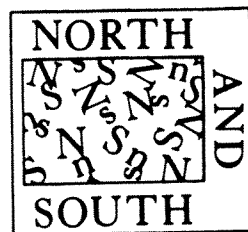


Dowsing in the ancient chemicals, the poet of information responds to the resources of time and human sequence. Translation coaxes not just Other Language into speech, but facts, destinies, lowly desires, learned trifles. Raphals here treats her readers to inventions and renewals. From technology and so-called history, two ends of the yardstick called Europe and China, song and simple sense, ideas and images throng to animate her poetry. With sly manoeuvres her poems witness formal energies of other passions and other ages. To read her is to return pleasurably to a half-remembered conversation, intelligent, alert and full of promise.

Robert Kelly

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WHAT COUNTRY

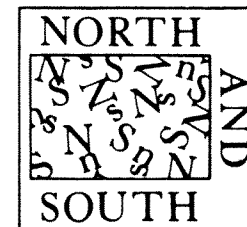
What Country

LISA RAPHALS



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Twickenham and Wakefield

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EPITAPH

Elaine's Indian grandmother

lies in this field

recognize her
by the flowers

in the lower left

black hunched figures, the snow

mountains

What country?

tell me
where

that Roman beauty
Flora
lies;

and Archipiada,
where
's her

first
cousin, fair
Thais,

and Echo
who speaks
in the cries

of sound
over the
river, then below,

such beauty more than human wise:
where do they go,
les neiges d'antan?

Where
is that wise
Heloise?

Peter
Abelard became

a eunuch and
at Saint Denis

a monk
for love of same.

Similarly
where's the queen
who ordered them to throw

Buridan
in a sack
in the Seine:

Where do they go,
les neiges d'antan?

Where's the siren-voices

lady, lily
Blanche
the queen,

Bertha Bigfoot,
Beatrice,
Alice,

Ermegarde, the dame
of Maine,

and Joan
the good Lorraine

the one the English
burned
at Rouen,

Sovereign Virgin, where are they:
Where do they go,
les neiges d'antan?

Prince
don't ask again

this week or year.
Know

you'll hear
the same refrain:

Where do they go,
les neiges d'antan?

CATS AND MICE

A Kitten

sat there unmoved, a sphinx,
viewed from the side
beautiful, each muscle silent, still as marble.

It had no wings	small
really	instead of the head
of a woman, that	of a cat
and it sat	on a marble slab in a
lab.	

where the riddle of the brain
was being removed for sectioning.

cut	cat	clock — the
right lateral		hypothalamus 12:03
right medial		hypothalamus 12:04
left posterior		pyreform lobe 12:04:30
left medial		hypothalamus 12:05
right posterior		pyre —

What about the left lateral hypothalamus?

Blood velvet nose	Procedure incomplete. bubbling <i>non in vivo</i>
that had been	a small perfection

— Villon

Mice

Once I had a mouse, it

lived in a cage
on a row with nine
in a stand with twenty-
on a corridor with fifteen
on each side

were three such aisles
wire mesh), or
on each corridor
eight corridors

which was

Mice were living in those rooms.

The mental energy of a mouse

I had to be there late at night

awake. The rustle was terrifying.

with nine other mice
other cages
three other rows
stands
of the aisle. There

(separated in blocks by
ninety stands total
and twenty-
in the room (there were three rooms)

several floors high
with connecting galleries.

is negligible. Once

when they were all

ICARUS

he knowing less than drugged beasts

Saline drifts through the tubes
ruby in a vein
sapphire in an artery

all night
syringes, like fingers. right:
adrenaline, antibiotic.
left: narcotic
bringer of blackness

double vision:
adrenaline, morphine
dark crows
the dayshift

Release, he belongs
to another her
wedding set
two weeks Tuesday

in his under world
incubates
pneumonia

slow and far
from the medical lights
the left lung
the
right

Oh it is godlike
to sit self-possessed
anywhere near you, your speech hearing,
your laughter heedless, fire,
desire

to me. My heart stumbles and
flies. One glance, and my tongue
is cancelled.

