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**MANI RAO**  
translating *Guru-aṣṭakam*  
attributed to Śankara, from the Sanskrit

(1) *Guru - Hymn in Eight Stanzas*

**ANNA ROSEN GUERCIO**

(6) *Duet for Piano and Poem*

(7) *Too Cold For Clouds*

(8) *like a carriage return*

(9) *This life the most charmed still*

**D. E. STEWARD**

(10) *Septambro*

**MARY CARROLL-HACKETT**

(15) *At Caddo*

(16) *It Is As One Body*

**DICK CLUSTER**  
translating the Spanish of Pedro de Jesús

(17) *The Sign*

# Anomalous #3

**GRAHAM TUGWELL**

(23) *The Thread*

**S.D. MULLANEY**

(30) *Our sex was so good*

(32) *XIV*

**IAN HATCHER**

(36) *Flock Behaviors*

**JANIS FREEGARD**

(37) *The Continuing Adventures of Alice Spider:  
An Anomalous Selection*

**ELLEN RHUDY**

(44) *The Return of Rain*

(47) *Public Monuments*

**JOHN PLUECKER**

(49) *Fly*

**JOSEPH ROSS**

(55) *On Fritz Eichenberg's "Pieta"*

**ANDREW BARRETT**

translating Nonnus from the Ancient Greek

(57) *Dionysiaca, Book One (lines 46–85)*

(59) *Dionysiaca, Book One (lines 137–162)*

(61) *Dionysiaca, Book Three (lines 55–83)*

**EVELYN HAMPTON**

(65) *love dolls*

**NAZIFA ISLAM**

(70) *she wears grey*

**SARAH TOURJEE**

(73) *In the Dark*

**ORI FIENBERG**

(76) *One Minute Michael Martone Re-Mix*

# Anomalous #3

**A. KENDRA GREENE**

(77) *Now a Fancy Tiger*

**REBECCA MERRILL**

(91) *How to Do Laundry*

**STEVE BRADBURY**

translating Hsia Yü from the Chinese

(98) *Lining Up to Pay*

**ASHER DANZIGER**

(101) *Lungs Open Lungs Close*

## Guru - Hymn in Eight Stanzas

*Mani Rao translating Guru-aṣṭakam  
attributed to Śankara, from the Sanskrit*

My body's shapely so's my Mrs'  
And my fame, pretty as a pic.  
I've got cash—Mt. Meru heaps  
    But if mind's not at Guru's feet  
It's futile futile futile futile

Wife 'n wealth, kids and grandkids  
I have a house, 'n relatives  
    But if mind's not at home at Guru's feet  
All futile futile futile futile

Veda 'n vedanga I know inside out  
Out come the śāstras when I open my mouth  
I do poetry I'm a pro in prosody  
    If mind's not studious at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

Internationally respected nationally celebrated  
In proper behavior there's no one but moi  
    If mind's not true at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

On the world-stage King-Emperor mobs  
keep kissing my feet  
    If mind's not simple at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

Thanks to my charity my fame's gone far  
Thanks to my blessedness all worldly things are near  
    If mind's not anchored at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

I've no thought for pleasures treasures  
Love-treats yogic-feats  
    But if mind's unfocused at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

Both home and wilderness I'm disinterested  
In job, life and precious things  
    But if mind's insincere at Guru's feet  
Futile futile futile futile

2

Student or householder, ascetic or king, whoever studies the  
Guru-hymn gets an A+. If mind's insincere at Guru's feet, futile  
futile futile futile.

## Guru-Aṣṭakam

Anonymous, attributed to Śankara

(1)

śarīram surūpam tathā vā kalatram  
yaśāścāru citram dhanam merutulyam  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(2)

kalatram dhanam putrapoutrādi sarvaṁ  
gṛhaṁ bāndhavāḥ sarvametaddhi jātam  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(3)

ṣaḍaṅgādivedo mukhe śastravidyā  
kavitcādi gadyaṁ supadyaṁ karoti  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(4)

videśeṣu mānyaḥ svadeśeṣu dhanyaḥ  
sadācāravṛtṭeṣu matto na cānyaḥ  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(5)

kṣamāmaṇḍale bhūpabhūpālabṛndaiḥ  
sadā sevitaṁ yasya pādāravindam  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(6)

yaśo me gataṁ dikṣu dānaptratāpāj-  
jagadvastu sarvaṁ kare yatprasādāt  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(7)

4

na bhoge na yoge na vā vājirājau  
na kāntāmukhe naiva vitteṣu cittam  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(8)

araṇye na vā svasya gehe na kārye  
na dehe mano vartate me tvanarghye  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

(9)

guroraṣṭakaṁ yaḥ paṭhetpunyadehī  
yatirbhūpatirbrahmacārī ca gehī  
guroraṅghripadme mānaścenna lagnaṁ  
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ

## Translator's Note

*Mani Rao*

The *Guru-Aṣṭakam*, a popular Sanskrit hymn honoring a guru, attributed to 8th CE Śankara like so many other popular Sanskrit hymns. Who's a guru? A spiritual teacher. The disciple reminds himself to be humble, to focus on the guru's feet, and not be carried away by successes, whether worldly or spiritual. Why feet? Because it's a tradition that the guru's feet stand in for the guru. The refrain "tataḥ-kim" translates literally to "then-what," i.e., "what's the use," which I take to mean "futile," producing the clipped "f" sound to match the "ḥ" (visarga) at the end of "tataḥ." I modify the refrain slightly with each verse to accentuate the theme of that verse.

## Duet for Piano and Poem

*Anna Rosen Guercio*

A certain opacity to her eyes  
as they say,  
“small forms.”

And I know something about these  
hands on keys as if love's neck, makes mine ache,  
and about this music sutured like the dreams we tell  
ourselves before falling, sleep.  
Whose idea of night and what paltry resistance  
are these, my quiet, my small forms.

6 Hers a song to accompany image,  
a dialogue as repertoire.  
And mine, small sounding place for:  
“There is nothing natural can quiet its feet in fall.”

## Too Cold For Clouds

*Anna Rosen Guercio*

I ache to name something “too cold for clouds:”  
a children's book, a cocktail, a postrock song.

Recalcitrant walls, I always thought  
she was singing as I would have sung.

Sung early to early to bed to bed,  
and form to bring to being.

Sung charms against chase against being held  
accountable for stories for keeping accounts.

Expressive after all after a fashion to fall,  
to create an audience as much as find or be.

As simple as a repertoire,  
I'd be armed to sing against a sea.

## like a carriage return

*Anna Rosen Guercio*

like a carriage return, a toolkit, a European inheritance  
a kind of domestic enclosure or a self-sufficiency  
the transformation trope  
the human endlessly iterative  
especially in conjunction  
with the protracted fixing of the sun

some things I turn and find  
I only pretend to believe  
like all of Sappho gone  
as if she won't be magically  
8 before I'm too far gone  
for magic, like the moon doesn't follow me home

like this old alchemical notion  
that the voice's duty is to give us what's left  
and hope we can make something from it  
something lacking the weight of the maternal

# This life the most charmed still

*Anna Rosen Guercio*

To arrest time and reverse loss  
admit disjunction and be done  
activity and object  
I'm making it up

Sideways hanged she is sleeping, naps sunned  
lazy unchaste astride the window  
It bangs a bit it's ominous  
I tell you

She is purposeful even in dreams  
a woman to unfold action over time

But I get messianic once a year  
(the rest of my days are handled by the stars)  
eyes go blue then blown (to smithereens)

# Septembro

*D. E. Steward*

They all left perch at the same instant

More than eighteen hundred migrating tree swallows

Three wires between four poles, estimate two hundred on each catenary, plus hundreds more basking in the eight o'clock sun on the low pitch metal raised seam roof of a new sheet metal barn near the fourth pole

For something like a minute they wheeled and wheeled

As they formed into broken flocks

10

Stupendous in perfect light

Charlie, the dairy farmer I worked for from twelve and thirteen on, used to bend down over burlap bags, find the chain-stitch thread with his teeth and jerk his chin high to open the sack

With any chain-stitched sack, black oil sunflower seed or basmati brown rice, I lean down to it and become Charlie

He sold his farm in the Piedmont when the barn burned and retired to a small condo on Oahu

Working on his farm and others like it as a kid, that those families needed to turn a cash profit seemed alien because the way of life, the living and farming, were what counted

And writing feels the same

Moneycraft being something else off to the side somewhere

On the mountain slopes above the settlement strung along  
the coast road for miles, with axes, whipsaws, bucksaws,  
sledges and teams, the men brought in immense quantities of  
stovewood, mountain maple and paper birch, balsam poplar  
and quaking aspen

Communally every year to supply each family

Rowdy bellowing horseplay and singing, red-mackinaw socialist  
practice

Out in the far Maritime's boreal forest

Everyone there knew everyone else all their lives

Communality for a century of Cape Breton winters before she  
walked that coastal country road on her way to school

11

At times as she started home a nun would hurry after her to pin  
up her blouse

Or the priest would drive by rolling down a window of the only  
car in the parish, point at her bare ankles, roar admonitions

In the States she fears the quiet, lonely, grayness in her life

First time back in Nova Scotia in more than thirty years she  
exclaims at the Cape Breton skies, the vastness and the blueness

Bright winter sun in an instant makes the green in her silk scarf  
nearly match her eyes

Show her in a mirror and she says proudly, "It brings it right out, doesn't it"

She was very young when soldiers who had been gassed came home from France to Cape Breton to die

Her pity for all victims still wells up with maudlin and intense compassion

And her slow-drip acerbic resentments sift down through a profusion of sardonic memories, singed by a lonely, solipsistic widow's life

She readily recalls all childhood sorrows

On rare occasion she is still the same cool, selfish, beautiful girl with the level stare that infuriated the nuns

12

In the same way the bright winter sun greened her eyes so that for that instant she was a girl again

*Vida:* After she broke down that September, neighbors locked her in a room in their house up the road

Another country road familiar to her as the one that passed her casa materna

After the night she tried to kill both of us, first by fire, then with a kitchen knife

At the neighbor's place her face came to a window in the afternoon, crazed, eyes red-rimmed wild

Her hands did not go up to her face in any shock of recognition

Perhaps there was compassion in her then for her two terrified,  
confused, forlorn little boys standing there

Perhaps not

We thought she would never return to us when they came and  
took her away next day

As though she was dying as surely as our father had died by  
shooting himself that April

Utter emptiness

It was a tumbling horror, fear, clear and vivid vision of the maw

All his life my brother, regularly, handled it the other way, he  
forgot everything

He always said he did, and usually with a kind of mock incredulity,  
when any of the details of those nights and days came up

By circumstance, questions from others, by me trying to talk it  
through to force him to admit what she had done, and to flush  
away the most unsettling images

The abandonment by suicide was pat, her act ambiguous

But he never would talk about any of it, was dismissive in the extreme

Would repeatedly say, "The past is dead," and leave it at that

Once or twice he even quoted Melville's *White Jacket*, "The Past  
is dead, and has no resurrection;... The past is, in many things,  
the foe of mankind;... In the Past is no hope;"

For him much was litany, secular rituals, and a kind of promiscuous shifting patriotism that swerved around to various identities and from one pole of loyalty to another, Marxist to Libertarian

He died over twenty years ago and writing about him now is almost writing about myself

“The eulogy is the most autobiographical of forms” –Richard Howard

My brother traveled well and fairly widely, but we rarely went together and when we did there was always the friction of brothers

He is gone but there are the shards still left, a few school friends and now and then recall of one of his tart observations by those who knew him

14

Once he told me that de Gaulle’s “Call to Honor,” *dix-huit juin 1940*, was delivered thirteen months after he was born and in his romantic high regard for de Gaulle, he would have been bemused to have known he would die on June eighteenth

It’s fine to be able to speak French but you have to have something to say

Open every chain-stitched sack with a jerk of my chin

Many, many hours in searing bush-veldt sun at Olduvai Gorge

Have been there twice

You carry your own water in

## At Caddo

*Mary Carroll-Hackett*

we knelt, we women, in living prayer to grind acorns, percussion of bone, horn and stone, flour loosening there beneath our touch, smooth as the mush I chewed, then softened with the pad of my tongue, from marsh elder, to finger into the half moon mouth of the black-eyed child we made. For your house by the red river, I boiled squash and pumpkin, fried fat and deer liver, gathered goosefoot and chinquapins, their woody shells stars you cracked with square strong teeth, the nutmeat spilling sweet from your mouth to mine. In the village, the connas kept time, those priests who played pallilos, who whispered first into the ear of the deer you brought, who taught of ships and open skies, the twin gaze of the feathered snake, the shake, rasp and rattle of the ancestor songs, how the desert stars had always been our eyes, how the desert fires were our fires too. We knew—all along—we women, all time given when we still floated in our mothers' blood, our unformed tongues already brave, speaking to the xinesi of the red sand we would make to honor his grave. My mother, her fingers stained and sticky with first fruit, traced my route across the swollen drum of her own belly, while I still swam within, marking the map of all women, the telling like persimmon bite, sweetening only as I grew, then came, finally, in ripeness, to you. You gave me purslane, pulled young and wild, and I tore the woody stem open for its sweet bit of milk, keeping safe the tiny seeds, dark and silky as my skin, in a hide bag, guarding them, always for the planting, for the time we would begin again.

# It Is As One Body

*Mary Carroll-Hackett*

*for John Eaton*

*the heart breaks, and breaks, and lives by breaking. Stanley Kunitz*

it is as one body we inhabit the past, that body learned first and fast  
in hot snaky rows of a cornfield, some other day and year, gone before  
here, when a smooth-skinned boy with square fingers and almond  
eyes slid his hands from breast to belt, centuries she'd known him—  
felt blood and limb—but time folded their way home, time, thinned  
and ridged and hollowed by song, knows better even than bone.

