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Poetry
Editor: Alison Flett

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Complete poetry.
Transnational Literature Vol. 10 no. 2, May 2018.
Transnational Literature is delighted to be featuring the work of Lisa Gorton, an exceptional poet who has won many auspicious literary awards for her achievements. Lisa lives in Melbourne and writes poetry, fiction and essays. Her two most recent publications, both from Giramondo, are the poetry collection Hotel Hyperion and a novel, The Life of Houses. Her awards include the Victorian Premier’s Prize for Poetry, the NSW People’s Choice Award and Prime Minister’s Prize for fiction, and the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal.

For this issue of Transnational Literature, Lisa has reimagined Rimbaud’s ‘Villes’, relating them to the dioramas and magic lantern slides popular at the time the poems were written. Her notes on the process are a work of art in themselves, overlaying a chiaroscuro of historical images to create a three dimensional understanding of the poetic artistry involved. When read alongside Marie de Quartrebarbes’ selection of French poetry, it's possible to see a direct link between Rimbaud’s 19th century poems and the work of the chosen contemporary French poets who have created their own versions of ‘magic lantern slides’.

**ON TRANSLATING RIMBAUD’S ‘VILLES’ / MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES**

These are not so much translations as poems projected onto Rimbaud’s ‘Villes I’ and ‘Villes II’ to cast light on his interest in

imperial panoramas—a now-forgotten technology, in fragments scattered amongst his images—

In 1781, William Beckford, ‘the richest commoner in England’, held a voluptuous festival at his inherited mansion, Fonthill Splendens—Beckford’s wealth derived from slave-worked sugar plantations in Jamaica—For his coming of age, Beckford commissioned Philip de Loutherbourg to fill Spendens for three days with magical lighting effects—

Philippe de Loutherbourg, at his *Eidophusikon* in Leicester Square, ran a phantasmagoric theatre of moving images—a machinery of lantern projections, winding backscreens, transparencies, clockwork automata, oscillating lights and sound effects, pulleys, mirrors on rails, adding ‘motion to resemblance’—Dawn over the Thames, noon in Tangier, sunset over the Bay of Naples, the moon rising over the Mediterranean, a shipwreck off the Atlantic coast—

The artist WH Pyne saw de Loutherbourg’s show of Milton’s Pandemonium—‘Here, in the foreground of a vista, stretching an immeasurable length between mountains, ignited from their bases to their lofty summits, with many coloured flame a chaotic mass rose in dark majesty, which gradually assumed form until it stood, the interior of a vast temple, bright as molten brass, composed of unconsuming and unquenching fire’—and mechanical demons climbed out of its burning lake—

De Quincey’s elder brother William was sent to London as de Loutherbourg’s apprentice—He died of typhoid in de Loutherbourg’s care—Baudelaire, introducing his version of *Les paradis artificiels*, compared someone seeking to create a narcotic paradise with that maniac who would replace solid walls and living gardens with panoramas, painted on a screen and hung on rails—

For Beckford’s three-day festival, in a winter storm, de Loutherbourg remade Splendens as a ‘vaulted labyrinth’—‘the line of apartments being infinite were all vaulted’—a palace of vanishing points, opening out from a staircase which vanished into darkness, and, when you looked up, was lost in vapour—
Beckford’s father had befriended Piranesi—He was the first in England to collect Piranesi’s work—At the age of ten, William Beckford inherited his fortune—When Beckford, self-exiled to Venice, Piranesi’s first city, first saw its Bridge of Sighs, he noted in his diary—a marble bridge—joins the highest part of the prisons to the secret galleries of the palace from whence criminals are conducted over the arch to a cruel and mysterious death’—He found himself drawing ‘chasms and subterranean hollows, with chains, racks, wheels & dreadful engines, in the style of Piranesi’—

Mallarmé wrote the preface to a French edition of Beckford’s 1786 novel Vathek, An Arabian Tale—Beckford, who said he wrote the novel over three days and two nights, claimed to have copied it from his memory of that voluptuous festival—‘The glowing haze—the endless intricacy of the vaulted labyrinth produced an effect so bewildering that it became impossible for anyone to define exactly where at the moment he was’—A prose of sudden, suspended, vanishing images—

Baudelaire wrote, ‘I would rather return to the Dioramas, whose brutal and enormous magic has the power to impose on me with useful illusions’—‘Do we show the public,’ he had asked, ‘the mechanism behind our effects?—All the rags, the paint, the pulleys, the chains’**—

Panoramas, dioramas, nocturnoramas—Through a dark tunnel, upstairs to a platform enclosed by a balustrade—into a self-closed, apparently endless realm—‘Dawn— the contour of mountains—of houses—a kitchen stove slowly flaming up—a forge—illuminated night—a ship that is anchored in the foreground of a harbour’—an avalanche in the lovely mountains†—battles, genre scenes, mythologies—An apparatus that could enfold prospects of empire inside a windowless room—Between each scene a bell rang—

