

RELIQUIÆ

Supplement 2017

Life must
be conjured.
Each wandering
is an incantation.

Reliquiæ is an annual journal of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction, translation and visual art. Each issue collects together both old and new work from a diverse range of writers and artists with common interests spanning landscape, ecology, folklore, esoteric philosophy and animism.

Reliquiæ Supplement 2017

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Published by Corbel Stone Press

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ISBN 978-0-9934310-5-0

www.corbelstonepress.com

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CORBEL STONE PRESS

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RELIQUIÆ

*A small spring came out of a hillside
and it sounded like so many bells.*

INSTRUMENT OF NATURE

Richard Jefferies

i.

An excerpt from The Pageant of Summer

Besides the singing and calling, there is a peculiar sound, which is only heard in summer. Waiting quietly to discover what birds are about, I became aware of a sound in the very air. It is not the midsummer hum, which will soon be heard over the heated hay in the valley and over the cooler hills alike. It is not enough to be called a hum, and does but just tremble at the extreme edge of hearing. If the branches wave and rustle they overbear it; the buzz of a passing bee is so much louder it overcomes all of it that is in the whole field. I cannot define it, except by calling the hours of winter to mind—they are silent; you hear a branch crack or creak as it rubs another in the wood, you hear the hoar frost crunch on the grass beneath your feet, but the air is without sound in itself. The sound of summer is everywhere—in the passing breeze, in the hedge, in the broad-branching trees, in the grass as it swings; all the myriad particles that together make the summer varied are in motion. The sap moves in the trees, the pollen is pushed out from grass and flower, and yet again these acres and acres of leaves and square miles of grass blades—for they would cover acres and square miles if reckoned edge to edge—are drawing their strength from the atmosphere. Exceedingly minute as these vibrations must be, their numbers perhaps may give them a volume almost reaching in the aggregate to the power of the ear. Besides the quivering leaf, the swinging grass, the fluttering bird's wing, and the thousand oval membranes which innumerable insects whirl about, a faint resonance seems to come from the very earth itself. The fervor of the sunbeams descending in a tidal flood rings on the strung harp of earth. It is this exquisite undertone, heard and yet unheard, which brings the mind into sweet accord with the wonderful instrument of nature.

2.

SUPERNAL FUGUE

Evelyn Underhill & Hugh of St. Victor

*An excerpt from *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness**

The mediaeval mind, more naturally mystical than ours, and therefore more sharply aware of the part which rhythmic harmony plays in the worlds of nature and of grace, gave to music a cosmic importance, discerning its operation in many phenomena which we now attribute to that dismal figment, Law. 'There are three kinds of music,' says Hugh of St. Victor, 'the music of the worlds, the music of humanity, the music of instruments. Of the music of the worlds, one is of the elements, another of the planets, another of Time. Of that which is of the elements, one is of number, another of weights, another of measure. Of that which is of the planets, one is of place, another of motion, another of nature. Of that which is of Time, one is of the days and the vicissitudes of light and darkness; another of the months and the waxing and waning of the moon; another of the years and the changes of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Of the music of humanity, one is of the body, another of the soul, another in the connexion that is between them.' Thus the life of the visible and invisible universe consists in a supernal fugue.

SPRING-CLOUD

Hans Jürgen von der Wense

3.

Translated by Kristofor Minta and Herbert Pföstl

An excerpt from a postcard to Heddy Esche
29 October 1946

Yesterday on the Meißner, back again after so many years. In storm and rain and wild light. Across the ruin in Abterode, rising through spring-coloured meadows, then a steep ascent over basalt flows. Up there, like wolves, the clouds creep eerily through the rotten forest, rime, and ice. Creation hour: the wet land, as if newly born, appears and fades in fragments, ghostlike. And my return through the glow of an ardent evening, steel blue and rainbows, white gypsum cliffs and bizarre hills, Olympus behind us in a heavy cloud, glowing from the dying sun over the coffin-black Höllental.

Excerpts from Epidot
Winter 1946

Springs are tongues, soliloquies of the earth, trickling proverbs, primal messages, oracles. All springs rush forth in longing to the sea, and the great ocean fills itself like a sacrificial bowl and becomes a fountain of air. Water makes the air into a mill wheel. Each spring is a future cloud. Springs are looms. They rush like shuttles and weave the sea.

At night, sipping from their cold, listening to their spinning, their whispers.

A blue spring, below madrigals of birds.

THE FOREST

Adalbert Stifter

An excerpt from Der Hochwald, translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

On the midnight side of the little country of Austria grows a forest, which starts at the source of the river Thaia and stretches westward in a thirty-mile-long twilit band to the tangle of borders where the country of Bohemia collides with Austria and Bavaria. There, thrust against one another like the needles in a crystal formation, a swarm of mighty ridges and outcrops once pushed up a sturdy massif, the forest-blue of which can be seen far and wide in all three countries. It sends into them rolling hills and rushing streams down all sides. The massif bends, as they often do, the course of the mountain chain, which then runs onward toward midnight for many days' journey.

The spot where the forest turns, so like a secluded bay, is in the territory where what we have set out to tell came to pass. For the moment, let us briefly examine two points of that sombre and stately forest corridor, to put before the eyes of the gentle reader where the persons of this story lived and worked before we meet them.

As the traveller turns westward from the old town and the castle of Krumau—that gray widow of the faded Rosenbergs—a piece of twilight blue begins to appear here and there between the unremarkable hills, a salutation and sign of the lengthy mountainous country beyond. When at last he crests a ridge and sees no further hills before him, as he has seen the entire morning, all at once the whole blue wall is spread from the south to the north—lonely and sad. It cuts across the evening sky in a broad, monochrome band, and encloses a valley from which the waters of the Moldau gleam—last seen in Krumau—but here even more childlike, being closer to their source. In the valley, which is wide and fertile, villages are scattered about, and in the midst of them stands the hamlet of Oberplan. The blue wall is the aforementioned forest embankment, as it turns northward, and is hence the focus of our attention. The actual place, however, is a lake, which is about two-thirds of the way up.

Dense forests of monotonous spruce and fir rise upward for hours from the Moldau valley; then open land, gently climbing towards the lake-stream; however, it is a wild strata, consisting of nothing but deep black earth, the dark deathbed of thousand-year-old vegetation, wherein lie many single granite spheres—pale skulls detached from their bedding, exposed, washed and rubbed round by the rain. Farther along is the white skeleton of a fallen tree and alluvial rocks lying here and there. The lake-stream carries brown water, rich in iron salts, but so clear that its white sand glistens in the sunshine, like so much gleaming, red-tinted gold. No trace of the human hand—virginal silence.

A thick growth of young spruce admits us after an hour's hike, and, having stepped from the black velvet of its ground, one stands at the still blacker lake surface.

Without fail, a feeling of deepest solitude overcomes the traveller each time he climbs up to the fairytale lake. As a taut cloth without a single crease, it lies smooth between the hard cliffs, lined with a dense strip of spruce, dark and solemn, from which primordial trunks extend their branchless shafts like so many ancient columns. On the other side of this tract of forest, a theatre of rocks rises vertically like a gray wall, spreading the same seriousness of colour in every direction, broken only by delicate patches of green mosses and sparse growths of black pine, which from such a height look as small as rosemary plants. These also frequently break loose for want of ground and fall down into the lake—so that, looking down on it, one sees the old, bleached trunks lying in a horrible confusion, hemming the dark waters in a sad, white shining abatis. On the right, the shore cliff supports a mighty granite gable, called Blockenstein; to the left it curves around into a gentle roof, surrounded by a high pine forest and draped with a green cloth of the finest moss.

Since there is literally never a wind in this basin, the water rests motionless, and the forest and the gray rocks and the sky look up out of its depths as from an enormous black-glass mirror. Above it stands a small spot of deep, monotonous sky-blue. One can linger and brood here for days, and no sound interrupts the thoughts sinking through the mind, save for a falling pinecone or the short cry of a vulture.

Often, the same thought came to me when I sat at this shore; that it seemed like the uncanny eye of nature watched me here—deep black—over-towered by the forehead and brow of the rocks, bordered by eyelids of dark firs—wherein the water lay, motionless, like a tear turned to stone.

6.

LONDON

Edward Thomas

Then I saw a huge silence of meadows, of woods, and beyond these, of hills that raised two breasts of empurpled turf into the sky; and, above the hills, one mountain of cloud that beamed as it reposed in the blue as in a sea. The white cloud buried London with a *requiescat in pace*.

I like to think how easily Nature will absorb London as she absorbed the mastodon, setting her spiders to spin the winding-sheet and her worms to fill in the grave,—and her grass to cover it pitifully up, adding flowers—as an unknown hand added them to the grave of Nero. I like to see the preliminaries of this toil where Nature tries her hand at mossing the factory roof, rusting the deserted railway metals, sowing grass over the deserted platforms and flowers of rose-bay on ruinous hearths and walls. It is a real satisfaction to see the long narrowing wedge of irises that runs alongside and between the rails of the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway almost into the heart of London. And there are many kinds of weather when the air is full of voices prophesying desolation. The outer suburbs have almost a moorland fascination when fog lies thick and orange-coloured over their huge flat wastes of grass, expectant of the builder, but does not quite conceal the stark outlines of a traction engine, some procumbent timber, a bonfire and frantic figures darting about it, and aerial scaffolding far away. Other fields, yet unravished but menaced, the fog restores to a primeval state. And what a wild noise the wind makes in the telegraph wires as in wintry heather and gorse! When the waste open spaces give way to dense streets there is a common here and a lawn there, where the poplar leaves, if it be November, lie taintless on the grass, and the starlings talk sweet and shrill and cold in the branches, and nobody cares to deviate from the asphalt path to the dewy grass: the houses beyond the green mass themselves gigantic, remote, dim, and the pulse of London beats low and inaudible, as if she feared the irresistible enemy that is drawing its lines invisibly and silently about her on every side. If a breeze arises it makes that sound of the dry curled leaves chafing along the pavement; at night they seem spies in the unguarded by-ways. But there are also days—and spring and summer days, too—when a quiet horror thickens and stills the air outside London. The ridges

of trees high in the mist are very grim. The isolated trees stand cloaked in conspiracies here and there about the fields. The houses, even whole villages, are translated into terms of unreality as if they were carved in air and could not be touched; they are empty and mournful as skulls or churches. There is no life visible; for the ploughmen and the cattle are figures of light dream. All is soft and grey. The land has drunken the opiate mist and is passing slowly and unreluctantly into perpetual sleep. Trees and houses are drowsed beyond awakening or farewell. The mind also is infected, and gains a sort of ease from the thought that an eternal and universal rest is at hand without any cry or any pain.

8. *from* BIRDS AND MAN
W. H. Hudson

At Willersey, a Mr. Andrews, a lover of birds who owns a large garden and orchard in the village, gave me an entertaining account of a pet wood owl he once had. He had it as a young bird and never confined it. As a rule it spent most of the daylight hours in an apple loft, coming forth when the sun was low to fly about the grounds until it found him, when it would perch on his shoulder and spend the evening in his company. In one thing this owl differed from most pet birds which are allowed to have their liberty: he made no difference between the people of the house and those who were not of it; he would fly on to any-body's shoulder, although he only addressed his hunger-cry to those who were accustomed to feed him. As he roamed at will all over the place he became well known to every one, and on account of his beauty and perfect confidence he grew to be something of a village pet. But short days with long, dark evenings—and how dark they can be in a small, tree-shaded, lampless village!—wrought a change in the public feeling about the owl. He was always abroad in the evening, gliding about unseen in the darkness on downy silent wings, and very suddenly dropping on to the shoulder of any person—man, woman, or child—who happened to be out of doors. Men would utter savage maledictions when they felt the demon claws suddenly clutch them; girls shrieked and fled to the nearest cottage, into which they would rush, palpitating with terror. Then there would be a laugh, for it was only the tame owl; but the same terror would be experienced on the next occasion, and young women and children were afraid to venture out after nightfall lest the ghostly creature with luminous eyes should pop down upon them.