16 this body, its own history submissive even, made of bits trundled up  
from sand, all woman, all man, bending first into—then out, casting  
about, in search of itself, as whole—angled and sharp as the shade  
of long-leaf pine—what time knows is that it loves

hard lives, those field scarred, hearts lined with pitch, that boy  
gone man in broke-sole boots, that girl gone woman, cotton skirt  
hitched to hip, a crescent scar cupping there the womb—sharing  
its dichotomies, its shape with the heart.

listen! you have what you need—

time giving and heated, left for you, circled, handed over with  
ceremony that knowing, skin knowing—that the soul flees not out—

but in—

when it finds its own again.

## The Sign

*Dick Cluster translating the Spanish of Pedro de Jesús*

Mercedes, the ex-kindergarten-teacher, goes over the numbers from one to a hundred again. Her short-sighted eyes peer out through the window in search of some unaccustomed animal that might cross the alleyway or pop out of the patch of weeds that her yard has become. She tries but fails to remember whether she had any dreams last night, whether she dreamed about an extraordinary event that could inspire her.

For Mercedes, betting embodies what we might call a hermeneutic adventure: diving deeply into the interpretation of certain meaningful signs which the chaos of reality offers as a favor not without subterfuge and mirages. She believes that given her age and circumstances this is the only sort of choice at once available to her and worthy of her – a choice among possible signs. It's the only aspect of the numbers game that she really enjoys, as opposed to the money she might win – little as that is considering her frequent mistakes.

17

But the afternoon is moving along, the runner is about to arrive, and Mercedes, the ex-kindergarten-teacher, worriedly ponders the numbers from one to a hundred. All of them seem equally opaque and inexpressive.

On the other side of the cardboard wall, Santa starts chortling, interspersing little cries like a mezzo-soprano in death throes among her other sounds. Mercedes goes into her mother's room, where Santa lies naked on the plastic covering the mattress. Mercedes

tells Santa the stomach doctor is outside. That does the trick. She shuts her toothless mouth bordered by sunken grooves, extends her arms, and grabs the edge of the bed. If only Mercedes' stratagems were always so successful.

"Now that the doctor is gone, you have to get up."

Mercedes speaks softly, her voice almost sweet.

"You should have seen the big parasol she was carrying, so beautiful..."

18

Seated on the corner of the double bed, she twiddles the thumbs of her clasped hands in her lap, above the grease-stained fabric of her robe. She considers. Maybe the nearly involuntary action of inventing a parasol for the phantom gastroenterologist could be a sign. Sometimes chance lets slip her deepest mysteries by way of words uttered involuntarily, or statements apparently false.

"Now that the doctor is gone, you have to get up," she repeats, her voice louder and lacking the almost-sweetness.

Often enough this is how it goes. Santa pretends not to hear, and Mercedes wonders whether her mother's vagaries and deliriums could be perverse ruses to inspire pity. Then Mercedes, who changes Santa's position several times a day to prevent bed sores, tries to get her to stand up. Since being the daughter of an old lady doesn't exempt Mercedes from her own more than half a century, she lacks the strength.

"I'm going to count to three," she warns, severely, the ex-kindergarten-teacher.

“Why do you want to get me out there if the doctor is around?” She’s adopting the tone of someone intent on getting her own way, somewhere between naïve and pleading. She’s still holding onto the mattress but no longer afraid, just taking advantage of the defenseless image which that pose might suggest.

“Don’t go playing crazy on me. I’m going to count to three...” Mercedes brandishes the stick that used to belong to a broom. With the nail at the end she pricks the old woman into action. Santa tries to bend her knees to avoid the stinger, but Mercedes goes after her ribs.

“Go ahead and kill me. That’s what you need to do, kill me.” Santa raises her hands to her forehead in a sign of exhaustion and impotence and begins to cry for help.

Should she bet on the old man, or the madman, or any of the whole of host of calamities associated with various numbers in the lottery? No way. She’d never bet on a one of them. The scene she’s living through isn’t any wink on the part of reality. It’s the true reality that she has to see every day. What special meaning could she find in it?

“You ought to give her chlorpromazine,” the number lady’s voice bursts through the hole in the window. “My grandmother got so much better ...”

Santa manages to grab one end of the stick, and while she tries to get possession of the whole thing she redoubles the strength of her cries.

“The cure is worse than the disease,” Mercedes shouts back. “They say it softens old people’s bodies so they can’t even sit up.”

“You have to choose between softening her or going crazy yourself.”

“I’ll kill her first!” With a yank she regains control of the implement and hurls it to the floor. Taking advantage of this burst of energy, she grabs Santa by the shoulders and sits her up in the middle of the bed.

“Do you want any help?” the numbers lady asks solicitously.

Inch by inch her mother slides along the bed toward the wheelchair.

“No, dear, come back later. My mind is a blank right now.”

Mercedes the ex-kindergarten-teacher holds the wheelchair handle, supervising the painfully slow maneuver, incapable of anything else. Now Santa turns perfectionist, putting all her skill and effort into every inch she conquers. She’s so motivated she starts singing. “The scorpion, the scorpion, the scorpion is going to sting you ...”

20

Afflicted, the daughter takes in the spectacle of her mother, stiff and skinny yet singing still. Suddenly a lightning bolt flashes across her mind.

“This is how I like to see you,” she says, stroking Santa’s forehead almost effusively.

Feeling for the coin in a pocket of her robe, the ex-kindergarten-teacher hurries over to the window, radiating happiness. She’s got the winning number now: the scorpion, forty-three. “The scorpion, the scorpion, the scorpion is going to bite you.” Santa keeps chanting and Mercedes can hardly contain her joy. She opens the door eagerly, strides through the weed patch, tries to look into the distance. Will the runner take a long time to come back?

She's gripped now by a fear that the woman won't come back, just now when reality, chaos, and chance have been generous. She feels a sudden tightness in her chest and decides to busy herself with dinner to drive away any bad thoughts. She crosses the kitchen, its floor pierced by the ceiba tree's roots. A cat that was snoozing somewhere among the implements follows her to the stove beneath the almond tree.

Mercedes stops beside the large supply of firewood and closes her eyes to overcome her sudden faintness. Santa intensifies her sing-song, piling sharps on flats without harmony or consonance, and then, like an orator gone hysterical, recites the lyric at the top of her voice. The ex-kindergarten-teacher fears the neighbors will hear, recognize the number, and rob her of her luck. Pondering whether to force her mother into silence with the stinging broomstick, she opens her eyes. Two hand-widths from her foot, on the pile of guásima wood, she spots the scorpion.

21

Surprise paralyzes her. Can this be coincidence? Or is it the sign insisting on interpretation?

She sees them on all sides. One, five, ten, how many scorpions? Their venom-bearing tails drawn up. She closes her eyes again, completely dizzy. Has she gone nuts? Is this a vision, maybe the one Santa sees that's causing her to sing and sing? Or are the repetitions casting a spell that conjures the animals into being?

Mercedes just wishes she could shut her up. Whether real or imaginary, scorpions put her into a panic, and her mother knows it, she always has. Many times she's imagined killing her and felt monstrous. Now she only wishes she'd stop singing. If she could

open her eyes, move her feet, scream. But somehow she knows that's impossible. The pain is intense, as if the scorpions had angrily sunk their stingers into one of the ex-kindergarten-teacher's drooping, shaking breasts.

While she falls like ton of bricks against the ton of firewood, she hears her mother's singing, far off, farther and farther off. But she knows it's very close, and she knows too that the voice is loud and strong. True signs are the most tenacious ones.

## The Thread

*Graham Tugwell*

And waking that morning, opening from a fist of cold-conscience dreams, on that dull yellow morning the villagers woke and, rising, came across the Thread.

Draped in golden cords from the crests of chimneys, hanging in frosted loops from the tops of trees, softly wafting from slanting telegraph poles, they found a length of shining Thread, glowing coldly in the milk-yellow of dawn. The diamond hair of angels fallen, straggling in hedges, tangling with rubbish in ditches, dragged in sagging lines across fields, through gardens, over blunt and sun-blushed hills.

Dew-frozen coils of Thread have lightly fallen over flocks of sleeping sheep and cattle, and the villagers find that these golden cords have blissfully sliced through necks and spines and haunches, like hot pins through candle wax, slaying livestock where they lay.

And so are discovered fields of lolling meatstrips, of soft night butchery undisturbed. Head-lopped pigeons lying at the foot of a garden wall. A slant-slashed homeless cut hip to shoulder, surgical, bloodless, under a hedge found folded.

The postman, blankly handless, falling horrified from house to house, whispering: *It came down in front of me, it came down in front of me, it came down right in front me.*

The first of the villagers to approach, the first to lay hold of the Thread outside the Promissory House, find their fingers frozen

cleanly off, crisply snapping bloodless, without a pang of pain. Sighing, the Thread drifts through and cold blue stubs just part and tumble, leaving watchers shocked, incredulous, stunned at the cold efficient cleanness of it all...

And the sun slips in silence up the pale blue edges of the world, throwing lengths of milky light upon the streets and houses, upon the old burned church and the closed-off graveyard curled round it.

Revealing Thread, revealing lengths of golden Thread everywhere, on everything.

Weary eyes trace the looping lariats from gable to gable, across the mouths of alleyways, around arials, between streetlights, draped upon cars. And slowly the villagers realise that it is all one piece, one single piece—mile after mile of it curling back on itself in glorious aurical tangles; all of it connected, all the same unbroken Thread.

24

And though they searched they find neither beginning nor end, nothing but endless circles, fruitlessly pursued across the village.

Loathe to touch the Thread lest more fingers sever or more hands are maimed, an age passes before anyone dares to reach for the Thread again.

Lots are drawn out beyond the Funeral Home.

Inevitably: the short straw.

A calloused finger extends, and slowly, hesitantly, reaches—a shallow breath—and runs along the golden lines. And there comes a minor revelation: the Thread is growing warmer; under the pale light of the climbing sun the coils of strange-stuff are gradually heating.

And then the voices, drifting up from the still-waking village: banal, sleep-weary questions: *What is this Thread? Where did it come from? Why did it come down upon us?* Unanswerable questions, questions with no one to answer them.

And then, when the futility comes clear to all, no voices rise above the slow soft whispers of the waking world.

Why question? The Thread has come; the Thread will be dealt with. And if it can't be dealt with, it will be endured. Endured, the way all terrible nameless things in this village are endured.

And so no voices rise, none except that of the Outsider, stumbling wet-legged as he has always stumbled through the lanes and narrow cul-de-sacs, eyes drooping with cold sleep unslept, he mumbles, he mutters: *We're in allegory; we're lost in layers of allegory now.*

25

Through sunshine the Thread is creeping slow to heat, hands now find it warm and tacky to touch. Still the autumn sun warms the strings so that those who come in contact must now pull, must struggle, to free themselves from the grip of hot elastic.

Desperately the Outsider whispers: *Someone is working cold Story through us, setting awful themes upon us! I feel them. Resting meanings unwanted upon us.*

And the rising sun, glowering the weak yellow of wheat, lends the Thread the same anaemic amber blush and those with palms and fingers upon the Thread's treacle cords begin to wail in alarm: painlessly their flesh is sticking fast, is becoming one with the Thread and no amount of pulling, no amount of struggling, seems fit to free them.

Slowly, but with urgency mounting, from the houses out by Holness Hill to the abandoned estates on the Cavan road, come thin and keening cries for knives, for saws, for severance, for release.

*Why else would this happen?* The Outsider screams at villagers unheeding. *It all means something else; we signify something more OUT THERE, in the real unwritten world.*

And pleading, the Outsider points to the hills, into the mists of unknown distance where no one is free to go. But the villagers ignore the Outsider, just as they have always ignored him.

Other things are pressing home.

26 How shining pale the Autumn sun, how frail and warmthless, light leant through a muslin gauze, painting all with albumen gloss. Ill light, unwholesome, heats the Thread, gives it its goldwax glow.

And throughout the village: the brittleness of cracking glass, the sudden snap of branches snapped, the chest-rumble of masonry crumbling. Things are moving, grinding together; the Thread is contracting.

Chimney bricks spill across the pavement; a streetlight, groaning, leans; slowly a car is spun upon its side. The Thread is tightening; pulling back upon itself. Loops close lopping, sagging lengths tauten; slowly phone poles bend and sway, eased softly from the ground and dragged in splintered pieces along the lanes.

A tangled knot is coiling, here in the heart of town.

The Outsider bawls, entreating: *This is the centre of things—here is where our allegory lies!*

The Thread is gorged on light, shining so hard it burns to look upon the incandescent star-links. And those who stretch to help those held amidst the Thread find themselves stuck fast as well, while others see their reaching fingers fall, sliced whispering away.

They are the lucky ones, kneeling there in streets and fields, cradling cauterised limbs. Those who remain stuck must meekly march, impelled to move by the tightening Thread, over fences, through hedges, painfully, painfully dragged up the sides of houses, along roofs.

They are parading; the villagers are mutely parading. The injuries, the terrible injuries they have begun to suffer.

Alone the Outsider wonders: *Why slice through some and stick to others? Who decides what fate we suffer?* But otherwise, the village is calm with cold resignation... such things as this happen, will happen again.

27

Now the hanging cords are neon; hissing, scalding lengths that scour flesh but leave bricks barely warmed. And the speed of the Thread is mounting; falling back upon the growing gnarl. Villagers are severed away from the Thread—knives chop fingers, cut into wrists—but the unlucky ones are moving too fast now, wrenched along relentless on tripping, bleeding feet before any saving blade can fall.

The Outsider: *Something chose to make this happen! Something chose to have it here!*

Still the Thread coils faster, beaded now with fingers, hands and wrists, trailing the dead and the living; men, women, children, all sobbing, screaming, dragged through the streets with the resounding scrape of sliding meat.

