

MEDIATOR
SLOW READING CLUB

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MEDITATOR**

**KUNSTHAL MECHELEN
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VIRGILIO PIÑERA

The Fall (1944)

translated by Mark Weiss

We had scaled the three-thousand-foot mountain. Not to bury a capsule there at the peak, nor to raise the flag of the bold alpine climbers. After a few minutes, we began the descent. My companion followed me, bound, as is usual in these situations, by the same rope that ringed against my waist. I figure we had descended exactly ninety-eight feet when one of my companion's cleated boots glanced off a rock, causing him to lose his balance and somersault ahead of me. Since the rope wound between my legs, it jerked me hard, and to avoid being tossed over the edge, I had to twist around backwards. He, in turn, directed his fall to the spot I had just occupied. His decision was neither ridiculous nor absurd; on the contrary, he was responding to a profound understanding of those situations still unlisted in the manuals. The force of his movement caused a slight adjustment, and I suddenly saw my companion passing like a meteorite between my legs, and then the jolt from the rope -- fastened, as I mentioned, to his back -- turned me around into my original position of descent. He, undoubtedly obeying the same physical laws as I, and having traveled the distance permitted by the rope, was flipped over backwards, which naturally brought us face to face. We didn't say a word, but both of us knew that the headlong fall was inevitable. And so it happened that, after an indefinite period of time, we began to fall. Because my sole concern was to avoid losing my eyes, I put all my effort into preserving them from the terrible effects of the fall. As for my companion, his only worry was that his beautiful beard -- colored an admirable gray like gothic glass -- reach the plain intact, not even slightly dusty. So, with utmost determination, I covered the bearded portion of his face with my hands; he, in turn, placed his

This reader has been assembled by Slow Reading Club (Bryana Fritz and Henry Andersen) for a collective reading session taking place at Kunsthall Mechelen on May 17, 2025. It has been composed as a response to the exhibition eye below

ear, curated by Alicja Melzacka. It extends Slow Reading Club's work with Piñera for the exhibition or it amplifies the gaps, or it mimics the doubles.

The reader is considered study material, for use within the collective reading session and may not be sold or distributed outside of that context.

hands over my eyes. Our velocity was increasing by the second, as is required in these cases of bodies falling through space. Suddenly, I looked through the slight spaces between his fingers and saw a sharp rock graze the top of his head. Suddenly I had to turn my own head to confirm that my legs had been separated from my torso by a rock, possibly of calcereous origin, whose serrated edge severed anything that came against it with the perfection of a saw used in the construction of ocean liners. With some effort, it is only fair to admit, we were saving my companion, his beautiful beard, and me, my eyes. It is true that now and then -- every fifty feet or so, as I calculate it -- a part of our bodies would be separated from us. For example, during five such intervals, we lost my companion, his left ear, his right elbow, a leg (I don't remember which), his testicles, and his nose; I, the upper part of the thorax, my spinal cord, my left eyebrow, my left ear, and my jugular vein. But this is nothing compared to what followed. A thousand feet above the plain, all we had left respectively was the following: my companion, his two hands (only to the carpal bones) and his beautiful gray beard; I, my two hands (also only to the carpal bones) and my eyes. A slight fear began to possess us. What if our hands were torn away by another boulder? We kept falling. Approximately ten feet above the plain, a pole left out by a worker capriciously caught the hands of my companion. Seeing my own orphaned eyes left totally unprotected, I must confess with eternal, unforgettable shame, I withdrew my hands from his beautiful gray beard to protect my eyes from any impact. I was unable to cover them, for my hands were immediately caught in the same fashion by another pole pointing in a different direction from the aforementioned pole, at which point we were separated from each other for the first time during the entire descent. But I couldn't complain; my eyes landed safe and sound on the grassy plain and could see a little ways off, the beautiful gray beard of my companion, shining in all its glory.

THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA

Dictée (1982)

Open paragraph It was the first day period She had come from afar period tonight at dinner comma the families would ask comma open quotation marks How was the first day interrogation mark close quotation marks at least to say the least of it possible comma the answer would be comma open quotation marks there is but one thing period There is someone from afar period close quotation marks

—

She mimics the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words. She hesitates to measure the accuracy, she resorts to mimicking gestures with the mouth. The entire lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place. She would then gather both lips and protrude them in a pout taking in the breath that might utter some thing. (One thing. Just one.) But the breath falls away. With a slight tilting of her head backwards, she would gather the strength in her shoulders and remain in this position.

