

Eric Cummings / Three Poems

monotypic me

pine cones
of no home
of fallen ground
of quick quill
of swift fall
of autumn seeping

yet never naked
yet always singular
and yet these things happen

abandoned, I imagine
birds ready to die

winters' cold death

everything seems
as if coming
but no, this log
-always fallen
frames this poem

this wood stinks
as cigars
as bourbon
as billet-doux
as animal
as someone stuck some-
where off this trail
and oh!, a quail?
A musty bird, now.

A mud coloured day,
It is indeed hunting
season again, I feel,
again the drift;
emotional versus intelligent
intelligence- the bird
smart enough to fly
to greater escapes
than of these pine cones'
homelessness
and fallen ground and I.

LECHER IN THE MOON

Nadir of a poor heaven, my life has been spent spending, racing tabs.
Begot of wishes and debts, burdened by cardinal deficits, born in contempt

of the lotteries, I have always been a fan of trickle down romance.
Homeless aside sheets, no magic bed my own, I owe the Universe rent.

It is with my mirrored heart and tongues lavender dance
that my head, vulpine, climbed today to reside on your pillow.

At night when we wake, the stars will come home and turn on.
The lights, neighbors I owe for bottles drunk and sugars poured.

Will march our naked mountain as villagers, poems, and pythons;
angry with torches. I'm sorry. They ache to dream, intend to beat down your door.

Dinner

Bird. Hop. Bird, hop.
.Rustle. .Peck. Bird,
wait. Scrunched, lack
of. .Movement. Peck,
think. .peck. .Set. Still.
Wait, cold. .sets in. Quick!
.Blink. .Stab. Eat. .Rustle.
Stab, drag and fly. .Feed.
Family. .Queue. .Night,
ink. .Perch. Above,
floor. .Feeding; Ground.
.And be. .Hunger, .Shadow,
gone. .And be. Be. Emptied.

Born-and-raised in "West by God Virginia"(US), hailing also from Philadelphia (US) and Prague (CZ), Eric L Cummings poems are often influenced by his ever changing geographic footing and lofty nostalgia. Aside from actively participating in poetry readings on both sides of the Atlantic, his work has appeared in Watchword, New Calligraphy, Black Words On White Paper, and Grasp.

Meera Suryanarayanan / Two Poems

Leanings

I lean over boundaries
curving the lines of straightback chairs,
I lean over the doorway
warming the heartless chill of frames, sliding doors,
noticing the milk pouches dangling
from the neighbour's bars. They are
as if with the heavy goodness of
D sized silicone implants.
I lean because
Your contented physicality
draws me
in a curve
like a well laden bough
trying to kiss
a sheltered head.

Missing Objects

(Thoughts before she fell asleep)

Soak my bones in your warm breath
Its cold, the quilt frayed with a mean length
that makes us fetuses every night.
I hold you close for other reasons besides heat retention,
I'm afraid you'll disappear too like
the silver filigree, china, the 1916 George V rupee
that we tossed into the air and the sun never swallowed it
but it never came back down again unlike
the curtains, paintings, wall hangings and
the sandalwood key holder that held fragrant keys
to many doors, the keys fought with
the overpowering smell of their inner iron
right here in our palms everyday,
both missing objects now,
we'll never know what won...

Meera Suryanarayanan was born in Kozhikode, Kerala. Currently, she resides in Mumbai, Maharashtra and has completed her post graduation in English literature from the University of Mumbai.

Nicholas Y B Wong / Two Poems

This is an Error

This is an era
of blocked veins and
closed hearts,
we keep trying and erring.

Our gangrenous senses
are nothing but a thought.

That can never be thought in real,
like the dreams of dreamers.

So rarely do we move people
or are moved.

We aren't any fresher than
frozen pizzas in the fridge,

luscious and full of pus.
Your plebeian eyes are better shut.

Keep the solace to your throat.
Don't placate in an uninflected voice:

we're not twelve anymore.
Go to somewhere

quiet: a church,
a cemetery or a school for the deaf,

find out where sounds hide,
then hide yourself there.

Flow with the summery music,
wherever it wants

you to go,
just go, and wait.

When you're there,
who do you miss?

And who do not miss you
in return? In fact,

don't even reason,
it is just the way it is.

