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## The Other Gardens (2017)

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The other gardens, the abandoned ones  
that do not ask for permission to exist  
exist there even so  
and invite in everything  
that lives and that is dead.  
Here is a good place to pause a while  
for travellers before they journey on.

Here  
not much remains of what once was  
when it comes to gleaming marshals  
and those guests who come here  
have other business than the celebration.

Yet they were tended once by human hands  
and therefore can be called gardens  
though the root system existed before and after  
the age of humanity.

If it is morning or evening:  
it can resemble another morning  
far beyond the old one  
it can also resemble an evening  
and point towards a long night.

That is no great matter to discuss.

Another night that encloses everything  
it tastes of metal, earth, leaves undergoing transformation  
deep within it such is being prepared as  
words as yet do not dare taste  
and which can thus resemble a morning  
as yet without written rules.

Vehicles come and vehicles go  
the windfalls are not picked up by anyone  
the betrayed pass by the betrayers here  
and eat beneath the same branches.

Do not ask me who extracted  
the greatest happiness from his life  
or who was assigned the greatest torment  
I, an intermediary, how could I possibly reply  
although I am acquainted with cobwebs  
the spiders' lives and victims.

In the abandoned gardens  
the signs of living seem more distinct  
because death's heel  
has left its prints in what has been left behind.

Here soul's refugees came passportless one night  
and found there a moment's rest

they did not think could be attained  
sat down for a while  
knew this to be no lasting place to stay  
yet tarried until daybreak.

Here those extremely happy come a while  
caress each other's bodies  
and think they know what life's idea is.  
Here the rain falls, that which first obliterates  
and then gives back another life.

Here the dead come on their swift passage  
through various worlds, take in the smells  
pause for a while  
taste before hurrying on.

And migrating birds that move at ease through the night  
search a while in what is now stripped of leaves  
find what they are looking for  
in the large recess of the body  
at the same place where the dead recently passed  
hence the dark gleam in their eyes.

Not until oblivion has come to take its place  
and death and life have acquired new meanings  
does a different burgeoning begin  
the faintly golden that precedes mouldering.

Now  
the leaves all interweave  
they look at me, at you they look  
and ask how it can come about  
we happen to be passing here  
through the soles of our shoes they whisper  
that it is alright to pause here for a while  
but that the secrets which they carry never will  
will be revealed completely.

Nor do some overripe apples that fall heavily  
ask to be picked up  
they fall into the abandoned grass  
to be there and to grow there into other things  
and to remain there quite still - and to wake up  
when night and morning together  
pass through the milling throng  
of all that does not know what rest is  
and they open their eyes wide, prick up their ears  
for that which once more is drawing near.

Far off it is as if vehicles  
as yet still out of sight are on their way  
and which not even the gardens know of.

## II

The human animal with its quivering lips  
the scent of prey

weighs up life, the value of life  
bares its teeth  
its eyes squint in the way they must.

There is a risk the wind will turn  
away from the direction of hope  
then it will be hard for us who travel over great waters  
or are left behind in the precinct on fire.

Then there is hope for us who sail  
over great waters in the direction of the wind and hope  
for us who live on the right side  
of the precinct when it is on fire.

It is an unclear position for those who are travelling.

The night she died  
from the tubes and the increasingly sore changes  
the night when the grievers and those who did not grieve  
sat round her

was not a hand stretched out from the dark  
a lover's hand towards her  
surprised she rose up in increasing clarity  
and was not around her hand  
another hand joined in lust

and those who grieved and did not grieve  
knew nothing of this.

The blade of grass!  
Look at it close up  
when it bends in the wind, still moist  
after the night's rain  
like a slender swaying scythe  
in its unheard-of splendour.

See how it dries in the summer sunshine  
on its way to its transparency  
ever thinner like old human skin  
see how it develops an unheard-of silence  
one which can rival that of deserts.

And then when it bends

towards the end of October  
its back still gleaming with the late morning  
when the mould comes and the frost comes  
and the foot that finally tramples it down.

See how in the earth it diminishes  
diminishes once more  
towards its new, unheard-of splendour.

Did there suddenly lie in the palm of the hand  
an invisible letter as yet not slit open  
in which everything was related  
about the vessel far off without harbours  
about the silence of the abandoned houses  
about love's conditions  
about those who lived a life  
and yet did not live  
about those with an excess of life on fire  
and everything that lies in-between.

But none of us dared open.

Why does the heron stand so securely on poetry's plinth  
and the crow so vigilantly  
in front of the trap on the rubbish heap?

Because the heron is scent-blue on the wing  
and has a flight like kings  
after having fished in still waters  
the crow more numerous  
hacks his way forward among the corpses.

I saw both of them at close quarters  
when similarly they jerked their necks and swallowed  
the heron more snake-like than the crow  
which in its frightened flight often loses its prey.

No doubt both of you have my approval  
no doubt we shall enter death together  
where the gradations hopefully cease  
and poetry finally blows away.

