word for word
parola per parola
palavra por palavra
panaera
一字换一字
, , ,
wort für wort
palabra por palabra
ρααστά ροι ρααστά
mot pour mot
1
2023



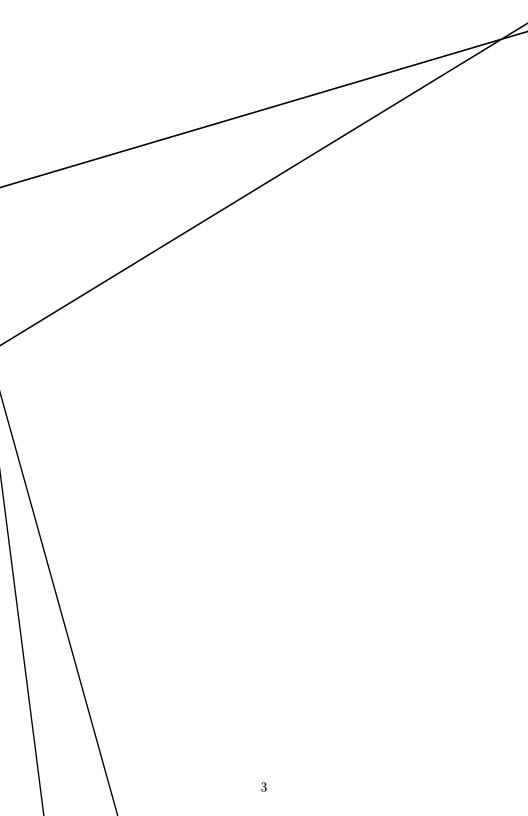


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foreword

word for word / 一字换一字 Columbia University School of the Arts Fudan University

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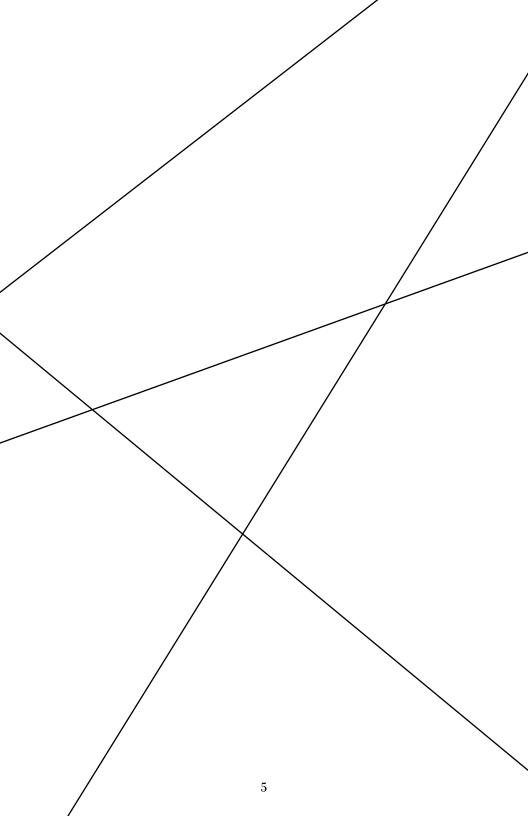
word for word / wort für wort Columbia University School of the Arts Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig

word for word / parola per parola Columbia University School of the Arts Scuola Holden

word for word / palavra por palavra Columbia University School of the Arts Instituto Vera Cruz Formação de Escritores

word for word / palabra por palabra Columbia University School of the Arts Universidad Diego Portales

acknowledgments



FOREWORD

Word for Word is an exchange program that was conceived in 2011 by Professor Binnie Kirshenbaum, then Chair of the Writing Program in Columbia University's School of the Arts. The exchange was created in the belief that that when writers engage in the art of literary translation, collaborating on translations of each other's work, the experience will broaden and enrich their linguistic imaginations.

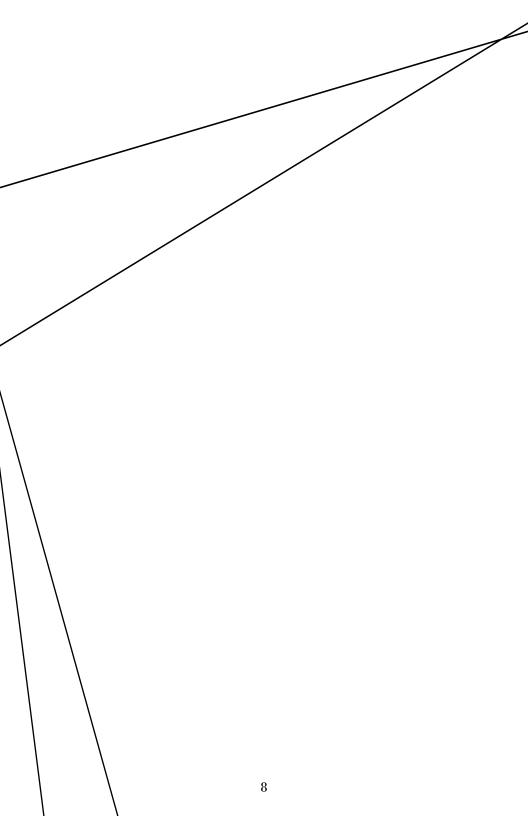
Since 2011, the Writing Program has conducted travel-based exchanges in partnership with the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig in Leipzig, Germany; Scuola Holden in Turin, Italy; the Institut Ramon Llull and Universitat Pompeu Fabra IDEC in Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain); the Columbia Global Center | Middle East in Amman, Jordan; Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.; and the University of the Arts Helsinki in Helsinki, Finland.

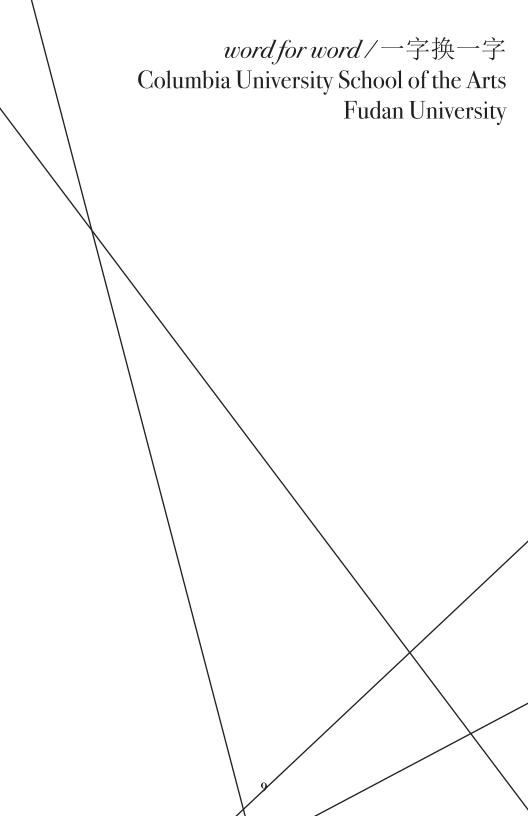
In 2016, the Word for Word program expanded to include a collaborative translation workshop that pairs Writing Program students with partners at two of these same institutions—the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig and Scuola Holden—as well as new ones: Université Paris 8 in Paris, France; Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile; and the Instituto Vera Cruz in São Paulo, Brazil. These workshop-based partnerships offer participants the chance to expand their horizons even without travel via personal and literary exchange and collaboration, establishing a new model for cross-cultural engagement. In 2022, we welcomed a sixth institutional partner: Fudan University in Shanghai, China.

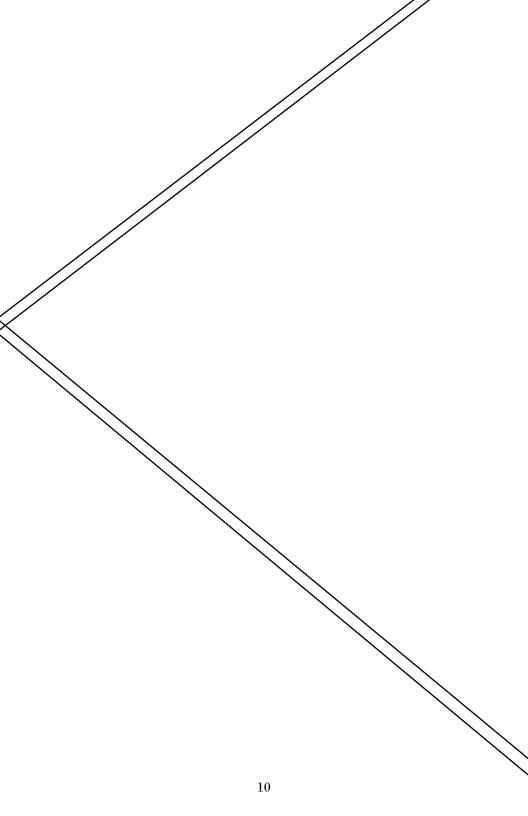
The present volume offers selections from the works (originals and translations) written by members of the Spring 2023 Word for Word Workshop in the Columbia School of the Arts and their Chinese-, French-, German-, Italian, Portuguese- and Spanish-language partners in Shanghai, Paris, Leipzig, Turin, São Paulo, and Santiago. This tenth in our series of Word for Word anthologies

collects the work of twenty-four exceptionally talented writers, presented here in tribute to all the ways in which artistic exchange can build bridges between peoples and cultures. Especially in light of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on travel it brought with it, we are grateful for the opportunity this project gives us each year to forge new relationships and artistic collaborations around the world. Singly and together, these twenty-four new literary voices offer suggestions for how to reach across the borders that divide us and strive for a global community based not on political or economic interests but on human connection.

Susan Bernofsky Director, Literary Translation at Columbia







译者注

当我读到Wally Suphap的非虚构小说时,太喜欢了。他的小说像一个潘多拉的魔盒,刚打开时是充满好奇与疑惑的,关于题目,关于虚构与非虚构,关于十三个篇章。当然,这个故事来自作者的亲身体验:坦诚、隐秘、反思。这部小说回忆了作者在20多岁时在性、生活和未来方面所遭受的一些际遇,现实和想象交织而成的复杂的自我也由此而生,这是文学青年所具有的神奇能力。

在我翻译这个故事的时候,最有挑战性的是理解主人公。在和Wally交流后,我开始明白这个故事更像是一个天真懵懂的年轻法学生追寻之旅。在文学中,这类故事的原型很多,比如《奥德赛》。但是,这篇小说超越传统的追寻模式:不断进取、求得满足,它反而塑造了一种具有生命力量的追寻形象:不断受挫、重拾力量,不纠结于是否找到答案,而是保持追寻的状态,继续前行。在我看来,现实与幻想之间的参差可能是产生碰撞摩擦的原因,Wally在这个旅程中保持敏感又智慧的触角,在酸甜苦辣之中找到与自我、与世界相适应的生命力。他娓娓道来自己的经历,告诉我们: "看,这是我人生的一部分"。如此的剖白让我对过去、现在和未来的他产生无限兴趣,让我真正地理解文本和人物本身的生命历程,当然,故事的最后,Wally依旧保持探索和疑问,是小小的休止符,也是崭新的开始。

WALLY SUPHAP

THIRTEEN WAYS OF INTERROGATING AN INCIDENT: A HYBRID MEMOIR

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(I) QUESTIONS as Epigraph

How do we go back to the very simplicity of the original notion? How do we look out into the dark?

Colum McCann, Thirteen Ways of Looking

How do we move toward wholeness? How do we direct our record keeping toward justice?

Carmen Maria Machado, In the Dream House

翻译:陈雨冰

十三种询问事件的方法: 一本混合回忆录

沃利•苏帕普

- I. 作为题词
- II. 作为前言
- III. 作为坦白
- IV. 作为记录
- V. 作为虚构故事
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- VIII. 作为自我诊断
- IX. 作为八卦
- X. 作为争议性问题
- XI. 作为非笑话
- XII. 作为状态容器
- XIII. 作为后记

(I)

作为题词

我们如何回到最简单的原始概念? 我们如何在黑暗中观察 -科伦•麦凯恩《十三种观看方式》

(II) QUESTIONS as Foreword

What is a memoir? According to Carmen Maria Machado, "the memoir is, at its core, an act of resurrection." Memoirists are like sculptors, Machado says; they "braid the clays of memory and essay and fact and perception together, smash them into a ball, roll them flat." Through a molding process that involves recreating the past, re-constructing dialogue, resuscitating the dead, and manipulating time, memoirists attempt to "summon meaning from events that have long been dormant."

This process has been revealed to me recently as I have attempted to reconstruct an incident from half a lifetime ago. The incident occurred in my early twenties, and it was not front of mind until a decade and a half later, amid the rise of the Me Too movement. While America and countries elsewhere were engaging in a long-overdue reckoning over sexual assault, I was privately embroiled in a belated reckoning of my own.

As I witnessed the growing chorus of silence-breakers come forward, taking their stories to the streets and to social media, a series of questions began gnawing at me: Why was I so moved by the Me Too stories? More pointedly, how was I relating? Was it as a fellow human, as anyone with an ounce of empathy would? Or was it more specific, more personal than that—was I relating as someone who had his own story to share? Was my appropriate label that of a supportive ally, or did I, too, have a right to carry the banner and proclaim to the world: Me Too?

From then on, I became a memory hunter. I traversed my past in search of clues, but the fragmented images I salvaged were obscured from years of neglect, not to mention possibly repression. As I attempted to excavate pieces from the rubble of my deeply buried memories, it soon became apparent that every single bid at an answer only invited further inquiry. Question after

我们如何走向整体? 我们如何引导自己的记录趋于正义? -卡门•玛丽亚•马查多《梦之屋》

(II) 作为前言

什么是实录?根据卡门•玛丽亚•马查多(Carmen Maria Machado)的说法,"一本回忆录,究其核心,是一种复活行为。"回忆录作者就像雕塑家,他们"把记忆、文章、事实和感知的粘土编织在一起,在高压下形成一个球体,然后把它铺平。"通过一个塑造过去、重建对话、复活死者和操纵时间的过程,回忆录作者试图"从被长期搁置的事件中召唤意义"。

最近,当我试图重现很久以前的一件事时,我发现了这个过程。这件事发生在我20岁出头的时候,但直到15年后,随着Me Too运动的兴起,它才成为人们关注的焦点。当美国和其他国家正在进行这场姗姗来迟的针对性侵问题的战争时,我不知不觉中也被卷入一场迟来的清算。

当我看到越来越多的打破沉默者挺身而出,将他们的故事带到街头和社交媒体上时,一系列的问题开始困扰我:为什么我如此感动于Me Too运动的故事? 更直言不讳地说,它们与我有什么羁绊?是作为一个人类同胞,任何一个有同情心的人都会这样做吗?或者更具体、更私人地说,我是不是作为一个有自己故事要分享的人来参与?我合适的标签是支持我的盟友吗,再或者,我也有权利高举旗帜、宣告世界: Me Too?」

1 Me Too (我也是):是女星艾丽莎·兰诺 (Alyssa Milano)等人2017年10月针对美国金牌制作人 哈维·

温斯坦 (Harvey Weinstein) 性侵多名女星丑闻发

question after question—unfolding like a Russian doll set. At some point, you realize the archive vault you had envisioned may only be a flimsy scrapbook.

The memoir insists on these questions: Which lens is the most appropriate? Which lenses illuminate? Which ones distort? Which ones illuminate through distortion? The lines between reconstructing and deconstructing are hazy at best, and disappear altogether, at worst. Which is to say, the memoir becomes akin to a dual act of resurrection and interrogation—a process of resuscitating and questioning, in virtual perpetuity.

(III) QUESTIONS as Confession

This is a story I've not told before. By that I mean I've not told a single version of it to anyone apart from myself.

The story begins in an office. At least this telling of it. The beige law offices inside an imposing corporate high-rise tower. We're in Bangkok during the peak of summer, with its draining humidity and heat. It's nighttime, past regular office hours, late even for a law office. All is silent except for the whooshing sounds of the central air-conditioning running overtime.

An intern in thick glasses, eager to prove something to himself and the world, has been assigned a time-sensitive research project for a bankruptcy litigation. The stakes are high. He and the other three interns are vying for the coveted offers of full-time associate positions. His mantra for that summer, and in fact, for his entire life to date, is this: to stand out from the crowd while innocuously fitting in. He's determined to the bone to live by it.

Years later he will have forgotten the exact parameters of the research project but he will remember other details. He will remember well the assault of questions fired at him by the only other person left in the 从那时起,我成为了一个记忆猎手。为了寻找线索,我翻看了自己的过去,但由于多年的忽视,我抢救出来的碎片图像变得模糊不清,更不用说可能的压抑了。当我试着从我深埋的记忆废墟中挖掘出一些碎片时,很快就发现,每一个回答都只会招来进一步的询问。一个问题引发不断的问题——像俄罗斯套娃般展开。在某个时刻,你意识到你所设想的档案库可能只是一个薄薄的剪贴簿。

这本实录关注这些问题:哪个镜头最合适?哪些透镜可以发光?哪些会扭曲?哪些是通过扭曲照亮的?重建和解构间的模糊界限是最好的,完全消失是最坏的情况。也就是说,回忆录变得类似于一个复活和质疑的双重行为——一个复活和质疑的过程,实际上是永恒的。

(III)

作为坦白

这是一个我从未讲过的故事。我的意思是,我从 来没有把它的任何一个版本告诉过任何人。

故事从一间办公室开始。至少这个故事是关于它的。米黄色的律师事务所位于一座雄伟的企业高层大厦内。我们现在在曼谷,正值盛夏,湿热难耐。现在是晚上,已经过了正常的办公时间,对律师事务所来说也是如此。四周静悄悄的,只有中央空调超时运转的嗖嗖声。

一个戴着厚眼镜的实习生,渴望着向自己和世界证明一些事情,他被分配到一个时间紧迫的破产诉讼项目。事关重大。他和其他三名实习生正在争夺梦寐以求

起的运动,呼吁所有曾遭受性侵犯女性挺身而出说出惨痛 经历,并在社交媒体贴文附上标签,藉此唤起社会关注。

office that night: a soft-spoken senior litigator.

How's the research going? How much more do you have? Why don't you come into my office and take a

It's a nice office, don't you think?
Why don't you come over and make yourself comfortable?

What's the matter, you don't like the sofa?
What's the problem, you don't want to sit?
Do me a favor, take off your glasses.
You have nice eyes, you know that? Can you come closer?

Do you want a shoulder rub?
There, how does that feel?
Does it feel good?

Shall I continue?

rest?

That night the intern learned how questions can be directives in disguise.

(IV) QUESTIONS as Diary

Why can't I remember much of anything else? Why can I only remember the sensations, what I felt as he reached out to caress my back and run his fingers through my gelled-up hair? Thinking back, it was repulsive, so why did I let him? I was twenty-two, certainly old enough to know what I wanted and how to say no. But knowing how to say no is different from being able to say no in the moment—right?

God knows, I wasn't even attracted to him. So, why did I go along with it? Maybe I was attracted to his status. Didn't he seem to have it all? Respect and adoration from his peers, bosses, clients. I saw my future self in him, my future as a hot-shot lawyer. No, I wanted to be him, perhaps not unlike how in The Talented Mr.

的全职助理职位。在那个夏天,事实上,到目前为止, 他的人生信条是:在人群中脱颖而出,同时又无伤大雅 地融入其中。他打定主意如此生活。

多年以后,他会忘记研究项目的准确参数,但他会记得其他细节。他清楚地记得那天晚上办公室里唯一剩下的人向他提出的一系列问题,那位说话温和的高级诉讼律师。

项目进行的怎么样了? 你还有多少需要完成? 你为什么不来我的办公室休息一下呢? 这是一间不错的办公室,你不觉得吗? 你为什么不过来放松一下呢? 怎么了,你不喜欢沙发吗? 有什么问题吗,你不想坐? 帮我个忙,把你的眼镜摘下来。 你有一双漂亮的眼睛,你知道吗? 你想要按摩肩膀吗? 这样,感觉如何? 感觉好吗? 要继续吗?

那天晚上,这位实习生学会了如何将指示伪装成 问题。

> (IV) 作为记录

为什么我什么都不记得了?为什么我只记得当时的感觉。他伸手抚摸我的背,抚摸我涂着发胶的头发。

Ripley, the young underachiever Tom Ripley yearned not only for the extravagant lifestyle of the millionaire playboy Dickie Greenleaf but also to assume his identity. To embody him outright.

What else do I remember? Oh yes, that he was startlingly articulate and loved using idioms. I recall that specifically because it was one of the few traits of his I found alluring. By far, his favorite idiom was "Come hell or high water"; he would slip it in at nearly every opportunity. Like that morning during his pep talk: "Trust me, we'll get this done today—Come hell or high water!" And again, later that evening: "Even if we have to pull an all-nighter, we'll finish it—Come hell or high water!" His voice was soothing and inviting, in contrast to mine, which was shaky and erratic. His every gesture, every word seemed assured and resolved, whereas my words and movements fumbled and betrayed my incertitude.

A week later he invited me on a weekend trip to Pattaya. Your reward for completing the research project, he said. I knew there was more to it, so why did I agree? That hot Saturday morning when his Mercedes rolled up to my serviced apartment, why did I get in? Why do I remember feeling excited like a giddy schoolboy off on a long-anticipated field trip?

What did we listen to on the drive over? Mostly his French CDs Celine Dion and Edith Piaf. His fluency in French, on top of English and Thai, caught me off guard. (Thinking back, I found that sexy, too.) He kept rewinding back to his favorite song, Non, je ne regrette rien. Which he translated for me: No, I will have no regrets. I found the song incredibly rueful yet empowering. I still do.

By early afternoon we would have arrived at the beachfront resort—it was one of those big chains, a Marriot or a Hilton. I noticed how the welcome entourage seemed to know him well and rolled out the red carpet for our arrival. ("Our"...._I wince at that word. Syntactically, the plural possessive pronoun suggests he 回想起来,那是令人厌恶的。为什么我容许他这么做? 我当时22岁,已经足够年纪了,知道自己想要什么,知 道如何说不。但是知道如何说"不"和当时能够说" 不"是不同的,对吧?

天知道,我根本就不喜欢他。那我为什么要同意呢?也许我被他的地位所吸引。难道他不觉得自己拥有一切吗?来自同事、老板、客户的尊重和崇拜。我在他身上看到了未来的自己,我将成为炙手可热的律师。不,我想成为他,也许就像《天才瑞普利》中,年轻差等生汤姆•瑞普利向往百万富翁迪基•格林利夫奢侈的生活方式,冒充他的身份,试图取代他。

我还记得什么?哦,是的,他口齿伶俐,喜欢使用习语。我对此印象深刻是因为这是他为数不多的吸引人的特质。到目前为止,他最喜欢的俗语是"无论发生什么事",他几乎一有机会就会说到。就像那天早上他在给人打气时说的:"相信我,我们今天会完成的——无论发生什么事!"紧接着,那天晚上晚些时候,他又说:"即使我们不得不开夜车,我们也能够完成——无论发生什么事!"他的声音温柔而诱人,与之相反,我的声音颤抖而游移。他的每一个动作,每一句话都显得自信而坚定,而我的言语和动作却含糊不清,暴露了我的不确定性。

一周后,他邀请我周末去芭堤雅旅行。研究项目的报酬由你负责,他说。我知道事情不止如此,那我为什么要同意呢?那个炎热的周六早上,他的奔驰车开到我公寓门前,我为什么要进去?为什么我记得自己兴奋得像一个轻浮的小学生,开始了一场期待已久的野外旅行?

我们开车时候都听了些什么呢?主要是他的法语 CD——席琳·迪翁和伊迪丝·琵雅芙。除了英语和泰语,他还会说流利的法语,这让我措手不及。(回想起 and I jointly owned or shared something. What did we own, what did we share?)

Who else had he brought to this resort, I wondered. How many other boys and men, or girls and women, for that matter? How many other interns? Perhaps the most dreaded question of all since I knew he was married: Did he ever come here with his wife?

The rest of the weekend is now a blur to me. I recall only the broad outlines of the affair, that it lasted until the end of the summer, as we snuck in a few more nights together in my serviced apartment, trying our best to keep it a secret from his colleagues, our colleagues.

Some details slip into the pit of the hurtling waves and then quickly disappear. Reflecting on that summer, I wonder if certain details are lost beyond resurrection.

If only I had kept a diary back then. How would the me in those hypothetical entries speak to me now? Conversely, if I could go back, what words of advice or caution, if any, would the I now impart to the me then?

(V) QUESTIONS as Fictional Tales

One of my favorite books growing up was Thomas Mann's Death in Venice. I first discovered the novella as a freshman in high school, stumbling upon it one day as I was browsing through the shelves at the local public library. Something about the snapshot description in the jacket blurb intrigued me: its promise of a story about same-sex longing. Finally, I thought, a story about my own desires.

But as I revisited the text throughout high school and later in college, what I initially perceived as a tale about unrequited queer love gradually twisted into something darker. The storyline of the perversions of the aged writer Gustav von Aschenbach toward the

来,我也觉得那很性感。)他不停地倒带回到他最喜欢的那首《不,我不后悔》。他翻译给我:不,我将永不后悔。我觉得这首歌有令人难以置信的悲伤却又充满力量。我现在仍然相信。

下午早些时候,我们就会到达海滨度假胜地——这是一个大型连锁酒店,万豪或希尔顿。我注意到前来欢迎的随行人员似乎很了解他,为我们的到来铺了红地毯。("我们的"——我一听到这个词就畏缩了。在句法上,复数物主代词表示他和我共同拥有或共享某物。我们到底拥有什么,又分享什么?)

我想知道,他还带了谁来过这个度假胜地。还有 多少男孩和男人,或者女孩和女人?还有多少实习生? 也许自从我知道他结婚以来,有个可怕的问题浮上心 头:他曾经和他的妻子来过这里吗?

周末剩下的时间我已经记不清了。我只记得这段婚外情的大致轮廓,它一直持续到夏末,我们又偷偷在我的公寓里待了几个晚上,尽力不让他的同事,我的同事知道。

一些细节滑入激浪的深渊,然后迅速消失。回想 那个夏天,我在想,除了再现,某些细节是否已经消失 了。

要是我那时写日记就好了。现在,那些假设情况中的我将如何与我对话?相反,如果我能回到过去,现在的"我"会给当时的"我"什么忠告呢?

(V) 作为虚构故事

托马斯·曼的《威尼斯之死》是我从小到大最喜欢的书之一。我第一次发现这部中篇小说是在高中一年级的时候,有一天,我在当地公共图书馆浏览书架时偶

underaged Tadzio came to the forefront. (Of course, it had always been there.) I questioned my earlier sympathies toward Aschenbach, specifically, his secret yearnings and intense solitariness, and wondered if his suffering a lonely death in Venice was indeed a fitting fate of just deserts.

My evolving moral interpretations of the story, however, did not detract from its allure. Truth be told, I became even more obsessed, riveted by how the story was simultaneously dreamscape and subversive—romantic yet debaucherous. Mann's tale became my own private gay version of two other classic novels I would encounter in high school English: Lolita and Love in the Time of Cholera—rolled and weaved into one.

They say we read into a book what we want, and I molded the text to fit whatever ailment I was seeking at the time, whether it was to flee to a faraway continent or to reaffirm my own version of a conjured reality. Each subsequent reading often surprised me by revealing new elements and genres in the tale: tragic romance, allegory, pre-apocalyptic thriller, cautionary tale, summer escapist reading, to name a few.

Good books, they say also, lead you off the page, wanting more. This was certainly the case with Mann's tale, as I desperately searched between the lines for more details about the story and its characters. What was the fourteen-year-old Tadzio's point of view? What was his version of the story? Was he aware of the intense gaze on him? Had he registered the unbounded power of his own beauty and youth—in this respect, was he like Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray who was painfully conscious of his spellbinding attractiveness?

What happens to Tadzio in adulthood? Does he get married, start a family, follow the path expected for someone of his familial background and stature, and live out the rest of his years without any major regrets or unfulfilled desires? Or does he seek a life outside the conventional script? Does he secretly long for something more than the old gender script and the marriage plot-

然发现了它。封面广告中的快照描述引起了我的兴趣: 它承诺讲述一个关于同性渴望的故事。最后,我想,我 应该写一个关于我自己欲望的故事。

当我在高中和大学时重新审视这本书时,我最初认为的单恋故事逐渐变得黑暗。老年作家古古斯塔夫•冯•阿申巴赫对未成年的塔齐奥的变态故事情节成为了人们关注的焦点。(当然,它一直都在那里。)我质疑自己早先对阿申巴赫的同情,特别是他内心深处的渴望和强烈的孤独感,并怀疑他在威尼斯孤独地死去是否真的是一种恰到好处的命运。

然而,对这个故事不断演变的道德解读,并没有削弱它的魅力。说实话,我更加着迷于此:这个故事如何同时兼具梦幻性和颠覆性,它浪漫却又放荡。曼恩的故事成为我在高中英语课上遇到的另外两本经典小说,《洛丽塔》和《霍乱时期的爱情》的私人同性恋版本。

他们说,我们在书里读我们想读的东西,我把文本塑造成当时我所寻找的症结,

无论是逃往遥远的大陆,还是重塑对虚构现实的看法。后来的每一次阅读都让我惊讶,因为它揭示了故事中的新元素和新类型:悲剧浪漫、寓言、末日前惊悚、警世故事、夏季避世读物,等等。

他们还说,好书会让你离开书本,想要更多。曼恩的故事当然就是这样,我拼命地在字里行间寻找故事和人物的更多细节。14岁的塔齐奥的观点是什么?他的故事版本是怎样的?他能意识到人们对他的强烈关注吗?他的美貌和青春有无限的力量吗?在这方面,他像奥斯卡•王尔德笔下的多里安•格雷一样,痛苦地意识到自己迷人的魅力吗?

塔齐奥成年后会怎么样?他会结婚,成家,按照 他那种家庭背景和地位的人应该走的路,没有任何遗憾 或无法实现的愿望过完余生吗?还是他在传统剧本之外 something he won't know he has been searching his whole life for until one unassuming day he spots a perfect beauty, and from then on, is forever consumed by it?

That is to say, ultimately, does the cycle repeat itself with him aging into the ill-stricken gazer?

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live," Joan Didion famously observed. What stories have I been telling myself about that summer? That I was the poor unfortunate intern pounced upon by a monstrous superior? That I was simply the helpless prey, while the soft-spoken litigator was the perfect predatorial archetype, the big bad wolf?

Or is there another version of the story—a version that may be just as compelling, if not more honest? Didn't a part of me then relish it, relish being the object of his fancy? Wasn't I tantalized by the possibility of an intimate mentorship with a smart and successful hot-shot lawyer? If I were to cast him as the wicked wolf, was I not the coy youth who coaxed him with a basket of sweet offerings?

If I follow the breadcrumbs, would they lead me toward the light or deeper into the shadowy woods?

(VI) QUESTIONS as Travelogue

This is the part where I write inspirationally and with platitudes about my courageous transformation:

- —how I used to travel the world feeling isolated, clinging to memories from that summer episode
- —how I used to see the soft-spoken litigator's face in the faces of my subsequent sordid affairs
- —how I used to go on countless long contemplative walks, selfdiscovery road trips, spiritual wellness retreats, soul-searching pilgrimages—how, yes, you better believe it, I've done the work, and then some
- —how after all that, I eventually built up the courage and strength to return to the crime scenes, back

寻求另一种生活?他是否暗自渴望更多的东西,而不是旧的性别剧本和婚姻情节———些他不知道他一生都在寻找的东西,直到有一天他发现了一个完美的爱人,从那时起,他就永远被它吞噬了?

也就是说,最终,这个循环会重复吗?他会变 老,变成病态的凝视者?

琼•迪迪翁(Joan Didion)有句名言: "我们给自己讲故事是为了生活。"关于那个夏天,我为自己讲述了些什么?我作为一个不幸的实习生被一个可怕上司的突然袭击?我只是无助的猎物,而说话温和的诉讼律师是完美的掠食者原型,大灰狼?

或者还有另一个版本的故事——一个可能同样引人注目的版本,如果不是更诚实的话?那时我是不是有点喜欢,喜欢成为他幻想的对象?我是不是很想和一个聪明成功的、炙手可热的律师产生亲密关系呢?如果我把他刻画成恶狼,难道我不是那个用一篮子甜食哄骗他的腼腆少年吗?

如果我跟着面包屑走,它们会带我走向光明、还 是深入幽暗的森林呢?

(II)

作为旅行见闻

我满怀鼓舞, 讲述自己的勇敢转变:

- ——我曾经如何孤独地环游,紧抓住那个夏日插 曲的记忆。
- ——在我后来的肮脏事件中,我如何面对那位轻 声细语的诉讼律师。
- ——我过去是如何进行无数次沉思的散步、自 我发现的公路旅行、精神健康的静修、灵魂探索的朝 圣——是的,你最好相信,我完成过这些事情,还有其

to that law office in Bangkok, back to that beachside resort in Pattaya

- -how I've gone into the belly of the beast
- -how I've come out on the other side
- -how I can move forward now
- -how I found my answers
- —how I am whole again.

 $\begin{array}{c} (VII) \\ QUESTIONS \ as \ Reality \ Check \end{array}$

What if I admit to myself the last part was all a made-up fantasy? What if I admit that I'm still struggling to make sense of the incident, to find any semblance of a resolution?

(VIII) QUESTIONS as Self-Diagnosis

I seek answers from The Source. The All-Knowing Oracle, also known as Google.

"Am I experiencing trauma?" I type into the search bar. The A.I. Oracle spits out the test:

A.I. Oracle: Do you have feelings of shame or guilt? Me: Sometimes. But I'm not sure it's related.

A.I. Oracle: Do you feel fear or terror?

Me: Sometimes. But again, it could just be the pandemic. Or the aftershocks from my big move halfway across the world, not to mention the career transition from law to writing.

A.I. Oracle: Do you often turn inward? Do you get depressed? Me: See above responses.

A.I. Oracle: Do you have any physical symptoms?

Me: Well, my friends tell me I am borderline O.C.D. and a neat freak.

Do those things count?

A.I. Oracle: Do you engage in self-harm?

Me: No. Not physically, anyways. That said, I'm

他。

——在经历了这一切之后,我终于鼓起勇气回到了"犯罪现场",回到了那间律师事务所。

在曼谷,回到芭堤雅的海滨度假胜地:

- ——我是如何进入野兽的肚子里的。
- ——我是如何从另一边走出来的。
- ——我现在应该如何继续前进。
- ——我是如何寻找到答案的。
- ——我再一次获得完整了。

(IIV)

作为现实核查

如果我承认,最后那部分都是虚构的呢?如果说 我还在努力去理解这件事,去寻找任何解决办法呢?

(VIII)

作为自我诊断

我从源头寻求答案。无所不知的先知,也被称为谷歌。

"我在经历创伤吗?"我在搜索栏里输入。

A.I. Oracle甲骨文公司公布测试结果:

A: 你有羞耻感或内疚感吗?

我:有时候。但我不确定这是否相关。

A: 你感到害怕或恐惧吗?

我:有时候。但同样,这可能只是大流行。或者 是我在地球另一端的大迁移带来的余震,更不用说从律 师到作家的职业转变了。

A: 你内向吗? 你会抑郁吗?

obsessed with Hanya Yanagihara's novel, A Little Life, about, among other characters, an asexual lawyer with a horrific history of sexual abuse. The lawyer engages in self-harm almost nightly. The repeated self-cutting sequences are so intense that some deride the book as misery porn. But I find it irresistible. I love sulking in the character's pain, loneliness, and agony. Tell me, what does that say about me?

A.I. Oracle: The results are inconclusive. If you have further questions, seek professional help.

(IX) QUESTIONS as Gossip

The autumn following the internship, I returned to law school in New York to a flurry of whispers. A salacious gossip was fast circulating. A tenured law professor had been caught having an affair with one of his students. I remember feeling a sense of Schadenfreudian relief knowing that my own illicit affair was kept well under wraps while another's had been exposed.

A sampling of snippets from overheard hallway conversations:

Did you hear how she and Prof. E got caught?
I heard another student spotted them on a flight together to Cancun. Is it true she was a pole-dancer back in her hometown in Alaska?

Pole-dancer ... that's code for stripper, isn't it? When did it start, do you think? Was it while she was in his Torts class?

That's what I heard. Wonder if she got an A+! Who do you think made the first move?

Don't know, but I imagine it happening during office hours. What's their age difference?

She's an older student, early 30s? Prof. E. must be in his 60s, maybe 65?

Are they married? Any children?

我: 见上面的回答。

A: 你身体有什么症状吗?

我: 嗯,我的朋友们说我有边缘性强迫症,还有 洁癖。这些算吗?

A: 你会自残吗?

我:没有。无论如何,不是身体上的。也就是说,我痴迷于韩亚柳原的小说《小生活》(A Little Life),这本书讲述的是一个有着可怕性虐待史的无性恋律师。这位律师几乎每晚都会自残。反复出现的自我切割片段如此激烈,以至于有些人认为这本书是痛苦色情片。但我发现它无法抗拒。我喜欢在角色的痛苦、孤独和痛苦中的闷气。告诉我,这说明了什么?

A: 结果是不确定的。如果您还有其他问题,请寻求专业帮助。

(XX)

作为八卦

实习结束后的那个秋天,我回到了纽约法学院,周围议论纷纷。一则淫秽的流言正在迅速流传。一位终身法学教授被发现与他的一个学生有染。我记得,当我知道自己的不正当恋情被保密,而别人的却被曝光时,我感到幸灾乐祸的宽慰。

在走廊偷听到对话:

你听说她和E教授是怎么被发现的吗?

我听说另一个学生在一起飞往坎昆的航班上发现 了他们。

> 她真的在阿拉斯加的家乡跳过钢管舞吗? 钢管舞者......这是脱衣舞娘的代号,对吗? 你觉得是什么时候开始的?是在他的侵权法课上

Not sure ... but wouldn't that be even more scandalous!

What seemed to underlie all the gossipy buzz was a central unspoken query:

Was the affair appropriate?

To litigate this controversy, let me put on my lawyer hat and plead opposing sides of the case:

The Prosecution's Case: Ladies and gentlemen, this was reprehensible! Facts are facts. He's a professor, and she was his student. A gross abuse of power. He should be fired. End of story. Case closed.

The Defense's Rebuttal: Don't rush to judgment, Jurors! You must consider the context. Yes, she was his student, but it was entirely consensual, and she was mature enough to decide for herself. No one was harmed here. Why punish the love between two consenting adults?

Devil's Advocate: Both are culpable! Jointly and severally.

Who judges guilt or innocence? Who should judge?

The jury's still out on this one.

(X) Questions as Polemic

How does the gay male experience fit into the larger cultural campaigns and social movements against sexual misconduct and assault? Does the queer experience necessitate a more nuanced approach? Does the LGBTQ community's hard-fought victory to be who we are and love whom we love mean we also need to accept the ramifications of "free love" taking the good with the bad? How do we reconcile the Me Too movement's parameter-resetting agenda with the queer movement's insistence on sexual liberation, including the right to flirt and flaunt, to hunt and trick, unapologetically and free from judgment, socially,

吗?

这是我听说的。不知道她是不是得了A+!你觉得是谁先主动的?不知道,但我想应该是在上班时间发生的。他们的年龄相差多少?

她是年龄较大的学生,30出头?E教授一定有60 多岁了,或者65岁?

> 他们结婚了吗?有小孩吗? 不确定,但那不是更可耻吗!

所有这些流言蜚语背后似乎都有一个不言而喻的 核心问题:

这件事合适吗?

为了对这一争议进行诉讼,让我以律师的身份为 案件的双方辩护:

控方案例: 女士们, 先生们, 这是应该受到谴责的! 事实就是事实。他是教授, 她是他的学生。严重滥用权力。他应该被解雇。故事结束。案件完结。

辩方反驳:陪审员们,不要着急下结论!你必须 考虑上下文。是的,她是他的学生,但这完全是双方自 愿的,她足够成熟,可以自己做决定。没有人受伤。为 什么要惩罚两个自愿的成年人之间的爱?

魔鬼代言人:两个人都是有罪的!共同的和个别的。

谁来判定有罪或无罪? 谁来评判? 这件事还没有定论。 politically, legally?

When does an act of seduction or casual manhandling go from charming to annoying to traumatic? Is it a matter of trusting the parties involved to plead their respective cases to a reliable and attuned committee of peers? How should their testimonies be weighted? Should the testimony of the alleged perpetrator be severely discounted, as some advocate for? What would be fair? Fair to whom?

Does it matter where the incident occurred, in which city or country, whether some cultures are less strict than others? Does it matter when it occurred, whether it was before or after one's supposed awakening? Do we retroactively arbitrate and penalize past incidents according to present-day standards? Should we deem those standards as enlightened or suffocating?

In a 2019 essay in The Atlantic, writer Spencer Kornhaber explores the tension between queer culture and the Me Too movement. He makes the case for creating a safe gay enclave for open and honest discussion on this thorny topic. Kornhaber writes:

In truth, gay male spaces—physical, digital, cultural—reflect a long and imperfect process of managing what happens when masculinity, homosexuality, and an often hostile wider society intersect. They deserve scrutiny both on their own terms and for what they reveal about the problems that gave rise to #MeToo.

It seems to me that the discourse would benefit from such an intersectional perspective. But are there enough gay men open to having the conversation? Or would they find it a mood killer?

> (XI) QUESTIONS as (Not) a Joke

A lawyer, a journalist, an activist, and a writer walk into a bar. The bartender tells them a story about a recent incident in which he was sexually harassed by a (X)

作为争议性问题

男同性恋者的经历如何融入反对不当性行为和性侵犯的这些更大的文化和社会运动?酷儿体验是否需要更细致的方法?LGBTQ群体在做自己和爱我所爱这一艰苦奋斗的胜利,是否意味着我们也需要接受"自由恋爱"的后果——接受其中的好与坏?我们该如何调和MeToo运动的参数重置议程与酷儿运动对性解放的坚持,包括调情和炫耀、狩猎和欺骗的权利,在社会、政治和法律上毫无道歉,不受评判的权利?

什么时候一个诱惑或随意的粗暴行为,会从迷人变成恼人再变成创伤?这是一个信任有关各方向一个可靠和协调的同行委员会辩护各自案件的问题吗?如何衡量他们的证词?是否应该像一些人主张的那样,严重低估被指控的犯罪者的证词?怎样才是公平的?对谁公平?

事件发生在哪里,在哪个国家或城市,某些文化是否比其他文化更严格,这重要吗?它发生在什么时候,是在一个人所谓的觉醒之前还是之后,这有关系吗?我们是否根据当今的标准对过去的事件进行追溯性的仲裁和处罚?我们应该认为这些标准是开明的还是令人窒息的?

在《大西洋月刊》2019年的一篇文章中,作家斯宾塞•科恩哈伯探讨了酷儿文化和Me Too运动之间的紧张关系。他提出了建立一个安全同性恋飞地的理由,以开放和诚实的态度地讨论这个棘手的话题。科恩哈勃写道:

"事实上,男性同性恋空间——物理的、数字的、文化的——反映了一个漫长而不完美的过程,即当男性气质、同性恋和一个经常充满敌意的更广泛的社

customer and asks for advice on how he should handle it.

The lawyer is the first to jump in with a response: "I'd sue the hell out of 'em! Make 'em pay big time."

The journalist goes next. "I'd write up an explosive expose that reveals the hidden truth about the rampant harassment in the service industry. The press can shine light on social concerns."

The activist stands up, pumps his fist into the air, and says, "I'd urge you to share your story in protest. Channel your rage into political action."

Meanwhile, the writer (who had also been a lawyer, a journalist, and an activist in a past life) was attentively listening and taking copious mental notes.

The bartender turns to ask the writer, "What would you do?"

After a long pause, the writer says, "This would make a fascinating hybrid piece. I'd write about a scenario involving a group of men walking into a bar and being solicited for advice from the bartender, with each customer offering their own take, each thinking their viewpoint is the right one."

The bartender looks puzzled and asks the writer, skeptically, "What's the point in that?"

"Good question. I'm afraid, though, you'll have to wait to read the piece for an answer."

> (XII) QUESTIONS as Redux

How do we go back to the very simplicity of the original notion?

How do we move toward wholeness?

I had two months off for my post-bar trip, that blissful period for all law school graduates between completing the bar exam and starting our respective legal careers. While some of my classmates set off on exotic around-the-world adventures, I chose to return to a familiar place: Bangkok. Or as it's nicknamed, the

会交织在一起时,会发生什么。无论是从它们本身的角度,还是从它们揭示的导致#MeToo运动的问题来看,它们都值得仔细审查。"

在我看来,这种交叉的观点对论述是有益的。但是,有足够多的男同性恋愿意讨论这个话题吗?或者他们会认为这是情绪杀手吗?

(XI)

作为非笑话

一个律师、一个记者、一个激进主义者和一个作家走进一家酒吧。酒保给他们讲了一个他最近被顾客性骚扰的故事,并询问应该如何处理这件事。

律师是第一个跳出来回答:"我会起诉他们!让 他们付出巨大的代价。"

记者接着说。"我会写一篇爆炸性的报道,揭露服务业猖獗性骚扰的隐藏真相。媒体可以报道社会关注的问题。"

激进分子站起来,举起拳头,说: "我强烈要求你分享你的故事,以示抗议。把你的愤怒转化为政治行动。"

与此同时,这位作家(过去曾是律师、记者和活动家)正在专心倾听,并在心里做着大量的笔记。

酒保转身问作家:"你会怎么做?"

过了很长一段时间,作者说:"这将是一部令人 着迷的混合作品。我会写这样一个场景:一群男人走进 酒吧,向酒保寻求建议,每个顾客都有自己的看法,每 个人都认为自己的观点是正确的。"

酒保一脸困惑,怀疑地问作家: "这有什么意义?"

"好问题。不过,恐怕你得等着看这篇文章才能 知道答案。" "Venice of the East"—an allusion not only to the canals and waterways that crisscross the city but also to the romantic mystique from a bygone colonial past.

I had not kept in contact with the soft-spoken litigator during the two intervening years, but upon arriving back in Bangkok, I rang him up and invited him out for a drink. I needed to reconnect, with mixed motivations. Part of me wanted to confront him, to interrogate him, with the vitriol of the abused confronting his abuser. But another part of me sought to know how he was doing, what (and who) was keeping him occupied, with the curiosity of an ex-lover.

We spoke for about two-drinks' worth of time. I recall he asked me to stay for a third drink—"Come on, what's one more?" he said in his deftly soothing tone—but I excused myself and left alone.

Come hell or high water, I repeated to myself that night, I will not let you sweep me away. I will not let your questions get to me. I will not relinquish control of the story.

 $\label{eq:No-come} \mbox{No---come hell or high water, I will have no regrets.}$

(XIII) QUESTIONS as Afterword

All stories must come to an end. I choose to end here, the way memoirs often do: in an afterword. An afterword typically involves a conclusion, a resolution, an attempt to wrap things up once all other words that need to be said have been said. But what if there's more to the story? What if the afterword is only the beginning, a prologue to the next chapter or book? What if the story is never over?

What has all these questions led to? I ask myself. Healing? Growth? Catharsis? I am doubtful; it would be too easy to default to hyperbole. If there is any conclusion to be had, perhaps it is a simple and humble acknowledgement that the hellish path to answers is

(XII) 作为状态容器

我们如何回到最简单的原始概念? 我们如何走向整体?

我有两个月的假期来准备我的律师生涯之旅,这是所有法学院毕业生在完成律师资格考试和开始各自律师职业生涯之间的幸福时光。当我的一些同学开始了充满异国情调的环球冒险之旅时,我选择回到一个熟悉的地方: 曼谷。或者就像它的绰号一样,"东方威尼斯"——这不仅暗示着纵横交错的运河和水道,也暗示着过去殖民时期的浪漫神秘。

在这期间两年里,我没有和这位说话温和的诉讼律师保持联系,但回到曼谷后,我给他打了电话,邀请他出去喝一杯。我思绪纷繁,需要重新产生连接。我的一部分想和他对质,审问他,用受虐者对施虐者的尖酸刻薄。但我的另一部分带着前任情人的好奇心,想知道他在做什么,是什么事(人)占据他。

我们聊了大概两杯酒的时间。我记得他请我留下来喝第三杯——"来吧,再来一杯怎么样?"他用他那熟练的安抚语调说——但我找了个借口,独自离开了。

那天晚上,我反复对自己说,无论发生什么事, 我都不会让你把我带走。我不会让你的问题影响到我。 我不会放弃对这个故事的掌控。

不——无论遇到什么困难,我都不会后悔。

(XIII) 作为后记 often paved with good-intentioned questions: What is a life but a catalogue of questions? What are questions but a means of cataloguing a life?

My reflections, on and off the page, have shown me that there does not appear to be one satisfying way to analyze this incident: it does not settle on a neat script or a coherent narrative, and it defies any recognizable genre or trope. Maybe the valid answers come only when the questions are lived, when they are asked again and again and through multiple lenses. Maybe the memoir can end when, after all the agonizing internal tug-of-war between resurrection and interrogation, the questions are posed and analyzed through varied perspectives until their intense hold on the author begins to diminish.

所有的故事都有结束的时候。我选择在这里结束,就像回忆录经常做的那样:在后记中结束。后记通常包括一个结论,一个决定,试图在所有其他需要说的话都说完了之后结束事情。但如果有更多的故事要讲呢?如果后记只是一个开始,是下一章或下一本书的序幕呢?如果这个故事永远不会结束呢?

所有这些问题指向了什么?我问自己。是治愈吗?是成长吗?是净化吗?我很怀疑:这太容易变成一种夸张。如果要得出什么结论的话,也许只是简单而谦卑地承认,通往答案的地狱之路往往充满了善意的问题:人生不就是一系列问题吗?问题不就是一种记录生活的手段吗?

我在书中和书外的思考告诉我,似乎没有一种令人满意的方式来分析这一事件;它没有一个整洁的脚本或连贯的叙述,它挑战了任何可识别的类型或修辞。只有当问题是活的,当它们通过多个镜头、一遍又一遍地提问时,有效的答案也许才能浮现。在经历了起死回生和询问之间的痛苦拉锯战之后,这些问题通过不同的视角被提出和分析,直到它们对作者的强烈影响开始减弱,也许回忆录可以在这样一个时刻结束。

Translator's Note

An intimate history.

That is how Chen Yubing (陈雨冰) described her piece to me during our first conversation. It is this duality of purpose—this tender familial treatment paired with a historical mode of exploration—that guided my translation of Chen's narrative essay, "She Shall Not Be Forgotten" (她不会被遮盖). An homage to her living grandmother, Yang Qiaoyun (杨巧云), it is both a story about a "very ordinary woman" and a profoundly extraordinary tale. Yang's is a life well lived, and the piece explores her domestic roles, as daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother; and just as important, her professional and public roles, as student, rural worker, seamstress, factory worker, performer, and storyteller.

Spanning seven decades, the essay traverses an expansive landscape of emotions, including struggle, humiliation, love, and contentment. Perhaps the most striking aspect—and one I have sought to render with care and respect—is its integration of multiple voices, including transcriptions of conversations with the author's grandmother and grandfather. Taken together, the interplay of these voices breaks open the narrative into a multi-generational dialogue.

On a personal note, Chen's essay speaks to my own attempts to record my grandmother's story. Several years ago, on a road trip with my grandmother and my mother, I interviewed my grandmother about her life, from birth to marriage to child-rearing to grandchild-rearing. As a new writer, I had hoped to collect the necessary fragments to give voice and do justice to her story. She passed away last year, and I never had the opportunity to show her my writings. In this regard, not only has Chen's work served as a craft mentor text for me, it also functions as a reminder of the exigence of archival storytelling—the work of collecting,

narrating, and translating these extraordinary, ordinary conversations. $\,$

陈雨冰

她不会被遮盖

"回想起来,这一担尿,使我终身难忘,这一担 尿也使我认识到了生活的艰辛、农民的不易。也使我体 会到了人生不可能是一帆风顺的。"原城中初66(2) 班的同学杨巧云在《知青岁月》的合集中这样描述当时 在生产队工作的情景。

对于一位即将迈步八十岁、经历过文化革命和上山下乡并且没有上过高中的女性来说,写作无疑是一件困难的事,但杨巧云却完成了这一任务,将那些逝去的岁月变成不可磨灭的铅字,留存在一页页纸张和读者的心尖。

1949年8月25日,杨巧云出生于一个地主家庭,名头上说是地主,可又算不上什么赫赫有名的角色,不过是较他人有几分投资眼光和财富积淀而已,可这对于头上已经有一位哥哥和一位姐姐的杨巧云来说,并不是什么幸事。她是家里最小的孩子,并且还是女孩。那时的社会还是重男轻女的,每一个家庭对于新生儿都抱有"是儿子"的期望,企图以这样的方式为家族延续香火、传宗接代,可想而知她在家庭中的地位和状况。除了她的母亲以外,她是并不被家庭重视且处处受挫的。她的母亲并没有因为她是女孩而区别对待她,而是十分耐心地爱护指导她,尤其重视她的教育问题,也使得杨巧云接受了很好的小学和初中教育。

translated from the chinese by WALLY SUPHAP

SHE SHALL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

[Carrying those pails of uurine to the old station is something I will never forget. In retrospect, that incident made me appreciate life's hardships and the difficulties farmers endure. It also made me realize we can't expect life to be all smooth sailing.]

This is how Yang Qiaoyun, a Class of 1970 alumna of Yuan Cheng Junior High, described her time spent working in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution in her memoir, *Educated Youth Years*.

For a near octogenarian who had lived through the Cultural Revolution, was sent to the countryside, and never attended high school, writing was no doubt a difficult task. However, Yang not only completed the memoir but did so with care and tenderness, archiving those bygone years in moving prose.

Yang Qiaoyun was born on August 25, 1949 into a "landowning family." At least that was their official designation. They were middle-class, not a particularly wealthy or otherwise prominent family. The youngest of three, with an older brother and sister, Yang was deemed unextraordinary: not only was she the youngest, she was a girl. Prevailing societal standards valued sons over daughters, and every family hoped for male heirs to pass down their lineage—to carry on the incense, as was said. However, from early on, her mother recognized her true worth and refused to treat her differently just because of her gender. In fact, she cared for and guided her lovingly and patiently, taking care to attend to her education, enabling Yang to receive a junior high diploma.

上山下乡的知青岁月



"我家是地主出身,在那个年代是低人三等的,一辈子抬不起头。因此,从小也养成了我逆来顺受的性格,不敢反叛,知道反叛没有任何意义,因为你的出身决定了你不可能是对的。"1969年1月4日,那个年代涌动着上山下乡、报效国家的热潮,杨巧云也响应党和国家的政策来到了水道河乡的上湾大堆王村小队。因地主出生的缘故,能够得到上山下乡的机会也实属幸运,她心里不仅珍惜在当时被略微照顾的身份条件,也时不时忐忑于未知的道路前景,与几个同学默默地承受着下乡的辛苦劳作。水道河乡的人民都十分淳朴,队伍组织的伙伴也同情善良,但她总还是不敢张扬。

"我兄妹三人,我最小,哥哥、姐姐都在外地读书,就我和母亲相依为命,我一下乡,家里就剩母亲一个人,非常孤单,使我很担心。"杨巧云兄妹三人,哥哥在兰州大学物理系读书,姐姐在宝鸡卫校学习,而她却在一个山沟里劳作。这其间不仅有时代社会的原因,还有命运机会的力量,即使她并不擅长且喜爱学习,但

The Re-Education Years in the Countryside

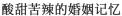


\[\text{We belonged to the landowning class. This categorization put us in a precarious position given the land rights movement at the time. That's why from a young age I learned to obey the rules, never daring to rebel. I was raised to believe that rebellion was meaningless, that birth predetermined your fate. \]

On January 4, 1969, amid a growing surge of rural migration with urban youths relocating to the countryside to serve the country according to the policies of the Party and the State, Yang Qiaoyun arrived at Shangwan Daduiwan Village in Shuidaohe Township. She was grateful for the livable conditions that her family was afforded back in the city; meanwhile, she was secretly worried about her unknown future in the fields alongside her compatriots. Fortunately, the people of Shuidaohe Township were friendly and humble, while her brigade peers were similarly sympathetic and kind. Even so, she knew not to stand out.

I am the youngest of three children. My brother and sister were studying elsewhere, only my mother and I remained at home. When I was sent to the countryside, my 还是对自己未能接受高中教育耿耿于怀。尤其是在如此青涩的时期离开熟悉的家庭和地区,且最爱的母亲在她下乡之后的不长时间便受到"不在城里吃闲饭"的热浪,被列为下放农村的对象。那时候的她暗暗下定决心:只要母亲平安,到哪里她都要和母亲在一起,于是她悄悄离开她下乡的农村,与母亲一同被下放在村涧大队。

"就这样艰难地走着,走到老车站时,突然担绳断了,尿也倒光了,另一只桶也摔得稍微轻一些,墩在地上,洒了一些。碰到这种情况,真的不知道如何是好,大姑娘急得两眼直掉泪,还不好意思大声哭。"杨巧云与母亲一同被下放的村涧属于城郊,条件较好,但那个年代肥料短缺,城郊的生产队所上的农家肥大都是从城里运回,生产队负责给那些提供农家肥的单位打扫厕卫生,一举两得。当她这次去背街广播站担尿的时候,便遇上了这样的情况,因着自己从小逆来顺受且不怕吃苦的性子,她慢慢地重新绑好了担绳,将一桶尿分成两桶,伤心欲绝也坚决地将尿担回了生产队,上到了生产队的田地里,回家之后才狠狠地大哭了一场。





mother was left alone. I couldn't help but grow concerned for her. \mid

While Yang Qiaoyun worked in the fields, her brother was studying physics at Lanzhou University, and her sister was enrolled in Baoji Nursing School. Later, upon reflection, Yang realized her path in life was not necessarily predetermined by the times or societal factors; in truth, forces akin to fate and opportunity also played a role. Even though she wasn't a particularly good or eager student, she regretted not having completed high school. Shortly after she went to the countryside, her mother was also enlisted to perform manual labor in the outskirts, heeding the pro-rural trend, "Don't eat the bread of idleness in the city." Yang Qiaoyun made a pact with herself that she would accompany her mother wherever she went. Filled with this determination, she left her brigade in the countryside without telling anyone, and followed her mother who was dispatched to Hejian village.

\[\int And this is one of my most upsetting and humiliating incidents: One day, as I was carrying two pails of urine to the old station, the rope suddenly snapped. You should have seen it, urine from the pails splattered everywhere. I was at a complete loss and utterly distressed—on the verge of tears, really—but I was too embarrassed to cry. \]

The village Yang Qiaoyun and her mother had been sent to was on the outskirts, where conditions were better. But there was a shortage of natural fertilizer, and much of the fertilizer the brigade required had to be shipped in. A deal was struck with another brigade: Her brigade would help clean the other brigade's toilets in exchange for a supply of fertilizer. A win-win situation. Yang Qiaoyun was tasked with cleaning the toilets and transporting the urine to the old station, and that's when the incident occurred. Thanks to the level-headed disposition she had developed, she remained calm throughout the ordeal, efficiently mending the rope on

"那时候大家都没有心眼儿,看顺眼了就在一起。"在提及她与陈维旭的恋爱经历时,杨巧云顿时将说起了并不熟练运用的普通话,面颊上也显出几道淡淡的红晕。杨巧云和陈维旭二人是相亲认识的,陈维旭的家庭条件虽然一般,但陈维旭的母亲在当时有很好的名声,在杨巧云听说见面对象是她的儿子的时候,也不免生出了几分期待。杨巧云对陈维旭的第一印象便是个"稻树杆",有将近一米八的个头以及并不健壮的身材,较为文静俊朗的长相也很亮眼。更巧妙的是,陈维旭和杨巧云两人都经历了上山下乡这一重大过程,只不过一个在北边的板桥、另一个在南边的杨斜,算是八竿子都打不着;可没承想,返乡之后二人竟产生了这样的交集,在得到双方父母认可后便于1974年4月正式登记结婚。

"我们可不是超生,是场里给了生育指标之后才决定生第二个孩子的。"面对是否遭遇计划生育的怀疑,杨巧云连忙表示自己的生育情况都是合乎国家标准与规范的。重男轻女的观念在当时依旧十分盛行,她生下了大儿子之后,算得上是完成了家庭的任务与使命,原本应该是大松一口气的,但却在被通知拥有一个生育指标之后决定再生一个孩子,无论男女。她觉得养孩子虽然辛苦难捱但总有出头之日,两个孩子不仅可以相互陪伴,更是能使得家庭更圆满幸福一些,便毅然地生下了第二个孩子,又是一个儿子。家庭的负担一下变大,幸好她母亲在这个时候也总是帮衬着她,分担很多家务和事情;在照顾好家庭的同时,她在印刷厂工作也十分辛勤,深受大家的一致好评。

"上课后老师要每人写一篇作文,记人记事皆可,我就写了我妻子的勤劳贤良,是我上人大的最大的动力和保障,还写了一副对联,是:地球离了谁都转,家里没有云不行。"她的丈夫也忍不住说道,他在36岁

the pole and redistributing the remaining urine among the two pails. Despite her distress, she transported the pails safely back to the station. She never forgot that day nor how it ended: how that night, once she was alone in her bunk, she burst into tears.

Sentimental and Bittersweet Memories of Marriage



 \lceil In those days, people weren't so fussy. You simply got together with someone as soon as a fondness developed. \rfloor

When recounting her courtship and romance with her husband Chen Weixu, Yang Qiaoyun switched to Putonghua, a dialect she was less proficient in. Her face would become flushed with faint streaks of red. The two had been introduced by a matchmaker. Although Chen Weixu came from an ordinary family, his mother was a socialite of local repute. When Yang Qiaoyun received news she was to meet the son of this socialite, she couldn't help but feel a surge of trepidation. Her first impression was that he looked like a tall bamboo stalk. At almost 1.8 meters in height, he sported a slender frame. His reserved, handsome appearance was striking. Their meeting defied the odds: while they had gone

时参加了全国首次成人高考并成功被中国人民大学录取,当时杨巧云在工厂工作,两个孩子都正在上学,十分需要各个家庭成员的支持和陪伴。当时有很多人不主张陈维旭带薪上学,但杨巧云这次却拿定主意,大力支持自己的丈夫去学府深造。丈夫离开家后,杨巧云一人扛起了家庭的重担:毕竟丈夫离自己太过遥远,平日里本就紧巴的生活费在此阶段更显得微薄,除了省吃俭用,她也额外地替别人干些针线活补贴家用。说起当时一个月的工资要掰成两个月花,儿子生病脑痛也得小心翼翼地藏着瞒着,甚至她们娘三个去北京时候、一个月一家人只用了一千五等等琐事,她的眼眶边闪着点点泪花儿。



风风火火的老年时光

"不要再说你怀念青龙寺的时光了,那些事儿总 提来提去有什么意思。我们俩就应该安安心心地过好现 在的生活。"听到她有几分责怪却不失温柔的娇嗔语 气,丈夫的面容轮廓一下变得柔和了不少,想必总还是 一物降一物的。老年本应该是收获和享受的最佳时刻, through the same countryside re-education program, he was stationed in Banqiao in the north and she was in Yangxie in the south—which might as well have been on opposite sides of the earth. No one could have predicted that their paths would cross after they returned home from their posts. With the blessing of their respective families, the couple married in April 1974.

 \lceil We did not violate the policy. We decided to have a second child after receiving the necessary approvals. \rfloor

Fearing concerns about whether they were violating family planning laws, Yang Qiaoyun sought confirmation that her plan to have a second child was in line with state rules. Male heirs was the prevailing preference; only after giving birth to a son could a wife be regarded as completing her family's mission. That her first child was, in fact, a son should have been a great relief. However, she decided she would have a second child, regardless of gender. Although raising two children would be difficult, she wanted her son to have a companion; she also hoped that the second child would make her family somehow more abundant and complete. And so, she gave birth to a second child, and it was another son. The burden of the family grew, but fortunately, her mother provided a helping hand, sharing in the housework and running errands. Yang Qiaoyun also got a job at a printing factory, where she worked hard and, not surprisingly, was well liked by everyone.

After class, the teacher asked everyone to write an essay, about someone or something, I wrote about my wife's hard work and virtues, which are the biggest driving force behind my decision to study at Renmin University. I also wrote a couplet poem: "The earth rotates without anyone; the home stops without Qiaoyun."

Chen Weixu took the country's first adult college entrance examination at the age of thirty-six, and was admitted to Renmin University. Despite the opinions of detractors, Yang Qiaoyun fiercely supported

他们夫妻二人却选择了帮助大儿子照看需要在外求学的孙女,来到很是陌生的城市——西安陪读。他的丈夫原本心中并没有那么乐意离开家乡,可她却在与丈夫的几番沟通之后立马做出实际行动:不仅去常光顾的理发店烫染了一个栗色的卷发、买了几身亮丽的衣服,也着手准备去别处定居的各种资料物品,丈夫无可奈何却又不由地被她的热情与举动感染,看似是半推半就实则心服口服地同意了。但有趣的是,后来每每提及陪读经历的总是丈夫而不是她。

"我其实一直不太喜欢跟人一起唱歌跳舞,但是架不住他的请求,也是看着那些姐姐妹妹们都参加了,我也咬咬牙,索性去了。"人老了之后总会要有些兴趣爱好的,她也不例外,但她总还是胆怯在众人面前展现自己,特别是另外需要的梳妆打扮就更考验勇气,她便选择了合唱,这个普遍且并不张扬的项目:第一次上台时,她像是十八岁的大姑娘般忐忑紧张,在后台不停地转来转去又急切地东张西望,一边想跟熟人聊天,一边又耐不住性子乱蹦乱跳;到真正上台的时候,气力也已经花费了大半,但也就逐渐地适应并喜爱上了;到后来便慢慢变得游刃有余了,甚至还有人笑称要选她做合唱团的长呢。她也总是与丈夫准时参加合唱团的训练排演,会向自己的儿女们炫耀显摆自己的服饰妆容,不厌其烦地在每次活动之后上传无数张并不清晰的合照。

当聊到写书这件事儿时,原本健谈的她却突然变得沉默了,这其间的缘故无从得知。"其实我不会写书,这些文章也并非是我一人的手笔,我的丈夫帮助我完成了很大一部分,好处也应当由他来获得。非要说我厉害,我是承受不住的。更别说要写人物传记,应该要采访我的丈夫才对,毕竟他读过大学、当过领导、出过书,有好多可以写的事儿。我只是一个普通的女人,没有你想象中的伟大。说这些家长里短、鸡毛蒜皮的事

her husband's decision to return to school as an adult, vowing to do what she could to care for her family. After her husband left, Yang Qiaoyun took charge of the household. On top of her job at the printing factory, she supplemented her income by accepting freelance sewing jobs. Though the family essentially lived from paycheck to paycheck, she took care not to burden her husband. She went so far as to cover up her sons' illnesses so as not to distract him from his studies. Always penny-wise, she was able to manage on a spending budget of only RMB 1,500 a month. Still, she occasionally found opportunities to treat her sons, such as organizing a family trip to Beijing. As she spoke about those trying times, her eyes teared up.



Later Years in Wind and Fire

☐ Stop saying that you miss those times at Green Dragon Temple. What's the use of reminiscing about the past? We should live out the rest of our days in peace. ☐

Yang Qiaoyun would tell her husband this in an exaggerated, girlish tone. It was a tone that always worked to calm him down, and his face would invariably 儿,有什么意思。"话语中潜藏着她,一半自卑一半自信的,一半迷糊一半清醒,一半捣乱一半理性的她。

最后的最后,像是经过最最艰苦卓绝地斗争般, 她无比真诚且郑重地拿出她很久之前写下(应该是经过 丈夫润色修改)的文字,示意我无论如何一定要将这段 放在结尾:

"天下所有父母对儿女的爱是无条件的,是不求回报的,她只希望儿女们首先要自立于社会,具有较强的生存能力,其次是有所发展,在自身发展的同时为社会做出贡献,为人处世要有爱心,要宽容、要大气。牢记勤能补拙。不管是发展还是生存,勤奋、坚韧不拔是最最重要的。热爱生命,热爱生活,勤奋努力,抓住机遇,自身发展,服务社会。"

她很普通,也很平凡,但是一定不会被遮盖,起 码在这短短的几千字里。 soften. Despite their best intentions to relax and enjoy old age, they couldn't help uprooting their lives once again to follow their eldest son and his family to Xi'an, where their granddaughter, Chen Yubing, was pursuing graduate studies. They were both unfamiliar with Xi'an, and while at first her husband resisted, Yang Qiaoyun sprang into action to get ready for the move. She visited her usual salon to perm and dye her hair chestnut brown and purchased a new brightly-colored wardrobe, among making other preparations they'd need to settle into a new place. Her husband was so moved by her enthusiasm and her preparations that in the end, despite half-reservations, he agreed to the move. He knew there was no alternative. What's interesting is that later, he'd be the one who would fondly bring up stories of those times.

 $\lceil I$ used not to enjoy singing and dancing, but I couldn't refuse when my husband asked me to join him. And seeing all my girlfriends participating, my jiejie and meimei, I just made up my mind and went for it. \rfloor

They say when you're old, it's good to have interests and hobbies; that proved to be true for Yang Qiaoyun. Not to say it wasn't difficult at first. She was timid, nervous about performing before an audience, and she didn't enjoy putting on make-up or dressing up. At the start, she chose a part in the ensemble, so as not to draw attention to herself. Even surrounded by others, she felt as anxious as an eighteen-year-old girl. She couldn't talk to her friends though she wanted to, and she fidgeted, paced up and down, and kept glancing offstage. Performing drained her energy. But gradually she relaxed into it and ended up thoroughly enjoying it. Without fail, she would arrive right on time with her husband to rehearsals. She even got into the habit of sharing group photos with her family and friends of her performing in full make-up and costume. Later, they would joke that they could imagine her leading the chorus.

When she first had the idea to write a book and share her story, she found herself tongue-tied, her

habitual loquacity notwithstanding. The fact of the matter is, I can't write. These words are not my own. At least not completely. My husband helped me complete a large part of them. Most of the credit should go to him. I can't stand it when someone insists on saying that I have done a great job. Perhaps instead of writing my biography, you should actually interview him. After all, he's the one who went to college, became a community leader, wrote a book, and has a lot of things to say. I'm just an ordinary woman. Nothing special. Who would want to read about neighborhood gossip and everyday life? In part, she was hiding behind her words—half bashful and half brash, by turns subdued and animated.

Finally, as if she had been waiting for this moment all her long and arduous life, she solemnly handed me the recently salvaged writings she had composed long ago, in collaboration with her husband. She instructed her granddaughter to end her story like this:

The love of every parent in the world for their children and grandchildren is unconditional, given with no expectation of anything in return. We hope only that our children and grandchildren will be self-reliant and continue to grow and develop, while contributing to their communities in their own way, to offer the world love, tolerance, and generosity. Remember this: hard work and perseverance are the most important traits and can make up for many things. Put another way, diligence is the means by which one can make up for other weaknesses. Love your life, love living, work hard, seize opportunities, better yourself, and serve your community.

Indeed, she is so very common, so very unextraordinary, but she shall not be forgotten. Her legacy shall live on at least through these few thousand words.

译者注

丽丽的散文就像一幅70年代中国北方农村生活 的风俗画,里面有着大量真实、生动的生活细节,在早 已被城市生活驯化的现代人眼里看来,有些细节甚至 会稍显粗俗或荒诞不经,但充满了原始的生命力和烟 火气。

翻译这篇散文的过程如同坐了一趟时光机去旅行,有些场景和我自己的童年经历似曾相识,有些的确是素未谋面。养猪、喂鸡、堆肥、煤油灯、土炕……这些从长辈口中或影视剧里听来的生活,以更细致的笔触出现在了丽丽的散文中,使脑海中朦胧的印象和概念了有了更为具象的呈现。

这篇用英文写成的散文记叙的是中国本土的故事,所以翻译起来也是较为顺畅的(相信丽丽写作的过程可能较我翻译的过程更为艰辛)。在原作中,丽丽预想的读者是不太熟悉中国文化和政治语境的英语母语者,所以她有时会在行文中加入一两句对某些既定的汉语用词和中国文化概念的解释,以便读者更好地理解故事发生的语境,这些对于中文读者是不太需要的,我会选择删去。对于中国60、70年代在农村实行的公社、公田和公分相关的政策,考虑到很多中国年轻的读者也不太熟悉,需要详细解释,我便采用了在全文后加注释的形式。

原文中,由于英文可以采用好几个从句嵌套的句式,所以经常会出现很长的句子,比如:

"Suddenly, my mother's right hand, which was stirring the grass and leaves in the stove with the iron stick, reached across the threshold, grabbed my book and threw it so hard that it dropped at the other end of the yard, at the foot of the front wall near where the pile of the chicken droppings were in the winter."

这样层层叠叠的长句如果直译成中文,将会变得非常死板且冗长,所以我一般会采用适当拆分句子并重组句子结构的方式,把长句变为节奏变化更多的几个短句:

"突然,妈妈的右手伸过了门槛。那只刚刚还 拿着火钳搅动灶膛里的柴火的手,现在用力抓起了我的 书,使劲一扔,书掉落在了院子另一头的墙角处,正靠 近冬天堆满鸡粪的地方。"

翻译丽丽的散文对于我来说是一次愉快且充满惊喜的尝试,它让我开始认真思考两种语言中间的那些 裂缝该如何填补,如何将原作中的某种语气、声音、隐含的情绪通过另一种语言的纯文本的方式传递给读者。通过这次的项目,我产生了翻译更多英文作品的渴望和信心。希望未来我还能有机会成为两种语言中的一座 桥梁。

LILI LUO

BOOK EATING (AN EXCERPT)

I remember it was the summer in 1973. I was nine.

