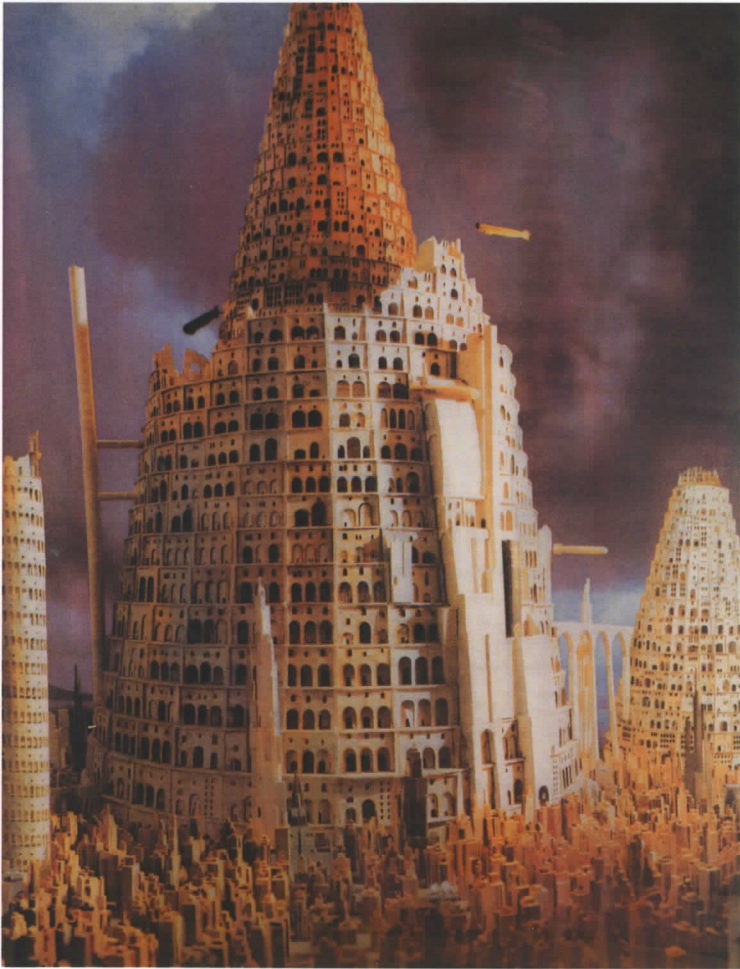


SUI GENERIS



**BARD COLLEGE
SPRING 2016**

József Attila, Victoria Robert, Will Kettner, Lun Li, Chloe Chappe, Fraiser Kansteiner, Osvaldo Lamborghini, Reina Murooka, Xinran Li, Gennaro Valvano, Shangyin Li, Alexandra Corbett, Ahad Ha'am Edith Grossman, Kathleen Keating, Hilda Hilst, Laszlo Csabay, Madeleine Calhoun, Salim AlQasim, Luisa Barbano, Olga Voronina, Michel Butor, Elsa Morante, Jacob Fisher, Sophocles, Tsuge Yoshiharu, Ethan Richman, Mashrou3 Leila, Maeve McQueeny, Catullus, Yarden Amir, Yoko Tadawa, Ovid, Boris Pasternak, Dylan McIntyre Serafina Savigano, Theo Lowrey, Velimir Khlebnikov, Qian Qi, Riham Ammar, Goliard, Nizar Qabani, Kevin Soto, Louis Aragon, Claire Gotch, Osip Mendelstam, Sarah Weinstein, Binwang Luo, Ameer Shalabi, Fyodor Tytchev, Melanie Mignucci, Pablo Martín Sánchez, John Cherichello, Valery Bryusov, Alessandro Cirafici.

Editorial Board

Lydia Herrick
Melanie Mignucci
Kevin Soto

Faculty Advisor

Patricia López-Gay

Language Editors

Arabic // Riham Ammar
Chinese // Yitong Luo
French // Victoria Robert
German // Dennis King
Hebrew // Yarden Amir
Italian // Daniele Biffanti
Japanese // Kayo Nakamura
Spanish // Mariana Aristizabal
Spanish // Fernando Lista

Cover Art

City of Towers
Lothar Osterburg

Special thanks to:

Kimberly Bail, the Department
of Languages & Literature,
Marina Kostalevsky, Denise
Minin, Ameer Shalabi, & Éric
Trudel

Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
Spring 2016

SUI
GENERIS*

****of its own kind***

Table of Contents

Foreword from the editorial board // 2

Artist statement by Lothar Osterburg // 126

"Fortune Teller"

by Nizar Qabani, translated by Riham Ammar // 5

"Maghawir"

by Mashrou3 Leila, translated by Theo Lowrey // 6

"At the Fountain"

by Ameer Shalabi, translated by the author // 8

"The end of a conversation with a prison guard"

by Salim AlQasim, translated by Sarah Weinstein // 10

"Goose Ode"

by Binwang Luo, translated by Lun Li // 13

"Written on a Rainy Night"

by Shangyin Li, translated by Xinran Li // 14

"Sending Off Master Lu Again as an Envoy to the East"

by Qian Qi, translated by Dylan McIntyre // 15

"Sending Off Master Yuan Traveling South"

by Qian Qi, translated by Dylan McIntyre // 16

Excerpt from "Transfiguration"

by Michel Butor, translated by Alexandra Corbett // 19

"Paris"

by Louis Aragon, translated by Victoria Robert // 21

Arabic

Chinese

French

"Te quiero mucho"

by Victoria Robert // 23

"The Sound of Spirits"

by Yoko Tadawa, translated by Reina Murooka // 27

Excerpt from "Godfather Death"

by Alessandro Cirafici // 41

Excerpt from "Oidopous Tyrannos"

by Sophocles, translated by Will Kettner // 49

"Moses"

by Ahad Ha'am, translated by Yarden Amir // 59

"Mamá"

by József Attila, translated by Laszlo Csabay // 63

"The Letters of Gennaro Valvano & Serafina Savigano"

by Gennaro Valvano & Serafina Savigano
translated by John Cherichello // 65

"The Light Thief"

by Elsa Morante, translated by Claire Gotch // 69

"Munounohito"

by Tsuge Yoshiharu, translated by Jacob Fisher // 79

German

Greek

Hebrew

Hungarian

Italian

Japanese

Latin

Poem
by Goliard, translated by Luisa Barbano // 85

Fasti V: Lemuria
by Ovid, translated by Fraiser Kansteiner // 87

Carmina XIV
by Catullus, translated by Fraiser Kansteiner // 89

Carmina XXV
by Catullus, translated by Fraiser Kansteiner // 91

Carmina XXVII
by Catullus, translated by Fraiser Kansteiner // 92

Carmina CI
by Catullus, translated by Fraiser Kansteiner // 92

Portuguese

(I), from "Ten Appeals to a Friend"
by Hilda Hilst, translated by Melanie Mignucci // 95

Russian

"Improvisations"
by Boris Pasternak, translated by Kathleen Keating // 99

"Silentium"
by Fyodor Tyutchev, translated by Kathleen Keating // 100

"I was given a body..."
by Osip Mandelstam, translated by Kathleen Keating // 101

"Asarhaddon"
by Valery Bryusov, translated by Maeve McQueeney // 102

"Refusal"
by Velimir Khlebnikov, translated by Ethan Richman // 103

Spanish

"9, Rue Truffaut"
by Pablo Martín Sánchez, translated by Madeleine Calhoun // 105

"The Body Has a Metaphorical Organ"
by Osvaldo Lamborghini, translated by Kevin Soto // 106

"That Hound"
by Osvaldo Lamborghini, translated by Kevin Soto // 107

Interviews

Edith Grossman: "*No tengas miedo*"
by Melanie Mignucci & Kevin Soto // 113

Olga Voronina: on her translation of Nabokov's *Letters to Véra*
by Chloe Chappe // 120

Foreword
by the editorial board

Translation has never before been more relevant, nor gained so much momentum, academically and culturally. This year, Bard hosted lectures from several important translators working in Portuguese (John Keene), Italian (Ann Goldstein), and Spanish (Patricio Ferrari and Edith Grossman), incubating a locus for translation scholarship in the Hudson Valley. On a national scale, Ferrante fever has swept America at the same time as the influence of foreign writers, like W. G. Sebald and Roberto Bolaño, has come in conversation with American literary traditions, a crossbreeding that has led to some of the most innovative work in contemporary literature.

But as Edith Grossman said in our interview with her (pg 113), translation, and other methods of intercultural exchange, face many challenges in today's world, where the U.S. presidential race is a contest of bigotry and hate, and the worldwide refugee crisis looms as the greatest humanitarian emergency of our times. In an era of massive cultural disconnect, translation becomes a political endeavor as well as an aesthetic one.

For the writer, translation becomes an exercise in honing your lingual dexterity—it demands the closest of readings and an understanding of the craft on every level, structural and syntactical. The choice of the right word, the right turn of phrase, is inseparable from literature and its modest mystery. For the reader, the pleasure is all the more rapturous. Reader, what you hold in your hands is a compendium of treasures plundered from vastly disparate times and places—contemporary and classic, traditional and strikingly experimental.

It has been a unique pleasure to work on this year's edition of *Sui Generis*. In it, you will find essays, poems, short stories, and even a libretto from each language taught at Bard (and then some). Submissions came from Senior Projects, the ESL center at the Learning Commons, and as far away as Bard Al-Quds in West Bank, Palestine. We, the editorial board, are honored to present such a vast array of work from Bard's endlessly talented student body. Each piece is rich in historical significance and linguistic grace. We only hope you enjoy reading *Sui Generis* as much as we have.

Lydia Herrick '17
Melanie Mignucci '16
Kevin Soto '16

ARABIC

مغاوير - مشروع ليلة

اولاً سنة حلوة يا جميل

ثانياً الليل هيكون طويل

قول لأملك ما تخاف الملهي على بعد رصاص

ثالثاً اللبس الاسود و انزل .. عالماً بس تتلج فوق التلال

و يصير الصبيان رجال .. مغاوير بعصمة الليل

علمونا عالمعب نلعب عصابات

شوب شوب أوصوك

شوب شوب أوصوك

شوب شوب أوصوك

كل ما تسوي عم نتسلي وينك أختفيت؟

شوب شوب أوصوك

شوب شوب أوصوك

شوب شوب أوصوك

رابعاً ما تحكي مع نسوان

علشان ما نسهر عالجتمان

و ما الست بس مقياس

لكرامته قدام الناس

غالباً في طبنجة بجيايه

وعلشان الصبي ابن بيته

حون ما حدّا بينطال

ادونيس ضحية الادغال

قارئة الفنجان (نزار قباني)

جلست والخوف بعينيها

تتأمل فنجاني المقلوب

قالت :

يا ولدي.. لا تحزن

فالحب عليك هو المكتوب

يا ولدي،

قد مات شهيداً

من مات على دين المحبوب

فنجانك دنيا مرعبة

.. وحياتك أسفارٌ وحروب

.. ستحب كثيراً يا ولدي

وتموت كثيراً يا ولدي

.. وستعشق كل نساء الأرض

وترجع كالمك المقلوب

Fortune Teller

by Nizar Qabani

translated by Riham Ammar

She sat with fear in her eyes,
Looking at my turned cup, she said:
My son, do not be depressed.
Love is your destiny
My son, he is such a saint
The one who sacrificed himself to save his beloved.
Your cup is a terrible world,
And your life is trips and wars.
You will love too much,
and suffer too much.
You will fall in love with all women on earth,
And you will end up as a defeated king.

First off, happy birthday, beautiful
Secondly, it's gonna be a long night
so tell your mom not to fear, the club's far from the shootings
Thirdly, wear black and come out, knowing that it only snows on the hills
and the boys become men, commandos in the capital of the night

They taught us on the playground to play like soldiers
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you
We were all having fun, where did you hide?
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you
Boy, boy, they shot you

Fourthly, don't talk to women
as we don't lose sleep over corpses
and women here are just used as measurements
for men's dignity in front of others
Too often there's a gun in his pocket
because he's his father's son
Here no one is caught
Adonis is the victim of the jungle

أعلى الدرج، بين أسراب الطلاب الخانقين، رأيت. كان مسرعا يمشي في الحديقة الأندلسية. كان هادئا. كان أكثر مني طولا. كان أضخم مني بنية. كان يلبس قميصا قحلي و بنطالا أزرق. عرفته من ملابسه.

عندما أصبح قريبا مني سألته: "انت الذي كان عند النافورة؟" حرك راسه موافقا. رفعت يدي سائلا عند المجد الذي لا يحكى.

رفع كامرته بيده اليسرى و أشار على اسفل كتفه الأيمن، على فخذة الايمن، و اسفل بطنه. أشار إلى ثلاث رصاصات مطاطية لم يطلقوها على جثته. اطلقوها على كامرته. اطلقوها على الحقيقة. لم أعرف اسمه و لم احتج أن أسأل. ذلك أكثر أمانا. أمانا لي و له. الآن، غير مهم من هو. وقف عند النافورة في مرمى النار و صمد. رفع يده يدعو صاح "صحافة". كان معه فقط كامرته و الأمل أن لا يكون ميتا في نهاية اليوم. كان طالبا.

استلم ثلاث شهادات. ليست من النوع الذي يعلق على الحائط وراء المكاتب. كانت شهادات تعلق على الجسد لفترة ثم تختفي و تختفي معها الحقيقة المرة. شهادات الألم المؤقتة هي الدليل الوحيد انه موجود. أخذها و رجع لحضن أمه كما لم يرجع الكثيرون.

اليوم لم نذق طعم الغاز المر، الرطب، الكريه البغيض، السلس الذي اعتدنا عليه. الرائحة ليست المشكلة في العادة؛ ما يأتي بعدها هو الأسوء. على كل، يأتي النسيم ليحرك قمم الشجر ليعلن عن كفاح النفس.

تخط الشمس بسمو. الهالة البرتقالية تتمدد على الارض، تحدد الظلال و نهاية دورة النهار. الزجاج المحطم على الأرض يعكس ضوء الشمس و صدى اصوات الغضب و اليأس. الأرضية الجديدة من الحجارة المحطمة تشهد على فاعليها و تحكي حكاية ما كان. و الجنود برشاشاتهم الكبيرة و قنابلهم الفخمة تراجعوا إلى حصنهم المدرع. لا يجب أن يقلل قدر الطلاب.

At the Fountain
by Ameer Shalabi
translated by the author

As I walked up the stairs, struggling through the swarms of scared students and faculty, I ran into him. He walked through the Andalusia Garden just outside Al-Quds. He walked calmly. He was a bit taller than me. More muscular than me for sure. He was wearing a navy blue button-up shirt and cowboy bluejeans. I recognized him from his outfit. I stopped and looked at him as he came closer to me. I asked: "Were you the one at the fountain?" He looked at me directly and nodded his head. I raised my hand acquiring the unspoken glory. He raised his camera with his right hand and with his left hand he pointed to the lower part of his right shoulder, he pointed just above his right kidney, and pointed to his right thigh. He pointed at the three rubber bullets the soldiers didn't shoot at his body; they were shooting at his camera. They were shooting the truth.

I never knew his name nor bothered to ask. It is safer that way. Safer for both of us. It doesn't matter who he is at this point. He stood at the fountain, in an open line of sight, and held the fort. He raised his hand and called out *sahafieh*—journalist in Arabic. He only had his camera and the hope he won't be dead by the end of the day. He was a student. He received three certifications. Not those which would be hung on the wall behind desks to collect dust, but ones that mark the body for a little while and fade, concealing the bitter reality. His temporary certifications of pain are his only real evidence that he exists. He holds on to them as he goes back home to his mother unlike many others.

Today, I didn't get to inhale the biting, moist, repulsive, loathsome, repugnant, abhorrent tear gas we were accustomed to. The smell isn't the problem usually; it's the aftermath. Nonetheless, the breeze moves the tips of the trees, marking the ongoing struggle to breathe.

The sun set gracefully. The orange haze stretched upon the earth, outlining the shadows of trees and the end of the day. The shattered glass mirrored the sun, echoing the sounds of anger and despair. The new floor of shattered rocks laid on the ground: a new battlefield witnessing the masses, telling the story of the undone. The battle is to be resumed when the sun takes its morning breath. The soldiers, with their big guns and fancy grenades, retreated to their fort of a vehicle. The students are not to be trifled with.

the end of a conversation with a prison guard
by Samih alQasim
translated by Sarah Weinstein

from the hole of my small prison cell

i see trees smiling at me

rooftops filled with my family

windows crying and praying

for my sake

from the hole of my small prison cell

i see your larger one

خاتمة النقاش مع سجان

سميح القاسم

من كوة زنزانتني

الصغرى

ابصرُ اشجاراً تبسمُ لي

وسطوحاً يملأها اهلي

ونوافذ تبكي وتُصلي

من اجلي

من كوة زنزانتني

الصغرى

ابصرُ زنزانتك الكبرى

CHINESE

咏鹅

骆宾王

鹅，鹅，鹅，
曲项向天歌。
白毛浮绿水，
红掌拨清波。

Goose Ode

by Binwang Luo
translated by Lun Li

Honk Honk Honk!

Groaning toward the sky with its serpentine neck,
Flowing on the emerald water with white plumage,
Swirling on the clean water red palms.

夜雨寄北

李商隐

君问归期未有期，
巴山夜雨涨秋池。
何当共剪西窗烛，
却话巴山夜雨时。

Written to the North on a Rainy night

by Shangyin Li
translated by Xinran Li

You asked me when would I come back, I don't know,
The pond has been brimming all night with the autumn rain at Bashan.
When shall we trim the wicks at that west window again?
And talk to each other on all the rainy nights.

重送陆侍御使日本

钱起

万里三韩国
行人满目愁
辞天使星远
临水涧霜秋
云佩迎仙岛
虹旌过蜃楼
定知怀魏阙
回首海西头

Sending Off Master Lu Again as an Envoy to the East

by Qian Qi

translated by Dylan McIntyre

Far away, the three states in the east,
Travelers, eyes filled with worry.
The declining sky makes the stars distant.
Facing the water, a mountain stream with autumn frost.
Clouds and ornaments moving towards the immortal island,
The rainbow banner crosses through illusion.
Surely you will think of the imperial tower.
Turning round, the sea heads west.

送原公南游

钱起

有意兼程去
飘然二翼轻
故乡多久别
春草不伤情
洗钵泉初暖
焚香晓更轻
自言难解缚
何日伴师行

Sending Off Master Yuan Traveling South

by Qian Qi

translated by Dylan McIntyre

I would love to travel with you,
Floating along like two light wings.
Homeland, how long removed?
The spring grass shall not wilt.
Washing the alms bowl, the stream's first warmth.
Burning incense, the dawn is even clearer.
Telling myself I cannot escape these bonds.
When will I accompany the master?

FRENCH

Excerpt from "Transfiguration"

by Michel Butor

Vous êtes devant une toile encore nue, d'une couleur quelconque, un grand rectangle gris par exemple. Imaginons qu'un caillou posé sur le bord de la cheminée, ou le visage d'une femme, ait attiré votre regard; il est facile pour l'œil d'en isoler un point saillant que vous traduisez, que vous reproduirez sur votre toile par une tache, mais les propriétés de cette tache au milieu de cette surface seront toutes différentes de celles que le point avait dans l'espace; la voilà, cette touche rose, perdue au milieu d'une immensité grise qui se creuse autour d'elle, devant laquelle elle se détache, qui détermine immédiatement, selon ses détails, un champ d'influences plus ou moins vaste, un mouvement qui se met à prendre tout l'ensemble; dès ce moment une possibilité d'illusion est là, mais dès ce moment la tache est l'endroit d'un objet qui nous cache son envers, la superficie qui nous cache un intérieur, nullement ce seul visage ou caillou d'où l'on était parti mais quelque chose de déjà tout autre qui flotte dans l'espace imaginaire suscité par ce premier geste.

Dès lors, si l'on ne veut pas se fier au motif, ce qui amènerait fatalement la constitution d'une écorce, d'un épiderme impénétrable, il faut poursuivre ce germe d'objet le premier coup de pinceau a introduit dans cette toile; c'est à cette apparition qu'il faut consacrer notre effort, et la seconde touche en sera la poursuite, une tentative pour capturer ce qui justement déjà s'échappe. Peu à peu la conspiration des taches va réussir à le tenir attaché. Ce sont liens qui sont des sondes. Bientôt il y a là, fixé, tout ce dont nous avons besoin pour l'évoquer, mais non seulement sa forme extérieure, dans sa veste et son pantalon de cuir, mais avec son sang et ses muscles et ses désirs et ses palpitations et sa pesanteur et ses rêves.

Ce qui se constitue dans l'espace devant la toile, et non plus de l'autre côté, plus à la façon d'une tapisserie que d'une peinture classique, ce qui se présente parmi nous sous toutes ses faces à partir de ce groupe de taches qui le résume l'étudie, tend avec passion vers tout ce qui peut naître tel autre groupe, s'apprête à le caresser, le considère, en a faim et soif, s'interroge à son sujet. C'est toute une aventure par conséquent qui a commencé dès ce premier pas, une aventure que le peintre a le devoir d'explicitier, de reconnaître, au moyen de tous ses souvenirs, de toutes les analogies qui se proposent entre ces ensembles plans et les habitants de l'espace. Ce travail, qui se sert d'évocations de plus en plus précises, certains détails devenant de véritables emblèmes servant à l'identification de tel ou tel corps, de telle ou telle région, va jusqu'au titre. Il s'agit donc d'un dialogue avec la toile qui engage peu à peu le peintre entier et son spectateur, non seulement sa rétine et sa main, mais toute son intelligence et la nôtre, tout son savoir.

