

VOLUME 15 number 1

Ezra and others among his friends received the following poem from the great Moroccan writer, Abdellatif Laâbi. This month there is much to be hopeful about:

We cling as much as we can
to hope
our old companion
Like us
he's no longer stalwart
though he insists on walking
with no cane
on hiding his hand away
when it trembles
Like us
thrown in the churning ocean
of atrocities
he succeeds one way or another
in keeping his head above water
not losing sight of the horizon
peering after that messenger pigeon
that rescuing sail
Like us
he clings
to the rare helping hand
abandons himself
to the music
of the enchanted desert
of the birds
making the trees rejoice
of the bared heart
brushed by love's wing

This is why
 whatever comes about
 we've stayed faithful to him

(translated by us, from the unpublished French)

Do go to the ALTA website often (www.literarytranslators.org), especially to update about the annual conference. If it is held in-person in 2021, instead of virtually, the atmosphere will be heady indeed. Note that to sign up to give a *Bilingual Reading* you have to be aware of early deadlines—usually in February. They're a fun and valuable feature, long hosted and managed by Ezra friend Alexis Levitin (who appears in this issue).

A hearty welcome, from all of us who want to see more translations reviewed, to our new Review Editor – Clara Burghlea. Clara is a poet, translator, and translation editor for *The Blue Nib*.

Note that our Winter Feature was also the 2020 Ezra Resident. Often Ezra Residents produce work for the magazine only after some time; we are lucky to have this Elias Canetti now.

Apologies for the great punch in the stomach that is the Algerian work in this issue—by Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne. We're thrilled to have some prose, too, sent in by Cynthia Steele, Yael Kiken and Kiriti Sengupta.

There is one publication notice in the issue.

FEATURED WRITER: Peter Filkins

Peter Filkins is a poet and translator. His new book of poems, *Water / Music*, will appear from Johns Hopkins UP in April 2021. Previously he has translated the complete poems of Ingeborg Bachmann, *Darkness Spoken*, as well as three novels by H.G. Adler, *Panorama*, *The Journey*, and *The Wall*. His biography, *H.G. Adler: A Life in Many Worlds* appeared in 2019. He serves as Richard B. Fisher of Literature and Creative Writing at Bard College at Simon's Rock, and teaches translation at the main campus of Bard College.

A Selection from Elias Canetti's *The Book Against Death*

Translator's Note:

The Book Against Death (Das Buch gegen den Tod) is the lifelong project that, by definition, Elias Canetti could never live to complete. Begun in 1937 as a collection of notes about the meaning, nature, and consequence of death, entries for it occur for every year right up until 1994, the year of his own passing. Because the central impetus behind the project was Canetti's burning desire to "defeat Death," only by continuing to live and to write could he maintain battle. Canetti could never bring himself to write the conclusive first sentence of this collection, nor arrive at a fixed organizing principle. Instead, there was only the daily urge to write, and thus to live, notepad after notepad filled with the notes and aphorisms he worked at each morning.

Canetti's notes are neither morose nor gloomy. Sardonic, mercurial, aghast, enigmatic, passionate – they are fueled by the fire of a man writing *for* life *against* death in a century and locale suffused with the latter. Though selections of his aphorisms have been published in German, his entire notes on death were published in German by Carl Hanser Verlag for the very first time in 2014. Within each lies the significance of the whole, and within the whole we are granted the warp and woof of a mind in constant thought. Like fireworks, they erupt from the small to the large, illuminating the dark through their explosive yet ordered, connective pulse.

1942 The "slain" – how grand that used to sound, how expansive, how embracing and brave: the "suffocated," the "crushed," the "charred," the "exploded"; how cheap they all sound, as if it cost nothing!

There is no longer any measure by which to gauge anything once the measure of human life no longer is the measure.

The promise of immortality is all that is needed to found a religion. The simple command to kill is all that is needed to wipe out three-fourths of humanity. What do people want – to live or to die? They want to live and to kill, and as long as they want that, they will have to be satisfied with various promises of immortality.

