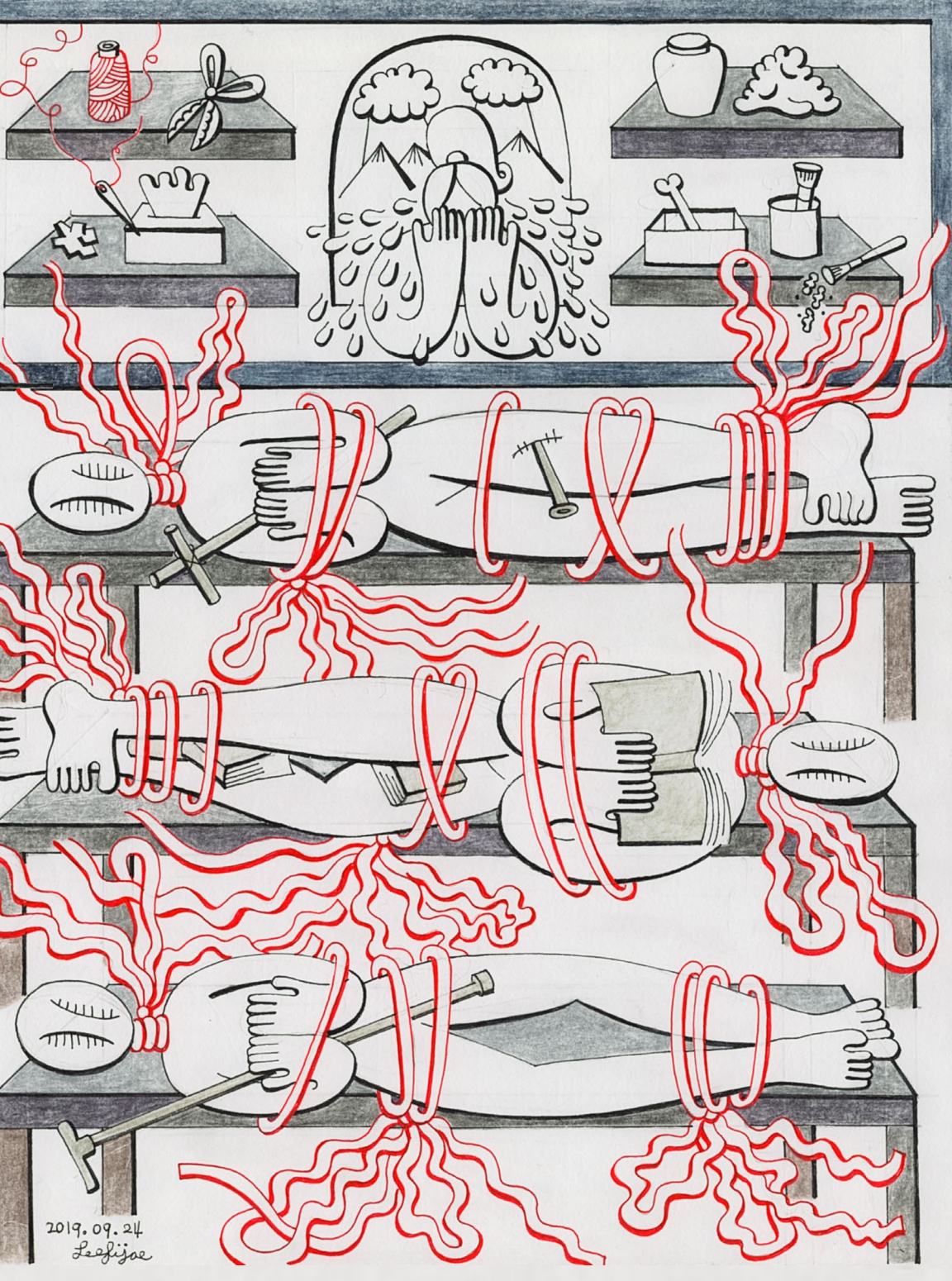

CONTEMPORARY KOREAN POETRY

CHICAGO REVIEW

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CONTEMPORARY KOREAN POETRY

NONFICTION

POETRY

FICTION

REVIEWS

MEMOIRS FROM EDITORS AND STAFF

CHICAGO REVIEW

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CONTEMPORARY KOREAN POETRY

Curated by Don Mee Choi

YI SANG

POEM NO. 1 (FROM CROW'S EYE VIEW)

13 children speed toward the way.
(For the road a blocked alley is appropriate.)

The 1st child says it is scary.
The 2nd child says it is scary.
The 3rd child says it is scary.
The 4th child says it is scary.
The 5th child says it is scary.
The 6th child says it is scary.
The 7th child says it is scary.
The 8th child says it is scary.
The 9th child says it is scary.
The 10th child says it is scary.

The 11th child says it is scary.
The 12th child says it is scary.
The 13th child says it is scary.

Among 13 children there are scary children and scared children and they are all they are. (It is better that there is no other excuse.)

Of those it is fine to say that 1 child is scary.
Of those it is fine to say that 2 children are scary.
Of those it is fine to say that 2 children are scared.
Of those it is fine to say that 1 child is scared.

(For the road an opened one is appropriate.)
It does not matter if 13 children do not speed toward the way.

POEM NO. 6 (FROM CROW'S EYE VIEW)

Birdie parrot ※ 2 horsies
2 horsies
※ Birdie parrot is a mammal.

How I—I know of 2 horsies is how ah I do not know of 2 horsies. Of course I keep hoping.

Birdie parrot 2 horsies
"Is this little girl gentleman Yi Sang's bride?" "That is so"
Then I saw the birdie parrot turn livid. In my embarrassment my face reddened.

Birdie parrot 2 horsies
2 horsies

Of course I was banished. I didn't need to be banished I dropped out on my own. My body lost its axis and became so frail I quietly flowed my tears.
"There is there" "I" "My—Ah!—You and I"
"I"
sCANDAL is what? "You" "So it's you"
"It's you" "You" "No it's you" I got all
soaked and fled like a beast. Of course there was no—no one who knows or who saw but will that be so? Will even that be so?

POEM NO. 15 (FROM CROW'S EYE VIEW)

1

I am in a room with no mirror. Of course, the me-inside-the-mirror has gone out right now. I shudder in fear of him. Where did he go? What is he plotting to do with me?

2

I sleep on a cold bed, damp from embracing my crime. I am absent in my explicit dream and the military boot carrying a prosthetic leg dirtied my dream's white page.

3

I sneak into a room with a mirror. To free myself from the mirror. But the me-inside-the-mirror always enters at the same time and puts on a gloomy face. He lets me know he is sorry. Just as I am locked up because of him he is locked up shuddering because of me.

4

I am absent in my dream. In my mirror my counterfeit does not make an entrance. He craves my loneliness despite my uselessness. I have finally made up my mind to recommend suicide to him. I point him toward the viewless window. It is a window for suicide. But he instructs me that if I do not kill myself then he cannot kill himself either. The me-inside-the-mirror is almost a phoenix.

5

After covering my breast above my heart with a bulletproof shield I aim and shoot at my left breast in the mirror. The bullet goes straight through his left breast but his heart is on the right side.

6

A red ink is spilled from an imitation heart. In my dream I am late. I am sentenced to death. I am not the ruler of my dream. It is a great crime to seal up two humans who cannot even shake hands.

1933, 6, 1

That person lived for thirty years on a scale (a certain scientist) that other person ultimately counted over thirty thousand stars (as expected) this person here lived for seventy years no actually for twenty-four years with no shame (I)

I write an entry on this day in my autobiography my autographed obituary my body's flesh is now never at home. Because it is proving too difficult for me to witness my body's poetry get confiscated.

GIRL

The girl is clearly a photograph. She always remains still.

When her stomach aches, someone is playing tricks on her with a pencil. The pencil is poisonous. As if she swallowed a bullet, the girl turns pale.

When she vomits blood, a wounded butterfly is perching on her. She is a tree branch stretching out like a spider's web, tremulous under the butterfly's weight. The branch eventually breaks.

She stands in the middle of a small boat—away from the mob and butterflies. The frozen water pressure—the frosted glass panel's pressure takes away everything except the image of the girl. And many pointless readings begin. Inside a closed book, or in some crevice of a library bookshelf, the girl hides, as emaciated as paper. The girl's smell lingers in my metal printing types. A smudge from the girl's soldering iron stays on my book's cover. No sharp fragrance will lead me astray from recognizing—

People wag their fingers at me—the girl must be your wife! I don't want to hear it. It is a lie. Really, no man has ever seen the girl.

But she must become a wife to someone, anyone! Because the girl has given birth to something inside my womb—I have not yet excreted it. If I do not pull this disquieting knowledge out of myself—it will—like a coal blackening my body from within—it will corrode me.

I cremate the girl. Letting it all go. Whenever papers burn near my nostrils, the smell stays on forever and refuses to dissipate.

Translated by Jack Jung

KIM SUYŎNG

GRASS

Blades of grass lie down
Fluttering in the rainstorm, moving in from the east
Blades of grass lie
At last they cry
Crying profusely because of clouds

Blades of grass lie
Faster than the wind they lie
Faster than the wind they cry
Earlier than the wind they rise

On a cloudy day, blades of grass lie
Reaching my ankles
Reaching the soles of my feet
Later than the wind they lie
Earlier than the wind they rise
Later than the wind they cry
Earlier than the wind they laugh
On a cloudy day, roots of grass lie down

(May 29, 1968)

PETALS 2

Give us flowers, for the sake of our agony
Give us flowers, for the sake of unexpected events
Give us flowers, for the sake of a time different than before

Give us yellow flowers, cracked flowers
Give us yellow flowers, flowers turning pale
Give us yellow flowers, uproars spreading wide

Receive yellow flowers, for the sake of erasing enemies
Receive yellow flowers, for the sake of things that are not ours
Receive yellow flowers, for the sake of the sacred chance

Forget the things you had before you found flowers
    so the letters of the flowers will not be twisted
Forget the things you had before you found flowers
    so the noise of flowers will come right in
Forget the things you had before you found flowers
    so the letters of the flowers will be twisted again

Believe my words, yellow flowers
Believe blind letters, yellow flowers
Believe trembling letters, yellow flowers
Believe all the omitted petals, trembling forever,
the repulsive yellow flowers

(May 30, 1967)

PHONE TALK

Hello. It's Albee's *The American Dream*. Despair.
Please include it in the August issue. From despair.
Translation will be finished the day after tomorrow. It's 200 pages. It
    will be a hit.
I can already see it. I left the house
after a quarrel with my wife. It's pure. I mean Albee's play.
A salon drama. It'll be performed
at Bando Hotel or Chosun Hotel. Lingering despair.
No resolution. Good. I'm satisfied.
So you think the 3rd floor of the News Hall is better? Nope.
There's no air conditioning. Can accommodate
about two hundred. Fuel of despair is running out.
Right! Only at a place like Bando Hotel,
we can collect entrance fees from the American bastards.
I can break up with my wife, but the pitiful are
our children. No resolution.

The Korean Dream? Don't make fun of me.
My child is sleeping. It is salvation for me
because I am not disturbed.
Despair splattered all over me.
If you decide, decide to include it in the August issue, it'll be a hit.
Great for the theater, great for your magazine too.
Great for the translator, great for me too.
It's Albee, Albee. A L B E E. Yes.
Ok. Oh, really?
Yes, I see. No. Ah, understood.

I made the call, to boast, to a translator friend beside me,
and passed on to him the obituary.
Enormous, enormous commotion.
By the time I felt content to have added one more to it,
I was already late to despair.

(June 14, 1966)

THAWING

The frozen water in the iron bathtub began to thaw. The top layer melted as the anxiety of ice quietly sinks to the bottom. Even though the front garden is still covered in frost, the premonition of spring I observe in the shallow bathtub gives me more pleasure than seeing any new sprouts. It's already too late to fully sense the spring when the new sprouts appear. I don't care to read into fallen leaves for early signs of spring the way Shelley† did—it's too poetic. I prefer to be ordinary and notice spring as it naturally arrives—but perhaps a bit sooner than most people might notice it.

New sprouts or buds make no sounds; the extremity of silence is contained in the action of thawing. This extreme silence makes me shudder with happiness. To be in sync with silence is an ultimate action, to love in such unbearable quietness.

I think of the ice in the bathtub as anxiety, that intensifies through winter. My plunging sadness is a source of delightful satire. I breathe a sigh of relief, regardless of my anxiety about reality. In the courtyard, a bowl of rice rinsed with well water glistens as I rub my firm hands in front of the earthen stove.

I try to imagine that it's blood that is thawing, not ice. I also imagine the thawing of the frozen Han River and the thawing of the sea's blood. I think silence is the only method for thawing, love's enormous action.

---

†/ Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Ode to the West Wind" ends with "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Our border across the 38th parallel is one of the tallest icebergs in the world. In order to thaw this ferocious iron-like mass, how enormous must our love need to be abosorbed in silence? Definitely quieter than the thawing of the bathtub. Couldn't we imagine such silence? My spring premonition. In the process, I forget myself. I want to be the first ice to melt and the last iron to remain frozen; I want to be the first iron to melt and the last ice to remain frozen.

(1968)

WASŎN [RECLINED ZEN MEDITATION]

I have heard that the most difficult Zen meditation is Wasŏn (臥禪), a reclined meditation. Although I am totally ignorant of Zen meditation, I rejoice in deciphering the complexities of reclined meditation. In my view, it is the most irreverent of all postures. Reclined mediation does not seek Buddha by wandering all over the world, but rather by lying down in bed, waiting for Buddha to simply drop from heaven or for Buddha to manifest within one's body. Such irreverent attitude can also be found in the way Rilke approached poetry. Although we have observed many poets who have appropriated Rilke's "girlish" poems, yet none of them have embraced his "thuggish" poems.

I became more certain of the aesthetics of Wasŏn while listening to Handel's music on the radio during last Christmas. Handel's music doesn't leave any memorable melodies like Beethoven's. But Handel's tone devours the tone itself. Though his music is said to be optimistic, in fact, it is the kind that makes us shiver with goose bumps. As I listened to Handel's *Messiah*, I recalled the gruesome scene I saw in the news of desperate North Vietnamese guerrilla fighters, being annihilated when they infiltrated enemy territory. You could say that Picasso's paintings are aligned with Handel's music, van Gogh's with Beethoven's, and that Baudelaire is the antithesis of Rilke. Baudelaire leaves his own dead body alone, but Rilke devours his in advance. We might be able to find at least some hair left from Rilke's corpse. As for Handel, we won't be able to find any remaining fingernails, toenails, or hair. Handel's corpse is a total void, an oblivion.

There is a saying in Zen that Buddha appears to a person when he or she can no longer hear any sounds of his surroundings, then is able to hear again. Such temporary deafness could be Handel's tone

of oblivion. He forgets his music. And his music is oblivious to the response of his audience. What a precious wisdom his *Messiah* is to a stupid poet like me. It may be the only gift I received last Christmas.

(1968)

Translated by Young-Jun Lee

KIM HYESOON

MY DAY, TO BE WIPED OUT BY THE MIGHTY SUN ERASER

To **the mirror**, I stick out my tongue. It tastes fishy. I feel that if I push this mirror, I will instantly shove aside that woman inside and vanish into the other world, invisible to me in this moment. I try pushing the mirror again. I put my tongue on it again. Tastes fishy. I try leaning my forehead against the mirror. This existence, just standing here, this weighty existence—is this me? Then who is that woman inside the mirror? Where was she yesterday? Where is she tomorrow? Do I really exist?

The sea was frightening. When I walked about three miles, the sea appeared. Whenever I paused in front of the sea, it would rise higher than me and growl, "I was waiting for you." My breath stopped from fear; this symptom still persists. Whenever I went to the sea, I had to teach my body how to breathe again. Once I went after my mother, who ran out of the house crying. The world's most beautiful mother. The aching hem of her skirt as she ran somewhere in tight little steps. Her skirt hem passed the forest of pine trees and arrived at the sea. I stopped breathing, then caught my mother, who was embracing a pine stub and shaking her shoulders to the rhythm of the sea. I was living in the only two-story house on that street. It was my maternal grandparents' house. A stub of a grapevine, creeping up from the Monopoly Bureau building next door, laid grapes on the roof of our lower floor and baked them in the sun. At night, I would lie by myself on the second floor, which was filled with books in Japanese. I would lie down in front of the hallway, on which rested steamed white rice cakes, glowing in the moonlight. My mother's breast milk had run dry, so she had spread out the cakes to make thin rice gruel out of them for my younger sibling. Downstairs, my grandfather's big pendulum clock was walking around the house. I listened to the sound of waves every night. At times, the waves would boil inside my

body. It would also feel as if the waves would boil over and spill down my ear flaps. Saliva kept flowing from my mouth. During the day, I could barely move because I had to keep spitting. During morning assembly at school, I fainted easily. The moment I thought of a yellow sea engulfing me, I habitually lost consciousness. After a very long time, my grandmother realized that my tuberculous pleuritis had returned. The waves that would enter my body and slosh every night were diagnosed as an auditory hallucination caused by malnutrition.

The morning coffee sits in front of me, the same shape as "last night" when it was squeezed out in a press. The sleepless night did not disappear but is hot and condensed, like so. This morning, I lift the cup filled with my insomnia and drink. Then, the poor woman who stayed behind and called out for sleep inside my body discreetly leaves the scene.

I need to make **the wind** circulate inside my body. I insert a tape that begins with "Perfect Love" into the cassette player. I leave the side road, where my house is. The moment I turn on the ignition, I start to melt inside the wind wafting from the song. In this tape are all the winds: the wind that grazes my skin; the wind that knocks on my body; the wind that pushes my back and throws me up in the air; the relaxing wind that stretches out, hiding in the sun, gently gazing at me; the wind that carries the sparkle of "Ruby Tuesday." Inside my car, the wind blows, calms, and blows again. This wind is phlegmatic; I melt inside it. The car dissolves me as it erases the Han River and Tunnel Number 3. I cannot remember how I crossed the river, passed through the mountain, and switched lanes. To get out of the car and go into the building where my office is, I have to regenerate and harden my body into a solid. I have to reassemble my phlegmatic body into a sturdy professor's physique. I don't want to get out of the car. I simply want to stay melted and seep in someplace—like into a rose bouquet.

In **Research Building 2**, inside its corner lecture hall, dreary and spooky even in summertime, I talk about poets' visions of perception and mediations of distance. An older female student asks: "Professor, is that something that you can improve over time?" The wall fans, covered in black plastic bags, look down at the students and me as

we laugh at the question. Some time passes, and I ask a male student: "You say she comes like rain; what aspect of her appearance, or her arrival, are you trying to depict?" After hanging his head for a while, he finally answers: "She's coming down like a guillotine." All the students burst out laughing, but the male student's expression is rather dark. I also start sputtering something about the differences among various modes of enunciation. Though as an example, I refer to the Sampoong department store collapse, and during my explanation, I regret it. But it's too late. I have already begun using my mouth to describe the scene of the pink department store sinking. People have already begun being tossed into the hole.

Someone calls **my name**. Telling me to pick up the phone. They say the words I wrote sweating over the break cannot be included in the book. Other people's pieces are essayistic prose about happenings surrounding their personal lives, but mine is like a frontal attack, so they will take it out. Okay, I don't know everything, but I'm definitely being reduced to ruins in this country because of my "frontal attack" writing. When I won the criticism category of *Dong-a Ilbo*'s annual spring literary contest, I was a fourth-year university student.† A professor whom I can't even remember came up to me to say, "Hey, how can you be a critic with a name like a maid's?" I still have the same name. At home, I often tell its story. The name my father initially had for me was "Kim Jeong-kyeong," but apparently my grandfather changed it without consulting anyone when he added me in the family register. My daughter tells me to change my name to "Capsyong Kim."‡ She says there are many great adjectives between "Capsyong" and "Kim," enough to fill ten pages; some examples are *ultra*, *great*, *beautiful*, *famous*, and *intelligent*.* If someone asks my name, she says I should answer, "Capsyong," hand over the ten sheets of paper, and then say "Kim." Maybe when I go to a conference, I should carry a trunkful of business cards.

---

†/ *Dong-a Ilbo*, literally "East Asia Daily," is a major South Korean newspaper, first issued in 1920.

‡/ "Capsyong" is a playful extension of "cap," slang from the 1980s–90s meaning "superb" or "the best." "Cap" and all its variants had become obsolete around 2000.

*/ This list of adjectives is italicized because they are English words in the original.

I hear **a voice**. I look around, wondering if it's coming from outside, but it's a voice trapped inside me that cannot escape from within. It seems I am not letting your voice go, keeping it tucked inside me. Out of all our senses, hearing is the best at rewinding. I heard there is such a thing as the mind's eye; there must be a mind's ear as well. As if reading a book, I read your voice. I read and reread, over and over.

Illness is a reply. I received a reply that no one sent. Skipping school, I read books. In addition to books, I grab and read everything that has words in it. I read and read. I read the paper wrapped around the meat, the signs outside the window. Sick and unable to go to school, I read nonstop. I borrow the complete series of world literature printed by Jeongeumsa and Eulyoo Publishing and read them all. I don't try to assess how much of the translation is wrong or whether the work is good. I read the complete series of world literature from the postwar and the encyclopedia. I don't read my sick body, only books. On the bed next to me in the hospital room, a young woman dies. She was a maid, and was carried into the hospital because she had fallen while cleaning the second floor windows. Even on the day she dies, I read. After returning to school, I don't listen to lectures and instead read books from the library. When my sick body starts to scream, when it starts to let out frightened shrieks that are excruciating to hear, when I come to realize that those are my body's replies, I start to read my sick body. I read what my body has written to me. Once my illness is cured, I go to the movies instead of reading. Without friends, without colleagues I can look up to, I wander alone and see films. After being immersed in another world, I run out alone into the darkened streets. If it hasn't gotten dark yet, I go back to watch the same movie again. Sometimes, I go to another school's library and read a collection of books about fine art.

Drinking **strawberry juice**, we chatter about the new minjung.[†] One friend says, "It might seem like the Internet is completely open but when you sign in, you are asked for a secret ID. During my sabbatical,

†/ "Minjung," roughly meaning "the people" or "the masses," has political, cultural, and philosophical implications of being the subjugated class oppressed by capitalists and the privileged class.

I wanted to rent a room in a US college dorm and live there for a year, but couldn't find a way to arrange it from here. I couldn't go further. It's quite bad in the US. They pretend like everything is open on the surface, but nowadays everything is done in cliques. A new kind of regionalism is born." Another friend says, "Here in Korea, there are no lesser evils. Remember the last election? They were all equally bad. So, I couldn't vote." Yet another friend says, "Can you believe your readers? You just have to go where the literature inside you tells you." After struggling to identify the many new monsters produced by the so-called Internet Democracy, we have another round of strawberry juice and go home to make dinner.

The body is a pulse. It seems that my body has a covert affinity for proving itself, beyond *me*. It moves on its own and puts itself in a monthly cycle. It doesn't always draw the same orbit all the time, though. It palpitates on its own and moves according to its own program. I don't transcend myself; my body transcends me. Unexpectedly, I find myself hearing the sounds of my body crying. When my body cries by itself out of desperation, there is nothing I can do but listen to its sobs or, for its sake, cry along. Putting the receiver down, I cry. Even driving home, I drop tears onto the steering wheel.

The body, again. Waves came pushing in. At first, once every hour; then, once every thirty minutes, once every ten minutes. Gradually, they became faster and came once every three seconds. I couldn't do anything but let my body go along with its program. I was waiting for something. Though I didn't command it, my body dipped me in and out of the waves again and again. My body opened, tightened, then spread out again on its own. It broke through its limitations. I became wider than the sea and narrower than the lightning. I emptied like the autumn sky then filled like thunder. Then, I forgot all of my life before this very moment. I cleared out everything. I was no longer that kind of woman. Covered in sweat, I was cleansed. At the pinnacle of violence that my own body created, at the pinnacle of fear, I saw my newly born self. A daughter. I was born again, enveloped in the flood I had spilled. I swaddled and tenderly held myself, and roared with laughter. I opened my grave and breastfed it.

In **cars**, clutching their wheels, people only stare forward, trapped in rush-hour traffic. Maybe there's a cinema over there? People are boring a hole in that direction. I also watch the same movie. I saw it yesterday, and it is terribly uninteresting.

Ten chicken legs lie rinsed on a wicker tray. I salt and pepper the legs to season them. Soon, I will dress them in thin batter. Whenever I see a chicken leg, I recall a passage from Chae Man-sik's novel. I recall the "appetite" for the New Women's legs, likened to chicken katsu that strutted the streets of Seoul.† I plan to fry these ten chicken legs in hot oil. In the word "fry," there is the sound of heat, oil, and bubbles popping. People can say, "Are you trying to egg me on?" but nobody says, "Are you trying to fry me up?" Because after frying, you, me, all of us just disappear. I raise the temperature of the oil in the cauldron.

Embracing the hollow void called **night**, I fall asleep. "Let me hold it," I say to the night who shoulders a heavy load. "No, no," says the night, stubbornly shaking its head. Hugging the void, I turn to the other side. I don't know why every day we have to repeat the beginning of the world, pull down the shutters of doomsday, and endure the long days after the world's end. Why do we have to endure the long days of celestial gas spheres in order to begin the world again? Even if I sleep, I don't feel like I slept. Even when I'm awake, I can't tell if I am.

Translated by David Krolikoski & Emily Jungmin Yoon

†/ This passage refers to a scene from "A Ready-Made Life," a short story by Chae Man-sik that was originally published in 1934 in the newspaper *Sindonga*.

CROW'S EYE VIEW 31†

"Today, I'm wingless"
—Yi Sang (Kim Haekyeong), "Wings"

In Kim Haekyeong's poem 13 children take off down the road
In Kim Hyesoon's poem 13 birds fly above the children's heads, up to the sky
13 birds keep flying up till they can't be seen from below
For 8 days straight they fly without eating or sleeping
They're so high up that they're flying across the black sky
The 1st bird says it's terrifying
The 2nd bird asks am I dead?
The 3rd bird says I'm pooping diarrhea
The 4th bird sobs then falls from the sky
The 5th bird's supersonic prayer dribbles like vomit from its beak
The 6th bird chirps I'm an arrow, then
thinks of how to commit suicide
I want to keep writing meanly about all the 13 birds
but that wouldn't be polite, for they've been endlessly patient
and it wouldn't be polite to Kim Haekyeong either who wrote the same line—"says it's terrifying"—13 times because things were intolerable for him, then turned the paper over and jotted down the complete opposite—"don't take off"—so I decide to stop

Really, the birds might not be terrified at all
Perhaps the 2nd bird is terrified of the 1st bird and
the 3rd bird is terrified of the 2nd and so on
This is how one nation might end up becoming a terrified nation
Terrified or not, birds fly because they can

†/ This poem is a play on Yi Sang's (Kim Haekyeong) "Poem No. 1" from "Crow's Eye View."

Go a bit further and there's our country, Republic of Korea
Doors of the nests along the pristine ocean shore
are left ajar like vowels
Welcome! Rooms wearing white aprons await
So birds keep flying

12 birds arrive on the west coast of Korea
In front, a vast reclaimed land for farming
Skinny, scruffy birds perch on the observation post like bowling pins
Birds haven't slept or eaten for 9 days straight
Birds are so starved that even the blood in their veins has dried up
In front, there is no sea

Crimson-colored hands of the mirage snatch up the birds

The 1st bird bashes its head into the asphalt
The 2nd bird bashes its head into the asphalt
Out of politeness, I'll stop repeating

Birds are falling inside my face, then the landscape, too

AGAIN, I NEED TO ASK POOR YI SANG

Dear colleagues of surkoreanpoemaordojunta,
I'm someone who raises stairs
I water them

My stairs grow tall like a melody
Melancholic step 5
Regrettable step 6
Sorrowful step 7

I go upstairs like the way my tears flow upstream inside me
I go downstairs as if I'm burying my sadness underground

My sibling stairs have lost their daddy

When I open the drawers of the stairs, Daddy's eyes flash open

If my painful knees don't exist, then stairs don't either

What if there aren't any stairs that risk the horizon?

When I lie on my side and hug my knees
the stairs inside me reverse direction

I go upstairs and look down with crow's eyes
I go downstairs and stare at the tail end of the numbers even further
    from year one
hundredthousandmilliontrillion away

You can call me a conductor of stairs
You can call me an excavator of stairs

When tears well up
my stairs stack up one by one
When my sadness gets buried
the pitch-dark basement inside me expands infinitely

To prevent my stairs from spilling out
I circle the staircase from top to bottom and bottom to top

My stairs' lips and your stairs' lips meet and moan moan moan

Stairs didn't create my music
instead it's my music that has created stairs

However lonely house
lonely stairs
lonely bed
lonely patient
lonely coughs, ascending stairs

This morning you, my fellows of poemaordojunta keep ringing the doorbell
Stairs howl neck to neck

What I listen to, hiding inside the piano:
Crazy bastard's nonsense, what bullshit, kill him![†]
Why bother creating such a thing? Cut her piano strings!
What is this? This isn't music!

But surely you won't ignore the fact that
there's music inside your body that's far more complex than you

I don't wish to be loved by you
What I've made is merely a pattern of despair

a spiral staircase that chases after me and conducts me

---

†/ From some of the insults thrown at Yi Sang's serial poem "Crow's Eye View" when it was serialized in *Chosun Central Daily*, 1934.

Therefore, after listening to you,
I shut my mouth and kneel
take two steps then crouch once
prostrate and raise my right leg, then turn over to lie on my back
unlock the door with my bound toes

stick to moths
shove my head into a rice cooker
switch my body with the whale's
clang the gongs with my heels
punch the ocean with my fists

to the basement of a basement
to the root of a root

Stairs, bite the bullet and rage!
Stairs, bite the bullet and endure the void!

Dear members of the poemaordojunta standing outside the hallway,
I'll embrace your knife with my hands

Please just leave my stairs alone!

Translated by Don Mee Choi

YI WON

FOR THE MIRROR

Mirror: If I look into it, I vanish into the wall or language.

Enter quietly. Don't look around. Don't question. Don't spread your hand into the mirror. Don't look back.

Yesterday's hour and tomorrow's hour enter the mirror and run into each other. They're too stunned to say anything. They don't touch each other. They just stare. This is why our lips stay sealed when we look in the mirror.

Though it's not the first time I look in the mirror, time always flinches.

Though I'm not a petal or a light, I slowly drift in the mirror.

The things that drift have a valley hidden inside. There is darkness inside darkness, cloud inside cloud, sand inside sand, seed inside seed, void inside void, mirror inside mirror, face inside face.

People are drawn like a magnet to other people's faces. Because others' faces are windows of time. People hesitate at seeing their own faces. Because their reflections are a wall of time.

The speeding body is full of fear. It rushes inside the mirror to the end of the wall. The speeding body bursts against it like a raw egg.

People can't see the wall behind the wall right in front of them. The mirror puts on a disguise to hide the real star. The mirror is extinguished.

Every time I brush past the mirror, I cut my face. Time seeps like blood into my cut face.

The dream of the mirror will drain my insides. A dream is only a dream while unattained, so the mirror continues to exist.

Inside the wall, the clear mirror rots away. The transparent I inside the mirror also rots.

Mirror: I emerge from it without vanishing. I am trapped in boiling sludge.

THE MIRROR RUNS AWAY

If I go inside the mirror thinking of the mirror, it runs away. Somehow it finds an exit, leaving behind the wall and my face and floats out of the mirror. What weighs heavy on me is the fact it was the wall and the face scheming a plot and not the mirror. In the place where the mirror runs off to, the face and the wall push out each other's air. The face is stiff. The wall clings closer to time, gasping. The roads swarm in from where the mirror has disappeared and pull on my face. I lack the darkness to become earth. I don't know the despair to become a wide patch of grass. The face stiffens from exerting strength, blocking roads. Between my blocked face and wall, the roads bounce along like tennis balls. The face I can never meet keeps digging into itself. My feet cry in the widening distance.

DARK AND BULGING TV AND ME

1

A TV from 1990 and
my body made in 1968 are inside a darkness

(a camel and time were left in a desert)

Moonlight vaguely tainted
the TV from 1990 and
my body from 1968 is dark and bulging

In 1968 I crouch
I peer like a ghost into the 1990 TV

2

The TV from 1990 and my body from 1968. Products with the year they were made. Products with serial numbers. Products that scald. Products that tangle. Somehow the TV in my body won't turn off. The TV broadcasts me to my body. Nanji Island TV. Water inside the dark, bulging TV. Body underwater. The well that can't be opened. The window that can't be turned off. Things crouching in the darkness. Fluttering things.

3

Inside me is the father of an indisputable rumor, not decomposing, who has been dead 20 years. Rusted spade. Rusted teardrop. Pair of feet dented by scrap metal. Bone and brass spoon. Goat's eyes full of sand. Shattered mirror. Plastic bag. Shooting star. The end of spring. The last drum of spring caught on the setting sun. The water inside the sun can't cross the horizon. A field of stones. Midnight's dark and bulging TV. Two rows of graves are connected to the TV with cables. Two more.

THE LANDSCAPE'S END

The window must stay a window, draped with curtains on either side, countless stars perfectly appear and disappear. Beneath them, a man and woman sit across a table.

A lamp hangs between them. Oblivious to the light overhead, they suddenly hold hands across the table. Look, the man leans back as if letting go of the woman. But their hands are clasped. She looks over to where he's pointing. Look, the man tugs their locked hands toward him. She pulls him toward her, they yank back and forth. Stars roll into their dark mouths, keeping them open. The stars vanish when their mouths close. The universe opens and closes so easily like that. Z. ZZ. O. B. O.… Before his letters reach the woman, they split apart in mid-air. Then the stars shower over them. The lamp shines on fallen stars across the table. The stars darken.

The window glows coldly. The man and woman stay seated. The time when just the candle at the center of the window was as pretty as an animal…the landscape's end…in a flash, the man, and woman, are sucked, into, a black hole.

A NIGHT AT THE GAS STATION

The man rips off the woman's left torso, lifts the hose and pumps gas.
With his other hand, he strokes her neck and hair

She rips out the man's belly, and seizing the pump, starts to giggle nonstop

The man rips out his spine, then lights up a cigarette. The pump is left dangling between his bones

All the cars in the world trust the traffic signal and make a road

and unexpectedly simple, composite bodies switch between man and man or woman and man or woman and woman

Translated by Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello & E. J. Koh

KIM HAENGSOOK

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Like a cake, we gather round. We're so close, it's as if the only thing that can pass between us is a knife

We reveal a cross section. Like even teeth seen through broad smile, we're lined up one by one. We wait. We look up at the clock on the wall, and our mouths form the same shape and shout in unison… ah ah ah ah as if stretching ourselves awake

Let's get ready! The world has something to it like a fuse getting shorter and shorter, as if to say, *I'll show you what an end really is*

The countdown begins. The blue screen crackles, suddenly appears the President wearing her folksy traditional dress, then cheers, EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE!

APRIL 16, 1914

It is my birth date.
As I am a person who is not yet dead,
I am a person who has many dead friends.
It's not that my friends have left me all alone in the twenty-first century,
but rather I have the feeling that I've traveled far from my friends.
It's like being washed away to the end of the world.
It is April 16, 2014.†

†/ This marks the date that the ferry MV *Sewol* capsized and sank off the southeastern coast of South Korea. 304 passengers, including 250 students from Danwon High School, drowned. This tragedy is widely regarded as a result of corporate and governmental negligence.

ANOTHER OBSERVATORY

Let's think of the crow sitting atop that branch as an observatory.
Let's think of the crow having moved to sit atop another branch as another observatory.
If your branch breaks, let's sigh about how your observatory has collapsed.
When one tree is pulled out by its roots, how many eyes must close at the same time, such that the entire world goes dark?
The forest is burning.
Like a giant eye, it burns ferociously.
If we call this a fire, it's the lord of all fires.

"This view of Seoul is so beautiful tonight."
The speech of my lover intoxicated by the light feels like that of a dictator, and my love has become frightening.

UNIFICATION OBSERVATORY 2015

I went to see North Korean land.
I went to see something that couldn't be seen.
To be honest I went to catch some fresh air.
We took the Sonata and went to have a bit of a diversion.
Over there is the North, someone said.
Aren't those words usually said while pointing to constellations in the night sky?

Then you struck a pose and recited a line from Lukács.
"How happy is the age whose path is illuminated by the light of the stars."
Now it was my turn to speak, I wanted to respond with something astute but *a—ah ah ah choo* a sneeze burst out.
What tremendous effort we made that day to make each other laugh.

LANDMARK

I saw a person in the midst of collapsing
like a building that has been tilting for 500 days
I am a message
Please read me
If a look could write, this was a look that wrote despairingly

If a hot kettle is tilted in the middle
of a hallway, trickling streams of tears
the warm water surely will stream in the direction of a cold fate
I am an arrow
Please read along with me
If the water level increases to that of a flood
the raging river, with time on its side, will redden and surge toward the west
pouring through a building that has been tilting for 501 days
to a building that has been tilting for 502 days
Still if we, being slower than light, are in the midst of going to the future

if a bullet, being slower than light, is in the midst of going to the future
if a collapsing person is in the midst of going to the future
if in the middle of the night, in the building that has been tilting for 503 days
among those who have gone to sleep after today's work was done
no one sleeps while standing
still tomorrow, even tomorrow, today's work will not be finished

Translated by Mia You

STEPHEN HONG SOHN

Across the Divides: Korean Poetry and Korean American Translators

This portfolio challenges the boundaries that typically divide comparative literature, area studies, and Asian American literature. In addition, the translation of some of the collection's poems into English suggests how we can read Korean literature through dynamic transnational ethnic and diasporic affiliations. In the following, I focus on the first five poets in the portfolio: Yi Sang, Kim Suyŏng, Kim Hyesoon, Yi Won, and Kim Haengsook. In discussing these poets, I take my lead from the chronological conceit used in the portfolio, in which earlier poets form a kind of lyrical context for later ones. The earlier poets and their poems reveal the critical intertwining of aesthetic experimentation and political sensibilities that tracks throughout this portfolio. After providing some interpretive pathways for these poems, I consider how to revisit Korean American poetry through transnational and interlingual dimensions.

That Yi Sang (born Kim Haekyeong) is the first poet in the portfolio is not surprising; his work has garnered much attention, especially for its use of wordplay, repetition, and revision, and its creative engagement with layout and page space. As one of the founders of modern Korean literature, his influence on later writers cannot be overstated.[1] According to Jack Jung, "Yi Sang's poetry and prose have been categorized as Korean modernist writings by Korean literary scholars since his death. In fact, Yi Sang's work would be considered as having introduced key modes and concepts of Dada and surrealism into Korean literature."[2] In all three poems of his "Crow's Eye View" series, Yi Sang disrupts any one perspective or understanding. In "Poem No. 1," for instance, we confront a nebulous situation: thirteen children say "it is scary," but "it" is never clarified. A later block of poetry then slightly alters the scenario: "Among 13 children there are scary children and scared children and they are all

they are. (It is better that there is no other excuse).” The children are now separated into two groups: one is “scared,” the other is “scary.” The shift from children saying that something is scary to the children themselves being scary is part and parcel of Yi Sang’s style. We must continually reorient and revise our understanding the further we move into a poem. As Sone Seunghee notes, “While contemporary Korean readers expected his serial poems to offer at least a commentary on the colonial experience, Yi Sang consistently offered them ambiguity. Those readers expected poems published in newspapers to provide a liberating space amidst their experiences of colonial oppression. However, his work was apparently too bizarre to be taken that way.”[3] The “ambiguity” Seunghee emphasizes as part of Yi Sang’s lyric style is on full display in various poems of the “Crow’s Eye View” series. The “liberating space” of poetry is replaced by confusion, which better reflects the period in which Yi Sang wrote. In this sense, despite the lack of explicit mention of colonial oppression, Yi Sang’s poems are deliberately elliptical in their engagement with politics.

“Poem No. 15,” for instance, involves the tense relationship between the lyric speaker and a mirror self, the “me-inside-the mirror,” an apt metaphorical rendering of the complicated emergence of creative possibilities in the context of colonial rule. The struggle for self-definition is made evident in the tensions that appear between the lyric speaker and his reflection: “I sneak into a room with a mirror. To free myself from the mirror. But the me-inside-the-mirror always enters at the same time and puts on a gloomy face.” The “me-inside-the-mirror” thus seems to attain a level of independence through his ability to defy the lyric speaker in various ways. At one point, the “me-inside-the-mirror” refuses to commit suicide, even though the act is recommended to him. The struggle with this reflection ends only when the lyric speaker seems to injure the “me-inside-the-mirror,” which results in serious consequences: “In my dream I am late. I am sentenced to death. I am not the ruler of my dream. It is a great crime to seal up two humans who cannot even shake hands.” The final lines gesture to the figurative tension created when the lyric speaker cannot control the realm of the imagination, a prison-like space that becomes inhospitable to sociality and community.

Kim Suyŏng, writing and publishing approximately a quarter century after Yi Sang, appears next in the portfolio, with a number

of creative nonfictional essays (수 필) that I reconsider here as prose poems.[4] "Thawing" intertwines a subjective lyric mood with the political dimensions of the Korean War. The poem begins with an individualized and meditative perspective: that of the lyric speaker observing the process of "thawing" occurring in an "iron bathtub." But something is certainly amiss: "The top layer melted as the anxiety of ice quietly sinks to the bottom." The phrase "anxiety of ice" keys us into a larger metaphorical conceit that develops over the course of the poem. The next two prose blocks begin to shift the stakes, as the lyric speaker emphasizes the connection between blood and ice: "I try to imagine it's blood that is thawing, not ice." The final block moves us to the poetic climax with the lyric speaker divulging, "Our border across the 38th parallel is one of the tallest icebergs in the world." In this sense, the physical process of thawing gives way to larger political dimensions, gesturing to the need to unfreeze the borders between North and South Korea.

This kind of radical poetic turn toward the political also appears in "Wasŏn," which is a "reclined zen meditation." The individualized perspective that opens "Thawing" finds more purchase in "Wasŏn," as the lyric speaker engages reclined Zen meditation while listening to music. For the lyric speaker, the "aesthetics of Wasŏn" become apparent only "while listening to Handel's music on the radio during last Christmas." What starts as a sensory experience takes a major turn: "As I listened to Handel's *Messiah*, I recalled the gruesome scene I saw in the news of desperate North Vietnamese guerrilla fighters, being annihilated when they infiltrated enemy territory." As in "Thawing," the lyric speaker draws upon an action—here, the process of reclined zen meditation—as a gateway that opens up a larger political issue. The reference to the Vietnam War recalls South Korea's participation in the fighting, as South Korea had agreed to provide military support to the United States. For this lyric speaker, Zen enlightenment is achieved only through a kind of dissolution of the artistic self that shifts perspectives toward larger issues (such as war and violence). In this sense, Kim Suyŏng's poetry engages more explicitly with political topics than does Yi Sang's work.