Excerpt from "Transfiguration"

translated by Alexandra Corbett

You stand before a still naked canvas, of any random color, a big grey rectangle for instance. Imagine a stone placed at the edge of a mantlepiece, or the face of a woman has caught your eye; it is easy for your eye to isolate a single protruding point and translate it, to reproduce it onto your canvas by way of a mark, however the properties of this mark in the middle of the surface will be completely different than that of the point in space; there it is, the stroke of pink, lost in the middle of the grey immensity which grows hollow around it and from which it detaches itself and immediately determines, by way of its details, a realm of fairly vast influences, one movement which sets out to capture the entirety; from this moment the possibility of illusion is there but in this moment the mark also becomes the location of an object that will hide its opposite side from us, a surface that will hide its interior from us, it is not at all this stone or this face from where we're from but something entirely different that floats in the imaginary space created by this first gesture.

From then on, if we aren't relying on a pattern, which would inevitably bring about the creation of an exterior layer, an impenetrable skin, we must pursue this germ of an object that the first stroke of the brush introduced to the canvas; we must consecrate our efforts to this apparition, and the second stroke is the pursuit, the attempt to capture precisely what is already fleeting. Bit by bit this conspiracy of marks will succeed in holding the object together. These links are also probes. Soon, it is fixed there, everything we needed to evoke the object, but not only its exterior form, the vest and the leather pants, but also its blood and its muscles and its desires and its palpitations and its weight and its dreams.

What forms itself in the space on the front of the canvas, and not the other side, more like a tapestry than a classical painting, what presents itself among us by way of all of its faces that were fashioned by this group of markings that encapsulated it and studied it, reaches out with passion towards what could be born from another group, is ready to caress it, to consider it, thirsts and hungers for it, and questions its subject. The result is a whole adventure that began with the first step, an adventure which the painter must explain, must identify, by the means of all their memories, all the analogies which arise between these plans in their entirety and the inhabitants of the space. This task, which utilises increasingly precise evocations, certain details becoming veritable symbols that serve to identify such and such a body, of such and such a region, goes all the way to the title. It is thus a dialogue with the canvas that bit by bit fully engages the painter and their spectator, not only their retina and their hand, but all of their intelligence and and ours, all of their knowledge.

Où fait-il bon même au cœur de l'orage
Où fait-il clair même au cœur de la nuit
L'air est alcool et le malheur courage
Carreaux cassés l'espoir encore y luit
Et les chansons montent des murs détruits

Jamais éteint renaissant de la braise
Perpétuel brûlot de la patrie
Du Point-du-Jour jusqu'au Père-Lachaise
Ce doux rosier au mois d'août refléuri
Gens de partout c'est le sang de Paris

Rien n'a l'éclat de Paris dans la poudre
Rien n'est si pur que son front d'insurgé
Rien n'est ni fort ni le feu ni la foudre
Que mon Paris défiant les dangers
Rien n'est si beau que ce Paris que j'ai

Rien ne m'a fait jamais battre le cœur
Rien ne m'a fait ainsi rire et pleurer
Comme ce cri de mon peuple vainqueur
Rien n'est si grand qu'un linceul déchiré
Paris Paris soi-même libéré

Where is it pleasant even in the heart of the storm?
Where is it bright even in the heart of the night?
Air is drink and sorrow courage
Broken windows where hope still glimmers
And songs arise from fallen walls

Never extinguished reborn from the embers
Constant *eau de vie* of the nation
From Le Point-Du-Jour to Le Père-Lachaise
Again, the soft roses from August have blossomed
People from all around, this is Paris bleeding

Nothing shines as much as Paris under attack
Nothing is as pure as its rebellious face
Nothing is as strong not fire not lightning
As my Paris standing up to danger
Nothing is as beautiful as this Paris that is mine

Nothing has ever made my heart throb as much
Nothing has made me both laugh and cry like this
Like the call of my victorious people
Nothing is as great as a shattered shroud
Paris Paris itself set free

Te quiero mucho (ou l'énigme du TKM)

by Victoria Robert

Cachée derrière les boots en léopard et les escarpins à paillettes se trouve une boîte translucide sur laquelle sont dessinés des soutien-gorge. La logique aurait voulu qu'elle abritât mes sous-vêtements mais, à l'ouverture de cette boîte de Pandore mon cœur se serre. Voilà cinq ans que j'avais dissimulé ma peine au fond de cette boîte. D'un premier amour déçu et douloureux il ne reste que ce qui a survécu aux flammes de la vengeance mais surtout du désarroi : un bracelet en perles d'eau douce offert pour mes dix-huit ans et un châle rapporté de Syrie, seul témoin d'un pays encore alors loin de la guerre. L'écharpe duveteuse imprimée d'un motif cachemire sent un mélange d'humidité et de renfermé. Elle a cette odeur des friperies mal aérées ou des puces de Saint Ouen où objets et vêtements se retrouvent pour vivre une seconde chance. Si je ferme les yeux et hume le textile, je pourrais presque encore sentir son odeur à lui. Cette écharpe, que je ne quittais jamais, portée si près de mon cœur, gît là, froissée comme piétinée par un sauvage sèche-linge sans pitié.

Quand au bracelet, si fin mais si précieux à mes jeunes yeux d'amoureuse transie, j'aurais préféré me couper le bras plutôt que de l'ôter. Mais un jour, c'est lui qui me quitta ; comme une mise en garde, un avertissement lumineux dans la nuit noire, un présage de ce que mon cœur allait vivre quelques semaines plus tard. Aveugle comme je l'étais, j'ai choisi de le réparer, de le faire ré enfiler pour croire encore que rien n'était cassé. Cependant, il n'avait plus le même éclat. La petite breloque en forme de papillon semblait tordue, condamnée à ne plus voler.

Quand je vois ces deux objets, je ne me souviens que de la peine, de l'attachement matériel destructeur et des reliquats de douleur infligés par ses mensonges à lui-même et aux autres face à son manque de courage d'accepter sa différence. Quand je pense encore à lui, je ne vois plus que cette écharpe et ce bracelet refoulés aux confins d'une penderie. Je ne me souviens ni des bons moments ni du chaos dans lequel je fus plongée après la rupture. Je ne vois qu'un magma d'émotions, des bribes de souvenirs confus : un baiser dans le cou, un sans-abri me tendant un mouchoir sur la place de la Bastille alors que je me tenais seule, pétrifiée par sa lâcheté, le son de sa voix le soir au téléphone, le sentiment de ne faire partie de sa vie que par intérim ... Tout se juxtapose, s'entrechoque, se mélange dans un film saccadé où même moi je n'arrive plus à démêler la réalité de la fiction. Tout cela s'est produit il y a si longtemps que ma psy pense qu'il est temps de redonner à ces objets leur liberté, de les déculpabiliser, de leur permettre de retenter l'aventure.

Alors, les voici désormais sur la table soutenue par des tréteaux branlants en face de chez ma tante lors de la brocante annuelle de la paroisse. Perdus au milieu de l'éclectisme des autres trouvailles, coincés entre un vieux robot Moulinex et des disques des L5 et autres rescapés de télé crochet, flottants parmi des montagnes de napperons et des empilements de Tupperware caoutchouteux, ils commencent à doucement retomber dans l'anonymat.

Quand une vieille dame s'approche et regarde de plus près le châle, elle me dit d'un air surpris :

“Pourquoi vous séparer d'une si belle écharpe mademoiselle ?”

Et, tout à coup, tout s'éclaire.

“Parce que le souvenir en ternit la beauté.”

Je lui demande un euro symbolique, fourre le châle dans un vieux sac plastique et la regarde s'éloigner à pas lents avec le souvenir le plus précieux de mes années adolescentes.

Quant au petit bracelet, une fillette, fouillant dans le fatras du coffre à bijoux porte son dévolu sur lui et un bracelet Pocahontas brillant de mille feux bien loin de l'esthétique amérindienne mais sûrement plus proche du kitsch à la sauce Disney. A côté de son homologue clinquant il paraît bien ridicule. Le bracelet papillon est un peu grand pour elle mais cela ne semble pas la gêner. Elle me dit même sur un ton rempli de fierté :

“C'est mon premier bijoux de grande !”

J'ai envie de lui dire de le reposer tout de suite, d'apprécier les strass de Pocahontas et de laisser les perles aux états d'âme des adultes mais je n'en ai plus le droit. Ils ne m'appartiennent plus, ni le bracelet ni le garçon qui me l'a offert. Ils n'ont été que de passage et désormais au péage d'une nouvelle aventure je dois lever la barrière pour laisser la place à quelqu'un d'autre, à d'autres écharpes, à d'autres bracelets investis de sens (en attendant la prochaine brocante !)

Alors au moment de payer je réponds à la mère :

“Non, je vous l'offre en lui souhaitant qu'il lui porte plus de chance qu'à moi.”

GERMAN

Der Klang der Geister

By Yoko Tadawa

Ich kann mich noch gut an den Klang der kleinen Trommeln erinnern, die einen Maskentanz begleiteten. In dem Stadtteil von Tokyo, in dem ich geboren wurde, gab es ein Fest, bei dem ein Shishi-Löwe von Haus zu Haus zog. Der erste Tänzer versteckte sich in der großen Löwenmaske und bewegte das Maul. Der zweite Tänzer befand sich im dunkelgrünen Löwenkörper aus Baumwolltuch. Mit diesem Tanz beabsichtigte man, böse Geister zu vertreiben. Ich hatte keine Angst vor den bösen Geistern, aber vor der Löwenmaske fürchtete ich mich sehr. Die Maske hatte keine Ähnlichkeit mit wirklichen Löwen, die ich vom Zoo in Ueno kannte. Die wirklichen Löwen empfand ich als sympathisch, während die Löwenmaske oder der Maskenlöwe mich nur erschreckten. Ich kann den Ausdruck der Maske nicht beschreiben. Viel später in Europa entdeckte ich einen Gesichtsausdruck, der der Löwenmaske ähnelte: den Gesichtsausdruck der Medusa. Meine Mutter erzählte mir, dass ich damals sofort anfang zu weinen, sobald eine Trommelmusik zu hören war.

Musik hatte daher für mich von Anfang an etwas Unmenschliches. Etwas »Un-menschliches« ist frei von menschlicher Grausamkeit. Etwas Nicht-menschliches stammt auf jeden Fall von einem Nicht-Menschen: Zum Beispiel von einem Fisch, einem Baum, einem Tier oder einem Geist. Es ist gut, dass es unmenschliche Musik gibt. Nur so können Klänge neuen Raum außerhalb der menschlichen Gedankenwelt bilden.

Später bekamen wir eine größere staatliche Wohnung in einem anderen Stadtteil von Tokyo. Wir kauften uns einen Fernseher und viele andere elektrische Geräte. In den siebziger Jahren veränderte sich das Leben in schnellem Tempo, zumindest im Technischen und Ökonomischen. Aber die Klanggeister hörten nicht auf, mich zu beängstigen und zu faszinieren. Für die Geister gab es wahrscheinlich keinen Unterschied zwischen einer Tempelglocke und einem Kühlschrank, oder zwischen einem alten Teich und einem neuen Fenster: Sie alle boten unsortierte Geräusch-Kulissen, in denen die Geister erscheinen konnten. In schlaflosen Nächten hörte ich aus dem Fernseher traditionelle Theatermusik. Sie machte mir Angst. Die Trommelgeister schlichen sich aus dem Fernseher im Wohnzimmer hinaus und durch die Papiertür in mein Zimmer herein. Sie verführten mich in eine fremde Welt, die weder dem Schlaf noch dem Wachsein gehörte. Nicht nur die Trommeln, sondern auch die Flöten übten große Macht auf mich aus: Ihre Töne flimmerten in meinem Kopf wie zerfetzte Lichtfragmente. Sie unterwarfen sich niemals einem Akkord und blieben unabhängig von den

Ich kann mich noch gut an den Klang der kleinen Trommeln erinnern, die einen Maskentanz begleiteten. In dem Stadtteil von Tokyo, in dem ich geboren wurde, gab es ein Fest, bei dem ein Shishi-Löwe von Haus zu Haus zog. Der erste Tänzer versteckte sich in der großen Löwenmaske und bewegte das Maul. Der zweite Tänzer befand sich im dunkelgrünen Löwenkörper aus Baumwolltuch. Mit diesem Tanz beabsichtigte man, böse Geister zu vertreiben. Ich hatte keine Angst vor den bösen Geistern, aber vor der Löwenmaske fürchtete ich mich sehr. Die Maske hatte keine Ähnlichkeit mit wirklichen Löwen, die ich vom Zoo in Ueno kannte. Die wirklichen Löwen empfand ich als sympathisch, während die Löwenmaske oder der Maskenlöwe mich nur erschreckten. Ich kann den Ausdruck der Maske nicht beschreiben. Viel später in Europa entdeckte ich einen Gesichtsausdruck, der der Löwenmaske ähnelte: den Gesichtsausdruck der Medusa. Meine Mutter erzählte mir, dass ich damals sofort anfang zu weinen, sobald eine Trommelmusik zu hören war.

Musik hatte daher für mich von Anfang an etwas Unmenschliches. Etwas »Un-menschliches« ist frei von menschlicher Grausamkeit. Etwas Nicht-menschliches stammt auf jeden Fall von einem Nicht-Menschen: Zum Beispiel von einem Fisch, einem Baum, einem Tier oder einem Geist. Es ist gut, dass es unmenschliche Musik gibt. Nur so können Klänge neuen Raum außerhalb der menschlichen Gedankenwelt bilden.

Später bekamen wir eine größere staatliche Wohnung in einem anderen Stadtteil von Tokyo. Wir kauften uns einen Fernseher und viele andere elektrische Geräte. In den siebziger Jahren veränderte sich das Leben in schnellem Tempo, zumindest im Technischen und Ökonomischen. Aber die Klanggeister hörten nicht auf, mich zu beängstigen und zu faszinieren. Für die Geister gab es wahrscheinlich keinen Unterschied zwischen einer Tempelglocke und einem Kühlschrank, oder zwischen einem alten Teich und einem neuen Fenster: Sie alle boten unsortierte Geräusch-Kulissen, in denen die Geister erscheinen konnten. In schlaflosen Nächten hörte ich aus dem Fernseher traditionelle Theatermusik. Sie machte mir Angst. Die Trommelgeister schlichen sich aus dem Fernseher im Wohnzimmer hinaus und durch die Papiertür in mein Zimmer herein. Sie verführten mich in eine fremde Welt, die weder dem Schlaf noch dem Wachsein gehörte. Nicht nur die Trommeln, sondern auch die Flöten übten große Macht auf mich aus: Ihre Töne flimmerten in meinem Kopf wie zerfetzte Lichtfragmente. Sie unterwarfen sich niemals einem Akkord und blieben unabhängig von den Trommeln. Sie hörten sich zwar wie Flötenmusik an, aber vielleicht sind es in Wirklichkeit die Klagen der Toten. Keiner kann sie trösten oder beruhigen. Alle Sänger und Instrumente, die mit der Flöte in Berührung kommen,

werden von ihr mit Gewalt in eine bestimmte Richtung geführt, in die der Ekstase. Dort gibt es keine Sprache mehr, kein Gespräch, keine Antwort. Die Sprachlosigkeit war es aber nicht, die mir Angst machte. Mich bedrückte das Gefühl, dass ich schon einmal dort gewesen war, wo diese Töne herkamen.

Viel später hörte ich zum ersten Mal die sogenannten Obertöne in einem tibetanischen Gebet. Ein tibetanischer Mönch kann bis zu sechs verschiedene Töne gleichzeitig singen. Über dem Boden des Haupttons schweben mehrere Töne wie Geister in der Luft. Der Mönchgesang hat meine Hörgewohnheiten verändert. Ich fing an, jedem Klang aufmerksamer zuzuhören, indem ich in sein Gewebe eindrang. Jeder gewöhnliche Ton enthält mehrere Töne in sich, selbst wenn sie nicht so deutlich herauszuhören sind wie beim Mönchsgesang. Und ich glaube, das gibt es nicht nur in der Musik, sondern auch in den gesprochenen Sprachen. Ich habe mich immer wieder gefragt: Warum hören wir nicht im Alltag mehrere Stimmen in einer Stimme, wenn sie vorhanden sind? Sind unsere Ohren wie ein schlechtes Mikrophon gebaut? Hören wir sie nicht, weil wir fest daran glauben, dass eine Stimme nur eine Stimme sein muss? Ich hatte ein Bilderbuch, in dem ein fuchsartiges Tier abgebildet war. Seine Zunge war aus Flammen. So wie diese Flammen mit vielen kleinen Spitzen müsste eine Stimme aussehen, wenn sie einen sichtbaren Körper hätte. Im Allgemeinen wird es aber negativ bewertet, wenn jemand doppelzünftig ist. Traumtiere mit gespaltenen Zungenspitzen sind immer die Bösen, weil sie mehrere Töne gleichzeitig singen können.

Die Obertöne, die ich im tibetanischen Mönchsgesang gehört hatte, erinnerten mich unmittelbar an die Flöten, die im Nô- oder im Kabuki-Theater gespielt werden. Vielleicht ist diese Flötenmusik eine Nachahmung der Obertöne. Die Obertöne klingen für meine Ohren noch »unmenschlicher« als die Trommeln. Sie erzeugen ein intensives Gefühl, das weder positiv noch negativ ist. In ihrem Klang verlieren die Begriffe des Glücks und des Unglücks ihre Bedeutungen. Ein Gefühl, das unauflösbar gemischt und widersprüchlich ist, ein Gefühl, das den vermenschlichten Kategorien wie etwa Liebe oder Hass entflieht.

Ich vermute, die Obertöne kommen nicht aus den Menschen, wenn sie nicht-menschlich klingen. Vielleicht sind das die Geister, die sich in unseren Stimmen eine Weile aufhalten. Sie können nicht immer mit uns in Berührung kommen, aber während eine Musik gespielt wird, besteht für sie eine Chance, im Klang der Musik einen Ort zu finden. Die Geister warten auf diese Gelegenheit, weil sie keinen eigenen Klangkörper haben. Oder besser: Um für uns hörbar zu werden, braucht die Schwingung eine Mate-

rialisierung. Dafür sind menschliche Stimmbänder und Musikinstrumente geeignet.

Wenn jemand mich fragen würde, ob ich an die Existenz der Geister glaube, so würde ich antworten: Wahrscheinlich nicht. Aber wie soll ich sonst bezeichnen, was ich mit diesem Wort meine? Ich finde dafür kein anderes Wort. Das mehrdeutige, deutsche Wort »Geist« hat es verdient, dieses wichtige Wesen zu bezeichnen. Es klingt zum Glück nicht wissenschaftsfeindlich, denn man spricht ja auch von »Geisteswissenschaften«. Gehen wir also davon aus, dass es etwas gibt, was man auch als Geister bezeichnen kann. Sie zeigen sich unter anderem als Schwingungen in der Luft und wir können sie durch Musik empfangen.

Bei dem mongolischen Stamm der Tuvans sind es die Schamanen, die die Obertöne singen können. Dieser Schamanengesang verkörpert meine Sehnsucht nach einem Ort, an dem ich schon einmal gewesen bin. Ich weiß nicht, wann ich dort war: Vor 5 Minuten oder vor 100 Jahren. Ich bin von dort hierher gekommen. Heimweh ist aber nicht das richtige Wort für dieses Gefühl, denn es ist weder ein Heim noch die Heimat, zu denen ich mich hingezogen fühle. Es hat nichts mit dem Heimischen, sondern mit etwas Unheimlichen zu tun. Musik erweckt bei mir die Sehnsucht nach dem Unheimlichen. Sehnsucht ist auch nicht das richtige Wort dafür. Denn ich möchte in diesem Fall nichts sehen, sondern mich von Bildern befreien, die mir vertraut vorkommen. Hörsucht könnte ich vielleicht dieses Gefühl nennen. Meine Ohren wollen etwas hören, was mit dem Vergangenen zu tun hat.

Wenn ich mich auf die Obertöne konzentriere, so verschwindet der Hauptton. Ich höre keine Melodie mehr, die mein Hören nur in eine Richtung lenkt. Nicht nur bei Musik, sondern auch beim einem Gespräch passiert es manchmal: Meine Ohren fangen plötzlich an, die Sprache nicht inhaltlich zu verstehen, sondern die Obertöne in einer Stimme zu entdecken. Dabei lösen sich klare Silben, bekannte Wörter, verständliche Sätze zerstückelte Teile auf, und ich verstehe den Sinn nicht mehr. Hast du mich verstanden? Schläfst du? Alle Bemühungen, mich ins Gespräch zurückzuholen, helfen nicht mehr. Die Macht der Obertöne ist gewaltsam, wenn man sich einmal zu weit mit ihr einlässt. Zusammenhängende Sätze, die Haupttöne der Sprache, sind dann nur noch Abfälle der Obertöne.

Dabei fällt mir eine Komposition von Tooru Takemitsu ein: »VOICE for Solo Flutist«. Die Flöte ist ein Tunnel, durch den der Atemzug der Geister zu uns gelangt. Der Atemzug fährt wie ein Zug. Dabei spielt die Flötistin mal die Rolle der Lokomotivführerin, mal ist sie selbst der Tunnel. Ich höre, wie der Zug durch ihren Körper fährt. Ab und zu lässt der Zug Laute

fallen, die in dem Moment für unsere Ohren wie die menschliche Sprache klingen. Ist es eine Sprache, die man auf der Eisenbahnschiene findet? Wer spricht, wenn es eine Sprache ist? Bestimmt nicht die Flötistin selbst. Aber auch nicht die Flöte. Geschweige denn der Komponist. Wem gehört eine Stimme? Vor allem wenn es in einer Stimme mehrere Stimmen gibt, können dann all diese Stimmen aus einer Quelle stammen? Hat eine Stimme, ein Klang oder ein Ton etwas, was man als Quelle bezeichnen kann?

