes amis disent que je suis le silence même, ils ne nieront pas qu'en dépit de leur extrême habileté, ils n'ont jamais su me tirer ce que j'avais à cœur de tenir secret. On a même convenu de voir dans cette impossibilité à me livrer une insuffisance assez grave qui excitait la pitié et je ne résiste pas au plaisir, identique à celui décrit plus haut, d'ajouter qu'une vanité sournoise me poussait à tirer profit de cette croyance en simulant ou seulement en exagérant la souffrance que me causait cette infirmité déplorable, comme si j'avais eu quelque grand secret que j'eusse été soulagé de confier si je ne l'avais tenu, à cause de son caractère à la fois exceptionnel et intime, pour absolument inavouable.

Mais si je me laisse emporter par mon zèle, je vais m'imputer des arrière-pensées que je n'ai pas eues pour me donner l'apparence d'un homme sincère qui est loin de songer à s'épargner les humiliations. Ce n'est donc pas pour le plaisir de vous entretenir de moi-même que j'ai pris la plume, ce n'est pas non plus pour mettre en vedette mes dons littéraires.

Là, je suis contraint d'ouvrir une parenthèse, mais vous avez dû éprouver vous-mêmes que sitôt que vous tentez de vous expliquer avec franchise, vous vous trouvez contraints de faire suivre chacune de vos phrases affirmatives d'une dubitative, ce qui équivaut le plus souvent à nier ce que vous venez d'affirmer, bref, impossible de se débarrasser du scrupule un peu horripilant de ne rien laisser dans l'ombre. Je disais donc que je ne me soucie pas le moins du monde de l'expression que j'emprunte pour coucher ces lignes sur le papier. Pas le moins du monde est sans doute de trop. Mon goût me porte naturellement vers le style allusif, coloré, passionné, sombre et dédaigneux et j'ai pris aujourd'hui, non sans répugnance, la résolution de laisser de côté toute recherche formelle, de sorte que je me trouve écrire avec un style qui n'est pas le mien ; c'est dire que j'ai écarté tous les charmes dérisoires dont il m'arrive parfois de jouer, tout en sachant bien ce qu'ils valent : ils ne sont les fruits que d'une habileté assez ordinaire. Ajoutez à cela que mon style naturel n'est pas celui du confessionnal, rien d'étonnant s'il ressemble à une foule d'autres, mais je n'ai pas de prétention, vous êtes avertis.

Eh bien, venons aux raisons qui m'ont conduit à m'étaler sordidement. Vous remarquerez en passant le ton un peu persifleur auquel je m'abandonne, en dépit de la résolution que j'ai prise d'être aussi sérieux que sincère, aussi peu provocant que peu aimable, mais si vous faites une expérience analogue, vous découvrirez qu'il n'y a rien de plus difficile, à moins d'être échauffé par quelque conviction, que parler de soi avec gravité en laissant de côté tous les agréables jeux de l'insolence ; vous craindrez le ridicule et, pour consciencieux que soit votre épanchement intime, il y aura toujours une irrépressible ironie qui s'y donnera libre cours. Le lâche cache la vérité sous l'équivoque de l'insolence ou de la plaisanterie : tu me méprises, lecteur, mais tu vois bien que je grossis mes vices ; à toi de faire l'accommodation ; rien ne t'interdit de prendre tout ceci pour les inventions d'un exhibitionniste candide et irréprochable dans ses actions, sinon dans ses pensées. Venons-en donc à ces raisons. En vérité, il n'y a qu'une et je dois dire qu'elle est on ne peut plus comique.

Je présume qu'il est arrivé à la plupart d'entre vous de se trouver saisi au revers de la veste par un de ces bavards qui, avides de faire entendre le son de leur voix, recherchent un compagnon dont la seule fonction consistera à prêter l'oreille sans être pour autant contraint d'ouvrir la bouche ; et encore, il n'est pas sûr que cet importun exige qu'on l'écoute, il suffit qu'on se donne un air intéressé soit en opinant de temps à autre d'un signe de tête ou d'un léger murmure que les romanciers appellent justement approbateur, soit en soutenant vaillamment le regard insistant de ce pauvre

diabole, malgré l'extrême fatigue que ne manquera pas de produire une telle tension musculaire. Examinons de près cet homme. Qu'il éprouve le besoin de parler et pourtant qu'il n'ait rien à dire, et plus encore, qu'il ne puisse assouvir ce besoin sans la complicité plus ou moins tacite d'un compagnon qu'il choisit, s'il en a la liberté, pour sa discrétion et son endurance, voilà qui mérite réflexion. Cet individu n'a strictement rien à dire et cependant il dit mille choses ; peu lui importe l'assentiment ou la contradiction d'un interlocuteur, et cependant il ne saurait se passer de celui-ci, auquel il a d'ailleurs la sagesse de ne demander qu'une attention toute formelle. Tout se passe comme s'il était atteint d'une affection à laquelle il serait impuissant à apporter un remède ou, pour me servir d'une comparaison familière, comme s'il se trouvait dans le même embaras que l'apprenti sorcier : la machine tourne sans nécessité, impossible d'en contrôler les mouvements désordonnés. Eh bien, j'ose dire, sans préjudice de la défection instantanée et massive de lecteurs à laquelle cet aveu m'expose, que j'appartiens précisément à cette espèce de bavards.

CHAPTER I

I look at myself in the mirror a lot. What I've always wanted more than anything else has been to find something poignant in my gaze. I think I've never stopped preferring – over women who, either blinded by love or trying to endear themselves to me, pretended I was a very handsome man or that I had strong features – those women who told me quietly, with a kind of fearful restraint, that I wasn't quite like other men. Yes, I had myself convinced for a long time that my charm came from being unusual. It's in feeling myself to be different that I exalted most. But now that I've lost some of my self-assurance, how can I hide from myself that I don't stand out at all? I wince as I write this. I can accept finally knowing such an unbearable truth, but that you should know it! In all honesty, my discomfort is laced with that mild feeling of acidic pleasure that comes from announcing one's failings, even if there's no way the audience will be interested. Maybe someone will ask me if I haven't taken to confessing in order to feel this kind of morbid pleasure I'm talking about – one I'd gladly compare to that sought by some refined people who slowly run the tip of the forefinger along a little scratch they've deliberately made on the lower lip or who use the tip of the tongue to prod the flesh of a barely ripe lemon. I can't help but smile at this, and it's with a smile that I tell you I pride myself on not much liking confessions; my friends say I'm silence incarnate, and they'll

admit that despite their great skill, they've never known how to get anything out of me that I wanted to keep secret. They've even taken to seeing my inability to open up as a pretty serious and pitiful deficiency, and I won't resist the pleasure — just like the one I described above — of adding that a devious vanity drove me to exploit this belief by feigning or simply by exaggerating the suffering this deplorable infirmity caused me, as if I'd had some big secret that I would have been relieved to tell someone if it hadn't been, because it was at once so exceptional and so personal, absolutely impossible to confess.

But if I let myself get carried away, I'll give myself ulterior motives I didn't have in order to make myself look like a sincere man who wouldn't dream of sparing himself any humiliation. So it's not for the pleasure of telling you about myself that I've taken pen in hand, neither is it to show off my literary talents. Here I must open a parenthesis, but you must have felt yourselves that as soon as you try to explain yourself candidly, you find you have to follow each of your affirmative sentences with a dubitative, which usually ends up negating what you've just affirmed, so that you can never rid yourself of the somewhat maddening scruple of leaving nothing in shadow. So I was saying that I wasn't the least bit concerned with the mode of expression I'm using to put these lines on paper. Not the least bit concerned is no doubt going too far. My taste tends naturally toward a style that's allusive, colorful, passionate, grave and disdainful, and today I've decided, a bit reluctantly, to set aside all formal affectation, so that I find myself writing in a style that's not my own; I've rejected all the ridiculous charms I sometimes use, knowing full well what they're worth: they're just the products of a pretty ordinary skill. Add to that that my natural style isn't confessional, and it's no surprise if it looks just like a hundred others, but I've got no pretensions, you've been warned.

Well, then, let's get to the reasons for my sordid revelations. You'll note in passing the slightly mocking tone I'm slipping into, despite my resolution to be as serious as I am sincere, as little provocative as I am little likable, but if you have a similar experience, you'll discover that there's nothing harder, unless you're fired up by some conviction, than talking about yourself seriously, setting aside all the delightful games of insolence; you'll fear ridicule and, as conscientious as your personal divulgence may be, an irrepressible irony will always run rampant in it. The weak hide the truth beneath the equivocation of insolence or jokes: you despise me, reader, but you can well see that I'm exaggerating my vices; it's up to you to make the adjustment; nothing's stopping you from taking all of this as the invention of an exhibitionist who's honest and irreproachable in deed,

taking all of this as the invention of an exhibitionist who's honest and irreproachable in deed, if not in thought. So let's get to those reasons. In truth, there's only one and I must say that it couldn't be more comical.

I imagine that most of you have been snagged at one time or another by one of those talkers who, eager to hear the sound of their own voices, are in search of a companion whose sole purpose is to lend an ear without, however, being required to open his mouth; and what's more, it's unclear whether this pest demands that one listen to him or whether it's enough to look interested, either by jumping in from time to time with a nod of the head or a soft murmur that a novelist would rightly call approving, or by courageously holding the insistent gaze of this poor devil, despite the extreme fatigue caused by such muscular tension. Let's look more closely at this man. That he feels the need to talk and yet that he has nothing to say, and especially that he can't satisfy this need without the more or less tacit complicity of the companion he's chosen, if possible, for his discretion and his endurance — this is what deserves reflection. This individual technically has nothing to say and yet he says a thousand things; he cares little for the agreement or contradiction of an interlocutor, and yet he couldn't do without one, of whom he's wise enough to demand, in any case, only a strictly formal attention. It all happens as if he were stricken with an affliction for which he has no remedy or, to use a familiar analogy, as if he were in the same bind as the sorcerer's apprentice: the machine turns in vain and there's no way to control its erratic movements. Well, I dare say, with no regard for the instantaneous and massive defection of readers to which this confession exposes me, that I belong to precisely this species of talker.

1. *Mémorial de Masoch. À l'entrée, un obélisque incurvé en U-invertie*
Sacher-Masoch est enterré ici, père nominal
Du masochisme. Ceci ce n'est pas un arc
Du triomphe, ceci est un auto-poinçonnant
Obélisque.

Épithaphe de Masoch

« Oh ! toi qui poses ton pied sur cette tombe, presse plus fort
Afin que je puisse lécher ta botte.
Oh ! me misérable, ça me peine
De ne plus savoir si le plaisir
Devrait me faire mal afin que je puisse sentir plus de plaisir,
Ou faudrait-il dire, plus de la douleur ?
Faux ! Faux ! Le fait que je souffrais de daltonisme
Sensuel, même quand j'appelais
Cette aberration « ultrasensualisme »,
N'a jamais transformé la douleur en plaisir—ça n'importait pas
De quelle façon j'appelais le résultat : si quelque chose me blessait,
Ça me faisait souffrir, et si quelque chose me plaisait, ça me plaisait.
Un « alchimiste »
Est encore appelé par ce nom car il n'a jamais réussi
À transformer cuivre ordinaire en or précieux.
Ne m'appellez pas Midas ! En dehors des oreilles
D'âne, nous n'avons rien en commun, ce roi et moi. Appelez-moi un «
masochiste »
Puisque je ne suis jamais réussi à convertir
Ni des maux vils en joie digne, ni la basse
Submissivité en liberté bienséante. »

La conviction encourage plus
Que les coups de bâton. Voilà la leçon
De *Venus en fourrure* : Séverin
Endurait tous les maux et l'humiliation
Que Wanda puisse lui infliger, et cependant,

Il restait à son côté. (Pis encore, il trouvait la douleur agréable.)
Ce n'était qu'au moment où il a compris *par la raison*
Les inconvénients du masochisme,
Qu'il est devenu libre, sage et sadique.

2. *Obituaire de Dada*

Idi Amin Dada est mort.
Chaque fois qu'une collecte soit organisée
Par les chefs d'un peuple en misères
Pour faire des « donations » à une population lointaine
Qui est en meilleur posture ; chaque fois que
Les troupes d'un état endetté et instable,
Qui ne pourvoie même pas pour les nécessités plus immédiates
De sa population, partant de leur patrie
Pour « libérer » un peuple distant
Qui est moins nécessité ; chaque fois que des payses
Pauvres avec plusieurs gens infectés de SIDA
Soient réclamés de payer privilèges
Démésurés aux distantes et bien parés propriétaires
De la patente d'un médicament de cotes de production raisonnables ;
Fin, chaque fois que ces choses se passent, Amin Dada, l'ex président
D'Uganda qui fit des « donations »
A la « plus nécessité » gens de la Grande Bretagne,
Amin Dada, je dis, se lèvera de la morte
Et avec toute sa force criera : Plagiat !
Cette blague, je l'ai inventé !

Salut à Amin Dada :
Saint patron, ange gardien et vengeur
Des droites de propriété intellectuelle.