Carnival-like the years let themselves  
be overturned even into a celebration  
beyond all celebrations.

A man on the square breaks down completely  
when he searches for a life philosophy.

The one who now distinguishes  
between what is dead and what is living

assumes a knowledge  
far beyond the human

and all that which then falls out  
of humanity's secret cupboard  
forgotten wars  
faces that have been dried in the herbaria  
and a matchless intimacy in unwritten letters.

Spring rain falls over stones  
that breathe with old hatred  
and an even older love.

The evenings sway like rocking chairs  
old folks fall asleep  
and during the night are transformed into dry skeletons  
arise already the following day  
garlanded for a May morning.

What a din of undiscovered insects  
will not then inundate the world!

Already before the dawning of the world  
they used to leap there  
the packs of expelled wolves  
at what we regard as the periphery of the universe  
they are looking for food, somewhere to live  
or at any rate a real name  
so that they can be called something.

But they are accepted nowhere  
in either the philosophical or the political systems  
or anything else.

Which is why they sometimes howl through our dreams.

The privilege of growing old  
that everything frightens yet does not frighten completely.

I imagined I saw so frequently talked-about death as a  
flame-green light  
just prior to the storm over the water.

The jay, bird of my childhood, appeared today  
still wearing the band on its wing.

Slightly less bleeding than before  
and not as visible on the surface  
but thicker inwards  
the mental veins increasingly clotted  
the light of the summer day far off.

The days of the surgery scar are past  
there now remains a duller time  
where no ambulances fail to arrive  
because no ambulances are needed here any more  
at the abandonment of treatment.

It certainly happens that the shores  
still go on enticing with what is theirs  
the trees likewise  
human hands likewise.

But the bleeding the so sleep-bringing  
also continues with what is its  
so like the summer night where the faces  
slowly merge into a hollowed-out light.

Far off earthquakes can be heard  
approaching.

Series of nights pass by  
they greet each other  
new days and new nights will come  
that are nothing like what there is now they say

and the clusters of fruit hanging ripe on the trees  
listen throughout the autumn  
and when they fall  
they meet the nights that are passing.

How heavy the leaves are today  
do they also taste of blood today?

Will a beetle or a human  
be also crushed against the street today?

Many will be crushed today against the street  
and who derives any pleasure from the fact  
that the leaves also taste of blood today?

It returns now - the fly  
settles as before on the wrist  
and tastes with its cold mouth.

If I was younger I would have killed it  
but now that there is so little left  
it can sit there with her sucker.

Not that I am doing creation any good  
by this declamatorily human gesture  
perhaps it will be soon be caught in a different trap

and suffer a more painful death.

Year after year we have consorted  
in this locked prison  
which now gleams once more  
in the late-July day.

All the stuffed animals in biological museums  
all the carpets of insects above and below the earth

the animal-human  
the human-animal

religious doctrines and the absence of doctrines  
I try to console myself with the doctrine  
of the non-measurable  
the bush-cricket's eyes gaze fixedly at me.

This bog is an eye  
with the eye's various characteristics  
the clear surface which the rain falls over  
and keeps clean  
the gleaming depths and farthest down the small aquatic creatures  
on life's and death's conditions  
the lovely salamander.

The bog observes the world and follows the day's happenings  
the one seeking consolation here can pause a while  
and gaze down into the blackness  
sometimes a smile passes over it, a smile  
that really has nothing at all to do with a smile.

As a bog-dweller living close to the bog  
I imagine I almost understand its characteristics  
when it scouts for insects on the surface of the water -  
but do not look for too long or too far down in it  
for then you can be seized by a longing for death  
and other such deceptions.

And just as the eye has a brief life  
the bog will not live much longer either  
aquatic plants and the natural course of events  
will lessen its extent, the sun will dry it out  
and like an ash-gall it will then turn in on itself.

But even when this evening comes  
it will continue to exist without revealing  
anything of what it feels and even less considers  
it simply looks at me, looks through me  
thereby confirming a life.

The Bohemian waxwings which now at the advent of winter  
come from the sunrise far to the east  
advance in circles  
more swiftly than our eye.

They are borne by the winter  
they eat the winter's berries  
they bear the silk in their feathers  
some survive January.

Whether their life like ours is long or short.

Towards half-dusk the interpreters gather  
and in their modest images provide  
an explanation of the enigmatic  
schist  
of the earth  
the upper earth and lower earth.

I was there occasionally  
thrived, half-thrived in the luke-warmth.

How truer the bats are then  
which emerge at this time of the day and night.

How unambiguous and clear  
are then their tiny faces  
between child and dead man's skull.

Now the days are more compact than before  
they demand a yes or a no  
but what this yes or no imply  
they do not let us know.

Therefore they do not say either  
who shall be the executioner or the one executed.  
On such days  
perjurers and martyrs are born.