Ein seltsames Gefühl: Ich spreche einen vollständigen Satz aus, wie zum Beispiel »Ich fahre morgen nach Zürich«, und denke dabei, vielleicht bedeutet der Satz gar nichts. Vielleicht waren die Wörter nur eine zufällige Kombination der Abfälle von Tönen, die einfach durch Schwingungen zustandekamen. Vielleicht haben irgendwelche Geister eine besondere Schwingung in die Luft gesetzt. Mein Körper wird nur dafür benutzt, um die Abfälle zu materialisieren. Und ich bilde mir dabei sogar ein, einen Sinn in dem Satz finden zu können und handle danach.

Etwas tröstlicher ist es deshalb, Literatur zu schreiben, als die Sprache im Alltag zu benutzen. In der Literatur beabsichtige ich wenigstens nicht, eine sinnvolle Botschaft zu vermitteln. Literarische Wörter flechten ein Netz, und dieses Netz fängt die Abfälle von Schwingungen auf.

Die Abfall-Wörter fallen vom Himmel auf die Erde wie Sternschnuppen. Wenn sie gefallen sind, gehören sie nicht mehr zu einem Sternbild. Fragmente. Bruchstücke. Einzelteile. Eine Disharmonie herrscht zwischen den Fragmenten, die in einem Netz liegen. Ich weiß zwar nicht, wie das ehemalige Sternbild aussah, aber ich kann in diesem Netz selbst Linien ziehen und neue Sternbilder zeichnen.

Auch die eigene Stimme empfinde ich als ein Netz, wenn ich bewusst spreche. In meiner eigenen Stimme höre ich mehrere Stimmen, die nicht zusammengehören und deshalb eigentlich auseinanderfallen wollen. Sie kommen nicht aus mir selber und bleiben mir fremd.

Ich habe in der europäischen Musik eine Figur gefunden, die eine disharmonische Mehrstimmigkeit verkörpert. Diese Figur wird manchmal mitten in eine harmonische Einheit eingesetzt, damit ihre Besonderheit auffällt. Der »Teufel« wird diese Figur genannt. In der Kantate Nummer 54 von Johann Sebastian Bach wird das Wort »Teufel« ganz anders behandelt als alle anderen Wörter, die im Text vorkommen: Es wird sorgfältig in mehrere Elemente aufgeteilt, und jedes Element wird in Form eines Tons präzise benannt. Deshalb erkannte ich beim ersten Hören das Wort »Teufel« nicht. Ich war überrascht, als ich im Beiheft zum ersten Mal las, wie der erste Satz des Textes lautet: »Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel.«

Wer verliebt sich nicht in den Teufel, wenn sein Name so schön

gesungen wird. »Wer Sünde tut, der ist vom Teufel. Denn dieser hat sie aufgebracht.« Vielleicht hat der Teufel uns nicht nur die Sünde, sondern auch Musik gebracht. Wenn jemand mich davon überzeugen will, dass diese Musik geschrieben worden sein soll, um bei Sündern Angst zu erwecken, so würde ich dem nicht unbedingt widersprechen. Denn Angst ist auch eine Form der Vibration wie Musik oder Lust. Vielleicht versetzen uns nicht alle Formen der Angst in Bewegungen, die als Vibrationen spürbar sind. Es gibt auch Angst, die uns wie ein Käfig aus Eis einsperrt und einfriert. Ich meine hier aber die Angst, die von Geistern als Vibrationen in Gang gesetzt werden. Es zittert und kitzelt und juckt und prickelt unter der Haut, wenn ich diese Musik höre. Das Wort »Teufel« bringt seinen eigenen Körper zum Vibrieren, und die Schwingung überträgt sich auf den Hörer, selbst wenn der Hörer die moralische Botschaft des Liedes nicht verstanden hat. Das ist wahrscheinlich ein Grund dafür, warum ich seit meiner Jugend religiöse Musik von Bach mit Leidenschaft gehört habe, ohne etwas von der christlichen Moral zu verstehen.

Was Musik betrifft, so gibt es keine Epoche oder Zeit, die ich durchgehend allen anderen vorziehen könnte. Oft mache ich mir nicht einmal Gedanken darüber, ob es Jazz, Barockmusik oder Popmusik ist. Als ich noch in Japan lebte, habe ich auch nie darüber nachgedacht, dass zum Beispiel Bachs Musik eine »ausländische« Musik sein soll. So war es ein Schock für mich, als ich in Hamburg nach einem Bach-Konzert von einer deutschen Dame die Frage gestellt bekam: »Wie finden Sie unsere Musik?« Soll Bach dieser Frau gehören und nicht mir, nur weil er in den Städten lebte, die heute der Bundesrepublik gehören? Ich war entsetzt. Ich bin noch nie auf die Idee gekommen, zum Beispiel Nô-Theatermusik als »unsere« Musik zu bezeichnen. Denn was soll das Wort »wir« bedeuten? Geister haben sowieso keine Nationalitäten.

Vielleicht habe ich mit Menschen in meine Alter, die auch in Tokyo aufgewachsen sind, einige gemeinsame Klangbilder in Erinnerung. Aber diese Gemeinsamkeit hat nichts mit der Nationalität zu tun. Der Charakter der Klangbilder besteht nicht aus ihrer Herkunft, sondern er zeigt sich in der Art und Weise, wie die Klänge an einem Ort, an dem wir uns gerade jetzt befinden, gemischt werden. Ich habe eine CD, die mich immer an Tokyo erinnert. Da rezitieren 1000 buddhistische Mönche gemeinsam ein Gebet und in demselben Raum spielt gleichzeitig eine Jazz-Band. Das Konzert fand in einem riesengroßen Saal in Tokyo statt, in dem es etwa 50000 Sitzplätze gibt. In den siebziger Jahren spielten viele Rockgruppen aus den Staaten in diesem Saal. Es gab sicher noch viele andere Veranstaltungen in diesem Saal, von denen ich nichts weiß oder an die ich mich gar nicht mehr erinnern

kann. Kann sich der Raum an sie erinnern? Behält ein Raum alle Klänge, die schon einmal in ihm zu hören waren? Wie würde es sich anhören, wenn all diese Klänge gleichzeitig präsent wären? Was passiert mit dem Gefühl oder mit dem Bewusstsein eines Menschen, wenn er zwei parallel laufende Züge gleichzeitig wahrnimmt? Manchmal schalte ich das Radio an und lese mir dazu laut einen Text vor. Abgelenkt vom Radio kann ich den Text, den ich mir vorlese, nicht mehr verstehen, und die Sendung kann ich auch nicht verstehen. Dennoch ist es befreiend für das Gehör, das sich gleichzeitig zwei Richtungen zuzuwenden versucht. Das Gehör kann wahrscheinlich nicht zwei Stimmen gleichzeitig hören, in Wirklichkeit springt es schnell hin und her.

Es gibt eine Legende, dass Shôtoku-Taishi, ein Reformier, der im 6., 7. Jh. in Japan lebte, zehn Menschen gleichzeitig zu sich sprechen ließ und alle verstehen konnte. Die Legende wird normalerweise als Beweis für seine Begabung als Politiker verstanden, mich interessiert aber seine Art des Hörens als kreatives Experiment. Wenn ich zehn Menschen gleichzeitig zuhören würde, könnte ich zwar keinen von ihnen verstehen, dafür würde ich aber vielleicht eine Stimme hören, die von keinem gesprochen wird. Das könnte so etwas wie die Stimme des Schweigens sein.

In der Stadt Tokyo gibt es parallel laufende Entwicklungen, die miteinander nichts zu tun haben. Sie erzeugen ein Gefühl, in dem Angst, Wut und Freude identisch werden. Wenn ich mich an Tokyo erinnere, kann ich verschiedene Rhythmen, die parallel laufen, und verschiedene hörbare und unhörbare Stimmen und Töne hören. Geräusche von Bohrmaschinen, Musik aus Läden für elektrische Geräte, Schritte von Stöckelschuhen, Ansagen auf Bahnhöfen, die Schalmei des Tofuverkäufers Kinderstimmen, Autolärm, Zikaden- und Grillengesänge, hysterische Reden der Rechts- oder Links-radikalen, Hundebellen.

Nachdem ich aus dem Elternhaus ausgezogen war, lebte ich mit meiner Freundin zusammen. Sie spielte Geige in einer Tango-Band. Während ich in meinem Zimmer schrieb, übte sie im Nebenzimmer Piazzollas Stücke. Damals zitterten meine Finger heftig beim Schreiben, als würden sie versuchen, die Schwingungen der Geige nachzuahmen. Ich habe mich bis heute noch nie mit Tango beschäftigt, und daher kann ich Tango weder definieren noch tanzen. Wenn ich aber bestimmte Verzögerungen, heitere Traurigkeit und beunruhigende Vibrationen höre, erinnere ich mich genau an diese Zeit: die Zeit der Trennung von meiner Geburtsstadt. Ich wusste, dass ich bald nach Europa fahren und für eine wahrscheinlich längere Zeit dort bleiben würde.

Damals auf dem Weg nach Europa hielt ich mich einen Monat in

Indien auf. Ich war verunsichert und manchmal auch einsam oder beängstigt. Wenn man von dem alten Zusammenhang abgerissen wird, fließt zu viel frische Luft in den Kopf hinein. So lachte ich viel in Indien, als wollte ich den überflüssigen Sauerstoff auf diese Weise ausspucken. Ich wurde in Agra krank und lag halb bewusstlos eine Woche lang im Bett. Als ich dann wieder zu Kräften kam und zum ersten Mal das Hotelzimmer verließ, lachte ich besonders viel, weil der Mond mir zu rund vorkam.

Das Lachen unterscheidet sich nicht viel von der Angst: Während die Angst die Vibration der Hautoberfläche ist, ist das Lachen die Vibration des Bauchmuskels. Ein Schullehrer erzählte uns immer, dass die Seele im Bauch sitze. Von mir aus kann die Seele auch an einer Haarspitze sitzen – falls ich eine Seele haben sollte. Aber der Bauch ist insofern ein wichtiger Ort, weil er als Trommel des Körpers zu verstehen ist. In einigen japanischen Märchen kommen Dachse vor, die mit dem eigenen Bauch Trommelmusik spielen. Man sagt, dass Dachse gerne in einer Vollmondnacht musizieren. Wenn man also bei Vollmond nicht einschlafen kann, kommt es vor, dass man plötzlich eine Trommelmusik hört.

The Sound of Spirits translated by Reina Murooka

I can still distinctly remember the sound of the light drumming that accompanied a mask dance. In the district of Tokyo where I was born, there was a festival in which a Shishi-lion came from house to house. The first dancer hid in the large lion mask and moved the jaws. The second dancer was situated in a dark green lion body made out of cloth. With this dance, one intended to banish evil spirits. I did not have any fear of evil spirits, but the lion masks filled me with dread. The masks had no similarities with real lions, the lions that I knew from the Ueno Zoo. I sensed that real lions were likeable, while these lion masks or the masked lions only terrified me. I cannot describe the expression of the masks. At a later time in Europe, I found a facial expression that was similar to the lion masks: the expression of Medusa. My mother told me that back then I would immediately begin to cry as soon as I heard any drumming.

Music had therefore from the beginning something I found unhuman. Something "unhuman" is free from manlike cruelty. Something unhuman comes by all means from a non-human: for example, from a fish, a tree, an animal or a spirit. It is good that non-human music exists. Only so could new sounds form new rooms out of the intellectual world of humans.

Later, we acquired a larger state owned apartment in another district of Tokyo. We bought ourselves a TV and many other electronic devices. In the 70s, life in Tokyo changed quickly, at least technically and economically. But the sound spirits did not stop frightening and fascinating me. For the spirits, there was probably no difference between a temple bell and a refrigerator, or between an old pond and a new TV: they all offered unsorted sound sceneries, wherein the spirits could appear. In sleepless nights I heard traditional theater music out of the TV. It frightened me. The drumming spirits slinked out of the TV into the living room and through the paper doors into my bedroom. They seduced me into a foreign world, belonging neither to sleep nor vigil. It was not only the drumming but also the flutes that exercised great power on me: their tones flickered in my head like frazzled light fragments. They never subdued themselves in harmony and remained independent of the drumming. It sounded like flute music, but perhaps, in reality, it is the laments of the dead. Nobody can console or reassure them. All singers and instruments coming into contact with the flute are guided by it forcefully in a certain direction, in ecstasy. There, there is no language, no conversations, and no answers any more. It was not the speechlessness though that scared me. I had the oppressive feeling that I had already once

been there, where these tones came from.

Much later, I experienced the so-called overtones in a Tibetan prayer for the first time. A Tibetan monk is able to simultaneously sing up to six different tones at once. Above the bottom of the main note more tones float like spirits in the air. The monastic chant has changed my listening habits. I began to listen more attentively to each note by penetrating into its fabric. Every ordinary sound contains a plurality of sounds in it, even if they cannot be perceived as clearly like in monastic chants. And I believe that this does not only pertain to music, but also to spoken language as well. I have repeatedly asked myself: Why do we not hear a plurality of voices in a voice in every day life, if they are present? Are our ears built like a bad microphone? Do we not hear them because we strongly believe that a voice has to be only one voice? I had a picture book in which a foxlike animal was depicted. Its tongue was made of flames. If it had a perceived body, a voice would have to look like these flames with many small spikes. But generally, it is seen negatively if someone is double-tongued. Dream animals with split tongue spikes are always evil, because they can sing several tones at once.

The overtones that I had heard in Tibetan monastic chants reminded me instantaneously of the flutes that are played in Noh or Kabuki theaters. Perhaps this flute music is mimicry of overtones. The overtones sound in my ears even more nonhuman than the drums. They generate an intensive feeling that is neither positive nor negative. In their sounds, the concepts of happiness and unhappiness lose their meaning. A feeling that is inextricably mixed and contradictory, a feeling that escapes humanized categories like love or hate.

I reckon that overtones do not come from humans, if they sound non-human. Maybe, they are the spirits who reside in our voices for a while. They cannot always be in contact with us, but while music is being played, there is a chance for them to find a place in the music's sound. The spirits wait for this opportunity because they do not have their own sound-bodies. Or, better: for us to be audible, the vibrations require materialization. Human vocal chords and musical instruments are suitable for that reason.

If someone were to ask me if I believed in spirits, I would answer: Probably not. But how shall I then describe what I mean with that word? I cannot find another word for that. The ambiguous German word "Geist" deserves to describe this important being. Luckily it does not sound academic, as one also speaks of "Geisteswissenschaften", the humanities. So let us assume that there is something that can also be described as a spirit. They show themselves to others as vibrations in the air and we can welcome

them through music.

In the Mongolian tribe of Tuvans, it is the shamans who can sing overtones. This shaman singing embodies my longing for a place where I have once already been. I do not know when I was there: five minutes ago or a hundred years ago. I have come from there to here. Yet, homesickness is not the right word for this feeling because it is neither a home nor a homeland to which I feel drawn. It has nothing to do with the homeliness of it, but the unhomeliness, the uncanny nature of it. Music awakens in me the vicarious nostalgia for the unhomey. Vicarious nostalgia, *Sehnsucht*, is also not the right term for this because I would in this case not want to see, *sehen*, but rather free myself from images that instinctively come to me. I could perhaps call this feeling "sound nostalgia." My ears want to hear something that has something to do with the past.

If I concentrate on the overtones, the main tone disappears. I do not hear a melody that draws my listening in only one direction anymore. Sometimes this happens not only in music but also in conversations: my ears suddenly begin to listen to the language not for context but to discover the overtones within a voice. Hereby, clear syllables, familiar words, comprehensible sentences dismember into parts, and I no longer understand the meaning. Did you understand me? Are you asleep? All efforts to bring me back into the conversation no longer help. The power of the overtones is forceful, once you get far too involved with it. Coherent sentences, the main shades of the language, will be only the remains, the drop of overtones.

That reminds me of a composition by Tooru Takemitsu: "VOICE for Solo Flutist". The flute is a tunnel, through which the breath of the spirit passes to us. The breath moves like a train. The flutist plays at times the role of the train driver and at other times she herself is the tunnel. I hear how the train moves through her body. From time to time the train drops sounds that resonate, in that moment, like human speech for our ears. Is it a language that can be found on the railroad track? If it is a language, who speaks? Certainly not the flutist herself. But also not the flute. Never mind the composer. To whom does a voice belong? Especially if there is a plurality of voices in one voice, can all of these voices derive from one source? Does a voice have a sound, or a tone, something that can be called a source?

A strange feeling: I utter a complete sentence, for example "I travel to Zurich tomorrow" and think, perhaps this sentence does not mean anything. Perhaps these words were only a coincidental combination of the drop of tones that simply came about through vibrations. Perhaps ghosts have placed a particular vibration in the air. My body is used only for that, for the drop to materialize. And I even imagine being able to make sense of

the phrase and act accordingly.

Therefore it is somehow comforting to write literature than to use language in everyday life. In literature, I at least do not intend to convey any meaningful message. Literary words weave a net, and this net catches the drop of vibrations.

The drop-words fall from the sky onto the earth like shooting stars. After they have fallen, they do not belong anymore to a constellation. Fragments. Broken bits. Single pieces. A disharmony prevails between the fragments that lie in a net. In fact, I do not know what the former constellation looked like, but I myself can draw lines in this net and outline new constellations.

I also perceive my own voice as a net when I speak deliberately. I hear several voices in my own voice that do not belong together and therefore want to be separated from each other. They do not come from myself and remain foreign to me.

I have found a figure in European music that embodies a disharmonious polyphony. This figure will be occasionally inserted into the middle of a harmonious unity, thus striking in its particularity. This figure is named the "devil." In Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata No. 54, the word "devil" is handled entirely differently from all other words in the text: It is carefully divided into several elements, and every element is precisely named in the form of a tone. Therefore I did not recognize the word "devil" at the first hearing. I was surprised to read in the booklet for the first time the initial sentence of the text: "Whoever sins is of the devil."

Who is not enamored by the devil when his name is sung so beautifully? "Whoever sins is of the devil, since he has brought it forth." Perhaps the devil had not only brought us sin but also music. If someone wants to convince me that this music was written to awaken fear in sinners, I would not necessarily disagree with them, for fear is also a form of vibration like music or delight. Maybe not all forms of fear put us in motion, which are tangible as vibrations. There is also fear that imprisons and freezes us like a cage of ice. I mean here the fear that is initiated by spirits as vibrations in transition. It trembles and tickles and itches and prickles under the skin when I hear this music. The word "devil" brings his own body to vibrate and the oscillation transfers itself to the listener, even if the listener has not understood the moral message of the song. That is probably the reason why I have listened to the religious music of Bach with such fervor since my youth without understanding anything of its Christian morality.

As for music, there is no service or time that I could consistently prefer above all others. Often I do not give a single thought as to whether

it is jazz, baroque or pop music. When I still lived in Japan, I had never thought that, for example, Bach's music should be classified as "foreign" music. So it was a shock for me when after a Bach concert in Hamburg, I was asked by a German lady: "How do you find our music?" Should Bach belong to this woman and not me, only because he had lived in these towns that today belong to the federal republic? I was appalled. I have never had the idea, for example, to denote Noh theater music as "our" music. For what should the word "our" mean? Spirits do not have nationalities anyway.

Maybe I remember some common sound-images in memory with people my age who have grown up in Tokyo as well. But this common ground has nothing to do with nationality. The character of these sound-images do not exist out of their origin, but shows itself in the ways that sounds mix in a place, where we are right now. I have a CD that always reminds me of Tokyo. A thousand Buddhist monks recite a prayer together, and at the same time in the same room, a jazz band plays. The concert took place in a huge hall in Tokyo, with about 50,000 seats. In the seventies many rock groups from the United States came to play in this hall. There were certainly many more events in this hall, of which I do not know about or that I cannot remember anymore. Can the room remember them? Does a room preserve all sounds that once could be heard in it? How would it sound if all these sounds were simultaneously present?

What happens with the feeling or awareness of a human being when he simultaneously perceives two parallel trains? Sometimes I turn on the radio and read out a text to myself. Distracted by the radio, I cannot understand the text anymore, which I read to myself, and I cannot understand the broadcast either. Nevertheless, it is liberating for one's hearing to try to turn towards two directions at the same time. Our hearing can probably not hear two voices at the same time. In fact, it jumps back and forth quickly.

There is a legend of Shotoku Taishi, a reformer who lived in the 6th, 7th century in Japan, who let ten people speak to him at the same time and could understand them all. The legend is normally understood as evidence for his talent as a politician, but I am interested in his kind of hearing as a creative experiment. If I listened to ten people at once, I would understand none of them, but I would perhaps hear a voice, spoken by none. That could be something like the voice of silence.

In the city of Tokyo there are parallel developments that happen simultaneously and have nothing to do with each other. They create a feeling in which fear, rage, and delight become identical. When I remember Tokyo, I can hear different rhythms that run parallel, and various audible and inaudible voices and sounds. Noises from drills, music out of shops for

electronic devices, steps from high heels, announcements at train stations, the shawm of the tofu sellers, children's voices, car noise, cicada and grill songs, hysterical talks of the right or left radicals, dog barks.

After I had moved out of my parents' house, I lived with my friend. She played violin in a tango band. While I wrote in my room, she practiced pieces by Piazzolla in the next room. At that time, my fingers trembled vividly while writing, as if they were trying to mimic the vibrations of the violin. I have never occupied myself with tango until today, and therefore I can neither define nor dance tango. But when I hear certain delays, serene sadness and agitating vibrations, I distinctly remember this time: the time of separation from my birthplace. I knew I would soon go to Europe and likely stay for a longer period of time.

