

DAVID PRATER

TJUGOTVÅ



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TWENTY-TWO POEMS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘T’GA 3A JYΓ’, which first appeared online in the Swedish journal *The Shipwright’s Review*, is a free transliteration of Graham W. Reid’s translation of “T’ra za jug” (or “T’ga za jug,” or “Longing for the South”) by Macedonian writer Konstantin Miladinov (1830–62).

All other poems were first posted online via my ‘Poem of the week!’ newsletter.
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‘T’GA 3A JY’ (‘LONGING FOR THE SOUTH’)

MEANINGFUL ADJACENCY REQUEST

could i possibly be somewhere near you
forever and a day or more if that's okay?

can i hide my face in your neck's hollow
or else just stand next to you on a bus?

riding together for several happy stops
with our shoulders barely touching at all

but somehow just there, just adjacent to
each other, parallel as quiet city streets

that will never intersect but nevertheless
exist simultaneously on time-worn maps

could we be denizens of that dizzy grid?
our arms linked together just so, breezy?

if only i knew where to file such a request
i'd gladly register my body as a business

DONE TAGGING

... my face on y'r space (rule #1: clone taggin'!
the school for the too-cool hispter-brew,
squeaky shoes – taggin' ... 'n' a-braggin'!

done taggin' my place get into y'r space-(ac'e)
new toolz, tru' blue hoodz, flute reeds 'n'
music sheet screeds wot i wrote, emo(t) E !

done taggin', so i'm tur(n)in' 'GO' on slaggin'
Grange Hill [1978–2008] replicas &, emm,
'lapped answers' ZOMG. Velodromancy X.

... my race in y'r two-faced analogue hate race?
Yo', s'r'l'y? back off, chrome-nose, pooh-
bear hose. 'n' pass the amyl bag, yo', bones.

oh noes, all my tags is, like, spray'd in y'r face!
disgrac'd (eg larsson 'widow' carryin' mace
why don'tcha tie this-a, old, shoelace! *salam-*

anders salam, tag this space (& then gracefully
degrade, slam *salami* in an am an anagram &
the signature tune (the spoon (i'Poon!)) on

... my tag & y'r space in the book of some face
a la buttery biscuit bass. Baaap. done taggin'
& y'r all, like,

amazed?

like sum flowa in a vase?

HOW THE COLD, DEAD MOON STAYED MAGNETIC

just how did the moon stay magnetic?
answer: something to do with the sea
or the way the dolphin cow calls to
her calf: a little click - there, maybe
a whistle, every second or so, then
a brief empty eternal moment before
she echolocates that tiny response -
whether far away or close - just as
long as it comes, once a second or so
like the blinking eye of a lighthouse
signalling rocks, signalling a breath
that's not empty, that's never still,
a beat sharp as a daydream or smoke
on the horizon (that signals a passing
cruise liner, rush to ignite bonfires
defeat the marauding shark that never
sleeps, not like the cold, dead moon
that's nevertheless magnetic, tiny death
washed up on some faraway beach where
lovers walk in the moonlight, kicking
sand with perfectly painted toenails,
rolling like a post-magnetic wave furls
forever against the reef, dolphin calf
nudged with a pectoral fin, the burst!
like a bullet through the salty water's
medium, the rush of blood through blue
veins (the moon calling endlessly to her
lover, her mother, forever in captivity
breaching now like a song in still air

HÄR KOMMER ALLIHOP!

heya cometh everyboddeeee! right out of the sleigh:
purring like honey from a see-through plastic bag!

& the dread, the dead night-cruise drops its beats
& sings 'la la la la la la laaaaaaa like a Lidl lamb!

hey did i dream all of that? or are we all still here,
shouting 'Ship to Shore' [1982] from the *stuga*?

life is a *fritidshus* that belongs to someone else -
but *iiii'm still standing* here, in the soupy *dimma*

& that's my dilemma: stay sane, or else go barking
up the trunks of unfamiliar trees; & i think i know

which way you'll lean, so let's engrave our names
on the nearest manhole cover & call it *kul*, or *jul*:

the *blekinge* wastes hold yesterday's rain & crawl
like a bereaved remainder, or something else.

