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Tongue-Tied

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its nipple standing up between two hungers,
my lips, words that are moaned, loss
of the pre-eminence of man,
and animal swept by the primeval . . .
but to keep silent?
Maple leaves burn, too foreign
to scream, the hand ages on the
steering wheel, wild horses will not stop
the attrition of cells, seeds, hopes.
A meadow and a lakeside: the drawled speech
of fishers-for-sport drags lead nets
through opaque waters. But to keep silent?
Even more terrible than crumbling, the sudden
consciousness that when a star
sears these fabricated skies
no one looks up, for the change in it.
The car doors will slam,
an odor, faint, of smoke, then nothing.

Translated by the author with Denis Johnson

CARLOS GERMAN BELLI / PERU

Tongue-Tied

Tongue-tied or stuttering,
squashed small,
 level with the heights
 I'm stretched out by my heels.

I hold it in, clamp up unwillingly,
& instead of blue fireflies
 crickets fly & spin
 in the pan of my skull,

while this darkened palate

shrunken, salivaless,
is whipped & nagged
by sodas & magnesias.

So I panic
like any driven mule
& because I have children
this is serious.

Rattled finally, fireless,
making errors from the cradle to the grave
I'm kept going & get up daily
sustained only by these errors.

Translated by Maureen Ahern

HWANG DONG-KYU / KOREA

In Praise of a Peaceful Reign

We are a lesser race, they told me.
The doors locked shut even in the daytime,
bathing our eyes with lotion,
we read essays, hugging the coal fire.

O, you of the lesser race,
travel the country from Kimhae to Hwachon,
winter fatigues loosely hanging on you,
one or two chevrons hashed on your arms,
and a canteen flapping at your waist.

Wherever you turn, there is barbed wire;
wherever you turn, there are checkpoints.
I do not understand this love,
this smothering over-jealous love.

I spread my gloved hands, palms up;