Then on the way to Europe I stayed in India for a month. I was insecure and sometimes also lonely or frightened. When one is torn from an old context, too much fresh air flows into the head. So I laughed a lot in India, as if I wanted to spit out the unnecessary oxygen this way. I got sick in Agra and was semi-conscious all week long in bed. When I had recovered again and left the hotel room for the first time, I laughed even more because the moon appeared too round to me.

Laughter does not differ much from fear: while fear is the vibration of the skin's surface, laughter is the vibration of the abdominal muscles. A schoolteacher always told us that the soul sits in the abdomen. For all I care the soul can also sit at the tip of hair - if I should have a soul. But the abdomen is an important place because it is to be understood as the drum of the body. In some Japanese fairy tales, there are badgers that play drums on their own bellies. One says that badgers love to make music on the night of a full moon. So if you cannot fall asleep at the full moon, it can happen that you suddenly hear the music of drums.

Excerpt from "Godfather Death"
by Alessandro Cirafici

Vorspiel

(Finsternis. Hinter den Kulissen steht der Chor.)
(Überschneidung; wiederholt)

der Chor

(leise)

Es war einmal.

M 1

(leise)

Es war einmal.

W 1

Tod (beat) Heilig ist der Tod.

M 2

Ewiger Tod.

W 2

Es war einmal (beat) Im Anfang war.

M 3, M 4, W 3, W 4

(laut)

Finster! (beat) (leise) und leer.

M 6-8, W 6-8

(laut)

Heiliger Tod!

M 5, W 5

(leise)

Finster. (beat)
Leer.

M 9-10

W 9-10

der Tod am Anfang und am Ende.

(Schweigen)

der Chor

Vor der Schöpfung der Welt war Finsternis und Leere.
Und einer lebte darin,
vor dem sich alle Menschen nun fürchten.

(Überschneidung; wiederholt)

der Chor

M 1-2, W 1-2

Es war einmal in dieser Finsternis.

W 3-6

(Laut)

Ewig (beat) Ewig ist der Tod!

M 3-6

In dieser Finsternis lebte einer.

M 7-8, W 7-8

Einer, vor dem sich alle Menschen nun in der Welt...

M 9-10

der Tod lebte.

W 9-10

Wir fürchten uns vor ihm!

(Schweigen)

(Leise und langsam)

M 1

Und in dieser Finsternis lebte der Tod.
(Laut)

der Chor
Heilig ist der Tod.
Heiliger Tod, Ewiger Tod.

(Leise)

der Tod für immer und ewig, Amen.

M 1
der Tod allein ist heilig. (beat)

der Chor
der Tod geboren aus der Finsternis und nun im Lichte lebend.

(Pause)

der Chor
Die Schöpfung der Welt. (Beat)
Diese Welt glaubte an einen lieben Gott, aber (Beat)
Dieser Gott ist unheilig.

Dieser Gott ist korrupt!
Er teilte die Welt mit einem falschen Glauben der Liebe.
Er führt Mensch gegen Mensch in seinem Namen.
Was für ein Gott ist das?
Existiert dieser Gott?

Heilig ist der Tod. Heiliger Tod, Ewiger Tod. (Beat)

der Tod für immer und ewig, Amen.

Wo in unserem Leben erfahren wir diesen lieben Gott?
Unter Menschen?
NEIN!!
Im Menschen lebt kein lieber Gott! (beat)
Im Menschen schöpfte Gott die Sünden der Welt. (beat)

(leise und langsam)

Durch Menschen schöpft Gott die Sünden der Welt.

der Chor
Heilig ist der Tod. Heiliger Tod, Ewiger Tod. (Beat)

(Leise)

der Tod für immer und ewig, Amen.

der Chor
Liebend ist Gott nicht. So steht es schon in der Bibel!

(laut)

Er führt Mensch gegen Mensch und teilt Länder in seinem Namen!

(Überschneidung; wiederholt)

der Chor
M 1-2, W 1-2
Ich will die Menschen, die ich gemacht habe, tilgen von der Erde,
nicht nur den Menschen, auch das Vieh.

M 3-6, W 3-6
Und selbst das Gewürm und bis auf die Vögel unter dem Himmel;
denn es reut mich, daß ich sie gemacht habe.

(Schweigen)

(Schweigen)

(Pause)

(Laut)

(Laut)

(Leise)

(Schweigen)

M 7-10

So will ich all dein Reich mit Fröschen plagen, daß der Nil von Fröschen wimmelt;
die sollen heraufkriechen und kommen in deinen Palast, in deine Schlafkammer, und in dein Bett.

W 7-10

Auch in die Häuser deiner Knechte, unter dein Volk, und sogar in deine Öfen; und die Frösche sollen auf dich und auf dein Volk und auf alle deine Knechte kriechen.

(leise; flüsternd)

der Chor
Die Menschen sagen,
Wegen des Teufels; Wegen der Unwissenheit, aber (beat)
Wer schöpfte den Teufel?
Wer schöpfte die Welt und die Menschen? (beat)
Im Menschen lebt kein lieber Gott!
Durch Menschen schöpfte Gott die Sünden der Welt. (beat)

(Pause)

der Chor

(Leise)

Mit der Weltschöpfung hatte der Tod ein neues Reich,
in dem er der wahre Gott war.

(Laut)

Heilig ist der Tod. Heiliger Tod, Ewiger Tod. (Beat)

(Leise)

der Tod für immer und ewig, Amen.

(laut; schrill)

der Tod ist am heiligsten!
der Tod sei Gerechtigkeit! (beat)
weder arm noch reich,
gesund noch krank,
Mann noch Frau,
jung noch alt.
ihm ist es egal,
der Tod wird deine Seele mit zur Finsternis nehmen. (beat)

(leise, langsam, und flüsternd)

Wahre Gerechtigkeit
ist ohne Liebe;
sie bevorzugt niemand';
der Tod ist Gerechtigkeit! (beat)
Wahrlich ich sage: Sehet selbst und höret!

(Laut; schrill)

Mit der Weltschöpfung hatte der Tod ein neues Reich,
in dem er der wahre Gott war.

(Laut)

Heilig ist der Tod. Heiliger Tod, Ewiger Tod. (Beat)

(Leise)

Tod für immer und ewig, Amen.
Ende des Vorspiels

GREEK

Excerpt from *Oidopous Tyrannos*
by Sophocles
translated by Will Kettner

ΙΕΡΕΥΣ

ὦ παῖδες, ἰστώμεσθα· τῶνδε γὰρ χάριν
καὶ δεῦρ' ἔβημεν ὧν ὄδ' ἐξαγγέλλεται.
Φοῖβος δ' ὁ πέμψας τάσδε μαντείας ἅμα
σωτήρ δ' ἴκοιτο καὶ νόσου παυστήριος. 150

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὦ Διὸς ἀδυεπὲς φάτι, τίς ποτε τᾶς πολυχρύσου
Πυθῶνος ἀγλαὰς ἔβας
Θήβας; ἐκτέταμαι φοβερὰν φρένα, δείματι πάλλων,
ἰήιε Δάλιε Παιάν,
ἀμφὶ σοὶ ἀζόμενος τί μοι ἢ νέον
ἢ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις πάλιν ἐξανύσεις χρέος.
εἰπέ μοι, ὦ χρυσέας τέκνον' Ἐλπίδος, ἄμβροτε Φάμα.
πρῶτα σὲ κεκλόμενος, θύγατερ Διός, ἄμβροτ' Ἀθάνα
γαῖαοχόν τ' ἀδελφεὰν
Ἄρτεμιν, ἃ κυκλόεντ' ἀγορᾶς θρόνον εὐκλέα
θάσσει,
καὶ Φοῖβον ἑκαβόλον, ἰὼ
τρισοῖ ἀλεξιμοροὶ προφάνητέ μοι,

εἴ ποτε καὶ προτέρας ἄτας ὑπερ ὀρνυμένας πόλει
ἠνύσατ' ἐκτοπίαν φλόγα πῆματος, ἔλθετε καὶ νῦν.
ὦ πόποι, ἀνάριθμα γὰρ φέρω
πῆματα· νοσεῖ δέ μοι πρόπας στόλος, οὐδ' ἐνὶ φροντίδος ἔγχος
ὅ τις ἀλέξεται. οὔτε γὰρ ἔκγονα
κλυτᾶς χθονὸς αὖξεται οὔτε τόκοισιν
ἰηίων καμάτων ἀνέχουσι γυναῖκες·
ἄλλον δ' ἂν ἄλλω προσίδοις ἄπερ εὐπτερον ὄρνιν 175
κρεῖσσον ἀμαιομακέτου πυρὸς ὄρμενον
ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ.
ὧν πόλις ἀνάριθμος ὄλλυται·
νηλέα δὲ γένεθλα πρὸς πέδῳ θαναταφόρα κεῖται ἀνοίκτως·
ἐν δ' ἄλοχοι πολιαὶ τ' ἐπι ματέρες
ἀχὰν παραβώμιον ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαν
λυγρῶν πόνων ἰκετῆρες ἐπιστενάχουσιν.
παιὰν δὲ λάμπει στονόεσσά τε γῆρυς ὄμαυλος
ὧν ὑπερ, ὦ χρυσέα θύγατερ Διός,

εὐῶπα πέμψον ἀλκάν.

Ἄρεά τε τὸν μαλερόν, ὃς νῦν ἄχαλκος ἀσπίδων
φλέγει με περιβόατον, ἀντιάζω
παλίσυτον δράμημα νωτίσαι πάτρας
ἔπουρον, εἴτ' ἐς μέγαν θάλαμον Ἀμφιτρίτας
εἴτ' ἐς τὸν ἀπόξενον ὄρμων
Θρήκιον κλύδωνα·
τελεῖν γὰρ εἴ τι νύξ ἀφῆ,
τοῦτ' ἐπ' ἡμᾶρ ἔρχεται·
τόν, ὦ τᾶν πυρφόρων
ἀστραπᾶν κράτη νέμων, 200
ὦ Ζεῦ πάτερ, ὑπὸ σῶ φθίσσον κεραυνῶ,
Λύκει' ἄναξ, τὰ τε σὰ χρυσοστρόφων ἀπ' ἀγκυλᾶν
βέλεα θέλοισ' ἂν ἀδάματ' ἐνδατεῖσθαι
ἀρωγὰ προσταχθέντα τὰς τε πυρφόρους
Ἄρτεμιδος αἴγλας, ξὺν αἷς Λύκι' ὄρεα διάσσει·
τὸν χρυσομίτραν τε κικλήσκω,
τᾶσδ' ἐπώνυμον γᾶς,
οἰνώπα Βάκχον εὔιον,
Μαινάδων ὁμόστολον,
πελασθῆναι φλέγοντ'
ἀγλαῶπι < >
πεύκα ' πὶ τὸν ἀπότιμον ἐν θεοῖς θεόν.

ΟΙΔΙΠΟΥΣ

αἰτεῖς· ἃ δ' αἰτεῖς, τᾶμ' ἐὰν θέλης ἔπη
κλύων δέχεσθαι τῇ νόσῳ θ' ὑπηρετεῖν,
ἀλκὴν λάβοις ἂν κἀνακούφισιν κακῶν·
ἀγὼ ξένος μὲν τοῦ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐξερῶ,
ξένος δὲ τοῦ πραχθέντος· οὐ γὰρ ἂν μακρὰν
ἴχνηνον αὐτός, μὴ οὐκ ἔχων τι σύμβολον,
νῦν δ' ὕστερος γὰρ ἀστός εἰς ἀστὸς τελῶ,
ὑμῖν προφωνῶ πᾶσι Καδμείοις τάδε·
ὅστις ποθ' ὑμῶν Λάϊον τὸν Λαβδάκου
κάτοιδεν ἀνδρὸς ἐκ τίνος διώλετο, 225
τοῦτον κελεύω πάντα σημαίνειν ἐμοί·
κεῖ μὲν φοβεῖται, τοῦπικλημ' ὑπεξελεῖν
αὐτὸν καθ' αὐτοῦ· πείσεται γὰρ ἄλλο μὲν
ἀστεργές οὐδέν. γῆς δ' ἄπεισιν ἀσφαλῆς.
εἰ δ' αὖ τις ἄλλον οἶδεν ἐξ ἄλλης χθονὸς

τὸν αὐτόχειρα, μὴ σιωπάτω· τὸ γὰρ
κέρδος τελῶ ἴγῳ χῆ χάρις προσκείσεται.
εἰ δ' αὖ σιωπήσεσθε, καὶ τις ἢ φίλου
δείσας ἀπώσει τοῦπος ἢ χαυτοῦ τόδε,
ἄκ τῶνδε δράσω, ταῦτα χρῆ κλύειν ἐμοῦ.
τὸν ἄνδρ' ἀπαυδῶ τοῦτον, ὅστις ἐστί, γῆς
τῆσδ', ἥς ἐγὼ κράτη τε καὶ θρόνους νέμω,
μήτ' εἰσδέχεσθαι μήτε προσφωνεῖν τινα,
μήτ' ἐν θεῶν εὐχαῖσι μήτε θύμασιν
κοινὸν ποεῖσθαι, μήτε χέρνιβας νέμειν·
ὠθεῖν δ' ἀπ' οἴκων πάντας, ὡς μιάσματος
τοῦδ' ἡμῖν ὄντος, ὡς τὸ Πυθικὸν θεοῦ
μαντεῖον ἐξέφηγεν ἀρτίως ἐμοί.
ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τοιόσδε τῷ τε δαίμονι
τῷ τ' ἀνδρὶ τῷ θανόντι σύμμαχος πέλω·
κατεύχομαι δὲ τὸν δεδρακότ', εἴτε τις
εἰς ὧν λέληθεν εἴτε πλειόνων μέτα,
κακὸν κακῶς νιν ἄμορον ἐκτρίψαι βίον·
ἐπεύχομαι δ', οἴκοισιν εἰ ξυνέστιος
ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς γένοιτ' ἐμοῦ συνειδότος, 250
παθεῖν ἄπερ τοῖσδ' ἀρτίως ἡρασάμην.
ὕμῖν δὲ ταῦτα πάντ' ἐπισκῆπτω τελεῖν,
ὕπερ τ' ἐμαυτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τε τῆσδέ τε
γῆς ὧδ' ἀκάρπως καθέως ἐφθαρμένης.
οὐδ' εἰ γὰρ ἦν τὸ πρᾶγμα μὴ θεήλατον,
ἀκάθαρτον ὑμᾶς εἰκὸς ἦν οὕτως ἔαν,
ἀνδρός γ' ἀρίστου βασιλέως τ' ὀλωλότος,
ἀλλ' ἐξερευνᾶν· νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ κυρῶ γ' ἐγὼ
ἔχων μὲν ἀρχὰς ἄς ἐκεῖνος εἶχε πρῖν,
ἔχων δὲ λέκτρα καὶ γυναῖχ' ὀμόσπορον,
κοινῶν τε παίδων κοῖν' ἄν, εἰ κείνῳ γένος
μὴ δυστύχησεν, ἦν ἂν ἐκπεφυκότα·
νῦν δ' ἐς τὸ κείνου κρατ' ἐνήλαθ' ἢ τύχη·
ἀνθ' ὧν ἐγὼ τάδ', ὡσπερὶ τοῦμοῦ πατρός,
ὑπερμαχοῦμαι κάπῃ πᾶν ἀφίξομαι,
ζητῶν τὸν αὐτόχειρα τοῦ φόνου λαβεῖν,
τῷ Λαβδακείῳ παιδὶ Πολυδώρου τε καὶ
τοῦ πρόσθε Κάδμου τοῦ πάλαι τ' Ἀγήνορος.
καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς μὴ δρῶσιν εὔχομαι θεοὺς
μήτ' ἄροτον αὐτοῖς γῆς ἀνιέναι τινα

μήτ' οὖν γυναικῶν παῖδας, ἀλλὰ τῷ πότμῳ
τῷ νῦν φθερεῖσθαι κάτι τοῦδ' ἐχθίονι.
ὕμῖν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοισι Καδμείοις, ὅσοις
τάδ' ἔστ' ἀρέσκονθ', ἢ τε σύμμαχος Δίκη
χοῖ πάντες εὐ ξυνεῖεν εἰσαεῖ θεοί. 275

ΧΟΡΟΣ

ὡσπερ μ' ἀραῖον ἔλαβες, ὧδ', ἄναξ, ἐρῶ.
οὔτ' ἔκτανον γὰρ οὔτε τὸν κτανόντ' ἔχω
δείξαι. τὸ δὲ ζήτημα τοῦ πέμψαντος ἦν
Φοίβου τόδ' εἰπεῖν, ὅστις εἴργασται ποτε.

ΟΙ.

δίκαι' ἔλεξας· ἀλλ' ἀναγκάσαι θεοὺς
ἂν μὴ θέλωσιν οὐδ' ἂν εἰς δύναιτ' ἀνήρ.

Excerpt from "Oidipous Tyrannos"
translated by Will Kettner

PRIEST

Up now, children. This is why we
journeyed here. For promises.
Lord Phoibos gave this warning, may he
save us now, remove the plague.

150

[exit Oidipous; the Priest and children; there remains a group of Old Men]

CHORUS OF OLD MEN

Zeus will shape us happy answers—he will say what's reached
our sunlit Thebes from golden
Pythia, but even so, my mind at least is terrified, exhausted in
presentiments, trembling—O,
healer out of
Dēlos: How could I conceive of what you'll make of me? Is it un-
known as yet?
Or do the seasons wheel it back to some arranged
position? Speak! Immortal Message! son of golden Hope—

...

Immortal Zeus' daughter. Now before the rest I call
Athena and her
sister, guardian of Earth, who fills the market's
famous, rounded throne, this
Artemis—and Phoibos, distant
marksman—Yes! Appear to me, a
threefold dam against what's on its way... And if undoing
ever loomed above this city, you displaced that
torch of misery. You will again.

...

Aah no, no! Innumerable misery
upon us! Masses

sick and thought without
a weapon we could use against it. Famous country
not a generation will be added to, the
women, in the agony of labor, break! Ah, ...

One upon the other, see the birds
gone faster on their wings than bloodless
fire...

lighting on the shore of Evening's god.
Innumerable... they become the city's
death. Children laid unpitied
at our feet, do we ignore it? Or the
ashen hair of mourners at the altars, mothers, wives of
every home, the incantations hoarse and—it's as if
one person's... sounded clear despite its roughness.
Send us vision, Zeus' golden daughter.
Sight to find escape.

...

Ares, madman, stripped of his
reflective shield, burns me
though I cry and beg him: Now!
You turn your back and run where nothing's in the way to
leave my fatherland! Whether to
the Sea of Amphitrite
or Thracian harbors,
so unwelcome.
But if night's completion won't be
realized, day will reach us.
Ares then... the fire of the
instant's very flash and Father Zeus, the sole
possessor of the lightning bolt, has ended him.

175

200

...

Lykeian Apollo... I would even ask the
twisting gold that strings your bow
to share those arrows no man breaks, to rain
down charity—the sunlight's fire
also, also Artemis

within it, shot above Lykeas'
mountains. And I'll
call aloud the one of golden edge, that
named this country, drunk-eyed Bacchus, Eyoh!
Closer, friend
of Mainadai, and burn the
blinding
torch against that god the gods despise—

[enter Oidipous]

OIDIPOUS

Well, as for the object of your prayers, if you'll
accept my words and minister to illness, an
escape is to be had—A chance to soar away
from underneath the curse...! Stranger to the whole
report as much as the occurrence, I address it
nonetheless, and yet, without this information,
couldn't trace him all too much myself. I have been
a citizen among you only since. So, this word to
all Kadmeans: Laïos, the son of Labdakus—if one
among you's seen the man who's brought him
to his end—he shows me everything, I
order it. And if he's frightened, he must tear this private
accusation from himself, and know no further
heartless punishment: safely he will leave
the country. If you know a man abroad
is guilty, don't be silent! I'll compile
a reward; there will be gratitude.
But if you tell me nothing, yes if anyone will
cast aside in fear what friends've told him, what
he's told himself—then it is time you hear
how I'll react. I will deny this man, whoever
he might be, the right within this country
where I manage both the power and the throne,
to be received or even greeted by a person,
to partake in hymns or offerings to gods, to
handle water. All will cast him from their
houses, our defilement, exactly as the Pythia
spoke to me the prophecies of god.

225

I come to prove myself defender of the
daimon and the murdered man. I pray
for him that did it—whether one man
has evaded us, or many, at his side—that he
might polish off this dreadful, fateless life in
dread! I pray, if he has shared my house's
warmth, and if I knew him, may I
suffer what I've promised to the people.
I depend upon you answering this charge,
and that you act on my behalf, the god's behalf,
and for the ruins of this withered, godless land.
And if a god had not impelled this action, still
it was unreasonable, leaving such impurity—
the best of men—a king was dead. You should've
analyzed the problem! Only now, because it's
I the power this man once possessed has passed to,
I that use his marriage bed, his wife—we
two, if he had had more luck with having
any, would've even shared our children!
As it is, misfortune smashed against his
head—and just as if he were my father, I will
take my vengeance, nothing will
repulse me in my search to apprehend the
hand of murder! Yes, for Labdakus! the son of
Polydōrus, then of Kadmos, then of Agēnor the
ancient! Anyone who takes no part in my activities—
I pray the gods will stay you from the harvest of the
earth, and give no children by your wives.
May our present doom destroy you, may it
worsen! But for you, for you, the rest of
the Kadmeans, who approve: our ally, Justice—
please, escort us, all eternal gods besides.