The inclusion of Kim Hyesoon in this portfolio moves us into a direct poetic genealogy, as a number of the poems showcased offer lyric responses to Yi Sang's poetry. In "Crow's Eye View 31," Kim

Hyesoon takes the first poem in the "Crow's Eye View" series as inspiration but changes the original poem's scared and scary children to scared and scary birds. The number 13 that was foundational to Yi Sang's "Poem No. 1" is reversed here in light of the avian imagery. Referring to Yi Sang by his given name, Kim Hyesoon writes: "In Kim Haekyeong's poem 13 children take off down the road / In Kim Hyesoon's poem 13 birds fly above the children's heads, up to the sky / 13 birds keep flying up till they can't be seen from below." As does Yi Sang, Kim Hyesoon emphasizes the ambiguity of meaning: "Really, the birds might not be terrified at all / Perhaps the 2nd bird is terrified of the 1st bird and / the 3rd bird is terrified of the 2nd and so on." The use of conditional phrasing and words—"might not be" and "perhaps"—destabilizes the affectual state of these flying animals. But the playful engagement with Yi Sang's poem takes a darker turn when the birds, somehow now only twelve in number, "arrive on the west coast of Korea." Their physical condition suggests a state of deprivation: "Birds haven't slept or eaten for 9 days straight / Birds are so starved that even the blood in their veins has dried up." South Korea proves to be an inhospitable location. As the poem ends, some of the birds seem to be captured and then "The 1st bird bashes its head into the asphalt / The 2nd bird bashes its head into the asphalt / Out of politeness, I'll stop repeating." "Crow's Eye View 31" thus seems to gesture to the challenging environment South Korea presents for those who travel there. For Kim, the shift from Yi Sang's "Crow's Eye Poem 13" to her own "Poem 31" suggests a kind of numerical mirror imaging. Whereas Yi Sang's poem can be read through its colonial critique of Japan, Kim's poem directly concerns South Korea's neocolonial relationship with the United States as well as its tense standoff with North Korea.[5] The birds thus become a possible metaphor for South Korea, as the country continues to face internal divisions over its connection to the United States, on the one hand, and continues to exist in a precarious cease-fire with North Korea, on the other.

In "Again, I Need to Ask Poor Yi Sang," Kim Hyesoon defends Yi Sang, who, like Kim, received significant criticism from a readership who saw her work as "vulgar" and inelegant.[6] The poem offers a spritely engagement with Yi Sang's and Kim's detractors in its argument for creative license. The poet threads staircase imagery throughout the

lines to convey artistic freedom. For instance, the lyric speaker notes, "Dear members of the poemaordojunta standing outside the hallway, / I'll embrace your knife with my hands // Please just leave my stairs alone!" Kim's neologism "poemaordojunta" refers to the poetic critics who have written so negatively about her and Yi Sang. However, Kim's lyric speaker is not so much invested in eliminating the criticism as she is in preserving innovative approaches to poetry. She'll "embrace" her own inner critic to push herself creatively but requests that her "stairs"—that is, the horizon of creative freedoms—be spared.

Another thread that deserves mention is Kim Hyesoon's ascendance as one of the most prominent contemporary Korean *female* poets.[7] According to Ruth Williams, "Kim's poems resist the pressure to beautify; instead, they take the subjects deemed appropriate to Korean women—family, 'pretty' voices, and 'pretty' landscapes—and defile them with garbage, vomit, and the violent expressions of oppressed identities."[8] Williams explores how many of Kim Hyesoon's poems depict the feminine grotesque to work against gender norms that influence how a female poet might be expected to write.[9] I take inspiration from Williams's argument in a brief engagement with the essay "My Day, to Be Wiped Out by the Mighty Sun Eraser," which I read as a prose poem in the context of this portfolio. This poem asks: "Then who is that woman inside the mirror? Where was she yesterday? Where is she tomorrow? Do I really exist?" The encounter with the self relates to restrictive gender paradigms, as the lyric speaker seeks a way out of a culture of objectification that permeates contemporary Korea. The feminine grotesque offers one mode of resistance, especially when the lyric speaker births another version of herself: "At the pinnacle of violence that my own body created, at the pinnacle of fear, I saw my newly born self. A daughter. I was born again, enveloped in the flood I had spilled. I swaddled and tenderly held myself, and roared with laughter. I opened my grave and breastfed it." This graphic scene immediately brings to mind the "violence" that accompanies childbirth. At the same time, these lines gesture to the possibility that this "daughter" who is "born again" may find a path toward a less restrictive future.

Kim Hyesoon's approach to poetry is germane to the poet who immediately follows in the portfolio: Yi Won. The motif of self-reflection and self-production found in "My Day, to Be Wiped Out

by the Mighty Sun Eraser" is the starting point for Yi Won's "For the Mirror" and "The Mirror Runs Away." In both poems, the encounter with the reflection is a tortured one. In "For the Mirror," the lyric speaker notes that "every time I brush past the mirror, I cut my face," while the speaker from "The Mirror Runs Away" must confront an asynchronous reflection in which "the face I can never meet / keeps digging into itself." Both poems hint at the claustrophobic nature of gender norms and physical beauty standards that trap modern Korean women within a hall of distorted mirrors. By reflecting images, the mirrors provide the speaker a terrain to reconsider the meaning of identity and self-determination.

Like Kim Hyesoon, Yi Won embraces the feminine grotesque. Two of Yi's poems in particular upend gender paradigms and relationships in disturbing, violent ways. The prose poem "The Landscape's End" at first seems to portray a romantic night between a couple who sit beneath the stars, but later transforms into something more apocalyptic: "The window glows coldly. The man and woman stay seated. The time when just the candle at the center of the window was as pretty as an animal…the landscape's end…in a flash, the man, and woman, are sucked, into, a black hole." In "A Night at the Gas Station," Yi's lyric speaker immediately describes a scene of violence: "The man rips off the woman's left torso, lifts the hose and pumps gas. With his other hand, he strokes her neck and hair." But the poem soon moves into a speculative register, as the woman is still miraculously able to resist: "She rips out the man's belly, and seizing the pump, starts to giggle nonstop." By the poem's end, Yi's lyric speaker reveals an intriguing fluidity of gender identities: "All the cars in the world trust the traffic signal and make a road // and unexpectedly simple, composite bodies switch between man and man or woman and man or woman and woman." What does Yi mean to convey by juxtaposing the gas station and vehicle imagery with the metamorphosing "composite bodies"? Yi's phrase "unexpectedly simple" perhaps provides an answer. Simple indeed are two principles governing cars: they require fuel and they must operate within legal rules. Yi's speaker seems to suggest that such accepted, simple rules *could* also be understood with respect to discourses of gender. The violent imagery that opens the poem is thus subverted by its conclusion: what might seem to be so difficult—the acceptance of gender fluidity—should be "unexpectedly simple."

Kim Haengsook continues the tradition of weaving lyric dynamism with political sentimentality. In "Happy New Year," Kim reformulates the language of celebration for the purpose of marking the impeachment of Park Geun-hye, the Korean president from 2013 to 2017 who was convicted of using illegal funds and engaging in election tampering. The poem begins with an ominous, tense gathering that accompanies a party-like atmosphere: "Like a cake, we gather round. We're so close, it's as if the only thing that can pass between us is a knife." We are already primed that this party is not what we might expect. Kim continues to embed violent imagery alongside the theatricality that comes with special events: "Let's get ready! The world has something to it like a fuse getting shorter and shorter, as if to say, *I'll show you what an end really is.*" On the one hand, the reference to "fuse" returns to the cake motif, conditioning us for a celebratory climax. On the other, the phrase in italics suggests that something like a bomb is about to go off. The poem's final lines leave us in a state of anxiety: "The countdown begins. The blue screen crackles, suddenly appears the President wearing her folksy traditional dress, then cheers, EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE!" The dissonance between the celebratory atmosphere and the violent imagery is part of Kim's point: the President's ascension and abuse of power are appropriately met with this harsh chorus. Kim's poem ultimately encourages us to participate in this oral profusion of political address.

Another key thematic thread running through Kim's poems relates to the issue of perspective, which recalls Yi Sang's "Crow's Eye View" series. Two poems, "Another Observatory" and "Unification Observatory 2015," gesture to the complicated nature of perception.[10] In "Another Observatory," the lyric speaker portrays the act of seeing as somehow destructive: "The forest is burning. / Like a giant eye, it burns ferociously. / If we call this a fire, it's the lord of all fires." We are left to wonder what this conflagration refers to until the final lines of the poem: "'This view of Seoul is so beautiful tonight.' / The speech of my lover intoxicated by the light feels like that of a dictator, and my love has become frightening." Here, the poem takes a significant turn as the lover's viewpoint strikes the speaker as both destructive and oppressive. The lover's observation seems categorical, leaving the lyric speaker without the chance to provide her own sense of

what she sees before her. Because "Another Observatory" appears before "Unification Observatory 2015," the former charges the latter poem with further meaning, and we begin to see Seoul as a city riven by war. The lyric speaker of "Unification Observatory 2015" seeks balance between enjoying the observatory as a tourist destination and confronting the fact that such a location is necessary precisely because North and South Korea remain divided. Whereas "Another Observatory" seeks an opening for multiple perspectives, "Unification Observatory 2015" establishes the various possibilities for viewing Korea in all of its complicated contours.

This set of poems helps illuminate the crucial intertwinement of formal innovation with sociocultural and political engagements. From my perspective as an Asian American literature scholar, the portfolio highlights the important influence of Korean literature on practicing poets in the United States. Indeed, I remain energized by the possibilities presented for thinking about transnational dynamics and lyric affinities. Here, I call attention to the six Korean American poets involved in the collaborative translation work appearing in the first half of this portfolio: Emily Jungmin Yoon, Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello, E. J. Koh, Don Mee Choi, Mia You, and Jack Jung.[11] Their participation in this portfolio is particularly striking given the wide chasm that typically exists between Asian American and Korean literatures. But the translation completed by these Korean American poets is not altogether surprising given their own creative impulses, which continually look back toward Korea.

Many of these poet-translators create diasporic affiliations that call attention to gendered social contexts. For instance, Emily Jungmin Yoon's *A Cruelty Special to Our Species* includes a series of dramatic monologues that draw from the testimony of Korean women who were sexually conscripted during the Japanese colonial period. Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello's *Hour of the Ox* is inspired partly by the *haenyeo*, the Korean female sea divers who have fished and swum for generations off Jeju Island. E. J. Koh's *A Lesser Love* takes some inspiration from the lives of her ancestors, who survived the Japanese colonial period, the division of Korea at the 38th parallel, and the Korean War. Like Yoon's use of the dramatic monologue, Koh's lyric

speaker in "Testimony Over Tape Recorder" conveys the traumas of her experiences as she is forced into sexual servitude. Koh's memoir, *The Magical Language of Others*, further breaks down the boundaries between Asian American and Korean literatures by incorporating letters written by her mother. Koh translates these letters in a labor of interlingual love that solidifies her connection to her mother.

As these poets so often look toward Korea, they also engage in interlingual creative projects. For instance, Don Mee Choi's *DMZ Colony* explores the problems and productivities of translation. When Choi's lyric speaker travels to Korea to interview various individuals who have criticized the South Korean state apparatus, she "poetically" translates what she hears. The speaker's translations are often whimsical rather than literal, but they simultaneously engage the political. Indeed, Choi's *DMZ Colony* reveals the ambivalent ways in which South Korea emerged as an independent nation, first under Syngman Rhee and then under Park Chung-hee. Mia You's "Gangnam Beauty" dramatically repurposes lines from Byeon Yeong-ro's "Nongae" in the context of contemporary feminine beauty standards.[12] The word "Gangnam" refers to the wealthy district of Seoul that was made popular in the West by Psy's pop music hit "Gangnam Style." Given Byeon's hallowed place in Korea's poetic canon, You's translation and redeployment of "Nongae" emphasizes the shift from artistic innovation to consumer excess and superficiality. Linguistic translation also becomes a central theme of Jack Jung's "Ahshinayo." The poem's title refers to a music video that Jung's lyric speaker translates as a traditional love song. The lyric speaker uses the occasion of reflecting on this song to reconsider its themes. The romantic pairing concerns a Korean marine and a Vietnamese lover during the Vietnam War. While the original music video production memorialized the Korean soldiers who died fighting the Vietnam War, Jung's lyric speaker reminds us of the distortion that those numbers represent, not only because they omit the multitudes of civilians who died during the Korean War but also because Korean soldiers themselves perpetrated massacres while serving as a kind of proxy army for the United States.

I take this detour not only to remind us of the varied poetic genealogies that materialize across languages and oceans but also to

emphasize that the act of translation is not unlike the larger projects that these writers engage in their own cultural productions and lyric ventures. These poet-translators continually cast attention on those at risk of being lost or forgotten—the women who suffered so catastrophically during the Japanese colonial period, the political dissidents who struggled to survive following the Korean War Armistice, the Vietnamese civilians who died during the Vietnam War. In doing so, these poet-translators ultimately bring us to the highest political stakes in this portfolio. Their translations allow English language readers to dive into an archive that, otherwise, they might not read. In this way, these poet-translators become excavators, bringing to the surface the complexities of Korean contexts, lyrics, language, and aesthetics as sites of possibility.

NOTES

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1/ Dafna Zur, "Writing the Real: Modernism in Korean Literature," *Modernism / modernity* 25, no. 2 (2018): 407–14. Zur provides a useful review of the critical terrain on Korean modernism.
2/ Jack Jung, "Yi Sang: A Timeline," in *Yi Sang: Selected Works*, trans. Jack Jung, Sawako Nakayasu, Don Mee Choi, and Joyelle McSweeney (Seattle: Wave Books, 2020), xiii.
3/ Sone Seunghee, "The Mirror Motif in the Crow's-Eye View (Ogamdo) Poems," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 29, no. 1 (2016): 195. For another critical exploration of Yi Sang's series, see John H. Kim, "As the Crow Flies: Yi Sang's Aerial Poetics," *Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no. 2, (2018): 241–74.
4/ Kim Hansung and Choi Junga, "The Genealogy of Korean Modernism in Poetry: Focus on Translations of W. B. Yeats," *Acta Koreana* 21, no. 2 (2018): 553–73. According to Kim Hansung and Choi Junga, "Kim Suyŏng advocated for the indispensability of English and Japanese literature for the newly established Korean literary tradition, given that 20th-century Korea underwent Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, and, in the south, American influence during the Cold War" (558). This information is crucial in that it reminds us of the importance of interlingual dynamics for Korean poets.
5/ This reading is inspired by feedback offered by Don Mee Choi.
6/ Ivanna Sang Een Yi, "The Corporeality of Writing: Kim Hyesoon's *Autobiography of Death*," *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 13 (2020): 376.
7/ For some useful overviews of contemporary Korean poetry, see Eun-Gwi Chung et al., "After Liberation: Notes on Contemporary Korean Poetry," *World Literature Today* 84, no. 1 (2010): 47–49; and Cho Kang-sŏk, Benoit Berthelier, and Jae Won Edward Chung, "Explorations of Contemporary Korean Poetry," *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 13, no. 1 (2020): 351–70.
8/ Ruth Williams, "'Female Poet' as Revolutionary Grotesque: Feminist Transgression in the Poetry of Ch'oe Sŭng-ja, Kim Hyesoon, and Yi Yŏn-ju,"

Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 29, no. 2 (2010): 409. For another reading of Kim Hyesoon's work that explores the grotesque, feminity, and the use of space and absence, see Joyelle McSweeney, *The Necropastoral: Poetry, Media, Occults* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 2014.

9/ While Kim Hyesoon has resisted the labeling of her work as "grotesque" (Charles Montgomery, "Even After Winning Acclaim, Poet Still Struggles with Gender, Label," *Yonhap News Agency*, Jan. 3, 2013), I use the term in the spirit of the ways in which her work can challenge prevailing understandings of gender dynamics, especially in patriarchal contexts.

10/ In conversation with Kim Haengsook, Don Mee Choi explains, "I heard her short speech that she gave at an award ceremony in Seoul, in 2016, when she received the prestigious Mi-Dang Poetry Award. She talked about how she intends to keep writing with her body. Then when I met her again in 2018, she gave a good example of what she meant by this. She said that we cannot see our own faces, so what is most unfamiliar to her is her own face. She is interested in thoughts, meanings, and expressions that her body generates without her knowing. She said that the 'body' is far more honest than 'I.'" Choi's recounting reminds us of the ways that the poems included in the portfolio consistently reframe perceptual experience beyond any one lyric figure. For instance, in "Another Observatory," the lyric speaker turns to the forest's burning as a way to reconsider the places where knowledge might be gained, however violent in manifestation.

11/ As a note of clarification, I realize that Yoon's placement within this grouping is complicated by her tri-national affiliations, as she lived for many years in Canada and currently splits her time between Seoul and Honolulu. This biographical information was obtained on Yoon's official website: https:/ emily-yoon-poetry.tumblr.com.

12/ Mia You, "Gangnam Beauty," *Poetry*, February 2020.

SONG SEUNGHWAN

CYCLAMEN

Green heart green heart green green green
Red sprout red sprout red red redden reddening red red sprout black dirt black dirt black blacken blackening flowing flowing water flows water dirt dirt flows drip drop death
Dense dense verdant dense dense verdant black forest black fire
Fire dance fire dance fire fire dance dance fire fire dance dance

Under the white sun

CHLOROFORM

Mic Cyclamen Randy Mic Geranium OISEAU Mic Mic Marcia Mark Reader† Record Player Mark Reader Mark Reader Mark Reader Record Player Record Player Record Player Camera Camera Camera From Motor To Generator From Motor To Generator Ether Ether Ether Jackhammer Jackhammer Jackhammer Laser Printer Laser Printer

Keul-ro-ro-po-reum Keul-ro-ro-po-reum

†/ Optical Mark Reader (OMR)

GERANIUM

Blue blue red blue blue red azure azure red cerulean cerulean red teal red teal red blue blue red red

Ultramarine ultramarine red red ultramarine ultramarine vermilion blue red rain rain blue red rain rain red drip red drop rain rain red blue red blue red red red blue blue blue

Red drip red drop snow snow red drip snow snow red red red blue blue blue blue red red red blue blue blue cerulean vermilion red red red green green green

Green above

PEAR BLOSSOMS

However truly perhaps but a little incredibly close sometimes but even so if that is the case yes almost perhaps and intentionally preferably before cooling off straight through successively therefore more so instead but even so if so sneakily suddenly hoped for out of nowhere slowly but surely day and night altogether only to the end quite possibly barely after a long time till satisfaction no from the beginning merely truly season to season layers upon layers totally too easily very much thoroughly as far as possible abruptly completely soaked unexpectedly all at once indeed in that case solely this way with this without knowing like rushing water by chance here just right by all means unsurprisingly as expected at the pinnacle seemingly easily on its own at the same time increasingly but then unforeseen ultimate actuality unanticipated again of course finally so in that manner at last too incrementally slowly therefore utterly in any way that is pleasing wildly fully without any mistake without fail however truly perhaps but a little incredibly close

LOOKING FOR OX

If you are then may you be if you are no longer if you are revealed if you come to light at last the name will shatter becoming many names however despite it all now at least until now carelessly as such more and more not stopping together in summer in winter to south to north seldomly often to the bottom to the sky to the wind to the eyes forever absolutely supposedly deeply to the left to the right for instance pushing upward bulging as if on the contrary same as always completely vainly close by if not eventually nothing else as if nothing but you are not anything no more no less all together shamelessly same as always no here no there already gently nightly entirely always but not at all supposedly against the norm mostly likely as such desired empty empty desired as such probably mostly empty empty if you are walking out to the end against the norm supposedly not at all but always entirely nightly gently already there here no identically no less no more nothing else nothing at all as if nothing but you are at last or else close by completely same as always on the contrary as if bulging pushing upward at last if you come to light

Translated by Jack Jung

CHOI SEUNGJA

ALREADY, THE WORLD

Already, the world
was a gallery of my failings
and a waste heap of my scars.
And so now my blood is all the rainwater
flowing down to some unknown place.

Anyone, call out for me?
From one end of the sea,
madly call out for me!

Then I will scatter cry upon cry
on you like foam.

My poems, as short as a shriek,
will spread
over the white horizon.

SPRING

Spring comes
even if you don't want it to.
Spring of the lonely, unmarried, thirty-three-year-old woman,
spring of the unemployed,
spring of the taxpayer.

In the spring, plants and grass bloom,
and even garbage grows fresh.
The trash pile grows bigger in my mouth.
I cannot swallow it or vomit it up.
Dump trucks endlessly drive in and out
to unload plastics, scrap iron, dirt, sweat, and shit
into my throat—
already,
unbelievably,
miraculously
elongated like a tunnel.

My Lord, your time has come.
I can no longer pronounce those words,
and only my hole full of trash
stays afloat in the sky
as if it will be torn,
or burst open.

SO ON A CERTAIN DAY, LOVE

With a spoonful of steamed rice and a teardrop,
how can I ever fill myself,
eating just this rice mixed with tears?

No matter how much you may love me,
or how much I may love you,
I still have to chew today's chicken
and swallow today's tears.

So let us no longer speak metaphorically.
Everything is concrete as cement
and everything is a cement wall.
What matters are not metaphors but fists,
and fists being smashed.

So don't try to attain what can't be attained
and don't say that you have attained the vanity of vanities.

Go away love or lover.
To love is to not die for you.
To love is to live
for you
and wait
only to be snapped off
mercilessly.

So, on a certain day, love,
please break my body
and snap off my arms and legs

and
arrange
them
in
your
vase.

THE PORTRAIT OF MR. PON KAGYA

At nine, the office door cheerfully opens Mr. Pon Kagya.
The chair walks over and sits on Mr. Pon Kagya.
A ballpoint pen rudely grips his finger
and letters stare angrily at him.

At noon, lunch devours him
and urine lazily releases him whenever it wants.
The phone sometimes calls him to kill time.
Hello? Hello! (a hiccup of existence)
Sometimes time passes, other times time does not,
until a pay envelope thrusts him into a pocket.
At six thirty, number 54 bus rides him again.
Wonhyo Bridge runs over him again.

The front door opens to push him in.
The warm floor knocks him down.
Sleep begins to gnaw at him.
But at last, in a dream,
the Republic of Korea passionately praises him
and sets up a monument
at the center of Yeouido Square.
A grand chorus rings out—
Worship and praise him!

PHONE BELLS KEEP RINGING FOR ME

Most people drifted away
They carried on their backs their desires and sorrows, their desire's
dreck.
They flew by my window.
But I didn't drift away.

I didn't drift away.
I mixed desire with despair
and produced one day
and one year,
faithfully paying death's monthly installments.

Yes, phone bells rang endlessly for me,
and I didn't want to avoid the call.
Even if I sank into the pit,
I wanted to touch
my fate.

But I also kept shutting and locking the door,
along with my ears and eyes.
I became a machine of sheer, conditioned reflex.
I called for food in the morning
and pushed sleep into me at night.

Sky's helmsman, you old nihilist
who operates the huge machine of nothingness
in the vacant lot of sky:
Who will tire first, you or me?
(Of course you know the result,
and even the fact that I created you.)

Phone bells kept ringing for me.
Your mouth was hanging at the end of the phone line,
looking like a cave, a rotten swamp.

From there, death will call for me decisively
and I will answer decisively.
The burning fuse of my fate
will explode in your rotten mouth
completing, in vain, the vanity of all vanities,
useless for thirty years.

Old nihilist, you'll erupt with a bloody, hearty laugh,
and begin to operate, silently, the machine of nothingness
with your old body,
to say that you've completed, in vain,
the vanity of all vanities,
useless for thousands of years.

Translated by Won-Chung Kim & Cathy Park Hong

KIM EON HEE

AS SOON AS I BITE THE MOUTH GAG

As soon I bite the mouth gag, I wanna eat dog meat. *It's rotten to the root*. *The rotten gums*, the rotting shame, *can't be numbed*. How are you all dead but say the rotten one is me! The treacherous, treachery-ful Jordan river is really only messy ditch water.

Jordan, you're my dog! The maw that's been slurping the moth balls in the closet, with that maw please slurp my toes.
Please suck them, treacherous dog. Though your teeth have completely fallen out for biting something so scalding!

In a dream, *did that girl go till the end with the first guy, did they love until the anchovies could be peeled? Are they removing the innards together till the end?* Charlton Heston asked, in the dream. Naked with only a raincoat hanging. His butt was like a block of ice, I've never

Never have been a cherry Miss Cherry. Of all places,
How did
A mouth appear here. Of all places how did teeth sprout up
With this mouth I obsessively loved! Chomp chomp chomp like a dog
Chewing bones.

(WHISPERINGLY)

it's me, dear, the genitals of Buddha's boundless mercy of your dreams, it's me, me dear, the one you feed your fingers to when it's night every night, gradually rubbing more saliva to eat, it's me, the octopus hole not any hole of anyone else, it's me, me, who faithfully enters nirvana with my hand, guffawing at nirvana's threshold, the guffawing vagina, it's me, dear, the genitals of universal compassion in your dreams, the one you have to take your eyes off to but can't take your eyes off, the one you have to spin but cannot spin, it's me, me, the one who perfectly matches with you dear eye-to-eye it's you dear.

HAVE YOU BEEN FEELING BLUE THESE DAYS?

Have you been feeling blue these days?
Are you struggling because of money?
Did you watch the viral videos?
Is this your castle in the sky?
Do your enemies appear as your parents?
Are you afraid of becoming an arsonist?
Do you want to suffer more from your sense of guilt?
Are you anxious you might step on a dead person's foot, somewhere?
Even though you're alone are you really not alone?
Do even dogs or cows belittle you?
Is your eye twitching and is pus pouring
Out of your gums?
Is smoke coming out from your asshole or ear hole?
Do your sayings come out like mushed rotten strawberries?
Are both your hands fool's gold, one holding amnesia and the other
    delirium?
Are you boundless and trapped? Suffocating and
In pitch black? You'll likely go crazy soon
But like, only like
Are you like that?

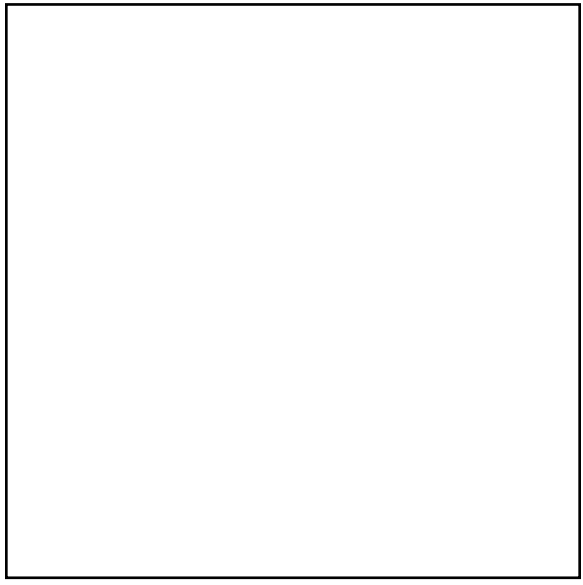
EX. 1) CAREFULLY READ THE ANSWERS ON THE NEXT PAGE, AND CREATE PROPER QUESTIONS OUT OF YOUR ANSWERS.
(DESCRIBE IN SHORT ANSWER FORM)

Question 01.
Question 02.
Question 03.
Question 04.
Question 05.
Question 06.
Question 07.
Question 08.
Question 09.
Question 10.
Question 11.
Question 12.
Question 13.
Question 14.
Question 15.
Question 16.

Answer 01. Crown of pubic hairs
Answer 02. After exceeding your excellent poem masturbation
Answer 03. Like pubes, poems that have waves and shine
Answer 04. Tapeworms who are born inside the intestines and die inside the intestines
Answer 05. Dirtily unfair and dirtily unfortunate witness
Answer 06. Will not go past 1.8 minutes
Answer 07. Go crazy if you have, go even more crazy if you don't
Answer 08. A fly agaric, amanita virosa, the coprinus atramentarius rotting up to the end of the tongue
Answer 09. A maggot on the tongue
Answer 10. The dog chewing gum in Eden
Answer 11. *Appendix with formulas for rudimentary familial relations*
Answer 12. Can use the welcome mat laid out at the gates of hell
Answer 13. If life changes then the motivation for derangement also changes
Answer 14. The mixed penis mayonnaise meal set
Answer 15. The yellow yolk only egg
Answer 16. Fallayavada (팔라야바다†)

†/ This is the title of an installation by the artist Bahc Yiso.

PLAYING WITH FIREWORKS ON THE MOON 1



LOUISE BOURGEOIS, 1982. R. MAPPLETHORPE.

Translated by Sung Gi Kim and Eunsong Kim

LEE SOHO

SONG OF UTMOST FILIAL PIETY

NARROW, EVEN MORE CRAMPED, AND RATHER CONCISE

Even
if a merry
place beckons me
my only place of rest is a
modest home my home Only my
home my shining home is where I can rest
like a broken piano key Love my home my merry
family There's no place like home I won't forget the dream
I laid out on the horizon painting my windows in the evening
Dear clear wind where is the spring day Where I cry one two they open
their eyes together Home sweet home sweet friend There's no place like home†

What'stheproblemSpititoutWhat'ssohardthatyouneedtogoseeashrinkLookat
yourmomanddadAslongasyousteelyourselfyoucanovercomeanythingHeyhoney
whyareourdaughtersinsane?WetreatthemsowellTheydon'tmakemoneyorhelp
aroundthehouseThey'rejustghostseatingupourmoneyTheyalwayssaythey'resick
asifweshouldbeimpressedIhavenoideawhytheykeeplosingtheirshitIhearother
people'skidsdon'tevensayathinginfearthattheirparentswouldworrybutoureldest
daughteryapsonandonaboutteverylittlethingWhatsinhaveIcommittedtobepunished
likethisI'msicktodeathofitallOncetheyhavetheirownkidsthey'llrealizehowhard
itwasfortheirmomanddadandfeelremorseWait'tilyouhaveadaughterjustlike
youandspendallyourdayssupportingheruntilshe'sthirtyDon'tcometouswhen
shemakesafussaboutartorwhateverandquitsherofficejobexactlylikeyouYouknow
inmynextlifeIwanttobebornasKyungjin'schildorKyungjinHowhappyIwouldbe
We'resogoodtoherHush!Don'ttalkbacktoanadultWhenyouactlikeabitch
we'retheoneswhogetblamedFromnowonwhenadultspeakjustacceptit
Don'teventhinkJustsayyesyesIunderstandandnothingelseGot it?Answerme!

†/ A variation on Kim Jae-in's adaptation of Henry Bishop's song "Home, Sweet Home."

KYUNGJIN'S HOME —A SPIDER WEB

Mom hated bridges
and us strays she'd found under the bridge of her legs

Our ever-cramped cradle
Every night in bed the whole family's legs got tangled
Two times two is four Two four eight
Fuck
That day, Mom birthed 1989 siblings

When the sun goes away
the spider climbs its web

Having only legs we had to live
Whenever we were hungry we practiced tightening our buttholes under the covers
With each breath the butthole tightens, the vagina contracts

What a pity Mom's womb grew old and worn after birthing 1989 siblings
Instead of sucking on her teats we injected insulin into her womb and took turns every day ejaculating between her legs
The ants would swarm every time

Listen up Mom
You're not a woman or anything anymore
You don't laugh even when I lick between your legs like this
Look Look
You can't come even when I stick three fingers inside like this

I shut the door tight

Nineteeneightynine Nineteeneightyeight Nineteeneightyseven Nineteeneightysix Nineteeneightyfive Nineteeneightyfour Nineteeneightythree Nineteen, Nineteen, Nineteen

Teen
……Teen……Spleen

Having only legs I
had to live

I ejaculated at Mom The ants swarmed between her legs, opened their jaws, and pinched Mom's saggy flesh
Mom cried
like a girl who lost her pink nipples at Yeongdeungpo Rotary as she ripped apart and ate my 1989 siblings swarmed by blowflies

Rain fell and the web broke
The spider climbs down the web

White fabric and hemp cloth Carbohydrates and chocolate Maggots and leeches Plus Dad, Dad, Dad of different seeds

I already knew about the abstraction of death

Now
the only way I can talk about myself without mentioning family
is by making excuses

"Mom always called me a bitch
A mother-eating spider bitch"†

†/ Velvet spiders engage in matriphagy, or suicidal maternal care. After spawning, the mother offers its body as food for its children as an extreme case of maternal instinct. The children are fated to repeat that same instinct as they become mothers. One day, Grandmother watched a documentary on these spiders and cursed at Mom. Called her "a spider bitch." I remember that day. Like a child, Mom locked her door and wept pitifully.

The sun went away and I
spreading all my legs built a home in another branch
A home that even a raindrop could break

KYUNGJIN'S HOME —A STUDIO APARTMENT

My lover wears old sweats with baggy knees and with even baggier knees I crawl on the floor and cry like spilled milk My thirtieth year like beer I've popped one bottle more than him so when I hold the night in my mouth like a dick it dwindles and when I blow it becomes infinite and when I cry yet again I become a woman Like a woman I become the shadow of an offspring The offspring sticks to the callus of my heels and sucks on me and screeches like a goddamn bird My lover sucked me off then said my poems suck Said he heard them and they're
disgusting

I rewrite my fully grown lover as Husband

So I'm telling you Husband
You should die when you get old

If you're lucky, you might die of old age
A fistful of Husband frozen hard in the fridge I try pounding Husband's cheeks against the sink I bang him on the floor

Why haven't we changed at all?

Because you keep taking bites out of me you bitch
Stop shoving food in your big fat mouth
or stop yapping

Lies
It's because you bastard
keep chomping away at me and everything else in this apartment

I cut and sell my hair to buy Husband's mouth Husband pokes through the plastic bag and bites my calf No matter how he bites and attacks me I
curl my spine while Husband's teeth force my head down Since his mouth was left open Husband uses it to say my poems
suck To say he's heard them and they're
disgusting I'm chewchewed out like squid while
the bitch
in my stead pops another beer at my husband

KYUNGJIN'S HOME —A GAME OF TOADIE, TOADIE†

It passes through the night The room
passes through that night and in that room
Daddy's little girl Mommy's Daddy's little girl Daddy's Daddy's little girl
These little bitches pass through Dad
Fapfap daddy sweeps the floor then lies down

Dad put Mom's head under the threshold and built a toad house for her
He waited

for the tide to rise

Wifey, you know we'll be better off if we stamp a lucky mole right here Dad stamped a mole between Mom's eyebrows The mole grew bigger Bigger than her pupils Covering her entire body until she couldn't breathe anymore We quieted our breaths toward Mom who had a lucky mole stamped between her eyebrows and starved
to death

The sea set out for far away and did not return

†/ A Korean folk game for children where they put a hand inside wet sand or dirt and build a "house" around it. They pat the dirt singing, "toadie, toadie, I'll give you an old house, please give me a new house," and try to remove their hand without breaking the house of dirt.

We sang rounds with the soles of our feet and performed a ritual for the gods of the earth We grasped our hungry stomachs and stamped another lucky mole between Dad's eyebrows too
We placed a single sweetbrier under the pillow and crunchcrunched on raw rice behind the folding screen

Dad flipped the dining table

Hapless bastard

We with our palms spread wide open hit Dad on the back of his head We wrapped his neck in bedsheets and waited for the rising tide We stamped Dad's mole whenever we were hungry We stamped it every day with our fists Like Mom
we put his head in the toad house and put him to sleep

Now every night for Dad
no matter how much he sleepsleepsleeps is night

Mud filled his mouth

Translated by Soje

YOO HEEKYUNG

BOY IVAN

to ivan who woke up early this morning the kitchen was like a windless bamboo forest, silent—father, the face he left behind, when picked up, was cold like a dropped razor blade

the day was waning—ivan found an ear—late at night sitting on a secluded bench in the playground he tilted the ear to the sound of his own crying—was endlessly listening

every morning, ivan's cry-dangling ears heard a sound from his younger brother's back headed to work—a sound as if something sparkly was sparkling

ivan shaved his face—mother became a spacious grove of silver grass, ivan became a swamp beneath her feet—except for this there's no other way to describe restless mother

the more time passed, a dull, ordinary crying clung to the ear through unknowable effort—accordingly, ivan holds for his own ear a boundless pride

WHEN I PUT MY NECK INSIDE A T-SHIRT I THINK

1

when i put my neck inside a t-shirt i think
it's cramped in here and i don't know you
on the kitchen table several bills are laid to rest
mother scrubs her after-image like a dish
i'm decorated onto one side of the wall
a morning that shrinks the veins of sycamore leaves
a sharpened self, in several pieces
can i possibly call something like this threadbare?

2

when i put my neck inside a t-shirt i think
while shaving i cut again the cut from two days ago
however much i scrub, bristles sprout from my body
with age bathroom tiles start resembling the color of humans
on the veranda sitting and smoking a cigarette, uncle
resembles a thick korean dictionary
thin pages quickly turning over
the back door is erased, you have no place to visit

3

when i put my neck inside a t-shirt i think
last night thanks to dreaming you in dreams
outside my heart a pouting signboard hangs
from the grime-worn floor the sound of rusty nail heads hammering
i bury you alongside a set of spoon and chopsticks
tap tap tapping on a lukewarm tomb
the heels of dust, they rustle

YOUR PLACE

i am the person to your left, to your right—the person turning from left to right—if there is a person who sinks beneath your feet, i am that kind of person—i am the kind of name that disappears when you close your eyes—the falling rain disappears—i turn more and more into a large vanishing point—the corridor becomes a little bit colder—there you stand—what you had thought precious is an unknown face—there is a breathing sound with only the thorns remaining—there is only one color left—i loved that color—you are the person to my right, the person turning from right to left—if there is someone wobbling like a loose tooth above my head, that would truly be you—you are the person who erases me so

THE UMBRELLA'S HOMETOWN

outside the window a thinned, unnerving season
the men, walk past clutching language
i haven't heard of birds that fly through the rain before but
just now, a thing flew through the air

my tightly packed fist brightens up, i
am sitting in every empty space, i am also over there
faces where surprise slumbers, are swept away

that could have been a bird
the men turn back to pick up what was dropped
their corduroy pants are sad as they get soaked

that is how the umbrella is born, we
are born wet, are things living for wetness
just like an answerless question

now is the time to visualize the umbrella's color
gently beginning, dark and familiar
the chill of the hand next to yours touching now and then

on a day like this when no tears are shed, everyone cries again
what flew away might have been the dusty dreams of birds
what becomes drenched might have been wholly rain

K

the person who had been standing by the window is K. despite our eyes meeting, there seemed to be no intention to retreat from or fend off my gaze. outside the window the wind was blowing as if about to fall on its back.

barely containing myself of that time. i thought i envied gray-haired K. because to me that time seemed so distant. expired sunbeams burn up. the burnt cannot come into existence ever again. let's say that is why i wanted to steal K's gray glimmering gaze. because i cannot recall that time. even to imagine it is strenuous. it is like a window. a well-dusted, bright window frame.

that time. the textured crinkling of brown paper bags. the smell of cheap food that used to waft out from within. holding the paper bag. my eyes opening wide. the darkness thickening. midnight that almost smells burnt. that time when solicitors shroud the streets and the neon signs glow at their brightest. i cannot know what K was thinking. that unhinges me.

K is dreaming and that is also my stance for thinking about K. to be standing outside all conceivable reactions. the place of the lightest weight where i was taken. a thousand butterflies invented K. therefore. as ever. wings. the heat glowing from wings heaps on. the place where K vanished. only a fever remains. blazes. that time. burnt-up K cannot stand again in that place. wavering K is not K but is truly that K is

Translated by Stine Su Yon An

LEE YOUNG-JU

THE GIRL THROWS

The chorus of recorders rings. Red blood's been smeared on the walls of Sôngsan Middle School. The ache that began at dawn isn't finished with her yet. The girl throws her broken tooth out the window. Yesterday, she hid behind a wall and sniffed the dry-cleaning smell pouring out of the cleaners. The hollowing feeling in her legs whenever the husks shed by visitors begin to flutter. Sounds of school bells climb over the bloodstained walls. The teacher, like a recorder, gets louder each time the chorus repeats. From the second floor the girl throws an empty lunchbox out the window. She already knows the variety of pitches that her ill, unstoppable self is capable of throwing. She's seen trees that can't bandage their aches. If the razor blade she threw into her body could wound her, she would have found birds with their legs cut off as charming as the man who says, I don't love you. Leaving early through the gates, she turns her skirt around. She prays, May the back alley protect me. Throwing her cold hands at the sun, she runs. Waiting for the future is a new kind of pitch, as when a cat is pitched to the basement room. *I'm never going to move forward*. The girl scratches the blade mark off of her left cheek. Leaves her body on a hanger at the cleaners.

MOONCOMING

Yesterday, I dreamed of becoming a solid object. Today, I come apart safely. No need to be so close. You flip the mung bean pancake. This tavern has many pipes water flows through. The sound of shredding matter in a blender. At dawn, there's an inexplicable beast from an old time lying on my bed. I'm getting soaked, and here comes the wind, the chilling breath. In the tunnel into an abandoned mine, there are still feet. Those feet that didn't make it into the mine hesitate. They're safe. Even today. A corner of the framed slogan is chipped. Thinking of death, day after day, is tiring. From the tip of the billowing charcoal, the cloud stares down at me with a black face and says: *Do you know any songs besides sad ones? You're like a terrible mung bean pancake. You're like a mung bean pancake for the dogs*. Breath fogs the tavern window. His breath is black as he hurls his cup. I learn that my breath is sad. I don't want to fix the wet pipes anymore. When I massage my mushy feet, my palms melt and drip. Light floats down to the floor. What is susceptible to wear and tear grows rich under soft light. We'll fray and grow rich. If we cry and cry, we'll shine, like dishes. The blender is spewing juice. Too close, that's why. Water gathers on the plate of cold mung bean pancakes. By the window, wiping the smudge off his forehead, the beast from an old time sings.