1. *Masoch's inverted-U memorial obelisk—entryway:*
Here lies Sacher-Masoch, nominal father
Of masochism. This is not an arch
Of triumph; it is just a self-reverting
Obelisk.

Masoch's epitaph:

"O you who step on this tomb, press harder
That I may lick your boot.

Oh miserable me! It pains me
Not to know anymore whether pleasure
Should hurt me so that I might feel more pleasure,
Or should I say, more pain?
Bullocks! The fact that I was sick of sensual
Color-blindness, even when I called
Such aberration 'ultrasensualism,'
Did not turn pain into pleasure—no matter
What I called the outcome: if something wounded me,
It pained me, and if it pleased me, it pleased me.
An 'alchemist'
Is still called an alchemist because he has never managed
To transform coarse copper into precious gold.
Don't call me Midas! Except for the donkey
Ears, that king and I have
Nothing in common. Call me a 'masochist'
For I have never managed to convert
Vile pain into worthy joy,
Or base submission into decorous liberty."

Enlightenment yields stronger incentives
Than pain. That is the lesson
In Masoch's *Venus in furs*: Severin
Endured all the pain and humiliation
That Wanda could inflict on him and still
Stayed by her side. (Worse yet, he found the pain pleasing).
It was not until he understood *through reason*
The disadvantages of masochism,
That he became free, wise and sadist.

2. *Dada's obituary*

Idi Amin Dada has passed away.
Whenever a collection is organized
By the heads of a miserable people
To make donations to a distant nation
That is better off; whenever

The troops of a heavily indebted and insecure State
That does not provide for the basic needs
Of its population leave from their land
To fight to 'liberate' a distant nation
That is much less needy; whenever poor
Countries with high rates of AIDS cases
Are required to pay extraorbitant
Tribute to the far-off and prosperous owners
Of the patents of a cheap medicine;
Whenever these things happen,
Then Amin Dada, the ex-president
Of Uganda who made "donations"
To the "needier" people of Britain,
Amin Dada, I say, will rise from the dead
And with all his might will shout: Plagiarism!
That joke is mine!

Hail to Idi Amin Dada:
Patron Saint, Guardian Angel and Avenger
Of Intellectual Property Rights.

les trois présents

original by Sarasin

translation by Elizabeth Przybylski

Je vous donne, avec grand plaisir
De trois présents un à choisir
La belle, c'est à vous de prendre
Celui des trois qui plus vous duit.
Les voici, sans vous faire attendre:
Bonjour, bonsoir, et bonne nuit.

With great pleasure, I bring to you
Your choice of three presents
Here, it is for you to take
The one of the three that pleases you the most
Here they are, without delay:
Good evening, good night, and good day.

german

verlegenheiten

original by **Horst Witte**
translation by **Dorothy Albertini**

Der Verleger sucht
nach dem Buch
das er verlegt hat,
vielleicht bei
seiner linkshändigen Freundin,
mit der er gestern
die Nacht verbrachte.
Er hatte – erinnert er sich –
das Buch aus der Hand gelegt
ehe er Hand an sie legte
danach das Buch wieder
zur Hand genommen
während die Linkshändige
einschlief, ermüdet.
Ihre Wangen waren,
wie der Verleger gerührt festgestellt
hatte,
vom Schlaf gerötet gewesen,
was ihn verlegen gemacht
und dazu bewogen hatte
weiterzublättern
bis auch er eingeschlafen war.

Nun sucht er
und ihm fällt ein,
es könne
das Buch, das er sucht
linkshändig liegengeblieben
sein.
Er ruft an
die Linkshändige ist abgereist
über die sieben Berge
sie ließ ihn rechtshändig liegen.
Der Verleger ist perplex
und blickt verlegen
in die Zukunft.

The publisher looks
for the book
he has misplaced
perhaps at his
left-handed lover's
with whom he spent last night.
He had – he remembers –
held the book away to
hold her, and afterwards
held up the book again
while the lover
fell asleep, exhausted.
Her cheeks,
he had observed,
were flushed with sleep,
which moved and ashamed
him.
Thus, he held the book closer,
thumbing through its pages
until he too fell asleep.

Now he is searching
and it occurs to him that
the book he is seeking
may have been
left.
He calls
The left-handed lover has gone
far, far away.
she has held him to his word.
the publisher is perplex
and looks to the future in
embarrassment.

Wie Orpheus spiel ich
auf den Saiten des Lebens den Tod
und in die Schönheit der Erde
und deiner Augen, die den Himmel verwalten,
weiß ich nur Dunkles zu sagen.

Vergiß nicht, daß auch du, plötzlich,
an jenem Morgen, als dein Lager
noch naß war von Tau und die Nelke
an deinem Herzen schlief,
den dunklen Fluß sahst,
der an dir vorbeizog.

Die Saite des Schweigens
gespannt auf die Welle von Blut,
griff ich dein tönendes Herz.
Verwandelt ward deine Locke
ins Schattenhaar der Nacht,
der Finsternis schwarze Flocken
beschneiten dein Antlitz.

Und ich gehör dir nicht zu.
Beide klagen wir nun.

Aber wie Orpheus weiß ich
auf der Seite des Todes das Leben,
und mir blaut
dein für immer geschlossenes Aug.

Like Orpheus I play
death on the strings of life,
and to the beauty of the Earth
and your eyes, which administer heaven,
I can only speak of darkness.

Don't forget that you also, suddenly,
on that morning when your camp
was still damp with dew, and a carnation
slept on your heart,
you saw the dark stream
race past you.

The string of silence
taut on the pulse of blood,
I grasped your beating heart.
Your curls were transformed
into the shadow hair of night,
black flakes of darkness
buried your face.

And I don't belong to you.
Both of us mourn now.

But like Orpheus I know
life on the side of death,
and the deepening blue
of your forever closed eye.

Er lebte im Schatten. Er kroch auf dem Boden. Dann guckte er nach oben und sah den Himmel und dachte, dass er schön war. Der Himmel beeindruckte ihn so, dass er sich entschloß ihn eines Tages zu erreichen und zu berühren.

Er kroch weiter und aufwärts. Wenn ihm jemand im Weg war, tat er ihm weh. Alle ließen ihn letztendlich sein, denn sie hatten vor seinem Gift Angst. Sie nannten ihn Giftsumach und mieden ihn. Er war aber nicht böse; er sehnte sich einfach nach dem Himmel und wollte von seinem Ziel nicht abgelenkt werden.

Er ließ den Boden hinter sich. Er verließ ohne Furcht, ohne ein letztes Mal nach hinten zu sehen, die letzte Quelle von Geborgenheit und kletterte auf einen Baum. Langsam streckte er seine grünen Zweiglein und umarmte die Taille des Baumes. Er sog von dem Lebenssaft des Baumes, obwohl er kein Parasit war, denn er wollte leben bis er den Himmel erreicht hatte.

Jeder Zentimeter brachte ihn näher an sein Ziel. Er ahnte nicht, was um ihn herum geschah. Er wusste nichts vom Baum, der sein stiller Genosse war. Auch wusste er nicht, dass seine sternförmigen Blätter, die früher immergrün gewesen waren, jetzt an Farbe verloren hatten. Sein Streben hatte ihn erschöpft. Aber an Aufhören dachte er nie.

Und dann, eines Tages, hielt er plötzlich an. Er war fast den ganzen Baum hinaufgeklettert. Zwischen Himmel und Erde unterbrach er seine Reise und sah sich um. Er sah die Erde wie eine Handfläche vor sich ausgestreckt. Er sah auch den Himmel - blau und immernoch so verlockend. Doch dieser hatte für ihn unerwartet an Reiz verloren, denn er sah noch etwas anderes. Er bemerkte zum ersten Mal den Baum. Und es war ein treuer und wunderschöner Baum. Er hatte ihn genährt und unterstützt, ohne sich zu beschweren.

Von diesem Tag an wollte der Efeu nicht mehr klettern. Unterwegs hatte er sein Ziel erreicht. Er war nicht mehr allein und er war nicht mehr blass. Er umarmte den Baum und seine Liebe machte ihn immergrün.

Reigen – die Liebe hält manchmal
im Löschen der Augen ein,
und wir sehen in ihre eignen
erloschenen Augen hinein.

Kalter Rauch aus dem Krater
haucht unsre Wimpern an;
es hielt die schreckliche Leere
nur einmal den Atem an.

Wir haben die toten Augen
gesehn und vergessen nie.
Die Liebe währt am längsten
und sie erkennt uns nie.

Round dance: a love can sometimes cease
in the extinguishing of an eye,
and what we come to see
is love's extinguished eye.

Cold smoke from the crater
breathes upon on our lashes;
only once did empty terror
not breathe at all upon us.

We've seen the eyes of the dead
and will forget them never.
Love lasts to the end,
but apprehends us never.

hebrew

in the beginning...

translation by **Rachel Freeman**

In the beginning
when love began to create us
our souls being unformed and void

our eyes submersed in darkness
a wind sweeping over our empty palms
cold deserts in the moonlight

and I think of you

when I lie down
and when I rise up

and all is in vain
and there is nothing new
but your palms
are in my palms

under the sun

You ask me why I learn Hebrew?
I say so that I can speak to you
I want you to listen to me
Are you listening?
You get happy when you speak Arabic
But you don't like me when I say I am a Palestinian Arab
You say " Sababa, Ars and Yallah"
But you can't listen to me,
You don't know me
You don't understand me
I want to thank you: your bombardment and your tanks
By my house made me succeed in my studies
But can you listen?
Why don't you get off your tank?
Have a sip of Arabic coffee
Under the vine tree in my backyard?
Then we can talk about
"Why don't you listen to me?"

Mindegyik országnak vannak bizonyos jó és rossz tulajdonságai. Ilyen a világ amiben élünk; nem fordulhatunk egy utópiához, nincsen egy tökéletes modell amit elérni próbálhatnánk. Szeretem Magyarországot; nem jöttem volna egy évre, ha ez nem lenne igaz. Dacára ennek a ténynek, mindig tisztán fogok emlékezni a magyar antiszemitizmusra, amilyen érzéseket okozott bennem és ahogyan negatív irányba változtatta meg a véleményemet a városról, az országról, a világról. Ez a dolgozat nem történelemről, irodalomról vagy szociológiáról szól. Inkább, a saját életemről írtam: az én évem Budapesten, és a magyarok, akiket ezalatt megismertem. A dolgozatban próbálok hangsúlyozni bonyolult, érzékeny kérdéseket, amit tapasztaltam ebben az évben: Az antiszemitizmus egy nemzeti probléma? Összefonódik-e népbüszkeséggel? Szenvednek a zsidók Magyarországon? És a magyarok mit szoktak gondolni erről?

Mielőtt Magyarországra jöttem, a zsidóság másodlagos volt az identitásomban. Férfi voltam, fehér voltam, Amerikai voltam, Magyar voltam. Zsidó? Zsidó az semmi más nem volt mint egy kötőjel, egy híd két fontosabb karakter között. Volt mikor poénkodtam róla a haverjaimmal, de ezen kívül – egy naptól a másikra – a zsidóság nem szerepelt az életemben. A második világháború után a családom Schönrről Jánosra változtatta a nevét, és ezzel a váltással próbáltunk asszimilálódni. Csak amikor Észak Amerikába költöztünk, akkor vált valóra az asszimiláció..

Mikor először érkeztem Budapestre, nagyon magányosnak éreztem magam. A szerelemem Amerikában volt, és ahogy egyik helyről a másikra mentem, mindig úgy éreztem, mintha egy színtelen háttérben lennék. A magyarok csak beszéltek egymással és nem törődtek velem. Jóban lettem az unokatestvéreimmel, és velük és a testvéremmel töltöttem az időmet.

Egy este októberben Bálinttal, egyik unokatestvéremmel voltam. Úgy döntöttünk, hogy elmegyünk kocsmázni. Szóval megittunk egy pár sört, és mentünk a belvárosba, éjfél körül. Bálint látta a volt barátját (nagy dráma) és én – mért nem találtam a helyemet ebben a vitában – barangoltam a bárhoz. Mellettem állt egy gyönyörű fiatal nő hosszú fehérített hajjal. Rendeltem egy italt. - Bocs, de nem vagy véletlenül a Bálintnak az unokatestvére? – kérdezte a szép szőke hölgy.

- De. – mondtam én. – És büszke is vagyok miatta.

- Bálinttal jártam gimnáziumba. Együtt mentünk az osztállyal kirándulni Franciaországba. Nagyon szépen beszél Franciául. Bemutatkoztunk egymásnak. Eszter volt a neve, és kezdtünk jól beszélni, dumálni. Lazán, lelkesen. Vicceket meséltem; nevettek és nevettek. Világos szeme volt, bele néztem és az egész interakció hihetetlenül könnyen ment. Tetszetünk egymásnak. A barátai oda jöttek de ő nem figyelt rájuk, és Bálint a szobának a másik oldaláról nézett engem és csodált.

Szóval röhögtünk és telt az idő. De ez a dolgozat nem magyar hölgyekről szól, hanem antiszemizmusról. Szóval lépünk tovább...