In ‘Villes’, Rimbaud showed the public these stairs, platforms, balustrades, abyss, a short bridge up to the second story, air made of light, a canvas unrolling with pulleys and ropes—as if to reveal the mechanism of an empire’s mirror-tricks—
RIMBAUD’S CITIES I / MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES

Its true acropolis, beyond the wildest ambitions of latter-day barbarism— Indescribably bleak, this day it makes— Immutable clouds, imperial mansions built on lasting snow— With a fetish for the grandiose, they’ve reproduced catalogues— Every classical monument— Hampton Court, the size of a replica under glass in some regional gallery— But what paint! Some Nebuchadnezzar of ice dreamt up these ministerial staircases— Civil servants vanishing into the background of their status—bureaucrats and overseers with faces of stone— A city of squares, courtyards, walled terraces closing its drifters out— And its parks, perfected replicas of wilderness— Overhanging it all, strangely, a strip of sea, deserted, unrolls its canvas of soft hail between two piers hung with oversized candelabras— A narrow bridge, a side gate opens directly into the Cathedral— ‘This vaulted dome of fine-wrought steel, fifteen thousand feet around’— From certain angles on its gilded walkways, viewing platforms, the spiral stairs enclosing its marketplace and columns, I had some idea that I could see into the city’s depths— Always something out-of-scale, though, in its dissolving views— What existence do they have, these other suburbs layered over and under the acropolis? Strangers to the present, its incomprehensible city— A shopping centre, or circular showground of arcades—its wares stay hidden, though the snow is marked— The odd magnate, rare as early risers on a London Sunday, hurries himself off to his glittering transports— Sofas of red velvet, drinks of arctic ice—it costs eight hundred rupees—it costs eight thousand rupees— No need for theatres here—the shops stage its dramas, dingy enough— It must be policed, this realm, but what kind of chancer could break the laws which govern this?

A realm as elegant as a boulevard— Its air is made of light— A hundred kind souls comprise its picture of the masses— Here, too, the houses come to a stop— Its city opens directly into a landscape— That idea of the natural, extending woodlands and vast fields across its permanent backdrop, out where pitiless aristocrats hunt down their histories in its invented light—

Lisa Gorton—translated from Arthur Rimbaud, ‘Villes I’, 1886

Lisa Gorton, ‘Rimbaud’s Cities I / Magic Lantern Slides’. 
Transnational Literature Vol.10 no.2, May 2018. 
RIMBAUD’S CITIES II / MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES

—themselves are cities— For those who live in them, incomprehensible mountains—an empire’s names—remake themselves in light— Afloat in distance, on its high peaks, steep-rooved houses, their dazzling windows, slide sideways now on rails— Its soundless machinery of pulleys and ropes— Now Vesuvius, lit through smoke, bright swarm adrift in its closed circle— The blank flesh of colossal statues— Copper palm trees aflame with the sound of bells— Long canals flooded with light— Streets narrowing back to that vanishing point, behind the houses, where love feasts on itself— Its bells ring back down those gulfs— More than life-size, its singers hurry forwards, mouths opening and closing— The light on their banners is the same as the light on its frozen Alps— Over the viewing platform, its abyss, the Green Knight rides forever in his painted wood— Along the handrails at the edge of its precipice, like light through cloud a white ray hangs rags of drapery, tourist villages which flap and swell—and each thing becomes itself in vanishing— Angelic centaur-girls plunge back into its soundless avalanche— Over its mountains, waves pour back from that place where Venus is rising still out of the sea, complete with zephyrs, a redolence of south sea pearls and rare shells— Sea darkening intermittently with blotches, scratches on its lens glass— Sumptuous flowers, outspread like a battlefield, crying when the wind pours through— One by one its May Queens, dressed in russet, opaline, rise up out of its precipice— In the distance, at the source, standing in the waterfall, in the tangled vines, Diana’s deer drink from the goddess— The bacchantes of the suburbs cry without sound— Over them the moon burns, raving, and Venus steps into the bedsits of loners and blacksmiths— Everywhere the belltowers ring with people’s thoughts— Ossuaries, palaces, have unheard-of music— Cloud by cloud the myths rise— Their gods walk in the streets, this paradise folding tempest by tempest back into itself—and Caliban is dancing in his island, night— One time I stepped into a Baghdad street—road-gangs singing the day’s work, the wind in my face—circling its Round City without ever escaping the backdrop of those hallucinatory mountains that the two of us were going to cross to safety—

Now what hand, what gentle hour, will return me to that province, home of my sleep, and the least of my gestures?