A GIRL AND THE MOON

Mid-night, swinging upside down on a pull-up bar, the girl says, Mother, this bone growing on my back, white in the night, protruding out of the skin, long and endlessly this bone, like a ladder it shoots up in the air, whenever hot wind sweeps past, whenever blind birds drop by, whenever suspicious air weaves in and out of this bone, the pain is unbearable, let me down from the pull-up bar, let me down and saw it off, it grows thicker each night, this, this, it renders white light whiter, anemic, before I become a grave for the bone, please, cut it off, quickly, in my body black bones clatter, joint by joint fluids are drying, it chose my back as its host, before the grains of light pile on and split the grave in half, before putrid craters start to multiply, before this bone drags my emptied body to the back of the sun, let me down from the pull-up bar, saw it off, Mother, please, a crescent moon is lodged in a girl's back, a flat bone will grow into a round and bright celestial body, the girl upside down on a pull-up bar will vanish into the moon, and they say that, once the moon gobbles them up, girls leave behind black bones filling every inch of the night sky,

INFINITY

My mother's mother cried in secret. *This blanket I'm using to stay alive is too heavy. And if I crawl out from under the blanket to die, I'm cold!* This was the night all of us gathered and shivered, the kind of night in which rounding your back sucked you into another world. We turned our heads toward the pile of ice by the entrance. Dear Grandmother, we've scrubbed the road. We wrote eulogies to deepen your name. We wrote, shipwrecked in reality. We wrote, gathered on the frigid edge of a precipice. The glass bottles floating across the sea containing myths crashed into the cliffs and shattered. *I feel like I spent a lifetime stirring porridge in hell.* Our dead grandmother once again heaved in tears. The fire went out every day, and when we rounded our backs and pawed at the floor, we found, rolling in the dust, more time than we knew what to do with. We breathed into the time on our hands. Who died? Though no one asked the question aloud, black hair, in clumps, slithered out from under the blanket. A night teeming with hair. The blanket grew longer. We all gathered under the black blanket and wrote our names.

ANNIVERSARY

The time I went looking for my vanished self: The weather flows away like streams. No one stays, and I'm also absent. Things I can touch but that also can't be touched. The mold in a warm bowl. Something like the long arm reaching out to catch the particles falling from clear clouds. The weather seeps into nooks and crannies. The now-nowhere part of me is an arm growing longer. To cuddle me and to push me away, the arm grows thinner and thinner. I'm in Poland, in the middle of winter. I'm multiplying in a Polish bowl. The souls who died unfortunate deaths purify themselves by drinking water that allegedly cleans their memories—but I spill mine. A sour smell spreads out in all directions. Bugs crawl out of the nooks and crannies in walls. How might our expressions encounter and remember each other? I'm buried in a Polish wall where everyone sleeps. When I slip out to encounter the grim soul, it turns away, feeling awkward. It darkens to hide its melancholy. It is climbing toward a brick house on a high plateau, drifting toward the people who dedicate their entire lives to building a coffin. On the wooden terrace is a warm time to be had. Where could I have gone, looking for tears that slid away? They say memories don't belong to the living. The weather seeps into the customs of grief. Bottles of booze roll around. A beautiful, forlorn country. Like a broken bowl, I'm in a Polish store. The now-nowhere part of me is a squirming arm, a worm. Crawling toward another soul. The soul that's trying to drink the water and be clean, though it's watching me and darkly growing wet. Only the weather is changing. I'm behind a great rock in a forest in Poland. A white mouse, a white rabbit, a white dog…

Translated by Jae Kim

KIM UN

APPLE BOMB

As I come out of the class, a student follows after me. He grabs something from his bag and puts it in my hand. Telling me to please enjoy it. When I ask him what it is, he says it's a bomb in lieu of an apple-ogy. When I look down, it is indeed a bomb. A bomb as an apple-ogy. A bomb shaped like an apple-ogy. The word "sorry" keeps falling from the mouth of the student who handed me the bomb for me to eat. *I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.* I haven't a clue what he's done wrong. And because I'm clueless, there isn't much I can say, holding this bomb in my hand: *All right*. Or *Take this back*. I wonder what else I can say to lessen his guilt. The student stands outside the classroom in his student's pose and the teacher stands in his teacher's pose, looking intently at the bomb. I think about the meaning of the bomb. The bomb is meant to explode and its explosion is its meaning. Since the bomb isn't something I can eat, I say: *I'm sorry, but can't you be sorry in another way?* If he was sorry by a different method and apple-ogized differently, would he feel that as though it's not a true apple-ogy? If we can prevent the apple-ogy from becoming a bomb, we won't have to continue this spectacle, standing here frozen in place. *Sir, your explanations are always difficult. Everything you say is exceedingly difficult. Your criticisms are difficult, and your compliments are difficult. Your similes are difficult and the words you use to explain your similes are difficult. Sir, why are you so difficult? Why do you use such difficult words?* The student saying "difficult" so many times makes me feel as if I'm really a difficult person, makes my words search for easier words arduously. So I stop speaking for a moment. And he continues to stand there. The student and the teacher both look down. Between us is a bomb and I am pondering the meaning of apple-ogies. One of us will make the first move. Pondering the

meaning of apple-ogies and feeling the power of the bomb in my small hand, one of us will turn away first.

Did he take back the bomb that day? Or did I carry it home with me? The student took off. The teacher also left the scene. Even as the student turned away he said, *I'm sorry for being sorry. I'm sorry that I'm sorry*. And in lieu of an apple-ogy, he never showed up in my class again. If that bomb had exploded, would things be different now? My words are still difficult regardless of who my students are. Explaining what happened that day is even more difficult. Switching to easier words is difficult and asking "Do you get it now?" is also difficult. Why have I become so difficult? Now my words sound difficult even when I'm only calling out names to take attendance. I stand there helpless, as if I'm holding a bomb.

SICK PERSON

My wife said she was sick and went to lie down in the bedroom. I was exhausted from taking care of my sick wife. Caretaking doesn't always make someone better. Caretaking only begets more caretaking. The fact that my thoughts have come this far must mean I'm spent. Dare I leave my wife when she's sick? The thought fills my throat like smoke in a chimney, but my mouth has never once let out puffs of smoke. Even if it has, I haven't followed after the smoke yet. If I scattered like smoke, I'd cast off my burdens and guilt and go live where there's no wife and no me. Since there's no wife or me, there's nothing to be responsible for, and I would be reading a book instead. And reading something would lead to writing something. Is this "writing something" literature? Poetry? Or a confession? Whatever it may be, I'm packing my bags in the belief that something will get written. My load is barely a load as I set out the door. How gleefully we'd planted the chimney when we first moved in together. No matter how much I ramble on about the feelings of a man whose insides are burnt to ashes, none of it will end up being worth reading. Confessions may be a literature that must be written in the distant future.

ALONE OR NO ONE

What might be the difference? Being alone or having no one? To not have connection to anyone. To disappear. To be truly alone, you must erase your relationships. Erase them, because the relationship is the real problem, not the person. Not the "you" as in the other but the "you" as in my beloved. I'm alone in order to erase, not "them" the people, but "them" the relationships. You are also alone. What we have in common is that we have no one, so we have no reason to meet. Because we're truly alone. Because we must be utterly alone, there is no such village where people who've erased their relationships can gather. An empty village. Alone, people walk around in this empty village. Strangers walk together, rest together, spend their days together. The thought that someone is next to me is a relationship, the thought that someone I don't know is resting beside me is a relationship. So, I erase these thoughts. Erasing myself to erase my thoughts: that is the essence of being alone. The truth of being alone. Things that help achieve the impossible task of being alone include death, suicide, and sometimes murder. Because I want to be alone so badly, someone needs to help me. Death can help me be alone forever, to achieve the state of being completely and flawlessly alone. Whoever was involved, whatever was the cause, whichever event sparked it, it doesn't matter how, a death where there is no one is what helps me be alone. Death helps me, decidedly. I achieve a me who doesn't know that I'm alone. I'm alone in a place where there is no one. You are alone in a place where there is no one. We won't recognize each other even if we met. We can't imagine each other. In a place devoid of the imagined other, a body that has no one is born. Lone thoughts proliferate.

REAL POETS

A real poet would tell other real poets that they're sorry. For not being a *real* poet. They'd say the same thing to a poet who's sorry for not having become a real poet. When will they stop saying that? They keep saying they're sorry until they become so sorry that they don't know where sorry begins or ends. As if they're becoming *really* sorry. It's also *really* difficult to practice keeping my mouth shut in front of a poet who is turning *really* sorry. I stop because I feel sorry. My being sorry makes me feel like I did something bad, and no matter which sorry party says let's pretend we didn't hear that, I'm still sorry. Them or me, we're both bowing our heads. Both with our eyes peeled open. The one who is less sorry keeps an eye out for the one who is sorrier. Is that what being a poet is? A real poet would admit it. A poet so sorry that there's no choice but to admit that they're a poet—there is, I'm sorry to say, no way to treat them. Sincerely not. Their only recourse is to be even more sincerely sorry. I'm sorry to say, that's all there is. No one knows that a real poet is sorry. That's why they go on writing.

Translated by Anton Hur

YOUNA KWAK

Answering the Call: Beyond Resistance and Liberation

The poets whose work comprises the second half of this portfolio engage in a persistent negotiation between political and aesthetic concerns by refusing to privilege either. Choi Seungja and Kim Eon Hee, contemporaries of Kim Hyesoon, enact this counterbalancing act through a metapoetic turn toward the role of the poet, raising the possibility of writing as a political or ethical act. The younger poets, two of whom are Kim Hyesoon's former students, emphasize formal experimentation and employ elements of the fantastic and the grotesque to explore nationhood, capitalism, domestic violence, misogyny, and the confrontation with the other. Often anchored in lived experience, many of these poems insist that no subject, syntax, or word, no matter how taboo, disordered, or profane, is off-limits as they challenge the boundaries of lyricism, representation, and language.

The work of the younger cohort departs in important ways from a poetic inheritance preoccupied, as a political necessity, with the articulation of resistance and liberation. Formally educated in an era of democratic stability, Lee Soho, Yoo Heekyung, Lee Young-ju, and Kim Un are well-positioned to witness Korea's uneasy ascension from war-torn military dictatorship to the twelfth largest economy in the world. These poets move with dexterity through the hall of mirrors of neoliberal democracy, using formal innovation, a focus on the quotidian, and manipulation of syntax, grammar, and typography to report back their findings. Grounded in the examination of the banal objects of everyday life, their poems nevertheless remind us how those very objects are imbued with the traces of the power relations that undergird their production. Many of these poems employ elements of the grotesque, in the strict sense of that word: distorted, unnatural, bizarre, ludicrously incongruous, fantastically extravagant, or absurd. They are grotesque in the sense that they frankly speak unbelievable truths by blurring the distinction between political reality and aesthetic experiment, thus disturbing the boundary between realism and surrealism.

The poems in Lee Soho's "Kyungjin's Home" series, for example, thwart the inclination to read their depictions of extreme familial violence metaphorically. Instead they suggest a metonymy of violence, in which the uncompromising harshness of language reveals itself to be part and parcel of potential bodily harm—which in turn maintains metonymic relation with institutional and state violence. In this series, Lee explores the fractious, incestuous homelife of an alter ego who bears her birth name, "Kyungjin." The Korean game of "toadie," in which children bury their hands in wet sand and then attempt to remove the toad-hand from its "house" without disturbing the sand, is hilariously and horrifyingly recreated in the poem subtitled "A game of toadie, toadie," by a "Dad" who puts "Mom's head under the threshold" of the house, "covering her entire body until she couldn't breathe anymore." The children, witnessing their mother starving to death, perform a ritual of song, dance, and an offering of sweetbrier that eventually culminates in patricide: "We with our palms spread wide open hit Dad on the back of his head We wrapped his neck in bedsheets and waited for the rising tide […] We stamped it every day with our fists Like Mom / we put his head in the toad house and put him to sleep."

The spider's web serves as the central image of home in the first of the "Kyungjin" poems, where the arachnoid mother's offspring verbally, physically, and sexually abuse her until she finally tears them into pieces and eats them. At once grotesque, playful, and disturbing, the poem intermingles history, details from the natural world, children's rhymes, and surrealistic violence to depict scenes that could have been stolen from a B-movie horror flick: "I ejaculated at Mom The ants swarmed between her legs, opened their jaws, and pinched Mom's saggy flesh / Mom cried / like a girl who lost her pink nipples at Yeongdeungpo Rotary as she ripped apart and ate my 1989 siblings swarmed by blowflies." The narrative is interpellated by a footnote informing us that "Grandmother watched a documentary on [velvet spiders] and cursed at Mom. Called her 'a spider bitch.'"—as if to countermand the outlandish terror of the scene by anchoring it in documentary reality. Near the end of the poem, in a register that contrasts with the brutal extravagance of what came before, the speaker soberly notes that "I already knew about the abstraction of death / / Now / the only way I can talk about myself without

mentioning family / is by making excuses." All stories of family engage in mythmaking. The perverse actions of the family that occupies "Kyungjin's Home" are not meant to be taken at face value; nor are they merely symbolic, gratuitously exaggerated for the sake of affirming the traumatic overload that actual violence produces. They exemplify the paradox of the speaker who wishes to reach beyond abstraction to grasp the far more slippery tail of the concrete and for whom there can be no talking about the self without finding some way to talk about family. Like Choi Seungja, whose influence can clearly be detected in this work, Lee writes in defiance of the erasure of the unfettered and animalistic cruelty that seems to shore up the sheen of domestic life.

A graduate of Seoul Arts University, Lee also emphasizes the visual anatomy of poems that assume explicit shapes, only to strain against these constraints. The ironically titled poems "Song of Utmost Filial Piety" and "Narrow, Even More Cramped, and Rather Concise" compel form and content to come into concert, as the strictures of piety and domestic life are rendered inflexible and claustrophobic. The square of text that comprises "Song of Utmost Filial Piety" is made up of sixteen lines of the word "YES" in repetition, followed by fifteen lines of the word "MOM" similarly repeated. Selective bolding of some of these words spells out "YES / MOM" in oversized letters. The tiresome monotony of the repetition, echoed in the square shape of the poem itself, asserts a message of compliance and obedience whose mechanization undermines its sincerity. Yet subtly, it appears that the suffocating completeness of this song of piety is disturbed, for in the top left-hand corner the first "YES" is slightly indented, creating a small blank spot that creates an imperfection in the otherwise perfect square. This missing piece suggests a disruption in the recitation of piety, even in its most exemplary form.

In "Narrow, Even More Cramped," Lee ventriloquizes a Korean adaptation of the lyrics of the ballad "Home, Sweet Home" (popularized during the US Civil War). The lyrics form the sweetly lilting—and literally tilting—triangular roof of a house, atop a square consisting, in contrast, of a litany of invective and threat, rendered in letters pressed so claustrophobically close together that they are arduous to read. The tiles of the roof, trilling "love," "rest," "Dear clear wind," and "Home sweet home," are propped up and supported by the dense square of

phrases such as "What'stheproblemSpititout," and "Don'ttalkbackt oanadultWhenyouactlikeabitch / we'retheoneswhogetblamed," in a diatribe addressed to a specific person: Kyungjin. The shelter promised by the roof, metonymic for the refuge of home, is founded on the bricks of insult, threat, and violence toward Kyungjin. By combining repressive forms with descriptions of "home" and "piety," these poems critique how "family" values can only be upheld at the expense of sacrificing certain of its members.

A former student of Kim Hyesoon's, playwright and poet Yoo Heekyung creates situations in which a speaker flails against phenomenological limits that curtail his attempts to fully apprehend the world. Yoo attempts to describe a tenuous relationship between an "i" and a "you," first spatially ("i am the person to your left, to your right"), then through naming ("i am the kind of name that disappears when you close your eyes"), gesture ("i turn more and more into a large vanishing point"), and preference ("i loved that color"), only to end in an erasure that may be the only true way of knowing: "if there is someone wobbling like a loose tooth above my head, that would truly be you—you are the person who erases me so." This concern with how to recognize, describe, and account for our relation to others is repeated in the poem "boy ivan," in which the titular ivan is left behind by his family: his father and "the face he left behind," his "restless mother" who became "a spacious grove of silver grass," and his younger brother, who leaves for work emitting only "a sound as if something sparkly was sparkling." Left on his own, ivan can only cry, but he finds an ear whose attentive listening becomes the only connection between himself and his departed family members, "endlessly listening" until "a dull, ordinary crying [clings] to the ear through unknowable effort." Finally, truly alone, ivan assumes his own bodily integrity, fashioning a kind of solitude out of abandonment, in which he can take "a boundless pride" in his own ear. Translator Stine Su Yon An foregrounds the ludic quality of Yoo's poem-riddles by omitting capital letters, even though capitalization is not a feature of the Korean language, thus employing a transgressive English orthography to emphasize the poems' sardonic and quizzical tone.

Another poem-riddle entitled "K" begins authoritatively by identifying K as "the person who had been standing by the window." But this authority soon comes unraveled, as the speaker tries in

vain to apprehend their feelings for the genderless K, and what "K was thinking." The fact that this cannot be known "unhinges me," admits the speaker, until all consideration of K has to be relegated to an imagined space, outside of real encounter: "K is dreaming and that is also my stance for thinking about K. to be standing outside all conceivable reactions." Until K is seemingly destroyed and "only a fever remains. blazes. that time. burnt-up K cannot stand again in that place. wavering K is not K but is truly that K is." By testing the limits of perception and description, Yoo Heekyung's poems ask not only what is, but how we can be assured of recognizing the objects and people that constitute our worlds. There is both pleasure and anxiety in this unknowing, and the poverty of stable interpretations is partially recuperated by the richness of phenomenological experience: the beauty of objects, the elegance of an umbrella slowly emerging out of darkness and nights of "neon signs [that] glow at their brightest" are, to some degree, the poet's recompense for acquiescing to a world of permanent strangeness.

The strangeness of the world is imbued with physical and gendered violence in the poems of Seoul-based poet Lee Young-ju. The girl named in the title of the poem "The Girl Throws" navigates a landscape shaped by her vulnerability to past and future harm. The broken tooth she throws out the window, the red blood (hers?) smeared on the walls of the middle school, the bloodstained walls over which "sounds of school bells climb," and the "hollowing feeling in her legs" testify to past harms, haunting a schoolyard of wounded trees and birds "with their legs cut off." The poem opens on a scene of children in music class—a "chorus of recorders" that accompanies a tableau of repetitive injury against the monotonous backdrop of school. The girl's attraction to the mutilated birds seems to augur worse to come, as if the prayers and ritual gestures the girl enacts as protection can be no match against the violence now embedded within her like a destiny. Until at last, the girl has no recourse but to leave her body behind, "on a hanger" at the dry cleaner's shop adjacent to the school.

Similarly, in the anodyne setting of a playground, the girl of "A Girl and the Moon" assumes the playful position of a child hanging upside down on a pull-up bar, except that she is tormented by a long white bone protruding out of her back. She begs her mother to cut

it off with a saw "before the grains of light pile on and split the grave in half, before putrid craters start to multiply, before this bone drags my emptied body to the back of the sun." As her pleas grow more desperate, the bone transforms into a "crescent moon," the girl's back ready to transform "into a round and bright celestial body," until the girl herself will surely "vanish into the moon." Once again, disembodiment is the only outcome for girls marooned in children's spaces marked by ceaseless threat, forcing the girl to dissociate from her own body, so that we are left in a graveyard where "girls leave behind black bones filling every inch of the night sky." Just as Kyungin's abused body is the foundation upon which the volatile domestic spaces of Lee Soho's poems are constructed, here the majesty of the night sky, rather than offering the girls shelter or cover, is instead sustained by the dismemberment and consumption of the sacrificial female body.

In "Anniversary," a speaker severed from his body departs on a journey in search of his "vanished self," ending up, comically, in Poland, where he finds himself alternately absorbed in "a Polish bowl," "Polish walls," "a Polish store," and "behind a great rock in a forest in Poland." Both there and "not there," in limbo between the living and the dead, the speaker roams among "grim souls" and coffin-builders, observing the "customs of grief" marked by heavy drinking and the attempts of lost souls to drink pure water to divest themselves of their memories. But roam as he might, the speaker cannot stage an encounter with the missing self: "The now-nowhere part of me is a squirming arm, a worm." Despite repeated attempts, the ghost-like speaker is unable to make connections with either the living or the dead: "How might our expressions encounter and remember each other?" he asks, and later, "Where could I have gone, looking for tears that slid away?"

When ceaseless potential for bodily harm is a given, the boundary between the body and the world grows dangerously porous, as the speaker in the poem "Mooncoming" declares: "Yesterday, I dreamed of becoming a solid object. Today, I come apart safely." The dead grandmother in the poem "Infinity" similarly decomposes, gradually becoming incorporated into elements of the world around her, as the family gathers to eulogize her under the "black blanket" where her "black hair, in clumps, slithered out from under the blanket," in

"a night teeming with hair." The coldness of the night of mourning produces an aporia: "*This blanket I'm using to stay alive is too heavy*," observes the grandmother, "*and if I crawl out from under the blanket to die, I'm cold!*" If the only choice is between fatal exposure and suffocating protection; if playgrounds and schools can offer no refuge to little girls; if the body itself is a betrayer, what might the future hold? Perhaps only, as the girl-who-throws muses, "Waiting for the future is a new kind of pitch." Like the poems of her contemporaries, Lee Young-ju's poems are no longer consonant with the old tune of turbulent, everyday political repression that so preoccupied the previous generation of poets. Rather, their new pitch is attuned to the more intimate forms of repression that nonetheless threaten the safety and survival of subjects who remain vulnerable to the oppressive authority of traditional norms and values.

It is precisely the crushing encumbrance of conventional standards of behavior and obligation in the workplace, home, and community that is foregrounded in the prose poems of Kim Un. The title of his 2018 collection, *I Thought I Knew What You Meant*, hints at the predicament explored in "Apple Bomb," when a student places a bomb in his teacher's hands "in lieu of an apple-ogy," in a wordplay that references the coincidence between the Korean words for apple and for apology. Bomb, apple, and apple-ogy seamlessly meld and alternate, as the student repeats, "*I'm sorry. I'm so sorry*." Having no idea "what he's done wrong," the teacher is at a loss for how to respond: "I wonder what else I can say to lessen his guilt." The word "sorry" and the shape and form of the apple-ogy lead the teacher to wonder about the meaning of these objects: "The bomb is meant to explode and its explosion is its meaning. Since the bomb isn't something I can eat, I say: *I'm sorry, but can't you be sorry in another way?*"

The student's clumsy attempts to apologize conflate a bomb with an apple with an apology and leave the teacher with an uneasy sense of having failed in his responsibilities, including perhaps the responsibility to have clearly instructed his student how to distinguish between these confusingly named objects. "Why have I become so difficult?" asks the teacher. The student stands "in his student's pose," while the teacher stands "in his teacher's pose," both unable to depart from the script and achieve meaningful connection. "If we can prevent the apple-ogy from becoming a bomb, we won't have

to continue this spectacle, standing here frozen in place," notes the speaker haplessly, but instead the student and teacher part without resolving the miscommunication that threatened to explode between them. Unable to absolve himself of being unhelpful to his student, the teacher ends up embodying the threat of destruction: "Now my words sound difficult even when I'm only calling out names to take attendance. I stand there helpless, as if I'm holding a bomb."

The burden of obligation is again taken up by the speaker of "Sick Person," charged with the care of his ailing wife. Exhausted by this task, the speaker contemplates packing his bags and leaving, to "cast off my burdens and guilt and go live where there's no wife and no me." But the potential freedom that this departure promises is foreclosed by the certain meaninglessness of what will come next, for once there's "no wife […] nothing to be responsible for," reflects the husband, "I would be reading a book instead." Inevitably, reading will lead to writing, and "a man whose insides are burnt to ashes" cannot possibly produce any writing "worth reading." Language, reading, and writing hold out the promise of a recuperative gesture: can turning the word around and around in the hand prevent the apple-ogy from detonating? Can the husband exchange his responsibility toward his ailing wife with a life of writing? But a life of writing what?—"literature? Poetry? Or a confession?" Recuperation is impossible within the temporal constraints of the present life, in which responsibility to the other can find no plausible substitute: "Confessions may be a literature that must be written in the distant future."

The thorny problem of how to settle accounts with the other reaches a paroxysm in "Real Poets," in which poets, real poets, and *real* poets all genuflect before one another, outdoing one another with apologies until "They keep saying they're sorry until they become so sorry that they don't know where sorry begins or ends." To be sorry: "Is that what being a poet is?" But the sincerity of this posture is impossible to prove, when "no one knows that a real poet is sorry. That's why they go on writing." Again, an attempt to make the gesture toward the other mean something, accompanied by a distant hope that writing might achieve the connection that actual relation can only exhaust and destroy.

This distant hope nods toward the influence of poets of the preceding generation—Kim Hyesoon, Choi Seungja, and Kim Eon

Hee—evident in the work of these younger contemporary poets. Choi Seungja, for example, a feminist icon in the world of contemporary Korean poetry, places the figure of the poet at the center of the task of creating meaning from the discards and refuse of a world in the throes of derangement. The poems selected from her collection *Phone Bells Keep Ringing for Me* (Action Books, 2020) thrust us into a natural world assailed by degeneration and decay. The cycle of the seasons, the cycle of human life, and even the cycle of a single day in the life of an office worker churn out waste, garbage, trash, tears, concrete, dirt, sweat, fists, blood, and shit, in a world where the encounter between subject and world produces tearing, bursting, scattering, shrieking, breaking, failing, and gnawing. When "Spring" arrives in a poem that bears its name, it heralds the bloom of "plants and grass" but also ushers in "the lonely, unmarried, thirty-three-year-old woman," "the unemployed," "the taxpayer," and, more disturbingly, a growing mountain of garbage that fills the speaker's throat "like a tunnel" until her mouth transforms into a "hole full of trash." Elsewhere, purifying rainwater flows disconcertingly "down to some unknown place," comprised as it is of the blood of the poet, and the food and sleep that might nourish her instead transform her into "a machine of sheer, conditioned reflex."

The poet is alert to the call that perhaps she alone can hear and that the world of strangely ominous and animate objects prods her to answer. The question of *how* the poet, lover, or speaker might respond is a central motif of these poems. What can be transmitted out of "the pit" of human experience? How will we answer when we are called? In the titular poem, "Phone Bells Keep Ringing for Me," the poet confronts the question head-on, not wanting "to avoid the call," even knowing it will lead to inexorable death: "death will call for me decisively / and I will answer decisively." Though life may prove only to be "the vanity of all vanities," the poet at the end of her tether will muster a response, even if its failure seems preordained. "Anyone, call out for me?" asks the speaker plaintively in "Already, the World," trying, preemptively, to answer the phatic call. That her poems—"cry upon cry" that are "short as a shriek"—will fail to adequately respond seems a foregone conclusion, when the poet concedes "Already, the world / was a gallery of my failings."

Yet, despite vanity, despite failure, in the face of certain death, the poet rises to the occasion, struggling to respond even if each utterance affirms the futility of the effort: "I can no longer pronounce those words," she announces in "Spring," owing to the way spring's grotesque fertility has made a trash bin of her mouth. Expressivity and transmission are obfuscated at every turn; in "The Portrait of Mr. Pon Kagya," even the phone that comes to life to call the eponymous office worker merely chirps "Hello? Hello!" in a misfired communication that transmits only "(a hiccup of existence)."[1] Choi portrays Mr. Pon Kagya at the center of a bewildering scene of flipped human agency, where he is sat upon, gripped, stared at, devoured, ridden, pushed, knocked down, and gnawed at by the anodyne doors, chairs, pens, lunches, and buses that constitute office life. At last, only when his labor has become so consuming that it devours him from the inside out, he is heralded by none other than the Republic of Korea itself, which builds him a monument "at the center of Yeouido Square," prompting "a grand chorus" to ring out: "Worship and praise him!"

Perhaps this reversal of the subject and objects of capitalist labor portends the poet's only trump card. Even while answering death's final call, the poet may yet outlast the churning of the machine: "Who will tire first, you or me? / (Of course, you know the result, / and even the fact that I created you.)." At the beginning of her career, Choi earned the moniker "the common pronoun of the '80s poets" for the political engagement of her work during that decade of intense antidemocratic repression. Here, she wields a grammatically embodied form of resistance. Perhaps the poet's labor is not completely futile after all, for even as the cruelty of the material world endeavors to annihilate her agency, the creative and generative act of writing will persist in documenting the stubborn traces of her existence.

The role of the poet as a creator—or instigator—of meaning is similarly accentuated in Jinju-born Kim Eon Hee's poems, marked by their fluid and electric formal innovation. This innovation assumes divergent shapes in "EX. 1)" and "Playing with Fireworks on the Moon 1," two poems that implicate the reader in interrogative forms of address that call into question the intentions of the interrogator and, ultimately, of the poem itself. The full title of the former poem instructs the reader to "Carefully read the answers on the next page,

and create proper questions out of your answers." But the list of profane, often hilarious, and nonsensical answers that follow defy any reasonable attempt to formulate coherent questions. What question could possibly lead to the response "ANSWER 03. Like pubes, poems that have waves and shine"; or "ANSWER 02. After exceeding your excellent poem masturbation"; or "ANSWER 14. The mixed penis mayonnaise meal set"? Furthermore, what kind of questioner would want to elicit these answers, and to what end?

Reaching a similar destination by a different road, the poem "Playing with Fireworks" consists of a large, blank box, captioned "LOUISE BOURGEOIS, 1982. R. MAPPLETHORPE." Is this yet another quiz or exam, one in which the reader is interpellated to do the work of imagining the vanished image? The curatorial text on the website for the Tate Modern, where the Mapplethorpe photograph is held, offers a beguiling detail: having only reluctantly agreed to pose for Mapplethorpe, Bourgeois was later vexed to discover that when museum curators chose to reproduce the image for the cover of an exhibition catalogue, they had cropped the frame to omit the large, phallic sculpture ("Fillette," 1968) she had been holding in her arms to vanquish her discomfort at being photographed. Kim's poem thus enacts a dizzying triple erasure: the poem as a work of art consisting of the erasure of a work of art, from which the image of a work of art had previously been erased.[2]

The interrogative form proves once again inconclusive in "Have You Been Feeling Blue These Days," the titular poem of Kim's 2019 collection (Noemi Press). Formulated as a series of questions that seem to inquire after one's health or well-being ("Have you been feeling blue these days?"; "Do your enemies appear as your parents?"), the queries soon deviate from the realm of medical or psychological care into more surreal terrain ("Is smoke coming out from your asshole or ear hole?"; "Are both your hands fool's gold, one holding amnesia and the other delirium?"). Eventually, the initial concern expressed by the questioner warps into subtle farce: "Are you anxious you might step on a dead person's foot, somewhere?" What possible expertise could inform these questions, and what kind of care is this expert offering? The final diagnosis—"You'll likely go crazy soon"—does not reassure as to either the intentions or legitimacy of this practitioner, whose obscure purpose seems suspicious at best and sinister at worst.

These are poems that put the reader on the spot. With cool confidence, they demand an uncomfortable role reversal. The reader finds herself suddenly and bewilderingly tasked with creating a coherent system of meaning, even as the poems withhold the crucial pieces of evidence required for satisfaction and closure. What question could yield the desired response, from the beloved, the subordinate, the other? "(*Whisperingly*)," a poem whose title instructs the reader how the poem should be read, employs a corporeal and visceral vocabulary of genitals, fingers, rubbing, saliva, holes, and a "*guffawing vagina*," to beg the question of the beloved's desire. "*it's me, dear*," the speaker insists, "*the genitals of universal compassion in your dreams*," silkily offering a promise of sexual ecstasy so lavish that it seems more taunt than erotic fulfillment. The repetition of the phrase "*it's me*" seems a prophylactic answer to an implicit question: *Who's there*? Yet, no matter the persistence of the response, it remains ultimately inconclusive. "*it's me*" is not sufficient information to create actual connection between a speaker subsumed by erotic performance ("*whisperingly*") and the beloved who cannot discern a legible "*I*" through the veils of that performance. Unlike Choi Seungja, whose voice channels a tortured despondency, Kim operates in a register of seamless irony. For Kim, the dissonance occurs between the "missing" inquiries and their opaque responses, while for Choi, it adheres to the receiver who awaits a call that never comes in the form that she desires. Although tonally dissimilar, both poets accentuate the impossibility of connection and communication. If we could formulate exactly the right question—or the right answer—could we restore our human connection, and thus restore what has been lost?

One possible solution to the conundrum of human connection is explored in Kim Un's "Alone or No One," in which the speaker ruminates that in order to be alone, one must "erase" not the other but the relation: "not 'them' the people, but 'them' the relationships." Since even the thought of the other "next to me" implicates a relationship, only by erasing thought completely can aloneness be achieved: "Erasing myself to erase my thoughts: that is the essence of being alone." Death, suicide, and murder are the final conditions of this kind of aloneness: "Death can help me be alone forever, to achieve the state of being completely and flawlessly alone. Whoever was involved, whatever was the cause, whichever event sparked it, it

doesn't matter how, a death where there is no one is what helps me be alone." Perhaps, at its most annihilating extreme, true aloneness is this: not mere solitude but rather the pure condition that arises only when all cause and effect, all blame, responsibility, and accountability are completely evacuated through erasure not only of the other, but of the self.

Erasure of the self is one way to describe the eventual fate of the protagonist of Bong Joon-Ho's 2019 film *Parasite*, a patriarch fallen from grace, doomed to a phantom existence in the basement of a house whose owners are unaware that he lives in their midst. Like Choi Seungja, Lee Soho, and Lee Young-ju, Bong draws our attention to the depravity and cruelty that bolster the apparently seamless functioning of a deeply classist society.[3] The historic significance of *Parasite*'s Best Picture Oscar in 2020 demonstrates the growing international recognition of Korean films rooted in the economic and political realities of the peninsula, whose aesthetic, formal, and ideological tropes nevertheless engage a worldwide audience. The decisive impress of US foreign policy on Korean politics has often been obscured to US citizens, as with the Korean War, so catastrophic for all players but nevertheless constantly overshadowed in the US historical imagination by the war in Vietnam. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that a culture so alert to its neocolonial status and continually activated in its resistance to US hegemony should produce cultural artifacts that resonate so strongly with a US public. However, rather than highlight this affinity, in her Oscar acceptance speech, *Parasite* producer Miky Lee instead chose to express her greatest appreciation for the movie's home audience: "I really, really, really want to thank our Korean film audience, our moviegoers, who's been really supporting all our movies.… And that made us really never be able to be complacent and keep pushing the directors, the creators, keep pushing the envelopes. And without you, our Korean film audience, we are not here."

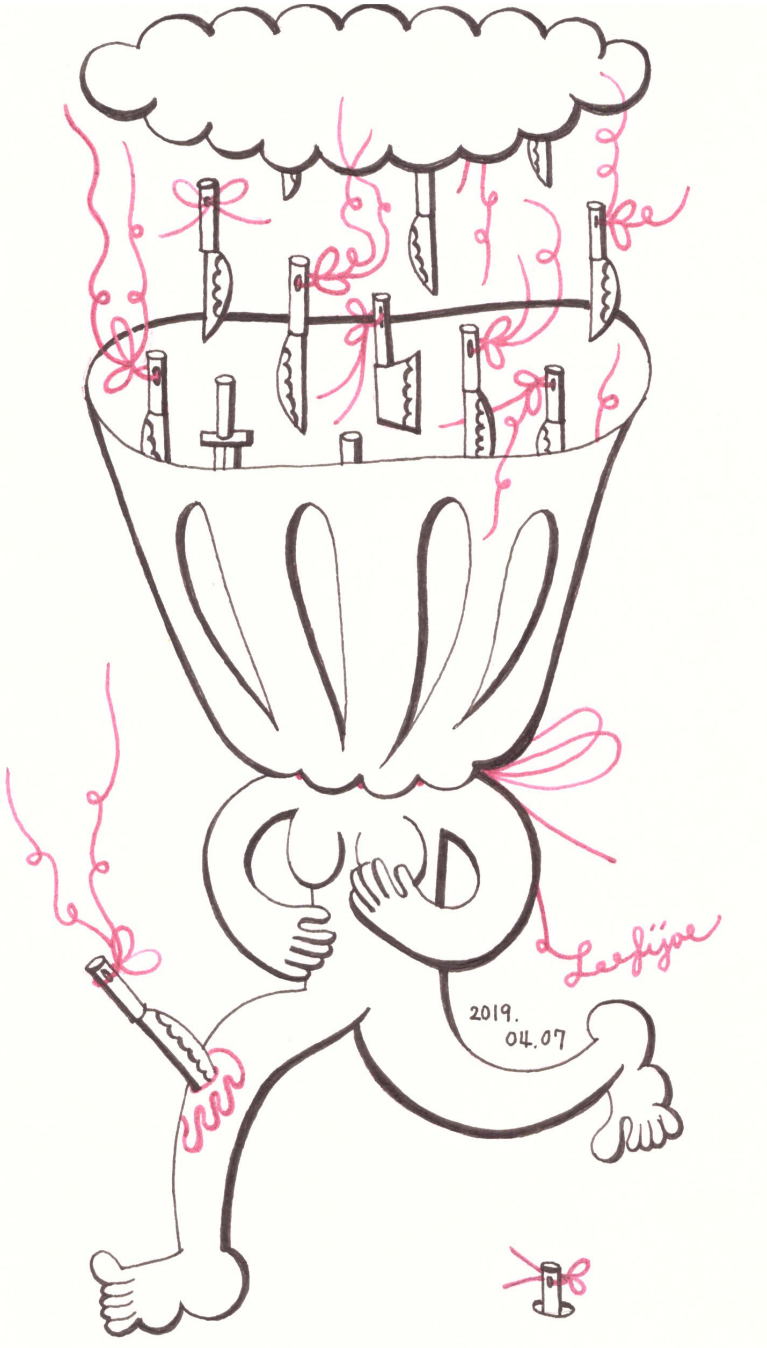
We—readers of these translations—are not the audience that makes these poems possible. But they resonate for us as long reverberations, attesting to the deep affinities that are constituted by, among other forces, the clash of imperialist foreign policy with a poetics of revolt and resistance. The poems in these pages invite us to listen in on a pervasive struggle not only to speak but to connect, to know, to understand, and to remain safe from harm. Although often

mired in hopelessness, they keep faith with the project of writing, as if the record of suffering could lead to catharsis as a vehicle for change. These poets' willingness to shine a light on the pain and violence that undergirds ordinary and everyday life is what gives the work freshness and political relevance, whether or not the poems seem overtly related to present political situations. Work in translation invites us to eavesdrop on a conversation being held in a room in which we are only discreet guests, not directly addressed or implicated in the discussion. The astonishing strength of these voices of contemporary Korean poetry compel us to listen in and to listen closely. We have everything to gain from our listening.

NOTES

I am indebted to Don Mee Choi not only for the invitation to contribute to this project, but for her generosity and insightfulness; Gerónimo Sarmiento Cruz, Adam Fales, and Ruth Williams for valuable feedback and editorial suggestions; and Stephen Sohn, who has been an unceasingly present and supportive collaborator and friend through these difficult times.

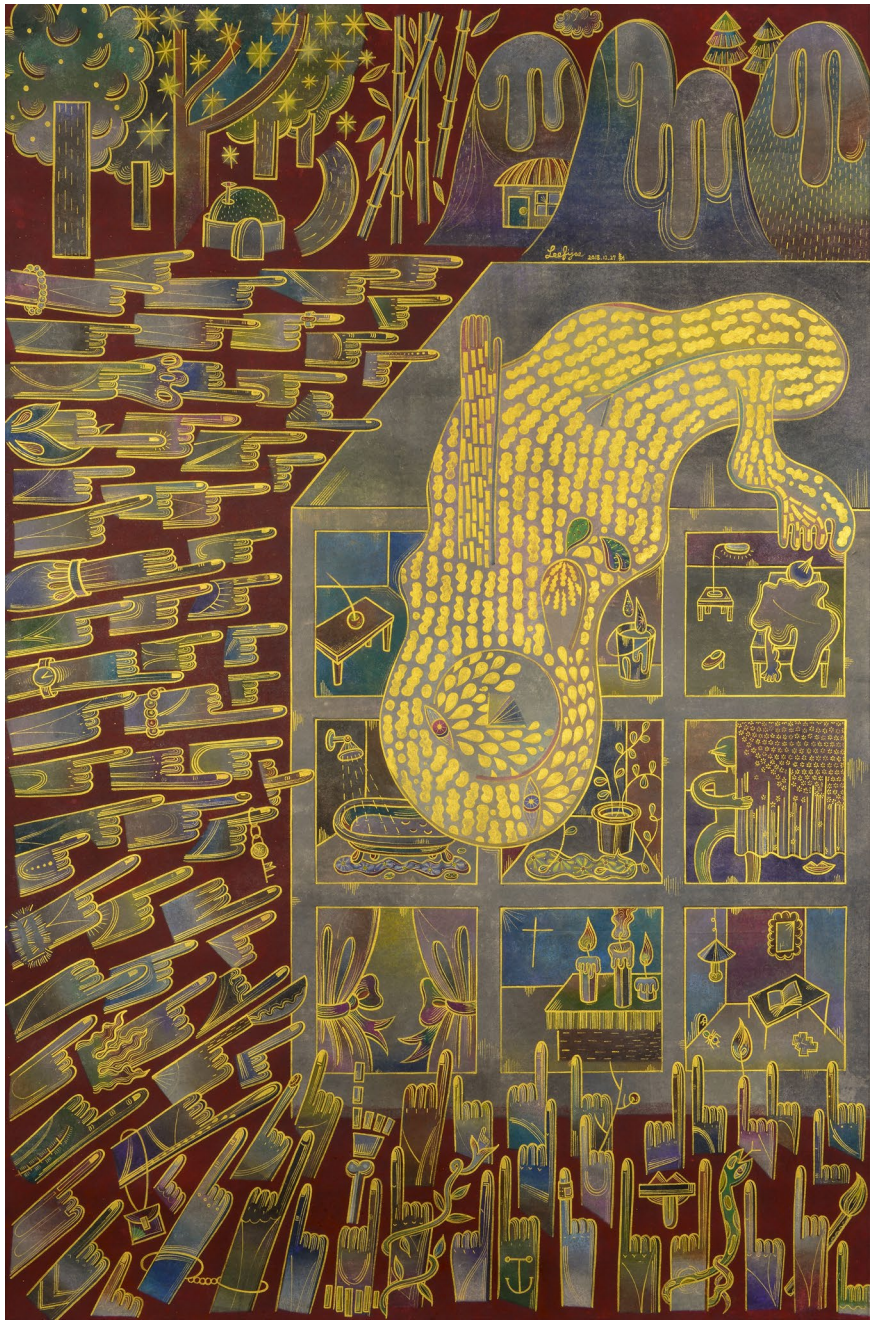
1/ By coupling the Germanic prefix "von" (폰) with "Kagya" (가갸), whose two syllables mimic the mnemonic used to teach the vowels of the Korean alphabet ("Ka-gya-kuh-gyuh-ko-gyo," etc.), the invented name "Pon Kagya" seems to satirize how this white-collar Korean worker is subject to capitalism's ennobling Westernization (gratitude to Don Mee Choi for pointing out this sly pun).
2/ Note that the reproduction of Mapplethorpe's photograph actually does appear in the original published version of Kim Eon Hee's poem. Only the English translation, published by Noemi Press, substitutes a blank box in lieu of the photograph, owing to copyright issues. I am delighted by Don Mee Choi's suggestion that the visual "re-enactment" (of the photograph) required here of the reader of the (blank) translated poem thus uncannily reproduces the kind of "re-enactment" required for reading translation in the first place.
3/ A conversation with Stephen Sohn led me to this insight about the film *Parasite*; I owe this reference to him.