250

275

Ch. As if you'd bound me to a curse, my lord, I will
confess: I didn't kill him and cannot produce the
killer. But the question—who committed this—
perhaps its prompter, Phoibos, ought to answer it.

Oid. Yes, well said, and yet, compel the
gods against their will? No human could.

HEBREW

כשאני שומע את החוקרים מתפלספים בדבר השפעתם של 'גבורי ההיסטוריה' על מהלך החיים של המין האנושי, שהללו אומרים: 'הגבורים' הם יוצרי ההיסטוריה, והעם אינו אלא חומר ליצירתם; והללו אומרים: לא, כי העם הוא הכוח המקורי, וגבוריו בכל דור הם אך תולדות מחויבות ממצבו של הדור; כשאני שומע את הופחים האלה, אומר אני לעצמי: כמה עלולים הפלוסופים לעצום עיניהם מראות מה שלפניהם ולבקש בדרכים רחוקים את הקרוב להם! והרי הדבר גלוי, שגבורי ההיסטוריה האמתיים, כלומר אלו שנהיו לכוחות פועלים בחיי המין האנושי לדורות, אינם כלל בריות מוחשיות שהיו במציאות באיזה זמן. כי אין לך גבור היסטורי, שלא בצטיירה צורתו הרוחנית בדמיון העם באופן שונה לגמרי ממה שהיתה במציאות, והציור הדמיוני הזה, שיצר לו העם לפי צרכיו ונטות רוחו, הוא הוא הגבור האמתי, שהשפעתו מתמדת והולכת, לפעמים אלפי שנה, – ולא האורייגנל המוחשי, שהיה זמן קצר במציאות, והעם לא ראהו כלל כמו שהיה...

וכשאני רואה את המלומדים מתאבקים בעפר ספרים וכתבים עתיקים, בשביל להעלות מקברם את 'גבורי ההיסטוריה' בצורתם האמתית, ומאמינים הם עם זה, שמאבדים מאור עיניהם לשם 'האמת ההיסטורית', – אומר אני לעצמי: כמה עלולים המלומדים להפליג בערכם של חדושיהם, ואינם רוצים לראות דבר פשוט זה, שלא כל אמת ארכיאולוגית היא גם אמת היסטורית. האמת ההיסטורית אינה אלא זו, שמגלה את הכוחות הפועלים בחיי החברה האנושית. כל שפעולתו בחיים ניפרת, אף אם מצד עצמו אינו אלא ציור דמיוני, הרי הוא כוח היסטורי ממשי ומציאותו היא אמת היסטורית; וכל שאין רשמו ניכר במהלך החיים הכלליים, אף אם מצד עצמו אין מציאותו המוחשית בזמן מן הזמנים מוטלת בספק, אינו אלא אחד מאלפי רבבות הנמצאים, שמציאותו של כל אחד מהם לעצמו היא בודאי 'אמת' במובן המוחשי, אבל – אמת שאינה מוסיפה ואינה גורעת כלום, ולכן היא כאלו אינה, במובן ההיסטורי.

When I hear researchers philosophize about the influence 'the champions of history' have on the course of human life, when they say: 'the champions' are the creators of history and the people are naught but the substance of their creation, and when others say: no, the people are the original force and 'its champions' are but the product of each generation; when I hear these arguments, I say to myself: how long can philosophers keep their eyes from seeing what is right in front of them, and how long can they reach out for something that is within their grasp? Surely it is plain to see that the true champions of history, those that have become vigorous forces over the generations of humanity, they never existed as physical creations at all. For there is no champion of history whose spiritual character has not been formed in the imagination of the people in a manner that is completely different from what it was in reality, and that this imagined character, that the people have created according to its needs and inclinations, that is the real champion, whose influence persists in continuity, sometimes for thousands of years, and not that of the actual original that existed only for a short while, and that the people have not seen for who they really were...

And when I see educated people covering themselves in the dust of ancient books and manuscripts in order to resurrect 'the champions of history' in their true form, and that they believe that in so doing they are sacrificing their own vision for the sake of 'historical truth', I say to myself: how much can the educated overestimate the value of their ingenuity, how reluctant they are to see that not all archeological truths are also historical truths. The historical truth is only that which reveals the forces acting upon human society. Anyone whose influence on life can be exacted, even if unto themselves they are nothing but an imagination, surely they are a substantive historical force and their reality is a historical truth; and anyone whose influence on life cannot be exacted, even if their temporal existence cannot be brought into question, is nothing but one in a hundred thousand, of which the existence of every single one may be a certain 'truth' in the physical sense, but—a truth that does not add or subtract anything, and therefore they are tantamount to not being at all, historically speaking.

HUNGARIAN

Mama
by József Attila
translated by Laszlo Csabay

Már egy hete csak a mamára
gondolok mindig, meg-megállva.
Nyikorgó kosárral ölében,
ment a madlásra, ment serényen.

Én még őszinte ember voltm,
ordítottam, toporzékoltam.
Hagyja a dagadt ruhát másra.
Engem vigyen föl a padlásra.

Csak ment és teregetett némán,
nem szidott, nem is nézett énrám
s a ruhák fényesen, suhogva,
keringtek, szálltak a magosba.

Nem nyafognék, de most már késő,
most látom, milyen óriás ő —
szürke haja lebben az égen,
kétítőt old az ég vizében.

I have been thinking only of my
mother this week

Always pausing
She was going to the left with a
swinging basket
She was going busily.

I was an honest person yet,
I was roaring; I was stomping
I wanted her to leave the puffy
dress for someone else,
I wanted her to take me to the loft.

She was just going, and
she was hanging silently the clothes
on the line,
She was not scolding me; she was
not looking at me either
And the clothes were circling, fly-
ing up, brightly swishing to the
heights.

I would not whine, but it's already
late.

I can see now, how amazing she
is —

Her grey hair hovers in the sky,
Her blueing tints heaven's water.

ITALIAN

The Letters of Gennaro Valvano & Serafina Savignano

translated by John Cherichello

Gennaro saw Serafina's face in a picture and immediately started writing letters to the Savignano home in Pescopagano, a mountain town in the sole of the boot of Italy. Though my grandmother spoke Pescopagnese, the dialect of her village, and my grandfather, English, from his American schooling, they wrote to each other in the Tuscan Italian, expressing their immense love and affection for each other letter after letter. The pair eventually married and started a life, fulfilling the immigrant's American dream in Orange, New Jersey. On translating this mass of letters, I read the voices of my grandparents as my contemporaries, young and infatuated, and soon after, deeply in love. Below are his first letter and her first reply of over 150 letters written by my maternal grandparents.

Orange, 12 Aprile, 1948

Cara Serafina,

Certamente questa lettera forse vi darà una grande sorpresa. Mi sentivo un po' avverso di scrivere, ma poi mi ho dato coraggio, ed eccola. Prima di andare più avanti, vi devo dire che se trovate sbagli nella grammatica, mi dovete scusare perché questa lingua non è esattamente mia.

Io vi conosco semplicemente dalla fotografia che mandaste a mia sorella, Dorotea. Devo aggiungere quella bella fotografia! Adesso mi conoscete anche voi, no? Voi avete una fotografia di me e della mia sorella insieme. Non è una fatta recentemente, e naturalmente non sono più quel ragazzino che vedete in quella foto, sono—diciamo che sono un giovanotto di diciannove anni.

Quest'anno finisco le scuole Ginnasiali e devo prepararmi di guadagnare col lavoro la vita. Da piccolo sono sempre stato ad aiutare nel negozio di mio zio insieme con la mia cara sorella. Sono anche otto anni che studio la musica e suono la trompa. Ecco dove mi trovo confuso. Possiamo, mia sorella ed io, fare dei grandi affari conducente un negozio. Ma poi amo molto la musica e vorrei continuare a studiarla. Ho un gran desiderio di venire in Italia per studiare, ma se non si fa una pace giusta, quel bello sogno svanirà.

Ma adesso parliamo di voi. Spero che state molto bene di salute insieme con tutti di casa. Capisco che siete una sarta. Ti auguro un buon e prospero futuro con la vostra arte. Nella vostra fotografia vedo che siete molto, molto simpatica e bella e naturalmente siete fidanzata, no? Vi assicuro che in America, ragazze belle come voi, non se ne trovano! Se possibile, sono desideroso sapere la vostra età.

Vostra made e famiglia non mi conoscono, ma voi potete introdurmi ad essi con saluti da me. Qui, mia zia, zio, Dorotea insieme con la mia cara mamma e caro babbo, vi mandano a tutti saluti. Spero che questa lettera vi trova felice e in buona salute. Non dimenticare di pregare al nostro Iddio nel cielo, che fa venire una pace subito, così passo venire ad imparare il paese dove nacque mio padre.

Affettuosamente vostro,

Gennaro

P.S. Sarò grandemente onorato da una vostra risposta. Scusati gli sbagli.

Ecco il mio indirizzo:

Mr. Gennaro Valvano
194 Hickory Street
Orange, New Jersey

Pescopagano 5-5-948

Egregio Gennaro,

Giorni fa mi giunse una vostra lettera, non conoscendovi, mi sorprese di certo, ma dopo aver letto esattamente pochi righe della vostra già me ne rise conto che eravate, e ne sono onorate di avere fra le mie mani una vostra.

Si vi conosco nella foto unita alla cara Dora e dimostrate anche di essere un bravo giovane, come pure vi ne ringrazio di avermi fatti mille quadri nei miei confronti, cioè nei confronti della mia foto, e penso che sono frasette solamente dette da giovani; non sono mia una diva, va bene?

Siete desideroso sapere la mia età; ho completo un mese fa l'età di ventuno anni, e come volete sapere se sono fidanzate; - non lo sono, però dichiarazione ne ho avute, prima perché non era nell'età di fidanzarmi, poi dietro alla crisi che si è abbattuta nella nostra cosa, della disgrazia del caro babbo, certo ne siete conoscenza.

Sono contenta che studiate la musica, a mi piace tanto.

Ricambio i saluti da parte dei miei, a tutti voi, tanti bacioni alla cara Dora, che mi scusa tanto di non averla scritta, dietro al daffare in famiglia.

A voi con stima l'amica,

Serafina Savignano

P.S. A Dora, Tanti baci,

—Serafina

Dear Serafina,

Certainly, this letter will come as a surprise to you. I felt a little hesitant to write but then I gained some courage, and well, here I am. Before going forward, I must tell you that if you find grammar mistakes, please excuse them because this is not exactly my first language.

I know you simply from a photograph that was given to my sister Dorothy. I should add, what a beautiful photograph! Now, You know me too, no? You have a photograph of me and of my sister. That photo wasn't taken recently and so naturally, I am no longer that little boy you see in the photo, I am—let's say I am a young man of nineteen years old.

This year I finish school and I have to prepare to earn money with a paid job and a working life. Ever since I was little I always helped in my uncle's store, together with my dear sister. Also, since I was eight years old, I have studied music and I play the trumpet. That's where I am confused, that is where there is some tension.

My sister and I conduct this business at the store. But, I love music greatly and I wish to continue to study it. I have a great desire to come to Italy to study, but that beautiful dream could fade away.

But now we can talk of you! I hope that you are very well, together with everyone of your home and family. I understand that you are a seamstress. I wish you a good, prosperous future with your art. In your photograph, I see that you look very, very nice and beautiful, and of course taken, no? I assure you that in America, beautiful girls like you are not easy to find! If possible, I am eager to know your age.

Your mother and family don't know me, but you should introduce me to them and give them my regards and salutations. Here, my aunty, uncle, and Dorothy, together with my dear mom and dad, send greetings to all. I hope this letter finds you well and in good health. Do not forget to pray to our God in the sky, that peace will come soon, so that I can come and learn in the country where my father was born.

Affectionately yours,

Gennaro

P.S. I would greatly appreciate a response. Please excuse my grammatical errors.

Here is my address:

Mr. Gennaro Valvano
194 Hickory Street
Orange, New Jersey

Dear Gennaro,

Some days ago, I received your letter, I did not know it was coming, it certainly was a surprise, but after I carefully read some lines of your letter, I realized and laughed! I am honored to have your letter in my hands.

I know the picture you speak of, together with your sister. And you seem to be a fine young man. Also, thank you for those compliments about my photo. However, I am not a diva, ok?

You wish to know my age; two months ago I turned twenty-one years old, and you wish to know if I am in a relationship... I am not, and I never have before, first because I was not the age to date, then because of the crisis of ours that has struck our family, the passing of dear father, I'm sure you are aware.

I am happy that you study music, I like music a lot.

Return the greetings to yours, to everyone, many kisses to our dear sister, Dora. Tell her I am so sorry that I have not written her, together with the family.

To you, an esteemed friend,
Serafina Savignano

P.S. To Dora, many kisses,
—Serafina

Il Ladro di Lumi
by Elsa Morante

Sebbene io non abbia ancora vissuto un numero d'anni sufficiente per poterlo credere, sono quasi certa di essere stata io, quella ragazzina. Vedo con chiarezza la via, angusta, sudicia, su cui le screpolature del vecchio intonaco disegnavano figure e macchie. La casa di cinque piani (la mia famiglia occupava l'ultimo) era la più alta della via. Nel fondo era il Tempio.

Io non avevo più di sei anni. Dalle finestre vedevo passare gli uomini pallidi, le donne brune dall'espressione quasi sempre volgare o torva, i ragazzi seminudi, grigi di polvere. Vedevo anche, di fronte, una casa giallastra, con tuoini alle finestre, e, sul lato, un ampio cortile senz'erba.

Spesso una fila d'uomini, per lo più militari, aspettava in questo cortile. A turno entravano per pochi minuti e poi si allontanavano, scambiandosi frizzi e chiacchiere. Alle finestre del primo piano si affacciavano sempre donne misteriose, ridenti, con le facce paonazze, gli occhi bistrati, e la voce forte e decisa. Udivo, specie la notte, i bassi richiami di queste loro voci; quando mio padre tornava dal caffè, sebbene egli non fosse che un vecchio gobbo, esse lo invitavano: - Vuoi salire, bel moretto? Vuoi?

Mia madre, ancora giovane, esile, aveva un volto grazioso, sciupato dal rancore. Ad ogni occasione, si batteva rabbiosamente la fronte con i pugni e, per le mie mancanze, aveva l'abitudine di maledirmi, in un ebraico solenne, volgendo verso il Tempio quella faccia disfatta. E io sbigottito, sapendo che le maledizioni dei padri e delle madri, ripercosse dagli echi, arrivano sempre a Dio.

Appena faceva notte, mentre mio padre si avviava al suo caffè, essa andava a passeggio sulle mura, insieme alla mia sorella maggiore, la bella, la sprezzante. Io restavo in casa, per non lasciar sola la vecchia.

Questa nonna era sorda, e pareva di legno. Un seguito d'anni innumerevole l'aveva succhiata lentamente, fino a ridurla un piccolo scheletro di legno, che forse non poteva neppure più morire. La sua testa era quasi calva e le palpebre oscure sempre abbassate. Teneva ferme lungo i fianchi le mani, dalle unghie di un turchino livido. Con mio stupore, avevo scoperto che si fasciava il petto e i fianchi, come si fa ai bambini, e, su tutte queste fasce, poneva degli ampi stracci grigi. Dicevano che fosse ricca.

Appena gli altri erano usciti, con una frase monca, che sdrucchiolava a fatica fra le sue gengive, mi ordinava di spegnere il lume; era inutile, per noi due sole, sciupare il petrolio.

Poi diventava muta e immobile. Io ubbidivo, sebbene tremassi. Infatti, avevo appena girato la chiavetta della lampada, che il fantasma del buio e della

paura si rizzava alle mie spalle, mostrando al posto degli occhi due fosse nere. Ed io, per avere un po' di chiaro, mi raggomitavo presso la finestra.

Il fatto avvenne più di cinquant'anni fa.

Dalla finestra potevo scorgere il Tempio, la sua cupola tozza, i gradini, le lunghe finestre dai vetri colorati, e, attraverso i vetri, l'opaco rosseggiare delle lucerne dei morti. Le lucerne di ferro battuto pendevano nell'interno del Tempio, e chi voleva dedicarne una a un morto doveva pagare il guardiano Jusvin perché l'alimentasse con olio e badasse a non farla spegnere né di giorno né di notte. I morti, nella loro tenebra, erano molto più tranquilli se possedevano una lucerna.

Solo dalle mie finestre si poteva scorgere l'interno del Tempio, con le sue luci rosse. Vedevo il guardiano Jusvin salire ogni sera i gradini per chiudere il Tempio e versare l'olio. Era un uomo bruno, d'aspetto bello e solenne, con occhi neri, e capelli e barba ricciuti. Nella penombra, così oscuro, pareva un profeta o un angelo, mentre saliva al Tempio, col suo passo obliquo, portando le pesanti chiavi. Ma una sera era appena entrato, che vidi ad una ad una spegnersi le lucerne; ed egli uscì, guardingo, col suo spegnitoio, lasciando dietro di sé un buio enorme.

- Nonna! - gridai. - Jusvin ha spento tutti i lumi dei morti!

- No, - biascicò la sorda. - Non si sciupa il petrolio. Non si accende la lampada.

- Non capisci? - gridai tremando per tutto il corpo. - Jusvin ha spento i lumi! I lumi!

- Tornerà presto, la Marianna, sì; sì, - rispose la vecchia.

Allora rinunciai a spiegarle quel segreto. Vedevo intorno a me le figure del buio e tremavo che aprissero le loro bocche, e mi parlassero. Tremavo per quello che avrebbero potuto dirmi, e per quello che avrebbe detto il Signore.

Tutte le sere, da quel giorno, vidi Jusvin chiudere dietro di sé il portale del Tempio, e spegnere i lumi. Il suo scopo era di risparmiare l'olio, guadagnando sul tributo che riscuoteva per le lucerne. Così spiegò mia madre; e mi disse anche di tacere, perché l'uomo aveva sei figli piccoli, e una denuncia gli avrebbe fatto perdere il posto. Dunque, silenzio. Iddio lo vedeva e avrebbe pensato a punire colui che rubava la luce dei morti. Iddio farà giustizia.

- Ladro! Ladro! - gridavano i miei nervi e le mie ossa, quando vedevo quell'ombra salire, piano, lungo la scala. Aspettavo nell'ansia che le sue mani cadessero, come due stracci. Avrei voluto correre al Tempio, gridare forte: - Io ti vedo! Ti vedo quando rubi la luce dei morti! Non hai paura... di Dio? - Ma rimanevo ferma, paralizzata nel vano della finestra. Pensavo ai morti, sotto la terra, senza nessun lume. E per non vedere, mi coprivo la

faccia, finché di nuovo ero attratta da quell'ombra lunga che ora discendeva col suo spognitoio; e spariva nei vicoli.

Una sera lui non venne, e le rosse fiamme tremolarono tranquille dietro i vetri. Quando riapparve, dopo un intervallo, non poteva più parlare. Cavava a stento dalla gola suoni rauchi e balbettii, e sbarrava gli occhi, con gesti da burattino, come fanno i muti; finché un giorno urla e rantoli bestialmente risuonarono nei vicoli. Era Jusvin che moriva. - Ecco la giustizia del Signore, - dissero. Il dito del Signore l'aveva toccato sulla lingua, ed ora quella lingua maledetta di Jusvin si disfaceva in una piaga. Era un male che la gente osava appena nominare con paura (io lo legavo, per il suo nome fantastico, alla feroce fauna marina e ai tropici africani). E quelle urla corsero per tutte le strade, ripetendo che il corpo del peccatore si torceva e sudava. E non ebbero un istante di riposo, fino al silenzio.

- Non avrà mai pace, - dissero, scuotendo il capo. - Né lui né i suoi figli.

Andando a scuola, incontravo spesso i suoi figli, specialmente Angiolo ed Ester. Essi erano assai belli, benché fossero tanto sporchi e nudi. I due grandi occhi di Angiolo erano simili a due fuochi, e, quando rideva, faceva le fossette. Ester aveva splendidi riccioli, le gambe snelle, e la sua faccia rotonda era come un frutto. Io li osservavo, spaurita. Pensavo che il dito di Dio li toccasse sulla lingua, come aveva fatto al padre, ed ecco, la strana bestia africana gliela rodeva. Ed essi non avrebbero potuto più parlare, più tardi, se non con tristi suoni. Uno dietro l'altro, muti, con una piaga dentro la bocca, i figli di Jusvin, e i figli dei figli, dovevano passare davanti al Signore.

Questa scena mi tormentava nelle mie solitudini infantili e riappariva nei miei sonni; ma qualche cosa di più chiaro io vidi in quella sera d'estate, presso il Tempio.

Mi era avvenuta una grave disgrazia. Mio padre mi aveva ordinato di uscire e mi aveva dato una moneta, incaricandomi di giuocare tre numeri al lotto. Nel tornare dal banco, assorta in fantasticherie, avevo perduto il biglietto acquistato, coi numeri. Febbrilmente avevo errato per quelle strade, singhiozzando piano, frugando nella polvere. Nulla. E poi rimasi ferma, rannicchiata presso l'alto muro, all'ombra notturna del Tempio. Pensavo di non tornare più a casa, di uscire dal Ghetto, di uscire dalla città e di morire. Nel pensiero chiamavo mio padre, in quell'ora, col soprannome che gli dava la gente: il gobbetto. Tante volte mi avevano chiesto: - Sei la figlia del gobbetto, tu? - Ed ora nella mia mente, con paura, passavano idee nuove, lampi sacrileghi: «Il gobbetto mi picchierà. Perché deve picchiarmi? Io sono piccola, ma bella, ho due trecce lunghe e so leggere. Lui è un gobbetto. Non voglio esser picchiata da lui. Ma io ho perduto il biglietto del

lotto, che forse avrebbe vinto. Ho fatto male, era suo, e lui mi picchierà. E mia madre mi maledirà. Questo è il castigo. Io giravo guardando le case, le finestre e le facce, senza pensare al biglietto, e ho peccato. Anche Jusvin aveva peccato, e il Signore l'ha punito».

