

Kalyna Review - Spring 2014

Editorial

Poetry:

Benny Anderson -
translated by Michael Goldman

Naomi Foyle

Naomi Foyle -
translated by Ihor Pavlyuk

Marcial Gala -
translated by Rosie Marteau

Jen Karetnick

Taylor Mali

Race MoChridhe

Christopher Mulrooney

Taras Shevchenko -
translated by Myroslav Petriw

Gary Swain

Prose:

At the Bardo Bar -
translated extract by J T Mahany

Review

Cello by Sean Street



Welcome to the launch of the first issue of Kalyna Review

If you visit Whitby in North Yorkshire and stand in the soft, velvety grass among the ruined abbey then you are treading the earth where Caedmon, the first English poet, walked. Caedmon was a lay brother who tended to the animals at the monastery. When the monks gathered to sing and play harp one evening he left them because he knew no songs, and laid down to sleep. He was taught the poem that bears his name, Caedmon's hymn, in a dream. He teaches us that sometimes in order to speak we need to listen to the voice within "the real man, the imagination, that liveth for ever and ever."

Caedmon could not have imagined how the nine line poem he wrote could have echoed from the seventh century onwards. The English language writers we have collated in this edition are in a sense his successors. Heaney certainly recognised Caedmon as a predecessor but famously protested at his inclusion in an anthology of "British" poetry. However, English has escaped Englishness and the English and become a language wherein many nations have found part of their voice. The "Englishes" in the selection of poets here, include an English that is also Irish and English that is American and Canadian. We have not edited the work to make it our version of English, Northern English, but respected the language of our authors.

Kalyna Review aims to be part of what we could call the global "multilogue", the conversation between each of us. If there are several Englishes, there are also several varieties of Spanish and of other languages. Our translated pieces include poems written in Cuban Spanish and poems in Danish and French. This multilogue is impossible without translation and the mind and heart of the translator is the place where different cultures encounter each other.

The review also includes poems translated into Ukrainian because part of its purpose is to facilitate Ukraine's cultural dialogue with the English world. We hope that the work that appears here is read in New York and Tokyo, but it will definitely appear on laptop screens in Kharkiv, Lviv and Kyiv.

Mark Musa once said that anyone reading a translation must hear the voice of the translator but that the translator must have listened carefully to the voice of the author. This edition of Kalyna Review contains work by literary translators who have allowed the words of the author to echo within themselves and tried to find the right pitch in their own voice. The task of the literary translator can seem like that of the ferryman to the afterlife bearing the soul of the writer between worlds. There are, however, so many technical nuances, so much effort can be invested in a single line, that translating a text becomes exhausting. However, through translation, the literary traditions of different nations speak and enrich each other. T. S. Eliot enriched English poetry with techniques adopted from French symbolism and English literature was shaped by the legacy of the Classics.

We hope you enjoy the first issue of Kalyna Review and stay with us as the journal develops.

Benny Anderson

About the writer

Benny Andersen is the foremost living poet and lyricist in Denmark. First published in 1960, he has produced 20 volumes of poetry along with numerous recordings, stories, screenplays and children's books. His works are renowned for their humor, expressionistic wordplay and colloquial depth. He has won a great number of literary and musical honors, including the Danish National Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement. Now 83, he continues to write and to perform to sold-out audiences in Denmark. He lives on the outskirts of Copenhagen.

About the translator

Michael Goldman taught himself Danish over 25 years ago to help him win the heart of a lovely Danish girl - and they have been married ever since. Recently he has found another use for his love of language - to bring across the Atlantic yet another Danish treasure: the poetry of Benny Andersen. His translations have appeared in numerous journals, including The Los Angeles Review, The Massachusetts Review and The Cincinnati Review. In addition to translating, Michael is a Carpenter/Contractor and jazz clarinetist. He lives in Florence, Massachusetts, USA.

Brændehugning

Midt i Norge står en musiker
og hugger brænde til sin søn.
man kan ikke se han er musiker
eller at han er dansker,
som han står der i skibukser
og i sin norske genser
og flækker norsk fyrretræ:
først flækker med kile og mukkert
så videre med øksen
derpå deling med saven
og til sidst med øksen
den endelig udformning
af stykker der passer til ovnen
i den lille hytte han har lejet.
Han spiller på højfjeldshotellet
men bor i denne hytte
foreløbig alene.
Af og til kan han lugte
den søde syrlige duft af fyr
især når han bruger saven
(en Sandviken Enmands-skovsav)
men det er ganske flygtigt
for lugtesansen er næsten lammet
af atten graders frost.
Men solen skinner og himlen er klar
og her er fuldstændig vindstille
så han fryser ikke selv om
han ikke har noget på hodet.
Og det gir også varme
at svinge økse og mukkert.
Han passer nøje på når han saver
ikke at save i fingrene
for dem skal han bruge i aften
når der spilles op til dans på hotellet.
Det er den første marts

nittensyvoghalvtreds
og hans søn er nøjagtig en måned gammel
og hans søn skal ikke fryse
derfor hugger han brænde
nok til adskillige dage.
Han har aldrig set sin søn
men har dog fejret hans fødsel
sammen med saxofonisten
med trommeslageren
og trommeslagerens kone
og trommeslagerens datter
der er syv år ligesom hans egen datter
og en kvindelig kok og en kelner
som de er gode venner med.
Det blev en munter nat.
Han vidste nok den dag
at det var ved at ske
men blev alligevel forbavset
da han fik telegram fra sin mor:
"Til lykke med drenge" stod der.
"Drengen" tænkte han forbavset
men regnede hurtigt ud
at barnet var blevet en dreng.
Det var en sær fornemmelse
at ha et ukendt barn i det fjerne
uden at kunne se det
uden at kunne sige god dag
derfor gik han den følgende måned
mere på ski end ellers
og huggede mere brænde end før
så den lille plads foran hytten
nu var fuld af brændestabler
nok til mange dage
men han blir alligevel ved
har svært ved at holde op
fordi han er så spændt på at se
og røre ved sit barn.

Der går endnu et par dage før
de kommer med toget fra Oslo hertil,
hans kone og datter med drengen.
Hvad mon han skal hedde
bortset fra efternavnet?
Solen går om bag en fjeldtop
og selvom der stadig ikke er skyer
kommer der enkelte snefnug
dalende lodret ned
på en musiker midt i Norge
der blir ved at hugge brænde.
Hans søn skal ikke fryse.

Benny Andersen ©1976

Chopping wood

In the middle of Norway there stands a musician
chopping wood for his son.
You can't tell that he's a musician
or that he's Danish,
as he stands there in ski pants
and his Norwegian sweater
splitting Norwegian spruce:
split first with a wedge and maul
followed with the axe
then cut to length with the saw
and lastly the axe
for final shaping
into pieces that fit the stove
in the little cabin he's rented.
He plays in the fjeld hotel
but lives in this cabin
alone for the time being.
Once in a while he can smell
the sweet acidic fragrance of pine
especially when he uses the saw
(a Sandvik one-man foresters saw)

but it is fairly elusive
since the sense of smell is almost paralyzed
by 0 degrees Fahrenheit.
But the sun is shining the sky is clear
and there is no wind
so he's not cold even with
nothing on his head.
And it warms him
to swing the axe and maul.
He pays attention when he saws
so he doesn't cut his fingers
because he's going to need them tonight
when they play for dancing at the hotel.
It is the first of March
nineteen fifty-seven
and his son is exactly one month old
and his son is not going to be cold
that's why he's chopping wood
enough for numerous days.
He has never seen his son
but he's celebrated his birth
with the saxophone player
the drummer
and the drummer's wife
and the drummer's daughter
who is seven just like his own daughter
and a female cook and a waiter
that they are good friends with.
It was a lively night.
He was aware that day
that it was about to happen
but still was surprised
when he got a telegram from his mother:
"Congratulations. It's a boy." it read.
"Boy?" he thought, surprised
but quickly figured out
that the baby was a boy.

It was a strange feeling
having an unknown baby far away
not being able to see it
not being able to say hello
that's why for the next month
he went skiing more than usual
and chopped wood more than before
so the little patio in front of the cabin
was now full of stacked firewood
enough for many days
but he keeps going anyway
can't stop
because he's so excited to see
and hold his child.

There's still a few days before
they arrive on the train from Oslo,
his wife and daughter and son.

What will they call him
aside from his last name?

The sun goes behind the top of a fjeld
and even though there still are no clouds
a few snowflakes begin
to drop straight down
on a musician in the middle of Norway
who keeps chopping wood.
His son is not going to be cold.

By Benny Andersen ©1976 "Brøndehugning"
Translated by Michael Goldman

Noget at leve op till

Jeg tæller ikke ligefrem mine døde
noterer mig bare at tallet stiger støt
men hvad er døde tal
mod sprældøde venner

Jeg har ikke noget imod døde
nogle af mine bedste venner er døde
det påfaldende er blot deres
usvækkende livskraft
modsat adskillige nulevende som er
mere døde end levende
jeg kender flere uafdøde
som keder mig til døde
mens de rigtige døde
de professionelle
har det med at gå igen
på uventede tidspunkter
blander sig i alt
sætter skub i en kedelig samtale
får syrener til at blomstre midt om vinteren
kalder latter frem under en tandudtrækning
kalder vreden frem under en blodfattig TV-reklame
får en til at læse den bog igen
som man ellers havde svoret aldrig
at ville læse mere
minder en om at Limfjorden er til
at man har oplevet ufattelige nordlys
at regn kan smage forskelligt

Otte ti sprøde toner
og jeg mærker dit solvarme hår
kilde mig i øret
og dit unge mund mod mine læber

En duft af terpentiner

klassens tykke dreng
du sårbare grinebider
vi forsøgte engang at blande blod
men kom til at grine og opgav
og vi jublede af grin ved at opdage
at en skovrider kunne udtales som sko-vrider

Derpå farvehandlerlærling
udvandrede til Amerika
lige tidsnok til at komme med i Koreakrigen
som du aldrig ville tale om
men ellers tyk og glad til det sidste
da du sank sammen i din lille japanske kones arme

En blomstrende hybenbusk
en lyshåret pige med rolige
smilende bevægelser
leukæmi
fem år

Piberøg og porsesnaps
skipperlabskovs og Ella Fitzgerald
hos Tut og Arne i Brønshøj
og det klaver der gabede som en flodhest
man blev nødt til at spille for at stoppe kæften på det
men hvordan bar man sig ad med at danse samtidig
og diskutere Ouspenski og den fjerde dimension
og Buddha og Huxley og Eartha Kitt
og Freud og Kafka og PH og Liva Weel
og når vi hørte de første fuglefløjt
og lugtede nyhentede rundstykker
nåede udmattelsen det punkt
hvor den udmattet af sig selv
kammede over i hidtil ukendt vågenhed
klaveret begyndte at spille på sig selv
dansen dansede sig selv
skodder sprang op fra ens øjne

og jeres ansigter var så smukke og kloge
at man blev nødt til at kaste en kurvestol
tværs gennem den fjerde dimension
ud på terrassen samtidig med at man
ene mand tostemmig afsang
Underlige aftenlufte
og Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgotten
for ikke at blive rablende sindssyg

En sagte raslen i birkens blade
en solsort der standser og kigger på en
en linje i et gammelt digt
en særlig revne i en flise
kan vise sig at være lyssprækker
ind til mit skøre Hades
befolket med elskede spøgelse

Visse genspenster har meget smukke bryster
en mørk og gylden latter
andre er noget ved musikken
for tiden har man et gengangerband
bestående af harmonika og guitar
trommer og tenorsax
violin og cello
plus hele to bassister
de spiller en slags fusionsmusik
jazz og Mozart
sømandsvals og reggae
Carl Nielsen med afrobeat

Jeg frygter ikke de døde
jeg frygter mere de levende
som godt kan ta livsmodet fra mig
men de døde gir mig oplevelser for livet
åh hvad var livet uden jer
mine utrættelige vejledere i
hvor levende livet kan være

og så swinger det oven i købet

Dog må jeg passe en smule på
de står altid og mangler en pianist
og dér står jeg altså af.