If your heart beats
for the wrong man,

don't panic,
we all do the same

in this era of errors.
Be grateful for tumults
of arrhythmia. Be grateful
if your heart still beats.

THE HOUR

At 3 A.M., I fold a few pages
of today's *Apple Daily* and pick
up the leash. Seeing this, Bradley wags
its round furry tail and gives me a grin.

We walk down to Oil Street, now quiet
and shadowless. We ignore all red and green
lights. We are the only burghers in our
own dominion. Occasionally, he would stop

at several lampposts to sniff yesterday's piss
and cover it with his own. Dogs, like
humans, are territorial. We walk the same
route every night. First, we come to a Starbucks,

now absent of laptop-gazing coffee drinkers
and conceited bankers, who pretend to be
working or thinking. The brown velvet sofas
and wooden tables look lonely behind the glass.

Then we walk towards the 7-11 on King's
Road. A shabby bearded man waits for his late
greasy cup noodles inside. Three minutes later,
his stomach will be fed and he will consider his day

lived and complete. The park smells plainly human,
thanks to the huge yellow NO DOGS ALLOWED
sign that hangs proudly outside. We go in anyway.

I unleash him and let him piss again near the swings
and slides. At a corner, I smoke my menthol Kent
and recall my residual thoughts of the day –
the standing trees, the passing breeze,
the ending of yesterday's poem, the opening

of tomorrow's, what faces I wish to see,

and what names I don't want to hear again.
I watch the ashes float and fall. Never mind,
someone dutiful will clean up our mess soon.

Back home, I clean and massage his paws.
He tells me, with the same grin, this is the best
hour of his day. I kiss him on the slope
between his eyes, in which I see myself satisfied.

Nicholas Y.B. Wong is a creative writer based in Hong Kong. His poems and short stories have appeared in The Centrifugal Eye, Asia Writes, Taj Mahal Review, The Medulla Review, Fag/Hag: A Scandalous Chapbook of Fabulously Codependent Poetry, pyrta journal, 6S: The Green Bike Stories, amphibi.us, Cha, Qarrtsiluni, Fifty-fifty: New Hong Kong Writing, edited by Xu Xi (2007, Haven Books), among others. He is currently an MFA Candidate at the City University of Hong Kong. Visit him at <http://nicholasywong.weebly.com>.

Ananya Guha / One poem

Saturdays

You do not spell doom
only, blue eyes
as my head whirls
in fantasy of what
you were, I were
in those oblivious
days of oranges
and a fireplace
of steaming fog
baked rice, home made
butter to feed hungry souls
and the armchair to run around
with the imaginings of the cricket
bat, and a deflated football to kick
around, the fun of bang-bang
a make belief game of cowboys.

For you and your penurious days
winter or summer
monsoon or autumn
your blue dovetail winds
remained as calm as the
Sundays following,
with whispers of some death
in a lake housed sometimes
for suicides.

Ananya S Guha lives in Shillong India, a picturesque hill station nestled among languid hills and pine trees. He is an academic by profession and works in the Indira Gandhi National Open University. His poems have been published in magazines/ ezines, both print and online; some of the latest being: Asia Writes, Poem 2 Day and Malaysian Poetry Chronicles.

Tanuj Solanki

The Sounds of Sushant Lok

Immeasurable sounds, perhaps non-existent sounds, perhaps a delusion, perhaps a delusion magnified by the heat of the soporific afternoon, hit the Bangladeshi maid. This happened while she was walking to the house that lay right across the street to that of the couple's. To her, the sounds belonged to a class of sexual ecstasy, an ecstasy that had visited her hut in Bangladesh but had yet not struck her thatch in India. As a first reaction, she found herself smiling. But her second thought, one that arose from an ineffable moralistic perspective, effaced the smile and filled her whole body with consternation. Inside her employer's house, she jostled with herself for more than an hour before coming up with the exact expression to report what she had witnessed. It wasn't easy: Hindi is foreign to an illiterate Bangladeshi, and she had never learnt the Hindi for such things.

*

The neighborhood was a mesh of six meter broad streets with horribly built twin storey houses on either side, houses that were a blatant subversion of municipal norms as well as

engineering and architectural common-sense. The inhabitants were worse, the kind that would tamper their meters while cursing the countryside farmers of looting electricity, or throw their garbage from first floor while blaming the rag-picker below of being lazy and untidy. There were fat housewives used to the leisure of leaving everything to the care of super-cheap maids, and there were maids completely taken by the bliss of daydreaming.

