

# The Empty Stations

Tamas Panitz

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## Contents:

1. Song I: Nout
2. Song II: "Disgusting Park" (McNair Park)
3. Song III: After Sextus Propertius #3
4. Song IV: Marcejar
5. Transformations I: Tivoli
6. Song V
7. Carmen
8. The McNair-Lowry Line
9. Transformations II
10. Gnostic Evenings
11. Song VI: for Miles
12. The Empty Stations

## Song I

Each morning I recite the spells

all-powerful grammatical exercise  
this is the dead man's book, his  
speech difficult to understand  
death difficult to understand

buried vertically under the apse  
(every book is a dead man's book)  
roving in a papyrus boat he  
mothers himself

from the East  
buried in the tree  
buried in the house beam  
raises the house around him  
at daybreak

breaking into two lands  
motions with his fern that last  
moonbeam of dream memory  
slipped away for this harder architecture  
while she walks about with his essence.

Nu becomes Nout  
the watery mass of of  
spilled by the river.  
Her walk  
divides the world

her river  
the words it takes me all day to cross.

## Song II

But I was distracted  
in the circular park its  
shit smell by a bird in  
the ring of flowers  
as if I were not ready  
or I had already passed  
through this prayer, air  
opened in me  
I breathe the shit in  
the deep said words which were  
not those I said I said  
thou art in the Sektet Boat which  
traverseth the heavens  
from the westward bench  
past the walkway to the garden,  
our secret book a holy smut  
the dead recite until they wake up  
until you look close at the word  
and see someone peeking through  
like a portrait of your dream

it isn't quite right  
the technical a philosopher's  
half-truth,

star boat traversing the arched  
goddess, sky span, mispronouncing half the  
constellations. The goddess knows—  
the woman on the other side.

By the time you see this

you will have been devoured by  
the boat as it  
    means across the heavens

begun with a bad breath  
the boat slowly pushes out  
past the flotsam the shifting signs  
you would give anything to know  
I can almost read but not quite the air clears and then I'm out of it.

### Song III

I am with a hot humid air. The earth as if a man lying on his  
back. Our foolish vigorous naming of things. What  
does the water say when the lid's on  
a genie trapped between us and heaven. A sort of rain  
between you & the next thing you see

the road between the thighs that does not  
go anywhere  
rain.

Not until we spent the day naked  
in Manhattan, sunlight from your sister's  
open windows did I realize you were healing me.

To lift the lid and let water  
let genii speak

in this wet muggy summer  
enclosure  
from which I was born.

Raining out over the rooftops  
someone says all the words  
I refused to say with you the clatter  
of hidden things the dead man's  
heart thumps on the tin roofs  
of the world  
and a violin  
wherever these things are heard  
(for I am the pianist who never  
learned to play  
hear only the music of the atmosphere)

Starboard Strauss  
    a flag catches  
the windy variation  
    time's peristaltics  
I recognize the old mechanics  
stamped on the image  
    I have known you  
girl on the Apidanus  
    my weapon in hand  
as I trod through the grassy book.

I have seen that rain before.  
Someone runs off with your name I call out but this.



## Song IV

The storm that passed without a trace  
what part of language was it  
you came in soaked & now on the  
dry ground of this 'made up' memory  
I realize it was your passport

not the wetness of the fact  
nor the light but the touch  
slanting in from the roman blinds  
complicates us.

Always moving somewhere another  
pair of our otherwise simple hands:  
a touch walked in backward on a ray of light  
to drip on the hardwood floor.

Gentle ibis your hermetic Toth  
in the face of my christian etymologies

as you take off your coat and  
make coffee taking a swig of milk  
from the container that expires today  
July 4th

    since the first instance, incident  
the ghost is there entire  
awaiting synchronicity

with the will, to touch at the right time  
with the light as it appears this transmutable  
what am I talking about:

raining sun of Occitan on the oak floor

the ibis-word in my third hand

brings coffee to my thousand mouths

still crowded with the day's words

what to say to that persistent thing it's still standing there.

## Transformations I

All gone. Left me, yet  
whatever finds my wail  
I continue to marry: you  
enter, no longer empty  
handed. A place  
                    the mystery of  
love visits. And her own  
scrupulous city I remember  
I watched her hand's  
convulsive turn the key  
of her, sleepy vertiginous  
fear of someone having seen.  
I saw that. Body lexicon.  
Book of dream words, fluid  
ground of the place so near  
we don't know where it is.  
The song changes,  
beach now or fir lined  
                    the roads lead here.

(To her.)

You must take them all,  
(they say) but we know how  
to read this bible. Stand in the center  
of town until you become every flower.  
Until her hand unfolds these pansies (pensées).