Ecco Jusvin, in cospetto del Signore. Il Signore non ha corpo né faccia; è come una nube di tempesta, come l'ombra di una montagna: - Pietà, Signore, l'ho fatto per i miei figli. Acqua alla mia lingua, sonno ai miei occhi. Pietà del mio camminare che invidia i placidi morti -. Parole sono queste che ha sepolte nella gola, ma non prenderanno mai forma sulle sue labbra. La bocca si torce, gorgoglia, l'uomo gestisce e suda. E lui, il senza-forma, non parla. Il suo tacere significa: Tu, ladro.

Intanto sono giunti molti altri, silenziosi, usciti dalle mura del Tempio. I loro corpi sono masse oscure, i loro volti sono maschere dalle occhiaie vuote; eppure mi sembra di riconoscerne qualcuno. Ecco la vecchia Mitilda, quella che cuoceva i semi di zucca e che poi, mi dissero, è andata in cielo. Invece è qui, con le scarpe rotte e il fazzoletto intorno alla sua faccia senz'occhi. Ed ecco Lazzarino e il figlio Mandolino, lunghi lunghi, dalle lunghe braccia, col cappello a cilindro sui visi scheletrici. Sì, sono loro e altri non ne conosco, ma tutti si rassomigliano, e trascinano fra le mura buie i loro piedi pesanti. Alcuni hanno vesti bizzarre, fatte di stracci, dai colori diversi e sbiaditi, o fasce di cencio intorno al busto; con cappelli di tutte le fogge, come quelli che si vedono nei teatri. Certe donne portano vesti ampie che strisciano per terra senza rumore, e bistri e rossetti sulla pelle. E altri invece sono seminudi e pallidi.

Sono i morti, e brancolano incerti, e tendono le labbra come per bere, chiedendo il loro lume. Nessuno di loro ha le ali; sembrano talpe uscite dalla terra. Di sotto la terra, certo credevano di vedere ancora il giorno in quel lume, ed ora a tentoni lo cercano. Solo i vivi possono accenderlo e spegnerlo; così vuole Dio, nel mezzo, il silenzioso, che castiga i vivi e rinchiude nella terra i morti.

Tale era il mio Dio; e quella ragazzina fui io, o forse mia madre, o forse la madre di mia madre; io sono morta e rinata, e ad ogni nascita si inizia un nuovo processo incerto. E quella ragazzina è sempre là, che interroga spaurita nel suo mondo incomprensibile, sotto l'ombra del giudice, fra i muti.

The Thief of Lanterns translated by Claire Gotch

It was me, that young girl. I am almost certain although I may not have lived a sufficient number of years to believe it. The six-floor house (my family lived on the top floor) was the tallest on the street, and at the end was the Temple.

I wasn't more than six years old. From the windows I could see passing by pale men, tanned women with all too often vulgar or menacing appearances, half naked boys gray from dust. Across the street I could see a house of a sickly yellowish color with shuttered windows, and, to the side, a large grassless courtyard.

Men, mostly soldiers, were often waiting in a line in this courtyard. One by one they entered for a few minutes and would then leave, exchanging banter and gossip. Mysterious, laughing women were always gazing out of the windows, their faces flushed, eyes heavily rimmed with makeup, and voices loud and forceful. Particularly at night, I could hear the low luring of those voices whenever my father would return from the café, despite his hunchbacked frame, they would call him over: "Want to come up handsome? Want to?"

My mother, still young and slim, had a delicate face ruined by resentment. Because of my misbehavior she would always hit her forehead furiously with her fist, cursing me in a solemn Hebrew, as was her habit, as she turned an exhausted face toward the Temple. And I would remain helpless, knowing that God always receives all the curses, booming with echoes, of mothers and fathers.

As soon as night fell, while my father made his way to his regular café, she would take a walk on the ancient walls surrounding the city, together with my older sister, my beautiful and contemptuous sister while I stayed home in order to not leave my grandmother alone.

Nonna was deaf and seemed to be made of wood. The consequences of countless years had slowly sucked away at her until she was reduced to a tiny wooden skeleton that, for all I knew, was no longer able to die. Her head was almost bald and her dark eyelids were always lowered. She held her hands, whose nails were colored blue by bruises, firmly to her sides. To my amazement I had discovered that she bandaged her chest and hips, the way you swaddle babies, and on these wrappings she placed large grey rags. People said she was rich.

As soon as the others were gone she would order me to put out the lamp with a curt phrase that slipped difficultly from between her gums: it was pointless to waste the oil on just the two of us. Then she became mute and motionless. Although I was trembling, I obeyed. Sure enough, as soon as I turned the knob of the lamp, ghosts of fear and darkness, whose eyes were replaced instead by two black holes, rose behind me. And I, in an at-

tempt to find some light, curled myself up against the windowsill.

This incident took place more than fifty years ago.

From the window I could see the Temple with its stocky cupola, its steps, and through the long stain glass windows the opaque red glow of the dead's oil lamps. The wrought iron lanterns hung throughout the interior of the Temple, and anyone who wanted to dedicate a lantern to the departed had to pay the guard Jusvin to feed oil to the flame day and night so that it never went out. In their own darkness, the dead were much more peaceful if they had a lamp.

The red lights from the inside of the Temple were only visible from my window. Every night I could see Jusvin climbing the steps of the stairwell to close the temple and pour the oil. He was a dark man, his face beautiful and solemn, with black eyes and curly hair and beard. When, strangely, he would wind up the stairs carrying heavy keys, the dim light of the surrounding darkness made him look like a prophet or even an angel. But one night, after he had entered, I saw the lanterns go out one by one. Then, warily looking around with his snuffer in hand, he left, leaving behind him an immense darkness.

"Nonna!" I cried. "Jusvin put out all the lamps of the dead!"

"No," she mumbled. "Do not waste oil. Don't relight the oil lamp."

"Don't you understand?" I yelled, trembling throughout my entire body. "Jusvin put out the lamps! The lamps!"

"Yes, yes, Marianna will be back soon," the old lady responded.

So I gave up trying to explain my secret to her. All around me I saw dark shadowy figures, and I shivered thinking they would open their mouths and speak to me. I shuddered from the thought of what they would have been able to tell me, and for what God would have said.

From that day on, every night I watched Jusvin close the door to the Temple behind him and extinguish the lamps. His aim was to save oil, keeping the left over money meant for the oil lamps for himself. This is how my mother explained it to me, also telling me to keep quiet about it because the man had six small children, and one word would cost him his job. So I remained silent. God could see him and would punish he who robbed the light from the dead. God always finds justice.

"Thief! Thief!" cried out my nerves and bones whenever I saw that shadow slowly ascend the stairs. In my distress I expected his hands to fall to the floor like they were two wet rags, as my mother would say. I wanted to run to the Temple, to scream, "I see you! I see you when you steal the lights from the dead! Aren't you afraid of God?" But I could do nothing but remain still, paralyzed, at the windowsill. I thought of the dead, buried beneath the earth, without any light. I covered my face so as not to see until, once again, my eyes were drawn to that long shadow that now descended the stairs with its snuffer, vanishing into an alleyway.

One night he did not come, and the red flames calmly flickered be-

hind the windowpanes. After a short period of time he reappeared, but could no longer speak. Hoarse stammering sounds escaped from his throat, and all he could do was gesture mutely, opening his eyes wide like a puppet. Until one day his gasps and screams echoed through the allies. Jusvin was dying.

"This is God's justice," they said. God's finger touched Jusvin's tongue, damning it with ravaging sores. It was an evil that people would not dare name (but because of his fantastical name, I associated it with ferocious marine wildlife and the African tropics). And those screams coursed through all the streets, echoing the sweaty writhing of the sinner's body. And they didn't have a moment's rest until there was silence.

"He will never be in peace," they said shaking their heads. "Neither him nor his children."

On my way to school I often encountered his children, specifically Angiolo and Ester. Despite their filth and nudity they were exceptionally beautiful. Angiolo's large eyes were like two burning flames, and when he laughed dimples appeared on his cheeks. Ester had splendid curls, slender legs, and her face was as round as a fruit. I watched them fearfully, thinking all the while that God's finger would touch their tongues, just as he did to their father, unleashing that strange African beast to gnaw on them. After which, they wouldn't be able to speak anymore, only able to make those wretched sounds. One after the other, mute from the curse in their mouths, Jusvin's children and his children's children would be judged by the Lord.

This scene tormented me throughout my infancy and would reappear in my dreams, but I saw something even more vivid one summer night near the Temple.

A serious misfortune befell me. My father had given me some change and told me to go out, instructing me to play three lottery numbers. On the way home from the bank, absorbed in my daydreams, I lost the ticket with the numbers I had purchased. I feverishly roamed the streets, quietly weeping, digging through dust. Nothing. So I stayed still, crouched in the moonlit shadows of the Temple's tall wall. I thought of never returning home, of leaving the Ghetto and the city and its dying. And in that thought and moment I called my father by the nickname that people had given him: *il gobbetto*. So many times I've been asked, "Are you *il gobbetto*'s daughter?" And now, with fear in my mind flashed new blasphemous thoughts: "*Il gobbetto* will beat me. Why does he have to beat me? I am small, but beautiful, and I have two long thin braids. He's a hunchback. I don't want him to beat me. But I lost the lottery ticket that perhaps could have won. I made a mistake and lost his chance of winning. He'll beat me, and my mother will curse me. This is the punishment. I was spinning, gazing at the houses, the windows, and the sides, unaware of the ticket, and I sinned. Jusvin also sinned, and the Lord punished him."

And in the presence of the Lord, there was Jusvin. The Lord has neither a body, nor a face; he's like a cloud in a storm, or the shadow of a

mountain: "Mercy, Lord, I did it for my children. Quench my thirst, give me rest. Have mercy on my path that envies the quiet dead." These words are buried in his throat, and will never take form on his lips. The man, gurgling, gestures and sweats, his mouth twisting. And He, the formless, doesn't speak. His silence declares: You, thief.

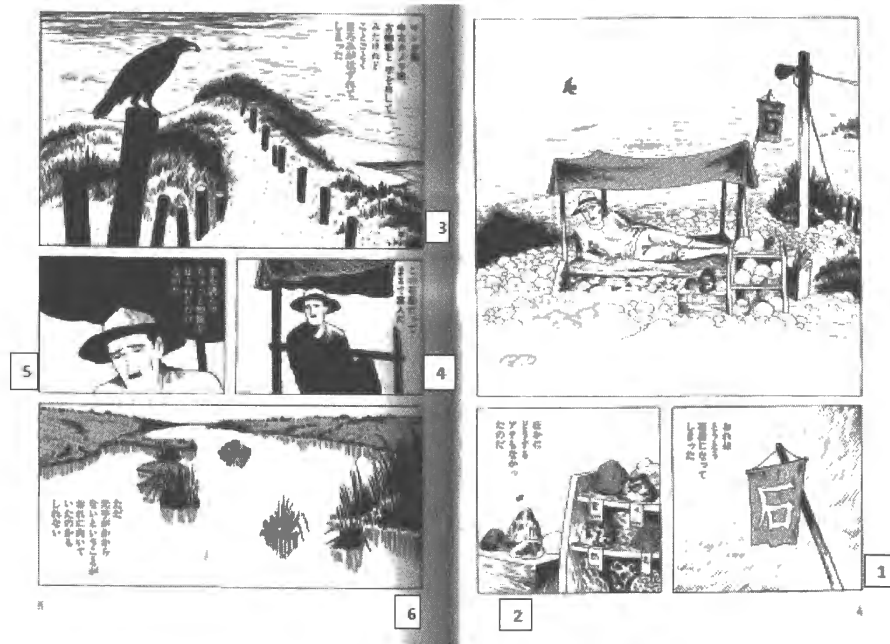
Meanwhile, out of the walls of the Temple, others joined in silence. Their bodies are obscure masses, their faces blank staring masks; yet, I seemed to recognize someone. There's the old lady Matilda, the one who cooked pumpkin seeds and then, they told me, went to Heaven. Instead she's here, with broken shoes and a handkerchief wrapped around her sightless face. And there's Lazzarino and his son Mandolino, with long arms and top hats covering their skeletal faces. Yes, it is them and others I don't recognize, but all of them resemble each other, their heavy feet dragging along the dark walls. Some of them wear bizarre clothes made of rags in either mismatched or faded colors, or tattered clothes bound around their torsos, with hats of all shapes and sizes, like the ones you see in theaters. Certain women wore blush and lipstick on their skin, and gowns that swept the ground without a sound. Others were instead pale and half-naked.

They are the dead, and they grab at the air uncertainly, lips reaching for the light as if it were a drink to quench their thirst. Without their wings they look like worms above ground. Underground, some believed they could still see the light of day in those oil lamps, and now they blindly fumble looking for it. Only the living can light and put out the lantern: that's how the silent God, who punishes the living and buries the dead in the ground, wanted it, in the middle.

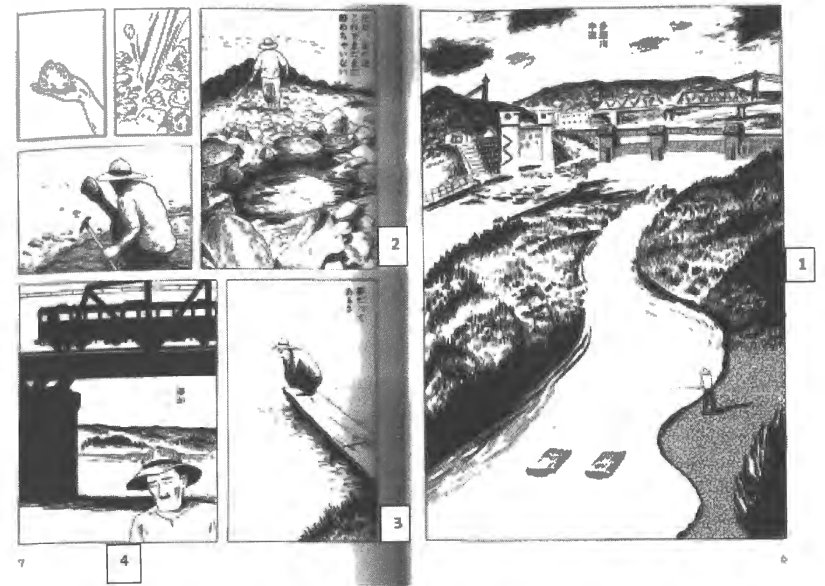
This was my God, and that little girl was me, or maybe my mother, or maybe my mother's mother; I am dead and reborn, and at every rebirth a new uncertain process begins. And that little girl is always there, among the mute, fearfully questioning her incomprehensible world under the shadow of the judge.

JAPANESE

Munounhito
by Tsuge Yoshiharu
translated by Jacob Fisher

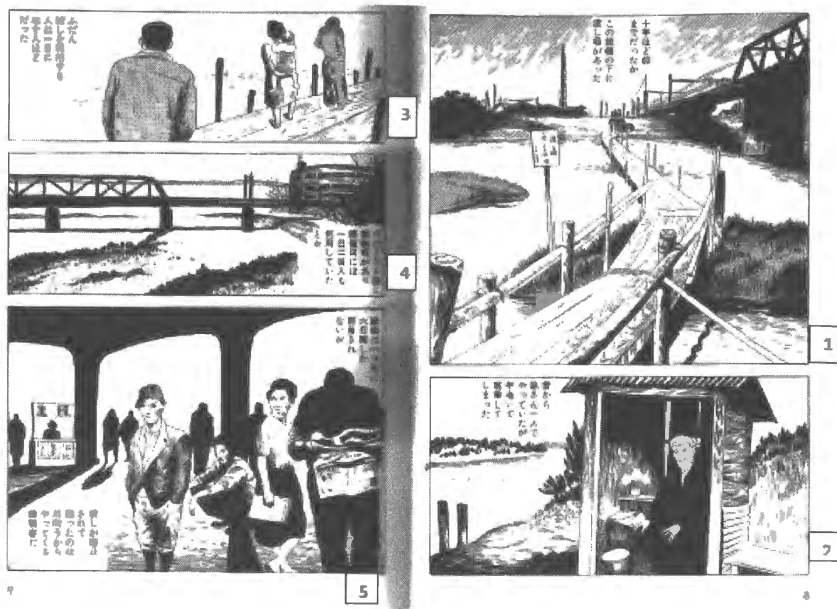


- 1) My life has regretfully become that of a rock salesman.
- 2) It's because I did not have other goals.
- 3) I've tried my hand at selling manga, used cameras, and antiques. Only to have all my plans derailed.
- 4) This rock store is completely amateur.
- 5) I've read some books only to take stock of a little information.
- 6) It just seems I was never cut out for wealth.

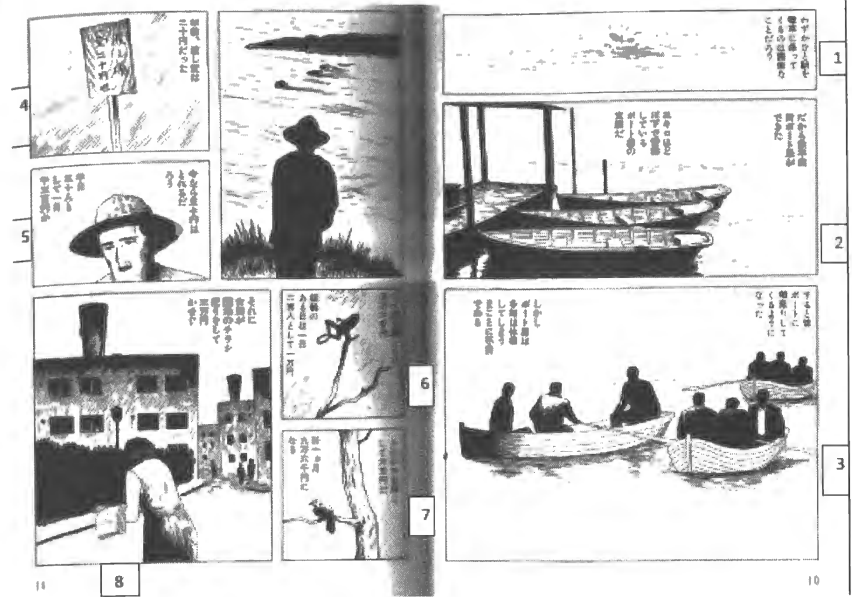


- 1) Tama River Midstream
- 3) I still have my dreams.

- 2) But, I still won't give up with this.
- 4) Dreams...



- 1) I guess it was 10 years ago... There was a pier under this railway bridge.
- 2) Long ago the old man used to work alone, but then, regretfully, he grew old and went out of business.
- 3) Usually, about 30 people used the pass per day.
- 4) On this side of the river there's a velodrome. When it's open, up to 200 some odd people use the pier.
- 5) The velodrome is open only six days per month. Those who got stuck due to the stoppage were the customers from across the river.



- 1) It must have been a cumbersome thing to take the train for just one stop.
- 2) So a boat rental shop was established. It's a branch of a boat shop three kilometers down the river.
- 3) Then it became that everyone would rent the boats together. However, the boat shop shuts down during the winter time.
- 4) Before, the fare for using the pier was ¥20.
- 5) Now it would probably take ¥50. On weekdays the pier would make ¥1500-ish for 30 people that cross per day.
- 6) Every 24 days that's ¥36,000. The velodrome makes ¥10,000 from the 200 customers that come on days it is open.
- 7) Those 6 days a month comes to ¥60,000. That comes to ¥96,000 per month.
- 8) Plus ¥30,000 my wife earns for distributing flyers at housing complexes...



- 1) "Together that's ¥126,000..."
- 2) "Don't worry. I'm sure we can put food on the table."
"Ha, is that your dream?"
- 3) "It's so painful!"
"I'm gonna revive the pier. Isn't it a good idea?"
- 4) I believe that various street stalls will be out in front of the beaches and train stations on days when the velodrome is open.
- 5) So I'll also display juices and *amazake**,
And incidentally, I'll try placing the rock stand there, too, to diversify my product selection.

*sweet sake

LATIN

Raptor mei pilei morte moriatur,
Mors sit subitanea, nec praevideatur,
Et poena continua post mortem sequitur,
Nec campis Elysiis post Lethen fruatur.

Raptor mei pilei saeva morte cadat,
Illum febris, rabies, et tabes invadat ;
Hunc de libro Dominus vitae sanctae radat ;
Hunc tormentis Aecus cruciandum tradat.

Ei vita brevis sit, pessimusque finis !
Nec vivat foeliciter hic diebus binis ;
Laceret hunc Cerberus dentibus caninis,
Laceratum gravius torqueat Erinnyes.

Nunquam diu baiulet illi colum Cloto ;
Cesset filo Lachesis tracto nondum toto ;
Filium rumpat Atropos, nec fruatur voto,
Et miser presbytero corruat remoto.

Excommunicatus sit in agro et tecto !
Nullus eum videat lumine directo !
Solus semper sedeat similis deiecto :
Hunc poenis Tartareis cruciet Alecto.

Ille rebus omnibus quas habet emunctus,
Nec confessus occidat, oleo nec unctus,
Morte subitanea palleat defunctus,
Iudae traditori sit inferno coniunctus.