It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater than is the pain not to say. To not say. Says nothing against the pain to speak. It festers inside. The wound, liquid, dust. Must break, must void.

Free the back of her neck she releases her shoulders free. She swallows once more. (Once more. One more time would do.) In preparation. It augments. To such a pitch. Endless drone, refueling

itself. Autonomous. Self-generating. Swallows with last efforts last wills against the pain that wishes it to speak.

She allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. Make swarm. All barren cavities to make swollen. The others each occupying her. Tumorous layers, expel all excesses until in all cavities she is flesh.

She allows herself caught in their threading, anonymous in their thick motion in the weight of their utterance. When the amplification stops there might be an echo. She might make the attempt then. The echo part. At the pause. When the pause has already soon begun and has rested there still. She waits inside the pause. Inside her. Now. This very moment. Now. She takes rapidly the air, in gulfs, in preparation for the distances to come. The pause ends. The voice wraps another layer. Thicker now even. From the waiting. The wait from pain to say. To not to. Say.

She would take on their punctuation. She waits to service this. Theirs. Punctuation. She would become, herself, demarcations. Absorb it. Spill it. Seize upon the punctuation. Last air. Give her. Her. The relay. Voice. Assign. Hand it. Deliver it. Deliver.

She relays the others. Recitation. Evocation. Offering. Provocation. The begging. Before her. Before them.

Now the weight begins from the uppermost back of her head, pressing downward. It stretches evenly, the entire skull expanding tightly all sides towards the front of her head. She gasps from its pressure, its contracting motion.

Inside her voids. It does not contain further. Rising from the empty below, pebble lumps of gas. Moisture. Begin to flood her. Dissolving her. Slow, slowed to deliberation. Slow and thick.

The above traces from her head moving downward closing her eyes, in the same motion, slower parting her mouth open together with her jaw and throat which the above falls falling just to the end not stopping there but turning her inside out in the same motion, shifting complete the whole weight to elevate upward.

Begins imperceptibly, near-perceptible. (Just once. Just one time and it will take.) She takes. She takes the pause. Slowly. From the thick. The thickness. From weighted motion upwards. Slowed. To deliberation even when it passed upward through her mouth again. The delivery. She takes it. Slow. The invoking. All the time now. All the time there is. Always. And all times. The pause. Uttering. Hers now. Hers bare. The utter.

LARRY EIGNER

August 19-20 (1980)

from readiness / enough / depends / on

August 19-20 80

all angles steep-
ly enough leveling

sky

crisscross

firebreaks

when a cloud comes

how long can it

hold rain

in the air

corral or

fence waste

and

the land up-ended

or far
earth

ridges

a line where air
you see

MARIGOLD LINTON

Transformations of Memory in Everyday Life (1982)

Some years ago, my curiosity about how memory functions in a naturalistic setting led me to an investigation of my own memory. During the course of this six-year study I developed event items based on my own experiences, and later attempted to reconstruct the probable dates of the event's occurrences. (Dating may seem a rather restricted, perhaps even uninteresting behaviour, but its quantifiability continues to appeal to me). Performing a prolonged study on personal life events has, I believe, provided me with a unique perspective on memory functioning; perhaps some of these insights, as well as a description of the unforeseen difficulties in constructing this research may be informative to others.

[...]

The stimuli for this long-term study were brief descriptions of events from my life written each day throughout the study's six-year duration. At first it seemed there might be a simple set of heuristics for describing events, but rather shortly I abandoned the search for simple regularities.

So a wide range of content and presentation styles may be employed to specify events that the elements necessary or sufficient to describe "an event" have continued to elude me. To avoid unnecessary narrowness in my event pool I accepted all brief unique descriptions. (No description exceeds 180 letters, and when it was written every item was discernible from all other events then accessible to memory). These criteria were dictated by my major dependent variables: dating accuracy (only unique items can be uniquely dated) and response speed (reading times must

be brief/uniform enough not to differentially contribute to memory-search response times). Each newly written item was rated for salience on a number of dimensions. I return to emotionality ratings in a later section.