\*

Water is best to sing of  
water splashing  
all over the gold  
is song. To touch the facts  
of will. (Her will.) Back in this town  
the wild offshoots, play of her  
fingers untamed from the plant

this everywhere of muggy  
America; fruit rotting on a kitchen table  
in Brooklyn, the other side of a coin

what we spend is its currency, night bud  
you (me), stranger, touch open & let loose  
this moon  
    to roll down the stairs of this valley.

\*

Soaked in my room after the restaurant  
where I inquired after you and was told  
you had gone home  
    to shower (!?) I sat  
at the bar until they asked me what I wanted.  
“Nothing” I said and went  
to soak the other half  
back here.

I refuse the word that won't come true.  
The waitress who never came back.  
Remember when you were an Orphan  
picking your way through the foggy backroad  
and wished it was all the time a warm moist night?

The memory is where it happens.

Your absence this pale black-haired moon  
says the rain was worth it.

    Worth what?  
Something on the tip of my tongue.  
Glint of gold beneath the wash

a moon business  
of jilted lovers, one of you is collateral,  
I can only see her with one eye closed.

## Song V

Quick, while it rains  
and the train  
goes by, the message  
you come with

come with what you know.

*For I am whose word says  
a dove, a daughter  
you know where.*

I know you. Or what you mean  
I the messenger who flew  
from the ring, that circle with a man  
in it, garden of all that. From  
that green to this blue, the great flood  
of colors we could never tell apart. I flew into that  
tree with no one there to hear it.  
Swallowed in the wingbeat, alternate seed  
o crow that goes white in me

o turning of the crow.

*totum consistit  
in ignis regimine*

take off your coat, while I'm empty enough  
to hear what the trees say  
and the mirrors with nothing in them.

## Carmen

The chorus  
like a pack of Barreiros  
close off the street.

There's no moon! She lies one of those  
lies that leave only the amorous word  
to talk among the sun-paled

green and blue cars:  
a ring of stones  
in the faery world

bearing on the cross-roads.  
Intersection  
is exchange

of offerings, breaking dollars  
it's market day  
for the skyless stars

empty handed merchants  
buying with their eyes  
word-salt on night's flint teeth.

The dance is economics  
you tango  
all the corn I never had  
on a street I've never seen

just the salt and fire of it  
as the palm fronds by my open window  
swell this picture of Spain.

## The McNair-Lowry Line

1.

Facing one another:

what does the table say when you come near  
how happy are you to transcribe it.

The give and take, not resemblances, not discriminations.

Public park concrete table, sunken metal rod  
chessboard top

it's clear crystal, *I say everything, anything.*

Long diagonal adventure of my bishop,  
running down Washington Ave. City-worth  
of faces going on there, known place  
image undimmed by sight:

lay of blueprint. You know better than what's there.

A one-sided discussion in True Mind,

Vishnu sleeping in the earth: people  
crossing under the sign;

Blue awning of Lincoln Station,  
Haitians carrying roast peanuts, blood zodiac-  
food is only what it feeds.

Air, Bananas,  
food that is not food. Meat that is not meat.

Keen places straddling store-fronts  
unaware you married someone buying an ugly  
green felt chair other side of this  
ice-cream store.

Walls that are not walls.  
A white ford truck on the corner, thighbone  
plastic-tied where the grill was — voodoo-machine  
blood to power the living god, the rod, driving a car

you would never know where.

Still in the park

I eat another banana, cheaper than bread, lighter than air. o

constant city

I glide along the whole

finding my fragments:

from Lincoln Station through

Tom's Diner, dining car

hidden behind pansies, distractions, hanging flowers

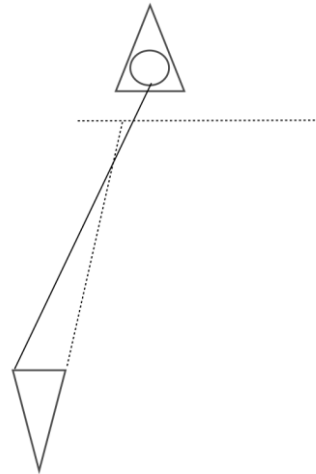
they let me in early, prepare the old

way station- then off

Washington Ave., until the left

of Lowry Triangle, a figure 8,

no bone machine could drive.





2.

Starring in my dream  
awake like some main-de-gloire,  
Hamlet-like, ghost-knife in my hand  
to kill the voodoo priestess.

Glowing thing woke up both  
hands on my cock, scepter, Sigurd  
run-through night, through  
zodiac . save the priestess.