Benny Andersen ©1993

Something to live up to

I don't actually count my dead
just notice that the amount is increasing sharply
but what are dead numbers
compared with dead-and-kicking friends

I have nothing against the dead
some of my best friends are dead
what strikes me is just their
unfailing life-energy
compared to numerous living that are
more dead than alive
I know more not-dead
who bore me to death
while the really dead
the professional
have a habit of arising
at unexpected moments
meddling in everything
putting some heat into a boring conversation
getting the lilacs to bloom in the middle of the winter
calling forth laughter during a tooth extraction
calling forth anger during an anemic TV commercial
getting me to read that book again
that I otherwise had sworn never
to read anymore
reminding me that the Limfjord

exists

that I have experienced inconceivable northern lights
that rain can taste different

Eight nine crisp tones
and I feel your sun-warmed hair
tickle my ear
and your young mouth against my lips

A smell of turpentine
our grade's fat boy
you vulnerable giggler
we tried once to mix our blood
but started laughing and gave up
and we laughed ourselves silly when we discovered
that bachelor of arts could be pronounced like bachelor o' farts
Then paint company trainee
emigrated to America
just in time to get into the Korean War
which you would never talk about
but otherwise fat and happy to the end
when you collapsed into your little Japanese wife's arms

A flowering beach-rose bush
a light-haired girl with easy
smiling movements
leukaemia
five years old

Pipe smoke and aquavit
captain's stew and Ella Fitzgerald
with Tut and Arne in Brønshøj
and that piano that yawned like a hippopotamus
you had to play it to gag its mouth
but how did we manage to dance while
discussing Ouspenski and the fourth dimension
and Buddha and Huxley and Eartha Kitt

and Freud and Kafka and Piet Hein and Liva Weel
and when we heard the first bird song
and smelled the fresh bakery rolls
our exhaustion reached the point
where it exhausted itself
crested over into hitherto unknown awakesness
the piano started playing itself
the dance danced itself
shutters sprang open in front of my eyes
and your faces were so beautiful and intelligent
that I had to throw a wicker chair
through the fourth dimension
out onto the porch while I
alone sang the duet finale
Strange evening air
and Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot
so as not to become a babbling idiot

A quiet rustle in the birch tree
a blackbird stops and looks at me
a line in an old poem
a peculiar break in a paving stone
can turn out to be chinks
into my crazy Hades
populated by beloved ghosts

Certain specters have very beautiful breasts
a dark and golden laughter
others are distinguished
for now I've got a zombie band
consisting of accordion and guitar
drums and tenor sax
violin and cello
even two bassists
they play a kind of fusion music
jazz and Mozart
maritime waltzes and reggae

carl Nielsen with an afro beat

I'm not afraid of the dead
I'm more afraid of the living
that so easily can sap my zest for life
but the dead give me lifelong experiences
oh, what would life be without you all
my tireless guides in
how full of life life can be
and it swings like crazy, too

But I've got to be a little careful
they're always needing a pianist
but that's where I draw the line.

By Benny Anderson copyright 1993

Translated by Michael Goldman

Avismanden i Speightstown

Hver dag sin ny avis
gårsdagens forældet
men avismanden holder noget længere

Efter en måned i Danmark
vendte jeg tilbage til Barbados
gik hen til min gamle belevne avismand
for at købe aviser som tilforn

De fleste her køber enten
NATION eller ADVOCATE
jeg køber gerne begge

Ved synet af mig
på tyve skridts afstand
folder han de to aviser sammen

men spørger som sædvanlig høfligt

Begge?

Jeg nikker og betaler

som om det var i går jeg var her

som om en måned eller

en dag kom ud på ét

og mens jeg slentrer vedere i formiddagsheden

ad den smalle hovedgade

i Speightstown på Barbados

i gadens skyggeside

sidder jeg og klimprer på det gamle hvide flygel

i restaurant Chez Ankerfeldt på Frederiksberg

i begyndelsen af '60erne

som om det var i nat

som om 35 år eller

en nat kom ud på ét

det var tidlig på natten

de få spredte gæster lyttede

til mine fingres ferme færden

gennem kendte toners verden

mens bartendersken Oda og jeg mest lyttede

til hver en gang at døren gik

og endelig gik den

døren

ind træder en lille kraftig mand

som vi ikke har set i et års tid

hvor han har arbejdet i Grønland

straks slår jeg over i et forspil til Stardust

som jeg plejer når han kommer

og samtidig bestiller han hos Oda

en guldøl til musikken som han plejer

og vi skåler som sædvanlig

som om det var i går

som om et år eller

en dag kom ud på ét

nu kommer flere gæster

omsider lidt gang i det gamle nattesæde

den lange lune jyde i hjørnet ved baren
med ny dame på eller
den samme med ny frisure
han skal også ha sin kendingsmelodi
Din hjerte er i fare, Andresen
som jeg spillede hver aften
i 1949 på Palads Bar i Esbjerg
mit første job som barpianist
som om det var i går aftes
som om 47 år eller
en dag kom ud på ét
bartender Ole kommer som sædvanlig
med en gin & tonic til musikken
jeg drikker ikke sprut i Niogfyrre
så det er gin + tonic minus gin
og senere afregner Ole med mig
for flere deciliter udrukke gin
fiktiv og dog kontant
jeg savner ikke spiritus her
i Nittenniogfyrre
er på forhånd beruset af glæde
bare ved at være til stede
for første gang rejst hjemmefra
for første gang i Jylland
først skrækslagen ved tanken om
at ende ved verdens ende
blandt uforståelige uforstående indfødte
men det modsatte skete
straks følte jeg mig hjemme mellem folk
der alle talte som min kære tante
Tante Martha som jeg havde kendt og elsket
fra min tiders morgen
Tante Martha som jeg var i pleje hos
hver gang mor var på sygehuset
Tante Martha hvis hvæse stemme jeg faldt i søvn til
Tante Martha som tog mig med i bad næste morgen
i et rigtigt hvidt emaljebadekar

Tante Martha den første kvinde jeg
fire år gammel så nogen
gennem flager af sæbeskum
men klart og uforglemmeligt
Tante Martha hvis cigaretrustne sprog jeg elskede
inden jeg mødte det Jylland hun kom fra
og nu sidder jeg her i Esbjerg
som ikke er verdens ende
men dens skummende navle
hvor alle taler Tante Martha'sk
og tilsammen i løbet af aftenen ryger
næsten lige så mange smøger
som Tante Martha på en lille times tid
men nu kommer Ole ned til klaveret
med nok en ginfri gin & tonic
en opfordring ovre fra det lange bord
det gibber i mig ved at høre titlen
jeg husker prompte frem til 1996
som var det i morgen
som om 47 år eller
en aften kom ud på ét
en aften på Barbados
et privat småkedeligt party
flyglet lidt mindre og hvidere
end det i Chez Ankerfeldt
jeg er slæbt med fordi jeg kan spille på det
lod mig slæbe med fordi jeg
i lang tid har lidt af klaverabstinenser
spiller lidt evergreens a la Garner
føler mine fingre snappe efter tangenter
som den druknende efter luft
indtil værten med fornavnet Owen
en ældre velholdt brite
med skarptskårne træk i det
garvede rødmossede ansigt
førhen squadron commander i Royal Air Force
afbryder mig (naturligvis på engelsk):

De spiller ganske fortrinligt
Jeg hører De er fra Danmark
Lidt yngre end jeg vil jeg mene
Gad vide om De er gammel nok til at huske
(her slår har over i fejlfrit dansk)
Nu skinner solen igen på vor lile jord--?
Det tar mig kun sekunder at kalde
melodien frem i forreste fingre
og udprinte denne slager fra 1945
befrielsesåret da den unge Owen
i Montgomerys kølvand erobrede
danskernes og ikke mindst københavnernes hjerter
nu er der glæde og forår på ny
da unge Owen oplevede sin gyldneste ungdom
og eftersom en gammel RAF-pilot
ikke får tårer i de smalle hvasse øjne
kniber han dem bare mere sammen
Well done--- very well indeed
og begynder udførligt at beskrive
præcisionsbombardementet af Shellhuset
hvordan de fik prikket bomberne ind
på de etager hvor Gestapo holdt til
mens tagetagen hvor ledende modstandsfolk
var anbragt som gidsler mod bombeangre
stort set gik fri
og det samme gjorde de
og han går lavmælt videre
stadig med eksakte førstehåndsdetaljer
beretter om den grufulde udgang
hvor så mange børn på den franske skole
blev ofre for venligtsindede bomber
det hele gik så hurtigt
jeg så kun røgen af det
fra fjerde sal i Gutenbergshus
den pludselig dag i marts '45
som 14-årige kontorbud
i varmemålerfirmaet Odin Clorius

som om det var i dag
som om 51 år eller
tre minutter kom ud på ét
sireneren har endnu ikke lydt
Owen og de andre har hele vejen
sydfra langs Øresund holdt sig
lige under tyskernes radarniveau
men vi her på kontoret har for to sekunder siden
hørt motorlyden nærme sig
og den lyd kommer ikke fra tyske maskiner
(de to der var tilbage)
alle hen til vinduerne
hvor det forbandede Rundetårn
som jeg ellers elske tårnhøjt
står i vejen for udsynet men
de fjerne dumpe drøn går vi ikke
glip af og en høj tynd røgsky idet
Owens eller en anders jagerbomber
skyder lodret op i rummet bagved Rundetårn
slår en sløjfe i luften
retter op og forsvinder
mod Vesterbro
Valby eller Frederiksberg
og nu
først nu
hyler alle luftsirener
lidt sent at gå i kælderen
men heldigvis snart tid til min daglige tur
på Long-John-cykel ud til Vester Fælledvej
for at hente en kasse Calorius-varmemålere
med nye omveje uden om det ryggede Shellhus
bevogtet af skydeklare gøende grønne
videre mod synet af røg og damp for enden
af en forandret Frederiksberg Allé
nærmere og nærmere den stramme stank
som af brændte cykeldæk eller tagpap eller
når man har glemt at tænde for gasapparatet

stærkere og stærkere op til Platanvej
hvor der er afspærret videre frem
hvor lysledninger hænger slatne ned over alleen
hvor halvt forkullede papirark
sejler formålsløst rundt i luftens lilla røg
to tre ambulancer er allerede kommet
flere kan høres på vej hertil men ellers
kun dæmpede lyde
folk løber hid og did men ingen råber
det er som om de lytter efter noget eller nogen
der inde bag disen eller røgen og lugten
og skønt jeg først senere hører om forældre
der nu tavse og blege går rundt og leder
efter børnene derinde bag røgen og stilheden
føler jeg med ét min mors bekymring og angst
må skynde mig hjem til Søborg kl. fire
(omsonst at ringe hjem
da der går cirka ti år
før vi får telefon)
for at vise mig i live
rigt udstyret med øjenvidneskildringer
familiens midtpunkt for en dag eller to
med sidst nyt før Aftenbladet
som jeg for resten må huske at købe
til far plus en æske cerutter
tre Golf hos cigarhandler Meyer overfor
på hjørnet af Søborghus Allé
mærker nu avisen under venstre arm
undrer mig lidt
har jeg allerede købt Aftenbladet
folder ud og ser hele to aviser
Advocate og Nation som jeg plejer
vender mig forbavset og ser et stykke borte
min avismand stå og handle og snakke
med lokale folk på Queen's Street her i Speightstown
på Barbados i Vestindien i denne skøre verden
hvor solen står højt her sidst på formiddagen

i april 1996
jeg skynder mig med minibussen
hjem til min kone
må berolige hende
og ikke mindst mig selv
jeg slap dog heldigt fra det
er lidt ældre efterhånden
men stadigvæk i live når det gælder.

Benny Andersen ©1996

The Newspaperman in Speightstown

Every day a new paper
yesterday's is obsolete
but the newspaperman lasts a while longer

After a month in Denmark
I returned to Barbados
walked to my old courteous newspaperman
to buy papers as before

Most people here buy either
the Nation or the Advocate
I like to buy both

At the sight of me
twenty steps away
he folds the two newspapers
but asks as usual politely
Both?
I nod and pay
as if it were yesterday I had been here
as if a month or
a day were rolled into one
and while I stroll on in the late morning heat

down the narrow main street
in Speightstown on Barbados
on the shady side of the street
I am sitting and plunking on the old white grand piano
in the restaurant Chez Ankerfeldt in Frederiksberg
in the early '60's
as if it were tonight
as if 35 years or
a night were rolled into one
it was early in the evening
a few scattered guests listened
to my fingers' adroit advances
through the known world of musical tones
while the female bartender Oda and I mostly listened
to every time the door opened
and finally it opened
the door
in walks a small powerful man
that we had not seen for a year or so
when he was working in Greenland
immediately I switch over to a lead-in to Stardust
like I usually do when he arrives
and at the same time he orders from Oda
a strong beer for the piano player as he usually does
and we toast as usual
as if it were yesterday
as if a year or
a day were rolled into one
now in come more patrons
getting to be some life in the old after-hours joint
the tall, wry Jutlander in the corner by the bar
with a new lady or
the same one with a new hairdo
he'll also have to have his signature song
You're too dangerous, Cherie
which I played every night
in 1949 at the Palace Bar in Esbjerg

my first job as a bar pianist
as if it were last night
as if 47 years or
one day were rolled into one
bartender Ole comes over as usual
with a gin and tonic for the piano player
I don't drink booze in forty-nine
so it's gin plus tonic minus gin
and later Ole settles up with me
for several deciliters of undrunk gin
fictitious and in cash
I don't miss alcohol here
in nineteen forty-nine
I am already drunk with happiness
just to be present
for the first time away from home
for the first time in Jutland
at first scared to death at the thought of
ending up at the world's end
among incomprehensible uncomprehending natives
but the opposite happened
I quickly felt at home among people
who all talked like my dear aunt
Aunt Martha who I had known and loved
since the dawn of my days
Aunt Martha who would take care of me
every time my mother was in the hospital
Aunt Martha whose hoarse voice I would fall asleep to
Aunt Martha who put me in the bath with her the next morning
in a real white enamel bathtub
Aunt Martha the first woman I
four years old ever saw naked
through floes of soap suds
but clearly and unforgettably
Aunt Martha whose cigarette-rusted language I loved
before I met the Jutland she came from
and then here I sit in Esbjerg