*Lisa Gorton*—translated from Arthur Rimbaud, ‘Villes II’, 1886
With a view to increasing cross-cultural interaction and introducing readers to contemporary poetry from different parts of the world, Transnational Literature includes a small guest editor slot in its poetry section, curated by—and partly featuring the work of—an established poet from a country other than Australia. In this issue we're delighted to have a selection of French poetry curated by editor and co-founder of La tête et les cornes, the excellent avant-garde poet, Marie de Quatrebarbes.

**French Poetry: An Introduction by Marie de Quatrebarbes**

What choices have led to this selection of texts and voices? Of course, they are not motivated by any attempt at representativeness. This is a subjective cut in the French contemporary poetic matter: voices that, to me, put poetry in movement. The works of Stéphane Bouquet, Dorothée Volut and Maël Guesdon all share a common relationship to sensible life. Objects, lives, processes are worked from the point of view of the sensible, which leads the poem to make all sorts of speculations and hypotheses. Writing and living are intertwined, nested. Yet, they do not maintain an analogical relationship. The poem is not superimposed on life as a filter that would tint the real or try to say what life should be. Besides, at the origin of the poem there is a common attention to the semiotics of life, of all forms. The poem is a dynamic space, an elastic canvas that deeply transforms our perception and our relationship to things. Stéphane Bouquet’s poem *Translating Paul Blackburn* questions the process of writing under someone else's influence, what it is to walk in someone else's footsteps, how it transforms the perception of oneself and the outside. In his poetry, Maël Guesdon mixes heterogeneous sources to describe a secret life of things, and how a sort of double sided perception maintains a fundamental ambiguity between the subject and the object. The text of Dorothée Volut, *Zorza*, describes precisely this entanglement of plans, this interlacing between writing and living, and how it can be an experience both childish and existential. My poems *33½ Flowers* have also been written under the influence of various authors (Lucretius, Jules Michelet, Louis Zukofsky). It is a text about the earth, the soil, the insects, and how a poem emerges in a certain composite loam.

33 ½ fleurs

Ce que la mort fit pour la vie, la vie elle-même le raconte.

Jules Michelet, L’insecte

1.

Ceci est un livre d’histoire naturelle, décrivant les formes élémentaires par lesquelles commence la nature (les cristaux, l’insecte, la femme, &c.)

un livre sur les fleurs où l’insecte joue le rôle de l’opérateur. Voilà, sans plus tarder, dans le souci d’aller plus vite je déchiffre le souci de définir l’objet par la fleur, & dans ce souci je vois l’effort durable du politique en un mot

cé qu’il y a de petit, d’innombrable, en un mot le peuple, négligeable pour Buffon alors que, chez Michelet, l’insecte devient la métaphore du peuple. Pourquoi ris-tu ? Sous un autre nom, c’est de toi que parle le récit. Un enfant joue ici, il joue. J’y viendrai.

2.

Brève histoire au regard de l’infini mouvement des astres, des cendres jetées au croisement d’une mer & de trois océans, par exemple, repoussent au loin la décomposition, alors si elle porte ses fruits, & qu’il y a quelque chose de caché entre ses feuilles, un dépôt, une masse en lévitation, le « A » écarlate de quelque chose, sur la poitrine de celle qui garde à l’ombre ce tout petit ceci que nous avons de commun. En somme, le sujet ne sera pas traité ici du point de vue de la science, ni l’anecdote, ni du sentiment, nous nous on tiendrons au matérialisme le plus tendre de même qu’après la discussion portant sur l’existence d’une semence féminine, nous nous perdons en spéculations & un sang coule sur le sol, & à l’endroit où il a coulé pousse une fleur également rouge ; façon de dire qu’Ajax aussi est naturel.
Épicure, dit-on, avait créé son école dans son jardin. Sans plus tarder munissons-nous d’une pioche & creusons. Voyant les insectes affleurer, car nous les verrons, que voyons-nous ?

La terre, alors que nous voudrions la quitter, ne nous quitte jamais. Maintenant, rappelez-vous que tout être nourrit des êtres, à sa surface. Chaque insecte est un monde parlons un peu du mélange, du court-circuit, de la chair délicate de la figue taraudée par le taon. Que dire d’un être qui respire par le côté ? Il y a des gens qui dissèquent un cœur comme un cadavre d’ailleurs, patience. Ne pensez pas que tous les fourrés ne contiennent que de jeunes arbres, un léopard peut s’y cacher.

*Marie de Quatrebarbes*
33½ flowers


1.

This is a book of natural history, describing the elementary forms in which nature begins (crystals, insects, women, &c.)

a book on flowers, in which the insect plays the role of the operator. All right. Without further delay, out of concern to go quicker I discern the concern to define the object as the flower, & in this concern I see the lasting efforts of (in a word) politics

what’s there is what’s small, innumerable: in word, a people. Negligible for Buffon, whereas for Michelet the insect becomes the metaphor for the people. Why are you laughing? Change the name and the story is about you. A child plays here, he plays. I’ll get to it.