1943 Sometimes I think, the moment I acknowledge death, the world will dissolve into nothingness.

1944 It is not shameful, it is not self-absorbed, but rather right and good and conscionable that we are now filled with nothing more than the thought of immortality. Does no one see them, people who are shipped by the trainload to their death? Do they not laugh, joke, and bluster in order to mutually uphold their false courage? And then twenty, thirty, a hundred, a multitude of airplanes flies off above you, loaded with bombs, every quarter of an hour, every couple of minutes, and then you joyfully see them return, shimmering in the sun like flowers, like fish, after they have leveled entire cities. One can no longer say “God,” for He is marked now forever, the mark of Cain on his forehead; one can only think of a single thing, the only Savior: immortality! If only we had it, if only it were already ushered in, how different everything would be! Who then would want to murder, who could lower himself to murder *when there would be nothing to kill?*

1945 The fact that the gods can die has only made death more brazen.

The cities die, and people dig in deeper.

The souls of the dead are in others, namely those left behind, and there they slowly die out entirely.

Whatever you have ever thought about death is no longer valid. In a single monstrous leap it has attained a power of contagion like never before. Now it is really all-powerful, now it is the true God.

1946 It is said that to many people death is a release, and there is scarcely a person who has not at some point wished for it. It is the supreme symbol of failure: Whoever fails to accomplish something great, he comforts himself by thinking that still others will fail, and he reaches for that monstrous dark cloak which covers us all equally. But if death did not exist, then we could not fail at anything; every new attempt could rectify weaknesses, shortcomings, and sins. Limitless time would lead to limitless courage. From an early age we are taught that, here at least, everything in the known world ends. Limits and narrow straits everywhere, and soon a last, a painful strait which we cannot extend. Everyone looks down this narrow strait; whatever might come after it is seen as inevitable; all must bow to it, regardless of their plans or means. A soul may feel as expansive as it likes, but it will be squeezed until it suffocates at a point it cannot determine. What does determine it, that is a matter for prevailing opinion and not the single soul itself. The slavery of death is the core of all slavery, and if this slavery were not accepted, no one could wish for it.

The shortness of life makes us behave badly. Now it remains to be seen whether possibly the length of life might not make us behave badly as well.

1949 The thought which torments him is that perhaps everyone dies *too late*, and that our death really spells death only when it is delayed, and that each has the chance to live on if he were to die *punctually*, though nobody knows when that might be.

1951 We carry the most important thing around inside ourselves for forty or fifty years before we risk articulating it. Therefore there is no way to measure all that is lost with those who die too early. Everyone dies early.

1953 A terrible peacefulness comes over you as more and more die around you. You become totally passive and no longer fight back, becoming a pacifist in the war on death, turning the other cheek towards it and towards others as well. From this, out of this frailty and fatigue, religion mints its coin.

1956 With the growing knowledge that we sit atop a heap of dead humans and animals, and that our sense of ourselves is genuinely nourished by the sum total we have survived, with this rapidly realized knowledge it becomes certainly much more difficult to come to any kind of solution about which one does not feel ashamed. It is impossible to turn away from life, whose value and prospects we always feel. But it is also impossible to not experience the death of other creatures whose value and prospects are no less than our own.

The bliss of simply withdrawing into the distance, something that traditional religions feed upon, can no longer be our bliss.

The beyond is within us: a grave realization, but it is trapped within us. This is the great and irreparable fissure of modern humans. For within us is also the mass grave of all creatures.

1959 Sometimes it seems to me as if taking things in stride has become an end in itself. I'm thinking about the goals with which I began, about the confidence that I had that I would achieve something real. As I have worked toward those goals, the world has become weighed down by a thousand-fold destruction. This destruction is *contained*, but does that make any difference?

And what is this obsession that drives me to address every kind of destruction as if I was named the world's protector? What am I myself but a helpless creature who suffers the death of one close friend after another, who cannot keep his own loved ones alive, shipwreck occurring left and right, as well as pitiful screams!