which is not the world's end
but it's bustling hub
where everyone speaks Aunt Martha-ish
and during the course of an evening smokes
almost as many cigarettes
as Aunt Martha did in an hour
but here comes Ole over to the piano
with one more gin-free gin and tonic
a request from over at the long table
it gives me a jolt just hearing the title
immediately I remember forward to 1996
as if it were tomorrow
as if 47 years or
an evening were rolled into one
an evening on Barbados
a private somewhat boring party
the grand piano a bit smaller and whiter
than the one at Chez Ankerfeldt
they dragged me along because I could play it
I let myself be dragged because I
had been suffering for a long time from piano abstinence
I play some standards a la Garner
feel my fingers snatching at the keys
like someone drowning gasping for air
until the host by the name of Owen
an older well-preserved Brit
with sharply defined features
tan red-cheeked face
previously squadron commander in the Royal Air Force
interrupts me (naturally in English)
You play quite splendidly
I hear you are from Denmark
A bit younger than I, I would guess
I wonder if you are old enough to remember
(here he switches over to perfect Danish)
Now the sun shines again on our little land—1
It takes me a few seconds to call forth

the melody in my lead fingers
and turn out this hit from 1945
liberation year when the young Owen
in Montgomery's wake conquered
the hearts of the Danish people and especially of Copenhageners
now there is joy and spring again
when young Owen experienced the most golden days of his youth
and since an old RAF pilot
doesn't get tears in his small keen eyes
he just squeezes them together a little more
Well done—very well indeed
and starts to describe in detail
the precision bombing of the Shell House
how they slipped in the bombs
on those floors the Gestapo occupied
while the top floor where the leaders of the resistance
were kept as hostages to deter bombing raids
pretty much went unharmed
as did they
and he continues on in a subdued voice
still with exact first-hand details
recounts the horrific aftermath
where so many children at the French School
became victims of the well-intentioned bombs
everything happened so fast
I only saw the smoke from it
from the fourth floor of the Gutenberg House
that sudden day in March '45
as a 14-year-old office boy
in the thermostat company Odin Clorius
as if it were today
as if 51 years or three minutes were rolled into one
the sirens haven't yet sounded
Owen and the others all the way
from the south along the Sound have held themselves
just under the Germans' radar level
but here at the office just two seconds ago

we heard the motor noise coming closer
and that noise doesn't come from German machines
(the two that were left)
everyone to the windows
where the damned Round Tower
that I otherwise love to the high heavens
is right in the way of our view but
the distant dull blasts we did not
miss and a high thin smoke cloud when
Owen's or another's bomber
shoots straight up into the sky behind the Round Tower
ties a bow in the air
levels out and disappears
towards Vesterbro
Valby or Frederiksberg
and now
only now
all the air sirens start howling
a little late to go to the basement
but luckily it's about time for my daily route
on the delivery bicycle out to West Fælleds Road
to pick up a box of Calorius thermostats
with a new detour around the smoking Shell House
guarded by rifle-ready barking German soldiers
further on towards the sight of smoke and steam at the end
of a transfigured Frederiksberg Allé
closer and closer the acrid stench
like burning bike tires or tarpaper or
when you have forgotten to light the gas ring
stronger and stronger up to Platan Road
where through traffic is blocked
where electric cables hang slack down over the street
where half-charred sheets of paper
sail aimlessly around in the air's purple smoke
two three ambulances have already arrived
you can hear several more on their way but otherwise
only muffled sounds

people running back and forth but no one is yelling
it's like they're listening for something or someone
there behind the haze or the smoke and the smell
and although I only later heard about parents
who now silent and pale were walking around searching
for children in there behind the smoke and the stillness
I feel all at once my mother's worry and dread
have to hurry home to Søborg at four o'clock
(useless to call home
since there will go ten years
before we get a telephone)
to show that I am alive
richly supplied with eyewitness accounts
the family's center of attention for a day or two
with the latest news before the Evening Post
that I by the way have to remember to pick up
for my father plus a box of cheroots
three Golf cheroots at Meyers tobacco shop upstairs
on the corner of Søborghus Alley
I feel the paper under my left arm
wonder why
did I buy the Evening Post already
I unfold it and see two whole newspapers
the Advocate and the Nation as usual
I turn surprised and look in the distance
my newspaperman standing selling chatting
with the local people on Queen's Street here in Speightstown
on Barbados in the West Indies in this crazy world
where the sun is high here late in the afternoon
in April 1996
I hurry to the minibus
home to my wife
have to calm her down
not to mention myself
I was lucky to get away
am getting a little older
but still alive when it counts.

Det visse liv

Det visse liv i krattet
højsang på alle fire
fuglesang og knapper
løvhang med lynlås
lægge sit livs knapper bag sig
frigøre sine knaphuller og udveje
kampen for at nå frem gennem lag på lag
af tøj forhuder bandager moskitonet
vikle sig ud af sin overmåde mumieble
og helst umærkeligt
virtuost
blive til mens nogen ser på det
blive til for den der ser på det
kom frit frem
og det evige spørgsmål
skal man lægge brillerne imens
berolige og opildne på een gang
ikke mindst sig selv
holde netop disse øjne fast
blotte sig forstående
uden at vakle på albuerne
skjule at lysten krympede
ved synet af en stinksvamp i det fjerne
phallus impudicus
nedkæmpe trangen til at gemme sig
i sit tøj
i sin forståelse
gå om bag et træ
bag en parentes
bag en vits
snakke forholdsregler
forebyggelser
forhud
fornuft
kommer råd kommer tid

hvorfor lige nu
fare fare krigsmand
man har hørt om halvfjerdsårige sågar
vital mimren
og alligevel vikle sig baglæns ud
af sin piblende halvfjerdsårighed
sin gigtsvage fremtid
og hvor har du vel hjemme
i den sorte gryde
med skovbundens syrlige kulde mod knæene
og surrende kommaer om hovedet
tanken om kratløs november
forebyggende december
mumievinter
omsider slå alle knapper ud af hodet
anråbe disse øjne om hjælp
lidt nødning
knæle ind i en rytme
afstukket af myg
falde ind
falde ned i en gryde af ømhed

Benny Andersen ©1964

Certain life

Certain life in the underbrush
hymns on all fours
birdsong and buttons
foliage with zippers
put your life's buttons behind you
liberate your buttonholes and escape routes
the struggle to make it
through layer upon layer
of clothing foreskins bandages mosquito netting
wiggle out of your excessive mummy diaper

and preferably unnoticeably
with virtuosity
come into being while someone is watching
come into being for the one who is watching
come out come out
and the eternal question
should you take off your glasses for this
calm down and rile up at the same time
yourself not least of all
keep these particular eyes focussed
expose yourself empathetically
without faltering on your elbows
hide that the desire shrank
at the sight of a stinkhorn in the distance
phallus impudicus
fight back the need to hide
in your clothes
in your understanding
go behind a tree
behind a parenthesis
behind a joke
talk about precaution
prevention
foreskin
forethought
all things revealed makes time
why right now
danger danger man of war
you have heard about seventy-year-olds even
lively twitching
and still wriggle themselves out backwards
from their trickling seventy-year-oldishness
their weak-with-arthritis future
and where do you come from I wonder
in the black cauldron
with the forest floor's acidic cold against your knees
and humming commas around your head

the thought of underbrush-free november
preventive december
mummy-winter
eventually knock all buttons out of your head
implore these eyes for help
little emergency
kneel into a rhythm
staked out by mosquitos
join in
fall down into a cauldron of tenderness

By Benny Andersen ©1964
Translated by Michael Goldman

Naomi Foyle

Naomi Foyle was born in London, UK and grew up in Hong Kong, Liverpool and Saskatchewan. She has travelled in North and Central America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. She currently lives in Brighton, UK.

Her first poetry collection *The Night Pavilion*, was an Autumn 2008 PBS recommendation; her ballad pamphlet, *Grace of the Gamblers*, and a second collection, *The World Cup*, are available from Waterloo Press. She also writes science fiction: her debut novel, *Seoul Survivors* (2012) was followed by *Astra* (2013). The second in the series, *Rook Song*, is forthcoming in 2015.

She is a lecturer and human rights activist. She holds a PhD in creative writing from Bangor University and lectures at Chichester University. In December 2009 she travelled to Cairo as a member of the Gaza Freedom March. In April 2010 she founded the BWISP (British Writers in Support of Palestine).

Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz **Gently Chide an Old Friend**

The innocent and the beautiful
Have no enemy but time
W.B. Yeats

Beautiful? Maybe.
But innocent, Willie, we never were.
Beyond the great windows
how the ground rumbled -
the hoof beats and gunshots
we planted as children
rooting and sprouting
in the hearts of the crowds,
the screams of the trains,

the finely scratched pages
freighting our wild goose campaigns.

Yes, a death sentence
deferred. A face drawn
in grey ink, turned to the light
that scours the air after a storm.
But time, sweet William, was never the enemy:
time is the water
hope drinks like a powerful cloud.
And if flower sellers still cry,
and circus girls sweat,
our shadows grow longer
to catch every drop -

dark tongues,
we meet in the garden;
not pleading, not guilty,
each wet bud knowing
 full well
the thunderous taste
of our weapons.

The Progress of Process

Peace was a cold, lumpy gravy train
dribbling down a precipice,
the conductor smearing the driver,
the promised derailment late.

Peace was a decommissioned knuckleduster,
kneading the city like soda bread dough,
splitting it into six quarters,
each studded with its own shiny tour bus.

Peace was gastro-pubs in disused banks,
pink Union Jacks at Belfast Pride,

a George Best memorial in Portavogie,
Hurricane Higgins mourned in Andersonstown.

Spinning between vandals and murals,
the coin of peace was Public Art:
the Balls on the Falls,
the Thing with the Ring;

taxis parked on roundabouts
so wee girls could break their heels
snapping midnight photos
of topiary bees.

Peace was a wishbone, not yet
picked clean, spread-eagled
around a harbour that had launched
another unsinkable dream.

Peace was the iceberg that keyed the Titanic
towed back to the shipyard to melt.
Peace was cheap red and blue paint
tinged orange and green by the rain.

Peace was dividends and diffidence,
reconciliation and recession,
burned-out Pilipinos two doors down.
Peace was the stink of pub carpets and loos

after the cigarette ban —
the landlord selling souvenir ashtrays;
the Polish cleaner round the Pound Shop
stocking up on Vim.

July 12th 1994

i.m. Mairtín Crawford

Pablo Neruda's would-have-been ninetieth birthday
slipped my notice entirely.

Out in space

a comet was head-butting Jupiter,
icy rocks breaking up like conversations
when the train rushes into the hill.

Back in Canada, Mum was getting worse,
and in Belfast Orangemen were banging on
about the Battle of the Boyne.

I had just met you,
spent the night in your room,
gasping for air...

Never have I inhaled

so much cigarette smoke
as when you lowered your voice to tell me
about your gun-running auntie
and grimly closed the window
I was inching my way towards.

The next day we hid above the Falls,
far from the city parades.

The people of your road

had worked in these woods for years
to lay the paths we trod.

Cross-legged on a log, you rolled a skinny joint.

I looked up at the pale blue sky.

Her mother's just died
you thought but didn't say.

Ten years later you, who dreamt of boats full of poets
uniting the rivers of Ireland,
have sailed off without me too.

Six months after your funeral, I'm left to imagine
Neruda and you
celebrating his century with a universal rave.
Your spirit dancing with Mum's
to the beat of my heart here on Earth
and the boom box of Belfast drums.

Naomi Foyle in translation

About the translator

Ihor Pavlyuk was born in the Volyn region of Ukraine and studied at the St Petersburg Military University, which he left in order to pursue his career as a writer. He later completed his education and received a Doctorate in Social Communications. He is a prolific writer of poetry in Ukrainian. A collection of his work translated into English, *A Flight Over the Black Sea*, was published by Waterloo Press in 2014.

Occupational Hazards

After a hot day digging
I close my eyes
to orgiastic visions
of roots and leaves and stems
dirtily worming through
my sleepy, earth-bound head.

After hours of deep sea diving,
I half-slumber in a hammock,
watch schools of silver fish
swarm inside my skull,
nibble at the coral
of my brain.

After reading palms all evening

I enter the blood web of night:
broken girdles of Venus,
crimson via lascivia,
etching worry and attachment
into the eyelids of my dreams.

The Morning After

It was windy on the beach.

My hair lashed my face,
and the gulls were gliding for miles,
crying without flapping their wings. I stood
and watched the sun play dice with diamonds,
shaking and scattering them out to the horizon,
where sailboats, stiff and pale as young nuns,
skimmed over the glittering sea. The sky
raised a baby breath cloud.

I stretched out on the pebbles, but, restless,
sat up, stirred by the curves of the birds.