The child turns off the light. He turns it on. How sacred the child, God only knows. The child and the insect go to bed in the book. We begin.
2.

The story is brief in relation to the infinite movement of the stars, those embers thrown across a sea & three oceans, for example, pushing decomposition far away, and so if she bears her fruits, & that there’s something hidden between her leaves, a deposit, a levitating mass, the scarlet letter of something, on the chest of the one who keeps that tiny little thing we have in common deep in shadow. In short, the subject will not be treated here from the point of view of science, or anecdote, or sentiment. We’ll keep ourselves to the most tender materialism the same as after the discussion about the existence of female semen, we lose ourselves in speculation & blood flows onto the floor & in the place where it flows grows a flower just as red; or just another way of saying that Ajax is natural too.
3.

It’s said that Epicurus founded his school in his garden. Without further delay we arm ourselves with a pickaxe and dig. Seeing the insects we turn up, for we will see them, what do we see?

Even though we want to quit it, the earth never quits us. Now call to mind that every creature nourishes other creatures on its surface. Each insect is a world

& here let’s talk about mixture, short-circuit, about the delicate flesh of the fig tapped by the fly. What shall we say of a being which breathes through its side and flanks? There are those who dissect a human heart the way they do a cadaver

anyway, patience. Don’t think the undergrowth is young trees, only: there could be a leopard hiding there.

*Marie de Quatrebarbes*
translated by *Lindsay Turner*
Lullabying Lahore

I
The mini mirrors caught within Kashmiri cross-stitches
On my grandmother’s shawl showed the first sketch of myself
Mutilated into multiple eyes, lips, noses and cheeks
Which did not dismay my nine-month-old understanding

II
Growing up between red-brick walls busy
Staring at their sound selves on the glazed ground
Sadness shimmers when the sun slips
Somewhere secluded

III
Buildings in Lahore are anxious looking
At their bodies shaking, shrinking and swelling
In little lochs left by the rains revisiting
The norms of narcissism.

Faiza Anum
Chemin de Fer

An apple orchard in which a wooden ladder
Still stands – a capital A with rungs. Our train
Slows to trace a curve that honours
Engineer and mountain. The rhythm, the repetition,
Now lulls the eager eye and the
Gift of dozing is taken. Tunnels are dream
Entrances and exits and the names of announced stations are
Remedies for the heart far from or near its destination.

Peter Bakowski

Eisenbahn

Apfel-Obstgarten in dem noch eine Holzleiter
Steht - ein großes A mit Sprossen. Unser Zug
Stockt langsam um einer Kurve zu folgen, in
Anerkennung an Ingenieur und Berg. Der Rhythmus, die Wiederholung be-
Gütigt jetzt das neugierige Auge und
Irgendwie kommt der Schlummer. Tunnel sind
Eingänge und Ausgänge der Träume und die Namen der angekündigten Bahnhöfe sind
Rastplätze für das Herz, noch weit entfernt oder schon nah am Ziel.

Peter Bakowski
Translated into German by
Ulrike Krenz-Fisher and Claudia Schneider
The courage season

The days. You try to settle them in diaries, but they can’t be Herded, tamed. They’re here to counter, perhaps best Each chess move, your ability to push out from dead corners.

Curiosity, action and laughter are contagious as are their Opposites. At crucial times you’ll need to go out on a limb to Understand the landscape, to see the outlines of false paths. Risk being a tightrope walker rather than a pedestrian. It’s A case of attitude over altitude. Go beyond data, dithering, staring at photographs of dead Explorers. Today awaits your focus, imprint and bold steps.

Some self-examination is what the moral doctor ordered. Excuses are crutches. Let them clatter to the ground. A balance is sought but there are tremors, shifts, seizures. Solutions come to the alert, the open-minded, excited by Obstacles rather than dismayed. Perhaps right now there’s No-one more in need of surprising than yourself.

Peter Bakowski
La saison du courage

Les jours. Tu cherches à les ranger dans l’agenda, mais ils refusent d’être assemblés, apprivoisés. Ils sont faits pour contrer, voire surpasser tous les coups sur l’échiquier, ta capacité à échapper aux angles morts.

La curiosité, l’action et le rire sont contagieux à l’instar de leurs contraires. À certains moments cruciaux, il te faudra tenter le diable pour comprendre le paysage, voir les contours des mauvaises pistes. Risque le funambulisme plutôt que la balade. Favorise une attitude aux dépends de l’altitude. Dépasse les données, les hésitations, les photos d’explorateurs morts. Le présent exige concentration, empreinte et pas décisifs.

