Christian Lehnert

opus 8
Im Flechtwerk

Suhrkamp

Christian Lehnert

opus 8

In the Wattle

(Original German Title: opus 8. Im Flechtwerk)

Publication date: 11 April 2022

© Suhrkamp Verlag Berlin 2022

Sample translation by Richard Sieburth

Montagu's harrier (Circus pyrgargus)

The harrier opens to the storm / without a flicker of emotion. Climbs into a gust of wind and settles into motion.

The summer linden (Tilia playphyllos)

The lung-tree / the linden / is breathing in.
The leaves quiver / and the wind drives home.
The tree was wide without and asleep within
Its roots / remembering back to stone:

There in its tousled hair the air has found a nest.

There night and day / both alike / have come to rest.

There the growth of things is no longer in doubt.

The lung-tree/ the linden / is breathing out.

Little Glowworm (Lampryis noctiluca)

I am blind of sight / I am deaf of ear / At dusk / the bodiless dust / shines very near.

Flowering mullein (Verbascum densiflorum)

How do they rediscover--these fires of vegetable matter / all these bright flashes of speech? Their name: *King's Candles* / of wastelands beyond reach / Numen-like / Unmoored beacons of desire--Without syntax / or metaphor / nor broken by the breeze--Driven toward the woods.

shadow-yellow flames /
Sprit in tongues / wildfires / descended from the blaze-Promised to a narrow clearing in the trees?

Icelandic moss (Cetraria islandica)

The tongues lie soft upon the gravel and growth-rings. Thus lichen expands so wanting / to wish for nothing.

The Grey Goose Breaks into Flight

A leap / sheer wingbeat sheer alarm/ not a thing Said / yet nothing ever itself again from this point on: The meadow deeply shaken around its pond / No landscape there / and a day with a different ring.

As I stood there in a formwork / a pain sliced
Through my knees / I saw wings rush into flight /
And bodies on the rise / in a myriad of cries /
Everything screaming / as if the light had been knifed.

House martin (Delichon urbica)

The hatchling kicks and falls. What once was nest / disappears from view / Seized by the breezes / no longer seeking / and finding everything new.

On Sea Cliffs

Get this / everything's already down in writing:
The rain upending a silvery leaf
And turning it over neatly / a root of a tree
Reading this and waiting. Chunks of chalk
Melted and erased / the tilted tree standing ready /
To ask for nothing more to know nothing more than null /
In whatever happens / nothing ever goes missing /
All there is to hear / is the shrieking of the gull.

Hollyhock seed pods (Alcia rosea)

In a vase time at rest / though the container not be its size / A further blossom-wake / that the year / fails to recognize.

The creeping cinquefoil's seed (Potentilla reptans)

It knows of roots / it knows of pollen /
Of yellow mattings / that creep up stalks /
Of leaves unrolling as they open /
Of breath-skins / slipping into shadow-walks.
It's borne in mind and is forgotten /
It's a body / it's a sign.
It's an echo / scattered to the wind.
It's a hand / continuing to write.

The tinder fungus (Fomes fomentarius)

This drizzle / this humming / this crumbling of a world within / This ancient tree listening / for the sound / that will do it in.

Parmelia lichen (Parmelia physodes)

Deadwood / pitching and rolling / does she know her place Or the body / into which she might extend? Is she an outer / sign / flecked with shade / Or the rough tongue / of words lying beyond ken?

Is she conscious of the light within?
A balance of green / that forward slides?
Rank growth / resulting in time and stride /
Driving ever further into the foreign?

The Tulip or On Blooming Late

She arises in red / electric / a sea of clouds lit up by lightning. A crack: she breathes in / the wind within her tightening.

Who is it / that fizzles out like magma / or a meteor? A crack: she breathes out / becomes body / night and pore.

White wingtail (Motacilla alba)

Forgotten-- the steady wind / the flowerbeds lying waste. Its stilts stir from the pond / elder branch bobbing up and down / in haste.

Brant goose (Branta hernicla)

Without looking ahead / the year within her burden / The sea within her wingbeat / the once and future / world.

The eel (Anguilla anguilla)

The small pond at rest / only you on the loose / to become an inflection / Moving along / a slipstream / to create your own direction.

The Apollo butterfly (Parnassius apollo)

She goes aground / and rests and now gathers into a cocoon / A forgotten figure awakened to her night and doom.

Grass frog (Rana temporaria)

Like glass gleam and glass vase / like a sheen / that one forgets / So the quivering smear of spawn upon the ground / becomes / what it begets.

Thyme (Thymus serpyllum)

Its scent / a shallow sleep / that seeps into the copse. The weighty roots of light sink into the rocks.

The skylark (Alauda arvensis)

To soar upward into sound / until everything gets lost / Until you own nothing / that the wind bears aloft.

Blue algae (Cyanobacteria)

Sprung from the light / in its streaks a dressing Of breath / that in the sea discovers its inner best.

Sweetwater polyp (Hydra)

What does the foot know of ground? Nowhere does the just man stand. There he wavers / shot through by the good and the bad.

E-coli (Escherichia coli) As if it were saying:

"So cozy are space and time / vessels that live for my good / and rescue me and carry me / to where I'm surrounded by food."