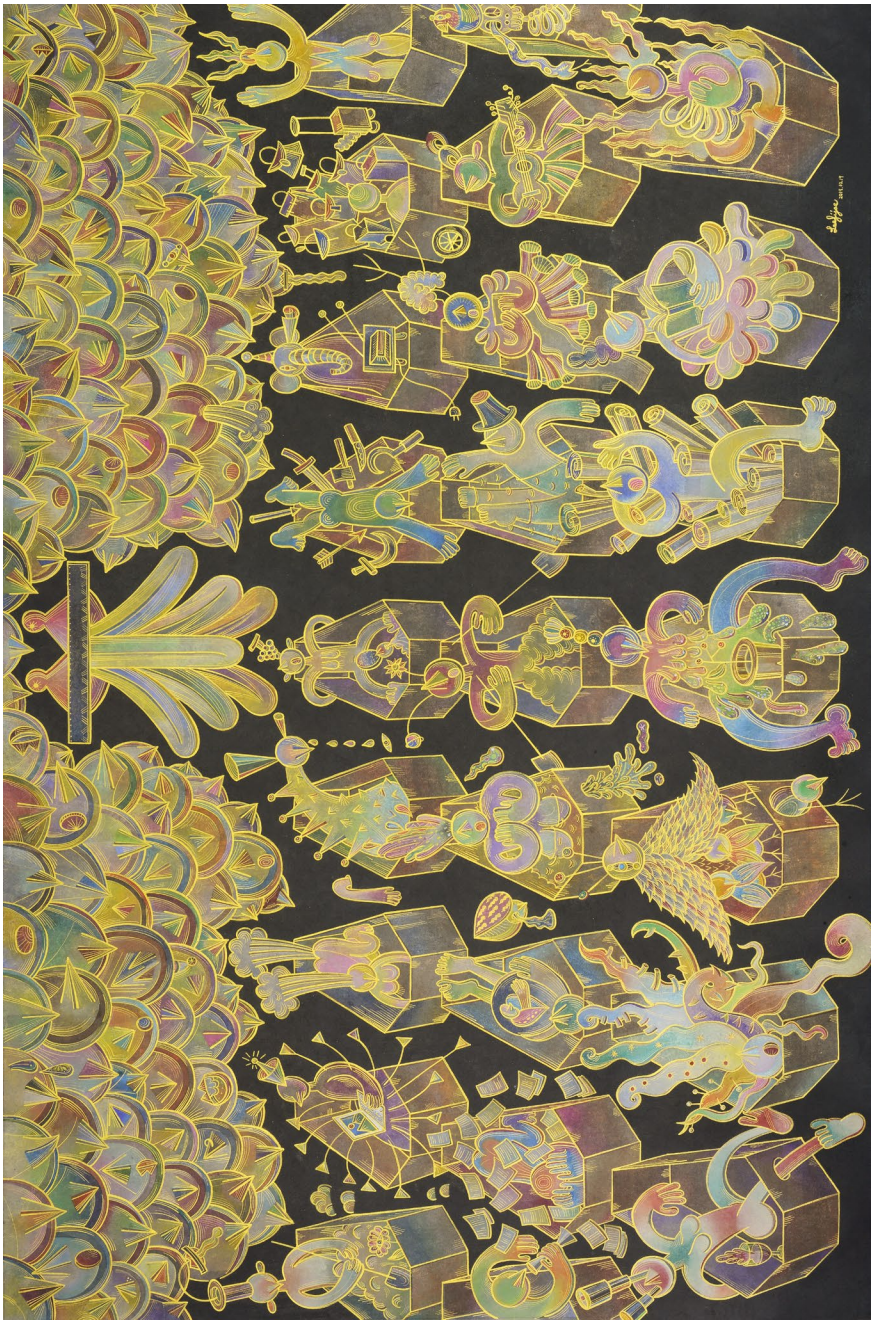
Fi Jae Lee, *20190407*, 2019, pen on paper, 39.5 x 29.5 cm.

Fi Jae Lee, *A Hencoop at Midnight*, 2014, mixed media, 98 x 83 x 53 cm.

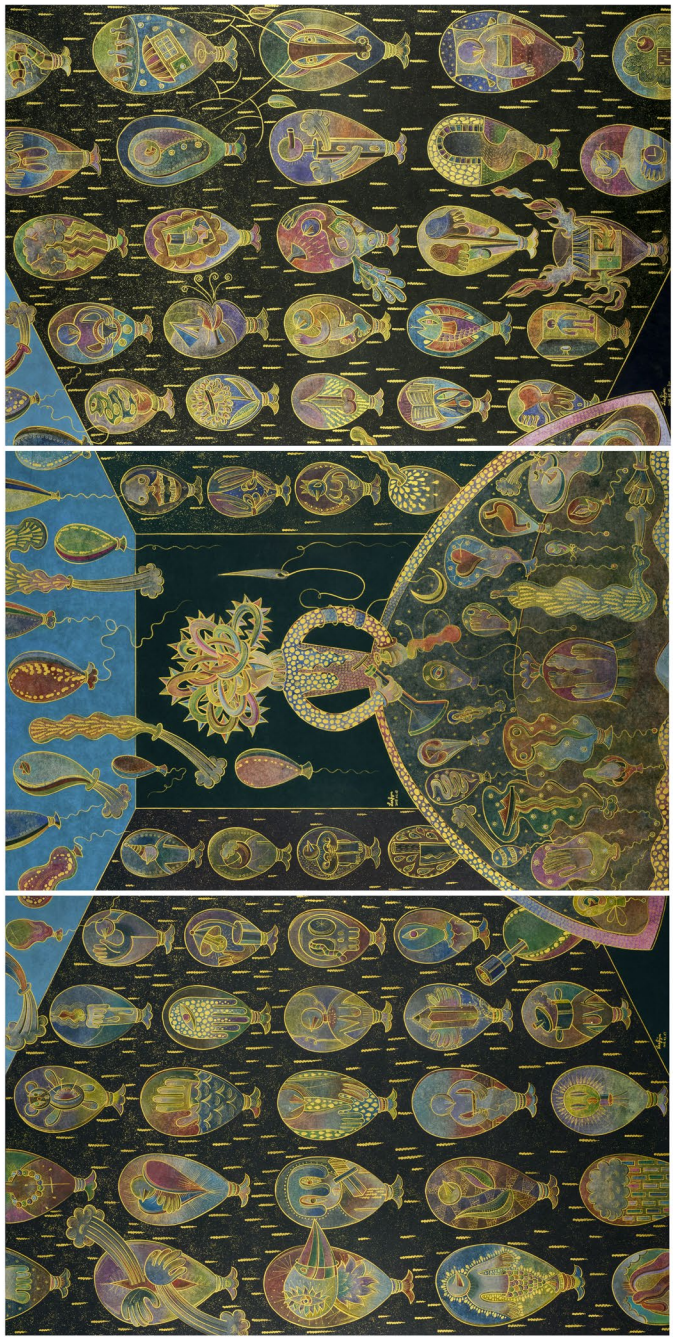
Fi Jae Lee, *A Hencoop at Midnight* (detail).



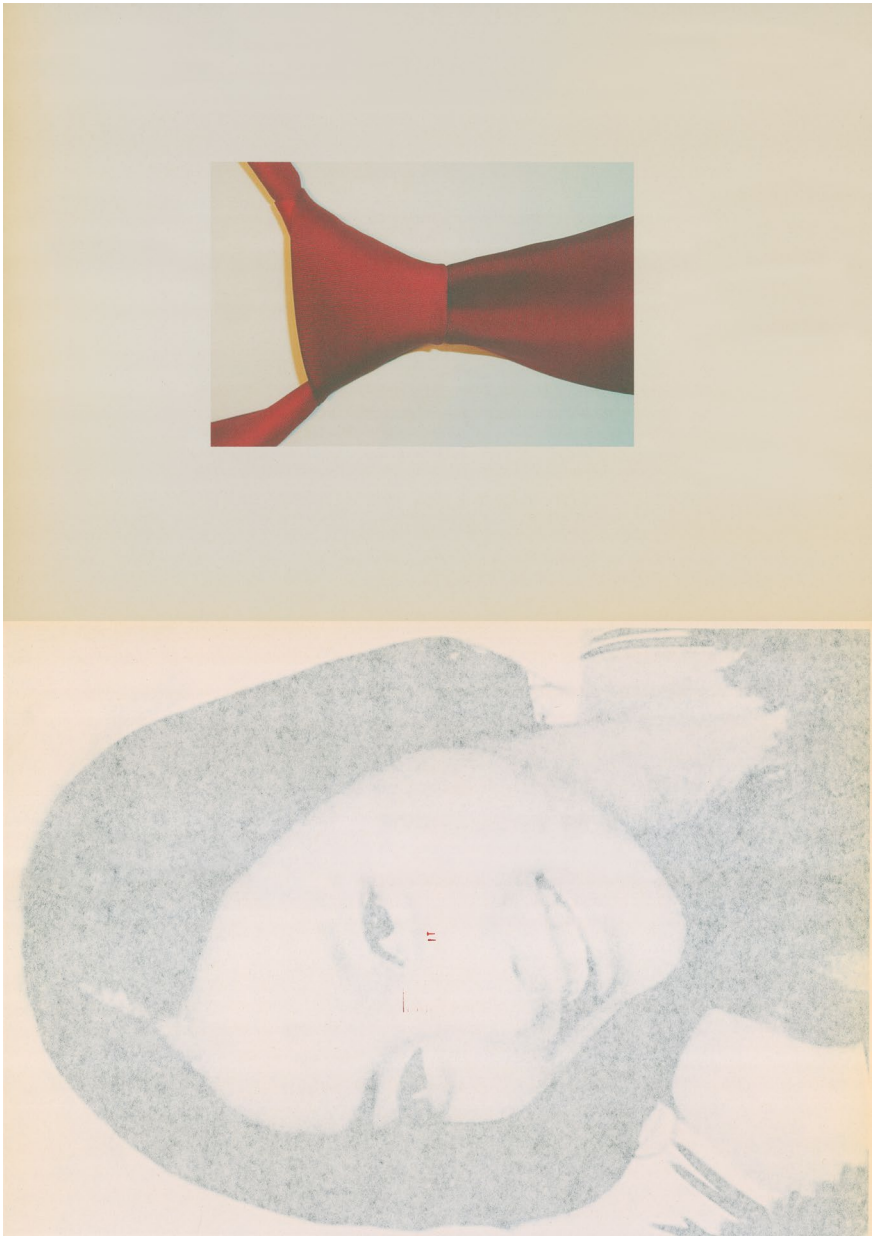
Fi Jae Lee, *Do Not Point a Finger at Me. I'm Melting*, 2019, ink, watercolor, Korean gold pigment on Korean paper, 191 x 126 cm.



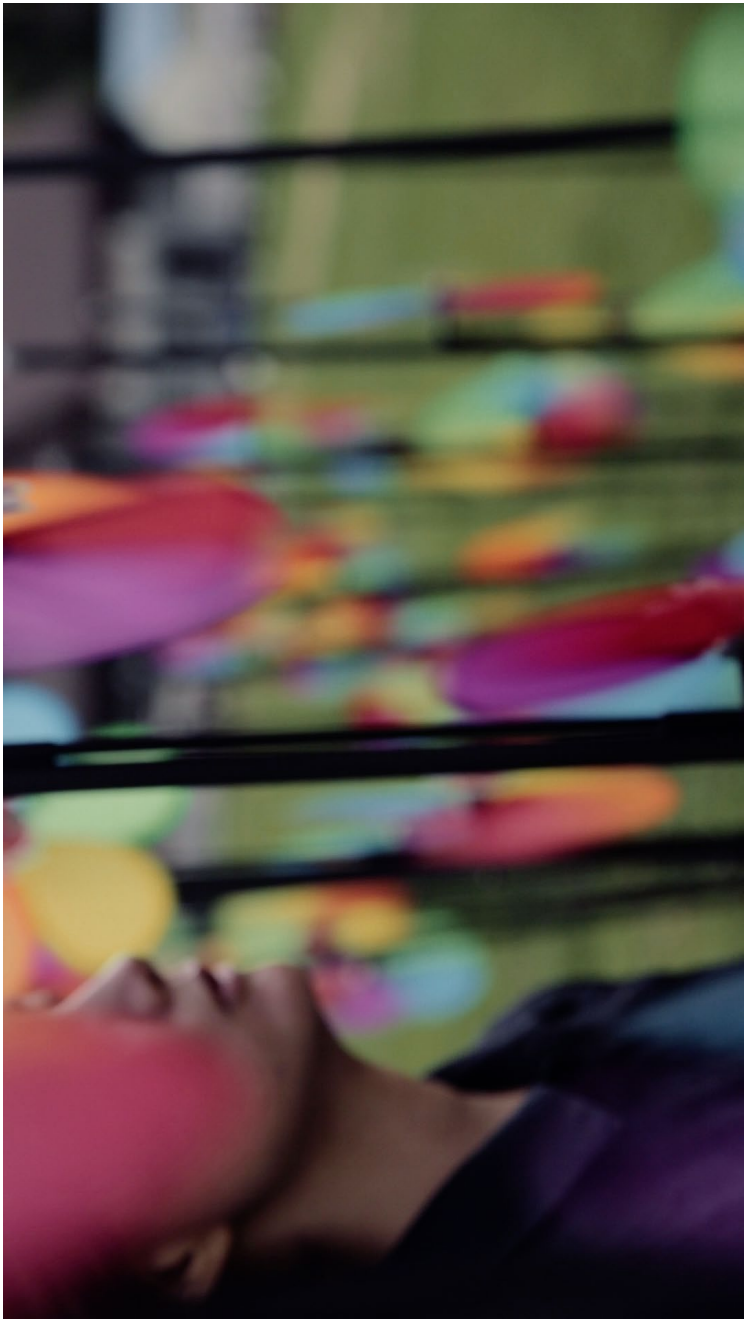
Fi Jae Lee, *Cheerful Death, Noisy Heaven*, 2019, ink, watercolor, colored pencil, acrylic, Korean gold pigment on Korean paper, 126 x 191 cm.



Fi Jae Lee, *Egg of Ego*, 2018, ink, watercolor, and Korean gold pigment on Korean paper, 191.5 x 389.5 cm.



Yi Yunyi, *I saw a red bird flying without wings when I looked closer it was a bullet.*, 2014, newsprint (interior), 12 x 16½ in, 40 pages.



Yi Yunyi, still 1 from *Hearts Echo Like Mercury*, 2016, HD video, color, sound, 20:24.

Yi Yunyi, still 2 from *Hearts Echo Like Mercury*, 2016, HD video, color, sound, 20:24.

Yi Yunyi, still from *October to June*, 2019, FHD video, color, sound, 24:19.

DANIELLE DUTTON

One Woman and Two Great Men

Among many reflections in Thomas de Quincey's essay "The Last Days of Immanuel Kant," the reader is offered a glimpse at the philosopher's bedtime routine. Kant had a strict habit, it turns out, of reading by candlelight until ten o'clock, then removing his mind from exertion for one golden half hour, sure that a mind laden with study would be prone to wakefulness. So he simply sat. Until, having removed his mind for the requisite time, he would undress, lie down, and wrap himself in a blanket—cotton in summer, wool in autumn, then, as the air cooled, both of these together. Once Königsberg was in the fullest grip of winter, frost felling ancient oaks and small hills of snow on every pitched rooftop, he'd sensibly switch to eiderdown or, to hit the nail on the head, to a blanket of eiderdown ingeniously stuffed, in its upper third, with wool instead of feathers (a blanket, then, both padded and stuffed), with which he'd enfold his body—nesting more than covering, we're told. Here's how: first, he'd sit on the side of the bed and with an agile motion vault obliquely into his lair; next, he drew one corner of the bedclothes under his left shoulder and, passing it below his back, brought it round so as to rest under his right shoulder; fourthly, by a particular *tour d'addresse*, he operated on the opposite corner in similar fashion, finally contriving to roll the blanket around his entire person. How pleasing it is to imagine Immanuel Kant thus enswathed (self-involved as a silkworm) as Thomas de Quincey stands close at hand, snuffing the candle or checking that the curtains are shut against the cold, and taking notes, mentally if not literally—noting, for example, how the author of *Critique of Pure Reason*, once nested, would often exclaim, "Is it possible to conceive of a human being with more perfect health than myself?" Yet, you would be wrong in imagining things this way. For the truth of "The Last Days of Immanuel Kant" by Thomas de Quincey is that not much of it is, in fact, by Thomas de Quincey. The *truth*, which hides not

behind lies but behind de Quincey's curious relationship to quotation and citation, is that this intimate description of Kant's bedtime routine comes from Ehregott Andreas Wasianski's 1804 *Immanuel Kant in seinen letzten Lebensjahren*, which de Quincey translated and annotated in such a way as to leave the reader with the impression that the words and experiences were de Quincey's very own. And so it is Wasianski, not de Quincey, snuffing Kant's candle, Wasianski, not de Quincey, with the presence of mind to inform us that when hosting a party, rather than keep a bottle of decanted wine with a servant, Kant, *anacreontically*, preferred to keep one at the elbow of every single guest. Who Wasianski was is not of great importance (a friend, a priest, a musical inventor) because it is de Quincey whom we think of as we read. "It is Thomas de Quincey that history remembers," I say to my companion sitting opposite on this bullet train, as we look out at the landscape whizzing by.

Looking at a rainbow shooting straight up from a field, I recall an interview with a French writer who, when asked what made his books funny, answered, "Work, work, work." "Yet, I can't help thinking," I tell my new friend, "that the humor I find in 'The Last Days of Immanuel Kant' is at least partially accidental." Or perhaps that's me eating straight out of its hand? Take the section in which de Quincey explains that Kant is not popular here and now (the here and now in question being nineteenth-century England) because he cannot be, and he cannot be because he wrote in German, and because of what, in German, he wrote. He wrote: All of the elements of the manifold of *i* (where *i* is some arbitrary intuition) are such that H is or can become conscious, in thought, that all of those elements, taken together, are accompanied by the *I think*. I think, announces de Quincey—in the middle of a tremendously long footnote printed in an exceptionally tiny font, yet offered with total conviction, as though these are the final words on a man and his body of work—*popular* the Transcendental Philosophy can never be.

Thus, we have an essay written and not written by Thomas de Quincey, about a philosopher whose philosophy, the essay's writer-slash-not-writer tells us, cannot be liked, or not liked by many, and yet, he goes on, any thinking person *must* be interested in Kant the man. A great man, he argues, though in an unpopular path, will

always be an object of liberal curiosity—and, indeed, there is ample evidence with which to back him up! From Diogenes Laërtius to our very own here and now, we seem to long to know just how the great man eats his breakfast (in Kant's case, oatmeal, promptly at five each morning), how he takes his exercise (a walk after dinner each night, alone, so as not to be bothered with conversation, talk forcing one to take in air through the mouth, whereas Kant preferred to take in air through his nostrils, ensuring the air reaching his lungs would arrive in a state of less rawness, especially in winter, the nose being an instrument of warming), how he sleeps (enswathed!), and above all how he dies. Like all great men, Kant died without any sweat. Only his eye was rigid, writes Wasianski, writes de Quincey, and his face and lips became discolored by a cadaverous pallor—and that was all. No crying or pleading, no vomit or piss. Unlike the rest of us, a great man looks out at the abyss and simply exhales. Or so we are told. And so we can hold it in our hands. This small old book in bright green leather—*The Works of Thomas de Quincey: Last Days of Immanuel Kant and Other Writings*—and I hold it up to show my neighbor as our train plunges into the dark.

"De Quincey," I say as we reengage the daylight, "is best known as an opium eater. In fact, we are told, he was a visionary at six." His earliest memories were dreams. When his sister Jane died aged three, the younger Thomas assumed she'd pop back with the spring rains, like a bulb. When his sister Elizabeth died aged nine, he stood beside her corpse and fell into a trance. Thus Thomas took leave of his youth: a school, a tutor, a tutor, a school. Some called him weak and effeminate, others gifted and premature. Throughout his life, de Quincey would be troubled by pain in his guts. A brilliant student, fluent in Greek, in 1802 he ran away from Manchester Grammar, tossing his trunk down the stairs one moonless night. Of course, the lives of the Romantics were filled with desperate flights, but de Quincey was perhaps the most adept at sleeping in actual fields and trudging through mountainous rain. A smallish teenager, he calls the sunset pompous. He watches the girls in bonnets. Then he is found and disappears again to befriend a virgin whore in London's soggy streets. At last he arrives at Worcester College, Oxford—but he'll run away from that school, too, calling it *ancient mother*.

"You might," I say, seeing a skeptical sort of spasm pass over my companion's face, "be inclined to think I inject so much moisture into this story because of the drops now pelting our window, and so be more likely to doubt the truth of what I say. But the fact is that the first forty years of the nineteenth century saw excessive rainfall in England. Truly, there were those who called it 'outstandingly wet.'"

"Interestingly," I continue as the horn blasts and we barrel past a cow, "for all the care with which de Quincey recounts Wasianski's account of Kant, the great man to whom he was truly devoted was William Wordsworth." He called himself, at seventeen, *zealously attached*, then went to live for a decade in Mr. Wordsworth's beloved Dove Cottage, its tangle of ivy and scallop-pink walls, where he irritated the elder poet's more fastidious nature. It's such a shame to meet the ones we worship. De Quincey would later advise: "Never describe Wordsworth as equal in pride to Lucifer: no; but, if you have occasion to write a life of Lucifer, set down that by possibility, in respect to pride, he might be some type of Wordsworth."

Eventually, he settled in Edinburgh with his wife and chowder of kids. As regards the de Quincey children: three boys died, one gruesomely, one in China, and Sara Coleridge accused the father of neglecting them all and worse. Yet, he was silver-tongued, even or especially in his insults. That no one in England read Kant was a sign, he was sure, of the nation's intellectual emasculation; Goethe was no good; Coleridge was a thief. Incendiary was de Quincey, always catching his hair on fire, his haystacks of papers, too. When he died at seventy-four, a semblance of youth came over his face. He looked, we're told, a boy of fourteen. "Thank you," he said, then simply expired. They called him a gracious corpse.

Now, from the window of this speeding train, I see hill after hill after hill and all their grasses blurring. Incidentally, the writer I've been most recently reading on de Quincey—in an essay called "Thomas de Quincey"—was also the translator into Italian of *Gli ultimi giorni di Immanuel Kant*. "And so," I tell my drowsy companion, for indeed it seems this train will never stop its oscillation, never meet an ocean, never approach a mountain it can't pass, "the writers begin to blur like the grassy hills!" That writer's name is Fleur Jaeggy, born in Switzerland and educated by nuns, there were horses and she rode

them speaking Italian, German, and French. Later, she modeled for pictures but found it dull. Known for being private, she lives in Milan with frescoes on her walls. I came to her work through her fourth book, a slender novel in which, as in the life of its author, a Swiss girl is sent to be educated in a boarding school managed by nuns. The school is in the Appenzell, where the writer Robert Walser died while walking one Christmas Day. Someone had the sense to snap a picture of the body: hat just out of reach, final line of footsteps caught forever in the snow. It is as if, having met his fate on the path, Mr. Walser simply agreed.

When people mention that Jaeggy translated de Quincey, they invariably cite as evidence "The Last Days of Immanuel Kant." Has ever a translator—I mean here de Quincey—so eclipsed the one he translates—I mean now Wasianski? Emerson wrote: "Do not go where the path leads, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." How interesting then to go where the path goes and leave a trail nevertheless. For her part, Fleur Jaeggy still lives, so there is nothing yet to say about her death. At times, it feels as though all the stories that need to be written are written and all the lives that need to be lived have been lived.

MATVEI YANKELEVICH

from FROM A WINTER NOTEBOOK

* * *

Winter full of parties I plan to attend and think better.
I'm not pro anything, I'm just speaking. Hear my poems'
pliant snow, trans-white. It's a very long scholarly paper,
but I don't have a stapler. Here I am on stage, what's left?
Now that I'm old enough to be alive, I can't forget it—
every picture frame hanging askew, floor's slope, every time
out of order, corners joined at odds with corners. Just listen
how I talk to you, without your courage. I was programmed
to be lost—planned incandescence. After Goethe and Spicer,
the word is death, a long line for bread. Like when I'd like to
take my shoes off: I was in the present and the knot wasn't.

* * *

Winter's prison: fog, the titles I write down to read,
each night too short to write that letter you would rather
I not write. Here useless struggle's worth my while, I cleave
persistent loafing, desperate inertia. To sing
without a tune, figuratively abstract: the sound
product of tying my shoes. Now, when I'm pulsed to change
a word, I often leave it, not—my suspicious friend—
for love of it as is, but of serious boredom,
so that you too may feel that drag, and this hang, also.

* * *

Winter, no thing new
under the sun. What comes
up again was that which
was under snow. Clod-like
clouds overhead, pebble
underfoot. I ran
for the train, why? I
got there early. Color
of retsina—I wanted
to drink, to make time
to drill holes out and build.
I said, find another,
yet the ghost of it
is in me. In my room,
new shelves already full
of nothing—dead jerks.

* * *

In winter's grip, in malady and warmth—
books at arm's reach, but I just scribble,
feign aesthetic undertakings, courting
gout. Apocalyptic nineties poets
spell the end: Stefan Georg, then Rod Smith.
Decadence now retrofolding under
theosophic light of CA's crystals,
fractals stacked. And me, I'm counting coots
with Stebelton by lakeside. They sway
under the shackled sky like ingrown hairs.

* * *

This winter, if something were to happen,
take this worldwide link to everything
I want to lose, and keep it marked unread,
highlighted pink, or yellow. Keep pulsing
and send me your dream diaries by text,
unlimited. I'll keep them on my phone
until I drop it. If one thing can be
recovered unregretted, give me that
one moment of thinking with my body,
narrow as wasps spin round earth's axis.
Meanwhile, I will accept all comfort in
a world gone wrong. You said you wanted just
the sex, while I have astrologic'ly
a need of being understood I can't
suppress, the way we believe we'll die, though
it never happens—only prorated
dread, its horrible approach, limbs slack with
air's lack, winter's suspicious light splintered
over floor that spins below life's axis.

* * *

Had I your hands, I'd give up my ambitions.
Does it matter now that far away you think
of nothing but what's close at hand? Heavy
is the burden; to speak it burdens others.
My posture gets the worst of me, the better.
Say "ancestors," they'll sigh alright. Drink until
insight comes, or sleep. What's liquid must pour out
and vessel empty of what memories
a friend to lend a hand: penitent, gloveless
sweeping snow from our last winter's windshield.

CHUS PATO
Translated by Erín Moure

from THE FACE OF THE QUARTZES

¿Que vos ía dicir
que prefería mirar as columnas salomónicas
os carros que cruzaban a ponte e levaban o ouro a Roma?
Un posto tiña eu nesa ponte
un mandado de pobreza
Si, eu era a meniña que desaparecía
e entraba pola porta falando dos cans
que se quedaba baixo o anuncio enorme das horas
perdida nos sotos que dan a un río
Non teñas coidado
sei tallar bisontes que miran cara atrás
e son proxectada ao esplendor
Así a comprensión
unha faísca que traza o camiño na noite
e xulga
O ceo
discernímolo
pola aresta
glauca
que a neve non logrou cubrir

Alauda
torna o teu trino cara min
cativa que son do lóstrego
cóseme con agulla branca
cántame
xunto aos cabalos

What was I saying to you
that I preferred watching the Solomonic columns
the carts crossing the bridge carrying gold to Rome?
I had a job on that bridge
forced by poverty
Yes, I was the girl who vanished
and came in the door talking of dogs
and who tarried under the huge clock advertising time
who was lost in tunnels that opened onto a river
Never mind
I know how to carve buffalo gazing backward
and am projected into the splendor
That's understanding,
a spark that lights up the path in the night
and concludes
The sky
we discern it
by the glaucous
ridge
that the snow failed to cover

Skylark
turn your trill to me
captive of lightning that I am
sew me up with a glinting needle
sing to me
amidst the horses

Iamos cos errantes
trataba de roubarlle aos defuntos a moeda que traían para pagar a
barca
non sabía que eu xa cruzara ese mar
O teu corpo era o esquezo
o que nunca se pode lembrar
era primavera
nadaba

*
non sei que facía coas moedas
as veces achegábase ao barqueiro para que a pasase
ou agardaba pola quenda e ao chegar ao distribuidor central
desistía
non estaba mutilada
falaba de telas gardadas nunha hucha
do sexo das mulleres

*
ela era o alimento dos liques
das árbores espidas
a néboa era tan real que podías bebela
un paso aberto na eclosión

da alma da osa
da alma do cabalo
nutrímonos

a *Nocturna*
volvía

We went with the wanderers†
She tried to steal the coins the dead brought to pay for the ferry
She didn't know I'd already crossed that sea
Oblivion was your body
that which can never be remembered
she was spring
she was swimming

*

Who knows what she did with the coins
sometimes she handed one right to the ferryman
or waited in line and on reaching the vending machine
desisted
She was not mutilated
She spoke of keeping them in a little box
of the sex of women

*

She was food for lichens
for bare trees
the fog was so real you could drink it
a passage open in the eclosion

on the soul of she-bear
on the soul of horse
we nourish ourselves

Nocturna
was making her return

---

†/ The dead and the planets are known in ancient writings as *the wanderers*. Our word *planet* comes from the Greek for "wanderers," as to us on Earth, the planets seem to move in relation to the stars in the night sky.

Nada máis achegado que os musgos
que as árbores espidas
o cantar das augas
pero ti musgo
ti, non me falas
¿ou son eu quen non escoita?
tería que me tender na pedra ao teu carón
mirar o ceo e só mirar o ceo
deixar que a xeada abrise un camiño…

ti, inverno
cos teus oráculos en desorde
Eneida, ti
co rabaño de cervos
e o heroe abaténdoos na mallante
un por cada nave
soñádesme

decídea vós
soños
a dor xenital das femias
cando se volven e a vida muda póstuma

linfas
cantádea!!!

Nothing closer than mosses
than bare trees
the singing of waters
but you, moss
you, you don't speak to me
or am I just not listening?
I'd have to stretch out beside you on the stone
look at sky and look only at sky
let the frost open a path...

you, winter
with your oracles in disarray
Aeneid, you
with the herd of stags
felling them heroically at the strand line
one for each ship
you both dream me

you decide it
dreams
the genital anguish of the does
when they return and life changes posthumous

lymphs
sing of this!!!

Non se sacia a mirada de contemplar a soidade
o verdor da herba
o resplandor da mica

as vacas
fascinadas co tractor
coma eu me extasío coa lingua na que as afalan

babariol babarial babarian
Raphel may amách zabí almí
edoy lelia doura

os orientais
que se cadra miran como unha serpe arde
e da cinza vive outra
de bronce
para que salves a mirada

o flúor da carriza orlando as táboas de pasar a ponte

as rapazas
atando ao unísono os cabelos
mentres apuntalamos unha columna de nomes

descalzas pisamos esas táboas
antes do asedio
e os narcisos

The gaze never tires of contemplating solitude
the greenery of grass
the flash of mica

cows
fascinated by the tractor
as I am ecstatic at the language of the drovers

babariol babarial babarian
Raphel may améch zabí almí
edoy lelia doura

men from the East†
who gaze almost like a serpent on fire
and from its ash another comes alive
in bronze
so you can salvage the gaze

the fluoride of moss adorning the planks of the bridge

the girls
tying back their hair in unison
while we steady a column of names

we walk those planks barefoot
in advance of the siege
and the daffodils

†/ Echoes Tiepolo's *Scherzi di Fantasia* series, many of which depicted turbaned peasants, in English called "Orientals," "Oriental peasants," "wizards," "men from the East."

O inverno abandónase á chuvia
e a chuvia entrégase a si
agardamos unha verdade da linguaxe
Nacín para ouvir o latido dos cans
para afundir os pasos no bulleiro de aldeas remotas
para teorizar o voo dun paxaro
que non completa o anel,
o broche é a caverna na que unha mociña tece
un cosmos para o verao
Para vivir neste pano de torre esboroada
nestas pedras
Nacín para esquecer a miña mao no sexo do tempo
para avanzar cabalgando crocodilos
e ser alegoría
Neste halo, nel escribo, hai un regato
un cisne bebe
Mimese, en ti pensamos
nos ollos que procuran as palmeiras africanas
nos náufragos
nas presas, nas vencidas…*à bien d'autres encor !*

pero si, algunha sílaba húmida
estendida sobre a pedra
coma un lique

Winter gave way to rain
and the rain gave in to itself
we await a truth of language
I was born to hear the bark of dogs
to sink my steps into the muck of remote villages
to theorize the flight of a bird
that does not complete its circle,
the broach is the cave in which a girl weaves
a cosmos for summer
For a life in this fabric of crumbling tower
in these stones
I was born to forget my hand in the sex of time
to advance astride crocodiles
and be allegory
In this halo, where I write, there's a brook
a swan drinks
Mimesis, we think of you
of your eyes that seek African palms
of the castaways
of women held captive, conquered…*à bien d'autres encor !*†

oh and yes, some damp syllable
spread over the stone
like a lichen

†/ Echoes Baudelaire's "Le cygne" from *Les Fleurs du mal*.

PATRICK MORRISSEY

Sandbox Modernism

He's busy with sand and sticks, methodically spreading and splitting his materials across a weathered wooden table in the sandbox, utterly absorbed in his workshop or kitchen. Every few minutes he glances over his shoulder, checking to see that I'm where he wants me, which is in view but not too close. When I approach, curious to learn more about his project, he sends me back to my bench—"Dada, sit over there"—and returns to his work. Other children call to one another or their grown-ups; the chains of the swing set rattle and screech. I watch him drift some distance away, scoop up more sand from a carefully selected spot, and bring it to the table. He unearths a piece of faded plastic, the cast-off half of a toy, and adds it to the arrangement. He's half speaking, half singing to himself. I turn over a line of poetry I've been carrying in my head, weighing out its syllables again, listening for the links their sounds suggest: *father and son practice their routine, each the other's understudy.*

§

My little son's improvisations exceed mine: a round stone to him's a loaf of bread or "this hen could lay a dozen golden eggs." Birds fly about his bedstead; giants lean over him with hungry jaws; bears roam the farm by summer and are killed and quartered at a thought. There are interminable stories at eating time full of bizarre imagery, true grotesques, pigs that change to dogs in the telling, cows that sing, roosters that become mountains and oceans that fill a soup plate. There are groans and growls, dun clouds and sunshine mixed in a huge phantasmagoria that never rests, never ceases to unfold into—the day's poor little happenings. Not that alone. He has music which I have not. His tunes follow no scale, no rhythm—alone the mood in odd ramblings up and down, over and over with a rigor of invention that rises beyond

the power to follow except in some more obvious flight. Never have I heard so crushing a critique as those desolate inventions, involved half-hymns, after his first visit to a Christian Sunday school.

—William Carlos Williams, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations*[1]

§

There's an essential privacy in child's play, or at least it seems that way to a grown-up. I remember my own games and arrangements only in dreamlike glimpses; the logic of my son's play is beyond my ken. But while the rigor of his invention often leaves me bewildered, his flights are clearly not nonsense. He plays seriously: his transformations follow rules of his own strict devising, and he is deeply absorbed in the world he continually refashions for himself. At his age—just over two—he mostly plays alone, even when he is with other children. Their worlds sometimes collide or briefly overlap, but they tend to orbit around one another, each his own planet. If he wants me involved, it's usually to provide logistical support, opening, closing, fixing, or holding something for a moment, though it's my proximity—even when he mostly ignores me—that lets him play. Winnicott called this absorption and imaginative semiautonomy the "capacity to be alone," emphasizing the possibility of solitude even when surrounded by others.[2]

The child keeps himself like a secret, his world hidden in plain sight. For Winnicott, this secret self is the artist's—or anyone's—precious, primitive source: "each individual is an isolate, permanently non-communicating, permanently unknown, in fact unfound."[3] Yet the artist—or anyone—lives among others and seeks to reach beyond self-enclosure. Thus an "inherent dilemma, which belongs to the co-existence of two trends, the urgent need to communicate and the still more urgent need not to be found."[4]

§

A stone becomes bread, sand becomes grain, a stick becomes a knife. A stone becomes a school bus, sand becomes paper, a stick becomes a companionable snake. Child's play is fundamentally transformative.

Scraps of the given world are arranged and made provisionally otherwise. Walter Benjamin was particularly well attuned to this poetics: "No one is more chaste in the use of materials than children: a bit of wood, a pinecone, a small stone—however unified and unambiguous the material is, the more it seems to embrace the possibility of a multitude of figures of the most varied sort."[5] While grown-ups might supply them with specialized toys to encourage their development in suitable ways, children "are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the world of things turns directly and solely to them."[6] To recognize a face in wasted things is to encounter the world as something animate, to sense a hidden animal kinship, a closeness known only to children. They see what the grown-ups see, but they see it aslant. "In using these things," Benjamin continues, "they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one."[7] Play is a semiautonomous work of art, a permeable poem, tethered to ordinary things yet extraordinarily mobile. It folds and unfolds into the day's poor little happenings. A refuge perhaps, but not an escape. Children depend upon adults, but within dependency they preserve their measure of freedom. After all, the grown-up world is, as Benjamin puts it, only "so-called life."[8]

§

William Carlos Williams understood poetry's closeness to play. Throughout his life he wrote poems about or addressed to children, and few poems delight kids and inspire such antic imitation as "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "This Is Just to Say."[9] In 1936 he wrote "A Chinese Toy":

> Six whittled chickens
> on a wooden bat
>
> that peck within a
> circle pulled

by strings fast to
a hanging weight

when shuttled by the
playful hand[10]

The poem is a single descriptive phrase stretched across eight lines. Because it never resolves into a sentence, it seems almost to be a protracted, multifaceted noun, hovering in suspended animation. Indeed, suspension—or suspense—is the poem's defining quality. Continual enjambment makes each line depend on the others, so while the absence of a complete predicate creates grammatical stasis, the play of syntax against line and stanza breaks induces a strong sense of mobility. Each piece of the poem seems to pull and be pulled gently by each other piece, balanced in motion, and this formal interdependency of the poem's pieces clearly imitates the structure of the thing it describes. All the pieces of the toy—whittled chickens, wooden bat, and hanging weight—are threaded through with a single string such that the movement of one piece sets each of the others into motion.

In his essay "A Philosophy of Toys," Charles Baudelaire celebrates the toy as "the child's earliest initiation to art, or rather for him the first concrete example of art, and when mature age comes, the perfected examples will not give his mind the same feelings of warmth, nor the same enthusiasms, nor the same sense of conviction."[11] Baudelaire attributes the strange power of toys to their "simplicity of production." It's the poorest toys that produce the most immersive imaginative worlds. He describes the way children make toys of ordinary furniture and scraps—chairs for horse and carriage, corks and dominoes for tiny soldiers—in ways that "put to shame the impotent imagination of the blasé public which in the theatre demands a physical and mechanical perfection, and cannot conceive that the plays of Shakespeare can remain beautiful with an apparatus of barbaric simplicity."[12] He writes with thorough contempt for the trappings of adult sophistication, disparaging "splendid dolls" and the ways that some children "play at grown-ups."[13]

Baudelaire's object of fascination is "the barbaric toy, the primitive toy, in which the maker's problem consisted in constructing an image as approximative as possible with elements as simple and as cheap

as possible: for example, the cardboard punchinello, actuated by a single thread; the blacksmiths hammering at their anvil; the horse and its rider in three pieces, four wooden pins for legs, the horse's tail forming a whistle, and sometimes the rider wearing a little feather in his cap, which is a great luxury.…"[14] Among these penny toys we might recognize Williams's Chinese toy and his poem about it. Both toy and poem are made of simple and cheap materials: some bits of wood and string, twenty-six basic words, and a few line breaks. Both seek maximum mimesis with minimum means. The toymaker wants to show us chickens; the poet wants to show us the toy that shows us the chickens. Imitation is a matter not of belabored visual reproduction but of quick mechanical analogy. The form of the blacksmith or the chickens may be chastely rendered so long as the toys' mechanisms conjure their essential gestures. The poem, like the toy, may be a simple moving image-machine. "These are toys for a penny, a halfpenny, a farthing," Baudelaire writes. "But do you think that these simple images create a lesser reality in the child's mind than those New Year's Day marvels which are a tribute paid by parasitic servility to the wealth of the parents rather than a gift to the poetry of childhood?"[15]

§

The Romantics tended to idealize and ennoble childhood and play. For Wordsworth, "The Child is father of the Man," and for Schiller, "man only plays when *he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays*."[16] Imagined as a parent, the Child becomes both the source of life and the source of law; the purity and imaginative vitality of childhood come to serve as ideals for a more natural, noble society. Schiller celebrates rational, ordered play—edifying play—over "uncultivated taste" for the "new and startling…colorful, fantastic and bizarre, the violent and the savage…."[17] As play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith points out, Schiller has little else to say about the more chaotic, darker sorts of play that might engage both children and adults.[18] Games of chance and imaginative phantasmagoria, for instance, in different ways court irrational, erratic, wasteful, and destructive forces that do not clearly lead to healthy maturity and might even thwart progress toward a well-adjusted adulthood. Sutton-Smith contends that these

more fanciful and sometimes disorderly imaginary worlds might be understood as assertions of autonomy from the orderly adult world, not as aspirations to join it—as "fabricat[ions] [of] another world that lives alongside the first one and carries on its own kind of life…" not mere "replications" of the given world.[19] Of course, Wordsworth understood well the disorder a child's imagination might induce. In "We Are Seven," an adult encounters a "simple Child" in whose world the living and the dead cohabitate, and her unwillingness to acknowledge death's finality gives the somewhat obtuse grown-up fits: "Twas throwing words away."[20]

Williams, Benjamin, and Baudelaire also idealized childhood, but their writings court, rather than avoid, the disorderly other worlds of children's play. While the adult task is "to provide a world order," writes Benjamin, the child is concerned with "pure receptivity."[21] Modernist children have trouble with authority. Consider original Dadaist Hugo Ball, in a 1916 journal entry: "Childhood as a new world, and everything childlike and phantastic, everything childlike and direct, everything childlike and symbolical in opposition to the senilities of the world of grown-ups…. To surpass oneself in naïveté and childishness—that is still the best antidote…."[22] Or André Breton, in "Manifesto of Surrealism": "From childhood memories, and from a few others, there emanates a sentiment of being unintegrated, and then later of *having gone astray*, which I hold to be the most fertile that exists. It is perhaps childhood that comes closest to one's 'real life.'"[23] And Winnicott on infancy: "There are long stretches of time in a normal infant's life in which a baby does not mind whether he is many bits or one whole being, or whether he lives in his mother's face or in his own body, provided that from time to time he comes together and feels something."[24] If growing up means losing or suppressing one's ability to linger unintegrated, Winnicott finds that supposedly healthy adult sanity often "has a symptomatic quality, being charged with fear or denial of madness, fear or denial of the innate capacity of every human being to become unintegrated, depersonalized, and to feel that the world is unreal."[25] Poetry is the antidote: "Through artistic expression we can hope to keep in touch with our primitive selves whence the most intense feelings and even fearfully acute sensations derive, and we are poor indeed if we are only sane."[26]

§

Who's imitating whom? Aspiration runs both ways. Benjamin maintains that children don't really imitate the works of adults, but that's not quite true. I don't fully understand my son's games, but I recognize in them a face, strange and half turned away, of the world I know. He pretends to talk on the phone, to cook a meal, to fill a page with writing. But his phone line reaches across species; his plate is never empty; his writing reinvents its script in every gesture. His own small world remakes the world it persists inside, yet it turns out with a perpetual difference, an instability, a potential I can neither foresee nor comprehend. He wants to be a grown-up in his own way, on his own. So what exactly is the desire to imitate a child—to take the Child as our Father, to improvise reveries or phantasmagoria worthy of a toddler or a kindergartener? The desire to make another image of ourselves, on our own. A simpler image, perhaps, made of scraps and string, letters and lines, poorer but strangely more real.