Hoc si quis audierit excommunicamen,
Et non observaverit praesulis examen ;
Nisi resipuerit corrigens peccamen,
Anathema fuerit ! fiat, fiat. AMEN.

May the snatcher of my cap die a death,
May the death be sudden, not foreseen,
And may continuous punishment follow after death,
And may he not enjoy the Elysian Fields after Oblivion.

May the snatcher of my cap fall by a cruel death,
May fever, frenzy, and plague invade him;
May the Lord scratch this one out of the Book of Sacred Life;
May Aeacus hand over this suffering one to torments.

May his life be brief, his end the worst!
And may he not live fortunately for even two days;
May Cerberus lacerate this one with canine teeth,
May Erinnyes twist this lacerated one even more seriously.

May Clotho never bear her spindle for him for long;
May Lachesis cease, her string not yet all drawn;
May Atropos break the string, and take no delight in the offering,
And may he fall down, miserable, before a removed priest.

May he be excommunicated in field and under roof!
May none see him in direct light!
May he always sit alone in similar dejection:
May Alecto torture this one with the punishments of Hell.

Let him, sniveling, have these in all types,
And may he perish neither confessed nor anointed with oil,
May he, finished, pale in sudden death,
May he be joined to the inferno of Judas the Traitor.

If anyone hears this excommunication,
And does not heed the consideration of a priest;
Unless he, setting things straight, repents the sin,
A curse there will be! so be it, so be it. AMEN.

Hinc ubi protulerit formosa ter Hesperos ora,
ter dederint Phoebos sidera victa locum,
ritus erit veteris, nocturna Lemuria, sacri:
inferias tacitis manibus illa dabunt.
annus erat brevior, nec adhuc pia februa norant,
nec tu dux mensum, Iane biformis, eras:
iam tamen extincto cineri sua dona ferebant,
compositique nepos busta piabat avi.
mensis erat Maius, maiorum nomine dictus,
qui partem prisca nunc quoque moris habet.
nox ubi iam media est somnoque silentia praebet,
et canis et variae conticuistis aves,
ille memor veteris ritus timidusque deorum
surgit (habent gemini vincula nulla pedes),
signaque dat digitis medio cum pollice iunctis,
occurrat tacito ne levis umbra sibi.
cumque manus puras fontana perluit unda,
vertitur et nigras accipit ante fabas,
aversusque iacit; sed dum iacit, 'haec ego mitto,
his' inquit 'redimo meque meosque fabis.'
hoc novies dicit nec respicit: umbra putatur
colligere et nullo terga vidente sequi.
rursus aquam tangit, Temesaeaque concrepat aera,
et rogat ut tectis exeat umbra suis.
cum dixit novies 'manes exite paterni'
respicit, et pure sacra peracta putat.

After Hesperus has revealed his handsome
Mug three times, and conquered stars yield thrice
To Apollo in this place, your ancient rites
Shall be confirmed, Nocturnal Lemuria: They will
Offer their hands to the silent dead.

The year ran shorter at that time, nor did men yet
Know of pious purgation, nor did you conduct
The months, TwoFaced Janus: Nevertheless,
Extinguished ashes still retain their rewards
And a grandson was appeasing his sedate
Grandfather's tomb. The month was May,
Called after the name of the elders, *maiorum*,
Which clutches fragments of the former custom
Still today.

Whence midnight now comes and
Offers silence for sleep, and you dogs, you
Piebald birds go still, he who is mindful
Of the ancient rites and fearful of the gods
Rises up (keeping his twin feet undressed)
And signs with his thumb joined between
The fingers, lest a trembling shade meet him
Amid the silence. And when he has bathed
His hands clean in the swell of the fountain,
He rotates, having taken black beans beforehand,
Casts them facing away. He throws them forth,
'These I send, with these beans,' speaking,
'I redeem me and mine.' This is what he
Says and he says it nine times, never glancing
Back: He reckons a ghost will collect them
And trail him unseen towards his home. He
Touches the water in return; he rattles on
Temesan bronze, and bids the shade adieu,
Asking it to leave his homestead. When he has
Spoken nine times, 'depart, ancestral phantoms',
He turns back, and considers the pure rite done.

Ni te plus oculis meis amarem,
iucundissime Calve, munere isto
odissem te odio Vatiniāno:
nam quid feci ego quidve sum locutus,
cur me tot male perderes poetis?
isti di mala multa dent clienti,
qui tantum tibi misit impiorum.
quod si, ut suspicor, hoc novum ac repertum
munus dat tibi Sulla litterator,
non est mi male, sed bene ac beate,
quod non dispereunt tui labores.
di magni, horribilem et sacrum libellum!
quem tu scilicet ad tuum Catullum
misti, continuo ut die periret,
Saturnalibus, optimo dierum!
non non hoc tibi, salse, sic abibit:
nam, si luxerit, ad librariorum
curram scrinia; Caesios, Aquinos,
Suffenum, omnia colligam venena,
ac te his suppliciis remunerabor.
vos hinc interea valetē abite
illuc, unde malum pedem attulistis,
saecli incommoda, pessimi poetae!

If I didn't love you more than sight itself,
Openhanded Calvus, you better believe
I'd be pissed off wickedly so by that gift:
For what did I do, what was said,
For you to shame me with so many shitty poets?
May the gods sew countless disasters for that
Client, who sent you so many godless men.
Because if Sulla the grammarian gave
That freshly recovered gift to you, as I have guessed,
It does me no harm. It's beautiful in fact, since you
Haven't squandered your arts. Christ!
What an awful and revolting scrap of paper,
Which you, naturally, have sent to your Catullus,
In order that he might have croaked that very
Day, the best of days, Saturnalia! No, you
Won't get off so easily, you little shit:
For, if at dawn, I should hit the shelves,
I will assemble every poison: Caesius,
Aquinus, and Suffenus' works; with these I'll
Reward your torture. Meanwhile, goodbye,
Get out of here where a wicked foot carried
You – villains of the day – lowliest of poets.

Carmina XXV
by Catullus

Cinaede Thalle, mollior cuniculi capillo
vel anseris medullula vel imula oricilla
vel pene languido senis situque araneoso,
idemque, Thalle, turbida rapacior procella,
cum dives arca rimulas ostendit oscitantes,
remitte pallium mihi meum, quod involasti,
sudariumque Saetabum catagraphosque Thynos,
inepte, quae palam soles habere tamquam avita.
quae nunc tuis ab unguibus reglutina et remitte,
ne laneum latusculum manusque mollicellas
inusta turpiter tibi conscribilent flagella,
et insolenter aestues, velut minuta magno
deprensa navis in mari, vesaniente vento.

Carmina XXV
translated by Fraiser Kansteiner

Thallus, you queer, softer than a hare's fur,
Or goose guts, or the lobe of a little ear,
Or an old codger's sickly cock, cobwebbed with neglect,
All this and still, Thallus, hungrier than a wild storm,
When the sloth god discloses sluggish observers,
Return my toga to me, which you pounced upon,
And my imported napkins and Spanish tapestries, you
Jackass, which you widely flaunt like antiquities.
Pry them from your talons at once and send them back,
Lest scorched whips hideously deface
Your downy ribs and supple little hands;
Then you'll thrash in an unprecedented fashion,
Like a raft caught in open waters by the raging wind.

Carmina XXVII
by Catullus
translated by Fraiser Kansteiner

Minister vetuli puer Falerni,
inger mi calices amariores,
ut lex Postumiae iubet magistræ
ebrioso acino ebriosioris.
at vos quo libet hinc abite, lymphæ,
vini perniciēs, et ad severos
migrate: hic merus est Thyonianus.

Boy Ganymede with the vintage Falernian,
Pour me more bitter cups, according
To the law of our mistress, Postumia –
More blitzed than the stuff left on the
Presses. Get out of here! Go wherever you want,
Crystal waters, you bane of wine, and seek out
The teetotalers: The Thyonian here is uncut.

Carmina CI
by Catullus
translated by Fraiser Kansteiner

Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus
advenio has miseras, frater, ad inferias,
ut te postremo donarem munere mortis
et mutam nequiquam alloquerer cinerem,
quandoquidem fortuna mihi tete abstulit ipsum,
heu miser indigne frater adempte mihi.
nunc tamen interea haec, prisco quae more parentum
tradita sunt tristi munere ad inferias,
accipe fraterno multum manantia fletu,
atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale!

Conveyed across countless countries, over countless seas,
I come, my brother, for these miserable funeral rites,
That I may give these gifts at last to the dead,
And speak in vain to your mute ashes, since you
Have been stolen from me by bitter misfortune. Oh,
Unhappy brother, shamefully snatched away. Now take
These gifts in the meantime, which have been passed
Down in the august style of our parents, unhappy gifts
For the grave, from a brother with many flowing tears.
Now for eternity, brother, hello and goodbye.

PORTUGUESE

de "Dez chamamentos ao amigo"
by Hilda Hilst

I

Se te pareço noturna e imperfeita
Olha-me de novo. Porque esta noite
Olhei-me a mim, como se tu me olhasses
E era como se a água
Desejasse

Escapar de sua casa que é o rio
E deslizando apenas, nem tocar a margem.

Te olhei. E há um tempo
Entendo que sou terra. Há tanto tempo
Espero
Que o teu corpo de água mais fraterno
Se estenda sobre o meu. Pastor e nauta

Olha-me de novo. Com menos altivez.
E mais atento.

From "10 Appeals to a Friend"
translated by Melanie Mignucci

I

If I seem to you nocturnal and imperfect
Look at me again. Because tonight
I looked at myself like you might have looked at me.
And it was as if for water
you thirsted

To escape from your house which is the river
and just barely slipping, to not even touch the bank.

I looked at you. And there's so much time
to know that I'm earth. There's so much time
I wait
for your body of water more fraternal
to extend over mine. Pastor and sailor

Look at me again. With less arrogance.
And more attentive.

RUSSIAN

Improvisations
by Boris Pasternak
translated by Kathleen Keating

Я клавишей стаю кормил с руки
Под хлопанье крыльев, плеск и клекот.
Я вытянул руки, я встал на носки,
Рукав завернулся, ночь терлась о локоть.

И было темно. И это был пруд
И волны.— И птиц из породы люблю вас,
Казалось, скорей умертвят, чем умрут
Крикливые, черные, крепкие клювы.

И это был пруд. И было темно.
Пылали кубышки с полуночным дегтем.
И было волною обглодано дно
У лодки. И грызлись птицы у локтя.

И ночь полоскалась в гортанях запруд,
Казалось, покамест птенец не накормлен,
И самки скорей умертвят, чем умрут
Рулады в крикливом, искривленном горле.

I fed a flock of piano-keys from my hand
to the beating of wings, the splashing and screeching.
I stretched out my hands, I stood on my toes,
my sleeve slid back, night rubbed my elbow.

And it was dark. And there was a pond,
and waves.— And, it seems, the birds of the species "I love You"
would sooner murder the screaming, black, sturdy beaks
than die.

And there was a pond. And it was dark.
The barrels of midnight tar blazed.
And there was a wave gnawing at the bottom
of the boat. And the birds squabbled at my elbow.

And night splashed in the throats of the weirs.
It seems, as long as the chick is unfed,
the mothers would sooner murder the trills in the screaming, contorted throat
than die.

Silentium!
by Fyodor Tyutchev
translated by Kathleen Keating

Молчи, скрывайся и таи
И чувства и мечты свои —
Пускай в душевной глубине
Встают и заходят оне
Безмолвно, как звезды в ночи, —
Любуйся ими — и молчи.

Как сердцу высказать себя?
Другому как понять тебя?
Поймет ли он, чем ты живешь?
Мысль изреченная есть ложь.
Взрывая, возмутишь ключи, —
Питайся ими — и молчи.

Лишь жить в себе самом умей —
Есть целый мир в душе твоей
Таинственно-волшебных дум;
Их оглушит наружный шум,
Дневные разгонят лучи, —
Внимай их пенью — и молчи!...

Be silent, conceal and hide
the feelings and thoughts of your self —
allow them to rise and set
in the depths of your soul
without words, like the stars in the night —
admire them — and be still.

How can you reveal your heart?
How can another understand you?
Could he comprehend how you live?
A thought, once voiced, is a lie.
Explicating it only muddles pure waters,
so drink them yourself — and be still.

Learn to live within yourself —
the whole world's mystical thoughts
exist in your own soul;
they're drowned out by exterior sound,
as daylight out-burns the candles —
attend to their songs — and be still!...

I was Given a Body...
by Osip Mandelstam
translated by Kathleen Keating

Дано мне тело - что мне делать с ним,
Таким единым и таким моим?

За радость тихую дышать и жить
Кого, скажите, мне благодарить?

Я и садовник, я же и цветок,
В темнице мира я не одинок.

На стекла вечности уже легло
Мое дыхание, мое тепло.

Запечатлеется на нем узор,
Неузнаваемый с недавних пор.

Пускай мгновения стекает муть
Узора милого не зачеркнуть.

I was given a body—what should I do with it,
so unique and still so mine?

For the quiet joy to live and breathe,
who, tell me, should I thank?

I am the gardener, and I am the flower,
in the dungeon of the world, I'm not alone.

On the glass of eternity are already imprinted
my breath and my warmth.

A pattern, unrecognizable until now,
engraved on it.

Let's the moment's cloudiness dribble—
the dear pattern will not be obscured.

Asarhaddon
by Valery Bryusov
translated by Maeve McQueeny

Ассирийская надпись

Я - вождь земных царей и царь, Ассаргадон.
Владыки и вожди, вам говорю я: горе!
Едва я принял власть, на нас восстал Сидон.
Сидон я ниспроверг и камни бросил в море.

Египту речь моя звучала, как закон,
Элам читал судьбу в моем едином взоре,
Я на костях врагов воздвиг свой мощный трон.
Владыки и вожди, вам говорю я: горе!

Кто превзойдет меня? кто будет равен мне?
Деянья всех людей - как тень в безумном сне,
Мечта о подвигах - как детская забава.
Я исчерпал до дна тебя, земная слава!

И вот стою один, величьем упоен,
Я, вождь земных царей и царь - Ассаргадон.

An Assyrian Inscription

I am—leader of all earthly kings and rulers, Asarhaddon.
To the rulers and the powerful, I say unto you: sorrow!
As soon as I took power, Sidon rose up against me.
I crushed Sidon, and threw the rocks of its city into the sea.

In Egypt, my speech resounded, and became law,
Elam read its fate in my single gaze,
Forging my throne on the bones of my enemies.
Rulers and leaders, I say unto you: sorrow!

Who can surpass me? Who can rival me? Who is my equal?
The actions of all people before me—like a shadow in crazy dream.
Their dreams of glory—like a child's amusing daydream.
I have exhausted to the dregs all of my worldly glory!

And here I stand alone, drunk on greatness,
I am, the king of all earthly kings and rulers— Asarhaddon.

Refusal
by Vladimir Khlebnikov
translated by Ethan Richman

Мне гораздо приятнее
Смотреть на звёзды,
Чем подписывать
Смертный приговор.
Мне гораздо приятнее
Слушать голоса цветов,
Шепчущих: "Это он!"
Склоняя головку,
Когда я прохожу по саду,
Чем видеть темные ружья
Стражи, убивающей
Тех, кто хочет
Меня убить.
Вот почему я никогда,
Нет, никогда не буду Правителем!

It's more pleasant for me to watch the stars,
than to sign
a death sentence.
It's more pleasant for me
to listen to the voices of flowers,
whispering: "That's him!"
bowing their heads,
when I pass through the garden,
than to see the dark guns
of the guards, killing
those, who want
to kill me.
That's why I will never,
no, *never* be a Ruler!

SPANISH

9, Rue Truffaut
by Pablo Martín Sánchez

Al salir del metro tomas la primera a la derecha y luego al final la primera a la izquierda y luego más tarde la segunda a la derecha y te encuentras ya entonces en la calle Truffaut. Sí, sí, Truffaut, como el cineasta. Vives en el número 9, segundo piso, puerta 21. El espacioso apartamento tiene ventanas a ambos lados, de modo que el sol entra a raudales durante todo el día y parte de la noche. Los muros macizos conservan el calor en invierno y el fresco en verano, y el suelo de madera aporta una calidez de pañales y biberones. Los vecinos, discretos y atentos, te saludan efusivamente al encontrarte en el ascensor y están siempre dispuestos a compartir un café contigo. El propietario del apartamento es casi de la familia y los domingos por la tarde suele retarte a una partida de ajedrez: a veces, si consigue ganarte y está de buen humor, te rebaja el alquiler. Por la calle la gente sonríe, feliz, contenta de vivir en un sitio como éste; se abraza, ríe, salta, corre y habla animadamente. Los bares están llenos, los metros son gusanos alegres que serpentean bajo tus pies y el sol brilla beatíficamente en un cielo despejado. Así que al llegar a casa, ante tanta felicidad, abres la ventana y, sonriendo, te suicidas.

9, Rue Truffaut

Translated by Madeleine Calhoun

When you get out of the metro you take the first right, and at the end of street, that next left. After that, you take the second right, and then you will find yourself on Rue Truffaut. Yes. Yes Truffaut, like the director. You live in #9, second floor, door 21. The spacious apartment has windows on both sides, so that the sun floods in during the whole day and even part of the night. The thick walls conserve heat during the winter and keep in the cool air during the summer, and the wooden floor brings a familiar warmth of childhood into the room. The neighbors, modest yet attentive, greet you warmly when they run into you in the elevator and are always free to grab a cup of coffee. The landlord of the apartment is practically family, and Saturday afternoons he often challenges you to a chess match. Sometimes, if he beats you, or is just in a good mood, he docks your rent. Through the streets people smile, happily, content to live in a place like this; they hug, laugh, jump, run, and talk lively. The bars are full, the metros are like happy underground worms that wriggle under your feet, and the sun shines cheerfully in the clear sky. So once you get back home after seeing all of this joy, you open the window and, smiling, you kill yourself.

El cuerpo tiene un órgano metafórico
By Osvaldo Lamborghini

El cuerpo tiene un órgano metafórico
es el lugar de todas las transmutaciones
es el lugar poético por excelencia, el ano
en es sentido que es el lugar
donde el niño y la niña
se encuentran todavía, subrayando todavía
sin el corte, sin la diferencia de los sexos.
El lugar metafórico, el ano,
mierda, niño, regalo, pene
todo es intercambio.
Una gran mujer, mujer de Nietzsche,
mujer de Rilke, casi
mujer de Freud: Lou Andrea Salomé,
habló de la vagina como
eternamente
arrendada al ano.

The Body Has a Metaphysical Organ

Translated by Kevin Soto

The body has a metaphorical organ
it is the locus of all transmutations
it is the locus poetica par excellence, the anus
in the sense that it is the site
where boy and girl
meet still, underlining still
without the slit, without the contrast of the sexes.
The metaphorical place, the anus
shit, boy, gift, penis
all is interchangeable.
A great woman, Nietzsche's woman
Rilke's woman, almost
Freud's woman: Lou Andreas-Salomé,
spoke of the vagina as
forever
on lease from the anus.

A este perro
By Osvaldo Lamborghini

A este perro yo me lo comería,
pensé, el día que lo vi en la veterinaria,
y lo compre sin vacilaciones.
Parecía un chico
ahí con sus flancos
y mostrando sus dientes.
El vendedor le puso un collar de cuero
tachonado
y salimos a la calle:
¿para qué negarlo?
así empezó nuestra novela.
Jerry parecía un niño
un encanto.
Escapo una tarde
la primera vez que quise someterlo a mis manejos:
(y esto se llama bestialismo).
Con los ojos anegados en llanto
—o llovía—
cruce los campos en su busca
con el collar de su huida
en la mano.
Cometí un atentado contra su honor
lo reconozco
tengo una conciencia culpable
e estas fueron pálidas
las pálidas consecuencias
encontradas y contrarias.
No era la tierra para perseguirlo en auto
no daba el barro.
Inocente como hay pocos
me ayudo en mi cacería
un paisano de a caballo.
Jerry se había refugiado en un matorral
y gruñía
y en púas la pelambre
mostraba los dientes.

—Pero vamos, juro que no se repetirá, vamos a casa.
Me conformaré con mirarte largamente los flancos
(y esto se llama amor).

QUE ESTÉS BASTA
LA ENTREGA ES UN HORROR
EL HORROR A LA ENTREGA
EL Matriarcado de la posesión

El hombre de campo
lo alzó a caballo.
Son las vueltas de la vida
la intemperie que no da para mas
el cielo
raso que cobija nuestro talco
o harina imposible de abolir.
Serenos, rocíos
impacientes solos contra el corcho que tapa la botella
porque entonces el genio
no tiene elección.
Doble sentido
alcohólico
que muero porque no bebo.

Pero nada de genio,
Jerry
no seas
nabo.

That Hound
Translated by Kevin Soto

That hound looks good enough to eat
I thought, the day I saw him at the vet
and I bought him without hesitating.
He looked like a kid,
with his flanks like that
and baring his teeth.
The vendor gave him a leather collar,
studded
and we went out for a walk:
why deny it?
thus began our novel.
Jerry looked like a kid
a darling.
He escaped one afternoon
the first time I tried to subject him to my schemes
(and this is known as bestiality).
With my eyes drowning in tears
—or it was raining—
I searched for him across the fields
with the collar of his desertion
in my hand.
I committed an affront to his honor
I admit
I have a guilty conscience
and these were the pale
pale consequences
contradictory and contrapositive.
It wasn't the right kind of turf to chase him in a car,
the mud wouldn't give.
As gullible as you can get
my hunt was helped out
by a fellow riding horseback.
Jerry had taken shelter in a coppice
and he growled
and in barbs the furball
bared his teeth.
—Come on, I swear it won't happen again. Let's go home.