To whom am I of any use, whom do I serve with this fierce defiance?

Nothing is left but this defiance. New people slide away, new words and conversations slip one's mind, only the latest remain alive, and when will they be destroyed as well? Nothing will be left, and I will still be standing here – a child who has stood on his own feet for the first time – and with all my might yelling: No!

1962 Might not returning be even sadder than disappearing?

1963 When the one struck down lies in a heap on the floor and doesn't know anything, nor wants anything but the deceased to return, when he is ready to trade all who are living for this one thing, then and only then, he grasps that death has annihilated him, and that it would have been better if he had never been born.

Those who are unbroken, how do they manage it? Those who remain unshaken, what are they made of? Once it's over, what do they breathe? When it is dead quiet, what do they hear? When the fallen do not rise again, how do they go on? How do they find the words? What wind blows across their lashes? Who penetrates the ear of the dead? Who whispers the name of those who have wandered off? When the sun no longer strikes their eyes, where do they find light?

We are familiar with all those we have known who have died; it's the living we do not recognize.

1966 There should be a court that could absolve us of death, if only we answered all of its questions honestly.

What point is there in the unspeakable victims, the blood of animals, the torment and guilt – so that we too must die?

Miserable, he who knows. How miserable God must be, all-knowing.

He stood before his most precious dead and said: God is good. He repeated it over and over, a thousand, a hundred-thousand times: Still the dead did not rise.

God is good, he still keeps saying, and the dead don't even reappear in his dreams.

1968 A good man asked me for directions. I don't dare tell you, was my answer. He looked at me kindly and was astonished. But he said nothing and seemed satisfied with this answer.

Uncertain, he walked on, and from the way he walked it was clear he would not ask anyone else.

Sadly, I looked on at him. Should I have told him the truth? I knew that he must die, since no matter which way I might have pointed, death awaited him. If he had known that, he could have not moved from the spot, for his salvation lay only in standing still.

“Don’t move,” I called after him. He heard me, but since I had refused to answer him, he didn’t dare stand still and kept on. “Don’t move,” I called out louder, and he walked faster. Then I hollered it, guilt consuming me, and he began to run.

1972 When one knows how wrong everything is, when one is capable of appreciating the extent of its wrongness, then and only then, is stubbornness the best: the constant pacing of the tiger behind its bars in order not to miss the single brief instant of its rescue.

1973 What will become of the images of the dead that you hold within your eyes? How will you leave those behind?

I would not know how to count them, all of my dead. If I tried, I would forget half of them. There are so many, and they are everywhere, I have scattered the dead across the entire Earth. Thus the entire planet is my home. There’s hardly a country I need purchase, the dead having taken care of it for me.

1975 This indestructible feeling of lasting, not to be reduced by death, by despair, by any passion for the other better ones (Kafka, Walser): I cannot come to grips with it, I can only record it with revulsion.

However, it is true that only here at my desk, before the leaves of the trees, whose movement has stirred me for twenty years, I am myself, for only here does the feeling of a terribly wonderful sense of certainty remain intact, which perhaps I *must* have in order not to lay down my arms before death.

1977 To experience the death of an animal, but as an animal.

“You go to sleep,” he says to a child, “but you do not wake up.” “But I always wake up!” the child says joyfully.

Whoever has opened himself up too early to the experience of death can never close himself off, a wound that turns into a lung through which one breathes.

1978 The *very last* book he reads: unimaginable.

There is no such thing as a dignified death. There are only deaths forgotten by others. They, too, are undignified.

1979 To write without a compass. I have always had the needle inside me, always pointing to magnetic north: The End.

1980 Everything else that I undertook, whether it was finished or was only an attempt, means nothing in comparison. Do I really want to content myself with such babbling? Have I not sensed something much more *certain*, and do I not have the determination to make it comprehensible?

The incredible shouts of rage of those who act as defenders of death have bewildered me. Too often I think that they exist as, God knows, something entirely new. But of course they exist, of course they always have. For that very reason I must disregard them and tend to my subject as if they didn't exist.