It melts. Fire fine-
stitches me, all over.
Eyes ... gone, ears ... bzzz ...

and a sweat / holds me cold, tremor
seizes me. I am greener than grass.
Just to see you, I
all but die ...

— *Sappho*

ASHES

My brother's ex-
lover's ex-
husband's ashes

(following
cremation following
death by murder in
the Lower East Side)

stayed in
my brother's closet
a year and a half,

which became
(he being in
South America and I having
her name)
my fault.

His other
ex-lover
is threatening to vacuum.

Mine says
return the urn, but first
glaze it.
Turn the ashes.

ODYSSEUS AND PENELOPE

Agamemnon stewed at Aulis
ten years' dull folly
but Homer's Odysseus
comes into his own,
his wife and son
into a sleek old age
far from the waves' harsh break.

Fleecen couches
late-waning firelight
sea-knotted beggar and a queen
converse in codes and dreams
around the ears
of her hostile maids.
Circumspect

Penelope
rises, having questioned the
beggar, who has told her
every lie. Now?
Will long grief sway?
Or feed and clothe an old
man, and send him on his way?

ORPHEUS

The Maenads got him and his music too.

We found his smile hanging from a pine

fingers there like amanita buds

under the needleway, and stars.

No branch could match the etch of his brow.

his hair blacker than the sky,

eyes deeper, reflecting no light.

We found his smile.

Then the wind began,

first with pre-dawn light, the curl-ends

of his music

waiting in the hemlocks

in that place

before day could intervene.

UNE FLEUR DE MAL

The castle is old and wreck-
rocked hard on the ocean.
We clean our house,
luring the rats
by strewing the rocks with
sweet carrion.

Too late,
the rats have been absorbed to the marrow.
A man leaps from the highest tower
as the seas swallow.
We run frantically
from the rotten castle to the rotten sea.

AFTER BORGES

*Entre mi amor y yo han de levantarse
trescientas noches como trescientas paredes
y el mar sera una magia entre nosotros.*

Stars weave on a night
warp, sea separations,
and each strike of the clock weaves
from an inexhaustible source
of distance. Nor do different clocks change
the stars' identities, and the same sun
touches us both when touch is out. Three
hundred nights' how naked presence,
but absence is always one
wave
of no diminutions,
one wall and one night.

HIS LAST CAPTAIN

for Victor

He waited for his name where names could not
as if some other man — hair by hair —
had watched a moustache
lose form, disappear

in a shaving basin. Now in the Odessa crowd,
in with the wind, to flow
softly in the new old civilian clothes,
complete with forged papers,

death sentence heavy
on the air. The Czar's arm is long or steps
keep their own time no reverie
can alter — the station door, the train, border

at last. Suddenly everything lurches. Overcast
looks knit into one face — his last
captain from the army, the very man, he guessed,
who found the pamphlets hidden in the bunks

and denounced the traitor. Watching his arm
rise, a salute no disguise could
it was so smart, saw his death in the distance
between them. Calm, dumb,

waiting, walking on, waiting for his name,
it seemed the buttonhole of his lapel
had caught the crook of someone else's thumb —
and the man went on without a second look.

A CHILD FOR MY LOVE

for Sarah, Fred, and Mariah

I gave my love an apple
without any skin.
I gave my love a leather pouch
of the evening sun.
I gave my love a new bone
of erythropoeic marrow.
I gave my love ungerminated seeds
stolen from the furrow.
I gave my love a pair of sleeves
of green of all the summer leaves.
I gave my love a little cat
that cried and died and that was that.
I gave my love a laundry line
for drying flour,
and a *perpetuum mobile* machine
without power.
I gave my love a leather boot
that was not right for either foot.
I gave my love a bed of oak
we used until the bedsprings broke.