Alert as the light, I absorbed
the slow roar of the waves
arriving again and again at the shore,
then slipping away, each under the next,
like a woman yawning in bed,
then tossing the sheet off her body,
each night and every morning, her own tides
of sleeping and waking,
rolling in and rolling out,
always the same,
no matter what happens
when the next wave crashes
and something new occurs.

for Egypt

Everywhere, the revolution

nods off in the wings, misses its cue
and the long-scripted farce bangs another door
in the face of the people

Here, the people resist
each other, the television flattens
and expands against the wall

until it is the wall
and its cold grey plasma
seeps like damp into our lungs.

There, it is blood that rises
in the back of the throat
spills on the pavement

with the little girl's mango juice
and as she cries, the revolution
jerks awake, not too late

to bring the house down.

Your Summer Arm

Was it an odd sort of cricket
climbing my oak dresser? No -
an emerald shield bug, you said,
watching as I tried to slide

a piece of A4 paper
beneath its crooked legs.

When a foot caught, and tore,
I thought we both might cry.

Where is grass to comfort that green?
Those sweet, young shoots
I slipped from their sheaths
and chewed with wobbly teeth?

Now, as we curl into bed,
outside in the whistling damp
the husk I dismembered today
begins to decay in the leaves.

This whirring of thoughts,
rustle of pages,
mean nothing to you
anymore.

Your breathing is so quiet
I'd hardly know you were there
if it wasn't for the glowing limb
buried in my hair.

Професійні ризики

Після дня, гарячого від риття,
закриваю очі
на оргіастичні видива
коренів, листя, і стебел,
що брудними в'юнами прогвинчують
мою голову, схилену в сон, до землі.

Після годин глибоководного дайвінгу,
лежу напівсонна в гамаку,

стежу за зграйками срібляних риб,
які плывуть всередині мого черепа
й заміряються на корал мого мозку.

Після читання долонь увечері
я входжу в ночі криваву павутину:
роздерті пояси Венери,
черлена віа ласківа
вигравіювали тривогу й присвяту
на повіках моїх мрій

На ранок опісля

Було вітряно на пляжі.

Мое волосся шмагало обличчя,
і чайки ковзали милями
із криками, та без помаху крил. Я стояла
і дивилася, як сонце грало в крем'яхи діамантами, –
струшувало і розкидало їх до самого горизонту,
де вітрильники застигли і бліді, як молоді черниці,
ковзали у виблисках морських хвиль. Небо
підняло малу хмарку,
легку, наче дихання немовляти.
Я вляглася на камінцях, але рвучко
підхопилася, приваблена віражами пташиних польотів.
Уважна як світло, я увібрала в себе
повільне ревіння хвиль,
які знову і знов накочувались на берег,
тоді відковзували назад, одна за одною,
як жінка, що зітхає у ліжку,
а потім відкидає ковдру від свого тіла,
щоночі і щоранку, її власні припливи й відпливи
сну і прокидання,
набігання й відбігання хвиль,
завжди так само,
незалежно від того, що відбувається,

коли наступна хвиля розбивається об берег
і щось нове настає.

До Єгипту

Усюди революція
перед виходом на сцену дрімає, вичікує,
допоки фарс за звичним сценарієм дверима грюкне
просто в обличчя людям.

А тут протистояння:
один проти одного; екран стає усе тоншим,
тоді зливається зі стіною,

стає стіною,
і плазма його, холодна й сіра
проникає в легені, як вогкість.

А там – кров...
яка піднімається горлом
і проливається на тротуар,

разом із манговим соком дівчинки,
і коли дівчинка плаче, революція
прокидається – ще не занадто пізно,

щоб зірвати овації.

Твоя літня рука

Чи то був якийсь дивний цвіркун,
що видряпувався на мою дубову шафку? “Ні –
кузька - “смарагдовий щит”, – ти сказав,
спостерігаючи, як я намагалася заштовхнути

шматок паперу формату А4
під його ніжки-дужки.
Коли нога потрапила в пастку і відірвалася,
мені здалося, що ми обоє ось-ось заплачемо.

Де трава, щоби втішити цю галявину?
Ці солодкі молоді паростки,
які я витягувала з їхніх піхов
і жувала хиткими зубами?

Тепер ось, коли ми згортаємося в клубок на ліжку,
надворі у пронизливій вогкості
обгортка паростка, яку я сьогодні розітнула,
починає гинути в листі.

Це дзижчання думок,
шепотіння сторінок
не означають нічого для тебе
більше.

Твоє дихання таке тихе.
Я не знала би, що ти лежиш біля мене,
якби не світилася твоя рука,
притрушена моїм волоссям.

Переклад Стівена Комарницького/Ігоря Павлюка

Marcial Gala

About the writer

Marcial Gala was born in La Habana in 1963 and lives in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Primarily a novelist, his published works include the short story collections *Enemy of the Angels* (1991) and *God and the Madmen* (1995) as well as the novels *Sat Among her Lime Green* (*Letras Cubanas*, 2004) and *The Cathedral of the Negros* (2012), for which he was awarded the Alejo Carpentier prize.

These poems appeared on the *Isliada* website, a literary project that seeks to give contemporary Cuban writing a platform outside of the island, and to promote cultural interaction between artists from Cuba and elsewhere.

About the translator

Rosie Marteau translates from Spanish, having lived and studied in Cuba and Barcelona and travelled throughout Latin America. Her published work includes *Washing Dishes in Hotel Paradise* (2010) by Eduardo Belgrano Rawson, and the short story collection *Red Tales* *Cuentos Rojos* (2012) by Susana Medina. A new short story by Susana Medina, *Oestrogen*, features in the Dalkey Archive Press anthology *Best European Fiction 2014*.

If They Had Given Vallejo The Nobel Prize

If a moment before dying of penury
they had given Vallejo the Nobel Prize
everything would be different.

Vallejo, Nobel laureate, the
history books would read,
and life surely would have
saved something nice for Van Gogh
just before he chopped his ear off
just before he lost himself to absinthe

for being so very forgotten,
perhaps some marchand would buy one of his works,
or one of those girls who stroll along the banks of the Seine
would have paused a moment to admire his tortured,
good-for-nothing face,
all this to ensure Vallejo's future Nobel prize.
For if Vallejo were a Nobel laureate
He could rest a little easier
No longer as certain in the conviction
that life is shit,
If Vallejo were a Nobel prize-winner
you and I would be a little bit Nobel prize-winning too
even if we weren't nominated
even if nobody said they deserve the Nobel:
a nation of Nobel prize-winners,
a nation of de-eared absinthe drinkers.
Let us sing a lullaby to the night
Let us sing it together for Van Gogh and Vallejo
And for those of us who will never, ever win Nobel prizes,
Not a chance:
Because to win a Nobel prize
It's not enough to die in Paris, with a rainstorm.

Original

Si un segundo antes de morir de inanición
a Vallejo le hubieran dado el Nobel
todo sería distinto.
Vallejo premio Nobel diría en los libros de historia,
y de seguro a Van Gogh la vida le hubiera reservado algo
agradable
justo antes de que se cortara la oreja
justo antes que se perdiera en ajeno de tanto ser olvidado,
quizás algún marchand compraría alguna de sus obras,
o alguna muchacha de las que pasean por las orillas del Sena
se hubiera detenido un segundo a admirar su cara de
atormentado,

de bueno para nada,
todo eso para garantizar el futuro premio Nobel de Vallejo.
Porque si Vallejo fuera premio Nobel
Se podría meditar con más calma,
Ya no fuera tan precisa la convicción
de que la vida es una mierda,
Siendo Vallejo premio Nobel
tú y yo también seríamos un poco premio Nobel
aunque no nos postularan,
aunque nadie diga se merece un Nobel:
un país de premios nobeles,
un país de bebedores de ajeno y desorejados.
Vamos a cantarle una nana a la noche
Vamos a cantarla junto a Van Gogh y Vallejo
Y los que nunca jamás seremos premios nobeles,
Ni de contra:
Porque para ser premio Nobel
No basta con morir en París con aguacero.

The Doctor Diagnosed Me

This morning the doctor diagnosed me
with dysfunctional psychosis of the peripheral kind.
I didn't get a lot of it,
I'm a bit slow when it comes to these things
but I knew that starting from today
roses would have another scent for me,
the scent of the madman
and even my wife
would become someone else,
the madman's wife.
This morning I went mad,
as of today my mother is no longer my mother
She's the mother of the madman
I've got to go and let her know.
Mama, I'll say,

Everything has changed
You're the madman's mother now.
The country has changed too
Cuba is now home to the madman,
how different it sounds,
what a host of infinite possibilities,
To say:
I live in the country of the madman,
I reside in Schizophrenia city,
Psychosis Street, right between Loony and Dementia,
The number's a given,
Just knock on any door.

Original

Esta mañana el médico me diagnosticó
una psicosis disfuncional de tipo periférico.
Yo no entendí mucho,
Soy un poco lerdo para esas cuestiones
pero supe que a partir de hoy
las rosas tendrían otro aroma para mí,
el aroma del loco
y hasta mi mujer
sería otra,
la mujer del loco.
Esta mañana me volví loco,
a partir de hoy mi madre ya no es mi madre
Es la madre del loco
Tengo que ir a decírselo.
Mamá, le diré,
Todo ha cambiado
Eres ahora la madre del loco.
También ha cambiado el país
Cuba es ahora el país del loco,
qué diferente suena,
qué cúmulo de infinitas posibilidades,
Decir:

Vivo en el país del loco,
me domicilio en ciudad Esquizofrenia,
calle psicosis entre orate y demencia,
el número se lo debo,
toque cualquier puerta.

The Face Of Alejo Carpentier

We saw Alejo Carpentier's face,
the cheeks of a thousand year-old turtle,
the sunken eyes of a man born ancient,
the mouth that burbled polished nonsense
in a guttural French.

We saw the funeral garb on the day of rest
And those hands that like nervous spirits
Could not keep still
and we swore to ourselves
that we would never end up like him.
We'd be the happy ones,
normal.

Now it's all done and dusted
and we're worse than Alejo Carpentier
fatter than Lezama
skinnier than Virgil,
sadder than the saddest of the lot of them.
Fame-less and talent-less,
Mere seaweed clung to the hull of a ship
as it goes down.

Original

Veíamos la cara de Alejo Carpentier,
las mejillas de tortuga milenaria,
los ojos hundidos de quien nació vetusto,
la boca que balbuceaba sandeces refinadas
en un francés gutural.

Veíamos el traje de funerario en día de asueto
Y aquellas manos que como fantasmas neurasténicos
No podían estarse quietas
y nos juramos a nosotros mismos
que nunca jamás seríamos como él.
Seríamos los felices,
los normales.
Ahora todo pasó
y somos peores que Alejo Carpentier
más gordos que Lezama
más flacos que Virgilio,
más tristes que el más triste de ellos.
Sin fama ni talento,
Solo algas aferradas al casco de una nave
que se hunde.

You'd Like to Write Like the Greats

Of course you'd like to write like the greats,
but for that you'd need very different experiences,
you'd need to have known the real Paris
and not some bar on Calle Arguelles in Cienfuegos
a bar that's not even called Paris, but la Lonja
where they serve a filthy screw-you-up liquor
that's not even real absinthe,
but straight-up firewater, sink unblocker to those in the know.
Even the women you've loved are marred by not being from Paris.
So it's pretty difficult to lose yourself in verse
as the greats have done,
and all that remains is to be part of your own little truth
like entering a cave without a torch
where you won't always leave in one piece,
a tunnel, which instead of ending at Notre Dame,
leads to the Cienfuegos Undertaker's
and if you're lucky
you'll bow out with a mention in a national newspaper:

Yesterday, the writer died.

Who's he then, more than one person will say
And you, ready dead, glide through the mists
of the insular night and its invisible gardens
and you'll ponder that you weren't fated to be born in Paris,
a place where willows raise poets
and those who fancy themselves poets too, which is almost the
same thing.

Original

Claro, te gustaría escribir como lo hacen los grandes,
pero para eso debiste haber tenido experiencias muy distintas,
debiste haber conocido el verdadero París
y no un bar de la calle Arguelles de Cienfuegos
que ni siquiera se llama París,
se llama la Lonja y allí sirven un mejunje de porquería
que ni siquiera es ajenjo,
es puro matarrata o chispa de tren como lo llaman los sabios.
Hasta las mujeres que amaste están marcadas por no ser de Paris.
Así, es muy difícil solazarse en el verso
como lo logran los grandes,
así sólo te queda adentrarte en tu pequeña verdad
como en una cueva donde entras sin linterna
y donde no siempre sales ileso,
en un túnel al final del cual no está Notre Dame
sino la funeraria de Cienfuegos
y si la suerte te acompaña
saldrá en un periódico de circulación nacional:
Ayer murió el escritor.
¿Y quién es ese? preguntará más de uno
Y tú, ya muerto, te deslizaras sobre la niebla
de la noche insular y sus jardines invisibles
y pensaras en lo fatal de no haber nacido en París,
lugar donde como sauces se alzan los poetas
y los que se creen poetas que es casi lo mismo.