At length, one morning the bird came not back from his night-wandering, and after two days and nights, during which he had not been seen, he was given up for lost. On the third day Mr. Andrews was in his orchard, when, happening to pass near a clump of bushes, he heard the owl's note of recognition very faintly uttered. The poor bird had been in hiding at that spot the whole time, and when taken up was found to be in a very weak condition and to have one leg broken. No doubt one of the villagers on whose shoulders it had sought to alight, had struck

it down with his stick and caused its injury. The bone was skillfully repaired and the bird tenderly cared for, and before long he was well again and strong as ever; but a change had come over his disposition. His confidence in his human fellow-creatures was gone; he now regarded them all—even those of the house—with suspicion, opening wide his eyes and drawing a little back when any person approached him. Never more did he alight on any person's shoulder, though his evenings were spent as before in flying about the village. Insensibly his range widened and he became wilder. Human companionship, no longer pleasant, ceased to be necessary; and at length he found a mate who was willing to overlook his pauper past, and with her he went away to live his wild life.

10.

RAIN

Keith Jafrate

rain falls into music
soft brush simmering
touches
greenskin
palmgreen
open

silver orbs and
globes in grassheads
sky leans on
the hilltop a fallen ghost
wearing ghostly turbines
voyages

jackdaws stir it up
swoop in soft drift
swifts
liquid calligraphers
fall and turn
and lift
into music like a breath

the full leaves clatter
hush enclosure under birches
under their slow
erratic dance
into music like a secret
whispered
safe

something the tongue absorbs
song always

WE CALL THIS PLACE THE CATHEDRAL

Heidi Bailey

11.

These trees have grown

 between their tall
 grey
 trunks
now like heavy cloth

 This time of year,
 it is deepness
It is stillness settled
It is thickly deeply
And isn't this still-ness
 And isn't space
 These strong
 straight
 beech
 bearing the weight
keep it from straining
keep it from breaking
 This air
 and breathes
which doesn't exactly
 but certainly heals
 small wounds

Even the Aeolian call of an owl
 in her high branches
 even this soft
 this lovely carved
 even this
might bruise the skin
 long-tended

this silence
like a skin

lay it out, let it fall
minutely made of leaves.

late January
settled thickly
deeply
still
where the root of silence is?
its wide canopy?

of light and dark space
the grace between trees –
the air beneath
where silence lives

congeal
around more than a thousand
of song.

pale as quiet

hollowed-out sound
breath-shaped sound
if it falls too far
of the trees'
silence.

12.

OF THE MANY WINDS

Georgius Agricola

An excerpt from De Re Metallica, translated by Herbert Clark Hoover

Now miners reckon as many points as the sailors do in reckoning up the number of the winds. Not only is this done to-day in this country, but it was also done by the Romans who in olden times gave the winds partly Latin names and partly names borrowed from the Greeks. Any miner who pleases may therefore call the directions of the veins by the names of the winds. There are four principal winds, as there are four cardinal points: the Subsolanus, which blows from the east; and its opposite the Favonius, which blows from the west. There is the Auster, which blows from the south; and opposed to it is the Septentrio, from the north. There are also subordinate winds, to the number of twenty, as there are directions, for between each two principal winds there are always five subordinate ones. Between the Subsolanus (east wind) and the Auster (south wind) there is the Ornithiæ or the Bird wind,¹ which has the first place next to the Subsolanus; then comes Caecias; then Eurus, which lies in the midway of these five; next comes Vulturnus; and lastly, Euronotus, nearest the Auster (south wind).

NOTE

1

A wind that blows in spring and brings with it the birds of passage.

GHOSTS

Anonymous

13.

Collected by C. Hart Merriam

Ghosts Follow the Pathway of the Wind

The Hookooeko of Nicasio and Tomales Bay say:

When a person dies his Wal'-le or Ghost goes to Hel'-wah the West, crossing the great ocean to Oo-tā-yo'-me, the Village of the Dead. In making this long journey it follows hinnan mooka, the path of the Wind. Sometimes Ghosts come back and dance in the roundhouse; sometimes people hear them dancing inside but never see them.

Ghosts May Come Back in Soo-koo'-me the Owl

The Middle Mewuk of Tuolumne River say:

When a person dies, Oo'leus the heart-spirit remains in the dead body for four days. During these four days everyone is quiet and the children are not allowed to run about or make noise. On the morning of the fourth day the people sprinkle ashes on the ground over the buried basket of burnt bones—or over the grave if the corpse were buried instead of burned. On that day the heart-spirit leaves the body in the invisible form of Hinnan Soos the Wind Spirit, or Soos-les'-ko the Ghost, and proceeds westward.

NOTE

Clinton Hart Merriam collected 'tales' told to him by Miwok elders between 1890 and 1910. He published a book of these Miwok myths in 1910 and wrote: 'At present the vanishing remnants of the Mewuk [Miwok] tribes are scattered over their old territory on the west flank of the Sierra; the handful that remain of the Tuleyome tribe are gathered in a small rancheria on Putah Creek in Lake County; while the sole survivors of the Hookooeko and Olamentko tribes (in each case a single person) still cling to their original homes on Tomales and Bodega Bays.'

*The celestial bodies create
a fourth realm, under the stones.*



16.

A WALK WITH DIETER

Hans Jürgen von der Wense

An excerpt from A Shelter for Bells, translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Immensely fulfilling walk in the Harz! By far the most daring of my life. On the edge of the one thousand metre zone, in thunderstorms on granite rocks throughout the high moors, with dwarf birch in tattered clouds. Weary from the heights, Dieter and I climbed down into the earth, in great danger on a heath sloping forty-eight degrees to the silver mines—open for two hundred years and almost two hundred metres below daylight—with a lamp, rope, and ladder. Sublime and ghostly scene: huge upheavals in the red rocks with sparkling veins, crystals, tourmaline, and quartz. Above, only a tiny hole where we had entered; here was the realm of Hades. Then up again, and received by the warm earth that awaited us, with the sound of torrents, the exaltation of birds, like the first people born from stone. Into a gloomy gorge and paradisiacal wilderness, black wall of fir trees, blue smoke, call of axes. Then through caves and raging glacial rivers, into basins of deep bells, we followed the trace-drawings of Paleolithic people, which were found just a few years ago; carvings on deer antlers and earth-painted soul-stones equal to the French cave secrets. Most beautiful was the stone church, a place of sacrifice, with altars, niches, and stairs set in white alabaster; all tintured and spiritualized by a light falling from above, in colours of acacia, a deeply tender green with breath of violet.

THE CRYSTAL REST

John Ruskin

17.

ETHICS OF THE DUST

The soft white sediments of the sea draw themselves, in process of time, into smooth knots and sphered symmetry; burdened and strained under increase of pressure, they pass into nascent marble; scorched by fervent heat, they brighten and blanch into the snowy rock of Paros and Carrara. The dark drift of the inland river, or stagnant slime of inland pool and lake, divides, or resolves itself as it dries, into layers of its several elements; slowly purifying each by the patient withdrawal of it from the anarchy of the mass in which it was mingled. Contracted by increasing drought, till it must shatter into fragments, it infuses continually a finer ichor into the opening veins, and finds in its weakness the first rudiments of perfect strength. Rent, at last, rock from rock, nay, atom from atom, and tormented in lambent fire, it knits, through the fusion, the fibres of a perennial endurance; and, during countless subsequent centuries, declining, or, rather let me say, rising, to repose, finishes the infallible lustre of its crystalline beauty, under harmonies of law which are wholly beneficent, because wholly inexorable.

LICHENS AND MOSSES

Lichen, and mosses—how of these? Meek creatures! The first mercy of the earth, veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks; creatures full of pity, covering with strange and tender honour the scarred disgrace of ruin,—laying quiet finger on the trembling stones, to teach them rest. No words, that I know of, will say what these mosses are. None are delicate enough, none perfect enough, none rich enough. How is one to tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green,—the starred divisions of rubied bloom, fine-filmed, as if the Rock Spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass,—the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fibre into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace. They will

18. not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child his pillow [...] To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark, eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold,—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, star-like, on the stone...

ORPHEI LITHICA

Anonymous

19.

Translated from the Greek by C. W. King

THE CORAL

Above all gems in potency 'tis raised
By bright-haired Phœbus and its value praised;
For on its birth it shows a wondrous change;
True is the story, though thou'lt deem it strange:
At first a plant, it springs not from the ground,
The nurse of plants, but in the deep profound
Like a green shrub it lifts its flowery head
Mid weeds and mosses of old ocean's bed;
But when old age its withering stem invades,
Nipped by the brine, its verdant foliage fades,
It floats amid the wrack of sea-things tossed,
Till roaring waves expel it on the coast;
Then in the moment that it breathes the air,
They say who've seen it, that it hardens there,
Or as by frost congealed and solid grown
The plant is stiffened into perfect stone:
And in a moment in the finder's hands,
Erst a soft branch, a flinty coral stands:
Yet still the shrub its pristine shape retains,
Still spreads its branches, still its fruit remains,
The bark yet there though turned to stone we view,
And yet the root whence in the depths it grew.

TANGLE AND COALESCE

Adalbert Stifter

An excerpt from Zwei Schwestern, translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Es ist sonderbar, wie die Abstufung der Dinge, unter denen wir leben, auf den Menschen wirkt. Wie fremd sind uns die Minerale, wie hart seltsam abenteuerlich sind uns ihre Farben – das giftige Grün, das Blau, das Braun, das Grau, das heftige Gelb, zum Beispiele am Schwefel – wie unbekannt ist uns ihr Entstehen in dem dunkeln Schoße der Erde, wo sie ineinander verwachsen und wunderlich gebildet ruhen und lauschen. Wie näher sind uns schon die Pflanzen, sie sind unsere Gesellschaft über der Erde, der sie wohl noch mit der Wurzel angehören, von der sie aber doch mit ihrem edleren Teile, mit der Krone und mit der Blüte, wegstreben; ihre Nahrung und ihr Wachsen ist wie das unsrige, sie nehmen die irdischen Stoffe in ihre feinen Organe und verwandeln sie in ihr Wesen, und wenn wir gleichwohl nicht begreifen, wie das geschieht, so ist es für unsere Liebe schon genug, daß sie uns hierin verwandt sind; und wie hold sprechen uns ihre Farben gegen die der Minerale an, selbst ihre heftigsten Roth und Gelb und Blau; und wie sanft ist das allgemeine Kleid, das sie antun, das Grün. So zugeartet ist uns dasselbe, daß wir dort, wo wir Abweichendes erblicken, wie an jenen rostbraunen oder blutig roten Blättern mancher fremder Bäume, eine Art Schauer empfinden.

