



Seyhmus Dagtekin

translated from the French by Donald Winkler



Where the fire is freed of names

No one answers me, you know it.
I grow in no one's head, you also know it.
I cannot even be freshness in the fire that burns us all, you know it.
What I say from my hill will alter me some on your hill, you also know it.
What I lob from my hill will bar you in on your hill, I know it.
Our cries rise in step with the obliviousness we share, we know it too.
Knowledge is of no help to us.
We know it.

Without our grasping what thread will unspool the rest of what we say.

I gaze with my eyes that see nothing of what stares me back and sees me not



I gaze at what loses me in its noise
I bore the eye
to fill it
with what I cannot see

to become trunk, become stone
and the fly that skims me
the same way it skims the trunk and the stone
the same way it sets down onto me
so you can live the intimacy of the fly
a little speech, a little thirst
in praise of the arcing water that spells them out

I know that the ant is the same shade as the earth I ingest
even if I can fill my belly with wild strawberries
shoots of firs
sniff out some remains
glimpse the tops of some trees
away from pennants and eyes
but the fly knows the spider is stalking it
that its feet are entrapped
it knows that its wings can close down
they know their pursuit can end in my mouth
each then bears down on me with its weapons

each wants to distance me from my own
so that my life
may
lengthen
theirs



As soon as Jacques took out his teeth, we saw the old toothless carnivore that had become his earth, begging every cow for her dung before she vanished into the vast quarry.

You will not kill he said to me
You will bury what you killed in the bowl of your feet he told me

You will coif a hill with your remains he told me
So they may feed your descendants' earth
And all was written on your sides
To form the chain of our subjection
Far from any abundance you might have been
Your skull's summit
The sum of my words
Like so many chains

I close my eyes

To open them no more
But I don't know it
When I know it, yours are already closed
I have no more mirror
To cross

My Home at War (excerpt)

One by one I tear off your fingers, I burn you hair
One by one, I prick your skin, I put out your eyes
But you persist
In what continues to be said in me
As if to say



Each is the depository of his life
I am
What is left
Of each one's death

Once more, you said cloud
And new flesh took flight
Over your words
With nothing being new in you
With nothing renewing itself
And the flesh, leadened by your words
Began to fall
Like flakes onto the page
Flakes of snow. Flakes of rage.
And it was
The word's despair

Soon my father will hear no more
Soon he will be no more what I heard of him
Soon I will have stopped hearing what he was
To become
A future in suspension
But what will I do with the mouths, with the noses I fill with words
Without knowing how to free myself
From this aftertaste of languages.

That, is nothing
That, is a cherry on the head of this good-for-nothing
That, I will not say. I will not touch it
Once, I came out of a pencil
And the pencil was happy
I could make myself very pointed
And what I wrote on an eraser

I could erase with another



I could arrange my words in a staircase
to touch the snow on your head
I didn't have to tell anybody

not even W who made it a point of honour
not to allow himself to write
But I found him so many forms that it made him dizzy
I forgot the dot on the I on purpose to perch there
and eye people who passed nearby
even if I learned nothing
of what you will later be
but no matter, I will carry on
so that every word might see itself
in the mirror
on the other side
and even if I'm never sure
that the mirror might not become
a trap
and bolt us in
on each side

Seyhmus Dagtekin was born in 1964 in Harun, a village in the Kurdistan mountains. After studying to become a journalist in Ankara, he arrived in Paris in 1987 and still lives there. He is the author of ten collections of poems, among which *Elégies pour ma mère*, Prix Benjamin Fondane 2015, *Juste un pont sans feu*, Prix Mallarmé 2007 and Prix Théophile Gautier de l'Académie Française 2008, *La Langue mordue*, *Les chemins du nocturne* (published by Castor Astral) as well as a novel, *A la source, la nuit* (published by Robert Laffont), special mention of the Prix des Cinq Continents de la Francophonie. His new book, *A l'Ouest des ombres*, was published in 2016 by Castor Astral.

His texts have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. *Phoenix* and *Décharge* have just published dossiers about his poetry.

A la source, la nuit, *Juste un pont sans feu* (both out of print) and *Sortir de l'abîme, manifeste* have simultaneously been republished by Castor Astral.

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