Waiting For Snow in Itabo

The night goes riding
on our shadows,
the ones we leave abandoned at home
to go and watch as the snow falls.
In Itabo, Matanzas.
time shot off like a brusque fish
and later said:
the night and I are the only ones that manage to touch
in the drumming of the air
And when returned
the house was no longer awaiting us
and you had died that little death that sparrows die,
the one that can barely be uttered
because it's not really a death,
just a way of keeping silent.
You'll wait for it to snow in Itabo, Matanzas.
Then peering round the door,
you'll hear rumours of your own burial:
Didn't you know?
The last Cuban died yesterday
A high fever took him to the tomb
It was snowing as heavily as it did for Mozart's well-known funeral
Or Edgar Allan Poe's no less infamous affair,
So hardly anyone went,
The murmuring you can hear is the sound of the sparrows
Crying for the last Cuban.
You'll want to say something then,
You'll want to say here I am,
But why, if in Itabo, Matanzas
it is already snowing inside
So the dream ends.

Original

ESPERANDO QUE NIEVE EN ITABO, MATANZAS

La noche cabalga
nuestras sombras,
aquellas que abandonamos en nuestras casas
para venir a contemplar como cae la nieve.
En Itabo, Matanzas.
el tiempo se estiró como un escueto pez
y luego dijo:
la noche y yo somos los únicos que logramos tocar
en el tambor del aire
Y al volver
la casa ya no nos esperaba
y tú habías muerto de esa muerte leve de los gorriones,
que apenas se deja pronunciar
porque no es una muerte en serio,
sólo una manera de quedarse callado.
Esperarás que nieve en Itabo Matanzas
al asomarte a la puerta
oirás el rumor de tu propio entierro:
¿No lo sabías?
Ayer murió el último cubano,
Una fiebre alta lo condujo a la tumba
Nevaba tanto como en aquel conocido entierro de Mozart
O en el de Edgar Allan Poe no menos célebre,
Por eso no fue casi gente,
Ese rumor que escuchas es el de los gorriones
Lloran por el último cubano,
Querrás decir algo entonces,
Querrás decir aquí estoy
¿pero para qué
Si en Itabo Matanzas nieva ya para dentro
para el sueño.

Jen Karetnick

About the writer

Jen Karetnick is the author of four chapbooks, including 'Prayer of Confession' (Finishing Line Press, 2014) and a full-length collection 'Brie Season' (White Violet Pree, autumn 2014). She works as the Creative Writing Director for Miami Arts Charter School and is a freelance food-travel critic and writer. She lives in Miami with her Husband, two children, three dogs, three cats and fourteen mango trees.

If you like food as well as poetry, Jen's cookbook 'Mango' is due to be published in September 2014 by University Press of Florida.

The President of People Fooling Themselves

Forcing a bow tie on a bankrupt foundation,
he made to armor the Art Deco dawn

with Elvis and a famous dead manatee,
but surging cut glass like a storm of accidents

scrambled the coastline, a city-by-city
forecast of litter and stench, seawalls

and sewage, until he agreed the undertaking
was little more than a series of beginnings:

raw, futile and human.

Her Majesty

Every morning the ant-drilled ochre
-- refraction, reflection, echo --

tongue ridged from the thirst that never leaves,
limbs hooked, joints sticky and dry as eyes,

friezes the lizards in her cracked foundations,
the coyotes on her rock-scrubbed skin.

She doesn't indulge in karma,
treats everyone on her path to the same sauna,

though there are those who think
if they preserve her they will also drink

from her cup of plenty (which appears
like a cup of empty at certain times of year)

during those last moments of dawning hospitality,
long before the cities imagine what they see.

A Love Poem from The Outlaw Catalog of Cagey Optimism

-- found from Rob Breszny's Astrology Newsletter

Corrupt me with your raw
purity, baby; beguile me
with your honesty. I dare you
to quench my thirst.
One of the keys to eternal
happiness is to be easily amused.
Shed your detachable set
of invisible wings, your inner
energy vampire. Let's
trade clothes and pretend
we're each other's higher selves.

Taylor Mali

About the writer

Taylor Mali is one of the most well-known poets to have emerged from the poetry slam movement and one of the original poets to appear on the HBO series “Def Poetry Jam.” A four-time National Poetry Slam champion, he is the author of two collections of poetry and a book of essays, “What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World.” In April of 2012, Mali completed a 12-year project of convincing 1,000 people to become teachers and marked the occasion by donating 12 inches of his hair to the American Cancer Society.

My Deepest Condiments

for Ursula

I send you my deepest condiments
was in no way what my old friend
meant to say or write or send
the night she penned a note to me
one week after my father died.

Not condolences, or sentiments,
she sent me her deepest condiments
instead, as if the dead have need
of relish, mustard, and ketchup
on the other side.

O, the word made me laugh
so hard out loud it hurt!
So wonderfully absurd,
and such a sweet relief
at a time when it seemed

only grief was allowed in
after my father's death,
sweet and simple laughter,
which is nothing more than
breath from so far deep inside—

so many years—it often brings
up with it tears. And so I laughed
and laughed until my sides
were sore. And later still,
I even cried a little more.

With or Without Laughter

Laura of the long legs used to make me laugh while we made love
because she said my laughter turned her on, opened and melted
her
in places nothing else could fit inside of or even reach, but also
because we had discovered the simple act of laughing made me
last
longer in bed—a bait and switch of sweet releases. It worked;
for what is laughter but a way to make you breathe more deeply
as prayer is just a way to make you ask for what you want from
God
damn, the sex was wonderful! Even though it sounded like
The Champagne Room at a comedy club.

You've heard of talking dirty? She talked funny, whispered first
into my ear silly things like cumquat, marshmallow, didgeridoo.
And, A funny thing happened on the way to my vagina.
I would laugh full bodied and somehow keep on going
while she ground herself against my ha-ha-ha.

But soon I was laughing at her attempts to be funny in the midst
of her arousal, the breathless comic genius gasping out gems like,
“What's the difference between fuck and . . . fuck!” Curious kama

sutra

koans in which you couldn't tell if the humor had been hijacked by the sex, or if the point—like love—was that there was no answer.

Maybe I have had better sex since Laura, with or without laughter—

I have been married now twice if that means anything—but what sometimes I have missed was the way we fit together, how it grew more perfect over time, like a bed that creaks less the more it rocks, or an itch that blossoms under a better scratch.

The Spell, Unused

We are no longer married, but yesterday

I recited a love poem I wrote
for you when we still were to an audience

because, I said, I still like the poem.

And everyone laughed because
it sounded as if I meant I didn't still like you,

which got me started on how not everything
is meant to last forever,
how some people see it before others, and why

what makes a good poem, be it a certain vein,
or grain of sand inside a pearl,
doesn't always make a good marriage.

I told a roomful of strangers that every love poem
I ever wrote for you tried
to tell me this truth: that you would one day leave.

I asked the audience to see if they could hear
that truth in this poem, too.
It's the one about how your body has a power

over me, and how I could never say no to you
when you went without clothes.

After the reading, a woman told me what went wrong

with us. You gave your wife a secret spell, she said.

A power over you she never used.

Race MoChridhe

About the writer

Race MoChridhe is a poet and playwright working in several languages. His pieces have been exhibited in decomP, Cha, The Montreal Review, the American Journal of Biblical Theology, and many other publications. More of his work can be found by visiting www.racemochridhe.com as well as by following @racemochridhe on Twitter.

De said
fon Race MoChridhe

Myn euges sinde sweir
als de blousems in lent
after de fett is eten.

Tou liecht sinde dei—
tou fol mid tajren af friewdigheid
om tou heule in swart

mid nidensmitten wimpers.
Tenk ji dat mann is aut erd,
om tou kultivire sommerwis?

Nei, doch aut streu om tou brenne,
lejt ond scheun,
by de hervest.

The Seed

by Race MoChridhe

translated from the Frenkisch by the author

My eyes are heavy,
like the flowers in spring
after the fat is eaten.

Too light they are—
too full with tears of joy
to be veiled in black

by downcast lashes.
Do you think that man is of earth,
to be planted in the summer?

No, but of straw to be burned,
lovely and light,
at the harvest.

Auten di
fon Race MoChridhe

Als en lampe
frosen in de sonn
is ick,

alleinheid
tou naij myn eigenschap
om tou wese sejbar.

Dou is de nacht—
de heit af de mon
in dat de liecht sick kenn

als elshwat ander

als de lantern
dat hald ett in.

Without You

by Race MoChridhe

translated from the Frenkisch by the author

Like a lamp
frozen in the sun
am I,

solitude
too near my nature
to be visible.

You are the night—
the heat of the moon
in which the light can know itself

as something other
than the lamp
that contains it.

Christopher Mulrooney

About the writer

Christopher Mulrooney is the author of symphony (The Moon Publishing & Printing), flotilla (Ood Press), viceroy (Kind of a Hurricane Press), and jamboree (Turf Lane Press, forthcoming). His work has recently appeared in The Interpreter's House, West Wind Review, Zettel, Indefinite Space, California Quarterly, The Southampton Review, Soliloquies, and Inscape.

vibrant

the word stamps its meaning like the seal of a great impost on everything
the city the economy the dunce of a civic figurehead the works
you and I pass through it all like a couple of bleeding Turks
the ones who count wear dark suits dark ties and can be relied
upon not to sing

trial balloon

you can inflate it that way or on another end
the delicate way is best you go a short sprint and a dash you go
a mile or so and then all out a marathon to the great city
where the news is received with cries of rejoicing
that fill the air above the town and can be heard for miles around
the wind in breezes lifts and carries adown the countryside.

the kinship of the farming community

I haven't any talent for building suspense but must tell you straight
what is meant peradventure
and what you ought to do about it being furtive and fearful by sad
nature

I do it all the more reluctantly but you see the way things are
at home and abroad you could say they're liable to go pretty far.

mirror reservoir

the townlet no longer in its right properties
and properly aghast but well situated in its fragments of social
proprieties
seems this Spring day upside down and blurry in watercolour set
upon the surface with a slight patina of sunlight directly on top of
that

package deal

if you undo the twine or just plain string around the brown paper
if you do that you observe all parts of the deal in question
no question of that it's signed sealed and delivered isn't that it
for you to inspect and reject or reflect upon many a long winsome
day or evening or night or morning
at the various seasons and turns or equinoxes like horses rounding
the bend evenly
lente lente currite noctis equi in some dream the nightmare of
course
let you ride her lest she ride us all down and be bloody mashed
together we
you ride the pale moon lonely weds the rider in black clouds
above the trees
that signal to the sun at morning in birdcalls.

Tara Hryhorovych Shevchenko

About the writer

Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko (1814 – 1861) was a Ukrainian poet, writer, artist, public and political figure, as well as folklorist and ethnographer. His literary heritage is regarded as the foundation of modern Ukrainian literature language. He is also known as a painter and an illustrator.

About the translator

Myroslav Petriw graduated from the University of Toronto with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. Married, with three sons, Myroslav lives in the suburbs of Vancouver, BC. He is fluent in both Ukrainian and English and is a leader in the local community for which he received the Taras Shevchenko Medal in 2008.

Recently retired from Ford Motor Co., he has combined his technical prowess and language skills in English and Ukrainian with his passion for history and applied them to writing fiction. He was awarded the Anna Pidruchney Award for New Writers for his first novel Yaroslav's Treasure.

Myron's translation comes close to capturing the rhythm and movement of the original.

ДУМИ МОЇ

Думи мої, думи мої,
Лихо мені з вами!
Нащо стали на папері
Сумними рядами?..
Чом вас вітер не розвіяв
В степу, як пилину?
Чом вас лихо не приспало,
Як свою дитину?..

Думи мої, думи мої,
Квіти мої, діти!
Виростав вас, доглядав вас —
Де ж мені вас діти?..
В Україну ідїть, діти!
В нашу Україну,
Попідтинню, сиротами,
А я — тут загину.

Там найдете щире серце
І слово ласкаве,
Там найдете щиру правду,
А ще, може, й славу...
Привітай же, моя ненько!
Моя Україно!
Моїх діток нерозумних,
Як свою дитину!

Тарас Шевченко

My Contemplations

Contemplations, meditations,
Woe for me is with you!
Why do you stand here on paper
In melancholy sequence?
Why the wind has not dispersed you
Like dust on the prairie?
Why misfortune has not lulled you
To sleep like her baby?

Contemplations, meditations,
Flowers mine, my children,
I did raise you, I did tend you –
Where then can I send you?

To Ukraine then, go my children,
Go to Ukrayina,
'Neath the fences, just like orphans,
While I, left here, - perish.

There you will find a sincere heart
And a kind word spoken,
There you will find the sincere truth,
Perhaps even glory.
Bid a welcome, dearest mother!
My own Ukrayina!
To my foolish little children
As if your own offspring!

Myroslav Petriw



Gary Swaim

About the writer

Gary Swaim was reared in California and received his A.B. Degree in English from the University of California, Riverside and his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature (minor in Philosophy) from the University of Redlands in cooperation with Claremont Graduate University. He currently teaches for Southern Methodist University in Dallas, serves as faculty advisor for Creative Writing in the Master of Liberal Studies Program, and is Executive Editor of Pony Express(ions), an online journal for S.M.U. His personal writing interests include poetry, playwriting, and short fiction. He has been widely published and produced in California and Texas.

