



TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE



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из России

Alitalia: hazy, like Nan & Pop's ... Rome: the taxis! the cats! ... Moscow's gilt mocks, McDonald's', too: one goddamn Big Mac 'meal' = one month's wage! ... Fifty dead presidents for genuine black market sailor shirt: itch -y, made from wool ... Gypsies nearly whoosh our bus in Pushkin ... Saint Petersburg → Karelia train star-red, ash-blond scouts snooze like speechless speech marks ... Lake Ladoga: icebox; MOSQUITOES; white nights bewilder Siberian cedars ... Kath & I boomerang to demountables: 'Il y a un beau garçon là-bas': Ilya's cheeks borscht-pink ... T's headphones' Cure: 'through the dark your eyes shine bright & burn like fire burn like fire in Cairo' ... **I ♥ zh** ... ~~Homesick for Hobart~~ ... с любовью

Stuart Barnes

*note: 'из России с любовью' is Russian for 'From Russia with love', 'Il y a un beau garçon là-bas' is French for 'There's a handsome boy over there'

**Machine Gun Women,
or They Mist Black Trees in Wet Walking**

Black—

black outline of the horizon
a black silhouette of trees
against a watercolor red,
violet,
milky,
pink sky
with a few stars scattered sparsely about
a thick mist.
One,
two,
three,
four stars
arching overhead.
Damp and wet trees,
water droplets from the leaves.

The occasional sound of machine guns blaring somewhere in the distance
the sound of an airplane moaning overhead

....

Sixty seconds.
Walking
creaking steps crushing the stones
passing by dead leaves on thin stalks,
hanging damp and wet.
A crunch and the shadow and the mist
light
a stillness and a silence
a bunch
of wet leaves.
Water dropping.
A general silence.
No one is there.

Also David-West. 'Machine Gun Women, or They Mist Black Trees in Wet Walking'.
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<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

The four of them
walking
quietly
worriedly.
The sounds of other people who are not there.
A certain fearsomeness about circumstance
trailed by their own shadows
under a moonless night
where the light is only the deep,
red,
violet firmament over the horizon of black,
naked branches
and trees
stretching somewhere.

They're walking
and trudging.
The mist is thick,
and they're hungry.
And pain
pulling inside
their stomachs
like tearing,
like twisting.

Cold damp air hitting their faces
turning around,
hearing waterdrops on stones.
Turning around
and again that moaning sound in the sky
and a barrage somewhere they cannot see
a mountain
nothing visible
beyond that thick mist.

And they walk and walk.
Their hands are cold.
Their feet are cold.
And their stomachs are empty.
They're hungry and tired and weak,
and they see a tree.

They come to what seems like a path.

More blotches,
black trees
and mist
a vista of thick,
suffusing mist
and black trees.

Her nose is leaking and itching,
and the fatigue straining their bodies.

And the heart—
their heart
aching
as if being compressed
uncomfortably.
The pain.
No food.
A hunger pain
in her heart
pulling,
stretching
an echoing crunch
walking on the wet stones and dead leaves
in the dark
in their shadows.
Tired.

February fourteen,
nineteen fifty three.

Alzo David-West

Second Language

I am a tenant
in this glorious palace,
running through rooms and hallways
someone else has decorated,
sleeping in a bed
as if it's my own,
my dusty boots lying on the floor.

I try to earn my keep
so I spruce up a bit,
only take small sips
from the wine in the cellar
--or did I buy it?
I can't remember
what's mine and
what I have found here.

I feel quite welcome
but I keep
a suitcase ready,
just in case.
Once in a while,
I nail one of my own portraits
On a burnished wall.

Natasha Garrett

A Captain Cook

Here again, not well, likely a turnspit, jiggered,
 seafowl asworn, unfeathered on deck mahogany,
 ocean smooth and tumultuous and heaving
 all bilious, curmudgeonly, all at a time.

