

Goliard Songs

Clamenç Llansana

Translated by Kit Schluter



THE
GOLIARD
SONGS

of

CLAMENÇ
LLANSANA

TRANSLATED
FROM THE OCCITAN

by

KIT SCHLUTER

ANOMALOUS PRESS | 2014

© 2014 Kit Schluter
First edition 2014.

Design and cover photograph
by Osborn Meagher

ISBN: 978-1-939781-24-6

The translator would like to thank Clément Cellier, Mark Cugini,
Cassandra Gillig, Clamenç Llansana, Estel P. L. Martinez, Erica Mena,
and Stephen Sparks for their help in making this project a reality.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Certain artists specialize in the art of being overlooked.

In using the word *overlooked*, I am not thinking of artists who have fallen into obscurity after death, having enjoyed the satisfaction of minor prominence during their lives, or even those who seek recognition only to see it deferred during their lifetimes, but those of whom the general public remains entirely unaware, whose work is known only by family members and, at its furthest reaches, a very select coterie of friends.

Widely known examples of this strange lot are difficult to conjure, for these names do not belong to the public domain, but instead to the introverted storybooks of families and communities bound by esoteric practices, the research of obscurantists and eccentrics, and the caprices of folklore. Certain names do, however, come to mind: Henry Darger, John Barton Wolgamot, Emily Dickinson, among others.

In the cases of the sort of artists I'm interested in looking into here, it's not a question of not knowing the right people, or not having a lucky break, or not being in the right place at the right time. Rather, the sort of public recognition that graces those artists on the tip of their generation's tongue means nothing to these artists of whom I'm thinking, who are satisfied by the very possibility that, at *some* point in time, however remote, a curious soul may stumble upon the work they left behind in a crate of family photographs, their old journals and binders of loose-leaf manuscripts, as she digs through the bric-a-bracs her family has accumulated and left behind, passed along to future generations and close friends.

Or maybe even *that* doesn't matter to them. Maybe, to say it simply, they just don't give a damn about any of that. Maybe making work seems to them as inevitable as the act of shedding seems to a golden retriever in the summer, and its reception is inconsequential. It's always a possibility.

In my family tree, there exists one Fredric Edward Schluter I (b. 1900, Huntington, IL) who, before giving up his early pursuits in sketching—ostensibly to pursue a life more assured of material security—produced at Fort Bragg a modest body of work, mostly plume and ink sketches, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. Of this work there remains only a single self-portrait and three still lifes of hardcover books, bottles, candles, desks, and sad-looking women. And yet, however little is left of this Schluter's output, the few works he left behind have secured a central place in my imaginary; at this point, to say they have allowed me to become who I am today would indeed be no hyperbole. When the day came that I too wanted to try my hand at drawing, for example, I copied the cross-hatching of his sketches. Later, too, his sketches of liquor bottles, candles, and open books seemed to steer my aesthetic taste toward the

perverse genre of Vanitas, the *memento mori*, the only mode of artwork I, to this day, love unconditionally. Looking back, this experience of possessing these works of beauty that no museum would house for the sole reason of their lack of cultural capital—of my family's having this œuvre *all to ourselves* in a sense—allowed these drawings to course through my very blood, and encouraged me to savor that overripe fruit that had grown off one of the shadier branches of our family tree.

In one sense, then, it strikes me that having access to these sketches (the self-portrait, most importantly) led me not only to want to leave behind artifacts that would be found by someone in the remoteness of a future I could never even dream up, but also to desire having more of this sort of secret artistic figures in my life. So, in another sense, I have the artist behind those sketches to thank for the curiosity that led me, years after his death, to find come upon poetry of Clamenç Llansana (né Louis Boone).

Born in 1951 in the pastoral city of Figeac, France, located roughly 100 miles North of Toulouse, the poet known as Clamenç Llansana was son of a Canadian father (Éric Boone b. Québec City) and Texan social worker (Clemence Thompson b. Dallas), who met through unlikely circumstances in Boston in the 1940s, of which I will spare you the details, and relocated to the rural city of France at some point in the 1950s under even less likely circumstances, the details of which I will also spare you, out of respect for the family's privacy.

In his adolescence, Llansana still went by his given name, Louis Boone, but wrote under two pen-names, between which he varied depending on the language of the composition: French or Occitan. If composing in Occitan, aligned himself with the medieval and scholastic lineage the language has to offer, and worked under the name Clamenç Llansana, which was, he said himself, the conscious merging of an Occitan first name with a Catalan surname. If in French, he imagined himself as following the leads of Lautréamont, Arthur Rimbaud, and Henri Michaux's prose works, and wrote under the admittedly strange Marcel l'Aveugle, or in English, "Marcel the Blind." Thus his work vacillates between French, the language of his schooling, and Occitan, the dying language of his local community, spoken now by select communities: the elderly, the eccentrics, and certain Leftist political radicals in the Midi-Pyrénées. Interestingly enough, even though his parents were both English-speaking and he too speaks English fluently to this day, none of the extant writings in Boone's archive (a milk crate's worth of poetry, photographs, and drawings) are in English. By the age of twenty or so, the poet had left his given name behind, to make way for the name he goes by to this day, Clamenç Llansana.