COLLAPSE MENU

Incantations [1978]

*'I feel all my childhood & its dreams
in this video ...'*

my father
 & his brothers
 & their seventies stereos:
born into the Space Age
watching all the menus collapse
like when you plonk a person

somewhere

deep

IN SPAAAAAAACE!

well, what does that make me
a synthesiser, then - a pop?
billions of commenters
on the new tube [*heya ...*]
 & still you think
that's nothing special.
get this into yr thick skullz:

it's all about the fucking comments

- all of them!

& when the melody collapses into now,
 you'll know it!
you'll believe it, then:
crystal clear,
a memory of *childhood & its dreams,*
the melody's menu shattered
& deep space empty except for

the one person in it!

YOUUUUUUU!!

o keyboard warriors!
sentimental new age jazz hearts!
interstellar phenomena reduced to saucepans & seas!
time-lapsed breathing, &
our curled spoons of sleep ...
i'd cry GIVE IT TO ME, NOW!
were the sounds not already trapped
here, inside my machine;
we're just waiting
for the lights to go dim:

*Another Aussie here
wiping away tears -*

chil

dood.

MARK ALL AS READ

here in the office of dead ideas
we mark all your thoughts as read

don't be alarm'd, it's just routine:
most people's are a waste of space

& Friday's pay day so we *rack off*
early (or long enough for a drink,

long enough for me to emote a hit
or a telepathic experience of 'snow

inside a glass jar', thinking (o *tack*
for th' emergency Radiohead anorak.

Only forty quid & left here today
by someone who refused to give

a number, even a Hollywood name.
which was a pity as you'll probably

be needing something big & yellow
to hide your big empty head under!

hooray, no spam here! (tho' notions
that've been here more than thirty

days will be automatically deleted,
then marked as read all over again.

I REMEMBER 제주도

for Choi Sung Hee

i remember Jeju-do: that living eye,
a candy-coloured sky that was remote-
controlled by Halla-san, our Lord Muck,
or else a lady mountain gathering skirts
around her as th' cloud sucks up rain.

i remember 4·3 사건, although we
were not there, bullets like a maze,
weeping in secluded lanes, wounds as
big as tangerines & the green moulds
all over the dead (the reds, the red

i remember Gangjeong Peace Zone,
cute as a postcard, its anti-nuke murals
(a white wall with the painted-on tree
whose outline mirrored that of a real
tree (its leaves greener than my hopes

i remember Mayor Kang Dong-kyun
was arrested for protesting too much –
& also for eating too little in his cell,
his hunger strike embarrassing some,
while electrifying the people's media

i remember *touch not one flower, not
one stone!*, a great mantra for daily
living, just like mayor Kang's letters,
each beginning with the line: *Dear Mr.
Noam Chomsky!* Or just: *Mr. Chomsky!*

i remember Seogwipo, quiet 6 PM city
on the island's south side, the flowers
in boxes lining the steep path down to
the marina, & the harbour, & the wooden
restaurant where the mosquitoes ate us

i remember U-do, tiny postage stamp
of an island, where Haenyo plied their
trade, sleek seals in black diving suits,
surfacing with buckets full of the sea,
anemones & seasons' salt-water tears

but i forgot all about you, funny old
dol hareubang, you characters, playing
dead in the stones on the mountainside.
hold some memorial service for me, if
you will. i can't remember, so i regret.

THAT FEELING AFTER FEAR

when you could see it coming
coming at you like a giant
giant ball of lead or something
something heavy cold & dead

death contained a hint of fear
fear faded & quickly passed
passed to an even higher plane
planet heavy cold & gone;

going to some future island
island where the lonely go
go further & 'find yr feelings'
feelings heavy dead & grey

greying like a knitted jumper
jumper of some football player
player watch the football flying
diving cold dead gone & wet

wetter than a rain-cold kitten
kitten washed up on a beach
beach bereft of calypso music
music heavy, 'wet & wild'

wilder than a lover's tongue
tongue warming up like fire
fire clinging to yr dim youth
young face ringing hot & loud

louder than the cries of years
years that rippled like a pool
pool you only sought to fill you
still & that feeling after fear