- Mit csinálsz itt Budapesten? – kérdezte Eszter.

- Diák vagyok. Egy hungarológiát tanuló diák.

Erre az Eszter nevetet.

- Hungarológiát tanulsz? Az úgy hangzik mint ha valamilyen nagyon durva szélső jobb oldali mozgalom lenne.

- De hogy is. Nem is annyira rossz. Népdalokat tanulunk és furcsa magyar kifejezéseket: sok lúd disznót győz. Az őrdög nem alszik... kinek nem inge, ne vegye magára. Vicces, élvezem.

- Ja – mondta Eszter. Ebben a pillanatban halottam egy férfinak a hangját, mögöttem.

- Héj- mondta a srác. Oda fordultam megnézni, hogy kibeszél. Idősebb volt nálam; tippelném, hogy harminc-nyolc. Köpcös, görbe orrú. Elégé csúnya.

- Igen, segíthetek? – kérdeztem.

- Menjél a WC-be. – válaszolt ő. Néztam, összezavarodott.

- Hát, igazából nem nagyon kell mennem.

Vissza mentem Eszterhez, folytatni a beszélgetést. Ő vágott egy pofát (ez mi volt?) és én reagáltam a sajátommal (fogalmam nincs). Szóval röhögtünk és elbűvöltünk és telt az idő.

- Hej – mondott a srác még egyszer. – menjél a WC-be.

- Azt hiszem, hogy nem értem mit szeretne mondani.

- Szeretnék beszélni a nővel.

- Oké. Beszéljen veled.

- De te ott vagy.

- Igen. Szeretek itt lenni. De, ha odanézel, van egy üres hely a másik oldalán, és engem nem zavarna ha próbálnál udvarolni neki. Erre ő röhögött, egy igazán gonosz röhögés volt, amitől nagyon kényelmetlenül éreztem magam, az italok után is.

- Nem tetszik ez a hely – mondott Eszter.

- Sajnálom – válaszoltam. – De én tetszek neked, nem?

- De – ő válaszolt. – Te jó ember vagy. De a hely... kevésbé tetszik.

– Erre nem tetszik. – Erre nem lehetett sokmindent mondani, Szóval röhögtünk és telt az idő. Ahogy múlt az idő, egy második férfi (magas, vékony, középkorú, fekete bőrkabát) oda ment a köpcös emberhez és beszélgetni kezdetek. Éreztem, hogy ott voltak, de nem néztem hátrafelé és próbáltam

ignorálni a kuncogásokat. A középkorú ember hozzám ért; vissza fordultam.

- Segíthetek? – kérdeztem tőle.

- Göndör hajad van.

- Igen. Ezt nagyon jól látod.

- Miért ennyire göndör a hajad? – kérdezte a középkorú férfi.

-... mert a szüleimnek is göndör haja volt.

- Egy kóser szilva? – kérdezte a magas. – Kóser ital. Te szereted a kóser dolgokat... nem?

Ebben a pillanatban a Bálint - aki látta, hogy valami furcsa folyik itt – odajött és megkérdezte tőlem, hogy kik ezek az emberek. Mondtam nekik, hogy ezek az emberek zavarnak engem, zavarnak minket. Ő ránézett a két férfire, és amikor már egy jó pár másodpercerájuk szegezte a tekintetét, végre elkezdett beszélni velük. Bocsánatot kért tőlük, úgy néz ki mintha valamilyen félreértés lett volna: Az unokatestvérem azt gondolja, hogy csúnyán beszéltek vele. Most érkezett Magyarországra, de jó ember és semmi rosszat nem akar. Légy szíves ne foglalkozz vele. Azt mondták, hogy semmi baj, az unokatestvére nagyon szórakoztató és csak akartak venni neki egy italt. Eszter mondta nekem, hogy üljünk le egy asztalnál, a kocsmának a másik oldalán. Oda is mentünk.

- Ők antiszemiták voltak. – mondat Eszter. – Azért utálok ezt a kocsmát. Mindig tele van nacionalista antiszemitákkal.

Igent bólintottam. Már volt olyan alkalom, hogy mondták nekem mennyire feltűnő, hogy zsidó vagyok, de ez volt az első alkalom, hogy úgy éreztem, mintha ez egy gyenge pont lenne, valami amitől szenvedni kenne. Valami gyengesség. De nem zavar, annyira; volt egy Eszterem.

- Az a baj a Bálinttal – fojtatta az Eszter – hogy nem akarja észrevenni az antiszemizmust. Ebben az országban, senki nem szeretné látni, nem akarja azt gondolni, hogy ez probléma igazán létezik. Azt szeretnék hinni, hogy mindegyik alkalom csak egy vicc. De ez nem egy vicc. Te Amerikából jöttél. Szokott ilyen történi Amerikában?

- Nem.

- Gusztustalan, az egész.

- Ha ennél nem lesz rosszabb, akkor szerintem kibírom egy évig.

- Lehet, hogy neked ez vicces. Végül is, te haza fogsz menni. De nekem – mint magyar zsidónak –, nekem minden nap kell ezzel foglalkozni. Nekem ez nem egy megoldás. Ezért sírnak az Amerikaiak Bush miatt, mikor a magyarok csak nevetnek.

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Egy pár asztal arrébb, részeg magyarok egy népdalt kezdetek énekelni. Nem értettem a szöveget; próbáltam, de túl nehéz volt. Eszter pofákat vágott (ez micsoda?!).

- Gusztustalan. – mondat ő.

Kimentünk a kocsmából. Fogtam a kezét, és a Bálint mondta, hogy jó látni, hogy van még szerelem a világon. Jókedvűek voltunk, mikor a magas, vékony férfi oda jött Eszterhez és a szemébe nézett.

- Mit csinálsz ezzel a emberrel? Mit csinálsz valakivel, akinek dús, göndör, ronda haja van?

- Tiednél jobb haja van – válaszolt az Eszter.
- Mért ennyire ronda a hajad? – kérdezte az ember, tőlem.
- Azért mert zsidó vagyok. – mondtam neki. – Dús ronda hajam van,

mért zsidó vagyok. Remélem, hogy nincs gond.

Erről a témáról a vékony férfi nem akart nagyon beszélni. Elfordult, elment.

Mikor elmondom ezt a történetet magyaroknak, nem nagyon reagálnak. Az unokatestvérem Bálint most is azt mondja, hogy az Eszter az túl érzékeny, hogy egy pár évig kint élt New Yorkban és cionista lett. A nagynénim azt mondja, hogy ezek az emberek biztos, hogy nem voltak antiszemiták, hanem inkább irigyek voltak, hogy találtam egy nőt és ők nem. A családban egy dologban egyetértettek: hiba volt megmondani a férfinak, hogy zsidó vagyok. Ez csak bajokat tudna okozni.

De mi a baj vele? Mért nem lehet mondani? Egyszerűen nem értettem. Semmi trágár sincsen a zsidósággal; nem vagyok hajléktalan vagy homoszexuális vagy alkoholista. Nem is vagyok vallásos. Ahol én felnőttem, zsidóságnak nem volt semmi negatív mellékjelentése; a zsidó csak azért másmilyen, mert karácsonykor nyolc estéig kapnak ajándékot, és mert mikor 13 évesek Bar Mitzvah-znak és sok pénzt kapnak, és mert van egy pár nap, mikor nem esznek. Nem is voltam igazi zsidó: nem tartok böjtöt, nem volt Bar Mitzvám, és ünnepelem a karácsonyt.

Elég nagy a ellentét Magyarországgal, ahol a szó „lezsidózni” létezik. „Lezsidózni”? Ez nem egy nyelvi különbség, ez egy kulturális különbség. Magyarországon, ha zsidónak hívsz valakit, akkor káromkods. Zsidónak lenni, az egy olyan „titok”, amitől az ember szenved. És lehet, hogy mindenki egyetért, hogy mennyire rossz volt a Holocaust, de ha azt mondod, hogy ma is van antiszemitizmus Magyarországon, nagyon furcsán reagálnak, mintha nem értenék, hogy ez mit jelent.

- Sokkal rosszabb a helyzet más országokban – mondta az egyik tanár.

- Legalább nem vagyunk cigányok – mondta az egyik unokatestvérem.

– Nekik sokkal rosszabb a helyzetük. A demokrácia nagyon új itt Magyarországon. Tíz, húsz év múlva, mikor a demokrácia megéri, akkor az antiszemitizmusnak nem lesz helye ebben az országban.

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Hajnal négy volt, egy hideg éjszaka Januárban, és utaztam a buszon hazafele. Barátnőm, Victoria (Eszter már rég eltűnt) velem van, és mind a ketten nagyon fáradtak vagyunk. A busz félig tele van, és leülünk. Egy megálló után, felszáll

három kopasz fiatal férfi. A legnagyobb leült velem szemben. Beszélni kezdett hozzám.

- Annyira csúnya vagy, baszd meg- mondta ő.

Pislogtam, feldolgoztam az információt. Victoria – aki amerikai – nem értette, hogy miről volt szó, de látta, hogy valami zavart engem és, hogy valakit zaklatni kezd engem. Végre lefordítottam neki. Ránéztem a férfirra, aki szólt hozzám ezzel a csúnya kis mondattal; szoros kék farmert viselt, ami be volt dugva a magas bőr csizmába; ahogyan fölfele néztem, láttam, hogy egy fekete pulóvert hordott, amire Nagy-Magyarország jelvény volt felhímezve. Amikor az arcára néztem láttam, hogy gonoszán mosolyog rám. Fenyegetve éreztem magam. Ő felhangon kezdett a barátaival beszélni rólam. Nagyon csúnyán beszélt, azt akartam, hogy vége legyen. Victoria folyamatosan oldalba bökött. Kérdezte, hogy mi a bajom... de nem akartam beszélni. Én azt akartam, hogy vége legyen.

- Lehet, hogy le kellenne szállni – mondtam csöndesen magamnak. – De ha leszállok, akkor lehet, hogy ő is leszáll, és akkor biztos, hogy szétver engem. – hallottam, hogy megint megállt a busz. Éreztem, hogy felém indul a nagy kopasz.

- Faszkalap. – mondta ő, de nem néztem rá. Úgy csináltam, mint ha nem beszélnék magyarul.

Ez után fejbe vágott.

Nyitott-kézzel ütött, de mögöttem volt, szóval nem tudtam felkészülni. A fejem az ablakba egy tompa puffanással csapódott be. Beharaptam a nyelvembe, és éreztem a vér ízét. A buszvezető kinyitotta az ajtót, és ezután eltűnt a három fiatal kopasz ember. Hallottam, mikor indult a busz, hogy hogyan röhögnek a háttérben. A busz átment a hídon, félig tele, és senki nem szólt egy szót se.

- Ádám – végre mondott Victoria. – Ádám, itt vagy? Ádám, mondjal valamit. Say something.

- Itt vagyok.

A Victoria hozzám ért, megfogta a kezemet.

- Annyira erős vagy – mondta a Victoria, és újra elmondta, és megint, és megint. – You're strong, so strong, so strong.

Én nem éreztem magam erősnek. Sőt, soha nem éreztem ennyire gyengének magamat. Egy kicsit vicces, de valahogy a családomra, a régi rokonra, és a második világháborúra kezdtem gondolni (mint egy rossz Hollywood film, nem?). De komolyan, csak arra tudtam gondolni, hogy milyen volt a dédszüleimnek, nagyszüleimnek, és az ő testvéreiknek (akik mind meghaltak) és milyen lehetett sétálni Budapesten: sárga Dávid csillaggal egy rongyos barna kabátra fűzve, és a szomszédok nem segítnek, mikor jönnek a gonoszok, hanem csak csendes ülnek, mint ez a félig tele, teljesen hangtalan 6É busz ...

És a zsidók ellenségei nem csak németek voltak, és nem csak oroszok... a magyar állampolgár is részt vett az antiszemitizmusban. De nem így tanuljuk történelemből, Amerikában sem. Úgy tanuljuk, mintha az antiszemitizmust azt valahogyan a németek találták volna ki, és ez valahogyan rá lett volt kényszerítve a többi Európai országra. A németek túsul ejtették Európát és amikor őket legyőzték, az antiszemitizmus nagyjából eltűnt.

Persze.

De Amerikában voltak olyan pillanatok, amikor ezt majdnem elhittem... Ott Amerikában, jobb esélyed van bejutni egy egyetemre, ha kisebbséghez tartozol. Megkérdeztem egyszer egyik gimnáziumi tanáromtól, hogy lehet-e „zsidót” írni a jelentkezésen, hogy az számít-e. Ő csak nevetett.

- Azt írsz amit akarsz. De szerintem nem fog segíteni. A zsidók... hát, igazából, a zsidók fehérek. És a fehérek nem egy kisebbség.

Ezzel nem nagyon tudtam vitatkozni. Amerikában senki nem zsidózott le. Soha nem láttam horogkeresztet történelem kontextuson kívül. A Holocaust mindössze egy borzasztó pillanat volt az emberiség történetében, de semmi más. Soha nem értettem: honnan jött ez a sok gyűlölet? Hogy lehetett ennyire sikeres? A zsidók mért hordták a Dávid csillagot? Miért nem harcoltak ellene? Hogyan lehetett, hogy ennyire sok gyűlölet volt egyik pillanatban, és a másikban teljesen eltűnt?

