

Keihiro Suga (Translated by Jordan A.Y. Smith)

## Four Rivers

The river that flows east conjures a slumber in violet,  
Its dozing ripples barely concealing a parched awakening,  
Against the angle of your shoulders break murky ripples dyed in bright tears,  
Alternating with the glittering indigo shadows of the lifeforce,  
the slope of your shoulder traces wave crests, blazing trails through sunlight,  
When the river dolphins swim right through the ascending sun, huge  
Koi and catfish swish feebly after them,  
Staying in the wake of this gathering, a turtle trudges through its beloved mud,  
An awakening the likes of which the world has yet to see,  
the turtle's subjectivity lends it that great agility,  
My own endeavor just to describe the animal's and your own soporific  
Superficial sliding over the water surface,  
So, let sleep slip away, give up on it,  
When you set out swimming, I'll swim along after,  
Drinking in the sunlit ripples your gliding shoulders scatter  
I sent word to the king of the koi, reigning over the river: it's time to settle things,  
A message transcending species, transcending time,  
Never erring on its path toward arrival, somewhere, to someone,  
And look, the river dolphins jump spraying rainbows—  
It's your love and it's oblivion  
An ocean of awakening, just over there

The river that flows west washes away the written word  
So I cut my hair short and splash right in,  
*Swim! Swim!* my dog tells me,  
A Newfoundland, the enormous swimming breed,  
But the letters spread out dazzlingly over the water surface

Glinting like dark silver koi swimming ever faster,  
As the river pours into a ravine, a Lorelei perches atop a rock on the riverbank,  
A gorgeous Nordic blonde girl, naked and singing away,  
The song instills the letters with the power of real fish, and they begin to leap,  
Her hair seems to net all the letters used to form the lyrics she sings,  
Yes, to the baptism, yes, to the lexicon,  
Yes, to the lamentation, yes, to the luminescence,  
Amazing, I mutter, secretly aroused,  
I swear a new oath to search for the terms of an unrecorded language,  
If I can harness her power, the labor of compilation will be all too easy,  
Beyond that, it's just a matter of classifying seawater from fresh water,  
Fishing up the letters before they're washed into the saltwater zone,  
Yet it's not a task I must do to perfection,  
The words rust,  
And as they rust, they are  
Rendered as eternal as a dictionary of iron

The river that flows north aims for the hunting grounds,  
Parting from, then clinging to, mountains and critter-filled forests  
As it snakes its way through the flats,  
Or rather, the river is mother of the land here,  
On top of this thick layer of peat,  
Dwell the deer and other larger deer, they say,  
In this river, I do not swim but ride in a seal-skin kayak  
Also snaking its way slowly downstream  
Careful to avoid the whirlpools around the fallen trees along the riverbanks,  
The shadows of enormous sky-dancing birds cross my eyelids, eclipsing the sun,  
At this latitude, noon finds the sky an indigo densely packed with stars,  
The constellations are a hunter's mnemonic, the sky a notebook,  
An album of beasts who sacrificed their lives for the sake of humans,  
From there, as the fresh crescent moon dips toward the lake—

*What could that be?* ...in the transparent depths countless sunken skeletons  
In a cemetery of the deer, a layer so silent no poem or song can penetrate,  
Within it, my kayak starts spinning  
The sounds of water, the music to a dirge,  
I greet and bid goodbye to the deer,  
Deer, thank you, deer,  
What a lively kind of loneliness

The river that flows south some call the river of forgetting,  
As I swim across its surface, countless fruits splashing down around me,  
Spraying rains of plump droplets  
On my head when I swim breaststroke, and on my face with backstroke,  
Alligators by the score, but they don't scare me,  
They are all as small as my pinky fingers,  
And piranhas all around, but they don't scare me either,  
Because ultimately their appetites are for physical flesh  
And the more I swim the more metaphysical my existence becomes—  
A river with this kind of powerful effect, what can it mean?  
True enough, the electric eels are dangerous,  
Suddenly I can hear an electric guitar solo in the distance,  
Restoring reality, a distant song heard, as one says, 'with ears to the sky,'  
But what a grotesque image—ears floating around in the sky!  
Were it not for that, I'd grab up all the soursop and alligator-skinned avocados

And steadily ingest their nutrition so I could swim forever,  
The clingy, murky olive green water coats my skin and my spirit in velvet,  
So freed from existence itself, carefree as an eel,  
Every last chain of karma fades to the farside of oblivion,  
And when I open my eyes underwater,  
I see myself swimming