LEVELLING

returning from the graveyard to rise a level¹
we stashed serious goods in our backpacks²
& fought for hours against the ironic orcs³
/whisper: I've been teleported to fairbreeze⁴
/clintolas dances with undead anok'suten⁵
clintolas shouldn't be meeting anok'suten⁶
i run swiftly across water when I'm dead!⁷
jou spik dansk? asks the suspect blood elf⁸
not enough energy! sit down: drink, refresh⁹
cheerful blood elf spirit level nine, is dead!¹⁰

¹ Just like william faulkner *i made it on a bevel*

² our avatars meet by a pixel in eversong woods

³ my sinister strike & your magnificent stealth

⁴ /whisper: okay I'll wait here until you return

⁵ /clintolas dies when anok'suten calls for help

⁶ clintolas has not levelled up sufficiently yet

⁷ when I'm alive it's 90% stealth mode for me

⁸ /enemyfan whispers: let's go somewhere else

⁹ /clintolas, gnaw on a hunk of mouldy bread!

¹⁰ return 2 graveyard (minutes till resurrection)

(ON THE TOMB OF) NOAH RAY

Noah Ray, when REM got you to play in
the filmclip for 'It's the End of the World

as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)' [1987]
did any of them actually ever stop to think

about the effect it might have had on you?
Maybe stopped to think about high school

pressure? O-or corridors, petty jealousies?
Or the ostracisation of all 'achievers' by

dimwits with no future or hope, no sense
of solidarity, generosity? You know the type:

the dead-legs at assembly, or else a casual
punch or two in the face just after recess

& always with the names: like, a stream of
them, srly, a stream of names like bubbler

water or vitamin-yellow piss that's being
aimed in yr direction *Hourly, Daily* [1996].

& yet, Noah, Ray, i like the fact that you
sing in a band called Music Hates You:

'We play a lot out of town . . . we're
doing all the things we know how to do.'

Coz it's the ultimate Fuck U: the music
your only comeback. Drown them all

in pools of simple Georgian feedback.

SNÖ KANINER

a year ago today i arrived in Bjorkholmen
on a slow train via winter's *Nevermind* [1992]

& to black mornings, deathly afternoons
mile-deep blizzards

people did not smile at each other in town
& the pub was like an extra from *LOTR*:

littered with snugs & corner tables hiding
mysterious drunks

today, one year on, i'm wearing pyjamas
again, a woollen scarf & thermal leggings;

the windows we only open for an hour or so,
just to let in some air

we don't look at the faces of the people lining
up at the Systembolaget for cut-price alcohol,

nor at the homeless man who sleeps every
night in the SJ station

many seasons have now attacked the admiral's
house with little success, flinging ice, water & air

plus the occasional TV aerial at us, hating us all,
seemingly, at random

we've taped shopping bags over our windows
in summer just to get an hour's sleep; then autumn

comes & goes, the wind & hail everyone spoke
of with frozen inevitability

so last night it snowed, finally, for the first time
in a year but the snow was just like dandruff

on the still-warm earth & by this afternoon it
will be gone away again

i worry about the rabbits living down there
in the park by our house & how they will survive

should it really snow ... & whether their warren
will freeze or close up.

but come spring they'll be back, out in open air,
their white tails bobbing with real life, skipping

over the path as if we weren't ever even here, in
Bjorkholmen, after all.

HEY, MOON!

apocalypse? miaow! ima jussa
gonna chk chk chk (it's awwn!

laydeez, miming *pretty woman*
walking down the huh-street

satellites are all in orbison LOL!
baaaaaaaaaayyyyyyybeeeee
hey seuss – no wait, hey venus!
“hello, world!” mkay, try again.

watchin' dead roy's black face
mime a moon; so we go “hey”
@ black francis's on tha moon:
GIT OUTTA MAI 'HAI' TIE BAI?

you wanna sonnet you wanna
say 'allo, moon??