Miután leszálltam a buszról, hazamentem és rögtön megborotválóztam. A szakállam – dús, göndör, fekete – kimutatta a zsidóságot. Így fedeztek fel engem. Lehet, ha borotválóztam volna, nem figyelnek rám. Lehet, ha levágom a hajamat, nem fognak észrevenni, mennyire etnikainak tűnök. Végre, én is szenvedtem. „Zsidó” egy káromkodás lett, nekem is. Itt Budapesten, én egy kisebbségbe tartozok. Én valami más voltam, más mint a normális. Ezek a Holocaust kérdései, amikre eddig nem volt válasz. Most végre egyértelműek lettek. A zsidók azért hordták a Dávid csillagokat, mert ha nem hordták volna, akkor a szomszédok jelezték volna a Gestapónak. Azért nem harcoltak a zsidók, mert nem volt katonaság, vagy dandár, vagy hadvezér akivel lehetett volna harcolni. Az ellenség mindenütt volt, a társadalom mindegyik részében: a városban, a vidéken, a boltokban, az utcán. És a gyűlölet nem egyszer csak odajött (mint egy veszett kutya), hanem több ezer évig létezett. És ma is létezik, ahogy láttam a 6É-n.

Szóval kezdtem belelátni a magyar antiszemitizmusba. Cikkeket olvastam róla, jártam egy kurzusra a CEU-n. Feljegyeztem, hányan szavaztak a MIÉP-re, és felfedeztem a szavazó-tendenciákat. Nem tudom pontosan miért, de valahogy azt gondoltam, hogy ha intellektuálisan nézem, könnyebb lesz, mint amikor az életemben tapasztalom, hogy megérthetem. Az emberek, akivel beszéltem szkeptikusok voltak.

- Szerintem nincs antiszemitizmus Magyarországon – egy CEU professzor mondta nekem. – Persze, vannak olyanok, akik agresszívek, de ez mindenütt így van.

Meséltem a buszos történetet. Ő ünnepélyesen biccentet.

- Bunkó részeg állatok... ugye részegek voltak?

-Ja.

Megelégedet, hogy kitalálta az „okot”, s a professzor boldogan elment. És persze hogy értem, hogy a professzor mért nem tudott többet mondani erről. Mert hogyan lehetne tudni, hogy az antiszemitizmus az egy nemzeti probléma, ha az ember nem látja és nem érzi magának? Ellentétben a romákkal, a magyar zsidók nem szegények. Nem rövidebb az élettartamuk, mint egy keresztény magyarnak. Találnak munkát, és tanulnak az egyetemeken. Ebből a szempontból, a magyar

zsidó teljesen asszimilálódott. Ha nem látod antiszemitizmust, akkor nincs okod azt hinni, hogy tényleg létezik. Mert az ember nem akarja azt hinni, hogy ilyen dolog létezik az ő országában. Ez olyasmi, mint ha valaki odajönne hozzám és azt mondaná, hogy az amerikaiak arrogánsak.

Én azt mondanám, hogy – Nem igaz. Az amerikaiak nem arrogánsak. Van egy pár aki arrogáns, persze, de ez nem egy probléma, amit Amerikának kellene megoldani. George Bush az egy probléma, a Republikánus Párt egy másik probléma. Vannak alkoholisták Alabamában akik azt mondják, hogy baptisták de akkor is szétverik a négerek, ez is egy amerikai probléma. De „arrogáns”, az nem probléma. – Mért, ha azt a konklúziót vonjuk le, hogy Magyarországon az antiszemitizmus egy probléma, akkor mi a megoldás? És erre a kérdésre nincs könnyű válasz.

A másik oldalról viszont az otthoni barátaim még kevésbé értenek. Ők semmit nem tudnak Magyarországról, csak amit én mondok. Ha én azt mondom, hogy Magyarország tele van antiszemitékkel, akkor elhiszik. De ők soha nem érezték a rasszizmust – mint én, mielőtt jöttem – és emiatt nem értik hogy az antiszemitizmus az MI.

A sok ember közül, akikkel beszéltem, úgy tűnik, hogy csak a szüleim értik, amiről beszélek. Ők 1980-ban menekültek el, és sok helyre mehettek volna. Vándoroltak, egyik országból a másikba. De direkt elkerülték Európát.

- Mi mindig úgy gondoltuk – mondta az anyám –, hogy bárhova megyünk Európában, a zsidó származásunk vissza tudott volna tartani. Ha Európában maradtunk, a zsidóságunk miatt mindig kellet volna egy kicsit aggódni. Ezt mi nem akartuk. De lehet, hogy az anyám csak érzékeny.

Múlt hónapban késő éjszaka sétáltam a kollégiumban. Halottam, hogy vannak emberek a konyhában. Szóval oda mentem, benéztem. Egy nagy csoport diák volt ott. Volt köztük haverom, volt köztük olyan ember, akivel alig beszéltem. Volt olyan is, akit nem is nagyon ismertem. Sütöttek, és láttam, hogy egy tortát készítenek. A diákok beszéltek, nevetek, szórakoztatták egymást. Egyik diák az asztalnál állt és játszott egy kis darab tésztával. Odamentem köszönni neki. Nem voltunk jó barátok, de jóban voltunk.

- Mint csinálsz azzal a tésztával – érdeklődtem.

Rögtön megmutatta; egy horogkeresztet alakított ki. Döbbenet figyeltem rá.

- Ezt a torta tetejére fogjuk rakni! – mondta ő, büszkén.

Ő – bírtam kimondani. Nem volt más mondanivalom. A szemembe nézett, és csak biccentett.

Visszasétáltam a szobámba, és valami furcsát kezdtem érezni. Az emberek a konyhában nem úgy néznek ki, mintha náci lettek volna. Nem úgy néznek ki, mint gonosz Német katonák, akik üvöltenek a Hollywood-i filmekben. Nem is úgy néznek ki, mint egy azok közül az emberek közül, akik a buszon voltak. Lehet, hogy nem látták, hogy az egyik készítette a horogkeresztet. Lehet, hogy egyáltalán nem rasszisták. Vagy az is lehet, hogy nem gondolják, hogy bajt okoz, ha egy torta tetejére raknak egy horogkeresztet. Ilyen fajta dolgokkal lehet viccelődni. Miért, végül is eltűnt az antiszemitizmus Magyarországból... nem?

Every country has its good and bad points. This is the nature of the world we live in; there is no utopia that we can turn to, no perfect model that we can strive for. I love Hungary; I wouldn't have come to spend a year in Budapest if I didn't. But with all the good that I have experienced in this country, there has unfortunately been the constant presence of antisemitism. This paper is not about history or literature or sociology. It is about my personal experiences with antisemitism, and the way Hungarians react when I retell these events.

When I got to Hungary, being Jewish was an afterthought in my identity. I was male, I was white, I was American, I was Hungarian. Jewish? Being Jewish was nothing more than a hyphen, a bridge from one important characteristic to the next. Occasionally I would joke about being Jewish with my friends. But as far as day-to-day life, Judaism was absent. After World War II, my family changed its name from Schön to Janos, and with that change came an assimilation of beliefs.

I was feeling very lonely, when I first got here. I had left my lover in America and everywhere I went I collapsed into the colorless background. Hungarians jabbered on amongst themselves, largely ignoring me. I became close to my cousins, and spent most of my times with my brother Ben and them.

One day, my cousin Balint and I decided to go out to the bars... so we had a few drinks and headed out, got there around midnight. Balint saw his ex-girlfriend and started arguing with her (big drama), and I – feeling out of place – wandered over to the bar to have a drink. A beautiful young woman with long bleached-blond hair stood next to me. I ordered my drink.

"You are Balint's cousin, right?" she asked.

"Sure am," I said. "And I'm damn proud of it."

She laughed.

"Balint and I were high school classmates. We went on a field trip to France together."

She introduced herself as Eszter, and then the conversation started in earnest. I spun jokes and she laughed and laughed. Her eyes were bright and I stared into them and the whole thing was so remarkably easy. Her friends would come by and she would ignore them, Balint stared across the room at me in wonder. We liked each other.

"What are you doing in Budapest?" she asked me after another enormously successful joke.

"I'm a student. A hungarology student."

"You're studying hungarology?" she asked with a laugh. "Sounds like some sort of extreme right-wing nationalist movement."

"No, it's alright," I said. "We learn figures of speech and folk songs. A lot of geese defeat the pig. The devil never sleeps."

"Very good," she said. Then, a voice came from behind me.

"Hey," said the man. I turned around. He was an older man, probably in his early thirties. Portly, big round nose. Pretty ugly.

"Yes, how can I help you?" I asked.

"Why don't you go to the bathroom?" he asked.

I stared, confused.

"Well, I don't really have to go to the bathroom."

I continued my conversation with Eszter. She made a face ("what the hell was that?") and I made a face back ("I have no idea"). We laughed and swooned and time passed.

"Hey," said the man again. "Why don't you go to the bathroom?"

"I don't think I understand," I said.

"I want to speak with this girl."

"Okay, speak with her."

"You're there."

"Yes. I like being here. But there's an empty space on her other side, and I wouldn't mind if you wanted to make your conversation."

He laughed, a real evil laugh, a laugh that made me uncomfortable, even after all these drinks. I turned around.

"I don't like this place," said Eszter.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But you like me."

"Yes," she said. "You are good. The place I don't like." But there wasn't much more to be said on that topic, so we laughed and swooned and time passed. A second man - a tall thin middle-aged man in a black leather jacket - came and joined the portly fellow. They talked behind us and sniggered. The middle-aged man smacked my shoulder.

"Yes?" I said.

"You have curly hair," he said.

"Yeah," I said. "That's right."

"Why is your hair so curly?" he asked me.

"... because my parents had curly hair."

"How about a drink?" asked the fat man.

"No," I said. "I don't want a drink."

"How about some kosher plum brandy?" asked the tall one. "It's kosher. You like kosher things... right?"

Balint came up to the bar to join the conversation.

"What seems to be the problem?" he asked. I told him that these people were bothering me, bothering us, and that they kept making rude comments. He looked them up and down; he was very drunk. After assessing the situation, he told the boys: Sorry, there seems to have been some sort of miscommunication. My cousin seems to think that you guys were making inappropriate comments. My cousin is new to the country, but he is a good man and he means no harm. Please excuse my cousin. They said there was no problem, that his cousin was good fun and they were just offering him a drink. Eszter told me we should sit down at a booth, away from the bar. Confused, I followed.

"Those guys are antisemites," she said. "The whole bar is full of nationalist antisemites."

I nodded. I have been told I look Jewish before, but this was the first time I felt that this look was an exposure. That said, I didn't really mind. There

was an Eszter.

"The problem with Balint," said Eszter, "is that he doesn't want to see the antisemitism. No one in this country does. They all want to think it is a big joke. But it's not a joke. You're from America. Does this ever happen in America?"

"No," I said.

"It's disgusting," she said.

"If this is as bad as it gets," I said, "then I can deal."

"Maybe for you it's funny. For you it is temporary. But I – as a Jew living in Hungary – I have to deal with it everyday. Maybe that's why Americans cry about Bush while we Hungarians laugh."

A few tables over, some drunken Hungarians began to sing a folk song. I couldn't make out the words, I tried but it was too hard. Eszter made a face ("what the hell?").

"It's disgusting," she said.

We left the bar that night holding hands. The tall thin man came up to Eszter and looked her straight in the eye.

"What are you doing with this guy? What are you doing with someone with thick, curly, ugly hair?"

"He has better hair than you," she said.

"Why do you have such ugly hair?" the man asked me.

"Because I'm a Jew," I told him. "I have thick ugly hair because I'm a Jew. I hope that's alright."

The man didn't have much to say about that. He just turned around and left.

When I retell this story to Hungarians, they tend to shrug. My cousin Balint insists to this day that Eszter is oversensitive, that she spent a few years in New York and became a Zionist. My aunt tells me that the men were probably jealous of me, because I had found a girl and they had not. However, what everyone agreed upon was that I should not have told the man that I was a Jew. This can only create problems.

But what's wrong with saying that I'm a Jew? I didn't understand. There is nothing obscene in being a Jew; I'm not homeless or homosexual or alcoholic. I'm not even religious. Where I grew up, being a Jew had no negative connotation; a Jew is only different because instead of Christmas they have 8 nights, because when they turn 13 they have a Bar Mitzvah and get lots of money, and because on certain days they don't eat. I'm not even a real Jew; I don't hold fast, I didn't have a Bar Mitzvah, and I celebrated Christmas.

Quite a contrast from Hungary, where "to Jew down" is a verb. "To Jew Down" as a regularly used part of speech? This is not a linguistic difference, this is a cultural difference. In Hungary, it seems as if to call someone a Jew is a swear. To be a Jew is a secret that people are ashamed of. And though everyone is willing to admit that the Holocaust was a bad thing, the idea that antisemitism might exist today is greeted with shrugs.

