

**Rodrigo GARCIA LOPES**

*Selected Poems*

**FLEETING**

Passage through a landscape,  
a place of where, yesterday, and when,  
how many words are still missing  
in a mouth full of images.

The other is the one left on the margin,  
on the fright of a pronoun,  
on the body of a slow wind,  
the other is like a hunger,  
a drifting feather, distant, or almost.

Lost in its own voyage,  
a bottle with its message,  
a stare enduring on a flower,  
nameless, secreted, gone wild.

Exile, water one drank on a train,  
a procrastinated party, a play over, vertigo,  
the mind always on some one,  
I other, I all, I none.

**WRITTEN IN A HOTEL**

What makes us write  
Even while time, the mind's writing,  
Denies that is there to entertain  
Until time closes, until light abridges.

The first gesture that detonates it  
Is the echo of the word that devours it,  
Bones and stuffing on exhibit as it  
Comes, of its own impulse the master.

To confuse the registers,  
A light in a room announces itself.  
And, to become even more lucid,  
A distracted hand writes us. And stops.

From *Visibilia*, 1996. Translated from the Portuguese by Chris Daniels

## SOLARIUM

slow  
disappearance

letters caught on the way  
tracks, dry  
leaves.

the horizon's invisible line --  
this distance signifying nothing.

the air that is short  
the untranslatable fever of silence  
that breathes us in

and separates us.

one day, they tried  
a taste-without-knowing  
life saying yes without wanting to  
marine breeze like a blues  
noise of airplanes crossing time.

the limit of meaning  
establishing itself, temporarily, there,  
where the poem's pumice

shatters

waves abducting  
only the steam from our mouths

*poluphilosboios*  
foam

impressed still  
imprisoned in spray.

words spread out along this beach —  
they are nomads, drunkards —  
until we know neither  
which of them translates us

nor the mute light that floats upon the waters  
and reproduces us

as if we were muses.

From *Solarium*, 1994. Translated from the Portuguese by Chris Daniels

betrayed by  
a winter wind

the beautiful  
butterfly

slowly flo  
wing like a  
flying Flower

fallen over  
a frozen  
river

(bitter is  
to fly

so far  
to die

better flying forever

From *Solarium*, 1994. Originally written in English

## MEMORY AND REPETITION

Repetition is a form of change. Change is a form of life. Life is a form of repetition. And the message becomes the vestige of continuous change. The dance of the same. A form of repetition. Every memory is annulled as it occurs, and all we have are tracks, texts, that accumulate upon the waters -- that do not stop. The idea of presence perseveres, but suddenly is mere absence. The water, river in reverse, in its transparency will not admit that ice has muted it completely. Silent duel. In the winter, its waters keep flowing, submerged, protected by it. By skin and by ice. Under the transparent absence of the waters where this ex-text writes itself, like snow, and forms a presence, alien to myself, although invisible like voices -- on the surface. That transforms. That transcends. Like the waterfall, whose text is celebrated and canceled at the same time. Its writing is a form of disappearance. A form of life, of change, of repetition. As if written in lemon revealed only under sunlight. Information is equalized: there is the impression that nothing happens there. All we have, I repeat, are tracks, trails through the thicket, false leads. But thousands of eyes pass along that trail, imperceptible gestures, at every instant. They converse in an extinct language, the language of ice, of water, of travelers. In silence they watch the halo of the moon (another form of repetition). There is nothing new in all this: not as much as in a poem unwritten. The aesthetics of disappearance invites all forms of change, like the nomad thoughts of Nietzsche, eternally repeating its return, which is nothing more than a form of disappearance. A fiction. Ritual dance of the mind. A fleeting tattoo. A memory of memory. A new form of repetition.

From *Solarium*, 1994.

