

At the Threshold of Another

A Reading of Tamas Panitz's *Invisible Marches*



Billie Chernicoff and Joel Newberger

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In an *Aside* to his poem *Invisible Marches*, Tamas Panitz reflects on the difficulty of seeing ourselves and of seeing beyond ourselves. Of Goethe he writes:

So he warns us, but tempts me, to infer that there is a way of proceeding mistakenly and yet with purpose, to regard one's "constitution" by way of imaginative projections of "theories, terminologies and systems, which we cannot even disapprove," to urge these projections forward.

Could this propose a way to read a text, to regard its being and constitution, its genius loci?

Both what is primary and our means of participation in it are in constant flux, suggesting thereby the Faustian relationship of an evolving forgery of our own manufacture.

We wanted to take a walk through *Invisible Marches*, as initiates, scientists and friends of the text, to hear each other read, to urge and abet each other's solemnest projections and wildest hypotheses, and at the same time to undo them, to surrender ultimately, necessarily, to *the confusion of interior and exterior, the confusion of one's existence, thought, and writing with universal processes*. To fall silent at *the threshold of another, even further transformation....*

Thus, *mistakenly and yet with purpose, an evolving forgery of our own manufacture*, humbly presented here.

bc

1.

*A branch raised
in both hands.*

Lifting the image. Baculus divinatorius. Vining rod, flowering rood, wand, bewitching stick. Breaks the first commandment with both hands. The poem dowses, locates hidden water, the sacred text within the text. Nails it to the air, for any to read. Branches out from the *here* it summons, visible, viable.

*Hawthorn. Flowers
fill your lover's room.*

Syllables multiply. The branch flowers. Where there were ones there are twos, and more, to *fill your lover's room*, listener's ear. The poem expands into silence, embodied. *Skin mixed with its musk*. Where there are two or more, *the gods enter*. Words are their doors. We are their doors. *Skin's deceptive porous comfort / through which they rush*, undeniable.

bc

1.

*A branch raised
in both hands*

is already two branches. Deuteruno. Non-duality. Antlers, of the body.

Horns. Hawthorns.

*A branch raised
in both hands*

is a horn, shofar. It is Mahler's horn, whence spirit's unprecedented course that, while seeming to discover, actually creates, enacts, earth's orders. Begin by breathing, blowing through any mouthpiece in a flower, branch, lover, any hole in your hands.

In both hands—not by. Not with. Not priestly presiding under. Not an image rushing through a hedge. The tree of the self, that is the tree of the cosmos, suddenly, gradually, grows, raises itself, and he who was man, is tree. Derwydd. Olson to Duncan, 1955:

For fr abt 21 on, there is this 'celtic' image of the poet's act: stopping the battle, to get it down. And I am only now again finding out what that means – christ, what goddamn idea, anyhow, holding up one's hand, and everybody suddenly ceasing what they are doing, and lending ear!

Not quite.

The cosmic tree raises itself to his mouth, to have ruach.

Branch that *locates hidden water...sacred text*, and yet the enthusing sound is not secret, nowise invisible, somehow indeed public in this synagogue or bedroom, tacked to the air *for any to read*, lusty horn blasts *do* convene all the inhabitants of earth and heaven ever, the Day of Laughter is nigh!

Then flowers come, gods come into being, you and your lover are hosting: holding up one's branch, and everybody suddenly beginning to do what they weren't doing. A party, the dance, liturgy of exchanging selves, not a battle. Linden. They're weeping in dirt on the backyard path. On the patio in the moonlight, goddesses enter your pores, and your lover doesn't mind; she is tended to by other flowers. Syllables. For *all* to hear.

This poet is not the lover, nor me; when he raises his tongue, I become him, and he becomes a tree, an oak.

Helios. The bright, unremembered sound, aril or bright Greek seed around which this Roman convivium turns and turns, which *is* the seven rings of Proust's young tree revolving around *pre-existence*, Sabbath.

And on the seventh day, the horny boy elicited this Good Book from my flower.

jn

1.

How long is a beginning? *Ruach*, only the breath can say.

In a beginning is a word, *mind's breath*, a world *in potentia*. *Chaos reined in by planetary whips*. The poem *fixed to its musk*.

In a beginning are words, *impoverished purities of form that decay/decay by law*.

*Attention breaks
the voice fades
into a native silence.*

But love preserves each (each breath? word? body? lover? all impoverished purities of form?) as the bark splits and the trees/are ripped away. Love, and only love.

bc

2.