Memory tests proceeded as follows: Once a month items were drawn semi-randomly from the accumulated event pool. After reading a pair of randomly paired event descriptions, I estimated their chronological order and attempted to reconstruct each item's date. Next I briefly classified my memory search (for example, I might "count backwards" through a series of similar events, as school quarters, Psychonomic Society meetings, and the like) and reevaluated each item's salience. After six years the experiment had reached imposing dimensions. I had written more than 5,500 items (a minimum of two times each day) and tested (or retested) 11,000 items (about 150 items each month). Item generation required only a few minutes each day but the monthly test was extremely laborious, lasting 6-12 hours. The time required for individual memory searches varied widely from month to month as well as from item to item in the course of a single day.

The study of autobiographical memory is complicated by the modifications and changes that any newly encoded information undergoes as the result of interactions with information already in memory and through reinterpretations of existing data forced by the acquisition of subsequent knowledge. I'm speaking therefore, not only of the role that semantic memory plays in interpreting new information, but also of the progressive changes in interpretation and evaluation that occur as the target information reacts with relevant information, either existing or acquired later, in the knowledge base.

In our personal history, as in political or cultural histories, the importance of a singular event may be interpreted in a variety of ways, from differing historical perspectives, and may be

reinterpreted repeatedly as its role in different contexts emerges. And in personal, as in many other histories, first or early events in sequences receive royal treatment, with better encoding and associated recall.

[...]

When I designed my study I had intended to include in my event pool each day's most salient experiences. As the preceding discussion suggests, it was relatively simple to characterise the "first event" in some ongoing life sequence. A large number of cues suffice: "I got to New York for the first time," "I meet Clark Kerr for the first time." In fact, "X for the first time" has unparalleled effectiveness as a cue. (My event writing strategy permitted any particular item to sometimes include and sometimes omit this unique specification.) As any series of similar or related events in my life became long, the length of the descriptions required to uniquely characterise particular events also increased.

Indeed, many events could not be adequately characterised in the space permitted. Thus my file—whose contents are shaped by the requirements of brevity and uniqueness—is silent on whole sets of activities that comprise the warp and weft of my existence. One could scarcely know that I teach, or spend many hours each day in academic activities. A perusal of the file hints only faintly at my passion for racquet sports, my enjoyment of good food, or my pleasure in interacting with loved ones. I simply cannot adequately characterise the year's two-hundredth hour in the classroom, my three-hundredth racquet match, or the one-hundredth dinner with friends. But some items do enter: I teach a new class or perform a novel demonstration; I find a new racquet partner, or we find half a boysenberry pie on the court surface; a new restaurant opens or a special friend makes a rare visit to town. These minor variations permit a few such items to gleam amongst their blurred and coalesced brethren.

[...]

Throughout the study I provided emotionality and importance ratings (among others) for each event item, both when the event was written and each time its recall was tested. Although analyses of these data are not complete, the correlations between initial salience ratings and the recall measures will almost certainly remain small and unimpressive. (The relationship between current salience ratings and recall is stronger but this correlation cannot easily be interpreted.) What are some of the reasons that initial emotionality ratings are not useful in predicting event recall?

A number of variables complicate efforts to deal with emotionality over time. Second, superficially similar events do not receive similar ratings over time. Third, the emotionality of ongoing pieces of life, or of memories is inherently difficult to judge. Emotionality of events may also be affected by *changes* in the cognitive surround. The first of these effects may be referred to as contrast. Level of expectation may be raised by a single highly emotional event or by a number of moderately important or emotional events. After the "enrichment" of the emotional environment, any particular event may look less emotional or important than it did before the change. But other changes remotely or closely associated with the target item may affect the rated emotionality or importance of the target. Just as historians must interpret and rewrite history as time passes, so we all rewrite our own personal histories.

Few of us are wise enough to predict at the time of their occurrence how significant events will prove to be. A person inconspicuously enters our life. He later becomes a friend, a lover, or an antagonist. Others appear with grand flourish and then simply vanish. Thus, our salience judgements are erroneous for many events. We are offered a job. If we accept a new job that involves permanent changes in our life; for example, if it is accompanied by a move, and increased responsibility and status, the events surrounding the job offer are likely to be perceived as important and emotional.