Underneath, fore, malodorous leviathan, rotten kraken stink;
 aft, cod slime coating us double-breasted in doubloons.
 Wheedle to side, we yearn dissolution, hard swizzle,
 a canter from the mizzen mast.

So swing us a reel, old mate, breach your musket lead.
 Till the sun breaks shackles, tasks late azimuth,
 we'll be run though midships with stringy bark,
 shaggy punch, brindled spinny fig.

Elsewise, we hide mongst mouldering caulk,
 wait dangle-tailed for planetary casts on cruise tide,
 when glacial icefloes volcane our breath space,
 pilfer our saddle-darned carpet bags.

Whose trajectory then scours my sleep, counterbreaks,
 smites caterwauls across my log lines?
 What worriment forths mildewed landsend,
 unwashable bloodclot, blind apostrophe?

Along the whiles, powder my silk, sash my periwig;
 stow flannel and serge, reft fishbone and lice.
 Stay me my phlegm, boil this black ink regalia.
 Curdlesome, I hove, penny pick my ultimatum.

Ian Gibbins

Ian Gibbins. 'A Captain Cook'.
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Stone:

 stretched
from fell to rigg
from crag to beck

grey patched
lichen plumed
pocked and pitted

pile on pile
pressed by cow pelt
brushed by sheep shank

the land's flanks
stitched with
drystone ribs

Mike Hopkins

One Last Poem

I was going to write one last poem
 but nothing came out,
 only lightning & red sand
 & a campfire that speaks
 at least fifteen Aboriginal dialects
 as it stirs the embers with a stick.
 Even a whitefella can understand
 two or three sentences
 if he's prepared to press
 his ear to the flames.
 The Pintupi have forgotten more than
 I'll ever know about the Land –
 its ways & names.
 Too much to remember,
 other than the warning:
 don't eat kuka in the rain.
 "Proper cheeky bugger, lightning."

Today a friend told me,
 "everything's a metaphor for something else."
 But what I don't understand is:
 why, when I wanted to describe you, was
 the only metaphor that came to mind
 the sound of wind blowing in from the desert?

Billy Marshall Stoneking

* "kuka" - meat

Shards of Colour

How brown, the sound of a galley's oars
when black is the sound of water.
See how the green of an ancient grudge dares
to ignite the red of a temper that flares,
lighting the white sound of a man's skull, cracked.

Jennifer Liston

Sound Track

Dancing like the dead
the leaves jump beneath the gurllet
blows of hailstones like Warren Beatty and Faye
Dunaway at the end of Bonnie & Clyde.
It might be stretching a point, and yet,
despite the thunder, the sky is still blue.

The machine-gunned villagers
in the black and white newsreel
are the silent witnesses now opposed
to the sun, the leaves' stains outlined on the path
steaming like the aftermath of fire.
Forthright in its silence

the road smokes like a tea break.
The survivors peek from beneath
the bodies of their fellows, playing
possum until, the tapping on the roof
subsiding, the sun revives
and the mood music changes.

Mark O'Flynn

Elegy for the Slain Bloggers

After the death of the writer or the cartoonist or the blogger

A bonfire is lit using

The fire kindled from the funeral pyre

Like the continued wriggle of the severed tail of a lizard

Creating a deceptive sense of a pulsating prolonged resistance

This week is the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombings.

Chandramohan S

One Day in the Life of

There were six, all girls,
Leningrad students,
spread on their little table; mackintoshes swinging
posh suitcases life
All clear for them. We talked and
drank
They asked me what I was. I told the
truth. "I'm special girls, heading straight for death".

They gasped and moaned
And covered me

all the way to Novosibirsk.

*

at night, through the back garden
my brother with me.

Nothing to give
him nothing for myself. In Frunze some

road workers
take my little brother
Teach him how to live

through

even this

Michele Seminara

* an erasure poem sourced from two paragraphs of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Michele Seminara. 'One Day in the Life of'.
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