It is peculiar how the nuance of the things we live among acts upon us. How foreign to us are the minerals, how harsh and oddly adventure-some seem their colours—the poisonous green, the blue, the brown, the gray, the violent yellow of sulfur, for example—how unfamiliar to us is their emergence from the dark womb of the earth, where they tangle and coalesce into wonderful forms, where they lie still and listen. How much closer to us are the plants, which accompany us above the earth—to which, of course, they are still rooted, but away from which they strive with their nobler parts—with their treetops, their blossoms. Their nourishment and growth are like our own; they take the stuff of the earth into their delicate organs and transform it into their being, and if, nevertheless, we do not grasp how this happens, it is yet enough for our love that they are, in this, related to us. And how handsomely their colours argue against those of minerals, even the most violent red and yellow and blue; and how mild is their everyday attire, the green. So accustomed are we to this, that when we catch sight of divergence, as with the rust-brown or blood-red leaves of many a strange tree, we feel a kind of shiver.

FRAGMENTS

Novalis

*Excerpts from Fragmente und Studien and Die Enzyklopädie, translated by
Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfösl*

Pflanzen wirken auf den Pflanzsinn des Menschen, Tiere auf den
Tiersinn, Steine auf den Steinsinn des Menschen.

Sollte nicht jeder Pflanze ein Stein und ein Tier entsprechen? Realität
der Sympathie. Parallelismus der Naturreiche. Pflanzen sind gestorbene
Steine, Tiere gestorbene Pflanzen usw. Theorie der Metempsychose.

Den Sternen sah er zu und ahmte ihre Züge, ihre Stellungen im Sande
nach. Ins Luftmeer sah er ohne Rast, und ward nicht müde seine
Klarheit, seine Bewegungen, seine Wolken, seine Lichter zu betrachten.
Er sammelte sich Steine, Blumen, Käfer aller Art, und legte sie auf man-
nigfache Weise sich in Reihen.

Wird nicht der Fels ein eigentümliches Du, eben wenn ich ihn anrede?
Und was bin ich anders, als der Strom, wenn ich wehmütig in seine
Wellen hinabschaue, und die Gedanken in seinem Gleiten verliere?
Nur ein ruhiges, genußvolles Gemüt wird die Pflanzenwelt, nur ein
lustiges Kind oder ein Wilder die Tiere verstehn. - Ob jemand die
Steine und Gestirne schon verstand, weiß ich nicht, aber gewiß muß
dieser ein erhabenes Wesen gewesen sein. In jenen Statuen, die aus
einer untergegangenen Zeit der Herrlichkeit des Menschengeschlechts
übrig geblieben sind, leuchtet allein so ein tiefer Geist, so ein seltsames
Verständnis der Steinwelt hervor, und überzieht den sinnvollen
Betrachter mit einer Steinrinde, die nach innen zu wachsen scheint.

Plants affect the plant-mind of Man, animals the animal-mind, stones the stone-mind of Man.

Should not every plant correspond with a stone or an animal? Reality of sympathy. Parallelism of the kingdoms of nature. Plants are stones that have died, animals are plants that have died, etcetera. Theory of Metempsychosis.

He watched the stars and copied their paths, their positions in the sand. He constantly watched the ocean of the heavens and never wearied of contemplating its serenity, its clouds, its lights. He gathered stones, flowers, insects of all kinds, and placed them various ways in rows.

Does not the cliff become a particular Other, as I address it? And what am I but the tide, when I look down, melancholic, into its waves and lose my thoughts in the flood? Only a quiet, appreciative soul will understand the world of plants, only a spirited child or a savage will understand the animals. Whether anyone has yet understood the stones and the stars, I don't know, but, if so, he must surely have been a sublime being. Only from those statues that have come to us from a lost age of human glory radiates such a deep spirit, emerges such a curious understanding of the stone world; they cover the thoughtful observer with a crust of stone which seems to grow inward.

THE MARL PIT

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff

An excerpt from Die Mergelgrube, translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfösl

Stoß deinen Scheit drei Spannen in den Sand,
 Gesteine siehst du aus dem Schnitte ragen,
 Blau, gelb, zinnoberroth, als ob zur Gant
 Natur die Trödelbude aufgeschlagen.
 Kein Pardelfell war je so bunt gefleckt,
 Kein Rebhuhn, keine Wachtel so gescheckt,
 Als das Gerölle, gleißend wie vom Schliff
 Sich aus der Scholle bröckelt bei dem Griff
 Der Hand, dem Scharren mit des Fußes Spitze.
 Wie zürnend sturt dich an der schwarze Gneus,
 Spatkugeln kollern nieder, milchig weiß,
 Und um den Glimmer fahren Silberblitze;
 Gesprenkelte Porphire, groß und klein,
 Die Ockerdruse und der Feuerstein ...
 Tief in's Gebröckel, in die Mergelgrube
 War ich gestiegen, denn der Wind zog scharf;
 Dort saß ich seitwärts in der Höhlenstube,
 Und horchte träumend auf der Luft Geharf.
 Es waren Klänge, wie wenn Geisterhall
 Melodisch schwinde im zerstörten All;
 Und dann ein Zischen, wie von Moores Klaffen,
 Wenn brodelnd es in sich zusamm'gesunken;
 Mir über'm Haupt ein Rispeln und ein Schaffen,
 Als scharre in der Asche man den Funken.
 Findlinge zog ich Stück auf Stück hervor,
 Und lauschte, lauschte mit berauschem Ohr.
 Vor mir, um mich der graue Mergel nur,
 Was drüber, sah ich nicht; doch die Natur
 Schien mir verödet, und ein Bild erstand
 Von einer Erde, mürbe, ausgebrannt;

*Ich selber schien ein Funken mir, der doch
Erzittert in der toten Asche noch,
Ein Findling im zerfall'nen Weltenbau.*

25.

Thrust your spade three lengths into the sand
You will see rocks jut from the furrow—
Blue, yellow, cinnabar red, as if for an auction,
Nature has opened its junk shop.
No leopard skin was ever so mottled,
No partridge, no quail ever thus spotted,
And the scree, glistening as if polished,
Crumbles from the clod at the touch
Of a hand, the scrape of a foot.
As if in anger the black gneiss glares at you,
Spar pellets roll down, milky-white,
And round the mica runs silver lightning—
Mottled porphyry, great and small,
Brown iron ore and the flintstone [...]
Deep into the debris, into the marlpit
I climbed, for the wind pulled hard—
There I sat sideways in the cave's parlour,
And listened, dreaming to the harping wind.
There were sounds, as if ghostly echoes
Melodically fading in the destroyed universe—
And then a hiss, like the swamp's murmur,
When it has slumped, bubbling, into itself—
Above my head a faint sound and movements
Like a stirring of the embers for the flame.
I pulled out foundling stones, piece by piece,
And listened, listened with intoxicated ear.
Before me, and around me, only the pit,
What was above I did not see—but nature
Seemed to me deserted, and an image arose
Of an Earth, friable, gutted—
I, myself, seemingly the only spark
Still trembling in the dead ash,
A foundling in the ruined world.

THE SPOT WHERE THE BLACK CLOUD TOUCHED THE EARTH

George Frederick Kunz

Adapted from 'On Meteorites, Or Celestial Stones' in The Magic of Jewels and Charms

1150 B.C. The Babylonian royal astrologers taught that the mere fact of the passage of a meteor across the heavens, whether its course were from east to west, or from north to south, was a good omen. A series of cuneiform texts treats of the prognostics to be drawn from the transformations of stars into various animals, metals, stones, etc. This is explained as referring to the apparent form or hue of the meteor itself, or of the tail it left behind. The transformations into stones concern the dushu-stone, porphyry, and lapis lazuli. This omen is invariably a favourable one. Especially favourable was the augury when the meteor was very brilliant and left behind it a trail that might be likened to the tail of a scorpion.

1583 Michele Mercato gives a vivid description of the fall of a meteor which was observed near Castrovilarii, in Calabria, on the 10th of January. Some men in a meadow observed a black, whirling cloud rushing through the air, and saw it descend to the earth not far from where they were standing. The noise accompanying the descent of the meteorite was so deafening that it was heard far and wide, and the poor men fell to the ground almost unconscious from terror. People from the neighbourhood hastened to the area and, after restoring the terrified witnesses of the phenomena, discovered a mass of iron weighing thirty-three pounds at the spot where the black cloud had touched the earth.

1851 It is reported that in Inniskea, an island off the coast of Mayo, there was a stone idol called in the Irish tongue Neevougi. Said to have been preserved and worshipped from time immemorial, the stone is described as having been wrapped in so many folds of homespun

flannel that it looked like a mass of that material. This is explained by the custom of dedicating a dress of this flannel to the stone whenever its aid was sought, the garment being sewn on by an old woman who officiated as the priestess of the stone.

1908 In an Iroquois myth and legend, He-no, the god of thunder, is an object of great veneration, because of the powerful aid he renders to those whom he favours. He is believed to direct the rain which shall fertilize the seed in the earth, and also to give aid to the harvesters when the fruits of the earth have ripened. While traversing the celestial vault, in his journeyings hither and thither above the surface of the globe, he bears with him an enormous basket filled with huge boulders of chert rock. These he casts at any evil spirit he may encounter, and when on occasion a spirit succeeds in avoiding such a boulder, it will fall down to the earth surrounded by fire. We have here another version of the almost universal myth of thunder-stones.

1907 It is written that the Italians are convinced that if an arrow-head, or similar object, comes in contact with a piece of iron, the 'essence of the lightning' departs from it, revealing itself in a spark; hence they wrap it up, carefully, in skin, cloth, or paper so as to guard it from harm.

1794 On the 16th of June, at about seven o'clock in the evening, a thunder cloud was seen in Tuscany, near the city of Siena and the town of Radacofani. This cloud came from the north, and shot forth sparks like rockets, smoke rising from it like a furnace; at the same time a series of explosions was heard, not so much resembling the sound of thunder as that produced by the firing of canon or the discharge of many muskets. The cloud remained suspended in the air for some time, during which many stones fell to the earth.

1690 In Milan, a very small meteorite, weighing not quite an ounce, fell into the cloister of Santa Maria della Pace (now a cotton factory) and killed a Franciscan monk. Such was the velocity of this little stone that it penetrated deep into the monk's body, whence it was extracted and preserved for a long time in the Collection of Count Settála.

28.

1912 Arnaldo Faustini writes: 'Falling stars are explained by the natives of Labrador and of Baffin's Bay as being souls of the departed bound on an excursion to Hades in order to see what is going on there, while the phenomena of thunder and lightning are caused by a party of old women, who quarrel so violently over the possession of a seal that they bring the house down over their heads and shatter the lamps.'

1900s The Burmese celts or stone hatchets are frequently of jade and differ from those usually met with in Europe and India, in that they are provided with a chisel-edge instead of a double-sloped cutting edge. An interesting account of the superstitions connected with these implements is given by Mr. Theobald, from whom we quote the following passage:

The Burmese call these implements *mo-jio*, thunder-chain or thunder-bolt, and believe that they descend with the lightning flash, and, after penetrating the earth, work their way back by degrees to the surface, where they are found scattered about the fields among the lower hills, usually after rain, or on removing the crops. The true *mo-jio* is supposed to possess many occult virtues, and it is not common to find one which does not show signs of having been chipped or scraped for medicinal purposes.

One of the chief virtues of the *mo-jio* is to render the person of the wearer invulnerable; and many an unlucky *mo-jio* has succumbed to the popular test, which is to wrap it in a cloth and fire a bullet at it at short range. If the man misses the cloth, the authenticity and power of the charm is at once established; if the stone is fractured it is held not to be a real *mo-jio*.

