





LUCIENNE STASSAERT

# **Between water and wind**

For Régine and Anouk

1. TURNING MOMENTS  
*(travel impressions)*

Autumn leaves swirl  
away in the light  
of headlights

Much white noise in between  
and few words  
to say just something –

Noise within and without  
at which the silence  
at certain moments  
achieves top speed.

On waking  
in the familiar  
unknown

The thought  
that life  
is detoxification

The one face  
and the other  
a rearview mirror –

No longer able to be grasped  
is what disappears there  
before you cut

words into ribbons  
as usual  
point to the map:

Where to  
what for  
today

Is it your body  
is it not your body  
that rants and raves  
like a polishing wheel

Just as time ticks  
in a village centre  
when the moon  
brushes past church windows

Leaded apostles  
holding their tongues in unison  
if this is sleeping or waking

So do spirits, ready  
to disrupt from their settings,  
bring middle ages perpendicular  
in the vizier

Years that rise up  
after new revelations  
in a emptiness, black in duration

The shimmering  
on the high sea  
of a copper-red sun  
a vibrato –

Over there  
the rising  
of the other one  
a sea of flame

And between the two  
flashes of light  
as if the sea  
has just given birth –

The sun climbs on  
unprecedented  
the whooshing  
afterwards

In once again so much distance.

Hotels on the bow-shot  
of the shore  
foretell the ossifying  
of land and sand.

Street children  
light a fire there at dusk  
and dance elatedly  
round it.

As long as the light  
still refuses to become night  
Spain comes for a moment  
on the screen –

Crickets only begin  
to chirp  
after that turning moment.

Desert  
non-reflecting expanse  
of multiplication

Wind sings here  
in the blackness  
of the night

Whirls out  
whirls around  
camels sunk in the sand –

The echo  
of a subterranean spring  
unsoundable, ungrounded.

Desert  
sand-mirror  
to slake the heat.

In El Oued  
faith is interlarded  
with silence

A treacherous  
chill the night  
that in an instant drops

into the lap  
of a dumbstruck  
hamlet –

Just strew sand  
on the hours  
halt the images

Which today you  
wanted to catch sight of  
or rather not:

The blood-warm  
throat-slit sheep  
in an alley

A turning point  
so as not  
to lose yourself

In narrow passages  
where men-folk  
lie in wait

A tinge of lasciviousness  
still juggles  
in their gesturing

Until the muezzin  
calls out the prayer  
in the time of Allah.

According as the sun  
smokes out your memory  
what ferments

inside such a den  
becomes in time  
no longer unimaginable.

The past too  
stretches farther out  
than now –

Just admit it.  
Just admit everything  
in the course of the light

Nothing else any more  
than land in sight.

On board  
the creaking groaning  
before the mooring –

Change distances from  
wave trough to a row of houses  
and no instrument  
to plumb the depths

With a god-indicator:  
therefore initial hesitation.



## 2. NIGHT SCENES

She only lets herself  
be heard  
when the stage  
is in darkness

Leaps up after the stroke  
of the gong from my memory  
putting me  
on a false track

Whether this is my past  
in the sound of  
a noise-nightmare –

It is her perhaps  
or am I hearing him  
dreaming aloud  
in an earlier sequence.

The nesting-place is known:  
here death lays her eggs  
in this room, aseptic fall

For some terminal patient  
or other –

An aeronaut  
who keeps on descending  
stamping against clouds

And who disappears from sight  
when she bursts open in him.

About this time  
I would like  
to ask Charon:  
take me to the underworld.

Father stands  
waiting for me there  
with a sealed face.

This time we play dumb  
until the ice is broken  
until words flow open again  
like you and I.

Fields of light at the edge of vision.  
I have to go there, break the ice  
that preserves them, lets them glide through deeper.

It is likely that they will  
touch each other as if by chance.  
A dull thud then puts me on the track  
of their sunken, false weight.

More than a picture  
in which to spend the night  
trees leave  
someone behind  
in search of words  
to spend the winter.

Thus a blood-oak brings  
me to safety  
a summer tree  
without a clogging gash  
which keeps all its sap  
still and in motion  
in vaulted branches  
like music by Bach.

At night it casts  
off shadows  
lets its wide-ringed wood  
glimmer  
in organ notes  
towards heaven-far light.

### 3. BARK CANKER

The cycle BARK CANKER, with trees as the main theme, is based on photographs by Régine Ganzevoort.

I am in an in-between phase  
with wounds showing their colours  
open on a rough rind

Although young strands of ivy  
in a sudden  
upsurge further up –

Deceptive now and again is  
the echo at the top  
of time that unremittingly

Squeaks in my sound-grooves.

Too white to be looked at  
my trunk retains  
the appearance of a new moon

Present in a scar  
that reveals  
what a pruning knife is.

The loss is gradually crusted.  
What attracts shadow, like a spirit,  
is on its way to my ending.

Already half-split  
is my shield of age.  
Lumps press me  
out of my canopy

Where everything that is ready  
for dumbness  
draws veined punctuation marks  
on a parchment half.

One day this one  
takes in the other  
like a hardened freebooter

From now on I lie ripped  
open as after a gestation.  
A trident bursts off me.

It lights me out and brings on  
labour. Light licks  
the putrefaction from my burns.