Translated from the Portuguese by Caryn C. Connelly and Chris Daniels

## ZEITGEIST

Knocking out celebrities disguised as penguins  
Monitoring the hoard of transactions and the tricks of climbers  
Snaking between stairways nailed with citations  
Kicking twilight's bucket with dawn's baby inside  
Stepping up strong to a showdown with lies, treading on calumny's corns  
Accruing stocks in patience and pederast informers  
Pinching salon-tanned folk made of fiberglass and ultra-high def pixels  
Pulling marketers by the ear, taking the millionaire bishop by the scruff of the neck

Showing his catalog of kung-fu moves to web designers  
Terrifying fashion editors with crucifixes made of shit  
Heading for a knockdown brawl at the florist's  
Shivving the morning and good intentions with her sharp dagger  
Pulverizing manipulators of the genome and chip-injected models  
Giving the third degree to the corrupted files of the justice department  
Assaulting metaphysical popcorn vendors and weekend-artist bankers  
Passing out acid lollipops to literary critics  
Blowing up the mouth of reason with inconsequential denunciations  
Sweetly choking the life out of the evening charged with video cameras & trance music  
Preaching fiscal irresponsibility and anthrax for all  
Rifling through the idées fixes-crammed mall with a cry of jihad  
The human bomb walks into the poem.

From *Nômada*, 2004. Translated by the author / Revised by Chris Daniels

#### MINUTE

Here you come  
Acting like the wind  
As if nobody saw you  
Here you come dubbing thought  
Like a feeling beach

Near laughter, hazard, onset  
Of the waves astonish's dunes,

There where muting speaks louder  
And where a moment commemorates  
With a minute of silence.

From *Visibilia*, 1996. Translated by Chris Daniels

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*For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea. Single words floated round me, they congealed into eyes which stared at me and into which I was forced to stare back-whirlpools which gave me vertigo and, reeling incessantly, led into the void*  
Hugo von Hoffmannsthal

*cut the word lines*  
Williams S. Burroughs

*The bit of noise, the small random element, transforms one system of order into another.*  
Michel Serres

On-line. Shhh. "Epic is a poem including history." Too much.  
"What if a Health Plan Could express Your Individuality? You're not like everybody else. Your individuality is something we like and understand. Mean-while, false flowers, carrion, black snow. "I don't look for what I find."  
Language escapes:  
Since when is ocean  
Sky? Access denied.  
FOR MANY, STORMS BEYOND COMPREHENSION/ "they saw tornados threw their cars around like toys and cows flying in the backyards ..." This, the American Dream. Rainpetals, strange postcard  
Ticket in obscure  
Esperanto - From Beyond: Cézanne: "The landscape thinks itself through me. I am its conscience." Mute  
books, red of trees spread in fake sentences, and the desert devours time.  
Shift  
*What makes of Dell  
The ideal choice? Dell  
Always aim at offering  
The perfect combination of power, performance  
And price.*  
THE cLOser We IOOk aT a  
WoRd tHe FUrThEr iT  
fAcEs Us. All rights reserved @  
Leave your message after the beep.  
Sour cherries: once, flowers.  
"If a lion could talk  
he wouldn't understand what we roar."

Ideology is language dressed up as transparency.  
*Egaugnal*: slowly I will tell you who you are. Medicine or poison.  
Man is not contemporary with his origins.  
Let's turn up the volume of the language.  
*This page is under construction*. Zip!  
Nobody hears thoughts like here. Now  
*you don't need me anymore, now form*  
is an extension of content. Bapel.  
To swin  
on this foam, virgin verse, pampa snowed with  
black walls.  
"Poetry is the supreme virtual reality, girlfriend."  
World. Wordless. Into which we enter  
stripped.  
This is the way the world ends,  
not with a shot,  
but without a meaning.  
Resistance of Materials. "This is gonna  
hurt me more than it hurts you."  
*The sentence is out of focus*.  
"When you dissect it, you kill it."  
"Pain is impossible to describe."  
*The dance of the duende in the forest of signs*.  
"If we always write only  
that which we already know  
the field of knowledge  
would never be extended." The weather turned, this  
page (from *pangere*, to grasp, fix, join)-morning.  
Just because,  
"a doubt that doubted everything would no longer  
be  
a doubt." And  
what changes after everything. *Changes*,  
after everything. *The dance of the duende*  
*in the forest of signs*. Madame Yahoo,  
there's nothing epic in lightining a cigarette:  
or perhaps there is, like the heroic act of  
opening the door and taking out the trash." The difficult thing  
is being able to jump over the wall." This line of lies.  
The hymen is testing the extended memory.  
A hot bath is the conquest of Egypt.  
Who said that? *I was*  
*your amulet in the midst of the riot*:  
*I protected you from war, goddess -*  
*I was the whetted blade in Thoth's hand*  
*in the midst of the riot*.  
The fall of the pen on the carpet is an autumn dawn.  
Skies of liquid crystal.  
Iron filings form a magnetized rose.  
Remnants of conversations are our prophecies.