Un peu d’introspection, a prescrit le docteur de la morale. Les excuses sont des béquilles. Fracasse-les. On cherche un équilibre, mais quid des séismes, glissements et attaques. Les solutions apparaissent aux esprits ouverts et alertes, stimulés plutôt que consternés par les obstacles. Il n’existe peut-être à cette heure personne qui n’ait plus besoin de surprise que toi-même.

Peter Bakowski
Translated into French by Mireille Vignol
A note on the translation process

My translators translate my poems as a labour of love. I either choose a poem that I consider ‘important’ to translate or a poem that extends the variety of poems that have been translated over the course our collaboration or I encourage my translators to translate a poem that they esteem or anticipate having fun translating.

I’m thrilled to have my poetry translated into French by Mireille Vignol. Having lived and worked in Australia, married to a Greek-Australian, now primarily living back in a tiny French village, Mireille has a firm knowledge of how Australians and the French express themselves.

As a poet, I continue to be guided by the following quote: ‘Use ordinary words to say extraordinary things’ – Arthur Schopenhauer. I want the French and German translation of my poems to be how living people speak, reveal themselves, their experiences and perceptions. I try not to have any ungainly words or phrases in my poems and I don’t want anything unwieldy or clunky to be there in the sound of the poem either in French or German.

I’m thrilled to have my poetry translated into German by Ulrike Krenz-Fisher and Claudia Schneider. I appreciate their care with my poems, being both flexible and meticulous. We have recently initiated, after meeting at the 2017 Monash translation conference, once a month translation ‘sessions’. It’s early days and hopefully regular German translations will flower in the global literary scene, in print and online, over the next months and years.

Peter Bakowski
pbakowski54@gmail.com
I hope to get by without knowing what we don’t love: here is everything not clanging inside our cupped hands: wife with her evening cries children red from the sirens, a circle of conclusions told to quiet down, a few coins to the side of the statistic The dog-air roaming through tenements is a man who builds his house in yours & leaves the key in the knob The time he held his answer to your neck he calls a joke What is this hollow that gleams in our eyelids & worries skin off our lips? Whose heft catches in my throat There’s a name outgrows the dots on the map, shrouds with tarp the AM radio, & makes stand on hind legs the stupid in me Brow to jaw, his face gives mine meaning: every day I rehearse its certainty, my love for his in the ampules I keep as close as my liver Above all he loves his might when in my veins slides his light & intercedes
We claim the space where light falls least, we wait
for our conviction to match the hyperbole, the blessed
lie that thrashes in its cage of never-again, quiets down
as it knows it’s alone, barks when it hungers
—don’t we understand it needs to be fed
we who push you away every last minute, mouthing
we didn’t think this through, it hurts too much
when all we maybe want is for you to be enraged, gift us

with the harm we’ve convinced ourselves we’re owed
distilling more darkness out of darkness, out of
turning away with the hope of being rewarded for it
out of not so much resentment or even sacrifice
but something from you without a name & therefore
we’re irredeemable: don’t we deserve this affliction

the kind we’ve turned to
for comfort & , on days when there’s nothing else
but the noise we make & don’t hear enough of, pleasure?
What about the prayers we hold for no reason, prayers that when pressed against your ear recall the impassive traffic of the ocean What about the hero’s will that falls into the plot, his flight an ending you’ve hot-glued onto his back What about the stranger, his blood running true into the gutter, its nest of cellophane What about his wife with the blisters that keep leaking milk What about the man who demands you swallow his anger, what about his smirk once you do What about despair & how it glitters the street, & what about the pictures that fulfill your screen, their baggage of words & thrown-to wrath What about the visionary’s face of redemption, how does it hollow the way he stabs his resolve into ripe air, how does it trouble this news, what in it must you preserve when it’s not from your life Must this day be what cracks off my face What about, should it please you: revolution

Mark Anthony Cayanan
she says

a grassed stretch
between apartments and Swan
seated in shade there
(a wagtail courts her) she wishes
for the sleep
of seasons her old burnout has
woken so
she says home
is a page number missed
a finger scroll
(the wagtail is still courting)
she says tomorrow
is cousined stone
fingers cupped around
a succulent bloom
in vermillion
and greyscale with all the letters of a name
dispersed she says it’s a
bell brought from Kent or a tower
Uno (you know)
rocking and tumbling by the quay

Anne Elvey
A climate of mortality meets Melbourne winter

who’ll leave a cedilla to
compost
unwritten in stone

where old breathing
forests are gone to fossil
drives who’ll

wonder if bacteria
can work
rock as caves were

painted in Lascaux or
if it happens that
the other were to think

as we who make books
of trees a potpourri
of matter who despite

the improbability
will hope
that we might not have

done this thing
and find
on a morning

crisp with winter sun
it’s unimaginable all is not
well

who’ll bookmark
a future that happened
yesterday

Anne Elvey

Anne Elvey, ‘A climate of mortality meets Melbourne winter’. 
Transnational Literature Vol. 10 no. 2, May 2018.
Huangshan sonnet

Dazed with mountain snow and anger I arrived at last.
I leapt from the train into the station’s darkness. All afternoon
I’d stared through the window, past his unforgivable face,
at snow-blind houses, precarious cars, ice on the pass
far above. He kicked along behind me on the way through town
penitent or sullen, impossible to say. God, I loved to flay
him with inattention: blanket silence, clipped syllables,
sweeping his argument’s pages to the ground.