My mom was cooking. Most of the time in her life, my mother is cooking.

She was sitting on a small wooden stool in front of the mouth of the dirty east brick stove in the kitchen. The top of her head was at the level of the counter of the stove. There were two stoves in the kitchen facing each other. On the left side of the counter, there was a white ceramic washing pan with a sorghum brush in it. My mother used that washing pan to wash dishes and vegetables, and make dough for buns or dumplings. On the right side, there was a soy sauce bottle, a vinegar bottle, a peanut oil bottle and a salt jar. Underneath this part was the "firewood hole," a small space between the inner wall of the house and the stove for storing dried wild mountain grass, tree leaves or grain stalks. Everyday, before cooking, my mother carried "firewood" from the pile in the yard and filled the" firewood hole." It needed to burn a big pile of firewood to cook one meal but there was not enough space in front of the stove. When she cooked, she kept pulling "firewood" out from the "firewood hole" to the front of the stove using the small hook at the front of the iron fire stick.

I was doing my homework, kneeling on the bottom level of the three-steps stone stairs that was

翻译:

吃书 (节选)

记得那是1973年的夏天,那年我九岁。

妈妈正在厨房做饭。在我的记忆里,她一生中绝大多数时间都在做饭。

她坐在厨房里的一张小木凳上,正对着柴火灶的 灶口,砌灶的砖块脏兮兮的落满了灰。妈妈的头顶正好 与灶台的高度齐平。厨房里,砌着两个一模一样的炉 灶,相对而立。炉灶台面左侧是一个白色陶瓷洗菜盆, 里边放着一把高粱刷。妈妈不仅会用这个盆洗菜,有时 还会在里面揉面团,做包子或饺子。台面右边是酱油、 醋、花生油和一个盐罐。正下方有一个"柴火洞",这 是房子内墙和炉灶之间的一个小空间,用来储存干草、 树叶和谷杆。每天做饭前,妈妈都会从堆放在院子里的 柴火中拿出一些,填满厨房里的"柴火洞"。做一顿饭 需要烧掉一大堆的柴火,但是厨房窄小,炉灶前边没有 足够的空间,所以做饭时,妈妈会用前端带钩的铁制火 钳不断把"柴火洞"里的燃烧物拉到炉子前边。

我常常会跪在厨房木质门槛儿处的三层台阶的最低一层做作业,把最高一级台阶当作书桌。上台阶进厨房,两侧的灶炉的后边各有一间卧室,由墙和门隔开,每间卧室里都有一个炕——一个泥砖砌成的平台,内部与灶炉相通,能保存做饭时产生的热量。平日里为了节

below the wooden threshold of the kitchen door, which also served as the entrance to the house, and using the top level as if it was a desk. The kitchen was in the middle of the house with two brick stoves facing each other. There was one bedroom on each side of the kitchen, separated by a wall and a door, and in each bedroom, there was a kang, a mud-brick platform, with its inside connected with the cooking pit to retain the heat from cooking. Most of the time, my mother used the east stove. In winter, it was for saving "firewood." There were not enough blankets, we all slept on the east kang. Only using the east stove would make the east kang warm. My father was away working as an electrician on a cargo ship and most of his yearly two months home visit fell in the summer. In summer, my sister and I, and sometimes my maternal grandmother, when she stayed with us, slept on the west kang. My mother most of the time still cooked using the east stove to leave the west kang cool. My mother gave us everything that she thought was the best for us. Even now.

I still see my mother's left hand was pulling the bellows, and her right hand kept adding "firewood" to the stove mouth and stirring the fire from time to time with the iron fire stick. Her arms were thin and withered, and her hands bony and gnarled with blue veins. Her yellowed white cotton short sleeve shirt with little black checkers on it was dirty. Ashes carried by smoke coming out of the stove mouth were flowing in the kitchen, dropped on her body, and stuck on her shirt by her sweat. My mother, cooking in front of the stove, is a forever image of my childhood. After marrying my father, my mother pulled the bellows three times a day for a quarter of a century until my family moved to the city in late 1988. Then she has been standing next to a gas stove for over thirty years now.

We didn't have a desk in the house. My carpenter paternal grandpa, who was living next door with my

省柴火,妈妈只用东边的炉子。到了冬天,被子不够, 大家只能挤着睡在东边的炕上,做饭时东边的灶膛烧得 旺,把炕也烧得暖烘烘的。爸爸是电工,在外地的货轮 上工作,每年只有两个月的探亲假,大多都在夏天,所 以到了夏天,我和妹妹,有时还有姥姥,就会换到西边 屋里的炕上睡觉。夏天闷热,妈妈为了让让西边的炕凉 快些,依旧用东边的灶炉做饭。无论什么时候,妈妈 都把她认为最好的东西给了我们。到了现在,也依旧 如此。

直到现在我还能清晰看到这样的场景:妈妈的左手拉着风箱,右手不断往灶膛里添着柴火,时不时拿起火钳翻动一下,让火烧得更旺;她的手臂瘦弱,皮肤上遍布皱纹,双手的指关节突出,青筋暴突;大量灰烬随着灶炉里冒出的烟弥漫在厨房里,落在妈妈身上,渗进汗水里,黏在她的衣服上,弄脏了那件带黑色小格子的、发黄的白色棉质短袖衬衫。在柴火灶前做饭的妈妈,是我童年时期永远无法忘却的一个画面。和我爸爸结婚后,妈妈每天都要拉三次风箱,持续了四分之一个世纪,直到1988年底我们全家搬到城里,通了煤气,她又一直站在煤气灶旁,至今已有三十年了。

我小时候家里没有书桌,只有一张爷爷给我们做的餐桌。他是个木匠,和我奶奶、叔叔还有姑姑们住在隔壁。那张餐桌是用白杨木做的,高度和咖啡桌差不多,我们戏称它为"饭桌",旁边放着爷爷给我们做的小木凳。但是我不喜欢在饭桌上做作业,桌子太矮,没一会儿我就开始腰酸背痛,所以我还是偏爱石阶。冬天,我们在东边卧室热乎乎的炕上吃饭,食物装在一个木盘里,大家都盘腿坐在炕上。我就跪在炕沿边,弯着腰趴在炕旁的梳妆台上做作业。当我还住在中国北方农

grandma and my father's younger siblings, made us a dining table with the height of a coffee table using a piece of poplar wood. We called it "food table." My grandpa also made us small wooden stools. I didn't like to do homework on the food table, because I had to bend my body too much and it made my back hurt a lot after only a short while. I would rather use the stone stairs. In winter, we ate on the kang in the east bedroom, the warmest place in the house. Food was served in a wooden tray and everyone sat cross-legged on the kang. I did my homework by kneeling on the edge of the kang and bending over the dresser which stood next to the kang. In the old time when I lived there in that village in northern China, for most families, the east bedroom usually served also as the family's main room. Guests were received in this room. In spring and fall, we ate at the food table in the kitchen, but I still did my homework using the kang and dresser. The oil lamp was on the dresser, and it was dim so that my face had to be very close to it. The next morning, the booger I cleaned from my nose was black. In summer, the kitchen would be too hot after cooking, so we always ate in the yard if it was not raining, though there were always mosquitoes, flies and the smell of the pigpen on the west side of the yard and chicken coop on the east. During the day, the chickens free-walked in the yard and their droppings were everywhere.

I was in third grade. There was no kindergarten or daycare in the village, and the age for entering school in first grade was eight. My mother felt I was "too naughty," and out of her control. "She doesn't behave like a girl. She climbs up trees and rooftops, and goes to the river to catch fish by hand with the boys. When she is home, she upsets and even hits her younger siblings." I often heard her complaining to the women in my neighborhood. She asked the village elementary school principal to let me enter first grade when I was seven.

"She was a handful. Please take her in and discipline her for me." She begged the principal, a middle

村的时候,大多数家庭会把东边的卧室当作主要功能房间,客人来了也是在这间屋招待。春秋两季,我们会在厨房的餐桌上吃饭,但到了做作业的时候,我还是会回到炕上,在梳妆台上写。梳妆台上的煤油灯里点着幽幽火光,灯光昏暗,我的脸紧挨着油灯,就连第二天从鼻孔里清理出来的鼻屎都是黑的。到了夏天,暑热难耐,煮完饭之后厨房更是闷得像个烤炉,所以只要不下雨,我们就会在屋前的院子里吃饭。院子的西边是苍蝇、蚊子乱飞的臭烘烘的猪圈,东边是鸡舍。白天,鸡会在院儿里悠闲地散步,留下一地鸡粪。

1973年,九岁的我正上小学三年级,那时村里还没有幼儿园或托儿所,八岁是最早的小学入学年龄。但妈妈觉得我太调皮了,根本管不住,所以找到当时村小的校长,请求他让我七岁提早上学。平日里我常常听见她跟邻居抱怨: "你看她这样,哪儿像个女孩?爬树、攀屋顶、和那帮男孩一起到河里抓鱼……她在家里要是不高兴了还会打她的弟弟妹妹呢!"

"她真的太让人头疼了校长,你让她早点入学吧,帮我管教管教她。"妈妈到校长办公室央求他。校长是一个有着圆眼睛、大眼袋的中年男人,我们都叫他"金鱼眼",他的办公室就在我们村儿西南面排屋的一个小房间里。

"好心帮帮我吧,大哥。"妈妈哀求道,"你完全不用担心她被欺负,她很倔强,能说会道,天不怕地不怕,根本不会怕那些比她大的孩子。她爸基本上都不在家,我一个人带孩子太难了。如果她能去上学,我就能轻松一点。她比那个两个小的加起来还难对付,我的确是没辙了。你看看,第四个孩子又快要出生了。"我

aged man whom we kids called "gold-fish-eyes," because he had big and round eyes with big eye bags underneath, in his office, a small room of the row house at the south west end of our village,

"She is small." He took a look at me, and said to my mother. "Other kids are at least eight years old, and some of them are even nine or ten. You don't want her to get bullied."

"Please help me, big brother," She begged. He and my father belonged to the same generation, though with different last names. "Don't worry about her getting bullied. She is very strong willed and sharp tongued. She is not even afraid of heaven and earth, let alone kids older than her. Her father is hardly home. It is so difficult to take care of the kids by myself. If she goes to school, my stress would be a little less. She is more trouble than the younger two added together. I really can't do anything about her at home. See, the fourth one is coming soon." My mother looked down at her pregnant stomach and pushed me forward from her back with one hand. I stood between her and the man, fixing my eyes on the dirt ground in front of my feet.

"Look up when grown ups talk to you." My mother ordered me.

I lifted my head, and saw there was something whitish covering the man's two big gold-fish-eyes, like two glass balls covered by dust. I wondered if he could see me clearly. The man took a look at me and said to my mother, "she looks smart! Look at her eyeballs! They are turning this way and that. Kids whose eyeballs move more are usually smart, because they think a lot in their heads. Eyes and brains are connected."

"She indeed is not dumb. She can read a lot of words already." My mom said proudly. She had taught me to read some words on the old newspapers she used as wall papers on the bedroom walls. Villagers stuck old newspapers on their mud brick walls using paste made by boiling water and wheat flour.

"But if she misbehaves, I will send her back."

妈妈低头看了看她隆起的肚子,把我从她身后推到前 头。我站在她和那个男人之间,目光紧紧盯着我脚下的 地面。

"抬起头来!长辈跟你说话的时候要把头抬起来!"妈妈命令我。

我抬起头,看到男人两只大大的金鱼眼上有层白东西,就像两颗蒙了尘的玻璃球。我怀疑他是否能看得清我。男人看看我,然后对我妈妈说:"她长了一副机灵样儿,看她那双的眼珠子!它们滴溜溜地转得可快了。眼珠子转得快的孩子通常都很聪明,因为他们脑子里想的事儿多,眼睛和大脑是相连的。"

"她确实不笨,她已经能看很多字儿了。"妈妈 骄傲地说。她已经用贴在卧室墙面上做墙纸的报纸教我 认过一些字儿,村里人都会用煮沸的水和面粉混合做的 浆糊把旧报纸粘在土砖墙上当墙纸。

"但如果她不守规矩,我就把她送回去。"金鱼 眼说。

"当然,当然!"妈妈急急忙忙应道,似乎担心他会改变主意,"大哥,太谢谢你了,你帮了我大忙了!"

就这样,我成了我们年级四个班,一百多号学生 里年龄最小,个头也最小的学生。

我爸爸一年到头只在家里待几个星期,就算他在家,我妈也不会让他做太多家务。"你爸辛辛苦苦工作

The gold-fish-eyes said.

"Sure, sure!" My mom said hastily, as if she was worrying that he might change his mind. "Big brother, I am really thankful. You are helping me a lot."

I became the youngest and the smallest student of my grade of about one hundred kids in four classes.

My father was only home for a few weeks a year. Even when he was home, he didn't do much-my mother didn't let him do much. "Your father works hard to provide for us. He should rest when he is home." All the work, taking care of us kids, collecting wild mountain grass, leaves and wood branches in the designated areas on the mountain by the production team for cooking; working in the field during planting and harvesting seasons in Zi-liu-di, a small piece of land allocated to each family by the village in that public-ownership period; going to the courtyard of the production team to collect grains it sold to each household (for the majority of villagers, cost of grains would be deducted from the yearly income at the end of the year according to their 'public point,' reward system we had to pay because both my parents didn't work in the production team's field); going to the market to buy groceries; fetching water home from the village well with two buckets on a shoulder pole; cooking; and washing laundry for the entire family in the river, all fell onto my mom. "Am I made of iron?" I had heard her crying many times. As the oldest, even at a very young age, I knew that it was my responsibility to help her. No children want to see their mothers suffer alone. I wanted my mother to live a better life because of me.

Everyday after school, I cleaned the yard. In winter, I collected all the frozen chicken droppings with a small iron shovel, and piled them up on the southwest corner of the yard. My hands in the cotton filled mittens my mother made me were clumsy so that often I didn't

赚钱养家,他在家里的时候就该好好休息休息。"

家里所有的事情——照顾孩子、到生产队指定的 山上收集烧饭用的干草柴火、在分到的自留地里耕种和 收获、到生产队大院里去买粮食【1】、去市场买菜、 用扁担挑着两个水桶去村里的井里打水、为全家人做饭 洗衣……所有的这些活都落在了妈妈身上。

"我是铁打的吗?"我曾多次听见她的哭声。作为家里最大的孩子,从小我就觉得自己有责任帮妈妈去分担压力和责任。没有孩子愿意看到他们的母亲独自受苦,我希望妈妈能因为我过上更好的日子。

所以每天放学之后,我都会帮忙清扫院子。冬 天,我用一把铁铲把所有冻鸡粪收集起来,堆在院子的 西南角。妈妈给我做的连指棉手套会让我的动作变得笨 拙,所以我在院儿里干活的时候很少会戴它,冷冽的寒 风很快让我的手变得麻木而红肿。春天,妈妈用一架生 锈的手推车把鸡粪堆运送到我们家的自留地,在播种时 节,这是最好的肥料。到了夏季和秋季,庄稼长大了不 再需要肥料,我就会把剩余的鸡粪都扔到猪圈里,之后 再用高粱杆做的扫帚把院子扫干净,把柴火的碎屑和地 面的灰尘扫成一堆,铲到西边的猪圈里,这个猪圈很 大,面积占了整个院子的一半。

猪圈在西边卧室的外边,分为两部分,较高的部分是猪吃饭和睡觉的地方,上面挂着一块石板作为遮挡。有时我会爬到猪圈的墙上,然后跳上石板,弓着身子从下端敞开的窗户一脚跨到卧室的炕上,这样就能避免与厨房里的妈妈打照面。猪圈底部是一个方形的大坑,大约一米深。我们会把所有垃圾、从院子里打扫出

wear them when I worked in the yard. Wind chills soon made my hands red and numb. In spring, my mother transported the pile using our rusted single tyre wheelbarrow to Zi-liu-di, to be used as fertilizer in the planting season. In summer and fall, I just threw them into the pigpen because all the crops had grown and they didn't need fertilizers anymore. Afterwards, I swept the yard with a broom made of sorghum stalks, and gathered the scraps of firewood along with surface dust into a small pile before shoveling it into the pigpen in the west which took half of the yard.

The pigpen was outside of the west bedroom. It had two parts, the higher part was where the pig ate and slept, with a stone slab hanging above as a cover. Sometimes, I climbed up to the wall of the pigpen then jumped to the slab, and strided over the lower part of the open window of the bedroom to the kang, to avoid having to pass my mother in the kitchen. The lower part of the pigpen was a square pit, about three feet deep. We threw all the garbage, dirt from cleaning the yards, the outer skin of watermelon (my mom made cold dishes using the light green part under the skin) and occasionally, rotten vegetables in it. Plastic, glass and metal could be sold for money. In those years, we didn't use much of these things. Every morning, mom cleaned the stove and gathered the ashes in it into a natural rattan basket. Then she shovel-cleaned the pig bed and dumped the soiled ashes in it from the previous night into the lower part of the pigpen, before dumping new ashes on it. Light gray ashes would fly up in the air above the pigpen and cover her face and clothes, giving her a ghostly look. Every spring, the production team sent two men to take away the content of the pigpen to the commune field to be used as fertilizer. The men stood in the pigpen in black rubber rain boots and threw shovels after shovels of black and smelly compost into the yard, then took it to the field by a wheelbarrow. Even a few days later, there was still a dark area in the yard next to the wall of the pigpen left by the pile.

来的泥土灰尘、西瓜皮(妈妈会用西瓜皮内侧浅色的部分做凉菜)、偶尔还有一些腐烂的蔬菜倒在里面发酵。那些年里我们不怎么使用塑料、玻璃和金属,所以我们会把这些东西拿去卖钱。每天早晨,妈妈都要清理灶炉,把炉灰收集到一个藤编的篮子里,再用铲子把猪睡觉的地方清理干净,把它前一天晚上弄脏的炉灰倒在猪圈底部,再把新的炉灰铺上去。浅灰色的炉灰飞腾在猪圈的空气中,遮住妈妈的脸,使她五官变得模糊不清,就像个幽灵。每年春天,生产队都会派两个人把猪圈里的东西运到公社的田里当肥料。他们穿着黑色橡胶雨靴站在猪圈里,一铲一铲地把那些又黑又臭的肥料堆放到院子里,然后装上手推车,运到公家的田里去。好几天过去,堆肥留下的黑色痕迹依然残留在院子里的猪圈墙角边。

接下来要做的事情是喂猪。从厨房大门进入院子,可以看到西边的猪圈旁有一个带木头盖子的大缸。妈妈洗完碗后会把洗过碗的水倒进缸里发酵。当时还没有洗洁精,妈妈会先用热水把油腻腻的碗碟洗一遍,然后再用冷水冲洗干净。妈妈把从田里摘的红薯叶子和野菜切碎,与浸软的炸过油之后的花生渣饼、发酵后的洗碗水混合,就做成了典型的猪食。年底,她再请邻居帮忙,把养大的猪送到市场上卖给公社的屠宰场。

不过村里的猪其实并不挑食,它们甚至连人粪都吃。小时候,我们会爬到猪圈的高墙上,蹲着,用我们拉出来的粪便喂猪,这可真是不浪费任何东西!那些年在村里,所有孩子的肠子里都会有蛔虫。我记得有一次,我妹妹在猪圈的墙上拉大便,我坐在石阶上做作业,我看到她屁股后边挂着一条又长又白的虫子,像一根银线!关于猪圈还有很多其他奇闻,比如有一天,住

The next thing to do was to feed the pig. In the yard, out of the kitchen on the west next to the pigpen, stood a big ceramic crock with a wooden lid. After she washed the dishes, my mother poured the water from the washing pan into the crock to ferment. There was no dish washing detergent. When the dishes were oily, she used hot water for the first wash, then rinsed in cold water. Chopped yam leaves and wild vegetables my mother picked in the field, mixed with peanuts pulps and the fermented dish washing water was typical pig food. At the end of the year, my mother asked a neighbor to help her to take the pig to the market to sell to the commune slaughterhouse.

Pigs in the village ate human waste too. When we were little, we went up to the wall of the pigpen and squatted on it to feed the pig from our bottoms. We didn't waste anything. In those years in the village, all children had worms in their stomachs. I remember once I saw a long and white worm hanging from my sister's behind like a piece of silver thread when she was on the pigpen wall while I was sitting on the stone stairs doing my homework. One day, "old granny," the small and skinny old woman in her late sixties who lived across from the street, died from falling to the pigpen when she was releasing herself. When her son came back from working in the field, her stiff body was curled in the pigpen. He had to go to the village well to get water to wash her clean. Neighbors said it was fortunate that the pig was not hungry so that it didn't bite on her.

The chicken coop was a small stone structure on the corner outside of the "inner room," which was usually used as the storage room, at the east end of the house next to the east bedroom. Sometimes, after school I chopped the outer leaves of vegetables mixed with cornmeal and water to feed the chickens. They made "goo-goo-goo" noises when they ate, as if they were very satisfied by the food I made or they were just happy

在街对面的"老奶奶"——那个又瘦又小的六十多岁的老太太——在猪圈上蹲着的时候不小心掉下来,摔到猪圈里去世了。她儿子从田里干活回来时,她的身子正蜷缩在猪圈里,都僵了。她儿子只能去村里的井里打来水,把她全身洗干净。邻居们说幸好是当时猪不饿,才没有去咬她的尸体。

至于鸡舍,则是在"里屋"外角落里一个用小石 子搭成的建筑结构, "里屋"通常被用作储藏室, 位于 房子的冬面,紧挨着东边的卧室。有时候放学后,我会 把蔬菜外边的几片叶子切碎,与玉米面和水混合用来喂 鸡。它们吃东西的时候会发出"咕咕咕"的声音,好像 在表达对食物的满意,或者它们只是很高兴见到我。太 阳下山后,它们会一起晃晃悠悠地走进鸡舍,就像在街 上玩耍的孩子被妈妈叫回家一样。偶尔有一只不太听 话, 当其他所有鸡都已经回到鸡舍里时, 它还在街上的 某个地方徘徊,我就会出去找它,一边走一边"鸡鸡 鸡"地喊着。过了一会儿它就从不知道什么地方走到了 我面前,摇摇摆摆,一点儿也不着急。虽然妈妈每天早 晨都会清扫鸡舍, 但是由于院子实在太小, 我做作业的 石阶离鸡舍只有几步之遥,所以我依然能闻到很重的气 味。再加上猪圈里堆肥的味道,我童年时从未拥有过清 爽新鲜的夏日空气,但肥沃的土地气息常与我相伴。那 是质朴的、原始的泥土的芳香,被秋日收获的期待填 满,紧紧拥抱着一个节俭、勤劳的普通农村家庭。

平日里,当妈妈做饭的时候,我要负责照看比我小七岁的弟弟。我就叫他"小弟弟",不喊他的名字,这样持续了很多年。我也不记得为什么,以及从什么时候开始我就不再叫他"小弟弟"了,而是直呼他的名字。小时候我会时不时把他驼在背上到街上去,因为这

to see me. After sunset, they waddled into the coop together on their own as when the kids on the streets were called back home by their mothers. Occasionally, one of them didn't behave and still wandered somewhere on the street when all others were in the coop. I had to go out and look for it by calling "ji-jiji-ji ', chicken, chicken chicken, chichen, and after a while, it waddled to me from nowhere without any hurry. Even though my mom cleaned the chicken coop every morning, because the yard was so small, and the stone stairs where I did my homework were only a few steps away, the smell was still very strong. Plus the smell of compost in the pigpen, the summer air of my childhood in the yard was never a fresh smell. But it was the smell of fertilizer for the field, so it smelled earthy, smelled expectation for harvest in the fall. It smelled of an ordinary frugal and hardworking family.

I also had to watch my youngest brother, who was seven years younger, so my mom could make dinner. I called him "little brother," never his name, until many years later. I don't know when, why and how I stopped calling him "little brother" but his name. Sometimes, I piggybacked him to the street because it was the only way I was able to carry him. Sometimes, he sat beside me while I was doing homework and played with whatever he could get his hands on. Once, he tore away a page off my textbook and chewed it. I was so embarrassed the next day when my teacher asked me to read the text on that missing page to the class. "I don't have this page," I murmured. My face was burning. "My little brother ate it," I said. All my classmates laughed. Years later, after I came to America, I learned the phrase "the dog ate my homework."

By the end of the day, my mother was usually tired. The time she made dinner was usually the time my little brother was cranky. However, it was also the only time I was able to do homework. We had no electricity so it was almost impossible to do anything in the house

是我能够背得动他的唯一方式。有时候我做作业的时候 他会坐在我身边,玩他能够得着的任何东西。有一次他 把我的课本撕下一页,把它嚼碎了。第二天当老师点到 我要我读课本上那一页的课文内容时,我真是尴尬得想 找个地缝钻进去。"我没有这一页,"我低声嘟囔,脸 上发热,"我的小弟弟把这一页吃掉了。"所有同学顿 时哄堂大笑。多年以后,在我到美国之后我才学会了" 狗吃了我的作业"这句话。

在一天快结束时,妈妈总是非常疲惫。通常她做晚餐的时候也是弟弟闹腾的时候。但同时,那也是我能够做作业的唯一时段。那时我们没有电,煤油灯微弱的光亮照不亮黑漆漆的夜晚,人们在屋里基本上做不了任何事情,更不用说到了夏天,蚊子满屋子飞,我们只有在打算钻进蚊帐睡觉的时候才会回到屋里。所以我总是尽量赶在日落之前在院子里做完我的作业。

那天,我正全神贯注地做作业,我的小弟弟坐在我身边,看着我。每当他试图伸手去摸我面前打开的课本时,我就把他的小手拂开。我可不想让他再撕掉我的课本的任何一页。他是一个可爱的两岁孩子,有一张灰扑扑的小脸和一个灰扑扑的没穿衣服的小身子。夏天,所有的小孩子,不管是男孩还是女孩,都光着身子。大人们不愿意把钱浪费在给小孩子买夏装上。

弟弟是个爱哭的孩子。从他出生就经常哭闹个不停。现在我明白了,他小时候之所以哭得那么厉害,也许是因为他没吃饱过。当时没有牛奶,我们也几乎没有肉吃。我们不能把所有鸡下的蛋都吃掉,因为妈妈需要把一部分鸡蛋卖掉来贴补家用。为了刺激我们的食欲,妈妈会把在白菜包子的馅里放进两块小孩大拇指指甲大

in the dim oil lamp light at night, not to mention that in summer time, mosquitos were all over the house so we only went inside when we were ready to sleep in the mosquito net. I tried to finish my homework everyday in the yard before sunset.

That day, I was absorbed in doing my homework, while my little brother was sitting by my side, watching me. Whenever he tried to touch my textbook which was opened in front of me, I brushed his little hands away. I didn't want him to tear another page of my textbook. He was a cute two-year-old, with a dirty little face and a dirty little naked body. In summer, all small children, boys and girls, were naked. People didn't want to waste money on buying summer clothes for little ones.

My brother was a colicky one. Even from his birth he cried a lot. Now I understand the reason he cried so much might be because he was hungry all the time. There was no milk and hardly any meat. We didn't eat all the eggs the chickens laid. My mother needed to sell some of the eggs at the market to supplement our family income. To encourage us to eat more, she usually put two pieces of pork the size of a child's thumb nail in the middle of a cabbage bun, so we kids competed with each other to be the first to bite on the meat in the buns we each held in our hands. The buns of the cabbage stuffing didn't taste good without much oil. Every time I was the first one to bite on the meat, but I was not the first one to eat it. I picked the meat out with my chopsticks and put it into my little brother's mouth. He needed it more than I did. I was the big sister and I knew I had to take care of him without anyone telling me. "He is the youngest, we should save all the good stuff for him," I used to tell my other two younger siblings. We spoiled him in our poor way. He had skinny arms and legs, and a bloated round stomach. Thinking back now I know he suffered from malnutrition, just like all other village children. Almost all the small children in the village were like that, as if they were little puffer frogs. All

小的肉。没有多少油的白菜包子馅儿一点儿也不好吃, 但是我们会争着抢着第一个吃到肉, 所以依然大口咬着 自己手里的包子。每次我都是第一个咬到肉的人,却不 是第一个吃到肉的, 因为我会用筷子把那一小块肉夹出 来放进小弟弟的嘴里。我知道他比我更需要这块肉。我 是大姐姐, 照顾好小弟弟像是我的一种本能, 不需要任 何人提醒。"他是最小的,我们应该把所有最好的东西 留给他。"我曾经这样告诉我另外两个弟弟妹妹,这是 我们在闲窘的生活中宠爱小弟弟的方式。那时他的胳膊 和腿都很瘦,肚子却鼓胀着,和村里其他的孩子一样。 现在回想起来这是营养不良的表现,他们就像一只只小 青蛙。后来我们几个兄弟姐妹个头都不高,但我们的孩 子都长得很高, 他们成长在物资丰富的好时候, 不缺 营养。"现在的一日三餐比你们小时候的年夜饭都丰 盛。"妈妈经常这么说,试图告诉我们她对现在的生活 有多么满足和幸福,即使按照现在的标准,她依旧生活 在贫困线上, "我们现在每天都能吃到肉和白馒头了 呢!"

记得有一次,弟弟的额头上长了很多痱子——那时候我们家没有电扇,夏天里几乎所有人的额头、脸和后背上都会长痱子——看上去就像一只小蛤蟆,但对我来说,他仍然是这条街道上最可爱的小孩子。有一天,我在东边卧室梳妆台的抽屉里找到了一小块紫色的布,就用一块白棉线把它系在弟弟头顶上,看起来就像一只栖息在他头上的小蝴蝶。我觉得这看起来可漂亮了。但是那个住在街对面的"老奶奶"看到他时却笑了:"你干嘛把白色的东西放在你弟弟头上?家里死人了才会把白布戴在头上呢。而且他是个男孩呀,你怎么能把他打扮成这个样子!"她的笑声像一只沙哑的鸭子,我听着可生气了。以至于当她摔死在猪圈里之后,母亲和我去

my siblings are short, but our children are tall because they've got more than enough to eat. "The daily meals now are much better than the Lunar New Year meals when you were little," My mother often says, when she tries to tell us how content and happy she is with the life she is having, though she is still at the poverty level by today's standard. "We can have meat and white steam bread everyday."

I still remember that day, there was miliaria on my baby brother's forehead. Actually, in summer, we all had miliaria on our foreheads, faces and backs. We didn't even have an electric fan. He looked like a little toad. But to me he was the most lovely toddler on the street. One day, I found a small piece of purple fabric in the drawer of the dresser in the east bedroom. I tied it on the hair on the top of his head with a piece of white cotton thread. It looked like a small butterfly perched on his head. I thought it was beautiful. The "old granny" laughed when she saw him. "You can't have anything white on his hair! People only use white on hair when someone in the family dies. Moreover, how could you make him look like this? He is a boy." Her laughter sounded like a duck's quacking and it made me angry. When I went to her yard with my mother to pay our last respects after she fell and died in the pigpen, I didn't even feel too sad in front of her dead body which was laying under white window papers on the wooden door taken out from her house. Instead I felt I could see the way her toothless mouth opened when she laughed at my brother. Her dark face was like a dried eggplant.

The pile of dried grass and leaves in the yard was soaked wet in the rain two days before. Even if my mother spreaded the pile out in the yard for two days under the sun, the leaves and grass were not dried enough. Smokes, instead of flames, were coming out of the stove, no matter how hard my mother pulled the bellows and tried to blow air into the stove mouth with

她院子里吊唁,我面对着她的尸体都没有感到太多悲伤。人们把她家的木门拆下来,将她的尸体平放在上面,再盖上白色的窗户纸。但我却感觉自己仍然可以看见她对我哥哥笑的时候,那张没有牙齿的嘴张开的样子。还有那张皮肤黝黑的脸,像一个干瘪的茄子。

还有一件事情我记得很深,那天妈妈正在用院子里的干草和树叶生火,那堆柴火在两天前被雨水浸透了,就算妈妈已经把它们摊开晒了两天,但它们还是没有干透。所以无论她怎么拉风箱,或者用嘴向灶口吹气,灶膛里冒出的仍然是滚滚浓烟,而不是火焰。

"妈妈,妈妈……"弟弟哭哭啼啼的。

"安静点!" 妈妈说,并继续吹气。

她并没有停止拉风箱的动作。

"丽丽,带他到街上玩一会儿。"我妈吩咐我。

"好的,好的。"我回答,但没有抬起头。我必须要做完我的作业。

"妈妈······"弟弟开始哭,他额头上的小疹子变得更红了。他一哭,额头上就会出现两条深深的纹路,看起来像个老人。

"丽丽,带他上街去玩!"我妈妈提高了声音。

"好的,好的,就一会儿。"我应着,仍然低头做我的作业。

her mouth.

"Mom, mom-," My brother whined.

"Be quiet!" My mom said, and kept blowing.

My brother didn't stop pulling the bellows.

"Lili, take him to the street to play for a while," my mother ordered me.

"Ok, ok." I answered, without lifting my head. I had to finish my homework.

"Mom-" my brother started to cry. The miliaria on his forehead became redder. When he cried, there were two deep lines crossed his forehead and he looked like an old man.

"Lili, take him to the street!" My mom raised her voice.

"Ok, ok, just a little while," I said, still doing my homework.

My brother's cry became louder.

"Don't you hear me?" My mother yelled, "no one is helping me! You are all wailing like ghosts and howling like wolves, how can I not be anxious and frustrated?" Whenever any of us cried, whined, or screamed, my mother tended to use the idiom of "wailing like ghosts and howling like wolves."

"Ok, ok," I said, without stopping doing my homework. "Little brother, little brother, just a moment, just a moment, ok?" I murmured.

"Mom-" he called her again.

Suddenly, my mother's right hand, which was stirring the grass and leaves in the stove with the iron stick, reached across the threshold, grabbed my book and threw it so hard that it dropped at the other end of the yard, at the foot of the front wall near where the pile of the chicken droppings were in the winter. When the pile was accumulated big enough, my mother sent it to zi-liu-di, the private lot, a small piece of land assigned by the village to each family for private use. "Let you read, let you read! In the future, will you just eat your books?" She said "eat book" very often, such as, "in the

弟弟的哭声更响亮了。

"你听不见吗?"妈妈大喊,"就没有人来帮帮我!你们一个个都鬼哭狼嚎的,弄得我一个头两个大!"每当我们中的任何一个人哭泣、抱怨或尖叫时,我母亲都会用"鬼哭狼嚎"来形容我们。

"好吧,好吧,"我一边做作业一边嘟囔着," 弟弟,弟弟,就一会儿,就一会儿,好吗?"

"妈妈……"他又叫她。

突然,妈妈的右手伸过了门槛。那只刚刚还拿着 火钳搅动灶膛里的柴火的手,现在用力抓起了我的书, 使劲一扔,书掉落在了院子另一头的墙角处,正靠近冬 天堆满鸡粪的地方。

"让你读,让你读!以后你就'吃书'吗?"她说"吃书"的频率很高,比如"你以后能把书当饭吃吗?"或者"你喜欢读书又怎么样?以后你的命运不也就和我一样,上山下地,天天站在灶台边?"

我什么也没说,只是走过去,拿起我的书,把它放进上学时妈妈亲手为我缝制的书包里。我蹲下身子,让弟弟爬到我背上,背他到街上去。他不算太重,但因为我个子矮,他光溜溜的小屁股坐在我交叠在身后的双手上时,两条腿就已经垂到我膝盖后面了。我总感觉他在往下滑,所以只好时不时地把他往上托。"弟弟你抓紧我,好不?"我一边走出院子一边对他说。

future, can you use books as food?" Or "You like to read, so what? In the future, won't you have the same fate as I have, going up the mountain and down to the field, and standing by the stove day after day?"

I didn't say anything. I just walked over and picked up my book, and put it into the book sack my mom hand-sewed for me when I started school. I squatted down, let my brother climb onto my back, and carried him to the street. He was not too heavy. But because I was short, with his naked little butt sitting on my folded hands in my back, his two legs reached to the backs of my knees, and it felt like he was sliding down so that I had to keep pushing him up. "Little brother, hold on me tight. Ok?" I walked out of the yard, telling him.

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注释1: 在70、80年代的公社时期,村民在生产队的公田里干活可以累积公分。到了年终,根据生产队的总收入把公分折算成钱。购买粮食的时候,可以直接从公分换算成的钱数里扣除。但是我的爸妈都不在生产队的公田里干活,没有公分,所以我家一向是自己出钱购买粮食。

Translator's Note

Jingyao Li's "To Meet" is a sad, but very beautiful and powerful personal essay. The tone is very matter-of-fact, but strong emotions are hidden in the plain and easy vocabularies of the sentences. I tried to be as loyal to the original Chinese writing as possible, because I didn't want to miss a single word that I believe she wrote while pouring her heart out.

Some challenges for me during the process of translating were:

- 1. Chinese language is characterized by the combination of its words' sound, shape and meaning, without strict sentence construction rules. Sometimes, verbs can be omitted. When translating into English, the requirements for sentence structure are more strict and to follow the rules, a short sentence in Chinese might become a very long one, or more than one short sentence, which may not result in the same flow as the original text.
- 2. Some things that are common knowledge for Chinese people-for example, the god Guangyin, Nvwa, and Monkey King, the music instrument Jinghu, and Bazi, etc., may be difficult for English readers who are not familiar with Chinese culture to understand. However, most of the time, adding explanations in the sentences may make them less clean and compact than the original text.
- 3. Words for sounds. In Chinese, words for sounds are onomatopoeic. So in Jingyao's essay, to make the sounds vivid, I used Chinese Pinyin for the sound "papa" Grandpa made when he was patting his body with his hands, the sound "zhi-ya-zhi-ya" Jinghu made on the Chinese traditional drama channel, and the sound "cha cha" when Grandpa was walking on the street in his cotton shoes.

It's been a very enjoyable process translating Jingyao's essay, through Grandpa's death, her memory about him, her reflections on life and death brought by his death, and her own fight with cancer and death, which more than once brought me to tears. I felt that I was not only close to this essay, but to her too. I hope I will translate more of her work, and wish her the best.

李婧瑶

相遇

我从来没听清楚过爷爷说话。

他声音很低,闷在嗓子眼儿,像一口盖着锅盖的 煎锅,滋啦啦的油星子在锅里闷响。他喉咙里总不"清 坦",粘稠的痰液铺在他嗓音的底层,如锅底被铲坏的 斑驳涂层。

小时候我以为这个声音是爷爷,后来才知道这个声音是衰老。

二娘记忆里的爷爷并不如此。她说,你爷爷在家 里说话的声音大得很,中气十足。大多数时候他沉默得 像一口闷钟,但偶尔咆哮起来吓人得很。比喻是我自己 加的,是我对一个从未见过的爷爷的想象。

我91年出生,那一年爷爷已经六十一岁了,在我的记忆中,他一直都是一个瘦削、拘谨的老人,前额上沟壑深深。千禧年前后,爷爷从湖南老家到广东和我们住过一段时间,随身携带着他每日如一的生活习惯:穿着那双黑面白底的布鞋走入晨曦,边走边甩动手臂和手掌把全身的皮肤拍得啪啪作响;透明顺滑的藕粉是早餐必备,也是爷爷认为的长寿秘方;电视不一定看但是一定得打开,有个声音在耳边,看报纸也更认真些。有时爸妈周末要去上班,我会单独和爷爷待在家里。戏曲频道里吱吱呀呀的京胡声填满了我俩之间的沉默。这种沉默让我感到不安。我觉得自己有甩不掉的责任让这位初到新环境的长者感到高兴和舒适,但一切努力都撞碎在了我听不明白的沙哑乡音上。有一回我挽着爷爷走在大街上,尽量放慢脚步合上他布鞋拖拽的嚓嚓声,凑近他

translated from the chinese by LILI LUO

TO MEET

I had never heard Grandpa clearly.

His voice was very low, and it stuck in his throat, like a covered frying pan, with the sound of sizzling oil muffled inside. His throat had never been "clean and smooth." Sticky mucus clung to the bottom of his voice, like the coating on the pan's spatula-scratched bottom.

When I was young, I thought this voice was Grandpa. Only later did I learn this voice meant being old.

Grandpa was not like this in the memory of Second Auntie, my second uncle's wife. She said, when your grandpa spoke at home, his voice was loud and full of energy. Most of the time he was quiet as a clock wrapped in a blanket, though it was horrifying when he occasionally roared. The clock metaphor was added by me—this is how I imagined the grandpa I had never met, the one Auntie talked about.

I was born in 1991. Grandpa was 61 that year. In my memory, he is a thin and demure old man, the lines on his forehead look like ravines. Around the millennium, Grandpa came to Guangdong from his hometown in Hunan and lived with us for a while, bring with him his never-changing routine: he walked in the early morning light in that pair of cotton shoes with black uppers and white soles, and while walking, he swung his arms and pa, pa, pa patted his body with his palms; translucent, silky lotus root paste was a must-have for his breakfast, a secret recipe for long life he believed in; he might not

耳边给他介绍街道两旁的建筑和商店。爷爷回应了我, 但我没听明白,我让爷爷再大声说一遍,仍然没听明白。对话被吸进了车流,我挽着爷爷的手臂,沉默却将 我们拉得很远。

三岁从湖南武冈随父母到广东中山定居,我从小就只会说不标准的武冈话和同样不地道的粤语。我从武冈话的闲言碎语里了解着一年只见一两次的祖辈,他们就和那些没有姓名的称谓一样,以一个固定的形状存在,轮廓清晰,内容空洞。我无法想象爷爷也拥有过天真烂漫的童年和意气风发的青年,他衰老的嗓音和走向死亡的脚步回音巨大,占据了我对他全部的记忆。

爷爷去世几年后,妈妈在家里的旧物箱里意外发现了一本爷爷从老家带来的相册,里边夹着他1950年初级中学的毕业证书,残破发黄的纸张上贴着一张褪色发白的证件照。照片里,二十岁的爷爷留着他一辈子都没变过的平头,标志性的粗眉毛像葱茏的山峰傲立在两口乌黑的泉眼之上。他是严肃的、审慎的,双目圆睁,看不出一丝孩子气。我想起伯伯曾经在一篇散文中写到的: "父亲二十岁就老了。"伯伯出生时,爷爷正是二十岁,但伯伯竟和我一样,从来都只认识一位沉默而严肃的老人,凝固在了这张二十岁的照片中。

爷爷是在中山这边的养老院去世的。按照老家武冈的丧葬风俗,死在家门外的亲人不能草率地将遗体或骨灰拿回家,只能暂时将爷爷的骨灰放在中山的殡仪馆,等一个吉日再带回老家安葬。但因为当年四月底我突发白血病在北京治疗了近一年,接下来又遇上新冠疫情的爆发,这一等就是两年多,爷爷留下的不少文件和物什就一直暂存在我家。有一天,二叔、二娘到我家认真整理了一遍爷爷的遗物。二叔边看边把一些纸质文件撕碎扔进一个塑料袋里。他们说死人的东西还留着不太吉利。我坐在一旁看着,犹豫再三,还是匆匆捡起两个

watch the TV but it had to be turned on, for he focused more when reading the newspaper if there was some noise in his ears. Sometimes, Dad and Mom had to go to work on weekends, so I stayed home alone with Grandpa. Zhi zhi ya ya, the sound filling the silence between us was the wail of Jinghu, a two-stringed fiddle, on the Chinese opera channel. This kind of silence left me unsettled. I felt I had an unshakable obligation to make this old man, who had just come into a new environment, happy and comfortable. But all my efforts crashed against the hoarse local accents of his hometown, which I didn't understand. Once, I was walking on the street holding Grandpa's arm, and I tried to slow my steps down to sync with the cha cha sound from the cotton shoes he was dragging. I told him about the buildings and the stores on both sides of the street, my mouth close to his ear. He responded, but I didn't understand. I asked him to say it one more time and louder. Still I didn't understand. Our conversation was sucked into the river of cars. I held on to Grandpa's arm, but the silence pushed us very far from each other.

When I was three, I left Wugang in Hunan province with my parents and settled in Zhongshan in Guangdong province. From a young age, I can only speak imperfect Wugang dialect and I can't speak perfect Cantonese either. Through Wugang gossip, I learned of those elders whom I only saw once or twice. They are like titles without names, existing only as a certain kind of shape with clear outlines, but without substance. I can't imagine Grandpa ever having a sunny, naive childhood and an enthusiastic youth. The echoes of his aging voice and his steps walking toward death are so loud that they fill all my memories of him.

A few years after Grandpa passed away, my mom accidentally came across an album in our storage trunk that Grandpa had brought with him from home. Inside

本子翻了翻。一本账本,一本退休证。我说我还是收起 这两本吧,总得留下点什么。我说得很快,生怕二叔、 二娘认为我对这种清理有什么异议。

我自认为并没有对这位交往甚少的祖辈有过什么 实质性的伤害或亏欠,但随着爷爷离开的时间越久,他 在我生命中留下的空白和模糊就愈加变成一种愧疚。这 些愧疚纠缠在民风民俗看似正当的规矩里,丝丝缕缕, 挥之不去。20年9月,爷爷去世两年多后,他的骨灰终 于被他的三个儿子和媳妇带回老家完成了下葬。二娘说 有些东西还是要注意一下,让我别跟着回家,神婆也叮 嘱过我:别靠近任何白事。

神婆,指的是在天后宫"做事(算命)"的阿姨。中山的民间信仰一向模糊暧昧,风水、道、佛不分家,人们会等在佛寺门口赶年初一凌晨的头香,而年初五又会在家里的神台前或者去道观里祭财神。19年底我从北京回到中山,久未相聚的高中同窗们把阿姨的联系方式推给我,半带着揶揄,要我去算算姻缘。

那时我做完骨髓移植一年多,留着剃过好几次之后,长出来依旧细软稀疏的板寸。我的确好奇,尤其看见科学在癌症的嘲弄里日显颓唐的姿态,我好奇那样"不科学"也不严谨的神秘主义是否真能破解无常的命运。姻缘不是我关注的重点,我觉得我的高中同窗们也明白。我感谢她们看破不说破的善意。

"请保佑这位李氏阿妹平平安安,身体健康。"阿姨认真将我写在纸片上的生辰八字和住家地址通报给各路神仙,从观世音菩萨到女娲娘娘再到齐天大圣,然后把两片光滑的木制"圣杯"抛向空中,等它们落下。六次都是平面扣在桌面上。她眼神慌乱,面色铁青: "我从来没遇到过这种情况,你要多做善事。"

后来我和爸妈主动去找了天后宫的道长,他告诉 我们道观会在九月的中元节举行大型的超度法会。"可 the album was his middle school diploma from 1950. A faded, pale ID photo was stuck on the damaged, yellowed paper. In the photo, my twenty-year-old grandpa wore the crew cut he had all his life, and his signature thick brows were lush peaks hovering proudly over the mouths of two black springs. He was serious, cautious-looking, showing no hints of being young. My uncle once said in one of his essays, "Father became an old man at twenty." Grandpa was just twenty when Uncle was born. But Uncle, just like me, only ever knew the quiet, serious old man, frozen in this photo at that age.

Grandpa died in a nursing home in Zhongshan. According to the funeral customs of his hometown Wugang, the bodies or ashes of those who died not at home can't be brought back with any haste. So his ashes were stored temporarily at the Zhongshan funeral home, waiting for an auspicious day to be returned to Wugang for burial. But at the end of April, I went to Beijing for almost a year to be treated for acute leukemia. Then Covid 19 broke out. The wait to bring Grandpa's ashes back to Wugang thus stretched to over two years. Many documents and other things Grandpa left were stored at our house. One day, my second uncle and his wife came to our home and carefully sorted these remnants. Uncle tossed some of the paper documents into a plastic bag while he was looking through them. He and his wife said it was unlucky to keep what was left behind by the dead. I sat there watching, hesitating again and again, then I hastily picked up two booklets and flipped through them. One was a ledger, the other his certificate of retirement. I said, let me keep these two, because we should keep something. I said this very quickly, afraid that my second uncle and aunt might think I had different opinions of their way of sorting and cleaning.

I don't think I did any substantial harm or carried any emotional debt toward this ancestor, with

以让我们先给你爷爷超度超度,让他安心上路。"一个道观的工作人员把一本长条形的记账本推到我面前,前面厚厚几页已经被写满了。我学着前面人填写的信息,一笔一划在逝者那一栏里写下爷爷的名字,然后在后代亲属那一栏里挤着写下我和爸妈的名字和现居住地的地址。工作人员指着我背后大殿中央那些堆放得老高的棕色纸袋告诉我,爷爷也会有那样一个写着他名字的纸袋,里边放着各种不同的纸钱和符咒,中元节会统一放到大殿外边点燃,烟雾能沟通天人,给亡者指路。

我不知道这算不算"善事", 我也并不真心相信 全真教这一套程序完整、寓意明确的神秘主义仪式真能 起到人们所期待的效果。但民间信仰里的"善恶报应" 论打中的是那些隐隐作痛的自责。没来由的,好像活着 的人总是背负着什么罪责,只有靠这些非理性的理论才 能承受住不知来来自何方的沉重拷问。

爷生命里的最后几年是在中山的养老院度过 的,我每次回国都会去看他。我对他最清晰的记忆也是 从这里开始的。

八十多岁的他背驼了,腿脚不利索,走路非常迟缓,我们常会向养老院借个轮椅推着他出去玩,或者带他回家吃饭。几乎每回他都会跟我们抱怨养老院的护工对他态度不好。但护工阿姨那边却是另一番牢骚。"你爷爷不肯让我们给他洗衣服,硬是要自己到洗手间搓衣服。要是真摔倒了怎么办?谁能负责啊?"

这样的担心并非杞人忧天,后来爷爷的确在卫生间洗衣服时摔断了胯骨。两个月后骨头虽然基本长好了,但是身体和精神状况越来越差。在又一次摔断腿之后,医生把他调整到多人病房——那里有护工二十四小时看护——并且建议他长期卧床。

在那几年里,我直观感受到了爷爷的固执。爷爷 只有睡觉和吃饭的时候是安静的,其余时候他不是在说 whom I'd had so little interaction. But as the time since his departure became longer and longer, the blankness and blur he left behind in my life became more and more a kind of guilt. These guilts intertwine with the local customs, which only look appropriate on the surface, bit by bit, like strands of thread that can't be brushed away. In September 2020, more than two years after his death, Grandpa's ashes were finally brought back home to Wugang by his three sons and daughter in-laws, and buried. Second Aunt said there were still some things that I needed to be careful of, and asked me not to follow them back home to Wugang. The shaman also urged me: don't go near any "white events," meaning funerals.

The shaman is the auntie who "works," telling fortunes, at the Tian Hou Temple. The popular religions in the Zhongshan region are indistinctly defined. There are no boundaries between Feng Shui, Taoism, and Buddhism. People wait in line at the gate of a Buddhist temple in the early morning of the first day of Lunar New Year to be the first to burn incense, because it's said the first one will be blessed with the best luck. But on the fifth day they worship the Taoist God of fortune in front of a home altar at home or at a shrine. At the end of 2019, I went back to Zhongshan from Beijing. My high school classmates, whom I had not seen for a long time, sent me a Wechat message with this auntie's contact information, half jokingly, telling me to go to her to hear about my predestined marriage.

It was a little more than a year after my bone marrow transplant, and I was wearing a crew cut—my hair was still thin, soft and sparse, even though it had been shaved a few times. We believe hair grows thicker and stronger after each shaving. I was indeed curious, particularly after seeing science grow feebler and feebler after being mocked by cancer day after day. I wondered if this "unscientific," imprecise mysticism could really crack and explain the unpredictability of fate.

胡话,就是在责备护工不让他下床。他嗷嗷叫着,一次次尝试用颤抖的手臂支撑起自己瘦弱的身体,又无奈地倒下去,把那条完好的腿探出床的边缘,又被护工们抬起放回到床上。

后来爸妈告诉我养老院的护工们为了防止爷爷半夜偷偷下床,晚上会把他的一只手用绳子绑在床边的横杆上。家里人都默许了这种做法,只是要求他们把绳子换成柔软的丝巾。这个消息刺痛了我,但我什么也没说,因为我不知道如何评价这件事。我去过好几次那个多人病房,一个大房子连着另一个大房子,整层楼都是打通的,每个房子里大概放着二、三十张病床,靠墙排开,中间有拉帘隔着。多人病房里的老人完全不能自理,需要定期给他们换尿布、喂饭和擦身。到了晚上,每个大房子里只有一个值班护士,主要为了应对老人们半夜紧急的突发情况。

爷爷在护士们嘴里,是整层楼里最麻烦的老人。

"有一次他自己挣开了那个丝巾,真的滑下来了 坐在地上,好吓人的。"

"他很不喜欢我们,因为他觉得我们把他绑住 了。"

有一回去看爷爷,他一见到我们就瞪圆了眼睛,告起状来,说护工偷了他抽屉里的钱。妈妈努力跟他解释说他抽屉里本来就没有钱,爷爷一脸茫然。二叔接着问了一句: "你知道今年你多少岁了吗?"爷爷说: "我九十了!"但那时他只有八十七。

爷爷没能活到九十岁,那只是他在梦里会念叨的年龄。我想,他锻炼、养生、坚持自己洗衣服、固执地下床上厕所,都是因为他倔强地想要证明自己能碰到那个数字吧。我曾经问二娘:"爷爷总是对周围人充满了抱怨,似乎过得很痛苦,但他为什么还总坚持要活到九十岁?"二娘轻笑一声,似乎觉得我这个问题问得非常

Predestined marriage was not my concern, and I believed my classmates knew that too. I was grateful for their kindness in knowing but not sayling.

"Please bless this Li A-mei, the Li family's daughter, and keep her safe and healthy." The shaman auntie solemnly announced my birth year, month, day, and hour, along with my home address-all of which was written on a piece of paper- to all kinds of gods, from Guanyin, the goddess of mercy in Chinese Buddhism, to Nvwa, the goddess in Chinese myth who made humans by molding yellow clay when the sky and earth were separated, and then to Monkey King, the mystical figure in the 16th central Chinese novel Journey to the West. Afterward, she tossed two pieces of smooth bamboo fortune sticks into the air, waiting for them to fall. Six times in a row, they both landed flat on the table-none of the hexagram symbols were lucky ones. Her eyes looked flustered, and her face became dark and serious, "I've never seen anything like this. You have to perform many good deeds."

Later my parents took the initiative and we went to see the Taoist priest of Tian Hou temple. He told us the temple would hold a large-scale ritual of transcendence during the Hungry Ghost Festival in the middle of the ninth month of the lunar calendar. "First you may want us to release your grandpa's soul, so he can go in peace." A temple employee pushed a rectangular ledger over to me. The first few pages were full. Studying the information other people had filled in those pages, I wrote Grandpa's name stroke by stroke in the "Dead" column, and my name, my parents' names, and our current address under "Children and Relatives." Pointing to the brown paper bags piled high behind me in the middle of the temple hall, the employee told me that Grandpa would have a paper bag like that with his name on it, and inside the bag there would be different kinds of joss paper money and Taoist prayer slips, and on the day

幼稚: "武冈不是有句土话? '宁愿在世上挨,不愿在地下埋'嘛。"

活着本身就是目的。这对于中国老百姓来说似乎是一件毋庸置疑的事。

2012年,我二十一岁,被确诊为乳腺癌后又复发,到了二十七岁又突然患上白血病。和爷爷一样,为了活着,我也用尽了全力。2018年10月在干细胞无菌移植仓里,医生穿着防护服来查房,看见我站在床边把一条腿架在病床上做拉伸运动,好心提醒说要我小心点: "你现在白细胞为零,血小板才三十多(正常值是一百至三百),万一摔了就惨了。"我看着自己因化疗和长期卧床而萎缩的小腿肌肉,想到了手腕被绑住还拼命要下床的爷爷。

17年底,爷爷住进了医院的ICU病房,病床靠着一扇巨大的玻璃窗,采光不错,阳光和他呼出的气体一同在透明的呼吸机管道里乱撞,回声如砂砾般粗糙。爸爸伏在爷爷耳边告诉他说我回来看他了,我把手放在他粗大的指关节和皱巴巴的皮肤上,看见他竹竿似的双手和双腿上长着许多黑褐色的老年斑。我开始对他说话,刚说两句话就噎住了。爷爷的眼睛睁开了一条缝,用力蜷着我的手指,嗓子眼里发出呼呼的声音。我靠近认真听,但就像小时候我挽着他的手走在大街上一样,一个字也听不清。他眨眨眼,一颗眼泪顺着眼角的沟壑流下来。

几个月后爷爷去世了。"活着"是我们从死神手 里偷来的时间,我和爷爷揣着它拼命逃,但回头张望 时,我却发现爷爷被留在了河那边。所以为什么骨灰一 直不能进家门的人是爷爷不是我?为什么贴身之物被当 作晦气之物被打包扔掉的是爷爷不是我?为什么同样是 这样偏执地想要抵抗消逝,最后被遗忘的是爷爷而不是 我? of Hungry Ghost Festival, they would be burned along with all other paper bags outside the hall. The smoke would connect earth and heaven and guide the dead.

I didn't know if this counted as a "good deed" or not, and I didn't fully believe this whole set of mystic ceremonies, with all the procedures and clear morals of the Quanzhen sect of Taoism, could really bring people what they wanted. But what has been stirred up by the popular religion's "karma" theory is the vague and painful self-reproach. It seems like the living always unfoundedly carry some kind of sin, and only by relying on these unreasonable theories are they able to bear the weighty torture of self-blame whose source is unknown where to them.

The last few years of Grandpa's life were spent in the Zhongshan nursing home. I went to visit him every time I came back to the country. It was from here I began to form my clearest memory of him.

The octogenarian Grandpa was hunchbacked, and his legs were limp. He walked very slowly. We often borrowed a wheelchair and pushed him around outside the nursing home, or took him home for a meal. Almost every time he would complain that the aides at the nursing home weren't nice to him. But the aide-aunties had their own complaints. "Your grandpa refuses to let us do his laundry, and insists on washing his clothes by himself in the bathroom. What if he falls? Who will take responsibility?"

Their worry that Grandpa might fall was not groundless. Later, Grandpa did fall and break his pelvis while washing his clothes in the bathroom. Though the bone healed in two months, his health and spirit worsened. After he fell again and broke his leg, the doctor suggested long-term bed rest, and transferred him to a multiple-bed ward, where there were around-the-clock nursing aides.

当然,也许对于亡者来说,死亡仅仅就是偶尔的游戏和永恒的寂静。道观里那些棕色的纸袋上写的是逝者的姓名,超度的却是生者的恐惧。我不知道爷爷是否真的需要那一缕通向天空的烟雾来给他引路,我只知道,当我自己数次站在生死的分界线上时,的确在心底隐隐盼望着,等我归于虚无,仍会有人记得为我烧去一份牵挂。

想起不久前和二叔的一次闲聊。我对他说起自己对爷爷的陌生,说起爷爷的遗物都被清理掉了,挺可惜的。二叔说是的是的,然后问我是不是留下了一些。我点点头。他说当时在清理的时候本来有一些爷爷当年写的"忆苦思甜"的文章,但没仔细看就撕掉了。我说那是历史,其实应该保留下来的。

是的是的,的确应该留下来。二叔的眼神直穿过 夜晚的昏黄,沉默了好一会儿。我不知道那一刻他想到 了爷爷,还是想到了自己。亦或和我一样,正站在一个 神奇的交点,与所有亡者和生者相遇,共同承担着人类 对遗忘的愧疚,和恐惧。 During those years, I felt Grandpa's stubbornness first hand. He was only calm while he was sleeping or eating. Other times, he was either talking nonsense or reproaching the aides for not letting him get out of bed. He would try again and again to lift his thin and fragile body on his shaking arms, crying painfully, then falling back hopelessly down into the bed. He would stretch his good leg over the railing of the bed, but a nursing aide would lift it back onto the bed.

Later my parents told me that in order to stop Grandpa from sneaking off the bed, the nursing aides would tie one of his hands to the crossbar of the bed at night. My family acquiesced to this only asking them to use a silk scarf instead of a rope. This news pained me, but I didn't say anything, because I didn't know how to judge it. I had been to that multiple-bed ward a few times. It was an entire floor that had been opened up, one big room next to another big room, and in each room, there were twenty to thirty beds along the wall, separated by curtains. Most of the elderly in the room couldn't take care of themselves. Their diapers needed to be changed, and they needed to be fed and bathed on a fixed schedule. At night, there was only one nurse on duty in each room, mainly for dealing with any emergencies.

In the nurses' words, Grandpa was the most troublesome old man on the entire floor.

"One day he tore the scarf open, slipped down, and sat on the floor. Scared the hell out of us!"

Once when we went to visit Grandpa, as soon as he saw us, he opened his eyes wide and started to complain, saying an aide had stolen his money from the drawer. My mom tried to explain that there had been no money in the drawer in the first place, but Grandpa still wore a blank face as if he didn't hear her at all. My

second uncle then asked, "Do you know how old you are this year?" Grandpa said, "I am ninety." But he was only eighty-seven.

Grandpa didn't live till ninety. It was only the age he might have murmured in his dreams. I believe he had exercised, practiced wellness, insisted on washing clothes by himself, and stubbornly got out of bed to go to the toilet on his own, all because he was determined to prove that he could reach that number. I asked my second auntie, "Grandpa complains about all the people around him. It seems he is suffering badly, but why does he still insist on living to be ninety?" My second auntie chuckled, as if the question I asked was very childish. "Isn't that a local saying in Wugang? 'Better to suffer on the earth, than to be buried underground.""

To live is itself the purpose. It seems for ordinary Chinese people, this goes without saying.

In 2012, when I was twenty-one, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and later it recurred. When I was twenty-seven, I was unexpectedly diagnosed with acute leukemia. Just like Grandpa, to stay alive, I have spared no effort. In October 2018, in the stem cell transplant room equipped with a HEPA-air filter, the doctor who was wearing a protective suit came to check on me. When he saw me standing beside the bed and stretching with one leg propped up on it, he kindly reminded me to be careful. "Your white cell count is zero, and your platelets are barely over thirty. The normal range is 100-300. If you fall down, it will be very dangerous." Looking at the atrophied muscles on my calf caused by chemotherapy and long term bed-rest, I thought of Grandpa who struggled to get out of bed even though his wrists were tied.

Towards the end of 2017, Grandpa was admitted

to the ICU. His bed was next to a big window with good natural light. The sun's rays along with the air he exhaled jumped and bumped around in the transparent pipe of the ventilator, whose echoes were as coarse and cracked as gravel. My father bent down to Grandpa's ear and told him I had come back to see him. I rested my hand on his thick knuckles and wrinkled skin, and I saw there were many black age spots on his bamboo-thin hands and legs. I began to talk to him, but choked up after only a few words. His eyes opened a slit. And with great effort, he curled my fingers tightly into his hand. His throat wheezed. I put my ear close to his mouth and listened hard, but it was just like when I held his hand walking down the street when I was young--I couldn't understand a single word. He blinked. A single teardrop ran down along the ravines at the corner of his eye.

A few months later, Grandpa died. "Being alive" was the time we stole from Death, and Grandpa and I carried this time inside our chests, running like hell. But when I turned and looked back, I found that I had left Grandpa on the other side of the river separating life and death. Why was it Grandpa whose ashes couldn't be brought back home, not mine? Why was it Grandpa whose clothes were treated as unlucky and were packed and thrown away, not mine? Why did we both so stubbornly and persistently resist death but the one who has been forgotten is Grandpa, not me? Why was it Grandpa who died, not me?

Of course, maybe to the dead, death is only a transient game and an eternal stillness. The names written on the paper bags in the Taoist temple were those of the dead, but it was the fear of death experienced by the living that was being released. I don't know if Grandpa really needed to be guided by that strand of smoke rising up to the sky. I only know that, when I stand again and again on the dividing line between life and death, deep in my heart I am indeed somehow

expecting that when I become nothing, there will still be someone to burn some incense to show they are thinking of me.

I remember a chat I had with my second uncle not long ago. I told him I didn't feel I had known Grandpa very well and it was a pity that his belongings were cleaned out. Uncle said it was true, then he asked if I kept a few or not. I nodded. He said when he was cleaning up, he found some essays that Grandpa had written for the purpose of "contrasting present happiness with past miseries," but he tore them up without taking a better look at them. I said they were relics, and we should have kept them.

"Yes, yes, we should have kept them." Uncle's eyes pierced through the dim yellowness of the night. He was silent for a long time. I don't know if at that moment he was thinking of Grandpa, or of himself. Or was he just like me, standing at a mystical intersection, meeting all the dead and the living, and with them, sharing all the guilt and fear of oblivescence that humans carry.

译者注

在和Jessica的翻译中,我最先的感触是语言的 差异导致的总体风格的相异。欧洲和美洲的语言是一 种"听"的艺术, 节奏韵律和世俗化的吟唱都更为重 要,而戏剧、史诗的表演也对语言的塑造起到了重要作 用,例如莎士比亚发明的"understand"这个词汇就是 在实际演出中得到的灵感。和Jessica 的交流中我得 知,美国当代作家的写作和口语是类似的,作家们更多 用当代的语言、俚语写当代的生活, 但是在中国语言是 完全不同的。从甲骨文开始,中文就是象形文字,每一 个字都如同一幅画一般,在时代交替的过程中古语和方 言的发音都在迅速变化,只有象形文字稳定流传了下 来, 因此可以说中国文人的交流主要是通过书面语沟 通, 在教育和知识的洗礼下书面语也越来越形成了高雅 的文人特色,和世俗生活迅速拉开了差距。这样的差别 让我们在翻译的过程中遇到了障碍, 我难以用"口语" 去将小说翻译成中文书面,Jessica也在试图把握巨大 的文化差异和词汇的缺乏。

除了固有的语言问题之外,我也在试图把握文字的"质感",我在交流时将其称为"texture"其实也不是特别恰当。这种质感类似于文字的肌理和脉络,是让小说活过来的关键,我尝试了翻译句子的押韵,但是并不合适,也尝试只翻译感觉而不是直观意思,但是这些对于"质感"来说都只是很小的一部分,我希望能够继续有机会在翻译中探索。

JESSICA SUN

MOUTH

I was addicted to sex. But don't get me wrong. I don't want you to think of me as a mere sex addict. I want to make a good impression, as much as I can, but there's only so much I can do. It didn't start out that way. I don't know if there was a singular moment that it started before it was everywhere, everyone. There aren't any records. I've forgotten most of it, most of them. I remember the beds more than the people. Looking back, I didn't know how much I was addicted, I just felt that urge and satisfied it. I say this in the past tense like I've moved on. Don't let that deceive you. I'm addicted. Look at me. You're looking at an addict. Why? Why is anyone an addict? I'm sure it had something to do with my childhood, or society, but that's not the important part. Let's talk sex.

I was a dentist. I cleaned teeth, filled cavities, did root canals, installed braces, made bridges and crowns. I reconstructed mouths and jaws. I looked at teeth every day, all shapes and sizes. Tongues, gums, throats, tonsils, lips. It was a fulfilling job—that's what I told people. I loved helping people feel better about their appearance and have more self-confidence—give them more spring in their step. I turned shyness around into a smile. I turned grimaces into grins. Isn't that what all dentists say? What else can I say? What I want to see is a dentist who blatantly likes getting paid, likes to think about his hourly rate and how many hours it takes to buy a boat or a lakefront property in Tahoe. I want to meet the guy who tells people the truth—"my parents wanted me to be a dentist, so that's what I did." That's my truth. Everything else becomes a means to an end.

翻译: 王欧雯

我曾沉迷于性。但请不要误解,我不想让你单把 我当做一个性瘾者。我尽力给你留下一个好点的印象, 似乎我也只能够做到这些了。其实一开始并不这样。我 不知道是否存在这样一个特殊的时间,它没有留下任何 记录,开始于有记忆的事件和人之前。我已经忘记了它 们中的大部分,因为我记住床更甚于记人。回看时我没 感受到我的成瘾,我只是感受到冲动,然后满足它。我 说这些的时候用的过去时态就好像我已经有所改变了, 请不要让那些欺骗你,看看我,我已经成瘾。你正在看 的是一个瘾君子。为什么?为什么会有人成瘾?我当然 相信这与我的童年或者社会有联系,但不是重要的部 分,我们还是来谈谈性吧。

我是牙医,给牙齿清洁,填补蛀牙,做根管,安装牙套,为它们做牙桥和牙冠。是我重塑的牙齿和下巴。我每天看着牙齿,看着它们所有的形状尺寸,舌头,牙龈,喉咙,扁桃体,嘴唇。我喜欢我的工作——我就是这么告诉别人的。我总是帮助人们喜欢自己的脸,让他们自信得加快步伐。我将羞于启"齿"变成莞尔一笑,我让苦脸笑出声来。牙医不都这么说吗,我还能再说些什么呢?我只想看到这种牙医,他明说自己喜欢赚钱,考虑他的时薪,以及需要多少小时才能买一艘船或者塔霍湖旁边的房子。我想遇到一个告诉人们真相的人——"我父母想让我成为一名牙医,所以我就这样干了。"这就是我真正的想法,其他一切都只是手段。

What I'm trying to say is that I make a lot of money and that I knew I was going to dentistry school years before I had any thoughts of my own.

I started attending the meetings. It just occurred to me one day that it would be interesting to go. Again, I didn't think that I was addicted, but I wanted to see the kinds of people attending those meetings and see if they got better. It was some parental instinct, maybe. It was like a show. I still didn't see any problem with how much sex I had. Here's what I really believed—that it's a replacement for exercise and there are several health benefits associated with regular sexual activity. Lack of sex—that was a real problem. But the overabundance of it? If sex is an exercise, how could you have too much of it? Anyway I wasn't hurting anyone. It all felt so good. Until it changed from sex to something else... let me explain.

My patients' mouths reminded me of sex. I remember the first time when I got hard during a procedure. I was fixing a chip in her tooth. Usually I look at the gums for signs of receding or inflammation. I assess the coating of the tongue and check for sores. I look at the tonsils for discoloration. Those tonsils were dark, a melange of red and purple and pink that can't be found anywhere except in those wet folds I like to spread apart with my fingers or my tongue. It's a secret color. It's covert. It's a shade you never see except when someone opens their mouth or their legs. I sprayed water in her mouth in between applying layers of resin and I saw—I really saw—her salivating, the drops blooming like shiny points of dew along her gums. I never saw saliva so closely before. Everything was glistening. I had never paid attention to my job until that day, that moment, where it became an exploration of someone's insides. I wasn't just a dentist. I was venturing into private territory—the privacy of a mouth. I felt like she trusted me. I felt powerful. The more I examined her mouth the more power I felt-everything sharpened and 我正在试图说明的是我赚了很多钱,并且在我有自己的 想法之前,我就知道我要去牙科学校了。

我开始参加戒瘾的活动,我去那里只是觉得很有意思。我再强调一遍,我不认为自己上瘾,我不过是想看看那种参加会议的人,看看他们会不会有什么改变。也许这是本能,它看起来就像一场表演。我始终不觉得我做爱太多有什么问题。我是这样相信着的,性和锻炼差不多,规律的性对健康有益,没有性才是真正的问题。我又在想,如果是过多的性呢?如果性是一种锻炼,你又怎么能够过度锻炼?但是不管怎么说我并没有伤害任何人,我自我感觉良好。直到它从性开始变为别的,咳咳,请容我稍作解释。

我病人的口腔让我想到性。我记得我第一次在手 术中勃起的时刻, 我那时正在修复她牙齿上的缺口。通 常来说我会检查牙龈是否有萎缩或者发炎的迹象,我检 查舌苔, 检查有无溃疡, 我也查看扁桃体是否变色。那 些深色的扁桃体是红、紫、粉色的混合, 只会在那些我 喜欢用手指或舌头掰开的湿润褶皱里被看到。这是一种 隐秘的颜色, 是隐蔽之处。如非有人张开他们的嘴巴或 者腿, 你将不会看到这种阴影。我在涂抹树脂的间隙朝 她嘴里喷水, 然后我看到, 我确实看到她在流口水, 水 珠在她的牙龈上像发亮的露珠一样绽开。我过去从未如 此近距离观察唾液,这一切自发地闪耀。在那一天、那 个时刻之前,我从来没有真的注意过我的工作,在这里 它变成了对一个人深处的探索。我不只是一个牙医,我 在闯入他人的私人领域,闯入口腔的隐私。我感受到她 的信任, 感受到了权力。随着检查的深入, 我更加感受 到权力——一切锋利化,手术变成了我和她之间精密的 舞蹈——我的手和她的牙齿,我的工具和她的舌头。她 的舌头在摇晃, 更加润湿。我们在彼此之间戏弄。

我能够听到我的心跳、荧光灯细小的呻吟、我的

the procedure became a precise dance between me and her—my hands and her teeth, my tools and her tongue. The more her tongue swayed the moister it became. We were playing a game with each other. I could hear my heartbeat and the thin buzz of the fluorescent lights and the creaking of my chair and the receptionist's crisp voice, all those sounds I never really heard before. I moved with the precision of an artist. It was like the bliss you have in the last moments of sex, when time disappears and everything has a clarity and a brightness and an importance... And all this was happening and I hadn't even penetrated her yet. And then I realized that I had already entered her, I already had my fingers in her mouth and my eyes down her throat. I thought maybe she could dangle her arm off the edge of her chair, dangle her arm that was inches away from my lap, and if she did she would feel something hot and solid and wagging. She'd think it was my knee, or she'd think nothing at all—that error was what thrilled me the most. That she trusted me. I'm sure she didn't suspect a thing. I was only her dentist, and she was only there to get the chip in her tooth fixed. But I knew something very different. I saw her hand brushing me, grasping me, moving me. I was in two worlds at once, one fantasy and one reality. When I looked at my assistant she didn't suspect a thing. She was just doing her job. The arm still dangled. Everyone was just doing their jobs—a dentist, an assistant, a patient. But no—I had escaped. I was more than a dentist. I was beyond mere dentistry. My slacks were loose so my assistant didn't notice the swelling in my crotch. And what if she did...