Furrowing

My hands dig deep into blistering Egyptian sands,
centuried layer after layer until they find
soil cool and moist, perhaps an ancient water flow
buried beneath Alexandria's surfaces.

I touch you Cleopatra, run my hands over your form,
searching for rich turns of smooth skin moistened by waters
from the river in which you bathed.
I fondle soft, dirt aureoles where your breasts would be.

But, all is sharp, brittle, wizened. No radiant fabric colors.
Only fouled decaying white, both apparel and bones.
A femur here, a tibia there. A misshapen wrist.
Is that the remnant of a hand placed over yours, a loving touch?

Antony's? In our nights of conflict, perhaps not unlike yours,
one can only hope, that if nothing else, deep, deep beneath
fractious surfaces, brittle hand touches
brittle hand.

Colors

Lighting on bright thistles, aster, and joe-pye weed,
a diminutive Painted Lady thrusts an even brasher color
on her world. A flash of orange against prickly reds and purples.
Morning incandescence unmatched at the sun's rising.

Though it's flamboyant orange you first see, mistaking the black
bruise-looking patches for dark leaves on which she rests,
the light of clearer day shows murky colors with bright—
fearsome beauty.

Someone has said dark stains streaking the butterfly's wings
come from the male's violent love making and serve as weights to
keep his Painted Lady from flying away.



J T Mahoney

“Bardo or not Bardo” is a black comedy about Tibetan Buddhism. Characters struggle through the darkness of their deaths, unaware of what is happening to them, or refusing to submit to their fates. This particular chapter is about a clown who killed himself, and how his death has affected others, including his mirthless comrade and a half-animal zoo worker.

Antoine Volodine is one of many heteronyms used by an unknown French author. He belongs to a clandestine literary collective called post-exoticism, which belongs to a world like ours, but different. He also writes and publishes books as Lutz Bassmann, Manuela Draeger, and Elli Kronauer.

The original is in French and has been translated by J T Mahoney, who by his own admission is relatively new to translation. He received a MA in Literary Translation Studies from the University of Rochester in 2013.

If you would like to read the novel in full it will be published by Open Letter in the coming year.

VII. AT THE BARDO BAR

At night, when cars speed down the boulevard, their breath rattles the bar’s windows. During the day, as conversations and comings & goings permeate the room with a permanent murmur, the trembling glass’s jingling in its frame goes unnoticed. But at night, it’s a different story. Everything is much calmer after sundown. Consumers disappear, traffic becomes scarce. A heavy vehicle passes while rumbling, the windows vibrate, then nocturnal silence is reestablished. It’s a deserted neighborhood. It can be found at a little-frequented exit from the city, far from residential buildings, just next to the zoo. It’s clean, there are trees, long black railings, animal growls, but it’s deserted. Thereabouts, with the exception of the drinking establishment, the only inhabited building is a

Buddhist place. Buddhist or rather Lamaist, if one holds to the nuances of pointless denominations, adjoining the bar. An old garage transformed into a temple. Recently transformed into a temple by a semi-dissident association of Red Bonnets. These new religious activities have not attracted any more night owls to the bar. From time to time a devotee will come in, inhale a cup of fermented milk with a straw, and then go. That is the total clientele growth. To summarize, hardly anyone is seen here in the dark hours, when the zoo's doors are closed.

A truck approaches and roars in front of the bar. The windows clink. Once again, silence sets in.

Behind the counter, the bartender wipes saucers, glasses, cups, teaspoons, puts them away.

Festoons of multicolored garland can be seen outside, suspended there like on a sixties pizzeria façade. Inside the room, the lights are mundane and bright. An hour earlier, there was ambient music, indistinguishable rock songs like those heard in any public place for the last two centuries, but the bartender had turned down the sound when he began his shift and looked for an exotic station. He came across a Korean music broadcast. It seems that a cassette alternating between pansori excerpts and traditional dances is playing on continuous loop. Sometimes the music is substituted with a Korean commentator who chatters at length in her language, with seductive tones that make Yasar the bartender daydream.

All is calm. The silence is also intruded on by noises originating in the neighboring lamaic temple. Monotonous chants, rhythms lacking any diversity, a prior's solemn voice, bells: on the other side of the partition, a ceremony has begun.

“Could I get another caffeine, Yasar?”

Freek is sitting on a stool at the bar. He is the sole client. At first sight it is apparent that he is lacking something human. For an Untermensch, he is very handsome, but his body emanates an impression of anomaly. An undefinable touch of abnormality pushes him back into the outskirts where the human subconscious hates to venture. He knows this, he tries hard not to let it affect him, but he suffers from it. It doesn't make his relations with others any

easier. When he speaks, his voice is often filled with emotion, like with all hypersensitive individuals. It is emotional and very slightly weird, as well.

The bartender halts his wiping. He thumps the percolator's coffee filter on a drawer, he screws it back on, clutching it tightly, he slides the drawer back without closing it, he presses the hot water button. His movements are calm. His entire person inspires trust.

"This is your fourth cup, Freek," he says. "It's going to make you sick."

"Don't need to sleep," Freek explains. "Have to go back to the zoo. The animals are waiting for me. Have to talk to them. They're anxious, they're not sleeping. They're afraid of dying."

"Ah," says Yasar.

"I have to reassure them," Freek continues after a silence. "They've smelled death's odor. They're afraid of dying like the clown, like the yak."

Yasar has turned back around. Now, he is placing a bowl of piping hot caffeine in front of Freek. Freek thanks him.

"What clown?" Yasar asks. "A clown died at the zoo? Tell me about it, Freek."

"No, the yak is the one who's dying. I need to go to the zoo because of him. The yak is old and sick. The veterinarian came, he said he still had a day or two. This is the yak's final night. It's happening, in a zoo. The bars protect, but they don't stop death." Freek pauses. Facing Yasar, who is friendly with him, he doesn't have too many problems expressing himself. It's even the opposite: he seems unable to keep himself from speaking. He dunks his lips in the too-hot caffeine, then revives his talking points.

"The animals are sad behind the gates," he says. "And sadness is very tiring. They're in a safe place, they're protected, but they grow old just as fast as if they were free, exposed to danger. The yak's gotten old. He's been feeling very unwell. The nearby animals are worried, they can smell death's odor. The veterinarian arrives. He says that the yak only has a day or two left. He says this in front of the yak as if the yak were deaf. He takes out a syringe, he injects useless vaccines against old age and death. Then he leaves. It's night. The smells spread. In their cages, the animals breathe in the smells.

It scares them. I have to go and console them. None of the animals can sleep in the zoo at night. They need someone by their side. My words reassure them. The yak needs someone by his side too, to talk to him and help him get through the night. I need to talk to the yak if he's struggling against death, or even if he's already stopped breathing."

In the neighboring room, a bell rings, a very solemn voice pronounces syllables incomprehensible to those who have not mastered Liturgical Tibetan. Then it stops and, coming from a transistor located behind the bartender, there is a Korean melody. It's a tune sung when worn out, when fate has been unfavorable and it's hard to find the necessary energy to go on. A woman adjusts her despair with the violence specific to pansori singers, a violence devoid of any whining, then the chorus picks back up and gives it a more lively coloration, as if the intervention of the collectivity had diverted the sorrow toward new reasons to fight together and endure.

"Excuse me, Freek," the bartender says. "I'll get back to what you were saying in a bit. You were talking about a clown."

"Yes," says Freek. "Furthermore, that's what's got the animals frightened horribly. After closing time, the clown that was found in the raptor exhibit. The clown's cadaver. That's keeping them from sleeping too. The clown's remains in the cage. In the dark, odors grow stronger. The animals breathe them in. All the animals in the zoo. They grow restless, they're afraid. They turn in circles or shrink into corners. They think about the yak, about death, about old age. They think about the clown. I have to go back to the zoo to calm them down. So they'll be taken by sleep and forget."

Yasar leans on his elbows in front of Freek. He's just thrown out the rag he was wiping dishes with. He has the hard face of a man who has suffered, cheeks scarred from smallpox, piercing eyes. The beginning of a tattoo can be seen at the base of his neck, perhaps a souvenir from some journey or passion, perhaps a souvenir from prison. He's passed a large part of his life inside four walls, in fact.

"I still don't understand this clown thing, Freek," he says. "I'm trying to picture your words in my head, but some of the

details escape me.”

“Oh,” says Freek.

“Yes,” says Yasar. “It’s all clear for you, because you’re going in and out of the zoo all the time, like you were... as if you belonged to a world that... (He sighs.) But I’m having trouble putting the clown in the scene. I can’t figure out what he’s doing in the middle of the night, in the cages. You’ll have to explain it to me.”

“The clown worked in a circus. The Schmöhl. Do you know about it?”

“No.”

“He killed himself,” Freek says. “He was brought to the zoo an hour after the gates were closed. After the visitors, children, left. They do that. A Lamaist mutual aid group. You have to sign up. The clown was a member, I guess. It’s a special service. They get permission from the city council. There are rules. They follow them. They only go into the cages if the zoo director gives them the green light. They come with the body. There are three of them. Dressed like gravediggers with nothing to lose. Poor guys like us, you know?”

“Not really.”

“Like us. Wearing civvies. They go into the aviary with the body. Sky burials, they call it. Sky burials.”

“They give the body to the birds to eat?” Yasar asks.

“Oh, not all of it,” Freek clarifies. “Otherwise they’d have to wait for days around vultures, eagles, condors. They don’t stay long. The zoo’s watchmen say that it’s mainly symbolic. Some strips, some small slices. A pittance. The raptors are afraid, they don’t approach. They won’t eat any meat under any circumstance. Afterwards, the guys walk out with the body. They load it on a little cart and cover it with an oilskin canvas. No one is on the paths. Zoo administration doesn’t attend these things. The zoo is empty. It’s already dark. They leave with the body to go incinerate it. They leave, but the dead clown’s scent continues to waft from cage to cage. It’s powerful in the large aviary, but not just there. It hangs around the zoo for hours. It gives everyone the heebie-jeebies. If no one comes to speak to them, the animals will tremble with fear all night...”

There is a silence. The music is followed by applause, then the Korean commentator launches into a dense monologue, without pausing, in which neither Yasar nor Freek is interested.

“Sky burials...” Yasar says thoughtfully. “A very, very ancient custom, it must go back to prehistory. I’ve heard about it, but I didn’t know it was still practiced. I’d have never guessed that it could happen here, in the middle of the city. Today. Just a kilometer from here.”

“There are rules,” says Freek. “You have to be patronized by the group, the lamas have to give their permission. And you especially need authorization from city council and written consent from the zoo director. But the vultures aren’t asked for their opinion. The vultures don’t really cooperate. They’re afraid of people who come into the aviary and throw clown meat at them. They don’t like to eat circus artists. I’ll have to speak calming words to the vultures too. I’ll go to the aviary later.”

“This clown, do you know any more about him?” Yasar asks.

“He killed himself,” says Freek. “There were two of them on the bill, always together. Blumschi and Grümscher. Blumschi and Grümscher, the kings of laughter. One small and one big. I went to see them in their circus, last month. It’s losing speed, a poor circus with a poor public. The clowns take the floor between numbers and speak loudly. They shout, they gesticulate, they lose their balance. They speak into the void. There aren’t many people on the bleachers. The audience is bored. They’re waiting for the trapeze artists, they want to see a trapeze artist’s skeleton shatter on the sawdust-covered ground. They’re waiting for the tamer, they want to witness an accident with the bears, they want a bear to tear an arm off the tamer or his daughter. They’re not amused by the clowns. No one’s laughing. I laugh, but that’s because I’m not... because I’m different... I laugh, but no one else does.”

The commentator continues her short speech. She does it softly, but all the same everyone would like her to wrap it up, to put down the mike bring the music back. It’s a live radio broadcast. On the other end, the commentator is facing the public, and the public appreciates her banter, her flattery, the public smiles loudly

or applauds when she wants them to. She is like an animal tamer, the obedient audience grovels before her voice and desires to show that they're under her spell. She finally shuts up, the audience applauds once more, and there is a blank in the broadcast, perhaps because the musicians left the stage and have been sitting down. At the same moment, during the blank, a Buddhist voice can be heard.

"You hear that, Yasar?" says Freek. "A religious service on the other side of the wall."

"Yes," says Yasar. "It's coming from next door. It was a fallen apart garage. Old car doors, grimy motors, cans of oil. Red Bonnets converted it into a temple. We have an adjoining wall. It was already thin, but with the renovation work I think it's gotten even thinner. Some days you can hear everything. On top of that we share an air vent. Noises pass through it."

"They're about to begin a ceremony for the deceased. A lama is going to read the Book of the Dead. He's going to speak to someone who died recently. He's going to give them advice to help them not be reborn as an animal."

"So you're a religious expert now, Freek?"

"Not really, no..."

They listen to the noises coming from the temple. Not much can be heard, actually. A solemn voice, now and then. Not much. Now, the Korean music has returned, a very long piece with syncopated drums and a magnificent soprano voice. Since the radio's sound is very low, not much can be heard from over there either.

"It's sad," says Yasar after several dull seconds, "thinking about clowns who can't make anyone laugh."