The weight of all who have died is immense. What strength is needed to forge a counterweight, which if it does not finally happen, it may soon no longer be possible to formulate a thought in the face of the weight of the dead which grows by the hour.

1981 And if death did not exist, where would the pain of loss be? Is it the only thing that speaks for death: that we need this greatest of pains, and that without it we would not be worthy of being called human beings?

1982 His experience for ages: Whenever railings against death increase, death takes another near and dear one away from him.

Does that anticipate what awaits him or is it his punishment? But who does the punishing?

If all is to collapse, it should be *said* that it will. When nothing more remains – we should not just exit obediently.

I do not at all feel weak as long as I think about what I am here for. The moment I don't think about that, I feel weak.

1985 And yet I curse death. I can't help it. And if I go blind as a result, I can't help it. I have to strike back at death. If I were to accept it, I would be a murderer.

The hardest thing for you? A last will and testament. To write one would spell capitulation.

Here he stands, staring at death. It approaches him, he pushes it back. He does not grant it the honor of coming to terms with it. When nevertheless the final bewilderment lowers upon him, he will not have bowed to it. He called it out, he hated it, he expelled it. Though he succeeded at very little, it is more than nothing.

Traduttori/traduttrici:

Alexis Levitin (Maranhão)

Jonah Radding (Amrane-Minne)

Vedita Cowaloosur (Golam)

Ujjal Mandal (Tagore)

Yael Kiken (Angela)

Kiriti Sengupta (Chakraborty)

Cynthia Steele (Mansilla Torres)

Return

~~translated by Alexis Levitin

Worn warriors return, no longer bold,
 like Odysseus home without his fleet,
 --calling on lost and shadowed, shipwrecked souls—
 to kiss the mythic ground beneath his feet;
 returning home in patched and ragged clothes,
 they wave their swords, they sing heroic doom,
 they gaze at wild seas with deadly shoals,
 then face the cry of paralytic noon.
 In flight from dreams and failures, bruised inside,
 I, too, rappelling down, have held my grip,
 and come back to my homeland purified,
 without Penelope, war horse, or ships,
 just bringing with me blessings from on high,
 words streaming from my throat and from my lips.

SALGADO MARANHÃO

Fellow Traveler

~~translated by Kiriti Sengupta

An afternoon is laid along the length of the day. Memory wanes. The Dooars observes it but I cannot. The floodplain has the aroma in the air but I fail to smell it. My eyes eject scenes that continue to shiver. I'm hungry: a few words remain unwritten; can I eat them to survive? I'm killing my soul. I stumble on disgorged words. Following rituals, I'll be burned on the pyre after my death. You will not succeed to find the umbilicus in the residues. But then, someone please pick the words from the ashes and scatter them in the stale Ganges.

GOUROB CHAKRABORTY (Bengali)

Boqala

~~translated by Jonah Radding

I brought back a *boqala* from the well
 Each drop that from it fell
 Bore the name of a brother killed
 I brought it home over-flowing
 Its waters fresh and perfumed

One drop bore your name, Abd el Latif, my brother, when it fell I thought I heard a joyful voice
 clear as a bell.

Do you remember, Abd el Latif, do you remember the dream you told me one day?

“Tonight I dreamed I was home, I spent all night there as before, marvelous!

Djamila, surely independence is soon, you’ll see us leading you to Bougie!”

I saw your face, Abd el Latif, confident as only a child’s can be; you smiled a dazzling smile. I felt
 happy, happy, I believed you, Abd el Latif; a few months more fighting underground and we’ll
 be home again, happy and free. That was September 1957.

Your smile followed me everywhere, Bougie was your smile, and there too was Khelil’s, forever
 shadowed by sadness, and I wished Bougie were only your smile, that smile dazzling with joy.

I came to the town of Bougie, July 1962, Bougie full of sun, Bougie full of flags, Bougie singing
 its joy, Bougie was your smile, Abd el Latif, but now you’re gone: Abd el Latif, you died
 fighting underground four years ago now and behind Bougie’s dazzling smile Khelil’s smile
 takes shape, a sweet smile forever shadowed by sadness.