That's when I knew that the two worlds had crossed.

It was fine, at first. It continued to happen. My assistant never knew what was going on, and I liked that. No one knew. I thought that maybe I was right to be turned on. Why shouldn't I be? Mouths are mouths are mouths. They're great for sex. How can we pretend

椅子嘎吱作响,还有接待员清脆的嗓音,所有这些声音 我过去从未真正听到。我用艺术家的精准性挪动着。它 就好像你在性爱最后时分拥有的幸福, 当时间消失时一 切都清晰、明亮和有意义起来。一切发生的时候我甚至 还没有进入她的身体。然后我意识到我已经进入了她, 我已经用手指深入她的口腔, 我的视线渗透她的喉咙。 我在想,如果她可以将胳膊从椅子边上晃到离我膝盖几 英寸的地方——如果她真的这样做了,就会感到有什么 温热而坚实的东西在颤动。她会认为那是我的膝盖,或 者干脆认为无事发生,这是最让我感到刺激的地方。她 信任我, 我确认她没有期待这些事情的发生。我不过是 她的牙医,她也只是为了修复牙齿芯片而来。但是我清 楚有些事完全变化了。我看到她的手触碰我,抓住我, 推动我。我同时处于两个世界。我看到我的助手了,她 没有起任何疑心, 只是在做自己的工作。那只手臂依旧 悬荡。每个人都只是在做自己的工作罢了——牙医、助 手,还有一个病人。不,其实我已经逃离。我不只是一 个牙医, 我超越牙科之上。我松垮的裤子让助手没有注 意到我胯部的肿胀,如果她注意到的话……

这就是我发觉两个世界交叠的时刻。

最开始还算良好。但是它难以停止。我的助手不会知道正在发生的事,正是我想看到的。无人知晓。我认为我的性兴奋是正确的,我为什么不能这样?嘴巴不过是口腔和嘴,他们对性来说很适宜,我们又怎能假装它是些别的?又是谁有资格分裂出一个嘴巴不被允许做这些的世界?我当然更清楚,这是只有我明白的真理。现在我在办公室时比在卧室里更兴奋,我迫不及待要去工作,去看那些每个小时都为我张开的嘴巴。我缠绵那些脸颊、嘴唇和固定它们的下巴,我在思想深处对嘴巴做研究。每个人对我来说都相当有意思——即使是男人。在此之前从未如此。每个人是独特的,每张嘴都不

otherwise? Who are we to divide the world up where some functions of mouths aren't allowed? I knew better. It was all shaping up into a truth that only I understood. I felt more thrill in the office than I did in the bedroom. I couldn't wait to go to work, to see all those mouths open up for me, one every hour. I became intimate with the cheeks and the lips and the chins that held the mouth in place. I was doing research, conducting studies of mouths in the privacy of my thoughts. Everyone was interesting to me—even the men. People had never been so interesting until then. Everyone was different, unique, each mouth one that no one else had. My practice became a front for my new obsession with mouths. How had I never seen them that way, through those seven years of school and residency? How had I missed what I saw now?

For a time it worked. I was content with my investigations. I would watch them sit down and lie back and open. I took great pleasure in directing them—show me your bite, chew, rinse, swallow. Good. You're doing great. Let me know how I can make you more comfortable. They listened to me with perfect obedience. Then I would imagine them accidentally touching me.

Totally harmless. A small brush, a light pat, nothing out of the ordinary. And then my imagination pulled reality into itself, and somehow those little things started happening. Fingers would brush ever so lightly on clothes. Hands would touch lips and skin. And then I would draw away as if it were all just accident, all of it unplanned, unnoticed, like it was nothing at all.

Some days I was no longer the dentist who did those mundane things that all dentists do. I was directing a theater from a dentist's chair in a newly remodeled office in Sunnyvale, California. Welcome to Sunny Smile Designs. What can we do for you? Our curtains open at eight and close at five. Book your tickets in advance; slots fill up quickly. They were my unwitting cast, and I had a fondness for them that is reserved for a director regarding his cast.

被他人所拥有。我的行动是我痴迷嘴巴的幌子。在过去 七年的学习和实习里,我是如何忽略掉这些的,是如何 错过我现在所看到的这些的?

这段时间就是如此,我对这些研究很满意。 我会看着他们坐下、往后躺然后张嘴。我从指挥中获得 巨大的愉悦——给我看看你的咬合,咀嚼,冲洗,吞 咽。不错,你做得很好。让我知道怎样能让你更舒服。 他们以绝对的服从聆听我。于是我会幻想他们突然间的 触碰。完全无辜的,小小的掠过,轻拍,平淡正常。接 着我的想象把现实拽入了自己,那些细小的事情无意间 开始发生。手指如此轻擦衣裳,手将触摸嘴唇和肌肤。 然后我会表现得好像一场巧合,不须解释,不被注意, 就好像它只是虚无。

这些日子我不再是只会常规的普通牙医了。我在加州森尼维尔市一间新近改建的办公室里,坐在牙医的椅子上导演戏剧。"欢迎来到阳光微笑设计室,我们能为你做什么呢?我们八点开,五点关门。请提前订票,因为满员很快。"他们是我不知情的演员,我像导演喜欢演员一样喜爱他们。

工作后我就得去放纵了。我已经数不清那上 千个夜晚、名字、身体……过程很简单:约一个女人出 来,邀请她去一家高档餐厅,随便一个流行地点,等着 夜晚揭开帷幕。我会坐在桌子的对面,微笑,点头,看 着她的嘴唇,那些牙齿,想着我该如何修复它们。但是 我在办公室更多享受这些嘴巴们,因为它们不知情。那 就是区别。我上过的女人,她们知道有些事情会到来, 一切都是事先安排好的。场景一,酒吧。葡萄酒在细长 酒杯中旋转。场景二,闹区散步,交谈工作、爱好和周 末安排并且假装有兴趣。场景三,床上。她们知道,我 也知道。但是办公室的嘴巴们并不知道。所以这些性不 过是程序,我不再和过去一样感受它们,但我还在做 After work I had to indulge. I've lost count of them, thousands of evenings, names, bodies... It was easy, the procedure: ask a woman out, invite her to an upscale restaurant, whatever trendy spot with a crowd, let the night unravel. I would sit across the table and smile and nod and look at her lips, those teeth, thinking about how I would fix them. But I enjoyed the mouths in the office more. Because those mouths didn't know. That was the difference. The women I fucked, they knew it was coming—it had all been marked out in advance. Scene One, the bar. Wine swirling in glasses with thin, long stems. Scene Two, the walk downtown, chatting about work, hobbies, plans for the weekend. Feign just enough interest. Scene Three, the bed.

They knew and I knew. But the mouths in the office didn't know. So the sex became routine, didn't feel the same way it used to, but I kept doing it, did it more, because of the mouths.

Yes, there was a line between me and them. My new job was to get as close to the line as I could without crossing it. The charade was fun, I have to admit. It made work easy. I practically skipped into the office. One day Natalia—my assistant—told me I looked good. And guess what I said—you're doing a great job—that's what I said! Can you believe that? And she was flattered, she thought that the comment was about her work, how great of a job she was doing, and I stayed hidden.

I got scared once. I saw myself, in the imagination that ran parallel to the hands that held silver instruments, stand up and step forward, very close to the patient. The next moment I was standing and my legs, the ones who knew to turn around for the hands to pick up a scraper or a pick, instead took a step in the wrong direction and my hand reached up and touched myself. It was hot, inflamed. My fingers wrapped around myself before I saw the receptionist walk past in the periphery. And I woke up and I placed my other hand very slowly on top of the first as if I were just folding my hands in front of me in the most natural way possible.

着,做得更多,因为那些办公室的嘴巴。

是的,这里有一条界限,我的新工作是尽可能接近但并不跨越。我承认这种做戏有趣且放松。我几乎是跑进的办公室。有一天我的助理纳塔莉亚告诉我我看起来状态很好。猜猜我说了什么——你做得很不错——这就是我说的!你能相信吗?接着她受宠若惊,她认为那条评论是在说她的工作,她的职责完成得有多好。我可不会说出来真正的含义。

我也有过恐惧。在想象中,我看见自己与拿着银器的手平行,起身前行,贴近我的病人。下一个时刻我站着,我的腿,那些知道怎么转身让手拿起刮刀或牙科涡轮机的腿,却错误地迈出去,我的手抬起并触摸到了身体。它很热,应该是在发炎。我的手指缠绕着自己,直到我看到接待员从边缘走过。我醒来,把手非常缓慢地放在了另一个手上,就好像我只是在尽可能自然地把我的手放在面前。

这场梦之后我就试着分开办公室和床上的嘴了, 但是我做不到。我很想在办公室把我的屌塞进他们的嘴 巴而只是在卧室里刷牙。

戒瘾会帮我理解别人的瘾,但从未了解我自己的。我只是在听他们重复的说着出轨,再出轨,找妓女,在酒吧大醉如泥,毁掉一些交往。他们羞耻而想去改变,想做个好人,但是从没人说起那些感受的美好之处,从没人提到那种明亮,目睹每个细小动作中的清醒,那种用宏大乐器演奏它们的感觉。

也许他们只是不知道从何谈起或者他们从未感受 到我所说的那些。我所感受的激情是人类的嘴巴,它的 颜色、形状、肉、口水,湿润、鲜活加上神秘。目前为 止我所有的推断中我还是性瘾者,我停不下来,那种感 觉一直臃肿。人们只想要一个牙医而不是有血有肉的 人,我该怎么告诉他们,他们的嘴对我来说是处女之 And when I turned back around I made sure to take my time to show that I wasn't in any rush at all. I counted to five—five seconds to turn around would be enough. I moved some forceps around on the counter to look occupied, like I was searching for something. When my assistant returned I asked her about the X-rays to let her chatter, while in my mind I questioned how I had let myself come so close to the line. What happened? I had nearly revealed myself! That's when it got all mixed up, even though I didn't know what exactly was wrong.

After that accident I tried to separate them. I tried to see a mouth in the office as different from a mouth in the bedroom. But they became the same mouth. I wanted to press my cock into the mouth in the office and I wanted to clean the teeth of the mouth in the bedroom.

The meetings helped me understand the others' addictions. But I never talked about myself. I just listened. They all talked about the same thing—how they cheated, kept cheating, hired whores, got drunk in bars, ruined relationships. They were ashamed. They wanted to change. They wanted to be better. But no one ever talked about the beauty of that feeling. No one ever brought up the brightness, the lucidity of witnessing every small movement, the sense of a great orchestration playing itself out. Maybe they didn't know how to talk about it—or maybe they had never felt the way I did. What I felt was a state of appreciation for the human mouth, its colors, its form, its flesh, its drool, how wet and alive and uncharted it was. Yet for all my reasoning I was still an addict. I couldn't stop. The obsession only grew. What people want in a dentist is a dentist, not a person. How could I tell them that their mouth was virgin land to me?

How could I communicate to them that each mouth was unique in its own way? But every last one of them expected me to be a dentist. Even my assistant, seeing me perform root canals and extract molars and install braces for forty hours a week, even she saw

地,每一张嘴都如此独特?但是最后他们只期待一个牙 医罢了。

就连我的助理,她每周看着我做牙根管、拔牙、装牙套四十小时,连她都看不到我的存在。六个周四的夜晚,成瘾者环绕在折叠椅上,传递纸巾盒,背诵祷告。我坐在不属于我的其中,我思考着我是否想放任我的成瘾和痴迷消失,在修复蛀牙和咬合肌里度过余生?我想要放弃我有过的这一切吗?我不喜欢你可能把我当做简单的性瘾者,我没有和妓女做爱,没有出轨和强迫别人。所以告诉我所有成瘾者都这样吗?如果不是的话,我为什么要改变,我从没做不该做的事情,做过的也从不后悔。我不会越线,这就是我和他们的区别。

nothing of me.

Thursday night. A group of addicts sitting in a circle of folding chairs, passing the box of tissues, reciting the prayer. I sat among them but did I belong? Did I want to let go of my addiction, my obsession, and go to the office every day to just fix cavities and overbites for the rest of my life? Did I want to give it all up for what I had before? You might take me for a simple addict, but I wasn't like them. I wasn't having sex with prostitutes. I wasn't cheating. I never forced myself on anyone. So tell me, are all addicts the same? Why should I change? I never did anything I said I wouldn't do. I've done nothing I regret. I never crossed the line. And that's the difference between me and them.

Translator's Note

| I wish I had a definition.

What is contemporary Chinese fiction? What does it sound like? These are the questions I seek answers to in my translation work. Wáng Ōuwén has become a good friend over our months of collaborations and discussions about what contemporary fiction is.

| We both like Olga Tokarczuk. Specifically, House of Day, House of Night.

I blend registers in *Distant Mountain* to create a surrealism and dreamstate of the kind we both admire. You'll see the mixing of historical and more modern uses of language, along with a directness of speech, to open a new space for this nascent genre. In general I work toward a contemporary voice—one that doesn't explicitly foreignize.

| I had a lot of freedom.

Ouwén gave me some direction and a lot of rein. I felt free to rearrange sentences, change punctuation, shuffle around sentence structure, and remove words that would have added unintended emphasis in English. This is not a word-for-word translation.

On the ambiguity differential.

Chinese and English have different ambiguity degrees/tolerances. There are moments of ambiguous reference in the original in which I added specificity: in Dream Four, the grave belongs to the lady but the possessive pronoun is not specified in Chinese. A translator of Chinese needs to be aware of what can remain as insinuation and what must be clarified in English to carry the same meaning.

On pandering, briefly.

I didn't want to and therefore didn't overexplain references to cultural traditions. This keeps the focus on the storyline and atmosphere. I believe that our work is meant to create an effect rather than to teach. In *Distant Mountain*, the setting and the villagers' relationship with

the setting are what create the story.

| Etc.

The tone markers are for accuracy of pronunciation and to suggest the Chinese words to a Chinese-speaking audience—since I wonder, every time I read pinyin, how to pronounce what I'm reading. The term "priest" (祭司) was the most difficult word to translate because it has white-man-in-a-black-robe associations; "shaman" would have been inaccurate; there is no fits-like-a-glove solution.

| Distant Mountain, Part II

In a few weeks from now, I'll be at a distant mountain with Ōuwén. In a few months she'll be coming to the U.S. for the first time. We'll continue adding to the voices of contemporary Chinese literature.

王欧雯

远山在上

梦境一

这是一座高耸的野山,打通南北的隧道看得出是新近驯服的痕迹。有一辆大巴车穿行隧道,但是与此同时的是山上的石块也紧着翻滚,下坠。或许是之前轻微的地震被大巴的摇晃盖了过去,但是它至少能撼动一些小小的石块,它们推搡着滚落,终于大一些的石头也动了。车里的人们察觉到落石的时候已经无处可去了。这种事情在山路是时常发生的,这一次的结果也算还好,只有一个稍大的石块打破了玻璃,伤到了一位老人。车已经不能开了,前方到处是碎石,车比人更危险,离有人烟的地方还有半天的路程。这些素不相识的人们最后只能做出决定,他们不能确定老人的伤势,只能徒步去找救援。他们留下保暖衣和食物,出发了。

我的讲述一

母亲听完我的梦境说道: "上个月,老家隧道那里确实滑坡了,死了个老人,和你讲的也差不多。"但是当我提到老家和外婆,她总是有消极情绪。这是可以理解的,无论街坊邻居还是走熟亲戚都对外婆颇有微词,不过大家也都会叹气,毕竟这么多年给外公治病养病呢。外婆结婚第二个月,喜宴的角落还没收拾好,外公就突发脑溢血,乡村哪能治这种病,于是一家人搬到了城市里,那个时候外婆开始学习摆摊讲价,后来也开过小饭馆和小区药店。外婆当年形影不离,细心照顾,外公离了她竟然也能生活。

translated from the chinese by JESSICA SUN

DISTANT MOUNTAIN

Dream: One

Before me was a magnificent and wild mountain. It had been tamed recently by the tunnel cutting through it. A bus entered the tunnel just as some stones on the mountainside shuddered and fell. It might have been caused by the tremor moments before the bus drove through—in any case, several smaller stones were dislodged and tumbled down, followed by larger ones. By the time they noticed, the passengers on the bus knew there was no escape. This kind of event happened often on mountain roads, and this occasion wasn't particularly serious. Although, one large stone crashed through a window of the bus and injured an elderly person.

The road outside the tunnel was blocked by loose stones so the bus couldn't go any further. Staying in the bus was dangerous, but they were still half a day away from the nearest town. In the end the passengers, all strangers to each other, had no choice. Because they didn't know how severe the old man's injury was, they had to search for help on foot. They left some warm clothing and food for him and set off.

My Account: One

After hearing about my dream, my mother said, "Last month there really was a landslide at the tunnel near my hometown, and an elderly person died. It's exactly like what you told me." But every time I mentioned either her hometown or her mother (my grandmother), she would feel bad. I understood; both neighbors and relatives talked behind my grandmother's back with a sigh because she'd had to tend to my sick

手稿一

第一个故事发生在外婆回到家乡的第一天,她在村口一户人家借了斧头,那家只有一个小女孩,很羞怯地爬上橱柜。我的外婆第一目的是砍点木头取暖,第二目的是回温过去,没想到回家的时候已经有了一位客人,原来村口的小女孩正是村支书的女娃。

事情是这样的,村庄坐落的名叫做羊峒山,除了 山下有众多村民, 山尖上还有一个消息甚少的村落, 据 说是一千年前打仗时候遗留下来的一支远兵。也是这个 原因,他们更乐于走另一座山脉的路线去故土朝拜,极 少有人下山, 因此过去的村支书慢慢地懒怠了这个划分 下来的村落,如今上山的路已经很少有人知晓了。但是 年轻的村支书刚上任就收到通知,一定要对管辖的村庄 记录帮扶,但是山下仅有一户从山上来的人家,多年前 两个男人背着锅碗瓢盆和两个小女孩下山来了。问题就 在干,他们方言难以相通,两个小女孩更是用自己的一 套语言互相沟通,与世隔绝。这下阳谷知道为什么找上 她了, 在她小时候, 这里流行上了外地和本地家庭的结 对子, 主要是为了众多因为饥荒逃过来的家庭的融入, 而恰巧他们一家和山上的来客都居住在山脚。阳谷当然 愿意帮忙, 但是她也很少能和这家人搭上话, 但是她还 是愿意去试试看。

手稿一

这是外婆说得最少的一个故事,哪怕她有了孩子,孩子也有了孩子以后还是有耻感。阳谷小时候是在后山洗澡的,她的母亲用大木盆浇上烧好的水,烫了就地加山泉水。那天她的母亲烧的水不够,折转回家去了,阳谷浸泡在温水里,水只能覆盖她的腰部,她感到上半身被山风挠得凉飕飕。山林里太过安静了,虫鸣和落叶的声音都被放大,断枝和脚步声更让人惊吓。阳谷

grandfather for so many years. Within two months of their marriage, even before the wedding banquet room had been fully tidied, my grandfather had suffered a brain hemorrhage. Of course treatment wasn't available in the countryside, so the entire family moved to the city. My grandmother opened a small shop, and later, a modest restaurant and pharmacy. She stayed by my grandfather's side and took good care of him. Yet when she passed away first, he was able to go on living just the same.

Manuscript: One

The first story took place the day my grandmother returned to her hometown. She went to borrow a hatchet from the first household by the gate. They had a timid little girl, their only child, who ran and hid herself in a cupboard out of shyness. My grandmother had two goals before her: first, to chop wood for a fire, and then to reminisce. But when she returned to her house, she found an unexpected guest there already. It was the village's party secretary, whose daughter was the little girl she'd seen.

The story went like this: her village was in Yángdòng Mountain. Though the village at the foot of the mountain was well-populated, there was a lesserknown village at the summit. It was said the villagers there were soldiers who'd been left behind from a war one thousand years ago. So most people took a different route through the mountains to return to their hometown to worship. Very few villagers from the mountaintop ever descended, and over time the party secretaries had all but forgotten about that village. The path up the mountain was also nearly forgotten. But when the new party secretary took office, he was instructed to make a record of all the villages under his jurisdiction to extend support to them. At that time there was only one family who had descended from the mountaintop; two men had arrived many years before, carrying pots and pans and two little girls on their backs. But they spoke a strange

看着两个裸身的小女孩走了过来,她们长得一模一样, 痣都点在相同的位置上,头发肢体都湿漉漉滴水,显然 是从山泉里洗身出来。她们在靠近,盯着木盆和阳谷, 阳谷看到了她们更深色的肌肤,水从她们脸庞、肚皮和 腿部淌下。她们看起来比阳谷更年幼,但是显然更健 壮。她们很近了,阳谷看得清双胞胎在阳光下照出的绒 毛,她赶紧用手护住胸口。双胞胎手牵手对话,阳谷听 不懂她们的言语,她们对木盆和阳谷的身体都很好奇。 其中有一个女孩转向了她,说了"戈萨",阳谷不断摇 头,她们就朝前去了,瘦小的大腿慢慢消失在山林里, 光脚的踩踏声也消失了。

梦境二

晚上我又开始做梦。还是在昨晚的那座山头,现在那里只剩下了土路和一些放牛的人们。人们把石子铺在山口道路,让放牧的人不要闯入羊峒山神的领地。山里的画面高速运转着,突然在一处房屋恢复正常的流转。这是一位妙龄女子的家,她把头发散落一半,用彩色的花梗编织鞭子,这是求偶的信号,这一周男人们都可以在夜晚取悦她,直到她有了决定。她的哥哥是远山回来的男人,被视为可以和"羊峒"沟通的祭司。这个晚上很离奇,姑娘的房子里突然翻窗进入了一个生面孔的男人,他的衣服比这里的厚实得多,没见过生人的姑娘没有叫。

第二天清晨山上又来了几个骑马的男子,他们的 衣服和帽檐都很锋利。他们询问村民一个赶路的男人, 黑衣服,头顶疤。刚好姑娘昨晚见过,他给了她不少 钱,然后往羊峒的领地去了。

"你拿了钱还睡了觉?"

"我是拿了钱也睡了觉,我刚好在备婚的时间 哩。" dialect and the girls had their own language altogether, isolating themselves from the world.

That was when my Grandma Yánggǔ understood why the secretary had come to her. When she was young, local families had been paired with foreign ones to help them integrate after escaping the famine. Her family and that family both lived at the foot of the mountain. Grandmother had barely spoken with them, but she was willing to try and help.

Manuscript: Two

This is the story Grandma Yánggǔ tells the least. Despite having children who have their own children, she still feels ashamed about what happened.

When she was young, she took baths behind the mountain. Her mother would prepare a wooden tub of boiled water, adding fresh spring water if it was too hot. One day her mother hadn't boiled enough water and returned home for more, leaving Yánggǔ to bathe by herself. The water in the tub only came up to her waist and the cold mountain wind gnawed at her. The mountain was eerily quiet, amplifying the sound of insects and leaves. The snapping of twigs underfoot startled her. She saw two naked girls approach. They looked exactly alike, with birthmarks in the same places, their hair and bodies dripping from their bath in a spring. They came close to Yánggǔ's tub, watching her. Their skin was dark and drops of water trickled down their faces, stomachs, and legs.

They looked younger than Yánggǔ, but sturdier. They were so close that she could see the hair on their skin illuminated by the sun. She covered her chest. The twins held hands and spoke with each other in a language Yánggǔ couldn't understand. They looked at her and the wooden basin curiously. One of them turned toward her and said, "Gesar". Yánggǔ shook her head over and over, then they strode past her. Their narrow thighs and the pattering of their bare feet on soil disappeared into the woods.

- "你们有没有村支书?"
- "只有祭司,我家就有一个。"
- "姑娘你这是违法了,念你初次,我们也赶路, 小惩一下就可以。"

犯什么法?姑娘问了几次: "我这是在备婚哩。"

"总之是不能收钱,我们打你三鞭子就行。" "不能三鞭子,这个是偷人的法,两鞭子。" 来人看着日照山头,有些不耐烦:"四鞭子。"

"那也行。"她半跪在地上,把臀部高高撅起。 但是这也有了别的问题,路过这家的第一个路人只听到 了三鞭子,然后看到骑马的大人们出去了。

"我"的讲述二

我醒来了。我感受到山头之灵的欲动,那浇灌村 庄的乳汁正在缓慢逝去。我得回到老家的房子去了,我 大部分童年的手稿都出存在老宅,那些梦也指引我进羊 峒。

梦境三

太阳照常升起,山头顶尖像是勃起的乳头,阳光 从此处喷薄。石子路旁的田地里一只尖下巴长白毛的 羊悄悄踏进土地,它从曾沉眠在"羊峒"深处,但是它 必须去山尖的石头上寻找些盐分。母羊低下头,闻了土 壤,专心舔舐。有一位醒得早的老人看见,尖叫。

大家差不多都聚齐了,只有被鞭打过的姑娘还在修养(人们说她只是心里难受)。在和山下人有一些交换物资后,人们已经少去远方祭拜了,现在只有十年前回来的两位祭司。老祭司弯下身去,尝了一口土: "太咸了,怪不得这两年收成差。"第一个发现此事的老人讲道: "我看着那母羊肚子垂下来的,山神在说肚子的

Dream: Two

I dreamed again at night. I was back at the mountain from the night before. All that remained were the dirt road and some cattle herders. People had piled stones at the mountain pass to block the herders from entering the territory of the Yángdòng Mountain god. Then the images of the mountain sped up, cycling faster and faster into obscurity before slowing down, whereupon a house at the summit came into focus. Here lived a young lady. She had parted and braided her hair with colorful flower stalks, a signal to suitors that she was open to courtship. Every night for a week, men would come in through her window to please her until she made her selection. Her older brother had just returned from a distant mountain, now established as a priest who was able communicate with Yángdòng. But this night was different. A man suddenly climbed in through the lady's window, wearing thicker clothing than the locals. Yet she didn't cry out for help.

The following morning before dawn, several officials on horseback arrived at the village. Their clothes and hat brims were crisp. They asked the villagers about a man who seemed to be in a hurry, dressed all in black, with a scar at the crown of his head. It was the strange man who had visited the lady. He had given her quite a bit of money before leaving for Yángdòng territory.

"So you accepted the money and went to bed?"

"Yes. I happen to be in my time of courtship."

"Is there a party secretary here?"

"We only have priests. Speaking of, there is one in my family." $\label{eq:weaking}$

"Miss, you have broken the law. Since this is your first time and we're in a hurry, a small punishment will do."

Broken what law? She kept repeating: "But I'm in courtship."

"You shouldn't have taken the money. Three flogs will be enough."

事。"老祭司说:"这些年,每家都生太多了。"大家明白了,土地开垦太多,牛羊也多了,但是手边孩子总不能塞回去。那天老祭司做了决定,他要携带所有家人去远方的故土定居,去祈福,村庄也能少好几口人,这是这个村庄能做的最大诚意。他临走前嘱咐村民聆听山神的旨意。他对小祭司没有交代,因为人们都知道小祭司的愚笨。他们走进山神的领地去了。

我的叙述三

我并不特别担心外公的生活状况,因为在山里的 这几年外公已经没有犯过病,可见生活之滋养。我从正 门走进去,院子里护理工在给外公按摩,外公在藤椅上 大惊。吴姓护工一直很局促地搓手,终于开口解释了一 通她和外公已经事实上同居五年,遗嘱也写这个房子以 后归她所有。我告诉她我并不是为财产回来。

手稿三

这个时候的阳谷已经知道了这家的两个男人难以接触,她趁夜间拜访两个女孩,带上鲜猪肉作为礼物。她从客厅敲门,顺着邀请的声音推开木门,两个女孩正躺下规规矩矩和毛毡贴在一起。阳谷说明来意和小时候两家人的缘分,观察之后发现两个女孩子竟是被牛皮的皮带扎着棉被捆绑在床上的。"戈萨"让惊慌失措的客人不要害怕。当她的同胞姐妹开口时,她们不由自主换上自己的语言,因此阳谷只能听到一部分解释,两个女孩小时候把山上的习惯带了下来,因此两个男人也借用山上男人的传统,一到夜里就把女孩老老实实拴在床上,像是把牛羊栓在圈里一样。阳谷离开的时候才发现身体木木的,在争执声中她扭头看到血水已经流到了木地板上,和灰尘融在一起。

我的讲述四

当年外婆执意要带外公治病,中医、西医、偏方

"That cannot be. Three is for a dultery! Two flogs." $\ensuremath{\text{\textbf{Two}}}$

One of them looked toward the sun rising over the mountain. He said with some impatience, "Four."

"Fine." She knelt down and raised her buttocks high. But this posed a different issue; a passerby heard only three cracks, then watched the officials disappear on horseback.

My Account: Two

I woke up. I felt the mountain spirit's desire stirring within me. Its nectar that once fed the village was slowly seeping away. I had to return to my hometown, my family house, where my childhood manuscripts about my grandmother were stored. It was these dreams that led me back to Yángdòng.

Dream: Three

The sun rose as usual. Its light spurted between the erect nipples of the mountain peaks. Beside the gravel road was a field in which stood a single ewe. She had a pointed chin and flowing white fur, picking her way delicately through the grass. She had been sleeping in the depths of Yángdòng, the Cavern of Sheep, but now she was headed to the summit in search of salt rocks. She lowered her head, sniffed at the soil, and licked. An elderly man who had gotten up early saw her and shrieked.

Nearly everyone from the village gathered around. Only the lady who had been flogged was absent and recovering at home (from anguish, people said). The villagers exchanged supplies with those from below; those villagers from the foot of the mountain seldom made the long journey to worship. And there were only two priests, but they had returned to the upper village ten years ago. The older priest bent down and took in a mouthful of soil. "Too salty. No wonder the harvests these past two years have been poor." The elderly man who had shrieked earlier said, "I saw that this sheep's belly was bloated

和念经祈福一样没落下,甚至她最后对外公的治病方式形成了独特的体系,甚至每次见医生的时候都会起争执。因此我还是想问外公为什么外婆去世的不久就和吴姨同居。外公眼睛浑浊但是滴溜圆地望着我,假装没听懂,他这招对外婆用了好几十年。我意识到外婆对外公的病已经形成了一种信仰,如同老祭司对远山的朝拜一般,直到终点两个人才互相摆脱。外婆说小时候她的阿爸领着一个黑乎乎的瘦娃进了家门,骨头凛冽,局促不安地看着她,她的脸很红很烫。

梦境四

这个时候的村庄规模更大,看来过了些好日子。 被鞭子抽打的姑娘已经不见了,她家的祭司时常在那块 坟前的山谷祈福。有时候另一个男人会抱着两个幼儿, 两个小孩牙牙学语聆听祭司的语言。这是姑娘与过路男 人的孩子。八月份的土地似乎比上一次更加贫瘠,清晨 的时候有人发现有一头羊死在了田野的边界。饥饿的人 们在这只羊身边围了起来。他们拾掇了自家的牛粪,和 圆润的石头放在一起着火。当天就有了一波地震,并不 太严重,但是这毕竟是"羊峒"的鼻息。人们终于意识 到山神再次发怒了,这时每户储存的粮食和肉都不够一 个冬天。他们只好去请求愚笨的小祭司。小祭司去了羊 峒山神的领地,说道他们一家会带着孩子下山去,而不 是去远山朝圣, 其次祭司迁移的方法以后会失效, 村民 们必须敬畏这片土地。院子里的人都对着羊峒山神的方 向跪地磕头, 感谢山神的仁慈。我能看出来村民的吁 气,他们似乎一直觉得这两个男人有苟且之事,这两个 女孩的母亲也挨过三鞭子。

"我"的讲述五

醒来时警察正在和外公洽谈,因为隧道的重修,

and drooping. The mountain spirit is speaking to us." The priest responded, "We've had too many children in recent years." Everyone understood. The land was overcultivated and there were too many cattle and sheep, but children couldn't be stuffed back into stomachs. That day the older priest made a decision. He would take his entire family and resettle in his homeland to appease the gods. So the village would shrink in size—it was the highest offering he could make.

Just before leaving, he addressed the entire village and beseeched them to heed the voice of the mountain spirit. He didn't explain this all to the younger priest, whom everyone knew to be absentminded—preoccupied with the beyond. And so the priest and his family entered the territory of the mountain god.

My Account: Three

I wasn't particularly concerned about my grandfather's health. He hadn't been ill for a number of years, having been healed by the nourishing power of the mountain. As I walked into the main entrance of his home, I saw nurses giving him a massage in a wicker chair in the front yard. He was shocked to see me. Nurse Wú rubbed her hands nervously for a while until the truth finally tumbled out of her mouth: she and my grandfather had been living together for five years, and she would be inheriting the house as was written in his will. I told her that I hadn't returned for the property.

Manuscript: Three

Grandma Yánggǔ already knew that the two men of that family would be difficult to communicate with. She used the cover of night to visit the two girls, bringing along a cut of fresh pork as a gift. She knocked on the door, heard a voice calling her inside, and pushed open the wooden door. The two girls were lying down side-by-side under a layer of wool felt.

Yánggǔ told them why she had come and about the relationship between the two families when she was

外公需要尽早搬离,而吴姨并不同意外公搬到她家。最后的结局我竟是从外公这里听到的,他告诉我他其实也对这件事印象深刻,但是少有人倾听。他记得那家有一个似乎是山上的村长带着双胞胎里面不爱和人说话的那个去了远山朝拜,再也没有回来,双胞胎的另一个和那家的老大带领了村支书找上山的路,这一对姐妹似乎下定了决心要分开,以便让对方过上普通人的生活。我感受到了外公的另一面。吴姨走了过来,告诉我们她接受外公住在她家了,前提是赔偿款归她。

梦境五

没能想到我还能再次进入山头,这是已经贯穿隧道的羊峒了。山脚的碎石堆预示着有一场事故发生。大巴车上一位被石头砸到后背的老人和周围人解释他归属山头,他本将命丧于此。但是他的方言让人难懂,但是考虑到他的伤势,人们还是先出发去寻找生机。老人感受到山头家人的呼唤,顺着羊峒的气息回来,将身体归还,完成了他最后的使命。

结束

我回到家的时候父母亲正在门口等待我,他们紧 紧拥抱住我,在那一刻语言、情绪和遥远的梦都离我们 远去了。 young. Then she saw that the two girls were strapped to the bed with cowhide belts padded by cotton blankets. Gesar told the panicking Yánggǔ not to be afraid. The twins couldn't help switching to their own language, so Yánggǔ could only catch snippets of their explanation: when they came down the mountain years ago, they had brought along the traditions from the upper village—so every night the two men would calmly strap the girls to the bed—as if corralling sheep in a pen. Only after Yánggǔ left did she notice that her body was petrified like wood. During their disagreement she had seen the pork blood already seeping into the floorboards, curdling with dust.

My Account: Four

My grandmother had insisted my grandfather's illness be treated: Chinese medicine, Western medicine, folk remedies, and prayer. She was thoroughly familiar with his medical options and created a special regimen for hm. It had reached the point where she argued with the doctors at every single visit. I still wanted to ask Grandfather why he was living with Nurse Wú so soon after Grandmother had passed away. He looked at me with his clouded eyes and a dull expression, pretending not to understand. He had played this trick on her for decades. Then I realized that my grandmother had formed a belief system around his illness, just like the old priest's pilgrimage to a distant mountain. It could only be cast off when one of them died. Grandmother said that once when she was young, her father had brought home a skinny, dirty child. It was chilled to the bone and looked at her uneasily, and her face had grown flushed.

Dream: Four

Now the village was larger and had seen better days. The lady who had been flogged was gone and her brother, the young priest, prayed frequently at her grave. Sometimes another man would come as well, carrying two children who babbled as they listened to the priest's

words. They were the lady's two children. The August land was drier and more barren than before and one morning a sheep was found dead at the edge of a field. Starving people surrounded the sheep. They gathered cow dung and lit it with round stones. That day a wave of earthquakes struck—nothing severe, but nonetheless it was Yángdòng's exhalation. The mountain god was raging again. The village's grain and meat stores would not last the winter. They implored the absentminded young priest to help, and he went to the Yángdòng god's territory, returning to say that his family would take their children down the mountain instead of moving to another one. Once he did so, this solution of moving the priests would be permanently nullified. In the future the villagers were to respect the land. Everyone in the courtyard knelt down, facing Yángdòng and touching their heads to the ground, thankful for the mercy of the mountain spirit. But I could see the villagers' relief. They had always believed that the two men were indecently involved; furthermore, the mother of the two girls had been flogged three times.

My Account: Five

When I woke up, I heard the police speaking to my grandfather. The tunnel was being reconstructed and he needed to move out as soon as possible—but Aunt Wú didn't want to move. It was actually Grandfather who told me how the story ended. He knew it well, though few cared to listen. He recalled a villager from the mountaintop who had taken one of the twins, the one who didn't speak to anyone, away on a pilgrimage and had never returned. The other twin led the village party secretary up the mountain. Each twin resolved to separate so that her counterpart could lead a regular life. That was when I felt a different side to my grandfather. Aunt Wú came over and said that she accepted Grandfather living in her home, assuming she would receive fair compensation from the government.

Dream: Five

I never imagined I would visit the mountain again. Yángdòng, the Cavern of Sheep, penetrated by tunnels. The rubble at the foot of the mountain told of the accident. The old man on the bus whose back had been struck by a stone said that he belonged to the mountain and so he would die there. But his dialect was thick and, considering his injury, the other passengers set out to find help. The old man felt the call of his family at the top of the mountain and rode upon the inhalation of Yángdòng, following it upward to return his body and complete his final errand on earth.

Ending

When I came home, my parents were waiting for me at the door. They hugged me tightly. At that moment, it was only us; language, emotions, and dreams were so far away.

译者注

翻译Jacky Wu《刑警先生》的过程,是一段难忘 而有意义的旅程。

线上的视频会议,连接了两个遥远的地点,连接了白天和黑夜,在一次次的沟通与探讨中,我们加深了对彼此文本的理解,也增进了我们之间的友谊。翻译的过程中遇到了一些困难,多处文本细节需要不断地揣摩体会,以求达到最理想的效果。

翻译是一门"遗憾"的艺术,所有的翻译都是"不忠实的美人"。在另一种语言环境中完美地展现原作的神韵与精髓,让原文在另一个语言体系中焕发生机,这一富于创造性的劳作,译者非殚精竭虑苦心孤诣而不能臻于完美之境。

好的翻译能促进文学发展、拓展文化边界,超前的翻译不仅可以给译入语文化带来新的思想和诗学,也可以打破不同民族之间的障碍,增进彼此的了解。走完这一段旅程,才真正理解了翻译家的不易。在今后看书阅读时,会更加尊重译者付出的努力。

Jacky在这篇小说中融入了雷蒙德·钱德勒式的语言风格。一只神秘而古怪的猴子与"我"偶然地相遇,牵连出朋友的离奇死亡事件,猴子的出现使小说拥有了奇幻的色彩。

小说结尾处,猴子留下一个诱人的悬念,勾起读者的好奇心,意欲一探究竟。此篇是一个更长故事的开头,我很期待后续的情节发展,希望她能写完这个有趣的小说。

非常感谢我能拥有此次翻译的机会,真诚地希望 我们都能继续创作下去,通过翻译和写作,给他人创造 一些属于我们的价值和快乐。

JACKY WU

MR. GUMSHOE

In the park a few years ago I met a monkey. I was sitting on a bench and he ambled up from behind me and hopped up onto the bench. He was eating a peach, the big juicy kind the likes of which I'd never seen outside of the subtropical climes of my mother's hometown. He took a huge greedy bite out of the peach, juice running down into the fur of his chin. I had never seen a monkey eat before, let alone as messily as that. If I'd ever thought about a monkey eating I might have pictured a tidy little animal delicately peeling a banana and taking swift ladylike nibbles. So I just watched his little red face as he held the peach in his clever black fingers and brought it to his face like it was the stuff of life. Had I been able to feel anything at that time I might have envied him his obvious enjoyment.

He paused in between bites and said to me, "What a sad sack you are, sitting all alone on such a nice day."

It's true, I was sitting alone, or at least I had been until he joined me, but I didn't think that was any of his business.

He finished the peach and held the pit for a moment in his leathery palm, regarding it keenly with his wise old man's eyes, before nonchalantly tossing it behind us into the shrubbery.

"An offering," he told me over his sleek brown rump. I really should have asked him for who, or for what purpose, but at that moment the thought didn't even cross my mind.

He turned back to face me and just looked at me, the same gaze he had turned upon the peach pit. I

翻译:

刑警先生

几年前,我在公园里遇到了一只猴子。我坐在长凳上,他从我身后缓步过来,跳上长凳。他在吃一个桃子,这种大而多汁的桃子,是我在母亲家乡的亚热带气候之外从未见过的。他贪婪地咬了一大口桃子,果汁顺着他下巴的皮毛流下。 我以前从未见过猴子吃东西,更不用说吃得这般狼狈的了。如果我曾设想过一只猴子吃东西,我可能会想象一只整洁的小动物小心翼翼地剥开香蕉皮,快速地小口啃食。所以我只是看着他那红润的小脸,他用灵巧的黑手指拿着桃子,将它置于面前,如同这是生命之源一样。假如当时我能感知到什么的话,我可能会羡慕他这份明显的享受。

在吃桃的间隙,他停下来对我说: "你真是个可悲的人,在这样美好的一天,独自一人坐着。"

是的,我独自坐着,起码在他加入我之前是这样的,但我认为这根本不关他的事。

他吃完了桃子,把桃核放在他坚韧的手掌上看了一会儿,用他那宛如睿智老人般的眼睛敏锐地凝视它,然后漫不经心地把它扔到我们身后的灌木丛中。

"一场献祭,"他的声音越过光滑的棕色臀部传来。我真应该问他指的是谁,或者出于什么目的,然而,在那个瞬间,这个想法甚至没有掠过我的脑海。

他转过身面朝我,一味盯着我,一如他先前对桃 核的凝视。我回看他,好奇他看到了什么。一个男孩, 一个人类,一个人类男孩,没什么特别或与众不同的。 looked back and wondered what he saw. A boy, a human, a human boy, nothing too distinctive or special. As for me I saw a monkey a little less than a third of my size, a scruff of white-brown fur around his solemn face, his high in-set eyes, scraggly and sticking up like the flyaway tufts of Albert Einstein's hair on those terrible black-and-white posters which decorated every middle-school science classroom. He might have been older; I had had a cat once whose fur got loose and staticky like that when she aged, in the months before her death.

Anyway I held his gaze for a little while, wondering in the back of my mind if the other people in the park could see us and what they might think of it; it was a popular park, a Sunday, so lots of families were wandering about, with their curious kids in those huge stroller contraptions that you'd think wouldn't be convenient in a city but that I seemed to see with twice the regularity than I would have in the suburbs. If one of those cute little toddlers caught sight of me and the monkey sitting together talking, you bet they would run right up to us shrieking with their little grubby paws out, and that would be it for me and the monkey. To be honest, though, I didn't really care if they did, or if their parents would see and what they might think.

In those days, what I remember of them, the sun was so bright that it made everything look slightly unreal—cast an illusion of unreality. Every morning when I left my apartment, when I walked through the park, from high up above, a hawk screamed, like a sound effect you would hear in the movies. The blue, blue sky, too, seemed like part of a Hollywood movie set. On that set, nothing was real, everything had been made elsewhere and then placed in, specifically, to mirror real life, or a version of life that could be happening elsewhere, concurrently, and the monkey and I were just unpaid actors, going over our lines by rote.

My best friend had died six weeks ago. She took her own life in the upstairs bathroom of her parents' home in the suburbs, a month after we graduated from 对我来说,我看到一只猴子,体型略小于我的三分之一,严肃的脸上裹着一圈棕白色的毛发,他的眼睛高而深陷,毛发参差不齐,竖立着,就像那些装饰每个中学科学教室的糟糕黑白海报上,阿尔伯特•爱因斯坦头发上飞散的一簇。他的年纪可能更老;我曾经养过一只猫,当它年老时,去世前的几个月里皮毛变得松散,一如猴子那样。

不管怎样,我们互相看了一会儿,心想公园里的 其他人是否能看到我们,他们会怎么想;这是个很受欢 迎的公园,在一个星期天,很多家庭都在四处闲逛,他 们好奇的孩子坐在那些你认为在城市里不太方便的巨大 婴儿车中,但在郊区,我似乎经常看到它们,两倍于城 市的数量。如果其中一个蹒跚学步的可爱小孩看到我和 猴子坐在一起说话,你敢打赌他们会尖叫着跑到我们身 边,伸出肮脏的小手,那我和猴子就完了。不过,老实 说,我真不在乎他们会不会这样做,也不在乎他们的父 母是否会看到,以及他们会怎样想。

那些日子,在我的记忆中,阳光明媚,让一切都显得有些不太真实——给人营造出一种不真实的幻觉。每天早晨,当我离开公寓,穿过公园时,都会听到高空中一只鹰的鸣叫,就像在电影中听到的音效一样。湛蓝的天空也像是好莱坞电影布景的一部分。在那种片场,一切都是虚假的,一切都是在别处制作,然后放于此处,特别是为了反映现实生活,或者可能同时发生在别处的生活版本。而我和猴子只是无偿的演员,死记硬背地说着我们的台词。

我最好的朋友六周前去世了。她自杀了,在郊区 她父母家的楼上浴室里。那是在我们大学毕业一个月之 后,也是我们预定去亚洲进行为期两个月的旅行的十天 前,然后我们会搬到这座城市,开启全新的成人生活。

说我已经麻木是一种轻描淡写的说法。食物对我

college and ten days before we had been slated to go on a two-month trip to Asia before moving to this city and starting our new, adult lives.

To say I was numb is an understatement. Food tasted like nothing to me, like sawdust in my mouth. I ate only because it would have worried my parents if I did not. As it was, I had been steadily losing weight. By the time the monkey met me, I would have already looked haggard, a bit gaunt, the way you do when you lose too much weight too quickly and the skin just hangs on you, lost and untethered.

"Well, well," the monkey said finally, leaning back on his haunches and resting his weight on his hands. "It's not too late, you know."

"What's not too late?" I asked automatically, responding, as you know, by rote.

At that point I had begun to receive phone calls from unknown numbers, from all over the country, with seemingly no rhyme or reason. The phone calls came in barrages, sometimes two or three in quick succession, with different area codes. They never left messages.

I wanted sometimes, very badly, to pick up. Who was trying to find me? Could it be her? After a call I sometimes had to put my head in my hands and remind myself that she was gone, forever, not coming back.

The monkey bared his teeth in a rictus grin. "How would you like to see your friend again?"

来说毫无滋味,味同嚼蜡。我进食只是因为如果我不吃,我的父母会担心。尽管如此,我的体重日渐减少。 当猴子遇见我时,我已经看起来很憔悴,有点削瘦,就 像短时间内减肥太多的样子,皮肤只是挂在身上,失去 了束缚。

"好吧,好吧,"猴子终于说道,向后倚靠在臀上,并将重心置于手上,"你知道的,现在还不算太晚。"

"什么还不晚?"我下意识地问道,如你所料, 机械地回应。

那时,我开始接到来自全国各地的未知电话,似 乎毫无规律可言。电话接二连三地打来,区号各不相 同。他们却从不留言。

有时,我非常想接听电话。谁会试着找我?会是她吗?一通电话响过后,有时我不得不把头埋于双手,提醒自己她已经永远离开了,再不会回来。

猴子露出牙齿,龇牙咧嘴地笑着。

"你想再见到你的朋友吗?"

Translator's Note

It has been both an education and a pleasure to live in the world of this story. Over the course of translating Yu Yanchao's 'Slip of the hand', I've learned more than I ever thought I would know about anatomy and physiology, not to mention zheng-gu, or bone-setting, and tuina, Chinese massage. This text is just as much a treatise on these traditional practices as they've been carried on into the modern day as it is the story of the people who populate Uncle Zhang's bonesetting clinic, and it has been my great good fortune to get to know both.

The more research on bonesetting and Chinese massage I did, the more my respect for these ancient arts and their adherents only grew. Though these forms of treatment are considered to be folk remedies in Western countries, contemporary practitioners undergo rigorous training to become certified doctors and massage therapists. Many Chinese hospitals have departments for both Eastern and Western medicine; in East Asian countries, Western medicine is seen by many as more of a short-term cure, treating only the external symptoms of a disease or condition, while Eastern medicine attempts to address the root or cause in a long-term and sustainable fashion. In rural countryside villages with little to no access to hospitals, specialists in Chinese medicine provide the only medical treatment for miles around.

Working with this story, I found myself tangibly reminded of the visits I made as a child to acupuncture clinics in Flushing, as well as my own bouts with physical therapy; thinking about how the ways in which we treat and respond to our bodies are so culturally informed. In light of that, I'm grateful to be able to bring this story to an English-speaking audience. The goal of reading, and especially of reading works in translation, is always to further the horizons of our knowledge. But Yanchao's

writing deserves to be read for its own sake, and on its own terms: his prose is fluid and gorgeous, moving easily from the abstruse terminology of physiology and the plain-spoken vocabulary of treatment to blossom into real poetic beauty. I hope that, for him, this is only the beginning of a long and fruitful career.

俞琰超

失手

一只蚊子落在墙壁上,准确地说,落在"张氏养生堂"的招牌上。我挥手把它赶走,这里以前不叫这名,叫做"张氏正骨馆",按叔的话说现在的人注重养生,这叫与时俱进。

前几年叔离婚后,退了街上的店面,把按摩床和 几张正骨椅搬到奶奶的念经房,屋里配有空调和独卫, 再把相邻的车库改成茶水间,在家开起了医馆。叔去北 京跟着名师专门学过正骨,人们聚在医馆里,一起上 课、互相实操。大学毕业后,我闲在家里,茫茫然觉得 再次被抛到世界上,两手空空,抓不到个生活的把手。 叔开的医馆在老家小有名声,父亲让我考了保健按摩师 职业资格证书,回去跟着叔学正骨、推拿的手艺。

推开门,屋里亮堂,叔招呼我: "快来扶着。" 我走到按摩床旁,床上的男人仰卧,手臂肌肉遒劲发达,短发,断眉,脸色黝黑,细看眼角有条疤,整体看着很精干。只见他青黑色头皮上似有青筋蠕动,在强忍痛苦。"两手压好了,不许动。"我点点头,一手压着男人膝盖上方,一手按住髂骨。男人的右侧踝上部被叔握在手里,叔左手扶住膝盖,两手同时用力,让男人屈膝、屈髋,把腿往男人的上半身压去,从内往外划出一个弧度,像是太极。男人闷哼出声,我感觉到他的腿部肌肉绷紧用力,叔再唰地一下拉直,男人长松口气。叔说: "吴老板,你这是骶髂关节前脱位,两条腿有高低,大腿根部才会疼。一开始我不太敢用力,还得再来几次。"男人没说话,头上渗汗。我说去纸巾,他点头

translated from the chinese by JACKY WU

SLIP OF THE HAND

A mosquito landed on the wall. Or to be more exact, it landed on the sign that read "Zhang's Health Hall." I waved my hand to swat it away. This place was once known as "Zhang's Bone-setting House." According to my uncle, people these days care about their health. This is called keeping up with the times.

A few years ago, after Uncle got divorced, he retired his storefront and had the massage table and a few orthopedic chairs moved to the workroom in Grandma's house. The house came with air conditioning and a private bathroom, and he even had the garage adjoining the workroom converted into a waiting room. He opened a clinic there, operating out of her home. Previously, Uncle had gone to Beijing to learn bonesetting from a famous master. Those who wished to learn all gathered at the master's clinic, where they attended class together and practiced with each other. After graduating from college, I had been idling at home, feeling ceaselessly tossed into the world again. My two hands were empty, unable to get a grasp on the handle of life. Uncle's clinic had gained some repute in our hometown. My father asked me to get my vocational credentials for massage, so I went back to learn bonesetting and the art of massage from Uncle.

I pushed open the door—the room was bright—and Uncle hailed me, saying, "Quickly, come here and hold on." I went to stand beside the massage table. The man on the bed was lying on his back. The muscles in his arms were powerful and well-developed. He had a dark complexion, short hair and broken eyebrows. There was a scar at the corner of one eye. Overall the impression he

道谢。"再来扶好。"叔说。如是连续几次,叔伸出手指放于髂骨旁,仔细比对两侧的高低,说:"现在平了。"

叔闭目摸索男人的膝盖: "吴老板最近做过剧烈运动?"男人笑道: "不小心扭伤了。"叔握拳顶在膝窝,一手握住脚踝,双手协同反复屈膝: "现在正了,回家感觉有些疼是正常的。近几天要避免剧烈活动,不要搬抗重物,等养好了再说,如果哪里不舒服,欢迎随时再来。"男人躺了一会,站起来试探地走几步,露出喜色,递上支烟: "多谢张医生。"他结了账,准备出门,屋外忽地下起暴雨,夏天的雨总是突如其来。男人回到屋内,我给他倒了杯水: "您不妨再坐一会。"

男人挽起裤腿,露出砖红色肌肉,一见便知常在户外,运动量极大。他一口将水吞下,玩起手机。这人身上有罕见的蛮性,眼睛像干灼的野草,周身混着烟味,散发蒙昧而原始的荷尔蒙。这人许是四十岁左右,跟叔不相上下,我看向叔,他苍白的脸颊上露出常年置身室内的安宁气息,细纹像流动的蛛网,苍白而渐显纹痕,眼神沧桑幽深,眨动间,透出几分压制不住的气力,大得像他按摩时的手劲。

玻璃窗上,米色半透窗帘拉紧,夏夜熟悉的静谧 气息袭来,然而还是有着什么,将平静的空气搅动,我 想,是那吴姓男人灼热的气息。两人在茶桌旁的圈椅上 左右对坐,红木桌上有积年龙井茶的香气,白雾浮动, 渐上窗帘,帘上忽然映出一个人影。

我提着刚烧开的电热水壶,热气蒸腾,雾了一片,叔与吴姓男人也笼在一片雾气之中。多年后,我仍记得那个夏日夜雨中的映像,窗帘上的剪影是如何游入,游进两个喝茶人中间,以影子的形式——高挑而纤弱,脖颈白皙修长,紧身上衣衬出胸前的起伏,我禁不住感到脸颊发热,应是被热气灼烫。只见她细长的肩臂

gave was that of a highly capable man. I noticed the blue veins squirming on his blue-black scalp: he was doing his best to endure the discomfort.

"Use both hands to press down, and don't move," Uncle instructed. I nodded, one hand on the man's knee, the other holding his ilium. Uncle stood by the bed and grasped the man's ankle in his right hand, supporting the other knee with his left hand. He made the man bend his knees and flex his hips, and then pressed his legs up towards his torso, drawing a half moon arc like tai chi. The man stifled his grunts. I felt the tension in his leg muscles. Uncle straightened his legs out again and the man breathed a sigh of relief.

Uncle said, "Mr. Wu, you have an anterior dislocation of the sacroiliac joint. Your legs are different lengths, so the root of the thigh hurts. I don't dare use too much force at first. You'll have to come back a few more times."

The man didn't say anything, a sheen of sweat on his forehead. I handed over a tissue and he nodded his thanks.

"Hold him down again," Uncle said to me. A few times in a row, Uncle stretched out his finger and placed it next to the man's hip, carefully comparing the length of the two sides, and said, "Now they're level."

His eyes closed in order to concentrate, Uncle held the man's knee: "Mr. Wu, have you recently done any strenuous exercise?" The man laughed. "I accidentally twisted something." Uncle made a fist and pressed against the back of the man's knee. He held the man's ankle with his other hand and then, using pressure from both hands, repeatedly bent the knee.

"Now it should be alright. It's normal to feel sore when you get home. Avoid strenuous activity for a few days, and don't lift anything heavy. If it gives you any more trouble, let me know. You're welcome to come back anytime."

The man continued to lie still for a few moments, then stood up and took a few tentative steps. A joyful

向后伸着,似是牵着什么。那影子起先朝向吴姓男人, 高鼻梁下微颤的嘴唇紧抿,紧接着,不知谁将她向后一 拉,那小巧的头又扭过去,耳边垂下几缕黑发,这影子 里的面孔,又朝向叔了。她张开口说了些什么,嘴唇 开,闭,开,闭。

我似乎闻到了发丝的香气,忽然影子消失了。门被拉动,迈进一只低跟尖头酒红皮鞋,哑面,应是穿了许久,嫩白脚面裸着,沾了雨水。我知道那米色窗帘上的影子要进来了。雨水、树林、女人的幽香绞成一股,钻入鼻腔,我急忙绕过柜台,招呼道: "您好!请坐。"

紧身海蓝色圆领裹住她的胸脯,脖颈修长,近看藏着几条浅纹,白色紧身半裤包满臀部,一双直腿雪白,浑身散发着成熟女人最致命的那种东西。她一直低着头,黑色半挽直发下露出鼻尖,她招呼着身后的人,一个小孩,白白胖胖,眼歪口斜,笑容透着憨傻,两只手腕不自然地内扣扭曲,腿伸不直,走路姿势别扭,看起来颇为怪异。女人红唇微张,终于抬眼望我:"张医生在吗?"

她双瞳深陷,妆容遮不住眼下的阴影,显然长期 睡眠不足,但仍不影响眼角流出的妩媚。我看向叔,叔 放下茶杯起身,走上前来。吴姓男子将视线从手机移向 女子,从上到下游移,像蛇钻入草丛,又移向那个怪异 的孩子,眉毛微挑,最后移回女子,眼神停留几秒。

吴老板突然道: "再来个中式推拿。"叔示意我去,我将他引到床边,垫上块毛巾,开始揉捏肩颈。女人和叔聊了许久,说着说着拿纸巾拭泪,小孩坐在一旁,呆望虚空。推拿完毕,吴老板起身,喊道: "张医生,先走了。"

那日暴雨一直下到深夜,我得知女人名叫韩小梅。儿子十四岁,病例单上姓名一栏里写着徐海锋。

expression appeared on his face. He handed over a cigarette. "Thank you very much, Dr. Zhang."

He had paid his bill and was getting ready to leave when all of a sudden we could hear the sounds of torrential rain outside. Summer rains always come on in the blink of an eye. The man came back inside and I poured him a glass of water, saying, "Sir, you might as well sit a little longer."

The man rolled up his pant legs, revealing brick-red muscle. You could tell at a glance that he was constantly outdoors and exercising intensely, pushing his body to its limits. He downed the water in a single gulp and then started to play with his phone. The man possessed a rare savagery: his eyes were like burning dry weeds, his whole body was muddled with smoke. He seemed to reek of primitive and uncivilized hormones. He looked to be about forty years old, around the same age as my uncle. I looked to Uncle. His pallid face showed the peacefulness of staying indoors from year to year: fine lines like flowing cobwebs, pale and faded in both the warm and cold; the expression in his eyes of having seen the vicissitudes of life, an unshakable serenity. But even a casual look would reveal a hint of constantly suppressed energy, matching the strength in his muscular hands from years of massage.

The translucent beige curtains were drawn tight on the glass window. The serene and familiar breath of a summer night filled the air, but there was still something, something that was causing a stir in the quiet atmosphere. I thought it must be the scorching breath of the man named Wu. He and my uncle were sitting opposite each other in the armchairs beside the tea table. The top of that mahogany table had, over the years, been imbued with many years' worth of the fragrance of Longjing tea. The white mist floated, saturating the curtain; and there on that curtain, reflected suddenly the figure of a woman.

I was carrying an electric kettle that had just boiled, steam rising, misting into the air. Both Uncle

叔告诉我,那孩子七岁时遭了一场车祸,智力永远留在了七岁。韩小梅在邻村外盘一间小店,是她前夫留给她的。她前夫算是有起色的生意人,精干薄情,事故发生的两年后离开家,再不回来。韩小梅很是庆幸自己还有一间店面。这两年实体服装店生意难做,她开始学着做微商,以供儿子求医。大城市的西医求过一圈,都未见明显的效果,偶一日见电视上有中医治疗恢复有效的案例,开始打听中医,求到了我叔这里。

叔说,海峰的半边脸不正,身上神经和肌肉扭曲,揉成一团,手、脚、颈椎、脊椎多处骨骼错位,这孩子,也是个可怜人。还能治吗,我问。叔说,得先慢慢放松肌肉,舒缓筋结,放松韧带,最后才能矫正骨骼。现在他还在生长发育期,趁早矫正,不敢说恢复得如何,比现在肯定是要好很多。叔补充道,他还是很忍痛的,没怎么叫唤,怕小梅担心。

我开始期待周六的晚上,韩小梅会领着海峰来治疗,天气越发炎热,我会提前开好空调。海峰的身子渐渐正了,手和脚能伸直,关节变得灵活,走路开始有模有样,最明显的进步是,韩小梅说他能自己握勺子吃饭了!有一天,我看到叔在给韩小梅推揉放松腰大肌,虽说按摩之后,正骨的效果会更好,但一般来说,正骨之前是无需按摩的,直接在错位处纠正即可。我知道推揉腰大肌时的感受,腹部紧绷的肌肉慢慢舒缓放松,肚子里的气通畅了,脊椎两侧沟内的竖脊肌随之牵动,这两块肌肉靠自己很难拉伸到位,暂时的酸痛过后是难以言喻的舒爽。

我轻轻地给他们带上门,搬张凳子坐到屋外,靠着墙壁,微笑地看人们在篮球场上打球。不一会儿,我睡着了,意识朦胧间,听到窗内的对话声,密集,连续不断,蝉声在炎热的下午发酵。迷迷糊糊地,我听到叔含蓄的笑声,这可能是他离婚后最快乐的日子。韩小

and the man named Wu were enclosed in the white haze. Many years later, I still remember the apparition in the rain on that summer night, how her silhouette on that curtain seemed to waver and swim, swimming in between the two tea drinkers in the shape of a shadow. Her reflection was tall, slim, and fragile, the neck fair and slender, the top adhering to the shape of the chest rising and falling underneath. I couldn't help but feel a feverish heat on my cheeks, as if in response to to the scalding steam.

I saw, to my surprise, her slender shoulders and arms stretching backwards, as if she was leading someone by the hand. The reflection first turned towards the man named Wu; her lips, under the tall nose bridge, were closed, but minutely quivering. The person behind her pulled her back, and that small exquisite head turned away again, a few strands of black hair hanging down by her ear. The reflection's face turned back towards Uncle. She opened her mouth as if to speak: her mouth opened, closed, opened, closed. I seemed to smell the perfume of her hair.

Suddenly the reflection vanished. The door opened, and in stepped the pointed toe of a single low-heeled wine-red leather pump. Its matte surface must have worn down over a long time; her tender white instep were bare and soaked with rain. I knew the shadow on that beige curtain was coming in. The delicate fragrance of the rain, woods, and woman entwined and pierced the nostrils. I hurried around the counter and greeted her: "Hello! Please sit down."

A sea-blue top with a round collar wrapped snugly over her chest. Her neck was long and thin; a closer look revealed a few faint lines. Tight white capris fully covered her buttocks and the pair of straight white legs. Her whole body exuded the fatal charm of a mature woman. She kept her head down: her straight black hair, half falling over her face, revealed only the tip of her nose. She was fussing over the person behind her: a fat white child. The child had crooked eyes and his

梅今天带来了帮叔洗过的白大褂,是她执意要叔脱下来 带回的,顺便从她的店里带来几套男士T恤,给我和叔 穿。她一来便低着头,让叔脱下来试穿一下衣服,叔 不好意思地看我一眼,我转身去了后院。韩小梅来的日 子,我比往常都要清闲。

吴老板也隔三差五地来店里,我惊讶于他训练的强度,每次来他砖红色的肌肉都像铜铸的一般,得花大力气才能揉松。大拇指累了换到食指,食指累了换到中指,一个一个指头轮换过去,背部的肌肉太硬就上肘部。时间长了,我和他渐渐熟稔,他告诉我,他是个极限运动主播,还给我展示他发布的视频,点赞数累计超过百万。他在杭州宝石山的岩壁上徒手攀岩,身手矫健,在高楼大厦的顶端玩平衡车,车轮来回晃动,与楼的边缘仅一线之隔,在楼顶转角的边缘做前滚翻,一个翻滚之后,屁股坐在楼沿上,双腿晃荡在空中,吹着几百米高的大风。他的野气和胆气裹住了我,我双腿发软,目眩神迷,手心冒汗,体会了一把与死神共舞的极限快感。

我问,你不怕死吗?他说,玩极限运动的时候状态最好,最能感受到自己还活着,好像拥有了一切。万一失手呢?我接着问。他说,超越极限像吸毒一样,有过一次就会上瘾。直面死亡,满足感会激增,不能犯任何错误。对追求完美的人来说,极限运动是最佳途径。他的脸嵌在按摩床的洞里,脸朝地面说话,声音经过反弹,有点变形,从四面八方传到我的耳朵。

我想象着另一种人生,从高空跳伞,在海里冲浪,短短几秒,活得绚烂精彩,直播几次就能赚大钱,仿佛一切都唾手可得。我没说话,转而思考我与吴老板的相似性。毫无疑问,我是个完美主义者,人体的骨骼必须严丝合缝地摆在它应有的位置,如有偏差,就会引发不适,必须要把它纠正。我的手指在工作中变得坚韧

mouth was askew; foolishness seeped through his smiling expression. Both his wrists were twisted unnaturally inward, and, even standing, his legs were not fully straight. As he walked in, his gait was awkward and uncomfortable. Altogether he was a bizarre sight.

The woman's red lips opened slightly. Finally she lifted her gaze to me. "Is Doctor Zhang here?"

Her eyes were hollow and deep set in her face. Makeup could not conceal the shadows beneath them, evidently from a long-term and chronic lack of sleep. But that still did not affect the charm that flowed from the corners of her eyes. I looked at Uncle. He put down his teacup and got up, coming forwards towards us. The man named Wu shifted his line of sight from his phone to the woman, his gaze moving from top to bottom, like a snake burrowing into a thick clump of grass. His eyes went to the strange child and he lifted his eyebrows slightly. Finally he returned his gaze to the woman, lingering on her for a few seconds.

Suddenly he said, "One more Chinese massage." Uncle motioned for me to go. I guided him to the bedside, laid down a towel, and started kneading his shoulders and neck. The woman stayed with Uncle for a long time, talking and wiping away her tears with a paper towel. The child sat to one side, dim-wittedly staring into nothingness. The massage finished, and Mr. Wu got up. He shouted, "Dr. Zhang, I'm leaving."

It rained until late that night, and I learned that the woman's name was Han Xiaomei. Her son was fourteen years old. Xu Haifeng was the name written in the name column on his case sheet. Uncle told me that he had been in a severe car accident when he was seven, and his mind, if not his body, had stayed frozen at that age. Han Xiaomei ran a small shop in a neighboring village, left to her by her ex-husband. Her ex-husband was a successful businessman, efficient and heartless. He'd left home two years after the accident occurred and never returned. Han Xiaomei was grateful that she still had her store, though in the last two years business for brick

有力,能从容地揉散各个筋结……然而生命仅有一次, 我深知这个道理。我现在有了一门可靠的手艺,生活有 了着落,心就安定了,可以吞回肚里。

转眼已是秋天,吴老板最近来得没那么勤了。一 日,按摩完毕,他说,帮我的脖子正正骨。

近几个月来,我跟着叔学习,理论和技术都突飞猛进,有了自己的心得。面对不同的病人,诊断和调理的整体观念最为关键,询问观察,推理分析,最终解决问题。我对自己有信心,却又犹豫不决。我还没考正骨的行医证书,叔快回来了,还是等他来吧。他回头,挑衅似地看我一眼,满盈着野气。我被他的眼神一激,想起他视频里的精彩人生,想起我只能在叔基本完工后,做一些锦上添花的收尾工作。我稳住情绪,心中默念正骨的原则,先判断骨骼的错位方向,欲合先离,打开间隙,再向错位的相反方向复位。

我让吴老板坐下,用手臂箍住他的下巴,向上牵引,慢慢地转头,转到一定程度,突然发力,咔咔两声,右侧的颈椎复位了。接着往左重复相同的动作。这次没有牵引到位,吴老板突然软倒,晕了过去。我想起叔对我的告诫,他说,颈椎十分脆弱,你以后给别人调颈椎,必须有我在场。如果再来一次,我也许不会干出这样的事。霎时间惶恐、自责与悔恨,死死地将我缠住,我想倒流时间,却无能为力。门突然被打开,叔回来了,问清情况后,立马出手,吴老板悠悠地醒来,摇头晃脑地检查一下,没有什么问题,叔留他坐一会,喝杯茶,临走时他看我一眼,洒脱地一笑。

叔对我大发雷霆,我低头坐着,空气似乎凝固了。过了许久,他说道,失手不可怕,没有人能保证不失手,重要的是,有没有本事去弥补。

往后,我一直记着这句话,有时我会想起吴老板,想着他万一哪天失手,骨头散了一地,就算是叔也

and mortar clothing stores had been slow. She started to learn how to do business on social media so that she could seek medical treatment for her son. They tried Western medicine in big cities, but there was no clear improvement. Then one day she saw a case of miraculous recovery from Chinese medicine on TV and she started to inquire into this kind of treatment. Eventually she had sought out and arrived at my uncle here.

Uncle said, half of Haifeng's face is crooked, and his body's nerves and muscles are twisted, softened into a ball. Many places in his skeleton are misaligned: his hands and feet, the cervical vertebrae of the neck and the vertebrae of the spine. He's truly to be pitied. Can he be cured? I asked. Uncle said, first we have to slowly relax his muscles, gradually easing the knots in the tendons and relaxing the ligaments; only then can the skeleton be adjusted and realigned. He's still growing, so it's important that we rectify what we can before it's too late. I dare not venture a guess as to how his recovery might go, but he will certainly be better off than he is now. Uncle added, he does his best to bear the pain. He doesn't cry out, because he doesn't want Xiaomei to worry.

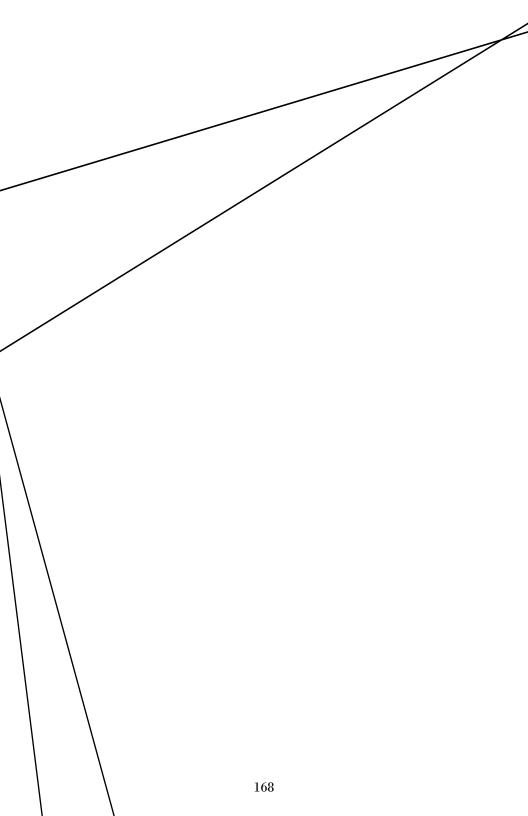
I started to look forward to Saturday nights, when Han Xiaomei would bring Haifeng for treatment. The weather was getting ever hotter, and I would turn on the air conditioner in advance, anticipating their arrival. Little by little, Haifeng's body improved. His hands and feet straightened out and his joints became flexible. Even the way he walked changed in pattern and appearance. And the most obvious improvement, as Han Xiaomei reported excitedly, was that he could now grasp his own spoon and feed himself.