"It's a lot worse in some of the other countries," said one teacher.

"At least we're not gypsies," said my other cousin, Gabor. "They have it really bad. Democracy is new here. In 10, 20 years, when the democracy has matured, antisemitism will not have a place in this country."

It was four AM on a cold night in January, and I was riding the bus home from my cousin's house. My girlfriend Victoria was with me (Eszter a distant memory), and we were both very tired. The bus was half-empty and we sat down. After one stop, three young bald men stepped on. The biggest one sat opposite me and looked me in the eye.

"You're so fucking ugly," he said.

I blinked, processed the information. Victoria – who is American – didn't understand what was going on but she saw immediately that something was bothering me so she pestered me. I finally translated for her. I looked over at the man who had said this to me; he wore tight blue jeans that were tucked into laced-up leather boots, and on top he had a pullover with the Hungarian insignia stitched to the heart. When I looked into his face, he was smiling evilly at me. I felt threatened. He began talking loudly to his friends about what an asshole I was. All I could do was stare at the seat in front of me. My vision began to tunnel. I wanted this to end. Victoria kept nudging me, asking me what was wrong, but I didn't want to talk.

"Should I get off the bus," I thought. "Or if I do, will he get off with me and beat me up?" The bus pulled to a stop and I heard the man pull himself off his seat. He approached me and called me a motherfucker as the doors came open.

That's when he hit me.

It was an open-handed slap, but it came from behind, so it caught me off guard. The impact sent my head into the window with a thud. I bit my tongue, I tasted copper. Then they were gone, laughing into the night. The bus lurched on, still half-full, and no one, including me, said a word.

"Adam," said Victoria. "Adam, are you there? Adam, say something."

"I'm here."

She touched my leg, took my hand.

"You're so strong," she kept repeating. "You're so strong, you're so strong..."

I didn't feel strong. In fact, I had never felt weaker. It's funny, but my mind immediately turned to all my relatives from sixty years ago. It's right out of a TV movie, right? But seriously, all I could think about was my grandmothers and my grandfathers, and all their siblings who didn't make it, walking through the streets of Budapest, yellow stars stitched onto the sleeves of their tattered brown jackets. They were shouted at and hit and occasionally beaten up. Not only by Germans, not only by Russians... their fellow Hungarian citizens did this to them, too. Of course, that's not the way we learn about in history. The way history books tell the Holocaust, antisemitism was a German thing, something that was forced upon other countries. The Germans held Europe hostage and once they were defeated, antisemitism died with it.

Of course.

In America, there were times when I almost believed it. Back home, you have a better chance of getting into college if you're in a minority group. I asked my high school English teacher if I could write down "Jew" to be considered for minority status. She laughed. "You can write down whatever you want," she said. "But I don't think being a Jew is going to make colleges think you come from a state of particular hardship. I don't know if they'll view you as an asset to diversifying the student body." There wasn't really much of an argument I could make back. In America, no one had ever told me to stop being such a Jew; no one had ever made me feel threatened. I had never even seen a swastika outside of a historical context (except for my trips to Hungary). The Holocaust to me was a terrible moment in history, but nothing more. I never understood where those hateful feelings came from, or how the Holocaust could've been so successful.

Why did the Jews wear their stars of David? Why didn't they fight back? How could so much hate come out of nowhere, and how could it disappear so fast?

After I got off the bus, I went home and immediately shaved my beard. My beard – thick, curly, black – was the source of my Jewishness. This was how they identified me. Maybe if I shaved my beard, people wouldn't pay so much attention. Maybe if I cut my hair, people wouldn't take note of how ethnic it looked. I was finally ashamed; "Jew" had finally become a swear word. Here in Budapest, I was a minority. Not only that, but it seemed like to the most patriotic of people, I wasn't even really Hungarian. I was something else. All these questions about the Holocaust were suddenly given bitter answers. The Jews wore their stars of David because if they didn't, their neighbors would've gladly reported them to the Gestapo. The Jews didn't fight back because there was no army, no faction, no General to direct their fight against. The enemies appeared everywhere in society – in the cities, in the country, in the shops, on the street. And the hatred against Jews did not appear out of nowhere; it was a hatred that had existed for hundreds of years; it was a hatred that continues to exist to this very day.

I started to launch into a full investigation of Hungarian antisemitism. I read articles about it, I took a class at CEU on it. I even obtained some exit polls of the MIEP political party and observed voting tendencies. I don't know why, but for some reason I thought that if I could intellectualize it, I would be better able to deal with its reality. The people around me were skeptical.

"I don't think there's too much antisemitism in Hungary," a professor at CEU said. "Of course, there will be people who don't like you and who are aggressive, but that is true everywhere."

I told him about my experience on the bus. He nodded solemnly.

"Drunken jerks... were they drunk?" he asked.

They were.

Satisfied that this problem had been cleared up, he continued on his way. And of course, I understand why he had nothing more to say. Because how can you say that Antisemitism is a national problem without experiencing it first hand? Unlike the gypsies, Hungarian Jews are not poor. They do not live shorter lifespans. They are not unemployed, and they are well-educated. From all points of view, they are assimilated. If you do not see the antisemitism first-hand, there

is no reason to believe it is there, because there is no reason to want to believe it is there. It is as if someone were to come up to me and tell me that Americans were arrogant. I would argue, "No, Americans are not arrogant. Some Americans are arrogant, but arrogance is not a problem in America. George Bush is a problem, the Republican party is a problem, southern baptism is a problem. But arrogance is not a problem." To come to the conclusion that antisemitism is a major problem in Hungary comes with an enormous "what next?". There are no easy answers. From the opposite perspective, my friends back home understand even less. They don't know anything about Hungary except what I tell them; if I tell them that Hungary is antisemitic, they will believe me. But if they have never experienced racism – as I had never experienced prior to coming here – they can never understand what antisemitism IS. They are just as in the dark.

The only people who seem to really understand and sympathize are my parents. They tell me that when they left Hungary in 1980, there were a lot of places they could go. They were wanderers, and they could have settled anywhere. But they distinctly avoided settling anywhere in Europe.

"We got the impression," said my mother, "that anywhere we went, our Jewishness would always be a force in play. It would always be something to worry about."

But maybe she was overreacting.

Last month, I was walking around late at night in the dorm when I heard some noises coming from the kitchen. I walked in and there were a group of students standing around. Some of these people were friends, but most of them were people I barely knew, only recognized from walking by them on the way to class. They were preparing to bake a cake, but it was also a social occasion, and people were talking, laughing, having fun. One person, who stood by the table, seemed to be playing with some dough. I went over and decided to say hello; we were on good terms.

"What are you doing with that dough there?" I asked him.

That's when he showed me: he was forming it into a swastika. I stared in amazement.

"We're going to put this on the top of the cake," he said proudly.

"Oh," I said. I had nothing more to say. I looked him in the eye, and he nodded solemnly.

I walked back to my room, and a strange feeling came over me. The people in that kitchen didn't seem like Nazis. They didn't look like the evil German soldiers that I had watched produced out of Hollywood movies. They didn't even look like the person who hit me on the bus. Maybe they hadn't seen the swastika being made. Maybe they weren't really racists at all. Or maybe they didn't think it was such a big deal to put a swastika on the top of a cake; we can joke about this sort of thing.

Because after all, there's no more antisemitism in Hungary, right?

portuguese

o órgão

original by João da Cruz e Sousa
translation by Cassio de Oliveira

Um largo e lento vento dormente
taciturnas lágrimas sonâmbulas, sinfônicas
um esquecimento amargo
uma sombria clausura de almas
suspirando e gemendo solitárias harmonias

Vago luar de esquecimento e prece,
dessa melancolia que anda errando
no mar e nas estrelas ondulando,
pela minh'alma etereamente desce.

Na minh'alma, dos Sonhos anoitece
o Sentimento que ando transformando
em hóstia de ouro

Sombra e silêncio

A wide and slow sleeping wind
taciturn and somnambolic, symphonic tears
bitter oblivion
a somber cloister of souls

Vague moonlight of oblivion and prayer,
– of this melancholy, wandering and erring
on sea and among stars undulating –
through my soul ethereally descends.

In my soul, darkens the Feeling
of Dreams I have been transforming
into a golden host

Shadow and silence

vamos deixar desse negócio de você viver sem mim

written by **Samantha Sutherland**

Sexta-feira, 12/07/2004

Esse vento me faz sentir uma liberdade triste e ao mesmo tempo emocionante. Agora que vejo o céu cujas estrelas se exibem descobertas por qualquer manta de poluição sinto também esperança. Sinto que poderia permanecer nesse momento eternamente somente com minhas memórias para fazer-me companhia. Estou agora deitada numa rede na varanda de uma simples, mas bela pousada de praia. Bossa Nova, vindo flutuando do bar do restaurante aos meus ouvidos contentes, me faz querer dançar e amar enquanto minha cabeça responde ao som, balançando de um lado para o outro;

“Dentro dos meus braços os abraços não de ser milhões de abraços
Apertado assim, colado assim, calado assim,
Abraços e beijinhos e carinhos sem ter fim”

A canção me faz fechar os olhos e porém paro um pouco de escrever. O vento volta, bagunçando meus cabelos com seu movimento apaixonante, bagunçando meus pensamentos com o frio que me faz passar pelo corpo. Aonde está você? Lembro da sua risada, seus olhos que me transmitiriam transmitiam tanta felicidade com seu azul cinza que passava-me todos seus pensamentos, sua ambição e seu amor. E o seu calor. Com seu calor certamente sentiria protegida de qualquer frieza; com seus braços em volta de mim certamente não existiria essa solidão que me pertence sem ti. Sinto falta do seu carinho.

Sábado, 13/07/2004

Acordei hoje cedo para poder assistir o sol nascer. Estou aqui agora, na praia, em frente ao mar. Como o mar está lindo nessa manhã! Todas as cores do céu uniram-se somente para realçar a beleza do mar, que tanto estica, que existe até na eternidade. É uma celebração do meu amor. Permaneço aqui no meu pequeno mundo com os mesmos pensamentos de ontem enquanto todas as gotas do oceano brincam e dançam individualmente e a iluminação e o brilho que vem da mistura de cores diante do mar me faz admirar essa arte na minha espera por você. Sempre por você. O tempo passa com o ritmo das ondas que sobem e descem na praia como crianças pulando em cima de uma mãe amorosa e depois fugindo do abraço dela com pequenos gritos de felicidade.

Dois apaixonados caminham diante de mim, a água do mar massageando seus pés, e uma pequena vira-lata da cor da areia seguindo-os a espera de qualquer coisa; talvez algum petisco, talvez apenas um gesto

amoroso. Entre risos, abraços, beijos e carinhos, minha presença passa despercebida. Das nuvens que se estabelecem fora do meu alcance começam a cair gotas de água morna. Ele a levanta e corre em direção à pousada, fugindo da chuva. E ainda eu espero.

Imagino com será quando tu chegares. Seu beijo, seu sorriso, seu carinho. Acima de tudo, sua presença. Apenas isso seria o suficiente para eu passar o resto dessa vida (cuja grandeza parecia ser tão fútil ao lado do amor que sentíamos um pelo outro) nessa praia. Amor, a praia sem você é tão solitária quanto o vira-lata, que parece estar procurando sem qualquer esperança o seu par. Penso em nada mais. Quero dormir acolhida em seu abraço e sentir nosso amor reascendido, realçado. Deixa-me dormir novamente acolhida em seu abraço.

“Vamos deixar desse negócio de você viver sem mim.”

Domingo de manhã, 14/07/2004

Acordei hoje de manhã trêmula, meu rosto úmido, meu corpo inteiro dolorido. Deitava-me numa rede, desapercibendo o cheiro de mofo a minha volta – uma lembrança da chuva da noite anterior. Meu primeiro pensamento hoje, o mesmo do meu último pensamento ontem que veio furtivamente antes do sono me levar, foi você. A imagem que me veio à cabeça era tão maravilhosa e seu impacto tão surpreendente que quando voltei a notar meus sentimentos percebi que estava voando – flutuando na minha memória de você. Tive que abrir meus olhos para não me perder. No meu amor existe tanta riqueza e tanta espessura que ela é transformada em uma polpa que me afoga cada vez mais. E eu o convido.

Porém, todo esse amor que sinto parece certamente ser fútil. Agora, no último dia da minha espera por você, enquanto sorvo champanha por em um copo plástico sem perceber o ato, penso que talvez você não virá.

Domingo à tarde, 14/07/2004

A praia nesse horário já está escura o tanto que fica difícil eu enxergar a página a minha frente e as palavras com as quais eu a ilumino. Ouço apenas a maré descendo lentamente, fugindo da minha tristeza e da minha solidão. Novamente meu rosto está úmido, e a tinta da minha caneta, levada a escorrer numa dança pelas lágrimas que me caíam caem dos olhos, se exhibe nessas páginas lamentáveis.

A escuridão me faz pensar em parar de escrever, porém não consigo. Não seria capaz de agüentar a dor que certamente eu sentiria caso eu voltasse à realidade.