We had lived so long in the prisoners' house  
that we started to dig the graves of the damned  
to which we would all eventually come.

Yet sometimes were alarmed  
by strange sounds in the walls  
as if something was in the process of giving way.

One day we broke through  
or was it the walls that opened up  
of their own desire.

Outside the great plains lay free.

### III

She stands at the red window  
in front of her is the fire  
behind her is the fire  
in the window is her only room  
she is standing high above the street  
if she leaps she leaps to her death  
she must exist there to be still alive:

she has stood there a thousand years or more  
she is still young  
still has her teeth despite all hardships.

. . . .

I saw you for the first time in 1939  
I was only nine then and the new war was there  
you stood at a burning window  
I think it was in Poland  
it could have been somewhere else  
death surrounded you on all sides.

I do not know if you were already dead  
when I saw you in the newspaper  
if you died in some camp much later  
if your death was violent or long-drawn-out.

Time after time I think that I see you  
and I shy away from your gaze.

. . . .

She has cast off all designations  
all that in some way could lock her in.

She is beyond myths  
icons she has abandoned  
her crime:  
she sought freedom  
she sought nothing else.  
She only wanted to travel in peace  
get the food her body needed  
see the landscape through the train windows.

She has had to borrow a lot so as to survive  
hands that once lived in order to caress  
have turned into claws.

Despite this she gleams

. . . .

Perhaps I saw you recently in a train compartment  
your old skin was chapped

and there were hollows in your jaw where teeth should have been  
your eyes bored into mine  
whether it was sympathy or out of mockery.

We did not know each other  
but it seemed as if you knew more about me  
than I do myself.

Not that I believe you wished me well in any way  
why should you  
perhaps you were looking for a final amends  
for the fact you still exist.

. . . .

What else do I finally have to say to you  
than that I once saw you as a newspaper photograph  
I got off lightly whereas you succumbed  
for there to be a reasonable conversation between us  
is impossible.

Despite this, we meet time after time.

Does even so a place exist  
if nothing else as a chance dream  
where all the streets and the window at which you stood  
finally open out  
towards the square which does not yet exist  
but which belongs to a different future.

## IV

Humans of ashes  
sit on benches of ashes  
around them the winter is harsh  
  
they are talking about the future.

After their visit to life's brief day  
the clouds colour themselves red before the sunset  
like rags  
still stained with life's sweat  
they wish to show themselves  
shortly before night comes  
takes them away.

The slaughtered animals recently hung up  
drained of blood  
now rise up on their hind legs  
sniff the air  
turn their horns towards the sun.

The improbable  
in its own great halls.

In the March day the sun dazzles  
the tall pine trees  
which have stood still for so long  
climbs out onto the crusted snow

a skier also glides past  
is dissolved against the light.

Just now a gleaming and a shadow fell through the night  
then there was nothing more

but the gleaming and the shadow lingered  
although they came from nowhere

it was a waiting for an answer that still lingers  
and you were awake

a gleaming and a shadow that change everything  
though everything seemed to be as it was

but you who were awake that night  
have since then had a splinter in your eye.

Skeleton-sharp with hunger the predators emerge  
from winter's forests  
if they find nothing to eat  
the cold winds its death around them.

When the spring and summer are over  
the mushroom-pickers shout with delight:  
Oh aren't the skeletons beautiful.

Happiness pays a sudden visit  
it stays standing in the doorway:  
I'm not staying long  
and should I return  
it will be unpreparedly.

but like a hot breeze in the evening  
you will remember me  
that time I came close to you  
and you believed the impossible.

So much that gathered  
and became one  
in the sun's setting light  
that only lies a few hours from  
the sun's rising light

my childhood's chorus was there  
December's star  
a scythe swished through the grass

heard the rakes among the leaves  
and the boats' sirens  
when they leave the harbour

a Swedish child  
outside the first great war  
outside the second great war

a Swedish child in the country  
Outside.

Thought there was nothing more to wait for  
here farthest out on life's spit  
nothing except the last step from terra firma  
Then suddenly life turned around  
and showed its predator's fangs:

I scratch you, you scratch me

I eat you, you eat me  
devoured we caress each other a while  
as one does in Paradise.

Did you hear that heart beat  
which causes the shores to yield!  
Those who drowned will not return  
but the dream of a possible return remains.

The sound of an early engine  
in the mirage on the horizon a city rises up  
then sinks once more  
voices draw near.

A wing lifts  
it is morning over the Baltic.

It was at the dividing line  
one of the many  
and I was there, that I can even so say  
that I was there.

The flies buzzed in the air  
it was the hot season  
with the unmistakable smell of ripe grass  
and of life abandoned bodies.

To take a decision then  
that can also last until late autumn  
when the season of deflaking comes  
with smells that grow sharper in a different way  
and not even the buzzing in the air is heard any longer.

To be able to say then  
it was my decision  
and it was dubious.

I was there even so.