Although his output was impressive, this chapbook, *Goliard Songs*, is, according to the author, the

only book he ever published. Released by a micro press in Villefranche de Rouergue named Éditions Igor in 1978, the book has all but entirely disappeared from conversation and circulation. Looking into this publishing venture while working as a public school language teacher in that small city during the 2011-12 school year, I found it has no other publications, and as no local poets had heard of the project, I began to suspect it was merely a one-off vanity project created Llansana himself for the making of this book. Llansana himself confirmed these suspicions, not with words at first, but with a wry grin, when we had the chance to meet in the café below his current apartment in the nearby Rodez, France in March of 2012. That same day, when I asked Llansana if we could expect any more work from him in the future, he said he had given up poetry at some point in his late twenties, with no intention of returning. He then retrieved from his modest archive a prose poem in French, “Le Jour de l’armistic (Armistice Day),” which he asked me to translate as a complement to the *Goliard Songs*—a task I carried out happily.

The copy of this book, which Llansana photocopied for me, is the only copy he has been able to locate until now. The nine others printed and distributed in bookstores in the greater Toulouse area must be out there somewhere. Should you know of another, please do find a way to be in touch.

— Kit Schluter, Providence RI, 31 March 2014

GOLIARD SONGS

*Was there ever a question of my wanting to forget
The long roads by which we traveled here?*

*The nights in the library were once my two brothers
Come from afar to heal me when sick or sad;*

*The choir of my own footsteps, the parents to whom
I was always too young to be seen as a son.*

*And now have I found myself a bed beneath slanted roof,
Free of mice and the other pests of which my teachers lived in fear.*

*To cleanse myself of the air I breathe,
I fast twice a moon and follow my fast in digesting a rusted chain,*

*Which protects my intestines from the worms of which I have heard so much in song.
The streets fan out beneath my loving footsteps like prostrating lepers.*

*My books grow moist, encased in stone across a sea.
I remember who I once was, and in my own light I rejoice and I repent,*

And there is no end to my celebration and censure.

—from the Latin of Hugh Primas of Orleansⁱ

a difficult interruption
to feel suddenly
at peace

with everything

you made arrangements
to leave

the fulcrum of promise

a constant
desire | need to leave

the indelible film
of inadequacy &
the vanishing point
converge
though once
immiscible

you radiate
what you deny
pauvre goliard!

you are forged by your fears

it isn't difficult

to project one-

self upon the flat

surfaces of transit & disappear

but to remain

there

in the company

of everyone you had fled

the oath

of return

the pledge of allegiance

pay no heed

to the flimsiness

of an October's vision

of May

it's been how long? &
I could already tell
you anything!

& through the “window
that without effort
circumscribes
our enormous life”ⁱⁱ

` a breath
of color

simple laughter
how it does us

such good

such simple
good

how it proves we need nothing
of history | of memory
| of how it *was*

I'm through
with promises:

invitations only
from now on

I never knew a mirror to be
so reflective

shucks!

as these buildings in the vacant bastide | the dead livelihood of *someone else's* ancestors

deep ogre thrones

where an apartment once got burned down

it wasn't light that broke these windows:

for there is no light

but eyes

the eyes

of cats

in the dark

:

walls of

arachnid Queen Anne's lace

surveilling

I have always spoken to God in Latin
the best I could | leaning slightly forth:

furare quod vis,

sed quod requires

mibi relinque

steal what you want,

but leave me

what you need

I cherish my childhood

days wandering through a wood | breaks
from the silence
at work on our structuration

“afterwards”

never comes
nothing satisfies my *wicked exigence*

(no complaints
it's just | *I can't successfully*
expect anything)

what if that
is “afterwards,” after all—

but if we don't want
an “afterwards,”

can we hide
ourselves from it
(if we discover

time's formula
and use it
to our advantage?:

eating soaped up
metal rags
drinking seawater
keeping a journal
a healthy journal
a journal in Latin | writing home in Latin
(taping the
sounds of ourselves
sleeping
in Latin)
asking our mothers for winter boots in Latin
et cetera
in Latin