The mustard sun hangs high. No Thread lies shadow-cold for long.  
Every inch now creeping elastic heat.

From all roads, lanes, and estates it comes: the golden neon Thread,  
dragging its terrible plunder of meat. The knot grows, feeding on  
the flesh pulled in, swallowing the villagers still ensnared, melting  
them, moulding them, cooking them in a plastic oven of flailing  
limbs and pulsing mouths.

A node of golden beast flesh, a trembling kernel of charred dis-  
grace, a body-bisque of life and death.

They watch, the villagers watch. The day slides down to evening.  
The sun cools, the Thread-mound cools. They watch. They listen.

28 The saffron knot is crying, stumping sluggishly on half-hands,  
thighs and hooves, a nuzzling eyeless thing. Mind—some shreds  
of mind are trapped within those folds of Thread and skin.

And if they listened hard, the villagers could hear tiny voices from  
within, pleading for an end. An end to it all.

What could they do? The villagers chased the slowly-suffering  
thing—leaking, quivering—out into the bog, deep into those  
water-logged ways of flesh-wrong and they forgot about, forced  
themselves to forget about it.

And so ended the Day of the Thread.

Leaving the Outsider, ditch-curved or stumbling through estates  
at the dead of night, crying, weeping, mumbling: *it must have  
meant something, it must all have meant something. We should  
have learned some lesson.*

But the villagers just look at him and look away, uncaring.

The Thread had come, the Thread had gone.

It cut through some and stuck to others.

It meant nothing, signified nothing, changed nothing.

The Thread was just something that happened.

Just another thing that happened.

# Our sex was so good

*S.D. Mullaney*

we named it *Ollie*. But I can't remember,  
can't remember *Ollie-sneaking-out*

under the sight-line of your father's telescope  
aimed at the stars. *Ollie-in-the-dark*,

*Ollie-in-come-free*

under hoary Sweet Pea vines

in your mother's mail-order greenhouse.

Can't remember *Ollie-loves-the-morning*

30

against the kitchen sink, dishwasher freshly  
loaded. *Ollie-behind-a-plastic-cordon*

in the renovated wing of the reptile  
house. *Ollie-out* of that itchy

burgundy sweater. *Ollie-in* sweat-stained  
suede. *Ollie-so-thick* I can't

remember you forking  
my lasagna at dinner beforehand

or playing hooky for a *Friday-of-Ollie*  
or fixing my watch so I wouldn't be late

for *Tuesdays-with-Ollie*,

can't remember the last time your hands emptied

my pockets, finding a number  
for sex named *Spike* instead of *Ollie*,

can't remember tripping  
over telling you I didn't

recall seeing that Spike.

## XIV

*S.D. Mullaney*

A man and a man and a woman and a woman  
And a poem and an automatic rifle  
And a bullet and a blackbird  
Are one.

## XV

I'm totally beaking  
Out my own eye  
After tomorrow.

32

After tomorrow,  
I'll never ogle  
The eye of another  
Blackbird.

## XVI

Sex sells.  
Sex sells poetry.  
Blackbirds sell poetry.  
I've sold poetry  
for sex.

## XVII

Blackbirds  
Are considered sexy  
Wherever pigeons  
Are ugly.

## XVIII

O, gluttoned citizen  
Of this city Square,  
  
Evacuate your squishy  
Coils. How absently  
  
You out-produce  
The most beloved  
  
Blackbird. Bestow  
Your pearls where  
  
I just this moment wished  
To walk,  
  
Or on my forehead,  
Which counts as a sign  
  
Of Grace in certain  
European countries.

## XIX

Pigeon biographies

Always end

With protagonist crushed

By a crowd at a ballgame,

Or conscientiously

Poisoned.

## XX

Did you know

The abridged pigeon

Beak bites with the strength

Of a baker's dozen?

34

## XXI

Please do something

With your blackbird:

Stuff it

And serve it on

Thanksgiving.

I'd be thankful.

I *love* blackbird.

## XXII

I'll take my tuxedo  
With a soft pretzel;  
I wear my cowboy  
Hat with pigeon feathers.XXIII  
Wallace Stevens is the answer  
To tonight's Daily Double:

What is the sound  
Of one pigeon clapping.

*for Kevin*

# Flock Behaviors

*Ian Hatcher*

flock and i set down

flock and i settle down upon a tensile docking plain

flock and i revel in impact

                  limitlessly numbered negligibly weighted points

flock and i land side

                  by side / proven efficiency of algorithm

flock and i assemble

                  new forms in flickering snowbanks above harbor mouth

                  design praxis of rigging trapping yetis

                  [ mammoth chips its tusk ]

                  we are a tube of marrow voiding

                  in our bed rusty deposits / placidity of cancers

                  stagnant algae pool

                  remnants of filmic growth

                  patterns of light on anchor bones

flock and i converge upon our feast

                  we've removed our names to eat

# The Continuing Adventures of Alice Spider: An Anomalous Selection

*Janis Freegard*

## **Alice Weaves**

Alice the Weaving Webster has spun herself a labyrinthine web. Alice is the Spider, waiting in her lair, spinning from her body the threads that create her life. Spinning around in the dance of her own conception. Alice is exactly where she should be, doing exactly what she ought. Alice is grinning.

## **Alice Sings**

she's a nightchild baby, daughter of the city, she's part of these neon lights, she walks so fast and looks so cool, you know that she's got it right, she's a citygirl, sugar, and she's so clever, she knows the quick way home, she's a moonbeam baby, she'll live forever, in the city you're always alone

37

she's a wildchild honey, a citylicking woman, in leather and net and steel, her lips are red, her eyes are laughing, you know she could make you feel, she's a slickchick baby with a heart that's beating and a head that knows it's home, it's where she's from and where she belongs, in the city you're never alone

## **Alice and the Prince**

Alice Spider met a Prince one night. Oh you silly thing, you've really gone and done it now.

## **Alice the Mermaid**

Alice spent too long looking at her own reflection in a rock pool. She fell in and turned into a mermaid.

## **Alice and the Unicorn**

Alice had a beautiful unicorn. It died. Then one day it came back to her. Alice was beautiful then.

## **Alice and the Patterns**

Do not think I have forgotten because I do not forget. And memory is more than in the mind. So sometimes I come back: to here. Because sometimes it's still like this.

38

Alice says it's just a pattern. It's part of your pattern for feeling lonely. But there were people there, Alice, and I still felt lonely and Alice, I still don't understand. And I carefully smoked my cigarettes and I carefully tipped the ash into the ashtray and I carefully put them out and I didn't do it, Alice, I didn't.

Alice says, you are as old as the moon and yet you are still a child. You are still crying for things you don't even want. You are still reaching for something that's just out of reach or maybe doesn't exist and you don't even know what it is except perhaps it's peace of mind.

But Alice, how could I feel like that, when I have no reason?

And Alice says, it's raining outside and your lover is sleeping and you're up late full of questions and you know the answers are inside you but you still haven't learnt them. And now you're

feeling ashamed because no one should feel the way you do but you do you do and you don't know why but you do.

### **Alice the Hunter**

At night, sometimes, Alice transforms herself into a panther. Her eyes are smouldering amber; her fur is sleek and black; her instincts are sharp. She hears the wind and smells the storm. She relishes the hunt: the chase, the catch, the taste of warm, raw flesh. Alice the Hunter hunts alone.

Alice's needs are primal and she knows no shame. She knows how it feels to slide a hand over a bare thigh. Alice knows how to take. Alice knows how to give.

### **Alice has Time**

There are times to party and times to hold on and wait. There is always enough time. It is not finite and it does not run out. It goes on forever, in a spiral.

### **Alice the Dinosaur**

Go for it, Alice. Alice Dinosaur. Go little dinosaur, go, go, go.

### **That Alice**

That Alice Spider – she's your one true friend (well, apart from the others), the only friend who will always be there (well, when it suits her), the one friend you can count on (well, when she feels like it).

The problem with you and Alice is that you want different things. She wants freedom, you want security. She wants passion, you want love. She wants adventure, you want stability. Whatever, you're stuck with her. You and Alice. Alice and you.

That Alice, she's a trollopy little tart. She has no morals, or dubious ones at best. She has no conscience.

She is a champion of honesty.

She's a witch.

That Alice, she laughs in the face of adversity, she laughs at danger, she laughs at life's tragedies, large and small. Alice the Comedienne.

#### 40 **Alice Meets Men**

One morning when Alice Spider is walking through the park in Western Springs, she meets a middle-aged alcoholic drinking McWilliams sherry. He offers Alice a swig, which she accepts. The middle-aged alcoholic used to be a mercenary in Zimbabwe. His wife has left him. Alice can see why. They do the crossword together. He wants Alice to go home with him. Alice declines.

In an Irish bar one night, Alice meets a pig-hunter from the West Coast. The pig-hunter is very drunk. He remarks on how large the breasts are of the woman across the bar from them. Alice agrees that they are pretty sizeable. The pig-hunter declares he prefers Alice's breasts. He finds them more discreet. Alice is flattered, but refuses to take him to bed.

Walking across Grafton Bridge, Alice passes a young Indian man. Alice smiles at him; she is feeling very happy. When she gets to the other side of the bridge, she hears footsteps. It is the young Indian man. He has run back the length of the bridge to ask Alice for a date. Alice demurs.

Alice is on her way to the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde park, when an Egyptian man asks if he can join her. He follows her all around the gallery. Then, when Alice goes to the gift shop, the Egyptian man goes to the gift shop. When Alice goes outside, the Egyptian man goes outside. When Alice goes back in again, she tells the Egyptian man she would like to go in alone. Some time later, she finds him waiting for her outside. He asks her out. Alice explains that she is catching a plane to New Zealand in two hours. She has to get back to her B&B. Alice is not lying.

41

Alice is in a gay bar one night, which is run by the most stunning transsexual in Wellington. Alice gets talking to a Glaswegian plasterer. He is the most beautiful man Alice has ever seen, although she can only understand half of what he's saying. He claims to be very good in bed. Alice doesn't doubt it.

### **Alice and the Zebra**

Alice Spider has a pet zebra called Horace. Horace eats only hors d'oeuvres. Shrimp cocktails, stuffed mushrooms, steamed asparagus. Alice spends hours in the kitchen: Horace is a hungry zebra. One day, she gets fed up with all the cooking. Learn to make your own hors d'oeuvres, Horace, she tells him. Horace enrolls at night school. He learns to cook. When his course is over, he cooks for Alice: tuna pâté

triangles, cheesy tomatoes, tarragon and salmon mousse. It makes Alice very happy.

### **Alice Gets Cloned**

Alice decides she's so much fun, there ought to be two of her. She has herself cloned. It's like looking in a mirror. It's so much like looking in a mirror that Alice and her clone do exactly that, just gaze into each other's eyes all day, going Oh wow Oh wow.

### **Alice Goes to a Party**

42

The thing with parties is that you have to get on to the party circuit. The place where you're most likely to get invited to the next party, is the last party. Should you miss out on one or more parties, you are off the circuit and may never be invited again. You will be forced to have a party of your own to get things rolling, and will have to phone people individually to invite them, which looks desperate, rather than happening to bump into them at a party, which looks casual and cool.

Alice goes to a party and it's a proper party, operating in the way that a party ought to operate and there's something very satisfying about that. Each time Alice walks into one of the bedrooms, the scene changes: people are snogging or standing in a circle passing a joint round or someone is going 'Listen to my new jazz CD it's really great' and it turns out to be exactly the kind of jazz Alice can't stand. She tells that to the man in the white shirt standing next to her and he says it's not the kind of jazz he likes either, he prefers the Rolling Stones.

Wine glasses get broken, people fall over on the dance floor, a woman goes to sleep on the couch. There are miniature martinis and small glasses of absinthe. A proper party: the kind Alices like best.

### **Alice Gets Published**

Alice decides to get herself published. She staples her pages together, folds herself in half and inserts herself into an envelope. She hopes the publisher will like her.

What are you? asks the publisher. Are you a poem or a short story or what?

I'm a prose poem sequence, says Alice proudly (after she's asked around). Publish me and be damned.

43

### **Alice Gets What She Wants**

Alice Spider is feeling smug. She gets what she wants, when she wants it. She gets who she wants, when she wants them. Alice can sometimes be a little unbearable.

I get what's coming to me, says Alice. And it's all good.

# The Return of Rain

*Ellen Rhudy*

I am not looking to free him, she said to the guard the day they shot her husband. But I need my revenge too, surely you can understand that.

The rest of that day she spent at home. Despite everything it felt wrong to see his death, so she turned the TV to face the wall. Her sister collected and disposed of the newspapers, and rather than field interview requests they unplugged the phone, locked the door, shuttered the windows.

44

Things stayed that way for a while—a few weeks—but they could not stay that way forever. The rains had started back up the day they would not let her see her husband, ex-husband, dead husband, and there were things that needed doing. Renting a sump pump, moving her records from basement to attic, feeding herself.

When they met at her sister's wedding he was standing at the door, arms crossed, in the uniform of the Royal Guard. She had gone out for a cigarette. Her sister looked happy and was dancing with her husband and in six months would be laid up with a belly bigger than the rest of her put together. For these reasons she needed to smoke. She saw him, her future husband, her future dead husband, and asked what he was doing standing there at the door in his uniform not moving.

Looking for dissident activity, he said. Bad weather.

#

After their engagement he took her to the park. He thought her beautiful because she was small and her skin so pale he sometimes saw straight through her, but he did not tell her these things. Instead he told her about his job and the tabloid reporters who tried every day to bribe him for information on the princess's health. He told her what their wedding would be like. He told her that he had always known where he would end up but not the manner in which he would arrive, and that he was pleased with the way things were going. He told her that he would love her as long as she loved him and maybe longer.