Leave in toad until stirred. Poem as rite. Reading Tamas's work I often have the sense of participating in some weird ritual, home at dawn with a stained dress and dirty feet.

*.....The dream waited,
and in a cauldron*

I was stirred in

To admit fresh chaos, and make something of it – ever this poem's work.

*to spring impulse back into form. A young king
jumps from the tub...*

Alchemy is personal, relational, and so is reading – you and me, she and he, new king, new text, from old. *Two suns* to illuminate each other's shadows.

We are bewitched, bewitched into reading, into partaking – *these berries you must eat.* And just as one writes or reads, one also speaks of a poem because the desire to participate in this *aberration of form, this haunted divergence,* is irresistible.

*Adore me adore me adore me
images of you, dear reader
left in me by the devil's passage.*

bc

1.

Whip. Track. Way. Passage.

Text. The *devil's passage* reports as *her admired whips*.

The devil, or the reader who is not yet the author. Why there are flowers here: as in Proust, giving or being given, they bring together what had been parted.

Attention is a whip, but a whip is a lasso. These are the *two suns*. Catch yourself in them paying no attention.

In the valley where Tamas lives, the air, more than the soil, is fertile. Things catch in it. Gardens are impossible; nothing can be kept out. Branches reach for single, accidental seeds before there are any branches at all.

This is inside, somehow, plantwork, range-finding, reining, coming back, mud, *two suns* in one room. *Home at dawn* from writing.

jn

2.

I am raising a branch with both hands, gigantic spoon with which to *stir* the author. I am holding the *horns of someone's moon*. Stirring mind's congealing light that it may *admit fresh chaos, impulse back into form*.

I am *stirred* by someone else's thorn, horn, tongue.

I am not sure who's stirring, who's instructing, who's being stirred, where we are in the eternal recipe.

Is this a recipe or me actually arousing Bacchus from *the facts*?

This is the mystery that mystery is. It raises me, like a question, but without any questions, out of the *cauldron* of text.

What I can't include: the essence of what can't be answered, yet no less ingredient, this *curious way* an old king births a young king. *The curious way* a text, this poem, operating the universe, ends up *void* but thickly fruiting *berries*. This *curious inability of the work to talk about itself*.

jn

3.

Three is green. Green announces the sappy life of things: *green silt, green serpent, green door, green caller*. Green is always being born. Green comes again, is always coming, like March, *Oroborosed*.

This curious inability of the work to talk about itself. Masks fall across my face in a glimmer of scales. The Green Man. Branches sprout from his mouth, seed the air. That is all he has to say.

Caller whose reflection is your own. Poem as mask, mirror, wherein we meet, in / our humid glory.

bc

3.

Green from “grow.” In the image of, “three” from “throw.”

As Tamas has told any northerner who would listen, the magician *throws across*.

Silt throws *silt* into the next stanza. *River* throws *water* into the next stanza. *Face* throws itself into the next line as many *faces*. The *current* throws the *serpent* it is through a *green door*. Anything that holds onto itself in this poem *dies and dies*, is *mud and mud*. But even *mud and mud hot mysteries green*, like Steiner’s flower, around their center’s borders.

jn

3.

From *your lover’s room* to the *cauldron* in her kitchen under *someone’s moon*, to this antediluvian landscape, *where the sands*—not the sea—*retreat*—

retreat to make space for water, *our humid glory*, forever or just for right now enthroned on the *green throne*.

A new gnosis: any gnosis. *Green* grows in the third epoch, or poem, from *blood* of the second epoch (there is me, and there is my blood, premise of poetical work, to say there is, there is something, material), which *blood* came from the impenetrably open, transparent first moment, from the wound of *attention*, the wound of sex, the wound of an enclosed *room* in infinite space, the wound any of us is from the start and that won’t close, so poems come out—

of our flank spear-pierced, *branch*-pierced (I),

of the holes in our mask that are for looking (II),

and of the three roots, or threefold root (shoresh),
trilateral, our throne on three feet, on which this word
learns to stand, two legs and the one green genital stalk
(III).

jn

4.

Spear-pierced, you say. 4 is a spear thrown right at the sky,
the yogic tree, thorn in God's eye. The image hurled into the
dark, all the way through to *a light in the woods* and still
moving, into the poem's witchy workplace, luminous room
within room, ever another screen or veil to be torn through, to
black benzoin, soul's black grease/ on the walls. Gnosis. Poem
as rite, initiation into *mud hot mysteries, matrilineal Morgan la
Fey orgies* and all that can't be understood, explained or
believed, only known, *where the hawthorn/ in potentia live and
where their images dazzle*.