Fire will not consume a house which contains one [...] Last but not least is the known fact that the owner of a real *mo-jio* can cut a rainbow in half with it.

from **THE FURTIVE PATROL**
Adam Flint

29.

Centaury morning witchery compasses sunup's lapwing blood • the
stars' tussle over • bouts of quiet cling • a brilliancing crater inverted
and ready for echo • from eaves passed the sun coldly explodes • a
fever of light rife across the greenery in fullness stunts one's mettle •
(mire coating dry the tongue hurts when it tuts) • farther along and the
wend will shine • everything lighter than spheres

*

Out of black flint its galaxies of calk hints of eroding light wash •
whitening the darkness extracts the stone • aloft and folly flowers •
blinking • as secrets blizzard down the dark • a vast admission that
must be confessed to enter • breath within it a clearing brume • up to
ward the terse prayers the air mills fine away • falling white and cold
through miles of like rumination

*

Brightest forms cross in daylight • solid shadows prove how strong the
beams are • both fall on broken sleepers • out over siding ground flow-
ers • white tawdries • forced affinities jostle in the bine • constriction
spirals • strangles the bole a baluster supporting nought • the uncon-
necting circle • edgeless • abyssal where a downward head extends •
need discreetly met relents for a darker congener to enter • consequent
loss of defining form forms more need • quickens dusk-crumpled hori-
zons • the blunt surgery of birdsong cutting eyes from their falter

*

30. A command known only by its ebb said stir • looking up the interior
went deeper being another • Frome boatyard • charred hut floor •
nothing more • the pity • sparkles like wet fennel after rain • head-
lights caress and pass over • the gentle decay in dark apices out-
buildings mount at night • enter the wood • fill the portal with new
gnawings • mill anterior slits affording escape with no visible sign •
and so be concealed • moonherb • hidden as a mare of nectar nights of
gibbous wane

*

FRIEDRICH TO SHUKOWSKI

Caspar David Friedrich

31.

From a letter to Wassili Andrejewitsch Schukowski, translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfösl

Sie wollen mich mit sich haben . . . aber das Ich, das Ihnen gefällt, wird nicht mit Ihnen sein! Ich muß allein bleiben und wissen, daß ich allein bin, um die Natur vollständig zu schauen und zu fühlen; ich muß mich dem hingeben, was mich umgibt, mich vereinigen mit meinen Wolken und Felsen, um das zu sein was ich bin. Die Einsamkeit brauche ich für das Gespräch mit der Natur.

You want to have me with you—but the me you prefer will not be with you! I must remain alone, and know that I am, in order to see and feel nature completely; I must give myself to my surroundings, unite with my clouds and stones—to become what I am. I need this solitude for my dialogue with nature.

*Regarding that time when birds,
animals, and trees had speech.*



from THE CHILD IN THE HOUSE
Walter Pater

There were the little sorrows of the dumb animals too—of the white angora, with a dark tail like an ermine's, and a face like a flower, who fell into a lingering sickness, and became quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism, and came to have a hundred different expressions of voice—how it grew worse and worse, till it began to feel the light too much for it, and at last, after one wild morning of pain, the little soul flickered away from the body, quite worn to death already, and now but feebly retaining it.

So he wanted another pet; and as there were starlings about the place, which could be taught to speak, one of them was caught, and he meant to treat it kindly; but in the night its young ones could be heard crying after it, and the responsive cry of the mother-bird towards them; and at last, with the first light, though not till after some debate with himself, he went down and opened the cage, and saw a sharp bound of the prisoner up to her nestlings; and therewith came the sense of remorse—that he too was become an accomplice to the limit of his small power, the springs and handles of that great machine in things, constructed so ingeniously to play pain-fugues on the delicate nerve-work of living creatures.

So he yielded himself to these things, to be played upon by them like a musical instrument, and began to note with deepening watchfulness, but always with some puzzled, unutterable longing in his enjoyment, the phases of the seasons and of the growing or waning day, down even to the shadowy changes wrought on bare wall or ceiling—the light cast up from the snow, bringing out their darkest angles; the brown light in the cloud, which meant rain; that almost too austere clearness, in the protracted light of the lengthening day, before warm weather began; that beam of June sunshine, at last, as he lay awake before it was time, a way of gold-dust across the darkness; all the humming, the freshness, the perfume of the garden seemed to lie upon it—and coming in one afternoon in September, along the red gravel walk, to look for a basket of yellow crab-apples left in the cool, old parlour, he remembered it the more, and how the colours struck upon him, because a wasp on one bitten apple stung him, and he felt the passion of sudden, severe pain.

ON THE SADNESS OF THRUSHES

E. J. Moor

35.

This spring, 1841, I saw a hawk on our lawn, carrying off a young Misseltoe Thrush, just full-grown; the old birds were attacking the hawk furiously, uttering sounds highly expressive both of terror and anger. The hawk flew to a fir-tree close at hand, and there was forced to leave the young bird, and to fly away without it, the old birds following it still, but not with such loud notes as before. When they had driven the hawk to some distance, they returned to the fir-tree, and notes of lamentation were set up (I think only by one of the old ones, probably the female). The notes were faint, moaning, and periodical; very different in expression from those lately uttered, and seemed very clearly to tell that the young one had died under the talons of the enemy.

THE TELEGRAPH HARP

Henry David Thoreau

Extracts from the journals

Sept. 22. 1851

Yesterday and to-day the stronger winds of autumn have begun to blow, and the telegraph harp has sounded loudly. I heard it especially in the Deep Cut this afternoon, the tone varying with the tension of different parts of the wire. The sound proceeds from near the posts, where the vibration is apparently more rapid. I put my ear to one of the posts, and it seemed to me as if every pore of the wood was filled with music, labored with the strain,—as if every fibre was affected and being seasoned or timed, rearranged according to a new and more harmonious law. Every swell and change or inflection of tone pervaded and seemed to proceed from the wood, the divine tree or wood, as if its very substance was transmuted. What recipe for preserving wood, perchance,—to keep it from rotting,—to fill its pores with music . . . When no music proceeds from the wire, on applying my ear I hear the hum within the entrails of the wood,—the oracular tree acquiring, accumulating, the prophetic fury.

Sept. 23. 1851

The telegraph harp sounds strongly to-day, in the midst of the rain. I put my ear to the trees and I hear it working terribly within, and anon it swells into a clear tone, which seems to concentrate in the core of the tree, for all the sound seems to proceed from the wood. It is as if you had entered some world-famous cathedral, resounding to some vast organ. The fibres of all things have their tension, and are strained like the strings of a lyre. I feel the very ground tremble under my feet as I stand near the post. This wire vibrates with great power, as if it would strain and rend the wood . . .

Jan. 3. 1852

A spirit sweeps the string of the telegraph harp, and strains of music are drawn out endlessly like the wire itself . . . I do not despair of such a world where you have only to stretch an ordinary wire from tree to tree to hear such strains drawn from it by New England breezes as make Greece and all antiquity seem poor in melody. Why was it made that man should be thrilled to his inmost being by the vibrating of a wire? Are not inspiration and ecstasy a more rapid vibration of the nerves swept by the inrushing excited spirit, whether zephyral or boreal in its character.

Jan. 18. 1852

While the snow is falling, the telegraph harp is resounding across the fields. As if the telegraph approached so near an attribute of divinity that music naturally attended it.

Jan. 23. 1852

No music from the telegraph harp on the causeway, where the wind is strong, but in the Cut this cold day I hear memorable strains. What must the birds and beasts think where it passes through the woods, who heard only the squeaking of the trees before! I should think that these strains would get into their music at last. Will not the mocking-bird be heard one day inserting this strain in his melody? It intoxicates me. Orpheus is still alive. All poetry and mythology revive. The spirits of all bards sweep the strings.

Jan. 29. 1852

Few are the days when the telegraph harp rises into a pure, clear melody. Though the wind may blow strong or soft, in this or that direction, naught will you hear but a low hum or murmur, or even a buzzing sound; but at length, when some undistinguishable zephyr blows,

38. when the conditions not easy to be detected arrive, it suddenly and unexpectedly rises into melody, as if a god had touched it, and fortunate is the walker who chances to be within hearing. So is it with the lyres of bards, and for the most part it is only a feeble and ineffectual hum that comes from them, which leads you to expect the melody you do not hear. When the gale is modified, when the favorable conditions occur, and the indescribable coincidence takes place, then there is music. Of a thousand buzzing strings, only one yields music. It is like the hum of the shaft, or other machinery, of a steamboat, which at length might become music in a divine hand. I feel greatly enriched by this telegraph.

Mar. 4. 1852

Some refer the music of the telegraph harp to the electricity passing along the wire! others, to the air passing through the glasses.

Mar. 9. 1852

When I hear the telegraph harp, I think I must read the Greek poets. This sound is like a brighter colour, red, or blue, or green, where all was dull white or black.

Mar. 12. 1852

The telegraph harp has spoken to me more distinctly and effectually than any man ever did.

EPITAPH OF THE SWALLOW

Rudolf Borchardt

39.

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

*Ich, die verwundete Schwalbe, drei Tage des Menschen Genossin,
 Sahe den schrecklichen Tod freundlicher werden und starb:
 Schwestern im Blau, fliegt schweigend hier überhin, wo sich das
 Geistlein
 Schüttelt und ringt nach Ruf, wenn es euch Rufende hört.
 Gönn mir Schweigen und singt, singt anderswo, wenn ihr das Meer
 wagt:
 Nicht ganz, nicht ganz stumm flattert ich eine beiseit.*

I, the wounded swallow, three days a man's companion,
 Saw terrible death grow friendly and died:
 Sisters in blue, who fly silently overhead, where the
 Little soul
 Is shaking and struggles to call out when it hears your voices calling.
 Grant me silence—and sing, sing elsewhere, when you dare
 the sea:
 Not quite, not quite mute, I flutter alongside.

40.

CELANDINE

Mark Roper

It dawned on me from the roadside,
simple, goodhearted, yellow daisy,
set in a surrender of leaves,
mild-marbled, almost heart-shaped.

Huge winds were ripping into the trees,
a thrush was singing, near but remote,
a cold-voiced clock striking short psalms,
beseechment, lament, into the wind.

Someone was holding my hand. A voice said
The green swallow, the first of spring,
Celandine, from the Greek for swallow, Chelidon.
And here's another word for you to savour:
Chelidonias, a swallow-bearing wind.

HYMENOPTERA I: WASPS

41.

Catherine Young

My sisters of tiny waists
and hooked wing;
of crane-like legs trailing thoughtlessly
behind, you cling to eaves,
mandibles able to deconstruct
my house while you build anew each year.
I wonder what drives you to tear
and vibrate, plaster a paper lantern nest,
so perfectly placed to shed bitter weathers; your cone
is shaped with spiralled intentions
for your brood. So much
work in a season, fierce
purpose. I fear you, your sting, your hum,
that ferocious roar of sisterhood.

Let me not harm you, sisters. My heart's
desire for sanctuary is like yours: encircled
by this humming, this
home building, layer by layer
from the grit and spit
of the world.

THE HERONS

Francis Ledwidge

As I was climbing Ardan Mor
From the shore of Sheelan lake,
I met the herons coming down
Before the water's wake.

And they were talking in their flight
Of dreamy ways the herons go
When all the hills are withered up
Nor any waters flow.