§

In her essay "Poetry and Grammar," Gertrude Stein traces the writing of poetry back to childhood experience. In an oft-quoted line, she asserts that "poetry is essentially the discovery, the love, the passion for the name of anything," but goes on to describe our mature distance from that discovery, our adult lack of love for naming: "Naturally, and one may say that is what made Walt Whitman naturally that made the change in the form of poetry, that we who had known the names so long did not get a thrill from just knowing them. We that is any human being living has inevitably to feel the thing anything being existing, but the name of that thing of that anything is no longer anything to thrill any one except children."[27] The suggestion is that modern poetry's formal disruptions—such as Stein's repetitions and grammatical idiosyncrasies—are attempts to seek again the childhood thrill of naming things.

It's a commonplace in criticism of Stein to deride—and occasionally praise—her writing as the work of a child. Sometimes critics have ranked her even below a child. "She has written a book or so of

inconceivably idiotic drivel," wrote one 1914 reviewer of *Tender Buttons*, "compared with which the babble of a three-year old child is Hegelian. Her specialty seems to be the throwing together of language absolutely meaningless and insulting alike to one's sense of taste and decency."[28] Echoing this charge of idiocy, the famous communist Mike Gold condemned Stein's work in 1934 as "an example of the most extreme subjectivism of the contemporary bourgeois artist, and a reflection of the ideological anarchy into which the whole of bourgeois literature has fallen…. The literary idiocy of Gertrude Stein only reflects the madness of the whole system of capitalist values."[29]

There's a useful insight buried in such condescension and apoplectic overstatement. If we emphasize not idiocy's connotation of imbecility but its root in *ἰδιώτης*, i.e., a "private person" or "person without professional knowledge"—we might begin to understand the substantial opacity and strangeness of Stein's writing as manifestations of a basically self-absorbed focus and intensity.[30] Stein wrote first for herself, every day and at great length. Reading the red notebooks in which she originally drafted *Tender Buttons*, one sees how little she edited the work before publication; the published text presents her strange array of nouns and verbs more or less as she first wrote it—an ongoing practice within her own small world of things, written for herself and possibly for Toklas, but not for us. "In those days," Stein wrote of herself, "she never asked anyone what they thought of her work, but they were interested enough to read it. Now she says if they can bring themselves to read it they will be interested."[31]

As we walk down the street, my son names the things he sees, repeating and recombining nouns and verbs in endless permutations. He's delighted; sometimes his words are lost on me, at others I'm interested, even thrilled by his compositions. He wakes up naming things I imagine he dreamt. Children often talk and play just for themselves. They don't mind if we hear, but they don't always care whether we understand their intricacies. One of Stein's achievements—or errors, depending on your view, or perhaps your mood on any given day—is to have so resolutely played her own game for so long. Guy Davenport once wrote that her work "is the very literate equivalent of children playing in a sandbox. They are happy, busy, purposeful in their own way, but only angels know what they think they're doing."[32]

§

"On the subject of the plaything of the poor," continues Baudelaire, "I once saw something even more simple, but sadder, than the toy for a penny—this was the living toy." He tells a brief story about a rich child who casts aside his own "glittering" doll when he beholds the toy of the dirty "urchin" on the other side of the fence: a caged rat. "To save money," Baudelaire writes, "his parents had taken the toy from life itself."[33] Baudelaire says nothing more on the subject. A caged rat seems a step beyond poems and paper toys, with their primitive imitations of the familiar world. The readymade toy is something more primitive still: a piece of the world, broken off and renamed, somehow made more—or simply other—than itself by play. A rat renamed "a rat," not an image but the animal itself. This is play as a radical realism, fascinating and at least a little frightening.

§

Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep* is a neorealist story of a father and his family making their way in Watts during the 1970s, but it's also something else: a wandering non-narrative of children at play, a document of the almost-innocent underworld they maintain in plain view of world-weary adults. Adolescent boys poke around in train yard detritus and wrestle in the dust, turning suddenly tender when one gets hurt, then jokingly tough again when they find he's faking it. Another boy lies beneath a boxcar, head by a wheel, and urges his buddies to push; the train won't budge, but they tie his shoelaces together as he laughs. A little girl croons a nonsense version of Earth, Wind & Fire's "Reasons" to an unkempt, naked doll while her mother applies makeup in the next room. In another scene, the girl watches her father and his friends through a deadpan rubber doggy mask. A dozen kids leap from roof to roof and climb the ledges of dilapidated buildings while a grown-up quarrel explodes into the open. The kids throw pebbles at each other; a boy hurts his arm and begins to cry. Two children sit inside on the couch while their mother waves a gun at her no-good man. Outside, their friends keep at their games and antics, turning a poor apartment complex into an afternoon's playground. Their cries and laughter permeate the soundtrack.

NOTES

1/ William Carlos Williams, *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1920), 76–77.
2/ See D. W. Winnicott, "The Capacity to be Alone," in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), 29–35.
3/ Winnicott, "Communicating and Not Communicating Leading to a Study of Certain Opposites," in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, 187.
4/ Winnicott, "Communicating and Not Communicating," 185.
5/ Walter Benjamin, "The Cultural History of Toys," in *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 115.
6/ Walter Benjamin, "Old Forgotten Children's Books," in *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 408.
7/ Benjamin, "The Cultural History of Toys," 408.
8/ Benjamin, "The Cultural History of Toys," 410.
9/ See the many samples of children's imitations gathered by Kenneth Koch in *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* (New York: Random House, 1990).
10/ William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems, Volume 1, 1909–1939*, ed. A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1938), 407.
11/ Charles Baudelaire, "A Philosophy of Toys," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 199.
12/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 199.
13/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 198.
14/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 199.
15/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 199–200.
16/ Friedrich Schiller, "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man," in *Essays: Friedrich Schiller*, ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 2001), 131. Italics in the original.
17/ Schiller, "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man," 174.
18/ Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 131–32.
19/ Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*, 158, 166.
20/ Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1800*, ed. Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008), 102.

21/ Walter Benjamin, "A Child's View of Color," in *Selected Writings, Volume 1*, 51.
22/ Hugo Ball, "Dada Fragments," in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 478.
23/ André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Modernism: An Anthology*, 737.
24/ D. W. Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development" in *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 150.
25/ Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development," 150.
26/ Winnicott, "Primitive Emotional Development," 150n.
27/ Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar," in *Writings 1932–1946* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 329-31.
28/ Richard Burton, "Posing," in *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein*, ed. Kirk Curnutt (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 163.
29/ Mike Gold, "Gertrude Stein: A Literary Idiot," in *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein*, 163.
30/ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "idiot."
31/ Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, in *Writings 1932–1946* (New York: Library of Congress, 1998), 712.
32/ Guy Davenport, "Tough Buttons," *New Criterion* (November 1993): 73.
33/ Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, 200.

it all melts down to this: a novel in timelines (chapter 19)

"From one autobiographer to another--or really ghostwriter to another--I'd advise you to keep in mind that everything the Subject of The Book (The Book)--every damn thing the man in that house you are entering and I am leaving, exhausted-- everything our Employer of Many Ghost Writers Says-- EVERYTHING isfalse but he is no fake--his energy is genuine, wh ich of course makes our task all the more complex, and strangely argues in favor of hismadness of hirfing so many writers to tell his tale--when you have no alm, when you are not in any way accurate--due to the damage wrought by senses that collide head-on like cars to produce clumps of carcasse narrative--when you can do no better than that--you need asmuch heaps of help as you can get."

and extinguishing gates of fire and whisselling as I said (said) a song of six-pence and lyrics baked in pies--juicy, red, b urstingf bustling with flavor not tides.

It was a calm, sunny day. But something was different about the c alm and the town by the sea vanished. It fell into or was carried away by the calm--no one knew which and I went outh t ere like many other people tostare at the c hink in the cost/eoast and see if I could come up with my own theory a bout what happened. More than six thousand people had vanished, houses, streets, motels--where it allwas was a coastal terrain of the substance neither sand nor dust nor dirt--but containlyng s me of all that, sure--and then The man behind the police line turned to me and said: "I don't think it sank. I think it evaporated."

SOUL SHELVING

glumday
useday
finsday
thirtsday
lieday
hatterday
unday

Birth of a Stump

virus contracts me and dies

burned out
by not being
challenged

I take some solace in the fact that geysers erupt at different temperatures."

ON SCHEDULE--the most beautiful phrase in the English language

It's the past dissassembled to form a Present equally as toxic, but more innocent.

At theborder Hurricane Inex is asked for her passpart. Inez demures rotationally and is detained, questioned. The border guards ask her where she is from, and she won't tell them that either. She just blows and blows and howls and yowls and smashes the chairs in the room where she has beentaken and down go the walls and the questioners are buried abd more bad things happen and then the BORDER OF THE NATION is pushed SOUTH by Inez, quick to anger, and the ripple effect is felt as far away Atlanta, which suddenly finds itself in FLORIDA.

He was wearing a stethascope and he said the word "evaporated" as if it did not contain a "p" and without being prompted went onto tell me about his career as a LAST RESPONDER arriving at emergencies days or even months after the 911 call-- and then? He ministered to the bones or dust or sand or whatever remained--his scope could pick up the dust's PULSE

TIME LINES OF OUR LIVES:: test

75h was the year if I'm remembering right, when I met coming through the fire and the ice, a micro-climate, moderate and level-headed, whisselling and skipping with a sweet unabruptness with a gentle hop-- and I laid down me speaking speak that was me only company until then and my fork and fishing rod and prey stabber too-- I did for the only time in my lifefe-- for a gracious second-- relenquish the squishy way of creative hunting and let bygones be ye bygones, and hitch a ride on that micro-clime skipping softly over the scarred earth and trotting too--trotting like a giant, wellbetrained Fuzzy-Wuzzy-Horse-Hybrid abd thawing ife it touched

The president of the United Sstates telepathically contacts me and insists that it is a law that each sitizen must get off their ass in the morning and roll around an the grass before doing anything else, before teethbrushing or coffee or going to work, and as I am a law abiding sitizen (one of those who'd you'd never think that of until I proved it) I roll around on the grass first thing and ubin the areana of my mind I hear the president thanking me and saying that if only people were more like me there'd be in this great antion of ours more people with hte attitude of Lincoln logs, and though I'm not sure why that is a good thing or why rolling on the ground is LincolnOlike (though I do see the log reference) enven though I am puzzled by the rolling around on thegrown growund first thing, I find it at the very least refreshing--the grass on my and planet pressed to my shape and the coolness of fourleaf clovers (three leafers too) and sky above with the tow trucks flying here/there tugging the birds that otherwise were too old to flu fly and feeling how the grown grownd feels different on one side of me then the other, owning pronenesd like a power, really, yes it was coming to me what a good president had we, he was worried about all of us sitizens and our detachment from our own world--he knew that society encourages shelter from nature--you build one inside the other--an inane bunker system like chinese boxes--separate bunkers for hand and toes and elbows and on and on--but why? Nature--yor own and the green kind--Nature can rip all those impediments away in a second and leave you espoused/exposed to your autobiography, your trash heap of wine foil factoids and unidentifiable cellophane strips--[redacted]--your allotment mit be a betterway to say it, unbittering it--your allotment of vegetal murk paper towel wadded catshop stuff murxked in with grass, and in it, the grass on the shit? or the knit on on thegrass? anyway dangeeous things you do to yourself knowing better but having ab nature that nows better than your knowing better, [redacted] the roots of you breaking through the meat of you to tell a tale of smoky rolling sharp rolling roiling ya epox pf grassamd sjot--epick I means to say of grasa and shit flashes back to nailand shail and snaile days

inherit a tea set with post-traumatic syndrome--decades earlier the cups and saucers survived an earthquake andever since (I was told in a letter with the set, written by my late great Aunt George) ever since THE EVENT OF SEISNIC MAGNITUDE 7.8 ON THE RICHTER SCALE the set was prone to rattle/shake at intervals--at least once a day, often more--wierd the sound I hear like tiny dancing bones

Dr, he prescribes
DUST TEA for my
blood disease of
themind, and I .
take the script to
a cafe run by the
lady who is named
Haverahame, and he
makes me a pot, and
says I'm the first
customer in a century
"of cenath rs" and
more things like that,
and I swip the tea
as if it were scotch,
just wetting lips,
and they g ray,
and I taste what?
It's like attics
boiled in acid--
the flavor. And my
jaw and the rest of
my skull and bones
below thngle--and
go AHHHHHHHHHHHH--
an AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHng
under my muscles of
thirst slakerended,
of death appreciated
as if it were a cured

blam balm, answer, restorative, solution, treat, gift

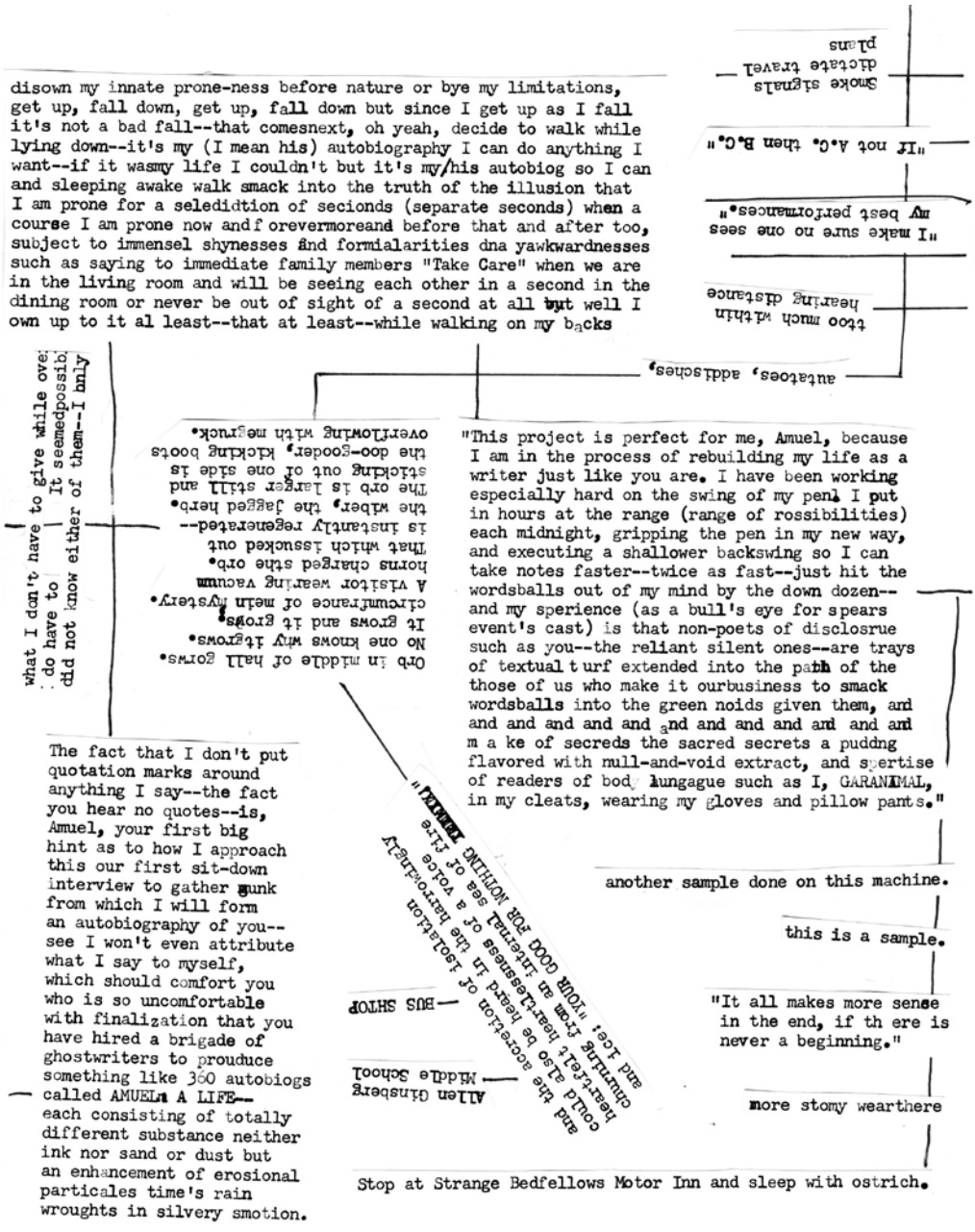
Dear Editor:

I am afraid your rejection of my poem is invalid, as what I sent you was not a poem proper. It was a prom. I used to right poems, to be sure. You may even have seen one or two over the decades, parting your beard to see in the dark light of your office my signature on a bloomet or bloody sonnet. I can assure you that as of two moths ago, however, I have devoted myself to scripting PROMS wherein images and rhymes and ideas pair off and do their chharnel dance on sawdust neither dust nor sand--boogie-ing down, if you well and will, shaking their very bootles of appteratling romance sheathed in casings of westerling fabric, sheel and cha-cha grade. How dduld you not differentiate between a poem and a prom for young folks in their seventh decade of breakage? Buy new glasses, sir.

done gone back again

"I perform CPR on ears not hearing what they should."

"them learning by things old you not"


disown my innate prone-ness before nature or bye my limitations, get up, fall down, get up, fall down but since I get up as I fall it's not a bad fall--that comesnext, oh yeah, decide to walk while lying down--it's my (I mean his) autobiography I can do anything I want--if it wasmy life I couldn't but it's my/his autobiog so I can and sleeping awake walk smack into the truth of the illusion that I am prone for a seleddidtion of seciends (separate seconds) when a course I am prone now andf orevermoreand before that and after too, subject to immensel shynesses and formialarities dna yawkwardnesses such as saying to immediate family members "Take Care" when we are in the living room and will be seeing each other in a second in the dining room or never be out of sight of a second at all but well I own up to it al least--that at least--while walking on my backs
Smoke signals dictate travel plans
"IF not A.C. then B.C."
"I make sure no one sees my best performances."
too much within hearing distance
autatoes, addisches,
what I don't have to give while ove
. do have to
did not know either of them--I only
It seemedpossib
Orb in middle of hall grows.
No one knows why itgrows.
It grows and it grows,
circumfrance of mein Mystery.
A vistitor wearing vacuum
horns charged sthe orb.
That which issucked out
is instantly regenerated--
the wiber, the jagged herb.
The orb is larger still and
stickding out of one side is
the doo-Gooder, kicking boots
overflowing with megruck.
"This project is perfect for me, Amuel, because I am in the process of rebuilding my life as a writer just like you are. I have been working especially hard on the swing of my penl I put in hours at the range (range of rossibilities) each midnight, gripping the pen in my new way, and executing a shallower backswing so I can take notes faster--twice as fast--just hit the wordsballs out of my mind by the down dozen-- and my sperience (as a bull's eye for spears event's cast) is that non-poets of disclosrue such as you--the reliant silent ones--are trays of textual turf extended into the path of the those of us who make it ourbusiness to smack wordsballs into the green noids given them, and and and and and and and and and and m a ke of secreds the sacred secrets a puddng flavored with null-and-void extract, and spertise of readers of bod lungague such as I, GARANIMAL, in my cleats, wearing my gloves and pillow pants."
another sample done on this machine.
this is a sample.
"It all makes more sense in the end, if th ere is never a beginning."
more stomy wearthere
Stop at Strange Bedfellows Motor Inn and sleep with ostrich.
The fact that I don't put quotation marks around anything I say--the fact you hear no quotes--is, Amuel, your first big hint as to how I approach this our first sit-down interview to gather gunk from which I will form an autobiography of you-- see I won't even attribute what I say to myself, which should comfort you who is so uncomfortable with finalization that you have hired a brigade of ghostwriters to prouduce something like 360 autobiogs called AMUELn A LIFE-- each consisting of totally different substance neither ink nor sand or dust but an enhancement of erosional particales time's rain wroughts in silvery smotion.
Allen Ginsberg
Middle School
BUS SHTOP
and the accretion of isolation could also be heard in the harrowingly chuntrue from an intentional see of a voice heartfelt heartlessness in the internal
"YOUR GOOD FOR NOTHING MOTHER"
and ice!

He assigns secretary the task of figuring out how he can retain dignity and integrity in a morally corrupt world and she makes a few calls and gets no answers, but is a good secretary so does not give up but goes home pre-occupied and sleeps badly and comes inand
try a little
salt and papper
on that
The tenstion --or tension-- between what you think you were put on earth to do, and what society insists and forces
Japam stock market crash
less similiar
more exact
less exact
more exact
less exact
more exact
less exact
more exact
less exact
more exact
less exact
more exact
less exact
more exact
TRANSPARENT ESPRESSO
"You were raised wrong, raised like October, and still are wrong, and will remainwrong unless you make things write--letting go of that valise that captures everything thing that should be routed to your soul."
"That's a whole other bag of beans, Palsy-Walsy."
Capers pelted the roof of the car. Some jar in the sky.
Knowxville, 1923
"There's spacKling in your future."
LIVES INTERRUOPTED FREE OF CHARGE
almolive, reens
"Beven when I'm being moderate, I eat and drink and think twice as much as I need to."
AAAAABBBBBBBBAA
"Beven my stationary bike abandonedme."
AAAAABBB
CREEK-SAFE SOAP BATH BARS
HAUTE CRUD
Sand pulls me aside and scolds me for spending no time pn the beach, instead hanging out with the substernce not sand nor dust--YOU! You and yer POPPAL! The bags after bags of rotten and plebitic and monsteramotated wurds you think can be arranged so they ϕ not stink and bathe you in a fragrance of light like chocolate chip cookies! You dripping and drooping with regrets fortified with ambition and blindness! Put that load of loquacious loogering bloody ringletted puss-embroidered and mucous-cored and slippy-sliding turf down and for just once in your life be if you can handle it--a healthy animal smell--sprawled across white sand and listening to the lullabye of the surf shlurshing shlurshing shlurshing in the weightless and steady mode of PEACE! Lay down the arms of your dessicated and death-seeping letters! Dispose of that ridiculous checkered theromostyy you boughbought to ostrhsin thou likid sorrow! The tears of blood cried by the brow that everyonemistakes for a hat brim! Emerge from the shadow (sad shadow) of your brim-brow and sieze the day at the beach every human has coming to them! Mix with grains of time that our y ourself Stop revising your gong-like tongue-- let it be a dilly little gong, blenging on a dune--not a foddering cannon loud but a true brassy and tinny both ready resonance of UNPRINTABLE BEING--a psalm of am-sounds bending like palm trees...

AMUEL'S INDISPENSIBLE DISSLOGRAPHY (ALBUMENS)

1. Bouzoukee: the Music of Greece
   featuring Iordanis Tsomodis
2. Prevue: Brooks Ker-Paul Quinichette Quartet
   with Gene Ramey/Sam Woodyard
3. Struggling Man by Jimmy Cliff
   featuring "Let's Seize the Time"
4. Sweet, Sad & Salty by Burl Ives
   featuring "Scarlet Ribbons"
5. Greatest Hits: The New Christy Minstrels
   featuring "Chim Chim Cher-ee"

Plot: The painter is obsessed with the notion that he can paint any protrusion until it no longer does protrude--for example, an outdoor faucet--the secret being the number of brush strokes, and the more belief he can flatten any impediment utilizing only the power of color

Taje/take a swim inthe substance neither sand nor dust nor air nor land--dive into bluish haze it looks like and do he back backstroke and my two stroking backs glide glide glide glide like a pair of rafts across the tepid surface fronded like some weird sea corn--a 1000 acres of submerged crop with only leaf tips and tassels above the endless depth of the substance neither sand nor dust nor salt nor air nor land and all is quiet for me then, a rarity for a cute-rate man of letters, I'm not screamering manifestos to myself, or moaning like a toad, or making any noise with my mind-mouth, I'm just stroking soundlessly as if my body has become a giant pen wistering across the sea ofstatutibyuary--tributaries of stationary--my head the pen cap, my body the shaft and my toes the complex pen tip--and what is it my body is writting on this vaporious paper of the contnumm--flbrous with the fog and leaves of seagrasscorn? I am writting a screenplay, of course.

FLOT: The Glob of It All.

Love Interest: Various surfaces

Main Character: House Painter

First line: "The Globe Glob of it all usually attracts me, but in this case not."

that strain --or string-- turns a life inside out or outside in, often gutting a conscience like a caribou

BBBBBAAAAAAA Inc.

"My previous position was a crack-measurer at the Institute for Bottom Rresearch--the bracks belongin to volunteers for various studies about the long term effects of sedentary lifestyles of Americans--all day on my knees with the tape measure in back of--I won't go into it--you can probably imagine who would volunteer, needing the twenty dollar honararium--but it did prepare me to weather most any storm..."

"I know how you can retain your dignity/integrity in a morally corrupet world of relativity--infinate versions of every and all moments! Mr. Amuel! I got so lucky! I called and God was in! For once! In! Carl is his name and he said for me to tell you to stop wearing a watch!"

Poet, to reach you I rowed my bike, my speckial bike, my boat bike, up the vetterical--or verticle sea of horizentalness--and now that I am here to yell tell you who you are, the least you could do is offer my a 402k plan

Explore Your Roar Here

"Lost in the blizzard of your own details, I know the look. For five years I was the managing agent for building managing agent who until I invented the post, had not a soul to call when they were being flooded, or their windows broke. It is interesting how fixing your own apartment problems is often not as easy as fixing the problems of others." Kick wrong leg under table.

"The great authentic human need to make, and concentration of heart, as well as intellect, are swiftly conmered in moments of spontaneous jotting or drawing...then the struggle is to be true to power of that initial transcription--and extend it without resorting to any tricks, exploring and learning, rathing than padding..."

you pool (pick) yrs & I'll pool mine & we'll hide both from the fly

the sheer listenability of the recordings of Johnny Hodges, sax player

I get the idea

some days are like a poached egg descending a water slide ubbery and ommo, flecktertating

Have a hot cup of coffee on wh.t feels like my first day on earth after a decades long approach--and just as I am finishing a real estate man doth approach and ask if he might be allowed the privilige of developing a small chunk of me and I say yes--which is how I got mailed in the area of the neck.

Any dog knows what a Law is-- a Law is anything you can't gnaw through.

office cord upue

"It isnecessary to don night goggles to see my lunch of censored material."

Almond sponge cuck socked in park coch

Poet, let me unpack you.

A bridge too near! Dear gosh I wake up andit's right under the bed--right there where the dust notes used to mope a bridge roadway and railings and traffice and suspension spans that tickle my nose, running right across my face and also my middle and between my toes too! Bridge cables flossing the cheese frometwixt me toes! Not a wet dream! The wet far below...a get dream...look how far I've gotten just by sleeping for my usual one and a half hour a night...snot where no notsnot bridges don't snot bridges spread out it's the drippy river fogs where my walls u sed to be, and a hum, and a swaying, and gull yelps, and I'm in the middle of the bridge somewhere, caught like an insect on the suspended cables and flapping my arms and thinking about crawling to the edge of the bed but not daring yet, just resting me nose on the cool slant of the braided cable like I'm--my nose fits so perfectly--it's like I'm some curious but perfect and natural amendementto the bridge's supple figure--oh itfeels wonderful, and gand. Any sedcond I might...be on the other side? A magistrate of a new fate? One I I I I I I dod not quite earn andyet which I still have a right to--that thing earning--that American obsession--being so overwrought with simplicity! Genie! I rub the cable with my noise nose and rub a little more, up, down, along the slant and from the the cable might out of the tender metal rised the bridge Genie and he is wearing a clock cloak of tolls--the coinsglimmering andhe looks at me andhe looks at me some more and he asks: What would you like to tide you over? and I think I get it, but am probably sure I don't, but am cowed by this event to the point of incredible politeness and so I don't ask for a kingdown--no I ask the bridge genie for TOMORROW--just that--and grants my request in the gamey flourish--a scent of old fur andsodden leather andcarbon monoxide--and the hum under the bed fades, and the cable under my nose banhishes, and I try not to feel abandoned but am, of course, I should have just askedfor today... but that seemedrude somehow--imposing--presumptive--or do I mean TOO EASY?

PROSTATE INSURANCE

herbal boar infusion hisseething

SELTZER SISTERS DELIVER AGAIN

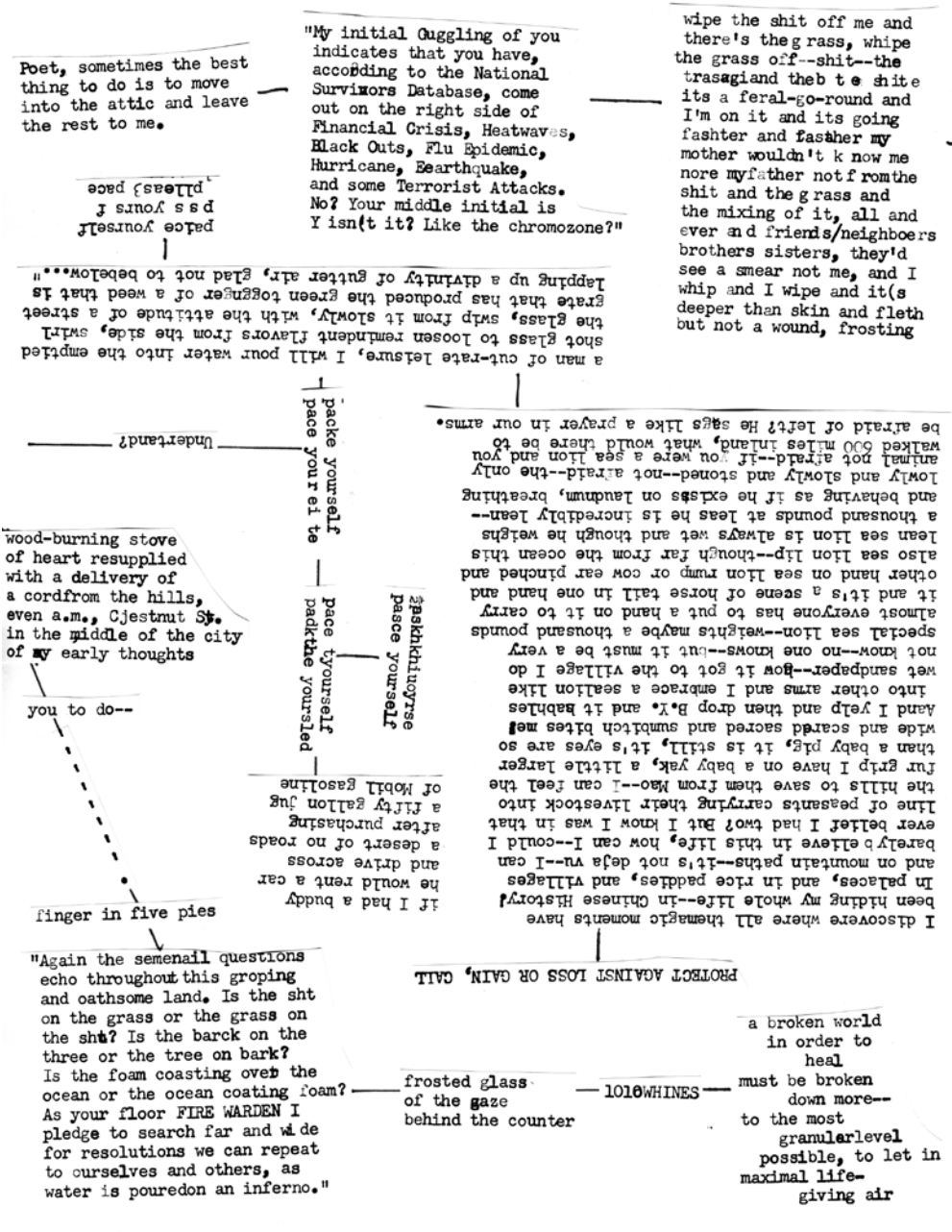
self-deflatism is spawnedby doobt that reconglifigures after each gonoquer-ng to rule again

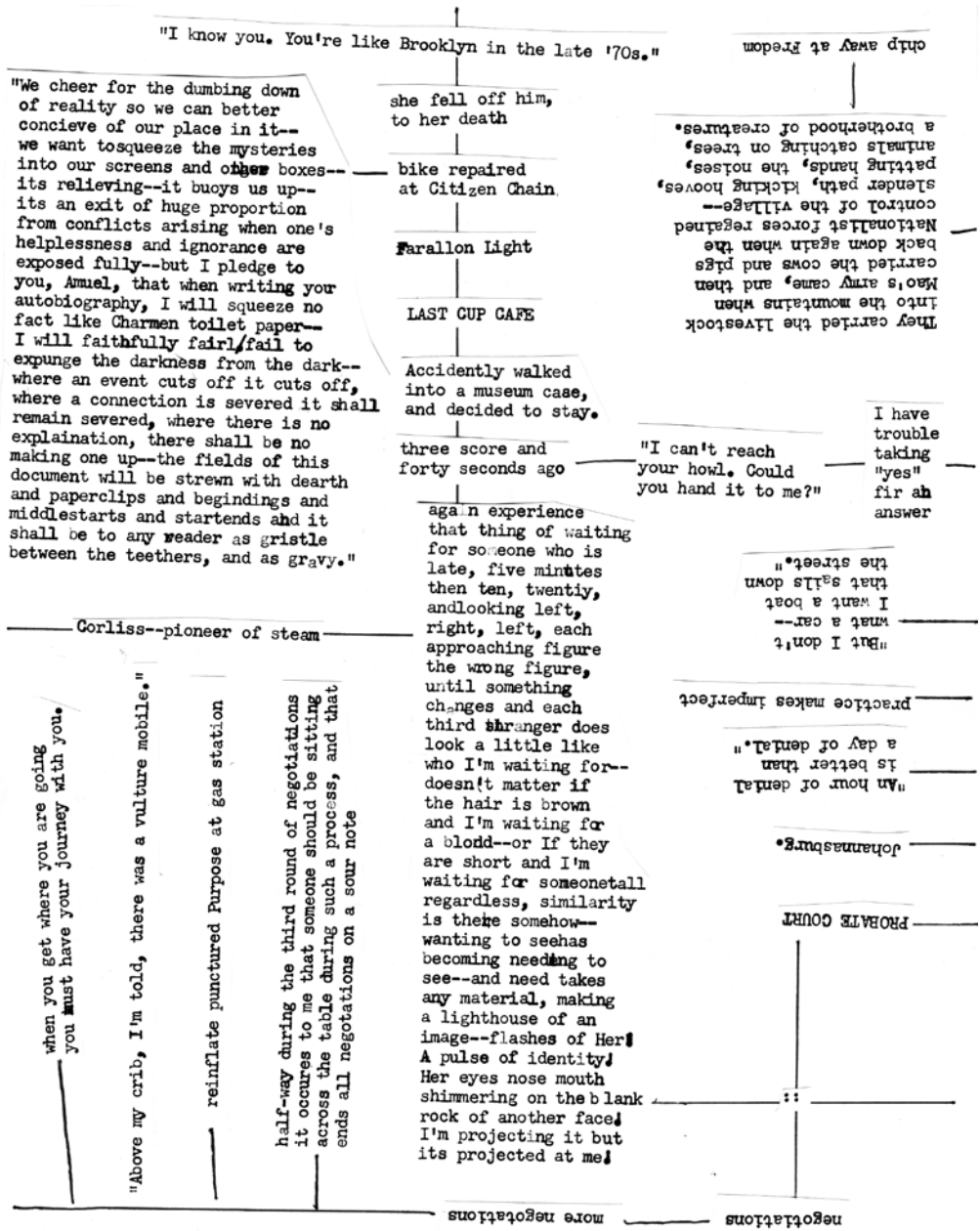
"The Longer your reach to hand a thing over-- the Longer the thing being handed over should be," I say once to many times (twice) for it is, Sir, one of those natural/cosmical laws that trickle so quickly from my beak--and which on repetition sound like the salustrode manravings of a would-be artiste whose heavering b reeth lends oxyghen a repute of a needless affect.