A kiss is the conquest of Egypt.  
Each morning you have to break the dead rubble afresh so as to reach the living warm seed.  
Vox, Vak, vaccum. Who knows, man  
is not contemporary with its image.  
Let's turn up the volume of the language.  
In American matinees they teach us to watch a film  
in the old style: in silence.  
With time, we become  
Invisible:  
*Sub verborum tegmine vera laten*, or  
behind the veil of words, the truth. Voices in the Mind's room?  
"But we awake at the same time to ourselves and to things"  
"Appearance's arduous path."  
THE EYE OPENS. THE EYE OPENS AND DIVIDES.  
Air, to articulate,  
like an animal leaving its nest.  
Cinema of the Grotesque taught us  
to configure an action, *black instant*, not a reflection  
of reality  
An apple floats in light: this its meaning.  
("we accept credit cards")  
that moves as one breaths, immediate,  
while it LOOKS at spirals Of time, rings Of smOke.  
There's no escaping it.

Tempe, Arizona, 1990.

From *Polivox*, 2000. Translated by Chris Daniels

Everything in space

Is past. Time,

pure distance,  
deep slow blue.

Even the shortest  
rain

falls on this world.

From *Visibilia*, 1996. Translated by Chris Daniels



**NEW YORK**

the street serpent drags its noises, raps & neon lights  
devours a real that accumulates its dust  
above us, layers  
of civilization without end and without exit

and the running over of all emotion  
restricted  
to a dog, eyeing, perplexed,  
sixth avenue

the artificial fog  
of the clandestine Korean restaurants underground  
mixes with the traffic, transit, gasp –  
escapes from the steam and embraces  
the sign, red letters, where you read

DON'T WALK DON'T WALK DON'T WALK

that disappears in the stupid white of a grey sky

no chance for Shelley, Keats,  
no haiku possible here –  
except the inhuman screams, anonymous thoughts, urban grunts

of a man who has just gone mad.

From *Solarium*, 1994. Translated by Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

**CITYSCAPE**

Cars advance in our direction; here lies the contemporary epic. Ithaca on the corner, Odysseus the peddler reading an ad stuck on the ground. Breeze of horns dazzling him, attracting him to the rush and the grind. From the synagogue slogans in the multitude of anonymous faces. He is the transubstantiated hero of other eras, or an ivy plugging the middle of things with what its steel flora, voracity, reveals: there is no silence, lights trace lines of flight, your fleeting face behind the glass, stain of detail, shoot. Everything proceeds by flux and accumulation. Life proliferates, neon-lights of convenience stores, yourself under eternal vigilance, and the images, the images. Minutes beg to be consumed like one more commodity (impossibility) so you have to be quick, so that death doesn't have as shock-absorbers the interruptions that scar it until it bleeds so that truth doesn't have time to install its lion of geraniums, its leaves of grass and vision. Think of Now and a whole network installs itself in your brain. This

perfume coming from the window display recalls an idea, and shatters in the instant necessary for time to stop

Unpublished. Translated by Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

## NAUTILUS

A new beginning. Winter camera in the  
blade of morning, sphinxes on the coast, the Sun,  
credential of the sky. The permanent  
monologue of the wind. Day and night being  
abstractions. Time,  
glass bell jar, triumphant.  
The vegetation  
Of dunes has resisted everything.  
Western smile on the cream sand,  
Two butterflies are thankful.  
Simultaneous planes: nuance  
of green and blue in high  
definition. blast of thinking  
of plants, close shave esperanto,  
and a mute sky of clouds.  
The digital blue converses  
with the eloquent southern wind.  
But the white, in no way, illuminates itself  
In no way,  
Our Lady of the Dunes. You  
don't look indifferent at all this.  
On the contrary, you disappear  
Making room for the labyrinth of desire, dull flowers  
Or distant ship.  
The veranda is a deck  
Where bamboo mobiles resonate.  
Someone forgot to turn off  
the sea machine.