Thorn in God's eye, Cain, the spear, self-maker. He doesn't
know *why*. Stalk, or reed. Sings it across. As a lamp throws its
light through branches, across the scratched page.

But 4 reversed is the Hanging Man, the listening man, *house
of bone and wind*.

Jerusalem, the word that speaks into the silence, into the
listening, till I hear it, that is, till I tell it to myself. This is how
a poem teaches you to read, and be.

bc

4.

4 is the knowledge of, commentary on, 3, so we're back in the *house*, in the *room*.

Subject, verb, object, preposition. The magic of preposition. The poet: *he doesn't know why*, but he knows where. *Reversed*, you say, making it a poem once more, which means it has turned around.

Who has twisted us around like this? (Rilke, "Eighth Duino Elegy," four x 2)

But Tamas wouldn't say *twisted* and would not, at the end of the poem, say this. *In, of, in, through, on, on, on, on, onwards* unto Jerusalem, the house wherein the orders of angels listen.

jn

4.

Note on technē: this poet again and again makes chains of things to things with prepositions, benzoin *on* stone, orgies *on* finger *on* the walls that are your flesh *on* The Lover's mind. The magic of preposition, which, to work, must dance. And by these doublings, triplings he has his rhythm. His speech leaps upon itself, higher, forming—and rising through—those angelic orders.

jn

5.

On pronominal magic, both spoken and implied, reflexive and intensive.

Reflexive:

the arm reaching back to throw forward. *Turns and turns*. A kind of stirring, a kind of whip. *Oroborosed, laughter itself*.

what holds true between a thing and itself, in *mysterious equilibrium, green caller whose reflection is your own*.

taking account of itself, the effect of the presence of the investigator on the investigated. *Who's there?* The poet changes everything.

instinctive, involuntary, and only human: "*we run our fingers through their silence*"

Intensive, openly: *the sun itself*. And implied: *stone reflexive, stones ourselves, us stones that whistle*.

bc

5, or any section,

where none of these meanings stay longer than a day. Technē, gnosis, history, magic—these leave, weirdly, almost before they've come. They are guests who don't stay even for a night, as if the wind

were my only guest,
as if the text were host to only the wind,
wind's angel, the messenger

revising

the message

so it arrives only elsewhere.

Elsewhere. Read this book and you're not where you are, are you?

Looking at this book for any time it dissolves into a pack of winds, hunting dissolution, hunting the open place, winds inside you swirling and racing to the borders of your body. This is a book that, turning around, turns you also around, so you know each other back to back.

But the back of the poem,
the back you've turned to the poem,
itself dissolves alive.

The back of your eyes sees the back of the other's face (the sun from behind), glowing, luring you, fearing you, whistling an ancient tune backwards, an apprenticeship to innocence, ignorance, your teacher or psychopomp whose name is Nothing,

unthinking you.

You walk through a misty wood or the rarefied body to the bright, obvious clearing out of your mind.

jn

6.

Out of mind, body.

*Clouds scud the flanks
of a secret heat*

*that turns within
draws the curtain.*

To turn within, turn to the other, *illusion turns/ to illusion,*
understanding eclipsed, *the lie at center/ glows in indirect light.*

Eclipse! Now, absolute. In his *Aside*, Tamas writes, *archetypes*
manifest in what is necessarily an aberration of form...an
aberration is where we find beauty, and our own exaltation.

And, *spiritual science in its self-awareness becomes the science*
of the beautiful, the missing original that haunts the beloved
twist of appearance.

The alchemic marriage is one name for what happens at the
center of chaos (*liquidating milk of voices throngs/ reverberant*
gutters of faces down hanging gardens). The knowing at the
heart of unknowing, *the lie at center, lie, not to but with.* Eros,
a force / shadowless as crystal/ flows between loves.

The enduring plant's/ forked sinuous lightning/ lashes the mind
to blossom. Branch whips mind to blossom, but to lash is also
to tether, to bind together, mind and blossom or body, king
and queen, *missing original that haunts the beloved twist of*
appearance. Again, from the author's *Aside: Implicit in "beauty"*
is the confusion of interior and exterior, the confusion of one's
existence, thought and writing with universal processes All parts
entwined, the archetype *glows in indirect light.*

bc

6.