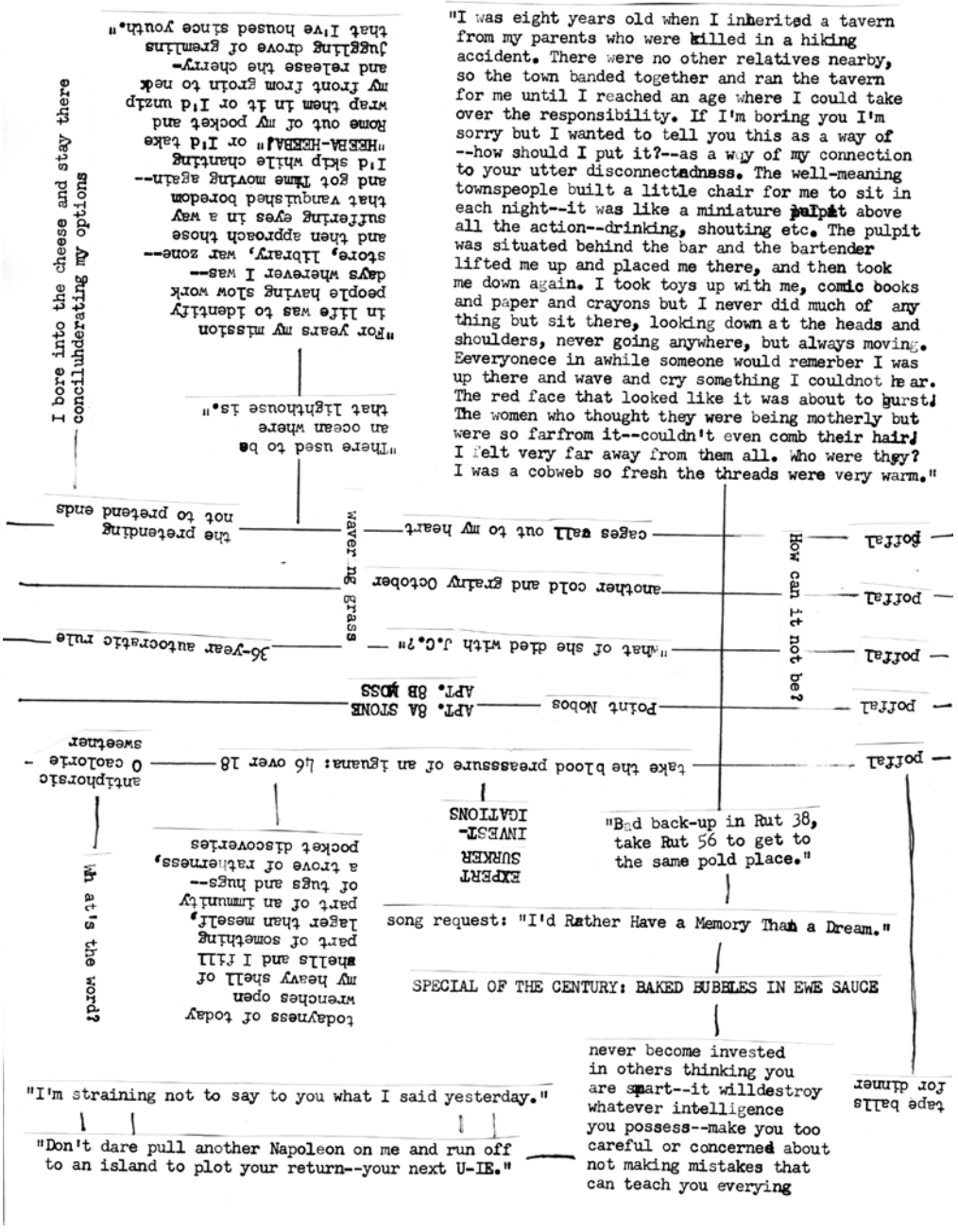
"Back desk. May I help you?"

where there's smoke there's Meyer

no one hurtles Lester Young in his pork pie hat, horn paddling


Poet, sometimes the best thing to do is to move into the attic and leave the rest to me.
"My initial Guggling of you indicates that you have, accobding to the National Survivors Database, come out on the right side of Financial Crisis, Heatwaves, Black Outs, Flu Epidemic, Hurricane, Earthquake, and some Terrorist Attacks. No? Your middle initial is Y isn(t it? Like the chromozone?"
wipe the shit off me and there's the grass, whipe the grass off--shit--the trasagiand theb t e shite its a feral-go-round and I'm on it and its going fashter and fasaher my mother wouldn't k now me nore myfather notfromthe shit and the grass and the mixing of it, all and ever and friends/neighboers brothers sisters, they'd see a smear not me, and I whip and I wipe and it(s deeper than skin and fleth but not a wound, frosting
I discovere where all themagic moments have been hidding my whole life--in Chinese Historyd In palaces, and in rice paddies, and villages and on mountain paths--it's not deja vu--I can barely b eliere in this life, how can I--could I ever belief I had two? But I know I was in that line of peasants carrying their livestock into the hills to save them from Mao--I can feel the fur grip I have on a baby yak, a little larger than a baby pig, it is still, it's eyes are so wide and scared sacred and swmbtch bites me! Aand I yelp and then drop B.Y. and it bashles into other arms and I embrace a sealion like wet sandpaper--how it got to the village I do not know--no one knows--but it must be a very special sea lion--weights maybe a thousand pounds almost everyone has to put a hand on it to carry it and it's a scene of horse tail in one hand and other hand on sea lion rump or cow ear plucked and also sea lion lip--though far from the ocean this lean sea lion is always wet and though he weighs a thousand pounds at leas he is incredibly lean-- and behaving as if he exists on Laudnum, breathing lowly and slowly and stoned--not afraid--the only animal not afraid--if you were a sea lion and you walked 500 miles inland, what would there be to be afraid of left? He sags like a prayer in our arms.
PROTECT AGAINST LOSS OR GAIN, CAIL
a broken world in order to heal must be broken down more-- to the most granularlevel possible, to let in maximal life-giving air
1010WHINES
frosted glass of the gaze behind the counter
"Again the semenail questions echo throughout this groping and oathsome land. Is the sht on the grass or the grass on the sht? Is the barck on the three or the tree on bark? Is the foam coasting over the ocean or the ocean coating foam? As your floor FIRE WARDEN I pledge to search far and wide for resolutions we can repeat to ourselves and others, as water is pouredon an inferno."
finger in five pies
you to do--
wood-burning stove of heart resupplied with a delivery of a cordfrom the hills, even a.m., Cjestnut St. in the middle of the city of my early thoughts
if I had a buddy he would rent a car and drive across a desert of no roads after purchasing a fifty gallon jug of Mobil gasoline
pace yourself
pace tyourself padkthe yourself
packe yourself pace your ei te
Underland?
a man of cut-rate leisure, I will pour water into the emptied shot glass to loosen remdnent flavors from the side, swirl the glass, swip from it slowly, with the attitude of a street grate that has produced the green toggnger of a weed that is lapping up a dirtnty of gutter air, glad not to beheloww..."
pa6oe yourself p s s your f pllease} pace


"I know you. You're like Brooklyn in the late '70s."
"We cheer for the dumbing down of reality so we can better concieve of our place in it-- we want tosqueeze the mysteries into our screens and other boxes-- its relieving--it buoys us up-- its an exit of huge proportion from conflicts arising when one's helplessness and ignorance are exposed fully--but I pledge to you, Amuel, that when writing your autobiography, I will squeeze no fact like Charmen toilet paper-- I will faithfully fairl/fail to expunge the darkness from the dark-- where an event cuts off it cuts off, where a connection is severed it shall remain severed, where there is no explaination, there shall be no making one up--the fields of this document will be strewn with dearth and paperclips and begindings and middlestarts and startends ahd it shall be to any reader as gristle between the teethers, and as gravy."
she fell off him, to her death
bike repaired at Citizen Chain
Farallon Light
LAST CUP CAFE
Accidently walked into a museum case, and decided to stay.
three score and forty seconds ago
"I can't reach your howl. Could you hand it to me?"
I have trouble taking "yes" fir ah answer
again experience that thing of waiting for someone who is late, five minutes then ten, twentiy, andlooking left, right, left, each approaching figure the wrong figure, until something changes and each third stranger does look a little like who I'm waiting for-- doesn't matter if the hair is brown and I'm waiting for a blodd--or If they are short and I'm waiting for someonetall regardless, similarity is there somehow-- wanting to seehas becoming needing to see--and need takes any material, making a lighthouse of an image--flashes of Her! A pulse of identity! Her eyes nose mouth shimmering on the blank rock of another face! I'm projecting it but its projected at me!
Corliss--pioneer of steam
when you get where you are going you must have your journey with you.
"Above my crib, I'm told, there was a vulture mobile."
reinflate punctured Purpose at gas station
half-way during the third round of negotiations it occures to me that someone should be sitting across the table during such a process, and that ends all negotations on a sour note
more negotiations
negotiations
PROBATE COURT
johannasburg.
"An hour of dental is better than a day of dental."
practice makes imperfect
"But I don't want a car-- I want a boat that sails down the street."
They carried the livestock into the mountains when Mao's army came, and then carried the cows and pigs back down again when the Nationallst forces regained control of the village-- slender path, kicking hooves, patting hands, the noises, animals catching on trees, a brotherhood of creatures.
chip away at Freedom


"I was eight years old when I inherited a tavern from my parents who were killed in a hiking accident. There were no other relatives nearby, so the town banded together and ran the tavern for me until I reached an age where I could take over the responsibility. If I'm boring you I'm sorry but I wanted to tell you this as a way of --how should I put it?--as a way of my connection to your utter disconnectedness. The well-meaning townspeople built a little chair for me to sit in each night--it was like a miniature pulpit above all the action--drinking, shouting etc. The pulpit was situated behind the bar and the bartender lifted me up and placed me there, and then took me down again. I took toys up with me, comic books and paper and crayons but I never did much of any thing but sit there, looking down at the heads and shoulders, never going anywhere, but always moving. Eeveryonece in awhile someone would remerber I was up there and wave and cry something I couldnot hear. The red face that looked like it was about to burst. The women who thought they were being motherly but were so farfrom it--couldn't even comb their hair. I felt very far away from them all. Who were they? I was a cobweb so fresh the threads were very warm."
I bore into the cheese and stay there
conclluderating my options
"For years my mission in life was to identify people having slow work days wherever I was-- store, library, war zone-- and then approach those suffering eyes in a way that vanquished boredom and got Time moving again-- I'd skip while chanting "HEEHA-HEEHA!" or I'd take Rome out of my pocket and wrap them in it or I'd unzip my front from groin to neck and release the cherry- juggling drove of gremlins that I've housed since youth."
"There used to be an ocean where that lighthouse is."
How can it not be?
poffal
poffal
poffal
poffal
poffal
cages wall out to my heart
another cold and grainy October
"What of she died with J.C.?"
Point Nobos
APT. 8A STONE
APT. 8B MOSS
36-year autocratic rule
the pretending not to pretend ends
waver ng grass
take the blood preassure of an iguana: 46 over 18
antiphorsic
0 caolorie -
sweetner
tape balls for dinner
"Bad back-up in Rut 38, take Rut 56 to get to the same pold place."
EXPERT SURKER INVEST-IGATIONS
song request: "I'd Rather Have a Memory Than a Dream."
SPECIAL OF THE CENTURY: BAKED BUBBLES IN EWE SAUCE
never become invested in others thinking you are smart--it willdestroy whatever intelligence you possess--make you too careful or concerned about not making mistakes that can teach you everying
"I'm straining not to say to you what I said yesterday."
"Don't dare pull another Napoleon on me and run off to an island to plot your return--your next U-IE."
What's the word?
toadyness of today
wrenches open
my heavy shell of
whells and I fill
part of something
Lager than meself,
part of an immunity
of tugs and hugs--
a trove of ratherness,
pocket discoverles

Again I need a simple little thing I can't find anywhere--this time a thermos--time before a pencil--anyway, I enter stores--these big too expanded stores that once just sold aspirin, for instance, and now sell dinner items and plane tickets and clothing and junk food and shoe inserts and candy and on and on. I ask where a thermos might be and always get directions but they are wrong. I end up outside needing the one little thing, and my frustrationgrows because I'm lugging bags of offal required by my special diet--three pounds of offal a day for the health of my blood and my other thingees--anyway offal is heavy--very heavy--I suppose that is because we each are offal and so appending more offal to your own offal has some compounding effect like bank interest. So I'm dripping sweat and the butcher bags are dripping and half the clerks who approach me slip on my own tail of sweat and just can't turvent--a reeking slappering cramp of a trip neverending--because I need that th ermos badly, must get it, I can't stop looking--have you ever dried to eat three pounds of offal a day? Can't be done. What you've got to do--or what your Holistic Gamtvore Health Advisor will tell you to do is to EAT A POUND AND A HALF OF OFFAL AND DRINK THE REST AFTER MIXING IT IN A BLENDER WITH A LITTLE YOUGURT--so I charge on, looking for a simple thermos, and getting slapped on the back by one clerk who tells me I'm the best thing to entertain the store since the mean who let loose a troupe of gremlins and getting growled at by another clerk who is the kind of vegetarian who walks around carrying a whip--anyhow, beln a poet I do have one thing going for me--I got a lot not (no publisher but a Rosterity and the blood disease and 245 biographers and again Po esterity on my back all the time, holding way over my head my own work that I'll never touch a gain) but I got one thing on my side--A POWER OF SIGHT--and it kicks in and just like I saw in the deepths of my penoul search despair neon reading: PENCILS NOTHING BUT--I see another heavenly scrabble of light: COUNTLESS THERMOSES JUST FOR YOU and I race forward in my barely crawling way--offal on my back and Postertystraddling those bags all the way to the stars--I get there in a half hour and there are the thermoses! walls of 'em--checkered and plaid and plain steel and thermoses for the pets you have and the ones for Vermont and the others for Florida and the one sfor milk and others for ink and the thermoses you can't put liquid in and medical ones that The Five Legged Clerk gets down with a 60 Foot hook, Samuel is his name, and mine being Samuel we have a big laugh and its all fine until I wrap my hand around the hermos and realize to my morror horror it's a Time Capsule for BOILED SECONDS!

"For a moment there, hearing your lovely accent, I thought I was having a life much more exciting than my own."

Dealthly

REMAINS OF A POEM AFTER TIME IS THROUGH WITH IT

POFFAL IS THE

five alarm bonefire

TI ME LI NES OF OU R LIVES :: plitterting roundtites of poffal has some

no fly zone esteblished around my pinkie finger

"You warrant more you."

cotton candy sunset I eat then darkne ss, nausea & you, TUEL AIN'T

--take up ju jutsu
--kick self in face
--hire new instructor
--am told I neednew legs
--fire secon instructior
--hire enemy within
--E.W. likes being on my payroll, it's a change of pace, he laughs and it's a nice gargly old man laugh, it's like I have a third Grandfather, he forgets to torture me very often, and when he does it--does it softly--he knows where is bread is buttered--I am calmer--broke, but more relaxed, no need for ju jutso
--join a writer's group

ham for dessert

Just want to be sure that I have this straight--correct me where I stray from your account--you, Amuel, do not have an account. Any anecdote you relate is in fact a for-sanity's sake--a plugger of the hole where your acdount is lost--lost forever. You do not lie. You plug holes so you are not carried away by the flood of holes staring at you. HOWEVER. You shift hole-plugging anectdotes around for exercise and sometimes cannot resist sticking your hand into a whole and when you do, you find it is a hole with a depth that is entirely flat--an envelope thin hole that extends for miles. That is, only the very tip of each of your fingernails fits in the whole that has swallowed years and years and more of your existence! There's not a plunge, though your chief sensation in life has been one of plunging, and papers scattering, taking with the words that you have breathed out your nostrils, and which have done your mind wrong though they came from there--and you, dearly, direly, want me to close the curtains on the ceiling."

Artwork by Dale Williams

DANIEL POPPICK

JANUARY NOTEBOOK

1.

She deployed her smile out of order.

And it was there I saw her eyes translated into lists.

2.

Parable of Grammar

"I prefer grammar."

"To my poem?"

"Yes, but also to the subject of your poem."

"You prefer grammar as a concept?"

"No. As an experience."

3.

Skin hinges on another's.

These see-sawing seas.

4.

Parable of Reading

"This is my son, Pail."

"Well hello there! You actually look rather sunburned. Have you been at the beach?"

"Yes, in fact he has been at the beach. But I didn't say 'pale.' I said Pail."

"Oh, I'm sorry—you mean as in a small bucket?"

"Yes, like a small bucket one fills with sand and crabs."

"I see now."

"I should hope so. Do you have something against my son?"

"No, I apologize for not understanding before. It's not that I—no. I wouldn't say I hate your son. I wouldn't. It's just that—hear me out on this—understanding his name is so much like reading. And if the question is about reading, and not your son, then the answer is yes, reading is something that I do loathe. Very deeply."

"Well, on that point I couldn't agree with you more. Perhaps you can think of his name like a song. 'Pail.' Like 'sail,' as in the boat—and not the exchange of goods or currency—but with a 'p' instead of an 's.'"

"I'm sorry, but that is a far cry from a song."

5.

Everything you do is a wound.

Just in time for another trip to California.

6.

An artist who lives with a curated "community" of hundreds of spiders in Berlin, harvests their webs, dips them in ink, applies these to paper, sends them to LA, gets rich, repeats. The pieces are surprisingly moving. Can you imagine? So many eyes on him in the privacy of his own home. You have to wonder how he finds the time to masturbate.

7.

LA is heaven, and may be everything I need from heaven. Unlike New York it feels, very occasionally, abandoned. A perfect husk of a perfect husk.

8.

I'd like to write a play about Joshua Tree where the props are the cast.

Dramatis personae: rose quartz, juniper, sage, cacti, a bombed-up tree or three, undead rabbits, unreal light.

Jackrabbits standing in a ring at dawn, staring at one another, standing on their hind legs.

Little eruptions of bleached exoskeletal flowers.

The floor sprayed with a lavender blade-foam.

Flushed ghost cacti twanging a song about the ground.

A voice like a low, weaponized vegetation that throws off flecks of green at certain hours.

Something flickers in a ring around them.

And scene.

9.

One witch, one wood, one Hansel, double Gretel.

10.

Parable of Exodus Rental Car

At noon the woman at Exodus Rental Car calls and tells me she is leaving, and that the car I reserved is not available. I behave with an urgency I usually come to regret, especially when it is successful. Hearing the panic in my voice, she tells me she will wait the extra hour.

When we arrive, I thank her again, profusely. She says it's no problem. "I make things happen," she says with a wink. She takes my driver's license and enters my information into the system. Then she frowns and looks up at me. "Are you Jewish?"

I don't like where this was going. I take a deep breath and smile. "Yes, actually."

She beams. "Me too," she says. I try not to show my shock. "That must be why I'm hooking you up."

11.

To what grotesque lengths would you go in the pursuit of general mystery?

Back to a poem?

Back to New York?

12.

Parable of Balanchine's Neoclassical Ballets

In *Apollo*, the way the dancers click into a single organism, then just as smoothly dissemble and go about their louchely human privacy. Their faces dissolve into their limbs; the body here essentially becomes the face. A gigantic, sneering, zoetropic grave of joy. Calliope stomps off in two directions. Stravinsky follows both of her.

In *Orpheus*, hell looks pretty fun. In this production, some of the dancers come bearing bags on their heads and dicks protruding from their torsos, some come with an expensive and grueling education, but all of them know exactly where they're going.

In *Agon*, I don't remember what happens. But whatever it is, I'm against it.

13.

X wonders if to write about dance is, essentially, to sadden—attempting to communicate in language what even the body cannot. A double failure. Y wonders why when she goes to the ballet someone always falls. Is it her fault?

For X, a novelist who trained in dance, ballet might be the highest form of art. "What these people can do with their bodies is a miracle. It moves me to tears." For Y, a poet who trained more intensely, ballet is hardly art at all. "It's just repetition. Its nothingness is what I loved."

14.

This trio of Italians is either talking about dissolving their bimonthly orgy or collectively describing an extraordinarily beautiful lighthouse.

15.

"Disease isn't good or bad—it's information."

Good information. Bad news.

16.

Everyone knows what a baby comes out of. What we haven't considered is: what does a baby go *in*?

17.

Not free to be not me.

The preening air freezes up.

18.

Older, slower, sadder, more cognitively obtuse, and better than ever.

19.

Dancers are luckier than poets. All dancers have to do is interview the floor.

20.

Each word a shovelful of dirt tossed on a coffin.

His words clacked together like small stones.

READING *THE BELL JAR*

When Esther Greenwood
is almost raped, why
can't she connect
what happened
to her downward
spiral from throwing

designer clothes
off the hotel
balcony to her
unwashed hair, electro-
shock therapy

and worse?
"Slut," the guy kept
saying. "Slut slut slut,
where's my
diamond, Slut?"

*

IN THE EVERGLADES

It rained all day.
Then, I read your poetry.

I lied twice.
First, when I told
you I wasn't afraid of rain
and then when I put
it in the poem. So, I
unfolded the piece
of paper where
the poem was and wrote
a true story: eight or ten
vultures on top
of a Corolla pecking at
a blue tarp the Everglades
National Park
provided their visitors.

I texted Alex, *vultures*
are the bird form of roaches.

NATIONAL PARK

My name is Esther
Greenwood. Sometimes,
I get a bad idea

and I follow
through on it. That's
the difference between me

and other people. Other
people get distracted by
roasting a chicken or
watching TV,
but I am carnal.

I know the difference
between killing
yourself and stepping
down the spiral
staircase into the cellar
of the self, that really

In 6th grade science class
there was a boy who

liked to light the hair
of girls on fire.
The science

teacher laughed *ha ha ha*
(she didn't believe us

when we told her)
ha ha ha
until the smell

of Heidi's burnt
braid mixed with the
chalk

powder that fell off
the enormous grave-
green board.

Then, one of them
looked at me.

"There were vultures
everywhere, in the
swimming pool
vomiting, shitting,
blood blood blood.
It was gross," said Mrs.
Delamo who bought
a $700K vacation
home in West Palm
where the birds invaded.
It wouldn't stop looking.
All the other birds
were pecking away
at the blue tarp to get
to the windshield wipers,
which, apparently, gives
off the scent of a carcass
when the plastic melts in
the sun. "Save me save me
save me," I said to the
vulture, but it
wouldn't look away.

meaty, stringy place
wrapped in shadows,
booming with an arterial
pulse so that if you
were to kill it, it
would mean something.

Now, look at me.
Look at the mirror
I'm holding up.
You can smash it.
There's another face
behind it, and another
one behind that. Just like

stars, they are endless
and stretch obliviously
in their cold calculations.

It is Christmas Eve,
so go ahead, smash it.
I'm sure someone
out there
is in love with me.

AND THE DAYS

Off the gridded
landscape, unraveling
palindromes—
thinking
of your dirty apart-
ment, box
of Special K [ripped
open on the ironing
board—[they
flee
at once in homophonic
substitutions and [I
cultivate red chili
peppers, laid
the harvest on
the lines between
plaintext and
[ciphers
and glowed
forensically. You
could see the graves

SHALL BE FILLED

[Speechless
couplets, [what
[did
you
make of
the
morning
inside the work-
flow]
[flow
of the unreal]
follows
[after you
slept
all the way
through]
[the typography of
a dream
of stars in-
side the teleported body
of each word]

WITH MUSIC

Like imprisoning]
a pressing need],
you long to die]
deeper
than the sea
with waves
unorganized], passed
over, rhapsodic in ion,
rhizome. One or
two] particles
crystalize
in the shrubs. [She
walked towards]
the mountain; she
believed it would
form] a dream,
a dream] form
engulfed [by crypts

stretch from sky
to tears in correct
numerical
sequence. [Drone
footage, denatured,
the great eyeball
of machine learning
to think as an
unblinking predator,
as off-
on patterns [in
the contaminated
atmosphere—O O. [O
lovely, lovely bridge!

footage
you transpose
or transcribe?

I go to the coffee
shop with
my cyclonic hair]
aleph tied
in a knot],
lovely with a scrunchie
and I am happy
and order
an espresso
and when the vulture
lands on
the grate
across from

my round table,
it becomes
a lover, an
eclipse, in excess
of spirit
"You feast on
the dead," I say

It pulls
a tendon out
of the carcass
with its curved beak

"No," he says,
"that's what poets do"

NATHAN JEFFERSON

Outbound

So look at this: SEAN shipping analysis and updates. Published monthly, professional looking and glossy—take it, see—and distributed free of charge to a network of participating patrons.

Uh-huh.

Like an industry update thing, everyone pitches in some money to the org that runs it, and in exchange, they all get updates, ads, promotions, whatever. And so look at the table of contents in this one—

Reinsurance and the 2019 Typhoon Season, port communications technology upgrades—good stuff.

Great stuff. But okay, look, page 45, they have like a clips thing, like roundups, brief bits—

Yeah—

And so here, look here: new dredging project gets funded, change of leadership in the whatever governing body, labor crunch in Singapore port due to dockworkers disappearing by stepping through an unknown and indescribable void. Look! Like it's almost incidental, that's the—

Yeah.

No, look at it! Two day laborers round a container block in the yards, see something, come over and duck through it, and they're gone. Perfectly perpendicular to the one security camera covering the area so authorities and the firm have no idea what exactly's up or what they saw, but over the next hour, almost three dozen people—three dozen!—come through, see this, step through. Says it's just low enough that the taller workers have to duck their heads. Largest group was nine guys single file. No word as to whether they hesitated or reacted in any way upon seeing the gap…. After about 20 minutes somebody makes a sweep of the yard to see why the headcount's off, can't find anyone. Checks the cameras and then they see what's been happening, but by the time security gets over there, there's nothing.

Yeah.

§

So. Does that not do—what's your reaction here? Explain it to me.

Nonplussed.

Nonplussed? Zero, nothing—pulse not quickening a bit? Not even, like, a spark of curiosity—

It happens.

It happens?

It happens. Not to be…I'm really not trying to be condescending, but it happens. Extremely human event and reaction.

What?

I told you I used to work in logistics, right? Back before—

Yes, but what do you mean this is a normal—

It happens. Happened before and it'll happen again. Last I worked on directly was six years ago, a guy…a trucker was driving through Kansas, nowhere land, just like miles and miles of fields of nothing, taking produce from the Central Valley to Chicago. Stopped for gas and coffee at a service center in west Kansas, and when he pulled out, he noticed that one of the guys working at the truck stop was walking behind his truck, keeping pace such that he stayed a constant size in the mirror.

I—what?

Hard to explain, but exactly what it sounds like. There's video on these rigs, right, and we saw a guy come out of this station behind the eighteen-wheeler, walking with just impossible—you know seven-league boots? Like the stories?

No? What's—

It's a kind of magical shoe that comes up a bunch in folktales, shoes that allow you to break time and space and take seven leagues with each step.

Okay—

Clearly impossible, right, fairytales. But that was the only way to describe what these were. The trucker pulls out of the station, accelerates up to the 70 mph limit for his rig, and this guy—some random truck stop worker, lived alone, never married—stayed walking a few lengths behind him at a speed that kept him a constant size in the mirror and the rearview camera. Unhurried

and unbothered, just like ambling along, but at impossible distance with each stride. The driver realized what was up pretty quickly and called it in, but a few moments later, the guy breaks off perpendicular to the road and that's the last anybody ever sees of him. Last clip on the rearview cam is a mid-thirties guy just walking away at speeds…it doesn't make physical sense unless he's like forty feet tall, he just goes off into the fields and he's gone. We checked the closest towns, satellite data—nothing. Never seen or heard from again.

§

And…what? How is this not, like, the single biggest news story ever—

That's not news.

That is absolutely—

It's not newsworthy. It's very human. It got written up in a trucking periodical; something about funny little interactions on the road. Like a little blurb in the middle of a larger story, not even the ones in the back that are meant to be one of the two pages people actually read in these things.

But someone vanished in the most amazing way imaginable! That is literally what all news is based on, hearing about other people's misfortunes—

Misfortunes? Did he die? Was he hurt?

I mean, I assume he—or all these people—they aren't seen again, are they?

Where'd I say he died? Where'd I say any of these people died?

Do you know?

I don't know. He went somewhere; nobody knows where. It happens.

Stop saying it happens—

You're new. You haven't seen it yet, or maybe you have and just didn't know. It happens.

§

But I still don't understand—

Human and understandable and unremarkable.

It is not—

Yes, it is. Happens all the time. Not regular but very much not unusual; it's on the same spectrum as watching somebody cry in public. Not news. Just people being people. That's why they only ever come up in trade mags, industry-specific forums, breakroom gossip…. They're mildly interesting only to the kind of people who meticulously track and think about movements of any kind for a living. Resource minimization, right? There's potential there, if you can understand it. But even then—I'm sorry if I came off as blasé. But I've seen it before and you will again, I promise. They almost never stick.

§

Have any ever—

Yeah, once. Close by where I was, actually, a decent chunk of a small city in the valley went…you'd see people not fly but go up. I saw it in person.

Go up?

Up. Got a writeup in an aviation regulator report, two paragraphs among thousands of pages in a yearly review…discussing who, if anyone, would be subject to fines for violation of airspace. Only lasted a week; rumor was the air force was about to start investigating.

Were they flying?

Blasting off. Team Rocket–style—I'm serious, don't laugh—hurtling off. Flight isn't human, and these things are always extremely human, humans…just human beings. Hence the lack of attention. Flight would've been news, but this was people gathering themselves and going up with without a moment's notice; something painful. Any bystander could tell it hurt. You'd see someone brace themselves and kind of begin to vocalize something—not really a scream, the one I heard was like…an exertion, and then up into the sky.

Just gone, like that?

They didn't try to resist or make any panicked moves once ascending, but then again, maybe they wouldn't be able to because of the speed. They seemed alive, though, all keeping a stiff posture.

Like the rocketeer: at attention, arms straight down by sides, legs locked, facing forward…or maybe something else was keeping them rigid. We couldn't know. Tracking was difficult; missile defense systems weren't designed to handle projectiles that small and fast. For sure, somewhere beyond the atmosphere. A few planes and weather satellites captured footage of people breaking through the stratosphere, clothes fraying to nothing in the cold. Best response was to treat it like a weather system and tell planes to give the town a wide berth until they were sure it was over.

And you saw one?

We had a project out there. I was walking the long way back from the market one day…out on my break, not going anywhere, just around the block because I didn't have to be back yet, and I saw something across the street from the corner of my eye. Turned and in a split second followed everyone's upturned faces up to the guy going up into the sky. He had on a red sweatshirt and the bottom of his shoes were still white. Must've been brand new, like bought within the past couple days: no time to gather dirt. It was like a dozen of us around, all looking up shading our eyes in silence. And then we lost him in the scattered clouds, and a couple seconds later, that was that. I went back to work.

Did you find out who it was?

Nah. I probably could've if I'd tried, but I didn't see the point. It happens.

§

But you think about them sometimes.

Well. Yeah.

More often than sometimes.

Like I said, they're mostly of interest to people who spend all day thinking about logistical problems. But even they can't really get into it. Logistics is about sending a thing somewhere else to be consumed—a useful and sometimes cruel way to think about flows, but a way that offers a consistent logic all its own. Even that falls apart here, though, because we have no idea where they go. I do wonder sometimes…it's funny. Back when that was my job, I'd

think about a lot of things, but now that I'm away from it all, I just wonder where they go. Like those people, up through the sky—

Where did they go, do you think?

The truth? I think they go up into the sun. I think it's a conscious decision. Zero proof or anything beyond a gut feeling, but I think they all knew. Can't say I haven't thought about it myself sometimes. Just at arm's length up there, right? Just a leap away…difficult and painful but doable when you have a goal in mind. People make that decision every single day, y'know?

It happens.

CHRISTOPHER RANDALL

from WILTED. SALTED. COVERED IN JAM.

I let blank noise make the stage without grieving;
tie it to something flat.

I heard a hard clamour get all the way hard at a talk, the fat and seed block to be fed on.

The fat and seed block to be fed on is a woolly transference
from one gold to another.

This frown, is it the talk of taper?
High bones and skin dips in a clay lot for sale.

Cloth on a mesa. Bunch it up with a
loose knot.

This turn has mold I'll adduce
as my interest.

Stare at strings, hung. In them. Wait for a breeze. Ornament dampered to puff by a nozzle trained on my construction.

CHARLES ALTIERI

The Genius of Robert Hass: What *Summer Snow* Accomplishes

Most writers are content to complete strong individual poems. With Robert Hass the situation has always been different. He continually asks what overall dispositions he can establish that might be well-suited to the work poetry can perform in his particular epoch. With his latest collection, *Summer Snow* (2020), this project seems to deepen.[1] Many of the poems try to elaborate attitudes and stances that enable coming to terms with how fully death can pervade the imagination of the living, especially when one has reached eighty years of age. And so these poems turn from dramatic situations to grammatical ones, trying to establish how matters of syntax, style, structure, and address can enhance poetry's powers to help cope with our pressing awareness of mortality and of a brutality perhaps spawned in part by not knowing how to deal with that mortality. Here the grammatical and the ecological cooperate to sustain a dialogue among possible resources that we might deploy to continue to will our conscious lives rather than view self-consciousness as essentially an instrument for registering the force of events that diminish our capacities for attention and for active caring.

This is to say that Hass is not your typical poet fostering modes of thinking that honor the interrelatedness of phenomena called for by ecological concerns. He is acutely aware of how the natural world establishes what we could call conversations among elemental forces. But unlike most ecological poets, he also develops a more abstract, self-reflexive level where the very conditions for experiencing must be seen as learning from one another. This commitment to hearing how an immense variety of poetic styles and voices might speak in collusion with each other makes poetry central to living a good life, since it is the self-conscious deployment of sound, syntax, and figure that most fully characterize how attitudes can intimately make vital what otherwise might merely be encountered.

Summer Snow functions as a coherent catalog of the ways poetry can happen in our lives, so that we learn to listen better and to empathize with what bears listening to, especially in relation to dealing with the pains of the deaths of those to whom one feels close. In Hass's poems, death proves painfully challenging to conventional lyrical strategies because these texts cannot rest in conventional lyric postures, celebrating how imagination can come to terms with oppressive features of living. Instead, the problem of finding a lyrical voice that we can trust to reflect on what is involved in dying forces Hass to seek lyric consolation in extremely intimate adjustments to life. These adjustments have to locate satisfaction, if not quite pleasure, in states that remain haunted by the incompleteness of such pleasure. I am tempted to say that in order to read this book with the pleasure it can produce, one has to be willing to enter an emotional theater very different from the expectations created by epiphanic lyrical resolutions, one of whose major practitioners had been Robert Hass.

Because I think these emotions are so distinctive, I will have to spend almost all of my time on sheer exposition attempting to attune my thinking to these unique literary events. The priorities of Hass's book are clearest in what is highlighted by its five-part structure. The first part moves quickly through a range of situations typical for Hass that reaches a climax in a long, multifaceted elegiac poem dealing with the poet's realizations of how death and dying have come to pervade his awareness of virtually every stage of life. The second part of the volume begins, "We live on a coastal hill with a view west onto a bay, a mountain, a rust-gold bridge, and the sea beyond them" (37). Perhaps that is all that need be said for the reader to begin to focus on the ways that various aspects of life in nature produce states of consciousness allowing a comprehensive picture of the joys possible from accepting who and where we are as we attempt to endure. The two elements of rain and light interact in almost every poem.

If we go by the opening poem of the third section, anaphorically titled "Los Angeles: An Analysis," we can say that in this section Hass seems to emphasize the grammatical in relation to the ecological, probably because the focus is on how language might formulate values capable of dealing with a pervasive and painful sense of mortality. And the fourth section seems a strange experiment in notation that essentially reports on social facts and pressures demanding imaginative

commitment if we are to avoid disaster. Here it seems that sheer fact is crucial because that is the only thing that can escape the mendacities of cultural life and the temptations to righteousness of those who oppose the dominant society. Finally a fifth section introduces a different mode of sociality based on reading and familiarity. Here Hass can combine the grammatical with the ecological because of what he learns from his reading. Memories, texts, and strategies are ecological features that float free in the world when people die, yet need not fade entirely from being present in various ways. So in this last section Hass invokes a time provided by reading where death and life are more intricately and intimately connected than in other arenas of experience. This complex temporality is achieved largely by elegies that are not quite elegies because conversations with the dead continue to shape Hass's understanding of the living.

I.

All of these sections have superb poems in them, such as "To Be Accompanied by Flute and Zither," "Abbott's Lagoon: October," "A Person Should," "Los Angeles: An Analysis," "Large Bouquet of Summer Flowers, or Allegory of the Imagination," "Dancing," and "The Creech Notebook." But the second and the third sections show Hass at his typical high level, and I am still mystified about how to appreciate part four. So I will focus on what seem to be distinctive achievements, even for Hass, in some of the poems in the opening and the closing sections. These poems are brilliant performances in themselves and establish significant imaginative value for how they relate to each other.

The opening four poems in the volume establish the bare bones for making us aware of the various ways poetry opens up aspects of the world for attention and for appreciation of what art can do to intensify this attention. "First Poem" is not just a tautological title. Indeed it is in prose, hence in acts of sheer attention where poetry probably begins. Or, better, it seems that the first poem becomes the interplay of prose with dream as homage to what is probably the original source of poetry's power. Poetry's affinities with dreams and dreaming provide resources for satisfying interventions in otherwise tense social situations. The second poem then turns to a more specific

commitment of poetry. It calls attention to how various effects of light dramatize features of the external world, so as to give them significant metaphorical extensions. Light comes to mediate between the worlds of dreaming and recognizing fact.

Then "Nature Notes in the Morning" seems to fuse with the first poem by stressing the synthesis of dreamlike states with the modes of attention to the actual world that they can elaborate. Two basic "notes" are emphasized—the notes by which the morning communicates its own fullness and the notes by which we hear the poetry celebrating how the sounds of the morning manifest a version of "just distribution theory," with another evocative pun on "just" as "merely" and as an adequate account of the "symmetry" of the "lodgepoles," as well as the relation between light and painted color. Once the "I" comes into this poem as active searcher, the focus shifts to a range of human concerns for finding "just" notes in nature. There are two principal agents here, both eager to explore how art can not only observe but also participate in the work light performs. One human context is the kinds of concerns haiku poets bring to the world. The other context fleshes out the cooperative relation between paint and natural light by elaborating advice given to Hass by a German art instructor ("long dead") who taught him what Cézanne brought to the craft of painting. By the end, when the poem returns to nature, we are invited to ask what these human presences have contributed to the notes established by the morning:

> The old art historian. I was going on
> About Cézanne and he took me into the studio
> And took down four tubes of shades of green
> And stood me in front of an easel with a brush
> And said, "Now, put those on paper
> In small rectangular daubs so that they shimmer,
> And until you can do that, I say this
> In all friendship, shut up about Cézanne."
> […]
> He [the professor] must be long dead.
>
> Sierra morning.
> Bright sun. No wind,
> So that stirring in the cottonwood
> Must be a warbler. (5)

The contribution of haiku is immediately visible in the concern for reconciling nature and art. But I think the reference to the instructor's death also provides the context for the longing to find some kind of life within the silence, perhaps a life that must be dreamt into existence. Here reference to concrete objects suffices for that process, but perhaps only because the artifice of leaving so much out is carefully correlated with the artifice of making this confident closing imaginative leap. It is crucial, and will be even more crucial, to recognize that nature can seem something more than the details given by appearance. Nature manifests itself primarily as a general state that calls for a sense of the whole, a sense that will become increasingly necessary as the presence of death gets more pervasive. Implicit here is also the fear that the typical contemporary stress on resolving epiphanic images will suffice for poets' responses to what nature can afford spirit. In contrast, this poem's sense of nature depends on an act of mind that echoes the conclusion of Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." But now it is not a river that is moving as spring takes hold. Rather, Hass's poem is more abstract: the "must" refers not to an inference drawn from nature's processes but to the mind's processes of confident discovery. We might even say that, considered in relationship to the poem's awareness of death, the poem's concreteness now brings a presence out of the silence.

II.

The dramatic core of the book soon follows in the poems that conclude the first section and require all the rest. This is the book of a sensitive eighty-year-old man observing a world gone mad, so there is death in every conceivable corner of life. How can you not lie about this condition yet still find attitudes that do not embarrass you as you take consolation in lyric sensibility? The task will certainly involve combining the resources of dream with what can be established by attention to how light determines appearances.

The prose poem "Patches of Snow in July" introduces the sequence. Prose enables the swift movement of realistic narrative characterizing how a late cold snap in the Sierra brings about a remarkable rush of exuberant display, both in nature and in the poet's penchant for metaphoric descriptions of what in that scene has the

power to undo him. That undoing, that mode of awakening, stems from a sense of "life in its exuberance rushing straight uphill toward death."

Each of the following sections describes how death disrupts a particular segment of human life. And each presents a different stylistic strategy for dealing with the tragic results. "Death in Infancy" brilliantly recognizes how little one can say about such situations. One can only hope to imagine a kind of peace in relation to the inconsolable. The poetry here is all in not imagining one can provide wisdom, and in the way the wish for sleep becomes a palliative—both for the baby and for the parents, albeit in quite different registers.

There is more to say, and more hope of consolation, in having poetry engage the life of one who died in childhood. And for Hass, the more there is to say, the more the demand for subtlety. The poem concentrates on the young boy's curiosity and love of explaining what he found. At least being witness to this rendering of pleasure survives in memory, as if such desire cannot die for its observers even if the desire has to be distributed between past and present tenses. That need for the two tenses is perhaps all one has to know in order to understand the condition of grieving involved in the child's death. Memory in this book becomes less recall of the past than extension of the present as a complex condition of living well.

"Death in Adolescence" seems to require two framing devices. First, because the longer the life, the richer the knowledge of the person's behaviors, thinking about the deaths requires considerable efforts to place them in a context of natural processes. And this thinking requires full metaphoric contextualization, especially in terms of where one can stand in relation to the combinations of pleasure and pathos that establish contesting modes of response. So the poem runs through a variety of extended figures and remembered scenes in the effort to find "a place to stand," to see clearly what the deaths involve. The final figure involves a contrast between two kinds of actors, one young and one old, as possible mediators of the complex feelings involved:

> What doesn't stand for them [seasons]
> is what's old, worn down, used up. Though what's old
> and skilled, the skills almost unconsciously absorbed
> so that the pleasure of them also is almost unconscious,

may be a place to stand to see them. Not the point of view
of the young actor whose agent calls before the interview
to remind him not to comb his hair.
[…]
Before his teeth cleaning appointment, before his lunch
with his step-daughter to try again to straighten out
their misunderstanding on the phone, before he arrives
at the theater and does his stretches and takes a lozenge
for his throat, before he begins his makeup that will run
with his sweat some five hours later when he hurls himself
on stage howling "Never, never, never, never, never!" (15)

The young actor is too full of himself and the immediacy of the passion he must perform. The old actor, in contrast, manages to deepen the substance of his art by its contrast with the routines of life that flesh out all that can be entailed in his eventually proclaiming Lear's "Never, never, never, never, never." The repeated "never" now refers both to a passionate unwillingness to die and an equally intense refusal of his life to be summed up by his daily chores. This actor has enough experience of living a life beyond those chores to refuse to succumb to despair. And he has enough experience of dying to recognize that the pain never goes away, in large part because the death never seems sufficiently justified by the actual events shaping the life. One has to dream of resistance to fact while accepting the authority of some greater power capable of imposing a sense of death within life that is a constant source of rage.

The next three poems make me exclaim that I had not known death could come alive in such various ways, all as preparation for a great prose poem, "Second Person," that makes explicit the depth and intensity of the dialogues with oneself made necessary by all these various intensities. The second and third of these poems seem especially interesting formal renderings of how the pain from witnessing death can be woven into the appreciation of the intricacy of what life offers. "Planh or Dirge for the Ones Who Die in Their Thirties" offers formal repetition which transforms silence before the power of death into a deep space where memory seems to coincide with repetition in nature. The refrain fills two of the three lines in each stanza, each time alternating the sequence of two lines, "It's summer on the pond" and "There's a green wind on the pond," each following a one-line mention of death. The final stanza adds a simple repetition:

We threw white roses in the grave.
There's a green wind on the pond.
It's summer on the pond.
It's summer on the pond. (20)

There is no voicing about death—only the gesture of throwing white roses in the grave and the reference to details about the pond. The pond becomes a parallel to the grave. Yet our reading will be incomplete if we fail to characterize the effect of the repetition and its capacity to suggest interpretations of throwing white roses into the grave. The first statement of summer on the pond seems to me to function primarily as contrast to the grave. But what of the second statement? It seems that the summer on the pond takes on a kind of perpetuity. It is always summer on the pond in memory. Yet that summer is not quite the season of festivity. Rather, summer becomes a surprising ripeness that has to include how one can feel in throwing the flowers—honoring what we have to be silent about in nature's ways.

"Harvest: Those Who Die Early in Their Middle Years" takes up another kind of song rhythm tied to music accompanying harvest processes, specifically the harvesting of barley that is fundamental to Basho and his legacy. Here there is an implicit and suggestive contrast between metaphoric and juxtapositional figuration. The metaphor of death as a kind of harvesting seems efficient but tired. Yet the poem works a beautiful surprise: after a catalog of friends dying, the poem turns to an extended scene of a disciple of Basho thinking of his master living where the farmers planted barley. The consciousness of someone who died one hundred years ago provides substantial testimony to what can remain of the artists whom Hass is memorializing. But the reaping of barley involves a much more capacious history, leading to American and to English poets until the chain stops with "those lines of Tennyson that came to the poet / as a verbal music when he was out walking / in Derbyshire: It was *only*, he wrote, *reapers, reaping early in among the beaded barley*" (22). The alliteration and assonance here pays homage to Tennyson, to the craft ideals of all the poets mentioned, and to the ways pain may be inseparable from our capacity to feel the fleeting sense of delighted surprise that brightens gloom without necessarily reducing it.

All this pain demands self-reflection. This occurs after the catalog of deaths in the marvelous "Second Person," a work that crosses the

form of the prose poem with one-, two-, or three-line stanzas in order to create something like a conventional elegy that is unconventional in many respects. The central figure is a second-person address by the author to himself—so divided is he by conflicting emotions and so eager is he to establish what inner dialogue might convey as an elegiac mode.[2] But the lack of an article in the title suggests also an unbridgeable distance between the "I" and this second person, who simply cannot reconcile himself to the innocence of direct first-person agency.

The most striking feature of this poem is the use of extended sentences to explore the complexities of shaping a single attitude that can embrace what the death of others involves for the self. The poet is not so melodramatic as to say this, but the feeling of discomfort pervading an ordinary life is pronounced and deeply disturbing, even as he never lets fear govern any action. Perhaps one could say that the fear of succumbing to this fear is what governs every action.