Eventually we stopped to eat, ordered bottles of beer
and if our silence had been any less crisp, if I’d smiled
at a joke or let him draw me into a story, I’d have poured
half that beer down my throat when it came. Instead, my whole body
an accusation,
I took one prim sip, then stopped to spit
a fine crescent of glass into his supplicating palms.

Ella Jeffery
scenes from the last night in guangzhou

we chose sea snake.
i’d seen them in pictures,
roping through ocean.
memory tells me this one was striped
white and black, threaded
on a stick where the meat sagged,
little fillets about two fingers’
width. it melted
to nothing in our mouths.

a british woman on her way
to macau bought us tsingdao
and leaned on our table.
she told us what it’s like
to be a professional gambler,
all the risks and expenses. we listened
in silence. “well” she said
“it never hurts to try.”

the food stall shrank in the heat
to an umbrella and grill,
meat laid in still groups each
with its own kind. behind us
the cook lopped heads
from chickens and dropped
bodies in a tin bucket.

early evening dissolved
into stillness. a boy and a puppy played
fetch with a pack of cigarettes.
when he threw it, smokes speared
the air and the puppy couldn’t choose
which to chase.

we ate a few bucks’
worth of skewered chicken
and let the night
extend for hours in all directions.

Ella Jeffery
Chichester and the Bhagavad Gita

Atlantic crossing by air
a touch down at Gatwick
a cockney Indian giving directions
a chrome train south to Sussex
a mess of bags kids passengers
a red brick city going green
a journey winding toward sunset
a pulling in at Chichester Station
a ticking taxi to a country cottage
a friend’s cottage lent for a long weekend
an old brass key beneath the mat
a hill of bags dumped in the hall
a welcome note under the fruit bowl
a rag-doll child carried upstairs
a sleepwalk dance to their beds
a ceramic lamp left on between them
a creaky, slow descent downstairs
a fire built up from the wood box
a cup of tomato soup with rye
a quiet relax in front of the fire
a slowing down to red coals
a chiming clock, its after-silence
a fragrant stick of nāg champa
a nestling into forgetting
two souls recharge on a velvet sofa

* 
"Mum, can I pour?" "Mum, can I flip?"
asked Pauline, asked Adele. “Mum, where's the sugar?"
"Mummy! Where's the lemon juice?" 
"Take it easy. I'll try the pantry."

Pauline dragged an animal squeal from a chair.
Up there, they perched, Adele spatula-armed

Chris Mooney-Singh. 'Chichester and the Bhagavad Gita'.
Transnational Literature Vol.10 no.2, May 2018.
on their lazy Sunday pancake fun-day, although it's Monday. Forgetful, happy

they're sprinkling English sugar on lemon juice, knife and forking through the filigree crepes, until the buttery nostalgia starts to bloat.
"Mum, when are we going home?

Dissatisfied it came, that same complaining.

*

Yogi slumped on the front room floor the Bhagavad Gita in his hand, picked up that day in Singapore, a guide book to his promised land.

The Gita was a Q and A: Arjuna is on the battleground quizzing Krishna why he must slay beloved ones. His heart unwound:

better to let the heart object
before killing off kinsmen, gurus.
One bad act has its ripple effect.
Arjuna slumps before the Kurus*

like poor Yogi on the floor, wondering how to win his fight with little girls still waging war ever since his wedding night.

*

Now came their outing hour with hats and coats from the winding Dimple Lane toward Chichester. Paul had headphone ears, Dele had fox glass eyes sitting with adult minders; now taxi time trundled

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* Dynastic clan including both warring cousin factions of Pandavas and the Kauravas that are centre character of the Mahabharata.

down hedgerow lanes banked by lavender fields.

A snowy gaggle of geese waddled onto the road, the barking terrier of a man came running behind, arms waving. White honkers skipped and wrangled through a hole in a hedge. "Look!" said Yogi stepdad. The girls plugged in devices, blocking the Enemy.

* 

Nine
AD
Norman
spire
kept
God
inside
safe
towns

see the floor-plan
centred cross  go altarwards
progress pilgrim
humbly step up  to Heaven
then
back
to
earth
Does
the
higher
life
start
when
needs
are
met?
Please
tell
right
now
Left to wander about
Adele and sister Paul
dawdled down the aisle
not so very impressed
by the nine-point star
parquetry underfoot,
neither the vaulted roof,
cross-ribbed like a Viking
longboat upside down,
nor the arches in stone
supporting a long nave,
nor each polished pew
lit by candleholders,
nor the organ playing
tunes decidedly dead
to funky ears. They will
walk the aisle to meet
their future husbands,
receive rings, take vows.
Today, however, they
are far too young to care
a fig-leaf for anything
other than strawberry,
double-ripple ice-creams
they have been promised.