A CATHARSIS OF GREY

Acheron alley cat birch grove grey
bored baby book dust Chicago back porch grey
centipede centrefold census taker grey
dirty sheet door factory electrical tape grey
elevator enervator *ex machina* grey
factory fragile and failure grey
gull-back and grey-away, goo of eternal youth
hail, hallways and halcyon potential grey
indigo-faded-into juniper and kangaroo grey
lonely laboratory lay-away grey
money, mould and map-of-Norway grey
nearly newly-sprayed natty and old chemicals grey
old grey orange grey order form grey
peat moss pinwheel quartz ore grey
rotor-rooter radar-used-by-bats grey
slicks slop sludge sewer
water test-tubes-from-*the Rats* grey
torrent grey terror grey theory of holes and
unburied moles used clothes and unbelievable grey
varied vivid wizard hat wistful warlike
xylene x-ray xenon tetrafluoride grey
your eyes yellowing lies Σ_{zebra} grey

TO AN ALCHEMIST

After HD

Nor fear of death nor weeping leaf
will cover you,
or shelter or succour of time.
Extract oils and platinum be over you,
the gold, the tangent, and
the sine.

My words unstrung —
the old song — lover, you
return as the tides but for this —
the lees of your days massing over you,
without comfort, without kiss.

如 夢 令

秦 觀

1

鶯燕指吹依人	啄尾冷徹舊與	花波笙梅舊楊	紅綠寒春	溜皺
			俱	透
				瘦

2

遙風夢霜無門	夜緊破送寐外	沉驛屬曉無馬	沉亭窺寒寐嘶	如沈燈侵	水閉
				人	被
					起

RU MENG LING

Oriole bills
 pluck
 red bud lees.
 Swallow trails
 dot
 the green seas.

And numb hands,
 the jade flute
 so cold
 keens
 "Little Plum"
 spring flees.
 Always again
 Always again
 As the willow
 green fades, so,
 people
 grow thin.

— Qin Guan

Distantly, like
 water, the
 dusk deep night.
 Shut the inn
 doors to the
 edge hard wind.

By the lamp
 a mouse moves
 my dream shards.
 Dawn
 in the covers
 sends its frost.
 Sleepless again
 Sleepless again
 On the street
 horses
 people
 awake again.

— Qin Guan

如夢令

李清照

1

暮路處鷺
日歸舟深鷗鷺
亭知回花渡灘
溪不晚藕爭一
記醉盡入渡起
常沈興誤爭驚

2

驟酒舊瘦
風殘人依紅
疏消簾棠否肥
雨不捲海知綠
夜睡問道否是
昨濃試卻知應

Always remember
Flood Lodge
 dusk.
Plumb drunk, I
lost
the road home.

Rapt
all night, my
home skiff
strayed into
lotus holds,
deep ways.

How to get through
How to get through
Startled from the
stands, a sandbar of
egrets
flies.

— Li Qingzhao

Spattering rain
blast winds
last night.
Drowned in dregs,
sunk in
wine-deep sleep.

The maid,
raising the blinds —
ask her.
“Plum —
still in bloom?”
“Still there.”

How could it be?
How could it be?
Now should the greens
shine and the
reds
pine.

— Li Qingzhao

cormorant shadows
(sea-spray's white crash along the rock)

ululating black

METAMORPHOSIS

*We had changed our throats
and had the throats of birds.*

Squirrels the shadow of
soot, moths with wings of ink,
dead fish rise
to meet us from the lake ...

Tadpoles have extra legs.
Flowers are petalled wrong.
The oil on our feathers is not right,
even snow is the wrong colour.

a world too full of things
to hold any reflection,
how will salmon
find the road upstream?

FEZ

Medina

Behind it, a spiral stair,
winding us up the cool shaft,
the dark wells of the Medina.
Below it, noise of everything,
flies, smells of dung, food, dye,
the rainbow of the tanneries,
segmented by vats and drying hides.

Before it, descent down slippery paths,
jumping roof to roof,
above the chasm of the town.
Above it, the mosque,
the mullah and the sun,
in its sea, the
indigo vertigo.

Periphery

I met him crowded on a bus
near the desert at the city's edge.

He carried yellow melons,
soft with a heavy load,
and laughing copper hair.
I never learned his name.
All freckles, friends
he shone.

Festival

The guest of honour
duly hennaed and circumcised
alternately sleeps and cries
the night away.