NIMÁBAN

Frank G. Speck

43

Excerpts from Hunting Charms of the Montagnais and the Mistassini

It is impossible to categorize *nimában* (the Montagnais name for this object) in exact terms. In general it is a prayer for game, a symbol of the hunter's body, his life, a symbol of the spirit which leads him to his game, a means of communicating with the shades of the animal, and an object of ceremonial importance worn at dances performed by the hunter over the body of the slain animal.

Spread over an extremely wide range of country, the various bands of the sub-Arctic, semi-maritime hunters known in literature as the Montagnais ('mountaineers') exhibit considerable variation in dialect and custom. From Hamilton River in eastern Labrador, following the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence westward to the Saguenay, the Montagnais are seafarers and forest nomads according to season and fancy. The term *nimában* seems to signify 'dance-cord,' from *nimi-*, 'dance,' and the common Algonkian stem *-aban*, denoting 'string,' 'length of something pliable,' which occurs in cognitive forms throughout eastern dialects.

A *nimában* used for a bear hunt is made of well-tanned mooseskin. In form it closely imitates a pack-strap, and in fact it symbolizes one. The wide part is bound on the upper edge with a red silk ribbon, and on the lower one with a similar ribbon of green. The scene is embroidered in red, yellow, and light-blue sewing silks. The figures show trees on each end, the trail and canoe, the hunter with his axe, and the bear trying to cross to a lake. This magical object is worn by the hunter who has had a revelation about getting game in the future. He carries this decorated strap with him on the trail, and when, true to the revelation, he gets his game, he wraps it in this strap and brings it home. The hunter keeps the strap in secret, more or less, and does not show it lest it lose its power to function as a safeguard against starvation. When the hunter finds and kills the bear, he sits down near it and smokes. After having laid the bear out on its back with crossed paws, he puts black tobacco in its mouth and places the *nimában* on its breast or about the

- 44 neck. Sometimes before this is done the hunter places the nimában across his head, allowing the ends to fall over his shoulders. He then dances around the fallen game, at the same time singing. When an animal has been left, to enable the hunter to return to camp for help, it is believed no beast of prey will eat the carcass while the nimában is resting on its chest.

White: Caribou, Green: Small Game, Dark-Blue: Bear, Red Wool: Beaver, Pink Silk: Lynx.

ON TREES

Gerard Manley Hopkins

45

I have now found the law of the oak leaves. It is of platter-shaped stars altogether; the leaves lie close like pages, packed, and as if drawn tightly too. But these old packs, which lie at the end of their twigs, throw out now long shoots alternatively and slimly leaved, looking like bright keys. All the sprays but markedly these shape out and as it were embrace greater circles and the dip and toss of these make the wider and less organic articulations of the tree.

*

The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more.

*

Blunt buds of the ash. Pencil buds of the beech. Lobes of the trees. Cups of the eyes. Gathering back the lightly hinged eyelids. Bows of the eyelids. Pencil of eyelashes. Juices of the eyeball. Eyelids like leaves, petals, caps, tufted hats, handkerchiefs, sleeves, gloves. Also of the bones sleeved in flesh. Juices of the sunrise. Joins and veins of the same. Vermillion look of the hand held against a candle with the darker parts as the middles of the fingers and especially the knuckles covered with ash.

Every word is a word of invocation.



48.

THE LANGUAGE OF MOTH
Rosie Sandler

for Belinda Worsley

You show me the ones
caught on paper
– your pencil strokes
as alien to me
as the insects themselves.

But I will learn
the hide-and-peek
of dead leaf,
the roll of twig,
the threat of hornet.

I will take silent flight
and give it words.

TWO POEMS

Alex Josephy

49.

NO WORD

No single move without a reason;
close-wrapped in cellophane skin,
a worker probes the wild geometry
of clover, the inevitable quirks
of blossom, stem, the way seed, sun,
prevailing wind have twisted them.

Furred head burrowing deep inside
the luscious funnels, she appears
to reel, delirious, floret to floret,
but there's method here, a map
of necessity. She'll swallow not a drop
for herself, honey-stomach tight
with heavenly cargo, no word for ecstasy.

A VOLUME

Empty page where a tree
 once stood. If you pause, troubled
 by invisible branches,
 there's the shock
 of sunlight:
 earth and pallid growth, shaded
 for maybe fifty years,
 laid bare;

 a hollow, roots ripped
 from the soil where the trunk went over,
 everything
 before and after altered, storyline
 folded back on itself

 to spring a chapter
 of homes: caves,
 gnawed crannies, annexes
 woven of twig, tatters
 of plastic bag, orange
 and blue; walkways
 tunnelled under bark

 and after-words:
 a delicate dirt
 not yet loam

IGNOTA
John Martone

51.

mycelium
under fallen leaves
my brain's white matter

two legs —
a great leap
on the deer path

I whisper my thanks
to a brown-ringed
tree-ear

the trail
dividing again
my fingers are cold

walking through
winter mosses
a hole in my shoe

sporangia
taller than
I'll ever be

red lichen blazing
on a fallen limb —
that horizon

pushing my way
through winter thorns
emerging where I should be

ON WANDERING

Hans Jürgen von der Wense

An excerpt from A Shelter for Bells, translated by Kristofor Minta and Herbert Pfösti

The wanderer never reaches his destination. When we reach the peak and rest, our eyes already wander again.

To wander is not a pleasure; it is worship. Wandering is science; true theosophy.

We wander only to discover that the ways are overgrown with grass.

The meaning of wandering is to forget oneself in creation.

Whoever walks reaches everything to abandon everything.

Life must be conjured. Each wandering is an incantation.

FOREST FOLKLORE

Alexander Porteous

53.

Leaves

One of the trees of India is called the Arka tree, which means 'having a thunderbolt for a leaf,' on account of the cuneiform shape of the leaves. The word *arka* is also a name for the sun, and during the Vedic period the leaf of this tree was used in sacrifices to that luminary. There is an Indian tradition that those who approach this tree will become blind, which probably had its origin in the name, as lightning and the sun both dazzle the eye.

Some of the ancient writers tell of wonderful trees whose leaves produced animals and even serpents, and in one case the leaves as they fell off became changed into butterflies.

Forestry

In ancient days the state of the moon, whether it was waxing or waning, was considered to be of great importance in connection with the felling of timber. Pliny, borrowing from Theophrastus, says that the very best time to cut down trees is when the moon is in conjunction with the sun, that day being called the *interlinium*, or sometimes the 'moon's silence.'

Shadows

There was a curious early primitive belief that a tree could be injured through its shadow, which was considered to be sensitive. Dudley Kidd tells us that if a Kaffir witch doctor required the leaves of a tree for his brews, as the shadow of the tree will feel the touch of his feet, he 'takes care to run up quickly, and to avoid touching the shadow lest it should inform the tree of the danger and so give the tree time to withdraw the medicinal properties from its extremities into the safety of the inaccessible trunk.'

Burials

Many races of mankind, instead of interring their dead, place the bodies on trees, which custom in some instances probably bore a mythical relation to placing them on the Tree of Life. Thus among some Indian tribes of North-West America the dead bodies are placed in boxes, which are slung by cedar-bark cords from the branches of trees. Frequently these cords give way, and then the bones strew the ground beneath.

Fire

There was an ancient tradition that fire first appeared on the tops of trees, which may have been an allusion to St. Elmo's Fire. The Ancient Persians saw the fire-generator in the Cypress or Konar Tree, because its needles point to the sky, and from it flashed the first spark. They say it was the first tree planted in their Paradise, whence it was brought to earth by Zarathustra, who saw in it the image of Ahuramazda himself...

Ancient myths tell that the Hawthorn originated from lightning, and Jacob Grim [sic] says that the Ancient Germans made their funeral pyres from its wood. Dr. Grill, referring to this, remarks: "It is thought that by virtue of the sacred fire which flows from the thorns the souls of the dead are received into the sky, and it is clear that this sacred fire is the image of the celestial fire, and the burning of the corpse a symbol of the storm, since the funeral pyre and the hammer were both consecrated to the god Thor.

In various countries the usual way of producing fire is by rubbing two pieces of wood together, which is in many cases successful, even if the wood be green. It has been conjectured that many forest fires, apparently causeless, have had their origin by the branches of the trees rubbing together, and probably primitive men, being forest-dwellers, obtained their first ideas of fire from that phenomenon. It may be that a divinity was believed to reside within the branches. Sir John Lubbock mentions that in De Brosse's *Cult des Dieux fétiches* reference is made to a passage in *Sanchoniatha* quoted by Eusebius, in which the first thirteen generations of men are described. The third generation had the names of Phos, Pur, and Phlox, meaning Light, Fire, and Flame, and

these discovered how to generate fire by the rubbing of two sticks of wood against each other, and they taught men the use thereof.

WRITINGS
Franz Hessel

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Das Licht stieg heim in tausend kleine Sterne...

Das Blaugrün war so voll Erinnerung an ich weiß noch nicht oder nicht mehr was—vielleicht nur an sich selbst...

Das Stück Landstraße, wo die Pappel aus Nebelgrund in Nebelhimmel steigt und ihr gegenüber der kahle Weidenbaum krüppelt, auf dem die Ästlein aufsitzen wie Kinder auf einem knienden Tiere.

‘Und die Blumen und die Tiere?’

‘—liebe ich auch, besonders wenn ich die Namen nicht weiß. Und ebenso liebe ich die Namen, besonders wenn ich nicht weiß, welche Blumen und Tiere dazu gehören. Ich habe auch Gedichte gern, besonders in fremden Sprachen, von denen man nur hier und da ein Wort versteht.’

The light rose home into a thousand little stars...

The blue-green was so full of memory—of what, I still don't, or no longer know—perhaps only of itself...

The stretch of road where the poplar rises from the fog-earth into a fog-sky and, opposite it, the bare, crippled willow tree, on which the little branches sit like children upon a kneeling animal.

And the flowers and animals?

— I love them, too, especially if I don't know their names. And I love the names just as much, especially if I don't know which flowers and animals they belong to. I also like poems, especially in foreign languages, when there is only a word here and there one can understand.

VARNHAGEN TO VEIT

Rahel Varnhagen

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

An Veit. Dienstag, den 16. Februar 1805.

Sterben Sie nur nicht! das hängt ganz von Ihnen ab. Ich will mich nicht so vergessen. Ein Mensch, wie wir, kann nur aus inadvertance sterben; das fühl' ich aufs lebhafteste. Auch giebt es eine Art, das Leben zu erhalten; es giebt Tropfen auf anderen Sternen, die allein hinlänglich sind, ein von Erde gesponnenes Leben zu erhalten. Den Um-Schwung, die Nahrung des begriffenern, gröbern Lebens, u.s.w.!!! Sein Sie nicht ängstlich! ich bin gewöhnlich gelassener. Wenn ich aber an Menschen schreibe, geschieht es mir, das der schwer erfüllte Horizont meiner Seele los gewittert. Himmlische Menschen lieben Gewitter. Auch ein Grund, warum ich das Schreiben scheue.

To Veit. Tuesday, February 16, 1805.

Only do not die! It all depends on you. I do not want to forget myself in that way. A being, like ours, will only die from inadvertence; this I feel most vividly. What's more, there is a way of sustaining life; there are drops on other stars, which solely suffice to preserve a life that's spun from earth. The reversal, the sustenance of the grasped, the coarser life, etcetera!!! Do not fear! I am usually more tranquil. But when I write to people, it so happens that the over-full horizon of my soul begins to thunder. Heavenly people love thunderstorms. Another reason why I shy away from writing.

HEART IN MY MOUTH

Karen Dennison

59.

Silence tells me my heart is a rose
pressed between pages
of a hard-backed book.