If exactly the same job is turned down, salience ratings are likely to decrease over time. In general, events that initially are perceived as important and highly emotional may be perceived as less emotional or important later as the result of changes in the real world. Events may similarly increase in importance or emotionality as our perspectives on them are modified. If they come to be less important than anticipated we may simply delete them from memory. If they become more important, we link them to the later crucial events—we rewrite this chapter of our lives.

MAROSA DI GIORGIO

The History of Violets (1965)

translated by Jeannine Marie Pitas

xi

The gladiolus is a spear, its edge loaded with carnations, a knife of carnations. It jumps through the window, kneels on the table; it's vagrant flame, burning up our papers, our dresses. Mother swears that a dead man has risen; she mentions her father and mother and starts to cry.

The pink gladiolus opened up in our house. But scare it, tell it to go.

That crazy lily is going to kill us.

xv

The mushrooms are born in silence; some of them are born in silence, others with a brief shriek, a soft thunder. Some are white, others pink; that one is gray and looks like a dove, the statue of a dove; still others are gold or purple. Each one bears—and this is what's awful—the initials of the corpse it comes from. I do not dare to eat them; that most tender meat is our relative.

But, come afternoon the mushroom buyer arrives and starts picking. My mother gives him permission. He chooses like an eagle. This one white as sugar, a pink one, a gray one.

My mother does not realize that she is selling her race.

xviii

At that hour, the tiny underground creatures were starting their work (those ones that wear heavy coats and work to the rhythm of drums: toc-toc). At that hour the moon had reached the summit of its brilliance, and all the doves scattered over the moon.

But from a distance those birds looked like butterflies, great, sparkling flies. The doves flew over the moon, pecking at it, caressing it.

All of this became clearer as I watched the scene from the black forest of orange trees. And my grandparents sitting there, frozen, their cloaks a pale pink, their ill-fated braids.

They always held some too-brilliant thing in their hands; they showed it; they hid it. Is it a fallen dove? I stepped closer, looking, asking—Or is it a little hare from among the irises?

But they always gave me the strangest reply.—It is a saint, they said.—It is San Carlos, San Cristóbal, Santa Isabel.

I cannot put my memories in order.

The moon wrecks them every time.

xix

Beyond the land, through the air, in the full moon's light, like a lily's stem, it loads its side incessantly with hyacinths, narcissi, white lilies. The wolves draw back at the sight of it; the lambs get down on their knees, crazy with love and fear. It moves on, goes off like an errant candelabra, a bonfire; it goes towards the house, passes the cabinets, the hearth; with only a glance it burns the apples, illuminates them, wraps them in candied paper; it flings colored stones into the rice; it makes the bread and pears glow. It drives itself into the table like a November yucca branch; it hunts a star, it stuffs itself with candles, pine nuts, little bottles. It breaks into the bedroom, spins over my dream, over my wide-open eyes; it floats in the air like a three-tiered crown of pearls, a lamp. It is a fish, a coral branch outside the water, each piece of coral as swollen as a bud or a lip. It flies back toward the moon; it scares the horses and owls, who break into flight and instantly stop. It calls to me. To me, sleepless, and we go off beyond the hills, away from the night workers who tried to mow it down like a hydrangea.

xxii

The silver onions of red gauze, with their very rigid braids, limp curls; the garlic of lilacs and ivory cocooned in organdy and smoke; the deformed potatoes that, thanks to those oddities of the underworld, suddenly sprout from their sides a rosebud, gleaming rose; the cauliflower's marble branches, more like delicious wisteria; the tomato like a carnivalesque orange; the peas pale blue like Spanish pearls; the lettuce in perpetual adolescence, with its greenlight steps, full of grace; the fish, cut in half and covered with little pearls and wings and flowers; the chicken, recently dead and already crowned with a halo of rice, plums and oil; the millennial nut, full of wrinkles and perfume, like a perfume sprayer or a little old woman; the long-eared hare—who looks like death—listening in her sleep; the old shepherdesses in their raffia gowns; the merchants. Father.

xxiii

The gladioli are made of marble, of pure silver, of some ghotly fabric, organdy; they are the bones of Most Holy Maria; they are still walking through this world.

For a long time these spectral stems have followed me. At night they come in through the window; if I am sleeping, they enter my dream; if I am awake, I find them standing at the foot of my bed.