It's the map I'm angry about  
dragging on the rest of your life  
there is no grid, taking off her shoes  
triumph of stars over the city.

\*\*\*

Incontrovertible, long subterranean geometricity still in planning. Still in  
the dirt. Worm we can't get rid of. I mean in the city plan, hard-hat, the  
measuring foot. It haunts the line of measured streets. To survive.  
Measureless, among sand and rocks, shells: what's washed up is nowhere.  
The low grumbling sea draws its fuck you across the horizon. That's all  
you can count on.

That's all. Poems say so: life's noise wrapped around our horizon note. The  
open mouth. Cave stretched under plexus. My bare foot  
in the hexameter of grass plots.  
Even if it's nonsense, my foot, the sea was there: the sound of a mouth,  
speaking itself; only this kiss could stop our incessant lying.

The mouth is a foot. I walked a hundred miles in you. The book  
I wrote on the roof of the cave

says so. Dew our salivary testament;  
proof is what soaks your shoes.  
Whatever comes. Sympathetic  
Nervous System dance with body's  
projections. My tongue was in your mouth all along.  
Chronicler of the outside limping towards you, uneven platitudes  
only you can make true. The Cattle of Helios you lead into the sun.  
Swim up the tributaries. Back through the ink.  
If I knew what I was saying it would say this.

\*\*\*

Refusing to define it. What comes against these other magics. That I do is  
enough. From this center I react, train crawling north still above ground,  
fog and rain trails, umbrella hat and rain-jacket soaked through. Rain from  
the ground up. Slowly north through the zero visibility. Arktos, Thulian  
north, pineal discussion I can't quite make out the words. Reassurance of  
babble, many particles in motion. What's important is to avoid obsession.  
Parcelling out what would be love. Just the train, slowly thrust. Glowing  
thing. Sword. Answer.

\*\*\*

Desire or repulsion. The thing you can trust. How else could you know a  
rock is the sky's greatest fear. The rock caught in your shoe. Threatening so  
much more. How else could you know about the line of sunset, as it  
retracts, an orange shawl, you have to follow, moving across all you were.  
That, more than what anybody says. Is what anybody says.

\*\*\*

To obfuscate. Represent a truth. The streets' derivation hides it. Never  
exactly clear. Where one stands in the unclarity. Whatever isn't that rock.  
To contradict yourself. Be reminded. What else is memory. Two moments  
come close. An answer inverts, a Galilean projection into the future. The  
sunset keeping pace. Moon at your heels. Thought, spinning the stars  
around it.

\*\*\*

I don't believe a word. The empty bottle of night. City forms a terrestrial-dome, street-lamps gleaming on the skyward ceiling. Lies. But there are stars, even if you can't see them, singing sky's aria. Far from this act of obsession, this war on night. Far as could be. Terrified you don't know whatever it is you do to them. Trying their best to tell you.

## Transformations II

Distant sound of Haitian rumbling far off  
right next to me. There are some things too.  
Certain dusty articles in the chinatown  
of life. Maybe no good to put in your room.

And lose the signal. We don't know until  
it happens, or doesn't. Those words  
I don't know until I say them.

Excitement of something remembered just as  
it comes present. Speak Creole without knowing it.  
Whatever language things speak, makes them

foreign enough to be things. Answering some  
question we can only divine. Daytime candles in the  
window, winking through a window in the candle of the sky.

\*\*\*

They took my voice away with all their talking.  
Sitting here I need to tell you.

Matter. The way anything is, if you can imagine a  
push against it. Alone in your apartment all the

precious stuff of your life I can't help but touch  
in my simple way, like a ghost can hope to

move air. Relative matters.

My voice still chattering with the rest of them

down the street. Here is an economy with things  
the way you've decorated a careful silence, where one

can linger, like two curtains parted to the ends of  
thought. Tzim Tzum. That life-wide silence where all our

noisy matter lives.

\*\*\*

The wreckers. Moon cursers luring night's ships in, onto the rocks. What comes to the candles in the living-room. What washes up we get to keep, I thought. 100 candles. The extravagance of plurality. I understood experience until some desire blurred it. So much so that's not even what. Not even it. That I wanted. I don't know what I wanted, but the embarrassing reminder. Fact of all I'd done to avoid it, brought me into its confidences: its clarity a well-worn path going nowhere. The single path of all I'd seen. A single light. When you close your eyes and there is no after image. As if her sad eyes lit there: the love these thousands of years.

## Gnostic Evenings

Yet it remains eternal something seen in the awareness of death. We learned to “know better” before we “learned” anything. So the rain calls in the middle of the night— as a relief, not a resolution.

