

**Some Complicity:
Poems & Translations**

H a r r y T h o m a s

Un-Gyve *Press*

Of Country I Know

for David Ferry

Above the lower tree-line in the desert
northeast of San Diego, where I'm from,
in land mapped out abruptly by the sun,
you'll find a spreading growth of piñon pine,
juniper, branching nearly to the ground,
lilac and sage, and scattering white pines.
Even in the driest months of summer
(in some years summer lasts through late November)
where there are seeds and insects there will be birds
and small, ground-dwelling, furtive creatures too.
Hummingbirds nest in the cactus scrub;
woodpeckers bore homes in the crazy yuccas;
meadowlarks shelter in the slender reeds;
lizards slip in and out of rock crevices,
panting and scurrying on the hot sands;
coyotes prowl all night for a square meal.

Everywhere life goes on against the odds.
You stand in the middle of a riverbed
the wind has driven down since there was wind
and like as not, three feet below the surface,
rimmed with a crust of alkaline deposits,
or where there's mesquite or a clump of bunch grass,
there's water left from last year's winter rains.

Admission

The turnstile *was* there to the left, then right,
Then straight ahead. I groped inside my pocket
For money for a ticket, but the Ticket
Booth suddenly was shuttered for the night.

I thought of Harrison and his H clocks,
The problem seemingly insoluble
Of sailing safely anywhere at all,
The seamen dreaming anxiously of docks.

To Himself

Giacomo Leopardi

Now, worn-out heart,
you'll rest for good, the last deception dead
that I believed was deathless. Dead.
I'm sure
not just the hope, but the desire
for sweet illusions is all gone.
So rest for good.
You've had enough excitement. Nothing's worth
all that you've suffered, nothing's good enough
on the whole earth.
This life is bitter, tedious,
and never any better. The world's shit.
So take your rest.
The one thing that's in store for us
is death. Show your contempt for it
and nature's brutal power that,
though hidden, governs everything—
the infinite vanity of everything.

In the Smoke

Eugenio Montale

How many times I waited for you at the station
in the cold, the fog. I'd stroll up and down,
coughing, buying unspeakable newspapers,
smoking the Giubas later banned by that fool
the Minister of Tobacco.

Sometimes the wrong train, or one added late
or out of service. I'd inspect
the baggage cars, certain that I'd see
your bags and, behind them, you.
Then finally you appeared. It's a memory
among so many others, and it haunts my dreams.