This is what my heart knows
– the weight of words,
blind-embossed on its walls.

And down in the hollowed out
calyx is the echo-chamber
of a ghost-pulse, still-born heart.

Rose-hip exposed, the stem
from a buried seed rises up my throat,
heart-blooms in my mouth.

And when I open my lips
to speak, petals
fly out.

60.

BEWICK'S BIRDS

James Walsh

The Magpie

strong

black

head

the snowy whiteness of the breast

a kind

whitish

beautiful bird

everywhere

common

England

Continent

Lapland

America

migratory

builds

nest with

art

covering

thorny branches closely entangled

furnished with

wool

on which her

young repose

crafty

familiar

pronounce words

imitate

noise

hoard

provisions

its

flight not

never

lofty

distant journies

The Nightengale

61.

bill brown
 eyes hazel
 body a rusty brown
 underparts pale ash colour
 white at throat legs pale brown
 leaves us
 in August
 to visit distant
 Asia
 to sing delightfully
 to haunt places not
 seen
 in
 a low timid
 hymn to nature
 the sound opens
 and swells bursts
 flows faints and mur-
 murs
 soft breathings
 poured from his inmost soul
 by pauses
 silence evening

NOTE

Both poems are drawn from *History of British Birds, Beilby & Bewick, Newcastle, 1797*

*Could it be the forms of
crystallization are broken gravity?*



A FRAGMENT FROM HARZREISE
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Translated by Hans Brückner and Richard Skelton

*Aber abseits wer ists?
Ins Gebüsch verliert sich sein Pfad,
Hinter ihm schlagen
Die Sträucher zusammen,
Das Gras steht wieder auf,
Die Öde verschlingt ihn.*

But who passes there alone?
His path is lost in the thicket.
The branches spring back
behind him.
The grasses rise.
The wild devours him.

from **ABDIAS**
Adalbert Stifter

65.

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Er erinnerte sich jetzt auch, daß ihm einmal im Morgenlande erzählt worden war, daß wenn es Nachts an dem Himmel blitze und ein Gewitter nicht auszubrechen vermöge, die Blumen unten manchmal eine leichte Flamme aus ihrem Kelche entlassen, oder daß gar ein fester ruhiger Schein darüber steht, der nicht weicht und doch nicht die Blätter und die zarten Fäden verbrennt. Ja diese Blumen sind dann gar die schönsten.

He remembered, too, that once while in the Orient, he had been told that when lightning brightens the night sky, but a thunderstorm is unable to break, the flowers beneath sometimes send forth a delicate flame from their calyces, or even that a serene and steady glow hangs above them—which does not diminish, and yet does not burn the leaves or tender stamens. Indeed, these flowers are then at their most beautiful.

BIRDS CLIMBING THE AIR

Richard Jefferies

Two hawks come over the trees, and, approaching each other, rise higher into the air. They wheel about for a little without any apparent design, still rising, when one ceases to beat the air with his wings, stretches them to their full length, and seems to lean aside. His impetus carries him forward and upward, at the same time in a circle, something like a skater on one foot. Revolving round a centre, he rises in a spiral, perhaps a hundred yards across; screwing upwards, and at each turn ascending half the diameter of the spiral. When he begins this it appears perfectly natural, and nothing more than would necessarily result if the wings were held outstretched and one edge of the plane slightly elevated. The impulse of previous flight, the beat of strong pinions, and the swing and rush of the bird evidently suffice for two or three, possibly for four or five, winding movements, after which the retarding effects of friction and gravitation ought, according to theory, to gradually bring the bird to a stop. But up goes the hawk, round and round like a woodpecker climbing a tree; only the hawk has nothing tangible into which to stick his claws and to rest his tail against. Those winding circles must surely cease; his own weight alone must stop him, and those wide wings outstretched must check his course. Instead of which the hawk rises as easily as at first, and without the slightest effort – no beat of wing or flutter, without even a slip or jerk, easily round and round. His companion does the same; often, perhaps always, revolving the opposite way, so as to face the first. It is a fascinating motion to watch.

The graceful sweeping curl holds the eye; it is a line of beauty, and draws the glance up into the heights of the air. The darker upper part of one is usually visible at the same time as the lighter under part of the other, and as the dark wheels again the sunlight gleams on the breast and under wing. Sometimes they take regular curves, ascending in an equal degree with each; each curve representing an equal height gained perpendicularly. Sometimes they sweep round in wide circles, scarcely ascending at all. Again, suddenly one will shoot up almost perpendicularly, immediately followed by the other. Then they will resume the regular ascent. Up, like the woodpecker round a tree, till now the level

of the rainy scud which hurries over in wet weather has long been past; up till to the eye it looks as if they must soon attain to the flecks of white cloud in the sunny sky to-day. They are in reality far from that elevation; but their true height is none the less wonderful. Resting on the sward, I have watched them go up like this through a lovely morning atmosphere till they seemed about to actually enter the blue, till they were smaller in appearance than larks at their highest ascent, till the head had to be thrown right back to see them. This last circumstance shows how perpendicularly they ascend, winding round a line drawn straight up. At their very highest they are hardly visible, except when the under wing and breast passes and gleams in the light.

All this is accomplished with outstretched wings held at full length, without flap, or beat, or any apparent renewal of the original impetus. If you take a flat stone and throw it so that it will spin, it will go some way straight, then rise, turn aside, describe a half-circle, and fall. If the impetus kept in it, it would soar like the hawk, but this does not happen. A boomerang acts much in the same manner, only more perfectly: yet, however forcibly thrown, the impetus soon dies out of a boomerang. A skater gets up his utmost speed, suddenly stands on one foot, and describes several circles; but in two minutes comes to a standstill, unless he 'screws,' or works his skate, and so renews the impulse. Even at his best he only goes round, and does not raise his weight an inch from the ice. The velocity of a bullet rapidly decreases, and a ball shot from an express rifle, and driven by a heavy charge, soon begins to droop. When these facts are duly considered, it will soon be apparent what a remarkable feat soaring really is. The hawk does not always ascend in a spiral, but every now and then revolves in a circle – a flat circle – and suddenly shoots up with renewed rapidity. Whether this be merely sportive wantonness or whether it is a necessity, is impossible to determine; but to me it does not appear as if the hawk did it from necessity. It has more the appearance of variation: just as you or I might walk fast at one moment and slowly at another, now this side of the street and now the other. A shifting of the plane of the wings would, however, in all probability, give some impetus: the question is, would it be sufficient? I have seen hawks go up in sunny and lovely weather – in fact, they seem to prefer still, calm weather; but, considering the height to which they attain, no one can positively assert that they do or do not utilize a current. If they do, they may be said to sail (a hawk's wings

68. are technically his sails) round half the circle with the wind fair and behind, and then meet it the other half of the turn, using the impetus they have gained to surmount the breeze as they breast it. Granting this mechanical assistance, it still remains a wonderful feat, since the nicest adjustment must be necessary to get the impetus sufficient to carry the birds over the resistance. They do not drift, or very little.

My own impression is that a hawk can soar in a perfectly still atmosphere. If there is a wind he uses it; but it is quite as much an impediment as an aid. If there is no wind he goes up with the greater ease and to the greater height, and will of choice soar in a calm. The spectacle of a weight – for of course the hawk has an appreciable weight – apparently lifting itself in the face of gravitation and overcoming friction, is a very striking one. When an autumn leaf parts on a still day from the twig, it often rotates and travels some distance from the tree, falling reluctantly and with pauses and delays in the air. It is conceivable that if the leaf were animated and could guide its rotation, it might retard its fall for a considerable period of time, or even rise higher than the tree.

HALO

Gilbert White

Adapted from the journals

1782

Frost, clouds, sprinkling, dark.	[JAN 2]
An extraordinary concussion in the air.	[JAN 5]
Vast white dew.	[JAN 14]
Snow covers the ground. Larks congregate in vast flocks.	[JAN 18]
Snipes come up the stream.	[JAN 21]
Ravens seem paired.	[FEB 9]

1784

Hoar frost lies all day.	[JAN 7]
A grey crow shot near the village. Only the third that I ever saw.	[JAN 9]
Small snow on the ground.	[JAN 10]
Clouds put up their heads.	[JAN 18]
Ice in chambers. Hares frequent the garden.	[JAN 21]
Hard frosts. Paths thaw. Fleecy clouds. Sky muddled. Halo.	[FEB 4]
Found a grass-hopper lark dead. It seemed to be starved.	[MAR 1]
Much snow in the fields. The country looks most dismally, like the dead of winter.	[MAR 4]

RELIQUE

70. Men open the hills. [APR 8]
Owls have eggs. Beeches on the common [MAY 8]
hardly budding.
Not one missle-thrush. [MAY 10]
Fern-owl churs. The bark of felled oak runs. [MAY 14]
- Sultry. Left off fires in the parlor. So much [MAY 16]
sun hurries the flowers out of bloom.
Flesh-flies begin to appear.
Bees thrive. Asparagus abounds. [MAY 19]
Men bring up peat from the forest. [MAY 21]

1787

- Strong aurora. [JAN 17]
Mice eat the crocus roots. [JAN 19]
Small frost, sun, still, & pleasant. [JAN 31]
Storm-cock sings. Brown wood-owls. [FEB 2]
Their note is like a fine vox humana.
White owls haunt my barn.
The air-full of insects, & gossamer. [FEB 19]
Male yew-trees shed clouds of farina. [FEB 21]
- The hedge-sparrow feeds the young [JUL 16]
cuckow in its cage.
Rooks in vast flocks return to the deep [JUL 27]
woods.
Vast rain. [JUL 31]
Several golden-crowned wrens appear in [AUG 1]
the tall fir-tree.

1791

71.

Strong cold gale.	[SEP 27]
Linnets congregate in great flocks.	[SEP 28]
Gathered one fine nectarine, the last.	[OCT 2]
Hunter's moon rises early.	[OCT 12]
Beeches in the field shed ripe mast.	[OCT 13]
Wood-cock and red wings return.	[OCT 15]
Snow on the Sussex downs.	[NOV 2]
Thunder in the night.	[NOV 13]
Hard frost, very white. Snipes come up from the forest.	[DEC 13]
Dark & cold.	[DEC 21]

72.

CIRCLE
Jeffrey Yang

vultures mark the sky
at sunset, divine artifice
carrying the dead from here
to clearer air, thermal up-
drafts under unmoving
wings, as if held by invisible
strings, gentle gyre, way-
ward winds in which
vultures mark the sky

LANDSCAPES

Olive Schreiner

73.

Excerpts from The Story of an African Farm

The rocks have been to us a blur of brown; we bend over them, and the disorganized masses dissolve into a many-colored, many-shaped, carefully-arranged form of existence. Here masses of rainbow tinted crystals, half-fused together; these bands of smooth grey and red, methodically overlying each other. This rock here is covered with a delicate silver tracery, in some mineral, resembling leaves and branches; there on the flat stone, on which we so often have sat to weep and pray, we look down and see it covered with the fossil footprints of great birds, and the beautiful skeleton of a fish.

A gander drowns itself in our dam. We take it out, and open it on the bank, and kneel looking at it. Above are the organs divided by delicate tissues; below are the intestines artistically curved in spiral form, and each tier covered by a delicate network of blood-vessels standing out red against the faint blue background. Each branch of the blood-vessels is comprised of a trunk, bifurcating and rebifurcating into the most delicate, hair-like threads, symmetrically arranged. We are struck with its singular beauty. And, moreover – and here we drop from our kneeling into a sitting posture – this also we remark: of that same exact shape and outline is our thorn-tree seen against the sky in mid-winter: of that shape also is delicate metallic tracery between our rocks; in that exact path does our water flow when without a furrow we lead it from the dam; so shaped are the antlers of the horned beetle.