O my sisters, my soul is in pain, what next will the boqala say?

“My lover’s house is on the plain.”

“My father’s house is on the mountain.”

How great is my pain

My father locked me up

On the wings of a dove

I took flight

The path was sown with tombs

The well-waters dry

But at my lover’s I found

A gift of three dresses

One white like a lily

Another green like meadows
The last red like the setting sun

The path was sown with tombs, Si Moh, Arezki, I still see you alive.

“I was in math prep, I love math, we must keep at our studies. We’ll toil if needed and study by night. Independence isn’t for tomorrow and the more years pass the harder to get back to our studies, but we’ll do it, Djamila, agreed?”

“Agreed, Si Moh!”

Arezki sang, you sang with him, passionately. Next day you were killed. A machine-gun bullet to the heart, Arezki died on the spot, you, Si Moh, you suffered two long hours. We were pinned down by the rocks, you held my hand and I could do nothing, nothing for you.

O my sisters, my soul is in pain, what next will the boqala say?

How beautiful is the dove

From its cage in flight

Tell me, O dove

who gave you some grain

when you were in pain,

who gave you water

when you were there up high,

high in our mountains?

O my mother, oppression is no more

And we, O people, are better off than before.

Who gave you some grain when you were in pain? Wounded, Slimane, you died, we couldn’t save you.

The village of Chaouchiines, among our poorest shelters, a narrow tunnel of three meters, in the end a hole. That’s where I found you, Slimane, sprawled on a bed of mud, wounded in the chest by an exploding bullet. That was the first time I saw you. Only your hand kneading the mud seemed alive, your face a scream of anguish. We stayed there awhile, and then, softly, you began to speak to me; it was Independence, you returned to your village, before the door to your home, your mother waving a flag.

“Our flag, Djamila, my mother with our flag...”

You smiled and fell asleep.

When I came back, Slimane, you were dead. Your hand covered in mud unfurled softly, lifeless, a fat tear settled on your cheek.

O my sisters, my soul is in pain, what next will the boqala say?

“He passed before my door”

“Staggering drunk on joy”

“He tossed me a lily and a grenade”

I sent him back an olive branch

And told him:

O my brother I am cured

He answered me

That’s the joy of independence

May God give us happiness and strength

Khelil is dead, he died after six years in combat, three months before the fighting ended.
 You died, Khelil, you are no more, but you left me some of your warmth and all your sadness. Your
 smile still follows me, Khelil, your smile at once so warm and sad.
 He's there, head held high behind these children barefoot and in tatters marching *had tnin, had tnin,*
one two!
 He's there on the surface of the Béni Badhel's waters, in the depths of caves where they tortured
 our brothers.
 He's there in the crescent curve of our flag;
 He's there in the rhythm our children chant:
Allah Irahm Ech Chouhada! May God have mercy on the martyrs!
Allah Iarhamkoum – may God have mercy on them: Abd el Latif, Si Moh, Arezki, Slimane, Khelil!
 You're dead, you're gone, but you left us the burden of living and making our lives worthy of you.

No my sisters I am not cured
 I have brought back a *boqalah* from the well
 Each drop that from it fell
 Bore the name of a brother killed
 And each of these drops
 Burns me forever.

DANIELE DJAMILA AMRANE-MINNE

Poem 1

~~translated by Vedita Cowaloosur

Hurl Everything Away
 Hurl away my youth
 Hurl away my wealth
 But Give back to me my childhood
 Give back to me my innocence
 Give back to me back my folk tales
 Give back to me my midnight melodies
 Hurl away my fences
 Hurl away my inheritance
 But Return to me my kite
 Return to me my carefree slumber
 Return to me my swings
 Return to me my ignorance
 Hurl away my intelligence

Hurl away my arrogance
 But Give back to me my sand castle
 Give back to me my crab-catching can
 Give back to me my smile Give back to me my milkless tea
 Hurl away my grand declarations
 Hurl away my grand projections
 But Return to me my hovel
 Return to me my sapsiway
 Return to me my freedom
 Return to me my peace
 The rest, hurl it all away
 Hurl away everything else

VIDYA GOLAM (from Mauritian Kreol)

(sapsiway is a game: juggling a small toy with one foot)

Failure

~~translated by Ujjal Mandal

If you don't love me
 Why have you loved me with such a love?
 Why the weaving garlands!
 Why do the blossoms lie!
 Why the southern breeze's whistling in the ear?