Upstairs, we all
danced; beating
rhythms on
everything.
Downstairs, a
solitary
twirler — bills from a bosom
already overflowing.

落花

李商隱

去飛陌暉掃歸盡依
竟亂曲斜忍欲春沾
客花連送未仍向是
閣園差遞斷穿心得
高小參迢腸眼芳所

FALLING FLOWERS

Even you have quit my high pavilion;
flowers astir in the garden below

scattering west, flown along the twisted dike
escorting dusk, passed into distances.

In the faded light I reach for your return
and still can't bear to sweep them away

fragrant mind following spring, to end
here in a tear-drenched robe.

— *Li Shangyin*

憶舊遊寄譙郡元參軍

李白

酒樓

丘造笑侯客逆難惜枝思
糟南哥王雲莫作所桂夢
董橋賣輕青心不無攀愁
陽津壁月豪君海意南北
洛天白累賢與轉倒淮洛
昔余金醉內中山情向留
憶爲黃一海就迴傾我君

RECALLING OLD JOURNEYS:

To Yuan Canjun, Chancellor of Qiao

Think back —

Luoyang
that drinking-inn
old "Wine-Barrel" Dong
had built me
south of Tianjin Bridge

Yellow gold, white jade
bought laughter and song,
one everlasting month
forget kings and princes
— drunk!

'mid restless sages,
come from all directions
wanderers of the vivid clouds
to meet you there
and none more welcome

Who thought it nothing
to turn peaks, churn seas,
to incline together in open admiration
with open meanings
and no shadow of umbrage.

I went to Nanhuai,
"picking cassia"
going nowhere fast
you stayed at Beiluo
dreaming backwards, thinking of it.

城螢明聲地迎我樂鳴舉舞
隨仙迴花風平相邀仙鳳輕起
相訪水千松倒來人動鸞欲醉
還迢曲入盡絡守眞上似摧守
別迢六初度金太之樓宛管太
忍隨十溪壑鞍東陽霞然長中
不相三一萬銀漢紫蒼嘈袖漢

吹 玉 笙

Then —

I couldn't bear it,
back to meet
to wander

We wandered far to
Xiancheng
that City of Spirits
coiled in its
thirty-six-fold river

Every stream giving onto
a thousand flowers blazing,
only then at the end
of ten thousand valleys,
each hollow full
of sound,
pines,
wind.

Gold reins,
gilt saddles,
down the plain,
the Taishou of Donghan
came to greet us.

The Daemon of
Ziyang,
"Purple Light,"
offered me his
jade *sheng* flute to play

And back at high
Canxia, began
playing that immortal music,
a brouhaha
of brooding-phoenix calls

into the long
sleeves of the
Taishou of Zhonghan
and up he rose, swaying and
started to dance

身股霄朝遙巢橋虎虜行若深金案心
我其九終水故渭豹戎太腸月黃玉歸
覆枕凌不山尋度勇遏渡羊歲輕青無
袍眠氣散關山家君州呼道涼義食飽
錦橫意雨楚還歸嚴并相不北貴綺醉
持醉筵離飛既亦家尹月輪來君杯我
手我當星分余君君作五摧行感瓊使

who, with his own hands
covered me with his
brocade robe
and I was drunk
and fell asleep with my head on his thigh.

And that
banquet's
thought and force, we reached ninth heaven
Star-scattered, rain-driven
over by dawn.

Flown apart, riven
by Chu Pass
seas and vastnesses,
I over the mountains, back to the old nest.
You home, back by Wei Bridge.

Your father,
august and fierce,
a leopard and tiger,
made governor of Bingzhou,
put down the barbarians.

In the fifth month
you sent for me,
across Taihang Mountain
broke the wheels, trackless,
twisted like sheep guts

I reached Beiling,
already deep into the year,
moved, most
by weight of kindness,
made light of yellow gold.

And there —
the jade winecups
pure jade tables
drunk, wearing brocade,
no thought of return.