Agora sinto uma mão se pondo delicadamente no meu ombro. Meu coração se aperta, ascenda, decola. Será você?

romanian

printe crengi incremenite

original by **Cecilia Țirea**
translation by **Raluca Albu**

Printe crengi incremenite
Mă privește o steluță.

Tot clipind din cerul magic
Mi se pare așa de micuță.

Lungi alei de pretutinderi
mă îndeamnă la visare,

și o privesc...

Between still-standing branches
a star is watching me.

It is glistening from its magical ceiling
It appears to me minute.

Long alleys between here and there
lend me to wistful dreaming

and I gaze back...

This is a poem relayed to me during an interview, which I conducted in Romania, about people's life stories under communism. The interview was conducted with a family and one woman recited it to me as "the only poem she'd ever written." She wrote it when she was fifteen years old.

RUSSIAN

untitled

original by **Sergel Esenin**
translation by **Cassio de Oliveira**

Снежная равнина, белая луна,
Саваном покрыта наша сторона.
И берёзы в белом плачут по лесам.
Кто погиб здесь? Умер? Уж не я ли сам?

4/5 октября 1925

A snowy plain, a white moon,
And a shroud covering our land.
Dressed in white, birches weep in the woods.
Who here perished? Died? Could it be me?

4-5 October 1925

ТЫ И ВЫ

original by **Aleksander S. Pushkin**
translation by **Rafael Iskhakov**

Ты и вы
Пустое вы сердечным ты
Она, обмолвись, заменила
И все счастливые мечты
В душе влюбленной возбудила.
Пред ней задумчиво стою,
Свести очей с нее нет силы;
И говорю ей: как вы милы!
И мыслю: как тебя люблю!

Empty you*, with intimate you**
She, tongue o slip, replaced
And all happy thoughts
In my soul, she lovingly roused
In front of her, in thought I stand,
To move my eyeballs from her I
have no power;
And tell her: how kind you* are!
While thinking: how I love you**!

*=formal, **=informal

spanish

el primer sabor

original and translation
by **Alexandra Ward**

Quiere el tiempo ausente,
entre manos y manos,
brazos de raíces mortales,
no puede esperar para siempre con luz,
luz, estaba ardiendo en la luna.

El agua y la vida,
una trenza, ni lágrimas,
ni oscuridad, ni final,
sólo muerte.
Muerte de rosas beneficiosas.

La muerte, girando solamente
en plantas y corazones.
No conoce pensamientos azules
hasta el final,
melancolía absurda de la fe.
La fe vieja, de edades,
nieve cae en fondos de
memorias construidas,
y hay una realidad surreal,
todos los niveles verdes del primer sabor.

Te olvidaste del cambio en la distancia
de tu vida, tu amor, padre.

She wants absent time,
between hands and hands,
arms of mortal roots,
she can't wait forever with light,
light, was burning in the moon.

Water and life,
a braid, without tears,
without darkness, with end,
only death.
Death of beneficial roses.

Death, spinning only
in plants and hearts.
She doesn't know blue feelings
until the end,
absurd melancholy of faith.
Old faith, of ages,
snow falls in the depths of
constructed memories,
and there is a surreal reality,
all green levels of the first taste.

You forgot the change in distance
of your life, your love, father.

Soy un llamador a las estrellas
gritando al cielo negro del otoño.
nunca sabía yo dónde estés tú,
o quizá aun quien seas.
ni siquiera sabiendo si lo sabré algún día,
sólo puedo llamar a nuestras estrellas.

¡Como añoran los oídos
los tonos de tu voz
y los manos un alcanzar más
de las yemas tuyas!
¡charlar contigo, ahora mismo,
sola una vez más,
como anhelo!

No es mío, este saber de intuición.
por mucho que empiece dudarla,
persiste el encender de tus ojos,
y no me dejan,
me atravesó tanto.

Tú, caprichoso indomable,
¡ol tu cara, aquel oasis de luz, charcado,
brillando en media de confusión ambiental.
por obvio, por visceral que sea,
queda todavía impensable
dolores tan graves
a pesar de que persiste tu poder suave.

Extraños ya no
gracias a una noche extraña,
tan húmeda y lejana...
¿nos encontraremos de nuevo?!
una mujer como yo,
un muchacho como ti...
sin ninguna falta
preguntarnos '¿por qué?'

Porque te encontré,
porque me encontraste.
por brusco el despedir,
por cortado
que fuera el total:
¡nos encontramos!

Por tanto,
lo único es echar de menos,
mi querido Perdido.

I am a caller to the stars,
crying out to the black sky of autumn.
I may never know where you are,
nor even who you are, perhaps.
not even knowing if I could know, someday,
but our stars remain mine to call on always.

How my ears long
for your voice's timber
and my hands one more reach of your fingertips!
just to chat with you,
once more, right now,
how I yearn!

It's not mine, this intuition's knowledge.
as much as I begin to doubt it,
that glimmer burning in your eyes persists
and won't let me,
it pierced me so,
you indomitable will!

Oh your face
that puddled oasis of light
shining
amid such darkness!

it remains still unthinkable, however visceral,
such kind, gentle power's persistence
despite pain so unspeakable.

Strangers no longer on a night so strange,
so far-away and humid...
- a woman like me, a chap like you,
with no need to ask 'why?'.

Because I found you,
because you found me,
so brutally cut short,
however sudden the parting,
we found each other!
And so, my dear Lost One,
I can't but miss you.

nota v

original by **Juan Gelman**
translation by **Riley Wise**

no echés a la tristeza del fogón
sientese aquí a mi lado/vieja/
uste nuna me va a dejar/
perdóneme si la olvide

si anduve de rabia en rabia
saliendo de un muerto entrando
a otro muerto o mundo roto/
si así viajé todos estos años/

arrímese/tristeza/que
me hace frío tanta furia
y tanto Puerto muerto y
necesito viajar/viajar

don't throw sadness from the hearth
sit here beside me/old dear/
you'll never leave me/
forgive me if I forgot you

if I strode from fury one fury to the next
leaving one dead man behind coming in
on another dead man or broken world/
if I traveled about like this all these years/

come in close/sadness/it makes
me cold so much fury
and so many dead ports and
I need to get away/to get away

una cinta y tan lejos

original and translation
by **Tullah Sutcliffe**

I.
¿Vivimos en hierro frío?
La mano de mi hermana no se extiende dentro
no arrima las leñas menudas

¿Estamos manchados? Todas las cenizas
de hollín y madera rajada donde
habíamos sido verde nudoso
Quebradizos nuestros dientes difundidos
nuestros dedos largos

II.
Pero hoy no
son esos días cuando

mis pies llegaron
a ser piedras
cazando hermanas encima del guijo
una vez el fondo del océano
formas de caracoles cobre contra gris

Todo el día caminaba encima del guijo

y el no estaba
Dentro de mi
y yo no estaba
Dentro de el
y yo no era
El

pero yo estaba cerca

III.

La
espina

de
mi
papá
no
era
el
foso
del
guijo

cubierto de nieve

Los ojos
de mi hermana no eran
vidrio encontrado
en playa de piedra

Ella podía
respirar debajo
del agua

y respirar
por sus ojos

Yo pensaba que tal vez ella era el mar

Y ahora ella está
en un delantal negro
tan lejos
de mis aretes y pies con calzados cubiertos

IV.
Una cinta y tan lejos
nos retienen

En la diferencia de un instante
estoy de pie en la espina de mi padre
nado en el aliento de mi hermana

I.
Are we living in cold iron?
My sister's hand does not reach inside
doesn't lean the kindling up

Are we are smudged? All soot
ashes and cracked wood where
we were knobby green
Crisp our teeth spread
our fingers long

II.
But today is
Not those days when

my feet turned
to stone
chasing sisters on gravel bits
once ocean's bottom
sea shell shapes copper against grey

I walked all day on gravel

and it was not
in me
and I was not
in it
and I was
not it

but I was close

III.
my
papa's
spine
was
not
the
gravel
pit

covered in snow

my sister's
eyes were
not glass found
on rock beach

She could
breathe under
water

and breathe
through her eyes

I thought maybe she was the ocean

And now she is
in a black apron
so far
from my earrings and shoe covered feet

IV.
A ribbon and so far
keep us

At a moment's different
I stand on my father's spine
swim in my sister's breath

piedra negra sobre una
piedra blanca

original by César Vallejo

Me moriré en París con aguacero,
un día del cual tengo ya el recuerdo.
Me moriré en París -y no me corrotalvez un jueves, como es hoy de otoño.

Jueves será, porque hoy, jueves, que proso
estos versos, los húmeros me he puesto
a la mala y, jamas como hoy, me he vuelto,
con todo mi camino, a verme solo.

César Vallejo ha muerto, le pegaban
todos sin que él les haga nada;
le daban duro con un palo y duro

también con una soga; son testigos
los días jueves y los huesos húmeros,
la soledad, la lluvia, los caminos...

translation by Maida Ives

I will die in soggy Paris
On a day which I already know
I will die in Paris - and still I won't leave
Perhaps a Thursday, like today, in autumn.

Thursday it will be because today -
The Thursdays that I write these lines
I have misplaced my wrists
But, never as today, have I turned
With all that is behind me, and ahead,
To see myself alone.

Cesar Vallejo has died. They all beat him
But he has done nothing to them.
They gave him the hard stick and

The hard rope; witnesses are
The days that are Thursdays, the bones,
The loneliness, the rain, the road.

translation by **Gordon Davis**

I would die in Paris with downpour,
A day of which possesses already the memory.
I would die in Paris – and run I would not –
Maybe a Thursday, As is today, of autumn.

Thursday would be, because today, Thursday, that I
Prose this poem, I have finally put them on, and never
like today I have began with all my journey I
have never seen myself alone.

Cesar Vallejo has died, Everybody hit him
without him doing anything. They hit him with a
hard stick.

Also with a rope, they are witnesses, the
Thursdays and the bones, the loneliness, the
rain and the roads.

translation by **Javier Centeno**

Oh, the struggle, the pain, the solitude
This cross I carry upon my shoulder bone that's so cruel
And, the days Thursdays of which will testify to

Hard strikes with thick rope, and, hard strikes with solid stick
That struck him hard as he got hit
They hit him all without him to them ever doing shit
Dead is Cesar Vallejo --- Isn't life a bitch?

I saw myself all by my lonely, with injustices in all my journey
As I turned upon four walls of white stone
Today like never ever before have I felt so alone

And, I carry this burned unwillingly
But, because of my ancestral history
These verses I spit with blood so naturally
On Thursday, today because, Thursday it will be really

Of autumn, like it is today, one Thursday maybe,
And I won't back down for this cause, I will ride
In Paris will I die, one day of which I've already realized,
With painful rain in my eyes, I say, in Paris will I die.

I will die in Paris with a heavy rain
a day in which I've already envisioned
I will die in Paris and I do not run
Maybe a Thursday, like today, in autumn

It shall be Thursday, because today Thursday, that I prose
these verses the humerus I've put on
in a bad courageous manner even when I can't go on
and never like today have I turned
in all my journey to see myself alone

Cesar Vallejo is dead, him they would hit
all of them, without him doing anything to deserve it
they would hit him hard with a stick

hard also with a rope; Thursdays
and the humerus bones, loneliness,
the rain, the roads are the witnesses.

translation by **Ricardo Lopez**

translation by **Mark Miles**

I shall pass on to the great beyond
in the capital of France,
on a day of rainfalls, I can recall it all.
I shall pass on to the great beyond
in the capital of France,
facing it – perhaps a day after Wednesday,
a day like today when leaves mature then descend.

It must be a day after Wednesday,
since today is before Friday,
when conceived these lines,
I dress my shoulder bones tacky,
and paced the lonesome road, me, myself, and I.

Cesar Vallejo is dead, overwhelmed with blow after blow.
no one missed, nor did he resist,
for he had done nothing to deserve this.
They struck him with a solid stick.

Moreover solid with a rope;
witnesses are the days after Wednesday
and dressed shoulder bones, solitude, rainfalls,
the road.

translation by **Norris Thomas**

It will be a rainy day in Paris when I die
Clearly I can see it
When I die in Paris—running won't be an option
Probably on a Thursday, like this day, of the fall

It has to be a Thursday, because today is Thursday
The day I penned these lines, I've placed a heavy burden
Upon my shoulders, my journey has finally led
Me to where I am today, by myself in solitude

Cesar Vallejo is deceased. Bludgeoned by the masses
Who he has never raised a finger against
Beaten heavily with sticks while tied down and struck
With a tremendous cord

The trails, the rain, the solitude, the set of the
shoulders along with Thursdays, know what I mean.

abuela...

original and translation
by **Anja Savic**
A mi abuela : In memoriam.

Abuela, hoy estoy en tu cama,
donde me haces una falta sin fondo!
Me acuerdo que nos acostábamos esta hora, y que te
suplicaba contarme historias...siempre las mismas historias...