## 四川

東にむかう川がすみれ色のまどろみを浮かべ  
まどろむ波のひとつ下には乾いた目覚めが隠れている  
きみの肩の角度に打ち寄せるさざなみの泥は涙の明るい色に染まり  
生命の影を紫色のかがやきと交換する  
波のなみうらをなぞるきみの肩の傾きが日向を開拓し  
離陸する太陽の中を川イルカが泳ぐとき大きな  
鯉と鯰がよちよちと後を追う  
群れに入らず水の分かれ目を探るのは泥を何よりも好む亀  
誰も見たこともないほど覚醒している  
亀は亀の主観においては大変に敏捷なのだ  
ぼくが試みるのはこうした動物およびきみの睡眠的  
水面的運動の記述  
さあ眠りをすぐ捨ててよ、あきらめてよ  
きみが泳ぎ始めるときぼくもこれから泳ぐよ  
きみの肩が起こすさざなみのちりぢりの光を飲んで  
川を支配する鯉の王にそろそろ決着をつけようかとテキストを送った  
通信は種を超え、時を超え  
失われることなくどこかで誰かに届くよ  
ほら川イルカのジャンプが虹を発生させた  
それがきみの愛とその忘却だ  
目覚めの海はすぐそこ

西にむかう川は文字を流すから  
ぼくはすっかり髪を短くしてぎぶんとその水に飛び込むわけ  
泳げ泳げとぼくの犬がいう  
ニューファウンドランドのでっかい水泳犬種  
けれども文字は水面いっぱいにきらびやかに広がり  
暗い銀色の鯉のように輝きながらしだいに速度をあげるよ  
溪谷にさしかかると川岸の岩にはローレライがいる  
何という美しいノルディックな金髪の娘が裸で歌っている  
その歌につれて文字は魚そのものの運動力をもって跳ね  
歌詞に使われた分だけ文字は彼女の髪に回収されるらしい

ああ洗礼、ああ辞書  
ああ悲嘆、ああ発光  
これはすごいぞとぼくは密かに興奮し  
まだ記述されない言語の語彙検索という辛い仕事を新たに誓う  
彼女のあの力をうまく使えば編纂の作業ははてしなく捗るはず  
後は海水と真水をうまく仕分けてゆくだけ  
塩分の水域に流されるまえに文字を救いとれ  
でもそれがうまく行かなくても大丈夫  
文字たちは錆びる  
錆びつつみずからを  
鉄製の辞書のように永遠にする

北にむかう川は狩猟の平原をめざす  
山に別れ森の小動物たちと別れたあとべったり  
平らな地帯を蛇行しながら流れてゆく  
というかこの地帯では川が土地の母  
泥炭の層が分厚く積み重なった上には  
鹿とさらに大型の鹿が暮らしているらしい  
この川ではぼくは泳がず海豹の毛皮で作ったカヤックに乗って  
蛇行しつつのんびりと流されていくだけ  
岸辺の倒木にからまったり渦にまきこまれたりすることを注意しながら  
大きな鳥が空を舞う影が臉にかかると太陽も真っ暗さ  
この緯度では昼間でも藍色の空にびっしりと星が見える  
星座は狩人の記憶術だ、空の帳面だ  
人のために命をささげてくれた獣たちのアルバムだ  
それからできかけの三日月湖にさしかかると  
おやおや、透明な水底におびただしい白骨が沈んでいる  
そこは鹿たちの墓場か、詩も歌も届かない無言の層か  
そこでぼくのカヤックもぐるぐる旋回をはじめ  
水音が追悼の音楽になる  
こんにちは鹿さようなら  
鹿ありがとう鹿  
にぎやかなさびしさだね

南にむかう川は忘れ川というんだって

いくらでも果実が降り注いでくる水面を泳いで行くと

びしびし大粒の雨が降ってきて

平泳ぎならつむじ、背泳ぎなら顔を打つのがいい気持ち

鰐もたくさんいるけど怖くないよやつら

小指ほどの大きさしかないから

ピラーニャもたくさんいるけど怖くない

やつら所詮肉体にしか食欲を覚えないから

泳げば泳ぐだけメタフィジカルな存在になってゆく

そんな効果のある川なんだここは

電気鰻はたしかにちょっと厄介だ

いきなりエレクトリックギターのソロが聴こえてきて

空耳だけど現実を思い出させるからね

空に耳がたくさん浮かんでいるのはちょっと気持ち悪いよ

それさえなければ水面に落ちてくるばんれいしやわになしを掴んで

齧りながら栄養補給していくらでも泳いでゆける

ぬるぬるした茶緑色の水が皮膚も心もすべすべにして

存在自体が無責任なうなぎのように自由になる

すべての連鎖するカルマが忘却の彼方に掻き消される

水中で目を開けるとね

泳いでいる自分が見えるんだ