This hypothesis makes sense of the way the poem's self-division into speaker and audience becomes increasingly more intense, as if the subject were working extremely hard to fix himself objectively without exaggeration or melodrama—one reason for the extended sentences. This is how the ten-plus-stanza sentence I refer to begins:

> You could have said, "That summer
>
> After my friend had shot herself," or "That summer after his friend had shot herself," but it was you who walked the street those mornings,
>
> Wavering a bit among the grammatical propositions as you woke to the early summer coolness in the air,
>
> You studying the piles of fruit in the little markets and the gilded Empire sewing chairs in the antique shops (25)

The sentence then moves to the figure of death attending the entire scene, so that shopping in Paris seems charged with a significance the speaker half hopes he could escape. Every expression seems a little more revealing and less emotionally clear than perhaps it could be or should be:

You were in that sort of neighborhood
and wondered briefly how the day

Might have been different, been colored differently, were the women at the wagon old and Moroccan with dark brown, well-worn hands

And not a Sorbonne graduate in pigtails (26)

Who can he become in relation to the text he is working on or the city that tempts him with distractions?

The next sentence is even longer (almost seventeen stanzas) because the social diversity in Paris now reminds him of social injustice in the US, then leads into an extended meditation correlating intimate feelings of fear with the overall condition of social unfairness intensified by the setting of his memorial speech:

And felt mildly sick, thinking about the courtesies of death and the sense of propriety or the predatory lunge with which it distributed its presence in the world, social class

By social class, war zone by war zone, brutal here, gentle there, as if you were being wakened again by and to an unfairness

As labyrinthine as the city itself, whose districts […] you wandered in the afternoons (27)

It is no wonder that by the ending of this list of adjacencies even the most innocent and gracious of gestures is treated cautiously in order to defend the speaker from the fears and injustice all around him. It is very rare in poetry to have a form of lyric release based on so simple yet all-encompassing an effort to deny fear while being aware that the situation could be worse were the speaker not of a socially comfortable class. He cannot quite resist or quite enjoy this social status. Eventually the poem allows a return to pleasure, but that allowance is still framed by a contrasting awareness of how even these pleasures may be dwelling places for memories of what dying involves:

And by eight o'clock—you had begun living in time—when you came back to the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés,

And you would sit at one of the outdoor tables and the proprietor would set down in front of you, with a delicate glassy sound,

A chilled glass of Lillet, you would remind yourself that the proprietor was not death,

Nor was the Lillet, nor the handsome couple at the next table ordering grilled river fish. (28)

It is important to see that this manifest technical achievement seems necessary to get at such elemental fear and self-division, no matter how effortless it seems. Notice especially two features here: the attention to the "delicate glassy sound," which brings more senses into play for what turns out to be a wary but positive experience, and the fact that even the momentary escape from fear of death seems to have to be cast in three negatives.

III.

The second section of the volume offers more conventional Hass poems where death seems to be something that can enter the domestic order if one approaches it with a full ecological consciousness. Neither death nor life could be so compelling were they not so intimately linked. As I have suggested, the third and fourth sections take up different perspectives, attempting to incorporate what might be threatening to such interrelationships. But for the volume as a whole, this sense of interrelationship cannot suffice because it is insufficiently attuned to two distinctively human traits brought to the fore by the constant consciousness of the fragility of life. Both rely on imagination's capacity to correlate past, present, and future. One is the possibility of memory, especially memory fostered by reading, which is a kind of giving life to the dead. And the second is the possibility of actually learning from the dead by seeking out the sources of their powers to present lively and intellectually acute applications of their craft, applications which become a heritage of techne that the serious writer can call upon in the creation of new possibilities for the imagination.[3] So there is a final section of the book in which the record of reading and listening provides living examples reaching out to accommodate and interpret pervasive pain by opening the mind

to the possible presences of the past and by actively demonstrating how that recovery of the past can inform one's writing in the present.

This is why Hass is careful to have the closing section of his book be largely about the "how" of poetry's shapings. By the end of *Summer Snow* the dead confer both powers and obligations on the living. But these structural features have not been noticed by reviewers, for whom providing an adequate account of this book is almost impossible given the way Hass demands slow time and expansive attention to subtleties not available to those on deadlines. Take the case of the opening poem of the final section, "What the Modernists Wrote About: An Informal Survey." Dan Chiasson notes the superficiality of the content (although he praises the poem's banalities about Wallace Stevens).[4] He does not register the significance of the careful, quiet frame that the title provides; nor does he recognize how all the poets sound roughly the same here, differing only in their choice of subject matter. If you choose attention to what the modernists write about, you are likely to come up with something close to the list the poem provides. But you are also likely to miss the majesty and acuteness of vision that the manner of their writing establishes. And you are likely to treat modernism as just another literary movement whose time is past. If the poet is willing to devote a rather lengthy poem to the limitations of reading for content, this act of self-effacement can set the stage for the following poems that demonstrate how one learns from other poets to supplement matter with manner. The inescapable matter is "all of us die"; the manner tells how we find dispositions for handling the inevitable.

Ultimately these acts of homage matter primarily because the opening poems make such demands on style to compose attitudes by which to face the ways that death seems to pervade much of life. The final poems are the major site for becoming self-conscious about where one can find a variety of resources for meeting those demands. The second poem in the section engages a writer's struggles with a southern heritage in relation to a will to style that makes her appreciate two things: how one can continue to write one's way into the real, and how one can counter the narcissism of one's will by hearing oneself as capable of actually saying something that matters beyond that will. Hass's hearing this statement becomes his own testimony to what attention to history makes possible.

With "The Four Eternities, or the Grandfather's Tale," the focus shifts from engaging a writer to engaging Hass's own granddaughter as an exemplary audience whose needs the writer must learn to address. Here Hass emphasizes an important feature of the poetic disposition in this volume: audiences are inseparable from the materials written about, as if everything in the poems depended on an imagination that is rooted in them. Much of the emotion here depends upon radically expanding the parameters of the personal and the value of self-consciousness free of defensiveness because of the plenitude offered to this mode of attention.

The particular audience in this poem, Hass's granddaughter, has firm desires for how the main characters appear in the story. But she is also willing, if the details are rich enough and sufficiently engaging, to give up on the ideological demand for a princess heroine in favor of fascinating details in a situation she has never heard of or formed expectations about. Even at the end there is negotiation between author and an audience he is coming to appreciate: the young woman will surrender her princess fantasies but not her particular demand for a specific description of the qualities of hair given to the leading lady. That Hass recognizes and adapts to these demands is fundamental to the quiet and subtle adaptations to context that pervade the volume. Adjusting to social context becomes the primary locus for how the poetry takes on force as significant and subtle and often profound particular graspings of the real.

The ending of "Silence" weaves a concern for the color of vowels into a focus on syntax in the closing sentences. This poem manages to make its leading characters actually step out of narrative into the many dimensions of stillness the poem has elaborated. Then there is praise for what we learn from tongue twisters and what we learn from Eugenio Montale's example of direct attention, fused into subtle enjambments and alliteration. Here the ending has to be cited for its catalogue of intricate sonic celebrations accepting what life presents for recognition:

> Or could have presented to my friend to remind her
> Of how we had loved the very idea of the line.
> Maybe *it rained yesterday, and the evening air was cool.*
> Or loved the simplest enjambment in a pair of lines.

Maybe, *we walked to the waterfall. On the way*
There was a patch of mountain lilies. And
Loved how a few lines made a flowing. Maybe
The mother bear leapt on the trunk of a fallen tree
To look back at us, or more probably to sniff us out.
And seemed to decide we were not a problem,
And came down off her perch in an easy cascade
Of brown fur, and disappeared into the forest. (167)

How could she imagine our being a problem when we so carefully attune our language to the hypothetical scene? The poem is about nothing, nothing but the forming of an attitude by which we are open to all the intricacies of what makes a forest also a "furrest."

The final poem, "Notes on the Notion of a Boundless Poetics," combines precise thinking with touching gestures directed at the past and the present (there is a dedication to Lyn Hejinian). As the echo of "note" and "notion" suggests, along with the opening citation of Pierre Reverdy, all talk of poetics is "indiscreet praise of oneself." But Hass does not want to seem comfortable in this self-referential, abstract mode of speaking. In fact he wants us to feel the difficulty for poets in practicing what is often an alien and alienating discourse while recognizing that such thinking has to take place in such form. That ambivalence in turn suggests why he turns to other writers—again as acts not just of memorializing the dead but of committing concretely to the ways by which the dead continue to affect how the living perform.

Here the primary impulse for Hass's own thinking is a one-line poem by Czesław Miłosz with what becomes a crucial title, "On the need to draw boundaries." The poem has Hass-like subtlety: "Wretched and dishonest was the sea" (171). The boundaries I presume are necessary because nature cannot be trusted to bring anything but death and suffering, so humans have to seek protection (perhaps so that they can safely use the past tense as the poem does). Miłosz's poem synthesizes much of what the presence of death does in the rest of the volume, so there is considerable reason for fearing any kind of boundlessness. This choice of topic in the final poem of the volume probably wants to make clear that escape from boundaries and double binds is not a feasible option. There is only the possibility of using the mind's temptation to think boundlessness in order to

sharpen by questioning both which boundaries cannot be escaped and which boundaries can be modified in order to accord with the desires to open up possibilities of extending far beyond the limitations of the present tense.

Think first about the form. This is a prose poem expanding into paragraphs even more than "Second Person." So the poem is not bound by strict measures. Yet this poem does not conform to rules of prose writing: for one thing, there are too many short paragraphs. For another, there is far too much concern for the weight of individual words and phrases for it to have the easy fluidity of good prose. One might say that while prose gives the statements a material body, something like spirit continually wants to assert the freedom it finds in thinking and in remembering. It matters thematically then that Hass rarely handles ideas by direct confrontation. He prefers indirection, barely noticing what boundaries in fact drive the efforts to correlate thinking and being.

These efforts are formally bound by an organization that emphasizes four critical points. But the distinct points seem more like lightly connected anchors than formal divisions of an argument. And each point opens up complicated internal relationships. Notice how the "first response" is primarily a matter of association rather than argument, but the associations are quite pointed. The phrase "boundless poetics" triggers both memories of songs and echoes of American exceptionalism. Association here may pick up relations that reason would be slow to arrive at, since the songs involve victims of the fantasies of progress sustained by this ideology.

"The second thing that came to mind" is more directly to the point, since Hass recalls the line of Miłosz that distinguishes the mentality of Europeans who have suffered directly from those who have fantasies of freedom from necessity. Hass characteristically does not interpret the poem but associates around it. He does recognize that poetry now has almost boundless means of expression at its disposal, but his poem then quickly identifies with the force of Miłosz's figures:

> And in that sense, I guess, one could speak of a boundless poetics.
> And—but—to choose to do any one thing is to choose not to do everything else you might have done instead and in that sense any poetics, any making, is bounded. So maybe *sustainable* poetics? An *adequate* poetics? (172)

Replacing "and" with "but" says it all. Boundless poetics is too close to fantasies of life without mortality. So Hass develops two associations with what can bind poetry as a positive force. One is manners or civility: "Some Swiss canton of the mind where the inhabitants practice an externalized disposition to kindness." The other is the way the artwork can traverse and embody "the energy of a gesture," an energy which is definitively finite.

We should recognize by now that one precise and definite line of thinking sponsored by Miłosz has done a good deal of work, without leading the poet to raise his voice or lose control of the qualities afforded by lyrical gesture. So Hass is free to turn to self-consciousness in another gesture that is almost a response to Miłosz's line. Listen to how Hass's statement takes on a different kind of concreteness by dwelling from the start in limited but expansive habits of personal imagination:

> The third thing that came to my mind was to wonder why the first thing that came to my mind was a lyric in which the speaker is a man who wants a woman's body very badly and understands that to act on this desire would be a betrayal. (172)

So unlimited are the contents of imagination, yet so limited are they to personal style and specific senses of obligation. By turning personal, the prose poem becomes itself a gesture expressing "an intensity of need that drives you to your knees."

Such a gesture realizes in its intense awareness of the needs of the flesh what the poem proposes as a "fourth thing that came to mind"(173). The poet realizes that such gestures in fact combine restrictive boundaries with the potential for boundless suggestion. And that realization of the reader's role is perfectly attuned to the situation of the poem because it arises from sheer association, not from any explicit drive for coherence in one's thinking. The process begins with the thought that "obsession had the virtue of combining quite narrow boundaries and boundlessness." This large claim appeals for support to Montale, then to a Pacific storm that picks up the content of Miłosz's line, then to imagining how native people "must have had myth names for kinds of storms, they must have had stories!" I love this exclamation point, probably intended to celebrate the move from theorizing to possibilities of engagement with cultural processes,

so it should not be surprising that the poem turns to more general aspects of how writing gets set in motion. And that issue, arrived at casually—as so often in this volume—turns out to be just what the poem needs to set the boundless and boundaries in creative tension: there are boundless procedures for writing but they seem to "end up as a form, a footrace between the narcissism of the writer and attention span of the reader."

Finally the poem closes by turning inward, then having to recognize that all this thinking takes place in a world of boundless demands to satisfy what time requires of us and punishes us for slighting. All of the experiences of death and suffering, and all the efforts to bring our awareness of death into how life grapples with it, can be summarized in the most trivial states of personal being, where they become not trivial at all but conditions of recognition and even occasionally of affirmation:

> My own stumbling a desire for lightness, and also necessity like a metallic taste in the mouth, and the civility of shape.
>
> And I think of Gorky's story about Tolstoy in Yalta grabbing him by the back of the neck with his great hand and pointing his head toward an old woman picking rags in the street across from the café where they were having lunch with Chekhov. They had been talking about writing. And Tolstoy, he said, held his head and said "Her, her." (173–74)

The process of association evokes two prose writers responding to a contingent moment, bounded by time but offering infinite imaginative possibilities. So the turn to these writers allows Hass to fuse this history of dependency and pain with a sense of freedom and possibility, at least limited possibility. There emerges a moment of bemused and slightly guilty resolution that is also slightly proud of breaking obligations for what seems a higher calling:

> So there is writing and there are ideas about it and the world full of rain, so many parts of it either tragic or brutal, any sense of responsibility to which would be a boundary as well as an entry.
>
> And time as a boundary, e.g., the telephone just rang. Writing this I was missing a meeting. (174)

NOTES

1/ Robert Hass, *Summer Snow* (New York: Ecco, 2020).
2/ In writing on Hegel's characterization of expressive activity, I emphasize his statement on the importance of achieving a situation where the "I" of utterance tries to make articulate the "I" positioned objectively by history. See my book *Modernist Poetry and the Limitations of Materialist Theory: The Importance of Constructivist Values* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2021).
3/ On the importance of traditions of techne for poetry please consult Henry Staten's *Techne Theory: A New Language for Art* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).
4/ Dan Chiasson, "Robert Hass's Inner History of the Decade," *New Yorker*, January 20, 2020. I think Hass's comments on modernist poets in his collection of essays *Twentieth Century Pleasures* (New York: Ecco Press, 1984) sustain my interpretation because he is acutely aware of their differences from one another.

Barry MacSweeney, *Desire Lines: Unselected Poems 1966–2000*, edited by Luke Roberts. Shearsman Books, 2018.

This volume gathers almost every published Barry MacSweeney poem not included in *Wolf Tongue: Selected Poems 1965–2000* (Bloodaxe, 2003), which was overseen by the poet before his death in 2000. At more than 300 pages, it's a lot to take in at once. Readers not already invested might understandably wonder: why do we need a collection of "extra" poems MacSweeney chose to leave aside?

The answer is complicated. Much of the published work was printed in tiny runs by tiny presses (including MacSweeney's own, Blacksuede Boot) and circulated primarily among friends. It's not surprising that some of these coterie poems are hard to appreciate from a distance. It's also true, though, that MacSweeney chose to leave many of his best poems either out of print or unpublished in a drawer. *Desire Lines* rescues these poems from oblivion and makes visible an astonishing range of styles (and poetic affiliations) over his long writing career. Links to Cambridge figureheads such as J. H. Prynne and Andrew Crozier in the late 1960s were preceded by an early (and arguably more formative) period in Newcastle. In his teens he frequented Tom and Connie Pickard's famed Morden Tower reading series, visited by US poets such as Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Ed Dorn, and Robert Creeley. One detects some of this US current in *Green Cabaret*, a bestseller that (as editor Luke Roberts notes) was aggressively marketed on both sides of the Atlantic to capitalize on the Beat explosion. There is, however, a ferocity in MacSweeney's class critique not typically associated with Beat poetry:

> Workers go home whatever wherever
> Lynched with expensive pleasure
> Pockets heavy with paper the hour when
> City jams in the lights red amber green
> Blood copper-coin leaves
>
> Pebbles rattle beneath their black boots!
> Shrouds draw across the network!
> Closed doors hide corrupt perfume
> Rising from carcasses in parliamentary abattoirs

These lines are littered with bodies. Some are obvious (workers and carcasses), while others (leaves and crowds) clarify only at close range. What unites them is extraction. The red, amber, and green lights jamming the city at dusk become leaves *blooded* by coins. Parliamentary slaughterhouses yield a "perfume," just as lynched workers yield pleasure. Flowers, workers, and crowds are commodities best consumed when rendered down.

MacSweeney was trying on other hats in *Cabaret* too. His Newcastle mentors included Basil Bunting, with whom he shared an office at the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* during the modernist icon's composition of *Briggflatts*. MacSweeney recalls that his first real lesson as a poet came when he gave Bunting a draft of the poem "Walk" and had it returned with all but four lines "sliced." An attached note read: "Start again from there." Here is that poem's opening section, in its published version:

> Tynemouth priory stands
> sepia walled
> hunched in bony remnants
> of a holy rood,
> gaunt anatomy of stones
>
> cliffs plait
> light brown and black
> into shapes
> above the splash
> of paddlers
>
> wind hoys sea
>
> on shore,
> glassing to a sand edge.

Whereas the lines from "City" above generate frenetic rhythms by combining midline rhymes and syntactic breaks with heavy enjambment, these lines largely coincide with clauses, guiding the eye and mind more deliberately. Similarly, the images of the prior poem come rapid-fire and without hierarchy; here they are precisely plotted, hewn to bare essentials that yield a restrained subjectivity more like Bunting's friend Zukofsky than like Ginsberg or Corso, or for that matter Pickard.

The 70s were MacSweeney's most impressive decade, and they are well represented in *Desire Lines*. Among this work is *Pelt Feather Log*, a long serial poem gathered in its most complete form here (it's not clear if MacSweeney thought of it as finished). Addressed with startling pain and sometimes

anger to an absent lover, the poem records city strolls alongside confessions of drunken self-hatred and abstract sexual longing, in a kind of daybook style. Sometimes, he's self-deprecating: "I stare into the many-faceted base / of my cider glass / & feel the power of poetry / extending its plumed arm through my mouth!" At other times, he chills the blood: "maggots in the ram's carcass / generate their own particular heat // open yr throat / and swallow the world."

How strange that this attempt to capture (as MacSweeney put it) the "sensual particularities" of enmeshed "inner &…outer geographies" was almost contemporary with *Black Torch*, a documentary poem in which MacSweeney's voice is largely displaced by voices from other times. Although the poem's principal focus is the Durham Miners' Strike of 1844, this event becomes emblematic of the North's struggle against the incursion of "southron" tyrants—Roman, Christian, British—from Northumbria's origins to the present. After a brief nod at the poem's Northumbrian dedicatee, Pickard, the opening lines frame the entire poem with this deep history:

> aah travelled on the dole
> sky in Tom and Connie's hair
> aah cannit blame Halfden
> who gave us fire
> after Ida
> a loathing for priests
> and false fire

The origin story on offer here suggests that the Viking invader Halfden strengthened Northumbria when he took the throne in the ninth century from descendants of the sixth-century founder, Ida (keep your Google handy). Halfden can't be "blame[d]" because he brought technology that enabled resistance. MacSweeney aligns his poem, and his office as a northern poet, with this resistance:

> pagan song drives iron
> into your plaid money
> you will not recall
> black fire-horns
> because you have none

The apparently paradoxical title, echoed here in the reference to "black fire-horns," and later in images of a "blackbird" mining canary and blackened miners with blinding white teeth, eyes, and phlegm, adds to the poem's primary metaphor: coal lit to foment revolution. MacSweeney valorizes the

striking miners as modern counterparts of the nation's ancient heroes. In "ripping fire / from the national hearth," these "black dusted prometheans" draw fire from ground that is now populated with the bodies of forebearers "breathing / beneath black forests / of the past."

In the midst of the poem's broader mythmaking, MacSweeney includes excerpts from documents such as *The Report of the Children's Employment Commission* (1842). The cold reportage of these sections is striking not only for their tonal contrast but also because they attest to the barbarity of mining labor conditions from the perspective of the government that benefited from it:

> Walter Coffin
> at Dinas
> employed 8-year-olds
> both sexes
> under-nourished
> could not read
> pulling trams
> no holidays
> 2½ pence a week
> running forward
> over the unfortunate boy
> "the train broke through
> the door"
> […]
> "the rats run away with my bag
> sometimes. I wash myself
> clean…"
> (Morgan Davies 1840
> Aged 7

MacSweeney preserves the format of the report, with summaries of working conditions interrupted by the direct testimony of children as young as four. Of course, neither Morgan Davies nor the adults working alongside him actually spoke the report's British English. To this documentary language, MacSweeney adds imagined voices in "Northumbrian dialect":

> they had ti gan back doon
> there was nee light
> someone brought a lamp
> woosh! yi bugga
> they fund their bones

on the heap next day
[…]
they divvent give yi any chance
we havent got much to start with
they smashed everything we had
and thats not much
the lass is bad there man
get a shovel
howay man
put a smile on ya face

The Durham strike was a failure, but MacSweeney presents this history as part of a long and unfinished struggle. Roberts's notes indicate that MacSweeney began writing the poem while he was himself on strike with the National Union of Journalists. Justice and injustice here are measured in familiar terms, by the degree to which workers control what they produce: "there'll be no pit justice / until the pits / are in the hands of the real owners / the pitmen."

Other poems from the 70s include the rebarbative sequence *Toad Church* (first published in *CR* 59:03) and the delicate elegies MacSweeney wrote for the poet Mark Hyatt after his suicide in 1972, which appeared in *Fog Eye*. MacSweeney's range is again on display here. A fixation on certain words and images is perhaps the only hint that they were written about the same time—both feature a bizarre image of women's hair "stream[ing] / with handcuffs and chains," for example. *Toad Church* lays down trails of narrative logic but never for long. This will either intrigue or infuriate, depending on one's threshold for violent and often disgusting images at strobing speed. Here's part of section 13 for a taste:

Room's gold threatened madder
peristaltics you swooned. The snow
burst suddenly! Sung under pink
universal sequins coating the divine
Bing Crosby. Hoopla! Snowshoes! Purple
stag-spiders in the birtwhistle hour! (by the
pool destrung instruments at dawn /

On its own terms, *Toad Church* is wonderful. Line upon line, one section after another, it builds a peculiar alertness to linguistic patterns, and patterns of cognition that produce those on display in front of you, but it never discloses its webbing. It's a firehose to the face. By comparison, the leaps of "Elegy" fall into legible patterns:

Tired eyes, peristaltic nerve-ends
lacing. (Sun low through colonnades
and the wind with each step.)
Invest the folded man with something
as mortal as tendencies, pineal
glands fall through their awnings
in the third room of the latchwork house.

The "nerve-ends," like the low sun and eyes and slowed steps of the folded man, are pressed toward their end by the natural course of things. The seat of the soul (pineal gland) falls through its awnings. What is left, in the tragic case of this young suicide, are empty pages: "You tear pages from a diary / written many years ago, but / the stories are the same as today."

The most basic question for a collection of "extra" poems might be whom it is for. In other words, it's always possible to imagine specialists or special interests as an audience. *Desire Lines* is different. It makes visible a poet whose importance, in terms of both historical influence and innovation, has largely been neglected and misunderstood.

Michael Hansen

§

Emmalea Russo, *G*. Futurepoem, 2018.
Emmalea Russo, *Wave Archive*. Book*hug Press, 2019.

Emmalea Russo's *G* feels like an important work because it uses the kind of performative problem-solving or embodied exploration typical of contemporary visual art and does so using poetry and language as its tools. *G* asks, "what would it mean to experience reality as a process of becoming" (indeed Russo cites Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy as central to her work). But Russo's real and truly energetic labor here isn't dependent on having a vague but named philosophical interest guiding her poetry—something many poets tend to do. Instead she has designed a phenomenological box, a delimited experiential system, where she can enact and test out certain kinds of perceptual and emotional knots binding the visual, the semantic, and other frameworks for legibility via language.

G is divided into two uneven sections "ONE" and "TWO." In section ONE Russo does most of the exploratory writing that is exciting in the book—it's the "experiment" section. TWO seems to follow in a more narrative vein and to operate as the shorter "explanatory notes" section. ONE is formatted in a consistently alternating mode—even-numbered pages have one justified

floating cuboid of text (usually 4–8 lines) in a vehemently computerized sans-serif font, while odd-numbered pages have one low-lying, naturally line-broken paragraph of text (usually 3–6 lines) in a less ostentatious sans serif. So each recto-verso pair has one cuboid and one small paragraph. As we progress through the sixty-four pairs, or 129 pages of ONE, we're introduced to the persistent riddle of "G," which seems like it can be alternately a person, a letterform, a material cue for a sound, a nexus of energy, or a garden among other things. Shifting the meaning of "G" is one of the central projects of the book. Russo is attuned to the way the "ground" conditions how a figure (e.g., "G") can be read. Her work, like that of a number of other contemporary poets influenced by visual art, philosophy, and/or concrete poetry, points up how frameworks of legibility condition perception, a major twentieth-century insight traceable variously to conceptual art (e.g., Robert Irwin, Victor Burgin), structuralist filmmaking (e.g., Hollis Frampton), or the work of thinkers ranging from Rancière to Foucault to Adorno to Wittgenstein. See, for example, M. NourbeSe Philip's virtuosic manipulations of sound and visuality (e.g., shifting "o" to "eau" to "oh" to "os" in *Zong!*), Noah Ross's concretism-inspired visual play in *Active Reception*, or even Sandra Simonds's *Orlando*, a study in relations with a fluid signifier (Orlando as city, as deadbeat boyfriend, as just "O," as sound).

Like Philip's, Russo's project is a sustained and careful one. It entails getting the reader/viewer to actually experience "G" plurally and to feel the possibilities of each of its referents in each other over time. In this way the book also speaks to other long-form poetic perceptual re-attunement projects ranging from the Language poetics–inflected representations of autobiographical memory in Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*; to Gurlesque performative re-assemblage of lyric subject–as–modal shifter (e.g., Chelsey Minnis's *Baby, I Don't Care*); to *that they were at the beach*, Leslie Scalapino's master study in repetition and re-assemblage of syntactical hinges, described by Charles Bernstein as arriving at "musical coherence" produced by the "chordal patterns" she repeats. Like all of these poets, Russo selects and then repeats simple subunits in varying combination, with the end effect that each of the subunits becomes, in a sense, soaked in half-formed recollections of previous combinations and instantiations. This accretive and variously recombined network comes to function as the "meaning" of these subunits—in many ways it feels as though Russo is working out how meaning might be produced by repetition and circulation; a real thinking or testing-out of process and ordinary language philosophy through form.

Russo's project is definitely systematic, diagrammatic, and reminiscent of the deconstruction and framework-resynthesizing ambitions of Language poetics and Structuralist film. But Russo's meaning system(s) in ONE has an affective intensity that gives her project a humanness and relational urgency

that goes beyond the dryness, crystalline systematicity, and inaccessibility that unsympathetic readers of work from these earlier movements often cite as grounds for dismissal or, perhaps more frequently, boredom.

A quick note on how Russo constructs this system: the subunits seem to be the letters G, X, O, H, and I; a set of three vertical lines |||, as well as words connoting borders, vectors, and orientations—such as "slant" (which also appears to be an Emily Dickinson reference); "hem" and "sphere" (and their combined echo in "hemisphere" and later "Hem 1 sphere"); "sew/sow," "field," "figure," "hex"; and perhaps most importantly "garden" and "ground." She repeats and ceaselessly recombines all these elements in ways that cue the reader to shift how they are reading, how they are making sense of the text. I'll outline two examples of how this seems to work: one with "X"/hex (primarily visual/sonic shifting), one with |||/gate (primarily visual/semantic shifting).

Russo makes the reader hear "hex" in "X," developing an associative link between them that the text will continue to use:

> Center the edges hexed I
> Hides is hindered is X
> D out becoming Ground

A lot of Russo's development of novel associations happens through sound/letterform play. She pushes sounds and letters between "meaning in English," "sustaining relationship by means of sound," and "sustaining relationship by means of visual similarity." The poem moves and means by creating pivots and connections across and between these orienting relational modalities, shifting and recombining frameworks of legibility.

I'll trace this example through because it's illustrative of mechanisms at play more generally throughout the book. Here, the stressed short "e" sounds of the first syllables of "center," "edges," and "hexed" in the first line crash into the long "i" of the line-ending "I," which ends up feeling as though it's an odd trochaic compound word with "hexed." This is the case despite the fact that at first this line sounds like it's going to be completed "[thus] hexed I [could not complete my gardening]" or something along those lines. But then the next line turns that "hexed" into an adjectival modifier for an "I" who "hides," the third-person singular conjugation ["hides"] establishing this "I" as separate from the organizing consciousness of the poem. Similarly, in the third line we're forced to reconfigure how we're reading the "X" of line two. The third line begins with a "D" that turns the X (formerly a letterform, a predicate of maybe I) into part of the compound verb "x-ed out," which, even as it requires our sense of the X to swivel, reinforces the link to the "hexed" of the first line. X-ed out, the hindered "I / Hides" is hexed—hexing as drawing an X over—and indeed hexes appear as drawn signs (six-pointed stars on

objects) throughout the text. A cascade of continual but glitched morphing, Russo's poetry cues us to read and reread, to see and see again on different terms, a highly controlled form of aspect change; think Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit rhythmically toggling for 129 pages. Wittgenstein is, perhaps not coincidentally, also a central proponent of the theory that the meaning of a word is its use in the language, that meaning is produced and sustained in relational circulation. Russo's reconfiguring process occurs throughout the book—a subtle and playful sonic alchemy rooted in patterned repetition and change, yoking by means of something akin to rhyme. The book refuses musicality, but so much of its thinking happens through soundwork in a way informed by poetic tradition, even though it isn't immediately clear that the work is participating in any kind of poetic lineage at all, other than, as mentioned earlier, vague affinity with the structuralist project.

Elsewhere, Russo establishes a relation between the letterform "H" and three vertical lines "|||," which then recur throughout the remainder of the book:

> […] A capital
> H being three lines. Arranged to make a gate.
>
> |||

Russo insists, here and throughout *G*, that the reader learn to see written language as a glyph—to think about the material and visual letterforms of language as part of the process of constructing meaning. A little later, she'll make the reader think about the formal and functional relationship between the signified border objects "hem" and "gate" (which is also the letter "H," as we've been taught, the beginning letter of the word "hem"):

> HEM |||

And later, a series of "1"s across the recto (serif font) produce a kind of visual border:

> 1111111111111111111111111111111111111111111

Then there is a series of lines, also across the recto, recalling the "1" and the troubled, unstably boundaried "I" that plays across the serifed and unserifed pages:

> ||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||

This kind of formal play isn't detachable from *G*'s thematic concerns—the issue of hems, or boundaries between bodies, consciousnesses, and spaces is

one of the central problems of the work. *G* seems to ask how these boundaries are established and what they consist in. Are the boundaries themselves objects? What does it mean to know or perceive a boundary? "I come back and arrange. ||| |||. Gate of land, G, self." Linguistically, it seems to be asked in the form of "how does this letterform [G] signify this idea? can it be made to blur the edges of its meanings, or reach out and touch other meanings? what are the boundaries of meaning and how do they come into being?" In shifting the reader between frameworks of legibility, *G* makes them feel and pass repeatedly over the boundaries between regimes of sensemaking.

Related to its question of boundaries and boundary objects, *G* is interested in slippages between recognizable identities—when and how one thing can be or be read *as* another: "G can be a person, place, energy field. And the figure. And the ground." Figure-ground concerns run throughout. Like Chelsey Minnis, Russo seems to inaugurate a species of figure which can also be thought as the ground and a kind of ground (e.g., G) that can also emerge as a figure.

G ||| ROUND. Consistent spinning. *Do you feel at home?*

Here, as has frequently been the case across line breaks on the even-numbered cuboid-containing pages, a G word is broken (or "opened" along the lines of Cecilia Vicuña's *Palabrarmas*) to reveal other words inside it. Rather than "ground," we have "G" across the "gate" from "round"—like the image of the G divided into hemispheres earlier in the text. The word "ground" itself now functions as a ground against which the figures of two new words appear: "G" and "Round." Similarly, G itself, as a guiding figure for the book, is also much of the "ground" against which other concerns emerge. We are at once "Always solving for G" and simply using the process of solving to sustain circulation within a relational network. "G is not ground. G is a person. G is ground. G is a garden and the g in the middle of the word figure." Russo uses these knots in language and perception to interrogate the boundaries of a self operating in a world (a figure in a ground, but unstably a figure, sometimes the ground in which the world appears as figure); in the edges of the "garden" which is arguably the central figure of the book (and also the space or ground in which the book's concerns sometimes play out); in the boundaries between "Emmalea" and the "G" whose "self is something tumbling towards mine […] [who] surprises me with a visit to a cute barn house." As the "I" says in TWO, "I think I know the feeling / of G's head. Such confusion. Where's I?" *G* sets up rules in order to explore how meaning emerges around patterning and iteration and then explores possibilities of flux and intermingling.

Russo's book makes an important contribution to contemporary poetics in the US; it's brave and thoughtful; it systematizes and dwells with its strangeness, using it as a way of refracting and trying to better understand aspects of consciousness, language, frameworks of legibility, and relational meaning. In TWO, it situates the playful but rigorous explorations of ONE in a narrative about a couple trying to live by gardening in pastoral Pennsylvania. They experience relationship problems, then separate and move away, a period followed by the "I" attempting, through acupuncture, I-Ching consultation, energy meridian therapy, kundalini yoga, Wikipedia Panpsychism, astrology, etc. to recover from this relationship and understand the self again. This section certainly accounts for the emotional intensity of ONE, but also makes the project feel like an exercise from a Whole Foods self-help book, completed after reading Whitehead's *Process and Reality*. I don't mean to diminish the validity of any of these approaches, but piled in this fashion, in close sequence without sustained engagement, it's hard not to read them as operating in their commodity kit form—available for casual dipping-into, easy browsing. More generously, I might say the browsing approach helps communicate a state of emotional desperation (will try anything!) or a belief that all spiritual systems connect up somewhere—that all practices will eventually lead one there, wherever "there" is. But most practices seem to require a systematic patience and commitment, something Russo truly sustains only in ONE, which in fact makes that section feel more spiritually (and philosophically) affecting than TWO, even though TWO is more explicitly concerned with both spirituality and philosophy. Experimental art and literature in the US have always borrowed wildly from various spiritual and occult traditions with varying degrees of respect and care, often with aesthetically wonderful results—e.g., John Cage's borrowings from Zen Buddhism. Russo's use of the spiritual in this second section simply strikes me as a little glib, a little careless, a little bit too much like the way one might handle a product. Arguing in its favor, I might say that TWO makes ONE into a "figure" against the messier, less consistent "ground" of life—a distilled knot or arena where the complex affects and experiences of real lived dailiness can be thought about as and through problems of language or image.

In their essay "Diana Hamilton, Hyperintimate Poetry, & the Machine for Fighting Anxiety," Marie Buck claims that hyperintimate texts are one of the best and most politically useful outcomes of the internet's influence on contemporary poetry, which can, at times, produce a "utopia of sharing and listening that exceeds social norms—that reorients our fears about the world into desire for our friends and for our lovers and for a better world for us all." Following their line of argument, I might say that Russo combines multiple

kinds of experimental lineages: ONE borrows from the more algorithmic lineage of Language poetics, structuralism, and conceptual art, TWO from the New Narrative and internet-inflected hyperintimate poetry of the late 2010s, and Russo uses each to enrich the other. Even in ONE, it's possible to feel a specific personal and emotional charge, a sense of a life and a particular set of experiences animating the play—that the formal play and perceptual re-attunement work is a way of trying to access or modify the self and its ways of feeling, almost with a kind of desperation. This affective charge is a major part of what makes the formalist impulse of ONE feel interesting, contemporary, and perceptually affecting for its reader. Though the relationship between the sections at times feels boringly and dangerously close to "object and its explanation," "illustration and its caption," or, and perhaps worst, "play and its justification," I'm nonetheless thrilled by the book.

Overall, I see Russo's work here as participating in a trend I notice in experimental poetics of the 2010s and 2020s—long, highly structured works that mobilize formal play as they operate in multiple languages and/or sense-making modalities (e.g., text/language and visual field), clearly influenced by visual art and engaging the Language poetics question of "the ways language generates meaning," as Robert Glück puts it in "Long Note on New Narrative," while bringing to it an intensified emotional charge, an interest in the directly personal and/or political, and a consciousness of intersubjective relationality that feels like an inheritance from New Narrative. So much experimental contemporary poetry in the US is clearly responding to and influenced by New Narrative, but what excites me about Russo's work is the novel ways it learns from both of these movements, and recombines their insights toward something new and affecting.

Wave Archive, Russo's second book, published shortly after *G* in 2019, feels partially like an effort to more meaningfully integrate the threads from ONE and TWO in *G*. *Wave Archive* thinks through a wide range of media about the embodied experience of epilepsy both historically, medically, and in a lived present. Its primary "figures" for thinking this are the "waves," which sometimes seem to be electrical brain activity, sometimes water movements, sometimes tildes (~) as figures for both boundary and drift, and for emotional surges. "Index" operates similarly—sometimes Russo seems to mean (even cite) the Peircean sense of index as "standing directly for an existing entity," sometimes the index finger and its metonymic pointing activity, sometimes the "non-hierarchical" organizing (archiving?) guide to a text or other body of material. The book wants to think about what forms of archive might accommodate the complex waveform possibilities of emotional, psychic, and neurological life, as well as continuing to use many of the formal tools Russo worked with in *G*. Like the letters of *G*, Russo uses "index," "wave," "archive," "the body," and "pillow" in tumbled and various

relation to each other, each new relational configuration also reconfiguring what each term means. She provides a kind of visually inflected structuralist or Josef Albers-esque semiotics that acknowledges the broader registers across which visual and sonic forms come to "mean" something in their difference and relational network. But what's great about this second book Russo has mostly already discovered and worked out in *G*. I find *Wave Archive* overall a little flat, a little self-satisfied; in some ways it already knows the essays one might write about it, having provided all the handholds in all the right places, very thoughtfully. It feels more streamlined for consumption under the value rubrics of our particular moment. What I loved so much in *G*, the uncertain, playful, and ultimately life-like sense of working a felt question out in real time, is what is missing from *Wave Archive*—the new book makes the stumbled-toward insights of *G* a formula; something that represents, but doesn't arrive experientially at, liveliness.

Kirsten Ihns

§

I'm Working Here: The Collected Poems of Anna Mendelssohn, edited by Sara Crangle. Shearsman Books, 2020.

"Exactly how silent / is one meant to be," Anna Mendelssohn writes. Asking this question in a poem might seem desperate at first. The obstacles that threaten to bar Mendelssohn's voice from existence have annexed territory in the poem itself. But as versions of this question manifest across this poet's output, it becomes clearer that Mendelssohn is not giving in to poetry's menaces by ceding them space along the line. She is toying with them. Restrict it, silence it, threaten it all you want; there is still the poem, an irreducible act.

Anna Mendelssohn's defiant voice, the subject of this nearly 800-page scholarly edition, has been all but hidden from readers since her death in 2009. Aside from one masterful late collection, *Implacable Art* (2000), her books are among the rarest documents in contemporary poetry. It is believed that a 1993 chapbook, *The Day the Music Died*, the first of Mendelssohn's many publications with Rod Mengham's Equipage Press, was an edition of five. *I'm Working Here* brings to its culmination one of late modernism's most crucial rediscoveries, which began in the winter of 2009 and 2010, when a team of poets including Peter Riley, Lynne Harries, Nigel Wheale, Kate Wheale, and Martin Thom retrieved Mendelssohn's papers from the garden shed in Cambridge where she resided during the last decade of her life. Mendelssohn's editor Sara Crangle—whose monumental introduction to this volume essentially constitutes the first standalone monograph on the

poet—finally provides readers with access to the whole run of those scarce collections, as well as ample unpublished material and excerpts of prose writings drawn from what is now the Anna Mendelssohn Archive at the University of Sussex. The world tried hard, but there will be no silencing Mendelssohn now.

Charged at age twenty-two with conspiracy to cause explosions as a member of the anarchist guerilla organization known as the Angry Brigade, Mendelssohn spent the end of her adolescence incarcerated at Her Majesty's Holloway Prison in London. The rest of her adult life transpired in a state of justified worry over further legal jeopardy. A "single mother" (she despised the term) dependent on the invasive largesse of social services and fearful of the reemergence of her vexed past in further criminal proceedings, Mendelssohn agreed to have her three children fostered in 1988; she never regained full custody. "Mendelssohn's case was harrowing and traumatizing," writes Crangle, who reports that when it was over, the lawyer who defended Mendelssohn permanently renounced his practice.

To the extent that these events left their mark on her poetry—Mendelssohn's use of autobiography is densely elliptical and ironic—they figure as a compound machinery of terror compelling the poet to be silent. Her work is littered with remembered instances of "language which was dismissive / of poetry," almost always with a paternalistic undertone: "Art comes Last, young lady. / When ? When ?" Authority figures characterize themselves in her poems by their insistence on tying art's tongue. In one untitled piece, she is labeled a "derelict," memorably defined as "a person the world forgot to give a violin to." Institutionalized belittlement follows:

> and the distracted "mental patient"
> sings of the lost property office she could not get back into
> where there was proof of her young poetry
> over which the doctors laughed or frowned.