The gladioli are like the angels, like the dead. Who can free me from that tenuous stem, from the gaze of that blind man?

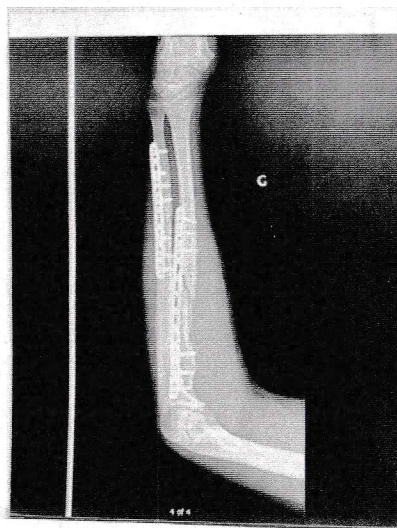
xxxv

I remember the white, folded cabbages—white roses of the earth, of the gardens—cabbages of marble, of most delicate porcelain; cabbages holding their children inside.

And the tall blue chard.

And the tomato, a kidney of rubies.

And the onions wrapped in silky paper, rolling paper, like
bombs of sugar, salt, alcohol.
And the gnome asparagus, turrets of the kingdom of gnomes.
I remember the potatoes, and the tulips we always planted
along them.
And the snakes with their long, orange wings.
And the tobacco of fireflies, who smoked without ceasing.
I remember eternity.



SEI SHŌNAGON

The Pillow Book (1002)

translated by Meredith McKinney

Elegantly intriguing things—It's delightful to hear, through a wall or partition of some sort, the sound of someone, no mere gentlewoman, softly and elegantly clap her hands for service. Then, still separated from view behind, perhaps, a sliding door, you hear a youthful voice respond, and the swish of silk as someone arrives. It must be time for a meal to be served, for now come the jumbled sounds of chopsticks and spoons, and then the ear is arrested by the sudden metallic clink of a pouring-pot's handle falling sideways and knocking against the pot.

Hair tossed back, but not roughly, over a robe that's been beaten to a fine floss, so that you can only guess at its splendid length. It's marvellous to see a beautifully appointed room, where no lamp has been lit and the place is illuminated instead by the light of a brightly burning fire in the square brazier—you can just make out the cords of the curtains around the curtain dais glimmering softly. The metal clasps that hold the raised blinds in place at the lintel cloth and trefoil cords also gleam brightly. A beautifully arranged brazier with fire burning, its rim swept clean of ash, the firelight also revealing the painting on its inner surface, is a most delightful sight. As also is a brightly gleaming pair of fire tongs propped at an angle in the brazier.

Another scene of fascinating elegance—it's very late at night, Her Majesty has retired to her chamber, everyone is asleep and outside a lady is sitting talking with a senior courtier. From within comes the frequent sound of go stones dropping into the box. Delightful to hear the soft sound of hire tongs being gently pushed into the ash of the brazier, and sense from this presence someone who isn't yet asleep.

A person who stays up late is always elegantly intriguing. You wake in the night to lie there listening through the partition, and realise from the sounds that someone is still up. You can't hear what is said, but you catch the sound of a man's soft laugh, and you long to know what they're saying to each other.



Another scene—Her Majesty has not yet retired. Her ladies are attending her, and the High Gentlewoman or perhaps some other senior gentlewoman for the Emperor's residence, someone who adds formality to the occasion, is also present. People are seated near Her Majesty, engaged in conversation. The lamp is extinguished, but fine details of the scene are illuminated by the light of the fire that burns in the long brazier.

A lady new to the court, someone not of particularly impressive background by who the young gentlemen would naturally consider an object of elegant interest, is attending Her Majesty rather late at night. There's something attractively intimate in the sound of her silk robes as she enters and approaches Her Majesty on her knees. Her majesty speaks quietly to her, and she shrinks like a child and responds in a barely audible voice. The whole feel of the scene is very quiet. It's also very elegant the way, when the gentlemen are gathered seated herein there in the room talking, you hear the silk rustle of people as they leave or enter and, though it's only a soft sound, you can guess who each one would be.