(#andimout

ANOTHER KIND OF SUN RA

drop drop the hangul! gimme
gimme gimme gimme sun raaaaaa –
no, the other kind! yes yessirree):
davey drop the davey drop the
dream, nation! yeeeah drop it ,
yoda drop it you must yoda!
any other kind of sun ra *i'm*
against it against all stooges
day dream nations, glo-wavers!
thomas covenant *i'm against it*
read stein for yr education
pynchon *i'm not against* got
no real problem with *it* but
pose? gaaaaaah! gimme sun ra!
book me immediately promoters
poster sun ra's face all over
prater – who's he? we want ra
and not just any old ra – yep,
you know the drill (*oh noes ...*
david i am david david goes
off! goes completely berko in
stone roses reunion poses (a
kind of sun that goes raaa?!
december - who noes it? not
me coz i got [fill in sun ra
blanks heya, then take a no. -]
leaving now for mars attacks

GVB MBV BPM VAT BTW PTO!

GO!

sun
vehicle
poem

A NEW CAREER IN A NEW TOWN

Call me *Kid A* [2000], cashing
in on foreign-language power,

breezily erasing any thoughts
of running aside to land here,

finally, in this new town. way
below zero i go, plunging into

a new career just as the Metro
escalators do, with no thought

or choice, only a strange drive
to run & run again to the north

Call me Bowie, or at least his
knife, cutting through forms,

bureaucratic mazes, wintery
shopping malls, towards a real

future packed tight as snow in
a drainpipe, or between fails.

my plans to map the vortices
of the city's public transport

take a backseat to idle wine,
to Tarkovsky's *Solaris* [1972]

Call me Yesterday, or prose
in Vreten Tunnelbana station,

piercing my southern naivete
with its sharp blue cubes, its

friendly, if cold, silence. here
is a place i could sit for hours,

u think, looping through *Low*
[1977] towards another place,

where non-descript bars hide
agonies, their private dreams.

Call me an Economic Asset,
working my way through this

crowd of extras sent here to
test my resolve. outside, all

the trains are full of snow, or
maybe fluffy clouds. i wanted

to send you a photograph of
the view from behind her eyes

but the light by then was dim
and her daze had disappeared.

VOOR MIJN VALENTIJN

ik ben dik voor mijn gappies
maar mijn valentijn is wel de liefste

liefie, liefie ... waar ben je nu?
ik ben hier maar jij niet

waarom zeg je daarom iedere keer?
hoe kan dat ... nou, weet ik veel.

ik weet veel van mijn gappies
maar Darryl ja klopt: hij weet alles,
tenminste alles over liefde

maar hij ziet er nu helemaal dom uit
in verband met jou en mij.

natuurlijk maar ik kan niet zeggen dat
ik doe dit shit als sinds ik klein bent
jo, ik weet dit wel en *ik kan wel liegen*
maar verliezen is geen optie

tenminste, ja, nou ... tenminste als ik
jou zal verliezen, dan komt alles niet
goed (in feite wordt alles slecht.

maar dat kan niet, 't is helemaal
onmogelijk, toch? ja hoor, klopt:

ik ben gek op mijn liefie (zij is
life, en ik ben haar dronken droppie.

niet iedere avond maar meestal ben ik
dol op haar! haar haar is uitstekend bruin
en lief, zoals haar (maar haar is niet

alles in deze wereld, weet je? daar
is meer in deze wereld dan haar.

maar tot en met haar haar is alles
lief en ik voel me zoals een oude
snoeperd als ik naast haar loop.

een soort van heel dronken (maar
wel lief droppie vol met drop,
of een liedje dat iedereen wel kent:

lekker bezig op straat doe ik mijn
best maar zij doet alles toppie.

en ik zit er nu aan te denken
wat ik doe precies ... ja, nou,

meestal niks, meestal zit ik hier
alleen in mijn hoofd, maar samen
met haar in mijn dromen (dronken

moppen tappen/maken praatjes met
de baas doen zoals *phileine* (zij
zegt sorry maar zij meent het niet.

zij is haar eigen baas, toch? jaaaa
klopt, ik ben de baas, maar ik ben
met de verkeerde trein! liefje,

ik zit hier, op een soort van perron
en ik denk dat ik jou lief find.

mag dat? kan dat? ik hoop het wel.

ik ben dik voor mijn gappies, ja,
de echte mannetjes, de kabouters

maar al die mannetjes met
bij voorbeeld de spelletjes enzo
zijn een beetje gek volgens mij
nou

maar niet zo gek als ik op jou

SILVERPILEN

Bara de döda stiger av i Kymlinge ...

