

HOANG Ly

*Nocturnal Singing**Dedicated to PC*

So I kept on proceeding on my way.
 Leaning against my friend's shoulder
 I muttered a song
 And listened to my friend singing
 The singing seemed to be far away

 Stars are also very far off
 How can we reach them.
 Hanging across the crescent moon
 The singing fled away and vanished
 Hanging across the firmament
 The stars suddenly died out
 No means to come up with them

 Enough
 I will stop singing. You will also stop singing
 We both silently look forward to the singing that has flown away
 Treading in the steps of stars
 Into the dark blue firmament
 But they simply vanish

 Leaving behind the lonely quietness reigning in our souls
 Leaving behind both you and I
 You and I we are leaning against each other's shoulders
 Looking at each other with searching looks. Seeking for the singing

 The crescent moon lies flat on its face
 Suppose it weren't late in the night.
 Suppose you weren't well on in the night

TanSonNhat Airport
1994 – 1996
(trans. by Vu Anh Tuan)

I am so scared, what's the purpose of my growing wings?
 Being not a bird while no longer a human being
 Having neither means to fly far and high nor being able to perch or to walk
 I'm on the halfway while being so rolling...

II. Retelling the old-time story while in my childhood
 standing beside the window I beheld the sparrows
 hopping about on branches and flying, flying

I told my mother I also want to fly and hop on branches instead of having to trace
 squares on the ground surface by means of a stick and to continuously throw
 plastic
 sandals on squares from 1 to 7
 And only from 1 to 7

As I grew a little older, Mother took me to the sea. I'd shivered upon seeing gulls
 wheeling round me and whitening the sea. So, sparrows only hop from branches
 to
 branches while gulls throw themselves into the sea sunshine. Immense is the sea.
 I wriggled wishing to turn myself into a gull

Back home
 The dream of sparrows disappeared
 The dream of gulls also vanished from sight
 Sparrows are so toddling while gulls are too lonely.

III. I will grow wings all by myself.

(Translated by Vu Anh Tuan)

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Hoi an

What's the good of the pavilion column
 What's the good of moss-covered tiles
 The well-aligned tiles
 Looking at clouds flying high overhead
 Wondering:
 What's the good of the pavilion column
 What's the good of the moss-covered tiles
 Letting the clouds flying hesitatingly over
 While the heart drabbles in a deep sorrow spot
 Without knowing

Where the deep sorrow spot
 resides?

Wandering wandering
 Untiring feet
 Wondering wondering
 Between the white-haired old woman chewing betel
 And Hoi An
 There's no difference to tell:

How lightly life passes
 Hoi An hides itself close by the white-haired woman

What's the good of the pavilion column
 What's the good of the moss-covered tiles
 Causing sadness to overwhelm the streets...

Hoi An Jan 1994
(Trans by Vu Anh Tuan)

*The Ghost Butterfly**For U*

The butterfly glided down in front of me
Your face paled
A bad omen

I painted blue-faced men wearing indigo tunics
Men from hell
And indulged the paintbrush
which splashed up colors
Blue tinting the ghost butterfly blue

You said the butterfly would bring bad luck
I don't believe in destiny
I do not want to believe destiny
Arranges matters between the two of us
There is plenty to worry about
Let's let our hearts be peaceful
Let's look coolly on life

Invoking the ghost butterfly I painted men from hell
But the butterfly was confused when it saw me
I carelessly brushed my hand across my face
My hand covered with paint
The different colors streaked my cheek
Frightened
The ghost butterfly
Took flight

(Translated by Hoang Hung & Joseph Duemer)

*Night Horses of Bac Ha**

The pack - horses whinny recklessly into the night wind
The echoes color the night of Bac Ha

The horses beat their hooves against the road in the mild mountain air
The sound of horses breaks the night
Breaks the heart . . .

Horses!
One life to be driven along the worn road
Through the mountains over the pass
To come calmly down to Bac Ha on market day
You are used to the journey . . .

You keep going along the usual way
Mare . . . stallion . . . colt . . .
Going by turns and returning
One generation after the other.

Oh horses, I understand your sad eyes in which stars burn in the night of Bac Ha
I hear the words of wind in mountains and forests and words of the forest moon
Urgent words of mountains and forests
Words of mountain and forest broken to pieces in those eyes.

Night horses whinny recklessly into the wind . . .

(Translated by Joseph Duemer)

*Bac Ha is a mountain area in North Vietnam famous for pack – horses of Hmong people.

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Night Train

The train runs rhythmically through the night
The wheels sound like the hooves of horses
Night spreads out thickly around the train
a breathing animal

Parallel rails
Pull me through the night
I want to know:
How many miles through the night? How long is the night?
I will not sleep
And will measure the length of the night . . .

Eyelids slowly meet
Closed eyes
Night

Morning comes
Overflowing with sunlight
The rails stretch endlessly away in both directions
The train has traveled through the night
I look behind where night fades.

I don't know
How many markers I have fallen away behind
Or the length of the night.

(Translated by Joseph Duemer)

Draining dry her eyes to absorb the night
 Slow and steady her body disintegrates
 Draining dry her eyes soaking up thousands of rainfall
 The old house is submerged in tears

Oe oe oe

The old house shivers and wakes up
 Cockroaches crawl helter-skelter on the tunic that falls down
 whitening the brick floor

The little girl in her white gown gently comes down from the unique
 velvet covered chair still in good
 shape

With her very limpid round eyes
 Dumbfounded she makes a tour
 Touching with her hand the fireplace, the window, the walls and
 all other mildewy and mossy items
 To find her hand chock-full with bacteria

Her deadly pale hand
 Turns the doorknob and she walks out into the rainy and stormy night

The door filled with ancient calligraphic seal characters sinks in behind
 At the very moment the night suddenly dies out
 Rain-like drops of sunshine fall down unceasingly
 Washing the dusty hand clean.