Érase una vez, estábamos acostadas, aquí,
después del almuerzo:
tu sopa, tu carne, tus patatas...comida que cantaba con sabor,
que vive y queda en mí hasta este día.
Y aquí estábamos, en esta cama
yo a un lado, tú al otro
yo llena de vida, tu cansada de ella

«Una vez más, una vez más» decía
«Blancanieves, Blancanieves» decía
Y siempre me contabas...
siempre, era la princesa,
pero sin la madrastra malvada...
Sólo una abuela amada.

Y por mis ojos entreabiertos veía tus labios,
moviéndose, contando, viviendo...
Y tus ojos, «uno mirándome, otro durmiendo» como siempre solías decir,
esperando...esperando para que yo me durmiera.
Nunca tardé mucho tiempo:
después de dos o tres enanos, elegí "Dormilón"
Y dormía, dormía, dormía sin fin...
cuando me desperté, tu pijama ya estaba colgada en la puerta;
ya estaba llena de huecos.

Ahora, nos hemos cambiado de lado.
Yo estoy en tu lado, y tú...
tú estás durmiendo sin fin
con ambos ojos cerrados, por fin.
Tu pijama no está en la puerta, pero aunque estuviera,
los huecos nunca estarían llenos otra vez.

Y yo estoy aquí, sólo...al lado de nada, de nadie, de un hueco pesado
Oye, abuela,
sólo una vez más.

Grandma, today I am in your bed,
where my need of you is bottomless!
I remember that we lay here this hour, and that I
begged you to tell me stories...always the same stories...

Once upon a time, we were lying, here
after lunch:
your soup, your meat, your potatoes...food that sang with flavor,
that lives and stays in me to this day.
And here we were, on this bed
i on one side, you on the other
i full of life, you tired of it

“One more time, one more time,” I would say
“Snow White, Snow White,” I would say
And you always told me...
always, I was the princess,
but without the evil stepmother...
Only a loved grandmother.

And through my half-open eyes I saw your lips,
moving, telling, living...
And your eyes, “one looking at me, the other sleeping” as you always used
to say,
waiting...waiting for me to fall asleep.
It never took much time:
after two or three dwarves, I chose “Sleepy”
And I slept, slept, slept, without end
when I woke up, your nightgown was already hung on the door;
it was already full of hollows.

Now, we have swapped sides.
I am on your side, and you...
you are sleeping without end
with both eyes closed, finally.

Your nightgown is not on the door, but even if it were,
the hollows would never be full again.
And I am here, alone...next to nothing, to no one, to a heavy cavity
Hear, grandma,
just one more time.

apocalypsis...

original and translation
by Lydia Ignacio

que me lleve el diablo entonces
sacame sangre
y hazme odiarte más

que traiga el infierno a la tierra
haga y desaga
pero, te lo vas a tragar

arruiname el futuro
destrózame el corazón
pero la culpa te va a demolar

abusame hasta sentir el vacío
y así, desfigura mi horrible piel
hecha de hierro
muestrame tu monstruosidad

y te haré recordar
para el resto de tu inútil
existencia gastada
que el día
que muero yo

mueres tu

may the devil take me then
draw blood
and make me hate you more

may he bring hell to earth
do and undo
but, you will swallow it

ruin my future
destroy my heart
but the guilt will demolish you

abuse me until you feel the emptiness
and like that, disfigure my skin
made of iron
demonstrate your monstrosity

and I will remind you
for the rest
of your useless
wasted existence
that the day
that I die

you die

Creo que he sentido el odio de Dios.
 Rojo en blanco, hojas, gotitas en la cortina
 de la ducha. Como atreví,
 como traté de extender este odio
 por las vidas de otras.
 Para que alguien
 pudiera entender lo que no se puede entender:
 la pena, el llanto, el sufrimiento, la congoja
 las estaciones del año.
 Un viaje en el coche que
 Jamás puede alcanzar
 En las entrañas de la memoria.
 Tampoco la esperanza.
 Tenían que ser los blanquitos
 en la lengua.
 Si me puedo acordar de las luces.
 Las cortinas sin color.
 Lo blanco de todo
 y el contraste con mi sangre burdeos.
 Si tengo la memoria de sollozos
 Sin parar sin cesar sin fin
 Asfixiándome en un potingue de
 Lagrimas y mucosidad
 Que corría por la garganta.
 Y ese día recuerdo el pensamiento
 De que sentí el odio de Dios
 no porque casi me morí,
 sino porque sobreviví.

Estaba sentada ahí, mirándome las manos, dándome cuenta que en verdad habían pasado los años y cada vez aparecían más de esos surcos que tenían las manos de mi mamá. Pensaba – tanto esfuerzo, tanto esfuerzo imaginándome y esforzándome para que se dieran cuenta cómo realmente era yo y finalmente ... piensan todo lo contrario.

Había aprendido las “artes” de tener una casa de clase media acomodada siendo en realidad sólo clase media. Como decía mi amiga Sara – podemos transformar un pedazo de cartón y un trapo en una maravilla para el hogar. Y sin embargo no vale nada. Y vale todo para nosotras. Otrora jóvenes universitarias inteligentes, hoy artistas por hobby y amas de casa a tiempo completo. Una mierda. Y mirándome las manos sentada frente a mi analista pensaba – qué triste mi vida ... esta pobre mujer debe estar harta de escuchar miles de historias como la mía, la de la triste ama de casa con talento encerrada en su sarcófago minimalista ecléctico contemporáneo decorado con mucho ingenio y poca plata. Qué triste mi vida y qué triste su vida.

Sara estaba por venir y yo estaba tratando de hacer tiempo mientras pasaban las tres horas que faltaban para su llegada. Me recosté en la cama y vi un poco de MTV. Luego fui al baño y me arreglé el pelo. Siempre me siento un poco insegura cuando viene Sara porque además de ser linda, ella también aprendió las artes de parecer más hermosa y más paja de lo que realmente es; algo que a mi madre nunca le importó enseñarme. Luego de arreglarme el pelo verifiqué que los almohadones de mi cama estuvieran bien puestos. Primero los blancos de lino deshilado, después los palo rosa haciendo juego con el cubrecama hindú y finalmente los almohadoncitos bordados en blanco sobre blanco. Algo que cualquier chica de Lima debe saber. Al final sabía que Sara y yo terminaríamos echadas en la cama y desbarataríamos todo pero en ese momento era muy importante que ella entrara y pensara, y mejor si lo decía – qué lindo está tu cuarto Valentina. Llegó Sara finalmente. Efectivamente estaba hermosa como siempre, aunque flaquísima pero eso era comprensible.

Estaba tan consternada que no se dio cuenta de nada de mi cuarto pero a mí no me importó la Valentina valiente había salido a la carga dispuesta a ser el holding de su querida amiga. Nos echamos efectivamente en la cama y lo desbaratamos todo. Sara estaba destrozada. Pert, después de ocho años de relación y uno de convivencia y a tres meses de su boda la había dejado.

Habíamos tenido ya varias maratones entre las dos tratando de especular cuál había sido el motivo. Sara siempre me repetía – por qué me dejé, valentina? Yo que hice todo por él, yo que lo conocí con el Opel que se caía a pedazos y sin saber qué hacer de su vida, yo que lo apoyé en todo hasta que logró hacer su maestría en ESAN y lograr ese puesto maravilloso que tiene y ese Audi maravilloso que tiene, yo que le decoré su casa con tres centavos y parecía que valía trescientos mil dólares, yo que le organizaba las fiestas más lindas del grupo con lámparas chinas

colgantes y rosas si era formal y flores silvestres si era informal, yo que lo acompañaba a elegir sus camisas de 250 dólares sin hacer una sola mueca (que era mi sueldo de todo el mes

por mis clases de arte para mocosos insoportables del franco peruano), yo que me la pasaba en mi casa esperando que él llegara cuando él quisiera llegar para decirle: amor te quiero, ¿Por qué me dejó? Mientras Sara se preguntaba todas esas cosas yo la escuchaba y pensaba qué queremos. ¿Queremos que nos den todo lo que queremos y nos quedamos en casa esperándonos? ¿Qué queremos Sara? Le preguntaba a mi amiga que entre lágrimas y con 5 kilos menos se retorció en mi cama porque no encontraba rumbo a su vida y me decía -¿quién se va a hacer ahora de mí, valentina? ¿Quién va querer a una mujer de 31 años, artista que vende de vez en cuando y vive con sus papás?

Efectivamente mis manos se parecen cada vez más a las de mi madre. Tengo 35 años y aunque parezca una vieja púber y use correa de tachas estoy envejeciendo entre almohadones de lino deshilado comprados en las ofertas del 80% de rebaja de Ripley y mi sueño eterno de ser alguien tan importante, tan importante como un presidente de la República. Pero para eso ya es tarde... Quizás Andrés logre su beca en el college en Nueva York y terminemos los próximos dos años allí. Yo aprovecharé y aprenderé inglés algo que realmente me hace falta y me avergüenza mucho no saber. Vasco también podrá aprender inglés y entrará a un nido o algo así. Se pasaran los dos años y regresaremos a Lima. Yo ya tendré 38 años y espero que Andrés consiga un mejor trabajo que me permita comprar las almohadas de lino en cualquier momento del año y no sólo en las rebajas. Quien sabe de repente me embarace otra vez. Total, como dice Andrés, preso por mil, preso por mil quinientos.

Y me pregunto nuevamente, al igual que Sara, cómo es posible que me haya matado haciendo de Andrés el hombre importante y reconocido que es hoy, decorando la casa como Sara con tres centavos, cociéndome la ropa y cociéndosela a Vasco para estar pajas y no parecer clase media, cómo es posible que me haya convertido yo sola en una artista plástica y me haya echado las porras sola y me haya felicitado yo sola porque nadie nunca se dio cuenta en qué me convertí, y estar ahora aquí sentada frente a mi analista que chequea su reloj a cada rato, porque debe estar harta de escuchar siempre lo mismo y lo mismo y lo mismo. Yo que fui la perfecta cenicienta, la pobre esforzada que hizo sus cosas solita soy vista por mi familia política como la nefasta interesada. Como me dijo mi muy importante suegro - yo pensé que a ti sólo te interesaba ir en tu Mercedes a bañarte en tu casa con piscina en Asia. Booooooom. ¿Qué mierda es esta vida? ¿Qué hiciste conmigo, mamá? ¿Qué clase de mensaje doy a la gente para que piensen como tú misma me acusas a mí, que soy una derechista, engreída y frívola. ¿Será mi extraño gusto por los almohadones de lino deshilado y el perfume francés?

No puedo discernir aún si lo que sé de mí niña-Valentina es algo mío o algo de mi abuela o quizás de mi madre. Lo cierto es que en esta conjunción de narrativas femeninas, casi todas, Valentina no es verdad valiente. Valentina es débil y delgada y por eso enfermiza y por eso especial. Y por supuesto yo preferí quedarme

con la parte especial. Pero fue una cuestión de supervivencia no de lucidez. Valentina es especial. Valentina es inteligente. Valentina tienes que pensar. Valentina no escuches a tu abuela, no veas novelas con ella, esas son sonseras de mujeres sin vida. No imites a tus amigas del colegio. Ellas solo repiten lo que sus frustradas madres les dicen, a saber de mi madre - organiza tu vida para que el día oportuno consigas un marido para que te mantenga y te conviertas en Susan linda. No Valentina-débil-valiente Valentina tú eres diferente. Tus padres son unos intelectuales también diferentes. No son como esos intelectuales blanquitos de los '70s que jugaron a desclasarse y a ejecutar la teología de la liberación. No. Mis padres eran de los pocos izquierdistas progres pero de bajos recursos que lograron mezclarse con los izquierdistas de muchos recursos en una época de "todas las sangres todas". Mis padres si se creyeron lo de "todas las sangres todas" y a diferencia de sus amigos que vía las ONG's lograron hacerse sus casa en monterrico o surco o miraflores y poner a sus hijos en los reyes rojos, decidieron vivir en un barrio de clase media-baja, mandar a sus hijos a colegios religiosos de tradición en medio de una educación que combinaba lo mejor, o quien sabe lo peor, de Max Weber, el Dr. Spock, Habermas y la Izquierda Unida jamás será vencida. Y así yo y mi hermana Esperanza llegábamos a nuestro colegio de monjas en San Isidro a los 8 años discutiendo con el microbuseron sus derechos a irse a la huelga, compartiendo asientos con otros niños que iban a sus colegios nacionales, gasfiteros, carpinteros etc. Pero eso sí. Siempre, siempre, siempre con perfume francés.

Quizás en eso radicaba aquello que cuando niña pensé que era mi deferencia y me llevaría a ser presidente de la república. Pensé que había algo en mi especial. Siempre supe que tendría que estar anclado en cierta debilidad mal leída por los otros. En realidad era una fuerza. Ahora pienso que mi fuerza, mi especialidad era esa. Yo, junto a Esperanza, sentadas en nuestro micro de mala muerte al lado de gente que no conocíamos pero que encontrábamos día a día en nuestros largos trayectos de ida y vuelta al colegio perfumadas de Dior o Chanel. Mi especialidad no era que iba a ser presidente de la república, mi especialidad era que usaba Dior en el micro 148. Y ahora aquí después de 6 años de universidad católica, 8 años de artista plástica y 35 años de Valentina ... mis manos se parecen a las de mi madre y soy feliz con mis almohadas de lino deshilado. Una mierda. Una típica mujercita como la mamá de Kevin Arnold y sus clases de cerámica. Valiente Valentina perfumada de Dior tirada en la cama con Sara preguntándonos ¿qué mierda vamos a hacer para sobrevivir?

