

**Daniel Borzutzky, two poems**

**Responsory # 0912**

there is a path called overidentification with humanity

and on the path there is a line

and in the line there is a body within a body within a body that detains all  
the other bodies

it prevents movement from one field of light to another

i remember sap and syrup but they're gone now

i remember acorns and nettles but they're gone now

come closer i say to the depleted body

*i need to listen to the cavity of your mouth the cavity of your breath the cavity of  
your drool the cavity of your knuckles*

the body spits and in the spit there are words that must be translated from  
spit-language to language-language

the translator all she can think of is capturing the spirit of the spit the  
spirit of the piss the spirit of the vomit the things we value most in our  
writing

they say we can distinguish between good death and bad death by how the  
leaves smell

they say we can see the quality of the dying in the aromatics of the deceased  
things trapped in a colony of action words

so many mass graves says the poet not enough time to write them

mother and child pose in front of the mass grave as the tour guide shows them how they can best capture the experience what angles to use so the light will shine on the mass grave just so

the tour guide plays with the snakes and says now we must go to the library where amid the bookshelves the death of the first born is ceremonially followed by the death of the second born the death of the third born and so on

this he says is culture

but it might be a dream in which i am translating one of my most mundane poems into a bestselling novel called *The Breathers* or *The Politics of Breath* or *The Man Who Could not Breathe*

it's a novel about the decadence of modernity

it wonders what would have happened if modernity had been a green bird instead of a nuclear bomb

if modernity had been the islands and not the continent

if modernity were the opposite of debt and death

you see i'm not particularly good with words

i don't have a big vocabulary

and i'd rather not speak of other bodies but my writing-mouth-dream-mind is filled with them

it's like that classic song "I Try To Forget Things All The Time"

in the translation the song is called "I Am Tripping Over My Lips To Get To My Face"

scan the QR code and you'll hear the tune and see choreographed slip-n-slides across the black box of wet-n-wild rhythms

time is a signal says my therapist-lover but what kind of signal is it  
what kind of fungus is it what kind of body is it

silence #243.423A or the border between your body and mine

they say the international frontier is just a gesture but the border-cross-  
ing "mice" know it is infinite they know the world as a series of lines you  
cannot cross a series of limbs you cannot articulate

in other words comma

the splintered finger at the end of this poem is nothing more than

a splintered finger at the end of a poem

you see it and you don't see it

what do you think about when your body is being "thrown out quickly"

they chisel the gold out of my teeth only to find a plastic bag a knife and a  
poem infinitely emerging from the body of a slaughtered soldier