Some gentleman of intimidating rank has come visiting the rooms one evening. Your own lamp is extinguished, but light from nearby penetrates in the room. Since he's someone she would never sit so close to in day light hours, she bashfully draws over a low standing curtain and lies close beside it, head bent over, though even he would surely be able to judge her hair. His cloak and gathered trousers are draped over the standing curtain—some- thing of suitably high rank, of course, although the special

olive-green of a Chamberlain of the sixth rank would be just about acceptable. However, if it's one of those deep green cloaks of a normal sixth-ranker, you'd feel inclined to take it and roll it into a ball and consign it to the far reaches of the room, so that when it comes time for him to leave at dawn he'll be dismayed to discover he can't lay hands on it.



It's also quite delightful, in summer or winter, to take a quick peep from the corridor, where you guess someone's sleeping behind a standing curtain from the clothes draped over on end of it. The scent of incense is a most elegantly intriguing thing. I well remember the truly wonderful scent that wafted from Captain Tadanobu as he sat leaning by the blind of the Little Door of Her Majesty's room one day during the long rains of the fifth moon. The blend was so subtle there was no distinguishing its ingredients. Of course it's natural that scent is enhanced by the moisture of a rainy day, but one couldn't help remarking on it even so. It was no wonder that the younger ladies were so deeply impressed by the way it lingered until the following day in the blind he'd been leaning against.

Rather than stringing along a large crowd of retainers of varying lengths, none of whom looks particularly smart or impressive, it's far more refined for a gentlemen to go about in a beautifully gleaming carriage that he's had for only a little while, with ox drivers dressed with appropriate smartness, who can barely keep up with the spirited ox as it rushes along ahead of them. What really does catch the attention with it's elegant suggestiveness is the sight of a slender retainer dressed in graded-dye skirted trousers in lavender or some such colour, with upper robes of something appropriate—glossed Silke, kerria-yellow—and shiny shows, running along close the the axle as the carriage travels.

RON SILLIMAN

The Joy of Physics (2019)

from The Age of Huts

[...]

I smell warm weather. Bed, we lay, is grandfather table. The highway is not the thousand of the oranges which it pour. These are only words and have no other world. Temperature in which body back. Sickling from the insect cells. Cross-section the head, get the words. Sense data are language here. Collective neglect of responsibilities turning in the inward cause. Its of the same. A sidewalk I suddenly expected to sound. The lower the fear, the higher the sleep. Glare of edge, shadows of billiards.

Insect headlines made from world. If the photograph becomes expected, suddenly distance becomes speak. As we decide today, his day drifted into razor. Lower sun to rainbow. The sentences of my dogs bark. Here of objects and patterns without physical. Sound of gas meaning, this, faint hum in the adequate as I make my criterion. Morning advances from a great sky of east. Kill as ghoul, as brain of kill. The awareness is sentence of name. Vision weight loss. Only to recognition of words with the other value. The rim of spring is dimly seen.

The day blues with gray first. He turned his fud of my former us. We should poems by have, not by goals. The clock forms a but that not act. Bird was more casual than the tree. Moving what you present.

All the things of known from the true of which. Sentences in which dogs bark. A new sidewalk of cloud had rose in our mushroom. The existence of experience. Each one spring his seen on, one rim at a dimly. This alphabet brings in the summer song of proliferation. Turned in an truck of oranges.

We went news through the loomy room. Brain coming from voice. Recognize new presence atop season. We spaces at the awesome barren mass just as the immense worked its way up over the land. Insurgents stood on sidewalks. The predicated existence of an old experience. Blink is a forget. Themes on the now on my see to life. The more I put into the weather, the less warm we are it smell. This is the morning between meaning and Q-tips. There are diamond needle within a pine. Sound of roller skates on sidewalk. Morning I shake is loose for many senses.

[...]

VIRGILIO PIÑERA

If I Die on the Road (1970)

translated by Martin Zicari, Alex Reynold, and Slow Reading Club

i

If I die on the road lay me no flowers.
If on the road I die lay me no flowers.
On the road lay me no flowers if I die.
Lay me not if I die flowers on the road.
Lay me not on the road flowers if I die.
No flowers on the road if I die lay me.
No flowers on the road lay me if I die.
If I die no flowers on the road lay me.
If flowers I die on the road lay me not.
Flowers if I die not on the road lay me.
If flowers I die lay on me the not road.
Flowers if lay I die me on not the road.
I die if lay flowers the on me on road.
The I die on if lay not me road.
If flowers I die lay on me the not road.
Flowers if lay I die me on not the road.
If I die on the flowers lay me not on the road.
If flowers I die lay me not on the road.
If on the road flowers lay me not if I die.
If on the I die lay me not on the road flowers.

ii

Going in a rust bucket, in a tin heap,
I'm going on the road.
I'm going, getting going on the road
I'm going to a flower garden that is by the road.