across the nameless ocean | years in advance

I foresaw in a thread

the melody

that we will sing

by the Garonne | the purple fires

of the lamps

swell

and the moon rolls

down the sky's curvature | down the banks

and we

are carried

through rose boulevards

on a wave of all the questions

once so naïve

that now seem

the most sage

over time

under time

a crutch laid

against time

I returned

to the margin
seeing everyone

had left it

now I leave it

again seeing everyone
having returned to it

if ever
there was
a time to teach
you, little Héloïse, the discipline
of keeping a clean
room

it has passed

and you
walk past
her bedroom door
and look upon
the hills of disorder
you believe
reflect some turmoil

look out your goddamn window
for a change

describe
the turmoil | you see

the fight for the sun
the tangle of branches

& better yet
if the room
is dark

disorder
cannot be seen

complaint against monkish disorder, desertion of monasteries, wearing of orange, shoes with beaks and ears

and now

these voices this
laughter so close

to weeping
through the window
of the garret

(the peculiar hope

found in debt

the mirror of the future

another tableau of our *espérances*

(another windy discourse

windy as

over those little bridges

one after another

(all that blue water

that salt that

salt that

settles on

everything

come listen
like an irrational star

when bashful | hide less than ever

count the steps from here

to your heart

discard the trash you've hidden

to lay bare the pathway

leading to the pool of memories

clear and fresh

when I went to speak
 he raised his palm
 in the center there
 was an eye
 it was gazing upon my son

*what is it you want
with him
 he's worthless I said
 what could you want with him*

non er de mi ni d'otra gen he said

& bent over the bed
 in the dark
 against the curtain

*but I will write his poems
while sleeping upon my horseⁱⁱ*

I remember waking
I remember lying awake
I remember feeling such rage

young I felt
such rage "I must be
a werewolf"

& I remember the werewolf desire

to hurt my kin
to bless my sin
to cook up skin

and I drape it for warmth in my thrice-knotted

habit of bare skin

Naturally, there is no camera as good as the eye, so don't worry if you've forgotten yours as you step into view of the mountain. Focus your vision on the cliffs that seem to be trying to haul themselves up out from beneath the ground itself. The cliffs of Montségur^{iv} retained by the drape of red foliage.

Wait.
Then blink.
The image should persist.

A cold wind.

Not working.

A warm wind.

Do you at least hear the bell chiming around the neck of the pregnant cow three thousand feet below?

A hot wind.

I do, I do, but I don't know how.
Through an opposition of good and evil.
Through air light and pure?"

including the glass palace
borne across the ideal city
is an arbitrary inclusion | that also inhabits the cities

that's where I got confused, when “a dawn isn't like that, but
well, it's the rhythm between you and the source

—make some missteps
the source is as bad
as you | whatever you are,

adjusting your steps, 'heaven'

stood in for 'city'”

that a humble idea span feeling | letting me come, what happens then
if it comes but *doesn't count*

because it's almost bound to develop an idea
supposed to please the asshole | if the radio set
bears a child

from suspicion | I would have rather gone to sleep instead
and no one else's | are true or scare me
discern a dumbfounding source for yourself . a universal source | just a guess

playing almost simultaneously

A : lateness
of late

inappropriate attention | how does it feel
to be watched . . .

B : it's half like skin

half impatience half the desire to read
& you've got to wonder
exactly how long

til that joking voice splits
the last hair left

A : into the bastide, I get surprised by confetti bursts

of birds that never fall

B : That's true. I've lied plenty of times too

& always when someone else wanted
a different truth

A: it always felt like a distorting mirror

B: in which all things

chanced, in their deformation,
upon unforeseeable beauty

maybe it's inescapable

like weather

and these

these are the first drops

these *these*

THESE

of rain

- i This epitaph, originally in French, is not in fact a text of Hugh Primas of Orleans—the 12th century medieval lyric poet widely known in his day as “the Primate”—nor is it in fact a text of any Goliard poet. This is a text that Llansana himself composed in French and to which he falsely attributed Latin roots.
- ii From Rilke's French poem, "Fenêtre": [...] "fenêtre, très simple forme/ qui sans effort circonscris/ notre vie énorme."
- iii A nod to *Guilhèm de Peitieu's* 11th century troubadour lyric "Ferai un vers de dreyt nien."
- iv A castle in the region of Toulouse and Carcassone, France, which was a stronghold of the Cathars, a religious sect heretical in the eyes of the Catholic Church. In 1244, at the end of the Albigensian crusade, the castle was taken by the Catholics, whereupon over two-hundred Cathars were burned alive.

The eleventh book in the **Anomalous Press** series,
this book was designed by Osborn Meagher.

Anomalous Press is dedicated to the diffusion of writing
in the forms it can take. We're searching for imaginary
solutions in this exceptional universe. We're thinking about
you and that thing you wrote one time and how you showed
it to us and we blushed.

www.anomalouspress.org