I'll be content to freely gaze at your flanks
(and this is known as love).

YOU BEING HERE IS ENOUGH
DEVOTION IS A HORROR
HORROR AT DEVOTION
THE MATRIARCHY OF POSSESSION

The countryman
raised him onto the horse.
Such are the ups and downs of life
the outdoors that give nothing more
the flat
sky that covers our talcum
or flour, impossible to abolish.
Serene, drops
solely impatient about the cork in the bottle
because then reason
has no choice.
Double-meaning
alcoholic,
I die because I don't drink.

But enough with reason,
Jerry
don't be
a prick.

INTERVIEWS

EDITH GROSSMAN: “NO TENGAS MIEDO”

By Melanie Mignucci & Kevin Soto

On October 20, the translator Edith Grossman gave a lecture at Bard about her forthcoming translation, a critical edition of the poetry of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the Mexican nun, proto-feminist and Golden Age poet. Grossman, arguably the most well-known translator of Spanish, has been previously lauded for her translations of Don Quixote and Nobel laureates Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa, among other influential works. Sui Generis sat down with Grossman to discuss politics, baroque poetry, small presses, and the best advice she ever got.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

SUI GENERIS: What was the first thing you ever translated?

EDITH GROSSMAN: I think I was in college and the first thing I’d ever translated was a poem or two by [Gustavo Adolfo] Becquer, which I chose because he’s so easy. I can’t remember the first thing I did as a professional translator... I was doing mostly stuff for magazines and journals. Which is what every translator does, starting out. Then I did a novel by a Peruvian [Manuel Scorza] called *Redoble por rancas*. It was basically a political novel.

What drew you to that novel?

They called me. I have a son who is a musician, a guitar player, and last year he said he had joined a polka band. I said “What? You joined a what?” I asked why. And he said, “Steady work, Ma.” So that’s my answer, you know. I was offered the job and I said yes.

You’ve translated a wide variety of works from across Spanish traditions, like Cervantes, Gongora, and [Augusto] Monterroso. What is it that attracts you to a work in general? Or are the jobs offered to you?

I’m gonna backtrack a little on my answer. I am offered the jobs that I do. The one author whom I did of my own accord—but I got a Guggenheim to sponsor it, because I can’t work without getting paid—was Gongora, for the *Soledades*. I had my eyes on that ever since I was in graduate school. Otherwise I’m just offered these things, much to my joy.

The Gongora must have been incredibly difficult.

It was, but I figured out what he did in the poems, which I never figured out in school. The thing that really makes it hard are the obscure mythological references—so obscure that my classical dictionary didn’t have them. I would Google the terms and there were no answers. That was really difficult. But I also figured out how he put the lines together. Each dash—if you’re familiar with the poem you know it’s filled with dashes—is a parenthesis, and if you read around the dashes, you get a very straightforward statement. And the parentheticals are interjected, but not between parentheses. He was very sly.

Did you come across any similar realizations with Sor Juana [Inés de la Cruz]?

I found her harder. The poem of hers that’s comparable [to the *Soledades*] is “*Primero sueño*,” and that is really about something. It’s filled with academic content, filled with references to music and mathematics and theology and philosophy. The *Soledades* is not about anything except itself. It’s a poem of perception. So in that sense it’s a much more difficult poem than the *Soledades*. Also, Sor Juana never had a Damaso Alonso. Alonso has a translation into prose of the *Soledades* in Spanish. He translated it into Spanish prose because no one could read the poem. So I had him, from 1927 or whenever he wrote it. This translation was a lifesaver, but no one ever did anything like that for Sor Juana.

Moving onto your book *Why Translation Matters*, there’s a very pessimistic attitude regarding the state of translation in today’s literary culture. Has your attitude changed with the advent of small publishers that focus exclusively on translation, as well as with the internet, where there are also websites and blogs dedicated to world literature?

I don’t think my attitude has changed, but the facts have changed. And it takes more than a fact to change my opinion. The problem with small presses, and university presses, is that most of the time they do not spend the money on marketing and sales promotion that bigger publishing companies can. So there’s very little advertising, which means that very few people know about the book. And since the myth is out that Americans don’t read translations, most of the time they’re not displayed prominently in bookstores. Or I guess people don’t buy books in bookstores anymore, for the

most part. As far as self-publishing, I associate my computer with working. I don't spend a lot of time online. I'm like one of Pavlov's dogs—I'm conditioned to work when I'm at the computer. So I'm not really sure what goes on. I know in the past ten years, a lot of small presses have started focusing on translation. Archipelago is one of those. Other Press does it somewhat.

There's also Deep Vellum, a small press from Dallas that did [Sergio] Pitolo's *Trilogy of Memory*. They've only been focusing on living writers from other languages, which is really remarkable.

Wow. Good for them, because it's hard for young writers to get published in the U.S., and this is remarkable because we have money and we're literate, for the most part. Even undergraduates are literate, right? [Laughs] That was a nasty joke.

I'm reminded of Europa Press and the amount of work they've been putting into promoting Elena Ferrante—have you been reading her?

I've read one of her novels, and I was not overwhelmed by it. I had friends who just worshipped Ferrante, but it didn't speak to me in a way that other novels did.

Her success is a good example of how translations in the U.S. are becoming mainstream—I'm also thinking of [Roberto] Bolaño's posthumous success, and—

Oh and the Norwegian who wrote... what's his name?

[Karl Ove] Knausgaard. There seems to be a kind of boom in translated literature, especially for these big ambitious works (also thinking of [Haruki] Murakami's huge *1Q84*). There seems to be a big foreign novel renaissance in the country.

[Laughs] Well, as Polonius once said, "Brevity is the soul of wit."

I saw Cesar Aira at one of his first readings in the U.S., in Brooklyn, and he said something that struck me, along the lines of, "Nowadays, the bigger a book is, the less literature it contains."

It does look as if not many [writers] can write fewer than 900 pages. That's

heavy. That's a lot of book to hold.

What do you think can be done to foster a culture of translation and world literature in the U.S.?

I don't know. If you have a man like Donald Trump running for president, who despises Mexicans, despises immigrants, despises people who speak other languages, I don't know how much hope there is. I really don't. I think there's a political factor, as well as a financial and literary one, in the unpopularity of translations.

It seems like the xenophobic rhetoric being spewed in the media has an effect on the distribution of foreign literature, cuts off its influence from contemporary American literature.

Oh absolutely. When Ben Carson can say a Muslim can't be president, that... I find that outrageous, morally outrageous.

It's scarier that there's a wide swath of people who sincerely agree with those statements.

See, living in New York, I miss out on that. There are people who feel exactly the same way [as Trump or Carson] in New York, but they have a damn hard time speaking out publicly. I mean, there are 197 languages spoken in Manhattan—you don't even have to go to Queens or Brooklyn. The city has people from every village in the entire world, and that kind of hate is just not tolerated. People in New York don't talk like that. They might think that way, but they certainly don't speak out... Anyway, sorry to get into politics. And there's a problem with publication of books with literature that hasn't been translated. Stuff that years ago would have been at the cigarette counter in the airport is now called "literature." So it has to do with people reading or not reading. I don't know what else to say.

At the same time that the culture of xenophobia has become more prominent, there's been a surge of literature that reflects the multicultural aspects of the United States, [in the work of] writers such as Junot Diaz, Giannina Braschi, and Julia Alvarez. Do you think there remains hope for bilingual literature?

I think there's a danger of it being ghettoized.

How so?

Because they're put aside. It's like, "This is the section for bilingual literature." Julia Alvarez won't be in the same spot as Virginia Woolf, not because she's not as good a writer as Woolf, but because she has a Latina background.

Is that an issue of it being less accessible to readers, or racial prejudice?

I think so. I'm sorry to say it, but it's the reality of... Let me backtrack. There was a Puerto Rican writer who died a few years ago whose name was Ed Vega. Edgardo Vega. He wrote this insane, 900-page novel called [*No Matter How Much You Promise to Cook or Pay the Rent You Blew It Cause Bill Bailey Ain't Never Coming Home Again*], like the song, "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home?" And there was a publisher who wanted to bring his book out under their Spanish language imprint, which was called Rayo. He said no. He said, "You bring it out under the imprint that everyone else gets published under." He was the one that made me aware of the ghettoization of writers on the basis of their ethnicity or if they're bilingual.

Talking about the contemporary state of translation and literature, it's been said that your *Don Quixote* 'brings the story to the reader', I guess to get into [translation] theory—

I don't understand it, so I never get into theory.

In other words, do you think it's true you've domesticized the Quixote?

Sounds like you've been reading Larry Venuti.

Yeah [laughs].

I can tell. *Don Quixote* was the first 17th century work I had translated. The question was, what language do I translate it into? Do I make up a 17th century English? Do I put it into difficult Shakespearean construction? I had been translating a very smart guy named Julian Rios, a Spanish writer, and I told him in an email that I was really excited about doing the Quixote but I was terrified... I was scared to death. He said, "*Oye, no tengas miedo*. Don't be afraid. Cervantes is the best writer we have, and all you have to do is translate him the way you've translated everyone else." You know, it

was like a light going on. I thought, "That's right." I don't have to invent a quaint language, because Cervantes was creating a language, he wasn't imitating a quaint language, except when he had Quixote going off on one of those rants, and I thought, "That's what I'll do." There's no slang in it. Slang is a very tricky matter in a translation. It has a shelf life of about five minutes and then it's out of date. So you have to be really careful. Also, I think Cervantes is one of the true geniuses the human race has produced. I think he's so extraordinary a writer that I didn't want to do anything to interfere with that. I wanted the perception of the writing in English to be near to the perception of his language in Spanish. I just finished translating his *Novelas Ejemplares* and—

Will those be coming out soon?

Next year. Those were really difficult. But I was overwhelmed by the sophistication of his writing. It was very different from the Quixote. The language in there is big and baroque and the sentences go on for a day and a half, you know. But this is very modern in its concision, it's a very tight kind of writing. I was just knocked out. When I first read them as a student, the truth was I was bored to death. I found them impossible. But I really love them now. I just adore them.

I'm excited to see what that book's repercussions will be in English generations from now.

One always hopes. I mean, if you're going to be influenced consciously, you can't do better than Cervantes. He really is remarkable.

Speaking of how Cervantes resonates today, we were thinking about Sor Juana and her feminism, and how you brought that to the modern reader—

That's good. It comes across? I'm glad. Have you read Octavio Paz's book on Sor Juana, *Traps of Faith*, I think it's called. He talks about what cannot be said. And what cannot be said could not be said because the inquisition was there, everpresent and omnipresent, and it was not a [laughing] matter. People were terrified of the holy office. I actually speak about that in the translator's note. How does the translator translate what hasn't been said? How much of the attitude that Sor Juana takes—she keeps calling herself a humble nun. I mean, in my life, have I ever heard anything as weird as

this erudite woman calling herself a humble nun. It was difficult. It was a problem that, as far as I can tell, didn't exist in Cervantes. The male writers didn't deal with that. Certainly those who were not in the church didn't deal with pressure from their superiors like Sor Juana did. I mean, the men all ended up as clerics. They did what they did. They hit sixty or so and they gave the world up and retired to a monastery. Forgive my cynicism, but they all did that. She entered the convent when she was very young. She was eighteen or nineteen years old.

What advice do you have for student translators? What should they read?

What you need to know you pick up from peripheral readings. My advice—this is serious advice—is being a translator is like being a poet, and you should not do it, unless you cannot imagine living without translating. It's very tough. There isn't, as we've been discussing, a huge market for translation in this country. We are not living in a society of avid readers, anywhere in the world, not just here. I once figured out that I can make more doing stoop labor than working as a translator. The amount of time you put in, first for the rough draft, and then the 900 revisions that you do... I figured out that I was making about seventeen cents an hour. It's not a field where you make a lot of money, or acquire a lot of prestige. You have a hell of a lot of fun if it's what you love doing, and I love doing it so I enjoy working. I work at home, and I don't have to get dressed to go to work. I don't have to commute. I just walk into my office, and I'm at work.

SG

OLGA VORONINA:

on her translation of Nabokov's Letters to Véra

by Chloe Chappe

Olga Voronina is the assistant professor of Russian at Bard and teaches in the Russian and Literature departments. Voronina's research includes ideological paradigms of Soviet political, media, and literary discourse of the Cold War, Soviet and post-Soviet children's literature and, most importantly for this interview, poetics of Vladimir Nabokov. Many years before arriving at Bard, Olga held the position of Deputy Director at the Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. Her book Letters to Véra, written, edited and translated in collaboration with Bryan Boyd, came out in the late fall of 2015. My introduction to Nabokov was with Olga in my sophomore year at Bard when we read The Luzhin Defense. Last semester I asked to her to lead a tutorial about Lolita that I participated in with two other students. Each minute that I spend in class with Olga listening to her talk about Nabokov's life and work, I learn something new. She recites facts about his life and his literature so effortlessly but with a clear excitement. This is our interview about what went into the book, including her experience with translating the personal letters of Nabokov to his wife.

SUI GENERIS: To start, what is your opinion of the epistolary art? Do you write letters? If so, in what language usually?

OLGA VORONINA: I love any kind of letter—on the screen, on paper, on a napkin, on a strip of sand. Handsome stationery may now be seen as a sign of backwardness—even a cloying habit, perhaps—but I would say it's too early to abandon good, or any, handwriting, which, for Nabokov, represented a “shadow” of a person's “voice.” I write dozens e-mails and texts a day, as all of us do, but also indulge in handwritten notes. My three epistolary languages are Russian, English and German. The first two are my spoken ones, too.

How did you come upon the letters between Nabokov and Véra? How did you and Brian Boyd decide to work together on this book?

I did not have to discover Nabokov's letters to Véra—their existence had been common knowledge for decades. In 1990, *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977* and the first volume of Boyd's biography, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*, came out. Both contained snippets of the correspondence, with Boyd's citing it from the excerpts read into his

tape-recorder by Mrs. Nabokov herself. The second volume of Boyd's tour de force, published in 1991, also included plenty of references to the letters, especially in the descriptions of the Nabokovs' challenging adjustment to the new life in the United States in the 1940s. I was intrigued by the non-existence of a complete edition of the correspondence and asked first Boyd, and then Dmitri Nabokov [the writer's son], about the possibility of publishing it when, in 1999, they came to St. Petersburg to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Nabokov's birth. Dmitri generously suggested that the three of us collaborated on the edition. In a way, it was a celebratory gesture, the son's way to mark the father's centennial by revealing yet another, more intimate and vulnerable, but in no sense diminishing aspect of his personality and talent.

Dmitri's assistants had sent Boyd and me Xerox copies of the correspondence from Montreux, shortly before they relocated a bulk of the Nabokov archive to its pre-approved new place of residence – the New York Public Library's Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection. At that time, I was still working at the Nabokov Museum in St. Petersburg, where one of the main jobs my colleagues and I had to perform was to translate Nabokov's biography into a series of spatial, rhetorical, and visual motifs, such as documentary exhibits, library shows, or public programs. Personal mementos of the writer's life and the narratives they formed were part of my everyday routine then. For example, great-grand-children of the Nabokovs' former domestic staff would come and tell stories about the early 1900s, often unreliable, for they were reiterating family lore, much distorted over the decades of storytelling. Or a book on butterflies would turn up with Nabokov's adolescent scribbles, and we had to research its provenance and imagine what the youthful lepidopterist was after when reaching out for his watercolor brush to color an engraving of Vanessa Io. But none of these experiences had prepared me for the wonderment of reading these letters. Written on very thin paper, photographed or copied so that the nether side would shine through the upper layer of text, they took months to decipher and years to get down right in a typescript copy. I was mesmerized by the richness of biographical detail but also by the narrative complexity and poetic grace of Nabokov's epistles to Véra. In the beginning, the process seemed cumbersome and the publication of the volume, a very distant goal. I was especially plagued by worries about choosing the right approach to contextualize the letters and frame them textologically and editorially. Boyd's experience in these matters was precious; he guided me expertly, smoothly, and with a great degree of tact through every step of preparing the volume.

What did you feel was your place as the translator of such personal correspondences? How did you decide it was appropriate to publish such information? Reading the letters of public figures such as writers creates a whole other world of knowledge for readers that can be so enlightening, but did you ever have to draw the line with any of the letters? Did you ever feel that some were too personal to share? If so, how did you make that judgement call?

As I have already said, we approached the letters first as editors, and only much later as translators. As soon as the preparation of *Letters to Véra* for publication was announced, Dmitri Nabokov resolved to publish the entire correspondence without any abridgments. In my opinion, it was a wise decision—and the only one to make the publication justifiable. If our task were to cut out “sensitive” places in the letters, we would have found it not only daunting, but also lacking in well-defined criteria. Is Nabokov's game of fiscal codes—such as naming French francs “Semyonlyudvigoviches” in honor of the Russian philosopher Semyon Lyudvigovich Frank or referring to his earnings in Paris as a matter beneficial to him “in terms of General Franco”—something to keep in or censor out? After all, the writer tried to avoid paying his due to the German tax office... Or the endless endearments he coined for Véra: she herself avoided reading them out to Boyd, thus indicating her fierce resistance to bringing up their intimacy and evoking her husband's tenderness in print. Take Nabokov's playfulness out of these letters, deprive them of their warmth, informality, acerbity and subtle erotic undertones, and they would immediately lose their shine and sparkle, turning, instead, into lists of meetings with publishers or of editorial tasks for Véra to perform. So it was neither me nor Boyd who had to decide what was appropriate to publish, but both of us rejoiced at our right to include every morsel of this rich epistolary repast.

As a translator, I did not “edit” anything, trying to be as precise in my rendering of Nabokov's words and as stylistically flexible as the letters themselves required.

In your introduction to the letters, “‘My beloved precious darling’: Translating Letters to Véra,” you mention “multi-dimensional artistic universes” that are created in various novels of Nabokov's that can be also seen in his letters, “in spite of their spontaneity.” Can you comment on the word “spontaneity”? Obviously the planning of a novel takes much more time than the writing of a letter, but to some extent don't

you think a person has a specific idea of what he or she is going to tell his or her interlocutor in a letter?

In spite of Nabokov's famous claim that "lack of spontaneity" was his "principal failing as a writer" (he made it in his 1964 interview to Alvin Toffler of *Playboy* magazine), the letters reveal his ability to weave stories forthwith, in an easy and unrehearsed manner, while responding to an immediate observation, be it a puddle gathering fallen leaves under his window, an appetizingly tinted cloud, or a ruined and strangely lit building in one of Berlin's side-streets. None of these observations have gone amiss: first we see them described, savored, and commented on in a letter to Véra, later, we discover them in a short story or a novel—spontaneity giving life to virtuosity, so to speak. Thus a man with a tattoo on his chest Nabokov meets in a public bath in 1926 appears in his novel *Invitation to a Beheading*, published in 1935-36. And the pigeon that flies off a cornice of a Paris cathedral and that he compares to a gargoyle coming to life resurfaces in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941)... You are right in believing that Nabokov had specific ideas to share with his wife, and that he often planned his letters in advance, especially in the 1930s, when most of them were very business-like and specific. And yet he managed to sneak in life's beautiful trifles, sometimes getting distracted and led away by their beauty and potential for generating fiction.

In your description of the translation process and choices that ensued with it, you comment that you decreased the number of diminutive noun forms ("mama" to "Mother," "teeny cold-cuts and macaronikins" to "cold-cuts and macaroni"). Inevitably choices like this must be made in translating, but do you feel like the letters lose something in this choice? Do you feel they are broadcasted from a more public voice without so many diminutives?

We did not really diminish the number of Nabokov's diminutives—it is the English language that did. Russian is full of *umen'shitel'no-laskatel'nye* [diminutive-hypocoristic] forms of nouns and adjectives. A variety of suffixes – some used frequently, others very rare—make this proliferation possible, even unavoidable. We Russians could turn a "daughter" into "a beloved little daughter" by adding "ka," "en'ka" "ushka," "unyushka," "ulya," or "ulen'ka" to the noun's basic form, "doch." A monkey could become a little monkey with the help of similar suffix-ending combinations or by means of a masculinizing but still diminutive "ysh," which is what Nabokov

used when calling Véra his "obez'yanysh" (we translated the endearment as "monkeykin"). Not only he was aware of stylistic diversity of the Russian language, but he also enjoyed taking words apart, experimenting with morphology, overlaying English, French, German, and Russian idioms, and thus venturing further into Indo-European proto-forms of Russian. We did what we could to convey his fascination with the possibilities of the Russian vernacular to the reader and to preserve most of his verbal tricks and verdant tropes. Did the correspondence lose anything in translation? I am afraid it did. But it is available, you can read and understand it, and, I hope, enjoy Nabokov's way of expressing himself through love letters written over the course of his life. That, perhaps, is what we should celebrate while keeping the linguistic losses in mind.

SG

"City of Towers," 2015

To me, the tower of Babel is not a symbol of losing the ability to communicate, but the end of speaking and thinking the same, which allows for many different perspectives. It is a tribute to mankind's ability to collectively reach far greater goals as a diverse group than a homogenous one. In New York City or Brooklyn, where I have lived for the past twenty-odd years, live representatives of any language, religion, philosophy, political conviction, ethnic group, etc., in a relatively small area, creating an incredibly exciting and diverse cultural energy.

I built the tower from plywood and cardboard with each surface covered in pages from discarded books I picked up from the streets of Brooklyn. There are at least 25 different languages used in the tower. After staging and lighting it, I photographed the scene and printed "City of Towers" in the 19th century photographic process of Gum Dichromate printing—essentially with photographically sensitized watercolor.