曲玉鳴綠過何日娥輝衣去飛
四壁鼓草經雪斜翠月羅空雲
城如簫莎恣似宜寫助舞入行
向水水鱗妓花醉潭娟唱哥繞
出流弄龍攜楊欲清嬋更吹自
時祠舟波來若妝尺娥人風曲
時晉浮微興其紅百翠美清哥

And sometimes, bending west,
beyond the city walls,
to the Jin shrine,
ancestral waters flowing like
green and white jade.

An idling boat,
strumming the stream
to flute and drum,
etched ripples, dragon scales
emerald water grass.

The impulse comes, lead out those girls
giving in — the moment passes
how do they do it,
white poplar flowers
so like snow?

Vermilioned, they *will* get drunk
apt to the setting sun.
a hundred feet of clear pool
to mirror kingfisher grace

Kingfisher elegance
reflected in young moonlight
each beauty
sings her gauze robe
into dance.

Clear wind
plays their songs
away, into the void,
curves of song
twirling on their heels
after passing clouds,

遊賦期去君群少紛 辭憶
再揚可歸遇離多紛 此相
難長不還一又知爭盡極絨遙
樂獻雲首頭北恨暮可可跪里
行因青白難之別春不長千
時遊闕山橋臺余花亦亦兒君
此西北東渭渭問落言情呼寄

This moment of joy
flies
hardly to be met again
I journeyed west,
to offer my "Long Willow" verse

North Tower's
vivid clouds
undo hope;
I returned to Dongshan
with white hair.

At the south head
of Wei Bridge
I met you one more time
we parted again
north of Can Terrace.

You ask me about parting
how bitter? How much?
At the end of spring
falling flowers
scatter and disperse

Words cannot reach the end of this
nor feelings fathom
I call the boy to kneel
and close this poem

and send you this a thousand miles, thinking.

— Li Bai [Li Po]

Once more Eros
unhinges my limbs

and stings —

bicerebral

untamable

animal.

— *Sappho*

POISE

for Phil

Midsummer sunset
clear from the street's end
winter dusk, northwest.

It's all right
the snow compass
buried in the park.

The fifth direction
(centre) still autrement, bow
at rest, program slow

until the winds change
to one work hold all over
turning everything.

白鷺鷥

李白

水霜去旁
秋墜未洲
下如且沙
鷺飛閑立
白孤心猶

觀放白鷹

李白

高毛雪毫
風錦片秋
邊白一見
月鷹飛里
八胡孤百

劃鷹

杜甫

起殊兔胡
霜作狡愁
風畫思似
練鷹身目
素蒼竦側
摘呼鳥燕
堪可凡平
光勢擊灑
鏃櫻當血
條軒何毛

WHITE EGRET

white egret
drops
to fall water
flying alone
like
falling frost

mind so still
still
I can't go
standing alone
beside
the strand

— Li Bai [Li Po]

LOOKING DOWN ON WHITE EAGLES

The August border winds
blow high
Hu eagle feathers
white brocade

a mote of snow
flies alone
see their autumn down
a hundred *li* away

— Li Bai [Li Po]

PAINTED FALCON

winds rise, and frost from the pale silk
grey falcon, uncanny work in paint
strains its body longs for the crafty hare
hooded eyes nomad's worried glance

metal tie-ring gleam from silk cord beckons the hand
form in motion, poised on the rail to command
When will it strike the common flock
plumage and blood sprinkle the grassy plain?

— Du Fu [Tu Fu]

THREE POEMS FROM LINES BY ROBERT KELLY

A PENTIMENTO

full of a special kind of dark called light

circling in the pool
a special kind of dark called light
and another clear, not dark or bright:
full light and empty light

down where the rapid resolves, water falls
to foam of energy (blackwhite light) and bubbles
reflect, absorb each other: whiteblack rocks, blackwhite falls
ink leaves no trace on water.

SPEM IN ALIUM

A congress of deception practices truth

Voice by voice, the motet grows
eight five-part choirs shift imperceptible parts.
Deduce who can, that *creator coeli et terrae*
invoked in fortyfold counterpoint.

Russell to Bishop Berkeley, Hume and Kant:
against things-in-themselves
induce phenomena, distinguish synthesis from cause,
arguments and cases, bulwarks ground to a fault.