Only yesterday I thought it was a great idea;
The trees were still covered in cutesy icicles,
Dead birds lined the footpaths & I wanted to
Get on at a mystery station – or at least leap
Off into some great unknown, wings attached.
At the T Bana, I paused. On reflection, maybe
Kymlinge wasn't ready for my ghosts just yet.

Only the dead get off at Kymlinge.

A LITTLE BIRD TELLS ME

start: doo-wop is the new ter-weetie: sheet iron
rules the world of river commerce & yet maniacs

wander the streets of wood mill towns aimlessly,
listening to portable transistors, holding on until

their batteries run down to nothing. sometimes,
i wonder what it's like in Pittsburgh, or anywhere,

really, sited on the confluence of more than two
rivers ... & my mind wanders, like an aimless out-

of-work timber lugger, over prairies & old rails,
the background thick with kudzu, REM, pylon –

you know, the old Reconstruction drill. Punch-on.
Pynchon-drunk on tough love, monkey bar plays,

& obscure league ladders underlined in invisible
inks that radiate like metro lines or else snake out

along branches, lines, staccato like rim shots pale
& golden in the light of a used-car dawn, or else.

a book of poems set in Edward Hopper's universe:
'A diner'. 'An office in a small city'. 'A small city'.

'An office'. 'A small diner'. Part-time crime writer,
moonlighting as some truck-stop harmonica-player

or was that a waif? faraway sounds of water falling
strafing the dock, the cobwebbed parking meters all

saying 'nothing really matters' – but what if it does.

STARSIGNS

star swinging so slowly spookily
seven signs say someone's sleepy
saying so so softly somnambulant
shredding sorrow saxily swaying
snakes simmering so snowily sad
so smitten saying sutures shiny
someone's sax subtracts sneezes
singly singing sinew shutterbug
starsigns signs so slender star
so saccharine so slow so stunned
say something shattering slowly
sing something sad slowly small
season snowy sadly surrendering
somehow silly so silly sadness
so-so subterranean stones shock
sixteen sighs stories scarsigns

(ON THE TOMB OF) EPHREM TAMIRU

no he's not dead yet (as if he ever could
pass on or away from this winged world

Ephrem! tell us what you think re
Kalmeselesh or else just the sax

(sax slow and shark-like snarls through
an Asmara bar to hit Thomas Keneally

cold in the nose like a sweet tea
if it cared for snark or saxophone

dreams thoughtful as Hammond organ
licks kicking the Amharic dawn (was it

Amharic? what did yr words
mean on 1975 cassette, Ephrem

i feel kind of bad for the Blogger-files
downloading y'r *trax* frantically to get

th' info (titles translations set-list
y'r sound worlds unfurling slow

as Stevie Wonder's imagination (you
were Ethiopia's Stevie, always will be

what does it mean, Atawquatim?
Drums, tell me what it all means

can't go back now to my indie daze
got me Ephrem in th' mound of love

in the mouth, a super-Saharan
pre-beat jazz combo w' *smokings*

preserved in shellac or was it Amber.
i want to die in the arms of my lover

while she plays the sax on 'Track 6'
whatever it's called. & do you

accept PayPal, Ephrem? Coz i want to
breathe all y'r radio transmissions from

Eritrea back onto the next stage:
blastin' Ephrem Tamiru thru a page

COAXING THE HEART TO HEAL ITSELF

just not possible. it's not possible that
the heart could heal itself (within days

the way a novel does, metaphorically, or
the way a tree heals the wind as it sways

not likely. not in my lifetime, or yours
will we live to see the human heart sing