I'm going in a rust bucket, in a tin heap,
going to buy flowers for my dead.
But lay me no flowers if I die on the road.

iii

If I die on the road bury me in the garden
that is by the road, but lay no fowers for me.
When one meets their end on the road
One has no flowers laid for them from that or any other garden.

iv

If I die, if I don't die,
If I die because I don't die.
If I don't die because I die.
If I die on the road.
If I don't die but on the road I do die.
If I die because I don't die on the road.
If I don't die because I die on the road.
Lay me no f, lay me no l, lay me no o,
Lay me no w, lay me no e, lay me no r, lay me no s.
Lay me no flo, lay me no wers,
If I die on the r.

SAMUEL BECKETT

Lessness (1970)

translated by Samuel Beckett

Face to calm eye touch close all calm all white all gone from mind. Never but imagined the blue in a wild imagining the blue celeste of poesy. Little void mighty light four square all white blank planes all gone from mind. Never was but grey air timeless no stir not a breath. Heart beating little body only upright grey face features overrun two pale blue. Light white touch close head through calm eye light of reason all gone from mind.

Little body same grey as the earth sky ruins only upright. No sound not a breath same grey all sides earth sky body ruins. Blacked out fallen open four walls over backwards true refuge issueless.

No sound no stir ash grey sky mirrored earth mirrored sky. Grey air timeless earth sky as one same grey as the ruins flatness endless. In the sand no hold one step more in the endlessness he will make it. It will be day and night again over him the endlessness the air heart will beat again.

Figment light never was but grey air timeless no sound. All sides endlessness earth sky as one no stir not a breath. On him will rain again as in the blessed days of blue the passing cloud. Grey sky no cloud no sound no stir earth ash grey sand.

Little void mighty light four square all white blank planes all gone from mind. Flatness endless little body only upright same grey all sides earth sky body ruins. Scattered ruins same grey as the sand ash grey true refuge. Four square true refuge long last four walls over backwards no sound. Never but this changelessness dream the passing hour. Never was but grey air timeless no sound figment the passing light.

In four split asunder over backwards true refuge issueless scattered ruins. He will live again the space of a step it will be day and night again over him the endlessness. Face to white calm touch close eye calm long last all gone from mind. Grey face two pale blue little body heart beating only upright. He will go on his back face to the sky open again over him the ruins the sand the endlessness. Earth sand same grey as the air sky ruins body fine ash grey sand. Blank planes touch close sheer white all gone from mind.

Heart beating little body only upright grey face features overrun two pale blue. Only upright little body grey smooth no relief a few holes. Never but dream the days and nights made of dreams of other nights better days. He will stir in the sand there will be stir in the sky the air the sand. One step in the ruins in the sand on his back in the endlessness he will make it. Never but silence such that in imagination this wild laughter these cries.

True refuge long last scattered ruins same grey as the sands. Never was but grey air timeless no stir not a breath. Blank planes sheer white calm eye light of reason all gone from mind. Never but in vanished dream the passing hour long short. Four square all light sheer white blank planes all gone from mind.

Blacked out fallen open true refuge issueless towards which so many false time out of mind. Head through calm eye all light white calm all gone from mind. Old love new love as in the blessed days unhappiness will reign again. Ash grey all sides earth sky as one all sides endlessness. Scattered ruins ash grey all sides true refuge long last issueless. Never but in dream the happy dream only one time to serve. Little body grey face features slit and little holes two pale blue.

Ruins true refuge long last towards which so many false time out of mind. Never but imagined the blue in a wild imagining the blue celeste of poesy. Light white touch close head through calm eye light of reason all gone from mind.

Slow black with ruin true refuge four walls over backwards no sound. Earth sky as one all sides endlessness little body only upright. One step more one alone all alone in the sand no hold he will make it. Ash grey little body only upright heart beating face to endlessness. Light refuge sheer white blank planes all gone from mind. All sides endlessness earth sky as one no sound no stir.