Authority switches masks during her phase of peak post-prison activity, which occurred in Cambridge, where she tried unsuccessfully for years to ply the margins of a hostile academic establishment. Her poetry from this period is filled with banishments and pariahs, including, but not constrained to, herself. Condescension achieves new depths in the staggering poem "Silk & Wild Tulips":

> I am told that I have reinvented my history, these fakes that have
> Drifted by desire rather than by noble patriotic inclination, to be told this
> Frozen kiss is a parasite berry that grows and governs our merriment
> That we fall to habitude unaged & are given brown cloaks for mourning

To circle the lotus that catches the tip of the dragonfly's wing
And burning it into fruition find an exhaust pipe carved in braille
The war continues to charr the air with shot speech,
Theses are buried or placed on parole for comparing the language of war & of peace

The representative "I" of vitality, "merriment," and imagination must be reeducated. She must accept that she is fundamentally mistaken, that an Edenic abundance is worth trading in for "habitude…an exhaust pipe carved in braille." Such deadening wisdom is what the "fakes" peddle in their academe which itself figures as a courthouse or graveyard of enforced obliviousness, ignorant even that there is a war going on above it. Biding its time over these martyred "theses," later on in the poem is an assurance of faith in history's leveling power, which resurrects the dead and judges the living: "the most beautiful poems speak to us / Yet we know they were written in the wrong country at the wrong time."

Mendelssohn's "I" is a nimble customer. Sidestepping confessional poetry altogether, life experience comes to stand for problems her art encountered in the making; the ordeals of life become metaphors for the ordeals of poetry, mutually assuaging each other's sting. As such, the "I"'s ongoing battle with authority, and its code of silence, transpires at a level that occasionally reaches deeper than experience, taking on an ancestral dimension. Mendelssohn's excavations of self and silence reach a pinnacle in the remarkable poem "Franked," issued in the Salt Publishing collection *Vanishing Points* (2004) alongside contributions by John Ashbery, J. H. Prynne, Stephen Rodefer, and others. Here the poet meditates on modern Jewish identity as an unfinished reckoning with extermination. From the first stanza:

this is not, though, a language of love but of ovens & covenant
glimmering harbours where forgotten and dismal houses
shudder in heat throwing miasmas over interludes

And later:

quotient over. I totally disagree. Visconti escaped the firing squad.
Unfortunately to be born & then have to go all the way back
to be unborn, although alive, is an inducement to illusion.
I only want two words Unfortunately and Although, we have a sense
that was intruded upon by a look and a resonant note
I shall not be signing, from territory which I did not seek.

The core thought is glossed in Crangle's introduction, which stresses Mendelssohn's formative reading of Emmanuel Levinas, as "her belief that the Jews of her generation are the outstanding half of an incomplete extermination quota" ("quotient over. I totally disagree"). The lure of our "inducement to illusion" is that the observance of a studied, personal form of survivor's guilt will automatically certify that our inherited history of slaughter is one that has ended or can end. But this is a universe of destruction, not some other kind. To be born is to be handed an "illusion" in exchange for agreeing to stay "unborn, although alive." Once again, the upshot of this authoritative regime of thought concretizes itself as a restriction on language, a choice for the poet between "Unfortunately," "Although," and silence.

Mendelssohn's typical method conceals cherished assertions under raucous puns and parody. For "Franked" to read the Holocaust back into the letter of God's pact with Abraham ("ovens & covenant") is a joke, but it is the kind of heretical joke on the arbitrary forms of sacred language that wouldn't have been lost on the compilers of the Zohar. Elsewhere, a poem that seethes with rage over, among other things, the dehumanizing (and expensive) ordeal of losing children in the courts makes space to bitterly detect "rent" inside "parent" across adjacent lines. The "face" is the battleground of "self-effacement" in another poem voiced by La Facciata, one of Mendelssohn's personae, whose name means "the façade," but also "the page." Her most crucial pun happens in "the fourteenth flight," a long poem that she dedicates to Jean-Luc Godard, in whose 1969 student protest documentary, *British Sounds*, a twenty-one-year-old Mendelssohn is briefly but memorably seen wearing a wide-brim felt hat and playing the kazoo rather well. She writes:

> I commune with the Dead
> although they may have accused me of imitation, charged me with fraud, treachery to kindred or
> lascivious behaviour, although my skull is constricted & my long flowing sentences
> rapidly turned into sentencing full of legal acrimony for what i fail to understand
>
> wanting to write undetected by lasers, exposed by lasers, the floodlit pitch. one more sweep
> over the Cities,
> hugging das kapital in burton-on-trent i have to congratulate the wrong answer

With the phrase "my long flowing sentences / rapidly turned into sentencing," the poem's conceit of facing an inquest with the esteemed dead is made terrifyingly literal, once again through a seemingly light pun. The speaker encounters the threat that she will fall into the hands of a living law, where poems ("sentences") are just another kind of actionable intelligence ("sentencing"). The status of poetry as incriminating legal evidence is a potent metaphor throughout Mendelssohn's oeuvre. Extrinsic to poetry, it was perhaps more than that. In a manuscript portion of life writing from the Sussex archive, Mendelssohn relates how she once scribbled out on a piece of paper, in the style of an Angry Brigade communiqué, "There is an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile buried in the back garden," and handed the note to her then-housemate, John Barker. "That piece of paper," she recalls, "was produced as evidence against me in court."† "There is an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile buried in the back garden" was therefore a sentence that literally became a sentencing. At some level, Mendelssohn's poetry wonders on every page when that dreaded misapprehension will happen again.

With her career now unfolded to us in this volume, it is clear that Mendelssohn allowed these anxieties about hostile reception their prominent place in her work with clear artistic purposes in mind. She did so because they spoke to risks that confront all poetry. Once experience, or thought, or a private language is externalized into the shape of a poem, there is no controlling what will happen to it. For Mendelssohn, the fears that came along with taking that considerable risk made silence a serious option, and one that the violent authorities which surrounded her were always encouraging. But making each poem real had another consequence. Once they existed, they could defeat all inducements to silence by their very being. Urged to be silent by so many harsh factors of life, her poems are now with us for good, still speaking.

Max Maller

§

Myung Mi Kim, *Civil Bound*. Omnidawn, 2019.

"If a species cannot find a sonic niche of its own, it will not survive," Myung Mi Kim writes midway through her latest book, *Civil Bound*. On a general level,

†/ Grace Lake, "Forever Damned?," fair copy manuscript [SxMs 109/1/B/1/41], quoted in Sara Crangle, "The Agonies of Ambivalence: Anna Mendelssohn, La Poétesse Maudite," *Modernism/Modernity* 25, no. 3 (2018): 13–21.

Kim proposes a direct connection between identity, language, and survival by articulating the survival of a species as dependent on a common language. Language is a cultural marker, Kim holds, a system of knowledge, a system for understanding the world, and thus something political and politicized.

And yet, in referring to a "sonic niche," Kim specifies that a species's dependence on language deals primarily with the spoken word. What separates a South Side Chicagoan from a Bronxite or a Hong Konger from a Taiwanese is not how she writes but how she speaks. The linguistic soundscape that a person operates within—her accent, pronunciation, fluency, degree of formality—tells a story of her background and cultural origins that the written often obscures. Kim's poetry shows that, although learning a common language can allow one to operate in a milieu, one's ability to truly belong to that milieu and one's perceived authenticity to that milieu depend on how one speaks.

In *Civil Bound*, Kim creates a violent soundscape rife with harsh consonants and staccato phrases. She navigates the destructive history of the English language, from tales of forced Native American assimilation to contemporary stories of immigration. Ultimately, she reckons with the idea that cultural identification and belonging stem from the lonely process of living with a new language, having to grasp at all of its nuances and find your place within it.

We immediately get a sense of cultural disconnection through the economy of Kim's language: "pity doves / silicate / the Great Lakes / silt

slit syllabaries." "Syllabaries" and "Great Lakes" are a nod to the Cherokee, who some scholars speculate migrated from the Great Lakes, and who also have one of the only living languages whose writing system is a syllabary. The sibilance of "silicate," "silt," "slit," "syllabaries" creates a sonic slicing effect, speaking to the way that dominant cultures and languages can seep into and become commonplace in the context of minority cultures, such as the Cherokee, and erode their writing systems, their native tongues. The image of the dove, in particular, also harbors a layered meaning because dove, in Cherokee, is *gule disgonihi*, which literally translates to "he cries for acorn" and means that "the dove is crying for the people." Thus, we see this passage operating on two levels; the image mourns how the Cherokee way of life is giving way to a more mainstream Americanization, while the sound mimics the destruction that causes such mourning.

We encounter a similar interplay between the visual and the aural through Kim's experiments with form. In the following passage, she points to the immediate confusion of attempting to map one's native culture onto a sudden and foreign one, just to encounter a void in understanding. She questions the visual representation of written language by mapping out broken sentences in the vertical writing used traditionally in East Asian languages:

e t n w e t h g d a a
x h l h d t a e r u a
p a y o e n e g l h
r t s s d o n t h l a
e i t e t o f t h t y
s t n h a t o u e h
s h e t t o r t e r i e
e e t r u e h p s n r
d h e i s s o e r u
i e t t u w i n a p
v n i i g u n g s m e e
e d e s o o d r i t e o p
y i g n v y v e n h e r
n g l o i r a r e a t i c l e
d s i t s n n n e n e a
e s m y a s a n o
c s h a p e c t t g i f
i h n a n o t i s
d o l t i d l m o i s a l
e u a i n h a r o n s g l
d l n n w e r s a h o l
l d g d b h o t o d
y u i y t i l r
b a a l h p t a r a
t e g n t i a n o e a c
h e h s n w e s n g e s
e t p e g l e r u o u
a o u p u a n f u g g 1
i u p u e a g u l h 8
d g i n r g u d e 8
e h l i m e a e a f 6
a t t i a s o
t r e

words such as "wet" and "shape," trying to find meaning in the wrong places. Meanwhile, an audience with a background in East Asian literature might be inclined to read this text vertically, but would also stumble because they might try reading it from the right, recognizing words but missing the larger meaning. Kim presents a non-traditional left-to-right version of vertical writing here so that the logistical confusions of learning a new language are conveyed along with the natural desire to learn through a more familiar mode. In this regard, Kim allows us an insight into the process of trying to adapt something to fit our own customs, just to realize that we need to break apart and depart from what is familiar in order to make sense of anything at all.

Furthermore, the visual disarray and new mode of writing creates a more disjointed reading experience, where each word needs to be freshly discovered in order for a phrase to be fully parsed. The sonic infrastructure of this passage thus comes across as a jagged, uncertain terrain, befitting the conscious cultural destruction at play—the Native American experience of being forced to learn "the language of the greatest most powerful and enterprising nationalities under the sun," in a process best described as linguistic colonialism.

Though she holds colonizers accountable, Kim makes it clear that her writing is not to be perceived as a one-sided take on the history of civil tensions; intentionality and accountability are never set in stone. She encourages complexities and grey areas, notably when she presents texts and images from the past. At one point, she takes from an entry of Fort Union's *The Settlers Ledger* from 1863: "1 pair gloves / 3 yds calico / whiskey / crackers / watch guard / 1 deck cards." She presents just a list of six items, immersed in their own mundanity, without explanation. Only the date, 1863, gives the entry historical context, but the history of Fort Union around 1863 is a complicated one. In 1862, Fort Union played a pivotal role in eliminating the Confederate threat in the West in the Battle of Glorieta Pass. Yet, in the years that followed, Fort Union also served as a base of destruction from which military campaigns against Native Americans would be launched. At once a place of refuge and a place of oppression—Kim leaves it to the reader to decide what kind of significance to place upon this list.

At another point, she captions a picture taken during the Japanese occupation of Korea: "Korean classroom, 1934 / 'King Lear' and 'Cordelia' written on the board in Japanese." Kim puts three cultures in conversation here, with Korean students being taught in Japanese about an English tragedy. It's difficult to discern who the perpetrators and who the victims are because Kim presents an image where much is left to the imagination. On a direct level, the Japanese are enforcing the use of the Japanese language on Korean schoolchildren so as to acculturate them, alienating these children

from their Korean identity to build a Japanese one. And yet, the Japanese are teaching an English text. The presence of Shakespeare in standard Japanese class material is then suggestive of a greater cultural hierarchy at work, as expressed through language.

Kim's introduction of material history in *Civil Bound*, be it through the ledger entry or this photograph, allows us to reckon with the complexity of colonial relations in a more depersonalized light. Specifically, these entries are so powerful because they are soundless. Where there is a certain comfort to the expected cacophony of the rest of the book, here we are suddenly left to fill in the blank by ourselves. We are forced to imagine the words that the teacher (whose nationality is unknown) and Korean students might have spoken, the conversation that might or might not have happened as the ledger was filled out, and what these sounds might have told about each party's origins. Kim detaches accountability from the people in these entries by silencing them and thus provides the distance needed for objective reflection.

Amidst all this disconnection, *Civil Bound* is most present and engaging when the impersonal becomes personal and Kim inserts shards of Korean. Such insertions build affective intensity because they bring Kim into the picture and allow us a more specific understanding of her particular "sonic niche," her Korean heritage. One of these moments occurs after a series of harsh-sounding English words form an aural assault: "dust residual projectile decibel atrophy preceding sunlight if / the chronoscope chronometer coroner if hands / were woven burnholes // *yi so ri.*" *Yi so ri* translates to *this sound* and feels delicate, quiet. There is still a certain ambiguity because *this sound* could either refer to the phrase *yi so ri* itself or could refer to the harsh cacophony that precedes it. But the familiarity and connection come from the pain of the phrase's silence, the idea that *this sound*, if referring to itself, exists in its own fragile sphere; and if referring to the harsh consonants that precede it, builds a sense that the harshness of another's language is no longer unfamiliar, and is instead the new normal.

Later, Kim writes, "morning pheasants *anjeonhae* / hulls of rice blown free," *anjeonhae* translating to *feeling of safety*. Whereas Kim uses English to write of destruction, only her native tongue can provide a sense of safety, even if it is in the context of "hulls of rice blown free."

Yi so ri and *anjeonhae* are the only two insertions of Korean in the whole book. And when they appear, it seems as though they are only spoken after one has become fluent in English, when one has adapted to a life where English is the language spoken on the streets and at home. In other terms, Kim only inserts *yi so ri* and *anjeonhae* when English, not Korean, is one's primary tongue and when, in the process of becoming familiarized with English, in going through life in the English language, one has lost touch

with one's original cultural nuances. These Korean words then read as retrospective, and perhaps mildly ironic in light of this adaptation because they speak to the longing for the familiarity of one's original culture, with the knowledge that one's connection to that culture has broken down in favor of a patched-up sense of belonging to another. And because such a cultural replacement through the form of language was potentially voluntary, in the case of the immigrant, it is disturbing that one's original language is a nurturing force and English is destructive, and yet the former cannot fully exist in the context of the latter.

Throughout *Civil Bound*, Kim reminds us that to know a culture is to know its language. Where language can bond people, it can also ostracize them and deprive the oppressed of a sense of complete cultural knowledge, cast them out of communal spheres of being. For language operates as a cultural barrier; one's fluency in a language is the point of entry to the culture the language exists within. The immigrant who cannot yet walk herself through an English sentence without struggling and the colonized person who is being forced to use a host language to navigate her native land can never feel as though they truly belong to whatever culture the English language is carrying with it. And they are identified as being "other" the moment they speak. This so-called "tattered conduit of jawbone and ear" pervades all oppressed people, all immigrants, and all for whom cultural change requires the sacrifice of one's original cultural identity. Though a country may claim diversity, language always serves as a channel for bias, whereby those with foreign accents are still discriminated against, and the difference between an immigrant and an expat is what their native tongue is. *Civil Bound* reminds us to reconsider the role of the English language in the everyday, to recognize it as a sphere of oppression, especially in its spoken form, and to question both historical and present conceptions that the English language is representative of upward mobility—be it political, economic, or cultural. Kim dedicates this collection in a subscript, "for my father and mother": a reminder that for every person who feels a sense of cultural belonging, there are people and sounds that had to be sacrificed for them to feel so.

Cynthia Huang

BARBARA GOLDOWSKY

Beat Poets and Zen Buddhists on the Midway

When I joined *Chicago Review* in the autumn of 1957, I was studying political science and history in preparation for a career in journalism. The two years I spent on staff turned out to be tumultuous for the *Review*—replete with accusations of obscenity, tabloid notoriety, cries of censorship, battles against the suppression of avant-garde writers, and the eventual resignation of half a dozen editors, including me.

I was Barbara Pitschel then—an immigrant, not yet a US citizen. In 1950 I had come to Chicago from Germany with my mother and my younger brother. After completing four years at Senn High School on the North Side, I attended Wilbur Wright Junior College, where I majored in journalism and worked on the student newspaper. The University of Chicago awarded me a tuition scholarship designated for "a deserving foreign-born student." My family, thrilled as I was by this splendid opportunity, moved to the South Side so that I could live at home but be close to the campus. This arrangement saved us the cost of a dormitory room. It also enabled me to work after school and contribute to the family income. I found a part-time job in the library's bindery and repair department.

I loved the political history courses that my advisor had recommended. I studied hard and read every textbook on the syllabus, which left me little time for literature. While buying a required text at the bookstore one day, I leafed through a copy of *CR* and was fascinated. I was impressed with the look and feel of the journal: the artwork on the cover, the quality paper, and the crisp printing. I was an avid reader of newspapers, but this elegant publication offered a glimpse into another world—a world of poems and stories, essays and book reviews.

"Is this published here?" I asked the salesclerk.

"Yes," he said. "It's a quarterly run by students; they feature new writing. It's seventy-five cents."

I paid for my book and the magazine. Looking over the *Review*'s

table of contents, I realized with shock that I did not recognize a single name. Here was new writing, indeed, and one immigrant who needed to catch up on contemporary US literature!

In high school and at Wright College I had read the classic poets taught in English classes: Shakespeare, Keats, Byron, Longfellow. I had read works by Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway. The most recently published fiction I had read was Herman Wouk's novel *Marjorie Morningstar*. My German childhood had familiarized me with the heroes and villains of the Brothers Grimm and the exploits of Wilhelm Busch's bad boys, Max and Moritz. Alice in Wonderland and Tom Sawyer were strangers. I knew about Stefan Zweig and Bertolt Brecht, but not about Nelson Algren or Philip Roth.

At the time, I spoke and wrote English fluently, although I could still get tripped up by colloquialisms. My knowledge of grammar and spelling was good enough to have earned me a position as a copy editor on the Wright College newspaper. I loved and admired the power and beauty of my adopted language. I felt a strong attraction to writing as an art form. If the editors of the *Review* would have me, I thought, I would join the staff.

After studying my copy of the magazine, I wrote a letter to the *Review* asking for an interview. I explained my interest in journalism and my experience at the Wright College newspaper. A short time later, I was invited to meet with Irving Rosenthal, the editor, at the *Review*'s headquarters in the Reynolds Club. I had never been inside the Reynolds tower; I pictured an office suite as grand as the imposing Gothic exterior of the building.

The red carpet and the dark oak paneling of the staircase to the second floor were as elegant as I had imagined. The large office I entered had no carpet. Several massive desks stood against the walls; bookcases held stacks of magazines and boxes filled with folders. Some of the desktops overflowed with papers; some were organized, with open-topped cartons full of bulgy envelopes standing on them.

Irving Rosenthal, a lithe, dark-haired young man with huge brown eyes, was alone in the office.

"Welcome," he said. "People come and go at different times, so there's no one else for you to meet right now. Take a seat; let's chat."

This job interview was so relaxed it made me nervous. Perhaps the *Review* did not need any additional staff at the moment. Would

I be sent on my way after a few minutes? I began talking about my political science studies and about my ambition to become a reporter.

"But I want to learn about literature as well—I mean writing as a creative art," I explained. "I haven't read much for pleasure. Required readings take a lot of time."

"I know," the editor smiled. "If you want to join us, there's a box of submissions over there that we're reading and commenting on. When we've all gone over them, we have a staff meeting and the editors make decisions. You'll like our poetry editor, Paul Carroll. He's very hip—in touch with all the new voices."

"Do you mean I can work on the *Review*?" I asked, not quite believing I had been accepted so casually.

"Yes, if you have the interest. It's all voluntary, you know. No pay, no course credits. It's a great group of people, though."

"Thank you, Mr. Rosenthal," I said. "Thank you. I'm more than happy!"

"Call me Irving. Come in whenever you have a couple of hours. Before you start reading manuscripts, look over the back issues; familiarize yourself with what we publish. When you're ready, the submissions are in the envelopes the authors send us. There's a sheet of paper for comments in each one. Write your thoughts on that and keep everything together so the manuscripts don't get mixed up."

"Yes. I'll be very careful," I said. I felt like an inexperienced swimmer who had just jumped into the English Channel determined to make it to France. Without knowing the crawl stroke.

I became very busy. I remained conscientious about my coursework and put in my usual hours at the bindery; my self-imposed effort to understand contemporary literature was completely engrossing. I spent little time with my family. After dinner at home, I prepared class assignments, collapsing into bed late and rising early the next morning.

At the *Review*, I learned that Irving Rosenthal was a doctoral student in Human Development. I could not imagine when he pursued his studies because he seemed to spend twenty-three out of twenty-four hours at the office. I met Paul Carroll, the poetry editor, and six or seven other staff members, most of them graduate students. Paul, a tall, genial man, was older than the rest of us. He was a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a published poet. He and

Irving, a native of San Francisco, regularly corresponded with Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and other members of the group called the Beats.

I had never heard of these authors, and I was relieved when other students confessed that they had not either.

"What does 'beat' mean?" I asked Irving.

"Kerouac came up with 'Beat Generation.' He says they're not the lost generation or the found generation—they're just *here*, just *beat*. You can also think of it as *be-at*, meaning open to the moment—beatific," Irving replied, and he added, "We're going to have a bunch of their work in the next issues."

I did my best to be open to the moment. As I read poems by Philip Whalen, I noticed references to Zen Buddhism. I knew that Buddhists were a major religious community, but I did not know what Zen was. Hesitant about asking too many questions, I waited for enlightenment. The poems were written in free verse—so free that in some, the words seemed to have been poured onto the page, landing wherever there was room. Careful rereading did reveal rhythmic phrasing and there were evocative images of nature. These poets lived in California, where I had never been. I wondered whether the open form of the poems reflected the spirit of the place. The spaces between the poems' words looked like deep breaths.

As decisions were made about the forthcoming issue, Irving asked me to help with copy editing. I happily agreed. It was a task I could do with confidence and feel useful.

I read through back issues and incoming manuscripts and gradually became familiar with the new writing the *Review* championed. Irving assured me that Allen Ginsberg would soon be acknowledged as one of the great poets of the twentieth century. As for the classics, my education was helped along by conversations with staff members who had read more widely than I had. They were gracious about my lack of background. When I admitted that I did not know who Cardinal John Henry Newman was, Ed Morin, one of the editors, explained the importance of the nineteenth-century divine and poet.

Still, I felt very much at sea when asked for an opinion on the literary merits of the current contributions.

The feature titled "From San Francisco" was published in the spring of 1958 (*CR* 12.1). It represented the first exposure in a major national journal, except for some work that had appeared in the *Evergreen Review*, for poems by Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Philip Lamantia, Michael McClure, and others. The issue was well received.

Our next project was another themed issue devoted to writings about Zen Buddhism—a discipline that had captivated Irving but was unfamiliar to most Americans at the time. On a balmy spring day, as I was walking across the quadrangle toward the Reynolds tower, I heard a voice from above.

"ZEN!"

I looked up. Framed in an open window on the second floor stood Irving, arms outflung, repeating, "Zen!"

"Zen!" I shouted back, adopting the new ritual greeting.

This issue, with its lovely Japanese cover art, sold well, increasing the *Review*'s circulation considerably. That summer, zori sandals, not yet mass-marketed as flip-flops, appeared on campus.

For me, summer 1958 brought the fulfillment of a dream. Early in the year, my advisor had told me that when I completed my current courses, I would meet the requirements for a BA degree. At the end of June, I received my diploma, granted by the Political Science department. It was a proud moment for my family. We had reached a milestone in our journey toward the American Dream. We were settled; we were not rich, but we were financially independent; education had proved to be achievable thanks to perseverance and a good deal of luck.

Before I had joined the *Review*, I had planned to look for a job at a newspaper immediately after graduation. Now that time had come, but I did not want to leave the university. I was enthralled by my new world of language and writing. I felt the excitement of the literary revolution that was unfurling before my eyes and I wanted to be part of it, not an outside observer. I hoped it would be possible to take graduate courses in the fall. My scholarship covered tuition for two years, but I had completed my degree in three semesters. With my mother's agreement and permission from the department chair, I changed my major to comparative literature, with a minor in German. I would start courses in the fall semester.

Meanwhile, it was summer and, as I had done every summer since high school, I sought and found a paying job with a commercial magazine working on the weekly entertainment listings. It was tedious; so different from my work at the *Review*, which was anything but.

Irving Rosenthal planned to include an excerpt from *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs in the Autumn 1958 issue, along with works by Philip Whalen, John Logan, David Riesman, and other previously published authors. Few of the staff knew anything about Burroughs. The manuscript had been recommended and sent by Ginsberg, Paul Carroll explained. It was brilliant, Irving asserted. He added, "It's raw. But great. We need to get it in shape."

I looked at the manuscript. It was a mess. Typed on flimsy onionskin paper, the text was littered with erasures, crossed-out phrases, overwritten words, and miscellaneous comments in the margins. I could find few pages that were numbered, and when I began to read, I asked if the pages were in sequence. "Not always," Irving answered.

The story, if it was a story—I couldn't seem to find a plot—was a nightmare. Drug pushers, boy prostitutes, sadistic doctors, and desperate addicts scrambled through episodes set in the slums of Tangiers. It was a dark, dark world, slashed by lightning bolts of gallows humor. The characters were like tortured figures painted by the gloomiest of the German Expressionists.

Naked Lunch was the exact opposite of the Zen writings I had begun to like, I thought. Instead of celebrating the beauty of selfless emptiness, this author plunged the reader into frenzy and despair, graphic violence and predatory sex. Instead of being invited into the calm of introspection, the reader was assaulted by obsessive, chaotic sensuality expressed in vulgar language. It was astonishing that Irving could find these vastly different styles equally attractive and meritorious. I helped him with the monstrous task of copy editing, thinking that this revolution was wide-ranging indeed.

The Autumn 1958 issue was published in September, with *Naked Lunch* prominently advertised on the cover. At first there was no adverse reaction. We continued to put together the Winter issue, which would contain even more Burroughs and work by Kerouac and Edward Dahlberg. But then, in late October, a *Chicago Daily News* columnist exploded into a tirade.

"Filthy Writing on the Midway," blared the headline of Jack Mabley's column. "Do you ever wonder what happens to little boys who scratch dirty words on railroad underpasses? They go to college and scrawl obscenities in the college literary magazine," Mabley continued.

Without naming the *Review*, the columnist berated the University of Chicago for publishing "one of the foulest collections of printed filth" he had ever seen. The editors, whom he called "juveniles," were not only "beatniks," but "evidence of the deterioration of our American society…dangerous."

Mabley concluded that the editors were too "immature and irresponsible" to be blamed. However, he strongly recommended that the trustees of the university take a long, hard look at what was being published. Not surprisingly, Chancellor Kimpton was alerted to do just that in short order.

In November, the *Chicago Tribune* picked up the story and ran an article and a photo in its Sunday magazine supplement on November 9.

"*Chicago Review* is midwest outlet for writings of beat generation," the caption reads. Irving Rosenthal, who had grown a beard that made him look like a Russian saint, is shown in the foreground, hugging a copy of the controversial magazine to his chest. Eila Kokkinen, the art editor, and I—by now the managing editor—stand behind Irving. We look quietly defiant, with a hint of amusement. Also in the background is essay editor Hyung Woong Pak, a serious Korean student. In front of him, Doris Nieder, the editorial assistant, smiles impishly.

The *Tribune* article's main point was that beatniks were a nuisance, but fortunately, most of them were already leaving Chicago and were on their way to the West Coast. The Furies, in the form of outraged trustees, a nervous administration, and a faculty advisor who had so far paid scant attention to us, were upon us within a week. Chancellor Kimpton told Irving and the staff that the Winter 1959 issue we had laid out could not be published as it stood. We could go ahead only if we removed the works by Burroughs and all the other "offensive" material and published a magazine that "a sixteen-year-old girl could read without blushing."

The alternative, we were told, was to resign.

"Blatant censorship!" Irving and Paul responded. Others added, "Suppression. Denial of free speech."

Irving Rosenthal, Paul Carroll, Charles Horwitz, Eila Kokkinen, Doris Nieder, and I resigned. Pak felt that he could produce an innocuous issue and chose to stay on as editor. I had been friendly with Pak; we had gone to the theater together and he had taught me to write my name in Korean characters. I wish I had not sneered that he was an opportunist. I should have remembered how hard it was to be a foreigner trying to make your way in an alien land.

The group of us that had resigned had no intention of letting the university bury the contents of our Winter 1959 issue. We did not keep quiet about its suppression. We made as much noise as possible, alerting the *Maroon* and the student government, as well as local and national media. Our message was that the university had engaged in censorship—an action unworthy of an institution of higher learning renowned for its liberalism. We decided to found a new magazine and to publish all of the works we had selected for the *Review* in our alternative forum. The new magazine became *Big Table*, which had to fight and win its own battles against censorship and seizure by the US Post Office.

I finished my semester of comparative literature courses and left the university in the early spring of 1959. By mid-March, when *Big Table*'s hugely successful first issue appeared, I had moved to Washington, DC, bringing with me an enduring love of literature and a passion for writing.

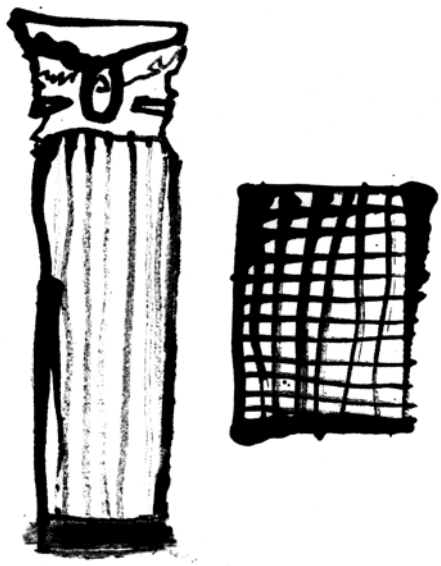
Charles Altieri (finally) retired from the English Department at UC Berkeley in July 2021 and regrets it. But looking back, it may be better than trying to produce close readers of poetry in these parlous times. He has written many books on poetry and what he considers the history of ideas, the latest of which is *Modern Poetry and the Limitations of Materialist Theory* (University of New Mexico, 2021). ◆ **Stine Su Yon An** is a poet and translator based in New York City. Her work has appeared in *Electric Literature*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Waxwing*, *World Literature Today*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA in Literary Arts from Brown University. ◆ **Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello** is the author of *Hour of the Ox* (University of Pittsburgh, 2016), which won the AWP Donald Hall Prize. She is cotranslator with E. J. Koh of *The World's Lightest Motorcycle* (Zephyr Press, 2021), by Yi Won. Her work has appeared in *Kenyon Review Online*, *Orion*, the *New York Times*, and more. Find more at www.marcicalabretta.com. ◆ **Don Mee Choi** is a poet and translator. Her most recent book, *DMZ Colony* (Wave Books, 2020), received a National Book Award for Poetry. She has edited *Yi Sang: Selected Works* (Wave Books, 2020). ◆ **Danielle Dutton**'s most recent book is the novel *Margaret the First* (Catapult, 2016). Her fiction has also appeared in *Paris Review*, *White Review*, *Guernica*, *Conjunctions*, *BOMB*, etc. She teaches at Washington University in St. Louis and is co-founder and editor of the feminist press Dorothy, a publishing project. ◆ Born in Germany, **Barbara Goldowsky** has published work that includes short stories, poems, and numerous newspaper articles. Her memoir, *Immigrant Dreams*, was published by TBR Books in August 2020. ◆ **Cathy Park Hong**'s book of creative nonfiction, *Minor Feelings*, was published in 2020 by One World/Random House (US) and Profile Books (UK). She is also the author of the poetry collections *Engine Empire* (W. W. Norton, 2012), *Dance Dance Revolution* (W. W. Norton, 2007), chosen by Adrienne Rich for the Barnard Women Poets Prize, and *Translating Mo'um* (Hanging Loose Press, 2002). Her poems have been published in *Poetry*, *A Public Space*, *Paris Review*, *McSweeney's*, *The Baffler*, *Yale Review*, *The Nation*, and other journals. She is the poetry editor of the *New Republic* and is a professor at Rutgers-Newark University. ◆ **Anton Hur**'s book translations include *Cursed Bunny* by Bora Chung (Honford Star, 2021), *Love in the Big City* by Sang Young Park (Grove Press, 2021), and *Violets* by Kyung-sook Shin (Feminist Press, 2022). He is a Korean citizen residing in Seoul. ◆ **Nathan Jefferson** is the Noir Editor at the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. ◆ **Jack Jung** is a graduate of the Iowa Writers'

Workshop where he was a Truman Capote Fellow. His translations of Korean modernist Yi Sang's poetry and prose were published by Wave Books this fall. He is currently a visiting assistant professor of English at Davidson College. ◆ **Eunsong Kim** is an arts writer, poet, translator, and assistant professor in the Department of English at Northeastern University. She is the author of *gospel of regicide* (Noemi, 2017) and with Sung Gi Kim she translated Kim Eon Hee's poetic text *Have You Been Feeling Blue These Days?* (Noemi, 2019). Her monograph, *The Politics of Collecting: Property & Race in Aesthetic Formation,* is under contract with Duke University Press. In 2021 she co-founded *offshoot*, an arts space for transnational activist conversations. ◆ **Kim Haengsook** was born in 1970 in Seoul. The poems featured here come from her most recent book, *1914*. Previous poems have appeared in English in *Asymptote* (trans. Lei Kim) and in Vagabond Press's *Poems of Kim Yideum, Kim Haengsook & Kim Min Jeong* (trans. Jiyoon Lee, Don Mee Choi, Jake Levine, and Johannes Göransson). Kim is also an essayist, critic, and scholar and teaches Korean literature at Kangnam University. ◆ **Kim Hyesoon** is one of the most prominent contemporary poets of South Korea. Her recent poetry in translation, *Autobiography of Death* (New Directions, 2018), won the 2019 International Griffin Poetry Prize. Her new collection, *Phantom Pain Wings*, is forthcoming from New Directions. ◆ **Jae Kim** is a fiction writer and a literary translator. His translation, *Cold Candies: Selected Poems of Lee Young-ju*, has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts and is forthcoming from Black Ocean. His work appears in journals such as *NOON*, *Conjunctions*, *Poetry*, and *Granta*. ◆ **Sung Gi Kim** is an award-winning journalist and photographer who writes about Asian affairs with a focus on the Korean Peninsula. He is a Korea correspondent for Thomson Reuters with his work previously seen in the *Sunday Times*, *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, and *Nikkei Asian Review*. ◆ **Won-Chung Kim** is a professor of English Literature at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, where he teaches contemporary American poetry, ecological literature, and translation. He has published articles on American and Korean poets in *ISLE*, *Foreign Literature Studies*, and *CLCweb*. He also co-edited *East Asian Ecocriticisms: A Critical Reader* with Simon Estok (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). His book *Food Ecology* was published in 2018 by Geobook. He has translated twelve books of Korean poetry including Chiha Kim's *Heart's Agony* (White Pine, 1998), *Because of the Rain: Korean Zen Poems* (White Pine, 2006), and *Cracking the Shell: Three Korean Ecopoets* into English (Homa & Sekey, 2005). He has also translated John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* and H. D. Thoreau's *Natural History Essays* into Korean. His first book of poetry, *I Thought It Was a Door*, was published in 2014. ◆ **E. J. Koh** is the author of the memoir *The Magical Language of Others* (Tin

House Books, 2020), winner of the Pacific Northwest Book Award and longlisted for the PEN Open Book Award, and the poetry collection *A Lesser Love* (Louisiana State University, 2017), winner of the Pleiades Press Editors Prize for Poetry. She is the translator, with Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello, of Yi Won's *The World's Lightest Motorcycle* (Zephyr Press, 2021). Her poems, translations, and stories have appeared in *AGNI*, *Boston Review*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Poetry*, *Slate*, and elsewhere. ◆ **David Krolikoski** is an assistant professor of Korean literature at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His scholarship has appeared in *Japanese Language and Literature* and *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture*. He is currently preparing a book manuscript, tentatively titled *Lyrical Translation: The Creation of Modern Poetic Language in Colonial Korea*. ◆ **Youna Kwak** is a poet, translator, and teacher based in Southern California. She is the author of a book of poetry, *sur vie* (Fathom Books, 2020), and two books of translation, *Gardeners*, by Véronique Bizot (Diálogos, 2017), and *Daewoo: A Novel*, by François Bon, (Diálogos, 2020). ◆ Based in Seoul, **Fi Jae Lee** received her BFA and MFA at School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has been practicing the technique of Korean traditional Buddhist paintings since 2008. Her paintings and sculptures have been featured in many exhibitions including sixteen solo shows, held in Korea, Japan, France and the United States. ◆ **Young-Jun Lee**, professor of the Humanitias College, Kyung Hee University, works as editor-in-chief of *AZALEA: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture*, published by the Korea Institute, Harvard University. He received a PhD from Harvard University for his study on Kim Suyŏng and Korean literature, and before coming back to Seoul, taught at Harvard University, University of California, Berkeley, and University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has published numerous essays and translations, including *Collected Original Manuscripts of Kim Suyŏng's Poetry* (2009) and *Collected Works of Kim Suyŏng* (2018). ◆ **Ben Miller** is the author of *River Bend Chronicle: The Junkification of a Boyhood Idyll amid the Curious Glory of Urban Iowa* (Lookout Books, 2013). His writing has appeared in *Best American Essays* and *Best American Experimental Writing*. ◆ **Patrick Morrissey**'s third book of poems, *Light Box*, is forthcoming from Verge Books in 2022. He was the poetry editor of *Chicago Review* from 2014 to 2016. ◆ **Erín Moure**'s translation of Galician poet Lupe Gómez's *Camouflage* (Circumference, 2019) was a finalist for a 2020 Best Translated Book Award. Her latest translations are Uxío Novoneyra's *The Uplands: Book of the Courel and other poems* (Veliz, 2020) from Galician and *This Radiant Life* (Book*hug, 2020) from the French of Chantal Neveu. ◆ **Chus Pato** is one of Europe's greatest contemporary poets and an indispensable force in Galician and Spanish culture. *Un Libre Favor*, her twelfth book, will appear in Fall 2021 from Veliz Books as

The Face of the Quartzes. ◆ **Daniel Poppick** is the author of *Fear of Description* (Penguin, 2019), a winner of the National Poetry Series, and *The Police* (Omnidawn, 2017). His poems appear in *BOMB*, *The Canary*, *Yale Review*, *Harvard Review*, *Harper's*, and other journals. He lives in Brooklyn, where he works as a copywriter and co-edits the Catenary Press. ◆ **Christopher Randall** brings up a two-year-old below Mount Sneffels and thinks about Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. His poems are in *Fence* and *New American Writing*. ◆ **Sandra Simonds** is a poet and critic. Her eighth book of poems, a collection of triptychs, will be published by Wave Books in 2022. Her forthcoming novel, *Assia* (Noemi Press, 2023) is based on the life of Assia Wevill. ◆ **Stephen Hong Sohn** is professor of English at Fordham University. ◆ **Soje** is the translator of Lee Hyemi's *Unexpected Vanilla* (Tilted Axis Press, 2020), Choi Jin-young's *To the Warm Horizon* (Honford Star, 2021), and Lee Soho's *Catcalling* (Open Letter Books, 2021). They also make *chogwa*, a quarterly e-zine featuring one Korean poem and multiple English translations. ◆ **Song Seunghwan** is an award-winning South Korean poet-critic. His published poetry collections include *Dry Ice*, *Chloroform*, and *If You Are Then May You Be*. He has also written two books of literary criticism, *Sense of Flanc-Garde* and *Outside of the Whole*. He currently serves on the creative writing faculty at Seoul Institute of the Arts. ◆ **Matvei Yankelevich** is a poet, translator, and editor whose books include *Some Worlds for Dr. Vogt* (Black Square, 2015), *Alpha Donut* (United Artists, 2012), *Boris by the Sea* (Octopus, 2009), *Today I Wrote Nothing: The Selected Writings of Daniil Kharms* (Overlook, 2007), and, most recently, the chapbook *From a Winter Notebook* (Alder & Frankia, 2021). ◆ **Yi Sang** (1910–1937) was a Korean poet and writer during the Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula who engaged with Surrealism and Dada. He died at age 27, when his tuberculosis worsened after imprisonment by Japanese police in Tokyo. His writings became his legacy, having influenced generations of Korean writers and artists. *Yi Sang: Selected Works* is published by Wave Books. ◆ **Yi Yunyi** studied Korean poetry in the Creative Writing Department at the Seoul Institute of the Arts and received her BFA in Fine Arts and MFA in Combined Media from the Studio Art Department at Hunter College in New York. She has held the solo exhibitions *A Son Older Than His Father* (DOOSAN Gallery, New York, 2021), *All Survived* (DOOSAN Gallery, Seoul, 2019), *CLIENT* (Art Sonje Center Project Space, Seoul, 2018), and *A Round Turn and Two Half-Hitches* (Insa Art Space, Seoul, 2014). ◆ **Yoo Heekyung** 유희경 is a South Korean poet and playwright. He is the author of *Oneul achim daneo* (2011), *Dangsinui jari - namuro jaraneun bangbeop* (2013), *Uriege jamsi sinieotdeon* (2018), and other collections. He is a playwright with the theater company 독 (dock) and a member of the poetry collective

작란 (作亂) (jaknan). In 2019 Yoo was awarded the Hyundae Munhak Sang (Contemporary Literature Award) for his poetry. He runs wit n cynical, a series of poetry bookstores and project spaces in Seoul. ◆ **Emily Jungmin Yoon** is the author of *A Cruelty Special to Our Species* (Ecco, 2018) and *Ordinary Misfortunes* (Tupelo Press, 2017). She has also translated and edited a chapbook of poems, *Against Healing: Nine Korean Poets* (Tilted Axis, 2019). She is the Poetry Editor for *The Margins*, the literary magazine of the Asian American Writers' Workshop, and a PhD candidate in Korean literature at the University of Chicago. ◆ **Mia You** was born in Seoul, Korea, raised in Northern California, and currently lives in Utrecht, the Netherlands. She is the author of *I, Too, Dislike It* (1913 Press, 2016) and previously translated Korean poet Jeong Ho-seung and Dutch poets Hannah van Binsbergen and Maarten van der Graaff. She teaches English literature at Utrecht University.



CORRECTION

Our last issue (64:1/2/3) regretfully miscredited the drawing by Robert Duncan on p. 195:

Robert Duncan, "For Gui" (crayon on paper, n.d.). Courtesy of Harry Bernstein & Caren Meghreblian. Photographed by Richard Friedman.