"Out of everyone on the bleachers, I was the only one who did," says Freek. "The spectators watching looked like they didn't understand a thing. Even the children's eyes were blank. They barely reacted at all. I was the only one who found them funny. Maybe it's because I'm not a person. Well, I mean, not a real person..."

"Hey, Freek! What are you talking about? Of course you're a person. This isn't because you..."

The bartender doesn't continue. He doesn't feel like getting mired down in unsettling considerations, he doesn't want to think

aloud about what parts of humanity Freek is lacking. Yasar the bartender's culture has always been resistant to racism, he has always refused to give in to atavistic urges to reject the Other, he has never felt the need to classify Freek in a disparaging animal category, himself being considered a sort of Untermensch, but he prefers not to think about those things aloud in front of Freek. He turns back toward the percolator, he wipes the wall, he rummages through the basket of cutlery.

"Of course you're a real person," he repeats.

A car passes by, the windows tremble in their frame. The lamas' voices come through the partition. A second car passes by, the driver accelerates, he strains his motor without changing speed, the windows shake.

The door opens. A client enters, not a regular: someone unknown, short in stature, dressed like a Sunday proletarian, with a full jacket too long in the sleeves. He has gray hair, a worn-out expression that the lack of sleep has rendered cartoonish.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he says.

His voice lacks confidence.

He goes to sit at a table under a fluorescent light, three meters away from the counter. Freek and Yasar greet him, but don't look at him, Yasar out of professional tact, Freek out of shyness.

"You wouldn't happen to have any salted buttermilk tea, would you?" the newcomer asks.

"No," says Yasar. "We don't have that here."

"I was joking," the man explains.

"Oh," says Yasar.

"Two whiskeys," says the man.

"A double?"

"No. In two glasses. Two doubles. With very few ice cubes." Yasar disappears the dishcloth he had on his shoulder and gets to work. No one says a word. There's the sound of falling ice cubes, pouring alcohol, the temple bell, the radio. The pansori singer can be heard. Yasar places the glasses on a platter, and brings them to the small man's table. Then he takes his place back in front of Freek. For twenty seconds, they don't speak, both of them, as if the presence of a client behind them is preventing them from picking

back up the interrupted conversation. Then Yasar shakes his head.

“You know, Freek,” he says. “In my opinion, they’re exploiting you, over at the zoo. They know very well that you’re going there after hours and taking care of the animals. What you’re doing is still work. Night work. They should compensate you.”

“Oh, I do it for the animals, not to get dollars,” says Freek. “And anyway, they pay me. Some days the director makes me come into his office. He talks to me. He gives me papers to sign. I sign them with my name. He gives me free meal tickets for the watchmen’s canteen.”

“There’s no way they count all your hours,” says Yasar. “I’m sure they’re exploiting you, Freek.”

“No, they do me right. Of course, sometimes...”

“Sometimes what?”

“Oh, nothing...”

“You were going to say something, Freek.”

“No.”

“Something that bothers you.”

“Well, sometimes they mistake me for an animal,” says Freek. “The watchmen. It’s an accident, I think. Not out of malice. They grab me on one of the paths before opening time. They don’t listen when I protest, like I’m talking to deaf people. No matter how loudly I complain, they open an empty cage and close it again with a padlock. Next to me they put cold food and some straw for toilet paper. There’s a sign hung from the bars: PLEASE DON’T FEED THE ANIMALS. While the zoo’s open to the public, I keep away from the sign so people don’t think it’s talking about me. At any rate, I don’t get much. The guards leave me there for three or four days. Then, they free me. They apologize. They say it was a truly regrettable mistake, that they accidentally got me confused, and it wasn’t out of malice. They say that I look too much like an animal. That they weren’t paying attention, because I’m tame, and I talk instead of biting or scratching... You see, Yasar? I’d have to bite them for them to see that I’m something other than... With all that, Yasar, how should I know that I’m really a person?”

“Stop, Freek,” the bartender says. “You’re like us, like everyone. Half human, half animal. Everyone’s the same way. You,

me... I can't guarantee I'm a hundred percent human either. I just don't know."

"All the same. No one accidentally throws you in cages, I take it? With hippopotamuses and parrots?"

"Oh, I... I was locked up in a special prison for twenty-five years... With men and women who'd shot soldiers, ministers..."

"Who did you shoot, Yasar?"

"Gangsters."

Yasar was immersed in a hard silence. He killed mafiosos, in the past, but he had only killed a small number of them, and the species still hadn't disappeared. To the contrary, it had multiplied, reducing other species' territories, polluting other species' daily lives and even their dreams. Yasar floats wordlessly, momentarily in the depths of this failure. The others, Freek and the whiskey drinker, ruminates on what they have said or heard.

A truck rumbles on the boulevard. The windows, and even a few glasses on the shelf behind Yasar, vibrate.

Behind the wall ascend mantras, prayers.

In the radio's disappointing loudspeaker, barely audible since Yasar lowered the sound for reasons unknown, the Korean singer expresses the pain of desertion, the pain of scorned fidelity, the pain of betrayed filial devotion. She has taken on a quavering, but powerful, intonation. It is possible that its unbearable beauty is why the bartender, without thinking, changed the volume.

The small man sitting behind Freek swallows the last mouthful of his first glass.

"You work at the zoo?" he suddenly asks Freek.

Freek turns toward him. His heart always races when a stranger talks to him. Any sort of direct question agonizes him, he feels like trouble must follow. He fears what humans may think, not necessarily their actual threats, but what they might imagine, their cruel and shameful daydreams, often unconfessed, their unconscious depictions of his suffering or death. He pivots frankly toward the stranger and tries to answer naturally, but he can't hide the abrupt pallor of his cheeks, nor the nervous quivering of his eyelids, his lips.

"Yes," he says. "I go to the zoo. I get in through openings in

the bars. When the visitors are gone, I talk to the animals. They'd like to be somewhere else. They'd like not to have to die in order to be somewhere else. They shiver in a corner for hours, without stopping. I wait for dusk, I sit near them and speak to them. The animals listen to me. They listen all night through the night, with their ears and muzzles. I try to talk to them until their fear fades away."

The small, worn-out man stirs the ice cubes in his empty glass, then puts it back down in front of him.

"It's not just animals," he says. "I'm in a funk myself. Once you're aware you're trapped in life without any way to get out... And then, when you think about those who did get out... When you imagine what happens to them after... At this very moment, for example..."

He attacks his second double whiskey

"And do you know how to get rid of humans' fears?" he continues.

"No," says Freek. "Not humans. For that, you have to go to a lama."

He clears his throat. He successfully talked with the stranger, but the effort hurt his vocal cords. Now he figures he can end the dialogue without offending the other man. He turns toward Yasar, toward the shelves lined with multicolored bottles.

"Can you make me another caffeine, Yasar?" he says. "I'm going to drink one more bowl and then go. The animals are miserable. It'll be a difficult night for them. I have to leave. They're whining in the darkness, they're waiting for me. They're going to need me. They're terrorized by death. Like the yak. Like the clown."

"Hey!" exclaims the Sunday-dressed proletarian. "How did you know I'm a clown?"

He lifts his arm, an arm with a too-long sleeve, in the half-theatrical gesture of a man who has been drinking.

"Oh, you're a clown?" asks Freek.

"Yes," says the man.

He puts his hand back on the table.

Yasar is once again busying himself with the percolator.

A lama's indecipherable voice wends through the air vent.

“I went to the circus the other day,” Freek says. “There were two clowns, Blumschi and Grünscher. One small and one big. They blindly greeted each other from different ends of the floor. Then they ran at each other, they crossed paths but didn’t touch. They often fell down.”

He pauses to thank Yasar, who’s given him a piping black bowl. He leans over it, he breathes. He skims the liquid with his lips to test the temperature. He doesn’t risk inhaling it in. He breathes again so that the temperature will fall. It doesn’t fall.

“When the big one fell down,” continues Freek, “the little one would stop running and rush to help him get back up, but it didn’t work. The big one struggled and shouted. It was very funny. He struggled, he refused the little one’s help, and he fell back down. It was very comical. But no one laughed, except me. One of the two is dead. I heard some watchmen say he killed himself. He must have been part of a Lamaist group. His body was given to the vultures earlier, to the condors, the eagles. Sky burials, they’re called. They go into the raptor cage and throw pieces of the body at them. I didn’t get near. I was busy talking to the yak. I couldn’t see if it was the little one or the big one.”

“It was the big one,” says the man as he takes a drink of alcohol. “It was Big Grünscher.”

“You’re sure?” Yasar asks, leaning on the counter.

“Why would I lie to you?” says the man as he swallows another mouthful. “I’m Blumschi, his partner. We worked together at the Schmühl Circus. You must have seen the posters, Schmühl himself put them up in noticeable places, near stoplights, at the entrances to parking lots. Posters with our names on them. Big Grünscher and Little Blumschi, the kings of laughter.”

He drinks.

“The kings of laughter,” he repeats. “Inseparable. Together forever. More than partners, actually. Much more. Inseparable brothers. And now... Now, like the dead once they’ve passed to the other side, I must go on alone. It’s so frightening... going alone... So painful... Grünscher! Can you hear me, Grünscher? How am I going to do it now, all alone, with an unlaughing audience?”

A sob rattles him from head to toe.

“Grümscher!” he says.

“You’re a weepy drunk,” Yasar observes.

“Not really,” says the clown.

“You probably shouldn’t finish your second glass,” Yasar insists.

“I’m drinking to Grümscher’s health,” explains Blumschi. “In the temple, they’re reading him the Book of the Dead, right now. Shaven-skulled bonzes. They do that. And I’m drinking in memory of Big Grümscher.”

“It’s helpful to read the Book of the Dead,” Freek intervenes. “Where he is, he’s really very alone. He needs someone to reassure him and tell him what to do. You know, if he can hear a voice, even if he can’t understand it, he’ll feel relieved. He’ll be less afraid. Even if it’s not true, it’ll give him the feeling he’s not entirely alone. You should speak to him, instead of drowning yourself in whiskey.”

“What do you want me to...” says the clown.

His eyes open wide. He looks both drunk and anxious.

“Wait, wait, what are you saying?” he asks.

“He’s saying that you should call it quits on the whiskey,” says the bartender.

“I’m saying that it would do him good to hear your voice right now,” says Freek. “He’s just beginning. It’s very difficult, at the start. It’ll have an effect on him. He may not recognize your voice right away. But it’ll do him good.”

“I don’t know how to talk to a dead person,” says the clown. “I’ve never had the chance to... And anyway, have you really thought about what it means to talk to a deadman? Thinking he can hear you? That he’s listening to you, from his dark world, from... It’s frightening... And if he misinterprets what you’re trying to... Did you think about that? If, instead of reassuring him, you end up terrorizing him? No, I really don’t see what I could...”

“You only have to do what you were doing onstage,” Freek suggests. “When he was struggling, when you yelled advice in his ear to help him get back up and he pretended not to hear you.”

“Or else, you only have to murmur phrases from the Book of the Dead,” says Yasar. “Reassuring formulas.”

“For what I know of the Book of the Dead’s formulas...”

Blumschi protests. “Big Grünscher could have... he could recite entire pages by heart. He loved Buddhist magic, he was a member of a mutual aid group that read the Book of the Dead to those suffering in the streets, to vagrants, to the tatterdemalion... He took courses at the Lamaist school. We were inseparable, but that put a chasm between us. I’ve never... I’m completely incapable of...”

“They’re reading it next door,” says Freek. “You only have to listen to a passage and repeat it.”

Blumschi drinks. He doesn’t retort. He puts his glass back down. Under the ice cubes, the liquid is transparent. If my count is correct, he’s just finished his fourth whiskey.

There is still the background noise of the radio in the bar, along with the diverse ringings and murmurs coming from the Buddhist ceremony on the other side of the wall. The officiant’s voice is distorted by the path it had to travel before arriving behind the counter. It is however a minimal distance, with negligible obstacles, a few bricks, a square of fine wire mesh. It’s a mystery what the dead man can perceive of this voice, being an incalculable distance away.

“You can’t distinguish anything, anyway,” Blumschi complains. “Not a syllable.”

“I’m going to turn off the radio,” Yasar proposes. “I can also undo the grill on the vent duct. They put the temple in the old service station next door. The air vents to the bar and the garage are connected. We’ll hear everything.”

“Great,” says Blumschi.

He pushes his chair back. He rises. He is drunk.

“Well,” he says. “One last drop to your health, my old Grünscher. And then, you’re going to see how I communicate with the garage and you.”

He grabs his glass, he examines the ice cubes which offer him nothing more than poorly flavored water. He staggers. He collides with a table.

The bartender turns off the radio. Then he climbs on a stool, loosens something behind the bottle shelves, above the bar’s partition. Suddenly, the sounds coming from the neighboring building transform. It feels like they are right in the heart of the

temple. The lama's profound bass resonates inside the bar as if the lama were standing behind the counter, between the percolator and Yasar.

"Oh noble son," says the lama, "I am once again going to repeat this first page of the Bardo Thödol, so important it is for you to hear and to understand, without which you will be lost for the forty-nine days of your journey through the Bardo."

