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Malay Melee

James Hawley-Meigs

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Three Poems · *James Hawley-Meigs*

THE YALD-SWEVYN GALIMAUFY OF HIS LIVES

Gloppen fowl fly south, the sky whimpers its
gyron amaritudinous dirge: bise;
watchet. An unseen errant compass haiks
well away, the caduke mensis blithers.
Tilt-a-whirl leaves whirlpool about, blizzard
giddily against children's legs, opaque
screendoors awash in Eurus' grim grippe.
J. hunkers down for winter's gentle hyp
pulls riparian cloaks to lackaday
jaws, spelunks a good, lights spermaceti
candles for luck. It's half-time now for half
of nature's world—the weary rest carafe
in sweaty bars, kitchens, cafes—petit
pois on hold. Groundhogs wait to leap. Allay!

MALAY MELEE

Night!—What? . . . Night already . . .

Joseph Conrad, An Outcast of the Islands

Dugongs breach, spout jets of silver water in the thick
equatorial night. The Rajang River licks the pearly lips of the sea
lifts proas lashed to ramshackle jetties—the empty

boats nod & dream. Frugivorous kukangs quick-
ly flit about the highest reaches of the canopied forest
foraging for grubs or birds' eggs. Once fed, they rest, pick

fur-burrowed ticks & lice at leisure. Lemures haunt the sky-deep night;
a yabbi's coyote-like shriek rings through the thickest
boughs of theetsees, disturbs slumbering orang

utans in comfy, well-built nests.

Tattooed men of the woods, asleep & arranged
around a dying fire, stir & grumble beneath the starry deadlight.

Lianas embrace the poison tree, riparian nipas click-click-
click at the slightest hint of wind. Gamboge mangosteens stand
weirdly nacreous at midnight – trunks thick

& cylindrical shimmer yellow, verdigris, madder. Mangroves itch
the riverbank's mud. Land crabs – tentative & harried – scuttle across sand
beaches. Ectoproct colonies thrive in a neritic ditch.

Gourami oragami down in rivers & lakes, hang
limp & drift on unseen sublacustrine currents. Bruang
snuggle in caves before sleep, sirgang

furl tired drake-colored wings in nids shaped like loaves.
Arna rub rumps in kurrajong groves.
The *bintang baniak* watch over silent coves.

LATE MAY

for David Craig Austin

The corrugated skyline of low-rise tenements
rustles the sable night. Venus pokes her knowing
eye through new leaves of the blooming
catalpa & all throughout this sleeping city
wide awake sash windows
are thrown open to let in the vaguest
hint of thick air.
Sumac, heavy-scented locust
even cottonwoods recently wrung clean of feathered seeds
gag. Corkscrewing swallows follow unseen insects;