And so, it comes to pass in time, that the earth ceases for us to be a weltering chaos. We walk in the great hall of life, looking up and round reverentially.

74 And so, it comes to pass at last, that whereas the sky was at first a small blue rag stretched out over us, and so low that our hands might touch it, pressing down on us, it raises itself into an immeasurable blue arch over our heads, and we begin to live again.

Then slowly from the white sky above, through the still air, came something falling, falling, falling. Softly it fluttered down, and dropped on to the breast of the dying man. He felt it with his hands. It was a feather.

We are sparks, we are shadows, we are pollen, which the next wind will carry away.

from PHANTOM BOUQUET
Edward Parrish

75.

Fragments adapted by Kirston Lightowler

Arcana of solitary occupations:
flowers, shells, birds, insects—
skeleton leaves.

Once nerves, now veins,
subjected to the subtle
chemistry of the cell.

Sanctuary of plant forms,
afterlife of exogens—
bare of particles
midrib to margin.

Serrated or entire,
divided, lanceolate, ovate,
acuminate, cordate.

With a fineness bordering
on transparency.

Permeated by moisture,
drawn up through the soil,
drawn down through the air,
in which it vibrates.

Microspore, alembic—

By what subtle influence
the sun's rays—
marvellous ends.

*Could it be the heavenly
bodies are fossils?*



78.

from **THE NOVICES OF SAIS**
 Novalis

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Mannigfache Wege gehen die Menschen. Wer sie verfolgt und vergleicht, wird wunderliche Figuren entstehen sehn; Figuren, die zu jener großen Chifferschrift zu gehören scheinen, die man überall, auf Flügeln, Eierschalen, in Wolken, im Schnee, in Kristallen und in Steinbildungen, auf gefrierenden Wassern, im Innern und Äußern der Gebirge, der Pflanzen, der Tiere, der Menschen, in den Lichtern des Himmels, auf berührten und gestrichenen Scheiben von Pech und Glas, in den Feilspänen um den Magnet her, und sonderbaren Konjunkturen des Zufalls, erblickt. In ihnen ahndet man den Schlüssel dieser Wunderschrift, die Sprachlehre derselben; allein die Ahndung will sich selbst in keine feste Formen fügen, und scheint kein höherer Schlüssel werden zu wollen. Ein Alkahest scheint über die Sinne der Menschen ausgegossen zu sein. Nur augenblicklich scheinen Wünsche, ihre Gedanken sich zu verdichten. So entstehen ihre Ahndungen, aber nach kurzen Zeiten schwimmt alles wieder, wie vorher, von ihren Blicken.

Many are the roads of man. Whoever follows and compares them will witness the emergence of curious figures, figures which seem to belong to that great cipher we perceive in all things, on wings, eggshells, in clouds and snow, in crystals and in stone formations, on freezing waters, on the inside and outside of mountains, of plants, animals, and men, in the lights of heaven, on vibrated plates of pitch and glass, in iron filings around a magnet, and in strange conjunctures of chance.¹ In them we infer a key to the script of miracles, its grammar; by itself, inference will not resolve into fixed shapes and appears reluctant to become a higher key. An alkahest seems to have been poured over the senses of men. Only momentarily do their desires and thoughts seem to solidify. Thus arise their intuitions, but after a short time everything floats out of their view again, as before.

NOTE

1

A possible referenece to the work of German scientist Ernst Chladni.

FOUR SPIRIT SONGS FROM THE WINTU

Anonymous

79.

Collected by Jeremiah Curtin

SONG OF SPIRITS

Lightning's Song

I bear the sucker-torch to the western tree-ridge.
Look at me first born and greatest.

Song of Olelbis

I am great above. I tan the black cloud there.

Song of Hau (red fox)

On the stone ridge east I go.
On the white road I, Hau, crouching go.
I, Hau, whistle on the road of stars.

Song of Waida Werris (the Polar Star)

The circuit of the earth which you see,
The scattering of stars in the sky which you see,
All that is the place for my hair.¹

NOTE

1 Hair in Indian mythology, as in other mythologies, is the equivalent of rays of light when connected with the sun and with planet luminaries.

80.

TWO POEMS
Wendy Heath

TOWARDS IRIDESCENCE

When black swan sky
sings greylag light

to water's white
egret edge

mercy spins harebell webs

above under
-ground chambers

where kingfisher
chicks born blind

featherless
in minnow bone nests

pierce Sun's blue heart

FIVE STATIONS ALONG A CIRCULAR JOURNEY

81.

I. *Threshold*

palms open
 the road to a door
 hinged
 on a sheet of rain

II. *Aerie*

daybreak's blackthorn air
 is astounded by thousands
 of hoofprints in snow

III. *Asylum*

scent of gorse
 borne on the southerly
 tends to the hills
 horses encircle her

IV. *Astrantia major*

rufts of green
 white bracts
 holding within
 their axils
 flowers

V. *Herald*

ruderal
Ratibida columnifera
 where
 sparrowhawk
 kills dove hear
 the feathered white gust
 in dove's song
 of the coming
 rain

VERDANCY

Catherine Young

1

Amid bare umber trunks and branches
the eternal mossy and verdigris-covered cliff crouches,
a beacon.

2

Emerald – the colour best for our eyes – rises, re-inflates
each grass blade, animates
while we wake, eat, sleep.

3

Fields convert viridian.
Woodlands hold back.

4

Trees become rivers channelling sky to earth, wet
to verdant unfurling.

5

Buds burst, cast off sheathes, reveal prasine.

6

Willows flare gold to green while
trilling, trilling, April stirs.

APHRODITE
Elizabeth Jardine Godwin

83.

The horses are asleep
so Aphrodite slips in through the loaded sea
comes ashore and looks around

i'm run aground with my tottering rosary of shells
the air swirling with the grief-stricken calls of oyster-catchers
so at first, i don't see her

but then

her slipper prints pearl beneath the bladder-wrack tell me
that she's here

didn't you know that she writes messages
and leaves lug worms to post them in the sand as the tide goes out?
That she salts breezes tails and flanks with a clear day bright as a needle?
Bobs orphaned rock pool weed out on a turquoise sea?
Best of all she shines the blue glass bead of a cormorant's eye.

Just as the horses wake and the sky resumes its call
she huddles into air-borne seeds to become
thrift wall pennywort roseroot

white billows

i tie the shells around my ankle
and begin to walk

THE WORLD TREE'S TORMENTS

Anonymous

A fragment from the Poetic Edda, translated by Olive Bray

Þriar rætr standa á þria vega
 und aski Yggdrasils:
 Hel býr und einne, annarri hrímþursar,
 þriþju menskir menn.

Örn sitr á asks limum
 es vel kveþa mart vita;
 öglir einn hönum augna í milli
 Veþrfölnir vakir.

Ratatoskr heitir íkorni es rinna skal
 at aski Yggdrasils;
 arnar orþ hann skal ofan bera
 ok segja Níþhöggbi niþr.

Hirtir 'u auk fjórir þeirs af hæfingar á
 gaghalsir gnaga:
 Dainn ok Dvalinn,
 Duneyrr ok Dyrarþróf.

Ormar fleiri liggja und aski Yggdrasils,
 an of hyggi hverr ósviþra apa:
 Goinn ok Moinn. þeir'u Grafvitnis synir,
 Grábakr ok Grafvölluþr,
 Ofnir ok Svafnir hykk at æ skyli
 meiþs kvistu má.

Askr Yggdrasils drýgir erfíþi
 meira an menn viti:
 hjörtr bitr ofan, en á hliþu fúnar,
 skerþir Níþhöggv neþan.

There are three roots stretching three divers ways
 from under Yggdrasil's ash:
 'neath the first dwells Hel, 'neath the second Frost giants,
 and human kind 'neath the third.¹

An eagle sits in the boughs of the ash,
 knowing much of many things;
 and a hawk is perched, Storm-pale, aloft
 betwixt that eagle's eyes.

Ratatosk is the squirrel with gnawing tooth
 which runs in Yggdrasil's ash:
 he bears the eagle's words from above
 and to Fierce-stinger tells below.²

There are four harts too, who with heads thrown back
 gnaw the topmost boughs of the tree:
 Däinn the Dead One, Dvalin the Dallier,
 Duneyr and Dyrathror.

More serpents lie under Yggdrasil's ash
 than a witless fool would ween—
 Goin and Moin, the offspring of Grave-monster,
 Grey-back and Grave-haunting worm,
 Weaver and Soother, I ween they must ever
 rend the twigs of the tree.

Yggdrasil's ash suffers anguish more
 than mortal has ever known,
 on high gnaw harts, it rots at the side,
 and Fierce-stinger rends it beneath.

NOTES

1 *Human kind*: these are the dead folk whose dwelling is in the underworld, not, as Snorri suggests, the living. We are repeatedly told that Yggdrasil springs from under the earth.

2 *Fierce-stinger*: the dragon of the underworld.

*Are these bones remnants of their migration
to the surface, or signs of their flight
into the depths?*



from **WORPSWEDE**
Rainer Maria Rilke

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

It is a strange country. If one stands on the small Sandberg of Worpswede, one can see it spread out all around, like peasant cloth with deep, radiant flowers at the corners of the dark fabric. It lays there flat, almost without a wrinkle, and the paths and streams lead far off to the horizon.

There begins a sky of indescribable variety and greatness. It is reflected in every leaf. All things appear to be occupied with it; it is everywhere. And everywhere is the sea. The sea which is no more, which rose and fell here a thousand years ago, and whose dunes are the sand mountain on which Worpswede lies. The things cannot forget it.

The great rushing, which pervades the old pines of the mountain seems to be its sighing, and the wind, the broad and mighty wind, carries its scent. The sea is the history of this land. It has hardly any other past.

Once the ocean receded, it began to form. Plants that we would not recognize rose, in abrupt and rapid growth in the greasy, furrowed mud. But the sea, as if it could not bear to part, came again and again with its outermost waters to these desolate regions, and finally black swaying marshes were left, full of humid animals and slowly decaying fertility.

Thus lay the fields alone, entirely occupied with themselves, for centuries. The moor formed. And finally it began to gently close here and there, like a wound closes. Around this time, it is assumed to be the thirteenth century, monasteries were founded in the Weser Lowlands, sending Dutch colonists to these regions, into a difficult, uncertain life.

Later followed (seldom enough) new attempts at settlement—in the sixteenth century, in the seventeenth—but only in the eighteenth according to a definite plan, through the energetic implementation of which the estates by the Weser, at the Hamme, Wümme, and Wörpe, were made continuously habitable.

Today they are quite populated; the early colonists, those who managed to hold out, have become rich from the sale of peat; the later ones lead a life of work and poverty, close to the earth, as if under the spell of a greater gravity. Something of the sadness and homelessness of their fathers lies upon them—the fathers, who, when they emigrated, left to begin anew in the black, volatile land, and could not know how it was to end.

There are no family similarities among these people; the smile of the mothers does not pass on to the sons, for the mothers never smiled. They all have but one face: the hard, strained face of labor, the skin of which has been stretched by all their struggles, so that in old age it has become too large, like a long-worn glove. One sees arms which have become over-elongated from lifting heavy things, and backs of women and old men which have become bent like trees that have forever endured the same storms.