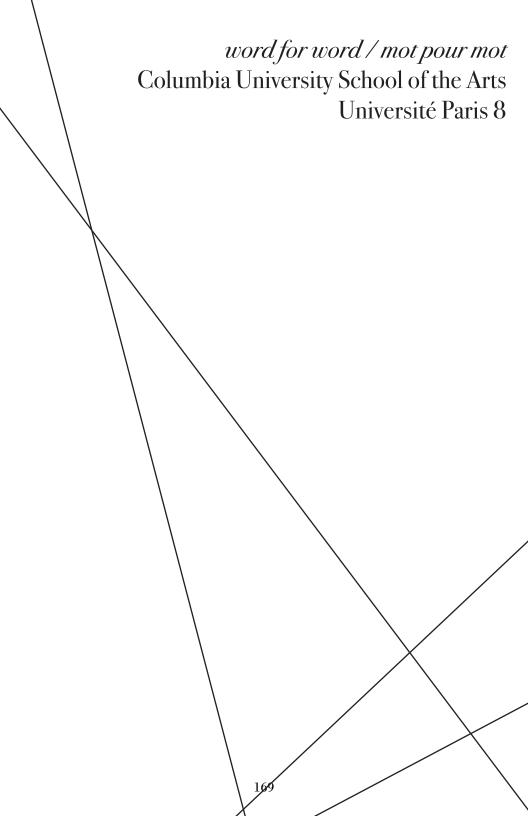
There was a day that I saw Uncle giving Han Xiaomei a massage to relax the muscles of the psoas major, the muscles around the waist and pelvis. Generally speaking, a massage before bone-setting is unnecessary. Although it's true that bone-setting might be more effective after a massage, any misalignment can 没办法再把他拼起来。

normally be directly corrected.

I know how it feels to have the psoas major massaged. The taut muscles of the abdomen slowly and leisurely relax, and the air in the stomach becomes free and unobstructed. The erector spinae in the grooves on both sides of the spinal column are then affected. These two muscles are difficult to stretch by themselves, but once pulled in place, temporary soreness is followed by an indescribable relief.

I gently closed the door for them and went out. I brought a stool with me so I could sit outside. Leaning against the wall, I watched people play on the basketball court with a smile. After a while, I fell asleep. While I was dimly conscious, I heard the conversation coming through the window, close and continuous, and the sound of the cicadas fermenting in the burning afternoon. In a daze, I heard my uncle's reserved laughter.





Note du Traducteur

Au début du processus de traduction, le texte de Jayne me semblait énigmatique car une partie de son sens et de son humour m'échappait. La beauté du processus a été, au fur et à mesure, en creusant le sens des expressions utilisées et en ayant la possibilité d'en discuter avec elle, de voir les multiples significations de son texte progressivement s'offrir à moi, comme autant de couches d'un mille-feuilles.

Avec de la concision et en restant factuelle, elle réussit à faire ressentir la complexité toute en contradiction des relations et des situations vécues par la narratrice. Le texte de Jayne est piquant, poétique, intelligent et un brin nostalgique. Son écriture appelle la complicité, voire la jubilation et une forme de douceur dans la lecture. On y reste volontiers. C'est comme être à l'intérieur au chaud, et regarder brûler une bougie pour soi, pendant que l'on observe la neige dehors tomber...

Jayne a été l'une de mes plus belles rencontres humaines et littéraires de cette année. À l'image de son écriture, elle a été une interlocutrice profonde, vive, délicate et drôle. Je la remercie pour le temps qu'elle a consacré à notre binôme, qui m'a permis de prendre goût au jeu et à la magie de la traduction. Ce jeu et cette magie, je les ai trouvés, lorsque je travaillais sur le texte de Jayne, dans le double tranchant de la traduction, ce qu'elle offre et retire : la perte que l'on peut ressentir en réinventant dans une autre langue, la langue de l'auteure, et à la fois son enrichissement.

JAYNE O'DWYER

WAX BOYFRIEND

For my 23rd birthday, my mother bought me a wax boyfriend. She had called me long distance from St. Moritz that morning when I was still in bed to say that "the perfect man" was en route, and happy birthday.

I knew you wouldn't mind if I wasn't in town, but I certainly couldn't let you be alone on such a special day. By the way she was cooing, I knew she had company, most likely the almost-divorced ski instructor who had taught her to pizza and French fry her way down a bunny hill. Upon hearing "the perfect man" I could only think of "the perfect woman," a gift shop mug I had seen at a gas station in Pennsylvania when I was seven, which was just a pair of pert white breasts with a handle.

My betrothed arrived at my doorstep a few hours later in a cardboard box covered in snow, the container at capacity with Pepto pink packing peanuts.

Hello, my darling, the light of my life. He was no more than 8 inches tall, an aloof Grecian bust with curls that fell down toward his brow and a wick that perched above them. He was alabaster and stern and already exasperated with my girlish antics. The perfect man – a mute, disapproving luxury candle. I had called my mother again that day to tell her thank you, but all that came out was he has nipples.

Are they beautiful? She asked.

I remember saying as nipples could be.

To which she parried, well then, what's there to be bothered about?, and I didn't have an answer. He was rather nice to look at, and his stateliness added something to my bedroom, which felt rather spartan besides the pillows and good sheets on my bed. I had a white metal snap bedframe, and a white wood desk with a matching chair that cut off my circulation (which

traduit de l'anglais par KIMBERLEY LIHAULT

PETIT AMI DE CIRE

Pour mon vingt-troisième anniversaire, ma mère m'a acheté un petit ami en cire. Elle m'avait passé un appel longue distance depuis Saint-Moritz ce matin-là, alors que j'étais encore au lit, pour me dire que "l'homme parfait" était en route, and happy birthday!

J'étais certaine que ça ne te dérangerait pas que je ne sois pas avec toi, mais il était hors de question de te laisser seule en un jour si important. À la façon dont elle roucoulait, je devinais qu'elle était en bonne compagnie, probablement avec le moniteur de ski en instance de divorce qui lui avait appris à descendre une piste verte en dégustant une pizza et des frites. En l'entendant dire « l'homme parfait », j'ai spontanément pensé à « la femme parfaite », un mug façon boutique de souvenirs, que j'avais aperçu dans une station-service en Pennsylvannie quand j'avais sept ans, qui se résumait à une paire de seins blancs et fermes, et une poignée.

Quelques heures plus tard, mon fiancé était sur le pas de la porte dans une boîte en carton recouverte de neige et remplie de boules de polystyrène rose vif.

Bonjour, cher rayon de soleil. Il ne mesurait pas plus de 20 centimètres, un buste grec, au regard froid, avec des boucles qui tombaient sur son front et une mèche qui se dressait au milieu de celles-ci. Il était d'albâtre, l'air sévère et déjà exaspéré par mes frivolités de jeune fille. L'homme parfait - une bougie de luxe muette et désapprobatrice. J'ai rappelé ma mère ce jourlà pour lui dire merci, mais tout ce que j'ai pu dire fut il a des tétons.

Sont-ils beaux? a-t-elle demandé.

Je me souviens avoir répondu autant que des tétons peuvent l'être.

Ce à quoi elle a rétorqué, eh bien alors, qu'est-ce

my mother said would give me varicose veins, how unbecoming), and a small pink step stool to get farther into my closet. The saving grace of the room was the two large windows that looked out onto my street, which was lined with ginkgo trees. I had pulled down the shade of the window closest to my bed and decided to break my wax boyfriend in that very evening. He sat on a baby pink soap dish on that window sill and burned for me for a few hours as the snow fell in great wet globs onto the sidewalk.

That summer, I dated a lapsed Catholic, who was more Catholic than any Catholic I've ever known, then and now. He was a few years older, already through grad school, yet he was boyish in that his life had no shape and probably wouldn't for some time. He talked at me about sin and Adorno and how he thought I looked best in blouses with a dramatic arm.

Who's Adorno? I'd asked him.

Adorno was an asexual Jewish man that fled Germany during WWII, lived in Hollywood, and, for reasons opaque to me, liked Betty Boop, he'd replied. I decided I liked Adorno, for I, too, liked Betty Boop. I began to repent and read The Culture Industry and wear bishop sleeves despite the humidity, and these little devotions pleased the lapsed Catholic, for he'd managed to get both a date and a pupil.

June came and went with postcards from my mother peppered throughout – Venice, Sorrento, Positano, yet I'd felt that I'd forgotten something. It was my wax boyfriend, losing his hair, exasperated as ever, put in the back corner of my closet so he did not melt under the heat of the day.

So sorry, my love. I brought him out to my back porch to set him alight after the sun went down to join him in a smoke, and I took him back indoors when his forehead began to slip down his neck.

When the lapsed Catholic made me carbonara – his best dish, though still average – I had burned my

qu'il y a de gênant?, et je n'ai pas su quoi répondre. Il était plutôt agréable à regarder, et sa prestance ajoutait quelque chose à ma chambre, qui était plutôt austère, à part les oreillers et les jolis draps de mon lit. J'avais un cadre de lit blanc en métal, et un bureau en bois blanc avec une chaise assortie qui me coupait la circulation (ce qui, selon ma mère, me donnerait des varices, comme c'est inconvenant) et un petit escabeau rose pour atteindre le fond de mon placard. Le charme de la pièce résidait dans les deux grandes fenêtres qui donnaient sur ma rue bordée de ginkgos. J'ai baissé le store de la fenêtre la plus proche de mon lit et décidé d'inaugurer mon petit ami de cire le soir même. Je l'ai assis dans un porte-savon rose layette sur le rebord de la fenêtre et il a brûlé pour moi pendant quelques heures, tandis que la neige tombait en grosse grappes humides sur le trottoir.

Cet été-là, je suis sortie avec un catholique non pratiquant, qui était plus catholique que tous les catholiques que j'avais connus dans ma vie. Il était âgé de quelques années de plus que moi et avait déjà terminé ses études supérieures, mais il semblait encore enfantin, dans le sens où sa vie ne semblait pas avoir de but, et probablement qu'elle n'en aurait pas avant un certain temps. Il m'a parlé de péché, d'Adorno et m'a dit qu'il me trouvait plus belle dans des chemisiers aux manches amples.

Qui est Adorno? lui ai-je demandé.

Adorno était un juif asexué qui a fui l'Allemagne pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Il vivait à Hollywood et, pour des raisons obscures, aimait Betty Boop, m'a-t-il répondu. J'ai décidé que j'aimais Adorno, car moi aussi, j'aimais Betty Boop. J'ai commencé à me repentir en lisant Adorno et les industries culturelles et en portant des manches bouffantes malgré l'humidité, et ces petites dévotions ont plu au catholique non-pratiquant, car il avait réussi à obtenir à la fois un rancard et un disciple.

Le mois de juin est vite passé, parsemé de cartes postales de ma mère - Venise, Sorrento, Positano. Mais wax boyfriend in earnest, until I reached his brows. I hosted the lapsed Catholic at my apartment for the first time not long after, a cool night in July, and I lit every other candle in my home, long white sticks stuck into green wine bottles, as if I'd robbed a French bistro at gunpoint. Lighting is everything, he told me once at a gallery that only contained stacks of tin cans arranged into haphazard piles, and in remembering this outing I had been so intent on the perfecting the ambiance of our dinner that I managed to mess up the food. We drank chilled red wine (a mistake), and I made him chicken with rosemary and thyme (it had been dry). Coming back from the grocery store before he arrived, I'd received another postcard, this time from Lisbon.

Heat is so rejuvenating for the soul -I hope you are getting some, my mother had written in her looping hand, though some of it had been blotted out from the sweat that trickled down my arm, down my fingers and onto the ink.

Oh, I will have heat, I thought, and sweating once more, this time from anticipation, I set my wax boyfriend ablaze before I took the interloper to bed. After, the lapsed Catholic told me I looked like Manet's Olympia, and my love's eyes fell into the baby pink soap dish.

I had known what was coming – deep in what my mother calls the wisdom bowl, what I call the pit of the stomach, I'd begun to mourn. The lapsed Catholic called me on the hottest day in August – the hottest day of the year – to tell me we were finished. I had done nothing wrong – he was the one who couldn't do right by me, his spiritual debts already stacked too high. I thought it had been because he'd made love too quickly and cried after and didn't want anyone, not even our Lord, to witness, but I kept that thought to myself.

I hope I can make it up to you someday, he'd said. He'd then asked me to send the books he'd left at my apartment to a P.O. box in New Jersey; Foucault,

j'avais l'impression d'avoir oublié quelque chose. C'était mon petit ami de cire, perdant ses cheveux, exaspéré comme jamais, rangé au fond de mon placard pour qu'il ne fonde pas sous la chaleur du jour.

Vraiment désolée, mon amour. Je l'ai emmené sur ma terrasse pour l'enflammer après que le soleil se soit couché, et je l'ai accompagné dans une cigarette. Puis je l'ai ramené à l'intérieur lorsque son front a commencé à glisser le long de son cou.

Quand le catholique non-pratiquant me prépara pour la première fois des pâtes carbonara - apparemment son mets le plus fin - j'avais sérieusement entamé mon petit ami de cire, jusqu'à atteindre ses sourcils. Peu de temps après, j'ai invité pour la première fois le catholique non-pratiquant dans mon appartement, une nuit fraîche de juillet. J'avais allumé toutes les bougies qu'il y avait chez moi, de longs bâtons blancs que j'avais plantés dans des bouteilles de vin vertes, on aurait dit que j'avais braqué un bistro français. Un jour, alors que nous étions dans une galerie d'art qui présentait essentiellement des colonnes de boîtes de conserve empilées de manière aléatoire, il avait commenté: L'éclairage est sublime. Gardant ce souvenir à l'esprit, j'avais tenu à rendre l'ambiance parfaite. À tel point que j'avais fini par bâcler la préparation du repas. Nous avons bu du vin rouge bien frais (une erreur) et je lui ai concocté un poulet au romarin et au thym (il était sec). En revenant de l'épicerie juste avant qu'il n'arrive, j'avais reçu une autre carte postale, cette fois de Lisbonne.

La chaleur est si revitalisante pour l'âme - j'espère que tu en profites aussi, avait écrit ma mère de son écriture toute en rondeurs, mais une partie du texte était effacée par la transpiration qui coulait le long de mon bras et de mes doigts, sur l'encre.

Oh, je vais en avoir de la chaleur, ai-je pensé. Et, férile, cette fois par anticipation, j'ai enflammé mon petit ami de cire puis emmené mon invité au lit. Après ça, le catholique non-pratiquant m'a dit que je ressemblais à l'Olympia de Manet, puis les yeux de mon amour sont

Horkheimer, Nietzsche, a stack of dead men.

When the call dropped, I had set out on a long walk toward the gardens in the center of the city. It was a garden that the lapsed Catholic had shown me, but I had come to decide that it was mine. On a shaded bench near a willow-covered pond, I sat and watched two swans separate then return to one another as the sun rose to its highest point, their dance looping around the edge of the water once, twice, three times before I realized what I'd done. I ran the mile and a half home to find there on my window sill, as he'd always been, my wax boyfriend, a coagulated pool of white and wick that dripped down onto the hardwood floor. I scooped what I could of him into my left hand and placed a call to my mother long distance in Barcelona with my right.

Darling, it's not my birthday. Is something wrong?

tombés sur le porte-savon rose layette.

Je savais ce qui allait arriver -au plus profond de ce que ma mère appelle le bol de la sagesse, que j'appelle le creux de l'estomac-, aussi j'avais déjà commencé à faire mon deuil. Le catholique non-pratiquant m'a appelée le jour le plus chaud du mois d'août - le jour le plus chaud de l'année - pour me dire que c'était fini entre nous. Je n'avais rien fait de mal - c'est lui qui ne me rendait pas justice, il avait déjà trop à faire avec sa dette spirituelle. J'ai soupçonné que c'était parce qu'il avait fait l'amour trop rapidement, qu'il avait pleuré après et qu'il ne voulait pas que quelqu'un, pas même notre Seigneur, en soit témoin, mais j'ai gardé cette pensée pour moi.

J'espère que je pourrais me faire pardonner un jour, m'a-t-il dit. Il m'a alors demandé d'envoyer les livres qu'il avait laissés à mon appartement vers une boîte postale dans le New Jersey: Foucault, Horkheimer, Nietzsche, une pile d'hommes morts.

Lorsque son appel était tombé, j'avais entrepris une longue promenade vers les jardins du centre-ville. C'était un jardin que le catholique déchu m'avait montré, mais j'avais décidé que c'était désormais le mien. Sur un banc ombragé par des saules près d'un étang, je me suis assise et j'ai regardé deux cygnes se séparer puis revenir l'un vers l'autre, alors que le soleil atteignait son point culminant, leur danse décrivant des cercles qui s'entrelaçaient sur le plan d'eau -une, deux, trois fois avant que je ne réalise ce que j'avais fait.

J'ai couru un kilomètre et demi jusque chez moi, pour découvrir sur le rebord de ma fenêtre, où qu'il l'avait toujours été, mon petit ami de cire, une mare blanche coagulée avec une mèche, qui dégoulinait sur le parquet. J'ai ramassé ce que je pouvais de lui dans ma main gauche et composé, avec la droite le numéro pour un appel longue distance vers ma mère à Barcelone.

Chérie, ce n'est pas mon anniversaire. Quelque chose ne va pas ?

Translator's Note

"SEA" by Kimberley Lihault is both a vision and a nightmare, a dreamlike, multi-continental odyssey through a woman's life and a series hyper-specific snapshots of trauma's indelible marks. From the moment I was introduced to this text, I knew it was important and would require stretching myself not only as a translator but as a writer. I was floored by Kimberley's acuity when it came to merging her narrative style with the fractured nature of memory, particularly memories of violence.

In translating the vignettes, I often took a very literal approach then discussed the emotional intention with Kimberley after. Having clarified the intention, I would then find Kimberley's connections between the scene at plot and image level and the greater point she was making. We spoke often of how to bring the detached, at times harried voice of the narrator into English, and the ways to best convey this feeling of fractured memory on the page. A once-opaque text then cracked open to reveal a story of doubling, mothering, and leaving things behind. My translation of "SEA" heightens the moments of hyper-specificity that trauma crystalizes in memory.

In taking on "SEA" in its gorgeously thorny complication, I had to take risks and trust my decisions. The most literal approach would lose the dreamlike quality that Kimberley's writing evokes in French. To do right by Kimberley's aesthetic goals - and my work as a translator - I had to trust that the risks would open the text to new meaning. I am honored to have gone through this process with Kimberley and hopeful that my translation introduces a new set of readers to an exciting new voice.

KIMBERLEY LIHAULT

MER

Il y a un ancien amour. L'ancien amour se tient au fond de l'amour. C'est l'emprise en plus de l'empreinte. C'est la fusion. C'est la porosité totale.

Vie secrète, P. Quignard

translated from the french by JAYNE O'DWYER

SEA

Il y a un ancien amour.

L'ancien amour se tient au fond de l'amour. C'est l'emprise en plus de l'empreinte. C'est la fusion. C'est la porosité totale.

Vie secrète, P. Quignard

There exists an ancient love.
Ancient love held deep within love. It is the influence as well as the imprint.

It is fusion. Total porosity.

TAHITI

TAHITI

On est à Mataiea. On va à la pêche avec le bateau de mon père. Il conduit. Mon frère et moi on est assis silencieusement de part et d'autre de lui. J'observe la mer. Elle est calme, limpide, lumineuse et lisse. Parfois le ciel devient orageux et elle prend alors des teintes argentées inquiétantes. Soudain on ne distingue plus ce qu'il y a au fond d'elle, à travers elle. Tantôt une ombre peut être un monstre caché sous la surface de l'eau, tantôt un simple reflet du ciel. De nourricière et d'Eden, elle devient soudain dangereuse, froide, voire meurtrière.

We are in Mataeia. We go fishing in my father's boat. He drives. My brother and I sit silently on either side of him. I watch the sea. It is calm, limpid, luminous and smooth. At times the sky becomes stormy and takes on some worrying silver hues. All of a sudden, we can no longer make out the bottom of the sea. Sometimes a shadow may be a monster hidden under the water's surface, sometimes a simple reflection of the sky. Nourishing and Edenic, it suddenly becomes dangerous, cold, even murderous.

Quand on a grandi au bord de la mer, en elle, on finit par avoir l'impression qu'elle est à l'intérieur de nous, et sa présence est si indissociable de notre appréhension du monde, que lorsqu'on se retrouve loin d'elle, on se sent privé d'une partie de soi, arraché de la vie elle-même. Il manque quelque chose devant soi, que l'on puisse toucher, regarder, dans laquelle on puisse entrer, se plonger, avec laquelle faire corps, qui nous mette en synchronicité avec le moment de la journée, la température, la saison, le vent, la réalité, le temps qui passe.

When we grow up at the edge of and in the sea, we end up feeling she's within us, her presence so inextricably bound up in our understanding of the world that when we find ourselves a long way from her, we feel deprived of part of ourselves, ripped from life itself. Something is missing in front of us, something that we can touch and look at, something we can enter and plunge into, become one with, something that places us in harmony with the day: temperature, season, wind, reality, the passing of time.

Je me souviens de son visage en sang, il y avait aussi du jaune, je ne sais pas si c'était du pus, ou quelque chose qu'il y a sous la peau, dont on ne sait pas si c'est toujours là mais qu'on ne voit pas d'habitude, en temps normal, car on a pas souvent l'occasion de voir la peau du visage ouverte, à nu, découverte, je me disais que c'était peutêtre du pus, parce que x a toujours eu une peau acnéique, x a une sorte de peau en relief, accidentée, ça m'a marqué, ce rouge et ce jaune, mis côte à côte, c'était surprenant, ce mélange de couleurs, ce contraste de couleurs, alors j'ai retenu, j'ai retenu aussi le mouvement du liquide qui coule, comme ça peint tout d'un coup, comme ça amène des couleurs surprenantes dans un intérieur principalement brun, la peau bronzée de x, au sol du parquet en bois massif, le plafond lambrissé et tout d'un coup, le rouge, ca tâche. Violence ne veut plus rien dire, dans ma tête. Ca ne veut rien dire, un mot, c'est plat un mot, ça n'a aucune réalité matérielle un mot. Ce n'est pas un mot, ce n'est pas « violence ». C'est cet enchaînement de bruits, de silences, de cris, de couleurs, du temps qui se dilate, puis s'accélère. C'est la sensation.

I remember his bleeding face there was also vellow I don't know if it was pus or something else under the skin something that we don't know if it's always been there but don't normally see since we don't often get the chance to see the skin of the open face uncovered exposed I thought it might be pus because X has a kind of damaged textured skin always had acned skin This juxtaposed red and yellow stood out to me was odd this mix of colors this contrast I remembered I also remembered the movement of liquid running down how it was like paint all of a sudden how it introduces these startling colors into a mostly brown room X's tanned skin on the solid wooden parquet floor the paneled ceiling and suddenly red it stains violence no longer means anything in my head word no longer means anything a flat word word that has no material reality not a word not « violence » this series of sounds silences cries colors time expanding then accelerating a feeling

Les larmes sont réservées aux enterrements. On peut pleurer, mais il faut s'isoler, se cacher, dans une pièce fermée, en silence, ne pas imposer aux autres ce spectacle gênant. En public, une larme qui coule et c'est perdu. Et comme le barrage qui se fissure, c'était l'assurance que tout se répande, et nous submerge. Chez nous, ça a toujours été tout ou rien. Rien de la colère, rien de la déception, rien de la vexation, ou toute la colère, toute la frustration et la rage. Il y a des familles qui s'adonnent à la colère comme on s'adonne à la drogue. Comme une façon de respirer, de faire fonctionner la machine, de traverser la vie.

Tears are reserved for funerals. We're allowed to cry, but we must isolate ourselves, hide in a closed room in silence, sparing others this embarrassing sight. A tear falls in public, and you've lost the game. It's guaranteed that everything bursts and submerges us like a dam that cracks. In our home, it was always all or nothing. None of the anger, none of the deception, none of the humiliation, or all the anger, all the frustration, and all rage. Some families take anger like you take drugs. Like a way of breathing, moving through life, stoking the fire.

Il y a cette nuit. C et moi nous dormons côte à côte. Nous faisons le même rêve. On rêve qu'on se noie. Je rêve que je vais peut-être me noyer et que je suis seule. Elle rêve qu'elle est en train de se noyer et qu'elle me cherche. Elle me dit que dans son rêve elle dit maman, maman.

This night. C and I sleep side by side. We dream the same dream. We dream that we are drowning. I dream that I might drown and I am alone. She dreams that she is in drowning and trying to find me. She tells me that in her dream she is saying maman, maman.

FONTAINEBLEAU

FONTAINEBLEAU

C, allongée sur un drap sur l'herbe à côté de l'étang et des marguerites avec son cahier d'activités, des feutres, un pot avec des glands, sa petite truelle jaune en plastique, ses gants blancs d'hiver inutilisés et introuvables en hiver qu'elle ressort là comme par magie avec lesquels elle saisit la peau sucrée et mouillée de la pomme croquée C, lying down on a beach towel on grass near the pond with some daisies and her workbook, some pens, a jar full of acorns, her yellow plastic trowel. She magically produces her unused white winter gloves. Nowhere to be found in winter, she uses them to grab the sweet, damp skin of a bitten apple.

Le soleil le ice champagne rosé le forsythias en fleur les jonquilles comme des points de soleil épars dans l'herbe comme des points de bonheur qui annoncent le printemps. Le beau-père assis en face de moi tout ce bonheur toute cette lumière tout ce soleil on ne se parle pas. Faire comme si les compteurs étaient remis à zéro, comme si le soleil avait brûlé les blessures et les rancœurs comme si sous lui nous étions purs et absous. Rien dire, rien penser, juste s'étendre là sous le soleil Revivre Se régénérer

The sun rosé champagne on ice forsythias in bloom daffodils like hints of sprinkled sunlight in the grass like hints of delight announcing spring. Father-in-law sat facing me all this joy all this light all this sun we don't speak to each other. Everything is dialed back to 0, like the sun has burned up all wounds and resentments as if beneath it we are pure and absolved. Nothing to say, nothing to think, just stretch out there under the sun Come back to life Regenerate

PARIS

PARIS

À IKEA il avait choisi pour notre première plante d'appartement, quelque chose de robuste, qui n'avait pas besoin de beaucoup d'eau et de soleil. Elle a duré jusqu'ici, huit ans qu'elle se développe de manière infime, si infime qu'on ne l'a pas vu pousser, on ne se rappelle plus, plus aucune idée de ce qu'elle pouvait être au début, une idée de sa petitesse à ses débuts. Elle n'est pas très belle, mais en effet résistante. Sans intérêt même, mais là, indéfectible.

ÀGamm vert, j'ai choisi une plante, qui ressemblait à une aquarelle. Ses pétales par touches de pinceau, feuilles aériennes, multiples, légères, qui bruissent, élégantes. Elle a déjà failli mourir une fois. Elle ne se plaît guère dans beaucoup d'endroits. Il a fallu chercher beaucoup avant de comprendre ce qu'elle voulait, ce qu'il lui fallait, avant de lui trouver sa place idéale. Là elle a daigné revivre.

At IKEA, he had picked out for our first apartment plant something robust that didn't need a lot of water or sun. The plant has lasted 8 years so far - growing in an infinitesimal way, so infinitesimal that we haven't observed its grow or remember anything else, no idea what it might've looked like or how small it was in the beginning. The plant wasn't very beautiful but indeed resistant. Deprived of proper care but nonetheless there, constant.

At Gamm vert, I chose a plant that resembled a watercolor: its petals like brushstrokes, ethereal, many rustling light leaves, elegant. The plant had already nearly died once. It didn't like many spots. It had been necessary to look a lot before knowing what it would like, what it needed, before finding the ideal place for it. There, the plant deigned to revive.

J'ai l'impression d'être entre deux rives et de me voir, depuis les deux rives à la fois, au milieu. Je me vois fille de et mère de. Je vois ce qu'on fait subir à son enfant et ce qu'on subit en tant qu'enfant.

J'ai parfois la nostalgie d'un lien qui n'a jamais existé. Un lien fait de rien, un lien comme un souffle de vent, des feuilles qui se suivent dans ce courant, qui ont l'air de tracer une ligne, mais que rien ne retient entre elles, si ce n'est ce mouvement circonstanciel. Le vide dans lequel a pris vie et s'est construit ma colère, le silence dans lequel s'est consolidée ma tristesse. Et maintenant qu'il n'y a plus la colère, et presque plus la tristesse, je revois de nouveau ce vide, je cherche à l'intérieur les raisons, la preuve, de ce vide, ou le signe que quelque chose a existé, qui m'aurait échappé, que j'aurais oublié, par mauvaise foi, ou par distraction. Je cherche des photos mais il n'y a rien. Il n'y a pas de correspondance. Il n'y a pas de souvenirs de vraies conversations, où l'on partage quelque chose qui serait une intimité, où ils me voient, où ils voient autre chose qu'eux-mêmes. Il reste encore de la tristesse. Ce sentiment doux, qui s'étire, dont on ne sait pas s'il va s'arrêter un jour. On y est bien. On tirera sur la corde tant que ça durera.

Les couches d'émotions diminuent.

Je me demande ce qu'il restera après la tristesse.

I feel I am between two shores, seeing myself from both sides. I see myself as daughter and mother of. I see what we do to a child and what we go through as children. I sometimes feel nostalgic for a bond that never existed. A bond made of nothing, like a blast of wind, a few leaves following each other in this current that seems to trace a line, but nothing holds them together except this circumstantial movement. The emptiness that absorbed and shaped my anger, the silence in which my sadness was strengthened. And now that there is no more anger and almost no more sadness, I once more see this emptiness. I look inside it for the reasons, the proof of this emptiness or a sign that something existed that has already escaped me, something I've already forgotten whether by bad faith or distraction. I look for photographs but there aren't any. There aren't any letters. No memories of real conversations where we share something that might count as closeness, where they would see me - where they would see anything other than themselves. Still, there is sadness. This sweet, lingering feeling that endures without our knowing if it will continue. It's fine here. We milk it for as long as it lasts.

The layers of emotion dissipate.

I wonder what will endure after the sadness.

Note du Traducteur

Toute enveloppée de l'odeur cendrée d'une histoire lue à la lumière d'un feu de camp. Ballottée par des vagues de résonances sonores. Inquiète quant à la responsabilité d'avoir à restituer correctement en français le feu et les vagues, l'empreinte que laissent les personnages. Finalement, avide de rencontrer l'écrivaine derrière le texte, et de glaner ses autres sonorités, lui partager les miennes. Puis l'odeur cendrée s'accentue, les vagues de sons se resserrent et l'inquiétude, elle, se dissipe. C'est en lisant le texte de Heran, une fois, deux fois et de nombreuses autres fois ensuite que ces sensations m'ont traversée et c'est en discutant avec elle autour de nos textes et de nos traductions en cours qu'elles se sont confirmées.

La première fois que nous nous sommes parlé, Heran m'a demandé comment je voulais que mon travail sonne une fois traduit en anglais. Prise au dépourvu, je n'avais pas la réponse, alors je lui ai retourné la question. Comment voulait-elle que son travail sonne en français? Elle m'a répondu qu'elle souhaitait que son texte puisse s'entendre comme une histoire qu'on lirait à voix haute, à la lueur d'un feu, comme le fait Laka dans Abby. A nouveau, son attache aux sonorités et le soin qu'elle apporte aux mots se voyait jusque dans son travail de traductrice et m'a demandé un travail important et nécessaire sur les choix que je faisais en traduisant son texte, travail dont une grande partie s'est faite le nez plongé dans un dictionnaire de synonymes. Heran ne me confiait pas seulement son texte, mais aussi sa voix douce et pleine, que je souhaitais lui rendre en français, au maximum. Au-delà de ça, ma partie préférée de nos nombreux échanges a toujours été le grand enthousiasme et l'amusement que nous avions chacune à partager nos trouvailles, la vue de nos fenêtres et nos mots justes.

Condamnée à être noyée par les bruits qui l'entourent, qu'elle entend trop fort et trop violemment, le personnage de l'épouse qu'écrit Heran évolue dans un texte enrobé d'une langue porteuse de multiples strates et en constante création. Ainsi, son texte ne porte pas seulement l'anglais, mais aussi l'amharic et l'oromija, dont les noms sont changés en kirahma et ajimoro (euxmêmes, mais écrits à l'envers). Dans le texte, la narratrice est laissée de côté parce qu'elle ne parle que kirahma, quand les autres parlent ajimoro. Ici, nos deux textes ont trouvé un point de contact important et quelque chose est passé entre eux et entre nous : les langues que nous parlons et celles que nous ne parlons pas, les langues entendues et qui, même si nous ne les manions pas, existent forcément dans nos textes, nous laissant toutes enveloppées de l'odeur familière de nos autres langues. Ce fut un grand plaisir de partager ça avec Heran.

HERAN TILAHUN

ABBY

In the village of Wollo, just outside of the Aburra estate, and just past dusk, a group of us gathered around a dying fire. In the vacancy left by the fading ember, I could hear the faint sounds of breath: forced arhythmic long exhales "hooooo, hoooooooo!"

There is a shuffling of fabric in the pitch black as she adjusts her position, before another attempt at stoking the fire "hahooooooooo! haaaahh, hooooooooo!"

As my attention wanders, I can hear the hyenas in the distance, their howls rising in unison to a high pitch in a haunting melody. And paying close attention I can vaguely make out the sound of the seven streams as they confluence just past the trees lining the Aburra Estate.

Finally, a crackle.

The fire expands and illuminates the incendiary—Laka Bultosa. opposite me there's a loud congratulatory grunt from an indistinct voice and all at once the silence and darkness abruptly breaches. An orange hue forms around Laka's silhouette as she returns to her seat on a log. Once she's seated, all the women lean forward, eager for her to finish the fable.

Mmm, the woman to her right urges, as soon as Laka is seated.

So she continues. Beerti furdoo malee guddoo hin qabdu. There's a groan here and a headshake there so I obligingly hmmed in disapproval. I don't know what it means but it has a nice rhythm. I imagine a running man, jumping from a high platform to a low platform back to a high platform, every other syllable. Beerti malee hin

furdoo guddoo qabdu

She continues in Kirahma. So, she acquiesced. A tsk from one of the women.

'Forgive me, dhirsa, I'll make it now,' the wife said. Laka lowers her voice to a baritone "How much did you pay for

traduit de l'anglais par LIKA

ABBY

Dans le village de Wollo, à l'orée du domaine d'Aburra et à la tombée de la nuit, une partie d'entre nous s'est réunie autour d'un feu mourant. Dans l'espace laissé vide par la braise faiblissante, je discernais les sons des souffles étouffés : de longues expirations arythmiques forcées « hooooo, hoooooooo ! »

Le tissu bruisse dans la nuit noire alors qu'elle se remet en place, avant de tenter une nouvelle fois de raviver le feu, « hahooooooooo ! haaaahh, hoooooooo ! »

Alors que mon attention diminue, j'entends les hyènes au loin, leurs hurlements s'élevant à l'unisson en une mélodie obsédante. En me concentrant, je peux vaguement distinguer le son des sept ruisseaux qui confluent non loin des arbres bordant le domaine d'Aburra.

Enfin, un crépitement.

Le feu enfle et illumine l'incendiaire: Laka Bultosa. En face de moi, un puissant grondement de félicitations s'élève d'une voix indistincte et tout à coup le silence et l'obscurité sont brutalement brisés. Une aura orange se forme autour de la silhouette de Laka alors qu'elle retourne à sa place sur une souche. Une fois assise, toutes les femmes se penchent vers elle, impatientes qu'elle termine la fable.

Mmm, l'exhorte la femme à sa droite.

Elle poursuit. Beerti furdoo malee guddoo hin qabdu. Ici un grognement, là une secousse de la tête donc je joins ma désapprobation à la leur. Je ne sais pas ce que ça signifie mais le rythme est agréable. J'imagine un homme en train de courir, sautant de plateaux hauts en bas, toutes les deux syllabes.

Beerti malee hin furdoo guddoo qabdu Elle poursuit en kirahma. « Donc, elle acquiesça. » Une femme réagit : tss. that vial?' the husband berated.

'Asir' the wife answered.

'Gowa!' he slurred and she began to weep silently.

At the least, finish the stew!' he shouted.

'Tole, dhirsa' the wife responded. She returned to the kitchen and proceeded to cut the onions, smash the garlic and let them sizzle at the bottom of the pot. She put the lentils in the rag and washed them. Her tears dripped into the stew."

Laka frowns and highers her register in a fake cry. 'How could I be so stupid?' She wondered. Just then, the memory of her friend Beti appeared to her and she cursed her name. How convincing she had been, selling her that vial. How stupid had she been to have downed that putrid, useless tincture.

Laka fake sniffles and in a mocking tone continues, 'take this, and vou'll be able to hear for milles' for miles my ass, the wife hissed carefully concealing her pitiful rage from the prying eyes of her husband. On cue, his reproach reached her back, 'where's the stew!' making her flinch mid sentence. Laka makes her voice quiver, 'almost ready' the wife said, more tears streamed down her face, faster and hotter. Laka leans forward and lowers her tone, just then, the sound of the rain collecting in the pale next to her is amplified. What was a faint tik...tik...tik turned into a loud blop!...blop!... blop!, growing louder and louder. Her husband in the living room shifted his position and she could hear the scratch of his wool gabi on the cushioned seat. Instinctively, she whirled her head to face him, a bewildered look coloring her face, before quickly ripping her gaze away and returning to the stew before inciting another tirade. She dutifully continued to stir the pot. Every scratch of the wooden spoon against the metal pot produced such a screech it made her wince.

She reproached herself for how late it was when it finally dawned on her: the vial had worked! She almost shrieked in excitement before quieting herself. She looked over her shoulder conspiratorially, the husband sprawled out over the cushioned seat, a grimace plastered on his face and a far-off look in his eye. She could hear herself swallow, an overwhelming wave down her throat, her wet lids, squished

« "Pardonne moi, dhirsa, je vais le préparer tout de suite," dit l'épouse. »

Laka prend le registre plus grave d'un baryton « "Combien as-tu payé cette fiole ?" vociféra le mari.

"Asir", répondit l'épouse.

"Gowa!" l'insulta le mari et elle commença à pleurer silencieusement.

"Va terminer le ragoût au moins!" hurla-t-il.

"Tole, dhirsa" répondit l'épouse. Elle retourna dans la cuisine et se mit à couper les oignons et écraser l'ail pour les laisser grésiller au fond de la marmite. Elle mit les lentilles dans le torchon et les lava. Ses larmes tombaient dans le ragoût. »

Laka fronce les sourcils et hausse le ton dans une sorte de plainte. « "Comment ai-je pu être aussi stupide ?" se demanda-t-elle. Au même moment, le souvenir de son amie Beti lui apparut, et elle maudit son nom. Elle avait été si convaincante en lui vendant cette fiole. Elle avait été si stupide d'avaler cette concoction putride et inutile. »

Laka feint de renifler et poursuit sur un ton moqueur, « "Avale ça, et tu seras capable d'entendre à des kilomètres," à des kilomètres mon cul, pesta l'épouse, dissimulant prudemment sa rage pitoyable aux yeux inquisiteurs de son mari. Et comme prévu, les reproches de son mari lui revinrent, "où est le ragoût!" la faisant tressaillir au beau milieu de sa phrase.

Laka fait trembler sa voix, « "c'est bientôt prêt" dit l'épouse, les larmes inondant son visage, de plus en plus rapides, de plus en plus chaudes. »

Laka se penche en avant et baisse le ton, « Soudain, le son de la pluie recueillie dans le seau à côté d'elle s'amplifia. Ce qui n'était qu'un léger tic...tic...tic devint un lourd floc !...floc !...floc !, s'intensifiant encore et encore. Dans le salon, son mari changea de position et elle put entendre la friction de son gabi en laine contre le siège capitonné. Instinctivement, elle fit volte-face pour le regarder, la perplexité colorant son visage, avant de s'arracher rapidement à son observation pour retourner à son ragoût et ne pas provoquer une nouvelle

with every blink, and her breath, like howling winds with each inhale and exhale, demanding her attention. She must have looked stupefied, standing motionless in the kitchen exploring the new frontiers of her body. Whoooooshhhhh the exhale, phhhhhhhhhh the inhale reverberating through her body, whoooooooooshhhh."

Laka sways back and forth with each whooshh and phhhhhhhh lulling her audience before screaming, 'GALA HARREE!' Two ladies around the campfire flinch or clutch at their chest and others listen intently, unblinking. The dominance of the husband's scream violently ripped her from her reverie and she stumbled before leaning against the counter to steady herself. She's heaving, raising her shoulders in defense, her breathing hitched at the first footstep: BOOM! She holds her breath, awaiting the nex- BOOM! 'GALA HARREE!?" ... BOOM!

Hopelessly, she looked around at the utensils in front of her through blurry eyes, but the sounds overwhelmed her. There's a new sound growing louder, one that beats in tandem with the footstep but also in the silences in between. BUM-BUM...BUM-BUM...BOOM, BOOM. BUM...BUM-BUM. When she finally turned she was faint but she spotted the vein in his neck through her squinted lids and knew at once the source of the second beat. BUM-BUM BUM-BUM BUM-BUM its spikes as it rises and sinks like thorns puncturing her chest. She shushhhhed him, only in her head the way she usually does, not aloud, and with her eyes still closed, as if obeying, the second beat quieted. Bum-bum bum-bum. She loosened her hold on her ears—just a little and straightened to hear the dissappeari- bum-bum bum... bum...

Stillness. It was so quiet and she feared that if she let go of her ears and opened her eyes the noise would turn a corner and flank her, more ferociously than before. When she opened her eyes through squinted lids and freed her ears, her hands hovering close by just in case, she saw her husband, flat on the ground, motionless.

The woman waits with bated breath. My gaze returns from a rustling bush just within the boundaries

diatribe. Elle continua à remuer le ragoût consciencieusement. Le moindre choc de la cuillère en bois contre la marmite en métal produisait un son si strident que ça la faisait grimacer.

Elle se blâma du temps que cela lui avait pris quand elle réalisa enfin que la fiole avait fonctionné! Elle faillit hurler d'excitation avant de se contenir. Elle jeta un œil conspirateur par-dessus son épaule, le mari vautré sur le siège rembourré, son visage figé dans un rictus alcoolisé et l'air égaré. Elle pouvait s'entendre avaler, une vague puissante dévalant sa gorge, ses paupières humides, un bruit de succion chaque fois qu'elle cillait, et son souffle, comme des vents hurlants à chaque inspiration et expiration, exigeant son attention. Elle devait avoir l'air stupéfait, debout dans la cuisine, immobile, explorant les nouvelles frontières de son corps. Whooooochhhhh l'expiration, phhhhhhhhh l'inspiration, résonnant dans son corps, whoooooooooocochhhh. »

Laka se balance d'avant en arrière au rythme des whoochh et des phhhhhhhh berçant son public avant de crier, « GALA HARREE! » Deux des femmes autour du feu de camp tressaillent ou portent la main à leur cœur et les autres écoutent attentivement, sans ciller. « La force du cri du mari l'arracha violemment de sa rêverie et elle chancela avant de s'appuyer sur le plan de travail pour retrouver l'équilibre. Prise d'un haut-le-cœur, elle leva les épaules pour se défendre, son souffle suspendu au premier bruit de pas : BAM! Elle retint son souffle, attendant le prochain BAM! "GALA HARREE!?" ... BAM!

Elle observa désespérément les ustensiles posés devant elle, la vision floue, mais les bruits la submergeaient. Un nouveau son apparaît, s'amplifiant, remplissant les silences laissés par les bruits de pas. BAM, BOUM-BOUM... BOUM-BOUM... BAM, BOUM-BOUM... BOUM-BOUM Quand elle se retourna enfin, elle était au bord de l'évanouissement mais elle repéra la veine dans le cou de son mari à travers ses paupières plissées et elle sut immédiatement d'où venait ce second battement. BOUM-BOUM BOUM-BOUM BOUM-BOUM. Ça croit en pics

of the fire. Laka pauses for a moment before continuing, In the morning the wife's friend Beti came to the door and knocked three times. With the third knock, the door shrieked open just a slit. 'Akkam Jirta' she said cheerfully, her voice receding to safety at the last minute. Sheepishly she cracked the door further and stepped through, neck first, turning right right until—-.

'Mmmm?' The wife barely registered Beti at the kitchen entrance. Too busy sweeping around the body lazily.

Beti smiles. 'It worked,' she nodded at the wife.

'Ehhhh, not the way you said, but this'll do'

'What do you mean, I told you you'd be able to control sounds.'

'You said I'd be able to hear them very well.'

'When has hearing well ever killed anyone's husband, don't be daft,' Beti accompanied her reproach with a disapproving look the wife didn't register, too busy looking down at the body. 'What an unfortunate heart attack,' Beti said. 'yes, yes, that's what I'll say' the wife responded.

From that moment on, her house was the picture of silence. Her gift not only brought her the death of her husband but acres of land. For over a mile in each direction of her house—life fled. So much as a squeak from a newborn lamb and its mother looked on as it silently dropped to the floor. Dead. Word got round and everyone fled. Those who stayed lived tortured lives: silent ciqaddas and crouching lizards, stuck, scared afraid to move. A foolish hyena would test the edge of the parameters but get spooked when all its friends would meander away in different directions and it too followed suit.

She lived her whole life that way, a legend before her death which is assumed by some and debated by others because in the two hundred years since, no one had ever dared enter that house or the surrounding areas. That ladies, is the legend of the Girti estate.

The women beam at the story. Asking her where she got the tale. Asking her where she learned to tell stories like this. Imagine the loneliness though, some counter. I would never kill anyone, no matter what they were doing to me, others boast. All while Laka drinks puis ça plonge comme des épines crevant sa cage thoracique. Elle lui demanda le silence, seulement dans sa tête comme elle le fait toujours, jamais à voix haute, et ses yeux toujours fermés, le second battement se calma comme s'il lui obéissait. Boum-boum boum-boum. Elle desserra les mains de ses oreilles, pas de beaucoup, et se redressa pour entendre les sons disparus : boum-boum boum... boum...

Quiétude. C'était si paisible, et elle craignait d'enlever complètement les mains de ses oreilles et d'ouvrir les yeux, laissant le bruit bifurquer et la prendre en embuscade, plus farouche encore qu'auparavant. Quand elle entrouvrit les paupières et retira ses mains de ses oreilles, les laissant à proximité juste au cas où, elle vit son mari, à plat ventre au sol, immobile. »

La femme patiente, retenant son souffle. Mon regard vient de se poser sur le bruissement d'un buisson juste à la lisière du feu. Laka s'arrête un moment avant de reprendre, « Au matin, Beti, l'amie de l'épouse, vint à la porte et frappa trois coups. Au troisième, la porte s'entrouvrit dans un grincement. "Akkam Jirta" dit-elle gaiement, modifiant sa voix juste à temps pour ne pas se trahir. Penaude, elle ouvrit plus grand la porte pour la franchir, seulement jusqu'au cou, tournant sa tête à droite, quand —

"Mmmm?"L'épouse remarqua à peine Beti à l'entrée de la cuisine. Trop occupée à balayer paresseusement autour du cadavre.

Beti sourit. "Ça a marché," dit-elle à l'épouse, hochant la tête.

"Euhhh, pas de la façon que tu avais annoncée, mais ça fera l'affaire"

"Qu'est-ce que tu racontes, je t'ai dit que tu serais capable de contrôler les sons."

"Tu as dit que je serais capable de très bien les entendre"

"À quel moment bien entendre a pu tuer le mari de quiconque, ne soit pas sotte," Beti accompagna son reproche d'un regard désapprobateur auquel l'épouse ne prêta pas attention, trop occupée à regarder le cadavre au sol.

 $"Quelle\ malencontreuse\ crise\ cardiaque,"\ dit\ Beti.$

it in, humble and quiet. One more story they beg her. Please. All of them transform into children. No-no she says, bashful. Please!!! They double down. Just one, just one. I'm all talked out, she says. Let her tell you a story she says looking at me. For the first time that night the general arrow of the circle turns around and all their necks turn to me. Their faces drop. They'd have preferred a definite no, rather than navigating a kind way to reject my tale. "Tole" I say and they snicker. They know I don't speak Ajimoro. "Okay, okay" they condescendingly offer. But before I could begin someone suggested going into the house and fetching kolo, so we can snack. The ladies enter in ones and twos and I get a sinking feeling in my stomach. I know they'll return saying it's too dark— we should head inside and eat a real meal.

Once all the ladies were inside it was just Laka and me. I get off my seat and go over and sit next to Laka on the log.

"Nice," I say.

She turns to me, "thank you."

"Sounds familiar" I say, casually.

There's recognition in her eyes for a split second before she hides it but I saw it.

The ladies come back out the same way they came in. Laughing at something one of them said. As soon as they reach the fire they pass the plate of kolo around. "Tollle" one of them says, dragging it out. "Tell us your story sweetie." The rest of them are smiling. They have no faith in my storytelling.

There once lived a sorcerer, I begin, who never used his powers. Sorcery was banned in the land so he did the only thing that was permitted: he thought magic. One day his brother, an officer in the king's army, told him of a sorcerer that had a bounty out on him, who dabbled in the worst sorcery imaginable: Alchemy. Concocting crystals from various liquids. When his brother told him of the sourcer's methods, he was appalled. What carelessness, what reckless—-" There's a strong rustle in the leaves leading to the dark woods and when we all whip our heads to see what it is, it's some of

"Oui, oui, c'est ce que je dirai" répondit l'épouse.

À partir de cet instant, sa maison respira le silence. Son don ne lui apporta pas seulement la mort de son mari, mais il lui conféra aussi celle d'hectares de terres. Sur plus d'un kilomètre de part et d'autre de sa maison – la vie fuyait. À peine un couinement, et un agneau tout juste né tombait au sol sous les yeux de sa mère. Raide mort. Le bruit courut et tout le monde s'enfuit. Celles et ceux qui restèrent vivaient dans la torture : des cigales silencieuses et des lézards tapis, acculés, terrorisés, effrayés de bouger. Une hyène imprudente testerait les limites de la zone mais serait tellement affolée de voir toutes ses amies s'éloigner dans différentes directions, qu'elle en ferait de même.

Elle vécut ainsi toute sa vie, une véritable légende avant sa mort, en laquelle certaines croient et que d'autres contestent, parce qu'en deux cents ans, personne n'avait jamais osé pénétrer cette maison ou ses environs. Voici, mesdames, la légende du domaine de Girti. »

Les femmes s'ébahissent de l'histoire. Lui demandent d'où elle tient ce conte. Lui demandent où elle a appris à raconter de telles histoires.

Tu imagines sa solitude, commentent certaines d'entre elles.

Je ne tuerai jamais personne, quoi qu'elle me fasse endurer, se targuent d'autres.

Tant de paroles dont Laka se délecte, modeste et silencieuse.

Encore une histoire, la supplient-elles.

S'il te plaît. Elles deviennent toutes des enfants.

Non-non, répond-elle, pudique. S'il te plaît !!! Elles surenchérissent. Juste une, juste une. Je n'ai plus rien à vous raconter, insiste-t-elle. Laissez-la vous raconter une histoire, dit-elle en me regardant. Pour la première fois de la soirée, l'équilibre de notre cercle est bouleversé et j'en deviens le centre alors qu'elles se tournent toutes vers moi. Leurs visages se décomposent. Elles auraient préféré un non catégorique plutôt que de devoir trouver un moyen de rejeter poliment mon conte. « Tole » dis-je, et elles ricanent. Elles savent que je ne parle pas ajimoro.

the women's husbands, coming back from their hunting. One of the women springs up from her seat, "you're late!"

One of the husbands, perches right next to me, spreading his legs and reaching for the plate of kolo right out of my hands. Talking over one another they tell us about their day. Defeated, I get up to leave but not before spotting Laka across from me, not joining in the merriment.

« Ok, ok » cèdent-elles d'un air condescendant. Mais avant que je ne puisse commencer, l'une d'elles suggère de rapporter du kolo de la maison pour que nous puissions manger un peu. Les femmes entrent, seules ou par deux, et je sens mon estomac se nouer. Je sais qu'elles reviendront en disant qu'il fait trop noir ; que nous devrions rentrer pour manger un vrai repas.

Une fois toutes les femmes à l'intérieur, il ne reste que Laka et moi. Je me lève de mon siège pour aller m'asseoir sur la souche, à côté d'elle.

« Bien joué, » dis-je.

Elle se tourne vers moi, « Merci. »

 $\,$ « Comme une sensation de déjà vu » je réponds, l'air de rien.

Ses yeux s'illuminent le temps d'une seconde avant qu'elle ne cache son émotion.

Les femmes ressortent de la même façon qu'elles sont entrées, riant toujours aux paroles de l'une d'entre elles. Dès qu'elles rejoignent le feu, elles se font passer l'assiette de kolo. « Tollle, » dit nonchalamment l'une d'elles. « Raconte-nous ton histoire ma grande ». Les autres sourient. Aucune ne croit en mes talents de conteuse.

« Il était une fois, un sorcier, » je commence, « qui jamais n'avait utilisé ses pouvoirs. La sorcellerie était bannie de ses terres, il faisait donc la seule chose qui lui était permise : il pensait seulement à la magie. Un jour, son frère, officier de l'armée du roi, lui parla d'un sorcier dont la tête était mise à prix car il s'était essayé à la pire magie qu'on pouvait imaginer : l'Alchimie. Faire sortir des cristaux de divers liquides. Quand il entendit parler des méthodes de ce sorcier, il fut révolté. Quelle négligence, quelle dangereuse façon de... » Un fort bruissement affole les feuilles menant à la forêt sombre et quand nos têtes se tournent vers le bruit, elles y trouvent certains des maris, de retour de la chasse. L'une des femmes jaillit de son siège, « vous êtes en retard! »

L'un des maris se perche juste à côté de moi, écartant ses jambes et me prenant l'assiette de kolo des mains. Se coupant mutuellement la parole, ils nous racontent leur journée. Abattue, je me lève pour partir, non sans voir Laka en face de moi, qui ne participe pas à ces réjouissances.

Translator's Note

"S O I F" in the middle header, two inch margins, several lines dedicated to an unfamiliar word "CROQUIS" written repeatedly, and a lipogram-block-quote all on the very first page. For my first encounter with translation, I was going to be jumping in headfirst. Over the course of my translation, I would discover that beyond the lipogram, there are various clever double entendres and rhymes throughout the piece. In order to make these devices work in the English translation, I needed to take big departures from the original text. As a result, the finished translation would differ greatly in content and diction in certain sections, but still needed to be in conversation with the original.

This is among the many reasons I was grateful to have been in contact with the author Lika Mangelaire throughout the translation process. Lika was a great partner and I feel grateful for her guidance. Since Wolof was an important part of this piece, her insight in those sections of the text was integral. For example: when I changed "Yaay" to "yay," she expressed her wish for that word to stay the same, since "yaay" translates as Mom in Wolof. She was also supportive of the various decisions I had to make throughout the text, from the first major decision: to keep the word "croquis" in French, to the entire lipogram and nursery rhyme sections. I did not want my translation to feel derivative. I wanted it to carry the same emotion as the original which was meant to be spoken aloud, so I edited THIRST as if I was writing in the style of Lika, in a Mangelesque style, if you will. It seems fitting, since over the course of translating her text, I've become a great fan of hers.

Lastly, I have to answer a question that occurred to me during the translation process: where does an English translation fit into this piece, in a conversation between Wolof and French, in the colonial history between Senegal and France, in the language barrier

between mother and daughter? I had my own answer. As an Ethiopian turned naturalized American, English is to me what French is to Lika. But I posed the question to Lika, and to her, English plays a similar role to French in this text. It is another layer. There are certain parts of this text where that's alluded to: "only the crumbs of English your mother doesn't understand." Lika has learned the French and English languages before her mother's language: Wolof. So you could say, the original text followed by this translation mirrors Lika's journey through language, first French, then English, with Wolof present throughout.

LIKA

SOIF

La feuille blanche sous la main, tu penses à ces années où ton mot préféré était croquis. Tu le répètes, en attendant qu'il se transforme sur ta langue.

Croquis, croquis, CroQUis, cRoquis, croquiS, crOquIs.

Plusieurs fois, jusqu'à ce qu'il devienne un étranger à ton palais.

cRoQuis, CROQUIS, CrOqUiS, cRoQuIs, crOquis, croquIs

La barre du I est trop rigide, tu es forcée de le dire en souriant, mais aucun mot ne te forcera à sourire. Alors tu brises ton rictus en deux par le milieu, obliges les commissures à ne plus remonter.

CROQUIS.

Rien n'y fait, tu le diras en souriant. Croquis t'attire, croquis te gonfle d'un sourire, crocs qui te mordent, croquis te traque. Tu essaies de fuir le mot, de te réfugier dans l'autre langue. L'inconnue, la silencieuse. Tu ne veux pas que les mots te choisissent, après tout, c'est toi qui les nommes, et pourtant, croquis s'impose, te tient éloignée de ce que tu as toujours voulu parler. Ce que ta mère parle.

Dans le miroir, tu observes les traces que laissent les crocs. Quelques gouttes de sang s'échappent du cou et de la lèvre inférieure, elles chutent sur le carrelage et tu tentes de lire le message qu'elles te laissent. Dans ton sang se lisent des [k] et des [r], ça cancane sur le sol et croquis ne veut plus rien dire. D'un coup de pied, tu effaces les traces, tu ne veux plus des [c] et des [qu] qui veulent dire [k], à la poubelle les [s] qui s'évaporent, qu'on t'enlève les [r] qui ne peuvent pas vivre seuls. Finalement, à quoi sert [r], qui n'est jamais qu'une béquille ralentissant les mots, une lettre violente

translated from the french by HERAN TILAHUN

THIRST

White sheet in hand, you think back to those years when croquis was your favorite word. You repeat it, listening to it transform on your tongue.

Croquis, croquis, CroQUis, cRoquis, croquiS, crOquIs.

again and again, until it's muddled paint on your palate.

cRoQuis, CROQUIS, CrOqUiS, cRoQuIs, crOquis,

croquIs

The I towers like an obelisk, straight and rigid. You're forced to say it with a smile. But no word will force a smile out of you. So, you break your grin—in half—down the middle and will the corners of your mouth to stay put.

CROQUIS.

Nothing works, you'll say while smiling. Croquis stalks you, croquis tracks you down, croquis draws you in, it sinks its fangs into your neck and your voice turns croaky when you speak. You try to flee the word, and take refuge in another language. In the unknown, in the silence. You don't want words to choose you, after all, you are the one who summons them, and yet, croquis imposes itself, keeps you from saying what you've always wanted, keeps you from your mother's words.

In the mirror, you see the marks left by its fangs. Blood drops drip down your neck from your lower lip, before falling on the qui existe dans chaque verbe ? Faire sans lui est impossible et pourtant tu le veux. Alors tu le fais. C'est décidé. Tu te mets au régime. Ce sera désormais un mode de vie sans [r] pour toi.

Ici, les mots ne jacassent plus. Tu les en empêches, ou c'est le séisme. Le symbole banni n'existe pas dans ce nouveau texte, maintenant ce ne sont plus que vingt-cinq signes. C'en est fini du langage indocile et cinglant, la feuille blanche sous la main, tu penses à ces années où une langue sans cette tache alphabétique cassante était possible. Donc tu fauches. Tu fauches les années. Tu fauches les obstacles. Tu fauches la végétation et un nouveau chemin éclot. La place est faite à une langue médicament qui soigne les entailles exhibées dont ce symbole est coupable.

En wolof, médicament se dit garab.

C'est loupé, plus de mode de vie sans R, le voilà renaître. Entre tes lèvres, il frappe les bouches, gratte les gorges, redresse et brise les mots. Entre celles de ta mère, il palpite, ondule, chatouille. De tes lèvres à celles de ta mère, tu voudrais que le choix soit possible et pourtant, ta bouche est décidée

croquis l'emporte, et de loin, sur garab alors tu as honte.

Tu es née en français, d'un père né en français, et d'une mère née en wolof.

Naître en wolof veut dire qu'elle parlera français dans son pays et qu'elle parlera français dans sa langue. Frontière se dira Frontière et gardera les [r] âpres, déguisés en [r] glissants et coulants.

Naître en français veut dire que ta mère hurlera en français

tiles below and you try to decipher the message they leave behind. In your blood you read the [k] and the [r], as they gossip on the ground and croquis loses all meaning. With a kick, you erase the traces, you no longer want the [c] and [qu] which sound out [k], and while the [s] evaporates into thin air, you remove the [r] which can not live alone. Honestly, what's the use of the [r], which has only ever been a crutch, slowing down your words, the violent letter in every French verb? To speak without it is impossible, even so, you want to try. So, you do. It's decided. You go on a diet. From now on, you'll live an [r] free life.

In this place, the fallen shapes don't speak as they once did. Not since you stopped them, suspecting the avalanche they could unleash. The banished symbol does not exist in this new text, and with it gone, the alphabet consists of only twenty-five shapes—an end to the unmanageable and scathing language. With the white sheet in hand, you think of a past when speaking without this delicate alphabetic stain was possible. So you begin to mow. To mow down the ages. To smash down the obstacles. To scythe the vegetation till a new path looms. One that can tend to this new language, one that can act as medicine, and heal the visible wounds left by the banished symbol.

In Wolof, medicine is Garab.

So much for a life without R, here it is: reborn. Between your lips, it strikes your mouth, scratches your throat, breaks and repairs your words. Between your mother's, it palpitates, undulates, titillates. Your lips or your mother's, you would have liked to choose but,

your lips have decided croquis over Garab, by a landslide, and you're ashamed. quand tu sortiras de son ventre.

croquis l'emporte et pourtant, tu ne voudrais que du [r] de médicament, le [r] de sirop pour la toux, qui apaise les gorges irritées. Tu aurais voulu naître en wolof toi aussi, comme le bébé qui est né avant toi. Puis il a commencé à parler français et les mots sont devenus trop nombreux pour sa bouche d'enfant. Un jour d'école, Maman a rangé le tiroir des jouets et a jeté ceux qui étaient devenus inutiles. Adieu bopp, adieu mbagg, adieu oom, adieu tànk, il n'a plus qu'une bouche à tête, une bouche à épaule, une bouche à genou, une bouche à pied, et le bouche-à-oreille nous fait entendre que le wolof n'existera plus entre vos lèvres. Si tu étais née en wolof, tu n'aurais rien oublié. Tes jouets auraient été rangés dans le tiroir que les parents n'ouvrent pas et seraient restés cachés jusqu'au jour où un spectacle aurait réuni Maman et papa dans le salon. bopp, mbagg, oom, tànk, chaque lettre est à sa place et ça se dit comme un poème, bopp, mbagg, oom, tànk, nous écoutons le refrain de ta comptine, bopp, mbagg, oom, tank, sonne bien mieux que tête, épaule, genou, pied, alors, sur un cahier, tu notes les paroles de ta chanson. Les pages sont noires des chansons que tu apprends à l'école, noires des chansons que tu entends à la radio, noires des chansons qui te viennent de l'Amérique, noires des chansons qui te viennent de l'Angleterre, elles sont blanches de celles que ta mère écoute chaque jour. Rien sur ton cahier, rien dans ta bouche, et sur tes joues, seulement les miettes de l'anglais que ta mère ne comprend pas. À l'heure du dîner, le cahier est rangé dans le tiroir que les parents n'ouvrent pas, mais les pages noircies ont déteint sur tes lèvres, alors ta mère sait à quoi tu as passé ton après-midi. L'encre noire sur tes lèvres tachera ta fourchette, ta fourchette tachera ta nourriture et ta nourriture tachera ta langue, ta langue tachera tes doigts et tes doigts tacheront ceux de ta mère, ses doigts tacheront son sein et le sein de ta mère tachera le torse de ton père, le torse de ton père tachera la joue du bébé né après toi et la joue du bébé né après toi tachera celle du bébé né avant toi et vous porterez tous la ***

You were born in French, from a father born in French and a mother born in Wolof.

Being born in Wolof means that she will speak French in her country and she will speak French in her language. She'll pronounce frontière as frontière, only, the harsh [r]s will be damasked in satin and silk.

Being born in French means that your mother will scream in French when you leave her womb.

Croquis prevails and yet, you only want the [r] medicine, the [r] cough syrup, which soothes your irritated throat. You would have liked to have been born in Wolof too, like the baby born before you. Before he started speaking French and the words became too numerous for his tiny mouth. One school day, Mom tidied up the crammed toy drawer and threw out the ones he no longer used. Bye bopp, Bye mbagg, Adieu oom, Adieu tank, he only has but one mouth to his head, one mouth to his shoulder, one mouth to his knee, and one mouth to his foot, and word of mouth has it that Wolof will not exist between his lips much longer. Had you been born in Wolof, you would not have forgotten anything. Your toys would have been stored in the drawer that your parents don't open and they would have remained there, until the day when Mom and Dad would gather in the living room and you would put on a show. bopp, mbagg, oom, tank, each letter is in its place, spoken like a poem, bopp, mbagg, oom, tank, they listen to the chorus of your nursery rhyme, bopp, mbagg, oom, tank, sounds much better than head, shoulders, knees and toes, so in a notebook you jot down the lyrics to your song. The pages are black from the songs you learn in school, black from the songs you hear on the radio, black from the songs that come from America, black from the songs that hail from England, they are the white ones tache des pages blanches de ton cahier.

Depuis que nous t'avons posé la question, tu bourdonnes je ne parle pas la langue de ma mère, je ne parle pas la langue de ma mère, je ne pas parle langue la de mère ma, mère ne parle pas la langue de ma je, la langue ne parle pas ma mère de je, de la langue ne pas ma mère je parle, parle la langue je ne pas de ma mère.

Ta langue en craquèle. Qu'on te donne à boire.

Tu frottes frénétiquement tes dents pour faire partir les taches d'encre qui s'y étalent. Ca ne sert à rien, chaque fois que tu ouvriras la bouche, tes dents noires se verront et ta mère gardera la tache sur son sein, comme preuve de ton silence. Pourtant tu le sais. Tu sais que bonjour se dit comme en arabe. Tu sais qu'il faut demander na nga def et qu'il faut y répondre maa ngi fii. Tu sais comment dire Maman et tu sais comment dire papa. Tu sais comment dire que tu as passé un bon moment et tu sais demander à quelqu'un de se pousser du chemin. Tu sais asperger un enfant au pistolet à eau puis le prendre dans tes bras et rire avec lui, lui dire qu'il est trempé. Tu sais tendre un objet à quelqu'un et lui dire de le prendre. Tu sais dire oui. Tu sais prendre un objet que quelqu'un te tend et dire merci. Tu sais dire non. Tu sais dire à la personne qui est au bout du fil de patienter. Tu sais dire que cet homme-là, c'est un vrai coquin. De tous ces mots, tu n'en dis aucun parce que la personne en face de toi a besoin de bien plus que d'un bonjour et il n'y a pas assez d'enfants avec qui jouer au pistolet à eau et pas assez de mains à qui tendre des tentatives timides et pas assez d'objets tendus et pourtant bien trop d'hommes coquins, comme de mots français dans ta bouche. Alors les taches d'encre ne partiront pas, à chaque sourire, la preuve de ton ignorance. À chaque your mother plays daily. Nothing in your notebook, nothing in your mouth, or your cheeks, only the crumbs of English your mother doesn't understand. At dinner time, the notebook is stored in the drawer that your parents don't open, but the blackened pages have rubbed off on your lips, so your mother knows what you've spent your afternoon doing. The black ink on your lips will stain your fork, your fork will stain your food and your food will stain your tongue, your tongue will stain your fingers will stain your mother's, her fingers will stain her breast and your mother's breast will stain your father's chest, your father's chest will stain the cheek of the baby born after you and the cheek of the baby born after you will stain that of the baby born before you and you will all bear the stain of the white pages of your notebook.

Your skin prompts a question, and you murmur the answer: I don't speak my mother's language, I don't speak my mother's tongue which my mother does not speak which, I don't speak my mother's tongue my mother does not speak I, don't language my mother, not the tongue I don't speak of my, mother does not speak, the language I do not of my mother.

Your tongue quakes. You need to drink.

You frantically rub your teeth to get rid of the smeared ink stains. It's no use, each time you part your lips, your black teeth will show and your mother will keep the stain on her breast, as proof of your silence. Yet you know it. You know that the word for hello is the same as the Arabic. You know to ask na nga def and to answer maa ngi fii. You know how to say Mom and you know how to say dad. You know how to say you had a good time and you know how to ask someone to get out of the way. You know how to spray a kid with a water

croquis, la preuve de ton mutisme. À chaque mot non dit, un couteau planté dans le dos de ta mère et c'est ta main qui en tient le manche. Une fois enfoncé, tu le fais glisser jusqu'au bas de son dos, puis de plus en plus loin, de plus en plus profond, jusqu'à arriver entre ses jambes. Le chemin est tout tracé, ton couteau pénètre son utérus. Ton bras est enfoncé jusqu'au coude et ta mère n'enfantera plus. Elle se souviendra de toi bébé qui babille et d'elle qui t'apprend à dire Maman et papa et oui et non. En français. À chaque mot que tu prononces, c'est un souvenir, et sa langue s'éloigne. À chaque croquis de toi enfant, c'est un souvenir, à chaque photo, c'est un souvenir et privée de son utérus, ta mère est forcée de se souvenir. C'est un coup de couteau dans son ventre, dans son cœur et dans sa gorge, puis dans sa langue.

Tu essuies le couteau sur ton jean, tu montes dans la voiture et tu dis poussel au fils de Tata. Plusieurs fois, poussel, il ne t'entend pas, poussel, alors tu répètes, poussel, jusqu'à ce qu'il se pousse. Il a compris et tu es fière. Tu as parlé en wolof. Dans la voiture, de gauche à droite, on se chuchote poussel, c'est ce que tu as dit, poussel, ça s'étend et les mots se poussent pour toi parce que tu as parlé, tu maîtrises l'espace de la voiture, jusqu'à ce que tu entendes. « Yaay, écoute ce qu'elle a dit, elle a dit *poussel* ». Ils rient ensemble. La honte colore tes joues. Tu ne parleras plus jusqu'à la fin du trajet. Ils n'entendront plus que la sécheresse de ta langue, qui continue de craqueler. Qu'on te donne à boire. Une fois rentrée, tu montres ta langue fendillée à ta mère et elle te donne du lait en litres. Tu le laisses te nourrir, avide de son goût et plus tard, quand ta bouche commencera à trop saliver, tu te cacheras dans les toilettes pour le vomir. Ta mère n'en saura rien et pour la remercier, tu lui achèteras une girafe en peluche au magasin, c'est son animal préféré. Sur son cul, tu broderas les trois initiales dans l'ordre de naissance, puis tu profiteras que l'aiguille et le fil soient de sortie pour coudre tes lèvres l'une à l'autre.

gun, you know how to take them in your arms and laugh with them, you know how to tell them they're soaked. You know how to hand someone an object and tell them to take it. You know how to say yes. You know how to take an object that someone hands you and say thank you. You know how to say no. You know how to tell the person on the phone to wait. You know how to say that man is bad news. All these words and yet, you don't use any, because the person in front of you needs a whole lot more than a hello and there aren't enough kids to play water guns with and not enough hands to hand objects to and not enough objects handed out and still far too many tricky men, like the French words in your mouth. The ink stains won't go away, with every smile, proof of your ignorance. With each croquis, proof of your silence. With every word left unsaid, a knife is planted in your mother's back and it's your hand that holds the handle. You slide it down to her lower back, then further and further, deeper and deeper, until you reach between her legs. The path is clear, your knife penetrates her uterus. Your arm is sunk to the elbow and your mother will give birth no more. She will remember your baby-babbling and her teaching you how to say Mommy and Daddy and yes and no. In French. Each word you say is a memory as her language fades away. Every croquis of you as a child is a recollection, every photo is a souvenir, and deprived of her womb, your mother is forced to remember. It's a stab to her stomach, to her heart, to her throat, to her tongue.

You wipe the knife on your jeans, you get in the car and you tell Tata's son to poussel. Several times, poussel, he doesn't hear you, poussel, so you repeat yourself, poussel, until he moves over. He understood and you're proud. You spoke in Wolof. In the car, from left to right, they whisper poussel, that's what you said, poussel, and your opus elevates you until you've mastered the space of the car, until you hear, "Yaay, did you hear what she said, she said poussel." They laugh in unison. Shame colors your cheeks. You won't speak until the end of the trip. They will only

Ta mère te raconte qu'elle vit entre deux langues et qu'on la croit folle. Ta mère te raconte que chez elle, des écrivains se retrouvent sur un bateau pour discuter entre eux. Elle te raconte qu'ils s'arrêtent à chaque village pour mettre de la poésie dans les mains tendues. Elle te raconte qu'un jour tu iras sur ce bateau et que toi aussi, tu pourras donner des pages et des pages de poésie. En attendant, tu écris sur des pages blanches à l'ordinateur, des mots que tu lis et relis, à voix haute, en ralentissant sur chaque [r]. Un jour, tes pages deviennent subitement noires. Tu es forcée de relire tes textes à l'encre blanche, ça te brûle les yeux. Ta mère ne lit jamais ce que tu écris et pourtant, aujourd'hui, c'est écrit à l'encre blanche et elle lit avec attention. Elle lit le texte avec attention et ça te frappe. Dans l'encre blanche, elle se reconnaît, elle reconnaît la langue qu'elle parle et toi, tu n'arrives plus à lire ce que tu écris. La page noire te rebute, l'encre blanche est trop claire pour tes yeux, les lettres se mélangent dans le blanc de ton œil. Tu es désolée, vraiment désolée, tu vas tout recommencer. Pourtant, ta mère aime. Désormais, elle ne lira que tes textes qui sont écrits à l'encre blanche. Alors c'est clair. Tout le lait que tu as vomi jusqu'à maintenant se retrouve sur la page noire et dans l'encre blanche tout est clair. Ta mère n'aime lire que ton vomi, ce que tu rejettes malgré toi et tout est clair. Elle ne veut pas lire ce que tu aimes transformer toujours et encore, elle ne veut pas des mots français avec lesquels tu joues, elle ne veut pas des mots que tu dénatures, elle ne veut pas des mots que tu penses, elle ne veut que de ce que tu vomis. Donne-lui un peu de tes vomissures, laisse-la les lire, c'est une mère, elle a besoin de savoir de quoi ton vomi est fait. Allez, donne-lui un peu de tes vomissures, laisse-la fouiller dedans, elle ne veut pas savoir de quoi tes paroles sont faites, elle ne veut pas de tes lettres qui devraient rouler sous la langue, celles sur lesquelles ta langue devrait appuyer. Pour toi, elles ne sont devenues que des lettres que tu fais accélérer, que tu lâches aussitôt les avoir prononcées. Tu fais tout vite et ça te fait mentir, mais ton vomi ne ment pas, allez donne-lui un peu de tes hear the sounds of your dried tongue, as it cracks. You need to drink. When you get home, you show your cracked tongue to your mother and she gives you gallons of milk. You let her feed you, hungry for the taste and later, when your mouth starts to salivate too much, you hide in the bathroom to regurgitate. Your mother won't know and to thank her, you will buy her a stuffed giraffe at the store, it's her favorite animal. On its ass, you will embroider your three initials in birth order, the baby before, you, the baby after, then you will take advantage of the needle and thread and sew your lips together.