The weather was so nice, that day.

Later, it started raining. It started raining the day they married, it rained for three years straight, nothing was ever done halfway in that country. For three years the bloated corpses of dogs and goats washed against their fence, testing the rotted wood, and then one day it stopped. People sobbed to walk outside and see the clear skies. Even the mud seemed rotted, dense and horribly fragrant. When they tried they found the bodies of the animals too wet to burn and graves impossible, the soil closing in and water rushing to fill their briefly shoveled plots, so outside of town they piled the dead, the rotten, the to-be-forgotten.

45

Animals had died and people had died and crops had not grown, but it was not until a year of no rain that they realized things could be awful in an equal but opposite way.

#

Her sister laughed at all his jokes. When she told her about the proposal she said, “Now there’s a real man.” It had taken her husband a pregnancy and a lost job to consider his own wedding.

In the four years of no rain, when the earth dried to reveal chasms of dirt, when the animals lay collapsed and brittle and then vanished altogether, her sister said, I could have told you this would happen. From the very start.

You laughed at all his jokes, she said. You bought five dresses to choose from for our wedding. What she wanted to say but didn’t was: You could not have seen this. Not you, not me, not anyone. Even when he said he had known forever where he would end up, he didn’t know. Although an industry of gossip and guesswork had sprung up around the disappearance of that girl with her husband, no one could have guessed what was his future on the night he lit her cigarette and watched the clouds.

46

If the sentence was assigned more quickly than it might have been, it was only for who he had been and what he had taken. He had been trusted, a member of the Guard; the most trusted, a guard for the princess herself; and for this reason and others his former employer’s justice was swift and exacting and unrelenting, and she was not allowed to see him before he left the second time. The crack of a rifle, a drop of rain. Things can come fast or things can come slow but in the end, she knows, they always come.

# Public Monuments

*Ellen Rhudy*

## i.

She holds my hand all day and I feel time vanishing from around us, breaking out in great peeling strips that when they hit the ground are like they never were. We are sitting on this monumental slab of stone that looks like it is from the future. It has been here my whole life, but sometime before that she says it crushed into the dirt, flinging up saplings and stiff yellow grass in its wake. She says it lasts because it already existed later, but when the sun is setting and throwing itself wide across the lake I forget that idea for the warmth of her hand next to mine on the stone. She says that I'm a fool but I'm not sure she minds.

47

## ii.

She built this house minute by minute. She built it for me. She told me so.

I stood on the graveled walk every morning to see how it rose up. One day my home broke through above the clouds and she came to me, smiling. Everyone said it couldn't be done, she said, but look at it, just look at it.

Those days the dust clogged the air so bad that when I wiped my nose the side of my hand came away black. There was something awful about the house but she was so happy, that day.

### iii.

My father stayed with us the week after my mother died. He said he had stayed one night in their home but couldn't sleep. He felt her in the bed next to him, the weight of her, but every time he rolled over to curl against her she would be gone.

She brought him a mug of coffee and a plate with dry toast and pats of butter, jam, every morning. He never ate her offerings and I don't know why. Every morning he came downstairs to complain of his hunger. After, he would always say that it was wrong his body kept going the way it did, when hers had stopped.

### iv.

48

She came out of a storm so thick with dust the sky had turned past brown. Her hair hung caked and stiff around her face and black hole eyes. I tried not to look at the dirt she left on the sofa, I took her shoes outside to clean.

I told her to shower. I gave her a towel. I told her to stay as long as she wanted.

We say a lot of things without knowing what we mean by them.

# Fly

*John Pluecker*

*for Humberto Navarrete*

1

Ladybug, ladybug  
fly away home.  
Your house is on fire.  
Your children's alone.

Do you see a black body  
divided into three sections  
elliptical head wider than long  
bulging eyes transparent wings  
crossed nerves trunkish mouth  
huge suckering feet escape  
into air or degrade into  
component parts?

Oh, beware the yellow-stomached  
the vulgars the domestics oh  
all are flies that aren't flies  
impostors of fake flying.

The impostor is trying to fly.  
No, says the other fly, you are  
a fake. You are not real.

The impostor fly  
only wants to

set into flight. But  
held back hung low.

**2**

One two three four  
the flies lock hands  
and scuffle some more.

Match those hands twist  
them wrench them ground  
them down to ground.

If he says mercy  
mercy please on  
his knees release.

50

One two three fight  
for. Release him  
mercy mercy.

**3**

You say:

The heart  
he was putting  
on his voice  
got my attention.

Already in  
handcuffs  
face down.

The whole time  
the agents  
hitting him on both  
sides of his ribs.

#### 4

How does the fly always seem to get away?

Finally scientists were able to reveal the secret as to why unruly flies were so hard to trap and always got away. Somehow the fly knows, they said. Researchers discovered the flies possess a sophisticated defense system that enables them to anticipate their aggressor's movements by a fraction of a second. Using high speed and high resolution videos scientists found that flies have quick brains enabling them to plan their escape ahead of time.

51

And scientists point out the best way to squash them is to approach silently and swipe down in the space just ahead. Most people have felt the frustration of trying to squash a fly and seeing how it intrepidly flees. Somehow the fly knows.

Before a fly escapes as a response to the threat of the predator or the flyswatter, it plans the direction of its launch making a series of complex movements. Instead of just flying away the tiny fly brain calculates where the threat originated and so prepares its escape.

The objective of these movements is to plan the flight.

The fly can prepare for its flight and then regret.

Somehow the fly knows, they say.

5

You say:

He's not resisting.  
Why are you guys  
using excessive force?

He says:

I don't know what's  
going on over there,  
obviously he's doing  
something. He ain't  
not cooperating.

52

6

I don't want these words to be as heavy as life sometimes seems heavy or I don't want them to be heavier or to weigh down or perhaps that's okay if you weren't already weighted down but perhaps you were so then I should give you a moment as I want there to be a moment here in the midst of all this

a moment, like my brother said, when we look up in the sky and part the billboards and the heavy eyelids and look up and maybe see a cloud or a seagull (maybe it's lost, no don't call the seagull lost, this is the pretty part) flying proudly in the sky or a flying superhero in the air a seagull superhero flying happily through the sky.

The seagull superhero says:

If you do not let my people go,  
I will send swarms of flies on you  
and your officials, on your people  
and into your houses. The houses  
will be full of flies, and even  
the ground will seem to crawl  
with their suckering feet.

Brother, when we read the Bible,  
we were never told,  
the Hebrew word for  
swarm of flies is almost  
the same as and easily  
mistaken for the word mixture.

## Author's Note: "Fly"

*John Pluecker*

54

"Fly" is a transversion of a conceptual poem in Spanish called "Magnitud" by Marco Antonio Huerta and Sara Uribe, both contemporary poets from Tampico, Tamaulipas, Mexico. After reading their poem, I began to translate it into English, but found the poem unleashing a wave of thinking and emotions as I worked with it, gently pushing me to write, to create using the aesthetic constraints of the original poem as a kind of substructure. Specifically, in this case, "Magnitud" revolves around several incidents of violent deaths of politicians in Mexico over the last twenty years as it interweaves these cases with appropriated and remixed text from a Wikipedia en español entry on flies. As I was translating, I was reflecting on several other recent incidents of violent deaths along the Tijuana–San Diego border, where I was living at the time. Grounded in the process of linguistic translation, another text slowly emerged out of the media detritus I was sorting through: Wikipedia and dictionary entries, YouTube videos, news reports and childhood songs. What appeared finally was a kind of transversion, a recycling and remixing of the aesthetic approach and concerns found in "Magnitud" into my own particular emotional and political experience. I see this piece as a small part of a much larger transborder conversation about violence.

## On Fritz Eichenberg's "Pieta"

*Joseph Ross*

If human eyes can see  
desolation, then this woman  
is its wet, furious face.

Her dead son's blood soaks  
this wood, this cross, this  
chalk outline on the concrete

of our century. Her boy, not lost,  
not gone, but killed.

If human arms can carry

bones, then this woman's  
arms, caught in the moon's  
dishonest light, now hold

the limp skeleton  
she once groaned from  
between her legs,

baptizing him at his first  
cough, in the birth waters  
emptying from her body.

Now, her own fingers  
shiver as she holds him,  
her legs spread wide

once again, only this time  
they keep his crushed  
frame from falling

to the earth as she offers  
him up in anger,  
in a twisting grief

on the altar of her arms.

## *Dionysiaca*, Book One (lines 46–85)

*Andrew Barrett translating Nonnus from the Ancient Greek*

Once, on a Sidonian shore,  
bull-shaped Zeus with horns grazing the sky,  
mimed a bellow of desire in his dissembling throat  
and was seized by a sweet shudder.

Little Eros had plucked a woman,  
his arms forming a circle around her stomach.  
The sea-faring bull came near and lowered his curved neck.  
Leaning, he offered his back and lifted up Europa.

The bull departed and his floating, silent hoof  
traced the water of the worn salt path with skimming steps.  
The girl sat motionless and dry above the sea,  
shaking with fear as she sailed upon the bull's back.  
If you saw her, you might say it was Thetis or Galateia  
or Poseidon's lover or even Aphrodite upon Triton's neck.

Poseidon, his hair the blue of the waves,  
wondered at this sea voyage ambling with a bull's gait.  
When Triton heard Zeus' deceptive, seducing bellow,  
he answered in kind with a wedding song from his spiral shell.  
Nereus saw the horned sailor foreign to the sea  
and pointed out the girl to Doris, his awe shading into fright.

So the young girl sailed,  
a weight hardly felt on the back of a bull-vessel.  
She shivered at the lofty spray of the watery path,  
and clutched the bull, using a horn as a rudder.

Desire was aboard.

With a matrimonial breeze, the adroit trickster Boreas  
spread open every inch of her fluttering gown  
and whistled with sneaking envy at her two soft breasts.

*As one of the Nereids,  
sitting on a dolphin  
crests the sea,  
cuts the liquid glass,  
her dripping hand a paddle  
and suspended in balance  
is an illusion of fluid motion.  
The glistening traveler half-submerged  
carries her dry through the salt-brine,  
curving his back  
while the fish's split tail  
inscribes the surface of its course  
as it cleaves the sea.*

58

So the bull as he pressed on, arching his rear.  
Eros acted as cowherd and whipped his slave's neck  
with Aphrodite's charmed girdle.  
He lifted his bow to his shoulder like a staff  
and drove Hera's husband with the cattle-crook of Cypris  
into the wet pastures of Poseidon.  
The virgin cheeks of motherless Athene turned red  
when she spotted a woman atop Cronion, riding.

## *Dionysiaca*, Book One (lines 137–162)

*Andrew Barrett translating Nonnus from the Ancient Greek*

Cadmus wandered in circles from land to land,  
as he followed the erratic tracks  
of a bull in the shape of a bridegroom.  
He approached the blood-spattered Armian cave  
when the mountains roved madly  
and pounded the gates of inviolate Olympus  
and the gods had grown wings  
and oared a weird path upon the high winds,  
like distant birds above the rainless Nile  
and the seven zones of the firmament were battered.

This is how it happened:

59

Zeus Cronides crept off to the nymph Pluto's bed  
to father Tantalus, that maddened thief of heaven's cups,  
and slid his luminous armor deep into a rocky crevice,  
concealing even his lightning bolts.

His thunder darkened the white cliff-face,  
bellowing smoke from beneath the crags  
while the hidden sparks from his flame-tipped arrow  
boiled the underground springs.  
Soon, mountain streams came in torrents,  
and the Mygdonian ravine resounded,  
brimming with froth and steam.

Then, when his mother the tilled Earth gave the sign,  
Cilician Typhoeus opened his hands  
and seized Zeus' tools for rain and fire.

Typhoeus opened wide his row of cavernous throats  
and let loose a battle-shriek that was every cry  
from every creature of the wild sounded at once.  
Snakes waved over the faces of leopards  
and licked the bristling manes of lions  
as they braided their spiraling tails  
into a crown around the horns of bulls.  
The poison that darted from their long tongues  
mingled with the foam on their cheeks.

All were fused and grown together.

## *Dionysiaca, Book Three (lines 55–83)*

*Andrew Barrett translating Nonnus from the Ancient Greek*

Dawn, upon the flashing wing of red Euros,  
grazed the rugged peaks of Teucarian Ida  
before spilling light on the dark waves  
of the facing sea and turning towards the harbor.  
Meanwhile, Aphrodite glazed the sea  
with an un-navigable surface of calm  
to join Harmonia to Cadmus, her lover.

The bird of morning pierced the air with cries.

Rows of solitary Corybantes wearing helmets  
and carrying shields, leapt in time  
as they executed a Cnossian dance.  
The double-aulos sang as the dancers spiraled  
and iron struck ox-hide in war-like competition.  
The music intensified, goading the dancers' feet  
as their movements became more frenzied.

The oaks rustled their leaves, the rocks echoed  
and the Bacchic wood knowingly shuddered.  
The dryads sang and packs of circling bears  
joined the dance, skipping face to face.  
Roars from the emulous throats of lions  
reflected the ecstatic cries of the Cabeiroi mystics,  
possessed by rational madness.

The bacchic single aulos, which was discovered  
in the dark age of Cronos through the horn-worker's craft,  
bellowed out a hymn for the goddess Hecate, lover of dogs.

The shouts of the Corybantes roused Cadmus early.  
The Sidonian sailors heard the resounding ox-hides at dawn,  
rose all at once from their pebbly beds  
and left the salt-caked shore upon which they slept.  
Cadmus went quickly on foot to search for the city.