The heart lies chastened in these bodies and can't unfold. The mind is freer and has undergone a certain one-sided development. No deepening, but an aggravation towards the clever, snide, witty. The language supports it in this.

This low German dialect with its short, taut, colorful words, which come along ponderously like marsh birds with stunted wings and webbed feet, has grown this way naturally. It is quick-witted and goes gladly into loud clattering laughter, it learns from situations, it emulates sounds, but it does not enrich itself from within: it contrives itself. It is often heard at mid-day, when the heavy work of peat-cutting, which forces a silence, is interrupted. It is rarely heard in the evening, when tiredness descends and sleep enters the houses almost along with dusk.

These houses lay widely scattered on long, straight 'dams'; they are red with green or blue framework, overlaid with thick, heavy straw roofs, and, as it were, pressed into the earth by their massive, fur-like burden.

Some can scarcely be seen from the dams; they have pulled the trees before their faces to protect themselves from the eternal winds. Their windows flash through the dense foliage like jealous eyes that look out of a dark mask. They lie quietly there, and the smoke of the fire-places, which fills them completely, billows out of the black depth of the door and forces its way through the cracks in the roof.

On cool days it stays near the house, its forms ghostly-grey and

90.

twice as tall. In the interior, it is almost all one room, a wide, elongated space, in which the smell and warmth of the cattle and the harsh smoke of the open fire mix to an odd twilight, in which it would indeed be possible to get lost.

In the background, this 'hall' widens, windows appear right and left, and the living rooms are straight ahead. They do not contain much equipment. A spacious table, plenty of chairs, a corner cupboard with some glasses and dishes, and the large, closed alcoves with sliding doors. In these sleeping cupboards the children are born; wedding nights and the hours of dying are passed there. Into this last, narrow, windowless darkness life has withdrawn, which has been displaced everywhere else in the house by work.

It is strange, how feasts and weddings, baptisms and funerals drop abruptly into this existence. Stiff and self-conscious stand the peasants round the coffin, and stiffly and self-consciously they shuffle through their wedding-dance. Their grief they display at work, and their amusement is a reaction to the earnestness imposed on them by work.

There are originals among them, jokers and shrewd ones, cynics and apparitionists. Some know America and tell of it, others have never gone beyond Bremen. Some live in a certain contentment and silence, read the bible and desire an ordered life; many are unhappy, have lost children and wives, are exhausted from need and exertion, and slowly die... perhaps here and there someone grows up with a vague, deep, nagging longing - perhaps, - but work is stronger than all such feelings.

In the spring, when the peat-cutting begins, they rise at dawn, and spend all day dripping wet in the camouflage of their black, muddy clothes down in the peat-pit, from which they shovel up the leaden mud of the moor. In the summer, while they are busy with the hay and grain crops, the prepared peat dries, which they will bring to the city in the autumn by barge and wagon. They drive for hours. Often, as early as midnight, the shrill alarm clock wakes them. On the black water of the canal waits the laden boat, and then they move off solemnly, as if they carried coffins, towards the morning and towards the town, neither of which wish to arrive.

And what do the painters want among these people? Thereupon, it is to be said that they do not live among them, but rather stand opposite them, as they stand opposite to the trees and all the other things which grow and move, flooded by the damp, clayey air. They come

from afar. They press these people, who are not of their ilk, into the landscape; and this is not violence. The strength of a child is enough for it, - and Runge wrote: 'We must become children if we want to achieve the best.' They want to achieve the best, and they have become children.

91.

They see everything in one breath, people and things. Just as the uniquely-colored air of these high heavens makes no distinction, and encloses everything that rises and rests in it with the same kindness, they exercise a certain naive justice, while they, without pondering it, perceive men and things in silent coexistence, as phenomena of the same atmosphere and as the bearers of colors that makes them shine. They wrong no one thereby.

They do not help these people, they do not instruct them, they do not improve them with it. They do not carry anything into their lives, which still remain a life of misery and darkness, but they summon from the depths of this life a truth in which they themselves grow, or, so as not to say too much, a verisimilitude which one can love.

And now the many enigmas of this land lie before these young people, who went there to find themselves. The birch trees, the moor huts, the heaths, the people, the evenings and the days, of which no two are ever equal, and in which there are also no two hours which could be confused. And so they went, to love these mysteries.

from **JOB**
Joseph Roth

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Es schneite dichter und weicher, je weiter der Tag fortschritt, als käme der Schnee von der ansteigenden Sonne. Nach einigen Minuten war das Land weiß. Auch die einzelnen Weiden am Weg und die verstreuten Birkengruppen zwischen den Feldern weiß, weiß, weiß.

Über hastigen Wolkenfetzen bleichte eine zerronnene Sonne, eine Stunde kaum; in einem neuen tieferen Dämmer versank sie endgültig.

Flach war das Land, der gestirnte Horizont zog einen vollendet runden tiefblauen Kreis darum, der nur im Nordosten durch einen hellen Streifen unterbrochen war, wie einblauer Ring von einem Stück eingefassten Silber.

Wie zwei kleine Stäubchen wurden wir verweht. Wie zwei kleine Fünkchen sind wir erloschen.

The snow became thicker and softer as the day wore on, as though it fell from the rising sun. In a few minutes the whole country was white, even the isolated willows along the way, and the scattered thickets of birch among the fields, white, white, white.

Above flying rags of cloud, a vanishing sun shone pale for barely an hour; then it finally sank in a new and deeper twilight.

Flat was the land, and the starry horizon drew a deep blue circle completely around it, broken only by a bright streak to the northeast, like a setting of silver on a blue ring.

Like two motes of dust, we have been scattered. Like two tiny sparks, we shall be extinguished.

SPHAGNUM FORECAST

Helen Freeman

Maybe you are a weed creeping low
 in diminutive sporangia,
adagio, stem hollow, unsure
 where to pitch under a wind whipped up.
 You disappear down groughs, lose yourself

in peat-bogs, float away on cushions
 cross-stitch stuck with burrs. Poison scoops you
 unfeeling of your weave; heat cascades
 you over crags, vein-dry. But your spores,
 though fragile, collect in sponge cups, drop

thread-like anchors as you snag and spread,
 and I see you bed down, pressed to sump
pianissimo. I hear whispers
 of spillage on gritstone, mantis-hushed
 in damp, so clamped to the land nothing

can stop you. Even in gale and blast,
 fume-spew, mole-claw, armadillo-dig,
 you cap and soothe from one petiole
 to another. You bolster cracks, breach
 chasms, clasp scarps and crochet borders.

In dark valleys your hug brings relief;
 footfall doesn't press you down for long.
 Up round axed stumps and tree trunks you curl
 a blanket for this ancient garden
 under bird-filled trees *trionfale*.

PASSAGE / OILEÁIN ÁRANN
Guy Dickinson

95.

pale zephyr
austerity foiled
his shrinking rhythm towards its cardinal notch

(lull)

prescribed meander by rasping marge
salt wedge
storm beach

(toil)

piercing grike, that moss witch asylum
tentative, he treads
salt shadow, skin and clint

(descent)

ocean anvil, grey to grain
serratus miasma
its fertility forgotten

(alone)

the sirens whisper

HYPOGEUM

John Martone

Underground: infinite space.
a greenhouse in the void's
branching tunnels—

seven balustrades, seven curtains
seven rows of pines.
Catacombs, pavilions

float untethered above
around that brilliance—

A child gazing up
from the palazzo courtyard
turns and turns—so many floors

so many rooms overhead
quiet, eternal. A starlit
greenhouse, mother's

first home—those chambers—
an empty hive
on the highest branch.

TATTERS
THREE POSTSCRIPTS
Peter O'Leary

97.

Clods of turf in a pile from far off
like the pelt of a bear.
And still
near.

::

A rough-gusting vernum of waves
mergansers core scant warmth from, mating
kept for a moment
in check.

::

Shelf ice's soft rustle—
a still grammar wintering gulls
punctuate in terse shifts

along
the dynamic
fringe.

Caves
of ice
we trace.

A boy's
burred
thrill.

FOUR POEMS
Vaughan Pilikian

How the sun slipped away,
how the wind
rattled the trees above us,
took the leaves off,
swirled them at our feet.
How the world seethed.

At junction of day
the alignment: three planets
and the waning moon,
a blade edged in gold,
its tranquillities
unenshadowed.

At junction of night,
silent and distant
the trees bend and writhe
beneath the hand of the wind.
How mysteriously fall the runes
of day into dusk into day.

Shadows of the earth
upon the clouds
thrown by the unrisen sun,
the door framed in azure,
the gleam of the things
beneath my feet.

What carries us out
into the world
stirs within us
in blessing,
settles back upon us
returning.

The things that made me
are all undone
in the matchless barely there:
the vanishing light of the hour,
the vanishing
of the hour.

Blooms bursting
in the dust
by the way.

A hand closed
on tears unwept,

amber in the eyes
like woltracks,

a memory struck
and buried in the ground,

and low stars
pushed through the earth:
pushed through the dust
into day.

Here you stand
at the broken staves
of the hour
that turns upon itself:

the polar sun has slung
its low ice beams
across your path,

the starlings
still
in the leafless trees

and nothing
but the long sussurus
of a distant day
still passing.

from **THE DIARIES**
Hugo Ball

Translated by Kristofor Minta & Herbert Pfössl

Hymnen und Höhen.

Der Grundton ist der einer unentrinnbaren Verzauberung.

*Ein von der Felswand bröckelndes Steinchen genügt, um Ursprung von
Legenden und Sagen zu werden.*

*Vierzigstündiges Gebet zu Goethe um die Gnade der Liebkosung aller kleinen
Dinge.*

*Wenn man genau sein wollte: zwei Drittel der wunderbar klagenden
Worte, denen kein Menschengemüt widerstehen mag, stammen aus alten
Zaubertexten.*

*Es soll einen einzigen solchen Hasen geben, der allemal von Bellinzona
herunterkommt und dann die Gegend unsicher macht, weil die Askonesen
gegen ihn auf dem Kriegspfad ziehen.*

*Die richtigen Askonesen essen Gras wie Nebukadnezar und tragen
lang wallende Matratzenbärte. Man heilt Wunden durch Auflegen von
Schmetterlingsflügeln. Die Punkte der Schmetterlingsflügel zu zählen, soll gut
sein gegen die Zeitkrankheit.*

Hymns and heights.

The undertone is that of an inescapable spell.

One tiny stone, crumbling from the cliff, is enough to birth legends and sagas.

Forty-hour prayer to Goethe for the blessing of the caress of all small things.

If one wanted to be precise: two-thirds of the wonderfully plaintive words, which no human temperament may resist, derive from ancient magical texts.

Description of the Asconese, who hunt swift hares with bow and arrow. It is said there is one such hare, that always descends from Bellinzona, then haunts those parts because the Asconese make war on hares.

The true Asconese eat grass like Nebuchadnezzar and have long matted beards. They heal wounds by the laying on of butterfly wings. To count the dots of the butterfly wing is supposed to be good against the malaise of our time.

*The closing represents the passage
from the real world into the secret world.*



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- (PAGES 14, 32, 46, 62, 76, 86, 104): *Lines from Novalis: Werke und Briefe*, Winkler Verlag, 1968, Minta, Kristofor & Pföstl, Herbert (trans.).

We wander
only to discover
that the ways are
overgrown with grass.



ISBN 978-0-9934310-5-0

CORBEL STONE PRESS 2017