If you don't love me
 Why the azure winking at me?
 And why the crazy heart for reason unknown?

Why does the boat sail
When the shore is strange?

Adieu!

Sweet spring, full of joy
Releasing the last bud
from wood.
You will go this way
I know.
And laughter
Will glimpse me!
The Ashoka flower will fall
Off the forelocks
In the dance.

That sailboat will float far away
I will sit then
On the bank alone
And flash a glance!
While the sunken sun
Upon the boat
Will paint in light,
I will be then out of sight,
A wall against brightness.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

(the translator is at University Gour Banga, West Bengal, India)

Reading

~~translated by Yael Kiken

Ana began reading at five o'clock this afternoon. She had found a suitable spot: the kitchen. Everything in it was completely white. Before starting, she opened the window where dusk was falling over an empty lot. At the time, her mother was at her sewing class and her father at the garage.

Ana tread over the words, waving her hand to shoo away the ants trying to eat the letters. After the quotation marks, there was a mirror into which Ana looked. She sighed with the protagonist's solitude and didn't know how to console her.

Ana was not ugly, but her body was stuck in that stage where her curves hadn't formed yet but she was no longer a child. She took a pin from the sewing basket and pricked her finger. She heard the page absorb the first drop of blood.

When the parents returned, they could not find Ana; only the book's fluttering pages.

Virgin of the Hospital

Mother
outside the hospital
people swiftly pass by
there are puddles still from July's deluge.

Mother
outside the hospital
they're selling sandals
with leather straps
that wrap around the calves.

Mother
outside the hospital

a radio is playing at full blast
and I would like to dance.

Mother
outside the hospital
there is a tree on the corner
with tissue-paper petals.

Mother
outside the hospital
there is a girl
painting mermaids
on cardboard boxes.

Mother
outside the hospital
a woman whisks at the window
and the egg whites rise in frothy peaks.

Mother
outside the hospital
my neighbor sings
stomping on the wood
I hear each string of the *jarana*.

Mother
outside the hospital
there is a man looking
for something he can't find
in his hat.

Mother
outside the hospital
everything is so alive.

The hospital
has a hallway
where I tremble
and the bed
is a vortex
where all us children fall.

GUADALUPE ANGELA (Oaxaca)