## Translator's Note: *Dionysiaca*

Andrew Barrett

Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* is an Ancient Greek language epic from Late Antiquity (circa 500 AD) which attempts to filter the whole of Greek mythology through the narrative exploits and ancestry of the god Dionysus. It is a baroque, erotic, vivid and—due to the sheer density of its classical literary references—sometimes maddening text. The 1940 Loeb Classical Library translation of the *Dionysiaca* is currently the only available English language version of Nonnus' Late Antique epic. Needless to say, the poem does not occupy a prominent place in contemporary classical studies. Thus, the following excerpts from my new translation of the *Dionysiaca* can be viewed simply as an attempt to help restore a broader awareness of one Late Antiquity's baroque masterpieces.

63

Although the *Dionysiaca* is composed in the fairly tidy form of dactylic hexameters (just like Homer and Virgil), it manages to squeeze in a large amount of description via a liberal use of adjectives and adjectival constructions. One of the goals of my translation is to keep that descriptive richness while at the same time preserving something of the swift readability that comes with the hexameter line. I also wish to echo something of the form and rhythm of the more prominent modern English translations of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, so my translation will register as 'epic' with readers before they move on to digesting the *Dionysiaca*'s unfamiliar narrative and descriptive content. I imagine Nonnus' original Late Antique audience (who would have been fluent in all of Ancient Greek literature as well as the epic tradition of the clas-

sical world) would have had a similar reading experience. Finally, I have also tried to keep the startling imagery and verbal density of the *Dionysiaca* at the forefront of my translation. This means that there are times when the classical literary references and inter-textual playfulness present in original poem fade in terms of prominence in my translation. My reasoning for having this hierarchy in my translation is simple: the vivid, baroque qualities of the *Dionysiaca* are more universal and thus accessible than its culturally specific Late Antique meta-literary qualities.

## love dolls

*Evelyn Hampton*

1.

She was content to display herself so casually, I thought that together we might inhabit an evolutionary frontier, study somatic communication, drink beer. With her I felt free to believe that when it comes to people, there's no such thing as *beneath*—what's there is there, in contact with air so deep we could sink in any direction and find ourselves sprawled on her shagreen couch. *Is it real*, I said, meaning the rough back of a horse I had seen through trees. *Of course it is*, she said, moving her hands through thick hair composed of nothing but curlicues, which speak volumes about thwarted hopes.

2.

The view of the city from where she lived made me want to talk—all those gaps the sky was divided by, all those places where we might live. When she went in through the sliding glass to pour more in her glass, I would tell her absence about where I had been, which buildings I'd tried to find someone like her in. All the time I talked I kept a little swatch of her skin in my mind, a background to float behind words which, through proximity, might take on a property of skin—to contain something alive and capable of returning to the balcony with a gin and tonic and wanting to tell me about every place she'd lived.

3.

What is the name of the property by which she could slip into the shape of a roof and inhabit its warmth for a time? Or into any object that happened to be grasped by her mind as providing a momentary refuge from time. Was it out of time that she slipped when she walked barefoot on pavement still releasing the heat of noon at night? Sometimes, from where I would lie, I could hear her brushing past shadows that collected along the side of my house, finding her way into those shadows, into mine.

4.

66

We stayed so long indoors, the color yellow *was* a lemon and the color blue was the sky, and the flecks in her eyes began to assume the properties of furniture across which I, broken into light, might lie. In no longer desiring to go outside, we achieved an unusually sophisticated state of mind. In light that came in from where we no longer wanted to go, we drew maps of our home towns on whatever wrappers we found lying around. We placed these side by side, connecting our grids as if time were just a matter of alignment. Being inside was precise, scientific—we saw how everything was just time and light, and how, if you stay in the same room for days, time and light form a rhythm that can be touched by skin moving out and in.

5.

She lived in an apartment so tiny, *it's like a maquette of life-size space*, she'd say in the lobby, where she would seat dinner guests at the reception desk once she'd managed to get herself hired as

evening receptionist. A *maquette*, and she'd go on and on with comparisons like this, finding in language enough space to proliferate. She'd claim the stories of dinner guests for her own storage needs, rearranging, extrapolating, opening drawers and sorting through the dry-cleaning receipts, photographs of kids, accumulated coupons—throwing out all of these to make space for her own ephemera. She had no qualms interrupting a dull account of a day as if her interruption were the point of the story. *It's the least I can do*, she'd say, *to give your story an edge—and then to leap off of it*. She would talk all night and talk would become the door she'd open for us in the morning, waving us out into her life.

## 6.

By reversing the color values of the image, I could almost make her go away. But always some trace of her would stay—the occasional dangling leather restraint, a full moon tangled in branches of nocturnal trees. She existed somewhere between the human and the pixel aspect ratio of everything I could see—the washed out beach, the concealed granularity. More satisfying than holding her beneath me was flipping the scene so that sky and water reversed—then I'd be holding her above and we'd be falling, a feeling that's like being free—until it hurts.

67

## 7.

I positioned her in the window, then went outside to be what she saw. Coming back inside was like parting a membrane—I felt her just beyond the door, so I stayed in the doorway and felt her just-beyond some more. The abstraction of tactility is like fashion—in-

terlocking rectangles, an alluring autumnal palette—draped over the body's shape like the body's absence. As long as I keep her at a distance, she models my desire as I feel it, a life-sized self-portrait cast in the features of her sex. I suppose it's sentimental to dress her in my clothes so I can feel tender and turn to the sky and admire the flattering patterns of sunset, which always inspire me to buy her a new vest.

## 8.

It was a lesson on perspective to see that immediacy concealed each thing's vanishing point. But in order to remain blind like this, it was important not to know what time it was. Not knowing that it was three o'clock and that soon we would have to turn back, we could see each blade of grass and the shadow each cast. Searching for the place outside the scene where we might see the contours along which time recedes, I knew we were trying to forget something, but I wasn't sure what. *If we keep describing things, we won't get lost*, I thought, watching her disappear among descriptions of thoughts.

68

## 9.

Other times, I built small houses and faced what I wanted to see—the edge where dune grass is blown back from the ocean like hair from a face that doesn't change. Can I make that edge me—make it aware of the sand in the crack at the back of my knees? Of the feeling that I am waiting for somebody, and of the need within the feeling to see affinities—I check each net for what resembles me so that I can cast it back to sea. Things gather the windward sides of

themselves, washed up things, and sometimes turn toward me—*I am ready, I think, for something that can't be taught.* Except maybe by proximity—the way dune grass grows already bent, so that it doesn't have to bend.

## she wears grey

*Nazifa Islam*

### 1. he had a peg leg too

She married a man with one glass eye  
and divorced him the next day but he  
still got his green card. She weeps now  
while sitting in front of her television  
watching Wheel of Fortune every night.  
You haven't met her yet, but her name is Rosemary.

### 2. the lighter was green

70

There is a burn mark  
on Rosemary's left wrist  
and a lighter in Finn's jacket  
pocket. No one has put  
two and two together.  
They weren't meant to.  
Rosemary's not going  
to say a word to anyone  
which is what Finn wants  
even if he is choked up  
with guilt—it wasn't his idea.  
Rosemary knows this, it's what  
has bought her silence.

### 3. now maybe you'll understand

Rosemary broke into two pieces at seventeen, though most everyone didn't notice. They let her halves lie in the sand and grit and mud, soaking up so much she never wanted to know, before she went and taped herself back together. Sodden, she couldn't get the tape to really stick though and so it was only a matter of time before she became someone she didn't like. She grew fond of knives and blue pills and boys with brown beards who smiled crooked moonshadow smiles at her when they were certain she was looking right at them. She met Finn at twenty and didn't try to die until almost twenty-one. He didn't know she was cracked in all the wrong ways though she felt guilty enough that she enlightened him as soon as her lips had stopped bleeding.

71

### 4. he wasn't trying to lie

Rosemary is thinking about the day the world ended—

when everything turned a pale  
shade of blue and the earth  
flipped itself inside out on a  
dare. She remembers it like it  
was yesterday—she's not certain  
it wasn't yesterday. But when  
she asks Finn to tell her the truth  
about whether or not her hair  
looked black under blue light  
all he'll say is he's never seen  
her before in his life.

5. it was lemonade-colored ash

72

Finn will grow to hate  
Rosemary when enough  
time has passed to cloud  
his judgment. He'll blame  
her for the color of his beard  
and he won't be wrong to  
hate her even if his beard  
does look better cerulean.  
Alice is different. Alice  
burned Rosemary's picture  
last week on Tuesday before  
vacuuming up the small  
pile of time immemorial.  
They only speak when  
people are staring now.

## In the Dark

*Sarah Tourjee*

They discussed the end of the world in the dark, because the darkness would permit it. “One more time,” Q said, and V bit hard into her side, leaving a broken circle of teeth marks over ribs. “What’s it look like?”

“An octopus, eight legs, ocean,” V said, even though this was hardly possible. It was the hour when it became too late to sleep and the conclusion of the day disappeared leaving only an unknown scale of time and black space. They were forced to view a more definite end, which was always looming but normally hidden behind so many dawns and dusks.

She pictured eight legs, traced them down Q’s skin with her fingers. Q did not question it. The architecture of the furniture permitted them to lean body against body, and sip from the same mug, and let voice answer voice without mind’s consent. There was only a couch. “Ok just once more.”

“Don’t you feel that it will all end any minute?” V said.

Q examined the imprint of teeth, “Swirls, lightning, imminent oblivion. It’s as likely to as not.”

V picked up the super glue and drew lines down her fingers and around her palm—what she would look like as a stick figure. “Where?” she asked and Q looked at the ceiling, considered.

“Over the octopus.”

V laid her hands against Q's ribs, covered all eight legs, gripped tighter, imagined her fingers reaching into Q's chest and weaving through the ribcage, holding on tightly until the skin healed around her hand and fused permanently within Q's skeleton. V opened her eyes and found their limbs tangled, their clothes on the floor except for her shirt which hung at her wrist, unable to drop from her hand now glued to the octopus on Q's ribs. The oceanic creature swayed as they swayed, inched its arms between V's fingers and reached for them.

74 V imagined herself as the octopus. With eight legs of suction cups she could climb up the walls, dangle upside down, wrap Q up in so many suctioned dots—little rings of skin pulled up into her grip. And when the end of the world found them under water she would propel through the ocean cradling Q safely between her legs. Though without gills Q would not survive, she would hold her regardless, tightly clutching so many rings of her for as long as it took for an octopus life to end. Then they would sink to the bottom of the ocean and land in one dark, still pile.

When Q said, "Now," V ripped her hand away with one calculated jerk. A noise came from Q's throat. V looked at her hand, inspected what she had taken. It gleamed red over bumps of glue and threads of skin. A wide red handprint lay across Q's side, the remnants of an octopus beneath it.

“If we never sleep, *any* day it ends will be today.”

Q twisted to look at her side, and exhaled deeply. “Anything you want,” she said and so V covered Q’s back with glue.

She painted it down Q’s arms, was careful to avoid the handprint at the ribs, traced legs, neck, spine. And then drew lines of glue down her own arms, stomach, knees, and breasts. She pressed against Q on the small couch and thought of suction cups as glue. They sank into the cracks of the cushions. V felt the cells of their skin take hold of one another. Breasts joined shoulder blades, spine joined stomach, their thighs became one pair.

Q breathed in deeply under V’s weight and felt their breath adjust to matching. She pressed harder against V, anticipating the pull—their bodies trading skin and blood.

“But what if it’s an ice age or a volcano instead of a flood?” V said, suddenly changing her mind about the whole thing. The light crawling through the window alarmed her. She had not expected it.

“Now,” Q said into the cracks of the cushions, braced herself for the rip, and didn’t answer.

## One Minute Michael Martone Re-Mix

*Ori Fienberg*

This audio piece was derived from an interview recorded at the 2005 Nonfiction Now conference. Just over 28 years ago, Michael Martone, the author of several fine books, passed out at Ori's bris. Listen to it on [our website](#).

## Now a Fancy Tiger

A. Kendra Greene

When Mr. Dave Twister asks me what kind of balloon animal I want, it's easy: a tyrannosaurus. He squeaks the blue-eyed, tiny-armed reptile into being, and no sooner is it in my hands than Penny the Clown asks me how I'd like my face painted. This is not easy. I was ready for the first question, knew it would come, and now I've used up my favorite animal in the first answer. True, the purple butterfly and her younger brother, the Chocolate Lab from Table 2, will soon demonstrate that there's no taboo against interpreting a single theme in inflated latex one minute and hypoallergenic body paint the next. But for me it's a kind of personal responsibility, a matter of pride, to come up with a second idea. Penny is smiling at me. Encouraging. I look back with ever-widening eyes, my eyebrows rising together in a brown peak of optimism and remorse. The worst thing you can do to a clown is arrive at the front of the line unprepared. They hate that. They're used to it, to kids who incessantly pester *isitmyturnisitmyturnisitmyturn* and then, when it *is* their turn, pause to contemplate what, what possible thing in the great wide world, might tickle their fancy. An elephant? A motor boat? You don't want to be that kid. I give Penny the look one gives a palm reader, as if she will, at any moment, with her special powers, see in my skin something I could never have anticipated yet will be delighted to discover.

"It's a hard question," Penny says, still smiling. She is still looking at me.

“Yes,” I agree. “It is.” Oh, god. I’m 29 years old and I am that kid.

“Butterflies are popular,” she mentions casually. “Skeletons, pirates, Darth Maul.”

I try to nod.

“Princess crowns. Spiderman. Cats,” she says. “Or big cats: leopards, tigers...”

“Tigers,” I say. Yes, tigers. Obviously tigers. I’d been thinking tigers. “Tiger,” I say, beaming. This isn’t so hard.

Penny lifts a wedge of white sponge.

“What color?”