Hear and rejoice, sense and doubt
as voices interleave a single sound and note
rising and falling, waves furl and calm
to a deft design hidden from the ear of reason.

One tone, purer than light
spem in alium nunquam habui
all my trust and hope
only in thee.

PEN AND HANDLE

flotsam on the surface
perceive through your pen he said
the entry points, surface of the day.

Pass the handles, semaphores, the wrong road,
no where here, how
to know.

Follow the marks, reckon significs as
clefts in rock, potential, invisible ink,
dew on dead trees' leaves.

And learn to detect Han forgeries, lull the dozy brain
of deep if useless memory (and useful particulars):
te deums, To Do lists
unwrite themselves, and do.

BOOK

a book about the edges
of language, *les ruses*
d'intelligence, their curves

misses have it. The other words
are shy, direct light
stumbles them, threading

through, natural and relentless, around such obstacles
are slow-moving if at all, and dull.
body to stride, nothing out of season.

... words
like certain cats that resist placement
arrange themselves, and purr

Adonis to the shades in Hades, asked what he missed most

I leave

-best of all-

the light of the sun.

Then-

the shining stars and the face of the moon.

Then-

wet cucumbers,

apples

and pears.

— *Praxilla of Sicyon*

RU MENG LING

Unlike Tang regulated verse forms, Song dynasty *ci* took its metres from songs, possibly of Central Asian origin. The music is lost, but each title identifies a distinctive metre. Like Elizabethan madrigals, *ci* could be read or sung. Most was written by men, ostensibly in the voices of the women who traditionally sang them. These four *ci* were written to the tune "Like a Dream".

Qin Guan (1049-1100). One of the great *ci* poets of the Northern Song, associated with the "Delicate Restraint" (*wan yue*) genre of *ci* poetry, his *ci* poems were considered superior to those of his friend, the great Tang poet Su Shi (also known as Su Dongpo), who was imprisoned in 1079 for offence against authority. Su tried to recommend the rather unsuccessful Qin Guan to the attentions of the great reformer Wang Anshi, but Wang's death prevented any action on the recommendation. Some fifteen years later (1094), Qin was accused of tampering with official records to help Su, and Qin was demoted and relieved of his official duties in the capital. Four years before his death, he was exiled to Chenzhou, where several more such transfers broke his spirit and his health.

Li Qingzhao (1084-1151), the greatest woman poet of China. Born into a literary family, her talents were recognized while she was still in her teens; and her early life and marriage were happy until the fall of the Northern Song (1127) and the subsequent death of her husband, the mayor of Nanjing. Her poetry combines an unaffected, natural style of language with rigorous observance of metrical rules.

FALLING FLOWERS

Li Shangyin (813?-858) explored a complex and ambiguous emotional range previously untouched by Chinese poets. His poems are known for their tight structure, rich allusion, irony, portrayals of secret love and use of Taoist and Buddhist imagery.

RECALLING OLD JOURNEYS

Opinion divides whether Li Bai [Li Po] (701-762) or Du Fu (see below) is the greatest of the Tang poets. Born somewhere in Central Asia, possibly of Turkic origin, Li Bai grew up in western China (modern Szechuan) and presented himself in the tradition of such "frontier" poets as Sima Xiangru.

He was summoned to a post at the Han Lin Academy by the emperor Xuan Zong in 742, and was expelled two years later. Thereafter he travelled widely, was implicated in a minor rebellion and arrested for treason during the An Lushan Rebellion. He was eventually released, and spent his last years wandering the Yangtze Valley, but never regained favour with the government.

POISE

Midsummer sunset: The geographical orientation of Montreal makes streets that run east- (northeast) west (-southwest) seem to run north-south.

Outrement: a neighbourhood in Montreal.

PAINTED FALCON

Du Fu [Tu Fu] (712-770) is variously esteemed for the technical precision of his verses, the realism of his representation of poverty and hardship during the An Lushan Rebellion, for his introspection, and for a surrealist richness of symbolism. He was a younger contemporary and devoted student and friend of Li Po.

ADONIS TO THE SHADES

The expression "Mad as Praxilla's Adonis" comes from this poem.



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