One month back, after four months of travel across the country, a young couple rented the ground floor of a shoddy house in this neighborhood. The couple was queer: the man Indian, the woman French. They had met in their last year of management education in Ahmedabad and dithered about each other initially, knowing well their rational life-streams that had no evident points of intersection. However, love grew recklessly, uncontrollably, and they decided, in a fugue, to shun their putative corporate paths and settle for a life scant in resources but bountiful in travel and love and love-making. Naturally, their excessive dream ran out of money. And after months of Diu, and Ujjain, and Khajuraho, and Orchha, and Lucknow, and Nainital, and what not, they landed up in dusty Gurgaon in search of some vocation. After a few days of unemployment, the woman got in touch with the handful of French expatriate families in South Delhi and grew comfortable in the role of a well-paid tutor. The man tried to do the same

with Indian families but with little success on the well-paid part. Their love, intense and ever-growing, made this inequality meaningless. The man concentrated, instead, on improving his writing, a hobby that had turned into a passion during the travels. Each evening, after toiling with French kids for hours, the woman would find her inbox flooded with poems of all kinds, of all themes, of love, of lost love, of mythology, of desire, of humor, of sadness, of anything, of everything. They would read the poems together in the night and make passionate love after.

From the first day, the couple was an oddity to every house on the street. A white woman's pairing with an Indian was driving everyone to a mild paranoia. The elderly were displeased with the perverse cultural impact this couple could have on the youth of the residency. Middle aged men were irritated upon sighting the beautiful woman because it often led to the discovery of a long-lost lust within their midriffs; the fat housewives fumed with a silent apprehension of the same. Most young men were full of jealousy for the man; others were in a muted awe, discussing secretly the machinations of landing such a 'catch'. The young women had more complex emotions running through them: they were perturbed by the freedom of the French woman-- a freedom that let her kiss the man on the street, and a freedom that let her be so palpably in love--and chafed by the indifference of the man, by his total neglect of

their existence. Even the children, used to playing their cricket and football on the street, would stop their fights, banter, or other usual frolic upon sighting the couple, as if something unjust had entered their dominion.

*

The denizens of Sushant Lok, Phase 1, Gurgaon, hold a monthly meeting to discuss the status of cleanliness, discipline and general civility in the residency. In usual times, this meeting is a set-up for forty-something men and women to munch on some munchies and take a cup or two of tea. On that day, the meeting was belligerent. Firstly, the attendance was surprisingly high. The meeting was attended by not only the middle aged house owners but also the young sons and daughters and the old grandpas and grandmas. The hall brimmed with people, to an extent that a miasma of human breadth created a suffocating environment.

Secondly, the congregation was loud, almost competitive in its urge for sharing its plight with the decision-making authority. It began with the Bangladeshi maid (she was brought along by her employer) giving a shied-up description of things in her staccato Hindi. She was followed-- or rather interrupted, once the content of her speech was evident-- by residents from houses on the street behind. Other close neighbors also provided other stories. One lady, mother of a teenage son-- growing hysterical

with each breadth, as if she had come across a hideous abomination most recently-- reported how the sounds almost always coincided with her son's afternoon study time, making it extremely difficult for him to concentrate. That the couple's house was almost 50 meters away from that of this lady, and that travel of sound through such distances was improbable, was whispered in some corners of the hall, but the whispers ended with the suggestion that this was nothing but a proof of the extremely loud nature the activity. The lady carried on, claiming that the sounds were a debilitating influence on her son, considering his tender age. And although she didn't mention it, she seemed to emanate an unshakeable belief that the young couple had only one objective in doing whatever they were doing-- to spoil her child's academic record.

Thirdly, there were no snacks to munch on; so throughout the tenure of the meeting the harangues about the inappropriate behavior of the inter-racial couple persevered without any divertissement.

