

Katabasis

Jay G Ying

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Published 2020 by Smith|Doorstop Books
The Poetry Business
Campo House,
54 Campo Lane,
Sheffield S1 2EG
www.poetrybusiness.co.uk

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ISBN 978-1-912196-30-2
Designed & Typeset by Utter
Printed by Biddles

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the editors of the following publications in which versions of these poems first appeared: *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *The Poetry Review*, *The North*, *Zarf*, *bath magg*, *The Scores*, *The Good Journal*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Fruit Journal*.

I would like to acknowledge the various resources that have assisted my work: the Corpus of Sumerian Literature at the University of Oxford (JA Black et al, 1998-2006); the Sumerian Dictionary from the University of Pennsylvania (A Sjöberg, E Leichty, 2006); and *Inanna* by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer (HarperCollins, 1983). I am grateful to Mary Jean Chan for judging the 2019 New Poets Prize, and to everyone who has helped with this pamphlet for their continued guidance and support.

Smith|Doorstop books are a member of Inpress: www.inpressbooks.co.uk.
Distributed by NBN International, 1 Deltic Avenue, Rooksley, Milton Keynes,
MK13 8LD.

The Poetry Business gratefully acknowledges the support of
Arts Council England.



Supported by
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ENGLAND**

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Two Conventions on Translation

Damaged, missing or untranslatable passages from one to several words in length are indicated by the mark *** (i.e. three asterisks).

Damaged, missing or untranslatable whole lines or passages are indicated as follows, on a new line:

(1 line damaged/missing/unclear)

(32 lines damaged etc.)

(unknown no. of lines damaged etc.)

The 2001 military invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the United States, the United Kingdom, and its allies, known as Operation Enduring Freedom (then Operation Freedom's Sentinel) was originally named Operation Infinite Justice.

After all a photographer is a kind of spy bought by the highest bidder, a parasite who lives off war without fighting it.

– Mathias Énard

Forwarding

So Sister, what did you do in the War?

* * *

I burnt War's photographs over a grave by the fountain's dovecote.

In the hut on the mountains
the immaculate homing heralds were plucked bare;
and War really was far flung. Dozen stamps

of partitions or DMZs I could not believe still existed,
lapis lazuli ink from every ochre or synthetic resurrected in our
tender address to endless War.

I moved a mountain over those testimonies of the dead, read each out
in a weak unsettling light.

So if War surely could travel back in time, back up the coast like
a forgotten word, stacking bodies in a mass grave of travertine

well—War would only need to hear the wind's artefact
whistle, our oxidised soil upturned,
War's lost heads cracking their jewels on hollowed-out houses
searching for a neck to hang from inside.

It Was the Earliest Flight

It really was the earliest flight. The very first day after the very first night in the very first year of War. Eclipse light: barely any bodies emblazoned from that whitish flare of the lapis lazuli.

* * *

I stand up to loosen on the spot noticing War's hungry eyes sat near me stare back through all these sentinel stretches

And when I returned to that mortal realm, my muscles churning this way then that

I felt like a canary assessed as I relearn War's old death tango

*From the great heaven she set her mind on the great
below ...*

*When you see the bomb's smoke, howl : When you go home, howl : When you
enter his bedroom, howl : Father, do not let your daughter die in the War :
Do not let your glossy daughter be fused with the hot metal of the War : Do
not let your lapis lazuli become fantastically corrupted in the War : Do not
let your limbs turn to precious metals in the War : Do not let your daughter
be put to death in the War*