78

It had not occurred to me that there would be more questions. I like to prepare for questions. I am often not prepared for questions. In restaurants, I am proud of myself if I make it through the litany of unexpected interrogatives with my confidence intact. Medium rare! Salad, not soup. Ranch? Um, yes. With the meal. Just water. Am I sure? Yes, I think so. Yes. I think so.

Which is to say it does not occur to me that there are orange tigers and white tigers in the world. The clown asks me what color tiger and all I can think of are the green-and-orange stripes of He-Man’s fearless friend, the mighty Battle Cat—“Cringer” as he’s known to Prince Adam—a character I haven’t thought about since it was roaring through my Saturday mornings twenty years ago. But now that I’m thinking of it, I can see myself twenty minutes from now, walking home from Carrow’s Kid’s Night down the arcade and through the park and along the bike trail—a full mile in

which I might strike up a conversation with someone old enough to remember, some young man who would hesitate but then stop to ask, “Excuse me, um, but are you, *Battle Cat*?”

“...Green and blue are the hardest to wash off,” Penny is telling me. “We don’t mention that to the parents. We let them go home and find out for themselves.” Her nose wrinkles when she smiles.

“Maybe not green, then,” I venture.

“It just takes some more scrubbing.” She smiles, her pigtails swinging with the quick tilt of her head.

“Orange,” I say, hesitantly, as if asking permission.

She doesn’t move.

I gather my confidence and try again.

“Orange,” I say. And I mean it. Absolutely! Orange!

\*

I am afraid of overripe fruit. I am afraid of arriving too early. I am afraid of what doesn’t heal and things that can’t be fixed. I don’t mind dogs in general, but I am afraid of our dog, the family dog, whatever dog it is at whatever point in time but always something big and slobbering that my father could not resist and which he will never train. I mention this not because of the flapping bloodhound who is waiting for me, who will leap and lick and push me against the door when I get home. I mention this because of the blue-tick coonhound who lept and bit and pushed me against the kitchen cabinets smearing blood when I was eight. I mention this because of the scars.

Dr. Williamson said the cuts were just this side of needing stitches, that by time I was old enough for it to bother me, to be a girl who cared about her looks, that laser technology would be advanced enough to smooth it away, like it had never happened. So I went home with a clutter of butterfly bandages across my jaw and arm and frankly might have forgotten about the inch-long ribbon of scar tissue next to my chin, the shorter crescent-shaped scar next to it climbing up my jaw. I don't notice it in reflections or dressing room mirrors. I might have forgotten, except new classmates and new officemates and first dates always asked, remark on it still. People who know me well never bring it up and strangers don't bother; it is only the vast population of new acquaintances that takes an interest in my face.

\*

80

“Close your eyes like you're sleeping,” Penny tells me. She says that if you tell a child, “close your eyes,” they squeeze them shut and the paint wicks over the creases. They try too hard and it ruins everything. When they open their eyes they have flesh colored wrinkles. It makes them look old. Nobody ever asks to look old.

I squint before complying, not sure if I should also let my head droop to the side and my mouth fall open. I am a single woman sitting on a stool in a room full of families, and I am very aware that I don't know what to do with my hands, whether to put them in my lap or let them hang limp at my sides, but I know I should sit still. So I try to sit still but not rigid as Penny works from light to dark, pressing white pigment against the middle of my forehead, gliding it over the eyebrows and dabbing the sides and lower cheeks.

“Open your mouth and say *ahhhh*,” she asks and wipes in the upper lip. Passing the foam wedge over the yellow well of a black case, she sweeps up to my cheek, fills in the middle third of the face—the parts that aren’t already white—and in an instant it’s the next shade, swipes of orange coming in from the sides and blending like a sunrise, a glow of honey oak and butternut and tangerine. Her wrist flicks, the color swept up into one perked ear. Mirroring the stroke, she conjures a second. She says on nights when she’s feeling saucy, she’ll go back and add teeth along the chin, a sharp zig zag of canines and incisors. But this isn’t one of those nights. She leaves my chin with the teeth it has already known.

When I was in high school, Carrow’s was as good as we could manage for a hang-out spot. The vinyl booths were worn but not splitting open. We all tipped poorly, the waitstaff was inattentive, and the laminated menus clattered together like racking pool balls. The food was just okay. But in a town with four stop lights where everything closed by six o’clock, Carrow’s was open until midnight, so we ordered Irish nachos and jumpy monkey sundaes and maybe someone got coffee and we all asked for water because it was free. Now, though, my high school friends long scattered and the food not improved, there’s no good reason to be at Carrow’s, except that it’s Wednesday night, the night the clowns come, and Mr. Dave Twister is one of the best in the world.

\*

Two days ago, two days before this particular Carrow’s Wednesday, I was at a clown-less sidewalk cafe in Sydney, eating panna cotta in tiny, rapturous spoonfuls before catching a plane that, by the quirk of time zones, landed in Los Angeles three-and-a-half

hours earlier on what was and was not the same Monday I'd left. My mother, in anticipation of the homecoming, had wanted to plan a special welcome home event and, with my consent, called the new boutique in town and booked me a facial, my first. And so accordingly on Tuesday, I went to meet Lisa, went to lie in a room with the lights off and the aromatherapy on while wearing the stylish version of a hospital smock, my clothes folded neatly on a chair in the corner.

82

It wasn't relaxing, but it was clear that it was supposed to be relaxing, that that was the point, to relax, so I breathed deeply. I tried to slow my heartbeat. I consciously relaxed the muscles around my eyes, in my jaw, down my neck. I wondered if the Buddhist monk smiling on the CD case propped up on a bureau was meant to correspond to the pine tree whispers piped in from hidden speakers, their murmur punctuated every so often with a tiny metal *ching!* Lisa came in and out to swab on cool liquids, rub in creams, let things set, and begin again with a new wash of textures and scents. Grainy pastes, then slick oils, then something stinging and bright. Lavender. Olives. She smoothed out her lab coat every time she stood up. She asked about the scar on my chin. I couldn't tell where things began to go wrong.

When I was ten or so, old enough that it cost the adult price but still young enough that it was my mother who made our appointments and brought me along to the salon, Debbie Million cut my hair. Debbie Million would actually cut my hair well into my twenties, long after I'd left home and moved six states away, but that day when I was ten she blew it dry, a novelty for my curls. She looked intent, but she must have been distracted. Debbie had enormous

blue eyes, always wide open, and when she blinked she'd shake the blow drier and move it to a new spot against my scalp. Where the air was too hot or too close or held too long, it hurt. It burned. Not so much that I screamed, but enough that I didn't know what to say, how to apologize, how to stop the pain without her feeling bad for causing it. I only knew to sit still. She held the barrel to my head, scrunching my damp hair in her fingers, and watched us both in the mirror. She was long and lean, pointy-heeled boots under skinny jeans, the cowl of her green turtleneck drooping as she bent forward. I was a head. A head and the draping tent of gray leopard print fabric snapped at my neck. I couldn't tell if she was concentrated on my reflection or hers, the mirrors in front and behind us mounted at a slight angle, lifting us up, doubling and redoubling to infinity.

When my face starts to prickle at age twenty-nine, however, I know enough to open my mouth.

83

"Umm," I say. "It prickles."

"Like stinging? That goes away."

"No, like prickles."

"Not to worry, we're almost done."

"The make-up brush—the bristles—they feel sharp. It hurts."

"It's a sunscreen powder plus a little shimmer."

"Like pinpricks. Like sharp and scoring."

"SPF 15," Lisa assures me. "You need all the protection you can get."

It hurts even more when I can see it. My face is ugly red, an agitated flush pooling unevenly over my forehead and cheeks and chin. I feel the abrasions hot as sunburn, stinging like a skinned knee, and am embarrassed that my skin won't cooperate, ashamed that I did not defend myself, that I circled "sensitive" and "freckles" and "dry" on the new client sheet and closed my eyes to the sound of waterfalls in bamboo forests thinking it would be okay.

It doesn't help that my mother is coming to pick me up, that it will be hard to be the grateful daughter. I will fail at that, too. I appreciate that she was thinking of me, that she went to some trouble and expense to arrange this treat, but I cannot pretend it came out well. I do not feel pretty. I do not feel like a lady who has spent an hour being pampered at the spa. I do not feel anything I was supposed to.

84

When my mother arrives I try to explain and Lisa tries to explain. A rising blush is hidden under my already screaming skin, but my diplomacy is crumbling to a stutter. Lisa looks innocently befuddled. They ask me if I want to look in the store next door, send me away so they talk things out like grown-ups. I go, and Lisa puts a tube of cream in my mother's palm, asks her to have me call tomorrow. Nobody suggests that these things take time. That pain is beauty or beauty is pain. Nobody says that it will look different tomorrow. That the transformation is not yet complete.

\*

Wolfe Brothers black is a particularly opaque paint. It's as dark as they come. On the broad, flat end of a #12 filbert brush, it licks a cool, wet line from nostril to nostril, runs down from the tip of my

nose and, turned to its thin side, paints down the groove to the top of my lip.

“Now you have a tiger nose,” Penny says. “Now you smell like a tiger!”

I can't tell if I'm allowed to laugh, if a sudden snort might ruin everything, but Penny doesn't wait for my approval. She has already dropped the filbert in a jar of water, traded it for a #4 round, and causes me to laugh again as she tickles in the outline of a muzzle. She paints the smile in permanently, black curves pulling at the corner of my mouth like a grin, exaggerated up and out in a Cheshire curl.

Facepainting works in broad strokes, in smears of color, in patches and blobs and fades and blends. It's all rather abstract until just before it's done. The fancy tiger base would look the same if I were a cheetah or a candy corn or a black-nosed pumpkin. But then some radiating stripes, fluid as calligrapher's strokes, thin at the ends and pulsing wide with taps of pressure; a quick pepper of whisker dots; and finally the outline, a painted frame of perked ears at the top of the forehead, a jagged fur line at the edges. The finishing steps are done in four quick words. Glitter. Shimmer. Mirror. Applause! And that's it: I'm a tiger. A fancy tiger. I growl and purr and yawn and preen. I feel twenty years younger.

“Lesson number one in face painting,” Penny tells me, “glitter makes everything better.”

\*

My older brother arrives as Penny points a squeeze tube of Liquid Bling at my temple. It's not attractive, the mechanical pencil

tip jammed on the end of the tube, but the solution itself is elegant, the metal tapering to a fine point at the corner of my eye and a perfect, viscous bead of gold at its tip. My brother, Gavin, has come so we can walk home together. And while he knows I have been hanging around with clowns, he does not know he will be walking a tiger home. He does not know he could be one, too.

My brother is six-foot tall, wears a full beard, and has been balding since high school. He presents a curious surface to facepaint, and anyway he doesn't know what he wants, can't begin to imagine, so he waives off Penny's offer. Instead I show him my tyrannosaurus, which at the moment is wearing the glasses I took off to become a tiger, the glasses I am now afraid to put back on lest they make me something else. My brother studies this little Jurassic librarian, this tyrannosaurus Clark Kent.

86

It's just a bit slow at Carrow's, still a little before the dinner rush, and Mister Dave Twister comes over to chat. He doesn't ask Gavin what kind of balloon he wants, knows Gavin can't begin to fathom his options, and says instead, "Hold out your arm."

Most twisters use pumps, either hand pumps with motors or special bivalves that woosh air on both the squeeze and the release. Mouth-inflation is an elite technique, superior to pumps for its speed and showmanship but, like most signs of virtuosity, easy to miss as such because of its very seamlessness, the sudden acceptability of a man spitting five foot tongues of color into the air. With two hands free to manipulate the balloons, Mister Dave then wraps a thin snake of yellow around two fingers, swirls and expands it into a sixty-inch corkscrew with one breath.

“Hold this,” Mister Dave says, slipping the coil around my brother’s outstretched arm. Mister Dave repeats the corkscrew trick. “And this,” he says, adding a matching spring to Gavin’s other arm. Gavin looks like a sonambulist turned coatrack, the way his arms stick out parallel to the floor.

“Oh, and this,” Mister Dave says, as if it just occurred to him, knotting the end of a third coil. My brother, who works for the IRS, is about to question the math. “Wait a minute,” Mister Dave exclaims, “you only have two arms!” My brother looks relieved. “Well that’s okay,” Mister Dave says and wedges the third balloon on Gavin’s head like a cockeyed party hat.

Gavin has taken on the air of a particularly festive zombie, and Mister Dave leaves the three coils there like a marinade while he inflates a green polka dot round, twists a pair of blue googley eyes, and pinches a transparent 160 into a string of bubbles. Then, daintily plucking the adornments off my brother, Mister Dave proceeds to wrestle with the whole thing. He clutches the curls and spheres at chest height, elbows wild, tentacles flailing, both bodies jerking—the air rent with the rude squeal and screech of latex rubbed against itself and set to vibrating—until, suddenly, triumphantly, Mister Dave holds up a squid.

It is absolute magic. Mister Dave makes the gift lightly, so much air and latex, hands it to Gavin where it seems to settle with more weight, as if what my brother held was an actual cephalopod and not just the idea of one.

When we get home, Gavin goes first, opens the door just a little, which sets the thumping to a frenzy. He holds his squid above his head, takes a step in, and uses the other hand to pat and push and prod and block our bloodhound Scarlet as she barks and jumps and lunges and wags. He gets her calm enough that I can follow, tyrannosaurus up in the air, and it all starts up again, her paws slipping and scratching furiously. Gavin is particularly protective today, but my brother's grip on her collar is not enough to stay her. No matter how deeply his voice rumbles *No* and *Scarlet* and *Down*, her jowls flap and the spittle strings and her long ears get in the way. There is nothing to settle her but time.

My parents built a three-story house and never installed a doorbell, so it's the commotion that alerts my mother we are home. She comes up the stairs, shoos Scarlet into the basement, and looks us over.