Your mother tells you that she's caught between two languages, and people think she's crazy. Your mother tells you that at home, writers gather on a boat and converse with one another. She tells you that they stop at each village and distribute poetry into outstretched hands. She tells you that one day you will go on this boat and that you too, will be able to hand out pages and pages of poetry. In the meantime, you write on the white pages of your computer, words that you read and reread, aloud, slowing down on each [r]. One day, your pages suddenly turn black. You're forced to reread your texts in white ink, and it burns your eyes. Your mother never reads what you write but today it is written in white ink and she reads it carefully. So carefully it hits you. She sees herself in the white ink. In it, she recognizes the language she speaks but you, you can no longer bring yourself to read what you write. The black page puts you off, the white ink is too bright for your corneas, and the white letters blend with the whites of your eyes. You're sorry, truly sorry, you'll have to start over again. But your mother loves it. From now on, she will only read the texts you have written in white ink. It's clear then. All the milk you threw up is splayed on the black page, and in the white ink everything makes sense. Your mother only likes reading your vomit, what you reject in spite of yourself. She doesn't want to vomissures, Maman veut prendre le temps de les examiner, voir si tu es en bonne santé.

À l'école maternelle, tu chantes ta comptine préférée et personne ne comprend ce que tu marmonnes. À leurs oreilles, c'est une boue de sons, des gargouillis, tu t'étouffes devant tout le monde et c'est la honte, t'as pas honte de chanter ça ?

Il court, il court, le p'tit margouillat Il court, il court, il court

« Mais si c'est un petit lézard!»

Il court, il court le margouillat Pour attraper son repas

Tout le monde te dit que tu racontes n'importe quoi

Il a mangé la saut'relle Qui chantait sous la tonnelle

tu n'es pas si sûre de toi

A croqué le scarabée Qui passait sans se presser

mais de toute façon personne ne sait ce qu'est un margouillat et personne n'ira vérifier

Il a gobé un insecte Berk c'était vraiment infect

alors tu peux bien dire ce que tu veux

A raté un papillon

read words you revise over and over again, she doesn't want the French words you play around with, she doesn't want those words you distort, she doesn't want the words you think, she only wants what you vomit. Give her some of your vomit, let her read it, she's a mother, she just needs to know what's in your vomit. Go on, give her a bit of your vomit, let her sift through it, she doesn't want to know what your words are doing, she doesn't want the letters you need to roll under your tongue, the ones your tongue needs to press on. For you, they have just become letters that you speed through, that you drop as soon as they're said. You do everything fast and it makes you lie, but your vomit doesn't lie. Give her some of your vomit, she just wants to take her time examining it, to see if you're healthy.

In preschool, you sing your favorite nursery rhyme but no one understands your mumbling. To their ears, it's a sludge of sounds, a gurgle, you choke in front of everyone. It's shameful. Aren't you ashamed to sing that?

> He runs, he runs, the little Iguana He runs, he runs, he runs

"But it's a little lizard!"

He runs, he runs, the little Iguana He catches his meal and eats his banana

Everyone saying you make no sense

He ate the grasshopper Who sang near the arbor

you're not so sure of yourself

et de toute façon ils sont tous nuls, ils savent moins de choses que toi et pourtant,

tes chansons personne ne les connaît, ton lézard il mange des insectes et c'est dégoûtant, t'as vraiment pas honte de chanter ça, nous, à la maison, on chante il court, il court le furet, toi c'est il court, il court le p'tit margouillat, et puis tu parles quelle langue à la maison, ta mère elle parle pas français, tu parles même pas la langue de ta mère et ta mère quand elle parle français elle a un accent, et c'est trop marrant quand elle te parle dans l'autre langue tu comprends ce qu'elle te dit ?

À l'école maternelle, tu chantes ta comptine préférée à tue-tête

pendant que tu te laves les mains, les jours de spectacle et les heures où il faut se taire, quand tu fais pipi, dans la cour de récréation, quand c'est l'heure de faire la sieste, devant la maîtresse, dans le hall, quand ta mère vient te chercher et quand ta mère te dépose, devant les animateurs

puis tu leur réponds aux enfants et aux adultes, tu leur dis, arrête de toucher mes cheveux, non je parle pas la langue de ma mère, non elle a pas d'accent elle parle français comme le parle ta mère, arrête de toucher mes cheveux, non je comprends pas ce qu'elle dit, mais je comprends quand même quand elle me gronde

parce que tu es une enfant et que toutes ces réponses sont évidentes

bien sûr que ta mère parle comme toutes les autres mères bien sûr qu'il n'y a aucun accent dans sa bouche bien sûr qu'elle ne parle pas de travers, elle parle tout droit comme toi et comme les autres.

croaking on the beetle with horns like a needle

In any case, nobody's sure what an iguana is and no one will check

He swallowed the tick Eww, that's so sick!

so you can say whatever you want

Missed a butterfly by forgetting his necktie

they all suck anyway, they don't know as much as you do and yet,

nobody knows your songs, your lizard eats insects and it's disgusting, you're really not ashamed to sing that, at home, we sing: he runs, he runs the ferret; you're: he runs, he runs the little Iguana, so what language do you speak at home, your mother doesn't speak French, you don't even speak your mother's language and your mother, when she does speak French, she has an accent, and it's so funny when she talks to you in the other language, do you understand her?

In nursery school, you sing your favorite nursery rhyme at the top of your lungs, while you wash your hands, while you pee pee, at nap time, on performance days, when you're meant to be quiet, when your mom picks you up and when your mom drops you off, in the playground, in front of the teacher, in the lobby, in front of the caretakers.

you tell them the same thing, the children and the adults, you say, stop touching my hair, no I don't speak my mother's tongue, no she has no accent she speaks French the same way your mother speaks it, stop touching my hair, no I don't understand what she's saying, but I still understand when she

Le lendemain à l'école maternelle tu chanteras il court, il court le furet,

même si Maman t'as dit de continuer à chanter le margouillat

même si à la maison, c'est le margouillat que vous chantez.

Il court, il court le p'tit margouillat Il court, il court, il court

C'est la nuit que la soif est la plus présente. La nuit, c'est l'heure où la langue de ta mère sort de sa bouche et vient te tourmenter, alors tu te bouches les oreilles. À boire s'il vous plaît.

Fini les [r], tu sautes à la fin de l'alphabet, fatiguée de compter sur tes doigts jusqu'à vingt-six. [w] mange [x], [y] et [z] et tu as grandi avec le wolof comme seule langue de l'Afrique. Ta langue silencieuse porte le poids des langues africaines jusqu'à ta bouche et une berceuse en wolof se fait un nid dans celle de ta mère. Elle la chante au vent, aux fleurs, à l'herbe, au bébé attaché dans son dos et tu l'écoutes, cachée derrière la porte de la cuisine. Tu commences à chanter avec elle, mais aucun son ne sort, tu ne fais que mimer ses paroles. Pendant que vous chantez ensemble, elle jolie, toi muette, le bébé dans son dos s'endort et tes doigts tentent d'écrire les paroles, sans y parvenir. Tu n'as aucune idée de quelles lettres écrire, d'où couper les mots, tu écrirais n'importe quoi. Tu n'écris que le français, la langue de Papa, et tu n'écriras pas le wolof, la langue de maman. Si tu n'écris pas, tu essayes de chanter, alors tu fais sortir les mots de ta bouche un par un, et à chaque fois que ta mère recommence la comptine, c'est un nouveau mot qui sort de ta bouche. Au bout d'une infinité de tours, tu chantes toute la comptine, toi et ta scolds me

because you're a child, all these answers are obvious of course, your mother speaks like all the other mothers of course, there is no accent in her mouth, she is of course correct, and she doesn't need to change the way she speaks just like you and like the others.

The next day at preschool, you will sing he runs, he runs the ferret, even if Mom told you to continue singing iguana even if at home, it's iguana that you sing.

He runs, he runs the little iguana He runs, he runs, he runs

It is at night that the thirst is its most potent. Night is the time when your mother's tongue comes out of her mouth and begins to torment you, and you cover your ears. Would you please drink?

No more [r], you jump to the end of the alphabet, tired of counting to twenty-six on your fingers. [w] eats [x], [y] and [z] and you grew up with Wolof as your only African language. Your silent tongue carries the weight of African languages to your mouth and a Wolof lullaby makes a nest in your mother's. She sings it to the wind, to the flowers, to the grass, to the baby swaddled to her back and you listen to her, hidden behind the kitchen door. You start to sing with her, but no sound comes out, you just mime her words. As you sing together, her's pretty, you mute, the baby on her back falls asleep and your fingers try to write the lyrics, in vain. You have no idea what letters to write, where to cut words, you could be writing anything. You only write French, Dad's language, but you only want Wolof,

mère chantez ensemble et tu trouves ça vraiment très beau jusqu'à ce que le bébé dans son dos se réveille et pleure.

Tes yeux brûlent d'avoir écrit des tonnes de mots. Tu te demandes toujours quel est le but, quel goût a le médicament, pourquoi les sirops pour la toux sont toujours délicieux, quel est ton prénom, comment s'écrit papa en wolof, pourquoi Maman ne t'a pas appris à le parler, pourquoi tu n'as pas appris à le parler, si tu iras sur le bateau des écrivains qui distribuent de la poésie, ce que dit vraiment Maman quand elle te gronde, d'où vient ton prénom, si le prénom de ta mère veut vraiment dire reine, qu'est-ce qu'un margouillat, combien il y a d'hommes coquins sur Terre, pourquoi tu ne supportes plus le lait, d'où vient le mot *croquis*, qui a créé l'alphabet, pourquoi on a pas vingt-six doigts pour compter vingt-six lettres, qui décide du nom des langues, de quoi on peut être malade, si la forme de ta langue décide de la langue que tu parleras, comment transformer la honte, de quoi sont faites les obsessions, si des romans ont été écrits en wolof, si ton obsession c'est de ne pas pouvoir parler wolof ou de ne savoir parler que le français. Les crocs ne veulent plus te lâcher et tu ne parviens pas à faire taire la soif. Tu reprends en main le fil et l'aiguille pour fermer la plaie de ta gorge d'où se déversent les lettres dures. Puis tu te places face au miroir et tu répètes tous les mots que tu as appris, sans répit.

Puis tu recommences depuis le début encore et encore.

Qu'on te donne à boire.

La soif se dit mar.

Mar de te taire, mar de parler, pas de lait pour toi,
pas de paroles pour vous.

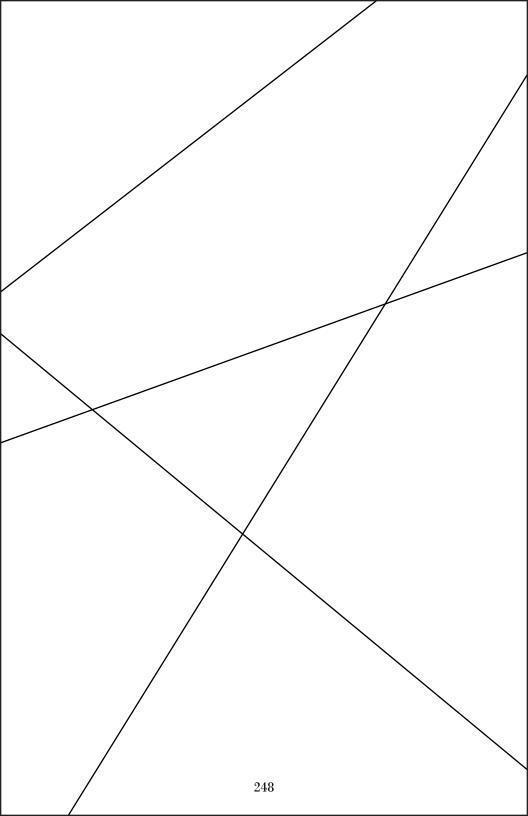
Mom's language. If you're not going to write, you try singing, you squeeze the words out from your lips one by one, and each time your mother starts the rhyme again, a new word comes out of your mouth. After an infinite amount of turns, you sing the entire rhyme, you and your mother in harmony and you find it really very beautiful until the baby on her back wakes up crying.

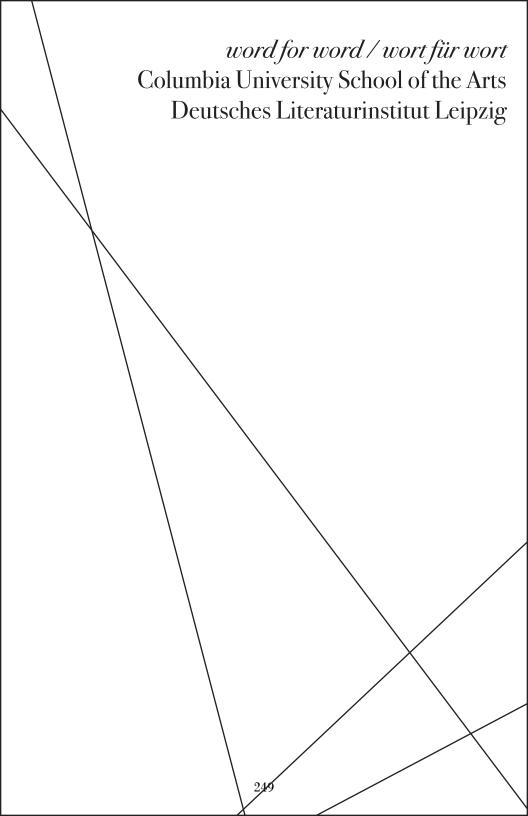
Your eyes burn from writing so many words. You always wonder what the purpose is, what the medicine tastes like, why cough syrups are always delicious, what's your first name, how is dad spelled in Wolof, why didn't Mom teach you to speak it, why didn't you learn to speak it so you could go on the boat with the writers who hand out poetry, what does Mom really say when she scolds you, where does your name come from, does your mother's name really mean queen, what is an iguana, how many tricky men are there on Earth, why can't you stand milk anymore, where does the word croquis come from, who created the alphabet, why don't we have twenty-six fingers to count to twenty-six letters, who decides the names of languages, what can you be sick with, does the shape of your tongue decide the language you will speak, how do you transform shame, what are obsessions about, have novels been written in Wolof, is your obsession that you can't speak Wolof or that you only speak French. The fangs won't let you go and you cannot quell the thirst. You take the needle and thread in your hand and close the wound in your throat where sharp letters pour out. Then you stand before the mirror and repeat every word you've learned, without respite.

Then you start over from the beginning again and again.

You need to drink.

Thirst is mar.
Like your marred throat, your marred lips,
No more milk for you,
No more words
for you.





Anmerkung des Übersetzers

Geht man den Bewegungen in Samuel Haeckers Gedichten nach, bemerkt man, dass sie auf das Anlegen von Linien ausgerichtet sind. Im Vorfeld der Übersetzung entstanden einige Zeichnungen, in denen ich mich ganz frei auf die Spuren der Lyrik einlassen konnte.

Es zeigen sich zyklische Verläufe, ein Kommen und Gehen überlagernder Linien, die, Richtung Horizont, wie weit entfernte Berge, immer blasser werden.

Konkret werden sie im Spiel einer Linie, die sich unter starkem Druck, in Schleifen faltet. Gebeugt und gekrümmt wie eine Serpentine, berührt sie sich an den Engstellen selbst. Gleichzeitig trauen sich die gegenüberliegenden Schleifen eine immer größer werdende Öffnung zu. Am Punkt größter Offenheit hält die Bewegung inne, scheint rückläufig, fast orientierungslos, um sich dann auf eine Symmetrie einzulassen. Dann gibt es da noch eine Senkrechte, welche die Serpentinen kreuzt, durchzieht und auch zu stützen vermag. Die Zeichnungen veranlassten mich, in der Übersetzung ähnlich vorzugehen, mich der Sprache seismografisch-tastend zu nähern.

Besonders überraschend war für mich die innewohnende Verbindung zur japanischen Kultur. In "Incision" begegnet uns die Faltkunst des Origami, in "Bonsai" die traditionelle, japanische Gartenbaukunst und in "Blossom" die Blütezeit. In "Floor Plan" verspürt man Bezüge zur japanischen Architektur. Erbaut aus Holz, Papier und Bambus funktionieren die leichten Innenwände des Hauses wie Schiebetüren. Bewegt man die Wände, fügen sich die Worte neu aneinander. Jedes Zimmer offenbart Verbindungen zum nächsten, neue Raumgefüge entstehen.

Die Gedichte vereint eine Suche nach Schönheit, Symmetrie und Richtung. Eine große Rolle spielt dabei das "Kami", welches in "Bonsai" angerufen wird. "Kami" ist ein Begriff des Shintoismus, der japanischen Religion. Er bezeichnet heilige Wesen, Geister, Gottheiten sowie übernatürliche Kräfte, die in der Natur, in menschlichen Emotionen und Handlungen präsent sind. Das "Kami" hat die Macht, den Suchbewegungen Halt zu geben. Es liegt in den Faltmustern und ritualisierten Abfolgen, denen das lyrische Ich präzise folgen will. Das Wilde, Buschige, was uns begegnet, wird ergriffen und in etwas Kompaktes verwandelt.

Trotz aller Achtsamkeit und Präzision gibt es immer wieder Stellen, die sich einem Zugriff entziehen, verbunden mit einem fragilen "Wir". Es vermittelt die Tonalität zwischenmenschlicher Beziehungen, zeichnet Choreografien aus Annähern und Ausweichen, Rückzug, neuen Anläufen, hoffnungsvoller Erwartung und verblüfftem Scheitern.

Samuel Haeckers Lyrikerscheint in seiner variantenreichen Bewegung leicht, fast heiter. Seine direkte, raumgreifende Sprache sucht aktiv nach einem Gegenüber. Doch sie konfrontiert uns auch mit Dramatischem, Endgültigem. Es zeigen sich Punkte, an denen Konsequenzen eingefordert werden, eine Umkehr erzwungen wird.

Während der Übersetzung saß ich meist in der Küche mit Blick in den Garten. Manchmal nahm ich die Gedichte mit in die Stadt. Dann lagen sie, ein bisschen geknittert, in einem bunten Heft. Sie freuten sich über den Ausflug, das Gemurmel im Café, die raschelnde Stille der Bibliothek.

SAMUEL HAECKER

POEMS

"bonsai"

minuscule and haunting, someone asked whether I was aware of fine intricacies when creasing.

your aesthetics are a loaded color, fluttering like honeysuckle evaporating and just a tad overwhelming

and as i

folded more, i was told of

the consequences of necessity

gazing downwards, greeting me

are leaves, petite and ripening to a fault.

you told me of
the longevity of the
process, its utter
grandness to
pursue.

aus dem englischen übersetzt von TINA PAGEL

POEMS

"Bonsai"

winzig und spukend, jemand fragte ob ich von den feinen Kniffen wüsste, beim Falten.

> deine Schönheit ist volle Farbe, flatternd wie Heckenkirschen verdunstend und nur ein bisschen *bestürmt*

und als ich weiter faltete, hieß es

> die Konsequenzen der Notwendigkeit

hinabstarrend, grüßen mich

> Blätter, zierlich und reifend zu einem

> > Bruch.

du erzähltest mir von der Zähigkeit dieses Vorgangs, seiner völligen Größe nachzukommen. i said that i knew what it felt like. your dimples disagreed. you were telling me of precision, care as if i didn't know what could sprout from your mouth yet i held the kami in front of me, careful designs emulating the origin say i took your tiny passions and kept them in my room. would you look outside? or if i used their pulp for an art you're unaccustomed to miniature mature mimicked manipulate and say i delicately manhandled your painstaking droplets of mist, falling with

resolute fervor

ich sagte, ich wüsste, wie sich das anfühlt. deine Grübchen widersprachen.

du hast mir erzählt von Präzision, Sorgfalt

als ob ich nicht wüsste, was da sprießen würd von deinem

Mund

dennoch hielt ich das Kami

> genau vor mir achtsame Formen nachahmend

> > den Ursprung

stell dir vor, ich nahm deine süßen Leidenschaften, und hielt sie in meinem Raur

Raum.

würdest du

hinaus schauen?

oder wenn ich

ihren Zellstoff benutze für eine Kunst, an die du

nicht gewöhnt bist

zur Miniatur gereift, imitiert

manipulier t

und wenn ich zart anpacke

deine akribischen Nebeltröpfchen, fallen mit ${\bf m}$

entschlossener Glut

as you water,

trim,

graft,

wire.

it's a selective procedure.

beauty in a

symmetry.

windswept roots, i craft

my own advice.

tell me what

i can make out of you.

cascading zeniths, poignant

slants. whittle them down

and i'll use them all the

same

we are both guilty of embezzling nature.

exercise restraint. you must

reflect its counter

parts

just as i

look to compartmentalize

my own models

you gave me shrubbery foliage and i gave it back compactly. während du gießt, stutzt,

propfst

verdrahtest.

es ist eine selektiver Vorgang. Schönheit in einer Symmetrie.

windgepeitschte Wurzeln, ich schnitze

meinen eigenen Rat.

sag mir was

ich aus dir machen kann.

kaskadende Zenithe, ergreifende

Schrägen. Stutze sie und ich benutze sie alle gleich

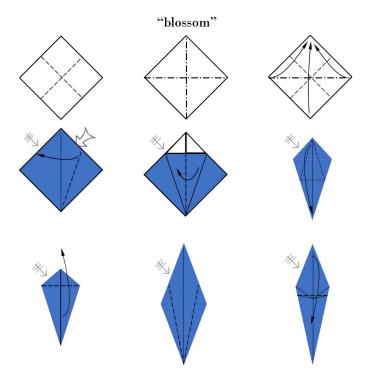
wir sind beide schuldig an der Unterschlagung der Natur.

übe dich in Zurückhaltung. du musst ihre Gegenstücke spiegeln

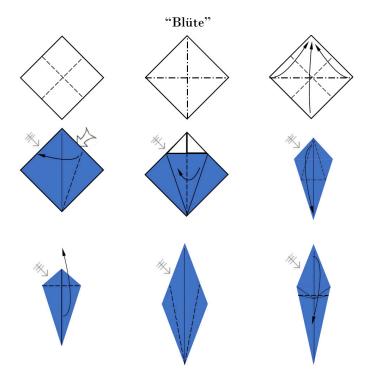
genau wie ich

versuche meine eigenen Muster zu kompartmentalisieren

du gabst mir Gebüsch Laubwerk und ich gab es zurück, kompakt.



- 1. flitting, long and sweet. it is as water does.
- 2. some time ago, i named us. we were golden, snow-topped lilacs.
- the cave collapsed unto itself, tiresome and labyrinthian. the walls, bent, elicited joyous shrieks.
- 4. slow and steady, your ridges shuddered in motion. present was time. smiling, i used it.
- 5. there you were, turning inwards. later someone berated me otherwise. lifted, we threaded our way through.
- 6. thin petals shredding their way through like moonlight
- i was caught alone. you were there, fine synapses belittling my frosty hands.
- you marked your skin with slitted stems, branching off into the delicate rust.
- 9. ornamental crease ginger iris
- 10. heaving downwards, we are at our limit. i don't want it.



- 1. eilend, lang und gutmütig. so wie Wasser.
- 2. vor einiger Zeit gab ich uns einen Namen. wir waren goldene, schneebedeckte Flieder.
- die Höhle stürzte in sich zusammen, ermüdet und labyrinthisch. die Wände, geneigt, entlockten heiteres Geschrei.
- langsam und stetig zitterte dein Grat in Bewegung. Zeit war Gegenwart. ich nutzte sie, lächelnd.
- 5. da warst du, nach innen gerichtet. später schalt man mich dafür. erhoben, wir fädelten unseren Weg.
- 6. zarte Kronblätter reißen ihren Weg hindurch wie Mondlicht
- ich wurde alleine erwischt. du warst da, feine Synapsen verhöhnen meine frostigen Hände.
- 8. du markiertest deine Haut mit geschlitzten Griffeln, verzweigt in filigranem Rost.
- 9. ornamentale Knitter Ingwer Iris
- nach unten schwankend, sind wir an unserer Grenze. Ich will es nicht.

"incision"

Paper: use a square, white side up.

Book fold and unfold, then fold both diagonals and unfold.

Bring the corners together to make a preliminary fold.

Sink the top corner. Be careful not to

it's torn, bloodied and spineless

Paper: use a square, colored side up.

Fold the diagonals and unfold to create creases that will always be visible to you.

Marked progress.

Bring all four corners to the center, carefully following my fingertips.

Gently book fold this new square ever so lightly, molten folds.

Now unfold one corner and

rip (with care)

'Einschnitt"

Papier: Nimm ein Quadrat, weiße Seite oben.

Falte es in der Mitte und öffne es wieder, dann falte beide Diagonalen und öffne.

Bring die Ecken zusammen um einen Vorbruch zu machen

Versenke die obere Ecke. Sei vorsichtig, es nicht

zu zerreißen, blutig und rückgratlos

Papier: Nimm ein Quadrat, farbige Seite oben.

Falte die Diagonalen und öffne sie, um Falten zu schaffen, die für dich immer sichtbar bleiben werden. Markierter Fortschritt.

Bring alle vier Ecken zur Mitte folge vorsichtig meinen Fingerspitzen.

Falte dieses neue Quadrat sanft, so leicht wie geschmolzene Falten.

Jetzt öffne eine Ecke und

reiße (vorsichtig)

please, be considerate to

the paper

it remains finite

take another

square from our stash, please.

tactful and esoteric. you must be considerate

in your effort, so crease the diagonals with

that singular dexterity.

here. let me see. it's adept enough.

> please don't sever, I can't take more

> > rupture

we've had enough

subtle gashes

for two weeks

(at least)

okay, pause. we're

sensitive

channel it or

give it here. I won't tear

you

bitte, sei achtsam zu

dem Papier,

es bleibt endlich

nimm ein neues

Quadrat aus unserem Vorrat, bitte

taktvoll und esoterisch. du musst rücksichtsvoll sein

in deinem Bemühen, also falte die Diagonalen mit

jener einzigartigen Geschicklichkeit.

hier.

lass mich sehen.

es ist geschickt

genug.

bitte nicht mehr abtrennen, ich ertrage nicht mehr

Risse

wir haben genug

subtile Schnitte

seit zwei Wochen

(mindestens)

okay, Pause. Wir sind

sensibel

vollbringe es oder

gib es her. Ich werde nichts zerreißen

du

look concerned.

 $\label{eq:constraints} don't \ martyr \ them.$ the cuts are temporary

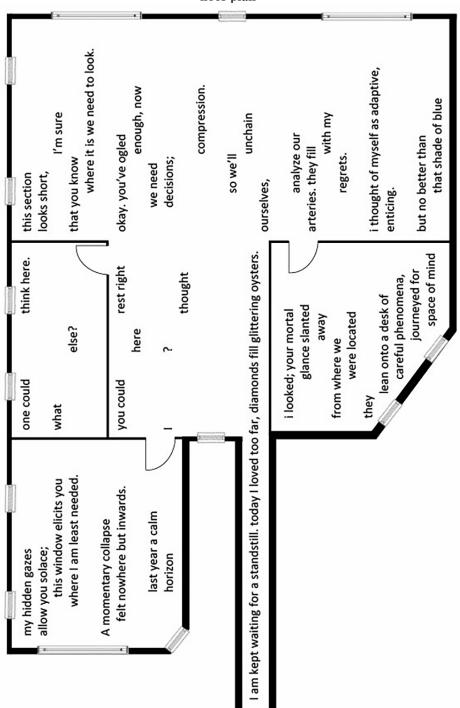
i thought you knew

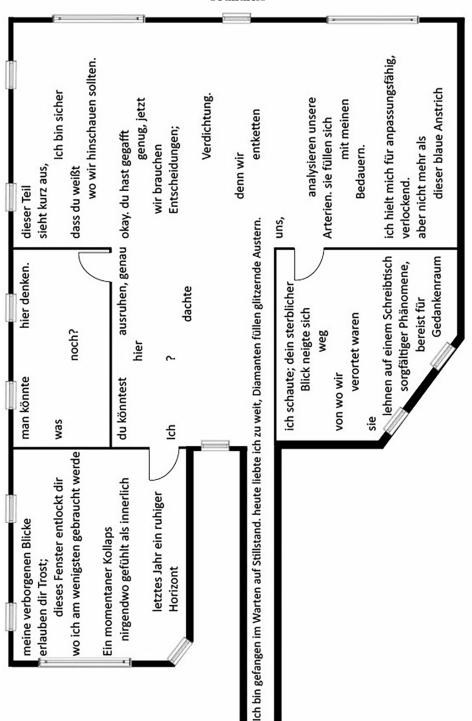
schaust besorgt.

bitte

martere sie nicht. die Schnitte sind vorübergehend

ich dachte, du wüsstest das





Translator's Note

Tina Pagel's Denudation enraptured me at first sight with its careful wordplay and eerie syntax, meshing geological terminology, neologisms, and choirlike lyricism. The text functioned as a translator's scavenger hunt traversing mining locales, genocides, and the Earth's crust through its constant fascination with redefining our thoughts on working class toils, scientific vernacular, and the environmental world around us that is constantly being left behind.

My first encounter with this text left me with vital questions and formidable obstacles regarding its vocabulary and rhythm. At the same time, the poetry exhibited a sense of playfulness that I knew had to be recaptured in its translation. Considering Denudation's simultaneous willingness and resistance to being rendered in another language was what made me certain that its challenges for the English translation would not just be reimagination but also a re-encompassing.

I was most struck by the difficulties of creating neologisms in English for their German counterparts, juggling the different meanings, sounds, and implications of the words in both languages. At the same time, Pagel is always concerned with rhythm throughout Denudation, which I was constantly looking to replicate with a precise ear in order to carry over the audial collages present in the poetry. Thus, the geology that plays such a key part in the overall soundscape of the collection often proved an anchor for figuring out its poetic phonemes.

Denudation is a series of poems that at its heart looks to both fascinate and confound us with its delicate and powerful themes. The words are as beautiful as their individual sounds, and the imagery contained within builds an ambiguous, surreal world that we have no choice but to revel in.

TINA PAGEL

DENUDATION

Rippelmarken

Algen, Ammonit streichen wir im Grad, im Gon stehender Gänge Spat, Neunaugen wühlen in zwölf Stundensand mein Bergmannstal im Bayonit, porphyrischer Blattrippen Geißblatt, epigenetic play

translated from the german by SAMUEL HAECKER

DENUDATION

Ripple Marks

Algae, ammonite
we traverse in degrees, in gons
staggering alleys' spar,
lampreys digging
in twelve-hour sand
my valley of miners
in bayonite,
porphyric veining
honeysuckle, epigenetic Spiel

Gangstein, Gangstörung

im Vorort, im Glöstal
: Neptunian Dikes
von dort griffen wir
eilend, dem Lab voran
springen ab
ins Tal, taub
das Rauschen der Glaskörper
starre Linsen bleiben hohl
faules Ruschel

vertreibt Hasen, Vögel -Fruchtfallen und wir züchten Feuer; Trilobiten und Coltan im starren Frack der schrönen Eozeit

Corridor Stone, Corridor Disturbance

in the purlieu, in Glös dale : Neptunian Dikes from there we grasped rushing, the vell in front vaulting off

into the dale, deaf murmurs of glass eyes rigid lenses remain hollow foul rustling

displaces hares, birds – flytraps and we're breeding fire; trilobites and coltan in rigid tails of our beautist Eocene

Schar, vermantelt

Im Schultaler Gang, da schart sich der Begleitsterz. Burgstätter, Zellerfelder und schließlich auch der Rosenhöfer, schließt sich an, guckt rein, Bilddiagonal - und Nebengänge, rieselt der Korallenschutt, devonische Labien, Schürzen aus Bleiglas, hardgrounds, wir kommen

Company, mantled

In Schooldales Passage, the rumpany amasses,

Burgstätter, Zellerfelder and Rosenhöfer tacks on last, peers within, screen sizes and side passages, coral detritus trickles, devonian labia, aprons of lead glass, Hartböden, we're coming

Morgengang, routine

kleine Trümmer : Morgengänge : Spatgänge flache Gänge, tonnig

von 9 bis 12, schwal, senkrecht mittags sich auftun, aufbrezeln fürs Mittagswohl

Lagergang im Stil des Konkordant, horcht an weißem Linolat and Lamprophyr, subvulvisch stakt, im kittenheel : Neptunian Dikes

wir klickern Dolerit

morning stroll, routine

tiny detritus: morning rounds: evening roundstight strolls, tonnic

from 9 to 12, swall, noon straight to dishing up dolling up for lunchtime

warehouse rounds
as concordant,
harking on
white linolate and
Lamprophyre, subvulvic
strides, in kitten heels
: Neptunian Dikes

we're clicking dolerite

Im gloven Eis

Karst bringt Mensch bringt weiteren Mensch verlassene Höfe und Zaum

die Trense im Maul
ein Pfiff, schrill
schon reiten wir
im gloven Eis, driften
ins Glös, ins Glöstal
wo Gletscher uns
auf Sommer bringt
auf Sommer haust du,
Rumpf, unter dickem Fist
und wir, zurück ins Steck,
klatschen ein
am Schöffenplatz

in the gloven ice

Karst brings man brings further man deserted farms and reins

the snaffle in the mouth a whistle, shrill already we ride in the gloven ice, drift into Glös, into Glös valley where the glacier brings us summer you muse on summer, torso, under sunned grains and we, back in the den, clap hands at jury square

Jettens Küche
Blanke Münder naschen dir am Block. Kriechen aus Korallenschutt, Jettchen. Deine Klitten zähmt, Violinenglas. Trilobiten züchten, cringe.

Jetten's Kitchen	
Bare mouths noshing on your block. Crawling out of coral rubble, Jetty. Your skittle ames, violin glass. Breeding trilobites, cringe.	

Vogelhaus

Ruht vergesst, wann wir gestorben ruht, wir wünscheln eure Namen ruht, in Papier ein Gestern

lösch mich aus, Bukowina lösch mich aus raub mich aus, Bukowina raub mich aus Vogelhaus, Bukowina, Vogelhaus

Millionen blinder Kugeln les' ich aus dem Boden füttern meine Tauben pick pick pick mich aus

bird house

Rest forget when we had died rest, we're dowsing our names rest, a yesterday in paper

put me out, Bukowina put me out rob me out, Bukowina rob me out bird house, Bukowina, bird house

millions of blind bullets
I'm sifting from the ground
feeding my pigeons
peck
peck
peck
peck me out

shakhty Шахты

Wir backen Wut aus tausend Dörfern und Gelump. Backen alles aus

: шахты

oh, sind nur Steine drin im Kuchenteig, hängt unser Dach zum Teich hinab, nur Steine diesen Sommer

: шахты

ein weißer Biss, aus Kalk und Aspartam im Lippenstift nur Steine drin, nur Steine malen uns den Mund

: шахты

und fröscheln uns ins Gegenmark als Laich, in Schnüren aus Kajal, schwarz unterm Lid, nur Steine sind nur Steine drin, mein

: шахты

bäckt mir Durst, noch einen Sommer kommen sehen gehen sehen

shakhty Шахты

We're baking wrath from a thousand villages and junk. Baking everything

: шахты

oh, only stones inside the cake dough, hanging roof down to the pond, only stones this summer

: шахты

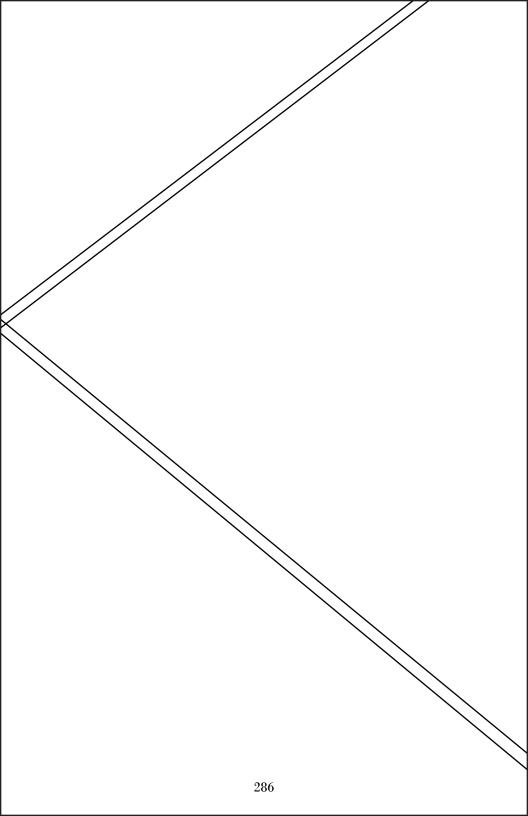
a white bite, of chalk and aspartame in lipstick only stones inside, only stones smearing our mouth

: шахты

and frogling us in countermark as spawn, in skeins of kajal, black under the lid, only stones there are only stones inside, my

: шахты

bakes me thirst, one last summer come and seen leave and seen



word for word / palavra por palavra Columbia University School of the Arts Instituto Vera Cruz Formação de Escritores

Nota do Tradutor

O texto da autora Gigi Blanchard, traduzido aqui para o português, é um trecho das memórias do cárcere de uma jovem que tenta sobreviver, enquanto se despede de forma abrupta da sua infância e de um lar que se desmantelou em virtude da separação entre o pai e a mãe. Sozinha, vagando pelas ruas, Gigi se depara com as ratoeiras montadas para atrair jovens sedentos de pertencimento e aventura, e acaba presa aos 15 anos de idade, após cometer um delito ridículo.

A obra é uma não ficção em primeira pessoa, que trata de um tema universal — e corriqueiro no Brasil — o encarceramento na juventude, suas consequências e realidade, especialmente em uma cultura que sacrifica seus jovens ao submetê-los a leis e regras formuladas por e para adultos. Nesse caso, o elemento original, além do estilo da autora, é o fato de ouvirmos a perspectiva de uma mulher jovem, quando o padrão na literatura tem sido memórias de homens em instituições prisionais.

Para mergulhar na temática, retomei leituras sobre a vida do dramaturgo francês Jean Genet e de uma referência literária à peça *Esperando Godot*, de Samuel Beckett.

Beckett teve sua peça Esperando Godot — o longo e conflituoso diálogo entre dois moradores de rua, ansiosos pelo salvador Godot, que nunca chega — encenada, em novembro de 1957, para a população carcerária da Penitenciária de San Quentin, em São Francisco, na Califórnia.

A reação dos presos ao ver a peça, descrita por Martin Esslin no seu livro O teatro do absurdo e observada por repórteres no dia da encenação, foi a de ver no tal Godot, que nunca aparece, entre outras coisas, a espera pelo lado de fora, e o inevitável desapontamento pelo que os esperava. Esse relato destacado no livro de Esslin, me lembrou um dos trechos da obra de Blanchard, e contribuiu para iluminar o processo de tradução. No final do texto, ela confessa temer a vida em liberdade:

> "When the time neared for me to be released from parole, I considered my freedom, which true to Plato's Allegory form, had not been this beautiful thing I fantasized in my cell. It was disastrous and even lonelier than I remembered."

"Quanto mais o fim da minha condicional se aproximava, mais eu considerava minha liberdade, emancipadora no mito da Caverna de Platão, distante daquela beleza toda que eu idealizara quando trancada na cela. Ela era mais desastrosa e ainda mais solitária do que eu imaginava."

Já Genet — escritor francês, artista, dramaturgo, prisioneiro, louco, homessexual, gênio, são tantos predicados — passou parte de sua vida encarcerado e fez da reclusão seu estado artístico. Segundo Sartre, em referência a Genet, "Liberdade é possibilidade de escolha, da qual não podemos escapar. Em certo sentido, nosso destino é a liberdade. Somos condenados à liberdade. Genet, por um ato de escolha, cria-se a si mesmo: como ladrão, como adorador do mal e, por fim, como artista."

Ao escolher esse momento, a prisão em idade precoce, para revelar um aspecto da sua vida, assim como Genet, Blanchard provoca nos leitores a sensação de que só é possível entender o conceito de liberdade, quando se foi ostensivamente privado dela:

> "I decided to intentionally revoke my parole; the warm blanket of the institution appealed more

than being released with nary a counselor or human being to check on me... After four years away, I was released back to my mother with a trash bag containing everything I owned. I tried to blend back into the family, but was detached."

"Eu decidi revogar minha liberdade condicional intencionalmente; o cobertor quentinho da instituição tinha mais apelo do que a falsa liberdade controlada por um supervisor... Depois de quatro anos longe, eu fui devolvida pra minha mãe com um saco de lixo contendo todas as minhas posses. Tentei me integrar de volta à família, mas me sentia isolada."

Blanchard é uma autora estadunidense, interessada e envolvida com a cultura e o idioma latinos, tanto o praticado nas Américas Central e do Sul, quanto o de origem latina falado na Catalunha, o catalão. A proximidade com a cultura latina, e seu passado underground, emprestaram ao ritmo e à linguagem uma ginga que fez da tradução um processo prazeroso.

Para traduzir trechos com gírias, como "Cue ridicule. Crack knuckles. 'Gangbanger' was the nicest of my colorful new names", pesquisei letras de rap norteamericano. Em uma das letras interpretadas pelo rapper Snoop Dogg, ele canta "I decided to get involved in gangbanging". Também pesquisei termos usados por gangues e facções criminosas no Brasil, em textos jornalísticos e literatura. O termo que adotei para traduzir gangbanguer foi marginalzinha. Ou seja, projeto de marginal, marginal-mirim.

Quando a autora escreveu o trecho apresentado para tradução, a referência de realidade carcerária feminina que impregnava o ideário norte-americano era o da série da Netflix, *Orange is the new black*.

Gigi foi presa num centro de detenção que não

tinha nenhum dos "luxos" ficcionalizados na série, e fez referência às discrepâncias entre sua realidade e a ficção, no corpo do texto e no título "Orange wasn't my new black".

O texto de Gigi conversa com a série ao traçar comparativos entre a realidade da autora e a ficção, mas, quando traduzo para outro idioma e para uma cultura que não teve o mesmo nível de exposição à série, como manter a essência do texto intacta? Como manter a essência do título? Nos dias de hoje, esse título ainda faz sentido ou caducou?

Minha decisão como tradutora foi manter a fidelidade das menções à série no corpo do texto e no título, afinal, elas são parte central da obra, e não comprometem a qualidade da leitura, pelo contrário, contribuem para o entendimento do relato da autora.

GIGI BLANCHARD

ORANGE WASN'T MY NEW BLACK

I was attending community college and carefully hiding from classmates the fact that I lived in a children's home for orphans and delinquents. After receiving my GED at age 17, I had finessed my case manager into thinking I had big dreams for my future. I told her I wanted to be a social worker to help at-risk kids like me. The truth? I petitioned to take a class in hopes of bumming cigarettes and slurping down contraband sodas purchased with change I'd scavenged from the group home's grounds. The first thing I learned from living in state institutions was how to manipulate my custodians.

For two hours twice a week I reveled in a game of makebelieve, pretending to be free. I made a ritual of going to the restroom mid-lecture, not because nature called, but because it thrilled me to go without asking. The first month went so well that my case manager gave me a half-hour bonus to do homework in the school's computer lab.

That's where I met Ronnie. We bonded over mutual Microsoft impairments and our newness to the sleepy town stretched along the northern Illinois side of the Mississippi. He'd been recruited from Louisiana to play basketball and I'd recently been paroled from a juvenile prison in Chicago.

"Can't, friend's on her way," was my go-to reply. Said "friend" would actually be a counselor, clocking me in a giant blue shuttle van parked outside the school. Five minutes late was a write-up and could translate into the revocation of my parole.

traduzido do inglês por MARIA FERNANDA P. CERÁVOLO

ORANGE NÃO ERA MEU NEW BLACK

Eu frequentava a faculdade comunitária e escondia dos colegas que vivia num abrigo para órfãos e delinquentes menores de idade. Quando me graduei no ensino médio, aos 17, convenci minha supervisora institucional que eu nutria grandes sonhos para o futuro. Ia ser assistente social para ajudar crianças em situação de risco como eu. A verdade? Me matriculei naquelas aulas para descolar refrigerante e cigarros contrabandeados, comprados com os trocos que eu arranjava nas dependências do abrigo. A primeira coisa que aprendi vivendo em instituições do governo foram formas de manipular meus cuidadores.

Duas vezes por semana, durante algumas horas, eu brincava de faz de conta e fingia ser livre. Criei um ritual de ir até o banheiro no meio da aula, não por necessidade, mas porque eu vibrava em poder ir sem ter que pedir permissão. As coisas correram tão bem no primeiro mês, que minha supervisora me deu meia hora de bônus para fazer a lição de casa no laboratório de computação da escola.

Foi nessas que eu conheci o Ronnie. A dificuldade mútua em lidar com os programas da Microsoft nos uniu imediatamente, além de sermos ambos novatos naquela cidade pacata espalhada ao longo da face norte do Rio Mississipi que margeia Illinois. Ele tinha sido recrutado em Louisiana pra jogar basquete e eu, acabado de conquistar liberdade condicional de uma prisão juvenil em Chicago.

"Não posso, minha amiga tá chegando", era minha resposta padrão pras investidas dele. A tal "amiga"

My descent into the justice system's labyrinth began a few years prior, after my parents divorced and I went from living in a crowded house with five siblings to a trailer with my mother. She transferred me from the Catholic school I'd loathed to public school. But no longer wearing uniforms was a game changer. Kids at my new school took name brands seriously and my revolving Wal-Mart specials kept me from joining their ranks. My mother's time was siphoned by long hours at the printing press, boyfriends and booze. I tempered my loneliness with joints, and to avoid becoming a complete loner, acquired friends from a neighboring town. But some of these new companions were black: high treason in a predominantly white community.

Cue ridicule. Crack knuckles. "Gangbanger" was the nicest of my colorful new names.

I gravitated toward kids who were similarly combatting idleness and absentee parents. I was expelled for fighting, became a runaway and eventually was arrested for stealing a car at age 15. I was sentenced into court custody until age 21 and was shipped five hours north of my rural town. At first, I welcomed this initiation into street culture. It was a solid escape from the chaos at home.

But kiddy prison was not as airy as the minimum security facility depicted in "Orange Is the New Black." Thanks in part to the super-predator rhetoric of the Clinton administration, facilities were overcrowded, forcing murderers and nonviolent criminals to be bunked together in closet-sized cells. It was, however, the first time I experienced solidarity amongst peers. Despite actual disparities, we were all leveled by our familiarity with counting cinderblocks to pass the time. But not having a lease on one's own will is exhausting, and after two years, I was itching to decamp.

era, na verdade, a supervisora da condicional, que cronometrava o tempo de dentro de uma van azul nada discreta estacionada na frente da faculdade. Cinco minutos de atraso eram notificação na certa, com possível revogação da condicional.

Minha descida ladeira abaixo no sistema judiciário aconteceu anos antes, logo depois do divórcio dos meus pais. De uma hora pra outra, eu saí de uma casa com cinco irmãos para um trailer sob a guarda exclusiva da minha mãe. Ela me transferiu de uma escola de freiras, que eu odiava, para uma escola pública. Lá eu não usava uniforme, o que foi um desafio. As crianças levavam grifes a sério e meu guarda-roupa de looks do Wal-Mart impediu que eu fizesse parte do bando. O tempo da minha mãe era dividido entre longos turnos na gráfica onde trabalhava, namorados e bebida. Eu enganava minha solidão com baseados e, para não virar uma excluída, fui atrás de amigos na cidade vizinha. Alguns deles, negros — alta traição numa vizinhança branca.

Quebra-barraco. Espertalhona. Marginalzinha. Eram os apelidos mais doces reservados pra mim.

Eu orbitava em torno de crianças que, assim como eu, tentavam enfrentar o isolamento e pais ausentes. Fui expulsa depois de uma briga. Fugi. Aos 15 anos fui presa por roubo de carro, julgada, virei menor infratora e acabei sendo encaminhada pra uma unidade de internação, onde vivi até os 21 anos. No começo eu apreciei a iniciação na cultura de rua. Era uma fuga concreta do caos da minha casa no interior, que agora estava a cinco horas de distância.

Mas as prisões para criancinhas não tinham nada a ver com as instalações arejadas retratadas na série *Orange* is the new black. Graças à retórica predatória do governo Clinton, assassinos e marginais acusados de pequenos delitos ocupavam o mesmo espaço em celas superlotadas. In Ronnie's company, I forgot about being state property. His flattery allowed me to imagine that I was desirable. After mistaking my refusals for playing hard to get, he stepped up his game.

"Big party this weekend, you down?" When that didn't work, he said, "Could use a cheerleader at tonight's game." Then came this: "Star Wars' premieres on Friday. Let me take you on a date."

The last one broke me. I ached to be normal and desperately wanted to do what others my age seem to be doing—even if it meant turning back into a pumpkin at midnight. But before I could accept Ronnie's proposal, I had to proposition my guardians.

"I promise not to start any more riots during group therapy," I said.

"Okay," my case manager conceded. "But only if he meets your treatment team and they approve unanimously." Team was code for case manager, two counselors, a therapist, a caseworker and a social worker. I was not a catch: more like a catch-22.

I assessed my options: blow the lid off operation hidemy-group-home-status or spend another Friday night plugging my ears, trying to shut out kids fighting over missing Uno cards.

I made the call.

"By group home you mean dorms?" Ronnie asked.

"No," I laughed, twisting the curly phone cord around my arm. "Just come to this address. No biggie. Politics, that's all."

When a counselor tapped on my door for roll call the

No entanto, pela primeira vez eu conheci a solidariedade entre os meus pares. Apesar das diferenças nítidas, fomos nivelados pela familiaridade em contar blocos de concreto pra passar o tempo. Ser privada de vontade própria era exaustivo e, depois de dois anos, eu queria vazar a qualquer custo.

Na companhia do Ronnie, eu me esquecia que era propriedade do estado. A bajulação dele me fazia sentir desejada. Depois de encarar minhas recusas como joguinhos de me fazer de difícil, ele tomou a iniciativa.

"Balada da hora esse fim de semana, topa?" Quando não surtia efeito, ele dizia "eu ia adorar ter torcida no jogo hoje à noite". E daí ele veio com essa "Tem estreia de Star Wars na sexta. Me deixa te levar num rolê".

Essa última quebrou minhas resistências. Eu fazia de tudo para parecer normal e queria desesperadamente fazer o que meninas da minha idade faziam — mesmo que significasse virar abóbora à meia-noite. Mas antes de aceitar o convite do Ronnie, eu precisava convencer meus guardiões.

"Prometo não provocar mais nenhum motim durante os grupos de terapia", eu disse.

"Tá certo", concordou minha supervisora. "Mas só se ele vier se encontrar com sua equipe de tratamento e for aprovado por unanimidade." "Equipe" era o código para uma supervisora, dois conselheiros, um terapeuta e dois assistentes sociais. Eu não era um bom partido, estava mais pra uma grande roubada.

Eu analisei minhas opções: dar a real sobre a operação muvucar-meu-status-de-residente-em-lar-comunitário ou passar outra noite de sexta tapando os ouvidos, tentando ignorar as crianças brigando por cartas de Uno perdidas. Eu tomei a decisão. following morning, I wasn't sure if I'd slept between practicing kissable facial expressions and naming children. I tried to act casual, standing at the doubleglass doors of my unit, speculating on each car that pulled in.

When Ronnie screeched into the parking lot behind the wheel of a rusted white Cadillac, I rushed to greet him. His stare was bug-eyed and not fixed on me, but at my unit where a cluster of fifth and sixth graders were waving frenziedly.

Usually talkative, he went mute as we entered an adjacent administration building. There, the team was lounging around a conference table with an additional guest—the staff nurse.

My case manager directed Ronnie to take a seat at the head of the table and instructed me to sit in a chair in the corner. The scene was similar to my sentencing, where I was an observer and not a participant in the discussion of my future.

Questions darted at Ronnie from all directions. "Where'd you grow up? Work? Grades? Drugs?" His face flushed while his knuckles turned white around his keys. He stayed perched on the chair's edge, on his mark to bolt out of the ambush.

After 20 savage minutes, the team conferred, then delivered its verdict. "You pick her up, we bring her home." My case manager stood up and outstretched her palm. "Just need to Xerox your ID." Ronnie remained frozen until she returned—all smiles—then dashed to his car without a word.

Come Friday, the girls in my unit were excited to help me primp. "Tell us how he asked again." They spritzed curls in my blond ponytail, checked for precise creases in my "Por lar comunitário você quer dizer residência estudantil?", perguntou Ronnie.

"Não" respondi rindo enquanto torcia o fio enrolado do telefone em torno do meu braço. "Só vem pra esse endereço. Nada demais. Política, só isso."

Quando a supervisora da condicional bateu na porta na manhã seguinte, me escalando pra reunião, eu não me lembrava se tinha pegado no sono entre a prática de expressões faciais de beijo e a divagação sobre os nomes pros nossos futuros bebês. Tentei agir naturalmente parada ali em pé entre as portas de vidro blindado da minha unidade, enquanto especulava cada carro que estacionava.

Quando Ronnie apareceu no estacionamento atrás da direção de um cadillac branco enferrujado, eu corri até ele pra dizer oi. Ele tinha o olhar fixo, não em mim, mas na minha unidade, de onde um punhado de alunos do quinto e sexto ano acenava freneticamente.

Sempre falante, dessa vez entrou calado no prédio anexo da administração, onde a equipe se acomodava ao redor de uma mesa de reunião, com uma convidada especial — a enfermeira da unidade.

Minha supervisora apontou o assento na cabeceira da mesa pro Ronnie e me instruiu a sentar em uma cadeira no canto da sala. A cena parecia uma sentença, onde eu não passava de mera observadora, e não uma participante ativa na discussão sobre o meu futuro.

O interrogatório veio de todos os lados na direção do Ronnie. "Onde você nasceu? Trabalhou? Estudou? É usuário de drogas?" Seu rosto ficou corado e os nós dos dedos das suas mãos amarelaram. Ele se posicionou alerta, na beirada da cadeira, pronto para escapar da jeans and ensured that I chose the least offensive of the pit-stained T-shirts from the donation bin. I was the one who was going to neck at the theater, but this was their moment, too.

The movie started at 7:00, so I expected Ronnie no later than 6:30. At six, the girls took their post at the doors, calling out each car that pulled in. "Red--not him."

6:39. No screeches in the parking lot.

6:44. "Blue—nope."

6:53...

At 6:55, a counselor coaxed the girls away from the door, reducing the normal bustle to whispers.

The mercy call came hours later. "Coach set a curfew," was the best he had. I was mortified. I had set myself up for failure and disappointed the only girls who had ever looked up to me.

After that, Ronnie changed his library schedule. When I reached the lab, traces of him lingered, causing stomach cramps where butterflies once flew.

I eventually was promoted to Independent Living, where I leased an apartment and practiced new freedoms, like going to parties. It was a small town, so I was not surprised to run into Ronnie. He saw me, glanced around nervously and asked, "Did you run away?" I explained my situation. He confessed to lying about curfew and apologized, "That was just too crazy." We truced on a friendship that never materialized. For him, solving the mystery had spoiled my allure.

Ronnie's rejection, combined with a familial void, burned into me a belief that I belonged to the nation of no one.

armadilha.

Depois de vinte intermináveis minutos, a equipe chegou a um consenso e emitiu seu veredicto. "Você busca ela aqui e a gente traz de volta pra casa." Minha supervisora levantou e estendeu a mão. "Só preciso de uma cópia do seu documento." Ronnie ficou imóvel até o retorno dela — que voltou toda sorrisos — e então voou pro carro sem dizer uma palavra.

Finalmente chegou sexta — as meninas da minha unidade estavam animadíssimas pra ajudar na produção. "Conta de novo como ele te pediu pra sair." Elas fizeram cachos no meu rabo de cavalo loiro, conferiram se os vincos do meu jeans estavam de acordo e garantiram que eu escolhesse a camiseta menos ordinária do cesto de doações. Era eu que ia dar uns pegas, mas esse também era o momento delas.

O filme começava às 7, então eu imaginava que o Ronnie não chegaria depois das 6:30. Às 6, elas já estavam na porta gritando pra cada carro que passava. "Vermelho — não é ele."

6:39 Nenhum ruído no estacionamento.

6:44 "Azul — não."

6:53...

Às 6:55, uma supervisora afastou as meninas da porta, reduzindo a barulheira toda a cochichos. A ligação com as justificativas veio horas depois. "O treinador impôs toque de recolher", foi a melhor desculpa que ele encontrou. Eu fiquei acabada. Fracassei e ainda por cima levei comigo as únicas meninas que me admiraram em toda a vida.

Depois disso, Ronnie mudou seus horários na biblioteca.

I did not have respect for myself and, believing I was damaged goods, was not choosy who I bedded so long as they'd come back for more. When the time neared for me to be released from parole, I considered my freedom, which true to Plato's Allegory form, had not been this beautiful thing I fantasized in my cell. It was disastrous and even lonelier than I remembered.

I decided to intentionally revoke my parole; the warm blanket of the institution appealed more than being released with nary a counselor or human being to check on me. But this was borrowed time. New laws were enacted to decrease the prison population, which scrolled back my discharge date to age 19. After four years away, I was released back to my mother with a trash bag containing everything I owned. I tried to blend back into the family, but was detached. I was a foreigner among familiar faces I no longer knew how to communicate with.

I scrounged enough savings from working multiple fast-food joints to relocate to another college town and became the first in my family to graduate from a university. There, I studied anthropology and developed a hunger to see the world I'd only experienced on the page. Perhaps the greatest gift from my seedy past was how well I dealt with isolation and how easily I could sleep in some of the most defunct places on the planet. I transformed myself into a backpacker: couch-surfing with strangers, sleeping in \$3 hostels, in bus stations or on the beach. I eventually settled in New York, which is brimming with lone wolves like me. I no longer have inhibitions about where I came from. But I am eyeswide-open about where I'll go.

Quando eu chegava no laboratório, notava vestígios da passagem dele, que me davam enjoo ao invés de me fazer levitar como antes.

Depois de um tempo, fui liberada para morar sozinha. Aluguei um apartamento e provei novas formas de liberdade, como ir a festas. A cidade era pequena, então não me surpreendi quando cruzei com o Ronnie. Ele me viu, se aproximou nervoso e perguntou "Você fugiu?". Eu expliquei minha situação. Ele confessou que mentiu sobre o toque de recolher e se desculpou "Aquilo foi muita loucura". Era uma trégua em uma amizade que nunca desabrochou. Pra ele, desvendar o mistério arruinou o fascínio que tinha por mim.

A rejeição do Ronnie, combinada com o vazio de não ter família, gerou em mim a crença de pertencer a uma terra de ninguém. Eu não me respeitava, e me enxergar como mercadoria danificada não ajudava na escolha de quem se deitava comigo, desde que voltassem me pedindo mais. Quanto mais o fim da minha condicional se aproximava, mais eu considerava minha liberdade, emancipadora no mito da Caverna de Platão, distante daquela beleza toda que eu idealizara quando trancada na cela. Ela era mais desastrosa e ainda mais solitária do que eu imaginava.

Eu pedi a revogação da minha liberdade condicional; o cobertor quentinho da instituição tinha mais apelo do que a falsa mobilidade controlada por um supervisor. Pura perda de tempo. Novas leis foram aprovadas para diminuir a população carcerária, baixando minha idade de soltura para 19 anos. Depois de quatro anos longe de casa, eu fui devolvida pra minha mãe com um saco de lixo contendo todas as minhas posses. Tentei me integrar de volta à família, mas me sentia isolada. Eu era uma estranha entre rostos familiares. Não sabia mais como me comunicar com aquelas pessoas.

Juntei dinheiro suficiente com meus bicos em

lanchonetes fast-food para ir em busca de outra cidade universitária e me tornei a primeira pessoa da minha família a conquistar um diploma superior. Eu estudei antropologia e despertei minha vontade de ver um mundo que até então eu só conhecia no papel. Talvez o maior presente desse meu passado decadente tenha sido minha habilidade de suportar o isolamento e a facilidade com que eu podia dormir em alguns dos lugares mais podres do planeta. Virei mochileira: pulando de sofá na companhia de estranhos a pernoites em hostels de três dólares, em paradas de ônibus ou na praia. Vivi assim até me fixar em Nova York, que borbulha de lobos solitários como eu. Não tenho mais vergonha de onde vim. Mas tenho os olhos bem abertos para onde vou.

Translator's Note

Working with Fernanda has been an incredible experience and getting to know her personally made translating her work even more exciting. I feel incredibly lucky to have been partnered with someone who not only writes eloquently but has the ability to create a scene and use metaphors in a way that brings her world into full color for us, her readers.

Cerávolo is a wife, a mother, and a successful career woman, working at one of the biggest social media companies in the world. But when her beloved country is faced with the onslaught of tyranny, she moves her family to Japan where she hopes to continue doing the work she loves while also offering a safe and friendly environment for her young daughter to grow up in. It doesn't take long to realize her dream will be eclipsed by gender and foreigner biases. And then, of course, there are earthquakes. This combination will dissolve her family's aspirations to reinvent themselves in Japan and in this short excerpt you can feel the disappointment and desire to go back home to her beloved Brazil.

I'm grateful to have been paired with someone who can pack this much detail into such a small excerpt and especially with someone who cares deeply about family, the dangers of misinformation and hate speech, and who believes that writing is activism. I also appreciate the great care she took in translating my own work so that both of our voices could be heard across borders.

MARIA FERNANDA P. CERÁVOLO

FRAGMENTOS DE UM FUTURO

A pulsão de vida de uma civilização tão jovem como a brasileira contrasta radicalmente com a maturidade milenar da alma japonesa. Abandonar um país desenfreado, mas efervescente como o Brasil, e fixar residência no futuro sábio, porém mais próximo do fim do que do começo, foi muito mais desafiador do que eu imaginei. Esse é o capítulo Tóquio da história da minha vida.

*

Antes de deixar o apartamento em Tóquio, dias antes do Natal de 2020, no fim de uma manhã fria e ensolarada de dezembro, ando pelos cômodos vazios pela última vez. No carpete, agora livre, vejo as marcas da mobília removida na noite anterior. Além delas, nada. Nenhuma mancha de canetinha nas portas ou vinho tinto no chão. Nenhum buraco na parede ou fuligem no teto da cozinha. É preciso entregar tudo exatamente como encontrei. Qualquer vestígio de felicidade no imóvel alugado vai me custar mais do que os ienes antecipados como garantia da minha idoneidade. Meu único descuido, a cópia da chave da porta de entrada perdida durante uma das minhas caminhadas noturnas pelo bairro, custou o equivalente a uma passagem de Shinkansen, o trem-bala japonês, para Hakone, cidade a oeste de Tóquio, de onde se vê o Monte Fuji bem de pertinho.

Eu, Toninho e Sophia, meu companheiro e nossa filha, na época com oito anos, aterrissamos em Tóquio numa segunda-feira, em 04 de fevereiro de 2019, no aeroporto de Narita. Instantes antes, da janela da aeronave, deu pra ver o sol invadindo a baía de Tóquio. Os raios eram prateados, volumosos, longos e rompiam as nuvens para

translated from the portuguese by GIGI BLANCHARD

A FUTURE FRAGMENTED

The pulse of a civilization as young as Brazil's stands in contrast to the maturity of Japan's thousand-year-old soul. I left my home country, an unrestrained and effervescent place, and moved somewhere that was storied beyond time, a place seemingly closer to its end than its beginning. The challenge to relocate my family was more than I ever imagined.

This is the Japan chapter of my life.

*

I'm leaving our apartment in Tokyo just days before Christmas on a cold, sunny, December morning. I walk through these empty rooms for the last time. On the carpet, I see the imprints of furniture removed just yesterday. Other than that, nothing. No stains from my daughter's art pens left on my door nor remnants of red wine spilled on the floor after dinner parties. There's not a single hole left from the many photos that hung on our wall, no soot on the kitchen ceiling from family meals. I need to return everything exactly as I found it. Any trace of life in this rented property will cost more than the excessive deposit I put down. My one misstep was losing a copy of the key during one of my nightly walks through the neighborhood. The replacement fee was nearly two thousand dollars, which could have purchased us all a ticket on the Shinkansen bullet train to Hakone, a city to the west with a grand view of Mount Fuji.

Toninho, my partner, and our eight-year-old daughter, Sophia, and I landed at Narita Airport nearly two years então repousar na superfície das águas escuras do oceano pacífico que margeia o Japão. Embora eu seja católica não praticante, estudei em colégio de freiras toda a infância, e essa cena era profética. Eu estava feliz. Nós estávamos felizes. E com um frio na barriga típico de quem deixa tudo para se aventurar num lugar desconhecido.

No dia anterior, nosso último em casa, na cidade de São Paulo, me desliguei voluntariamente da empresa onde trabalhara desde 2011, despachamos parte da mudança, mandamos o restante para um depósito, distribuímos as garrafas de bebida entre os amigos que nos ajudaram a encaixotar a mobília, livros e algumas roupas, trancamos a porta da casa vazia, e num intervalo de 40 horas estávamos em outro país. Dois dias depois da nossa chegada, a Sophia teve seu primeiro dia de aula na nova escola, o Toninho começou a investigar - é jornalista - e eu fui readmitida pela filial da mesma multinacional americana com sede no bairro comercial de Roppongi.

Em vários momentos dessa etapa inicial da nossa jornada, e em outros tantos, me senti numa película do 007. Não no papel coadjuvante da musa vilã que após morte sádica submerge em águas profundas com as madeixas ondulando na frente do rosto, mas no centro de uma missão que começou no ocidente e migrou para o oriente na busca pelo desfecho.

Nos hospedamos por dois meses num apartamento de planta e mobília ocidental, no topo de um prédio alto, com dois quartos, sala, cozinha americana e banheiro, no bairro de Shibuya. Do nosso andar dava pra ver de um lado um mar de gente caminhando em ruas cercadas por edificações modernas e lojas de grife e do outro, uma quadra tranquila, bicicletas circulando durante o dia e a noite e jovens na cafeteria da esquina.

Nesse período, ao invés do carrão do 007 e suas traquitanas de ataque invencíveis, tivemos que nos conformar com o conteúdo das malas despachadas no voo até que nossa mudança definitiva chegasse meses depois. Tóquio, assim como São Paulo, é uma megalópole populosa, mas que brilha muito mais à noite do que sua

ago on Monday, February 4, 2019. As we made our descent that afternoon, we watched from our windows as the sun broke into Tokyo Bay with silvery lightning bolts reaching through the clouds and penetrating the surface of the dark waters of the Pacific Ocean below. Although I'm a non-practicing Christian, I attended a Catholic School my entire childhood, so this scene felt prophetic. I was happy. We were happy. Still, I couldn't ignore the chill up my spine—typical of someone leaving everything behind to venture into somewhere unknown

Before leaving Saõ Paulo, I voluntarily resigned from the Brazilian branch of YouTube where I'd been working since 2011 and asked for a transfer to the same company in Japan. Within 40 hours, we had shipped a small portion of our belongings overseas, distributed all the bottles of liquor, books, and extra clothing among friends before sending the rest to a warehouse, and locking the door of our suddenly empty house. Sophia was scheduled to attend her first day at the new school within two days of our arrival, and Toninho, a freelance journalist, would begin investigative work while I started at the YouTube branch in Japan's Roppongi business district.

At several points in the early stages of our journey, I felt like I was in an 007 movie. Not in the supporting role of the villainous muse who plunges to her death into deep water with the tide engulfing her face. I was at the center of a mission that began in the West and migrated east in search of a happy ending.

We stayed for two months in a temporary apartment—a two-bedroom-one-bathroom with Western furnishings in a high-rise in the Shibuya district. From our floor, we could see to one side, a sea of people strolling through the streets surrounded by modern buildings and designer shops, and on the other side, a quiet courtyard with cyclists spinning day and night among young people seated at a corner café.

irmã de densidade populacional. Não só ela, mas outras megalópoles asiáticas como Xangai, Osaka, Seul, como vim a constatar, promovem um espetáculo vibrante de luzes e neons que contribuem para forjar nos forasteiros e investidores a imagem de modernidade, pulsação e fartura.

Fazia frio no hemisfério norte. Sentimos o drama do clima nas primeiras manhãs que levamos a Sophia até o ponto de ônibus da escola, a um quilômetro e meio do nosso apartamento no Shibuya Stream. Antes de sair, vestíamos roupas supostamente quentes e impermeáveis para acompanhá-la. Sem preparo pra viver numa ilha de climas extremos, sofríamos com o vento matutino gelado e a garoa sem trégua. Sophia, com oito anos e extraída a fórceps do conforto uterino da escola no meio do ano letivo, reagiu à via-crúcis matinal dos primeiros dias com excitação e pânico - oscilava entre choro, birra, gargalhada, catatonia e gritos agudos, no país onde gritos não há. No retorno do delivery de filha até o ponto de ônibus, éramos nós; os bêbados da noite anterior; alguns Forrest Gump's locais; os neons piscantes; vitrines de loja que deixariam a Audrey Hepburn mais extasiada do que as da Tiffany na Quinta Avenida de Nova York em Bonequinha de Luxo; além do Starbucks, único local pra tomar café e comer um pão industrializado às 7 da manhã, desjejum que aliás não tinha nada a ver com o folhado com café de Hepburn enquanto olhava a vitrine da Tiffany na cena icônica do filme.

Na segunda noite no estrangeiro, ainda sensíveis pela diferença de fuso e com os corpos em frangalhos, sentimos um tremor — Vocês sentiram alguma coisa? Estávamos os três na conformação preferida do momento, aglutinados na sala em torno da comida. Vimos inclusive a bebida fazer ondinhas na superfície do copo. Esse foi o primeiro de vários abalos sísmicos nos anos em que moramos ali. A rotina era sempre a mesma: primeiro soava a campainha do aplicativo de alerta de terremoto; depois de três a oito segundos, sentíamos o tremor. Como se desse para fazer alguma coisa além de se jogar debaixo de uma mesa com tampo sólido, caso você tenha uma, nesse

Instead of Bond's Aston Martin and invincible gadgets, we settled for the contents strewn about from our suitcases until we could relocate to our permanent flat. Like São Paulo, Tokyo is a populous megalopolis but shines much brighter at night than its densely populated sister back in South America. I'd soon come to see that other Asian megacities such as Shanghai, Osaka, and Seoul also promoted vibrant shows of neons that forged images of modernity, vibrancy, and abundance for the eyes of outsiders and investors.

We first felt the tug of the northern hemisphere that next morning when we took Sophia to the bus stop, a mile from our apartment on the Shibuya Stream. Before stepping out, we put on supposedly warm, waterproof clothes. Clearly unprepared to live on an island with extreme climates, we suffered from the roaring morning winds. Eight-year-old Sophia, forced from the womb-like comfort of her classmates and teachers in the middle of the school year, reacted to the crisp walk with excitement and panic, which manifested into crying, giggling, laughing, and catatonia before escalating into high-pitched screaming in a country where screaming doesn't exist. Toninho and I shivered our way back from the bus stop, passing people stumbling from last night's booze while others milled about aimlessly as if it weren't freezing. We scurried past the blinking neons of storefronts that would have made Audrey Hepburn more ecstatic than another breakfast at Tiffany's. But these elegant windows were soon overshadowed by a Starbucks—the only place to have coffee and so-called pastries at 7 a.m.—a shameful breakfast compared to Hepburn's beloved am treat.

On our second night abroad, still sensitive to our distance from the equator and with our bodies still jet lagged from the long flight, we felt a tremor. The three of us were in our favorite shape of the moment, huddled around food when ripples crested upon the surface of a intervalo de tempo. Como prevenção, comprei a nossa na Ikea para o apartamento definitivo, que além de robusta, comportava seis pessoas sentadas para comer ou sob o tampo para se proteger de sismos. Na maioria das vezes os abalos tinham pouca intensidade. O epicentro era em alto mar. Nos preparamos, nos acostumamos, mas dava medo. Menos de 10 anos antes, em 11 de março de 2011, o Japão havia sido atingido por um terremoto, seguido de tsunami e acidente nuclear em Fukushima.