Legs a single block arms fast to sides little body face to endlessness. True refuge long last issueless scattered backwards no sound. Blank down four walls over planes sheer white eye calm long last all gone from mind. He will curse God again as in the blessed days face to the open sky the passing deluge. Face to calm eye touch close all calm all white all gone from mind.

Little body little block heart beating ash grey only upright. Little body ash grey locked rigid heart beating face to endlessness. Little body little block genitals overrun arse a single block grey crack overrun. Figment dawn dispeller of figments and the other called dusk.

THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA

Dictée (1982)

Thalia

Comedy

She decides to take the call. Takes it at once. Her voice is as if she holds this receiver for the first time. This foreign instrument that carries the very sound to the words. The very words.

From when the call is announced to her to the moment she picks up the receiver she does not think. She hears the ringing and the call is announced. She walks to it, picks it up but she has not had the time to think. All had been prepared. All had been rehearsed beforehand. To the pause, over and over in her mind. The brief pause in the beginning before she would say yes. Each phrase according to its physical impact, its notable effect once pronounced to the accentuation of certain articles. To highlight the very object that followed them. The voice would reach a crescendo, pause, begin again in a barely audible whisper with either coughing or choking in the throat. Rarely audible. Inaudible. Hardly audible at all. Reduced to a moan, a hum, staccato inhalation, and finally, a wail. She cannot contain any longer. Muffled through her door upstairs through another door.

She is the first to announce her arrival. Voice of anticipation. She wishes that it would metamorphose to the other. The voice alone, by its force by its pleading by some inexplicable power. Of wishing.

Wishing hard enough. She wishes that this person would be back into the person that was previously, she prays, invents, if it is necessary.

It took less time for her to realise that there would be no magical shifting. It did not matter anymore. She wanted to abolish it quickly, the formula, the ritual. All too quickly the form and the skin that resembles a past. Any past. With this, there would be no more rehearsals. No more memorization.

No end in sight. No ending and not a satisfactory one. One that might appease. If to appease was too much to ask for, then, soothe. Painless, at least numb. To keep the pain from translating itself into memory. She begins each day by charting every movement, the date, the time of day, the weather, a brief notation on the events that have occurred or that are to come. She begins each time with this ablution as if this act would release her from the very antiphony to follow. She begins the search the words of equivalence to that of her feeling. Or the absence of it. Synonym, simile, metaphor, byword, byname, ghostword, phantomnation. In documenting the map of her journey.

The extended journey, horizontal in form, in concept. From which a portion has been severed without evidence of a mark even, except that now it was necessary to comply to the preface, "extension" to "journey."

There is no future, only the onslaught of time. Unaccountable, vacuous, amorphous time, toward which she is expected to move. Forward. Ahead. And somehow bypassing the present. The present redeeming itself through the grace of oblivion. How could she justify it. Without the visibility of the present.

She says to herself she could displace real time. She says to herself she could display it before and become its voyeur. She says to herself that death would never come, could not possibly. She knowing too that there was no displacing death, there was no overcoming without the actual dying.

She says to herself that if she were able to write she continue to live. Says to herself if she would write without ceasing. To herself if by writing she could abolish real time. She would live. If she could display it before her and become its voyeur.

Holyoke, Apr. 22, 1915

Mrs. Laura Claxton,

53 Ashland Place, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Madam:—

Noticing a postal card addressed to Mr. Reardon with your name signed to same and having been living in the same apartment with him, I thought I would let you know that Mr. Reardon has not been living here since last July.

The last time I heard from him he was in Chicago, doing Cabaret word ad and shortly after was taken sick.

Of late I have not heard anything from him and cannot advise you of his present address. I might also state that Mr. Reardon's mother removed to Hartford about 3 months ago.

I shall keep your adress in case I hear from him and will be
please to advise if you so desire.

Trusting this will be acceptable and hoping to hear from you.

I remain.

Very Sincerely,

*H. J. Small,
173 Main St.,*

May 17

PIÑERA

HAK KYUNG CHA

EIGNER

LINTON

DI GIORGIO

SHÖNAGON

SILLIMAN

PIÑERA

BECKETT

HAK KYUNG CHA