My bark peels badly.  
Time rattles in my heaviness  
like a ventriloquist.

He portrays a late afterbirth  
of what I wore, bore,  
bares the core of hard winters.

But in summer, in fresh shade  
of tight-packed leaves  
he spans the crown. High in the wind

He creaks as never before.  
Death is a breakwater.

Who unyokes me as a bull  
a maimed paternal beast  
shifts her secret stirrings

to me, setting in me  
in bloody bruises and curvatures.

A blowhole is now my beginning –  
There she impressed upon me  
how hot the lap of the earth is.

She ferments like a boiling spring.

The livors, warty excrescences,  
call up nubs of pain  
eyes like potter's wheels  
in a blind face.

So does wound fever  
fester out in pruning cuts before  
I begin the death struggle  
as a mildewed god.

Death buds  
in all my gashes

Springs ashen from my skin  
and lets itself be known, named,  
heard.

I split out of my past.  
It bursts out green

Lets itself soften  
in all green, parasitic growth.

Read me as water.  
Read the swelling  
of my veins  
now that leaf-moss creeps up on  
me  
like a final childhood illness.

Read the white  
between the silence  
how the wind  
speaks in drum language  
in bone-dry hollows.

Read me as a testament.

#### 4. WHO ELSE ARE YOU THAN SOMEONE UNKNOWN *an ode to Stanisława Przybyszewska*

The cycle WHO ELSE ARE YOU THAN SOMEONE UNKNOWN is an ode to Stanisława Przybyszewska (1901-35). As an illegitimate child of the then famous Stanislas Przybyszewski, Stanisława bore the name of her mother Aniela Pajak until 1914. It was not until 1919 that she became better acquainted with her father, who advised her to take morphine for creative purposes. Her interest in the French Revolution – the real main theme of her modest oeuvre – resulted in 1929 in the masterly play ‘The Danton Affair’. A film version of it was made in 1975 by no less than the Polish film director A. Wajda. It was also i.a. performed as ‘The Danton Affair’ by The Royal Shakespeare Company in 1986. During the last eight years of her life, Stanisława lived in a shed belonging to the Polish Grammar School in Danzig (Gdansk), where her husband, the artist Jan Panienski, had been a teacher until his sudden death in 1925.

The wide-open eyes  
in the face  
of a castrated apostle

That close-cropped hair  
black and white identity card  
betray your self-containment  
Stanislawa Przybyszewska.

The fear is within  
the harvest over  
now that you, without batting an eyelid,  
wait for a final blinding.

In shed number 12  
you go into hiding  
for the rest of your future

So as to set right  
the holy fire  
of the French Revolution.

There you learn Robespierre  
by heart or  
how a pure passion

intensifies the notion  
of passing through life  
as a spirit.

Who else are you than someone unknown.

It sometimes occurs to you  
how many voices  
morphine allows to speak.

So no one puts  
you on the track  
of the planetary motion

In your consciousness –  
no one else  
to be added.

Once more you reach for your violin  
look for, as before, the right note  
during the singing, sinking, soaring

Until you hear them, one by one, burst  
all those disowned bonds and that  
which wanted to go on quivering in you

At the end of a diffuse pleasure  
between hovering and living, and God.

He could not even  
look inside you  
as in the eyes of a child  
that was to chide him one day.

And you discovered him too late.  
You could not keep them apart any more:  
the father, the lover, the man  
who took you on his lap

Two or three times, and then no more.

He only really began to exist for you  
in the prolongation of his obsessive language.  
From then on you held a father of printed letters  
by the hand, crept inside his skin and

Again with him in bed. The true Stanislas  
still had a semblance of Przybyszewski about  
him  
in a hotel room in Gdansk  
where you could taste the ripe fruit of his love

And the charms of morphine.

Time to weigh up his words,  
the offprint of his imagination.  
You read dead letters in it,  
heartrot, shrivelled memories.

The many letters  
so as to be mentioned

When you want to  
spend the night  
on paper with someone:

A time-signal  
destined for your writing drawer  
and you who

remain in life  
poste restante  
between the lines

Your shadow blown up  
by blue cold  
and late hunger.

I read that you knew nothing  
else but thirst.

No more words tonight  
and no morphine  
to lull your fear.

Look: father's sitting  
in Lucifer's lap.  
Another jerk, and he is gone.

A stroke, and you are hardly  
aware of a heart  
that scares you with its beating

As if someone wants to force a way in  
who weighs more than loneliness.

And you drift off.  
Your voice closes up  
although your mother hears  
what you are missing.

Mother, how far off is it still  
before I receive my ration of life,  
the kiss which you have denied me

When you died  
on a day  
when I learned to  
spell the word orphan.

Mother, how late will it be  
before I become a native  
of your world.

Here a dead march sooner or later will sound  
keeping step with Nazism  
for Jews of flesh and blood.  
Tell me: how do I escape this narrow cell.

There is no emergency exit  
for your cat. She has been wailing  
herself hoarse for hours already

And you are becoming whiter, lie suspiciously  
furled like a flag.  
You're still there and yet no longer there.

Whoever looks inside  
through the window  
is nonplussed by

your sunkenness and hurries  
towards the remains  
of what you were. In broad daylight

You lie floating on the light  
that now takes pity on you  
and has completely unchecked you.