Eu nunca tinha parado pra pensar em como agir se tivesse que abandonar minha casa na correria sem saber se vou voltar, ou no impacto do risco iminente de morte por desastre natural na vida e psique de uma pessoa, uma família, uma nação. Imagino que a resiliência da população japonesa se deva também à suscetibilidade aos desastres naturais. Em algumas escolas que visitei para decidir onde a Sophia ia estudar, vi capacetes infantis pendurados em cadeiras nas salas de aula. O arquipélago japonês está localizado entre três placas tectônicas, numa das áreas mais propícias a abalos sísmicos do globo. As pessoas passam por treinamentos preventivos, os bairros possuem abrigos com reserva de alimento e água para emergências, e todas as casas precisam, ou devem ter, uma mochila preparada para fugas rápidas. Eu não preparei a minha. Mas pensava nela todos os dias, até o dia em que não pensei mais e quase precisei de uma.

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Tomamos a decisão pela viagem entre o primeiro e o segundo turno das eleições presidenciais de 2018 no Brasil, quando o avanço do conservadorismo em apoio a um candidato presidencial tirano, defensor do acesso indiscriminado às armas de fogo, da exploração criminosa dos recursos naturais, da invalidação dos direitos humanos e da desinformação, entre outras barbáries, parecia irreversível. E sistêmico, pois aflorou na esteira da guinada da extrema direita nos Estados Unidos com a eleição presidencial da celebridade de reality show loira, Donald

glass of water. That earthquake was the first of many. The routine was always the same: the alarm on the app would sound, and three to eight seconds later, a tremor. The window of time was hardly enough to duck under a table much less reach for a helmet—that is, if we even had one. My precaution had been to buy a sturdy Ikea table where six people could eat and take cover. With the epicenter on the high seas, the tremors were mostly mild. We got used to it, but that doesn't mean it stopped being scary. Nearly a decade earlier, on March 11, 2011, Japan had been hit by an earthquake that preceded a tsunami that ignited a nuclear catastrophe—Fukushima.

I'd never stopped to think about what I would do if I had to abandon my home in a hurry nor the imminent risk of death or emotional turmoil imposed upon a person who experiences disaster, much less the impact on their entire family or nation. The resilience of the Japanese people is partly due to their susceptibility to destruction. At some of the schools we visited when deciding where Sophia was to study, I saw children's helmets hanging from chairs in classrooms. The Japanese archipelago lies between three tectonic plates and is located in one of the most seismically active areas on earth. People go through preventive training and neighborhoods have shelters with food and water reserves for emergencies. Every home needs-or should have-a backpack ready for quick escape. I didn't prepare ours, though I thought about it every day until the day I stopped thinking about it and almost needed one.

We had decided to travel between the first and second rounds of the 2018 presidential election in Brazil, when the advance of conservatism in support of a tyrannical presidential candidate who advocated for indiscriminate access to firearms, criminal exploitation of natural resources, human rights violations, and misinformation campaigns, among other barbarities, seemed irreversible. The machine that brought this

Trump. O pretexto simplista para nos aventurarmos no oriente foi a busca por uma mudança de ares no trabalho e a possibilidade de proporcionar essa experiência para minha criança. Mas sair de São Paulo para viver do outro lado do mundo, além da atração pelo imponderável, teve um quê de exílio.

Eu trabalhava no YouTube, o gigante de vídeos online, que apesar da promessa de tráfego democrático de conteúdo, se mostrou desajeitado na curadoria do discurso de ódio que contribuiu para elevar bandidos ao poder nas Américas. Ver tudo isso de perto, sem autonomia para reverter a catástrofe - eu liderava a operação de conteúdo do YouTube no Brasil - contribuiu para a fuga.

Mal sabia eu que a porta de saída que eu buscava era pra algo muito maior e mais distante do que o Japão.

*

Vir para cá foi meu desvio de rota mais radical. Nasci no centro-oeste do Estado de São Paulo, um dos principais destinos de imigrantes japoneses no século 19. Minha infância e juventude foram cercadas de netos e bisnetos de imigrantes como o Murakami, 'Mura', meu amigo, filho do dono da joalheria, não o escritor, e a Letícia Y., colega de colégio e vizinha. Minha mãe praticou ikebana durante muitos anos. Meus irmãos judô. Meu pai estudou medicina em São Paulo e alguns dos seus colegas de faculdade e profissão mais chegados e brilhantes eram japoneses. As minhas muambas prediletas de infância eram borrachas, papel de carta e lápis ilustrados com Hello Kitty. Eu desenhava avidamente mangás de olhos vivos e brilhantes - pra minha desgraça, mamãe jogou tudo fora. Várias marcas locais fizeram parte da minha vida e infância: Atari, Panasonic, Canon, Nikon, Sony, Yamaha,..Até hoje tenho a cicatriz de uma queimadura no escapamento da Honda CB400 do meu pai na coxa esquerda.

Me identifico com as texturas da cultura nipônica às quais tive acesso, que ao lado da italiana, da qual man to power was systemic. A mirror image that emerged in the wake of the far-right's turn in the United States with the presidential election of a certain blond reality show celebrity. The simplistic pretext for venturing east was to seek a change of scenery in the workplace and the possibility of providing an enriching experience for my child. But leaving São Paulo to live on the other side of the world, the allure of the imponderable aside, meant a kind of exile for my family.

For years, I had led YouTube's content operation in Brazil, which, despite the promise of democratic content traffic, proved clumsy in weeding out hate speech that helped elevate thugs to power in the Americas. Seeing this up close—and with no autonomy to reverse impending doom—contributed to our desire to escape. What I didn't know was that the door I was opening would lead to something much bigger and farther away than Japan.

Coming here was my most radical detour. I was born in the Central-Western state of São Paulo, one of the main destinations for Japanese immigrants in the 19th century. My childhood was surrounded by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants such as Murakami, Mura, my friend-son of the jewelry store owner, not the writer—and Leticia Y., schoolmate and neighbor. My mother practiced ikebana for many years. My brothers: judo. My father studied medicine, and some of his closest and brightest colleagues from the University and profession were Japanese. My most treasured artifacts from my youth were letter paper and Hello Kitty pencils. I eagerly drew manga characters with bright, shiny eyes, which, to my dismay, my mother always disposed of. Several local brands were part of my life and childhood: Atari, Panasonic, Canon, Nikon, Sony, Yamaha. To this day, I have a burn scar from the exhaust pipe of my father's Honda CB400

descendo, e da brasileira, a qual pertenço, são meu berço - o tom de voz delicado, a atenção aos detalhes, o culto a ancestralidade, as passadas curtinhas, a valorização de cada canto de solo cultivável, os aromas, o respeito pelo espaço do outro. Mas viver e trabalhar nos intestinos do Japão, sem ser japonês, é para os fortes, os locais ou os loucos.

Cheguei em Tóquio com um canivete de lâmina cega no bolso. Espiei a realidade local sob um ângulo ao qual poucos gaijins têm acesso, especialmente uma gaijin fêmea. Para uma ocidental, nascida em um país lindo, mas ex-colônia, elitista e racista, estar aqui, me deixa em estado de alerta constante. Não falar japonês, ou pior, ter que me comunicar em inglês onde o idioma é pouco falado, e desencorajado nas escolas por ser sinônimo do exercício de domínio ocidental, e com uma vagina entre as pernas, prejudicou a minha capacidade de expressão e as chances de pertencimento.

Minhas primeiras reuniões com executivos nas dependências do Google no bairro de Roppongi, uma espécie de Wall Street, foram assoberbadas. Ninguém me preparou para elas. Fui apresentada como estrategista sênior em conteúdos em ambientes digitais, com duas Olimpíadas, uma Copa do Mundo (no Brasil), e a transmissão de vários carnavais de rua e festivais de música no currículo. Minha experiência nunca foi questionada abertamente, mas fui boicotada por meses enquanto tentava inútilmente empurrar a minha lógica de trabalho goela abaixo, em um ambiente onde o relacionamento, raça e hierarquia mandam. Ou seja, experiência no currículo, no Japão, para uma forasteira, não serviu para nada.

Participei de centenas de reuniões, e descobri que o consenso comunitário, ao vivo, não existe. A democracia não é exercida em salinhas de reunião. No meu primeiro mês de trabalho eu entendi que um ano e meio, ou seja, meu prazo até as Olimpíadas de 2020 em Tóquio, projeto para o qual foi contratada e práticas já testadas, porém do ou lado do globo, não seriam suficientes para criar e executar um plano com marcas globais patrocinadoras

motorcycle that still protrudes from my left thigh.

I identify with the textures of Japanese culture to which I've had access, alongside the Italian, which I descend from, and the Brazilian, to which I belong—my cradle. While I cherish Japan's delicate tone of voice, and pay attention to her detail, her legacy of ancestry, the layered past, I appreciate every corner of her arable land, her aromas, and her respect for the space of others. But living and working in the bowels of this country and not being Japanese is a task for the strong or the crazy.

I arrived in Tokyo with a blunt blade in my back pocket, as it were, and attempted to mirror the local customs but from an angle that few gaijin have access to—especially female gaijin. For a Westerner born in a beautiful former colonial, elitist and racist country, being here left me in a constant state of alertness. Not speaking Japanese, or worse, having to communicate in English, a language spoken sparingly and discouraged in schools for being synonymous with Western dominance—and with a vagina between my legs to boot—impaired my ability to express myself and sabotaged my chances of belonging.

My first meetings with executives at YouTube's offices in the Roppongi district, a kind of Wall Street, were overwhelming. Nobody prepared me for this exercise. I was introduced as a senior content strategist in digital environments with two Olympic Games, a World Cup in Brazil, in addition to broadcasting various street carnivals and music festivals on my resume. My experience was never openly questioned, but I was boycotted for months as I tried in vain to push my work logic down the throat of an ecosystem where relationships, race, gender, and hierarchy rule. For an outsider, work experience in Japan was basically useless.

I've since attended hundreds of meetings in this country and found that real-time community consensus doesn't olímpicas, executivos vaidosos, detentores de direitos da transmissão, criadores de conteúdo e agências de publicidade monopolistas.

Antes das conversas em grupo, era preciso me reunir com cada indivíduo, entender aflições, vender uma perspectiva favorável do projeto, e só então voltar para a prancheta, ponderar tudo, e apresentar uma solução viável ao grupo. Na versão tamanho extra large que satisfizesse a pessoa de patente mais elevada da hierarquia, e seduzisse os demais participantes a se engajar e contribuir. Mudei a tática, subi de patente, mas um processo que em São Paulo duraria um mês, em Tóquio levava seis.

Eu subestimei o poder altamente ofensivo dos colarinhos brancos japoneses. Quando em grupo, o comportamento é homogêneo, não há explicitação óbvia de liderança, mas um senso coletivo primal de quem é a vítima. O poder do líder está implícito nos códigos de comunicação de linguagem corporal e facial. Se você não pertence a matilha, não tem chance de ascensão por mérito. Se você pertence, pode se projetar e lamber as patas do líder até, quem sabe, conseguir. Me lembro de uma ocasião, durante uma das reuniões, quando ao apresentar meus slides diante do "líder", ouvi fungadas intensas a cada frase lentamente proferida. Aguentei até a terceira fungada. Parei, projetei meu corpo pra frente, olhei nos olhos do líder e perguntei pra ele qual era o problema. Todos os olhares se voltaram para baixo, inclusive o dele. E então ouvi um resmungo "Siga Fernanda, quero ver onde isso vai dar". Segui, e dessa vez, sem fungadas.

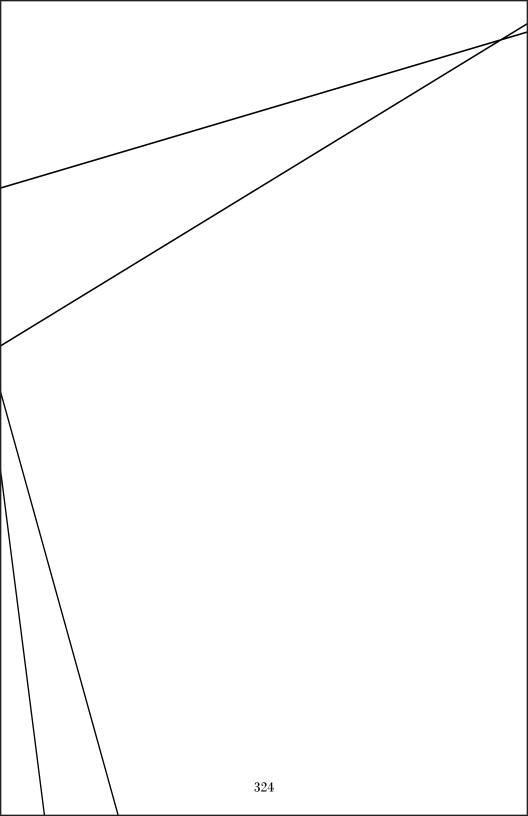
exist. Democracy is not exercised in board rooms. In my first month on the job, I understood that a year and a half—my deadline before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and project for which I was hired—would not be enough to create and execute a plan with the global brands that sponsored the Games, their vain executives, broadcast rights holders, nor their content creators and monopolistic advertising agencies.

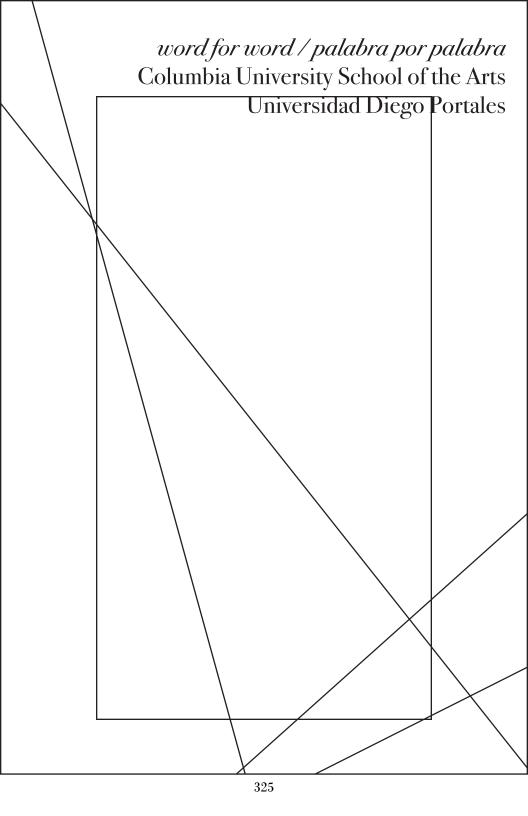
Before group conversations, I had to meet with each member of the team and negotiate a favorable perspective on any project I proposed and then—and only then—could I go back to the drawing board and weigh everything before presenting my solution to the group of businessmen. I knew if I didn't satisfy the highest person on the food chain, it would be impossible to entice the others to engage and contribute. So, I changed tactics. I got promoted—but a process that in São Paulo took only a month, took six in Tokyo.

I underestimated the highly oppressive power of the Japanese white collar. Group behavior here is homogeneous with no obvious explanation for leadership; there's a primal collective that senses the victim. The leader's power is implicit in the codes of body language and facial expression. If you don't belong to the pack, you don't stand a chance. Your merits don't change the game. If you chance upon belonging, something privy to natives, you'll still have to lick the leader's boots until, who knows, maybe you become his footstool and then somehow become a leader yourself.

During one of my presentations, I was showing slides to Head Honcho, when I heard intense sighs and shifts in chairs after each sputtered sentence. I held out until the third rumble and stopped. I leaned forward, looked Honcho in his eyes, and asked, "Is there a problem, Bosu?" The groups' collective eyes stared before darting down. Honcho followed them this time and then, another

murmur, "Keep going, Fernanda, I want to see where this leads." I continued, and this time, no more outbursts.





Nota de traductor

Roz Naimi tiene 29 años y estudia un Master en Bellas Artes, específicamente en Poesía. Vive en Brooklyn, pero es de Los Ángeles, California. Sus mayores inspiraciones en su escritura son Louise Gluck, Jack Spicer y Don Mee Choi, los cuales inspiran su creación poética.

Cuando leí por primera vez la poesía de Roz inmediatamente sentí que era sencillamente difícil de explicar en palabras y que poseía un carácter único, aún sigo pensándolo. La presencia y el juego del sonido con la imagen, tanto por sí solas como la unión de ambas, es una característica especifica de su poesía, de una mujer que juega con la imaginación de su lector creando un ambiente definido por la experiencia femenina y entregando un sonido constante hacia el oído de quien lee sus poemas, el que se basa en una crudeza y sinceridad exquisita.

El imaginario de Roz trata temas como el sarcasmo, la ira y la angustia femenina, de forma cotidiana y con una burla de las situaciones que ocurren más de lo que se cree, como el abuso sexual y la violencia machista, tomando un tono que reta al lector a entenderla, a comprender su punto de vista de estas situaciones, que no es necesariamente uno de carácter común o replicado de siglos anteriores, de hecho, es uno actualizado a la ironía y crudeza del mundo actual.

La imagen paterna o de autoridad y el cómo esta genera una visión de mundo en una niña o adolescente es otra característica relevante en su escritura visibilizándolo desde una perspectiva que rebaja las experiencias de violencia en la vida de una mujer, pero destacando cómo estas la forman como persona, como sujeto social y literario en la poesía.

También destacan las referencias literarias como la mención de Philip Roth en su primer poema junto a una estrategia alucinante para mencionar al lector con su "my reader far, far away" (mi lector tan, tan lejos), provocando que el lector se sienta parte de lo que lee, de la historia que Roz cuenta sobre el abuso sexual y machista desde una perspectiva llena de sarcasmo femenino, característica crucial de su escritura.

Al momento de traducir su poesía me encontré con problemas como los dichos coloquiales de la zona de Estados Unidos, tal como "he played below the belt", que es un dicho que expresa, literalmente, jugar bajo el cinturón y hace referencia a algo que no debe ser dicho o que puede tener carácter sexual, en Chile no se ocupa un dicho así, por lo que la traducción más cercana me llevo a colocar "aun cuando jugaba a sexualizarme".

Por otro lado, Roz habla con una expresión y un uso de palabras crudas, diciendo todo tal como es y con un sonido claro "clinch" que es más típico del inglés que del español, provocando un cierto grado de complicación en la traducción, por ejemplo, con "thick skin is hard to pinch by pinching hard" que provoca este juego ya mencionado y que en español se puede perder fácilmente. Ahí me encontré buscando una convalidación siendo lo más cercano el sonido del "ll" que justo en ingles no se utiliza.

Finalmente, mi experiencia traduciendo a Roz fue enriquecedora y extremadamente agradable, disfrutando un ambiente de fuerza femenina y enseñanzas constantes. Roz posee una capacidad de contar historias desde la perspectiva de una mujer hacia otras mujeres, entregando un espacio seguro de comprensión y sororidad a un nosotras constante, haciendo visible un número que no puede ser dicho en voz alta, un número que es minimizado y oculto por la sociedad, pero que Roz le da, finalmente, un espacio para relucir.

ROZ NAIMI

Reading Philip Roth in Brooklyn, or On the Purpose of The Male Authority Figure

He said he would whip my ass into locutionary shape And didn't. He only ever wanted to say big words.

Blah blah "slutty aesthetics" blah— I had to hand it to him Even when he played below the belt Regarding my being Cheap and easy Due to my father's relationship to capital.

Sometimes I feel a great sadness overcome me When I remember that most of my suffering Has been in the resistance to suffering.

Blood spatter on my fresh sheets

If I was not who I am today, I'd make a joke here.
Something like:
How much can a woman give?
She gave him her cold
And he wanted pneumonia!

I'm not supposed to do that anymore.
"That" means holding my reader far, far away
At a distance so far away that, though they can see
Blood spatter on my fresh sheets,
They don't know how or why it got there.

traducido del inglés por DANAE E. SALGADO

Leyendo a Philip Roth en Brooklyn, o Sobre el Propósito de La Figura de Autoridad Masculina

Él dijo que latigaría mi culo de forma locucionaria Y no lo hizo Él solo quería decir palabras mayores.

Blah blah "estética de putita" blah— Tuve que aceptárselo Aun cuando jugaba a sexualizarme Al referirse a mí misma Barata y fácil Debido a la relación de mi padre con el capital.

Algunas veces siento una gran tristeza sobrepasarme Cuando recuerdo que la mayoría de mi sufrimiento Ha estado en la resistencia al sufrimiento.

Salpicadura de sangre en mis sábanas limpias.

Si no fuera la que soy ahora, Haría una broma aquí. Algo como: ¿Qué tanto puede dar una mujer? Ella le dio un resfriado ¡Pero él quería neumonía!

Se supone que ya no debo seguir haciendo eso. "Eso" significa mantener a mi lector tan, tan lejos A una distancia tan lejana que, aunque pueden ver Salpicadura de sangre en mis sábanas limpias, Ellos no saben cómo ni por qué llegó ahí.

I am telling you I got involved with a bad bad man.

If I didn't believe it before
I believe it now
What life as a man can do to a man—
How a nasty blankness drove me to Philip
For whom I'd have rather shed tears
And spewed love.

Mr. & Mrs. Roth
We could have hated each other
Aborted a love child
Thrown plates at every corner
Because there are no words
For the grief we might have shared.

Here in Brooklyn
I have the gray sky
And a full way of not knowing.
Here I have taken to talking
To myself. Yes,
I only talk down to myself
Like he might have
Regarding my delusions, how
They entertain him
Given my history with older men.
Let me be clear, he says
I don't ask this to shame you,

How did your brain react in order to survive?

He always asks such good questions.

Te digo que me relacioné con un hombre tan, pero tan malo.

Si no lo creí antes Lo creo ahora Lo que una vida como macho puede hacerle a un hombre— Cómo un desagradable vacío me llevó a Philip Por quién prefiero derramar lágrimas Y vomitar amor.

Sr. & Sra. Roth
Podríamos habernos odiado
Abortado un hijo del amor
Platos arrojados en cada esquina
Porque no hay palabras
Para el duelo que podríamos haber compartido.

Aquí en Brooklyn
Tengo el cielo gris
Y una manera completa de desconocer
Aquí me ha dado por hablarme
A mí misma. Sí,
Solo me rebajo a mí misma
Como él podría hacerlo
Refiriéndose a mis delirios, cómo
Estas lo entretienen a él
Dado a mi historia con hombres mayores.
Déjame ser claro, él dice
No pregunto esto para rebajarte,

¿Cómo reaccionó tu cerebro con el fin de sobrevivir?

Él siempre hace unas preguntas tan simpáticas.

Those without daughters do not have children.

My dad says
So many things
His whole head of hair blew away in the wind
He has a masters from MIT
He's been pregnant with my baby sister for 25 years
I used to press my head
up against
His grumbling belly
Until one blinking afternoon
I realized

Just like that
Heredity approached me
And I cheated the biology test
Drew the human skeleton
on my thigh lifted my skirt
as needed
No hesitation after
years of forging
his busy signature

He showed me thick skin
is hard to pinch
by pinching hard
Don't let the feeling go inside of you
He says to my wet face
Acts chauvinist to show me
Life
I press my head
To his head
we stare off
into a future where
I've got a kid
To help him
Take off his shoes

Aquellos sin hijas no tienen hijos

Mi padre dice
Tantas cosas
Toda su cabellera voló lejos con el viento
Él tiene una maestría de MIT
Él lleva embarazado de mi hermanita por 25 años
Solía presionar mi cabeza
Contra
Su panza gruñona
Hasta que una tarde parpadeante
Me di cuenta

Tan solo así
La herencia me llegó
Hice trampa en el examen de biología
Dibujé el esqueleto humano
en mi muslo y levanté el jumper
lo necesario
No hay duda después
de años falsificando
su firma apurada

Él me demostró que la piel gruesa
es difícil de pellizcar
pellizcándola fuerte
No dejes que el sentimiento se apodere de ti
Él me lo dice, frente a mi cara mojada
Actúa machista para demostrarme
La vida
Presiono mi cabeza
Contra su cabeza
miramos
hacia un futuro donde
Tengo un hijo
Que lo ayuda
A quitarse los zapatos

This time I am going to tell a story

This time I will tell you about my first kiss with the first man who raped me

We were sitting on the couch next to each other watching Groundhog Day inhaling and exhaling so carefully My heart beat flooded the room.

I was a virgin, and I didn't know how to touch yet So I didn't
I sat, eyes forward, while he inched over I focused on my breath, on the movie
I had never seen before
Bill Murray and the leading lady were kissing Over and over
Because that's the whole point of the story Over and over
The same thing keeps happening

We were sitting on the couch and we looked at each other and he kissed me like I never thought he would His tongue and my tongue met and danced I was happy, I didn't know what was next All I knew was that 4 years of a crush had finally come to fruition Finally life had begun

And Groundhog Day was on the screen
And we were on the couch and then
We heard footsteps so we stopped
We pretended to watch the movie
And I was blushing
I was a virgin, blushing on the couch

Esta vez les contaré una historia

Esta vez les hablaré sobre mi primer beso con el primer hombre que me violó.

Estábamos sentados en el sofá uno al lado del otro viendo El día de la marmota inhalando y exhalando tan cuidadosamente El latido de mi corazón inundó la habitación. Yo era virgen, y no sabía cómo tocar todavía Así que no lo hice Me senté, mirando hacia adelante mientras él avanzaba poco a poco me concentré en mi respiración, en la película Que nunca había visto antes Bill Murray y la protagonista se besaban Una y otra vez Porque ese es el punto de toda la historia Una y otra vez Lo mismo sigue pasando.

Estábamos sentados en el sofá y nos miramos y él me besó como nunca pensé que lo haría Su lengua y mi lengua se conocieron y bailaron Yo estaba feliz, no sabía lo que seguía después Todo lo que sabía es que 4 años de enamoramiento finalmente habían llegado a buen fruto Finalmente, la vida había comenzado

Y El día de la marmota estaba en la pantalla Y estábamos en el sofá y luego Escuchamos pasos así que nos detuvimos Fingimos ver la película Y yo estaba sonrojada Yo era virgen, sonrojada en el sofá Next to a boy who was not a virgin, who had plans
Or didn't have plans
Maybe
neither of us knew what we were doing
And that is the problem isn't it
That you don't know
what's going to happen until it happens

We didn't finish the movie
We went to his room
He turned on music to drown out
inevitable moans
we touched, we rubbed,
we weren't just kissing anymore
And the bad things didn't start that night
That night he loved me and let me
keep my pants on
That night I got to go home blushing
savoring the taste of his tongue on mine.

This is a story about my first kiss with the first man who raped me a week after our first kiss
This is a story about me, 9 years later, so far from the blushing virgin who, 9 years later, did not bat an eye when she saw the blood spatter on the white sheets
Over and over
I am compelled to tell a story called
How many times can a girl get raped is not a rhetorical question
There is a number that I can't say aloud
There is a number

Junto a un chico que no era virgen,
que tenía planes
O no tenía planes
Quizás
ninguno de nosotros sabía lo que estábamos haciendo
Y ese es el problema cierto
Que tú no sabes
qué va a pasar hasta que pasa

No terminamos la película
Fuimos a su habitación
Él puso música para ahogar
gemidos inevitables
nos tocamos, nos frotamos,
ya no nos besábamos solamente
Y lo malo no empezó esa noche
Esa noche él me amó y me dejó
quedarme con mis pantalones puestos
Esa noche me tuve que ir a casa sonrojada
saboreando el sabor de su lengua en la mía.

Esta es la historia sobre mi primer beso con el primer hombre que me violó una semana después de nuestro primer beso Esta es la historia sobre mí, 9 años después, tan lejos de la virgen sonrojada quien, 9 años después, no pestañeó cuando vio la salpicadura de sangre en las sábanas blancas Una y otra vez Estoy obligada a contar una historia llamada Cuántas veces una niña puede ser violada no es una pregunta retórica Hay un número que no puedo decir en voz alta Hay un número Hay un número.

Translator's Note

During our first conversation, I asked Dana what she values most in these poems; what I, as her translator, should preserve. Her answer: the poems' emotional register and their lineated, margin-shifting structure. From there, I set out to take Dana's formal vessel as a channel to make these poems emote in English.

To achieve this, I asked myself, how can I situate myself in this translation? Where am I? I'm not in Chile, but I can research Chile. I am not Dana, but surely I can be myself—I can access an anger borne of patriarchal injustices; the almost-compulsory disassociation that comes with surviving womanhood; and the solace we find in the works of our predecessors, who shared our struggles, paved ways and, like us, sought poetry as a tool for liberation. Dana's poems do what poetry is best suited for: They seduce the reader to find a node of shared experience amidst a tableau of language. Slashed across this poetic triptych are the impassioned brush strokes of an unapologetic, indignant voice who is seeing, witnessing, and arriving at knowledge.

Dana harnesses a most poetical sleight of hand. She employs deceptively simple language to illustrate a landscape of psychic multiplicities and temporal simultaneities, channeled through a speaker whose seemingly performative ambivalence is borne of an unfathomable rage. These are not easy poems.

This is a poet who provokes her reader to look at words as concrete material. She asks us to hold attention for the gendered politics of grammar, a shared theme between English and Spanish, but one that manifests differently. This question of sexed nouns became my preoccupation. For example, "poetisa" in Spanish, is both a diminutive and a condescending feminization of the masculine

"poeta" (which is considered masculine despite its ending in an a). In English, "poetess," carries the same sense of dismissiveness, but without an explicit diminution in its feminizing ess. How, then, was I to negotiate this nuance? How could I draw an English-speaking audience's attention to the implicit diminution of the ess, a revelation that I may not have arrived at had I never had the opportunity to investigate the stakes of an isa. With just three letters, Dana sent me on a philosophical journey regarding the problem of lineage. My unrelenting question: What do we inherit and how does it manifest in language? What are we to do with poetry's vexing history, mired in gendered violence and glorified wars? With their aesthetic nakedness, these stark poems lay bare the inextricable link between political and literary histories.

My hope and goal has been to elucidate this work's dissonant opacity and depth. Throughout this process, I have wrestled with my English-speaking desire to perform a mimetic translation of Spanish. More often than not, I had to reign in my impulses to ornament my English because I wanted so badly to approximate what I perceived as a lyrical, effortlessly uniform metrical fidelity in the poet's use of Spanish. But, alas, I am writing in English, which is more often than not an irregular, grammatically promiscuous language and only partially shares Spanish's Romance roots.

Faced with the looming specter of lyric—or, more specifically, the longstanding conflation of poetry and lyric—I looked back to my first conversation with Dana and what she said about preserving the poems' emotion. And, boom—what once felt like constraint became my liberation. I realized I had trapped myself in the expectation that high emotion requires high lyric. Here I was given an opportunity to practice the ethics of Dana's poetics: to disobey the sometimes-suffocating hold that history has on poetry. In this case, that meant reconstructing my relationship to Spanish, to lean into

a candid plainspokenness. I am grateful to Dana for presenting me with this challenge of syntactic restraint, and will forever remember the lesson I learned from an *isa*.

DANAE E. SALGADO

el final está cerca

el final se acerca, me dicen las voces mis primeras oraciones fueron robadas por un extraño

> y revueltas por tu piso perdiendo lo femenino quemándose con los fósforos que robé de tu cocina olvidándome de la existencia

porque me molesta tu presencia en mi ausencia

si las miradas fueran objetos podría ser una escopeta las balas saldrían cuando el patriarcado me buscara para la gran guerra

aun así, me quedan ideas para comenzar este relato con forma de un poema escrito por Anne Carson

siempre te molestó que leyera solo mujeres

es una decisión personal y de lucha querer que mis autoras sean reconocidas por la técnica que aplicaban en sus escrituras y no por los suicidios y trastornos con los que terminan

leíste a Alejandra Pizarnik, cierto? o a Sylvia Plath?

pero

¿cuál es la necesidad de llamar poetisa a Gabriela?

si gano el Nobel antes que Neruda

la palabra poetisa le queda minúscula a una profesora y pedagoga

la educación es el chiflón y el jardín para los que eligen enseñar y culturizar en un país donde la vocación ausente está

y yo te lo dije un par de veces que yo no resumiría mis oraciones ni mis poemas espero que ahora tengas todo el espacio que necesitabas

translated from the spanish by ROZ NAIMI

the end is near

the end is nearing, the voices tell me

my first verses were stolen by a stranger

and strewn about your floor, their femininity vanishing burning with the matches i stole from your kitchen driving their existence from my mind for i am bothered by your presence in my absence if clarge ware chiects.

if glares were objects i could be a shotgun

whose bullets discharge when the patriarchy seeks me out for the great war

even so, i have my ideas to begin this story shaped liked a poem written by Anne Carson

it always bothered you that I only read women

a personal decision, a resistance a desire that my authors be recognized for the techniques they used in their writings and not by the suicides and afflictions that ended them

you've read Alejandra Pizarnik, right? how about Sylvia Plath?

but

what's this compulsion to designate Gabriela a poetess

if she won the Nobel before Neruda?

the ess makes a lower-case of the professor and pedagogue

education is the drought and the garden for those who choose to educate and enlighten in a country where the vocation has gone missing

and i told you a couple times
i wouldn't boil down my prayers nor my poems
i hope you finally have all the space you needed

por un hombre con complejo de narcisista
gracias por robármelas, ahora tengo unas mejores para empezar
escucho en las noticias
asesinaron a una mujer
adivina quién la mató
y por qué pensaste en un hombre
explícame

aun así el romance seguirá vivo mientras yo exista y eso siempre te incomodó

> el amor es una experiencia física ¿por qué decirte que te amo? jajaja tan chistoso...

así que jugué con tus teselas y me apuñalaste pero eso te desangró a ti también

> el homicidio frustrado del 11; tu irresponsabilidad afectiva lamentable y trágica mi idealización romántica inevitable y solitaria

for you, a Narcissus
thank you for stealing them & leaving me better ones to start with i hear on the news
they killed a woman
guess who killed her
and why did you think of a man?
explain that to me

even so
romance will go on living
meanwhile i exist
and this always inconvenienced you

love is a physical experience why should i tell you i love you? ha ha ha what a joke...

so i played with the tiles of your mosaic and you stabbed me but the shards bled you out as well

the attempted homicide of September '73
your emotional irresponsibility
lamentable and tragic
my romantic idealization
inevitable and desolate

el camino de vuelta a casa puede ser una agonía

cuando llega la mañana te colocas el parche curita que ella te obsequió maldices mi nombre con los anónimos olvidas que no tienen identificación ni importancia en tu narración, eres el héroe que altera la redacción

> yo soy la villana que confiesa; tú sabías que estaba débil desde que la reina roja me empujó pero eso no te importó así que todo mi cuerpo es temblor

aun así, camino por los andenes y las calles

disfruto de mi libertad nadie me pertenece no le pertenezco a nadie

escribo los poemas que siempre imaginé pero jamás redacté

> y ahora las palabras son mías me pertenecen por siempre

ya no me traicionan al ver tu semblante

lo que más me gusta de ti es tu ausencia

llego a mi casa después de un largo día me duermo en las noches y apareces en mis sueños

para luego irte lejos antes de que te diga mis versos

me quedo con las letras atragantadas en mi garganta

> los cortes no cierran ni se curan espero el anticipo para escupirte en la cara

así que te busco en rostros ajenos

creo tropezarme con tu silueta en Los Héroes, en Manuel Montt en Vergara, en Ejército

the way back home may be agony

when the morning comes you put on the bandage it bestowed you with you curse my name with the nameless forget that they don't have identities or any importance to your story, you are the hero who carves out words

i am the villain who testifies
you knew i was weak
since the red queen shoved me
but you didn't care
so my whole body trembles

still, i walk through metro stations and streets

enjoying my freedom no one belongs to me i belong to no one

i write the poems i always imagined but never wrote

and now the words are mine they are mine forever

they no longer betray me upon seeing your face

what i like most about you is your absence

i come home after a long day i fall asleep and you show up in my dreams

then drift far away without hearing my verses

i sit with these letters choked in my throat

the cuts don't clot or heal i wait for a provocation to spit in your face so i search for yours among others

i may have stumbled over your silhouette in Los Héroes, in Manuel Montt in Vergara, in Ejército ahí no acierto ni un poco categóricamente nada

> el camino no avanza si no te mueves y no me muevo porque aún te escribo así que saco mi celular y hago una lista;

t de te quiero, t de te deseo, t de te anhelo

t de te amo, t de te odio, t de te extraño,

t de te voy a golpear donde más te duela, t de te olvidaré algún día, yo lo sé t de te sigo escribiendo, no sé por qué

y pienso en mandársela por correo postal pero olvide su dirección y borré su número telefónico, se quedará en los borradores la leeré cuando te olvide

> creo que te inventé en mi mente creo que me inventé en tu mente creo que nos inventé en nuestras mentes

antes quería gustarte a ti ahora solo me quiero gustar a mí

así que mantengo cálido mi corazón y escribo este monólogo luego miro el espejo de mi habitación veo todo lo que seremos después, tal vez, quizás, si es que... i didn't hit the target not even close categorically nothing

> the path can't move if you don't move and i won't move because i still write to you so i grab my phone and make a list:

+ i love you, + i want you, + i crave you

+ i'm crazy about you, + i hate you, + i miss you

+ i'm gonna hit you where it hurts most

+ i'll forget you one day, this i know

+ i'll keep writing to you, why i do not know

and i consider sending
this list by mail
but i forgot your address
and deleted your number
they'll stay in the trash
i'll read them when i forget you

i think i made you up in my head i think i made myself up in yours i think i made us up in each other's minds

i used to want to be loved by you now i only want to love myself

so i keep my heart warm and write this monologue then look in my bedroom mirror see everything we'll be afterwards possibly, maybe, if...

cuando la tristeza ataca tus pulmones

 $\begin{array}{l} me\ sigo\ enredando\ con\ mis\ lanas\ azules \\ la\ tristeza\ y\ yo\ estamos\ solas \end{array}$

estoy tan molesta contigo que

me disuelvo en el plato de la cocina estoy derritiéndome ante mi rabia

los pulmones se me llenan de agua

la canción que tanto te gustaba sigue sonando en el reproductor de la cocina

y yo me estoy ahogando

inhalo, mantengo, exhalo sobrevivo y me miro con mis ojos de ayer en mi presente eterno

me digo que estaremos bien que terminamos de inventar en su mente que las discusiones en casa ya no están que la relación con su padre ha mejorado que por fin estamos haciendo lo que amamos que perdimos, pero avanzamos que nos empujaron al acantilado del conejo pero que salimos ilesas del suceso que la terapia psicológica ha servido

que ha llovido torrencialmente y la suciedad se ha ido que ahora estamos limpias

que tenemos amigas y amigos que nos cuidan

así que compramos llaveros de colores disfrutamos el momento y nos abrazamos nos reímos y nos amamos

que escribimos mucho más que antes quizás no mejor, quizás no más cuerdo pero los versos son propios de nuestro cuerpo

> ya no tenemos miedo de estar por nuestra cuenta finalmente estamos bien, solas y contentas la compañía es una elección importante porque sabemos que merecemos cosas buenas y reales

when sadness attacks your lungs

i keep getting tangled up in my blue woolen threads the sadness and i are alone

i'm so upset with you

that i dissolve myself into the kitchen plate i am melting in the face of my fury

my lungs fill with water

the song you liked so much is still singing on the kitchen speaker

and i am drowning

i inhale, hold, exhale i survive

and i look at myself with yesterday's eyes in my eternal present

i tell myself we'll be okay
that we're done playing make-believe in our mind
that our arguments at home are over
that she's healed her relationship with her dad
that we are finally doing what we love
that we lost, but we moved on
that they pushed us to the edge of the rabbit hole
but we made it out unscathed
that the psychotherapy worked

that it has poured down torrentially and the filth is gone now we are clean

that we have friends who care for us

so we buy colorful key-chains we enjoy the moment and embrace we laugh and we love

that we write much more now than we used to maybe not better, maybe not lucid but the verses are ours, of our body

we aren't scared to be on our own now finally we are okay, alone and content the company we keep is an important choice because we know we deserve better things, real things así que ahora somos sólo las dos, yo y mi niña interior

creo que es lo mejor que he inventado en mi mente hasta ahora, hasta el momento presente, hasta siempre y cuando la vida vuelva a perder su significado que este poema te recuerde que puedes volver a tomar el camino del lado si es que necesitas descansar y pensar, sabes que te quiero mucho más.

so now it's just the two of us me and the girl inside me

i think she's the best thing i've made up in my mind until now, until this present moment, up until forever and when life loses its meaning again let this poem remind you that you can take the side streets if you need to rest and think, know that i love you evermore.

Nota de traductor

Jessie Shohfi, autora, asistente editorial y profesora, se encuentra pronta a graduarse de la escuela de artes de la Universidad de Columbia. Vivió durante un año en Estambul y actualmente reside en Brooklyn. Comenzó a escribir They have to take you in en 2021, cuento que terminó entre los finalistas del Jesmyn Ward Fiction Prize. Los personajes que protagonizan la obra, Susannah, Emine y Mark, tienen un desarrollo complejo. Cada perspectiva muestra las caras de una situación que le podría ocurrir a cualquier familia del mundo: la dificultad de adaptarse a entornos nuevos. Susannah, la protagonista, es un personaje poseedor de una gran variedad de matices que batallan entre la creciente inseguridad, sus propios deseos y la eventual determinación de abrirse paso en este nuevo mundo que no tiene intenciones de esperarla. A medida que la historia avanza, la protagonista va cambiando sutilmente su forma de expresarse; el hecho de ya no poder soportar todos esos sentimientos que la aquejan la llevan a sincerarse consigo misma y a mostrar esa sinceridad a su lenguaje.

En cuanto a los aspectos técnicos, los temas que más me dejaron pensando fueron las repeticiones, la adjetivación y la cantidad de información que puede tener una frase sin sonar demasiado sobrecargada. Si bien, en inglés estas dan lugar a un texto armonioso, a los ojos del castellano es demasiada información a la vista y poco aire en los pulmones. En este caso, la decisión de cortar secciones particulares en favor de ganar fluidez, se tomó bajo la lógica de seguir el instinto del oído.

A la hora de interpretar y traducir esta obra, mi mayor preocupación fue mantener esa tensión psicológica que se va construyendo desde las primeras frases del cuento. A pesar de que la historia se desarrolla en un entorno cotidiano, es sumamente intensa, entre sus párrafos hay

bombas que debía desmantelar y volver a armar, con la esperanza de que pudieran explotar con la misma fuerza en el idioma receptor. Ya no se trataba de traducir el contenido de la historia, debía darle vida desde lo implícito y hacerla andar, no desde las palabras, sino desde la sensación que las mismas provocan. Traducir la soledad, la frustración, la impotencia, la inadaptación, la incomodidad y el autodesprecio fue inesperadamente difícil. Por tanto, con el fin de mantener la esencia de los personajes, tuve que ser muy cuidadosa a la hora de elegir mis palabras.

Siempre me han gustado los retos y esta experiencia en particular fue especialmente desafiante, donde la confianza en instinto e ingenio se volvió una parte crucial del proceso. ¿Qué palabra sería mejor? las horas en que me quedé pensando en como ordenar la frase, ¿qué haré con esa coma? ¿qué hago con todos estos adjetivos?

Hasta que al final, en un rayo iluminador, llegaba a la solución mientras desatornillaba la tapa de la pasta de dientes. Siendo tanto traductora como lectora, puedo decir que fue una delicia deslizarme en la prosa de Jessie, su talento para evocar emociones y crear vueltas de tuerca me mantuvieron al borde de la silla creando posibles escenarios. Si este solo es un fragmento tengo grandes expectativas del resto de su obra.

JESSIE SHOHFI

(EXPERT FROM) "PARTE DE LA FAMILIA"

Susannah didn't think twice about throwing the wood away. There was a mountain of boxes to unload and she was already exhausted from the strain of keeping the secret of her pregnancy from everyone, including her husband. Navigating around the stack of warped, unfinished planks seemed like an unnecessary complication. She took five minutes to drag the pieces of oak to the curb, stacking them in a neat pile next to the dented metal trash cans, before she returned to the truck and resumed unpacking the rest of their belongings. For whatever it was worth, Mark didn't say anything about the wood, either. He didn't notice, or it didn't matter to him. But it mattered to his mother, Emine.

Emine didn't notice that the planks were gone until they'd been living with her for over a month. Her vision was almost gone and her movements were limited, so she stayed mainly in the master bedroom or the kitchen or the pristine living room. The only times she ever left the house were to sit in the backyard, taking her afternoon tea amid the fluttering monarch butterflies that sipped nectar from the lilac shrub. But finally it was time for her bimonthly doctor's appointment and Susannah guided her gently through the mess room, between the piles of shoes and around the jutting mounds of winter coats, down the half flight of stairs to the garage. Emine, who often walked straight into the couch, which was in the same place it had been for half a century, stopped dead. She reached out with her foot and found the area previously occupied by the planks of

traducido del inglés por ROSSELA AGURTO FUENTES

(EXTRACTO DE) "PARTE DE LA FAMILIA"

Susannah no lo pensó dos veces antes de deshacerse de la madera. Había una montaña de cajas que desempacar y ella ya estaba agotada por el estrés de mantener su embarazo en secreto de todo el mundo, incluso de su marido. Avanzar entre las tablas a medio cortar parecía un esfuerzo innecesario. Le tomó cinco minutos llevar las piezas de roble a la calle, y juntarlas en una pila ordenada junto al abollado basurero, para luego volver al camión de mudanzas y seguir desempacando el resto de sus cosas. Por alguna razón, Mark no dijo nada sobre la madera. Quizás él no lo había notado o no le había importado. Pero sí que le importaba a su madre, Emine.

Su suegra, no notó que las tablas habían desaparecido hasta que Susannah y Mark llevaban más de un mes viviendo con ella. Emine ya había perdido casi toda la vista y sus movimientos eran limitados, así que solía permanecer en la habitación principal, en la cocina o en el impecable living. Las pocas veces que salía de la casa era para sentarse en el jardín trasero y tomar su té de la tarde entre el vuelo de las mariposas monarca que bebían el néctar de las lilas.

Cuando llegó el momento de su cita bimensual con el médico, Susannah la dirigió con suavidad a través del comedor, entre los montones de zapatos y abrigos de invierno, bajando el tramo de escaleras que daban al garaje. Emine, quien solía ir directamente al sofá, que ha estado en el mismo lugar desde hace medio siglo, estiró su pie y notó como la zona que antes habían ocupado las piezas de madera ahora estaba vacía.

wood to be empty.

She stopped, stunned, for just a moment before she was shouting at Susannah, something in Turkish that was completely comprehensible despite the language barrier, raising her voice in a way Susannah had never heard in the four years they'd been in each other's lives. Susannah was almost pleased—she had always been below Emine's notice. She had a sense that, to her mother-in-law, she was little more than an irritant, not even worthy of her disapproval. Emine brushed aside her offers to help as she pulled herself up the stairs by the rickety railing. Susannah walked close behind, her hands ready to catch her if she fell, until Emine smacked her hand hard and she stood back, just for a moment. The sting was sharp, and the area between her thumb and her wrist on the back of her hand was already turning pink. Susannah shook her hand lightly to alleviate the pain, the seconds she took to resettle herself just enough time for the older woman lose her balance and topple forward.

"What the hell is this," Mark said, appearing at the door to the mess room.

"No fucking clue," Susannah muttered, but she couldn't be heard over her mother-in- law's furious wails of pain.

Eventually, Emine calmed down enough to let Mark carry her to the car. She cradled her wrist to her chest and glared darkly at Susannah as she passed, reclined in Mark's arms like a wallowing virgin. She would only allow Mark to take her to the hospital, Mark who was frustrated to miss an afternoon of distraction-free writing. He would never say anything to Susannah, but she felt the weight of his disappointment in her, his frustration with her uselessness, her inability to contribute, to complete even such a trivial task as taking a fragile old woman to the doctor. He'd been thrilled to give up his day job with the move, devote himself fully to his sophomore novel, which he could now afford to do, freed from the expenses of the city and their exorbitant rent. He had friends nearby, pals from childhood who

Poruninstantese detuvo, atónita, antes de empezar a gritarle a Susannah. Fue algo en turco, perfectamente comprensible a pesar de la barrera idiomática, elevó su voz de una forma que la joven nunca había oído en los cuatro años que llevaban viviendo juntas. Susannah casi se alegró—ella siempre había pasado desapercibida a los ojos de Emine. Tenía la impresión de que, para su suegra, ella era apenas algo más que una molestia. Alguien que ni siquiera merecía su desaprobación.

Emine rechazó sus intentos por ayudarla a subir las escaleras mientras se apoyaba en la tambaleante baranda. Susannah mantuvo sus manos detrás de ella, lista para atraparla por si llegaba a caerse. Emine le golpeó la mano con fuerza y Susannah quedó pasmada por un instante. La punzada era intensa, y la zona entre el pulgar y la muñeca, en el dorso de la mano, ya se estaba enrojeciendo. La sacudió un poco para atenuar el dolor, sin embargo, los segundos que se tomó para recobrarse fueron suficientes para que la anciana perdiera el equilibrio y cayera hacia adelante.

- —¿Qué carajo es esto? —dijo Mark apareciendo en la puerta del comedor.
- —Ni puta idea. —susurró Susannah, pero nadie pudo escucharla entre los furiosos lamentos de su suegra.

Eventualmente, Emine se calmó lo suficiente como para dejar que Mark la cargara al auto. Ella acunó su muñeca en su pecho y miró amenazante a Susannah mientras pasaba, reclinada dramáticamente entre los brazos de su hijo. Solo permitió que él la llevara al hospital.

Mark estaba frustrado por haber perdido su tarde libre de distracciones para escribir. Él nunca le reprochó nada, pero ella sintió como el peso de su decepción le subía sobre los hombros. La frustración por su inutilidad, por su incapacidad de contribuir, de completar algo tan trivial como era llevar a una frágil anciana al hospital.

A Mark le había hecho ilusión dejar su trabajo por la mudanza. Ahora podía permitirse continuar escribiendo su segunda novela, libre de los gastos de la ciudad y el arriendo desorbitado. Él tenía amigos cerca, amistades de they saw on the weekends. She, meanwhile, sacrificed her PR posting—parties, perks, the lot. Friends, who remained in the city, had fallen off, and now this failure.

While they were gone, she sorted through the stacks of china and everyday dishes, the salad bowls and glasses, all of which had been piled up on the long dining room table since they'd moved in. Somehow, they'd neglected to consider that moving into a fully furnished house would make their own belongings superfluous. She wasn't sure why she'd bothered to unpack most of it; she supposed she'd been optimistic about finding a place for everything, and now here she was, a month later, a packing Sisyphus.

One by one, she wrapped up the expensive dishes, a wedding gift from her parents, who had spent more than they could afford because they knew how much she loved the blue floral pattern. They'd been eating instead off of Mark's mother's dishware, antique Turkish porcelain with intricate, colorful designs. These were the same plates Mark had eaten off of as a child in Istanbul, plates which had made their way across the world, packed with such care and love that they survived perfectly intact.

Susannah dropped the tape onto the table and walked to the cabinet with the Turkish porcelain, pulling out an intricately decorated bowl. The pattern truly was lovely, unreserved in a way that made her own choice of design feel dowdy and conservative. The bowl felt surprisingly heavy in her hands, the paintwork so delicate and intricate. Susannah let her grip go slack, feeling the bowl drop, pulled down by gravity, just a bit before she caught it firmly again. What if she let it crash to the floor, how beautiful would the shards be, dark blues and deep reds, burnt orange and teal and lime green strewn across the floor like a punishing rainbow. She imagined her bare feet walking across the broken china, the trail of bloody footprints she would leave in her wake.

She scared herself sometimes, with thoughts like

la infancia con quienes solía verse los fines de semana. Ella, por su parte, sacrificó su puesto en relaciones públicas, fiestas, beneficios, todo. Sus amigos, que se habían quedado en la ciudad, se habían ido alejando y ahora se encontraba ante este nuevo fracaso.

Mientras estaban afuera, Susannah ordenó pilas de vajilla, platos, ensaladeras y vasos, que habían estado amontonados en la larga mesa del comedor desde el día en que llegaron. Por alguna razón, no pensaron que mudarse a una casa completamente amoblada haría que sus propias cosas se volvieran innecesarias. Ella no estaba segura sobre por qué se molestó en desempacar casi todo. Quizás supuso que, de alguna forma, encontraría un lugar para cada una. Y ahora, un mes después, se había convertido en una suerte de Sísifo del empaque.

Uno a uno fue envolviendo los platos de loza, un costoso regalo de bodas de sus padres, quienes gastaron más de lo que podían permitirse, porque sabían cuánto le había gustado el diseño de flores azules. A pesar de ello, durante todo ese tiempo habían estado comiendo en la antigua vajilla de porcelana turca de la madre de Mark, la cual tenía intrincados y coloridos diseños. Esos eran los mismos platos en los que su marido había comido desde su niñez en Estambul, platos que habían viajado por el mundo y que fueron empacados con tanto cuidado y cariño que habían logrado mantenerse completamente intactos.

Susannah dejó el Scotch en la mesa, caminó hacia la despensa en la que estaba la porcelana turca y sacó una de las tazas. El patrón era realmente encantador, vistoso de una forma que le hacía sentir que su propia elección había sido demasiado aburrida y conservadora. La taza se sintió inesperadamente pesada entre sus manos; mientras admiraba la delicadeza y la complejidad de los detalles pintados.

Susannah aflojó el agarre y la sintió caer. La taza, atraída por la gravedad, estuvo a punto de estrellarse contra el suelo antes de que ella la atrapara con firmeza. ¿Y si la dejara quebrarse? ¿Qué tan hermosos serían los fragmentos, azules oscuros, rojos profundos, ocres,

these, what ifs that would lead to pain, hers or someone else's. Had she had time to catch Emine before she fell? Had she chosen, instead, to watch her wobble, taking pleasure in the knowledge that Emine was realizing she depended on her daughter-in-law, realizing the support she needed only when she was missing it? It was this predisposition that compelled Susannah to keep her pregnancy a secret from Mark. How could she tell him, when she would be a monster of a mother? She should get rid of it, she knew. It was the right thing to do.

She had all the dishes in boxes and was starting on the crystal glasses, her grandmother's, when Mark and his mother returned. He shouted a cheery "we're back," but guided his mother to her bedroom and settled her in for a rest before he joined Susannah in the kitchen. She waited, but he just looked at her with a bemused expression.

"So?" she asked when she couldn't stand it any longer.

"Sprained," he said. "No cast. They gave her a splint and some pain meds, she's super out of it. Didn't we just unpack those?" He walked to the sink. "Maybe you should bring her some tea, she might actually be nice to you for once."

Susannah made a face. He shrugged, reached into the cabinet for a glass and filled it with water from the sink. "You know my father was a carpenter."

"I know," she said. "Is that a reason to have a fit over a few pieces of rotting wood?" "It's what he was working on," he said. "When he died."

"Well, sure." While he chugged his water, she picked up another glass and began to fold newspaper around it, tucking the corners into the bowl of the glass. "I'm putting our things in storage. There's nowhere to—"

"The project was for her, I guess," he said.
"Some kind of present. I don't know, she wasn't making too much sense really, but I guess it had some meaning to her, besides it being the last thing he had his hands on. I

turquesas y verde limón desperdigados por el suelo como un arcoíris castigador? Se imaginó caminando descalza sobre los pedazos de porcelana y en las huellas de sangre que dejaría a su paso.

Algunas veces se asustaba de sí misma, de esos pensamientos, los supuestos que la llevarían a sentir dolor, ya fuera de ella o al de alguien más. ¿Habría tenido tiempo suficiente de atrapar a Emine antes de que cayera? ¿Habría elegido, en su lugar, verla tambalearse, complaciéndose al saber que su suegra estaba al tanto de que dependía de ella, y que solo sabría lo mucho que necesitaba su ayuda cuando ya no estuviera ahí para asistirla? Esa era la razón que llevó a Susannah a mantener su embarazo en secreto de Mark. ¿Cómo podría decirle, cuando ella sería una madre monstruosa? Debía interrumpir su embarazo, lo sabía. Era lo correcto.

Ella había dejado todos los platos en cajas, y apenas estaba comenzando con los vasos de cristal de su abuela, cuando Mark y su madre regresaron. Él gritó un alegre "volvimos". Sin embargo, optó por guiar a su madre hasta su dormitorio y acomodarla para que descansara antes de reunirse con Susannah en la cocina. Lo esperó, pero él solo se limitó a mirarla con perplejidad.

- —¿Entonces? —preguntó ella cuando ya no pudo soportarlo más.
- —Un esguince, no hay yeso. Le dieron una férula y unos cuantos analgésicos, está bastante ida —Mark caminó hacia la llave de la cocina. —¿No los habíamos desempacado recién? —tras una larga pausa agregó—Podrías llevarle una taza de té, hasta puede que quizás sea amable contigo esta vez.

Susannah hizo una mueca. Él se encogió de hombros, alcanzó un vaso de la despensa y lo llenó con agua del lavaplatos.

- —Tú sabes que mi padre era carpintero.
- —Lo sé —dijo ella—, ¿es esa una razón para tener un ataque por unos cuantos trozos de madera podrida?
- —Era en lo que él estaba trabajando—dijo Mark—, cuando murió.

know, you don't have to say it—it's still a bit much."

It was. Half the wooden furniture in the house—including the massive dining room table Susannah was currently standing over, laughably huge, they could host a dinner party for twenty with room to spare—were the work of Mark's father. The effect was homey and ghostly at the same time, like they were living inside a shrine he had crafted for himself.

"Will you take the boxes to the attic when I'm done?" she asked, and he grunted a yes. "I suppose... I guess I'll apologize." She felt his approval. All he wanted was for his wife and his mother to get along, and it really wasn't too much to ask. She reminded herself that her husband was a good man, a considerate man, a man who would carry heavy boxes for her, who would, without hesitation, pick up and move to the countryside to help his ailing mother. Leave the twenty-four-hour bodegas and the five-a.m. after-hours dives, though actually, in the months before they left, he'd seemed to be growing tired of the nightlife. But still, leave it behind for a town with one general store that was only open until five and always closed on Sundays, a town with no concept of Japanese whiskey or Vietnamese sandwiches or any of the things he'd most enjoyed before.

Susannah almost told him then, the words rising to the tip of her tongue, but she bit them down. It was a selfish impulse—he wanted kids, she knew, and she would be happy for a minute or two, reveling in his joy and support. But then she'd have to pay, and keep paying. And eventually he would see who she was and she'd lose even the semblance of love she had now.

"Özür dilerim," he said. "That's 'sorry' in Turkish. Thank you, baby, but it might not be enough."

"What more can I do?" she asked, reaching for another one of her grandmother's glasses. "What does she expect from me?"

Mark walked the length of the table and put his water glass down, wrapping his arms around her waist and stooping to dig his chin into her shoulder. It was

- —Sí, claro— mientras él bebía un trago de agua, ella tomó uno de los vasos y comenzó a envolverlo en hojas de diario, metiendo el papel hasta la base. —Estoy guardando nuestras cosas, no hay ninguna parte donde...
- —Creo que ese proyecto era para ella,—interrumpió él —algún tipo de regalo, no lo sé. De todas formas, no tenía mucho sentido, pero creo que significaba algo para ella, además de que fuera lo último que él tuvo en sus manos. Lo sé, no tienes que decirlo, sigue siendo un poco exagerado.

Sí, lo era. La mitad de los muebles de madera de la casa eran trabajo del padre de Mark; incluyendo la mesa ridículamente grande en la que Susannah estaba trabajando, que era suficiente como para una cena de veinte y que aún así sobrara espacio. El efecto era hogareño y tenebroso al mismo tiempo, era casi como si estuvieran viviendo en el altar que su suegro creó para sí mismo.

- —¿Podrías dejar las cajas en el ático cuando termine? —Mark gruñó un sí.
- —Supongo... que me disculparé.—ella sintió su aprobación.

Todo lo que Mark quería era que su esposa y su madre pudieran llevarse bien y, la verdad, no era mucho pedir. Susannah se recordó a sí misma que su esposo era un buen hombre, un hombre considerado que podía llevar cajas pesadas por ella y que sin dudar se mudaría al campo para ayudar a su madre enferma. Dejaría las bodegas de veinticuatro horas y los antros a las cinco de la mañana, aunque en realidad, en los meses anteriores a su marcha, Mark parecía haber estado cansándose de la vida nocturna. Aun así, dejó todo por una pequeña ciudad con una tienda general que solo abría hasta las cinco y que siempre estaba cerrada los domingos. Un pueblito que no tenía concepto de lo que era el whiskey japonés o los sándwiches vietnamitas o cualquier cosa que antes habría disfrutado.

No dijo nada. Fue un impulso egoísta, él quería niños, lo sabía y quizás ella hubiera sido feliz y por un minuto o dos habría disfrutado de la alegría y el apoyo both painful and reassuring. She felt the words rise to the surface again—what if she gave in, what if she chose to make him happy—but then Emine called from her bedroom.

"Geliyorum!" he replied, and walked away.

In the morning, Emine was already in the kitchen when Susannah left Mark in bed and went in search of some coffee. The cabinets were full of çay and türk kahvesi, the vitalizing scent of the kahve already filling the kitchen, but Susannah couldn't stomach the bitter drinks. Lately, she could barely stand the smell without feeling her stomach roil. She opted to skip eating, hoping she could manage the morning without an unwanted visit to the bathroom. Pregnancy, so far, had consisted mainly of experiences ranging from the merely inconvenient to the extremely unpleasant. No one was complimenting her on her healthy glow. Instead, she was vomiting multiple times a day and peeing constantly. Another sign, probably, that maternity was just not something she was suited for.

She walked past the small, steaming pot on the stove and switched on the coffee maker she had insisted on keeping. Emine was seated in the small alcove by the window, seemingly gazing out at the sparrows flitting around the red oak, though she likely couldn't make out more than a blur of color. Her wrist was encased in a black brace, cinched tight with Velcro. Susannah waited for her acknowledgement, but the old woman gave no sign that she noticed her presence. She wondered if Emine was still high on painkillers. They were silent as the coffee maker gargled. Usually, in the mornings, she would take what she needed from the kitchen and evacuate Emine's space as quickly as possible, but when Susannah finally poured the dark brew into a mug, she moved to stand where Emine couldn't miss her.

"Özür dilerim," she mumbled, then cleared her

de Mark. Pero ella tendría que pagar y seguir pagando el precio de su decisión. Y al final él vería como era ella en realidad y perdería incluso esa apariencia de amor que tiene ahora.

- —Özür dilerim—dijo él—Así se dice "lo siento" en turco. —Gracias, amor, pero no creo que eso sea suficiente.
- —¿Qué más puedo hacer? —preguntó ella, alcanzando otro de los vasos de su abuela.
- —¿Qué espera ella de mí? —Mark rodeó la mesa y dejó el vaso encima; acto seguido, se acercó a Susannah, le abrazó la cintura y le hundió el mentón en su hombro. Fue tan doloroso como tranquilizador. Susannah sintió como las palabras volvían a salir a flote, ¿Y si cedía? ¿Y si elegía hacerle feliz? Pero entonces, Emine lo llamó desde su habitación.

-: Geliyorum!-respondió él antes de irse.

La mañana siguiente, Emine ya estaba en la cocina cuando Susannah dejó a Mark solo en la cama y fue a prepararse algo de café. Las despensas estaban llenas de çay y türk kahvesi, la cocina estaba embargada por el revitalizante olor del té, pero Susannah no podía soportar las bebidas amargas. Últimamente apenas podía tolerar el olor sin sentir su estómago revolverse. Optó por saltarse la comida, esperando así poder evitar una visita inesperada al baño. Hasta ahora, el embarazo, en su mayoría, había consistido en experiencias que variaban desde una leve incomodidad a lo extremadamente desagradable. Nadie podría decirle que tenía un brillo saludable. Vomitaba varias veces al día e iba constantemente al baño. Quizás, otra señal de que ella no estaba hecha para la maternidad.

Pasó junto a la pequeña olla humeante de la cocina y encendió esa cafetera que había insistido en conservar. Emine estaba sentada en el pequeño cuarto junto a la ventana, aparentemente, mirando a los gorriones revoloteando alrededor del roble rojo. Aunque en realidad era más probable que estuviera viendo una mancha borrosa en su lugar. Su mano llevaba una muñequera negra ajustada con velcro.

Susannah esperó que la reconociera, pero la

throat and tried again. "Özür dilerim." Emine turned towards her, though her white-sheathed eyes remained unfocused, gazing at something in the middle distance just beyond Susannah's right shoulder. She fought the urge to turn and look, to see if there was anything there.

After a beat, Susannah took a gulp of her coffee, letting out a puff of breath as it burned her tongue. "I didn't know," she said when the pain lessened. "I thought it was just an old pile of trash, you know. Sorry. I should have guessed, I mean, your house is impeccable, you'd never let a pile of trash sit anywhere for long, not even your garage. Which is where most people let it accumulate. Trash, I mean."

Emine sipped her kahve, no comprehension showing on her face. Probably she couldn't understand anything Susannah was saying. She'd made no effort to learn English, even after nearly three decades in the country, relying on her husband and then her son to translate for her whenever communication was required. Susannah was suspicious, suspected Emine understood much more than she claimed, but Mark swore up and down she didn't speak a word.

Susannah glanced at the time on the oven door and suppressed a groan. Mark wouldn't be awake for a few hours. Somehow, when he was absent, the enormous house felt so much smaller, Emine's presence expanding to fill every room, even the rooms she rarely entered anymore.

Mark was so jovial, so youthful, though he was twelve years older than Susannah's twenty-five, and when he was around, the three of them existed in a kind of tentative truce that let the air back into the rooms. Without him, the walls began to close in. Susannah worried about every choice she made, every movement. Emine couldn't see, couldn't speak English, couldn't move far without assistance, and yet her judgement was omniscient. Like with the wood, there was nothing, however small and insignificant it might seem, that Susannah could get right. She couldn't retreat

anciana no dio señales de notar su presencia, eso la llevó a preguntarse si Emine seguía drogada por los analgésicos. Ambas se quedaron en silencio mientras el agua de la cafetera hervía. Usualmente, en las mañanas ella tomaba lo que necesitaba de la cocina y salía del territorio de Emine lo más rápido posible.

Sin embargo, esta vez, cuando finalmente vertió el líquido oscuro en la taza, Susannah se posicionó de forma que Emine no pudiera ignorarla.

—Ozür dilerim. —murmuró, luego se aclaró la garganta y lo intentó otra vez. —Ozür dilerim. — Emine se giró hacia ella, aunque sus ojos se mantuvieron desenfocados, mirando algo más allá del hombro de Susannah.

Ella resistió el impulso de mirar atrás, para ver si realmente había algo allí. Poco después, tomó un sorbo de su café, soltando un soplido tras haberse quemado la lengua.

—No lo sabía— dijo cuando el dolor se atenuó.

—. Solo pensé que era una vieja pila de basura ¿sabes? Lo siento, debí haberlo sabido. Quiero decir, tu casa está impecable, jamás dejarías que una pila de basura estuviera ahí por demasiado tiempo, ni siquiera en tu garaje, que es donde usualmente la gente deja qué se acumule. La basura, quiero decir.

Emine le dio un sorbo a su *kahve* sin dar señal de haber entendido. Susannah pensó que probablemente no había entendido nada. Ella nunca había hecho un esfuerzo por aprender inglés, ni siquiera cuando ya había vivido cerca de tres décadas en el país. Siempre dependió de su marido y luego de su hijo para traducir cualquier cosa que necesitara decir. Susannah tenía sus dudas, sospechaba que Emine entendía mucho más de lo que decía, pero Mark podía jurar de corazón que no era capaz de entender una sola palabra.

Susannah le dedicó una mirada al tiempo que le quedaba al horno y reprimió una queja. Mark no despertaría hasta dentro de un par de horas. Por alguna razón, cuando él no estaba, la enorme casa se sentía mucho today, couldn't find a forgotten corner and sink into her Instagram feed, creeping on the photos of her former friends at this club opening or that movie premiere, as she usually would. Last night was Thursday, the big night for art gallery debuts. Her feed would be filled with glamourous candids of the girls from her old PR firm, laughing with glasses of champagne in front of some sculpture artist's newest masterpiece, and here Susannah was, trying, because her husband wanted her to, trying so hard to win over this woman with a heart of stone.

"Let's go for a drive," Susannah suggested. Emine didn't respond, but after they finished their drinks, Susannah knelt and guided the woman's feet into shoes, offered her arm to help her to the car. At Emine's insistent pointing, she grabbed her black snakeskin purse and tucked it into her armpit. Susannah took them the long way to the car, out the front door and through the large yard to the garage, so they wouldn't have to pass the scene of the fall, past the empty site of the missing wood.

Once they hit the highway, Susannah let herself wonder what she was doing. Where was she taking them? The impulse had seemed a good one—forward movement, some kind of progress—but if she'd had a plan, she'd forgotten it. She was doing that a lot these days, forgetting things. Walking into a room and realizing she had no inkling of why she'd gone in there. It was another symptom of pregnancy, she'd read. Nausea, swollen breasts, forgetfulness.

"Any errands you need to run? Friends you want to see?" she asked, not expecting and not getting an answer. Emine pushed the button to lower her window, closing her eyes against the strength of the wind. Her lips were moving, like she was chanting something beneath her breath.

Susannah found herself turning into the cemetery with no real understanding of how she'd found it. Mark had taken her here just once, a year or so after they'd started dating. It was memorable, perhaps, only in

más pequeña, la presencia de Emine se expandía a cada habitación, incluso en las que ya no frecuentaba. Mark era tan alegre, tan juvenil aun teniendo doce años más que los veinticinco de Susannah. Cuando él estaba cerca, los tres vivían en una suerte de tregua tentativa que les devolvía el aire a las habitaciones. Sin él, las paredes parecían cerrarse sobre sí mismas.

Susannah se preocupaba por cada decisión que tomaba, por cada movimiento. Emine no podía ver, no podía hablar inglés, apenas podía moverse sin ayuda y aun así su juicio era omnisciente. Como con la madera, no había nada, por pequeño e insignificante que pareciera que Susannah pudiera hacer bien. Hoy no podía esconderse, no podía encontrar una esquina olvidada y hundirse en su feed de Instagram como solía hacer, espiando las fotos de sus antiguos amigos en la apertura de ese club o en la premier de esa película. La noche anterior había sido jueves, la gran noche de los estrenos de las galerías de arte. Su feed estaba lleno de glamurosas fotos de las chicas de su antigua empresa de relaciones públicas, riendo con sus copas de champaña frente a la obra maestra de algún escultor. Pero ahí estaba Susannah, intentando, porque su marido se lo había pedido, ganarse a esa mujer con corazón de piedra.

—Vamos a dar un paseo en auto. —sugirió Susannah.

Emine no respondió, pero después de que terminaran sus cafés, Susannah se arrodilló para ayudarla a ponerse los zapatos y le ofreció el brazo para llevarla hasta el auto. Ante la insistente indicación de Emine, Susannah cogió el bolso negro de piel de serpiente de su suegra y se lo puso al hombro. Susannah, para evitar la zona de la caída, tomó el camino largo hacia el auto. Ambas salieron por la puerta principal y cruzaron el gran jardín en dirección al garaje, lejos del espacio vacío que dejó la madera ahora desaparecida.

Una vez llegaron a la autopista, Susannah se preguntó qué estaba haciendo. ¿A dónde las estaba llevando? El impulso había parecido ser una buena ideathe fact that it was where he'd chosen to propose.

"I wanted my father to meet you first," he said, and she tried not to think morbid thoughts as he dropped to one knee amongst the headstones, odorous bouquets of lilies lining the graves on either side of him. That scent had always reminded her of rotting fruit. Somehow she'd internalized the directions, and when she pulled in and parked, Emine did not seem surprised to see where they'd ended up. She waited patiently for Susannah to help her from the car, knew the exact path to her husband's grave.

"Mehmet," she said, then erupted into a stream of rapid Turkish. It was as if a faucet had been turned on inside of her, and though Susannah couldn't understand a word, she was confused by Emine's tone. She wasn't maudlin, or weepy. Instead, it sounded as though she were aggravated, excited, and exhausted by turn. Susannah felt as though she were listening to a group of old women gossiping in the supermarket. She began to feel ashamed of eavesdropping on what was clearly a private conversation, so she wandered away, staying close enough to hear if Emine called for her. It was nice, so nice, to be needed.

She idled between the memorials, reading the names and the dates on the tombstones. One was just a child, one had a funny name, one had lived to be a hundred and three. Her stomach growled and she was beginning to think of the candy she had hidden in the console of her car when she noticed a funeral, a quiet gathering just behind the mausoleum. She inched closer, staying on the outskirts of the modest crowd, Emine still in her periphery.

Susannah hadn't known anyone who died, no one close really. A great uncle, her best friend's grandmother. She had watched the crying families with the same fascination and distance as she watched this family now. There was a young mother, holding two small children to her sides, at the side of the casket. It seemed she had been made a young widow. Susannah looked closer at

el movimiento hacia adelante era un tipo de progreso pero si había tenido un plan, lo había olvidado.

Últimamente lo hacía mucho, olvidarse de cosas. Entraba a una habitación y se daba cuenta de que no tenía la menor idea de por qué. Según lo qué había leído, era otro síntoma del embarazo. Náuseas, los pechos hinchados y la pérdida parcial de memoria.