* 

Margaret and her lover rock
side to side and forget the clock,
finding respite as two, not four,
like Richard the Earl and Eleanor

who clasp palms in white repose,
lap dogs snoozing at their toes
of Arundel's tomb once noble throne,
six hundred loving years in stone.

And yes, today life gasps at death
as loving marble holds its breath.

Chagall uplifts now red and blue
Creation's dancing stained-glass view,
and fires of love ride up, roughshod
across the panes breathed on by God.

Inspirited, the Yogi slips
a simple kiss onto her lips.

*

Lunch and double ice cream. A signpost walk
to museums, pubs, a flower show, cream tea,
an hour's stroll around the Roman wall
that's been five metres tall two thousand years.

The girls were not adventurers - just bored
and scuffed their sneaker heels upon the path,
this history walk far from Adelaide,
talking about Papa.

"Can we call later?
I'm tired, Mummy," moaned Pauline. "Let's go!"
While Dele played Glass Eyes. Poor Margaret
knew the game was up. It was time to get
a sleepy cab at the Square.

Away they went.
Ms Earphones hardly saw the languid river.
Ms Glass Eyes paid no heed to the bumpy bridge,
stone-masoned, where those haloes of black gnats
were fish-food hour above the emerald scum.
A man was casting a fly beyond the midges.

"Stop the cab," said Yogi.
"Do we have to?"
The girls complained.
"Yes, for a second," he said.
The driver braked. Yogi wound down his window to see the taut line whiplash – a leaping fish was making its escape across the water.
The angler worked his line. Soon all heard the scream of the reel as a fighter took the bait.
The fish lunged off to the right, until the angler checked him as he raced, causing fibreglass to bend and make a parabola in air.
The fish exploded through a hole in the scum and flew till the dorsal smacked back like a hand, then plunged once more, grappling with coated line taut against its body. The warrior fought with one last lunge upward from the algae depths as if to ram the enemy and then fell slack.
The fight was over. The fisherman reeled in and scooped the prize of silver in his net.

"He caught it, Mummy!" said the fierce Pauline.
Adele was silent. She was ever thoughtful, while Yogi was remembering his father – the weekend angler with an outdoors ego, so deft and quick, unlike inadequate Yogi.
They once went fishing up the Shoalhaven River. Yogi caught nothing, while the Expert coaxed a big brown trout from its hide-hole with a spinner cast out and dropped below the spitting falls. The fish was childhood thrashing up against his Dad.

He flinched and wound the window up.
"Hey mate, let's go," said Yogi. And so the cab puttered homebound back to Dimple Lane.

* Arriving back, they bathed and lit a fire.
Yogi piled up steaming pasta mountains. Cheesy peace achieved, the girls were lolling each side of their mother's comfy contour possessing the country of her blanket lap.
He sighed upon his own chair, separated from the threesome on the mainland sofa; and did he not deserve a passing glance? He counted up three countries left behind. What was his role? The bagman? Staring ahead Margot stroked the fringes of her girls, as red to green the fire along the log inflamed his neediness. Where was that set of Bhagavad Gita Cards? He rescued them from the cushion crevice of his armchair, then shuffled hard, a forlorn bibliomancer, selecting one at random:

\[ O \text{ Arjuna,} \]
\[ \text{The best of yogis sees one Self in being after being} \]
\[ \text{and feels each single pain and pleasure as one’s own.} \]

How far was he from yoga’s skill in action? He decked the card, thinking: at least he could sit back to watch the sun set in the yew. The trickster tree was shuffling a clutch of larks. He tightly held the Gita Cards and worries. \textit{Funny, he thought. Is this the lesson then? Become a tree and learn to shuffle birds?}

The girls slept on. At last, she looked across. Most men make raids like north men and take off. but he was her Green Man. Carrying girls upstairs he seemed relieved. At last, she needed him.

\textit{Chris Mooney-Singh}
The night is not far

The night is not far
from day and heat,
but still quite its own.

It is much past the time
when I lost you to the stars,
the moon’s absence.

Even then, come slow.
I shall wait for you
in this white vacancy.

I shall smell
the curries
you used to prepare,

listen for your
footsteps from beyond
the river, your laugh joining

my children’s laughter.
You are here now but
motionless: your picture hangs

green on the walls. Let me
not destroy you; come,
following your wish, come slow.

I am sure you will arrive
long before my child and wife
find me waiting for a single ghost.