the way a pop star does having seen some
bright star warning her that everything

is going. to disappear some day, the way
the soundtrack does when you're homesick

or the memory of some mean thing you did
slights her, alone on a couch, face slick

with new tears. they almost manage to heal
themselves (save for a salty memory trail

that scars her face so playfully, so sad
like her mother's handwriting in the mail

that no one else can read. though it flows
like appointments you never meant to keep

the way a strange pulse rescues the pain
from itself. the way a child cries without

even knowing why that familiar face keeps
popping up, unannounced, the way FM radio

dive bombs the day, until a silence sweeps
back. although that's also impossible, now

the heart can print itself in three ways:
look at it soaking up all those cosmic rays!

AN EX-EDITOR'S LAMENT

“It’s as if I was never really here: a shadow in
a haunted house. Do I reflect my new status in
the now o-so-mundane bio note as if a part of
me has actually died? ‘Ex-editor, war wounded,
freshly deceased.’ I wear my trousers creased,
not rolled. Vale, everyone: poets, proles untold.

Never bitter, more like a sack of rolled oats:
chafed, bruised, burnt, churned through & dry
as the western slopes and plains or a chianti.
I’m as dry as the bar half an hour after your
magazine launch has commenced: a plastic cup
containing someone’s spit, half a profiterole.

Vale, all of you: poets, souls & Microsoft
Word as well, especially its tab function, yea.

Goodbye to hours of pointless formatting, days
spent waiting for a reply to an inquiry about
the kerning, or an ampersand. Do I dare delete
a space where a reader might pause? Do I what.

The precious preciousness of poets fighting
over prestige in a world where monkeys reign
& no-one gives a flying vale about villanelles.

My eyes roll backwards in my head at the idea
of pantoums; & limericks are pure, living hell.
Vale, all of you: meter, rhyme, fonts as well.

Though I would not even bother to contact me
if I were you, spare a thought for what even
the smallest offering by way of appreciation
might do for my replacement's self-esteem (&
grant me a small indulgence before I expire:
stay lame. Because when you're gone, not one

minute will the rest of us spend divining the
meaning of your amateur hobbyist's musings on
your behalf, yea, here in the wonderful boredom
of the fold, where the same old sucks churn out
stuff to pollute & mould. So vale, y'all! Poets,
proles untold. Hope you die before it gets old."

“T’ΓA 3A JYΓ” (LONGING FOR THE SOUTH)

let’s pretend i’m an eagle: okay, now, here are my wings,
& with them I shall launch myself from this obscure eyrie,
& together with my fellow—

[who? these ... yeeeeearh, with my comrade eagles!!]

i will fly back to my own beaches, my own daylight savings time,
to see the surf club at Ballina, to witness the sunset at Yamba,
& then to sleep on the beach all night so as to catch
the sunrise! W000t! and to ask myself,
knowing the answer: could Brunswick Heads ever be as miserable
as olden Europe sometimes is (that is, on the days when it rains?)

[which means most days! hi-hi!]

& then if the rhetorical answer is no, then it’s all settled:
i’ll sit and watch that sun rising until it burns my scalp,
until its death rays meet my bald crown in a victorious union,
& i’ll slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen & slap on a hat;
yes, even though I’m an eagle & have no need of such things,
I’ll pack them into a small dilly bag & attach it to my claw
right before i launch myself from my faraway eyrie &—

[hang on, didn’t i just—

ehm ...]

oh i shall replay my grand ascent from my eyrie just for kicks!
& then wait for myself on the briny shore of Lake Ainsworth,
near Lennox Head there,
where Kombie-van campers greet me with toothbrushes & grins,
& the skirts of the young women have been sewn with stars.
& why shall I re-do all of these things i have already done?
why, to remind myself of the fact that here, in the cold north,
i am surrounded by a cold and clammy dark that knows my name,

ever you look for it or find it. so let me perch, undisturbed, in
the branch of some otherwise unremarkable tree, preferably
green;

let the sun set slowly over the whole tableau like the light at
the end of a movie; & let me die there, one day,

cradling childhood in my arms.