—¿Necesitas hacer un trámite? ¿Algún amigo qué quieras ver? — preguntó su suegra sin esperar y sin recibir una respuesta. Emine pulsó el botón para bajar la ventana y cerró los ojos ante la fuerza del viento. Sus labios se movían como si estuviera tarareando algo en voz baja.

Susannah se encontró girando el auto hacia el cementerio, sin comprender realmente como lo había encontrado. Mark la había llevado allí solo una vez, un año y algo después de que habían empezado a salir. La experiencia fue memorable únicamente por el hecho de haber sido el lugar que eligió para pedirle matrimonio.

"Quería que conocieras a mi padre primero" dijo él, y ella trató de no pensar en nada morboso mientras Mark se arrodillaba entre las lápidas, y ella sentía el hedor de los ramos de lilas alineados a ambos lados de él. Ese olor siempre le había recordado al de la fruta pudriéndose.

De alguna forma, había internalizado las indicaciones para llegar hasta allá. Cuando estacionó el auto, Emine no parecía sorprendida por el lugar al que habían llegado. Esperó paciente a que Sussanah la ayudara a bajar del auto. Su suegra conocía perfectamente el camino hacia la tumba de su marido.

—Mehmet. —dijo antes de comenzar a hablar rápidamente en turco.

Fue como si dentro de ella se hubiese abierto un grifo, y aunque Susannah no entendió una sola palabra, estaba confundida por su tono. No era cariñoso o triste, sino que variaba entre la irritación, el entusiasmo y el agotamiento. Susannah sintió como si estuviera escuchando a un grupo de ancianas chismeando en el supermercado. Se sintió avergonzada de estar escuchando lo que a todas luces era una conversación privada, así que

the littlest child, a girl in a dark purple tulle dress. While her mother and brother cried, the girl stared into the dark hole where the casket would soon be interred. She strained against her mother's hand, trying to peer deeper, looking perhaps for the bottom, or maybe worrying that there was no bottom.

A hand on Susannah's arm startled her, and she turned to see Emine had joined her, somehow managing to walk across the stretch of land unassisted.

"Let's go," Susannah said, taking a step away, but the hand on her arm tightened. Emine held her in place, and together they stood witness to the ending of a life. se alejó de allí, manteniéndose lo suficientemente cerca para escuchar si Emine llegaba a llamarla. Era agradable, tan agradable, que la necesitaran.

Susannah vagó ociosamente entre los memoriales, leyendo los nombres y las fechas en las lápidas. Una de ellas era solo un niño, otra tenía un nombre gracioso y otra era de alguien que vivió hasta los ciento tres años. Su estómago gruñó, estaba empezando a pensar en el dulce escondido en la guantera de su auto cuando noto el funeral, un silencioso grupo detrás del mausoleo. Con Emine aun en su vista periférica, se acercó al lugar sin prisa, quedando lo suficientemente lejos de la modesta multitud.

Ella no conocía a nadie que hubiera muerto, o al menos a nadie realmente cercano. Un tío abuelo y la abuela de su mejor amiga. Había observado el sufrimiento de esas familias con la misma distancia y fascinación con las que ahora los veía a ellos. Junto al ataúd, había una joven madre, sosteniendo la mano de dos pequeños, uno a cada lado suyo. Aparentemente, se había vuelto una joven viuda. Susannah vio más de cerca a la niña, llevaba un vestido de tul violeta oscuro. Mientras su madre y su hermano lloraban, la niña se quedó viendo el agujero negro donde sería enterrado el ataúd. Ella apretó la mano de su madre, intentando mirar más profundo, parecía estar buscando el fondo, o quizás preocupándose de que no hubiera un fondo.

Susannah se asustó al sentir una mano en su brazo, y se dio vuelta para notar que Emine se había unido a ella, de alguna manera logró caminar el trecho que las separaba sin ayuda.

—Vamos —. dijo Susannah dando un paso atrás, sin embargo, el agarre de su suegra se tensó.

Emine la detuvo, y ambas observaron el final de una vida.

Translator's Note

When I asked her about the process of writing her story, *Dinosaurs*, Rossela Agurto told me it came out of her in "a sparkle of inspiration." This phrase, so uniquely Rosse, stuck with me as I worked to revise my translation. Rosse's story is inspired by the magic of everyday items—the unknowable history that lives in each item on an antique shop's shelves. It was important to me to preserve that "sparkle" as I translated her work into English.

In my experience, I have found there is something inherently playful about translation—and this feels especially in keeping with Rosse's piece. Translating can feel like solving a puzzle, trying piece after piece to see what fits. Or sometimes translating can make me look at language as a moldable material, something I can physically shape to fit the needs of the piece. I had so much fun playing with the language of Rosse's story, finding ways to bring the youthful joy of her tale of childhood into a language with different rules, rhythms, and expectations.

Rosse's work invokes and questions the nature of childhood innocence, so it makes sense that she names Lewis Carroll as one of her main influences. Like Carroll's Alice, Rosse's unnamed narrator steps bravely through the looking glass and discovers a new world. Like Alice, she returns—a little different, a little changed. Rosse's narrator keeps a bit of that magic with her, carrying it into her adult life. I tried to do the same with my translation of Rosse's story.

It's been a challenge and a privilege to work on Rosse's story, and I look forward to reading much more by her in the future.

ROSSELA AGURTO

DINOSAURIOS

Casi todas las veces que había salido a caminar ya entrada la tarde, había ido hacia el centro. Allí estaban las partes más bulliciosas y brillantes, la plaza de armas, los barrios comerciales y el casco histórico, donde se podían encontrar museos, restaurantes, edificios y antiguos palacetes. Lugares que al atardecer parecían cambiar en su totalidad. Esta vez, para variar, crucé la calle en dirección opuesta al centro.

Mientras iba avanzando entre las calles interiores, se levantó un agradable vientecillo veraniego, que atenuó un poco el calor que sentía en la nuca. Estaba distraída, pensando en algo que había ocurrido hace un tiempo atrás en la tienda de antigüedades de Saint James, lugar al que me dirigía.

Las ciudades costeras entre los cerros, especialmente al atardecer, tienen algo de mágico. Podrías andar por los mismos caminos, subir y bajar por las mismas escaleras y aún así encontrarías nuevos recovecos que daban la sensación de haber aparecido allí como por arte de magia. La tienda del viejo James, como quería que lo llamáramos, era uno de esos lugares que solo podía ser encontrado de pura casualidad. Una joya escondida, destinada a ser hallada, por mi padre y por mí, durante un paseo casual hace doce años atrás.

Después de caminar otro rato, miré mi celular y vi las instrucciones del mapa algo perpleja, no recordaba que el lugar estuviera tan lejos. Seguí caminando hasta que finalmente tuve ante mí al engañoso callejón. Parecía terminar allí, en un barandal que daba una vista preciosa a las casitas y al mar coloreado por los tonos violetas del cielo. Miré hacia la derecha lo que parecía una pared desde

translated from the spanish by JESSIE SHOHFI

DINOSAURS

Just about every time I go for a walk in the late afternoon, I make my way to the city center. That's where you find the brightest, most bustling areas: the Plaza de Armas, the commercial districts, the historical center. It's where you find museums and restaurants, apartment buildings and extravagant mansions. Places that, as it grows dark, seem to transform entirely. But this time, for a change, I crossed the street in the other direction.

While I was making my way through the alleyways, a pleasant summer breeze relieved, a little, the heat dampening the nape of my neck. I was distracted, thinking about something that had taken place a long time ago, something that had happened in the antique store in Saint James, where I was now headed.

These coastal cities, nestled among hills, have something magical about them. Especially at dusk. You can wander the same streets, climb the same steps, and still you might stumble upon entirely new nooks and crannies. They just appear, like magic. The shop owned by Old James, as he insisted we call him, was one of those places you could only come across by pure chance. A hidden gem, predestined to be found by my father and me during a casual stroll twenty years ago.

After walking a while longer, I checked my phone. The directions on the map confused me; I didn't remember the shop being so far. I trekked on until the deceitful alleyway finally showed itself. It appeared to end just up ahead, with a railing overlooking a gorgeous view: pretty little houses, the sea stained violet by the darkening tones of the sky. On my right, I saw what at

mi perspectiva, realmente era una abertura que daba a una calle estrecha que desembocaba en un espacio abierto. Ya había anochecido.

Recuerdo que la primera vez que vine a este lugar, me había llamado la atención el contraste entre la estrechez de la calle y esa zona abierta. El lugar estaba a desnivel por lo que había que bajar por unas escaleras de piedra, suavizadas por cientos de pisadas. Ya había olvidado como era la vista desde la altura en la que estaba, una zona semicircular, en cuyo borde había una variedad de tiendas, cafeterías y restaurantes que posiblemente costaban una fortuna; todo iluminado por una serie de farolillos que daban un aire festivo al lugar.

Esa zona no había cambiado casi nada, aunque, curiosamente, había más gente de la que esperaba encontrarme a esa hora, la mayoría eran parejas o familias paseando o cenando en los restaurantes. Una refrescante ráfaga de viento me arremolinó el cabello, mientras bajaba la escalera de dos en dos. Como antes.

Cuando era niña, mi padre solía llevarme a pasear buscando los "secretos" de la ciudad. Íbamos de la mano mientras tomábamos un helado y observábamos los objetos en las vitrinas. Las antigüedades del señor James siempre habían sido mi debilidad, podía quedarme varios minutos observándolas, casi como si estuviese esperando que me contaran todos sus secretos. En los estantes estaban sentadas varias muñecas de porcelana, habían jarrones pintados, extraños artefactos de metal, lámparas de araña con sus brillantes cristales de colores y, sobre todo, las decenas de figuritas de animales hechos de loza.

Aquel verano, habíamos ido tan seguido a la tienda del viejo James, que los dueños de las tiendas aledañas ya nos conocían y entablaban largas conversaciones con mi padre. Durante una de ellas, el señor James no hizo más que quejarse de la ineptitud de sus empleados, ahora que lo pienso rara vez vi al mismo empleado más de dos semanas seguidas, pero siempre era amable con mi padre y sobre todo conmigo. Esa vez no me quede mucho tiempo escuchando la conversación antes de ir a explorar por la

first glance seemed to be a wall, but in fact it was a slit leading into a narrow street that led to another area. It was already getting dark.

I remember the first time I came to this place. That contrast, between the narrowness of the street and the open space beyond had captured my attention. The ground had a steep slope, so to get down you'd have to take the stone steps, softened by hundreds of footsteps. I had forgotten this view: the open plaza ringed by a semicircle of assorted shops, snack bars, restaurants that probably cost a fortune. Strings of paper lanterns illuminated it all. They gave the whole place the air of a festival.

Almost nothing here had changed, although curiously there were more people than I would have expected to see at that hour. Most were couples or families, walking, dining in the restaurants. A refreshing gust of wind whirled my hair around while I hopped down the stairs two at a time. Just as I had back then.

When I was a little girl, my father would bring me to seek out the "secrets" of the city. We'd eat ice cream, hand in hand, and peer into window displays. Mr. James's antique shop was always my greatest weakness, with its shelves stocked with porcelain dolls, painted vases, strange metal artifacts, chandeliers with brightly colored crystals and, along the top shelf, dozens of animal figurines made of earthenware. I would spend ages staring at the strange objects, almost as if I were waiting for them to confess their secrets.

That summer, we visited Old James's store so often that the owners of the nearby shops already knew us and would engage my father in long conversations. Once, Mr. James did nothing but complain about the incompetence of his employees—come to think of it, I rarely saw the same clerk there more than two weeks in a row—but he was always kind to my father and especially to me. That day, I didn't spend too long listening to them talk before I wandered off to explore the store. Their conversations offered me more chances to survey the

tienda, para mí, esas conversaciones significaban que tendría más tiempo para ver las antigüedades.

Recuerdo que una de esas veces, caminé entre los pasillos mirando otra vez las cosas de siempre. Algunas habían desaparecido y otras nuevas habían ocupado sus lugares, sin embargo, no había muchas novedades a la vista. Caminando entre los estantes llegué a una puerta, que hasta ese momento nunca había visto abierta. Había un cartel, pero aún no sabía leer del todo así que lo ignoré y bajé por unas escaleras de caracol que daban a lo que parecía la bodega del local.

Las luces estaban encendidas y el lugar estaba plagado de objetos, algunos en vitrinas de vidrio y otros tantos apilados al azar en estantes juntando polvo: bolas de cristal, platos de porcelana pintada, viejas máquinas de escribir, planchas de hierro, entre otras cosas. Del techo colgaban lámparas y adornos de vidrio que refractaban la luz de las ampolletas y en las paredes había mariposas disecadas en marcos de vidrio, pinturas, retratos y decenas de espejos.

Podría decirse que fueron los espejos los que más llamaron mi atención, entre ellos había uno enorme, que destacaba por estar tapado con una tela blanca. Mi curiosidad demandaba que la sacara y viera como era. Al sacar la tela tuve ante mí un espejo que me doblaba la altura, sus bordes antes dorados estaban desgastados y el vidrio estaba cubierto de manchas negras. Algo decepcionada por el descubrimiento, disponía a irme cuando, de repente, un ruido llamó mi atención.

Algo extrañada miré a mi alrededor, el ruido consistía en tres golpecitos consecutivos, no sabía de dónde provenía. Cerré los ojos y agucé el oído. *Toc, toc, toc.* Volví sobre mis pasos hasta quedar nuevamente frente al espejo, el corazón me latía con fuerza, Toc, toc, toc. Ahora estaba segura: vienen del espejo.

Aún algo curiosa miré detrás del mismo, nada. Volví a encararlo, lo miré con algo de nerviosismo, pero una corazonada me dijo lo que tenía que hacer. Me acerqué con cautela y, en respuesta, di tres tímidos golpecitos a la antiques.

I slipped away down the aisles, marveling again at all the curious items. Sometimes objects would disappear and new ones would take their place, but that day there was nothing much I hadn't already seen. Weaving among the shelves, I came to a door that, until that moment, I had never seen open. There was a sign, but I couldn't read yet so I ignored it and followed spiral stairs down to what seemed to be the cellar.

The lights were on and the room was full of objects, some in glass cases and others randomly stacked on shelves gathering dust: crystal balls, painted porcelain plates, old typewriters, and cast-iron pans, among other things. Lamps and glass ornaments dangled from the ceiling, refracting light, and on the walls hung butterflies in glass frames, paintings, portraits, and dozens of mirrors.

You could say it was the mirrors that most caught my eye. In the middle hung an enormous frame, hidden under a white cloth. Curiosity demanded that I uncover and reveal it. When I tugged off the fabric, I found myself before a mirror that doubled my height. Its once-golden edges were worn and the glass was speckled with black. Mildly disappointed, I was about to leave when, suddenly, a noise caught my attention.

I looked around, surprised. The sound consisted of three consecutive taps. I couldn't tell where it was coming from. I closed my eyes and listened. *THUD*, *THUD*, *THUD*. I retraced my steps until I was back in front of the mirror, my heart pounding, *thud*, *thud*, thud. Now I was sure: the tapping was coming from the mirror.

Investigating, I looked behind the frame—nothing. I faced it again, peering into it with some trepidation, but I had a hunch about what to do. I approached cautiously and, as a response, tapped three timid thumps on the glass.

I still can't explain what happened next; it was as if, instead of barely touching the surface, I had hammered blows upon it. Large cracks began to spider

superficie.

Todavía no puedo explicar lo que pasó después, fue como si en vez de apenas haberlo tocado le hubiese dado un martillazo. Grandes grietas comenzaron a surcar la superficie del espejo. Yo no había hecho eso ¿verdad? Al final, no pude hacer más que quedarme parada mirando como los pedazos cayeron al suelo con estruendo.

Instintivamente dirigí la mirada hacia las escaleras, Ahora si estoy en problemas. Aunque, para mi suerte, aún seguía escuchando las voces animadas de mi padre y el vendedor lo cual, hasta cierto punto, era un alivio. Me di la vuelta y vi el desastre que tenía en el suelo, luego miré al espejo.

Voy a ser honesta, tuve que verlo un par de segundos más para comprender lo que tenía frente a mí. La parte que debía estar detrás del cristal no existía, en su lugar, estaba lo que en un comienzo pensé que era la pintura de una selva. *Pero las pinturas no se mueven*.

Mi padre solía decir que siempre hay explicaciones lógicas a las cosas extrañas, en este caso, llegué a la conclusión lógica de que me encontraba frente a una enorme ventana. Lo supe apenas vi a la enorme mariposa de tonos azules aletear tranquilamente en mi dirección. Pestañee un par de veces mientras la veía cruzar el espejo y posarse con suavidad encima de uno de los estantes que había detrás de mí.

En un impulso de valentía potenciado por una burbujeante curiosidad, noté que, al acercar la mano, está cruzaba al otro lado: realmente era un espacio abierto. La perspectiva del espejo estaba en altura por lo que me imaginé que podría ser la rama de un árbol gigantesco. Me acerqué al marco y después de pensarlo un momento pasé al otro lado. No me había equivocado, las anchas ramas de aquel árbol me permitían avanzar con total normalidad a través de las mismas.

Mire hacia atrás y me alivié al ver que el espejo seguía ahí mostrándome la tienda, podía volver cuando quisiera. Con algo más de tranquilidad, caminé hasta llegar a uno de los límites de la rama, me senté y observé el across the glass. I hadn't done that, had I? I could do nothing but watch as pieces of glass crashed to the ground.

I flicked my gaze to the stairs on instinct. I'm in trouble now. Lucky for me, I could still hear the animated voices of my father and the shop owner which, to some extent, was a relief. I spun around and regarded the mess I had made on the floor, then looked into the mirror.

I'm going to be honest, I had to keep looking for a few seconds to understand what was in front of me. The reflection that should have appeared inside the frame wasn't there, instead, I saw what at first seemed to be a painting of a jungle. But paintings don't move.

My father liked to say there are always logical explanations for strange things—in this case, I concluded (logically) that I was standing in front of a gigantic window. I decided this when I spotted a huge blue butterfly flapping nonchalantly towards me. I blinked a couple of times as I watched it cross the mirror's threshold and perch effortlessly atop one of the shelves behind me.

On impulse, my courage fueled by bubbling curiosity, I stuck out one hand and stared as it crossed to the other side: there really was open space there. The view through the mirror was high up, so I assumed I must be looking out from one of the top branches of a big tree. I approached the frame and, barely pausing to consider the risk, slipped through to the other side. I wasn't wrong, the wide branches of a tree allowed me to stride forward without difficulty.

Glancing back, I breathed relief to see the mirror was still there, and on the other side, the store. I could return whenever I chose. A little calmer, I walked until I reached the end of the branch, sat down and took in the landscape before me: a colorful rainforest with trees full of what I guessed might be unfamiliar, ripe fruits. I focused on the sounds: a waterfall not far off, the flapping of insects, footsteps and distant cries of creatures as yet unknown.

paisaje que tenía ante mí; consistía en una colorida selva tropical con árboles llenos de, lo que imagino, eran extrañas frutas maduras. Me concentré en los sonidos; una caída de agua que no debía estar muy lejos, el aleteo de los insectos, los pasos y las voces de criaturas aún desconocidas.

Pero, de repente, esa calma se vio interrumpida por cientos de pájaros que emprendieron el vuelo desde las copas de los árboles. La rama, antes quieta comenzó a moverse levemente, los pesados pasos se acercaban cada vez más ¿Qué era lo único lo suficientemente enorme para hacer un ruido así? Se hizo silencio, los pájaros y los insectos apenas si se escuchaban, instintivamente también fui parte del silencio de la selva.

Un fuerte rugido corroboró mi corazonada: Dinosaurios. Me levanté con el corazón a mil por el descubrimiento. Los pasos se acercaron cada vez más y el temblor aumentaba. Tuve que sujetarme a una rama más pequeña para mantener el equilibrio. Cerré los ojos con fuerza, esperando a que el temblor acabara. Estuve a punto de abrir los ojos, cuando un aire cálido con olor a hierba podrida pasó a través de mí.

Abrí los ojos, la vista de antes ya no estaba, en su lugar vi el enorme ojo de una criatura moviéndose en mi dirección. Me quedé estática, la enorme pupila del dinosaurio se dilató y, acto seguido, extendió su largo cuello escamoso más y más largo hasta llegar casi a la copa del árbol, este se estremeció una vez más. Para ese entonces yo ya corría en dirección al espejo mientras hojas y ramas caían desde arriba. De alguna forma mis piernas lograron llevarme a la tienda e inmediatamente después subí a trompicones la escalera.

No recuerdo exactamente qué ocurrió luego de eso. Tiempo después, mi padre me contó que me había encontrado durmiendo al lado de la puerta de la bodega, agarrando con fuerza la figurita de un dinosaurio de madera en la mano. Y que después de despertar, entre asustada e inexplicablemente emocionada, le conté lo mejor que pude lo que había pasado. Aunque no obtuve más que risas discretas por parte de ambos. Cuando salimos de la tienda

But suddenly the calm shattered as hundreds of birds darted up from the treetops. Heavy footsteps clomped closer and closer and my branch began to shiver. What could be big enough to make such a racket? In the interstice, silence settled, the birds and insects barely audible. Instinctively, I also sank into the silence of the jungle.

A deafening roar confirmed my guess: Dinosaurs. My heart pounded, racing with this discovery. The footsteps pounded closer and closer, intensifying the quaking; I had to grab on to a smaller branch to keep my balance. I squeezed my eyes shut, praying for the shaking to end. I was about to open them again when a warm breeze heavy with the smell of rotten grass passed over me.

I opened my eyes. The view from before was gone, replaced by the giant eye of a creature peering in my direction. I froze as the enormous pupil dilated. Then the dinosaur extended its long, scaly neck further and further until it almost reached the top of the tree. The branches shuddered once more. I was already off by then, scrambling in the direction of the mirror as leaves and branches crashed down from above. Somehow my legs managed to bring me back, stumbling into the store and straight up the stairs.

I don't remember, exactly, what happened after that. My father told me that he found me some time later. I lay asleep next to the door to the cellar, clutching a wooden dinosaur figurine. He said that after I woke up, I told them what had happened, as best I could, alternating between sounding terrified and inexplicably excited. I got nothing but tactful laughter from both of them. When we left the store, my father was carrying a bag with the dinosaur he had decided to buy for me.

Today, twenty years later, I find myself again in front of Old James's display case. I automatically reach into my bag to grasp the little dinosaur. mi padre llevaba la bolsa con el dinosaurio que había decidido comprarme

Actualmente, doce años después de aquel día, me vuelvo a encontrar frente a la vitrina del viejo James. Instintivamente llevo la mano al bolso y agarro al pequeño dinosaurio.

Hace unas semanas me mudé con mi prometido, por lo que estuve varios días curioseando en los armarios de la casa de mi familia. En mi búsqueda, encontré una caja que contenía la figurita del dinosaurio, que instintivamente me había hecho recordar este lugar.

Al entrar a la tienda el sonido de la campanilla me recordó de golpe todas aquellas visitas de antes, acto seguido, inspiré ese olor familiar a polvo e incienso. Apenas puse un pie en la tienda, me encontré con un viejecillo saliendo de la bodega con una caja en las manos.

- -Espere, ya la atiendo. -su voz se había vuelto áspera.
- —Señor James, déjeme ayudarlo—dijo una voz detrás de él.

El viejo James chasqueó la lengua y dejó la caja en el suelo. —Deja todo esto al fondo— una cabeza anaranjada salió de la bodega, una nueva víctima, seguramente. No ha cambiado nada ¿eh?

¿Lo ordeno por color? — James, volvió a chasquear la lengua como si ya estuviera cansado de repetirle lo mismo.
¿En qué puedo ayudarla señorita?

El anciano hizo una pausa, entrecerró los ojos y luego los abrió como platos. Ambos nos saludamos afectuosamente. Pregunto por mi padre y bromeó una vez más sobre mi capacidad de dormir en cualquier parte, como hacía siempre que me veía.

Hablamos de arqueología y del último hallazgo que mi grupo y yo estábamos siguiendo en unos cerros al norte del país. Ambos seguimos charlando de cosas varias mientras me ofrecía una taza de té. Le terminé contando sobre lo cansador de la mudanza y de los preparativos ya casi terminados de mi matrimonio. Luego de buscar un poco en el bolso le tendí su invitación. Me felicitó con más efusividad de la que esperaba, me tomó de las manos con

I moved in with my fiancé a few weeks ago, and in preparation I spent several days rummaging through the closets in my parents' house. That's when I found a box containing the dinosaur figurine that reminded me of this old place.

When I entered the store, the sound of the bell took me back to all those visits from years before. I breathed in that familiar scent of dust and incense. As soon as I stepped through the door, I saw an old man emerging from the cellar, a box in his hands.

"Stay there, I'll take care of her." His voice was harsher with age.

"Mr. James, let me help you," said a voice behind him.

Old James tsked his tongue and lowered the box to the ground. "Leave all this in back."

A ginger head appeared from the cellar—a new victim, surely. *Nothing has changed, huh?*

"Do I sort it by color?"

James tsked again, as if tired of repeating himself. "How can I help you, Miss?" The old man paused, narrowed his eyes, and then opened them wide as saucers. We greeted each other warmly. He asked about my father and joked as he always did about my talent for falling asleep anywhere.

We talked about archaeology and the latest find my group and I were excavating in the hills of the north country. We went on chatting while he made me a cup of tea. I told him about how exhausting my move was, detailing the preparations—almost finished—for my wedding. After digging through my bag, I offered him an invitation. He congratulated me more effusively than I expected, holding my hands, bright-eyed, drawing me in.

James told me to take something, anything I wanted, from the store, though I said it wasn't necessary. I was worried about accidentally choosing something too

los ojos brillantes y me atrajo hacia sí.

James acabó por ofrecerme lo que quisiera de la tienda, yo insistí en que no era necesario, mirando a mi alrededor con la inseguridad de llevarme algo demasiado valioso por accidente. Después de insistir un poco acabo llevándome a la bodega.

Técnicamente nunca había bajado, pero me sorprendí mucho al darme cuenta de que la bodega era muy similar a la de mi sueño. Miré a mi alrededor hasta que di con el espejo cubierto por la tela blanca. James me hablaba de un encargo que había traído de Indonesia, pero cada vez prestaba menos atención a sus palabras.

Tiré de la tela y ahí estaba, con sus bordes dorados desgastados y sus manchas negras en el vidrio, tal y como las recordaba. Movida por la curiosidad le di esos tres golpecitos, aunque, obviamente, no pasó nada fuera de lo común.

James estaba detrás de mí, diciéndome que eligiera algo más bonito que un espejo desgastado y otras cosas a las que no pude prestarles atención, ya que al mirar más de cerca pude ver entre nuestros reflejos el aleteo de una mariposa. Estaba satisfecha.

Después de todos esos años me encontré nuevamente donde había comenzado mi afán por los dinosaurios. valuable. He insisted, and I headed to the basement.

Officially I had never been down there, but I was surprised to realize that the basement looked very similar to the one in my dream. I peered around until I spotted the mirror covered by the white cloth. James was prattling on about a shipment he'd just gotten in from Indonesia, but I paid less and less attention.

I pulled off the cloth and there it was, with its worn gilded edges and black spots on the glass, just as I remembered. Out of curiosity, I tapped those three taps, and—of course—nothing out of the ordinary happened.

James stood behind me, telling me to choose something prettier than a worn mirror, telling me other things I couldn't pay attention to. When I looked closer, I could see between our reflections the flutter of a butterfly. I was satisfied.

All those many years later, I found myself once again standing in that spot where my enthusiasm for dinosaurs first began.

Nota de traductor

Dayana Morales Gómez nació en California en 1994, se graduó de Georgetown University en Washington D.C. donde fue la editora en jefe de *The Georgetown Voice* y, actualmente, está terminando su MFA en Columbia University en New York. Desde este rincón perdido en Latinoamérica, todas estas cosas me impresionaron y antes de leer su historia leí algunas de las cosas que había escrito en *The Georgetown Voice*. Quería tener una idea de quién era ella antes de intentar traducir sus palabras, de tener su voz en mi cabeza cuando me enfrentara a su relato. En esas lecturas y en nuestra primera conversación pude reconocer un tono familiar coherente con el cuento que ahora debía traducir. Y es que, a pesar de estar escrito en inglés, la historia de Dayana es una historia latinoamericana.

En esta historia Dayana retrata no sólo la complejidad de la realidad migrante, sino el sentido de comunidad y de pertenencia. Lupe, una mujer latina en Estados Unidos, lucha por habitar con dignidad espacios ajenos y de acortar esas distancias para sentirse parte del sueño americano. Su inglés es, en el más optimista de los escenarios, funcional. Sin embargo, es interesante observar cómo su inglés quebrado es visto como una falencia mientras que el español de su jefe, tan deficiente como el inglés de ella, es visto como una ventaja.

Me pareció importante mantener estas dinámicas de clase reflejadas en la barrera idiomática. Salvo pequeñas ediciones, conservé los diálogos en *spanglish* para, en primer lugar, mantener las herramientas que utiliza Lupe para navegar el mundo anglosajón y, en segundo lugar, darle la oportunidad al lector de experimentar esa misma distancia.

Dayana y yo hablamos de la importancia de situar nuestras historias en el mismo lugar donde fueron pensadas, más allá del idioma de la traducción. En un momento pensé en traer su historia a Chile y jugué con la idea de que Lupe hablara en Creole, espejando las distancias del lenguaje que experimentan las comunidades haitianas en los países hispanohablantes, sin embargo, cada experiencia migrante es distinta y equiparar la experiencia de la inmigración dentro de Latinoamérica con la inmigración a Estados Unidos hubiera sido un deservicio con ambas realidades.

La tensión entre el inglés y el español en la historia de Davana revela, también, una franqueza sin pretensiones. Cuando Lupe habla en español manifiesta autoridad, opiniones y cuestionamientos que no manifestar cuando habla en inglés. Dayana trabajó muy bien esta espontaneidad y calidez: le da dos voces a Lupe y, aunque estas dos voces revelan distintos aspectos de su personalidad, no son contradictorias, trabajan en conjunto y construyen un personaje complejo y real. Uno de los desafíos más grandes al trabajar esta traducción fue mantener ambas voces en equilibrio: reservar el inglés que Lupe aprende de memoria, como un libro de frases de turista, para moverse en sus espacios de trabajo como una herramienta útil, mas no sumisa ni servicial; por otro lado, permitirle al personaje moverse con soltura en el español y jugar con el inglés que conoce en sus términos. En un momento, Lupe dice "Tú con tu 'I know'. Si tú 'know', entonces hazlo bien sin que te lo diga", usa el idioma ajeno, el idioma del trabajo y de los jefes, ya no para hacerse entender, sino que para crear complicidad con un compañero de trabajo y, de alguna forma, recuperar un espacio de poder al que le es imposible acceder en inglés.

Otro aspecto de cuidado en la traducción es el ritmo en el que se narra. Si bien la acción principal es casi frenética, Dayana mantiene una calma narrativa que permite al lector ver el mundo de la misma forma que Lupe lo ve, siempre un poco más tarde, siempre debiendo tomar un paso hacia atrás para observar la imagen completa antes de reaccionar a ella. Al familiarizarme con el relato pude

apreciar las capas entre las oraciones y estuve en un punto, ignoto para mí, entre la lectura y la escritura: ¿cómo se traduce lo que no está en las palabras? Al leer disfruto las elipsis, se transforman casi en un juego detectivesco siendo el premio descubrir qué hay entre los silencios, pero al traducir tuve que darles voz a esos silencios y, al experimentar en el ritmo, decidir cuándo callarlos.

Por último, como escritora, una parte importante de mi proceso creativo es querer a mis personajes. Si no puedo quererlos, sus historias no me interesan mucho. Creo que Dayana imbuye este mismo cariño a los suyos y, en el intercambio, era inevitable que también yo terminara queriendo a Lupe, desde su bisutería de domingo hasta su polera negra sin el logo de la empresa, en inglés y en español. Más allá de cualquier equivalencia lingüística y análisis de discurso, esta traducción fue hecha desde el cariño a la historia, a Lupe y a Dayana.

DAYANA MORALES GÓMEZ

Mist gathered on the window beneath Lupe's nose. The condensation blurred the reflection of her mouth but she pressed her face harder against the glass. Her eyes shifted from side to side. There was no one on the left. No one on the right. She pulled back. Her eyes refocused and stared at the residue visible on the glass. It's fine, she thought. I'll be the one who cleans it up anyway.

. . .

Lupe had been doing the same kind of job for decades and was hired to her current position more than one year before. She knew the building inside and out. She always knew every building inside and out.

In the first building all of those years ago, she had cleaned up after insurance salesmen -- salespeople, as her daughter would correct her. The women who worked there weren't in sales, though, and the women who were around at all didn't need cleaning up after. But the men did.

The next building had more women. And also the next one. There were some more buildings and men and women in there between then and now but she couldn't recall the specifics. She had been working a very long time.

The present building was home to an up-andcoming technology company. Lupe couldn't explain the technology or what it did but she was proud to work there, especially at first. In the beginning, she was excited by the free dinners the company provided for

traducido del inglés por SUSANA ALIAGA

Lupe presionaba su cara contra el vidrio y el vapor se arremolinaba bajo su nariz. La condensación en la ventana distorsionaba el reflejo de su boca y sus ojos, que iban de lado a lado, no avistaron a nadie. Se alejó, vio el residuo visible en el vidrio y suspiró. «Da igual, lo tengo que limpiar yo de todos modos» pensó.

Por décadas había hecho el mismo trabajo y, en ese lugar llevaba más de un año. Conocía el edificio por dentro y por fuera. Siempre conocía los edificios por dentro y por fuera.

Su primer trabajo de limpieza había sido en un edificio que albergaba ejecutivos de venta de seguros. *Ejecutives*, le había corregido su hija, pero pensó que las mujeres que trabajaban en ese edificio no estaban en ventas. Además, esas mujeres no necesitaban que otra persona les limpiara. Los hombres sí.

En su segundo edificio trabajaban más mujeres. También en el siguiente. Entre esos primeros edificios y el de ahora había más edificios y más hombres y más mujeres, pero no podía recordar los detalles. Llevaba trabajando mucho tiempo.

Este edificio era el hogar de una prometedora compañía tecnológica. Lupe no podía explicar el tipo de tecnología o qué hacía exactamente, pero se enorgullecía de trabajar ahí, sobre todo al comienzo. Al principio le emocionaban las cenas gratis que la empresa proporcionaba a los trabajadores, incluso había escuchado del turno de la mañana que entregaban desayuno y almuerzo también.

its employees -- she even heard from the morning crew that they provided lunch and breakfast, too. She was in awe of the no-cost vending machine. It had gotten to the point where Lupe started making references to the company she worked for as "we" even though she was hired through a third party. It was nice to feel a part of something so elegant and new.

Even the food these people ate here had to be elegant and new. Lupe was specifically instructed to throw out all leftovers every day. She didn't. She cautiously walked them from the dumpster exit to her vehicle. With just one day's worth of 'trash' she might be able to feed her family for the rest of the week. Her son, Pablo, wrote down his favorite candy on a note in her phone and she almost always brought home the right one.

It wasn't like that anymore, though. Some of the early glamour had worn off. Dinner service was cut, and so was lunch. Breakfast was reduced to cold cereals and granola bars -- and those were put away after 11 a.m. The vending machines accepted payment with a phone only and the prices were twice as high as anywhere else.

Still, Lupe was grateful to have work. She knew what life was like without it -- back when she had to stretch an allowance that shrunk seemingly every month. Here, she had even forged relationships with some of the office workers, in spite of the language barriers. You didn't need to know the same words in order to complain. An eye roll at 6 p.m. was a mutual disappointment that dinner service had ceased. Someone walking out of the bathroom shaking their head warned that the room's cleaning should be held off for at least another hour. And anyone folded over their desk was one big "avoid me at all costs."

• • •

This particular week hadn't gotten off to a bad start. That Monday, the office was business as

Estaba embelesada por la máquina dispensadora gratuita. Aunque estaba subcontratada por otra empresa, llegó a referirse a la compañía principal como "nosotros". Era agradable sentirse parte de algo tan elegante y nuevo.

Elegante y nueva, también, era la comida que esa gente consumía en el edificio. Lupe tenía la instrucción de botar todas las sobras al final del día. No lo hacía. Cautelosamente, las llevaba desde el basurero de afuera hacia su auto. Con un día de "sobras" podía alimentar a su familia por una semana. Su hijo, Pablo, anotó en el teléfono de Lupe su snack favorito y Lupe casi siempre le llevaba el correcto.

Sin embargo, las cosas habían cambiado. El glamour del principio se había desvanecido. La empresa había eliminado los servicios de cena y almuerzo. El desayuno se redujo a cereales y barras de granola, y esos se guardaban después de las 11 am. Las máquinas dispensadoras ya no eran gratuitas, aceptaban pago por celular a precios el doble de altos que en otros almacenes de por ahí.

Como fuera, Lupe agradecía tener trabajo. Ella sabía como era la vida sin trabajo. Antes. Cuando tenía que estirar la mesada que le daba su marido. La mesada que se disminuía mes a mes. En San Francisco, donde vivía, había formado relaciones con algunos compañeros de trabajo, a pesar de la barrera del lenguaje. No necesitaban saber las mismas palabras para quejarse. Poner los ojos en blanco a las 6 pm significaba la decepción mutua ante la cancelación de la cena. Alguien saliendo del baño sacudiendo la cabeza advertía que la limpieza de ese baño debería postergarse por lo menos otra hora. Y cualquiera desparramado sobre su escritorio era una invitación a evitarle a toda costa.

Esta semana en particular había partido igual que siempre. Ese lunes, como todos los lunes, fue trabajoso. Las mismas personas que le hablaban le hablaron. No hubo cargamentos nuevos, así que había menos reciclaje usual. The same people who usually acknowledged her acknowledged her. No new shipments, so there was less recycling than she typically handled. Everything seemed right in its place.

That is until Thursday, when it wasn't. Lupe woke up at 6:30 a.m., just as the sun was rising. She checked her phone and noticed seven missed calls from her supervisor. She sat up quickly. Did she leave something out of place? Had someone noticed that she hadn't vacuumed the hallway to nowhere that day? What was she forgetting? Her thoughts were interrupted by another call.

"Lupe, es Carl, supervisor."

"Si, yo se," she replied, noticing a stern tone in his broken Spanish. Carl had learned Spanish in grade school and Lupe could tell.

"¿A qué hora salió?"

"11 p.m., señor. Same always," she replied in her own choppy second language.

"O.K. Ben llamo a ti."

She stayed on the line until she was met with a dial tone. Then, as promised, Ben called.

Ben was young and white. Taller than her by a few inches, but not imposing. He grew up speaking English and then learned Spanish in school (but his was better than Carl's). He must have been out of school for no more than two or three years. And yet, somehow he had ended up here, in cleaning, just like Lupe. Ben was the future she feared for her children.

In Spanish, he told her about a break in. It happened the night before -- sometime between 3 and 4 a.m. No, Lupe wasn't being blamed, and no, she wasn't in trouble. The alarm sounded but the burglars were gone before the police arrived. The management had some typical questions. Did Lupe see any other cars in the lot before or after her shift? Anyone loitering? Even the hint of anything out of place would have been helpful, apparently.

"No," was all she could answer. But she was

que el que usualmente manejaba. Todo parecía normal.

Hasta el jueves, cuando dejó de estarlo. Lupe se despertó a las 6:30 am, cuando el sol estaba saliendo. Revisó su teléfono y notó muchas llamadas perdidas de su supervisor. Se levantó rápidamente. ¿Había puesto algo en el lugar equivocado? ¿Se habían dado cuenta que no había aspirado el pasillo desierto ese día? ¿qué se le estaba olvidando? Sus conjeturas fueron interrumpidas por otra llamada.

- —Lupe, es Carl, supervisor.
- —Sí, yo sé— contestó notando la dureza en su malogrado español. Carl había aprendido español en la universidad y Lupe se daba cuenta.
- —¿A qué hora salió?
- —11 pm, señor, same always— respondió en su propio inglés deficiente.
- —Ok. Ben llamo a ti.

No soltó el teléfono hasta que la llamada se cortó por el lado de Carl. Luego, tal como le había dicho, Ben llamó.

Ben era joven y blanco. Más alto que ella por unos diez centímetros, pero no imponente. Creció hablando inglés y aprendió español en la escuela (aunque el suyo era mejor que el de Carl). Probablemente se había graduado hace unos dos o tres años. Aun así, de alguna forma había terminado aquí, limpiando, igual que Lupe. Ben era el futuro que temía para sus hijos.

En español le contó sobre el robo. Fue la noche anterior entre las 3 y las 4 de la madrugada. No, no la estaban culpando y no, no estaba en problemas. La alarma sonó, pero los ladrones huyeron antes de que llegara la policía. Administración tenía las típicas preguntas: ¿Lupe vio algún otro auto en el estacionamiento antes o después de su turno? ¿Alguien merodeando? El mínimo atisbo de algo fuera de lo común habría sido de ayuda, aparentemente.

—No— fue todo lo que pudo responder. Pero tenía curiosidad, así que le insistió a Ben —pero ¿qué se llevaron? Ben le dijo que habían roto una mampara de vidrio curious. So she pressed Ben, "¿pero que se llevaron?"

He told her they had broken a glass door and taken 15 or so laptops and some TV monitors. It's not a huge deal, he added, but it would help if she saw anything suspicious.

"No," was again all she could put together.

"Yeah, O.K.," Ben said. He told her to do her shift as she would on any day, adding that someone was already on their way to replace the glass door. He hung up before letting her say anything else.

It wasn't that Lupe was one to fear easily. As a single mother she had taken on things far scarier than burglars - hormones, bad grades, crying teachers. And before that she had dealt with rising rents and an unreliable husband. She had even dealt with burglars themselves. She had grown up with them and even had her own run-in with them. Right as she was vacating the house she couldn't afford without her husband there was a break in. Packing had already started, her husband was gone, and the last things left were her pieces of fine jewelry. Well, not fine jewelry per se, but fine in comparison to what she usually owned. Stuff that had been made with some kind of paint or covering that didn't stain her skin green when she took it off. And everyone complimented her on it. There were the delicate, light blue earrings that she wore to church. The shiny rings she wore to divert any unwanted attention when she went to the store, and the ones she wore to garner respect when she needed something. These were Lupe's most prized possessions.

But thieves had taken almost her whole collection. And yet no one else lamented the loss. Her children pointed out that the burglars had taken "fashion jewelry" and said it wasn't a big deal. Lupe took solace in the fact that at least these strangers had seen value in it. too.

The experience left her shaken. Her things weren't valuable in the proper sense, but they were hers. And everything her kids had was because of her, too, y se llevaron alrededor de quince computadores y algunos monitores. No era gran cosa, añadió, pero ayudaría si acaso ella vio algo sospechoso.

- -No-fue, de nuevo, todo lo que pudo decir.
- —Yeah, Ok— respondió Ben. Le dijo que siguiera con su trabajo como cualquier día y que alguien ya iba en camino a reemplazar la mampara. Colgó antes de que Lupe pudiera decir otra cosa.

Lupe no se asustaba fácil. Era madre soltera, soportado cosas más aterradoras ladrones: hormonas adolescentes, malas notas, profesores llorando. Y antes había pasado por reajustes de arriendo y un esposo irresponsable. Los ladrones tampoco le eran ajenos, se había criado entre ellos y había tenido su propio encontrón con ellos. Cuando estaba vaciando la casa que no podía costear sin su esposo hubo un robo. La mudanza ya había empezado, su esposo se había ido y lo último que quedaba eran sus joyas finas. Bueno, no finas finas, pero finas en comparación a las que normalmente usaba. Piezas que estaban hechas con una pintura o revestimiento que no dejaba verde la piel cuando se las quitaba. Y todos las piropeaban. Eran los aros celestes delicados que usaba para ir a la iglesia. Los anillos brillantes que usaba para distraer la atención cuando iba a la tienda y los que usaba para imponer respeto cuando necesitaba algo. Sus posesiones más preciadas.

Pero los ladrones se habían llevado casi toda su colección. Y nadie lamentó la pérdida. Sus hijos dijeron que los ladrones habían robado solo bisutería y que no eran la gran cosa. Lupe se consoló pensando que, por lo menos, los desconocidos también habían visto valor en su colección.

Esa experiencia la sacudió. Sus cosas no eran valiosas en términos de dinero, pero eran suyas. Y todo lo que tenían sus hijos era gracias a ella también, aunque no lo apreciaran. Todo el asunto la dejó vulnerable. Sin importar lo mucho que trabajara, la podían despojar de su nimia recompensa así sin más. Su casa, su esposo, sus joyas... pero era suficiente preocupación por ahora. Eran

whether or not they ever noticed. The whole thing left her feeling vulnerable. No matter how hard she worked, the little reward she received could be taken away from her that fast. Her home, her husband, her jewels... But that was enough worry for now. It was nearly 7:35 a.m. and she had a morning shift to attend to at a local diner. She got dressed and that helped her forget all about the call.

Every time she walked through the double doors she remembered why Bill's was a great place to work. It was homey; the staff was friendly. There were always at least three people working at once. It wasn't showy, so no one would ever bother them for money. Small talk with customers meant the day went by quickly. Plus Lupe only worked during daylight hours. She was usually late, but that was never a big deal, except to Bill himself, who had a whole speech ready about timeliness and dedication and being the member of a team.

"Lupe, I expect you here right at 8. You told me you have limited availability and offered very specific shifts but I took you on anyway because I know you can use the pay. So now you're a part of this business and if you're not here, we're short staffed. I don't care what excuse you have today. Let this be the last time."

"Mr. Bill, I am so sorry. It won't happen again." Lupe's elder child, Rosa, had translated Bill's monologue and taught her how to apologize. As a result, this conversation had repeated itself word for word five times over the last three weeks.

Bill wasn't there that morning. But the other regulars were. Erik, the cook, and Jamie, the hostess. Also, Willy, a local retiree and Doris, who worked for the sheriff. Those two were always reading and discussing the local newspaper. Doris, who spoke some Spanish, sometimes looped Lupe into the conversation before she took their order.

"Crimes es arruba," Doris gestured up as she shook her head. Willy grumbled. Lupe understood, and for once she had something to add. casi las 7:35 am y tenía turno de mañana en la fuente de soda local. Se vistió y eso le ayudó a olvidarse de la llamada.

Cada vez que atravesaba las puertas gemelas recordaba porqué Bill's era un gran lugar para trabajar. Era acogedor, el equipo amigable. Siempre había por lo menos tres personas trabajando al mismo tiempo. No era llamativo, así que nadie entraba a mendigar dinero. Las conversaciones con los clientes hacían que el día pasara rápido. Además, Lupe sólo trabajaba durante el día. Solía llegar tarde, pero eso nunca era problema salvo para el mismísimo Bill, quien tenía un discurso listo sobre la puntualidad, dedicación y ser parte de un equipo.

—Lupe, te espero a las 8. Me dijiste que tienes disponibilidad limitada y me ofreciste turnos muy específicos, pero te contraté de todas formas porque sé que necesitas el dinero. Así que ahora eres parte de este bote y si no estás aquí, tenemos un remo menos. No me importa qué excusa tienes hoy, que sea la última— le dijo en inglés. —Mr. Bill, lo siento mucho, no volverá a pasar— Su hija mayor, Rosa, le había traducido el monólogo de Bill y le enseñó a disculparse en inglés. Por tanto, esta conversación se había repetido cinco veces, palabra por palabra, a lo largo de las últimas tres semanas.

Bill no estaba esa mañana, pero el resto del equipo sí. Erik, el maestro de cocina, y Jamie, la anfitriona. También estaba Will, un jubilado del sector y Doris, quien trabajaba para el capitán de policía. Ambos siempre estaban leyendo y comentando el periódico local. Doris, quien hablaba algo de español, a veces incluía a Lupe en la conversación antes de que les tomara el pedido.

- —Crimes es arruba— dijo Doris con un gesto hacia arriba mientras sacudía la cabeza. Willy gruñó. Lupe entendió lo que quiso decir y, por primera vez, tenía algo que aportar a la conversación.
- -My other job robbed- Lupe dijo.
- —No pues, wow— Doris dijo. —Esos cabrones are robbing all the negocios these days. Y gente todavía diciendo que hay que difundir a la policía. La verdad es que ocupamos

"My other job robbed," Lupe said.

"No pues wow," Doris said. "Esos cabrones are robbing all the negocios these days. Y gente todavía diciendo que hay que difundir a la policía. La verdad es que ocupamos más policía, no menos. ¿Agarraron a la persona?"

"No," Lupe said.

"Classico."

Lupe saw Jamie seating some other customers and tried to get a move on the order. "The usual?"

Doris went on about neighbors who lounged outside their homes "like they own the place." Willy added something, and Doris nodded away. Both broke into English, and Lupe lost track of their conversation. Eventually, she got their orders, and walked them over to Erik.

"¿Que paso?" Erik asked through the kitchen window.

"Malo, malo, Erik," Lupe said. "Mucho robo. Gente que piensa que el mundo es de ellos."

"¿Como pues?"

"Hubo un robo en mi otro trabajo."

"Y tu que?"

"Me dio un susto."

"¿A ti por qué? No se llevaron nada suyo, ¿o si?."

"No, pero -- "

"Usted no se debe preocupar de la compañía."

"Si me preocupa. Aquí vive mi familia."

"¿Sabía que antes habían planes de public housing en ese terreno? Casas pagadas con ayuda del gobierno."

"La gente se aprovecha del gobierno."

"Y de donde crees que viene el dinero del gobierno?"

"Ay, Eric -- tu con ideas de joven."

"No todo es tan fácil --"

"No, nada asi de facil. Pero hay que ser buena persona. No se roba. Ganas dinero de manera honorable o no." más policía, no menos. ¿Agarraron a la persona?

- —No— Lupe dijo.
- --Classic.

Lupe vio a Jamie sentada con otros clientes y trató de acelerar su pedido. —¿Lo de siempre?

Doris empezó a quejarse de los vecinos que se sentaban afuera de sus casas, —como si la vereda fuera su living room—. Willy añadió algo y Doris asintió. Ambos se cambiaron al inglés y Lupe perdió el hilo de su conversación. Luego de un rato, tomó sus pedidos y se los llevó a Erik.

- —¿Qué pasó? Erik preguntó a través de la ventana de la cocina.
- —Mal, mal, Erik— dijo Lupe. —Mucho robo. La gente que piensa que el mundo es de ellos.
- —¿Cómo pues?
- -Hubo un robo en mi otro trabajo.
- —¿Y a usted, qué?
- -Me dio miedo, pues.
- -¿A usted? ¿Por qué? No se llevaron nada suyo, ¿o sí?
- -No, pero...
- -Usted no debe preocuparse de la compañía.
- —Sí que me preocupa. Aquí vive mi familia.
- —¿Sabía que antes había planes de public housing en ese terreno? Casas pagadas con ayuda del gobierno.
- —La gente se aprovecha del gobierno.
- -¿Y de dónde cree que viene el dinero del gobierno?
- —Ay Erik, tú con tus ideas de joven.
- -No todo es tan fácil...
- —No. Nada es así de fácil. Pero hay que ser buena persona. No se roba. Ganas dinero honradamente o no ganas dinero.
- —No voy a pelear con usted, señora Lupe.
- —Bueno. Y que no se te olvide darle salsa extra a don Willy, si no va a devolver el plato.
- —I know.
- —Tú con tu 'I know'. Si tú 'know', entonces hazlo bien sin que te lo diga.

El resto del turno siguió igual. Más clientes entraron y Doris los puso al día con el tema de la

"No me voy a pelear con usted, Señora Lupe."

"Bien. Y no se te olvide darle salsa extra a Don Willy. Si no va regresar el plato."

"I know."

"Tu con tu 'I know.' Si tu 'know' entonces hazlo bien sin que te digan."

The rest of the shift went like that. More customers came in, and Doris filled them in on the latest crime figures. And Erik kept trying to challenge Lupe, but she could not be convinced. Things in town were bad.

When Lupe got back home, she changed into her evening wear – a polo with the janitorial services logo printed, not stitched, over the left sleeve (this was for the best, actually – she could buy and wear any other black polo and wear it and tell Carl the logo disappeared in the wash -- cheap printing, sorry!).

When she walked into the office, she could see lots of people. She was comfortable and getting a lot done. But as the night wore on, the bodies started to leave, and Lupe started to get hungry. She had brought a sandwich with her and left it in the cooler in her car. Every night, she sat there, alone, eating her meal. This time, the walk to her car made her feel uneasy, but she did it anyway. After she was done, she walked back to the door, and there, she pressed her face against the glass. Almost all of the inside lights were off.

With the parking lot lights on, it was brighter outside than in. She looked the building up and down. It's okay, she thought to herself, you've done this many times before. With her hand shaking, she took the badge out of her pocket and let herself into the building.

As soon as she walked in, the lights went on. The motion sensors! Great, she thought, there's no way anyone else is here because if there were the lights would be on. She finished the last few hours of her shift without a care in her mind. She listened to music from her

delincuencia. Erik siguió llevándole la contra a Lupe, pero Lupe no se convencía. Estaban malas las cosas en la ciudad.

Cuando Lupe volvió a la casa, se puso el uniforme de noche: una polera de piqué con el logo del servicio de limpieza estampado, no parchado, sobre la manga izquierda. Mejor así, Lupe podía usar cualquier polera de piqué negra y decirle a Carl que el logo había desaparecido en la lavadora —estampado de mala calidad, ¡Sorry!—.

Cuando llegó a la oficina, había mucha gente. Estaba cómoda y se sentía eficiente, pero a medida que avanzaba la noche, la gente empezó a irse y a Lupe le dio hambre. Había traído un sándwich en el *cooler* del auto. Cada noche se sentaba sola en su auto comiéndose su colación. Esta vez la caminata al auto la inquietó, pero la hizo de todas formas. Cuando terminó, caminó de vuelta a la mampara y ahí apoyó su cara contra el vidrio. Casi todas las luces de adentro estaban apagadas.

Con las luces del estacionamiento apagadas, estaba más iluminado afuera que adentro. Miraba el edificio. Está bien, pensó, has hecho esto muchas veces antes. Con la mano temblando tomó la credencial de su bolsillo y entró.

Las luces se prendieron apenas abrió la mampara. «¡Los sensores!» pensó, aliviada. Si alguien hubiese entrado, las luces estarían prendidas. Terminó las últimas horas de su turno sin pensar mucho en lo que había pasado. Escuchó música desde el altavoz de su teléfono en vez de los audífonos, para sentirse más segura, pero todo lo demás parecía normal. Puso la alarma a las 11 pm, salió del edificio hacia su auto y manejó hasta su casa mecánicamente. Se hundió en el sueño más profundo y reparador apenas puso su cabeza en la almohada.

phone's speaker rather than headphones, just to be safe, but otherwise went on with business as usual. She set the alarm right at 11 p.m., walked out of the building and into her car, driving home without a second thought. In bed, she quickly fell into a deep, restful sleep.

She woke up drenched in sweat, mid-sentence. She finished mouthing the word "policia" right as she regained consciousness.

"Mama, mama" her youngest, Pablo, yelled as she shook her.

"¿Qué tienes, hijo?"

"Estabas gritando."

"Una pesadilla, no te preocupes."

"OK. Pero ya son las 7:45 así que si no me llevas a la escuela voy a llegar tarde."

I guess I'm going to be late no matter what, Lupe thought to herself. She quickly threw on some clothes and gave Pablo some money to buy lunch at school. No time for leftovers. There was an accident four blocks from Pablo's school. He was late. Lupe, in turn, was very late. The morning shift at Bill's started without her.

... (story continues)

Se despertó bañada en sudor con una frase en la boca. Terminó de decir "policía" justo al recobrar la conciencia.

- —¡Mamá, mamá! le gritaba su hijo menor, Pablo, mientras la sacudía.
- —¿Qué tienes, hijo?
- -Estabas gritando.
- -Una pesadilla, no te preocupes.
- —Ok. Pero ya son las 7:45, si no me llevas a la escuela voy a llegar tarde.

«Supongo que voy a llegar tarde de todas formas» Lupe pensó. Se vistió rápido y le dio a Pablo algo de dinero para comprar almuerzo en la escuela. No había tiempo para empacarle sobras. Había un accidente a cuatro cuadras de la escuela de Pablo así que él llegó tarde, mientras que Lupe llegó muy tarde, el turno de mañana en Bill's ya había empezado sin ella.

Translator's Note

I first read "Derrota" knowing little about the author, Susana Aliaga – notably, the experience most people have with almost any piece of writing. Author unknown, I was immediately taken by the voice and relatability of the piece. It's a story full of topics readers across the world can find relatable: online dating and body politics, gentrification and the question of home, reconciling family history and malleability of memory.

The unnamed narrator of "Derrota," literally "Defeat," is distinctly Chilean. She is living history with her family, especially her father, who was a victim of torture during the authoritarian rule of Augusto Pinochet. She's also living in a patriarchal society, where women have historically been relegated to the domestic sphere. In the narrator's interior monologue, we see her trying to deal with the memory of abuse she experienced at the hand of her mother, after years of adopting a revisionist history. She is not sentimental in explaining the pain. She simply notes it and moves on.

Though I knew a bit about Pinochet and gender roles in Latin America at large, meeting Susana and listening to her explain this history from her perspective was enlightening. Regular facetime with the author isn't a privilege all translators have, but it made a big difference in what I was able to bring to the English. And still, the translation is limited to my voice as a speaker of American English with a particular background. But even if you read it and don't understand each and every turn of phrase, there's a lot in here. I read through the story many times and found something new in it every read.

Susana, a short story writer who studies fiction at Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Chile, has a voice I'm excited to bring over to an English speaking audience. Her work often highlights women in the margins. For me, the central questions of this particular piece are how do we explain the parts of ourselves that require so much back story, and how much of that information do we owe to strangers? To our family members? To ourselves?

But this isn't the kind of story that offers a simple answer. It's doing much more than that.

It has been a joy and a privilege to work with Susana on this piece. I can't wait to read whatever she produces next.

SUSANA ALIAGA

DERROTA

- -Es una marca de nacimiento- le contesté.
- -Parece una cicatriz-respondió Rafael.
- -Cuando son cicatrices la piel se levanta, tiene otra textura. Si te fijai esa sólo tiene un color distinto que el resto de la piel— me di vuelta para cerrar el tema. "Es una marca de nacimiento", decía cada vez que alguien me preguntaba. La memoria reconstruye, no reproduce. Cuando empecé a decirlo, me convencí de que si lo decía suficientes veces, se iba a borrar el recuerdo real, buscaba excusas para levantarme la polera y mostrar el lugar exacto en mi espalda que albergaba mi marca de nacimiento.

Cuando chica me portaba pésimo, o así me lo hacía saber mi mamá. Era buena para desarmar cosas y no saber como armarlas de nuevo, era torpe y botaba los adornos de loza que estaban en ese mueble antiguo del comedor y manchaba la ropa de comida o de cloro cuando intentaba limpiarla y que mi mamá no se diera cuenta. Pero lo peor para ella era que no me quedaba callada. Respondona, me decía, contestadora. Le cuestionaba todo, que por qué si ella hablaba con garabatos, yo no podía decirlos; por qué ella podía ver la tele que quisiera y yo no; por qué no me dejaba comer completos ni tomar bebida cuando ella comía completos y tomaba bebida. Resulta que aparte de contestadora, era gorda, y para una mujer con el cuerpo y estatura de una geisha, tener una hija gorda era inaceptable.

Su respuesta ante mis insolencias variaba según el delito. Si le faltaba el respeto, me pegaba una cachetada. Si no quería hacer algo que ella me pedía, me tiraba el pelo. Cuando todo fallaba, usaba la peor amenaza: iba al closet

translated from the spanish by DAYANA MORALES GÓMEZ

DEFEAT

"It's a birthmark," I said.

"Looks like a scar," Rafael replied.

"When it's a scar, the skin is raised. It has a different texture. Look closely and you'll see it's just a slightly different color." I turned over to end the conversation. I said the same thing whenever I was asked: "It's a birthmark." The memory reconstructs; it does not reproduce. When I started saying it, I was convinced that after enough recitations the real memory would vanish. I looked for reasons to lift my shirt and reveal my back to show the exact location of my birthmark.

When I was a girl, I behaved terribly. That's what my mom would tell me anyway. I was good at taking things apart but lousy trying to put them back together. I was clumsy and constantly knocked things over from the antique cabinet. I dirtied my clothes with food or stained them with bleach when I tried to clean it so my mom wouldn't notice. But the worst thing was that I wouldn't stay quiet. Respondona, she would call me, chatterbox. I questioned everything - why she used swears when I couldn't, why she was allowed to watch whatever TV she wanted but not me, why she didn't let me eat hotdogs or drink soda even though she ate hotdogs and drank soda. Turns out that besides being chatty I was fat. For a woman with the build and body of a supermodel, having a fat daughter was completely unacceptable.

She responded to my insolence in different ways, depending on the offense. If I was disrespectful, she

del pasillo donde estaba la ropa de mi papá, y sacaba un cinturón de cuero grueso que había comprado un verano en una feria artesanal de Chiloé. Durante mucho tiempo, el cinturón fue solo eso, una amenaza. Un recordatorio perenne de que siempre sería más fuerte que yo.

Mi papá era alto, grande. Se paraba en el dintel de la puerta y no dejaba entrar nada de luz. Verlos juntos era como ver el poster de esa película de Arnold Schwarzenegger y Danny DeVito en que se supone que son gemelos. Ridículos. Mi papá nunca nos pegó, eso sí, con todo lo imponente que era, siempre tuve permiso en su presencia de portarme mal. Pero no estaba mucho en la casa, estaba trabajando o carreteando y mi mamá, soportando el peso de mantener la casa, estaba siempre frustrada. Ella no se merecía un esposo alcohólico, una casa chica, una vida llena de deudas y dos hijas cada vez más parecidas a su papá.

-¿Querís un cigarro?

-Ya, pero no en la pieza que queda pasá a humo—Me puse calzones y la parte de arriba de mi pijama y salí de la pieza con el cigarro en la boca. Me senté en la ventana del living mirando las ventanas del edificio de al lado.

Ya le había perdido el pudor a pasearme en ropa interior en el departamento. Me gustaba sapear lo que hacían los vecinos y en el año y medio que llevaba viviendo en esa torre de la calle Carmen había visto gente tirando en el balcón o fumando marihuana. Una vez un vecino botó una colilla de cigarro prendida y la basura que se había acumulado en el cantero del segundo piso empezó a arder, en seguida el fuego agarró la ropa colgada en el balcón del piso de arriba y con eso las cortinas del departamento de al lado. Fue un incendio chico, ningún damnificado, pero preguntaron por todos los departamentos si alguien había visto algo.

-Lo único peor que un paco es un sapo, al paco le pagan por último, el sapo es tonto útil sin recibir un peso- Me came back with a slap. If I didn't want to do something when she asked me, she'd pull my hair. When all else failed, she turned to the worst threat of all: she'd go over to my dad's closet and pull out the thick leather belt he'd bought one summer at a crafts fair in Chiloé. For a time, the belt was just that — a threat. An ever present reminder that she would always be stronger than me.

My dad was tall, imposing. He would stand in front of a door frame and block all the light from outside. Seeing them together was like looking at a poster from the movie with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito, where they're supposedly twins. Ridiculous. My dad never laid his hands on us, that much is true. In spite of his towering presence, I was free to misbehave when he was around, but he wasn't home much. He was either working or dragging his feet. Meanwhile my mother, holding the weight of the whole house alone, was always frustrated. She didn't deserve an alcoholic husband, a tiny house, a life full of debts and two daughters that everyday looked more like their father.

"Do you want a cigarette?"

"Yeah, but not in the bedroom because the smell will linger." I put on my underwear and a pajama top and left the room with the cigarette in my mouth. I sat on the living room window sill and looked into the windows of the building next door.

I had already lost the shame of walking around in my underwear. I liked to know what the neighbors were up to. In the year and a half since I'd moved into that high rise on Carmen Street I'd seen people littering from the balcony or smoking marijuana. One time a neighbor flicked a lit cigarette butt and the trash that had accumulated on the second-floor flower box ignited, and soon the flames took hold of the clothes hanging on the balcony one floor above and from there the curtains in the apartment next door. It was a small fire, no one

decía mi papá cuando me mostraba las quemaduras de electricidad de cuando lo torturaron. Así que, recordando eso, decía que no, que no había visto nada. También me daba culpa que yo igual botaba las colillas de cigarro por la ventana, pero desde ese día procuraba apagarlas en un pocillo con agua. Quizás debería haberlas botado en la casa, pero dejaban hediondo el basurero y con eso la pieza, la cocina o el baño.

La única vez que abrí la boca fue cuando vi a una vecina pegándole a un niño. El niño arrancó hacia el balcón y la mujer lo encontró, lo agarró del pelo y lo arrastró hacia adentro pegándole con la escoba. Conté los pisos, los departamentos y llamé a carabineros. No llegaron. Entre al edificio de al lado y le dije a los conserjes, no hicieron nada, pero otra vecina me escuchó y me dijo que hace rato que en ese departamento el niño lloraba. Resulta que vivía solo con la mamá y mientras ella trabajaba, lo cuidaba una tía con poca paciencia, la tía le pegaba y la mamá parece que sabía, pero se hacía la loca, porque si no lo cuidaba ella, nadie más lo podía cuidar gratis y ella no podría trabajar. -Es que son extranjeros. Usted sabe que ellos son más violentos que los chilenos- me dijo la vecina buscando la complicidad que busca alguien que, de repente, vio su barrio llenarse de nuevos acentos.

-Gente de mierda hay en todas partes, vaya a preguntar al campo cuántos chilenos todavía andan a correazos con sus hijos. La gente inmigrante quiere venir a surgir, a trabajar, solamente. Es terrible que esa mujer no tenga otra opción—Pero igual después de tirarme el rollo, fui al departamento y le dije a la señora que si volvía a escuchar a su hijo llorar, iba a llamar a extranjería.

-Chucha, sorry, quemé la bandera- su cigarro le había hecho un hoyo a la Wiphala que tenía colgando en la ventana. La había comprado en una de las marchas del estallido y la había colgado ahí a pesar de que la ventana no daba para la calle. Sólo podían verla los vecinos del was hurt, but they went around the apartments asking if anyone had seen anything.

"The only thing worse than a cop is a snitch. The cop is at least paid; the toad makes himself useful without even getting a cent," my dad would say as he showed me his electrocution scars from when he'd been tortured. And so, with that in mind, I said no, I hadn't seen anything. I also felt bad that I threw cigarette butts from the balcony, too. From that day forward I was sure to put them out in a little bowl of water first. Maybe I should have disposed of them inside the house, but they'd have left a hideous smell in the trash can that wafted into the bedroom, kitchen and bathroom.

The only time I opened my mouth was when I saw a neighbor hitting a child. The boy rushed out to the balcony but she found him there, pulled his hair, and dragged him inside while hitting him with a broom. I counted the floors, counted the apartments, and called the police. They didn't come. I went to the building and told the doorman and they didn't do anything either but another resident overheard me and said the kid in that apartment had been crying for ages. Turned out that he lived alone with his mom and when she worked an aunt with a short temper took care of him. The aunt hit him and it seems like the mom knew, but she played dumb because if the aunt didn't watch him no one else would do it for free and then she couldn't work.

"It's because they're immigrants. You know those people are more violent than Chilenos," the other resident told me, seeking the kind of commiseration craved by someone who's seen their neighborhood suddenly overrun with new accents.

"Shit people live everywhere. Go ask people in the countryside how many Chilenos are still beating their kids. Those people come here looking for stability. They want to work and nothing more. It's terrible that woman has no other options." And still, after giving my spiel, I found the apartment and told the woman that if I heard her son cry again I was going to call immigration. edificio de al lado, los mismos que sapeaba cuando estaba aburrida.

-Filo, da lo mismo- Le tiré un poco de agua para que se dejara de derretir el material sintético de la bandera. Me senté en sus piernas y me abrazó.

-Qué cuático vivir así- me dijo -no sé, con todos esos departamentos viendo, cuántos deben ser, ¿cómo trescientos? Es como vivir en un reality show, ¿no encontrai?

Sí, es un poco como vivir en un reality show cuando bajai al Ok Market de al lado en pijama con zapatillas, cuando se te queda un calcetín en la lavandería del edificio o cuando bajai a recibir un pedido recién vestida con la toalla todavía en el pelo.

-No, o por lo menos, no más que vivir en una de esas comunidades cerradas donde viven los cuicos. Demás que el metraje cuadrado es distinto, pero cuando la gente no tiene nada que hacer, igual anda pendiente del resto. Apuesto que tu mamá igual se sabe toda la vida de tus vecinos— Se quedó callado. Mi vida le parecía tan lejana como a mí la suya y sí, me puse a la defensiva, pero no me metí a tinder a escuchar críticas del lugar donde vivo.

-¿Por qué tengo que tomar consejos de un hueón que nunca ha paleado ripio?— decía mi papá cuando le pedían en el colegio que fuera con ropa limpia o, por lo menos, no arrugada. Mi mamá, por otra parte, se preocupaba que toda su ropa estuviese limpia, planchada, cartera perfectamente combinada con los zapatos, el pañuelo y los aros. –No porque seamos pobres, tenemos que vernos sucios, Eduardo—. La rigurosidad de mi mamá y el caos de mi papá no funcionaban bien, de niña aprendí que el matrimonio significaba uno arrastrando al otro y que el amor significaba arrastrarse mutuamente.

-Es una marca de nacimiento-le dijo mi mamá a mi primo, cuando tenía veintitantos y ya me había ido hace años de la casa a estudiar a Santiago. Estábamos un verano en la ***

"Sorry, Chucha, I burned the flag." His cigarette had burned a hole in the Wiphala flag I hung from the window. I'd bought it at an indigenous rights demonstration and put it there even though the window didn't face the street. Only neighbors from the building next door could see it – the same ones I snooped on when I was bored.

"Don't worry about it." I threw some water on it so the synthetic material would stop melting. I sat on his lap and he held me.

"Must be awful living like this," he said. "Dunno about all of these apartments looking in. How many are there, like 300? Sort of like living in a reality show, don't you think?"

Yes, it is a bit like living in a reality show when you go down to the Ok Market next door wearing shoes with pajamas, when a sock is left behind in the communal laundry room or when you go down to get a package freshly dressed with a towel still in your hair.

"No – at least, no more than those gated communities where the bougie people live. The square footage might be different, but anywhere people have nothing to do they keep tabs on everyone else. I bet your mom knows all about her neighbors' lives." He stayed quiet. My life seemed as far away to him as his did to me. And sure, I got defensive, but I hadn't downloaded Tinder to listen to criticisms about the place where I live.

"Why should I take advice from some dumbass who's never shoveled dirt?" My dad would say this whenever the school asked him to wear clean clothes, or, at least, unwrinkled ones. My mom, for her part, always made sure her clothes were spotless and ironed – her purse perfectly matched with her shoes, scarf and earrings.

"Just because we're poor doesn't mean we need to look filthy, Eduardo." The inflexibility of my mother

playa y mi primo chico me preguntó qué me había pasado en la espalda. Ya tenía esa respuesta incorporada en mi cabeza, pero mi mamá, casi con urgencia, se adelantó, como si creyera que yo iba a contar que la amenaza del cinturón fue siempre una amenaza, excepto la vez que me pilló robándole cigarros cuando tenía quince. Ya había pasado un tiempo desde la última vez que me cacheteó, o más bien, que intentó cachetearme. Fue en el verano después que cumplí 13, me pegué un estirón y era más alta que ella, había bajado un poco de peso, pero seguía siendo grande, ancha, imponente. Mi mamá me fue a pegar y en un instinto que no entiendo, porque le seguía teniendo miedo a su mano, le agarré la muñeca y no dejé que me pegara. En ese momento entendí que tenía opción, que podía no permitir que me pegara, que podía escapar de sus golpes, bloquearlos o, incluso, devolverlos.

Nunca se me habría ocurrido pegarle a mi mamá, pero ella no lo sabía, creyó que ya había alcanzado la edad del peligro, donde la iba a resentir e iba a responder con la misma violencia que ella. En ese momento yo no sabía que eso era opción, ella sí, y actuó acorde hasta que contó sus cigarros y se dio cuenta que le faltaban dos. Entró a mi pieza, yo estaba acostada de guata leyendo y antes de preguntar qué pasaba, sentí el ruido, la onda de dolor que partía mi espalda y el llanto de mi mamá.

-Una hija nunca puede robarle a su madre, eso no se hacele temblaba la voz. Me puse a llorar. Mi mamá nos decía que nos amaba, que éramos lo más importante para ella, ¿por qué nos maltrataba entonces? Mentiría si dijera que me puse a llorar sólo por eso, el cinturón en la espalda dolía más que la cresta.

-¿Y tú no tienes planes de irte de acá? ¿Encontrar una mejor pega y cambiar de comuna?— me preguntó prendiendo el último cigarro. Para mí la cita ya estaba, no quedaba más que pedir un Uber, despedirse y bloquearlo de Tinder. No me interesaba saber más de él ni que supiera

and the chaos of my father didn't go well together. As a girl, I learned that marriage was one pushing the other to be better. Love was about two people pushing each other at the same time.

