Malay Melee

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Three Poems · James Hawley-Meigs

THE YALD-SWEVYN GALIMAUFRY 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

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 quickly 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.


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;