Today, re-reading only this one section after months away
from *Invisible Marches*, I find in my hands a completed story,
written in more or less a descriptive mode, telling me, with
perfect fidelity to the order of things, what happens. We need, I
feel right now, to read lines like

Across Love's body, enduring passages

of the heart planted within the eclipse exult

as the truest lines ever written, not figures of what is or is becoming, not the fainting of a love-sick poet, but the world reciting its own event, reciting and exulting itself. This whole section, in fact, tells me to read it as a procession of happenings *across Love's body*, universal events put in sequence before us, yearning to show us their causal relations, that, indeed,

*a force
shadowless as crystal
flows between loves*

that is hard to see, but we can read so slowly that even the invisible shines.

jn

7.

*The rose.
A crow's nest.*

Bearing stars, shiny holes,

When the rose comes in you're on the verge of Paradise, Dante taught us. I've lingered a long time with 7, speechless on the rim of the Empyrean.

*The blinding rose.
A face pressed to the edge of my face reflects.*

In his introduction to *Invisible Marches*, Robert Kelly speaks of the marshes, the borderlands. *We live by the border*, he says, *every dawn a glorious danger*. Pilgrims and desperados of the regions between and beyond, those who are willing to come

face to face with themselves, their sins and *projections*, and perhaps, at last, the mind of God, *a single dazzling word*.

Marches are parades, and parades must have something to do with paradise, a moving forward and circling around, a form-giving ascent, an enclosure, like *the shadows of a rose*.

A crow's nest is a lookout. Hunters, like poets, improvise their own – branches, mud and shadows – making use of what is at hand.

*Along the median
a garden of crows composes
reflections from cars. A language before.
Your own small pieces too small to recognize.*

A garden of crows...reflections from cars... the images vanish into the moment of their unlikely conjunction, vanish into their own music, fission, a conjoining that can't be parsed, *pieces too small to recognize* folded into *the blinding rose*.

It is impossible to talk about a poem. *Of those things to which our everyday language pertains – experience, understanding, judgement – none is adequate to the task.* (Goethe via Panitz, *Aside*) We may perhaps speak *with* or *of*. *Of*, that means both apart and a part of.

*You and the book share
mud and mud hot mysteries.*

bc

0.

The frontispiece, a drawing by poet Lila Dunlap.

The knot's released heat.

*A sun is a storm
of heat that reads.
Weaves me with it.*

The lion has eaten the sun.

The poet Gerrit Lansing writes,

*1963 A.D. the negative afterimage of the vision of Man
poised in the electromagnetic currents of space is a roaring
Lion.*

*It is still hard to distinguish the form of the Lion, who walks
in flame.*

But it could be a rose. *Chaos reined in by planetary whips.* The poem *fixed to its musk.*

bc

7.

Three roses. *The rose. The shadow of a rose. The blinding rose.* Trinity? It is hard to distinguish the forms. Who is speaking of roses? Who are you?

Who are you? He addresses me, but who are you? Where is the source of these odes? Where does magic have its first heaviness and power? *Invisible.* I can behold the letters that

march, but not their faces, and not even the shadow of who leads them. Who leads them? Are they led?

Order follows. *A single dazzling word is organized at the end, that's all, no more, not a feeling, not an image, a thought, an effect, a place, a memory, a person, a desire, a body, a god—a word.*

What is this word? A word. So it is. One word, of three roses. One god, who is? *A single dazzling word, not blinding like the rose, who is brilliant but, now, sufferable. A single word we can see and live. The face, however, only its edge—we press its edge, we leap back, or are thrown back, strong with the blood, into the traffic of images, a language before.*

I have seen the rose. Nothing has been said. I have seen the rose. I have heard its shadows. I have raised the branch. Not one word said. But this one—whoever you are, or I am—this is one word, a bright garland round its head, tremendously lucent, flecked by parts of what shadows cannot say.

jn

8.

Propositions:

This is first. This is a way, a heroic gesture. A river, not Jesus, was crucified as it walked.

Body *is* released. Sex is writing, not rewriting, nor is it writing. This is first, but then again everything is.

An author waylays the road, the long road. But our bodies are longer. They are the measureless soul of length. Pronoun is extent, of this special sort: she is a long *serpent* where his

body is crowded. Intent is shadow. It is the poem's image on the ground exactly where we set one foot, then another.