Finally, the decision-making authority, whoever it was, decided that delivering a mild rebuke to the young couple would not belie any tenets of jurisprudence. The responsibility for the cat-belling was awarded to the employers of the Bangladeshi maid, who were free to use her services in the act. It was also decided that the rebuke be handed over at the exact moment of the

young couple making the disconcerting sounds, so that irrefutable evidence could be gathered and punishment meted out at the same time. When argued against, the decision-making authority defended its rather lenient treatment of the wrong-doings of the young couple by pointing out the alienness of the white girl and her understandable neglect of the codes of Indian society. Thereafter, the meeting became a parliament of discussions. Examples of the superiority of Indian culture over libidinous Western influence began to be exchanged obstreperously. The congregation grew totally immersed in the topic of the day. In the end, it took a decent exertion on the hosts' part to make everyone understand that it was proper to leave the premises of the hall after the scheduled time had been extended by two hours.

*

The maid's monthly salary was increased by 200 rupees, with the addition of one extra responsibility. She had to look out for timing most appropriate for the delivery of the rebuke. In other words, she had to confirm the activity, convey it to her employer, accompany her in knocking on the criminals' door and interfere in their process and convey the neighborhood's mindshare on the nuisance that they had caused. She complained of the meager raise. But the employer's retort was undeniable:

“You'll have pleasure doing it. It's like going on a pilgrimage”

*

They have gone into some sort of asceticism, the maid imagined. There were no sounds. There were noises, yes, but only ones that correspond to melancholic household activity, nothing exciting nothing profane. Two weeks passed in total lull, and it perturbed the maid that the young man and woman were not engaging. They had also become less outgoing, for she couldn't remember a single instance of them stepping outside their house in these two weeks, certainly not during her duty hours in the opposite house. Sensing the matter to be something serious, she summoned the courage to visit the young couple, but for what exact purpose she was herself unaware. Perhaps she wanted to see if there was something grave within the household, some injury or illness that was making love-making unviable, or some malediction that had rendered it soundless, or some quarrel that had made it temporarily impossible. Or perhaps, as was more plausible, she just wanted to develop a clearer image of how the couple would look like in bed, making the myriad sounds and postures. Her own concoction of the scene was fading in her mind, due largely to the couple's reduced appearance.

When the young man opened the door to her knock, the maid felt as if she had a lot to say, but found the words too puffy to

come out of her throat. When he questioned her, she could only grin sheepishly, with a kind of grin she suspected didn't look very nice because it had always irritated her husband. She glanced inside their living room, their only room, as much as she could from outside the door. She saw framed photographs hung on walls, chairs with cushions, a bed with a nice bed-sheet, a carpet-like thing made of cane, and other such minor trinkets that symbolize the beatitude of domestic life. She felt an inexplicable frisson rise within her. She wanted to bless the couple in Bangla, but didn't do so. She just responded with an open ended question in Hindi, "Sab theek?" and went away, leaving without making any impact: neither on the mind of the young couple nor on her own theories regarding their life. She came back to her employer's house with the intent of resuming her dull chores and as she carried on she rediscovered the burden of her unabated curiosities. She was tired now. She wanted the young couple to fornicate and she wanted them to do it loudly. She wanted to be the first one to hear it, to be an important person in the discovery of the sexual act. She wanted to tell the whole neighborhood about it; the police-like morality of it made her feel like a child again. Surely, she would have done it even if there was no raise in salary.

Then on one afternoon she heard something like foreplayish tittering while polishing the narrow metal gate of the opposing house. She couldn't believe it. The moment she had been

waiting for eagerly, impatiently, had finally arrived; her wish of being the first eardrums to oscillate with the love-making jingle had finally come true. Or had it not? Were she conjuring sounds? Were these not the sounds of the young couple having sex but a mere replay of what had been in Bangladesh? Her precipitation into past was prevented by her sensations of the present: faint murmurs, ignorable to everyone except a spy. But what am I if not a spy? She thought. She hurriedly reported the event to her employer. Within seconds the two of them were within one meter of the young couple's door, whose bed was just next to the door. For a brief second employee and employer paused to provide more clarity to their ears. It was a pause that had no reasoning behind it.

Tanuj Solanki, 24, works in an insurance firm in Bombay. His work has been published in online journals such as Cartier Street Review, Tin Foil Dresses and Crisis Chronicles Library. He is currently completing a short story collection about fatalism in Indian cities, titled The Bom Bay of Life. He just can't learn swimming.