Fried Pancakes of Mussels and Shallots

~~translated by Cynthia Steele

The incessant screeching of the southern lapwings (*treiles, teros, queltehues, teru teru*: names for the same noisy sound of wings) indicates that someone is crossing the stubble fields where the round-eyed cattle watch indifferently as Western civilization collapses. Look who's coming, leaping over the fences! Why, these poor devils are none other than Cervantes, Shakespeare and the ineffable Sapho! What the hell are these people doing on this island shrouded in fog, in the midst of a stormy night when God is drunk?! Good evening, Sir; we're looking for a lady whose last name is Torres. Her last name is Torres? A lady, they told me, married to a so-called Mansilla Ojeda; she weaves woolen clothing. Oh! Yes, I do know her. And why might you be looking for her? I want to buy a *ruana* from her, said Sapho, and as she said it, she smiled inside her skin which had been turned olive by the sun on her isles of light. But come in, ladies and gentlemen, come on in and forgive the mess; don't stand there on the patio, like fools, where the only inhabitants are the stars, which our eyes can't see. Once they were inside the house, lit by the dying light of the old kerosene lamp, I realized that the visitors were dressed in suits of moonlight and damp earth. They told me that Calibán lives around here, muttered Shakespeare in pidgin Spanish. I've vaguely heard that gentleman mentioned, but I don't know him. The one that the old people did used to talk about, was a sailor who came through here drawing birds, animals and plants; he came in a brigantine whose crew spoke a language that wasn't Christian. It must have been Darwin, the old bearded fellow who thought we were born of monkeys. And how is Sra. Dulcinea? She's your mother, isn't she? I, said Cervantes, am after a pair of hand-tied wool rugs, as a matter of fact. I'm too old now, and one-armed, to boot, to spend all my time walking over the sharp, cold bones of so many who died fighting over a shadow. I wouldn't know, since I was in Lepanto. Look, Don Miguel, you'll have to wait a while—I'm a little fed up, to be honest—until the woman you're looking for resuscitates. Her author killed her off with cancer, in the last chapter of that prodigious novel about the lady's life, a novel that, unfortunately, no one around here knew how to write, nor will they ever know how to write it. Resuscitate her, then, peasant Poet, since I don't plan to leave here without the rugs. Nor I without the *ruana*, murmured Sapho, who had in the meantime sat down on a bench near the stove.

I was about to sit down to some mussel pancakes. Will you join this old, nearly toothless, circus dog for supper? While they were sitting down around the table, you could hear the creaking

of the house's wood; it was a chorus of green silences which the years had turned to the color of soot.

I don't know if you remember, but our mother used to make them especially for supper. You beat farm-grown eggs with a bit of pepper and salt, with a little sauteed garlic on the side. Once the yolk and white are thoroughly mixed, you add some chopped green stalks of scallions; they are thicker than the ciboulette but finer than what are known here as chalotas. (I always thought they were just scallions.) You chop the white part and add them to the eggs. Then a little water, and the mussels that you have already steamed or that are left over from a clambake. You add wheat flour until you have a uniform mixture. Then you ladle them with a big spoon into the hot lard. You serve them with potatoes and lettuce from the garden.

William, Miguel, Sapho, pay attention: these are our roads, our animals, beds, chairs, vestiges of bodies that are gone. If you find here windows, bonfires, doors, leftover food, know that they are our primitive tools, helping us breathe when the air turns thin. My words, like your own, are carried off by the winds; they ripple in the dream of a madman filled with sound and fury. They creep slowly over the fern leaves, then fall to the eternally caressing earth. They are a dust storm, opening up like wounds that will never heal.

*For I'm a troubled man,
with a withered life and a solitary soul
who aspires to the wonder of your embrace.*

*Come to me, woman, tender wave,
gentle dawn, breeze in the boughs
and let the sun rock me to sleep in your lap.*

Sapho, I have stolen your words; I changed their gender, but I know you'll understand and forgive me. From here I can't invoke Aphrodite, and you yourself only have eyes for the sweet maidens of Metilene. Take this *ruana* that my mother left me half-finished, before her weakened hand turned a key in the lock of her breath. Hand-tied wool rugs for Miguel, and take good care of that arm that the Moors nearly tore off of you with an arquebus, in Lepanto. William:

*. . . man blooms like a plant
whom the sky itself feeds and pays tribute,
first proud and then dejected,
until no one remembers its splendor.*

That's the way it is, man. To be or not to be; with so much Hamlet, the doubt prevails, stronger than marble. How I love you all! *Sir, sorrows weren't meant for beasts, but for men; but if men feel them too deeply, they turn into beasts.* The breeze of literature caresses skin exposed to the warm tongue of pleasure, lightly salted by life.

SERGIO MANSILLA TORRES

PUBLICATION NOTICE:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSIC & FOURTEEN FORMS OF MELANCHOLY, Eduardo Chirinos. Translated (bilingual edition) by Gary Racz. Diálogos Books, 2020. Prefaced. 139pp.

“G.C. Racz’s renderings are delicate but supple, and perfectly ventriloquize Chirinos’s elegant, sometimes whimsical voice.” (Charlotte Whittle)

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