Then *us*. *Us*, where it is written, is not anything but the reality beyond the text. It is not at all different from hands *melting* in water, or water itself dissolving in the very first water. *Us* is a *city*. You may not have sojourned there, drank there, found there, lost your voice there, been fucked there, eaten there, been saved there, walked there, fled there, but there it stands, walled and full of *singing children*, lissome bodies, words.

Us is *us*. But *us* expands. In that city, *us* is the name of Dawn, more than the sun rising, more even than the bright red belly of the *serpent*. *Us* stands under the *ceremonies*. It is that which *has already come back to itself*.

If you say *us*, there is no *shadow*.

But we who are the first *us* march over the *bridge* that is *shadows*. *Us* passes its finger through the *serpents*, passes through the shadows' hair, and pleases them. Them. Ecstasy of them. Ecstasy of nothing there.

jn

8.

The poet has given us *a single dazzling word*, and we are dazzled, borne into ecstasy

through ear's gates
body is released

and then, wonderfully, kindly, he gives us something to hold to, to keep us in the world.

*starlings to hop
across the cross*

Starlings solidify the hill, as the body may also, that can

*With both hands
melt the snow
like camomile*

The smallest things conspire to root us. The least flower,

*the fallen tree's black
ceremonies*

that has already come back to itself.

*Come back to itself, like 8, the lemniscate, glyph of the breath,
glyph of infinity and the indestructibility of energy in- and ex-
carnate, Ouroborosed, harnessed forces, chaos reined in by
planetary whips. Perpetual swirl of enstasy/ecstasy.*

bc

9.

Nine, the Ennead, gods of the Heliopolis, declension of the Sun.

*A horse sacrifice/is the proper use for a horse:/ the sparagmos
of Bacchus strikes me with its violence and its truth. Where
desires surge against the law's rigid patience/the lover burns
and the half-god is torn apart; The proper use of a life is to offer
itself and be made sacred. That is the only alchemy, our
combustion, and burning/resolution into gold, and also the
proper use of a poem.*

Nine, completion and return. The turn. The mystery of, contradiction in terms of, a parting touch.

*hand on my shoulder
before we parted*

*I can feel still. What came before
will come again*

bc

9.

One cannot escape a sense of finality. This is apparently the last section of the poem, and therefore it induces me to speak of last things, each image apocalyptic, from her *days/ hip* to a *mauve horse*, meaning the ending, from a *hand on my shoulder* to *the oils of her mind*. Each, and the whole, beckons me and you to pronounce judgment, simply by it being the last, by being illuminated by the light of the end that it radiates.

What does the poem, the last, desire of me? I want to know what to do.

I want to know what to do. In the interval between *hand on my shoulder/ before we parted* and

I can feel still—

what desires anything of me? I feel inadequate to saying the last word. “Nine”—nine has been spoken. You said “nine.” Is “nine” all there is to say? *A stillness that burns within our skin a structure*. What does a line like that need from me? It apparently writes nine words. Is “nine” all there is to say? The text doesn’t cease my own wanting to quote it; it comes to me, when I falter.

Not a word, but *a star a word a lover*, more, somehow than all there is. But when he writes *a heart burns throughout the*

forest, the march is over, and the invisible line of love that has desired the way of book—instantly appears. But, of fire, it bends a circle of fire. *The body*, the only one, that is, the circle, expands.

But can't cease. The poem, again, surges. Races, curves, surges, burns; the gloss, again, is torn. The poem agrees, halts, rages, burns, can feel still, came and will come; the comment of—which, in dialogue, would evolve—bends. Invisible marches have charmed me. How can a reader not be charmed? How can a reading not be bound to the resurgence, the stillness? The ending of this book constrains me to resurrection, if not infinity. If not infinity, then to *burn throughout the forest* all my mortal days.

And it constrains me, as it leaves to resume in the other place, to this perception: that the end of the book is *midheaven*, that is the middle of the forest, half of it is to come. But here we ought not feel the Tuscan acedic gloom. For here is the center of a shape of *oil*—a temple, or planetary, miracle in fluencies, that here, after all of that, is right here, and the clear *heart* still burns.

jn

Notes

Unless otherwise referenced, italic language set apart and indented or incorporated into the text is from *Invisible Marches* by Tamas Panitz, Lunar Chandelier Collective, Hudson, NY, 2018 (also on line at www.dispatchespoetrywars.com) though occasionally we quote an unreferenced word or two of each other's in italic as well.

Sections of *At the Threshold of Another* are numbered to correspond to the numbered sections of *Invisible Marches*, and initialed bc for Billie Chernicoff or jn for Joel Newberger at the end of each section.