I’m finally writing what I should be as a fourteen year old girl. In bed, the simplified room. Overcome by my body. It’s only me who outlives the composition. That medusa Vinteuil left, or Mahler’s Japanese ghost, in laurels, sandals, harrowing the streets until the symphony’s over. Write to the halting composition of rain.

\*\*\*

Crickets, a flood of sound: I met a musicologist on the street; this flood is the city slicker’s plague, a flood you realize *not literally*, what it means to realize anything at all.

The loss of stars of direct communication teaches us other motions: eclipse, elongation, though the stars are out of reach the world bends to these things and night is a matter of what changes from day.

\*\*\*

It’s true I’m preoccupied with rigging my guts to the sky, to get wrenched by it! An owl neglected now comes from outside, is that what you are? Shapeshifter?

If it’s hidden it’s worth something. Equal at least to origin. But I don’t know what’s there. Riding the topography of my zeal, intestines swaying in the solar wind of that black one, a glittering forest, as if infinitely cut crystal affording glances, the variegated being of the object in question.

## Song VI

I'd like to find one of those places  
lateral outpost  
of continuous life

where from the corner of your eye  
flaps into your house  
whatever comes and Here I am.

L'Chaim! It's been garbled  
at the end of the night.

How could anyone be born  
under the sign of the virgin.

How everyone is, with nothing but will  
to make sense by.

The lazy will of being everything, of being "by"  
shadow surfacing on the page  
or the stranger who kicks you  
at the dance, and demands you buy her a drink.

That angry look of Mephistopheles  
as if she'd just stormed the fifth dimension  
to match your will with her precision.  
The part and the whole.

Because she did. An answer  
to your willful thrusts at the boundary we name ours.  
Who's there?



Wound up Aleph, sign of the kick

banging at the edges of life.

It's an Aries who answers. Or the next one.

The first letter that keeps happening in all the rest.

## The Empty Stations

1.

Something already happened here. Remember? It's the first thing you think of what else could we worship. Our memories— It's circuitous to see anything. Even once. The white spider crawling upside down through the air. For as long as I focus. I look beneath the bench (why did I look!) and find one green grape directly below me. The spider is gone. —& memories that aren't even ours.

2.

Smell of soup after midnight from downstairs. Like lovers tramp across the frozen tidal river the tides a cold terror of latent pasts: a dream (but I was going to write demon) ridden primordial soup

warms open. It's summer, barley & rosemary & the green man. Who says the seasons come in order.

It only takes one letter to move from mahyeem to shahmahyeem. Water to Air. Hidden letter that supports the root. To pierce the icy past with summer potage. There is another letter (shaped like a stick), that says if you dig a whole deep in the earth you will find water there.

3.

On last night's train, what I didn't dare say. My notebook in my bag. A bull, foghorn the empty stations. Express. Long smooth stride of underground animal. Unseen bellowing of the inside world. The star passes from its subterranean tracks.

The end. "I feel a sense of closure" you said, asking if that implied a new beginning. Absolutely not I replied rejecting sparing you outright. My male vanity. And because it seemed imperative you know. But mostly this. See the same thing again and it's dead. Or you are. As if post-protean, we could keep asking the same questions.

4.

We decide life. Or recognize death (what I heard was *or* hebrew for Light). Don't recognize anything. Even a sound comes with a color. Unfamiliar beyond source; yet a rare steak, whole tomato, smell of whale oil in an open book: the inside of my eyes, familiar dew glitters across the landscape. *But there is a law of the sun which protects us.*

5.

The fact of men in boats and fish come out to meet them. Sight is the organ of apprehension, just as it is the daughters of helios on that boat, catching not fish but shoals of cloud. The eyes do nearly nothing. The rest is magic.

No need to explain as long as there's response. The wise half of desire. What the sun sees in us. From us. The street yields up its offerings flower planters sandwich bags of sliced mango or cantaloupe it's my business to collect. Even money, whatever catches the eye, for it buys bread. A man walking home with black feathers, oil-slicked green. A reality irritated from the uselessness of invention.

6.

The Hudson in sun-smoothed patches from the Cloisters' balcony. A castle of stolen doors. I could tell a limestone archway with my eyes closed. That peculiar coolness. And beneath the sunspots— perhaps you felt their meaning, the where-to of a form, just before the buzzer, your finger still on the Merode Altarpiece. I was convinced you would trip as we hurried out through the wide chapel its elevated chancel a tripwire as soon as you've seen it. Or even thought of it. Perhaps you did.

7.

I've never had more than guesswork. Aristotle says something: learning is when you cease to know. Catharsis. Representation. It's a lie. The snake continues to navigate the roots of the poet's tree. Immense tree of the stories, of all we've made up.