

Arrow in Translation

I don't speak another language
or have anything to tell you
in any tongue not my own,
I'm not on a small road
in a foreign country,
in a wood I don't recognize
the glossolalia of what,
a thousand birds betrayed
by their song strangled
in a thicket,
and yet I'm often traveling,
pulled by the roots,
caught in a flutter,
or as I was about to say,
quivering.

Alternate Ending

maybe the money came from your mouth
incidentally

emerging from the wreck of your life
a treasure

manifested like pirate ships veering
asynchronously

the way birds fall in the movies
from a demagnetized sky

what a nest egg
blooming in your palms

imagine the sea change
loot burning in your chest

the prows of your armada
breaking the banks

divesting inland
letting loose for the night

until hard up in a clinch and no knife
to cut the seizing

your boats purchased and hauling
for another coast

a parade of flocked hands pecks out
the coins from your open eyes

Soldiers

Go to the cemetery
see if you are there

if your name is etched
on the stone over you

root into the earth
it may be hard

if you don't recall
a benediction

find the fletcher
who made the arrow

bid him feather another
the archer aim truer

tell them your heart
is like an apple

split the flesh
seeds will spur

bud in the rock
nurse in your blood

the orchard will rise
a legion

the myth
of your sacrifice

About an Alligator

Hello, alligator with pine cones in your mouth.
I admire your debut and sprawl,
the cocky pause, frivolous eye, and toothy smirk,
how you leave the audience to ponder
your last remark. Town after small town encores,
you swallow the punch line, the soup, spoon and nuts
all at once. They wonder at you, brackish karaoke king,
the mythic you, big ham, your ambiguous tears,
the murky legends of your New York escapades;
how you leave them gut-split and rolling
in the aisles when your top hat premiere steals the show.
O, you eat it up, their handbags,
and those ridiculous shoes.
Spring's sessile pink and purple posy pop
through the ferruled end of your cane,
hovering on the stage. The theater aghast with applause,
roaring, *See ya later, lagarto!*
Some speculate your empire shadow still scales the earth
when storybooks close, goodnight follows a kiss,
and beds drift warily, warily, warily, toward a dream.
Or so it is written. Technically, you're just a big lounge lizard
rolling whale-eyed deer to death under the river.

Fracture

In the cafe four old men,
their bodies curled like shrimp,
watch the heat bend spoons.

On the horizon, boiling
hulls of cars rise out
of the black asphalt road.

The mountain range tilts,
a sunken fish tank fortress
under the emphatic blue sky.

Along the roadside two crows,
in a tug of war, gut and bobble
a several-days-killed raccoon.

The head come loose.
A scream fights its way out
of the jaws locked open,

teeth that scratch at the dry,
sucking wind, tear at the barrier
that withholds sound.