7.2001

(Translated by Vu Anh Tuan.)

Performance II

Blurred photocopied portraits are pasted pel-mell on the wall
Recording the diversified looks of a same physiognomy:
Laughing-weeping-angered-happy-loving-lost-suffering-blissful et cetera...
Life is neatly wrapped up within four walls
Onto them the sun splashes the night shines the rain lashes and the wind cuts into
The portraits that, day after day, turn more and more blurred

The woman ties herself
The woman asks everybody: " Brothers and sisters, please just tie me up"
In the tied-up posture
The woman smiles, satisfied of being tied up
Then chokes with laughter while shedding tears
She suddenly has her face contorted and cries
She jerks furiously
Howls with heavy-heartedness
Then desperately shrieks
She collapses
Squirms
and dies out

The blurred portraits on the wall
Suddenly turn all white

In her tied-up posture
The woman doesn't find her own body
Seeing only phantasmic green moss all over the foot of the wall
Feeling only the night streaming with tears.

July 01, 2001
(Translated by Vu Anh Tuan.)

ours is the night

In the night flooded with light
Inside the room
Keeping awake
The blanket creeps over the chest
Go to bed
Let's
Greyish white is the blank

Oh, night sleepers
That bring love
To bed

Would you continue to keep awake
To bring along love to illuminate
The night belongs to us
Love brightens the night

Ours is the night
How can you be so heartless as to sleep

I will leave myself to my fate keeping awake all alone
In nights flooded with light
The blanket creeping over the chest
Biting old

The greyish white blanket
Helpless

The night belongs to us...

Jan 05, 2001
(Translated by Vu Anh Tuan.)

Nocturne 2

The night detachs itself from me
Softly the tree bark falls on the grass
The wind's face is raised up toward the sky
Filled with strong winds

What's strange with the rain tonight
The tree bark will never touch the ground
By someone on the white sand a candle is lighted
Someone who prays for love before the sea

Rain-storm out there
Sufferings out there
Asking for peace

Flashes of lightning cross the night with a twinge
Waves splash about searching for the shore
Fleeing away

What's strange with tonight's rain
As trees turn so flurried

Blowing out the candle, blowing out the white sand beach
Someone flurriedly walks into the house
Waves pile up in his eyes
And the sea's black colour sticks to his skin

The night detachs me from the one that loves me
When the rain pours stirringly on the leaf-roof
The bed suddenly turns wavy
I feel a sea of writhing pains

It rains it rains unceasingly
Noisily stirring the smoky nocturnal sea
Whisperingly praying for all souls

It rains it rains unceasingly

Noisily stirring you and I
The band of dogs plaintively howl in the night

It rains it rains unceasingly
But it cannot detach me from my lover who loves me
But it cannot detach me from the one I love
Whisperingly pray for deliverance
Of all souls.

(Trans by Vu Anh Tuan)

Nocturne 1

Turning one's back, one finds the night
Turning one's back, one finds the night
Turning one's back, one finds the night
Turning one's back, one finds the night
Turning one's back, one finds the night
One can see the night only when one's mind sees the night
One can see the night only when one's mind sees the night
In front of one is the night
In front of one is the night
In front of one is the night
In front of one is the night
Though not wanting the night, one sees the night all the same
Though not wanting the night, one gets it all the same

Over one's head is the night
At one's foot is also the night
Some people lie in the night
Some people hug the night
Some people live in the night
Some people die in the night
Some are born in the night
Some cry in the night
Some laugh in the night

Closing one's eyes
Wrapping one's blanket close about
One listens to the night rolling around onnself.

2002
(Trans by Vu Anh Tuan)

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Flows The Mekong
(on the Mekong river, feeling war pains)

Me me kong kong
 Me me me me me me kong kong
 Me me me he e he me he kong kong kong
 Me kong me kong me kong

An immensity of water rolls up the two stony shores
standing up
looking at
 the swirling flow that washes away my life

Me me kong kong
 Me me me me me me kong kong
 Me kong me kong me kong

Mountain joins mountain, I join my life to the brown river
That, not caring about day or night, flows
absorbedly
Overwhelming overwhelming the skyblue
 eyes
 fainted

Feelings spread up to the clouds one sits on top of the waves one sits to cry because of the war

Other places get troubled times, why it's so peaceful here.

Calmly and peacefully the river flows with its two greenish shores while the river's heart
is breaking
rending

with pains of swelling waves of life that aren't
calm
and peaceful

Me me kong kong
 Me me me me me me me me kong kong kong

Don't modulate oh musical oh musical instrument; As rending is my
heart

The piece of music leaves the waves
 Thunders, flashes of lighting and stormy rains while the

Mekong remain calm
The small hut seems wanting to stop the flying sand
Evening light falls reddening the trees
The life's turn of destiny shakes the reed
the nodes in stems of grass
Blow down to the ground by stormy winds
Who's calling me
Who's calling me...

Me me kong kong
Me me me me he me he kong kong kong
Me kong me kong me kong

March 2003
(Trans by Vu Anh Tuan)

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Hoang Ly's performce pieces can also be seen at
http://www.vietnam-finearts.com/Video_Clip/