Miro al futuro y veo a mi madre. Inteligentemente justificando su domesticidad, con todas las teorías de vanguardia a la mano y con todos sus miedos y cadenas de esclavitud de aliadas. Tengo miedo. Valentina no es tan valiente. Pero que se vayan todos a la mierda. Me tomo mis dos xanax y me duermo. Y mañana será otro día. Y el lunes volveré a mi análisis, psicoanalítico por supuesto, si sé diferenciar el perfume francés también sé diferenciar otras cosas. Pero Vasco está por llegar del nido y yo no voy a mandarme con las cagadas que se mandó mi mamá conmigo por hacer la revolución. Mejor me tomo dos sobres concentrados de wawasana relajante y llamo a alguna amiga que no tiene nada que hacer como yo para pasar el

día juntas quejándonos y teorizando algo de neo feminismo. Podría ser Alicia. Ella si que me engríe. A pesar de ser menor que yo ya esta identificándose con lo que será su triste realidad. Seguro me regala una placa de stickers y nos pajeamos un rato con eso. A ella si que no le importa si mis almohadones son de lino o no. Ella todavía vive con sus padres y es su mamá quien se encarga de las cojudeces de la casa. Encima no puedo salir, tengo nueva empleada y no puedo dejar a Vasco con una desconocida. Bueno tengo para tres meses en casa. Salgo una vez a la semana a dictar mis dos horas de clase y regreso a esperar a Andrés que estuvo vivo por ahí haciendo su vida como mi papá mientras yo, Valiente Valentina teorizo un poco sobre arte contemporáneo, decoración de interiores, y post feminismo psicoanalítico. De repente puedo aprovechar estos tres meses y armar un grupo de patchwork y feminismo, así mientras cosemos podemos discutir algún texto de Lucy Irrigaría o Betty Fridan. Por supuesto perfumadas de francés. Ahí está la diferencia.

I was sitting there, staring at my hands, and I realized that years had actually gone by and that there were more and more wrinkles like the ones in my mamá's hands. I thought – so much effort, so much effort imagining myself and striving so they realize how I really was and in the end ... they think exactly the opposite.

I had learned the "arts" of keeping an upper middle class household when in fact it was only middle class. As my friend Sara would say – we can transform a piece of cardboard and rags into something marvelous for the home. But it isn't worth a thing. And it is worth everything to us. Once young, smart college women, today we do art as a hobby and are full-time housewives. A piece of crap. And staring at my hands sitting in front of my therapist I thought – how sad is my life... and this poor woman must be fed up with hearing thousands of stories like mine, the story of the miserable talented housewife shut in her minimalist eclectic contemporary coffin decorated with much skill and little money – how sad is my life and how sad is her life.

Sara was about to arrive, and I was trying to kill time while I waited those three hours for her to come. I lay down in my bed and watched some MTV. Then I went to the bathroom and fixed my hair. I always feel a bit self-conscious when Sara comes because, besides being pretty, she has also learned the arts of looking more beautiful and cool than she really is; something that my mother never bothered to teach me.

After fixing my hair, I made sure that the cushions on my bed were well arranged. First the white hemstitch linen ones, then the antique rose ones that match the Hindu bedspread, and finally the small cushions embroidered in white on white. Something that any girl from Lima must know. Eventually I knew that Sara and I would end up lying in bed and would wreck everything, but it was very important that the instant she entered the room she would think, and better if she said it – your room looks beautiful, Valentina. Sara finally arrived. Of course, she was as beautiful as always, though too skinny, but that was understandable. She

was so distraught that she didn't realize anything about my room, but I didn't care because the valiant Valentina was ready to be there for her dear friend. We did lay down in bed and messed it all up.

Sara was devastated. Pert, after an eight-year relationship, one living together, and only three months away from the wedding, had left her. We had already had several marathons together trying to speculate about his reasons. Sara would always repeat – why did he leave me, Valentina? I, who did everything for him, I, who met him when he had the Opel that fell apart and he didn't know what to do with his life, I, who supported him in everything until he could finish his master's at ESAN and get that wonderful job he has and that wonderful Audi he has, I, who decorated his house with three cents but it looked like it was worth three hundred thousand dollars, I, who used to throw him the most beautiful parties of the whole group with Chinese hanging lamps and roses if it was a formal party and wild flowers if it was informal, I, who would go with him to pick out his \$250 shirts without even blinking (which was my monthly salary for teaching art to those unbearable brats of the French school), I, who stayed at home waiting for him to come whenever he wanted to get home and to say to him: Honey, I love you. Why did he leave me? While Sara wondered about all those things, I listened to her and thought: what do we want? Do we want them to give us everything we want and stay home waiting for them? What do we want, Sara? I asked my friend, who was in tears and had lost 10 pounds, who writhed on my bed because she couldn't find a meaning in her life and said to me – who is going to accept me now, Valentina? Who is going to love a 31-year-old woman artist who sells her stuff from time to time and lives with her parents?

It's true; my hands look more and more like my mother's. I am 35 and, though I look like an old teen and wear studded belts, I am getting old among linen cushions bought at the Ripley's 80% discount sales and my eternal dream of being someone so important, so important like a President of the Republic. But it's too late for that... Maybe Andrés will get his scholarship for the college in New York and we will end up spending the next two years there. I'll take that chance to learn English, something I really need to learn and that I'm embarrassed not to know. Vasco will learn English too and will go to a preschool or something like that. The two years will be over and we will come back to Lima. I will be 38 and I hope Andrés gets a better job that will allow me to buy the linen pillows anytime of the year, and not only when they are on sale. Who knows, maybe I'll get pregnant again. Anyway, as Andrés says, in for a penny, in for a pound.

And I wonder again, like Sara: how is it possible that I've killed myself trying to make Andrés the important and well known man he is today, decorating the house like Sara, with three cents, sewing my clothes and sewing Vasco's clothes to look cool and not look like middle class, how is it possible that I became an artist by myself and encouraged myself to do so and only I congratulated myself because nobody ever realized what I had become, and sitting here now in front of my therapist, who checks her watch every other minute because she must be fed up with always listening to the same, and the same and the same. I, who was the

perfect Cinderella, the brave poor girl who did everything by herself, seen by my husband's family now as the horrible selfish one. As my very important father-in-law told me —I thought that you were only interested in going in your Mercedes to have a swim in your house with a pool in Asia. Booooooom. What a shitty life this is! What have you done with me, mamá? What kind of message do I send to people to make them think, like you, who also accuse me, that I am rightist, spoiled and frivolous? Is it my strange taste for the linen pillows and French perfume?

I still can't discern if what I know from my Valentina-girl is something of mine or of my grandmother's, or maybe of my mother's. The truth is that in this combination of feminine narratives, in almost all, Valentina is not really valiant. Valentina is weak and skinny, that's why she's sickly, and that's why she's special. Of course I preferred to keep the special part of me. But it was a matter of survival, not of clarity. Valentina is special. Valentina is intelligent. Valentina you have to think. Valentina don't listen to your grandmother; don't watch soap operas with her, that's the nonsense of women without a life. Don't imitate your school friends. They only repeat what their frustrated mothers tell them, which according to my mother is: "Arrange your life so that on the opportune day you get yourself a husband to support you and you will become Pretty Susan." No, Valentina-weak-valiant Valentina you are different. Your parents are intellectuals, also different. They aren't like those whitewashed intellectuals of the 70's who played climbing-down-the-social-ladder and practicing Liberation Theology. No. My parents were among the few low-income liberal leftists who managed to mingle with the well-off leftists in a time of "all the races together." My parents did believe in the "all races together", and unlike their friends — who through the NGO's managed to build their houses in Monterrico, or Surco, or Miraflores, and send their kids to the Reyes Rojos — they decided to live in a lower-middle class neighborhood, send their kids to traditional Catholic schools with an education that combined the best, or who knows if it was the worst, of Max Weber, Dr. Spock, Habermas and the Left, Unite, never defeated in the fight. And so, at 8 years old, my sister Esperanza and I would arrive at our Catholic girls school in San Isidro talking with the bus driver about his right to strike, sharing our seats with other children who went to their public, carpentry, or plumbing schools. But it didn't matter because I always, always, always wore French perfume.

Maybe that's what I thought as a child was my difference, and it would make me President of the Republic. I thought there was something special in me. I always knew it had to be based on some weakness misread by others. In reality it was a strength. Now I think that my force, my specialty was that. I, next to Esperanza, sitting in our ramshackle bus next to people we didn't know, but whom we met day after day on our long trip to and from school, perfumed in Dior or Chanel. My specialty wasn't that I was going to become the President of the Republic; my specialty was that I wore Dior on bus 148. And here now, after six years at Catholic University, eight years of fine arts, and 35 years of Valentina... My hands look like my mother's and I'm happy with my decorative white hemstitch linen pillows. A piece of crap. A typical little woman like Kevin Arnold's mother and her

pottery classes. Valiant Valentina, perfumed in Dior, lying in bed with Sara and asking ourselves: what the hell are we gonna do to survive?

I see the future and I see my mother. Intelligently justifying her domesticity, with all vanguard theories in her hand, and with all her fears and chains of slavery as allies. I'm scared. Valentina is not so valiant. But all of them can go to hell. I take my two xanax and I fall asleep. And tomorrow's another day. And on Monday I'll go back to my therapy, of course psychoanalytic, if I can tell the difference between French perfumes, I can tell the difference between other things too. But Vasco is about to arrive from preschool and I'm not going to do the same crap my mother did to me for the sake of revolution. I better take two packets of relaxing Wawasana concentrate and call some girl friend who has nothing to do, like me, so we can spend the day together complaining and theorizing about neo-feminism. It could be Alicia. She really boosts my self-esteem. Although she's younger than me, she's already identified with what'll be her sad reality. Sure, she gives me stickers and this entertains us for a while. She really doesn't care if my pillows are linen or not. She still lives with her parents and her mother is the one who looks after the nonsense of the house. Besides, I can't go out, I have a new maid and I can't leave Vasco with a stranger. Well, I have to stay home about three months. I leave once a week to lecture my two hours of class and I come back to wait for Andrés, who was alive outside, living like my dad, while I, valiant Valentina, theorize a little about contemporary art, home interiors, and post-psychoanalytic feminism. Maybe I can make use of these three months and set up a group of patchwork and feminism, so while we sew we can discuss a text from Lucy Irigaray or Betty Friedan. Of course, wearing French perfume. That's the difference.

thai

thai song

original by **unknown**
translation by **Robert Cutler**

Every man with words of love for his sweetheart must be able to speak with her easily, but with my love I just can't.

I want us to be the same as with other people, but I just don't know how to tell her.

It's true that I am not daring enough to tell her that I'm always anxious to be with her.

Men are bashful to fall head over heels with a woman when his heart is not brave enough. I don't know how to begin to move forward with my love.

A man can be bashful to love a woman with all his heart. Can she understand that a single man can be "afraid" to show his love.

Men are bashful to fall head over heels with a woman when his heart is not brave enough. I don't know how to begin to move forward with my love.

Repeat

original thai can be read and heard at:
http://www.ethaimusic.com/popup/a_0458.htm

vietnamese

còn chút gì để nhớ

written by A'nh Pham

1.

Hoàng hôn buông xuống trên miền xa
Cơn gió xuyên qua những mái nhà
Vội vã tia nắng vờn đôi mắt
Ngẩn ngơ đám mây chạy đi xa.

Hỏi hà bình yên, một buổi chiều...
Hỏi hà cơn gió, một hồn tiêu...
Bay mãi mãi bay về hư ảo...
Tìm đâu đâu tìm một chốn phiêu...

Gầm gừ tiếng mưa, ôi mùa nắng!
Gầm gừ tiếng gió, ôi mùa vắng!
Lá mùa thu quật tròn trên mảnh trời xa vắng!
Ô kia, một chiếc lá rơi!

Then cửa đóng sập, ôi đêm lạnh.
Gió gầm mưa rơi, ô hồ lạnh?
Lặng lẽ trong đêm tìm kỉ niệm
Đề rồi nhận ra "Ô "... sao vắng tanh?

2.

Một thoáng âm thầm một thoáng xa
Một thoáng mây mưa một thoáng tà
Bâng khuâng kỉ niệm nơi xa thăm
Một mảnh trời riêng ta với ta.

một ngày như bao ngày....

written by A'nh Pham

Dù hôm qua chẳng bao giờ trở lại
Dù hôm qua chẳng còn là thực tại
Nhưng xin hay nhớ rằng:
Ngày hôm nay bắt đầu từ hôm qua.

Dù ngày mai chẳng bao giờ đến
Dù ngày mai sẽ chẳng cập bến
Nhưng xin hay tin rằng:
Ngày hôm nay là bắt đầu của ngày mai.