Even then, time is endless;
take your time, come slow.
I can almost feel your breath.
I never cried when you left.
Today, let this lean hour feel ourselves together, while I

waste myself in your arms
like a child. No one, no one
will know. Mother, come slow.

_Bibhu Padhi_
scrollings through a mirror

I spend hours looking online
at photographs of other people. If asked, I say
Szukam polskich gęb—I’m
searching for a Polish face—a sister, a cousin—
remembering lost physiognomies.

But all the while I know I am asking,
is this me? where have I seen myself before?

Tam? Tak! There. That’s me.
Over there with them
across the glass.

Carolina Skibinski
To consider Chelsea Manning at Guangzhou Airport

1. Scoping
word docs surprise in the departure lounge
under foreign infomercials: the unrecognisable

pixels you are – fonts align
solvent cultures
from cabin to smoking alcove
the hour rebranded, air smartened, no biography necessary
is Triskelion not a drug?

diasporic maintenance /
movement the music of ideology,
try on breath:
beginnings, nothings, dwelling
on Chelsea’s weak chin
& the edge on the air

2. Prostrate
doubt Europe’s crowded skies
until further information

tepid rapport suggests itself
among those watching screens
from low places,
a sit-in
in the name of a face / here
it is the idea of Him that inspires
no more

the actuality of Her
and me
growing dimmer
in the distorted glow of
a new morning’s haze

illuminating factories in the distance
as if deleted scenes

Barnaby Smith
Two Poems by Friedrich Rückert
Translated by Alex McKeown

Home

God, guide the weary poor back home
Oh lead our erring thoughts back home

Soul, guest of my rotting flesh, have patience
In time you’ll be free to soar back home

Wield a quick yielding touch my ship
And over the waves be borne back home

From the earth’s dark womb all the shoots shall twine
Upwards to the light longed for back home

Spring flowers spray their spores through the air
Then fall in fall like their spores back home

Hafiz your soul is yearning skywards
While your earthly bones yearn to turn back home

Gott geleite die armen traurigen Kranken heim!

Gott geleite die armen traurigen Kranken heim!
Gott geleite die müden irren Gedanken heim!

Gott verleihe dir einen Stab der Geduld, mein Herz, müder Wanderer! um am Stabe zu wanken heim.

Gott verleihe dir einen gnädigen Hauch, mein Schiff! aus den Wogen des Unbestandes zu schwanken heim.

Alle Triebe, dem dunklen Schoße, der Erde entblühlt, aufwärts ringen sie, sich zum Lichte zu ranken heim.

Alle duftigen Blütenstäubchen der Frühlingsluft, rastlos sprühen sie, bis zum Staube sie sanken heim.

Also sehnet Hafisens Seele sich himmelwärts, und sein irdisches zu den irdischen Schranken heim.
Bliss

Oh just to love you: tree of bliss
Oh just to hold you: dream of bliss

Who through the sea of pleasures swim
Can reach in the end the rim of bliss

The pleasured being and the thing of pleasure
Must tread within a mist of bliss

Over all the lands all I can hear
Is a drunken call from the feast of bliss

In all your being from head to toe
Through love Hafiz become the tree of bliss

Dich zu lieben, o Baum der Ekstase!

Dich zu lieben, o Baum der Ekstase!
Dich zu haben, o Traum der Ekstase!

Mancher, der durch ein Meer von Genuß schwamm,
Kam am Ende zum Saum der Ekstase.

Der Genießer und der Genuß muß
Untergehen im Schaum der Ekstase.

Überall, wo ich hinhör', hör' ich
Trunknen Ruf nach dem Schaum der Ekstase.

[ Wo sind Herzen, auf deren Antlitz
Du nicht hauchest den Flaum der Ekstase? ] (left untranslated)

[ Wagt sich irgendein Stolz zu bäumen,
Zäumen soll ihn ein Zaum der Ekstase. ]

Hafis' Dasein von Kopf bis zu Fuße
Ward durch Liebe zum Baum der Ekstase.¹

¹ This poem is, in fact, a translation of a poem by the Persian poet Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfez-e Shīrāzī (1315-1390), commonly known as Hafiz. (Translations Editor’s note.)

Two Poems by Friedrich Rückert. Translated by Alex McKeown.
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عشق توه‌حال حیرت آمد

عشق توه‌حال حیرت آمد
وصل توه کمال حیرت آمد

بس غرقه حال وصل کر
هم بر سر حال حیرت آمد

از هر طرفی که گوش‌کرد
اواز سال حیرت آمد

نه وصل بماند و نه وصل
ان چا که خیال حیرت آمد

یک دل بنما که در ره او
بر جهره نه حال حیرت آمد

شد منهزم از کمال عزت
آن را که جلال حیرت آمد

سر تا قدم وجود حافظ
در عشق توه‌حال حیرت آمد