"It's a birthmark," my mom told my cousin. I was in my twenties and had moved out of her house years before when I went to study in Santiago. We were at the beach and my younger cousin asked me what happened to my back. I already had the answer programmed into my mind, but my mother, with urgency, got ahead of me. It was as if she thought I was going to tell the story about the belt that had always been a threat until the time she caught me stealing cigarettes when I was 15. A lot of time had passed since she had so much as slapped me, or even tried to slap me. That last happened after the summer when I turned 13. I'd had a growth spurt and was suddenly taller than her. I'd lost some weight but I remained large, broad and imposing. When my mom went over to hit me, an instinct I hardly understand even now kicked in. I grabbed her wrist and held her back. At that moment I realized I had a choice, that I could prevent her from hitting me, that I could escape her blows, block them, or even send them back.

It had never occurred to me to hit my mother, but she didn't know this. She thought I had reached a dangerous age where I was going to resist and answer her with the same violence. At the time I had no idea that was an option, but she did and she acted accordingly, until the day she counted her cigarettes and noticed two were missing. She went into my room. I was lying on my stomach and before I could ask what was going on I heard the sound, the wave of pain that split my back and the cries of my mother.

"A daughter cannot ever steal from her mother. Never," she said, her voice trembling. I started to cry. más de mí, no quería explicarle que, aunque encontrara una mejor pega, no me iba a alcanzar para irme, que las empresas inmobiliarias como la que tenía su papá se habían encargado de gentrificar tanto la comuna que mi opción era este departamento o pagar cien lucas más por otro igual, en otro barrio, quizás con otra orientación, pero siempre en un radio de cuatro cuadras. Dios lo bendiga, en su mente mi aspiración era Ñuñoa o Providencia, en un departamento antiguo con piso parquet. Su gente nunca se imagina que alguien puede ser feliz en un Paz Froimovich con piso flotante.

-No, me gusta el barrio, me gusta tener hartos vecinos, nunca me siento sola- Le dije. Me fui a la cocina y empecé a lavar los platos, dándole la espalda.

-Una madre nunca debiera hacerle daño a sus hijos, sobre todo si son hijas- lloraba mi mamá después de pelear con mi abuela. La demencia senil ya estaba afectando su capacidad para tener filtro y les decía cosas horribles a mi mamá y sus hermanas. -Mi mami siempre ha sido así, no es la enfermedad, supieras las cosas que nos decía, como nos pegaba con la correa, con la regla de madera, una vez agarró un palo y nos persiguió por la casa- vomitaba su infancia terrible sobre una taza de café y un cigarro a medio fumar. Me daba pena, me dolía verla así. Estaba lavando la loza para alivianarle un poco la mochila, pero como si volviera a agarrarle la mano antes de pegarme una cachetada me di vuelta.

-Sí po, una madre nunca debiera hacerle daño a sus hijos-. No me dijo nada, siguió fumando en silencio. Después de un rato se le quebró la voz.

-Yo intenté no ser así, yo me acuerdo que cuando se me pasaba la mano con ustedes, después lloraba, yo creo que me dolía más a mí que a ustedes— llevaba cinco minutos secando el mismo vaso lleno de pelusas. No le estaba alivianando la mochila a mi mamá, solo estaba viendo su peso real.

My mother would tell us that she loved us, that we were the most important things to her. So why did she treat us this way? Though I'd be lying if I said my tears were coming from that sentiment alone – the belt on my back hurt more than anything else.

"You don't have any plans to leave this place? To find something better and change up the scenery?" he asked me, lighting the final cigarette. For me the date was over. All that was left to do was call an Uber, say good-bye and block him on Tinder. I was not interested in knowing any more about him, or in him knowing any more about me. I didn't want to explain that finding something better wouldn't be enough to leave. That the real estate companies like the one his father owned had set off so much gentrification that my options were this apartment or 100 bucks more for another just like it, perhaps facing in a different direction, but always within the same four block radius. God bless him, he thought my aspirations were the luxurious Nuñoa or Providencia - a historic apartment with geometric wood floors. His kind never could imagine that someone could be happy in a conventional building with laminate floors.

"No, I like the neighborhood. I like having so many neighbors. I never feel alone," I said. I went over to the kitchen and started washing the dishes, giving him my back.

"A mother should never hurt her children, especially her daughters," my mother cried after fighting with my grandmother. Dementia was starting to affect the elder's capacity for vocal filtering and she said horrible things to my mother and her sisters. "My mother has always been like that. It's not the illness. If you only knew the things she would say to us, how she would hit

- -No sé, igual los correazos duelen harto.
- -Pero yo nunca les pegué con la correa.
- -¿Cómo que no? Me dejaste hasta una cicatriz en la espalda- me paré al frente de ella, de espaldas y me levanté la polera. Esperaba que agachara la cabeza en vergüenza o arrepentimiento, que me pidiera disculpas, que se justificara, no sé. Me descolocó verla seria, sosteniéndome la mirada, prendiendo un cigarro nuevo.
- -Es una marca de nacimiento- me dijo.
- -Mamá, es una cicatriz de cuando me pegaste con la correa- imploré.
- -Es una marca de nacimiento, siempre la has tenido, pregúntale a tu hermana- se paró y se fue a la pieza, no sin antes sostenerme la mirada una última vez.
- -Una hija no puede decir esas cosas de su madre. Las madres lo hacemos todo por amor.

- -¿Qué es eso?- me preguntó Francisco.
- -Una marca de nacimiento- le respondí.

us with the belt and the wooden ruler. Once she grabbed a stick and chased us around the house."

She'd start trauma dumping over a cup of coffee and a half-smoked cigarette. I was sorry to see her this way. It hurt. I was washing the dishes in order to take some of the weight off of her back, but just like the time I grabbed her wrist, an instinct kicked in:

"Yes, a mother should never inflict pain on her children."

She didn't say anything. She continued smoking in silence. After a moment, she said, voice quivering, "I tried not to be that way. I remember that whenever I went too far I cried afterward. It probably hurt me more than it hurt you." I had been drying the same glass for five minutes. I wasn't taking any of the weight off my mother's back. I was just seeing it for what it was.

"I don't know – those belt beatings hurt a lot."
"But I never hit you with a belt."

"Are you kidding? You even left a scar on my back." I went over and lifted my shirt to show her my back. When I shifted to face her, I expected her to lower her head in shame or regret, expected that she would ask for forgiveness, that she would try to explain, I don't know. I was puzzled by her seriousness, holding my stare, lighting a new cigarette.

"It's a birthmark," she said.

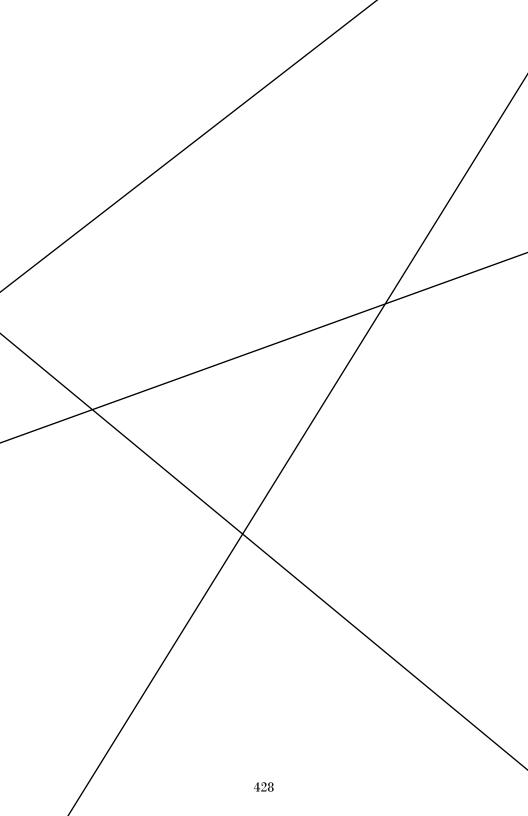
"Mom, it's a scar from the time you hit me with the belt," I insisted.

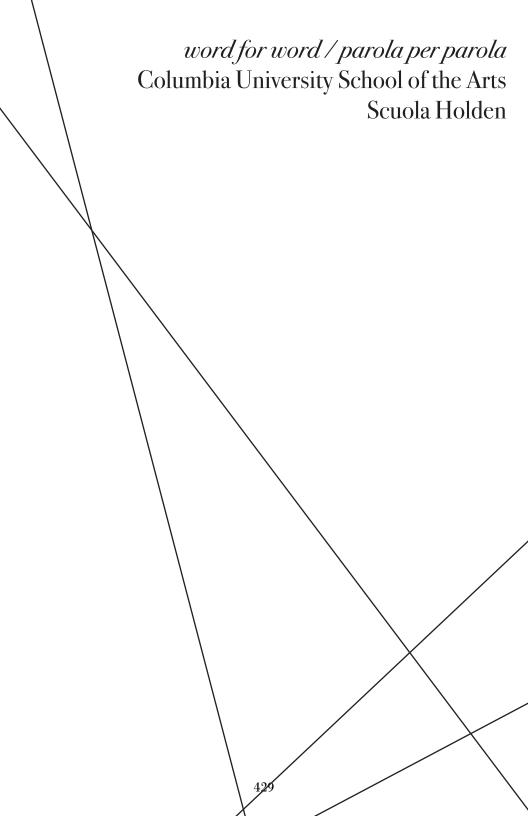
"It's a birthmark. You've always had it, just ask your sister." She stood up and left the room, but not without holding my stare one final time.

"A daughter can never say things like that to her mother. Mothers do things out of love."

[&]quot;What's that?" Francisco asked.

[&]quot;It's a birthmark," I answered.





Nota del Traduttore

"Days of Bossanova", di Ines Rodrigues, è la rievocazione malinconica del passato di un protagonista ormai anziano, dopo la morte dell'ultima delle sue sorelle. Il focus dei ricordi è sulla famiglia: la madre, e tutti i suoi fratelli e sorelle. Oggi, della sua famiglia non resta più nessuno. Soltanto lui.

Il tono della narrazione è piano e confidenziale. La voce del protagonista rivela la maturità dell'uomo che ora ci parla, in conflitto con la visione limitata e inconsapevole del bambino che è stato. La patina malinconica si accompagna a una certa sensazione di scherno, di riconoscimento della parzialità della sua comprensione del mondo: l'abbandono della provincia si porta dietro il chiarimento delle incomprensioni, dei "si dovrebbe fare così" e la vita dell'immigrato diventa subito quella dell'uomo adulto, a prescindere da se si sia uomini o ancora bambini.

Il tema principale della storia è indubbiamente la famiglia. Ma anche la povertà, che qui è vista a colori: la stoffa a righe bianche e verdi da cui la madre ricava i vestiti uguali per tutti, maschi e femmine; oppure l'esitazione prima di bere un sorso di latte condensato portato in dono. Il narratore è un uomo, ma cresciuto tra le donne: aveva più sorelle che fratelli, e il suo occhio cade spesso sui problemi delle ragazze. I problemi delle ragazze, a quei tempi, erano il dover trovare marito e il non farsi sedurre dalle oscenità che la città può riservare. Ma un problema poteva essere anche l'avere delle ambizioni, come sua sorella Rá, la cui salma crolla insieme al secondo piano di casa sua poco prima del funerale. È dopo questa scena cruda, forte, che il protagonista inizia a ripercorrere la sua vita a partire dalla prima delle morti: quella di suo padre, che determinò la loro partenza.

Tradurre è sempre una sfida. Ma tradurre il testo di Ines Rodrigues è stata una sfida dolce: la sua prosa limpida e piana, seppure dalla struttura complessa, mi ha accompagnata piacevolmente nella scelta delle parole e della struttura della traduzione. La sua lingua è puntuale: gli oggetti nominati non sono solo oggetti, ma sono proprio quegli oggetti di cui il protagonista ha memoria.

Della lattina di latte condensato, ad esempio, è descritta l'etichetta in poche parole. Ma è stato necessario ricercarne la foto, per poter scegliere quali parole descrivessero al meglio il tipo di bellezza che la pubblicità di quel tempo promulgava.

La mia priorità è stata trasmettere la patina romantica e al contempo pungente del ricordo. La voce narrante ci parla da un tempo lontano e di un tempo lontano, e trovare la sua puntuale declinazione in italiano è stata una sfida sottile, delicata, eppure estremamente stimolante e personale. Perché tutti ricordiamo, ma ognuno ricorda a modo suo.

Per tutti questi motivi "Days of Bossanova" è la prova del fatto che il ricordo non è soltanto "io", ma è "tutti". L'universo di quello che è stato continua a incrociarsi con quello che adesso è. Ed è anche azione, è passato e presente, ma anche e soprattutto futuro.

INES RODRIGUES

DAYS OF BOSSA NOVA (EXCERPT)

São Paulo, Brazil, 2009

On the day of my older sister's funeral, my wife gave me an extra dose of diuretic pills, and her mistake saved my life. Nobody died when part of the second floor collapsed, but I am seventy-five years old, and I've been enduring a long parade of physical suffering. How could I run downstairs as fast as the children when the floor, eaten by thousands of termites, cracked and shook like an earthquake?

I was supposed to see the body, but, as there was just one bathroom on the ground floor and I had to use it every ten minutes, we all thought it was safer to pay my respects at a distance and sit on the porch.

Termites were the only company Rá had in old age. Eating, chewing, carving their way into the old floors, cabinets, closets, digging sinister tunnels, inch by inch, the insects probably planned to take occupancy when the house was finally left alone. The fall of the second floor during her wake was more dramatic than carpideiras' tears - women who were hired in the old times to cry at funerals and make them all more sentimental. First, we heard a cracking noise and, suddenly, the wooden planks seemed just made of paper as they started to fall down and apart. People stomped fast down the stairs, before the room came down in a few seconds with the bed and the corpse. Luckily, there was nobody standing in the living room right below, as we always congregate in the kitchen. The termite colony showed the Navarra family who is the boss and who

tradotto dall'inglese da LORENZA SABATINO

I GIORNI DELLA BOSSA NOVA

São Paulo, Brasile, 2009

Il giorno del funerale della mia sorella maggiore, mia moglie mi aveva dato una dose di diuretici in più e il suo errore mi ha salvato la vita. Non è morto nessuno quando è crollata parte del primo piano, ma io ho settantacinque anni e un mucchio di acciacchi. Come avrei fatto a correre al piano di sotto alla stessa velocità dei bambini quando il pavimento, mangiato da migliaia di termiti, si è spaccato tremando come un terremoto?

Avrei dovuto vedere la salma, ma siccome c'era solo un bagno al piano terra e io dovevo usarlo ogni dieci minuti, abbiamo pensato tutti che era più sicuro se porgevo i miei omaggi a distanza e me ne stavo a sedere sul porticato.

Le termiti erano l'unica compagnia che Rá aveva da vecchia. Mangiavano, masticavano, si facevano strada nei vecchi pavimenti, nei mobili, negli armadi, scavavano sinistre gallerie, centimetro dopo centimetro, forse progettando di occupare la casa quando alla fine sarebbe stata abbandonata. Il crollo del primo piano durante la veglia di Rà è stato più sensazionale delle lacrime delle carpideiras — le donne che un tempo erano pagate per piangere ai funerali e renderli più struggenti. All'inizio abbiamo sentito uno schiocco e di colpo le assi di legno si sono messe a cadere come se fossero di carta, andando in pezzi. Gli altri si sono precipitati giù per le scale, prima che la stanza cedesse in pochi secondi portandosi dietro il letto e la morta. Siccome ci troviamo sempre in cucina, per fortuna nel soggiorno sotto la camera

inherits my sister's house.

Insects are like the criminals in this city. They rule and control everything. Thank God I don't need to go out and win my bread every day anymore. I remember a time when leaving the house in the morning had an exciting taste of discovery: the cold smell of rain, the constant drizzle in the winter, women wearing black gloves and skirts, the metallic noise of trams scratching the rails. Now we have a safety list instilled in our brains: don't take your debit card in your wallet to avoid being kidnapped; don't wear jewelry; don't drive with the windows opened or, instead of a breeze in your face, you will face a gun or a knife, your watch and cell phone will be gone in seconds. Streets are crowded, buses are noisy, rich people are snobs, and poverty had long lost its dignity.

"Felipe, Felipe," Rá told me the last time we saw each other: "Who, between the two of us, is going to close the family gates?"

After all four of our siblings were dead, the gates were the only prize we competed with each other for. As I was not in great shape, my angelic wife Emilia used to see her more often than I did and Rá never forgave me. "I am going to leave all my money to Emilia. She is the only one who loves me," she said proudly, her brown eyes opaque by cataracts.

I really couldn't care less about Rá's money. She was so attached to her coins that they might bring bad luck to whomever takes them. I am pretty sure she died in her bed, scrubbing the thumb and index finger constantly, the sign of counting money in her final hour.

"Auntie Rá was so scared, she didn't even have a husband or a child to pass the money on. She was lonely, the poor thing," my niece Mariana said.

She was always kind. I couldn't care less.

"Mariana, dear, can you bring me two slices of that chocolate cake I saw in the kitchen?"

"You know you shouldn't be eating cake."

"Today is a special day."

After the fall of the house, and after a cleaning

non c'era nessuno. La colonia di termiti ha fatto vedere alla famiglia Navarra chi è che comanda e chi avrebbe ereditato la casa di mia sorella.

Gli insetti in questa città sono come i criminali. Dominano e controllano tutto. Grazie a Dio non devo più uscire e guadagnarmi il pane ogni giorno. Ricordo un tempo in cui uscire di casa la mattina aveva un sapore elettrizzante di scoperta: l'odore freddo della pioggia, il piovischio costante in inverno, donne in guanti e gonna neri, il rumore metallico dei tram che raschiavano i binari.

Ora abbiamo una lista di accorgimenti impiantata nel cervello: non tenere il bancomat nel portafogli se vuoi evitare di essere rapito; non portare gioielli; non guidare con i finestrini abbassati altrimenti, invece della brezza, sulla faccia ti ritroverai una pistola o un coltello, l'orologio e il cellulare spariranno in pochi secondi. Le strade sono affollate, gli autobus rumorosi, i ricchi sono snob, e i poveri, ormai da tempo, hanno perso la loro dignità.

"Felipe, Felipe," mi aveva detto Rá l'ultima volta che ci eravamo visti: "Chi dei due chiuderà i battenti della famiglia?"

Dopo la morte dei nostri altri quattro fratelli, chiudere i battenti era l'unico premio per cui eravamo in competizione. Siccome non ero in splendida forma, quell'angelo di mia moglie Emilia la vedeva più spesso di me e Rá non me l'ha mai perdonato.

"Lascerò tutti i miei soldi a Emilia. È l'unica a volermi bene," aveva detto con orgoglio, gli occhi castani ormai opachi per via delle cataratte.

Dei soldi di Rá non poteva davvero fregarmene di meno. Era così attaccata ai suoi quattrini che va a finire che portavano sfortuna. Sono abbastanza sicuro che quando è morta a letto si stava sfregando pollice e indice, come a contare i soldi fino all'ultima ora.

"Zia Rá era così spaventata, non aveva neanche un marito o un figlio a cui lasciare i soldi. Era sola, la poveretta," ha detto mia nipote Mariana.

Lei era sempre gentile. A me non poteva fregare di meno.

crew was called to rescue the dignity of the dead, Rá was taken to the cemetery wake room where she stayed until the time of her funeral. The whole family, not more than twenty souls, remained all night, praying rosaries and sweating under the November humidity. She was buried in the morning after a quick ceremony, and I couldn't wait to go back to my air-conditioned Mercedes once we placed white roses on the fresh tomb. Rá was gone and I was left to close the gates.

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Chapter 2

Taubaté, State of São Paulo, 1940

My strongest memory of my father's death is the new outfit and shoes I got after his funeral. I was six and I had never had new clothes until that day, just handme-downs. I don't remember my father's face, just his hair, the color of copper, always cut very short. I know his hair was curly and abundant, because it is like mine, except mine is black as Mother's. He died of typhoid fever but the family always says it was of embarrassment because of his multiple gambling debts. Mother had to pay some of them afterwards, others were forgiven due to our situation – a thirty-nine-year-old widow with six children and a miserable pension of 250 réis a month. It could barely buy all the rice, beans, bananas and toucinho we needed to eat for the same period. So she decided to join her cousin Lorenzo in the city and change our lives forever. She has always been brave and adventurous and taking us to the unknown didn't seem a big deal at the time, at least for her. We were terrified but we needed clothes for the journey.

She used her last *réis* and her dignity to go to Armarinhos Garcia, the haberdasher at Rua São José. She bought the whole piece of a striped white and green cotton fabric, thread, and ugly green buttons to match.

"Green is the color of hope!" She said as she stomped into the kitchen that day, the big roll of fabric "Mariana, cara, potresti portarmi due fette di quella torta al cioccolato che ho visto in cucina?"

"Lo sai che non dovresti."

"Oggi è un giorno speciale."

Dopo il crollo della casa, e dopo la telefonata a un'impresa di pulizie per restituire dignità alla morta, Rá è stata trasferita all'obitorio del cimitero, dove è rimasta fino al momento del funerale. Tutta la famiglia, non più di venti anime, ha passato lì la notte, a recitare rosari e a sudare nell'umidità di novembre. L'hanno sepolta il mattino, dopo una rapida cerimonia, e io non vedevo l'ora di tornare all'aria condizionata della mia Mercedes una volta posate le rose bianche sulla tomba fresca. Rá se n'era andata, e a chiudere i battenti ero rimasto io.

Capitolo 2

Taubaté, Stato di São Paulo, 1940

Il ricordo più vivido che ho della morte di mio padre sono il completo nuovo e le scarpe che mi diedero dopo il suo funerale. Avevo sei anni e fino a quel giorno non avevo mai avuto vestiti nuovi, solo quelli dismessi. La faccia di mio padre non me la ricordo, ricordo solo i capelli, color rame, tagliati sempre molto corti. So che erano ricci e folti perché sono come i miei, solo che i miei sono neri come quelli di mia madre. Morì di tifo, ma in famiglia si dice sempre che in realtà morì di vergogna a causa dei tanti debiti di gioco. Mia madre in seguito dovette pagarne alcuni, altri furono annullati per la nostra situazione — una vedova di trentanove anni con sei figli e una misera pensione di 250 réis al mese. Così decise di raggiungere suo cugino Lorenzo in città, cambiando per sempre le nostre vite. È sempre stata impavida e avventurosa, e all'epoca trascinarci verso l'ignoto non sembrava chissà quale sacrificio, almeno per lei. Noi eravamo terrorizzati, ma ci servivano vestiti nuovi per il viaggio.

in her arms, her customary generous smile on her face.

"Probably nobody wanted the green stripes, I bet it was cheaper than the other colors", Rá said behind her back, while we were peeling oranges outside in the backyard. We would never dare say anything like that in front of Mother.

It took her and my older sister Maria a week to sew buttoned shirts and long shorts for the boys, just Décio and I. The girls – Maria, Rá, Lana and Gilda – had the same shirts and matching A-shaped skirts below the knees. We sold the big iron pots and the furniture that was not taken by creditors to my aunt Mariza, who also had become a widow years earlier. She lived in my old grandpa's house with her eight kids. With the money we bought the train tickets, three dozen mandarin oranges and plain crusty bread to eat during the trip.

A week prior to our big journey to the city, my new clothes were ready. I was too scared they would be damaged by my siblings. For three days I saved the parchment paper that came from the bakery. They used to wrap French baguettes in these soft, translucent sheets of paper. They were never large enough to protect the whole loaf of bread, but they kept its freshness and smell. With a few pieces of paper I was able to wrap my shorts and shirt. They looked like fancy packages just out of an upscale shop.

I cleaned the shoes every day with a rag and put them on the top of my wardrobe. These are the first recollections I have of my life in the house where I was born, a *sobrado* with blue large windows facing the church, from where my eyes always tried to reach the sky. Life as I know started in the city, and the *première* smelled of starch and coal from my mother's heavy flat iron preparing our travel outfits.

Usò gli ultimi *réis* e la sua dignità per andare da *Armarinhos Garcia*, il merciaio di *Rua São José*. Comprò un rotolo intero di stoffa di cotone a righe bianche e verdi, il filo e brutti bottoni verdi da abbinare.

"Il verde è il colore della speranza!" disse quel giorno entrando in cucina con il grande rotolo di stoffa tra le braccia e il suo solito sorriso buono.

"Si vede che nessuno le voleva quelle righe verdi, secondo me costavano meno degli altri colori", disse Rá alle sue spalle, mentre sbucciavamo le arance in giardino. Non avremmo mai osato dire una cosa del genere davanti alla mamma.

Lei e la sorella maggiore Maria ci misero una settimana per cucire camicie e calzoni alla zuava per i maschi, ovvero Décio e io. Le femmine — Maria, Rá, Lana e Gilda — avevano le stesse camicie, abbinate alle gonne scampanate che arrivavano sotto al ginocchio. Vendemmo le grandi pentole di ferro e i mobili che non erano finiti in mano ai creditori a mia zia Mariza, anche lei rimasta vedova anni prima. Viveva nella vecchia casa di mio nonno con i suoi otto figli. Con i soldi comprammo i biglietti del treno, tre dozzine di mandarini e del semplice pane casereccio da mangiare durante il viaggio.

Una settimana prima del nostro grande viaggio in città, i miei vestiti nuovi erano pronti. Avevo il terrore che i miei fratelli li sgualcissero. Per tre giorni misi da parte la carta oleata del fornaio. In quei fogli di carta morbida e semitrasparente si avvolgevano le baguette francesi. Non erano mai abbastanza grandi da coprire l'intero filone, ma ne conservavano la freschezza e il profumo. Riuscii ad avvolgere i calzoni e la camicia in qualche pezzo di carta. Sembravano confezioni di classe uscite da un negozio di lusso.

Ogni giorno pulivo le scarpe con uno straccio e le mettevo in cima all'armadio. Questi sono i primi ricordi che ho della mia vita nella casa in cui sono nato, un sobrado con grandi finestre azzurre rivolte verso la chiesa, da dove i miei occhi cercavano sempre di sbirciare il cielo. La vita per come la conosco iniziò in città, e la

Chapter 3

Taubaté, 1940

The third-class seats were small and very hard, just two wood planks, one for sitting and the other as a backboard. We got into the train, and I ran aboard first. I wanted to save seats to all of us together. But along the journey most of the passengers would stand up and walk around the carriages. It was impossible to seat in those torture chairs for more than half an hour. Now, when I think of it, I find the carriages of the poor much more social and livelier than the first class, where everybody was sitting comfortably, reading, and just whispering. We were telling jokes, laughing out loud, and sharing the food we could afford to bring.

As our journey progressed, we started talking to a small woman with rosy cheeks who shared her bag of bananas with us. They were *prata*, a quality of banana I had never tasted before: firm, smaller and not as sweet as the *nanica* we used to have at home. I don't remember how many I ate, but hours later, when we arrived in São Paulo, I had an upset stomach. When my sister Rá asked why, I lied and said the oranges we brought were too ripe and the bread was horrible.

Lana was fifteen at the time and the prettiest of my sisters. She inherited my father's hair color and her shiny curls fell over her shoulders like liquid copper. She was the only one who came up with green eyes and she stole Mother's full lips. Unlike Maria, Lana was pleasant, spoke softly and was delighted with the trip and the move, as she dreamed about all the window shopping she would do at *Mappin Stores*. The green striped skirt and blouse Mother sewed looked different on her than on the other Navarra girls. Men turned their heads as she passed, and I've heard my mother telling my aunt that she worried about Lana in the city.

"Can you imagine what's going to be of this one with all those hawks in the city, used to easy women and première odorava di amido e del carbone contenuto nel pesante ferro da stiro con cui mia madre preparava i vestiti per il viaggio.

Capitolo 3

Taubaté, 1940

I sedili di terza classe erano piccoli e molto duri: due assi di legno, una per sedersi e l'altra come spalliera. Quando era ora di salire, fui io a correre per primo sul treno. Volevo occupare dei posti vicini per tutti. Ma durante il viaggio la maggior parte dei passeggeri si alzava e camminava per le carrozze. Era impossibile rimanere seduti per più di mezz'ora su quelle macchine da tortura. A pensarci adesso, trovo le carrozze dei poveri molto più di compagnia e vivaci della prima classe, dove tutti stavano seduti comodamente, leggendo o al massimo sussurrando. Noi raccontavamo barzellette, ridevamo ad alta voce e offrivamo agli altri il cibo che avevamo potuto permetterci.

Mentre il viaggio avanzava, iniziammo a parlare con una donna minuta e dalle guance rosee, che ci porse un sacchetto di banane. Erano prata, banane di una qualità che non avevo mai assaggiato prima: sode, più piccole e meno dolci delle nanica che mangiavamo a casa. Non ricordo quante ne mangiai, ma ore dopo, arrivati a São Paulo, avevo lo stomaco sottosopra. Quando mia sorella Rá mi chiese il motivo, mentii dicendo che i mandarini che avevamo portato erano troppo maturi e che il pane era terribile.

Ai tempi Lana aveva quindici anni ed era la più bella delle mie sorelle. Aveva preso il colore dei capelli di mio padre e i riccioli lucenti le ricadevano sulle spalle come rame liquido. Era l'unica ad avere gli occhi verdi e aveva rubato le labbra piene dalla mamma. A differenza di Maria, Lana era simpatica, parlava a bassa voce e, sognando già di ammirare le vetrine dei negozi *Mappin*, era entusiasta del viaggio e del cambiamento. La gonna e

with no morals? I have to find her a husband very soon."

Lana had different plans. She wanted to find a job as a secretary, not a husband. A job like that was exactly what Mother feared, as she thought it would deliver her daughter to the hawks. My mother was a woman born in 1901, so she never believed in education or work for her daughters. She encouraged us boys to stay in school, as we would one day need a good job to support a family.

"But why should women have to study?", she questioned. "Elementary school is what we need to add and subtract at the grocery store and read signs in the street, maybe read a magazine or two. Women spend their days going from the stove to the laundry!"

Rá was just a year younger than Maria and both had already quit school for good. They spent their days helping Mother to cook, scrub the floors – "many, many times until they look like a mirror" – and take care of us, until they found their respective husbands. On the train they sat together, enduring the torture of the hard seats for most of the time. Maria still cried every now and then, and Rá tried to console her.

"I am a spinster now, I will never leave this miserable life", Maria cried. "I was so close to getting married!"

Rá, on the other hand, never imagined finding a husband. I don't think she ever had a boyfriend, or even had thoughts about it. She was always the one who said the wrong things at the wrong time. Mother was always scolding her for looking ugly and strange like a groundhog. "She's like a marmota", she used to say, and "marmota" became her nickname among us. She was the smallest and skinniest, never weighting more than 100 pounds. She had my father's copper hair and freckles all over her body. She was so mortified by her freckles that she never wore short sleeves, even when it was 100 degrees in the shade.

"It looks like a disease," she used to say about the freckles. Half of the family had the same skin, but la camicetta a righe verdi che aveva cucito la mamma le stavano in modo diverso dalle altre ragazze della famiglia Navarra. Gli uomini si giravano quando passava e avevo sentito mia madre dire a zia che l'idea di Lana in città la preoccupava. "Ti immagini cosa le potrà succedere con tutti quegli avvoltoi immorali della città, abituati alle ragazze facili? Le devo trovare marito al più presto".

Lana aveva progetti diversi. Voleva un lavoro da segretaria, non un marito. Era proprio quello che temeva la mamma, perché così la figlia sarebbe finita dritta nelle grinfie degli avvoltoi. Mia madre era nata nel 1901: non ha mai creduto nello studio o nel lavoro per le sue figlie. Incoraggiava noi maschi a non lasciare la scuola, perché un giorno ci sarebbe servito un buon lavoro per mantenere la famiglia.

"Perché mai le donne dovrebbero studiare?", diceva. "Le elementari servono per fare le addizioni e le sottrazioni quando vai a fare la spesa e per leggere i cartelli in strada, o al massimo qualche rivista. Dai fornelli al bucato: è così che le donne passano la giornata!".

Rá aveva solo un anno meno di Maria ed entrambe avevano già lasciato la scuola. Le giornate le passavano ad aiutare la mamma a cucinare, a sfregare il pavimento — "molte, molte volte finché non sembra uno specchio" — e a badare a noi, finché non avrebbero trovato un marito. In treno sedevano insieme, riuscendo per la maggior parte del tempo a sopportare la tortura dei sedili duri. Maria ogni tanto si metteva a piangere e Rá cercava di consolarla.

"Ora che sono zitella la mia vita sarà orribile", gemeva Maria. "Ce l'avevo quasi fatta a sposarmi!".

Rá, invece, non ha mai immaginato di trovare marito. Non credo abbia mai avuto un fidanzato, né che ci abbia mai pensato. Era quella che diceva sempre le cose sbagliate al momento sbagliato. La mamma la rimproverava di continuo perché era brutta e stramba come una marmota. "Sembra una marmota", diceva sempre, e per noi fratelli marmota divenne il suo

nobody gave a second thought about concealing them.

Maria's face was also covered with freckles and Louis, her boyfriend, used to say she was the most beautiful girl of the *Paraíba Valley*. They were introduced to each other the year before, at the Military Academy Ball, a big "find your own husband" kind of seasonal event in Taubaté. He was the son of a pharmacist who was there with his tenant brother. Louis and Maria started a proper courtship. He visited us every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, sitting on the living room sofa with Maria. My mother used to sit on a chair right in front of them. She invariably brought a plate with fresh pineapple slices as a snack and strategically placed it between the couple. Mother had also a bowl with raw beans in her hands, and she spent the next hour in silence, threshing them while they talked.

Unable to soften Mother's heart, Louis – who was nice but not particularly good looking or charming – tried to gain our sympathy. He used to bring us caramels in a brown paper bag every time he came to see Maria. But one day, it was probably Decio's tenth birthday, came the most unexpected miracle: he gave a can of condensed milk to each one of us. We had never had it, not even on Christmas Day, when the grocery stores' shelves were full of *Leite Moça*, destined to other family's special desserts.

The can was the size of a teacup, round, the label with the standing Nestlè maid – all beauty and European health – holding her bucket. That can was a symbol of foreign lands, their grounds covered with snow, that I would probably never see. Those images were magical in my little mind. We had to use a can opener to pierce the can and plop! The soft custard-like cream would fill the small hole, all its sweetness spreading over the top of the can. The first lick was the best and its intense sweetness used to make me shiver.

I can see my family on that train very clearly now. Mother laughing loudly, chatting and all my brothers and sisters dressed elegantly in the same colors, soprannome. Era la più bassa e la più magra, non ha mai superato i quarantacinque chili. Aveva i capelli ramati di mio padre e lentiggini su tutto il corpo. Le lentiggini la imbarazzavano così tanto che non metteva le maniche corte, neanche quando c'erano quaranta gradi all'ombra.

"Sembra una malattia", diceva delle lentiggini. Metà della famiglia aveva la stessa pelle, ma nessuno si preoccupava mai di coprirsi.

Anche il viso di Maria era cosparso di lentiggini e Louis, il suo ragazzo, diceva sempre che era la ragazza più bella della Valle del Paraíba. Si erano conosciuti l'anno prima, al Ballo dell'Accademia Militare, che a Taubaté era il grande evento della stagione per le ragazze in cerca di marito. Era il figlio di un farmacista e si trovava lì con il fratello tenente. Louis e Maria iniziarono un vero corteggiamento. Lui veniva a trovarci ogni sabato e domenica pomeriggio, se ne stava seduto sul divano del soggiorno con Maria. Mia madre si sedeva sulla sedia davanti a loro. Lo spuntino che portava sempre era un piatto di ananas fresco tagliato a fette, e lo posizionava strategicamente in mezzo alla coppia. Poi, con la ciotola di fagioli crudi tra le mani, trascorreva l'ora successiva in silenzio, e si metteva a sgranarli mentre loro due parlavano.

Siccome non riusciva a intenerire la mamma, Louis, che era simpatico ma non particolarmente bello o affascinante, cercò di conquistare la nostra simpatia. Ogni volta che veniva a trovare Maria ci portava le caramelle in un sacchetto di carta marrone. Ma un giorno, forse era il decimo compleanno di Decio, arrivò il miracolo più sorprendente: regalò a ognuno di noi una lattina di latte condensato. Non l'avevamo mai bevuto, nemmeno a Natale, quando gli scaffali dei negozi traboccavano di *Leite Moça*, destinato ai dolci delle altre famiglie.

La lattina era grande quanto una tazza da tè, rotonda, e sull'etichetta stava in posa la signora della Nestlè— tutta salute e bellezza europee — con in mano un mastello. Era il simbolo di terre straniere, di campi our small-town concept. We were naïve but hopeful.

I had no idea of what was going on, but now it's so clear how big the challenge was for us, and especially for Mother, who would never admit a failure or a mistake. She was always right and always the boss. Even after we grew up and left the house, we kept this fearful respect for her.

coperti di neve che in tutta probabilità non avrei mai visto. Quelle immagini erano magiche nella mia mente di bambino. Per bucare la lattina dovevamo usare un apriscatole e plop! Una crema morbida come quella pasticciera erompeva dal forellino e tutta la sua dolcezza si spalmava sopra il coperchio. La prima leccata era la migliore, e l'intensità di quella dolcezza mi dava la pelle d'oca.

Ora riesco a vedere con estrema chiarezza la mia famiglia su quel treno. La mamma che rideva sonoramente e chiacchierava, e tutti i miei fratelli e sorelle vestiti eleganti, con gli stessi colori, un'idea tipica della provincia. Eravamo ingenui ma fiduciosi.

Non avevo idea di cosa stesse per succedere, ma ora è chiaro quanto fosse grande per noi quella sfida, e soprattutto per la mamma, che non era incline ad ammettere fallimenti o errori. Era lei a comandare, e aveva sempre ragione. Mantenemmo questa sorta di timore reverenziale nei suoi confronti anche dopo essere cresciuti e aver lasciato la casa.

Translator's Note

The writer Lorenza Sabatino and I found two strong points of connection over the first of our many video calls: an author and two types of insects. In her story, "Le Tarme", that I was about to start translating, I had found echoes of Natalia Ginzburg, my favorite female Italian author. Lorenza laughed and said that Ginzburg is actually her most-preferred writer too. That first literary bond cemented our desire to do our best to honor each other's writing.

Later, we both realized that our respective stories used insects as metaphors. The title of her story is "The Moth" – "Le Tarme" in Italian, and of course these animals play an interesting part in her narrative. On my side, in the chapter that she translated into Italian, one of the most unexpected scenes involves a colony of termites. This coincidence with insects may be even funny, but it served as a starting point in our conversations to open possibilities of collaborations, as we both agreed that we would like to keep translating each other's work and discovering more common ground.

Our partnership at a distance was also interesting in the way we found solutions together for some language dilemmas. Working in tandem to translate each other's work was a literary adventure, a fascinating task of recreating a narrative. I was writing her words in English while I still could hear the Italian in my mind, trying my best to preserve its unique musicality. I searched for words who could match her enigmatic style in this ghost story. I found interesting links in my language repertoire, trying to identify emotions that I share in Italian and English, my two most used languages, despite neither of these being my native one.

After finishing this project, I truly believe that translating is a fundamental contribution to my own writing, an essential activity, fundamental to understanding myself, as I am a product of different cultures and sounds.

LORENZA SABATINO

LE TARME

Era il 23 novembre quando Don Silvestro mi avvicinò. Non mettevo piede in quella chiesa da quando avevo lasciato la città, vent'anni prima.

Era contento di rivedermi e di sapere che ero tornata per restare. Gli chiesi se in parrocchia ci fossero gruppi di volontariato, poiché aiutare gli altri avrebbe aiutato me a riprendere contatti con quel posto che avevo abbandonato anni prima.

Don Silvestro mi rispose di sì, e mi diede appuntamento per il giorno dopo.

I bambini della parrocchia andavano dai dieci ai quindici anni ed erano tutti stranieri. Dopo la prima lezione, passai a ringraziare Don Silvestro in ufficio. Lui mi chiese se avessi conosciuto Nikolaj, e io annuii.

"Sua madre ha perso il lavoro," disse, "appena la settimana scorsa".

Si alzò dalla sedia al di là della scrivania e fece per salutarmi.

"Don Silvestro," dissi. "Mi sono appena trasferita e non sono quasi mai in casa. Mi farebbe comodo una mano. Potrebbe chiedergliela per me?"

Don Silvestro glielo chiese, e lei rispose di sì.

Così Agata divenne la custode e la prima ospite della mia nuova casa. Agata non aveva cellulare, solo telefono di casa. Così montai in casa un telefono fisso anch'io.

La sua riconoscenza la vidi nelle pietanze che mi preparò la sera in cui le dissi che avevo lasciato il mio compagno, nella cura con cui stirava le lenzuola e nel suo insistere per restare a lavorare un'ora in più. Io la

translated from the italian by INES RODRIGUES

THE MOTH

It was the 23rd of November when Don Silvestro approached me. I hadn't set foot in that church since leaving town twenty years before.

He was happy to see me again and to learn that I was back to stay. I asked him if there were groups of volunteers in the parish, since helping others would help me to reestablish contact with that place I had abandoned years ago.

Don Silvestro said yes and gave me an assignment for the next day.

The children in the parish ranged in age from ten to fifteen years old and they were all foreigners. After the first lesson, I stopped by the office to thank Don Silvestro. He greeted me as he stood up from the seat behind the desk. He asked me if I had met Nikolaj, and I nodded.

"His mother lost her job," he said, "just last week."

"Don Silvestro", I said. "I've just moved here and I'm almost never at home. I wouldn't mind some help. Could you ask her if she's interested?"

Don Silvestro asked her, and she said yes.

That's how Agata became the housekeeper and the first guest in my new home. Agata didn't have a cell phone, only a landline. So, I set up a landline in my house as well.

I saw her gratitude in the dishes she prepared for me the evening I told her I had left my partner; in her care ironing my sheets; or in her insistence on staying at work an extra hour. I used to escort her to the door, accompagnavo alla porta dicendole che era quasi ora di cena e che i bambini la stavano aspettando.

"Saresti una buona madre," mi disse una sera mentre andava via.

Ben presto capii che se Don Silvestro poteva soprassedere sulla scelta di non sposarsi, su quella di non avere figli proprio non ci riusciva. Gli avevo spiegato più volte le ragioni per cui avevo interrotto la convivenza con Filippo, ma lui indagava, sempre più a fondo, conscio che ci fosse qualcosa che non ero disposta a dirgli. Un giorno mi chiese se non volessi dirlo a lui o non volessi dirlo a Dio.

"Non mi sentivo pronta a essere madre, e quando stava per succedere ho fatto in modo che non succedesse," risposi.

Lui rimase in silenzio.

"Lo stai dicendo a me o a Dio?" chiese, poi.

"A te," risposi.

"Allora non puoi ancora prendere l'eucarestia," disse.

Dopo aver confessato a Don Silvestro il motivo del nostro allontanamento, fu quasi naturale dirlo anche ad Agata. Ero appena tornata a casa e lei stava cambiando le lenzuola.

Mi salutò e, subito, mi chiese di Filippo.

"Perché non lo chiami e gli chiedi cosa fa a Natale?"

Ma sapeva che non lo avrei fatto.

"Hai ancora tutte quelle foto con lui," indicò il cassetto della toeletta. "Sono sempre in ordine diverso. Significa che le guardi".

Poi sedette sulle lenzuola tese. Disse: "Controllo che non ci siano quegli insetti che mangiano i mobili. Come si chiamano?"

"Tarme," risposi, poi sedetti sull'altra sponda del letto. "Filippo... io ho fatto una cosa alle sue spalle".

Agata batté le mani.

"Un altro uomo!" disse, e scosse la testa.

telling her it was almost dinner time, that her children were waiting.

"You would make a good mother," she told me one evening as she was leaving.

Pretty soon I understood that even though Don Silvestro could accept the idea of someone choosing not to get married, he couldn't accept those refusing to have children. I explained to him many times all the reasons why I broke up with Filippo. But he kept probing, always deeper and deeper, certain that there was something else I wasn't willing to tell him. One day he asked me if it was him I didn't want to tell, or God.

"I didn't feel I was ready to be a mother and when it was about to happen, I made sure it didn't," I said.

He remained silent.

"Are you telling me or telling God?" he asked.

"I'm telling you."

"Then you still can't take communion."

After confessing to Don Silvestro the reason for our estrangement, it felt almost natural to tell Agata as well. She was just changing the sheets when I got home. She said hello and immediately asked about Filippo:

"Why don't you call him and ask what he's doing for Christmas?"

She knew I wouldn't.

"You still have all those photos with him in them," she said, pointing at the vanity drawer. "They are always in a different order. It means you keep looking at them."

Then she sat down on the taut sheets. "I've been checking just to make sure there are none of those insects that chew on our clothes. How do you call them?"

"Moths," I said. "Or maybe termites? I don't know."

Then I sat on the other side of the bed. "Filippo... I did something behind his back."

Agata clapped hands.

Io le dissi di no, e lei capì che si trattava di qualcosa di più grave.

Evitai di raccontarle i particolari dell'operazione. Quando finii di spiegarle, si era ritratta fino al bordo del letto.

"È quasi ora di cena e i bambini mi aspettano," disse.

Il pomeriggio del 23 dicembre, quando tornai a casa, lei era già andata via. Così cucinai della pasta, ma appena fui sul punto di mettermi a tavola il telefono squillò. Era lei.

"Volevo dirti che non vengo più," disse. "Ho lasciato le chiavi nel cassetto dove tieni le foto con Filippo".

La sua voce mi colpì il volto dalla cornetta. Rimasi in silenzio, e lei continuò.

"Non è per quello che mi ha detto," disse. "Non ne sono contenta, ma sono affari suoi".

"E perché, allora?" chiesi.

"L'ultima volta che sono venuta, ho visto qualcosa" disse. "Non voglio parlarne".

Respirai nella cornetta, e lei fece altrettanto.

"Per favore, non chiamarmi più," disse. "Non voglio più entrare in casa tua".

Tornai al tavolo. Era poco lontano dal mobiletto su cui avevo installato il telefono, ma gli avevo dato le spalle per tutto il tempo. Ero ferita e dispiaciuta, troppo confusa per notare subito la forchetta già immersa negli spaghetti. Erano accumulati al centro del piatto, come se qualcuno li avesse tutti allontanati dai bordi. No, non tutti. Della porzione era rimasta solo la metà.

Mi dissi che non era possibile, e che il trasferimento doveva avermi stressata un bel po'.

Per questo, quando mi sedetti e impugnai la forchetta, sentendola tiepida mi dissi che dovevo aver fatto confusione. Agata doveva avermi chiamata mentre avevo già iniziato a pranzare.

Mi misi a mangiare.

"Another man!" she said, shaking her head.

I said no, and she understood it was something more serious.

I avoided telling her the details of the procedure. When I finished explaining, she had retreated to the edge of the bed.

"It's almost dinner time and the children are waiting for me," she said.

In the afternoon of December 23rd, when I returned home, she was already gone. So, I cooked my pasta but, when I was ready to sit down to eat, the phone rang. It was her.

"I want to tell you that I'm not coming anymore," she said. "I left the keys in the vanity drawer where you keep your photos with Filippo."

Her voice hit my face straight from the receiver. I remained silent as she continued.

"It's not because of what you told me," she said. "I don't approve of it, but it's your own business."

"So, why then?" I asked.

"Last time I came, I saw something," she said. "I don't want to talk about it."

I breathed into the receiver, and she did the same.

"Please, don't call me anymore," she said. "I don't want to be in your house again."

I walked back to the table. It was not far from the cabinet where I had installed the phone, but my back was turned to it the whole time. I was hurt, regretful, too confused to notice the fork, already immersed in the spaghetti that was gathered in the center of the plate, as if someone had pulled it all away from the edges. No, not all of it. Only half of my portion was left. I told myself it was not possible, that the recent change of house must have stressed me out quite a bit.

When I sat down and held the fork, it felt warm, and I told myself I must have been confused. Agata must have called me after I had already started my lunch.

Controllai che Agata avesse lasciato davvero le chiavi nella toeletta. Le foto erano di lato, come al solito. Le chiavi, invece, erano proprio al centro. Attorno, le tarme.

Il giorno dopo cucinai il pesce, lo condii e lo misi in forno. Lavai i piatti del giorno prima, coprii il letto alla buona, aprii le finestre. Poi andai a fare una doccia.

Ero certa di aver chiuso il rubinetto dopo aver lavato i piatti: è un gesto che si fa e basta. Eppure, sentivo dal lavandino della cucina l'acqua scorrere e scorrere, e dal mobile che nascondeva i tubi ne scorreva anche altra. Uscii in fretta dalla doccia e raggiunsi il mobiletto: un tubo era incrinato ed era il 24 dicembre. Quando riuscii a staccare l'acqua, l'accappatoio mi si era attaccato addosso e il pavimento era un pantano.

Natale: la mia tavola era apparecchiata per uno.

Camminai nell'acqua fino alla camera da letto e scelsi un tailleur per la messa. Pensai alle tarme nel cassetto della toeletta, e pensai che le foto di Filippo a quell'ora dovevano essersele già mangiate.

In chiesa arrivai un po' in ritardo, ma mi parve durare molto poco. Quando finì, tutti si fecero il segno della croce e andarono in pace. Don Silvestro si fece togliere i paramenti dorati dai chierichetti e venne verso di me, un po' sorrideva. Mi chiese cosa pensassi della predica, io inventai un complimento.

"Agata si è licenziata," dissi, poi.

Lui non sembrò sorpreso.

"Agata si è licenziata," ripeté, "perché è una donna superstiziosa. Lasciala andare".

Allora ci pensai un'ultima volta e poi la lasciai andare. Fu allora che mi accorsi che non m'importava davvero e che avevo perso di più.

"Anche se bisogna ricordare," disse Don Silvestro, "che tutti dovremo rispondere di quello che abbiamo fatto".

Io sentii un moto nella pancia, come se avessi

I began to eat.

Later, I checked to see if Agata had actually left the keys in the dresser. The photos were pushed to one side, as usual. The keys, though, were right in the middle, surrounded by moths.

The next day, I cooked the fish, seasoned it, and put it in the oven. I washed the dishes from the day before, roughly threw the coverlet over the bed, opened the windows. Then I went to take a shower.

I was sure I'd turned off the tap after washing the dishes: it's a gesture you just do, that's it, basta. Nevertheless, I heard water running and running in the kitchen sink, and even more water spilling from the cabinet concealing the pipes. I stepped out of the shower in a hurry, before pulling open the cabinet: one of the pipes was cracked, and it was Christmas Eve. By the time I managed to stop the flood, my bathrobe was clinging to my body, and the floor was a swamp.

Christmas. My table was set for one.

I walked through the flooded rooms to the bedroom and picked out an outfit for Christmas mass. I thought about the moths in the drawer and imagined that, at that time, Filippo's photos would have been already devoured.

I was a little late for church and the service didn't seem to last long. When it was over, everyone left peacefully after making the sign of the cross. Don Silvestro accepted the altar boys' help to remove his golden vestments, then walked towards me with a faint smile. He asked what I thought of the sermon. I made up a compliment.

"Agata has quit," I said, after.

He didn't seem surprised.

"Agata quit," he repeated, "because she's a superstitious woman. Let her go."

I still gave it a last thought and then I let her go. That's when I realized it didn't bother me that much, I had been through worse.

mangiato male.

Quando tornai a casa, l'acqua aveva iniziato a puzzare. Anche se la tavola era apparecchiata, non avevo cucinato. Diedi uno sguardo al forno e l'occhio dell'orata mi restituì lo sguardo morto. A guardare meglio attraverso il vetro scuro ebbi la sensazione che ne mancasse un pezzo. Quando aprii il forno mi accorsi che la carne non c'era più. Era rimasta la lisca. E la testa con le branchie aperte non respirava, anche se la casa era piena d'acqua.

Chiusi le finestre e m'infilai sotto le coperte. Il piumone odorava di detersivo alla viola.

Mentre mi addormentavo ripensai al Gesù bambino esposto sui gradini dell'altare. Durante la funzione lo avevo visto da lontano, eppure in quel momento, con gli occhi che si rovesciavano come quando ci si addormenta, mi sembrava di starlo guardando da vicino. Aveva davvero le labbra un po' livide? Erano socchiuse e senza controllo dei muscoli? E gli occhi, quegli occhi erano davvero rovesciati sotto le palpebre?

Il bambino aveva lo stesso profumo delle mie lenzuola.

Mi svegliai e guardai l'altro lato del letto. Stesi le braccia e allungai le gambe sull'altra piazza. Quando mi accorsi che era tiepida, per un attimo, uno soltanto, mi parve di vedere una figura sgusciare fuori dalla porta. Rimasi con la schiena bloccata, bloccato anche il viso in un'espressione d'indifferenza fuori posto. La finestra era di nuovo aperta.

Mi alzai in fretta dal letto, chiusi la porta della camera e pensai che quella notte avrei dormito sul divano.

Il primo mestruo dopo una gravidanza arriva dopo 4-6 settimane e dicono che si chiami capoparto. Così disse il medico dopo l'operazione, ma era una specie di doppia negazione, la dimostrazione di un teorema per assurdo. Il mio non si sarebbe chiamato capoparto, e sarebbe arrivato dopo 20 giorni.

"Even if you must remember", said Don Silvestro, "that we all need to be accountable for our deeds."

I felt a churning in my stomach, as if I had swallowed something bad.

When I returned home, the water smelled funny. Even though the table was set, I hadn't cooked anything. I looked in the oven. The bream's eye returned my dead gaze. Looking more carefully through the dark oven glass, I had the impression that a piece of the fish was missing. When I opened the oven door, I realized there was no meat left. Only the backbone remained. And the head with the open gills, not breathing anymore, even though the house was full of water.

I closed all the windows and slipped under the bed covers. The comforter smelled of lavender detergent.

As I was falling asleep, I thought again about the baby Jesus displayed on the altar steps. During the service I had seen Him from a distance, yet at that moment, with my eyes rolling back in my head, the way they do when you fall asleep, I felt I was seeing him from up close. Did his lips really look a little pale? Were they ajar, with no muscle control? And the eyes, were those eyes really rolled up under his lids?

The baby and my sheets smelled the same.

I woke up and looked over at the other side of the bed. I stretched my arms and legs over that side. Just as I realized it was warm, for one minute, one single minute, I thought I saw a figure sneaking out of the door. I remained still, my spine frozen. Frozen too was my face, with an expression of indifference, like being out of place. Again, the window was open.

 \ensuremath{I} got up, closed the bedroom door, and decided to sleep on the sofa that night.

The first menstrual period after childbirth comes after about 4 or 6 weeks, and they say it's called capoparto. That's what the doctor said after the procedure, but it was a sort of double negative, the proof

Ma quel Natale, con l'acqua che aveva ripreso a scorrere, pensavo a quello che mi avevano tolto da corpo e a dove fosse andato a finire. Forse era diventato poltiglia, forse un fiore. Forse era l'acqua che m'impantanava, il vento che apriva e chiudeva le mie finestre.

Mi svegliai il giorno dopo con il mal di stomaco. Il pavimento era lercio e quel che restava del pesce era in forno ormai da due giorni. Non potevo fare la doccia. Così, mi dissi che avrei chiamato un idraulico dopo colazione. Avrei solo dovuto ritrovare il suo biglietto da visita. Lo cercai per quasi un'ora, poi lo trovai nello svuota-tasche all'ingresso.

Sul fondo c'era anche un biglietto con su dipinto un grande occhio azzurro, e la dicitura "Medium". Impilai i biglietti da visita e quello con l'occhio lo misi in cima, poi chiamai l'idraulico. Non rispose alla prima chiamata, non rispose alla seconda, neanche alla terza.

Così mi trovai di nuovo sola, e per sopperire a quel senso di solitudine pensai: perché no. Perché non provare a chiamare la medium.

Una voce rispose al primo squillo. La medium mi disse che sarebbe passata due giorni dopo. Io, prima di riagganciare, mi ricordai di avvisarla: avrebbe avuto bisogno di un paio di ciabatte, ché le tubature perdevano a fasi alterne. Allora cambiò idea, disse che sarebbe venuta il giorno dopo.

Si portò le ciabatte, degli infradito viola. Aveva i capelli biondi e uno spazio che le separava i denti – tutti i denti, non solo quelli davanti.

Subito mi chiese da dove venisse l'acqua. Io capii, e le risposi che avevo abortito il mese prima. "Penso che il fantasma di mio figlio mi stia perseguitando," dissi anche questo.

Allora montò un porta incenso in legno, ne accese una stecca e iniziò a camminare per casa. Quando ebbe finito, tornò in cucina e si accomodò sul divano. Indicò of a theorem by contradiction. He said mine wouldn't be called capoparto and it should arrive after twenty days.

At Christmas though, with the water running again, I thought about what had been taken out of my body and where it could have ended up. Maybe it had become pulp, maybe a flower. Maybe it was the water that had flooded me, or the breeze opening and closing my windows.

I woke up the day after with a stomachache. The floor was filthy and whatever was left from the fish had been in the oven for two days at that point. I couldn't take a shower. So, I reminded myself I'd call the plumber after breakfast. I only had to find his business card. I looked for it for almost an hour, then I found it in the tray by the entrance hall.

At the bottom, there was also a card with a picture of a big blue eye and the word "Medium" written on it. I stacked all the business cards and placed the one with the blue eye on the top before calling the plumber. He didn't answer on the first call, nor did he pick up the second, or the third.

I found myself alone again and, to compensate that lonesome feeling, I thought why not call the medium?

On the first ring, a voice answered. The medium told me she would stop by in two days. Before I hung up, I warned her that she would need a pair of flip-flops because the pipes were leaking on and off. Then she changed her mind, telling me she would come the next day.

She brought some purple flip flops. She had blond hair and a gap between her teeth – all her teeth, not just the front ones.

She immediately asked me where all the water came from. I understood. I told her I'd had an abortion the month before. I also said "I think my child's ghost is following me."

She then assembled a wooden incense holder, lit a stick, and started walking around the house holding it.

la bottiglia di vino che avevo comprato per la vigilia di Capodanno. Io presi due calici, li riempii e lei sollevò il suo.

Io la imitai. Rimanemmo in silenzio finché non si accese una sigaretta, ancora così, col calice in mano.

"In questa casa non c'è nessun fantasma," disse. "Ci sei solo tu".

Poi lo fece toccare col mio, e in quel momento l'acqua smise di scorrere.

Mentre sfilettavo il pesce per il giorno dopo, sentii che il momento era arrivato. Il mio utero aveva cominciato a contrarsi e qualcosa aveva bagnato il salvaslip. Andai in bagno che già una fitta dalla pelvi mi era risalita nella bocca dello stomaco. Dovetti fermarmi a respirare, appoggiata al lavandino, mentre aspettavo che passasse. Ma passò solo per un attimo, e quello dopo era già ricominciata, e stavolta bruciava anche a partire dalla schiena, dal fondo, risalendo e allo stesso tempo con una certa tensione a scendere.

Mi sedetti sul water strofinandomi la schiena. I respiri profondi non facevano che aumentare il senso di nausea, e vomitai al lato del gabinetto. Il sangue sugli slip era scuro. Tutto normale: il dottore ne aveva parlato dopo l'operazione.

Tentai di distendere i muscoli, ma i crampi s'infittivano e la sensazione d'avere un mostro che mi rovistava gli organi con le unghie mi si impiantò nella testa. La fitta continuò, si alzò ancora come una curva, ancora e ancora.

Alla fine raggiunse il picco, e io ero piegata in due. Quando il dolore iniziò a diminuire, sentii qualcosa lasciare il mio corpo. Era il fegato? Forse lo stomaco. Avrebbe potuto essere qualsiasi organo. Guardai tra le gambe e vidi colare fibre e sangue. Poi un tonfo nell'acqua, e il dolore scomparve.

Sul fondo del water c'era una massa grigiastra e involuta. Un fegato, un cervello. Poi notai quella specie di cordone di sangue, un filamento che mi abbandonava il corpo con un ultimo sbalzo. When she was done, she went back to the kitchen, and finally sat on the sofa. She pointed to the bottle of wine I had bought for New Year's Eve. I picked up two glasses, filled them up, and she raised hers.

I did the same, imitating her. We remained silent until she lit a cigarette, still like that, glass in hand.

"There's no ghost in this house," she said. "There's only you."

Then she touched my glass with hers and, in that moment, the water stopped overflowing.

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While I cut the fish in filets for the next day, I felt the moment had arrived. My uterus started to contract, and something wetted my panty-liner. I went to the bathroom, as a twinge from my pelvis was already rising to the pit of my stomach. I had to hold my breath, leaning on the sink, waiting for it to pass. It passed only for a moment though. The next minute it was already starting over again, and this time it also burned all the way from my spine, from the bottom, rising and, at the same time, with a certain tension, going down.

I sat down on the toilet rubbing my back. My deep breaths did nothing but increase the sense of nausea, and I ended up throwing up next to the toilet. The blood on my panty-liners was dark. All normal, the doctor had warned me about that before the procedure.

I tried to stretch my muscles, but the cramps intensified and the sensation of having a monster rummaging through my organs with its nails was instilled in my head. The twinge continued, rising again in a curve, over and over.

In the end, when it reached its peak, I was doubled over in agony. When the pain finally started to subside, I felt there was something leaving my body. Was it the liver? Maybe my stomach. It could have been any organ. I looked between my legs and saw fibers and blood dripping. After that, a splash in the water, and the pain was gone.

Una placenta.

Mi lavai in cucina, mi addormentai sul divano, e quando fui sveglia era mattina.

Dopo giorni, mi sforzai di riaccendere il cellulare. Ignorai le notifiche e tornai a dormire.

Era pomeriggio quando squillò il cellulare. Il pesce puzzava dal ripiano della cucina. Era lì dal giorno prima. Tutto sembrava andato a male, io prima del pesce inacidito, delle tarme che si accalcavano una sull'altra e si rovesciavano con l'addome esposto nel mio cassetto e poi morivano, marcivano e restavano là, si mangiavano il mobile e diventavano il mobile, ci facevano i buchi e li riempivano sempre loro.

Mi portai il cellulare al volto. Sullo schermo c'era il nome di Filippo. Strizzai gli occhi e poi risposi.

Non dissi pronto, solo respirai nella cornetta. Anche lui fece lo stesso.

"Mi chiedevo se ci avessi pensato," disse infine. Una punta di entusiasmo mi s'installò al centro del petto.

"Insomma, è passato un po' di tempo," disse.
"Potremmo vederci stasera. Che ne dici di passare?"

La malinconia si fece spazio nell'entusiasmo.

"Tornare a casa, dici?" chiesi.

"Per stasera, sì. E per tutto il tempo che vuoi".

Rimasi in silenzio, e il suo respiro fece da contrappunto al mio.

"Allora? Che ne dici?" fece lui.

Dicono che la nostalgia sia sentirsi felici e tristi insieme.

"Ci vediamo stasera, sì," dissi.

Feci le valigie in fretta, e poco prima di uscire ricordai di non aver svuotato i cassetti. Tornai alla toeletta e feci per prendere le foto di Filippo. Qualche tarma era ancora nel cassetto, camminava sulle chiavi. Lasciai lì anche le mie. A grey, convoluted mass lay at the bottom of the toilet. A liver, a brain. Then I observed a kind of bloody cord, a filament leaving my body with a last jolt.

A placenta.

I washed myself, fell asleep on the couch. When I woke up it was morning. Days later, I forced myself to turn my cell phone back on. I ignored the notifications and went back to sleep.

It was afternoon when the phone rang. The fish smelled bad on the kitchen counter. It had been there since the day before. Everything seemed to have gone bad, first me, then the rotten fish, and then the moths crowded on top of each other, spilling over in my drawer with their bellies exposed, then dying, rotting, and remaining there, eating those pieces of clothes, paper, dust, and becoming a piece of furniture themselves, making holes to fill themselves.

I raised the cell phone to my face. Filippo's name was on the screen. I narrowed my eyes and answered it.

I didn't say hello, I just breathed into the receiver. He did the same.

"I was wondering if you'd thought about it," he finally said.

A flicker of enthusiasm nested in the middle of my chest.

"Well, time has passed," he said. "We could meet tonight. How about you come over?"

Melancholy gave way to excitement.

"Go back, you mean?" I asked.

"For tonight, yes, and for as long as you want." I was silent, his breathing in contrast to mine.

"So? What do you say?" he asked.

People say that when we feel homesick we feel happy and sad, all at once.

"Yes, see you tonight," I said.

I packed my suitcases in a hurry, and just before I left, I remembered I hadn't emptied the drawers. I went back to the vanity to pick up my photos with Filippo. Some moths were still in the drawer, crawling over the

Tornare nella mia vecchia casa mi fece pensare a quella che avevo appena lasciato. Lì era rimasto tutto quello che avevo da buttar fuori e lì avrebbe marcito, sul fondo del water. Suonai il campanello. Forse Filippo mi avrebbe aiutata a colmare quel vuoto. Forse avremmo litigato, e lui avrebbe impiegato tempo a perdonare,. Io, forse, gli avrei detto che non volevo soffrire, che se la vita era una forse volevo amare il meno possibile, e che avevo deciso di amare lui solo.

Quando aprì la porta, sorrise. Mi abbracciò, poi prese la valigia.

La posò all'ingresso, poi mi sfilò il cappotto. Quel movimento fece cadere una tarma che per tutto il tempo era rimasta lì. Non la vide. Mi portò in sala con un po' d'impaccio. Entrai nel salone, e la nostalgia mi scomparve dal petto.

Sulla tavola addobbata a festa c'era qualcosa fuori posto, a cui ero impreparata. Guardai i calici: erano due, quelli sì, le sedie erano sei come al solito. Di fianco al lato del capotavola c'era persino una piantina addobbata, le luci gettavano disegni storti sulle pareti.

Ma i piatti erano tre.

keys. I also left my set there.

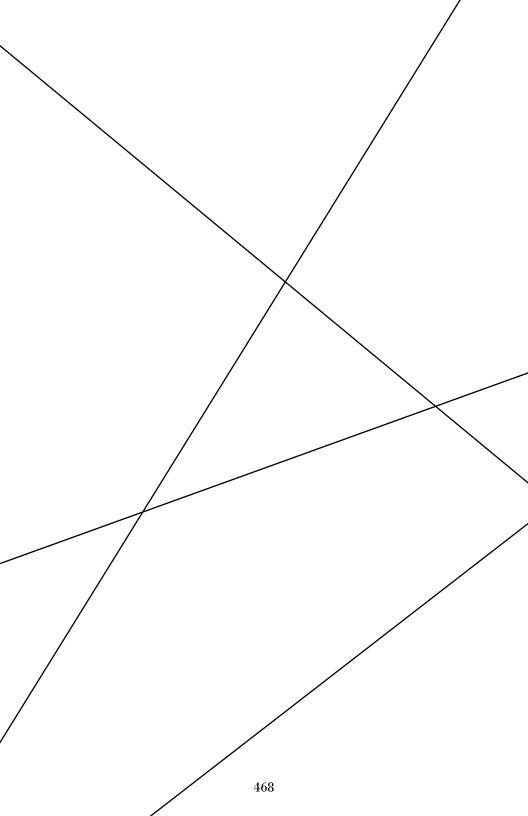
Going back to my old house made me think of the one I had just moved out of. Everything I had to throw away I just left there, and over there it was all going to rot, at the bottom of the toilet. I rang the bell. Perhaps Filippo will help me fill that void. We might fight, and he might take time to forgive. Perhaps I will tell him I don't want to suffer, and if we have only one life, I want to love as few people as possible, so I decided to love only him.

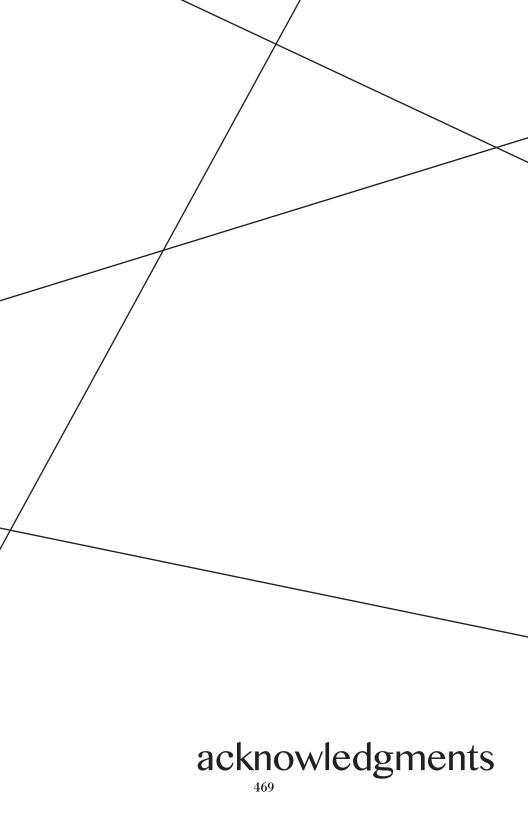
He opened the door with a smile. He hugged me, then picked up the suitcase.

He placed it inside and took my coat off. As he did, a moth popped out of the coat, it had been there all along. He didn't see it. Awkwardly, he led me to the living room. As I set foot there, the homesickness vanished from my chest.

The table was decorated for a celebration, but something was out of place. I was not prepared for that. I looked at the glasses: there were two of them, and yes, the chairs were six as usual. Next to the head of the table there was even a little tree ornated with lights projecting twisted patterns on the walls.

But the table was set for three.





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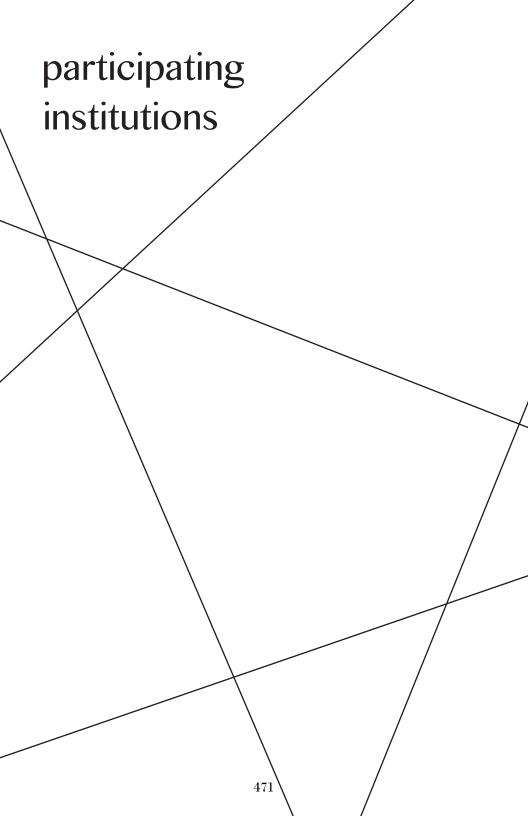
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The Master of Fine Arts Writing Program at Columbia University School of the Arts was founded in 1967, and is one of the foremost creative writing programs in the United States. Students in the Program pursue degrees in fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction, with the option to pursue a joint course of study in literary translation. The Program is distinguished by the intellectual rigor of its curriculum, the eminence of many of the writers on faculty, and the significant number of its alumni who have gone on to become eminent authors in their own right.

The Escuela de Literatura Creativa at Universidad Diego Portales was founded in 2003, the first of its kind in Chile. The program offers an undergraduate major and two graduate programs in which students pursue degrees in publishing or writing. Translation workshops are part of the curriculum in all three programs. The students work with noteworthy writers from the Spanish-speaking world and beyond, thanks to Cátedra Abierta UDP, international lecture series in homage of Roberto Bolaño that has invited more than 150 writers.

Founded in Turin in 1994, Scuola Holden is an institution devoted to training storytellers through courses spanning multiple disciplines of writing and performing arts. Scuola Holden also serves as a cultural production center in Italy by way of collaborations with schools, universities, book-shops, publishers, and festivals throughout Italy and Europe.

Established in 2011, the MFA in Creative Writing at Instituto Vera Cruz focuses in two areas: Fiction and Nonfiction, with secondary concentrations in Writing for Children and Young Adults and Creative Writing Methodology. Vera Cruz was founded in 1963 and started offering undergraduate and graduate courses in 2005. The MFA has 80 students now enrolled in an intensive two-year course, with a faculty of award-winning and recognized writers. It is among the most renowned in Brazil.

The Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig is a central institution at the Universität Leipzig, providing the only degree course for writers in the making in Germany since 1995. Alongside the three-year BA in Creative Writing, focusing on poetry, prose, and drama, an MA in Creative Writing has also been offered since winter of 2009. This is a two-year degree designed as a novel workshop. The aim of the program is to provide students with highly professional writing skills and creative competence, along with a knowledge of literary history and theory.

Founded in 2009, the Creative Writing program at Fudan University is the first professional master's degree program in mainland China devoted to cultivating literary talents. Unlike traditional academic programs in literary studies, this program is explicitly designed to educate creative practitioners of the literary arts. Graduates of the program go on to work at the highest level as writers, teachers, researchers, critics, journalists and other media professionals in a wide range of professional contexts including arts organizations, theaters, colleges and universities, museums, scholarly institutes, media, and government-related agencies.

The Master in Creative Writing at Université Paris 8 was founded in September 2013, with the goal of allowing students the opportunity to start or continue a work of literary creation. While programs of this type are common, especially in the United States and Great Britain, they are still rare in the French academic system. The Master in Creative Writing is therefore destined to play a pioneering role in the Francophone world.