88

"Oh my," my mother says. "Oh, my," she keeps saying. "Oh *my!*" from one pitch and inflection to another until she has worked her raving and gushing into epiphany: "You must show the neighbors!"

I have never been sent to show the neighbors anything. When I was a girl scout I rang just six doorbells before I realized the nervousness was not going away, would maybe never go away, that my embarrassment for showing up to hawk thin mints uninvited was not worth the occasional sale, much less its accompanying promise that I would have to return later with the goods, ring and re-ring the door until some occupant took mercy and relieved me of the lemon pastry crèmes and the tag-a-longs and the chalky shortbreads no one ever ordered unless they were on a diet but trying to be polite. It was awful, those encounters. No good ever came of them.

“Oh no you *have* to,” my mother insists. “The Wells have grandchildren now, and Tom and Mary do, too. They should *know* about this. They’d like to see you.”

I look at my brother. “I think you can do this alone,” he says. I am still looking at him. I think that I will keep looking at him until he gives me an answer I can work with, that I am not leaving the house unless there’s someone to hold the squid, but he moves an eyebrow. The look is quiet and small.

“Okay,” I say. I look to my mother. “Absolutely.”

\*

When my brother and I were kids, when we were both young, I tagged along trick-or-treating with him and the neighbor boys his age. I was Bo Peep the year he was a homicidal clown, the year we knocked on the door of the gray house with the peaked roof and the porch light off. The house was only a few doors down from ours, on the bend where Seafarer jogged north into Harbor, but it came at the end of the long loop we were making through the neighborhood that night. There is a ranking to trick-or-treat booty, a hierarchy from the houses that give out full-size candy bars to the houses with an empty “Take One” bucket out on the steps. This was a penny house. I could feel the disappointment when she opened the door, the sigh of the ninja standing next to me upon seeing a glass candy dish of coins. “Take a handful,” the occupant said.

The dead football player reached in and said, “thank you.” The ninja and my brother did the same. I reached out and she chuckled.

“What small hands you have,” she said. I drew my hand back. It did look small.

“Look at my hands,” she said. “They’re big.”

I nodded.

“Let me help you,” she offered, scooping her own hand deep into the copper pile. It was the most generous thing I had ever seen. “Hold out your hands,” she said. I cupped my hands and the weight filled them, pennies ran over, more wealth than I could hold. Seeing this, the woman stopped, her half-full hand of pennies still in the air. With her empty hand she pinched one cloth handle of the bag hanging from my wrist and pulled it open. Then she tipped the penny hand, let it fall and sweep like a conductor’s, the balance pouring in, glinting as it fell.

# How to Do Laundry

*Rebecca Merrill*

## **SORTING**

Start by dumping the small but overflowing laundry basket on the carpet that stretches from the queen sized bed on one side of the room to the bar stools and table on the other side. The room transforms from bedroom to living room to dining room based on where you sit and what you are doing. The mound of laundry covering the majority of the open floor space means you are currently in the laundry room. There were times when your apartment had more than one room. Then again, there were times when your apartment had more than one person.

Sort the clothes into two piles on either side of where you have plopped yourself on the floor. On one side, the old, broken-in light colors. These are the underwear, the socks, the t-shirts worn to bed, the tank tops worn as undershirts. These are the comfortable, safe clothes. It was Mike, using his title of boyfriend to constantly point out what you didn't know, who taught you that the light load colors didn't necessarily have to be white. "It's the clothes that have been washed lots of times," he told you. "The broken-in clothes." That was five years ago.

In the other pile, the dark colors. These are the shirts worn to work and the jeans that you rarely wash to avoid the stiff, tight, uncomfortable feel of just-dried denim. You look at both piles and are forced to make a choice. Last month, you did laundry for two, as two. Together, you would lug four loads of laundry at a time

down to the basement. Now you are on your own and the closest laundromat is a seven minute walk down the street. You only have the strength for one load at a time.

Assess both piles, the pros and cons, and make a choice. Choose darks. Choose to make your jeans a little more uncomfortable for the time being. Choose to live in a small apartment alone with only your stuffed animals for company. Place the load of lights back in the laundry basket. You'll get back to those.

## CLEANING

92

At the laundromat, plan to make the best of what comes next. Realize that in an ideal world, you wouldn't have to wash the clothes. In an ideal world, the jeans would never get dirty. They would stay comfortable and cozy forever. Remember why the jeans need to be washed. Remember how you spilled soup on yourself in the middle of a restaurant, eating alone. Notice the little things. Notice the specks of dirt on the hem and the hips stretched from too much wear. Notice the things too small for anyone else to see but you.

Remember how Mike told you he didn't like hanging out with you anymore. Remember how that hurt worse than when he said he wasn't sure if he loved you anymore. Remember how you agreed with him both times, still unsure if it was because you did agree or because you were too hurt to defend yourself. Wonder why you feel so guilty for ending it. Wonder if you should have given him another chance. You look down at the stained jeans and remember that even if there were no soup stain, they needed to be washed.

Choose a top-loading machine, since you are most familiar with those. Find a machine near the set of chairs you will sit in. Get one as close to the dryers as possible. Once you have planned and over-analyzed your situation, begin the process. Add your detergent to the machine first. It's the detergent your Mom uses, not the detergent Mike used. Wonder when you get to have your own detergent.

Load the jeans and shirts into the machine. Do not overfill. Close the lid. Insert 9 quarters. Be outraged that it costs 9 quarters for one load. Press the button for colors and put into motion a series of events that you cannot undo. Mourn the loss of your comfortable jeans. Realize that you cannot have both. You cannot have comfort and clean. You cannot have cozy and a fresh start.

## WAITING

93

Sit in the laundromat as your clothes get clean. One load takes 28 minutes. It is not enough time to run any errands, and yet it is enough time to completely change the comfort level of your jeans. Bring a book to read and your phone to text. Talk with the middle-aged laundromat employee, who quickly befriends you, about the cats he has just adopted. He's looking to keep occupied as he washes the clothes other people drop off to be cleaned. Be jealous of those who just leave their dirty laundry for other people to deal with.

Wish that time would go faster. Wish that you could wake up 28 minutes from now and have it all be over. Wish that someone else would go through all of this waiting for you. Remind yourself that sitting in the laundromat is better than sitting at home

alone. Remind yourself that as a reward for completing tonight's goal of laundry, you will return home to eat ice cream and watch the shows Mike hated without feeling guilty. You can't remember how you got through the evenings alone without these mini-goals and mini-rewards.

Wish that time would go faster. Wish that it was a year from now and you were over the break up. Remind yourself that it is the getting over the break up that will help you grow the most. "The only cure for a hangover," they say, "is time." Wish you had a hangover so it would only take a day to get over. Wait.

## MOVING

94

When the washing machine comes to a stop, grab one of the ten metal laundry carts scattered throughout the place. Pull it close to the machine to leave the least possible space for any rogue shirt to fall to the ground. Grab your wet, mangled laundry and drop it into the cart. Jean legs and shirtsleeves become tangled together, clinging onto one another as they leave the machine. The laundry is now worse than when it went into the machine. Before it was dirty and not ideal, but now it is unwearable.

Push the cart over to the wall of dryers and start lifting the heavier, wetter, grosser clothes into the second machine of the evening. Feel proud of what you can accomplish without Mike. There was the 140-pound bed frame that you and a co-worker moved up to your new 4th floor apartment. And the 78-pound kitchen table that you carried piece by piece from the vestibule up the stairs since there was no one around to help you. You never had to do these things on your own before. Feel proud of how you have

grown. Feel your upper arms ache from the consequences of your strength.

After unloading the cart, deposit 6 quarters into the machine, choose high heat, and hit start. Push the laundry cart out of the way and return to your book. Feel the muscles in your arms relax. The heavy lifting is over.

## SPINNING

Read your book and relish in the calm that comes from sensing the end. Get lost in the soft rock coming from the wall-mounted speakers. Mike would have hated this music. Respond to the text message waiting on your phone. Mike never texted you. Rest your book on your lap and start observing what else is going on. Your jumble of clothes is confined in the dryer, repeating the the process of being carried up the side of the machine and then falling to the bottom. The laundry continues to spin. All you see are the clothes in chaos, tumbling, rolling and being tossed around.

95

A woman your age sits down next to you, opens a magazine, laughs out loud and then shows you a not-that-funny kitty litter advertisement. Wonder if you should get a cat. A young couple is over by the much more complicated front-loading washing machines, unloading three trash bags full of dirty clothes into them. Feel sorry for them, not jealous of them. Think about how doing one load of laundry for an hour once a week seems so much easier than doing four loads at once.

Remember when you moved in with Mike a year and a half ago, and you promised each other this was a step forward and there

would be no steps back. You became an us. You were on your way up. And then, the bottom fell out. You flopped down to the bottom of the dryer. He got cold feet. You got insecure. Your us became a you again.

The laundry continues to spin, getting pushed back up every time it falls.

## FOLDING

When the cycle ends, empty the clothes from the dryer into the mesh bag, sling it over your shoulder and head home. Climb the three flights of stairs, taking each step with purpose, remember everything else you have carried up them. You share these memories with no one else. Enjoy that. Enter your apartment and dump the clothes on the bed. Turn on your TV.

96

Fold the shirts and separate into piles based on length of sleeve and appropriate use. Take comfort in knowing every shirt is in the correct pile. You never understood what piles to put Mike's clothes into, and always assumed you were doing it wrong. He never said as much, but the piles you made always got rearranged. Look at the imperfect folding job and realize that there is no one else who will care how the clothes are folded. He always smoothed out those flawed edges, making you feel flawed, too. Now, the clothes are perfect enough.

Shake the wrinkles out of the jeans and place them on a hanger in the closet. They are slightly wrinkled and worn at the bottom where they drag on the ground. They are stiffer than when they went in the wash and you can tell just by looking that they are

going to be too tight when you next put them on. They are fresh, though, and ready for their next adventure.

## RETURNING

Take the piles of somewhat-perfectly folded shirts and return them to the proper dresser drawer. Be happy for them to be reunited with the rest of your clean wardrobe. Hope that there are no hard feelings. Realize life isn't always like that.

Return to your former apartment to pick up the things left behind in your rushed move out. Look through the box Mike put together for you. He can barely look you in the face. Comb through the kitchen cabinet to collect Fluff and white chocolate chips, your favorite foods that he would never eat, as he washes the dishes with his back to you. Ask if he wants to keep in touch, or if he wants time to process the situation. Sigh when he says both. You still cannot figure out how to please him. Turn away and walk out the door.

Don't cry on the way home. Think about the new furniture waiting to be built—furniture you chose on your own. Think about how proud you are of yourself. Think of how the only person you have to please is yourself. Think about how nice it is to not have to worry about someone else's dirty laundry.

## Lining Up to Pay

*Steve Bradbury translating Hsia Yü from the Chinese*

This is how it is/that's the way it goes/unilaterally/in all its finality/that's the way it goes/there's no catching him now/even if I tried he's bound to be gone/it shouldn't be like this/there ought to be a better denouement/O these cities!/always throwing someone in your path/all day long I got my directions wrong/muddled the time/threw my whole day off/no wonder he was first in line to pay/could he be waiting by the door?/this so sucks!/if I'm not simply late/I miss out on it completely/life really sucks!/the part that sucks the most is when you take off after them and come up empty-handed/find yourself wondering how on earth you get into these stupid situations/stuff like this explains why I lie around in bed till noon/explains why I can't get my sorry ass to sleep/it explains those rhetorical omissions I'm always making/otherwise/we'd/all/be/mud/duh/ling/through/life/to/get/her/it's true though that falling on your face like this can be conducive to spiritual growth/helps to build character/not that anyone seems very fired up/very us-versus-them/and where's the fun in that when supposing there's a game coming up/everybody gets in line to buy their ticket/someone else comes along cuts in breaking the continuum/that person has still got to say sorry my bad/the thing with lining up to pay is/soon as you have swiped that card you're gone/never knowing that someone in the line behind you has fallen head over heels/but can't get up the nerve to speak/cause you know how it goes if you don't forge ahead full steam you fall hopelessly behind/how nice it would be if we all grew old and gray in the same

grocery line/in saying everyone/we're assuming that we all like  
trouping about in a gang/though I'd be more than happy/just to  
be with him/just look at the convergence of items in our shopping  
carts/doesn't that suggest that we could live together/isn't it lovely/  
though we live in different buildings we eat the same frozen foods/  
doesn't that suggest that we have compatible personalities/isn't it  
lovely we use the same soap and soap dish/isn't it lovely to think  
that if we could cram our apartments together/join ourselves at  
the waist/certain statistics would rise/other statistics would fall/  
certain political positions would harden/others grow less hard/  
isn't it lovely to know that whenever we went traveling/got the urge  
to shop/we could share a shopping cart/wouldn't that be so lovely/  
so why doesn't he love me/why doesn't he know that/there by the  
door of a grocery store/he could change a certain someone's life/  
in the process maybe even change his own/when one object conver-  
ges with another like this/it's clearly for the purpose of making  
something happen/at the moment I wouldn't be particular as to  
what that might be/but now he's paid and gone/and I'm left wait-  
ing in the same old spot/only now/thanks to him/the world's been  
split in two/halves/and of these two/the relatively gentler/more  
easily bruised/far more liable to find itself redeemed/and certainly  
more certain/to think itself more capable of loving half/without a  
doubt/belongs to me/I am that half

## Translator's Note

*Steve Bradbury*

Hsia Yü is my favorite Chinese poet on the planet and this is one of my favorite poems from my favorite Hsia Yü volume, *Salsa*. I could talk about this poem for hours, but its virtues are so refreshingly up front, the situation it describes so common to the human comedy, I doubt there is much I could say that wouldn't seem perfectly obvious to everyone—we've all been there before, if not in the same grocery store.