"Well?" says the bartender. "Don't tell me you still can't distinguish the syllables. It's quite stunning, isn't it? Go on, Blumschi, you don't have any more excuses. Have faith! Repeat everything to your friend."

"Pour me another whiskey," Blumschi says, panicking. "I... This feels obscene. I'm not drunk enough for public speaking."

Yasar hesitates for a second, then he stretches his hand toward the bottle. He prepares the drink Blumschi requires.

"He needs guidance," says Freek. "Don't make anything up, give him the same advice the monks do. Let yourself guide through what the monks say. The most important thing is for him to recognize your voice. Your voice and your way of speaking. He has to know that his friend is still nearby to help him. It will do him an immense good. It will help him not drown completely in terror."

"Oh noble son, Grümscher," the lama says, "I am addressing you as I will every day for forty-nine days. It is absolutely necessary that you lend me your ear and do your best to understand the meaning of my words. What I am telling you now is meant to ease your crossing of the Bardo. If you listen to me without distraction, you will be less afraid when you are walking the Bardo's dreadful, narrow passages. You will even be able to escape the disastrous prospect of endless rebirth and death, and rebirth again, and death again. You will be able to liberate yourself from this long chain of suffering."

The small clown takes hold of the glass Yasar filled. He swallows several mouthfuls with glum anxiety.

"Put your glass down, Blumschi," says Yasar.

"Yes," says Blumschi as he wobbles, not putting his glass down.

"Talk to your friend," says Yasar. "Everything is strange and

unpleasant to him right now. If that's the case, he won't even realize he's not alive anymore. He doesn't know how to react at all. Talk to him so he knows that a friend is trying to help him."

"It's obscene," says Blumschi.

"Go on," Yasar encourages him. "It's not obscene. It's a moment of very strong friendship. Pretend like you're together again on the circus floor, before the public. Like obscenity doesn't exist."

"Before the public..." Blumschi grumbles as he staggers. "Like..."

Then he overcomes his reluctance and launches into it. He moves his arms and pretends to flap between the first tables and the counter. In his pauper's clothes, held together with four safety pins, he is grotesque, but that's precisely what he's going for. In an instant he has become a clownish character who makes no one laugh. He widens his despair-laden eyes and grimaces dazedly, and now he is raising his pitch, whining in an acute voice.

"Can Big Grünscher hear me?" he bawls. "Does he hear Little Blumschi? Yes? No? Where is Big Grünscher? Has anyone seen him, perchance? Where is Big Grünscher hiding? Oh oh oh! He wouldn't happen to be hiding in a big, big vulture's big, big gizzard, would he? Or on the crematorium's big, hot grill? Where could Big Grünscher be hiding? In the Bardo? Could Big Grünscher have gone and hid in the Bardo?"

A car passes by. The windows clink. Blumschi takes a drink. He puts his glass down on the counter with an imprecise gesture.

"It's useless," he says. "I'm sure he can't hear me. Even if he could, it'd just be a bigger nightmare."

"What would?" asks Freek.

"If my voice reached him," says Blumschi.

There are two seconds of silence.

"Oh noble son, Grünscher," says the lama, "you have remained unconscious for several days. When you left this void, you asked yourself: 'What happened? What has come about?'... You try to consult your memories, but everything is hazy in your mind. You have trouble recognizing the world around you."

"Go on," says Yasar. "Continue, Blumschi. Too bad if it's a

nightmare. It's for his own good."

The clown opens his eyes wide. They are damp with tears. He makes a ridiculous, exaggerated grimace, but his expression betrays an immense sorrow.

"Does Big Grünscher hear me?" he bawls. "Does the big buffoon hear me or not? Well? Has he had enough of being unconscious? He opens his eyes, and what does he see? The acrobats' crossbar, where the big straw mats sway when they're hung up, that's what he sees! And he consults his memories, and what does Big Grünscher say? 'What's come about?' he says! 'What happened? And why is Little Blumschi all shook up, why is he crying and blowing his nose so loudly?'"

The clown gesticulates. He spins around, stretching out his arms, like a shaman on the brink of a trance, though it is obvious he hardly believes in the spectacle's worth. On top of that, his gestures are uncertain. With the back of the hand, he slaps the platter Yasar had used to serve his whiskies. The glasses go flying, a saucer rolls off, everything shatters on the ground.

"Oh, blasted yak rot! I broke your dishes," he says, doubtlessly relieved to have found a pretext for taking a break.

"It's nothing," says Yasar. "I'll clean it up. Don't stop."

"You are having difficulty deciphering the universe which has welcomed you," continues the lama. "You understand nothing. Nothing is familiar to you. Without an effort on your part, you are going to be as ill-equipped to interpret the post-death world as a baby in the post-birth world. React, noble son. Do not let yourself become submerged in dread. Do not imagine either that you are finally walking into reality. Everything around you is just another illusion. Do not become attached to this illusion, as deceitful and vain as the existence you just left."

"You're acting like Big Grünscher was attached to this existence," Blumschi remarks.

He picks up a piece of glass from the ground. Tears run down his cheeks.

"Leave it," says Yasar.

Blumschi gets back up. He didn't even have time to cut his palm. He is standing in the small puddle, surrounded by

nearly-melted ice cubes, alive, not even wounded. He is comical. No one feels like laughing.

“Do not become at all attached to it,” says the lama.

“Is Big Grünscher still listening?” Little Blumschi suddenly continues. “Does he hear Mister Lama, huh? Is he listening to Mister Lama? Is he not letting himself become submerged in dread? Is floating in vultures’ gastric juices not doing anything for him? Oh, but I heard that the Grünscher is a little afraid... Don’t be afraid, you big straw mat! It’s for a laugh! It’s just an unreal world! It’s a silly illusion! You have to get used to it, Big Grünscher! Don’t get attached!”

Sobs suffocate Little Blumschi. A truck passes by. The windows tremble. Blumschi has slumped into a chair to cry.

“I can’t,” says the clown. “It’s too absurd. It’s making everyone suffer.”

“Don’t stop, Blumschi,” says Freek. “Don’t cry too loudly. You don’t want him to hear you crying. Keep helping him like you were. The big one’s afraid. He’s woken up and is afraid. It does him an enormous good to hear you. Don’t stop shouting your inanities. I’m sure it’s doing him an enormous good.”

“Who cares about my inanities?” says Blumschi. “He can’t hear me.”

Blumschi sniffles. He sits up straight in his chair. He listens to the religious man’s voice describing the best attitudes for the dead man to adopt should any problems arise, but now the discourse is in a ritual Tibetan which the least useful intonation no one in the bar can glean.

“You never know,” says Freek. “But maybe, down there, in the dark, he understood. He wanted to laugh in the dark. Maybe. He was afraid, then he was less afraid.”

“Poor guy,” says Blumschi. “He didn’t laugh for months at a time. He was drowning in depression and couldn’t get out. Nobody found us funny anymore. Big Grünscher was a great clown though. I’m not saying that just to indulge him, or because I loved him like a brother. I’m saying it because it’s true. He was a consummate professional. But we still couldn’t get any laughs from the bleachers anymore. Sympathetic murmurs, yes, two or three snickers, but no

laughs. Big Grünscher started to feel like it was too much, in the circus, in life. He felt completely useless. Nothing helped convince him to the contrary. In the last few days he was dwelling down there for good. He was convinced he was lost in an awful dream.”

Yasar sweeps the glass fragments, the ice cubes. He makes the puddle disappear. He thinks about Blumschi, about Grünscher, about Freek. He recalls the years in captivity, he reflects on the strange pointlessness of existence, no matter what anyone wants. He rinses the ground under the table, he takes the mop near the counter. We all feel like we are lost inside an awful dream, and, if you add together all the insignificant moments of the present, the dream carries on.

“You know,” Blumschi says, “when a clown can’t make anyone laugh, he can go mad with grief. You go onstage, the projectors blind you, it’s freezing cold, the circus reeks of old beasts, the smell of piss rises from the sand, and you’re there, to thrash around, to shout, like you’re extremely lonely, with the hope that, despite everything, someone on the bleachers will soon start laughing, in the darkness you can hardly see because of the lamps. But no one flinches. No one giggles or roars. And it’s unbearable. It drives you mad. Years like that, living it night after night. Waiting for laughs that never come.”

“You made me laugh,” says Freek. “I went to see you at the Schmöhl Circus. I saw both of you. The kings of laughter, like on the poster. I was in the dark, on the bleachers. The third row. There were some children. They had stopped talking. The closest ones were annoyed that I was sitting next to them. They tried to move away. I didn’t dare laugh out loud once I realized that I was the only one who found you funny. But I had a stomachache. You made me laugh. I don’t think I’ve ever laughed so much in my life.”

“Yes, but with you, it’s not the same,” says Blumschi. “You’re not really... I mean...”

Freek jabs his nose into his bowl of caffeine. He still had the bottom to finish.

“Each one of us is mired in his own awful dream,” the clown says. “You’re there, petrified with grief on top of the stinking sand, and, as petrified as you are, you keep struggling, emitting

sounds... You wait for a friendly laugh to echo from the dark. You wait for a friendly voice to encourage you, agree with you, pull you from there... And nothing. Nothing comes... The darkness remains silent. You do the best clownings in your repertoire, and the children move away. No bursts of laughter... So you don't even believe in friendship anymore. You move away yourself. You close up. You don't even try sharing your grief with Little Blumschi. You go hang around under the acrobats' crossbar one night. You go hang around under the acrobats' crossbar one night, and you hang yourself."

Blumschi is once again slumped in his chair. He spoke those last sentences in a broken voice. Mucus and tears soil his cheeks. Yasar rinsed the mop in the bucket, then he washed Freek's bowl, some saucers, a spoon. At one point, he closed the air vent connected to the temple. The reading of the Bardo Thödol became a distant, uninterpretable murmur. Grümscher can perhaps be heard better right now in his mysterious darkness, but the lama's guidance is unintelligible.

A police car races down the boulevard. The revolving lights color a wall red and blue for a second. The windows quiver.

Freek has left for the zoo.

Yasar turns the radio back on. It's the Korean music program again. For those in the know, it is now a traditional dance, accompanied by a popular oboist, the hyangpiri, an hourglass-shaped drum, the changgo, a cylindrical drum, the puk, and flutes. For others, it's just lovely music that can be listened to for hours, because it's rhythmic, because it's beautiful, and because they are extremely lonely.

Cello, Poems by Seán Street

There are several facets to Seán Street's creative work, he is a writer, broadcaster and poet who has produced musical works and radio dramas. His eighth collection, *Cello*, is a collection of sequences, which to an extent are an elegy for Jonathan Harvey, the composer who died in December 2012. However, the poems explore mortality and loss through the medium of the English landscape as the book moves from the Neolithic stone circles and barrows of Avebury to the estuaries of the Thames and the Mersey. The opening poem, *Landscape*, is a template for the collection, a sonnet whose delicate rhyme scheme mimics the tenuous nature of our grasp on the world we inhabit:

At night it is when the engine dies
the car door opens admitting Place-
its high tide drowning us – history's
too long lived to have voice or face.
...It's the circle's ruling:
the old dies out the ancient goes on,
and landscape is its own ritual.
We're a parenthesis under torn
hills, tenants of earth. Habitual
does not - cannot - imply ownership.
(Landscape 1-4, 8-13)

The poem affirms, almost didactically, the circularity of history and

the paradox that while each of us perishes that which we create persists. The stone circles offer a perfect metaphor, yet in spite of the poem's painstakingly achieved music and detachment, the verse is imbued with the writer's own personal feeling of bereavement. This first sequence, Stone and Source, neatly links the circularity of life, landscape and musical form, The formal precision of most of the sonnets and the burnished language are reminiscent of Geoffrey Hill. However, one of the poems, Wodnesbeorg, echoes Anglo Saxon alliterative verse in its recreation of local legend to beautiful effect.

Harvey, the composer, and the sense of his music is most powerfully present in the sequence titled Cello Music. The piece is introduced with a quote from Harvey, which tells us that the Cello is the most human of instruments and "speaks with every aspect of the human voice". The richly alliterative patterns and the fricative sounds of the piece mimic the particular quality of the cello's sound beautifully.

Today it mourns.

Bow across the dusk of its song, the twilight of it,

the rich wood singing, the full heart of old colour.

Cello music. It never leaves you,

a player of cello owns its voice, sings it

through all other songs.

Today it's a sound sung instead of weeping

(Cello Music, 1-7)

Perhaps what the poem evokes is the paradox that the person we lose when they die is most powerfully present to us through the traces they leave in the natural and human environment.

However, Harvey has become part of that intrinsic pattern that his music tried to recreate:

... You are there now in a space
purer than silence. White light
beyond the possibility of prisms
solo song moving towards starlight
and the promise of angels kept.

(Cello Music, 26-30)

The subsequent poems in the book circle round the themes of mortality, music and transcendence in these sequences. Cello is a beautifully achieved collection infused with all the craft that Street has acquired throughout his extensive career. The poems are both detached and perfectly crafted, but also an intimate evocation of bereavement and the indifference of the life cycle that created us to our passing, simply embodied in: the car park on the/estuary shore, where nothing happens,/ and then just goes on and on happening. (The Car Park, 7-10)

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