Unpublished. Translated by Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

**POLIVOX**

There is no voice to be mine  
on this morning of being awakened by the washing machine,  
birds in cages made of wind and Villa-Lobos.

Other voices intersect with it and mix  
In the cataract of sentences which I am writing  
and which slowly watch, and recognize me.

And other breath of silence reanimates us. Tongues  
collide in the toxin of islands  
in the exile of all paths  
(which, however, do not fork. They  
hide -- in the yesterday wherein they drain --  
In a riot of echoes, reflections in a grotto).

Would poetry be the art of listening?

From *Polivox*, 2001. Translated by Chris Daniels

**UPON AN OLD SAYING**

*Be like sandalwood, that perfumes the wounding  
axe.*

I will say again what once was said  
So the mind will never forget  
That one day our lips, leaves, were made  
Grass, rapid sky, velvet and dense fog.

This smoke in the void seems  
the other, life, that  
lasts as lightning bolts last, quartz  
a pupil dilates and irradiates.

Who would say, for instance,  
that under the flesh of incense,  
in the evening's duramen,  
the sandalwood inhales  
and causes no scandal.

From *Visibilia*, 1996. Translated by Chris Daniels

**IN OPEN MYSTERY**

*Reality works in open mystery*  
Macedonio Fernández

The Eye  
Behind  
What consumes its flame:  
These hours without a name  
Well beyond language  
And darkness.

We are just  
A consciousness of oneself  
That the eye lends the ancient seeing  
The old world  
An excuse for being.

The things it sees  
Are more distant  
Than can seem.  
Silence: language speaks.  
The landscape creaks  
Of reality.

Thoughtscape:  
In a flash of lightning  
The mind drinks a sunset  
This has been the old law.

To not confide in mirrors  
In spectacles  
And in what the eye doesn't see.  
To be is to perceive, said Berkeley.  
It wasn't always like this:

See, a palm's length  
From paradise  
The closed, precise eye  
Envisages the Eye.

Afterimages whinny  
Unknown designs  
Its thirst for more:  
To rob the real  
Of two open eyes.

“The wind breathes  
my bodiless thoughts

(The soul gets out of breath)  
(My silence sweats).”

It sees itself, the eye, island of  
pure movement now,  
limited between the tongue  
and the time.

The panel of the sunset  
With its hunger for the impossible  
Refuge, momentum,  
Ideograms of light.

In the eye of the hurricane  
Where it  
Is calmer.

Double of itself,  
condemned to seeing,  
but separate.  
Who observes?  
The pupil,  
Its servant?

If what it sees  
Is the real  
Then what is this  
That moves  
At the speed of a wink?

I am not that which it perceives  
Since darkness would kill me.

Between music and the world  
In the silence of its curvature  
Between the sound and this rain  
Many questions without answers.

The eye, without a past,  
electric flux  
Behind  
What seems to be  
It anchors its shadows  
In burns in an instant of air

But, unreachable,  
All this advances,  
Escapes you, skin,  
Slow papyrus,

Voice vacuum,  
A nothing that vociferates  
Between the being that dissolves itself  
– a slit in the silence –  
And the look that luciferates.

Unpublished. Translated by Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

#### **IN THE HOUR OF THE WORLD**

To rhyme is to awaken sounds of syllables, words  
as primordially, to surprise them  
In their secret den: wherein none stands.  
Freed from the senses, neither sibyls,  
nor slaves, portable instants,  
To impassion these fruits of speeches,  
ramified in their echoes, their inverted flight,  
nomads lost in an uncertain desert  
under this heat that sweetens each color, washes  
with strangeness this severe passion,  
under the bass that marks the melody  
of the first midday.

Unpublished. Translated by the author

## GOOGLE EARTH

This pain is very ancient  
A Colossus of Rhodes, in view  
The British Museum, the Taj Mahal,  
Sugar Loaf, Atacama, a park in Peru

Once she knew by heart the Bhagavad Gita  
The midday prayer,  
The Torah, the Necronomicon,  
The inscriptions on Ikhnaton's grave

A Grail suffered on the sands.  
It felt the remorse of the sea.

It looks like Khephra, seen as such  
from the front, and from the side like no one.  
Yesterday it seemed more ancient. Today, not even  
sorrow: it doesn't seem like anything.

Unpublished. Translated by Marco Alexandre de Oliveira

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