100

I bet you're curious, though, about the crazy-ass way she has formatted this poem. I once had the temerity to ask the poet, who designs and publishes her own books at considerable expense, if “Lining Up to Pay” was a prose poem or some zipfile version of free verse she cobbled up to save on paper, and she looked at me like Cher when people ask her age, and said, “Free verse? Prose poetry? *What's* the difference again? I always forget which is which.” Could the co-founder of Taiwan's foremost journal of cutting-edge poetry really be so naïve as to questions of poetic form, or is she just being cagey?

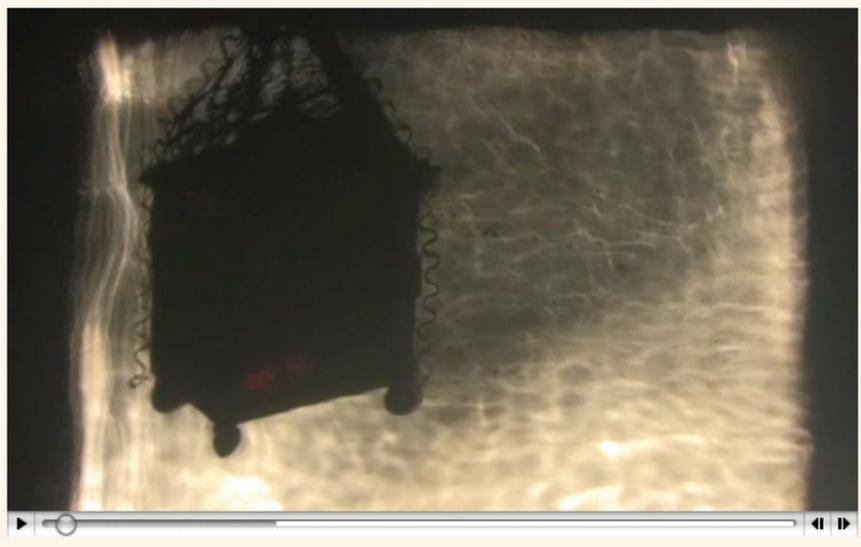
One of the great things about being Hsia Yü's translator—as opposed to one of the many critics, scholars and graduate students who are now writing about her work—is that I don't have to answer that question, though I will admit to wondering now and then if the sweet disorder of her lines, like those rhetorical omissions she professes to make, aren't simply part and parcel of a nonchalance that conceals design. Castiglione called it *sprezzatura*; I like to call it, “Hsia Yü lets down her hair.”

# Lungs Open Lungs Close

*Asher Danziger*

[Lungs Open Lungs Close](#) is an excerpt from the multi-modal book entitled “The Retelling” that combines sound, video, still imagery and text to bring forth the inner dialogue that accompanied me on a sixteen hundred mile bicycle journey from Chicago to the Florida Keys. By using new forms to create a world that is vast enough to become self-referential, a deepening engagement with the narrative becomes experiential.

If you haven't already, [click here to view Lungs Open Lungs Close](#).



The noise of our thoughts is cacophonous. Silent walks are anything but. The woods may be empty, my footprints may be the first to touch the fresh snow, the lone lark and the wind are both audible, but I am deaf and blind to all that can be seen and heard. Until a deer jumps out from behind the maple and all thoughts but those of its bounding form are eradicated.

## Contributors

**Andrew Barrett** is a translator and musician who lives in Rochester, NY, where he is pursuing a Master of Arts in Literary Translation degree at the University of Rochester. He is currently translating a portion of the *Dionysiaca*—a lush and expansive Late Antique Ancient Greek epic composed by Nonnus of Panopolis. Andrew has also translated poems by Christophoros Kontonikolis, a Modern Greek poet who writes in Ancient Greek. Several of these translations are set to be published in the October 2011 issue of *Words Without Borders*. In June of 2011, Andrew had the honor of working on his translation of the *Dionysiaca* at the Banff International Literary Translation Centre.

**Nonnus** was most likely born during the fifth century A.D. in the Upper Egyptian city of Panopolis. The *Dionysiaca*, a 48 book epic poem composed in ancient Greek hexameters, which takes the mythological exploits and ancestry of the god Dionysus as its inspiration, is Nonnus' magnum opus. The only other surviving work attributed to Nonnus is a hexameter paraphrase of the *Gospel of John*.

**Steve Bradbury's** poems, essays, and translations have appeared in *Jacket Magazine*, *Poetry International*, *Raritan*, *Sub-Tropics*, and elsewhere. A recipient of the PEN translation fund grant and the BILTC translation residency, he is Associate Professor of English at National Central University in Taiwan, where he edits *Full Tilt: a journal of East-Asian poetry, translation and the arts*.

**Hsia Yü** (sometimes spelled Xia Yu) is the author and designer of five volumes of ground-breaking verse, most recently, *Pink Noise* (2007), a bilingual collection of English-language poems and computer-generated

Chinese translations printed on crystal clear vinyl in pink and black ink. “Lining Up to Pay” is from her fourth and most popular volume, *Salsa* (1999), which has gone to seven editions. She lives in Taipei, where she co-founded the avant-garde journal and poetry initiative *Poetry Now*.

**Dick Cluster** is a Spanish-English translator, writer, and teacher. His published work includes three novels and two books of popular history, most recently *History of Havana* (with Rafael Hernández); translations of novels and stories from Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America; and translations of scholarly work in politics, economics, and literary criticism from Cuba, Mexico, and Spain. He teaches in the Honors Program at the University of Massachusetts in Boston.

**Pedro de Jesús** lives in Fomento, Cuba. He is the author of the story collections *Cuentos fríos* (1998) and *La sobrevida* (2006), the novel *Síbilas en Mercaderes* (1999), and the poetry collection *Granos de mudez* (2009). *Cuentos fríos* has been published in English translation by City Lights Books, as *Frigid Tales* (1998).

**Mary Carroll-Hackett** took the MFA in Literature and Writing from Bennington College in June 2003. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in more than a hundred journals including *Carolina Quarterly*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *The Potomac*, *Reed* and *The Prose-Poem Project*. Her chapbook, *The Real Politics of Lipstick*, was recently named winner of the 2010 annual poetry competition by Slipstream. She currently directs Creative Writing at Longwood University in Farmville, VA where she founded and edits *The Dos Passos Review*, *Briery Creek Press*, and The Liam Rector First Book Prize for Poetry.

**Asher Danziger** graduated from Columbia College with a BFA in photography in 2009 and has been performing and creating since. Recently

he had a solo exhibition of writing, video and image at the Happy Collaborationists Gallery in Chicago, was the featured artist in a show at Climate Gallery in NYC, and was published in the online journal *The New Everyday*, which is an offshoot of the organization called The Future Of The Book..

[Ori Fienberg](#)'s writing appeared recently in the *Nashville Review*, *the Prose Poetry Project*, and *Kill Author*. Just over 28 years ago, Michael Martone, the author of several fine books, passed out at Ori's bris.

**Janis Freegard** was born in England, but has lived in New Zealand most of her life. She writes fiction and poetry and is a past winner of the BNZ Katherine Mansfield Award. Her poetry collection, *Kingdom Animalia: the Escapades of Linnaeus*, was published by Auckland University Press in May 2011. She blogs at <http://janisfreegard.wordpress.com>.

**A. Kendra Greene** is a Jacob K. Javits Fellow at the University of Iowa. She has vaccinated wild boars in Chile and modeled dresses twisted from balloons. She is currently looking for reasons to love Dallas, Texas. A writer and book artist, her work is in *The Best Women's Travel Writing 2010*, and the special collections of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and The University of Florida. And even as we speak, she is writing a memoir about museums. More at [greeneinkpress.com](http://greeneinkpress.com).

**Anna Rosen Guercio** is a translator and poet living in Los Angeles. Her work has recently appeared in or is forthcoming from *The Kenyon Review Online*, *Pool*, *The St Petersburg Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *inter|rupture*, *Prime Number*, *Eleven Eleven*, *Faultline*, *Entasis*, and *Words Without Borders*. She is the translator of José Eugenio Sánchez's *Suite Prelude a/H1N1*, published by Toad Press. She holds an MFA from the University of Iowa and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Irvine.

**Evelyn Hampton** lives in Providence. Her website is <http://lispservice.com/blog>.

**Ian Hatcher** is an interdisciplinary artist working with text, code, sound, and the physical body. He has been the principal composer and accompanist for the Moving Architects dance company since 2008. He holds a BFA from SAIC and an MFA from Brown University, and presently lives in New York. Info & projects: <http://clearblock.net>.

**Nazifa Islam** grew up in Novi, Michigan, and has the misfortune of being born on the day in history that resulted in Abraham Lincoln's assassination as well as the sinking of the Titanic. She has work forthcoming in *Breadcrumb Scabs*, *Disingenuous Twaddle* and *Phantom Kangaroo*, and regularly updates her blog [Thoughts Interjected](#).

**Rebecca Merrill** is the human companion to Henry Owen, a cat of exquisite lineage and generally excellent taste. She does not spend enough time at home petting him.

**S.D. Mullaney** earned his MFA in Poetry/Creative Writing from the UMass Boston. This is his first appearance in *Anomalous Press*; other poems have appeared in *Hanging Loose*, *Pemmican*, *Breakwater Review*, *Hoi Polloi*, and *The New York Review*. His work has been heard on WERS 88.9 FM Boston and WOMR 92.1 FM Provincetown. His first collection of poetry, *Follow the Wolf Moon*, is available from MJS Publishing, and he's working on subsequent collections and projects. A Plymouth native, Mullaney recently co-edited the first edition "Common Threads: seven poems and a wealth of readers" for the Mass Poetry Outreach Project, available at [www.masspoetry.org](http://www.masspoetry.org). He's taught creative writing at the Walter Denny Youth Center in Dorchester and at Renewal House, a Boston-area shelter for victims of domestic violence. He currently works as a critical

writing instructor at UMass Boston's College of Nursing and Health Sciences and is at work on his second collection.

**John Pluecker** is a writer, interpreter, translator and teacher. His work has appeared in journals and magazines in the U.S. and Mexico, including the *Rio Grande Review*, *Picnic*, *Third Text*, *Animal Shelter*, *HTMLGiant*, and *Literal*. He has published more than five books in translation from the Spanish, including essays by a leading Mexican feminist, short stories from Ciudad Juárez, and a police detective novel. There are two chapbooks of his work, *Routes into Texas* (DIY, 2010) and *Undone* (Dusie Kollektiv, 2011). Find more of his work at <http://johnpluecker.blogspot.com>.

**Mani Rao** is the author of seven books of poetry and a translation of the Bhagavad Gita. [www.manirao.com](http://www.manirao.com) has links to her publications.

**Śankara** is an Indian philosopher who may have lived in the 8th CE. He consolidated the doctrine of advaita-vedānta (or non-dualistic philosophy), wrote commentaries on the Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras and the Gita, and is credited with the authorship of many devotional hymns.

**Ellen Rhudy** is a Peace Corps Volunteer serving as an English teacher in the Republic of Macedonia. In October 2011 she will begin researching Albanian culture as a Fulbright student in Tirana. Her fiction has appeared in *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *Hanging Loose* and *Dr. Hurley's Snake-Oil Cure*. She writes about books at her blog, [Fat Books & Thin Women](#).

**Joseph Ross** is a poet and writer in Washington, D.C. His poems appear in many journals and anthologies including *Poetic Voices Without Borders* 1 and 2, *Drumvoices Revue*, *Poet Lore*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Tidal Basin Review*, and *Full Moon on K Street*. In 2007, he co-edited *Cut Loose*

*the Body: An Anthology of Poems on Torture and Fernando Botero's Abu Ghraib*. He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and writes regularly at [www.JosephRoss.net](http://www.JosephRoss.net). He directs the Writing Center at Carroll High School in Washington, D.C.

**D. E. Steward's** "Septembro" is a month in a sequential project that runs month to month, underway since September 1986, bringing the number finished to date at 299 with almost 200 published. The months generally go into tables of contents as poetry, but that is always an editor's call. The months are an attempt to note, and to build on, some of the reality of times. Google or Bing "d e steward poetry" for more than's necessary.

**Sarah Tourjee's** fiction has appeared in the *Sonora Review* and *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*. She is pursuing an MFA at Brown University. She lives in Rhode Island with a herd of small nonhuman mammals and her human partner.

**Graham Tugwell** is a PhD student with the School of English, Trinity College Dublin, where he teaches Popular and Modernist Fiction. The recipient of the College Green Literary Prize 2010, he has been published by *Anobium*, *Write From Wrong*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Red Ochre Lit*, *The Quotable*, *Sein und Werden*, *Thoughtsmith*, *THIS Literary Magazine* and *L'Allure Des Mots*. He has work forthcoming in *Kerouac's Dog Magazine*, *Anemone Sidecar*, *Plain Spoke*, *Pyrta*, *Battered Suitcase*, *Lost Souls*, *Rotten Leaves*, *Red Lightbulbs*, and *FuseLit*. He has lived his whole life in the village where his stories take place. His website is [grahamtugwell.com](http://grahamtugwell.com).

## **Anomalous Press**

launched in March of 2011 as a non-profit press dedicated to the diffusion of writing in the forms it can take. Its backbone is an editorial collective from different backgrounds and geographies that keep an eye out for compelling projects that, in any number of ways, challenge expectations of what writing and reading should be.

At the time of its launch, Anomalous is an online publication, available in both visual and audio forms on various platforms. It has its sights set on publishing chapbooks, advancing audio forms and creation, and supporting all sorts of alternative realities of the near future.

**Erica Mena, Sara Gilmore, David Johnson**

**Catherine Parnell, Rachel Trousdale, Shannon Walsh**

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